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The fundamental question driving my research this fall had its basis in the question of the relationship between evolving national identity and the nature and kinds of autobiographical writing. Autobiography is a prevalent literary genre in the Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian (BCS) literatures. From Branslav Nusić to Miljenko Jergović, and from Ivo Andrić to Dubravka Ugrešić, there is no shortage of autobiographical writing in the region of the former Yugoslavia. Nonetheless, it was remarkably difficult to unearth information in the United States about this field in any language. Material available in English was inconsistent, made up of articles about individual authors, or short encyclopedic articles; material in regional languages was not accessible in the United States, where distribution of both primary and critical texts in the BCS languages is limited.¹

Given the popularity of autobiographical literature and autobiographical literary criticism in English language scholarship, it seemed appropriate that a discussion of Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian autobiographical literature be undertaken. One might assume that autobiographical literature in the region adopts many of the same conventions, topics, themes, and other generic attributes as autobiographical writings in other literary traditions. However, given the diversity of cultural influences in the region, a more nuanced and specific understanding of the genre in this region would be a valuable addition both to literary studies and to our understanding of identity in the region. However, more specific parameters needed to be set before research could be conducted, given limitations of time and resources. Although autobiographical literature certainly has a place in the history of Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian literature and deserves its own dis-

vant period of study consists of literature written since the dissolution of Yugoslavia, from approximately 1991 to the present.

I chose to focus my research on women's autobiographical writing during this period. This decision was the result of several factors, the primary one being that autobiography is often considered to be a more traditionally "female" genre of literature; one question that arose during the process of my research is whether or not that was in fact true. Second, the topic of gender in South Slavic literatures tends to be overlooked in favor of the more well-known and celebrated male authors, although studies of female authors among BCS writers do exist. A third motivation for studying women's autobiographical writing during this period, one that branches outside the domain of simple generic analyses, is the substantive change in the social and cultural role of women between Tito's Yugoslavia and today.

My second research goal was to examine the literature collected in the former Yugoslavia nationally and regionally. During the Yugoslav years there was a greater level of cultural cooperation and exchange among the constituent countries of that state. Each republic shared cultural attributes, but each republic also had its own unique literary history and literary influences. Expressions of cultural and ethnic identity and perspective through the lens of autobiographical writing in the war and post-war periods could potentially reveal useful information about changes in the political and cultural environment of the region.

While I chose to focus on the years between 1990 and the present, much might be gained by exploring the years before the war--the Yugoslav cultural scene in 1970s and 1980s. Not only was literature of high quality written during those years, but much of that literature demonstrates important developments in autobiographical writing in the BCS languages. One particularly inter-

termed “quasi-autobiographical,” including *Pada Avala (Avala is Falling, 1978)* and *Psi i ostali (Dogs and Others, 1984)*.

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iii Written in the first-person, these novels explored subjects that were theretofore taboo in Serbian literature, such as lesbianism and women’s sexuality.^{iv}

Focusing on women’s autobiographical writing in the former Yugoslavia between the early 1990s and the present, I set two research objectives: to gather material and literature on the topic of women’s autobiographical writing, including both literature and literary criticism, which is not readily available in the United States; and to meet with and interview scholars and writers who focus on this genre of writing. My goal was to develop a more concrete understanding of the conventions of autobiographical literature in the BCS literary traditions, in terms of both national and regionally specific characteristics, and thereby to develop an understanding of the cultural role of autobiographical literature in both the BCS literary traditions and in the wider “Western” tradition of autobiographical literature.

