The Politics of (Non)Belonging in Three Novels by Daša Drndić

By

Dara Šljukić

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Supervisor: Professor Jasmina Lukić

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I. Abstract

In this thesis I am analyzing the three novels by the Croatian/post-Yugoslav author Daša Drndić, "Dying in Toronto," *Canzone di Guerra* and *Leica format*. I focus on the ways in which they deal with the various politics of (non)belonging through their thematization of exile and Holocaust. I argue that the politics of belonging is the underlying issue of Drndić's novels, connecting her themes of exile and fascism. I conduct my analysis through, firstly, situating the novels in the post-Yugoslav literary field and engaging them with the frameworks of transnational literature; and secondly, by engaging the novels with the concepts of exile, home, (non)belonging and language politics. The aim of my thesis is to uncover the complexity of Drndić's writing on exile and (non)belonging and, at the same time, its value for the conceptualizations of transnational literature. I also aim to contribute to the history of women's anti-war writing in the region of former Yugoslavia.

II. Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgement is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

I further declare that the following word count for this thesis is accurate:

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Introduction

In this thesis I want to analyze the novels of Daša Drndić, a Croatian/post-Yugoslav author, as narratives of exile, her representation of different experiences of displacement and the way she engages with various conceptions of exile and migration. I believe Daša Drndić has something important to say about the politics of belonging (in its many variations and complexities), through her thematization of exile and nationalist and fascist discourses and practices. Furthermore, I find the topic of displacement to be in many ways inseparable from the author's interest in fascism and its many appearances throughout different historical and geographical contexts. I believe the concept of (non-)belonging provides one of the most effective angles from which these two thematic clusters in Drndić's work come together.

My main research question, then, is: How *does* the work of Daša Drndić, which is fictional, theoretical and historical at the same time, *engage* with different notions and politics of belonging? Additionally, how *could* the work of Daša Drndić *be engaged* with different theories of exile and belonging, how does it speak back to theory?

I base my research on her three novels: *Marija Czestochowska još uvijek roni suze ili Umiranje u Torontu (*"Marija Czestochowska still shedding tears or Dying in Toronto"*)* from 1997, *Canzone di Guerra* from 1998 and *Leica format* from 2003.[1] The first two novels are Drndić's first

[1] *Umiranje u Torontu* and *Canzone di Guerra* are not translated into English. *Leica format* was translated in 2015 by Celia Hawkesworth and published by MacLehose Press. In this thesis, I am reading all three novels in their original language – which is Croatian, Serbo-Croatian or BCMS (Bosnian-Croatian-Montenegrin-Serbian). This issue of naming the language will be examined throughout the thesis.
As far as the novels' titles are concerned, I will use the original titles of *Leica format* and *Canzone di Guerra* – the first one because it is left the same in the English translation, as well, and the second one because it stays true to Drndić's practice of titling her novels in different languages. I will refer to *Umiranje u Torontu* in English, as "Dying in Toronto," because it makes reading of the thesis easier.

novels written after the Yugoslav wars and in many ways as a response to them and the author's experience(s) of exile during the 1990s. *Leica format* is a novel closer to Drndić's later phase of writing, for which she is most known for, which is the Holocaust writing, but exile also figures as a significant theme in this novel.

In analyzing the two 'Toronto novels' and 'Rijeka novel' together, I aim to show that an overarching interest of the novels and of the author herself, is not only (and not 'simply') with fascism, nor is it only with exile, but with the politics of belonging and non-belonging, with the confines of monoculture and its fundamental limiting effects. In other words, I suggest that (non)belonging is the underlying issue Drndić deals with, problematizes, responds to – from the non-belonging of migrants and refugees in Canada and the US to the non-belonging of numerous groups of people under nationalist and fascist regimes. Drndić's representation of historical continuities and repetitions of nationalist and fascist practices is built on her recognition that there is an important continuity and similarity between designating certain groups of people as unwelcome, excluding them from the community and, on the other hand, attempting to eradicate them. Further, I argue that through the concept of belonging it is possible to look into all of Drndić's work as a unified whole, to recognize fundamental thematic interrelatedness of her representations of exile experience and different migrations and her thematizations of Holocaust. This is, of course, not to say that Holocaust and fascism are of secondary interest in these novels, nor that *Canzone di Guerra*, same as "Dying in Toronto," is not an exile novel, but it does emphasize the specificity of approach that Drndić has to these topics. This thesis should therefore

Finally, all the citations of the novels in this thesis, as well as of the articles which are published in Serbian/Croatian, will be given in my translation. On account of space, the cited text will not be given in the original, too.

help uncover and describe this specificity. At the same time, recognizing the concept of (non)belonging as essential for these novels allows for a recognition of the way they are politically engaged with their contemporary context marked by the trauma of Yugoslav wars, post-socialist social transition and consistent ethnonationalism in the successor states. Yugoslav wars were, as Stef Jansen puts it, "precisely (…) about the notion of home (…) about the right to a home in the name of different 'we's'."[2]

The expected contribution of my reading of Drndić's work is three-fold. Firstly, considering Daša Drndić to be one of the most important Croatian and post-Yugoslav writers, it aims to be a tribute to a better understanding of her work, focusing in my interpretations on specific problems of exile and non-belonging. Secondly, taking into account her anti-nationalism and regional perspective in her writings, I hope that this interpretation will contribute to a possible history of post-Yugoslav literature and, more specifically, to the history of women's literature in the region of the former Yugoslavia. In this way I also hope to contribute to current debates on transnational literature speaking from post-Yugoslav perspective. Finally, using her work as a case study, I hope to engage in a discussion on exile, (non)belonging and related issues such as cosmopolitanism and language politics. In other words, I hope to position Daša Drndić in the post-Yugoslav literary field as an important writer whose novels bring valuable memories of post-war exile, and an example of anti-nationalist (women's) writing that still resonates very strongly with the contemporary political and social realities of former Yugoslav states. I also intend to show that her writings subvert the concepts of belonging to national literary canons as promoted by new nation-states in former Yugoslav region, calling instead for a broader framework of transnational

[2] Stef Jansen, "Homeless at home: narrations of post-Yugoslav identities," in *Migrants of Identity: perceptions of "home" in a world of movement,* edited by Nigel Rapport and Andrew Dawson (Oxford: Berg., 1998), 85, 86.

literature. The third objective is to go into a more interdisciplinary direction, engaging Drndić's literary narratives with some of the most influential analytical essays on (non-literary) narratives of exile.

These three main objectives correspond to the structure of my thesis: after introducing the author and outlining my theoretical framework in the first chapter, in the second chapter I will analyze the three novels as cases of border writing, "writing outside the nation," as world novels and, finally, as cosmopolitan literature, thus situating Daša Drndić and her post-Yugoslav exile narratives within the framework of transnational literature. At the same time, I will also examine how well this framework functions for other writings coming from the post-Yugoslav literary field. In the third chapter I will analyze the novels relying on Sara Ahmed's critical insights on the concepts of home and (non)belonging and on Snježana Kordić's analysis of language politics, which are questions of importance for the transnational turn, but also for the theories on exile and migration in general. In that way, the third chapter will take further the analysis commenced in the previous chapter, while at the same time going into a more interdisciplinary direction. Again, the focus will not be solely on the interpretation of the novels, but also on the 'interpretation' of the theory – on examining the critical essays on exile from the perspective of Drndić's writing. Finally, in the conclusion I will iterate my questions and summarize the main points from the thesis. The conclusion will also point out directions for further research.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

This chapter is split in two segments. In the first one I will sketch a short biography of Daša Drndić, focusing on her literary career. This will help situate the three novels to be discussed in this thesis in the broader picture of Drndić's oeuvre, ending with an explanation of my choice of the novels. In the second, much longer segment, I will delineate some of the frameworks and concepts I will be using to analyze and engage with the writings of Daša Drndić.

1.1 Introducing Daša Drndić

Daša Drndić (1946 – 2018) was born in Zagreb, Croatia, in a revolutionary, partisan[3] family; in 1953 her family moved to Belgrade, Serbia, where she lived until 1992. During that time Drndić studied English language and literature at the University of Belgrade, and dramaturgy at the University of South Illinois. She worked as a publishing house editor and an editor-playwright at Radio Belgrade, and was known both as a writer of two novels and an author of numerous radio dramas. In 1982, she got a daughter; motherhood in Daša Drndić's work is a topic for another study, but here it becomes relevant from the gendered and feminist perspective, since both "Dying in Toronto" and *Canzone di Guerra* are (quasi)autobiographical narratives whose narrators are, like the author herself, experiencing exile as single mothers.

With the break-up of Yugoslavia, as an outspoken antinationalist and an opponent of the Serbian regime, Drndić came under strong political attacks (later to be described more in detail in her novels), and decided to move to Rijeka, where as a newcomer from Serbia, she encountered another form of nationalist hostility. In response, Drndić went with her daughter to Canada as one of many Yugoslav refugees, but stayed there only a couple of years, before returning finally to

[3] Yugoslav partisans were the Communist-led resistance during the WWII in Yugoslavia.

Rijeka, where she stayed for the rest of her life to become one of the most important Croatian and post-Yugoslav writers. Her experience of exile to Canada marks the second beginning of her writing career – of eleven novels that she published altogether, nine were written in this later period, starting with the "Dying in Toronto" (1997). The next eight novels are, in chronological order: *Canzone di Guerra* (1998), *Totenwande/Zidovi smrti* (2000), *Doppelgänger* (2002), *Leica format* (2003), *Sonnenschein: dokumentarni roman* (2007), *April u Berlinu* (2009), *Belladonna* (2012) and *EEG* (2016). *Sonnenschein*, translated as *Trieste* in English, is her most famous novel, both locally/regionally and internationally,[4] and it is in some ways representative of her second writing period – characterized by collage structure made up of various documents, photographs, historical and fictional accounts, thematizing Holocaust and the phenomenon of bystanders, along with whole communities' and countries' refusal to deal with fascist crimes and their perpetrators. Marking this period of her writing as distinctive from her previous literary career is supported not only by the fact from her biography (exile from both Belgrade and Rijeka), but also by the fact that she wrote exclusively novels, thematically preoccupied with the history of fascism, particularly its reappearance during the Yugoslav wars.

Before the break-up of Yugoslavia, while living in Belgrade, Drndić was best known for her work on radio dramas. After the war, during her exile in Canada in the 1990s, she returned to prose writing, actively and consistently publishing novels until her death in 2018. She gained regional recognition and literary fame in the 2000s, with the publication of her novels

[4] Amanda Hopkinson, "Daša Drndić Obituary," *The Guardian*, June 13, 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/jun/13/Daša-drndic-obituary; Craig Seligman, "In the Grip of Madness," *The New York Times*, January 31, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/02/books/review/trieste-by-Daša-drndic.html.

Doppelgänger and *Leica format* in both Zagreb and Belgrade.[5] Her widespread international recognition has been steadily growing only since the 2010s, starting with the translation of *Sonnenschein/Trieste* into English in 2012.[6] The translations of *Leica format*, *Belladonna*, *Doppelgänger* and *EEG* followed, receiving critical acclaim in the most central newspapers and magazines of the Anglo-American literary and cultural field.[7] However, her fiction altogether has received wider critical attention mostly in the region (which is why the literature on Drndić in my thesis is largely from this area). Having obtained international recognition only relatively recently, her novels have still not been extensively researched and evaluated outside the region of former Yugoslavia, particularly on an academic level.[8]

Partly because Drndić's international recognition came with the publication of her Holocaust novels and partly because it came fifteen years after the publications of "Dying in Toronto" and *Canzone di Guerra*, the two exile novels this thesis focuses on have largely been

[5] *Doppelgänger* was first published in Belgrade in 2002 (by *Samizdat B92*, today *Fabrika knjiga*), and then in Zagreb in 2005 (by *Faust Vrančić*). *Leica format* was published in both cities the same year, 2003 (in Zagreb by *Meandar*, in Belgrade again by *Samizdat B92*).

[6] Translated by Ellen Elias-Bursać, published by MacLehose Press/Harcourt, in UK and the United States.

[7] The following articles and essays, by no means a complete list of texts written on Daša Drndić, are meant to illustrate the recognition she received in the recent years:
Merve Emre, "'Dismembered, Relocated, Rearranged,' " *The New York Review of Books*, June 6, 2019, https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2019/06/06/Daša-drndic-dismembered/;
Dustin Illingworth, "Daša Drndić's 'EEG' and the Joys of Pessimism," *The Paris Review*, May 22, 2019, https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2019/05/22/Daša-drndics-eeg-and-the-joys-of-pessimism/;
Claire Messud, "E.E.G. by Daša Drndić Review – Reclaiming Lives Lost to War," *The Guardian*, December 8, 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/dec/08/eeg-Daša-drndic-doppelganger-review;
Parul Sehgal, "In Gory, Majestic Fiction, a Hard Look at the Holocaust's Stubborn Silences," *The New York Times*, December 24, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/24/books/review-Daša-drndic-belladonna-eeg-doppelganger.html;
Lydia Perović, "When We Were Brothers: On the Writing of Daša Drndić," *Los Angeles Review of Books*, April 4, 2019, https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/when-we-were-brothers-on-the-writing-of-Daša-drndic/.

[8] Unlike the works of some other post-Yugoslav writers of her generation (or generation after her), who wrote on the similar topics of exile and displacement, such as Dubravka Ugrešić, Aeksandar Hemon, David Albahari, and others.

neglected (they have not even been translated into English). However, the primary reason for choosing these two novels is an assumption and an assessment that they represent specific and valuable cases of exile novels in post-Yugoslav literature, which can be relevant also in a wider context of transnational literature. Additionally, I believe that the analysis of these novels with an emphasis on the topics of displacement and belonging allows for a new and a productive reading of Drndić's Holocaust novels which generated more of critical attention, and for a better understanding of her novelistic writing in general. In order to show this connection, I am also analyzing *Leica format*, which could be categorized as both an exile and a Holocaust novel.

The direction of my analysis has been also informed by a suggestion made by Jasmina Lukić in the concluding page of her article[9] on *Sonnenschein/Trieste* and *Leica format*, that in several of her books Drndić aims to "denounce the logic behind monocultural discourses and practices" and that "in this context, she is returning to fascism as the ultimate example of exclusive, destructive monoculturalism."[10] Building up on this, I propose that complex issues of belonging serve as a multifold link between Drndić's novels, but also, at the level of separate narratives, as a link between thematic clusters of Holocaust and exile, between fascisms Drndić identifies and points to in different historical contexts, between past and present moment, between collective and individual/personal experiences.

