Remembering Yugoslavia: Depictions of Trauma, Cultural Memory, and Transnationalism in Three Post-Yugoslav Novels

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Abstract

The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia disintegrated in the 1990s, causing violent wars and a diaspora wave of fugitives to the West. Over twenty years later, authors are still writing about these events, expressing trauma, cultural memory, and transnationalism among other themes in what can now be referred to as Post-Yugoslav fiction, indicating the relevance of this historical occurrence to this day. Previous research on Post-Yugoslav fiction remains scarce, as the focus is put more on historical studies and literary sources take broad contemporary frameworks related to Yugoslavia such as 'Bosnian prose' or 'Balkan literature'. This thesis aims to analyse three specific works of Post-Yugoslav fiction – Téa Obreht's *The Tiger's Wife*, Sara Nović's *Girl at War*, and Saša Stanišić's *Where You Come From* – using comparisons and close-reading strategies in order to establish what the relationship is between themes commonly seen in war fiction, those being trauma, cultural memory, and transnationalism. Aside from providing historical context and explaining theoretical concepts such as Yugonostalgia and transgenerational trauma, this study dissected each core theme for every novel by linking textual examples to the theoretical framework. As a result, the Post-Yugoslav fictions *The Tiger's Wife, Girl at War*, and *Where You Come From* show interesting similarities and differences in how trauma, memory (along with nostalgia), and transnationalism are presented which indicated that there is a correlation among and intersection between these themes due to their equally prominent roles in all three texts and their relation to the Yugoslav wars.

Keywords: Yugoslavia – Post-Yugoslav literature – trauma fiction – transgenerational trauma – cultural memory – Yugonostalgia – transnationalism – migration

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Introduction

"The war in Zagreb began over a packet of cigarettes."[1] The first line of *Girl at War* (2015) by Sara Nović marks the beginning of the past. A specific past, as the novel recounts the civil war between the Serbs and Croats in Croatia which erupted in 1991. Josip Broz Tito, regarded by many Balkans as "the Greatest Son of Yugoslav Nations", died in 1980, and his passing can be seen as the catalyst for the fall of Yugoslavia.[2] Although the country of Yugoslavia has existed since 1918, Tito was the president of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia which was officially established in 1945. The Republic consisted of Croatia, Serbia (and Kosovo which became independent later on), Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Slovenia. The capital was Belgrade, and its official languages were Serbo-Croatian, Macedonian and Slovene. Once Tito had died and Stalin's Communism had fallen, economic and political unrest exploded into warfare which Europe had thought unthinkable after the Second World War. As capitalism and nationalism took over socialism, the Yugoslav states sought for independence, which eventually became the Balkan countries the world is familiar with today.

The impact of Yugoslavia is significant, evidently so from novels which are still being published to this day; Saša Stanišić's German novel *Herkunft* (translated into *Where You Come From* in English), about a Bosnian-German migrant reflecting on his experiences of Yugoslavia, hit the shelves as recently as 2021. This, along with Nović's *Girl at War* (2015) and Téa Obreht's *The Tiger's Wife* (2011), belongs to the category of Post-Yugoslav literature. The term can, similar to other literary terms, be difficult to define. In its most literal sense, it signifies literature about Yugoslavia, written after the disintegration of the state. There are, however, more definitions which professor Milutinović has attempted to explain and reject. These definitions from his work will be discussed in Chapter Two. Post-Yugoslav literature is also little explored as a field and genre of literary studies. Some scholars such as Vervaet (2011) and Levy (2001) have looked at novels written after the Yugoslav disintegration, but keep their research framework of Bosnian prose or, more general, Balkan literature quite broad. As of today, close-reading research (which is specific textual analysis in order to extract hidden meanings from specific examples) on specific Post-Yugoslav novels remains scarce. Out of the three authors chosen for this particular set, Stanišić appears to be

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[1] Sara Nović, *Girl at War* (London: Little, Brown, 2015), 3.
[2] Aleksandar Bošković, "Yugonostalgia and Yugoslav Cultural Memory: Lexicon of Yu Mythology," *Slavic Review* 72, no. 1 (2013): 69, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5612/slavicreview.72.1.0054; Marie-Janine Calic, "The Crisis of Socialist Modernity," in *History of Yugoslavia* (Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2019), 252, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvh9w0sp.23.

the most well-known, but even so academic works revolving his literature mostly focus on his 2006 novel *How the Soldier Repaired the Gramophone*. As a result, there is evidently a gap in the field of Post-Yugoslav literature which remains to be filled.

What has been researched more in regards to Yugoslavia, however, is its history. Yugoslavia has existed long before the socialist Republic, having been founded after World War One under the name Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The sudden and unexpected outbreak of violence which led to the disintegration had brought Yugoslavia under attention to scholars and remains a topic of interest. Historical sources are still being written on the topic to this day and therefore indicate its relevance, for example *History of Yugoslavia* by German historian Calic (2019), which elaborately detailed events from the three Balkan wars of the 1930s all the way up to what remained after the disintegration. Yugoslavia has furthermore been discussed in fields other than history, such as gender issues, migration, and nostalgia for the Yugoslav past. A specific term for the latter is Yugonostalgia, which means a longing for the Yugoslav past in which everybody could coexist peacefully regardless of their ethnicity. This term has also been discussed sufficiently by, for example, Bošković (2013), Dr. Müller-Suleymanova (2022) and Professor Milivojevic (2022). However, their studies only explain Yugonostalgia by itself or in relation to the diaspora, and no studies discuss Yugonostalgia within literature.

The disintegration of Yugoslavia was paired with much trauma. As one big nation dispersed into various new ones it created new national identities and sought to destroy those who did not align with them. The violence which went alongside it caused a surge of fugitive migration and left a transnational diaspora as a result. Over time, the war and the era of Yugoslavia became instances of cultural memory expressed in monuments, museums, history books, music, film and fiction. Trauma, cultural memory, and transnationalism are broad fields of research, which is why it comes as no surprise that these themes have been elaborately explored. Since the last few decades, these fields have even begun to specify their focus onto literature and how they operate within it. Cathy Caruth has established herself with *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996) as a leading scholar for trauma fiction, and the same goes for Ann Rigney in relation to cultural memory with her work *The Life of Texts* (2019).

Although combining trauma and memory with literature is a first bridge to analyse specific texts, little is published about Post-Yugoslav fiction. Studies on transnationalism do depict the experiences of ex-Yugoslav migrants, but again do not mention Post-Yugoslav fiction or the field of literature in general when discussing transnationalism. This once more

shows that Post-Yugoslav fiction is a relatively little explored genre, likely due to its minority position when compared to, for example, American civil war literature. Its recency as a genre might also have an influence over this, since 'classic' Yugoslav literature such as Ivo Andrić's *The Bridge on the Drina* (1945) is much more well-known amongst regular readers and scholars.

Aside from Post-Yugoslav literature's importance within the academic debate, personal motivations also influenced the choosing of this topic. Having Macedonian parents who have migrated to the Netherlands in the 1980s and early 90s, I have received the cultural and memorial knowledge of my roots which many of my Western peers appear to lack. From personal experience hardly anything related to Yugoslavia was mentioned at school due to the curriculum keeping focus on Dutch history (their cultural memory) and the very impactful World Wars and Cold War. The field of Slavic studies is likely much smaller compared to other language and/or literary studies. As a result, many might be unaware of the impact and trauma the Yugoslav disintegration caused, and misconceptions of the topic could occur. Although my parents have luckily not experienced the wars themselves, they were aware of it and have seen the beginning of the end, passing the memory of Yugoslavia on to me. Furthermore, literature serves as a good means of sharing experiences and memories.

It is therefore important to look at this genre of fiction, because those who were forced to go abroad remembered their trauma, and decided to document it. The framework chosen for this study is no exception to this, as the authors, who were part of the diaspora themselves, have written narratives of characters who have experienced the war and reflected on it. The contents of the novels will be analysed in more detail later on, but it is of relevance to give a short synopsis of them now in order to situate them within the theoretical framework of this study. Although they are all about the same topic – the fall of Yugoslavia – their perspectives and modes of storytelling differ.

Obreht's novel *The Tiger's Wife*, relates two mystic tales of the protagonist's grandfather (The Tiger's Wife, and the Deathless Man, respectively) while she medically aids villages in a fictional Balkan country and reflects on her grandfather and his passing. *Girl at War* by Sara Nović has a protagonist who is a student in New York during 9-11 and who reflects on her experiences of the war in Croatia when she was a child. Lastly, Saša Stanišić's most recent novel *Where You Come From* (2021) depicts the autofiction events of a Bosnian-German author who revisits his grandmother's village and reflects on his past experiences as a migrant and a Yugoslav. All three novels look back on the past and describe situations related to the wars of Yugoslavia while also showing examples of transnationalism. They depict three

different narratives about the same topic and therefore share many similarities, but they also appear to contain an ample amount of differences despite their similar theme, which is why these texts serve as an interesting case study for seeing how the three themes of trauma, (cultural) memory, and transnationalism work together to construct a Post-Yugoslav narrative.

Aside from these specific novels, many narratives such as these deal with topics related to war trauma, migration, and remembering the past, yet no analysis has been done on precisely what the relationship is between these three themes in regards to Post-Yugoslav literature and how these themes are presented. The main research question is therefore: What is the relationship between trauma, cultural memory, and transnationalism in the Post-Yugoslav fictions *Where You Come From, Girl at War,* and *The Tiger's Wife* and how are they presented? The methodology in order to answer this question will consist of close-reading analysis of the primary texts in combination with the support of secondary sources and theories related to these topics. Moreover, the main research question can be unpacked into several sub questions, which are reflected in the chapters of this thesis.

It could be argued that many people are still unfamiliar with the events of the Yugoslav disintegration, which comes as no surprise considering the complexity of events and it being of a much smaller scale compared to the World Wars. In order to understand the historical context of which these novels are based on, Chapter One will answer the sub question of how the fall of Yugoslavia occurred and what its repercussions are by providing a concise historical overview of events. Chapter Two will answer what Post-Yugoslav fiction and Yugonostalgia are, as well as explain other theoretical concepts related to the primary texts. These concepts are (literary) trauma studies, cultural memory, and transnationalism. Doing so will give readers a better understanding of the themes dealt with in the novels. Next, Chapter Three will begin analysing the three texts with a comparative standpoint and will attempt to answer in what way trauma is presented and applied in these narratives. Chapter Four and Five will apply the same methods but will discuss cultural memory and transnationalism, respectively. Each of the analysis chapters will end with a summary of all the main similarities and points of difference in order to highlight the comparisons and draw clear connections. Lastly, there will be a general conclusion.

Chapter One: A Compact History of Yugoslavia

Yugoslavia is comprised of a vast history which spans almost a century, but only the period of 1980-2000 is most important for the purposes of this thesis. I intend to provide a compressed historical overview of Yugoslavia's demise and the results afterwards. Stokes's "Instant History: Understanding the Wars of Yugoslav Succession", Hudson and Bowman's *After Yugoslavia*, and especially Calic's *History of Yugoslavia*, contain much more elaborate historical framework on this topic. [3] For this summary, Calic's work is the main source of information, as it is the most historically extensive and provides various aspects, causes and effects in chronological order. The majority of this section has therefore been paraphrased.

There are many factors which have contributed to the fall of Yugoslavia, but there appears to be no clear consensus on who or what caused it all. In fact, the world at the time was shocked to hear that such a prosperous and stable country could collapse with such violence as it did.[4] According to Calic, Yugoslavia rapidly fell into an economic crisis after Tito's death. Due to the oil crisis in the late 70s and the global recession which followed, production and productivity began to fall, and Yugoslavia's production was outdated and underfinanced, which caused it to fall behind the rest of Europe. The Yugoslav economy shrank, which led to unemployment and social unrest, as well as an increase in the number of strikes. Furthermore, the economic crisis widened the gap between rich and poor even further as Slovenia and Croatia refused to contribute 10 percent of their investments into development.

Another development after Tito's death was the rise of pluralism. Society demanded more civil rights, democracy and freedom of opinion. Although the regime hoped for Tito's socialism to continue after his death, the public had become too divided for it to become a reality. With this sense of social freedom, people also began to question the Socialist regime. The issue was addressed in the media and many political figures were criticized for their incompetence, and problems of corruption were also stressed. Researchers furthermore proved that employees had no sense of financial affairs, and that those with financial power were functionaries, managers and directors.

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[3] Gale Stokes et al., "Instant History: Understanding the Wars of Yugoslav Succession," *Slavic Review* 55, no. 1 (1996): 136-160, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2500982; Marie-Janine Calic, *History of Yugoslavia*, trans. Dona Geyer (Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2019), https://www-jstor-org.ru.idm.oclc.org/stable/j.ctvh9w0sp; Robert Hudson and Glenn Bowman, *After Yugoslavia: Identities and Politics within the Successor States*, eds. Robert Hudson and Glenn Bowman (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), https://link.springer.com/book/10.1057/9780230305137.

[4] Stokes, "Instant History: Understanding the Wars of Yugoslav Succession," 136.

Slobodan Milošević played an important role in the growing need for nationalism and sovereignty. In 1981, the people of Kosovo started demonstrating for the founding of an independent republic where all people with Albanian nationality in Yugoslavia (that being Kosovo, West-Macedonia, and South-Serbia) could live. As Kosovo was part of Serbia, many Serbs claimed the violent demonstrations of the Kosovars were a case of discrimination and assault to them, causing fear in the public and a large migration flow. Milošević saw the political unrest of the Kosovars in Serbia as an opportunity to boost his own career. By encouraging the Serbs to stand their ground, he began to promote himself as the man to rescue the nation from the older party establishment who were supposed to have been acting indifferently to the situation. He became president of Serbia in 1989 and promoted national interests, while also proposing liberal economic reforms in order to appeal to both nationalists and communists.[5] This consequently led to other parties in other states that have been formed in the 1980s to adopt the same strategies as Milošević by advocating freedom and brotherhood. This led to even further ethnic diversity and social distance of the republics.[6]

In 1990, the Yugoslav government decided to hold elections. Instead of finding a stable form of democracy, however, the elections led to ethnical issues and disintegration due to political parties having been organized of ethnic identity and solidarity instead of political programs. Moreover, the parties of the different republics gained extra help from their respective nationalists living abroad. Immediately after the elections, Serbia, Croatia and Kosovo called for independence and declared their sovereignty. Various fields executed independence movements: radio and television broadcasts as well as the newspaper press moved away from Yugoslavia to create their own news in which their respective nation was the victim of the conflicts. War affairs, similarly, became more nationalistic in nature. The Yugoslav People's Army "was fast becoming an armed force without a country." Slovenia and Croatia began to build their own military and police, and the general of the People's Army publicly declared that they would defend the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia, which built up tensions even further. From 1991 onwards, these tensions between proponents of Yugoslavia and nationalists erupted into various wars of independence across the Balkans in which ethnic relations played a big role.[7]

The first major conflict of war occurred in the spring of 1991 in Croatia, when the Croat armed forces fought the Yugoslav People's Army (who had decided to help the Serbs)

[5] Calic, *History of Yugoslavia*, 252.
[6] Calic, 278.
[7] Calic, 286.

and the rebel Serb forces. The city of Vukovar was heavily bombed by the Yugoslav and Serb troops, until it surrendered in November 1991. Dubrovnik was attacked in October, and within a few weeks the entire region was under control of the Serbs, and the Croat population was systematically driven out or had fled. Once the UN intervened, the People's Army retreated from Croatia.

