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Bellarmino University

“We were just trying to, you know, survive”:

Coming of Age as a Displaced Person and Narrative

Eli Megibben

Advisor: Dr. Fedja Buric

30 April 2019

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank:

My thesis advisor Dr. Fedja Buric, who, in spite of my horrendous email etiquette, remained a steadfast mentor and source of genuine support throughout the two years spent working on this project. Through his potty humor-laced stories and his propensity for gossip, he taught me not to take things so seriously, and that in order to successfully operate as an empathetic person, one must remember to laugh, and to laugh often.

My readers, Dr. Annette Powell and Dr. Jon Blandford, who are two of the busiest people I know and enthusiastically agreed to be a part of this project. The honest, thorough feedback they provided helped me to grow as a student and as a writer. Knowing them has been a delight and I feel blessed to have been able to work with each of them.

My friends Audrie, Mary, Andrew, Molly, Katie Kaufling, and Kathleen for their companionship, their support, their silliness, and their love.

My parents Hart and Angie and my sister Mary-Clare. The three of them are in everything that I do (even the bad stuff) and being related to them is one of my greatest joys.

And the men and women whose stories are featured in this project.

I would like to dedicate this thesis to those who allowed me to interview them for this project.

Although I was not able to incorporate every interview, the impact and experience of having spent an hour or so with each of you cannot be understated. Thank you for sharing your story. I am better for having known you.

Introduction and Literature Review

“Home” is a personal construct that shapes who we are. It is not a physical place, but rather an experience tied to a place. It’s where we go to touch base, to feel safe, to participate in community, to grow, to develop, and to reflect. Home is where we go to find ourselves and to be ourselves. How are people to respond, then, when the socio-political institutions that rule the land that they call home say “you’re not allowed to exist because of who you are and where you come from”? According to the UN Refugee Agency, “we are now witnessing the highest levels of (human) displacement on record” with over 68 million people in the world seeking asylum and/or experiencing refugee or internally displaced-person status (unhcr.org). On its own, the gravity of this situation is unfathomable. In order to begin to comprehend this refugee crisis, one must turn their attention towards the human side of this humanitarian issue. Exposing oneself to personal narratives of displacement allows the individual to pick out the name and face of one of the 68.5 million.

In my project, “narratives of displacement” refers to personal narratives composed by individuals who were forced to leave their homes and seek refuge elsewhere due to dangers posed by war or war-like conditions. Through my study of narratives of displacement, I investigate the effects that physical displacement, by way of war and violent conflict, have on an individual’s identity. Specifically, I’m investigating the question “who am I without my home?” To investigate this question, I examine narratives written by young people who have been displaced by varied historical moments, cultures, and forms. The use of diverse primary sources is pertinent to this project because it is within the thematic overlap of these narratives that certain consistencies and universals about the displaced experience and the process of self-identification and re-identification will reveal themselves.

For this project, I limit the scope of my research to three historical moments of mass-human displacement due to war: the Holocaust, the Bosnian war, and the current Syrian civil uprising. The field of Holocaust studies traditionally focuses on the Holocaust through the lens of genocide studies. I want to add to the field of Holocaust studies by shifting my focus towards the effects that displacement within the context of the Holocaust had on young people through researching the narratives of the individuals displaced by the event and look at such displacements as early examples of a modern refugee crisis. I use the diaries of two Jewish teenagers in Poland uprooted and displaced by the Holocaust as a sort of thematic control group against which I can compare and contrast essays and interviews retrospectively composed by individuals who were displaced as teenagers by the Bosnian war and the current Syrian uprising. Like the Holocaust, the Bosnian war was fueled by nationalism and ethnic conflicts that resulted in genocide and mass human exodus. The war ended 23 years ago, yet not much has been said or written about those displaced by that specific conflict. Many of the narratives of those displaced by the Bosnian war were published within the past 5-10 years, which implies that there is a budding interest and/or willingness to share and publicize the specific experience of displacement resulting from the Bosnian war. The Syrian refugee crisis is different from the Holocaust and the Bosnian refugee crisis in that the Syrian situation is active right now. Most of the information about the Syrian uprising that is available to the western population is delivered through the rapid-fire, shallow style of news. I wanted to study a present refugee crisis in conjunction with other refugee crises that have since ended.

I used archival as well as experiential research. In the winter of 2018, I sought out interviews from refugees and former refugees in Louisville, Kentucky. Thanks to the resettlement efforts of Kentucky Refugee Ministries and Catholic Charities, there is a large

population of former Bosnian refugees as well as recently resettled Syrian refugees, in city of Louisville. As a student in this area, I had unique opportunities and access to conduct original research. I interviewed Bosnian-Americans because the Bosnian war that displaced many of the people living in the States was more than twenty-years old and I thought it would be interesting to interview people who had been resettled and had had time to assimilate and reflect. I interviewed Syrians because the conflict in Syria is current. I thought it would be interesting to analyze representatives from two groups of refugees resettled in the same area at different stages in their experience as former refugees and now re-settled persons.

The experience wound up being an amateur anthropological excursion. My role as an anthropologist looked different when I talked to the Bosnian-Americans than it did when I talked to the Syrian-Americans. Taking place in local coffee shops or in the interviewee's place of employment, the interviews that I conducted with the Bosnians were guided by the interviewee—I only needed to ask a couple of questions before the story of the individual's displacement came pouring out as a complete narrative followed by a discussion between the interviewee and myself.

With the Syrians, however, I felt more like a researcher. The most obvious hurdle I encountered was the language barrier—the interviewees spoke some English but were generally most comfortable speaking in their native Arabic. I do not speak Arabic, and thanks to a grant from the Bellarmine University Office of Sponsored Projects, I hired an interpreter to accompany me on the interviews. Due to transportation limitations, the interviews had to be conducted in the homes of the interviewees. This created an interesting dynamic between the interviewees and me as the interviewer. I was invited into their homes and received as a guest, but also met with the apprehension that accompanies any personal interview.

As an interviewer, I had several roles in the composition of the narratives. In order for the interviews to be fruitful, I did everything in my power to make sure that the interviewees were comfortable. After the participants signed a form of consent (see appendix 2), I established that they (the speakers) were in charge of determining the nature and content of the conversations. I reminded them that, although I would be asking questions, that they had the right to refuse to answer a question and to end the interview at any time. The beginning of each interview was colored by tension. Within minutes of meeting people for the first time, I was asking them to recount some of the most difficult experiences of their lives. The interviews themselves were motivated by research and a need to derive information. The shackles of formality, however, were shed within minutes of the start of the interviews. The interviewees seemed motivated to share and actively reflect on their experiences.