1.2 Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

This thesis does not only aim to situate Daša Drndić's writing in the different theoretical frameworks of transnational literature, which are modeled on the writings from very different

[9] Jasmina Lukić, "The Politics of Memory in the Fiction of Daša Drndić," in *Memory. Identity. Culture* (volume 1), eds. Tatjana Kuharenoka, Irina Novikova, Ivars Orehovs (Latvijas Universitate: LU Akademiskais apgads, 2015), 160.
[10] Ibid.

context than the post-Yugoslav. It also intends to open up the given frameworks for the complexity that Drndić's writing, in my reading, brings. Similarly, I intend to go further from interpreting the novels through the use of various concepts. This is not to say that I find these goals insufficient, and they are indeed a relevant part of my research, but what is particularly of interest to me is engaging the three novels with some of the important theoretical writings on the experiences of exile and displacement and on the concepts of home and belonging. With the verb engage I want to suggest a bi-directional analysis: on the one hand, relying on theory to illuminate the novel, and on the other, relying on the novels to illuminate the theory. This approach is partly modeled after Azade Seyhan's comment that Homi Bhabha "instrumentalizes fictional texts to perform theoretical tasks" without "always engage(ing) them in a genuine dialogue."[11]

Sharing Seyhan's understanding of fictional texts as carrying "the capital of cultural nuance" and the ability to represent experience in a different way than theory,[12] instead of instrumentalizing the three novels to perform theoretical tasks, I intend to 'stay true' to the genre of the novel and examine the given narratives of exile/displacement, without separating their content from their literary narrative form. Therefore, the first cluster of concepts through which I will read the novels are concepts of genre, particularly "border writing" by Emily D. Hicks and "writing outside the nation" by Azade Seyhan, as well as the world novel, as defined by Debjani Ganguly. Along with this, it is useful to situate Drndić's writing in the context of post-Yugoslav literature.

Post-Yugoslav literature, although not entirely an uncontested concept, will be used in this thesis as a relevant cultural and literary framework in the post-Yugoslav space, in the way in which

[11] Azade Seyhan, *Writing Outside the Nation* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 5.
[12] Ibid.

it is defined and used by Jasmina Lukić, Boris Postnikov and Stijn Vervaet, among others. It is a transnational literature that emerges between ex-Yugoslav literary fields and spaces of exile or migration, that is marked by the need of its writers to reengage with the former socialist state and investigate its relevance for the contemporaneity.[13] Vervaet emphasizes the fundamental importance of displacement and trauma (or in the words of Mads Rosendahl Thomsen that Vervaet refers to: literature of migration and of Holocaust) as primary topics ("tropes") which define contemporary transnational literature, post-Yugoslav one included.[14] Boris Postnikov, in an article which posits Holocaust as one of the topics which allows for recognizing Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav literature as specific corpuses of texts, is another researcher who sees post-Yugoslav literature as most notably marked by exile and (anti)war writing, as well as by "narrativizations of the processes of post-socialist social transition."[15] As will become apparent during the following chapters, all of the above can be applied to Daša Drndić's writing, including the three novels discussed here (Postnikov, actually, does analyze two novels of Drndić, as well as of David Albahari, in the quoted article).

Authors such as Renata Jambrešić Kirin and Miranda Levanat-Peričić also established the connection between post-Yugoslav literature and exile writing. Miranda Levanat-Peričić analyzes the chronotope of post-Yugoslav exile narration through the examples of five novels written respectively by Dubravka Ugrešić, Goran Vojnović and Aleksandar Hemon. Post-Yugoslav exile narratives, unsurprisingly, have a specific chronotope, time-space configuration, mostly built

[13] Jasmina Lukić, "Gender and Migration in Post-Yugoslav Literature as Transnational Literature," in *Schwimmen gegen den Strom? Diskurse weiblicher Autorschaft im postjugoslawischen Kontext*, edited by Angela Richter, Tijana Matijević, Eva Kowollik (Münster et al.: LIT-Verlag, 2018), 331, 332.

[14] Stijn Vervaet, "Ugrešić, Hemon i paradoksi književnog kosmopolitizma: ili kako otvoriti postjugoslavenske književnosti ka svijetu u eri globalizacije," *NOVI IZRAZ, časopis za književnu i umjetničku kritiku* 65-66 (2016): 6.

[15] Boris Postnikov, "Između fikcije i svjedočanstva: Kiš, Albahari, Drndić," *Kultura* 156 (2017): 50.

along the lines of present/foreign Western country/host land – past/former Yugoslavia/homeland.[16] I will apply Miranda Levanat-Peričić's analysis of chronotope in post-Yugoslav exile literature on the narrative of *Leica format*, a novel not easily characterized as an exile novel. I also find it noteworthy referring to the article's delineation of post-Yugoslav exile narratives, because it analyzes Hemon's narratives of multiple exile positions of different social groups in different time planes, related to Holocaust as "the past perfect of the contemporary massacres," as well as to unwanted immigration.[17] Without implying that any intention of omitting Daša Drndić's writing existed on the part of the author, I believe it would be a much more complete picture of post-Yugoslav literary history if the significance of her exile narratives had been recognized as well.

Jasmina Lukić and Renata Jambrešić Kirin both write short sketches of possible literary histories in the post-Yugoslav fields, including Daša Drndić's writing in the framework, but even more importantly, including the category of gender in their analysis. Renata Jambrešić Kirin places the two novels discussed in this thesis, "Dying in Toronto" and *Canzone di Guerra* (along with *Totenwande*, which will not be analyzed here), inside an analysis of Croatian women's autobiographical exile writing in the 1990s.[18] What the texts inside this corpus have in common is "genre hybridity, essayism, autobiographical confessional tone, political commentary and numerous quotations from the literary and testimonial material."[19] For the most part, the author discusses Dubravka Ugrešić's writing, but her analytical framework provides an important ground for analyzing Daša Drndić's writing in more depth, particularly through the prism of gender.

[16] Miranda Levanat-Peričić, "The Chronotope of Exile in the Post-Yugoslav Novel and the Boundaries of Imaginary Homelands," *Colloquia Humanistica* 7 (2018): 83 – 97.
[17] Ibid., 89.
[18] Renata Jambrešić Kirin, "Egzil i hrvatska ženska autobiografska književnost 90-ih," *Reč* 61/7 (2001): 175-197.
[19] Ibid., 183. All translations from the BCMS langauges in this thesis are mine, if not otherwise noted.

In the sketch of history of women's writing in the field of post-Yugoslav literature, defined as a transnational literature that is fundamentally marked by exile/diaspora writing and a relation to the former Yugoslav state, Lukić positions Drndić as an inner emigrant who subverts newly founded national and cultural divides through the play with language and its variants, particularly Serbian and Croatian ones.[20] In other words, Lukić posits her writing in the framework of "minor transnationalism," relying on the concept introduced by Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih, and relating to "cultural transversalism," which both suggest subversion of stable and essentializing concepts of nationhood and belonging, from the inside.[21] Where I follow Lukić's direction the most is not with the concept of minor transnationalism, although it will be indirectly close to my conceptual framework, but with her idea that post-Yugoslav literature functions well as a model of transnational literature as delineated by Azade Seyhan.[22]

Azade Seyhan defines transnational literature written by displaced people as "writing that operates outside the national canon, addresses issues facing deterritorialized cultures, and speaks for those in what I call 'paranational' communities and alliances."[23] The concept of paranational communitites, according to Lukić, works very well for the post-Yugoslav context, because instead of enforcing the opposition of inside-outside, it blurs this binary and indicates instability of borders, both geographical and symbolic ones. Furthermore, it problematizes national canons or belonging to any one specific national literature (of the successor states of former Yugoslavia).[24]

[20] Jasmina Lukić, "Gender and Migration in Post-Yugoslav Literature as Transnational Literature," in *Schwimmen gegen den Strom? Diskurse weiblicher Autorschaft im postjugoslawischen Kontext*, edited by Angela Richter, Tijana Matijević, Eva Kowollik (Münster et al.: LIT-Verlag, 2018), 338.
[21] Ibid., 289.
[22] Ibid., 284.
[23] Azade Seyhan, *Writing Outside the Nation* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 10.
[24] Jasmina Lukić, "Gender and Migration in Post-Yugoslav Literature as Transnational Literature," in *Schwimmen gegen den Strom? Diskurse weiblicher Autorschaft im postjugoslawischen Kontext*, edited by Angela Richter, Tijana Matijević, Eva Kowollik (Münster et al.: LIT-Verlag, 2018), 335.

From the interest in the way Drndić's narratives negotiate (non)belonging, the question of how the borders of ethnic and national communities figure in these narratives is of great importance, and Seyhan provides tools for looking into this. Her definition of paranational communities as "communities that exist within national borders or alongside the citizens of the host country but remain culturally or linguistically distanced from them and, in some instances, are estranged from both the home and the host culture"[25] is what works well not only for the experience of exile and post-Yugoslav diaspora in Canada, but also for the position Drndić's narrators hold when in Croatia (particularly in the 'Rijeka novel', *Leica format*).

In relation to this, it is interesting to see how the issue of language, and the way Seyhan uses it in her framework, figures in the post-Yugoslav novels I discuss. Relying on the concept of minor transnationalism, Lukić positioned Drndić as a minor writer in post-Yugoslav literature, referring to her play with versions of the formerly known Serbo-Croatian.[26] It is this play that makes Drndić's writing both "writing outside the nation" and, at the same time, suggests an additional layer that is not present in Seyhan's theory. Namely, Drndić's novels are not exactly "conceived in and operative between two or more languages," like Seyhan's examples, but between two or more dialects,[27] while at the same time subverting and ridiculing the political decisions of dominant institutions that Serbian and Croatian are different languages.

Snježana Kordić, a Croatian linguist, argues that Serbian and Croatian, as well as Bosnian and Montenegrin, contrary to the new language politics employed for the work of new nationhood

[25] Azade Seyhan, *Writing Outside the Nation* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 10
[26] In my thesis I will also use the abbreviation BCMS, standing for Bosnian-Croatian-Montenegrin-Serbian, which is originally written bhcs (bosanski-hrvatski-crnogorski-srpski), since this is a contemporary way of referring to the languages spoken in the four countries, underlined by an understanding of this language as a common, polycentric one.
[27] Azade Seyhan, *Writing Outside the Nation* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 8.

constructions, are different variants of the same language, which is a polycentric standard language. By definition, standard language is supra-regional and based on one dialect (in the case of Serbo-Croatian – Shtokavian) spreading over a wider territory than dialects.[28] Therefore, the differences between Croatian and Serbian standard versions are significantly smaller than those between three different dialects (Chokavian, Kajkavian and Shtokavian) present inside Croatia itself. [29] This problematic of the language politics in Croatia and Serbia is a very direct context of Daša Drndić's writing – indeed, it is a case of theoretical-political issues with which Drndić herself engages. For that reason, it will be discussed in more depth in the third chapter of the thesis.

Returning to Seyhan's framework, it is also noteworthy that Drndić goes somewhat further than Seyhan's examples, in which accents indicate "national, ethnic, geographical, and historical origins."[30] Her novels use accents and dialects to do the opposite, to problematize the newly defined origins in two successor states. Of course, the difference in the way Seyhan's examples and Drndić's novels operate with language has something to do with the fact that Seyhan discusses literature of Turkish immigrants in Germany and Chicano literature in the US, where the host land and homeland of migrant subjects have not ever been a part of the same country or shared a language. For a similar reason – because they are written in one language (even if in its different variants), for the reading public which understands this language, i.e. the one in the (former) homeland, not Canada, Drndić's novels could not be named ethnic writing. This is particularly true when considering the fact that they problematize any kind of ethnically bound identification, even when rigorously critical of Canada's unwelcoming relation to former Yugoslavs.

[28] Snježana Kordić, *Jezik i nacionalizam* (Zagreb: Durieux, 2010), 69 – 76.
[29] Ibid., 76.
[30] Azade Seyhan, *Writing Outside the Nation* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 9.

In a similar vein as Azade Seyhan, Emily D. Hicks formulates "border writing" as a kind of world literature that transgresses national frameworks, as a way to think about the culture without the nation, as Neil Larsen puts it in the foreword. Border writing, in short, "undermines the distinction between original and alien culture." it entails "multiplicity of languages within any single language" and "multidimensional perception," seeing from both sides of the border.[31] It "emphasizes the differences in reference codes between two or more cultures", which allows the reader to "cross over into another set of referential codes," making it subversive against the hegemony of powerful countries (like the US, in Hicks' example) in the production of self-images and images of the Other.[32] Finally, border writing "offers a new form of knowledge" which is not bound by the Western humanist teleological, progressivist thinking.[33] Similarly as with Seyhan's, I believe Hicks' framework provides a solid foundation for opening Drndić's texts, uncovering their subversive intentionality against "monocultural discourses and practices,"[34] and looking into the way the novels 'work on' the borders between Serbia and Croatia. I apply this theory to Daša Drndić's three novels, focusing on the way in which they, as border writing, operate in more than one culture; but contrary to Emily Hicks' examples and conceptual framework, these novels do it in one polycentric language, playing with institutional divisions imposed upon it and with its different variants. I also use the concept to show how these novels subvert predominance of any single perspective and a perspective based upon a "Western cultural bias," inviting readers to look from both (or even multiple) sides of the border in the process of multidimensional perception. In

[31] Emily D. Hicks, *Border Writing: the Multidimensional Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), xxiii.
[32] Ibid., xxv, xxvi, xxvii.
[33] Ibid., xxxi.
[34] Jasmina Lukić, "The Politics of Memory in the Fiction of Daša Drndić," in *Memory. Identity. Culture* (volume 1), edited by Tatjana Kuharenoka, Irina Novikova, Ivars Orehovs (Latvijas Universitate: LU Akademiskais apgads, 2015), 160.

the end, I point out why that is a relevant aspect of Drndić's writing and post-Yugoslav cultural field.

Another concept which opens up new layers of meaning in Drndić's writing and situates it in another transnational or global context is the world novel. This genre is defined by Debjani Ganguly in her study of the contemporary novel, *This Thing Called the World*.[35] It is similar to both border writing and "writing outside the nation" in that it denotes literary worlds which transgress national borders and equations between a nation-state and a culture. It is specific in that its chronotope is the world – the world seen not as a product of capital flows and accumulation, but as "a product of *human beings*."[36] Ganguly's definition of the world as a chronotope opens up an understanding of the ways Drndić's texts represent the history of Toronto and of Rijeka, as well as history around Canada's borders, from the perspective of labor migrations and experiences of refugees and various other migrant groups – essentially, from the perspective of human beings. This is then related to Drndić's interest in historical micro-narratives and history from below, so the world as chronotope in her novels is indeed a configuration not only of multiple spaces, but of multiple time frames, as well.

