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Multilingual practices and transnational alliances:
German-language texts of post-Yugoslav migration

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Abstract

My thesis argues that German-language texts of post-Yugoslav migration expand our understanding of what constitutes German-language literature today, since they cannot be contained by scholarly paradigms rooted in notions of distinct national literatures and require a comparative and multilingual critical approach. In order to illustrate this, the thesis examines prose texts by Peter Handke, Saša Stanišić, Marica Bodrožić, and Alma Hadžibeganović.

In methodological terms, I draw on Leslie A. Adelson's ground-breaking study *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature* (2005). Combining approaches derived from theories of multilingualism and gender theory, I engage with the so-called 'Eastern Turn' in German literature.

The collapse of Yugoslavia was a watershed moment in recent European history, which led to a violent partition of the country and resulted in high numbers of people fleeing the conflict to Western Europe, including Austria and Germany. German-language commentators were from the start heavily involved in debates surrounding the war. I start my discussion by looking at Peter Handke's travelogues from the 1990s. Contrasting Handke's essays with later works by Stanišić, Bodrožić, and Hadžibeganović, I explore the potential of linguistically heterogeneous texts to undermine essentialist understandings of ethnic, national, and cultural identity. I draw attention to power structures rooted in language which, in my opinion, can be subverted by non-idiomatic usage, linguistic errors, code-switching, interlingual mixing, literal translation, interferences, referential indeterminacy, and a strategic deployment of non-sense. Crucially, I combine my text analysis with a feminist response to the texts. I highlight the works' engagement with gender, sexuality, and discrimination, and examine how they address the traumas suffered by diverse subjects in patriarchal society, and resist the violent erasure of such experiences from dominant narratives.

Zusammenfassung

In der Dissertation wird die These vertreten, dass deutschsprachige Texte der postjugoslawischen Migration die Grenzen von zeitgenössischer deutscher Literatur erweitern. Sie hinterfragen die Vorstellung von unterschiedlichen, separaten und abgegrenzten Nationalliteraturen und erfordern einen komparativen und mehrsprachigen kritischen Ansatz. Um das zu verdeutlichen, werden in der Arbeit die Prosatexte von Peter Handke, Saša Stanišić, Marica Bodrožić und Alma Hadžibeganović untersucht. Die Analyse orientiert sich an Leslie A. Adelsons Studie *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature* (2005) und berücksichtigt die Mehrsprachigkeitstheorie sowie die Gendertheorie. Die Arbeit setzt sich außerdem mit dem „Eastern Turn“ in der deutschen Literatur auseinander.

Der Zusammenbruch Jugoslawiens war ein Wendepunkt in der jüngeren europäischen Geschichte und führte zur gewaltsamen Teilung des Landes und zur Flucht vieler Menschen nach Westeuropa. Deutschsprachige Kommentatoren waren von Anfang an stark an den Debatten rund um den Krieg beteiligt. Die Dissertation vergleicht die umstrittenen Reiseberichte von Peter Handke aus den 1990er Jahren mit späteren Werken von Stanišić, Bodrožić und Hadžibeganović. Sprachlich heterogene Texte sind in der Lage, das essentialistische Verständnis von ethnischer, nationaler und kultureller Identität zu untergraben. Die Analyse offenbart die Machtstrukturen, die in der Sprache verwurzelt sind und die durch nicht-idiomatische Wendungen, Sprachfehler, Code-Switching, interlinguales Mischen, wörtliche Übersetzung, Interferenzen, referentielle Unbestimmtheit und einen strategischen Einsatz von Unsinn untergraben werden können. Die feministische Auseinandersetzung mit den Texten geht auf die Themen Geschlecht, Sexualität und Diskriminierung ein. Es wird gezeigt, dass die Texte patriarchale Gewalt bezeugen und sich der gewaltsamen Auslöschung solcher Erfahrungen aus dominanten Narrativen widersetzen.

Abbreviations

Literary texts

<i>Abschied</i>	<i>Peter Handke, Abschied des Träumers vom Neunten Land. Eine Wirklichkeit, die vergangen ist: Erinnerung an Slowenien</i>
<i>Eine winterliche Reise</i>	<i>Peter Handke, Eine winterliche Reise zu den Flüssen Donau, Save, Morawa und Drina oder Gerechtigkeit für Serbien</i>
<i>ilda</i>	<i>Alma Hadžibeganović, ilda zuferka rettet die kunst</i>
<i>kirschholz</i>	<i>Marica Bodrožić, kirschholz und alte gefühle</i>
<i>Penthesilea in Sarajevo</i>	<i>Alma Hadžibeganović, zz00m: 24 Std. mix 1. of me oder Penthesilea in Sarajevo</i>
<i>Sommerlicher Nachtrag</i>	<i>Peter Handke, Sommerlicher Nachtrag zu einer winterlichen Reise</i>
<i>Sterne</i>	<i>Marica Bodrožić, Sterne erben, Sterne färben. Meine Ankunft in Wörtern</i>
<i>Was wir im Keller spielen</i>	<i>Saša Stanišić, Was wir im Keller spielen, wie die Erbsen schmecken, warum die Stille ihre Zähne fletscht, wer richtig heißt, was eine Brücke aushält, warum Emina weint, wie Emina strahlt</i>
<i>Wie der Soldat</i>	<i>Saša Stanišić, Wie der Soldat das Grammophon repariert</i>

Acronyms

BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (1993-2017)
JNA	Jugoslavenska Narodna Armija (Yugoslav People's Army)
NDH	Nezavisna Država Hrvatska (Independent State of Croatia)
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force

Illustrations

- 1.1 *Footage from Trnopolje Camp (ITN),*
Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/nov/22/ratko-mladic-bosnia-camps-mass-murder-torture-rape-serbian#img-1> [accessed 30 May 2018]
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Source: <http://www.bildarchivaustria.at/Preview/16063648.jpg> [accessed 30 May 2018]

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Introduction

By proposing that there exists a German literature of post-Yugoslav migration, I am making a bold claim. Is it necessary to create yet another category for a subset of German-language literature? Do literary critics have the right to impose labels on authors and texts? Is it not time, as Brigid Haines suggests in her recent overview, ‘to retreat from national or linguistic identifications [...] and to talk instead of the transnational and porous nature of writing’?¹

‘Post-Yugoslav’ is not attached to one particular language, nation, or territory. Rather, it is a designation whose exact cultural and geographical contours remain yet to be determined. A dynamic term, it attempts to capture a situation of loss and displacement after the collapse of a federal state and a war which tore communities apart and resulted in long-lasting animosities. In my understanding, the term reflects the very fragility of political and state structures in today’s world which can no longer offer shelter and security to their citizens.

The Yugoslav Wars constituted a watershed moment in recent European history. The conflict spanned almost a decade and caused deaths, trauma and injuries which many had thought no longer possible in Europe after the end of the Second World War. The texts which will receive sustained attention here respond to migration, flight and expulsions resulting from the conflict and address the difficulties of post-war reconciliation. German literature of post-Yugoslav migration engages with the violent disintegration of the Yugoslav state but also mirrors social and political developments defining a new historical era. Indeed, the last decade of the twentieth century was a key period in European history during which old certainties were undermined and a new political consensus was negotiated out of the ashes of East Germany, the Soviet Union, and, eventually, Yugoslavia.

My concern with this new literary development is informed by Leslie A. Adelson’s seminal study *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature* (2005), where the critic introduces the concept of ‘literature of migration’ to talk about ‘the cultural effects of Turkish migration’ in German literature. Adelson distances herself from such terms as ‘guest worker literature’, ‘foreigners’ literature’, ‘migrants’

¹ Brigid Haines, ‘Introduction: The Eastern European Turn in Contemporary German-language Literature’, *German Life and Letters*, 68 (2015), 145–53 (p. 147).

literature’ and ‘intercultural literature’.² The term ‘literature of migration’, according to Adelson, makes it possible to ‘keep transnational migration and its long-range cultural effects keenly in sight as historical formations’ and to demonstrate the vital contribution of Turkish-German writers to German culture and the German national archive after 1990.³ The notion of ‘intercultural’ writing is rejected because it implies ‘a schematic rhetoric of self and other predicated on incommensurable partners in dialogue’⁴ and ‘stresses dialogic communication as a process in which readers and characters engage as representatives of discrete worlds’.⁵ Such binary constructs do not do justice to the innovative and often subversive potential of these works.

Of course, many writers challenge the label ‘migrant author’ or ‘author with a migration background’. Arguably, these terms are reductive and marginalizing, since they suggest that the author’s biography *always* determines the subject matter and the style of their works. Feridun Zaimoglu has castigated the term ‘Migrationsliteratur’ as an ‘Ekelbegriff’.⁶ Such labels are particularly problematic if they are not used by authors themselves but rather their critics, reviewers or publishers. Here, I want to stress that I do not believe that the author’s personal history of migration⁷ is a factor which determines the themes or style of their texts in a straightforward, unidirectional way. It is each author’s decision whether they wish to experiment with the multitude of languages they speak in their texts and whether they choose to use their biographies as inspiration for their fiction. Writers with a personal connection to Bosnia do not necessarily write about Bosnian themes, as shown for instance by Saša Stanišić’s second novel *Vor dem Fest* (2014). Maxim Biller’s infamous irritation at this author’s departure from Yugoslav themes betrays the critic’s reluctance to abandon schematic categories when engaging with contemporary literature. In Biller’s view, second-language authors as well as writers who were not born in Germany are forever bound to serve as embodiment of cultural or ethnic difference.⁸

² Leslie A. Adelson, *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature: Toward a New Critical Grammar of Migration* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 23.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., p. 25.

⁵ Ibid., p. 26.

⁶ Feridun Zaimoglu and Julia Abel, “‘Migrationsliteratur ist ein toter Kadaver’”. Ein Gespräch, in *Literatur und Migration*, ed. by Heinz Ludwig Arnold, Edition Text + Kritik (Munich: Richard Boorberg, 2006), pp. 159–66 (p. 166).

⁷ I prefer the formulation ‘history of migration’ to ‘migration background’.

⁸ Maxim Biller, ‘Letzte Ausfahrt Uckermark’, *Die Zeit*, 20 February 2014, <http://www.zeit.de/2014/09/deutsche-gegenwartsliteratur-maxim-biller> [accessed 11 May 2018].

Terminology

In the present study, my focus is on texts which a) deploy multilingual literary devices and b) are thematically concerned with the former Yugoslavia and, more specifically, with the Wars of Yugoslav Succession: the Ten-Day War in Slovenia (1991), the Croatian War of Independence (1991–1995), the Bosnian War (1992–1995), and the Kosovo War (1998–1999). Here, I would like to define my line of enquiry in the project, and briefly touch on the avenues which I decided not to pursue. There undoubtedly exists a connection between bilingualism on the individual level and multilingual expression. The impressive study of bilingualism by Elizabeth Klosty Beaujour combines literary criticism with neurolinguistics to examine specific contributions by writers who have in the course of their literary careers switched languages or produced work in more than one language. Klosty Beaujour argues that ‘the bilingual writer’s difference begins on the level of his or her cerebral organization for language and reflects the broader variety of linguistic processing strategies available to bilinguals’.⁹ The critic argues that acquisition of a foreign language is reflected in how different regions in the brain interact, and therefore leaves a lasting trace in the individual. Not a linguist myself, I do not feel competent to make claims relating to how a neurological make-up of an individual’s brain could affect their literary activity. In the current study, therefore, I shift my focus away from the capabilities or characteristics of bi- or plurilingual individuals and look at literary texts which experiment with multiple languages and display a metalinguistic sensitivity.

In order to prevent marginalization and ethnicization of such texts, I have chosen to use the neutral and comprehensible term ‘multilingual’ to talk about works produced by writers who might fall under Steven G. Kellman’s definition of translingual authors, i.e. ‘those who write in more than one language or in a language other than their primary one’.¹⁰ For practical reasons, I sometimes use ‘second-language’ to refer to writers who are fluent in languages other than German but I do not intend to impose hierarchies between the primary and secondary language. I have decided to abandon the term ‘exophonic’,¹¹ which is sometimes used to denote

⁹ Elizabeth Klosty Beaujour, *Alien Tongues: Bilingual Russian Writers of the “First” Emigration* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 1.

¹⁰ Steven G. Kellman, ‘Preface’, in *Switching Languages: Translingual Writers Reflect on Their Craft*, ed. by Steven G. Kellman (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), pp. ix – xix (p. ix).

¹¹ Chantal Wright, ‘Writing in the “grey Zone”. Exophonic Literature in Contemporary Germany’, *German as a Foreign Language*, 3 (2008), 26–42.

African literatures written in European languages and thus challenges the traditionally European idea of equivalence between language and territory, and between language and nation. The prefix 'exo', means 'external, from outside' and 'phonic' is derived from the Greek *phōnē*, voice. Even though this term is not without its merits, since it draws attention to the bodily aspect of linguistic articulation and points to the exteriority and strangeness of one's voice, it is not widely used in scholarship and might therefore lead to confusion.

Minor literature, or language and power

Multilingual literary practices are not regarded here as mere features of style but as crucial elements of social and political critique present in the texts of post-Yugoslav migration. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1975) is one of the first theoretical texts to address the political potential of minority texts written in a major language. While acknowledging the importance of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of minor literature, my analysis does not employ a systematic Deleuzian framework for its interpretations of the multilingual texts. Rather, I use a broadly defined poststructuralist framework. At the same time, I draw attention to those instances where fixed linguistic norms and structures are subverted, which unsettles hegemonic power relations. This concern also informs Deleuze's project. Ronald Bogue notes:

For Deleuze and Guattari, language is a form of action, and linguistic regularities are merely partial components of power structures that enforce regular patterns of practice. When writers subvert phonetic, syntactic and semantic conventions, they activate lines of continuous variation that are immanent within language and thereby disrupt the regular functioning of fixed power relations.¹²

Deleuze and Guattari state that minor literature 'doesn't come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language'.¹³ Further, the critics argue that in this literature, 'what each author says individually already constitutes a common action, and what he or she says or does is necessarily political, even if others aren't in agreement'.¹⁴ This does not mean that an author speaks on behalf of an ethnic or cultural community, or that they represent (in the sense of

¹² Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze on Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 5.

¹³ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. by Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 16.

¹⁴ Ibid.

German *vertreten*) the interests of a certain real-life political group. Rather, the peripheral position of a writer makes it possible for them ‘to express another possible community and to forge the means for another consciousness and another sensibility’.¹⁵ The three main features of minor literature listed by Deleuze and Guattari (‘the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation’) are not just characteristic of one specific literature but rather indicate ‘the revolutionary conditions for every literature within the heart of what is called great (or established) literature’.¹⁶ The revolutionary potential of such minor writing can be actualized in a variety of contexts.

Margaret Littler has deployed a Deleuzian framework in her work on Emine Sevgi Özdamar and Zafer Şenocak.¹⁷ Crucially, Littler draws attention to the political implications of Deleuze’s materialist philosophy that have been largely neglected by other scholars of multilingual literature.¹⁸ The critic argues that Deleuze is interested ‘in the convergence of life and literature in zones of intensity, or pure “affect”, which can enhance the human power to become. [...] affect is the power to forge new bonds, not tied to known identities or communities’.¹⁹ This ability of literature to displace affects and forge new constellations beyond known structures, Littler argues, is of key importance, especially when one considers the totality of Deleuze’s philosophical project, which ‘replaces literary mimesis with becoming, by means of which literature contributes to the transformation of the world, rather than simply reflecting the world as we know it to be’.²⁰ A deterritorialized use of language, oriented towards intensity

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 18.

¹⁷ Margaret Littler, ‘The Fall of the Wall as Nonevent in Works by Emine Sevgi Özdamar and Zafer Şenocak’, *New German Critique*, 116 (2012), 47–62.

¹⁸ Littler differs from Adelson, whose monograph does not refer to the idea of ‘minor literature’, despite certain parallels between Adelson’s approach and Deleuze’s. For instance, Littler points out that Adelson’s concept of Turkish/iconoclastic ‘lines of thought’ bears strong resemblance to ‘lines of flight’, which is an important element of Deleuze’s philosophy of literature. Littler notes in her review of Adelson’s monograph:

‘The notion of “lines of thought”, despite disconcertingly Deleuzian echoes, refers to a Cartesian “discourse with no worldly analogue,” which “commits an unprecedented form to being” [sic] [...]. Nonetheless, much of the analysis of “affect” and immanent meaning in the texts could equally be interpreted via a Deleuzian framework, the avoidance of which is all the more striking in this discussion of what, in other contexts, might be deemed “minor literature”.’

Margaret Littler, ‘*The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature: Toward a New Critical Grammar of Migration* by Leslie A. Adelson’, *The German Quarterly*, 79 (2006), 403–5 (p. 404).

¹⁹ Margaret Littler, ‘Intimacy and Affect in Turkish-German Writing: Emine Sevgi Özdamar’s “The Courtyard in the Mirror”’, *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 29 (2008), 331–45 (p. 334).

²⁰ Ibid., p. 332.

as opposed to representation, is inextricable from the political and revolutionary potential of minor literature, since language is always intertwined with power.

These preliminary considerations have shown that second-language writing and literature of migration are inescapably political. The political implications of these texts are played out in such realms as production, editing and reception as well as in textual practices which might subvert grammatical, lexical or orthographic conventions. This is not to say that it is always each second-language author's *intention* to make political statements in their texts but that, in my opinion, it is not possible to discuss literature of migration in separation from the mechanisms of social and political dominance and exclusion which affect migrant communities in Germany today. Migration and multilingualism, I believe, are a form of disruption of the monolingual and mono-ethnic status quo.

Germany – reluctant *Einwanderungsland*

In response to new figures released by the Federal Office of Statistics in April 2018, leading German newspapers published a series of articles with alarming titles such as 'Das ist ein Höchststand' and 'Die Zahl der Ausländer in Deutschland steigt'.²¹ At the end of 2017, 10.6 million people with a foreign passport were registered as living in Germany. Most of the new arrivals came from EU countries such as Poland, Romania and Bulgaria. As of 2017, the largest foreign community in Germany were the Turks (1.48 million), followed by the Poles (867,000) and Syrians (700,000).²²

Contemporary patterns of flight and migration differ in their massive scale and multidirectional character from migratory movements after the Second World War, which mostly concerned labour migration. Partly to respond to a workers' shortage after the GDR's construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961, the West German government and industry undertook a large labour recruitment initiative between 1955 and 1973, aimed at workers from Turkey, Italy, Greece, Spain, Morocco, Portugal, and Tunisia.²³ The relevant agreement between West Germany and Yugoslavia was

²¹ 'Das ist ein Höchststand', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 13 April 2018, p. 6; 'Zehn Millionen Ausländer in Deutschland', *Der Tagesspiegel*, 13 April 2018, p. 4; 'Die Zahl der Ausländer in Deutschland steigt', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 13 April 2018, p. 1.

²² Ibid.

²³ The first agreement was signed between West Germany and Italy in 1955. In 1973, Brandt's government introduced an *Anwerbestop* meant to impede the arrival of further guest workers to Germany. Cf. Herbert, Ulrich, *Geschichte der Ausländerpolitik in Deutschland: Saisonarbeiter, Zwangsarbeiter, Gastarbeiter, Flüchtlinge* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2003), pp. 202-229.

signed in 1968.²⁴ The recruitment of foreign labourers resulted in the emergence of large migrant communities in Germany. In the late 1980s and 1990s a new group of migrants arrived in Germany from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. This phase of migration included ‘ethnic’ Germans who were descendants of German migrants who colonised such countries as Poland, Romania, Russia, Bulgaria or Hungary from the twelfth until the eighteenth century.²⁵

During the Bosnian War (1992-1995) Germany accepted around 350,000 Bosnian refugees, most of whom had to leave after compulsory repatriation commenced on 1 October 1996. According to estimates by the Federal Ministry of the Interior, only around 90,000 Bosnians were living in the Federal Republic by 1998. During the war between Yugoslavia and NATO (1999), Germany granted refugee status to around 15,000 civilians evacuated from Kosovo via Macedonia. However, the actual number of asylum seekers was much higher. Since many applications for asylum were rejected, as of 1999, around 180,000 Kosovo Albanians remained in Germany illegally.²⁶

The issues of migration and asylum have been subject to many controversies ever since German unification. The conflict in the Balkans coincided with the German debate about asylum law, which Ulrich Herbert describes as one of the most severe domestic controversies in German post-war history; the debate was fuelled by the rise of violent attacks against migrants as well as by anti-foreigner publications in such media as *Bild-Zeitung* and *Welt am Sonntag*, which claimed that Germany’s lenient asylum law made it possible for ‘false’ asylum seekers to abuse the system.²⁷ In 1992, the number of asylum applications rose to 440,000. In 1993, as part of the so-called ‘Asylkompromiss’, the Bundestag voted to change the Constitution and replace

²⁴ Pero Mate Anušić, and Azra Džajić, ‘Autor/innen aus dem ehemaligen Jugoslawien und den Nachfolgestaaten (Kroatien, Bosnien-Herzegowina und Bundesrepublik Jugoslawien)’, in *Interkulturelle Literatur in Deutschland: Ein Handbuch*, ed. by Carmine Chiellino (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2007), pp. 106–24.

²⁵ Brigid Haines, ‘German-Language Writing from Eastern and Central Europe’, in *Contemporary German Fiction: Writing in the Berlin Republic*, ed. by Stuart Taberner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 215–29.

²⁶ ‘Migrationsbericht 1999. Zu- und Abwanderung nach und aus Deutschland’, Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Ausländerfragen, <http://www.efms.uni-bamberg.de/migber99.pdf> [accessed 16 January 2018].

²⁷ Herbert, p. 299.

Article 16 with Article 16a, which introduced many limitations on the right to asylum.²⁸

In 2000, the German citizenship law was reformed under the red-green coalition. The new law adjusted the criteria for naturalization of foreign residents and introduced dual citizenship for children of foreign parents. Initially, however, children born in Germany to immigrant parents were required to decide, at the age of 18, whether they wish to keep their German or foreign citizenship (this rule was discontinued in 2014).²⁹ The introduction of dual citizenship was opposed by the CDU/CSU and the FDP, who conducted a campaign under the slogan ‘Ja zur Integration – nein zur doppelten Staatsbürgerschaft’.³⁰

At the height of the so-called ‘refugee crisis’ in 2015, 2.139 million people came to Germany, 672,000 (46%) more than in 2014.³¹ Such unprecedented high numbers of new arrivals in Germany are of course a challenge on the administrative, social, and financial level but do not explain the aggressively racist tone of current public debates. The rise of anti-immigration movements such as Pegida, as well as AfD’s entry into the Bundestag have marked a new era in Germany, when public figures such as Björn Höcke are openly calling for a radical reassessment of Germany’s Nazi legacy and the fundamental human right to asylum is increasingly questioned.³² At the same time, NGOs and researchers draw attention to other entrenched problems such as lack of social mobility, political participation and representation affecting migrants and minorities in Germany, given the persistence of

²⁸ ‘Vor zwanzig Jahren: Einschränkung des Asylrechts 1993’, Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, <http://www.bpb.de/politik/hintergrund-aktuell/160780/asylkompromiss-24-05-2013> [accessed 21 May 2018].

²⁹ Matthias Baxmann, ‘Die Hürden der Einbürgerung - Deutsch werden’, *Deutschlandfunk Kultur* http://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/die-huerden-der-einbuengerung-deutsch-werden.976.de.html?dram:article_id=407767 [accessed 30 March 2018].

³⁰ Henning Storz and Bernhard Wilmes, ‘Die Reform des Staatsangehörigkeitsrechts und das neue Einbürgerungsrecht’, Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, <https://www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/migration/dossier-migration/56483/einbuengerung?p=all> [accessed 30 March 2018].

³¹ ‘Migration: Nie kamen mehr Menschen nach Deutschland als 2015’, *Die Zeit*, 14 July 2016, <http://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2016-07/migration-fluechtlinge-deutschland-statistisches-bundesamt-2015-zuwanderung> [accessed 7 December 2017]. It is possible that the data does not reflect the exact number of refugees who arrived in 2015.

³² Cf. Björn Höcke’s speech on 17 January 2017 in Dresden: ‘Wir Deutschen, also unser Volk, sind das einzige Volk der Welt, das sich ein Denkmal der Schande in das Herz seiner Hauptstadt gepflanzt hat. [...] Wir brauchen nichts anderes als eine erinnerungspolitische Wende um 180 Grad.’; Sascha Lobo, ‘Björn Höcke in Dresden: Schauen Sie diese Rede’, *Spiegel Online*, 18 January 2017, <http://www.spiegel.de/netzwelt/web/bjoern-hoecke-rede-offenbart-gesinnung-kolumne-von-sascha-lobo-a-1130551.html> [accessed 16 January 2018].

discriminatory structures at schools, universities, in the media, the judiciary and other areas of life.³³ Debates about Germany's status as *Einwanderungsland* are often carried out without considering the migrants themselves, even if they regard Germany as their only homeland.³⁴

Cultural effects of migration and German literature

Whereas migrants in Germany are still socially and politically disadvantaged, it can no longer be denied that German-language literature is produced by authors who were born outside of Germany, speak multiple languages, bear non-German names, whose parents came to the Bundesrepublik as guest workers, or who belong to ethnic or religious minorities. Below, I offer a brief review of the history of scholarly reception of literature of migration and second-language texts in Germany. This overview will help situate texts of post-Yugoslav migration within the German literary scene and establish conditions for the production and reception of these works.

German literature which emerged out of labour migration had long been treated as 'Stiefkind der Akademie' by literary scholars in Germany.³⁵ Writing by authors with non-German backgrounds was accommodated within the field of *Deutsch als Fremdsprache*, as opposed to *Germanistik*, and it took some decades to bridge this disciplinary divide. Even today, the cultural effects of migration in Germany are more often examined by *Auslandsgermanistik* than traditional *Germanistik*.³⁶ In German academia, innovative approaches to issues of migration, multilingualism and transnationalism tend to have been developed by scholars working in the fields of comparative literature and cultural studies.³⁷

Initially, the literature of migration was neglected by major publishers, to which authors responded by establishing their own organizations independent of the

³³ Mithu Sanyal, 'Das Einhornministerium', *Gunda-Werner-Institut*, <https://www.gwi-boell.de/de/2018/03/28/das-einhornministerium> [accessed 1 April 2018].

³⁴ Cf. Nicol Ljubić, 'Vorwort', in *Schluss mit der Deutschenfeindlichkeit! Geschichten aus der Heimat*, ed. by Nicol Ljubić (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 2012), pp. 7–8.

³⁵ Helmut Schmitz, 'Einleitung: Von der nationalen zur internationalen Literatur', in *Von der nationalen zur internationalen Literatur: Transkulturelle deutschsprachige Literatur und Kultur im Zeitalter globaler Migration*, ed. by Helmut Schmitz (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), pp. 7–15 (p. 7).

³⁶ Cf. Karl Esselborn, 'Neue Zugänge zur inter/transkulturellen deutschsprachigen Literatur', in *Von der nationalen zur internationalen Literatur: Transkulturelle deutschsprachige Literatur und Kultur im Zeitalter globaler Migration*, ed. by Helmut Schmitz (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), pp. 43–58.

³⁷ Cf. Elke Sturm-Trigonakis, *Global Playing in der Literatur: Ein Versuch über die Neue Weltliteratur* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2007); *Exophonie. Anders-Sprachigkeit (in) der Literatur*, ed. by Dirk Naguschewski, Robert Stockhammer, and Susan Arndt (Berlin: Kadmos, 2007); Özkan Ezli, Dorothee Kimmich, and Annette Werberger, eds., *Wider den Kulturenzwang: Migration, Kulturalisierung und Weltliteratur* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2009).

mainstream literary scene. In 1980, the collective of foreign artists in Germany was founded bearing the name PoLiKunst (Polynationaler Literatur- und Kunstverein). The Italian-German writer Franco Biondi and the Syrian-German writer Rafik Schami referred to texts written by migrants as *Gastarbeiterliteratur*, thus re-claiming the derogatory term ‘Gastarbeiter’ imposed upon migrants. The term highlighted the political aspect of the works, which had common concerns, such as the precarious legal situation of migrants fearing deportation, racism and discrimination.³⁸ Biondi and Schami understood *Gastarbeiterliteratur* as part of a multinational workers’ literature, whose task was to foster solidarity between workers from abroad and the local working class.

Foremost among official bodies promoting second-language writing was the Institute of German as a Foreign Language at Munich’s Ludwig Maximilian University, whose chair, Harald Weinrich, was one of the founders of the Chamisso Prize in 1985. Rather than focus on the politically subversive potential of literature of migration, Weinrich preferred to draw attention to the question of ‘mother tongue’ and its relation to literary creativity. In his 2002 lecture ‘Chamisso, Chamisso Authors, and Globalization’, Weinrich makes a series of problematic statements about authors writing in a second language, premised on a situation of lack and disadvantage. Weinrich states that the writers ‘live with the permanent handicap (unlike native writers) of having passed their childhood and youth in a milieu that speaks a different language. [...] To their benefit, however, they are specially endowed with a deepened experience of otherness and foreignness’.³⁹ Adelbert von Chamisso is treated as an emblematic ‘Chamisso author’, forever marked as an outsider and a foreigner. The fact that Chamisso never achieved ‘the total linguistic competence in his chosen literary language one might expect from a classic author’ is founded on the claim that he never lost his French accent.⁴⁰ The writers’ linguistic skills are cast by Weinrich in ontological terms, and having acquired one’s second language later in life amounts to a disability, barring access to the elitist and exclusionary sphere of ‘classic’ German literature.

³⁸ Franco Biondi, and Rafik Schami, ‘Literatur der Betroffenheit. Bemerkungen zur Gastarbeiterliteratur’, in *Zu Hause in der Fremde. Ein bundesdeutsches Ausländer-Lesebuch*, ed. by Christian Schaffernicht (Fischerhude: Atelier im Bauernhaus, 1981), pp. 124-36.

³⁹ Harald Weinrich, ‘Chamisso, Chamisso Authors, and Globalization’, trans. by Marshall Brown and Jane K. Brown, *PMLA*, 119 (2004), 1336–46 (p. 1340).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1339.

This focus on the ‘mother tongue’ was reflected in the profile of the Chamisso prize, which up until 2012 was defined as an ‘Auszeichnung für deutsch schreibende Autoren nicht deutscher Muttersprache’,⁴¹ and later awarded ‘to authors writing in the German language whose literature is affected by cultural changes’.⁴² The prize was discontinued in 2017. The Bosch foundation explained that the original goal of the prize had been fulfilled and ‘Autoren mit Migrationsgeschichte haben heute grundsätzlich die Möglichkeit, jeden in Deutschland existierenden Literaturpreis zu gewinnen’.⁴³ This decision was criticized by Ilija Trojanow and José F. A. Oliver, who point out that the prize was politically significant and showed multiculturalism and migration in a positive light, a stance which is still relevant today. The authors write: ‘Der Preis, so nahmen viele Menschen an, sollte eine Mehrstimmigkeit abbilden, die diesem aus den Ruinen der Selbstbespiegelung und Fremdverachtung auferstandenen Land gut zu Zunge stand’.⁴⁴ From 2018, the literary prize is to be replaced with further funding for workshops led by authors at schools. Trojanow and Oliver believe that this proposal reveals the Bosch foundation’s paternalizing attitude towards migrants and refugees. The literary texts are instrumentalized for purposes of pedagogy, and their literary value and political potential largely dismissed.

The ideological underpinnings of the Chamisso prize as well as the earlier activities of the Munich Institute have been subject to some controversy. Arguably, the prize led to a marginalization of writers with non-German backgrounds, as suggested by the fact that their texts were termed ‘[e]ine deutsche Literatur von außen’ or ‘Ausländerliteratur’, which emphasized the outsider status of these texts.⁴⁵ While it is not my aim here to fully evaluate the influence of the Institute’s activities on the German literary scene, it is interesting to note that first anthologies of works submitted to literary competitions organized by Irmgard Ackermann and Weinrich between 1979 and 1986 were meant to serve as course materials for students of *Deutsch als Fremdsprache*. Carmine Chiellino notes in this context: ‘Diese Texte wurden [...] als

⁴¹ ‘Robert Bosch Stiftung - Über den Chamisso-Preis’ <http://www.bosch-stiftung.de/content/language1/html/14169.asp> [accessed 19 December 2017]

⁴² ‘Robert Bosch Stiftung - About the Chamisso Prize’ <http://www.bosch-stiftung.de/content/language2/html/14169.asp> [accessed 19 December 2017]

⁴³ Ilija Trojanow, and José F. A. Oliver, ‘Kritik an Bosch-Stiftung: Ade, Chamisso-Preis?’, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 21 September 2016, <http://www.faz.net/1.4443175> [accessed 22 December 2017].

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Irmgard Ackermann, and Harald Weinrich, *Eine nicht nur deutsche Literatur: Zur Standortbestimmung der ‘Ausländerliteratur’* (Munich: Piper, 1986).

Nachweis für die These vereinnahmt, daß die Gastarbeiter bereit waren, die Sprache der Gastgesellschaft auf kreative Weise zu bereichern'.⁴⁶ At the same time, Chantal Wright argues that the Institute needs to be credited with securing funding from 'governmental [...] and non-governmental institutions' to support 'a "deutsche Literatur von außen" '.⁴⁷ In any case, Ackermann and Weinrich made it possible for many second-language writers to publish their works in the first place, given the authors' continued exclusion from the literary establishment.

In 2000, Chiellino published a compendium entitled *Interkulturelle Literatur in Deutschland Ein Handbuch*,⁴⁸ which contained a comprehensive overview of literary activities of various ethnic minorities in Germany. In his contribution, Chiellino examines methodological approaches to literature which emerged out of migration to Germany, stating: 'Die bundesdeutsche Literaturwissenschaft [...] tut sich schwer, Literatur im Kontext von Einwanderung, Exil und Repatriierung als Bestandteil der Lehre und Forschung zu verstehen'.⁴⁹ Chiellino provides an overview of various attempts to find a suitable designation for this new body of writing: 'Aus der Frauenliteratur oder der Literatur der Arbeitswelt [...] wurde abgeleitet: Gastarbeiterliteratur, Ausländerliteratur, Emigranten-, Migranten- und Immigrantenliteratur'.⁵⁰ Chiellino states that the literary reception was often marked by an ethnocentric bias: 'Rezeptionsmodelle [wurden] aufgestellt, die sich als vorteilhaft für die Gastgesellschaft erweisen sollten. Der Hauptgewinn besteht darin, daß die Leser/innen durch die Werke ausländischer Autor/innen das Eigene besser verstehen können'.⁵¹

Indeed, certain critics identified in the growing body of texts by German second-language authors published throughout the 1990s and the 2000s an enrichment of the stale literary landscape in the Federal Republic and a counterweight to the more 'traditional' German-language literature. A notable example is a contribution by

⁴⁶ Carmine Chiellino, 'Interkulturalität und Literaturwissenschaft', in *Interkulturelle Literatur in Deutschland: Ein Handbuch*, ed. by Carmine Chiellino (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2007), pp. 387–98 (p. 387).

⁴⁷ Chantal Wright, 'Before Chamisso: The Role of the Munich DAF Writing Competitions and Anthologies in the Promotion of a "deutsche Literatur von außen", 1979–1987', *Oxford German Studies*, 43.1 (2014), 20–36 (p. 22).

⁴⁸ Carmine Chiellino, ed., *Interkulturelle Literatur in Deutschland. Ein Handbuch* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2007).

⁴⁹ Chiellino, 'Interkulturalität und Literaturwissenschaft', p. 387.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 391.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 390.

Martin Hielscher from the publishing house Beck to the special issue of the renowned literary magazine TEXT+KRITIK, entitled *Literatur und Migration* and edited by Heinz Ludwig Arnold in 2006. Examining the reasons behind the popularity of such authors as Emine Sevgi Özdamar, Feridun Zaimoğlu, Wladimir Kaminer and Dimitré Dinev, Hielscher argues that the success of these writers can be partly explained by the low quality of ‘German’ literature produced in the 1980s and 1990s. This lack of talent produced a blank space within German literary scene, which could be filled by ‘migrant authors’.⁵² The critic elaborates:

Diese Literatur, von Rafik Schami bis Dimitré Dinev, kam mit einer großen Stofffülle, mit einer Lust am Erzählen, [...] mit dem pikaresken Vertrauen in die eigenen Mittel, mit der Entdeckerfreude desjenigen auch, der sich diese Mittel vor gar nicht so langer Zeit überhaupt erst angeeignet hat, auf die Leser [...] zu.⁵³

Hielscher suggests that writing by migrant authors is not a development within German literature but rather a phenomenon coming from outside, bringing with it new themes and ‘exotic’ stylistic devices. Hielscher remarks: ‘Dort, wo die Erinnerung an gesprochene Sprache, an die Körperlichkeit der Sprache, an Ton und Laut, an ein Stimmen- und Gestengewirr noch lebendig ist, teilen sich dem Text eine Sinnlichkeit und zugleich ein Gestus der Mitteilbarkeit mit’.⁵⁴ Hielscher’s rhetoric is clearly orientaling migrant writers as naïve and innocent explorers, for whom any sort of literary expression is a novelty, and whose texts are associated with chaos and disorder (‘Stimmen- und Gestengewirr’). The phrase ‘Dort, wo die Erinnerung an gesprochene Sprache [...] noch lebendig ist’ reveals that, in Hielscher’s opinion, migrant writing is a repository of things which had been lost in the West, such as the awareness of the materiality of language, as well as of the qualities of tone and sound. Such primordial qualities are explicitly linked to the writers’ heritage and the sensual way of life which is supposedly characteristic of Eastern Europe as well as Arabic countries and Asia Minor, which constitute a homogenous entity opposed to the West: ‘Die große Bedeutung, die das orale Erzählen für viele Autoren mit Migrationshintergrund besitzt, hängt ganz unmittelbar mit ihrer Herkunft aus dem osteuropäischen Raum

⁵² Martin Hielscher, ‘Andere Stimmen - andere Räume. Die Funktion der Migranteliteratur in deutschen Verlagen und Dimitré Dinevs Roman “Engelszungen”’, in *Literatur und Migration*, ed. by Heinz Ludwig Arnold, Edition Text + Kritik (Munich: Richard Boorberg Verlag, 2006), pp. 196–208 (p. 199).

⁵³ Ibid., p. 199.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 200.

oder aus der arabischen beziehungsweise kleinasiatischen Einflussphäre zusammen; Oralität ist schlicht eine Realität ihrer Erfahrungswelt'.⁵⁵ Hielscher maps the dichotomy between orality and literacy onto the distinction between Eastern and Western societies, at the same time constructing a vision of the 'Orient', which functions as an antithesis to German culture.

This brief overview highlights the strands within German-language literary criticism which make manifest the need for a new approach to literature of migration. This body of writing has a radical political potential and its reception cannot be reduced to questions of exotic and 'foreign' themes, language acquisition or 'integration' into German society. The tendency to treat the texts as empirical portrayals of migrant experiences is reductive and marginalizing, and precludes an engagement with such questions as language and style, which – even if to a certain extent linked to the author's biographical experiences – require a keen ear and an open mind on part of the critic.

New developments in German Studies

In recent years, scholars have responded to new developments in German literature of migration, which has posed a challenge to traditional conceptual frameworks rooted in the notion of distinct national literatures. In the context of Anglo-American German Studies, revolutionary theoretical approaches have been first developed in relation to Turkish-German writing. The first major intervention was Azade Seyhan's study *Writing outside the Nation* (2001), where the scholar concentrates on the works by 'nonnative writers living in [the United States and Germany] and writing in English and German, respectively'.⁵⁶ This literature, which she calls diasporic, originates 'at border crossings' and 'cannot be bound by national borders, languages and literary traditions'.⁵⁷ Crucially, diasporic literature can preserve the memory and cultural specificity which might otherwise be lost through dislocation or enforced forgetting, since '[l]iterature as social document resists the erasure of geographical, historical, and cultural differences'.⁵⁸ In this literature, non-Western histories are reintroduced into Western narratives and literary traditions. While I acknowledge the significance

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 205.

⁵⁶ Azade Seyhan, *Writing Outside the Nation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 12.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 4.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 7.

of Seyhan's pioneering work, I find her contention that diasporic literature predominantly focuses on restoring the past problematic. Also, the use of the term 'diasporic' implies that second-language writers necessarily identify with a certain national or cultural community linked by common heritage. In my view, the term does account for the multidirectional and transnational dimension of the literature of post-Yugoslav migration.

A further significant intervention in the field of multilingual writing came with Leslie A. Adelson's ground-breaking monograph *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature: Toward a New Critical Grammar of Migration* (2005), which has proven key to my project's methodology. The monograph critiques the essentialist assumptions inherent in earlier approaches to second-language writing and opens up new pathways for engaging with cultural changes brought about by Turkish migration into Germany. Margaret Littler expands Adelson's analyses of Turkish-German writing by deploying Deleuzian reading strategies and bringing non-German contexts to bear on the texts.⁵⁹ In turn, the question of language is taken up by Adelson's doctoral student, Yasemin Yildiz, in her highly influential monograph *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Postmonolingual Condition* (2012).⁶⁰ A later addition to the field, David Gramling's *The Invention of Monolingualism* (2016) tracks the development of monolingualism in literary studies and linguistics.⁶¹

Multilingual texts of post-Yugoslav migration examined in this study are of course not the same as the works of Turkish migration. Yet methodological approaches and key concepts developed by scholars working on Turkish-German texts can be used very productively to examine the works of authors from outside the Turkish community in Germany, especially as regards the concept of national culture and its shape in the changing, interconnected world. In 'Against Between: A Manifesto' published in 2001, Adelson states that national culture is not a static entity but rather 'an activity, a creative engagement with a rapidly changing present'.⁶² This dynamic concept of culture makes it possible to grant 'authors usually presumed to

⁵⁹ Margaret Littler, 'Guilt, Victimhood, and Identity in Zafer Şenocak's *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft*', *The German Quarterly*, 78.3 (2005), 357–73 and Littler, 'Intimacy and Affect in Turkish-German Writing'.

⁶⁰ Yildiz, Yasemin, *Beyond the Mother Tongue. The Postmonolingual Condition* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012).

⁶¹ David Gramling, *The Invention of Monolingualism* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016).

⁶² Leslie A. Adelson, 'Against Between: A Manifesto', in *Germany in Transit: Nation and Migration, 1955-2005*, ed. by Deniz Göktürk, David Gramling, and Anton Kaes (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), pp. 265–70, p. 266.

be outside German culture' a place squarely within it, and to acknowledge the imaginative labour undertaken by these artists.⁶³

Drawing on those ideas, Adelson opens her monograph with a critique of the rhetorical conceit which situates migrants 'between two worlds' and which is used in public debates about the presence of (Turkish) migrants in Germany. Adelson argues that the conceit is problematic if it 'is made to function as an analytical paradigm that is effectively incapable of accounting for cultures of migration *as historical formations*'.⁶⁴ The problematic implication is that 'whatever worlds are meant are presumed to be originary, mutually exclusive, and intact, the boundaries between them clear and absolute' (p. 4). Countering such interpretations, Adelson stresses that many national cultures were 'themselves subject to defamiliarizing change at the turn to the twenty-first century' (p. 8). Thus, the German frame of reference itself was radically redefined by global developments after 1990. The literature of Turkish migration intervenes in the development of German historical culture and participates in the 'reconfigurations of the German national archive' (p. 12) through the 'imaginative labour [...] increasingly oriented toward a shared future history' (p. 14). Adelson regards German national culture as highly contingent and porous, expanding the category of the national and championing an inclusive model able to accommodate subjects without biological or ethnic ties to Germany.

Another key aspect of Adelson's work is her critique of 'an entrenched epistemological positivism' in studies of Turkish-German literature, which 'presumes that literature reflects empirical truths about migrants' lives and that authors' biographies explain their texts so well that reading the texts themselves is virtually superfluous'.⁶⁵ Adelson makes clear that Turkish figures in literary texts 'are not, strictly speaking, socially referential', and are not meant to represent and embody a social reality of migration into Germany.⁶⁶ Adelson argues:

Commentators in wide-ranging venues commonly assume that the literature of migration depicts Turks literally and represents them politically (thus conflating the German sense of *darstellen* and *vertreten*). This referential presumption dovetails easily with the perception that public figures of Turks represent self-evident

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Adelson, *The Turkish Turn*, p. 3, original emphasis. Later page references in brackets.

⁶⁵ Adelson, 'Against Between: A Manifesto', p. 267.

⁶⁶ Adelson, *The Turkish Turn*, p. 16.

categories of cultural difference, social unassimilability, or incommensurable strangeness.⁶⁷

The smooth transition between the ‘referential presumption’ relating to the perception of Turkish figures in literature and ‘real-life’ prejudices associated with Turks in German public life might not seem justified. However, this move is legitimate since what is being critiqued here is a set of epistemological assumptions at work in literary analysis as well as political discussions, in which the reader/critic do not engage with the text at hand but rather take it as confirmation of what they already know. Thus, Adelson notes that public figures of Turks in Germany are often perceived ‘*as and on [...] the face of things*’, i.e. they serve as an embodiment of difference, and their appearance is mistaken for their essence.⁶⁸ This presumed essence is supposed to reflect ‘a cultural difference and a social reality that are a priori known and knowable only in predetermined ways’.⁶⁹ In this way, the German fantasy of cultural difference can be projected onto these Turkish figures, literary or political. As I show below, similar preconceptions can be found in scholarly and journalistic texts pertaining to the literature of post-Yugoslav migration.

An eastern European turn in German literature?

The varied and extensive literary activities of writers with a biographical connection to Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe is a relatively recent phenomenon in the German context. Today, these writers are among the most prominent contemporary authors in German-language literature. In 2010, Melinda Nadj Abonji received the German and the Swiss Book Prize for her novel *Tauben fliegen auf*, in 2013, Terézia Mora was awarded the German Book Prize and in 2014, Saša Stanišić received the prize of the Leipzig Book Fair. The presence of those new literary voices prompted Boris Previšić and Brigid Haines to argue that a ‘Balkan Turn’⁷⁰ or an ‘eastern European turn’ in German-language literature was to follow the ‘Turkish Turn’ posited by Adelson.

In Haines’ terms, the ‘eastern European turn’ (formerly: ‘eastern turn’) refers to a body of texts by authors who came to Germany, Austria and Switzerland after the

⁶⁷ Adelson, *The Turkish Turn*, p. 16.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 17.

⁷⁰ Boris Previšić, ‘Poetik der Marginalität: Balkan Turn gefällig?’, in *Von der nationalen zur internationalen Literatur. Transkulturelle deutschsprachige Literatur und Kultur im Zeitalter globaler Migration*, ed. by Helmut Schmitz (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), pp. 189–204.

collapse of the Soviet Union and in the aftermath of the Yugoslav Wars. The texts in question address ‘the present moment and the Europe we now share’.⁷¹ Such authors as Ilija Trojanow, Dimitré Dinev, Artur Becker, Radek Knapp, Zsuzsa Bánk, Terézia Mora, Vladimir Vertlib and Wladimir Kaminer, ‘constitute a new wave of German writing, distinct from – though sometimes thematically similar to – Turkish-German literature and other *Migrantenliteratur*’.⁷² These authors are ‘migrant writers in the double sense that they have migrated and that they write of that experience, though, like Turkish-German writers, they are also not contained by the term’.⁷³

Even though Haines explicitly distinguishes between the region defined during the Cold War as ‘Eastern Europe’ and the former Yugoslavia,⁷⁴ she sometimes – most likely inadvertently – ends up conflating the two, for instance when calling Saša Stanišić an ‘eastern European’,⁷⁵ or arguing that the texts of the eastern turn are concerned with ‘the communist period in the eastern bloc, and its aftermath’⁷⁶ and that they ‘collectively reflect the recent shared history [...], that is, the period from the end of the Second World War until 1989 when the region was dominated by Moscow’.⁷⁷ This commonality is allegedly manifested in literary texts as an implicit ‘collective subject, a “we” formed by experience in the eastern bloc and united by memories of that time’.⁷⁸ However, unlike such countries as Poland, Hungary, or Bulgaria, Yugoslavia did not belong to the eastern bloc but was part of the Non-Aligned Movement, founded in Belgrade in 1961. Also, Yugoslavia was never totally isolated from the West in terms of arts and (popular) culture.

These details matter, especially if this new scholarly paradigm is meant as a shift away from the dominant Western European perspective to a more nuanced and non-hegemonic engagement with the rest of Europe. Haines notes regarding the authors in question:

⁷¹ Haines, ‘Introduction: The Eastern European Turn in Contemporary German-language Literature’, p. 145.

⁷² Brigid Haines, ‘Saša Stanišić, *Wie der Soldat das Grammofon repariert*: Reinscribing Bosnia, or: Sad Things, Positively’, in *Emerging German-Language Novelists of the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by Lyn Marven and Stuart Taberner (Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2011), pp. 105–18 (p. 106).

⁷³ Brigid Haines, ‘The Eastern Turn in Contemporary German, Swiss and Austrian Literature’, *Debatte: Journal of Central and Eastern Europe*, 16 (2008), 135–49 (p. 136).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

In writing of their homelands, they are [...] staking a claim in the project of redefining Europe, insisting on broadening out both historically and geographically the Cold-War definitions of Europe based on the Franco-German heart of the European Union. Europe, they insist, is ancient, dynamic, and complex; its people are shaped by empires, whether the Ottoman Empire, Austria-Hungary, the Soviet Union, the Third Reich, or global capitalism.⁷⁹

History indeed plays a major role in many recent German-language publications which show that the experience of being subjugated to a superior Western or Eastern power was shared by Europe's minorities and smaller nations for centuries. This different perspective is made visible in the new German literature by authors with a history of migration from Eastern Europe and the Balkans. However, Haines introduces a problematic formulation when claiming that the authors of the eastern turn 'have a common mission to enlighten and inform Western readers about their eastern neighbours, whether it be to remember the "perfectly ordinary lives" [...] lived under communism, or to bear witness to politically caused suffering'.⁸⁰ This mission is allegedly in line with 'the openness of a German, Austrian and Swiss readership to the perceived exoticism of foreign locations in general, and to depictions of the newly accessible east in a vastly expanded EU in particular'.⁸¹ However, by proposing that countries east of Germany constitute an exotic foreign location, Haines perpetuates a hegemonic, orientalisating stance towards non-Western countries and dismisses the historical links between German-speaking empires and eastern and southeastern Europe. What this leaves out is the history of Germany and German-speaking countries itself. In contrast, Leslie A. Adelson is centrally concerned with how texts of Turkish migration intervene in German memory debates, especially regarding the memory of the Holocaust. Adelson insists that literature of migration actively participates in the national culture of the host country, since literary texts 'conjoin historical and literary narrative in particular ways without laying claim to particularist ethnic identities or political rights attaching to them'.⁸² Her analysis concentrates on 'interventions into and beyond national archives of twentieth-century German

⁷⁹ Haines, 'Saša Stanišić, *Wie der Soldat das Grammophon repariert*: Reinscribing Bosnia, or: Sad Things, Positively', p. 106.

⁸⁰ Haines, Brigid, 'The Eastern Turn in Contemporary German, Swiss and Austrian Literature', *Debatte: Journal of Central and Eastern Europe*, 16 (2008), 135–49 (p. 138).

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Adelson, *The Turkish Turn*, p. 10.

culture'.⁸³ Adelson asserts that 'the national culture of Turkey is not a necessary or primary frame of reference for the literature in question'.⁸⁴ Further, the critic makes the case for 'medium-specific and context-specific vocabularies that allow us to grasp the varied cultural effects of Turkish migration in increasingly refined ways'.⁸⁵ Such interventions into German memory politics make it possible to rethink the fraught relation between the past and contemporary German identity.⁸⁶

Just like the texts belonging to the Turkish Turn, works of the eastern European turn participate in the German memory culture. Examples include Vladimir Vertlib's *Das besondere Gedächtnis der Rosa Masur* (2001)⁸⁷ or Maja Haderlap's *Engel des Vergessens* (2011).⁸⁸ Crucially, these texts do not necessarily depict histories which are unrelated to the past of the German-speaking realm but rather highlight the interconnectedness and continuities between previous and present oppression, exclusion and conquest. By introducing a different, often subaltern perspective, the texts pay closer attention to European peripheries, as opposed to the Western European 'centre'.

In her first article, Haines notes that texts of the eastern European turn 'may throw light on questions of identity and memory in the German-speaking countries still haunted by their Nazi past'⁸⁹ since these authors 'are intervening in or broadening out the memory debates of their countries of settlement'.⁹⁰ This is, I believe, a key critical potential of these texts, which do not just enlighten German readers about the history of their eastern and southern neighbours but also re-assess Germany's and Austria's colonial past and address the role played by those countries in maintaining present-day inequalities between the East and West. It seems, however, that this critical angle is not given enough prominence by Haines. In her introduction to the special issue of *German Life and Letters* in 2015, Haines forsakes labels, arguing instead that '[c]ategorisation based on biographical data such as "migrant writer" is in any case invidious, as it creates and perpetuates binary divisions where none need

⁸³ Ibid., p. 12.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 13.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 13.

⁸⁶ Cf. Michael Rothberg and Yasemin Yildiz, 'Memory Citizenship: Migrant Archives of Holocaust Remembrance in Contemporary Germany', *Parallax*, 17.4 (2011), 32–48.

⁸⁷ Vladimir Vertlib, *Das besondere Gedächtnis der Rosa Masur* (Vienna: Deuticke, 2001).

⁸⁸ Maja Haderlap, *Engel des Vergessens* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2011).

⁸⁹ Haines, Brigid, 'The Eastern Turn in Contemporary German, Swiss and Austrian Literature', p. 141.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 143.

exist’.⁹¹ It is, of course, important not to marginalize authors by constantly highlighting their biography. At the same time, it might be useful to foreground the innovativeness of certain texts dealing with European history from a minoritarian position. Maja Haderlap’s novel, for instance, undertakes the task of an alternative history writing, by showing the legacy of Nazi brutality on the Slovenian-speaking minority in Carinthia. This novel does not just *inform* the reader about historical events but is an ethical intervention resisting the erasure of unwanted stories.

Stuart Taberner re-evaluates Haines’s notion of ‘eastern turn’, which results in some problematic claims of his own. Taberner notes that by highlighting five common scenarios found in the texts by migrants from eastern and southeastern Europe,⁹² ‘Haines emphasizes content over form, which might even be taken to suggest that the writing of the eastern turn [...] may be primarily of interest for what it tells (German) readers about the “others” who now live among them’.⁹³ Taberner concedes that this view ‘is not entirely wrong’ and claims that Saša Stanišić’s *Wie der Soldat das Grammophon repariert* ‘informs about the conflict that prompted the largest arrival of refugees in Germany since the Second World War’.⁹⁴ Minority writers in Germany, Taberner notes, contribute to ‘an *archive* of sorts’, since they ‘excavate, narrate, and record transnational histories of conquest and colonization, of multiple languages and ethnicities living side by side, and of racial prejudices and, ultimately, genocide’.⁹⁵ The term ‘transnational’ seems to relate to European history leading up to the Second World War, rather than to the innovative potential inherent in revising historical master narratives. Further, Taberner claims that in recounting traumatic histories, the texts in question show that ‘the intermingling of languages and ethnicities predicts not only Central and Eastern Europe’s cultural vibrancy but also its endless hatreds and acts of violence’.⁹⁶ Here, a hegemonic stance towards the east

⁹¹ Haines, ‘Introduction: The Eastern European Turn in Contemporary German-language Literature’, p. 146.

⁹² These five scenarios are: ‘the lived reality of communist rule during the stagnant period before the fall of communism; the alienating experience of migration westwards; the disillusionment with life during and after the economic and political liberalisation of the east in the early 1990s; the shocking conflicts in former Yugoslavia in the 1990s; and the disorientation of life in post-Cold War Europe today’; Haines, Brigid, ‘The Eastern Turn in Contemporary German, Swiss and Austrian Literature’, p. 139.

⁹³ Taberner, Stuart, *Transnationalism in Contemporary German-Language Novels*, Palgrave Studies in Modern European Literature (Palgrave Macmillan, e-book, 2017) DOI: 10.1007/978-3-319-50484-1_3 p. 62.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 63, original emphasis.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

of Europe comes to the fore, whereby the co-existence of various ethnicities in the region is implicitly linked to its violent history, and colonial activities by Western countries go unmentioned.

Transnational German Studies

Indeed, some recent discussions of contemporary German literature are oriented towards a shift towards transnationalism as a conceptual framework. In an introduction to the recent volume *Transnationalism in Contemporary German-Language Novels*, Elisabeth Herrmann, Carrie Smith-Prei and Stuart Taberner define transnationalism as ‘a plurality of intersecting, and crosscutting flows of products, ideas, and people back and forth over borders’.⁹⁷ The scholars’ aim is to ‘move beyond a focus on diasporic formations, hybridity, or notions of center and periphery in order to theorize how contemporary transnationalism’s characteristic multidirectionality and saturation of all aspects of everyday life [...] impacts *everyone*’.⁹⁸ In this, they distance themselves from such post-colonial thinkers as Arjun Appadurai and Homi Bhabha and avoid the focus on minority authors in literary studies. Similarly, in his recent monograph *Transnationalism in Contemporary German-Language Novels* Stuart Taberner notes that transnationalism ‘is a structuring principle of contemporary societies’ which means that everyone is affected by it, albeit in very different ways.⁹⁹ He maintains that it is important for literary studies to look at both minority and nonminority writers, to avoid romanticizing migration and exile as unique and privileged vantage points which enhance literary sensibility.

In my view, this account of transnationalism as a universal phenomenon permeating all dimensions of daily life robs the concept of its critical potential.¹⁰⁰ B. Venkat Mani and Elke Segelcke offer a different working definition of transnationalism, which is useful in the current context, since it speaks to the attempt to liberate academic endeavour from scholarly paradigms bound by the notion of national languages and literatures:

⁹⁷ *Transnationalism in Contemporary German-Language Literature*, ed. by Elisabeth Herrmann, Carrie Smith-Prei, and Stuart Taberner (Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2015), p. 1.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1, original emphasis.

⁹⁹ Stuart Taberner, *Transnationalism in Contemporary German-Language Novels* (Palgrave Macmillan, e-book, 2017) <DOI: 10.1007/978-3-319-50484-1_3>, p. 55.

¹⁰⁰ The authors mention that transnationalism could be understood as ‘a methodological approach that highlights a critique of nationalism and its mythologies’ but this angle is not central to their thesis; Herrmann, Smith-Prei, and Taberner, p. 10.

First, ‘transnationalism’ as a critical approach does not invoke the condition of the ‘nation-state’ (bounded by a hyphen) so much as it calls for a critique of the ‘nation/state’ (separated by a slash) – prompting both choice and alternative. Transnational critique includes the examination of the nation through its various ‘nation-building’ institutions: language, literature, politics, sociology, art, and history. [...] Second, ‘transnationalism’ cannot be reduced to a ‘methodology’. It is a mode of critical intellectual experience, representation, analysis. [...] ‘transnationalism’ is not a sub-discipline, it is a way of re-arranging, or even creatively disarranging prevalent national paradigm within disciplines, especially those pertaining to language and literature.¹⁰¹

In this study, I understand transnationalism to be not so much a feature of contemporary life but rather an intervention and a critical stance towards nation and nationalism. I give prominence to those moments where transnationalism figures as a disruptive, iconoclastic force with decidedly political implications. I pay attention to language as an instrument of nation-building, and investigate how literature of post-Yugoslav migration might deconstruct the supposed equivalence of language, national identity, culture, and territory contributing to the formation of new, future-oriented concepts of belonging.

At the same time, my study is informed by an awareness of the gendered nature of nationalism. Questions of gender and sexuality are inextricable from those of ethnicity, race, and national identity, and linguistic experimentation is a productive way to subvert power structures and hierarchies jointly produced by those categories. In order to consider how literary texts might help imagine transnational, non-institutional and affective alliances in contemporary Europe, I combine feminist and post-colonial approaches with theories of multilingualism. Richa Nagar and Amanda Lock Swarr understand transnational feminisms as ‘an intersectional set of understandings, tools, and practices that [...] attend to racialized, classed, masculinized, and heteronormative logics and practices of globalization and capitalist patriarchies, and the multiple ways in which they (re)structure colonial and neocolonial relations of domination and subordination’.¹⁰² While my study does not offer a detailed analysis of the patriarchal dynamics of global capitalism, I pay close

¹⁰¹ B. Venkat Mani and Elke Segelcke, ‘Cosmopolitical and Transnational Interventions in German Studies’, *Transit*, 7 (2011) <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/78d804v8> [permalink]

¹⁰² Amanda Lock Swarr and Richa Nagar, ‘Introduction: Theorizing Transnational Feminist Praxis’, in *Critical Transnational Feminist Praxis*, by Amanda Lock Swarr and Richa Nagar (Albany: SUNY Press, 2010), pp. 1–20 (p. 5).

attention to the interrelatedness of gender and ethnicity in dominant nationalist narratives and in the creation of a power imbalance between the Western European centre and its eastern or southern peripheries.

The monolingual paradigm...

What is the political potential of multilingualism? On 27 February 2018, the AfD fraction at the Bundestag proposed a change to Article 22 of the German Constitution, which in their opinion should contain a sentence declaring German to be the country's official language.¹⁰³ Johann Saathoff from the SPD grabbed the nation's attention by countering the proposal with a speech delivered partly in Plattdeutsch.¹⁰⁴ Saathoff stated clearly that his mother tongue is not High German and thus distanced himself from the claim that all Germans are speakers of the same language. However, while Plattdeutsch is a language native to North Germany and as such is protected by the law, the situation of non-prestigious and non-Western languages such as Turkish, Farsi, or Arabic is very different. These languages are often perceived as a threat to social cohesion rather than part of Germany's cultural heritage.¹⁰⁵

Linguistic research tells us that it does not matter which languages are spoken by the bilingual: the mere fact of a double proficiency brings with it cognitive advantages.¹⁰⁶ This does not reflect popular attitudes in many predominantly monolingual countries, where speaking minority languages is perceived as detrimental to academic success. In Germany, such views are to a certain extent confirmed by the fact that schoolchildren from migration backgrounds tend to achieve worse results than their peers. This educational disparity is due to the fact that many children 'are exposed to German less frequently, and the varieties of German are often non-standard; thus they often lack proficiency in the expected varieties of German

¹⁰³ Gesetzentwurf, 27 February 2018, <http://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/19/009/1900951.pdf> [accessed 3 April 2018].

¹⁰⁴ 'Deutscher Bundestag - Saathoff, Johann, (SPD)', *Deutscher Bundestag* <http://www.bundestag.de/mediathek?videoId=7206225#url=L211ZGlhdGhla292ZXJsYXk=&mod=médiathek> [accessed 3 April 2018].

¹⁰⁵ Sonja Ozimek, 'Rot-Grün will: Arabisch, Persisch, Türkisch als Schulfächer', *Epoch Times*, <https://www.epochtimes.de/politik/deutschland/rot-gruen-will-arabisch-persisch-tuerkisch-als-schulfaecher-abitur-geplant-cdu-befuerchtet-parallele-schulhofsprache-a2092538.html> [accessed 6 April 2018].

¹⁰⁶ While the jury is still out as to what causes the bilingual advantage in cognitive control (Cf. J. Bruce Morton and Sarah N. Harper, 'What Did Simon Say? Revisiting the Bilingual Advantage', *Developmental Science*, 10.6 (2007), 719–26), there is evidence that bilingualism delays the onset of dementia (Cf. Suvarna Alladi and others, 'Bilingualism Delays Age at Onset of Dementia, Independent of Education and Immigration Status', *Neurology*, 81.22 (2013), 1938–44).

when they enter school’.¹⁰⁷ In some schools in Germany, the percentage of non-German speakers reaches 90%. Rather than seek innovative solutions such as bilingual alphabetization, preschool and school education remains, for the most part, German-only, apart from some bilingual private schools and the *Staatliche Europa-Schulen Berlin*.

The link between a fluent command of German and a successful participation in political, social and cultural life in Germany was upheld by the 2000 citizenship law, which, according to Uli Linke, redefined German nationality in terms of language.¹⁰⁸ Carol W. Pfaff asserts that since 2000, German language proficiency has come to be a significant requirement for non-Germans wishing to acquire German citizenship.¹⁰⁹ In 2005, the German government introduced *Integrationskurse* for adults, which are primarily devoted to language acquisition and are obligatory for new immigrants. Sometimes, those who are not willing to participate in such courses are penalized.¹¹⁰ In this way, immigrants are forced to learn German, which is regarded as a necessary step towards ‘integration’ into society. Of course, being able to speak German is useful skill when living in Germany. What concerns me, however, is the implied equivalence between linguistic proficiency (often conceived as speaking correct and accent-free German) and the right to political participation.¹¹¹

Linke claims that the emphasis put on linguistic proficiency in Germany is founded on an inherently discriminatory logic, according to which the German nation is imagined as an organic speech community. She argues:

Linguistic nationalism is embedded in quasi mythic notions of the German nation as a language body – a closed linguistic corpus. An early metaphor of this national idiom is blood. [...] Language purism, which aims to preserve the integrity of an ethnoracial linguistic organism, is located on an imaginary landscape of intensely charged concepts: nation, nature, and race.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ Here, I follow: Carol W. Pfaff, ‘Multilingual Development in Germany in the Crossfire of Ideology and Politics: Monolingual and Multilingual Expectations, Polylingual Practices’, *Transit*, 7 (2011) <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9gp0f163> [permalink].

¹⁰⁸ Uli Linke, ‘Ethnolinguistic Racism: The Predicaments of Sovereignty and Nationhood under Global Capitalism’, *Anthropological Theory*, 4 (2004), 205–28 (p. 206).

¹⁰⁹ Pfaff.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Only recently, Christian Lindner (FDP) linked incorrect German to criminality: ‘Man kann beim Bäcker in der Schlange nicht unterscheiden, wenn einer mit gebrochenen Deutsch ein Brötchen bestellt, ob das der hochqualifizierte Entwickler Künstlicher Intelligenz aus Indien ist oder eigentlich ein sich bei uns illegal aufhaltender, höchstens geduldeter Ausländer’; ‘Lindner-Rede auf dem 69. FDP-Bundesparteitag’, 12 May 2018, <https://mailings.fdp.de/node/123621> [accessed 1 June 2018].

¹¹² Linke, p. 206.

Such bodily metaphors perpetuate the alleged link between linguistic abilities, heritage and ethnoracial belonging. The image of ‘the German nation as a language body’ evokes Yasemin Yildiz’s analysis of the term ‘mother tongue’, which she understands ‘as a “linguistic family romance” because it produces a fantasy about the natural, bodily origin of one’s first language and its inalienable familiarity that is said to establish kinship and belonging’.¹¹³ In turn, speaking multiple languages and being able to switch between them is associated with deception and inauthenticity.¹¹⁴

In her ground-breaking study, *Beyond the Mother Tongue*, Yildiz deconstructs the ‘monolingual paradigm’ which has shaped European modernity, determined the production of monolingual subjects, institutions and systems of knowledge, and played an important role in the emergence of modern nation-states.¹¹⁵ According to this paradigm, belonging to a political community held together by a nation state is only available to those with biological and ancestral ties to it, which leads to the exclusion of members of ethnic minorities or migrants. Such exclusionary thinking, Yildiz argues, was instrumental in the discrimination of German-speaking Jews in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the German Reich, since their language was regarded as being at odds with their ‘ethnic’ identity. Even Jews fluent in German had no claim on the identity supposedly attached to the German language.

Taking literature into account, Yildiz refutes the idea that original literary work can only be produced by ‘native’ speakers of a language. The critic points out that in the middle ages, it was often the *genre* that determined the language of the work, as opposed to the author’s stable, unchanging ethnic and linguistic identity.¹¹⁶ In the eighteenth century, ‘the notion of monolingualism rapidly displaced previously unquestioned practices of living and writing in multiple languages’.¹¹⁷ Yildiz does not comment on the fact, however, that the eighteenth century also brought about a massive increase in the levels of literacy in Europe. Whereas in the pre-modern period, writing itself was only practiced by educated elites who could speak and write multiple languages, the situation in the eighteenth century changed rapidly, and the process of monoligualisation went hand in hand with an increase in access to

¹¹³ Yildiz, *Beyond the Mother Tongue*, p. 128.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 38

¹¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 2-3.

¹¹⁶ ‘Postmonolinguale Verhältnisse. Deutsch-Türkische Sprachexperimente in Literatur und Film’, 16 August 2012, <http://cba.fro.at/62634> [accessed 30 May 2018].

¹¹⁷ Yildiz, *Beyond the Mother Tongue*, p. 6.

education and literacy. It is therefore not entirely clear whether the pre-modern period can be so easily compared with the modern times, given the higher numbers of people who are able to read and write. One could also ask whether the spread of literacy in eighteenth century Europe would have taken place without the state-induced monolingual paradigm.

Despite my reservations relating to the validity of some historical parallels drawn by Yildiz, I find her reading strategies of multilingual texts highly productive. Yildiz indicates that in contemporary Europe, which is still dominated by the monolingual paradigm, ‘imaginative works in literature and other fields’ contribute to a possible creation of a postmonolingual condition which would ‘restructure perceptions and social formations along new lines *after* monolingualism’.¹¹⁸ Whereas the notion of a unique ‘mother tongue’ associates affect and attachment with the first language only and defies ‘the possibility that languages other than the first [...] can take on emotional meaning’, Yildiz argues convincingly that languages acquired later in life can provide relief from the traumas endured in the first language.¹¹⁹ In fact, non-native languages might ‘play a crucial identity- and affect-producing role’.¹²⁰ Multilingual literary texts ‘seek to disrupt the homology between language and ethno-cultural identity’.¹²¹ The term ‘postmonolingual’ is therefore used by the critic to describe practices that seek to assert multilingualism *after* and *against* the onset of monolingualism.

... and multilingual practices

It is not possible to examine all German-language literary figurations of the post-Yugoslav condition within the bounds of this thesis. While the conflict in Kosovo plays an important role in my discussion of the German (military) involvement in the Balkans, the literary works under examination focus on the wars in Croatia and Bosnia, and, to a lesser extent, the Ten-Day War in Slovenia. Not all the authors whose texts I examine are refugees who fled the war. Marica Bodrožić, born in Croatia, came to Germany with her parents in 1983 at the age of nine. Her novel *kirschholz und alte gefühle* (2012) is a story of woman from Sarajevo and who finds herself in France

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 5.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 13.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 35.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 26.

during the siege of her city. Saša Stanišić and Alma Hadžibeganović both fled Bosnia as refugees in 1992. Stanišić's novel *Wie der Soldat das Grammophon repariert* (2006) has as its focal point the massacre of the Muslim population by Bosnian Serb forces which took place in Višegrad in eastern Bosnia in 1992. The novel is partially written from a child's point of view and describes the narrator's flight to Germany as well as his journey to Bosnia undertaken as an adult. Hadžibeganović's *zz00m: 24 Std. mix 1. of me oder Penthesilea in Sarajevo* (1997) spans just 24 hours and concentrates on two women attempting to obtain a permit to leave the besieged city. Hadžibeganović's collection *ilda zuferka rettet die kunst* (2000) addresses past and present experiences of Bosnians and Yugoslavs living in Vienna, and engages with the colonial legacy of the Habsburg Empire. In my close readings, I draw out parallels between these texts and Peter Handke's controversial travelogues *Eine winterliche Reise zu den Flüssen Donau, Save, Morawa und Drina oder Gerechtigkeit für Serbien* (1996) and *Sommerlicher Nachtrag zu einer winterlichen Reise* (1996), which engage with the border area between Serbia and Bosnia along the river Drina as well as describing the narrator's visit to Bosnia in 1996.

The texts featuring in my project challenge the idea that stable territorial borders and identities can be neatly captured and reflected in language. I argue that multilingual texts expand the notion of what it means to be German and to write in the German language, calling for a new, non-hierarchical, and inclusive model of cultural participation in the German (or, for Hadžibeganović, Austrian) state, and signalling a possibility of reconceptualising the German language as one that can be inhabited by subjects whose connection with it is based on affect rather than on ethnic origin. At the same time, the texts demonstrate that European identities and memories cannot be conceptualized in isolation from non-Western histories.

In the thesis, I do not regard second-language texts through the lens of identity politics, or as a reflection of the writers' cultural/ethnic/national origin; rather, I argue that literary multilingualism is a conscious textual strategy actively employed by the authors. I pay attention to the material (visual and auditory) qualities of language, and am particularly interested in instances in which signification is disrupted. This occurs whenever the texts deliberately utilise, or perform, linguistic errors as part of the writers' artistic strategy. In such cases, the tension between sense and non-sense produces new, unexpected meanings, which only emerge as a result of mixing, errors, malapropisms, and homonymy.

Literary multilingualism is of course not a new phenomenon and its key role in modernist writing has been acknowledged by scholars. Axel Englund and Anders Olsson argue that a spatio-temporal rupture caused by migration, volitional or coerced exile, and other forms of movement characteristic of an increasingly globalized world, was one of the main features of modernism around 1900.¹²² This rupture of location was associated with ‘linguistic fractures and refractions that result from the itineraries of exile’.¹²³ In her study of multilingual experiments in the work of leading modernists such as James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, and Jean Rhys, Juliette Taylor-Batty notes the potential of multilingual texts to subvert the notion of stable identities:

multilingualism troubles notions of linguistic, cultural and national identity and ‘origins’ through the productive stylisation of processes of interlingual interference, mixing and error, and in the use of translational processes that fundamentally undermine the traditional distinction between ‘original’ and ‘translation’, between source and target languages and cultures.¹²⁴

An important preoccupation in multilingual texts is the issue of linguistic purity. Apart from the realization of the creative potential of working with multiple languages, multilingual texts highlight the inherent impurity and heterogeneity of every idiom, blurring the boundaries between distinct languages, and refuting the notion that there exists a single, unassailable norm in terms of accent, grammar, syntax, lexis, or expression.

At the same time, Taylor-Batty remarks that in the modernist period, the mixing of languages sometimes provoked anxieties around questions of ethnic ambiguity. In fact, multilingualism was regarded by writers such as D.H. Lawrence as unnatural, inorganic, and thus ‘symptomatic of technological modernity’ and of ‘the dissociation between man and “soil”, between individual and national culture’ (p. 11). Therefore, in modernist writing ‘the correlation between linguistic mixing and a rejection of essentialist conceptions of national language is not always clear-cut’ (p. 43). At the same time, the usage of multilingual techniques in literary texts is, ‘whether implicitly or explicitly, ideologically motivated’ (p. 42), since it reflects the author’s attitude to intercultural and interethnic mixing. Taylor-Batty names the

¹²² Axel Englund and Anders Olsson, ‘Introduction: Twentieth-Century Ruptures of Location and Locution’, in *Languages of Exile. Migration and Multilingualism in Twentieth-Century Literature*, ed. by Axel Englund and Anders Olsson (Bern: Peter Lang, 2013), pp. 1–18 (p. 5).

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹²⁴ Juliette Taylor-Batty, *Multilingualism in Modernist Fiction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 37–38. Further page references are given after quotations in the text.

example of the figure of a ‘Jewish cosmopolitan polyglot’ which appeared during ‘the late nineteenth-century influx of Jewish immigration to the European metropolis’ (p. 56). Polyglot abilities were linked in certain modernist texts with artifice, and the figure’s speech shown to be ‘sinister and degenerate, in an anti-Semitic representation that reflects a deep anxiety regarding linguistic and cultural identities that exceed and challenge essentialist conceptions of national identity, national language and interlingual difference’ (p. 56). Linguistic mixing could therefore be associated with ‘the social awkwardness and/or outsider status of less sympathetic foreign characters’ (p. 46) and reflect the fears of interethnic encounters, miscegenation and creolization.

This ambiguity is important in multilingual texts, where the implied association between linguistic mixing and figures of outsiders and foreigners is sometimes productively tweaked and thus deconstructed. In Saša Stanišić’s novel, for instance, multilingualism is linked to figures who do not comply with the hegemonic norms upheld by the mainstream society. This focus on the enforced marginality of certain characters makes it possible for the novel to critique the oppressive mechanisms at the heart of the social order.

In turn, in Hadžibeganović’s text *zz00m: 24 Std. mix 1. of me oder Penthesilea in Sarajevo*, linguistic experimentation gives expression to the narrator’s complex position as a person of mixed ethnic heritage, as can be seen in the following passage:

Nein, nein wir sind jetzt nur noch ein Jein. [...] unser neuester öffentlicher Kosename: ‘Fußnoten’? Aha-ha! Die, die nicht zur Masse gehören, läßt die Masse sowieso rhythmisierend konvergieren, kommunistische Bastarde. Nicht mehr fungieren wir als Überschrift im Textkörper ohne Einzug im alten gemeinsamen Programm.¹²⁵

The German word ‘jein’ is used to evoke ambiguity and indecisiveness, since it blends negation and affirmation. Those born of mixed parents are not legitimate members of a linguistic community and therefore regarded as ‘communist bastards’. The presence of loan words functions as a critique of linguistic purity advocated by those for whom each language is a direct reflection of national identity. The radical mixing of idioms and registers rejects clear-cut ethnic divisions between the inhabitants of the former Yugoslavia. The bodily metaphors are replaced by the notion of ‘Textkörper’, which is a remnant of the political attempt to create a unified, pan-national Yugoslav identity.

¹²⁵ Alma Hadžibeganović, ‘zz00m: 24 Std. mix 1. of me oder Penthesilea in Sarajevo’, in *Schreiben zwischen den Kulturen*, ed. by Christa Stippinger (Vienna: edition exil, 1997), pp. 4–26 (p. 14).

This points to the fact that linguistic practices and identitarian logics are deeply intertwined in the former Yugoslavia. After the disintegration of the state, its common language, previously called Serbo-Croat, was replaced by such distinct idioms as Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian, and Montenegrin (since 2007), subsumed under the acronym BCS which was created by translators working at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (today, the acronym is BCMS).¹²⁶ Tomislav Z. Longinović asserts in this context: ‘Each of the seven post-Yugoslav political entities (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Serbia, Slovenia) has retaliated against the former lingua franca [...], reflecting its new identity by creating different visions of the national territory by linguistic means’.¹²⁷ Longinović notes that existing minor linguistic differences were emphasized ‘in order to justify the discourse of ethnic particularism’.¹²⁸ Monolingualism, understood in this case as making an exclusive claim to a language, was crucial to the formation of new nation-states in the Balkans, and in the Croatian case, this language could not be shared with the Serbs, figured ‘both as the conquering external other and the insidious alien within the country’.¹²⁹ Longinović claims that Croatian and Serbian are in fact non-identical twins, and translation between the two languages is unnecessary, or amounts to the production of difference where none exists.¹³⁰ In the current study, I use the term BCMS when talking about grammatical rules and linguistic features common to all varieties of the language, ‘Serbo-Croatian’ when referring to the standard used in the former Yugoslavia, and, depending on the context, Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin or Serbian to denote local usage.