To gather the written narratives, I traveled to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and spent two days sifting through the archives. I chose to conduct archival research because I wanted to make sure to utilize texts that were not heavily canonized because I believed that deviating from the canon would reveal something about the unique experience of having to piece one's life together after surviving the Holocaust. During this research trip, I found the diaries of Holocaust survivors Melania Weissenberg/Molly Applebaum and Ephraim Sten, as well as a collection of essays composed by students from the former Yugoslavia called Children of Atlantis.

I consult six primary texts in this paper. The first two texts, *Buried Words: The Diary of Molly Applebaum (1942-1945)* by Molly Applebaum and *1111 Days in my Life Plus Four (1941-1945)* by Ephraim Sten, contain personal journals kept by Jewish teenagers living in Poland during the Holocaust. *Buried Words* also contains a memoir written by Applebaum in the 1990's

as a partner piece to her diary, and Sten's diary includes annotations that he made as an adult when he decided to translate his diary from Polish to Hebrew so that his Israeli children could read it. The next text I draw upon is *Children of Atlantis*. Edited by Zdenko Lešić, Atlantis is a collection of essays collected from displaced students from all over the world who had fled the former Yugoslavia. The final three texts included in this project are oral interviews that I conducted in February and March of 2018 with an 18-year-old Syrian woman named Adeela and two Bosnian-American former refugees named Sanja Jurica and Alen Kukic.

In order to better begin to understand these personal narratives from a theoretical standpoint, I consulted the work of leading diary scholar Philip Lejeune. In his masterwork *On Diary*, Lejeune describes the role of the diary in everyday life as such:

Before becoming a text, the private diary is a practice. The text itself is merely a by-product, a residue. Keeping a journal is first and foremost a way of life, whose result is often obscure and does not reflect the life as an autobiographical narrative would do... written for oneself, journals are often filled with implicitness, and kept irregularly. One has to learn to read between the lines. Far from their shedding light on a life, it is only with the help of context that one is able to shed light upon them. (31)

Lejeune applies this theory exclusively to diaries. However, the diaries that Lejeune consulted in his research chronicled the lives of admittedly "ordinary" people in "ordinary" situations (29).

The texts that I consult were composed by people in extraordinary situations. The authors I consulted seemed to be composing and eventually sharing their intensely personal stories not for the benefit of others (several authors explicitly pushed back against the Western cultural notion that their harrowing stories ought to be shared and disseminated to the public, stating that they would rather forget their experiences altogether) but as a means for self-exploration and self-

analysis with the resulting text being “a by-product, a residue.” Because of this, Lejeune’s theories about the diary and way he understands the relationship between the diary and the diarist can be applied to the non-diary narratives I consult in this project.

The overwhelming theme that connected each of the narratives I surveyed was the author’s grappling with his or her own identity in the wake of their displacement. Rhetoric scholar Katrina Powell writes in her essay “Rhetorics of Displacement: Constructing Identities in Forced Relocations” that rather than being a fixed characteristic, identity is active, and it changes and evolves alongside the person. “As displaced bodies move,” she argues, “the identities they inhabit also move. Complexities arise as identities interact and move across space and time as they are displaced from ‘home’” (300). Regarding the effect that displacement has on the individual’s sense of themselves, Powell argues that

Displacement is a jolt to one’s self—a jolt to one’s identity. If we think of displacement not in terms of moving from one place to another... but rather in terms of transition, displacement then becomes a temporal space (a third space) where identities are in metonymic relation to one another. The act of reconceptualizing the hybrid identity, continues in an active way and does not end (300-301).

She also notes that one identity does not take over the previous identity, but that the “hybrid” identity is formed by the “old and the new” (301). In the narratives I surveyed, the authors wrote from one of three temporal distances from their own displacements—they either wrote at the moment of displacement (the diaries of Molly Applebaum and Ephraim Sten), between one and five years after resettlement (authors featured in *Children of Atlantis* and the interview with Adeela) or several decades after resettlement (interview with Sanja Jurica and Alen Kukic and the supplementary materials composed by Applebaum and Sten as adults). Through these diverse

moments, the “active” identity as described by Powell reveals itself. Borrowing Powell’s assertion that identity is active, and that the identity of a displaced person is constantly changing and that the displaced identity eventually becomes a sort of hybrid identity, I argue that the displaced identity is formed through the autonomous process of hyphenation,

“Hyphenation” in this project is defined as the process through which a displaced or formerly displaced person identifies themselves with the new place they occupy while simultaneously identifying themselves with the home that was taken from them. The hyphen in a hyphenated identity (Bosnian-American, Syrian-American, etc.) acts as a bridge over the nebulous “third space” described by Powell, which offers the individual a new sense of security in themselves and in their identity to replace the one that was snatched from them at the moment of displacement. The hyphenated identity also counteracts the highly stigmatized label of “refugee” by giving the individual a space in which they can reclaim the home that was taken from and adopt parts of the new place identity with which they now affiliate. Narrative then operates as a space in which hyphenation can occur. This project uses narratives composed by individuals who have been displaced to pinpoint specific moments in the hyphenation process and analyze the effects that different stages of the hyphenation process have on the individual’s identity.

Writing in the Moment—Diaries Chronicling Displacement

The diaries written by Molly Applebaum and Ephraim Sten can be studied to observe the moment of displacement and the way that displacement stunts the individual's growth and identity development. Both authors deal with the crushing loneliness and the overwhelming lack of security brought on by their displacement by finding something ideological that exists outside of themselves through which they can touch base and be reminded of their own humanity in spite of their deplorable living situations. Applebaum finds a degree of security through her own mystical beliefs, praying to both a Jewish and Christian deities as well respecting omens, signs, and other nondenominational spiritual symbols. Sten identifies himself through his role as a family member and his relation to the people (alive and deceased) close to him. The way that these authors cope with their prolonged displacements through the composition of narrative reveals the way that displacement halts the active nature of identity, and the way in which the person focused on survival maintains a sense of pseudo-security when the security found in one's identity is taken from them.

In Buried Words: The Diary of Molly Applebaum and 1111 Days in my Life Plus Four, each author expresses feeling misunderstood and alone. Early in the texts, the authors seem to establish the role of the diary as being that of an inanimate confidante and tool for self-expression in addition to being used as a tool for record keeping. In the first entry of her diary, Applebaum writes "If I have any secret at all I shall confide in you immediately, because I know that there can be no true friendship without that" (1). The authors rarely catalogue or describe day-to-day existence. Rather, these journals contain the musings of tortured souls trying to make sense of the twisted reality in which they reside. What makes these coming-of-age narratives of displacement nuanced is the way in which they seem to have a dual purpose; they contain the

laments over universal “growing pains” (first loves, disagreements with authority figures, etc.) that one would expect to find in a personal text authored by a teenager as well as the harrowing experiences of individuals being targeted by socio-political institutions on the basis of ethnicity.