Ganguly's main argument is that this new type of novel as a global literary form emerges after the historical disruption of 1989:

> "at the conjuncture of three critical phenomena: the geopolitics of war and violence since the end of the cold war; hyperconnectivity through advances in information technology; and the emergence of a new humanitarian sensibility in a context where

[35] Debjani Ganguly, *This Thing Called the World. The Contemporary Novel as Global Form* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016).
[36] Ibid., 24.

suffering has a presence in everyday life through the immediacy of digital images."[37]

The three points are in many ways mutually constitutive and they are also relevant for Drndić's writing. However, the issue of new humanitarian sensibility which emerges in response to this historical crisis is the most poignant issue to which Drndić's novels try to respond, specifically in relation to various forced migrations. I will focus on examining this response, which will also help me build up an argument that Daša Drndić's novels are world novels and that, as Ganguly's examples, they show the "ability to cut through this miasma of received political truths."[38]

In the final segment of the second chapter, I will use the definition of "vernacular cosmopolitanism" by Sneja Gunew in order to examine if and how Drndić's narratives engage with the notion of "being at home in the world."

Having situated the three novels in the framework of transnational literature and having worked through their structural complexity and mapped out most of their fundamental points, I will move on in the third chapter to the discussion of concepts I identified as relevant for both the novels and the topic of exile more generally. The given concepts figure prominently in the discussed frameworks of transnational literature, so they will be discussed already in the second chapter. I further focus on them in the third chapter either because the novels themselves directly engage with them (in the case of language), or these concepts prove to be crucial for my interpretation of the given narratives (home and non-belonging). Focusing on these concepts allows me to analyze the novels more deeply, while at the same time the novels allow me to analyze

[37] Ibid., 1.
[38] Ibid., 26.

the concepts, or, in other words, to approach them from a new angle. The concept of (non)belonging is of primary relevance, it figures throughout my thesis as a central one, and in many ways offers a connective point between the concepts singled out throughout the thesis.

In the first segment of the third chapter, I will reflect on Drndić's narratives of exile from the perspective of Sara Ahmed's critical analysis of widespread romanticizing tendencies in the conceptualizations of exile and migration and in the representation of non-belonging or, in her terms, "estrangement." In her article "Home and away. Narratives of migration and estrangement," Ahmed is also problematizing the conceptions of home and belonging that romanticizing narratives of exile usually incorporate or imply. While this segment will be structured primarily around Sara Ahmed's insights, I will also refer to some of the canonical texts in this field, such as "Reflections on Exile" by Edward Said, and Madan Sarup's "Home and Identity."

The second segment of the third chapter will return to the question of language politics in the successor states of former Yugoslavia, particularly in Croatia. Relying on Snježana Kordić's analysis of Croatian language politics, I will delineate the context in and against which Drndić wrote. Apart from contextualizing the novels, this segment will use Kordić's lucid analysis of the significance language had in the constructions of new nation-states and national identities in the region of former Yugoslavia. Finally, I will return to the discussion of language from the previous chapter, in relation to border writing and "writing outside the nation," deepening the already given interpretation. Through the mentioned steps of this segment I will indicate the relevance of language for the politics of (non-)belonging in Daša Drndić's novels.

Chapter 2: Narratives of Exile

In this chapter, I will situate the three novels by Daša Drndić in four different frameworks of transnational literature. In the first segment, I will outline the understanding of different types of migration and define Daša Drndić's (and her narrators') experience of displacement as exile, which is a definition I will rely on throughout the thesis. Further, I will discuss the framework of post-Yugoslav literature, define Daša Drndić as a post-Yugoslav author, and point out the importance of the topics of exile and displacement for the post-Yugoslav space, as well as the importance of Daša Drndić's writing on these topics. In the second segment, I will examine the three novels as "border writing," as defined by Emily D. Hicks, establishing them as this genre, while also expanding the given framework by introducing a specific case of writing from the literary context completely new to the corpus of texts Hicks focuses on. The next segment relies on the concept of "writing outside the nation" by Azade Seyhan, which, similarly to Hicks' border writing, provides the tools and insights for analyzing the texts which deconstruct essentialist identification of nation, geography, culture, ethnicity and language. Again, the specificity of post-Yugoslav context and Drndić's post-Yugoslav writing to the ones Seyhan's analysis is formulated on functions in a way that confirms the given conceptual frame, broadens it and opens it up for more complexity. In the third segment of this chapter, I will posit the novels by Drndić as world novels, a genre defined by Debjani Ganguly, with a focus on the topic of humanitarianism. Further, I will connect the issue of witnessing, which is central to Ganguly's understanding of world novels, to the topic of memory wars that figures prominently throughout Drndić's writing.

2.1 Post-Yugoslav Exile Literature

2.1.1. Typology of Exile

In the first chapter of the compendium of essays titled *The Exile and Return of Writers from East-Central Europe*, John Neubauer discusses the concept of exile and differentiates the types of migratory subjects closely related to and generally associated with exile: the émigrés and the expatriates. Neubauer slightly alters the standard definition of exile, i.e. the forced displacement and expulsion from home/native country. He defines exiles of the modern age as fleeing "*by their own volition* (…) to escape totalitarianism, minority suppression, and racial persecution," in order to account for the East-Central European exile experiences throughout the 20th century.[39] The émigrés and the expatriates are, in Neubauer's understanding, similarly as in Edward Said's,[40] those who have not been banished from the country. The expatriates are those for whom the return is still possible and who "retain their original nation-state rights."[41] The émigrés are not sharply distinguished (nor distinguishable) from exiles. However, if they are not "under imminent threat" in their home country, "if they leave legally, and do not burn the bridges behind themselves, they are, strictly speaking, no exiles."[42] Contrary to exile, which is a very old form of banishment/forced migration, refugees "are a creation of the twentieth-century state."[43]

[39] John Neubauer, "Exile: Home of the Twentieth Century," in *The Exile and Return of Writers from East-Central Europe: a Compendium*, edited by John Neubauer and Borbála Zsuzsanna Török (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 8

[40] Edward Said, "Reflections on Exile," in *REFLECTIONS ON EXILE and Other Essays* (London: Granta Books, 2013), chapter 17, online eBook.

[41] John Neubauer, "Exile: Home of the Twentieth Century," in *The Exile and Return of Writers from East-Central Europe: a Compendium*, edited by John Neubauer and Borbála Zsuzsanna Török (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 8

[42] Ibid., 9.

[43] Edward Said, "Reflections on Exile," in *REFLECTIONS ON EXILE and Other Essays* (London: Granta Books, 2013), chapter 17, online eBook.

The 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees,[44] as Neubauer explains, defines the refugee's legal status in the host nation state based on the refugee's past status in the home country.[45] Discussing exile writing, Dubravka Ugrešić notices that exile writers avoid writing about the bureaucratic side of exilic experience, since the only or the most profitable narratives on exile are romantic/romanticizing ones.[46] At the beginning of the next chapter, I will examine this issue in relation to Drndić's novels in more detail.

Drndić's exile narratives deal with multiple forms of displacement, and are not only focused on the autobiographical, individual experience. Even though the exile experience of the narrator in both "Dying in Toronto" and *Canzone di Guerra* is in the focus, it simultaneously serves as a ground from which the narrator tells the migration stories of various other individuals, but also of wider groups of people: of former Yugoslavs running away from the Yugoslav wars (refugees); of the previous, post-WWII generation migrating from socialist Yugoslavia (political emigration); of Chinese people who built the Canadian railways (labor migrations); of failed attempts of Jewish people and successful attempts of Nazi criminals to find refuge in Canada during/after the Holocaust, and many others. *Leica format* similarly thematizes not only the narrator's displaced position inside Rijeka, but historical mass movements of people *to* and

[44] "[A person who] owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it." Quoted from: John Neubauer, "Exile: Home of the Twentieth Century," in *The Exile and Return of Writers from East-Central Europe: a Compendium*, edited by John Neubauer and Borbála Zsuzsanna Török (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 11

[45] Ibid.

[46] Dubravka Ugrešić, "Pisati u egzilu," *Reč* 60.6 (2000): 98.

through Rijeka, as well, for example labor migrations from Eastern and Southeastern Europe to Northern America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Mass migrations, according to Neubauer, should serve as a background on which to consider the experiences of exiles, émigrés and expatriates, who usually "designate individuals or small groups," carrying "a certain elitist connotation."[47] Precisely because Drndić's narrators' personal exile stories are situated not only in an immediate context (of mass migrations of former Yugoslavs), but also historically in contexts of various other migrations which left their mark upon the host city and/or the host country, it would be misleading to judge Drndić's narratives or narrative perspectives as elitist, even if her narrators are educated (former) middle-class intellectuals who went into 'voluntary exile'.

When it comes to the exile status or position of Drndić's narrators (and, indeed, Drndić herself), I describe it as exile, following the author's/narrator's own designation of it as "partly voluntary banishment,"[48] even though this understanding is not straightforwardly supported by Neubauer's definition. Drndić left the country legally, and she was free to go back; but regarding the "original nation-state rights," it is difficult to ascertain whether she retained them, since her original country no longer existed, even though she did have citizenship rights of new Croatia. This would make her either an émigré or an expatriate, yet both of these terms would not account for the involuntary aspect of her migration. Further, even though the novels recount the exile from Serbia to a lesser degree than the one from Rijeka, it would be difficult to claim Drndić was free to return to Belgrade during the 1990s, one of the reasons being that she did not even have

[47] John Neubauer, "Exile: Home of the Twentieth Century," in *The Exile and Return of Writers from East-Central Europe: a Compendium*, edited by John Neubauer and Borbála Zsuzsanna Török (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 10.
[48] Daša Drndić, *Umiranje u Torontu* (Kikinda: Partizanska knjiga, 2018), 43.

citizenship rights of the new Serbian state.[49] Drndić, same as her narrators, went into exile because she did experience "minority suppression" and, in the case of exile from Belgrade, also ethnic (instead of racial in Neubauer's definition) persecution. This is particularly important to emphasize, since the exile status of intellectuals/dissidents from communist states was rarely questioned in the Western media's liberal discourse, while the phenomena of exile from a post-communist country has been difficult to accept. In the already mentioned essay, Dubravka Ugrešić recognizes this problem with her usual irony, when she recounts some of her colleagues' accusations that her exile is 'not real' and that claiming it only compromises honorable tradition of east European exile.[50] Parallelly, the same accusations of fake exile were not uncommon in Croatia, as well – as David Williams argues:

> "the Croatian cultural milieu's refusal to acknowledge its exiles reflects the fact that such an acknowledgement would amount to a concession that in the immediate post-independence years, newly 'democratic' Croatia had far more in common with the hard-line communist regimes of eastern Europe than it would ever care to admit. Democracies, after all, rarely produce dissidents, let alone exiles."[51]

It is also important to emphasize the legitimacy of understanding an experience such as Drndić's as exile because it goes against an essentialized understanding of home, home-country and belonging. In the nationalist discourses that have dominated former Yugoslav republics' public

[49] This is not explicitly stated anywhere in the novels, but it is what could be assumed from some other related information, such as the narrator's father losing his pension, because he worked and lived in Belgrade most of his life, and when the Yugoslav Federation dissolved into separate nation-states, it took a long time for the new countries to regulate such cases. Also, it is safe to assume Drndić did not even ask for the citizenship of new Serbia, considering that she was (self)exiled in the middle of the Yugoslav wars.
[50] Dubravka Ugrešić, "Pisati u egzilu," *Reč* 60.6 (2000): 101, 102.
[51] David Williams, *Writing Postcommunism: Towards a Literature of the East European Ruins* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 64.

spheres since the wars in the 1990s, a person's belonging to a community is defined by his or her ethnic identity, which is defined by 'blood' and 'genes'. In this framework, Daša Drndić belonged in Croatia, which is why her migration from Belgrade to Rijeka would not qualify as exile. Her migration to Canada also further demonstrates the non-belonging of a Croatian in Croatia. The newly established democracies of Yugoslavia's successor states were, especially in the immediate post-war years, self-representing as safe havens (motherlands) for the specific ethnic group. In the new Croatia, the understanding of democracy was tightly connected to anti-communism, as well. Drndić's experience, of running away *from* Croatia in the post-war years, after fleeing from Serbia during the war *to* Croatia, directly disturbs this self-representation.[52]

In the same vein, her exile is equally effectively subversive against patriarchal nationalist discourse which legitimizes war as a struggle for homeland. Homeland was in the Yugoslav wars strongly designated as a 'motherland', home space whose protection in the war is presented as fundamentally a protection of women in the ethnic community. Along the same line, women's role in this home space and in the new nationhood construction was defined through the 'feminine' qualities of self-sacrifice and endurance. A woman leaving the space which is represented as a space fought for her to participate in the new nationhood construction is an act problematizing the purpose and the legitimacy of the "struggle for the 'homeland cause'."[53] In the following part of this segment I will examine the way Drndić's exile narratives, as anti-war women's writing, disturb patriarchal values of the nationalist discourse in the post-conflict Croatia.

[52] Paradoxically, even though ethnic identity is defined primarily by 'biological facts', and only then by culture or language, speaking the language in the Serbian accent and using the Serbian-sounding or Turkish-sounding words is enough to make a person's belonging problematic in this same ethno-nationalist discourse. The narrators of all three novels discussed here have lived through such a paradoxical situation, and many others have been (self)exiled for the same reason. This will be discussed further in the thesis.

[53] Renata Jambrešić Kirin, "Egzil i hrvatska ženska autobiografska književnost 90-ih," *Reč* 61/7 (2001): 189.

2.1.2 Post-Yugoslav Exile Literature

In this section I will situate Daša Drndić's writing, particularly her exile writing, in the post-Yugoslav literary field and in the history of post-Yugoslav women's writing as outlined by Jasmina Lukić and Renata Jambrešić-Kirin. I will also argue that the novel *Leica format* is an exile novel and point out its relevance for the post-Yugoslav literature.

