Community Outside Communion: Exile as an Inoperative Community in the Works of Dubravka Ugrešić

By

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Submitted to
Central European University
Department of Gender Studies

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MA in Gender Studies.

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Budapest, Hungary

2015

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to analyze Dubravka Ugrešić's works: *The Museum of Unconditional Surrender* and *The Culture of Lies* from the scope of philosophical theories whose main premises have arisen from the political and social matters of the 20th century and have come to be known as communitarian theories (Nancy, Blanchot, Esposito, Derrida). Ugrešić's books offer an exceptional insight into Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav communities, identity constructions, and workings of the newly arisen nationalisms. I argue that exile—which in the two books stands for the position of a voluntary outsider whether inside or outside the nation's borders—has a potential of creating an alternative community that challenges the organic one based on nationalism. My main focus is the position of an individual as opposed to the organic community. The different aspects of the opposition that I look into include: dismantling Yugoslav and Croatian communities as organic, where the latter is an imitation of the former, the contestation of the organic communities by the means of an alternative narrative, as well as the importance of mobility and transgression of national borders—both literally and symbolically. I argue that exile offers a creative potential for artists that provides them with both a unique perspective on the organic imaginings and an aesthetic gain which enables them to not only articulate their transgressive insights through their artistic medium, but also make it performative, i.e. transgress by the means of their very art. Ugrešić does so by both her fictional and non-fictional narratives. The alternative community that she creates is that of fluid identities, and queer citizenship.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Věra Eliášová for her guidance, positive energy, and infinite kindness. She has been such an inspiration for me throughout the year.

My study at CEU would have never been possible had I not been given the CEU Fellowship, so hereby I would like to thank the Central European University. Dear CEU, you have provided me with a life-changing experience.

The demanding academic year would have been impossible to endure without my friends Anel, Lejla, Nina, Haruko, Timothy, Heather, Henry, Iva, Jack, Ana, Tess, Kostya, Ausrine, Donatas, Feri, and Eva.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my mother Minka and sister Azra for their love, support, and for believing in me even when I didn't.

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Secrecy flows through you,
a different kind of blood.
It's as if you've eaten it
like a bad candy,
taken it into your mouth,
let it melt sweetly on your tongue,
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into its glottals and sibilants,
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And now it's in you, secrecy.
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as dark velvet.
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a poppy made of ink.
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What power it gives you!
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power of the crushed fingers,
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(*"Secrecy" - Margaret Atwood)*

Introduction: The Loss of Illusions

Dubravka Ugrešić is a renowned Croatian (born Yugoslav)[1] writer and literary scholar with degrees in Comparative and Russian literature. Upon the fall of Yugoslavia, when Croatian nationalism—as well as that of other ex-Yugoslav states—was growing as hunger in the war that followed, Ugrešić chose not only to disidentify with it, but also to critique it. Soon she found herself as an outsider in her own country and, more than the war itself, her critical stances and reflections on the nationalist ravaging in the space, where one ideology was being erased and replaced by another, put her life in danger. National(ist) media has targeted her as a public enemy, causing her to go into a voluntary exile in 1993—if exile can be considered a choice when one is publicly ostracized in a society where retrograde but progressively destructive nationalism(s) are being built on the blood of imagined Others. Such circumstances have, subsequently, divided her literature into that before and after the war. Whereas her "before" works were non-political novels that in their opus included even books for children, her "after" literature has gained the nature of critical reminiscences of the political occurring of the immediate post-Yugoslav period.

One of the most famous fictional[2] works from her "after the war" literary oeuvre is the novel *The Museum of Unconditional Surrender* (1998). It has drawn much attention not merely for its experimental narrative, but also for its delving into such themes as Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav nationalism[3], boundaries, migration, exile, memory, nostalgia, and trauma, to name but a few. Although it is a piece of fiction, which bursts with diverse characters and multiple plots, *The Museum* often feels like an academic essay, filled with commentaries,

[1] It is important to note that I am using these national categories to introduce the writer despite the fact that her own life was endangered precisely because of her passionate fight to expose them as imaginary ideological constructions that were insignificant to her: "The words 'religion', 'people', 'nationality', or even 'communism' and 'the party' meant nothing to me. I only ever wrote one 'political' sentence (and I stole that from a child): 'I love my country because it's small and I feel sorry for it' (*The Culture of Lies* 5). This struggle is one of the core themes of this thesis.

[2] Again, this category is used to distinguish the novel from the book of political essays *The Culture of Lies* although the binary fiction/non-fiction is too poor in meaning to capture the nuances and blurred boundaries between the two in Ugrešić's works—as will be seen further in this paper.

[3] While it is imprecise to say that Yugoslavia was a nation, the Yugoslav community resembled national communities in its organic imaginings: despite ethnical and religious differences, there, certainly, existed a Yugoslav identity that was associated with one territory with specific boundaries, with the Yugoslav flag, the Yugoslav army, Tito—their father figure—music, cinema etc. The community was worked by its members: they built their roads, houses, and institutions together.

explanations, analyses and numerous citations from world's canonical writers. Thus, reading it feels like drawing seemingly unrelated items from a surprise box. Indeed, the book opens with an exhibition of rather incongruent items from a walrus's stomach at the Berlin Zoo. The narrative structure that follows is a collection of vignettes that are similarly incoherent. Nonetheless, in accordance with the narrator's note that the seemingly unrelated parts will eventually connect—albeit the reader has to do the work—the novel's fragmentation creates a patchwork that functions as a photograph that symbolically captures a historical moment of dismembering or fragmentation of a country that has been maintained by the belief in unity; it captures the loss of one's country and its effects on one's identity. However, the fragmentation is not merely destructive; it has an important function: its very deconstruction is what constructs a new kind of unity, different from that based on brotherhood or nationality. I will argue that the narrative style creates a community that bases itself not on borders and communion, but on communication.

The new community that is being created once the narrator transcends both the physical borders of her homeland and the borders of traditional storytelling will be the main foci of this paper. I argue that once the borders are transgressed, there is a potential for the formation of a community that is different from the one left at home. Rather than communion, the new community operates through fragmentation, whose pieces are still connecting, but not through fixed given identifications such as nationality and religion. This is best visible through the narrative form. In order to do such an analysis, I will apply communitarian theories as proposed by philosophers such as Jean-Luc Nancy, Maurice Blanchot, and Roberto Esposito. They propose that there are two types of community: a commonsensical one that we all take for granted, and a so-called "inoperative" community, which is an alternative to the first one. I will examine if the exile[4] opens a space for the inoperative community as an alternative to the commonsensical one—often referred to as organic. There are four aspects of "community" I will look at: dismantling both Yugoslav and Croatian communities as organic, the exposure of the fakeness of the organic community by the means of national spectacle where I will analyze the trope of the Angel in *The Museum*, how the narrative form symbolically functions as an inoperative community, and the identity that the new belongings provide. Beside the communitarian theories, I will also develop my argument

[4] Exile in Ugrešić's books does not only have the literal meaning, but also symbolical: both Ugrešić and her narrator have felt as if they were outside the nation even when within its borders.

with the help of Ugrešić's collection of political essays *The Culture of Lies* (originally published in 1995), as I believe the book can be considered as a handbook for understanding *The Museum*. The book provides unique insights into the organic workings of myth, kitsch, and cult leader figures, that Ugrešić exposes as mutual to both Yugoslavia and its "state replicas" (*The Culture of Lies* 44). The most important method for my thesis will be a close-reading of both *The Museum* and *The Culture* through the scope of the communitarian theories, as well as a dialogue with already existing scholarship on the topic of exile in Ugrešić's works.

While Ugrešić's novel has already been in the spotlight of many academics, who have indeed studied the topic of migration and exile with various hints at the role of community, the communitarian theories have not yet been applied and, hence, a systematic study of communities in the novel is still missing. With my thesis I will contribute to the knowledge of the relation between exile and community in these two great books, relying on the work that is already out there and knitting new threads to it.

Theoretical Framework: The Revision of Bonds

In the era when Tönnies' 'Gesselschaft' is turning into what we call globalization now, and taking over 'Gemeinschaft'—the traditional social ties between individuals based on blood, family, and small community—there has appeared a political striving to return to the latter form of societal organization. Such politics rise from the belief in the authenticity of one people, and longs for the return to the people's original state and ties. As could be inferred from the fall of Yugoslavia and the war that followed in the 1990s, these politics can be extremely dangerous. Because of such endeavors, philosophy of the last several decades has revisited the idea of "community." Nancy and Blanchot presented the "inoperative"—or "unworked" as J. Hillis Miller prefers to call it—and the "unavowable" model of community, respectively (Miller, *Literature as Conduct* 88). Both these models represent an alternative to that "ordinary, commonsensical one that most people have in mind, explicitly or implicitly, when they speak of 'community'" (Miller, *Literature as Conduct* 87). The idea is that the new type of community does not only reject, but also annihilates the previous, "commonly accepted model of community" (Miller, *Literature as Conduct* 88). This traditionally presumed model is hence always already unworked by the "devastating" alternative model (Miller, *Literature as Conduct* 91). Consequently, as Miller notes, this implies that the commonsensical model in its nature is "worked," i.e., it is a work of a group of people living and working together. Their community is hence their construction, "the product of their combined and cooperative work" (91). The collective work of these "cohabiting subjectivities" has produced their

> language, houses, roads, farms, towns, cities, industries, laws, institutions, religious beliefs, customs, and mythical or religious stories about their origin and destiny that are told communally or written down in some sacred book to be recited to the group. (Miller, *Literature as Conduct* 91)

As Miller notices, the idea of the community as a product of work is obviously related to the Marxist notion of products and productions, which suggests, as Elliott observes, that it is not coincidental that the alternative communitarian theories have stemmed from "the period of the definitive breakdown of Soviet communism" (Elliott 893). Nancy counter-argues this notion by saying that "community cannot arise from the domain of work. One does not produce it, one experiences or one is constituted by it as the experience of finitude" (Nancy 31). In such a theory, finitude becomes an important difference between the two types of community: whereas the traditional one bases itself on the idea of its immortality, in the alternative model

it is the imminence of death that enables the community experiences—as will be discussed later.

The persons of the first, commonsense model are perceived as individualities or preexisting self-enclosed subjectivities, which connect with other subjectivities for their common good. "Intersubjectivity," is their way of communicating their own individuality, as well as what they are, and what they think or feel, by the means of their "common language" (Miller, *The Conflagration of Community* 13). Nancy's model—as Miller further brings out—"sees persons not as individualities but as 'singularities'" (15). These singularities, unlike individualities, are fundamentally different from each other, and cannot be equated or penetrated by the means of common language. On the contrary, "each singularity harbors a secret alterity that can by no means be communicated to any other singularity" (Miller, *Literature as Conduct* 15).