As was previously mentioned, Philippe Lejeune summarizes that the keeping and composition of a private diary is “a practice”. “The text itself” he argues, “is merely a by-product... Keeping a journal is first and foremost a way of life whose result is often obscure and does not reflect the life as an autobiographical narrative... written for oneself, journals are often filled with implicitness... One has to learn how to read between the lines. Far from their shedding light on a life, it is only with the help of context that one is able to shed light upon them” (31). This is seen in the cases of both the diaries of Molly Applebaum (formerly Melania Weissenberg) and Ephraim Sten. Reading the raw, primary texts alone is confusing. The informed reader could discern that each was written by a young Jewish person during the Holocaust, but without explicit context provided in supplementary documents from both scholars and the authors themselves, these diaries are difficult to decipher. In the introduction to *Buried Words: The Diary of Molly Applebaum*, historian Jan Grabowski notes that “Unlike memoirs and accounts written after the fact, the diaries are free from ‘corrections of memory’ that tend to eliminate and obfuscate those dimensions of our experience that we are least proud of or that we would like to sidestep and altogether erase” (xvi). When one decides to reflectively write or speak about his or her past, they are granted the lens of hindsight through which they can view and analyze their experiences as well as the power of discrimination, which can be employed to shield the reading public from the most private aspects of a person. The diarist differs from the reflective author in his or her purpose. The reflective author writes—at least in part—to communicate. The diarist writes to express, to process, and to remember. The reflective author

writes to a reader, the diarist writes to him or herself. “The true, authentic diary” argues Lejeune, “is: Discontinuous, Full of gaps, Allusive... The exact opposite of literary communication... each sequence tells something but it is not constructed like a story with a beginning, a middle, and an end... it is written without knowledge of an ending” (170). Lejeune’s conclusions about “authentic” diaries being choppy and allusive apply to the texts composed by Applebaum and Sten as children.

Converse to Lejeune’s observation, however, is the fact that these diaries seem to follow a loose narrative structure. On one of the first page of twelve-year-old Applebaum’s diary (the official first few pages of the diary are indecipherable due to erosion and time), the child writes: “I look at each page with respect. Why, these are the pages of my existence, my life” (1). Similarly, thirteen-year-old Sten opens his diary with the lines “Mother knows nothing of Father’s murder. I won’t be the one to tell. But I have to express what I’m feeling. I doubt I’ll use this copybook again, so I can use it for a diary. I’ll write down all the details so when I’m old I’ll remember my youth and this World War, even though I’m not sure I’ll live through it” (3). Fresh out of the starting gate, both authors are seen here adopting the role of diarist with an explicit purpose—they seek to preserve their own humanity and existence in the wake of an omnipresent threat to their lives. While the Nazis sought to liquidate Judaism via its people, Applebaum and Sten made a physical record of their lives via narrative self-expression in the diary. By writing an on-going story in which they play the roles of both protagonist and narrator, Applebaum and Sten validate themselves and their humanity so that even if their own lives ended, some personal record of them would remain.

Applebaum’s diary begins as the musings of a bright girl who feels alone and afraid in the volatile space she occupies. The contents of the diary are remarkable in that they seem almost

ordinary and along the lines of what one would expect to see in a twelve-year-old's diary. She writes poetry. She laments on her first love, which manifests as an infatuation for a 20-year-old woman affectionately referred to as "Bineczka" (a pet name derived from her given name "Sabina") who "will not believe that such a love can exist... I love you with all my naïve, still entirely pure, tiny heart" (4). She discusses feeling misunderstood by her family and alone amid turmoil of the ghettoization of her neighborhood. Despite the fact that he seemed to have a positive, affectionate relationship with both of his parents, Sten expresses similar sense of loneliness. "It is good that this diary exists. I always used to tell Mother and Father everything. But there are a growing number of happenings that shouldn't be told in the first place. At least one can unburden oneself on paper. It helps like ersatz [Hebrew word that loosely translates to "substitute"]." (25) Both authors acknowledge and respect the role of their diaries. While they are forced to focus most of their energy on preservation and survival of the body, the diary operates as a place to store and document that which makes them human (thoughts, feelings, etc.) in a world where their humanity is actively robbed from them.

What makes the entries of both diaries extraordinary is the fact that each entry is influenced and colored by the daily threats of life in a Polish ghetto. For example, as children grow and develop cognitively, it is not uncommon for young people to begin to question and explore the faith tradition (as well as figures within that tradition) in which they were brought up. In one of the first entries Applebaum makes after beginning her diary, she addresses her Jewish G-d directly in the writing and notes that she is certain her request for peace and an end to the war will go unheard: "But I will try anyway. For everyone who sends a request knows that it will not reach the Almighty. But they send it anyway. Why? Because they hope" (2). Five months later, however, she expresses melancholy disappointment in her God and relinquishes the hope

she invested in the prospect of a happier future: “So why try to convince yourself that a miracle is going to happen?... If there were miracles, then we would have already seen something. There has been so much evil! And if there were miracles and they could do something good then they would surely not tolerate such human suffering, which is indeed boundless, with such indifference!” (7). Having given up the practice of praying for an improvement to her situation, Applebaum does not lose her belief in a higher power altogether. Bineczka was killed by the Nazis towards the end of 1942. Applebaum’s neighborhood became practically inhabitable and people all around her were either being captured or fleeing. “If I survive until the New Year,” she writes in November, “my faith in god will begin to return. Bineczka watch over me!” (13). In wrestling with her faith, Applebaum is doing something very common among young people. However, Applebaum’s questioning of her faith is prompted by the fact that she has been made to play bystander in the intentional destruction of her people and her corner of the world. Applebaum’s “normal” responses to the abnormal circumstances she finds herself in seem to point to a liminal space that she as a person whose life and overall wellbeing are jeopardized occupies.

Where Applebaum finds some semblance of security through her spirituality, so too does Sten find a sense of security through his relations to the people dear to him. When his father dies in December of 1941, Sten recalls his mother saying to him “You haven’t anyone any longer to bid him good night, daddy.” (20). Sten notes that his mother is right but goes on to note that “Despite his death I’ll go on consulting him on everything. My father is a wise man and knows everything.” (20) Evidence of Sten’s devotion to his late father and to his relationship with long-departed is evident in an annotation made by Sten as an adult when he was translating his diary. He notes that, despite the fact that he is an atheist,

Every evening on the second day of Tevet, I go to the synagogue to recite the Kaddish. Now I can read and understand the prayers even if I don't know what I'm doing there, mumbling, a lonely non-believer with a skull cap on his head. Once a year the tradition immersed in the blood wakes up, completely ignoring my secularity... maybe I go to the synagogue because I know my father would have wanted that. (21)

As a teenager, Sten feels grounded in his role as a son. Even when his parents—the people who qualify his role as a son—die, Sten is able to remain connected with himself by making the decision to continue participating in the role of “son”.