Jasmina Lukić defines post-Yugoslav literature as a suitable and necessary frame for situating and analyzing a significant corpus of texts produced in the contemporary states that emerged after the break-up of Yugoslavia.[54] These are the texts emerging in the post-Yugoslav and spaces of exile, engaging with the common Yugoslav heritage and with the violent conflicts that marked the dissolution of the former country, and positing a certain continuity between the Yugoslav past and the post-Yugoslav present.[55] As Lukić notes, the term post-Yugoslav itself points to the fact that the ties between the newly formed nation-states did not break after the break-up of Yugoslavia, in spite of aggressive nationalist attempts at drawing strong cultural borders.[56] Large parts of this corpus of texts termed post-Yugoslav literature belongs to exile or diaspora writing. In addition, the Holocaust has also been recognized as one of the primary topics of post-Yugoslav literature.[57] Drndić's writing, therefore, is easy to recognize as a case of post-Yugoslav

[54] Jasmina Lukić, "Gender and Migration in Post-Yugoslav Literature as Transnational Literature," in *Schwimmen gegen den Strom? Diskurse weiblicher Autorschaft im postjugoslawischen Kontext*, edited by Angela Richter, Tijana Matijević, Eva Kowollik (Münster et al.: LIT-Verlag, 2018), 320.
[55] Ibid., 331, 332.
[56] Ibid., 320.
[57] Stijn Vervaet, "Ugrešić, Hemon i paradoksi književnog kosmopolitizma: ili kako otvoriti postjugoslavenske književnosti ka svijetu u eri globalizacije," *NOVI IZRAZ, časopis za književnu i umjetničku kritiku* 65-66 (2016): 6. Boris Postnikov focuses primarily on Holocaust as a complex of motifs which allows for recognizing both the Yugoslav and the post-Yugoslav literary field. He delineates a long tradition of literary writing on this topic in the region of former Yugoslavia. Boris Postnikov, "Između fikcije i svjedočanstva: Kiš, Albahari, Drndić," *Kultura* 156 (2017): 48 – 61. The cited authors do not go into the reasons why the topic of Holocaust holds such a central place in the given literary fields, but it is useful to note here that WWII in Yugoslavia represents a fundamental moment in history for the peoples living in

writing – it is a writing in exile and on exile, it is also a writing on Holocaust and the institutional forgetting of fascist crimes, as well as on the post-conflict contemporaneity of post-Yugoslav spaces.

The novel *Leica format*, which has been recognized and approached primarily as a Holocaust novel,[58] embodies all of the above-mentioned aspects of post-Yugoslav writing. In this segment I will posit it as a novel of exile, which departs from the usual image of post-Yugoslav exile – from the Balkans to the West. Namely, *Leica format* is about the narrator who, leaving Belgrade for Rijeka in the midst of war, migrates to *her own* country, at least according to the new paradigm in the Yugoslav successor states, of homelands as ethnically defined spaces. In this paradigm, a Croatian woman belongs in Croatia and it seems impossible to be an exile in the only country where you supposedly belong. The narrator, however, did not grow up neither in the socialist republic of Croatia, nor in the new independent Croatia; instead, she grew up in the socialist republic of Serbia. What is more, her belonging to Croatia, as well as to Serbia, was self-understood with her belonging to Yugoslavia. It became questioned only with the disappearance of the supranational state and it will remain a contested issue, by both the nationalist community

the region, and it is particularly fundamental for the constitution of the nationhood – firstly, of the socialist Yugoslavia, and after its dissolution, of the successor states. After WWII, due to the win of the National Liberation Army in the war against the occupiers and fascists inside the country, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia became the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The National Liberation Struggle against the Holocaust and, in general, against attempts at eradicating any ethnic, national and religious group, was a foundational element in the constitution of socialist Yugoslavia. During the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s and the dissolution of Yugoslavia, new emerging nationalisms were to a great extent fixated upon WWII and the Holocaust as well – emphasizing and often falsely portraying the victimhood of a single ethnic group in order to legitimize the hatred and the wars against other ethnic groups in the region, as well as the nationalist aspirations for ethnically homogeneous nation.

[58] For example: Sabina Giergiel, "The Saving Narratives of Daša Drndić," *Studia Judaica* no. 1 (2018): 97–116; Jasmina Lukić, "The Politics of Memory in the Fiction of Daša Drndić," in *Memory. Identity. Culture* (volume 1), edited by Tatjana Kuharenoka, Irina Novikova, Ivars Orehovs (Latvijas Universitate: LU Akademiskais apgads, 2015), 153 – 160.

and the narrator herself. In order to avoid the implicit understanding of 'home' as an ethnically defined space and community, which the novel itself strongly problematizes, I believe the narrative of *Leica format* should be considered an exile narrative.

John Neubauer briefly mentions that the term '*internal* exile' is a suitable designation of the forced displacements of people from one member state of former Yugoslav Federation to another.[59] However, Drndić, as well as her narrator, moved to Rijeka at a time when Croatia had already been proclaimed an independent state, so strictly speaking, it was not a case of internal exile. On the other hand, '*inner* exile' or 'inner emigration' refers to the position of those intellectuals and authors who "are silenced, or they voluntarily fall silent" and do not publish any work in their home countries.[60] The term that describes Drndić's (and her narrator's) position in Croatia much better than internal emigrant is dissident – because instead of falling silent, she assumed "an oppositional public voice and activity."[61] Furthermore, her position in Serbia during the war was also that of a dissident – as the narrator briefly recounts in *Leica format*, her criticism of Serbian nationalist fervor has led to threatening acts and hateful insults against her, which was a critical factor for her decision to leave.[62]

Miranda Levanat-Peričić analyzes post-Yugoslav exile literature through the focus on chronotope, a space-time configuration in the literary narratives. Building her argument on the examples of the novels by Dubravka Ugrešić, Aleksandar Hemon and Goran Vojnović, she argues that the post-Yugoslav exile narration is marked by three specific "chronotopic motifs": "the motif

[59] John Neubauer, "Exile: Home of the Twentieth Century," in *The Exile and Return of Writers from East-Central Europe: a Compendium*, edited by John Neubauer and Borbála Zsuzsanna Török (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 19.
[60] Ibid., 18.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Daša Drndićć, *Leica format* (Beograd: Samizdat B92, 2003), 66.

of a home as a non-place or a place of absence (…) the motif of the other / 'mirror' country and the other / 'mirror' history" (…) and, finally, "the motif of return and travel."[63] Regarding the image of home in the exile narration, Levanat-Peričić relies on Rushdie's thought that the abandoned homeland is always only a mental projection, loosely related to the same place in the contemporary reality. For that reason, nostalgia becomes an extremely important aspect of exile narration. In *Leica format*, however, as in the two 'Toronto novels', a limited space is given to nostalgia. Instead of nostalgic reminiscences on the lost home – which is both Belgrade (where she lived) and Rijeka (where her roots are) of the period before the war and separation – the narrator nurtures sharp critical relation to all the new nationhood/home(land) constructions in the space of former Yugoslavia. This is one of the primary agendas of Drndić's exile narratives, as will be demonstrated throughout the thesis. As a result of these complex mappings of homeland(s) and host land(s) in *Leica format*, the chronotopic motif of return also functions in a specific way. Apart from the narrator's visit to Belgrade a decade after she left, when those in power had changed, the fundamental return in the novel is also the exile itself, the return to Croatia during the war. Furthermore, instead of it being a foreign country, as the United States in Hemon's novels or Canada in Drndic's 'Toronto' novels, the "mirror" country in *Leica format* is Croatia, the narrator's *new homeland*. It is both familiar, as a place where she originates from and as a former part of the common Yugoslav space, but also unfamiliar, as it had drastically transformed from its pre-war state. Indeed, the narrator does not "mirror" new Croatia with new Serbia, even though a line suggesting parallels in their ethno-nationalism runs throughout the narrative, but she mirrors the pre-war history of Rijeka with its contemporaneity.

[63] Miranda Levanat-Peričić, "The Chronotope of Exile in the Post-Yugoslav Novel and the Boundaries of Imaginary Homelands," *Colloquia Humanistica* 7 (2018): 84.

On account of space, this comparison of *Leica format* with the post-Yugoslav exile narratives Levanat-Peričić analyzed cannot be further researched. What is important to note here, however, is that *Leica format,* because of its original chronotope structure which then relates to its subversive deconstruction of essentializing understandings of home, deserves a space in the 'canon' of post-Yugoslav exile narratives.

Jasmina Lukić and Renata Jambrešić-Kirin have already included Daša Drndić in their outlines of the histories of post-Yugoslav women's writing. They do not conduct a detailed analysis of individual novels, but Lukić's remark that Drndić's writings require "reinterpretation of the concept of exilic," because they show that the idea of homeland "can be successfully subverted from within its borders,"[64] confirms the interpretation of *Leica format* given above.

Jambrešić Kirin analyzes (quasi)autobiographical exile writing by Croatian female writers in the 1990s, delineating this corpus of texts as characterized by "genre hybridity, essayism, autobiographical confessional tone, political commentary and numerous quotations from the literary and testimonial material."[65] The author notices the double subversiveness of female narrators in these writings – both in relation to the nationalist patriarchal constructs of women's role as "nurturers, warrants of preservation and transmission of nationally marked cultural traditions and values,"[66] and on the other hand, in relation to a typical male and Western-centric travelogue genre about the Balkans, massively produced by Western diplomats, humanitarians, journalists.[67] The way Drndić's exile writing responds to the "balkanist prejudices" of "foreign

[64] Jasmina Lukić, "Gender and Migration in Post-Yugoslav Literature as Transnational Literature," in *Schwimmen gegen den Strom? Diskurse weiblicher Autorschaft im postjugoslawischen Kontext*, edited by Angela Richter, Tijana Matijević, Eva Kowollik (Münster et al.: LIT-Verlag, 2018), 338.
[65] Renata Jambrešić Kirin, "Egzil i hrvatska ženska autobiografska književnost 90-ih," *Reč* 61/7 (2001): 183.
[66] Ibid., 176, 177.
[67] Ibid., 185.

metropolitan discourse of engaged humanitarianism"[68] will be indicated in few places further in my thesis. Jambrešić Kirin's analysis of Croatian women's exile writing is particularly useful for situating Daša Drndić's exile narratives in the socio-cultural context of post-war Croatia.

Even though a gender analysis of Drndic's novels is a topic deserving of further study, it should be emphasized that an analysis focused on her deconstruction of essentializing notions of home(land), language, culture and national and ethnic identity is in many ways an analysis which recognizes feminist workings of her narratives. This has to do with the fact that the tradition of anti-nationalism and anti-nationalist writings in the region of former Yugoslavia is fundamentally marked by the tradition of women's activism and women's anti-war writing. More to the point, it has to do with the fact that aggressive nationalisms of the post-Yugoslav states in the 1990s were extremely patriarchal, suppressing women's voices (especially women's anti-nationalist voices) in the public sphere and propagating the 'return' of women to the private spaces of home and family. In this context, where the "social potential and symbolic capital of women" has been consistently devalued, women are pressured into the 'respectable' roles of submissive, self-sacrificing 'femininity' in service of the nation.[69] In the nationalist worldview which "believes in the essentialist navel cord between territory and identity, family and nation," the ideas of women's primordial connection to roots, language, religion and ethnic belonging gain predominance.[70] As such, women are also assigned roles of "warrantors of preservation and transmission of nationally marked cultural traditions and values."[71] In such context, women's exile writings, which refuse to subscribe to the nationalist and war values and instead express defiance to the patriarchal authority,

[68] Ibid., 184. This quote refers specifically to Dubravka Ugrešić's writing, but I believe it corresponds well to the two novels by Daša Drndić I analyze in this paper.
[69] Ibid., 177.
[70] Ibid., 176.
[71] Ibid., 176, 177.

are "deconstructing the 'symbolic pact' according to which a woman's gender identity is determined by her (pro)creative and emotional abilities to make a home."[72] Drndić's exile writings are precisely such defiant expressions turned against the post-war patriarchal nationalism, written from the perspective of narrators who ironically and cynically ridicule nationalist patriarchal authority. In *Leica format*, she writes that "males [of bats], as most males, love packs,[73] and usually hang in the groups of hundreds of specimens, because when they are not in groups, they become schizoidically vulnerable."[74] This case of her sharp derision of masculinist values should be seen precisely in the context of predominant conservative, patriarchal values of the social and cultural spheres in Yugoslavia's successor states.

Finally, the fundamental fact about all three narrators in Drndić's narratives is their role of single mothers. The narrators' motherhood adds an additional weight to the narratives' undermining of the prescribed roles of women as daughters and mothers of the nation. Instead of being a "warrantor of preservation and transmission of nationally marked culture," the narrator in each of the three exile narratives leaves the country with her daughter precisely to shelter her from this culture.

2.2 Border Writing

In the Introduction to her 1991 book *Border Writing. The Multidimensional text*, Emily D. Hicks says that border writing depicts "the experience of border crossers, those who live in a

[72] Ibid., 179.
[73] Or herds or flocks. Even though a group of bats is not called a pack, this is the right translation of the original word (*čopor*), which points to the fact the story about bats contains a metaphorical level relating to human species.
[74] Daša Drndić, *Leica format* (Beograd: Samizdat B92, 2003), 55.

bilingual, bicultural, biconceptual reality," with borders understood as cultural, not physical.[75] In "Dying in Toronto" and *Canzone di Guerra*, there are many border crossers in Toronto, the narrator being one of them. In *Leica format*, the narrator is living in Rijeka, having been (self)exiled from Belgrade during the war, and this is a particularly interesting case of border crossing. The narrator's life in Rijeka (also recounted briefly in the previous two novels) is a life in a bilingual reality, because the reality is (re)made in such a way that one language became a few politically separate languages. The same geographical relocation in the time before the separation of Yugoslavia would not have brought the same bilingual experience – it was the drawing of new borders that created a new split reality. What is more, it was not the establishment of physical borders in and of itself – the linguistic borders of new ethno-nationalist states were also drawn, and this is what made the experience of the narrator resemble the one of Hicks' border crosser. Along with that, even though the cultural differences between Belgrade and Rijeka were always there and the move from one city to the other one was always a bicultural experience, these cultures drastically changed during the war, becoming nationalist and xenophobic and, as a result, impoverished. In that sense, the symbolic borders were also drawn *inside* these places, between the former multicultural openness of the "brotherhood and unity"[76] ideals, on the one hand, and the post-war ideals of homogeneous national, linguistic and cultural space, on the other. In that sense, the narrator of *Leica format*, who cannot identify with the new culture of Rijeka and subscribe to its ideals, does live in a bicultural reality. This is presented in the novel through the

[75] Emily D. Hicks, *Border Writing: the Multidimensional Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), xxv.

