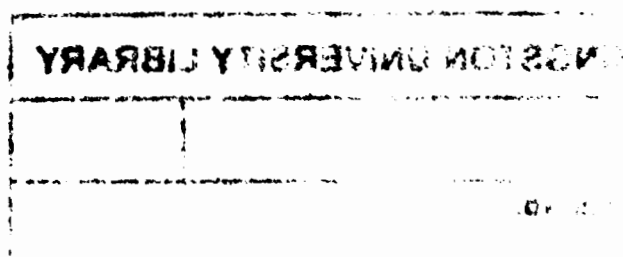# The Idea of (Un)belonging in Post-1989 Black British and Former Yugoslav Women's Writing

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Abstract

The idea of belonging remains highly politicised and represents a recurring thematic concern in literary works. This thesis examines its articulations in post-1989 black British and post-Yugoslav women's writing. It focuses on Bernardine Evaristo's verse-novel *Lara* (1997) and her novel-with-verse *Soul Tourists* (2005), Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000), Dubravka Ugrešić's novel *The Ministry of Pain* (2004) and her essays (1994, 1998, 2003, 2007), and Vesna Goldsworthy's memoir *Chernobyl Strawberries* (2005).

Engaging with recent theories of loss and melancholia (Cheng 2002; Boym 2002; Eng 2003; Gilroy 2004; Ahmed 2008), the thesis explores precarious nature of belonging and moments of tension and non-resolution that characterise belonging in all the examined narratives. I have coined the term '(un)belonging' in order to define the oscillations between belonging and unbelonging. As a dialectic process, (un)belonging indicates the protagonists' negotiation between the ways in which they are positioned by the hegemonic structures of belonging and their provisional locations of belonging. On whose terms this negotiation depends is precisely what is repeatedly questioned in these narratives and it is this tension which the concept of (un)belonging importantly keeps in place. My contention is that the significance of (un)belonging lies in what is less a melancholic 'inability' in these narratives to resolve cultural/personal conflicts and more a melancholic obligation to resist neat resolution of conflicts and the translation of (un)belonging into a personal/'ethnic'/cultural issue. The thesis offers new ways of reading post-1989 black British narratives and the very first discussion of Ugrešić's and Goldsworthy's narratives.

The chapter structure of this thesis reflects four main areas of concern through which the four writers thematically intersect. 'Belonging and the Body' examines how (un)belonging results from querying or hailing of belonging through 'visible' and 'audible' markers of difference and the posing of the question 'Where are you from?'. 'Belonging and Home' explores the constructions of attachments to both real and imaginary places in these narratives. 'Belonging and Movement' discusses how and to what extent (un)belonging acquires a performative and imaginative potential in order to counter the workings of hegemonic belonging and to release various burdens.

'Belonging and Memory' examines how memory functions as a foundation of belonging and considers how the past in these narratives can serve as a resource to reconsider the present.

Though these narratives are primarily concerned with disrupting hegemonic forms of belonging, this thesis suggests that they also gesture towards new ways of belonging. By comparing black British and post-Yugoslav narratives, the thesis introduces post-Yugoslav/Eastern European (un)belonging into contemporary British criticism, and it also shows that black British literature with its long tradition of narratives of (un)belonging can be useful for theorising the contemporary Eastern European experience in the 'West'. The thesis makes critical interventions in literary scholarship in terms of offering new ways to theorise the bodies that continue to be marked as Eastern European, raced and migrant, and brings in some of the writers' own reflections on belonging.

Contents

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Acknowledgements

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Sections on Ugrešić's *The Ministry of Pain* appear, in revised form, in 'Open Wounds, The Phenomenology of Exile and the Management of Pain: Dubravka Ugrešić's *The Ministry of Pain*' in *Literature in Exile of East and Central Europe*, ed. by Agnieszka Gutthy, (New York: Peter Lang, 2009), pp.139-154. Sections on *Chernobyl Strawberries* are forthcoming, in revised form, in 'Against Balkanism: Women's Academic Life-Writing and Personal and Collective History in Vesna Goldsworthy's *Chernobyl Strawberries*' in *Women: a Cultural Review* in Summer 2010. Sections on Eastern Europe from the last part of Chapter 2 are forthcoming, in revised form, in 'Balkanisms Old and New: From the Discourse of Balkanism and Self-Othering in Vesna Goldsworthy's *Chernobyl Strawberries* and *Inventing Ruritania* to Recent Literary and Media Representations of Eastern Europe' in *Facing the East in the West: Images of Eastern Europe in British Literature, Film and Culture*, ed. by Barbara Korte

and Sissy Helff (Rodopi, Internationale Forschungen zur Allgemeinen und Vergleichenden Literaturwissenschaft Series) in Summer 2010.

Chapter One

Introduction

1. Querying Belonging

In the atmosphere of optimism that followed New Labour's 1997 election victory and their vision of a 'new' multicultural Britain, an infamous commentator on the subject of belonging made ominous pronouncements:

> Multiculturalism is a divisive force. One cannot uphold two sets of ethics or be loyal to two nations, any more than a man can have two masters. It perpetuates ethnic divisions because nationality is in the long term more about culture than ethnics [sic]. Youngsters of all races born here should be taught that British history is their history, or they will forever be foreigners holding British passports and this kingdom will become a Yugoslavia.[1]

Unlike his 1990 'cricket test' of belonging, these comments by Norman Tebbit received a faint echo and were quickly dismissed both by the public and his party members. In 1997, New Labour's 'Cool Britannia' project to rebrand the nation for the new century as young, creative, culturally diverse and forward-looking (exemplified by the slogan 'things can only get better') was still fresh and so Tebbit was, after all, rightly brushed away as a voice of old Britain and the past.[2] Britain, of course, did not become 'a Yugoslavia', however, only a few years later, New Labour's utopian vision for 'new' Britain was abandoned and questions of belonging were again on the political agenda. Following the 2001 riots in northern cities of Britain, the 11 September 2001 World Trade Centre attack and the 7 July 2005 London bombings, politicians returned to the rhetoric about segregated communities

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[1] Norman Tebbit, quoted in *Un/settled Multiculturalisms: Diasporas, Entanglements, Transruptions,* ed. by Barnor Hesse (New York: Zed Books, 2000), p.3. Originally from *The Independent,* October 8, 1997. For reactions on Tebbit's remarks see Kim Sengupta, 'British Muslims horrified by Tebbit's dark vision'<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/british–muslims–horrified–by–tebbits–dark–vision–1234780.html> and
<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/tory–conference–anger–as–tebbit–questions–loyalties–of–twonation–immigrants–1234581.html>[accessed 4 March 2007].

[2] For a detailed discussion of 'Cool Britannia' see for example *British Cultural Studies: Geography, Nationality, and Identity,* ed. by David Morley and Kevin Robins (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) and Jim McGuigan, 'A Shell for Neo-Liberalism: New Labour Britain and the Millennium Dome' in *Relocating Britishness,* ed. by Stephen Caunce and others (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp.38-52.

and their 'failed' integration, setting new conditions and borders of belonging in the policies that ensued. In the Government's 2002 White Paper, *Secure Borders, Safe Haven: Integration and Diversity in Modern Britain*, the then Home Secretary David Blunkett said that '"we" need to be secure within our sense of belonging', develop a more 'robust' national identity and 'build firmer foundations on which integration with diversity can be achieved'.[3] This is similar to Tebbit's attempt to define belonging for those 'new' generations who, as Tebbit admits, are British. As the title of the White Paper implies, the use of the language of security and borders evokes the need to define and establish clear borders of belonging – the borders between 'us' and 'them', between those who arrive at 'our' border legally and those who come by suspicious routes. In 2004, the enlargement of the European Union brought a new wave of migrants to Britain, largely from Eastern Europe. Their increased presence as newcomers was met with ambiguous responses, reawakening old and new anxieties about belonging and entitlements to be 'here'.[4]

Tebbit's and Blunkett's conception of belonging illustrates what sociologists Nira Yuval-Davis and John Crowley describe as the 'politics of belonging'.[5] This involves particular political projects aimed at establishing and fixing boundaries and borders of belonging between 'us' who are seen as 'rightfully' belonging and 'them' who are constantly seen as having a 'problem' with belonging and must meet certain conditions in order to belong. Various cultural and national markers of belonging (and unbelonging) are mobilised as well as the remains of older monolithic markers of 'difference' in order for the boundaries to be established. Such a politics of 'hegemonic belonging' also involves multiple forms of interpellation.[6] That is,

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[3] See David Blunkett, 'Foreword', in *Secure Borders, Safe Haven: Integration with Diversity in Modern Britain*, Home Office (2002b), White Paper, Cm 5387 (London: The Stationery Office).

[4] The concerns were expressed by politicians as well as some sections of the white, black and Asian communities in terms of whether the influx of Eastern Europeans was beneficial to the economy or a threat to working-class jobs, and whether they were to bring 'new' racism to Britain with their outdated views out of line with multicultural Britain. For example, the head of what was then the Commission for Racial Equality, Trevor Phillips, warned of this. See <http://www.metro.co.uk/news/22238–britain-faces-wave-of–eu–racists> [accessed 8 June 2006]. This, as I explain throughout the thesis, is however not to say that racism is not a problem in Eastern Europe.

[5] See Nira Yuval-Davis, 'Belonging and the Politics of Belonging', *Patterns of Prejudice*, 40, 3 (2006), 196-213 and John Crowley, 'The Politics of Belonging: Some Theoretical Considerations', in *The Politics of Belonging: Migrants and Minorities in Contemporary Europe*, ed. by Andrew Geddes and Adrian Favell (Aldershot: Ashgate/ICCR, 1999), pp.15-41.

[6] See Aimee Carrillo Rowe, 'Be Longing: Toward a Feminist Politics of Relation', *NWSA Journal*, 17, 2 (2005), 15-46 (p.28). Interpellation, or a creation of subjects through hailing, was a term first coined by Louis Althusser in his seminal essay 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses'. See Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), pp. 127-186.

certain groups are repeatedly interpellated or hailed by the dominant group to declare their 'true' belonging. Yuval-Davis lists Tebbit's 'cricket test' as an example of such politics of belonging, which also mobilises, as she reminds us, emotional attachment as a guarantee of belonging.[7] But while Tebbit's 'cricket test' determined whether immigrants and their descendants 'truly' belonged to the British collectivity simply according to the team they would choose to cheer for in a cricket match, in his 1997 remark belonging seems to be more elusive, shifting and almost frighteningly uncertain. 'Old' immigrants are absent from his address and his focus are generations born in Britain but their belonging does not seem to correspond with what is perceived as traditional foundations of belonging such as birth or nationality. As Tebbit suggests, their belonging 'doubles' and shifts between nationality, citizenship, passports, place of birth, culture and ethnicity. He tries, albeit unsuccessfully, to define and capture belonging as mono-dimensional and make it secure through a clearly problematic conception of British history. Furthermore, Tebbit suggests that belonging for 'the youngsters of all races' born in Britain seems to border on unbelonging as if approaching the state of inevitable conflict evoked in his displaced and problematic reference to the violent dissolution of Yugoslavia, which becomes a cautionary metaphor for the 'perils' of multiculturalism and multiple belonging.[8]

As these examples show, belonging is often defined along the axes of inclusion/exclusion and by its opposite – the not belonging, or unbelonging. Recent sociological and cultural studies have explored how particular constructions of belonging – a maintenance of a 'we' in the name of exclusionary national(ist), political, cultural and other claims – become particularly resonant in contemporary multiethnic and multicultural societies.[9] Because the idea of belonging has often been associated with the discourses of nationalism, racism, right-wing and anti-immigration politics, belonging has been dismissed as a hegemonic concept that articulates and produces boundaries and exclusions. In such discourses, particular migrant and minority groups often become emblematic figures of unbelonging, seen

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[7] Yuval-Davis, 'Belonging and the Politics of Belonging', p.210.
[8] As some commentators observed, he was clearly referring here to British Muslims, thus also simplifying the complexity of the Yugoslav conflict.
[9] See for example Anne-Marie Fortier, *Migrant Belongings: Memory, Space, Identity* (Oxford: Berg, 2000) and *Multicultural Horizons: Diversity and the Limits of the Civil Nation* (London; New York: Routledge, 2008).

as being unable to integrate and accept the terms of belonging defined by the dominant majority. At the same time, unbelonging has been reclaimed by the migrant, the exiled, the racialised, and other marginalised groups, who have historically mobilised experiences of unbelonging for the strategies of resistance, forming alternative ways of belonging. Indeed, the idea of belonging shifts across a number of categories and contexts. Belonging, as Elspeth Probyn writes in her book *Outside Belongings*, oscillates between being 'public and private, personal and common'.[10] 'Belonging' can be defined as being part of a group or a particular place, a possession and property, as well as through notions of affect – as a sense of comfort, feeling 'at home'. Probyn points to a relational character of belonging associated with a construction of various attachments to people, places and modes of being and its affective dimension of belonging – the longing in belonging.[11]

Recent and earlier migration movements and the effects of globalization have also greatly re-configured the idea of belonging as static, pre-given and one-dimensional, allowing new forms of individual and collective belonging to emerge that can no longer be contained under clearly-defined and homogenised forms of national belonging. As Probyn reminds us, 'the stability of belonging and the sanctity of belonging are forever past'.[12] Today it may seem that questions of belonging are no longer pressing as they are 'part of both mainstream discourse and of competing, alternative discourses'.[13] The 'migrant's "double vision"', the experiences of those who occupy 'in-between' spaces as well as the oscillations between belonging and unbelonging – the dialectic in which, as Roger Bromley argues, new belonging and 'a new agency may be shaped' – have also been well explored in numerous postcolonial, exile, migrant and other 'minority' narratives.[14] However, as new ways of policing belonging continue to be produced and old ways sustained, and as tensions continue to arise between those who are seen as 'rightfully' belonging and those regarded as not belonging, the question of belonging remains a highly politicised issue and a recurring thematic concern in literary works. It is perhaps in

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[10] Elspeth Probyn, *Outside Belongings: Disciplines, Nations and the Place of Sex* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p.13.
[11] Ibid., p.19.
[12] Ibid., p.8.
[13] Ulf Hedetoft, 'Discourses and Images of Belonging: Migrants between "New Racism", Liberal Nationalism and Globalization', *AMID Working Paper Series 5/2002* <http://www.amid.dk/pub/papers/AMID_5-2002_Hedetoft.pdf>[accessed 2 January 2010], p.2.
[14] Roger Bromley, *Narratives for a New Belonging: Diasporic Cultural Fictions* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p.121.

the moments when belonging seems to be naturalised and secured that it deserves to be reconsidered, as, to use a Derridean metaphor, the Other is always arriving.[15]

I begin this thesis, taking Britain as an example, with a brief sketch of complex social, cultural and political developments because they show how belonging remains a contentious issue in both liberal and conservative discourses today and how the concept of belonging is saturated with meaning. Dominant social groups and individuals define others through the politics and concept of 'belonging', yet their conditions and borders are, at the same time, continually transformed. Indeed, in which way is the notion of belonging transformed between earlier migrants, who were constructed as not belonging, and their descendants and successive generations born in Britain who gradually belong, to those who are seen as 'new migrants'? Which forms of hegemonic belonging are lost in these shifts and which stubbornly remain? In view of the relation of the literary to the political, the aim of this thesis is to explore fictional representations of these oscillations between belonging and unbelonging by focusing on four very different contemporary writers who are connected through their shared concern with belonging: black British writers Bernardine Evaristo and Zadie Smith and post-Yugoslav writers Dubravka Ugrešić and Vesna Goldsworthy.[16] The thesis focuses on Evaristo's verse-novel *Lara* (1997), novel-with-verse *Soul Tourists* (2005) and her non-fictional essays, Smith's *White Teeth* (2000), Ugrešić's novel *The Ministry of Pain* (2004) and a selection of her 1994-2007 essays, and Goldsworthy's memoir *Chernobyl Strawberries* (2005). Through a comparative analysis of the protagonists and narrators who have arrived earlier (migrant, 'first' generations as 'old', 'unbelonging' others), those who have been born 'here' (black British generations with seemingly settled belonging) and those 'who are arriving' (former-Yugoslavs as 'new' Eastern European 'others'), the central concern is to examine how these narratives problematise the concept of belonging in historical, political, phenomenological and imaginative terms and to see how they unpack the workings of various politics of hegemonic belonging. All these

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[15] See Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle, trans. by Rachel Bowlby, *Of Hospitality* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000).

[16] My use of the term 'Former Yugoslav' in the title of this thesis indicates that Ugrešić and Goldsworthy both come from former Yugoslavia. However, during the course of this thesis, the term 'post-Yugoslav' has proved to be more productive in terms of encompassing the temporal and thematic aspects of Ugrešić's and Goldsworthy's works. Throughout the thesis, I shall continue to use the term 'post-Yugoslav' and I shall be using the official term 'former Yugoslav' when I refer to the territory or the citizens of former Yugoslavia.

shifts articulate the questions of belonging in particular ways and provide a rich context for a comparative study of fictional representations of belonging.

Clearly, the texts I have chosen to examine are different in terms of structure and genre (one of them is a memoir), however, they overlap thematically. Equally, one may argue that the majority of selected fictional texts have been autobiographically-based (such as Evaristo's *Lara* based on her family history, the Willesden of Smith's childhood in *White Teeth*, or Amsterdam as Ugrešić's place of residence in *The Ministry of Pain*), however it is not the main concern of this thesis to explore where the autobiographical ends and the fictional begins. I am principally concerned with the ways these texts articulate belonging which, as I will show throughout the thesis, is unaffected by the degree of fictionality in the story. The analysis of the writers' non-fictional essays (as, for example, a comparative analysis of Ugrešić's and Evaristo's essays about their travels through Eastern Europe will demonstrate) equally offers important critical insights into the transformations of belonging. The choice of such a diverse range of texts and writers was motivated by a concern with the texts that display ambivalent belonging or reflect cultural moments when questions of belonging became particularly acute. Smith's novel, despite its ambivalent representation of both migrant and British-born belonging, was mainly seen as a celebratory portrait of 'Cool Britannia', while Evaristo's novel *Lara*, for example, was largely read as a fully-rounded narrative of self-formation.[17] The thesis examines the moments of tension and non-resolution that characterise belonging in both narratives. The post-Yugoslav focus of my thesis was motivated by the dramatic shifts in belonging in post-1989 Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe and an interest in the hegemonic representations of 'Eastern Europeans' in the 'West'. I wanted to investigate how old anxieties about belonging and unresolved histories are displaced onto 'new migrants'. As Paul Gilroy has recently noted, 'even if today's unwanted incomers – from Brasil or Eastern Europe – are not actually post-colonials, they may still carry all the ambivalence of the vanished empire with them'.[18] I am also aware that other 'Eastern European', black British, Asian British narratives (such as Meera Syal's, Andrea Levy's or Helen Oyeyemi's novels) and other texts might have been discussed. For the purpose of this thesis, I focus on four writers. I

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[17] See for example Mark Stein, *Black British Literature: Novels of Transformation* (Columbus: Ohio State University, 2004), pp.57-67.

[18] Paul Gilroy, 'Multiculture in Times of War': an Inaugural Lecture given at the London School of Economics, *Critical Quarterly*, 48, 4 (2006), 27-45 (p.31).

make references to other works throughout the thesis and hope to show that the theoretical model and the comparative approach developed here can be tested to examine the degrees of (un)belonging in other narratives as well as films or media representations.[19]

Starting from the writers' shared thematic concern with questions of belonging, while being attentive to the histories that stand behind each of the texts, the thesis will examine how they have imaginatively responded to the transformation, disintegration and redefinition of collective and individual belonging. I am specifically interested in exploring how belonging is redefined in the context of generational and cultural shifts (for example, what it means to stop being Yugoslav, to become Eastern European, or black British) and in the ways in which particular markers of belonging (such as place of birth, passport, nationality, culture), and the residues of monolithic and essentialising markers (such as 'race', 'West', 'East', 'European') continue to complicate belonging in these narratives. By an in-depth analysis of the texts, the thesis considers and compares the significance of various 'inauthentic' and 'not-quite' belongings, the moments of tension and non-resolution that characterise the oscillations between belonging and unbelonging in these narratives. I demonstrate how each writer in their work evokes the idea of (un)belonging – a space of unresolved dialectic that challenges and haunts the very foundations on which hegemonic forms of belonging and history still rest.

My use of the word '(un)belonging' in the title of this thesis, thus enclosed in brackets, indicates a process through which the protagonists negotiate between the ways in which they are positioned by the hegemonic structures of belonging and their finding – or imagining – provisional positionings of belonging. I borrow this term from Joan Riley's 1985 novel *The Unbelonging*, and adapt it to examine the oscillations from unbelonging as an acute and almost debilitating condition towards (un)belonging as a process or a dialectic, and which may even transform into a source of creativity and resistance through this tension.

I do not, however, want to suggest that unbelonging is not productive in earlier black British and/or migrant narratives, and neither is my aim to homogenise earlier works simply as passive narratives of loss and deprivation, without possibilities of resistance. There are simply less resources for this transformation to happen – that is, for unbelonging to become productive and creative. For example,

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[19] I give some examples from the media in the next chapter.

Riley's Unbelonging, thus capitalised, feels almost like a blockage in which racial hurt and rage are never transformed into any kind of active contestation. While there is no space here to discuss Riley's novel in detail, I can only point out briefly that the idea of unbelonging for Hyacinth, the novel's protagonist, covers all those traditional spaces of belonging – from the loss of childhood, storytelling and diasporic affiliations, to the loss of family homes, national and other community spaces. But although Hyacinth's nightmarish world and her state of ultimate and irreparable loss may seem to be at the very end of the scale of narratives of (un)nbelonging, the novel, I would argue, powerfully resonates with a longing to put an end to such Unbelonging – a longing for a change which would entail a critical re-evaluation and engagement with past histories of hurt and loss and their meaning and persistence in the present.

Equally, I do not want to imply that the concern with (un)belonging in later works, and in those considered in this thesis, should only be theorized in terms of claiming, celebratory notions of multiple belonging and a resolution of (un)belonging. While certainly acknowledging a generational and thematic distinction with earlier narratives, my aim is not to repeat some of the existing reading frameworks with a recurrent focus on the *Bildungsroman* and identity negotiation that is often read as completed over, but to offer a critical analysis of what might be at stake in such critical readings. The works examined in the thesis are not solely concerned with unsettling the binaries 'belonging – unbelonging', or that they gesture towards some kind of a resolution of belonging, as if belonging would be secured if the protagonists would be re-homed, or welcomed into the national/majoritarian embrace. On whose terms this negotiation depends is precisely what is repeatedly questioned and it is this tension which the concept of (un)belonging importantly keeps in place.

This thesis develops the idea of (un)belonging as a conceptual space between ownership and loss. The concept calls into question the seamless transition from unbelonging to affirmative and confident belonging and vice versa – from confident belonging to disabling unbelonging in post-Yugoslav narratives. By attending to the oscillations between belonging and unbelonging, the concept of (un)belonging asks what is lost, or gained, in these social, cultural and generational shifts. It addresses the ways in which the protagonists (and in most cases the writers themselves) articulate belonging not only as a matter of personal negotiation, but within the

conditions of belonging in terms of social and cultural (in)visibility. As a dialectic, (un)belonging exposes the workings of hegemonic belonging and the ways in which the protagonists are marked by the remains and residues of unresolved histories. However, the imaginative and critical significance of (un)belonging lies precisely in what is less a melancholic 'inability' in these narratives to resolve cultural/personal conflicts and more a melancholic obligation to resist neat resolution of conflicts and the translation of (un)belonging into a personal/'ethnic'/cultural issue.

The prefix 'un' in (un)belonging implies a productive tension, acquiring a performative and imaginative potential, and allowing the protagonists to transform painful experiences of unbelonging into creative counter-strategies. At the same time, I am careful not to reify (un)belonging as a progressive 'double-vision', or a 'third' category. Instead, I ask to what extent the movement of (un)belonging brings about a productive double-vision by examining, for example, whether recovering roots in the name of belonging is always either progressive and/or regressive and by tracing the movement from migrants to citizens (and vice versa), and the emerging contact zones between post-1989 Eastern Europeans, 'former' postcolonial migrants and black Britons.[20] Another critical significance of the concept is in exposing the points at which (un)belonging as a double vision fails, tracing instead its productivity in the narratives' engagement with loss and journeys into memory, and asking if these movements engender a site where productive melancholic consciousness may emerge and new forms of belonging may begin to be re-imagined.

Before moving on to a more detailed outline of the thesis, it might be useful to introduce briefly the context within which I approach the writers in this study, the basis for a comparative analysis and to clarify the use of the terms 'black British' and 'post-Yugoslav' women's writing and the year '1989'.

2. Contextualising Black British and Post-Yugoslav Narratives of (Un)belonging

As the temporal marker in the title of this thesis suggests, there is a need to place this study historically within wider political and cultural changes during the last couple of decades that have impacted on the ways in which belonging in these narratives is imagined. In both British and Yugoslav/post-Yugoslav contexts, the nature of

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[20] See for example the discussion of Ugrešić's and Evaristo's accounts of the Literature Express in Chapter 3.

belonging has been contentious and, as such, the question of belonging keeps reappearing in political and cultural debates. As a starting point, the year ˙1989˙ serves as a symbolic point of reference for a consideration of how these changes have affected and shaped fictional representations of belonging, and consequently unbelonging, in the texts under study.

To briefly sketch some of these changes, both Britain and Yugoslavia, as multicultural and multiethnic societies, saw issues of national and cultural identity fiercely debated, and both contexts witnessed a fragmentation of more inclusive collectivities in the late-1980s and early-1990s. During the 1991-95 Yugoslav wars of dissolution, questions of multiple belonging have been violently resolved. The idea of a Yugoslav collectivity, that despite its numerous problematic and ideological aspects united the people who inhabited that country, turned out to be a fragile construction and was replaced by entrenched ethno-national identities.[21] Breaking from the non-aligned internationalism of Yugoslav communist propaganda and erasing all aspects of common Yugoslav history, the post-communist nationalist regimes, particularly in Serbia and Croatia, strove to make the successor republics mononational and monocultural. Moving away from Yugoslav cultural pluralism, former Yugoslav republics emerged as 'new' nation states. At the same time, other forms of alternative, political solidarities began to emerge (mainly anti-war and feminist), particularly during the war in Bosnia, uniting against post-Yugoslav nationalisms across ethnic differences which were reified as fixed during the war. Some writers and intellectuals who were publicly critical of the post-Yugoslav nationalist regimes and were, as a result, denigrated in the media, emigrated to Western European or US metropolitan centres and began writing about their former homeland as well as about their newly-found 'Eastern European' otherness reflected in the 'Western' mirror.

In Britain, the early 1990s saw a change in black British cultural politics and a fragmentation within the black British collectivity – political alliances formed in the late 1960s uniting African, Asian and Caribbean communities against ˙the

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[21] There is no space here to go further into this complex history and, as Dejan Djokić notes, different nations had different experiences in Yugoslavia and some nations and ethnicities were seen as more Yugoslav than others. For example, the Roma and the Albanian ethnic minorities were excluded even by the designation ˙Yugoslav˙. For more on this history and the history of Yugoslavia see *Yugoslavism: Histories of a Failed Idea, 1918–1992*, ed. by Dejan Djokić (London: Hurst, 2003), p.6.

common experience of racism and marginalisation in Britain'.[22] The fractures within 'black' as a political positionality which began mid-1980 were brought by the tensions between the diverse groups and the intersections of other axes of identification such as gender and sexuality, the changing politics in race relations, the emphasis on identity politics and generational changes. Since then, as Pratibha Parmar and Paul Gilroy have noted, the 'strategic use [of 'black'] has lost its currency' and 'appeals to national and ethnic difference [...] are currently fashionable'.[23] However, as Stuart Hall pointed out, even though a weakened collective alliance, the category 'black' must not be abandoned as a form of political solidarity and resistance particularly because institutional racism and new forms of racism continue to operate today.[24] As outlined earlier, the late 1990s under New Labour saw an institutionalisation of multiculturalism, a naturalisation of 'difference' and a rebranding of British identity based on a celebration of cultural pluralism. However, with the 2001 riots in northern cities of Britain and with the government's responses to 9/11 and later to 7/7, the celebration of multicultural diversity was beginning to wane and new boundaries of belonging and irreconcilable cultural 'differences' were re-asserted.[25] The intended shift from 'Rule Britannia' to 'Cool Britannia' turned out to be short-lived and, as many commentators noted, it left the hegemonic discourses and histories unresolved. For example, the 2000 Parekh report on 'The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain' recommended that if Britain was to be re-imagined as truly multicultural, it would need to 'take account of the inescapable changes of the last 30 years' such as post-Second World War migration, devolution, globalisation and the end of empire.[26] However, as Gilroy argues in *After Empire*, these melancholic attachments to past greatness have not been worked through and residual elements continue to linger or transform into new forms of racism.[27]

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[22] This has been outlined in Stuart Hall's seminal essay 'New Ethnicities'. See *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader*, ed. by Houston A. Baker, Jr., Manthia Diawara and Ruth H. Lindeborg (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp.163-172 (p.163).

[23] Parmar quoted in *Companion to Contemporary Black British Culture*, ed. by Alison Donnell (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), p.41; Paul Gilroy, *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* (London: Routledge, 2004), p.6.

[24] See Hall, 'New Ethnicities', pp.163-172.

[25] For a detailed overview of these changes and anti-racist policies see Les Back, Michael Keith, Azra Khan, Kalbir Shukra and John Solomos, 'The Return of Assimilationism: Race, Multiculturalism and New Labour', *Sociological Research Online*, 7, 2 (2002) <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/7/2/back.html>[accessed 5 January 2010].

[26] See Bhikhu Parekh, *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain*, The Runnymede Trust (London: 2000) <http://www.runnymedetrust.org/reportPartOne.html> [accessed 6 May 2008].

[27] See Gilroy, *After Empire*.

Finally, the year 1989, if seen through the iconic image of the fall of the Berlin Wall that marked the ending of the Cold War, ushered in a 'reunification' of Europe and the creation of new nation-states in Eastern Europe, places the examination of belonging in this study in the context of shifting ideas of Europe and the 'West'. At the same time, with the 1989 fatwa against Salman Rushdie new 'walls' were established.[28] Today, 'Western' European metropolitan centres have been transformed by decades of migration and settlement of guest-workers and labourers from their former colonies, and so the boundaries of belonging to Europe (and Britain) have been redefined and stretched by the post-migrant generations.[29] However, Western Europe continues to invest in symbolic and real boundaries of belonging and these are particularly evident in attitudes towards asylum seekers, refugees and new waves of migrants, and in stricter immigration policies for them. For Yugoslavia, 1989 did not mark a shift towards liberal democracy as it did for other communist Eastern European countries, but slowly led to the 1991-95 civil wars. The country, which previously dis-identified with the rest of the Soviet communist bloc, became in turn perceived as extreme Eastern Europe.

These changes and unresolved tensions, as this thesis will show, are reflected in the representations of belonging in the narratives under discussion and they have also affected the thematic and historical developments of post-Yugoslav and black British literature. With the disintegration of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, what used to be called Yugoslav literature ceased to exist and fragmented into Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian and other literature. On the other hand, the late 1990s, as numerous critics have pointed out, saw the consolidation of black British literature with new generations of black British writers who emerged or began publishing in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s.[30] There was also a need to distinguish these new

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[28] For a detailed critical account of issues surrounding the Rushdie affair, see Kenan Malik, 'Born in Bradford' <http://www.kenanmalik.com/essays/bradford_prospect.html>[accessed 10 December 2009] and his book *From Fatwa to Jihad: The Rushdie Affair and its Legacy* (London: Atlantic Books, 2009).

[29] It must be emphasised that Britain here significantly differs from Western Europe where post-migrant generations are often still considered to be foreigners while in Britain they are rightfully considered to be British citizens. The majority of Europe remains in a postcolonial condition.

[30] See Susheila Nasta, 'Writing in Britain: Shifting Geographies', *Wasafiri*, 17, 36 (2002), 3-4. See also earlier *Wasafiri* editions such as No.17, 1993 ('Focus on Writing in Britain') and No. 29, 1999 ('Taking the Cake: Black Writing in Britain'). I am of course aware that black British writing has had a long literary history. For earlier writing see for example *The Black Presence in English Literature,* ed. by David Dabydeen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985) and C. L. Innes, *A History of Black and Asian Writing in Britain, 1700-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). For post-1945 and contemporary writing see Bruce King, *The Internationalization of English Literature, 1948-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); James Procter, *Dwelling Places:*

voices from earlier migrant narratives. As Bruce King summarises, 'black British identity began to be proudly asserted in contrast to the previous West Indian disappointment and alienation' and 'nostalgic immigrants' were replaced by second and post-second generations of British-born protagonists.[31] This shift was also registered in new thematic concerns, a diversity of genres, and representations of different positions, experiences and multidimensional characters. At the outset of the new millennium, Zadie Smith witnessed unprecedented success and the popular reception of her first novel catapulted her into mainstream British writing. These developments as well as the success of black British writers during the late 1980s and 1990s, have led the critics to ask whether the category 'black British writing' is still useful and necessary, and, as Susheila Nasta suggests in 2002, whether it should simply be called 'Writing in Britain'.[32] While black British literature has now been a subject of numerous critical studies and widely anthologised, there is still debate on what constitutes black British literature and which writers are part of this literary canon.[33] The post-1989 changes in Eastern Europe and the disintegration of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, on the other hand, engendered fictional narratives of new 'nostalgic immigrants' and exiles displaced in various 'Western' locations. In this period, as Nataša Kovačević explains, eastern European narratives have been concerned with displaced identities, however, 'this time not [with] communist exiles, but rather [with] refugees from the post-communist civil wars and/or emigrants from the economically devastated locales of Eastern European transitions to capitalism'.[34]

It is appropriate to explain how these thematic shifts are reflected in the narratives I study in this thesis and to outline the particular position of the writers in relation to the literary categories 'black British', 'post-Yugoslav' and 'women's writing'. I am attentive to the potential limitations of these categories, and, in particular, to the writers' '(un)belonging' to them. As I discuss in subsequent

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Postwar Black British Writing (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003); Mark Stein, *Black British Literature: Novels of Transformation* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2004), *Black British Writing*, ed. by Victoria R. Arana and Lauri Ramey (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), *Write Black Write British: From Post Colonial to Black British Literature*, ed. by Kadija Sesay (Hertford: Hansib Publications, 2005).

[31] Bruce King, 'Sea Change: Black British Writing, and: The Booker Prize and the Legacy of Empire' (review), *Research in African Literatures*, 34, 2 (2003), 213-215 (p.215).

[32] Susheila Nasta, 'Writing in Britain: Shifting Geographies', *Wasafiri*, 17, 36 (2002), p.3.

[33] For these debates see for example *A Black British Canon?*, ed. by Gail Low and Marion Wynne-Davies (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). Also, Asian British writing now tends to be considered separately, even though it may share thematic concerns with black British writing.

[34] Nataša Kovačević, *Narrating Post/communism: Colonial Discourse and Europe's Borderline Civilization* (London: Routledge, 2008), p.7.

chapters, all the writers would prefer to be considered simply as writers without further qualifications. They all seem to be aware that these are more than just literary labels and that they involve what Kobena Mercer and Stuart Hall have termed 'the burden of representation'.[35] That is, not only are writers seen through the colour of their skin, ethnicity, or the place where they 'come from', but they are also expected to continually produce works that in some ways reflect their personal positionings.[36] The thesis identifies this issue as an important area of comparison between black British and post-Yugoslav writers through which significant critical insights on the questions of belonging can be gained. The secondary aim of the thesis is also to explore how changes in the politics of belonging have affected the ways in which their narratives have been read, marketed or aligned with performing certain work. Following sociologist's Brian Alleyne's critique of the idea that '"we" (in the West) are comprised of individuals in society, whereas they (the Rest) have community', I consider the conditions upon which certain narratives become 'ours' or get interpreted as individualised narratives.[37] That is, while some literary works are personalised as 'belonging' or speaking only to a particular community (such as 'ethnic' or migrant literature), others are collectivised and seen as being able to offer a broader reflection on society. Chapters 2 and 4 offer a critical comparison of the reception of Smith and her novel mainly as a celebratory portrait of the multicultural nation and the future of 'Cool Britannia', and of the interpretations of Evaristo's *Lara* as a personalised narrative of self-formation through the *Bildungsroman* genre. Chapter 4 presents a case against the reading of black British narratives through the *Bildungsroman* genre. While Smith and Evaristo have qualified as British writers, Ugrešić and Goldsworthy remain 'ethnic', minority writers or representatives of monolithically conceived 'Eastern European' writing. In 'Western' readings, their works are often marginalised as ethnic/anthropological narratives of the dissolution of Yugoslavia. By considering these issues, the thesis complements existing work on the 'burden of representation'. Finally, the term 'women's writing', apart from indicating that all these writers are women, signifies the ways in which questions of

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[35] See Kobena Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies* (New York; London: Routledge, 1994), pp.233-258 and Stuart Hall, 'New Ethnicities' in *Black British Cultural Studies*, p.165.

[36] A good example is a reception of Smith's second novel, *The Autograph Man* that did not focus on black British protagonists.

[37] Brian Alleyene qtd. in Ulrike M. Vieten, 'Out in the Blue of Europe': Modernist Cosmopolitan Identity and the Deterritorialization of Belonging', *Patterns of Prejudice*, 40, 3 (2006), 259-279 (p.268).

gender intersect with those of race, ethnicity and other positionings and markers of (un)belonging. I am also aware that the labels 'black British' and 'post-Yugoslav' must be used for the purposes of literary analysis and for locating these writers and their works in a particular context.

Both Ugrešić and Goldsworthy were born in what used to be Yugoslavia (Goldsworthy in Serbia and Ugrešić in Croatia), however, they do not really belong to what is now Serbian or Croatian literature. Both writers are now resident in the 'West' – Ugrešić in Amsterdam and Goldsworthy in London.[38] Goldsworthy, however, left Yugoslavia in the late 1980s before the country disintegrated and witnessed the war from London, while Ugrešić had to leave Yugoslavia during the war in the early 1990s after she became a target of an intensive media campaign because of her critical views about emerging hegemonic nationalisms in both Croatia and Serbia. This incident was perhaps one of the less well-known 'witch hunts' of the late twentieth century.[39] Ugrešić, who was an already renowned and established writer in then-Yugoslavia, emerged as one of the major post-war, post-Yugoslav novelists. She comes from an ethnically mixed background, but she has always identified herself as 'Yugoslav' and has refused to identify with new 'ethnic' or national labels when Yugoslavia disintegrated. Ironically, Ugrešić has become known in the 'West' as the most renowned Croatian writer.[40] Ugrešić writes in her native Serbo-Croatian, but her books have been widely translated.[41] This thesis looks at her works in English translation. Evaristo and Smith, both born in London and of mixed heritage – Smith of English-Jamaican and Evaristo of English-Nigerian heritage – are both critically acclaimed (black) British writers.[42] Evaristo, however,

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[38] Further biographical details on all four writers are provided in subsequent chapters where appropriate.

[39] Under the title 'Croatia's Feminists Rape Croatia!', a Croatian nationalist weekly, accused five Croatian women writers and journalists (Slavenka Drakulić, Rada Iveković, Jelena Lovrić, Vesna Kesić, and Dubravka Ugrešić) of being 'witches' and of 'raping' Croatia – that is, of being unpatriotic. The magazine published personal details of these women such as their home addresses, phone numbers, professional details, marital status. Briefly, the article was provoked by the possibility of depriving Croatia of its right to organize the PEN congress in Dubrovnik, because of the persecution of these women. Further details, as well as summaries and English translations of these articles are available at <http://www.wworld.org/archive/archive.asp?ID=157> [accessed 7 October 2007].

[40] Since the mid-1990s, she has published two post-Yugoslav novels, *The Museum of Unconditional Surrender* (1998) and *The Ministry of Pain* (2005), and several volumes of essays, *Have a Nice Day: from the Balkan War to the American Dream* (1994), *The Culture of Lies* (1998), *Thank You for Not Reading* (2003), and *Nobody's Home* (2007).

[41] See Ugrešić's official webpage for further biographical details and publications, <http://www.dubravkaugresic.com>.

[42] For further biographical details, see Evaristo's official website, <http://www.bevaristo.net/>, and for Zadie Smith, see for example the entry on *The Literary Encycopedia*.

belongs to the generation maturing under black anti-racist politics in the 1970s and 1980s. She began publishing in the late 1990s in a climate when a number of black and Asian British women writers appeared. Smith, the youngest of the four writers, appeared on the literary scene in 2000 with her literary debut *White Teeth*. As already suggested, it seems that the designation 'black British writer' for Smith and Evaristo becomes redundant when the literary mainstream is reached. However, for political, strategic and thematic reasons, I retain the category in this thesis. I also make extensive use of the interview I conducted with Evaristo in order to present her perspective on whether she considers herself a black British writer as well as to support my analysis of (un)belonging in her fictional and non-fictional texts.

The use of the terms 'black British' and 'post-Yugoslav' also points to thematic concerns in the texts under study and these are also markers of (un)belonging. Both Ugrešić and Goldsworthy reflect on how the disintegration of Yugoslavia affected a sense of belonging and they are also concerned with the issues of belonging to the Eastern European otherness experienced in the 'West'. Goldsworthy first began exploring these issues in her 1998 academic study *Inventing Ruritania* and then creatively in her 2005 memoir *Chernobyl Strawberries,* both of which were written and published in English.[43] The protagonists of Ugrešić's novel *The Ministry of Pain* are former Yugoslavs displaced in Amsterdam trying to come to terms with the loss of their country. Her essays offer a rich portrait of post-1989 transformations of belonging in Eastern Europe and of the ways in which the 'West' perceives Eastern Europe(ans). Both writers explore how the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia has radically transformed belonging in both personal and collective terms as well as how a new sense of belonging, in places where they and their protagonists are now, is continually interrupted. Evaristo's and Smith's novels, though primarily concerned with experiences of the 'second' and 'post-second' black British generations, who are usually of mixed-race parentage and growing up in London, explore how the notion of belonging transforms from 'migrant' to British-born generations. While the thematic shifts from 'migrant' to British-born protagonists, from 'unbelonging' to 'belonging', have mainly been seen in positive terms, Smith and Evaristo seem to complicate these clear-cut shifts not only by their inclusion of experiences of the 'nostalgic' migrant generations, but also by their representations

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[43] See Vesna Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania: The Imperialism of the Imagination* (Yale University Press, 1998).

of the British-born generations' belonging as tense and precarious.[44] This seems to be in contrast with some optimistic readings, particularly with those of Smith's novel. I suggest that it is important to consider what makes belonging precarious or continually interrupted in these narratives. This thesis thus aims to move these texts away from debates that emphasize positivity, self-formation, or their 'ethnic' aspects and instead situate the writers' concern with belonging within recent discussions of loss and melancholia.[45]

3. Main Theoretical Approaches and Structure

In order to engage in a study that examines black British and post-Yugoslav narratives of (un)belonging, one must adopt a variety of theoretical approaches. As gestured towards in the opening part of this chapter, the concept of belonging shifts across a number of registers and this is also the case in fictional representations of belonging in these narratives. The work of numerous critics and cultural commentators who are concerned with issues of belonging, loss and melancholia, 'race' and 'Eastern Europeanness' informs this thesis throughout. This section outlines some of the main theoretical concepts which are discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters. The concept of 'the politics of belonging' provides a springboard for exploring the oscillations between belonging and unbelonging. Yuval-Davis's contention that the politics of belonging involves 'determining who does or does not belong, regardless of their formal citizenship status',[46] is useful in considering how place of birth, passport, nationality, or citizenship does not seem to guarantee belonging in these narratives. I prefer though to use the term 'the politics of hegemonic belonging' throughout the thesis because I also want to consider how these narratives counter or resist such politics with their own politics of (un)belonging. As suggested earlier, the politics of hegemonic belonging also operates through hailing. Critical race theorists such as Sara Ahmed and Ien Ang,

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[44] I am of course aware of other black British novels that focus primarily on British protagonists, such as Diana Evans's novel *26a*. It would be interesting to further explore how belonging of this generation is represented in such narratives and what the absence of migrant characters enables.

[45] See Anne Anlin Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race: Psychoanalysis, Assimilation and Hidden Grief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, ed. by David L. Eng and David Kazanjian (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), Paul Gilroy, *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* (2004), Ranjana Khanna, 'Post-Palliative: Coloniality's Affective Dissonance', *Postcolonial Text*, 2, 1 (2006) and Sara Ahmed, 'Multiculturalism and the Promise of Happiness', *New Formations*, 63 (2008), 121-137.

[46] Yuval-Davis, 'Belonging is Multi-Layered', *Connections*, Quarterly from the Commission for Racial Equality, Winter 2004/5.

who have discussed hailing of belonging by reworking Althusser's seminal concept of interpellation, are particularly useful for examining the relationship between the conditions of belonging and the questions of power. Ahmed's analysis of 'the figure of a stranger' and 'embodied others' in her book *Strange Encounters* is useful in showing exactly how old and new forms of racialisation construct belonging in these narratives and how the politics of hegemonic belonging mobilises the idea of ontological belonging based on 'difference' to be found in/on the body.[47] This issue of belonging and the body became one of the first frames for potential comparative analysis as in all the narratives unbelonging arises due to various 'visible' and 'audible' markers of difference. Ien Ang's discussion of hailing of belonging through the question 'Where are you from?' for 'ethnic' generations is also particularly relevant for illuminating (un)belonging of the British-born generations in Evaristo and Smith's novels because they are repeatedly asked where they are from, even if they are born in Britain.[48] In a similar vein, Rey Chow considers the construction of ethnic identity in Western multicultural society through interpellation, whereby the 'ethnic' is seen to own their ethnicity (according to the Western sense of self as property and ownership) and hailed to exhibit it repeatedly.[49] Together, these insights inform my discussion of the processes of racialisation and othering in the narratives and what I describe as 'hegemonic reminders' – the transformation of the markers of difference, or the stubborn remains of otherness, that are repeatedly evoked to determine belonging.

Recent theories of loss and racial melancholia explored by Anne Anlin Cheng, David Eng and others, are particularly helpful for exploring the role of negative affect that is evoked in the moments of hailing. This is also relevant for examining how these narratives articulate numerous losses – of generational transmission of affect, ancestral links and stories, of earlier and recent histories that haunt the present, of losses in the war, exile and migration. Cheng's discussion of 'the ontological and psychical status of a social subject who has been made into an "object", a "loss", an "invisibility", or a "phantom"' illuminates the ways in which

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[47] See Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-coloniality* (London; New York: Routledge, 2000). I also draw on other concepts from Ahmed's work throughout the thesis and they are explained in more detail where appropriate.

[48] See Ien Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese* (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp.11-12. As she explains with an autobiographical example, despite her 'perfect Dutch' and 'assimilated lifestyle', she was repeatedly asked 'where she was from', and people were never satisfied when she said ,'from Holland'.

[49] Rey Chow, *The Protestant Ethnic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), pp.111-114.

racialised and othered bodies articulate strategies for healing and confront 'the haunting negativity' that continues to mark 'the very category of the racialised'.[50] The essays collected in *Loss: The Politics of Mourning* suggest that the melancholic state in its insistence and engagement with loss may not necessarily entail a pathological and passive condition. In contrast to Freud's negative reading of the melancholic, these recent re-readings consider melancholia as 'a depathologized structure of feeling' with productive and creative possibilities.[51] By positing the relationship between 'what is lost' in terms of 'what remains', these essays point out how the engagement with loss 'generates sites of memory and history, for the rewriting of the past as well as the reimagining of the future'.[52] In line with these positions, I examine the precarious nature of belonging, forms of melancholic attachments and moments of non-resolution in these narratives. Since all the narratives are concerned with the past 'remains' and are at the same time directed towards the future, I examine how they engage with fragments of those fractured histories of loss that can be best defined through various 'posts' – post-colonial, post-communist and post-war – and ask whether they re-imagine new forms of belonging through loss. By considering forms of belonging and unbelonging in black British and post-Yugoslav narratives in the context of melancholia and loss, the thesis complements two recent literary studies that posit the productivity of melancholia, mourning and negative affect over celebration or resolution. These are Sam Durrant's examination of mourning without closure in post-colonial narratives, *Postcolonial Narrative and the Work of Mourning: J.M. Coetzee, Wilson Harris, and Toni Morrison* (2004) and Heather Love's discussion of early-twentieth-century queer narratives which were deemed 'too depressing', *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (2007). Love's discussion can be usefully applied to consider exile or earlier black British narratives that are often considered 'depressing' and 'belonging' to the past.[53] By examining the protagonists' productive melancholia, the thesis also complements Paul Gilroy's discussion of 'postcolonial

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[50] See Anne Anlin Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race: Psychoanalysis, Assimilation and Hidden Grief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.14; p.25.

[51] David Eng and Shinhee Han, 'A Dialogue on Racial Melancholia' in *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, ed. by David L. Eng and David Kazanjian (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), pp.343-371, (p.344). See also Sigmund Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholy' (1917) in *The Nature of Melancholy: from Aristotle to Kristeva*, ed. by Jennifer Radden (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp.283-294.

[52] David L. Eng and David Kazanjian, 'Introduction: Mourning Remains', in *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, pp.1-25 (p.4).

[53] Here in particular I have in mind Joan Riley's 1985 novel *The Unbelonging*.

melancholia' in *After Empire* that is primarily focused on the examination of Britain's melancholic attachment to greatness and its inability to work through the loss of empire.[54]

Throughout the thesis, I also draw on numerous reflections on (un)belonging by writers (such as Fred D'Aguiar's notion of 'unbelongingness') since they are often much better equipped in capturing its nature. Finally, the fiction and non-fiction of Ugrešić and Goldsworthy demand a particular focus on the construction of 'Eastern European' and 'Balkan' otherness. The two are not emergent markers of (un)belonging, but have been invented over the last two centuries by the Western imagination, as many scholars of post-1989 Eastern Europe have demonstrated. Inspired by Said's *Orientalism*, since the late 1990s, several important studies have emerged with the common purpose of looking at why the Balkans (and Eastern Europe) have been perceived by the West as backward or as not quite European.[55] My reading of Ugrešić's and Goldsworthy's work is informed by the work of these scholars as well as by Goldsworthy's own contribution to the field with her examination of the imaginary imperialism of the Balkans in her ground-breaking study *Inventing Ruritania: The Imperialism of the Imagination* (1998). During the course of this thesis, problematic representations of Eastern Europeans in British media and politics became increasingly visible in a way which certainly deserves further research.[56] Some of these representations are further examined in the next chapter, since they are useful for illuminating how the monolithic markers 'Eastern European' and 'Balkan' have transformed in the present and to contrast them with the ways in which Ugrešić and Goldsworthy counter such hegemonic discourses of Eastern European otherness in their work.

The chapter structure reflects four main areas of concern through which all the writers thematically intersect: belonging and the body, belonging and 'home', belonging and movement, and belonging and memory. The thesis examines the representation of hegemonic belonging (a construction of 'inauthentic' belonging based on 'visible' and 'audible' markers of difference), the affective dimension of

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[54] See Gilroy, *After Empire*.

[55] See for example Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Vesna Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania: The Imperialism of the Imagination* (Yale University Press, 1998); *Balkan as Metaphor: Between Globalization and Fragmentation*, ed. by Dušan I. Bjelić and Obrad Savić (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002); Nataša Kovačević, *Narrating Post/communism: Colonial Discourse and Europe's Borderline Civilization*, (London: Routledge, 2008).

[56] There has also been a rise in the number of fictional representations of Eastern European migrants in Britain such as Marina Lewycka's *Two Caravans* (2007) and Rose Tremain's *The Road Home* (2007).

belonging (the writers' and their protagonists' constructions of attachments and a sense of 'home'), the ways in which movement/migration/settlement transforms belonging and the ways in which certain acts of remembering or forgetting constitute belonging. The thesis is arranged in six chapters. The four chapters of literary-theoretical analysis are structured around the particular problematic of belonging that is prevalent in all the narratives and juxtapose the writers in order to illuminate the similarities as well as differences in their concern with belonging.

Chapter 2 ('Belonging and the Body') begins to unravel the question of belonging by exploring the representations of the politics of hegemonic belonging in these narratives and the ways in which it operates through hailing and querying of belonging in the body. It begins with a discussion of Fred D'Aguiar's poem 'Home' because this provides a particularly effective means of introducing the key concerns with the body as marker of belonging and hailing. It is divided into three sections. The first section considers how 'visible' markers of belonging affect the British-born generation in Smith's *White Teeth* and Evaristo's *Lara* and explores how hegemonic belonging operates on these bodies through the posing of the question 'Where are you from?' and naming. The second section analyses how 'audible' differences and the designations 'Balkan' and 'Eastern European' mark self-representational practices in Goldsworthy's memoir and the 'migrant' body in Ugrešić's novel *The Ministry of Pain*. Because I want to emphasise their different historical development, I analyse 'visible' and 'audible' differences separately in this chapter. However, in the last section, I bring the two markers together by analysing the 'Eastern European' body – the body that has recently 'migrated' and that occupies an ambivalent position in the 'Western' imagination – in order to demonstrate how the practices of visibility may also operate on bodies perceived as unmarked by the visible (i.e. white) or assumed to be marked only by the audible differences. This is examined by comparing Evaristo's and Ugrešić's perceptions of Eastern Europe. This chapter also seeks to engage in questions beyond literary representations of belonging and investigates the marketing image of Smith and her novel, some examples of recent hailing of black British belonging in the British media and representations of Eastern Europeans (mainly from British newspapers), because such questions reflect the transformation of hegemonic belonging and provide a crucial social context to my readings of fictional texts.

Chapter 3 ('Belonging and 'Home') builds on the discussion from the previous chapter by extending the question 'Where are you from?' to the histories of the declaration 'go back where you came from/where you belong' in order to examine the complicated relationship towards 'home' in these narratives. Because 'home' has been traditionally imagined as a space of belonging and comfort, this chapter explores where and what 'home' is by comparing the protagonists who are at home with those who are not at home, those who have lost their homes with those who allegedly possess it, and considers the idea of 'home' as roots and/or routes. Drawing on Freud's and Homi Bhabha's concept of the unhomely, it analyses various manifestations of 'phantom' and diasporic 'homes' in these narratives and the oscillations of 'home' between material and imaginary place. It focuses on the affective dimension of belonging – the longing in belonging – by examining forms of attachments and the relationship between belonging and place for the British and migrant generations and in the context of migration, exile and war for Goldsworthy and Ugrešić. The last section of this chapter examines the idea of Literature as 'home' and considers whether the writers feel at home with particular literatures and literary labels they are positioned as belonging to. I bring in Evaristo's own reflections on these questions from the interview I conducted with her.

Chapter 4 (Belonging and Movement) is concerned with how belonging and unbelonging is articulated in the moments of movement and examines where movement appears and in what function. It considers how (un)belonging acquires a performative and imaginative potential in these narratives in order for the protagonists to counter the workings of hegemonic belonging and to release various burdens of belonging. By comparing the constructions of attachments and affiliations, the empowering or imprisoning forms of movement in these narratives, this chapter examines how belonging is constructed 'along the way'. However, by comparing various 'travellers' in these narratives, as well as the writers as travellers (Evaristo's and Ugrešić's essays in particular), it also asks to what extent the movement between belonging and unbelonging brings about a productive 'double-consciousness'.[57] The final section considers whether the movement between

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[57] I refer here to DuBois's and Fanon's discussion of double consciousness to examine the experiential rift that arises out of social constructions of the racialised/colonised other within oneself. See W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of the Black Folk*, ed. by Farah Jasmine Griffin (Barnes and Noble Classics, 2003), p.9 and Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. by Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 1986 [1952]). See also Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double*

generations in Smith's novel is a sign of progress and new belongings and examines whether interpretations of Evaristo's novels through the *Bildungsroman* genre displace her concern with (un)belonging into personalised journeys of self-formation.