Questions of language policy in the post-Yugoslav context are addressed in Bodrožić’s *kirschholz und alte gefühle*, where the narrator distances herself from the aggressive process of nation-building in Croatia, which went hand in hand with a campaign aimed at ridding the Croatian language of any Serb words and expressions. The novel denounces attempts by political actors to take exclusive possession of a language and critiques their wish to establish linguistic differences between the mutually intelligible local forms of BCMS.

¹²⁶ Tomislav Z. Longinović, ‘Post-Yugoslav Emergence and the Creation of Difference’, in *After Yugoslavia: The Cultural Spaces of a Vanished Land*, ed. by Radmila Gorup (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), pp. 149–59 (p. 149).

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

German literature of post-Yugoslav migration

My focus on multilingual practices in texts of post-Yugoslav migration offers a new angle from which to examine the varied body of texts published in the German speaking countries in the aftermath of the Yugoslav wars. German-language literature engaging with the conflict is an expanding field of study.¹³¹ Among frequent themes identified by scholars in this corpus are a) the role of the media and war journalists, b) war crimes against civilians and the question of guilt, c) the awareness of one's own situatedness and privilege in relation to the region, d) the motif of a literary journey and its troubled relation to war reporting, e) representability and narratability of war, trauma and suffering. However, at the time of writing, there exists no full-length study to look at predominantly multilingual strategies in German literature of post-Yugoslav migration.¹³²

The starting point for intense German literary engagement with the Wars is to be found in Peter Handke's essays, amongst which are *Abschied des Träumers vom Neunten Land* (1991) and *Eine winterliche Reise zu den Flüssen Donau, Save, Morawa und Drina oder Gerechtigkeit für Serbien* (1996). Since these early interventions, the corpus of Handke's texts about the conflict has grown exponentially, and so has the body of scholarship responding to his work. I undertake a more detailed examination of Handke's texts and the controversies they provoked in Chapter Two. Here, it is important to note that Handke's works had a profound effect on subsequent German-language literature dealing with the topic. Elena Messner notes in relation to German and Austrian authors:

Unschwer ist [...] die [...] Monopolisierung der Thematik durch [...] Peter Handke auszumachen, dessen Reisetexte aus unterschiedlichen Lagern erbitterte Kritik oder umgekehrt große Begeisterung ernteten.

¹³¹ Cf. Mirjana Stančić, 'Der Balkankrieg in den deutschen Medien – Seine Wahrnehmung in der *Süddeutschen Zeitung*, bei Peter Handke und in den Übersetzungen der exjugoslawischen Frauenliteratur', in *Krieg in den Medien*, ed. by Heinz-Peter Preußner (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), pp. 203–26; Leopold Federmaier, 'Nicht nichts: ex-jugoslawische Reisen deutschsprachiger Autoren', *Weimarer Beiträge*, 56 (2010), 69–83; Andrea Schütte, 'Krieg und Slapstick: Kontrolle und Kontrollverlust in der literarischen Darstellung des Bosnienkrieges', in *Repräsentationen des Krieges. Emotionalisierungsstrategien in der Literatur und in den audiovisuellen Medien vom 18. bis zum 21. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Søren R. Fauth, Kasper Green Krejberg, and Jan Süselbeck (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2012), pp. 275–93.

¹³² To date only the 2015 monograph by Raffaella Mare addresses second-language writing by Saša Stanišić, Anna Kim, Melinda Naj Abonji, Maja Haderlap and Nicol Ljubić. Mare looks at war trauma in these texts through the lens of Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope. Cf. Raffaella Mare, 'Ich bin Jugoslawe – ich zerfalle also': *Chronotopoi der Angst – Kriegstraumata in der deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur* (Marburg: Tectum, 2015).

Die breite Wirkung dieser Handke-zentrierten Debatte hinterließ in der Öffentlichkeit eine intellektuelle Markierung; nachfolgende Autoren und Publizisten wurden daran [...] zwangsweise vergleichbar.¹³³

Besides Handke, scholars have devoted much attention to *Das Handwerk des Tötens* by Norbert Gstrein (2003), which addresses the role of the media during the conflict in Yugoslavia, thus inscribing itself into the discussion begun by Handke.¹³⁴ The theme of the strained relationship between journalism and literature is negotiated through the fictive figure of Christian Allmayer, an Austrian war reporter killed during his deployment in Kosovo (the protagonist is based on the *Stern* correspondent Gabriel Grüner, who was killed in Yugoslavia on 13 June 1999).¹³⁵ The story of Allmayer's death is filtered through his old friend Paul, who befriends the narrator and tells him about his intention to write a novel about Allmayer's activities in the former Yugoslavia. The narrator recounts Paul's literary activity and at the same time writes about his growing desire for Paul's Croatian girlfriend Helena. The novel ends with Paul's suicide. In its focus on questions of aesthetics, the ethics of war reporting, authenticity and its preoccupation with the blurred boundaries between literature and journalism, Gstrein's work is often compared to Handke's essays. Joanna Drynda sees in Gstrein's work a more nuanced engagement with the possibility of capturing the war's reality in literature, and a vehement critique of cynical war reporters interested in sensational and macabre contents.¹³⁶ Susanne Düwell considers *Das Handwerk des Tötens* and Handke's *Unter Tränen fragend* (2000), which addresses the NATO bombings in Serbia, and notes that both texts emphasize 'die Stärke der Literatur im Vergleich zu journalistischen Berichten in der Reflexion auf sprach- und Darstellungsformen'.¹³⁷ Düwell is more critical in her evaluation of Gstrein's novel,

¹³³ Elena Messner, '“Literarische Interventionen” deutschsprachiger Autoren und Autorinnen im Kontext der Jugoslawienkriege der 1990er', in *Kriegsdiskurse in Literatur und Medien nach 1989*, ed. by Carsten Gansel and Heinrich Kaulen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), pp. 107–18 (p. 108).

¹³⁴ Norbert Gstrein, *Das Handwerk des Tötens* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2003).

¹³⁵ Katalin Szabó, 'Eine Reise in die Vergeblichkeit - “Das Handwerk des Tötens” von Norbert Gstrein', *Literaturkritik.de* <http://literaturkritik.de/id/6563> [accessed 12 January 2018].

¹³⁶ Cf. Joanna Drynda, 'Der Schriftsteller als medialer Zaungast einer Kriegskatastrophe: die Informationsware “Balkankrieg” in den Prosatexten von Gerhard Roth, Peter Handke und Norbert Gstrein', in *Information Warfare. Die Rolle der Medien (Literatur, Kunst, Fotografie, Film. Fernsehen, Theater, Presse, Korrespondenz) bei der Kriegsdarstellung und -deutung*, ed. by Claudia Glunz, Artur Pelka, and Thomas F. Schneider (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), pp. 455–66.

¹³⁷ Susanne Düwell, '“Ein Toter macht noch keinen Roman”: Repräsentationen des Jugoslawienkrieges bei Peter Handke und Norbert Gstrein', in *Zeichen des Krieges in Literatur, Film*

noting that both Handke and Gstrein attempt to create a literary vision of the war, which is supposed to outweigh the inauthentic media reports. However, whilst Handke's text is decidedly political, since it protests NATO's military intervention, Gstrein's work uses the war as a pretext for a general reflection upon the nature of writing. Gstrein's apolitical attitude is marked by 'Verzicht auf historische Detailkenntnis und inhaltliche Differenzierung'.¹³⁸ Düwell contends: 'Gstreins Darstellungsform ist derart metareflexiv und universalisierend, dass das spezifische Ereignis des Krieges aus dem Blick gerät'.¹³⁹

Indeed, Gstrein's novel is marked by a hesitant tone, which shows that the narrator is reluctant to make any conclusive statements about the war. At the same time, the information provided by Paul, Helena, and Helena's father is presented as unreliable, with the narrator constantly questioning his interlocutors' motives and knowledge. The text challenges the possibility of accessing any 'objective' facts about the conflict but at the same time avoids any political engagement with it. This could be regarded as the novel's great strength, since it suggests that an external observer is not equipped to make ultimate judgements about a war they did not experience nor understand. As much as such an impartial perspective could serve as a refreshing counterweight to the judgmental and hegemonic stance exhibited by certain German commentators of the conflict (see Chapter One), in the current project I am not interested in the questions of travel literature vs. war reporting, or in the issue of availability of knowledge about the war, which is so central to Gstrein's novel. Instead, I look at decidedly *political* texts which do not give up in the face of a supposedly incomprehensible conflict but rather dare to be political. Therefore, I examine Peter Handke's problematic apologia for Serb aggression against Croatia and Bosnia, as well as multilingual texts which, in a subversive and innovative way, deconstruct the discourses of nationalism, ethnic purity or heteropatriarchy.

Elena Messner confirms Düwell's conclusion that many German-language texts published in the aftermath of the Yugoslav conflict use the war as a pretext to address more universal questions. Apart from works by Handke and Gstrein, Messner looks at Gerhard Roth's *Der Berg* (2000), Juli Zeh's *Die Stille ist ein Geräusch*

und den Medien; *Ideologisierung und Entideologisierung*, ed. by Stephan Jaeger and Christer Petersen (Kiel: Ludwig, 2006), pp. 92–117 (p. 92).

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 116.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

(2002), Richard Schubert's *Freitag in Sarajevo* (2003) as well as Anna Kim's *Die gefrorene Zeit* (2008).¹⁴⁰ Roth's novel tells the story of an Austrian journalist who interviews a Serbian poet who supposedly witnessed the massacre in Srebrenica.¹⁴¹ Zeh's work is an autobiographical travelogue through post-war Bosnia.¹⁴² Schubert's drama engages with the role of Western intellectuals during the siege of Sarajevo. The play's grotesque plot is based on Susan Sontag's production of *Waiting for Godot* in Sarajevo. The protagonist Fiona Freitag is supposed to resemble Sontag, whereas the figures of Jean-Pierre Léaud and Hanuman Knülch serve as caricatures of the French philosopher Henri-Bernard Lévy and the German Tilman Zülch, who was heavily engaged in the debate surrounding Peter Handke.¹⁴³ Anna Kim's text focusses on the perspective of Albanian victims of the conflict in Kosovo.¹⁴⁴ Messner points out similarities between these various works, noting that the authors

ihrer Situiertheit nicht entkommen: auf der einen Seite ist es persönliche Betroffenheit, Involviertheit, zumindest Sympathie, also eine unterschiedlich zu bestimmende Nähe, welche die Erzählstrategien bestimmt, die auf der anderen Seite mit einer den Texten inhärenten, meist programmatischen Distanz in Interaktion tritt, die sowohl zeitlicher als auch räumlicher Natur ist.¹⁴⁵

At the same time, the works are marked by scepticism towards news reports. Messner states: 'wenig überraschend kommt keiner der deutschsprachigen Theater- oder Prosatexte ohne Reflexion der medial vermittelten Realität aus'.¹⁴⁶ This distrust of the media results in a universalized critique of language and literature. However, by engaging with representability of war, the works put their emphasis on aesthetic questions, which might be said to lead to a marginalization of the conflict itself.

In his 2014 habilitation thesis, Boris Previšić makes a similar point concerning the bias inherent in many German-language texts concerned with the Balkans, but adds to that a critical dimension informed by the concepts of Orientalism and Balkanism:

¹⁴⁰ Other literary works engaging with the Yugoslav conflict include *Die Story* by Peter Balsiger (1996), *Ende der Ausgangssperre. Sarajevo nach dem Krieg* by Sabine Riedel (1997), *Sarajevo Safari* by Otmar Jenner (1998), Ingrid Bachér's *Sarajewo 96* (2001), *Dubrovnik. Europa erlesen* by Inge M. Artl (2001), *Serbische Bohnen* by Andreas P. Pittler (2003), *Der leere Himmel. Reise in das Innere des Balkan* by Richard Wagner (2003), *Jugoslavian gigolo* by Zoran Drvenkar (2007).

¹⁴¹ Gerhard Roth, *Der Berg* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 2000).

¹⁴² Juli Zeh, *Die Stille ist ein Geräusch. Eine Fahrt durch Bosnien* (Frankfurt a.M.: btb, 2002).

¹⁴³ Richard Schubert, *Freitag in Sarajevo* (Klagenfurt: Drava, 2003).

¹⁴⁴ Anna Kim, *Die gefrorene Zeit* (Graz: Droschl, 2008).

¹⁴⁵ Messner, ' "Literarische Interventionen" deutschsprachiger Autoren und Autorinnen', p. 110.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

Entscheidend [...] ist, dass man in der deutschsprachigen Literatur ständig auf Projektionen trifft, welche letztlich mehr über die Erzähl- und Autorinstanzen aussagen als über den südslawischen Raum per se. [...] Wenn [...] Gewalt sowie Irrationalität regional essentialisiert werden konnte, so sagt eine solche diskursive Balkanisierung mehr über den Botschaftssender und seine unverarbeitete koloniale Vergangenheit sowie Projektion aus als über die Dynamik des Krieges selbst.¹⁴⁷

Here, Previšić stresses the continuities between the colonial past of the German-speaking countries and current discursive constructs relating to the political situation in the former Yugoslavia. His comparative study considers writings from today's Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia, as well as elsewhere in Europe, such as Spain, France and Italy. The critic is concerned to stress that no literary analysis of textual engagements with the Yugoslav wars can be possible within the bounds of German-language literature alone. Crucially, the analysis of eye-witness accounts as well as fictionalized testimonies by authors from the former Yugoslavia is followed by an examination of literary responses from abroad. His approach to texts is narratological: 'in der Analyse der narrativen Form [eröffnet sich] die Möglichkeit, die Brüche, die metaleptischen Strukturen, die prekäre Stellung zwischen Autor- und Erzählerfunktion [...] aufzuzeigen'.¹⁴⁸ This methodology makes it possible to account for various textual strategies employed by authors responding to the Yugoslav wars.

The critical potential inherent in multilingual texts of post-Yugoslav migration is pointed out by Previšić in his earlier article on the supposed 'Balkan Turn' in German literature. He concludes that texts by Juli Zeh and Norbert Gstrein, even though they explicitly address the limitedness of the Western perspective on the Wars, fail to fulfil 'die interkulturell so notwendige Vermittlungsaufgabe, endlich festgefahrene Stereotypen über den Balkan aufzulösen'.¹⁴⁹ In contrast, Stanišić's *Wie der Soldat das Grammophon repariert* is said to bring to life many different voices and to avoid an orientalising attitude.¹⁵⁰

Daniela Finzi's 2013 monograph addresses a selection of German-language texts written in the aftermath of the Yugoslav Wars and examines the interrelation between travel literature, war literature and witnessing, paying close attention to the

¹⁴⁷ Boris Previšić, *Literatur topographiert. Der Balkan und die postjugoslawischen Kriege im Fadenkreuz des Erzählens* (Berlin: Kadmos, 2014), p. 45.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 23.

¹⁴⁹ Previšić, 'Poetik der Marginalität', p. 199.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 189.

interdependence of identity and alterity.¹⁵¹ Among Finzi's main objects of scrutiny are the dialectic of distance and proximity in the German perception of the war and the construction of self-image through the encounter with the Balkan other. Finzi offers a psychoanalytic reading of Germany's and Austria's attitude towards the Balkan. The critic argues that the war in Yugoslavia brought some of the repressed and/or latent aspects of German and Austrian history to the surface. Finzi's study establishes the significance of the Second World War for German-language discussions surrounding the conflict and examines her primary texts against the backdrop of German memory culture. Finzi considers such authors as Peter Handke, Norbert Gstrein, Saša Stanišić, Juli Zeh, and Anna Kim, and accords Stanišić's text a special position within the corpus, since it is the only work that was a bestseller and was written by an author born in the former Yugoslavia.¹⁵² Finzi's work again confirms Stanišić's status as a German-language mainstream author but fails to acknowledge the subversive potential of his multi-layered text. While Finzi's insights prove useful to my discussion of the complex positionality of the narrator in Saša Stanišić's novel (see Chapter 3), she does not engage with the novel's multilingual aspects. In contrast, I draw out such crucial aspects of this innovative text as its interrogation of constructs related to gender, nationality, and childhood.

The memory of the Bosnian war

Sarajevo and Srebrenica are the most notorious sites of the Bosnian War (1992-1995) and as such constitute part of the European cultural imaginary.¹⁵³ The siege of Sarajevo by Bosnian Serb forces under the command of Radovan Karadžić began on 6 April 1992 and lasted 1,425 days, during which 14,000 people were killed and 70,000 wounded.¹⁵⁴ The inhabitants endured daily sniper fire, grenade attacks, hunger and international isolation. Srebrenica gained international notoriety in the summer of 1995. The town was declared a safe zone by the UN already in 1993. For years,

¹⁵¹ Finzi, Daniela, *Unterwegs zum Anderen: Literarische Erfahrungen der kriegesischen Auflösung Jugoslawiens aus deutschsprachiger Perspektive* (Tübingen: Francke, 2013).

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 131.

¹⁵³ 'so bleibt von den postjugoslawischen Kriegen meist der bosnische Krieg im öffentlichen Gedächtnis präsent, weil er auch die meisten Todesopfer, die meisten Verletzten und Vertriebenen forderte. [...] Erstaunlicherweise verbindet man selbst mit dem Bosnienkrieg nur wenige Toponyme: Sarajevo und Srebrenica, vielleicht noch Mostar. Aber wem sagen Manjača und Žepa noch etwas [...]?'; Previšić, Boris, *Literatur topographiert. Der Balkan und die postjugoslawischen Kriege im Fadenkreuz des Erzählens* (Berlin: Kadmos, 2014), p. 71.

¹⁵⁴ *Opsada Sarajeva 1992-1996*, ed. by Muamer Spahić (Zenica: Vrijeme, 2014).

Bosnian Muslim refugees living in the enclave suffered squalid conditions and hunger. The UNPROFOR did not manage to stop Ratko Mladić's army from entering Srebrenica on 11 July 1995. On 12 and 13 July, men between 16 and 65 years of age were separated from other civilians, transported to various locations and murdered.¹⁵⁵ In 2014, the Dutch troops from the UN peacekeeping force were made partly liable for the deaths.¹⁵⁶

The events which took place at these two locations give only a partial picture of the war's gruesome reality. Edina Bećirević identifies five further sites of mass killings in eastern Bosnia, which in her eyes should be regarded as cases of genocide against the Bosnian Muslim population.¹⁵⁷ The literary texts analyzed in the thesis engage with both Srebrenica and Sarajevo but also recount the fall of Vukovar in Croatia in 1991 and the massacres which took place in Višegrad in eastern Bosnia in 1992. Višegrad figures in texts by Handke and Stanišić and is a site where competing interpretations of the recent wars are played out against each other, as depicted in Jasmila Žbanić's *For Those Who Can Tell No Tales* (2013).

My decision to focus on literary figurations of Bosnia and Herzegovina and, partly, Croatia, is motivated by a desire to differentiate between different stages of the wars, and to draw out the specificity of Bosnia's mixed cultural heritage and its status as a former colony of the Habsburg Empire. At the Congress of Berlin in 1878, it was decided that Austro-Hungary would take over control in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and annex it in 1908.¹⁵⁸ The Habsburg occupation of Bosnia took the form of a bloody military intervention, with approximately 250,000 Austrian soldiers deployed to conquer the territory by fighting so-called local 'insurgents'. The operation lasted three months, until October 1878, and resulted in thousands of casualties on both sides and in a mass exodus of civilians from Bosnia. Clemens Ruthner notes that Austrian activities in the region were characterized by the colonizers as a civilizing, cultural

¹⁵⁵ *Srebrenica. Erinnerung für die Zukunft* (Berlin: Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 2005).

¹⁵⁶ Daniel Boffey, 'Srebrenica Massacre: Dutch Soldiers Let 300 Muslims Die, Court Rules', *The Guardian*, 28 June 2017, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/28/dutch-soldiers-let-300-muslims-die-in-bosnian-war-court-rules> [accessed 15 January 2018].

¹⁵⁷ Edina Bećirević, *Genocide on the Drina River* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), pp. 81-143.

¹⁵⁸ Clemens Ruthner, 'Kakaniens kleiner Orient: Post/koloniale Lesarten der Peripherie Bosnien-Herzegowina (1878-1918)', in *Zentren, Peripherien und kollektive Identitäten in Österreich-Ungarn*, ed. by Endre Hárs, Wolfgang Müller-Funk, Ursula Reber, and Clemens Ruthner (Tübingen: Francke, 2006), pp. 255-83 (p. 257).

and modernizing mission, deemed necessary given the previous occupation of the region by the allegedly uncivilized Ottoman Empire.¹⁵⁹

The question of whether Bosnia and Herzegovina could be regarded as a post-colonial space in relation to the Habsburg Empire has recently been a subject of increased interest among cultural theorists and historians.¹⁶⁰ In this project, my approach is informed by post-colonial theory, most notably Edward Said's *Orientalism*, Maria Todorova's writings on Balkanism, Milica Bakić-Hayden's idea of 'nesting orientalisms', and Nataša Kovačević's polemical revision of Western European and North American narratives of Eastern Europe and the former Yugoslavia as post-communist spaces. As I demonstrate below, post-colonial theory offers an important theoretical tool for examining the discourses relating to the Balkans as well as for dismantling the essentialist assumptions inherent in scholarly approaches to multilingual and second-language texts.

Today, Bosnia's memory landscape is divided along ethnic lines, reflecting the post-war political fragmentation of the country. The 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement created a power sharing system between Bosnia's three constituent peoples, i.e. Bosniaks (or Bosnian Muslims), Serbs, and Croats. In this thesis, I use the terms 'Bosniak' and 'Bosnian Muslim' interchangeably. *Bošnjak* (Bosniak) designates the nationality of Muslims in Bosnia and Hercegovina, in the Sandjak region in Serbia and all other Muslims who speak the Bosnian (*Bosanski*) language, whereas *Bosanac* (Bosnian) is a regional, geographical or administrative term which refers to everyone born in Bosnia and Hercegovina.¹⁶¹

According to Nicolas Moll, the current Bosnian state is facing 'three official memory narratives and ethnonational identity constructions'.¹⁶² The memory of crimes committed during the recent war (1992-1995) is often entangled with the commemoration of the Second World War, whereby certain traumatic events are re-

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 262.

¹⁶⁰ Stijn Vervaeke, 'Some Historians from Former Yugoslavia on the Austro-Hungarian Period in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1878-1918): A Reality of Imperialism versus the Golden Years of the Double Eagle?', *Kakanien Revisited*, 2004 <http://www.kakanien-revisited.at/beitr/fallstudie/SVervaeke1.pdf> [accessed 18 January 2018].

¹⁶¹ Alija Isaković, 'Ko je Bosanac, ko Bošnjak a ko Musliman?', *24sata.info*, 15 November 2012, <http://www.24sata.info/kolumne/fatamorgana/122028-alija-isakovic-ko-je-bosanac-ko-bosnjak-a-ko-musliman.html> [accessed 7 April 2018].

¹⁶² Nicolas Moll, 'Fragmented Memories in a Fragmented Country: Memory Competition and Political Identity-Building in Today's Bosnia and Herzegovina', *Nationalities Papers*, 41 (2013), 910-35 (p. 912, original emphasis). Further page references are given after quotations in the text.

interpreted and endowed with new meanings. The competing narratives centre around the Nazi occupation of Yugoslavia (1941-1945), the role played by the Nazi puppet state in Croatia (Nezavisna Država Hrvatska), and the concentration camp in Jasenovac, established on NDH's territory.

Moll notes that the Bosniak narrative of the recent war puts emphasis on Serb and Croat aggression, and on victimization of the Muslim population. This focus leads to a reluctance to 'critically address one's own role in the recent war' (p. 915). References to the Second World War are used to prove that the history of Bosniaks is 'a history of continuous genocide' (p. 917). In turn, the official version endorsed by Bosnian Serb elites presents the Bosnian War as a defensive war protecting the inhabitants of Republika Srpska from external aggression. The crimes committed against Croats and Bosniaks 'present the biggest challenge to Bosnian Serb memory politics' (p. 917). While responsibility for Srebrenica is partially acknowledged, other sites such as Prijedor and Višegrad are ignored. The memory of Nazi crimes committed against the Serbs plays an important role in Republika Srpska, to the extent that Jasenovac serves 'as an argument to counterbalance Srebrenica and to insist on Serb victimhood' (p. 918). Finally, Bosnian Croat nationalist narratives centre on the Croats' victimization by the Partisans in the Second World War and by Serbs during the wars in Croatia and Bosnia (which are sometimes regarded as one war fought for Croat independence).

Crucially, my aim in the current study is not historical revisionism or finger-pointing. My intention is to stress that German-language literary texts under scrutiny here cannot be separated from this fluctuating, unsteady flow of competing stories and interpretations of the past in today's Bosnia and other countries of the former Yugoslavia. This means that the texts are political, since they intervene – albeit indirectly – in the process of working through the past in the region.

Touching tales between Germany and Yugoslavia

The historical and cultural entanglements between Yugoslavia, Austria and Germany are numerous and diverse, including the Austrian-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1908), the Nazi occupation of Yugoslavia (1941-1945), German diplomatic interference in the issue of Slovenian and Croatian independence (1991), and German participation in the air strikes in 1999. However, as noted above in relation to Brigid Haines and Stuart Taberner, scholars of German Studies are not

always willing to admit that these regions share a common history. This is aggravated by the fact that, as noted by Moll, Bosnia ‘is mainly perceived as a problem, associated with the 1914 assassination of Franz Ferdinand and the beginning of the First World War [...], while at the same time the question of European implication and responsibilities is often avoided’.¹⁶³ Moll links this tendency to ignore Bosnia’s presence in European history with the ‘European tradition of seeing the Balkans as something outside of and antithetic to Europe’.¹⁶⁴ To renounce such binary thinking which pits Western Europe against the Balkans, I insist on mapping the common ground between these two realms. I examine shared histories and cultural narratives which find their way into multilingual texts of post-Yugoslav migration, where they are re-written, subverted, or re-invented to reflect a new political and social reality where what is traditionally regarded as the realm of *German* culture is radically transformed by transnational alliances and innovative imaginative interventions.

In order to theorize the ways in which Turkish migration affects the German national archive, Adelson introduces the concept of ‘*touching tales*’ as an alternative organizing principle for considering “*Turkish*” *lines of thought*’.¹⁶⁵ Adelson argues that ‘Germans and Turks in Germany share more culture (as an ongoing imaginative project) than is often presumed when one speaks of two discrete worlds encountering each other across a civilizational divide’ (p. 20). In putting emphasis on ‘a broad range of common ground, which can be thicker or thinner at some junctures’, the concept foregrounds affective dimensions inherent in German narratives of Turkish migration and ‘denotes literary narratives that commingle cultural developments and historical references generally not thought to belong together in any proper sense’, such as the Holocaust, the Cold War, and Turkish history (p. 20). Such narratives go beyond mere analogies and offer ‘aesthetic innovations that reframe German and transnational pasts, presents, and futures from the vantage of the 1990s’ (p. 20). In these texts, familiar points of reference are unsettled and shifted in unpredictable ways. Moreover, the notion of ‘Turkish’ lines of thought ‘is deployed to consider transfigurative dimensions of contemporary literature in German as well as transnational cultures and histories’ (p. 21). The critic asserts that Turkish-German ‘tales touch by figural and narrative means, but they also mediate abstract lines of thought pointing readers

¹⁶³ Moll, p. 929.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Adelson, *The Turkish Turn*, p. 20. Further page references are given after quotations in the text.

toward newly imagined (and newly imaginable) cultural effects of Turkish migration (p. 22). Adelson voices the suspicion that ‘German literature of Turkish migration could articulate something not yet otherwise known, or even something with as yet “no wordly analogue” ’ (p. 22), which means that the literature of migration is marked by both figurative and iconoclastic elements (p. 23). The term ‘lines of thought’ evokes Deleuze’s concept of ‘lines of flight’, which for Deleuze denotes ‘the trajectory of a process of becoming-other’ and traces possible movements with a transformative power.¹⁶⁶

In the thesis, I take inspiration from Adelson’s concept of touching tales to examine how texts of post-Yugoslav migration contribute to the reshaping of German and transnational imaginary at the beginning of the twenty-first century. I look at historical narratives which are negotiated in various ways by German and Austrian writers, authors with a biographical connection to Yugoslavia and artists from elsewhere in the world. Bearing in mind important differences between Handke and ‘second-language’ writers of the younger generation, I do not regard their texts as standing in opposition to one another but rather as intertexts and I set out to investigate possible links and parallels between the works. At the same time, I highlight that Handke’s work is explicitly concerned with the changes in German memory culture after 1990. In later chapters, I show that the memory of the Second World War is also present in texts of post-Yugoslav migration, which allows me to situate these texts in a decidedly German post-unification context. The historical culture of Germany was and still is affected by the country’s diplomatic, military and political involvement in the Balkans, and, as Adelson contends, can only be conceived of as a historical formation subject to constant change. In turn, Hadžibeganović’s texts set in Vienna engage with Austrian history and respond to particularly Austrian memory debates as well as developments in Austrian politics.

While Adelson’s study informs my own approach in many ways, it is of course not without its flaws. In her attempt to firmly situate the literature of migration within the culture of its host society, Adelson runs the risk of obliterating the specificity of non-Western cultures which also play a key role in these literary works. Margaret Littler has highlighted that Adelson leaves out ‘most Turkish frameworks of reference’ which are key to Özdamar’s *Der Hof im Spiegel* and is not convinced by

¹⁶⁶ Bogue, p. 6.

Adelson's analysis of Zafer Şenocak's *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft* (1998), which 'relies on a highly abstract reading of the characters as little more than figures of speech'.¹⁶⁷ In her response to Şenocak's novel, Littler contends that historical comparisons the work contains might involve 'the instrumentalisation of suffering'.¹⁶⁸ Littler asks whether the implied parallel between the Holocaust and Turkey's involvement in the Armenian genocide has more to do with the formation of a hybrid Turkish-German identity than with 'the illumination of contested histories, or even the commemoration of the victims of past atrocities'.¹⁶⁹ This aspect is omitted in Adelson's analysis, which reads the novel through the lens of specifically German memory debates.

In my thesis, I approach the issue of such entangled histories by foregrounding the multilingual aspects of the texts. I demonstrate how the works resist notions of linguistic purity on the stylistic level but also reject ethnocentric narratives in favour of conflicted and fragmented constellations affecting various pasts and presents. Therefore, in my analyses, I aim to recognize multiple frameworks of reference, regardless of which national culture or literature they would normally be associated with, and not limit my interpretation to one national lens. The texts by Saša Stanišić, Marica Bodrožić and Alma Hadžibeganović are of course part of German and/or Austrian literature. However, they are much more than that, since they require a comparative and multilingual critical approach and cannot be contained by categories rooted in a national philology, be it *Germanistik* or *Südslawistik*. I acknowledge that Germany and, more reluctantly, Austria, are not the only countries where there exists a memory of the Second World War and the Holocaust. The Balkan states currently witness battles between conflicting interpretations and framings of the past relating not just to the 1990s but also to the period of Nazi occupation.¹⁷⁰ As discussed briefly above with regards to Bosnia, Serb, Croat and Bosniak, ethnonational identitarian constructs are closely linked with memory politics related to the victimization of various groups during the Second World War. This means that literary engagements

¹⁶⁷ Littler, 'The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature', p. 404.

¹⁶⁸ Margaret Littler, 'Guilt, Victimhood, and Identity in Zafer Şenocak's *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft*', *The German Quarterly*, 78 (2005), 357–73 (p. 358).

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 359.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Robert M. Hayden, 'Mass Killings and Images of Genocide in Bosnia, 1941-5 and 1992-5', in *The Historiography of Genocide*, ed. by Dan Stone (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 487–516.

with National Socialism are not to be understood within the framework of German national culture alone.

Outline of the thesis

My thesis opens with a brief overview of how German elites responded to evolving stages of the crisis in the Balkans. I trace developments in German foreign policy, from the ardent support for Slovenian and Croatian independence, to outrage at the atrocities committed in Bosnia and support for military action by German soldiers in Kosovo in 1999. Crucially, I map German responses to the Yugoslav Wars onto the wider socio-political context of post-unification Germany. I argue that discussions of the Yugoslav Wars served as a proxy in debates on the shifting political consensus in Germany in the 1990s. I contend that conflicts in the Balkans became a discursive site where left-liberal intellectuals in Germany could first re-claim the moral high ground that had been undermined by unification, and secondly, posit that the Germans belonged to a re-educated nation, whose experience of National Socialism now obliged them to prevent genocide on Bosnian Muslims and Kosovo Albanians. In this way, Germany's political and discursive involvement in the Yugoslav Wars contributed to an internal process of 'normalisation' of the memory of the Holocaust, arguably making it possible for Germany to participate in military intervention against Serbia in 1999.

In Chapter Two, I investigate the work of Peter Handke, one of the most prominent German-language commentators of the conflicts. By including Handke's work in my project, I clearly situate second-language writers within the German-language discourse surrounding the Yugoslav Wars, showing their embeddedness in the culture of their 'host' country. Handke is not usually regarded as a second-language writer, despite his connection to the Slovenian language. Handke was born in Carinthia, Austria's bilingual region with a large Slovenian minority and has worked as a translator from Slovenian into German. Even though multilingualism is not absent from Handke's texts about Yugoslavia, it is not deployed to subvert strict ethnic and cultural categories, but rather to reinforce the differences between German and the South-Slavic languages spoken in the former Yugoslavia.

Handke's works written during and after the Wars constitute a reaction against the perceived demonization of Serbs by the German and French media. Handke fashioned himself as an independent observer of events whose texts served as a

corrective foil to the aggressive and biased language of the media. Yet a close analysis of Handke's language shows that his works do not dissolve the East-West dichotomy and instead reinforce the hegemonic power relation between Germany/Austria and the former Yugoslavia, as well as between the Serbs and Bosnians.

In contrast, texts by Saša Stanišić, Marica Bodrožić and Alma Hadžibeganović will be shown to challenge categories of self and other conceived according to strict ethnic or national distinctions. In my close readings, I contend that the authors employ a range of textual strategies aimed at integrating an array of voices and subjectivities into their texts, depicting complex and sometimes conflicting patterns of guilt and victimhood.

Chapter Three deals with the acclaimed novel by Saša Stanišić, *Wie der Soldat das Grammophon repariert* (2006). The text, based on Stanišić's own experience, is a multi-layered depiction of the narrator's flight from war-torn Višegrad in 1992 that combines a child's and an adult's perspective. Crucially, I contrast the novel's eye-witness account of ethnic cleansing in Višegrad with Peter Handke's problematic representation of the massacre in his *Sommerlicher Nachtrag zu einer winterlichen Reise* (1996). I argue that Stanišić's text self-consciously deploys the literary voice of a child to comment on social expectations and assumptions surrounding children in a heteronormative society. Furthermore, I argue that the novel defies the logic of normative monolingualism through its multilingual textual strategies, which unsettle stable meanings and question the referential quality of language. In my analysis, I also draw on approaches derived from queer theory and theories of multilingualism, most notably Lee Edelman's work on the figure of the child, queerness and the death drive, as well as Meir Sternberg's theory of translational mimesis. Combining these two different methodologies, I offer a new reading of the novel, suggesting that interlingual mixing is used in the text to unsettle the stable notion of ethnic identity and to engage with sexual and racial differences.

In Chapter Four, I further demonstrate how approaches derived from scholarship on multilingualism as well as feminist theory are crucial to my discussion of second-language texts dealing with the Yugoslav conflict. The focal point of the chapter is the novel *kirschholz und alte gefühle* (2012), which addresses the theme of sexual violence against women and engages with the events which took place during the siege of Sarajevo and the battle of Vukovar in Croatia. My reading draws attention to the figure of a gap, which is a key structural element of the text, and which the

novel deploys to explore the limitations of language in representing traumatic experiences. The gaps and failures of language present in the texts are linked to those aspects of experience which do not fit the dominant framework and which resist linearity, stability and homogenization, which I associate with ethnic and sexual exclusion. I bring the novel into a dialogue with films by the Bosnian director Jasmila Žbanić, which allows me to discuss different artistic strategies aimed at creating alternative sites where the subject can express their traumatic and fragmented memory. Further, I show how the films and the novel reflect on the role of international media in misrepresenting the Bosnian War.

In Chapter Five, I discuss *zz00m: 24 Std. mix 1. of me oder Penthesilea in Sarajevo* (1997) and *ilda zuferka rettet die kunst* (2000) by Alma Hadžibeganović, an Austrian writer who came to Vienna in 1992 as a refugee. Her texts constitute a feminist intervention into the Western canon, since they engage with popular culture, Hollywood cinema, the German literary canon and the history of Austrian imperialism in Europe. I discuss how linguistic experimentation and estrangement are deployed by Hadžibeganović to give voice to a subaltern perspective on migration, war, and the neoliberal world order.

The thesis throws new light on German texts of post-Yugoslav migration, by bringing together works which so far have not been considered in relation to each other. I look at female authors who received less scholarly attention than Handke and Stanišić and offer a comparative reading of German-language literary texts and feminist films by Jasmila Žbanić. I take into consideration cultural developments in the former Yugoslavia and combine theories of multilingualism and feminist approaches with the aim to highlight the political significance of multilingual works and to stress their important contribution to the current moment in European history, still partly shaped by the legacy of the brutal conflict in the former Yugoslavia.

Chapter 1: German responses to the Yugoslav Wars

Germany at the end of the twentieth century

The 1990s was a decade of tumultuous change. The collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the wars between the newly established independent states in the former Yugoslavia and the fall of the Berlin Wall all resulted in a new geopolitical order being established in Europe. German reunification in 1990 was an equally epochal event, which led to a shift in the discussions surrounding the question of German national identity. Andreas Huyssen remarks that prior to unification, the Federal Republic was home to an ‘anti-nationalist consensus’.¹⁷¹ The renewed focus on the question of German nation after 1990 led to heated debates in the media, which were concerned with the issues of asylum, migration and citizenship, as well as with the continued relevance of the Holocaust as the fundamental identity-shaping event in German history. The unified Germany faced the question of how to handle the process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and how to accommodate the diverse histories of the FRG and the GDR.

German-language texts of post-Yugoslav migration, published from 1991 onwards, are a product and a reflection of this troubled decade which brought freedom from authoritarianism to the east of Europe but also saw a revival of nationalism, conservatism and misogyny, marked in Germany most pointedly by the pogrom against foreigners and asylum seekers in Rostock-Lichtenhagen in August 1992. The resurgence of nationalist and right-wing sentiments posed a challenge to the new German state, which was in the process of a radical transformation and soon emerged as a key player in Europe. The decade after unification marked a shift in Germany’s political and ideological self-positioning in the international context, with German foreign policy moving towards an active participation in the shaping of European geopolitics. This was first played out in relation to the Balkans. The push for the recognition of Croatia was the first intervention undertaken by united Germany, and the military intervention against Serbia in 1999 sealed the transformation ‘in Germany’s self-image from a peaceful, non-aggressive into a warfaring nation’.¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 68.

¹⁷² Christiane Eilders and Albrecht Lüter, ‘Research Note: Germany at War Competing Framing Strategies in German Public Discourse’, *European Journal of Communication*, 15 (2000), 415–28 (p. 416).

Situating the texts of Turkish migration within the context of post-unification German culture, Adelson argues that in the 1990s, the Turks came to function as one of many ‘Others’ against whom the new German state could define itself as ‘civilized, democratic and European’.¹⁷³ Thus, the debates surrounding the National Monument for the Murdered Jews of Europe coincided with debates about Turkey’s membership in the EU, with ‘German opposition to Turkish membership [...] voiced in discursive terms alleging incompatible cultural values’, such as Turkey’s insufficient commitment to human rights.¹⁷⁴ In these discussions, Turkey (and Turks in Germany) served as a counterbalance to the new German state: ‘The more the Federal Republic chastised Turkey for its “civilizational” deficiency before and after 1990, the more robust Germany’s own civilizing commitment to European identity appeared’.¹⁷⁵ This alleged difference between the civilized German self and the barbaric non-European ‘Other’ is important in my analysis of German responses to the Yugoslav Wars. It seems that the debates about Turkey’s place in Europe and the discussions about Germany’s future role on the international scene in the context of the Yugoslav crisis were conducted using similar rhetorical strategies, marked by an Orientalizing, patronizing gaze. In what follows, I demonstrate how Yugoslavia came to serve as a proxy site where certain aspects of West German political consensus could be re-negotiated in the wake of unification.

Germany’s new war

Commentators note that Germany’s military involvement in the Balkans in 1999 would have been impossible without frequent discursive recourses to the Second World War. Joachim Jachnow remarks that ‘the German military’s return to offensive warfare, explicitly outlawed by the Constitution because of Nazi war crimes, was legitimized through the moral exploitation of the very same’.¹⁷⁶ This view is corroborated by the sociologist Michael Schwab-Trapp, who has examined statements by leading German politicians from the period. Schwab-Trapp argues: ‘Im Diskurs über den Jugoslawienkrieg verbindet sich der Diskurs über den Krieg mit einem

¹⁷³ Adelson, *The Turkish Turn*, p. 84.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 85.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 85.

¹⁷⁶ Joachim Jachnow, ‘What’s Become of the German Greens?’, *New Left Review*, 81 (2013), 95-117, <https://newleftreview.org/II/81/joachim-jachnow-what-s-become-of-the-german-greens> [accessed 22 January 2018] (p. 97).

Diskurs über die nationalsozialistische Vergangenheit, in dem die Bedeutung dieser Vergangenheit für das politische Handeln verändert und das Gebot “Nie wieder Krieg” aufgehoben wird’.¹⁷⁷ In various political discussions throughout the 1990s concerned with the Yugoslav Wars, the memory of the Holocaust was endowed with multiple, often conflicting meanings. Schwab-Trapp explains that references to the Second World War initially served as an argument *against* Germany’s participation in airstrikes against the Serbs. Joschka Fischer and Rudolf Scharping, who were later to play a decisive role in convincing the public to support the NATO operation in 1999, both stressed initially that sending German troops to Yugoslavia would represent a breach with the past which they were not willing to condone.¹⁷⁸ It was not until the Srebrenica massacre that the German discussion about the legitimacy of military action took a turning point. Within a month, the same left-liberal politicians were ready to argue in favour of an intervention, drawing historical parallels between the Bosnian War and the Second World War, this time, however, casting the Serb aggression as the return of fascism to Europe.¹⁷⁹ Similar historical comparisons were later drawn in the run-up to the war against Serbia in 1999. By then, however, Germany’s role on the international stage and the memory of the Nazi period had been redefined in terms of an ethical responsibility to prevent future genocide.

Comparing the Serb violence with Nazi crimes was an international trend, especially pronounced during the Kosovo crisis. Mick Hume quotes the British Foreign Secretary Robert Cook as referring to the Kosovo crisis as ‘the revival of fascism’.¹⁸⁰ Still, referencing the Second World War by public figures in the Federal Republic needs to be situated in the context of German memory culture. In fact, the debate about the Yugoslav Wars became one of the discursive sites where the German national identity and history were being radically contested after unification and a new political consensus was being negotiated in response to the changed geopolitics after the end of the Cold War.

¹⁷⁷ Michael Schwab-Trapp, ‘Der deutsche Diskurs über den Jugoslawienkrieg. Skizzen zur Karriere eines moralischen Dilemmas’, in *Medien in Konflikten. Holocaust-Krieg-Ausgrenzung*, ed. by Adi Grewenig and Marget Jäger (Duisburg: DISS, 2000), pp. 97–110 (p. 97).

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 101–102.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 103–105.

¹⁸⁰ Mick Hume, ‘Nazifying the Serbs, from Bosnia to Kosovo’, in *Degraded Capability: The Media and the Kosovo Crisis*, ed. by Philip Hammond and Edward S. Herman (London: Pluto Press, 2000), pp. 70–78 (p. 71).

Theoretical approaches

The German debate about the Yugoslav Wars needs to be situated in relation to the concept of the public sphere. Ever since the publication of his *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit: Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* in 1962, Jürgen Habermas has been a leading figure in academic discussions of this term.¹⁸¹ In his monograph, he investigates the bourgeois public sphere which emerged in Europe in the eighteenth century, when feudal power relations and absolutist rule were replaced by modern political systems. For Habermas, the public sphere is the domain where public opinion is formed. While the public sphere is in principle open to all citizens, ‘when the public is large this kind of communication requires certain means of dissemination and influence: today, newspapers and periodicals, radio and television are the media of the public sphere’.¹⁸² The political public sphere is concerned with the activities of the state, but the ‘coercive power of the state’ is not part of it; rather, the public sphere belongs to civil society. In turn, the notion of public opinion ‘refers to the functions of criticism and control of organized state authority that the public exercises informally, as well as formally during periodic elections’.¹⁸³

Nancy Fraser explains:

According to Habermas, the idea of a public sphere is that of a body of ‘private persons’ assembled to discuss matters of ‘public concern’ or ‘common interest’ [...] These publics aimed to mediate between ‘society’ and the state by holding the state accountable to ‘society’ via ‘publicity.’ At first this meant requiring that information about state functioning be made accessible so that state activities would be subject to critical scrutiny and the force of ‘public opinion.’ Later, it meant transmitting the considered ‘general interest’ of ‘bourgeois society’ to the state via forms of legally guaranteed free speech, free press, and free assembly, and eventually through the parliamentary institutions of representative government.¹⁸⁴

In Habermas’s view, an ideal public sphere should only concern ‘serious issues of real importance’, engage ‘in rational, logical argument’, and remain ‘unified and homogenous, refusing the fragmentation of niche audiences and different kinds of

¹⁸¹ Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit: Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1962).

¹⁸² Jürgen Habermas, ‘The Public Sphere’, in *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Anthology*, ed. by Robert E. Goodin and Philip Pettit (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 103–6 (p. 103).

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Nancy Fraser, ‘Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy’, *Social Text*, 1990, 56–80 (p. 58).

culture'.¹⁸⁵ It is not difficult to spot how elitist such thinking about the public sphere is and indeed, scholars have indicated that multiple forms of exclusion based on gender and class were fundamental to the formation of the liberal public space in a bourgeois society.¹⁸⁶ In contemporary Western democracies, the public sphere is not accessible to all, since 'subordinated social groups usually lack access to the material means of equal participation', such as dominant media outlets.¹⁸⁷

Despite their shortcomings, Habermas's ideas remain relevant today, especially for conceiving the dominant, official public sphere under examination in the current chapter. Fraser indicates that 'something like Habermas's idea of the public sphere is indispensable to critical social theory and to democratic political practice', since the concept makes it possible to theorize 'an institutionalized arena of discursive interaction' and envision 'a site for the production and circulation of discourses that can in principle be critical of the state'.¹⁸⁸ The important, and potentially critical, role of the public sphere in democratic societies explains why controversial decisions taken by governments, for example declaring a war, need to take public opinion into account. The fact that the public sphere comes about as a result of exclusion as much as participation is another reason why Germany's public debate about the Yugoslav Wars should be subject to critical scrutiny.

Discourses about the Balkans

Following the increased media attention devoted to the Balkans, numerous studies have addressed the way in which the region was perceived and misrepresented by Western journalists, writers, travellers, politicians, and scholars during the 1990s and in earlier periods. This body of research is informed by post-colonial and subaltern studies. A major theoretical intervention, Maria Todorova's *Imagining the Balkans*, was first published in 1997. Vesna Goldsworthy's *Inventing Ruritania: The Imperialism of the Imagination* (1998) examines images of the Balkans in British literature since the nineteenth century. In a series of articles, Milica Bakić-Hayden

¹⁸⁵ Alan McKee, *The Public Sphere: An Introduction* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/public-sphere/B6D1A41779C37221157A2E10C7E654D6> [accessed 26 January 2018] (p. 14).

¹⁸⁶ Fraser, pp. 59-62.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., pp. 64-65.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 57.

introduces the notion of ‘nesting orientalisms’ to describe the re-appropriation of orientalizing rhetoric within the Balkans.¹⁸⁹

In her article on rhetorical strategies of Balkanization, Vesna Goldsworthy cites President Clinton, who in 1999 described Kosovo as ‘a small place’, located ‘on a major fault line between Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, at the meeting place of Islam and both the Western and Orthodox branches of Christianity’.¹⁹⁰ Goldsworthy notes that the Balkans are often ‘defined not by identity traits of their own but by their position on the fault line’, which implies ‘an essentialist vision of the world as a set of colliding cultural and religious tectonic blocks’.¹⁹¹ Goldsworthy provides ample examples of British and American journalistic texts, memoirs by politicians, foreign correspondents, and scholarly texts published throughout the 1990s, where the Balkans and their inhabitants are described as primitive, ferocious, irrational, inevitably violent, hostile, and innately wild. What emerges out of these texts is a picture of a region which is forever caught up in a cycle of violence, a powder keg endangering European peace, and whose people constitute a different species. Goldsworthy argues that such shocking racializing and essentializing accounts ‘proved useful in exonerating outsiders of culpability for the crises in the Balkans’, since they ‘represented the peninsula as a source of instability, a threat to the outside world rather than a victim’.¹⁹² Indeed, the Yugoslav Wars were often discussed in terms of ‘ancient ethnic hatreds’, which provided a simplifying narrative of the complex interplay of ethnicity, religious affiliation and statehood in the former Yugoslavia. The implication here is that whenever various ethnic, racial and confessional groups live together on a small territory, hatred and animosity are inevitable. The rhetoric of ‘ancient ethnic hatreds’ was very popular in non-academic debates, such as the media, or among politicians, soldiers and writers.¹⁹³ The argument

¹⁸⁹ Milica Bakić-Hayden and Robert M Hayden, ‘Orientalist Variations on the Theme “Balkans”: Symbolic Geography in Recent Yugoslav Cultural Politics’, *Slavic Review*, 51 (1992), 1–15; Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, Updated edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Vesna Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania: The Imperialism of the Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, Yale University Press, 1998).

¹⁹⁰ President Clinton’s televised address to the nation, 24 March 1999. Quoted in: Vesna Goldsworthy, ‘Invention and In(ter)vention: The Rhetoric of Balkanization’, in *Balkan as a Metaphor. Between Globalization and Fragmentation*, ed. by Dušan I Bjelić and Obrad Savić (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2002), pp. 25–38 (p. 25).

¹⁹¹ Goldsworthy, ‘Invention and In(ter)vention: The Rhetoric of Balkanization’, p. 25.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹⁹³ Cf. Dejan Jovic, ‘The Disintegration of Yugoslavia. A Critical Review of Explanatory Approaches’, *European Journal of Social Theory*, 4 (2001), 101–20.

was ‘a rhetorical screen obscuring the modernity of the conflict’.¹⁹⁴ As I show in my discussion of secondary texts responding to the literature of post-Yugoslav migration, such simplifying historical narratives often find their way into literary scholarship which reiterates the supposed dichotomy between the civilized West and the ‘tribal’ animosities in the Balkans.

Such negative portrayals have a long tradition and are partly grounded in Europe’s colonial interests in the region. In her seminal study *Imagining the Balkans* (1997) Maria Todorova argues that already during the Balkans Wars (1912-1913), the Balkans were ‘described as the “other” of Europe’ and their inhabitants shown not to ‘care to conform to the standards of behaviour devised as normative by and for the civilized world’.¹⁹⁵ Todorova’s point of departure is the contention that the term ‘Balkanization’ serves in the Western academy as a disparagement implying ‘the parcelization of large and viable political units’ but also ‘a reversion to the tribal, the backward, the primitive, the barbarian’ (p. 1). Todorova attacks the ‘frozen image’ of Balkan brutality and barbarity which was evoked to ‘explain’ the Yugoslav Wars in the 1990s, when the Balkans came to function as ‘a powerful symbol conveniently located outside historical time’ (p. 7).

An issue related to balkanism is the process of self-Balkanization, whereby certain elements of hegemonic rhetoric positing an essential distinction between (Western) civilization and (Eastern) barbarity are appropriated by political or cultural elites within the Balkans. A case in point are films produced in the former Yugoslavia during and immediately after the wars, such as Emir Kusturica’s *Underground* (1995), Srđan Dragojević’s *Pretty Village, Pretty Flame* (1996), Goran Paskaljević’s *Cabaret Balkan* (1998) and Danis Tanović’s *No Man’s Land* (2001).¹⁹⁶ Meta Mazaj argues that such films catered to the Western desire to understand the conflict and to indulge in the alleged Balkan exoticism, since they depicted ‘a hypermasculine and patriarchal image of a nation, constructed in a thematic and stylistic framework that appealed to

¹⁹⁴ Milica Bakić-Hayden, ‘Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia’, *Slavic Review*, 54 (1995), 917–31 (p. 929).

¹⁹⁵ Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, p. 1. Further page references are given after quotations in the text.

¹⁹⁶ *Underground*, dir. by Emir Kusturica (Ciby 2000/Komuna, 1995); *Pretty Village, Pretty Flame*, dir. by Srđan Dragojević (RTS/Cobra Films, 1996); *Cabaret Balkan*, dir. by Goran Paskaljević (StudioCanal, 1998); *No Man’s Land*, dir. by Danis Tanović (Océan Films/Rai Cinema/Momentum Pictures, 2001).

international audiences, in no small amount because it affirmed the stereotypical image of the Balkans'.¹⁹⁷

German reactions to the Yugoslav Wars

Looking at specifically German-language responses to the Yugoslav Wars, I examine public enunciations by politicians, journalists and intellectuals, tracing patterns and developments in how the Yugoslav Wars were framed in the period between 1991 and 1999. I examine dominant public voices through print media, such as *Der Spiegel*, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine (FAZ)*, *Die Zeit*, and the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, as well as anthologies of texts by prominent intellectuals responding to the conflict. Unable to offer a comprehensive picture of those debates within the space of just one chapter, I examine selected contributions by renowned figures which I understand to reflect broader trends.

The recognition of Croatia

In June 1991, Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence from Yugoslavia. At this point, the European Community was still trying to prevent the disintegration of Yugoslavia and was unwilling to recognise these newly formed countries. The German government under Chancellor Helmut Kohl was the first to support the independence of Slovenia and Croatia. In December 1991, Germany broke the consensus within the EC, and the Bundestag 'voted unanimously to mandate the government to opt for recognition before Christmas 1991', with Foreign Minister Genscher aiming to seek the EC agreement for recognition.¹⁹⁸ By pushing for recognition, the German government ignored numerous opponents of Croatian and Slovenian independence, such as the UN Secretary-General, Javier Perez de Cuellar, George Bush, as well as Cyrus Vance and Lord Carrington.¹⁹⁹ However, Genscher's efforts proved fruitful, and the EC recognised Slovenia and Croatia on 15 January 1992.

¹⁹⁷ Meta Mazaj, 'Marking the Trail: Balkan Women Filmmakers and the Transnational Imaginary', in *After Yugoslavia: The Cultural Spaces of a Vanished Land*, ed. by Radmila Gorup (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), pp. 200–215 (p. 201).

¹⁹⁸ Tom Gallagher, *The Balkans after the Cold War: From Tyranny to Tragedy* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 70.

¹⁹⁹ Marie-Janine Calic, 'German Perspectives', in *International Perspectives on the Yugoslav Conflict*, ed. by Thomas Halverson and Alex Danchev (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1996), pp. 52–75.

Germany's role in the process proved quite controversial, with certain commentators and academics arguing that Germany had destroyed Yugoslavia through a 'premature' and 'unaccompanied' recognition of Slovenia and Croatia and was to blame for the bloody disintegration of the country.²⁰⁰ Tom Gallagher states that the 'most serious criticism levelled at Germany is that its "precipitate" recognition of Croatia engineered a chain of events that led to the declaration of Bosnian independence and the outbreak of the worst fighting in post-1991 Yugoslavia'.²⁰¹ However, Gallagher rejects this interpretation, pointing out that the Serbs had been preparing for the war in Bosnia since at least August 1991.²⁰² On the other hand, German historian Marie-Janine Calic notes that the decision to recognise Slovenia and Croatia and, subsequently, Bosnia in April 1992 was irresponsible, since 'the credibility of the German approach depended ultimately on the ability and willingness of the international community to use military force. Yet none of them, least of all Germany, was prepared to protect the new independent states by military means'.²⁰³ The German media played a big role in exerting pressure on the Bundestag in the run-up to the recognition of Slovenia and Croatia, especially after the escalation of violence between the JNA and the newly created republics.

In the media, one of the main advocates of the recognition of Croatia was Johann Georg Reißmüller, the former editor of the *FAZ*. Reißmüller is even credited by some with having a considerable influence on Helmut Kohl's policy.²⁰⁴ Reißmüller's articles, reprinted in the volume *Der Krieg von unserer Haustür. Hintergründe der kroatischen Tragödie* (1992), indicate his strong pro-Slovenian, pro-Croatian and anti-Yugoslav as well as anti-Serb stance. In the title of the first section of his book, Reißmüller describes Yugoslavia as a 'Zwangsstaat' and goes on to prove that Yugoslavia represented a clash between East and West, and that a

²⁰⁰ Michael Martens, 'Anerkennung Sloweniens und Kroatiens vor 20 Jahren: "Oder es wird zerfallen"', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 15 January 2012, <http://www.faz.net/1.1602228> [accessed 19 March 2018].

²⁰¹ Gallagher, p. 73.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Calic, 'German Perspectives', p. 61.

²⁰⁴ Jürgen Chrobog, former political director of the Foreign Office in 1991, claims: 'Herr Reißmüller war ein massiver Anhänger einer sofortigen Anerkennung Kroatiens und Sloweniens. Er hat ständig hierfür plädiert und über die F.A.Z. starken Druck ausgeübt, endlich die Anerkennung auszusprechen. Seine beinahe täglichen Leitartikel zu dieser Frage haben Kohls Jugoslawien-Politik getrieben. [...] Reißmüller hat uns alle unter erheblichen Handlungsdruck gesetzt'; Quoted in: Martens.

‘Kulturgrenze’ had divided the region since the fourth Century.²⁰⁵ The West, i.e. Croatia and Slovenia, was always opposed to the East, i.e. Serbia and Montenegro, and ‘Völker mit so verschiedenen Traditionen und Mentalitäten in einem Staat zusammenzubinden war falsch’ (p. 11). In Reißmüller’s view, the Serbs used the Yugoslav state to oppress other ethnic groups, striving for the creation of ‘Greater Serbia’. Therefore, Serbia was not ready to accept Slovenia’s and Croatia’s liberation from communism. Reißmüller describes the formation of independent states of Slovenia and Croatia as liberation from ‘oriental despotism’ (p. 118), which should be supported by the West. In the article dated October 1991, the author states: ‘Die westlichen Staaten [...] müssten Slowenien und Kroatien jetzt endlich anerkennen’ (p. 170). He condemns Western ‘appeasement’ policy towards Serbia, and the arms embargo preventing Croatia from obtaining weapons. He even demands a military intervention on behalf of Croatia.

Reißmüller’s bias towards Croatia is also connected with his tendentious and selective treatment of the history of Yugoslavia during the Second World War. He refers to the Serbs as ‘Chetniks’, a derogatory name dating back to the Serbian monarchist and nationalist paramilitary organisation active before and during the Second World War. On the other hand, Reißmüller plays down the fact that the Croats created a Nazi puppet state in 1941, presenting it as an act of national self-determination, for which the Croats were disproportionately punished by the Yugoslav regime: ‘die Kroaten hatten es unter der kommunistischen Herrschaft besonders schwer. Auf sie kam nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg die Rache dafür, daß sie 1941 gedacht hatten, jetzt sei die Gelegenheit, sich vom jugoslawischen Königreich zu trennen, das in Wahrheit ein großserbisches war und sie schlecht behandelte’ (p. 118). Thus, for Reißmüller, liberation from the (Eastern/Oriental) Serbian oppression could even justify collaboration with the Nazis.

Reißmüller’s analysis operates within an orientalisising and essentialising framework, which follows the logic of ‘nesting orientalisms’, as described by Bakić-Hayden. Bakić-Hayden notes that through its re-appropriation of orientalist ideology, ‘nesting orientalisms’ describe the complex pattern of othering in the former Yugoslavia. Within this symbolic geography, regions which previously belonged to

²⁰⁵ Johann Georg Reißmüller, *Der Krieg vor unserer Haustür. Hintergründe der kroatischen Tragödie* (Stuttgart: DVA, 1992), p. 10. Further page references are given after quotations in the text.

Austria-Hungary are regarded as culturally superior to ‘areas formerly ruled by the Ottoman Empire’.²⁰⁶ In Slovenia and Croatia, the historical links to the Habsburg Empire are perceived as proof of their affinity to Western Europe.²⁰⁷ Bakić-Hayden observes that the proclaimed ‘Europeanness’ of Slovenia and Croatia ‘has strengthened popular perception in the north and west of Yugoslavia that there is a southern, “Balkan burden,” which has slowed if not prevented entirely the non-Balkan parts of the country from being what they “really are” – European’.²⁰⁸ In a similar vein, those Yugoslavs who ‘have not scored high on the hegemonic western scale find their own “others,” whom they perceive as even lower’.²⁰⁹ For Serbs (as well as Croats) those ultimate others are Bosnian Muslims.²¹⁰ In his articles, Reißmüller reinforces the hierarchical ‘gradation of Orients’ within former Yugoslavia, and re-establishes the perceived border between Slovenia and Croatia, which had previously been part of the Habsburg monarchy, and Serbia, Bosnia and Montenegro, which were formerly ruled by the Ottoman Empire. In Reißmüller’s terms, this ‘cultural’ division directly corresponds to the split between the ‘Western’ and ‘Eastern’ Yugoslavs, with the ‘Eastern’ countries plagued with imperialist and despotic ambitions, and the ‘Western’ regions suffering under Serb expansionism. In his view, the Germans were obliged to support Slovenia and Croatia and thus prove their allegiance to civilized values associated with Western culture.

German reactions to the Bosnian war

Bosnia proclaimed its independence from Yugoslavia after the referendum on the weekend of 29 February and 1 March 1992. By 1 March, the Serb troops had encircled and cut off Sarajevo, thus starting a war which had been prepared well in advance by the Serb forces in Bosnia. The intention of Bosnian Serbs, backed by President Milošević in Belgrade, was to create a Serbian-dominated ‘new Yugoslavia’ after the secession of Slovenia and Croatia.²¹¹ This ‘Greater Serbia’ was to include Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Bosnia, with Bosnian Muslims accepting their status as minority within the state. At the same time, however, Milošević was carrying out talks

²⁰⁶ Bakić-Hayden, ‘Nesting Orientalisms’, p. 922.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 924.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid., p. 927.

²¹¹ Tim Judah, *The Serbs: History, Myth, and the Destruction of Yugoslavia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 200.

with President Tudjman in Croatia about partitioning Bosnia and thus creating both a Greater Croatia and a Greater Serbia.²¹²

The prompt recognition of Bosnia by the international community (EC) on 6 April 1992 gave the Bosnian government reasons to hope for military backing by the West. However, Western leaders, even though highly involved in peace negotiations in Bosnia, ruled out a military intervention. Tim Judah writes: 'Outraged, or rather embarrassed at their impotence, western leaders felt the pressure to "do something" but exactly what they did not know. They certainly did not want their young men to die fighting the Serbs'.²¹³ Western powers considered launching airstrikes against Serb positions around Sarajevo, which did not happen until the NATO air-raids against the Bosnian Serb Army in August 1995. Throughout the siege of Sarajevo, Western aid agencies provided food and supplies to the inhabitants of the city, benefitting from the fact that the Serbs handed over Sarajevo airport to the UN. However, 'not only did the international community feed the defenders of the city but, with scrupulous fairness, they fed the besiegers too, because otherwise they would have closed the airport again'.²¹⁴ In this way, the siege could go on indefinitely, and Western prominent figures, starting with President Mitterrand on 29 June 1992, could use the airport to fly into Sarajevo to show their solidarity with the besieged. Thus, for a period of more than three years, Western leaders in the US, Britain and France were reluctant to get involved and distanced themselves from the conflict, framing it as an inevitable result of ancient ethnic hatreds escalating after the collapse of Yugoslavia.

In Germany, the governing parties, the Christian Democratic Party (CDU), led by the chancellor Helmut Kohl, and the Free Democratic Party (FDP), 'agreed that Germany must participate in peace-keeping as well as peace-enforcement actions mandated by the UN'.²¹⁵ The German Air Force and the German Navy had been supporting the UN and NATO operations in former Yugoslavia since 1992.²¹⁶ In 1994, Germany reluctantly agreed to provide NATO with German Tornado planes in Bosnia, and in 1995 German non-combat troops were stationed in Bosnia. However, during the Bosnian war, Germany's military involvement was still out of the question,

²¹² Ibid., p. 198.

²¹³ Ibid., p. 212.

²¹⁴ Ibid., p. 213.

²¹⁵ Calic, 'German Perspectives', p. 63.

²¹⁶ Ibid., p. 65.

given constitutional constraints on the use of the German military. Still, through participation in the peace-keeping missions, the German government began a gradual process which would enable an increased German military involvement abroad, culminating in the operation in Kosovo in 1999. The war in Bosnia played an important role in ‘shifting German public opinion away from pacifism’,²¹⁷ with many German intellectuals and politicians supporting military involvement in Bosnia which would go beyond the peace-keeping missions sanctioned by the government.

The main parties in the opposition could not find a consensus concerning their political response to the Yugoslav conflict. The Social Democratic Party (SPD) was torn, since some of its members supported the intervention and other prominent figures, such as Oskar Lafontaine, opposed even the German participation in the NATO peace-keeping missions.²¹⁸ The most heated debate, however, took place among the members of the Green party, in which the discussion about the Bosnian war became ‘intertwined with struggle over the identity of the party’²¹⁹ and revealed the dilemma ‘between fundamental values that had been considered mutually reinforcing during the Cold War: between antifascism and pacifism; between internationalism and pacifism; and between collective security and antimilitarism’.²²⁰ Since its formation in 1980, the Green Party had been ‘identified with the demands of the peace movement for nuclear disarmament and the abolition of NATO’.²²¹ The anti-militarist wing of the party was worried that the deployment of troops in Bosnia could normalise military action as a tool of German foreign policy.²²² On the other hand, military intervention was particularly supported by women members of the Greens, as well as human rights activists from the former GDR. The feminist wing of the Green party, including Claudia Roth, Waltraud Schoppe and Eva-Maria Quistorp, argued that the war was especially targeting women, and expressed their concerns about such issues as war rape, detention camps, and mass killings. The supporters of

²¹⁷ Karoline von Oppen, ‘Imagining the Balkans, Imagining Germany: Intellectual Journeys to Former Yugoslavia in the 1990s’, *The German Quarterly*, 79.2 (2006), 192–210 (p. 194).

²¹⁸ Calic, ‘German Perspectives’, p. 64.

²¹⁹ Alice H. Cooper, ‘When Just Causes Conflict with Accepted Means: The German Peace Movement and Military Intervention in Bosnia’, *German Politics and Society*, 15.3 (1997), 99–118 (p. 111).

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

²²¹ Jachnow, p. 96.

²²² ‘35 grüne Jahre: Die Frage der militärischen Gewalt. Winfried Nachtwei über einen schmerzhaften Prozess der Partei und Erlebnisse auf einer Bosnienreise’, 6 July 2010, <https://www.gruene.de/ueber-uns/35-gruene-jahre-35-gruene-geschichten/35-gruene-jahre-18-die-frage-der-militaerischen-gewalt.html> [accessed 19 March 2018].

intervention argued that pacifism was no longer able to protect the civilians in Bosnia, and thus should be rejected as a political tool.

A re-birth of National Socialism?

In August 1992, British television broadcast images of emaciated prisoners standing behind barbed wire at the detention camp run by Bosnian Serbs in Trnopolje in Bosnia. The camp, which was a site of beatings, rape, starvation, and torture, accommodated a total of 25,000 inmates, 90 of whom are believed to have died there.²²³ The images aired on TV clearly evoked photos taken at Nazi concentration camps and as a result, the Serb-run camps in Trnopolje, Omarska and Keraterm soon gained international notoriety.

Mick Hume argues that in contemporary secular societies, the Nazis function ‘as the modern agents of hell on earth’ and therefore an ‘effective way to demonise anybody today is to link them somehow to the Nazi experience’.²²⁴ Here, my aim is not to question the fact that Bosnian Serb troops and militias committed grave war crimes but rather to consider the comparisons drawn by certain Western commentators between the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo and the Holocaust.



Fig. 1.1. Footage from Trnopolje (ITN)

In the US, members of the Jewish community voiced their outrage at the perceived failure of Western powers to prevent the crimes in Bosnia, which they compared to the Western indifference to the plight of the Jews. Henry Siegman, head of the American Jewish Congress, wrote in 1993: ‘What we are witnessing is the West’s

²²³ Katarina Panic, ‘Bosnia’s Notorious Trnopolje Jail Camp Remembered’, *Balkan Insight* <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/bosnia-s-infamous-pow-camp-remembered> [accessed 19 March 2018].

²²⁴ Hume, p. 71.

total abandonment of Bosnia's Muslims to the destruction programmed for them. It is as complete and as cynical an abandonment as that of the Jews in World War II'.²²⁵ The conceptual link between the Holocaust and the war in Bosnia (and later in Kosovo) is further explored by Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, who claim that, even though the 'trope that equates Serbs with the Nazis did not spring immediately from the facts, [...] [s]lowly over the course of the Bosnian conflict the US public came to identify the Serbs with the Nazis'.²²⁶ According to Levy and Sznaider, the parallels drawn between the Holocaust and the conflict made the US public more likely to support a military intervention in Bosnia.

In Germany, it was the massacre in Srebrenica that brought about a turning point in how the public responded to the war. The central figure in the debate was Joschka Fischer, who at the time served as the spokesperson for the Green parliamentary fraction in the Bundestag. On 30 July 1995 Fischer published an open letter to the members of the Green Party, in which he backed up military protection of the UN 'safe zones' in Bosnia, given the failure of the UNPROFOR soldiers in Srebrenica. Fischer justified his shift away from pacifism with a reference to Germany's Nazi past. He wrote: 'droht unserer Generation jetzt nicht ein ähnliches politisch-moralisches Versagen, wie der Generation unserer Eltern und Großeltern in den dreißiger Jahren [...]?'²²⁷ According to Fischer, post-war Germans were obliged to prevent genocide, partly because their pre-war forefathers failed to do so. In order to justify his position, Fischer made clear that the Serbs were renegades, who 'nationalistisch-völkisch denken und handeln, die eine fast schon perverse Lust am Töten haben und die auf nichts als auf brutale und verbrecherische Gewalt setzen'.²²⁸ Franco Zotta, in his astute analysis of Fischer's rhetoric, states that '[i]n der Wahrnehmung eines linken Nachkriegsdeutschen mutiert der Bürgerkrieg [...] zur

²²⁵ Henry Siegman, 'Perspective on Bosnia: The Holocaust Analogy Is Too True: A Muslim People Are Targeted for Extinction, and the West Turns Away', *Los Angeles Times*, 11 July 1993 http://articles.latimes.com/1993-07-11/opinion/op-12060_1_muslim-state [accessed 19 March 2018].

²²⁶ Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, 'Memory Unbound. The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory', *European Journal of Social Theory*, 5.1 (2002), 87–106 (pp. 97-98).

²²⁷ Fischer, Joschka, 'Die Katastrophe in Bosnien und die Konsequenzen für unsere Partei Bündnis 90/Die Grünen: Ein Brief an die Bundestagsfraktion und an die Partei', 30 July 1995, https://www.gruene.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Dokumente/Grüne_Geschichte/JoschkaFischer_Die_Katastrophe_in_Bosnien_und_die_Konsequenzen_fuer_unsere_Partei_1995.pdf [accessed 31 January 2018], p. 9.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

Wiedergeburt des Nationalsozialismus.’²²⁹ Zotta shows that the main reason for Fischer’s rejection of pacifism was his anxiety, caused by the return of ethnic violence to the supposedly civilised and violence-free Europe. The war in Yugoslavia disturbed the allegedly pacifist consensus of post-war history, and therefore made Fischer re-evaluate his beliefs, which had remained unscathed by other non-European wars. This analysis reveals the Eurocentric bias of responses linking the Yugoslav war with Nazi violence and shows that Srebrenica prepared the ground for the Greens supporting the German military intervention in Kosovo. Joschka Fischer, who in 1994 still opposed the engagement of German troops in a region ‘where Hitler’s troops had stormed during the Second World War,’²³⁰ had no such qualms in 1999 when, as Foreign Minister and Vice-Chancellor of Germany, he condoned the deployment of German Air Force in Serbia.

The framing of the Serbs as the new Nazis and the usage of the term ‘Holocaust’ to describe the Yugoslav conflict has been critiqued by Hayden, who states that ‘the effort to fit the ethno-national mass killings in the former Yugoslavia into a framework defined by the Holocaust has produced systematic distortions in the ways in which the conflict has been presented’.²³¹ Also, ‘the invocation of genocide’ appeals to emotion rather than reason and may serve as ‘a “God term”, the ultimate point of reference of a rhetorical framework, invoked to forestall further examination by all but heretics’.²³² Similarly, Nataša Kovačević claims that approaching the wars with ‘the “same” ethical outrage that followed the World War II horrors [...] freezes the wars’ many actors in the imagery of Nazi-like depravity, which relies on a depoliticised language of ethics and morality’.²³³ In this rhetoric, the repetition of the Holocaust might serve to redeem Western European actors, since ‘the fanatics are now [...] in Eastern rather than Western Europe, “we” can now do something to prevent disaster’ (p. 160). Engaging with the perception of the Yugoslav Wars from a post-structuralist and post-colonial perspective, Kovačević criticises the ‘progressive, liberal, or leftist’ discourse which, although opposing such oppressive

²²⁹ Franco Zotta, ‘Es geht um die “moralische Seele”’, *Die Zeit*, 11 August 1995 http://www.zeit.de/1995/33/Es_geht_um_die_moralische_Seele [accessed 19 March 2018].

²³⁰ *Die Tageszeitung*, 30 December 1994, quoted in Jachnow, p. 95.

²³¹ Hayden, ‘Mass Killings and Images of Genocide in Bosnia’, p. 488.

²³² *Ibid.*, p. 489.

²³³ Nataša Kovačević, *Narrating Post/Communism: Colonial Discourse and Europe’s Borderline Civilization* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 159. Further page references are given after quotations in the text.

political forms as Titoism or nationalism, uses racially informed rhetoric to support military intervention in former Yugoslavia. This discourse is characterised by a tendency to designate Serbia ‘as a terrorist state’ and to demonize Serbs as ‘aggressors and evil expansionists’ (p. 161). Kovačević does not dismiss all forms of diplomatic or even military intervention and does not try to ‘gloss over Serbia’s undoubtedly gruesome share in the war’ (p. 162) but rather finds fault with the ideology which ‘relies on the politics of blame and collective guilt, ethnicized (for the most part) as Serbian, and on the politics of reward for the good ethnicities, (for the most part) Moslem, Albanian, or Croatian’ (p. 162).

Deploying a psychoanalytic framework, Karoline von Oppen argues that the ‘use of historical analogies between Balkan and Nazi violence’ reveals an anxiety caused by the Balkans’ perceived liminality and in-betweenness, identified by Maria Todorova as key features of balkanist discourse.²³⁴ Oppen argues that this ‘liminality is suggested in the use of historical analogies between Balkan and Nazi violence’, which is situated in Europe’s past and hence ‘the same but different; European but other’.²³⁵ The Third Reich belongs to the past which has been reworked and which can never be repeated. In their pronouncements condemning Serb violence, German politicians distanced themselves from the Balkans, traditionally regarded as semi-European, but also from Germany’s Nazi past. By allocating collective guilt for the war crimes to the Serbs and by constructing them as the new fascists, the memories of the Nazi crimes could be displaced and erased, and the West (or, Germany) could assume the role of a humanitarian peace-keeper, and redeem its failure to stop the Nazis during the Second World War. Thus, the conflict in Yugoslavia enabled the ‘self-beautification’ of the West, since ‘[t]he knowledge of Balkan violence [...] is also knowledge of Western peace.’²³⁶

German intellectuals and the question of military intervention

Quite surprisingly, as opposed to French or American commentators, German intellectuals proved quite reluctant to engage in a discussion concerning the Bosnian

²³⁴ Karoline von Oppen, ‘“(un)sägliche Vergleiche”’: What Germans Remembered (and Forgot) in Former Yugoslavia in the 1990s’, in *German Culture, Politics, and Literature into the Twenty-First Century: Beyond Normalization*, ed. by Stuart Taberner and Paul Cooke (New York: Camden House, 2006), pp. 167–80 (p. 169).

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Bjelić, p. 11.

war. Among those who did were Peter Schneider and Herta Müller, who not only called for military action in Bosnia but also criticised other West German intellectuals unwilling to abandon their faith in pacifism in the face of violent acts committed by the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia. Indeed, in contrast to the Gulf War, when ‘the debate centred in the broad left intellectual milieu as well as in the SPD and the Greens’, during the war in Bosnia, ‘intellectuals like Wolf Biermann and Hans-Magnus Enzensberger contributed little to the public debate’, and the discussion took place mainly ‘among Green politicians in both eastern and western Germany’.²³⁷

Jürgen Habermas explains his silence in relation to the Bosnian war by saying that the West faced ‘die unheimliche Alternative [...], entweder selbst dort Krieg zu führen, um das Land zum Frieden zu zwingen, oder die Leute dort ihre Kriege führen zu lassen’.²³⁸ These two possibilities left him speechless:

was sollte ich mich zu einer so schwerwiegenden Alternative äußern, solange sie noch nicht unausweichlich zu sein schien? Ich hatte immer Verständnis für einen hinhaltenden Kurs der - sagen wir - geringeren Verantwortung. Wer Krieg führt, ist bereit zu töten. Wer möchte denn diese Verantwortung übernehmen? Ich sah keinen Grund, irgendwen mit meiner Stimme, die ja sowieso nicht zählt, in einen Krieg zu treiben.²³⁹

Habermas changed his mind on the matter after the massacre of Srebrenica, after which he advocated a NATO intervention against the Serbs. He argued that the military action in Yugoslavia should be supported by German forces, since the Nazi past can no longer deter the Federal Republic from supporting the UN’s humanitarian missions:

Wer daran interessiert ist, daß die Uno instand gesetzt wird, mit der Rückendeckung einer internationalen Polizei Menschenrechte global durchzusetzen, kann nicht abseits stehenbleiben. [...] Die historische Hypothek, die Sie erwähnen, mag eine gewisse Zurückhaltung rechtfertigen, aber nicht die Inkonsequenz, nur die Soldaten anderer Nationen vorzuschicken.²⁴⁰

²³⁷ Alice H. Cooper, *Paradoxes of Peace: German Peace Movements since 1945* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), p. 262.