One of the basic differences between the two models is the notion of finitude. In operative communities, on the one hand, "mortality does not essentially define community life" (Miller, *Literature as Conduct* 14). Although the individuals are aware of their being mortal, and "though one of their community places is the cemetery," their reproduction and renewal from generation to generation gives them a sense of "collective immortality," while they tend to cover and suppress, and almost forget death (Miller, *Literature as Conduct* 14). On the other hand, Nancy's singularities are "essentially marked by their finitude and by their mortality" (Miller, *Literature as Conduct* 15). Each singularity is always aware and defined by the fact that it will die. Furthermore, singularities are not self-enclosed subjectivities as in the first model, but each one of them is "exposed, at its limit, to a limitless or abyssal outside that it shares with the other singularities, from the beginning, by the way of their common mortality" (Miller, *Literature as Conduct* 16). It is important to understand that death is never experienced in one's own death—for that is impossible—but rather in the death of another, the death of one's friend, neighbor or relative. Perhaps most importantly, Nancy suggests that singularities create "neither communion nor atomization"—as is the case with members of organic communities; there is rather a *clinamen.* i.e., an inclination "from one toward the other, of one by the other, or from one to the other" (3).

Blanchot points out that such a community is unavowable, and—as Miller explains—"does not provide a solid ground for any avowals or speech acts" (Miller, *Literature as Conduct* 93). Speech acts do take place in the unavowable communities, but are not endorsed by public institutions or authorities for they do not recognize them as legal. Although

exposing and sharing themselves, Nancy's singularities do not make communions; they do not fuse. He adds that "in place of such a communion, there is communication," which consists in "compearance (com-parution) of finitude" (29). Moreover, community in itself is resistance: "namely, resistance to immanence" (Nancy 35). Therefore, community is transcendence, signifying precisely a resistance to immanence" (Nancy 35). Language in the first model is a sacred myth, "a tool that 'works,' or makes, produces, the interchanges of community," whereas in Nancy's model "it becomes literature, writing" (Miller, *Literature as Conduct* 93). Likewise, in the latter model, it is always figurative and catachrestic for "no literal language exists for it" (Miller, *The Conflagration of Community* 17). Literature within "operative" communities is "the imitation, or reflection, or representation of community, the construction of cunningly verisimilar miniature models of community (Miller, *The Conflagration of Community* 14). In contrast, literature within "inoperative" communities "is the expression of the unworking of community" (Miller, *Literature as Conduct* 93).

"Yugo-Atlantis" and its replicas: Exposing Croatia as an Organic Community

When "the Yugoslav Utopia" was dismantled in the bloody war of the early 1990s, "time rolled up into a circle and everything went back…to the beginning!" (*The Culture* 19). As Ugrešić creatively simplifies it, Jovans were fighting with Ivans, Djordje with Jafer, the Cyrillic with the Latin alphabet[5] (*The Culture* 19). "The Utopia was devouring itself" annihilating its books, letters, and symbols, "and in the wastelands" new ones were being created (*The Culture* 19). The "multinational, multicultural and monoideological community"—as Ugrešić perceived it during her growing up—was getting rid of its 'multis'; it split into several different communities aspiring to be mononational, monocultural and monoideological (*The Culture* 5).

After the Utopia vanished, and the "Yugoslav spectacle" annihilated everything people identified with, Ugrešić realized that it was fictional; hence, she named it "Yugo-Atlantis" (*The Culture* 44). The fiction, however, came to live in a different form. The new republics have merely become "little state replicas" of the Yugoslav apparatus "instead of dismantling [it]": "Instead of real democracy, they have created small, totalitarian communities. Instead of citizens, they have created an obedient numerical figure; instead of free media, rigid control" (*The Culture* 44). As she further elaborates, both systems are "kitsch", the latter reflecting the former:

> In the schizophrenic head of the citizen of former Yugoslavia not only are two realities refracted, past and present, but two types of kitsch: the old type, already long since dead, and the new which reflects the old, on the assumption that the recipient has long since consigned the first model to oblivion. (*The Culture* 49)

However, rather than the leftovers lingering from the former regime, the problem might be democracy itself. Derrida argues that democracy as we know it is not the democracy as it should be; it has been corrupted and distorted by money and the media[6] (De Caputo 123).

[5] Note how Ugrešić is playing here with the names: Jovan and Ivan, as well as the Cyrillic and Latin alphabet in ex-Yugoslavia are two versions of the same name and alphabet, respectively. She even found a close Muslim name equivalent to the Serbian name Djordje (Eng. George): Jafer (orginial: Džafer). The two alphabets contain the same number of the exact same phonemes.

[6] The very fact that Ugrešić could not use the right to free speech without being ostracized by the media proves that democracy failed in the new system: "All of a sudden you have democratic rights, so you think you can do what you like! Ah, but you can't!" (*The Culture* 194).

Indeed, the media is one of the major "local ideological apparatuses" and serves to "interpellate" or give an identity to "each individual member of a community (Miller, *Literature as Conduct* 87). Whether the old or the new system, the means of achieving their "reality" is the same: appealing to "the basest and most violent instincts of the demos" (De Caputo, 123). Ugrešić refers to Vladimir Nabokov's story about Gogol as an allegory to explain such instincts: Gogol is a man who, in order to seduce a girl who everyday sits on her balcony with a view over a lake, undresses and swims in the lake, "while at the same time embracing two swans he has acquired especially for this purpose" (*The Culture* 49). He eventually seduces the woman's heart. This cheap, false, kitschy endeavor is—as Nabokov elucidates—"disturbing," but even more so when "the falsity is not obvious and when it is believed, rightly or not, that the values it imitates belong to the highest reaches of art, thought or sensibility" (*The Culture* 49).

In an organic community, one of the most successful kitschy ways to appeal to people is communal talk of "mythical and religious stories about their origin and destiny" (Miller, *Literature as Conduct* 88). Christian Church, for instance, keeps its community constantly seduced by organizing weekly meetings for its members so they can read the Old and New Testaments (Miller, *Literature as Conduct* 88). Myths and stories that are told from generation to generation become a survival kit for an organic community. They ensure that the "collective consciousness" or "community consciousness" is maintained through the belief in the community's origin and infinity. (Miller, *Literature as Conduct* 89). Ugrešić's quoting the words of "a Serbian writer" best describes this:

> In torment and mere physical survival, what remains are words, tales told from generation to generation, in which dust, blood and bondage forge an exalted epic which bridges All, what remains are the tales heard with a sense we have carried with us from our ancient, pagan gods. (*The Culture* 59)

"Words", "tales", "blood and bondage", and "us" are the most salient ideological words in the passage. Right after Croatia declared its independence, there appeared a slogan "Clean Croatian air" that has through the Croatian language "come to life in newspapers, on television, in politics, in thought, in everyday speech, in everyday life" (*The Culture* 60). Clean referred not only to Croatian territory, but also to Croatian blood, the Croatian language ("words"), and Croatian literature ("tales"). Thus, "the zeal for cleanliness" has undertaken "the patriotic task of cleansing" the territory where Serbs—those of an unclean blood type—resided (*The Culture* 61). Beside people and their houses, their "words", i.e. literature and the

Cyrillic script, have also been physically removed from the libraries, as well as from the school curriculum, as a strategy of eliminating the polluters of the "Clean Croatian Air" (*The Culture* 62).

In order to render what the hygienic process looks like from the inside of the community, Ugrešić mockingly quotes Slobodan Novak, a Croatian writer:

> Croatia is cleansing itself of Yugo-unitarist and Great-Serb rubbish which had been spread all over it for a whole century. Croatia is simply being restored to its *original* form and returning to its *true self*. If today it has to make painful incisions in its language, history, scholarship, and even the names of its towns and streets, that only shows the extent to which it was contaminated and how polluted were all facets of its life and all segments of its corpus." (*The Culture* 65, my emphasis)

What Croatia was seeking is its original "value" or "essence," which a community can lose, but then refind, "as something that once belonged to [them] and that therefore can once again belong to [them]; an origin to be mourned" (Esposito 2). Gogol from Nabokov's story here functions as a metaphor for Croatia who has seduced its community members with a kitschy means: in this case, the beautiful, romantic swans are replaced by the romanticized tales of origin and clean blood.[7] Gogol's seduction of the girl is a metaphor for a new construction of the new organic community. The old one was that of Yugoslavia, which—as any other human community—has been worked or built by its "cohabiting subjectivities" who have built together "language, houses, roads, farms, towns, cities, industries, laws, institutions," as well as "mythical" stories about their origin and destiny" (Miller, *Literature as Conduct* 88). At the time, Yugoslavia was Gogol.

In modern times—as Miller elucidates Nancy's theory—there has been required "counterwork" or a work that would "dismantle or deconstruct those material and immaterial elements of community. Having first been 'worked,' they now have had to be 'unworked' (Miller, *The Conflagration of Community* 6). Nancy introduced three different terms for three different types of "the unworking of community": "dissolution," "dislocation," and

[7] The politics of origin is also bound to the politics of place, as well as the naturalization of a community on a certain territory. Having roots in one place also implies love for that place. According to Sale, love of place also entails that the place is *the place of love*: "For ultimately love is the true cradle of politics, the love of the earth and its systems, the love of the particular bioregion we inhabit, the love of those who share it with us in our communities, and the love of that unnamable essence that binds us together with the earth, and provides the water for the roots we sink" (qtd. in Malkki 30). Such a notion only emphasizes how deeply romanticized *organic,* or naturalized, communities are.

"conflagration" (Miller, *The Conflagration of Community* 6). The "unworking" of Yugoslavia seemed to have included all three types. It has been dissolved, i.e. its once integrated whole has disintegrated into several parts; it has been dislocated, i.e. just as—in Miller's interpretation—body parts can be dislocated: there was a "breaking of the ligatures that have held communities together as living, quasi organic wholes" resulting in "the disarticulation of bonds, the joints, which have held its members together;" and finally it has also, literally, been conflagrated: people have been murdered, material workings have been destroyed, and the material that produced the immaterial (read: books and literature) has been burnt (Miller, *The Conflagration of Community* 6). The "unworking" or the destruction of Yugoslavia has been immediately, or even "simultaneously"—as Ugrešić notes—followed by yet another "working" or construction:

> Terrible times are marked by the rhythm of destruction and construction, chaos and order, rapid demolition and simultaneous building. What was there is destroyed (cities, ideological notions, bridges, criteria, libraries, norms, churches, marriages, monuments, lives, graves, friendships, homes, myths) the old truth is destroyed. What will become the new truth is rapidly built in its place. In Duga Resa, a small town in Croatia, a little wood was planted: eighty-eight trees, for Tito's birthday. Today the inhabitants of Duga Resa have cut down the wood: they say they were removing 'the last remnants of the communist regime'. The people who cut the wood down were the same people who planted it. (*The Culture* 70)

Ugrešić here exposes both communities as organic, the latter being a replica of the former one—regardless of the allegedly different political regimes. What we also see here is that seduction is a two-way process: the people were not only being seduced by the system, but they were seducing it too, which destabilizes the dichotomy of people/power. Ugrešić scornfully explains: "They are all equally 'in love' with their homelands, and who can deny them the right to love" (*The Culture* 188)? By planting the trees they were seducing Tito, expressing their faithfulness and belonging to the romanticized system, and by cutting the trees they were seducing Tudjman, for the same reasons.