The next, and likely largest, conflict occurred in Bosnia. Bosnia-Herzegovina was more multi-ethnic than Croatia, with the population comprising of Muslims, Serbs, Croats and Yugoslavs, which concerned the Bosnian government during the bombings of Dubrovnik and Vukovar. The Bosnian Croats and Muslims did not want to be in a state dominated by Serbs, while the Bosnian Serb leadership sought independence. On 9 January 1992, the Bosnian Serbs declared themselves the Republic of the Serb People of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and on 6 April the European Community officially recognised Bosnia-Herzegovina as a sovereign state. The Bosnian Serbs declared independence a day afterwards. As soon as this happened, the Bosnian Serbs, who were similarly aided by the Yugoslav People's Army, launched an assault in Bosnia which created a territorial bridge between Bosnia, Serbia, and Croatia. Similar to the situation in Croatia, the non-Serbs were driven out of the country or killed. In 1992, disputes arose between the Croats and Muslims over the constitution, which led them to turn on each other.

The West wanted to intervene with the war and help stop it, but due to a lack of political will in forming a united approach and no means of conflict management, they limited themselves to a strategy of humanitarian help and containment. The United Nations were sent to Sarajevo to distribute food and medicine, and there was an arms embargo as well as sanctions on Serbia and Montenegro. As many people were forced into the cities, the UN Security Council declared many of them as 'safe areas', of which Srebrenica was one. The name was false, however, as the areas were those in which there was no protection. Although peacekeepers were sent to the cities, they were barely armed and were ordered to be impartial and not use any force unless it was self-defence. This factor became very unfavourable for Srebrenica, which was stormed by the Bosnian-Serb army and police force on 11 July 1995. Their general, Ratko Mladić, initially assumed he could get the city to surrender without a major battle by placing it under siege, however, the Muslims he wanted to get rid of attempted to flee on the night before which caused the massacre.

The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina ended in 1995 with the Dayton Accord. After Srebrenica, the West felt inclined to step in more forcefully, providing the Croatian and Bosniak armed forces with foreign arm shipments and American military advisers. Soon

Bosnia-Herzegovina was divided equally amongst the Bosnian Serbs and the Croat-Muslim troops. In order to settle the matter, the presidents and delegations of Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia were housed in an air force base in Dayton under lockdown, until they settled on an agreement in November 1995. Bosnia-Herzegovina was to be kept as a unified state with pre-war borders and two independent yet constituent entities, of which the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (ruled by Croats and Muslims) ruled 51 percent.

The West had hoped the Dayton Accord would be the end of the Yugoslav wars, but the terror attack of the underground organization Kosovo Liberation Army in 1997 worsened matters. The Albanians in Kosovo felt forgotten by the West due to them consistently ignoring independence demands. The Serb special police forces and army started to counter the terror attack with a massive crackdown, resulting in killings. When sanctions and warnings did not help, the West decided to "end the conflict militarily in order to prevent a "second Bosnia"," in 1999. NATO launched an air war on 24 March 1999 and attacked Serbian and Kosovar military installations, industrial plants and infrastructure. The air raid backfired, however, as Serbian forces caused even greater destruction. Many people fled and found refuge in Macedonia and Albania. Slobodan Milošević, who initially refused to obey the US and Europe, finally agreed in June 1999 to make a UN protectorate within Yugoslavia out of Kosovo. He was put on trial in 2000 and Serbia began the process of Europeanization under a new democratic government.

The last violent conflict in former Yugoslavia was in Macedonia from 2000-2001, when the Kosovo Liberation Army carried out attacks there. The EU and US came with peace agreements and granted Albanians more rights. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia dissolved afterwards, transforming into State Union of Serbia and Montenegro in 2003.[8]

The war of Yugoslavia left the Balkan region with several changes: firstly, the region underwent social-geographical changes. Only Slovenia, Croatia and Montenegro came out of the war with territorially consolidated state entities. The Serbian people, however, were divided across three states. Furthermore, although Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo were their own state now, the population was deeply ethnically divided, and they both suffered severe economic setbacks. Bosnia, for example, was divided into Bosnian, Serbian, and Croatian, which could be seen in language and schoolbooks. Macedonia, who did not play a large part in the war, still suffered the consequences of Yugoslavia's fall, as due to Greece's objections, the country could not be recognised under its chosen name, and was therefore forced to call

[8] Calic, 298.

itself the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in 1993.

Secondly, there are setbacks and prospects on an economic level. Due to the damage of the war, as well as the break-up into smaller unproductive economies and the introduction of a market economy, the former Yugoslav states suffered from deep recession. The global economic crisis of 2007-2008 only worsened matters, and subsequently led to shrinking employment and a declining income. A prospect, however, is a revival in cooperation between states.

Lastly, Bosnia-Herzegovina suffered from religious changes. The Bosnian Muslim culture used to be tolerant and openminded, but since the war a process of heavy Islamization began. Despite its efforts, it was a mixed success. More veiled women appeared on the streets, but other Islamic practices such as Koran studies, prohibition of pork and alcohol, and daily prayers have remained uncommon in Bosnian society.[9]

As is apparent here, the disintegration of Yugoslavia has left a large mark on society, both within and outside the Balkans. It is also seen in literature which contains one or several aspects of Yugoslav life and living during wartimes, written not only by natives, but also by migrants. The novels used as a case study for this thesis are examples of that.

[9] Calic, 318.

Chapter Two: (Post-)Yugoslav Concepts Explained

"I was born in a country that doesn't exist anymore."[10] Many people lost their country and identity when Yugoslavia disintegrated. The wars left unimaginable trauma upon the Balkan societies and this trauma is still being remembered to this day. Moreover, the wars caused many to flee the region to seek refuge in the West. Aspects of the war trauma, memories of the no longer existing Yugoslavia, and the experiences of migrants are presented in various ways such as monuments, films, or artworks. Some took to writing about Yugoslavia in order to process the trauma of an era gone by in a flash. Literature written about Yugoslavia after the disintegration is usually referred to as Post-Yugoslav literature. This form of literature often contains aspects of trauma, cultural memory, nostalgia and transnationalism, which is why they need to be addressed and explained separately before I can move on to the analysis of the primary texts in order to better aid the understanding of them. This chapter discusses each theme separately as each following chapter is dedicated to one of these themes. Discussing them separately will facilitate keeping this complex topic untangled, and will allow for a more in-depth analysis and a clearer drawing of conclusions before being able to look at the bigger picture.

2.1 Post-Yugoslav Literature

Post-Yugoslav literature is, as was briefly established in the introduction, a difficult term to define. Milutinović attempted to explain and debunk several definitions and interpretations of Post-Yugoslav literature and concluded that it is a weak term which cannot be pinned down.[11] It is assumed, for instance, that writers from this Post-Yugoslav regional space share a common language, which would be incorrect when one considers the fact that Slovene and Macedonian were their own languages within Yugoslavia.[12] Nevertheless, Milutinović's explanations might still provide food for thought in establishing a finer definition.

The first possible meaning of Post-Yugoslav literature is non-nationalist and leftist literature written in the Yugoslav successor states, meaning that it opposes nationalist and

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[10] Saša Stanišić, *Where You Come From*, trans. Damion Searls (New York: Vintage Books, 2021), EPUB.
[11] Zoran Milutinović, "A Note on the Meaning of the 'Post' in Post-Yugoslav Literature," *Slavonic and East European* Review 99, no. 4 (2021): 734-741, https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10139586/1/slaveasteurorev2.99.4.0734%5B61%5D.pdf.
[12] Milutinović, 734.

neoliberal policies.[13] This theory is already debunked by the fact that Yugoslavia was both nationalist and non-nationalist, as can be concluded from the historical context. In order to be counted as Post-Yugoslav fiction, the criterium is derived from the Communist Alliance's official anti-nationalist socialist ideology, and what the literature wanted to be perceived as rather than from what it historically was.[14] According to Milutinović, this definition should therefore be abandoned.

The second description links Post-Yugoslav fiction to post-national literature. The historical period in which literature was nationally produced is now over, and we live in a 'post-national constellation' in which national literature is no longer important.[15] National literature is in this description, however, completely misunderstood. Dividing literature into national literature would imply literature is bound to its respective language (Milutinović uses Finnish literature written in Finnish as an example), but classifying literature in such a manner would mean all works of literature are national, which is not always the case.[16] Post-national literature is essentially supposed to be non-national literature. Milutinović states that this theory is regarded as "more theoretically sophisticated", but keeps a critical standpoint.[17]

The third and final definition Milutinović uses for Post-Yugoslav fiction is post-nationalist literature. Literature belongs to a certain nation in the same manner as cultural aspects (music, clothing, cuisine), history and nature do, and literature's link to a nation is language.[18] Literature is part of the nation-building process and becomes nationalist rather than national by documenting representations, values and stories of the nation. Calling Post-Yugoslav literature post-nationalist, however, is also a misinterpretation. If it is post-nationalist, it is supposed to oppose the nationalism of all Yugoslav successor states, but Yugoslavia was meant to be understood as non-nationalist (as everyone was supposed to be united), meaning that Post-Yugoslav literature should indicate the literature of nationalism.[19]

This raises the question whether or not *The Tiger's Wife*, *Girl at War*, and *Where You Come From* are instances of Post-Yugoslav fiction. In the chapter called "Closer to the North Pole", Stanišić questions the issue of identity and nationality by having children write down how they identify themselves as on a list, of which the categories are Muslim, Serb, or Croat. One of them starts writing "Don't know" but then changes her mind and writes "Yugoslav" as

[13] Milutinović, 735.
[14] Milutinović, 735.
[15] Milutinović, 735.
[16] Milutinović, 736.
[17] Milutinović, 735.
[18] Milutinović, 736.
[19] Milutinović, 737.

a new category. When one boy writes someone else's name under Muslim, they get into a fight.[20] If Post-Yugoslav literature were non-national, then *Where You Come From* would be classified as Post-Yugoslav literature. *Girl at War* and *The Tiger's Wife* also denounce nationalities by linking it critically to warfare, indicating that it should not matter whether someone is Serb, Croat, Muslim or something else. The novels are non-national, post-nationalist and, therefore, according to Milutinović's analysis, likely not Post-Yugoslav at all. For the purposes of this thesis, however, I will refer to these texts as Post-Yugoslav fiction for simplicity's sake, as it would likely be more difficult to place them in another literary genre.

2.2 Literary Trauma

The novels in question deal with warfare and, more importantly, the aftermath thereof. Trauma is a very natural topic to include within these narratives. The study of trauma was originally situated in the field of medicine and psychology, but over the last few decades it has become an important discussion topic in literature and cultural studies as well.[21] What is more, according to Schönfelder, trauma and memory reinforce each other: "a mania for memory is particularly likely to arise at moments of crisis, at times when memory comes to be felt as fragile and threatened – a frequent after-effect of trauma", meaning that memories are fuelled by traumatic experiences. [22] Trauma theory as devised by Cathy Caruth claims that the brain is unable to properly process the traumatic event and can only present it through repetitive flashbacks.[23] Furthermore, she suggests that a traumatic experience is contagious and can be transmitted to others through the means of narration or by sharing an ancestry or ethnic origins.[24] As a result, traumatic experiences are "transhistorically passed across generational gaps, primarily through verbal or written acts of remembering."[25] This would mean that a person could 'inherit' the trauma and symptoms thereof experienced by their parents or ancestors without having experienced it themselves, which is also referred to as

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[20] Saša Stanišić, *Where You Come From*, trans. Damion Searls (New York: Vintage Books, 2021), EPUB.

[21] Christina Schönfelder, "Chapter One: Theorizing Trauma: Romantic and Postmodern Perspectives on Mental Wounds," in *Wounds and Words: Childhood and Family Trauma in Romantic and Postmodern Fiction* (New Rockford: Transcript Verslag, 2013), 28, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv1wxrhq.5.
[22] Schönfelder, 28.
[23] Cathy Caruth, cited in Michelle Balaev, "Trends in Literary Trauma Theory," *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal* 41, no. 2 (2008): 151, https://www.jstor.org/stable/44029500.
[24] Caruth, cited in Balaev, 151.
[25] Balaev, 152.

transgenerational trauma.[26] Because of those acts of remembering, trauma fiction reflects on the past. It is also an important mode of engagement between readers and trauma, as trauma fiction calls for critical reflection and emotional identification, often representing repressed groups of people and "narrating the unnarratable."[27]

Aside from narrating the past in a manner that is otherwise unspeakable, trauma fiction contains an individual protagonist who functions as the expression of a unique and personal traumatic experience, but at the same time represents an event experienced by groups of people.[28] Slavery and the Second World War are examples of this. The trauma novel describes a protagonist's suffering, but presents it in such a way that the protagonist is an "everyperson."[29] Moreover, the person's experiences are often a result of larger cultural forces.[30] These aspects are applicable to the three Post-Yugoslav novels: *Girl at War*'s protagonist Ana was a child when war broke out in Croatia; the socio-political unrest was beyond her comprehension, as she initially did not understand why the Serbs and Croats began hating each other: " "Do you want Serbian cigarettes or Croatian ones?" The way he stressed the two nationalities sounded unnatural."[31] In *The Tiger's Wife*, Natalia is in the middle of the group's conflict by providing medical help. Saša's situation in *Where You Come From* was one of which many war fugitives could identify themselves with.

Another characteristic of trauma fiction is the omission of details and events altogether. Balaev uses Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* as an example in which she was raped by her master but could not write about it or tell her grandmother. Her silence allowed for greater suspension and repulsion amongst readers as they could imagine their own worst fears of abuse.[32] By not expressing the events, the authors or trauma fiction in reality highlight the un-narratability of traumatic events. This narrative strategy could create a "gap" in time in which the reader can imagine what might have happened to the protagonist.[33] Narrative gaps are established in a similar manner through the usage of flashbacks or frame narratives, as these also disrupt the story and may omit events that could have happened between the main narrative and the frame or flashback. Finally, the act of displacement could

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[26] Gabriele Schwab, *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 78.
[27] Schönfelder, "Chapter One: Theorizing Trauma: Romantic and Postmodern Perspectives on Mental Wounds," 29-30.
[28] Balaev, "Trends in Literary Trauma Theory," 155.
[29] Balaev, 155.
[30] Balaev, 156.
[31] Sara Nović, *Girl at War* (London: Little, Brown, 2015), 6.
[32] Balaev, "Trends in Literary Trauma Theory," 158.
[33] Balaev, 159.

say more about a traumatic event than directly addressing it: Caruth uses the example of the film *Hiroshima mon amour* which is a fictional story not about Hiroshima but taking place in Hiroshima, to argue that the indirectness of the narrative allows for the possibility of a faithful history.[34]

2.3 Cultural Memory

Flashbacks or frame narratives could also fill in the function of remembering. Cultural memory is a form of collective memory (a memory and/or history shared by a group of people) which can be found in material objects such as museums, monuments, and books. [35] In other words, it recounts the common history of a group's culture. Said group requires communication to be able to share memories.[36] Memory has been an important part of society since Antiquity. To the Ancient Greeks and Romans, memory was a spatial location in which things were stored in a manner similar to how humans remember words.[37] With the rise of the Enlightenment and the novel, memory became a documented thing rather than face-to-face communication.[38] According to Irimia, Benedict Anderson's view on memory comes closest to cultural memory. His idea of memory is material stored by imagined communities, meaning that it is stored in the experiences of groups, their mnemonic institutions (for example museums), and in societies which can reconstruct that which is no longer in practice but still remains of value to their identity.[39]

Literature plays a large role in cultural memory due to its ability of narrating a shared history. As Charles Moseley cleverly states: "Human beings have one characteristic apparently shared by no other species on the planet: we tell each other stories, and make sense of the world we inhabit and experience through narrative. […] Story-making, then, is fundamental to our humanity."[40] The world contains various cultures which get passed down

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[34] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), EPUB.
[35] Ann Rigney, "Literature and Cultural Memory," in *The Life of Texts: An Introduction to Literary Studies* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 367, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvt9k5s9.15.
[36] Rigney, 365.
[37] Mihaela Irimia, "Introduction: Literature and/as (Cultural) Memory," in *Literature and Cultural Memory*, eds. Mihaela Irimia, Andreea Paris, and Dragoş Manea (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 3, doi: https://doi-org.ru.idm.oclc.org/10.1163/9789004338876_002.
[38] Irimia, 4.
[39] Irimia, 4-5.
[40] C.W.R.D. Moseley, "Ancestral Voices," in *Literature and Cultural Memory*, eds. Mihaela Irimia, Andreea Paris, and Dragoş Manea (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 64, doi: https://doi-org.ru.idm.oclc.org/10.1163/9789004338876_006.

from generation to generation through the means of storytelling. In short, people and nations are constituted by a common myth.[41] Studies of cultural memory have taken to this idea of literature's importance and have started to incorporate literature and narratology in their research. This is because literature can give new insights into cultural memory when it is based on trauma and identity politics.[42] Repressed memories, for example, are successfully reconstructed due to narratives, even if the memories are fragmentary or hallucinatory.[43] One way of analysing these new insights is by looking at the focalisation of a narrative. Focalisation is a narratological strategy in which a critic observes the perspective of the narrative, which does not necessarily have to be of the narrator. According to Brînzeu, focalisation can tell a lot about the protagonist's state of mind and his or her memories.