Chapter 5 (Belonging and Memory) examines how memory may function as a foundation of belonging and considers whether the past in these narratives can serve as a resource to reconsider the present. It discusses how these narratives engage with past and present (un)belongings not only in the context of foundations, but also in the context of ruins and remains. It considers the role of generational remembering in Evaristo's, Goldsworthy's and Smith's narratives and the role of the two figures described as 'melancholic travellers' in Evaristo's *Lara* and *Soul Tourists* and the '*Trümmerfrau*' figure in Ugrešić's *The Ministry of Pain*. By comparing different forms of affect and longing in these narratives, such as nostalgia and melancholia, that define what is remembered, how and by whom, this chapter explores the narratives' investments in imagining the future and new forms of belonging. Chapter 6 (Conclusion) reflects on the main points of the thesis and is an evaluation of the writers' engagement with the question of belonging. As the Introduction began with a general discussion of 'querying' belonging, the next chapter opens with a contextualised examination of hailing of belonging in the body.

Consciousness (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993). For a consideration of exile as a double vision see the work of Edward Said and Svetlana Boym.

Chapter Two

Belonging and the Body

1. Reading Bodies

Fred D'Aguiar describes in his poem 'Home' how upon his return to Britain after some time away, the narrator is faced with 'the usual inquisition' from the customs officers at Heathrow airport:

> I resign to the usual inquisition, [...]
> my passport photo's too open-faced,
> haircut wrong (an afro) for the decade;
> the stamp, British Citizen, not bold enough
> for my liking and too much for theirs.
> The cockney cab driver begins chirpily
> but can't or won't steer clear of race,
> so rounds on Asians. I lock eyes with him
> in the rearview when I say I live with one.[1]

In this poem, Heathrow airport is an ambivalent location. It is both welcoming and unwelcoming; it is a point of departure as much as arrival. The narrator arrives as a British subject; however, he leaves the airport as a raced subject. The Customs officers choose to 'see' the narrator only through 'visible' markers of difference. What is an obvious fact – citizenship, is displaced onto the visible – skin colour, and therefore the passport does not 'match' the look. Belonging, if understood as citizenship or nationality, is simply not guaranteed and its precariousness is revealed. D'Aguiar's choice of the word 'inquisition' is evocative not only in that it demonstrates how the politics of hegemonic belonging operates through 'tracking' and tracing belonging by relying on the 'visible' bodily markers in knowing and racialising the Other (stranger). It also signals the ways in which the politics of hegemonic belonging may function as Althusser's mechanism of interpellation or 'hailing', according to which the policing powers – of the state, the nation, and in this case, the national border – are likely to 'scan', that is to detect and detain some

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[1] Fred D'Aguiar, 'Home', in *British Subjects* (Northumberland, UK: Bloodaxe Books, 1993), p.14.

bodies more than others.[2] Taking D'Aguiar's poem as a useful starting point, this chapter examines the hailing or querying of belonging. Through a close reading of Evaristo's, Smith's, Ugrešić's and Goldsworthy's works, I discuss the ways in which hegemonic belonging operates through hailing of belonging in the body according to 'visible' and 'audible' differences, assumed 'origins', the recurring question 'Where are you from?', and naming.

D'Aguiar's poem demonstrates how the notion of individual belonging, as embodied in possessions and rights (having a particular passport, citizenship, nationality), is not experienced in the same way by all individual citizens. He shows how in those moments of hailing individual belonging becomes re-defined and transformed into collective (un)belonging ('Black', 'foreign'). Some bodies are subject to constant examination, and indeed, must undergo particular lines of enquiry and answer certain questions – their 'looks', names, passports, 'belongings' and bodies thus get transformed into 'objects' of further enquiry. Spatial arrangement of immigration areas at airports clearly mirrors this idea of 'handling' bodies – consider how the holders of different passports are asked to stand in clearly demarcated lines. However, as D'Aguiar shows, those lines (and passports) do not necessarily lead to points of entry and smooth passages. Rather, some bodies get stuck on the way and some bodies do not get allowed to cross those lines.

Written in the early 1990s, D'Aguiar's poem still resonates with relevance today as it testifies to how some bodies more than others are marked by the hegemonic regimes of 'looking' and practices of visibility. In this age of 'suspicious' bodies, bodies with the 'wrong' look, 'wrong' names, or 'wrong' passports can even 'contain' a potential terrorist. The guardians of such regimes of 'looking' know exactly what to look for. For example, a darker skin, a Muslim name, or a Palestinian passport, may all lead to such points of recognition and fixing of a subject's belonging. In her analysis of the figure of the stranger, Sara Ahmed argues that the

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[2] I draw here on Sara Ahmed's re-reading of the Althusserian concept of interpellation in her book *Differences that Matter: Feminist Theory and Postmodernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp.113-118. See also Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), pp. 127-186. For a further critique of interpellation as theorised by Althusser, see for example, Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997) or Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993).

stranger is someone 'we' have already identified as such. S/he is not any-body.[3] D'Aguiar's poem thus echoes Ahmed's contention that 'strangers are not simply those who are not known in this dwelling, but those who are, in their very proximity, *already recognised as not belonging*, as being out of place'.[4]

The title of D'Aguiar's poem is therefore ironic as the poem reflects how this 'home' (home as nation, the idea of Britishness and home as a place of living) is imagined and constructed in problematic and exclusive terms. This becomes evident in the poem's juxtaposing of the hegemonic and exclusive notion of home (in the encounter with the customs officer and the taxi driver) and the sense of home for the othered and racialised British citizen who is made to feel out of place in this dwelling. The idea of home is redefined at the border. The airport, where different bodies meet and arrive, in D'Aguiar's poem then becomes a place where some bodies, to borrow Judith Butler's phrase, materialise as the effects of boundary, surface and fixity.[5] That is, in a few poignant lines, the poem not only accounts for the transformation of a subject into an object of enquiry, but also shows how this querying of belonging is dependent on the 'histories of determination that define the parameters of the bodies' and on the effects of 'corporeal and historico-racial schemas' that take different shapes in particular moments, situations and on particular bodies.[6]

But even though forms of racialisation can often undo a subject, this may not always be a paralysing experience. As the narratives discussed in this study, D'Aguiar's poem is also about transforming the negativity of unbelonging into creative counterstrategies. When the narrator finally leaves the airport, the poem ends abruptly with a scene in which the cockney cab driver complains of Asians who are seen as foreigners. In that moment, the narrator faces the driver in the rear-view with the assertion that he lives with one (a foreigner). In this role-reversal, it is the 'stranger' who locks eyes with the driver. The poem ends with a shift from the first part of the poem in which the narrator's body has been locked into the body of a

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[3] Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-coloniality* (London; New York: Routledge, 2000), p.55.
[4] Ibid., p.21, emphasis original. The relationship between belonging and 'home' is discussed further in the next chapter.
[5] Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p.9.
[6] Ahmed, *Encounters*, p.51; Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. by Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 1986 [1952]).

stranger (a surface), so that now the very surface – the 'looking back'– works as a reflection that exposes the racist gaze and the body of the racist. This short poem may therefore effectively open up the questions that lie at the heart of this chapter. How are some bodies 'seen' as not belonging? How are some bodies 'heard' as not belonging? How does it feel to inhabit a body that has been rendered 'strange'? How are some bodies marked, affected and 'scarred' by the hegemonic regimes of looking – by the looks and questions that 'burn' the body?[7] How do these bodies look or speak back and negotiate imposed strangeness?

All the writers considered in this study explore these issues – moments when some bodies are hailed as not belonging to imagined communities of the nation and/or citizenship according to 'visible' and 'audible' differences, or assumed 'origins'. But it can also be noted that all these writers are 'seen' in a particular way. Literary reception, reviews and academic discussions often place various 'burdens of representation' on these writers and align their novels with performing certain (imaginative) work.[8] Indeed, as I show in the next chapter, the work of all the writers belonging to a particular body of literature can become a matter of debate (and unbelonging) depending on particular ways of reading, as much as these writers emphasise their 'discomfort' when they are aligned as belonging to one of the following categories – black British literature, post-colonial literature, Serbian/Croatian/post-Yugoslav, Eastern European literature, or contemporary women's writing.[9] At the same time, the writers are often blurring and questioning the boundaries of these categories by belonging to more than one at the same time or by refusing them altogether.

The aim of this chapter is therefore twofold. It concentrates on exploring the concern with belonging and embodiment in the works of Smith, Evaristo, Goldsworthy and Ugrešić, and it also considers how some of these writers and their works have been read, interpreted and marketed. The first part of this chapter considers how 'visible' markers of belonging affect the British-born generation in Smith's *White Teeth* and Evaristo's *Lara* and explores how hegemonic belonging

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[7] I borrow this metaphor from Fanon's poignant discussion of the phenomenology of blackness. See *Black Skin, White Masks*, p.114.

[8] See Kobena Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies* (New York; London: Routledge, 1994), pp.233-258.

[9] Of course, all these categories may often overlap.

operates on these bodies through the posing of certain questions and naming. The second part examines how 'audible' differences and the designations 'Balkan' and 'Eastern European' mark self-representational practices in Goldsworthy's memoir and the migrant body in Ugrešić's novel *The Ministry of Pain*. This chapter closes with a reading of the body that has recently 'migrated' and that occupies an ambivalent position in the 'Western' imagination – the 'Eastern European' body. I discuss the surfacing of this figure in the British context and examine its representation in Bernardine Evaristo's blog about her impressions from the 'LiteratureExpress Europe 2000', a project that took some one hundred writers (from both 'Western' and 'Eastern' Europe) through Europe by train. By comparing these differently marked bodies, this chapter examines the transformation of markers of difference and the ways in which their residues continue to circulate in the present.

Before I move on to a close reading of individual works, it may be useful to return once more to the cab scene in D'Aguiar's poem and ask a few provocative questions. Who exactly has been hailed in this final scene – the narrator or the racist cab driver? Is the narrator hailed again, though in a more subtle way, as a 'foreign' body by the cab driver who we can clearly assume – by the cockney accent – to be a white working-class Londoner? The driver's race is not revealed, but the driver's persistent way of talking about race is emphasised – he can't or won't steer clear of it. I would read this less as a deliberate play on the unmarked whiteness of the driver, and more as a strong statement against race talk and against the reading of differences on the surfaces of bodies. The poem directs attention, our 'look' to this. Further, we can ask whether the talk of Asians as foreigners is metonymic. That is, does it represent a deliberate displacement by which the generalised collective – Asians as foreigners – stands for the narrator's 'foreign' body that the driver 'sees' in the rear-view, but what he cannot directly say? Is not the driver then performing 'hidden' violence by the talk that nevertheless 'burns'? In this sense, the driver's talk, just like the customs officer's attitude, is yet another example of the ways in which the foreigner occupies the horizon that has already been laid out according to Fanon's historico-racial schema and Ahmed's histories of determination. Or, to take a slightly different direction, one might also ask whether the cab driver 'sees' the narrator as a familiar body by 'hearing' him as a body that speaks good English (given that the narrator is sitting at the back of the cab) and thus as a body that has

passed as 'homely'. Could the driver's talk of foreigners then perhaps be also directed to some other bodies who are 'now' seen as 'foreigners'? Perhaps the driver assumes – or interpellates – that the narrator even takes his side in the conversation. The narrator, however, rightly refuses to take part, leaving the driver 'in a huff silence'.[10]

The second reading, one can easily argue, may border on over-reading, but the point of asking all these questions is not about finding or fixing the 'right' reading of the poem. As discussed earlier, the narrator speaks back to the driver thus destabilising and critiquing the very histories of determination. The aim is, rather, to draw attention to how the regimes of looking, practices of visibility and racial inscriptions may and have changed and transformed over time. In other words, it is important to ask what gets 'seen' or 'heard', and what gets overlooked and more importantly: when and where. D'Aguiar's poem dramatizes this through an ordinary daily encounter. To re-phrase the questions more bluntly – if one was to come across the names of Bernardine Evaristo, Zadie Smith, Vesna Goldsworthy and Dubravka Ugrešić in a book, what would one notice, apart from one 'strange' name (Ugrešić)?[11] How does a name mark the body and how does the notion of strangeness get watered down by first or last name (as in Evaristo and Goldsworthy)? If one was to place these writers in a line-up or in a group what would be 'seen'? Which questions would these writers be asked? And crucially, who is the beholder and the poser of questions? My reading of various hegemonic regimes of 'looking' in the works of these writers will demonstrate how often these practices of visibility say more about the beholder than about the observed bodies. And they reveal the remnants of those histories founded on the myths of differences as 'properties' or 'essences' of bodies and demonstrate how some of them have transmuted in the present.

But this is not to suggest that 'visible' and 'audible' differences should be discussed as the same entities. As Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks pointedly argues in her book *Desiring Whiteness*, 'racial visibility should be understood as that which secures the much deeper investment we have made in the racial categorization of

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[10] D'Aguiar, 'Home', p.14.
[11] The fact that the other three names do not sound 'strange' is already showing a degree of acculturation.

human beings'.[12] In *Queer Phenomenology*, Sara Ahmed, also reminds that 'white bodies do not have to face their whiteness' and that 'bodies that pass as white move easily'.[13] While language, accent or name can be 'faked' or hidden (although it should not be assumed that this is always possible), a 'black' body cannot 'pass' in the same way. Bearing in mind Seshadri-Crooks's and Ahmed's important observations, the aim is, rather, to explore the ways in which the politics of hegemonic belonging may operate by mobilizing both the visible and the audible in racialising bodies, the ways in which it generates the boundaries of belonging, and 'sees' and 'hears' some bodies through 'the logic of appearances or essences'[14] and of the larynx. I also want to suggest that there may be a contingency at work. That is, it is not only that some bodies are 'seen' as not belonging on the basis of 'visible' differences, but the practices of visibility also operate through the practices of (deliberate) mis-hearing, as my analysis of *Lara* and *White Teeth* will show. And vice versa – the practices of visibility also operate on bodies perceived as unmarked by the visible (i.e. white) or assumed to be marked only by the audible differences. I demonstrate this point in the last section of this chapter by analysing the marked whiteness of the 'Eastern European' body in Evaristo's blog and recent UK media. Looking at the moments when these 'white' bodies face or are faced with their 'whiteness', my analysis of 'Eastern European' whiteness then also supplements Ahmed's discussion of a monolithically conceived whiteness.

2. 'Seeing' Bodies

Not quite outsiders in the same way as their 'migrant' parents, nor directly affected by the experience of migration or diaspora, the protagonists of Bernardine Evaristo's *Lara* and Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* are the representatives of a new, British-born generation, often with mixed-parentage. But even though they are no longer perceived as 'extravagant strangers',[15] they are still reminded that they do not fully

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[12] Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks, *Desiring Whiteness: A Lacanian Analysis of Race* (London: Routledge, 2000), p.8.
[13] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), p.132.
[14] Michael J.C Echeruo, 'An African Diaspora: The Ontological Project', in *The African Diaspora: African Origins and New World Identities*, ed. by Isidore Okpewho, Carole Boyce Davies and Ali A. Mazrui (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), pp.3-19 (p.10).
[15] I borrow this phrase from Caryl Philips's anthology *Extravagant Strangers: A Literature of Belonging* (London: Faber, 1998), a collection of works by British writers not born in Britain.

belong precisely because of their diasporic and visible markers of 'origins'. Evaristo's protagonist Lara, a mixed-race child of an English mother and a Nigerian father, is growing up in the predominantly white South London suburb of Woolwich during the 1970s. For her, the crisis of (un)belonging is triggered by these powerful reminders when her school-friend poses a familiar question:

> 'Where'you from, La?' Susie suddenly asked
> one lunch break on the playing fields. 'Woolwich'.
> 'No, silly, where are you from, y'know originally?'
> 'If you really must know I was born in Eltham, actually'.
> 'My dad says you must be from Jamaica,' Susie insisted.
> 'I'm not Jamaican! I'm English!' 'Then why are you coloured?'
> Lara's heart shuddered, she felt so humiliated, so angry.
> 'Look, my father's Nigerian, my mother's English, alright?'
> 'So you're half-caste!' Lara tore at the grass in silence.[16]

An almost identical scene can be found in Smith's *White Teeth* when the novel's British characters, Millat and Irie, are faced with the same question from Joyce, a white middle-class mother of their school-friend:

> 'Well,' said Joyce [...] 'you look very exotic. Where are you from, if you don't mind me asking?'
> 'Willesden,' said Irie and Millat simultaneously.
> 'Yes, yes of course, but where *originally*?'
> '*Oh*,' said Millat, putting on what he called a *bud-bud-ding-ding accent*.
> 'You are meaning where from am I *originally*.'
> Joyce looked confused. 'Yes, *originally*.'
> 'Whitechapel,' said Millat, pulling out a fag. 'Via the Royal London Hospital and the 207 bus.'[17]

Both extracts demonstrate how the idea of hegemonic belonging operates through the visual economy – exotic look, coloured skin – and how the apparently-benign question 'Where are you from?' actually contains the mechanism of hailing. As Sara Ahmed argues, hailing becomes a form of declaration as well as 'recognition which constitutes the subject it recognizes'.[18] Those who pose the question have already

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[16] Bernardine Evaristo, *Lara* (Tunbridge Wells: Angela Royal, 1997), p.65. All further references are to this edition and are cited in the text.

[17] Zadie Smith, *White Teeth* (London: Penguin Books, 2001), p. 319 (emphasis original). All further references are to this edition and are cited in the text.

[18] Ahmed, *Encounters*, p.23.

assumed that these bodies have come from somewhere else, rather than having already been (born) 'here'.[19]

However, recognition does not simply stem from reliance on the visual in 'knowing' those who are perceived as strangers or the Other, but demonstrates how the idea of visual bodily markers is deeply tied to the histories of 'race' and empire that haunt hegemonic imaginings of national belonging, 'home' and citizenship. The visual markers stem from those histories and they maintain the borders of belonging. Lara's 'inauthentic' belonging is not only located in her skin colour, but she is also positioned as not belonging to an imagined Englishness which is predicated on whiteness. Through visual markers, the politics of hegemonic belonging makes Lara's and Millat's roots precarious and calls up 'inauthentic' routes in their bodies.[20] Finally, in both examples, it is precisely the language that maintains the idea of 'race' and ethnic difference couched in these seemingly benign questions.

I would argue that the mechanism of hailing also contains a practice of mis-hearing. Those who pose the first question 'Where are you from?' do not hear or simply refuse to hear that it has already been answered. What is said – the reply – is not heard and what remains reinforced and fixed is what is 'seen' – the 'origins'. The essentialising of Lara's black skin leading back to Jamaica and Millat's exotic look leading to an undifferentiated 'South Asian' location, as Ahmed points out, 'demonstrates the general problems of racialised thinking which assumes that race is secure as an origin'.[21] Though both Lara and Millat reply by claiming their birth-right as British Londoners and 'home' as a locality of living – Woolwich/Eltham, Willesden/Whitechapel – they are faced with another question: 'But where originally?'

It is in this second moment of hailing that the British generation must claim what in terms of belonging appear to be their rightful possessions (London, citizenship, place of birth). By adopting the ethnic accent in his ironic answer to Joyce's hailing, Millat 'performs' imposed ethnicity and belonging for a moment

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[19] I elaborate further on the implications of the question 'Where are you from?' for the relationship between belonging and 'home' in Chapter 3.

[20] However, there have been other black British texts and more recent novels, in which hegemonic belonging loses its power and the roots of the British-born generation are stronger or even taken for granted. See Sara Upstone, '"Same old, same old": Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* and Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 43, 3, (2007), 336-349 (pp.345-346).

[21] Sara Ahmed, 'Passing through Hybridity', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 16, 2 (1999), 87-106 (p. 97).

only to firmly declare that his own lines of arrival are via the Royal London Hospital and the 207 bus.[22] But in the moments of hailing, the British generations of *White Teeth* and *Lara* are aligned with earlier histories of migration and arrival which are inadequate for them. Through the matrix of 'refusing to hear–preferring to see' and through the displacement of 'from here' to 'from elsewhere', the British generations are made 'unrecognizable'.

As Ahmed suggests in her critique of Althusser's discussion of interpellation, the identification that takes place in the moment of hailing also 'does not fully or adequately name the subject' it is hailing.[23] She illustrates this effectively by discussing an autobiographical example – an event that took place in her youth when she was living in Australia and was on her way 'home' (a respectable middle-class suburb) walking barefoot. Looking 'suspicious', she was stopped by two policemen. In this moment of hailing, the policemen have not only aligned her with a working class body based on the absence of shoes and as someone who was already seen to be out of place in such a wealthy suburb, but they also asked her if she was Aboriginal. She indignantly replied 'no' but did not reveal her 'origins'.[24] Then one of the policemen stated, 'it's a sun-tan, isn't it?' thus assuming and positioning Ahmed as a white sun-tanned woman. In this instance, as she writes, under the now-protective policeman's eye (he gave her a wink and let her go), the colour of her body 'was evoked as an adornment rather than a stain'.[25] Ahmed discusses in detail how this event brought about a complexity of identifications and dis-identifications – a desire for whiteness, coming to terms with having been hailed as a white middle-class woman who tans her body, and finally, her dealing with the feelings of anger and shame upon realising she had been also implicated in a racist structure of identification by disavowing Aboriginality.[26]

We can see a similar mis-naming and misrecognition at work when Lara is hailed as coming from Jamaica. Even if she had been properly identified as 'actually' being half-Nigerian, this would hardly have captured the complexity of her

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[22] However, as I show later in my analysis, this is one of the rare displays of the black British generation's confidence in the novel.
[23] Sara Ahmed, *Differences That Matter: Feminist Theory and Postmodernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.114. See also *Strange Encounters*, pp.23-24.
[24] Ahmed's mother is English and her father Pakistani.
[25] Ibid, p.116.
[26] Ibid., p.117.

positioning.[27] This emphasis on Lara's genealogical paternal inheritance would again reify 'race', which is already echoed in her friend's insistence on 'then why are you coloured?', as much as it would secure whiteness as a hidden master signifier.[28] At the same time, it would be premature to read Lara's statement 'I'm English' at this stage of the novel simply as her claiming of Englishness or as a disruption of Englishness predicated on whiteness, even though her reply already partly destabilises the visual economy. Both Evaristo's and Smith's novels explore how their characters' alienation from the body passes through the stages of desiring whiteness and wanting to be 'seen' as belonging. So Lara's reply 'I'm English' may be read as a dis-identification and a disavowal of 'blackness' expressed here as not Jamaican. The escape from this vicious circle is not immediately available or possible.

The novel follows Lara from being seen through a racist gaze by her school friends as a body 'out of place' to being faced with a negative reflection of such racialised body image. During her childhood in a predominantly white London suburb of Woolwich in the 1970s, Lara is surrounded by whiteness which feels almost engulfing:

> In the showers at school I began to notice my difference.
> My skin was drier, pubis curly, titties pointy, bum perched.
> I wanted to be invisible. I wanted to be noticed. (p.70)

Lara wants to fit in and belong, but also to name and claim her mixed 'identity' – to become 'visible' at the same time. Caught up in these contradictory urges which mark her (un)belonging, Lara longs for an image or representations to identify with, but in the 1970s she can not find herself 'on the screen, billboards, books, magazines' (p.69).[29] In the same way, she tries to dis-identify from the paternal 'racial' line by avoiding walking near her Nigerian father on the street, wanting to be

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[27] As I discuss in the next chapter, Lara's identification with/or being identified through 'Nigerianness' becomes even more problematic later in the novel when she meets her Nigerian boyfriend Josh as well as when she goes to visit Nigeria in search for roots.

[28] I draw here again on Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks's discussion of the structure of racial difference as being founded on a master signifier –Whiteness. See *Desiring Whiteness*, p.22.

[29] Today, of course, this is a different story. For example, the UK 'Intermix' community website started in 1999, offers extensive references to mixed–race identities ranging from books, icons, celebrities, to film and music. See <http://www.intermix.org.uk/icons/index.asp> [accessed 08 July 2009]. John Agard's recent collection of children's poems *Half–Caste* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2005) also deals with these issues.

parentless and sucking her lips, yet she is always seen as 'nearly white' (p.65). Faced with her own reflection in the mirror, she thinks of various disguises such as covering her hair with her mother's yellow cardigan so that she may pass unnoticed, pass as white (p.64). Although passing here functions 'at the level of the intentional subject (the subject who seeks to pass in order to secure something otherwise unavailable to them)', it takes Lara time to realise that it is hegemonic whiteness that sets out the conditions of belonging and according to which she would always be potentially 'revealed' as not truly belonging.[30] As Ahmed shows in her theorisation of passing as that which always involves forms of social differentiation and antagonisms, 'subjects assume images which they cannot be or fully inhabit, but the images they assume are *already differentiated*'.[31]

Lara's cousin Beatrice, an empowered figure from Liverpool who proudly wears her 'Angela Davis' hairstyle (p.73) and who is also of mixed parentage, reminds Lara that, despite her lighter skin, she would always be 'seen' in a particular way by the hegemonic regimes of looking. Even though Lara as a teenager refers to herself as half-caste (although racist, this is the only term available to her), Beatrice tells her that 'they don't care whether/ your mother's white, green or orange with purple spots,/ you're a nigger to them lovey, or a nigra as I like to say.' (p.74). Beatrice then gives her a brief history of racism by mentioning the 1919 Liverpool race riots and that Liverpool was England's major slave-trading port in the 18th century. Lara however thinks that 'there weren't any slaves in England' (p.74) and only later in the novel will she discover that her paternal family history was deeply marked by slavery.[32] Beatrice's knowledge of these important histories, her experience of growing up in the increasingly impoverished and segregated Liverpool suburb of Toxteth in the 1970s, as well as her sense of belonging to the Liverpool's black community and to blackness as an antiracist collectivity enable her with a deeper understanding of hers and Lara's complicated positioning as 'mixed-race' bodies in the late 1970s and offer forms of empowerment that Lara lacks.

When Lara comes to her mother after sunbathing in the garden, excited about getting a sun-tan, her mother tells her not to be silly (p.60). As discussed earlier, the

[30] Ahmed, 'Passing', p.92. See full article for an excellent discussion of passing.
[31] Ibid., p.92.
[32] In chapter 5, I discuss the implications of not passing down such stories, histories and experiences.

sun-tan, according to Ahmed, becomes an adornment, a detachable accessory or colour that some bodies can acquire as well as lose and which is primarily available to the white subject. Black skin here becomes something fixed and unchangeable as if the sun-tan is unavailable and almost unintelligible in the 'black' body. The skin also becomes a border which separates rather than connects Lara to her mother. As Patricia Murray has noted, Evaristo also leaves largely unexplored Lara's mother's story as a white working-class mother of mixed-race children in 1970s London.[33] But the reason for this may also lie in subsuming class into whiteness and so emphasising explorations of the pernicious effects of race in terms of something that can be read off the body and as what some bodies inherently 'possess'. A new expanded edition of *Lara* has just been published in October 2009 and, as Evaristo has suggested, the new edition now includes a further exploration of Lara's maternal family history.[34]

Similarly, Zadie Smith's Irie, a mixed-race girl with a Jamaican mother and English father, is represented as a body 'out of place' even in the London of the early 1990s: 'there was England, a gigantic mirror, and there was Irie, without reflection. A stranger in a stranger land' (p.266). In comparison to Evaristo's Lara who comes across even fewer resources in London of the 1970s and the 1980s to define her multiple cultural heritage and affiliations positively, Smith's representation might at first appear to be slightly anachronistic, since in the 1990s, there were at last some positive black role models in Britain.[35] Smith seems to voice what Evaristo pointed out when I asked her to reflect on what has changed since *Lara* was first published in 1997. Referring to Boyd Tonkin's recent article which praised Zadie Smith's, Andrea Levy's and Evaristo's writing, for not only engaging with Britain's shared, and often deliberately forgotten, multicultural history, but also for reminding us about what Tonkin celebrates as 'the pleasure and the virtues of impurity', (and one must add the pains too), Evaristo brought up an important point during the interview:

> BE: There was a piece in the *Independent* on Friday [November 2009], [...] talking about the BBC movie of Andrea Levy's *Small*

[33] See Patricia Murray, 'Stories Told and Untold: Post-Colonial London in Bernardine Evaristo's *Lara*', *Kunapipi*, 21, 2 (1999), 38-46 (p.45).

[34] In conversation with Bernardine Evaristo at the Memory Maps Conference, CRASSH, Cambridge, 2 July, 2008. See also 'Interview with Bernardine Evaristo', Appendix.

[35] See *Companion to Contemporary Black British Culture*, ed. by Alison Donnell (London; New York: Routledge, 2002) for a wealth of references on public figures, cultural initiatives, art and activist groups, TV and radio programmes.

Island and referring to the British National Party Question Time debacle and then it was talking quite a lot about *Lara* and about having multiple heritage and how you can't unpick all those heritages. [...] That would have never happened 12 years ago because I just don't think there was the same conversation going on about race at that time, or about being mixed-race.[36]

Smith's representation of Irie's (un)belonging thus seems to fit into the context that Evaristo describes. Like Bram Stoker's Dracula who does not have a reflection, and like Lara who wants to become invisible but at the same time be noticed, Smith translates the otherness of Dracula into the invisibility of Irie as a young, British mixed-race girl in the early 1990s. Rather than making Irie ordinary, the novel describes Irie as a stranger. But mixed-race relationships were becoming more common so one must ask whether this slightly inadequate unbelonging of the British-born protagonist is a deliberate marketing strategy and to what extent the novel then offers a progressive narrative of the British-born generation. I return to this question in the chapters that follow.

Smith dramatises the crisis of (un)belonging through the body and makes Irie an outsider who is particularly unhappy with her physical appearance. Living in a world in which white ideals of beauty dominate, Irie, as a teenager, dreams of transforming her figure from Jamaican hourglass to English rose (p.267). Like the previously discussed hegemonic imagery of mixed-race children as washing out 'Englishness', this is also a negative transformation as it rests on Irie's offering of '*a little Caribbean flesh for a little English change*' (p.266, emphasis original). One day, she decides to visit a hair salon that specialises in the submission of 'the curvy African follicle' (p.275). However, the straightening of her hair ends in disaster – due to a misunderstanding between the hairdressers, Irie is left to wait too long with ammonia on her scalp and, as a result, most of her hair falls off. Trying to salvage the situation, the hairdressers make Irie go and buy several metres of 'real' Indian hair in a nearby shop. This hair is then plaited into what is left of Irie's. Similarly, Irie is fascinated with the 'liberal' middle-class Chalfens family whose 'Englishness',

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[36] 'Interview with Bernardine Evaristo', Appendix. See also Boyd Tonkin, 'Islands of Love in a Sea of Suspicion', *The Independent*, 30 October 2009 <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/boyd-tonkin-islands-of-love-in-a-sea-of-suspicion-1811353.html>[accessed 3 November 2009].

which she secretly desires, turns out to be just as 'fake' just as the hair extensions.[37] Irie does not realise nor is she able to 'see' that the Chalfens are also 'impure' English and, as Smith informs us, they are 'after a fashion, immigrants too (third generation, by way of Germany and Poland, née Chalfenovsky)' (p. 328).

Nevertheless, Irie feels 'like a Columbus discovering Arawaks' (p.321) in her encounter with the middle-class Chalfens just as Joyce Chalfen is fascinated with observing these 'exotic' bodies who have suddenly eased her middle-class boredom. By juxtaposing these two observers, Smith complicates who is studying whom in this encounter. But it seems that Joyce is the main object of Smith's satire in order to expose liberal racism. Though Joyce wants to get close to 'understanding' Irie and Millat, she is only able to 'see' them through their 'culture'. Her judgments and 'realisations' that 'Afro-Caribbeans' find it hard to establish long term relationships (p. 322) and that Millat 'had possibly a slave mentality, or maybe a colour complex' (p.375) are reminiscent of what Žižek terms a racism with a distance which '"respects" the Other's identity, conceiving the Other as a self-enclosed "authentic" community towards which the multiculturalist maintains a distance rendered possible by his privileged universal position'.[38] It is not surprising then that Smith makes Joyce a horticulturalist; she is a writer of gardening books. But Smith also uses the metaphor of horticulture to show how Joyce's studying of these multicultural bodies as different garden species is reminiscent of a civilising mission, or a process of cultivation or improvement which the word 'culture' once implied.[39] By bringing attention to this hegemonic remnant, the novel seems to be highly sceptical of the idea of multiculturalism based on a stereotypical and essentialised view of the 'ethnic' other. Joyce's observing and studying of these bodies ties in with the notion of a 'Western' individual subject who is able to penetrate into the problems of ethnic/racial community and see a larger picture. That is, it corresponds with the

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[37] Joyce and Marcus Chalfen are the parents of Irie's school friend Joshua.

[38] Slavoj Žižek , 'Multiculturalism, or, the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism', *New Left Review*, 225 (1997), 28-51 (p.44).

[39] For a short history and development of the word 'culture' see, for example, Raymond Williams's *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*.

problematic idea that '"we" (in the West) are comprised of individuals in society, whereas they (the Rest) have community'.[40]

While the Chalfens have successfully assimilated into middle-class whiteness and have become successful individuals in society, the novel describes a 1990s multicultural school playground where one can find children with 'first and last names on direct collision course' (p.326). Isaac Leung, Quang O'Rourke and Irie Jones, all have the names that contain various histories of migration – the names that 'secrete within them mass exodus, cramped boats and planes, cold arrivals, medical checks' (p.326). Ironically, the Chalfens proudly own their detailed family tree,[41] but the 'ethnic' generation's family ties and history, on the other hand, are often lost in the moments of migration or in earlier historical ruptures such as slavery. Nevertheless, the novel suggests that their ethnic first or last names seem to bind them forever to those earlier histories even in the 1990s. The British generation in *White Teeth* strive to escape that burden, but it seems that multiple cultures and mixed names do not suggest a peaceful coexistence or positive foundations, but conflict. The names are on a collision course and for example, Millat is described as living 'up to his middle name, Zulfikar, the clashing of two swords' (p.351). Even though the novel puts faith in the everyday multicultural encounters that give us best friends Sita and Sharon, its representation of 1990s multiculturalism is equally far from being fully optimistic. Everyday conviviality seems to clash with everyday racism. Sita and Sharon, the narrative reveals, are still 'constantly mistaken for each other because Sita is white (her mother liked the name) and Sharon is Pakistani (her mother thought it best – less trouble)' (p.327). Indeed, names and naming play a prominent part in both *White Teeth* and *Lara*, but their function, although multi-layered, is also different.

Lara's full name Omilara, which means 'the family are like water' (p.43) in Yoruba, signals more positively not only the presence of diasporic roots and transatlantic ancestral routes marked by slavery, however distant they may be, but also tries to make sense and engage with recent arrival routes. One such route brings

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[40] Brian Alleyene qtd. in Ulrike M. Vieten, 'Out in the Blue of Europe': Modernist Cosmopolitan Identity and the Deterritorialization of Belonging', *Patterns of Prejudice*, 40, 3 (2006), 259-279 (p.268).
[41] This is juxtaposed with an illustration of Irie's incomplete family tree (p.337-8) and her family history based on oral tradition, rumour, folk tale and myth (p.339).

Lara's father Taiwo to 1950s England, but soon, we find out, he starts calling himself Bill as the African name closes doors (p.5). The use of water imagery in *Lara* also brings to mind a familiar representation of immigrant bodies in terms of flooding or swamping metaphors – which was evident, for example, in Enoch Powell's notorious 'rivers of blood' speech. These metaphors also crop up in contemporary debates about migration in Britain as I will show later in this chapter. On the other hand, given that in nationalist politics these new, 'hybrid'/mixed-race generations are usually represented as 'washing out' the indigenous Englishness, Evaristo's use of a water metaphor in Lara's name suggests both the 'permeability' of these bodies and identities as objects in such discourses.[42] At the same time, the water imagery evokes porousness, or a fluidity or leakiness of identities, thus blurring and disturbing any such claims of pure 'origins' which the British National Party still seems to hold on to.

Lara and *White Teeth* repeatedly draw attention to the histories of racist names that mark both migrant and British-born bodies and explore how names entail or get in the way of belonging for both generations. For Ugrešić and Goldsworthy, as I show in the next section, names may also become the very markers of 'inauthentic' belonging and/or Eastern European otherness, however, they do not carry the weight of racism. In *White Teeth*, Magid and Millat's father Samad, is called an 'Indian Sultan' and 'a poof' (p.85) while fighting with the British in the Second World War. Upon his arrival in England, Samad also wants to claim his presence and to counter invisibility and racism by scratching his name onto a bench (p.505). His twin son Magid, while still a schoolboy, starts calling himself Mark Smith and wants to be in some other family and like 'everybody else' (p.151) – the process that is complete when he returns from Bangladesh, contrary to Samad's expectations, as a 'a pukka Englishman, white suited, silly wig lawyer' (p.407). Millat, on the other hand, realises in his teens that, despite being born British, he is also racialised:

> He knew that he, Millat, was a Paki no matter where he came from; that he smelt of curry; had no sexual identity; took other people's jobs; [...] that he should go back to his own country; or stay here and earn his bloody keep; [...] that he worshipped

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[42] For a further discussion of new generations and washing out of identity in the British context see Anne-Marie Fortier, *Multicultural Horizons: Diversity and the Limits of the Civil Nation* (London; New York: Routledge, 2008), p.51.

> elephants and wore turbans [...]. In short, he knew he had no face
> in this country, no voice in the country, until the week before last
> when suddenly people like Millat were on every channel and
> every radio and every newspaper and they were angry, and Millat
> recognized the anger, thought it recognized him, and grabbed it
> with both hands. (p.234)

As Teresa Brennan argues, 'naming is part of how the other is seen' and such repeated naming leaves its mark both on the skin of the other and the skin of the social.[43] The intertextual references to the Bradford protests and the Rushdie affair mark Millat's awakening protest against such naming. However, as I demonstrate shortly, it is questionable to what extent Millat's protest or Magid's desire for whiteness translate into full agency or progressive defiance of cultural expectations. This extract also shows how the question 'Where are you from?' can also contain violence, though in a muted form, and that it can be directly related to the histories of the declaration 'go back where you came from'. The question 'Where are you from?', which Anne Marie Fortier aptly describes as the cliché question, always puts the minoritised bodies in their place and reminds them of their minority status making 'their personal boundaries permeable and penetrable, shrunk back to geography closest in, to their skin and body'.[44] This is certainly evident for Lara who is also asked the same question and called racist names during her growing up. So how do these protagonists negotiate the effects of these namings?

I would suggest that Evaristo evokes a form of melancholia in *Lara*, although not in the Freudian sense of unhealthy mourning, but more in the context of recent readings of melancholia as 'a depathologized structure of feeling' with productive and creative possibilities.[45] Lara articulates her feelings of grief and hurt over racial injustice as well as loss understood as rejection, denial and the impossibility of inhabiting some forms of identity and belonging. She passes through stages when she is unhappy with her 'dark skin and wiry hair' (p.71), but she also refuses to be forever immobilized by the pain of inhabiting a racialised body and by what Fred D'Aguiar in his reflections on 'unbelongingness' describes as 'the corrosive

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[43] Brennan qtd. in Seshandri-Crooks, *Desiring Whiteness*, p.5. See also Teresa Brennan, *History after Lacan* (Routledge, London; New York, 1993), p.60.

[44] Fortier, *Horizons*, p.94.

[45] David Eng and Shinhee Han, 'A Dialogue on Racial Melancholia', in *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, pp.343-371 (p.344).

negativity of white contumeliousness against Blacks'.[46] Later, in the most poetically expressed part of the novel, Lara creatively voices her rage by calling up her 'anarchic blood and black vortices' and begins 'to dip into her skin like a wet suit' (p.87) to be finally able to emerge anew as 'the sum of all [her] parts' (p.97). She explores the ways in which collectivities such as 'Nigerianness' and 'blackness' mark her belonging. They become part of her (dis)identifications through a constant renegotiation between her own positionings of belonging and hegemonic structures of belonging. That is, the healing process that starts with her Nigerian boyfriend Josh, her travels through Europe with her friend Trish and Lara's real and imaginary search for her family's scattered histories, are variously interrupted and complicated by the intersections of race, gender, class and generations.

Lara's productive engagement with these various losses is reminiscent of recent reinterpretations of melancholia by scholars with an interest in critical race theory such as Anne Anlin Cheng and David Eng. They have not only reworked and interrogated the Freudian concept, but have also usefully applied melancholia to describe the complexities of everyday conflicts and struggles of different minority groups 'with experiences of immigration, assimilation and racialisation'.[47] By proposing to understand racial melancholia as a complex psychic conflict and an ongoing process, Eng and Han acknowledge agency and thus speak powerfully against 'the assumption that minority subjectivities are permanently *damaged* – forever injured and incapable of ever being "whole"'.[48] Most importantly, as these scholars have argued, this process is not simply an individual drama for the racialised minority, but always involves the complex and shifting social processes and causes of racialisation and othering within the dominant national imagery. As Anne Anlin Cheng writes in her study of racial melancholia, the dominant culture is also melancholic in that its 'relation to the raced other displays an entangled network of repulsion and sympathy, fear and desire, repudiation and identification'.[49] But as I point out here and develop in Chapters 4 and 5, Evaristo's *Lara* and *Soul Tourists* should not only be read as individualised and triumphant narratives of overcoming

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[46] Fred, D'Aguiar, 'Home is Always Elsewhere: Individual and Communal Regenerative Capacities of Loss' in *Black British Culture and Society: A Text-Reader*, ed. by Kwesi Owusu (London: Routledge, 2000), pp.209-220, (p.214).

[47] Eng and Han, 'Racial Melancholia', p.344.

[48] Ibid., p.363.

[49] Anne Anlin Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race*, p.12.

racial melancholia, but also for their interventions into those very complex and shifting social processes that produce both racial and national melancholia.

Both Smith and Evaristo are therefore concerned in their novels with the stages of pain, anger and grief that follow when a body or one's identity, as Caryl Phillips would put it, becomes 'traduced [...] the first time one is called a "nigger" or told to "go back to where you come from"'.[50] However, the countering of racial injury in *White Teeth*, particularly that of the British-born male characters, seems a paler comparison to Lara's productive melancholia. In the earlier extract from *White Teeth* about Millat's (un)belonging, one can clearly identify the complex ways in which racial injury and woundedness inflicted by the hegemonic reminders affect a racialised person. Millat's anger and hurt stems from knowing he would always be seen as a 'Paki'. The repetition of being called a 'Paki' has a binding effect by aligning him with an immigrant body and works as a blockage in the sense of limiting his social mobility and access – he could be a shop-owner, but not a film-maker (p.234).[51] Therefore, Millat and his friends' trip to Bradford is less about Rushdie's book – which, we found out later, he has not even read – but more about protesting against racism and indeed, about renaming. As Smith writes, it is their mission to 'put the Invincible back in Indian, the Bad-aaaass back in Bengali, the P-Funk back in Pakistani (p.232). It is not surprising then that the violence of racism is countered with violent masculinity.[52]

Smith writes about Millat's group of 'Raggastani' friends. These are British-Asian kids who have experienced racism and are influenced by US black urban and hip-hop culture. This is particularly evident when Smith describes the way they walk, talk and dress (p.232). However, the fusion of cultural influences is far from progressive and actually results in selective affinities. They are distanced from their

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[50] Caryl Phillips, 'Necessary Journeys', *The Guardian*, 11 December 2004 <http://books.guardian.co.uk/review/story/0,,1370289,00.html> [accessed 23 July 2008].
[51] I draw here on Sara Ahmed's discussion of the word 'Paki' in her book *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), pp.92-93.
[52] For a different representation of 'rudeboys' see Gautam Malkani's novel *Londonstani*. For an interesting reading of the representation of fundamentalism in Smith novel after 7/7, see Susie Thomas, 'Zadie Smith's False Teeth: The Marketing of Multiculturalism', *Literary London: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Representation of London*, 4, 1 (2006) <http://www.literarylondon.org/london-journal/march2006/thomas.html> [accessed 3 January 2009], and Helga Ramsey-Kurz, 'Humouring the Terrorists or the Terrorised? Militant Muslims in Salman Rushdie, Zadie Smith, and Hanif Kureishi' in *Cheeky Fictions: Laughter and the Postcolonial*, ed. by Susanne Reichl and Mark Stein (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Rodopi, 2005), pp.73-86.

parents' generation who seem largely to put up with discrimination, and are ready to oppose racism fiercely – even violently. But they are also distanced from earlier 'black' collective identity and political alliances that united diverse groups against racism. This marks a shift in alliances described by Kenan Malik after the Rushdie affair as 'a transformation from a belief in secular universalism to the defence of ethnic particularism and group rights'.[53] 'Raggastanis' particularly pride themselves on using as many euphemisms for homosexuality when they 'speak back' to racism.[54] Instead of forging alliances with those who suffer other forms of oppression, they incorporate homophobic elements. Contrary to Lara's creative re-imagining of belonging, which I discuss in subsequent chapters, Smith's British-born characters are rarely given the same opportunity.

In this sense, the novel does not seem to offer more progressive forms of British-Asian masculinity or indeed, alternative identifications and new forms of belonging, but shows fraught and further fragmented collectivities and particularities. Although the novel mocks imposed belonging through culture, religion and 'race' of both white liberalism and parental expectations, it equally does not resolve matters for the British generation whose foundations of belonging remain problematic. Magid does not remain true to 'his culture', because it seems that more opportunities and social mobility can only be enabled by 'becoming English'. Millat, on the other hand, belongs everywhere and nowhere (p.268) and remains caught between wanting to become a Muslim (though a different kind from the one his father has in mind) and being British – the identity that has been already saturated with 'Western' popular culture and the Hollywood gangster films he models himself on. In the end, the brothers can not reconcile their differences and remain true to their particularities. Millat's 'fundamentalism' is defused through humour, however a more conflicted belonging which marks the hyphen, or perhaps even a fragile line that is at the same time a border which connects and maintains the British-Muslim identity, continues to echo uneasily particularly after the 9/11 and 7/7.

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[53] Kenan Malik, 'Born in Bradford' <http://www.kenanmalik.com/essays/bradford_prospect.html>[accessed 10 December 2009]. For a detailed critical account of issues surrounding the Rushdie affair, see also his book *From Fatwa to Jihad: The Rushdie Affair and its Legacy* (London: Atlantic Books, 2009).
[54] This is evident in Millat's reply to the ticket-man at the station before they board the Bradford train: 'First: I'm not a Paki, you ignorant fuck. And second: you don't need a translator, yeah? I'll give it to you straight. You're a fucking faggot, yeah? Queer boy, poofter, batty-rider, shit-dick.'(p. 231).

Finally, it is Millat's mother Alsana who temporarily resolves the Rushdie incident by burning all Millat's favourite belongings on seeing him on TV in Bradford. She thereby hopes to teach him a lesson that 'either everything is sacred or nothing is' (p.237). On the other hand, Millat's father Samad supports seeing Millat at the protests and thinks this is a matter of protecting one's culture and religion from abuse (p.235). Samad thus reifies culture as something fixed and embodies the hegemonic representations of migrant/racial other as being primarily saturated by his culture/religion/ethnicity. It is actually Alsana, a member of this 'intermediate' generation, who negotiates various pulls of belonging (both secular and religious) and offers alternative, though not always unproblematic, visions of community.[55] She tells Samad about her meetings and heated discussions at the Women's Committee and that different members with opposing views can still find ways to live with one another and let others live (p.235). This is mocked and dismissed by Samad who perceives culture as something fixed. So, although *White Teeth* is concerned with forms of 'cultural racism in which beliefs, values and morals are the primary site for the marking of absolute difference',[56] which Smith exposes through humour, the question is whether such narrative strategies might easily translate into a comical generational conflict – as the inability and failure of the 'migrant' generation to foster a sense of belonging in their children – rather than having a power to reveal and point to structural inequalities in the British society that are not resolved, but continue to mark the new generation as well.

Yet, despite its contentious representation of multiculturalism and a dubious British-born belonging, upon its publication in 2000, Smith's novel was generally read as a progressive multicultural narrative and has been almost universally praised for what most reviewers saw as the novel's positive representation and celebration of multicultural London. As one reviewer observed, the novel 'captures the colourful multicultural landscape of London' and others commended the novel on its 'upbeat portrait of multicultural Britain'.[57] Anne Chisholm of the *Sunday Telegraph* even

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[55] I use 'intermediate' here which already signals the inadequacy of the term 'generation'. Even though Samad's wife Alsana, Archie's wife Clara and Alsana's niece Neena are all of a similar age, have been born elsewhere and now live in Britain, it is difficult to classify them as belonging only to the migrant generation. These characters have been rarely considered in discussions of *White Teeth*.
[56] Fortier, *Horizons*, p.6.
[57] Lisa Allardice, 'From Tangled Roots to Willesden Green', *Evening Standard*, 17 January 2000; Matthew Christopher and Hephzibah Anderson, 'Update: Fiction', *Daily Mail*, 21 January 2000.

went so far as to suggest that the novel ushers in post-racial themes and that 'the complications and conflicts, loves and hates' in Smith's novel 'result from living in a cultural melting pot [that] is not only post-imperial but post-racial'.[58] In a similar vein, Stephanie Merritt of the *Guardian* wrote that the novel 'offers a very optimistic vision: prejudice exists, but tolerance appears in equal measure, and racist violence is only mentioned briefly and at second hand'.[59] Similarly, in other reviews, *White Teeth* was not only hailed as a happy 'multicultural' novel, but Smith was also lauded as '"the George Eliot of multiculturalism", "the Lauryn Hill of London Literature", literature's "great black hope"'.[60] Smith herself and her first novel truly became, as the *Guardian* reviewer put it – '*the* literary sensation of the new millennium'.[61]

The arrival of this new, young and promising talent onto the British literary scene was widely reported in the media. Smith wrote her first novel while only in her early twenties and preparing for her final examinations at King's College, Cambridge. There were also speculations about the amount of the advance Smith received from a literary agent before the novel was published. These already well-known circumstances and a high level of pre-publication publicity were certainly part of securing successful marketing of the novel. And when Smith finally arrived onto the literary scene, she became an object of much media and critical attention. *White Teeth* received praises and endorsements from writers such as Salman Rushdie and Caryl Philips; it soon became a bestseller and was widely translated. The novel also went on to win numerous literary awards including the Guardian First Book Award, the Whitbread First Novel award and the Commonwealth Writers Prize for first book. In 2002, the novel was adapted for Channel Four.

Smith's novel was commended on taking on and exploring such 'big' themes which some reviewers characterized as 'the "fundamentals": belonging (Englishness) and roots (the past)', or as the questions 'Who are we? Why are we here?'[62] It soon

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[58] Anne Chisholm, 'Post-racial Conflicts', *Sunday Telegraph*, 16 January 2000.

[59] Stephanie Merritt, 'She's Young, Black, British – and the First Publishing Sensation of the Millennium' <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2000/jan/16/fiction.zadiesmith> [accessed 2 January 2009].

[60] Aida Edemariam, 'Learning Curve' <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2005/sep/03/fiction.zadiesmith>[accessed 2 January 2009].

[61] Merritt, 'She's Young', emphasis added.

[62] Allardice, 'From Tangled Roots'; Caryl Phillips, 'Mixed and Matched', <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2000 jan 09 fiction.zadiesmith>[accessed 3 January 2009].

became clear that the claims made for *White Teeth* were equally 'big' and the novel was hailed as 'zeitgeist fiction that captures the new spirit of Britain at the millennial threshold'.[63] All the ingredients were there – a sweeping, yet personal portrait of the twentieth century told through a multigenerational story of Jamaican and Bangladeshi immigrants, working and middle-class Londoners whose genealogy hides Polish-Jewish immigrants and the British-born generation, with an exploration of the effects of colonial and imperial history and the intricate issues of 'home', belonging and unbelonging in the multicultural metropolis and the ways in which they are experienced by different generations.

What is perhaps most interesting about *White Teeth*'s reception is how some reviewers identified an important shift in Smith's novel, that is, a shift from 'the migrant, or "post-immigrant", literature of such as Sam Selvon, Caryl Phillips, Michael Ondaatje, and Hanif Kureishi' which, according to Maya Jaggi, in Smith's new narrative is now but an echo of the previous ones.[64] Dominic Head elaborates on this point by crediting Smith with speaking 'for a third generation of post-war Black-British experience, a generation for which the concepts of 'migrancy' and 'exile' have become too distant to carry their former freight of disabling rootlessness'.[65] He goes on to argue that 'the complex problem of post-colonial identity and national affiliation [...] begins to find some kind of resolution in the intricate, but satisfying plot of *White Teeth*'.[66] This resolution, according to him, seems to demonstrate a positive progression from the 'vulnerable' and 'embattled' migrant self as represented in Sam Selvon's and V.S. Naipaul's fictions.[67] Such a reading of 'migrant' literature is however symptomatic of what the migrant figure is imagined to represent and I revisit these readings in chapter 4. In such readings, the earlier migrant remains a figure of unbelonging, and the important reasons why those earlier

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[63] James Procter, 'New Ethnicities, the Novel, and the Burdens of Representation', in *A Concise Companion to Contemporary British Fiction*, ed. by James F. English (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing 2006), pp.101-120, (p.113).

[64] Maya Jaggi, 'In a strange land' <http://books.guardian.co.uk/reviews/generalfiction/0,6121,125310,00.html>[accessed 17 July 2006]. Her use of the term 'post-immigrant' for Kureishi and Phillips is also highly inadequate and problematic.

[65] Dominic Head, 'Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*: Multiculturalism for the Millennium', in *Contemporary British Fiction*, ed. by Richard J. Lane, Dominic Mengam and Philip Tew (Oxford: Polity Press, 2003), pp.106-119 (p.107).

[66] Ibid., p.107.

[67] Ibid., p.107.

migrant figures were vulnerable and embattled are obscured. The celebration of a positive progression in Smith's novel shifts attention from earlier 'migrant' narratives and so 'white' guilt can finally be unburdened and even take pleasure in Smith's new 'British' narrative. Most recently, the BBC's 2009 adaptation of Andrea Levy's *Small Island* – the novel which engages with the post-war, post-Windrush painful experience of Selvon's and Naipaul's novels – has made a similar shift by providing the viewers with a happy ending.[68] As readers of *Small Island* would remember, Levy's novel importantly does not offer a happy ending or a resolution for the main protagonists and Queenie's mixed-race child. The discussion of *Small Island's* adaptation reaches well beyond the scope of this chapter, but the departure from the novel's unhappy ending reveals the same sense of unease and inability to fully engage with Britain's post-imperial past.

Recent discussions of *White Teeth* have been, however, more cautious of the triumphant optimism and premature celebration that followed the publication of Smith's novel. In her discussion of the novel's success, Corrine Fowler argues, by drawing on Graham Huggan's groundbreaking study *The Postcolonial Exotic*, that 'in the public domain, the novel's more radical elements were subjugated to what Huggan has described as "naive cosmopolitanism sensibility in which conspicuous inequalities [...] are elided"'.[69] Fowler suggests that these optimistic readings have not only contributed to the novel's commercial success, but have also appropriated the novel to represent a particular version of multiculturalism. Fowler's point can most clearly be seen at work in the media interest in Smith's background, namely, her mixed-race background as the daughter of an English father and a Jamaican mother. This 'quest' for locating belonging, as well as the need always to mention Smith's biographical details, is a familiar narrative that follows non-white British writers. But what is perhaps more interesting is that it demonstrated how much the media interest in Smith was driven by the fact that she was the perfect marketing

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[68] While in Levy's novel, Queenie's mixed-race baby Michael will never know who his white mother was (Hortense decides to keep a secret of Queenie's photograph), the BBC adaptation inserted a snapshot of a present day mixed-race family in London. The last scene shows Michael, now a grown up man with his own mixed-race children, looking happily at a family album that includes his white mother's photograph. This happy scene in which the past is safely distant distorts and simplifies the novel's important engagement with the past. Other aspects of the novel have been also simplified or occluded.