Throughout history, this way of seduction has been proven to be very populist, very crowd-enchanting, whether it comes to the question of whose religion is the true, or original one, or whose skin, or whose blood. The myth of origin, but also of the original—the belief that one's blood is clean/true/original one, whereas the Other's is not—has probably been the main cause of "the unworking" of communities. As Miller explains, a community construed on and by shared stories, such as myths of origin, is a "close-knit community, geographically

located, closed in on itself" (Miller, *Literature as Conduct* 93). As Esposito elucidates, once the community is identified, whether "with a people, a territory or an essence," it becomes "walled in within itself and thus separated from the outside" (Esposito 16). Its borders become very important: they prevent air contamination by outside polluters. Nevertheless, polluters can come from the insiders as well, in which case they become the outsiders—as will be analyzed in the following section.

"I am no one. And everyone.": Disidentification and Counteridentification

The hygienic raid in Croatia meant cleaning the Croatian blood from those whose blood was different, i.e. Serbs—as imagined by the enchanted community. The "blood-group police" was afraid that pollution could come from the inside; that is, from their own blood-group that has been diseased and should be eliminated before it contaminates the good, healthy, blood (*The Culture* 60). Clean blood became an ideological tool that was used as a discourse for indoctrination not only in every day speech as an unwritten rule of "generally accepted behavior," but also as part of election campaigns in order to brand all types of Others:

> The magic spray formula 'clean Croatian air' cleans Croatian territory not only of 'Byzantines'[8] who are of different blood type, but of all internal enemies who are different from the ruling majority. Such dirty enemies are insufficiently good Croats, 'saboteurs', 'traitors', 'anti-Tudjman commandos', 'commies', 'Yugo-nostalgics', 'unlike-thinkers'. In this spirit all the candidates of the parties in the recent pre-election campaign, including the President himself, promised a 'great clean-out' of the above mentioned polluters.' (*The Culture* 61)

The two-direction seduction dynamic mentioned in the previous chapter explains the existence of the inside 'polluters.' They are the 'traitors' who were not entrapped by the perverse seduction game; they did not fall in love with the naked male body and two swans. It is important to note here that the metaphor of naked male body and the beauty of swans both emphasizes that the nation is masculinized, and works well with the aestheticism and cleanliness of the nation.

Dubravka Ugrešić was the Ugly Duckling in this story. With her blood unclean, she was not of the kind. Her main polluter was critical thinking—and the "denunciation of people who [thought] differently" was "the patriotic duty of every citizen" (*The Culture* 74). Emphasizing the newly nurtured role of "the nation as a victim"—which produced "the totalitarian mentality, collectivism and conformism"—any type of opposition to the national ideology was considered "an attack *against the young Croatian state, as anti-Croatian*, and, therefore *pro-Serbian* […] as treason, as…a lie (*The Culture* 76-77). Nationalist media was the most powerful means for the victim's self-defense, which included "public campaigns" that

[8] "'Byzantine' is simply another (more refined) word for Serb, Orthodox, which, in the same linguistic and ideological system, means: sly, dirty, deceitful, in other words whoever is different from us" (*The Culture* 61).

lynched the polluters (*The Culture* 77). Ugrešić reports that several types of such "*public enemies*" were identified: "feminists, women journalists, women writers, sociologists, actors, university professors" (*The Culture* 102). She was one of them because she "chose the wrong time to speak the truth;" she was an unlike-thinker (*The Culture* 102).

In an organic or "commonly accepted model of community," 'unlike-thinking' is an unknown concept (Miller, *Literature as Conduct* 88). The individuals in the community are seen as "pre-existing subjectivities" (Miller, *Literature as Conduct* 88). They are bound together for the common good, and their communication is "an interchange between subjectivities" which "presupposes that the other is like me" (Miller, *Literature as Conduct* 88). As Ugrešić notes, they are all fused together "under the sticky, protective pronoun we" (*The Culture* 187). Due to this sameness in thought among the community members and its obviousness, or—as Ugrešić explains—due to the "national togetherness in which everything is clear and everything is foreseen," the national party HDZ's slogan in their election campaign was "HDZ – zna se!" ("HDZ – of course!") (*The Culture* 106). Similarly, Ugrešić's conversation with an acquaintance proves that not only does the collective "we" think the same, but there is also a certain kind of trust among them thanks to which they consider the truth only that which is in accordance with their own knowledge of themselves, whereas everything else is not only unquestionably a lie, but does not need to be questioned at all:

> A few days ago an acquaintance came up to me in the street. 'So, you're going abroad?' she asked, meaning was I at last intending to leave the country for good.
> 'Why should I go 'abroad'?'
> 'Because you keep writing all those lies about us,' she said with conviction.
> 'So you've read what I've written,' I said.
> 'Why should I! Are you going to say that everyone else is lying?' she said, emphasizing the word *everyone* in astonishment. (*The Culture* 77)

This oneness of the community members—as Roberto Esposito reports—is what makes political philosophy and "a large part of neo-communitarian philosophy" think of community as a "wider subjectivity," or as "the self" expanded into the "hypertrophic figure of 'the unity of unities'" (2). If one member refuses to be part of the unity, they are no longer "the self," therefore they are "the Other." Analyzing the epistemology of the word community, Esposito found out that, in a medieval lexicon, the word "communitas" was related to the notion of belonging: community belongs to its collective, but the collective also belongs to the community—which is "its own properly essential type" (9). Over time, as he further explains, this "totality always takes on the shape of a fixed territory" and implies the defense of its

borders (9). It is clear from the dialogue that what makes the community is not only the unity, or oneness, of the members who are seduced into the organic intercourse with their community, but also the defense of their borders. They want to claim their space and are, thus, hostile to unlike-thinkers.

Further breaking down the word "community," Esposito notes that the word from which it originates, "*munus,"* has in itself an implication of "gift," but not in its "voluntary" connotation, but rather in that of an "obligation" or "duty" (4). Thus, the community is "the totality of persons" who in their togetherness are indebted to the community[9]; they have to serve it, which as a result produces the lack of what is their "most proper property, namely, their very subjectivity (Esposito 6-7). They are no persons; no subjects. They are "*not* subjects. Or subjects of their own proper lack" (Esposito 7). Their "taking part in," on the contrary, does not mean they are "taking" but losing; they are being servants, not masters (Esposito 11). Those who, on the other hand, are not "affected" and do not have to perform "office," that is, those who are not indebted, are "exempted;" they are immune and can preserve their own position (Esposito 6). Ugrešić reflects on the loss of individuality of those who are "affected:"

> To say something unpleasant to the milieu, is the same as saying it to oneself (for we are the milieu); to say that something is after all 'bloody, criminal and morally sick' would mean to condemn oneself to exile, to the naked, individual I. This is why our intellectual readily blows his kiss to the homeland, thinking the while of the Holy Majority. Kisses are blown simultaneously by the intellectual and the war criminal and the warlord and the master of the written word. […] Homeland, Institution, We, those are the magic formulae which cancel out the danger of the individual act. And where there is no individual act, there is no individual responsibility either." (*The Culture* 187-188)

This can also be understood through the concept of seduction, which had been introduced previously. Love between the community and its members is a two-direction process: when they are affected by it, they are also indebted to it. Nevertheless, Esposito's proposition that those who *do not have* to serve are *exempted* can hardly be applied to Ugrešić for it connotes

[9] As Ugrešić reports, Franjo Tuđman made sure that the members of the nation knew they were indebted to the nation: "The nation is just a big family, says my President and leader […]. If a person in a family wants to get more, then he must contribute more to that family, both by his behaviour, and his work. That is how it is also with the nation…" (*The Culture* 104). Then, she declares that she failed *to give* to the nation: "But then I feel a sudden misgiving, what have I contributed to make things better for my family, my nation, I wonder?" (*The Culture* 104*).* Later in the book she explains that "to give" to the collective means "to be the same" as the collective, and she was different from it both naturally—because of her ethnical origins—and voluntary—because she disidentified with the collective' ideology—as will be analyzed further in the paper (184).

a certain passive state. While it can be said that she is not *affected*, it is not because she is being exempted, but because she exempts herself, actively. Her not letting the community affect her active preservation of herself as a subject, and not allowing her agency to be curtailed by the entrapping debt relationship does not mean that she *does not have to* operate for the community, but that she does not want to: "I refuse to serve affairs of state" (*The Culture* 271).

Ugrešić's attitude, however, could be explained by Esposito's notion of a "modern individual" (12). Namely, it is a perfect, "absolute individual" whose "absolutism carries in it the meaning of "'decision,' which means violent breaking of his [sic] roots" (Esposito 12-13). This absolute individual's breaking away in Ugrešić's language translates as "condemn[ing] oneself to exile, to the naked, individual I" (*The Culture* 187). Although, this seems like a some sort of punishment, Esposito argues that once such individuals are unchained from the "debt" that unites them to those who are indebted as well, and once they let go of that contact, "which threatens their identity, exposing them to possible conflict with their neighbor," they are isolated, or in Ugrešić's situation "exiled," but also protected (Esposito 12-13). This concept is relevant for this paper because it hints at the positive potential of concepts such as exile or isolation, which traditionally have had negative connotations.

Muñoz concept of "disidentification" can be applied to understand this process of isolation as the means for preserving one's identity. Although Muñoz mainly focuses on sexual and racial minority subjects and the way they enact their identity by resisting the establishment, his notions could be expanded to incorporate disidentifications by other minorities, for instance: those who disidentify with nationalism when within the nation. Muñoz calls these "disidentificatory identity performances […] emergent identities in-difference" (7). This emergence is enabled by "a failed interpellation from within the dominant public sphere" (Muñoz 7).