Cultural memory, be it written or not, could also influence the thinking and identification of groups of people, youths especially. According to Krawatzek, "the cultural realm is capable of expanding the limits of social and political thought and highlighting contradictions and tensions in society."[44] Many works of fiction aimed at youths which discuss historical topics try to engage the reader. At a first glance these sort of novels seem to engage only with the past, but their aim is to shape the present and future.[45] The topics overlap with transitional moments that encourage nations to redefine their identity.[46] History textbooks are a prime example of this as they are a tool for social conditioning which reflects the teachings of history as serving to construct national identity.[47] Children were meant to be shaped into citizens of a nation, which is why history books are structured in such a way that it brings forth a political and cultural opinion out of them. One flaw of this is that history textbooks are never objective, as they romanticise their own nation, and considering the fact these textbooks are usually written by adults, it shows what the nation should mean to youths according to them, rather than showing how youths make sense of national ideas.[48] This implies that cultural memory is biased towards a specific nation's ideas and values, and that adults attempt to teach youths the 'correct' opinions on their culture. It also indicates that

[41] Moseley, 65.
[42] Pia Brînzeu, "Memory and Focalization," in *Literature and Cultural Memory*, eds. Mihaela Irimia, Andreea Paris, and Dragoş Manea (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 86, doi: https://doi-org.ru.idm.oclc.org/10.1163/9789004338876_008.
[43] Brînzeu, 86.
[44] Félix Krawatzek and Nina Friess, "Transmitting the Past to Young Minds," in *Youth and Memory in Europe: Defining the Past, Shaping the Future*, eds. Félix Krawatzek and Nina Friess (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), 4, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110733501-001.
[45] Krawatzek, 5.
[46] Krawatzek, 5.
[47] Krawatzek, 6.
[48] Krawatzek, 7.

cultural memory is what a society wants to remember rather than what actually happened.

All the aforementioned points raise the question how cultural memory was presented in Yugoslavia. During the Yugoslav wars, women's groups arose which sought to help female refugees regardless of their ethnical background, one group being the Center for Women War Victims which was formed in 1992.[49] These groups organised self-help groups in refugee camps, distributed humanitarian aid, and organised counselling.[50] Nowadays, however, their efforts are largely marginalised and forgotten. Women's suffering and war resistance became repressed in collective memory.[51] Although women were the initialisers of resistance and gender equality, nationalist political parties started to re-patriarchalise society from 1990 onwards. Ethnicity and gender became the central focus, as for example a square originally named Exchange Market Square was renamed into Square of Croatian Great Men, whereas no monuments were dedicated to women.[52] History was presented as an "endless sequence of male heroes" (Verdery).[53] Moreover, the collective narrative of Yugoslavia transformed after the civil wars, causing the cultural memory to adopt the histories of national groups suffering under the socialist regime.[54]

2.4 Yugonostalgia

A specific term which can be associated with cultural memory and Yugoslavia is Yugonostalgia. Yugonostalgia is a longing and sense of nostalgia for Yugoslavia in which general life seemed better than it did after the wars. The term was coined in the 1990s by Croatian media and was used to attack people critical of the ethno-nationalist discourse. It was also a synonym for a "public enemy" or someone who regrets the collapse of Yugoslavia.[55] Although the successor states became very nationalist in nature, nostalgic discourses of the socialist past have become increasingly popular.[56] According to Milivojevic, "*Yugonostalgia*

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[49] Vesna Kesić, "The Gender Dimension of Conflict and Reconciliation: Ten Years After: Women Reconstructing Memory," in *After Yugoslavia: Identities and Politics within the Successor States*, eds. Robert Hudson and Glenn Bowman (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 144, https://link.springer.com/book/10.1057/9780230305137.
[50] Kesić, 144.
[51] Kesić, 146.
[52] Kesić, 148.
[53] Kesić, 148.
[54] Mirko Milivojevic and Dilyara Müller-Suleymanova, "(Post)-Yugoslav Memory Travels: National and Transnational Dimensions.",," in *Youth and Memory in Europe: Defining the Past, Shaping the Future*, eds. Félix Krawatzek and Nina Friess (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), 182, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110733501-013.
[55] Milivojevic, 182.
[56] Milivojevic, 182.

is a wide range of counter-memory narratives and practices," as it goes against those who want to ban all things Yugoslav. [57] This emergence of popularity for Yugoslavia was aided by filmmakers, artists, musicians, authors and so forth who produced alternative interpretations of the Yugoslav past.[58] Nostalgia is often combined with irony, humour or criticism of the past regime in most of these productions, offering a reconstruction of memory narratives.[59]

One particular object of Yugonostalgic cultural memory is the *Lexicon of Yu-Mythology*. The lexicon, which was a project first started in 1989 by writer and critic Dubravka Ugrešić, is a collection of various "things Yugoslav", as well as a written and visual exhibition of memories.[60] Examples of "things Yugoslav" are slang, children's games, hairstyles, sports (such as the Red Star soccer club), the car brand Fića (a Fiat 1300 which was immensely popular there), and much more. Pop culture became increasingly popular in Yugoslavia due to the fact that it was largely unexplored at the time just before the disintegration.[61] All citizens who wished to contribute could do so, but contributions were scarce because of the political struggles. The *Lexicon* project was redesigned into a website when the civil war broke out in 1991 and became a virtual museum.[62] It was initially meant to provide a means to construct identity and to represent the collective memories of lived experiences, however, "it had become a political statement by ex-Yugoslavs who did not wish their social and cultural history to be erased from public memory."[63] With the new nationalist politicians transforming historical truths into historical lies and dismantling the old system which contained so much diversity, ex-Yugoslavs felt robbed of their collective identity. This is why many of them, mostly those who lived abroad, contributed to the Lexicon.[64]

As becomes apparent, a lot of influence on Yugoslavia came from the ex-Yugoslavs living in Western Europe. It is interesting that so many people ended up in the 'capitalist West' after having been brought up in a socialist republic. Yet because of the economy, Yugoslavia was the only socialist country which allowed migration to the West, and the government even encouraged labour migration in order to tackle their economic problems.[65] As a result, there was a large wave of economically-driven labour migration to Western

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[57] Milivojevic, 182.
[58] Milivojevic, 182.
[59] Milivojevic, 183.
[60] Aleksandar Bošković, "Yugonostalgia and Yugoslav Cultural Memory: Lexicon of Yu Mythology," *Slavic Review* 72, no. 1 (2013): 55, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5612/slavicreview.72.1.0054.
[61] Bošković, 56.
[62] Bošković, 56.
[63] Bošković, 56.
[64] Bošković, 57.
[65] Milivojevic, "(Post)-Yugoslav Memory Travels: National and Transnational Dimensions.","," 184.

Europe from the 1960s to the 1980s. When the wars broke out across the Yugoslav region, labour migration shifted to mainly refugee migration.[66] There is a difference in the way these migrants socialised: whereas in the 60s-80s period migrants went to joint migrant clubs linked to the Yugoslav state, after the disintegration they only socialised within their respective national or religious group, leading to memories of Yugoslavia being discussed only in the private spheres or within the family.[67] Despite these facts, a strong nostalgia exists, specifically among the youths of migrant background who have never lived in socialist Yugoslavia or only have fragmented memories of it.[68]

According to a study by Müller-Suleymanova, Yugonostalgia helps diaspora youths to help cope with stigmatisation against ex-Yugoslavs in their migrant countries, as well as with the violent history of the civil wars and its consequences.[69] The study analyses biographical narratives of two migrant youths in Switzerland: one was of Serbian descent and the other Bosnian-Muslim. In both cases, their families remained within their own ethno-national and religious circles in which attachments to the homelands (Serbia and Bosnia) had the upper hand over a vanished Yugoslavia.[70] As a result, post-war national discourses have taken over and silenced memories of Yugoslavia.[71] The two youths, however, deviated from their families' manner of socialisation, for example by leaving their home circle for college, and have rekindled their sense of Yugonostalgia. For the Serbian person, nostalgia meant a departure from an exclusive focus on Serb identity, and for the Bosnian-Muslim, "it is a departure from the narratives of trauma, victimhood and religious traditionalism."[72] The discovery of Yu-rock was furthermore a means to reconstruct these people's views, as it was a transnational and intergenerational memory of the Yugoslav period.[73]

2.5 Transnationalism

As has become apparent, Yugoslavia has left its mark much further into the world than merely in the Balkan region. Up to this point the feelings migrants have about Yugoslavia

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[66] Milivojevic, 184.
[67] Milivojevic, 185.
[68] Milivojevic, 185.
[69] Dilyara Müller-Suleymanova, ""I am something that no longer exists ...": Yugonostalgia among Diaspora Youth," in *Youth and Memory in Europe: Defining the Past, Shaping the Future*, eds. Félix Krawatzek and Nina Friess (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), 193, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110733501-014.
[70] Müller-Suleymanova, 200.
[71] Müller-Suleymanova, 200.
[72] Müller-Suleymanova, 200.
[73] Müller-Suleymanova, 201.

have been discussed, but how do ex-Yugoslav migrants cope with their identity abroad, and how does transnationalism influence the successor states?

Transnational means, simply put, to extend or operate across national boundaries. Due to the flood of ex-Yugoslavs going abroad and creating communities there, former Yugoslavia can be regarded as an example of transnational. At the same time, however, the region is also transnationalist. Transnationalism means that economic, cultural and political processes extend beyond the boundaries of the nation-state. As I have discussed in the historical context for example, politicians reached out to the Yugoslav communities living abroad to gain votes for their campaigns. Transnationalism is linked to and clashes with citizenship. To illustrate, there is a strong debate about the question whether or not a person living abroad should have voting rights and other forms of political influence in their country of origin.[74] It has been said that some refugees have sent funds to violent nationalist organisations in their home country while they themselves were living peacefully in the West.[75] Citizenship is not excluded to political rights alone: 'cultural citizenship' can give a person rights determined by their cultural identity. A Croat in Croatia, for instance, is entitled to benefits such as voting and landowning which non-Croats lack.[76] This defines citizenship as a "membership category" in the sense that it creates belonging and distinguishes between members and the excluded.[77]

Questions of citizenship and identity have played a major role in the lives of ex-Yugoslav migrants. Migration of the 1990s was a reaction to the changed rules going from multi-ethnic to ethnonational, and identifying to a specific ethnicity was required and demanded.[78] Living away from the war proved to be difficult due to feelings of trauma and victimhood. Families would call themselves naïve and victims of the war, throwing all the blame on the "other" ethnic party (for example, Croats would say they had to migrate because of the violence the Serbs committed).[79] For youths, especially, the constant reminder of the past and the older generation refusing to settle down in the West became a burden on their lives. These youths, often referred to as the "Generation In-Between", have experienced difficulties in the country they have fled to, as well as their homeland when they go back to

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[74] Katherine Verdery, "Transnationalism, Nationalism, Citizenship, and Property: Eastern Europe Since 1989," *American Ethnologist* 21, no. 2 (1998): 293, https://www.jstor.org/stable/646696.
[75] Verdery, 293.
[76] Verdery, 293.
[77] Verdery, 293.
[78] Dragana Kovačević Bielicki, ""Tell Me a Name and I Will Tell You Who They Are": Post-Yugoslav Refugees and the Legacy(ies) of Ethnification," in *Balkan Legacies: The Long Shadow of Conflict and Ideological Experiment in Southeastern Europe*, eds. Balasz Apor and John Paul Newman (Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2021), 321, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv1dhph96.17.
[79] Bielicki, 324.

visit. [80] On the one hand, it can be argued that this generation has better living standards compared to their peers back in the successor states. They may nevertheless perceive themselves as being disadvantaged compared to their Western peers because of marginalisation in the workforce when it comes to housing, employment, education, and political participation.[81]

Many young migrants believed they would one day return to their country of origin.[82] One person narrated in Bielicki's study, however, that during her first return after three years since the war was over, she realised she had felt estranged from her 'home country' and that she now felt as a foreigner.[83] According to her, "the society "there" had moved on from the conflict, while the relocated refugees perpetuate bad memories of how the society was back when they left."[84] Many refugees could not move on themselves because of this. This, added to the fact that the Generation In-Between is feeling disadvantaged in Western society is likely the reason why they feel lost in their identity. It is said that these migrants identify themselves as both people from the Balkans and the West, rather than excluding one from the other.[85] Despite this fact, they are regarded as foreigners in their new country, and strangers in their old one, making them feel unwelcome in both the West and in ex-Yugoslavia.[86]

One final example which stresses the disadvantage of migrants in the West can be found in literature. Germany termed works of non-German writers in the 1980s as *Gastarbeitersliteratur* (guest worker literature).[87] As mentioned earlier, *Gastarbeiters* came to Western Europe to work, and these "guests" were expected to return home. In Germany, these workers, and therefore also authors, migrated to the Federal Republic and were seen as outsiders who were merely temporarily welcome. Even so, these migrants did not return home, and there was very little social relationship with the host community as they had little or nothing in common with Germany.[88] Over time, as the number of migrants increased, new

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[80] Eva Tamara Asboth and Silvia Nadjivan. "Neither Here Nor There – Ni ovde, ni tamo: Religiously Connoted Social Media Self-Representations of "Generation In-Between"," in *Migration in Austria*, eds. Günter Bischof and Dirk Rupnow (New Orleans: University of New Orleans Press, 2017), 192, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1t89kvv.11.
[81] Asboth, 192.
[82] Bielicki, ""Tell Me a Name and I Will Tell You Who They Are": Post-Yugoslav Refugees and the Legacy(ies) of Ethnification,", 326.
[83] Bielicki, 326.
[84] Bielicki, 326.
[85] Asboth, "Neither Here Nor There – Ni ovde, ni tamo: Religiously Connoted Social Media Self-Representations of "Generation In-Between"," 200.
[86] Asboth, 200.
[87] Máiréad Nic Craith, ""Migrant" Writing and the Re-Imagined Community: Discourses of Inclusion/Exclusion," *German Politics & Society* 33, no. ½ (2015): 85, https://www.jstor.org/stable/43917501.
[88] Craith, 85.

terms were developed for this kind of literature, such as *Ausländerliteratur* (foreign literature) or *MigrantInnenliteratur* (migrant literature).[89] These terms proved to be criticised, as migrants began writing and publishing in German in order to establish themselves, and calling it foreign became problematic. As some authors translated their writing from their mother tongue into German, they created a new kind of written German that was distinct from their spoken German.[90] This eventually led to non-German writers being more recognised in the German community.