[76] Brotherhood and Unity was a famous slogan in socialist Yugoslavia, coined during the Yugoslav People's Liberation War (1941–45) and designating the socialist Yugoslavia's official policy of the equality of all ethnic, religious and other groups in the country, their freedom to nurture their culture and language.

juxtaposition of Rijeka's cultural life in different historical periods, at the beginning of the twentieth century, during socialism and in the contemporary moment.[77]

Border writing operates through the "emphasis upon the multiplicity of languages within any single language", through undermining "the distinction between original and alien culture" and through inviting the readers "to practice multidimensional perception," i.e. the ability to see from more than one side of the border.[78] How exactly does Drndić's writing accomplish this?

The three elements in her writing function together – simply put, she undermines the newly demarcated cultural borders in the former Yugoslav region primarily through the play with the language variants of Serbian and Croatian and an emphasis on their common origin. Both her thematization of the region's language politics[79] and her own play with language variants[80] demonstrate the practice of seeing from two sides of the border: Croatian language politics is 'seen' and experienced from the perspective of a Serbian-speaking person (as she is positioned in Croatia), and vice versa, Serbian cultural ethno-nationalism is experienced from the perspective of a Croatian (as she is positioned in Serbia). The issue of language deserves a separate segment for

[77] The story of the "Hotel of Emigrants" is one way into the history of Rijeka, one metaphoric image of this history: at first, it was a hotel for migrants who were travelling from numerous parts of Eastern Europe and the old Austro-Hungarian empire to the US, at a time when the city was a rich, flourishing cultural center; after WWII, the hotel became a metal foundry, at a time when the working class was growing stronger; in the contemporary moment, the building is empty and run down, at a time when "there is no more working class nor honest intelligentsia," when "everything is dead." "That is why," the narrator concludes about the present moment, "the carnival lives." The carnival is the only culture left. Daša Drndić, *Leica format* (Beograd: Samizdat B92, 2003), 150, 152.

[78] Ibid.

[79] For example, in *"*Dying in Toronto,*"* she writes about the experience of reading a book about Croatian language purity, in which the author tries to distinguish 'pure' Croatian words and word forms from the so-called non-Croatian influence, particularly 'Serbisms' and 'Russisms'. Daša Drndić, *Umiranje u Torontu* (Kikinda: Partizanska knjiga, 2018), 51.

[80] This is particularly present in *Leica format*, and it will be discussed more at length in the segment on language in the next chapter.

discussion, and it will be discussed later in the thesis. Right now, it is worth mentioning other ways in which the given narratives function as border writing.

In "Dying in Toronto," the distinction between an 'original' and an 'alien' culture (single inverted commas should suggest the constructed nature of both concepts, at least in this specific example) is problematized by the portrayal of modern Canadian history through the history of immigration from China and Eastern Europe. The "backbone of Canada," the narrator at one point explicates, are the numerous migration and refugee stories:[81] those of Chinese laborers who constructed the transcontinental railway, which in turn paved the way for the industrial prosperity of the country, inviting more labor migrants from Eastern Europe. In other words, there is no 'original' culture without the 'alien' one. The one culture which could be deemed original to the geographical space of Canada, that of the indigenous peoples, is completely invisible, segregated in reserves. The narrative of "Dying in Toronto," which digresses from one story of migration to another (from different generations of Croatian and Yugoslav migrants and refugees, to different generations of Chinese migrants, etc.) is a testimony of the narrator's specific perspective, the exile perspective. As she admits, these numerous refugee stories, "written in languages and cultures foreign to us, they were until now distant, exotic, insignificant"[82] – the new experience of exile, simply put, made them closer. This is then again a case of multidimensional perception, a view from the other side of the (symbolic) border, from the perspective of those who do not fully belong, who are not entirely inside. When looking towards the past, Drndić positions herself in a similar way, as somebody who does not fully belong in any of the revised national histories of the successor states of former Yugoslavia.

[81] Daša Drndić, *Umiranje u Torontu* (Kikinda: Partizanska knjiga, 2018), 58.
[82] Ibid., 58, 59.

In *Canzone di Guerra*, writing about post-Yugoslav immigration in Canada, the narrator again practices seeing from multiple sides of the border – borders between Serbia and Croatia, and borders between Canada and the former Yugoslav region. This is very visible in the segment of the novel which lists testimonies of Yugoslav refugees, one after the other, without sorting them out in the way they have been sorted out in the newly formed homelands – according to their ethnic identity. One might conclude what their ethnic and/or national identity is, based on their names and testimonies of why or where from they ran, but that is not of primary relevance – their stories are not about "counting blood cells," which was the fundamental action of drawing borders in the post-Yugoslav societies, but about similar experiences of not belonging in the emerging post-Yugoslav societies, and of not belonging in the new host country, Canada. Conveying the testimonies in a way that shows equal trust, respect and compassion for all Yugoslav refugees, irrespective of them being Bosniaks, Croats or Serbs, is ultimately an act of subverting the recently drawn borders. "Border writing is deterritorialized, political, and collective"[83] – collective in Drndić's narratives, as is suggested already by her dedication of "Dying in Toronto" – "to my friends wanderers,"[84] is neither national nor ethnic.

The narrator's multidimensional perception from multiple sides of the border is further illuminated through its juxtaposition with the representation of what it means seeing from one side of the border. The monodimensional or single perception is typical for the privileged middle-aged Serbians who did not run away from war or from the burden of non-belonging, who came to Canada under the pretense of avoiding mobilization, and who claim that all sides in the war are equally guilty, that BCMS languages are Serbian, that get insulted by Croatians or Bosnians saying

[83] Emily D. Hicks, *Border Writing: the Multidimensional Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), xxxi,
[84] Daša Drndić, *Umiranje u Torontu* (Kikinda: Partizanska knjiga, 2018), 4.

they immigrated from Serbia ("They ask, for God's sake, why?"), that claim the Sarajevo and the Adriatic Sea as theirs ("They say, we are at home there, it is all our country.")[85] Fundamentally, the issue of multi- or monodimensional perception in the given context is a very political one – the multidimensional perception allows one to be critical of nationalisms in all of the successor states of former Yugoslavia, without relativizing the responsibility and the power disbalance between the opposing sides in the conflict. On the other side, monodimensional, self-centered perception nurtures either overt or covert nationalism without admitting it and relativizes both the responsibility of certain groups and the extent of suffering endured by other groups.

Finally, the subversive nature of border writing is in its disruption of "the one-way flow of information" from the West to the East (or Global North to Global South in more contemporary terms), in its disruption of the Western host land's control of "the images of itself as well as those from the other countries."[86] One example of this writing in Drndić's novels is the deconstruction of the myth of the promised land, of the capitalist safe haven for refugees and migrants from post-communist countries in two 'Toronto novels'. As it is done explicitly through the previously mentioned testimonies: "Why did we come? We thought that Canada is a land of great possibilities. I don't know why nobody told us the truth."[87] The life stories of educated people unable to get jobs but menial ones, because 25 years of working experience are valued nothing without the "Canadian experience"[88] – these stories are not interesting to the ("surprised and insulted")

[85] Daša Drndić, *Canzone di Guerra: nove davorije* (Zagreb: Društvo za promicanje književnosti na novim medijima, 2007), 18, 19.
[86] Emily D. Hicks, *Border Writing: the Multidimensional Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), xxvii.
[87] Daša Drndić, *Canzone di Guerra: nove davorije* (Zagreb: Društvo za promicanje književnosti na novim medijima, 2007), 16.
[88] Ibid., 15. "I know that Canada cannot give us everything we had before. But little dignity at least. We are people, too. (…) I know that in Canada I will never work like an economist. I have forty two years, two small children and no strength. Future? Future depends on how much strength I will have for hard jobs. I

Canadian journalist who wants something "tragic and sensationalist," something that can represent this new group of people to the confused Canadian citizens.[89] The journalist in this narrative could be recognized almost as a metaphor of a "one-way flow of information," and the narrator's story about him, as well as his interviewee's stories to him, are a clear disruption of this flow.

However, the most poignant example of border writing's subversive strategy can be found in *Canzone di Guerra*'s account of Canada's history during and after WWII, particularly its disturbingly weak acceptance of Jewish refugees during the war and its open-arm acceptance of war criminals for decades after the war. Canada's self-image is consistently derided throughout the listing of war criminals' short biographies, including their pleasant post-war lives in Canada and lack of any effort by the country's officials to take these individuals to court.[90] In short:

> "Fifty years have gone by, there was no communist censorship and terror in the West, and justice about these questions still hasn't been accomplished. The 'truth' is still being proven. How so?"[91]

Another subversive aspect of border writing is in its offering of "a new form of knowledge" which does not reduce the "reality to the instrumental logic of Western thought," but instead, subverts "the rationality of collective suicide (…) calming the storm of progress blowing from Paradise."[92] In *Leica format*, Drndić refers to the same idea Hicks does in the cited paragraph[93] –

work like an animal. Eight hours per day in big houses. (…) The first thing the woman of such one house asked me was, do I have Canadian experience. I asked her what am I supposed to have Canadian experience in, cleaning or living?"

[89] Ibid., 11, 17.
[90] Ibid., 47 – 50.
[91] Ibid., 47.
[92] Emily D. Hicks, *Border Writing: the Multidimensional Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), xxxi.
[93] Daša Drndićć, *Leica format* (Beograd: Samizdat B92, 2003), 241.

Walter Benjamin's thoughts on historical progress, expressed in the ninth thesis of his 1940 essay "Theses on the Philosophy of History."[94] The complete citation of the ninth thesis, in which Benjamin criticizes the idea of progress which dominates Western thought, is a conclusion of the novel's chapter on some of the numerous renowned (now deceased) German and Austrian doctors who carried out and coordinated experiments on a large number of people, often children, during the WWII. In the fictionalized dialogue between the narrator and these doctors, in which the narrator requests explanations of them and asks them to admit and testify to their crimes, since nobody else ever did, one of the accused's response points toward the commonness of these inhumane practices and toward the way they have been justified: "In the name of future. In the name of progress."[95] Indeed, *Leica format* is in part a novel about the long history of such experiments, and it even contains an eight pages long chapter titled "Short incomplete chronology of performing medical experiments on people in the name of peace, democracy and humanity's progress."[96] As Jasmina Lukić points out, *Leica format* represents fascism as a social disease similar to syphilis, which comes back as even more destructive than before if not cured on time.[97] In this sense, it is a novel which tries "calming the storm of progress" and turning the attention towards the past, towards the rewriting of history in the Yugoslav successor states and towards "the cancellation of memory," characteristic for the twentieth century.[98] The narrator, like the The

[94] Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 257, 258.
[95] Daša Drndićć, *Leica format* (Beograd: Samizdat B92, 2003), 240. "Run through the history a little bit. When it comes to experiments, why is the humanity so fixated on us SS. We had who to learn from. Japanese, Americans, multinational companies. Drug factories all over the world even today experiment on people, producing new biological weapons. In the name of future. In the name of progress."
[96] Daša Drndić, *Leica format* (Beograd: Samizdat B92, 2003), 242 – 249.
[97] Jasmina Lukić, "The Politics of Memory in the Fiction of Daša Drndić," in *Memory. Identity. Culture* (volume 1), edited by Tatjana Kuharenoka, Irina Novikova, Ivars Orehovs (Latvijas Universitate: LU Akademiskais apgads, 2015), 154.
[98] Ibid., 154, 155.

Angelus Novus or the angel of history in Benjamin's thesis, "would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed."[99]

2.3 "Writing Outside the Nation"

Azade Seyhan uses the term "writing outside the nation" to account for "the nuances of writing between histories, geographies, and cultural practices," which the usual terms "exilic, ethnic, migrant, or diasporic cannot do justice to."[100] It is a writing "conceived in and operative between two or more languages and cultural heritages," writing in which there are "varying degrees of accents indicating national, ethnic, geographical, and historical origins."[101] This definition is an attempt at discussing literary texts which do not fit inside the national literature paradigms, which address "issues facing deterritorialized cultures, and speak for those in what I call 'paranational communities and alliances'." Paranational communities are present "within national borders" but they "remain culturally or linguistically distanced from" the citizens in the national communities of both home and the host country.[102]

Indeed, "writing outside the nation" as an analytical framework and a descriptive term for Drndić's novels works much better than the concept of the more general exilic writing. The already discussed segment of Yugoslav refugees' testimonies from *Canzone di Guerra* represents a case of a paranational community – not only are they distanced from the Canadian citizens, in both cultural and material senses of the word, they are fundamentally distanced from their home countries as well. Firstly, their home country does not even exist – this is the generation born in

[99] Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 257.
[100] Azade Seyhan, *Writing Outside the Nation* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 9.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid., 10.

the socialist and multiethnic supra-nation state Yugoslavia, which disappeared in their middle age. Secondly, in the new countries' narrow definitions of belonging there is no space for them – even those whose "blood cells" allow them belonging in one of the countries (while immediately excluding them from the others), as in the narrator's case, their cross-ethnic marriages, allegiances, friendships or simply 'impure' accents disqualify them from even those last communities left to them.. The non-belonging in the xenophobic communities, however, is not only imposed, it is also chosen – by all those who, like Drndić's narrators, do not comply with the new symbolic borders of their national community.

Similarly to Hicks' border metaphor, Seyhan talks about a "hyphen metaphor" – it signifies an important element of "writing outside the nation," which is a representation of culture "not as a fundamental model, but in its interaction with other cultures."[103] In other words, a hyphen "simultaneously separates and connects, contests and agrees. It creates new dialect(ic)s, such as Chicano-Spanish, Turkish-German, and Algerian-French."[104] Even though Serbo-Croatian, contrary to the given examples, was a term for one language with different variants, one might still say that Seyhan's hyphen functioned inside it, between these variants, until aggressive nationalist politics started destroying the connective aspect of the hyphen. What Drndić's writing does, then, is trying to recuperate this hyphen, stubbornly reminding of the connection and of the 'impurity' of the language. It might not be Serbo-Croatian anymore, but it is neither all Serbian (as the Serb nationalist language politics would like to argue), nor is it 'pure' Croatian, completely separate and different from Serbian.

[103] Azade Seyhan, *Writing Outside the Nation* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 14, 15.
[104] Ibid., 15.