Although displacement results in an uprooting of the individual identity, the displaced person will continue to age and develop, even if their identity is stunted. As teenagers, Applebaum and Sten continued to rapidly move towards adulthood during the three-to-four years they were displaced. During that time, both Applebaum and Sten had their first sexual experiences. Experimenting with sex is a natural aspect of growing up and transitioning from child to adult. However, within the context of the Holocaust and Applebaum and Sten's subsequent displacement, this typical rite of passage is twisted, and the authors are left grappling with these newly-discovered parts of themselves that were foreign to them.

Once the ghetto where Applebaum lived became inhabitable, she and her family sought refuge with a local dairy farmer named Wiktor Wójcik and his widowed sister Emilia Kułaga. Wiktor hid Applebaum and her sixteen-year-old cousin in a camouflaged, partially-buried wardrobe in his barn by day. The girls were allowed to stretch their legs for a few hours every night but spent a majority of their time underground. In the introduction to *Buried Words*, Grabowski notes that

Somewhere near the end of 1943 or in the winter of 1944, Melania (Applebaum's given name) started to have sex with (Wiktor). The brief entries in the diary in which thirteen-year-old Melania describes sex with her forty-year-old rescuer is something unique to Holocaust literature... The entries, which require empathy and careful reading (often reading between the lines of the diary), with their horrible background and horrifying consequences, extend beyond the normal interpretations of human behaviour. (xxvii)

Around the time Applebaum begins having sex with Wiktor, the nature and content of the prayers she records in the diary change. She goes from praying to a Jewish G-d and asking for protection from her late friend Bineczka often to not mentioning her at all. She instead turns her attention towards Wiktor and begins to worship him and his Christian God. In a letter to Wiktor, she writes "I will neither praise nor flatter you because I know you dislike that but you are our saint and what you've been doing for us is superhuman." (27) Applebaum's harsh shift from praying to her Jewish G-d and friend to praying to Wiktor's Christian God and worshiping him as her "savior" (28) is indicative of her own drive for security by way of ensuring that there is something beyond her that has control over the chaotic existence. This shift in focus indicates that it is not within specific dogma that she identifies herself, but instead takes comfort in the belief that on some plane, there exists beings with the power to exercise order over the life which she has no control over.

Like Applebaum, Sten also has his first sexual experience during his displacement. Interestingly enough, he does not record the event in his diary. In the diary he kept as a boy, Sten writes "the night was terrible. I was eaten alive by fleas or lice. In the morning, I woke up angry with the whole world." (32-33). However, as an elderly man, Sten goes back in the diary and adds an annotation between the words "or lice" and "In the...". He writes: "Shall I confess? In

spite of the hateful vermin it was the first time I slept with a woman. And one who was older than me, married and experienced... I don't like to write about that." (33) Following that entry, Sten becomes more socially withdrawn from his friends and family and his writing expresses more and anger and bitterness towards the people and around him and towards humanity in general. This sexual trauma experienced by Sten caused him to pull away from the relationships in which he took solace, further stunting his identity and exasperating his sense of disconnect from himself.

Both Sten and Applebaum finish writing their diaries once the Nazis have been exiled from Poland and it is safe for them to exist in the world once again. The authors bid farewell to their notebooks and head towards refugee camps where they will to work towards forgetting the years chronicled in the pages of their diaries. They each store their diaries away in drawers and do not touch them again for decades. The fact that these narratives were stored away points to the fact that the diaries served an explicit purpose—to get the authors through their displacement. Once that purpose was fulfilled, the diary was put away for several decades until the authors were encouraged by other people to re-consult the texts.

Recent Resettlement

As was revealed in the previous chapter, the author of a personal narrative of displacement is limited when in the midst of his or her displacement—the instinct to survive overtakes the instinct to explore one’s identity. Powell describes displacement as a “jolt to oneself—a jolt to one’s identity” (301). This “jolt” sends the authors into a sort of identity free fall—as they are displaced, they hang onto that which was constant and intangible from their life prior to displacement and identify themselves through that which is familiar. Resettlement acts as a tether to the identity free-fall often experienced by a displaced person—while it does not provide the stable ground that was available to the person prior to his or her displacement, it does provide the individual with just enough stability to examine his or her new place in the world to begin to piece together that which was shattered by displacement. Narratives composed by the recently resettled reveal some of the still-fresh wounds of the experience of displacement while also offering the first glimpses into the author’s attempts to begin exploring their identities again.

All the texts in this chapter (*Children of Atlantis* and the interview I conducted with Adeela H.) were composed within 5 years of the author’s initial displacement and all the authors were writing from the countries in which they resettled following their initial upheaval. On the resettled identity, Powell notes that “identity construction within relocation involves literal starting and ending positions, yet bodies end up inhabiting a figurative ‘third space’ or ‘hybrid identity’ to which the displaced move because they cannot fully inhabit the ending position” (320). In *Children of Atlantis* and in the interview with Adeela, we see narrative vignettes from young people who are on the threshold of that “third space”. This chapter looks at how young adults explore their identities once the immediate threat that prompted their displacement is removed and they are safe enough to begin to piece together their identity, which is now

permanently complicated by the fact that they were forced to flee their home. The authors in this chapter seem to maneuver some variation of the following pattern: feeling nostalgia for and grieving the overall home (the place, the people, the relationships, the traditions, etc.) that was lost, discussing the experience of living in a place that they do not identify with or consider home, approaching their inevitable—and often intimidating—personal process of hyphenation that accompanies relocation with uncertainty, and finally finding a sense of security in the idea of a hypothetical future self that has some sort of intangible skill or training that will make them more refined representatives of the home they left.

While the “skill or training” could represent itself in many ways depending on the speaker, each author in this chapter cites education and the possibility of self-improvement through education as what allows them to feel secure when thinking about the future. Because of their education, these authors find a sense of security and purpose that helps them to cope with their displacement and the identity markers of “refugee” and/or “immigrant.” Education also seems to cement their homeland pride in that these authors overwhelmingly identify themselves as representatives of the land the love and they seems to feel that their own achievements and accolades will help to work against the stigma inflicted by the war(s) that brought ruin to their beloved homelands.