[69] Corinne Fowler, 'A Tale of Two Novels: Developing a Devolved Approach to Black British Writing', *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 43, 3 (2008), 75-94 (p.84).

package for the type of multicultural society Britain wanted to 'see' – mixed race. not too dark or alien, twenty something and Cambridge-educated – a perfect 'symbol of a new Britain's self-definitions' for the new millennium.[70]

Dominic Head has noted, for example, how Smith's photograph on the jackets of the book's two different editions was changed. On the first photograph. Smith appears with an 'Afro' hair-style, while on the second photograph she can be seen wearing long, straight hair. This second image, according to Head, evokes not only an 'Asian look' but also 'the ability to adopt different guises' and a 'hybridized identity that goes beyond the more cynical marketing objectives'.[71] I am not however convinced by the transgressive potential Head would like to ascribe to these new 'hybrids'. His analysis, on the contrary, even falls prey to suggesting that a mixed-race subject can pass as and even adopt two 'races' – an Asian look as well as African. In her critique of passing as transgression, Sara Ahmed cautions against such readings of 'ambiguous bodies' and points out that such reading of mixed-race bodies 'further supports the enunciative power of those who are telling the difference'.[72]

It is not clear how much influence Smith had in the choice of photographs, but one can see from some of her interviews that she was clearly not comfortable with becoming a 'spokeswoman for race, youth, women' nor with the fact that she was expected 'to be some expert on multicultural affairs'.[73] This is a familiar problem of the burden of representation for the non-white/'ethnic'/black British writer that Kobena Mercer outlined in his seminal 1990 essay 'Black Art and the Burden of Representation'.[74] A decade later, in her 2000 book *Desiring Whiteness*, Seshadri-Crooks, has noted how 'of late we have become uncomfortable in evoking racial identity', and also how 'citing someone's race' (or in Smith's case, her mixed background) becomes 'a dominant mode of establishing identity, especially in the absence of visual evidence such as a photograph'.[75] The marketing strategies around

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[70] Claire Squires, *Zadie Smith's White Teeth: A Reader's Guide* (New York: Continuum, 2002), p.15.
[71] Head, 'Multiculturalism', p.106.
[72] Ahmed, 'Passing', p.89.
[73] Smith in an interview with Simon Hattenstone, 'White knuckle ride' <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2000/dec/11/fiction.whitbreadbookawards2000>[accessed 2 December 2008].
[74] See Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle*, pp.233-258. The essay was originally published in a 1990 issue of *Third Text*.
[75] Seshadri-Crooks, p.133; p.132.

the decision to change Smith's photograph only exaggerate this fact. There is. I would suggest, more to be learnt from the transformation of Smith's look into a mixed-race-straight-hair image than simply being the expression of an ethnically indeterminate 'look' and identity.[76]

The transformation can be more accurately described as a 'straightening device' – to borrow Sara Ahmed's excellent phrase coined in *Queer Phenomenology* – that operates on several levels.[77] First, it accommodates Smith's image for the dominant version of multiculturalism within a white cultural ideal in the form of straight hair and a 'not too dark not too alien' look. As I have discussed, this trope of 'taming' black hair is also prominent in *White Teeth* and implies a negative transformation. Secondly, Smith embodies a perfect product of heterosexual hybridity for the new image of the multicultural nation.[78] As these descriptions of Smith and her novel show, and as Ahmed pointedly argues, 'mixed-race body [...] enters public culture as a spectacle'.[79] In this case, and according to Ahmed, Smith would fall under the celebratory version of mixed-raceness by which the mixed-race body is 'idealised as the new hybridity, as the meeting point between races [...] a sight of pleasure, or a good object that supports the fantasy of "multiculturalism" as a "cultural mix"'.[80] Thus, as a straight/ened and acceptable face of new Britain, Smith was hailed as a representative not only of the new 'Cool Britannia', but also of a promising new generation of writers hopeful for a particular version of the multicultural future. In this sense, the novel, as it were, came to 'belong' to the nation.

Exploration of the novel's reception also helps to expose the terms under which one becomes part of the mainstream literary establishment, which ironically Smith is very much a part of today, and sets up conditions for writers to come. My final example of the 'straightening device' can be found in a phrase that the novel produced – 'the new Zadie Smith'. Attached to some novels more than others, such as those of Monica Ali, Hari Kunzru and Diana Evans. this phrase is performative in that it aligns, classifies, evaluates and qualifies the writers who come to be seen as

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[76] Head, 'Multiculturalism', p.106.
[77] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p.92.
[78] For a further discussion of this aspect of hybridity see Fortier's *Multicultural Horizons*.
[79] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*. p.143.
[80] Ibid, p.144. Interestingly, a year after *White Teeth* was published, the 2001 United Kingdom census recognised 'mixed-race' as an ethnic category.

worthy of such characterization as much as it produces the novels worthy of extensive discussion and study and, as a result, marginalises others. As suggested in Fowler's discussion of Joe Pemberton's novel *Forever and Ever Amen* set in Manchester's Moss Side, it would also exclude non-London based novels. For this particular 'multicultural' taste, 'the new Zadie Smith' novels would obviously consist of those perceived as not dealing with 'depressing' themes or of those novels that seem to be capable of overcoming migrant and postcolonial concerns.

While Smith's novel, with its diverse and numerous characters, however undeveloped some may be,[81] was perfectly suitable to be incorporated into the imagined body of the multicultural nation, Evaristo's autobiographically inspired verse novel *Lara* was deemed as 'too personal' to be considered in such manner. In an interview, Evaristo comments on how her writing was sometimes relegated to an exploration of personal issues:

> In a complimentary review, one critic said of my work, 'Evaristo is obviously trying to explore her identity or just feel at home in England', and I remember thinking, well no, this is actually about OUR culture, I'm talking about British culture – why does that have to be personalized into an exploration of my identity . . . why can't she, the critic, *see* it as an exploration about British identity and buy into it herself?[82]

Evaristo asks an important question and rightly protests against the narrowing of her wider concern with identity and (un)belonging to personalised explorations of her 'diasporic heritage' (like Lara, Evaristo's father is Nigerian and her mother English) and to thematic issues that would only speak to and of a particular ('black') community.

Contrary to such a limiting reading, Mark Stein's study *Black British Literature: Novels of Transformation* proposes to read Evaristo's *Lara* as a diasporic *Bildungsroman*, and more broadly, as belonging to black British novels that, he argues, are not only concerned with 'the *formation* of its protagonists', but also with

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[81] See James Wood's review 'Human, All Too Inhuman' <http://www.tnr.com/politics/story.html?id=504a27d4-c41b-46e3-97a3-c586c927117> [accessed 1 June 2008]. He points out how Smith's novel over-relies on plot rather than characterisation and argues that the characters very often slip into caricature and shiny externality.
[82] 'On the Road: Bernardine Evaristo interviewed by Karen Hooper', *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 41, 1 (2006), 3-16 (p.4), emphasis added.

'the *transformation* of British society and cultural institutions'.[83] But as I investigate in chapter 4, this can risk personalising (un)belonging into an individual or generational conflict, or indeed, imply a resolution of belonging. At the end of the novel, Lara steps out of Heathrow into her future, yet it would seem too optimistic to read her return as a resolution and a guarantee of belonging. Likewise, Smith's *White Teeth* does not offer a neat resolution, and the ending openly addresses such expectations of the novel:

> And is it young professional women aged eighteen to thirty–two who would like a snapshot seven years hence of Irie, Joshua and Hortense sitting by a Caribbean sea [...] while Irie's fatherless little girl [...] feels free as Pinocchio, a puppet clipped of paternal strings? [...] But surely to tell these tales and other like them would be to spread the myth, the wicked lie, that the past is always tense and the future, perfect. (p.541)

This deliberate play on tenses suggests that such effortless belonging, free of any baggage of origins, roots and history, has not yet happened, but that it may be expected to happen – the success of its realisation and achievement precisely depending on how (in)tense these residues of the past are. So the story of Irie's daughter is still to be written. The small rebel brown mouse that escapes its predetermined genetic destiny in *White Teeth* and Lara's look into the future in the novel's last lines are perhaps not so much images of the perfect future, but the expression in both novels of hope and the need for such utopian imaginings of belonging. The questioning yet at the same time hopeful tone of *White Teeth's* last lines points to a re-imagining of potential future belonging, rather than identifying the new millennium as a particular moment where the issues of belonging and unbelonging have been resolved and have therefore become redundant.

However, from some recent symptomatic moments hovering over the British politics of belonging, one gets a rather less optimistic image that demonstrates how residues of hegemonic belonging still linger. As Barnor Hesse points out, drawing on Raymond Williams's notion of the residual as that which has been formed in the past but re-emerges in the present, 'challenging colonial representations and racist regulations of "non-European" others has a long imperial history, which resurfaces

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[83] Mark Stein, *Black British Literature: Novels of Transformation* (Columbus: Ohio State University, 2004), xiii.

renarrativized in the contemporary idioms of the British way of life'.[84] I want briefly to draw attention to two examples that, interestingly, mirror the workings of naming and hailing I have discussed in the novels. One example is about the debate that followed when a video of Prince Harry, in which he called an army colleague a 'Paki' was leaked to the press. Various sides engaged in discussing whether Harry's comment was racist or not. Some claimed this was simply a normal part of army banter and soldiers' name-calling.[85] In some more awkward justifications of racism, it was even claimed that the word was not said in *that* way according to the tone of Harry's voice in the video. Allison Pearson of the *Daily Mail* wrote accordingly that, while the word 'Paki' had negative connotations for her generation, it may no longer seem offensive for Harry's generation, as race is no longer significant to these colour-blind young Britons and that the word 'Paki' may even be a part of their edgy sense of humour.[86] She also pointed out that it is the 'chavs' who are now subjects of racism.[87]

The second example I want to outline happened shortly before Harry's 'Paki' incident. Following Barack Obama's recent election victory, the BBC Newsnight presenter Jeremy Paxman was joined by two black British figures to comment on this important event – Baroness Amos, a senior Labour politician, and Dizzee Rascal, a young hip-hop musician from London.[88] During their discussion about the possibilities for a first black British Prime Minister, Amos pointed out that more debate about 'race' was needed in Britain. At this point, Paxman suddenly interrupted Amos and slipped out that cliché question by asking Dizzee Rascal if he considered himself to be British. Unconcerned, the young musician replied in a

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[84] Barnor Hesse, *Un/settled Multiculturalisms: Diasporas, Entanglements, Transruptions* (New York: Zed Books, 2000), p.18.
[85] Matthew Taylor and Audrey Gillan 'Racist Slur or Army Banter? What the Soldiers Say' <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2009/jan/13/military–prince–harry–race–issues> [accessed 23 January 2009].
[86] Allison Pearson , 'Lets be honest, Harry is no racist' <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article–1114719/ALLISON–PEARSON–Lets–honest–Prince–Harry–racist.html> [accessed 23 January 2009].
[87] Chav is a derogatory term usually applied to young white working-class Britons. For an excellent reading of the 'chav' figure see Imogen Tyler, 'Chav Mum, Chav Scum': Class Disgust in Contemporary Britain', *Feminist Media Studies*, 8, 2 (2008), 17-34.
[88] Full interview available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/7789194.stm>[accessed 23 January 2009]
See also Italian Prime Minister's remark on Obama's 'sun-tan' <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/us_and_americas_us_elections_article5100973.ece>[accessed 12 November 2008].

typical 'street' hip-hop vernacular: 'Course I'm British, man – you know me [...] it don't matter what colour you are. It matters what colour your heart is man'.[89] While the BBC backed up Paxman stating that the question was '"a natural part" of a chat about Britishness',[90] the fact that Dizzee Rascal, a British-born Londoner, was asked this question, simply because he was black, remains. It is important not to forget who poses such questions to whom and which individuals and groups are still repeatedly hailed to declare their belonging.

Each of the comments raises a number of important issues that deserve further discussion reaching beyond the scope of this chapter. But the two recent examples from British everyday life clearly reflect the unresolved tensions of Smith's and Evaristo's novels. The Dizzee Rascal and Prince Harry incidents illustrate the ways in which the practices of visibility and naming have transformed. They keep haunting the body politic of Britain. What both examples show is not that some bodies 'have' a problem with belonging or that they repeatedly fail to feel at home, but that as long as there exist such hailing or querying about belonging and origins, as long as there are attempts to cut off questions such as 'Where are you from?' from previous histories of association or make names such as 'Paki' not sound insulting, belonging is always already going to be problematic, tense and contentious.[91]

3. 'Hearing' Bodies

When thinking about belonging and the body in the post-war, post-Yugoslav context, it is difficult not to think about a disorientating number of missing bodies, of places such as Srebrenica and other mass graves, of freezer lorries transporting corpses of men, women and children from Kosovo to various locations in Serbia, of all those bodies that 'belonged' to the 'wrong' ethnic group.[92] It is also difficult not to remember raped women's bodies during the wars of the 1990s, and how the war

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[89] <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/7789194.stm>[accessed 23 January 2009].

[90] Ibid.

[91] I draw here on Sara Ahmed's discussion of what she terms 'sticky signs' and how the use of some words, such as 'Paki', become sticky through repetition – therefore the difficulty of not hearing the word without hearing it as insulting. See *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p.91.

[92] I will not be going further into this context here, but I want to signal its importance as the idea of belonging and the body gets a rather morbid and concrete expression during the wars of the 1990s, especially when one thinks of the scale of atrocities committed.

played out on women's bodies, both literally and symbolically.[93] Women's bodies were mobilised as objects for reproducing the nation (through an emphasis on women's reproductive role during the war) and used as battlefields and embodiments of territories in order to conquer and humiliate 'the enemy' (through systematic raping of women from 'other' ethnic groups). It becomes difficult not think about the nationalist politics of belonging during the disintegration of Yugoslavia (and about its effects today) when 'ethnic' markers, names and accents became the sites of differentiation and 'properties' of bodies that could 'reveal' the 'ethnic stranger'.

In Dubravka Ugrešić's novel *The Museum of Unconditional Surrender,* the narrator describes the beginnings of those tensions in the 1990s when her friend, a woman from Belgrade who is married to a man from Zagreb, becomes identified as a suspicious body:

> Finally Ivana gave birth to an exceptionally beautiful little boy. Life seemed intoxicating and bright even when she came out of the house to find her car (with a Belgrade number plate) covered with spit, even when she found anonymous messages in her postbox...'Serbian whore. Go home!' Ivana changed her Belgrade number plate for a Zagreb one. Life seemed bright even when she went to Belgrade and found her car covered with spit, even when she found anonymous messages in her postbox...'Croatian whore. Go home!'[94]

Ugrešić describes what many 'ethnically' mixed marriages were faced with when national belonging became redefined along clearly demarcated lines. That is, 'Serbian' woman, married to a 'Croatian' man and living in Zagreb, would be seen as an abject body threatening the 'purity' of a newly imagined Croatian national identity. She must therefore return to where she 'belongs' (Serbia). The image of car number plates (in Former Yugoslavia, they used to display a city name in an abbreviated form making it easy to identify where the car and the driver 'comes

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[93] There has been an extensive, particularly feminist, research of this issue. See for example Vesna Kesić, 'Muslim Women, Croatian Women, Serbian Women, Albanian Women...', in *Balkan as Metaphor: between Globalization and Fragmentation,* ed. by Obrad Savić and Dušan I. Bjelić (Cambridge Mass; London: MIT Press, 2002), or Vesna Nikolić Ristanović, *Women, Violence and War: Wartime Victimization of Refugees in the Balkans* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2000). For a fictional exploration see Slavenka Drakulić's novel *As if I am not There: A Novel about the Balkans* (London: Abacus, 1999).
[94] Dubravka Ugrešić, *The Museum of Unconditional Surrender* (London: Phoenix, 1999), p.223. All further references are to this edition and are cited in the text.

from') demonstrates not only the alignment of bodies with belonging to a territory and the 'tracing' of origins on the basis of this territory, but also the banality of signifiers of difference (car plates as 'evidence' of belonging). But in this quote Ugrešić also shows how in the nationalist imaginary women are always already constructed as abject and suspect bodies. The image of the 'Croatian or Serbian whore' reveals suspicious loyalties through her being married to or being intimate with a member of the 'enemy' nation, rather than fully belonging to 'her' nation and 'their' men.

This expulsion of abject bodies can be seen at work on Ugrešić's own experience during the disintegration of Yugoslavia. As an already established writer in then-Yugoslavia, she has been one of the few critical female voices in Croatia who found it a necessary political and ethical task to speak against the emerging post-Yugoslav nationalisms. As outlined in the Introduction, Ugrešić, among other vocal critics, mostly feminists, soon became a target of an intensive media campaign in Croatia. Ugrešić subsequently left the country and, since then, she has been living in and writing from the Netherlands. It is ironic that she has become known in the 'West' as the most renowned 'Croatian' writer, while 'back home', until very recently, she would be referred to as a writer who went into a self-imposed, voluntary exile and excluded from the body of a 'new' Croatian Literature established after the war. Although Ugrešić refuses to identify with any 'ethnic'/national labels, the 'West' can only 'see' her through these markers. I discuss how Ugrešić reflects on these classifications in the next chapter.

Vesna Goldsworthy asks, 'Am I Balkan?' in the preface to her book *Inventing Ruritania: The Imperialism of the Imagination,* one of the key studies of post-1989 Eastern Europe that explores the discourse of Balkanism, or ways in which the West 'looks' at the Balkans and/or Eastern Europe.[95] This question can explain why Ugrešić is usually 'seen' as a Croatian writer which, indeed, has a 'balkanizing effect' on the writer and her works by marginalising both into this narrow category (writing 'from the Balkans'). But the question of being 'Balkan' or being perceived as Balkan' can also introduce both writers' concern with belonging and the body.

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[95] The term 'Balkanism' was first coined by the historian Maria Todorova in her book *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). See also *Balkan as Metaphor*, ed. by Dušan I. Bjelić and Obrad Savić.

Apart from their writing of the unbelonging that results from the Yugoslav crisis, both Ugrešić and Goldsworthy, also write about a specifically 'Western' gaze that further 'presses upon' alienated embodiment through the workings of generalising categories such as 'Balkan' and 'East European'. There has been a deeper investment in the meaning of these terms and, particularly in the case of the Balkans, these histories of determination would resurface again during the 1990s wars in Former Yugoslavia. But as I show in the last section of this chapter, following the recent enlargements of the EU in 2004 and 2007, it seems that Eastern Europe is now overshadowing the Balkans and occupies a difficult terrain in Western imagination, politics and everyday life.

Although the writing of Goldsworthy's memoir *Chernobyl Strawberries* sprang from a personal crisis, it also speaks about the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the ways in which it has affected Goldsworthy. Even if she is witnessing the wars of the 1990s from a temporal and spatial distance in London, they nevertheless cause dramatic identity shifts that Goldsworthy metaphorically juxtaposes with the images of her young and her cancerous body. The wounded storyteller's body is often conflated with her attachments to the country of her birth and her early life, which has now, despite her hauntingly beautiful memories, turned into a painful place to revisit:

> The outlines of the hills, rising from the murky confluences of the Sava and the Danube, were as well known to me as the curves of my own body. It might not be an accident that the two were wounded and disfigured so soon after each other.[96]

The violent disintegration of the country presses on, and is felt on, the body in the literal image of a pervasive tumour. When Goldsworthy is about to undergo surgery, she notices that she is wearing a bracelet bearing her 'name, date of birth and gender (a succinct biography)' (p.253), without the burden of place. This implicitly echoes Goldsworthy's particular speaking position and material location, together with the ways in which such construction of self-image is marked by the tensions and entanglements of personal and collective history. It speaks of the need to feel

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[96] Vesna Goldsworthy, *Chernobyl Strawberries* (London: Atlantic Books, 2005), p. 152. All further references are to this edition and are cited in the text.

unburdened, but at the same time of its impossibility – the scar, both literal and metaphorical, will always remain imprinted on the skin.

Goldsworthy's name, mother tongue and accent also become burdensome at different moments in the memoir. Witnessing the war from London, and being faced with Western Balkanisms that have characterised the representation of the Yugoslav wars in the British media, it becomes difficult for Goldsworthy to identify as 'Serbian' and to reveal where she 'comes from':

> In the quiet of the night my voice suddenly sounded more foreign for some reason. 'Where are you from?' the man continued. 'Russia,' I said, suddenly taken aback by the realisation that I pretended to be Russian in order not to talk about the war in Yugoslavia. (p.209)

Just as language/accent marks the body, the question 'Where are you from?' makes the body anxious – it becomes painful and shameful to declare that one now comes from such a country. On the other hand, in the early years of her life in 1980s London, her first name 'Vesna' often and at best turns into 'Vanessa', which she sometimes accepts and uses strategically as her 'onomastic equivalent of an invisible cloak' (p.31) for 'passing' as English. While becoming a British citizen may have been easier for her by marriage, which she satirises as just another bureaucratic procedure, in everyday life it entails the same exclusions.

Her last name, Bjelogrlić-Goldsworthy, often creates a comic confusion and eventually she decides to drop 'the beautiful, unpronounceable [maiden] name, which was her [paternal great-grandmother's] bequest' (p.36). At one of her first jobs, Goldsworthy reveals, she was perceived as sounding too foreign to be answering phone calls. These audible differences subsume her into generalised Eastern European otherness, by which her education, class, or gender is elided and matters less. Thus, even though she offers a heroic image of her early years in London, 'becoming' British for Goldsworthy also involves a negotiation and a letting go of those stumbling, 'itchy names' (p.31). As Sneja Gunew points out, like 'skin',

language, and here we can add accent and name, can also become a constitutive element in the creation of the outsider.[97]

On 'becoming' Serbian as an effect of the bloody disintegration of Yugoslavia, Goldsworthy turns her memoir turns into a painful narration. Ironically, she witnesses the war from another part of the continent, but nevertheless *in medias res* of the media machine, working as a broadcaster for the BBC World Service. She had joined the company in order to keep her mother tongue alive, but then ended up knowing 'more words for dying than the Inuit know for snow' (p.214). Although Western media representation of the war is briefly mentioned in the memoir through the haunting headlines 'Balkan, war, dead' (p.211), which she sees appearing daily in the British newspapers, this is nevertheless one of the critical factors that determine the development of her external critique of Balkanism. In other words, her very locatedness in the West enables her to see how much 'the Balkans' have been balkanised from the outside. This is illustrated by an episode when the Serbo-Croat news service split up during the war and Goldsworthy reveals that there was no Bosnian programming and no Bosnian Muslims were employed (p.205). Her colleagues become divided according to their accents, but also by a dividing wall:

> In an echo of the world of Balkan politics, the BBC had given the Serbs and the Croats adjoining rooms, with no connecting doors but with a large window in the dividing wall, so that we could always see what the others were up to...Was the management trying to send some kind of message? (p.213)

This can be read as an ironic comment on the Western media's balkanisation of 'space' as everyone, Goldsworthy observes, continued reporting on their own 'side' – 'under the caring eyes of our British bosses, we went forth and multiplied our programmes, as long as the wars went on' (p.205). But although Goldsworthy is trying to question the idea of Western media's objectivity in news reporting and its role as an 'educator', she perhaps misses an opportunity to put herself in an imaginary window of other 'sides', which one may feel is a missing story in the memoir. A glimpse into those *other windows* could have further questioned the stereotype of 'sides'.

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[97] Sneja Gunew, 'The Home of Language: A Pedagogy of the Stammer', in *Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration*, ed. by Sara Ahmed and others (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2003), pp.41-58 (p.45).

During her night shifts at the BBC, she attempts to get close to the pain of innocent people in her homeland, but when she becomes 'a hostage to the stories of death about which she could do nothing but transmit' (p.208), she decides to move away. Having realised that the stereotypes of 'ancient Balkan hatreds' go back much further, she keeps 'escaping to the British Library to work on a book about the Balkan past with much more enthusiasm than [she] ever had for the Balkan present' (p.215), thus announcing *Inventing Ruritania*. As I discuss in more detail in Chapter 4, she uses the genre for exploring oppositional forms that may contest another kind of history of perceptions. Having self-consciously announced that she is 'a bookish girl, a London university teacher', but also 'a great-granddaughter of shepherds from the Montenegrin and Herzegovinian limestone uplands, part of a cousinage of bishops and reluctant throat-biters' (p.20), recalling Dracula imagery, Goldsworthy creatively uses the strategies of self-construction and self-othering in the imagological sense in order to counter Western Balkanisms.

Echoing Goldsworthy's concerns, Ugrešić's novel *The Ministry of Pain* concentrates on a group of former Yugoslavs in Amsterdam whose stories are tied together by a female narrator Tanja Lučić, a lecturer of Yugoslav literature. It describes how they are often perceived as 'the fall-out of Balkanization', but also as 'savages', 'foreigners' or 'the beneficiaries of political asylum'.[98] The novel constantly juxtaposes the specificities of the post-war Yugoslav condition of exile and displacement with the dominant and generalising image of the foreigner through which migrants, exiles, refugees and asylum seekers are aligned and their differences blurred. That is, once former Yugoslavs start arriving in Amsterdam in waves, scampering out of the country like rats (pp.20–23), they are no longer only the victims of 'Balkanist' discourses, but also simply another set of bodies that are not welcome and that take too much 'space'. Ugrešić's metaphors of waves and scampering rats clearly evoke large numbers and undifferentiated masses.

The novel also explores the condition of exile and displacement as a bodily experience – a difficult condition of loss and discomfort felt on the body in an unhomely environment. Tanja has been lucky to get a temporary post as a lecturer of Yugoslav literature at the University of Amsterdam – a profession that no longer

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[98] Dubravka Ugrešić, *The Ministry of Pain* (London: Saqi, 2005), p.58. All further references are to this edition and are cited in the text.

exists in her former country. Ironically, her students are mostly former Yugoslavs, but they are not real students either. For most of them, enrolling for a university course was a way of prolonging their stay in Holland. Most of Tanja's 'students' have come with the war – some as refugees, others avoiding military service, some had real while others had 'imaginary' Dutch partners. Having all experienced, although in different ways, the loss of common language, country, a sense of 'home' and safety and for some of them the loss of family members in the war, they live in an Orwellian-like limbo in Amsterdam.

While both Goldsworthy's and Ugrešić write about bodies in pain, Goldsworthy's memoir explores physical trauma and the pain issuing from the body – literally from the post-operative body recovering from cancer – juxtaposing it with the emotional pain she experiences while witnessing the disintegration of Yugoslavia. And while Goldsworthy often uses humour to counter pain and to invert the stereotypical images of the Balkans and Yugoslavia, in Ugrešić's novel, the pain, which resonates so powerfully in the title and throughout the novel, is inexorable. Tanja's emotional trauma is buried so deep within the body that it only later becomes pain appearing on the bodily surface. Even though the novel is set almost 10 years after the war, we are told that Tanja often feels a painless pain (p.169) and harms herself in order to feel some real physical pain. Similarly, later in the novel another 'student' Uroš commits suicide because he is unable to cope with the knowledge that his father committed horrific crimes in Bosnia. As we find out, his father made captive Bosnian Muslims play humiliating 'father and son' sexual games before beating them to death and throwing their bodies into the ponds (p.139).[99] In Ugrešić's novel, human bodies are therefore humiliated and violated both physically and mentally.

Having found herself in 'the ever present physicality' of Amsterdam, the city for Tanja, in fact, has 'no power to arouse' (p.77). Her experience of Amsterdam as a transitory place, a miniature doll's house, and of Holland as a country 'built on sand' – all evoking erasure, forgetting, and disappearance – further expresses her anxieties of turning into the observed, a body out of place, without a voice. This partly mirrors

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[99] In his recent article, Dejan Ilić takes up this scene from Ugrešić's novel to explore the difficult and rarely talked about issue of male rape during the wars in Former Yugoslavia. See Dejan Ilić, 'Kruna od Trnja', Reč 78, 24 (2009), 105-124 (in Serbian).

Irie's and Lara's experiences of inhabiting a body that has been rendered strange and without reflection. But this experience also makes Ugrešić's heroine an insightful observer. However, as I shall show in chapter 4, there are disadvantages as well as advantages of this 'double-vision'. Tanja is the one who can 'see' the ways in which the humiliated bodies of her former Yugoslav compatriots are marked with a particular tension – 'the manner in which they moved [...] betrayed their loss of personal space (p.24) – and they 'looked like corpses that had risen for a bottle of beer and a round of cards but ended up in the wrong place' (p.23). At the same time, this can be read as her own self-reflection – her ability to see the world in such sharp observations betrays an inability to look into her own pain.

The power of the gaze, between observation and being observed, are conflated in the novel as well as Tanja's (un)belonging to the community of real post-Yugoslav exiles. This culminates in the novel's handcuffing scene when Igor, one of Tanja's students, comes to her flat to ask for an explanation for why she had decided to fail him in their final exam (even though Tanja found his paper the best). In the second part of the novel, Tanja is warned that some students allegedly complained that they were not doing anything in class and that she should start giving real lectures. In the first semester and before Uroš's suicide, Tanja and her students all decide to talk about the memories of their vanished country in their classes. A rigorous literature lesson that follows after alleged complaints about Tanja's teaching represents Tanja's inability to come to terms with her personal and professional loss as a lecturer of Yugoslav literature and with a possibility that the post might end. This also alienates her from her students. In a reversal of the teacher-student relationship, the observer and the observed, Igor shows to the handcuffed Tanja that observing can only be partial. He reveals how Meliha, a 'student' with a degree in literature from Sarajevo University could have been the teacher, but instead worked in the red-light district.

Interestingly, these layers of privileged and less privileged stages of exile are to be found in the most striking metaphor of pain – the novel's title. It refers to a 'sweat shop' specialising in the manufacturing of sado-masochistic clothing for a club called 'The Ministry of Pain'. Most of these ex-Yugoslavs worked there as it was one of the best paid jobs they could get without a work permit. The handcuffs, which the students gave Tanja as a present for her birthday, metonymically stand for

that other knowledge her students have. They represent another painful side of exile and migration – that is, the unspoken material conditions of 'slave' labour for 'Western' pleasures. Isn't then Tanja's mighty scream after Igor leaves her flat, a reminder of the pain that cannot be expressed in words, as much as it is her own? Ugrešić knows perhaps that romanticising exile and writing exile through the body may also entail violence and that as such exile must always remain an unfinished narrative.

Not surprisingly, soon after the handcuffing scene, Ugrešić revisits the margins of the city once again, by way of inserting a story within the story, in order to tell a stronger tale of inhospitality towards the 'barbarian', foreign presence pushed out into the city suburbs. The inhabitants of 'Little Casablanca', one of Amsterdam's immigrant ghettoes, where Tanja now lives her 'low-life visa' since her teaching position could not be extended, 'bear the invisible stamp of Columbus on their foreheads' (p.223) just as Tanja's compatriots wear their 'invisible slap on the face' (p.20).[100] These two bodies of immigrants with their different and difficult histories of arrival now occupy the same margins, but their lives rarely touch. Ugrešić's novel does not imagine any potential alliances or solidarities among them based on the shared experiences of alienation and (un)belonging. Rather, these bodies remain in constant, prolonged and immobilising pain as described in Tanja's only encounter with the inhabitants from 'Little Casablanca'. The three young boys who try to steal her purse all have 'the dark, sullen look of grown men' (p.233) and the piercing cry of one of them is described as coming 'from some unknown depths' (p.234). The pain is too deep to be resolved and a perpetuating circle of violence continues to mark the bodies of these new generations of outsiders. As I show in Chapter 4, even the precarious existence of 'Little Casablanca' – that old and well-known migration route from Africa to Europe – will soon be replaced by a new route, a new wave of migration of the emergent post-communist undergrowth. In this sense, Ugrešić's novel points to uneven representations of other non-European migrations occurring daily, and it also announces a shift from the Balkans and Former Yugoslav traumatic sites to new 'Eastern Europe' that is now 'on the move'.

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[100] Little Casablanca is Ugrešić's fictional creation. In conversation with the author in Amsterdam, 7th June 2009.

Indeed, new 'strange' bodies have recently arrived in 'Western' metropolises. In May 2004, the European Union was enlarged with eight new countries, most of them ex-communist and 'Eastern European'.[101] However, the atmosphere following their admission was not fully welcoming. While becoming a part of the EU has now guaranteed freedom of movement and travel for these 'new' EU nationals, a majority of 'old' European Union states introduced work restrictions fearing they might be 'flooded' with workers from these poor countries. Although the UK was one of the few states which allowed free movement of 'new' Europeans workers (although it introduced the restrictions for Romanian and Bulgarian nationals, the less wanted Eastern Europeans, when they joined in 2007), their presence in Britain was soon seen as problematic and thus re-awakening old anxieties. The government and the media became preoccupied with allegedly overwhelming numbers of 'Eastern Europeans' and began speculating exactly how many of them have arrived and how many of them will, if at all, eventually go back. It appeared that suddenly these 'Eastern Europeans' could be found everywhere, even in the remotest parts of Britain, swamping and taking over British labour markets with their cheap, illegal labour and burdening social services.

This rhetoric of flooding and swamping has had a long history in the British media and politics, particularly in nationalist circles (from Enoch Powell and Margaret Thatcher to David Blunkett) and is part of a familiar discourse on migration in Britain. So, a language previously used on post-1945 black and Asian immigrants, and later on black and Asian British citizens during the 1970s and 1980s, has now been resurfacing and has been following this new 'Eastern European' figure. As Imogen Tyler argues in her analysis of the chav figure, 'the ways in which at different historical and cultural moments, specific [bodies] become over determined and are publicly imagined [and represented] in excessive, distorted and caricatured ways' is actually the expression of 'an underlying social crisis or anxiety'.[102] Indeed, as I have shown in this chapter, this can be extended to the figures I have been discussing – such as the migrant figure, the 'Zadie Smith' figure, the British-born 'inauthentic' figures. One only needs to go randomly through newspaper and media

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[101] These were the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Bulgaria and Romania were admitted 3 years later.
[102] Imogen Tyler, 'Chav Mum, Chav Scum': Class Disgust in Contemporary Britain', *Feminist Media Studies*, 8, 2 (2008), 17-34 (p.18).

headlines such as – 'Deluge: Around 700 Eastern Europeans arrive daily, latest figures show' (*The Daily Mail*, November 2007), 'Eastern Europeans targeted by angry Asians' (*Yorkshire Post*, January 2008), 'More Eastern Europeans leaving UK' (BBC, May 2009), 'Romanians hit by racist attacks in Northern Ireland want to go home' (*The Times*, June 2009) – to notice how these titles contain much deeper anxieties. Indeed, who is seen as taking whose jobs and by whom? Which politics of forgetting is at work here?[103] Or is there an underlying racist politics at work that quietly encourages Eastern European migration in the hope of whitening British multiracial population? These questions reach beyond the scope of this chapter, but they certainly require attention. With the current economic crisis, these tensions are surely going to be emphasized even more.

While further study of such media representations of the Eastern European figure is needed, I want to try and define some of its contours here. How is this figure imagined and how do we come to know him/her? What are the points of recognition? Looking at the images of 'Eastern Europeans' that have been circulating in the British media, the most frequent one is perhaps that of a male 'Polish plumber' or a construction worker. To be sure, this is a gendered figure which corresponds to its alignment with cheap physical labour often assumed to be male. Interestingly, the images of female migrants have been less visible, or when they have been visible, they are usually represented as victimised trafficked women and in highly problematic terms. This only reinforces the perception of male mobility and female stasis. And one may also argue that it makes female cheap labour – as cleaners, domestic workers, waitresses, au pairs or, in the most extreme scenario, as victims of sex trafficking – even more invisible.[104] So including gender in the analyses of this figure 'on the move' is much needed as well as a consideration of other forms of positioning, such as class or education, and how they intersect with the generalising category 'Eastern European'.

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[103] *Daily Mail* has been heating up this issue particularly with sensationalist stories of assimilated 'old' migrants who now turn towards 'new' migrants. See for example the story of a Sri–Lankan postman, 'I'm standing up for Britain, says Sri Lankan postmaster who won't serve migrants who won't learn English' by Paul Harris, *Daily Mail*, 19 March 2009 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1162957/Im-standing-Britain-says-Sri-Lankan-postmaster-wont-serve-migrants-dont-speak-English.html>[accessed 20 March 2009].

[104] Tena Štivičić, a young Croatian playwright now resident in London, tackles some of these issues in her 2007 play *Fragile!*.

I am also aware that 'Eastern European' white bodies do not have to face their whiteness when they are 'at home'. That is, Eastern European whiteness is often invisible in national contexts – it is a master signifier – but it becomes visible when these bodies move to the 'West'.[105] Since my aim is to study and face Eastern European whiteness from the 'West', let me first tackle this issue of being 'seen' or 'heard' as 'Eastern European'. It is often assumed that 'Eastern European' bodies are recognized only when they start speaking by their language, accent or by their 'unpronounceable' names. However, the practices of visibility also operate on these bodies perceived as unmarked by the visible (i.e. white) or assumed to be marked only by 'audible' differences. The discourses around this figure now show that the 'Eastern European' body can not only be heard, but also 'seen'. An article on a recent teenage shooting in London, for example, describes the victims as 'looking Eastern European'.[106] Indeed, what does it mean to look 'Eastern European' and what are the mechanisms for the differentiation of this look? In order to consider this, I will look at several examples – one of Bernardine Evaristo's blog essays, a book cover of Ugrešić's *Nobody's Home* and recent literary and media representations.

In 2000, Evaristo travelled through Europe on a literary train called 'LiteratureExpress Europa 2000' with some hundred 'European' writers from all the European countries (both Western and Eastern). Organised by 'Literaturwerkstatt Berlin' (the Literature Workshop Berlin), this interesting cultural project started in Lisbon and took the writers through 19 European cities such as Paris, Brussels, Talinn, St. Petersburg, Moscow, Warsaw, and finally Berlin.[107] Interestingly, Dubravka Ugrešić also took part on this trip and wrote about it in her essay 'Europe, Europe', which I discuss in chapter 4, but the writers accounts of the journey and of the things that captured their attention and imagination seem to be very different. Evaristo's impressions from this journey were originally published in 2000 for *The Independent*, but she has recently reproduced this piece on her blog website

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[105] For a study of white supremacy's function in the constitution Eastern European national identities in opposition to racialised Roma identities see Aniko Imre, 'Whiteness in Post-Socialist Eastern Europe: The Time of the Gypsies, The End of Race', in *Postcolonial Whiteness: A Critical Reader on Race and Empire*, ed. by Alfred J. López (Albany: SUNY Press, 2005), pp.79-102.

[106] John Twomey, 'Teenage boys shot for their iPods' <http://www.express.co.uk/posts/view/85116/Teenage-boys-shot-for-their-iPods> [accessed 20 February 2009].

[107] The full train route can be seen at: <http://www.unesco.org/courier/2001_01/photoshr/42uk.htm> [accessed 12 June 2009].

enriching the essay with numerous photographs from this journey.[108]   In this blog, we meet another 'Eastern European' body that is captured in the following photographs taken by Evaristo:

Figure 1. Picture of female folk singers in Eastern Europe from Evaristo's blog

[108] Bernardine Evaristo, '105 Writers Tour Europe', 4 December 2008
<http://bevaristo.wordpress.com/2008/12/04/105–writers–tour–europe> [Accessed 15 December 2008].

Figure 2. Picture of a woman in Minsk from Evaristo's blog

Both photographs show images of older women and are followed by further descriptions and comments. The images of these two old women may first bring to mind a familiar 'Western' media representation of 'Eastern Europeans' when any news coverage of this area would usually be accompanied by footage of old, poor people and decrepit bodies as if they were from a different time. The comments that follow these photographs are, however, more difficult to read. The comment below the first photograph directed at the older woman folk singer with slightly stronger facial lines, dark eyebrows and a frowned facial expression, reads as 'Male or female? You decide'.[109] The comment below the second photograph which captures another older woman at a train station in Minsk wearing sandals with socks on and what appears to be a cheap floral patterned dress reads as 'Peasant-chic. Minsk,

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[109] Ibid.

Belarus'.[110] Should one simply brush off these comments as being humorous and join in laughing at this 'strange' face with an equally 'suspicious' gender and at this 'peasant' woman with a 'bad' fashion taste? While Evaristo writes about her anxieties of travelling through Eastern Europe as a black woman, what to make of the photographer's eye? What to make of this encounter of two different types of (un)belonging? These two bodies are further aligned with 'ugly' 'Eastern European' places one may never wish to visit again. Kaliningrad, Evaristo writes, is 'surely one of the ugliest cities in the world, unless Soviet-style tenement-chic becomes the next big thing' while Western European places are described as 'nice' and 'lovely'.[111]

I would suggest that Imogen Tyler's discussion of class disgust which operates on poor white working-class bodies ('chavs'), similarly operates on 'Eastern European' bodies. Marked with a 'terrible' communist heritage, they are usually perceived as unrefined with an outdated taste in fashion and usually wearing too much make-up. In a recent *Guardian* article, Tim Dowling refers to some of these images, particularly being reproduced and circulating in *Daily Mail* headlines, and reveals that 'Eastern Europeans' are also 'eating our swans, stealing our unwanted clothes, and offering bad service in 'our' restaurants'.[112] Tyler's argument is that 'class disgust is intimately tied to issues of racial difference and chav-disgust [Eastern European-disgust] is racialising: "[chavs] [Eastern Europeans] are almost always white"'.[113] And, I would further argue that the 'Eastern European' body is overwhelmingly 'white' (often described as 'very white' recalling a distant Dracula imagery) and at the same time it occupies 'dirty' whiteness (by being poor or dressing badly). However, the focus on this exaggerated whiteness may be a recent trend in the perception of 'Eastern Europeans'. Numerous scholars of Eastern Europe (Wolff 1994; Goldsworthy 1998; Kovačević 2008) have shown how racial designations of Eastern Europeans have historically shifted and oscillated between 'white', 'black', 'gypsy' and attendant characterisations such as half-civilized, 'not quite' European, or barbarian and finally, how these people have been aligned with the landscapes ranging from black impenetrable woods to generally depressing

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[110] Ibid.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Tim Dowling, 'They come over here…'<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2007/nov/22/immigration.immigrationandpublicservices> [accessed 23 March 2008].

[113] Tyler, 'Chav Mum', p.25.

sights.[114] Contemporary post-communist Eastern Europeans may have lost Dracula's aristocratic charm, but they nevertheless remain deathly pallid. Take a look at the book cover of Dubravka Ugrešić's *Nobody's Home* UK edition: [115]
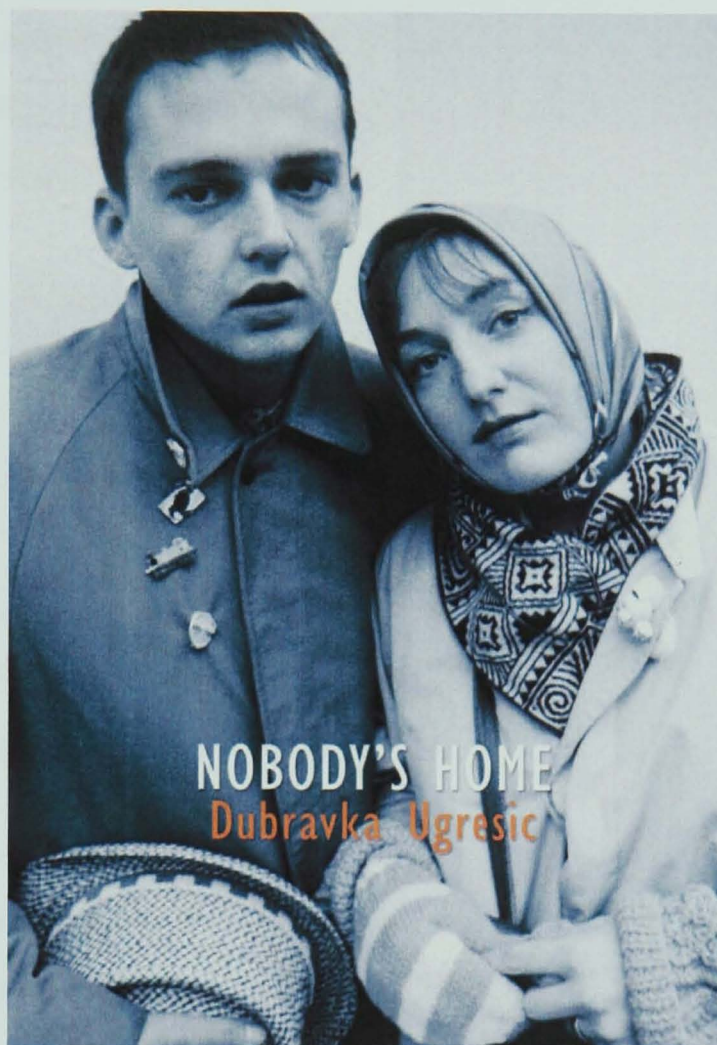

Figure 3. UK edition cover of Ugrešić's *Nobody's Home*

While there is no space here to discuss the marketing strategies of 'Eastern European' visibility and how this image can evoke various emotional responses in different readers, the book cover, with its 'representative' Eastern European faces, speaks directly to the reader as if to say – here 'you' will find 'their' authentic stories. At the same time, it imposes on the writer the burden of representation. The young man's pale and deeply sunken face (which uncannily bears traces of the

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[114] See for example Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994), pp.337-9. Today, of course, Eastern Europe is undergoing a new kind of re-branding and I have not had space to explore this aspect here. For a discussion of 'local' attempts at such re-branding see for example the work of Belgrade anthropologist Ivan Čolović, *The Politics of Symbol in Serbia: Essays on Political Anthropology*, trans. by Celia Hawkesworth (London: Hurst, 2002), 'Balkan Tower' and his recent articles available in English at <http://pescanik.net/content/view/1793/152/> [accessed 03 August 2008].

[115] Dubravka Ugrešić, *Nobody's Home* (London: Telegram Books, 2007). I would like to thank Telegram Books for their kind permission to reproduce the book cover. Telegram Books is an independent publisher of international literary fiction, see <www.telegrambooks.com>.

Dracula imagery), his shabby coat, the woman's 'ethnic scarf' and her head scarf (a contentious object in the 'West' and usually seen as a sign of oppression and backwardness) all give away an image of decay, suffering and displacement and accentuate the contrast with Western modernity.

In her essay 'Refugee', Dubravka Ugrešić writes about similar representations of Eastern Europe as Western European poor and primitive other:

> In the Bodega Kayzer café I drink coffee and write down pairs of opposites. Right-left; organized-disorganized; [...]; civilized-primitive; [...]; citizen-nationality. I fill the left-hand column under the heading Western Europe, the right under Eastern Europe. And suddenly I see that same Eastern Europe. It's sitting at my table, we look at each other as in a mirror. I see a neglected complexion, cheap make up, an expression of condescension and defiance on its face. It wipes its lips with its hands, talks too loudly, gesticulates, raises its eyebrows. I see in its eyes a glint of simultaneous despair and cunning, I see a panic-stricken need to stop being a second-class citizen and become someone. My sister, my sad Eastern Europe.[116]

In order to counter such a representation of Eastern Europe in the Western imagination, Sarajevan writer Nenad Veličković uses the very same image and describes France ('Western' Europe) as having 'a wrinkled face of a frightened miserly old lady [who] hides behind the expensive make-up'.[117] But her smile also reveals vampire teeth and as Vesna Goldsworthy notes 'the idea of Europe as a vampire, which sucks the (young) lifeblood of the Balkans' is a 'rare reversal of this kind of imagery'.[118] This imagery certainly reveals its potency when translated into the conditions of cheap labour as well as when considering the fact that Western Europe's population is getting older and that it needs these bodies to be 'reinvigorated'.

However, what interests me more is the fact that Evaristo, Ugrešić and Veličković all use the same female imagery in their discussion of Eastern and Western Europe and particularly that of an old woman in Evaristo's and Veličković's case. But while Ugrešić anthropomorphises Eastern Europe as her sister without

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[116] Dubravka Ugrešić, 'Refugee', in *Have a Nice Day: from the Balkan War to the American Dream*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994), pp.19-26 (pp.22-23).
[117] Veličković cited in Vesna Goldsworthy, 'Invention and In(ter)vention: the Rhetoric of Balkanization', in *Balkan as Metaphor*, ed. by Dušan I. Bjelić and Obrad Savić, p.33.
[118] Ibid., p.33.

references to age, Veličković's descriptions and Evaristo's photographs are rather grotesque – both the reading of the old woman's face as gender ambiguous as well as Veličković's emphasis on the physical features of 'miserly old lady'. As feminist scholars have taught us, 'old female body' occupies a different symbolic terrain to 'old male body'. An old woman is an abject figure that arouses revulsion and discomfort (think also of the archetypal image of the Witch).[119] Surely all these writers are privileged travellers in their observations, but while Ugrešić faces Eastern Europe at the table through a reciprocal gaze (they sit together and look at each other through gestures of imagined sisterhood), Evaristo's gaze and Veličković's counter-gaze remain one-directional. That is, it becomes acceptable to 'look back' at Western Europe through a devalued image of an old woman or to evoke laughter and mockery at these 'strange' Eastern European women. Even though Veličković is aware of the stereotypical images of Eastern Europe, I would argue that his mirror image loses its subversive potential precisely by couching it in the image of an old woman. Evaristo's gaze, on the other hand, corresponds with that of a Western traveller. The workings of this gaze lock the two photographed bodies into what can be termed, following Gayatri Spivak, a subaltern Eastern European otherness. These two subaltern Eastern European women 'do not speak' and are turned into a 'surface'. We must find more ethical ways to read 'her' distorted face beyond assigning her to a static role of the exotic local. On the other hand, in the Serbian edition of Literature Express Europe essays, Evaristo has been interpellated as a 'mulatto from England'[120] by a Latvian writer, a description which opens up a complex and rarely discussed issue of racism in Eastern Europe. The resurfacing of racism and the rise of neo-fascism in post-1989 Eastern Europe in particular calls for a sustained and urgent socio-historical analysis. Evaristo may at times approach Eastern Europe with Western eyes, but at the same time, Eastern Europe meets Evaristo with racist eyes. I discuss in more detail how Evaristo experiences the predominant whiteness of Eastern Europe in Chapter 4.

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[119] As for example Susan Sontag famously noted in her seminal essay 'The Double Standard of Ageing' (1972). See also *The Other Within Us: Feminist Explorations of Women and Aging*, ed. by Marilyn Pearsall (Westview Press 1997). Interestingly, Ugrešić also explores these issues in her most recent novel *Baba Yaga Laid an Egg* (2009).

[120] Maris Čaklais, 'Večita Vatra' (Eternal Flame), in *Književni Voz Evropa 2000* (Literary Train Europe 2000), ed. by Vladislav Bajac and others (Beograd: Geopoetika, 2002), pp.55-70, (p.57), (in Serbian).

Therefore we must find new ways not only to theorise the marked whiteness of the Eastern European body, but also to counter the recurring effects of race as a regime of looking and the ways in which it still realigns some bodies more than others. A much needed consideration of the absence of gender in the analyses of Eastern Europe and its overlapping with the issues of race, class and other forms of positionings, and in different encounters, might be one such productive intervention which can avoid falling back into worn-out discussions of the 'East' and the 'West' as overarching and often too generalising categories.

This chapter has explored how these concepts are sustained and how they continue to create boundaries of belonging. Through a comparative analysis of bodies who have arrived earlier (migrant generation), who have been here (British-born generation) and who are arriving (new Eastern European migrants), this chapter has revealed how histories of determination and practices of visibility have changed over time and how they continue to mark, distort and transform different bodies. Drawing on Sara Ahmed's insightful reconsideration of hailing, I have shown how the politics of hegemonic belonging operates on these bodies through naming and the putting of the question 'Where are you from?' A discussion of this symptomatic and recurring question has exposed how hegemonic belonging operates on the border between belonging and unbelonging – or 'true' origins versus 'inauthentic' belonging.

But hegemonic belonging is also transformed in these narratives and the hailing of 'Where are you from?' is countered through the processes of identification and dis-identification with national/ethnic/cultural, visible and audible markers of 'origins' and difference, and generational lines of belonging. So the next step would be to explore when this question could become ordinary without having the connotations of power and hailing, and without evoking the violence of 'go back where you came from!' Indeed, where and what is this place? Where is 'home' when one is made to inhabit a strange body, when one does not feel good in one's skin? Can all these queries of belonging be turned into a queering of belonging? We can return to the D'Aguiar poem that opened this chapter and which also asks – what are the possibilities of alternative imaginings of belonging from the position of 'living with a stranger'? What happens when a 'sprawled out, distorted, recoloured' body,

[121] and a body marked by physical scars and scars of trauma and loss comes back to oneself? Moving on from the issue of 'strange' bodies to the question of 'living with the strangers(s)', in the chapters that follow, I explore whether these writers offer a possibility for alternative imaginings of belonging, alliances and affiliations by looking at the idea of 'home', movement, and memory and their intersections with (un)belonging.

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[121] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p.113.

Chapter Three

Belonging and 'Home'

> In the house of fiction you can hear, today, the deep stirring of the unhomely.[1]

> 'Where are you from?'
> On an empowered day, I describe myself as a Diaspora(s) daughter with multiple migratory and ancestral reference points in Nigeria, Ireland, England, Guyana and the United States. On a disempowered day, I am a nationless nomad who wanders from destination to destination in search of a singular site to name as home.[2]

1. 'Home' – A Space of Belonging?

The declaration 'go back where you came from' evokes a problematic, yet familiar idea of 'home' that is rehearsed daily on the subjects who are seen as occupying and inhabiting 'homes' that do not 'belong' to them. 'Home' is constructed as clearly demarcated 'here' and 'there'. The 'here' of 'home' is imagined as the originary site of those who are considered to have come 'here' *first* and its boundaries are heavily policed – not everyone can belong 'here'. On the other hand, the construction 'there' of the Other's 'home' is always directed to an equally problematic place – the not 'here'. But as I have suggested in Chapter 2, the hailing of 'Where are you from?' and the violence of 'go back where you came from' almost always fails to locate and capture the Other's 'real home'. Nevertheless, both statements thrive on fantasies that the 'there' as 'home' exists and that it is always possible for the Other to return to this place. Rehearsed today on immigrants, or those perceived as immigrants, such myths of 'home' have had a long history in the establishment of nations, or homelands onto 'empty' lands, and went hand in hand with colonization, forced displacements and 'cleansing' of territories. Imagined communities of nations, to use Benedict Anderson's seminal concept, have indeed dreamt up some nightmarish and unliveable 'homes'. A number of theorists have recently questioned and reconsidered such conceptions of 'home' and nation through the notion of diaspora, which,

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[1] Homi Bhabha, 'The World and the Home', in *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*, ed. by Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti and Ella Shohat, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp.445-455 (p.445).
[2] Jayne O. Ifekwunigwe, 'Returning(s): Relocating the Critical Feminist Auto-Ethnographer', in *Theorizing Diaspora: A Reader*, ed. by Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur (Malden, Mass.; Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 184-206 (p.196).

according to Paul Gilroy, 'disrupts the fundamental power of territory to determine identity by breaking the simple sequence of explanatory links between place, location and consciousness'.[3] The nation is built upon and depends on the fantasies of harmony and seamlessness between these three categories.