The hyphen metaphor also signifies writings rich with accents indicating various kinds of origins. While different accents of Serbo-Croatian (or BCMS language) and its different variants often indicate either national, ethnic, geographical or some other origins, they can equally often conceal these origins, and with that, ultimately, obfuscate the straightforward identification of language and ethnic/national identity. Just like the accent of Turkish immigrants' German is specific and detectable, so is the Balkan accent of Yugoslav refugees' English. However, Yugoslavia was a multiethnic, multinational state in which Serbs and Bosniaks lived in Croatia, Croats and Bosniaks in Serbia, Serbs and Croats in Bosnia, etc. – their accents, put simply, had very little to do with their ethnicity. Changing the accent and/or the vocabulary to align (according to the new politics of belonging) with one's ethnic identity was, as the narrator mentions in *Canzone di Guerra*, more difficult than learning English words, which made the exile into Toronto "less painful" than the one to Rijeka, "at least as far as the language is concerned."[105] Whole families went into exile because "there were no secret, evening, crash courses for redrawing cerebral convolutions from Serbian to Croatian wave lengths," as the story of Vlatko and his grown children speaking Serbian while carrying Croatian surnames, as such being "suspicious" everywhere, testify.[106]

Seyhan also pays significant attention to the ways narratives of dislocation relate to and construct the cultural memory of a community. Similar to the subjects of Seyhan's study, Drndić's writing is also marked by the attempts to "articulate a real or imagined past of a community (…) in order to create new definitions of community,"[107] new versions of the politics of belonging. This

[105] Daša Drndić, *Canzone di Guerra: nove davorije* (Zagreb: Društvo za promicanje književnosti na novim medijima, 2007), 32.
[106] Daša Drndić, *Umiranje u Torontu* (Kikinda: Partizanska knjiga, 2018), 58.
[107] Azade Seyhan, *Writing Outside the Nation* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 16, 17.

is a particularly important element of writing in the "epochs of historical regression" that force mythologized views of history upon the society.[108] Working against this view of history, which is very often founded upon "an essentialist unity of language, geography, and ethnicity," writers "outside the nation" find the narrative and cultural coordinates to offer another version of their lands' history, a version free of official doctrine and rhetoric, a history of the actual human cost of transformation and migration."[109] Both "Dying in Toronto" and *Canzone di Guerra*, as is already obvious from some of the previous discussion in this thesis, are narratives about communities formed on the basis of similar experiences of exile and precarious economic positions in the host land, as well as on the shared life in the same (no longer existing) country and on the shared language. The basis of this community is, therefore, at the complete opposite from the communities in the homeland – the ethnic, national or religious identity markers are not relevant factors of inclusion/exclusion, and neither are the homelands' new language politics. In this sense, Canada did provide a safe haven, but an odd one – by not caring for any of the identity markers of the new immigrants, except for their "Otherness." Drndić's definition of community, however, is also a very political one, i.e. formed on the basis of political identity more than any other. Writing about the new Croatia, she says: "Today descendants of Ustashas and descendants of partisans sit together and talk (…) And they give justifications for their fathers. It's unfortunate that before, those leaving Croatia were the descendants of Ustashas (and Ustashas), and today it is the descendants of partisans who are leaving."[110] From this perspective also comes the counter-narrative of the homeland's history – in *Canzone di Guerra*, this is the narrative of Croatian antifascist resistance, given through the focus on the narrator's parents' participation in the

[108] Ibid., 16.
[109] Ibid., 20.
[110] Daša Drndić, *Canzone di Guerra: nove davorije* (Zagreb: Društvo za promicanje književnosti na novim medijima, 2007), 36.

antifascist movement, as well as the narrative of historical and political link between fascism old and new.

Seyhan describes exile in the narratives she analyzes as a "condition of critical reflection" which allows its writers "to offer another version of their land's history," and this sounds close to Drndić's writing, too. However, the narrators of "Dying in Toronto" and *Canzone di Guerra* are offering another version of their land's history as descendants of partisans, not as exiles. As exiles, furthermore, they are developing critical reflection towards the *host land*'s history.

2.4 The World Novel

Debjani Ganguly argues that a new literary genre, the world novel, emerged after the historical break of 1989, which represents a culminating point in the dissolution of a two-hundred-year-old global liberal consensus. This process of dissolution started with the 1968 revolution that "rejected both the old liberal and the old left legacies of the capitalist world system," and it peaked with the post-1989 "proliferation of war and violence," with the hyperconnectivity and new humanitarian sensibility emerging through the advances in information technology.[111] The new post-1989 wars, which have "the globe as their battleground," more civilian casualties than any wars before, and ethnic and identity politics as their primary fuel (as opposed to the "bipolar ideological divide of the cold war"), led to the increased scope of the global humanitarian industry."[112] This, along with the oversaturation of images of war and violence in people's

[111] Debjani Ganguly, *This Thing Called the World. The Contemporary Novel as Global Form* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016), 1, 7, 10.

[112] Ibid., 9. The author does not provide arguments for the statement that the post-1989 wars created more civilian casualties than any wars before, and it is impossible to take this statement for granted. However, in the context of Ganguly's points, it would be possible to interpret this statement as referring to the *visibility* of civilian casualties – in other words, the civilian casualties of post-1989 wars were immediately and widely visible, due to the media coverage and "information technology," to a much larger extent than the civilian casualties of previous wars. To be more precise, I am not arguing that this is the

everyday spaces, made possible with the digital revolution, producing "compassion fatigue" and voyeuristic indulgences, induced the emergence of a new controversial humanitarian sensibility. The world novels are a literary response to these shifts in sensibilities, trying to capture them, trying to "preserve for history (…) an expansion of the moral imagination due to incessant media exposure to distant suffering."[113] At the same time, the world novels try to work against the media's flattening of the experiences of war, against the saturated empathy, forming "a new global infrastructure of sympathy beyond the benevolent and the militaristic."[114]

As world novels, Drndić's novels are "inflected with an acknowledgement of crisis – the mass of stateless people, the plight of refugees, the experience of war and terror, genocidal reprisals."[115] They represent a response to this crisis, while at the same time responding to the humanitarianism that followed this crisis. In "Dying in Toronto," talking about her experience of working for the United Nations, the narrator bitterly recounts the organization's orientalist education programs for refugee children in the Balkans.[116] The degrading treatment of refugee children as second-rate human beings is perhaps even more sharply demonstrated in the account of the food support program, in which children were sent "dry, untasteful, hard high-protein cookies sealed in the far away fifties in the long black cans half a meter high."[117] The most

right way to interpret Ganguly's assessment, but I would like to emphasize that in this thesis I use Ganguly's arguments with this altered understanding of one of her statements.

[113] Ibid., 10 17, 26.

[114] Ibid., 32.

[115] Ibid., 10.

[116] "(…) my bosses were wondering why, for example, refugee and other schools need cassette player, overhead projector or, God forbid, computers. I received forms with questions regarding students' sex structure in classes, because it was assumed that female children go to school and then leave. These forms encompassed first to sixth grade because it was, too, assumed that refugees don't go to seventh and eight grades. For high school and universities there were no forms." Daša Drndić, *Umiranje u Torontu* (Kikinda: Partizanska knjiga, 2018), 112.

[117] Ibid., 112.

heartening and uplifting moments in Drndić's narrative are those in defiance of such treatment, whether it is the narrator's indulgence in the fine food and wine after advices of Canadian social help counselors for refugees to save up on the food,[118] or the children "seeing through the kind of charity offered them": "My small pleasure was seeing that milk spilled and those horrible cookies crushed on the road leading to school."[119]

Ganguly argues that the world novels "express a new kind of humanitarian ethic, a new internationalism built on a shared dread of human capacity for evil"[120] – this novelty is fundamentally important. In Drndić's narratives, the expression of "new internationalism," or a "world oriented sensibility"[121] is formed simultaneously with the sharp criticism of the humanitarian industry. An image of UNPROFOR soldiers in Rijeka's hotel from *Canzone di Guerra* emphasizes the impersonal, almost business-like or, at best, adventure-like relation of humanitarians towards their "missions":

> "They wear dark sunglasses and tight white cotton t-shirts (…) Each t-shirt has something written on it. Two t-shirts particularly catch the eye. On one it was written: I SURVIVED SARAJEVO '92, and on the other: SAVE THE RHINOCERES OF ZIMBABWE. UNPROFORs don't make differences between messages. A t-shirt is a t-shirt."[122]

[118] Ibid., 84 – 90.
[119] Ibid., 113.
[120] Debjani Ganguly, *This Thing Called the World. The Contemporary Novel as Global Form* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016), 10.
[121] Ibid., 2.
[122] Daša Drndić, *Canzone di Guerra: nove davorije* (Zagreb: Društvo za promicanje književnosti na novim medijima, 2007), 96.

This novel's critical view of humanitarianism is well aligned to what Ganguly recognizes as the typical pre-1989 view on it as "a patronizing form of pity that often morphed into cruelty."[123] In the endnotes of *Canzone di Guerra*, Drndić cites a (fictional) 1994 book titled *How to survive from humanitarian aid*, in which the (fictional) author advises which energy raw materials to use instead of wood, too expensive for occupied Sarajevo citizens, suggesting plastic packaging and carton from the USA lunchboxes.[124] It is not only about the humanitarians' pity and charity which humiliates, it is also, as the narrator puts it in the quoted paragraph about refugee children, about the *kind* of charity offered, the kind that only helps those who offer it feel better about themselves.

The new humanitarian ethic in Drndić's novels, therefore, is formed in contrast to the ethics of humanitarian industry. It is, as Ganguly phrases it, "a world oriented sensibility," where world is "a world of hyperconnected humans sensitized as witnesses to the depredations of gruesome global violence and the excesses of a liquid capitalism."[125] Ganguly distinguishes the world (novelistic world) from the global – the latter is an empirical category, the domain of economic and political systems of globalization, while the former is "the work of the human," the world-making activity through language and "an orientation critically attuned to the *surplus* of humanness."[126] Ganguly poses the question, looking for the answer in the novels she discusses: "what is the world as the product of *human beings*," [127] and not as a product of capital flows and capital accumulation?

[123] Debjani Ganguly, *This Thing Called the World. The Contemporary Novel as Global Form* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016), 14.
[124] Daša Drndić, *Canzone di Guerra: nove davorije* (Zagreb: Društvo za promicanje književnosti na novim medijima, 2007), 103.
[125] Debjani Ganguly, *This Thing Called the World. The Contemporary Novel as Global Form* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016), 23.
[126] Ibid., 21, 24.
[127] Ibid., 24.

Drndić's orientation towards the world, in Ganguly's sense of the word, is clear already from some of the previously mentioned segments. Throughout the novels, she digresses into stories from different geographical and historical contexts, stories of the oppressed, forgotten, killed, exiled. When she talks about cheap self-indulgent charity offered to the immigrants, she also talks about charity offered to the countless Canadian poor and homeless.[128] When she talks about Yugoslav refugees, she also tells a story of the new generation of Chinese migrants, who make the "so-called native Canadians" upset, with their educated backgrounds and self-confidence, their ambitions and success.[129] When she talks about language policing of Serbisms in her writing, that propelled her to leave for Canada, she also mentions the nationalist language laws in Quebec.[130] A dinner scene in "Dying in Toronto" is a small segment that illuminates this logic of her text the best, the specific perspective through which the world is represented in the novel. The narrator's guests, Carolina and Kiko, exiles from Pinochet's Chile, Steve from South Africa, professor G.D. and his wife Olga from Poland, and Jasna and Esad from Sarajevo, "sitting at the cheap table with shaky legs and plasticized panel," told the stories which brought four continents in one place and "revived (…) the whole twentieth century."[131] Theirs are the stories, coupled with the photographs of Albert Eisenstaedt, movies of Marcel Ophuls and some of the stories of Marko Ristić, that represent the twentieth century.

The historical line of narrative, in which the narrators of these novels bear *witness* (perhaps the most famous aspect of Drndić's writing) to the forgotten evils of the twentieth century, is a line that makes Drndić's novels specific cases of the world novel genre. Ganguly posits the theme of

[128] Daša Drndić, *Umiranje u Torontu* (Kikinda: Partizanska knjiga, 2018), 110
[129] Ibid., 64 – 68
[130] Ibid., 117 – 124.
[131] Ibid., 90 – 98.

witnessing as "central to the humanitarian imagination," following Agamben's understanding of witnessing as "not abstract but singular and interested." The object of this witnessing is "the real depredation, the naked abandonment, of bare life, unlike that of human rights, whose object is abstract humanity."[132]

However, Drndić's novels introduce the relevance of "memory wars" in the post-1989 period to the issue of witnessing, at times relating it to humanitarianism as well. Witnessing in her narratives is a strategy against these multiple "memory wars," fought in both post-communist, transitional and democratic regimes. These are the wars between different interpretations of the past, in which the anti-communist reinterpretation of history and reconstruction of collective myths came to the fore.[133] Jasmina Lukić identifies this topic to be "the ethical and the political agenda behind the novel *Trieste*," as well as *Leica format*,[134] but it is not difficult to see it in the Toronto novels as well. In *Canzone di Guerra*, for example, the narrator recounts the shameful history of the Red Cross, whose officials visited only one Nazi concentration camp during World War II, Theresienstadt near Prague, reporting that Jewish prisoners led a good life in it and cancelling the scheduled visit to Buchenwald.[135] The Ustashas' propaganda worked similarly – the journalists who visited the concentration camp Jasenovac wrote news of its well-functioning manufacture of

[132] Debjani Ganguly, *This Thing Called the World. The Contemporary Novel as Global Form* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016), 35, 36.
[133] Jasmina Lukić, "The Politics of Memory in the Fiction of Daša Drndić," in *Memory. Identity. Culture* (volume 1), edited by Tatjana Kuharenoka, Irina Novikova, Ivars Orehovs (Latvijas Universitate: LU Akademiskais apgads, 2015), 153, 154, 155.
[134] Ibid., 153, 154. "It is not only unethical to forget the difficult past, it is also dangerous. History will stubbornly repeat itself until we learn from it, says the narrator in *Sonnenschien/Trieste."*
[135] Daša Drndić, *Canzone di Guerra: nove davorije* (Zagreb: Društvo za promicanje književnosti na novim medijima, 2007), 53.

goods and published it in the articles which some contemporary fascists in Croatia cite, trying to preserve the continuity of fascist propaganda.[136]

2.5 Vernacular Cosmopolitanism

Vernacular cosmopolitanism is a notion designating, put shortly, a specific way of being in the world, a feeling of belonging to the world. In Sneja Gunew's conception, vernacular cosmopolitanism is a form of "denaturalization" or defamiliarization enabling openness to different ways of "being at home in the world," "different engagement with the world."[137] Contrary to an elite or an old understanding of cosmopolitanism, vernacular cosmopolitanism is "subaltern and peripheral," and associated to the vulnerable groups on the margins of national communities (such as refugees and immigrants).[138] In other words, it is a cosmopolitanism from below, the one which allows for a recognition of "the limitation of any one culture or any one identity," for a "refusal of state-centeredness." In its transgression of essentializing views on culture and nation, in its view across the borders, so to speak, this concept is relatively close to the aforementioned concepts of border writing and "writing outside the nation." However, it provides a slightly different lens on the analysis of Daša Drndić's positioning in and towards the world. In other words, it allows for positioning her as a cosmopolitan writer, whose literary belonging cannot be contained in the individual national frameworks of Yugoslav successor states, and whose "world oriented sensibility" in writing "navigates the structures of belonging in numerous ways."[139]

[136] Ibid.
[137] Sneja, Gunew, *Post-Multicultural Writers as Neo-cosmopolitan Mediators* (London, New York: Anthem Press, 2017), 7.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Ibid., 5.