²³⁸ ‘Ein Abgrund von Trauer’, *Der Spiegel*, 7 August 1995 <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-9207454.html> [accessed 29 March 2018].

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

Here, Habermas adopts the language of universal human rights and describes NATO as a global police force, thereby admitting that the West has the right to intervene in other sovereign states.²⁴¹

Historian Dunja Melčić speaks of a ‘bankruptcy of critical intellectuals’ in relation to German responses to the Yugoslav wars.²⁴² In her analysis Melčić subscribes to the ethnicised view of the conflict in which the Serbs carry the entire blame for the war. For Melčić, as for Reißmüller, the declaration of independence by Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia was an act of liberation from totalitarianism.²⁴³ This act had nothing to do with nationalism, since the only nation pursuing nationalist policies were the Serbs. Melčić regards the Serbs as solely responsible for the war, with their intolerance, lust for power and expansionism marking their politics in the Balkans over the last 150 years. What is more, Melčić claims that Western commentators make a mistake when they mourn the multiethnic Yugoslavia which, as a matter of fact, was a ‘Völkerkäfig’.²⁴⁴

It transpires then that the perceived failure of German intellectuals lies in their failure to take sides, and to allocate the entire blame for the conflict to the Serbs. It is true that, as shown above, Western commentators did not immediately ‘recognise’ the Serbs as the main villains in the Yugoslav war, and instead talked about the conflict in terms of ancient hatreds. Still, already in 1992, certain German writers displayed a strong anti-Serb attitude, and were ready to call for military intervention on behalf of Bosnian Muslims. Herta Müller criticised German media for their engagement with the war in former Yugoslavia.²⁴⁵ For Müller, presenting the conflict as a messy affair with no culprit corresponds to the vision disseminated by Serb propaganda. The author seems to be in no doubt that the fault lies with the ‘großserbischen Herrenmenschen’.²⁴⁶ Müller contrasts her own position with that of a ‘Western intellectual’ who has never lived in a totalitarian state: ‘Wer in seiner eigenen Biographie die Erfahrung der Diktatur nicht hat, der denkt mit Absicht oder aus

²⁴¹ For a critique of Western humanitarianism, see: Stephen Hopgood, *The Endtimes of Human Rights* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

²⁴² Dunja Melčić, ‘Der Bankrott der kritischen Intellektuellen’, in *Europa im Krieg. Die Debatte über den Krieg im ehemaligen Jugoslawien*, ed. by Willi Winkler (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1992), pp. 35-45.

²⁴³ Ibid., p. 37.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 39.

²⁴⁵ Müller, Herta, ‘Die Tage werden weitergehen’, in *Europa im Krieg. Die Debatte über den Krieg im ehemaligen Jugoslawien*, ed. by Willi Winkler (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1992), pp. 95-101.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 96.

Unwissenheit weit daneben'.²⁴⁷ Müller claims that she, as a survivor of the Ceaușescu regime, has more insight into the functioning of Yugoslavia, which in her view was a comparable dictatorship. This 'insider' knowledge permits her to compare Yugoslavia not just to Ceaușescu's Romania but also to Nazi Germany, when she asks her readers: 'Wem nützt der Pazifismus, der beteuert, dass er gegen jeden Krieg ist, wenn ein Krieg tobt? Wenn das Vorbild für Gesetze die Judengesetze des Faschismus sind?'.²⁴⁸ Müller rejects any comparisons made between the proposed NATO intervention in Serbia and the violence committed in the region by the *Wehrmacht*. According to the writer, it is wrong to designate a military intervention as war. She writes:

Eine grobe Fälschung [...] ist es auch, wenn man eine militärische Intervention als Krieg bezeichnet. [...] Die Wehrmacht bringt man ins Spiel, als ginge es darum, ein Land zu erobern, und nicht einen Krieg zu beenden. Dabei weiß man, dass man nur die Nachschubwege zerstören müsste, auf denen die schweren Waffen aus Belgrad rollen.²⁴⁹

Here, Müller seems to subscribe to the liberal view in which Western military intervention is justified by its humanitarian mission, and no mention is made of civilian victims on the side of the alleged aggressor.

Calls for military intervention only intensified as the war progressed. In 1994, Peter Schneider, a leftist intellectual and a former organizer of the '68 Berlin student movement, travelled to Sarajevo and wrote a report for *Der Spiegel*. Like Müller, Schneider challenges the Western tendency to frame the war as 'Schlachten dort unten' and 'Bürgerkrieg,' in which it is impossible to distinguish between the victim and the perpetrator.²⁵⁰ Schneider's criticism is aimed at the non-action of the Western powers, which failed to react to the genocide on Bosnian people committed by Serbian forces. According to Schneider, 'Was sich in Sarajevo (und anderswo in Bosnien) abspielt, ist kein Krieg, sondern ein wahlloses Massaker an der Zivilbevölkerung [...]. Was dort vonstatten geht, ist ein faschistisch inspirierter Eroberungs- und Vernichtungsfeldzug gegen ethnisch gemischte Gemeinschaften'.²⁵¹ The comparison between the Serbs and the Nazis does not dominate Schneider's analysis but it is still present. Talking about war crimes committed by Bosnian Muslims, Schneider states

²⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 97.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 96.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 99.

²⁵⁰ Peter Schneider, 'Bosnien: Der Sündenfall Europas', *Der Spiegel*, 14 February 1994 <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-13684449.html> [accessed 29 March 2018].

²⁵¹ Ibid.

that one should not compare these crimes to the atrocities committed by the Serbs, since doing so would be the same as equating the acts of vengeance committed by the Poles against the Germans before and after 1945 with the crimes of the Nazis.

The above analysis indicates that during the Bosnian war, those German intellectuals willing to participate in the debate rejected the orientalist rhetoric of ‘congenital violence’ of Balkan peoples and instead employed a no less essentializing discourse in which the Serbs were cast as nationalist, intolerant and bloodthirsty. Of course, the atrocities committed by the Serbs during the war should not be forgotten or glossed over. However, a discourse in which the warring sides are described exclusively in ethnic terms and where military intervention is justified in terms of humanitarianism, is highly problematic. Nataša Kovačević notes that framing war as a humanitarian intervention makes it impossible to raise the question of Serbian civilian victims. As a result, the Serbs are established as ‘collateral damage’.²⁵² The Serbs become dehumanised, but the same fate befalls Bosnian Moslems and Kosovo Albanians, who ‘become biopolitical objects of intervention as much as Serbs’ since the ‘decision on their life and death, although it has a seemingly more favourable outcome [...], is likewise imagined to be the prerogative of the imperial police’.²⁵³ Such an arbitrary approach to war casualties is critiqued by Hans Magnus Enzensberger in his article about the NATO intervention in Kosovo, where he renounces the differential media treatment of victims depending on their ethnicity:

Drei amerikanische Soldaten, die in Gefangenschaft geraten sind, haben im Fernsehen und in der Presse dasselbe Gewicht wie ein oder zwei Dutzend verletzter oder getöteter Serben, und diese wiederum wiegen ein paar hunderttausend vertriebener Kosovaren auf. Das spezifische Gewicht eines Menschenlebens ist offenbar eine variable Größe.²⁵⁴

This gradation in the media depiction of victims suggests that the lives of Western, white males are valued more than lives of the locals. Such a view ties in with the narrative of a just war, whereby the American soldiers acted as a force for good and only found themselves in the Balkans because their government was trying to ‘help’.

²⁵² Kovačević, p. 161.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Hans Magnus Enzensberger, ‘Ein seltsamer Krieg. Zehn Auffälligkeiten’, in *Der westliche Kreuzzug. 41 Positionen zum Kosovo-Krieg*, ed. by Frank Schirmacher (Stuttgart: DVA, 1999), pp. 28–30 (p. 29).

In this way, Western humanitarianism, military or not, serves as continuation of old forms of Western dominance over the Balkans.

Over the course of the 1990s, German public opinion gradually shifted towards a consensus that military engagement abroad was an acceptable tool of German foreign policy. This process has been described by scholars in terms of a 'normalisation' of German political life after reunification. Normalisation has been described by Stuart Taberner as a process of transformation of the unified Germany into 'a modern, forward-looking country, mindful of its history but not obsessed by it'.²⁵⁵ Calls for an increased normalisation of Germany's relationship with its past first came from conservative circles around Helmut Kohl in the 1980s. However, the process was further advanced under Gerhard Schröder of the Social Democratic Party. In 1998, Schröder defeated Helmut Kohl in the German federal election, which allowed him to form a coalition with the Green Party. The election marked 'a generational change'²⁵⁶ in German politics, and ended the 16-year-long period of rule of the conservative party under Kohl. After the election, the SPD formed a coalition with the Green Party, the first red-green coalition in German history. Joschka Fischer, the Green Party leader and a former squatter and protester, became Foreign Minister in the Schröder cabinet. It was this unprecedented centre-left coalition which led Germany into war for the first time since the Second World War.

NATO's military involvement in Yugoslavia

Between 24 March and 10 June 1999, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation conducted a bombing of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, hitting targets in Kosovo, Vojvodina, Serbia proper and Montenegro. The bombings, codenamed Operation Allied Force, were a reaction to a violent conflict between the Yugoslav army and police and the Kosovo Liberation Army. The intervention was aimed at stopping the violations of human rights committed by the Yugoslav forces in Kosovo, as well as at withdrawing the Yugoslav army from the province, 'ensuring the return of Kosovar refugees [...] to their homes'.²⁵⁷ According to Amnesty International,

²⁵⁵ Stuart Taberner and Paul Cooke, 'Introduction', in *German Culture, Politics, and Literature into the Twenty-First Century: Beyond Normalization*, ed. by Stuart Taberner and Paul Cooke (New York: Camden House, 2006), pp. 1–15 (p. 2).

²⁵⁶ 'Kohl's long reign ends', *BBC News*, 27 September 1998, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/181335.stm> [accessed 29 March 2018].

²⁵⁷ 'NATO/Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY): "Collateral Damage" or Unlawful Killings? Violations of the Laws of War by NATO During Operation Allied Force', 5 June 2000,

‘whatever their intentions - NATO forces did commit serious violations of the laws of war leading in a number of cases to the unlawful killings of civilians’.²⁵⁸ Approximately 495 civilians were killed and 820 injured during the air strikes,²⁵⁹ and the bombings hit not just military, but also civilian targets, such as hospitals, schools, bridges, and cultural institutions. In certain cities, the bombings of oil refineries, factories and industrial complexes caused severe environmental damage, putting the inhabitants’ health at risk.²⁶⁰

The campaign against Yugoslavia was supported by the German Air Force and German soldiers on board Tornado planes. The air-strikes in Yugoslavia were Germany’s first military engagement since the Second World War. As Jachnow puts it, in March 1999 the ‘German Luftwaffe was back in the Balkans, 58 years almost to the day after the last bombardment of the Yugoslav capital in 1941’.²⁶¹ German participation in the NATO intervention, carried out without a UN mandate, presented a major shift in German foreign policy. To lend moral legitimacy to the bombings, politicians in Germany presented Operation Allied Force as a ‘humanitarian intervention’,²⁶² aimed at preventing the genocide of Albanians in Kosovo.

The language of humanitarianism was also employed by Tony Blair, who described the war against Serbia as ‘a just war, not based on territorial ambition but on values’.²⁶³ Blair became Prime Minister in 1997, succeeding the Tory government led by John Major, who had been reluctant to get involved in the conflict in Bosnia.²⁶⁴ When animosities escalated between the Kosovo Liberation Army and Serb forces in 1998, Western diplomats demanded that Milošević enter negotiations about Kosovo’s autonomy, which he refused and instead intensified the attacks against Kosovo

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR70/018/2000/en> [accessed 22 January 2018].

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ ‘Serbia: Impunity for NATO – Ten Years after Operation Allied Force’, 23 April 2009, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/press-releases/2009/04/serbia-impunity-nato-e28093-ten-years-after-operation-allied-force-20090423/> [accessed 22 January 2018].

²⁶⁰ ‘The Kosovo Conflict. Consequences for the Environment and Human Settlements,’ <http://www.grid.unep.ch/btf/final/finalreport.pdf> [accessed 22 January 2018].

²⁶¹ Jachnow, p. 95.

²⁶² ‘Dieser Krieg sei in Wahrheit eigentlich kein Krieg, sondern eine “humanitäre Intervention” gewesen, die darauf abzielte, einen Völkermord an den Kosovo-Albanern zu verhindern’; Source: Franziska Augstein, ‘Als die Menschenrechte schießen lernten’, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 11 May 2010, <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/kosovo-krieg-als-die-menschenrechte-schiessen-lernten-1.457678> [accessed 22 January 2018]

²⁶³ Con Coughlin, ‘Defiant Warmonger to the Last’, *The Telegraph*, 9 May 2007, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1551087/Defiant-warmonger-to-the-last.html> [accessed 22 January 2018].

²⁶⁴ John Kampfner, *Blair’s Wars* (London: Free Press, 2004), pp. 36-61.

Albanian military leaders and civilian population. After many rounds of failed negotiations, NATO launched air strikes, while Milošević continued his military campaign against Kosovo Albanians, resulting in 850,000 refugees fleeing to neighbouring countries, mainly Albania and Macedonia, and 200,000 people being displaced within Kosovo.²⁶⁵ Finally, pressure from Russia forced the Serbs to withdraw from Kosovo, but this did not put an end to human rights abuses in the region.²⁶⁶

A shifting consensus in Germany

The participation in the wars in Kosovo and Afghanistan marked a U-turn in Germany's foreign policy. Chancellor Schröder argued that the Nazi occupation of the Balkans meant that the Federal Republic had a special responsibility to intervene and prevent ethnic cleansing in the area.²⁶⁷ After the bombings in Serbia, SPD Defense Minister Rudolf Scharping emphasized that Germans should be proud of the fact that for the first time after the Second World War, German soldiers fought in Serbia alongside other Europeans to defend human dignity.²⁶⁸

The Western intervention in Kosovo has been subject to heated journalistic and scholarly debate, with many critics arguing that the military intervention against Slobodan Milošević provided NATO with a new *raison d'être* after the collapse of the Soviet Union.²⁶⁹ It is all the more striking that this military operation was supported by the Green party in Germany. Joschka Fischer's attitude towards the Kosovo crisis shows that during his time as foreign minister, he underwent a transformation from a leftist activist into a political realist.²⁷⁰ As expected, Fischer's decision to support the war led to major discord within his own party, with anti-war members of the Greens demanding a special party congress at which to discuss the

²⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 59.

²⁶⁶ Neil Clark, 'Kosovo and the Myth of Liberal Intervention', *The Guardian*, 15 December 2010 <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/dec/15/balkans-report-blairs-liberal-intervention> [accessed 22 January 2018].

²⁶⁷ Schwab-Trapp, p. 106.

²⁶⁸ 'Rudolf Scharping zu Gast bei "Menschen 99" (1999)', ZDF <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kqX-EeulmBw> [accessed 2 January 2018].

²⁶⁹ Cf. Philip Hammond and Edward S. Herman, *Degraded Capability: The Media and the Kosovo Crisis* (London: Pluto Press, 2000); Noam Chomsky, *The New Military Humanism: Lessons from Kosovo* (London: Common Courage Press, 1999).

²⁷⁰ Christian Hacke, 'Die Außenpolitik der Regierung Schröder/Fischer: Zwischenbilanz und Perspektiven', *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung* <http://www.bpb.de/apuz/26588/die-aussenpolitik-der-regierung-schroeder-fischer-zwischenbilanz-und-perspektiven?p=all> [accessed 29 March 2018].

issue. In his speech held at the congress in Bielefeld on 13 May 1999, Fischer justified German involvement in Kosovo with loaded references to the memory of the Holocaust: ‘Auschwitz ist unvergleichbar. Aber ich stehe auf zwei Grundsätzen, nie wieder Krieg, nie wieder Auschwitz, nie wieder Völkermord, nie wieder Faschismus’.²⁷¹ Despite his claim that Auschwitz is incomparable, Fischer effectively equates the violent acts committed by the Serbs under Milošević in Kosovo with the Holocaust. Fischer’s stance provoked a violent response of its own, when a red paint bomb was thrown at Fischer during the conference. Fischer’s ‘Farbbeutel-Rede’ figures as a separate entry in the *Lexikon der “Vergangenheitsbewältigung” in Deutschland*, which reads:

Fischer [...] diente die Chiffre ‘Auschwitz’ [...] als Begründung eines der historischen Verantwortung der Deutschen Rechnung tragenden Interventionismus. [...] ‘Auschwitz’ als das Böse schlechthin bietet wie kaum ein anderes historisches Ereignis die Möglichkeit, in aktualisierende Sinnstiftungen einmontiert zu werden, verliert dabei aber [...] ebenso an Eindeutigkeit wie an Überzeugungskraft.²⁷²

The authors argue that a political instrumentalization of the Holocaust went hand in hand with a dangerous tendency on Fischer’s part to universalize the event, which as a result lost its historical specificity. Auschwitz turned into a metaphor which could be freely co-opted by politicians. Therefore, in the debate about the 1999 air strikes, the memory of the Holocaust came to serve as a justification of Germany’s *duty* to intervene in Serbia and Kosovo, and the principle of ‘Nie wieder Auschwitz’ effectively displaced the tenet of ‘Nie wieder Krieg’.²⁷³

German public opinion, and especially the media, did not oppose the government’s policy, accepting the dominant narrative that the war against Yugoslavia was indeed necessary to save Albanians from genocide. Writing for *Die Zeit*, Jürgen Habermas underscores that the war against Serbia is waged in the name of universal human rights, as opposed to particularist interests of NATO members:

Der vorliegende Fall zeigt, daß universalistische Rechtfertigungen keineswegs immer die Partikularität uneingestander Interessen verschleiern. [...] weder das den USA zugeschriebene Motiv der

²⁷¹ ‘Wortlaut: Auszüge aus der Fischer-Rede’, *Spiegel Online*, 13 May 1999, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/wortlaut-auszuege-aus-der-fischer-rede-a-22143.html> [accessed 29 March 2018].

²⁷² *Lexikon der ‘Vergangenheitsbewältigung’ in Deutschland. Debatten- und Diskursgeschichte des Nationalsozialismus nach 1945*, ed. by Torben Fischer, and Matthias N. Lorenz (Bielefeld: transcript, 2007), pp. 304-305 (p. 305).

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

Sicherung und Erweiterung von Einflußsphären noch das der Nato zugeschriebene Motiv der Rollenfindung, [...] erklären den Entschluß zu einem [...] Eingriff. [...] Weil der Sicherheitsrat blockiert ist, kann sich die Nato nur auf die moralische Geltung des Völkerrechts berufen. [...] Selbst 19 zweifellos demokratische Staaten bleiben, wenn sie sich selbst zum Eingreifen ermächtigen, Partei. [...] insoweit handeln sie paternalistisch. Dafür gibt es gute moralische Gründe. [...] Politologen haben festgestellt, daß sich eine Differenz zwischen 'Erster' und 'Zweiter' Welt in einem neuen Sinne herausgebildet hat. Nur die friedlichen, wohlhabenden OECD-Gesellschaften können es sich leisten, ihre nationalen Interessen mit dem halbwegs weltbürgerlichen Anspruchsniveau der Vereinten Nationen mehr oder weniger in Einklang zu bringen.²⁷⁴

This lengthy quotation shows that for Habermas, the 'objective' economic difference between Western and Eastern countries means that the West can look beyond its own interests and act on behalf of global standards. Habermas forgets to mention that these supposedly international moral standards were formed by West Europeans themselves, who see it as their prerogative to interfere in less developed areas. The existence of this neo-colonial project is denied by Habermas, who justifies the paternalizing attitude of NATO in moral terms, thereby suggesting that the military organisation acts as a concerned parent towards the more barbaric parts of Europe.

The debate about the Kosovo war conducted in German national newspapers such as the *FAZ*, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, the *Frankfurter Rundschau*, the *taz* and *Die Welt* demonstrated a high degree of consent. Eilders and Lüter conclude that the discussions in leading national newspapers 'did not exceed the limits of parliamentary discourse, but rather reflected the high level of consensus between government and opposition'.²⁷⁵ A case in point is an article from *Die Welt* describing a state visit by President Clinton to Germany during the bombings. Together, Clinton and Schröder paid a visit to a refugee shelter in Ingelheim, where they talked to displaced inhabitants of Kosovo:

Immer wieder sitzt Clinton weinenden Frauen gegenüber. Er selbst reibt sich mehrfach die Augen und ballt die Faust bei Berichten über ungeborene Kinder, die die Serben im Leibe albanischer Mütter getötet haben. Wie versteinert sitzt Gerhard Schröder daneben. [...] Andere

²⁷⁴ Jürgen Habermas, 'Bestialität und Humanität', *Die Zeit*, 29 April 1999, http://www.zeit.de/1999/18/199918.krieg_.xml [accessed 22 January 2018].

²⁷⁵ Eilders and Lüter, p. 426.

berichten, serbische Terrorgruppen würden Männern die Beine abhacken und sie dann grausam verbluten lassen.²⁷⁶

Without irony, the reporter notes that the President assured the refugees that their stories would have an impact on the decision-making process by NATO leaders. Clinton is also quoted as thanking the Germans for their leading role in NATO and for offering shelter to refugees from Kosovo, thus raising the profile of a Chancellor who was battling internal disputes in the Bundestag.

Even traditionally left-leaning newspapers such as *Die Zeit* and *tageszeitung* were largely uncritical of the government's stance and took many political statements at face value, which led certain commentators to claim that the media 'abdicated responsibility for a fundamental element of any functioning democracy – the dissemination of information'.²⁷⁷ Such analyses diagnose a weakening of the German left-liberal tradition. Critics to the left of the political spectrum, who prior to unification had been critical of the government's actions in their opposition to re-militarization, did not oppose the actions of a red-green government which seemed to promise a more progressive political development.

According to empirical research conducted by Eilders and Lüter, references to the Nazi past did not play a major role in the media coverage of the conflict.²⁷⁸ This does not mean that references to the Second World War were absent from the intellectual debate. The poet Durs Grünbein compared the bombing of Serbia with the Allied bombing of German cities in 1945, suggesting that airstrikes could serve as retribution for war crimes:

Man muß kein Idealist sein, um einzusehen, daß die Bombe ein Erziehungsmittel sein kann, wie wir aus Deutschland wissen [...]. So war Dresden, nach der Logik der Erzengel, der Preis für Auschwitz. [...] Muß man nicht unwillkürlich an deutsche Verhältnisse denken, wenn man von Serbien hört? Dann wird Krieg zu einer Form der Erinnerung an die Vulgarität des eigenen Herzens.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁶ Martin S. Lambeck, 'Der Präsident umarmt die Flüchtlinge', *Die Welt*, 6 May 1999 <https://www.welt.de/print-welt/article571188/Der-Präsident-umarmt-die-Flüchtlinge.html> [accessed 2 February 2018].

²⁷⁷ Thomas Deichmann, 'From "Never Again War" to "Never Again Auschwitz": Dilemmas of German Media Policy in the War against Yugoslavia', in *Degraded Capability: The Media and the Kosovo Crisis*, ed. by Philip Hammond and Edward S. Herman (London: Pluto Press, 2000), pp. 153–63 (p. 162).

²⁷⁸ Eilders and Lüter, p. 426.

²⁷⁹ ' "Ein Territorium des Hasses" ', *Der Spiegel*, 12 April 1999 <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-11616934.html> [accessed 29 March 2018].

It is indeed no longer clear whether Grünbein is referring to the war in Kosovo or to the Holocaust, since the two have become indistinguishable in his rhetoric. Grünbein suggests that the experience of the Holocaust, paradoxically, gives Germans the moral right to 'educate' other nations by bombing their cities. This moral superiority of post-war Germans, derived from a twisted and partial understanding of the legacy of the Holocaust, overlaps with the Western, orientalisating gaze upon the region, in which the barbaric Serbs represent the ugly and brutal 'other' within the re-educated and peaceful European self.

The NATO air-strikes in Serbia seemed to rekindle memories of German suffering during the Second World War, which were used by the few opponents of the intervention to protest against any kind of military involvement in Yugoslavia. Christa Wolf referred to her own experiences while writing in opposition to the airstrikes in her contribution to an opinion piece published in *Spiegel*:

Was ich mir aber vorstelle, weil ich es nämlich selbst erlebt habe, und was wie ein Film vor meinem inneren Auge in Sekundenbruchteilen ablief, als ich die Nachricht vom Beginn der Bombardements empfing: Menschen in Luftschutzkellern, Sirenen, Bombeneinschläge, Angst. Und Tote, Verwundete [...] Ihnen helfen die Bomben nicht [...]. Ich war in dieser Sekunde auf seiten der Opfer auf beiden Seiten, und ich bin es bis heute.²⁸⁰

For Wolf, her personal memories of the Allied air-strikes on Germany served as an argument against German participation in the war. However, by quoting victimhood as a universal condition of warfare, she ends up conflating, as well as de-politicising, the perspectives of victims of different atrocities.

Perhaps surprisingly, it is the conservative critic Frank Schirrmacher who rejects the historical references to the Second World War: 'Milošević ist nicht Hitler. Und der Kosovo ist nicht Auschwitz'.²⁸¹ Schirrmacher argues that the rhetorical gesture of linking Kosovo with Auschwitz is used by German politicians to exorcise demons from Germany's own past. He writes: 'Dieser Krieg wird in Deutschland [...] fast ausschließlich mit Auschwitz begründet. Und vielleicht stimmt es ja, und die deutschen Tornados im Himmel über Jugoslawien bombardieren in Wahrheit nicht die Serben, sondern die deutsche Wehrmacht von 1941'.²⁸² For Schirrmacher, the

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Frank Schirrmacher, 'Luftkampf', in *Der westliche Kreuzzug: 41 Positionen zum Kosovo-Krieg*, ed. by Frank Schirrmacher (Stuttgart: DVA, 1999), pp. 117–20 (p. 119).

²⁸² Ibid., p. 118.

military intervention against Yugoslavia was not only undertaken to stop the killings committed by the Serbs, but also to ‘purify’ the German national conscience by participating in a belated war against Adolf Hitler.²⁸³

Concluding remarks

The 1990s saw a paradigm shift in German foreign policy, and a change in how left-liberal intellectuals positioned themselves vis-à-vis the *Bundeswehr*, the role of NATO and global politics. This shift was partly reflected in the debates surrounding the Yugoslav Wars, in which, as Thomas Deichmann notes, ‘traditional conservatives were often the most critical, and liberals the most bellicose’.²⁸⁴ Karoline von Oppen contends that the discussions carried out by German elites in relation to the war in the former Yugoslavia reflected a conflicted understanding of Germany’s past:

The disintegration of Yugoslavia could either serve to reinforce the success of over forty years of German normality as a peaceful, democratic state, a position typical of conservatives; or it could be used to engage in self-critical debates about Germany’s own fascist past, as is typical for left-liberal circles. Either way, [...] the wars in Yugoslavia enabled Germans ‘to fall in love with themselves’ again, the only disagreement being on which Germany they were falling in love with.²⁸⁵

The decade following the fall of the Berlin Wall was a period marked in Germany by hefty debates pertaining to the constitution of a new national identity. However, as noted by Andreas Huyssen in *Twilight Memories*, participants in these debates were ‘heavily mortgaged to the politics of the past’, either warning against the perceived dangers of national unity or embracing anti-democratic ideas of German dominance in Europe.²⁸⁶ Therefore, the elites failed to formulate a future-oriented vision of an inclusive German identity capable of accommodating both East and West Germans, migrants and non-migrants. This exclusive focus on German history and on the new nation state’s place in Europe could be clearly seen in the debates surrounding the various stages of the Yugoslav conflict, which also displayed a strong tendency to treat the cultural differences between Yugoslavia’s ethnic groups as fixed and insurmountable. The new nationalism in Southeast Europe was either welcomed – as

²⁸³ Ibid., p. 119.

²⁸⁴ Deichmann, p. 153.

²⁸⁵ Oppen, ‘(un)sägliche Vergleiche’, p. 169.

²⁸⁶ Huyssen, *Twilight Memories*, p. 70.

in the case of Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, whose right to national self-determination and independence from Serbia was hardly questioned – or castigated – as in the case of the supposedly bloodthirsty and tyrannical Serbs. Playing favourites with particular post-Yugoslav states, German commentators did little to challenge the alleged equivalence of cultural, ethnic and national identity.

The above discussion is necessary to situate the writings of Peter Handke, who was one of the few opponents of the German participation in the NATO intervention against Serbia in 1999. In protest, Handke handed back the Büchner prize that had been awarded to him in 1973, and decided to secede from the Catholic Church because the Pope did not oppose the war against Serbia.²⁸⁷ Starting from 1996, Handke's texts about the Yugoslav Wars, demanding justice for Serbia, disturbed the consensus in the public debate as to who were the victims and who the perpetrators in the Yugoslav conflict. Volker Corsten notes that 'Peter Handkes Texte und Ansichten [...] sperren sich gegen das Eindeutige, politisch Korrekte, gegen den Konsens'.²⁸⁸ Handke's pronouncements about the former Yugoslavia served as a mirror-image to the dominant left-liberal discourse in Germany after 1989. However, Handke's critical stance towards the discriminatory rhetoric employed by German commentators served merely as a pretext for historical revisionism and an apologia for Serbian aggression against other inhabitants of the Balkans. Handke's texts opposed the rise of nationalism in the Yugoslav republics using anachronistic arguments casting Yugoslavia as a socialist, supra-national state which, as it were, truly embodied the anti-fascist legacy of the Partisan struggle in the Second World War. However, this selective reading of European history was not enough to account for the contradictions and challenges of late Yugoslav society, where national, local and religious identities, historical narratives and ideologies were undergoing a rapid transformation, given the epochal shifts elsewhere in Europe. However, as I discuss in the next chapter, Handke's texts were marked by a refusal to engage with this fluid present of the 1990s.

²⁸⁷ 'Kosovo: Konrad will Diplomatie und Herr Handke schmeißt hin', *Spiegel Online*, 7 April 1999, <http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/gesellschaft/kosovo-konrad-will-diplomatie-und-herr-handke-schmeisst-hin-a-16091.html> [accessed 2 February 2018].

²⁸⁸ Volker Corsten, 'Störer der Konsensrepublik', *Die Welt*, 3 June 2006 <https://www.welt.de/print-wams/article143176/Stoerer-der-Konsensrepublik.html> [accessed 2 February 2018].

Chapter 2: Peter Handke's literary and political engagement with the Yugoslav Wars

Introduction

On 14 December 1995, the leaders of Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia gathered in Paris to sign the Dayton agreement which formally ended the Bosnian war. A week later, on 21 December 1995, Siegfried Unseld, the manager of the Suhrkamp publishing house, received a manuscript of a text which was to become one of Peter Handke's most controversial works. At the beginning of January, the essay, entitled 'Gerechtigkeit für Serbien. Eine winterliche Reise zu den Flüssen Donau, Save, Morawa und Drina', appeared in two parts in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.²⁸⁹ The text was promptly published in book form on 2 February 1996 as *Eine winterliche Reise zu den Flüssen Donau, Save, Morawa und Drina oder Gerechtigkeit für Serbien* ("Eine winterliche Reise").²⁹⁰

Handke's essay was a reaction against the anti-Serb bias that the writer perceived in European media reports from the Balkans. In his text, Handke demands 'justice for Serbia' and criticizes Western journalists, whom he holds responsible for the widespread demonization of the Serbs. In an interview, Handke states: 'Die Serben gelten heute automatisch als die Schuldigen. Gut und Böse stehen fest'.²⁹¹ To disrupt this perceived moral consensus and to distance himself from journalists and writers who travelled to such oft-visited sites as Sarajevo, Handke makes a conscious decision *not* to travel to Bosnia and instead to focus on Serbia, which he visits with two Serbian friends, Zlatko Bocokić and Žarko Radaković, who visit their families in the towns Porodin and Bajina Bašta.

The narrator of the essay bears strong resemblance to the real-life Handke, given the fact that he refers to Handke's earlier texts and to his wife Sophie, who in the text is just called S. Indeed, the text was often treated as an expression of the writer's personal political views, rather than a fictional travelogue. In *Der Spiegel*, Peter Schneider spoke of the 'historical stupidity' of Handke's text and accused him

²⁸⁹ 'Serbien: *Eine Winterliche Reise* (1996)', *Handke Online* <https://handkeonline.onb.ac.at/node/954> [accessed 15 February 2018].

²⁹⁰ Peter Handke, *Eine winterliche Reise zu den Flüssen Donau, Save, Morawa und Drina, oder, Gerechtigkeit für Serbien* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1996).

²⁹¹ 'Die Serben gelten heute automatisch als die Schuldigen, und Fragen werden nicht gestellt. Peter Handke im Gespräch mit Bru Rovira', in *Noch einmal für Jugoslawien. Peter Handke*, ed. by Thomas Deichmann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999), pp. 199–202 (p. 200).

of playing down the crimes committed by the Serbs and of dismissing the suffering of Bosnian Muslim victims of the war.²⁹² In *Die Zeit*, Bosnian writer Dževad Karahasan accused Handke of ethical nihilism.²⁹³

The controversies surrounding Handke's text were further spurred on by his provocative actions. Immediately after *Eine winterliche Reise* had appeared, Handke organized a series of readings in Germany, Austria and Slovenia, which attracted much public attention, with 800 people attending in Munich alone.²⁹⁴ The Serbian publication of *Eine winterliche Reise* in May 1996 inspired the writer to visit the country again and to participate in readings in Belgrade and Priština, as well as give interviews on Serbian TV. Handke describes this second trip in *Sommerlicher Nachtrag zu einer winterlichen Reise* ("*Sommerlicher Nachtrag*"), published on 30 September 1996. The essay is conceptualized as a postscript to his first text about Serbia and a self-conscious repetition of the wintry journey, this time, however, with the explicit intention not to stop at the Serbian border but to continue into Bosnia. While still in Serbia, Handke's narrator meets the figures described in the previous text, many of whom are not happy with the way they were depicted. By including their comments and corrections in the follow-up essay, Handke playfully presents himself as an unreliable narrator and creates the illusion that his texts about Serbia constitute a collective effort.

Sommerlicher Nachtrag is mainly devoted to Handke's stay in Višegrad and Srebrenica, the sites of massacres of Bosnian Muslim civilians carried out by Bosnian Serb forces in 1992 and 1995, respectively. Since 1995, both towns, predominantly Muslim before the war, have formed part of Republika Srpska, the Serb-dominated constituent part of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In his travelogue, Handke critiques the Western media's obsession with facts, 'Ausfragen' and 'Datenerforschen', and journalists' tendency to tell stories full of macabre details.²⁹⁵ In contrast, Handke's narrator focusses on Bosnia's landscape and buildings. He notes that the mosques in Višegrad were destroyed and the city was deserted by its Muslim inhabitants. However, the narrator admits that he finds it difficult to believe the media reports

²⁹² Peter Schneider, 'Polemik: Der Ritt über Den Balkan', *Der Spiegel*, 15 January 1996 <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-8871151.html> [accessed 20 February 2018].

²⁹³ Dževad Karahasan, 'Bürger Handke, Serbenvolk', *Die Zeit*, 16 February 1996 http://www.zeit.de/1996/08/Buerger_Handke_Serbenvolk [accessed 12 February 2018].

²⁹⁴ Cooper, 'When Just Causes Conflict with Accepted Means', p. 113.

²⁹⁵ Peter Handke, *Sommerlicher Nachtrag zu einer winterlichen Reise* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1996), p. 32. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

which implied that Milan Lukić, the paramilitary leader later indicted by the ICTY, did not encounter any resistance from Muslim inhabitants of the city. Handke wonders whether it is conceivable that the city constituted ‘ein grausiger Spielraum für nichts als die paar Barfüßler im Katz-und-Maus mit ihren Hunderten von Opfern’ (p. 40). To relativize the paramilitaries’ responsibility for the killings, the narrator casts the conflict as a civil war marked by reciprocal fighting and comes close to shifting the blame for the massacres to the Bosnian Muslim troops who, in his words, were well armed and prepared for the war. The infantilizing comparison between the war and a cat-and-mouse game is deployed to dismiss the gruesome reality of what happened in Višegrad.²⁹⁶

In 1991, out of 21,000 inhabitants of the municipality of Višegrad, 63% were ‘of Muslim ethnicity’, 33% were ‘of Serb ethnicity’ and 4% identified as ‘other’.²⁹⁷ Killings in Višegrad took place throughout 1992, reaching their peak in June and July, and were mainly conducted by two paramilitary units: the White Eagles led by Milan Lukić and the troops of Vojislav Šešelj. Tensions between Muslims and Serbs in Višegrad started to mount from early 1992. The situation was undoubtedly aggravated by the external pressure coming directly from Belgrade, with the Serbian government under Milošević controlling the leadership of the Yugoslav People’s Army (JNA) and supplying arms to Bosnian Serb paramilitaries. On 6 April 1992, the JNA started shelling Višegrad, targeting mainly Muslim neighbourhoods and villages.²⁹⁸ On 14 April 1992, the city was taken by the Užice Corps of the JNA, which, at the beginning, ‘had a calming effect’.²⁹⁹ The situation remained stable until 19 May 1992, when the JNA withdrew from Višegrad. According to the ICTY, after the army’s retreat, ‘local Serb leaders established the “Serbian Municipality of Višegrad” and took control of all municipal government offices’.³⁰⁰ This was followed by ‘one of the most notorious campaigns of ethnic cleansing in the conflict’, aimed against the town’s Bosniak population.³⁰¹ The town’s mosques were destroyed and its inhabitants were subjected

²⁹⁶ The image of war as play returns in an unexpected way in Saša Stanišić’s novel, which provides a sobering counterweight to Handke’s problematic formulations.

²⁹⁷ ICTY, Mitar Vasiljević Judgement, 29 November 2002, <http://www.icty.org/x/cases/vasiljevic/tjug/en/vas021129.pdf> [accessed 20 February 2018], p. 15.

²⁹⁸ ICTY, The Prosecutor of the Tribunal against Milan Lukic and Sredoje Lukic. Second Amended Indictment, 27 February 2006, http://www.icty.org/x/cases/milan_lukic_sredoje_lukic/ind/en/luk-2ai060227.htm [accessed 20 February 2018].

²⁹⁹ ICTY, Mitar Vasiljević Judgement, p. 16.

³⁰⁰ ICTY, The Prosecutor of the Tribunal against Milan Lukic and Sredoje Lukic.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

to beatings, lootings, rape and murder, with many bodies dumped into the Drina, or buried in mass graves in and around the Višegrad municipality.³⁰² Non-Serb civilians were routinely killed or expelled from the city and as a result, ‘by the end of 1992, there were very few non-Serbs left in Višegrad’.³⁰³

The bridge, the Drina, and persistence of history

In *Sommerlicher Nachtrag*, Handke’s narrator travels to Višegrad, out of admiration for Ivo Andrić and his 1945 novel *The Bridge over the Drina*.³⁰⁴ Andrić’s novel is a city chronicle centred around the Mehmed Paša Sokolović Bridge in Višegrad, set against the backdrop of Bosnia’s conquest by the Ottoman Empire and its later annexation by the Habsburgs. The text documents the co-existence of Muslims and Christians in the town from the sixteenth century until 1914, when the bridge was destroyed by Austro-Hungarian troops. Perhaps due to its iconic status, Andrić’s text is often treated as a reliable historical source. In his foreword to the English-language edition of the novel, the translator Lovett F. Edwards states: ‘No better introduction to the study of Balkan and Ottoman history exists, nor do I know of any work of fiction that more persuasively introduces the reader to a civilization other than our own’.³⁰⁵ Here, Edwards conflates story and history and, in an exoticizing gesture, declares the text to offer its readers a privileged insight into a culture which is clearly different from their own.

Marina Antić highlights that during the conflict in Yugoslavia, Ivo Andrić and his text became ‘codewords in Western academic and political discourse, signalling to an informed audience that the speaker shares with them a secret and thorough knowledge of the Balkans’.³⁰⁶ The novel made the wars in Yugoslavia accessible to Western audiences, serving as proof ‘of racial and political disorder that marked the Balkans as a place closed to rationality and understanding’.³⁰⁷ However, Antić asserts that this reductionist reading ‘ignores both the historical background of Andrić’s

³⁰² ICTY, Mitar Vasiljević Judgement, p. 19.

³⁰³ Ibid., p. 21.

³⁰⁴ Ivo Andrić, *The Bridge over the Drina*, trans. by Lovett E. Edwards (London: The Harvill Press, 1995).

³⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 1.

³⁰⁶ Marina Antić, ‘Living in the Shadow of the Bridge: Ivo Andrić’s *The Bridge on the Drina* and Western Imaginings of Bosnia’, *Spaces of Identity*, 3.2 (2003)

http://www.yorku.ca/soi/Vol_3_3/HTML/Antic.html [accessed 20 May 2018], p. 7.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 9.

writing and the politics of the text'.³⁰⁸ Even though the novel sometimes attests to Andrić's sympathy for the Orthodox community at the expense of the Muslims, the writer, Antić argues, 'saw the ethnic clashes and wars in Bosnia not as inherent characteristics of the Bosnian or Balkan character, but rather as consequence of the presence of world empires in this small and otherwise insignificant place'.³⁰⁹ Andrić's text is preoccupied with 'the historical trauma of colonialism, and of the physical possession of its victims'.³¹⁰ The scars inflicted by colonial powers are imagined in the text as straight lines, which stand in contrast to the bridge with its many arches. The bridge is 'a reflection of the conditions of the subject in the "colonial" world of the Balkans, caught in-between those determinate lines of colonial possession'.³¹¹

The bridge as the novel's central metaphor is inextricable from Bosnia's colonial past. Rather than pitting diverse religious and ethnic groups against each other, Andrić's text shows that Višegrad's fate was determined throughout centuries by the conflicting interests of the Ottoman, Habsburg, and Russian Empires. In what follows, I demonstrate that Handke's engagement with the Drina and Višegrad as literary topoi mapped in Andrić's oeuvre runs the risk of casting the town and its inhabitants in ahistorical and apolitical terms, and thus diverting attention from the crimes committed during the Bosnian war. Rather than deconstruct the colonial power relation between Bosnia and Eastern and Western empires, Handke treats Balkan identities as fixed and unchanging and thus subscribes to an ethnicized view of the conflict.

Orientalism in Handke's writings

In order to address the complexity of Handke's writing concerned with Yugoslavia, I use insights derived from Edward Said's *Orientalism*.³¹² Said's ground-breaking analysis pertains mainly to French and British writings about the Near East from the eighteenth to late nineteenth century. In *Imagining the Balkans*, Maria Todorova is concerned with the conceptual positioning of her own analysis in relation to the theoretical framework of Orientalism and reiterates some of the criticism raised

³⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 11.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 12.

³¹⁰ Ibid., p. 13.

³¹¹ Ibid., p. 14.

³¹² Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2003).

against Said's work, e.g. that he allegedly ends up 'essentializing Europe and the West', and that his analysis is ahistorical.³¹³ In Todorova's terms, the Orient is an intangible notion which 'has always existed as an elastic and ambiguous concept' and which has depended 'on the normative value set and the observation point' (p. 12). In its modern version, the East-West division was constructed by European thinkers in the eighteenth century to reflect 'the belief in evolution and progress' (p. 11), whereby the world east of Western Europe 'came to be identified [...] with industrial backwardness, lack of advanced social relations and institutions typical for the developed capitalist West, irrational and superstitious cultures unmarked by Western Enlightenment' (pp. 11-12). Looking at early twentieth-century English-language travelogues, Todorova states that in contrast to the malleable categories of the Orient or the East, the Balkans have had 'unimaginative concreteness', which, along with 'almost total lack of wealth', has provoked 'a straightforward attitude, usually negative, but rarely nuanced' (p. 14). In cultural and historical terms, the Balkans were most profoundly influenced by the Ottoman Empire, which leads Todorova to state that 'it seems that the conclusion that the Balkans are the Ottoman legacy is not an overstatement' (p. 12).

At the same time, 'practically all descriptions of the Balkans' suggest the region's 'transitory status' (p. 15). Whereas the Orient is often imagined in complete opposition to the West, the Balkans 'have always evoked the image of a bridge or a crossroads' (p. 15). Thus, as opposed to 'orientalism, which is a discourse about an imputed opposition, balkanism is a discourse about an imputed ambiguity' (p. 17). This 'in-betweenness of the Balkans [...] could have made them simply an incomplete other; instead they are constructed not as other but as incomplete self' (p. 18). For Todorova, in terms of religion and race, the Balkans need to be conceptualized as part of Europe, which means they are both the same and different. Karoline von Oppen contends that because of their liminal status, the Balkans 'disrupt binaries between Orient and West, Christianity and Islam. [...] this disruption causes tension for western Europe, which is why the region has become associated with violence and chaos'.³¹⁴

³¹³ Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* p. 9. Further page references are given after quotations in the text.

³¹⁴ Oppen, '(un)sägliche Vergleiche', p. 169.

In contrast, Milica Bakić-Hayden claims that balkanism should be considered within the context of orientalism ‘since it shares an underlying logic and rhetoric with orientalism’.³¹⁵ The Balkans can be seen ‘as a part of Europe that used to be under Ottoman, hence oriental, rule, and, as such, [is] different from Europe “proper” ’ (pp. 920-921). Further, images found ‘in the writings of westerners travelling through the European east’ resemble those ‘used to describe Asian lands’ (p. 921). Bakić-Hayden is less concerned with the liminal position occupied by the Balkans than with the mechanisms of reproduction and appropriation of Orientalist discourse which she recognises within separate Balkan states. In her often-cited 1995 article, Bakić-Hayden introduces the notion of ‘nesting orientalisms’, which signifies a ‘gradation of “Orients” ’ and ‘a pattern of reproduction of the original dichotomy upon which Orientalism is premised’ (p. 918). Her concept is based on the premise that Said’s framework can be productively applied in the analysis of the former Yugoslavia.

In my view, what makes Said’s theory especially relevant in the current context is his preoccupation with European perceptions of Islam. Said notes that because of the Muslim expansion into Europe in the Middle Ages, Islam in the European imagination came to ‘symbolize terror, devastation, the demonic, hordes of hated barbarians’.³¹⁶ The danger of Islamization was epitomized by the Ottoman Empire, which stretched all the way to Bosnia, and, as noted by Maria Todorova, left a legacy which to this day is fundamental to negative stereotypes associated with the Balkans.³¹⁷ Orientalist rhetoric was used in relation to Islam within the Balkans themselves. Robert M. Hayden explains: ‘Whatever many Bosnian Muslims may have thought of their own identity as Muslims, Europeans, or Bosnians, their Serb and Croat antagonists impute to them a cultural essence that dichotomizes Muslim from European’.³¹⁸ Bosnian and Albanian Muslims were regarded by Serbian and Croatian nationalists as ‘in essence the same as the Turks who imposed Muslim rule on the Balkans, while the Christian peoples, now as then, shield the West from the Oriental onslaught’.³¹⁹ In my view, this complex pattern of discriminatory thinking also

³¹⁵ Milica Bakić-Hayden, ‘Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia’, *Slavic Review*, 54 (1995), 917–31 (p. 920). Further page references are given after quotations in the text.

³¹⁶ Said, p. 59.

³¹⁷ Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, p. 12.

³¹⁸ Robert M. Hayden, ‘Muslims as “Others” in Serbian and Croatian Politics’, in *Neighbors at War: Anthropological Perspectives on Yugoslav Ethnicity, Culture, and History*, ed. by Joel M. Halpern and David A. Kideckel (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), pp. 116–24 (p. 117).

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

informs Handke's texts, which betray a disdain for Muslims and Islam. The writer never deals with Bosnia's Islamic culture on its own terms but rather engages in what Said describes as the domestication of the exotic, which according to the critic is typical of Western European reception of Islam.³²⁰ For example, Handke uses a range of old-fashioned and pejorative terms to denote Muslims, such as 'Muselmanen' or 'Mohammedaner'.

As becomes clear below, Handke's essays are full of contradictions. On the one hand, he cannot be accused of privileging the capitalist, Western mode of living over the conditions in the former Yugoslavia; he also disagrees with the Westernization of the former Yugoslavia, and longs for the time when it was an autonomous, self-managing socialist country. On the other hand, in his texts, he assumes intellectual authority over the region he visits, which complies with the logic of orientalism. Said argues: 'the Orientalist, poet or scholar, makes the Orient speak, describes the Orient, renders its mysteries plain for and to the West. He is never concerned with the Orient except as the first cause of what he says'.³²¹ Said argues that such a hegemonic attitude reveals itself in 'the kind of narrative voice [a writer] adopts, the type of structure he [sic] builds, the kinds of images, themes, motifs that circulate in his text – all of which add up to deliberate ways of addressing the reader, containing the Orient, and finally, representing it or speaking in its behalf'.³²² This tendency to speak on behalf of the subjects from within the former Yugoslavia is very noticeable in Handke's texts. The writer assumes the right to speak about and *for* the inhabitants of Yugoslavia and to make judgments about their political decisions, dismissing not only the Croats' and Bosnians' desire for independence (*Eine winterliche Reise*, pp. 33-39), but also the Serb voices opposing the nationalist policies of Milošević (*Eine winterliche Reise*, pp. 85-86). This shows that, even though Handke accused his contemporaries of making judgements about Yugoslavia 'von ihrem Auslandshochsitz aus' (*Eine winterliche Reise*, p. 123), the author's stance towards the region suffers from a similar bias. In a way similar to those whom he critiqued, Handke also speaks from a vantage point of a privileged German outsider.

In adopting a theoretical framework of Orientalism in relation to Handke, I follow Boris Previšić, who notes Handke's marginalisation of Bosnia in *Eine*

³²⁰ Said, p. 60.

³²¹ Ibid., pp. 20-21.

³²² Ibid., p. 20.

winterliche Reise and argues that the writer's textual strategies have a paradoxical effect, whereby 'durch den Versuch einer Reintegration der durch den Krieg diffamierten Serben die Bosniaken ausgegrenzt werden – ganz nach dem Muster des *Nesting Orientalism*'.³²³ *Sommerlicher Nachtrag* is plagued by an even more problematic tendency to marginalize and suppress the brutal reality of the Bosnian conflict and to gloss over the war crimes committed by Bosnian Serbs, including the killing of more than eight thousand Bosnian Muslim men and boys by Bosnian Serb forces under Ratko Mladić in Srebrenica.³²⁴

In what follows, I demonstrate that, on the one hand, Handke opposes the racist rhetoric which presents those parts of the former Yugoslavia (e.g. Serbia) which had been under the Ottoman rule as culturally inferior to those which had been part of Austria-Hungary. At the same time, however, the attempt to protest against the demonization of Serbs leads to an exoticization of Yugoslavia's Muslims, which corresponds to the power relations existing between the Bosniaks and the Serbs, and is in line with Serb and Croat nationalist propaganda. Handke's approach is marked by a tendency to posit cultural/ethnic differences as fixed and unchanging. Rather than attempt to tackle the conflicted, multidirectional identities within the Balkans, Handke operates with strict binaries and mutually exclusive categories. Even the supposedly inclusive and supra-national Yugoslav identity is in Handke's texts problematically implicated in the denial of genocide committed against Bosnian Muslims.

Situating Handke

The controversy surrounding *Eine winterliche Reise* was one of many literary debates which took place in Germany in the 1990s. The proliferation of such debates reflected a crisis in the status and self-perception of German intellectuals after unification. Previously, West German intellectuals were an integral part of 'an amorphously left and left-liberal consensus,' which derived its strength from its 'persistent criticisms of *deutsche Zustände*' and which 'helped to improve and to legitimize the "unloved republic"'.³²⁵ All this changed when the unification of Germany undermined this long-standing political consensus and challenged the perception of writers as figures

³²³ Previšić, 'Poetik der Marginalität', p. 194.

³²⁴ Ibid., p. 195.

³²⁵ Andreas Huyssen, 'After the Wall: The Failure of German Intellectuals', *New German Critique*, (1991), 109–43 (p. 116).

of public authority. In 1993, Ulrich Greiner wrote an article responding to Günter Grass's decision to leave the SPD. Greiner argues that Grass's departure represents the end of an era in post-war German literary scene:

Der Austritt des Schriftstellers Günter Grass aus der SPD [...] ist bemerkenswert, weil Grass damit unabsichtlich das Ende einer Epoche bestätigt. Die lange Zeit gewohnte Personalunion des Schriftstellers und des politisch engagierten Intellektuellen ist zerbrochen. Sie entsprang der Vorstellung, der Schriftsteller sei ein Seismograph des gesellschaftlichen Gefüges. Früher als andere spüre er kommendes Unheil. Deshalb sei er verpflichtet, öffentlich an der Schadensvorsorge mitzuwirken. Da das Unheil, aller deutschen Erfahrung nach, von rechts kam, gab der engagierte Autor links sein Bestes öffentlich redend und handelnd, bei Demonstrationen [...] bei Friedensmärschen und auch, wie besonders Grass, in Wahlkämpfen für die SPD.³²⁶

Writing for the supposedly left-liberal *Die Zeit*, Greiner, along with such conservative commentators as Frank Schirrmacher and Marcel Reich-Ranicki, instigated a discussion following the publication of Christa Wolf's *Was bleibt* (1990), which discredited Wolf together with other East German writers. Soon enough, the debate mutated into a right-wing backlash against post-war German authors in general and, as Robert Weninger puts it, constituted 'eine Generalabrechnung mit jeglicher linksorientierten deutschen Literatur'.³²⁷ Given the changed political climate and the rise of nationalist, decidedly right-wing rhetoric in many publications, intellectuals in East and West were forced to radically reposition themselves in the newly unified country. Weninger notes that it became crucial for the elites to

sich in der veränderten, erstmals seit 1949 wirklich 'gesamtdeutschen' Literaturlandschaft neu zu orientieren und zu positionieren. Mit dem deutsch-deutschen Literaturstreit beginnt denn auch jene Koordinatenverschiebung, die die intellektuelle Topographie der Bundesrepublik heute definiert. Wer wundert sich noch, wenn sich ein Joschka Fischer [...] gegen den Pazifismus und für einen Bundeswehreinsatz im Ausland ausspricht? Wer, wenn [...] sich ein vermeintlich apolitischer Peter Handke für die Serben politisch ins Zeug legt?³²⁸

This suggests that the controversy sparked by Handke's essay was primarily concerned with the shifting political consensus in Germany and with the new role and

³²⁶ Ulrich Greiner, 'Günter Grass verläßt die SPD: Cassandra, arbeitslos', *Die Zeit*, 8 January 1993, <http://www.zeit.de/1993/02/kassandra-arbeitslos> [accessed 5 February 2018].

³²⁷ Robert Weninger, *Streitbare Literaten: Kontroversen und Eklats in der deutschen Literatur von Adorno bis Walser* (Munich: Beck, 2004), p. 143.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

self-understanding of leftist intellectuals after unification. To a certain extent, Handke served as an important corrective instance in the discussions surrounding the Yugoslav conflict. The author not only functioned as a ‘dissident’ voice opposing the demonization of the Serbs in German media, but also questioned his contemporaries’ right to assume a position of moral superiority towards the Serbs. Indeed, in his essay, Handke directly targets Peter Schneider when he writes of Schneider’s article: ‘Ich kenne [...] einen [...] mechanischen, feind- und kriegsbildverknallten [...] Schrieb des Autors Peter Schneider für das Eingreifen der Nato gegen die verbrecherischen Bosno-Serben’ (*Eine winterliche Reise*, pp. 132). According to Handke, Schneider’s article reinforces the stereotypical image of the Serbs as enemies and villains. Instead of acting as a voice disturbing the political consensus, Schneider becomes a political opportunist who has given up his leftist ideas and is now ready to support NATO. Handke argues that the members of his generation missed their opportunity to ‘grow up’ during the conflict in Yugoslavia:

Hat es meine Generation bei den Kriegen in Jugoslawien nicht verpaßt, erwachsen zu werden? Erwachsen nicht wie die so zahlreichen selbstgerechten, fix-und-fertigen [...] Mitglieder der Väter- und Onkel-Generation [...]. Erwachsenwerden, Gerechtworden, keinen bloßen Reflex mehr verkörpern auf die Nacht des Jahrhunderts und die so noch verfinstern helfen; aufbrechen aus dieser Nacht. Versäumt? Die nach uns? (*Eine winterliche Reise*, pp. 130-132)

Handke suggests that the legacy of National Socialism, which for the members of his generation was embodied in the figure of ‘fathers’ and ‘uncles’, obliged his contemporaries to develop a mature reaction towards the conflict in Yugoslavia. However, through adopting their anti-Serb attitude, German intellectuals ended up perpetuating the violence committed in the Balkans by the generation of their fathers. Here, Handke introduces a direct link between the misrepresentation of the Serbs in German media and the history of German domination in the region, positing a historical continuity consisting in Serbia’s victimhood. In Handke’s eyes, in their condemnation of the Serbs and their support for NATO, the members of his generation defied the tradition of political non-conformism associated with the movement of 1968 and sided with Western imperialism.

Handke's early texts dealing with Yugoslavia

Peter Handke's preoccupation with the former Yugoslavia might be explained by his biographical connection to the region. Handke was born in 1942 in South Carinthia in Austria. His mother's family were Slovene-Carinthians, and his stepfather, Bruno Handke, was a German who came to Carinthia as a member of the Wehrmacht.³²⁹ In fact, Dževad Karahasan was not accurate in his response to *Eine winterliche Reise*, when he accused Handke of total ignorance in relation to the former Yugoslavia, stating that Handke 'kennt nicht ein einziges Wort der Sprachen, die in diesen Gegenden gesprochen werden. Handke kennt nicht die Kultur der Gegenden, in die er reist, er kennt nicht ihre Geschichte'.³³⁰

Handke has been indirectly preoccupied with his Slovenian heritage and the precarious status of Austria's Slovenian minority ever since the beginning of his literary career, as shown by his autobiographical text *Wunschloses Unglück* (1972), which tells the story of his mother's suicidal death.³³¹ The theme of Slovenia, as part of Yugoslavia, is in Handke's writing associated with issues of belonging, heritage, and language, as becomes visible in Handke's first major text concerned with the region, *Die Wiederholung* (1986). The novel tells the story of Handke's alter ego, Filip Kobal, an Austrian of mixed Slovenian and German heritage, who travels to Yugoslavia (Slovenia) in order to find his missing brother. The brother figure is based on Handke's uncle Gregor Siutz, who was killed during the Second World War. The novel's structure is determined by a complex network of repetitions: the Austrian narrator Filip Kobal, writing in 1985, recalls his journey from 1960 when, at the age of twenty, he travelled through Slovenia following in the footsteps of his elder brother Gregor, who had disappeared in 1940. The narrator's journey is therefore a return into his own past but also an exploration of the history of his brother. Lothar Struck highlights the ambiguity inherent in the title of the novel, and argues that in the text, 'Wiederholung' is not a repetition of what is known but rather a reconstruction or rediscovery.³³² Thus, 'Wiederholung' figures in its double sense, as a repetition but also retrieval, as is signalled by the two meanings of the verb (wiederhólen/wiéderholen). In the text, it is the narrator's father (and not, as in

³²⁹ Fabjan Hafner, *Peter Handke: Unterwegs ins Neunte Land* (Vienna: Zsolnay, 2008), p. 13.

³³⁰ Karahasan, 'Bürger Handke, Serbenvolk'.

³³¹ Peter Handke, *Wunschloses Unglück* (Salzburg: Residenz, 1972).

³³² Lothar Struck, "Der mit seinem Jugoslawien." *Peter Handke im Spannungsfeld zwischen Literatur, Medien und Politik* (Leipzig: Ille & Riemer, 2012), pp. 40-41.

Handke's case, the mother) who has Slovenian heritage. The narrator positions himself as an outsider, describing the isolation and loneliness that he feels in his native village, to which he returns as a young man after years spent in a boarding school. As the narrator asserts, this homecoming was flawed; '[ich] bin [...] nie mehr recht heimgekehrt'.³³³ This sense of isolation stands in contrast to the narrator's projected feeling of belonging, which he experiences immediately after leaving Austria for Slovenia. However, this identification with Slovenia is never complete and the narrator remains haunted by the lack signalled by the narrator's Austrian heritage. In this way, Slovenia becomes an imaginary counterpart to Austria, and a surrogate for the non-existent or wanting homeland, which it can never replace.

Handke's intimate connection to Slovenia is described in Fabjan Hafner's monograph *Unterwegs ins Neunte Land* (2008). Hafner notes that after having lived in Berlin between 1944 and 1948, Handke had forgotten both the Carinthian Austrian dialect and Slovenian, and was unable to communicate with members of his family back in Austria.³³⁴ Handke re-learned Slovenian later in life and towards the end of the 1970s, he started working as a translator from Slovenian into German, translating works by Florjan Lipuš (together with his teacher Helga Mračnikar) and Gustav Januš.³³⁵ Handke's works were widely translated, read and performed in former Yugoslavia. Handke's identification with 'the threatened Carinthian Slovenes' and his concern for Yugoslavia's 'anti-fascist traditions' led the Yugoslav critic Zoran Konstantinović to claim in 1986 that Handke could be viewed as 'our' (Yugoslav) writer.³³⁶ Handke's heritage influenced the Slovenian reception of *Die Wiederholung*, which was misinterpreted in Slovenia as Handke's self-affirmation as a 'Crypto-Slovenian' supporting the independence of Slovenia.³³⁷

In fact, Slovenia in Handke's writings figured as an imaginary realm which could only exist within Yugoslavia. This became especially visible in 1991, when Handke harshly criticized the secession of Slovenia and Croatia from Yugoslavia in his essay 'Abschied des Träumers vom Neunten Land. Eine Wirklichkeit, die

³³³ Peter Handke, *Die Wiederholung* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch, 1999), p. 41.

³³⁴ Hafner, pp. 89-90.

³³⁵ Florjan Lipuš, *Der Zögling Tjaz*, trans. by Peter Handke and Helga Mračnikar (Salzburg: Residenz, 1981); Gustav Januš, *Gedichte. 1962-1983*, trans. by Peter Handke (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1983).

³³⁶ Svetlan Lacko Vidulić, 'Literatur als Gast. Peter Handke im südslawischen Raum 1969-2009', in *Der Gast als Fremder: narrative Alterität in der Literatur*, ed. by Evi Fountoulakis and Boris Previšić (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2011), pp. 137-52 (p. 141).

³³⁷ Ibid, p. 142.

vergangen ist: Erinnerung an Slowenien' (*"Abschied"*). The text first appeared in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and was later reprinted in book form.³³⁸ The title is an allusion to the Slovenian phrase *deveta dežela* (ninth country), which, as pointed out by Irena Samide, already in the nineteenth century functioned in Slovenian literature as 'eine Bezeichnung für ein Land, das es nicht gibt und nie geben wird, in welchem aber alles, was in der realen Welt nicht vorkommt, verwirklicht werden kann'.³³⁹ That Handke chooses to use such a loaded term in a text responding to contemporary political events is significant, since it manifests his tendency to foreground his subjective perception of reality at the expense of current events. Handke writes in his essay: 'Nein, Slowenien in Jugoslawien, und *mit* Jugoslawien, du warst deinem Gast nicht Osten, nicht Süden, geschweige dann balkanesisch; bedeutetest vielmehr etwas Drittes, oder Neuntes, Unbenennbares, dafür aber Märchenwirkliches [...] – Slowenien, meine Geh-Heimat' (*Abschied*, p. 28). For Handke, Slovenia is a realm situated beyond the geopolitical coordinates of post-Cold War Europe, a dream-like place which, nonetheless, is still part of the Yugoslav *Vielvölkerstaat*. Previšić notes that in Handke's eyes, Yugoslavia embodied a multicultural ideal which enabled the coexistence of various language groups, ethnicities, and religions, and Slovenia's secession from Yugoslavia constituted a rejection of this utopian South Slavic community.³⁴⁰ According to Handke, in leaving Yugoslavia, Slovenia drifted away 'von ihrem großen Jugoslawien, hin "zu Mitteleuropa," oder "zu Europa," oder "zum Westen" ' (*Abschied*, p. 38). This political and social rapprochement with the commercialised and capitalist West is seen by Handke as a step backwards.

Handke opposes the view espoused in certain German media outlets that Yugoslavia was a form of 'Völkergefängnis' (*Abschied*, p. 31). He also rejects such designations as 'der Osten' (p. 24) and 'der Balkan' (p. 26), stating: 'Nirgends in Bosnien und der Herzegowina, auch nicht im Kosovo, [...] kam mir jemals dieses

³³⁸ Peter Handke, *Abschied des Träumers vom Neunten Land: eine Wirklichkeit, die vergangen ist. Erinnerung an Slowenien*, (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1991). Further references are given after quotations in the text.

³³⁹ Irena Samide, ' "Spieglein, Spieglein an der Wand: wo liegt das holde Neunte Land?": der habsburgische Mythos aus slowenischer Sicht', in *Kakanien revisited. Das Eigene und das Fremde (in) der österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie*, ed. by Wolfgang Müller-Funk (Tübingen: Francke, 2002), pp. 201–10 <http://www.kakanien-revisited.at/beitr/fallstudie/ISamide1.pdf> [accessed 15 February 2018].

³⁴⁰ Boris Previšić, '"Das Gespenstergerede von einem Mitteleuropa": Die Imagination eines Un-Orts', in *Der Gast als Fremder: narrative Alterität in der Literatur*, ed. by Evi Fountoulakis and Boris Previšić (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2011), pp. 113–36 (p. 113).

blödsinnige Schlägerwort in den Sinn, geschweige denn über die Lippen' (p. 26). Handke seems to be suggesting that not even the Muslim parts of Yugoslavia could be described as 'Balkan'. This passage, where Bosnia and Kosovo are singled out, can be compared to a later statement, in which the narrator speaks about young people who came together in the final years of Yugoslavia's existence and which leaves out these two regions: 'Damals geschah es, daß ich diese slowenischen, serbischen, kroatischen, makedonischen, herzegowinischen Studenten, Arbeiter, Sportler, Tänzer, Sänger, Liebhaber [...] um ihre Jugend herzlich beneidete' (*Abschied*, p. 44). This strange omission reinforcing the unspoken division between Muslim and non-Muslim regions of the former Yugoslavia (Herzegovina is a region with a large Croat population) anticipates Handke's problematic treatment of Bosnia in his later texts.

Paradoxically, Handke's criticism of Slovenia's independence combines attempts to counter certain stereotypical views of the region with a tendency to make authoritative claims about Slovenia and, more broadly, Yugoslavia. On the one hand, Handke is critical of the Slovenes' and Croats' purportedly arrogant attitude towards the Serbs and Bosnians, whom, as he claims, they regarded as 'uncivilized' and 'less European':

So hörte ich immer öfter [...], Slowenen und Kroaten sollten an den Südgrenzen eine Mauer gegen die Serben, die 'Bosniaken' usw. errichten [...]. Und wenn ich nach Gründen fragte, beschlich es mich dumm-bekannt bei: 'Die unten arbeiten nicht – die im Süden sind faul – nehmen uns im Norden die Wohnungen weg – wir arbeiten, und sie essen.' (*Abschied*, pp. 38-39)

Here, Handke makes a valid point concerning the logic of 'nesting orientalisms' in relation to the Balkans, which, as described by Bakić-Hayden, was used by the Slovenes and the Croats to discredit their Eastern and Southern neighbours.³⁴¹ Handke problematizes the East/West dichotomy which was easily instrumentalized both in Germany and Yugoslavia. He also argues that Austria, as the successor of the Habsburg Empire, is not a reliable partner for Slavic countries. Handke's critique of the Habsburg monarchy is among other things related to the inferior status of minor languages within the empire, which were regarded as 'Sklavengemunkel' (*Abschied*, p. 22) or 'Kauderwelsch' (p. 28).

³⁴¹ Bakić-Hayden, 'Nesting Orientalisms'.

On the other hand, Handke's work reveals a clear tendency to marginalize Bosnia, as shown by the fact that the term 'Bosniaken' has been singled out and put in quotation marks.³⁴² Handke's later texts show that the author does not believe that the Bosniaks have the right to define themselves as an ethnic group separate from the Serbs. In *Eine winterliche Reise*, Handke explicitly challenges the Bosniaks' claims to their own identity when he writes of Bosnia's declaration of independence: 'Wie sollte [...] das nur wieder gut ausgehen, wieder so eine eigenmächtige Staatserhebung durch ein einzelnes Volk – wenn die serbokroatischsprechenden, serbischstämmigen Muselmanen Bosniens denn nun ein Volk sein sollten [...]?' (*Eine winterliche Reise*, p. 38). The clumsy formulation 'die serbokroatischsprechenden, serbischstämmigen Muselmanen Bosniens' enhances the point made by Handke: that Bosniaks do not have an authentic identity but rather are descendants of Serbs who had been converted by the Turks. As noted by Hayden, in the nineteenth century Bosnian Muslims were regarded by some Serb nationalists as 'lapsed Serbs, who should be reintegrated with their Serb brothers and [...] with the supposed faith of their ancestors'.³⁴³ Similarly, Ivan Čolović points out that according to Serb nationalists, 'peoples descended from the Serbs [...] always have the possibility of returning to their former Serbianness, which they all carry somewhere in the depths of their soul'.³⁴⁴ In denying Bosnia's right to function as a sovereign country and in giving primacy to the allegedly primordial Serb identity of Bosniaks, Handke engages in a very problematic polemic which foregrounds the 'genetic' make-up of a people and does away with the notion that religious/ethnic identities are social constructs. The archaic term 'Muselmanen' further stresses the supposed exoticism of this group.

Apart from making problematic statements about Bosnian Muslims, Handke asserts his superiority over the inhabitants of the former Yugoslavia through his condescending statements about Slovenia's immaturity as a state. In calling Slovenia 'welch kindliches Volk, welch kindischer Staat,' (*Abschied*, p. 43) and designating Slovenia's drive towards independence as 'Staat-Spielen' (p. 43) and 'bloße Laune' (p. 38), Handke treats Slovenia like a child.³⁴⁵ Such 'condescending paternalism' has

³⁴² Bosniak is a term denoting the national identity of Muslims living in Bosnia and Serbia.

³⁴³ Hayden, 'Muslims as "Others" in Serbian and Croatian Politics', p. 119.

³⁴⁴ Ivan Čolović, *The Politics of Symbol in Serbia. Essays in Political Anthropology*, trans. by Celia Hawkesworth (London: Hurst, 2002), p. 68.

³⁴⁵ This tendency to regard the inhabitants of the Balkans as children is also present in Handke's statements made about Serbia. Handke suggests that the Serbs in Belgrade are 'orphaned'

been identified by film scholar E. Ann Kaplan as a feature of the ‘imperial gaze’ which is typical of Hollywood films about colonial and exotic travel. This racialized gaze cast by white male travellers at non-white subjects is inextricably mixed up with anxiety and desire. At the same time, the imperial gaze

reflects the assumption that the white western subject is central, much as the male gaze assumes the centrality of the male subject. [...] anxiety prevents this gaze from actually seeing the people gazed at. [...] Like the male gaze, it’s an objectifying gaze, one that refuses mutual gazing, mutual subject-to-subject recognition.³⁴⁶

The centrality of the white male subject is an undeniable feature of Handke’s essay about Slovenia, marked by a desire to master and control the ‘rogue’ Slovenian state which is now a sovereign country and can no longer function as Handke’s ‘Geh-Heimat’.

The gendered aspect of Handke’s preoccupation with Slovenia becomes clear in his exploration of the tension between his Slovenian heritage and his persona as a German writer, which is bound up with the issue of language. Handke writes:

[ich] spiele [...] mich keineswegs als ‘Slowene’ auf. Zwar bin ich in einem Kärntner Dorf geboren, wo seinerzeit [...] noch die Mehrheit, nein, die Gesamtheit österreichisch-slowenisch war und auch in der entsprechenden Mundart miteinander verkehrte [...]; aber mein Vater war ein deutscher Soldat, und Deutsch ist meine Sprache geworden [...]; dem Kind aus der deutschen Großstadt waren die slawischen Urlaute ein Greuel in den Ohren, es fuhr bei Gelegenheit sogar der eigenen Mutter deswegen über den Mund, gerade ihr. (*Abschied*, p. 9)

Handke describes himself as a child struggling with the bilingual environment in the Carinthian village Stara Vas after years spent in Berlin. The passage suggests that the normative monolingualism of Berlin made it hard for the child to adapt to the peripheral condition in Carinthia, and to the life of an ethnic and linguistic minority. The Slovenian language, connected to Handke’s maternal heritage, is described as ancient or primitive, an ‘abomination in the ears’ of the child, and a source of conflict between mother and child. The tension between German and Slovenian is clearly gendered. Handke contrasts primeval Slavic sounds (‘die slawischen Urlaute’) with the German language, which is associated with aggressive masculinity (‘ein deutscher

(*Winterliche Reise*, p. 60), and describes Bosnian Serbs as ‘Menschenkinder’ (*Sommerlicher Nachtrag*, p. 37).

³⁴⁶ E. Ann Kaplan, *Looking for the Other: Feminism, Film, and the Imperial Gaze* (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 78-79.

Soldat'), and progressive urban existence ('aus der deutschen Großstadt'). Later in the text, Slovenian is described as 'das so dingnahe, so sanftmütige, so ungekünstelt-anmutige Slowenisch' (*Abschied*, p. 19), which makes the language seem feminine, and stands in contrast to German, associated with militarism, progress and masculinity. The dichotomy of masculine and feminine is clearly mapped onto the West/East divide, which again inscribes Handke's treatment of Yugoslavia into the Western tradition of orientalisating the Balkans.

Later in the essay, Handke claims: 'wenn ich mich heutzutage in so etwas wie einem Volk sehe, dann in jenem der Niemande' (*Abschied*, p. 11). The tension between the maternal and the paternal side of the family, and their diverse backgrounds, is not resolved but rather dissipated into an identity which belongs to no-one, and is not even 'half' Slovenian. Still, this non-Slovenian identity is characterised by a constant movement of familiarity and estrangement which allows for the paradoxical simultaneity of being a stranger and being-at-home in Slovenia: 'Und trotzdem habe ich mich in meinem Leben nirgends auf der Welt als Fremder so zu Hause gefühlt wie in dem Land Slowenien' (*Abschied*, p. 11). The sentence is ambiguous, and allows for two possible readings: Handke is both 'auf der Welt als Fremder' and 'als Fremder [...] zu Hause' in Slovenia. This passage suggests that Handke's search for *Heimat* is not just determined by the possibility of finding a new home in Slovenia but also by feeling *fremd* in Austria, in the realm of German language and history.

Handke returned to the theme of Slovene-Carinthians in his play *Immer noch Sturm* (2010), which focusses on the armed struggle of Partisans against the Nazi occupation and at the same time recounts a fictionalized history of Handke's family. By taking up the history of this marginalized ethnic group, the play, along with Maja Haderlap's *Engel des Vergessens* and Kevin Vennemann's *Mara Kogoj*, has contributed to renewed discussions about Slovene-Carinthian culture and history.³⁴⁷

This brief overview cannot do justice to the complex and often contradictory character of Handke's relationship with the Slovenian language and his Slovene-Carinthian heritage. While Handke's politically contentious involvement on behalf of

³⁴⁷ Andrea Leskovec, 'Peter Handkes "Immer Noch Sturm" oder zur Hintergebarkeit der Festschreibung', *Zagreber Germanistische Beiträge: Jahrbuch für Literatur- und Sprachwissenschaft*, 22.1 (2014), 31–51 (p. 32).

Austria's Slovene minority often went against mainstream opinion in Austria, this did not give him the right to pronounce value judgements about Slovenia, which is a separate entity from Carinthia. In Handke's eyes, the Slovenes enjoyed in Yugoslavia all forms of political, economic and cultural freedom, and they had no right to declare themselves an independent state. This demonstrates Handke's hegemonic stance towards Slovenia, further confirmed by his disparaging and orientalizing statements discussed above.

Given my later analysis of multilingual texts of post-Yugoslav migration, it is important to stress Handke's bilingualism as well as his preoccupation with the struggles of the Slovene-Carinthian minority. At the same time, this awareness of the power imbalance between the dominant nation state and its minority population does not feed into those of Handke's texts that are concerned with the precarious position of Bosnian Muslims, whose distinct identity is dismissed in his writings. Also, despite Handke's sensibility to language and his attention to subtle differences between Slovene and German, his works very rarely question hierarchies rooted in linguistic structures and instead use linguistic nuances in such a way as to make implicit discriminatory comments, e.g. when putting the term 'Bosniaken' in quotation marks and questioning the validity of this ethnic designation. Handke's texts, even if they are marked by a heightened metalinguistic awareness, do not subvert essentialist notions of identity.

Handke's programme of poetic justice for Serbia

Eine winterliche Reise marks a decisive shift in Handke's poetic vision of Yugoslavia – after its declaration of independence from Yugoslavia, Slovenia loses its unique status in Handke's oeuvre, and the writer's attention turns to Serbia, which now comes to stand for the Yugoslav legacy of anti-fascism and anti-capitalism. In Handke's view, Serbia is misunderstood by the West and the Serbs are 'ein sich offensichtlich europaweit geächtet wissendes ganzes, großes Volk, welches das als unsinnig ungerecht erlebt' (*Eine winterliche Reise*, p. 115). Handke's criticism of the Western perception of Serbia manifests itself in his critique of a wide range of publications dealing with the Yugoslav conflict. Severe censure is aimed especially at the *FAZ*, which Handke calls 'Serbenfreßblatt' (*Eine winterliche Reise*, p. 125), and its editor Johann Georg Reißmüller, a conservative figure who published articles revealing his strong pro-Slovenian, pro-Croatian and anti-Serb attitude (see Chapter One).