As is now apparent, Post-Yugoslav literature is a broad and difficult concept to define. The literature could contain aspects of trauma, and trauma is subsequently linked to acts of memory as a traumatic experience leads a person to remember. These memories can be collective and cultural, and for the former Republic of Yugoslavia cultural memory is strongly related to nostalgia, which is in this case specifically defined as Yugonostalgia. Lastly, Yugonostalgia is not only experienced inside the successor states but also outside of them, turning Yugoslavia into a transnational state. Migrants have also expressed feelings of identity loss, as they are frowned upon in their new country and estranged of their old one. Now that some context has been established on what makes the primary texts so interesting and important, it is now possible to dive more in-depth into these texts.

[89] Craith, 85.
[90] Craith, 89.

Chapter Three: Somnambulist[91]: Trauma Depictions in Post-Yugoslav Literature

The Yugoslav wars were highly unexpected and extremely violent. Because of this fact, it is only natural many people have suffered from effects of trauma. Some of them still regret the events of the war to this day and have been unable to move on from their loss. This experience of trauma was not limited to the warzones, as we have established in the previous chapter. Due to the large diaspora wave many war fugitives have brought their traumatic experiences overseas and to other generations as well, and some of these people have decided to write about them. The primary texts in question are no exception to this trend, although their execution of trauma writing might differ. Nonetheless, all of them document the stories of a repressed group of people and narrate the unnarratable.[92] Furthermore, the trauma of these groups is in each of these texts expressed through the experiences of an individual.[93] When regarding these texts as a set, their similarities as well as their differences in trauma depictions will become apparent.

There are essentially three different forms of trauma for each of the novels. Firstly, *The Tiger's Wife* uses the collective trauma of Yugoslavia to help the protagonist cope with her personal trauma of losing her grandfather, in other words, redirecting the trauma. Next, *Girl at War* actively confronts the reader with trauma by having the protagonist be haunted by her past and experience symptoms of PTSD. Lastly, the protagonist of *Where You Come From* did not experience the war directly due to being a fugitive, but receives transgenerational trauma from his relatives in which their experiences are passed down to him.

3.1 Trauma of Redirection in The Tiger's Wife

As the previous chapter explained, traumatic experiences cannot be properly processed by the brain and need a means of narration, either written or spoken.[94] This narration is often performed through flashbacks and is, therefore, linked to aspects of memory. A protagonist who has experienced a traumatic event will turn inward and struggle with the past.[95] These flashbacks can be experiential but can also be mythical stories. Obreht's *The Tiger's Wife*

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[91] Sara Nović, *Girl at War* (London: Little, Brown, 2015), title of Part II.
[92] Schönfelder, "Chapter One: Theorizing Trauma: Romantic and Postmodern Perspectives on Mental Wounds," 29-30.
[93] Balaev, "Trends in Literary Trauma Theory," 155.
[94] Balaev, "Trends in Literary Trauma Theory," 151.
[95] Balaev, 164.

relies heavily on surreal narratives in which the line between real memories and myth is blurred.

The novel revolves around the protagonist Natalia, who is crossing the border of Brejevina, a village of an unnamed fictional Balkan country which was involved in a civil war twelve years before the events of the main narrative. Natalia followed her grandfather's footsteps into becoming a doctor, and she is on a healthcare mission for her university's United Clinics. Together with her friend and fellow medic Zóra, they were assigned to sanitize children in an orphanage by providing them with vaccines. Right before they cross the border, Natalia receives a phone call from her grandmother, informing her of her grandfather's sudden passing. The first chapter introduces the reader to the protagonist and her goals, and already makes it apparent that this fictional war is an implicit representation of the Yugoslav wars. An example of this is that nationalist tendencies of the people are revealed: "everyone had apparently been anxious about it all along, about how your name started and ended."[96] To a multi-ethnic country such as Yugoslavia, names were an indication of one's nationality. Nationality was part of the political unrest and caused national groups to turn on each other. In addition, later on in the novel, Natalia describes the consequences of the war in more detail:

> The war had altered everything. Once separate, the pieces that made up our old country no longer carried the same characteristics that had formerly represented their respective parts of the whole. Previously shared things – landmarks, writers, scientists, histories – had to be doled out by their owners. […] And all the while we told ourselves that everything would eventually return to normal.[97]

This passage strongly indicates that this narrative is about the aftermath of Yugoslavia's disintegration. There was one old country, a whole unit which separated itself into multiple nations. A way to narrate the unnarratable is by fictionalising real traumatic events, which Obreht does here by fictionalising the entirety of the Yugoslav wars. By creating an unspecified Balkan country and non-existent towns and villages, as well as calling the capital merely 'the City', Obreht omits details of the war while still depicting horrific scenes such as bombings and stories of people found in dumpsters. This fictionalisation of location also aligns with Caruth's example of telling a narrative without directly engaging with the

[96] Téa Obreht, *The Tiger's Wife* (New York: Random House, 2011), 15.
[97] Obreht, 161.

historical events as she discussed with the Hiroshima example.[98] Natalia is in the country, but does not partake in war conflicts as the war is already over. This is a sharp contrast with the other two novels, who have their setting in Croatia and Bosnia. Choosing so is likely because of the different types of trauma they discuss.

Although Natalia is the protagonist, her reflections on the past are not only about herself, but also about her grandfather, who turns out to be an important part of the story. These past reflections do not contain any explicit confrontation with warfare, nevertheless they all take place during times of war. Authors of trauma novels tend to incorporate a nonlinear plot or disruptive temporal sequences to highlight mental confusion or contemplation as a response to traumatic experiences.[99] This is the case for this novel, but also for the other two novels, who alternate between the past and present, as well as different locations in their narratives. Time in *The Tiger's Wife* alternates between roughly four main moments: the present, which is stated to be twelve years after the war, Natalia's teenage and student years when her grandfather was still alive and the civil war was at its peak, her grandfather's experiences as a doctor in the 50s and 70s when he encounters the Deathless Man (narrated by himself within Natalia's past when he was still alive), and her grandfather's childhood when a tiger escapes the City zoo due to German bombings in 1941, which also relates the Ottoman war which occurred before her grandfather's birth (narrated by Natalia).

Compared to *Girl at War* and *Where You Come From*, Obreht's novel contains the most variations in time and location: *Girl at War* alternates between the protagonist's present of the United States as well as her return to Zagreb, and her past of growing up and experiencing the war in Zagreb. Moreover, a small section is dedicated to her arrival in the United States when she was a child. *Where You Come From* offers a similar experience, alternating between the protagonist's past and present in Bosnia and Germany, but alternates more rapidly in its structure.

Each chapter of *The Tiger's Wife* is dedicated to a specific moment in time, with Natalia's student years being tied to the chapters of the Deathless Man. These recollections also serve the purpose of transhistorically passing trauma along to other generations.[100] This is due to the fact that Natalia's grandfather was a doctor, who was always involved in some sort of trauma during his encounters with the Deathless Man: first, he encounters an epidemic

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[98] Cathy Caruth, "Literature and the Enactment of Memory," in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), EPUB.
[99] Balaev, "Trends in Literary Trauma Theory," 159.
[100] Balaev, 152.

of a village. Next, he visits a different village where people come to be healed by the Virgin of the Waters and sets up a care centre there to help them. Lastly, he visits Sarobor the night before the siege, when the town of Marhan (with a Muslim community) is being shelled across the Old Bridge from Sarobor. This is a parallel to the Srebrenica massacre, when the Bosnian-Serb army massacred the Muslims. This generational passing of trauma is also seen in *Where You Come From* through the protagonist's family, but not so much in *Girl at War*, as will be discussed later.

Looking at the focalisation and narration of the narrative can unveil some information about Natalia's trauma. The entirety of the novel is written using first-person narration, with the narrator being either Natalia or her grandfather. The chapters about her grandfather's childhood are all narrated by Natalia as if she were telling the reader a story, but the encounters with the Deathless Man are narrated by her grandfather when he was still alive. The fact that Natalia narrates the events of her grandfather's childhood is interesting, since the focalisation, or perspective, is additionally from her viewpoint and not her grandfather's. The reader will know the events paired with Natalia's thoughts and opinions, for example when she discusses one of the few stories her grandfather has told her: "I think something in those early childhood memories must have been imperishable."[101] Natalia relies on the stories told by her grandfather and the other villagers, making her an unreliable narrator as she does not know her own veracity: "In the end, I cannot tell you who or what she was. I cannot even say for certain what happened to Luka, though I tend to side with those in Galina who say that he awoke."[102]

War is not the only trauma Natalia has experienced. She is also in a grieving process of her suddenly deceased grandfather. The loss leads her to troubled sleeping as she has not yet processed what has occurred: "…that night, I hadn't learned to think of him as dead yet, hadn't processed news that seemed too distant to belong to me."[103] He passed away in another village away from her and his wife, without them being aware of it. Schwab states that "to achieve this freeing from the past requires one first to awaken the dead and to revisit the trauma. This process, in fact, is what we commonly call mourning."[104] Determined to find closure, Natalia sets out to the clinic where he died to retrieve his belongings. This bag of personal items is a symbolic confirmation of someone's passing, and Natalia struggles with its

[101] Obreht, 104.
[102] Obreht, 337.
[103] Obreht, 81-2.
[104] Schwab, *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma,* 79.

acceptance: "The blue bag was in my backpack, folded in half. The mortuary cold of it had stunned me, and I hadn't touched it since Zdrevkov."[105] The events of Natalia's coping are alternated with the events of her grandfather's childhood and the tiger, as well as the Deathless Man and the outbreak of the Yugoslav wars. These war narratives not only steer the reader and Natalia away from her trauma of loss, but also reawaken her deceased grandfather. By narrating a collective trauma Natalia can cope with her personal one. Trauma is essentially redirected, which is not the case for the other two novels, as Nović puts direct focus on traumatic war events, and Stanišić relies more on transgenerational trauma.

3.2 Trauma Hauntings in Girl at War

Sara Nović's narrative also contains traumatic events related to warfare, but presents them very differently from Obreht's. Unlike the storytelling of someone else's memories, *Girl at War* narrates the experience directly through the protagonist's flashbacks, making it experiential in nature. The novel is centred around Ana Jurić, a student in New York in 2001, who is still gripped by the events of her childhood. When she was ten and still living in Zagreb, Croatia, she was witness to the civil war erupting between the Serbs and Croats in 1991. Her parents were executed by Serbian soldiers, and she was then smuggled to the United States with the help of her godfather. The novel is structured in four parts, each one alternating between the past and present: part I introduces the reader to Ana as an innocent child while nationalist tensions arise related to the Serb-Croat case. Part II jumps forward to 2001, presenting Ana's life after the war in America and in which she decides to travel back to Croatia. Part III flashes back to her childhood when she reaches a Safe House (the UN safe zones described in Chapter One) and helps a group of resistance fighters, and part IV describes her reaching Tiska in the present, where her godparents lived. The entirety of the novel is written in the first-person, and unlike Natalia, Ana was in direct war conflict.

Ana is essentially the 'everyperson' as described by Balaev, which is also the case for Natalia and Saša. Anyone could have been in her position, and her experiences were resulted by larger cultural forces.[106] Ana is, to illustrate, a ten year old girl when the war breaks out. Nović stresses the fact that Ana, being an innocent child, had no understanding of the political tensions in Yugoslavia, for example when she watches a speech of Slobodan Milošević on the

[105] Obreht, 229.
[106] Balaev, "Trends in Literary Trauma Theory," 156.

television: “when I saw him, I laughed. He had big ears and a fat face […] He was saying something about cleansing the land, repeating it over and over. I had no idea what he was talking about.”[107] Society is changing around her, but Ana only knows her life in which she races on her bicycle with her best friend Luka. When her father tries to explain the difference between the Croatian National Guard and the Yugoslav National Army, she has difficulty understanding. Events escalate, until they drive from Zagreb to Sarajevo to a hospital for Ana’s ill sister. On the way back, they get detained by Serb soldiers at a roadblock and are taken to the forest to line up.

The title of part II, *Somnambulist*, describes Ana’s trauma long after the war. A somnambulist is someone who walks around in their sleep. She suffers from symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder which are described in the text. The first symptom described in part II is Ana having trouble sleeping, which is also the case for Natalia, as well as characters from Stanišić’s text.[108] Nović writes, “It was too early to leave but there was no chance I’d fall back to sleep now.”[109] Later on, she recalls her first months in her American home: “I’d tried to fend off the nightmares by avoiding sleep altogether.”[110] She also responds physically to things that reminds her of the traumatic event, for example when she is holding a speech to UN delegates about her childhood circumstances: “I returned to my seat, relieved I had gone first. But when they got to the photos of the mass graves, I slipped out a side door and vomited in a potted plant.”[111] Having been thrown into a mass grave herself, she was brought back to that experience and reacted to it. She is further shown to have difficulty in maintaining close relationships.[112] Although she is in a relationship, she has not told her partner of her identity and past experiences, and at the end of the novel she says the following about her love life: “ ‘I mess up my relationships,’ I said. ‘I basically broke up with my last boyfriend because he was too nice.’”[113] Another symptom of PTSD is being easily startled or frightened.[114] During a Fourth of July celebration, Ana gets startled by the fireworks: “Then the explosions started. […] I yelped and took off towards the house […] I dove beneath the porch, tucking my head between my knees and covering my neck with my arms like we’d

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[107] Nović, *Girl at War*, 8.
[108] “Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD),” Mayo Clinic, December 13, 2022, https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/post-traumatic-stress-disorder/symptoms-causes/syc-20355967.
[109] Nović, *Girl at War*, 95.
[110] Nović, 140.
[111] Nović, 104.
[112] “Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD),”
[113] Nović, 296.
[114] “Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD),”

learned to do at school if we didn't have time to get to the shelter."[115] These aspects show that Ana is frequently haunted by her past experiences. Even if she wants to forget by living the life of a student, she cannot: "In Croatia, life in wartime had meant a loss of control, war holding sway over every thought and movement, even while you slept. It did not allow for forgetting."[116] In other words, Ana expresses that her trauma would always follow her.

Traumatic experiences can be transferred to other people through narration.[117] Nović shows that this does not need to be a full work of literature to do so. When Ana goes to the library and finds an Eastern European nonreference book she reads the dedication page: "*To my friends in Yugoslavia, who are now all dead or enslaved.* I snapped the heavy cover shut. The book hadn't been checked out since 1991 […] I thought of the person who'd borrowed it more than a decade ago, when I was still across the ocean."[118] The book is not a fictional trauma narrative, yet still grips Ana by describing someone's trauma of loss. Moreover, Ana herself is always narrating her story to others: she holds a speech to UN delegates, recounts fragments of her story to her boyfriend, and tells her own sister of her parents as she does not remember them.

Obreht's novel presented traumatic memories somewhat covertly by narrating stories of other people and their pasts, but Nović engages directly with flashbacks. Schwab states that "traumatic memories come in flashbacks or nightmares"[119] Aside from narrating her childhood events directly in parts I and III, Ana is also constantly remembering in her present. Her memories are tainted by the trauma due to nightmares: "I dreamt of bodies. They were nightmares I'd had years ago […] Dreams in which I'd be cliff-diving from the rock ledges in Petar and Marina's fishing village and […] was […] careening toward a pile of bloated corpses."[120] Fireworks remind her of bombings, images of children with guns remind her of herself when she was a child liberation soldier. It is not until Ana decides to face her trauma head-on by travelling back to Zagreb that she slowly starts to heal, as she says, "I was gradually recalling those mundane moments – the ones that had until now given way to more traumatic memories – of a childhood governed by collective superstition."[121] Nović, in short,

[115] Nović, 129.
[116] Nović, 111.
[117] Balaev, "Trends in Literary Trauma Theory," 151.
[118] Nović, 163.
[119] Schwab, *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma*, 2.
[120] Nović, 125.
[121] Nović, 196.

uses direct confrontation with trauma, describing events explicitly, in order to help her protagonist cope and to expose trauma to the reader.