But 'home' has also been traditionally imagined as a space of belonging and comfort. Just like belonging, the notion of 'home' is an elusive, free floating signifier that can be attached to different things. It encompasses various and often ambiguous meanings and can come to embody a number of geographical, psychological, material and abstract spaces. In this sense, 'home' can be a metaphor for the homeland/nation, but also for the family, a place where one lives or 'comes from', a geographical location, or a birthplace, and in many of these instances, 'home' can often become a space of discomfort and violence as feminist critiques of the idea of 'home' as a domestic, gendered and static space have demonstrated. In the special issue of *New Formations*, 'The question of "home"', Angelika Bammer neatly summarizes these shifting meanings of 'home':

> Semantically, 'home' has always occupied a particularly indeterminate space: it can mean, almost simultaneously, both the place I have left and the place I am going to, the place I have lost and the new place I have taken up, even if only temporarily. 'Home' can refer to both the place you grew up...the mythic homeland of your parents and your ancestors that you yourself may never actually have seen, or the hostel where you are spending the night in transit [...] This indeterminate referential quality of the term has two quite different, even (at first glance) contradictory consequences. On the one hand, it *demythifies* 'home' as provisional and relative [...] On the other hand, its very indeterminacy has lent itself to the continual *mythification* of 'home' as an almost universal site of utopian (be)longings.[4]

Drawing on Bammer's useful insights, but also on recent diasporic, postcolonial and phenomenological readings of 'home', this chapter explores where and what 'home' is in the literary and essayist works of Evaristo, Smith, Goldsworthy and Ugrešić, and examines whether 'home' corresponds with belonging. The final section considers the idea of Literature as a 'universal home' for these writers. That is, I ask to what extent they can claim/belong to this 'home' or whether they would always

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[3] Paul Gilroy, *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture beyond the Colour Line* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000), p.123.

[4] Angelika Bammer, 'Editorial: The Question of "Home"', *New Formations*, 17, (1992), vii-xi (vii).

remain merely its 'sub-tenants'[5] as black British/Eastern European/ethnically/nationally defined writers. In this sense, only Smith appears to have been fully integrated into the literary establishment, although on the problematic terms demonstrated in Chapter 2, while Ugrešić remains a definite outsider. I particularly concentrate on exploring the metaphors of 'home' in her collections of essays *Have a Nice Day: From the Balkan War to the American Dream* (1994) and the most recent one aptly titled *Nobody's Home* (2007). Through a close reading of the texts, I show how 'homes' in these narratives materialise as spaces of (un)belonging, rather than spaces of comfort. That is, there is an oscillation, doubling and multiplying of the notions of 'home'. This is not only in the sense that all the writers evoke unhomely dimensions of 'home' (according to the Freudian schema,[6] the unhomely here is not the antithesis of 'home' but implicated in it), but that they also point to the difficulties of calling a location a 'home'. There are too many 'homes' or none in these narratives – to paraphrase bell hooks – sometimes home is nowhere, at other times it is no longer just one place, but locations.[7] 'Home' often shifts from being nowhere, to elsewhere and somewhere – to a place in the imagination. It is at the same time sentimentalised and repudiated, utopian and impossible.

Before I move on to a more detailed analysis, I want to try and sketch out these shifting notions of 'home'. Indeed, where and what is 'home' in these narratives? 'Homes', it may at first seem, manifest as particular locations of living such as London (in Smith, Evaristo and Goldsworthy), Amsterdam or Berlin (in Ugrešić). But for some protagonists these locations also represent points of arrival in which it takes time to feel 'at home', if this is ever achieved. Some of these writers explore the ways in which the notion of 'home' is reworked in exile or migration. 'Homes' are also evoked as imaginary, originary and often lost or deserted homelands of Yugoslavia (in Ugrešić and Goldsworthy), Africa and the Caribbean (in Evaristo and Smith) or Bengal (in Smith). In all the narratives, 'homes' are indeed diasporic and multiple, hybridised by roots and routes. In their exploration of the relationship between 'home' and (un)belonging, these writers often ask what it

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[5] I borrow this phrase from Dubravka Ugrešić's essay 'Nice People Don't Mention Such Things', in *The Culture of Lies* (London: Phoenix House, 1998), pp.236-251 (p.250).

[6] See Freud's seminal essay 'The Uncanny' (1919), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVII (1917-1919): An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works*, ed. by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), pp.217-252.

[7] bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston, MA: South End Press 1990), p.47.

might mean that for some subjects 'home' is always elsewhere or never far from nowhere that also echoes so powerfully in Andrea Levy's novel of the same name? [8] And how does the idea of 'home' shift from 'nowhere' to 'elsewhere' to 'somewhere' and back? In which of these points does 'home' get cemented as a space of belonging or unbelonging? How is 'home' made and remade through all the three points? Is there a place or places in these narratives that can be called 'home'? In Goldsworthy and Ugrešić, for example, childhood 'homes' are evoked and idealised as spaces of belonging, but they are also the forever lost 'homes'. In Smith and Evaristo on the other hand, childhood 'homes' are traumatic (they represent a reminder of experienced racism) and are therefore abandoned. For some protagonists, and particularly for Ugrešić as a writer, one can only feel at 'home' in transit points, borderline and in-between spaces or one only feels an acute sense of unhomeliness. 'Home' is sometimes found in uncanny places such as airports and in the moments of flight. Or, it is sought in particular metropolitan topographies such as, for example, flea markets in Ugrešić, Brixton but not Woolwich in Evaristo, and Willesden but not Whitechapel in Smith. The sense of 'home' is also described through a possession (or not having) of material objects such as suitcases and family photographs.

Some protagonists are homesick and nostalgic for the lost 'homes', but also sick of 'home'. Longing for 'home' often calls up the histories of destruction of homes – a disorientating number of homes (both real and imaginary) destroyed during the wars in Former Yugoslavia – and colonial and transatlantic histories of uprooting. Today, not only wars, but also capitalism, often hand in hand with racism, equally contributes to such forced re-housings, displacement of people and the destruction of homes. [9] To feel at home as being settled and comfortable is also unsettling. To have a 'home', in both physical and abstract senses, is a privilege and the idea of 'home' is tied to the materiality of belongings and houses; their

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[8] Andrea Levy, *Never Far From Nowhere* (London: Review, 2004 [1996]).

[9] As I write these lines, police in Belgrade have forcibly evicted some fifty Roma families and destroyed their shanty houses for the sake of urban development for the upcoming Belgrade Universiade 2009. These families are spending yet another night under the open sky without homes. During this incident, The Mayor of Belgrade resorted to familiar racist discourse when he stated that those members of the Belgrade Roma community who are not registered as Belgrade residents must 'go back to where they came from'. This is ironic since most Roma people in Serbia are sans-papiers, and this persistent, widespread and deeply-rooted racism, violence and discrimination against Roma people is worrying. For more information on this most recent violence against the Roma community in Serbia, see for example 'Greetings from Šaban Bajramović', Yucom, <http://www.pescanik.net/content/view/2971/158/> [accessed 08 April 2009].

foundations, ruins and remains. Some protagonists dream of 'homes' as mythical, imaginary places, but also point to 'home' as a myth. Does 'home' then remain in the domain of desire, an idea, an impossible place, and when does it materialise as a liveable space? 'Thinking affectionately about home is all I'll go along with',[10] wrote Said, and it seems that Goldsworthy and Ugrešić, in particular, evoke such conception of 'home'. This affective relationship to 'home' can be found in the same D'Aguiar poem that opened Chapter 2, expressed through the metaphor of the poet's heart that performs 'a jazzy drum solo' once he gets close to 'home'.[11] But the affectivity of 'home' is soon shattered by the hegemonic reminders that 'home' is not 'here', but elsewhere – thus the temporariness of 'home'. A similar metaphor can be found in Ugrešić's essay 'Europe, Europe', when her heart suddenly registers an unexpected 'tremor' in a hotel room in Poland full of objects and designs that call up the forever lost 'home' and time.[12] Finally, Literature, thus capitalised, is often like a house with a shaky roof or heavy doors for these writers, even though it may seem that some writes have been fully recognised as its rightful residents.

2. Writing Unhomely 'Homes'

In Freud's seminal essay, 'Das Unheimliche' – translated into English as the uncanny, or unhomely – springs from something familiar which has been repressed.[13] It is an ambivalent concept that is always related to its seeming opposite – 'Heimlich' or homely. Freud traces the manifestation of the unhomely in diverse places and concepts such as ghosts, haunted houses, or dismembered limbs, while homely is described as that belonging to the house and what is familiar, comfortable, or homelike. In this sense, his discussion of melancholia through the metaphor of an open wound may be also read in terms of producing another unhomely effect.[14] Narratives of exile or migration are not only profoundly melancholic in their refusal

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[10] Edward Said quoted in Rosemary Marangoly George, *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-Century Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.201.

[11] The first stanza of D'Aguiar's poem goes as follows: 'These days whenever I stay away too long,/ anything I happen to clap eyes on,/(that red telephone box) somehow makes me miss here more than anything I can name./ My heart performs a jazzy drum solo when the crow's feet on the 747 scrape down at Heathrow.' But as I have discussed in chapter 2, a Customs officer reminds him that 'home is always elsewhere'. The full text of the poem can be found in his collection *British Subjects* (Northumberland, UK: Bloodaxe Books, 1993), p.14.

[12] Dubravka Ugrešić, 'Europe, Europe', in *Nobody's Home* (London:Telegram, 2007), p.108.

[13] Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny' (1919), in *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. 17*, pp. 219-253.

[14] Sigmund Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholy' (1917), in *The Nature of Melancholy: from Aristotle to Kristeva*, ed. by Jennifer Radden (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp.283-294 (p.290).

to let go of what has been lost ('home' as a place of shelter and safety), but they are also narratives about bodily experience – the writing of a difficult condition of loss and discomfort felt on the body in an unhomely environment. Therefore, the metaphors of an open wound or a phantom limb through which these melancholic losses are often expressed might all be considered elements that produce an unhomely effect. This can also apply to the metaphors of in-betweeness (being neither 'here' nor 'there') and the writing of a migrant's fascination with the objects she/he encounters in new surroundings. For example, both Ugrešić and Goldsworthy use the metaphors of a phantom limb to describe their uneasy relationship to their lost Yugoslav 'home'. The Freudian unhomely can therefore serve as a useful theoretical starting point in order to explore the representations of alienation and dislocation, the idea of 'home' as unhomely (where one does not feel at home) and various manifestation of 'phantom' homes in these narratives.

In both her essays and fiction, Ugrešić not only explores the trauma of living where one does not feel at home in the context of the post-Yugoslav displacement following the wars of the 1990s, but she also engages with the lost Yugoslav 'home' and the wider effects of loss of this 'shared space'. In *The Ministry of Pain*, Tanja constantly feels the need to escape from her Amsterdam basement flat, which is described as having a 'floor covered with black linoleum [which] gave the flat the aura of a hospital or penitentiary' and a 'windowless bathroom, with its shower, white tiles and concrete floors [evoking] a nightmarish feel' (p.33), even though she tries to buy a few accessories to add a homely feel to the flat. These descriptions not only evoke the unhomely and the idea of 'home' as a confined and claustrophobic place, but also mirror Tanja's feelings of discomfort of inhabiting a body out of place. She is equally anchorless in the city and is constantly getting lost – '[her] internal map was the outcome of an amnesiac's attempt to plot his coordinates or a flaneur's attempt to leave his tracks on the sand.'(p.38). While the inhabitants of the city knew 'the number of signs and signals – fingerprints – by which [they] made it clear they belonged' (p.34), for Tanja, the city feels elusive and unreal like a phantom in which she must start a difficult process of re-homing and re-inhabiting herself. Her discovery of Amsterdam's hidden 'homely' topography in landmarks such as flea markets, Bosnian cafes, railway stations and trains, and her conversing with other travellers, beggars and street musicians, is about accommodating to the

new environment and its landscape. These outside, public spaces represent a temporary refuge and sense of 'home'.

Tanja's return 'home' is described as an equally disorientating experience. When she goes back to Zagreb to visit her mother after the war, she realises she cannot find her way because all the previously Yugoslav street names have been changed as this is now a 'new' country called Croatia. Tanja observes that 'everything looked run-down and grey, now *mine*, now *alien*, now *former*' (p.116) and so the familiar and homely becomes strange and uncanny. Scholars such as Avtar Brah who are concerned with the phenomenology of home 'as the sensory world of everyday experience' emphasize the impossibility of homecoming to a place that was lived as home precisely because 'home', although it may represent 'a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination, a place of return', is also 'a lived experience of locality'.[15] However, because of the conditions of war and migration, neither Amsterdam nor Zagreb feel as 'homes'. As Sara Ahmed explains 'the process of returning home is likewise about the failures of memory, of not being inhabited in the same way by that which appears as familiar'.[16] Tanja discovers that even the lived reality in Zagreb has its own touch of the unhomely which she notices in her mother's submersion into the world of cheap TV soaps – 'this categorical refusal to confront reality' (p.99). Such an atmosphere reveals a 'home' that is 'sick' and haunted because of the unresolved post-war condition. Tanja therefore does not want to be re-homed into her 'old' home, but her in-betweenness is equally traumatic. As Tanja notes, she and her students 'belonged neither here nor there [and] were busy building castles in the air [...] peering down to decide which place suited them better'(p.168). While some of them eventually come to terms with accepting Amsterdam as their new 'home', Tanja stubbornly remains 'Yugoslav without Yugoslavia' refusing to be either re-homed into the newly established post-Yugoslav nation (Croatia) or assimilated into her new 'home' (Amsterdam). The imaginary floating castle that exists in a time rift before the war ('home') and after the war (no 'home') represents her only 'home' and stands for the changing and recurring metaphor in Ugrešić's work – the phantom 'home'.

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[15] Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p.192.
[16] Sara Ahmed, 'Home and Away: Narratives of Migration and Estrangement', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 2, 3 (1999), 329-347 (p.343).

The effects of the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the loss of this shared space are also recorded in Vesna Goldsworthy's memoir. However, Goldsworthy's moment of leaving Yugoslavia in 1986 affects the sense of belonging and the location of 'home'. Goldsworthy left former Yugoslavia in 1986, the year of the Chernobyl disaster, to marry her English husband and has lived in London ever since. Hence the title, referring to the irradiated strawberries she tasted back then; but this is not to insinuate a possible cause of her cancer. Rather, Goldsworthy's image of Chernobyl strawberries carries a deeper metaphorical meaning in her exploration of the decay and violent disintegration related to the breakup of her country which she witnessed from London while working for the BBC World Service. Growing up in Belgrade of the 1960s and 1970s during the golden age of Yugoslav socialism, Goldsworthy enjoyed a privileged childhood in a relatively well-off middle class family, who in three generations 'moved from being shepherds to skiers' (p.8). A true 'spoilt child of communism' (p.217), as she writes, Goldsworthy spent an idyllic and carefree youth in Belgrade, went to some prestigious schools, learnt French and English and was well-travelled. Even during Yugoslavia's economic decline in the eighties, Goldsworthy, like other young women, was busy falling in and out of love, passionately discussing literature, writing poetry and deciding what she might try to do next. Beautiful on the outside, but rotten inside, the irradiated strawberries are a productive metaphor for Goldsworthy to explore how it was to grow up in and belong to such a seemingly ideal 'home'.

Goldsworthy's memoir is thus not only a story of illness, though surely it is a story of loss – of her healthy breast – but it is also a tale about survival. So on the one hand, perhaps this is why throughout the memoir there is a need to construct a heroic and coherent image of herself, especially in the light of a serious illness, and the reason she would speak of other losses – of her country, Yugoslav nationality and her 'maiden' name – with more difficulty or in a more subtle manner. In the light of some recent work on autobiography that has emphasised therapeutic powers of the genre, the return to her childhood and youth memories represents one such common trope of imaginative healing of the self.[17] Her return to the carefree memories of pre-war everyday life in Belgrade before Yugoslavia's gradual economic decline during the 1980s offers an image of peace, stability and, indeed, pleasure under the 'strange

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[17] See for example Judith M. Melton, *The Face of Exile: Autobiographical Journeys* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1998) and the work of John Paul Eakin.

mixture of liberalism and restriction' (p.143) of Yugoslav's soft socialism. But there is also a questioning of this idealised 'home' as Goldsworthy notes:

> Yugoslavia was simultaneously the only solution and the worst of all possible worlds. I couldn't decide whether I loved it or hated it. I had hauntingly beautiful memories of that country, yet it appears that it was also, and for so many people, an ugly, doomed place. (p.238)

There is a tension here between personal memories, or belonging to the place by familial and other affective ties, and belonging to what Yugoslavia has become during the war which now represents a burden.

It could be suggested that Woolf's statement, 'as a woman I have no country',[18] gains new emphasis in Goldsworthy's memoir – as 'a woman I have a country and I happened to acquire a 'new' country, different from the one I left'. However, in Goldsworthy's case, this becomes less a question of gender. This is not in the sense that gender is simply irrelevant, but more a question of coming to terms with the loss of belonging to a more inclusive Yugoslav identity, and a negotiation of a newly acquired burdensome Serbian identity as discussed in Chapter 2. I would not want to suggest here that there has been something stable and essential, such as 'positive' Yugoslav versus 'negative' Serbian identity. Although there was a promise in the multi-ethnicity and multiculturality of Yugoslav identity, it certainly was not unproblematic, (and this would deserve another study); recent history has taught us how fragile this identity was. It should be pointed out that as a result of a post-Yugoslav violent nation building, an imposed conservative, traditional and patriarchal Serbian identity emerged, which a feminist anthropologist Žarana Papić has aptly described as a process of a 'totalitarian nationalist occupation of the total space of one's identity'.[19] As many studies of nationalism have shown, and as Papić further elaborates, 'we become what is written in our birth certificate, as the inescapable part of our identities, by the simple fact that we are born somewhere (territory), and to someone (national identity)'.[20]

At first, Goldsworthy tries to distance herself from this hegemonic conception of identity and belonging not only by claiming Englishness at the same time, but also

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[18] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own, and Three Guineas*, ed.by Morag Shiach (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.313.

19 Žarana Papić, 'From State Socialism to State Nationalism: The Case of Serbia in Gender Perspective', *Refuge*, 14, 3, (1994), 10-14 (p.14).

[20] Ibid., p.14.

by belonging to a new generation of women who no longer stayed at home (p.22). The fact that Goldsworthy was able to choose a partner and a country in which she would live sets her apart from her female generational counterparts – her mother and her grandmothers – who had witnessed the passing of empires and wars without actually moving. The statement 'as a woman I have no country' is also reflected in Goldsworthy's mobility and her privileged middle-class upbringing by which she can claim to have grown up in a post-feminist society, as if not wanting to unsettle the image of 'happy' Yugoslav socialism for the Western audience. To a feminist reader from former Yugoslavia, this may appear as flattening a rich and complex history of the feminist movement in pre- and post Yugoslavia. Yet, if the memoir is read more closely, Goldsworthy subtly reveals a miniature glimpse into 'local Balkanisms', the everyday heteropatriarchy and small town mentality. Through the memories of her mother's everyday life in socialist Yugoslavia, Goldsworthy shows how, despite advancements in gender equality, 'home' was still considered a domestic sphere reserved for women. This is illustrated in Goldsworthy's descriptions of her mother's day at work when her male secretary is being mistaken for being her boss; her evenings spent after work in preparing dinner and the next day lunch, while Goldsworthy's father would have his siesta; her mother's frequent crying; and Goldsworthy's discovery of her mother's French notebook at her maternal grandmother's funeral, which evocatively repeats the phrase 'I am happy'. Revealing the gendered structure of 'home', Goldsworthy is at the same time reconsidering the connections to the places one calls 'home' by painfully noting how her parent's house 'like a mausoleum [...] embodied – literally – [her] parent's dream of a large extended family, of generations multiplying and staying put, a Mediterranean hubris flying in the face of so much Balkan history and so much displacement' (p.7). This reproduction of familial 'home' through heterosexual coupling also reveals its uneven transformation from a place of stasis to a place of movement for different generations of women.

Goldsworthy also defies the expectations of a 'Western' audience by refusing to act as the 'native informant' and provide an explanation for Yugoslavia's disintegration which would turn her memoir into another ethnographic account. The last section is titled 'England, my England' which ties in with its opening statement – 'I am English now; I wouldn't begin to know how to return to Serbia, which is not the place I left anyway' (p.3). England is claimed as her 'home' too, although it is

underlined with conflicted attachments as I have discussed in chapter 2. On the other hand, the relationship to her lost Yugoslav 'home', forever frozen in her imagination in the act of leaving, recalls Rushdie's 'imaginary homelands':

> Yugoslavia no longer exists, not even as a name, but in a kind of Rorschach test I still see the land of the South Slavs on every map of Europe. It is a vision which dates me: [...] the way in which I still call myself Yugoslav, and my mother tongue Serbo-Croat, without thinking, as though the very act of leaving, paradoxically, makes it impossible to let go. (p.2)

This place is now no longer geographically tangible, but the contours of Yugoslavia remain imprinted in her imagination. Yugoslavia uncannily exists as a phantom limb that twitches from time to time in her imagination.[21] These elements evoke the affectivity of 'home', acting as forms of healing, literally, of herself and her body through her recovery and acceptance of the part of the breast that is no longer there (p.233). But while this lost 'home' now safely exists in Goldsworthy's memory, it is as if none of the 'homes' she claims and belongs to (London) and the current country she 'comes from' (Serbia) can ever carry such an affective and utopian potential as the 'home' she used to belong to (Yugoslavia), but which no longer exists.

Ugrešić's semi-autobiographical, exilic novel *The Museum of Unconditional Surrender* is not only structured around the idea of photographs and a family album in that it is written as a series of snapshots and fragments, but it also explores the loss of 'home' through photographs.[22] The novel includes passages from Susan Sontag's *On Photography* and mini essay-like reflections on the nature of photography, writing and the condition of exile, but on a deeper intertextual level it acts as an anticipatory narrative of destruction and erasure of 'home(s)' in both literal and metaphorical sense. The novel is prefaced with a photograph of unknown women swimmers on the Pakrac river in Croatia taken by an unknown photographer, but also by a Contents Page which reads subtitles such as 'Family museum', 'Group Photograph' and phrases in German such as 'Ich bin mude' (I am tired?), 'Guten Tag' (Hello/Good morning), 'Wo bin ich?' (Where am I?). The river points to the place of the narrator's childhood (a place that was once safe), and the German

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[21] See uses the metaphor in this interview, 'A writer's life: Vesna Goldsworthy: Jasper Rees discovers how cancer inspired an émigré to recreate a lost world for her son' <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/arts/main.jhtml?xml=/arts/2005/03/27/bogoldsworth.xml> [accessed 1 April 2007].

[22] Dubravka Ugrešić, *The Museum of Unconditional Surrender* (London: Phoenix, 1999). All references are to this edition and are included in the text.

phrases reveal her current (dis)location in Berlin where she must now begin to learn 'a life in a new language',[23] accommodate to new surroundings and try to piece together the fragments of her lost life in Yugoslavia following the war. The phrases are the first words she learns in German, while the Contents Page literally corresponds with her current belongings – the contents of her suitcase:

> All I posses now is a suitcase [...] I do not use my suitcase as a metaphorical substitute for the word 'exile'. The suitcase is in fact my only reality. Even the stamps which have accumulated on the pages of my passport do not convince me sufficiently of the reality of my journeying [...] The suitcase contains some completely senseless things. Including one old, yellowed and another blank, reject photograph. (p.204)

But the narrator, who announces herself as coming from Atlantis (p.105),[24] never really accommodates to a life in a new language, nor does she acquire a new 'home' in Berlin or in any of the places she travels to. At the end of the novel, she is at the same point as she was at the beginning, stuck in an immobilizing neither 'here' nor 'there' and in a wearisome state of unbelonging. Her first German phrase 'I am tired', which opens the novel, mirrors the novel's ending scene in which she is exercising on the stair climber in a Berlin fitness centre. Even though the memories of her country are getting paler, as if they are slowly approaching the gaping whiteness of the blank photograph, in front of her are the 'steps that lead nowhere' and her feet feel heavy as if they have been stuck to the steps (p.247-248). The climbing of these imaginary steps offers her a temporary healing and release, but at the same time, their trajectory to nowhere uncannily and painfully reveals the loss of her previously settled life. In the absence of any fixed coordinates in the present, she is doomed to climb these steps forever. But it is not simply that 'home' is nowhere. Through her continuous attachment and detachment, the uncanny phantom 'home' is created. This process of home-building entails what Ghassan Hage describes as 'the

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[23] I borrow this phrase from Eva Hoffman's *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language* (London: Vintage, 1989).
[24] Lost Atlantis is a recurring metaphor for a no longer existing Yugoslavia and it has resonated in literature, fiction, film and theatre from all former Yugoslav republics. I can only point to a few titles here and this certainly deserves a future study – (fiction) Daša Drndić, *Canzone di Guerra* (1998), Ivančica Djerić, *Bosanci Trče Počasni Krug (Bosnian Run the Victory Lapse)* (2007), Aleksandar Hemon, *Nowhere Man* (2002), Miljenko Jergović, *Sarajevo Marlboro* (2004), (plays) Biljana Srbljanović, *Belgrade Trilogy* (1996), Tena Štivičić, *Fragile!* (2007), (films) *Das Fraulein* (2006), and cultural projects such as 'The Lexicon of Yu-Mythology'. There is also a webpage which recreates a virtual Yugoslavia and whose 'citizens' call themselves the citizens of Atlantis. See 'Cyber Yugoslavia' <http://www.juga.com/>[accessed 04 April 2009].

gathering of "intimations" of home, "fragments which are *imagined* to be traces of an equally imagined homely whole, the imagined past "home" of another time and another space'.[25]

The imaginary climbing of steps, Atlantis, the suitcase, the blank photograph, the castle in the air, are all recurring motifs in Ugrešić's writing that can be read as variations on the same theme – that is, as metaphors of the 'phantom home'. This imaginary space also shapes the contours of Ugrešić's only 'true home' as its metaphors keep reappearing elsewhere in her essays. Another such metaphor manifests itself in her essay 'Refugee' and the passage deserves to be quoted at length:

> 'Where are you from?' the young Flemish photographer asked, in the hope that his question would make my tense face relax. 'Zagreb', I said. 'And where's that?' he said causally, chewing gum. Really where is that? In Croatia. In a country which does not yet exist. And where is that? In Yugoslavia. In a country which no longer exists. If the country does not exist, then what is happening there cannot actually, be happening. There is no death, the flattened cities are no longer flattened, there are no casualties, the refugees have not abandoned their homes, and the crazed generals of the Yugoslav Army do not exist either. Everything is peaceful as a fixed flash back. I am at home in Holland, I am the Flying Dutchman.[26]

Written in 1991 at the outset of Yugoslav dissolution wars and during the time when Ugrešić was invited to spend a couple of weeks in Amsterdam in September 1991, the title of the essay ('Refugee') anticipates that Ugrešić is to become without a 'home' like so many people in her country were, though in far more traumatic ways. When Ugrešić returned to Zagreb in June 1992 (she directly went from Amsterdam to Wesleyan University in the US where she had been invited to teach Eastern European novel), her 'home' has ceased to exist (Yugoslavia), and at the same time the new 'home' came into existence (Croatia was internationally recognised in January 1992). Croatian nationalists were busy erasing the memory and material remains of fifty years of Yugoslav life of which Ugrešić was highly critical. After persistent media harassment that proclaimed her a 'traitor' and a 'witch', Ugrešić left

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[25] Ghassan Hage qtd. in *Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration*, ed. by Sara Ahmed and others (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2003), p.9.

[26] Dubravka Ugrešić, 'Refugee', in *Have a Nice Day: From the Balkan War to the American Dream* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994), pp.19-26 (p.19).

Croatia in August 1993 eventually settling in Amsterdam. But even though Ugrešić now lives in Holland, she can never be at peace and at home 'here', but perhaps only momentarily and temporarily as in a flash of the camera. Like the Flying Dutchman – the ship that is cursed to always be 'elsewhere' and at the same time can never go 'home'– Ugrešić remains in a limbo. The Flying Dutchman is literally her only 'home' whose contours can emerge at any time like a phantom and in unexpected places. On this uncanny phantom ship, she has become a doomed transmitter of Yugoslavia's fragments, small unimportant, but homely details of everyday life, flashes of memory and places long lost, forever sailing its drowned shores and being tied to this lost time. As a writer at the margins, who could never be at home in what is now Croatian literature or ever fully belong to Dutch literature, Ugrešić is also haunting both landscapes.

Ugrešić therefore does not want to find a 'new' home. The imaginary 'phantom home' is her only 'home' which she carries with(in) her all the time. The places and objects she comes across in the new environments she finds herself in, or on her journeys, only act as temporary replicas of 'home', but never as her 'real home'. For instance, in her essay appropriately titled 'Comforter', Ugrešić writes about the first thing she bought while she was in America – a type of padded blanket called a 'comforter' intended to keep one warm at night. But as she reveals, she becomes aware that this was not its sole purpose:

> A comforter is a feather-bed, a duvet, a warm cover filled with feathers. Now I know that that object, my comforter, was a symbolic substitute for my lost home, that my subconscious had infallibly selected an item that could serve as a mental roof over my head, a protective balloon, a snail's house, a tortoise's shell, an umbrella, a hole, a hollow, a home.[27]

As Angelika Bammer has noted, 'home is something we can never give up because it is one of the few remaining utopian ideals – the expression of our need to believe in a place of shelter where we 'belong' and are safe.'[28] In this essay, Ugrešić realises that her subconscious has been constantly seeking to build this 'phantom home'. But while the comforter acts a temporary substitute for the lost 'home' and assuages feelings of alienation, at the same time it uncannily reminds Ugrešić of the war and air raids when her neighbours would start accumulating objects such as pillows,

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[27] 'Comforter', in *Have a Nice Day*, pp.163-169 (pp.166-167).
[28] Bammer, 'The Question of "Home"', xi.

blankets and radios in their basement shelters. In this juxtaposition of the materiality of 'home' and the struggle for bare life in both exile and war, Ugrešić shows how the acquiring of 'home' is always tied to the losing and destruction of 'home(s)' and the loss of old 'homes' can never be fully compensated by the new ones.

Ugrešić also identifies some locations in her essays that evoke a temporary sense of 'home'. In an essay entitled 'Melancholy' Ugrešić writes about her frequent visits – while in America – to the discount store 'Woolworths' where she feels at home among the 'large black women' who shop and work there. Just as their quality is not of a long-lasting nature, the cheap products one can find in Woolworths offer a temporary feeling of comfort and, being among its visitors, Ugrešić feels 'a temporary sense of belonging to a class, race, or kind which is *ours* or which we feel to be *ours*.[29] In another essay titled 'Life Vest', the space of an airport becomes 'home':

> I feel good here. I am a human larva. Here, in this no man's land, I shall weave my natural nest. I shall wander from sector A to B, from sector B to sector C. I shall never leave. They'll never find me. [...] I shall live under the artificial airport light like a postmodern exhibit, in transitional phase, in limbo, in an emotionally aseptic space.[30]

More than in any country, she feels at home in no man's land which becomes a phantom location where one can disappear. But this postmodern fantasy thrives on an illusion that one can forever remain unnoticed in such a place – thus the airport evokes another temporary 'home'. In contrast to D'Aguiar's poem where the airport and its immigration border is a contentious and emotionally charged space for a 'raced' subject, for the white subject, the airport can still hold fantasies of transitions, blending in and being unnoticed. Indeed, airport is an international space, but as D'Aguiar's poem has shown, it rests on an uneven mobility of bodies and points of passing.

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[29] Ugrešić, 'Melancholy', pp. 123-129 (p.124, my translation). This essay is only available in the Serbo-Croat edition of *Have a Nice Day: From the Balkan War to the American Dream*. See *Američki Fikcionar* (Belgrade; Zagreb: Konzor and Samizdat B92, 2002). Thanks to Vesna Goldsworthy for her advice on the translation of the Serbian 'naša/naš' into English.
[30] Ugrešić, 'Life Vest', in *Have a Nice Day*, pp.221-226 (p.225).

In her most recent collection of essays *Nobody's Home*, Ugrešić continues to dream not of a new 'home' but of a large new suitcase [31] that can accommodate the contents of her 'phantom home' which are scattered all over the world:

> There is a secret geography of the things I leave behind me. I conduct a clandestine occupation, leave my mark, drop my secret anchor. My belongings – coffee pots, plates, bedspreads, shoes, sheets, sweaters – are scattered through European and American cities, to the four winds. [32]

Finally, in her essay 'Gardening', Ugrešić refuses any rooted notion of 'home' symbolised in the idea of having a garden, opting rather for a mobile 'home':

> At this point I no longer want a garden. A garden is like a fingerprint, like the palm of a hand from which the soul of its owner can be divined. It is a relic of Arcadia for those of us who have been permanently expelled from paradise. Gardening is a way of evoking that paradise. [...] Personally, I am content with plastic tulips. They are cheap, don't weight much, are mobile, take up little space, are easily packed, and most importantly, require no care. From time to time you have to dust them, that's all. [33]

As with plastic tulips, she carries her imaginary 'phantom home' with(in) her which can give an impression that Ugrešić is, indeed, travelling light. As Rosemary George has noted in her book *The Politics of Home*, immigrant genre is characterized by excessive use of the metaphor of luggage, both spiritual and material' and she asks whether such belongings may impede or facilitate belonging. [34] This is an interesting question. Is it easier to have a 'garden' that can become one's new 'home' or only an imaginary 'home' and no real garden? However, while it may appear that Ugrešić is travelling light without having many material belongings, her spiritual luggage is indeed a heavy burden. Ugrešić's essays and fiction do not evoke a liberating homelessness or a celebratory idea of belonging 'elsewhere', but they show how painful it is to have an imaginary 'phantom home' you can never detach from and that you can never let go of. Although this position makes Ugrešić a rather idiosyncratic observer, the creative gains of this melancholic consciousness and the

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[31] Ugrešić, 'A Suitcase', in *Nobody's Home* (London: Telegram, 2007), pp.15-17 (p.17)
[32] Ugrešić, 'Bird House', in *Nobody's Home*, pp.33-35 (p.34).
[33] Ugrešić, 'Gardening', pp.36-38 (pp.37-38).
[34] Rosemary Marangoly George, *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-Century Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.8.

pain of the 'phantom home' often resonate with an overpowering and almost exhausting sense of unbelonging.

Samad, the 'first' generation migrant of Smith's *White Teeth*, comes to England in the 1970s to make a new 'home', but having 'a substantial garden area' (p.218) does not guarantee a sense of 'home'. As migrants are usually represented in conservative politics as refusing to settle and assimilate to their 'host' home, Smith thus prefaces the '*Samad 1984, 1857*' part with Norman Tebbit's infamous 1990s cricket test speech '... Are you still looking back to where you came from or where you are?' (p.123). The cricket test, as Nira Yuval-Davis reminds, was a proof whether the immigrant 'really' belonged to the British collectivity'.[35] Throughout the novel, Samad continues to 'look back' to where he came from and does not fully feel at home in London. But he looks back because he remains educationally and economically degraded which a simple 'cricket test' does not reveal.

At the same time, the immigrant presence is described as making the metropolis unhomely. The gathering of these 'strange' bodies soon starts causing white discomfort as Archie's colleague from work comments how Euston is becoming more and more like Delhi every Monday morning (p.72). As Sara Ahmed usefully reminds, the notion of disgust is deeply tied to the histories of imperialism and Smith's representation of the multicultural metropolis reveals these tensions and unresolved histories.[36] These two competing discourses – between the migrant seen as taking 'home' and the idea of 'home' constructed through the notion of hospitality on which the migrant's sense of belonging ultimately depends – explain why it is usually not possible for the migrant to make a 'home' here and why it always remains elsewhere:

> They know what they want, especially those who've lived this century, forced from one space to another like Mr De Winter (ne Wojciech), renamed, rebranded, the answer to every questionnaire nothing nothing space please just space nothing please nothing space (pp. 518-519)

Here the narrative breaks and the chapter ends trying to convey the emphasis on space that emerges at both sides. In this refusal of hospitality, the nationalist experiences the migrant as taking the imagined national space that 'rightfully' belongs to him/her, while the migrant in his/her marginalised position wants nothing

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[35] Yuval-Davis, 'Belonging and the Politics of Belonging', p.210.
[36] See Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, p.83.

but a piece of secure space. The question of 'home' in migration is then as much about (not) having a place one can call 'home' as it is about affect. As Ahmed has suggested, 'the question of home and being at home can only be addressed by considering the question of affect' or *'how one feels or how one might fail to feel'*.[37] The failure to feel at home is also compensated with material possessions – the accumulation of migrant belongings or objects that replicate a sense of 'home'. This is evident in Smith's description of immigrants' spare rooms that accumulate during time 'all that they have ever possessed, no matter how defective or damaged, mountains of odds and ends – that stand testament to the fact that they *have* things now, where before they had nothing.' (emphasis original, p.336).

Samad remains a typical figure of a melancholic migrant, forever torn between what Gilroy has termed a rift between 'the locations of residence and the locations of belonging',[38] eventually abandoning the search for belonging:

> Who would want to stay [...] in a place where you are never welcomed, only tolerated. Just tolerated. [...] But you have made a devil's pact...it drags you in and suddenly you are unsuitable to return, your children are unrecognizable, you belong nowhere. [...] And then you begin to give up the very *idea* of belonging. Suddenly this thing, this *belonging*, it seems like some long, dirty lie... (p.407)

Since the predominant experience for Samad is that of unbelonging, belonging remains an idea, an unattainable ideal and is finally abandoned and mocked for its false promise of community and welcome. Working all his life as a waiter in London and feeling most of the time like an immigrant nobody, Samad not only constantly needs to assert that he is an educated man from Bangladesh who had fought in the Second World War for England, but he is also obsessively engaged in the recreation of his own 'phantom home'. Throughout the novel, he is endlessly retelling the story of his great-grandfather Mangal Pande who had allegedly started the Indian Mutiny. His connection to this imaginary 'home' partly makes up for his feeling of inferiority, but he also imposes this 'phantom home', and the importance of being close to one's roots, on his twin sons which famously ends in disaster. Unlike in Evaristo's verse-novel where Lara constructs a positive sense of identity by engaging with the lost ancestral connections, in *White Teeth*, these connections seem to be a

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[37] Ahmed, 'Home and Away', p.341.
[38] Gilroy, *Against Race*, p.124.

matter of concern only for the melancholic migrant (Samad) who unproductively holds onto his roots, culture and customs.

The idea of roots and culture as unchanging are repudiated by the British-born generation and this is also evident in Smith's playing with various metaphors of roots and different types of teeth. Thus, for example, she prefaces one of the *Irie 1990, 1907'* sections as 'Canines' which may symbolise breaking away and severing from generational lines of belonging, while one of the *'Samad 1984,1857'* sections is named 'Molars' which may point to the stubborn wisdom tooth corresponding with Samad's melancholic looking back to his roots. But even though he is a static character, Samad is not totally out of place or without 'home'. Together with Archie, he makes a 'home from home' (p.184) in O'Connell's Pool House run by an Iraqi immigrant Abdul-Mickey. Here he and Archie build a kind of a male refuge and a sense of community gradually distancing themselves from their much younger wives. These female characters – Clara, Alsana as well as Alsana's lesbian niece Neena for whom 'home' as a destination materialises in London – offer glimpses of much more positive redefinitions of 'home' and belonging, but sadly, Smith does not fully develop these characters.

Passing through the characters and writers, I have so far discussed those who belong to a phantom 'home' (Ugrešić) and those who want to partly un-belong, detach from the 'phantom home' and want to have a new home, a garden 'here', but can never fully attain it (the 'migrant' generation). I now come to those characters that are referred to, though often awkwardly, as the British-born generation. They have never known or had the 'phantom home', but they are often reminded that they should have one elsewhere and, as a result, cannot fully claim their 'home' as a place of living/birth. Their relationship to both the 'phantom home' and the rooted 'home' remains fraught. Both Smith and Evaristo concentrate on exploring where and what 'home' is for these generations. For them, both the location of residence and the location of belonging, to use Gilroy's terms, often remain contentious. As shown in the previous chapter, this split is often caused by the hegemonic reminders of belonging that construct this generation's 'real origins' on the basis of differences read out on the body. If the location of residence for the British generation in both Smith and Evaristo is London, even though it does not always correspond with the location of belonging, the question where the location(s) of belonging are for these generations remains to be answered. Before I move on to exploring the British-born

generation's search for 'home' and belonging in Smith's and Evaristo's novels, earlier narratives of the 'second', British-born belonging can help unravel this question.

Hanif Kureishi's protagonist Karim Amir of *The Buddha of Suburbia* illustrates the melancholic belonging of the British-born generation when he famously declared that he '[is] an Englishman born and bred, almost [...] [a product of] two old histories [...] of here and there, of belonging and not'.[39] He clearly demonstrates the British-born generation's new vocabulary for not only articulating the conflicting and multiple attachments, but at the same time for their contestation and negotiation. Yet, this is far from any kind of romanticisation of rootlessness or from offering a simple resolution through securing and claiming a part of the nation's space; it is more of an ongoing process. The creative playfulness of his statement can be read as a celebration of in-betweenness, but I would suggest that it is the 'almost' that carries the weight of his statement and that is symptomatic. In other words, Karim Amir is in a state of (un)belonging. The two histories of nation, race and empire are unresolved and the 'here' as a place of dwelling is not simply guaranteed. The sense of belonging for Karim, recalling Freud's discussion of melancholia which behaves like an open wound, can always be potentially 'sore'.[40] That is, there is always a possibility that he may be aligned as belonging to 'there' by the hegemonic reminders and the processes of racialisation. Karim thus demonstrates that his in-betweenness is more traumatic then celebratory. But the creative force of his statement also entails a refusal of such exclusionary 'either/or' foundations of belonging and asserts that the hegemonic concept of national belonging – Englishness predicated on whiteness – must be critically rethought and re-imagined. It is at the same time about claiming belonging, yet the nature of belonging remains contentious, as it is evident in the novel's ending.[41]

In a similar manner, Fred D'Aguiar writes about what he terms as 'Unbelongingness' in his autobiographical essay 'Home is Always Elsewhere'. He describes unbelongingness as a condition of 'a nervous disposition coupled with a

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[39] Hanif Kureishi, *The Buddha of Suburbia* (London: Faber, 1991), p.3.
[40] Sigmund Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholy' (1917), in *The Nature of Melancholy: From Aristotle to Kristeva*, ed. by Jennifer Radden, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp.283-294 (p.290).
[41] These are the last lines of the novel:
And so I sat there in the centre of this old city that I loved, which itself sat at the bottom of a tiny island. I was surrounded by people I loved, and I felt happy and miserable, at the same time. I thought of what a mess everything had been, but that it wouldn't always be that way.(p.284).

psychic tremulousness or sense of inadequacy in relation to time and place',[42] which encapsulates the precarious nature of belonging. Capturing the contentious nature of belonging for the British-born generation, D'Aguiar critically engages with the fictions and fixities of belonging when it is expressed through the place of birth, nationality and citizenship and writes about his experience as a member of this 'generation'.[43] D'Aguiar was born in London to Guyanese parents, but he had lived in Guyana until he was twelve before returning to London in the 1970s. Early on this resulted in his shifting sense of belonging. Moving from Guyana brought about longing for the place left behind, while the arrival in London offered little comfort and feeling at home. Because of his Guyanese accent, he often felt out of place in London but, more importantly, it was the white majority reminding him on a daily basis he was a visitor and a guest that made him develop an acute sense of unbelonging during his childhood and youth (p.197). D'Aguiar writes poignantly of the violence being called a 'nigger' (p.196) can do to oneself and of the stages of pain, anger and grief that would follow (p.200). Hegemonic reminders that he could never fully belong because of his 'race' would make him more attuned to the things that could speak to his experience of unbelonging. He remembers how these would range from Bob Marley's and Marvin Gaye's albums, the 1978 production of *Bent* with Ian McKellen to Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey' (p.197). It is in his search for those imaginary ties, a kind of closeness in the dissimilarity of marginalization and alienation, that D'Aguiar offers alternative ways for forging belonging and for rethinking 'with whom we may feel that we belong'[44] – the 'we' here transcends ethno-racial affiliations. D'Aguiar therefore articulates the point at which it becomes possible to transform the acute awareness and experience of unbelonging not only into a strategy of self-empowerment, but also into a strategy against the hegemonic ways of belonging and even into a source of creativity. Yet, it is often a burdensome, hard earned creativity as seen in Ugrešić's work, and can only come through an

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[42] Fred D'Aguiar, 'Home is Always Elsewhere: Individual and Communal Regenerative Capacities of Loss', in *Black British Culture and Society: A Text Reader*, ed. by Kwesi Owusu (London: Routledge, 2000), pp.195-206 (p.199). Further references to this essay are cited in the paragraph.

[43] There is no space here to further consider the implications of the term 'generation'. For an important discussion of the term in the context of black British literature see Stein's *Black British Literature* where he problematises the term 'generation' and especially its notion of linearity (pp.6-7). I share his concerns, but in absence of a better term, I must use 'generations' here to provisionally differentiate between the parental migrant and the British-born generation as represented in Evaristo's novels.

[44] Elspeth Probyn, *Outside Belongings*, p.35.

engagement with loss – as the second part of the title of D'Aguiar's essay – 'Individual and Communal Regenerative Capacities of Loss' – clearly demonstrates.

It is this insistence on 'almost', 'not quite', and on the dialectic between belonging and not belonging, found in Kureishi's and D'Aguiar's earlier works, that reappears in Evaristo's *Lara* and Smith's *White Teeth*. As discussed in Chapter 2, even though the protagonists of *Lara* and *White Teeth* are no longer 'extravagant strangers', they still remain at odds with their time and place and neither their country of birth nor their citizenship easily provide them with those (presumably available) 'comforts' of belonging. In both *Lara* and *Soul Tourists*, Evaristo explores a sense of belonging and 'home' of her protagonists in periods when debates about the politics of belonging were particularly tense. In *Lara*, London, and particularly its predominantly white suburb of Woolwich where Lara grows up in the 1970s, occupies an uncertain status as 'home' in the novel precisely because she is often reminded of the 'phantom home' which is evoked in the recurring question 'Where are you from?'. This question implies that Lara is from somewhere else, that this is not 'her' place and that she cannot fully claim it as her own. This, I believe, is the meaning of D'Agiuar's idea that 'home' is always 'elsewhere'. Rather than a romanticisation of rootlessness, it demonstrates that for some subjects 'home' is never simply there nor is it guaranteed by a place of birth or residence. As a child, Lara expresses such a sense of unhomeliness:

> Home. I searched but could not find myself,
> not on the screen, billboards, books, magazines,
> and first and last not in the mirror, my demon, my love
> which faded my brownness into a Bardot likeness.
> [...] I longed for an image,
> a story, to speak me, describe me, birth me whole.
> Living in my skin, I was, but which one? (p.69)

Again, Evaristo here positions her mixed-race protagonist within a wider context of representation, (in)visibility and unavailability of positive images and role models in the 1970s to construct a sense of belonging. As she leaves the place of her childhood, Lara first embarks on a search for more homely places in the metropolis.

During the 1980s, as a young woman, Lara slowly begins to forge a sense of belonging among Brixton's and Notting Hill's black communities where she finally feels on 'safe ground' (p.88), particularly with her Nigerian boyfriend Josh. But the moment he starts objecting that she is not acting as a 'proper African' and is not able

to cook Jolof rice (p.90), Lara dramatically abandons such imposed and exclusionary identifications. Such construction of 'Blackness' with fixed gender roles is problematic for Lara. After having seen Josh in a bar with a sassy Shirley Bassey (p.91), her accumulated feelings of grief and hurt over racial injustice, as well as the fact that she was not 'authentic' enough for Josh, reach the point of an angry outburst:

> I was a walking irradiated automated diatribe, saw
> the rapist in every homme, worms in every phallus,
> the bigot in all whites, the victim in every black
> woman. London was my war zone. (p.92)

Lara's forceful statements, which take her on the road to creative engagement with loss, recall interventions of black British feminists who, throughout the 1970s and 1980s, started drawing attention to issues of sexism within monolithic 'Blackness' and to the double oppression of racism and sexism for black women. Lara then decides to leave London and embarks on a journey through Europe with her friend Trish and on more metaphorical journeys into her family past. She finally returns to London in 1995, though return does not signal a resolution of belonging as I show in the next chapter.

While Evaristo's *Lara* contextualises and explores the sense of 'home' and belonging for the British-born generation in the 1970s and the 1980s, the British-born generation of Smith's *White Teeth* is in the London of the 1990s and heading towards the new millennium. One would expect they would not need to claim London as their 'home' as Smith describes them as the children who knew the city (p.174) and who like to play the game of '"taxing" something whereby one lays claims, like a newly arrived colonizer, to items in a street that do not belong to you'(p.167). As they are playing this game on a London bus, an OAP complains *'they should all go back to their own...'*, but Smith does not allow 'the oldest sentence in the world' to be finished – it becomes 'stifled by the ringing of bells and the stamping of feet, until it retreated under the seats with the chewing gum' (p.163, emphasis original). Although muffled here, the question 'Where are you from?' resurfaces later in the novel when Irie and Millat are in their teens, as discussed in Chapter 2.

In Smith's novel, even in the 1990s, Irie is still described as a 'stranger in a stranger land' (p.266) and despite the fact that Millat is known all the way from

Cricklewood to West Hampstead and equally embraced by the cockney, black and Asian kids, we are told that 'underneath it all, there remained an ever present anger and hurt, the feeling of belonging nowhere that comes to people who belong everywhere' (p.269). Some readings of the novel, such as Jonathan Sell's article on *White Teeth*, have celebrated this notion of belonging everywhere as a positive move forward that does away with even the very idea of identity. Sell claims that 'terms such as "British" are emptied of significance [in *White Teeth*] and remain useful only as labels to stick on passports'.[45] Indeed, Britishness has been in constant redefinition, particularly since 1945, and new definitions and 'hyphenations' have emerged in the last couple of decades. But, although weakened, remnants of hegemonic Britishness survive and D'Aguiar's poem in Chapter 2 reminds us of this. Sell seems to overlook that even holders of British passport can still be treated differently. In *White Teeth*, even though Irie, Millat and Magid possess a passport, their belonging to Britishness as a collective identity and as citizenship remains contentious.

This is particularly true for Millat when he joins a fundamentalist Islamic group called 'KEVIN' and tries unsuccessfully to purge himself of Britishness seen as the 'corrupted' West. Rather than constructing a positive black-British, Asian-British, or a 'new' British identity, Millat's affiliations, the novel suggests, remain in conflict and continue to oscillate between his secular upbringing and a problematic new form of militancy. In her exploration of what she terms as the 'British-born confidence' in Smith's *White Teeth* and Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*, Sara Upstone takes a more sceptical view than Sell and suggests that other recent narratives, such as Diana Evans' Orange Prize winning novel *26a*, have been more successful in their claiming of London and Britain as 'home', without falling back to 'postcolonial and migrant frames of reference', and she also points out to other recent texts that even do away with the need for claiming.[46]

On the other hand, even though they are still reminded of the 'home' as 'elsewhere', the British generation in *White Teeth* is only partly interested in the search for diasporic roots and they firmly remain in London. Although the diasporic 'home' is made more distant by generational changes. Irie still wants to find it. But

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[45] Jonathan P.A. Sell, 'Chance and Gesture in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* and *The Autograph Man*: A Model for Multicultural Identity?', *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 41, 3 (2006), 27-44 (p.41).

[46] Sara Upstone, '"Same old, same old": Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* and Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 43, 3, (2007), 336-349 (p.346).

when she goes to visit her Jamaican grandmother in South London in search of family photographs and discovers more about her Jamaican roots, Irie forges a sentimental version of Jamaica – 'so *this* was where she came from. This all *belonged* to her, her birthright, like a pair of pearl earrings' (p.400). Marking and laying claim to everything she finds, Irie feels like a Columbus discovering Jamaica (p.402) and constructs her own version of a mythical 'home'. But it rests on an imbalance of ownership as suggested in Smith's use of colonial imagery. To Irie in London, Jamaica appears as a utopian 'well wooded and watered place' and without the weight of history – 'no fictions, no myths, no lies, no tangled webs' (p.402) – and there is little sense of any kind of belonging to the Caribbean diaspora. Irie's version of the diasporic 'home' is at the same time a myth as the narrator soon comments how '*homeland* is one of the magical fantasy words like *unicorn* and *soul* and *infinity* that have now passed into language' (p.402). While Evaristo's *Lara* carefully reconstructs her family history marked by slavery, Smith does this through an intrusive narrator thus disconnecting these histories from the British-born generation. For Irie, the ideal image of the future and history would be a blank page, a time when roots would cease to matter. I discuss further implications of this release from history in Chapter 5.

Both Smith's and Evaristo's novels explore the British-born generation's idea of a diasporic 'home' but through very different conceptions of diaspora. While Irie's imagining of the diasporic 'home' recalls some of Lara's diasporic travels, Smith's characters never really leave London (apart from Magid who, as a child, is involuntarily sent to Bangladesh by Samad, but returns later). The concept of diaspora as well as its use as a critical category has certainly proliferated among different disciplines, from social sciences, tourism, postcolonial and black British cultural studies to literary criticism. Literary studies, in particular, have been largely influenced by Paul Gilroy's and Stuart Hall's work on diaspora.[47] These theoretical positions seem to be more productive for an exploration of the 'migrant' or earlier generations' locations of belonging, to use Gilroy's term, and for contexts where there is an experience of both economic and enforced diasporas. Lara's diasporic travels, however, recall Hall's discussion of a dialogic diasporic identity, laid out in

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[47] See Paul Giroy *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge. Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993) and Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', in *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. by Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), pp. 222–237.

his seminal essay 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', that has to do with healing of the fractured self (evident in Lara's countering of hegemonic reminders of 'racial origins' and her search for the diasporic roots). The positionings of the British-born generations' also illustrate Hall's discussion of the constant transformation of cultural identities.[48] But the British-born generations' evocations of diaspora as represented in Smith's and Evaristo's novels also mark a shift from 'belongingness to Africa as imagined community'.[49]

In both *Lara* and *Soul Tourists*, the black British generation's relationship to the African diaspora as 'home' is explored. But although there is a longing to form diasporic attachments, the protagonists feel as alienated and out of place as in their lived 'home' when they get closer to Africa (literally or in imagination). When Lara undergoes her imaginary search for roots and a reunification with the African half of her identity in Nigeria in 1993, she asks – 'this is the land of my father [...] I wonder if I could belong', but the children start shouting 'Oyinbo!' (p.104) at her, which means Whitey. She is not embraced as belonging to this imaginary 'home' merely on the basis of her skin. But this is also because she seems to be seen as a privileged 'Western' traveller who has come to search for roots.[50] Similarly, when in Gibraltar, Stanley of *Soul Tourists* is wondering whether to go to Africa, but although his family tree began there, he admits 'he knew little of Africa beyond the popular image of starving peasants and corrupt governments' (p.153). Stanley's partner Jessie remembers the days of the Black Power movement, 'our African culture and *authentic* dresses', but concludes that she only knows of the culture that 'wrapped greasy chips in dirty old newspaper' and, like Stanley, she wonders – 'Africa's a continent, not a country, so which of its cultures, thousands of tribes and languages is mine, exactly?' (p.198).

Jessie is also an orphan, but she is neither Ifekwunigwe's diaspora's daughter nor a nationless nomad. As she declares, she might have 'a cantankerous obeah woman buried not so deeply in [her] genetic code, but [she is] a Yorkshire woman, and reet proud of it' (p.198). Jessie's wandering from destination to destination may at first suggest that she has no 'home', or that 'home' is on the move, but her aim is

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[48] See Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', in *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference*, pp. 222-237.

[49] Ibid., p.232.