Accordingly, Handke calls him a 'Haßwortführer' (p. 125) and 'Reißwolf & Greifermüller' (p. 126). Handke denounces what he calls 'die Rotten der Fernfuchter, welche ihren Schreiberberuf mit dem eines Richters oder gar mit der Rolle eines Demagogen verwechseln und, über die Jahre immer in dieselbe Wort- und Bildkerbe dreschend, [...] genauso arge Kriegshunde sind wie jene im Kampfgebiet' (p. 123). Handke argues that media reports, through spreading hatred and misconceptions, only aggravated the situation in the region.

Eine winterliche Reise is a carefully structured text, in which the description of the narrator's journey (in two parts) is framed by a prologue and an epilogue. In the prologue, Handke's narrator lays out the reasons for his trip to Serbia, suggesting that the accounts and images sent home by war reporters during the war in Croatia and Bosnia hardly ever depicted Serbia, and thus made the country all the more mysterious and enticing. The prologue is followed by a description of the journey proper, which Handke undertakes together with his wife S., as well as his two Serbian friends, the translator Žarko and the casual labourer Zlatko. During the trip, Handke's companions often serve as a corrective foil to Handke's point of view, making him realize that he has a general tendency to overlook what he calls 'Realitätselemente' (*Eine winterliche Reise*, p. 55). This strategy, in which the narrative voice is rendered unreliable and unstable, is meant to enhance the 'authenticity' of the text.

Still, Handke's narrator idealizes Serbia as an ancient, pre-industrial and non-capitalist country. At a market in Belgrade, the narrator discovers that Serbia's isolation from international trade (caused by Western embargo) gives trade in the country a special quality, which he describes as 'eine ursprüngliche und, ja, volkstümliche Handelslust' (*Eine winterliche Reise*, p. 72). Thus, the Western embargo is cast as a measure protecting Serbia from the negative influence of the external, capitalist world. Handke admits: 'ich erwischte mich dann sogar bei dem Wunsch, die Abgeschnittenheit des Landes – nein, nicht der Krieg – möge andauern; möge andauern die Unzugänglichkeit der westlichen oder sonst welchen Waren- und Monopolwelt' (p. 72).

After a short stay in Belgrade, and a visit to Zlatko's parents in the village Porodin, Handke travels to the Orthodox monastery Studenica, which he visits together with Milorad Pavić, a renowned Serbian writer. On the same day, Handke meets a group of young writers, including Dragan Velikić. Handke is reluctant to get involved in a discussion about Serbian politics, and refuses to engage with an

unnamed writer who is critical of Serbian nationalism. Excluding counter-narratives within Serbia, Handke states: '[ich wollte] seine Verdammung der Oberherren nicht hören; nicht hier [...], nicht in der Stadt und dem Land; und nicht jetzt, wo es vielleicht doch um einen Frieden ging' (*Eine winterliche Reise*, p. 86). The meetings with public figures in Serbia contrast with Handke's own assertions that he was not travelling through Serbia in an official capacity.

The second part of the journey takes the narrator and his Serbian companions to Bajina Bašta, a town situated on the Serbian border with Bosnia. In his description of a difficult passage across the mountain Tara³⁴⁸ during a snowstorm, Handke ironizes the fact that his writing resembles 'adventure stories' (*Eine winterliche Reise*, p. 92). Having safely arrived in Bajina Bašta, the party is received by Olga, Žarko's ex-girlfriend. Olga tells the narrator about her sense of loss, caused by the collapse of Yugoslavia, as well as about the hardship suffered by most inhabitants of the town. The only people who are well off are the 'Bosnian Serb war profiteers' (p. 95), and the rest of the inhabitants find it hard to make ends meet. In the text, acute poverty is manifested through the lack of heating in most buildings and through the missing teeth of people whom Handke meets in town. In his description of the town, Handke plays with stereotypical images of the Serbs and admits that he mistook a group of forest rangers for 'paramilitary killers' (p. 98).

The description of the journey ends with Handke's critique of new developments in Slovenia following the country's secession from Yugoslavia in 1991. Handke is very critical of the Westernisation of Slovenia, and of the fact that the country has been flooded with German export products and German tourists. Because of these changes, the country alienates Handke (*Eine winterliche Reise*, p. 109). On the other hand, Serbia, which remains isolated from the West, maintains a special quality in the traveller's eyes, and, although Handke does not feel at home in Serbia, he does not feel like a stranger either. He writes: 'weder wurde ich in Serbien etwa heimisch, noch aber erlebte ich mich je als ein Fremder, im Sinne eines Unzugehörigen' (p. 114). In this way, Serbia is not only constructed in opposition to Western Europe but also in opposition to Western-oriented parts of former

³⁴⁸ In *Eine winterliche Reise*, Handke mistakenly refers to the mountain as Debelo Brdo. This error is pointed out by Handke himself in *Sommerlicher Nachtrag* (p. 22).

Yugoslavia. In this way, Handke inadvertently reinforces the stereotypical lines of division described by Bakić-Hayden as nesting orientalisms.

Following the publication of this key text about the Yugoslav war, Handke has continued to produce works concerned with the Balkans. Following the 1999 NATO bombing of Serbia and Kosovo, Handke published the drama *Die Fahrt im Einbaum oder Das Stück zum Film vom Krieg* (1999) as well as the travelogue *Unter Tränen fragend* (2000). The latter text is an account of two journeys to Serbia undertaken by Handke during the NATO bombings provoked by violence in Kosovo. In the text, Handke is very critical of the rhetoric justifying the Western intervention, according to which NATO only bombed ‘military targets’ and aimed at sparing the civilian population. Handke raises the subject of Serbian civilian victims of the bombings: ‘Tod den Arbeitern in der Zastava-Fabrik vom Kragujevac, weil dort neben den Autos angeblich auch “Pistolen” fabriziert werden’.³⁴⁹ Handke considers the bombing of Kragujevac as especially abominable since the town was a site of a massacre organised by the Nazis during the Second World War. The text makes clear that for Handke there exists a clear continuity between the violence committed in the Balkans by the *Wehrmacht* and the German air strikes on Serbia and Kosovo in 1999.

After 1999, Handke’s attention shifted towards the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. In 2003, Handke published a text about the trials in The Hague, entitled *Rund um das große Tribunal* (2003) and an account of his visit to Slobodan Milošević, indicted by the ICTY, entitled *Die Tablas von Daimiel. Ein Umwegzeugenbericht zum Prozeß gegen Slobodan Milošević* (2005). Handke’s visit occurred after he had been asked to act as a witness of defence in the trial against Milošević, but declined this offer.

In Germany, the last major controversy surrounding Handke happened in 2006, when the Düsseldorf city council questioned the decision to award the Heinrich Heine prize of the city of Düsseldorf to Handke. Initially, the decision by the jury (composed of local politicians and intellectuals) provoked a heated discussion in the feuilleton, which focussed on Handke’s literary texts but also on his recent presence at Milošević’s funeral. Handke’s right to the award was questioned by such figures as Hans Christoph Buch and the Balkan correspondent of the *TAZ* Erich Rathfelder,

³⁴⁹ Peter Handke, *Unter Tränen fragend: nachträgliche Aufzeichnungen von zwei Jugoslawien-Durchquerungen im Krieg, März und April 1999* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2000), p. 33.

while writers such as Elfriede Jelinek, Marlene Streeruwitz and Botho Strauß defended Handke.³⁵⁰ In an article for *Die Welt*, Hans Christoph Buch accused Handke of mocking the victims of the Bosnian war and of insulting the pilots participating in NATO air strikes against Serbia in 1999. In his article, Buch describes Handke's texts and pronouncements about former Yugoslavia as a 'political frenzy' which reveals Handke's 'megalomaniac need for admiration'.³⁵¹ At the same time, writing for the *FAZ*, Botho Strauß compared Handke to Ezra Pound and Bertolt Brecht, claiming that Handke's literary work should not be dismissed due to his political views. On the contrary, argues Strauß, guilt and error can be viewed as marks of greatness.³⁵²

This last debate about Handke had more to do with Handke's public persona than with his literary texts, with certain politicians involved in the decision-making concerning the prize admitting that they were not familiar with Handke's works.³⁵³ In the public discourse, Handke, regarded as a supporter of Milošević and a proponent of Serbian nationalism, came to represent a morally suspect stance towards the Yugoslav war. As pointed out by Thomas Steinfeld, 'Das gute Gefühl, moralisch im Recht zu sein, ist ihm gegenüber offenbar so stark, dass es sich auch ohne Begründung zu großer Aggressivität berechtigt glaubt, dass es meint, von allen Legitimationspflichten befreit zu sein'.³⁵⁴ By 2006, the belief in Handke's moral bankruptcy had so deeply permeated the public sphere that Handke's critics did not feel obliged to read his literary works in order to dismiss both the biographical Handke and Handke as a writer. In many ways, Handke fell prey to what he already criticised in 1996 – a consensus in Germany which allowed intellectuals and politicians to assume a position of moral authority by setting themselves against an 'other' whom they perceived as morally corrupt.

The reception of *Eine winterliche Reise*

Not surprisingly, in the controversy that followed the publication of *Eine winterliche Reise*, it was Handke's perceived conflation of art and politics, as well as his

³⁵⁰ Struck, pp. 241-245.

³⁵¹ Hans Christoph Buch, 'Bis zum Delirium', *Die Welt*, 26 May 2006 <https://www.welt.de/print-welt/article219358/Bis-zum-Delirium.html> [accessed 21 February 2018].

³⁵² Botho Strauß, 'Was bleibt von Handke?', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 1 June 2006, <http://www.faz.net/1.330233> [accessed 21 February 2018].

³⁵³ Struck, p. 247.

³⁵⁴ Thomas Steinfeld, 'Düsseldorf: Ein Eklat und sein Ende. Das Spiel ist aus', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 17 May 2010, <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/duesseldorf-ein-eklat-und-sein-ende-das-spiel-ist-aus-1.225614> [accessed 21 February 2018].

‘aestheticisation’ of politics, which gave rise to criticism by feuilleton writers and literary critics alike.³⁵⁵ Jürgen Brokoff observes that in Handke’s texts about Yugoslavia, ‘the political and the aesthetic aspects are impossible to tell apart,’ which allows Handke to gloss over the war crimes committed by the Serbs.³⁵⁶ Similarly, according to the common view expressed in the media, Handke misused his literary talent to pursue his revisionist politics but was unable to depict the events on the ground in a truthful, unbiased way. In an article in *Der Spiegel* from June 1996, unidentified ‘authors’ write about the public’s negative reaction to Handke’s ‘excursion into the in-between space of poetry and politics’ (‘Zwischenreich von Poesie und Politik’).³⁵⁷ The authors point out that Handke did not believe the reaction to his text would be so strong and wonder: ‘Wie naiv kann ein Schriftsteller im reifen Mannesalter sein?’³⁵⁸.

For his part, Handke asserted that his texts were not meant as political commentary but rather as a literary exploration of the conflict in the Balkans. In an interview for *Libération* concerning the controversy surrounding *Eine winterliche Reise*, Handke declares: ‘Ich bin kein Journalist, auch kein Richter und kein Historiker. Ich bin Schriftsteller, und als Schriftsteller bin ich nach Serbien gefahren’.³⁵⁹ For Handke, the debate in the media was carried out using a moralising, aggressive language which excluded any voices of dissent:

Die Mauern wurden in Bezug auf die jugoslawische Frage sofort gezogen. Es gab gleich welche, die wussten: So und so ist die Lage, und so muss man darüber reden. Man kann nur das und das sagen und nur auf die journalistische Weise.³⁶⁰

To distance himself from this politicised language, Handke tried to place himself outside of the media discourse and to fashion himself as an independent intellectual

³⁵⁵ Susanne Düwell, ‘Der Skandal um Peter Handkes ästhetische Inszenierung von Serbien’, in *Literatur als Skandal: Fälle-Funktionen-Folgen*, ed. by Stefan Neuhaus and Johann Holzner (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), pp. 577–87 (p. 583).

³⁵⁶ Jürgen Brokoff, ‘Peter Handke als serbischer Nationalist: Ich sehe was, was ihr nicht fasst’, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 15 July 2010, <http://www.faz.net/1.597025> [accessed 21 February 2018].

³⁵⁷ ‘Dichters Winterreise’, *Der Spiegel*, 5 February 1996 <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-8872098.html> [accessed 21 February 2018].

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

³⁵⁹ ‘Mit Jugoslawien ist Europa zugrunde gegangen. Peter Handke im Gespräch mit Antoine de Gaudemar’, in *Noch einmal für Jugoslawien. Peter Handke*, ed. by Thomas Deichmann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999), pp. 262–65 (pp. 262–63).

³⁶⁰ ‘Der lange Abschied von Jugoslawien’, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 17 June 2006 <https://www.nzz.ch/articleE7H0L-1.40135> [accessed 21 February 2018].

whose supposedly unbiased and peripheral position allowed him to critique and challenge the consensus present in the media discourse. Christoph Deupmann notes that Handke declared himself incompetent in the face of immediate political and legal questions, leaving these to the experts.³⁶¹ In this way, Handke attempted to claim for himself an ‘in-between’ position which would exceed the binary logic of friend and foe present in the media discourse, and therefore challenge the moralising tone adopted by other intellectuals and journalists. Still, even though Handke repeatedly distanced himself from the language of the media, the division between literature and journalism in his texts was not as clean-cut as he hoped, partly because *Eine winterliche Reise* was first published in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, which blurred the line between the literary, journalistic or essayistic account.

Handke’s self-understanding as an author who remains untainted by political and journalistic discourse plays an important role in his self-stylisation. This stylisation occurs through a constant emphasis of the uniqueness of his authorial *Ich*. When asked about his intentions when writing *Eine winterliche Reise*, Handke states:

Meine Erwartung [...] war es, die Köpfe, die Augen und natürlich auch das Herz zu öffnen [...]. Ganz nach meiner Art eben, dass ich mich selber ins Spiel gebracht habe, aber nicht um den Blick zu verstellen, sondern durch mein Ich eine Art Vertrauen zu erwecken, was viele, die meisten Journalisten ja nicht tun. [...] Aber ich als Schriftsteller [...] konnte und musste mich hineinbringen.³⁶²

The passage is dominated by Handke’s *Ich*. As shown above, in *Eine winterliche Reise*, Handke uses a narrative voice which avoids making universal truth claims and constantly highlights its own unreliability. In this way, the partial view inscribed into Handke’s self-reflexive *Ich* functions as a sign of the authenticity of Handke’s account. As pointed out by Karoline von Oppen, Handke’s project of poetic justice entails a ‘reflection on the process of travelling and on the traveller’s preconceived notions’.³⁶³ Thus, Handke’s narrator constantly ‘questions the veracity of his own observations’.³⁶⁴ Handke’s impressions of Serbia often turn out to be false or naïve,

³⁶¹ Christoph Deupmann, ‘Die Unmöglichkeit des Dritten. Peter Handke, die Jugoslawienkriege und die Rolle der deutschsprachigen Schriftsteller’, *Zeithistorische Forschungen, Online-Ausgabe*, 5 (2008), <http://www.zeithistorische-forschungen.de/1-2008/id=4442> [accessed 21 February 2018], 9.

³⁶² ‘Ich mag nicht gerne theoretisieren oder politisieren, aber Serbien war wahrscheinlich das, was der inneren Leere vieler, die sonst überhaupt kein Engagement, keine Vision hatten, gefehlt hat. Peter Handke im Gespräch mit Thomas Deichmann’, in *Noch einmal für Jugoslawien: Peter Handke*, ed. by Thomas Deichmann (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1999), pp. 187–98 (p. 187).

³⁶³ Oppen, ‘Imagining the Balkans, Imagining Germany’, p. 203.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

as pointed out by his fellow travellers. He casts doubt on his ability to make judgments about Serbia, wondering ‘Was weiß ein Fremder?’ (*Eine winterliche Reise*, p. 59) and reveals the fallibility of his memory (*Eine winterliche Reise*, p. 79). By introducing an element of uncertainty into his narrative, Handke suggests that his text does not claim universal validity and is therefore different from those journalistic texts about Yugoslavia that do.

However, as I demonstrate below, this staged naivety is a mere linguistic ploy strategically used by Handke to cast doubt on the veracity of media reports about the conflict in Yugoslavia, especially those concerned with the war crimes committed by Serb forces during the wars in Croatia and Bosnia. A close analysis of the aesthetic devices which allegedly undermine the authority of Handke’s narrative voice reveals a clear intent to relativize and de-historicize the conflict.

What really happened in Vukovar?

In his engagement with European media accounts concerned with the Yugoslav Wars, Handke employs a rhetorical strategy through which he presents two contrasting viewpoints and initially avoids stating explicitly where he stands. Handke introduces his point as a question, a strategy which recurs throughout the text and which allows him to adopt a hesitant, wondering tone and to ponder his ideas in a seemingly non-binding manner. Still, Deupmann notes that ‘[d]er Fragemodus, in den Handke den Behauptungsgestus seiner Aussagen immer wieder zurücknimmt, gerät oft genug in die Nähe der Insinuation’.³⁶⁵

A prominent example is Handke’s engagement with media reports about the battle of Vukovar. Vukovar is a border town in Croatia, located on the Danube. The siege of the city by the Yugoslav People’s Army (JNA) and Serb militia units lasted from May 1991 until the Croatian surrender on 18 November 1991. Around 1,130 Croatian civilians lost their lives in the siege, and 2,600 people went missing. The city was completely destroyed in the fighting. Renata Schellenberg writes: ‘When Vukovar finally fell to Serb forces [...] the city was virtually non-existent, demolished to the point of rubble, becoming an unrecognizable shell of its former self’.³⁶⁶ After entering the city, Serb forces committed grave war crimes, including the massacre of

³⁶⁵ Deupmann, 8.

³⁶⁶ Renata Schellenberg, ‘Politics and Remembrance in Post-War Vukovar’, *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 17 (2015), 15–28, (p. 16).

264 patients at the Vukovar hospital between 20 and 21 November. Schellenberg highlights that the victims were ‘deliberately removed from the site in order to be transported outside of the city to be tortured and killed at a disused farm. The act was deliberate, premeditated and purposely atrocious’.³⁶⁷ The massacre figures in Bodrožić’s novel *kirschholz und alte gefühle*, where one of the protagonists, Silva, witnessed the atrocities committed after the fall of Vukovar.

To draw international attention to the fighting which had taken place in the city, on 20 November 1991 a group of activists replaced the Paris metro sign ‘Stalingrad’ with ‘Vukovar’.³⁶⁸ In the passage below, Handke recounts his reaction to the fall of Vukovar, and to the symbolic action in Paris. Handke asks himself how it was possible that, initially, he could ‘naively’ condone the parallel between Vukovar and Stalingrad, only to realize on the next day that this was inaccurate:

Wie kam es etwa, dass ich es im ersten Moment ganz nachfühlen konnte, als Ende November 1991, bei der Meldung von dem Fall der Stadt Vukovar, noch am Abend desselben Tages das Schild der Pariser Métrostation *Stalingrad* von einer so empörten wie ergriffenen Passantenhand umgeschrieben wurde zu *Vukovar*, ich das als eine so aktuelle wie biblische Handlung sah, oder als Kunst- und Polit-Akt in Idealunion - und dass doch schon am nächsten Morgen, wie manchmal bei einem für den Augenblick zwar packenden, aber schon gleich nach dem Wort ENDE nicht mehr ganz so, und später beim Bedenken immer weniger plausiblen Film (in der Regel aus Hollywood), meine Anzweiflungen ansetzten, wie denn ‘Stalingrad’ und ‘Vukovar’ sich aufeinander reimen könnten. (*Eine winterliche Reise*, p. 33)

This passage is striking since it almost imperceptibly blurs the line between reality and the representation of reality. The act of renaming the metro station (we do not know whether the narrator saw it in real life or in the media) turns into a work of art, combining contemporary politics with ‘biblical’, ahistorical values. However, soon enough, this artistic act turns into ‘bad’ art, which for Handke seems to be synonymous with Hollywood films, and the narrator starts having his doubts regarding the plausibility of this historical comparison. The transition between the initial ‘enthusiastic’ reaction and the later scepticism is signalled through a shift from ‘nachfühlen’ to ‘Bedenken,’ from emotion to reason or even doubt. Thus, Handke critiques the comparison between the battle of Vukovar and the siege of Stalingrad,

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ ‘Kunstdenkmäler: Blauweiße Zielscheibe’, *Der Spiegel*, 9 December 1991
<http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-13491635.html> [accessed 11 February 2018].

which, although historically inaccurate, was used by the former Croatian President Stjepan Mesić in 2007 when he claimed that ‘someone must answer for turning Vukovar into Stalingrad’ (my translation).³⁶⁹ The slippage in the passage occurs when Handke re-examines his attitude to the ‘Meldung von dem Fall der Stadt Vukovar,’ which sparked his initial, emotional and supposedly irrational reaction. The long and complex structure of the sentence does not exclude the possibility that what is being compared to the ‘momentarily thrilling’ but ‘hardly plausible’ Hollywood film is not the ‘artistic’ act in the metro, but rather the news report itself. This ambiguity blurs the lines between reality, media and art.

The fact that within the passage Handke has made a smooth transition from the interpretation of reality (comparing Vukovar and Stalingrad) to the description of reality itself (the siege of Vukovar by the Serb forces) is confirmed in the following sentence. At this point, Handke’s attention shifts to an article in the *FAZ* describing the Croatian declaration of independence and the implication of this development for Croatian Serbs. The critique of the article quickly develops into a political polemic. Handke tries to justify Serbian military aggression in Croatia, stating that it is abominable that in the constitution of the newly formed Croatian state Croatian Serbs were overnight turned into ‘a second-rate ethnic group’ (*Eine winterliche Reise*, p. 34). Handke claims that Croatia had no right to declare independence, and thus it was the Croatian government that provoked the war:

Was hieß es, einen Staat zu begründen, [...] auf einem Gebiet, wo doch seit Menschengedenken eine unabsehbare Zahl von Leuten hauste, welcher solcher Staat höchstens passen konnte wie die Faust aufs Auge, d.h., ein Greuel sein musste, in Erinnerung an die nicht zu vergessenden Verfolgungen durch das hitlerisch-kroatische Ustascharegime? Wer also war der Aggressor? (*Eine winterliche Reise*, p. 34)

In Handke’s view, the fascist legacy of the Second World War meant that Croatia had no right to impose its power on the Serb inhabitants of Croatia. He also claims that forcing these Serbs to become Croatian citizens, and, on top of that, ‘second-class’ citizens, was reason enough for the Serbs to start what he considers a defensive war. Handke even identifies with the militant Croatian Serbs:

³⁶⁹ ‘Mesić nakon sastanka s Del Ponte: Netko mora odgovarati što je Vukovar pretvoren u Staljingrad’ <http://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/mesic-nakon-sastanka-s-del-ponte-netko-mora-odgovarati-sto-je-vukovar-pretvoren-u-staljingrad/367100.aspx> [accessed 11 February 2018].

wie hätte ich, Serbe nun in Kroatien, mich zu solch einem gegen mich und mein Volk beschlossenen Staat verhalten? [...] hätte ich mich, [...] zur Wehr gesetzt, [...] zur Not sogar mit Hilfe einer zerfallenden, ziellosen jugoslawischen Armee? Wahrscheinlich, oder, wäre ich als so ein Serbe halbwegs jung und ohne eigene Familie, fast sicher. (*Eine winterliche Reise*, p. 35)

This analysis illustrates how Handke, starting from a critique of a historically inaccurate comparison between Vukovar and Stalingrad, goes on to argue that the Serbs besieging Vukovar and the rest of Croatia were in fact defending their country. The transition from initial empathy with the critics of the Serbs to identification with the ‘young and single’ militant Serb is striking. Handke’s rejection of the news report about the siege soon enough develops into a polemic revealing his highly problematic political stance. Handke might be right in criticizing Croatian nationalism but he ends up taking sides and justifying Serbian military aggression, appealing to such obsolete categories as ‘Volk’ and subscribing to the same strict ethnic divisions that he elsewhere abhors.

One might wonder whether Handke’s apologia for the Serb violence in Croatia is meant as a genuine attempt to provide representational justice for Serbia. It seems that Handke’s support for the Serbs is rather a provocative gesture aimed at breaking a taboo in Germany. Through his identification with Croatian Serbs, who were one of the most demonized groups in Western media, Handke is playing devil’s advocate, countering the pro-Croatian sentiment which existed in Germany during the war in Croatia. It becomes clear that Handke in fact instrumentalizes the figure of the Croatian Serb soldier in order to position himself as an outsider in Germany. Handke is not at all interested in the subjectivity of the ‘Croatian Serbs’ besieging Vukovar, who function in his text as stock figures with no face and no voice.

Handke’s non-engagement with Bosnia

In the final part of the chapter, I demonstrate that Handke’s alleged attempts to counter the imbalanced depiction of the Serbs in the media merely result in the total exclusion of Bosnian Muslim voices from his travelogues. Serbian suffering and Serbian voices (of course, mediated through Handke’s own *Ich*) overshadow the victimhood of other ethnic groups. This omission undermines Handke’s project of representational justice for Serbia, which seems to be incompatible with a truthful portrayal of Bosnian Muslim suffering.

On the border with Bosnia

In *Eine winterliche Reise*, Handke describes his visit to the Serbian border town of Bajina Bašta. Because of heavy snowfall which made the roads impassable, the travellers decide to stay in the town longer than planned. During Handke's conversations with the locals, it transpires that they regard the collapse of Yugoslavia as a tragedy which destroyed closely-knit communities and for many presented a rupture in their identity. This vision of Yugoslavia is compatible with Handke's own perception of the country, which for him represented an idealized supranational and anti-fascist entity.

Still, the affirmation of the Yugoslav model of communism is not expressed by the narrator himself but by his Serbian interlocutors. Thus Olga's mother claims that 'sie würde bis an ihr Lebensende eine durchdrungene – nicht serbische, sondern jugoslawische Kommunistin sein; [...] auch heute noch galt ihr das als die einzige, die einzig vernünftige Möglichkeit für die südslawischen Völker' (*Eine winterliche Reise*, p. 104). Also, an unnamed librarian from Bajina Bašta states: 'Ich weiß nicht, wie ich es erklären soll, dass ich immer mehr zum Jugoslawen werde. Für solche sind das jetzt die schwersten Zeiten. [...] Ich kann nicht Serbe, nicht Kroat, nicht Ungar, nicht Deutscher sein, weil ich mich nirgends mehr zu Hause fühle' (p. 102). Yugoslavia, or a Yugoslav identity, seem to live on, even though the political entity upon which it rested has collapsed.

The new division of a country which used to form a bigger whole is symbolized by the border between Serbia and Bosnia, which Handke cannot cross. The border runs along the river Drina, and the two border posts are on two different ends of a bridge. The bridge in Bajina Bašta is, of course, not the same as the famous 'protagonist' of Andrić's *The Bridge over the Drina*. Still, as noted above, Handke's fascination with the Drina owes much to his reading of Andrić. Alexander Honold argues that in Handke's text, the Drina is not a mere geographical location but 'ein intertextuell durch den Roman von Andrić präformiertes Erzählgebiet'.³⁷⁰ Handke's literary journey to the border zone between Serbia and Bosnia is thus 'eine [...] performative Relektüre und Reinszenierung der Schwellensituation aus dem

³⁷⁰ Alexander Honold, 'Grenze, Brücke, Fluss: Peter Handkes Erkundungen einer Kriegslandschaft', *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie. Sonderheft. Grenzen im Raum - Grenzen in der Literatur*, 129 (2010), 201–19 (p. 216).

Roman'.³⁷¹ The narrator's failed attempt to cross the bridge is therefore less concerned with the current political situation than with Andrić's work. In its first description of the bridge in Višegrad, Andrić's novel reads:

this great stone bridge, a rare structure of unique beauty [...] was the one real and permanent crossing in the whole middle and upper course of the Drina and an indispensable link on the road between Bosnia and Serbia and further, beyond Serbia, with other parts of the Turkish Empire.³⁷²

The bridge in Andrić's novel is a permanent feature of the landscape. It is more important than the town itself, which would not have the same significance were it not located at this important transit point. Therefore, the fact that in Handke's travelogue the Drina cannot be crossed and the border between Serbia and Bosnia is protected by armed guards could be read as a disruption of the literary universe evoked by Andrić's renowned text.

At the same time, however, the Drina's cultural significance goes beyond Andrić's novel. Anthropologist Ivan Čolović argues that in Serbian nationalist mythology, the nation and its territory are inextricably linked and 'geographical elements, and especially rivers and mountains, become parts of the body, the spine, arteries, bosom or shoulders of such a personified Serbian national community'.³⁷³ The Drina, for instance, is described by the poet Milutin Savčić as 'the backbone, strong and firm, | Uniting all the Serbian people'. Čolović contends: 'Given that it has this role, [...] the Drina cannot be a frontier. The idea of "cutting off" the Serbs on the Bosnian side of the Drina from those who are on its western bank then becomes a painful butchering, a severing of the body-Serbia'.³⁷⁴ This entanglement between geography and nationalist ideology (which is of course not unique to Serbian national mythology) renders Handke's text ambiguous. In my view, the landscape mapped by Handke cannot be separated from contemporary events and treated exclusively as a literary realm, intertextually linked to Ivo Andrić's oeuvre.

In fact, the river Drina physically connects the Serbian town Bajina Bašta to Višegrad. This means that Bajina Bašta, located downstream, was not unaffected by the Bosnian conflict, which, as it were, was brought to Serbia by the polluted waters

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² Ivo Andrić, *The Bridge over the Drina*, p. 14.

³⁷³ Čolović, p. 34.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

of the Drina. As noted by journalist Ed Vulliamy, in June 1992 Milan Josipovic, a police inspector from Višegrad, ‘received a macabre complaint from the manager of Bajina Bašta hydroelectric plant across the Serbian border, asking whoever was responsible to please slow the flow of corpses down the Drina. They were clogging up the culverts in his dam’.³⁷⁵ On 19 June 1992, 147 Muslims were killed and thrown into the Drina from the New Bridge in Višegrad. The Old Bridge was also one of the main sites of the massacre.³⁷⁶

However, these facts are rendered suspect by Handke’s conversation with Olga, who states that people in Bajina Bašta were not aware of what was happening in Bosnia and claims that she never met anyone who had seen the dead bodies floating down the river. The relevant passage reads: ‘Immer wieder sollen scharenweise Kadaver die Drina abwärts getrieben haben, doch sie kannte niemanden, der das mit eigenen Augen gesehen hatte. Jedenfalls wurde in dem Fluß, vor dem Krieg sommers voll von Schwimmern, [...] nicht mehr gebadet’ (*Eine winterliche Reise*, p. 94). By allowing Olga to voice her doubts concerning the veracity of media reports about the bodies in the Drina, Handke seemingly forsakes his positions as an authoritative narrative instance and gives voice to those whose perspective was absent from Western media. It must be said, however, that Handke’s tendency to focus on the Serbian perspective on the conflict leads to many omissions in Handke’s representation of the Bosnian war. Also, by suggesting that Olga was not aware of the massacres in Bosnia, Handke introduces a problematic link between the Serbs and the denial of history, which is in line with the policies of Serbian nationalist leaders.

Absent Bosnian Voices

In *Eine winterliche Reise*, Handke’s narrator does not cross the border into Bosnia. Thus, in many ways, Bosnia occupies a liminal position in the text, both geographically and textually. The travelogue is dominated by Serbian voices: Handke travels to Serbia with two Serb friends, talks only to Serbian refugees (like the refugee from Knin, the former capital of the Republic of Serbian Krajina, recaptured by the Croat forces on 5 August 1995) and to Serb locals. The massacre in Srebrenica is not mentioned by Handke himself but rather by two female protagonists of his text: Olga

³⁷⁵ Nerma Jelacic and Ed Vulliamy, ‘The Warlord of Visegrad’, *The Guardian*, 11 August 2005, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/aug/11/warcrimes.features11> [accessed 20 February 2018].

³⁷⁶ Bećirević, p. 127.

and Handke's wife S., who asks the narrator: 'Du willst doch nicht auch noch das Massaker von Srebrenica in Frage stellen?' (*Eine winterliche Reise*, p. 121). In response to S.'s question, Handke states: 'Nein. [...]. Aber ich möchte dazu fragen, wie ein solches Massaker denn zu erklären ist, begangen, so heißt es, unter den Augen der Weltöffentlichkeit, [...] und noch dazu, wie es heißt, als ein organisiertes [...] Hinrichten' (*Eine winterliche Reise*, p. 121). In this way, Handke only comes to discuss the massacre using indirect speech, at first, by quoting Olga and S., and later, by repeating the words 'so heißt es' and 'wie es heißt' (i.e. 'they say'). In this way, Handke suggests that any information he might have about Srebrenica is second-hand and potentially unreliable. At the same time, the reference to the fact that the Srebrenica genocide was committed under the watchful eyes of the international community is based on fact, since the Dutch peacekeepers operating under the UN were declared responsible for the deaths of Bosnian Muslim men.

It could seem that Handke's later decision to cross the Serbian border with Bosnia in his second travelogue and to travel to two sites of atrocities committed by the Serbs on Bosnian Muslims (Višegrad and Srebrenica) would have to change the status of Bosnian victims in Handke's texts and render them more central. And yet Handke's attitude remains as ambivalent and problematic as before. Again, Bosnian victims are absent. The war toll on Bosnia is conveyed through the destruction of buildings and through the fact that the Bosnian population left (or was forced to evacuate) the towns visited by Handke. Plundered and abandoned houses serve as a reminder of their past inhabitants. The people themselves are never encountered.

In the opening part of *Sommerlicher Nachtrag*, the narrator, in a non-binding manner, says that he wanted to visit Višegrad 'der Brücke dort über die Drina und Ivo Andrić' wegen, und einfach nur so' (p. 9). He fails to mention the recent war and instead highlights the significance of the town as the setting of Andrić's novel. This evokes the opening lines of Said's *Orientalism*:

On a visit to Beirut during the terrible civil war of 1975-1976 a French journalist wrote regretfully of the gutted downtown area that 'it had once seemed to belong to ... the Orient of Chateaubriand and Nerval'. He was right about the place, of course, especially so far as a European was concerned. The Orient was almost a European invention [...]. the main thing for the European visitor was a European representation of the Orient and its contemporary fate, both of which had a privileged communal significance for the journalist and his French readers.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁷ Said, p. 1.

What is different in Handke's travelogue is that he is not referring to a colonial text about Bosnia but rather to a significant work of Yugoslav literature. Still, Višegrad is conceptualized as a significant literary topos rather than a contemporary location with a difficult and brutal history. Handke's ambiguous attitude towards recent events becomes clear in the passage in which Handke is looking at the famous bridge over the Drina and briefly mentions the killings:

die wuchtige, aus dem Dunkeln glimmende Brücke inzwischen vollends entvölkert, unter den schon sommerlichen, südlich hellen [...] Sternen, und das Durchkreuztwerden dieses Bildes jetzt von dem Bedenken der Berichte über die Tötungen in der hiesigen Muslimgemeinde vor ziemlich genau vier Jahren. (*Sommerlicher Nachtrag*, p. 38)

In the passage, the memory of the killings is a disturbance, a sudden thought which 'intersects' with the peaceful image of a bridge under a summery sky. At the same time, what the narrator is looking at is a 'Bild', which suggests a degree of artifice. Handke talks about 'Berichte über die Tötungen', which, of course, are not the same as the actual killings. Thus, the memory of the killings is close and distant at the same time, and mediated through journalistic accounts which cannot be relied upon. Also, the noun 'Bedenken' is markedly ambiguous, since it has the double meaning of reflection and doubt/suspicion.

It soon transpires that Handke is more interested in the experiences of Bosnian Serb inhabitants of the town. Handke describes his visit to a Serb orthodox cemetery of Bosnian Serb soldiers killed in action in 1992, which was the time when the killings of civilians took place. Handke sees women cleaning the tombstones, and one of the women starts praying and singing next to a gravestone, which, as Handke assumes, belongs to the woman's son. The passage contains the following descriptions:

der von nichts als dem Schmerz hervorgebrachte, und geleitete, und betonte, und beherrschte Totenbahrenmonolog; [...] ganz anders sich in die Lüfte erhebend und diese erfüllend als je eine Arie [...]. Und muß hier dazugesagt werden, dass jenes Totenklagen dort auf dem serbisch-orthodoxen Friedhof das sicher ganz gleiche, nur verschieden sich äußernde Weh woanders natürlich miteinschloß? (*Sommerlicher Nachtrag*, pp. 47-49)

Handke describes a woman mourning a Bosnian Serb soldier. This stands in contrast to a source Handke quoted earlier, an article by Chris Hedges, a journalist from the *New York Times*, who describes a woman mourning her relatives killed in Višegrad

by Milan Lukić. The woman, Mrs. Muharemovic, witnessed her mother and sister being shot in the stomach and saw their bodies fall into the Drina. The witness spent three years in a Serb detention camp and cannot sleep at night, plagued by a nightmare in which she drowns in the river herself, and the bodies of her mother and sister float past.³⁷⁸ However, Handke is more preoccupied with the artistic quality of Hedges' article than its content and argues that the text has a kitsch conclusion:

der miesliterarische Schlußabsatz (ganz und gar nicht zu Herzen gehend, sondern auf dieses eben bloß nackt schamlos *abzielend*) des nach Višegrad hinter die bosnischen Berge geheuerten Manhattan-Journalisten, worin er eine aus ihrer Stadt geflüchtete Zeugin, nächstens dabeigewesen beim Hinabgestoßenwerden von Mutter und Schwester von der Brücke, Tennessee-Williams-haft [sic] sagen lässt: "The bridge. The bridge. The bridge..." (*Sommerlicher Nachtrag*, p. 41)

Handke questions the description of suffering present in Hedges' article. He claims that the American journalist only cared about his 'Story', 'Scoop', his 'Beutemachen' and his 'Verkaufbares' (*Sommerlicher Nachtrag*, pp. 40-41), which makes his account morally dubious, artistically flawed and lacking in insight. Again, only Handke – so it would seem – has access to both political and artistic truth, and his depiction of the lamentation of a Serbian woman in Višegrad is – supposedly – aesthetically superior to what he deems a kitsch literary reference in a text describing the suffering of a Bosnian Muslim woman. Although Handke is making an important move here, since he shows that the suffering of the Serb woman is as valid as any pain felt by a mother who loses her son, he goes too far in denying the value of Hedges' report. As Jürgen Brokoff argues in his analysis of the passage, Handke's criticism of Hedges' language also affects the victim, whom Handke denies the right to articulate her suffering. Brokoff observes: 'Seine Aussage [...] trifft durch den Journalisten hindurch auch das Opfer, dem nicht nur Mutter und Schwester genommen wurden, sondern auch – durch Handke – die Möglichkeit, das real erfahrene Leid zu artikulieren'.³⁷⁹ In his text, Handke does not comment on the fact that the relatives of the Muslim victims were expelled from Višegrad and therefore cannot mourn their dead there. Muslims can only commemorate their victims elsewhere, in absentia, but Handke denies them this

³⁷⁸ Chris Hedges, 'From One Serbian Militia Chief, A Trail of Plunder and Slaughter', *The New York Times*, 25 March 1996, <https://www.nytimes.com/1996/03/25/world/from-one-serbian-militia-chief-a-trail-of-plunder-and-slaughter.html> [accessed 21 February 2018].

³⁷⁹ Brokoff, 'Peter Handke als serbischer Nationalist'.

right, letting the Serbian voice of mourning overwhelm the Muslim one. The objectification of Bosnian suffering is visible in language used by Handke to convey the woman's plight: the clumsy nominalisation 'Hinabgestoßenwerden von Mutter und Schwester von der Brücke' renders the woman's relatives as passive objects, which reinforces the violence done to them. It also avoids, grammatically, the need to mention the active agent, i.e. the Bosnian Serbs participating in the killing.

Muslim victims are only granted a right to exist and be commemorated when they are gone, and their voice is replaced by Handke's own poetic vision. Thus, Bosnian Muslims are allowed to enter the text only as mere phantoms and ghosts, e.g. when the narrator is day-dreaming and 'sees' a woman on the Muslim cemetery in Višegrad, or a presumably Muslim man in the crowd at a football match:

der Eindruck, dort bewege sich eine Frauengestalt bergauf, ein Tschadortuch um den Kopf gewickelt. [...] Und in der Folge gesellte sich unversehens ein früherer Ortsbewohner zu dem Publikum [...], einen Fez auf dem Scheitel [...]. Nein, das war jetzt eindeutig eine Luftspiegelung... (*Sommerlicher Nachtrag*, p. 59)

In the passage, Handke attempts to bring the former inhabitants of Višegrad back to life, and to recreate the pre-war multiethnic make-up of the city. However, the figures evoked by Handke are mere puppets which embody a Western fantasy of cultural difference and exoticism. In the text, Bosnian Muslim inhabitants of Višegrad are made to wear a badge of religious and cultural identity: the chador and the fez, serving as 'typical' Muslim forms of headdress. Handke makes a factual mistake when he refers to a 'chador' wrapped around the Bosnian woman's head – the chador being a full-body cloak typically worn by Iranian women.³⁸⁰ The fez, on the other hand, can be associated with the Ottoman Empire, where it was introduced in 1829 as a status marker worn by Turkish officials regardless of their religious identity.³⁸¹

Handke's text aims at assigning a decidedly Islamic identity to all Bosnian Muslims. The passage in which Handke forces a fez (or a headscarf) on the fictional figure of a Bosnian Muslim is reminiscent of a photograph from November 1994, which was a still from the television broadcast about a successful Bosnian Serb offensive against Muslim forces in Bihać, and in which 'a laughing Serb soldier was

³⁸⁰ Claudia W. Ruitenberg, 'B Is for Burqa, C Is for Censorship: The Miseducative Effects of Censoring Muslim Girls and Women's Sartorial Discourse', *Educational Studies*, 43.1 (2008), 17–28 (p. 27).

³⁸¹ Donald Quataert, 'Clothing Laws, State, and Society in the Ottoman Empire, 1720–1829', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 29.3 (1997), 403–25.

putting a fez on the head of an understandably distraught Muslim prisoner'.³⁸² Hayden regards this gesture as emblematic of a tendency by Serb and Croat political leaders to impose an Islamic identity on all Bosnian Muslims. This religious identity was later misinterpreted as a sign of Bosnian Muslims' inherent 'otherness' – according to the orientalizing logic in which 'the definitive non-European essence is Islam'.³⁸³ In his text, Handke makes no attempt to dismantle or even question these strict divisions along religious, ethnic, and cultural lines. He not only forces a fez, as a mark of Muslim identity, on his imaginary protagonist, but also regards the Serbs as essentially Orthodox. In this way, Handke conflates religious affiliation, cultural identity and ethnicity, and emphasizes the difference between the Serbs and the Bosnian Muslims, reinforcing the categories present in the rhetoric of warring parties in former Yugoslavia, rather than debunking them.

Outlook

In the texts discussed in this chapter, Handke positions himself as a corrective foil to the left-liberal German commentators of the Yugoslav war, whom he accuses of an anti-Serb bias and a tendency to gloss over the German occupation of Serbia in the Second World War. However, close textual analysis has revealed how Handke's representation of Serbia is simultaneously marred by the writer's orientalizing habitus, which means that paradoxically, in his attempt to challenge the negative image of 'the Serbs' in the media, Handke adopts the mainstream view, in which the nation as a whole is conflated with individual Serb war criminals. Instead of dismantling rigid ethnic categories, Handke depicts the Serbs as a collective entity and not as a group of individuals with conflicting opinions, desires and motives. As pointed out by Karahasan, Handke talks about 'Serben als solche' and 'Serben an sich', treating them as an undifferentiated abstract entity, which can only exist 'in Handke's and Slobodan Milošević's head'.³⁸⁴ It seems that in order to side with Serbia, Handke feels he also need to support such figures as Lukić, Mladić or Milošević. Ultimately, in his texts he avoids condemning the war crimes committed by Serbian military leaders and their troops, engaging instead with the possible reasons for these massacres, ultimately laying the blame elsewhere. Handke also takes

³⁸² Hayden, 'Muslims as "Others" in Serbian and Croatian Politics', p. 116.

³⁸³ Ibid., p. 118.

³⁸⁴ Karahasan, 'Bürger Handke, Serbenvolk'.

for granted that ‘Bosnian Muslims’ form a homogenous ethnic, religious and cultural group. While allowing the Serbs a degree of individualization – the reader meets such figures as Olga, Zlatko, Žarko – Handke makes sure that Bosnian Muslims have no voice and no face in his texts, and that they are only recognizable through stereotypical badges of identity which the narrator imposes upon them.

By contrast, multilingual texts of post-Yugoslav migration investigated later in this study seek to deconstruct the essentialist notions of ethnic and religious identity. In Alma Hadžibeganović’s texts, Bosniak refugees are not idealized or reduced to their status as victims of the war but instead shown to be conflicted, unpredictable, and sometimes petty people, who navigate their existence as social outcasts in the West. In turn, the narrator in *zz00m: 24 Std. mix 1. of me oder Penthesilea in Sarajevo* distances herself from her Muslim identity *and* from her Serb heritage, since she finds both identitarian positions equally alienating.

The texts of post-Yugoslav migration discussed in this dissertation address the issue of victimhood, guilt and responsibility on a less abstract or collectivised level, focussing on the fact that the crimes were committed by specific individuals, and that each victim has a unique story, regardless of their ethnicity and religious affiliation. In Marica Bodrožić’s novel *kirschholz und alte gefühle*, the paramilitary leader responsible for the Vukovar massacre in 1991 (Željko Ražnatović) is depicted as an individual whose guilt is not questioned or diluted in collective responsibility. Moreover, Bodrožić’s novel seeks to challenge the authority and integrity of the narrative voice, which is decentred and fractured. The narrator, a victim of sexual violence, struggles to come to terms with her experience. Her story is facilitated through another figure who serves as her *alter ego*. This encounter, in which both women find a new way of voicing their experience, holds the potential to become an ethical and political intervention in which the victim’s voice is established as legitimate and politically significant, and no longer overshadowed by a Western narrator’s domineering perspective.

As I stressed in the Introduction, German and indeed international responses to the Bosnian war do not exist in a vacuum but rather contribute to the process of meaning-making following the conflict. Republika Srpska is an ever-evolving political entity, whose legitimacy is being established by a one-sided reading of history, whereby Bosnian Serb victimhood outweighs the crimes committed against the Bosnian Muslim population, and whose territorial integrity is still a contested

issue.³⁸⁵ Of course, Handke could not have known what would happen in the decades after the publication of his travelogues. Still, his refusal to engage with crimes committed against Bosnian Muslims, as well as acts of sexual violence committed by Bosnian Serbs, lead to many blind spots in his account.

One of those blind spots is related to a question posed by Handke in *Sommerlicher Nachtrag*, where the narrator wonders: ‘Aber gab es nicht tatsächlich noch einige “Mohammedanerinnen” in Višegrad, verheiratet in “Mischehe” mit einem “Orthodoxen”?’ (p. 59). Although he puts the religious/ethnic designations in inverted commas, he does not go so far as to genuinely deconstruct these categories, or indeed to engage with those subjects whose ‘mixed’ and ‘in-between’ identities do not comply with the logic of ethnic purity. In contrast, multilingual texts analysed in this thesis consciously highlight the constructedness of strict ethnic divisions between the Croats, the Serbs and the Muslims in the Yugoslav context and reveal the tangible and bodily implications of language of ethnic purity. My next chapter on Saša Stanišić’s text *Wie der Soldat das Grammophon repariert* provides an answer to Handke’s question, since the novel’s narrator, born in Višegrad, has a Serbian father and a Muslim mother, and struggles with a mixed ethnic heritage which sets him apart from other children.

³⁸⁵ Gearóid Ó Tuathail and Carl Dahlman, ‘The “West Bank of the Drina”: Land Allocation and Ethnic Engineering in Republika Srpska’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 31.3 (2006), 304–22.

Chapter 3: Linguistic impurity and de-constructed ethnicities in Saša Stanišić's novel *Wie der Soldat das Grammophon repariert*

Introduction

Saša Stanišić's novel *Wie der Soldat das Grammophon repariert* ("Wie der Soldat") from 2006 is central to my discussion of German literature of post-Yugoslav migration. The text is one of the most well-known and successful German-language novels written in the aftermath of the Yugoslav conflict. It has gained a lot of international scholarly attention, with critics praising its experimental narrative form and its deconstruction of fixed ethnic and cultural categories.

Stanišić was born in 1978 in a Serbian-Bosniak family in Višegrad, which today belongs to Bosnia and Herzegovina, and he fled the interethnic violence that erupted in the town at the beginning of the Bosnian war in 1992. *Wie der Soldat* is a polyphonic text which combines first-person narration by Aleksandar Krsmanović with other narrative perspectives. The temporal structure of the novel is highly complex – it opens on 25 August 1991, the day on which Aleksandar's grandfather Slavko died of a heart attack (see Appendix A for the novel's table of contents). In the first seven chapters, the narration goes back and forth between April 1991 and April 1992, recounting the gradual ideological shifts within Yugoslavia, the disintegration of its administrative structure, and the first months of the war in Croatia. The text is multiperspectival from the start, since Aleksandar's narrative is punctuated by stories told by his mother, his friend Zoran, and Zoran's father Walross. Chapter nine ('Was wir im Keller spielen') is set in April 1992, when Višegrad was attacked and invaded by the JNA, and marks a significant rupture in the narrative. Chapters nine and ten represent the kernel of Aleksandar's traumatic experience, and his only first-hand experience of the war. This segment of the novel is flanked by two monologues which stand alone as separate chapters – a monologue by a rabbi who talks about the violence he was subjected to during World War II, and a monologue by a Serbian soldier who laments his beloved Emina and describes the shelling experienced by himself and his fellow soldiers.

This dramatic kernel of the novel is followed by short chapters, which include six letters to Asija, a Bosnian Muslim girl whose entire family was killed in the war. Aleksandar loses sight of Asija when his family leave Višegrad. In the letters, which are probably never delivered, Aleksandar talks about his flight to Germany, his

schooling, and the difficulties experienced by his parents, who finally leave Germany for the US. Other short chapters in this section include a monologue by Zoran, a lyrical text by Aleksandar's maternal grandmother Fatima, and a letter from his paternal grandmother Katarina.

The second part of the novel is followed by a book within a book entitled 'Als alles gut war', which has its own table of contents, and comprises a foreword, a dedication ('Für meinen Opa Slavko'), and sixteen chapters. However, the last chapter of 'Als alles gut war' has the same title as the first chapter of the entire novel ('Wie lange ein Herzstillstand für hundert Meter braucht'), and the page on which it should begin is in fact blank.

Even though set before Slavko's death and before the war, the texts in 'Als alles gut war' are far from idealizing the past. Aleksandar writes about his favourite ice-cream, fishing at the Drina, and his favourite football team, but also about his fear of the AIDS epidemic and his shame at ending his friendship with the Italian engineer Francesco, after the rumour spreads in Višegrad that Francesco is gay. Aleksandar's book recounting his past in Bosnia is followed by a section which is written from an adult's perspective and set in 2002. The adult Aleksandar writes about his decision to travel to Bosnia, to visit people and places mentioned in the previous parts of the text, and to make preparations for the writing of the novel.

Based on Stanišić's experience as a refugee who came to Germany as a fourteen-year old, *Wie der Soldat* deals with a protagonist who is half-Muslim and half-Serb and who does not fit the binary categories enforced with the rise of nationalistic rhetoric before and during the war. In a key passage in the novel, the narrator Aleksandar states:

Ich bin ein Gemisch. Ich bin ein Halbhalb. Ich bin Jugoslawe – ich zerfalle also. Es gab den Schulhof, der sich wunderte, wie ich so etwas Ungenaueres sein konnte, es gab Diskussionen, wessen Blut im Körper stärker ist, das männliche oder das weibliche, es gab mich, der gerne etwas Eindeutigeres gewesen wäre oder etwas Erfundenes.³⁸⁶

For some critics, this passage is indicative of the fact that the narrator's identity is inextricable from Yugoslavia as a state and that the collapse of Yugoslavia means that Aleksandar's existence is in danger. Frauke Matthes argues that Aleksandar's 'hybrid

³⁸⁶ Saša Stanišić, *Wie der Soldat das Grammophon repariert* (Munich: btb, 2008), p. 53. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

identity [...] collapses just as Yugoslavia does'³⁸⁷ and that 'Being a Yugoslav [...] is no longer possible [since] there simply is no country – no identity – to fall back on'.³⁸⁸ Matthes suggests that Aleksandar's identity is a direct expression of his national origin and his ensuing crisis of identity is induced by the political crisis befalling the country.

In this chapter, I will offer an alternative reading of the passage. Without denying the potentially lethal implications of being an ethnic misfit in Bosnia in 1992, I suggest that the novel invites the reader to revisit the notion of fixed identity itself, rather than cast the nation state as a source of possible identification. In fact, Aleksandar's 'identity' is erased in the very moment of its enunciation. The sentence 'Ich bin Jugoslawe – ich zerfalle also' performs the collapse of a legible identity on the linguistic level, through its unusual syntax ('ich zerfalle also'), and the fact that it is written in the present tense. The displacement of Aleksandar's 'Ich' is also conveyed by the fact that later in the passage, he talks about himself using the third person ('es gab mich, der'), linguistically undermining the conventional first-person subject position. The text shows that any attempt to categorize a subject using dominant frames of reference can potentially be understood as violent. In this case, Aleksandar's body is being metaphorically dissected by other children in the schoolyard, who have adopted the racist rhetoric of pro-war propaganda and whose language serves as a reflection of the dominant discourse.

In what follows, I suggest that Stanišić's novel deconstructs the entangled discourses of racial purity, normative monolingualism and heteronormativity through its multilingual textual practices. Reflecting on the differences between Serbo-Croat, Bosnian, German, Turkish, and Italian, the narrator makes use of multiple languages. The novel highlights key factors which make each language distinct – most notably, alphabet and orthography – but also elements which many languages have in common, such as shared vocabulary.

In my analysis, I draw on approaches derived from queer theory and theories of multilingualism. In combining these two methodologies, I show how a non-normative attitude to language can be mirrored by a non-normative depiction of gender relations and argue that the narrator's non-compliance with normative

³⁸⁷ Frauke Matthes and David Williams, 'Displacement, Self-(Re) Construction, and Writing the Bosnian War: Aleksandar Hemon and Saša Stanišić', *Comparative Critical Studies*, 10 (2013), 27–45 (p. 32).

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

masculinity is reflected in his linguistic practices, which are marked by a rejection of fixed meanings and clichéd expressions.

The benefits of combining queer and multilingual theory in the analysis of the novel become especially pronounced in my close reading of a brief chapter detailing the narrator's early experience of transnationalism in his encounter with the Italian engineer Francesco, whom others believe to be gay. In drawing attention to this episode, which has been widely neglected by other critics, I offer a new reading of the novel and show how it uses multilingual strategies to examine the intersection between linguistic, ethnic and sexual difference, to unsettle the stable notion of ethnic identity, and to expose the mechanism behind a child's socialization into a social order based on patriarchal norms and heteronormativity.

My literary analysis of the novel is combined with an examination of the text's reception in Germany and abroad. I argue that Stanišić is often viewed through the prism of his migrant background and that the author's persona as a former refugee has been instrumentalized and exoticized by various critics, who see him as 'a model migrant'. As a result, Stanišić's work is incorporated into the growing body of the so-called 'migrant' or 'intercultural' writing, which reinforces the supposed dichotomy between 'German' and 'non-German' literature. The paradigm of 'immigrant writing' has been analysed by Stanišić himself in his essay 'Three Myths of Immigrant Writing: A View from Germany'. In my discussion of the essay, I question whether it entirely manages to dismantle the hegemonic power relation existing between Germany and its 'others'. By drawing attention to interlingual strategies employed in the novel, I argue that the literary text offers a much more differentiated engagement with multilingualism than the writer's essay.

The historical background

The structure of *Wie der Soldat* is deeply intertwined with the events which took place in Višegrad during the Bosnian war. Stanišić's text offers a nuanced depiction of the fighting, the period leading up to the war, and its aftermath. The novel does not provide a neat explanation of the conflict, refusing to discuss the war in exclusively ethnic or religious terms, to equate guilt/innocence with national identity, or to dismiss the war as an expression of ancient ethnic hatreds. Here, I differ from Brigid Haines, whose widely-cited work on Stanišić has flagged up the novel's significance as a unique contribution to the German literary engagement with the former Yugoslavia.

Haines argues that certain scenes in the novel ‘are crafted to show that the hatred of the other that emerged with frightening speed at this period came from tensions that had *always* been present’, thus suggesting that ethnic differences within Bosnia made the conflict unavoidable.³⁸⁹ As already signalled in Chapter One, the notion of ancient ethnic tensions which had been suppressed by Tito’s authoritarian rule and only erupted in the 1990s, is exemplary of the marginalizing rhetoric which has characterized some Western responses to the conflict. As argued by Nataša Kovačević, one ‘way to explain why the war happened, in its extreme racist version, is by simply criminalizing the Balkan peoples as automatons in the morality play of irrational “ancient ethnic hatreds”’, thus casting the wars ‘as an inevitable repetition of the same’.³⁹⁰ Stanišić’s novel challenges such exclusionary and orientaling rhetoric by exploring multidirectional identities and positions within the social fabric of the town.

In the novel, the invasion of Višegrad is signalled through a temporal and stylistic rupture in the narrative, which marks the end of Aleksandar’s childhood. Aleksandar’s family leave Višegrad by the end of April, which means that the narrator does not witness the worst atrocities committed in the town. Apart from recounting Aleksandar’s experience, the novel documents the experiences of those who stayed. Engaging with a range of different characters who then turn into narrators, the novel does not re-create a story of division along ethnic lines but rather points to affective ties which linked people in Bosnia regardless of their ethnic belonging. In this way, the novel reveals the arbitrariness of ethnic divisions and the destructive impact of identity politics in former Yugoslavia. This is not to say, however, that the novel participates in the project of idealizing Bosnia as a perfect embodiment of multiculturalism. The text does not suggest that the differences between specific ethnic and religious groups were completely obliterated by the Yugoslav ideology, nor does it imply that the ethnic or religious ‘essence’ of specific groups was suppressed by the state, only to erupt during the wars. Rather, the novel shows that Yugoslavia can be imagined as both a place of intermingling, contact and selective affinities, and a defunct post-totalitarian state whose political elites were becoming increasingly divisive and nationalist over the course of the 1980s and 1990s.

³⁸⁹ Haines, ‘Saša Stanišić, *Wie der Soldat das Grammofon repariert*’, p. 108, my emphasis.

³⁹⁰ Kovačević, pp. 158-159.

Stanišić's novel and German-language responses to the Yugoslav Wars

Upon its publication, *Wie der Soldat* was an immediate success. It was shortlisted for the Deutscher Buchpreis in 2006, and awarded the Förderpreis of the Bremer Literaturpreis in 2007. In the following year, Stanišić received the Chamisso Prize awarded by the Robert Bosch Stiftung. The reactions of critics were overwhelmingly positive, with Hauke Hückstädt from the *Frankfurter Rundschau* praising the work as 'das wundervolle, bestaunenswerte wie punktgenau akrobatische Debüt'³⁹¹ and Richard Kämmerlings from the *FAZ* describing Stanišić as a young and highly talented story-teller.³⁹² In many reviews, the text was welcomed as a new, fresh voice which was radically different from other German literary works produced at the time. Monika Münch claims: 'Damit etabliert sich der Schüler des Leipziger Literaturinstituts als junger Autor, der erzählen kann und etwas zu erzählen hat; [...] der weder großkotzig daherkommt, noch depressiv-blutleer am eigenen Dasein krankt; der sich seinem Text verschrieben hat, nicht seinem Ego'.³⁹³ Since its publication, *Wie der Soldat* has been translated into 31 languages, and an English-language translation by Anthea Bell appeared in 2008.³⁹⁴

Interestingly, Stanišić's literary success has been linked to his alleged status as an 'ideal immigrant' in Germany. The critic Amalija Maček argues: 'Saša Stanišić ist als Person der ideale Zuwanderer – assimiliert, gut erzogen und gebildet, die deutsche Sprache vollkommen beherrschend, was ihn zusätzlich zum Liebling des deutschen und weltweiten Publikums gemacht hat'.³⁹⁵ It is true that Stanišić was frequently described by journalists and literary critics as an exemplary migrant who could adapt to German social norms, associated with cosmopolitanism, economic success, and a good command of the German language. Claudia Voigt's text 'Der Übersetzer' from 2006 is a case in point. Voigt writes:

³⁹¹ Hauke Hückstädt, 'Wenn Hochhäuser musizieren könnten', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 4 October 2006, <http://www.fr.de/kultur/literatur/wenn-hochhaeuser-musizieren-koennten-a-1195238> [accessed 10 April 2018].

³⁹² Richard Kämmerlings, 'Als die Fische Schnurrbart trugen', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 4 October 2006, <https://www.faz.net/1.385975> [accessed 10 April 2018].

³⁹³ Monika Münch, 'An der Nahtstelle', *literaturkritik.de* <http://literaturkritik.de/id/10153> [accessed 10 April 2018].

³⁹⁴ Saša Stanišić, *How the Soldier Repairs the Gramophone*, trans. by Anthea Bell (London: Phoenix, 2008).

³⁹⁵ Amalija Maček, 'Balkanbilder bei Saša Stanišić und Catalin Dorian Florescu', in *Mobilität und Kontakt: Deutsche Sprache, Literatur und Kultur in ihrer Beziehung zum südosteuropäischen Raum*, ed. by Slavija Kabić and Goran Lovrić (Zadar: Zadar University Press, 2009), pp. 347–54 (p. 349).

Wenn man Stanišić gegenüber sitzt, dann gibt es erst mal kein Anzeichen dafür, dass er die erste Hälfte seines Lebens nicht in Deutschland verbracht hat. Er trägt die Klamotten, die in Berlin-Mitte getragen werden, er spricht bildreich, fehlerlos und akzentfrei Deutsch. Aber je länger das Gespräch dauert, desto stärker wird der Eindruck, dass ihn doch manches unterscheidet von vielen knapp 30-Jährigen in Deutschland. Er neigt nicht zum Zaudern und nicht dazu, sich möglichst lange alles offenzuhalten, sondern zeigt eine große Ernsthaftigkeit.³⁹⁶

Voigt admits that initially, she has been unable to find any clear ‘evidence’ that Stanišić is a foreigner. Stanišić’s impeccable German suggests that he is fully integrated into German society, since he conforms to what Salla Hirvonen calls the normative ideal of a German native speaker.³⁹⁷ Voigt shows, however, that the writer – despite his best efforts to assimilate into German society – will be forever marked by his biography, which makes him fundamentally *different* from other young German people.

A slightly different take on Stanišić’s integration can be found in the article by Haines, where the critic mentions the author’s online presence on social media such as Twitter. Haines interprets the fact that Stanišić tweets in English as ‘symptomatic of the positive outcome of his own personal story [...]; namely, his transformation from child refugee into global bestselling author and multilingual citizen of the world’.³⁹⁸ Here, Haines suggests that there exists a dichotomy between Stanišić’s status as a refugee and his position as an author, and that the social and economic capital he accrued later in life is at odds with his childhood experience. Haines does not refer to the writer’s command of German but rather his ability to communicate in English, which seems to suggest that Stanišić’s global success renders the question of his national identity irrelevant. In any case, Stanišić’s new German/global identity is presented in contrast to his previous status as a refugee.

The issue of integration comes up in Stanišić’s novel, which deconstructs the idea that integration is always desirable and unequivocally positive. In one of his letters to Asija, Aleksandar writes that he feels quite settled in Germany, as reflected in his good command of German and his local knowledge:

³⁹⁶ Claudia Voigt, ‘Der Übersetzer’, *Der Spiegel*, 25 September 2006

<http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/kulturspiegel/d-48995345.html> [accessed 10 April 2018].

³⁹⁷ Salla Hirvonen, ‘Weil Deutsch die Sprache ist, die ihm sein zweites Leben ermöglichte. Identitäten von Saša Stanišić anhand deutscher Medientexte - eine diskursanalytische Untersuchung’ (unpublished master’s thesis, University of Jyväskylä, 2012), p. 54.

³⁹⁸ Haines, ‘Saša Stanišić, *Wie der Soldat das Grammophon repariert*’, p. 105.

Asija, ich kann Nazis weismachen, dass ich aus Bayern bin, ich sage: stamme. Ich kann mich auf Kosten der Friesen amüsieren, die sind so ein bisschen wie die Montenegriner bei uns – wenn ihr Reißverschluss heute nicht offen ist, pinkeln sie halt morgen. Ich freue mich für fünf Nationalmannschaften. Wenn jemand sagt, ich sei ein gelungenes Beispiel für Integration, könnte ich ausflippen. (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 154)

A possible reference to hate crimes committed by German right-wing groups in the 1990s, the passage reveals an anxiety marking Aleksandar's new position as a fluent speaker of German and an integrated migrant. The choice of verbs is telling, 'weismachen' echoing the word 'weiß', and suggesting that Aleksandar's belonging in Germany is only possible through an exclusion of other ethnic minorities. The language adopted by Aleksandar ('ich sage: stamme') evokes the 'blood and soil' ideology implying a unity between an ethnically defined people and their territory. This shows that Aleksandar's annoyance at being called a model migrant is not only due to the condescending nature of every such remark, and to the racist undertones of the integration debate in Germany – it is also caused by the narrator's ambiguous attitude towards his experience of living in Germany, speaking German, and pretending to be (ethnically) German.

The novel and the German involvement in the former Yugoslavia

One of the very few negative reviews of Stanišić's novel appeared in *Die Zeit*, where Iris Radisch claimed that the novel failed to provide an authentic account of the Yugoslav Wars and instead constituted an orientalizing and clichéd depiction of the region, explicitly aimed at German readers. In the review, Radisch argues:

Sehr viele Onkel, Ur-Opas, Opas und Tanten stürmen lautstark durch diesen Roman, pflücken Pflaumen, feiern 'Klofeste', rauchen Zigarettchen und verbreiten heiter-pittoreske balkanische Urigkeit. Hier wird sehr viel Kittelschürze getragen, Knoblauch gegessen und aus dem Kaffeersatz gelesen, so viel, dass nicht immer ganz klar ist, ob es sich wirklich um ein kindliches oder ein fremdenverkehrsamtliches Erinnerungsbild handelt.³⁹⁹

Radisch further suggests that the novel has been nominated for the Deutscher Buchpreis precisely because it *fails* to depict the complexity of the conflict, opting

³⁹⁹ Iris Radisch, 'Der Krieg trägt Kittelschürze', *Die Zeit*, 5 October 2006 <http://www.zeit.de/2006/41/L-Stanisic> [accessed 10 April 2018].

instead for an opaque, immature narrative voice which seems to be suggesting that the war itself was a child's play. Radisch writes:

Das Magische [...], in das sich dieser Roman über den grausamen Bürgerkrieg wie in ein kostbares Gewand hüllt, hat ihm [...] sogar die Nominierung für den Frankfurter Buchpreis eingetragen. Literaturkritisch ist das nicht ganz nachvollziehbar, menschlich dafür umso mehr. Denn die Verzauberung und kindliche Poetisierung des Jugoslawienkrieges, die Undurchsichtigkeit und Entrücktheit des Krieges, die in dieser manieriert kindischen Erzählhaltung beschlossen liegt, entspricht durchaus dem diffusen Gefühl, das der westeuropäische Betrachter bis heute mit diesem Krieg verbindet. Wer da eigentlich gegen wen war und ob das Ganze nicht nur eine auf ewig unaufklärbare, rätselhafte Kinderei darstellte, scheint bis heute nicht feststellbar zu sein. Der Roman von Saša Stanišić bestätigt diese nebulöse Ansicht auf rührend kindsköpfige Art und Weise.⁴⁰⁰

As I will show in my close readings, the elements of the supernatural found in the novel do not make the war appear harmless, or 'digestible' for Western readers. Rather, the child's perspective as well as references to play and invention are self-conscious strategies deployed to create a complex narrative which requires the reader to come to terms with multiple temporal levels and perspectival shifts.

It is significant that for Radisch, Stanišić's novel does not challenge the 'Western' view of the conflict in the Balkans, according to which the warring parties were indistinguishable from each other and their motives remained incomprehensible. By asserting that there exists a homogenous 'Western' perspective on the war, Radisch positions herself as a corrective instance who has access to the 'truth' about the region. Radisch's condescending tone is reminiscent of Handke's statements about the conflict in the Balkans. In his publications, Handke stylized himself as the only Western observer capable of depicting the conflict in a truthful, unbiased way. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, even the voices of those victimized by the war were given less validity in Handke's writings than the author's own perspective. In his texts, Handke also referred to the inhabitants of the Balkans as children, orphaned and confused by the collapse of Yugoslavia. Radisch's assertion that the conflict remains incomprehensible to the Western observer is at odds with the role Germany played in the war in 1999. This shows that contrary to Handke, she ignores Germany's political and military involvement in the Balkans and dismisses the notion of Western

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

responsibility. In this way, Radisch manages to displace any sense of shame and guilt away from Germany to (former) Yugoslavia.

Stanišić's novel appeared in August 2006, just a few months after the scandal which erupted after Peter Handke had been awarded the Heinrich Heine prize of the city of Düsseldorf. The controversy surrounding the award concerned Handke's political stance and his alleged support of the nationalist policies of Slobodan Milošević. In an English-language review, the German journalist Carolin Emcke calls Stanišić's text 'an elegant response to the scandal', as well as 'a literary and political sensation in Germany', which contrasted with Handke's revisionist fiction concerning the Balkans.⁴⁰¹ Radisch does not refer to Handke in her text, which is all the more surprising given the fact that in May 2006, she was one of the critics who decried Handke as a rampant political essayist, whose presence at Milošević's funeral meant he was not a worthy recipient of the Heinrich Heine prize. Radisch wrote: 'Wer vor gut zwei Monaten auf der Beerdigung des serbischen Nationalisten und mutmaßlichen Kriegsverbrechers Slobodan Milošević vor 20000 Anhängern spricht [...], sollte nach menschlichem Ermessen nicht kurz darauf einen Preis erhalten, der in der Hauptsache der Beförderung der Völkerverständigung dient'.⁴⁰² One could speculate that in Radisch's view, Stanišić's novel did *not* provide the necessary counterbalance to Handke's biased view of the war, since it failed to identify the 'real' culprit of the conflict and did not present the Serbs or Milošević as an incarnation of evil. As Daniela Finzi points out, partly in response to Radisch's undifferentiated critique, 'Jener Leser, der sich vom Roman Stanišićs verbindliche Aussagen über die Urheberchaft des Krieges und Schuldzuweisungen erwartet, mag mit der energischen Unvoreingenommenheit und Unparteilichkeit schwer zu Rande kommen.'⁴⁰³ Stanišić foregrounds individual motivation and refuses to view perpetrators through the lens of ethnic or national identity but at the same time does not avoid difficult subjects, such as the role of the West during the wars.

⁴⁰¹ Carolin Emcke, 'Bosnia's Magical Realism. Wie der Soldat das Grammophon repariert (How the Soldier Repairs the Gramophone) by Sasa Stanisic', *Foreign Policy*, 159 (2007), 78–81 (p. 80).

⁴⁰² Iris Radisch, 'Der doppelte Peter', *Die Zeit*, 1 June 2006 http://www.zeit.de/2006/23/L-Glosse-23_xml [accessed 13 April 2018].

⁴⁰³ Daniela Finzi, 'Wie der Krieg erzählt wird, wie der Krieg gelesen wird', in *Gedächtnis–Identität–Differenz: zur kulturellen Konstruktion des südosteuropäischen Raumes und ihrem deutschsprachigen Kontext*, ed. by Marijan Bobinac and Wolfgang Müller-Funk (Tübingen: Francke, 2008), pp. 245–54 (p. 252).

It is true that Stanišić's text only addresses Germany's military involvement in Serbia in a very indirect way, with hints and allusions scattered throughout the novel, as for example in the result list of the narrator's Internet searches:

Ich wühle mich durch Suchmaschineneinträge zu:
'fußball im krieg sarajevo training beschuss',
'višegrad genozid handke scham verantwortung'
'opfer unschuldig bombardement belgrad'
'milošević internationales versagen interessen' (*Wie der Soldat*, pp. 214-215)

This list of seemingly random terms and names reveals that Stanišić's text is by no means trying to gloss over the atrocities committed during the war. On the contrary – it mentions the crimes committed by the Serbs in Višegrad but also the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999. The reference to Handke is not coincidental but rather shows that Stanišić's novel is deeply embedded in the German discourse about the conflict.

Stanišić's dialogue with Handke

It might seem controversial to argue that there exists a dialogue between Stanišić's novel and Handke's travelogues, given the fact that these two authors adopt diametrically different strategies.⁴⁰⁴ Still, Handke's *Sommerlicher Nachtrag* and Stanišić's novel display certain commonalities in terms of structure and themes. They both describe a journey to Bosnia undertaken by a German-language external observer, who is very similar to the author of each text. Both narrators are conscious of their own position as an outsider and problematize the reliability of their account, leaving certain things unsaid or open to interpretation. Therefore, in both texts, the narrators oscillate between 'authenticity' and fiction, since they are self-conscious literary figures.

Whereas in *Sommerlicher Nachtrag*, Handke continues the journey described in *Eine winterliche Reise*, the novel by Stanišić describes a journey undertaken by the adult narrator to the place where he spent his childhood. In *Sommerlicher Nachtrag*, Handke re-encounters some of the figures he described in his previous travelogue, and

⁴⁰⁴ In his analysis of German and Austrian authors writing about the Yugoslav conflict, Boris Previšić contrasts Stanišić's text with the works by Handke and argues that 'Handkes Hauptproblem [liegt] in der Bemühung, authentisch sein zu wollen, um dadurch das Eigentliche, das "Dritte" aufzuzeigen, womit er lediglich seine Poetologie auf einen politisch-territorialen Raum projiziert', whereas Stanišić 'verfährt gerade umgekehrt: Die (Kriegs-)Wirklichkeit bestimmt die Form seiner Geschichte und gleichzeitig seine Poetologie'; Boris Previšić, 'Poetik der Marginalität', p. 200.

Aleksandar also meets the protagonists of the first part of the novel. The fact that the narrator in Stanišić's text forgets some names suggests that these are real people whom he needs to recollect. At the same time, certain scenes and images in previous chapters turn out to be a premonition of what was to happen to the characters later, which reveals that the child's naivety was staged throughout the text. Boris Previšić notes that the child's perspective is fabricated by the adult Aleksandar, who 'writes' the text after his trip to Bosnia in 2002:

es wird offensichtlich, dass hinter dem erzählenden Ich des ersten Teils des Romans nicht einfach ein Kind steht als vielmehr eine weitere Vermittlungsinstanz, die sich bisher nur versteckt hielt: der im Jahre 2002, also zehn Jahre nach der Flucht aus Višegrad, zurückkehrende Aleksandar.⁴⁰⁵

This doubling of narrative levels reveals that Aleksandar as a child is a literary figure created by the adult version of himself. In fact, as a child, Aleksandar admits that he is aged 'zwischen acht und vierzehn, je nach Bedarf' (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 91). In this way, Stanišić's novel questions the authority and referential quality of the narrative voice, and fully embraces the possibility that the narrative *Ich* is merely a rhetorical device necessary for the story to unfold.

A similar doubling of the narrative perspective is at work in Handke's text. The narrator admits that his journey described in *Sommerlicher Nachtrag* is, to an extent, a repetition of his previous trip. As a result, Handke is conscious of the fact that he and his fellow travellers are literary figures. This becomes visible when Žarko repeats the words uttered during their previous trip:

genauso wie damals kam es von Žarko [...]: 'Dort unten liegt Bajina Bašta, und dort unten, das muß die Drina sein!', das freilich nicht nur als ein Ausdruck des Jetzt und des Hier, sondern mehr noch als ein Zitat: Fast der gleiche Ausruf war von ihm ja auf unserer ersten Fahrt gekommen, oder so hatte ich ihn in meiner Erzählung davon festgehalten – und so, als der, der und der unterwegs, bewegten wir drei uns für Momente zugleich als Personen einer Geschichte durch dieses Serbien jetzt, als Figuren eines fast schon alten Spiels, was dabei aber keinesfalls Entwirklichung heißen mußte, weder des Augenblicks, noch der Gegenwart, noch unserer selbst. (*Sommerlicher Nachtrag*, pp. 16-17)

Žarko's statement is a quotation in a double or even triple sense, since it is a repetition of his supposedly real words, uttered during the first trip, as well as an intertext

⁴⁰⁵ Previšić, *Literatur topographiert*, p. 374.

evoking Handke's previous travelogue.⁴⁰⁶ Is Žarko quoting himself, or the literary figure he has become, or can he no longer tell the memory and the narrative apart? Because of this play with narrative levels, the subject becomes entangled in its literariness. In this way, Handke questions the authenticity of his account which – even though drawing on a real experience – involves a process in which he re-writes himself as a 'Figur'.

In line with his programme of countering Western media reports about the Bosnian war, the narrator positions himself as fundamentally different from other Western observers. Handke stresses that he will be travelling to Republika Srpska without preconceptions or ulterior motives, and that he opposes the dominant and marginalizing perception of Bosnian Serbs as violent and primitive. This attitude, the narrator claims, is noticed by the clerks at the consular office of Republika Srpska in Belgrade, who regard him and his companions as those who

nicht von vorneherein als Feinde oder Übelwollende in ihr verfeimtes Land strebten; deren Reiseziel oder Hinter- und Hauptgedanke es jedenfalls nicht war, weitere Worte und Sätze zuzuhäufeln zu der Sage von ihrem Volke als einem von Vergewaltigern, Schlächtern und uneuropäischen Barbaren. (*Sommerlicher Nachtrag*, pp. 13-14)

This passage illustrates the double-edged strategy in Handke's writing analyzed in Chapter Two: the author critiques the tendency to ascribe collective responsibility for the war crimes to the entire Serbian nation but, at the same time, he relegates the reports of rapes and massacres committed in Bosnia to the realm of myth ('Sage'), thus casting doubt on the veracity of any such reports. Also, Handke does not question the fact that Bosnian Serbs are in the position of power in Republika Srpska, which is now 'ihr [...] Land', an ethnically homogenous entity founded after its Muslim inhabitants have been expelled or murdered. Therefore, despite his wish to counter the alleged one-sidedness of Western media reports about the Balkans, Handke ends up obliterating the experience of Bosnian Muslim victims.