During my time in the former Yugoslavia, I was able to make significant progress towards meeting my research goals. I visited the national and city libraries of Zagreb, Belgrade, and Sarajevo in order to acquire material. In Croatia, as well as in Bosnia and Serbia, visiting archives was unnecessary: the literature I was seeking was relatively recent and therefore easily accessible in-country. In Zagreb, I met with scholars Andrea Violić-Zlatar, a professor at the University of Zagreb, and Helena Sablić-Tomić, a professor at the University of Osijek, who are the two foremost experts on autobiographical literature in Croatia. I also visited with several journalists who cover the literary scene in Croatia, including Mija Pavliša from T-portal, who is

ferent authors to consider in my research. It was more difficult to meet with writers in Zagreb, as many of them, such Slavenka Drakulić, Dubravka Ugrešić, and Daša Drndić, live abroad for large parts of the year. However, I had the opportunity to meet with the writer Maša Kolanović, the author of a popular autobiographical novel in Croatia, titled *Sloboština Barbie*.

In Belgrade, I worked with several professors of literature, most notably Dubravka Djurić, a professor at the University Singidunum, and Vladislava Gordić-Petković, a professor at the University of Novi Sad. Both of these scholars were very helpful in arranging for me to meet writers and providing me with critical material on the topic of Serbian literature. I also had the opportunity to meet with the journalists Saša Čirić, from Radio Belgrade, and Nenad Župac, from Rende publishing, who were able to talk to me about women's literature and provide me with information about different writers whose work might be relevant to my research. Perhaps most useful were the meetings I had with members of *Women in Black*, a women's anti-war organization in Serbia. Although their work largely deals with war protests, members of this organization were also active in the Serbian cultural scene and had a great deal of information about Serbian female writers who have been active in the past 20 years. Through them, I was also able to meet the Serbian author, Jasmina Tešanović, who, in addition to her literary career, has been involved in *Women in Black* for a number of years.

In Sarajevo, finding scholars to work with was difficult, given that Bosnian women's literature was not as well-developed as in Serbia and Croatia. However, I did have the opportunity to meet Ferida Duraković, the current director of the Bosnian PEN center. Duraković had a great deal of insight into what was being written by Bosnian female writers, particularly among Bosnian Muslims. Through her, I also was able to connect several professors at the University of Sa-

of whom have commented on the problems and issues of women's writing in Bosnia in several of their articles. In my research, I was able to work with Sadžida Bjelak and Senija Mujić, librarians at the library at the University of Sarajevo, who were able to discuss contemporary female writers of autobiographical literature with me and who put me in contact with several writers. During my time in Sarajevo, I was also able to meet the writer, Jasmina Musabegović, who has been a well-respected Bosnian Muslim writer for many years. Musabegović was willing to discuss in detail her novels, particularly her most recent, and most autobiographical work, *Most*. Finally, through Ferida Duraković, I began correspondence with the writer, Safeta Obhodaš, whose autobiographical *Bildungsroman* provides a unique perspective on the life of young Muslim girls in rural Bosnia.

One of my goals in each country was to ascertain the level of critical study of autobiography as a literary genre in the region. By ascertaining the level of critical interest in this genre, one could better understand the place of autobiography as a literary genre and as a cultural factor in the evolution of identity. The most fruitful region for this goal was in Croatia. Since the early 1990s, autobiography is a topic that has been addressed with increasing frequency in Croatian scholarly discussions, beginning with the works of Mirna Velčić and Vinko Brešić.^v These authors took different approaches to autobiographical material, with Velčić more interested in narrative theory and Brešić more interested in history, but the texts, nonetheless, represent the first significant moves to address material in the field of autobiographical literature.

While numerous scholars that have continued to address autobiography as a literary genre in Croatian language criticism (notably Marijana Trinajstić and Renata Jamrešić-Kirin), two scholars dominate the field in Croatia today: Andrea Zlatar-Viočić and Helena Sablić-Tomić.

numerous articles and books on the topic of autobiography, the most notable being Zlatar-Violić's two main texts, *Autobiografija u Hrvatskoj (Autobiography in Croatia)*, which provides a historical analysis of autobiographies in Croatian literature, and *Tekst, trauma, tijelo (Text, Body, and Trauma, 2004)*, which addresses a variety of thematic issues in Croatian women's autobiographical literature, such as exile and corporeality.^{vi} Sablić-Tomić, on the other hand, has chosen to focus more on issues of form in her book, *Intimno i javno, 2002*, exploring the different sub-genres of autobiographical literature written in modern Croatian literature, with particular attention paid to the genres of the "pseudo-autobiography," "the diary," and "letters."^{vii} While both Zlatar and Sablić-Tomić deal with the topic of women within the context of autobiographic writing, neither of them focus specifically on *women's autobiographical writing*. This remains an open field in criticism in the Croatian language, in that scholarship on this topic still lacks definitive analyses, with one exception.