'Interpellation' as a concept is very important for an organic community. Miller explains that every member of the commonsensical, organic, community is interpellated by "the local ideological apparatuses" (Miller, *Literature as Conduct* 87). In his article "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," Louis Althusser argues that "*all ideology has the function* […] *of* '*constituting*' concrete *individuals as subjects.*" He uses Christian religion as an analogy to explain how the ideology/subjects dynamic operates. God (read: ideology) has created his subjects in his own image, therefore they are a mirror reflection of the God, who is

the Subject with the capital S. They, non-capitalized subjects, have been interpellated or transformed into his subjects through such rituals as baptism, confirmation, communion, confession etc. In order for them to be what they are, i.e. subjects, they need to be subjected to the Subject. This further explains Esposito's notion of "debt." The organic community is the Subject, whereas its members are subjected to it. When people obey the God, or the Subject, they reinforce their subjectivity, which without the Subject does not exist. If we translate this to Croatian nationalist ideology, we get true blooded Croatians—those who obey—and the nationalist ideology (Subject), without which they would not be that which their ideology wants them to think they are: Croatians (subjects). In order to remain that, their debt is obedience to the Subject. Beside "mutual recognition of subjects and Subject," there is also "the subjects' recognition of each other," and this imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence is the representation of the Ideology (Althusser). Such a relationship and their mutual recognition of each other and the Subject is so integrated into everyday life that it is obvious to all subjects as that: obviousness, truth; as that which is right (Althusser). Subjects' ideological belief must also be translated into their everyday material practices, and if a subject rejects to do so, "that is wicked:"

> Indeed, if he [sic] does not do what he ought to do as a function of what he believes, it is because he does something else, which […] implies that he has other ideas in his head as well as those he proclaims, and that he acts according to these other ideas, as a man who is either 'inconsistent' […] or cynical, or perverse. (Althusser)

It is visible from Ugrešić's dialogue with the acquaintance that the nationalist Croatian subjects—the acquaintance being one of them—are mutually recognized in their subjection. Ugrešić, on the other hand, is the one who spreads lies, or exposes as illusionary—or in Marxist formulation: as "an imaginary assemblage (*bricolage*), a pure dream"—that which is for the nationalists the obviousness, the truth (Althusser).

It is out of Ugrešić's exposition of the ideology as imaginary—by writing what is perceived as "lies" about the ideology by its subjects—that she disidentifies with "the mass public," which in turn enables the emergence of her "identity in-difference" (Muñoz 7). She does not only disidentify, but also counteridentifies, i.e. aims at "dissolving or abolishing entrenched cultural formations" (Muñoz 14). Ugrešić explicitly states that she disidentifies with the Croatian national ideology and that it has failed to interpellate her: "My passport has not made me a Croat. On the contrary, I am far less that today than I was before. I am no one." (*The Culture* 269). However, she also counteridentifies with the nation, and proclaims

herself an enemy of nationalism by taking the role of the imagined Other: "I am no one. And everyone. In Croatia I shall be a Serb, in Serbia a Croat, in Bulgaria a Turk, in Turkey a Greek, in Greece a Macedonian, in Macedonia a Bulgarian" (*The Culture* 269-270).

Her counteridentification should not be confused with "anti-assimilation" which would imply "merely an apolitical sidestepping, trying to avoid the trap of assimilating or adhering to different separatist or national ideologies," but as an active counterwork; as an attack on, or, in communitarianists' language, *unworking* of the organic (nationalist) community (Muñoz 18). Ugrešić's means of doing so is language, words, literature. In *The Culture of Lies* she uses an overt language in the form of political essays, often, however, drawing points by referring to different works of fiction. In *The Museum of Unconditional Surrender* she creates fiction that irresistibly breaks the binary between fiction and real, and it is through such fiction that she is producing her disidentifying and counteridentifying self. As Muñoz notes, despite the hostility that such fiction produces for the writer, it is needed to make the self (Muñoz 17). While it might seem that Ugrešić is not making her *self,* but remaining it, the fact that—at the time of switching one story with another—she realized that Yugoslavia and Yugoslav identity was as a similar type of myth as those of its replicas indicates that she is, indeed, departing from that which had once interpellated her.

Jose Medina's concept of *guerilla pluralism* can be used to further understand how Ugrešić challenges the dominant ideology. In his article "Toward a Foucaultian Epistemology of Resistance: Counter-Memory, Epistemic Friction, and *Guerrilla* Pluralism," Medina looks at Foucaultian notion of the plurality of knowledges and the ways in which official, unitary, hegemonic knowledges work to subjugate non-dominant knowledges and render them as unqualified. Official knowledges create the official history which works on the principles of unity and continuity; i.e. they impose the shared past as contradiction free, and without breaks or gaps (Medina 14). What Foucault calls "counter-history" is created by the "subversive power" of those knowledges that have been put into the gaps and pushed to the margins (Medina 14). Counter-history operates on opposing principles that expose clashes and contradictions in the official history, and bring out the omissions and gaps that have been put to oblivion (Medina 14-15). Foucault focuses here, primarily, on how written dominant knowledges, that is, foundational texts, incorporate within themselves voices that were silenced and need to be resurrected, but he also considers living people whose experiences have been disqualified and marginalized.

This idea can be applied to the means nationalist ideologies compete, turning the conflicting experiences and knowledges into oblivion. According to both William James and Michel Foucault, truths as not given, but *made* through practices and experiences; however, the genesis of their making is likely to be forgotten (Medina 24-25). Medina terms this process of forgetting *genesis amnesia* (Medina 24-25). Throughout her work, Ugrešić is deeply struck by the nationalist processes to put certain memories, which disrupt their unitary national history, into oblivion:

> Warriors, the masters of oblivion, the destroyers of the old state and builders of new ones, used every possible strategic method to impose a collective amnesia. The self-proclaimed masters of life and death set up the coordinates of right and wrong, black and white, true and false. (*The Culture* 6)

She further makes clear that imposing the collective amnesia is "one of the strategies with which the culture of lies is established" (*The Culture*, 78). The other side of the same coin is forcing people to remember what they do not remember (*The Culture* 78). These processes do not only happen through the brainwashing by the means of the media and propaganda, but also by "collective compulsion": Yugoslavia, the word, and everything related to it like "flags, coats of arms, the names of streets, schools, squares, […] the language" have been removed from usage or changed (*The Culture* 78). Ugrešić's knowledge about the workings of the system is what is behaving as counter-history and fighting the power. Through her fictional and non-fictional works, Ugrešić is practicing that what Foucault names the "insurrection of subjugated knowledges" (Medina 13). In other words, she is mobilizing power against itself. What the power has subjugated, she is resurrecting by exposing the power's very means of doing so. In that sense, her works function as what Medina calls "guerrilla pluralism" (Medina 21). After being qualified as a public enemy, and a witch because of her disastrous knowledge for "the culture of lies," she has turned that knowledge, that conflicting perspective, into a constant friction, or guerrilla pluralism.

To emphasize the significance of guerilla pluralism, Medina compares it to two other types: C.S. Peirce and G.H. Mead's *converging pluralism*, and William James's *meliocratic pluralism,* both labelled like that by Medina himself. While the first pluralism proposes that the conflicting perspectives be erased and eliminated, as to unify them, the latter suggests that they should work jointly, in "coordination and cooperation" (Medina 23). On the other hand, "the radical epistemic pluralism that we find in Foucault" and that Medina termed "guerilla pluralism" does not want to achieve neither of the two solutions. According to this pluralism,

epistemic frictions are not tools for harmony or overcoming conflict but for provoking them, and re-energizing them (Medina 24). By continuously writing, Ugrešić also continuously produces this epistemic friction that constantly provokes the nationalist establishment(s), and never gets old. Her texts are friction incorporated and firmly stand for her decision: "I refuse to serve affairs of state" (*The Culture* 271). The following chapters will look into how friction is achieved by the means of her fiction.

A Writer in Exile: Unworking the Community through Fiction

In an organic community, as Miller explains, literature merely imitates, reflects, and reproduces the community's ideology, creating thus, its miniature model (*Literature as Conduct* 88). Literature becomes the community's loyal representation. Because of this, such literature is just a statement, a replica, of something that already historically exists out there (Miller, *Literature as Conduct* 88-89). Its purpose is to convey what is perceived to be the fact, the truth, the original. As Ugrešić explains, "in opting for the language of one *truth* (for truth cannot be but one," the poet rejects the "poetic language (the language of lies) and [chooses] the photograph (the language of truth) (*The Culture* 32-33). The reason why literature has such an appeal to nationalists is that it belongs to "the things of 'the soul and spirit'"—together with history, religion, and television—and these "are the most rewarding field for manipulation" (*The Culture* 264). The writer, thus, becomes a puppet on a string through which the creators of the national identity spread the word about "their national being" (*The Culture* 45).

That new art becomes a tool for establishing the national culture and identity, and writers become mere social workers for that divine purpose. The truth that they work on cannot, however, be farther from the truth. The main principle of working of those literary patriots is—in Miroslav Krleža's words—"to think nothing, to distort the facts, to misinterpret the most basic truths, to spread lies, to foster a cult of empty phrases, in short to do everything that is contrary to the most primitive taste of common sense" (qtd. in *The Culture* 86). The writer, thus, becomes the herald of the rulers, "the spokesman of his people;" they join in in the love game, and replace their art with kitsch; their feather is that of swans'.

In order to represent the national truth, the writer needs to avoid figurative, and employ literal language instead. Such a strategy functions as a means to "work," or to produce, "the interchanges of community" (Miller, *Literature as Conduct* 93). In the way physical workers 'work' the community by building roads, bridges, and buildings, the writers do so by words in their most literal, unambiguous sense. They "reproduce the same language, the same mental and linguistic formulae, the same articulation of the unhappy reality which has affected everyone equally" (*The Culture* 91-92).

Ugrešić's novel, on the other hand, bursts with textual experimentation and figurative language, and includes such narrative devices as: photographs, numerous metaphors—the

angel being the most salient one—and textual juxtapositions that symbolically take the role of museum exhibitions—to name but a few. With figurative language she creates meanings that do not only subvert the literal language's claim to truth, but she also subverts the community that claims to be the true one. The reason why this new community requires such a creative expression is that—unlike for the organic community—"no literal language exists for it" (Miller, *Literature as Conduct* 91). Its language is, hence, "necessarily, figurative, catachrestic;" language itself becomes literature; it becomes writing and the way of "unworking the community" (Miller, *Literature as Conduct* 91, 93).

Furthermore, the language needs to be symbolic because only like that certain ideas—which are, otherwise, unwelcomed in organic communities—can be articulated. Miller explains that inoperative communities are "unavowable" because they do not provide space for avowals or speech acts, not because they are unwanted or do not occur in such communities, but because the avowals they want to avow are unlawful or prohibited (Miller, *Literature as Conduct* 93). Ugrešić's novel's form becomes a speech act itself; a speech act that is undeclarable, unless communicated symbolically. She herself explains: "I write about one thing in order to write about something else" (*The Museum* 223). Perhaps that is why the very first page contains the warning not to connect the stories with the author's real life, explaining that that could be a matter of interest for the police only, not the readers: "[t]he question as to whether this novel is autobiographical might at some hypothetical moment be of concern to the police, but not to the reader" (*The Museum* 1). It is because the knowledge that the readers are about to find out is somehow dangerous, and it is risky to speak it. It is dangerous because its very language proves that the organic community's language is not the only one. Instead on one truth, she offers more truths.