This hegemonic stance is largely absent from Stanišić's novel, which focuses on the subaltern experience of a refugee who has fled an ethnic conflict. At the same time, the novel addresses the power imbalance between Aleksandar as an exiled author and other victims whose experience he aims to portray in his novel. Charlton

⁴⁰⁶ In *Winterliche Reise*, the relevant passage reads: 'Dort unten ist die Drina, dort unten muß Bajina Bašta sein, und dort hinten gleich Bosnien' (p. 93).

Payne argues that one of the novel's achievements is the fact that it exposes the dangers of co-opting and instrumentalizing the experiences of others within a literary text, since it draws attention to the fact that 'the individual voice of a former refugee [...] becomes the determining condition for making other voices audible as well'.⁴⁰⁷ The text highlights the inequality between those who managed to escape and those who stayed, and the potential violence inherent in any attempt to depict the victimhood of others in a literary text. By making the process of writing and of gathering information one of its central concerns, the novel reflects on the ethical implications of appropriating someone else's experience.

Aleksandar's reflection on his position as an outsider and the necessary limitedness of his perspective is combined in the novel with a consideration of the media image of the war. This reflection is present in the chapter which describes the adult narrator's decision to travel to Bosnia. The chapter is dated 11 February 2002 and marks almost ten years since Aleksandar's flight from Višegrad. Just like Handke before him, Aleksandar compares the mediated version of events – accessed through the Internet as well as his own memories – with the situation on the ground. The temporal lapse between past and present functions as another layer of mediation which separates the narrator from the events of the war. While Handke was mainly concerned with newspaper and television reports, Aleksandar has access to the multitude of information present on the Internet. It turns out, however, that even these resources do not offer access to real knowledge:

Ich scrolle durch Foren, lese mir Beleidigungen und nostalgische Schwelgereien durch, klicke und klicke und notiere mir fremde Erinnerungen, Montenegriner-Witze, Kochrezepte, Namen der Helden und der Feinde, Augenzeugenberichte, Frontberichte, lateinische Namen der Drina-Fische, [...] klicke auf den ersten Link zu: „den haag eigentor europäische union srebrenica“, und lese, der Kriegsverbrecher Radovan Karadžić halte sich in Belgrad auf, worauf mein Computer abstürzt. Ich drücke die Reset-Taste. Mein Gesicht spiegelt sich im schwarzen Bildschirm, und ich weiß mit einem Mal nicht mehr, wonach ich hier, in meiner Wohnung mit Blick auf die Ruhr, Tausende Kilometer von meiner Drina entfernt, suche. Das Hintergrund-Foto von der Brücke in Višegrad erscheint, aber nicht einmal das Foto habe ich selbst geschossen. (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 215)

⁴⁰⁷ Charlton Payne, 'How the Exiled Writer Makes Refugee Stories Legible: Saša Stanišić's *Wie der Soldat* das Grammophon repariert', *Gegenwartsliteratur. Ein Germanistisches Jahrbuch*, 13 (2014), 321–39 (p. 337).

The narrator's mirror image which appears on his computer screen is reminiscent of Handke's statement in *Eine winterliche Reise*:

Beinah alle Bilder und Berichte der letzten vier Jahre [...] erschienen [...] mir [...] als bloße Spiegelungen der üblichen, eingespielten Blickseiten – als *Verspiegelungen* in unseren Sehzellen selber, und jedenfalls nicht Augenzeugenschaft. Es drängte mich hinter den Spiegel. (p. 13).

Here, Handke suggests that Western media reports of the war were one-sided and biased, providing a mere reflection of the dominant point of view. Stanišić takes it a step further and suggests that his narrator is complicit in this process of knowledge production, with the Internet giving him an impression that he has access to true knowledge about the war. Ironically, this second-hand information (e.g. the jokes about the Montenegrins) will find its way into Aleksandar's novel. However, faced with the massacre in Srebrenica (partly orchestrated by Radovan Karadžić), which signals the limits of representability, the computer crashes, making the narrator realize that all this time he has been looking at his own reflection. In order to surmount the epistemic distance which separates him from the events of war, Aleksandar decides to travel to Višegrad. However, the narrator still hopes that he would be able to revisit the timeless world of his childhood: 'ich [habe] mir fest vorgenommen [...], alles so vorzufinden, wie es immer war' (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 258).

That the passage of time and the atrocities committed during the war substantially changed Višegrad becomes evident when Aleksandar returns to the town and meets his old friend Zoran. Aleksandar and Zoran are estranged and cannot communicate with each other, as shown by the episode in which they go out to a noisy bar and cannot hear each other. It is not until Zoran leans over and shouts into Aleksandar's ear that the exchange happens. Aleksandar's position as an outsider is fully exposed, along with the huge gap between himself and his old friend, who tells him: 'Du bist ein Fremder, Aleksandar! Zoran starrt mich aus der Nähe an. Sei froh! Ich spreche zur Seite: ich will nur meine Erinnerung mit dem Jetzt vergleichen.' (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 277). In her reading of the passage, Annette Bühler-Dietrich notes:

Aleksandar ist ein Fremder in einer Geschichte, die er nur am Anfang erlebt hat. Wenn er 'zur Seite spricht', entzieht er sich mit der Dramenkonvention der direkten Antwort. Dass Stanišić hier die Form des Dramas zitiert, macht die Rückkehr zum Erinnerungstheater, in dem Aleksandar eine Rolle spielt, die er eben auch wieder verlassen

kann. [...] Aleksandars Rückreise beschwört eine Nähe herauf, die als illusorisch erfahren wird.⁴⁰⁸

The distance between Zoran and Aleksandar stems from their different experiences, since Zoran witnessed the war crimes which took place in Višegrad after Aleksandar's departure. Zoran recounts these events in a long monologue which stands alone as a separate chapter.⁴⁰⁹ In the monologue, Zoran says to Aleksandar: 'Ich hasse dich, weil du weg bist' (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 145).

Through his confrontation with the changed reality in Bosnia, Aleksandar reflects on his own position vis-à-vis the events of the war and acknowledges the partiality of his external perspective. Accepting his inability to represent the reality from which he has been separated both physically and experientially, the narrator embraces fiction as a means of approaching the past. Aleksandar's statement from chapter twenty-seven could thus be seen as programmatic in the context of the novel: 'Man müsste [...] einen ehrlichen Hobel erfinden, der von den Geschichten die Lüge abraspeln kann und von den Erinnerungen den Trug. Ich bin ein Spänesammler' (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 266). The quotation shows the narrator's awareness that memories are always intertwined with fantasies and lies and it is often impossible to tell those two things apart. Therefore, one would have 'to *invent* an honest plane' which could shave the lies and deception away from stories and memories. Only through invention can the story be pieced together in the first place. Therefore, Aleksandar claims that he is after the shavings, i.e. the fabricated part of our own past. As pointed out by Previšić, the passage shows that 'Die Pointe besteht gerade nicht in einem "wahren Kern" der "Geschichten" bzw. der "Erinnerung" als vielmehr im Abfallprodukt, in den "Spänen", Metaphern für "Lügen" und "Trug". Die Wirkungsmacht entwickelt der Text aus der Verneinung einer Wahrheit'.⁴¹⁰

Such fabrications and half-truths are present in the depiction of Aleksandar's 'return' to Bosnia, which is more of a return to the literary setting of the first part of

⁴⁰⁸ Annette Bühler-Dietrich, 'Verlusterfahrungen in den Romanen von Melinda Nadj Abonji und Saša Stanišić', *Germanica*, 51 (2012), <http://germanica.revues.org/1981> [accessed 25 February 2018], pp. 21-22.

⁴⁰⁹ Daniela Finzi notes: 'Zoran kommt im Roman die Aufgabe zu, das zu dokumentieren, was Aleks zu erleben erspart bleibt'. Finzi also points out that Zoran's telephone monologue is reminiscent of Ivo Andrić's story 'Letter from 1920', in which Bosnia is described as the land of hatred. Finzi, 'Wie der Krieg erzählt wird', p. 248.

⁴¹⁰ Boris Previšić, 'Reisen in Erinnerung: Versuch einer narratologischen Raumtheorie angesichts des jugoslawischen Zerfalls', *Zagreber Germanistische Beiträge: Jahrbuch für Literatur- und Sprachwissenschaft*, 19 (2010), 101-20 (p. 111).

the novel than a journey to an authentic geographical location. Thus, Aleksandar discovers old cars which had been abandoned in Višegrad and Veletovo. As it turns out, these cars are already known to the reader from the stories Aleksandar told as a child. This suggests that they function as props which, strangely enough, are still physically present in contemporary Bosnia. After his arrival at the bus station in Višegrad, Aleksandar discovers that the bus stolen by Walross before the war is still parked at the station (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 259). On the way to Veletovo, Aleksandar sees the old Yugo which had belonged to his family and which is now trapped in a thicket (p. 307). Still, contrary to Handke's travelogues, in which the engagement with Višegrad as the literary setting of Ivo Andrić's novel precludes a nuanced response to the war crimes committed from 1992 onwards, Stanišić's text very pointedly maps Višegrad and its surroundings as sites of atrocities, thus updating both Aleksandar's personal memory of the place and the landscape of cultural memory. Crucially, this occurs by integrating different perspectives into the narrative, such as Zoran's or that of the rabbi, who recounts brutal events which took place during the Second World War and thus introduces a 'fourth' perspective on the conflict which goes beyond the usual constellation of Catholic, Muslim and Orthodox voices within Bosnia.

Through its play with fiction and invention, Stanišić's text foregrounds the contingency and fragmentariness of knowledge and offers a critique of its own representational power, revealing the problematic implications of any attempt to turn the experience of war into a literary text and displaying a deep-seated anxiety about the communicability of traumatic experience. What is more, the text does not shy away from the difficult question of possible instrumentalization of the suffering of others for the purposes of creating a successful narrative.

Queering (post-Yugoslav) masculinities

The decentred and fragmented narrative voice is one of the devices used in the novel to fundamentally question the figure of a masculine, dominant and sovereign subject of enunciation. By giving up his position of unquestioned authority, the narrator creates discursive space for those who are excluded by the hegemonic order: be it children, homosexuals, women, or animals. A key theme addressed in Stanišić's novel is thus the intersection of gender, sexuality and violence.

The ways in which the heterosexual matrix was mobilized throughout the 1990s to entrench ethnic divisions within the former Yugoslavia has been subject to

much recent scholarship. Kevin Moss points out that gender and heterosexuality figured in the Serb nationalist discourse, which ‘involved Orientalizing projections onto the “Turks”, the Bosnian Muslims, both homosexualizing the ethnic other and casting them as potential rapists of men’.⁴¹¹ As noted by Dubravka Žarkov, already in the mid-1980s bodies of men and women became sites of ideological production of ethnicity. Nationalist media outlets discussed women’s reproductive rights and gender roles, linking these issues to political questions, such as the survival of the ethnically homogenous nation.⁴¹² Ethnic purity became associated with normative heterosexuality, and a person’s adherence to traditional models of masculinity and femininity became a factor in determining their ethnic allegiance. Therefore, as Žarkov contends, ethnicity and gender are categories which constitute each other in multiple and often ambiguous ways.⁴¹³

The figure of the child

Stanišić’s novel contains a stark critique of the patriarchal norms which determined a young boy’s socialization into the late Yugoslav society. Aleksandar is not yet a grown, fully formed man and as such occupies an in-between position between childhood and adulthood, which enables him to regard the rules of patriarchal society from a distanced and sometimes disoriented point of view. The child’s perspective serves in the text as an alienating device used to denounce assumptions surrounding children in a heteronormative society.

In what follows, I examine the novel’s self-conscious deployment of the literary voice of a child, using insights derived from queer theory, and Alexandra Lloyd’s work on literary depictions of childhood. According to Lloyd, the normative vision of childhood entails the belief ‘that the child is “other”; that it has a special nature; that it is innocent; and that, because of its innocence, it is vulnerable and dependent upon adults’.⁴¹⁴ In light of these wide spread ideas, literary depictions of children ‘are invested with a very specific symbolic capital’, whereas texts dealing with children growing up in extreme circumstances often deal with topics which are

⁴¹¹ Kevin Moss, ‘Queering Ethnicity in the First Gay Films from Ex-Yugoslavia’, *Feminist Media Studies*, 12.3 (2012), 352–70 (p. 353).

⁴¹² Dubravka Žarkov, *The Body of War: Media, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Break-up of Yugoslavia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁴¹⁴ Alexandra Lloyd, ‘Writing Childhood in Ruth Klüger’s *weiter leben: Eine Jugend*’, *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 49.2 (2013), 175–83 (p. 176).

regarded as social taboos. These taboos refer to what Lloyd describes as the ‘unnatural’ ending of childhood, which occurs ‘through knowledge or experience, either of death or of sex’.⁴¹⁵ In Stanišić’s text, the narrator’s childhood ends through his premature encounter with the death of his grandfather and with the Bosnian Serb aggression against the civilian inhabitants of Višegrad.

Aleksandar’s story opens with the death of his beloved Grandpa Slavko. Given the assonance between Slavko and Yugoslavia, Grandpa’s death heralds the disintegration of Yugoslav society and the destruction of the stable world of Aleksandar’s childhood. The novel depicts Slavko as a gifted story-teller who is always ready to answer his grandchild’s questions and thus serves as a source of stability and comfort to the narrator. Haines observes that the grandfather is associated ‘both with Josip Tito’s vision of a multiethnic, federal, communist Yugoslavia, and with the transformative gift of storytelling, which Slavko bequeathed to Aleksandar shortly before he died’.⁴¹⁶ Slavko’s legacy is later questioned within the text, with his political commitment to Yugoslavia undermined by references to rising nationalism within the country, and his belief in ‘the holistic power of storytelling’ challenged by the narrative form, which becomes fragmented after Aleksandar’s family leaves Bosnia.⁴¹⁷

The presence of death is felt throughout the first chapter of the novel. It is evoked by linguistic features of the text, which expose life as a death-bound state. Introducing his relatives, Aleksandar states: ‘Noch nicht gestorben in meiner Familie sind Mutter, Vater und Vaters Brüder – Onkel Bora und Onkel Miki’ (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 12), as if implying that his family members could die at any point in the text. At the same time, the text questions the opposition between life and death, casting these states as two extremes on a scale. Thus, Bora’s wife ‘wird von allen Taifun genannt, weil sie viermal lebendiger lebt als normale Menschen’ (p. 12) and Aleksandar’s great-grandparents, despite their age of one hundred and fifty years, ‘sind [...] am wenigsten gestorben und am meisten am Leben von allen in der Familie, ausgenommen Tante Taifun’ (p. 14). The neighbours who come to see Katarina immediately after Slavko’s death are trying to be ‘as alive as possible’, ‘als gelte es, [...] in der Nähe zu einem Tod so lebendig wie möglich zu sein’ (p. 15). In turn, when

⁴¹⁵ Ibid., p. 177.

⁴¹⁶ Haines, ‘Saša Stanišić, *Wie der Soldat das Grammofon repariert*’, p. 108.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., p. 109.

Aleksandar is referring to his grandfather Rafik, he points out: ‘Weniger am Leben als Opa Rafik kann kein Toter sein’ (p. 18). These observations stand in contrast with the fact that, despite their bereavement, Aleksandar’s family are busy avoiding the topic of death: ‘Sie alle sind wegen Opa Slavkos Tod zu Oma gekommen, reden aber über das Leben in Tante Taifuns Bauch’ (p. 12) The unborn baby, referred to ‘das neue Leben’ (p. 13) becomes a substitute topic for the family, and stands for the natural order of things, in which the death of one person is rendered less final by the presence of their progeny. In fact, as specified by Uncle Bora, the child will be called Slavko if it’s a boy (p. 12), possibly as an attempt to patch up the gap in the social order caused by Slavko’s death. This insistence on the continuity of life and the reproducibility of the family complies with the logic of ‘reproductive futurism’, which Lee Edelman sees as the oppressive structure ensuring the survival of the political order, and which he critiques in his work concerned with the relationship between politics, queer sexuality and the death drive.⁴¹⁸

Referring to Edelman’s controversial *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, Michael L. Cobb states that ‘in our own times of highly entrenched family values, values voters, and the virulent disgracing of queer politics, Edelman’s book is a welcome interruption in the inevitability of our bleak future’.⁴¹⁹ Edelman’s analysis rests on the idea that ‘queers are conceived as poised against the future because they are a threat to children’, which casts ‘queers as anti-children’.⁴²⁰ Instead of dispelling such harmful stereotypes, Edelman ‘revels in the possibilities of the anti-child position’.⁴²¹ This leads to a stark critique of the political and social order in general.

Edelman argues that our political order is bound up with the figure of the Child, which serves as an image of the ideal future citizen who needs to be saved and protected. Therefore, the social order ‘exists to preserve for this universalized subject, this fantasmatic Child, a notional freedom more highly valued than the actuality of freedom itself’.⁴²² The Child is thus a spectral image which guarantees the survival of the social order and serves as a source of ‘meaning whose presence would fill up the hole in the Symbolic – the hole that marks both the place of the Real and the internal

⁴¹⁸ Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 2.

⁴¹⁹ Michael L. Cobb, ‘Childlike: Queer Theory and Its Children’, *Criticism*, 47.1 (2005), 119–30 (p. 122).

⁴²⁰ Ibid, p. 123.

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² Edelman, p. 11.

division or distance by which we are constituted as subjects'.⁴²³ In this way, the Child helps to establish a fantasy of the future that

endows reality with fictional coherence and stability, which seem to guarantee that such reality, the social world in which we take our place, will still survive when we do not. It thus compels us to identify ourselves with what's to come by way of haven or defense against the ego's certain end.⁴²⁴

Thus, the Child functions as 'the emblem of futurity's unquestioned value'⁴²⁵ and stands for the belief that the social order should be saved and perpetuated, affirming society's faith in its continuous existence. In fact, however, as Edelman insists, the subject's identification with the future is necessarily a fantasy bound up with a denial of death. Since the figure of the Child is central to the way in which society imagines its own future, fictional depictions of children in literary and filmic narratives are always marked by adult desire.

Questioning the patriarchal order

Edelman's controversial theory resonates with a short episode described in Stanišić's novel, in which the child narrator encounters a queer figure who is a foreigner and an outsider and whose presence has a disruptive effect. By showing Aleksandar's identification with Francesco, a figure who is ostracized by the local community, the text exposes the violence of gender and sexual norms inherent in a heteronormative, male-dominated society. Edelman's ideas help to conceptualize queerness as an anti-identitarian force capable of exploding the social order.

Upon his arrival in Višegrad, the Italian engineer Francesco is perceived through the lens of heterosexual desire by female inhabitants of the town, including Aleksandar's mother. Aleksandar approaches Francesco and, having tested his manly prowess at football, decides to make friends with him, at the same time ensuring that Francesco does not court his mother. Aleksandar teaches the newcomer Bosnian, in a way which mirrors but also exposes the interpellation of a subject by patriarchal norms which enforce the heterosexual matrix:

Francesco sprach mir nach: Ich. Bin. Ein. Bisschen. Verheiratet. Aber. Meine. Frau. Hat. Bei. Weitem. Nicht. So. Barocke. Augenbrauen. Oder. So. Sympathische. Große. Ohren. Wie. Sie. Das sagst du,

⁴²³ Ibid., pp. 15-16.

⁴²⁴ Ibid., p. 34.

⁴²⁵ Ibid., p. 4.

erklärte ich Francesco, wenn dir eine Frau gefällt – ich zeigte auf mein Auge und luftbildhauerte die Umrisse einer Frau mit einem breiten Hintern, wie es Männer machten, nachdem sie viel Räucherfleisch gegessen haben. Zu meiner Mutter und zu hässlichen Frauen sagst du: ich bin äußerst verheiratet, obwohl Sie äußerst freundlich sind. (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 189)

On the one hand, the disjointed speech of a language learner enhances the comic effect inherent in the passage, caused by the strange compliments formulated by Aleksandar. On the other hand, however, the narrator emulates the normative attitude towards women found among men in his community, reinforcing the notion of an ideal body type which all men would find attractive. All women who do not conform to that ideal are considered “ugly” and thus excluded from the circulation of heterosexual desire. Aleksandar’s remarks reveal a further double standard, according to which married women have to be ‘protected’ from strange men but men are not constrained by their marital status.

Aleksandar’s attempt to teach Francesco Bosnian is described as ‘Francesco vom Italienischen abzubringen’ (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 189), as opposed to the usual phrase ‘Francesco Bosnisch beizubringen’, which implies a degree of violent intervention on Aleksandar’s part, and casts Francesco’s foreign origin as something which needs to be discouraged. The impression that a person speaking a foreign language is necessarily different is strengthened later in the text when Aleksandar starts learning Italian, in the hope that his linguistic abilities might impress his classmate Jasna. The fact that Aleksandar is speaking Italian to his friend makes him appear foreign: ‘Edin sah mich an, als wäre ich ein Opernsänger oder ein Japaner in Višegrad’ (p. 190), which suggests that linguistic difference goes hand in hand with racial/ethnic difference.

The narrator’s encounter with Francesco introduces him to a new linguistic reality which affects the style of this part of the novel. As Taylor-Batty indicates in her study of multilingual modernist writing, poetic engagement with a foreign language can serve as a tool of ‘self-estrangement’ which ‘leads to an increased metalinguistic clarity in relation to one’s own language’ and produces ‘a heightened perception of those *material* (visual as well as aural) qualities of language’.⁴²⁶ Through his encounter with Italian, Aleksandar is introduced to the arbitrariness of

⁴²⁶ Taylor-Batty, p. 21.

linguistic norms which differ from language to language. Aleksandar finds out about the different spelling rules of Italian and Bosnian when Francesco introduces him to Boccia: ‘Er brachte mir die Regeln bei und dass man zwar Boća sagte, aber “Boccia” schrieb. Ich versuchte, Francesco zu erklären, dass wir Jugoslawen überall sparten, sogar bei unserer Schrift, und dass zwei “c” nebeneinander einfach ein “c” zu viel sind’ (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 191). At the same time, the text suggests that Italian and Bosnian share common sounds which are simply transcribed using different conventions.

Even though the chapter describes Aleksandar learning Italian and translating between Italian and Bosnian, Bosnian is largely absent, having been replaced by German. The text makes use of what Taylor-Batty, following Meir Sternberg, calls ‘translational mimesis’, which means that ‘the languages of the fictional reality have been at least partially “translated” into the dominant language of the text’.⁴²⁷ Still, even though translational mimesis normally aims at making the text comprehensible to the reader by supplying translations of foreign phrases, Stanišić’s text eschews intelligibility whenever Italian phrases – which would be understandable to an educated German reader – are misspelt and rendered using Bosnian spelling, since this is the way in which Aleksandar ‘heard’ Italian as a child. In this way, the reader is confronted with a doubling of the foreign, and forced to reconstruct the ‘original’ Italian phrase. In this way, the novel maintains the trace of Bosnian, which is used to filter the sounds of a third language, as seen in the following example: ‘Bella Sinjorina! Mi kjamò Alessandro’ (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 190).⁴²⁸

One could argue that since Stanišić’s text mixes not two but three languages, it successfully combines two distinct types of ‘translational mimesis’ as described by Sternberg: ‘selective reproduction’, which involves an ‘intermittent quotation of the original heterolingual discourse’ and ‘verbal transposition’ which is ‘the poetic or communicative twist given to what sociolinguists call bilingual interference’.⁴²⁹ Whereas reproduction functions as a ‘mimetic synecdoche’⁴³⁰ and can be limited to one word, transposition involves the narrator ‘superimposing on the translated quotation one or more of a variety of features and patterns distinctive of the source

⁴²⁷ Ibid., p. 39.

⁴²⁸ The Italian phrase could be reconstructed as ‘Bella signorina! Mi chiamo Alessandro’.

⁴²⁹ Meir Sternberg, ‘Polylingualism as Reality and Translation as Mimesis’, *Poetics Today*, 2.4 (1981), 221–39 (pp. 225–227).

⁴³⁰ Ibid., p. 225.

language but unacceptable in the target language – this montage accordingly producing an interlingual clash of the two codes within the transposed utterance’.⁴³¹ Transposition, which is also described as ‘translational interference’, can ‘relate to any verbal level or aspect at which the two languages involved are less than perfectly isomorphic’, such as the phonic or orthographic features, grammar, lexis or even style.⁴³² Even though Aleksandar does not translate the Italian phrase, but rather quotes it directly, his rendition bends the spelling rules of Italian, and retains the orthographic rules of Bosnian, which means it can be viewed as a case of transposition. Importantly, as Sternberg argues, transposition produces a ‘jarring effect’⁴³³ and reveals ‘verbal tension, deviance and incompatibility within a given unilingual discourse’.⁴³⁴ By trying to ‘Bosnianize’ the Italian sentence, Aleksandar produces a phrase which is linguistically deviant and which disturbs the hegemonic view of each language as a separate and self-contained entity.⁴³⁵

Aleksandar’s conversations with Francesco are shown to unify silence and talking: ‘Wir waren still, obwohl wir viel redeten – unsere Stimme war das Blättern im Wörterbuch, wir zeigten auf die Wörter und bildeten Sätze mit Lücken bis nach Italien’ (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 191). The sentences full of gaps and silences gesture towards a different way of communicating. Later, during his trip to Bosnia, the adult Aleksandar recollects important moments in his life in which silence played a decisive role: ‘Liste: Stille. Stille der dunklen Sekunde mit Asija im Treppenhaus, bevor wir den Lichtschalter drücken. Stille, die ihre Zähne fletscht. Mein Vater. Stille nach Kamenkos Schuss. Francesco und die Veranda-Stille. Meine stille Nena Fatima. Stille meiner letzten zehn Jahre’ (p. 296). As it turns out, silence is not only associated with negative experiences, such as Aleksandar’s inability to speak to his father after Slavko’s death, or his refusal to speak about the experiences of war between 1992 and 2002, but can also evoke the realm free of violence and oppression. Referring to

⁴³¹ Ibid., p. 227.

⁴³² Ibid.

⁴³³ Ibid.

⁴³⁴ Ibid., p. 228.

⁴³⁵ Sternberg points out that ‘every act of bilingual interference is not necessarily an instance of mimetic transposition. [...] the original (real or fictive) speakers may themselves be responsible for imposing on a foreign language the various features and patterns peculiar to their native tongue. [...] Sociolinguistic interference, therefore [...] is not an instance but an object of translational mimesis’ (pp. 228-230). While one could argue that Aleksandar himself — as a fictive speaker — is the one responsible for bilingual interference, I believe that Aleksandar as a writer also engages in mimetic transposition, since not every Italian phrase in the chapter is transcribed using incorrect spelling.

people who do not have to speak because they cannot, such as Francesco or Nena Fatima, Aleksandar suggests that silence can become a space inhabited by marginal subjects who manage to escape the constraints of language.

Over time, Aleksandar starts viewing Francesco as a male role model and tries to imitate the newcomer's appearance:

Ich schmierte mir Nivea ins Haar, damit es in die gleiche ölige Ordnung kam wie bei Francesco [...]. Wenn ich einmal so alt wie Francesco sein werde, wollte auch ich Hemden mit einem Alligator darauf tragen [...], ich wollte nach der Zitrone aus einer Welt riechen, in der jedes Wort auf -i endet. (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 191).

However, this cycle of reproduction of heterosexual masculinity is interrupted when rumours spread in Višegrad that Francesco is gay: 'eines Abends erzählte Čika Sefer [...] ausgerechnet bei uns zu Hause, dass Francesco Männer liebte. [...] Čika Sefer amüsierte sich über Francescos ordentliches Haar' (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 191). Suddenly, the characteristic which Aleksandar wanted to emulate – Francesco's neat hair – is linked to Francesco's non-normative sexual identity. The news changes the inhabitants' attitude towards Francesco: 'Alles wurde anders, und das Anders hatte mit Francesco zu tun' (p. 192). The capitalized 'Anders' disrupts fixed linguistic structures. Trying to put her finger on Francesco's non-nameable transgression, Aleksandar's mother says: 'So etwas hätte ich wirklich nie gedacht'. This vague statement is followed by a series of anacoluthons:

Was 'so etwas' und was 'nie gedacht' im Schaukelstuhl, in dem Francesco die alten italienischen Zeitungen las? Was 'so etwas' und was 'nie gedacht' in unserer Straße [...]? Was 'so etwas wirklich nie gedacht'? [...] Ich wurde wütend, weil [...] unser Wörterbuch das Wort für 'so etwas wirklich nie gedacht' nicht kannte. (*Wie der Soldat*, pp. 192-193).

Ludger Hoffmann points out: 'Anakoluthisch sind Äußerungseinheiten mit Teilen, die sich syntaktisch nicht einfach integrieren, sich nicht bruchlos anschließen lassen'.⁴³⁶ The fact that Francesco's queer sexuality cannot be expressed in correct, comprehensible language fits in well with Edelman's view of queerness as a force opposing signification. In his polemic, Edelman links queerness to the death drive and irony, both of which he understands as a 'constant disruption of narrative

⁴³⁶ Ludger Hoffmann, 'Anakoluth und sprachliches Wissen', *Deutsche Sprache*, 19 (1991), 97-119 (p. 99).

signification'.⁴³⁷ Referring to Paul de Man's theory of irony, Edelman points out that irony is a 'corrosive force' which 'threatens, like a guillotine, to sever the genealogy that narrative syntax labours to affirm [...]. Irony, whose effect de Man likens to the syntactical violence of anacoluthon, severs the continuity essential to the very logic of making sense' (p. 24). Heteronormative culture, Edelman argues, displaces 'the radical threat posed by irony [...] onto the figure of the queer' (p. 24). Also, since 'the figural burden of queerness [...] is that of the force that shatters the fantasy of Imaginary unity, the force that insists on the void [...] always already lodged within, though barred from, symbolization: the gap or wound of the Real that inhabits the Symbolic's very core' (p. 22), queerness embodies the death drive at the heart of the social order, exposing the drive's 'resistance to determinations of meaning' (p. 27). Thus, just as 'the death drive refuses identity or the absolute privilege of any goal' (p. 22), queerness, which is 'the place of the social order's death drive' (p. 3), 'can never define an identity; it can only ever disturb one' (p. 17). This analysis makes it possible to link the literary trope of anacoluthon to the un-doing of meaning associated with queerness as posited by Edelman. In the passage quoted above, Aleksandar gives in to 'the syntactical violence of anacoluthon', defying grammar and syntactical norms. In this way, the crisis of language mirrors the disruptive force of queerness, which is figured as a threat to the social order. Thus, Aleksandar's conversation with Francesco following the news is marked by interlingual mixing, deepening Aleksandar's sense of linguistic inadequacy. Answering Francesco's question 'ke kose sućesso?', Aleksandar says: 'sućesso kvatromila viel' (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 193). The phrases could be transcribed as 'Che cos'è successo?' ('What happened?') and 'Successo quattromila viel', and while the meaning of the first one is straightforward, the second one is untranslatable, since its syntax, combining German and Italian, does not make sense. The meaning of the phrase is further blurred by the passage in which Aleksandar lists all the things which Italy and Yugoslavia have in common, and where he mistranslates the word 'mila': 'Über "mila" freute ich mich am meisten und sagte: siehst du, Francesco, Meer, Krieg und dasselbe Wort für lieb!' This pair of false friends (*mila* means thousand in Italian) is important given the significance which love would acquire later in the chapter, when Aleksandar states: 'ich lernte, dass es

⁴³⁷ Edelman, p. 24. Further page references are given after quotations in the text.

Lieben und Lieben gibt und dass nicht jedes Lieben ein gutes ist' (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 192).

Aleksandar's encounter with Francesco highlights the heteronormative norms upheld and partly disguised by language. In the novel, homosexuality functions as an unspeakable offence which is perceived as a threat to the town's integrity and leads to a homophobically motivated ostracizing of Francesco. Lacking appropriate vocabulary and unable to access information, Aleksandar cannot explain his newly acquired knowledge about the difference between homosexuality and heterosexuality and eventually gives in to the discriminatory attitude displayed by everyone else, refusing to see Francesco even when he visits Aleksandar at his house. Aleksandar's confrontation with queerness is mirrored by a deployment of multilingual strategies such as interlingual mixing, interference and spelling 'errors'. The narrator's confusion is rendered through nonsensical, untranslatable phrases which at the same time resist the strict delimitation of borders along sexual and ethnic lines.

The constructed nature of national identity

Aleksandar's friendship with Francesco is informed by a complex negotiation of linguistic, national and sexual difference. At first, Aleksandar's understanding of the encounter with the foreign figure is quite straightforward, since he sees Francesco as a representative of his national identity. As his intercultural competence increases, however, Aleksandar realizes that nations are constructs, which evokes the point made by Andrew Baruch Wachtel in his seminal study of Yugoslav nation-building. Wachtel states that the nation is not 'a political entity but [...] a state of mind, [...] whose members belong to it not because of any objective identifying criteria such as common language, history, or cultural heritage [...] but because they think they do'.⁴³⁸ Wachtel further argues that every nation 'contains people with a broad range of both similarities and differences' but 'its members have agreed to overlook the differences and view the similarities as essential'.⁴³⁹ This constructed nature of each nation is hinted at in the novel when Aleksandar comments: 'Ich erfuhr, dass nicht alle Italiener schwarzes Haar haben und verriet Francesco, dass nicht alle Jugoslawen Börek mögen' (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 191). In terms of language, the notion of discrete and

⁴³⁸ Andrew Baruch Wachtel, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation: Literature and Cultural Politics in Yugoslavia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 2.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

mutually exclusive national cultures is undermined through interlingual mixing and referential ambiguities.

What is striking about the town's reaction to Francesco's presumed homosexuality is how unified the inhabitants' attitudes are. The threat posed by the queer foreigner lends an imaginary unity to the community. This unity is not tenable, as becomes clear when Aleksandar recounts the multiple deaths of Comrade Tito and hints at the gradual ideological shifts within Yugoslavia away from Titoism to nationalism. Aleksandar's account reflects 'the disintegration of the very concept of the Yugoslav nation' which, in Wachtel's opinion, paved the way for 'particularist national ideals' and 'the rise of figures such as Milosevic and Tudjman'.⁴⁴⁰ More importantly, however, the political crisis affecting Yugoslavia is mirrored by a rift within Aleksandar's family.

A clear cut-off point for the family is the moment in which Aleksandar's uncle Miki goes off to join the army, a moment celebrated by a lavish feast in Veletovo.⁴⁴¹ The scene reveals, on the one hand, the arbitrariness of ethnic designations within Yugoslavia, and, on the other, the beginnings of a conflict which would eventually tear the family apart. The party is interrupted by Kamenko, Miki's Serbian friend, who shoots at musicians playing an old *sevdalinka* entitled 'Emina', which Kamenko dismisses as 'türkische[r] Zigeunerdreck', shouting: 'Sind wir hier in Veletovo oder in Istanbul? Sind wir Menschen oder Zigeuner? Unsere Könige und Helden sollt ihr besingen, unsere Schlachten und den serbischen Großstaat! (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 45) and later: 'Ich lasse mir nicht länger von Zigeunern Ustaschalieder und Türkengeheule vorsetzen! Ich will für unseren Miki unsere Musik! Lieder aus der ruhmreichen Zeit, die war und die wieder kommen wird!' (p. 49).

The song is identified as Aleksa Šantić's 'Emina' by Annette Bühler-Dietrich, who argues that the song is 'a relic of the pan-Slavic utopia from the beginning of the 20th Century'.⁴⁴² Here, it is important to distinguish between pan-Slavism and pan-South Slavism, two distinct schools of thought which developed in the 19th Century – pan-Slavism envisaged a union of all Slavs, including the Poles and the Russians, whereas pan-South Slavism was a movement aimed at uniting Serbs, Croats, Slovenes

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 17.

⁴⁴¹ The scene is misidentified by some critics as 'a toilet party', supposedly celebrating the inauguration of the first indoor toilet in Veletovo.

⁴⁴² Bühler-Dietrich, p. 17.

and, initially, Bulgarians.⁴⁴³ Šantić, a Bosnian Serb from Mostar, was one of the writers who aimed at creating a synthetic Yugoslav culture in the period before World War I which would combine South Slavic tradition with elements borrowed from European modernity.⁴⁴⁴ Therefore, one could argue that Kamenko is both right and wrong in his assessment of the song – written by a Serb, the song cannot be dismissed as ‘Turkish Gypsy filth’. On the other hand, however, Šantić was not a Serb nationalist, and since his song uses Bosnian Muslim motifs, it functions as a site of intermingling, which renders ethnic differences irrelevant. This cultural mixing becomes a source of anxiety for Kamenko, who adheres to ideas of racial and ethnic purity. Kamenko wants to purge all cultural elements which are not ‘purely’ Serbian, which explains why he ends up conflating the Turks, Ottomans, Roma, Bosniaks, and the Croats, whom he describes as Ustashas. Non-Serb elements are associated with filth but also cast as abject and non-human, as suggested by Kamenko’s question ‘Sind wir Menschen oder Zigeuner?’ The music is described as an animalistic sound (‘Türkengeheule’), reminiscent of a dog’s wailing. The irony in the passage lies in the fact that Kamenko is enraged by the Serbian-Bosniak song but does not mind the ‘multiethnic’ food he has been served at the party.

Kamenko’s racist rage is interrupted by Great-Grandpa Nikola, who wakes up after a nap and simply continues singing ‘Emina’. The lyrics of the songs are quoted in Bosnian, and the translation offers a slightly altered version of the song, creating the impression that Emina herself is present in Veletovo, standing underneath a plum tree. As shown by Andrea Schütte, ‘[i]ndem das Lied die Besungene vergegenwärtigt, ist eine Grenze überschritten, sogar boykottiert, da die Besungene in die Feiergruppe aufgenommen wird.’⁴⁴⁵ In my view, this transgression is also performed on the linguistic level, whereby the German both does and does not translate the Bosnian song. The original song has five stanzas, and the last three of them, divided into six two-line passages, are interspersed with the German narrative:

Mit grölender Trauer, als würde die eitle Emina vor Ur-Opas
Veranda stehen und seinen Gruß nicht erwidern –
... *ja joh nazvah selam, al’ moga mi dina,*
ne šće ni da čuje lijepa Emina ...

⁴⁴³ Wachtel, pp. 22- 23.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 60.

⁴⁴⁵ Andrea Schütte, ‘Ballistik: Grenzverhältnisse in Saša Stanišićs “Wie der Soldat das Grammophon repariert”’, *Zeitschrift für Deutsche Philologie*, 129 (2010), 221–35 (p. 223).

– braust Ur-Opas Stimme auf [...]. Eminas Haar, zu Zöpfen
 geflochten, riecht nach Hyazinthen, unter ihrem Arm eine silberne
 Schüssel, im Lied steht sie unter einem Jasmin, in Veletovo unter
 einer Pflaume -
... no u srebren ibrik zahitila vode
pa po bašti đule zalivati ode...
 – breitet Ur-Opa die Arme aus und wirft den Kopf in den Nacken.
 (Wie der Soldat, p. 50)

Here, it is important to note that the German only offers a loose translation of the third stanza. In fact, the order of images in the song does not correspond to the way in which they are rendered in the German text – the fact that Emina’s hair smells of hyacinths is not mentioned until the fourth stanza (*‘zamirisa kosa ko zumbuli plavi’*) and the fragment describing Emina standing underneath a jasmine tree is completely left out from the novel, since it is found in the first stanza, which has been sung before Kamenko’s outburst. Also, the German text does not mention the fact that Emina is watering roses in her garden (*‘pa po bašti đule zalivati ode’*). The physical presence of Bosnian lyrics demonstrates that the song contains Turkish loan words, such as *‘đul’* (rose), which was typical of the Mostar dialect spoken by Šantić.⁴⁴⁶

In Kamenko’s opinion, songs which would be more appropriate are ‘Lieder aus der ruhmreichen Zeit’, i.e. heroic songs which glorify the Serbian Empire, its kings and heroes. Here, Kamenko refers to the rich oral ‘tradition of decasyllabic village singing cultivated above all in the inaccessible mountain regions of Herzegovina, Montenegro, Bosnia and Serbia’.⁴⁴⁷ Heroic songs were normally performed by ‘wandering minstrels – called *guslari* in Serbian after the one-stringed instrument, the *gusle*, with which they accompanied their singing’.⁴⁴⁸ A great number of heroic songs were concerned with the struggle between the Turks and the Slavic population after the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, traditionally viewed as an event which ‘marked the collapse of the medieval Serbian Empire and the beginning of five centuries of Turkish domination’.⁴⁴⁹ This tradition played an important part in the process of specifically Serbian nation-building. Celia Hawkesworth indicates that the songs belonging to the Kosovo cycle became instrumental ‘in engendering a sense of

⁴⁴⁶ Marilyn Sjoberg, ‘Turkish Loanwords in the Language of Aleksa Šantić’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, The Ohio State University, 1972).

⁴⁴⁷ *Marko the Prince: Serbo-Croat Heroic Songs*, ed. by Svetozar Koljević, trans. by Anne Elizabeth Pennington and Peter Levi (London: Duckworth, 1984), p. xiv.

⁴⁴⁸ Wachtel, p. 32.

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

patriotic allegiance, of commitment to national cause' among the Serbs.⁴⁵⁰ The mythical dimension of the Kosovo battle was 'appropriated as specific to the Serbian nation' and 'its heroic, epic ideals became the core of the Serbs' national identity', especially during the liberation struggle against the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century.⁴⁵¹ Serbian culture in this period was 'dominated by ideas of liberation from alien, Islamic rule', which rendered the Muslim heritage of the inhabitants of Bosnia and Herzegovina 'at least problematic'.⁴⁵²

Importantly, Stanišić's novel demonstrates that Serbian culture is not to be equated with anti-Muslim sentiment and that the connection between heroic songs and Serbian nationalism is arbitrary, which means that old songs cannot serve as justification of contemporary violence. Aleksandar indicates that his Great-Grandpa enjoys singing heroic songs when he states: 'In seinen Liedern sprang jemand namens Kraljević Marko auf einem Wein trinkenden Pferd über die Drina und metzelte Türken. [...] Spannender als die armen Schurkentürken fand ich aber die Frage, ob alle Wein trinkenden Pferde fliegen konnten' (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 39). Svetozar Koljević notes that Kraljević Marko, or Prince Marko, 'is the most popular and the most controversial Serbian epic hero. He is the greatest champion of the helpless, ready to die for justice and honour, but ready also to kill or maim in revenge or even out of spite. He has a magic sword and an extraordinary horse'.⁴⁵³ Even though Nikola reiterates the violent message inherent in the song, he does not subscribe to the idea that Bosnian Muslims are the same as the Turks who conquered Slavic lands in the fourteenth century, which is a view shared by Serb nationalists. Importantly, the song is not perceived as threatening by Aleksandar, who sees the battle between Marko and the Turks as boring and instead focuses on the imaginary part of the song – the flying horse. This shows that Aleksandar sees the song as belonging in the realm of entertainment and fiction. The fact that Nikola sings while using the toilet further deflates the heroic message of the song.

While the text questions the alleged connection between heroic songs and present-day nationalism and ethnic violence, it is much more critical in its treatment of gender roles emulated in the oral tradition. Hawkesworth observes that Serbia's

⁴⁵⁰ Celia Hawkesworth, *Voices in the Shadows: Women and Verbal Art in Serbia and Bosnia* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2000), p. 20.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁴⁵³ *Marko the Prince*, p. 30.

patriarchal culture, both reflected and propagated by heroic songs, assigned a very specific role to women, whose position was defined by being a mother and a loyal subject. Certain figures from heroic songs, such as the mythical Mother of the Jugovići, were viewed as appropriate role models for women. Stanišić's novel does not suggest that a sexist attitude is typical of Serbian culture alone but rather that sexism permeated late Yugoslav society. Women are viewed as wives and mothers and treated by men as objects. This attitude is exemplified by Aleksandar's friend Zoran and his father Walross: Zoran hits his girlfriend Ankica while Walross, after having been betrayed by his wife, sets off to find a new mother for his son.⁴⁵⁴ When Walross returns to Višegrad with his new girlfriend Milica, he is showing her off like his property (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 88). Zoran's view of Walross also complies with the patriarchal tradition. Zoran clearly idealizes his father but adopts a hostile attitude to his mother and cannot forgive her sexual transgression (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 67).

At the same time, both Zoran and Walross, even though they are Serbs, oppose Serbian nationalism and clearly function as figures who transcend ethnic and religious divisions. Walross is shown to drink from a fountain near a mosque, and gets angry at a bus driver listening to patriotic music which Walross describes as 'großserbisches Eselsgeschrei' (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 94). He is also the only person who keeps playing Boccia with Francesco after he has been outed as gay and everyone else has turned their back on him.⁴⁵⁵ In this way, the text shows that its protagonists are many things at the same time – violent and sexist, but also tolerant and generous.

From draft to the novel

In what follows, I expand my discussion of the novel's engagement with masculinity, gender and military aggression and link it to an analysis of narrative devices and multilingual practices employed in the text. To highlight how linguistic and stylistic devices contribute to the text's expressive power, I refer to a draft fragment of the novel, submitted by Stanišić for the Ingeborg Bachmann competition in Klagenfurt in 2005, where it was awarded the audience prize (for the text, see Appendix B).⁴⁵⁶ An

⁴⁵⁴ Laura Scheifinger, 'Kriegstexte/Kindertexte. Die Romane von Saša Stanišić, Nenad Veličković und Bora Ćosić', in *Zwischen dort und hier. Acht Annäherungen an die zeitgenössische bosnische Literatur*, ed. by Elena Messner and Antonia Rahofer (Innsbruck: Studia, 2010), pp. 63–73 (p. 69).

⁴⁵⁵ In fact, Francesco contacts Walross during the war and sends him a photo showing his wife and his daughter, which suggests that he may have been straight after all.

⁴⁵⁶ Saša Stanišić, 'Was wir im Keller spielen, wie die Erbsen schmecken, warum die Stille ihre Zähne fletscht, wer richtig heißt, was eine Brücke aushält, warum Emina weint, wie Emina strahlt'

examination of the differences between the draft and the published version of the text offers insights into matters such as word choice, phrasing and style and shows that gender roles and their relation to military aggression became increasingly important as the text developed.

Metalepsis and imploding worlds

The shelling of Višegrad lasted from 6 to 14 April 1992. These nine days are first recounted, significantly, in chapters nine and ten of the novel (*Wie der Soldat*, pp. 103-128). These two chapters mark the end of Aleksandar's childhood in Bosnia. In very quick succession, the reader learns about the bombing of the city, the invasion of the Yugoslav army, the crimes committed by the soldiers and, finally, Aleksandar's parents' dramatic decision to escape to Germany via Serbia. These chapters account for Aleksandar's only first-hand experience of the war.

The first sentence of chapter nine describes soldiers storming Grandma Katarina's apartment building, in whose cellar Aleksandar was hiding with his family, friends and neighbours: 'Kaum haben die Mütter zum Abendessen gerufen, mit flüsternden Stimmen, stürmen Soldaten das Hochhaus, fragen, was gibt es, setzen sich zu uns an die Sperrholzplattentische im Keller' (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 103). This opening sentence has a shocking effect. Marked by a striking oxymoron, it evokes a suspension of normality, whereby the everyday routine, signalled by the phrase 'zum Abendessen gerufen', is derailed by the qualifying 'mit flüsternden Stimmen'. Through its syntax and the fact that it is written in the present tense, the sentence manages to capture the split seconds before and after the raid of the house, putting the reader in medias res.

The significant opening sentence of chapter nine is repeated in Aleksandar's first letter to Asija, dated 26 April 1992, after his flight from Višegrad. In an interesting twist that might seem puzzling and disorienting to the reader, the narrator is reflecting upon the possibility of narrating an episode which has already been told within the novel:

Ich will eine Geschichte aus einer anderen Welt oder aus einer anderen Zeit hören, aber alle reden nur vom Jetzt und von der Frage: was jetzt? Wenn ich von dieser Zeit und dieser Welt erzählen würde, müsste ich danach versprechen, es in den nächsten zehn Jahren nie wieder zu tun. Beginnen würde ich so: *Kaum haben die Mütter zum Abendessen*

<http://archiv.bachmannpreis.orf.at/bachmannpreisv2/bachmannpreis/texte/stories/42638/index.html> [accessed 21.04.2018]. Further page references are given after quotations in the text.

gerufen, mit flüsternden Stimmen, stürmen Soldaten das Hochhaus, fragen, was gibt es, setzen sich zu uns an die Sperrholzplattentische im Keller.

Ich muss mir nichts ausdenken, um von einer anderen Welt und von einer anderen Zeit zu erzählen.

(*Wie der Soldat*, pp. 132-133, my emphasis)

Here, the letter's significance goes beyond functioning as an account of the narrator's displacement, since it contains important metafictional remarks which address the 'coming-into-being' of the text itself. The metalepsis also reflects an experiential rupture caused by the sudden invasion by Bosnian-Serb soldiers to Višegrad.

In his seminal work on narratology, Gérard Genette defines metalepsis as 'any intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe (or by diegetic characters into a metadiegetic universe, etc.), or the inverse [which] produces an effect of strangeness'.⁴⁵⁷ Metalepses are transgressive games which

demonstrate the importance of the boundary they tax their ingenuity to overstep, in defiance of verisimilitude – a boundary that is precisely the narrating (or the performance) itself: a shifting but sacred frontier between two worlds, the world in which one tells, the world of which one tells.⁴⁵⁸

This 'sacred frontier', I suggest, is of key importance in Stanišić's novel, which shows that a stable boundary between the world of fiction and the world in which one invents stories may serve as a source of comfort, since it establishes a clear border between the possible and the impossible.

The metaleptic shift present in the passage quoted above is two-fold. On the one hand, Aleksandar's remark establishes a link between the narrator and the author, since the act of narrating carried out by Aleksandar is conflated with the act of writing performed by Stanišić. As pointed out by Payne, 'the novel alludes to a link between homodiegetic and extradiegetic narrative frames, as well as between protagonist and author'.⁴⁵⁹ On the other hand, if we treat Aleksandar's letter as part of the novel's diegesis, i.e. its first-level narrative, chapter nine turns into an embedded story, i.e. a second-level or a metadiegetic narrative. In this way, metalepsis allows Aleksandar

⁴⁵⁷ Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse. An Essay in Method*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 235.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 236.

⁴⁵⁹ Payne, pp. 326-327. In order to illustrate the links between the narrator and author, Payne points out that the title of the first chapter doubles as the last chapter in the table of contents of 'Als alles gut war', draws attention to the novel's paratexts, and to the fact that Saša is a diminutive form of Aleksandar.

to reflect upon the conditions and implications of his own narrating. The fact that the passage uses the subjunctive suggests that the act of narrating is posited as a hypothetical situation. This stands in contrast to the simple fact that the story of the siege of Višegrad has already been told within the narrative discourse. This reveals a rift within the narrative instance itself – if the Aleksandar writing the letter to Asija is oblivious to the fact that the story has already been told, who was speaking in chapter nine? Alternatively, Aleksandar is referring to a different story with the same beginning, a story which has indeed not been told.

The narrator's fixation on the (im)possibility of narrating the events which took place during the siege of Višegrad reveals the traumatic nature of these experiences. In the same way as metalepsis describes an imploding of distinct worlds within the narrative, the passage describes an invasion of the impossible and traumatic into the safe and predictable world of childhood. While at the beginning of the passage, Aleksandar talks about his longing for another world and another time ('eine Geschichte aus einer anderen Welt oder aus einer anderen Zeit'), which is contrasted with the here and now, towards the end of the passage, these two worlds: 'dies[e] Welt' and 'ein[e] ander[e] Welt', have become conflated, since reality has become more improbable than fiction ('Ich muss mir nichts ausdenken, um von einer anderen Welt und von einer anderen Zeit zu erzählen').

War is a boys' game

The invasion of Bosnian Serb soldiers into Višegrad collapses the boundary between the world of the predictable and safe and the realm of the unexpected and dangerous. This transgression between distinct worlds (reality and fiction, familiar and strange, probable and improbable) can be linked to the blurring of boundaries between play and reality in the rendering of the siege of Višegrad in chapter nine. The chapter describes a paradoxical situation, in which children hiding in the cellar play 'artillery' while real war is happening outside of their apartment building. In a striking inversion, military vocabulary such as 'Gefecht', 'Feind', 'Verteidiger', 'Aggressoren' (*Wie der Soldat*, pp. 104-105) are used in relation to children playing war, rather than the military operation taking place outside.

Here, a brief examination of the differences between the draft and the published version of the chapter illuminates the ways in which the finished text blurs

the boundary between play and war through referential instability and wordplay. In the novel, the narrator describes a game played on the day of the invasion:

Auch heute Nachmittag gab es ein Gefecht. [...] Edin war bei den anderen. Normalerweise liefen die Mannschaften vor dem ersten Schuss in entgegengesetzte Richtungen, versteckten sich in finsternen Kellerecken und warteten lauernd: Wer verlässt die Stellung als Erster und stürmt zum Angriff? Manchmal stürmte keiner, und es wurde langweilig – wir begannen mit Murmeln zu spielen und vergaßen, dass Krieg war. Leichte Beute für den Feind, wenn er dich dann doch überrennt, und deine Waffe ist nur ein Glaskügelchen zwischen Daumen und Zeigefinger, meines immerhin mit einer vierfachen Feder darin. (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 104)

In the draft, the relevant sentences read (the changes are underlined):

Auch heute Nachmittag haben wir gespielt. Zoran war bei den anderen. Normalerweise liefen die Mannschaften nach Spielbeginn in entgegengesetzte Richtungen [...]. Konnte ganz schön langweilig werden in der Kellerecke, und wenn die anderen gar nicht kamen, begannen wir mit Murmeln zu spielen und vergaßen, dass Krieg war. (*Was wir im Keller spielen*, p. 2)

In this passage, the novel is less explicit than the draft, mixing up play and reality, and creating two levels of meaning – the literal and the metaphorical. The literal sense of the phrases ‘gab es ein Gefecht’ and ‘vor dem ersten Schuss’ is very different from their intended meaning, which corresponds to what is said in the draft version: ‘haben wir gespielt’ and ‘nach Spielbeginn’. Yet the reader remains aware of the divergence between the literal and the intended meaning. This changes in the sentence ‘wir begannen mit Murmeln zu spielen und vergaßen, dass Krieg war’, where forgetting about the war could refer both to playing war and to the real war outside. This example shows the importance of wordplay, puns and *double entendre* in the text, which contribute to a destabilization of meaning and to a conflation of various narrative levels. Daniela Finzi points out that play constitutes

eine von Stanišić für das erste Kriegskapitel raffiniert eingebaute ‘Parallelaktion’ [...], die, indem sie den Fokus vom Draußen der belagerten Stadt auf das Drinnen des Hochhauskellers verlagert, das eigentlich Abwesende anwesend macht. In Aleks’ Kriegsspiel gelten noch Regeln und Abkommen, gibt es Verstecke, in denen man sich in Sicherheit wähnen kann.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁶⁰ Finzi, ‘Wie der Krieg erzählt wird’, p. 250.

Rules are indeed important in all games and serve as a source of temporary order within the make-believe world established by the players.⁴⁶¹ In Stanišić's text, the narrator describes the rules of the game: 'Drei gegen drei, keine Bomben erlaubt, nein, Marija du darfst nicht mitmachen, Gefangene dürfen gekitzelt werden, unbegrenzte Munition, im Aufgang zum Treppenhaus – Waffenruhe' (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 104). Thus, the cellar – the underground space – turns into a playground, and the way out into the staircase is a safe space. These rules are broken whenever the soldiers enter the apartment building and start committing violent crimes in the stairway, violating the rules of the game and subverting the order previously created by the children.

Importantly, play is a gendered activity in Stanišić's novel, since it is only enjoyed by boys and men. The fact that girls are not allowed to play war is related to the novel's preoccupation with the unequal status of men and women in the community. Indeed, the issue of gender became more central as the text developed, as shown by a comparison between the draft and the published version of chapter nine. For instance, the novel omits the episode in which one of the mothers is trying to attract attention of a male character called Čika Petar: 'Eigentlich wollte sie nur, dass Čika Petar sie in die Arme nimmt. Lläuft sie also nach links, verdreht die Augen, legt die Hand vor ihre Brust, und wie schön, da steht ausgerechnet Čika Petar, jetzt kann sie sich fallen lassen' (*Was wir im Keller spielen*, p. 4). While this deleted scene undermines the authority of the mother, the novel is quite clear in its depiction of mothers as figures whose position can only be challenged by soldiers: 'Nicht mehr die Mütter, die Soldaten sagen uns jetzt, was wir wissen sollen' (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 114). In turn, the novel contains certain added sections which question the authority of male figures, such as the scene in which men are playing games on C-64 (also called Commodore 64, a home computer produced between 1982 and 1994). Men play computer games to escape the immediate reality and are ultimately unable to respond to the crisis, as shown by the scene in which Edin comes back from upstairs

⁴⁶¹ Here, I refer to Johan Huizinga's analysis of play's role in culture, cf. Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens. A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (London: Routledge and Kegan, 1949). Huizinga argues that the rules 'determine what "holds" in the temporary world circumscribed by play' and 'are absolutely binding and allow no doubt' (p. 11). Whenever the rules of the game are broken, 'the whole play-world collapses', thus revealing 'the relativity and fragility of the play-world' and robbing 'the play of its *illusion* – a pregnant word which means literally "in-play"' (p. 11). According to Huizinga, the fixed and delimited character of play means that it can become a source of order: 'Into an imperfect world and into the confusion of life it brings a temporary, a limited perfection' (p. 10). Thus, playgrounds function as 'temporary worlds within the ordinary world', in which 'an absolute and peculiar order reigns' (p. 10).

and tells Aleksandar that he has seen soldiers shoot some men in the stomach. Aleksandar expresses his incredulity:

Soldaten haben den Männern in den Bauch geschossen. [...] Das habe ich, fantasierte Edin, [...] oben aus dem Fenster gesehen. [...] Ich glaubte ihm kein Wort, sagte aber nichts, welche Soldaten überhaupt, Čika Aziz, der Einzige mit einer Waffe in der Nähe, spielte gerade mit offenem Mund 'Ghostbusters' auf seinem C-64, die Nachbarn sahen ihm rauchend zu, und Walross sagte gelangweilt: ordentlich platt gemacht, ich bin dran. (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 106).

The underlined sentence, which is missing from the draft, establishes an important connection between computer games and war. The abbreviation C-64, consisting of a letter and a number, recalls weapons mentioned earlier in the chapter: 'Schweres Geschütz, nickten die Leute, und sagten entsprechende Buchstaben und Zahlen auf, VRB128, T84. Čika Sead und Čika Hasan stritten darüber, welcher Buchstabe mit welcher Zahl wohin schoss, und ob getroffen wurde' (*Wie der Soldat*, pp. 103-104). The child does not recognize the abbreviations as symbols with a real referent and instead emphasizes their quality as abstract signifiers. The child's perspective confronts the reader with the intrinsic strangeness of the signifier itself and makes the military operation appear strange.

Another uncanny connection between war, play and chance comes up later in the chapter, when the soldier wearing a headband (called Rambo in the draft) uses the counting rhyme 'eci-peci-pec' to select his next victim, Čika Sead. Significantly, this children's rhyme comes from BCMS and not German ('eci-peci-pec, ti si mali zec, ja sam mala prepelica, eci, peci, pec'). This early mention of Čika Sead as a victim of arbitrary violence hints at what is going to happen to him later. The link is enhanced by word choice and imaginary. The description of soldiers plundering Čika Sead's flat and eating chicken at his table ('Soldaten bohren die Finger ins Fleisch, spießen es auf die schartigen Messer, essen das Fleisch von den Messerspitzen' (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 114) is a premonition of the figure's brutal death. The full macabre dimension of the scene is only revealed in chapter twenty-seven, in which Aleksandar finds out that Čika Sead has been impaled and grilled like a lamb near a road leading to Sarajevo ('Man sagt, sie haben ihn aufgespießt und wie ein Lamm gegrillt', p. 280). The textual detail relating to Čika Sead's fate establishes a lexical connection between the narrative of the child and the knowledge acquired by the adult narrator.

In the passage describing the soldiers feasting on chicken's flesh, the novel makes clear that there exists a connection between the voraciousness of the soldiers and their cruel acts. This link is also present in the scene in which the soldier with a headband demands more bacon and makes a figure called Amela cut some for him. The novel evokes the sense of impending danger:

Amela [...] legt dem Soldaten ein paar Streifen rotes Fleisch über die Hand, sie will sie zudecken. Hast du dir das Kleid selbst genäht?, fragt der Soldat Amela und leckt am Fleisch, sag Ja, und ich werde deine geschickten Finger küssen. Sag vielleicht nicht Nein. (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 111)

In the draft, this passage does not make clear that the soldier is referring to Amela: 'das Mädchen mit den langen, schwarzen Zöpfen legt dem Soldaten ein Kreuz aus Speckstreifen auf die Hand. Er beißt ein Stück ab, fragt, hast du dir das Kleid selbst genäht? Sag ja, und ich werde deine Finger küssen' (*Was wir im Keller spielen*, p. 10). As chapter ten makes clear, Amela is later violated by one of the soldiers. Seen in this light, the changes introduced in the novel (the soldier licking the red meat and dismissing every possibility of Amela saying 'no') serve as a premonition of what is to come.

Importantly, the soldier with a headband silences his victims, as indicated by the narrator who observes: 'Amela [...] sagt nichts. Čika Hasan und Čika Sead [...] haben auf keine Soldatenfrage eine Antwort' (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 111). This sentence shows that 'Soldatenfrage' is not a real question but rather a statement aimed at foreclosing an exchange. Before addressing Amela and Čika Sead, the soldier destroys the radio, which – since it reflects the Bosnian perspective on the conflict – has acted as a voice competing with the soldiers' presence (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 110). The violence directed at the mechanical object marks the moment in which the soldier demonstrates not just his physical, but his symbolic power, appropriating the right to speak. By drawing attention to the victimhood of Amela and Čika Sead, the novel makes the victims' experience visible, without co-opting or sentimentalizing their stories. Acts of violence are not described directly but rather signalled through subtle hints and linguistic features of the text. At the same time, it is important that the victims are named, whereas the perpetrator is only given a brief physical characterization. In foregrounding the individuality of the victims and thus making them 'audible', the text opposes the process of silencing which goes hand in hand with physical violence. By engaging with the victims of sexual and ethnic violence, the

novel draws attention to the subaltern experiences of those silenced by the brutality of their oppressors.

The sounds of war

The novel's description of the siege and the subsequent invasion of Višegrad is marked by a very strong focus on sound and listening. As argued by J. Martin Daughtry in his book about the veterans of the Iraq war, 'sound is not epiphenomenal to the lived experience of war'.⁴⁶² Instead,

the belliphonic is a fundamental dimension of wartime experience. [...] The fact that the value of belliphonic sound is ambiguous – that it can be received as simultaneously a rich source of tactical information and a profound source of trauma [...] – both complicates and magnifies its salience.⁴⁶³

This ambiguous character of 'belliphonic' sounds and other auditory sensations in wartime is emphasized in Stanišić's novel, which foregrounds the importance of the sonic in the narrator's experience of the fighting. At the same time, the sounds of war are connected to questions of language and communication, where failed dialogue and confusion are rendered as silence.

The act of listening is central in the passage describing the moment just before the soldiers' arrival at the apartment building. The scene is marked by a tense atmosphere of anticipation, perceived by the narrator as silence:

Zu hören waren vereinzelte Schüsse, ab und an eine Salve, dann Stille, dann eine ferne Explosion, dann wieder Geknatter. Es kam von den Straßen und nicht mehr aus den Bergen. Gegen sieben wurde es draußen so ruhig, dass unsere Mütter uns ermahnten, stilljetztstill!, obwohl wir gar nichts sagten. Alles war wie immer, nur die Stille drückte lauter als sonst. Warum hörten alle der Stille zu? Die Stille fletscht die Zähne, flüsterte Walross. Sonst sagte er "fletschen" zur Aprilsonne, wenn sie strahlt, ohne zu wärmen. Sogar die Rufe der Mütter klangen wie geflüstert: Abendessen! Die Großväter drängten ihre Köpfe dicht über ein kleines Transistorradio zusammen. Ich wünschte mir Opa Slavko hinzu. Was würde er sagen, jetzt, da alles zu unaussprechlicher Stille geworden war? Lange schon kam auch keine Musik mehr, immer redeten sie im Radio nur. (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 107)

⁴⁶² J. Martin Daughtry, *Listening to War: Sound, Music, Trauma, and Survival in Wartime Iraq* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 4.

⁴⁶³ Ibid., pp. 4-5.

The sentence in which Aleksandar expresses his longing for Slavko has been added in the novel, thus heightening the sense of abandonment experienced by the narrator. Slavko is presented as the only one who could have said something in this oppressive situation, which suggests that speech could be an act of resistance.

The passage is organized around this notion of the unspeakable and tries to convey an experience which lies beyond language. To achieve this, the text operates with paradoxical images, such as the phrase ‘unaussprechlich[e] Stille’. Silence is not present in a phenomenological way since, as the passage makes clear, the radio is still on and music has been replaced by the spoken word. The nature of this silence, which is not the lack of sound but something much more menacing, affects the listeners, as suggested by alliterations present later in the text: ‘Schweigend stützten Großväter Ellenbogen auf Knie und Köpfe auf Hände, oder standen auf und stützten sich kopfschüttelnd auf ihre Stöcke’ (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 107). Paradoxically, the repetition of the sht sound makes silence (Stille) audible and performs the lack of guidance and silence after Slavko’s death. The grandfathers are described as old frail men who do not offer comfort or support.

Silence is personified in the phrase ‘Die Stille fletscht die Zähne’, which evokes the Bosnian expression ‘zubato sunce’ (literally ‘toothed sun’), which usually refers to the winter sun which shines without giving any warmth. This suggests that the Bosnian expression, consisting of an adjective and a noun, has been transformed into a verbal phrase, forming a striking image. The Bosnian original has become displaced, since the German is not a literal translation but rather a completely new metaphor. This means that translating the phrase back into Bosnian is impossible – did Walross talk about a toothed silence (zubata tišina), or rather silence baring its teeth (tišina pokazuje zube)?

The word silence is used in a way which explodes its original meaning – the mothers warn the children to stay quiet even though they are not saying anything, and silence is something tangible which everyone can hear and in its physical presence, it weighs down loudly. In this way, the text suspends the referential quality of the word and draws attention to the linguistic gap which it is trying to capture. This gap also informs the elliptical description of the fall of Višegrad:

Alle fieberten mit unseren Truppen [...], obwohl niemand genau wusste, wer das war, diese unsere Truppen [...]. Erst als die heisere Radiostimme den Namen einer Stadt sagte, die genauso hieß wie unsere Stadt, wussten alle etwas. Auch ich wusste ein wenig – die

heisere Stimme sprach "Višegrad" wie etwas aus, wovor man in keinem Versteck sicher war. Dieses Wissen war es, das in der Stille seine Zähne fletschte. [...]

Was wir sonst wissen sollen, das redeten uns die Mütter ein. Nur abgekochtes Wasser trinken, ab halb zehn in den Keller gehen [...]. Als die heisere Radiostimme jetzt Višegrad sagte, und ich mich fragte, wie kann es sein, dass eine Stadt fällt, muss das nicht ein Beben geben?, wussten selbst die Mütter nicht, was zu tun war. Sie salzten die Erbsen und rührten im Topf. (*Wie der Soldat*, pp. 107-108)

In the passage, the gap is signalled through ellipsis and repetition. The fact that the city has been captured by the JNA is not stated explicitly. The reader is encouraged to read between the lines when the narrator states: 'Als die heisere Radiostimme jetzt Višegrad sagte, und ich mich fragte, wie kann es sein, dass eine Stadt fällt, muss das nicht ein Beben geben?'. The straightforward information indicating that Višegrad has fallen 'nach erbitterten Gefechten' (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 110) does not appear in the text until later.

The radio is an uncanny presence, since it is a source of a mechanically produced and disembodied voice. It is also the only source of information available to the people hiding in the cellar. This emphasizes the disjointedness of experience – the victims are very close to the war but need to listen to a news report to understand what is really happening. The radio imposes a sense of identity upon its listeners, who are supposed to identify with troops whom they have never seen.

While the city falls without making any meaningful sound, the arrival of the soldiers is depicted as noise which takes over from silence ('Draußen löste eine hupende Hochzeitsgesellschaft die Stille ab', *Wie der Soldat*, p. 108). The verb 'ablösen' can also be used in the expression 'Wache ablösen', which has military implications. The incongruity between military vocabulary and the allegorical language disguising the real nature of the event has an unsettling effect. The description of the soldiers as a wedding party further points to the interconnectedness of war and sexual violence. This link is visible already at the beginning of the chapter ('So unbedingt dringen die Soldaten ein', p. 103). The soldiers enter the city only after they have damaged and conquered it: 'Eine Armee von bärtigen Bräutigamen fuhr vorbei, sie schossen den Himmel an und feierten, die Stadt zur Braut genommen zu haben. Auf den Wagendächern [...] schaukelten Bräutigame im Takt der Straßenlöcher, die sie selbst ausgeschachtet haben' (p. 108). The ceremony takes place against the will of the city, as suggested by the phrase 'zur Braut nehmen', which

implies lack of agency, and the description of tanks ‘Metallfäusten – der Zeigefinger ausgestreckt!’ (p. 109) contains an explicit reference to masculinity.

The close readings above demonstrate the complexity of the text, the multitude of meanings it evokes and the interconnectedness of images present in various sections. It is a great achievement of the novel that while capturing a traumatic episode in the narrator’s life, it also draws attention to the troubling overlaps between masculinity, military aggression and sexual violence. The most dramatic events, such as the fall of Višegrad, which would lead to further acts of murder, plunder, and violence, are included indirectly through ellipsis. The inhumane acts committed by the soldiers are not represented as such but rather made present by salient gaps and repetitions, their haunting effect signalled by an absence.

Multilingual practices in the novel

The close reading of chapter nine has demonstrated that Stanišić’s novel maintains traces of the author’s first language. Bosnian is present through linguistic interference (‘Stille fletscht die Zähne’) and direct quotation (‘Eci-peci-pec’). By creating two levels of meaning in its description of the siege, the novel underscores the arbitrariness of linguistic signs and thus makes the language appear strange, which is equally part of its multilingual strategy. At the same time, it should be noted that the draft contains certain Bosnian words which have been replaced by their German equivalents in the novel (Artillerie instead of *Artiljerija*, Papa instead of *Tata*). The Turkish word *rahmetli*,⁴⁶⁴ which means ‘deceased’ and which in the draft refers to Asija’s uncle Ibrahim (‘*rahmetli* Ibrahim’, *Was wir im Keller spielen*, pp. 8-9) has been left out, even though it adds to the text on the phonetic level by creating a striking alliteration. At the same time, the novel still uses the Bosnian word Čika, which means ‘uncle’ and is used by Aleksandar as an honorary title to refer to the male members of his community. Arguably, the meaning of the word Čika becomes evident through its frequent usage (always preceding a name), whereas the meaning of the word *rahmetli* would have been impossible to guess.

These differences between the draft and the novel are important, since they reveal the degree to which the text has been normalized into standard German

⁴⁶⁴ In the draft, Bosnian words are written in italics. In the novel, ‘Čika’ is never written in italics, which suggests that it is treated as a regular word.

spelling. This tension between the novel's multilingual focus and the monolingual framework which underlies the politics of publishing and translation can be linked back to my discussion of the text's reception in Germany and abroad. As demonstrated above, many contributions suggest that Stanišić owes his literary success to his impeccable German and to the fact that he has allegedly managed to distance himself from his Bosnian origins. In the final section of this chapter, I turn my attention to an essay written by Stanišić in response to his critics, many of whom tend to distinguish between writers of German and non-German origin and assume that there is a straightforward link between the thematic and stylistic aspects of literary texts and the ethnic or national origin of their authors. Stanišić is perfectly aware of this reductive discourse, as shown by his essay 'Three Myths of Immigrant Writing: A View from Germany', which was published online in 2008.

Stanišić's self-positioning in the literary field

In the essay, written in English, Stanišić argues that after the publication of his novel, the critics' attention turned to the question of his national origin and his background as a migrant. He has 'come across many opinions on [his] "immigrant" writing in particular and many views on so-called "immigrant literature" in general'.⁴⁶⁵ Stanišić writes:

In Germany, I carry my ominous immigrant background in my name and my passport, in the little bump on my nose, in my sympathies for food with lots of garlic, but most of all in my past, having fled a civil war and escaped to another country.

Stanišić's essay recalls Homi K. Bhabha's analysis of the process of articulation of cultural difference, as elucidated in his essay 'The Other Question'. Bhabha notes that 'colonial discourse produces the colonised as a fixed reality which is at once an 'other' and yet entirely knowable and visible'.⁴⁶⁶ He also argues:

The construction of the colonial subject in discourse, and the exercise of colonial power through discourse, demands an articulation of forms of difference – racial and sexual. Such an articulation becomes crucial if it is held that the body is always simultaneously inscribed in both the economy of pleasure and desire and the economy of discourse,

⁴⁶⁵ Saša Stanišić, 'Three Myths of Immigrant Writing: A View from Germany', *Words Without Borders*, <http://wordswithoutborders.org/article/three-myths-of-immigrant-writing-a-view-from-germany> [accessed 22 April 2018]. I quote from the English text available online.

⁴⁶⁶ Homi K. Bhabha, 'The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination, and the Discourse of Colonialism', in *The Location of Culture*, ed. by Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge Classics, 2004), pp. 94–120 (p. 101).

domination and power. [...] an *articulation* – in the sense that word itself denies an ‘original’ identity or a ‘singularity’ to objects of difference – sexual or racial.⁴⁶⁷

The relation between the colonizer and the colonized described by Bhabha is not the same as the relation between migrants and mainstream society in the German context, but it is worth bearing in mind that the articulation of racial difference often produces power relations in society, and that the body – and the body of migrants in particular – is always perceived through the lens of exclusionary and discriminatory discourse. Bhabha does not deny real-life difference and claim that it *only* exists as a discursive formation but rather he draws attention to the way in which difference – as opposed to similarity – is instrumentalized to justify power relations and to produce the ‘subject’ of discourse who can then be controlled and appropriated by the dominant power structure.

This process of articulation of difference is deconstructed in Stanišić’s text, which draws attention to the way in which ethnic or immigrant ‘essence’ is produced based on appearance. Stanišić refers to an arbitrarily chosen aspect of his physiognomy – ‘the little bump on [his] nose’. This particular facial feature is not in fact a reflection of a specific ‘background’ but can be retrospectively ascribed to a certain ethnicity, and thus function as a mark of difference. In order to question this construction of visible difference, the author ironically suggests that his background is something tangible which he can ‘carry’ around with him (‘my passport, [...] the little bump on my nose’). However, the idea that this difference is easy to grasp is undermined when the author mentions his past, which is not tangible and can only be ‘carried’ in the form of memories. This is not to say that the author’s past has no material reality – for the past to be present, however it must be turned into a narrative. This diachronic aspect of Stanišić’s ‘immigrant background’ disturbs the notion of a stable synchronic migrant essence. The mere idea of ‘background’ is destabilized by the adjective ‘ominous’, which is highly ambiguous in this context – it is not clear whether the author’s ‘immigrant background’ is perceived as ominous by others, or whether it acts as an ominous force in his own life. On a certain level, the phrase amounts to an oxymoron, since the word ‘ominous’, whose main meaning is ‘suggesting that something unpleasant is likely to happen’ refers to the future, whereas

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 96.

the notion of ‘background’ is linked to the past. Also, the reference to garlic is probably an element of ironic self-orientalization on part of the author.

Stanišić’s essay not only critiques the popular perception of migrants as stand-ins for foreign cultures but also addresses the tendency to regard writers who migrated to Germany as a homogenous group. In his view, the idea that ‘immigrant literature is a philological category of its own, and thus comprises a fruitful anomaly in relation to national literatures’ is a myth. Here, Stanišić touches upon the alleged opposition between ‘national literature’ viewed as the norm, and migrant writing, treated as an exception which not only disturbs but also validates the framework of ‘national’ or ‘German’ literature. This arbitrary division has been challenged by Adelson, who, as demonstrated in the Introduction, stresses that literature of migration is a cultural phenomenon which takes place *within* the ‘national’ literary tradition and thus disrupts clear-cut oppositions between Germans and non-Germans. Adelson argues that the idea of national culture is in itself unstable, and that all national frameworks are ‘historical formations, themselves subject to defamiliarising change at the turn to the twenty-first century’.⁴⁶⁸ The ‘German’ frame of reference is thus radically challenged by global developments after 1990, and literature is both a reflection of these social and cultural transformations and a creative force which is capable of redefining German society. As Adelson puts it, the literature of migration ‘incorporates itself into the historical culture of Germany’,⁴⁶⁹ participating in the ‘reconfigurations of the German national archive’,⁴⁷⁰ and carrying out the ‘imaginative labour [...] increasingly oriented toward a shared future history’.⁴⁷¹ In short, Adelson believes that migrant literary voices participate in the transformation of the national canon of their countries of settlement.

Similarly, Stanišić suggests that Germany’s national culture has been deeply transformed by immigration, which means that minority culture is now right at the heart of German society:

In countries with high immigration rates, like Germany today, minority culture became long ago one of society’s constitutive elements. Immigrant authors are no longer a marginal phenomenon, but a significant reference point with almost-mainstream qualities (a good thing, because it rids the work of the exotic). Immigrant literatures are

⁴⁶⁸ Adelson, *The Turkish Turn*, p. 8.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

not an isle in the sea of national literature, but a component, both in the depths, where the archaic squids of tradition live, and on the surface, where pop-cultural waves hit the shore.