3.3 Transgenerational Trauma in Where You Come From

Saša Stanišić's protagonist (himself, as the novel is an example of autofiction and, therefore, also experiential) is displaced from the war. *Girl at War*'s Ana was also taken away from the warzone, but had participated actively in it, and Natalia was completely part of it but deflected the war to the passing of her grandfather. Saša experienced the Yugoslav wars from Germany. He was born in 1978 in Višegrad, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and was forced to flee the country when he was thirteen, at the breakout of the war. His father brought him and his mother to the Serbian border, but he himself remained to look after Saša's grandmother. He then reflects on his childhood in Bosnia, as well as growing up and adapting in Germany. He also revisits his grandmother's village when he is an adult, and the reader slowly discovers she suffers from dementia. The narrative flashes back and forth in time frequently.

His father had seen the war, but Saša was taken away from it:

> Where I Come From is war. Here's what war was for us: Mother and I fled through Serbia, Hungary, and Croatia to Germany. On August 24, 1992, we arrived in Heidelberg. [Father] joined us six months later, bringing with him a brown suitcase, insomnia, and a scar on his thigh. To this day I haven't asked him where the scar came from.[122]

When his father was reunited with them, he brought the trauma of the war with him. With his insomnia he shows a sign of PTSD, like Ana, and he refuses to talk about his injury. Trauma is often silenced, and traumatic events have to remain isolated.[123] When Saša's father returns, the following passage in the chapter titled "Bruce Willis Speaks German" reads:

> He doesn't talk much. Says that it was peaceful in Višegrad. Recently. That Grandmother's doing well. Considering. When it comes to concrete details about *before recently* or *considering what*, he doesn't say anything, and that doesn't exactly make the things you're imagining seem better or less scary. As for the scar on his

[122] Saša Stanišić, *Where You Come From*, trans. Damion Searls (New York: Vintage Books, 2021), EPUB.
[123] Schwab, *Haunting Legacies*, 80.

> thigh, he doesn't tell you anything about that either. You're not well informed enough to be able to say that it looks like a bullet wound, healed. You don't ask about it.[124]

From this passage it can be established that his father is very curt about the war. He says it was recently peaceful, implying that it in fact used to not be peaceful at all, and once again refuses to go into detail about his traumatic events, therefore silencing them.

By doing this, he transfers transgenerational trauma upon his son. When this occurs, a person who has not experienced the trauma directly may manifest symptoms that stem from a parent's or ancestor's traumas or secrets.[125] As has been established before, traumatic memories are often fragmentary. Saša's writing style is a good example of this. Memories play a major role in *Where You Come From*, and these are often described in a stream-of-consciousness sort of manner, similar to how the brain would remember things. In the chapter "Soccer, Me, and War, 1991", for example, Saša writes a list of things he has had in his life. The list starts with mundane things, such as his collection of reflectors, his grandmother, and his pets, however, the contents begin to change. First, he writes "Frequent headaches", then he describes an "improbable game" he would attend with his father had the events of the war not occurred. Next, he writes "An unthinkable war" and "An English teacher I never said goodbye to, and will never see again."[126] The mundane aspects of his life have been replaced with the war as it takes over his mind. In a later chapter called "Lost in the Strange, Dimly Lit Cave of Time", he admits that he digresses a lot, and the narrative is constantly moving between memories. This also aligns with the aspect of trauma novels incorporating a nonlinear plot and disruptive sequences as a response to traumatic experiences, as Saša is in a perpetual state of disruptiveness. [127] Instances of trauma appear at random, following a regular scenario, for instance: "On my way back I found Mother and my uncle's wife behind a rock. They were giggling over a wine bottle. […] Two years later dozens of Muslim women would be taken to the Višegrad health spa, raped, and killed."[128] Trauma is always there in the back of his mind, as Saša himself also describes, "There are no stories I can tell of my childhood except dissonant ones."[129]

Saša's father is not the only one who transfers his trauma to him. As I have argued for

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[124] Stanišić, "Bruce Willis Speaks German," EPUB.
[125] Schwab, 78.
[126] Stanišić, "Soccer, Me, and War, 1991," EPUB.
[127] Balaev, "Trends in Literary Trauma Theory," 159.
[128] Stanišić, "Lambs," EPUB.
[129] Stanišić, EPUB.

Girl at War's case, narration is used to transfer trauma to other people.[130] Saša's grandmother, who suffers from dementia in his present, told him stories of her experiences during World War II. He asks her if she remembers the Germans marching in, and if she was scared. She replies, "Everyone was scared. […] We knew the stories. Everyone was scared of each other, and that's what scared me."[131] Saša then describes the events himself: "Every time the villagers could wash their faces in the morning without seeing someone hanging from a nearby tree or hearing that someone had been stabbed in the night, it got easier for them to fall asleep."[132] These instances show that experiences of a different war and its traumas are shared and transmitted to another generation.

Similar to Natalia and Ana, Saša is the "everyperson" whose life gets altered by events around him. In a manner similar to Ana's when she watches Milošević's speech, he describes his ignorance of things his father says in the chapter "A Party!": "I didn't understand the word 'memorandum.' I understood 'serious crisis,' but not what the crisis was. I knew the word 'genocide' from school, but here it wasn't being applied to Jasenovac, it was about Kosovo."[133] He understands some of the words his father is saying, but he does not comprehend the situation, similar to Ana who did not understand the reasons for the political unrest. This is due to the fact that they were both children when it happened, and that also explains why Natalia did not have this sense of ignorance: she was a teenager when the war broke out. Despite this fact, all of them were youths who had no control of the situation and the trauma that would result from it. At some point Saša even describes the lack of control himself: "In Bosnia on August 24, 1992, there was shooting; in Heidelberg, there was rain. Every place you live is accidental: you are born here, exiled there […]. Anyone who has any influence over chance is lucky."[134]

3.4 Conclusion

When the focus lies on trauma in literature, these novels respond to it in their own way. It is now apparent that all three do incorporate war trauma in some form, therefore it can be argued that these novels fall within the category of trauma fiction. Yet the difference within this common trait lies in how exactly trauma is depicted. All three novels have an

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[130] Balaev, 151.
[131] Stanišić, "Grandmother and the Soldier," EPUB.
[132] Stanišić, EPUB.
[133] Stanišić, "A Party!" EPUB.
[134] Stanišić, "Heidelberg," EPUB.

everyperson as the protagonist, someone who has no control over the events that eventually result to trauma. The description of events, and the directness or indirectness thereof, starts to show some differences. *Where You Come From* and *The Tiger's Wife* lean closer to each other and more on the indirect side, whereas *Girl at War* directly depicts war conflicts as Ana was directly involved. Natalia and Saša, however, take a more distant standpoint, in which Natalia participated in war protests as a young adult but mostly reflects on events twelve years later, and Saša was literally removed from the warzone altogether.

Narrating the unnarratable is also executed differently. Again, *The Tiger's Wife* and *Where You Come From* choose to be distant by omitting details, allowing the reader to fill in the gap themselves. Stanišić attempts to veil traumatic events by placing them between domestic affairs, while also having characters being actively silent on the matter. Obreht takes this a step further by fictionalizing the entire war itself, changing names of locations (Sarobor being a parallel of Srebrenica) or not naming them at all (the City). *Girl at War*, on the other hand, chooses to face the traumatic events head on by having the protagonist experience them. A similarity these novels share is the disjointedness of a nonlinear plot as they constantly move between past and present. They also all portray symptoms of PTSD, with insomnia and nightmares being the most shared trait, yet *Girl at War* highlights PTSD symptoms more than the other novels.

Transgenerational trauma is applicable to all three, although, as with the previous point, to one more than the other. *Girl at War* appears to be the least transgenerational, due to the fact that the protagonist experienced the war directly herself, but Ana still receives the trauma of others through, for example, books. Natalia also experienced the Yugoslav wars herself, but receives narratives about her grandfather's past in order to reawaken his spirit. Saša's story is likely the most transgenerational, as he is away from direct conflict and receives trauma from his father and grandmother's experiences.

Lastly, all three protagonists need to experience a sense of closure in order to cope with their trauma. Ana and Saša do this both by returning to their country of origin in their later years, once the war is over. Natalia finds closure through her retrieval of her grandfather's belongings, as his passing reflects her war trauma. It is up to readers to decide, however, whether or not these protagonists have moved on from their trauma of Yugoslavia.

Chapter Four: Grandmother and Tito[135]: Remembering Yugoslavia

The fall of Yugoslavia affected a large group of people from different ethnicities, resulting in them having a shared history. Nowadays, Yugoslavia and its history is still remembered through music, the internet, films, and literature. People express a longing for the pre-war days when Tito was still alive, thereby experiencing Yugonostalgia together. By using media and sharing the experience with other people, an individual's memories can be moved to the collective level.[136] The Yugoslav wars are an instance of cultural memory in the sense that they have been documented and shared in personal narratives, monuments, place names (such as the Square of Croatian Great Men), and museums. Furthermore, the wars have stimulated the interest in remembering the past as writers began to reflect on the gap between the socialist past and post-socialist present, as well as how collective and individual memories are constructed today.[137] Although it was established in the previous chapter that the primary texts all describe traumas of war in their narratives, at the same time they rely heavily on memory and, in some cases, Yugonostalgia.

Once again, there are three main ways of remembering and each way is unique to one of the three novels. *The Tiger's Wife* shows it contains cultural memory, but that of Ottoman history rather than of Yugoslavia, therefore describing a different culture altogether. *Girl at War* does mention Yugoslavia, but remembers cultural history of Zagreb, Croatia, and more importantly the protagonist's personal memories of home. Finally, *Where You Come From* serves as a good example of incorporating Yugonostalgia in literature and, therefore, describing cultural memory of Yugoslavia, but puts that to question by having the protagonist misremember his own past.

4.1 The Tiger's Wife *and Ottoman Mythmaking*

The very first line of Obreht's novel is related to memory: "In my earliest memory, my grandfather is bald as a stone and he takes me to see the tigers."[138] As Natalia is dealing with the loss of her grandfather, the novel is filled with memories of her time spent with him. Individual memories alternate with collective ones in which Natalia describes the situation of

[135] Saša Stanišić, *Where You Come From*, chapter title.
[136] Rigney, "Literature and Cultural Memory," 365.
[137] Stijn Vervaet, "Writing war, writing memory. The representation of the recent past and the construction of cultural memory in contemporary Bosnian prose," *Neohelicon* 38 (2011): 11, doi: 10.1007/s11059-010-0076-3.
[138] Obreht, 3.

her family during wartime before describing general events of the people. This is also indicated by a change of narration: when narrating family memories, Obreht uses first-person narration. For general memories, however, she addresses the readers by using second-person narration, for example when she writes, "You'd be on your way to the dentist and see him sitting on someone's stoop in his undershirt, wine bottle in hand, and then you'd either join him or turn around and go home."[139] By addressing the reader, Obreht can tap into other people's memories and how they might relate to her phrases. Stanišić's novel is constructed in a similar fashion: he writes mostly in first-person, but the chapter "Bruce Willis Speaks German" uses 'you' instead of 'I', for example, "You stand outside the door and read "Ziehen." "Pull." Welcome to the door of the German language. And you push."[140] Unlike Obreht he uses it for his own experiences as well as those of others rather than merely others. Nović, in constrast, does not use second-person narration at all. This might be due to the fact that the focus of memory lies on the protagonist's own memories, rather than the experiences of others.

Communication and narration is needed to establish cultural memory.[141] Folklore and myths are part of this trend. *The Tiger's Wife*'s genre can be characterised as mythical realism. Obreht incorporates character archetypes defined in mythology or folklore.[142] The story of the Deathless Man, who is also referred to as Gavran Gailé, for example, contains magical elements situated in a realistic world. Natalia's grandfather encounters this man several times in his life, and during their first encounter cannot believe Gavran's claims of not being able to die. The story of the tiger's wife is also constructed mythically, as Natalia hears various snippets of it from her family and the villagers who were around at the time, therefore creating a narrative based on hear-say and memory (which can be unreliable) rather than facts. Death is, moreover, a recurring theme of myth in the narrative. The concept of the forty days after one's passing as described in the first chapter is a common legend or superstition in the Balkans, in which people believe that the soul will leave its home. For forty days, people leave the soul's belongings untouched to encourage the soul to find its way back again. The forty days are also days of remembrance, as Obreht describes in the novel, "The living know that, at daybreak, the soul will leave them and make its way to the places of its past – the schools and dormitories of its youth, army barracks and tenements […], places that recall love

[139] Obreht, 36.
[140] Stanišić, "Bruce Willis Speaks German," EPUB.
[141] Moseley, "Ancestral Voices," 64.
[142] Selma Raljević, "Téa Obreht's Transnational Disremembering within the Mythical Realism of The Tiger's Wife," *Liminal Balkans* 6, no. 2 (2016): 7, https://hrcak.srce.hr/171963.

and guilt."[143]

Aside from these examples, using myth could also be paired with ancient history. According to a study conducted by Michele Levy in 2001, novels from the former Yugoslav region written at that time could mix ancient memory and present events in order to shape the 'future'.[144] Obreht's novel is written much longer after the disintegration of Yugoslavia, but its frame narrative structure and usage of mythical history show that the text still shows resemblance to the older novels of Levy's research. Seeing as Obreht used this practice it could be a form of nostalgia for older Post-Yugoslav fiction. The other two novels differ from this trend, however, detailing only a recent past rather than an ancient one. Natalia is a child of an inter-religious family. Her grandmother is Muslim, which made life for the family problematic as the military would later proceed to bomb Turkish quarters. Her grandfather says he was raised Orthodox.[145] Looking at the narrative of the tiger's wife during the Second World War, the aversion towards Muslims becomes already apparent. The tiger's wife was a young girl married to the village's butcher, Luka. When Natalia's grandfather wants to approach her, his grandmother says, "That girl's a deaf-mute, and Mohammedan besides—you stay away from her."[146] She is the only known Muslim in the village at that time and regarded as an outcast – the apothecary is also a Mohammedan but hides his identity.

Despite the aversion towards Muslims by others, Natalia imagines the Turkish community of the past very lively; imagine is used here because the tiger's wife is a legend told to Natalia by the villagers. The gun which would be used to kill the tiger at the village, for example, is described in over a page long as a historical Ottoman artefact. Obreht narrates the origins of the musket and how it ended up in the village in the possession of the blacksmith's grandfather, who "had once shod the sultan's horse," likely in order to emphasise this Turkish past and make it vivid for readers.[147] Luka's youth is also the telling of a tragic love story between him and Amana, the daughter of a Turkish silk merchant. When she runs away from home on the night before the wedding without Luka knowing of it, the silk merchant dresses the tiger's wife, Amana's sister, in Amana's bridal clothing and tricks Luka into marrying her in order to avoid disgrace. This narrative of a Turkish past is poetic and romantic in nature, with the city of Sarobor serving as a hub for remnants of the Ottoman

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[143] Obreht, 7.
[144] Michele Levy, ""Brotherly Wounds": Representations of Balkan Conflict in Contemporary Balkan Literature," *World Literature Today* 75, no. 1 (2001): 67, https://www.jstor.org/stable/40156317.
[145] Obreht, 284.
[146] Obreht, 113.
[147] Obreht, 119.

empire.