[50] For an illuminating discussion of diaspora tourism see Tina M. Campt and Deborah Thomas, 'Diasporic Hegemonies – Slavery, Memory, and Genealogies of Diaspora': A Dialogue with Jacqueline Nassy Brown and Bayo Holsey', *Transforming Anthropology*, 1, 2 (2006), 163-177.

to reach Australia to find her estranged son. Perhaps Evaristo uses the figure of the orphan to suggest the severing of parental, generational lines of belonging and to announce a shift from the preoccupation with diasporic 'roots' to a positive affirmation of rootedness in the place of living which is signalled by Jessie's use of Northern English slang 'reet'. Born in Leeds as one of 'the early-born blacks up North [b]efore immigration en masse' when there was 'no fancy Race Relation Department at Council' (p.34), and despite her difficult life in children's homes, Jessie is not interested to trace her Ghanaian father who was a student in Leeds, nor indeed, her African 'roots' which are often seen as a source of empowerment. Yet these conflicting genealogical histories and broken intimacies affected by the imperialist politics and the politics of miscegenation, reach Jessie when she seems to be most stable and content in her life.

When she finds out that she and Kwame – the man she really loves – are cousins, their relationship breaks down. Interestingly, representations of black British orphanhood and foster care children have appeared in other black British women's writing such as Joanna Traynor's *Sister Josephine* (1997), Lucinda Roy's *Lady Moses* (1998) and Valerie Mason-John's *Borrowed Body* (2005, republished as *The Banana Kid* in 2008) as well as in earlier texts such as Joan Riley's *The Unbelonging* (1985), but these contexts have so far been rarely researched.[51]

Stanley, who is the son of Jamaican immigrants, is similarly not interested in his Jamaican heritage and remains distant from both the Caribbean and African diaspora. At the beginning of the novel, Stanley wonders about what the meaning is of his father's repeated reminder that Stanley is 'a Jamaican first and foremost' (p.51). But this seems to be just a passing thought as he is quickly interrupted by Jessie who reminds him that 'home' and a sense of belonging is falsely constructed as 'elsewhere'. This is reinforced by her rhetorical questions –'you've spent all your life in England, Stanley, so what does that make you? Mongolian? Peruvian? Egyptian? (p.51). Exploring the 1970s and 1980s issues of belonging and 'home' for the British generation, Evaristo also shifts and opens up a new diasporic horizon in *Soul Tourists*, in a much closer, and at first unusual locale – Europe. As she stated in the interview:

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[51] A notable exception has been John McLeod, however he mainly focuses on Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*. See John McLeod. 'Postcolonial Fictions of Adoption', *Critical Survey*, 18, 2 (2006), 45-55.

> BE: [...] In the 1980s in particular, there wasn't the same sense of ownership of England, Britain and Europe that we have now today [and] in the 1970s and 1980s, there was still a climate of 'do we really belong?'. Do we belong in this country? Is there somewhere else where we can go? [...] This whole 'back to Africa' thing was prevalent in the 1970s. So what about Europe? What about 'back to Europe'? Well, actually this is your home; this is where you belong, people have cut path through and lived here for millennia. Why not here? It's kind of like saying 'stay here, this is home'. Because when people do go back to Africa, they do find out they don't belong.[52]

Evaristo's aim is not 'just to say that Stanley belongs in England', but also in Europe.[53]

Finally, in *Soul Tourists*, Evaristo is concerned with imaginatively exploring other black diasporas, especially in Europe, thus moving beyond the privileging of the African-American diaspora. This is comically enacted in an episode when Stanley meets the ghost of Pushkin and his Ethiopian great grandfather. Pushkin becomes rather disappointed when he finds out that Stanley is not one of those 'hip' African-Americans, but only a faint version – British, of Jamaican parents (p.238). All Evaristo's characters are then distanced from Africa as originary 'home'.

It seems that in both novels Evaristo is more concerned with the ways in which the notion of diaspora and Africa as 'originary' homeland have acquired different meanings over time and with different generations rather than with exploring diaspora's liberating potential. Ien Ang's discussion of the role of diaspora for the generations 'who cannot speak Chinese', to use her term metaphorically, or for the generations who have never known the diasporic 'home', neatly captures this problematic of (un)belonging:

> While in the so-called host country they are condemned always to be positioned as 'different' or 'foreign', (re)defining themselves as 'diasporic' – as belonging to an idealised home elsewhere – affords them the promise of symbolic escape from the pains and frustrations of marginalisation. But this belonging to a 'there' while being 'here' remains a vicarious, virtual one; never to be conflated with the 'real' thing.[54]

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[52] Interview, Appendix.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ien Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese* (New York: Routlegde, 2001), p.54.

That is, Irie's mythical Jamaica, Lara's travels to Nigeria, and Stanley's perception of Africa in the previously quoted passages, all construct these diasporic homes as passive and unchanging onto which to project, and possibly assuage, their feelings of unbelonging.

It seems that for the British generations diasporic blackness no longer holds its earlier political promise of affiliation and community and, at the same time, '"the decolonized nation as the place of ultimate refuge and gratification" represents only another myth of origins to which the Black British subject can never belong'.[55] In the same way, Stanley's view of Africa thus approximates Koye Oyedeji's contention that 'for many of a Black generation born in Britain, knowledge of Africa remains no more than facing The Unexamined River. A rippling river across which you can see Africans on the other side'.[56] Lara, Stanley and Jessie are all privileged subjects who are able to travel and explore their diasporic roots. Recent work on diaspora has pointed out that there is a tendency to idealise roots and that diasporas also generate 'their own specifically internal rules of explication, forms of enunciation and relations of representation which designate their identities and constitutive outsides'.[57]

But the importance of roots clearly has two distinct histories in the black British and Former Yugoslav context. While the search for roots may be empowering in the black British context, in the Former Yugoslav, and especially in the post-war context, the digging out of 'ancient' roots and myths has been mostly associated with forms of conservatism and hegemonic belonging and has been mobilised in the establishment of 'new' national identities after the war (evident, for example, in the politics of returning to one's true 'roots' throughout the former Yugoslav republics or in the recycling of the Kosovo myth in the Serbian nationalist politics and imagination). As Laura Chrisman points out, 'the dynamic between diasporic and

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[55] Simon Gikandi quoted in Bronwyn T. Williams, 'A State of Perpetual Wandering': Diaspora and Black British writers'<http://www.postcolonialweb.org/diasporas/williams1c.html> [accessed 05 June 2008].

[56] Koye, Oyedeji, 'Prelude to a Brand New Purchase on Black Political Identity: A Reading of Bernardine Evaristo's *Lara* and Diran Adebayo's *Some Kind of Black*', in *Write Black Write British: from Post Colonial to Black British Literature*, ed. by Kadija Sesay (Hertford, Hansib Publications, 2005), pp.346-374 (p.355).

[57] Barnor Hesse, 'Diasporicity: Black Britain's Post-Colonial Formations', in *Un/settled Multiculturalisms: Diasporas, Entanglements, Transruptions*, ed. by Barnor Hesse (New York: Zed Books, 2000), pp.96-120 (p.113).

nationalistic cultures is 'uneven, variable and at times symbiotic'.[58] Indeed, diasporas are often politicised.

For example, a recently established Serbian Ministry for Diaspora perceives the relationship between homeland and diaspora of the greatest state and national interest. Its aim is to bring those scattered around the world closer to the 'homeland' and is therefore heavily focused on the idea of return. Its recently published handbook (written in Cyrillic) brings this problematic and exclusionary version of diaspora to the fore – the handbook is specifically aimed at those 'who belong to the Serbian nation', and it does not acknowledge the existence of an enforced post-Yugoslav diaspora.[59] Diaspora therefore remains a contested term existing in multiple contexts. Perhaps aware of such misuses of diaspora and of the Serbian/Croatian hegemonic diasporic formations, Ugrešić almost never uses this term, even though her writing is littered with numerous diasporic encounters. The next chapter explores whether Ugrešić's writing offers intimations of an alternative conception of diaspora – that which can move beyond being always rooted in a specific diasporic context and from its nexus with the nation and genealogical inheritance.

So to conclude, in Smith's, Evaristo's, Goldsworthy's and Ugrešić's narratives various 'phantom homes' are created, but while in Ugrešić's essays and novels there is no longer a particular place that holds a promise of belonging, in *White Teeth*, *Lara* and *Soul Tourists* (and perhaps even in *Chernobyl Strawberries*), it is London – the city of 'strangers' where one can disappear or constantly be noticed and which is both homely and unhomely – that maintains a strong pull. In Ugrešić, since the locations of belonging have been lost, there is a refusal to belong fully to a rooted 'home' and new places of residence/dwelling, like artificial limbs, never really fit. For Ugrešić, 'home' is a place of the unhomely and a place of an impossible return. For the British generations, a sense of 'home' and (un)belonging arises out of 'a lived experience of locality', while the notion of 'home' as 'a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination, a place of return',[60] is less present. Yet, in these narratives, there is still no new and privileged generation that has never

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[58] Laura Chrisman, *Postcolonial Contraventions: Cultural Readings of Race, Imperialism, and Transnationalism* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), p.7.
[59] The information about the handout is available in English at <http://www.mzd.sr.gov.yu/Eng/News/NewsDetail.aspx?id=45&cid=661> [accessed 09 January 2009].
[60] Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora*, p.192.

known the 'phantom home', that can fully resist belonging to or knowing the 'phantom home' and choose whether to belong or not irrespective of any external influences.

So far I have discussed the material manifestations of 'home' and the relationship between belonging and place in these narratives. Finally, I want to briefly consider how literature may also manifest as one such location of (un)belonging.

3. Literature as 'Home'

Returning once again to the metaphors of luggage, all these writers are faced with the 'burden of representation' as demonstrated in the discussion of Smith's *White Teeth* in the previous chapter. Literary scholars (and writers themselves) have repeatedly drawn attention to the fact that black British, post-colonial, post-Yugoslav or Eastern European writers (note the multiplying of usually inadequate and limiting categories) are not only expected to become true representatives, advocates and experts for the issues, places and people they write about (that often carry traces of their autobiographical circumstances but cannot be reduced to it), but that they are also expected to continue producing the same themes for the literary market. Certainly, for some writers this becomes less a matter of choice and more of survival, while others have greatly profited – with support from both the publishers and critics – from staying safe on the side of quasi margins and have continued recycling these issues (of 'race', 'post-coloniality', otherness) in their works. Sara Upstone usefully reminds us how Zadie Smith's and Monica Ali's second novels have already fallen into relative obscurity precisely by not having met the expectations and not being directly concerned with these issues.[61] Smith is, however, now part of the British literary mainstream and Evaristo may be steadily approaching a similar status, although she is still quite reluctant to say whether she fully belongs to the British literary mainstream.[62] In this last section, I want to consider some of the writers' reflections on (un)belonging to literary canons and labels and to see how particular literature has played a prominent part in creating a sense of 'home' when it was most needed.

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[61] Upstone, "'Same old, same old'", p.346.
[62] See Appendix for her interesting answer to this question which supports very well the idea of (un)belonging.

Evaristo is a member of an earlier generation of writers than Smith, and for her, growing up in Britain of the 1970s, there were few black female protagonists with whom she could identify apart from Buchi Emecheta's novel *Second-Class Citizen*. Recalling D'Aguiar's search for the imaginary ties of belonging as well as Lara's search for a positive image, in her essay 'False Memory Syndrome', Evaristo writes:

> People who are in the majority in the society often do not understand this need for validation [...] When the gap between our cultural backgrounds and those portrayed in literature is a chasm, we can fall into it, screaming sometimes silently, sometimes noisily as I did. You see, I loved literature but I had discovered that literature, it seemed, did not love me'.[63]

Evaristo remembers how the works of African-American women writers such as Toni Morrison and Alice Walker, played a crucial part in the transformation of her own 'scream of rage' and writes about the importance of availability of such positive and empowering representations for one's sense of belonging. First, she would start forging the imaginary alliances and spaces of belonging with the experiences of African-American women, as she notes – 'in looking for fiction that explored the existence of women in the African Diaspora I was looking for myself' (p.27). But as she begins to reflect on her (un)belonging, she would slowly start discovering the points of departure and critical difference with African-American writers, who were writing out of their own specific tradition that could not account for Evaristo's particular positioning in Britain. Her literary journey speaks of discovering her own voice and finally gaining confidence to write from her own experience (p.30), thus transforming (un)belonging into a source of creativity, but at the same time being indebted to an earlier generation of writers and their invaluable representation of black female experience that enabled her to make such shift. Today, her literary heritage consists of African-American literature and also of Classic Greek, transnational and other literary influences.

Though, when I asked Evaristo to reflect on the current state of black British literature, she offered a bleak view on the number of black British writers and the

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[63] Bernardine Evaristo, 'False Memory Syndrome', in *Writing Worlds 1: The Norwich Exchanges*, ed. by Vesna Goldsworthy (Norwich: Pen & Inc Press, 2006), pp.27-31 (p.28). All further references are cited in the paragraph.

availability of empowering stories she had previously found in African-American writers:

> BE: [...] I don't know what the statistics are in terms of the number of writers of African-Caribbean or Asian heritage who are published in this country as novelists. I can probably count on my one hand. So you have Andrea Levy, Zadie Smith, Diana Evans, Helen Oyeyemi and you have me. You have Aminatta Forna and now I'm struggling [...] So that is six people I can think who are published with the mainstream publishing houses. There is Delia Jarrett-Macauley who published one novel a few years ago, but in terms of people who are publishing at the moment, it is six. Delia might publish another book, so that is seven. There were lots of Black women writers who have published in the mid to late 1990s. There were lots of writers and I noticed it when I published *Lara*. They published one book or two and then they disappeared. The only one who is still around is myself, although I come from poetry to fiction, and Andrea Levy. So the others are all very new. Then we've got the male writers who are almost invisible. Now, I'm talking about writers who are British; I am not talking about writers from India who come here and get published or writers from Africa. I am talking about the British born writers because they will be the ones who'd be writing about Britain. They have almost disappeared. So in answer to your question, I don't think there are enough books. There has been some research into it which was a report called 'In Full Colour' years ago, but it didn't look at the statistics of how many writers of colour are getting published in this country. It looked at the situation, but not the statistics. I would really like to see the statistics because I think it is a lot less than you might think and because some of those writers are very high-profile, it is like having Maggie Thatcher as a Prime Minister – you think everything is good, but actually I don't think it is. [...] Some writers get lot of attention and we think the doors are open, but are they really?[64]

Evaristo's last observations particularly resonate in the context of Zadie Smith's success and shed light on the fact that all is not well in the house of (black) British fiction. Although we talk today about something called black British literature, Evaristo's answer actually suggests that this house often feels like a lonely place.

On the other hand, Evaristo's multiple heritage has also played an important creative role within her fictional writing, and at the same time it has complicated her belonging as a writer inviting a string of categories and labels such as black British, multicultural, mixed-race, or post-colonial writing that trail behind her writing. In another interview, Evaristo reflects on the burdens of these labels:

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[64] Interview, Appendix.

I'm just a writer. To be labelled a post-colonial or Black writer is just a process of categorisation by the academics. I have strong women characters in my novels though I don't deal with specific feminist issues. I'm both Black and White. My mother is English and my father Nigerian. I grew up very British. As for the sense of belonging, the UK is not one homogenous place. In the cities there is intermarriage but in the countryside it is different. There are various levels. Earlier Nigerians felt they did not belong but this has changed in the last 10-15 years. If you are always dreaming of going home, you will never invest in where you are living.[65]

Evaristo claims several important things here. Despite her diasporic heritage and transnational allegiances, she rightly and powerfully claims her belonging to London, however, with awareness that in places outside London her Britishness might be questioned.[66] I asked Evaristo if the luggage of labels becomes lighter once literary mainstream is reached and whether she felt we have reached the point when these labels are becoming redundant and one can finally be 'seen' just as a writer:

BE: Well, I don't think those labels are redundant yet and I question whether I have reached the literary mainstream. To me, I don't feel marginalised. My career has developed a lot since 1997; a lot of good things have happened, I published lots of books and I'm with a mainstream publisher. But even though that is the case – I get reviewed in the main papers and so on – I don't know, am I mainstream? There's a part of me that is not sure that I am [...]. But in terms of all the labelling, I don't really preoccupy myself with it except when the academics ask me about it, or when I do gigs and they say – are you a black writer or a black woman writer, a woman writer and those kinds of questions. That's the only time I really engage with it. But I have to accept that these labels exist; they can work for me – I got an MBE for being a voice in multicultural British literature. Now, if I wasn't that, would I have got an MBE? Because the fact is that the stories I have to tell are coming out of particular experiences and cultures, so it kind of makes you stand out – because there aren't many of us – black British writers/novelists in this country. [...] So as I'm one of the few who has continued to publish over a period of time, it has brought attention to my work. But I don't really wear it as a burden and I respond to it differently at different situations. So when I'm in Nigeria, they say, 'are you a Nigerian writer?', and I say yes. They can call me that, I don't care really. I'm taught on postcolonial courses – I would never

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[65] 'Home is Here', Bernardine Evaristo interviewed by Kausalya Santhanam, *The Hindu Literary Review*, 7 December, 2003 <http://www.hindu.com/lr/2003/12/07/stories/2003120700250400.htm> [accessed 4 October 2007].
[66] She also makes this point in the interview, see Appendix.

call myself a post-colonial writer, but I like the fact that I'm taught on those courses. Am I a black writer? Yes, and that means Martin Amis is a white writer. Am I multicultural? Yes, I am, but this whole country is multicultural in many ways. So, it's complicated, but it's not an issue for me. I can leave it up to other people to preoccupy themselves with what I am.[67]

Evaristo's powerful assertions counter and expose at so many levels the entrenched ways of 'seeing' I discussed in the previous chapter, and perhaps today – just over 10 years since *Lara* was first published – the burden of labels does not feel as heavy to Evaristo as it might have been earlier. She can opt to use the labels strategically or refuse them altogether. However, when I asked her if a younger generation of writers such as Diana Evans, Helen Oyeyemi and Lizzy Dijeh are transcending the labels and the issues around the burden of representation, she interestingly responded:

BE: Are they transcending them? Not really. They might like to think they are, but I don't think so. I think in this society, if you're considered to be black or mixed-race or whatever, you are 'marketly' different. Though I have to say there is a writer called Mike Gayle[68] – he's like a boy-lit writer. I've never read his work, but he's a black guy and he writes these very popular novels that, I think, tell very well about being a young man in today's society and, from what I understand, his characters are not racially specific, but when you see his picture on the cover, you know he's a black guy. He's somebody who doesn't really seem to address anything to do with race. But all the writers you're talking about, they're not talking about race, but they will have characters of colour in their books. So Diana Evans' new novel *The Wonder* is set in Notting Hill and it is about the black community in Notting Hill in the 1960s and today, but it is not about race – they [the characters] are just black. So they are dealing with things that they wouldn't necessarily be dealing with if they were not of colour and they [these writers] are labelled whether they like it or not. But if you become really famous then there is a level at which you don't wear the labels so heavily like Salman Rushdie or Zadie Smith. There is a level at which it is a little bit overlooked, but not completely.[69]

Evaristo's answer echoes the discussion of Smith's photograph and her status in contemporary British literature and also supports the argument made in this thesis,

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[67] Interview, Appendix.
[68] Mike Gayle is best known for his bestselling novel *My Legendary Girlfriend* (1998). See also an interesting piece from *The Independent* where Gayle talks about the burden of being labelled as a black writer, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/profiles/mike-gayle-im-not-the-male-bridget-jones-709498.html>[accessed 26 November 2009].
[69] Interview, Appendix.

namely, that questions of belonging – in terms of the bodily 'difference' and in the context of literary production and marketing – are still contentious and far from being resolved.

Evaristo's assertion that she wants to be seen just as a writer is important and it is the one which Ugrešić also makes:

> I am a freelance writer. I do not hide behind an ethnic, national, or religious identity (the category on which many contemporary writers increasingly rely).In Croatia I am barely recognized as a Croatian writer, and in the Netherlands I am not recognized as a Dutch writer. One might say I am a complete outsider.[70]

Both writers' claim that they would wish to be considered just as writers is less about claiming belonging to this privileged space of Literature, thus capitalised, but is more a call for re-organising the 'home' of Literature that has traditionally belonged to the white, Western, and, most often, male writer. But while Evaristo and Smith can negotiate belonging to British literature and often successfully claim this space as they are re-writing the nation and inscribing themselves into this landscape thereby making the literary labels that follow their writing redundant and inadequate, in Ugrešić's case, this is much more complicated and she is also not interested in re-claiming the space of what is today considered Croatian literature. For Ugrešić, who now lives in Amsterdam, being just a writer is more complicated.

Even though we are witnessing the weakening of national literatures, it is ironic that Ugrešić has become known in the 'West' as one of the most renowned Croatian writers, while 'back home', until very recently, she would be referred to as a writer who went into a self-imposed and voluntary exile.[71] In his introduction to *The Locations of Culture*, Homi Bhabha expands on the Freudian unhomely to talk about historical complexity and about what he terms unhomely fictions – or the narratives that spring from 'transnational histories of migrants, the colonized, or political refugees'.[72] In his work, the return of the repressed that haunts the present is historicised and evoked in 'the unspoken, unrepresented pasts' (p.26) that are imaginatively interwoven, for example, in the fictions of Nadine Gordimer and Toni

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[70] Nataša Kovačević, 'Yugoslavia, an "Almost Forbidden Word" : Cultural Policy in Times of Nationalism – Interview with Dubravka Ugrešić', *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory*, 17, 3 (2007), 299-315 (p.309).

[71] In chapter 1, I have pointed out the circumstances around Ugrešić's leaving Croatia in the early 1990s.

[72] Homi, Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), p.17. All further references are to this edition and are cited in the paragraph.

Morrison. These unhomely moments do not only appear as haunting effects of slavery or apartheid, but also as further questions of witnessing and writing of/for the Other. Although Bhabha goes to great lengths to provide a list of such oppositionary imagination and creative impulses of *witnessing,* and advocates that the unhomely should be considered beyond a paradigm of colonial and post-colonial condition (p.13), Ugrešić's writing of the unhomely does not figure in his evidence of 'a more transnational and translational sense of the hybridity of imagined communities' (p.7). Sadly, for Bhabha, Ugrešić's writing remains in the uncanny shadow of 'the hideous extremity of Serbian nationalism' (p.7) – the dominant 'Western' image.

In her essay 'EEW', which is an acronym for Eastern European writers, Ugrešić writes ironically about Literature as 'home', but also reveals other problems her writing faces once it arrives at the 'Western' literary market:

> I believed that a writer should have no homeland or nation or nationality, a writer must serve neither an Institution nor a Nation, neither God nor the Devil, a writer must have only one identity: his books, I thought, and only one homeland: Literature (where did I get that idea?) [...] My Literature, my Belles Lettres, I repeated to myself , clutching my only ID – my books – in my hand [...] As soon as I crossed the border, the customs officer of culture began roughly sticking identity labels on me: *communism, Eastern Europe, censorship, repression, Iron Curtain, nationalism* (Serb or Croat?).[73]

Certainly, since they come from different contexts, the labels that follow Ugrešić's writing do not affect Smith and Evaristo and these labels are yet to be destabilised.[74] But while Smith and Evaristo can strategically claim to be both British writers and black British writers, hyphenations such as Croatian-Dutch or the even more problematic Former Yugoslav-Dutch, are not yet available to Ugrešić. The same can be said for Goldsworthy and her difficulty of claiming belonging as a Serbian-British writer. In her essay 'The Trouble with Belonging', Goldsworthy writes how she was invited to open the 2005 Belgrade Book Fair not as a local author, but as a British author. Her speech was delivered in English which caused some debate in Serbian newspapers about whether this was necessary as she was, after all, a Serbian writer. Reflecting on this schizophrenic position of (un)belonging, Goldsworthy asks – 'whom should I have really represented: Britain or Serbia? Am I a British writer of

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[73] Ugrešić, 'EEW', in *Have a Nice Day*, pp.137-143 (pp.138-9).
[74] Ugrešić has been putting these labels under scrutiny elsewhere in her essays, but since this reaches beyond the scope of this chapter, it is not possible to consider all the essays in detail here.

Serbian origin or a Serbian writer?'[75] So, while the locations of residence and the locations of belonging are put in productive tension in Smith and Evaristo, Ugrešić and Goldsworthy must work through imposed national identifications 'at home' as well as through those numerous other identifications in their 'locations of residence' which Ugrešić identifies above. Ugrešić concludes in 'EEW' that an Eastern European writer is not only struggling with baggage, but with several suitcases (p.140). She sees a western writer 'as an elegant passenger travelling without luggage' (p.137). Indeed, it may seem that the 'suitcase' is lighter for Evaristo and Smith, but, as the next chapter will demonstrate, this would depend on where they travel and Ugrešić obviously has in mind white western writers.

This chapter was focused on exploring the affective side of belonging, its relationship to 'home', and various manifestations of temporary homes and the 'unhomely'. The next chapter takes Ugrešić's metaphor of travelling with or without luggage further to look at the ways in which the writers' and their protagonists' release the burden of various belongings and unbelongings and to examine whether the gains and losses of these negotiations can evoke a liberating 'double vision' and new forms of belonging.

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[75] See Goldsworthy, 'The Trouble with Belonging: An Afterword', in *Writing Worlds 1: The Norwich Exchanges*, ed. by Vesna Goldsworthy (Norwich: Pen & Inc Press, 2006), pp.160-165 (p. 163).

Chapter Four

Belonging and Movement

The space of the foreigner is a moving train, a plane in flight, the very transition that precludes stopping. As to landmarks, there are none.[1]

From being an object of hegemonic reminders of belonging through essentialisation of 'visible' and 'audible' markers of difference (discussed in Chapter 2), to their exploration of longing in belonging through the precarious trajectories of 'home' (in Chapter 3), the protagonists of Evaristo's, Ugrešić's and Smith's novels, and Goldsworthy in her memoir, all reflect on belonging from the multiple positions of (un)belonging. This is not to imply that these narratives are only concerned with unsettling the binaries 'belonging – unbelonging', or that they gesture towards some kind of a resolution of belonging, as if belonging would be secured if the protagonists would be re-homed, or welcomed into the national/majoritarian embrace. On whose terms this negotiation depends is precisely what is repeatedly questioned in these narratives and it is this tension that the concept of (un)belonging importantly keeps in place. Building on the discussions from the previous chapters – of belonging and the body and the rift between what it means to be black British, former-Yugoslav, Eastern European, diasporic, migrant and exile – this chapter examines how movement away from a place, and also to another place affects belonging. Following Kristeva's suggestion that the foreigner belongs to the space of transition, this chapter explores how belonging and unbelonging are articulated in the moments of movement. Exploring the construction of places in the moments of arrival, passing, staying, or travelling, as well as the materiality of particular landmarks in these narratives, I examine to what extent this seemingly fluid and transitory nature of 'the space of the foreigner' can engender progressive forms of resistance.

The prefix 'un' in (un)belonging may at first seem to have negative connotations (as in unbelonging that 'scars' the body and keeps some bodies in place as discussed in Chapter 2), but the 'un' in (un)belonging also acquires a performative

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[1] Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p.7.

and imaginative potential in these narratives. At the same time, the protagonists express the need 'to unbelong' from being defined through the negative and to move away from such an environment which often results in the protagonists going on a series of physical journeys.

'To unbelong' is to move – within oneself (as in Goldsworthy), away from 'home' and to negotiate the possibilities and conditions of return (as in Evaristo), or to be forever moved by an impossible return (as in Ugrešić). To unbelong is to find ways to decouple belonging from conservative and hegemonic notions, to re-appropriate and redefine new forms of belonging. To unbelong thus entails releasing the burden of one's various belongings and unbelongings. The imaginative process of re-location and dropping down of such 'baggage', particularly at 'Western' doors, is productively used in Goldsworthy's memoir through humour and the strategies of looking back. To unbelong is to uncover, unpack and unravel the processes around hegemonic belonging and it is about finding ways to undo its effects. This has become evident in the previous chapter's discussion of the always problematic and politically charged question of who came 'here' first and who has the right to say 'I' belong and 'you' do not. (Un)belonging thus becomes a mobile and unstable category that engenders a productive verb form 'to unbelong'. As Irit Rogoff writes in her book *Terra Infirma: Geography's Visual Culture*, 'to "unbelong" and to "not be at home" is the very condition of critical theoretical activity'.[2] In a similar manner, Elspeth Probyn has suggested that critically thinking about belonging makes one already outside.[3] Could (un)belonging then be considered as a third category or do the oscillations between belonging and unbelonging, between the protagonists being both inside and outside, enable a third space to emerge? To what extent the movement of (un)belonging bring about a productive 'double-consciousness'?

Since all the narratives extensively employ various metaphors of movement – both voluntary and involuntary physical journeys and metaphorical journeys into memory and the past – it seems appropriate to start addressing the questions outlined above by exploring the protagonists' physical movements. Evaristo's Lara embarks on several journeys throughout the novel leaving behind the spaces of unbelonging and only returns to London at the very end of the novel. Ugrešić writes extensively

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[2] Irit Rogoff, *Terra Infirma: Geography's Visual Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 2000), p.18.
[3] Probyn, *Outside Belongings*, p.8.

about her various travels in her essays, but also offers some powerful observations on exile, migration, and globalised movements in her novel *The Ministry of Pain*. The British protagonists of *White Teeth* almost never leave London, but the narrative moves between different time frames and between the British and migrant generations. Goldsworthy writes about her experiences of moving to Britain and reflects how her departure from Yugoslavia affected her sense of belonging. Evaristo's *Soul Tourists* – the novel which is centrally about Stanley's and Jessie's journey through Europe – is even prefaced with G. K. Chesterton's famous comment, 'they say travel broadens the mind, but you must have the mind'.

Following Evaristo, this chapter then asks – what enables one to 'broaden the mind' and how does one begin to see (or not) things differently by travelling? What do metaphors of physical movement do in these narratives and to what extent do they evoke a 'double consciousness'? Who progresses by travelling and who remains stuck? As the discussion of Evaristo's 'Literature Express 2000' journey in Chapter 2 has revealed, not all travelling and not all forms of movement result in a productive 'double-vision' which, on the contrary, can sometimes have its own blind spots. To clarify, these narratives are littered with various movements (tourism, search for roots, diaspora, displacement, exile, migration) and forms of transport (trains, cars, planes, river journeys), and also with various travellers (exiles, migrants, 'soul tourists'). The differences and important histories that stand behind each of these movements should not be taken for granted or erased under the sign of productive critical mobility. Not all forms of movement are voluntary and thus, for example, exile and tourism cannot be aligned. Unbelonging, on the one hand, results from involuntary movements (such as war and exile in Ugrešić) and on the other, it may result from migration or from othering of hegemonic reminders (in Smith and Evaristo). Movement in these narratives can thus be empowering, but also imprisoning. By considering where movement appears in these narratives, in what function and how it affects belonging, I examine to what extent the politics of (dis)location and travel is subversive in these narratives.

Testing Anne Anlin Cheng's claim that 'melancholia, both living with the ghost of the alien other within and living as the ghost in the gaze of another, may be the precondition – and the limit – for the act of imagination that enables the political

as such',[4] this chapter examines which physical movements (if any) might enable the creative possibilities of melancholic consciousness. The journeys may be both cathartic and healing – they are about putting oneself together – but, as I discuss in the next chapter, they are also about putting together of fragments of those fractured histories of loss that can be best defined through various 'posts': post-colonial, post-communist and post-war. As I point out here and develop in the next chapter, a productive melancholic consciousness is more enabled by the journeys into memory and the past rather than solely through physical movements. In line with Cheng's argument that melancholia can sometimes be productive and sometimes less enabling, and through a close reading of the texts, it becomes clear that not all movements that result from the crisis of (un)belonging are productive. A liberating 'double vision' that can radically destabilise hegemonic belonging does not seem to result only from the protagonists' physical journeys, but through a constant engagement with past and present belongings. The very need to undertake the journey, both voluntary and involuntary, precisely exposes the histories and the workings of the hegemonic idea of belonging, and questions the idea that these are simply narratives of personal growth. The last section of this chapter points out the implications of such theorising of the narratives.

As it has been pointed out in Chapter 2, Smith's *White Teeth* has been most often read as a progressive narrative of celebratory British multiculturalism that moves away from the so-called 'migrant' narratives and imagines positive plural identities. The final section of this chapter interrogates the claims made for *White Teeth* as a progressive narrative by exploring the novel's representation of the migrant generation in the light of recent readings that have been more critical of the novel's 'new' belongings. Evaristo's *Lara*, on the other hand, has been read through the lenses of the *Bildungsroman* genre, as a journey of self-formation of an 'authentic' black British protagonist who seeks to 'feel at home' in Britain, most prominently in Mark Stein's book *Black British Literature: Novels of Transformation*. Since the *Bildungsroman* genre heavily relies not only on the notion of a physical journey, but also on a journey within oneself – the protagonist usually returns a transformed and more mature self at the end of such novels and can finally fully belong to the place he/she had left – the final section of this chapter critically

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[4] Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race*, p.194.

discusses some problematic aspects of analysing Evaristo's novels through this genre and the implications for the idea of (un)belonging.

1. (Un)belonging: (Im)possibilities of a Double-vision

Throughout her memoir, Vesna Goldsworthy announces herself as Yugoslav, Serbian, 'exotic' Montenegrin, and also English and continental European, and she often switches points of view for a particular purpose and audience. However, the aim of these positionings is not to narrate or celebrate the idea of a fluid, ever-changing migratory subjectivity in the postmodern sense. Rather, it is an active exploration of her provisional positionings of belonging and the ways in which one is being positioned by the hegemonic ways of belonging. As pointed out in Chapter 3, the reconstruction of memory in *Chernobyl Strawberries* may be literally read as the healing of a displaced self. This is a literal healing, of herself and her body through her recovery and acceptance of the part of the breast (and the country) that is no longer there, and imaginatively, through a negotiation of her multiple belongings. After all, she is now revisiting from a distance of twenty years the Yugoslavia she had left behind in the 1980s. And just as the country has irrevocably fallen apart, Goldsworthy has been changed by many crossings and new attachments to her British 'home'. Perhaps aware that the cultural/imaginative work performed in the name of autobiography has often profoundly concerned representations of the nation, and of the roles that nationality and/or ethnicity play in the construction of a self,[5] Goldsworthy can only reconcile the temporal and spatial distance through forging a sense of belonging that is both 'here' and 'there'. She writes:

> I was not reaching some Copernican, nationalist turning point. I simply felt that being English and Serbian at the same time was the only way I could now be happy: inside and outside, within and without, belonging but free (p.203).

On the other hand, her claiming of Englishness represents an empowering position that disrupts the dominant perceptions of Englishness with its clearly defined set of boundaries, according to which she would always remain foreign, or at best British, but never English, as the discussion of audible differences in Chapter 2 has revealed. Thus blending *ius sanguinis* with *ius soli* and *ius domicile*, she shows how

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[5] Further on this aspect see Leigh Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony* (Ithaca, N.Y.; London: Cornell University Press, 2001), p.12.

Englishness becomes safeguarded on the grounds of 'blood', birth and residence and how Britishness, although perceived as more inclusive than Englishness, at the same time becomes a refuge for everyone who cannot align themselves.

This re-appropriation of Englishness recalls *White Teeth* when Abdul-Mickey, Samad and Archie's friend who is himself an 'Iraqi immigrant', asserts 'we're all English now, mate. Like it or lump it' (p.192). However, not everyone can utter 'I'm English' or be seen as English and Smith's novel also considers the important role 'race' has played in the construction of Englishness. It is the Chalfens who are paradoxically represented as the bearers of 'natural' Englishness as whiteness blends them in and their Jewish background has been whitewashed and absorbed after several generations. Similarly, Goldsworthy's 'Eastern Europeanness' is watered down by her English surname. But as much as she celebrates her plural belongings, Goldsworthy also creatively engages with the loss of her maiden surname Bjelogrlić rather than abandoning it. By re-imagining and tracing the matriarchal history of this surname – Bjelogrlić literally translates as 'a son of a "white throat"' (p.32) – Goldsworthy yet again calls up the Dracula imagery which shows her masterful handling of this trope for various purposes in the narrative.

This female Dracula in disguise blending into Englishness then not only invades and re-appropriates the language (by writing in English), but also reveals contingent belongings and shows how this mastery, although an effective literary strategy, is never fully achieved. Belonging is always implicated and determined not only by its hegemonic reminders and the working of the post-imperial imagination, but also by the residual elements, such as her first name and accent – those uncanny reminders of otherness that can always come back. This pain of otherness is perhaps most poetically expressed when she writes about invading cancer and about the post-operative pain exacerbated by the tubes and drips attached to her body. Despite this, Goldsworthy tells her nurse that 'villagers in Serbia believe that the injections and vaccinations given in the course of a lifetime prevent the deceased from turning into a vampire' (p.254). This metaphor of a threshold between life and death evokes Probyn's discussion of the ways in which 'belonging hinges on not belonging' and 'the ways in which the manners of being at the threshold may provide another

perspective from which to view the complexities of identity, difference, subjectivity and desire'.[6]

Although it takes Goldsworthy time to reach the empowering speaking position displayed in the previously quoted passages, one should also be cautious not to over-valorise the author's 'I' as a constant movement between different identities that does not allow for any settled perspective. There has been a tendency in recent cultural theory and literary studies to over-emphasise, for example, the narratives of 'unhoused' intellectuals, and to overlook the differences of class and other forms of positioning. This notion of estrangement from one's culture/nation as necessary for the development of such 'double-vision' is, for example, evident in Said's work where he claims that 'belonging, as it were, to both sides of the imperial divide enables you to understand them more easily'.[7] Perhaps being suspicious of the gains of such double vision, Goldsworthy writes how before her cancer she had developed binocular diplopia, an eye condition resulting in double vision (p.27), and how, by being so 'immersed in theorizing about double vision', she failed to notice her cancer until it changed the shape of her breast (p.28).

Certainly, there is something that is gained from such crossings and in-between experiences, but we should be careful not to reify this positioning as a gift of being able to view things from a different perspective because one now occupies both 'sides'. As already pointed out, Smith's novel has been interpreted in a similar way as one such celebratory narrative. This privileged standpoint – since most such intellectuals (and writers) are based in the Western metropolitan centres and draw inspiration from these metropolitan locations – has been often taken as a synonym for a new form of humanism. And, it may also risk suggesting that those who remain in the same place suffer from a 'limited vision' as one can surely feel out of place in one's 'home'/country on many different levels. As Andrew Smith points out in his critique of migrancy as a new way of being, 'just as modernism adopted a figure of urban exile, postcolonial theory takes the modern global migrant as its own self-

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[6] Probyn, *Outside Belongings*, p.14.
[7] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1993), xxvii. See also his other works such as *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* and *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures*.

portrait'[8] which may risk turning migrancy into a metaphor and erasing the material and often difficult realities of migration.

In this regard, *Chernobyl Strawberries,* as an example of academic life-writing, can afford the movement between alternative identifications I have outlined earlier (Yugoslav, Serbian, 'exotic' Montenegrin, 'English, but not quite'), but it is not Goldsworthy's aim in the memoir to perform continuous displacement or romanticise in-betweenness. The story of her arrival in England is told through a conscious narrative of in-betweenness:

> I have never been a refugee. I am not an exile. Not quite an expatriate either: that term seems to be reserved for those coming from lands which are more fortunate than mine. A migrant, perhaps? That sounds too Mexican. An émigré? Too Russian. All these descriptions contain existential drama, cultural baggage which is highly inappropriate for someone who walked down the greenest lawn in Belgrade to the embassy of her adoptive country [...] acquired a letter [...] to grant me the right of abode in the kingdom of the lion and the unicorn. (pp.36-7)

By pointing out the inadequacy of these terms to describe her own positioning, she shows that her arrival in England is not a grand migrant narrative, nor a result of any forced expulsion, but that it was her own personal choice when she decided to join her English husband. At the same time, by juxtaposing these terms – refugee, exile, migrant, émigré – she is moving away and liberating herself from the expectations of Eastern European memoir as testimony to history. From the opening lines she reminds us that her story is an ordinary one and that it should not be confused with Eastern European dissident narratives. Similarly, when describing her first arrival in the UK at Heathrow and the moment in which she is aligned with other 'real' subjects at the border, she points out that hers is a much more privileged position:

> Only at Heathrow, briefly, did my story touch those of others. The immigration officer decided that I needed to have my chest X-rayed and I was whisked off from Terminal 2 to a clinic in Terminal 3 in a minibus driven by a chatty woman in a grey and navy uniform. There were other people waiting to be seen – a worried Indian woman in a sari, an African family, a man in a strange green suit reading an Armenian book – but I was out before I could take a good look at any of them. (p.38)

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[8] Andrew Smith, 'Migrancy, Hybridity and Postcolonial Literary Studies', in *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies,* ed. by Neil Lazarus, (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.241-260 (p.260).

As a holder of the 'communist' Yugoslav passport who is about to marry an Englishman, Goldsworthy is only held temporarily and there is also a sense that mobility is aided by whiteness. Although her arrival in the UK is described here as smooth and the plane that carries her to her new 'home' represents a neutral symbol, with the outset of the war in Former Yugoslavia Goldsworthy's multiple belongings become more strained and conflicted. This is particularly evident in the descriptions of her witnessing of NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999, when she painfully realises that the war planes carrying British soldiers are now bombing the city of her childhood where her parents and family still live. One might then expect to find Goldsworthy's political opinions on the Yugoslav conflict in the episodes in which she visits Belgrade during the bombing as an interpreter to a British journalist, or in those of her reading news bulletins at the BBC during the war in 'the Balkans'. However, she moves away from taking on a role of another Balkan expert for the 'Western' audience and instead remains a silent translator.

In their reflections on the future of research in life-writing, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson point to the attention paid to borders and mobility in recent autobiographical works and call for a debate on the issues of subjectivity in transit, the ways in which autobiographical subjects negotiate 'strangeness' and the ways in which different kinds of mobility, such as forced displacement, exile or migration, affect self-representational practices.[9] In Goldsworthy's memoir, what happens to narration of the self 'when the very notion of 'location' starts to change' and 'when "place" becomes layered with numerous crossings' becomes a precondition for critique.[10] It is Goldsworthy's in-betweenness – 'almost English, being 'foreign but not quite' (p.150) – that enables her to refuse to be forever marked by the 'Balkan' war. This difficult burden can only be dealt with through proximity and distance – between her departure from former Yugoslavia and her arrival in England. As she realises that the stereotypes of 'ancient Balkan hatreds' go back much further, Goldsworthy reconciles her own haunting ghosts through a creative positioning and acceptance of speaking with the forked tongue, which will soon enable her to speak back to 'the West'. Belonging to the Balkans, to borrow Alexander Kiossev's words,

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[9] Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, 'Introduction: Situating Subjectivity in Women's Autobiographical Practices', in *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader*, ed. by Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), pp.3-52 (p.39).

[10] Linda Anderson, *Autobiography* (London: Routledge, 2001), p.114.

in Goldsworthy's memoir becomes a 'tricksterlike field of counter-identifications'.[11] As discussed in Chapter 2, her very locatedness in the West enables her to see how much 'the Balkans' have been balkanised from the outside and she creatively uses the strategies of self-othering and her privileged position to criticise Balkanism against its dominant histories in the West.

Goldsworthy often inverts the perspective and uses the same stereotyping the West uses towards the 'Wild Balkans' and 'prejudices other than those Occidentals then commonly harboured towards East Europeans'(p.268) in order to debunk cultural assumptions through humour and irony. Describing for example her paternal grandmother's view of what the Serbs think of the English, the laughter that is invoked is both bittersweet and healing. The English were:

> perfidious and treacherous [...] on the whole, ugly [...] England had, quite possibly, the worst climate in the world [...] perhaps the strangest cuisine [...] They were reputed to have developed a special jam for every kind of meat, and they smothered their lamb with mint and vinegar. (pp. 268–270)

Playing thus with cultural stereotypes and turning the rules of engagement on their head, Goldsworthy experiences a liberating sense of release by redirecting and 'dumping' cultural baggage at 'Western doors'. But this does not mean that she is completely freeing herself of any cultural baggage. Throughout the memoir, Goldsworthy reconstructs her maternal and paternal family history, whose stories reach back as far as nineteenth century Ottoman Balkans – to a time when negative images of the Balkans were cemented in the Western imagination. Writing from the centre of power (from the 'West' and the institutional space of Western academia), her revisiting of the Ottoman Balkans (through the personal fortunes and misfortunes of her ancestors) may be read as a creative contestation of the generalised perception of the Balkans in the 'Western' imagination. Goldsworthy particularly uses these 'negative' Ottoman elements, which were often responsible for the perception of the Yugoslav crisis as a revival of ancient hatreds and primordial violent passions as a deliberate strategy of self-exoticisation and stereotyping. She also uses them to offer a positive account of the hybrid Balkan cultural space. Through humour and the post-colonial strategies of writing back, Goldsworthy thus uses her role as a critical

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[11] Alexander Kiossev, 'The Dark Intimacy: Maps, Identities, Acts of Identification', in *Balkan as Metaphor*, pp. 165-190 (p.183).

insider productively and negotiates her (un)belonging to the Balkans. In an episode when her grandmother (who is an avid storyteller of the beheading of the Ottoman feudal lord Smail-Aga) meets her English husband, Goldsworthy writes that 'Granny had no experience of headhunting [but] she sensed what my husband, a recent English graduate in Balkan history, wanted to *hear*' (p.34, emphasis added). Though in subtle terms, the point of address here is clearly intended to reach the Western audience. Goldsworthy satirises the 'exoticism' of her family to make the point to a Western audience that they are in fact like everyone else.

Interestingly, rather than looking at Goldsworthy's *balkanologie*, most Western reviews of *Chernobyl Strawberries* have shown preference for the narrative of Yugo-nostalgia focusing mainly on the memories of her vanished country. The titles of these reviews – 'An Elegy for Yugoslavia'[12] and 'Balkan Eulogy'[13] – pose the question of what kind of work the memoir is invited to perform. Is personal memory in such readings collectivised, and is the mourning of Yugoslavia – 'the reverse of balkanisation'[14] – only possible in the West, then, after the country is no more? It would seem that the discourse of balkanism still lingers in such readings. Also, the title of the memoir's German edition has been changed to *Heimweh nach Nirgendwo*, which translates as 'Homesick for Nowhere'. It may allude to the memoir's main concern with a certain place that is now distant and, therefore, its continuous nostalgic longing for the lost 'home', which privileges and fetishises the narrative of in-betweenness. I would suggest that these readings are symptomatic in that they reveal a 'Western' need for the romantic nowhere (since Yugoslavia as 'the Balkans' are no longer violent and no longer existing, they can safely continue living in the Western imagination) and a fascination with the so-called narratives of migrancy where a 'native' provides a first-hand account for the 'Western' readership.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Ugrešić's work has also suffered from the so-called 'ethnic' burden as well as the labels that come with the 'Eastern European' repertoire such as communism, repression, Iron Curtain, nationalism. Elsewhere in her essays, she has ironically reflected on these labels – what she

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[12] Victor Sebestyen, 'An Elegy for Yugoslavia', *The Spectator*, 26 March 2005 <http://www.spectator.co.uk/books/21363/an–elegy–for–yugoslavia.thtml> [accessed 10 April 2006].
[13] Tim Judah, 'Balkan Eulogy', *The Observer*, 17 April, 2005 <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/review/story/0,6903,1461452,00.html> [accessed 05 August 2007].
[14] Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, p.33.

appropriately calls 'the luggage of identifications' that trail behind her writing.[15] She has also critically engaged in highlighting the inadequacy and the narrowing functions of these labels. It seems ironic that she has become known in the West as one of the most renowned contemporary Croatian writers, while in Croatia, until very recently, she would be referred to as a writer who went into a self-imposed and voluntary exile. Yet, Ugrešić has always insisted on contextualising her own condition of exile and in one of her interviews she comments on the burden of such a position:

> *At the same time, you disagree with those who try to identify you as an émigré, political exile or a fugitive?*
> In the places I live/reside in, I do not want this identification. It is reductive and extremely manipulative. Both exiles and the environment in which exiles find themselves manipulate with this identification. Exile is citational – it has had a long tradition and its meaning has petrified, so it happens that an exile is read entirely on the basis of this 'exile complex'. And I do not want this. On the other hand, when I address my message to the place I had left – to Croatia and Former Yugoslavia – I then insist on exile, that is, on political exile.[16]

Ugrešić here speaks against a traditional view of exile as an official expulsion, but also against a manipulation with exile as an in-between vantage point that offers a radical vision of the world, or as a metaphor for a new kind of humanism and epistemology. There are different stages of exile, as well as the inner ones, and even writers themselves can manipulate this idea. Given the circumstances around Ugrešić's political exile, it is not surprising that she always insists on reminding us that in the Croatian context her exile was not self-imposed. Contrary to stereotypical views of an exile who dreams of going 'home' where she/he will finally belong again, Ugrešić cannot celebrate the return. At the same time, this doubling of positions and (un)belonging also resonates in the Dutch context where she rightly refuses to be identified as an exile, but as a resident even though she does not speak the language.

In her essays, *The Culture of Lies* (1999), *Thank You for Not Reading* (2003) and *Nobody's Home* (2007), Ugrešić offers some sharp observations on the relationship between exiled writers and the literary market and writes ironically

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[15] Ugrešić, 'What is European about European Literature', in *Nobody's Home*, pp. 163-176 (p.168).
[16] Ana Ristović, 'Biti izvan: Dubravka Ugrešić' (To be on the outside: Dubravka Ugrešić), Interview with Dubravka Ugrešić, *Reč*, 60, 5 (2000), 111-122, (p.112). My translation.

about the fact that an exiled writer is often expected to become a spokeperson or a representative of the country they abandoned.[17] In one of her essays from the 1990s, Ugrešić describes the arrival of a former Yugoslav writer on the 'Western' literary market in similar terms by noting how he/she then 'becomes a kind of interpreter, psychologist, anthropologist, sociologist, political analyst, ethnologist [...] a translator of his own reality and the reality of his country into a language comprehensible to West European readers'.[18] But Ugrešić also observes that a former Yugoslav writer 'stands out from the general East European landscape through his exclusive right to unhappiness'.[19] If the disintegration of Yugoslavia ironically signals the rise of a post-Yugoslav narrative of exile as a distinct variation on the theme, Ugrešić is, however, still indebted to the literary tradition of East European exile narratives which in her work comes through frequent references to the writers such as Brodsky, Nabokov or Kundera. Perhaps not being quite 'at home' within this tradition, Ugrešić does not only use citationality to explore the theme of exile and the citationality of exile itself, but also succeeds in writing herself into this landscape. Reflecting on the literary theme of exile, Ugrešić's character Igor in *The Ministry of Pain* observes that 'in literature it's always the men who go out into the world [...] shed their "prodigal tears"' (p.180). In both novels from Ugrešić's exile opus, *The Museum of Unconditional Surrender* and *The Ministry of Pain*, she explores such melancholia of exile and offers a gendered perspective of exile by using a female narrator. However, exile as a thematic concern in Ugrešić's fiction cannot be limited to the gendered perspective only, as it often intersects with the 'ex-Yugoslav unhappiness' and with wider questions of ethics in exile narratives, namely with the question of writing loss and remembering which the next chapter explores.

2. Ugrešić's Migrant Flâneuse/ Ugrešić as a Migrant Flâneuse

Eva Hoffman has suggested that in the first stages of writing exile, the writer deals with lyrical nostalgia and focuses on remembering the past and the lost country, and that in the next stage, the concern is with a more 'cosmopolitan, globalized,

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[17] Ugrešić, 'EEW', in *Thank You For not Reading* (London: Dalkey Archive Press, 2003), p.135.
[18] Ugrešić, 'The Tale of the Bomb and the Book', in *The Culture of Lies*, pp.151-176 (p.169).
[19] Ibid., p.174.

international or inclusive world-view'.[20] However, I would argue that in both *Museum* and *Ministry* these concerns are intertwined as Ugrešić explores the ways in which exile affects and figures in the literary imagination not only in the post-war, post-Yugoslav context, but also within wider global ruptures. The difference seems to be in the choice of literary form. In *Museum,* these issues are explored through a highly original fragmentary narrative, while *Ministry* struggles to narrate the fragmented post-Yugoslav/post-communist memory and the disjointed lives of the characters through a fairly linear narrative. In *Ministry,* Ugrešić takes the citationality of exile even further, as a condition that may be romantic in literature, but traumatic in reality as its pain almost reaches beyond the pages. That is, in *Ministry,* the two conditions are constantly conflated – the ways to write the Yugoslav disaster with a materiality of exile, the figure of a migrant *flâneuse* with that of a *Trümmerfrau,*[21] losses with gains, remembering with forgetting, the observer with the observed.

Indeed, the difficult question whether exile brings certain gains or whether it is a condition of ultimate loss is explored in the novel. As discussed in Chapter 2, Tanja's arrival in Amsterdam is described as a traumatic and disorienting experience. Like Alice in Wonderland, she feels as if she inhabits a parallel world and her constant getting lost in the city feels like 'drowning in a glass of water' (p.34). In her book *The Future of Nostalgia,* Svetlana Boym has suggested that the main feature of exile is double consciousness.[22] Ugrešić also makes Tanja what may be termed a migrant *flâneuse* – an aimless, exiled wanderer who is streetwalking the metropolis. The drama of (un)belonging is played out in the metropolis towards which she feels both fascination and alienation – 'If Amsterdam was a stage, I had a double role: I was both audience and performer, watcher and watched' (p. 79). Amsterdam thus becomes 'a fragmented and stratified location',[23] a site in which different degrees of estrangement are occurring. As an observer, Tanja is the one who can 'see' the woman in Amsterdam's red light districts as an East European trafficked woman, but it is the very doubleness of her *flânerie* that enables such a privileged observation. Ugrešić's migrant *flâneuse* might then appear as an alternative observer as she is

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[20] Eva Hoffman, 'The Uses of the Past', in *Writing Worlds 1: The Norwich Exchanges,* ed. by Vesna Goldsworthy, pp.13-18 (p.14); 'Expectations, Inheritances and Literary Freedom', p.40.
[21] *Trümmerfrauen* were the rubble women of Germany who cleared the ruins of the destroyed cities in the aftermath of the Second World War. I discuss this figure in the next chapter.
[22] Svetlana, Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), p. 256.
[23] Paul Gilroy, *After Empire,* p.78.

constantly sliding between her roles of observer and observed and as she is re-reading the unhomely city from the margins.

When Tanja is out of her claustrophobic basement flat, she likes to wander around railway stations and to travel aimlessly on trains with no particular destination in mind. These ordinary and peaceful journeys are also healing as she reveals, 'the journey alone calmed my nerves [...] the Dutch lowlands tempering my angst. I took pleasure in the absolute, undisturbed constant of the horizontal in the motion'(p.35). However, it should not be forgotten that apart from these healing journeys and Tanja's flanerie in Amsterdam, there are two important journeys in the novel. One is when Tanja travels back 'home' to Zagreb after the war and refuses to be re-homed into the new nation as discussed in Chapter 3. Reflecting on this impossible return, Tanja remembers Igor's argument made in his final essay:

> [...] what if everything he said was true? What if return is in fact death – symbolic or real – and exile defeat, and the moment of departure the only true moment of freedom we are granted? And who are 'we' anyway? Aren't we all smashed to bits and forced to wander the earth picking up the pieces like Meliha, putting them together like a jigsaw puzzle, gluing them together with our saliva? (p.180)

I discuss in more detail this difficult task of putting together fragments, making sense of one's past and present (un)belongings and Tanja's character as a *Trümmerfrau* in the next chapter, but what is interesting here is that for Ugrešić's protagonists the moment of departure might, in fact, be the only moment of freedom. This idea reappears later in the novel as well as in Ugrešić's essays. The other important journey is Tanja and Igor's trip to the Hague Tribunal after Uroš commits suicide. Tanja and Igor decide to go The Hague to witness the trial of Uroš's father who was involved in mass killings and torture during the war. The question of the power of the gaze, between observation and being observed, culminates in the novel's handcuffing scene when Igor reveals a painful side of exile and migration – the students 'slave' labour in a fetish clothing factory for the 'western' pleasures discussed in Chapter 2. So also, Tanja's arrival in Amsterdam is entangled within the traumatic flights of survivors and mass transportations of the victims of the Yugoslav war, and within other 'global' movements. Therefore the writing of exile or migration in Ugrešić's novel is not so much about seeing these conditions in terms of

'new sight, new knowledge, a new understanding',[24] but rather in terms of revealing hidden knowledge.