The first text that this chapter draws on is *Children of Atlantis*. Published in 1995, *Children of Atlantis* is a compilation essays of written by students from the former Yugoslavia and edited by Zdenko Lešić. The authors of the essays are marked only by their initials because Lešić wanted to eliminate the prejudices that could accompany a reader seeing a name and being able to determine the author’s ethnicity based on his or her moniker. In the introduction to the text, Lešić explains that in order to get material for the book, he put out a call to displaced

former-Yugoslav students living all over the world. “The students were asked to reply to the following questions in their essays: 1) ‘What are your reasons for leaving the former Yugoslavia and your reasons for wanting to continue your education abroad?’ 2) ‘How do you perceive your future and the possibility of returning to your home country after your studies are completed?’” (15). Such an open-ended prompt lent itself to honest essays from diverse authors. “They did not philosophize...They did not politicize...They did not analyse (they did not want to explain what had happened.) Instead, they opened their hearts, presented their ‘case’, told their story...For them ‘to write’ meant ‘to reveal themselves’, nothing more” (Lešić, 15-16). The disinclination of the authors to analyze and comment upon what happened to them and to instead lay themselves out before the reader makes these texts similar to the diaries in the previous chapter. Like Sten and Applebaum, the authors featured in *Atlantis* write (at least in part) to get some piece of themselves down on paper and to reconnect with their humanity.

Despite the fact that the essays were written to a specific prompt, each passage is unique and reads more like an unprompted essay instead of one that was written to cater to a specific prompt. Lešić points out that the plot of each story told generally follows the same structure: I was happy in my home until it was snatched from me and I had to leave. The benefit, however, in reading multiple stories and seeing the same plot played out over and over again through different voices with different specificities, is that each story “reveal(s) the individual within the collective fate...This polyphony of voices slowly reveals the full complexity of the situation to which young people bear witness. It reveals and completes the picture of an entire generation which, at the very threshold of adulthood, lost all hope of a future and was brought face-to-face with the utter uncertainty of life” (Lešić, 16-17). This “polyphony” is valuable because, across

the polyphony, consistencies and themes reveal themselves, and through this revelation, the “hybrid space” as proposed by Powell is made visible.

The second narrative that this chapter draws upon is an original interview with a young Syrian woman named Adeela. The interview was conducted in March of 2018. At that time, Adeela was eighteen-years-old and had been living in the United States for two-and-a-half years. Although Adeela’s experience as a displaced person was separated geographically and temporally from that of the authors surveyed in *Atlantis*, there were striking similarities in the ways Adeela maneuvered her narration and the way the authors in *Atlantis* maneuvered theirs.

It is worth noting that in a way these stories are written with dual authorship. The authors featured in *Atlantis* were prompted to answer two specific questions in their writings, and the pieces chosen for the book were chosen by a single editor who wrote the questions that the essays sought to answer. Similarly, the interview with Adeela is another example of a narrative composed with dual authorship. While every part of the interview came from Adeela and her experiences, nearly everything she offered was prompted by a question. The “external author”—that is, the editor or the interviewer—serves as a liaison between the formerly displaced person and the audience. While the implementation of an external author sands down some of the raw edges of an independently composed narrative, the external author significantly benefits the readership. Through gentle guidance, the external author either filters through the overwhelming information and condenses it in a way that makes it palatable for the public or coaches the author to help them most effectively tell their story.

In the diaries composed by Sten and Applebaum, the reader is presented with the experience of displacement in almost-real time. As the war progressed and the jolting shock of displacement wore off, the time elapsed between individual entries grew. This pattern was

conceptualized by one of the Yugoslav authors, who wrote: “It was on 15 May 1992 that the war began in my home town Tuzla. A brutal end was put to normal life, or—more to the point—it completely changed, because life under brutal wartime conditions became normal” (99). The authors featured in *Children of Atlantis* are writing from a secure location in which the threat on their life has been absolved. Hindsight makes perversion of “normal” during wartime become obvious. The removal of this threat allows the author to set foot on the path describe by Powell and begin to grapple with their identities. “Most of us have found our feet in this upheaval. I have. We’ve survived. But are we living or are we just surviving?” (28)

Due to the open-endedness of the writing prompt, the authors featured in *Atlantis* had creative control over which part of their stories of displacement about which they chose to write. Not surprisingly, the more the authors who chose to focus on the act of displacement itself submitted essays laced with grief. “For me it was a painful, wrenching experience. It’s impossible to describe the pain when you leave—maybe forever—your hometown, familiar streets, parks, memories, loved ones. My parting kisses and goodbyes to my father—pain, pain, pain. There’s no other word” (47). For the authors featured in *Atlantis*, this homeland grief was most obvious in the entries composed by students from the cosmopolitan capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo. Lešić points out in the introduction to the text that “more than any other city in the former Yugoslavia, it is Sarajevo which is most prominent in this book... Here it is present not as a place of horror and despair... Sarajevo appears in these stories as an almost idyllic place of erstwhile, and still possible, human happiness” (19). He goes on to note that “what is deliberately being destroyed in Sarajevo... is the complex fabric of a multinational, multireligious, multicultural community... Sarajevo was a city which proved that life together is possible” (20). What is unique about the Sarajevan identity, then, is the fact that within the city,

diverse people were brought together under the label “Sarajevan”; a label which the students surveyed by Lešić wear proudly.

The representation of so many “multi’s” in Sarajevo allows the “Sarajevan” label to transcend hyphenation. In other words, to come from Sarajevo is to come from a place so diverse that describing one’s multi-ethnic identity with hyphenated words (Croatian-Serb, Muslim-Croat, etc.) was not necessary. As one author points out, “We young people didn’t know we belonged to different nations” (27). The formerly cosmopolitan, unified space became sectored off by nationalistic forces: “Overnight Serbo-Croatian, the predominantly spoken language, became two separate languages: Serbian and Croatian” (111). The adoption of a hyphenated identity then, becomes crucial for these Yugoslav—and especially for the Sarajevan—students as they navigated homogenous spaces in which they relocated.

Like the students featured in *Atlantis*, Adeela was staring the prospect of hyphenation in the face at the time of her interview, and in a way, she resisted it. Powell points out that, because forced displacement is often violent and a “jolt” the one’s identity (especially in the cases of people whose displacement has been fueled by violence or the threat of violence) personal narratives of displacement may resist the “third space” and the “hybrid identity” that accompany displacement (321). Adeela and her family (her mother, father, younger brother and two younger sisters) fled Syria for the first time in 2013 and moved in with relatives living in Lebanon for 3 months. Unable to find a home or work, her family moved back to Syria until they could travel to Jordan several months later, where they were, again, unable to find a place to live. After that they went back to Syria and later traveled on foot back to Jordan where they stayed until immigrating to the United States in October of 2015. In Jordan, it was illegal to be Syrian. Adeela’s father had to make money by working “under the table”, and the entire family faced possible deportation if

they were discovered. During their final stay in Jordan, Adeela's mother gave birth to another baby girl. Since resettling in the United States, Adeela expressed discontentment for the way that she has been either tokenized or alienated due to her religion by some of her American peers. I asked her if she had been able to make friends at her school, she responded "yes, I have Arabic friends", which prompted me to ask if she only had Arabic friends, to which she responded "yes."