More traces of Ottoman remembrance is found in the story of Dariša, a hunter and taxidermist. Natalia describes the opening of a museum: "the Winter Palace of Emin Pasha opened its doors. As a relic of Ottoman history, it had been unused for years."[148] The palace museum contains Ottoman relics such as weapons, tapestries, and the pasha's china. In order to maintain the memory within society, it needs to be repeated across different media platforms.[149] The palace is effectively a site of memory, a museum with artefacts on the one hand, and a relic of Ottoman history in the form of an old palace on the other, which keeps the Ottoman memory alive. Obreht remembers the Ottoman empire and its hold over Yugoslavia, stressing that this instance of collective memory is an important influence when explaining the dislike of Yugoslavs towards the Muslim community. Yet the tiger's wife and Natalia's grandfather serve as symbols to stop the violence, as their cultural memory is just as valuable as that of the Slavic people.

Yugonostalgia does not appear to play an important role in *The Tiger's Wife*, which is somewhat also the case for *Girl at War* but the opposite of *Where You Come From* as it is packed with Yugonostalgia. Nostalgia implies one remembers positive moments of the past, in this case related to Yugoslavia before the wars. While the war is still going, Natalia explains that the City's greatest doctors would meet on a restaurant patio and share stories, but those stories were not about better times before the war: "they reminded each other of difficult times, pleasurable to revisit now that their legacy was secure."[150] Furthermore, Natalia expresses anger when the war is over: "Years of fighting, and, before that, a lifetime on the cusp of it."[151] On the one hand, her life as a child proceeded as normal, unlike other children who became refugees, therefore she had no need to be nostalgic for better times. Despite this there was always conflict or tension according to her, thus the people had no better times to be nostalgic for. The only time nostalgia is clearly present is in the last chapter about the Deathless Man, when Natalia's grandfather is walking through Sarobor and describing the sights there. Regardless of this fact, it is not longing for the Yugoslav past but the Turkish past. This, combined with the fact that there is a large amount of remembrance for the Ottoman history in general, shows that Obreht's novel does remember the past, but not necessarily Yugoslavia.

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[148] Obreht, 245.
[149] Rigney, "Literature and Cultural Memory," 372.
[150] Obreht, 149.
[151] Obreht, 152.

4.2 Remembering Home in Girl at War

Ana is constantly remembering Zagreb, and some of her decisions are influenced by that memory. When she arrives at her foster home in America, for example, she says: "In the end I picked the room with the biggest window because it reminded me of the balcony in Zagreb."[152] Her decision to move to New York when she is older is fuelled by similar sentiments: "I recalled Zagreb – its alleyways and trams, the autonomy and mobility that came with the compactness of a city – and set my sights on New York."[153] Whenever she remembers her old life, she mentions Zagreb, such as the family photo in Zagreb or "my Zagreb couch."[154] Aside from Zagreb, Ana is also always reminded of her parents. When she looks in the mirror her eyes remind her of her mother, and when she is standing in front of the UN delegates she remembers her father encouraging her at a performance she was doing as a child. These memories are remembered experientially, meaning that Ana has lived through the experience, whereas most of Natalia's memories are recalled through myths and narratives of others. Saša is situated between these parallels, remembering mostly in an experiential manner but also incorporating some myths (such as dragons) as well as experiences of others.

Ana's sister Rahela was a baby when they lost their parents and has no memories of them. When Ana returns home from college, Rahela asks about their parents. Personal memory is narrated, and Ana narrates their own family memory to her sister. When she finishes the story of Rahela's birth, Ana thinks, "I thought of our parents and felt sorry that she could only see them blurred."[155] Ana has to pass on her memories to her sister who has none in order to keep the memory of their parents and Yugoslavia alive. Towards the end of the novel the meaning of cultural memory is explained by Ana's childhood friend Luka: "You don't need to experience something to remember it. You're going to have kids, and eventually they're going to want to know where their other set of grandparents is."[156] By narrating and documenting historical events a society will be able to remember these events without having experienced them themselves. This aligns with Rigney's theory that a personal history can become a collective one. This instance of cultural memory in the making is also discussed in the final passages of *The Tiger's Wife*, when Natalia says, "After [the tiger's wife] death, [the villagers'] time with her became the unifying memory that carried them into the spring,

[152] Nović, 126.
[153] Nović, 106.
[154] Nović, 140.
[155] Nović, 148.
[156] Nović, 300.

through the arrival of the Germans with their trucks."[157]

When Ana returns to Zagreb Luka shows her around the city and she comes face to face with sights she still remembers from her past. She describes a cultural monument, "And Jelačić was at the center of the square, sword drawn, right where I'd left him."[158] Ana refers to a statue of Josip Jelačić, a Croatian lieutenant of the Imperial Austrian Army at the time of the Habsburgs. She then points out another monument which is missing from the square: "The Wall of Pain had been constructed over the course of the war, each brick representing a person killed, until the memorial of brick and flowers and candles spanned the whole square."[159] The Wall of Pain had been moved to the cemetery while Ana was away, as it was supposedly bad for tourism. Later in the novel, she sees a plaque in Plitvice reading "in memory of Josip Jović," who was a Croatian policeman killed in an incident between the Serb and Croat police forces. [160] Specifically the Wall of Pain and the plaque represent the collective history of the fall of Yugoslavia and serve as a memory site where people can remember the ones they have lost. Cultural memory is an ongoing transformation of stories into different media and texts, and the Wall functions as one of these media in which people transform their narratives. [161] It is interesting to note that monuments are absent from both *The Tiger's Wife* and *Where You Come From.* Obreht's novel focuses more on Ottoman myths and relics and probably therefore lacks war monuments. Stanišić, in turn, was not directly involved with the war and put his memorial focus on himself and Yugoslavia.

Similar to *The Tiger's Wife*, this novel does not seem to have much instances of Yugonostalgia, but rather nostalgia for Ana's childhood in Zagreb. She even stresses it herself around the end of the novel: "Something new was burgeoning within me […] nostalgia, untainted by trauma, for my childhood."[162] Yugoslavia is, however, shown to be remembered through music. Yugonostalgia could manifest itself through Yu-rock, which was a collection of popular Yugoslav rock bands in the 70s and 80s that regained popularity in the post-Yugoslav period.[163] Aside from Yu-rock, the genre of Turbofolk was also popular. This genre originated after the war by mixing traditional folk music with contemporary genres, such as house or pop. It was accused of carrying nationalist sentiments during the disintegration, and

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[157] Obreht, 337.
[158] Nović, 188.
[159] Nović, 188.
[160] Nović, 211.
[161] Rigney, "Literature and Cultural Memory," 372.
[162] Nović, 303.
[163] Milivojevic and Müller-Suleymanova, "(Post)-Yugoslav Memory Travels: National and Transnational Dimensions."," 183.

was therefore controversial. [164] When Ana and Luka decide to drive to Tiska and listen to Turbofolk on the radio, however, its meaning is described differently: "A mix of traditional Muslim and Mediterranean melodies overlaid with thumping house beats, they'd become the new post-war pop. A far cry from the nationalistic anthems of our childhood, they were what Luka termed a "cultural cease-fire," an effort to bring the segregated nationalities back into communion with one another."[165] As she explains, by mixing different music styles together and playing it in clubs and on the radio it could dissolve the aversion people felt towards each other.

On a paratextual level, which is to say parts of the book that fall outside of the story, the novel shows some instances of cultural memory. The story is prefaced by two maps. The first map depicts the Balkans in 1991. In the top right corner there is a smaller map of Europe, with the Balkan region highlighted and labelled as Yugoslavia (1991). Yugoslavia is one country, and the map does show division lines between the states but they are light grey compared to the thick outline of Yugoslavia. The second map is the Balkans in 2001, showing the same region but now with clear borders. The small map in the corner now only has Croatia highlighted. Some name changes on the maps also indicate the change of history. Serbia, for example, has become Serbia & Montenegro in 2001, and Macedonia has become the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The map functions as a means to inform the reader of the novel's setting, but is at the same time a piece of documentation depicting a historical and cultural change within a decade.

4.3 Yugonostalgia and misremembering in Where You Come From

Obreht and Nović depict cultural memory of other groups (Turks and Croatians respectively) rather than Yugoslavia, but Stanišić's novel appears to be packed with remembrances of Yugoslavia. He describes the people that do not want to forget Yugoslavia: "November 29 is the Day of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. On that day, Yugoslavians, who don't exist anymore, meet in symbolic, Yugoslavically laden places. And if they come together on November 29, the Day of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia which doesn't exist anymore, then it does exist."[166] Although he stresses twice

[164] Müller-Suleymanova, Dilyara, ""I am something that no longer exists ...": Yugonostalgia among Diaspora Youth," 193.
[165] Nović, 208.
[166] Stanišić, "Honest, Loyal, Tireless," EPUB.

that Yugoslavia does not exist anymore, as long as people gather to remember it, it will still exist. He writes that he has seen old men and women singing a song dedicated to Yugoslavia, calling it their beloved homeland and that it was always dear to them. This exemplifies Yugonostalgia, as people not only remember the Yugoslav wars, but also the good memories of the former Republic. Stanišić writes the original Serbo-Croatian lyrics of the songs, as well as a translation of it, and also includes a verse of the national anthem of Yugoslavia, hinting at the important function of language and music to a culture, and allowing readers who have a Yugoslav background to reminisce along with him. In addition, he mentions "things Yugoslav" similar to the Lexicon of Yu-Mythology. He mentions the Yugo car, for example, or the Red Star soccer team.

Another significant event of Yugoslav cultural memory is the youth relay. Youth Day is, according to Stanišić, one of the most important Yugoslav holidays. On this day there is a relay run in which a baton is carried across all the Yugoslav countries until the last participant presses it into Tito's hands. It was a day of "music and speeches" and an important event to initially honour Tito until he proclaimed it should be spent honouring the youths.[167]

When it comes to Yugonostalgia, instances of nostalgia are often combined with criticism, irony or humour.[168] Stanišić's text is no exception to this trend: while still describing a gathering of November 29, he writes, "The years under Tito were their best years. The present is the Hell that followed Paradise. Except for the ones who profit from this Hell: the political hard-liners, the conscienceless businessmen, the exploitative foreign investors."[169] Here, he claims that Yugoslavia was regarded as a paradise, and that the region has become a place of hell after the disintegration. He furthermore criticises the wealthy upper-class who thrive from the new system of capitalism. The past regime also receives some criticism: "Yugoslavia was also very good at that: keeping quiet about whatever was less good."[170] In addition, Tito is mentioned several times across the narrative, unlike Obreht and Nović's novels which do not mention him at all. He is regarded as a hero, with his death being the catalyst for the war: "If Tito were still alive, there wouldn't have been a war", or "Tito proved irreplaceable as the central voice telling the story of Yugoslavian unity."[171] Saša's grandmother is also devastated when Tito passes, having his portrait and a biography of him in her house.

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[167] Stanišić, "The Youth Relay," EPUB.
[168] Milivojevic, "(Post)-Yugoslav Memory Travels: National and Transnational Dimensions.",," 183
[169] Stanišić, "Honest, Loyal, Tireless," EPUB.
[170] Stanišić, "Half Blood," EPUB.
[171] Stanišić, "Death to Fascism, Freedom to the People," EPUB.

His grandmother plays an important role in the story and Saša's life, and also highlights the unreliability of memories. Grandmother Kristina is shown to have dementia during Saša's adult years, after the war. When she is distressed about Tito's passing, it becomes apparent the moment is long after the historical event: "I understood: "Here" wasn't today. Grandmother was back in the year of Tito's death, 1980."[172] Having dementia, her mind flows between the past and present, and as a result she gets confused about her own memories. Saša himself also misremembers certain moments from his life. The aforementioned youth relay in which he participated once is one of those moments. He does not remember the year he participated: "What year was it exactly? I do a little googling and find out that 1987 was the last year the baton underwent its pilgrimage […] I also find out that the 1987 baton was made of glass and plastic, unlike in my wooden memory."[173] He appears to be misremembering details about his life, and when he messages his family in their WhatsApp group his mother makes him realise he held a local baton instead of the 'real' one that would end up in Belgrade. By doing this Stanišić could be trying to show the fact that memory is prone to change and the same event would be remembered differently per individual. He even states the unreliability of memory himself: "I am sick of the betrayals of memory."[174] Collective and cultural memory may also change over time, due to the fact that it is constructed by various individual memories existing in a certain area.[175] When cultural memory is documented it is not the past as it is remembered, but as it should be remembered by the group.[176]

Stanišić is throwing the cultural memory of Yugoslavia into question by misremembering himself, and discussing his grandmother's dementia. This raises the question why his memory is functioning in this manner. As I have established in earlier chapters, memory and trauma are linked to each other, and traumatic events have a great influence on how one remembers the past. When reflecting on himself and his writing, he writes, "I describe life before and after the convulsion while in reality I forget birthdays and neglect wedding invitations," of which 'the convulsion' might likely refer to Yugoslavia's disintegration.[177] He is engrossed by the war which caused a major change in his daily life, so much that the trauma of it has taken over his new daily life. When it comes to Yugoslavia and

[172] Stanišić, "Grandmother and Tito," EPUB.
[173] Stanišić, "The Youth Relay," EPUB.
[174] Stanišić, "It Is As Though You Heard Overhead a Bold Brisk Beat of Wings," EPUB.
[175] Jan Assmann, cited by Vervaet, "Writing war, writing memory. The representation of the recent past and the construction of cultural memory in contemporary Bosnian prose," 3.
[176] Assmann, cited by Vervaet, 3.
[177] Stanišić, "Story Glue," EPUB.

cultural memory, he remembers due to other people's remembrances and the documentation of historical facts. Events related to the war are written very factually, for example: "In August 1992, the Bosnian Serb Army massacred a whole village not far from Višegrad."[178] Yugoslavia lives on in Stanišić's memories through the memories of others, much like how Natalia remembers the Ottoman history. Unlike the other two novels, however, *Where You Come From* openly questions the personal memories of the protagonist.

4.4 Conclusion

Much like the discussion of trauma, these novels contain similarities on some fronts and differences on others when it comes to cultural memory and nostalgia. The culture that is being remembered is a different one for each narrative: Stanišić is the only one who remembers Yugoslav cultural memory, established in national anthems and national holidays he remembers from his childhood. Nović does mention Yugoslavia in her text, and remembers its history through a map of the Balkans and the post-war invented genre of Turbofolk, yet puts focus of cultural memory more on Croatia and Zagreb specifically. The war monuments Ana encounters relate a part of Croatia's history, and nostalgia is directed at Ana's childhood in Zagreb rather than a collective Yugoslav past. Looking at it this way, one could say that *Girl at War* is situated between the other two texts, considering the fact that *The Tiger's Wife* barely regards the cultural memory of Yugoslavia. Although the fictionalised world and war is a parallel to the Yugoslav disintegration as has been established in the previous chapter, the focus is mostly put on the Ottoman culture and the influence it has had on the region.

The manner in which these narratives remember likewise bears similarities and differences. All three of them rely on the narratives of others and the documentation of memories in order to establish a cultural memory. *Girl at War* contains the least examples of this but still stresses the importance of storytelling in order to remember. This is done by having Ana describe the memory of her parents to her sister and stating that one does not need to have experienced the event in order to remember it. *Where You Come From* puts a bit more emphasis on Yugoslav cultural memory by describing November 29, for example, on which many from the older generation remember Yugoslavia before the disintegration. *The Tiger's Wife*, in turn, relies the most on other stories by narrating the individual pasts of her grandfather's village neighbours. Obreht does this by employing the strategy of mythmaking

[178] Stanišić, "Half Blood," EPUB.

and narrating a distant past which Natalia has not experienced herself but has heard from other people. Stanišić creates some myths of his own by misremembering the past, which is shown with, for instance, the baton he carried on Youth Day. Lastly, Nović uses experiential remembrance by having Ana remember things she has experienced herself.