Another important element that she challenges through her narrative is that of space. As mentioned before, organic communities are based on a closed and strictly limited space, as imagined by its members. In Ugrešić's novel, not only through travelling does she broaden the physical space, but she does so even more by employing a variety of dialogues from writers who are not only from different countries, but have also experienced some sort of displacement in their life. Placing her mother in the dialogue with the writers provides an imaginative space that defies borders and connections based on identity. The interlocutors share the same, borderless space, and their relationship is based on communication. Instead of

fusing into one communal being—a communion—they remain singular beings that through communication expose themselves to each other in a space that is borderless.

In organic communities, there is always a central figure, whether it be God, or a cult leader—as will be seen later in the analysis—around which the community is centered as a symbolical family, in which everything is known. Similarly, organic narratives are told by an omniscient narrator, who knows it all, because no disloyal secrecy is allowed in the community. Such a narrator is detached from the characters as if they hover above and see and hear it all, like a God figure, or some sort of an authority that controls everything. As Miller explains, the narrator becomes the expression of the collective consciousness of the community (Miller, *Literature as Conduct* 89). Ugrešić's narrator, on the other hand, shares the space with the characters and through communication with them tries to learn. Similarly, rather than collective consciousness, Ugrešić employs what Olga Tokarczuk calls "episodic consciousness" which is "built like a bee's eye" and "made up of individual pictures, which a person then merges together," dismantling thus "the classical novel" which is "an artificial creation, because it attempts to give linearity to perception." She achieves this through a myriad of different stories, different time periods, and different locations.

Ugrešić's narrator, nevertheless, seems to be omniscient only when creating an emblematic representation of the past country in the chapter about the angel—where she has an access to the most intimate moments—as if to distinguish the community she left behind and the new one in which she seems to exist only through the exposition to others and communication with them. Ugrešić's chapter about the angel is an idyllic and romanticized representation of the organic community based on unity of the members who are centered around their trunk: a charismatic figure—the angel—who perhaps symbolically represents the charismatic Yugoslav leader, Tito. It is through the omniscient narrator that she not only renders that everything is known in an organic community, but it also becomes a way to detach herself from such a community. The reader has an impression as if that chapter is not narrated by the narrator of the rest of the book.

In the remaining of the novel, Ugrešić employs diverse narrative devices, as well as diverse narrative voices in order to dismantle the imagined communion of organic communities. The narrator rejects to imitate to be a superior intelligence, and brings into question her authority by revisiting certain passages by using postscripts, in which she elaborates the reasons for writing something and elucidates how her stances might have

changed, hence rejecting the notion of a fixed, given, identity. By doing so she enters into an inoperative community not only with the characters, but also with her readers. She creates a space designed for the communication between herself and the readers, as well as the multiple voices that, indeed, speak for themselves in the book.

It is important to note that such communication provides space for numerous meanings and interpretations, defying one, grand narrative and its one truth. As Eliášová notes, the narrator "does not 'restore' some original state, but revitalizes her story of migration by adding new stories" (Eliášová, 2014: 244). Eliášová further exemplifies this strategy with the usage of flea-markets in the novel where the meanings of the things on sale become appropriated by the new owners, who—in her words—concoct new stories out of them (244). She claims that, in this way, things are released from "axes of fixed meanings," and are given what Monica Popescou—as quoted by Eliášová—calls "an (after)life" in which the connection between things and their subjects is broken (245). Being detached from "original" meanings, things become "non-things"—as termed by Eliášová—that call for new inscriptions, and have a potential of developing in "unforeseen directions" (245).

The narrative form, thus, ceases to be merely an organizational tool, but works to produce meaning that is not given, but reached through communication. Hence, the novel's form does not only exist for the sake of the content, but it *is* the content. By challenging the literal language, Ugrešić offers alternative truths that "unwork" the organic community. In this sense, the very act of reading becomes performative, and the readers participate in the "unworking" of the organic community. The knowledge that—if inferred from the narrator's warning—is dangerous is being communicated to the readers. According to Lukić, this bringing together the author, the text, and the reader has become Ugrešić's trademark since the early 1980s (Lukić, *The Transnational Turn* 47). By doing this, the novel makes them all "a part of fictional, that is of textual reality," thus putting the reader into "an open game of problematization of its borders" (Lukić, *The Transnational Turn* 47). It is not only the borders and limitations of the traditional narrative style that are being challenged here, but also geographical borders—which are, at the end of the day, fictional too. This is illustrated by an artist character Sissel's obsession of buying maps of the world and appropriating their borders, following "her own inner sense of geography" (*The Museum* 98).

Miller explains that in such form of fiction, "an all-powerful author, in sovereign control of what he [sic] writes, is no longer possible. Rather, the novelist's work takes

unforeseen and incalculable directions," in the same way the work's meaning does, as previously explained by Eliášová (Miller, *Literature as Conduct* 145). Such directions are quite visible in the postmodernist form that Ugrešić uses, and that contains not only various textual forms, such as a diary, direct quotations, epigraphs, a recipe for a soup—to name the salient ones—but she even employs visual communication, in the form of a photograph. Lukić also notes that such textual forms speak to us through both content and form, and "cannot be reduced to any kind of message" (Lukić, *The Transnational Turn* 43).

Due to all these specificities, narratives like Ugrešić's, indeed, produce a specific genre, and Lukić thinks that it is very important to emphasize that fact. She quotes Azade Seyhan who "speaks of *transnational* or *diasporic* or *exilic* literature" produced necessarily in a state of "in-betweenness" of languages and cultures by those who find themselves living in what Seyhan calls "'paranational communities' as communities of those who live "within national borders and alongside citizens of national borders and alongside citizens of the host country but remain culturally and linguistically distanced from them and, in some instances, are estranged from both the home and the host country" (Lukić, *The Transnational Turn* 39). Ugrešić's narration offers multiple diverse locations, cultures, and languages that interact so richly that location becomes untraceable. Eliášová notes that places in *The Museum* are "non-places"—the depiction attributed to Berlin in one of the dialogues (242). She reads Ugrešić's "non-place" not as "an empty location but a construction site—a site of constant change" (242). Tokarczuk's notion of "liquid identity" can be adjusted to describe the place of mobile people: as liquid identity helps mobile people gain "freedom from themselves", so does the "liquid place"—it frees itself from itself, thus becoming "non-place."

The postmodernist aesthetics of Ugrešić's novel produce a meaning as important as the novel's content. It subverts the hegemony of the master narrative in literature, but also the master narrative of organic, nationalist communities. Caren Kaplan's observation of postmodern expressions best describes what Ugrešić's text achieves: "All versions of the "postmodern" share a distrust or disavowal of master narratives, totalizing systems of explanation, and a recognition of the breakup of formerly hegemonic practices and representations" (12). Ugrešić, too, could have been the spokesman of the Croatian nation; she could have gone along the stream, but she chose not to. Her duty is not that of the homeland, but of homelands that she herself creates. She chose the poetic lie as opposed to the truth of the culture of lies.

Angel or the Myth Exposed

Part Six of *The Museum of Unconditional Surrender,* titled "Group Photograph", is the part where the magical dimension of the repetitive motif of the angel becomes augmented. Indeed the chapter has a dimension of magic realism, and stands out from the rest of the narrative. It is Ugrešić's witty intervention to render the mechanism behind the system to which people unconditionally surrender. In this chapter she exposes the Yugoslav community as organic, or organized around a myth; she symbolically presents the collective memory erasure, and how by the symbolic means of feathers, Angel's (read: Yugoslav) replicas are disseminated.

The story is centered around the narrator and her friends: Nuša, Doti, Ivana, Alma, and Dinka, who have gathered at what seems to be just another girls' night at Dinka's apartment. The accounts of their lives and this meeting are stereotypically feminized: the narrator arranges the narrative around different types of food that they love, and are good at preparing because "with time [their] parties had become culinary orgies" (*The Museum*, 175). Then she talks about their concerns with aging, gaining weight, their "battle against cholesterol," dieting, wrinkles, clothes' sizes, children, husbands, cleaning, sewing, polishing, hairdressers, beauticians, gynecologists, dressmakers etc. (*The Museum*, 176). They all "more or less" thought that "such an unexciting activity as politics must be a profession for fools and…men" (*The Museum*, 177). Their escape from reality was Tarot, or "card-throwing;" it helped them "overcome the gravity of life" and enjoy the thought of multiple different interpretations of life instead of "the repetition of a familiar story" (*The Museum*, 178).

As the girls' night unraveled, the magic ritual of the Tarot cards became multidimensional when they were interrupted by "a quite other-worldly blue light" and saw "a beautiful young man […] standing in the doorway" (*The Museum* 181). His name was Alfred, and he was an angel. It becomes clear that the angel is a trope for both Tito and Yugoslavia when the narrator lists all the badges that he had pinned on his T-shirt: "The Yugoslav coat-of-arms, a badge of Tito, the Yugoslav flag, a hammer and sickle" (*The Museum* 182). Dinka's home became a place of myth telling, involving the symbolical Tito himself. The "small" flat, with "low ceilings" became a symbolical community closed in on itself, its borders creating a claustrophobic feeling (*The Museum* 187).

As Nancy explains, the scene of a myth happens at a gathering where there turns up someone who is telling a story, and the people who are listening to the story are "brothers'

and sisters because they are gathered together and because they are listening to the same story" (Nancy 43). Although the narrator and her friends are all women, it would be too liberal to say that they are sisters because in Yugoslavia, regardless of gender, they learned that they "must preserve brotherhood[10] and unity like the apples of [their] eyes" (*The Culture of Lies* 3). This trend, however, was not unique to Yugoslavia; Mary Louise Pratt noted that "women inhabitants of nation were neither imagined as nor invited to imagine themselves as part of the horizontal brotherhood" (51). Nevertheless, in *The Museum*, they are unified around the central figure: the angel, who is, symbolically, Tito. The angel's storytelling was full of stuttering and seemed jumbled—as myths often are: "confused" and not always "coherent"—but it did not prevent girls to unify in one feeling: amazement by the mythical figure: "He took our breath away" (Nancy 44; *The Museum* 181). Even before his narrative, the angel—the mythic figure—is the story for itself; he is the myth that, as Nancy adds, communicates itself (Nancy 57). This self-communication is the "mythic will" which is "totalitarian in its content, for its content is always a communion: of man [sic] with nature, of man with God, of man with himself, of men among themselves" (Nancy 57). The women were now made into sisters by their mutual exposition to the myth, and were fused into a community of seduction.