Situating Drndić's writing in the framework of cosmopolitan writing is relatable to what Stijn Vervaet argues for the post-Yugoslav literature. In his article on Dubravka Ugrešić and Aleksandar Hemon, Stijn Vervaet describes post-Yugoslav literature as a cosmopolitan literature that both opens post-Yugoslav culture towards the world, making it cosmopolitan, at the same time "decentering ("opening towards the world") the (Western) perception of what a global world ought look like, making it provincial."[140]

Gunew conceptualizes new cosmopolitanism in close relation to the new ways of thinking about multiculturalism – she seeks to add the cosmopolitan dimensions of connection to the world without the mediation of the nation state, into the understanding of multiculturalism. The cosmopolitan element that is missing from the old notions of multiculturalism is "the perspective of those 'minority ethnics' " on the world.[141] This perspective in Drndić's writing, as I have discussed throughout the thesis, is at the same time the perspective from those on the margins of society, and on the margins of history as well. Her descriptions of multicultural Canada are always inflected with a great deal of irony, since she recognizes that it is a multiculturalism "as a way for states to manage difference."[142]

In *Leica format*, on the other hand, the narrator shares this perspective 'from below', even though it is not literally a perspective of a "minority ethnic." The narrator belongs to the ethnic majority in the country, her 'impure' Croatian language makes her "suspicious" to her fellow countrymen and countrywomen, but more than anything else, it is her political/ideological position

[140] Stijn Vervaet, "Ugrešić, Hemon i paradoksi književnog kosmopolitizma: ili kako otvoriti postjugoslavenske književnosti ka svijetu u eri globalizacije," *NOVI IZRAZ, časopis za književnu i umjetničku kritiku* 65-66 (2016): 6.
[141] Sneja, Gunew, *Post-Multicultural Writers as Neo-cosmopolitan Mediators* (London, New York: Anthem Press, 2017), 11.
[142] Ibid., 10.

that puts her on the margin. Like Gunew's vernacular cosmopolitans, she imagines herself as a stranger, but this estranged point of view is as enforced by the outside (by others' suspicion of her accent) as it is stemming from her own position in the world. Similarly to the author herself, the narrators could be positioned as anti-nationalists and anti-fascists. This is perhaps their strongest and most straightforward identity marker; nationality and ethnicity are always of questionable relevance and certainty. The cosmopolitan orientation of Drndić's narratives comes precisely from this (political) identity and positioning outside of the nation, alongside all those who do not belong anywhere.

Chapter 3: Narratives of Home and (Non)Belonging

3.1 Romanticizing Non-Belonging

In his famous essay on exile, Edward Said makes a crucial connection between exile, one's image of home and nationalism. "Nationalism is an assertion of belonging in and to a place, a people, a heritage. It affirms the home created by a community of language, culture, and customs; and, by so doing, it fends off exile, fights to prevent its ravages."[143] Nationalisms create a rhetoric of belonging and, consequently, of non-belonging – therefore, nationalisms and exile are "opposites informing and constituting each other" and so they can never be discussed without reference to each other.[144] This connection is relevant for both Toronto novels, in which the narrators first leave Belgrade running from Serbian ethno-nationalism, and then also leave Rijeka running from Croatian ethno-nationalism. Said's quote, however, can also be drawn upon in relation to those parts of the novels that deal with Canada's (non-)acceptance of migrants. The relevant nationalisms in the novels are not only Balkan nationalisms; relevant as well is the Canadian nationalism – the one that is expressed in "native" Canadians' relation to Balkan refugees, to two different generations of Chinese migrants, to Jewish people during WWII, etc. Drndić's novels show that exile can indeed not be discussed without reference to nationalism, of *both* the homeland and the host land.

It is also valuable to look at Drndić's exile narratives keeping in mind Said's often quoted statement that "exiles cross borders, break barriers of thought and experience," which refers to his idea, following Adorno, that exilic experience can provide a fruitful perspective on the issues of

[143] Edward Said, "Reflections on Exile," in *REFLECTIONS ON EXILE and Other Essays* (London: Granta Books, 2013), chapter 17, online eBook.
[144] Ibid., 182, 183.

belonging.[145] In other words, he posits that exile can function as "an alternative to the mass institutions that dominate modern life," because it allows for a de-automatized perspective on "home" and language that does not allow them "becoming nature."[146] While this kind of "estranged" perspective is very close to Drndić's writing and applicable to the position her narrators take in all three novels discussed here, they still present the experience of exile in a somewhat reversed way. Namely, Drndić's narrators in "Dying in Toronto" and *Canzone di Guerra* do not acquire this perspective of estrangement in Canada, they come to Canada because they already possess it. Exile in these cases, in the case of most Yugoslav exiles, is not a *cause* for a changed perspective on homeland, it is a *result* of this perspective, of antinationalist ideological position. This is perhaps related to the context and 'nature' of the Yugoslav wars – ethnic hatred and nationalism, seeking 'pure' homelands, broke a supranational state that allowed for a complex understanding of home. It was not only a multiethnic home, but also a home in which national identities could be formed in reference to both individual republics and the common state.[147] Many people who found themselves in the middle of violent restructurings of home and who were deemed as not belonging anywhere, did not need to "stay away from 'home' " in order to feel "detachment"[148] from it or to understand that homes are always "provisional."[149]

[145] Ibid., 190.
[146] Ibid.
[147] On this, see Stef Jansen, "Homeless at home: narrations of post-Yugoslav identities," in *Migrants of Identity: perceptions of "home" in a world of movement,* edited by Nigel Rapport and Andrew Dawson (Oxford: Berg., 1998), 85-109.
[148] Edward Said, "Reflections on Exile," in *REFLECTIONS ON EXILE and Other Essays* (London: Granta Books, 2013), chapter 17, online eBook.
[149] Ibid.

It is useful here to turn towards Sara Ahmed's discussion about narratives of migration and estrangement.[150] She does not explicitly refer to Said's text discussed above, but in her critique of contemporary theories of migration it is exactly his thought that "exiles cross borders, break barriers of thought and experience" that she problematizes in Iain Chambers' book *Migrancy, Culture and Identity*, especially because Chambers conflates various kinds of migrancy together, not distinguishing between fundamental material differences in the way people cross borders.[151] Even though Said himself was critical of romanticizing narratives of migration, Ahmed goes further by questioning "the slippage between literal migration and metaphoric migration," i.e. the use of migration as a metaphor of displacement and of the migrant as a *figure*, which ultimately leads to "a thesis that 'we' are all migrants, that what 'we' have in common, is the experience of dislocation from home, as such."[152] Another point of her critique is in the link between migration and identity – she lucidly criticizes Chambers' account of the "authentic migrant perspective" as that which refuses fixed entities, an essence, an identity, against which an "inauthentic migrant" would be the one who refuses to transgress.[153]

> "The violence of this gesture is clear: the experiences of migration, which can involve trauma and violence, become exoticized and idealized as the basis of an ethics of transgression, an ethics which assumes that it is possible to be liberated from identity as such, at the same time as it 'belongs' to an authentically migrant subject."[154]

[150] Sara Ahmed, "Home and away. Narratives of migration and estrangement," *International Journal of Cultural Studies,* 2, no. 3 (1999): 329–347.
[151] Ibid., 332.
[152] Ibid., 332, 333.
[153] Ibid., 333, 334.
[154] Ibid., 334.

What exile narratives in *Canzone di Guerra* and in "Dying in Toronto" represent, however, is precisely an impossibility for immigrant subjects to be liberated from an (national, ethnic, racial and/or immigrant) identity – if for no other reasons, than because the circumstances, the host land's institutional framework and its people's prejudices do not allow it. The narrators of both narratives hope for, to follow Chambers' phrase, a certain liberation from their identity, in both of the exiles they go through, from Serbia, as well as from Croatia. Not even in Canada, actually, are they able to achieve this liberation, because they are labeled in new ways there as well, already by the social and economic realities of their status of exile. In Canada, in other words, their immigrant identity is affirmed through fundamental material conditions – they are given very limited resources and limited possibilities to create a decent, comfortable life. In all the listed localities, the narrators' identities are marked differently, and never by their own volition, but by others – in Belgrade they are Croatian, in Rijeka they are Serbian (or Serbian-allies), in Canada they are Balkan exiles – which shows, among other things, that refusing an identity (national, ethnic, immigrant identity) is not an option if political and socio-cultural circumstances simply do not allow it.

Going back to my point above, the experience of exile does not necessarily bring an enriching or estranging transgressional perspective, one can go into exile already having such perspective. If the narrators of Drndić's three novels ever were or had a chance to be "authentic migrants," it was before any of these post-war migrations; if they ever were, to speak in Chambers' terms, 'liberated' from their identity, it was before the rising ethnonationalist sentiments that led to war and forced them to start migrating. This deconstructs the opposition between "home" and "away," which Ahmed notices as one of the most problematic results of theorizing migrancy as a metaphor, in which migration is equated with the "transgression of identity thinking" and "home" as something that must be overcome, because it is defined by boundaries, fixity, stasis and

closure.[155] Ahmed warns that this contrasting of home as a place of familiarity and nomadism as a place of encounters with strangeness, leads to imagining home, which is usually thought of as nation, as a "purified space," 'free' of strangers.[156] This, then, negates the basic fact of every nation space, which is that it always already contains in itself "strangeness and movement."[157] In Drndić's narrative, home was Belgrade before it got contaminated with ethnic hatred, it was home not because one did not encounter 'strangeness' or because its boundaries were clear – quite the opposite, it was home because its borders were open and because it accepted and accommodated strangeness – much more than Canada proved to be in the exiles' experiences.

In this way Drndić successfully avoids the "violent gestures" and common traps into which narratives of migration, as Ahmed pointed out, often fall. In other words, she avoids romanticizing migration as a liberating experience and, along with that, she avoids essentializing the space of homeland, too. Going even further, her exile narratives could be engaged with the widespread notions that exiled persons, once they lose their homeland, can never fully belong in their new host country.[158] While the concept of home is in no doubt a complex one, as Madan Sarup points out,[159] the concept of belonging should not be entirely tied to it. In other words, while having a 'home' and/or being at 'home' allows for a certain sense of belonging that is more difficult to establish in other, 'outside' places, this does not mean that having a sense of belonging in these other places is by definition impossible. "Language, nostalgia, loss, search for identity" are important problems

[155] Ibid., 338, 339.
[156] Ibid., 340.
[157] Ibid.
[158] I recognize this notion as implied in the "home" and "away" opposition that Ahmed identifies as a widespread characteristic of the narratives of migration. I also find this notion implied in various writings that discuss exile, migration and feelings of (non)belonging to a place, but do not discuss fundamental material aspects of these experiences.
[159] Madan Sarup, "Home and Identity," in *Travellers' Tales: Narratives of home and displacement*, edited by George Robertson et al. (London: Routledge, 2005), 90.

facing emigrants,[160] but what Drndić's narratives try to emphasize as a crucial obstacle for former Yugoslavs' attempts at finding a home in Canada are in fact, the material conditions of their exile experiences. Put simply, the migrants' and exiles' sense of belonging is tied to the extent of welcome they receive and a fundamental way in which a host country's welcome is expressed and shown is in the opportunities it provides to the newcomers: to work in jobs they are qualified for, to be treated as equal citizens.

The anti-romanticizing quality of Drndić's narratives is made even more poignant in short digressions about many different migrations that marked Canada's history. *Canzone di Guerra* is not simply a narrative about an individual experience of exile – in its documentary way, it thematizes migrations of different social groups in different time periods. These parts demonstrate the importance of the issue of belonging. To be more precise, it is not Jewish people's exile experiences in themselves that are of the utmost interest here, they are not even exhaustively represented; far from it, it is the Canadian politics of belonging at a certain moment in history that interests the author. Going back to Said's linkage of nationalism and exile, it is noticeable that Drndić traces nationalism not only as a background to her own exile and, in different ways, to many other migrations (Jewish people were coming to Canadian shores running away from Nazi German nationalism, Ustashas were running away from the new country in which their own nationalism was not accepted anymore, etc.), but also to the Canadian state itself. Canada's 'hidden history' of refusing entrance to certain people and allowing it to some others is also a story about Canadian nationalist politics of belonging. This, together with the specificity of social groups and historical determination of their arrival to Canada, is what vividly demonstrates the impossibility to essentialize migration or present it as a subversive transgression of borders and identity fixities.

[160] Ibid., 93.

This is, in the same vein, a refusal of "migrant ontology" and its humanism, a refusal of the "we are all migrants" assumption.[161] What Drndić's short and fragmentary history of immigration to Canada presents is that it is precisely the opposite – there are different kinds of migrants, coming with different resources and being accepted in very different ways by the host land.