In this passage, the image of immigrant literature as ‘an isle in the sea of national literature’ is juxtaposed with a more mobile and differentiated vision of this literature as ‘a component, both in the depths [...] and on the surface’. Stanišić emphasizes the fact that every national tradition is shaped by migration, and that national literatures cannot be separated from global developments, such as the spread of popular culture.

The question which remains is whether Stanišić’s essay has managed to overcome the presumed dichotomy between migrant and dominant culture. By admitting that migrant writers can transform the mainstream, Stanišić expands the category of the national and decouples it from the notion of a discrete culture, ethnicity or territory. On the other hand, the notion of ‘national literature’ is not rejected in its entirety. By writing that ‘immigrant literatures’ are a subset ‘in the sea of national literature’, Stanišić suggests that national literary canon is still the dominant framework. Also, one might ask what sort of conditions need to be met by a migrant author for them to become part of the centre and to gain ‘almost-mainstream qualities’. Stanišić writes: ‘To speak of a single ‘immigrant literature’ is simply wrong, because it is wrongly simple. The nature of migration and the level of foreign writers’ integration vary too much to be collected in one category’. Here, the author seems to be suggesting that the degree to which a writer has been integrated into German society is an important factor affecting their work. As it also turns out, ‘foreign’ writers need to have a good command of German in order to engage with mainstream society. Stanišić writes:

Asked if it’s hard to write in a language I learned so late (I was fourteen), I answer no. It’s never late to learn a language, I say, it just eats up more time that would otherwise be spent on fishing trips as you get older. And then I say: There is nothing special about writing in a foreign language so long as you think you can use it in a sufficient and productive way. [...] A language is the only country without borders. Writers, indeed anyone, can (and should) use the privilege to make a language bigger, better and more beautiful by planting a wordtree here or there, one never grown before.

On the one hand, Stanišić attempts to show that writing in a language ‘different from the one [he] learned as [he] cut [his] milk teeth’ is not at all extraordinary. He admits that his choice of language was pragmatic rather than ideological or identitarian, since

he ‘picked [his] “better” language: German’. At the same time, however, Stanišić ignores the fact that he had access to structures and support which made it possible for him to master German. The fact that German became his ‘better’ language is not questioned or deconstructed but rather presented as a simple fact, and the power relations within society which discourage the development of one’s heritage language are not exposed.

Stanišić’s ideal of unlimited artistic creativity and freedom also means that in his view, the writer’s biography should not determine the subject matter of their works. He writes:

Any ‘good’ author should, at any time, be able to write ‘good’ fiction about a child suffering from cancer, a dog with three legs or a dogleg telling a story about an immigrant author, all without ever having even talked to a child sick with cancer, without ever owning a dog, or without personally being friends with me. Writing fiction also means inventing worlds which are not part of the writer’s own world. Through research, travels, interviews and other methods of approaching the unknown, these experiences are within the reach of any author.

Here, again, Stanišić opposes the essentialising view according to which migrant authors have access to worlds and themes which are not available to authors without migrant background, and therefore remain bound by their biography, which also means that certain topics are ‘reserved’ for migrant writers. Stanišić’s rejection of literature as an instrument of identity politics representing the voice of migrants in Germany could be understood as a reaction against what Elke Sturm-Trigonakis describes as ‘die [...] übliche soziologische Instrumentalisierung der literarischen Texte, die nur auf Authentizität und Dokumentationsleistung hin abgetastet werden, deren ästhetische Merkmale jedoch ignoriert werden, weil man ihnen erstens die Existenz von Poetizität und Literarizität gar nicht zutraut’.⁴⁷² In drawing attention to the ‘purely literary’ matters of style, genre and aesthetics, Stanišić shows that his texts do indeed have a literary value and should not be regarded as political or moral manifestos.

While it is difficult to disagree with this criticism of what Adelson calls ‘referential presumption’ affecting the reception of literary texts, it seems that Stanišić throws the baby out with the bathwater when he says that literary texts can be written in total isolation from the external world. Also, there exists a contradiction between

⁴⁷² Sturm-Trigonakis, p. 49.

him saying that an author can write about a sick child ‘without ever having even talked to a child sick with cancer’ but also has to ‘approach the unknown’ through interviews and research. The total dismissal of the author’s background knowledge or their personal attachment to the subject matter is surprising given the fact that Stanišić’s first novel was based on his childhood in Bosnia. Stanišić clearly tries to position himself as a *German* writer, defending himself against unfair claims that he owed his literary success to his biographical experience of migration. Stanišić’s success, however, cannot be separated from his personal background. By dismissing the parts of him which are not purely German, he effectively marks his non-German origin as something negative or shameful. In arguing that the aesthetics of multilingual texts have no political value, Stanišić ignores the revolutionary potential of literature which defies the national framework and gives rise to a global aesthetics of migration.

The above analysis has shown that to an extent, Stanišić’s essay ends up perpetuating the hegemonic discourse it sought to deconstruct. However, since the text was written after the publication of the novel, it should be seen as an expression of the author’s self-positioning in the literary field rather than a poetological manifesto. Stanišić’s normative remarks pertaining to the ‘sufficient’ command of German as a prerequisite for artistic creativity clearly stand in contrast with multilingual practices which in his novel oppose the notion of linguistic purity.

Conclusion: intersecting histories

Bosnien 95

die lateinische wort für krieg fehlt mir
 spaeter ein
 jetzt suche ich kinder hose
 schneide rechte bein ab
 naehe zu die offnung
 mit unsichtbarem garn
 auf meine zunge liegt
 unferlezt
 ein unerhörtes
 Gebett.⁴⁷³

Poems by the Croatian-born Swiss poet Dragica Rajčić constitute a radical multilingual intervention. The words, if read aloud, sound like German spoken with

⁴⁷³ Dragica Rajčić, *Post bellum* (Zürich: edition 8, 2000), p. 9.

an accent. Making use of the supposedly incorrect German, the poet disrupts grammatical and orthographic conventions to bring out latent, often counterintuitive meanings hidden in everyday idiom. The title of the above poem is the only indication of the text's political point of reference and helps to place the loss evoked by the poem within the context of recent European history.

The poem commemorates and mourns the victims of the Bosnian war and shows that the conflict inflicted a wound in language in general and in the German language specifically. The inaudible sound of prayer, the invisible yarn woven through the mutilated fabric and the missing Latin word are only present through absence. Nothing remains unharmed, including the very notion of being unharmed, as suggested by the distorted word 'unferlezt'.

Such wounded language also finds its way into Stanišić's *Wie der Soldat das Grammofon repariert*, where it signals a different historical trauma. Among the figures and stories forming the rich tapestry of the novel, one episode stands out as a direct evocation of the Jewish suffering during the Second World War: a monologue by Rabbi Avram, entitled '...'. The monologue is placed just before chapter nine describing the invasion of Višegrad and acts as a digression which draws the reader away from current events. The rabbi is referred to as 'Dreipunktemann' because of his elliptical speech, consisting of repetitions, incomplete sentences and anacoluthons, as in the following passage: 'dass es bei uns immer so mit Fäusten ... dass wir immer ... es zerreiβt mir ... es zerreiβt mich ... Waffen ... prügeln ... sogar mit Worten ... prügeln ... schelten ... fauchen ... fluchen ... wie damals ... immer schon ... und das ist nur ... ihr werdet noch sehen' (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 95). Recollecting past atrocities, the rabbi speaks the words of warning for the present, burdened by his inability and simultaneous urge to testify to his pain.

The character is encountered by Walross during his road trip across Yugoslavia in the winter of 1991/1992 and is first introduced in chapter seven. The rabbi has peculiar features: he is tiny, has a long beard and side curls, wears a shabby tailcoat, a hat and a bow tie. Although we are given little detail regarding his fate during the Second World War, we know that he was beaten by soldiers of an unnamed army (were they German Nazis? Croatian Ustaše? someone else?) and trapped in the middle of a frozen lake, where he endured cold and hunger. He only survived thanks to Orthodox priests, who fed him in secret. His story is told amidst other dramatic events: Walross's fight with the bus driver, the beginning of his love affair with

Milica, the rescue of Milica's father from Osijek which had been bombed by the JNA between 1991 and 1992, and Milica's father's reminiscence of his dramatic escape from Italian soldiers in the summer of 1943.

The rabbi is haunted by his past trauma and the events which took place fifty years before but he is also a figure coming from the past, given his minuscule stature and quaint dress. In an unexpected twist, the rabbi is put behind the wheel, while Walross and Milica are making out in the rear of the bus. He steers the bus off the road and across the barrier, down the hill, only to land on a frozen lake. He gets his ice-skates out and is suddenly freed of his elliptical speech.

Who is this Jewish figure, ice-skating on a frozen lake in Slovenia, amid the Croatian war? Why has he chosen to re-visit the site of his trauma? Is it repetition compulsion, or rather a possibility of liberation? And what are the implications of telling one's story? What speech is more likely to be heard: the interrupted, fragmented, incoherent 'Dreipunktsprache' (p. 95) or a more fluent narrative?

Anne Fuchs and Mary Cosgrove note that in reunified Germany, the past is 'a hotly contested territory' where personal memories passed down in families and subjective experiences of the past clash with the institutionalized memory culture which had determined the official landscape of commemorative practices of the Federal Republic.⁴⁷⁴ Unmastered and uncanny memories return to haunt the present and to subvert official narratives of contrition, which sometimes leads to historical revisionism and the emergence of controversial narratives of German victimhood.⁴⁷⁵

The literature of post-Yugoslav migration reflects the multidirectional pressures of globalization and migration after 1990 and intervenes in the fraught landscape of German memory and identity contests. Stanišić's novel draws attention to the complex web of transnational memories and traumas still haunting contemporary Europe, posing questions concerning the significance of narratives of Jewish suffering in Bosnia and personal stories of Yugoslav Partisans who fought against Mussolini's forces in the Second World War. By introducing these narratives into the German-language memory archive, the novel gives new prominence to such personal, subjective and partial stories.

⁴⁷⁴ Anne Fuchs and Mary Cosgrove, 'Introduction: Germany's Memory Contests and the Management of the Past', in *German Memory Contests: The Quest for Identity in Literature, Film, and Discourse since 1990*, ed. by Anne Fuchs, Mary Cosgrove, and Georg Grote (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2006), pp. 1–22 (p. 2).

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

Conceptualizing the touching tales between Germany and Yugoslavia, one cannot ignore the long shadow of the Second World War which lingered in both countries for decades, and the memory of which was re-awakened by the eruption of violence in the early 1990s, forcing those with a personal experience of the war to re-visit some painful or shameful aspects of their past. The legacy of the Holocaust and its influence on Germany's memory culture today is also addressed by Marica Bodrožić's *kirschholz und alte gefühle*. My next chapter will look at themes which are common to the texts by Stanišić and Bodrožić: the memory of Jewish suffering, sexual violence, as well as linguistic gaps and absences which mark and block access to the traumas and injuries inflicted on various subjects in wartime.

Chapter 4: Transnational feminist solidarities and multilingual futures in *kirschholz und alte gefühle* by Marica Bodrožić

Introduction

Wir leben wieder in unsicheren Zeiten. So gefährlich das für jene erscheint, die ihren Besitz zu verteidigen haben, so sehr ist es für all jene eine Chance, die keine Angst vor Bewegung haben und einem neuen Leben mutig, pionierhaft entgegensehen können, sei es, weil sie ihren Kindern ein besseres Leben ermöglichen oder sich selbst aus dem Gewohnten in das Ungewohnte und bald zu Bewohnende bringen wollen: eine neue Sprache etwa, sie wird so zu einem neuen Leben, zu einer neuen Musik, die wir diesen Pionieren oft genug nicht zugestehen wollen, weil sie uns in unserem alten Rhythmus und in unserer Langeweile stören. [...] Da ich keine Politikerin bin, erlaube ich mir, meine Überlegungen auf die menschliche Seele auszurichten. [...] Ich frage mich manchmal, ob die Seele uns eigentlich im Singular gehört [...] [ich bin] mir sicher, dass die Seele so etwas sein muss wie das Meer, das tropfenweise zu benennen unmöglich ist. Und doch gibt es uns einzeln und wir sehen nicht das Wasser, das uns alle verbindet. Tropfen 1, Tropfen 2, Tropfen 3 usw. gehen auf die Reise und beim Zusammentreffen mit Tropfen 4, Tropfen 5 und Tropfen 6 müssen sie ihre Ausweise herzeigen und sich als Tropfenartgenossen identifizieren lassen. Tropfenabteilung 7 bis 9 droht mit einem Krieg, wenn es weiterhin zu illegalen Grenzüberschreitungen kommt usw. Natürlich wird jeder von uns bei der Vorstellung dieser Tropfen-Separationsbestrebungen von Natur aus ein offenes Meer begrüßen.⁴⁷⁶

In current political debates, questions of identity, borders and exclusion are often viewed through the lens of language. In her speech ‘Diese Honiglieferantin Sprache. Über das Sehen mit den Ohren und das Hören mit den Augen’, Marica Bodrožić addresses some of the fears and anxieties provoked by migration and multilingualism in today’s world. She suggests that national language is treated by some as a possession which can be stolen or contaminated by newcomers who speak it with a different accent, pitch or intonation. For Bodrožić, however, such ‘abnormal’ linguistic patterns form a new music, made possible through displacement. This spatial and linguistic dislodgement can result in a new kind of lodging (‘aus dem Gewohnten in das Ungewohnte und bald zu Bewohnende’), which, sadly, is often disregarded by those who themselves are not used to change and movement.

⁴⁷⁶ Marica Bodrožić, ‘Diese Honiglieferantin Sprache. Über das Sehen mit den Ohren und das Hören mit den Augen’, <http://docplayer.org/15518614-Kakanien-neue-heimaten-praesentiert-von-caroline-peters-mit-mit-marica-bodrozic-rosemarie-tietze-eva-jantschitsch-gustav-kasino-12.html> [accessed 30 May 2018].

At the same time, the author insists that all human beings are connected to each other. This vision of a shared humanity has deep egalitarian ramifications and evokes feminist formulations of solidarity. Carol C. Gould notes that solidarity is a notion encompassing ‘the supportive relations we can come to develop with people at a distance’.⁴⁷⁷ This solidarity does not need to be grounded in collective identity but rather stems from ‘identification with the lived situation of others and [...] an appreciation of the injustices to which they may be subject’.⁴⁷⁸ It is an affective relation which extends across borders and reflects ‘the new forms of transnational interrelationships that mark contemporary globalization’.⁴⁷⁹ As I argue below, such transnational bonds are important to feminist responses to the gendered trauma of the Bosnian war. The chapter focusses on Marica Bodrožić’s novel *kirschholz und alte gefühle* (“*kirschholz*”).⁴⁸⁰ In the novel, the questions of language, displacement and belonging are filtered through the lens of a specifically female experience of violence and exclusion. Through its engagement with multiple traumatic stories, the text points to the radical interconnectedness of humans, their bodies, and the environment, at the same time insisting on the specificity and concreteness of each person’s story. Crucially, the novel is brought into dialogue with other works addressing the legacy of mass rapes committed during the Bosnian war.

Born in 1973 in today’s Croatia, Bodrožić moved to Germany in 1983. Her first book, a collection of short stories entitled *Tito ist tot*, was published in 2002. Further publications include *Der Spieler der inneren Stunde* (2005), *Sterne erben, Sterne färben. Meine Ankunft in Wörtern* (“*Sterne*”) from 2007, a collection of stories *Der Windsammler* and a volume of poetry *Ein Kolibri kam unverwandelt* (2007), followed by two further volumes of poetry: *Lichtorgeln* in 2008 and *Quittenstunden* in 2011. Bodrožić writes essays, novels, poems, and works as a literary translator. She has received numerous prizes and distinctions, including the Adalbert von Chamisso prize awarded by the Robert Bosch Stiftung, the European Union Prize for Literature, and the literary prize awarded by the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung.

kirschholz is the story of Arjeta Filipino, which extends over more than twenty years. Arjeta comes from Sarajevo but left the city just after the beginning of the

⁴⁷⁷ Carol C. Gould, ‘Transnational Solidarities’, *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 38.1 (2007), 148–64 (p. 148).

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 156.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 148.

⁴⁸⁰ Marica Bodrožić, *kirschholz und alte gefühle* (Munich: Luchterhand, 2012).

Bosnian war to study in Paris, probably in 1992. Her father and her twin brothers were killed in the war. While in Paris, Arjeta makes friends with Silva, a refugee from Yugoslavia, who survived the battle of Vukovar in 1991, and Mischa Weisband, a Berlin-born survivor of the Holocaust. She also meets Arik, a photographer and a painter. Arik is a possessive and brutal figure, who rapes Arjeta after one of their first dates. Arjeta gets pregnant, and suffers an ectopic pregnancy which proves to be life-threatening. Arjeta feels ashamed for what happened and does not confront Arik. Instead, she starts a relationship with him which lasts several years. The couple break up once Arjeta gets pregnant again and it becomes clear that Arik does not want to take responsibility for the child. Arjeta decides to give the child up for adoption, and leave Paris for Berlin. After Arik's death, Arjeta inherits photo albums stored in his Paris flat, which contain photos of herself and her friend Nadeshda, taken surreptitiously by Arik, who had stalked the women before making their acquaintance. At the time of writing, Arjeta is nearing the age of forty, has lived in Berlin for five years and has just moved into a new flat. Unpacking her boxes and looking at old photographs which she spreads over her grandmother's cherry wood table, she starts to recall her past.

In my reading of the novel, I focus on the trauma of rape and explore various links between Arjeta's victimization in Paris and the experiences of the victims of the gendered violence in the former Yugoslavia. In examining how traumatic memories of sexual violence are negotiated in Bodrožić's novel, I investigate the potential of multilingual texts to forge new forms of expression capable of reflecting the trauma of rape as well as the experience of female objectification through the male gaze. In its portrayal of a character who struggles to assert the legitimacy of her own voice, the text uses a non-linear and non-chronological narrative to explore alternative sites enabling the subject to express their traumatic and fragmented experience. The novel suggests that violent experiences can only be signalled through linguistic failure but, at the same time, such events need to be documented.

In turn, multilingualism is conceptualized in the novel as a new mode of living which offers a tentative way out of the silences of trauma. Unspoken experiences of displacement, loss and violence are translated into possible futures by friendships and alliances based on mutual concern and affect. Multilingual lived experience makes it possible for the characters to form transnational bonds of care and solidarity which transcend biological, ethnicized, or familial strictures.

Theoretical responses to the trauma of war

To highlight Bodrožić's feminist engagement with the legacies of the Yugoslav Wars and to give justice to the complex situation in post-war Bosnia, I draw on theoretical approaches developed by scholars working on wartime rape, most notably their insights into how ethnicity, sexuality and gender overlap in the construction of a nation state and national identity. During the Bosnian war between 1992 and 1995, 20,000 Muslim and Croatian women and girls are reported to have been raped by the JNA and Bosnian Serb forces. In Bosnia, these crimes have been addressed by the acclaimed director Jasmila Žbanić, whose work has inspired scholars to develop innovative theoretical frameworks responding to artistic engagements with gendered violence during the Yugoslav war. The film critic Dijana Jelača and the feminist scholar Jasmina Husanović offer a revision of Western trauma theories beyond the paradigm established by Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience*. They consider various criticisms levelled against Caruth,⁴⁸¹ and adapt the theory to fit the local context. By integrating their insights into my thesis, I seek to mitigate an exclusively Western-European bias in my own work.

The experiences of women traumatized by the Bosnian war, argues Husanović, uncover 'a hidden dimension within the interlocking texturing of political community and violence'.⁴⁸² Violent experiences might affect women 'both in times of war as well as of peace, in family as well as in community'.⁴⁸³ Considering family and political community as sites of violence means that 'the illusion of certainty, security, and safety they provide implodes',⁴⁸⁴ uncovering 'the radical contingency of social and political edifices' and producing 'a sense of not belonging to the matrices around us'.⁴⁸⁵ Indeed, Bodrožić's text challenges the legitimacy of established family models, which cannot serve as sites from which to recuperate the wounds inflicted by gendered violence. By showing the dysfunctional relationship between Arjeta and her mother, the text makes clear that Arjeta was subjected to violent treatment and objectification as a child and that patriarchal norms governing the relationship

⁴⁸¹ Cf.: Sigrid Weigel and Georgina Paul, 'The Symptomatology of a Universalized Concept of Trauma: On the Failing of Freud's Reading of Tasso in the Trauma of History', *New German Critique*, 2003, 85–94.

⁴⁸² Jasmina Husanović, 'Reckoning with the "Bosnia Troubles": Trauma, Witnessing, and Politics', *Anthropology of East Europe Review*, 22 (2004), 15–21 (p. 16).

⁴⁸³ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid, pp. 16-17.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 17.

between men and women were emulated by her close relatives. As opposed to the narrator's abusive relationships with her mother and her boyfriend, her relationships with her friends Silva, Nadeshda, Hiromi, and Mischa are marked by care and respect. In this way, the novel points to other, alternative family models and elective, transnational bonds which can replace the dysfunctional family structures left behind. The novel deconstructs the ethnonationalist discourse of difference and makes it possible to draw parallels between figures coming from diverse cultural backgrounds, thus echoing the point made by Husanović that precisely because of its recent traumatic past, the Balkans can become a 'site where imagination, memory, and agency may and should coalesce into emancipatory gestures that traverse violent deadlocks of conventional phantasmatic politics'.⁴⁸⁶

Here, I do not mean to re-centre Bodrožić's novel as a text whose scope and themes are limited to former Yugoslavia. Rather, I suggest that the novel is to be situated in the context of other artistic and feminist interventions which respond to the region's traumatic past and 'engender new ways of thinking memory and theorizing trauma refracted through the postcolonial imaginaries *of* and *in* Bosnia'.⁴⁸⁷ Such feminist projects are committed 'to advance cross-national feminist solidarities in producing knowledge and action'.⁴⁸⁸ By linking Bodrožić's work to Žbanić's films, I aim to establish a transnational and translingual connection between these two projects which respond to the gender-specific experience of trauma against the backdrop of displacement, silence and post-war normalization.

Gaps and silences

Stressing the ambivalent role of language in addressing trauma, Husanović states that 'trauma which happens within family as well as within political community is outside the possibility of conventional communication, because the language we have to use belongs to the very community and the very relationships of power that traumatized us in the first place'.⁴⁸⁹ The tension is visible in the theoretical discourse itself, in which the academic and generalizing 'we' is employed, as it were, on behalf of victims of sexual violence, whose individual experiences exceed the possibilities of

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 15.

⁴⁸⁷ Jasmina Husanović, 'The Politics of Gender, Witnessing, Postcoloniality and Trauma. Bosnian Feminist Trajectories', *Feminist Theory*, 10 (2009), 99–119 (p. 100).

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 101.

⁴⁸⁹ Husanović, 'Reckoning with the "Bosnia Troubles": Trauma, Witnessing, and Politics', p. 17.

linguistic conventions. How to think this ‘paradox of having to witness both inside and outside the vocabulary of power’⁴⁹⁰ in relation to multilingualism, writing in a second language, and distinctively female experiences of displacement? Indeed, the fact that Bodrožić’s literary language is German situates her project in a specific historical and cultural context. How important is Bodrožić’s position as a German writer living in Berlin for her engagement with a traumatic history which happened elsewhere (even though she has a biographical connection to the region in question), and in a different language? To what extent can the choice of a new language be understood as an attempt to undermine the organic notions of family and community, and how does this (enforced, voluntary) disconnection and linguistic non-belonging affect the novel’s engagement with trauma?

Gendered violence in Bosnia in film and literature

After the imposition of the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995, Bosnia and Hercegovina was divided along ethnic lines, which led to the formation of two separate administrative entities, Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The memory of wartime rape in these different parts of Bosnia is determined by two conflicting interpretations of recent history which are based on ethnonational allegiance.⁴⁹¹ In the Federation, the victimization of Bosnian Muslim and Croatian women is instrumentalized in the nationalist rhetoric of collective martyrdom. Teodora Todorova points out that in post-conflict Bosnia, the narrative of mass rape has been framed as a ‘collective “Bosniak” wartime victimisation’ and, paradoxically, women’s experiences ‘have been marginalized and silenced in an attempt to re-establish social “normality”’.⁴⁹² In turn, in Republika Srpska, acts of wartime rape are surrounded by silence, since the Bosnian war is remembered there ‘as “the homeland defense war” led [...] in order to protect the Serb nation in BiH from the Muslim and Croat threat’.⁴⁹³ The crimes committed against the non-Serb population of Republika Srpska are often downplayed or ignored. On both sides of the ethnic divide, the bodily suffering of individual women is glossed over in the

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁹¹ Cf. Moll.

⁴⁹² Teodora Todorova, ‘“Giving Memory a Future”: Confronting the Legacy of Mass Rape in Post-Conflict Bosnia-Herzegovina’, *Journal of International Women’s Studies*, 12.2 (2011), 3–15 (p. 5).

⁴⁹³ Moll, p. 917.

process of nation-building, accompanied by glorification of post-war, militarized masculinity.

Films by the Bosnian feminist director Jasmila Žbanić have played a decisive role in bringing these crimes to the public attention, both in Bosnia and abroad. Her important film *Grbavica* was released in 2006 and awarded a Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival.⁴⁹⁴ Its two alternative titles are *Esma's Secret* and *Grbavica: The Land of My Dreams*. The film tells the story of Esma, who has been forced to give birth to a daughter conceived in a Serbian rape camp. Esma has decided against giving her child up for adoption and now lives as a single parent in Sarajevo, working as a waitress in a night club and struggling to support herself financially, since she receives no help from the state. The film was made with a clear activist intent and was welcomed by women survivors of rape. It also led to important changes in legislation which introduced state pension for victims of wartime rape.

A later film by Žbanić, *For Those Who Can Tell No Tales*, engages with the crimes committed in Višegrad.⁴⁹⁵ Released in 2013, the film is based on *Seven Kilometres North East: Performance on Geography, Tourism and Crime*, a theatre project by the Australian artist Kym Vercoe. Having seen a video recording of the performance, Žbanić decided to adapt Kym's play and make it into a film. The collaboration between two artists separated by geography, language and historical experience shows that cross-cultural feminist projects can oppose the violent re-writing of history and commemorate the experience of women whose wartime suffering is being forcefully erased.

This is not to say that the international community was not aware of the rapes committed in Višegrad prior to the film's release. Statements by survivors were collected by local NGOs, such as the Association of Women Victims of War, whose president, Bakira Hasečić, was one of the victims held at the camp.⁴⁹⁶ However, despite the testimonies given by women survivors, the ICTY failed to prosecute rapes committed by such paramilitary groups as the 'White Eagles' under the command of Milan Lukić. Since the victims of wartime rape in Bosnia were for a long time refused any legal recognition, their experiences were more accurately reflected through

⁴⁹⁴ *Grbavica*, dir. by Jasmila Žbanić (Deblokada, 2006), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gcVSxplvH-Q&t=165s> [accessed 30 May 2018].

⁴⁹⁵ *For Those Who Can Tell No Tales*, dir. by Jasmila Žbanić (Deblokada, 2013).

⁴⁹⁶ Olivera Simić and Zala Volcic, 'In the Land of Wartime Rape: Bosnia, Cinema, and Reparation', *Griffith Journal of Law & Human Dignity*, 2 (2014), 377–401.

various acts of ‘symbolic reparations’ undertaken by grassroots organizations, as well as victims, activists, and artists’.⁴⁹⁷

The film by Žbanić is set in 2011 and tells the story of Kym’s travels in the Balkans and her journey to Višegrad, where, following a recommendation found in a tourist guide, Kym spends one night at the Vilina Vlas spa hotel. Even though she is unaware of the building’s recent history, Kym is haunted by anxiety, insomnia, and nausea. It is not until her return to Australia that she finds out about the 200 women who were systematically raped, beaten and murdered in the camp set up in the hotel by Serb paramilitaries. Appalled by the fact that the hotel is still admitting tourists, Kym decides to return to Višegrad and to stay at the hotel again, this time performing a symbolic act of commemoration for the victims. She picks up 200 yellow flowers in the gardens around Višegrad and lays them on the bed in the hotel, each one meant for one victim, to whom she refers to as ‘woman number one’, ‘woman number two’, and so on. This solitary act is only witnessed by the cleaning lady who comes to the room the next morning, and who is visibly disturbed by this unusual sight. According to Dijana Jelača, the film ‘self-consciously positions its existence as an important exercise in addressing, as well as commemorating, suppressed war crimes’, turning into ‘a cinematic enactment of memorialization in a place [...] where war crimes are forcibly denied by the ruling Bosnian Serb regime’.⁴⁹⁸ Thus, the film can be read as a ‘counter-monument’ and an ethical intervention which ‘actively seeks to fill the gap of forgotten trauma and insert it back into active, knowable cultural memory’.⁴⁹⁹

As discussed in my previous chapter, sexual crimes committed in Višegrad are also addressed in Saša Stanišić’s *Wie der Soldat das Grammofon repariert*, where one of the victims, Amela, is raped by a Serb soldier during the raid of Grandma Katarina’s house. The act of violence is not depicted in a voyeuristic, exploitative manner, but rather signalled by a gap in Stanišić’s text, as illustrated by the following passage:

Amela mit geflochtenen Zöpfen, aber auch Strähnen im Gesicht. Mit Mehl an der erröteten Wange und jetzt besorgt gefurchter Stirn, wenn der Soldat mit seinem Ohr an ihrem Nacken lauscht, unter Amelas geflochtenen Zöpfen den anderen Frauen rät: schließt die Tür, wenn ihr hinausgeht, alle, sofort! Sie schließen die Tür, lehnen an der Wand, reichen einander die Zigarette, spucken auf den Zeigefinger, streichen

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 384.

⁴⁹⁸ Dijana Jelača, *Dislocated Screen Memory: Narrating Trauma in Post-Yugoslav Cinema* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 44.

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 47.

die Spucke auf die Kippe und die Tränen von den Wangen. Flüstern:
Amela, Amela, Amela. (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 117)

The act of sexual violence takes place behind closed doors. The disorientation of the narrator is stressed through the use of repetition and zeugma. The syntax is slippery and ambiguous, exploring multiple meanings of verbs and pronouns. A few paragraphs later, the soldier leaves the flat and Amela is seen kneeling on the floor, 'mit einem nassen Schleier aus Strähnen im Gesicht' (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 120). Amela's braid is now dishevelled, her face covered in tears, and it is up to the reader to link this lacuna to an act of violence.

Stanišić's novel also addresses the lack of any visible commemoration of Bosnian Muslim victims in Višegrad. During Aleksandar's visit there, the narrator is taken to the sites of atrocities by his uncle Miki, who is now a police inspector and who most probably played an active part in the crimes committed during the war, including the Hotel Vilina Vlas and Kosovo Polje, a village near Višegrad, which is where Dragan Šekarić and other Bosnian Serb soldiers committed murder, rape and arson.⁵⁰⁰ The novel does not spell out what happened at these two locations during the war, and the reader is invited to carry out their own research into the history of the places visited by Aleksandar:

Miki fährt mit mir zum Hotel Vilina Vlas. Etwa auf dem halben Weg, in Kosovo Polje, parken wir bei einer Brandruine. Miki hebt einen Stein auf und reibt mit den Daumen über den Ruß. Auf dem Parkplatz vor Vilina Vlas bietet er mir eine Zigarette an und wirft die halb volle Packung weg, als ich sie nicht annehme. (*Wie der Soldat*, p. 304)

On the way back, Miki stops at the police station and demands that the officer in charge give him the keys to the prison cells. Miki unlocks one of the cells and puts the stone he had brought from Kosovo Polje on one of the camp beds (which recalls Kym Vercoe's gesture). The significance of this gesture is not explained. Is it meant as a symbolic act of justice, commemorating the civilian victims who were raped and killed by Bosnian Serb soldiers in 1992? Aleksandar is unable to confront his uncle, and to ask him about his role in the war: 'Ich vertraue meinem Mund nicht, nachzufragen, erlaube meinen Augen keinen herausfordernden Blick, meinem Gesicht keine strenge Miene, den Händen keine geballte Wut. Ich bin überragend im

⁵⁰⁰ Denis Dzidic, 'Bosnian Serb Soldier Jailed for Višegrad Rape, Murder', <http://www.justice-report.com/en/articles/bosnian-serb-soldier-jailed-for-visegrad-rape-murder> [accessed 11 July 2017].

Beschreiben von Gesten' (*Wie der Soldat*, pp. 305-306). Aleksandar's failure to challenge the power relations in post-war Višegrad shows how difficult it is to pass moral judgement and to hold the perpetrators to account.

Aleksandar's encounter with the police in Višegrad is very different from the way in which Kym is treated by the police in Žbanić's film. The film is framed by the scene of interrogation, with Kym facing two police officers in Višegrad. Kym talks to the police chief, played by Boris Isaković, through an interpreter, asking him whether he knows what happened in Vilina Vlas during the war. The policeman responds that the hotel was a military hospital and a rehabilitation centre. When Kym remains incredulous, he states: 'Ja znam što je ovdje bilo. Bio sam tu' (I know what happened here. I was here). Even though she has tried to learn Bosnian, Kym's experience is mediated through English. As it turns out, however, linguistic proficiency is not always key to understanding. Kym's external perspective is confronted with 'local' knowledge, and these two competing versions of events are due to bias rather than lack of access to information.

This historical and cultural context is crucial for my ensuing discussion of the specific contribution of Bodrožić's novel, which engages with the unspoken trauma of sexual violence through gaps, silences, and omissions. I argue that this German-language text, similarly to Žbanić's *For Those Who Can Tell No Tales*, functions as a counter-monument, placing the trauma of ethnic violence endured by women during the Bosnian war at the centre of German/European cultural memory and resisting the attempts to either erase the memory of these crimes or to instrumentalize them for political purposes.

kirschholz und alte gefühle: reception, narrative style and main themes

kirschholz is a first-person narrative, divided into seven chapters, which correspond to the first seven days spent by Arjeta at her new Berlin flat. Her memories are mixed with her current impressions and reflections. Several critics comment at length on the novel's style and narrative structure. Carola Ebeling, in her review for *die tageszeitung*, notes: 'Eine weibliche Stimme, eine Perspektive, ein Bewusstseinsstrom, kein einziger Dialog, der in direkter Rede wiedergegeben ist,

dazu der Verzicht auf den klassischen Plot – gewagt, einen Roman so anzugehen’.⁵⁰¹ One could wonder whether Ebeling’s comment about the novel’s ‘bold’ style has something to do with the gendered nature of the text, which foregrounds the experiences of women told in a non-linear, associative manner. As pointed out by René Kegelmann, the novel’s non-chronological narrative is a reflection of memory lapses experienced by the narrator since her early childhood, the first of which occurred after her relatives had to leave Yugoslavia for political reasons in 1978.⁵⁰² Arjeta never delivers a complete narrative of her life: ‘Doch es gelingt Arjeta nicht, ihr Leben in eine Chronologie zu bringen oder gar einen bruchlosen Zusammenhang der verschiedenen, teils sehr unterschiedlichen Lebensphasen herzustellen’.⁵⁰³ Karl-Markus Gauss states, somewhat irritated, that the novel is a demanding read, and its disorderly structure reflects the narrator’s unhinged mind:

Das Geschehen ist ganz aus der Perspektive dieser gescheiterten und verstörten Frau gedeutet, das verlangt konzentrierte Leser, die den Wechsel von Schauplätzen, Zeiten, Figuren, den sie oft von einem zum nächsten Absatz vornimmt, nachzuvollziehen bereit sind.⁵⁰⁴

In my view, this fragmentary narrative, marked by sudden shifts and ruptures, is one way in which the novel approaches the absences and blank spaces which are so central to traumatic memories. In her study of trauma narratives in post-Yugoslav cinema, Jelača writes that ‘trauma is psychoanalytically understood to be an experience of devastating psychological injury that leaves lasting marks on the psyche’, and ‘it is only in the fragmented memories of the traumatic event that the mind is able to work through trauma’s injurious impact or access some aspects of it’.⁵⁰⁵ What is more, trauma ‘is not an easily locatable experience in terms of its temporal and spatial occurrence, in part because its impact shatters the continuous experience of the two’, which means that ‘trauma is re-ignited and re-experienced, in various forms, through unwitting recurrences in the present, thus blurring the boundary between “then” and “now”’.⁵⁰⁶ Further, trauma is ‘an experience simultaneously impossible to know and

⁵⁰¹ Carola Ebeling, ‘Eine Reisende aus Zwang’, *Die Tageszeitung*, 5 January 2013, <http://www.taz.de/1526999/> [accessed 27 May 2018].

⁵⁰² René Kegelmann, ‘Marica Bodrožić: *kirschholz und alte gefühle*’, *Spiegelungen*, 8.2 (2013), 215–17 (p. 216).

⁵⁰³ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁴ Karl-Markus Gauss, ‘Pausen im Gedächtnis’, *sueddeutsche.de*, 4 February 2013, <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/roman-kirschholz-und-alte-gefuehle-pausen-im-gedaechtnis-1.1590750> [accessed 27 May 2018].

⁵⁰⁵ Jelača, p. 4.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 5.

not-know, impossible to put into coherent representation in a satisfying way, yet burdened with an imperative to continue to do so in order to bear historical witness'.⁵⁰⁷

Importantly, Jelača does not dismiss the possibility of narrating trauma, but rather hopes to 'incite a rethinking of what constitutes a narration to begin with', arguing that even though 'trauma may not be fully narratable, it unquestionably influences narratives that emerge around it'.⁵⁰⁸ Similarly, Husanović argues that 'literature does justice to the refusal of the trauma to be closed, because it does not gentrify the abyss of the trauma but keeps encircling it and casting a look over it in new and repoliticizing ways'.⁵⁰⁹ Bodrožić's text is such a tentative attempt to weave the narrative between the knots of traumatic memories, and to bring the memories into new constellations. Recalling the first upsetting event of her childhood, i.e. the sudden disappearance of her uncle and aunt, who had to leave Yugoslavia in 1978 and settle in Paris, the narrator is able to approach the difficult memory of her own trip to Paris, which she undertook with her father before the war. During the car ride, the father decides to tell Arjeta about the events of 1978. The father's tale is intermingled with Arjeta's memories and the description of the immediate present:

Vater erzählte mir zum ersten Mal ausführlicher von damals. Ich konnte das Schluchzen meiner verängstigten Großmutter in Istrien geradezu hören, konnte meine Tante Sofija vor mir sehen, den alten Lada und den Kirschholztisch. Kaum ein anderes Auto kam uns auf den Landstraßen entgegen. [...] Das war unser Sommer, diese Reise, quer durch Europa, unsere letzte gemeinsame Julifahrt.
(*kirschholz*, p. 16)

The conflation of different temporalities is evoked by the narrator looking ahead along the road, no obstacle in sight, gazing towards her future in Paris, and towards the past and the memory of her relatives' departure. Later in the text, a similar technique is used to mark the moment in which telephone lines are cut off in Sarajevo, making it impossible for the narrator to contact her family. This information is provided alongside the description of Arjeta's first meeting with Nadeshda, and her first date with Arik, which creates a disjunctive, interrupted narrative: 'Irgendwann brachen in der belagerten Stadt die Telefonleitungen vollständig zusammen. [...] Irgendwann fiel mir eine Frau vor dem Kino auf [...]. Das war Nadeshda' (*kirschholz*, p. 61). The

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 33.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 3.

⁵⁰⁹ Husanović, 'Reckoning with the "Bosnia Troubles": Trauma, Witnessing, and Politics', p. 19.

unspecified time frame signalled by the repeated word 'irgendwann' does away with chronology, and establishes a different narrative logic.

kirschholz's engagement with significant historical and political events is praised by Maria Mayr, who applauds the text's resistance to stability and closure. Mayr notes that Bodrožić 'experiments with narrative silences and allusions in order to leave the represented past open for present and future renegotiation and to safeguard it from becoming co-opted by identity politics'.⁵¹⁰ Mayr argues: '*Kirschholz und alte Gefühle* looks for ways in which it can let the memory of past events breathe, using conspicuous narrative ellipses and lacunae for that purpose. In fact, some of the major events of the novel's plot are not narrated'.⁵¹¹ Thus, the reader never finds out how Mischa and Silva managed to survive, and does not learn the details of how Arjeta's father died in Sarajevo. Mayr points out: 'While these silences in part mirror the rift in experience and the aporias introduced by trauma, they are also part of the novel's overall refusal to fix the past in one definitive representation'.⁵¹² What is more, the novel invites the reader to decipher its veiled allusions to such prominent figures as Arkan or Ceca, which shows that it refrains from pointing fingers at war criminals and nationalists. The reader is not presented with a ready-made narrative concerning the Holocaust, the siege of Sarajevo, or the battle of Vukovar, but instead she 'has to activate [...] her knowledge of other survivor stories and become actively involved in filling in the details'.⁵¹³

Mayr rightly argues that the text shows Berlin to be filled with life, new friendships and cross-cultural, future-oriented alliances which cannot be contained by a strictly German national context. In this way, Berlin is re-cast as 'a city of the present and future',⁵¹⁴ which 'has moved beyond a focus on questions surrounding Germany's national past and identity',⁵¹⁵ and which becomes a new home for refugees from Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe. The fact that Mischa's first visit in Berlin after the Second World War is occasioned by his wish to visit his friend Arjeta introduces 'an

⁵¹⁰ Maria Mayr, 'Berlin's Futurity in Zafer Şenocak's *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft* (1998) and Marica Bodrožić's *Kirschholz und alte Gefühle* (2012)', in *Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies* 51:4 (2015), 357–77 (p. 358).

⁵¹¹ Ibid., p. 369.

⁵¹² Ibid., p. 370.

⁵¹³ Ibid.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid., p. 371.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid., p. 374.

element of futurity to Berlin-related memories of pasts that are marked by genocide'.⁵¹⁶

While I am largely sympathetic to Mayr's points outlined above, I think one has to be careful to distinguish between 'a refusal to fix the past in one definitive representation'⁵¹⁷ and leaving the past 'open for further interpretation in conversation with both the present and the future'.⁵¹⁸ While certain historical events, such as the Holocaust, or even the siege of Sarajevo, are openly commemorated through rituals and monuments (and sometimes instrumentalized by various interest groups willing to impose their version of history), things are quite different when it comes to acts of sexual violence committed during the Yugoslav wars. Even though the memory of these events can also be co-opted by nationalist rhetoric, the experiences of individual women are often silenced and erased. These stories need to be told and documented in the first place for any sort of justice or recuperation to take place. The word 'interpretation' is thus highly ambiguous in this context, since it can also refer to an obfuscation of history.

Textual gaps, memory gaps, failure to remember

A case in point is the reception of *kirschholz* itself, which has been characterized by a tendency to gloss over the fact that the novel's narrator was raped after her date with Arik. Carola Ebeling, in her review for *die tageszeitung*, refers to 'die schwierige Liebe zu Arik'.⁵¹⁹ In turn, René Kegelmann talks about Arjeta's memory of 'intensiv erlebte gemeinsame Zeit mit [...] Arik in Paris'.⁵²⁰ The critic talks about Arjeta's guilt after having given her child up for adoption but does not refer to Arik's abusive treatment of his partner. Instead, Kegelmann makes clear that Arjeta decided to abandon Arik because he refused to commit to her and her child. The narrator's experience of being violated is ignored and reintegrated into a narrative of a failed romantic relationship, which fails to live up to the cliché of a nuclear family. The fact that Arjeta's refusal to become a mother can be interpreted as liberating – given her own traumatic experiences in her childhood and her abusive relationship – is ignored by the commentators. So is the novel's critique of the family structure itself. Maria

⁵¹⁶ Ibid., p. 373.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid., p. 370.

⁵¹⁸ Ibid., p. 371.

⁵¹⁹ Ebeling.

⁵²⁰ Kegelmann, p. 216.

Mayr does call Arjeta's relationship with Arik 'abusive', yet she then euphemistically speaks of 'Arjeta's strained romantic relationship with the emotionally disturbed French war photographer'.⁵²¹ The word rape is not mentioned in Mayr's article, which constitutes an act of erasure in itself. This means that the critic ignores the potential links between Arjeta and Silva, and the fact that Arjeta's own story is full of gaps and ellipses. As I argue below, Silva's story is linked through textual echoes to Arjeta's experience of sexual abuse. The omission noticed in the reception of the novel is a starting point for my discussion of the text's engagement with rape.

Arjeta's engagement with Silva's story could be understood as an act of commemoration which opposes forgetting and erasure. In fact, the novel shows that it is natural for human beings to disengage from the suffering of others, and it is only when one is directly affected by painful events that one starts to reflect on the interconnectedness of suffering. Referring to the Holocaust memorial on Wittenbergplatz in Berlin, the narrator points out:

Am Wittenbergplatz umgibt mich ein hektisches und lustvolles Hantieren mit Einkaufstüten. [...] Am Platz sind Tafeln aufgestellt, die an die Lager und die Zeit der Barbarei erinnern. Die Lagernamen [...] sind polnische Namen, greifbare Wirklichkeit, keinem Märchen entsprungen, vor meinen Augen flimmern die Buchstaben auf, mahnen das Gedächtnis der Passanten an, die allesamt mit etwas anderem als der reinen Betrachtung beschäftigt sind. (*kirschholz*, p. 190)

The Holocaust memorial on Wittenbergplatz is located opposite the *Kaufhaus des Westens*, and consists of inconspicuous plaques bearing the names of concentration camps. This reference recalls Dubravka Ugrešić's 1997 novel *Muzej bezuvjetne predaje*, which is set in Berlin and is written from the perspective of a Croatian exilic writer bearing huge resemblance to Ugrešić herself. In the novel, Ugrešić states that Berlin is a city where different layers of history and memory are arranged on top of each other, the dead co-exist with the living, the traces of past atrocities and dictatorships are covered up with a thin layer of asphalt, and where a passer-by can stumble upon 'yellow stars, black swastikas, red hammers and sickles'.⁵²² Elsewhere, Ugrešić writes:

Berlin ist wie ein Schwamm mit bitterem Wahnsinn getränkt, sage ich. [...] Der Wahnsinn läßt sich aber schwer verbergen, wie Feuchtigkeit. Er schlägt immer irgendwo durch. [...] Hinter der Glaskuppel im

⁵²¹ Mayr, p. 367.

⁵²² Dubravka Ugrešić, *Das Museum der bedingungslosen Kapitulation*, trans. by Barbara Antkowiak (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2000), p. 207 (my translation from the German).

obersten Stock des KaDeWe, wo man bei Champagner und Krebscocktail die Tafel mit den Namen der deutschen Konzentrationslager sehen kann, die als Mahnmal am Wittenbergplatz steht. Überall feuchte Flecken. (p. 216)

A similar image of the layering of history comes up in the novel by Bodrožić, who thinks about her friend Mischa Weisband and his biography marked by the Holocaust:

der Gedanke, dass unter der äußeren Zeit, in der wir alle leben, eine andere Zeit wie eine unsichtbare Schnur verläuft und dass dort alles, was Mischa erlebt hat, immer noch da ist, als Schattenhälfte einer Wahrheit über uns Menschen, die niemand mehr sieht, obwohl jeder vorgibt, sich zu erinnern und etwas dazu sagen zu können. (*kirschholz*, pp. 135-136)

It is, perhaps, the task of the writer to insist on the uniqueness of personal stories of victims and survivors, even if the tendency to forget the past and move on is universal. Just as the passers-by ignore the demand to remember posed by the names written on the plaques on Wittenbergplatz, so did the Sarajevans quickly forget the events in Vukovar in November 1991. The memory of these events only became relevant again when their city became affected by military aggression in the spring of 1992, as becomes clear in the description of the beginning of the siege. Arjeta recalls that upon hearing the first gun shots, most inhabitants of the city were incredulous:

Keiner von uns glaubte an echte Schüsse. Es schien, als hätten wir den Zehn-Tage-Krieg in Slowenien aus dem vergangenen Jahr auf den Mars verlegt und die Vorkommnisse an der Donau und in Vukovar, die totale Zerstörung dieser Stadt, das Massaker im Lebensmittelkombinat, das noch im November für Erschütterung und Trauer gesorgt hatte, einfach jenseits unseres Planeten und in eine andere Galaxie verortet. (*kirschholz*, pp. 19-20)

Arjeta's personal memory of the events in Vukovar is forever altered by her encounter with Silva, whose story is retold by the narrator. Silva survived the battle of Vukovar, which had been besieged by Serb forces for 87 days before it fell in November 1991. After the fall of the city, around 260 people were killed at the Ovčara pig farm. Silva witnessed the disposal of male bodies after the massacre. The bodies were thrown into the Danube, and, as the text makes clear, this massacre was not the first one to have taken place on the bank of this particular river: 'Der Fluss war voller Leichen. Ein Grenzfluss, an dem sich die Vorkommnisse von früher wiederholten' (*kirschholz*, p. 88). Similar incidents took place in January 1942, when, as recalled by the writer

Danilo Kiš, Hungarian fascists executed Jews and Serbs in Vojvodina, throwing the corpses under the ice.⁵²³

During the massacre, Silva was hiding in the bushes but was betrayed by a dry twig which cracked when she moved. At this point, she was discovered by the leader of the Serb forces, called Bomba in the narrative. This character is based on the historical figure of Željko Ražnatović, also known as Arkan. During the 1970s and 1980s, Arkan was involved in bank heists and robberies in Western Europe, for which he was wanted by Interpol. During the wars in Yugoslavia, with the support of Serbian state security, he set up the Serbian Volunteer Guard, also called ‘Tigers’, a paramilitary unit composed of football fans, former criminals and volunteers who were active in the war in Croatia and Bosnia. Arkan’s paramilitaries and the leader himself committed such crimes as lootings, rape, torture, and murder. During the siege of Vukovar, the Tigers were deployed to support the Yugoslav People’s Army. In 1995, Arkan married Ceca, a Serbian turbo-folk singer. He was murdered in the lobby of a Belgrade hotel in 2000 and never brought to justice.⁵²⁴

Arkan was one of the most feared military leaders during the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and so it is striking that in the novel by Bodrožić, he lets Silva go. As noted by Arjeta, Silva ‘erzählte mir nicht, warum, sagte nicht, warum sie am Leben geblieben war und alle anderen getötet wurden. Aber Bomba tat ihr nichts’ (*kirschholz*, p. 86). Arjeta admits: ‘Sie sagte, sie erinnere sich an alles, es klang wie eine Warnung, keine weiteren Fragen zu stellen. Das tat ich auch nicht, ich hörte ihr nur zu, ohne die Lücken, die es in ihrer Geschichte gab, zum Thema zu machen’ (p. 78). However, by drawing our attention to the gap, the narrator does precisely the opposite, which shows that such omissions remain a very important part of the novel.

Silva’s elliptical story is refracted through the episode in which Arjeta is violated by Arik. The alliteration linking Arkan, Arjeta, and Arik cannot be coincidental, and it seems that the reader of the novel is asked not only to discover Bomba’s real identity, but also to spot the connection between these figures. While the text does not make clear whether Silva was a victim of sexual violence, it is

⁵²³ ‘A Conversation with Danilo Kiš by Brendan Lemon’, <http://www.dalkeyarchive.com/a-conversation-with-danilo-kis-by-brendan-lemon/> [accessed 30 May 2018].

⁵²⁴ Denis Dzidic, Marija Ristic, Milka Domanovic, Petrit Collaku and Sven Milekic, ‘Arkan’s Paramilitaries: Tigers Who Escaped Justice’, *Balkan Insight* <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/arkan-s-paramilitaries-tigers-who-escaped-justice> [accessed 30 May 2018].

striking that the stories of Silva and Arjeta are linked through a number of linguistic echoes. Silva's encounter with Bomba, and Arjeta's encounter with Arik both take place on a river bank. When recalling Silva's story, Arjeta talks about the waters of Danube: 'Zuerst das Schimmern des Wassers. Dann der vereiste Fluss in jenem eisigen Dezember' (*kirschholz*, p. 86). This is reminiscent of a scene on the Pont Mirabeau: 'Die Seine schimmerte eisig zu uns herauf' (p. 66). Both Arjeta and Silva are at the mercy of a man in a position to hurt them. Bomba's appearance conveys a sense of danger: 'Sie sah seine weißen Zähne. Und riesige Augen, die sie inspizierten. Er lächelte sie an. [...] Sie folgte ihm so, wie die Männer ihm gerade noch gehorcht hatten. Hast du dich verlaufen, Kleine, fragte er sie' (p. 89). The same notion of obedience and passivity is present in Arjeta's reaction to Arik's possessive and dominating behaviour: 'es war, als hätte ein alt gewordener Gott meinen Körper erwählt, sich Arik zu ergeben. [...] ich [habe] versucht [...], Ariks Augen genauer zu sehen. [...] seine Iris sah ich, sie hatte etwas mich Prüfendes' (pp. 65-66). The sense of violation is already suggested through Arik's searching gaze and by the fact that Arjeta follows him blindly, putting herself in danger, which is similar to what happened to Silva.

Silva's experience forms a parallel to Arjeta's narrative, which points to a metonymical relationship existing between various female characters in the text. The implicit connection between Arjeta and Silva is confirmed by Bodrožić herself, who draws attention to the key role played by gendered violence in Arjeta's life and refers to Silva as Arjeta's alter ego. The writer also makes clear that Arjeta does not give us any details concerning her time in besieged Sarajevo:

Bei Arjeta steht ja die Frage im Raum, was sie in der belagerten Stadt eigentlich erlebt hat. Sie erzählt das nie zu Ende oder besser gesagt, fängt erst gar nicht damit an. [...] Statt selbst zu berichten, lässt sie uns durch Silva, ihr Alter Ego, näher an sich heran. Wir erfahren, dass Silva die Zerstörung ihrer Stadt zwar überlebt hat, aber ganz offensichtlich einem großen Verbrechen als Zeugin beigewohnt hat. Ein Freischärler lässt sie laufen – und wir erfahren nicht, wie ihr das gelingt, denn er lässt einfach alle töten und in die Donau werfen. Was aber hat sie tun müssen, um zu überleben? Es ist Gewalt im Spiel, die sich auch in der Szene auf der Brücke wiederholt.⁵²⁵

⁵²⁵ Simone Finkenwirth, 'Marica Bodrožić über Erinnerungen', *Klappentexterin*, <http://klappentexterin.wordpress.com/2012/10/04/marica-bodrozic-uber-erinnerungen/> [accessed 30 May 2018].

This fragmentary and disjointed narrative which, nevertheless, makes it possible for certain traumatic stories to shine through thanks to an artistic strategy of doubling and mirroring, is reminiscent of the way in which the trauma of rape is treated in Jasmila Žbanić's film *Grbavica*. In the film, the story of the main protagonist is told indirectly, present only insofar as it is linked to other women's experiences. *Grbavica* refrains from showing any scenes of sexual violence, drawing attention to those aspects of Esma's story which remain unspoken/unshown. The viewer never sees flashbacks showing Esma's past but rather witnesses events in the present which cause her traumatic memory to re-surface. Drawing attention to artistic strategies employed in the film, Jelača states that *Grbavica* looks at 'the difficulties of going back to life's daily routines with a pretense of normalcy, when this very normalcy is made impossible by the recurring traumatic memories and aftereffects of the conflict'.⁵²⁶ Despite its mostly linear storyline, the narrative of *Grbavica* is 'occasionally, yet very importantly, punctured by significant, disorientating breaks in the narrative flow' which 'represent [...] a rupture in the present, a puncture which does not completely break the continuity of time so much as it disrupts it by inserting a parallel temporality that introduces the past back into the present'.⁵²⁷ This happens in many scenes, e.g. when Esma, working her night shift in the club, observes how men treat Jabolka, a Ukrainian prostitute also employed at the club. The scenes include the war profiteer Puška putting out a cigarette on Jabolka's breast, and, on a different night, a man dressed in a uniform pouring beer over Jabolka's chest, grabbing her and licking her breasts. Both episodes force Esma to escape the dance floor and hide in the changing room (Fig. 3).

⁵²⁶ Jelača, p. 81.

⁵²⁷ Ibid., pp. 81-82.



Fig. 4.3

In this way, Jabolka's current victimization becomes a proxy for Esma's previous experiences, which shows that the power relations between men and women remain unchanged: women are still subordinated to men who hold economic and social power. The injuries suffered by Esma in the past are re-enacted on another woman's body by men who remain in power. A similar critique of the patriarchal objectification of women is raised in the novel by Bodrožić, which establishes links between different forms of gendered oppression epitomized by such characters as Bomba-Arkan and Arik. Even though they represent different sides in the conflict, with Bomba being responsible for war crimes and Arik acting as a war photographer who wants to document the plight of the victims, they both end up using their privileged position to violate the text's female characters.

The works by Žbanić and Bodrožić signal to the viewer/reader that certain aspects of past traumas can only be made partially available. In *kirschholz*, the plot is narrated around the trauma suffered by Arjeta and her friend Silva, but the parallels and linguistic echoes linking their stories signal a repeated occurrence of trauma of sexual violence. In fact, gaps and omissions also exist on the stylistic and linguistic level of the novel. Already on the first page of the novel, the narrator speaks of ‘Lücken in meiner Erinnerung’ and ‘die kleinen Risse in meinem Bewusstsein’ (*kirschholz*, p. 7). These gaps in memory remain beyond language. The narrator is struggling to find the words which could render her experience legible. She uses loan words (*Pétit mal*), medical vocabulary (Anfälle), phrases such as ‘Pausen in meinem Gedächtnis’, ‘das kleine Übel’, ‘Makel’, ‘Absenzen’ (p. 7) or even ‘Es’ (p. 8).

The fact that traumatic experiences are often marked by textual gaps and ellipses is further noted by the author in an interview with Simone Finkenwirth. Bodrožić refers to Heinrich von Kleist’s *Die Marquise von O.* (1810) and the Marquise’s unawareness of what happened to her. Bodrožić argues:

Arik überwältigt Arjeta auf der Brücke und später weiß sie nichts davon, genauso ist es Kleist’s *Marquise von O.* ergangen. [...] Das Problem von Arjeta ist das Problem vieler Frauen: sie traut ihrer eigenen Wahrnehmung nicht. Warum? Sie kann sich nicht erinnern an das, was ihr vorher geschehen ist. Sie spricht von Lücken in ihrer Erinnerung, davon, dass fremde Vögel in ihrer Stirn picken, sich ihr aber nicht mitteilen.⁵²⁸

The protagonist of *Die Marquise von O.* falls victim to an act of sexual violence in wartime, after the citadel in which she lives with her family has been stormed by Russian troops. Significantly, the rape is not described explicitly but only signalled through a dash. Kleist’s text calls attention to the importance and ambiguity of a linguistic and narrative gap, forcing the reader to fill in the empty space signalled through mere punctuation. An important parallel to be drawn between the texts by Kleist and Bodrožić is the fact that both works turn an ellipsis (or ellipses) into the driving force behind a narrative. In both texts, dramatic events are not described explicitly and textual hints are meant to guide the reader in piecing the story together. What is more, these ellipses make it possible for the texts to subvert the clichéd and discriminatory representations of victims of sexual violence.

⁵²⁸ ‘Marica Bodrožić über Erinnerungen’.

Looking at the description of the rape scene in the novel by Bodrožić, the reader realizes that the event is marked by a gap and a temporal shift in the prose:

Wir gingen Richtung Brücke [...]. Der Schwindel hielt an. Das Klopfen in meiner Stirn kündigte wieder die Absenzen an. [...] Und dann nahm ich nur noch alles verschwommen wahr, wie unter Wasser in einem Schwimmbecken [...]. Er küsste mich plötzlich mit einer Wildheit, die mir Angst machte, drängte mich an einen Pfeiler, und noch bevor ich richtig begreifen konnte, was genau vor sich ging, hatte Arik mir die Strumpfhosen und den Slip heruntergezogen, und im Stehen versuchte er, in mich einzudringen. Ein Bus und mehrere Autos fuhren vorbei, einige hupten. Erst ein paar Tage danach begriff ich plötzlich, was geschehen war. Für mich war in der Situation selbst alles ein Rätsel gewesen, ein undefinierbares und hektisches Hantieren mit Händen und Kleidern. Und dann fiel mir noch ein, dass Arik mir Komplimente [...] gemacht hatte (...). Der vom Fluss kommende kalte Wind hatte mich schließlich aus meiner Trance gerissen. Ich versuchte, Arik von mir zu schieben. Er ließ es nicht zu, hielt mich an den Handgelenken und am Nacken fest. Unbeirrt führte er seine wuchtigen Bewegungen aus. Dann küsste er mich, küsste meinen Mund, meine Nase, meine Ohren. (*kirschholz*, pp. 65-66)

At first, the explicit description of the rape stops short before the penetration, leaving it open whether Arik manages to enter his victim. The penetration itself is marked by an ellipsis, and a description of cars going past and honking in approval. This is followed by a temporal lapse of a few days, marked by the past perfect tense. The event is no longer experienced in the here and now but rather filtered through the layer of recollection, making it seem more removed in time ('Und dann fiel mir noch ein, dass Arik mir Komplimente [...] gemacht *hatte*', my emphasis). The moment in which Arjeta regains control over her body and attempts to defend herself is marked by another tense change, with the rest of the event narrated in the imperfect tense.

The gap associated with rape is then reflected in the language used by Arjeta to talk about the event, since she refuses to explicitly state that she was sexually violated. Instead, she speaks of 'die Szene auf der Brücke' (*kirschholz*, p. 67), 'Vorfall auf der Brücke' (p. 71), 'das Missverständnis' (p. 68). Eventually, the rape itself is replaced by the site where it happened: 'die Brücke' (p. 72), a word which is linked to *Lücke* through assonance and rhyme. Arjeta's inability to say/write the word 'rape' is mirrored by her inability to tell her friends what happened to her:

Ich glaube, damals entwickelte ich mein ganz eigenes System der Selbsttäuschung [...] – *wenn* ich es nicht erzähle, dann ist es nicht geschehen [...], und als ich verstand, dass ich mich hätte wehren können und auch in meiner neuen Sprache, in jeder Sprache dieser

Welt eine Stimme hatte, war die Geschichte mit Arik vorbei.
(*kirschholz*, p. 75)

In the quotation, it becomes clear that the articulation of trauma is very closely related to the person's agency. To 'have a voice' means to call attention to one's own narrative and to be able to defend oneself. Arjeta is afraid of using her own voice to talk about her experience: 'Doch ich brachte kein Wort heraus, weil ich mit einem Mal Angst hatte, es laut zu sagen, und dabei meine eigene Stimme zu hören. Wie würde das Ganze klingen?' (*kirschholz*, p. 72). Again, the rape is referred to as *es*. Similarly, Arjeta does not tell her friend Nadeshda about the fact that she had to go to the hospital because of the life-threatening ectopic pregnancy ('Ich habe Nadeshda damals nichts von der Sache im Krankenhaus erzählt', p. 96). The reader is also not given any information about what exactly happened. Instead of confronting Arik, Arjeta blames herself, and doubts her ability to assess what really happened to her:

Hatte ich mir im betrunkenen Zustand alles nur eingebildet? Ich hätte mich wehren können – und ich fragte mich, ob es nur der Alkohol oder eine alte Angst war, die mich davon abgehalten hatten. Merkwürdigerweise fiel mir in diesem Moment das Wort Wiederholung ein, doch fand ich nicht heraus, warum, und ich begann, mich für den Vorfall auf der Brücke zu schämen. (*kirschholz*, p. 67)

The fact that the passage refers to an old fear and repetition could be read as a reference to another unspoken trauma, maybe stemming from Arjeta's childhood. The reader of the novel needs to be attuned to such subtle hints and to the fact that Arjeta has forgotten many aspects of her past.

Bodrožić's text suggests that the subject does not have access to all aspects of their past. This is reflected in the novel's non-linear and fragmentary narrative structure mixing past and present events. The plot is marked by 'significant, disorientating breaks in the narrative flow' which 'represent [...] a rupture in the present, a puncture which does not completely break the continuity of time so much as it disrupts it by inserting a parallel temporality that introduces the past back into the present'.⁵²⁹ The fact that Jelača's analysis of *Grbavica* could also refer to Bodrožić's novel highlights the similarities in how the two works approach the repressed/unspoken aspects of the protagonists' traumatic past relating to sexual violence. Both *Grbavica* and *kirschholz* suggest that traumatic memories can never

⁵²⁹ Jelača, pp. 81-82.

be fully accessed but can only flash in distorted, dislocated forms, especially if relived by other women whose violation continues in the present.

International (media) presence in Bosnia

Although Sarajevo is never explicitly named in Bodrožić's novel, there can be little doubt that the text refers to the siege of this city: '1425 Tage dauert die Belagerung, es ist die längste des 20. Jahrhunderts. Es fallen Granaten. Durchschnittlich 329 pro Tag' (*kirschholz*, p. 49). Sarajevo had been the capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the most ethnically mixed of all former Yugoslav republics. The census of 1991 showed the population to be '44 per cent Muslims, 33 per cent Serbs, 19 per cent Croats and 4 per cent others'⁵³⁰. Edgar O'Ballance argues that

Sarajevo had long been a symbol of multicultural, multiprofessional and multiethnic society [...], and in April 1992 most citizens, including many Serbs, were eagerly looking forward to the prestige [...] of living in the capital of a new, internationally recognized nation.⁵³¹

The siege of Sarajevo by Bosnian Serb forces lasted between April 1992 and February 1996. The siege was not an ordinary event: its cultural, social and political impact and the sheer length and bestiality of the siege grant it a special place in European memory. The siege was very widely covered by Western media, with reporters present in the city throughout the duration of the conflict, and international TV teams keeping the world up-to-date about the suffering of the civilian population. Sarajevo was visited by prominent activists and intellectuals, e.g. Susan Sontag, who went to Sarajevo in April 1993, encouraged by her son David Rieff. In the summer, she returned to collaborate with the director Haris Pašović and stage Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. The play, which, as Sontag argues, 'seems written for, and about, Sarajevo'⁵³² offered a parallel to the situation experienced by Sarajevans, waiting for a Western intervention which would lift the siege.

Sarajevo became a focal point for Western attention, and, as Peter Andreas puts it, the rest of the Bosnian republic remained 'a dark, unknown area, from which

⁵³⁰ Edgar O'Ballance, *Civil War in Bosnia 1992-1994*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), p. 2.

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

⁵³² Susan Sontag, 'Waiting for Godot in Sarajevo', *Performing Arts Journal*, 16 (1994), 87-106 (p. 88).

journalists were mostly barred'.⁵³³ In a paradoxical sense, Sarajevo turned into a global city *because* it was under siege. Andreas argues that Sarajevo was

certainly violent and dangerous [...], but it was also the most accessible war zone and viable working environment for international actors in Bosnia – which also helped turn Sarajevo into a global media spectacle [...]. The siege was formally internationalized through UN monitoring and aid provision, diplomatic initiatives, sanctions and embargoes, an influx of humanitarian workers, and continuous global media coverage.⁵³⁴

However, the picture of the war conveyed by journalists based in Sarajevo's Holiday Inn was far from accurate, and the high profile of Sarajevo obscured from view other sites of the conflict, such as Mostar. Andreas argues: 'Sarajevo was besieged yet accessible, and as such it profoundly shaped international engagement with (and perceptions of) the war'.⁵³⁵

War photography

Bodrožić's novel is deeply situated in the context of Western perceptions of the Bosnian war. The narrator suggests that the city became a target for Western journalists, who hoped to gain money and prestige from their reporting on the siege. She points out:

Es war nichts Neues für uns. Viele verdienten sich in der Zeit des Krieges einiges dazu, und als der Krieg irgendwann zu Ende war, fiel das Zubrot wieder weg. Aber es gab Leute, denen in der Zwischenzeit der Krieg ein neues Auto möglich gemacht hatte, eine größere Wohnung, bessere Anzüge. (*kirschholz*, pp. 76-77)

A source of particular distress for the narrator is the fact that her lover Arik takes advantage of his privileged position as a Western journalist to turn the inhabitants of Sarajevo into an object of his voyeuristic gaze. Linguistic echoes in the text even suggest that there exists a link between Arik and the Serbs besieging the city. Speaking of snipers on the hills surrounding Sarajevo, Arjeta claims: 'Snipers are the new gods. [...] They have the city in their sights' (Die Heckenschützen sind die neuen Götter. [...] Sie haben die Stadt im Visier', *kirschholz*, p. 49). A similar image occurs in her description of Arik, who, according to Arjeta, 'had her in his

⁵³³ O'Ballance, p. ix.

⁵³⁴ Peter Andreas, *Blue Helmets and Black Markets. The Business of Survival in the Siege of Sarajevo*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 2008), p. 3.

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

sights' ('mich ins Visier genommen hatte', p. 36), i.e. he observed her and took pictures of her without her knowledge, even before they met. Thus, the text shows that being looked at is a form of being violated, and that, as famously noted by Susan Sontag, photography is also 'a tool of power'.⁵³⁶ Speaking of the connection between the camera and the gun, Sontag writes:

To photograph people is to violate them, by seeing them as they never see themselves, by having knowledge of them that they can never have; it turns people into objects that can be symbolically possessed. Just as the camera is a sublimation of the gun, to photograph someone is a subliminal murder – a soft murder, appropriate to a sad, frightened time.⁵³⁷

In the novel, Arik's activity in the war zone is mapped onto his relationship with Arjeta in the supposedly peaceful Parisian setting. Arik's privileged position and his ability to visit Sarajevo stands in contrast to the fact that Arjeta has no means of visiting or contacting her relatives. What is more, after Arik has raped Arjeta, she suffers an ectopic pregnancy, which places her in lethal danger. Again, linguistic echoes signal that Arik's violence is comparable to the violence of the besiegers of Sarajevo. Arjeta says:

[ich] dachte [...], dass die Zellen das Gleiche mit meinem Körper gemacht hatten wie Arik mit meinem Kopf. Sie hatten sich auf einem Nebenweg in mir eingenistet, sie *belagerten* mich von Innen, und ich erfuhr, dass man daran sterben konnte. (*kirschholz*, pp. 74-75, my emphasis)

Thus, the objectification of the inhabitants of Sarajevo by Serbian snipers is translated in the text into the objectification of Arjeta's body by Arik. What is more, Arik wants to follow other renowned guests who visited Sarajevo during the siege. Arjeta is very sceptical about Arik's intended trip:

Er hat mir erzählt, dass er in die belagerte Stadt will. Er ist Maler. Susan Sontag und Joan Baez waren auch schon da. Sagt er. Als müsse man daraus folgern, dass nun er und jeder Vorstadtfotograf an der Reihe sei, zu den Menschen in der belagerten Stadt zu fahren. Diese Folgerichtigkeit in seinem Kopf ist das Erste, was mich innerlich attackiert. [...] Die meisten französischen Zeitungen kaufen seine Fotos. Er macht Fotos vor Ort und dann malt er sie nach, so entstehen seine Bilder. [...] Arik will ein guter Mensch sein. Wie alle gute Menschen meint er das ganz ernst. Er will von Paris aus schon etwas tun, etwas ausrichten, nützlich sein. (*kirschholz*, p. 51)

⁵³⁶ Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London: Penguin, 2008), p. 8.

⁵³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

Despite his supposedly good intentions, Arik participates in the production of a global televised spectacle about Sarajevo and makes profit off his war photographs. He also uses Sarajevo as raw material for his art and in this way appropriates the suffering of the victims. The mention of Susan Sontag at this point is hardly a coincidence, given Sontag's thoughtful and nuanced reflection on the relationship between photography, violence and power. Sontag sees a connection between photography and voyeurism and considers the ethical implications of documenting another person's pain. She writes:

To take a picture is to have an interest in things as they are, in the status quo remaining unchanged (at least for as long as it takes to get a 'good' picture), to be in complicity with whatever makes a subject interesting [...] – including, when that is the interest, another person's pain or misfortune.⁵³⁸

As Sontag makes clear, taking photographs is 'more than passive observing'.⁵³⁹ The photographer does not intervene in the events and establishes a distance between themselves and the object of the gaze, which, for technical reasons, is necessary if a photo is to be taken. This silent complicity troubles the idea that international journalists were merely neutral observers during the Bosnian War. By showing the parallels between Arik's actions in Paris and in Sarajevo, Bodrožić's text addresses the various ways in which a privileged individual might abuse his position of power.

A transnational feminist intervention

Foreign involvement and the Western gaze cast upon Bosnia is also addressed in Žbanić's *For Those Who Can Tell No Tales*. As argued by Jelača, by using 'the foreign gaze as a device for unearthing suppressed truths about war crimes, the film elides the more complicated aspects of local knowing and not knowing', instead foregrounding 'an outsider's sense of moral outrage that war crimes are not being acknowledged in a more proactive way'.⁵⁴⁰ In my view, Kym's foreign gaze is one of the most exciting aspects of the film, and her stance cannot be described just in terms of a 'moral outrage'. In fact, I believe that her positionality oscillates between ignorance, naivety, voyeurism, empathy and what might be imagined as transnational solidarity.

⁵³⁸ Ibid., p. 12.

⁵³⁹ Ibid., p. 12.

⁵⁴⁰ Jelača, p. 45.

Žbanić's film shows that bridging this experiential gap separating Kym and the locals is not easy. In a significant scene, Kym visits Edina, an academic from Višegrad, who has written scholarly articles about the crimes. At first, Edina is reluctant to speak to Kym and sees in her another Westerner eager to capitalize on the war. Significantly, Kym is physically separated from Edina by a cupboard, on whose side hangs a poster depicting Šejla Kamerić's work 'Bosnian Girl' (Fig. 4.1). The work features an image of Kamerić herself paired with graffiti found in the Dutch army barracks in Potočari near Srebrenica. The fact that the graffiti, which suggests that Bosnian women are not feminine enough, was authored by a soldier who was meant to protect the Bosnian population in the enclave of Srebrenica renders the 'joke' not just sexist and racist but also inhumane. The image is a 'striking indictment of the failures of the international community during the Srebrenica massacre'.⁵⁴¹

The shot showing Kym next to the poster (Fig. 4.2) invites the viewer to reflect on the implications of the Western intervention in the Balkans, the instrumentalization of Bosnian suffering, as well as on patriarchal violence and male disdain for (non-Western) women. However, even though an outsider and a foreigner, Kym has come to care deeply about the fate of the women whose invisible presence provoked a strong visceral reaction in her during her visit. Kym's later intervention in Višegrad is aimed at commemorating the crimes committed in Vilina Vlas and confronting the perpetrators of gendered violence.

⁵⁴¹ Seila Rizvic, 'What Does a Victim Look Like?', *Balkanist*, 7 July 2015 <http://balkanist.net/what-does-a-victim-look-like-sejla-kameric/> [accessed 19 April 2017].

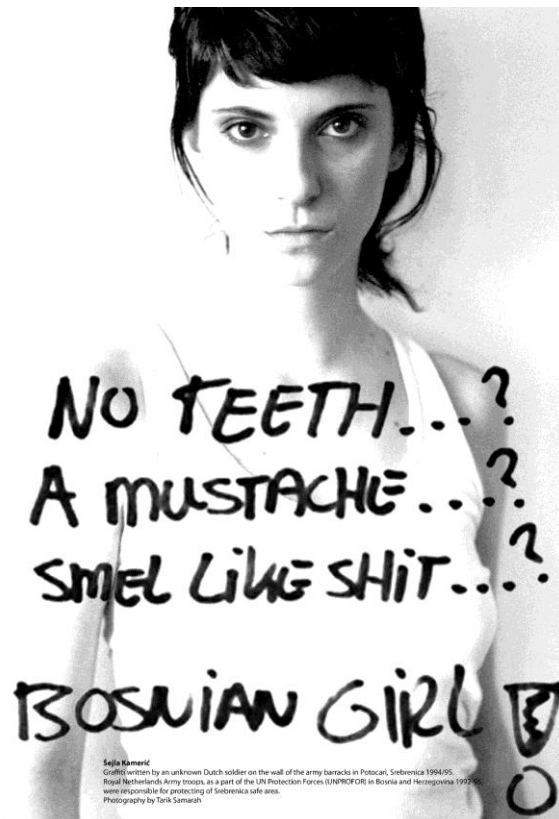


Fig. 4.1 'Bosnian Girl' by Šejla Kamerić

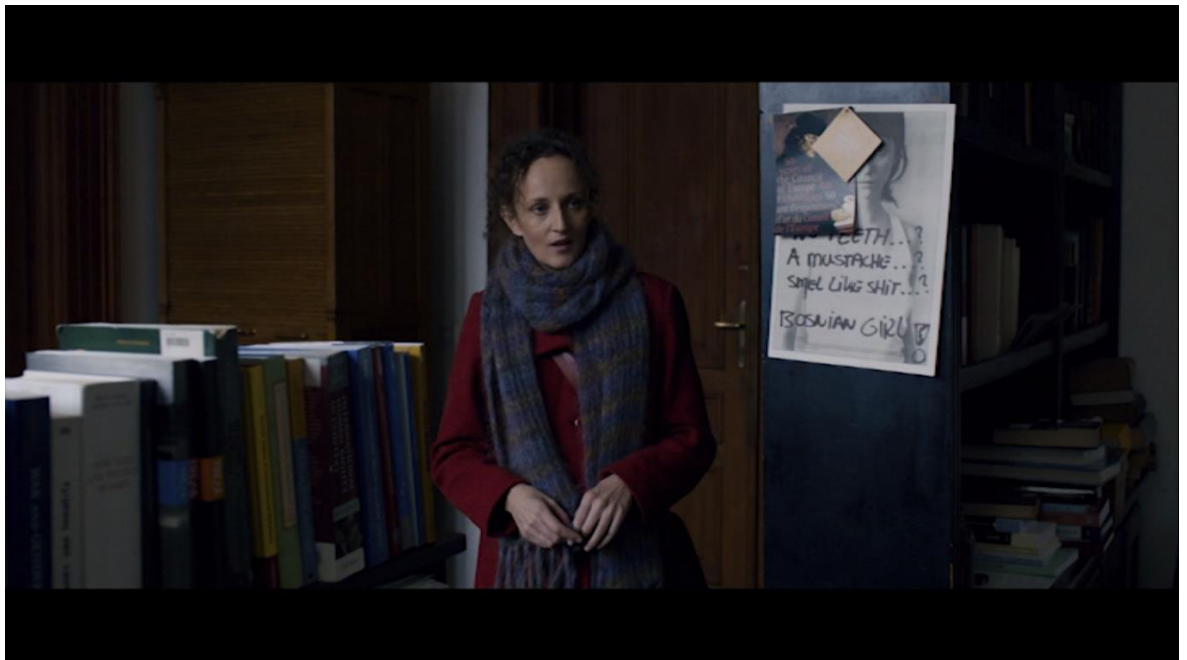


Fig. 4.2, For Those Who Can Tell No Tales [film still]

Female subjectivity and multilingualism

Bodrožić's novel and Žbanić's film both evoke transnational female solidarities which cut across continents and languages, without de-historicizing or universalizing the historical events which they document. Both works suggest that it is possible to form feminist alliances in a world no longer defined by the nation state, where one's link to their country of origin is loosened by flight and migration or where the nation state discriminates against those whose experience or subjectivity does not fit the dominant framework (victims of gendered violence, single mothers, prostitutes, migrants, refugees). In the final part of the chapter, I will examine how such elective cross-border ties relate to multilingual practices and metalinguistic reflections found in Bodrožić's prose.