When Adeela spoke about her life in Jordan, she would describe herself as "Syrian," highlighting the fact that, although she felt more at home in Jordan than in the United States, she was still an outsider there. When she spoke of her life in the United States, she called herself an "immigrant". When I asked her if she would describe herself as "Syrian-American", she said that she was a "Syrian Immigrant". Adeela's conscientious adoption of the word "immigrant" as an identity marker indicates a resistance to the adoption of a "hybrid" identity. Although she is currently geographically unable to occupy a strictly "Syrian" identity, Adeela uses the word "immigrant" as a placeholder or substitute for a hyphenated "Syrian-American" identity. The daunting circumstances under which she left her home coupled with the fact that she has been made to feel like an outsider by her American contemporaries make Adeela's resistance towards hyphenation and towards the "third space" described by Powell understandable.

Regardless of this resistance, however, as the oldest child in the family, Adeela occupies the role of liaison between her Arabic-speaking parents and the English-speaking people they encounter in the United States. "I'm the translator in home", she explains, "I think they (her parents) feel sad inside when someone talk in front of him or her and they cannot understand them (sic)" (9:15) Adeela's mother (who was present for the interview) made sure to note that Arabic culture was preserved in the home as much as possible, even going so far as to point out

that English is forbidden in the house. And Adeela herself seemed intent on maintaining her Arabic (an ethnic and cultural marker rather than a country marker) identity as much as possible. She noted that, despite the discrimination she faced as a Syrian, that she would like to live in Jordan should Syria continue to prove to be inhospitable. I asked her when she would like to move back to Jordan, and she said “Like I can do it right now if it’s of my opinion (sic). I wanted to come back now, but my family say ‘okay, we come here with like you to study in college and your brother to study so why you should come back there (sic)?’ She goes on to point out that, at the end of the day, an education in Jordan is too expensive (25:03). However, as the family’s translator and as the sole member actively seeking an American degree, Adeela is obligated through her role in the family to undertake a degree of assimilation with United States customs and culture.

The convergence of Adeela’s passionate Arabic identity with inevitable budding of her American student identity can be seen in her response when asked how she felt about being in the United States for school:

I like to go to school here and I want to go to the college in here but just like I say, you know, like my feelings just like “okay, I want to see my auntie again. I wanna just (sic) to walk between the stores cause like in Arabic country, in here, we just have a malls. But like in Arabic country (sic), we have just like all this street, okay, this is like this store is all to sell one thing (sic). So just I hope to go and hear some noise from Mosque and like, there; yeah, just like the inside. That’s it. That’s it (25:56).

Due to her role and identity as a student, a degree of hyphenation is forced upon her because she is living and becoming educated in the United States. However, within this hyphenated space, she also sees a future in which she has some authority and authorship over the type of adult she

will eventually become. I asked Adeela what she wanted to see for herself in the next five years. She contemplated for a moment, and then responded “I want to graduate from my college, and to work... I want to be something that like, to make my family proud of me. You know? Yeah, that’s it” (10:57). Like many people her age, Adeela aspires to make her family proud, and the way she has chosen to do that is through her education.

Interestingly, some of the Yugoslav students who are farther along in their careers than Adeela demonstrate a similar drive, but one that is more mature and more focused on their future. In summarizing his essay, one author notes that “I needed a goal, something to fight for, and I found it in my studies. That’s all I’ve got left from my former life” (49). Another goes on to comment that “Learning gives me motivation and satisfaction, and also provides me with a basis on which to build my future, starting from nothing but my knowledge and initiative” (53). While Adeela wants to improve herself as a representative of her family, the students from former Yugoslavia want to serve as proud representatives of the country which no longer exists. They allow Yugoslavia to live on through them, in which case, they have a small degree of control over how Yugoslavia is remembered. As was noted earlier, Powell described the inclination of the displacement narrative to become a narrative of resistance. In Adeela’s interview, we see a student actively resisting hyphenation. However, through the writings of some of the students featured in *Atlantis*, we see the act of resisting hyphenation blossom into the act of resisting erasure. “I prefer to think that there is a reason why I am here, in the United States of America (Lexington, Kentucky), right now. I am here because those dearest to me cannot be here, I am here to learn and educate myself so that one day, when I am reunited with them, wherever they may be, we can share my knowledge and their experience. Until that day comes, I shall be working with all my energy, dreaming and wishing for a better tomorrow”

(172). It is through their education that these students are able to connect with the land in which they have resettled and therefore begin to explore the “hybrid space” in which a hyphenated identity is established and nourished while also staying connected to their Yugoslav identity.

Resettlement in Retrospect

As was previously mentioned, Powell argues that the displaced person occupies a hybrid identity that combines the home from which they were displaced and the home(s) in which they resettle. This chapter focuses on an individual's reflecting on their own identity as formerly displaced persons decades after resettlement. While the previous chapter surveyed people who were just getting their bearings within (and sometimes rejecting) this hybrid identity or "third space", the four narratives that were surveyed for this chapter—two interviews with Bosnian-American former refugees living in Louisville Kentucky, and the memoirs written by the two Holocaust survivors featured earlier in this project—were written by individuals who spent decades in that third place, and are able to offer a perspective on their displacement that is colored by retrospection. Additionally, while every person surveyed for this project was displaced during their teenage years, the authors in this chapter are writing as adults commenting on their teenaged experiences. Writing as adults allows the author to comment upon and critique the worldview that they possessed as young people, and then analyze how their perceptions of the world as young displaced persons shaped their present-day identities.

While the authors in the previous chapter composed their stories from a place where they were able to just begin talking about the jolt of displacement, the authors in this chapter have a cushion of several decades between their current place and their past displacement. With this cushion, the authors are able to offer a more complete recollection of their stories. The diarists in the first chapter mostly wrote on their emotions, and on the rare occasion that they did narrate, the narrations were used more to give context to whatever feeling they were going to discuss. The authors in the previous chapter did not always choose to narrate what happened to them, and when they did, the narration was sparse and offered as frames from a life as opposed to a linear

narrative. The four authors in this chapter, however, told their complete or their almost complete story. There was a beginning, middle, and end, with the end usually being the author's present moment. The authors in this chapter also had the grace of hindsight as well as adult wisdom that the authors in the previous chapters had not quite gotten the hang of at that point in their lives. Out of all of the narratives consulted in this project, the texts in this chapter are the most complete and comprehensive. The authors are able to reflect, they know some of the facts that were unclear in the upheaval and dishevelment of the displacement process. According to Lejeune, the diary does not seek to communicate, the diary seeks to process (30). Like diaries, these texts are less focused on communication and more focused on self-analysis. Through self-expression, the nuances of the author's identities made themselves known.