Once again we have a Gogol from Nabokov's story, seducing girls with his aesthetics: he was "a beautiful young man with curly chestnut hair, big almond eyes and full lips the colour of fresh raspberries. The young man had a fine, masculine face and a perfectly built body" (182). As the myth unknots, this Gogol has no need for swans; his intimate parts, or as the narrator calls it "his willie", will do:

> 'Ooooo!' we all sighed in *unison.* […] We all moved closer and gazed enchanted at Alfred's willie. If there was anything other-worldly about Alfred it was his willie. Consequently it would be stupid to say that it was the loveliest willie that any of us had ever seen. No, it was something that none of us had ever seen: a divine, large pestle nestling in soft mother-of-pearl fluff which trembled in the air like a humming bird and emitted a magical bluish light. […] We all stood entranced, […]. (*The Museum* 184, my emphasis)

Alfred's 'willie' is symbolically what Weber meant by "supernatural, superhuman, or exceptional" qualities that make an individual charismatic and deemed extraordinary (qtd. in

[10] It is because of this exclusive brotherhood that the Yugoslavian writer—as Lóránd notes—is always referred to as a "he" in Ugrešić (77).

Schweitzer 151). Indeed, this is what happens in myths: even before the myth narrative takes place, there is an "inaugural" of a figure, or an act that "circumscribes the event at the heart of man [sic], emotive like an infant" (Nancy 49). Alfred is "the hero"—to use Nancy's term—who makes the listeners commune by his self-communication; he makes them fuse "in the communication that he himself effects between existence and meaning, between the individual and the people" (Nancy 51). Only by *being* he succeeds to create the "*unison"* of the women.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that such a fused community does not operate on its fusion—the fusion of women seems to be the effect of it—but on their mutual desire to make the community out of myth. Ugrešić uses sexual desire to exaggeratedly render how desire of those summoned by myth works to create fusion; the story of the Angel is, if you will, a caricature of how an organic community comes into being and operates. There is a myth, a desire that keeps it operating, and what follows is a community and its fusion centered around that myth. Nancy further explains that "this does not mean only that community is a myth, that communitarian communion is a myth. It means that myth and myth's force and foundation are essential to community and that there can be, therefore, no community outside of myth" (Nancy 57). To keep the community going, the seductive power of myth needs to remain continuous.

The seductive appeal of the angel is not merely a symbolical representation of community leaders and the workings of their charisma. It is well known that Tito was a great womanizer and apart from having married multiple times, he also had many affairs outside marriage. A typical Yugoslav living room always had a "picture of Tito [hanging] on the wall beside family photographs" (*The Culture* 217). Slobodan Milošević, the Serbian leader was yet another Casanova, who once stated "in an interview that his wife was a bad cook, [and] some 200 women offered to go and cook for him" (*The Culture* 119). Alfred's powers were magical; he used "hypnotic" sounds to bewitch the women who then "lost all sense of time, [and] were quite captivated by his angelic gurgling. Alfred produced words like a magician's silk handkerchief from a hat" (*The Museum* 185). Ugrešić drew this magician analogy from Serbian nationalists and leaders: Slobodan Milošević, Radovan Karadžić, and Jovan Rašković, the latter two being psychiatrists, who like Alfred hypnotized their followers into "a collective madness, transforming first the former and then the new states into madhouses and the citizens of their states into patients" (*The Culture* 208). She further compares them to

"street illusionists [who], manipulating little balls around in front of the world and the local community" have everyone in awe and fascinated (*The Culture* 209). Such an ecstasy necessarily follows from a situation with charismatic magicians, by the means of which they produce awe and fear in their followers, and create a "sacrificial community" (Schweitzer 152). As stated in the previous chapter, this hypnotizing ecstatic seduction is a two-way process, that includes—as Ugrešić explains—inducers and the induced, the first being psychopaths, the letter "emotionally or intellectually immature" who "blindly accept the ideas, thoughts, behaviour and attitudes of the inducers and support them in everything" (*The Culture* 209).

Along with the status of seducers of their followers, national leaders, in a perverse way, are also always considered fathers of the nation, which symbolically organizes the nation into a natural, organic, family: "(Stalin, Tito, and Tudjman are all referred to by homely local words for 'dad' – 'batya', 'stari', 'ćaća', 'tata'). National heroes are *sons* (who are *loyal* and *lay down their lives on the altar of the homeland),* while women, of course, serve for the production of *sons*" (*The Culture* 51). Yet, while "father" is not an unusual term for male national leaders[11], Ugrešić unusually also refers to Tito as a 'mummy:' "Some ten years ago the nations of now former Yugoslavia wept sincerely at the funeral of their long-lived mummy, Tito" (culture, 69). 'Mummy' does not only assign him also the role of a mother, but it also implies that the members of the nation are infantile, as the word is usually used by toddlers. Tito has, indeed, nourished the people of Yugoslavia from their early childhood: he used to send them baskets of mandarins from his gardens on Brioni (*The Culture* 52). It is with this word 'mummy' that Ugrešić emphasizes the emotional and intellectual immaturity needed for the nation to be easily induced by the magic inducers. McClintock emphasized that the family trope is used because it naturalizes woman's subordination to man, and child's to adult, which in national terms translates as "*hierarchy within unity* as an 'organic' element of historical progress" (68). Having Tito as both father and mother would make all his children—symbolically "immature citizens"—subordinated to him, a unitary cult figure.

The trance, however, does not last forever. Alfred—who was also the trope for the inducers' means for "idiotisation" of people such as the media and ministries of culture, and commissions for monitoring language purity—decided to throw cards (*The Culture* 210).

[11] For a thorough discussion about family as a trope for nation and its multiple significance, see McClintock (1993).

Throwing cards means "a large number of combinations" instead of "the repetition of a familiar story" (*The Museum* 178). This has resulted in his hypnotizing combination of referring to different classical and religious texts, including the Bible, the Quran, and the teachings of Tibetan mystics, prophesying that "the false side will become the true" and that "the spirits of [their] forefathers will come to claim their due" (*The Museum* 185-186). Alfred's words almost instantly started to be embodied; Doti "kissed the little cross hanging round her neck" and was offended by his quoting Jovan Jovanović Zmaj because he should not have quoted a Serbian children's poet in the middle of Zagreb (*The Museum* 86). It seemed like the *unison* has started to disintegrate by the seeds of difference that Alfred had sown; that one story was split into multiple ones, as the card throwing provided, and each one of them wants to claim its own originality—thus the symbolical references to religious texts.

Another symbolical account of Yugoslavia's falling apart into its several little replicas is Alfred's distribution of feathers. Before leaving the myth-telling scene, he "plucked a few feathers from his wings" and gave them to each girl except to the narrator. Those were the feathers of "oblivion" that produced the collective amnesia (*The Museum* 188). They wiped away the memory of "time that no longer existed, a time of warm sharing" (*The Museum* 202). Now it became a time when Hana managed to escape Sarajevo in 1993 to seek shelter in Zagreb, and all of a sudden none of the girls had place for her; "Doti's flat was to small, […] Alma had some visitors, and Dinka couldn't have her, and Nuša wasn't in Zagreb at the time" (*The Museum* 204). The love for Alfred, i.e. Tito, turned into hatred, and was replaced by the love for his successors: Doti "exchanged her deep hatred of Yugoslavia and Tito for love of his replica, Tito's general and imitator, the President of the New Croatian state" (*The Museum* 210). The feathers—which could also be interpreted as pens—wrote different stories on the place where once was one big tale, thus producing palimpsests that deep underneath contained the traces of the old ink. In Nancy's words, the myth has been "staged once more: it might be a new myth, that is to say the renewal of the old myth" (Nancy 59). Nancy further compares this palimpsestic protrusion to music:

> When a voice, or music, is suddenly interrupted, one hears just as that instant something else, a mixture of various silences and noises that had been covered over by the sound, but in this something else one hears again the voice or the music that has become in a way the voice or the music of its own interruption: a kind of echo, but one that does not repeat that of which it is the reverberation." (62)

This analogy can be applied to the interruption of the socialist kitsch by nationalist kitsch, the latter one fitting the former "like a photograph torn in half" (*The Culture* 52). Ugrešić also uses a sound metaphor to render the echoes from the former regime: "there is a cacophonic mixture of fragments of the former and present regimes, tunes which we have already heard but in new arrangement, symbols which we have already seen, but in a new design" (*The Culture* 51). She mockingly demonstrates Tito and his replica, Franjo Tuđman, who wore white jackets like Tito used to, gave children apricots the way Tito used to send them mandarins, and kissed children in front of cameras in the same poses as Tito (*The Culture* 51-52). The kitschy badges that Alfred had on his shirt were equally replaced by the same ones, but in Croatian[12] fashion: Croatian coat of arms, Croatian flag and such like.

Alfred's performance was abundant in kitsch. According to McClintock it is through "the visible, ritual organization of fetish objects"—such as those on Alfred's shirt—that nationalism becomes tangible, which creates a "spectacle" through which "national collectivity is experienced" (70-71). Alfred's act was a performance, a ritual, in which he, the man, was the main actor, whereas the women were an interactive audience: they were not only available to watch the show, but also participate in it upon the man's requests in order for the show to go on; thus, they were part of the spectacle. McClintock emphasizes that more research needs to be done to see in what ways women respond to such kitschy national spectacles (71). *The Museum* offers some responses; the immediate effect of the spectacle has not only hypnotized women's minds, but also disciplined their bodies, the way military does to soldiers:

> Out of the corner of my eye I noticed that we had all, at the same moment, like soldiers, each made a small movement, a gesture that betrayed instant, unconscious, inner mobilisation. Nuša slightly narrowed her beautiful, dark eyes, Alma flashed a captivating smile, Doti smoothed her hair with her hand, Ivana straightened her shoulders, I drew my stomach in, while Dinka stared at the young man with half-open lips. (181)

The fact that there were no men who were disciplined by Alfred in such a caricaturist manner only endorses the belief that "women, like landscapes, are the obstacles to be tamed, not people with civic and human rights" (Taylor 33). Nevertheless, although all women's immediate reaction was similar to that of soldiers when summoned by a commander, not all women got hooked on the rite of passage that military provides, or at least not all in the same

[12] This could be replaced by any other Yugoslav state replica's name.

intensity. The narrator herself was entranced, only to later realize the purpose of the performance. The rest of the girls' oblivion of the show only proves the fact that interpellation works in such a way that those who are interpellated (or induced; or seduced) are not even aware that the process it taking place, let alone making changes on them. It is because organic communities base themselves on what becomes perceived as common sense—as that which, according to Geertz, "lies so artlessly before our eyes it is almost impossible to see" (qtd. in Malkki 26) Yet, not all were interpellated to the same degree: Doti's case is the most radical one; she started writing patriotic poems and "gladly identified with the dark media stars of these times, anarchists, terrorists, and all kinds of modern martyrs of state systems" (*The Culture* 207). Her husband became a member of the party in power, which she supported "wholeheartedly" (209). Those like Ivana, who symbolically got pregnant with Alfred after swallowing the feather he gave her—and her child became a mixture of Croatian and Serbian blood—coped with identity at different levels: her child did not know the name of his mother tongue, and experienced himself in the third person—just as Alfred—because identity and the holy "I" of each side was something people were killing each other for (*The Culture* 214-215).