Towards the end of the novel, Ugrešić revisits the margins of the city. Tanja is no longer a teacher in Amsterdam as her teaching position could not be extended. She now lives in the flat belonging to her student Ana who has decided to go back to Belgrade with her Dutch husband and has left the key for Tanja in case she needs a place to stay. This act of hospitality and kindness is soon conflated with inhospitality towards the 'barbarian' presence pushed out into the city suburbs to inevitably form 'immigrant' ghettos. Tanja soon learns why the area around Ana's flat is called 'Little Casablanca'. However, the story of its inhabitants is not told by Tanja this time, but Ugrešić inserts a story within the story. It is narrated through an imaginary and gendered 'we':

> We are barbarians. The members of our tribe bear the invisible stamp of Columbus on their foreheads. We travel west and end up east; indeed the farther west we go the farther east we get. Our tribe is cursed. [...] We have no writing; we leave our signatures on the wind: we utter sounds, we signal with our calls, our shouts, our screams, our spit. [...] We bawl at weddings and wail at funerals, our women's convulsive voices battering the concrete facades like tempests. [...] We are like dogs: we bark. We bark at the lowering grey sky weighing down on our heads. [...] Returning to the lands whither we have come spells defeat. Hence the endless repetition in our dreams of the departure sequence, the moment of departure being our only moment of triumph. (pp.219-223)

While there is no space here to consider the representation of what is obviously a Muslim presence in Ugrešić's novel – since the chapter makes references to Turkish pizza, the mosque and the quiet veiled women – I am more interested in the implications of the last sentence in the quoted passage. The assertion that the moment of departure is the only moment of triumph then suggests that this fleeting point might indeed be the only moment of freedom and that whatever comes after – becoming an exile (a migrant or the Other) and living exile or migration[25] – is perhaps a prolonged pain and a condition of ultimate loss. By positing the idea of 'no writing' and by inviting the reader to imagine the lived materiality of migration, this

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[24] Andrew Smith, 'Migrancy, Hybridity and Postcolonial Literary Studies', p.246.

[25] I am not trying to align exile and migration here, but want to emphasize that the novel deals with both.

chapter in the novel also forces us to *remember* that the writing of this condition is always half a story which is ironically expressed through that bark or wail. By writing about the parallel world of a 'perfect' society and its borderline existence, Ugrešić reminds the reader that its pain and anger often pass unheard and get lost not only in the violence of migration, but even in the narratives of exile. The precarious existence of 'Little Casablanca' – that old and well-known migration route from Africa to Europe – the novel envisions, will soon be replaced by a new route, a new wave of migration of the emergent post-communist undergrowth. This passage deserves to be quoted extensively:

> Any minute now, any second, a new, completely different tribe will arise from the post-Communist underbrush bearing doctoral dissertations with telling titles like *Understanding the Past as a Means of Looking Ahead* [...] They will form a vibrant young contingent of specialists, organizers, operators and, above all, managers, experts in business management, political management, ecological management, cultural management, disaster management – the management of life. [...] they will have multiple identities: they will be cosmopolitan, global, multicultural, nationalist, ethnic and diasporic all in one [...] ever ready to [...] invent and reinvent themselves, construct and deconstruct themselves. [...] the words *mobility* and *fluidity* will be like chewing gum in their mouths. [...] But on their way they will forget that the very flexibility, mobility and fluidity that catapulted them to the surface leave a nameless mass of slaves down below [...] And some of them will travel all the way to the shores of Western Europe, where the more fortunate will pick asparagus in Germany and tulips in Holland and the less fortunate will scrub toilets. (pp.228-231)

This passage, which speaks of new flows of seemingly privileged migrants and the ways in which the pain of the 'slave class' is easily forgotten and 'managed' in the speed of 'progress', is part of a much longer one where Ugrešić offers a powerful and bleak outlook into the future of post-communist migrations, globalization and new colonialisms. New flows of migrants, exiles, refugees and 'undocumented' come, but the time-space compression, to use David Harvey's seminal term, quickly manages the pain, breeds new forms of forgetting and engulfs. Ugrešić's novel asks us not to forget that access to movement is twofold and that the capitalist machine breeds its own 'managers' of gains and losses. New flows of more privileged migrants will create their own mechanisms for the 'management' of pain, while the losses and the pain of the 'slave class', on the other hand, are easily forgotten in the

speed of movement and progress. The ironic tone that follows words such as fluidity, mobility, deconstruction and constant reinvention – these much quoted celebratory terms that keep reappearing in some critical readings of such narratives – then makes the novel being suspicious of exile (or migrancy) as a double vision. But in this powerful breadth of vision where the novel not only questions 'the pleasures of exile', but also considers the production of the underclass within the narrative of global capital and post-communist transitions, Ugrešić paradoxically, and most closely of all the writers, approximates the writing not only of a double, but a productive 'multi' vision.

Ugrešić's novel then speaks against the condition of migrancy as a celebratory floating of identity, the neither of 'here' nor 'there', and forces us to *remember* that the writing of that condition is always a half-story. Perhaps it also provides a glimpse into the not-so-far future of East European narrative of exile.[26] Indeed, now that the post-Yugoslav states are aiming to 'return' to Europe and most of the post-communist East European countries have already done so, will the story of post-Yugoslav exile remain an interesting narrative, both 'at home' and in 'the West'? Are the writers going to continue marketing the margins, to use Graham Huggan's seminal phrase, in offering a commodified image of 'Eastern Europe' for the 'Western' market as Ugrešić asks in one of her essays?[27] Shall we encounter fewer stories of exile and passports and more of those addressing new realities of Eastern European societies? Shall we witness a decline in the stories from internal exiles and see the emergence of new literary characters embodied in the image of an East European migrant (as I gestured towards in Chapter 2)? These are some of the questions that literary history will certainly begin to address soon.

Reflecting on the theme of exile in her work and on whether *Ministry* might be the last novel in her exile opus, Ugrešić stated that she might still be interested in exploring the theme of exile in the context of our perception of time.[28] That is, to paraphrase Ugrešić, given that we are all deeply rooted in living in the present, exile, as a dislocation in space and time, is consequently negated. So the theme of exile negates itself as it were, and as Ugrešić contends, the 'performing' of exile becomes

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[26] On East European writers in post-communism and on marketing of their works in the West see Andrew Baruch Wachtel's study *Remaining Relevant After Communism: The Role of the Writer in Eastern Europe* (Chicago, Ill.; London: University of Chicago Press, 2006).
[27] Ugrešić, *The Culture of Lies*, p.161.
[28] E-mail correspondence with Dubravka Ugrešić, Friday, October 19, 2007.

inauthentic.[29] Although it may seem that Ugrešić is moving on from this theme – her most recent 2009 novel *Baba Yaga Laid an Egg* is not directly related to post-Yugoslav exile – and almost two decades after the war, when invited to give interviews and literary tours of her writing, Ugrešić must still present a short history of her (un)belongings and be introduced to the 'Western' audience with a digested and many times repeated story of her own exile. Perhaps this is the meaning of what she ironically calls the 'performing' of exile. But unlike some 'minority' authors, Ugrešić has rarely profited from such 'unbelonging' and marginality. She nevertheless remains an 'inauthentic' writer or a dysfunctional cog in the literary machine – an appropriate metaphor she uses in her essay 'What is European about European Literature?'.[30] This essay, which deserves be on literary studies reading lists, is not only a self reflection on her own writing and 'the luggage of identifications' it undergoes, but also a timely and provocative observation of the current literary production by 'inauthentic' writers and the eroding power of national literatures. Testing Azade Seyhan's concept of transnational literature and Deleuze and Guattari's concept of minor literature on these 'new' literatures, Ugrešić argues that '"ethnically inauthentic" authors, émigrés, migrants, writers in exile, writers who belong simultaneously to two cultures, bilingual authors who are writing "neither here nor there" (p.172), despite being published 'within imposed, unjustly narrow and often discriminatory categories – exile, ethnic, migrant, émigré, Diaspora' (pp.173-4) are actually 'building their own place, a third cultural zone, a 'third geography'(p.173). Accordingly, Ugrešić's answer to the question 'what is European about European Literature?' is Joydeep Roy Bhattacharaya, a writer born in India who currently lives in New York and writes about Eastern Europe. Thus reclaiming 'exile' as a privileged standpoint and turning it into a condition of critical theoretical activity, Ugrešić declares her belonging to these 'new' literatures and calls for this creative force to colonise national literatures. She concludes with a sense of wonder and positivity – 'who could have predicted that this invisible, alternative world which had been discriminated against has so rapidly outgrown the previously exhibiting one [...] or that Lolita would turn up one day in Teheran?' (p.175).

Paradoxically, it is the very experience of dislocation and unbelonging that helps Ugrešić develop these insights. But perhaps Ugrešić's emphasis on constant

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[29] Ibid.
[30] In *Nobody's Home*, pp.163-176, p.170. All further references are cited in this paragraph.

movement also represents a way out of the condition of being stuck in time and with the luggage of identifications. At the same time, she shows her allegiance to these 'dysfunctional cogs' and re-appropriates the state of being seen as a source of blockage and obstruction for creative and critical purposes. In *Nobody's Home*, she returns to the theme of exile which again brings up the question from the previous chapter about whether the metaphors of luggage (material and spiritual) impede or facilitate belonging. In her essay 'Suitcase', the difficult experience of exile and the moment of departure is embraced and turned into a desired position which facilitates literary imagination and intellectual freedom. She suggests that:

> The only way those in exile are able to leave trauma behind is not to leave it behind at all, but to live it as a permanent state, to turn their waiting room into a cheery ideology of life, and to embrace schizophrenia of exile as the norm of normalcy, revering only one god: the Suitcase![31]

The suitcase here becomes a trope of poetic privilege and utopian new beginnings as Irit Rogoff reminds us in her book *Terra Infirma,* and Ugrešić's sliding between material – or less cheery – aspects of exile and an abstract idea of exile, can fall prey to such romanticised views of exile. As a migrant intellectual, Ugrešić is, in a way, a privileged subject who can afford to be on the move.

As she tells us in her essay 'Life Vest', the route she takes 'between leaving one plane and boarding the next, from flight towards flight', represents 'a route of inner freedom'.[32] This mirrors the observations made in *The Ministry of Pain* and, as I have discussed in the previous chapter, the unhomely experience of displacement gives rise to a fascination with uncanny spaces of an airport or with threshold moments in which departure, destination and arrival are blurred. But, as Rogoff asserts, the suitcase also 'signifies the moment of rupture, the instance in which the subject is torn out of the web of connectedness that contained him or her through an invisible net of belonging'.[33] So for Ugrešić, the suitcase is also a reminder of this rupture, but this is not simply to mourn the loss of belonging – to be sure, there can never be attachments to hegemonic belonging for Ugrešić – but rather to critically engage with the ways in which one has been shaped by past and present (un)belongings.

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[31] 'A Suitcase' in *Nobody's Home*, pp.16-17.
[32] 'Life Vest', in *Nobody's Home*, p.225.
[33] Rogoff, *Terra Infirma*, p.37-38.

In an essay called 'The Tale of the Bomb and the Book', Ugrešić opens the contents of a former Yugoslav writer's suitcase which consists of:

> traumas, [...] [but] also a happier experience of multinational and multicultural life, the experience of cultural community, [...] the experience of mixed cultures, rural and urban, the experience of cultural cosmopolitanism and cordial xenomania, but also cultural autism and frenzied xenophobia.[34]

Rather than painting a happy picture of Yugoslav multiculturalism, Ugrešić points out to its contradictions and the need to work through this lost and unresolved legacy. She is equally an observant chronicler of levels of identifications and the changes in the boundaries of belonging in both pre and post-war Yugoslavia that this thesis might even be considered to take forward. In 'Souvenirs from Paradise', for example, she registers these changes:

> The citizens of Yugoslavia persistently refused to identify with Eastern Europe [...]. For a time they were non-aligned, but Africa was too black and too far away for them to be open to the non-aligned brotherhood imposed on them [...] Many former Yugoslavs became nationalists, chauvinists, racists [...] meta-fascists and justabit-fascist.[35]

There is no space here to consider the implications of Ugrešić's short history of Yugoslav nesting orientalisms[36] – a process by which the neighbouring countries or ethnic groups stereotype and orientalise each other in the region – and the changes in Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav global and local belonging in this short quotation. This thesis, with its comparative framework of black British and former Yugoslav (un)belonging, has already pointed out how these levels of (un)belonging and potential (non)alliances operate in the present. But an exploration of the mainly neglected history and politics of Yugoslav involvement in the non-aligned movement as well as Yugoslav's perception of Africa and Asia (and African and Asian perceptions of Yugoslavia) which Ugrešić's essay evokes would surely be an interesting area of further research. As for Ugrešić's own (un)belongings before and after the dissolution of Yugoslavia, she is careful to make it clear where she belonged and where she now belongs:

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[34] 'The Tale of the Bomb and the Book', in *The Culture of Lies*, p.175.
[35] 'Souvenirs from Paradise', in *The Culture of Lies*, pp.258-9.
[36] See Milica Bakić-Hayden, 'Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia', *Slavic Review* 54, 4 (1995), 917-931.

> Among the Slovenes, Croats, Bosnians, Serbs, Montenegrins, Albanians, Macedonians, I felt Yugoslav, and that's how I described myself in my identity documents: a citizen of Yugoslavia, mixed, anational, unspecified, nationally indifferent... There were people like that living in Yugoslavia. [...] I am no one. And everyone. In Croatia I shall be a Serb, in Serbia a Croat, in Bulgaria a Turk [...] If I have to belong to someone, then it's to my readers, wherever they may be...[37]

Ugrešić describes the disintegration of Yugoslavness along ethnic-religious divides and the transformation of belonging in the post-Yugoslav context. She refuses to be identified along these 'new' national/ethnic lines of belonging and deliberately chooses 'inauthentic' belonging preferring to be seen as what she in this essay calls an 'ethnic bastard' (p.272). This mirrors the identification in *The Museum of Unconditional Surrender* by the narrator who announces herself as 'an uprooted daughter of the Adriatic sea' (p.227). This identification with a larger, nationally indifferent and unmarked sea, which is at the same time a marked and distinct geographical/cultural area (the Adriatic), characterises Ugrešić's (un)belonging. That is, Ugrešić's experience of displacement and mobility oscillates between trying to imagine a more inclusive 'global' diasporic solidarity from the position of someone whose belonging has been affected by movement, but who has also been shaped by attachments to this particular place and, perhaps still is, strongly rooted in/around this particular geographical/cultural area. Finally, she constructs a sense of belonging through writing (for the readers). Evaristo's (un)belonging is marked with similar oscillations – between imagining belonging to Europe and to other diasporas and her strong identification with London.[38]

In the places of arrival, Ugrešić's ethics and politics of dislocation give rise to diasporic consciousness and to the forging of diasporic communities of (un)belonging. Just as she feels at home in uncanny places, such as Woolworths supermarket and among black women who shop there as discussed in Chapter 3, Ugrešić feels close to other marginalised groups:

> At street demonstrations I cry with the Kurds, I buy roses from the Tamils, I put a coin in the hat of a Gypsy beggar, I buy my vegetables from a Turkish man. Today I really am surrounded by brothers, black and yellow and white, in New York, Berlin, Paris,

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[37] 'Glossary', in *The Culture of Lies*, p.269; p.270; p.272.
[38] See Appendix.

> Amsterdam... I catch, infallibly, a spark of recognition, I know my
> kind – exiles, nomads, emigrees. I nod my head and smile...[39]

Sparked by Ugrešić's sojourn in the US or by her experience and registering of what Gilroy has termed 'everyday conviviality'[40] in the culturally mixed metropolises, numerous other essays are littered with such diasporic encounters. While in New York, Ugrešić befriends a homeless black man with whom she shares experiences of unbelonging and the anger of otherness – he tells her not to stay in America as she will be 'black like him'[41] – and in another essay entitled 'Refugee', she writes about her encounter with an immigrant fast food seller:

> I stand there, I, an ex-Yugoslav, I, who no longer knows who I
> am. I buy a little package of fast food, winking at the swarthy
> assistant [...] He smiles, he's 'one of us', Third World, I
> recognize him by the expression of condescension and cunning on
> his face.[42]

But although Ugrešić struggles to imagine alternative diasporic solidarities arising from different global ruptures and forms affective attachments with the immigrants and those who feel alienated and othered in society, Ugrešić's diasporic solidarity is built on an uneven encounter. The 'we' she creates is imagined from the position and vantage point of a privileged intellectual/writer and there is another problematic aspect to this proximity. While she can move between identities and deliberately adopt different disguises – in her essay 'Dreamers' for example, she writes, 'I am a Jew, a Pole, a Swede, I am African, Russian, Italian, I am white, black and yellow'[43] – the black man and the Third World seller remain as nameless Others, identified only by their Otherness. So as much as she uses public/national space as a site for destabilisation of nationally/ethnically rooted identities and tries to unite these different histories of oppression, her politics of dislocation also tends to erase these different and difficult histories of arrival. These aspects of Ugrešić's becomings – her cosmopolitanism and her 'double-vision' – are therefore problematic, and this

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[39] 'The Writer in Exile', in *Thank You for not Reading*, p.147.
[40] See Gilroy, *After Empire*.
[41] See 'Addict' in *Have a Nice Day*, pp.70-81 (p.80).
[42] 'Refugee', in *Have a Nice Day*, p.25.
[43] 'Dreamers', in *Have a Nice Day*, p.213.

supports Ien Ang's argument that 'ultimately, diaspora is a concept of sameness-in-dispersal, not of togetherness-in-difference'.[44]

Paradoxically then, the idea that travel and dislocation broadens the mind comes to the fore in Ugrešić's essays when she writes about encounters with the former Yugoslav and Eastern European diaspora, such as in her essay 'Rise up, ye Slavs!'.[45] These encounters with the scattered and mainly East European underclass – hotel cleaners, bus drivers and toilet attendants – are random, but uncanny too as they recognise each other by asking 'are you one of us?',[46] even if they do not always speak the same language. Touched by such encounters, Ugrešić calls for a new sense of 'global brotherhood',[47] but this 'we' is less tinged with a touch of irony than with a sense of being at home with ordinary people who, in the end, used to share this socialist ideology of brotherhood and unity and who have been variously scarred by its effects. Ugrešić hopes that she would at least be able to partly reciprocate the gift of recognition based on this shared space as well as the gift of their hospitality and friendliness. She promises the money she will earn from writing this essay to the hands of other members of the underclass in need – a Bulgarian woman in charge of a toilet, a Romanian window washer, a Russian street musician – whom she meets daily or whom she might meet in the future. Finally, a productive melancholic consciousness also arises on Ugrešić's travels, most prominently in her essay 'Europe, Europe'.[48] This is the essay in which Ugrešić writes about her impressions from the 'LiteratureExpress Europe 2000' and in which she becomes most critical of the idea of travel as transformation as well as the movement of global capital. As discussed in Chapter 2, both Evaristo and Ugrešić took part on this 'literary' journey, but interestingly, one finds contrasting images and impressions. Ugrešić begins the essay by analysing travel as a literary trope and the train journey itself soon starts to bring up various images and associations. The train that carries the writers from all over Europe comes to represent the idea of European unification, but it also reminds Ugrešić of ways in which the train and its forward movement was used in the communist propaganda as an image of a brighter tomorrow. She then links the so-called Yugoslav trains of 'brotherhood and unity' that carried youth

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[44] Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese*, p.13.
[45] In *Nobody's Home*, pp.83-86.
[46] Ibid., p.83.
[47] Ibid., p.85.
[48] In *Nobody's Home*, pp. 99-120.

brigades who rebuilt the destroyed railways after WWII to Yugoslavia's foundations as an anti-fascist project as well as to what are now the Yugoslav State Railway ruins after the war – the railway that lasted for only about 50 years.[49] In offering a short history of the dual image of this symbol, Ugrešić provides a backdrop to the 'cheery' writers' journey and to the supposedly 'neutral' symbol of the train as it also reminds Ugrešić of the transportation of Jews to the camps during WWII.

In this essay, Ugrešić also writes about the writers' arrivals in different 'West' and 'East' European cities on their journey and about the observations her fellow travellers made. 'In each and every traveller there crouches a coloniser',[50] one writer observes and soon Ugrešić starts revealing how some of her fellow 'West' European writers expressed discomfort and scorn about the 'East' particularly in relation to accommodation, water and food. As she confesses, 'I didn't hear any of the writers complain about the bad hotels in Madrid or Brussels (through they were bad), but I did hear many of them complain about bad hotels in Malborg and St. Petersburg'.[51] When she adds to the list the 'Western' writers' complaints about rude waiters and awful coffee that could be found anywhere, red wine served chilled in a Minsk restaurant, or their avoidance of drinking tap water, Ugrešić shows what Mary Douglas in her *Purity and Danger*, Anne McClinntock in her *Imperial Leather* and Sara Ahmed in her *Cultural Politics of Emotions* have taught us – that disgust to and the avoidance of particular kinds of food acts as a boundary maintenance and also that the notion of disgust is deeply tied to the histories of imperialism. So exposing the attitudes of her 'Western' colleagues who 'brought along in their mental luggage a significant overweight of stereotypes about Eastern Europe, but paid no mental fine for that', Ugrešić shows how some of them still suffer from an 'unarticulated feeling of superiority'.[52] Similar attitudes towards the 'East' are also evoked in Evaristo's photographs from the journey as I argued in Chapter 2. And, ironically, the train journey that was supposed to represent the idea of European unification and a community of European writers seems to re-open old divides.

But Ugrešić does not end with a note on Eastern European resentment. She moves on to a close scrutiny of Eastern European fantasies of belonging and getting close to the 'West' in the aftermath of post-communist transitions. Witnessing on this

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[49] Ibid., p.104; p.102.
[50] Ibid., p.104.
[51] Ibid., p.113.
[52] Ibid., p.114.

journey the changes in Eastern European cultural politics and the transformations of collective belonging, Ugrešić is also satirical of the ways Eastern Europeans see themselves and the way they market their sense of locale. This is epitomized in her conversation with a Slovak writer who disidentifies from Eastern Europe as Russia and Belarus, her reading of Estonian tourist brochures where an interesting rebranding of Eastern Europe is at work, and her chatting to the women in Kaliningrad who sell cookies aptly named 'western'. In contrast to Evaristo's experience of Eastern European cities and places as looking pretty much the same with their legacy of communist architecture, Ugrešić experiences most 'Western' European cities as being flattened by globalisation. Wherever the writers travel, she notices, they are followed by 'DANONE' yoghurts or 'Ariel' detergent and just like the phenomenon of the British high street, these 'Western' European cities display uncanny similarity. But Eastern Europe's arrival in a consumerised world is also happening quickly, as Ugrešić observes:

> Dutch tomatoes, German yoghurt, French cosmetics, and Italian shoes. Who would keep track of all that has occupied Eastern Europe? The occupation is sensual, exciting and pleasurable; if it hadn't been, someone would have already objected. Invisible money rustles, clinks and pours from pocket to pocket.[53]

She sees the same things in St Petersburg, but when the writers arrive in the Polish city of Malborg, Ugrešić notes how this place has not yet been 'occupied' by the same products. The writers are all put up in an 'unmodernised hotel', however Ugrešić feels as if she had finally arrived 'home'. The interior of the hotel room – 'the floral bedding, threadbare from laundering and ironing [...] the stuffy, unaired smell, [...] the coarse dark red carpeting, [...] the linen dish towel'[54] – is so familiar throughout the 'Eastern European' landscape that her heart suddenly registers an unexpected tremor. Ugrešić writes poignantly and precisely about all these small details as if to carefully record what will soon be lost. Observing the uneven movement of capital finally leads Ugrešić to evoke another uncanny doubling image. In the final essay 'Nobody's Home' from which the collection takes its title, Ugrešić takes on modern alienation in the 'West' by describing an episode in a Dutch bank. She is made to take a ticket number from a dispensing machine even if there is

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[53] Ibid., p.119.
[54] Ibid., p.108.

nobody queuing at the bank's window and this 'rigid and lethargic' bureaucracy uncannily reminds her of the everyday human degradation under communism.[55] Similar parallels are found in Goldsworthy's memoir when the university tower block reminds her of Eastern European architecture (p.39), or when long university meetings approximate communist plenaries (p.181). Blending literary, theoretical and material reflections in her sharp critique of post-Communist transitions, the movement of global capital and the images of Eastern Europe in the West, Ugrešić thus faces both Eastern Europe and the West. This is the point in which the productive possibilities of 'double consciousness' are most successful in her work.

3. Evaristo's *Soul Tourists*/ Evaristo as a Tourist

Bernardine Evaristo's 'LiteratureExpress Europe 2000' experience, on the other hand, soon becomes an anxious journey particularly when the train reaches Eastern European countries. Just as Ugrešić is faced with the return of the category 'Eastern European' in 'Western European' places and in fellow travellers' remarks, Evaristo is, however, faced with a return of a more difficult and 'reductionist interpellation' of 'the fiction of racial belonging'.[56] As I have shown in Chapter 2, this was evident in the Latvian writer's remark on Evaristo as a 'mullato from England' which makes her an 'inauthentic' voice chosen to represent Britain on this journey – the racism she points out herself in her most recent essay that also reflects on 'LiteratureExpress Europe'.[57] Titled 'CSI Europe', the essay, which appeared in the *Wasafiri*'s special edition on African Europeans, calls for a much needed and almost forensic investigation, reconstruction and piecing together of forgotten, and often deliberately buried, black European history – the issue she has fictionally explored in *Soul Tourists*. When the writers arrive in St Petersburg and visit one of Pushkin's monuments, Evaristo brings up his African heritage, however she finds her comments brushed aside and realises how this fact from Pushkin's biography is still dismissed or not accepted. So for Evaristo as the only black woman traveller, it is not surprising that 'Eastern Europe' is almost a hostile landscape:

> In Tallinn, the capital of Estonia, I was told there were six black
> people, none of whom I saw. Prior to that in Latvia I had seen one.

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[55] In *Nobody's Home*, p.271.
[56] Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese*, p.49.
[57] Evaristo, 'CSI Europe', *Wasafiri*, 23, 4 (2008), 2-7, p.2.

> In Lithuania I saw what I thought were two West Africans. And not a single swarthy face passed my way on the streets of Kaliningrad, that most depressing of Russian outposts with its miserabliski communist architecture.
>
> It's not that I usually go around counting or anything, but when I left the familiarity of Western Europe behind, I wondered how I would be received in Eastern Europe where I knew black people were few and far between. It's always there, this colour consciousness, although often sublimated; an awareness that in places where the population is mostly white, I am a) going to stick out and b) going to receive different (negative) treatment because of it. I needn't have worried. People sometimes stared, but more out of curiosity than hostility.[58]

So the colour consciousness distances Evaristo from contemporary post-communist Eastern Europe with its problematic and still unresolved racist terrains. I asked Evaristo to reflect on how her sense of belonging and unbelonging articulated when she travelled trough Eastern Europe on the 'LiteratureExpress' train:

> BE: I've done a lot of travelling with my work and without it, but I wasn't that familiar with Eastern Europe and just the nature of that tour was such that you really got a strong sense because we went through Poland to Kaliningrad and then to Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, then Russia, then Belarus and then Poland again and then Germany. And we were on the train travelling quite slowly. So it was interesting. I felt quite exposed as a black person once I left, I guess, it would have been Belgium or Germany. As I said in the essay ('CSI Europe'), there are hardly any people of colour, so it was a strange experience. [...] I didn't feel a sense of belonging particularly in Europe, but I didn't feel the sense of not belonging either. [...] what I felt a sense of was that I was physically different because I was also travelling with a group where there was only one other person of colour, a guy from Haiti, through countries where there were hardly any black people at all. And then with Russia, I was a bit worried and not sure if there might be some hostility, but it was fine; also there was a sense that the countries coming out of communism haven't gone through the same kind of transformations that some of the countries in the West have had in terms of race awareness, the civil rights movement, etc. So you're kind of aware that you're in places where some of the attitudes might be really antiquated and reactionary. But I was back in Lithuania and Latvia about a month ago touring for the British Council and again, hardly anyone of colour. I was also in the Scandinavian countries which are much more mixed, but Latvia and Lithuania are very, very white countries. I actually felt fine because you develop this sort of

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[58] Ibid., p.2.

> sensitivity to how people are going to treat you and, even though those two countries in particular are extremely white, there's no resentment, no anger, you don't sense any animosity. It's just a fact they don't have a history of immigration from certain countries so the population's very white. So I felt fine and enjoyed being there. When I was travelling through on the train which was 9 years ago, I didn't feel quite so comfortable. But these places have also become more cosmopolitan, not just in terms of the racial make–up, but just in terms of the societies. [...] You feel that the people are much more aware of difference in the world.[59]

As Evaristo points out, one may hope that the opening up of Eastern Europe in terms of joining and becoming part of the EU – which is often described as a 'return' to (Western) Europe – would help broaden the mind of a region that was previously locked under various dictatorships and whose people were not able to travel and move freely.

But it is also possible to identify in Evaristo's reflections the voice of a Western traveller that accounts for the stereotyped perceptions of the Eastern European body discussed in Chapter 2. Eastern Europe clearly appears as an undifferentiated entity under the same communist curtain. To be sure, the overwhelming whiteness of Eastern Europe burns the body, as Fanon wrote powerfully and as Evaristo reveals, but the history of this whiteness is at the same time obscured. That is, while Evaristo is, as a writer, alert to the effects of Western European and British colonialism in her works – the effects which have *largely*[60] made Britain the multicultural country it is today – here she seems to forget the very reasons that had caused immigration from some countries *to certain other countries* and its absence in Eastern European countries. In other words, while Britain experienced large-scale immigration from its former colonies after the Second World War and soon saw this immigration as a threat (exemplified by the 1948 Nationality Act, the 1968 Rivers of Blood speech and persistent racial discrimination that gave rise to civil rights protests), Eastern Europe had a different colonial history from the 'West'. Some Eastern European countries became part of other empires (the Soviet Union) in the post-war and the Cold War period while others (such as Yugoslavia)

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[59] Interview, Appendix.

[60] Since there is no space here to delve into the history of British Isles, emphasis is added to signal earlier histories. See for example Peter Fryer's *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (1984), Ron Ramdin's *Reimagining Britain: Five Hundred Years of Black and Asian History* (1999) as well as Evaristo's verse novel *The Emperor's Babe* that is set in Roman, multicultural London.

became much closer to the non-aligned ideology which advocated the struggle against colonialism, imperialism and racism.[61]

This short-lived history now seems to be forgotten in Eastern Europe and has not helped in the deconstruction of racist stereotypes. Furthermore, as Aniko Imre points out, 'there is a general amnesia about an entire register of communist and pre-communist popular cultures that blatantly and uncritically incorporated racist and imperialistic ideologies [...], [such as] racist depictions of Turks and, by extension, Muslims inherited from the Ottoman Empire [...] and racist stereotypes of the Roma'.[62] Evaristo is right to point out that raising race awareness in Eastern European societies on the whole is long overdue. Thus, for example, in the 21st century, one can still hear a Serbian-Croatian writer remark on his new-found Eastern European otherness and how upon his arrival at Heathrow Airport he is questioned by an 'Indian, a naturalised British citizen' at a high profile literary event in London,[63] or read a Serbian literary critic lamenting that 'English' readers are more interested to read about the 'assimilation of Indians in England' and about 'the experiences of Caribbean immigrants' [64] than about Eastern Europe. These examples show how ingrained racism is in Eastern European cultures.

So even though Western Europe is sometimes evoked as a familiar terrain, by the end of the journey, Evaristo is 'happy to be leaving the dourness of post-communist Eastern Europe behind' and get back to London 'with its multifarious citizens and 300 languages'.[65] As in *Lara*, London maintains the strongest pull when it comes to the relationship between belonging, place and 'home'. Evaristo's exploration of belonging and place thus oscillates between the notions of outsiderness as well as superiority and there seems to be little space for the forging of new alliances based on common, yet different experiences of (un)belonging. Perhaps

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[61] Again, there is no space here to consider how the founding principles of the Non-Aligned Movement were actually implemented and respected in Yugoslavia towards its own citizens (particularly towards Roma and Albanian ethnic minority that were racialised and still are today) and how they became forgotten with the dissolution of Yugoslavia.

[62] Anikó Imre, *Identity Games: Globalization and the Transformation of Media Cultures in the New Europe* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2009), p.83.

[63] This remark was made by a Serbian-Croatian writer Borivoj Radaković at 'Destination London: Writing Cities from Eastern Europe' Event, 23 October 2009. This was part of 'The East Looks West' travel writing project within The UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies. See <http://www.ssees.ucl.ac.uk/destinationlondon.htm#cities>[accessed 8 November 2009].

[64] Dragan Jovanović Danilov, 'Duh Romana: Punokrvne i Mrtve Knjige' [The Spirit of the Novel: Full-blooded and Dead Books] <http://www.politika.rs/rubrike/Kulturni–dodatak/Punokrvne–i–mrtve–knjige.lt.html>[accessed 07 January 2010].

[65] Ibid., p.5; p.6.

the story of 'the miserabliski communist architecture' evoked in her essay is yet to meet and find its double in the grimness of British council flat architecture.

Although the story and research on the reasons for the absence of black people in Eastern Europe is yet to be fully explored,[66] Evaristo's work has already filled in the other missing side of the story – the history of black Western Europe. The next chapter explores this in more detail and within the context of 'belonging and memory'. Apart from pointing out in 'CSI Europe' the need to engage with the now almost forgotten history of African students who studied in communist Europe and who often produced mixed-race children (and I would add the experiences of white mothers who brought up these children), Evaristo also writes about the 'second' black British generation and her own changing relationship to the African-Caribbean and African-American diaspora:

> Most of the other black Brits I knew spurned Europe. The general consensus was that we belonged to Africa, the Caribbean or America, where there were family ties, but not to mainland Europe. People were wary, it seemed, of engaging with a continent that they thought would be hostile to black folk. Yet the most unpleasant thing that happened to me was to have the car I was travelling back to Britain in dismantled, panel by panel, by customs officers at Dover. The only people treating me like a criminal on account of the colour of my skin were my own.[67]

Evaristo's interest and fascination with forgotten black European history has figured in her work and most prominently in *Soul Tourists*. The novel is indeed a rare attempt to explore belonging primarily to 'Western' Europe by re-imagining, rediscovering and recovering historical black presence in these spaces. As she sets the story within Europe, Evaristo explores a different narrative of belonging in the form of 'back to Europe'.[68] Stanley's journey in *Soul Tourists* loses the focus on African-Caribbean diasporic roots that was predominant in the 1970s and 1980s and which featured in *Lara*, and becomes a search for the black European presence.

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[66] Such research might start by exploring the invention of 'race' and the effects of Western race thinking in Eastern European contexts, the effects of communist as well as Western isolation of Eastern Europe, the history of the non-aligned movement in Eastern Europe and of African students who studied in communist Eastern European countries during the Cold war period, Eastern European attitudes and perceptions towards strangers, other cultures and ethnicities after 1989 and so on. Mike Phillips' novel *A Shadow of Myself* (London: Harper Collins, 2000) has been one such rare attempt to fictionally explore the story of African students who studied in communist Eastern Europe.

[67] Ibid., p.5.

[68] Interview, Appendix.

Evaristo's encounter with the customs officers at Dover also mirrors her exploration of the protagonists' contentious belonging. When Stanley and his partner Jessie, start travelling throughout Europe in the late 1980s in Jessie's old Lada Niva, Evaristo dramatises those real and imaginary stumbling blocks of 'almost' or 'not quite' on an actual site that polices the boundaries of belonging – the national border:

> That customs officer fingered my black
> United Kingdom passport at length,
> Glancing to compare information to person,
> As if he couldn't quite believe...something. (p.196)

Here we witness again the return of the question 'Where are you from?' (discussed in Chapter 2) and the border represents another such reminder of 'origins'. But the way in which this is voiced by Jessie signals a chance to speak back and negotiate (un)belonging. She can opt for being on the move, not belonging, or she can proudly and strategically claim her Englishness and finally, her Yorkshireness, in a comical episode with the Turkish customs officer who, despite having seen her passport, locates her 'Blackness' first as African-American and then as Jamaican or Brasilian (p.199).

Although the journey is not always smooth, the black British generation of *Soul Tourists* is mobile, has a passport and can travel. Indeed, the sense of travel as freedom is explored in the novel, although it turns out that the protagonists have different expectations of where the journey – both as a physical and an inner journey – might take them. While Jessie ultimately wants to reach her estranged son in Australia, the journey for Stanley seems to offer a timely escape from his monotonous job as a banker. While he is at first reluctant to drive through Europe and anxious about fascist thugs, Jessie reminds him to 'stop acting like a resident without a permit' (p.51). On different legs of their journey, Stanley is soon visited by a lively set of ghosts from forgotten black European history. While Jessie continues her wandering, Stanley becomes enriched by travelling and through the ghosts he begins to forge some interesting connections and a new sense of belonging – thus travel broadens his mind.

Indeed, Evaristo's two travellers soon turn out to be very different. While for Stanley they are primarily tourists, Jessie prefers seeing themselves as independent travellers (p.138). And while Stanley indulges in sightseeing, Jessie is not interested in the historical sites they come across. However by describing Stanley as a soul

tourist (p.187) who is always in search of historical sites and Jessie for whom freedom is to be always on the move, Evaristo is pointing out their privileged positions and observations, thus often conflating voyager with voyeur. On their way throughout Europe, Stanley and Jessie are able to 'see' and comment on the presence of Senegalese men in Spain, historical amnesia in France, or ironically reflect on the bittersweet history of coffee and sugar as they sit in cafes while they 'consume' this history. When towards the end of the novel they arrive at what seems like a hippie camping site in Turkey, they meet other travellers such as Sunita from Tooting Bec who, we are told, is on her way to India to find her roots (p.211), but because she has overstayed in the camp, it seems she will never make it there. It appears Sunita has found 'home' in this transit camp. So the British-born generation's search for roots is not only parodied, but the diasporic journeys never come full circle, and they are either interrupted or postponed. The closest Stanley comes to Africa is in Gibraltar, but he decides to cross the continent another time. It is also not clear when he would return to London. Perhaps in this sense Stanley is less a genealogical tourist and more appropriately Evaristo's soul tourist whose engagement with the black European ghosts has wider implications. The next chapter takes this argument further.

Similarly, Lara's imaginative diasporic journeys to Nigeria reveal an uneven encounter. Lara's English mother 'frowns at the sun, sips her tea, grimaces at the condensed/ milk inside' (p.107) while Lara longs for a cappuccino and croissant. Notions of boundary maintenance and superiority discussed earlier are evoked through these simple observations about food. So, even though Lara wants to get close to her diasporic roots, her position between privileged traveller and 'static' native comes to the fore and reveals the intersection of class and other forms of positionings within differently conceived 'black' identities. As Mark Stein has noted 'it is ironic that former colonial routes are now travelled by postcolonial subjects in a mythopoeic quest for origins [...] where coffee, sugar, gold, spices, and slaves were once shipped'.[69] To be sure, the river journey is no longer in the colonizer's hands but in Lara's. She also performs a different journey from her parents and ancestors as she is able to travel and return to London. But just as the train remains an unsettling symbol that reminds Ugrešić of the transportation of Jews to the camps

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[69] Stein, *Black British Literature*, p.89.

during WWII, the journey in *Lara* never loses its focus from the multiple traces of colonial histories and their effects not only on the protagonist's family history, but also on the society she lives in. That is, it is precisely 'the prevailing of where are you from over where are you at'[70] that prompts Evaristo's protagonist on a journey. For Lara the moment of leaving London also signals the moment of freedom. She travels 'back to where she belongs' and explores how 'Nigerianness' and 'blackness' mark her belonging. In this sense, Lara is Ien Ang's 'active historical agent whose subjectivity is ongoingly shaped through his/her engagements within multiple, complex and contradictory social relations which are over-determined by political, economic and cultural circumstances in highly particular spatio-temporal contexts'.[71] Finally, in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* there are no diasporic travels and the British generation remains firmly in London. As a result, this has engendered numerous optimistic readings in which the British generation is seen as progressive and thus announcing a positive generational change. On the other hand, Lara, who seems to be a more progressive British-born character than Smith's, has brought on readings that see *Lara* as a form of a *Bildungsroman*. In the final section of this chapter, I want to consider some implications of such readings.

4. *White Teeth* and *Lara*: Progressive Journeys of Self-formation?

While Ugrešić's writing has been marginalised as 'ethnic' literature pertinent for a particular audience or hailed to offer neat explanations of the dissolution of Yugoslavia for the 'Western' reader, Smith's *White Teeth* and Evaristo's *Lara* have been most often read as progressive narratives of celebratory British multiculturalism that move away from the so-called 'migrant' narratives. Since the idea of a new generation is usually imagined as a symbol of change, promise and a better future, it may not be surprising at first that Evaristo's *Lara* has been often read as a progressive form or an adaptation of the *Bildungsroman* genre and as a narrative with the potential to portray and also to bring about 'newness' and transformation.[72] In both *Lara* and *Soul Tourists*, Evaristo places her protagonists in the Britain of the 1970s and 1980s – those periods of conflict and cultural change – though often

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[70] Ien Ang qtd. in Lynne Pierce, *Devolving Identities: Feminist Readings in Home and Belonging* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), p.25.

[71] Ang, *On not Speaking Chinese*, p.49.

[72] Mark Stein, *Black British Literature: Novels of Transformation* (Columbus: Ohio State University, 2004), p.23.

within an exclusively metropolitan setting. The novels of Meera Syal, Andrea Levy and Monica Ali have also been read along these same lines either as different forms of diasporic and black British *Bildungsromane*,[73] or as a 'multicultural *Bildungsromane*'.[74] Zadie Smith's *White Teeth,* although not a *Bildungsroman* in generic terms, has nevertheless been hailed in a similar manner as a true literary triumph of the new millennium and was widely praised by reviewers and critics alike as a celebration of multicultural London, even though Smith's novel was far from offering a neat resolution of the tensions of multicultural belonging. Nevertheless, a kind of critical optimism has followed these novels.

In Maya Jaggi's review and Dominic Head's optimistic reading of the novel discussed in Chapter 2, *White Teeth* has been celebrated for ushering in a shift in black British writing – from 'migrant' to 'third generation' black-British concerns.[75] In another similar discussion, Jonathan P.A. Sell heralds *White Teeth* as an emancipatory narrative that announces a break with the past and a 'fresh concern for a present disembarrassed of all complexes about historically determined origins and identities'.[76] Although this 'new' multicultural generation still at times displays a hint of 'postcolonial resentment', Sell contends that Smith nevertheless offers 'a more positive model of identity' which is more a matter of 'personal individuality [than] of racial, ethnic or cultural affiliation, and [which] comprises an endless series of reinventions'.[77] However, such a reading not only repeats the idea of a fluid, ever-changing migratory subjectivity in the postmodern sense, but it may also personalise these narratives as the narratives of black British protagonists who seek to 'feel at home' in Britain and who can successfully negotiate their various 'belongings'. Such a reading may also suggest that the question of belonging becomes a matter of personal choice, a heroic individual act, thus cutting it off from the histories and realities of racism that are still evoked in the present.

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[73] Stein, *Black British Literature,* p.92; p.233.

[74] See for example Michael Perfect, 'The Multicultural Bildungsroman: Stereotypes in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*', *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature,* 43 (2008), 109-120 (p.109).

[75] Maya Jaggi, 'In a Strange Land'; Head, 'Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*: Multiculturalism for the Millennium'.

[76] Jonathan P.A. Sell, 'Chance and Gesture in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* and *The Autograph Man*: A Model for Multicultural Identity?', *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature,* 41, 3 (2006), 27-44 (p.27). This is also not only an unfair reading of Phillips's work, but as I have shown in Chapter 2, such a reading of 'migrant' literature and migrant bodies is also symptomatic of what the migrant figure is imagined to represent.

[77] Ibid, pp. 37, 33, 34.

On the other hand, Samad, the novel's main representative of the 'migrant' generation, embodies stasis and 'unproductive introspection', which, according to Sell, is a result of not being able to let go of past historical injustices, but who, as a character, would appeal to writers such as Caryl Phillips whose novels, as it were, seem to be locked in the same dilemma.[78] But as Sara Ahmed pointedly argues in her examination of the ways in which bad feelings are seen to reside in particular bodies and in her discussion of the migrant generation in the film *Bend it Like Beckham*, 'these histories have not gone: we would be letting go of that which persists in the present, a letting go which would keep those histories present'.[79] To be sure, it is never the British generation that is seen as static or non-progressive in Sell's, Jaggi's and Head's readings, but the migrant. What remains problematic in the analyses of these critics, and what they all have in common, is their grounding and theorisation of 'the shift' through the figure of the migrant. In other words, the shift which *White Teeth* was credited with seems to be performed on the backs of the migrant who remains a stereotypical and marginalised figure in every sense – either as a negative figure of unbelonging that needs to be transcended (evoked in Head's characterisation of vulnerable and embattled migrant selves, and Jaggi's disabling rootlessness in earlier black British texts) or through erasure of the migrant as a material subject in a celebratory discourse of 'migrancy' (evoked in Sell's discussion of the novel's 'migratory' forms of identity as an endless series of reinventions). If the shift bestowed upon the novel is to be theorised and fully explored, surely it would deserve a more ethical reading than the claims for a simple break with the past or with earlier 'migrant' texts and characters.

The novel itself does not seem to provide easy answers and it may, at times, even reinforce stereotypical representations of the migrant figure I have outlined. Furthermore, rather than suggesting escape from the past and disassociation, it often aligns the British generation with the migrant generation. Here is a famous passage from the novel where the intrusive narrator tells of 'immigrants':

> And it goes on to prove what has been said of immigrants many times before now; they are *resourceful*; they make do. [...] Because we often imagine that immigrants are constantly on the move, footloose, able to change course at any moment, able to

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[78] Ibid., p.33.

[79] Sara Ahmed, 'Multiculturalism and the Promise of Happiness', *New Formations*, 63 (2008), 121-137 (p.135).

> employ their legendary resourcefulness at every turn. We have
> been told of the resourcefulness of Mr Schmutters, or the
> footloosity of Mr Banajii, who sail into Ellis Island or Dover or
> Calais and step into their foreign lands as *blank people*, free of
> any kind of baggage, happy and willing to leave their difference at
> the docks and take their chances in this new place, merging with
> the oneness of this greenandpleasantlibertarianlandofthefree.
> Whatever road presents itself, they will take, and if it happens to
> lead to a dead end, well then, Mr Schmutters and Mr Banajii will
> merrily set upon another, weaving their way through Happy
> Multicultural Land. Well, good for them. But Magid and Millat
> couldn't manage it [...] They seem to make no progress. The
> cynical might say they don't even move at all [...] occupying a
> space equal to [...] Samad Iqbal's. [...] the brothers will race
> towards the future only to find they more and more eloquently
> express their past [...] Because this is the other thing about
> immigrants (fugees, émigrés, travellers): they cannot escape their
> history any more than you yourself can lose your shadow. (pp.
> 465-6)

The question of migrants' belonging is expressed through metaphors of mobility, and the narrator first plays on various perceptions and misconceptions about migrants by describing them as being constantly on the move, resourceful and free of baggage. At the same time, the narrator counters the image of a happy migrant ready to merge into 'Happy Multicultural Land' by adopting an ironic tone. However, what is particularly interesting is that this passage does not directly relate to the migrant generation but follows a scene when Millat and Magid meet to discuss their views on the 'FutureMouse' and are unable to reconcile their differences. The British-born generation is even aligned here with the migrant generation as the narrator compares the twins to Samad. This then poses a question whether the movement from the migrant to the British-born generation is to be read as a sign of progress and positivity which may shed light on the readings discussed earlier that emphasise the novel's positive plural identities. As Sara Upstone points out, 'British-born Londoners [...] are [still] described as "second-generation migrants", even though they have travelled nowhere'.[80]

Upstone has questioned whether the novel introduces new thematic concerns in black British writing. Interrogating the claims that *White Teeth* announces a shift from earlier migrant fiction and postcolonial theoretical frameworks, Upstone argues

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[80] Upstone, "'Same old, same old"', p.341.

that the novel is on the contrary 'contiguous with existing migrant narratives'.[81] Examining the representation of what she calls 'the British-born confidence' in the novel, she also identifies a few problematic points in Smith's representation of migrants particularly in the passage I have quoted above. She writes:

> There is repetition here of Rushdie's tendency to characterize all migrants as itinerant wanderers, but for Smith not only migrants but their children, too, are 'going round and round'. In deference to postmodernity, belonging is made both the Holy Grail, and – paradoxically – the impossibility which the narrative cannot unfashionably offer with any resolution. [...] Immigrants are bracketed as 'fugees, émigrés, travellers' in a way that encapsulates Smith's process of generalization. This strategy situates the novel inside, rather than outside, the purist exclusivity it seems to challenge on a thematic level, and also illustrates the problems of those critiques of nationalism which reject revising national belonging in favour of postmodern statements of relativity. Ultimately *White Teeth* is not only a reflection of a problem of marginality but, on another level, is itself a contributor to this marginality as it refuses to grant the British-born ethnic citizen – or anyone – insider status.[82]

Upstone is right to point out that Smith's strategy, by adopting inadequate migrant metaphors for the British generation, only reinforces stereotypes and makes these characters outsiders, and this disregards any positive generational changes or changes in race relations.[83] But Upstone is also critical of those readings of the novel that favour the postmodernist motto 'we are all migrants' (whose problematic aspects I have outlined in the first section of this chapter) and that refuse to fully engage with unresolved question of national belonging in Britain.

And yet, in this passage, the narrator, one might argue, questions the reader's views by suggesting that the cynical reader might say that the British-born generation indeed does not make any progress. Smith's strategy here recalls the novel's ending I discussed in Chapter 2 where the narrator speaks of Irie's unborn girl in terms of being free of at least some parts of genealogical baggage – 'free as Pinocchio, a puppet clipped of paternal strings' (p.541). This image intimates the notion of belonging, or perhaps even unbelonging, as the Holy Grail, to use Upstone's term, but the narrator also plays on readers' expectations and even suggests that the

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[81] Ibid., p.336.
[82] Ibid., p.341; p.345.
[83] Ibid., p.337.

narrative may no longer be controlled by Smith. Later on in this passage that speaks of the immigrants and the twins, the narrator makes references to Zeno's Achilles and tortoise paradox and says that 'the brothers will race towards the future only to find they more and more eloquently express their past' (p.466). Perhaps then belonging, just like Zeno's paradox, is full of contradictions or is even an illusion. And it may be at this point – which they might never reach and which is, on an aesthetic level, marred by 'Smith's process of generalisation'[84] as Upstone rightly points out – that a promise of moving forward lies. As Smith has pointed out in an interview, 'the relationships in the book are something to be wished for'.[85] Indeed, Smith does not write progressively in *White Teeth*. But perhaps this is the point of her imperfect and ambiguous representation of multiculturalism – to mirror the actual state which a majority of literary critics and reviewers of the novel have failed to see.

While Smith's characterisation of both the British and the migrant generation may at times fall into stereotypical representations, both Evaristo's novels, on the other hand, carefully re-construct the parents' migrant experience, particularly their experiences of racism, before they reach the British-born generation. Yet, as in Smith's case, a majority of discussions of Evaristo's verse-novel *Lara* were primarily focused on the new, 'hybrid' British-born generation. Analysing a number of black British novels through the prism of the *Bildungsroman* genre, Mark Stein argues in *Black British Literature* that these novels are not only concerned with 'the *formation* of [their] protagonists', but also with 'the *transformation* of British society and cultural institutions'.[86] He goes on to suggest that these, what he terms, black British 'novels of transformation' rest on 'a radical generational conflict [...] between a generation that migrated to Britain and one that was born there'.[87]

One such narrative with which Stein engages in detail is Evaristo's *Lara* and he proposes to read the novel as a form of a diasporic *Bildungsroman*. The creative playfulness of Lara's 'hybrid' statements and her articulation of conflicting and multiple attachments throughout the novel, certainly display a possession of a new vocabulary that was perhaps not available to an earlier generation of characters or those classified as 'migrants'. But although the urgency for change, and the need to voice the experience of the new generation, is present in Evaristo's verse-novels –

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[84] Upstone, "'Same old, same old", p.345.
[85] Merritt, 'She's Young'.
[86] Stein, *Black British Literature*, xiii.
[87] Ibid., p.29.

both *Lara* and *Soul Tourists* begin with an apparent generational break or a break with the past – a closer look at the movement between generations in her novels reveals that a generational conflict is not as prominent as it may first seem.

Early on in *Soul Tourists*, Evaristo juxtaposes a long description of the flat belonging to Stanley, all in 'subtle complementary tones of white' in which 'pure emptiness' reigns, with an utter decay of his father's flat, his dying body and the 30 years-out-of-date globe he possesses (p.11). This may be read as a sanitized and whitewashed version of the past, but also as remnants of the unresolved past histories that still linger in the present. Stanley's journey through Europe and his rediscovery of Europe's forgotten black history, which is the novel's main focus, is precisely the way of countering and engaging with the politics of forgetting of those histories and forging belonging to them. The description of Lara's birth as 'messy, impatient and dramatic' (p.43) may, in a similar vein, announce her entanglement in her parents' histories that preceded her and wider histories of race, migration and settlement that complicate her belonging.

Before they reach the British-born generation, both Evaristo's novels carefully re-construct the parents' migrant experience, particularly their experiences of racism in Britain of the 1950s. Racial injury only reinforces the parents' sense of unbelonging. As such a strong affective state of 'inadequacy in time and place', to use D'Aguiar's powerful description, this pain of unbelonging is passed on to their children.[88] Stanley's father, a Jamaican, constantly reminds his son that they will never belong and dies with this feeling. He comes to England to work as a chemist, but spends his whole life working as a postman. His brown skin remains the determining factor of his acceptance or rejection in British society (p.19). Lara's Nigerian father Taiwo, we are told, aches with 'invisible bruises' (p.49), yet his anger and pain are never expressed either to his wife or his children. Instead, both fathers' alienation transforms into strictness towards their children and turns into a repudiation of all those visible and audible reminders of difference that remain a source of trauma for the 'migrant' generation. Hence Stanley is not allowed to speak patois and, similarly, Lara is forbidden to talk to her imaginary 'Daddy People' (p.48). But Evaristo does not simply dismiss the first generation as a lost generation. Rather than depicting a simple generational break, both her novels point to the need

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[88] D'Aguiar, 'Home is Always Elsewhere', p.199.

to testify to those histories of hurt that account for the British-born protagonists' complicated relationship towards the past and their parents, and that account for their own positioning in the present. Her fictional re-imagining of 'migrant' suffering forms an integral part of the narrative in understanding the ways in which 'unresolved losses suffered by the first generation' are passed on to the 'British-born' generation.[89] By engaging with these different histories, time frames and contexts, Evaristo lays out the ways in which 'migrant' unbelonging becomes the British-born (un)belonging.