One place that the resettled retrospective identity can be observed is through interviews that I conducted with two Bosnian-American adults—Sanja Jurica and Alen Kukic—living in Louisville KY. The interviewees were teenagers at the time of their respective displacements. One interviewee has advanced degrees, and another was a professional who was in the process of continuing their education at the time of the interview. The interviews were structured similarly, with the interviewees providing a complete summary on their experience of leaving home and becoming resettled. Once their stories were told, I became a more hands-on interviewer and asked them questions to guide/encourage their reflections on their experiences not just with the immediate displacement, but with the time elapsed between their resettlement and the moment of the interview. Both interviewees discussed the liminal identities that they exhibited not only as children of mixed ethnic backgrounds (each had one Muslim parent and one non-Muslim parent) but also as Bosnian Americans. This section focuses on the identity of being a hyphenated or

multi-hyphenated person and the effect that displacement during one's formative years has on self-identifying as "hyphenated"

Another point of retrospective resettled identity comes from the authors from the second chapter (Molly Applebaum/Melania Weissenberg and Ephraim Sten) and dissects the texts they composed as elderly adults as follow-up pieces to the diaries that they kept as teenagers. It observes the decades-old scars left by their displacement and observes the ways that each survivor grapples with their identities through the process of composing retrospective narratives. Due to many factors (including the nature of the event that displaced them and the deep scars incurred by not only surviving the Holocaust, but also having to live in a post-Holocaust world where they as Jews, as Poles, as Europeans, as members of their generation, etc., will feel the reverberations of the Holocaust for as long as they live) these authors claim to have waited until late in their lives to revisit their trauma through writing. This delayed journey into investigating one's identity raises interesting questions regarding the importance of introspection and the ability to grapple and be patient with one's ever-shifting identity, especially when compared to the testimonies of the other survivors and formerly-displaced persons in this project.

Philippe Lejeune argues that when reading a diary, one must "read between the lines". So too, I think, does that theory apply to the narratives in this chapter. When interviewing Jurica and Kukic, they spent the first half of the interview recounting the details of their displacement in a linear narrative. Once they were finished telling their story, I stepped in and operated as a conventional interviewer, reading from a list of prepared questions (see appendix) and asking follow-up questions as necessary. By providing the details of their experiences, Jurica and Kukic provided the background information that I as an interviewer needed to read between the lines of their interviews

At the beginning of her interview, Jurica explained that her father was Muslim and that her mother was Orthodox Serb. I asked if her father's heritage made her technically Muslim, and she said "it makes me half-half. Because I never wanted to go on one side, pick one side, because we were basically raised atheist... It was especially hard for us when the war started because we didn't know where we belong (sic)." (1:23-1:51). Like the authors featured in *Children of Atlantis*, Jurica was given a hyphenated label at the beginning of the war that she did not necessarily identify with—empty labels that tied her to conflicting religions that she had never practiced and did not identify with.

After being on the run and several narrow-escapes, Jurica and her family fled to Germany, where they stayed with a cousin who had lived there since before the war broke out. As refugees, the work available to Jurica and her family was meager. Just before the war, Jurica planned to go to college. As a refugee, however, she worked as a cleaner to support herself financially (she refused to accept aid from her father because she considered herself an adult and she did not want to draw from his slim wages). As a family of mixed ethnicity, it would have been easy for the Juricas to apply for and receive asylum in a "third country" such as the United States, Canada, or Australia. However, it was not until 1999 after Jurica and her now-husband had a one-year-old baby that they decided to consider relocating outside of Germany.

Poor baby, he was born as a refugee. Because Germany is one of the countries where they don't give citizenship if you're born there, so basically his parents were refugees so his first visa was a refugee visa. I don't wanna put the pressure on him, but I always said that he was the main reason we came here... He was like that capsule that pulls you because you're not thinking about yourself anymore. You're thinking about a baby and what can I offer him? We could go back to Bosnia, of course, and family is gonna be around and

he's gonna be loved, and cared (sic), and nurtured, but what about his future? We always said 'we can always go back, but let's try something while we're young here. (49:50)

Prior to the birth of her son, Jurica felt content in the liminal space of "refugee" proposed by Powell. "In Germany, I never felt like I belonged because I was stigmatized with that three-month-to-six-month visa. I never got the status of regular citizen or regular human being, basically. You can't go to school... work... nobody wants to lease you an apartment because your visa is only valid for three-to-six months." (53.18) However, once she became a mother, she began to focus on the future. With the birth of her son, Jurica's identity became not just her own, but also tied to her offspring. If she stayed in her liminal space, he too would have to occupy a liminal space having never known anything other than that. "If you told me 25 years ago 'you going to be living in the United States (sic)' I'd be like 'excuse me?', you know never ever, never ever, but that's how it is. You never know what's going to happen, you never know what turn your life is going to take, you just move through it, I guess." (1:01:57) Becoming a parent catalyzed Jurica and her husband to consider relocation. Relocation meant eventually moving out of the liminal space and moving towards the development of a hyphenated identity.

Unlike Sanja Jurica, Alen Kukic came to the United States with his immediate family as a teenager in the 1990's. As someone for whom the decision to come to the United States was made for him (like Adeela in the previous chapter) Kukic has been able to let his hyphenation unfold organically. The process of occupying a hyphenated Bosnian-American identity seemed to come naturally to Kukic. One reason for this could be the fact that Kukic found stability in the positive relationship he had with his family, which consisted of two parents and a sibling. When asked about the impact that displacement had on his family dynamic, he answered "I would say we grew closer." (53:25) He went on to elaborate: "my explanation is the war. Because we went

through so much together, and we were constantly together, the four of us, that it creates this incredible bond.” (55:22). The security that Kukic felt within his family unit served as a sort of temporary surrogate for some of the security that was lost at the moment of his displacement. Once Kukic was resettled, the familial security that he hung on to during his displacement remained. Through this consistency in Kukic’s otherwise uprooted life, he was positioned to undertake the task of adopting a hyphenated identity.