The wings, that cheap seduction tool that functioned as the two swans in Nabokov's story, are the "kitsch" that has fallen apart, and the feathers are its fragments: "In a country which has fallen apart, kitsch, as an important element of that country's ideological strategy, has also disintegrated: each side has now dragged relevant parts out of the ruins, and stuck them together in new strategic monsters" (*The Culture* 51). Again the real danger lies in the intellectual immaturity that Ugrešić deemed the key requirement for being easily seduced into believing that falsity[13] is the truth:

> Our swimmers embrace their swans and swim without paying any attention to the unseemly stage design. And as always the seduction achieves its aim. The peoples on the shore clap enthusiastically. Seeing the

[13] In the absence of an adequate word, one must take the word "falsity" with caution. To render one community false would imply that there is another one out there that is true or original, and such implications are precisely those that make the first one "false." Benedict Anderson explained that "communities are to be distinguished not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined" (qtd. in Taylor 29). For instance, imagining a community around the narrative of origin is false because the rhizomatic analogy of one nation's having one true root or source is itself false, as explained by Hebdige in his study on Caribbean music and cultural identity: "Rather than tracing back the roots…to their source, I've tried to show how the roots themselves are in a state of constant flux and change. *The roots don't stay in one place.* They change shape. They change colour. And they grow. There is *no such thing as a pure point of origin…*but *that doesn't mean there isn't history"* (qtd. in Malkki 37)

> performance as 'the essence of national being'. As something beautiful, grand and true. (*The Culture* 54)

While the narrator modestly wonders why she was not among the peoples on the shore who fell in love with the swimmers and the swans, it is because—in Levi-Strauss's words—she is one of those people from a future century who see themselves in their temporary "historical internality, while at the same time knowing (but on a different register) that what [they live] completely and intensely is a myth" (qtd. in Nancy 55). Yet, her knowing is used prospectively—not as something that is merely out there, but something that, ironically, enables a quest for alternative stories.

A Writer's Nation: New Belongings in Exile

"*As a woman I have no country.*
As a woman I want no country.
As a woman, my country is the whole world."
Virginia Woolf

The stories of organic communities grounded in nationalism are love stories. They are a never-ending seductive intercourse in which the members of the nation take part in their organic fusion—into their oneness—in order to help their love remain immune to the threats from the outside that can endanger their orga(ni)sm. They are never-ending because their love is infinite, like that of Romeo and Juliet—they would die for it but only to preserve *its* immortality.[14] Those who, by questioning the love, condemn its means of preservation, such as war, fall out of love; their "doubt in the new systems is [considered] a hostile act against the new state" (*The Culture* 89). Dubravka Ugrešić was one of those who did not "speak the language of the collective," and was thus pronounced a traitor and a public enemy of the nation[15] (*The Culture* 77).

It must be noted, however, that the binary of inside and outside is not as clear cut and obvious as it may seem. It refers to the physical boundaries that divide one nation-state form another, but not always so. Those who are physically inside the nation-state can also be outsiders; they can be exiles within the state, as it, indeed, happened in the war: "Thousands of people lost their lives, homes, identity, children, thousands of people became émigrés, refugees and homeless in their own country" (*The Culture* 6). Ugrešić chose to be an exile

[14] They are mortal and, as Miller explains, cemetery is one of the places in their community; however, mortality does not "essentially define community life" (Miller, *Literature as Conduct* 89). Wars—as paradoxically as it may sound—are fought for the preservation of the nation's life. Soldiers, in fact, die for the community to live on forever. That is why "the lives of the Yugo peoples are harsh, they are concerned only with questions of death and survival," where the latter depends on the former (*The Culture* 206). Also, the collective immortality of a nation is achieved by the community's constant renewal from generation to generation (Miller, *Literature as Conduct* 89). This is why one of the most important roles of women is that of "biological reproducers of members of" the ethnic collectivity (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 8).

[15] Ugrešić emphasizes that the public enemies were often women, and that the old patriarchal system, that was disguised under the "socialist formulae about the equality of women and men," has now only taken a new form; it was democratized in a way that brought "a new freedom for patriarchalism:" women intellectuals became "almost a 'natural' choice as objects of a media assassination" (*The Culture* 77). This is, however, not to say that all women were opposed to the regime. In fact, in *The Museum,* with the character of Doti, Ugrešić proves that women could and did work for the nationalists. Doti joined "the right side," and merged with the "holy 'we'" and was publicly "executing" the narrator (*The Museum* 211-212). For a discussion on how not merely women, but women who thought of themselves as feminists embraced nationalism and "refused angrily to sit in the same room with feminists from another territory," see Žarkov (3).

while still inside of the country, before she—again voluntary—became a literal one in 1993 when she left Croatia.

Nevertheless, she seems to have been an exile ever since she was born: "I have the feeling that I live the whole of my life in a kind of exile" (*The Museum* 113). In *The Culture of Lies,* she contemplates her transition from a writer into a public enemy, not being sure whether she was a writer first and then a public enemy, or the other way around; finally, she asks: "Perhaps I was always a PE?" (183) However, she found an answer further back in the past when she recalled her childhood memories. Namely, it seems that her first outsider status had nothing to do with either her choice or vocation: it was because of her hybrid, liminal, ethnic background: her blood was not cleanly Croatian because her mother was Bulgarian. When she was a child the girls from the road would not play with her, but would instead tease her with the words: "Bulgie! Bulgie!" (*The Culture* 183). The same happened to other *Others* as well: when Romani women would come down the street, the girls would shout: "Gypsy! Gypsy!" (*The Culture* 183). Both words 'Bulgie' and 'Gypsy' "were pronounced in the same way and meant the same thing: someone else, someone who wasn't the same as them" (*The Museum* 127). Her non-belonging to the collectivity was not only because she was different, but also because she was not accepted as such: "Perhaps the cause of my unconscious refusal of (any) collectivity was the distant *humiliation* of bribing the three little girls with chocolate: you have to give something for the collective, you have to be the same…" (*The Culture* 184, my emphasis). It is this past event that has caused her early disidentification with any belonging that had a national prefix: "Then, without knowing it, I firmly decided […] that I was not a Bulgie, and equally firmly that nor was I a little girl from our street" (*The Museum* 128). Considering Kaplan's notion that exile indicates "the estrangement of the individual from an original community," one could say that Ugrešić was an exile ever since she was a child (27). Little did she know that in the years to come, she would take pride in being the Other, a Bulgie, a Gypsy: "Being an ethnic 'bastard' or 'schizophrenic' is my natural choice, I even consider it a sign of mental and moral health. And I know that I am not alone" (*The Culture* 270).

In 1993, Ugrešić left the country and "joined the new European nomads" (*The Culture* 7). It is then that she realized that the Yugoslav Gypsies were "the only remaining Yugoslavs," probably because in the states to become, they were listed as Others (*The Culture* 7). Other ex-Yugoslavs have, on the other hand, become: "homeless, exiles, refugees,

countryless, excommunicated, new nomads, in a word – Gypsies" (*The Culture* 7). She puts herself in the same category and further describes them:

> They do not respect their forebears. They belong to a new tribe of people *of no fixed abode*. They feel most natural in an aeroplane. […] Their achievement is mental, personal freedom. […] They are *Trümmerleute*, people who mentally clear up the ruins, because they have emerged from ruins, people who can therefore build a new idea about life, a new morality. […] They do not consider Europe a privilege. Their privilege is the loss of illusions. […] I myself am a *Trümmerfrau, a sub-tenant, a bastard, a nomad, a Wossie*. (*The Culture* 250-251)

What she offers in this passage is a new perspective on a lifestyle that is traditionally looked down upon because—as Simone Weil claimed—"to be rooted is the most important […] need of the human soul" (qtd. in Malkki 24). Rather than the fixed territory and borders of an organic community that put (national) identity into a stationary frame, people like Ugrešić—nomads—achieve their identity only in movement; that is why liminal places such as airplanes feel *natural* for them. Yet, such exilic places provide resistance to be "*naturalized,* to put down roots in a place to which one did not belong" (Malkki 35, my emphasis). This "insisting on one's liminality and displacement" has been defined "as a subversion of (national) categories"[16] (Malkki 35). Rosi Braidotti expresses similar preference for the in-between places:

> But I do have special affection for the places of transit that go with traveling: stations and airport lounges, trams, shuttle buses, and check-in areas. In between zones where all ties are suspended and time stretched to a sort of continuous present. Oases of nonbelonging, spaces of detachment. No-(wo)man's lands. (Braidotti 18-19)

Such an attachment to detachment shows that nomadic identity is always on the move, rootless; always with an itinerary, but never the final destination. It is liminal, which suggests that nomads no longer hold onto that from where they stem, but neither do they ever finish the ritual of becoming oneself—"the kind of subject who has relinquished all idea, desire, or nostalgia for fixity […] without and against an essential unity" (Braidotti 22). This physical

[16] The very fact that a subject is mobile, as opposed to rooted is what makes them Others, and the duty of every citizen is "denunciation of people who travel too much ('while we sit out here bravely because our homeland is in danger') (*The Culture* 74). Similarly, Malkki observes that refugees are necessarily considered to be problematic: "They are not ordinary people, but represent, rather, an anomaly requiring specialized correctives and therapeutic interventions" (33). As subversive as she is, Ugrešić finds that being a schizophrenic is not an anomaly, but a duty (*The Culture* 270).

liminality corresponds with Ugrešić's hybrid identity: that of neither Bulgarian nor Croat, nor Yugoslav, and yet all of these at the time.

Nomadic subjects could be referred to that which Nancy named "singularities." Together they share the borderless space. Singularities are the opposite of the "self-enclosed subjectivities" who are the members of the organic community; they are "aboriginally *partagés*, shared, sheared, open to an abyssal outside called death, sharing it willy-nilly" (qtd. in Miller, *The Conflagration* 19). Their community is not thought of as infinite, as it is the case with the organic community; in Ugrešić's case, her finitude and the finitude of those she shares her community with is especially emphasized by the life on the edge that they all share. There is no mutual past, no myth or mythical figure, or angel, which binds them. Their communication consists in this sharing of finitude: 'that is, in the dislocation and the interpellation that reveal themselves to be constitutive of being-in-common—precisely inasmuch as being-in-common is not a common being" (Miller, *The Conflagration of Community* 19). What this means is that there is no fusion into one being, no collective conscious, no holy 'we', and no seduction with swans, wings, and feathers. Their community is *clinamen*, the term that Nancy borrowed from physics, which describes such movement of atoms in space in which they share the space, and in which there is always an "inclination or an inclining from one toward the other, of one by the other, or from one to the other," but they never fuse into one (Nancy 3).