Denaturalizing the mother tongue

Bodrožić's writing explores the liberating aspects of multilingualism and shows that a multilingual speaker can distance themselves from their 'mother tongue'. This can already be seen in Bodrožić's autobiographical essay *Sterne erben, Sterne färben: Meine Ankunft in Wörtern* (2007), which describes the writer's complex relationship with her first and second language. The narrator of the essay states that in German, 'die Wurzeln der Buchstaben [sind] ganz mit mir und meinem Nabel verbunden'.⁵⁴² Claiming German as her literary language makes it possible for the writer to establish a new lineage connecting the roots of German letters with her navel, in a radical rejection of the notion that it is only the first language that has an organic connection to the individual. Questioning the idea that the first language comes, as it were, from the body of the mother, Bodrožić states:

Die erste Sprache kommt nie aus dem Rund des Nabels. Aber mein Nabel ist auch nicht immer nur rund. Mein Nabel ist wie bei allen Menschen eine runde Narbe in der Bauchwand. [...] Die Berührungsstelle von *vorher* und *nachher*. Bevor der Nabel ein Nabel war, gab es das althochdeutsche Wort Nabe, ein walzenförmiges Mittelteil des Rades bezeichnete es im neunten Jahrhundert. Mein Nabel ist verwandt mit dem Kreis des Rades. (*Sterne*, p. 14)

The navel is a bodily trace of the child's origin and their former connection to the mother's body through the umbilical cord. This biological origin is juxtaposed by

⁵⁴² Marica Bodrožić, *Sterne erben, Sterne färben. Meine Ankunft in Wörtern* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2007), p. 13. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

Bodrožić with the etymological origin of the word ‘Nabel’ itself, which she links to the Old High German *naba*.⁵⁴³ This helps her establish a different kind of kinship which is based on her chosen language rather than ethnicity or place of birth. Bodrožić uses puns in order to endow words with new, unexpected meanings, and to link unrelated nouns such as ‘Nabel’ and ‘Narbe’. Rather than signifying an intimate connection to the mother, the navel is recast as a scar which is a remnant of the rupture between mother and child. In fact, the narrator’s story shows that a person’s connection to the first language is influenced by the economic and social status of their family. Playing with the term ‘Muttersprache’, the narrator speaks of mother’s language (‘Sprache der Mutter’) and wonders:

Wer aber war meine Mutter der ersten Jahre? Eine Frau, die im Ausland [...] ihre Schönheit und Kraft verlor, um mich und meine Zukunft möglich zu machen, um mich am Leben zu erhalten? Ich war also schuldig an ihren Krankheiten, an ihren nur aus Arbeit bestehenden schweren Stunden. (*Sterne*, p. 96)

Yasemin Yildiz indicates that the term mother tongue emerged in late eighteenth century in Europe, when German thinkers such as Johann Gottfried Herder, Wilhelm von Humboldt and Friedrich Schleiermacher introduced ‘the highly consequential political linkage of language and nation’.⁵⁴⁴ Schleiermacher introduced the idea of an organic relation between the speaker and their first language, which was now imagined as a ‘mother tongue’, or *Muttersprache* (p. 9). The image of a mother tongue, Yildiz shows, rests on an assumption of ‘a unique, irreplaceable, unchangeable biological origin that situates the individual automatically in a kinship network and by extension in the nation’ (p. 9). *Muttersprache* only became an emotionalized term towards the end of the eighteenth century, as part of a larger shift which ‘produced new and interrelated conceptions of family, kinship, motherhood, nation, and state’ (p. 10). Thus, it was the ‘image of the bourgeois mother that entered into the modern “mother tongue” discourse’ (p. 11). However, since both women and language were at the time subjugated to male authority, the mother tongue is in fact ‘the result of male ventriloquism’ (p. 12). This realisation of the decisive influence of patriarchal norms in the production of language goes against the widely-spread

⁵⁴³ ‘Nabe’ in ‘Das Wortauskunftssystem zur deutschen Sprache in Geschichte und Gegenwart’, <https://www.dwds.de/wb/Nabe> [accessed 19 July 2017]

⁵⁴⁴ Yildiz, *Beyond the Mother Tongue*, p. 7. Further page references are provided after quotations in the text.

conception that ‘the mother tongue emanates from the mother’s body’ (p. 12). In Bodrožić’s essay, the physical attachment to the first language, implied by the term mother tongue, stands in contrast to the actual distance between the child and the mother.

Language depropriation

A strained relationship to one’s first language is equally an important theme in *kirschholz*. A German-Jewish figure, Mischa Weisband, has distanced himself from German, which was the language of his childhood but which he then came to associate with his persecution by the Nazis. For him, the meanings evoked by German words are permeated with the historical legacy of the Second World War and the Holocaust.

In turn, Arjeta’s account of her relationship with her first language is filtered through a preoccupation with Italian. Early in the narrative, Arjeta is looking at old photographs and reminiscing about the summer holidays she spent in Istria as a child. The Istrian peninsula changed hands multiple times throughout history. Part of Austro-Hungary before the First World War, it was handed to Italy in 1918. After Italy’s capitulation in the Second World War, the region became part of Yugoslavia. Today, around 30,000 Italians still live in the region.⁵⁴⁵ Pamela Ballinger notes that currently, there exist two competing interpretations of Istria’s identity. Whereas some regard the area as either exclusively Italian or Slavic, others see it ‘as marked by cultural and linguistic hybridity. [...] many inhabitants of contemporary Istria – members of the small Italian minority, as well as Croats and Slovenes – advocate a view of Istrian identity as multiethnic, multicultural, and multilingual’.⁵⁴⁶ It becomes clear, then, that in recalling the carefree atmosphere of this border region and in reflecting on the nature of proper nouns and their translatability, the narrator is making a political statement, as shown by the following passage:

Die Ortsschilder sind in beiden Sprachen aufgestellt. Das Nachflirren der italienischen Wörter in meinem Kopf, eine besondere Sicht auf die sommerlichen Landstraßen, alles ist doppelt da, das ganze Leben ist immer mehr als ein Singular, die Sprache sagt es, auf den Ortsschildern steht es. Als Kind habe ich ein bisschen Italienisch gelernt und immer wenn ich unglücklich war, wollte ich nach Italien auswandern. Zu den Giovannis und Giovannas. Fort von den Ivans und Ivanas.
(*kirschholz*, p. 30)

⁵⁴⁵ Pamela Ballinger, ‘“Authentic Hybrids” in the Balkan Borderlands’, *Current Anthropology*, 45.1 (2004), 31–60 <https://doi.org/10.1086/379633> [permalink], p. 32.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid.

The fact that one place can have multiple names has been recorded by geographers who refer to local names as ‘endonyms’, and to names used outside of a given linguistic community as ‘exonyms’. The existence of ‘exonyms’ indicates that even proper names might have a meaning beyond their immediate referent.⁵⁴⁷ This elusive, associative semantic value is due to the material quality of each word: its sound, length and visual representation. In evoking the fact that town signs in Istria are bilingual, the narrator suggests that the area can be claimed by members of different communities and cannot be co-opted by a monolingual nation state.

The narrator’s early dream of eloping to Italy is linked to her memory of Mateo, a young boy from Istria who used work in her grandmother’s garden and was planning to study philosophy in Italy. Arjeta found him fascinating, partly because of his connection to a different country: ‘Ein wenig Italien sah ich ihm schon an, ich verlangte, dass er mir Wörter beibrachte und mit mir italienisch redete’ (*kirschholz*, pp. 31-32). After the war, Mateo turned into a ‘großer Sprachreiniger’ (p. 172) and joined an association attempting to purify Croatian from all loan words and, presumably, make it as distinct from Serbian as possible. While the text does not make this clear, Mateo’s name could point to his Italian heritage, which would make his newly found nationalism even more striking. The narrator, for whom loan words are an expression of the richness and multifacetedness of language, opposes Mateo’s agenda, wondering ‘warum er etwas besitzen möchte, das ihm gar nicht gehört und nie gehören kann’ (p. 218).

Despite Mateo’s dogmatism Arjeta holds on to the memory of the past. In this, she differs from her mother, for whom Mateo’s new nationalistic zeal is reason enough to condemn him and to erase any memory of the time spent together:

Ihr Zorn war geradezu körperlich spürbar. Als ich sie an die Sommer von früher erinnerte, wollte sie nichts davon wissen. Sie verweigerte einfach die Erinnerung an eine Zeit, in der Mateo ein ganz normaler junger Mensch gewesen war. (*kirschholz*, p. 32)

This episode brings to mind Stanišić’s novel and Aleksandar’s friendship with Francesco, reproached by his family. In *Wie der Soldat*, the Italian language is

⁵⁴⁷ Susan Arndt, Dirk Naguschewski, and Robert Stockhammer, ‘Einleitung. Die Unselbstverständlichkeit der Sprache’, in *Exophonie: Anders-Sprachigkeit (in) der Literatur*, ed. by Susan Arndt, Dirk Naguschewski and Robert Stockhammer (Berlin: Kadmos, 2007), pp. 7–27 (pp. 14–15).

associated with transgression and resistance on the part of the narrator to fit into the dominant frame of heteronormativity and in *kirschholz*, it is linked to the narrator's refusal to support the historical revisionism represented by her mother, who claims the right to determine what should be remembered and what should be forgotten.

In its preoccupation with remembering and forgetting in relation to traumatic pasts, the novel draws attention to silences as the flipside of language. Arjeta's mother refuses to pronounce the names of her sons who were killed in the siege of Sarajevo and does not address Arjeta with her first name but rather uses her last name: 'Signorina Filippo sagt sie zu mir, neutralisiert mich auf diese Weise, nimmt mir meinen Vornamen weg [...]. Liebling oder Herz, wie sie mich manchmal früher nannte, kommt ihr nicht mehr über die Lippen' (*kirschholz*, pp. 22-23). For the mother, the Italian language makes it possible to distance herself from her daughter, and to avoid loving pet names from the past.

Whereas the narrator in *Sterne* describes her longing for her mother, Arjeta's greatest wish is to escape from her family home, either to Italy, Paris, or to her grandmother's house in Istria (*kirschholz*, p. 124). The child's unhappiness is caused by her mother's obsession with taking photographs supposed to capture the girl's 'allegedly remarkable beauty'.⁵⁴⁸ In childhood, Arjeta was objectified by her mother, who used to dress her up and show her off in front of the father, who then approved of her outfits. Since Arjeta used to serve as a dressed-up object, what mattered was the surface, the clothes, and the fact that she was agreeable to the other's gaze:

Ich kam mir dabei wie immer entfremdet und verkleidet vor [...]. Mutter klopfte mir lobend auf die Schultern, so als hätte ich Anteil an dieser großen Sache, die mein Aussehen war. Ohne Unterlass ging es um meine Schönheit, nie um meine Sehnsucht, nie darum, ob mir etwas weh tat. (*kirschholz*, pp. 123-124)

Arjeta recalls the omnipresence of the camera throughout her childhood and admits that she felt observed and oppressed: 'Selbst wenn nicht fotografiert wurde, fühlte ich mich von diesem großen Kameraauge verfolgt, das in meiner Vorstellung wie eine Waffe auf mich gerichtet war' (*kirschholz*, p. 125). Arjeta admits that her linguistic skills failed her when she tried to voice her dissent: 'Und wenn ich nur den Versuch unternahm zu protestieren, vergaß ich die Endungen der Verben und manchmal die

⁵⁴⁸ Mayr, p. 367.

Verben selbst' (p. 121). This rendered the narrator passive and a mere object of the other's activity.

kirschholz is a novel concerned with linguistic failure and speechlessness as much as with articulation and voicing. Significantly, it is during one of her conversations with her friend and flatmate Hiromi that Arjeta can recall the painful episodes from her childhood, which she had previously repressed. Thanks to Hiromi, who studies philosophy and fashion design, Arjeta develops a new attitude to textiles and clothes, as something that fosters creativity, as opposed to a weapon used against her by her mother. The skills taught by Hiromi make it possible for Arjeta to later work as a costume designer in Berlin, and to sew dresses for her friend Nadeshda. Hiromi, an ardent environmentalist and a bisexual, is an anchor in Arjeta's turbulent life, someone who gives her a sense of stability and peace: 'Hiromi ist da. Hiromi ist mein Frieden. [...] Sie ist ruhig und freundlich und wirkt am Abend mit ihrem schmalen Körper wie Baldrian auf mich' (*kirschholz*, p. 57). Arjeta is able to find a new sense of belonging and intimacy with someone coming from a completely different country: 'Hiromi und ich. [...] Jede von uns ist aus einem anderen Grund hier. Wir leben. Zusammen' (pp. 57-58). This female friendship is key to Arjeta's emotional well-being during her studies in Paris. This connection between two female figures brings to mind Arjeta's statement quoted above, which refers to bilingual town signs in Istria, where Arjeta states: 'alles ist doppelt da, das ganze Leben ist immer mehr als ein Singular, die Sprache sagt es, auf den Ortsschildern steht es' (p. 30). This doubling, made possible by the co-existence of two languages next to each other, is very important in the novel, which establishes parallels between diverse figures across nations and languages.

While the mother tongue is traditionally associated with ethnic, and, by extension, cultural belonging and origin, multilingual prose texts by Bodrožić show that no identity can be conceptualized as forever grounded in a single location, culture, or language. War, migration, displacement and the passage of time affect the subject's affective and identitarian coordinates. Bodrožić's works show that it is possible to form emotional bonds to new locations and languages, even if they are far removed from one's biological and ethnic ties.

Conclusion: new redemptive communities

Bodrožić's novel shows that the fact that one's own traumatic past can be linked to someone else's experience can provide a source of hope and solidarity. In the text, Arjeta cannot speak about her own injury but instead, in her conversations with Mischa, she can articulate the pain and fear felt by Silva:

Wir sprachen über Silva, und ich erzählte ihm von den Erlebnissen in den Donau-Auen, von jenem Augenblick des angehaltenen Atems, den sie nie vergessen konnte. Ich weiß, wie es ist, wenn einem der Atem stockt. [...] Mischa sagte, dass wir viel über einen Menschen erfahren können, wenn wir wahrnehmen, auf welche Weise er atmet. Er war überzeugt davon, dass jeder Mensch, den wir treffen, auf eine geheimnisvolle Art ein innerer Teil von uns selbst ist. Mit dem Atem sind wir verbunden, von ihm getragen, weil es nur eine Luft gibt, nur die eine Quelle, aus der wir versorgt werden. [...] Wer bin ich ohne die anderen? Niemand. Es gibt mich nur so, in einem Zusammenhang mit Menschen, Orten und Landschaften. (*kirschholz*, pp. 100-101)

The interconnectedness and relationality evoked in the passage recall the image quoted above, whereby all human beings are drops of water, together forming one sea. The idea that we are connected to each person we meet also points to the fact that these links do not have to be biological or ethnic. The relational self as evoked by Bodrožić is very different from the dominant, universal subject which can exist in separation from the world.

Even though Arjeta was not always honest with Nadeshda while in Paris, their friendship survived their tumultuous relationship with Arik. Nadeshda and Arjeta are linked through the fact that they were both exploited by Arik, who treated them like 'willige Marionetten' (*kirschholz*, p. 35). The friendship between the two women who form a new family in Berlin points to alternative, non-heteronormative forms of bonding which make it possible for both women to recover from their past traumas.

Arjeta's connection to her friends Silva, Mischa Weisband, Hiromi, Nadeshda, and her son Ezra can be contrasted with the narrator's relationship with her mother and with Arik. The novel shows that a human being cannot exist without a family but that this family does not have to be based on biological ties.

Chapter 5: Linguistic transgressions and displacement in the work of Alma Hadžibeganović

Introduction

In Chapter 4, I looked at artistic responses to women's experiences during the Yugoslav wars. I argued that Bodrožić's *kirschholz und alte gefühle* could be read as a counter-monument which commemorates (female) victims of rape and genocide. Here, I expand my discussion of feminist literary engagements with the Yugoslav wars by looking at the relatively unknown Austrian writer Alma Hadžibeganović. Born in 1972 in Brčko in Bosnia and Hercegovina, Hadžibeganović studied German in Sarajevo. She fled from Bosnia in 1992 and came with her parents to Vienna, where she studied art history and struggled to find legal employment. In 1997, she won first prize in the now established literary competition 'Schreiben zwischen den Kulturen', launched by the Vienna-based Amerlinghaus, a cultural centre led by the Austrian writer Christa Stippinger. Since 1988, the centre had served as a forum for artists with a history of migration or with a minority background and published literary texts in its own publishing house, edition exil.⁵⁴⁹ The competition 'Schreiben zwischen den Kulturen' has been a springboard for such distinguished Austrian authors as Dimitré Dinev, Anna Kim and Julia Raby nowich.

Hadžibeganović's first story was published by edition exil in an anthology edited by Stippinger. Hadžibeganović's later works include poetry, prose and drama, including a play about prostitution entitled *Das Stück* (2007). Since 2016, she has been involved in Tina Leisch's project 'Lustwerkstatt', which is conceptualized as a counter-history and a growing archive documenting the past and present of female sex workers in Vienna. The initiative debunks various myths associated with prostitution and examines the changing attitudes to sex workers throughout centuries.⁵⁵⁰ For personal and financial reasons, Hadžibeganović has not written any literary texts since 2007.

⁵⁴⁹ Angelika Friedl, 'Der Literaturpreis "Schreiben zwischen den Kulturen". Ein Literaturprojekt zur Förderung des Dialogs zwischen und über Kulturen' (unpublished master's thesis, University of Vienna, 2003), p. 11.

⁵⁵⁰ Valentine Auer, 'Lustwerkstatt', *Wiener Zeitung Online*, 1 June 2016, https://www.wienerzeitung.at/nachrichten/wien/stadtleben/822263_Lustwerkstatt.html [accessed 10 May 2018].

Previously, I argued that Bodrožić's work points to the interrelatedness of different historical events and establishes transnational bonds between characters. Such notions of solidarity and shared humanity are revealed as somewhat utopian in the texts by Hadžibeganović. Her works offer a grim, unembellished vision of a world marked by involuntary migration, uprooting and exclusion, and focus on antagonisms between ethnicities, classes, generations, as well as mainstream society and its minorities. These clashes are conveyed in a poetic language marked by alliterations, repetitions, onomatopoeias, stark contrasts and incongruities. Hadžibeganović's writing is filled with striking metaphors, shocking associations, linguistic errors and neologisms which unsettle usual meanings and make various interpretations of the text possible. The works deploy a range of intertextual references and direct quotations, and switch between technical, scholarly, and colloquial vocabulary. Whereas in Bodrožić's novel, the hidden references to historical figures and cultural artefacts are possible to decipher, the allusions in Hadžibeganović's text are ambiguous, since they may refer to fictional events and persons, and non-existent geographical locations. These strategies bring about an effect of radical displacement. Hadžibeganović's texts introduce new forms of thinking which explode known frames of reference, clashing with established truths and hegemonic power relations. Her works leave the reader suspended in an unknown literary universe, filled with mysterious intertexts and allusions which are difficult to gloss using one's standard scholarly repertoire. This radical unsettling of known frames of reference requires a dynamic, de-centred reading practice, which I attempt in this chapter.

The texts by Alma Hadžibeganović that I will discuss focus on women who find themselves in challenging life situations, be it as civilians caught up in a war zone or refugees living in Vienna. Hadžibeganović's first short story *zz00m: 24 Std. mix 1. of me oder Penthesilea in Sarajevo* is set in 1992 and uses linguistic experimentation to portray two female protagonists living in Sarajevo at the beginning of the siege. The immediate experiences and desires of the figures are filtered through their emotional investment in films, music and literature, most notably Paul Verhoeven's *neo noir* film *Basic Instinct* (1992), and Heinrich von Kleist's drama *Penthesilea* (1808), important works which both address the role of women in a patriarchal society. As sexual 'predators' who kill their lovers, both Catherine Tramell (Sharon Stone's character in *Basic Instinct*) and Kleist's Penthesilea function as the flipside of

the cultural model of a passive, innocent woman idealized by nationalist ideology.⁵⁵¹ Kleist's *Penthesilea* resonated with many feminists, amongst whom Laura Mulvey, who together with Peter Wollen made a film based on the play in 1974.⁵⁵² As put by Mulvey, the myth of the Amazons is of interest to women today, since it is 'one of the few myths of strong women that actually exist'.⁵⁵³

Stevie Simkin notes that 'the familiar binary of the whore and the virgin [...] has been understood for many years as pivotal in conceptualising female identity in Western culture'.⁵⁵⁴ Dangerous and violent women embody not just male phantasies but also anxieties related to female power, and as such can potentially pose 'a threat to the stability of the patriarchy'.⁵⁵⁵ The beautiful yet lethal woman is an anomaly which conjures fears of 'female promiscuity', 'hysteria' 'unbridled sexuality', and 'insanity'.⁵⁵⁶ As I discuss below by referring to feminist film theory and secondary texts responding to Verhoeven and Kleist, both the film and the play are ambivalent in their portrayal of gender relations and could be read as either reactionary or subversive. This ambiguity is played out in Hadžibeganović's text, which refuses to confine its female narrator to a straightforward identity position, with her desires and motivations difficult to pin down.

Two other texts which receive attention here appeared in 2000 in a collection entitled *ilda zuferka rettet die kunst*, published by edition exil in the series 'kleine reihe lesen'. The collection contains various genres, such as prose, drama, and poetry. The author claims that the texts in the volume were drafts and regrets that the editor decided to publish them in their current form.⁵⁵⁷ While I return to the question of the volume's premature nature later, I want to stress that in my opinion, the texts contained within it have a high literary value and are worthy of scholarly attention. The eponymous work in the collection is a dystopian text set in post-Dayton Bosnia. Ilda Zuferka is an art historian whose aim is to gather international support for the

⁵⁵¹ Cf. Jasmina Lukić, 'Poetics, Politics and Gender', in *Women and Citizenship in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. by Jasmina Lukić, Joanna Regulska, and Darja Zaviršek (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 225–43.

⁵⁵² *Penthesilea, Queen of Amazons*, dir. by Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen (The Other Cinema, 1977).

⁵⁵³ Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen interviewed by Claire Johnston and Paul Willemen, 'Penthesilea, Queen of the Amazons', *Screen*, 15.3 (1974), 120–34 (p. 121).

⁵⁵⁴ Stevie Simkin, *Cultural Constructions of the Femme Fatale: From Pandora's Box to Amanda Knox* (London: Macmillan, 2014), p. 6.

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁵⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁵⁵⁷ Interview with Alma Hadžibeganović, 5 May 2018.

protection of a medieval necropolis located in the fictional town of Zori Do. The text combines hybrid forms and comprises hand-written notes, transcripts of recordings and word files which all offer glimpses of the protagonist's activities leading up to her death. Other texts in the collection include a monologue for a musical performance and a dramatic text entitled 'Putzköniginnen', based on Hadžibeganović's own experience. The play portrays a mother and a daughter from Bosnia who work as cleaners in a luxurious flat in Vienna, in exchange for the right to live in a shabby flat owned by their boss. The themes which come up throughout the volume are female agency, the hegemonic power relations between Western Europe and the Balkans, generational tensions and conflicting interpretations of the Bosnian war.

Here, I focus on two texts. 'Etwas läuft', first published in the 2000 collection, draws attention to social and ethnic divisions within the city of Vienna and recounts an everyday episode set in the urban space reluctantly shared by Austria's mainstream society and Bosnian refugees. In the text 'PRETTY CITY @ WIR', a shopping trip undertaken by two Bosnian women to central Vienna serves as an occasion to revise Austrian history and to address the role played by Southeastern Europe in the project of European imperialism. Hadžibeganović reminds the reader that Austrian history has long been entangled with that of the Balkans through geographical closeness and political interests. Officially, Austro-Hungary did not participate in European overseas colonialism and instead, it pursued its colonial interests in the Balkans. The Austrian legacy of militarism and imperialism, embodied in Vienna's representative buildings, is juxtaposed in the text with the world of migrants.

Hadžibeganović's texts are preoccupied with images of women promulgated in the media as well as with stereotypical perceptions of migrants and refugees. The feminist critique in her texts is thus expanded to include a wider reflection on power relations in society, which might be productively approached through the critical lens of intersectionality. The concept, first introduced by Black legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, purports that 'subjectivity is constituted by mutually reinforcing vectors of race, gender, class'.⁵⁵⁸ Having become one of leading feminist paradigms, intersectionality reveals the contradictions and conflicts within large and heterogeneous groups such as 'women' and is meant to give voice to multiply

⁵⁵⁸ Jennifer C. Nash, 'Re-Thinking Intersectionality', *Feminist Review*, 89.1 (2008), 1–15 (p. 1).

marginalized subjects.⁵⁵⁹ Jennifer C. Nash notes that intersectionality shows how ‘race, gender, sexuality, and class, among other categories, are produced through each other, securing both privilege and oppression simultaneously’.⁵⁶⁰ Theorists working within the paradigm of intersectionality aim to introduce new vocabulary which would not entrench existing divisions and discriminatory structures but rather account for how ‘positions of dominance and subordination work in complex and intersecting ways to constitute subjects’ experiences of personhood’.⁵⁶¹ Some theorists take recourse to poetry and narratives in order to articulate such non-linear visions of experience and subjectivity, which shows that literary texts have a critical potential when it comes to expressing complex and conflicted positionalities.⁵⁶² In what follows, I argue that Hadžibeganović’s texts are concerned with such ‘shifting, contextual, contingent positions’ and thus – in my understanding – contribute to the visionary and subversive project of feminist politics.⁵⁶³

In my analysis, I argue that Hadžibeganović’s multilingual texts resist the double bind of racism and patriarchy. I show that on the one hand, the works make the German language appear foreign and therefore produce a radical effect of estrangement. At the same time, they expose how the gendered use of language reinforces patriarchal power structures present in the former Yugoslavia and in Austria. By radically re-centring the female figure as the agent and the subject of language, the texts participate in a revolutionary writing praxis.

The political contexts of Hadžibeganović’s writing

In an interview with Alma Hadžibeganović conducted on 5 May 2018, I asked the author about her reasons for writing in German. She answered that it was a political decision. Even though she felt excluded from society due to her precarious legal status as a refugee in the 1990s, she could participate in public debates in Austria by writing in the language understood by the host society.⁵⁶⁴ This emphasis on the political

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 3. In her article, Nash deals with the contradictions and absences within the theory of intersectionality. Her aim is not, however, to dismantle the concept altogether but rather to advance its theoretical force.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 10

⁵⁶¹ Ibid.

⁵⁶² Ibid., p. 7.

⁵⁶³ Sylvanna M. Falcón and Jennifer C. Nash, ‘Shifting Analytics and Linking Theories: A Conversation about the “Meaning-Making” of Intersectionality and Transnational Feminism’, *Women’s Studies International Forum*, 50 (2015), 1–10 (p. 3).

⁵⁶⁴ Interview with Alma Hadžibeganović, 5 May 2018.

implications of writing in German echoes the author's statement from 1997, when, in an interview conducted by Stippinger, she stressed her status as a decidedly *foreign* writer:

Ich bin eine schonungslose Rebellin des Wortes. Dadurch, daß mir im Deutschen vielleicht nicht so viele Wörter zur Verfügung stehen, kommt eine andere Sicht hinzu. Durch die radikale Reduktion des Satzes und des Wortes, der Syntax kommt Unmittelbarkeit zustande! Aber ich schreibe ja ausländisch, natürlich! Typisch! In Wien leben 200.000 Menschen mit Deutsch als Fremdsprache. Wie lange noch sie ignorieren? Die Sprache entwickelt sich, und WIR VERÄNDERN SIE MIT. Schluß mit den schmierigen Aposteln der (sprachlichen) Starrheit! Sofortige Demokratisierung der Sprache! Sie können uns das Wahlrecht verweigern, aber das Grundrecht auf Sprache, die einzige Waffe, die wir haben, (und deswegen bin ich Rebellin) NICHT! ⁵⁶⁵

Hadžibeganović sees her means of literary expression as a form of 'accented' language used by non-native speakers of German in Vienna yet regards her limited proficiency as an advantage. The German language is re-deployed by the writer who uses alliteration ('Schluß mit den schmierigen Aposteln der (sprachlichen) Starrheit!') to condemn rigid language norms and to demonstrate the potential of a language liberated from the notions of purity and ethnonational belonging. The slippage between 'ich' and 'wir' does not mean that Hadžibeganović co-opts the voice of all migrants but rather shows that her positionality cannot be considered in isolation from wider political issues, and that her literary work is part of a larger transformation in society. By displacing the question mark from the end of the sentence to its centre in 'In Wien leben 200.000 Menschen mit Deutsch als Fremdsprache', Hadžibeganović shows that the number of migrants living in Vienna is not specified or stable, and points towards a trend which will continue into the future. Her poetological statements clearly indicate that linguistic experimentation is a key component of her politically loaded texts. Her 'foreign' writing opposes restrictive monolingualism and critiques the tendency to disavow the presence of migrants in Austria, at the same time asserting the right of non-native speakers to write literature and *transform* the majority language. By resisting the monolingual paradigm, identified by Yasemin Yildiz as characteristic of European literature since Romanticism, the texts oppose the

⁵⁶⁵ "'Schonungslose Rebellin des Wortes" oder "Großes AlmaAlphabet". Alma Hadžibeganović im Gespräch mit der Herausgeberin', *schreiben zwischen den kulturen. Eine Anthologie*, ed. by Christa Stippinger (Vienna: edition exil, 1997), pp. 27–36 (p. 33).

intertwined forces of monolingualism and ethnic/national exclusion, which limit access to political participation and cultural production.

Vienna's (literary) landscape

Hadžibeganović's German-language texts were first published in Vienna and so her appearance on the literary scene needs to be situated against the backdrop of social and cultural developments in Austria. Vienna is a multicultural city where every second inhabitant has a history of migration, 27 percent of the population have a foreign passport, and 34 percent were born abroad.⁵⁶⁶ Migrants from the former Yugoslavia are the largest migrant community in the city. In 2016, Serb nationals formed the largest foreign group in Vienna, estimated at 99,082 people, or 4 percent of the total population.⁵⁶⁷ Quoting data from 2001, Michael John indicates that 9.3 percent of the Viennese reported Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian as their language of everyday use.⁵⁶⁸ The high number of foreigners inhabiting Austria's capital also means that a large group of people are disenfranchised, with over 420,000 inhabitants of the city being unable to vote.⁵⁶⁹

This significant presence of former Yugoslavs in the Austrian capital can be traced back to labour migration after the Second World War. Following the Raab-Olah Agreement of 1961, Austrian state agencies signed labour recruitment contracts with such countries as Spain (1962), Turkey (1964), and Yugoslavia (1966). Yugoslavs 'formed the biggest share of the guest workers, approximately 80 percent, in 1973', and Serbia and Bosnia were the federal states sending the highest number of migrants.⁵⁷⁰ This labour migration was followed by high numbers of people coming to Austria as refugees fleeing the wars in Croatia and Bosnia, and later in Kosovo. Between 1989 and 1993, the number of foreigners living in Austria doubled, from 384,000 to 699,000, and 60 percent of new migrants arrived from former Yugoslavia and Turkey.

⁵⁶⁶ 'Daten und Fakten zur Migration 2017 – Wiener Bevölkerung', *Stadt Wien* <https://www.wien.gv.at/menschen/integration/daten-fakten/bevoelkerung-migration.html> [accessed 10 May 2018].

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁸ Michael John, 'Migration in Austria: An Overview of the 1920s to 2000s', in *Understanding Multiculturalism: The Habsburg Central European Experience*, ed. by Johannes Feichtinger and Gary B. Cohen (New York: Berghahn, 2014), pp. 122–57 (p. 139).

⁵⁶⁹ 'Daten und Fakten zur Migration 2017'.

⁵⁷⁰ John, p. 134.

Hadžibeganović's work is clearly situated in the context of Austrian migration policy in the 1990s, which saw the rise of the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) under Jörg Haider, whose xenophobic slogans included 'Wien darf nicht Chicago werden'.⁵⁷¹ In 2000, the Freedom Party formed a coalition with the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) and proposed 'a drastic cut in immigration to Austria'.⁵⁷² In terms of legislation, one could observe a 'decline of the rights of foreign labor migrants and family reunification programs'.⁵⁷³ It was at this difficult time that, as noted by Wiebke Sievers, writers with a migrant background became more established within the Austrian literary landscape. Sievers' work is part of a recent state-funded collaborative project 'Literature on the Move', which looks at writers who migrated to Austria and the challenges they have faced when entering the Austrian literary field.⁵⁷⁴ The researchers involved in the project include Sandra Vlasta, Holger Englerth, Bülent Kaya and Christa Stippinger.

Sievers argues that as opposed to Germany, where literature written in German by Italian and Turkish authors emerged already in the 1970s, German-language literature by authors with a history of migration did not develop in Austria until the 1990s.⁵⁷⁵ Growing racism, the rise of the FPÖ, and the fact that immigration became a hotly discussed political issue contributed to this new literary phenomenon. At the same time, new publishing houses were established with the explicit aim to promote 'minority cultures and literatures, such as EYE in Innsbruck, Kitab in Klagenfurt and, most importantly, edition exil in Vienna'.⁵⁷⁶

As already signalled in the introduction, Hadžibeganović benefitted from Stippinger's activism and support and was able to publish her texts in edition exil. Angelika Friedl has conducted interviews with authors supported by Stippinger, including Hadžibeganović, who state that Amerlinghaus was a platform which made it possible for them to reach a wider public and which encouraged them to pursue their literary interests. Friedl concludes that authors were always treated with respect and 'Vereinnahmung, paternalisierende Tendenzen oder Überheblichkeit wurden von

⁵⁷¹ Ibid., p. 141.

⁵⁷² Ibid.

⁵⁷³ Ibid., p. 145.

⁵⁷⁴ 'Literature on the Move', <http://www.litmove.oeaw.ac.at/index.php> [accessed 10 May 2018].

⁵⁷⁵ Wiebke Sievers, 'Writing Politics: The Emergence of Immigrant Writing in West Germany and Austria', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 34 (2008), 1217–35 (p. 1228).

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 1229.

keiner Autorin und keinem Autor angesprochen'.⁵⁷⁷ For Friedl, the literary competition served as a source of financial backing for authors whose existence in Austria was made difficult by strict legislation limiting their access to work and state support, and who would have had a difficulty gaining recognition within the relatively monocultural literary landscape in Austria.

Still, one needs to be careful when assessing Stippinger's involvement in Hadžibeganović's career. As noted above, Hadžibeganović points out that her 2000 collection was published precipitously and the texts contained in the volume were hardly edited, which was motivated by the publisher's desire to retain the texts' alleged 'authenticity'.⁵⁷⁸ By 2000, Hadžibeganović had left for Utrecht and was not in Vienna when the book was being produced. This made it difficult for the author to compete on the book market with such authors as Stanišić or Bodrožić, whose works are edited before publication and do not appear as rough drafts. As I demonstrated in my previous discussion of Stanišić's *Wie der Soldat*, the novel underwent many alterations before publication. While I maintain that the differences between the draft and the novel's finished version demonstrate that the text was normalized into standard German spelling and grammar, it must be acknowledged that professional editorial work is standard practice at big publishing houses, such as Suhrkamp or Luchterhand. In fact, Stippinger's decision not to edit Hadžibeganović's texts went against the author's wishes, who felt that she was not being treated on a par with professional writers.

Penthesilea in Sarajevo

Penthesilea in Sarajevo is a first-person narrative telling the story of Melli and Ena, two friends trying to obtain a permit to leave Serb-occupied Sarajevo. They are both students of foreign languages, English and German. Melli is a Croat, whereas Ena's father is a Bosnian Muslim and her mother is Serbian. Melli has her mind set on leaving the city but Ena is hesitant: she hopes to carry on with her university degree and considers remaining in the city for the sake of her ex-boyfriend Dan, a Serbian guitar player. In the last scene, after a night of shelling, Melli is picked up by her

⁵⁷⁷ Friedl, p. 43.

⁵⁷⁸ Interview with Alma Hadžibeganović, 5 May 2018.

Serbian cousin, with whom she is about to flee the city. Ena reluctantly accompanies Melli to the station but it remains unclear whether she decides to board the train.

Linguistic transgressions and enstrangement

Hadžibeganović's story is divided into six sections and adopts a classical dramatic structure: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, final suspense, and denouement/catastrophe. The narrative style is disjointed and heavily influenced by filmic language, as signalled in the title, which evokes a zoomed image. This suggests that the experiences of Melli and Ena are filtered through a possibly distorting lens but also that their 'adventures' in Sarajevo could provide ample material for a gripping film. The protagonists ironically refer to their attempts to leave as 'Rettungsreise', 'Vertreibungstrip', 'Reise ins Ungewisse'.⁵⁷⁹ The time of narration is the same as narrated time, and the explosions, bombings and chaos of war are integrated into the narrative. Apart from such 'belliphonic' sounds, the text contains frequent direct quotations from literature, films, and pop music, which together form a disjointed, cacophonous narrative.

Music is of paramount importance in the narrative, and the story's soundtrack ranges from Bosnian alternative rock and Nirvana's 'Come as you are' (referred to as 'Antigewalthymne', *Penthesilea in Sarajevo*, p. 18) to nationalist pop music, also known as turbo-folk,⁵⁸⁰ which the narrator describes as '[d]ie einzigartige Kotzparade' (p. 19). The contrast between the pacifist music played on the radio and turbo-folk transmitted on TV gives expression to the conflicted political reality in late Yugoslavia, where students, young people and intellectuals were oriented towards progressive politics and international music, whereas others were becoming increasingly attached to nationalist narratives and myths.

The author comments on the fragmentary, incongruous style of the text in an interview with Stippinger:

Vielleicht kann man meine Texte als 'Montage-Texte' bezeichnen. Ich liebe es, die Leute zu überraschen. Ich finde, das wird der Wirklichkeit gerechter. Ich spiele mit den Ebenen. Da ist vielleicht eine ganz

⁵⁷⁹ Hadžibeganović, 'zz00m: 24 Std. mix 1. of me oder Penthesilea in Sarajevo', p. 6. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

⁵⁸⁰ Gordana Andric, 'Turbo-Folk Keeps Pace with New Rivals' <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/turbo-folk-keeps-pace-with-new-rivals> [accessed 11 May 2018].

detaillierte Schilderung, eine Situation, und dann plötzlich – ein satirisches Spiel, eine Verfremdung!⁵⁸¹

Hadžibeganović texts are marked by paradoxes, playfulness, exaggeration and irony. They make use of second-hand material, presented in new, surprising constellations. *Penthesilea in Sarajevo* is a collection of citations and allusions, partly explained in a glossary, 'Verzeichnis mehr oder weniger unbekannter Wörter' (p. 25). The list documents Sarajevo's eclectic and cosmopolitan cultural life in the early 1990s and shows that students in Sarajevo had access to international youth culture, watched MTV and followed the latest global trends.

Rather than give a linear, realistic account of suffering in the besieged city, Hadžibeganović's text offers a distorted, stylized vision of the event and refuses to hold on to the notion of authenticity or original, primordial meanings. Complex and hermetic, *Penthesilea in Sarajevo* is a multilingual work mixing German, English, Latin and Bosnian, as well as different registers and styles, which enhance the effect of incongruity, montage and fragmentariness. The story's language makes use of neologisms, malapropisms, and 'incorrect' and non-idiomatic German phrases. For instance, Ena creates a new idiom when talking about her permit to leave Sarajevo: 'Meinem Passierschein verpasse ich Eselsohren' (*Penthesilea in Sarajevo*, p. 12), mixing the phrase 'jemandem eine Ohrfeige verpassen' and 'Eselsohren', i.e. dog-ears. In this way, Ena expresses her contempt for the piece of paper which she only managed to obtain because of her mother's ethnic heritage.

In provocative and subversive ways, Hadžibeganović's works stretch language to its limits and make productive use of interlingual difference. This can be seen in the description of the siege of Sarajevo, where the missiles launched by Serb forces from the hills surrounding the city are referred to as hang-gliders. The narrator states: 'So kommen wir bald vorbei am Zentrum zur Beobachtung ihrer Drachenflieger. [...] Der Himmel gehört ihnen' (*Penthesilea in Sarajevo*, p. 8). The danger is not rendered directly and the attack is made to seem like a show which the narrator came to watch of her own accord. At the same time, linguistic estrangement is used to critique the voyeurism of Western journalists who descended upon Sarajevo to *watch* the attack, which for them constituted an extraordinary sight worthy of the

⁵⁸¹ 'Schonungslose Rebellin des Wortes', p. 32.

world's attention. Ena notes that the centre of Sarajevo is full of foreign correspondents:

Das Zentrum wiederum ist Tummelplatz vieler fremder Journalisten und Fotografen; die werden immer zahlreicher, denn es ist erstaunlich, wie speedy bengales von den umliegenden traumhaften Flugbergen herunter – hoopss! – in das einsame Stadtbecken funktioniert. Der Luftdruck, der Meeresspiegel, in den wie ein Europa alle blicken. (*Penthesilea in Sarajevo*, p. 8)

The passage takes advantage of the possibility of forming compound nouns to create neologisms such as 'Stadtbecken' or 'Flugberge'. The English-language reference to Speedy Gonzales is distorted into 'speedy bengales', and the adjective 'speedy' regains its literal meaning.⁵⁸² The theme of shelling, and the lethal danger coming from the sky are conveyed through the noun 'Luftdruck', which here no longer denotes atmospheric pressure but rather the oppression experienced by the besieged civilians. The sea level of the city ('Meeresspiegel'), which is important given its exposed position in a valley surrounded by mountains, unexpectedly turns into a mirror which reflects Europe's future. Pre-war Sarajevo is a city which, as many believed, embodied the possibility of a peaceful coexistence of various ethnic and religious groups. The syntactically odd formulation 'der Meeresspiegel, in den wie ein Europa alle blicken' might be a reference to the fact that the European Community failed to stop the atrocities committed in Sarajevo, which for some commentators constituted a moral failure of Western Europeans.⁵⁸³ At the same time, the image of the mirror (also meant as a reference to the German news magazine) comes up in Handke's *Eine winterliche Reise*, where the narrator states in relation to his wish to visit Serbia in person: 'Es drängte mich hinter den Spiegel' (*Eine winterliche Reise*, p. 13). Hadžibeganović's text reiterates Handke's point that many Westerners regarded the ethnic conflict in the Balkans through the prism of their own anxieties, which meant that they were only interested in Sarajevo insofar as it served as a reflection of their own fears and concerns.

A further way in which language is made to appear strange is through the process of literal translation, which according to Yildiz is 'a postmonolingual writing

⁵⁸² Such linguistic games performed within the text make it a fascinating but hermetic reading material, and at times make the critic admit interpretative failure. I have not managed to gloss the word 'bengales' used above. A possible reference to Bengal/Bengalese does not 'make sense' according to traditional notions of literary scholarship.

⁵⁸³ Cf. Schneider, 'Der Sündenfall Europas'.

strategy, gesturing towards and unfolding in the tension between monolingual paradigm and multilingual practice'.⁵⁸⁴ Yildiz observes that in rendering Turkish sayings and idioms into German, Özdamar's *Mutterzunge* manages to achieve an effect of a double defamiliarization, whereby the German employs atypical turns of phrase and the Turkish becomes strange when idiomatic expressions are repeated in the words supplied by a different language. As Yildiz puts it, 'literal translation, through relying to a degree on an underlying Turkish matrix, also cast[s] that language in a new light, as being both necessary and insufficient to the text'.⁵⁸⁵ At the same time, literal translation of idiomatic expressions gives them an additional, literal, layer of meaning, which might have an unsettling effect and which puts emphasis on how images and linguistic structures determine our thinking. Hadžibeganović translates certain phrases from BCMS, e.g. 'hinter den Hosenträgern Gottes' (*Bogu iza tregera*), which refers to a faraway location. The adjective 'altmädchenhaft' (a calque of *stara devojka*, or a spinster) is a hybrid, since it combines a literal translation from BCMS with a German suffix 'haft'. These unfamiliar words disrupt the reading experience, adding an additional layer of complexity to the text. The odd, striking images displace clichéd expressions and enhance the effect of incongruity and estrangement.

Linguistic play is used in Hadžibeganović's text to denounce the patriarchal military regime in Sarajevo. Melli's and Ena's chance of survival is dependent on the decisions made by men in power, and their ethnicity is determined by their last names, inherited through the male line:

Melli und ich werden niedergedrückt. Gründe werden durch das Sein, und das Sein wird durch das Tragen des Namens ausgedrückt. Urgroßväter der Großväter unserer Väter entscheiden dank altväterlichem Nachnamensbrauchs, daß ich müeslimisch bin, und karotisch sie. (*Penthesilea in Sarajevo*, p. 8)

The repetition of the verb 'gedrückt' conveys a sense of pressure mounting on the women. The protagonists' current existence is determined by the past. The long-dead male ancestors, who function as the grammatical subject of the sentence, have real power over the lives of two young women. The hyperbolic repetition of the word 'Väter', which refers to family members but also occurs in the adjective 'altväterlich' shows that the traditional assignment of ethnicity and name-giving is part of

⁵⁸⁴ Yildiz, *Beyond the Mother Tongue*, p. 144.

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 160.

patriarchal oppression. The narrator's statement 'das Sein wird durch das Tragen des Namens ausgedrückt' refers to the nationalist idea that one's ethnicity is in fact an essence which, even though suppressed in the times of Socialism, now has the potential to reveal itself and come to its full expression. The metaphysical idea of 'Sein' is separated from the material, sexed body. The absurdity of the notion that identities are fixed, unchanging qualities is heightened through the playful adjectives 'müeslimisch' and 'karotisch', which displace the opposing identitarian categories 'muslimisch' and 'Kroatisch/katholisch' and make us pay attention to the names themselves, seeing them in a new, unexpected light.

Lethal women in Sarajevo

The questions of female agency and power in war-torn Sarajevo are further explored in the story through an engagement with the iconic erotic thriller *Basic Instinct*, which Melli and Ena watch in the opening scene of the story. By foregrounding Melli's and Ena's responses to the film, the story inverts the hierarchies often espoused by mainstream cinema and re-casts the female protagonists as active agents. At the same time, the women's viewership makes it possible to re-read the film beyond its patriarchal codes and to unearth its latent, potentially liberating, meanings.

The depiction of women in Hollywood cinema and the female gaze have been key questions in feminist film theory, given their complex relation to the dominant male gaze, as described by Laura Mulvey in her seminal essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'. For Mulvey, the pleasures of cinematic looking are founded in voyeurism and fetishism. The structure of the gaze found in mainstream cinema serves to emulate the patriarchal order by placing the woman in the position of a passive sexual object observed by male characters and male spectators. The male hero of a film is therefore the active bearer of the gaze, whose role is to forward the story and make 'things happen' within the plot.⁵⁸⁶ The gaze is thus a tool of power, domination and objectification of the female body.

Both inspired and irritated by Mulvey's arguments, feminist critics have since addressed the question of whether it is possible for female spectators to take pleasure in watching mainstream films which perpetuate power structures in society. Given the

⁵⁸⁶ Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*, ed. by Amelia Jones (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 44–53 (p. 48).

importance of the psychoanalytic framework in film criticism, the disagreements were concerned with the question of identification, narcissism and desire. Jackie Stacey has argued that the pleasure derived by white female spectators from mainstream films is informed by a homoerotic desire directed at central female protagonists, which is not necessarily isolated from narcissistic identification.⁵⁸⁷ Even if films invite ‘an identification with a masculine heterosexual desire’, the reaction of a viewer ‘can vary across a wide spectrum between outright acceptance and refusal’.⁵⁸⁸ Matters are more complex for viewers of colour. bell hooks recounts her interviews with Black women, who ‘testified that to experience fully the pleasure of [Hollywood] cinema they had to close down critique, analysis; they had to forget racism’.⁵⁸⁹ As a result, many Black women developed ‘an oppositional gaze’ which was able to critique ‘the cinema’s construction of white womanhood as object of phallogentric gaze’ and thus created ‘a critical space’ from where the passive/active binary posited by Mulvey could be questioned.⁵⁹⁰ This deconstructive and oppositional gaze could then become a source of pleasure. Crucially, such theorizations highlight the fact that women’s experiences as spectators depend on ‘specific socio-historical contexts’.⁵⁹¹ Stacey notes that ‘the cultural production of meaning involves active spectatorship, rather than the passive consumption of textually determined meanings’, as can be seen in the ways in which sub-cultures ‘produce an alternative set of readings of dominant cultural images’.⁵⁹² Hadžibeganović’s story explores such possibilities of constructing an alternative meaning for well-known texts. The re-vision of a Hollywood blockbuster from the perspective of women trapped in besieged Sarajevo speaks to the situatedness and contingency of female subjectivity, and reveals how political and social contexts determine women’s responses to mainstream cultural products.

⁵⁸⁷ In Hollinger’s words, ‘Stacey’s revisionist Freudianism allows her to argue that female spectator/star relationships [...] represent forms of intimacy between women that involve both identification and desire simultaneously’; Karen Hollinger, ‘Theorizing Mainstream Female Spectatorship: The Case of the Popular Lesbian Film’, *Cinema Journal*, 37.2 (1998), 3–17 <https://doi.org/10.2307/1225639> (p. 4).

⁵⁸⁸ Jackie Stacey, ‘Desperately Seeking Difference’, in *The Female Gaze: Women as Viewers of Popular Culture*, ed. by Lorraine Gamman and Margaret Marshment (London: The Women’s Press, 1988), pp. 112–29 (p. 121).

⁵⁸⁹ bell hooks, ‘The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators’, in *Black Looks. Race and Representation* (London: Turnaround, 1992), pp. 115–31 (p. 120).

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

⁵⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

⁵⁹² Stacey, p. 114.

The main protagonist of *Basic Instinct* is Catherine Tramell (Sharon Stone), an independent writer who uses her sexual encounters with men to write her novels, and whose long-term partner is a woman named Roxy (Leilani Sarelle). Catherine is suspected of having murdered her lover with an ice-pick, a strikingly phallic object. During the police investigation, Catherine meets her next lover Nick (Michael Douglas), a brutal and misogynist police inspector who is himself accused of killing civilians while on duty. Nick is faced with two possible perpetrators: Catherine and Dr Elizabeth Garner (Jeanne Tripplehorn), who is Nick's psychiatrist, and who had an affair with Catherine in college. By the end, Nick becomes convinced that the real culprit is Dr Garner. However, Catherine's innocence is challenged by the final bed scene with Nick, which shows an ice-pick lying next to her bed.

It cannot be denied that Catherine has features of a stereotypical vamp: she is glamorous, desirable, deceitful and mysterious, which allows her to lure 'the male hero into dangerous situations by overpowering his will with her irresistible sexuality'.⁵⁹³ The threat to the patriarchal order embodied by Catherine is to an extent contained towards the end of the film, given the fact that she ends up in bed with Nick. Therefore, one way to read *Basic Instinct* is to buy into the heteronormative interpretation of the ending, according to which Catherine has indeed abandoned her homicidal instinct and her bisexuality. Such interpretation is supported by the fact that Roxy is killed and therefore eliminated as a lesbian contender and a voyeur who watched Nick and Catherine have sex. At the same time, Catherine's situation remains ambiguous, since she has not been brought back under state control. She remains in control of the police investigation into her own case, and determines Nick's actions, and effectively she is the one in charge of the film's plot.

The film has been controversial among queer audiences. J. Halberstam notes that while some queer viewers believed the film to be able 'to move female heroism and cinematic lesbianism to a new and exciting place, others viewed *Basic Instinct* as a dangerous vision of lesbianism as a network of lesbian murderers'.⁵⁹⁴ Still, Halberstam believes that the film subverts the image of women as necessarily passive or pacifist, since it raises the question of male and female violence.⁵⁹⁵ The fact that

⁵⁹³ Simkin, p. 8.

⁵⁹⁴ J. Halberstam, 'Imagined Violence/Queer Violence: Representation, Rage, and Resistance', *Social Text*, 37 (1993), 187–201 (p. 196).

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

women kill male members of their families and their lovers questions a social order premised upon male authority and state surveillance.

All this points to the fact that there exist multiple ways of reading the filmic text. In Hadžibeganović's story, Melli derives clear pleasure from watching the film, which is partly motivated by her heterosexual desire. This is made clear by the passage:

Melli sitzt auf der Couch [...], den Kopf auf wenig nach vorne geneigt, um so größtmögliche Konzentration zu erzielen [...]. Während sie Schokolade kaut, weiden ihre Augen auf dem knackigen Po von Michael Douglas, der gerade nackt läuft. Ochohoo! (*Penthesilea in Sarajevo*, p. 4).

Arguably, the plot of the film appears less important to Melli and Ena than the sexualized display of the actors' bodies, as suggested by the fact that the names of the actors and those of their characters are interchangeable. The choice of vocabulary in the above quotation makes it clear that Douglas's protagonist is objectified and treated as a consumable. The importance of sex is again exemplified by the passage in which Ena describes how Sharon Stone/Catherine breaks social and sexual taboos:

Es läuft die Partysequenz, in der der Untersuchungsbeamte Douglas in den Luxuskammern der Sharon-Villa die Luxus-Besitzerin sucht, und wenn er sie findet, knutscht sie gerade mit ihrer Freundin vor dem Klo. Heftig. Wenn Sharon das in meiner Stadt Tuzla täte, müßte sie hinter sich Ausrufe lausbübischer Kinder ertragen, wie z.B. meiner fünfjährigen Nachbarin, die das Wort 'Lesbierin' nicht kennt: 'Schwule-rin! Schwule-rin!'. Aber Sharon ist cool, der würde das nichts ausmachen. (*Penthesilea in Sarajevo*, p. 5)

The passage is striking given how much it leaves out. The narrator mixes up the sequence of events in the film (the party does not take place at the villa but at a club), which foregrounds the importance of lesbian desire as the main thing that she notices. Even though the kiss between Catherine and Roxy is most likely staged for the objectifying male gaze (that of Nick and the viewers' at the cinema), the scene retains its subversive potential when viewed by a woman who – most likely – revisits her own memories related to homophobia experienced in her home city, for how else would she know that her neighbour does not know the word 'lesbian'? At the same time, rather than 'Lesbe', the text uses the odd noun 'Lesbierin', which is the female form of 'Lesbier' (the inhabitant of the island Lesbos). In this way, it draws attention

to the fact that even sexual identities which do not comply with the heterosexual matrix are designated using suffixes which perpetuate gender binaries.

In her discussion of ‘the ambiguous lesbian film’, Karen Hollinger borrows Teresa de Lauretis’ terms and notes that films which depict a female friendship with a potentially sexual undertone offer to lesbian audiences ‘moments of “discursive consent” through which lesbian viewers can engage in lesbian cinematic fantasies rendered socially “safe” within a homophobic society by the film’s heterosexual implications’.⁵⁹⁶ This is what might be at stake here, since even though *Basic Instinct* is explicit in showing lesbian desire, the scene of intimacy between two women is framed by the tale of a heterosexual romance. This is not to say that I wish to make conclusive claims about Ena’s sexuality but rather suggest that she is able to engage with the film’s lesbian elements without committing to a specific identitarian position.

Women who break social codes are often turned into objects of scrutiny by the media and popular culture. Simkin notes that female criminals are often regarded as deviant in a double sense, since they transgress against the law as well as the rules ‘of what is understood to be acceptable female behaviour’.⁵⁹⁷ The perceived contradiction between a woman’s crime and her femininity means that her appearance and her compliance with beauty standards is of key importance. This tension informs the famous interrogation scene in *Basic Instinct*, in which Catherine, dressed in white and wearing no underwear, answers questions posed by an all-male team of police investigators. The officers become aroused by her provocative movements and explicit confessions detailing her sexual tastes. Catherine is aware both of her role as an object of the gaze and of the effect she has on the policemen. This means that, as put by John Berger, ‘she turns herself into an object – and most particularly an object of vision: a sight’.⁵⁹⁸ This self-awareness is linked to the fact that she, as a woman, is ‘continually forced to observe herself in attempts to regulate her behaviour and appearance’.⁵⁹⁹ The role of the male gaze is teased out in Hadžibeganović’s story, which offers a striking re-reading of the interrogation scene.

Catherine’s successful negotiation of the police questioning contrasts with the section in which Melli and Ena go to see Serb officers responsible for their case. The

⁵⁹⁶ Hollinger, p. 8.

⁵⁹⁷ Simkin, p. 40.

⁵⁹⁸ John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: BBC/Penguin, 1972), p. 47.

⁵⁹⁹ Simkin, p. 43.

imbalance of power between female supplicants and male officials is apparent, since the women are objectified and treated as ‘Weibsstücke’ or ‘Kriegsbräute als -beute’ (*Penthesilea in Sarajevo*, p. 9). The Serb soldier is described as ‘Polizist-Beamter-Soldat=Alles in einem Macho’ (p. 9) and thus incorporates all faces of state authority. He is also an active controller of the gaze, as made clear by the passage: ‘Der große Braune steht vor uns, die Herrschaft des verunsichernden Auges auslebend’ (p. 9). To help her case, Melli tries to emulate the bold behaviour exhibited by Sharon Stone in *Basic Instinct*: ‘Melli setzt instinktiv ihr Basic ein’ (p. 9). However, in Hadžibeganović’s story, the title of the film is displaced, and the adjective and the noun swap places, with ‘instinct’ turning into ‘instinktiv’ and the adjective ‘basic’ becoming a noun. This reversal corresponds to Melli’s failure to behave like her Hollywood idol, which means that her sexual provocation is only ‘die billige Verführungsvariante’ (p. 9) in comparison to the glamorous performance seen on TV. In fact, the soldier soon finds a way to humiliate Melli, by ordering her to provide a document confirming that her Croatian father is not fighting against the Serbs.

Melli fails to perform the role of a beautiful yet dangerous woman whose sexual power is enough to keep her out of trouble and to deceive the authorities, which reveals the brutality of her precarious position:

Melli. Wie Sharon Stone ist sie blond und langhaarig, aber auf sie trifft nur das stone zu. Sie starrt in sein Gesicht, anstatt kokettierend zu lächeln, wie eine Frau, die in höchster Not was braucht. Meine abgefackten Nerven verweigern meiner geschminkten Person, die Rolle anzunehmen oder die Maske der Weiblichkeit aufzusetzen. (*Penthesilea in Sarajevo*, p. 10)

The text’s multilingual perspective and its deployment of code-switching result in an unexpected pun, whereby the word ‘stone’ regains its original meaning. In this way, the text reveals a tension between the term’s function as a proper name and its dictionary definition. Also, what is at stake in this re-enactment of the iconic scene from *Basic Instinct* is the power relation between the man as the bearer of the gaze and the woman as object of the gaze. At the same time, this objectifying gaze is counterbalanced by Ena’s sympathetic eyes, for whom Melli is not an object to be conquered or dominated but rather an individual, a friend, and a desperate woman. Ena’s gaze is therefore different, and constitutes an intervention which cuts across the hegemonic power relation between her friend and the Serbian macho.

The world of acting, film, and theatre evoked in the story can be linked to the text's engagement with the fluidity and constructedness of identitarian positions. The characters slip into and out of different roles and guises, which suggests that they are mere figures in a TV drama. Thus, the soldier is described as 'die vorgesetzte männliche Figur' (*Penthesilea in Sarajevo*, p. 12), and reduced to his function within the narrative. Moreover, Ena speaks about taking up a role, her 'made-up person' and putting on 'a mask of femininity'. This could be read as a reference to the fact that gender is constituted through performative, iterative acts which produce an essentializing masculine/feminine identity. At the same time, however, Ena's remarks point to stage make-up and masks used in the theatre, which suggests that all the figures, including the soldiers, are participating in an ethnic masquerade. In fact, the narrator treats military clothes like stage costumes, as for example, when one of the Serb soldier's uniform is described as 'Eidechsenkostüm' (p. 13).

Reading Kleist in the besieged city

Unlike Melli, Ena is reluctant to flirt with the soldiers during the interrogation, and only reveals the life-saving fact that her mother is a Serb under duress. Ena feels uncomfortable whenever she needs to play the ethnicity card. When she and her friend seek shelter from the shelling in their Muslim neighbours' flat, she dis-identifies with her Muslim heritage, describing the interior of the flat in a defamiliarizing manner. She is alienated by the aggressive manifestation of the neighbours' cultural and religious allegiance, which goes together with essentialist and ethno-nationalist rhetoric of hatred and ignorance. She does not eat pork, but not because she is a Muslim, but rather a vegetarian, which is her own decision rather than a rule prescribed by religious allegiance.

Throughout the story, Ena carries scholarly literature around with her and insists on working on her university assignment on Kleist's *Penthesilea*. Her intellectual work is an act of resistance, as indicated by her statement 'Ich laß' mir von den Behörden nicht mein ganzes Leben bestimmen' (*Penthesilea in Sarajevo*, p. 6). This act of defiance is also directed against gender stereotypes and patriarchal powers structures in Sarajevo, where macho culture, militarism and traditionalist values are on the rise.

Penthesilea, first published in 1808, is a one-act drama, loosely based on Homer's *Iliad* and comprising twenty-four scenes. The connection between Kleist's

drama and Hadžibeganović's text is already signalled by the latter's title, which contains a reference to 'two of the classical dramatic unities',⁶⁰⁰ i.e. the unity of time and place, which are adhered to by Kleist. The eponymous heroine of Kleist's play is the queen of the Amazons, who gets involved in the struggle between the Greeks and the Trojans but refuses to side with either of the warring parties. Her aim, instead, is to seek out the famous warrior Achilles and take him as her lover. Penthesilea's strong desire for Achilles is at odds with the laws governing the Amazon state, since the warriors are not allowed direct their lust at one man in particular.

Led by her strong, transgressive desire, Penthesilea refuses to withdraw her troops from the battlefield and return home to the Amazon capital, Themiscyra. She confronts Achilles on the battlefield and is defeated. Penthesilea and Achilles declare their love for each other but fail to find a solution which would enable them to have a common future. Achilles leaves the Amazon camp. Penthesilea feels isolated from her fellow Amazons and betrayed by Achilles, who challenges her to a duel. In her frenzy, Penthesilea kills Achilles and, aided by her hounds, dismembers and devours his corpse. She dies once she recognizes the monstrosity of her deed, declaring: 'Ich sage vom Gesetz der Fraun mich los, | Und folge diesem Jüngling hier'.⁶⁰¹ Her death, however, serves to affirm the social order threatened both through her unbounded desire and her gruesome deed.

Elystan Griffiths argues that it is possible to view Kleist's *Penthesilea* as a critique of 'hegemonic male attitudes to women'.⁶⁰² The play was controversial at the time of its publication, and led Goethe to remark that it was written for a theatre which was yet to come.⁶⁰³ Reviewers criticized Kleist's depiction of the classical world as non-harmonious, his 'eschewing of a conventional five-act structure, his use of neologisms', accused him of inaccuracy in his depiction of the Trojan war and found fault with the depiction of gender roles in the play, arguing that there exists a 'mismatch between Penthesilea's behaviour and her femininity'.⁶⁰⁴ Hadžibeganović's text refers to such negative views of the play, which are paired with a condemnation

⁶⁰⁰ Linda Hoff-Purviance, 'The Form of Kleist's *Penthesilea* and the *Iliad*', *The German Quarterly*, 55 (1982), 39–48 (p. 40).

⁶⁰¹ Heinrich von Kleist, *Penthesilea. Ein Trauerspiel. Studienausgabe*, ed. by Ulrich Port (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2012), I. 3012–3013.

⁶⁰² Elystan Griffiths, 'Gender, Laughter, and the Desecration of Enlightenment: Kleist's *Penthesilea* as "Hundekomödie"', *The Modern Language Review*, 104.2 (2009), 453–71 (p. 457).

⁶⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 453.

⁶⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 455.

of the Amazon state: ‘Die Frauen haben [...] einen Staat gegründet, nachdem sie ihre Mißbraucher getötet hatten. Doch ein gewisser Herr T. meint, daß der Staat der Amazonen [...] seinen Angehörigen nur eine reduzierte Menschlichkeit zu bieten [vermöge], die notwendig als Inhumanität zur Wirkung gelange’ (*Penthesilea in Sarajevo*, p. 13). Ena does not comment on Herr T’s analysis but her scepticism is implied by the fact that she does not give the critic’s full name, instead highlighting his gender.

Jean Wilson points out that such normative readings of the play show that critics disapprove of the threats posed by the text to stable notion of gender identity and to social order in general.⁶⁰⁵ Wilson notes that the play highlights gender’s fluidity. Penthesilea’s actions are deemed unfeminine, which ‘cements the monstrous otherness of the Amazon queen’.⁶⁰⁶ Penthesilea is described by other characters in the play as raving mad, a blind, furious hyena.⁶⁰⁷

The ambivalence of Penthesilea’s position is evoked by Ena’s conflicted subjectivity: her mixed ethnicity, her dislike of strict divisions, as well as her unwillingness to identify as either a Bosnian Muslim or a Serb. In fact, Ena’s narrative is marked by a refusal to occupy any of the fixed identitarian positions available to her: a Muslim, a Serb, or a woman complying with the demands of a patriarchal, heteronormative society. Ena’s contradictory position is also played out in her relationship with her Serbian ex-boyfriend Dan, whom she compares to Penthesilea’s lover Achilles.

Dan is a non-conformist artist hiding in his grandfather’s cellar. The story does not make clear why exactly Dan and Ena cannot be together, although it is established that they belong to warring ethnic groups, and Dan is soon to be drafted into the Serbian army.⁶⁰⁸ On the one hand, the narrator reveals that she started dating a different man who is deemed more suitable by her friend Melli and her mother but she still feels attracted to Dan, whose sudden appearance triggers a range of emotions in the narrator:

⁶⁰⁵ Jean Wilson, ‘Transgression and Identity in Kleist’s *Penthesilea* and Wolf’s *Cassandra*’, *Women in German Yearbook: Feminist Studies in German Literature & Culture*, 16 (2000), 191–206 (pp. 191–194).

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 193.

⁶⁰⁷ Kleist, *Penthesilea* I. 331.

⁶⁰⁸ Friedl, p. 109.

Die Wahrheit macht mich mein Selbst hassen: Sie findet dich nicht gut für mich, bzw. für das Schema: Beziehung, Heiraten und Kinderkriegen. Kindermachen vielleicht. Tut mir leid, bis bald.

*Ich sage vom Gesetz der Frauen mich los,
und folge diesem Jüngling hier.*

Ein/e von der Norm abweichende/r, die Norm überragende/r einzelne/r, wie etwa Penthesilea selbst, wird durch den Militärstaat so weitgehend determiniert, daß sie/er sich nur im Zustand der Täuschung oder des Wahnsinns verwirklichen kann.
(*Penthesilea in Sarajevo*, p. 16)

Like Penthesilea, the narrator is torn between her sexual passion and the social laws governing romantic relationships. As it turns out, the women's law, represented by Melli and Ena's mother, is no less oppressive than the military regime governing the Amazon state, which makes it impossible for Penthesilea to be with the man she loves. The heteronormative scenario mentioned by Ena is an allusion to her earlier description of Melli, who 'sucht sich einen mutti-lieben und tanten-netten Mann für ein familiengerechtes Schema: Beziehung-Heiraten-Kindermachen und Kinderkriegen' (*Penthesilea in Sarajevo*, p. 5). Ena disturbs the pattern by isolating 'Kindermachen' (without 'Kinderkriegen') as a legitimate goal in itself, defending a woman's right to sex for pleasure rather than procreation. Ena suffers under social pressures which limit her (sexual, personal, intellectual) self-realization. However, the gender-neutral language employed in the scholarly passage shows that she, as a woman, is not the only one suffering under the conditions introduced by the militarized state, and Dan's freedom is also limited, since he is forced to identify with Serb nationalism and defend it as a soldier: 'Wenn nicht sein Geschlecht und seine Nationalität, so erinnert ihn schon die Zwangswehrpflicht an das Bedürfnis nach "Kulturverteidigung"' (p. 19).

Hadžibeganović depicts a world in which any sort of in-between positionality, in terms of either ethnicity, sexuality, or gender, is undesirable and dangerous. However, the story opposes such aggressive assignment of identity through its style, in which layers of meaning are multiplied, references unstable and positionalities are in flux. A rejection of the notion of a stable identity is signalled by the multilingual title *zz00m: 24 Std. mix I. of me oder Penthesilea in Sarajevo*, where the conjunction 'oder' is highly ambiguous, destabilizing the position of 'me'. The blurring of boundaries between identities is aided by intertextual references, which open up new

possible positionalities, with the ‘roles’ found in films and literature serving as an addition to the repertoire of social roles which are available to protagonists (or which they are expected to occupy). The story explores the limitations imposed on female subjects in wartime, contrasting the fate of the protagonists with two iconic cultural artefacts, both concerned with murderous, sexualized ‘deviants’. However, rather than being the source of danger, the women in the story are exposed to violence and male rage, which they must navigate to survive. They are not impermeable sex icons or larger-than life frenzied warriors, but rather young students whose existence has been shattered by forces which they cannot control.

Texts set in Vienna: gender, class, and ethnicity

The tone of Hadžibeganović’s texts set in Vienna is defiant, provocative and rebellious. As she herself puts it, these are ‘Stimmen aus dem Jetzt’, which address hard, concrete realities and social problems.⁶⁰⁹ Issues such as work and residence permits, lack of housing, everyday humiliations and structural racism all find their way into her works and reflect the experiences of Bosnian refugees in the 1990s and their precarious existence on the margins of Austrian society, which was very different to the situation of first Yugoslav *Gastarbeiter*, most of whom had a settled status and a residence permit by the time the war started.

‘tut frau das?’ – migration and lack of feminist solidarity

‘Etwas läuft’ is a short story, written in the third person, recounting a chance encounter between two acquaintances from Bosnia: Nella and a character called ‘die Große’, who happen to be taking the same underground train. The narrative perspective in the story is not stable, which creates an effect of disturbance. The opening remark by the omniscient narrator is followed by a passage focalized through Nella’s point of view, where the reader finds out that Nella suffers from menstrual symptoms and does not want to engage with other passengers. The perspective then switches to omniscience mid-paragraph: ‘Da sie sich vor den Gesichtern der Einsteigenden scheut, senkt sie die Nase in die Zeitungen. Doch es wäre besser für sie, wenn sie schauen würde! Unter den Einsteigenden ist eine’.⁶¹⁰ The sudden

⁶⁰⁹ Interview with Alma Hadžibeganović.

⁶¹⁰ Alma Hadžibeganović, *ilda zuferka rettet die kunst* (Vienna: edition exil, 2000), p. 20. Further references are given after quotations in the text and the title is abbreviated as *ilda*.

intrusion of the narrative 'wir' (as an instance which knows more than the character), creates a comic effect, by foreshadowing the chance meeting between the women. It also gives the narrative an air of orality, and makes the time of narration line up with narrated time.

Very quickly, however, the omniscient 'wir' gives way to external focalization, also called behaviourist narrative, when relating the actions of 'die Große'. In the next sentence, the focalization alternates again, this time shifting from external to internal focalization, giving the reader an insight into the character's thoughts: 'Es schaut so aus, als ob sie in den letzten Wagon wollte. Normalerweise pflegt sie, dort einzusteigen, doch in letzter Sekunde überlegt sie es sich anders' (*ilda*, p. 20). These changes are interesting since the switches between zero, internal and external focalization are not always marked. Therefore, it is not always clear whose point of view is conveyed by the narrative, as in the sentence: 'Die Eingestiegene springt sofort zum Zungensport über, hüpfte über den Bock' (*ilda*, p. 21). This statement could come directly from the omniscient narrator but it also could reveal Nella's thoughts; she feels assaulted by her friend's incessant speech, described later in the story as 'Klatschnetz' (*ilda*, p. 21), 'Wortmasse' (*ilda*, p. 22), 'sprachliche Reaktorenauswürfe' (*ilda*, p. 25). The text makes clear that even though they are childhood friends, the two women are very different, as already signalled by their appearance. Nella wears scruffy clothes and Doc Martens, whereas 'die Große' is dressed in a leather jacket and suspects Nella of belonging to an 'Alternative Menschengruppe' (*ilda*, p. 21). Lines of division, exclusion and judgement are present on many different levels, and patterns of identification and solidarity are not determined by the figures' origin. The disorientating effect of the frequent shifts in focalization make it difficult, however, to say with certainty whose judgement and whose prejudice is being espoused.

The relationship between the two Bosnian acquaintances, is thus characterized by its lack of feminist solidarity. The ruthless inspection of Nella's body undertaken by her female friend recalls Rosalind Gill's arguments concerning the postfeminist sensibility which can be found in mainstream representations of women since the late 1980s. In Gill's terms, contemporary media portray femininity as primarily a bodily property, which means that the 'possession of a "sexy body"' is presented as women's

key (if not sole) source of identity'.⁶¹¹ The fact that this sexy body needs to be maintained by the woman who wishes to remain desirable to men means that her diet, style, and exercise regime all need to be monitored, controlled and managed. Gill suggests that post-feminist media narratives often falsely portray makeovers and dieting as a woman's free choice. In fact, however, the woman's attention to her body is complicit with the logic of patriarchy, according to which a woman's main pursuit in life is to be desirable and available to men.

At the same time, the story foregrounds the significance of class, since the female protagonists are all members of the working class. The narrator states: 'Die mieseste U in Wien heißt U6. Sie fährt die sechste Unterstufe der Arbeitswelt auf der Gesellschaftsleiter. Sauber getrennte Gürtel-Linie, Stammfahrgäste starmüde' (*ilda*, p. 19). Sophie Weilandt points out that the U6 connects Florisdorf, Ottakring and Meidling, i.e. traditional working-class districts with high numbers of migrants.⁶¹² The Gürtel refers to an ancient fortification in Vienna, separating such districts as Ottakring, Rudofsheim, Währing, Favoriten, and Meidling from the inner city (Fig. 5.1). Geographer Michael Pacione notes that following the arrival of many migrants in Vienna after 1991, ethnic segregation increased in the city, with Austrian residents leaving the districts with the highest numbers of foreign residents, resulting in a trend 'indicative of the early stages of ghettoisation'.⁶¹³ Yugoslav migrants clustered in districts 15, 16 and 17.⁶¹⁴

⁶¹¹ Rosalind Gill, 'Postfeminist Media Culture: Elements of a Sensibility', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 10.2 (2007), 147–66 (p. 149).

⁶¹² Sophie Weilandt, 'Wien im "fremden" Blick. Die Rolle und Darstellung Wiens in der Literatur österreichischer AutorInnen mit Migrationshintergrund' (unpublished master's thesis, University of Vienna, 2011).

⁶¹³ Michael Pacione, 'Ethnic Segregation in the European City: The Case of Vienna', *Geography: Journal of the Geographical Association; Sheffield, England*, 81 (1996), 120–32 (p. 124).

⁶¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

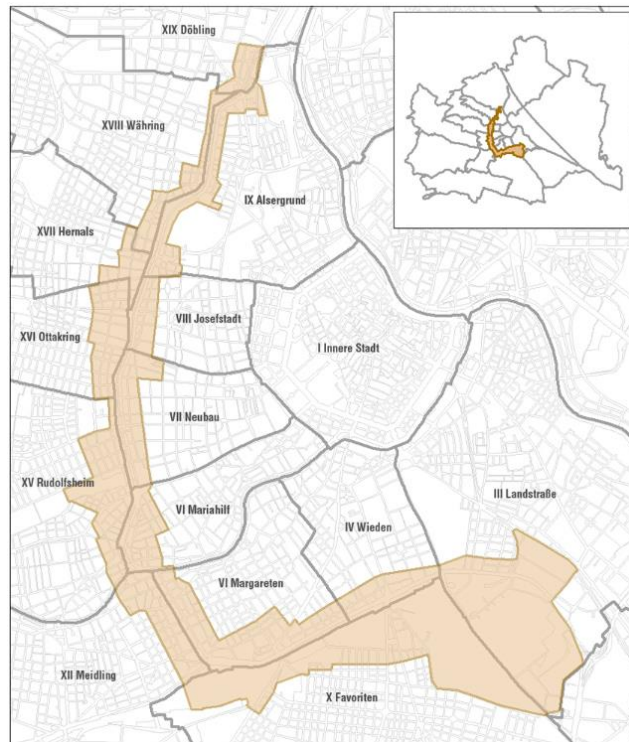


Fig. 5.1

The commuter train is a point of intersection which forces the passengers into a shared space. The two Bosnian women would not have met otherwise, since they spend their leisure time differently, which corresponds to their diverging attitudes to mixing with Austria's mainstream society. Whereas 'die Große' does not go to 'Austrian venues' (*ilda*, p. 27), Nella has never been in 'Life' in the 15th district (Rudolfsheim), a club run by her own cousin which serves a meeting point for Bosnian migrants. However, this chance meeting forces an artificial collective identity upon the women when their conversation, conducted in Bosnian, is overheard by two Austrian students of a textile college, who start to mock the Bosnians. The narrator terms this process 'die Selbstamüsierung durch Fremdenverarschung' (*ilda*, p. 25), drawing attention to the dichotomy between self and other, and to the process of exclusion which contributes to the constitution of one's own identity.

The antagonism between members of the working class in Austria and migrants from Southeastern Europe did not appear in the 1990s. Already in 1973, the Viennese Chamber of Commerce launched an anti-discrimination campaign against racist behaviour towards migrant workers, the most iconic symbol of which became the Kolaric posters (Fig. 5.2).