As a final point of comparison, Yugonostalgia is only really present in *Where You Come From*. Songs written in the Yugoslav language, Tito, holidays, car brands and soccer clubs are all mentioned and are, as other studies have shown, criticised or described with irony. Although Nović does put forth some examples of Yugonostalgia (music), nostalgia is mainly placed on Ana's childhood. During the one instance when Yugoslavia is remembered in *The Tiger's Wife*, it is not met with nostalgia and good sentiments, but the direness of the living situation was addressed. The other instance of nostalgia present, which is when Natalia's grandfather has his last encounter with the Deathless Man, fond memories are only there for the Turkish quarter.

To summarise, all three novels are novels of personal as well as cultural memory, although only one of them focuses overtly on Yugoslavia whereas the other two opt for either a national memory or an ancient one. All three texts to share one clear message, however: the past must not be forgotten.

Chapter Five: The Crossroads[179]: Transnationalism

These novels detail cultural memory fuelled by war trauma, and choose a transnational setting to highlight cultural differences, therefore drawing on the interrelationship between these aspects stemming from warfare. Migration is an important aspect of transnationalism. When the war broke out, many people fled their respective nation state and migrated to the West as war fugitives. This type of migration is not the only one that occurred in Yugoslavia, however, as prior to the war there was a wave of labour migration in order to boost the economy.[180] Although this was initially meant to be temporary, these *Gastarbeiters* (guest workers), as they were called, did not end up returning to Yugoslavia and were regarded as outsiders by the Western communities.[181] Migrants felt displaced from their new lives, and war fugitives especially felt a gap in their lives upon return to their home as the people there had moved on from the war but those living abroad had not. Moreover, due to having established their new lives in a different culture, they felt as strangers in their home country.

The novels in question are interesting to observe from a transnational perspective as, even if the contents of the text might not directly express instances of transnationalism, all three texts do share a transnational trait: the authors were all born in former Yugoslavia, which can be deduced when looking at the author's info page of each book. Obreht, Nović, and Stanišić moved from Yugoslavia when they were children in the 90s, the former two to the United States, and the latter to Germany, respectively. As such, they live with the experiences of the Yugoslav wars as well as being a migrant, and those experiences are reflected in their novels. Obreht's novel discusses transnationalism the least, as *The Tiger's Wife* is always set in fictional Yugoslavia and Natalia never leaves the region, although she does cross national borders. Stanišić and Nović, on the other hand, discuss transnationalism and migration identity much more directly by comparing home country and migrant country, and describing examples of displacement and othering.

5.1 The Tiger's Wife *and Crossing National Borders*

Although Téa Obreht had moved to the United States when she was a youth, experiences of the new migrant country are not expressed in *The Tiger's Wife*, which is in

[179] Téa Obreht, *The Tiger's Wife*, chapter title.
[180] Milivojevic, "(Post)-Yugoslav Memory Travels: National and Transnational Dimensions," 184.
[181] Craith, ""Migrant" Writing and the Re-Imagined Community: Discourses of Inclusion/Exclusion," 85.

contrast with Nović and Stanišić who do narrate migration experiences in their novels. Despite this fact, it does not necessarily mean Obreht's text does not include instances of transnationalism. For something to be transnational or transnationalist, it needs to extend beyond national boundaries. The first chapter of *The Tiger's Wife* already shows an example of transnationalism, which is when Natalia and Zóra are crossing the new border of their country into Brejevina. As I have discussed in chapter three, the war in the novel's fictional Yugoslavia caused for a division within the country Natalia has grown up in. She describes the border before the war: "The border had been a joke, an occasional formality, and you used to drive or fly or walk across as you pleased, by woodland, by water, by open plain."[182] Although there was technically a border, it did not exist in a cultural sense, but with the "new border" as Natalia puts it, she and Zóra need to pass border control before being able to cross into Brejevina, showing the concept of borders as making something transnational as well as showing the consequences of the war.

The literal crossing of a nation's borders is not the only way something can be regarded as transnational. By looking at the novel as a published and distributed object, the text itself also crosses transnational borders. The study performed by Raljević, for example, states that this novel does not appear as an immigrant narrative within the text, but becomes one when pairing the text with Obreht's personal experiences and her writing style.[183] Through the usage of language, Obreht introduces readers belonging to a different culture to the culture of Yugoslavia. An example of this is specific Serbo-Croatian words she writes in italics without adding a translation of its meaning. "*rakija*" and "*zaljanica*" are two examples of this.[184] She also mentions a brand once: "Kiki bonbons" which is a real brand of candies found in the Balkans.[185] Readers who are familiar with these terms can relate to them even if they live outside of former Yugoslavia, and those who are not familiar with them get in touch with a new culture.

Using specific words like these is also found in *Girl at War* and *Where You Come From*. Unlike Obreht's text, however, *Girl at War* does sometimes give readers an explanation of specific terms, such as "a *šupa*, a padlocked wooden storage unit", or "*Oba dva! Oba su pala!* Both of them! They both fell!"[186] Other terms are not translated, but their meaning can be derived from the context, for example "*Laku noć*" when Ana's father puts her

[182] Obreht, 15.
[183] Raljević, "Téa Obreht's Transnational Disremembering within the Mythical Realism of The Tiger's Wife," 4.
[184] Obreht, 17, 26.
[185] Obreht, 131.
[186] Nović, 17, 28.

to bed, or "You should go home, *stranac*" when she and Luka encounter a foreign news reporter.[187] In Stanišić's text, there are similar kinds of examples in which he either does or does not translate Bosnian words: "Crvena Zvezda, Red Star Belgrade."[188] With some instances he even debates what some words mean to him specifically, rather than accept the literal translation, such as is the case with the word *poskok*: "*Poskok* meant: *A child*—me?—*and a snake in the chicken coop* […] There's *skok*, "jump," hidden in *poskok* […] The translated word, "horned viper," does nothing to me."[189] Again, these terms highlight transnationalism in the sense that the text may not include direct examples of in-text transnationalism, but do in fact still express transnationalism on an outer-textual level.

Unfortunately the rest of the novel expresses transnationalism much less compared to its expressions of trauma and memory. It is also expressed less strongly than the other two novels. The cause of this might be the fact that, unlike the other two texts, this one does not have a protagonist who has transnational experiences, but instead aims to focus on the Balkans from an inside perspective. The text nonetheless contains some aspects related to transnationalism as seen with the description of country borders (and therefore indicating migration) and the usage of language, making it no less important than the other two novels.

5.2 Comparing to Home in Girl at War

Unlike Natalia, Ana eventually becomes a war fugitive and moves to the United States. She is essentially smuggled by her godfather Petar to a UN member who can deliver her a safe passage by plane out of the country. Once there, she is reunited with her infant sister and her new foster parents, who have decided to adopt Ana as well. Ana is part of the Generation In-Between as described by Asboth and Nadjivan, as she is familiar with the habits and values of both countries and its languages.[190] Although she has no Yugoslav family to remind her of the past, she still experiences difficulties in dealing with it due to her own trauma, and also has a hard time adjusting to her new life. Her new life is overshadowed by her memory of Zagreb, causing her to draw comparisons between the United States and Croatia a lot. One page describes social and cultural differences between these two countries:

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[187] Nović, 39, 43.
[188] Stanišić, "Soccer, Me, and War, 1991," EPUB.
[189] Stanišić, "Oskoruša, 2009," EPUB.
[190] Asboth and Nadjivan, "Neither Here Nor There – Ni ovde, ni tamo: Religiously Connoted Social Media Self-Representations of "Generation In-Between"," 189.

> America was not what it looked like in the movies. I had been right about the McDonald's at least; they were everywhere. […] In Zagreb I had always been excited about a trip in the car. In Gardenville you needed the car to do anything, even to buy groceries. […] Everything in the supermarket was presliced and prepackaged. […] The culture was noticeably conservative, even in juxtaposition with the dual traditions of communism and Catholicism back home. In Croatia, topless women graced the covers of most newspapers and were common on the beaches, but in America nudity of any kind was something shameful. In Zagreb I ran the streets without curfew and bought cigarettes and alcohol for the grown-ups. In Gardenville, adults nursed a perpetual fear of kidnappers, and I stayed close to home.[191]

As these contrasting examples show, Ana experiences culture shock upon arrival. The world of America is very transnationalist through the medium of cinema and Hollywood, exporting their culture abroad to the rest of the world. Before Ana migrated she knew the United States only through what had been presented to her on television. Once actually there and moving transnationally herself, she sees how different reality is, and how different the United States is compared to Eastern Europe. She had more freedom in Croatia, and things that felt special to her, such as a car trip, were now part of her everyday experience. To a reader, this originally full-length page passage would be an interesting revelation by reading about two vastly different cultures being compared side-by-side. This transnationalist experience of migrating to another country is important for establishing cultural differences and raising awareness for them among people.

Transnationalism is furthermore presented through American export of goods, as when Ana returns to Croatia she describes, "I thought of the gifts I'd bought for Luka and Petar and Marina—things I'd found new and exciting in America when I'd first arrived—and felt embarrassed. From the looks of it, they'd imported everything already."[192] The items she had thought of as unique had become available in Croatia by the time she returned there, due to transnational operations.

These examples are unique to this text, as Stanišić focuses more on his experiences as a migrant and Obreht's text contains no migrant narratives at all, but Ana and Saša share a trait of hiding the fact they were war fugitives. When Ana describes her experience of people asking her about the war she says the following: "But to create a palatable war was tiring and

[191] Nović, 126-7.
[192] Nović, 175.

painful, so one day, I stopped completely. I grew and my accent faded. For years I didn't reveal anything at all. I passed as an American. It was easier that way—for them—I told myself."[193] Her identity as Yugoslav is forgotten so she would be able to adapt more easily into her new foreign life, which is likely because foreigners and fugitives were regarded negatively.[194] Another reason, however, could be that Ana wants to forget her trauma by neglecting her past altogether. She claims that she told herself it was easier for other people, but it would also make the situation easier for herself, as she would no longer have to be reminded of her past experiences. For Saša, this similar situation was expressed by him posing as Slovenian: "Two things I didn't want: to be seen as a Yugo; to be seen as a refugee. So every now and then I would tell someone I met that I was from Slovenia."[195] He likely also wanted to avoid being reminded of the war. Stanišić elaborates more on the migrant experience than Nović, but that will be discussed further in the next section. Despite it being less elaborate, Ana nevertheless describes herself as feeling out of place in the United States, for example her foster parents being her 'American' parents even if she got used to calling them mum and dad. Her appearance similarly makes her feel different: "My eyes, so dark they were almost black, had bothered me in my teenage years—incongruous, it seemed, with both my paleness and the blond, blue-eyed model in every American ad and magazine."[196]

During part II of the narrative, Ana decides to go back to Zagreb in order to find closure for her trauma. As was the case with other young migrants, upon return to their home country they felt estranged and foreign.[197] The same can be said for Ana; as soon as she reaches airport customs she is confronted with the changes of her life: "'*Dobar dan*,' I tried. The words were rough in my throat. '*Kako ste vi danas?*' I'd conjugated the phrase formally but correctly, and stroking his mustache, he looked me over as if I'd presented him with false papers."[198] As she stopped writing to Luka she no longer had a reason to converse in Croatian, causing her language to be broken, and as a result Croatian natives would regard her strangely. Language continues to remain a problem for her when she is reunited with Luka and his family: "Every time I spoke I was met with a correction of my childlike grammar. English words welled up in my mouth and I swallowed them with difficulty. Now the cousins […] had nicknamed me American Girl. I mulled over the vinegary phrase with distaste,

[193] Nović, 100.
[194] Asboth, 200.
[195] Stanišić, "Slovenian Me," EPUB.
[196] Nović, 142.
[197] Bielicki, ""Tell Me a Name and I Will Tell You Who They Are": Post-Yugoslav Refugees and the Legacy(ies) of Ethnification," 326.
[198] Nović, 174.

struggling to construct a grammatically sound sentence I could wage against them."[199] Her being called American Girl implies they see her as a foreigner rather than as a fellow native, and she does not like this. This struggle with language is less apparent in *Where You Come From*, due to the fact that Saša had his biological family with him in Germany, as well as an ex-Yugoslav community he conversed with.

Lastly, for refugees who have fled the war zone, many failed to move on from the trauma which was usually the opposite for the society of their home country.[200] One example presented in *Girl at War* is the Wall of Pain monument which I have discussed in Chapter Three. Before Ana left she placed her parents' bricks there to remember them, but when she returns to Zagreb she finds the monument gone. Luka explains the reason for its movement, "Up to the cemetery. A few years ago. The mayor decided it was too depressing to have it in the Trg. Bad for tourism."[201] By removing the monument from the central square, the government shows society should move on from the tragedies and resume their daily lives. The removal also ties back to aspects of trauma and memory, as this example can be seen as a form of cultural amnesia or active forgetting. Looking back at trauma theory, some choose to omit details and events.[202] The Wall of Pain is a site of memory, a place where people would come to remember the war and the ones they have lost. The fact that the government decided to move this part of cultural memory shows that they might be trying to silence the trauma by omitting some of it, however it is not entirely forgotten due to its placement to the cemetery. This aspect is not found in the other two novels, since *The Tiger's Wife* does not possess a strong transnational narrative, and with *Where You Come From*, Saša revisits the village of his grandparents which was not affected by the war due to its location in the mountains.

5.3 Migrant Experiences in Where You Come From

One line in *Where You Come From* exemplifies transnationalism very well: "The world is full of Yugoslav-fragments like them or me. The refugees' children have long since had children of their own, who are Swedish or New Zealanders or Turks."[203] The Yugoslav culture spread out of the region and into the rest of the world, and as time and generations pass Yugoslav migrants slowly transform into members of their migrant country's society.

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[199] Nović, 181.
[200] Bielicki, 326.
[201] Nović, 188.
[202] Balaev, "Trends in Literary Trauma Theory," 155.
[203] Stanišić, "Story Glue," EPUB.

Saša's first destination away from Yugoslavia was Heidelberg. Similarly to Ana in the US, he feels strange in Germany: "We wandered aimlessly through a world where everything was still nameless: the streets, the river, ourselves. No one understood us and we understood no one."[204] Being unable to speak German at that point he had no name for objects yet, and by saying 'ourselves' was nameless too, he implies they have lost their identity by being refugees. They also experience certain disadvantages, for example Saša's parents having physically straining and underpaid jobs: "Father ruined his back on construction sites in Ludwigshafen and Schwarzheide and was home only on weekends. Mother died a thousand melting deaths in the laundry. As a non-German woman, from the Balkans no less, she stood on the bottommost rung of the work ladder and people made sure she knew it."[205]

This furthermore implies the marginalisation many migrants experienced in the West as well as the fact refugees were viewed negatively.[206] Stanišić elaborates on this:

> We were also reminded often that in Germany people have to obey "the rules." As if no one in other countries had ever heard of rules. "Hey, we speak German here," fired at my cousin and me on the tram, was not a rule we had to take seriously, of course, but the intent to intimidate was certainly serious. My parents always spoke Serbo-Croatian preemptively softly in public spaces. […] And along with every rule people reminded us of, they were also reminding us: You don't belong here.[207]

Saša manages to adapt by learning the language and going to school there, calling his own case of being a refugee as fortunate compared to others due to him being educated. Furthermore, he gains friends both Yugo and non-Yugo, and Germany's multiethnicity could be the cause of him feeling less foreign.

As has been established in Chapter Two, the younger generation of migrants socialised differently from the older ones. Stanišić, spending his teenage years in Heidelberg and Emmertsgrund, finds a common social hub for Eastern-European migrants at the ARAL-gas station. His Yugo friends whom he met there are different from the "Balkan cliches" he describes: "They confused belligerence with confidence, insults with free speech. Carried with them the sewn-on symbols of the old days. They were Croatians and wanted everyone to know it. And the first time we met, they sorted out what I was: not-Serbian. Further details

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[204] Stanišić, "Heidelberg," EPUB.
[205] Stanišić, "Slovenian Me," EPUB.
[206] Craith, ""Migrant" Writing and the Re-Imagined Community: Discourses of Inclusion/Exclusion," 85.
[207] Stanišić, "Slovenian Me," EPUB.

held no interest for them, they left me in peace, and I avoided them."[208] These persons remained within their ethno-national circles and attachments to the homeland, whereas Saša and his friends disregarded the past.[209] They talk about the present and future instead, as he says, "I rarely talked to the Yugos in Heidelberg about the fractures in our biographies. […] We talked about Germany. The present. What worked."[210] These experiences of multiethnicity could be the reason behind all the Yugonostalgia present in the text.