Nomads' alternative model of community by its very existence says no to the commonsensical one (Miller, *The Conflagration of Community* 19). Their community "does not emerge among already given subjects (objects)" (Miller, *The Conflagration of Community* 20). Rather it is the community of those like Ugrešić, who are always in making, and always necessarily in movement, always on airplanes and bus stations. These places can also be symbolical—they stand for both the detachment from any point of fixity and the consciousness which is "a form of political resistance to hegemonic and exclusionary view of subjectivity" (Braidotti 23). As Braidotti further explains, "not all nomads are world travelers; some of the greatest trips can take place without physically moving from one's habitat. It is the subversion of set conventions that defines the nomadic state" (5). In Nancy's words, a singularity's state of mind is such that "in its being, its very being, singularity is exposed to the outside" (qtd. in Miller, *The Conflagration of Community* 20).

Ugrešić presents a few symbolical models of such a community in *The Museum.* For instance, when the narrator started living in the USA with Sally, who was also her landlady, the two women created a "temporary community" (*The Museum* 134). Sally was a "political-asylum-seeker" who in her mind compressed Zagreb and Berlin into one geographical point (134). Together they lived in a shared flat, "or more exactly a shared kitchen. […] Over those few months the kitchen was to become [their] shared place, [their] temporary homeland, the ship on which [they] would sail over past, present and future, joined by nothing other than Sally's general grasp of geography" (134). First of all, Sally is an emigrant from her country, whose sense of geography symbolically indicates that fixed physical borders are not of interest for her. She is a political-asylum-seeker which means that, like Ugrešić, she must have faced threats and a fear of prosecution. The women are now sharing the place and being-in-common, rather than being in communion because there is no communal identity that binds them together. In Nancy's words, their relationship is that of "you *and* I" in which "*and* does not imply juxtaposition, but exposition" (qtd. in Miller, *The Conflagration of Community* 20). Their being joined by Sally's sense of geography means being joined by non-fixity, non-borders, non-locations. Moreover, it means that there is no pre-given "social bond" between them which—as Nancy elucidates—"superimposes upon 'subjects' (that is to say, objects) a hypothetical reality (that of the 'bond') upon which" they would be attached to each other (qtd. in Miller, *The Conflagration of Community* 20). They do not bind, but share the space and their own finitude; represented through their detachment from the infinite organic communities. Individuals in organic communities bind together through communication called "intersubjectivity"—which presupposes "that the other is like me" (Miller, *Literature as Conduct* 88). In the inoperative community of Ugrešić's narrator and Sally, they are singularities that are "fundamentally different" from each other and each "harbors a secret otherness that can by no means be communicated to any other singularity" (Miller, *Literature as Conduct* 90).

Another inoperative community is that of the narrator in *The Museum* and Antonio, a man she met during her stay at a literary conference in Lisbon, and with whom she had a short love affair. Again, he was similar to her in regard to her scattered movement through space; her nomadic lifestyle: "he had lived all over the world, the longest in Brazil, for a time in Germany, in Norway, of course" (143). As their "sharing" unfolded, he started telling her about his insecurities, and his risky lifestyle. She also shared hers; she told him about the war, and about her homelessness. They exposed themselves to each other in the same space

of life turbulences; in the place which "life had chosen […] in the secret geography of [their] lives" (153). Yet, the two of them did not fuse; despite similarities, he uttered: "The two of us are not equal, that's the matter" (146). The secrecy that each of them harbors could not be communicated. She too noticed that what she told him was true; however, she would not interpret it that way "because that was not how [she] experienced [herself] (147). The most striking point was an unusual family relationship that was created between the two: "Yes, Antonio was my sister, we were […] two similar orphans in this world…" (153). Not only does the narrator claim the same blood with Antonio, which has nothing to do either with real blood, or with (clean) ethnic blood, but she is also queering his identity by referring to him as to a female. This shows that inoperative communities are neither established on a fixed identity, nor do they establish fix identities. Antonio's gender identity corresponds to the fluidity of the fluid, mobile life. As Lukić notes, "gender identity intersects with exile identity, and border spaces of displacements of any kind are always seen as highly gendered" (Lukić, *Beyond Humanities* 28). Assigning him the role of a sister indicates that the condition of displacement and non-belonging is somehow feminine—which has nothing to do with sex.

The epigraph of this chapter contributes to the idea that not fitting in state boundaries is a condition that is both preserved for women and, in return, desired by women. As Anh Hua remarks, citizenship is a highly gendered concept, and although presenting itself as democratic, it sometimes dismisses "certain gendered and racialized individuals and communities as inauthentic citizens, noncitizens, or denizens" (46). She further explains that it is women who have been persistently "denied the rights to citizenship" (46). Quoting Jan Jindy Pettman, Hua notes that it has been so due to the assumption that citizenship identity is male and "rests in ambiguous ways on the private support world of family, home and women" (46). Ugrešić does not only queer such an identity, but also appropriates and threatens it by creating a community that no longer produces organic institutions that help sustain male citizenship. Finally, their status of orphans implies that both of them are 'bastards'—that Ugrešić takes pride in non-belonging and considers it a sign of "moral health" (*The Culture* 270). They are non-wanted children, but through their very existence, their very illegitimacy, and exposure to each other, they create an alternative kind of family that disregards the organic one based on clean blood, sex, and gender. The inoperative community by *being* always already unworks the organic one.

One must not neglect the importance of the fact that Ugrešić is a writer, and how it fits into the idea of an alternative community. While it has already been discussed how she creates the community through writing, it must also be observed in relation to her own mobility as a writer. In the organic community, especially at the time when the state is being established, writers become much desired by nationalists because their feathers and ink can be used as swans to seduce the people. Those whose writing resists such social function are considered polluters. That is why Ugrešić's family members—as she calls them—"Oscar Wilde, Ivo Andrić, Branko Ćopić, Mark Twain, Jack London, Victor Hugo, Ivana Brlić Mažuranić…" were all "executed:" their books have been removed from the libraries and school curriculum; they were destroyed because they, too, were a threat to national integrity and cleanliness (*The Culture* 272). Ugrešić explains that in such situations, the writer has three options: "transformation and adaptation; inner exile, in the hope that it won't last long; real exile, in the hope that it is temporary" (*The Culture* 166). Ugrešić, thus, chose the real exile for she "[refused] to be a writer of '[her] nation', especially of a nation which destroys books" (*The Culture* 272).

A writer being outside the nation does not necessarily have negative implications. On the contrary, it seems that exile provides a creative potential; a special point of view. Peter Adley believes that mobility is synonymous with imagination and is "inextricably linked to freedom and liberty" (62). Similarly, Kaplan points out that "detachment of the one from the many…is the necessary precondition of all original thought" (38). She further adds that once liberated from the national puppet strings, writers find "the only community available to them: a community of medium; of their own practices" (32). Writing becomes a means of escaping nationalist interpellations; it becomes a way of making the self as it is: singular. Or, as Trinh T. Minh-ha put it, "to write is to become. Not to become a writer (or a poet), but to become, intransitively" (qtd. in Braidotti 16). Hence, as Kaplan elucidates, "exile becomes a vocational practice at odds with collective identity and historical experience" (38). It becomes a rite of passage whose outcome is "the effect of statelessness" (Kaplan 36).

Hence, Ugrešić's exile functions as a rite of passage that does not imply a return to the place where she once was—as a changed person that will fit back into society; it rather becomes a means of no return, and a means of non-belonging. The status of a writer in exile provides Ugrešić not only with detachment and existence in parallel with the national system as two separate flows, but it rather works as a means for *guerilla pluralism*; as a way of

constant friction and living and working against the stream. Hers is "a writer's nation" (*The Culture* 272). The "woman" in the epigraph could be complemented with the word "writer" in order to fully capture Ugrešić's community.

Conclusion: The Culture of Polluters

In the age of the rise of nationalisms, national identity becomes a holy temple at which all the members of the community whose blood belongs to the one and only true body—that of the nation—are invited and expected to pray. Upon the fall of Yugoslavia different nationalisms created what has come to be called commonsensical, organic communities, in which there was no place for polluters whether they came from the inside or from the outside—because the main goal was to preserve the clean blood of the nation. The polluters included any members of different nations who, by their very nature, were enemies, or those who came from the inside but showed signs of critical thinking that threatened the national integrity. In order to preserve immunity from such contagions, the nations needed to put themselves into incubators, which are determined by fixed and rigid borders. This has caused the dichotomy of us and them. My thesis was a case study of the way in which one inside polluter organized her life and vocation in order to challenge national imaginings. I looked at how Dubravka Ugrešić's life and work became organized in such a way that it continuously contested the newly formed Croatian national identity, despite the life-threatening nature of such endeavors.

In order to provide a more grounded analysis, I focused on two works by Ugrešić: *The Culture of Lies* and *The Museum of Unconditional Surrender*. The two books are complementary and often feel as two volumes of the same book. My central argument is that Ugrešić creates a community that is not only alternative to the nationalist one, but also always works to challenge it—or "unwork" it, as the communitarian theories suggest.

Ugrešić exposes both Yugoslavia and its subsequent states as organic or imagined communities. In both works she discloses the organic imaginaries that are embodied through national kitsch, national spectacles, and such relations that she symbolically rendered as perverse love affairs. Her literature becomes performative in that in its very existence it challenges the national establishment. By using an alternative discourse of depicting the workings of the political leaders, she mobilizes the power against itself.

Because the organic community is dependent on the loyalty of its members it obligates them by the condition that they always be obedient and the same as everyone else because, after all, they all live fused together, as if they were of one body. Ugrešić, however, does not only disidentify with such belongings, but also counteridentifies, which has, subsequently, caused her status of both an ethnic bastard and public enemy. By continuously and

progressively sharing the knowledge that was deemed false and pushed to the margins in Croatia, Ugrešić does what Jose Medina named *guerilla pluralism*. Similarly to the process of counteridentification, Ugrešić does not merely create a community that is an alternative to the commonsensical one, but a community that persistently creates friction in order to disable the workings of the former one.

The main reason why she is such a threat is because she is a writer. Literature and writers play a major role in establishing a national identity. They become the tools for social manipulation and brainwashing. Ugrešić's literature, fictional and non-fictional alike, is her means of "unworking" the community. Instead of becoming the spokesman of the nation—which is the duty of a national writer—she chose to become a polluter. I analyzed the ways in which she contests the national community through her writing. The chapter of Angel in *The Museum* is dedicated to the exposure of the organic community as myth. On the other hand, the novel also offers several examples of the inoperative community, which are based on a borderless space, contested geographical maps, fluid gender identity, female—or even queer—rather than male citizenship, life of the outsiders, and communication defined by the detachment from national ideologies.

Ugrešić's works are in themselves places of hybridity where fiction and reality are not exclusionary truths. They are an aesthetic expression of cultural contestation and exploration of identity and belonging of the time when such ventures were dangerous. As such, they provide a different view of *Otherness*—a view that empowers.

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