Traditionally, a *Bildungsroman* has been a highly individualistic narrative – a story of personal development or character formation structured around a metaphorical or literal journey that a protagonist undertakes. Some form of loss or disagreement with the society/home/family is what usually prompts the protagonist to leave 'home'.[90] The journey as the central motif of a *Bildungsroman* entails the protagonist passing through different stages expressed through the metaphors of growth, maturity, coming of age, self realisation, adaptation and emancipation. The journey of self-formation should typically end with the protagonist's return and social re-integration thus following the pattern of a fully rounded tale of resolution or moving towards some kind of closure. The genre is steeped, I would argue, in some idea of compromise or negotiation. Stein employs the *Bildungsroman* genre strategically in terms of explaining the 'British-born' generation's 'coming to terms' with their identity and 'the *voicing* of this identity' and also points out that the Black British novel of transformation is not only concerned with 'the privatist *formation* of an individual', but that it also 'constitutes a symbolic act of carving out space, of creating a public sphere'.[91] Yet, the very choice of the *Bildungsroman* genre still resonates with some of its traditional features – namely, the idea of the protagonist's growth, maturation and formation. The emphasis on formation, transformation and generational conflict presents numerous problems when translated into the black British context.

If 'newness' and generational conflict are foregrounded, do such readings not risk implying that growth of the British generation is attained at the expense of a generational conflict? Anne-Marie Fortier usefully reminds us that in immigration

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[89] Eng and Han, 'Racial Melancholia', p.352.
[90] Suzanne Hader, 'The Bildungsroman Genre: Great Expectations, Aurora Leigh, and Waterland', The Victorian Web <http://www.victorianweb.org/genre/hader1.html> [accessed 05 May 2008].
[91] Stein, p.30.

and ethnic studies, the concept of generations is used 'to periodize the settlement and adaptation of a population within the "country of adoption"'[92] according to the familiar patterns of assimilation or integration which privileges movement in its importance for identity formation as well as the place of arrival. Does the *Bildungsroman* pattern with its assimilationist tendencies then not cover up those crucial histories and experiences of the parental generation that continue to shape their children's lives and which make the British-born generation always 'part-aliens'? Does it not place too much faith and expectation in the new protagonists who can successfully negotiate their various cultural/ethnic/national and other allegiances and who are no longer stuck in place and time as opposed to their parents who are usually represented as such? Does it not allow for the freezing of the image of the older generation as being authoritarian, traditional and backward? As Stein writes:

> For example, in the case of Andrea Levy's first novel, *Every Light in the House Burnin'*, the central character Angela is quite articulate. This, however, has to be seen from within the context of the protagonist's parents, *who are not*. Having partly internalized the host society's notion that as Jamaican immigrants they should not really reside in Britain, they tried to 'blend in' and remain silent.[93]

I would suggest that such a reading may risk whitewashing the histories of those stumbling blocks of racism and putting those numerous parental figures of 'melancholic migrants'[94] out of sight from the national imaginary making them outsiders who forever remain unassimilated and who are forever stubbornly unbelonging. As I pointed out in Chapter 2, the altered ending of Andrea Levy's *Small Island* in the BBC's adaptation reveals the same issue. The insisting on 'newness' and 'transformation' may thus erase, or 'hide from view', those crucial histories and experiences of the parental, 'migrant' generation. What is presented as progressive theorising of the black British experience seems to repeat the very

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[92] Anne-Marie Fortier, 'New intimacies and un/marked (hetero)sexuality: intersections of ethnicity and sexuality in new multiculturalist Britain', Lancaster: Department of Sociology, Lancaster University, <http://www.comp.lancs.ac.uk/sociology/papers/Fortier-New-Intimacies.pdf> [accessed 07 April 2005], p.8.

[93] Stein, p.30, emphasis added.

[94] See Sara Ahmed's discussion of the melancholic migrant in 'Multiculturalism and the Promise of Happiness', pp.131-135.

similar problems of the discussed shift in *White Teeth* which was based on the break with earlier migrant texts and characters.

Does growth need to be attained at the expense of generational conflict. or, as I shall argue in the next chapter, could this be done through more ethical ways – that is, through an engagement with those histories of loss that precede and partly affect the British-born generation? An interpretation of black British texts through the *Bildungsroman* genre and its neat resolution can have real political and ethical implications. It can put those figures of melancholic migrants away and instead give us a new triumphant generation of characters who are able to 'sort themselves out', work on their development, negotiate their various cultural affiliations and thus be happily accommodated in the nation's multicultural diversity. How to think optimistically about the intended performativity and progressive social change of Stein's black British novels of transformation, when in 2000 many critics so enthusiastically welcomed the 'multicultural' characters of Smith's *White Teeth* thus enabling a quick transformation and replacement of the melancholic migrant characters with more 'interesting' ones? What also to make of the 'novels of transformation' in those symptomatic moments when critics in or outside the UK, consciously or unconsciously, continue to label these writers as migrant writers, along the lines of 'second or even third-generation' migrant writers – as recently experienced by Hanif Kureishi, at the promotion of his latest book in Germany.[95] Should we think of such reactions simply as random aberrations and the last remains of racialised thinking?

The point of asking all these questions really is about thinking and finding more ethical ways of reading in which maturation or growth does not happen at the expense of the Other, 'the migrant', and, in this case, at the expense of a generational conflict. It would be difficult to say whether conservative tendencies of the *Bildungsroman* could avoid this. A classical example, *Jane Eyre*, has often been read as a progressive female *Bildungsroman* and, as post-colonial critics such as Gayatri Spivak have famously pointed out, Jane's progress and emancipation depends on

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[95] Having been asked if he finally felt at home in Britain, Kureishi reflects on this with a well-founded rage – 'I was in Germany a couple of weeks ago. They referred to me all the time as an immigrant, as if I'd just got off the f***ing boat. I'd think, 'For God's sake! You don't have any idea, do you?' <http://www.timeout.com/london/books/features/4312/7.html>[accessed 26 February 2008].

othering, and ultimately, on the death of Bertha. [96] Some critics have also suggested that the *Bildungsroman* genre defuses social tensions and the disruption of the social order which resonates awkwardly in the context of the intended performativity of the Black British novels of transformation. [97] In his analysis of Meera Syal's *Anita and Me*, Berthold Schoene-Harwood has noticed how '*Bildung* encourages self–alienating mimicry and conformism prone to result in self-deformations rather than the emancipatory fulfilment of individual difference'. [98] In a slightly different context, tracing the differing commercial success of Smith's *White Teeth* and *Forever and Ever Amen* by a black writer from Manchester, Joe Pemberton, Corrine Fowler has pointed out how a classic *Bildungsroman* is what usually sells and that Pemberton's novel's lack of closure was what some reviewers found frustrating. [99] But it was also the fact that it was a Northern novel, less marketable and certainly lacking Smith's 'interesting' metropolitan setting. Fowler's useful analysis of these two novels in the context of corporate publishing and marketing of black British fiction can be equally applied to interrogating different ways of *reading* black British fiction.

In both *Lara* and *Soul Tourists*, as discussed in the previous section of this chapter, the crisis of unbelonging prompts the protagonists to journey away from 'home' which may indeed signal that these novels follow a narrative trajectory of the *Bildungsroman* genre. Yet, in both novels, Evaristo is quite cautious not to personalize unbelonging simply as an individual or generational conflict, or to reduce neatly the protagonists' diasporic journeys into a journey merely of self formation. In fact, I would be as bold as to argue against the idea of the 'black British *Buildungsroman*' being applied to Evaristo's work. In much black British literature one finds something that resists being neatly accommodated into the narrative trajectory of triumphant individualism, compromise and resolution found with *Bildungsroman*. As discussed in Chapter 3, the adverbial intensity of Kureishi's 'almost', D'Aguiar's 'elsewhere' or Evaristo's 'not quite' all suggest this. These

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[96] Although some recent studies have pointed to the novel's more unstable meanings. See for example Cora Kaplan, *Victoriana: Histories, Fictions, Criticism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

[97] See José Santiago Fernández Vázquez, 'Recharting the Geography of Genre: Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* as a Postcolonial *Bildungsroman*', *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 37 (2002) 85-106 (p.95).

[98] Berthold Schoene-Harwood, 'Beyond (T)race: *Bildung* and Proprioception in Meera Syal's *Anita and Me*', *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 34 (1999), 159-168 (p.164).

[99] Fowler, 'A Tale of Two Novels', p.67.

phrases not only point to the residues of those past histories of hurt and loss that make belonging always contentious for the new generation, but also question the very foundations on which social integration and self-formation is imagined to be achieved. Focusing only on the protagonists' personal development, even when this is expressed as a negotiation of the protagonists' various conflicting attachments, would make belonging a personal affair. The *Bildungsroman* interpretation would undermine the workings of Evaristo's melancholia as a simple exploration of 'her' diasporic heritage that would speak only to a particular community. It would mean risking that her wider concern with loss and (un)belonging might easily become translated by the dominant culture as a 'problem' of 'her' culture that is eventually solved through romanticisation of 'her' losses. As discussed in Chapter 2, Evaristo has pointed out herself how this has been the case in some reviews of her novels. Finally there is more to the workings of Evaristo's melancholic narratives than a celebration of diasporic identities, as the next chapter will demonstrate.

Other 'minority' narratives have also suffered from being read through the lenses of the *Bildungsroman* genre and generational conflict. In her book *Immigrant Acts*, Lisa Lowe argues against the interpretation of 'Asian American culture exclusively in terms of the master narratives of generational conflict and filial relation [which] essentializes Asian American culture, obscuring the particularities and incommensurabilities of class, gender, and national diversities among Asians'.[100] She importantly points out that 'the reduction of the cultural politics of racialised ethnic groups, like Asian Americans, to first-generation/second-generation struggles displaces social differences into a privatized familial opposition'.[101] Similarly, in her discussion of Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, Anne Anlin Cheng notes how the memoir has often been read as a progressive ethnic *Bildungsroman* 'where the narrator overcomes her destabilising experiences of ethnic and racial discriminations to construct a positivist identity'.[102] Cheng interestingly argues that the *Bildung* is, instead, 'constantly jeopardized'.[103] As pointed out in Chapter 2, Evaristo's Lara steps out of Heathrow into her future at the end of the novel, yet it would seem too optimistic to read her return simply as a resolution and a guarantee

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[100] Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996), p.63.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race*, p.221.
[103] Ibid., p.102.

of belonging. Lara does triumph over racial injustice, but the novel is not simply the narrative of generational conflict. Especially in the light of Cheng's argument. the *Bildungsroman* interpretation might also imply that the previous self of the racialised other was somewhat incomplete. In their discussion of racial melancholia outlined in Chapter 2, Eng and Han spoke powerfully against this idea 'that minority subjectivities are permanently *damaged* – forever injured and incapable of ever being "whole"'.[104] Both Evaristo's novels point out that this self in need of formation, or difference in need of emancipation, as *Bildungsroman* would have it, is precisely the effect of hegemonic discourses of belonging that are modified in the present, as Chapter 2 has demonstrated. Critics who favour the idea of the `black British *Buildungsroman*' rarely consider these implications. To conclude, reading these novels through the genre of resolution, celebratory metaphors of movement (in-betweenness, migrancy, rootlessness) or as 'ethnic' narratives, may thus greatly normalize the effects and residues of earlier histories of exclusion and the ways in which these writers engage with them.

By engaging with fictional representations as well as with the ways in which movement (exile, migration, search for roots, tourism) has figured in the literary imagination of the writers, this chapter has explored the points in which the possibilities of melancholic consciousness are productive and in which they are less enabling. This has been highlighted in the discussion of the relationship between travel, knowledge and power and in the encounters with various places and travellers ('Eastern Europe', exiles, soul and diaspora tourists, migrant flaneurs, 'black' travellers) we have met on the writers' and their protagonists' journeys. In doing so, this chapter has pointed out the limits of fictionalising/imagining progressive forms of belonging through the metaphors of movement. The next chapter therefore ushers in a discussion of the narratives' engagement with loss and journeys into memory in order to explore whether these movements engender a site where productive melancholic consciousness may emerge and new forms of belonging may begin to be re-imagined.

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[104] Eng and Han, `Racial Melancholia', p.363.

Chapter Five

Belonging and Memory

> We are born and have our being in a place of memory. [...] We know ourselves through the art and act of remembering. Memories offer us a world where there is no death, where we are sustained by rituals of regard and recollection. [...] I pay tribute to the past as a resource that can serve as a foundation for us to revision and renew our commitment to the present, to making a world where all people can live fully and well, where everyone can belong.[1]

For bell hooks, memory acts as a foundation of belonging, linking past and present to re-imagine a better future and new, almost utopian, forms of belonging. The aim of this final chapter is to explore memory's relation to (un)belonging and to determine whether the past in these narratives, following hooks's ethical stance, can serve as a resource to reconsider the present. I consider how these narratives engage with past and present (un)belongings not only in the context of foundations, but also in the context of ruins and remains. That is, I explore how certain acts of remembering (or forgetting) constitute belonging, as well as how the journey into memory and the past consists of piecing together fragments of 'lost histories as well as the histories of loss'[2] whose remains are embedded in a multitude of 'posts'– post-colonial, post-imperial, post-communist and post-war.

In a sense, all these writers write out of the ruins in order to reflect on the present – though Ugrešić and Goldsworthy write out of more recent post-1989 Eastern European ruins, while Evaristo and Smith engage with the effects of older ruins of post-imperial culture as generations replace one another. These narratives are criss-crossed by numerous journeys into memory and the past, as the previous chapter suggested, and they also interweave different narrative times. However, they also reflect ambivalent investments in the idea of memory as a foundation of belonging by repeatedly blurring the boundaries of what is thought to represent individual and collective memory. In Evaristo's and Ugrešić's work, the very foundations of the 'present' are questioned, as well as the act of renewal and healing of a community through the work of remembering. This is the function of particular

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[1] bell hooks, *Belonging: a Culture of Place* (New York and London: Routlegde, 2009), p.5.
[2] David Eng and David Kazanjian, 'Introduction: Mourning Remains', in *Loss: The Politics of Mourning* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), p.436.

forms of melancholia and nostalgia in these narratives and their use of the two figures which I describe as 'melancholic travellers' in Evaristo's *Lara* and *Soul Tourists* and the *'Trümmerfrau'* figure in Ugrešić's *The Ministry of Pain*. In Goldsworthy's memoir, return to the past acts as healing and re-establishes her relationship to the present. At the same time, she works through the tensions and entanglements of personal and collective history by remembering the vanishing communist Eastern European and Yugoslav world of her childhood after she has witnessed its violent disintegration from London – which can be best described through Svetlana Boym's notion of reflective nostalgia.[3] Finally, *White Teeth,* unlike the other narratives, is an attempt to make a shift from the past as a foundation of belonging, particularly in the context of the British-born generation. For them, the self is not sustained by rituals of recollection and the past figures much less prominently as a foundation of belonging. The British generation does not pay tribute to the past, to use hooks's words, but strives to escape the pre-determined historical and genealogical 'origins'. It shows little interest in the generational passing down of stories and even finds those stories boring. Indeed, the British generation of *White Teeth* might even be prepared to bury 'the ruins' in order to re-imagine the future. By comparing the role of different forms of affect and different forms of longing in these narratives, such as nostalgia and melancholia, that define what is remembered, how and by whom (and also what is forgotten), this chapter explores the narratives' investments in imagining the future and new forms of belonging.

1. Evaristo's Melancholic Travellers: Jolted Memories, Reflective Melancholia

Both *Lara* and *Soul Tourists* focus on the protagonists' necessary journeys away from London as 'home', but as much as these novels are about the protagonists' physical journeys, they are also about metaphorical journeys into memory and past. As Briar Wood usefully points out in her introduction to *Leave to Stay: Stories of Exile and Belonging,* the etymology of the word 'travel' has its roots in the French word 'travail' which translates as 'to labour', 'work', or 'toil'.[4] In Evaristo's novels, the protagonists' journeys entail a labour of remembrance and a productive engagement with the past and its remains. Rather than simply being a journey of

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[3] See Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, pp. 49-55.
[4] Briar Wood, 'Foreword', in *Leave to Stay: Stories of Exile and Belonging*, ed. by Joan Riley and Briar Wood (London: Virago, 1996), x.

maturity and self-formation, the journey is an exploration of potential lines of belonging, particularly through longing to form diasporic attachments (discussed in Chapter 3), as well as being about 'piecing together fragments' of 'those violent historical forces that have rewritten family plots in the twentieth century' and throughout centuries of slavery and colonialism.[5] Employing a rhetoric of generational haunting and ghosts that follows her melancholic characters on their imaginative rediscovery of forgotten connections of the past, Evaristo opens up 'a tension between the oppressive memory of the past and the liberatory promise of the future' in order to raise 'consciousness of unjust foundations of the present'.[6]

Lara grows up in a house called 'Atlantico' which uncannily signals connections to the Middle Passage. But apart from the house's basement passage described as 'body-wide, mildewed' (p.79), there is no actual evidence of ancestral histories marked by slavery and Lara notices the absence of paternal family photographs in the house – 'no Da Costas photos memoried the mantelpiece' (p. 83). At the same time, her father Taiwo decides never to pass on the painful stories of those histories to Lara. After experiencing sustained racial discrimination upon his arrival in England in 1949, Lara's father's dictum to erase memories of his family in order to survive acts as his defence mechanism and is perhaps an attempt not to burden his children with these traumatic events and memories. Hardly ever speaking of the world he had left behind, Taiwo thus breaks the previous generational chain of stories, but Lara longs for those stories and their very unavailability seems to be traumatic for her. Her 'Daddy People', whom she starts imagining as a child, suggest her longing for the relatives from her father's side. Indeed, Lara grows up surrounded by whiteness, as shown in Chapter 2. Appearing to Lara as 'phantoms, perched in trees like owls, eyes smiling, singing' (p.54), 'Daddy People' release uncanny potential as haunting phantoms of hidden histories and family secrets. They will soon call her to imaginatively reconstruct the routes of her paternal ancestors and to revisit Nigeria and then Brasil where Lara will learn of Taiwo's grandfather's painful journey from slavery in Brasil to his return to Lagos as an 'emancipado'. The ways in which Lara imaginatively recreates the routes of her ancestors, 'makes memory' out of lost stories and absent memory 'objects' – not only of physical evidence such

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[5] Marianne Hirsch qtd. in Sarah Brophy, *Witnessing AIDS: Writing, Testimony, and the Work of Mourning* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), p.14.

[6] Sam Durrant, *Postcolonial Narrative and the Work of Mourning: J. M. Coetzee, Wilson Harris, and Toni Morrison* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004), p.1.

as photographs or bodies, but also of the absence of storytelling – is evocative of Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory developed from her work on the children of Holocaust survivors. Postmemory, or the second-generation memory, she argues, 'is a powerful form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection, but through an imaginative investment and creation'.[7] Hirsch suggest that the term can usefully describe 'other cultural or collective traumatic events and experiences' and the ways in which, what she terms, 'the second-generation memory' may be shaped by the events that preceded their births.[8] In *Lara*, Evaristo explores the role of these traumatic events, of family as a space of transmission, and examines how even the memories that are not transmitted from one generation to the next affect the 'second-generation's sense of belonging.

Several paternal family stories are reconstructed during Lara's physical and metaphorical journeys. Her ancestral connections reveal the bitter labour at sugar plantations and speak of generations marked by slavery and transportations over the Middle Passage. Some stories are fully told, others echo with difficult silences. Evaristo's narrative, in its constant shifting back and forward in time, keeps the tension between what memories represent for each generation – Lara's longing for memories and their painful and traumatic nature for the previous generations. While for Lara's father familial memories are an open wound better not to be touched,[9] for Lara's white grandmother memories are associated with 'the good old days' (p.54). And Lara, who is on a quest for 'tomb raiding' (p.79), is treading, as Stein notes, the very 'colonial trade roots, where coffee, sugar, gold, spices, and slaves were once shipped', while also trying to 'to rediscover and remake connections that have been lost in history'.[10] But it is Tolulope, Lara's paternal great-great grandmother whose incomplete story opens the novel, that presents Lara with an 'ethical encounter'[11] with how to reconcile her conflicting emotional need for reconstruction with an inability to account for some stories that have forever perished – those fragments of memory and gaping losses in history that are part of the difficult legacy of slavery

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[7] Marianne Hirsch, 'Past Lives: Postmemories in Exile', in *Exile and Creativity*, ed. by Susan Suleiman (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), pp.418-446 (p.420).
[8] Ibid.
[9] Once he arrives in England, he remains traumatically disconnected from his family in Nigeria. He is never able to visit them due to lack of money, and ultimately never sees them again – both his sister and mother die while he is in England.
[10] Stein, *Black British Literature*, p.89.
[11] For a further discussion of ethical encounters, the problem of missing bodies and ethical implications of hearing and touch, see Sara Ahmed's *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-coloniality*, pp.147-160 and particularly her insightful reading of one of Mahasweta Devi's stories.

and that can never be bridged. As Judith Butler has recently pointed out, 'perhaps most difficult' is 'the loss of loss itself: somewhere, sometime, something was lost, but no story can be told about it; no memory can retrieve it; a fractured horizon looms in which to make one's way as a special agency, one for whom a full 'recovery' is impossible'.[12] Tolulope, the most difficult voice in the novel, continues to haunt Lara and the reader:

> Sugar cane, damp musky earth, saccharine vanilla
> journeys in from Eighteen Forty-Four, scenting Lara.
> Disembodied chords pluck the air. (p.1)

Raped and killed by a plantation owner in Brazil in 1844, Tolulope's dismembered body is transformed into a bird and then a baobab tree, 'and so it continued' (p.1) – tells this voice in a short phrase that contains so much – until her seeds are carried over the ocean by one of her sons. This painful and violent story is then juxtaposed with less violent and recent histories of scattering, as the novel, amongst its numerous time spans, shifts to Taiwo's arrival in England in 1949, Lara's birth in 1962, her visit to Nigeria in 1993, to Lara's arrival in Brasil in 1995 and her subsequent return to London.

After being severed from her mother's womb, Lara arrives into a world where not everything is passed on. She is named Omilara – 'the family are like water' (p.43) in Yoruba. The water metaphor of her full name may evoke ancestral transatlantic connections, but it may also imply how these connections have been strained and severed over time, as suggested by the Yoruba proverb that prefaces the novel – 'however far the stream flows, it never forgets its source' (p.1). Indeed, Lara will follow and revisit those older ancestral routes only to return to London. But Tolulope's story remains disembodied and the seeds of her story are buried even deeper by Taiwo with the death of all of his family relatives in Nigeria:

> When the roots of a tree die, its seeds are reborn.
> My children are my seed, this is home now. (p.57)

Interestingly, in the new edition of *Lara*, Tolulope has been renamed into Severina.[13] However, for Lara, Taiwo cannot act as the primary source of 'origin' and so water,

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[12] Judith Butler, 'Afterword: After Loss, What Then?', in *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, pp.467-474 (p. 467).

[13] See also the Interview where Evaristo talks about how she explored the Irish and German side of her family history with the help of genealogical and census details obtained from ancestry.co.uk.

as maternal source, will eventually connect her to Tolulope who is described as scenting Lara (p.1) at the beginning of the novel. However, the fragmented pieces of Tolulope's story that stand for the losses under slavery can never be fully re-created or recovered. Rather, their irrecoverability opens up Lara's journeys 'into incommensurable spaces within memory'[14] and a never fully completed process of 'churning of stories into a babbling stream of poetry oratory' (p.124) – which is an example of Evaristo's creative engagement with loss.

On her journeys, Lara tries to get close to those stories and hear all the silences, but when she finally comes to Salvador – the place of her paternal family origin – she is faced with the disorientating loss of not being able to find out about her own particular origin. Upon entering the Afro-Brasilero museum, she hopes to find 'a clue, a photograph of a great grandfather or ancestor' (p.138) carrying her paternal ancestral name Da Costa, but the museum attendant tells her there are hundreds of thousands of Da Costas in Salvador (and presumably others scattered around the world). For Lara, this is both disturbing and healing. She cannot trace all stories and the need to come close is followed by an ethical need to move away. The journey, as an ethical encounter, is therefore a reminder of the larger historical loss of slavery, colonialism and all those missing bodies. The origins of Lara's paternal surname cannot be found in a museum, nor is the name confined to Lara's family tree, but it surpasses her personal family history and is to be found in the origins of Salvador as the major port of entry for slaves transported from Africa during the 19th century – the points that again lead to so many unjust histories that are only partly Lara's own. By discovering unjust foundations of the past, Lara is able to counter their stubborn residues in the present. Lara's crisis of (un)belonging is resolved through her imaginative engagement with loss and its remains – through her identification with many old wounds of her ancestors that would not heal and that must remain open. Lara is then able to return to London empowered and contest hegemonic ways of belonging that made her undertake the journey in the first place:

> I am baptised, resolve to paint slavery out of me,
> the Daddy People onto canvas with colour-rich stroke,
> their songs will guide me in sweaty dreams at night.
> I savour living in the world, planet of growth, of decay,
> think of my island – the 'Great' Tippexed out of it –

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[14] Susheila Nasta, *Home Truths: Fictions Of the South Asian Diaspora in Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p.212.

tiny amid massive floating continents, the African one
an embryo within me. I will wing back to Nigeria again
and again, excitedly swoop over a zig-zag of amber lights
signalling the higgledy energy of Lagos.
It is time to leave.
Back to London, across international time zones,
I step out of Heathrow and into my future. (p.140)

Unlike her father, who had to forget his past in order to survive, Lara will cherish the ghosts of the past.

In *Soul Tourists*, Evaristo summons the ghosts again, but from a different past. The main protagonist, Stanley, inherits from his mother a gift passed down through generations of her family – the ability to see ghosts and communicate with them. His father's banishment of Jamaican culture is juxtaposed with his mother nourishment of it and the fact that she would always talk to dead ancestors. This maternal gift comes alive when Jessie, the woman he meets in a London bar soon after his father dies, persuades him to go on a journey across Europe. This ability awakens on his and Jessie's journey through Europe where Stanley is visited by a lively set of characters from Europe's forgotten black history. They range from the Jamaican nurse Mary Jane Seacole, the Dark Lady of Shakespeare's sonnets, Lucy Negro of Clerkenwell, the Duke of Florence, Alessandro de Medici, and Abram Petrovitch Gannibal, Pushkin's Ethiopian great-grandfather. Stanley takes on the role of a historian, or rather appropriates the role of a 'Western' cultural traveller just as his name might imply another role reversal recalling the famous Victorian explorer of Africa – Henry Morton Stanley.[15] However, Evaristo's Stanley is enriched by his encounter with the ghosts. Playing with the Freudian analogy of memory as an archaeological excavation of the buried past, Evaristo makes Stanley re-create, through his dialogue with the ghosts, what has been suppressed, lost and deliberately forgotten in the European 'official' historical memory.[16] Indeed, Evaristo digs deep and widely (the ghosts crop up from France to Turkey) thus unsettling the 'European' foundations and countering the whitewashing of memory in Europe based on the denial of black historical presence.

In her previous novel *The Emperor's Babe,* Evaristo was particularly engaged in exploring and 'exploding the myth of Britain as monocultural and "racially" pure

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[15] Thanks to Vesna Goldsworthy for pointing out this reference to me.
[16] Sigmund Freud qtd. in Nicola King, *Memory, Narrative, Identity: Remembering the Self* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p.11.

until 1948' by locating the novel in Roman London 1800 years ago.[17] By re-imagining the 16th century black presence in Britain, Evaristo's *Soul Tourists* restores 'the constitutive outside of the Black British subject [who] is partly defined by the manner in which its historical formation has been historically uninformed by its own British history'.[18] In *Soul Tourists*, by re-imagining the existence of a pre-Columbian African Diaspora in Europe, Evaristo is not only exploding the myth that the first African Diaspora came into being as an enforced one, but is also countering the founding European myths of whiteness. Evaristo's imaginative exploration of the black European diaspora and of its ghosts that haunt the narrative demonstrates that, as John McLeod has proposed, 'the fortunes of black people in history are not marginal or of interest only to black readers'.[19] Perhaps they should also become urgent to all 'European' readers. This could be one of the functions of Evaristo's use of visual elements in the novel as each new section is preceded by an image of various traffic signs. They mark important developments and turning points in the narrative and the protagonists' journey, but they also draw the reader's attention to this 'unexpected' black European history and point out that one needs to stop, slow down and reflect on the significance of this information. This mix of warning, direction and information signs may thus function as numerous 'time lags' that deconstruct and disrupt the master narratives of Eurocentric history and its amnesia.[20]

Evaristo has not ended her preoccupation with such concerns. In her latest novel *Blonde Roots*, published a year after the Bicentenary of the Abolition of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade was marked in Britain, Evaristo engages with the politics of commemoration, remembering and forgetting. She prefaces the novel with an epigraph 'Remembering 1444-1888' and a dedication to the millions of African slaves and their descendants. However, in a reversal of the transatlantic slave trade, it is the Aphrikans who enslave the Whytes (*sic*) in the novel.[21] In Evaristo's dystopian narrative, the novel's protagonist, Doris Scagglethorpe, a whyte slave woman from 'the Grey Continent "Europa"' is enslaved in 'the UK of Great Ambossa' (p.7). She

[17] Bernardine Evaristo with Alastair Niven in *Writing Across Worlds: Contemporary Writers Talk*, ed. by Susheila Nasta (New York: Routledge, 2004), 279-291 (p.291).
[18] Barnor Hesse, 'Diasporicity: Black Britain's Post-Colonial Formations', in *Un/settled Multiculturalisms*, p.114.
[19] John McLeod, *Postcolonial London: Rewriting the Metropolis* (London: Routledge, 2004), p.177.
[20] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p.364.
[21] Bernardine Evaristo, *Blonde Roots* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2008). All further references are to this edition and are cited in the text.

tells the story in the first-person narrative, of her escape journey through the 'Londolo' Underground system, the suburbs of 'Poplare' and 'Pe Khama' where 'Ambossan blaks' congregate and tell her 'Wigger, go home! You're taking our jobs!'(p.28), to her re-capture and banishment to a (Caribbean) sugar plantation. But before Doris is re-captured, Evaristo introduces another narrator in the middle of the story. It is Doris' master who directly addresses 'dear reader' in the pseudo-scientific tone of the colonialist and speaks of his upward journey of 'Prosperity and Enlightenment' (p.112) striving to achieve mastery over the narrative. Evaristo thus manages to trick the reader into anticipating the story of a triumphant escape journey, only to shatter the illusion that the effects of 'the time when people belonged to one or two colours' (p.75) can be simply overcome through a narrative of resolution. The novel ends with a postscript of the time after slavery, but rather as a triumph for its victims, it concludes that the capital and power still lies in the hands of the colonisers' descendants.

These 'open wounds' of Evaristo's narratives demonstrate her continued interest in the competing notions of remembering and forgetting, 'official' national and 'unofficial', suppressed histories.[22] By constantly going back in time and engaging with the past, Evaristo's novels reflect on the unresolved histories of nation, race and empire that still affect the contemporary. The protagonists of *Lara* and *Soul Tourists* decide to go on their necessary journey in order to explore how they are marked by what they inherit, and also to contest the melancholy of race and to revisit those wider histories of loss through metaphorical journeys into memory and past. To Britain's postcolonial melancholia – that Paul Gilroy described as the nation's melancholic attachment to past imperial greatness and its inability to work through the loss of empire – they juxtapose their own reflective and productive melancholia.[23] Against racist ideas of 'origins' and boundaries of national belonging, they juxtapose their own provisional 'scattered belongings' enriched by multiple cultural influences.[24] In this sense, the protagonists' navigation of diasporic routes and their recreation of difficult losses and silences in history that affect the present, evoke Kobena Mercer's notion of diaspora as 'a reminder and a remainder'

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[22] See also the appendix where she talks about her concern with history.

[23] See Gilroy, *After Empire*.

[24] I borrow this phrase from Jayne O. Ifekwunigwe and her book *Scattered Belongings: Cultural Paradoxes of Race, Nation and Gender* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999).

of Britain's unresolved colonial past.[25] Perhaps that is why, in the words of Jessie of *Soul Tourists*, memory that has been jolted, should remain jolted. 'To jolt' may mean to startle somebody out of a daydream, fantasy, or other state of semi-awareness, but can also imply a sharp reminder. *Soul Tourists* ends with England's amnesia as it re-imagines a conversation between Queen Charlotte and the demented King George III who does not remember slavery was abolished during his reign. However, it is Queen Charlotte who has the last words in the novel – she is left musing on her African ancestry and those lost connections that have been 'swept under the carpet' (p.278). Therefore, in keeping the past open between the competing notions of remembering and forgetting, Evaristo's poetics and politics of haunting point to so many stories still left untold and waiting to be explored in fiction. Evaristo's imagined rediscovery of lost connections and her engagement with the ghosts of the past, not only from British, but also from European history, may be read as a stand against the whitewashing of historical memory and against national amnesia. In this sense, Evaristo's characters are indeed melancholic travellers who do not let go of lost stories, memories and histories and for whom the task of drawing together those lost fragments remains less than finished.

2. Among the Post-Yugoslav Ruins: The *Trümmerfrau* Figure in Ugrešić's *The Ministry of Pain*

There are no such catastrophic events and historical traumas resulting from slavery and colonialism and stretching over five centuries and across generations in the post-Yugoslav context. However, the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia, as one of the most catastrophic events of the 1990s, has resonated in literature and this is where Evaristo and Ugrešić are similar on a thematic level – namely, their questioning of foundations of the present after traumatic and violent events, a concern with the ethics of re-membering, haunting and missing bodies. Also, both Ugrešić's and Evaristo's protagonists are distanced from the ruins of those catastrophic events – geographically (Ugrešić's protagonists are in Amsterdam) or temporally (Evaristo's protagonists are a British-born generation) – however, they all invest imaginatively in the rubble-work of memory. The Freudian exploration of

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[25] Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle*, p.7.

memory as an archaeological excavation of the buried past that characterises Evaristo's work is also found in Ugrešić.

In order to start discussing how Ugrešić explores these issues in *The Ministry of Pain*, it might be useful to return to Bhahba's consideration of the symbolic function of unhomely fictions (outlined in Chapter 3) and his contention that they could perform a kind of psychic survival in the moment 'when historical visibility has faded' and 'when the present tense of testimony loses its power to arrest'.[26] These ethical concerns, as I have shown, are evident in Evaristo's work and also in Ugrešić's. As we shall see, the emphasis on melancholic remembering and the evocation of ruins and metaphors of pain in *The Ministry of Pain*, may point both to the urgency of confronting the recent past, and also to the difficulty of writing about grief and loss. Although Ugrešić deals with a historically and contextually specific unhomely – that which symbolically incorporates in the act of writing the effects of the war in Former Yugoslavia – there is still something that remains in the writing of this unhomely – *something that haunts*. Indeed, the remains in Ugrešić's novel figure in both meanings of the word 'remains'– as a dead body and as something (or some bodies or worlds) left behind. Focusing on the residual elements in Ugrešić's narrative, this section discusses her imaginative engagement with loss and post-Yugoslav and with post-1989 ruins.

When Tanja, the narrator of *The Ministry of Pain*, becomes aware of her ironic position as a temporary lecturer in Yugoslav literature at the University of Amsterdam – the literature which no longer exists – she suggests to her 'students' that instead of a proper literature course, they could play a game which would consist of the cataloguing of everyday life in Yugoslavia. During their course in remembering, they recreate a '*painless* territory of the past' (p.134, my emphasis) through a recollection of Yugoslav pop culture, 'Yugogoods – food, drink, apparel and the like – and Yugodesign, ideological slogans, celebrities, athletes, events, Yugoslav socialist myths and legends' (p.59). This act of nostalgic remembering may be read as twofold. Firstly, it represents an affective investment that creates a sense of community in order to confront their inner fragmentation – the trauma and the pain of displacement. In her book *The Future of Nostalgia*, Svetlana Boym discusses such an affective character of remembering in which the nostalgic has 'an amazing capacity for remembering sensations, tastes, sounds, smells, the minutiae

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[26] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p.26.

and trivia of the lost paradise'.[27] By revisiting the culture of the everyday, the objects and places that felt homely and that connected them, the novel also expresses a particular character of nostalgia – its 'untranslatability'.[28] For example, Yugoslav popular tunes and other references to Yugoslav popular culture would bear little significance to a reader outside the Former Yugoslavia.

Secondly, and on another level, their nostalgic remembering may be read as a counter memory. In other words, when the characters remember their lost 'home', they recreate the forever lost Yugoslav cultural space and attempt to preserve personal and collective memories from systematic erasure following the country's disintegration. As Tanja explains:

> [...] I had to find a territory that belonged equally to us and would hurt us as little as possible. [...] With the disappearance of the country came the feeling that the life lived in it must be erased. The politicians who came to power were not satisfied with power alone; they wanted their new countries to be populated by zombies, people without memory. They pilloried their Yugoslav past and encouraged people to renounce their former lives and forget them. Literature, movies, pop music, jokes, television, newspapers, consumer goods, languages, people – we were supposed to forget them all. A lot of it ended up at the dump [...] 'Yugonostalgia', the remembrance of one's life in the former country became another name for political subversion. (p.57)

Ugrešić here evokes a specific form of nostalgia –*Yugonostalgia,* similar to the East German phenomenon of *Ostalgie* – which represents a longing for the lost cultural space of Yugoslav identities and its positive values.[29] Such nostalgic remembering is therefore subversive and acts against what Ugrešić in her essays terms 'the confiscation of memory' and the repressive strategies of 'oblivion and forgetting' of the post-Yugoslav nationalist regimes in their attempt to erase everything that was related to a common Yugoslav past and redefine ordinary people's lives along more restrictive national, religious, ethnic and other lines.[30] Nostalgia could then be read as a symptom of the post-Yugoslav subjectivity constituted on the basis of this repression and as a symptom of Tanja and her students' desire to return to more

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[27] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia,* p.4
[28] Ugrešić, *The Culture of Lies,* p.230.
[29] This discussion reaches beyond the scope of this chapter, but these forms of nostalgias are common across Eastern Europe and are a reaction against the post-1989 erasure of the communist past, the renaming of streets, dismantling of monuments, transformation of the media and consumer landscape and so on.
[30] Ugrešić, *The Culture of Lies,* pp. 66-96.

peaceful times. However, such construction of the past is often utopian and romanticised, and does not sufficiently address its problematic features which Igor, another student, often brings up during their course in remembering. It is therefore important to ask who constructs the nostalgic 'we' and what nostalgia as an emotion may do and represent.

Nostalgia has often been considered as having similar symptoms to melancholia in its refusal to let go of what has been lost and in its clinging to an imaginary past.[31] Nostalgic symptoms have been considered as a sign of collective longing, while melancholic ones have mostly been relegated to the personal domain and personal history.[32] It is not surprising then that the longing for 'home' in nostalgia has often been associated with nationalism and conservatism. However, in some recent work on contemporary nostalgia and on collective mourning and melancholia, there has been much less emphasis on distinguishing between these two emotions. Rather, there is a need to contextualise, historicise and politicise these expressions as they can mean different things in different times.[33] Following from a recent ethical 'turn' in literary and cultural studies and a renewed interest in affect, a clear-cut distinction between nostalgia, melancholia and mourning has been complicated by the fact that these affective states are often experientially and historically contingent. Most of these critical responses, although indebted to Freud's distinction between the two stages of grief – melancholia as unhealthy or failed mourning and mourning as a productive, future-oriented and reparatory state, a successful letting go of the lost object – seem to focus not so much on this distinction, as on his notion of cathexis, or an emotional investment that goes into working through loss and grief. Nostalgia and melancholia may then not always be cast off as regressive states, but can act as a defence mechanism against dismemberment and their emotional energy can be invested in connectedness rather

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[31] For a very useful discussion of the history of the term 'nostalgia' see Boym's *The Future of Nostalgia*, pp.3-57.

[32] Ibid., p.5.

[33] For example, in previous chapters I drew on David Eng's and Anne Anlin Cheng's work on productive and creative possibilities of racial melancholia; See also Judith Butler's *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London; New York: Verso, 2004) for a discussion of a hierarchy of grief in melancholic responses post 9/11 and of mourning as a resource for politics. For a discussion of the relationship between postmodernity and nostalgia see the work of Wendy Wheeler or Zygmunt Bauman. In *The Future of Nostalgia*, Boym also discusses forms of postcommunist nostalgia as a defence mechanism against the accelerated rhythm of change and the economic shock therapy of the free market.

than in substitution.[34] Just like Evaristo's melancholia, this seems to be what Ugrešić does initially with affective and utopian *Yugonostalgic* remembering.

On the other hand, the attachments to loss in melancholia/nostalgia can have ethical implications. The nostalgic 'we' they create, can only partially do away with a loss of identity and trauma; it cannot make the loss meaningful. Tanja then begins to wonder whether stimulating memory and evoking 'homely' terrains would reveal something more sinister:

> I wondered whether by evoking endearing images of a common past I wouldn't obscure the bloody images of the recent war; whether by reminding them how Kiki sweets tasted [...] [and] urging them to 'reflect on' Mirko and Slavko, the Yugopartisans of the popular comic strip, I wouldn't be postponing their confrontation with the countless episodes of sadism perpetrated by Yugowarriors, drunk and crazed with momentary power, against their compatriots; or whether by calling up the popular refrain 'That's what's happens, my fair maiden, once you've known a Bosnian kiss', I wouldn't be dulling the impact of the countless deaths in Bosnia, that of Selim's father, for instance. The list of atrocities knew no end, and here I was, pushing them into the background with cheery catalogues of everyday trifles that no longer existed (p.58)

It is not only that the characters are haunted by the memories of a lost home; there is something else that haunts and threatens this nostalgic remembering. The novel here reveals the unhomely character of memory, which can be read as that which is traumatic. In recent work on trauma, nostalgic evocation of utopian images and homely places 'can function to conceal another traumatic past' and therefore the nostalgic defence mechanism may not necessarily be a productive response.[35] Through Selim's story that interrupts, cuts through and disrupts the homely remembering, the novel begins to articulate the point that nostalgia cannot be separated from *what came after* Yugoslavia. In other words, remembering the smallest everyday things that make them alive also brings along the war victims and the war dead (p.125). Selim is a Bosnian student whose father was killed in the Omarska concentration camp.[36] The lectures soon turn out to be an unsuccessful

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[34] Susanna Radstone qtd. in Wendy Wheeler, 'After Grief: What Kind of Inhuman Selves?', *New Formations*, 25 (1995), 77-95, (p.82).

[35] Linda Belau, 'Introduction: Remembering, Repeating, and Working-Through: Trauma and the Limit of Knowledge', in *Topologies of Trauma: Essays on the Limit of Knowledge and Memory*, ed. by Linda Belau and Petar Ramadanović (New York: Other Press, 2001), xx.

[36] Omarska was a concentration camp in northern Bosnia and Herzegovina run by Bosnian Serb forces.

group therapy and the reanimation of their better past (p.59) reveals a 'home' that is *sick* and haunted because of the absence of a healing process. In keeping the melancholic wound open and in insisting on the 'post-war' not as a break, but as an unresolved state, her novel speaks against such *management* of pain and points to the urgency of confronting the legacy of Yugoslav wars.

In this novel and in her essays, Ugrešić also asks how long *Yugonostalgia* will retain its subversive potential. She wonders whether the recent violent past will inevitably become marketable once post-communist nostalgia and *Yugonostalgia* are turned into exports by capitalist changes. Perhaps Ugrešić recognizes that when the past becomes marketable, the recent communist or violent past will inevitably become commodified, simplified and written forever. The novel speaks against another such *management* of pain. When Tanja goes to visit the Anne Frank Museum in Amsterdam, she comes across a video quiz that is replaying the following questions over and over again – '1. *Whom did Anne first share her room with? 2. Whom did she have to share it with later on? 3. What did Anne do to liven up her room?*' (p.235, emphasis original). She imagines a similar quiz in an imaginary Yugoslav museum – '1. What was the name of the country in the south of Europe that fell apart in 1991? a) Yugoslovakia, b) Yugoslavia, c) Slovenakia' (p.236). Ugrešić here speaks against such a trivialisation of horrors and remembering and points to the ethical implications of politics of remembering and witnessing.[37] In the second part of the novel, Tanja goes to visit Zagreb and on her flight back to Amsterdam, a telling conversation takes place between her and a fellow passenger. He tells her that over time 'more people will know that Elvis Presley is no longer with us than the Sarajevo Library [...] or the Muslim victims of Srebrenica' and that 'more people lost their lives in the floods of India this year'(p.119). Juxtaposing the traumatic legacy of Yugoslav violent conflict with other disasters and sites of trauma throughout the world, the novel opens up thinking about the temporality of remembering. In *The Museum of Unconditional Surrender,* the narrator voices similar concerns:

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[37] In her recent essay, Ugrešić writes how she took her 10 year old nephew to the Anne Frank Museum, but he did not know who Anne Frank was, as well as how she recently taught a young group of students who could quote from Derrida, Lacan and Žižek, but knew nothing about Ceszlaw Milosz or Mikhail Bulgakov. See Dubravka Ugrešić, 'Novi Barbari' <http://www.pescanik.net/content/view/3542/145/>[accessed 20 September 2009]. Available in English as 'Rebranding the Footnotes' at <http://www.thedrawbridge.org.uk/issue_8/rebranding_the_footnotes/>[accessed 05 January 2010].

> Because soon the minefields will be covered in grass, new houses will spring up on top of the ruins, everything will be grown over, it will disappear and shift once again into dream, story, fortune-tellers' prophecies. Firm borders will be established once again between the existing and dream worlds. It is true that there will be people left, witnesses, who will not acknowledge those boundaries, evoking their nightmare experience as proof of what occurred, but few will listen to them, and then with time they too will be covered over by grass.[38]

Ugrešić's poignant observations reverberate powerfully if we consider them in the context of generational changes, generations as transmitters of memory, and the past as a foundation of belonging which all the writers in this thesis address. I shall return to these issues of generational forgetting and the layering of foundations in the last section of this chapter.

It is not surprising that a successful management of pain in mourning is often expressed in the metaphors of rebuilding – of oneself or of a community. Insisting rather on melancholic attachments, Ugrešić takes up Bhabha's ethical concerns with what happens when historical visibility has faded and asks what might be the implications of such a management of the past, or of collective denial of the past, for the post-war and future generations, the children of survivors and perpetrators, who inherit a legacy of unmourned traumas.[39] In her essays, she also keeps returning to the questions of building foundations on the ruins and asks what might be at stake if threads that connect survivors to the victims and future generations to the previous, are buried. As she states in one of her essays, 'what is being built upon the ruins is the new truth, the one that will one day be the only memory'.[40] Of course, Ugrešić is pointing to post-Yugoslav nationalist revisions and the refashioning of history and it is this hegemonic version of the past that still remains dominant. How future post-Yugoslav generations position themselves in relation to the past and towards what they are (not) told about the legacy of the war both from their parents and from 'the nation' remains a matter of utmost ethical and political importance.

Scholars who study memory point out that it was invented after a catastrophe, when the roof of a house collapsed killing most of the people at a banquet. An

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[38] Ugrešić, *The Museum of Unconditional Surrender*, p.204
[39] I refer here to Eric Santner's illuminating discussion of the inability of postwar German society to confront the Nazi past in the years after the war and the tasks of mourning in subsequent generations. See Eric L. Santner, *Stranded Objects: Mourning, Memory, and Film in Postwar Germany* (Cornell University Press, 1993), pp.1-32.
[40] Ugrešić, *The Culture of Lies*, p.70.

ancient Greek poet, Simonides, witnessed this tragic event and his remembering of the exact locations where people were seated helped identify the deceased and thus the art of memory was born.[41] When Tanja initiates *Yugonostalgic* remembering, she sets herself a task: 'the house was in ruins, and it was my job to clear a path through the rubble' (p.40). This may suggest a reading of her character as a metaphor of contemporary Simonides, however I want to suggest that a different figure might better describe Ugrešić's work of remembering. We can read Tanja's character as a *Trümmerfrau* figure.[42] The main task of the *Trümmerfrauen*, or 'rubble women', was to clear up the ruins and rubble heaps of bombed-out German cities in the aftermath of World War II, a task that most often involved difficult manual labour and the sorting of usable bricks and material for use in the construction of new buildings. The employment of this metaphor may symbolically suggest a difficult work of working through the rubble after the disaster – the work of mourning. But if women have been traditionally thought to show and perform the signs of mourning, collective mourning could be then discussed as a gendered cultural practice that should perform a renewal of a community and heal the national body. Certainly being aware of the manipulation with this 'women's work' and with women's bodies during the war in Yugoslavia, Ugrešić does not make her character take on the role of collective mourning.[43]

Instead, by making Tanja a melancholic *Trümmerfrau* and in *keeping the wound open*, Ugrešić's novel struggles to find ways to write the post-Yugoslav *disaster* which is evocative of Maurice Blanchot's ethics.[44] In evoking a disaster that weighs down on nostalgic remembering, the unhomely in the novel continues to haunt as Blanchot's gaping reminder – 'what remains without remains'.[45] This is not only about bearing witness to 'anonymous human flesh' that 'has served in the battle for territorial, national and state designs'[46] which the novel evokes through the mute cries of the victims, such as Selim's father's death in Omarska concentration camp,

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[41] See Petar Ramadanović, 'Simonides on the Balkans', in *Balkan as Metaphor*, pp.351-365.

[42] References to the '*Trümmerfrau*' can found in her previous essays 'The ABCs of Exile', in *The Suitcase: Refugee Voices from Bosnia and Croatia*, ed. by Julie Mertus and others (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p.198, and in *The Culture of Lies*, p.250.

[43] See especially the work of Women in Black in Belgrade who by wearing black as a traditional sign of mourning protested against the war and Milošević's regime in a silent vigil. Women in Black still continue their silent vigils around the world. See <http://www.zeneucrnom.org/index.php?lang=en.> [accessed 12 March 2006].

[44] See Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986).

[45] Ibid. p.33.

[46] Ugrešić, *The Culture of Lies*, p.194.

but is also, more widely, about writing *as remembering* and writing for the other. The novel's staging of the post-Yugoslav unhomely and its weaving of the events that are both inside and outside the text, brings us back to Bhabha's difficult ethical and political questions expressed in the need 'to fully realize, and take responsibility for, the unspoken, unrepresented pasts that haunt the historical present'.[47]

The novel seems to be distrustful of the role of institutions to bring restorative justice to the war victims and the war dead. The descriptions of Tanja and Igor's visit to the Hague International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia suggest that the tribunal functions in a way that is far from cathartic. As they watch the trial of Uroš's father who was involved in mass killings and torture during the war, Tanja wonders:

> I sat facing the glass and musing ...what would happen, I wondered, if all that pain came together in the feeble mind of an Oskar Matzerath and he [...] opened out his mouth and let out a scream [...] I pictured that piercing, ear-splitting voice [...] sending all the heads of all the blood-drenched murderers flying through the air, bursting their hardened eardrums and callous hearts...(pp.140-141)

The novel expresses the impossibility – not only for law courts but perhaps even for writing – ever to fully do justice to such pain. Indeed, writing fails and only the scream remains.[48]

Ugrešić's novel struggles to find ways to write the post-Yugoslav *disaster*. It is a writing that in the very act of writing acknowledges its own disaster and its limits, but which nevertheless in that impossibility creates witnessing that will enable other witnessing. In one of her essays, Ugrešić reflects on these difficult questions – 'everything that the author has written is just a footnote to the long list of names of people who have lost their lives, families, friends, homes or the homeland which was until recently shared, a footnote to the texts written by the warlords'.[49] In *The Ministry of Pain*, through a repeated conflation of remembering and forgetting, melancholia and mourning, Ugrešić leaves an unfinished and precarious testimony that even a book can be a fragile witness, capable of being burned altogether like so many were during the war. Repeated remembering can constitute the act of

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[47] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p.18.
[48] Oskar Matzerath is the main character of Gunter Grass's *The Tin Drum*. His scream has power to break glass.
[49] Ugrešić, *The Culture of Lies*, p.191.

witnessing, but it can also make us *tremble* to the possibility of a disaster that would render pain as 'speechless, useless and only true witness' (p.140) as Tanja remarks. Ugrešić's narrative then imaginatively struggles to find ways that the disaster does not 'put people off' (p.119). There is a constant threat that the ruins might become 'covered by indifferent grass'.[50]

Towards the end of the novel, Tanja and Igor's need for human flesh to put out the pain (p.136) brings them together. Grief is here expressed by the tenderness of the touch of another. Tanja works as a babysitter, Igor as a builder, and, interestingly, it is Igor who is trying to perform that task of symbolic rebuilding 'that by the sweat of his brow he is restoring a certain equilibrium, that for every wall he builds here one will rise out of the ruins there'(p.249). Tanja is the one who remains haunted by nightmares of a house floating and dangling in the air (pp.213-4), although she manages to run out of it before it collapses. She is not only a survivor, someone who did not witness the disaster firsthand as some of her students have, but also a heroine of Ugrešić's exilic narrative which is fundamentally a story of survivors and of those who are far from the ruins. Tanja is not a translator who will perform the work of mourning and Ugrešić, in refusing to generalise or romanticise the condition of exile, expresses her doubts in the exilic narrative as such. After all, Tanja is not among the ruins, but in the Dutch clearing. She remains a melancholic *Trümmerfrau*, an embodied memory of present and absent bodies, the figure of the 'mourner-survivor'.[51] But just as Ugrešić is not a lonely *Trümmerfrau* writing 'on the rubble' of the post-Yugoslav disaster, the novel offers a possibility of alternative remembering and witnessing. At the end of the novel Tanja remains to shape the pain with words, which are poignantly expressed in the long list of Slavic curses with which the novel ends. These curses (taking more than 3 pages) uncanilly reflect the long list of named and still nameless victims and at the same time remind us of Oskar Matzerah's scream. The performative of Tanja's curse releases unhomely potential in that it embodies witnessing and the victim, in order to haunt all those who do not want to *hear*. This ethical demand expressed in Tanja's Balkan litany can only be told in a forked tongue. She posts her 'sounds' on a Dutch sandy beach *to the nameless* like a message in a bottle' (p.251, emphasis added) – the nameless that continue to haunt beyond the pages.

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[50] Ugrešić, 'The ABCs of Exile', p.203.
[51] Santner, *Stranded Objects*, p.9.

3. Gifts for the Future: Goldsworthy's (M)other's Gift and Smith's Unburdened Future

In *Chernobyl Strawberries*, Goldsworthy is 'haunted by the memories of the vanished socialist world' whose 'uninvited fragments [...] float before [her] eyes [and] manage to be vivid and melancholy at the same time' (p.259). Goldsworthy's creative engagement with the Yugoslav remains of her childhood and youth evokes Svetlana Boym's notion of reflective nostalgia which 'cherishes shattered fragments of memory and temporalises space'.[52] The terrain of Goldsworthy's reflective nostalgia, as with Ugrešić, is the specific form of *Yugonostalgia* as well as the post-1989 Eastern European cultural landscape in ruins. Writing an account 'about individual and cultural memory', Goldsworthy in her memoir 'savours details' and 'pieces' of the lost Yugoslav everyday, 'perpetually deferring homecoming'.[53] As she has recently put it – 'I concede that I may well be on a lifelong journey to the point of departure'.[54] According to Boym, 'the defamiliarization and a sense of distance' drives reflective nostalgics to 'tell their story, to narrate the relationship between past, present and future',[55] and for Goldsworthy, it is physical distance of 2000 miles and a temporal distance of twenty years. At the same time, a realisation that Yugoslavia was for many people 'an ugly, doomed place' (p.238), prompts her to negotiate her relationship to the 'home' in ruins, and to piece together the fragments of personal and collective 'belongings' and account for their transformation, disintegration and loss.