The lack of multiethnicity and demand for identification with one's nationality in Yugoslavia is what led many people to leave the region in the 1990s.[211] Stanišić is also shown to have experienced this, as he explains him being from a multi-ethnic family, "Like my parents, who were from Serbian-Orthodox (Father) and Bosnian-Muslim (Mother) families. I was the child of a multiethnic state."[212] When the war broke out in Bosnia, the Croats and Muslims initially fought the Serbs, but once this group was driven out they began fighting amongst themselves.[213] Religion was also part of this national identity, and Saša's mother being a Muslim created a problem for the family because Bosnia was to undergo a process of ethnic cleansing against Muslims. He says the following: "Her ethnic origins, though, hung around her neck like a stubborn rumor due to her Arabic name. It was a flaw, in the eyes of the new people in charge—a flaw that neither ambition nor education nor aptitude could correct. *Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the soul of soulless conditions*."[214] He explains that despite his mother's capabilities and good qualities, they are useless in the eyes of the enemy due to her religion, and it would pose a problem to Saša as well. However, once they extend beyond the national borders into a multi-ethnic Germany (which is akin to former Yugoslavia), their life betters.

Religion and ethnicity also play a role in the other two novels. For *The Tiger's Wife*, the same issue of Muslim versus Orthodox arises. At some point Natalia lets a man from the war enlistment office into her grandfather's house, who begins questioning him about his family. When her grandfather eventually says his wife was born in Sarobor, the following occurs: "'I see,' the hat said. I had stopped dusting, and was standing there with the moist towel in my hand, looking from my grandfather to the hat. I could imagine my grandma

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[208] Stanišić, "Aral Literature," EPUB.
[209] Müller-Suleymanova, ""I am something that no longer exists ...": Yugonostalgia among Diaspora Youth," 200.
[210] Stanišić, "Story Glue," EPUB.
[211] Bielicki, ""Tell Me a Name and I Will Tell You Who They Are": Post-Yugoslav Refugees and the Legacy(ies) of Ethnification," 321.
[212] Stanišić, "Soccer, Me, and War, 1991," EPUB.
[213] Calic, "The War of Succession (1991 to 1999)," 298.
[214] Stanišić, "My Mother Likes a Cigarette with Her Coffee," EPUB.

sitting on the other side of the door, in the kitchen, listening to all this. We had heard about this kind of thing happening; I had let it into the house."[215] During this point in time, Sarobor had already been shelled to the ground, but ethnicity still mattered. As was established before, Natalia was from a multi-ethnic family, similar to Saša. *Girl at War's* Ana, however, was not from a multi-ethnic family and did not encounter religious problems, but still experienced danger by being a Croat as the Serbian army assassinated her parents.

5.4 Conclusion

The Tiger's Wife does not appear to be transnational on a surface level, unlike *Girl at War* and *Where You Come From* which have protagonists act transnationally themselves by being war fugitives. Upon further analysis, however, one can see that *The Tiger's Wife* does still contain some transnational aspects despite being not much of a transnational text. For one, Natalia is seen to cross a national border of her fictional ex-Yugoslavia, in which she uses her skills as a doctor to help the villagers of Brejevina. The novel also implies transnationalism on an outer-textual level by appealing to readers through the Serbo-Croatian language and writing words without translating them into English. This trait is also present in the other two texts. This, combined with the fact that books are already distributed transnationally, shows that a text does not need to contain textual examples to be a transnational object.

Of course having Obreht's novel be less transnational than the other two can make one expect Nović and Stanišić to have more comparisons with each other, and that does appear to be the case. Their protagonists both share the experience of being a fugitive and migrant, yet there are still differences in how they portray these experiences. Ana, for example, experiences more setbacks and cultural differences when she returns to Croatia, whereas Saša feels less alienated from Bosnia because he had his parents with him in Germany and could subsequently retain the language of his home country. A shared trait is that they wanted to hide their fugitive identity by lying about their ethnicity, but in the end Saša is the one who feels more integrated into his new Western life despite the criticism he and his parents receive from Germans. This might be because he was in a multi-ethnic social circle in which he could discover his identity, whereas Ana was forced to adapt into American culture and eventually decided to pretend to fit in. As a result, Saša manages to leave the war behind him and focus

[215] Obreht, 47.

on Germany and fond memories of Yugoslavia, while in contrast Ana remains stuck in the past.

When looking at ethnicity and identity, all three novels show parallels. Ethnicity and identity were important for a war driven on nationalism within a previously multi-ethnic state. Obreht and Stanišić are the most parallel by having their protagonist be from a multi-ethnic family, as well as having one side of the family be Muslim. Natalia does not feel direct consequences of her grandmother being from a predominantly Turkish city, but Saša needs to migrate in order to remain safe. Although Ana was not from a multi-ethnic family, her identity of being a Croat still endangered her life because of the Serbian army assassinating Croats.

In short, Nović and Stanišić have the best direct examples of a transnationalist text and the experiences of ex-Yugoslav migrants, but Obreht also uses this field to shape her narrative albeit a lot less. Transnationalism is shown to highlight cultural differences between Eastern Europe and the West, as well as stress the importance of identities in terms of religious affiliations and explain how trauma and memories operated for those who have chosen to migrate.

Conclusion

Previous historical and sociocultural studies have already established that the disintegration of Yugoslavia made a huge political, economic and social impact on the Balkan region. Alongside this impact, the sudden violence which erupted from it left a scar on everyone who called themselves Yugoslav. What has now further been revealed and answered is that the Post-Yugoslav novels analysed in the previous chapters show a collaboration of trauma, cultural memory, and transnationalism. The wars caused an intersection of these three concepts, as many had to flee due to the country's collapse in several new nations, which is part of the traumatic experience. The Yugoslav disintegration caused trauma, the emergence of Yugoslav cultural memory, and transnationalism. The novels then proceed to narrate different parts of the past belonging to the same cultural memory: Ottoman history, which counts as an ancient past, Yugoslavia, which is a more recent past and of a much smaller scale, and Croatian past which is the smallest.

As has been established before, memories and trauma are linked to each other, which is why these memories are presented in such a manner. All three novels have shown to contain different forms of trauma, leading to different types of cultural memory and different transnational experiences. *The Tiger's Wife* redirects trauma, causing memories to steer away from Yugoslavia and towards Ottoman history while also containing the least transnational operations in terms of narrative. *Where You Come From* incorporates transgenerational trauma upon the protagonist which transfer memories from Yugoslavia abroad. Lastly, *Girl at War* uses personal trauma which links itself to personal memories of the protagonist's home country and therefore cultural memories of Croatia which are remembered in America and revisited back home. Three themes were dominant in each of the novels, although some were more prominent in one compared to the others. However, by combining each of these themes together, they create a transnational, Post-Yugoslav war narrative.

Through the analysis it can now be established that the novels are examples of trauma fiction, but each novel has its own type of trauma. Obreht's protagonist Natalia discusses the collective trauma of Yugoslavia in order to cope with the personal trauma of her deceased grandfather. Yugoslavia is, however, fictionalised, which can be seen as a form of narrating the unnarratable by discussing trauma indirectly. Although the novel makes it clear that the country had a war related to conflicts of ethnicities, seen for example in culture and history needing to be claimed by their national owners, or the shelling of Turkish quarters, there are no real place names and only by knowing about the Yugoslav conflicts can a reader draw

parallels between examples such as Sarobor and the Srebrenica massacre. This narrative of heavy fictionalisation and magic realism is in stark contrast with *Girl at War* and *Where You Come From*, which are explicitly set in Croatia and Bosnia. Furthermore, *The Tiger's Wife* sets itself apart from the other texts by narrating stories of other people from a past distant to Natalia, creating a narrative of mythmaking as a result, whereas Nović and Stanišić express trauma experientially or transgenerational. *Girl at War* has a protagonist who had served an active part in the war during childhood and in *Where You Come From*, Saša had to hear the trauma from his father due to his direct displacement from the war to Germany. Despite these differences, transgenerational trauma is not limited to Stanišić's text, as Obreht presents Natalia's grandfather, who had experienced multiple wars, and Nović uses books to transfer trauma upon Ana.

The novels contain more similarities regarding trauma. One is that all three characters are the 'everyperson' described in Balaev's research. They were either children or teenagers when the war broke out, and are shown to have no influence on events as higher forces of power disrupt their lives. Ana and Saša especially are presented to have no understanding of the social and political unrest which occurred before the war broke out, mocking Slobodan Milošević and not understanding words spoken by the adults. This sense of child ignorance was lacking in Obreht's text, likely due to the fact that Natalia was older when the war broke out. Symptoms of PTSD is another feature related to trauma that all novels share. Ana is shown to have the most symptoms, such as insomnia, nightmares, and physical reactions such as vomiting when she sees violent images. Natalia, in turn, is only shown to have trouble sleeping, and Saša shows no symptoms himself due to his displacement from the war, but his father has insomnia and refuses to talk about what he has seen back in Bosnia. Lastly, all three novels have disruptive narratives which alternate between the past and present. Obreht uses frame narratives in order to tell the myths of the tiger's wife and the Deathless Man, while Nović and Stanišić rely more on flashbacks.

As a result of the three different manners of trauma – redirection, haunting, and transgenerational transfer – the novels have different modes of remembering which are all part of the same cultural memory. Although Obreht has an implied Yugoslavia as the novel's setting, her trauma of redirection causes the protagonist to remember Ottoman history and culture. This history is expressed by showing discrimination towards Muslims and describing a rich Ottoman past through relics, romantic tales and sites of memory. Leaning on a trend of older Post-Yugoslav fiction, the author combines the present with ancient memories in order to shape the future. This differs once again from Nović and Stanišić, who, because of their

realistic setting, describe the more recent past of the Yugoslav wars. Furthermore, *The Tiger's Wife* was shown to be the least nostalgic towards Yugoslavia, focusing on Muslim heritage instead.

For *Girl at War*, memory is centred around Croatia and Ana's childhood in Zagreb. Her trauma of having lost her parents, being part of the war and then being taken away from Croatia as a fugitive led her to remember her old life and constantly compare her new life in America to what she loved in her childhood. This novel presents the change from personal memory to a collective one, as Ana narrates her past to her younger sister and the narrative slowly shifts to examples of cultural memory upon Ana's return to Zagreb, such as the various monuments related to Croatia she encounters. The presence of monuments was lacking in the other two texts as they had a different focus of memory. Narrating memory, on the other hand, does occur in Obreht and Stanišić's texts, which can be seen in the stories of Natalia's grandfather and Saša's grandmother.

Where You Come From once again shows a different memory focus, as it focuses instead on heavy Yugonostalgia and misremembering. The transgenerational trauma presented in this text and the fact that Saša did not experience the war is the reason why he reflects on Yugoslavia and its cultural traditions, as well as why his personal memory centres more on Germany and his grandmother's village. He also mentions Tito, which is something Obreht and Nović do not. However, Stanišić is critical about the political situation – being critical or cynical was a common trait of Yugonostalgia – and his own memories. He stresses how unreliable memories can be by alternating between his own and his grandmother's, and that memories are only what one wants to remember rather than what is actually being remembered, which is also the case for cultural memory considering the fact it adapts in accordance with current times.

Transnationalism was a final point of analysis, which reveals itself to be a consequence of the war much like trauma and memory are. Migration and questions of identity are important factors of transnationalism. *The Tiger's Wife* turned out to be the least transnational, only showing Natalia cross country borders and religious ethnical issues of Orthodox versus Muslims. Discrimination towards Muslims was also a prominent factor in *Where You Come From* because Saša's mother being Muslim is what led them to becoming fugitives. However, Obreht does not express transnationalism any further on a narrative level. Natalia does not migrate to another country, unlike Ana and Saša who go abroad and as a result describe migrant experiences. Ana draws many comparisons between Croatia and Zagreb, but does not experience discrimination and disadvantages in the United States

because she chose to ignore her Croatian identity and slowly adapt into becoming an American in order to facilitate her living situation. Saša is also shown to hide his fugitive status, but still has his Bosnian family and socialises with fellow ex-Yugoslavs as well as Germans and other migrants. He expresses how his parents had difficult working conditions and that native Germans would regard them negatively, but because he kept in touch with his Bosnian roots throughout his life, he did not experience much setbacks when he visited Bosnia again. This is a sharp contrast with *Girl at War*, as Ana returns to Zagreb and finds she has difficulty speaking fluent Croatian and her friend's family see her now as the foreigner.

Transnationalism can also be looked at on an outer-textual level. Novels are published and distributed objects which can be read worldwide, and these specific novels can transfer their Yugoslav culture transnationally as a result. One specific piece of transferred culture which is evident in all three texts is language. Specific Bosnian or Croatian words and phrases are written in italics to distinguish it from the English surrounding it, and in some cases the words are not translated. Especially Obreht uses words such as *rakija*, or fruit spirits, within a sentence, which only those familiar with the Slavic language would understand. Those who do not, however, could look it up and learn something new about a different culture. Nović, on the other hand, chose to translate many of the Croatian words and phrases, unless their meaning could be derived from the context of the sentence. Lastly, much like how Stanišić is questioning memories he debates the meaning of words, decomposing them into constituents and trying to think of what it means to him personally rather than what the literal translation is. Language, then, serves the purpose of moving the Yugoslav culture transnationally without needing to contain narrative examples of transnational experiences.

This research sought to combine prominent themes of war fiction in order to understand how these themes operate within the little explored literary collection of Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav debate focused mostly on its history and socio-political issues, and studies that did choose to analyse it from a literary perspective still kept a broad framework of 'Balkan literature'. Studies on specific texts remain scarce, especially on recent works of fiction which might be less famous than Ivo Andrić's *Bridge on the Drina* but prove to be equally important in discussing Yugoslavia nonetheless. Moreover, Post-Yugoslav fiction remains a new and debatable genre and is, therefore, mostly unexplored, which is why this thesis aimed to analyse works belonging to it. They narrate the unnarratable, the unspeakable horrors of the Yugoslav disintegration which occurred in a recent past and was seen as unthinkable after the Second World War. These works are important for broadening the field of literary trauma studies and cultural memory studies by having its focus on a part of history

which has been less explored than, for example, holocaust literature.

Future research could be inspired by this revelation and might opt to look at other works of war fiction or migration fiction which describe wars and communities lesser known than those of the United States or Germany. Birgit Weyhe's *Madgermanes* (2016), for example, is about African labour migrants in East-Germany during the civil war in Mozambique in the 1980s. The graphic novel details a relatively recent past of warfare and has not been analysed much up to this time. Furthermore, future research could consider other specific case studies to analyse in the light of Yugoslavia, such as *The Cellist of Sarajevo* (2008) by Steven Galloway or *Dark Mother Earth* (2013) by Kristian Novak. The current primary sources could also be discussed through other fields and themes of analysis, for instance feminism, folklore or a linguistic perspective. The study by Craith (2015) mentioned how Stanišić developed a new type of written German; this could be further unpacked by looking at the writing style of *Where You Come From* or his older novel *How the Soldier Repairs the Gramophone* (2006). Even so, a first step has been attempted to bring attention to Post-Yugoslav fiction. The war started over a packet of cigarettes, and it ended with a range of experiences and memories which must not be forgotten.

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