Fig. 5.2

As noted by Michael John, this poster campaign was financed ‘in the interest of a group of entrepreneurs to do something about the growing xenophobia in the lower classes’.⁶¹⁵ In a sense, therefore, these anti-racism measures were driven by economic, rather than political, factors. John argues: ‘With this campaign a pressure group tried to strengthen the acceptance of new migrants from southeastern Europe by calling on Austria’s past as a multicultural state’, since the boy and the guest worker depicted share the same surname.⁶¹⁶ The campaign highlighted the possible commonalities between migrants and local inhabitants and was aimed against the usage of the racist word ‘Tschusch’ to denote migrants from Southeastern Europe. When it comes up in the text by Hadžibeganović, the word evokes the historical dimension of racism faced by Bosnian refugees and guest workers in the 1970s.

By reiterating certain stereotypes associated with the Balkans, the text by Hadžibeganović conveys an atmosphere filled with prejudice and hostility, where the way of seeing and relating to others is determined by racist and sexist stereotypes.⁶¹⁷

⁶¹⁵ John, p. 135.

⁶¹⁶ Ibid.

⁶¹⁷ Sophie Weilandt argues that this strategy is meant to demonstrate the implicit power relations between the mainstream society and its minorities: ‘Die Stereotypisierung, die in der gegenseitigen Perspektivierung der Charaktere erfolgt, ist [...] Kennzeichen für die Distanz, die ungebrochen zwischen ‘österreichischen’ und ‘fremden’ Figuren existiert und die ein hierarchisches Machtverhältnis zwischen den beiden Gruppenidentitäten schafft’ (p. 146).

The protagonists are treated as types rather than individuals and their exterior characteristics are given huge prominence. Therefore, the leather jacket worn by ‘die Große’, described by the narrator as ‘tailliert-gummierte Lederjacke, Marke weibliche Population südlich der Donau’ (*ilda*, pp. 21-22) serves as an ‘expression’ of her ethnic identity. Later in the story, the jacket is treated as a sign of visible and even ostentatious foreignness by the Austrian women:

Blicke betasten die gummierte Lederjacke der Großen. Ihre Sprechart:
‘scacu-mascus schamuljamu-schagada-lamaba...’

Und *die andere* antwortet:

‘Bababpan dtschetschuwitschutschuuddubi chassachallazuri
hahahaha.’

(*ilda*, p. 24, my emphasis)

The leather jacket and the foreign speech both become markers of otherness, each enhancing the other. Whereas the jacket, however, is a recognizable referent, the gibberish sequence is fully disorienting. The materiality of the jacket is evoked by the verb ‘betasten’, which is not strange when used in conjunction with the noun ‘Blicke’, but which is out of place in the next sentence, where it seems to be referring to the figure’s way of speaking. The senses of sight, touch and hearing are mixed up, and it is not clear how the Austrians could *see* the speech of ‘die Große’, unless their hearing is disrupted by an image, or a stereotype. Therefore, in my opinion, the passage of gibberish is not a rendition of Bosnian sounds, but rather is a non-language, a string nonsensical, barbaric utterances which have nothing to do with human speech.

My interpretation differs from Weilandt’s reading of the passage. She argues that since the conversation between the Bosnian women has been ‘translated’ into German and is understandable to the reader, the story operates on two levels: ‘die Sinnebene, die nur den Sprecherinnen und den LeserInnen erschlossen ist, und die Lautebene, die für die Österreicherinnen bedeutungslos bleibt’.⁶¹⁸ She argues further: ‘Als LeserIn nimmt man somit die Position der Protagonistinnen ein, die beide Sprachen, deutsch wie bosnisch-kroatisch-serbisch, verstehen und zwischen ihnen beliebig wechseln können. Man fühlt sich mehr oder minder sprachlich in die “Fremdperspektive” ein’.⁶¹⁹ In my opinion, the question of perspective in the story cannot be unambiguously resolved, since the reader gets access to conversations which are taking place simultaneously and which they could not follow ‘in real time’.

⁶¹⁸ Weilandt, p. 148.

⁶¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 148-149.

What is more, the text plays with referential ambiguity, since the words ‘die andere’ in the quotation above could refer to the other Bosnian woman but also to the other Austrian woman. Who is speaking is dependent on whose perspective we occupy, since the gibberish can be read as the non-words uttered by the Austrians (and heard by the Bosnians) *or* the Bosnian language filtered through the Austrians’ ears, impeded by their stereotypical thinking. If the reader occupies the Austrians’ perspective, they can only ‘hear’ a string of consonants, or animalistic mumbling.

The narrator in Hadžibeganović’s story connects the episode on the metro to wider social issues when they wonder: ‘Aber, du coole Jugend, tut frau das? Schwester. SOS Mitmensch.’ Playfully replacing the masculine-sounding ‘man’ with ‘frau’, the narrator refers to ideas of sisterhood and feminist solidarity, which is lacking in the encounter between the women. *SOS Mitmensch* is a human rights organization in Austria, which was founded in 1992 and which organized the *Lichtmeer*, a huge demonstration which took place in central Vienna on 23 January 1993 as a reaction against racist rhetoric spread by the Freedom party, gathering more than 200,000 participants. By evoking the name of the initiative, the narrator highlights deep divisions within the Austrian society and diverging attitudes to migration. At the same time, the question ‘tut frau das?’ could also refer to ‘die Große’, who critiques her female friends for being either too fat or too thin and complains about Nella’s messy appearance. By evoking such politically loaded terms as ‘Schwester’ and ‘Mitmensch’, the narrator ironically points out that these terms become meaningless unless followed by action.

Hadžibeganović’s text works to deconstruct such seemingly monolithic categories as ‘women’, ‘refugees’ or ‘Bosnians’ by pointing to complex experiences produced by colliding regimes of ethnic, linguistic and gender difference and exclusion. Indeed, Nella’s subjectivity is unique and cannot be described as a sum of such mutually exclusive categories as a woman + a Bosnian + a foreigner + a refugee. In rejecting simplistic approaches to identity and pointing out the tensions between women from different backgrounds and with different life experiences, the text participates in radical feminist politics and calls for a different conceptualization of female positionality.

Shopping on Maria-Hilfmir-Straße: re-writing Austrian history

In 'PRETTY CITY @ WIR' the narrator, a Bosnian migrant, together with her friend Delirija visits an H&M clothing store on Mariahilfer Straße, Vienna's main shopping street, which in the text is playfully referred to as 'Maria-Hilfmir-Straße' (*ilda*, p. 57).

The shopping experience is rendered using military vocabulary:

Delirija und ich [...] schreiten im Partisanentempo. [...] Unser Angriffsziel: H&M, das Beutestück: die sensationelle PVC-Jacke. Kaum vor dem Geschäft angekommen, passieren wir die elektronischen Barrikaden [...]. Bei Vietnam-Temperaturen strömen Bataillone herein, zertrampeln einander um einer Aktion willen, andere laufen mit vollen Händen hinaus. [...] Viele feindlichen Hände berühren die Kleider. (*ilda*, p. 57)

The historical allusions in the passage evoke the anti-fascist struggle by the Yugoslav partisans and the Vietnam war, a brutal war fought between North and South Vietnam (supported by the US and other anti-communist countries) between 1955 and 1975. The use of military vocabulary: 'Partisanentempo', 'Angriffsziel', 'Beutestück', 'Barrikaden' or 'Bataillone' seems surprising, not least because it mixes the traditionally 'masculine' sphere of military activity with the 'feminine' activity of shopping for clothes. These two, it would seem, disjunctive realms come together through the word 'Aktion', which could refer both to a military campaign and sales in a shop. This military operation performed by shoppers is interesting, because its aim is mere plunder. Other customers are presented as enemies competing for the same precious resources. The reference to Vietnam suggests colonialization and subjugation of foreign countries, and reveals that military operations abroad are always aimed at economic gain and wealth grab. The term 'Beutestück', etymologically related to exploitation ('Ausbeutung'), comes up later in relation to Belgrade, described as 'Kriegsbeute'. Antagonism and conflict are depicted as key mechanisms in society, in which (mostly) female shoppers are pitted against each other by the forces of fast fashion and advertising.

At the same time, shopping, depicted as a gendered and an ethnicized activity, is a form of escapism for women with a Yugoslav background whom the narrator overhears on Mariahilfer Straße:

Alle fünf Schritte hört man hier unsere Muttersprache. Nein, nicht bei den Verkäuferinnen von Gassen-Eis. Svetlana probiert bei Salamander Plateauschuhe, ihre Freundin Zvezdana bei Delka, halboffen und weiß.

Sanela kauft beim H&M eine ganze Ladung weinroter und schwarzer Reizwäsche und Amela schleppt vom C&A drei kniekurze und Sanita drei bodenlange Seidenröcke mit Blumenmuster ab. (*ilda*, p. 58)

The narrator is consciously debunking clichés surrounding Yugoslavs, which is signalled by the negation in the second sentence, as though pre-empting a comment equating all Yugoslavs with guest workers. In the passage, the narrator makes clear that migrant women are not just workers, but also consumers who can afford international and Austrian brands and thus can keep up with the rest of Austrian consumer society. The women spend their free time shopping for colourful clothes, before they go back to work and put on their white uniforms: ‘Morgen fängt wieder die Putzkolonne an, weißuniformierte Soldatinnen der Raumpflege beginnen einen neuen Arbeitstag’ (*ilda*, p. 59).

Shopping is thus an ambivalent activity. On the one hand, it constitutes a form of participation in Austrian culture, which makes it possible for the migrants to blend in and disappear in the crowd, but at the same time, military vocabulary is employed to describe the world of work as well as leisure, signalling that the same disciplinary regime is operating in both realms. Mica Nava has written about this ambivalence of consumerism and notes that many critics, including Horkheimer and Adorno and their seminal critique of the culture industry, expressed in the post-war period ‘their anxiety about the advent of a vulgar and materialistic American-inspired consumer culture’.⁶²⁰ Consumerism and advertising were theorized as a manipulation of the masses aimed at enhancing ‘social conformity and political acquiescence’, and consumers were seen as passive victims of capitalist power.⁶²¹ Nava draws attention to the fact that many theorists uphold a gendered division between female consumers and male producers, with shopping often ‘constructed as impulsive and trivial, as lacking agency’.⁶²² More recent critical approaches, informed by methods developed within the field of Cultural Studies from the 1970s onwards, oppose the elitist rejection of popular culture and consumerism. Nava notes that these new studies associate consumerism with creativity, sense of liberation and choice, and stress that consumers endow the products they purchase with meanings independent from those intended by the

⁶²⁰ Mica Nava, ‘Consumerism Reconsidered: Buying and Power’, *Cultural Studies*, 5.2 (1991), 157–73 <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502389100490141> [permalink].

⁶²¹ Ibid.

⁶²² Ibid.

producer. Nava also insists that the consumer is not passive but rather able to exert (political) power.

The notion of pleasure of consumerism is important in Hadžibeganović's text, which foregrounds the fact that shopping is a sensual experience: 'Zur Stärkung [...] holen wir uns Kohlenhydrate am Pizzastand gegenüber. Da verbleiben wir eine Weile und genießen Schmelzkäse und Champignons', *ilda*, p. 58). Also, going to the shops is an excuse for the narrator to leave her noisy and run-down flat, located next to a smokehouse and a tyre shop. Consumerism is thus shown to be a dynamic activity which involves movement, pleasure, and conscious choices.

Vienna's topography from a Bosnian vantage point

Topographical details mentioned in the text are clearly meant as markers of cultural and social capital acquired by the narrator. The narrator avoids the Südbahnhof and the area around Argentinierstraße, which are significant spots associated with first-generation guest-workers in Vienna. The Südbahnhof (today's Hauptbahnhof) was among the places frequented by the newcomers from Yugoslavia, since most of them came to Austria by train. The place was not just a transit point, however, but also a popular spot where guest workers came to spend free time, speak their first language and hear the news from their country.⁶²³ In 1971, *Die Presse* called the station a 'Dorfplatz der Gastarbeiter' and reported:

Die ganze Halle des Bahnhofs ist gleichsam in streng abgegrenzte Reviere aufgeteilt, jedes Gastarbeiterdorf aus Jugoslawien oder der Türkei hat hier sein eigenes Territorium, seinen festen Standplatz. Hier treffen sich Freunde, erzählen von gemeinsam verübten Bubenstreichen und besprechen ihre Probleme in der fremden Stadt – die auch nach jahrelangem Aufenthalt noch fremd geblieben ist.⁶²⁴

The critique is signalled by the choice of vocabulary. The guest workers are depicted as provincial, childish, foreign and forever isolated from the host country. The association with criminality is evoked by the ambiguous formulation 'Bubenstreiche' and the notion of clearly delimited areas of activity of different communities and the alleged hostility between the Turks and the Yugoslavs. The fact that an urban train station has been transformed into a 'village square' contradicts the vision propagated

⁶²³ Peter Payer, 'Gehen Sie an die Arbeit'. Zur Geschichte der „Gastarbeiter“ in Wien 1964–1989', 2004, <http://www.stadt-forschung.at/downloads/Gastarbeiter.pdf> [accessed 10 May 2018], p. 8.

⁶²⁴ 'Wiens Südbahnhof wurde zum "Dorfplatz" der Gastarbeiter', *Die Presse*, 7 October 1971, quoted in Payer, p. 8.

by the municipal authorities in Vienna, according to which the capital was again turning into a metropolis after a period of stagnation and provincialism following the Second World War.⁶²⁵ The presence of guest workers in the city centre was an unexpected and unwelcome side effect of economic growth. The bodies of labourers were not supposed to occupy such a central location but rather remain hidden from sight. The arrival of migrants significantly changed the Viennese cityscape.

The historical significance of Südbahnhof is not the only thing which bothers the narrator during her shopping trip to central Vienna. Looking at the map of the city, one notes that the train station is just a stone's throw away from the Belvedere. The narrator of the text remains very conscious of her proximity to the representative baroque complex: 'Etwas Obskures kreuzt meinen Blick. Was für ein grüner Großraum dort drüben, welche Geometrie, welche Anlage! Gartengewordene Wunschgesellschaft!' (*ilda*, p. 60). The narrator admits that, even though she is studying art history, she has not been to the Belvedere. This could be linked with the fact that the political history of the place is not part of the narrator's art history course, which is rather concerned with the aesthetic and architectural features of the palace:

Möglicherweise können nur Gleichsprachige nachempfinden, daß *ich* es nicht sehen will, daß *wir* es umkreisen, das Schloß Belvedere, wie einen dunklen Keller. *Wir* kommen von einem anderen Planeten, wo es keine klaren Begrenzungslinien um Rasenflächen gibt, keine geometrischen Anlagen und keinen Sinn, darüber zu diskutieren. (*ilda*, p. 61, my emphasis)

Mixing the first person singular and first person plural, the narrator suggests that her sentiment is shared by other Yugoslavs, to whom she refers as 'Gleichsprachige', since the political entity which held them together no longer exists. The zeugma present in the passage destabilizes the spatial meaning of the phrase 'es gibt', and the antecedent of the adverb 'darüber' is not clear. The sentence itself crosses grammatical borderlines and disturbs linguistic order, thus upsetting the harmony embodied in the architectural ensemble. The association with a dark cellar evokes repressed, hidden truths which have been ignored, and is an image very often associated with the crimes committed during the Second World war, as was the case in Bodrožić's novel. Hadžibeganović's text suggests that only those whose perspective is affected by their marginal position see through the facade of the garden-

⁶²⁵ Cf: Karl Ziak, *Wiedergeburt einer Weltstadt. Wien 1945-1965* (Vienna: Verlag für Jugend und Volk, 1965).

like ‘dream society’. The story ends, in a manner typical of Hadžibeganović, on an ambivalent note, with the narrator admitting that she may, after all, engage with Vienna’s architecture: ‘Vielleicht, gehe ich einmal dorthin, in das Schloß, beim Südbahnhof. Einfach so. (Wenn ich dazukomme.)’ (*ilda*, p. 61). This nonbinding statement is an assertion of the narrator’s agency and power to choose, and a reversal of power structures, whereby the Belvedere is not named but rather identified as the building next to the train station.

The Belvedere comprises two palaces and an extensive garden and was built at the beginning of the 18th Century as a summer residence for Prince Eugene of Savoy (1663-1736).⁶²⁶ Prince Eugene was a very successful military commander who was ‘in the service of three emperors of the baroque period: Leopold I, Joseph I, and Charles VI’.⁶²⁷ In the historiography of the 19th and 20th Centuries, Prince Eugene gained a mythical status and was idealized as an Austrian national hero. Historians note that the ‘Habsburg ideal of a Central Europe united under the dynasty rests primarily on the achievements of Prince Eugene’.⁶²⁸ The commander stood for Austria’s past military glory, but also for ‘the supranational idea of a monarchy that brought together the peoples of Central Europe and the Balkans’.⁶²⁹ In 1865, a statue of Prince Eugene was erected on Vienna’s Heldenplatz.

The narrator in Hadžibeganović’s text refers to Prince Eugene’s military achievements, noting that his troops managed to lift the Turkish siege of Vienna in 1683 and occupied Belgrade in 1717: ‘Prinz Eugen und die Türken, der Rückzug bis zu unseren Städten – und dann stop! [...] Fackeln des Fortschritts brannten in Sarajevo nicht, dafür aber die Serays und Handschriften, goldverziert. Früher oder später war auch Belgrad Kriegsbeute’ (*ilda*, p. 61). Through a striking zeugma, juxtaposing the idea of progress with the destruction of Ottoman palaces and manuscripts, the narrator reveals her contempt for the Austrian ‘civilizing’ mission, which was always motivated by economic and military considerations rather than respect for Bosnian culture. The image of fire suggests that progress and military conquest are interrelated.

⁶²⁶ ‘Belvedere Museum Wien’ https://www.belvedere.at/bel_de/belvedere/ueber_uns [accessed 10 May 2018]

⁶²⁷ Filip Šimetin Šegvić and Tomislav Brandjolica, ‘The Age of Heroes in Historiography: The Example of Prince Eugene of Savoy’, *Austrian History Yearbook*, 44 (2013), 211–33 (p. 211).

⁶²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

⁶²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

The destruction and plunder of Sarajevo by the forces of Prince Eugene took place in October 1697. The event was described in Prince's military diary:

On 23 October I placed the troops in a broad front on a height directly overlooking the city. From there I sent detachments to plunder it. The Turks had already taken the best things to safety, but still a great quantity of all sorts of goods remained behind. Towards evening the city began to burn. [...] We let the city and the whole surrounding area go up in flames.⁶³⁰

Furthermore, the fact that Belgrade was for the Austrian army nothing more than war booty further emphasizes the power relation existing between the superior European power and the lands it conquered. The reference to the conquest of Belgrade could also be read as a reminder of Austria's military aggression against the Balkans which continued into the twentieth century. In fact, the image of Prince Eugene was used in Austro-Hungarian military campaigns against Serbia during the First and the Second World War. In 1914, after Austro-Hungary declared war on Serbia, postcards were sold depicting Prince Eugene storming Belgrade.⁶³¹ During the Second World War, 'the SS Volunteer Mountain Division "Prinz Eugen" was supposed to spread fear in the Balkans in accordance with the memory of Eugene's invincibility, just as the songs of Eugene were broadcast on the day of the attack on Belgrade'.⁶³² Thus, Prince Eugene is not just a figure who carried out ruthless military campaigns in the Balkans but also a symbol used by the Nazis, who clearly believed that his achievements were in line with the ideology of subjugation and annihilation of Eastern Europe. Hadžibeganović's text shows that the glorification of Prince Eugene as a national hero is highly problematic and points to Austria's complex relation with its Nazi past, especially in relation to the Balkans.

Conclusion: a foreign troublemaker

Looking at Hadžibeganović's works, it is not possible to agree with Wiebke Sievers, who argues that texts by Austrian authors with a history of migration pay little attention to issues such as workers' solidarity.⁶³³ According to Sievers, Austrian works differ from German guest worker literature from the 1970s, since 'while the

⁶³⁰ Gerda Mraz, *Prinz Eugen: sein Leben, sein Wirken, seine Zeit* (Vienna: Brandstätter, 1985), quoted in Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (London: Pan Books, 2002), pp. 84-85.

⁶³¹ Šegvić and Brandjolica, p. 215.

⁶³² Ibid., p. 216.

⁶³³ Sievers, 'Writing Politics', p. 1229.

guestworker authors subscribed to the belief that social change would bring them equality, the [...] works [by Dimitré Dinev, Radek Knapp and Doron Rabinovici] seem to imply that racism and exclusion can only be overcome on the individual level'.⁶³⁴ In fact, the issues of work and class are very important in Hadžibeganović's texts, which show that racism and discrimination are a structural problem which cannot be fully addressed by an individual.

Equally, the texts are preoccupied with political developments in the former Yugoslavia, and the rise in nationalist ideology in the 1990s, which led to a radical re-patriarchalization of Yugoslav society.⁶³⁵ In line with the new nationalist rhetoric, the woman's role was reduced to being a wife and a mother of numerous ethnically pure children. This made feminist critiques even more urgent. Some women rejected the national identity imposed upon them by the newly constituted states and

refused to simply accept their new citizenship if it overlapped with an imposed ethnicity. Suddenly ceasing to be Yugoslav feminists, they purposefully chose to be only feminists, as if feminism itself provided the space of citizenship. [...] Being feminist assumed protection of the right to self-determination and autonomy, which was equated with non-acceptance of the imposed ethno-national citizenship. It also involved a non-compromising rejection of militarist ideology and the logic that the state could be a victim, and a refusal of the patriarchal politics which divides women on the basis of ethnicity and denies solidarity between them.⁶³⁶

Hadžibeganović's preoccupation with patriarchy, female sexuality, and women's right to independent intellectual activity constitutes a radical defence of women's rights endangered by the logic of nationalism. The texts analyzed here, by using such strategies as interlingualism, alliteration, enstrangement, puns, and code mixing, examine the constructed nature of gender and ethnic identities. The works show women who exert their agency even if their options are limited by patriarchal/racist power relations. In this way, the works address issues of belonging and identity, pointing to alternative sites where identities can be negotiated and shifted.

The individual issues of Hadžibeganović's protagonists – be it commuting, shopping, studying, reading, or eating – are always connected to social, political and

⁶³⁴ Ibid., p. 1230.

⁶³⁵ Lukić, p. 227.

⁶³⁶ Adriana Zaharijević, 'Dissidents, Disloyal Citizens and Partisans of Emancipation: Feminist Citizenship in Yugoslavia and Post-Yugoslav Spaces', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 49 (2015), 93–100 (p. 96).

structural questions. Her work successfully demonstrates that various forms of oppression are related, and that resistance must be directed against the forces of capitalism, patriarchy, and ethnonationalism. The style employed by Hadžibeganović is crucial to the explosive power of the texts. Subversive and innovative, it demonstrates that language is not a neutral means of communication but rather a tool of power and exclusion. Multilingual strategies are part of the author's project to mark her texts as visibly 'ausländisch' and thus to carve up space for migrants within the otherwise monolingual literary landscape.

The texts are marked by a radical rejection of social and literary norms and a refusal to accept rigid power structures. In my interview with the author in May 2018, she said that she never wanted to play the part of 'Parademigrantin' or 'Musterschülerin' or to fulfil the expectations imposed by the German-speaking majority on the so-called 'migrant writers'.⁶³⁷ In this, she differs from Saša Stanišić and Marica Bodrožić, who position themselves as part of the dominant literary scene in Germany. Stanišić opposes the idea that 'immigrant literature' is a distinct philological category, and argues that writers with a history of migration have 'almost-mainstream qualities'.⁶³⁸ Equally, Bodrožić insists that she does not feel like a *Migrationsautorin*, which she makes clear in an interview:

Eigentlich habe ich eher den Eindruck, dass ich mich hier überhaupt nicht fremd fühle und dass mich das Wort 'Migration' oder 'Migrationsliteratur' ein bisschen hinauswirft aus einem Zustand, in dem ich mich längst befinde: einem Zustand der Normalität im Umgang mit der Sprache, mit der Literatur, mit meinem Leben in einer Stadt wie Berlin.⁶³⁹

By contrast, Hadžibeganović's explicit intention is not to fit in and instead to play up her status as a foreigner, in this way subverting the rigid monolingual and monocultural framework that underlies the politics of publishing, reviewing and literary marketing.

⁶³⁷ Interview with Alma Hadžibeganović, 5 May 2018.

⁶³⁸ Stanišić, 'Three Myths of Immigrant Writing'.

⁶³⁹ Michael Braun, 'Ankunft in Wörtern. Interview mit Marica Bodrožić', 16 December 2010, http://www.kas.de/upload/themen/deutschesprache/interview_bodrozic.pdf [accessed 28 May 2018], p. 1.

Conclusion

Every year, a hundred international participants from South and Eastern Europe, Arabic countries as well as North America, Israel and France are invited to come to Berlin for five months and work for an MP at the German Bundestag. The aims of the programme are to spread democracy and tolerance, to deepen the participants' understanding of cultural diversity and to foster international peace.⁶⁴⁰ In March 2018, I was one of the lucky participants and, as part of the induction offered by the organizers, I took part in a five-day 'intercultural training'. The curriculum made me think once again of the observations made by Leslie A. Adelson in her monograph *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature*, which formed the starting point for this thesis. The training opened with a screening of the film *Almanya – Willkommen in Deutschland* (2011), which was later discussed as a testimony to the experiences of first Turkish migrants in Germany.⁶⁴¹ When I remarked that what we had seen was a work of fiction rather than a documentary, the trainer responded that he had spoken to many descendants of Turkish *Gastarbeiter* and they had confirmed the film's authenticity. We then moved seamlessly into a discussion of cultural differences between the Turks and the Germans, based on what we had learned from the film. Adelson's rejection of the referential presumption surrounding Turkish figures in literature as well as public life seemed more relevant than ever.

Later in the day, we were presented with the 'iceberg model', an idea derived from management research, according to which culture is like an iceberg floating in the ocean, with its tip visible above the surface (which corresponds to the allegedly superficial elements of culture, such as food, music, language etc.) and its larger part placed underwater (which represents the invisible i.e. values, beliefs, gender relations). Cultures are thus closed off and impenetrable, and any intercultural contact would inevitably lead to a clash. Subsequently, everyone from our international group was asked to depict the culture of their home country as an iceberg. Not everyone liked the idea that a country's national culture can be represented as a clearly delineated entity, however. The participants from Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and

⁶⁴⁰ 'Deutscher Bundestag - Internationales Parlaments-Stipendium (IPS)', <http://www.bundestag.de/ips> [accessed 30 May 2018].

⁶⁴¹ *Almanya - Willkommen in Deutschland*, dir. by Yasemin Samdereli (Concorde, 2011).

Macedonia teamed up and produced one diagram devoted to the Balkans, subverting the alleged equivalence of nation state and culture.

Adelson opposes the notion that national cultures constitute originary, discrete, unchanging ‘worlds’ incapable of undergoing historical transformation. While she does not mention the iceberg model in her study, it effectively illustrates the dangers associated with thinking of nation states as static, discrete entities, and of dismissing the historical dimension of national cultures. This static model is not tenable, not least because icebergs are about to melt due to global warming. This rigid paradigm cannot account for the diverse body of German-language texts which emerged as part of literature of migration in Germany and Austria after 1989. In Adelson’s words, insisting that national cultures ‘remain stable while unstable migrants are uncertainly suspended between them’ is detrimental to the analysis of literature.⁶⁴² Such binary thinking ‘renders scholarship blind to some striking innovations’ to be found in texts of migration.⁶⁴³

Aspects of that scholarly blindness are addressed by Marica Bodrožić in an essay published in 2008. Bodrožić writes:

Sehr oft werde ich aufgrund meiner schon im Vorfeld als Mehrwelt definierten Biographie nach dem DAZWISCHEN gefragt, nach dem Dazwischen der Sprachen, der Länder, der Echoräume, der Erinnerung. [...]

Auch das Dazwischen ist erst einmal ein Ganzes. Für mich als schreibenden Menschen ist es eine unerschöpfliche Quelle, ein Ort gleichsam, zu dem ich immer wieder gehen und den ich betreten kann – literarisch betreten –, und das bedeutet natürlich: Ich erfinde mein Dazwischen, erfinde es nicht etwa für mein Leben, nein: Es ist eine Erfindung, eine Erfahrung, die sich beim Schreiben einstellt.

Das Mehrweltgefühl offenbart sich von selbst.

[...] Diese Fragen lösen sich beim Schreiben von selbst, stellen sich nicht in dieser ethnographischen Form. [...]

Was im Text als Mehrwelt schon da ist und sich als solche ohne Erklärung auch mühelos verstehen lässt, wir auf der Rezeptionsebene wieder getrennt. Warum? [...] Um was zu tun? Das Fremde wieder zu verorten, wohin es gehört?⁶⁴⁴

Bodrožić alludes to clichéd notions which often determine the public’s reception of literary texts. The image of ‘DAZWISCHEN’ evokes Adelson’s point that migrants

⁶⁴² Adelson, *The Turkish Turn*, p. 4.

⁶⁴³ Ibid., p. 5.

⁶⁴⁴ Marica Bodrožić, ‘Die Sprachländer des Dazwischen’, in *Eingezogen in die Sprache, angekommen in der Literatur: Positionen des Schreibens in unserem Einwanderungsland*, ed. by Uwe Pörksen (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2008), pp. 67–75 (pp. 67-68).

and writers with a history of migration are often presumed to be suspended between two worlds, the space between which 'is cast as a site of discriminatory exclusions of happy hybridity'.⁶⁴⁵

Bodrožić re-thinks this in-between space and claims that it is not a product of a clash of languages, states or cultures but rather an undamaged realm which she is free to enter in her literary work, and, importantly, a realm which she invents when writing. The innovative potential of literature of migration lies in its ability to evoke new possible realities which transcend the divisive categories otherwise structuring our social and political reality. The literature of migration does not create added value understood in economic, quantitative terms (Mehrwert) but rather brings about a new, multiply connected world, a 'Mehrwelt'. Bodrožić's 'Dazwischen', therefore, is not a place of scarcity or half-existence but rather the focal point of her life. She states:

diese *neuen Räume* sind keine per se dem Ursprung entgegenstehenden Räume. Da müsste ja das Dazwischen nur ein Halbes sein. Und in diesem Halben wäre ein ganzes Leben nie denkbar. [...] ich möchte aufzeigen, dass das Dazwischen kein Provisorium ist, sondern eben immer auch zum Leben dazugehört.⁶⁴⁶

Rejecting the dichotomy of old and new, ex-Yugoslav and German, Bodrožić opposes rigid categorizations based on ethnic identity and place of birth, and claims that ambiguity is always already part of life. A spatial metaphor, 'DAZWISCHEN' connotes first and foremost an outside, lack of belonging and an inability to fit into the existent categories. This negative image is born out of binary thinking which does not allow subjectivities to be constituted by more than either-or. In re-claiming the creative power of 'DAZWISCHEN', Bodrožić insists that it is possible to be formed, as a subject, by a multiplicity of cultures, languages and movements. Yasemin Yildiz states in *Beyond the Mother Tongue*: 'Multiple origins, relations, and emotional investments are possible and occur daily [...]. This means that we need to reimagine subjects as open to crisscrossing linguistic identifications, if not woven from the fabric of numerous linguistic sources'.⁶⁴⁷ This echoes Bodrožić's demand: 'ich darf mich verändern: Identität und Sprache sind nichts Festes, sie sind eher ein Fluidum, ein

⁶⁴⁵ Adelson, *The Turkish Turn*, p. 5.

⁶⁴⁶ Bodrožić, 'Die Sprachländer des Dazwischen', p. 72.

⁶⁴⁷ Yildiz, *Beyond the Mother Tongue*, p. 205.

Unterwegssein [...]. Das Leben fließt, wie könnte Identität dann etwas Festes sein!?'⁶⁴⁸

Relegated to the unhappy realm of 'DAZWISCHEN', however, writers with a history of migration in Germany today are still treated as outsiders who will remain forever marked by their foreign origin. Later in her essay, Bodrožić voices her desire for change: 'Irgendwann wird aber dennoch hoffentlich die Zeit kommen, in der das Blut nicht mehr so eine große Rolle spielt'.⁶⁴⁹ The German-language literary scene, she asserts, still suffers from essentialist thinking and prejudice. Writing in a language which is not one's first continues to be viewed with suspicion, whilst the mother tongue retains its privileged position as a language of kinship, childhood, and ethnic belonging.

In various ways, multilingual texts analysed in this thesis critically interrogate such static and essentialist notions of language, identity and kinship and reveal the dangerous overlaps between national ideology and ideas of linguistic and racial purity. I have argued that the works by Saša Stanišić, Marica Bodrožić and Alma Hadžibeganović constitute a critical intervention into contemporary German-language literature, expanding German and Austrian national imaginaries and conjuring a non-ethnic and non-hierarchical allegiance to the German language. The texts deploy multilingual strategies to expose the links between patriarchal oppression, heteronormativity and nationalist narratives (Stanišić), to posit the radical interconnectedness of traumatic histories spanning various time periods and cultural contexts (Bodrožić), and to convey the displaced positionalities of women subjected to violent regimes of racist exclusion and sexualization (Hadžibeganović).

While insisting that literature of Turkish migration makes a vital contribution to the German memory archive after 1989, Adelson also asserts that no contexts are pre-given when analysing these texts. She states:

The process of determining whether the cultural vectors of imaginative reorientation in any given case are predominantly national, transnational, postnational, or something else altogether is an uncertain interpretative enterprise, but this is no reason not to undertake it. Iconoclastic lines of thought direct us to where we had not thought to go, but curiosity has its rewards.⁶⁵⁰

⁶⁴⁸ Bodrožić, 'Die Sprachländer des Dazwischen', p. 71.

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 74.

⁶⁵⁰ Adelson, *The Turkish Turn*, p. 29.

As I have demonstrated in my comparative analyses, it is not possible to interpret texts of post-Yugoslav migration as either exclusively Austrian, Bosnian, or post-Yugoslav. My readings have not been informed by a notion of a static origin or an unchangeable cultural/linguistic/ethnic context that needs to be re-constructed for the reader to ‘make sense’ of the works. Rather, my aim was to bring the texts into dialogue with each other and to show their diverging preoccupation with Bosnia and other post-Yugoslav spaces. Tracking transnational bonds and alliances, often born out of uprooting, displacement and non-belonging, I have attempted to map a new territory, intersected by what could be imagined as *transnational lines of thought* spanning Germany and the former Yugoslavia.

The comparative analysis of Marica Bodrožić’s *kirschholz und alte gefühle* and Jasmila Žbanić’s films has brought out latent meanings in the novel and demonstrated how a German-language text resonates with the work of a Bosnian filmmaker. Peter Handke’s *Sommerlicher Nachtrag zu einer winterlichen Reise* and Saša Stanišić’s *Wie der Soldat das Grammofon repariert* managed to inscribe Višegrad into the German literary landscape and into the Western cultural imaginary, as further witnessed by a recent novel by Nicol Ljubić’s novel *Meeresstille* (2011) which is partly set in Višegrad and addresses the theme of guilt and genocide from a new, post-Yugoslav vantage point.

Is there a tension between the national and the transnational as categories of analysis? This study has shown that texts of post-Yugoslav migration revisit and update German and Austrian historical narratives related to the Habsburg Empire and its presence in the Balkans, the Third Reich’s occupation of Yugoslavia as well as the arrival of Yugoslav guest workers in both states after the Second World War. I have argued that literary texts concerned with the Yugoslav Wars, along with other works of the eastern European turn, do not just migrate *into* Germany’s national memory but rather uncover the long yet sometimes forgotten history of German and Austrian involvement in the Balkans. Andreas Huyssen remarked in his 2003 discussion of diasporic memory that Germany’s re-unification brought with it an intensified preoccupation with the issue of national identity in Germany. After the fall of the wall, ‘Berlin’s urban, political, and mental pasts began to haunt the present in powerful ways. Memory began to take material form in the debates and practices of urban

reconstruction and national self-understanding'.⁶⁵¹ One of the challenges facing migrants in contemporary Germany became the memory of 'the Holocaust as an identity shaping *Zivilisationsbruch*' in the country's national memory discourse.⁶⁵² Crucially, Huyssen asks: 'How can non-European or peripheric diasporic people, including former colonial subjects living in Europe, relate to such a claim [...]? And what is the effect of such an overriding foundational claim on the memories of European colonialism?'.⁶⁵³

In the thesis, I have discussed the various historical and political entanglements between the German-speaking countries and the Balkans and the way in which the memory of colonialism, the Holocaust and the collapse of Yugoslavia are negotiated in multilingual texts. I have demonstrated that texts of post-Yugoslav migration make a vital contribution to the German intellectual discussion of the Yugoslav Wars and constitute a response to Handke's controversial texts (Stanišić), engage with the memory of the Second World War and its felt presence in the Berlin Republic (Bodrožić) and point to gaps in the Austrian national narrative which downplays the colonial exploitation of the Balkans (Hadžibeganović).

Rejecting the view of German culture as an ahistorical, fixed entity, I view it in terms of a dynamic engagement with the country's past and present. The first two chapters of the thesis have provided key insights into the changing nature of the German cultural landscape after 1989 and demonstrated that the political and discursive engagements with the Yugoslav Wars coincided with a massive shift in the German cultural memory and the changed self-understanding of the Federal Republic's role in international politics. The decision by the red-green coalition to launch Germany's first military intervention after the Second World War and to participate in NATO airstrikes against Serbia in 1999 constituted a watershed moment in the country's post-war history. Today, Germany is a major diplomatic and military power, with troops stationed in Somalia, Sudan, Mali, Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria.

The perceived parallels between the Serb war crimes committed in Bosnia and later in Kosovo and the genocidal policy of the Nazi regime were variously interpreted by German politicians and intellectuals. Initially, many commentators were sceptical

⁶⁵¹ Andreas Huyssen, 'Diaspora and Nation: Migration into Other Pasts', *New German Critique*, 2003, 147–64 (p. 159).

⁶⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 153.

⁶⁵³ *Ibid.*

towards the use of military force by the West against Bosnian Serbs supported by Serbia's President Milošević. It was not until the news of the massacre in Srebrenica that leading left-liberal figures such as Joschka Fischer or Jürgen Habermas spoke out in support of NATO's armed intervention. Germany's historical responsibility stemming from the legacy of the Second World War was re-interpreted in terms of an obligation to prevent any future cases of genocide. By 1999, German politicians and intellectuals had no qualms about claiming the moral high ground in relation to Serbia, asserting that Germany was now on the right side of history, having joined the US and the UK in their effort to save Kosovo Albanians.

Critical of the perceived media consensus casting Serbia as the war's main aggressor, Peter Handke's travelogues sparked a heated debate in the German and international media. I have highlighted the omissions and essentialist tendencies present in Handke's engagement with sites such as Vukovar in Croatia and Višegrad in Bosnia and demonstrated the orientalizing bias in his refusal to acknowledge the suffering of Bosnian Muslim victims of the war, who in the texts are denied individuality and perceived solely through the prism of religious and ethnic allegiance.

For Handke, Bosnia and the former Yugoslavia are static and ahistorical locations, idealized, as in the case of Slovenia and later Serbia, or marginalized and exoticized, as in the case of spaces previously inhabited by Bosnian Muslims. Multilingual texts of post-Yugoslav migration offer a way out of this hegemonic yet simplifying discourse. They pose radical questions: Can German literature accommodate the voices of Muslim, or half-Muslim, subjects? What happens if German-language literature can no longer be reduced to the German national archive but constitutes an intervention branching out into the realms of world literature and transnational feminisms? What if 'typically' German and Austrian locations, such as Berlin and Vienna, are re-mapped by flows of linguistic and narrative innovation?

In her analysis of migrant engagements with the legacy of the Third Reich in Turkish-German literature, Adelson maintains that the literature of migration 'participates in German and transnational cultures of memory as both undergo broad change. Yet it would be misleading to elide the German dimensions of these interventions in a rush to embrace the transnational'.⁶⁵⁴ Far from claiming a

⁶⁵⁴ Adelson, *The Turkish Turn*, p. 82.

globalization of the memory of the Holocaust as ‘a measure for humanist and universalist identifications’,⁶⁵⁵ my concern in the thesis has been to open up the exclusively national lens through which to view the legacy of the Third Reich and the way in which the past informs the present. For me, ‘transnational’ is not a synonym of ‘global’ or ‘cosmopolitan’ but rather a critical term signalling a political stance highlighting the dangers of nationalism, of national narratives instrumentalizing the memory of the Second World War and of the dangerous fixation on the Holocaust as an event which can only be commemorated within a framework which remains, as Huyssen notes, ‘fundamentally and persistently national’.⁶⁵⁶

As I have demonstrated in my discussion of the political rhetoric surrounding the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo, ‘Auschwitz’ figured in many public statements as an emblem of, on the one hand, Germany’s guilt, and, on the other, of genocide and abominable war crimes in general. The symbolic power of the Holocaust was mobilized in topical debates which were meant to justify strategic decisions by the government, including military action. These references make the war in the former Yugoslavia into an integral part of the German *Erinnerungskultur*.

At a time when leading politicians manage to push through their initiative to establish a ‘Heimatministerium’ and claim that Islam does not belong in Germany, the right of variously defined migrants, refugees and foreigners to be acknowledged as an integral part of Germany’s national culture is being increasingly contested.⁶⁵⁷ By questioning the idea of a stable ethnic or national identity reflected in one’s first language, multilingual texts translate the migratory displacement and uprooting into new forms of habitation and dynamic belonging, transforming the German language with bold experimentation, linguistic mixing, incorrect usage and thus subverting the very foundation of hierarchical power relations entrenched in sexist, racist and homophobic linguistic structures. Questioning traditional models of home, belonging and familial kinship, the texts help imagine new, non-ethnicized and transnational forms of bonding.

⁶⁵⁵ Levy and Sznajder, p. 88.

⁶⁵⁶ Huyssen, ‘Diaspora and Nation’, p. 164.

⁶⁵⁷ Julia Bähr, ‘Männerverein Heimatministerium: Das Spiegelkabinett des Horst Seehofer’, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 28 March 2018, <http://www.faz.net/1.5517227> [accessed 29 May 2018].

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Almanya - Willkommen in Deutschland, dir. by Yasemin Samdereli (Concorde, 2011)

Cabaret Balkan, dir. by Goran Paskaljević (StudioCanal, 1998)

For Those Who Can Tell No Tales, dir. by Jasmila Žbanić (Deblokada, 2013)

Grbavica, dir. by Jasmila Žbanić (Deblokada, 2006)

No Man's Land, dir. by Danis Tanović (Océan Films/Rai Cinema/Momentum Pictures, 2001)

Penthesilea, Queen of Amazons, dir. by Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen (The Other Cinema, 1977)

Pretty Village, Pretty Flame, dir. by Srđan Dragojević (RTS/Cobra Films, 1996)

Underground, dir. by Emir Kusturica (Ciby 2000/Komuna, 1995)

Appendices

A: Table of Contents, *Wie der Soldat das Grammophon repariert*

Chapter No.	Chapter Title	erzählte Zeit
1	Wie lange ein Herzstillstand für hundert Meter braucht, wie schwer ein Spinnenleben wiegt, warum mein Trauriger an den grausamen Fluss schreibt und was der Chefgenosse des Unfertigen als Zauberer draufhat	25 August 1991
2	Wie süß Dunkelrot ist, wie viele Ochsen man für eine Wand braucht, warum das Pferd von Kraljevic Marko mit Superman verwandt ist und wie es sein kann, dass ein Krieg zu einem Fest kommt	
3	Wer gewinnt, wenn Walross pfeift, wonach ein Orchester riecht, ab wann man Nebel nicht mehr schneiden kann und wie eine Geschichte zu einer Abmachung wird	
4	Wann Blumen Blumen sind, wie Mister Hemingway und Genosse Marx zueinander stehen, wer der wahre Tetrismeister ist und wofür Bogoljub Balvans Schal sein Gesicht erhalten muss	
5	Wann etwas ein Ereignis ist, wann ein Erlebnis, wie viele Tode Genosse Tito hat und wie der ehemals gefeierte Dreierschütze hinter das Lenkrad eines Centrotrans-Busses gelangt	
6	Was Milenko Pavlović, genannt Walross, von seiner schöner Reise mitbringt, wie das Bein des Stationsvorstehers zum Leben erwacht, wofür man Franzosen gebrauchen kann und warum die Anführungsstriche überflüssig sind	
7	Wohin schlechter Musikgeschmack führt, was der Dreipunktemann anprangert und wie schnell ein Krieg ist, wenn er einmal Anlauf genommen hat	
8	...	

- 9 Was wir im Keller spielen, wie die Erbsen schmecken, warum die Stille ihre Zähne fletscht, wer richtig heißt, was eine Brücke aushält, warum Asija weint, warum Asija strahlt 14 April 1992
- 10 Wie der Soldat das Grammophon repariert, was Genießer trinken, wie wir schriftlich in Russisch stehen, warum Döbel Spucke essen und wie es sein kann, dass eine Stadt zersplittert
- 11 Emina auf den Armen durch ihr Dorf getragen
- 12 26. April 1992
- 13 9. Januar 1993
- 14 17. Juli 1993
- 15 8. Januar 1994
- 16 Hallo. Wer? Aleksandar! So was, woher rufst du an? Nicht schlecht! Beschissen, und selbst?
- 17 16. Dezember 1995
- 18 was ich eigentlich will
- 19 1. Mai 1999
- 20 Aleksandar, ich möchte das Paket unbedingt – dir – schicken
- 21 **Als alles gut war. Von Aleksandar Krsmanović. Mit einem Vorwort von Oma Katarina und einem Aufsatz für Herrn Fazlagić**
- Vorwort
- 1 Eis
- 2 Wunsch
- 3 Parade
- 4 1. Mai 1989 oder Das Küken in der Pionierhand
- 5 Es gibt keine Partisanen mehr
- 6 Eine schöne Reise

- 7 Wie man verschwindet
- 8 Warum Čika Doktor jemandem die Wade aufgeschnitten hat
- 9 Warum Vukoje Wurm mit der drei Mal gebrochenen Nase meine Nase nicht bricht
- 10 Warum Čika Hasan und Čika Sead unzertrennlich sind und womit auch der klügste Welsgelehrte nicht rechnen kann
- 11 Wie sich Schachspiel zu Weltpolitik verhält, warum Opa Slavko weiß, dass morgen die Revolutionen kommen und wie es sein kann, dass manchmal etwas so schwer zu sagen ist
- 12 Welches Versprechen ein Staudamm halten muss, wie die schönste Sprache der Welt klingt und wie oft ein Herz schlagen muss, um die Scham zu schlagen
- 13 Warum Häuser mitfühlend und selbstlos sind, was sie musizieren und warum ich ihnen wünsche, dass sie mitfühlend und selbstlos bleiben, und vor allem fest
- 14 Welcher Sieg der schönste ist, was mir Opa Slavko zutraut und warum alle so tun, als würde die Angst kleiner werden, wenn man über sie nicht spricht
- 15 Wie es der dreisten geht, wie es der lippenlosen Drina wirklich geht, was sie vom kleinen Herrn Rzav hält und wie wenig man braucht, um glücklich zu sein wie ein Falke
- 16 *Wie lange ein Herzstillstand für hundert Meter braucht, wie schwer ein Spinnenleben wiegt, warum mein Trauriger an den grausamen Fluss schreibt und was der Chefgenosse des Unfertigen als Zauberer draufhat*

22 11. Februar 2002

23 Ich bin Asija. Sie haben Mama und Papa mitgenommen. Mein Name hat eine Bedeutung. Deine Bilder sind gemein.

11/12
February;
6 April 1992 –
11 April 1992

- 24 Von dreihundertdreißig zufällig gewählten
Nummern in Sarajevo ist bei ungefähr jeder
fünfzehnten ein Anrufbeantworter dran
- 25 Was die Wise Guys weise macht, wie hoch der
Einsatz auf die eigene Erinnerung sein darf, wer
gefunden wird und wer erfunden bleibt
- 26 Was hinter Gottes Füßen gespielt wird, wofür
sich Kiko die Zigarette aufhebt, wo Hollywood
liegt und wie Mikimäus zu antworten lernt
- 27 Ich habe Listen gemacht
- 28 Chefgenosse des Unfertigen

**B: Saša Stanišić: ‘Was wir im Keller spielen, wie die Erbsen schmecken,
warum die Stille ihre Zähne fletscht, wer richtig heißt, was eine Brücke aushält,
warum Emina weint, wie Emina strahlt’**

Kaum haben die Mütter zum Abendessen gerufen, mit flüsternden Stimmen, stürmen Soldaten das Gebäude, fragen, was gibt es, setzen sich zu uns an die Sperrholzplattentische im Keller. Sie bringen eigene Löffel mit, an ihren Handschuhen fehlen die Finger. So unbedingt dringen die Soldaten ein, wie sie auch unbedingt die Namen von allen wissen wollen, wie sie in die Decke schießen müssen, wie sie Čika Hasan und Čika Sead aus dem Treppenhaus in den Keller schubsen und zu einem der Soldaten bringen. Der aber tunkt Brot in die Erbsenbrühe, sagt: nicht unbedingt jetzt. Schnell zu Tisch, Soldaten, bitte, es wird doch kalt, hatten die Mütter nicht gerufen. Es gibt keinen Platz für Rucksäcke und Gewehre und Helme auf den kleinen Tischen, aber Zoran und ich machen für die Kalaschnikow gerne Platz. Wie heißt ihr? Wir heißen ganz gut und dürfen deswegen Helme tragen. Wie kann es sein, dass ein Helm nach Erbsenbrühe riecht, ich weiß nicht.

Bis auf die Soldaten, und dass Čika Hasan und Čika Sead vor den Sperrholzplattentischen ihre Mützen in den Händen kneten und weinen, ist alles so, wie es zuletzt immer war. Ich durfte seit heute morgen um zehn nicht aus dem Keller, ich durfte Marija nicht an den Zöpfen ziehen, tat es aber doch, ich musste Erbsen essen, obwohl Erbsen nach Bohnen schmeckten. Pünktlich um zehn Uhr dreißig begann auch heute morgen, wie an jedem Morgen in den letzten drei Wochen, der Krach.

Schweres Geschütz, nickten die Großen, und sagten entsprechende Buchstaben und Zahlen auf, VRB128, T84. Čika Petar und Čika Hasan stritten oft darüber, welcher Buchstabe und welche Zahl wohin schoss, und ob sie was trafen. Sie

sagten: „theoretisch“. Wenn unser Gebäude getroffen wurde, sagten sie „praktisch“, und lachten. Uns Kindern gefällt Artillerija besser als schweres Geschütz. Die Einschläge der Artillerija und das Gekläff der Maschinengewehre kann Zoran am besten nachahmen. Deshalb will ihn jede Mannschaft für sich haben, wenn wir Artillerija im Keller spielen. Drei gegen drei, keine Bomben erlaubt, nein, Marija du darfst nicht mitmachen, Gefangene dürfen gekitzelt werden, unbegrenzte Munition, im Aufgang zum Treppenhaus – Waffenruhe. Tattattaterte Zoran, spitzte die Lippen und schüttelte sich wie ein Verrückter! Fast immer gewann die Truppe, in der Zoran diente. Kein Wunder bei seinen Salven und seinem Schütteln. Auch heute Nachmittag haben wir gespielt. Zoran war bei den anderen. Normalerweise liefen die Mannschaften nach Spielbeginn in entgegengesetzte Richtungen, versteckten sich in finsternen Kellerecken und warteten lauernd: Wer verlässt die Stellung zuerst und stürmt zum Angriff? Konnte ganz schön langweilig werden in der Kellerecke, und wenn die anderen gar nicht kamen, begannen wir mit Murmeln zu spielen und vergaßen, dass Krieg war. Leichte Beute für den Feind, wenn er dich dann doch überrannte, und deine Waffe ist ein Glaskügelchen zwischen Daumen und Zeigefinger, meines immerhin mit einer vierfachen Feder darin. Heute sind wir den anderen heimlich gefolgt, anstatt uns zu verstecken. Sie verbarrikadierten sich hinter zwei Sauerkrautfässern und einem Bettgestell mit verrosteten Federn. Wir wollten von hinten an sie rankommen. Nach drei Schritten landeten wir links vor einer Wand, nach fünf Schritten rechts vor einem verschlossenen Kellerraum. Eine tolle Taktik. Lasst uns eine entlegene Kellerecke auf der anderen Seite suchen, schlug ich Nešo und Edin vor. Mir war eigentlich nach Murmelspielen. Wartet mal, Nešo zeigte auf die Tür, das hier ist doch der Keller von Čika Petar, da kann man durch. Drüben ist der Keller

von Čika Ratko, dahinter unser Keller mit einem Durchgang zu Čika Seads. Wenn wir von dort aus unbemerkt über den Gang kommen, dann geht alles super. Nur noch runter und zack und wir sind hinter ihnen. Los, lasst uns die Schlüssel besorgen. Na, das sind mir zu viele Keller, das dauert zu lange, sagte Edin, nahm sein Winchester-Repetiergewehr von der Schulter und schlich vor, spähte um die Ecke. Wie oft hatten wir Edin gesagt, die Winchester, das geht nicht. Die hat hier nichts verloren mit ihrer Bison-Gravur und ihren zwölf Schuss. Da kann er gleich mit Pfeil und Bogen kommen. Schieß ich eben genau. Gar nicht genau schoss er, und sah dabei auch noch komisch aus. Am Abend vor dem Schlafengehen und morgens nach dem Aufstehen klebte ihm seine Mutter mit Panzer-Tape die abstehenden Kartoffelscheibenohren am Kopf fest. Edin winkte uns heran. Zoran und seine beiden Kameraden hockten, den Rücken uns zugewandt, da und bemalten die beiden Sauerkrautfässer. Ich legte den Zeigefinger auf die Lippen und ging geduckt voran, mein AK-47 fest in den Händen, Edin und Nešo dicht hinter mir. Leise war das nicht, aber wir blieben unbemerkt. Daumen – Zeigefinger – Mittelfinger – Faust: Hurraaaaaaa!, und wir stürmten voran. Überrascht und erschrocken wichen die anderen zurück! Nur Zoran verharrte, drehte den Kopf zu mir, ließ die Kreide fallen und hob sein Maschinengewehr. Bevor er die Lippen spitzen und sich zu schütteln beginnen konnte, warf ich mich auf ihn. Zuckte er zusammen? Duckte er sich? Wollte er ausweichen? Ich weiß nicht, sah nichts. Wir stürzten zu Boden, rollten umeinander. Ich schoss in seine Seite, du bist tot, rief ich, hab dich, rief ich, trrrr. Er sagte, warte mal, es blutet, stand auf, langte unter seine Nase, als würde er Wasser trinken und zeigte mir das Blut in der Handmulde. Es blutet, sagte er, mit dem Knie hast du mich, und das Blut rann ihm um den Mund und in den Ärmel. Wie viel Blut so eine Nase hat, und ich antwortete: vier Literflaschen

voll. Edin lud nach und schüttelte den Kopf, sagte, Leute, ich freue mich, wenn wir wieder kicken können, hab schon wieder daneben geschossen.

Als Zorans Mutter das Blut sah, rief sie seinen Namen und drohte umzufallen. Ich glaube ja, sie hat das extra gemacht. Eigentlich wollte sie nur, dass Čika Petar sie in die Arme nimmt. Läuft sie also nach links, verdreht die Augen, legt die Hand vor ihre Brust, und wie schön, da steht ausgerechnet Čika Petar, jetzt kann sie sich fallen lassen. Was wohl Čika Petar jetzt denkt? Wenigstens musste er sie nicht lange halten. Mit einem Schrei löste sie sich von ihm, sprang auf Zoran zu und stierte auf seine Nase. Halt deinen Kopf nach hinten, was ist passiert? Sie zerrte ihn aus dem Keller. Als sie schon an mir vorbei war, kehrte sie um, als hätte sie etwas vergessen. Es nutzte nichts, dass Zoran und ich „keine Absicht, keine Absicht“ riefen – sie packte mich am Ohr und schüttelte dran, bis es knackte. Zoran streckte mir hinter ihrem Rücken die Zunge heraus, er sollte lieber den Kopf nach hinten halten.

Soldaten haben den Männern in den Bauch geschossen.

Vornüber sind die zusammengesackt. Wenn du einen Volley abkriegst – so war das. Das habe ich, berichtete Zoran, als er zurück kam, oben aus dem Fenster gesehen. Er flüsterte und drückte ein Handtuch an seine Nase. Immer musste Zoran mit allem übertreiben. Ich glaubte ihm kein Wort, welche Soldaten überhaupt, sagte aber nichts. Erst wenn kein Blut mehr kommen und wenn seine Mutter nicht mehr in der Nähe sein würde, wollte ich ihm zeigen, was ich von seinen Märchensoldaten halte. Zoran faltete das Handtuch auf und zeigte mir, wie viel Blut er verloren hatte. Viel Blut war das, zwei Literflaschen vielleicht, aber Blut wächst nach.

Zorans Mutter schüttelte ihren großen Kopf, stemmte die Hände in die Seiten, lief vor mir auf und ab. Sie bimmelte. War das ihr Schmuck? Ich hörte diesen kleinen Glocken zu und

nicht ihren strengen Fragen. Sie zog die Augenbrauen zusammen und fuchtelte mir mit ihrem Zeigefinger vor der Nase herum, worauf es noch heftiger zu bimmeln begann. Warte nur!, zischte sie durch die Zähne. Ich schämte mich aber nicht mehr für den Tritt und hatte keine Angst vor ihr – Zoran und ich verstanden uns doch wieder. Trotzdem nickte ich zu dem, was mir der große Kopf von Zorans Mutter bimmelnd erklärte. Waren das Münzen vielleicht? Geldscheine namens Demark nähten die Frauen seit kurzem in ihre Kleider und Unterkleider, aber doch keine Münzen! Warte nur! Ich wartete und bald bimmelte sie davon, zu den anderen Müttern und den Töpfen auf dem Herd.

Die Erbsen köchelten schon auf dem Gottseidank-dasswir-noch-Strom-haben. Durch das Luftgitter fiel immer weniger Licht. Zu hören waren vereinzelte Schüsse, dann eine Salve, dann Stille, dann Schüsse, dann wieder Geknatter. Es war in den Straßen und nicht mehr in den Bergen. Gegen sieben wurde es zu einer Stille still, dass wir ermahnt wurden, stilljetztstill!, obwohl wir schon längst nichts mehr sagten. Alles war wie immer, nur die Stille drückte lauter als sonst, warum hörten alle der Stille zu? Zähne fletscht die Stille, murmelte Čika Petar. Sonst sagte er „fletschen“ zur Sonne, wenn sie im Winter strahlte, ohne zu wärmen. Sogar die Rufe der Mütter klangen dagegen wie geflüstert: „Abendessen!“ Die Großväter drängten ihre Köpfe dichter über das kleine Transistorradio zusammen, stießen mit den Köpfen aneinander. Lange kam keine Musik mehr, immer redeten sie im Radio nur. Heiser sprach jetzt einer verärgert davon, dass sich unsere Truppen von ihren Stellungen zurückzogen, um sich neu zu formieren. Schweigend stützten Großväter ihre Ellenbogen auf die Knie und ihre Köpfe auf die Hände, oder standen kopfschüttelnd auf und stützten sich auf ihre Stöcke. Alle fieberten mit unseren Truppen und den Stellungen unserer Truppen, obwohl

niemand genau wusste, wer das war, diese unsere Truppen, und was das für wichtige Stellungen waren, die aufgegeben werden mussten. Erst als die heisere Radiostimme den Namen einer Stadt nannte, die genau so hieß wie unsere Stadt, wussten alle etwas. Auch ich wusste ein wenig. Dieses Wissen war es, das in der Stille seine Zähne fletschte. Was wir Kinder sonst wissen sollten, das redeten uns die Mütter ein. Wasser vorm Trinken abkochen. Im Innenhof, nicht auf der Straße spielen, und nur morgens vor zehn. Nicht an die Fenster gehen. Aber als die heisere Radiostimme jetzt „Višegrad“ sagte, und ich mich fragte, wie kann das sein, dass eine Stadt fällt, muss das nicht ein Beben geben, wussten selbst die Mütter nicht, was zu tun sei. Sie salzten die Erbsen und rührten im Topf.

Draußen löste eine Hochzeitsgesellschaft die Stille ab. Wir wurden aus dem Keller hinausgehupt – erst an die Fenster im Treppenhaus, dann in den Hof, dann auf die Straße. Was sollte das jetzt, Bräutigame mit Bart, oben Tarnjacke, unten Trainingshose? Geländewagen hupten, Lastwagen hupten. Eine Armee von bärtigen Bräutigamen fuhr vorbei, sie schossen die ganze Nacht den Himmel an, und feierten, die Stadt zur Braut genommen zu haben. Auf den Wagendächern und den Hauben schaukelten Bräutigame im Takt der Straßenlöcher, die sie selbst ausgeschachtet hatten, morgens ab zehn Uhr dreißig, drei Wochen lang, jeden Tag. Die Hände hielten sie flach über die Augen, schielten darunter hervor, mieden die untergehende Sonne. Hinten hingen aus den Anhängern Beine in grün und braun, baumelten wie Zierde.

Die ersten Panzer ziepten die Straße hinauf. Ihre Ketten hinterließen weiße Ritzen im Asphalt und machten, wo sie über Bürgersteige fuhren, Beton zu Kiesel. Es gab kein Halten mehr: wer ölt die denn, was quietschen die so? rief ich, und schon rannten wir auf die Panzer zu – rennen, das konnten am schnellsten wir! Die Mütter, deren Händen wir entschlüpft waren, griffen sich in die langen Röcke und klagten uns nach,

so schnell eilten wir zu den Panzern. Ja, wer fährt die denn, wie sieht das Lenkrad aus und können wir mit? An den Gärten vorbeiklappern, an den Pflaumenbäumen, die reife Früchte trugen, an den Höfen vorbei, in denen Koffer standen und Menschen, die sie schnell schnell in Kofferräume packten und auf Autodächer stapelten. Wie es wimmerte und trillerte unter diesen geballten Fäusten – der Zeigefinger ausgestreckt! Was zerrieb die Faust, was mahlte das Metall, was presste die Faust aus, wohin zeigte der Finger? Sogar die Brücke über die Drina bog sich unter den Zahnrädern. Ihre Bögen werden bersten, da ist Großmutter's teures Porzellan nichts dagegen. Im kleinen Park blieben wir stehen, kletterten auf das Podest der Statue von Ivo Andrić, wollten hören, wie laut es würde, wenn die Brücke bricht.

Die Mütter holten uns ein, ich holte mir von meiner eine ehrlich gemeinte Ohrfeige ab. Sie wusste, dass ich den Panzern auch über die Brücke gefolgt wäre, sobald der erste drüben angekommen ist. Mir dröhnte nach der Ohrfeige der Kopf, so wie von den Panzern die Ziegeldächer vibrierten. Ich hielt mir die Hände an die Ohren, die heute so einiges auszuhalten hatten, und hörte nur noch die stählernen Hundertfü.ler, wie sie die Straße zu Staub raspelten. Die Brücke hielt.

Zoran am Ohr, mich am Ärmel zerrten uns die Mütter zurück in den Keller. Emina, meine Emina, war nicht mitgelaufen. Sie saß auf der untersten Treppenstufe, da sitzt man doch, wenn man keine Munition mehr hat, Spielregel: Treppenaufgang – Waffenruhe. Ich setzte mich neben sie, rieb mir das Ohr, sie rieb sich die Augen. Als ich „Panzer“ sagte, und „schneller als Zoran“ sagte, und „Soldaten wie Bräutigame“ sagte, stand sie auf und rannte weinend die Treppe hinauf.

Vor zwei Tagen hatte Emina schon einmal geweint. Sie weinte, bis sie einschlief, ihre Hand in meiner. Eminas Onkel

Ibrahim traf es, als er sich in Čika Hasans Bad rasieren wollte und den Kopf zum Spiegel neigte. In den Hals und ein bisschen in das Kinn traf es ihn durch das Fenster im Bad. Čika Hasan erzählte den anderen, und ich hörte an der Tür mit, rahmetli Ibrahim habe Minuten lang nach Luft gerungen. So sehr gekämpft und an meinem Hemd gezerzt, als wollte er einen unendlichen Atem schöpfen, um mir von Dingen zu erzählen, die am wichtigsten sind auf der ganzen Welt. Ich hatte, schüttelte Čika Hasan den Kopf, keine Luft für rahmetli Ibrahim. Und so war er in den Tod geklettert, ohne mit seiner Geschichte begonnen zu haben. Dabei ist sie auch ungesagt eine Legende geworden! Čika Hasan zeigt, wie er die Hände hob, weil alle um Ibrahim bloß herumstanden, und Čika Hasan erzählt, wie er die Augen verschloss, weil an Ibrahims Kopf und an den Fliesen und am Spiegel das Blut klebte. Überall Blut, überall die Farbe von Kirschen, stellte ich mir vor, auch wie sie von den Fingern triefte, die in Ibrahims Hals gebohrt wurden, damit er Luft bekam.

Ich wäre Emina sofort nachgelaufen, hätten die Mütter nicht zum Abendessen gerufen und wäre nicht Glas im Treppenhaus zerbrochen und die Stille unter Schüssen und Rufen verfliegen. Emina weint, weil Soldatenfäuste nach Eisen riechen und niemals nach Seife. Weil den Soldaten die Gewehre um die Nacken baumeln und Türen unter ihren Tritten nachgeben, als gebe es keine Schlösser. Sie weint, denn so hatten Soldaten auch in Eminas Dorf die Türen eingeschlagen, sie weint und versteckt sich auf dem Speicher, in dem wir Mäuse jagen, in dem Staub auf den Vitrinen liegt und mein erstes Fahrrad rostet. Dort werde ich meine Emina gleich finden.

Hier, im Keller, schöpfen die Mütter Erbsen für Kinder und Soldaten. Einer mit schwarzem Stirnband bricht das Brot und verteilt die Stücke – wehe mir und meinem Ohr, wenn ich

das Brot mit Dreck unter den Nägeln anfassen würde. Zoran zeigt auf das Stirnband, sagt, Rambo eins war viel besser als zwei und drei. Die heisere Radiostimme sagt: Višegrad, Rambo sagt, jaja; die Radiostimme sagt: nach erbitterten Gefechten gefallen, Rambo kratzt sich unter dem Stirnband, gutgut, und nimmt Anlauf; die Radiostimme hebt sich: aber unsere Truppen formieren sich neu, Rambo murmelt, mmh interessant, aber irgendwie... verantwortungslos, denn ich bin Rambo vier und fünf. Er tritt mit Vollspann gegen den kleinen, schwarzen Kasten und die Radiostimme sagt nichts mehr. Der Soldat wirft den Großvätern die verbogene Antenne und einen Knopf vor die Fü.e: was zum basteln. Wer es repariert, dem kauf ichs ab. Er setzt sich an den Sperrholzplattentisch. Und ihr, mehr Speck in die Erbsen – so werde ich nicht satt. Lasst ja nicht mich nach Speck suchen. Finde ich Speck, verliert ihr Schöneres. Du da hinten, du wirst mir Speck aufschneiden. Löffel schlagen gegen Teller, das Mädchen mit den langen, schwarzen Zöpfen legt dem Soldaten ein Kreuz aus Speckstreifen auf die Hand. Er beißt ein Stück ab, fragt, hast du dir das Kleid selbst genäht? Sag ja, und ich werde deine Finger küssen.

Im Treppenhaus – wieder Schüsse, Schreie und die Stimmen besorgter Menschen. Wie die Muschel am Ohr klingt das Stimmenrauschen im Keller. Eminas Stimme fehlt mir, ich muss Emina finden. Ich lege den Helm ab, renne durchs Haus, wieder der schnellste. Die Soldaten jagen in Tarnfarben hinabhinauf, grölen, runter und raus und nein! Nehmen immer drei, immer sieben Stufen auf einmal. Ziehen in die Wohnzimmer ein, die nach frischem Pflaumenkompott riechen. Wüten in den weißen Schlafzimmern. Schmieren die Fliesen in den Bädern mit ihrer Sprache voll. Rütteln an Schränken, an Schubladen, an Truhen. Mit roter Kreide malen die Bräutigame Kreuze und Halbkreise an die Wand, schreien rausraus, alle raus. Wieder und wieder dringt Soldatenbefehl in das Muschelrauschen. Gesichter werden gegen die Wand gepresst, über die Köpfe die

Arme an den rissigen Putz gedrückt. Wen suchen die, einen Namen rufen sie. Ich kenne diese Soldaten nicht und nicht diesen Namen. Überhaupt sind mir die meisten Treppenhausbewohner unbekannt, sie leben nicht hier, sind aus ihren Dörfern weg, die Soldaten ihnen nach. Schutz suchten sie, weil Granaten einschlugen, weil das Treppenhaus und die Keller des einzigen Hochhauses der Stadt groß genug für Viele waren. Flüchtlinge, sagen wir zu ihnen, ich sage, „Schutzlinge“. Sie beschützten Emina, begleiteten sie und ihren Onkel Ibrahim hierher, nachdem Eminas Eltern verschwunden waren. Um ihr Haar wickeln die Frauen Tücher, die Männer haben keine Zähne und kauen am Brot mit offenem Mund. Sie riechen säuerlich und schlafen auf ihren Handrücken in den Fluren zwischen den Stockwerken. Manchmal muss man über sie steigen, und da seit Wochen niemand fest schlafen darf, wachen sie auf und fluchen kraftlos.

Wenn Soldaten fluchen, winseln die „Schutzlinge“, bitten, bitten, geben. Wenn die Soldaten lärmern, wenn sie brüllen, wenn sie brechen, wenn sie prügeln, wenn sie schimpfen – winselt es in der Treppenhausmuschel. Am besten wäre, überlege ich und zähle die Stufen auf dem Weg zum Speicher so laut ich kann, die Muschel geht kaputt, und alle – Nachbarn und „Schutzlinge“ und Soldaten – reden normal miteinander. Auch Männern aus dem Haus, Čika Muharem im zweiten Stock, Čika Husein und Čika Fadil im dritten, halten die Soldaten die Köpfe gegen das Geländer. Die Nacken stützen sie ihnen von oben mit den Gewehrkolben oder von der Seite mit den Stiefeln. Auf dem Boden liegt Čika Fadils Mütze. Ich renne vorbei, grüße Čika Fadil nicht, obwohl er mein Geschichtslehrer ist und ich bei ihm nur eine Drei habe. Gegen den Kopf von Čika Miloš wird nicht gedrückt. Čika Miloš verschränkt die Hände vor der Brust und fragt einen der Soldaten: Was wollen Sie denn, Herrschaften? Hier sind nur ehrliche Menschen.

Wollen, dass du dein Maul hältst, hältst du die Fresse,
wird nix passieren.

Ich will zu Emina, das ist alles, halte mein Maul, damit
nichts passiert. Am schnellsten zu meiner Emina, sie wird
Angst haben, sie wird wieder weinen müssen, und ich werde
sie finden auf dem Speicher mit den Besen, mit Spinnweben
zwischen den Sliwowitzflaschen und mit den Mäusen, die man
niemals sah, aber immer hörte. Ich stürze durch die Tür zum
Speicher, Emina zuckt zusammen, zieht die Beine enger an sich
und drückt sich an die Wand.

Du bist es, joj, du bist es! Schnell, die Tür zu, schnell, sie
finden uns sonst! Sag mir, finden sie uns?

Emina streckt die Arme nach mir aus und fragt
schluchzend, hast du meine Mama und Tata gesehen? Sind
Mama und Tata vielleicht mit den dummen Soldaten
zurückgekommen? Soldaten haben sie vor Wochen doch auch
mitgenommen, wie viele andere, die einen falschen Namen
trugen. Woher Mama und Tata zurück kommen sollen, weiß
Emina nicht. Das weiß niemand, flüstert sie. Und niemand soll
wissen, dass wir hier sind! Wenn uns die Soldaten finden,
werden sie nach unseren Namen fragen. Wenn du keinen guten
Namen hast, so wie ich, wenn du einen falschen Namen hast,
dann kommt, wenn alle schlafen, der Lastwagen mit der
grünen Plane und sie fahren dich weg. So war es bei Mama und
Tata. Vielleicht fahren mich, hebt Emina plötzlich ihren Kopf
von meinen Händen und ruft unter noch mehr Tränen,
vielleicht bringen mich die Soldaten zu Mama und Tata, wenn
ich ihnen meinen Namen sage, hörst du? Vielleicht ist es jetzt
für mich gut, falsch zu heißen, hörst du?

Ich höre es – und Schritte, die sich nähern. Ich höre
schwere Stiefel und trage den richtigen Namen. Und obwohl
der Soldat mit gelbem Bart schmunzelt, obwohl er nicht nach
Schweiß und Schnaps riecht wie die anderen, obwohl er nur
will, dass wir ins Treppenhaus zurück gehen, schreie ich ihn an:

Ich heiße Aleksandar und das, das ist meine Schwester,
Katarina, das ist Katarina, nur meine Schwester Katarina. Meine
Oma heißt doch auch Katarina, und ihr Name, davon bin ich
überzeugt, ist nicht falsch, das kann gar nicht sein. Omas haben
niemals falsche Namen. Meine Emina ist meine Katarina, das ist
alles dasselbe. Der Soldat lacht, packt mich unter seinen Arm,
na du Knirps, nimmt Emina an die Hand und trägt und zieht
uns in das Treppenhaus, ihr rührt euch nicht vom Fleck,
verstanden?

Im Flur zwischen dem vierten und dem fünften Stock
rühren wir uns nicht vom Fleck, warten. Wie lange und worauf,
weiß niemand. Die ganz Kleinen werden von ihren Großen
keine Sekunde losgelassen. Sie werden in Armbeugen gewippt,
quengeln und bekommen auf Alles „shhh“ zur Antwort. Gehen
wir runter, Emina? Wir würden schon, aber ein fatter Soldat
stellt sich in den Weg, guckt, als hätten wir gestohlen. Unter
uns fallen ausgerechnet jetzt Schüsse, der Fette sagt, na hört ihr.
Wir nicken, halten unser Maul, damit nichts passiert und
rühren uns nicht vom Fleck. Nicht mehr die Mütter, die
Soldaten reden uns jetzt ein, was wir wissen sollen.

Im Fenster am Flurende hängt schon die Nacht. Draußen
brummen noch immer die Motoren. Čika Petar sagt, die ziehen
weiter nach Westen ins Landesinnere, theoretisch. Čika Hasan
ist nicht mehr da, um zu widersprechen. Lange Zeit sind
Motoren und Husten und Stiefelsohlen die einzigen
wiedererkennbaren Geräusche. Die Bräutigame sind nicht mehr
in Feierlaune, müde spazieren sie mit ihren großen Schritten
über und zwischen und unter uns. Einer singt das fröhliche
Lied, alle kennen es, er singt allein und schläft dabei ein.
Zwei neue Soldaten kommen auf unser Stockwerk, der
eine zeigt schiefe Zähne und steckt dem Schlafenden einen
Finger ins Ohr. Aus einer Plastiktüte holt der andere Brot, Salz,
Bier. Packt aus der Alu-Folie zwei ganze gebratene Hühnchen.

In einem roten Topf dampfen gekochte Kartoffeln. Sind unten etwa die Erbsen ausgegangen? Große Messer mit schartiger Klinge und Kerben im Griff, Teller brauchen sie nicht. Alle Türen stehen offen oder liegen auf dem Boden, wer hat das schon mal gesehen, dass du über die Tür laufen musst, um in ein Zimmer zu kommen? Čika Hasan wohnt dort, wo zwei Soldaten hinein gehen. Es scheppert und rumpelt, quietscht und scharrt, so kratzen die Tischbeine übers Parkett und der Tisch passt doch nicht durch die Tür. Da stehen die Soldaten, zwei drinnen, zwei draußen, und was jetzt? Der mit dem größten Hunger isst die Hähnchenkeule im Stehen. Die schon drinnen sind, setzen sich in Čika Hasans Wohnung an den Tisch, einer setzt sich vom Flur aus dran. So wird das gemacht, Soldaten wollen Hähnchen, bohren die Finger ins Fleisch, spießen es auf die Messer, essen das Fleisch von den Messerspitzen.

Alle zwei Minuten erlischt das Licht im ganzen Treppenhaus. Für Sekunden verhüllt die Dunkelheit das Warten. Nicht genug Zeit, um Konturen zu erfassen. Sofort knipst jemand das Licht wieder an.

Was ruft da auf der gegenüberliegenden Seite des Flures der schwer atmende, aufgeblähte Soldat mit dem roten Gesicht? Verficktes Licht? Verficktes Scheißlicht? Ist doch die Dunkelheit, die ihn stört, der Fette möchte nämlich lesen. Wenn er gegen den Lichtschalter haut, knackt es. Einmal will er mit dem Fuß, kommt aber nicht so hoch. Aus der Wohnung nebenan holt er einen Stuhl und setzt sich direkt unter den Schalter um sofort dagegen zu hämmern, wenn das Licht erlischt. Wenn die Neonröhren angehen – ein großes Blinzeln jedes Mal, aber kein Aufwachen - die Soldaten verschwinden nicht, spielen Fußball mit der abgenagten Hähnchenkeule, das Warten endet nicht.

Einmal, unmittelbar nachdem der Fette das Licht

angeknipst hat, deutet Emina mit einem Kopfnicken auf ihn und beginnt flüsternd zu zählen. 115, 116, 117. Dunkel. Knazz! Tsck-Ssssum! Licht. Beim zweiten Mal, und ich frage mich: warum zählen wir eigentlich? Es würde reichen, sich bereit zu halten, bestimmt sind wir auch so schneller als der. Aber wir zählen, und jede gleichzeitig gezählte Zeit steht später für einen Wunsch. Bei 109, 110 legen wir die Hände hinter dem Rücken an den Schalter, lassen den Fette nicht aus den Augen. Bei 114 prasselt draußen eine Gewehrsalve los, bei 117 grunzt der Fette die Dunkelheit an, der Stuhl unter ihm knarrt. Emina schiebt ihre Finger durch meine, wir drücken einander die Hand und mit Fingerspitzen den Plastikschalter. Eminas Strahlen ist im Augenblick dieses Triumphs, da sie vor Freude in die Hände klatscht, heller als jedes Licht. Ruhe da hinten, der fette Soldat will lesen.