Boym suggests that for reflective nostalgics 'the past is not made in the image of the present or seen as foreboding of some present disaster' but that the past 'opens up a multitude of potentialities, nonteleological possibilities of historical development'.[56] But Goldsworthy is also writing under personal disaster that befell her in 2003 as well as under the effects of collective disaster that engulfed Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Indeed, the title 'Chernobyl Strawberries' might at first suggest the 1986 Chernobyl disaster as a possible cause of her cancer, but it may as well be a random point of departure or simply the year when she left Yugoslavia to

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[52] See Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, p.49.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Vesna Goldsworthy on '*East Looks West*', a speech at the launch of the '*East Looks West*' volumes, UCL, 22 October 2009 <http://www.ssees.ucl.ac.uk/Goldsworthy.pdf>[accessed 10 December 2009].
[55] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, p.50.
[56] Ibid., p.50.

join her husband in England. At the beginning of her memoir, Goldsworthy wonders about those 'what ifs'. However, her exploration of the trajectories of her personal choices and of roads taken and not taken, does not attempt to convey some sense of causality between personal and collective history, rather it attempts to imaginatively open up her relationship and (un)belonging to pre- and post-1989 Eastern Europe and Yugoslavia, and to Britain. We might be led to think that the 'poor old Atropos, [would be] destined to live under the sign of Cancer and left to measure her days in strands of falling hair' (p.19), but Goldsworthy succeeds in breaking from the grip of illness, weaving instead memories and stories of personal and collective history and creating webs of connectedness across her multiple belongings. The memoir first came into being as a story for her son and was written under the threat of loss of memory in the sense that Goldsworthy as a transmitter of memory and as a maternal figure might not be present. By reconstructing several maternal and paternal generational stories and snapshots from her life, she creates precarious threads between the past and the future.

A sense of multiple positionings is evoked in the memoir. Goldsworthy writes as a Yugoslav/Serbian-Montenegrin/British woman, from an 'in-between' position (discussed in Chapter 4), as well as a (M)other – that is, as a Balkan/Eastern European 'Other' (discussed in Chapters 2 and 4) and as a mother. As she feared the worst, the story of her life was a necessary gift for her son who was only two at the time. The bracketing metaphor of the '(M)other' works as a threshold that would connect him to her and her place of birth that she felt could seem to him exotic, distant and not much beyond stereotypical media representations, if he was to grow up without her. At the same time, Goldsworthy, as an academic life-writer, invests the memoir with a double task which can be traced in the subtle critique of the Western imperializing gaze towards the 'Wild Balkans' discussed in the previous chapters. Goldsworthy's strategic self-othering in the memoir and her critical insiderness – 'almost English' and 'foreign but not quite' (p.150) that are in an infinite, often humorous conversation – can be read in a dialogue with her academic study *Inventing Ruritania*. In this sense, Goldsworthy uses life-writing as a critical practice and the memoir thus displays ironic and humorous features of reflective nostalgia which, according to Boym, does not oppose longing and critical thinking.[57]

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[57] Boym, pp. 49-50.

Finally, in the light of recent work in life-writing, Goldsworthy uses the genre as a vehicle for exploring 'the self-reflective process of memory and remembering'.[58]

Stressing in the *Afterword* that this memoir is an imprint of individual memory 'written from a slowly shifting vantage point in the flow of the experience it describes' (p.286), Goldsworthy organises the memoir in a Woolfian manner with a non-linear narration and associative principle. Indeed, the terrain of Goldsworthy's memoir is everyday, personal memories. But she is also writing in a particular context (post-Yugoslav, post-1989) and at the same time has the task of unburdening the memoir from potential associations of the genre with the dissident memoir or as an 'expert' account of the Yugoslav war. Her emphasis in the *Afterword* that this is the way she remembers her past (p.287) as well as at the beginning – when she states that she 'was no Russian dissident [...] [and] didn't escape to the West under a train' (p.3) – suggest that Goldsworthy, as an academic life-writer, is well aware of these associations. She thus clearly distances herself from traditional expectations of Eastern European memoir–as–testimony and the witnessing of 'big' historical events writing early on that one will rarely find there the images from Nabokov's *Speak, Memory* or Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* (p.3). Instead, she tells us, that she was a 'spoilt child of communism' (p.217) belonging to that 'spoilt generation' of 'the pre-1989-ers' (p.56) who grew up under 'a strange mixture of liberalism and restriction' (p.143) of Yugoslavia's soft socialism.

Working through the ideology of the 'brighter tomorrow' under which she grew up (p.260), Goldsworthy criss-crosses the foundations of her childhood to ask 'how could something that seemed so solid perish so easily?' (p.4). At the same time, her recreation of 'happy' images of Yugoslav socialism in comically rendered episodes filled with references to Titoist ideology – such as her performing at one of Tito's posthumous birthdays and her own brief membership of the Communist party – may be read as alternative memories of the communist past. In other words, her memories offer an insight into the lived embodiment of this particular historical and autobiographical subject and disturb the image of communism in the Western imagination as generalised images of torture and hard dictatorships. As she admits, the only conflict she ever had with the Communist power machine was an argument with Yugoslav customs officers about trying to 'smuggle' some Western records she had bought in Paris (p.4). We also find out that her communism was, in fact, a

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[58] Susheila Nasta, 'Editorial', *Wasafiri*, 21, 2 (2006), p. 1.

product of 'Hollywood fantasy in which tall men and slim bookish women argued passionately and [...] printed illegal leaflets on small presses hidden in back rooms' (p.68).

By contrasting Yugoslavia's relative openness to the West and the mobility of Yugoslav citizens who, like Goldsworthy's generation, could travel proudly and freely with their 'red' Yugoslav passport, with the countries 'belonging' to the Soviet bloc – the Iron Curtain proper – Goldsworthy provides an intimate account of the transformations of personal and collective belonging before and after 1989. Shifting backwards and forward in time, she revisits the 'golden age' of Yugoslav socialism in the 1960s and 1970s Belgrade where her family lived a comfortable middle-class life, as well as her carefree youth and the foundations of her 'communist' education that have all played a part in the construction of her middle-class, Yugoslav difference. Ruins and images of a slowly decaying system are there too, captured in a vivid reconstruction of the everyday and the changing East European landscape – from empty shops she notices during her visit to the Eastern bloc Bulgaria in 1984, Yugoslavia's economic decline in the 1980s and to her and her husband's visit to post–revolutionary Romania in the winter of the 1990s and to the streets of Bucharest still fresh with 'smouldering ruins', 'sniper killings' and 'flags with the communist star cut out' (p.236). Juxtaposing the ways in which 'new' European foundations have been laid by tearing down walls and 'curtains' after 1989 with Yugoslavia's disastrous investment in the creation of new borders soon after, Goldsworthy explores how these two trajectories intersect with her own – her departure from Yugoslavia and arrival in England in 1986. That is, she negotiates a tension between the personal memories of belonging to the Yugoslav and Eastern European cultural space through familial and other affective ties, and the burden of belonging to what Yugoslavia is to become during the war, bringing a burden of belonging.

Goldsworthy returns to the ruins once more, but this time to her native Belgrade and to the rubble of the bombed city during the NATO bombing in 1999. She accompanies a British journalist and works as an interpreter, but unlike numerous Western journalistic, sensational explanations of the 'Balkan' war, Goldsworthy reveals that she has no 'story' to tell. As suggested in previous chapters, remembering Yugoslavia in her memoir represents a need for the survival of personal memory under the weight of a difficult collective history. At the same time, it cannot be separated from her witnessing of the way the Balkans were

represented in the West and her need to re-imagine them. Indeed, Goldsworthy also tries to create an empowering and positive image of the Balkan cultural space, particularly through her reconstruction of several paternal and maternal generational stories. This is the most interesting creative aspect of her melancholic re-membering as well as evidence that, for Goldsworthy, memory is relational and generative – it is an account for another and it has a role in creating shared spaces and generational connections. Inspired by a personal crisis to enter into a dialogue with her past as a gift for her son, Goldsworthy realises that 'the world I came from would seem as exotic and distant to him as accounts of nineteenth-century explorations of the source of the Nile' (p.280). She also notes that her son's English ancestry is well documented, while no such record of his Balkan ancestry would be available to him. This is because Goldsworthy's 'Balkan' ancestors kept little in writing or 'owned barely anything that was older than [them]' as a result of past, and often forced, migrations, and also because Goldsworthy's recent move to England contributed to the lack of such material inheritance – she brought only a few suitcases when she moved to England (p.281). By writing about her ancestry, she secures a place among the family memoirs, paintings and letters of her son's English paternal ancestors and so creates an alternative maternal inheritance. This is complemented by the insertion of numerous photographs of Goldsworthy's maternal and paternal family.

Reversing the stereotype that she comes 'from a nation of inhabitants of history, supposed to dwell upon medieval conflicts as if they are still raging' (p.17) allows Goldsworthy to reconstruct several family histories – some through historical evidence and stories transmitted to her within her family, and others through imagination. She locates earlier generations at the crossroads of empires that have deeply marked the Balkan region – for example, by telling stories of her grandparents who managed to 'live and die in a number of different kingdoms and empires' without actually moving (p.9). A celebration of her ancestral roots is beautifully evoked when she tries to trace the origins of her maiden surname Bjelogrlić (p.32) by imagining the routes her ancestral mother – 'White Throat' – might have taken. Goldsworthy brings to life unexpected connections to Montenegro and Herzegovina of the Ottoman Empire and immortalises some of the social conventions of those times, especially through the lively character of her Montenegrin paternal grandmother, whom she calls a 'Christian Orthodox Scheherazade' (p.33) and whose stories maintain a 'vivid link with the nineteenth-

century Ottoman Balkans' (p.35). The stories of these women are some of the most interesting in the memoir and it is here that Goldsworthy's exploration of the associative process of memory works best. It is often through a single image that Goldsworthy is able to posit other unexpected juxtapositions. So, for example, while the memories of her paternal grandmother's passion for reciting epic poetry are told with love, at the same time they reveal sadness at her maternal grandmother's illiteracy, when education was considered unnecessary for women. By remembering her past, Goldsworthy experiences both 'a sense of reunion' with her multiple belonging and 'a sense of release'[59] and healing. Coming to terms with her scarred body and the war-scarred country, Goldsworthy concludes that 'she can no more escape the world she is coming from – her flawed East European self – than [she] can slip through the rain and out of the London hospital room' (pp.257-8). The forging of familial, generational connections makes her realise that she is:

> [...] scarred by the evaporation of the communist empire just as much as Grandpa was by the fall of the Habsburgs. He was twenty-four when the dual monarchy collapsed, I was twenty-eight when the crowds first danced on the wall in Berlin' (p.258)

Goldsworthy's son Alexander was born in 2000, in the new century, but it remains to be seen whether he will carry the past into the future or whether these connections will be lost with her son's generation.[60] Goldsworthy's is perhaps aware of this precarious work of passing down stories over the generations and so her story remains a gift that does not impose the genealogical burden.

The concern with generational remembering is also present in *White Teeth*. The novel explores whether, and to what extent, the past can act as a foundation of belonging, particularly for the new, British-born generation who are temporally removed from the parental histories of loss and earlier historical injustices. In *White Teeth*, the question of what constitutes foundations of belonging oscillates between the old generation's (not) passing down stories to the next and the new generation's desire for a 'clean slate' on which to build their own sense of belonging: between the past as tradition and the past as a burden, between unjust foundations of the past and the desire to find neutral spaces in the present whitewashed of this past. The novel

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[59] bell hooks, 'Writing Autobiography', in *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader*, p.431.
[60] For a discussion of the necessity of 'burdensome citizenship' for the generations who matured in Serbia during and after the wars of the 1990s, see Daša Duhaček's essay, 'Teaching Responsibility: Forging Citizenship' <http://www.travellingconcepts.net/duhacek1.html>[accessed 2 October 2008].

does not offer easy resolutions of these conflicts. As suggested in the opening of this chapter, Samad's repeated retelling of the story of his imaginary ancestor Mangal Pande is boring for the new generation (p.226) who has no ear nor patience to listen to them, just like no one in the London of 1974 wanted to hear Archie's stories from World War Two anymore (p.17). Though Samad engages in postcolonial reconstruction and reclaiming of history by visiting Cambridge University library to finally find written evidence of Pande's contribution to '*laying of foundations of the Independence*' (emphasis original, p.259), it seems that this 'alternative' history is no longer useful in understanding the present – it has been consigned to the dusty heap of library books. And it seems that it only remains useful for assuaging the migrant's sense of unbelonging.

Indeed, the last section of the novel seems to suggest that Millat is to provide a new attitude towards these unjust histories by departing from the 'need for library books and debates about reconstruction' (p.506) and diverging from his father's relationship with his ancestor. This is also evoked in the titles of last sections –'The End of History', 'Final Space', 'Of Mice and Memory'. On their way to the 'FutureMouse' exhibition, Millat and his fellow members of 'KEVIN' pass through Trafalgar Square where they are faced with four monumental statues of Nelson, Havelock, Napier and George IV. Having found himself between Havelock's dominant gaze and a nearby bench on to which Samad carved his name years ago, Millat gets a desire to 'turn that history around' and make sure that there would be 'no misspelling *his* name in the history books' (p.506). Yet, we are left unclear of what this strategy would involve – not only because he is stoned, but also, as the narrator intrudes, Millat '*liked* to think he had a different [...] second generation attitude' (p.506, my emphasis). Millat seems to be ashamed of Samad. The statues who 'look to their future to forget the past' (p.504), may be all that is left of Empire, but to Millat, Havelock's statue towering over the square appears to be a dominant and triumphant figure of the Indian Mutiny of 1857. Standing in the polished square between the statues and his father's feeble mark on the bench, Millat realises that neither is there such a monument celebrating Pande (who remains a marginal figure), let alone one of the contribution made by immigrants to British culture. Millat however, does not pursue the latter connection and Samad remains an immigrant nobody to him. Standing in the midst of a painful lesson of unequal histories, what

Millat perhaps does not realise is that he is also occupying a public space of protest.[61] In this sense, his 'second-generation' rage is more similar to his father's than he would like to think. The difference is that Millat's rage is voiced louder as exemplified in his desire to write his name bigger, but there is again no one there to listen. His limited agency and rage later erupts into violence, but Smith defuses it.[62]

So not only has generational transmission of affect (Brennan, 2004) failed in the novel, but it seems that the official history and education have also failed to play a role in providing 'new' generations with a more positive sense of belonging. This is particularly evident in Irie's encounter with Shakespeare's Sonnet 127 – 'In the old age black was not counted fair' – in which she thinks, for a moment, that she 'had seen something like a reflection, but it was receding' (p.272). She is famously told by her teacher that there were no 'Afro-Carri-bee-yans in England at that time' (p.271) and neither does Irie possess a greater knowledge of her family's black history. The school's educational system is built upon historical amnesia, while 'the parental generation' seems to have failed 'to elaborate a scrupulous strategy of "counter-memory"' in the British generations 'to connect the past with the present within a critical nexus'.[63] Interestingly, almost all the characters in Smith's novel suffer from a series of mis-educations and the novel questions the productivity of the past as a resource to reconsider the present. For Irie's grandmother Hortense, who was born during the 1907 Jamaican earthquake, 'de past is done wid. Nobody learn nuttin' from it' (p.410). But Hortense's Jehovah's Witness belief that the earthquake is to erase everything once more in the new millennium is, ironically, a remnant of colonial education 'passed as if by osmosis into Hortense's soul' (p.359) by her mother Ambrosia who was impregnated and 'educated' by English Captain Charlie Durham. While Irie's mother Clara breaks free from Hortense and the Jehovah's Witnesses, which is metaphorically enacted in a scooter accident where Clara loses her front teeth, Irie returns to excavate these genealogical layers. It seems that Clara is more successful in making sense of the past – we are informed that she attends

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[61] Today Trafalgar Square is used for demonstrations as well as celebrations.
[62] This scene at Trafalgar Square uncannily reminds us of the crowds who celebrated the 2010 Olympic Games bid decision at Trafalgar Square on 6th July 2005 and the London bombing that followed on July 7th.
[63] R. Radhakrishnan, 'Adjudicating Hybridity, Co-ordinating Betweenness', *Jouvert: a Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 5, 1 (2000) <http://english.chass.ncsu.edu/jouvert/v5i1/radha.htm>[accessed 6 May 2008].

night courses at a red-brick university, with titles such as 'British Imperialism 1765 to the Present' and 'Black Feminism', but she does not seem to share this knowledge with her daughter and this information is just left unexplored, as is her character. Irie's wish to become a dentist suggests the need to get to the 'roots canals' as well as the pulling out of genealogical roots. Using various teeth metaphors, the novel oscillates between severing and connection, remembering and obliteration.

Irie's search for roots happens in South London, in her grandmother's house. Rummaging through her grandmother's belongings, Irie comes across birth certificates, army reports, news articles and puts 'an X on everything she found, collecting bits and bobs [...] and storing them under sofa, so that as if by osmosis the richness of them would pass through the fabric while she was sleeping and seep right into her' (p.400). The use of the same metaphor of osmosis is here ironic as Irie never fully finds out how the white English line permeated her maternal family history. This is partly because of 'the Jones/Bowden gift for secret histories, stories you never got told, history you never entirely uncovered' (p.379), which is what is passed on to Irie and because she has no knowledge of 'alternative' histories to be able to draw connections to colonial history. What Irie absorbs out of the items she comes across is only a fading, but for her nevertheless intoxicating, smell of tobacco, plantain and sugar, with no presence of the histories of exploitation that stands behind these items – the histories that are embedded in London's foundations. So when she finds the photos of her great-grandmother Ambrosia and of 'Charlie "Whitey" Durham standing in a pile of rubble with a sepia-print sea behind him' (p.399), Irie is left to forge a romantic image of a place where 'a young white captain could meet a young black girl with no complications, both of them fresh and untainted and without past or dictated future – a place where things simply *were*. No fictions, no myths, no lies, no tangled webs' (p.402). In this sense, Irie's act of collecting these bits and bobs does not result in a creative practice of post-memory, of recovering and making sense of personal and collective past like in Evaristo, but instead contributes to whitewashing and burying of the past. After all, Irie's reflections are directed towards the future, not the past.

Indeed, the novel strives to find a neutral space, new foundations where things can start anew for future generations (Irie hopes her girl would not be preoccupied with a search for belonging) as much as it tries to unburden the British 'second-generations' and remove them from retrospection on the past. Irie looks

forward to 'a time not far from now, when roots won't matter any more because they can't because they mustn't because they're too long and they're too tortuous and they're just buried too damn deep' (p.527). As we have seen, this generation has their own terms of processing the past and negotiating their position in the present. Their sense of belonging seems to depend only partly on their parents' stories and hidden family histories, and more on global youth culture. Irie's bedroom, we are told, looks like a shrine of Hollywood idols (p.328), while Millat listens to 'Public Enemy' all the time (suggesting a possible forging of new black alliances) and wishes his father was akin to a figure from the American gangster film *The Godfather*. This then suggest that the British-born generation does not suffer from trauma due to the lack of alternative histories and not passing down of stories. Indeed, the only one who still seems to think so is Joyce who worries that Millat and Magid have been split by their cultures. But as Irie interjects, she is not sure which is worse – 'pulling together or tearing apart' (p.435). Yet it is also worrying that the British generation has only very few remaining foundations of belonging – global, imperialising US culture. Though 'burying' of roots is presented as having a liberating potential for these generations, the underlying problematic implications of this are that such 'forgetting' also creates uncritical and de-politicised individuals. Irie's wish to spend a gap year in Africa seems like an adventure and may suggest that Irie has also become a privileged Western subject.

At the same time, the novel's untainted vision of the future is strained under the weight of London's foundations. When Clara and Joyce set up a meeting for Magid and Millat, they arrange it to take place at Clara's red-brick university which is 'built on empty waste land' with 'no Indian burial grounds, no Roman viaducts [...] no foundations of a long–gone church. Just earth.' (p.458). Yet, when the brothers meet, they manage to 'cover the room with history – past, present and future history (for there is such a thing) – [...] take what was blank and smear it with the stinking shit of the past like excitable, excremental children' (p.464). The narrator ponders on the difficulty of finding such neutral places sanitised from the past – 'the sheer *quantity* of shit that must be wiped off if we are to start again as new. Race. Land. Ownership. Faith. Theft. Blood' – and concludes that 'there are no people or places like that left in North London' (p.457). Irie's, Millat's and Magid's school in Willesden – Glenard Oak – may look like a colourful multicultural playground in the 1990s, but they are unaware that its foundations hide some 300 Jamaicans brought

over to England by Sir Glenard to be 'taught' English work ethic and to continue packaging cigarettes for his tobacco business or of his connection to Irie's great-grandmother.[64] In the school booklet, Glenard remains recorded as a Victorian philanthropist and a benefactor, and his history as a successful tobacco plantation owner in colonial Jamaica seems to be neatly erased. A reconstruction of Glenard's colonial roots is, however, made by the narrator, who thus technically strives to unburden future generations by safely removing these difficult histories.

Yet, by continuing to evoke such historical silences and the presence of earlier foundations in the present, the narrator seems to be at the same time aware of many other similar layers and the possible ethical implications of building 'new' forms of belonging upon these layers. That the present constructed on the previous ruins and losses is already unjust is evident in the school's construction of its history. This concern with foundations echoes Ugrešić's reflections on the ruins being covered by 'indifferent grass', however, in the context of post-war, post-Yugoslav generations, this has a much stronger resonance than for Smith's generations who are temporally and spatially removed from earlier historical ruptures. The novel imagines a hopeful vision of a future, but its vision remains caught between the notions of release and control of the past.[65] Even in the novel's grand finale, the consequences of uncritical, sanitised and disinterested versions of the past and present are made obvious. The space at the Institute where the mouse is to be displayed only appears to be neutral because it is sterilized every day by 'a Nigerian cleaning lady with an industrial Hoover and guarded through the night by Mr De Winter, a Polish night watchman' (p.518) who now 'maintain' London's foundations. By juxtaposing these surfaces of the present with two versions of the future – Marcus's idea of the perfectly controlled future as a bright 'place where we did things right' (p.422) and allowing the mouse to escape its genetically programmed future – the novel leaves the fate of the future (to use the novel's much exploited term) deliberately unsettled and unresolved. It will be continually negotiated in the messy London space formed of layers of multiple migrations and settlement.

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[64] Glenard is killed in the Jamaican earthquake when he tries to rape Ambrosia. Hortense is born immediately after.

[65] As discussed in Chapter 2, this is also evident in the scene where the narrator offers a romantic image of the future – Irie and Joshua sititng by a Caribbean sea with Hortense and Irie's girl – and counters it at the same time.

By engaging with past remains and evoking them in the present, all four writers anticipate and imagine belonging in/for the future. Goldsworthy's and Smith's concern is with the generational imagining of a better future for their children as well as about the need for new foundations of belonging, healing and release from history. Writing about entangled routes and roots, they both attend to what is lost from one layer to another, from one generation to another, showing the precariousness of the past as a source of belonging and whose foundations may loosen and crumble with the passage of time and generations. For Ugrešić and Evaristo, future belonging cannot be imagined without 'memory, without reading the traces of the past'[66] and their narratives point to ethical and political implications of building 'new' belongings upon earlier ruins. Their protagonists' memory rubble work serves as a reminder to the dominant culture that the grief and trauma of respective historical injustices have not and must not be overcome. In Ugrešić's and Evaristo's work, the future must be bestowed to the hands of those who have 'emerged from the ruins' and who imaginatively 'clear up the ruins'.[67] However, what all narratives have in common is their investment in the dialectic of remembering and forgetting – some attempt to bury unjust foundations, while for others, this is a process of a continual and critical engagement with the remains and that which has been relegated as 'belonging' to the past. Even though the engagement with loss and residues of the past takes a variety of forms, in all narratives 'looking forward' is inseparable from 'looking backward'. These oscillations create a space of (un)belonging – a residual space that articulates a 'difficulty of separating culturally particular articulations of the past from the dominant cultural institutions of the "present"'.[68]

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[66] Andreas Huyssen, *Twighlight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p.252.

[67] See Ugrešić, 'Nice People Don't Mention Such Things', in *The Culture of Lies*, pp.236-251.

[68] Hesse, *Un settled Multiclturalisms*, p.18.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

> After all, us black Britons, with our newer, particular take on citizenship, should
> have much to offer here that's useful to new others, or old ones remaking
> themselves...I feel a film coming on: a Pole, a black Briton and a Romany, a wry,
> human comedy; funds from the big paymaster that is the European Union...New
> coalitions, new self-identifications.[1]

This thesis has examined the transformation of the idea of belonging in post-1989 black British and post-Yugoslav narratives in the context of black British generations and 'old' and 'new' others. In order to discuss the oscillations between belonging and unbelonging in relation to the cultural-political changes, the thesis focused on four representative writers. The analysis of the writers' fictional and non-fictional narratives was underpinned by a selection of other theoretical and literary works. I began the thesis with an examination of a contentious representation of black British citizenship in Smith's and Evaristo's novels which demonstrated that citizenship does not guarantee the protagonists' belonging. Contrasting this discussion with the ways in which the loss of Yugoslav citizenship, as a previous 'guarantee of belonging', has affected Goldsworthy's and Ugrešić's narratives, the thesis began to unravel the construction of the concept of (un)belonging as oscillating between possession and loss in all narratives. By considering the significance of a politically and emotionally charged question 'Where are you from?' and the repetitive practices of 'hailing' belonging, I was able to trace the changing politics of hegemonic belonging, showing how it operates on particular bodies or 'differences' found on the body. The thesis has assessed the productivity of (un)belonging as a literary-critical concept for analysing cultural moments when belonging becomes precarious and 'inauthentic'. A comparative analysis of the racialised, migrant and 'Eastern European' body in these narratives was productive not only for examining the overlapping of 'visible' and 'audible' markers of belonging, but also for the transformation of hegemonic markers of belonging and

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[1] Diran Adebayo, 'Some thoughts on Barack, the African in him, and "Post-black"',
<http://www.theblessedmonkey.com> [accessed 3 January 2010].

the ways in which their residues continue to circulate in the present and stick to some bodies. In the black British and post-Yugoslav narratives I examined, the drama of (un)belonging is thus deliberately not resolved by the protagonists themselves because hegemonic reminders have not gone and because belonging is never simply the protagonists' personal affair, as, for example, the critique of the black British *Bildungsroman* has demonstrated.

As this study has shown, in these narratives engagement with (un)belonging cannot be separated from their engagement with the politics of hegemonic belonging in post-1989 British and post-Yugoslav context – the politics which remains steeped in unresolved histories of the nation, empire, 'race', 'ethnicity' and war. The discussion of Eastern European otherness in the British context has demonstrated how these histories are not resolved, but are displaced onto 'new' others. In this sense, (un)belonging in these narratives can be best viewed as a space of unresolved dialectic that challenges and haunts the very foundations on which hegemonic forms of belonging and history still rest. As a dialectic, (un)belonging does expose the workings of hegemonic belonging and the ways in which the protagonists are marked by the remains and residues of unresolved histories. However, the imaginative and critical significance of (un)belonging lies precisely in what is less a melancholic 'inability' in these narratives to resolve cultural/personal conflicts and more a melancholic obligation to resist neat resolution of conflicts and the translation of (un)belonging into a personal/'ethnic'/cultural issue. By attending to the ambivalent nature of belonging in these narratives through the lenses of recent theories of melancholia, the thesis has argued for the imaginative and political importance of (un)belonging as unresolved dialectic. It has thus offered new ways of reading post-1989 black British narratives and interrogated some previous, optimistic readings. It has also offered the very first discussion of Ugrešić's and Goldsworthy's narratives. The approaches to the narratives have been validated by the writers' own reflections, particularly evident in the interview with Evaristo that fed into the thesis. The research has benefited from an opportunity to discuss and test the arguments developed in this thesis with some of the writers themselves.

It was equally important to examine the relationship between belonging and the body because the discussion of the contentious question 'Where are you from?' has not only revealed how the body becomes a marker of (un)belonging, it has also opened up the histories of an uncanny declaration 'go back where you belong',

relating the body and belonging to the idea of space and 'home'. The bodies of immigrants in the *Ministry of Pain*, the migrant generation and racialised bodies in *Lara* and *White Teeth*, and Goldsworthy herself, all have a complicated relationship towards 'home' and pass through affective stages of not feeling at 'home'. Though Goldsworthy and Ugrešić have lost 'homes', and Evaristo's and Smith's British protagonists are at home (born 'here' but assumed to come from 'elsewhere'), the search for belonging and 'home' appears to be the point in which all the writers intersect. Through Freud's and Bhabha's notion of the unhomely, I examined the phenomenology of belonging and precarious constructions of attachments in these narratives to both real and imaginary places. I traced the constructions of 'phantom homes' – the shift in the versions of diasporic 'homes' and (un)belonging to the black diaspora in Evaristo's and Smith's narratives and Ugrešić's and Goldsworthy's use of the metaphors of a phantom limb to describe their uneasy relationship to their lost Yugoslav 'home'.

The discussion of belonging, the body, 'home' and movement was also useful for making critical interventions into the ways in which some of these narratives have been (mis)read. I extended Bhabha's concept of unhomely fictions to Ugrešić's narratives and her position as a writer during the war in Yugoslavia. I also drew attention to the ways in which the migrant becomes a useful figure for theorising the cultural and generational shifts in black British narratives. I questioned Smith's novel as a celebratory multicultural narrative, particularly in relation to its representation of the black British experience and belonging as secure. Locating the novel within the millennial optimism of 'Cool Britannia', I asked whether the novel was not cast as part of that celebration by the critics and reviewers who largely saw the book as a great progressive multicultural narrative. I discussed the appropriation of the novel by the critics to represent a particular version of multiculturalism, the straightening of Smith's look at a successful minority and the ways in which the novel came to belong to the nation. By contrasting the reception of *White Teeth* with the ways in which Evaristo's *Lara* was largely read as a personalised exploration of her 'diasporic heritage' or as a *Bildungsroman*, I have shown that such interpretations of both novels are implicated in glossing over the conflicts that these narratives uncover and their less celebratory aspects. I pointed out that as literary critics we need to be alert to problematic aspects of such interpretations which may also homogenise

earlier migrant narratives simply as passive narratives of loss and deprivation, without possibilities of resistance.

By providing examples of some recent symptomatic moments of belonging in British politics, I have suggested that (un)belonging as an analytical concept extends beyond literary representations and may be usefully applied to examine the transformation of hegemonic markers of 'difference' and constructions of belonging in film and media representations.

The sense of belonging and unbelonging arises out of particular contexts and conditions in black British and post-Yugoslav narratives. Nevertheless, what binds these narratives together, as the thesis has shown, are the ways in which they negotiate (un)belonging through loss and melancholic attachments. Throughout this study, I traced the emergence of racial and 'ethnic' melancholia by looking at the ways in which the protagonists/narrators transform the negativity of unbelonging into creative counter-strategies, as represented, for example, by Goldsworthy's strategies of looking back to counter Western representations of the Balkans. Goldsworthy's and Ugrešić's fictional and non-fictional narratives, beside exploring the shifts in belonging that came with the Yugoslav crisis, were particularly productive for examining what it means to become 'Eastern European' and/or 'Balkan' in the British and 'Western' European context.

In chapters four and five, I examined the performative and imaginative potential of (un)belonging through movement and memory. The discussion of the moments that prompt the protagonists on both voluntary and involuntary journeys, has demonstrated that these narratives question the very foundations on which social integration and self-formation is imagined to be achieved. These narratives should therefore not only be read as triumphant narratives of overcoming racial or 'ethnic' melancholia, but also for their interventions into the processes that produce both racial and national melancholia. Evaristo's and Ugrešić's creative engagement with ruins and remains of the past points to unjust foundations of the present, while Goldsworthy's and Smith's dialectic of generational remembering and forgetting tries to unburden new generations and re-imagine a better future.

While I have showed how (un)belonging can be understood as referring to a strategy of revealing the workings of hegemonic belonging and releasing various burdens, I was also careful not to reify (un)belonging as a progressive double-vision, or a 'third' category. Ugrešić's 'migrant flaneuse' and the '*Trümmerfrau*' figure and

Evaristo's 'soul tourists' and 'melancholic travellers' have certainly demonstrated creative and productive possibilities of (un)belonging, but I was also aware of the social, lived reality of (un)belonging and its multidimensionality reaching beyond the literary. Juxtaposing these progressive fictional representations with the writers' non-fictional observations on belonging (particularly Evaristo's and Ugrešić's 'LiteratureExpress' essays), provided a more complex picture of those moments when (un)belonging as a double vision fails and when it becomes productive. And indeed, for the writers as privileged subjects, it might no longer be appropriate – or necessary – to continue insisting on their (un)belonging. As Evaristo pointed out in the interview, she no longer feels marginalised and burdened by the labels that have trailed behind her writing. Smith was already 'belonging too much' when she arrived on the literary scene, and for both Smith and Goldsworthy, unbelonging might, in fact, even be a desirable position.[2] Ugrešić, though perhaps offering the most perceptive and challenging observations on (un)belonging thematically, has, out of all the writers, profited the least from (un)belonging in terms of the literary market. It was nevertheless useful to examine the writers' changing positionings and ways in which they have been read because they tell us about the contradictory and transformative nature of belonging.

Finally, the question that kept hovering over the thesis was whether these narratives offer new forms of belonging through the dialectic of (un)belonging. From what this study has found, the narratives do not offer the 'new coalitions' evoked in Diran Adebayo's hopeful statement with which I opened this conclusion. This is because the narratives I have examined are primarily concerned with disrupting hegemonic forms of belonging and because they arise out of the fragmentation of more inclusive collectivities and cultural shifts in post-1989 Eastern Europe and Britain. They mainly intervene in the domain of 'querying' rather than 'queering' of belonging. Though the narratives I examined often reveal the difficulty of forming more inclusive collective attachments and affiliations, they nevertheless do gesture towards potential new alliances and new belonging in the future. The emergence of diasporic solidarity in Ugrešić, her identification with 'ethnically inauthentic' authors and Evaristo's explorations of black presence and belonging to Europe, are some

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[2] See Zadie Smith's latest collection of essays *Changing my Mind* (2009) and the review by Boyd Tonkin, 'Comic relief: Zadie Smith's passion for British comedy', <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/comedy/features/comic-relief-zadie-smiths-passion-for-british-comedy-1823815.html> [accessed 20 November 2009].

examples. What these narratives importantly demonstrate is that a successful articulation of new belonging precisely depends on the intensity of residues of the past and the transformation of hegemonic belonging in the present. This was evident in Evaristo's reluctance to claim belonging fully to Europe in the interview, and safely locate her belonging to London. Without this understanding of the layered histories of determination there can be no potential for new forms of belonging, nor indeed, for Adebayo's new coalitions between a black Briton, a Romany and a Pole. At the moment, Adebayo's coalitions seem to be possible only in Britain, and more specifically, in London – the most multicultural metropolis in Europe. Adebayo's piece could only have been written now, in 2010. Similarly, Evaristo's inclusion of the Irish and German side of her family history in the new 2009 edition of *Lara* may also mark a new shift in the narratives of (un)belonging.

By examining black British and post-Yugoslav writers together, this thesis was written with the possibilities for these new coalitions in mind. Such coalitions, however, remain unpredictable, tense and precarious and cannot be based only on the alignment of uncommon strangeness. Indeed, how would the dynamics change if Adebayo's new formations are complicated further along other lines of belonging – for example, a middle-class black Briton, a Romany asylum seeker and a gay Pole? Narratives like these are just beginning to be written.[3]

By comparing black British and post-Yugoslav narratives, the thesis has not only introduced post-Yugoslav/Eastern European (un)belonging into contemporary British criticism, but it has also shown that black British literature with its long tradition of narratives of (un)belonging can be useful for theorising the contemporary Eastern European experience in the 'West'. By examining the two groups of writing, my aim was not to collapse or reify the two forms of cultural otherness, but to see what each can say to the other through an examination of the transformations of belonging and with a hope that the comparison does not end here or with these two literatures. While the study of Eastern Europe, despite engendering numerous 'postcolonial' studies in the last two decades, remains a marginalised and rarely discussed terrain in postcolonial studies, the thesis has hoped to show that new critical alliances might be beginning to take shape now when black British literature is also slowly moving away from postcolonial concerns. This is not to say that

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[3] But see for example a 2005 British film *Gypo* which features a lesbian Romany and also Helen Oyeyemi's *The Opposite House* (2007) for its representation of the friendship bewteen the characters Maja (a black Cuban Londoner) and Amy Eleni (a lesbian Cypriot Londoner).

postcolonial critical approaches are no longer relevant, but that, just as (un)belonging indicates a process and a dialectic, there might be a need for a new synthesis of critical approaches. In this sense, this study has made critical interventions in literary scholarship in terms of finding new ways to theorise the bodies that continue to be marked as Eastern European, raced and migrant. It has also advocated opening up of a rigorous and urgently needed discussion of new racisms and cycles of hatred towards various other 'strange' bodies that are today seen as unbelonging both throughout 'Eastern Europe' and the 'West'.

Appendix

Interview with Bernardine Evaristo
The Tricycle Theatre, London, 3 November 2009

Vedrana Velickovic: To mark the publication of *Lara*'s new edition, I would like to begin by asking if you could to reflect on how things have changed since then as it has been over 10 years since *Lara* was first published in 1997. Today, you are one of the most critically acclaimed writers in Britain, with 4 novels behind you, highly original and challenging both in terms of their themes and experiments with form, the fifth novel on its way, and numerous other achievements. Recently, you have also been awarded an MBE for being 'a major voice in the multicultural panorama of British literature'.[1]

Bernardine Evaristo: Well, *Lara* was published with a very small publisher and that was because I didn't send it anywhere else and I didn't understand how publishing industry worked, that who publishes you makes a difference to the reception of your work. So, the publishing house was tiny; it was new, they only ever published about maybe 5 or 6 books and it was a struggle to get reviews in the national newspapers for it. But I was able to, because I'm very resourceful, to go and do lots of readings from it and I was constantly hawking the book around. And, if I met anybody who was a critic, I would say to them – 'would you be interested in reviewing my book for whatever publication?'. So in the end, it did get critical attention, but it was mainly in the academic papers, some international papers and it got a couple of books of the year awards from national British newspapers. But it didn't get the kind of attention that my later book, *The Emperor's Babe*, got because it was with Penguin, and Penguin is just so well tapped into the publishing industry that with that book, all of a sudden, I was being reviewed everywhere – so that was a big difference. And I did lots of readings for *Lara* to promote the book so that also was something that I had to do at that time. What's interesting now that it has just been published a few days ago and I'm going to be reading from it for the next year or so to sort of build momentum, is that it does feel that there is more receptiveness to it, I have to say. There was a piece in the *Independent* on Friday, I don't know if you saw

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[1] <http://bevaristo.wordpress.com/about-me/> [accessed 30 October 2009].

it; it was talking about the movie of Andrea Levy's *Small Island* and referring to the British National Party Question Time debacle and then it was talking quite a lot about *Lara* and about having multiple heritage and how you can't unpick all those heritages. That was in the Boyd Tonkin's books column. That would have never happened 12 years ago because I just don't think there was the same conversation going on about race at that time or about being mixed-race. So this time around, it is Bloodaxe, which is a poetry publisher. That's a big difference because it will hopefully reach a poetry audience and they [Bloodaxe] are very big; they publish many, many books and have a loyal following. So I'm hoping that it will gain momentum in a way that it was harder to do 12 years ago, but you know, having said that, *Lara* did very well. I began to tour the world for the British Council on the back of *Lara* and it is a book that a lot of people who've read it really enjoyed and I felt very proud of it. So, in one way, it did well, but it wasn't like a big splash on the literature scene nor is it now either, but I'm hoping it will gain currency.

VV: Can you tell me more about what is new in *Lara*'s 2009 edition and how it came to be re-published?

BE: I've got into a lot more depth into the Irish and German side of my family history. A lot of it is imagined, but it is based on facts. So for example, with the original book, I was very interested in my father's ancestry because, to me, it was about discovering my blackness and understanding what it was like to be mixed race for myself – coming to terms with it when I wrote *Lara* originally. So although it went into both sides of my family history, the focus was really on my parents' marriage, my parents' childhood and then I went back 150 years into my father's ancestry – Brazilian ancestry. This time round, I discovered more about the German and Irish ancestry, so it is a more balanced book in a way because you've got my father's Nigerian-Brazilian ancestry and my mother's Irish and German ancestry. Actually, before I wrote the Irish and the German section, I researched my family history on ancestry.co.uk. So I was able to track, I think I've gone back about 200 years, through the names and it is a really arduous process – actually I enjoyed it – but it takes a lot of time. Ancestry.co.uk is amazing, you can go back a long time through birth, death, marriages and the census (the census didn't begin until about 1840 or something). I was able to discover my mother's great grandfather who was a

German called Louis who came to England in the 1860s and settled in Woolwich where I grew up and that was a complete discovery to all of the family. We knew there was a German, but we didn't know who he was. So I was able to track him up to his death, including his naturalization documents from the internet – they send it to you within a couple of hours. Then I had his census details, his children who were married, what job he did, when various people died and then eventually his death. In the First World War, his family shop, which was a bakery, was smashed in and my mother and I went to the archives in Greenwich and we found a newspaper cutting; in fact, the archivist found the newspaper cutting which was of the incident when his window was smashed in because there was anti-German sentiment in Britain in the First World War. So it was amazing; I tracked his family and his heritage down through ancestry.co.uk. I don't know where he came from in Germany or anything about Germany, but I do know about the movement of Germans to Britain at that time and he was part of that movement. Then I knew about the facts about his stay in the UK, where he lived and I went to see the house where he lived (it's still there) in Plumstead. But then to actually get the newspaper cuttings about the windows being smashed and to get this little record in the newspaper was amazing. My mother knew that there were some Germans and she knew that the windows were smashed in the First World War, but that's all she knew. And then on the Irish side, my mother's mother was half-Irish so I tracked then through the same records. But with both Louis the German and the Irish people who had come over, I had the dates and everything else, but the rest of it I make up, of course, because I don't know how they lived.

VV: That is really interesting, especially that ancestry.co.uk was a valuable resource for you to not only find out about the German and Irish part of your family history but also to use this as a resource for the novel. I'm wondering if you would have written *Lara* differently if you had such access to the Nigerian side of your family history, for example in form of written documents or other records, because, I presume, most of it is oral history.

BE: I would love that so much. That would be amazing, but it is never going to happen. There may be ways of tracking my father's father history because he was the Customs officer and I know that there aren't really records on the internet – I don't

think there are for Nigeria – but there might be archives that I could explore. But it would have been impossible for me to ask to do that. And if I could track my father's father and his father and their migration from Brasil and when they came and all the census details, I'd be so excited, but I just have to use my imagination.

VV: To go back once again to the time when *Lara* was first published – some reviews of the novel were only able to see it as an exploration of your personal diasporic heritage. Elsewhere, you have rightly protested against the 'burden of representation' and 'blind spots' of such readings. At the same time, a string of categories such as black British, multicultural, mixed-race, or post-colonial have trailed behind your writing. Is this luggage of identifications becoming lighter once literary mainstream is reached? Or do you feel we have reached the point when these labels are becoming redundant and one can finally be 'seen' just as a writer?

BE: Well, I don't think those labels are redundant yet and I question whether I've reached the literary mainstream. To me, I don't feel marginalised. My career has developed a lot since 1997; a lot of good things have happened, I published lots of books and I'm with a mainstream publisher. But even though that's the case – I get reviewed in the main papers and so on – I don't know, am I mainstream? There's a part of me that is not sure that I am, but what do you think, do you think I am?

VV: I would partly question whether you are part of it as well and I think it becomes complicated particularly because of the persistence of those labels. Also, the question is which British writers are considered part of literary mainstream today, who sets the criteria and what are those criteria.

BE: Yes, there is no centre as such, there are just lots of pockets of it, I suppose. But in terms of all the labelling, I don't really preoccupy myself with it except when the academics ask me about it (laughter), or when I do gigs and they say – are you a black writer or a black woman writer, a woman writer and those kinds of questions. That's the only time I really engage with it. But I have to accept that these labels exist, they can work for me – I got an MBE for being a voice in multicultural British literature. Now, if I wasn't that, would I have got an MBE? Because the fact is that the stories I have to tell are coming out of particular experiences and cultures, so it

kind of makes you stand out – because there aren't many of us – black British writers/novelists in this country. Actually, I don't know what the statistics are, but there aren't that many of us. So as I'm one of the few who has continued to publish over a period of time, it has brought attention to my work. But I don't really wear it as a burden and I respond to it differently at different situations. So when I'm in Nigeria, they say, 'are you a Nigerian writer?' and I say yes. They can call me that. I don't care really. I'm taught on postcolonial courses – I would never call myself a postcolonial writer, but I like the fact that I'm taught on those courses. Am I a Black writer? Yes, and that means Martin Amis is a white writer. Am I multicultural? Yes, I am, but this whole country is multicultural in many ways. So, it's complicated, but it's not an issue for me. I can leave it up to other people to preoccupy themselves with what I am.

VV: So while some black British, 'ethnic' or 'migrant' writing (to use these often inadequate terms) is still sadly read as 'belonging' and speaking only to a particular community, Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*, for example, was seen as 'belonging' to 'multicultural' Britain. Do you think new generations of black British writers (such as Diana Evans, Helen Oyeyemi, Lizzy Dijeh) are transcending these issues?

BE: Are they transcending them? Not really. They might like to think they are, but I don't think so. I think in this society, if you're considered to be black or mixed-race or whatever, you are 'marketly' different. Though I have to say there is a writer called Mike Gayle[2] – he's like a boy-lit writer. I've never read his work, but he's a black guy and he writes these very popular novels that, I think, tell very well about being a young man in today's society and, from what I understand, his characters are not racially specific, but when you see his picture on the cover, you know he's a black guy. He's somebody who doesn't really seem to address anything to do with race. But all the writers you're talking about, they're not talking about race, but they will have characters of colour in their books. So Diana Evans's new novel *The Wonder* is set in Notting Hill and it is about the black community in Notting Hill in the 1960s and today, but it's not about race – they [the characters] are just black. So

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[2] Mike Gayle is best known for his bestselling novel *My Legendary Girlfriend* (1998). See also an *Independent* piece where Gayle talks about the burden of being labelled as a black writer <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/profiles/mike–gayle–im–not–the–male–bridget–jones–709498.html>[accessed 26 November 2009].

they are dealing with things that they wouldn't necessarily be dealing with if they were not of colour and they are labelled whether they like it or not. But if you become really famous then there is a level at which you don't wear the labels so heavily like Salman Rushdie or Zadie Smith. There is a level at which it is a little bit overlooked, but not completely.

VV: Do you see yourself as belonging to a particular generation of writers? For example, you and Joan Riley were born in the same year, though in different places (London and Jamaica)...

BE: No, I don't feel myself as part of any generation, definitely not Joan Riley, but I do see myself as part of a generation of writers who are second-generation British if you like. And we all usually have one parent who comes from another country, if not two, and we're writing that that fact permeates our work, but some of them are much younger than me, some of them are a bit older, but we're not the same generation as the people who came over from the Caribbean in the 1960s and 1970s. We're a generation born in this country, raised in this country, writing from that perspective. So if I have to identify myself with such, I would definitely say that.

VV: Speaking of generations, you open *Soul Tourists* with the death of that generation who came in the 1950s and 1960s (the death of Stanley's father) while *Lara* reconstructs the trajectories of several generations. I saw these generational changes and generational intertwining in your novels as an engagement with some wider loss not only in terms of people passing away, but also in terms of stories and histories that have not been passed on and are lost, or deliberately buried in this process. However, some critics emphasized a generational conflict between the generation born here and the so-called migrant generation as well as suggesting that the main concern in your novels is with self–formation of British-born protagonists. What are your thoughts on such readings?

BE: History is very important to me, my personal history as in *Lara*, but also the Black history of Britain which is also the history of Britain – the multicultural history of Britain. One of my books, *The Emperor's Babe*, was reviewed in *The Poetry Review* by a critic who said that I was trying to find some sense of identity by

exploring the black history of Britain. It was actually a favourable review but I was really annoyed by that because, she'd missed the point. The book is about our national heritage, our shared history. Black people in Roman Britain 1800 years ago is an aspect o f British history that I wanted to recover. It wasn't about my personal Odyssey. I'd done that in *Lara* which is clearly semi-autobiographical. And whereas *Lara* is in some ways personal, *The Emperor's Babe* most definitely is not. I'm very interested in lost history – and this is one of the reasons I write. And I'm interested in exploring those lost histories people don't know about or they know about but they don't know that people are black. So for example, In *Soul Tourists* there are figures like Pushkin and his great-great grandfather, and you wouldn't think that he had an African heritage, so that is why he is in the book. But I think history is so important to our sense of national identity and about who we are. We've been so interested in history in this country – we explore it in fiction, documentaries, non-fiction books – and I really feel a sense of injustice and loss that certain stories are omitted from both the British and the European narrative. So that is part of my greater project – to bring them to the fore in particular with *The Emperor's Babe* and *Soul Tourists*. In *Blonde Roots*, I'm doing something a bit different.

VV: I found very interesting the way in which you use physical and metaphorical journeys to explore the idea of belonging in *Soul Tourists*. How is Stanley's sense of belonging articulated through journey and movement?

BE: Well, it's set in the 1980s and he's the son of Jamaican immigrants. In particular, Jamaicans and Nigerians have a very strong sense of identity and often they tell their children they are Nigerian and Jamaican even though the children are born in this country and don't know the countries their parents had come from. So I wanted to look at a character who comes from that kind of background. He's English but his father's telling him he's Jamaican, and in the 1980s in particular, there wasn't the same sense of ownership of England, Britain and Europe that we have now today, because, as time passes, people's roots are deeper. So in the 1970s and 1980s, there was still a climate of 'do we really belong?'. Do we belong in this country? Is there somewhere else where we can go? And the whole point of family and encountering all these ghosts of colour is not just to say that Stanley belongs in England, but actually to say that Europe has a history of black people and he belongs there too. So

it's completely challenging the assumption not just of Britain as a mono-racial society, but Europe too. Through his travels, he undergoes a transformation through encountering all these people whose roots on the continent run deep. But what I really wanted to explore was the issue – and it is a 1980s thing about belonging – in a way he finds that he does belong and that frees him to do anything, go anywhere he likes, because in the end, he goes off somewhere, doesn't he?

VV: And he doesn't go to Africa...

BE: No, he doesn't, but that's the point really. This whole 'back to Africa' thing was prevalent in the 1970s. So what about Europe? What about 'back to Europe'? Well, actually this is your home; this is where you belong, people have cut path through and lived here for millennia. Why not here? It's kind of like saying 'stay here, this is home'. Because when people do go back to Africa, they do find out they don't belong.

VV: You have also completed an impressive number of nearly 70 international literary tours and in 2000 you represented Britain at one such tour – the *Literaturexpress Europe 2000* which took some 100 writers through Western an Eastern Europe by train. You wrote about this experience in your blog and in your recent essay 'CSI Europe'. Here you bring up the issues we discussed earlier – whether you were Britain's 'authentic' representative and the question of 'histories put under the carpet', to use the words of King George in *Soul Tourists*. When you visited St Petersburg, you wrote that some of your fellow writers brushed away your comments about Pushkin's African heritage. How was your sense of belonging and unbelonging articulated when you travelled through Eastern Europe?

BE: I've done a lot of travelling with my work and without it, but I wasn't that familiar with Eastern Europe and just the nature of that tour was such that you really got a strong sense because we went through Poland to Kaliningrad and then to Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, then Russia, then Belarus and then Poland again and then Germany. And we were on the train travelling quite slowly. So it was interesting. I felt quite exposed as a black person once I left, I guess, it would have been Belgium or Germany. As I said in the essay, there are hardly any people of colour, so it was a

strange experience. The thing is, I think, even though I talked about belonging to Europe, you really belong to the place you come from which, for me, is London. It is this country, but really it is London. So I didn't feel a sense of belonging particularly in Europe, but I didn't feel the sense of not belonging either. But that would probably be different to everybody else, but what I felt a sense of was that I was physically different because I was also travelling with a group where there was only one other person of colour, a writer from Haiti, through countries where there were hardly any black people at all. And then with Russia, I was a bit worried and not sure if there might be some hostility, but it was fine; also there was a sense that the countries coming out of communism haven't gone through the same kind of transformations that some of the countries in the West have had in terms of race awareness, the civil rights movement, etc. So you're kind of aware that you're in places where some of the attitudes might be really antiquated and reactionary. But I was back in Lithuania and Latvia about a month ago touring for the British Council and again, hardly anyone of colour. I was also in the Scandinavian countries which are much more mixed, but Latvia and Lithuania are very, very white countries. I actually felt fine because you develop this sort of sensitivity to how people are going to treat you and, even though those two countries in particular are extremely white, there's no resentment, no anger, you don't sense any animosity. It's just a fact they don't have a history of immigration from certain countries so the population's very white. So I felt fine and enjoyed being there. When I was travelling through on the train which was 9 years ago, I didn't feel quite so comfortable. But these places have also become more cosmopolitan, not just in terms of the racial make up, but just in terms of the societies. They're really cool cities. I mean they were pretty cool then, but now they are really cool. You feel that the people are much more aware of difference in the world.

VV: In your essay 'False Memory Syndrome', you reflect on your growing up in Britain in the 1970s and 1980s and you write about how the works of African-American women writers, such as Toni Morrison and Alice Walker and their empowering female protagonists, allowed you to construct a sense of belonging and offered a positive image that was missing from British literature at that time. Do you feel that black British literature today can offer similar empowering stories?

EE: Interesting question really because I don't know what the statistics are in terms of the number of writers of African-Caribbean or Asian heritage who are published in this country as novelists. I can probably count on my one hand. So you have Andrea Levy, Zadie Smith, Diana Evans, Helen Oyeyemi and you have me. You have Aminatta Forna and now I'm struggling…

VV: If I was to ask you about poetry, I would presume the situation would be worse.

EE: It is worse. So that's six people I can think who are published with the mainstream publishing houses. Ok, there's Delia Jarrett-Macauley who published one novel a few years ago, but in terms of people who are publishing at the moment, it's 6. Delia might publish another book, so that's 7. There were lots of Black woman writers who have published in the mid to late 1990s. There were lots of writers and I noticed it when I published *Lara*. They published one book or two and then they disappeared. The only one who's still around is myself, although I come from poetry to fiction, and Andrea Levy. So the others are all very new. Then we've got the male writers who are almost invisible. Now, I'm talking about writers who are British; I am not talking about writers from India who come here and get published or writers from Africa. I am talking about the British born writers because they will be the ones who'd be writing about Britain. They have almost disappeared. So in answer to your question, I don't think there are enough books. There has been some research into it which was a report called 'In Full Colour' years ago, but it didn't look at the statistics of how many writers of colour are getting published in this country. It looked at the situation, but not the statistics. I would really like to see the statistics because I think it's a lot less than you might think and because some of those writers are very high-profile, it's like having Maggie Thatcher as a Prime Minister, you think everything's good, but actually I don't think it is. I think there are probably a lot of people who are writing but their work isn't getting published; they're not getting through to the publishing houses and the male thing is a whole issue again. I wish someone do some research into it, because in the end, in the 1980s and 1990s, it was male writers who were really dominant. I do know some of them and some of them failed to deliver their next book. So it's not like they've sent work off and it's been rejected, but they failed to deliver. I think there must be a lot more out there who are

delivering and their work is not being accepted, well why is that? Some writers get lot of attention and we think the doors are open, but are they really?

VV: I also hope more research will be done to look into the current state of affairs in publishing black British writing. It has been a pleasure discussing all these important issues with you. Thank you very much for your time.

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