3.2 Language Politics

Croatian linguist Snježana Kordić gives a comprehensive overview of the Croatian language politics since the 1990s in her book *Jezik i nacionalizam* (Language and nationalism), which provides a solid contextual ground for the analysis of the three novels by Daša Drndić.[162] Kordić's analysis validates Drndić's testimony of the aggressive nationalist policing of language in the three novels. The intense campaigns for 'purifying' the Croatian language from all the foreign words, especially Serbisms, resulted in burning or throwing away thousands of books written in Serbian or published in Serbia, as well as in firing a large number of teachers and lectors for their undesirable national roots.[163] More to the point, the fervor of nationalism enforced through language purism turned everyone in the country into a lector-policeman, calling out all those who do not speak the "correct" language.[164] "Everybody suddenly felt invited to take care of language purity and (…) to identify every 'language polluter', publicly stigmatize and prevent them in their attempts at 'sabotage'."[165] A similar "totalitarian system of language supervision" was practiced

[161] Ibid., 336.
[162] Even though Drndić narrates the experiences of Croatian nationalism to a much larger extent than those of Serbian nationalism, one should not leave it out of the consideration, especially because the entire premise of her exile(s) starts with her being "chased away," as she phrases it in *Leica format*, from Belgrade. This nationalism was also expressed through language, as the attack on the narrator for using Latin script instead of a Cyrillic script demonstrates. Daša Drndić, *Leica format* (Beograd: Samizdat B92, 2003), 66.
[163] Snježana Kordić, *Jezik i nacionalizam* (Zagreb: Durieux, 2010), 16, 17.
[164] Ibid., 17.
[165] Ibid., 40.

in publishing, where writers' books would be subject to invasive changes of a 'more suitable' language by lectors. Kordić identifies the proclamations of the leading ideologue of language purism among the Croatian linguists, Stjepan Babic, as threats and successful intimidation of language users.[166] Drndić refers to such experiences on many occasions in her novels, recounting the pressure to "absorb" the right intonation, learn new expressions and words and remember the ones she knew, in order to "legitimize" her belonging in the country: "Once, out of utter tension, I blurted out hvalja, instead of hvala (thanks)."[167] This comical mistake also ridicules the absurd levels to which the language purism went, creating "an artificial version of the language" made up by some "hastily trained" lectors in contradiction to every scientific logic and honesty.[168]

The most relevant insights Kordić provides for the analysis of Drndić's engagement with the language politics are those on the relation between nation, ethnic/national identity, culture and language. The ideal of language purism in Croatia (re)emerged after the violent break-up of Yugoslavia, when Croatian nationalists undertook the project of constructing a new nationhood and national identity, as far removed from Serbian and former Yugoslav connections as possible. In this nationalist project, modeled on the romanticist-nationalist ideas from the end of the

[166] Ibid., 49.

[167] Daša Drndić, *Canzone di Guerra: nove davorije* (Zagreb: Društvo za promicanje književnosti na novim medijima, 2007), 32 There is no good way to translate this, since hvalja is not a word, but an incorrect version of hvala, which means thank you. It suggests the straining attempts of the narrator to use the Croatian forms, including ijekavica, which is one of the primary ways of distinguishing Croatian dialect from the Serbian one (characterized by ekavica). One of the ways in which Serbian and Croatian dialect are usually distinguished is through the jat-reflex. Jat reflex distinguishes between Ekavian (where the reflect of jat is /e/), Ikavian (it is /i/) and Ijekavian (the reflect is /ije/) speech. Ijekavian one is spoken predominantly in Croatia, while Ekavian is characteristic for Serbia. However, as Kordić explains, this distinction should not be overemphasized or used as an argument, as some Croatian linguists do, for the difference of language standards: firstly, it does not affect the intelligibility of language variants among its users, and secondly, Serbian variant contains both Ekavian and Ijekavian forms. Snježana Kordić, *Jezik i nacionalizam* (Zagreb: Durieux, 2010), 90, 91.

[168] Ibid., 35.

eighteenth century about the "holy Trinity of language, nation and state," a unique and separate language was a key to legitimizing the new nation.[169] However, as Kordić argues, from the perspective of both (socio-)linguistics and historical context, the Serbo-Croatian language, like most other languages in the world, has not been and is not aligned to the borders of any one nation-state.[170] Furthermore, language is not necessarily, contrary to nationalist conceptions, a key constituent of national identity.[171] Inhabitants of the Balkans in the nineteenth century did not even identify according to the language boundaries, and even if they would have, those who lived on the territory of contemporary Croatia could not have possibly identified as Croatians, since before the Croatian language was standardized in the nineteenth century on the basis of the Shtokavian dialect (same as in Serbia), they spoke three different dialects (Shtokavian, Kajkavian and Chakavian) and shared them with people living in Slovenian and Serbian territories.[172]

Kordić further analyzes the issue of ethnic identity from a firm constructivist position, understanding it to be neither stable nor inert and relying on numerous researches that show how religion, language and culture do not in and of itself constitute ethnic identity.[173] On the contrary, it is social and political elites that instrumentalize these symbolic markers and claim them to have been fixed and homogenous throughout the centuries.[174] Culture is another issue which Kordić defines against the dominant claims of philologists from the former Yugoslav region, that nationally different cultures prove Serbian and Croatian cannot be one language. She argues that cultural borders do not coincide neither with language, nor with national and state borders in the

[169] Ibid., 169, 179
[170] Ibid., 172, 173.
[171] Ibid., 177. Kordić gives the supportive example of Austrian national identity, which is very lightly informed by the issue of language.
[172] Ibid., 178, 179.
[173] Ibid., 195.
[174] Ibid., 196.

South-Slavic spaces.[175] In other words, there are cultures that encompass multiple nations, and there are nations which contain multiple cultures.[176] What is perhaps the most infamous opinion on the region's cultural borders in the nationalist societies of former Yugoslavia, Kordić argues that cultural demarcations between Croatian, Serbian and Bosniak cultures are unfounded, that these ethnic and national communities shared a culture even before the founding of socialist Yugoslavia,[177] the state that is usually accused of having deleted cultural specificities and having endangered cultural survival of the state in question. Kordić also gives a historical background to the emergence of the nation-states in the Balkans, as well as the process of standardization of Serbo-Croatian language, easily refuting the nationalist myths of national history and national language, along with the myths of cultural oppression and Serbian and/or Yugoslavian "language unitarism."[178] On account of space, this argumentative line cannot be conveyed extensively here; what is important to point out is that Kordić convincingly deconstructs the essentializing notions of nation, language, as well as culture.

The subversion of these essentializing tendencies is a poetical, and at the same time also political objective of Drndić's novels. In *Leica format*, more than in the other two novels, Drndić's poetics is made most visible through her play with words – the novel is filled with the listings of words from different variants of Serbian and Croatian. In most cases, these listings are written in a tone of defiance or spite towards the suppressive definitions of the Croatian lexicon. After quoting the words of Ödön von Horváth , the Austro-Hungarian writer from the first half of the twentieth century, in which he expresses contempt for "rummaging through one's own forebears

[175] Ibid., 234.
[176] Ibid., 234, 235
[177] Ibid., 237.
[178] Ibid., 283 – 293.

and analyzing one's own blood," the narrator writes a list of random words identified as Serbisms by the new Croatian language community ("I suddenly felt like saying it.")[179] Sometimes, a collection of words from numerous languages serves to prove the ridiculousness and ignorance of those trying to emphasize the Croatian dialect as utterly distinct from all the other dialects of Serbo-Croatian or BCMS language. After recounting the conversation between the two students she overheard, in which one was complaining about being called out by a professor for having a 'Serbian' name (Sidonija), the narrator concludes with a long list of examples from different languages in which Sidonija has been used as a female name. The attempts of claiming clear boundaries of the Croatian language, therefore, are unfounded not only 'on the borders' with the Serbian language, but with many others, as well.

The novels also contain language plays which are explicitly thematizing issues of poetics. In "Dying in Toronto," the author/narrator criticizes nationalist language politics as destructive for the literary craft, because they constrict the lexicon and censure the rich expressiveness allowed through the wealth of dialects.[180] Drndić elaborated further on this point in *Leica format*, admiring the treasure of word doublets found in Slovene languages and the creative freedom they open up both in speech and in writing.[181] On the other side, 'expelling' the words from a language for nationalist reasons impoverishes the language, reducing its ability to express nuances: "That's how it is here. There's no difference between the heat (toplota) and the warmth (toplina) (…) There is no difference between the running (tekuce) and the liguid (tecno)."[182] In a rare moment of nostalgia

[179] Daša Drndić, *Leica format* (Beograd: Samizdat B92, 2003), 210, 211
[180] Daša Drndić, *Umiranje u Torontu* (Kikinda: Partizanska knjiga, 2018), 120 – 122.
[181] Daša Drndić, *Leica format* (Beograd: Samizdat B92, 2003), 255.
[182] Ibid., 51.

in her writing, Drndić speaks of how, in former Yugoslavia, she loved all the accents, as they seemed "unifying and pacifistic," while now some of them seem "devastating, destructive."[183]

All these examples, along with those in which Drndić laments on the new generations' inability to read Cyrillic and their narrowed vocabulary (in both Serbia and Croatia), testify to the destruction of Serbo-Croatian language community, which, as Snježana Kordić argues, was an organized process from above, not a result of 'spontaneous' different evolutions of language variants.[184] Overflowing her writing with both Serbian and Croatian expressions, words and word forms, ridiculing, criticizing and lamenting the language politics of post-Yugoslav Croatia, Drndić is precisely working against this destructive process. This work is highly ideological, as the language she writes in is utterly ideologized. Contrary to the nationalist manipulation with language, Drndić, also a signatory of the 2017 *Declaration on the Common Language*,[185] demonstrates throughout her writings that Serbian and Croatian, as well as Bosnian and Montenegrin, are simply different variants of the same language. As Kordić puts it, this is one polycentric standard language, in which differences between the standardized version in Croatia and standardized version in Serbia are significantly smaller than those between the three different dialects (Chokavian, Kajkavian and Shtokavian) existing inside Croatia itself.[186] Following the concept of border writing, Drndić's writing does employ a strategy of emphasizing "the multiplicity of languages within any single language," in the broad sense that it acts subversively

[183] Ibid., 94, 95.
[184] Snježana Kordić, *Jezik i nacionalizam* (Zagreb: Durieux, 2010), 171, 172.
[185] "Deklaracija o zajedničkom jeziku," Jezici i nacionalizmi, accessed June 25, 2020, http://jezicinacionalizmi.com/deklaracija/
[186] Snježana Kordić, *Jezik i nacionalizam* (Zagreb: Durieux, 2010), 76. Kordić also adds that a standard language by definition has a transregional character. The speakers of this standard language are able to communicate with each other even when they are coming from the furthest points of the territory in which the standard language is spoken.

against the (institutionally) imposed language and culture borders, celebrating the 'impurity'. However, Drndić's writing operates in an additional way – it emphasizes the multiplicity of dialects, accents and speech forms within one single language, while also emphasizing the commonness of this language across national borders. In the given context, therefore, the calls for recognizing the language as *one* is a primary poetical and political act. Bilingual reality of the narrators' life, in Hicks' terms, is not a cause for celebration – it is a consequence of forcefully split language community.

The extent to which the language in the given context is ideologized, as well as the character of language politics, is perhaps best demonstrated through its historical contextualization. Kordić convincingly points to the similarities between contemporary Croatian and Ustashas' ideology of language in the first half of the twentieth century, modeled directly on Nazi Germany's ideology and institutional practices.[187] This, like previous points, legitimizes Drndić's representation of Croatian language politics, particularly its consequences for the generation that grew up during the 1990s, in the midst of language (together with history and memory) revision – this is the generation which also learned to be racist and homophobic.[188] From this perspective, as previously mentioned, Drndić's poetic play with language is also overtly ideological, anti-nationalist and anti-fascist.

[187] Ibid., 10 – 18.
[188] Daša Drndić, *Leica format* (Beograd: Samizdat B92, 2003), 104.

Conclusion

Throughout my thesis I have tried to provide an answer to the questions I have posed at the beginning: How does the work of Daša Drndić engage with different notions and politics of belonging? Additionally, how could the work of Daša Drndić be engaged with different theories of exile and belonging, how does it speak back to theory? I based my research of these questions on the three novels by Daša Drndić: "Dying in Toronto," *Canzone di Guerra* and *Leica Format.*

The first question has been based on the premise that the politics of belonging represents one of the key issues in Drndić's writings, allowing for a recognition of their two most important thematic preoccupations, exile and fascism, as related phenomena. The second question has been based on an assessment that engaging the three novels by Daša Drndić with the chosen frameworks of transnational literature, as well as with the different conceptualizations of exile and (non)belonging, could bring a creative and productive reading not only of the novels, but in turn, also of the given frameworks and concepts. In this way, I aimed to show that situating Daša Drndić inside the different frameworks of transnational literature is not only possible – that her writing is indeed a case of border writing, "writing outside the nation," that it belongs to the world novel genre and new cosmopolitan literature – but is also valuable for further thinking about these conceptions. In other words, my analysis of Drndić's writing in the second chapter aimed at examining the conceptions of transnational literature from the post-Yugoslav perspective. Similarly, the intent behind reading Drndić's novels from the perspective of Sara Ahmed's article was to examine whether the given novels contain romanticizing and essentializing tendencies that Ahmed identifies as widespread representations of migration and (non)belonging. Furthermore, the aim of this segment was, following Ahmed's critical insights, to examine how Drndić's narratives of migration problematize the romanticizing conceptions of exile, home and

(non)belonging. The thesis ends with a segment on language politics because it is a fundamentally important topic in Drndić's novels, closely related to her writing against the essentializing ideas of nation, homeland, identity and culture.

My analysis of the novels has shown that they are, as border writing, subversive against the ethnonationalist drawing of cultural borders in the region of former Yugoslavia, against the host land's self-image of a liberal safe-haven for migrants and against the Western humanist discourse of progress. I have further shown that, as "writings outside the nation," Drndić's novels subvert the literary belonging to any of the nation-states constituted after the break-up of Yugoslavia. They do so by insisting on the non-homogenous ethnic, national and cultural identity, at the same time deconstructing the new national(ist) histories. Interpreting the novels as world novels, I have also analyzed their strategy of literary world-making 'from below,' from the perspective of human beings, those on the margins of societies and geopolitical maps, and against the perspective of the global humanitarian industry. At the same time, I have pointed out how this world-oriented sensibility in Drndić's narratives extends into the past, connecting her witnessing of the contemporary global crises with her witnessing of the historical evils of the twentieth century in Europe. The short discussion of vernacular cosmopolitanism further emphasized Drndić's self-positioning in the world and her perspective 'from below,' or, in other words, from 'outside' of the nation-space and dominant, national(ist) cultural values.

I would like to point out that a primary direction for further research on Daša Drndić's exile novels should be an analysis of her representation of exile and problematization of various politics of (non)belonging from the gender perspective. This thesis has not provided gender analysis of the three novels because it focused on engaging them with a relatively wide range of concepts in order to map out the extensive potential of Drndić's narratives of exile for (re)thinking

post-Yugoslav literature, transnational literature and the politics of (non)belonging more generally. However, I would like to emphasize that the interest in this topic and the entire process of writing this thesis has been born out of a clear gender perspective. In the region of former Yugoslavia, contemporary anti-war and anti-nationalist women's writing is also fundamentally anti-patriarchal. For that reason, this thesis hopes to point out another direction for further research – of the regional post-Yugoslav history of women's anti-war and anti-nationalist writing. I hope my thesis has been a small contribution to this history.

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