Unlike any of the other authors consulted in this project, Kukic travels back to the country he was displaced from—in his case, Bosnia—regularly. When asked if Bosnia felt different to him than it did prior to his leaving, Kukic answered

Yeah, I feel like I belong, and I don’t belong, I don’t know. Like this last time I felt like (pause) on the one hand I really really like being there, and on the other hand I was kind of lost. Like what do I do? I’m really ambivalent. But on the other hand, I don’t feel completely American. Like I do feel different, which is not bad (sic) thing. I’m just saying, like, there are still things that I miss there and things that I miss here, etc. and so—it’s really like this in-betweenness. (1:02:23)

Kukic’s comments on “in-betweenness” highlight an important component of the displaced experience: the fact that one can never truly “go home” after he or she has been displaced. The displaced person is then has to define home on his or her own. The hyphenated identity, then, exists at least in part as a set of chosen identity markers that help the individual determine where “home” is for them.

Jurica and Kukic remain in conversation with themselves and with their identities from the past as well as the present. Applebaum and Sten, on the other hand, literally put their identities

from the past in a drawer, avoiding them (their displaced selves) for decades. Despite being well into their adult years, Applebaum and Sten seem out of touch with themselves and their identity. They do not identify themselves as hyphenated. Despite their physical relocation, they operate perpetually in an in-between space, never truly being able to make peace between themselves in the present and themselves from their past. Despite this disinclination towards hyphenation, both authors do, through their narratives, hint at inclinations towards hyphenation, which indicates that the resettled individual cannot completely distance themselves from the person they were in the past.

In the opening to Applebaum's memoir, she notes that "I now realize what little part religion played in our lives," (45) which is interesting when one considers the fact that she grew up in an Orthodox community and that a majority of the diary she kept as a teenager is filled with prayers. Despite her disinterest in Judaism, it is worth noting that she did not completely abandon the spirituality to which she clung in the years she kept the diary. One of the ways that she was able to entertain herself in the few nighttime hours she spent roaming around the barn in which she was hidden was by adopting a rooster as a pet. "I still have its feather. I believed it was my good luck omen." (72) At the time of her displacement, Applebaum had almost no possessions other than her diary. The fact that she made an effort to keep the rooster's feather even through stints in refugee camps and a cross-continental migration indicates that the feather had immense sentimental value. By describing it as her "good luck omen", she remains in touch with some of the spirituality in which she derived comfort during her displacement. Despite her efforts to "move forward" (50) and to forget the past—in other words, to avoid hyphenating herself by deflecting her identities from before displacement—she is still driven to maintain a small connection to the person she was during (if not before) her displacement.

Where Applebaum is ambivalent towards her identity before displacement, Sten outwardly rejects parts of his identity from before his displacement. On being from Poland, he writes “Yes I was born in Poland but is she my country? I felt like a guest there.” (49) The reason he translates his diary in the first place is because his children want to read it and they do not speak a word of the Polish that it was written in. The act of translation, then, forces Sten to face Powell’s proposed “third space” that he as a formerly displaced person has occupied for decades. It appears as though he is taking his first steps towards hyphenating himself. It is worth noting, however, that in the introduction to the text, Myra Sklarew states: “The reader of this book might feel that the author has come to some catharsis: Ephraim always made it clear to his family that he could not.” (xii) Sten’s self-described inability to come to a “catharsis” reveals the limitations of the act of becoming hyphenated—although the hyphenated identity allows the individual to participate in and experience home in a new land, it does not soothe or alleviate the pain and sorrow that the displaced person feels. Hyphenation merely empowers the person to go forth and continue existing and identifying themselves in spite of the scars they incurred during their displacement.

Conclusion

With this project, I analyzed six narratives composed by displaced and formerly displaced people to investigate the question “who am I without my home?” In order to do this, I borrow Lejeune’s theories about diary and apply them to six narratives composed by displaced persons. Like the diary proposed by Lejeune, all of the texts I consult are remarkably incomplete. The interviews lasted no longer than 90 minutes apiece. The short essays collected by young people from the former Yugoslavia are just that: short essays. The time in which I interact with each author is very limited. There is always more left unsaid than actually said. The key to interpreting and analyzing these texts lies in the reader’s ability to read between the lines. With the diaries, there is enough background info provided by both scholars in the prefaces and the authors themselves going back as elderly adults and writing about and/or commenting on what they experienced as young people. In the oral interviews, I had the luxury of being an active participant in the creation of those texts—I was able to ask clarifying or provoking questions as I saw fit. Additionally, because the interviews took place in person, I was able to capture the human interaction. Every pause, flinch, fidget and sniff was captured by my recording equipment. The gaps in these stories—that is, the sentences that trail off, the harsh shifts from one anecdote to another, and the pauses between my questions and the interviewees answer—are supplemented by signals and nuances that can only be communicated through the physical act of conversation. The shortest pieces I researched are the short essays composed by students from the former Yugoslavia. The editor of the collection of the stories noted that he and his team were careful to not do much to the essays in terms of changing them because they wanted the voices to remain as authentic as possible. My job as a researcher relied on my ability to read between the lines without putting words into the mouths of the authors.

In order to effectively “read between the lines”, then, I frame my analysis through Katrina Powell’s theory of identity being ever-changing and the idea that displacement leads the person into a “third space” in which they begin to occupy a “hybrid identity”. I further the point made by Powell and argue that one way this “hybrid identity” is explored and established is through the process of hyphenation, which I define as the process through which a displaced or formerly displaced person identifies themselves with the new place they occupy while simultaneously identifying themselves with the home that was taken from them. Through my analyses of six personal narratives written by displaced or formerly displaced persons, I chart three observable moments in the hyphenation process: The moment of displacement in which the person is in a sort of identity free-fall and must find security through that which is familiar to them, the first five or so years after the individual is resettled in which the person’s safety is secure once again and they are first faced with the prospect of hyphenation (and presented with a degree of autonomy in that hyphenation process), and the decades following resettlement in which the person has had time to settle into and reflect upon their hyphenated identity. Conversely, some people reject the hyphenated identity altogether, and even decades after the displacement, such rejection can create a gulf within the individual, and within this gulf, the insecurity and feeling up-rootedness catalyzed by displacement could continue to linger within the person.

The hyphenated identity is not a replacement for the sense of home-based security and comfort that the non-displaced person experiences. Rather, the hyphenated identity is a tool for the formerly displaced person to use to push back against the trauma and turmoil of their displacement. Though the process of becoming a “hyphenated person” is challenging and could make the individual feel further distanced from the home that was taken from them, it can

conversely become a means of empowerment by way of granting the individual control over their own experience of home. By creating a bridge between their home from before and their present home through the process of hyphenation, the formerly displaced individual reasserts their humanity and their right to belong.

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