That exception is the work of Jasmina Lukić. Although Lukić is Serbian, her work lacks the specific national focus common to many of her colleagues. In several of her articles, she has addressed the topic of women's autobiography throughout the body of her work, most specifically in her article, "Women-Centered Narratives in Contemporary Croatian and Serbian literatures."^{viii} However, while the criticism of autobiographical literature in Croatia can be described as relatively systematic and thorough, the same cannot be said for the field in Serbian and Bosnian literary scholarship. In Bosnian language criticism, autobiography as a genre appears in literary discussions only as an incidental observation. For example, scholars Damir Arsenijević and Ajla Demiragić write about the creation of autobiographical narratives in war-time literature in Bosnia in the 1990s.^{ix} This can also be seen in the context of a particular literary work, such as

should start from the beginning, 2004), in which the autobiographical elements of Toskić's writing are discussed, yet are still not necessarily the focus of the analysis.^x

Serbian literary criticism handles autobiography with only a little more attention. While Serbian critical approaches towards autobiography tend to resemble the approaches in Bosnian scholarship, there have been efforts to expand on the topic in the last ten years. Scholars Dubravka Djurić and Vladislava Gordić-Petković have written articles detailing the trends in Serbian women's literature.^{xi} The most significant attempt is represented by the 1997 conference "Naučni sastanak slavista u Vukove dane," the topic of which was the various forms and roles of autobiography throughout the history of Serbian literature.^{xii} Although it was difficult to find any further information about the conference itself, a collection of papers given at the conference was available in the Serbian National Library. This collection offers a historical perspective on the uses of autobiography in Serbian literature, but it lacks the systematic analysis of autobiography as a literary genre that can be found in Croatian language scholarship.

While the lack of criticism may suggest a lack of critical concern regarding autobiographical literature in Bosnia and Serbia, it does not reflect the quantity or quality of contributions to this genre in these languages within the region at large. The literatures of each country offer a wide variety of autobiographical writing, both from the time period chosen for the focus of this research (1991-present) and in historical perspective. This writing encompasses a wide variety of sub-genres and literary approaches. As such, it is difficult to make broad statements about the qualities and characteristics of autobiographical writing in BCS literatures, and any comprehensive attempt to organize, classify, and analyze them would take years. Nonetheless, some basic

towards towards shaping our understanding of them.

In discussing the literary scene of Croatian female authors, it is impossible to avoid discussion of the heavyweights: Dubravka Ugrešić, Slavenka Drakulić, and to a lesser extent, perhaps, Irena Vrkljan. These three women have written prolifically since the 1970s, and much of their individual corpuses contain autobiographical content. Although Irena Vrkljan has written numerous books, beginning in the 1980s with *Svile, Škare (The Silk, The Shears)*, and has published throughout the beginning of the 21st century, she has led a less public life and has been less politically vocal than Drakulić or Ugrešić.^{xiii} Both Ugrešić and Drakulić, on the other hand, have been highly public and often controversial figures in the Croatian literary landscape.

Dubravka Ugrešić, as a matter of comparison, has been more involved in literary life, both at home and abroad. During the 1970s and 1980s, Ugrešić was admired and praised for her playful, experimental meta-fiction, which dealt with topics such as creativity, literary culture, and feminist issues, both in Yugoslavia and abroad. Although she long defended her work as being unconcerned with politics, when the controversy over a newspaper article in 1992 sent her (as well as Drakulić) into exile, she soon stopped making this claim as she began to comment more specifically on political conditions in Croatia through her work. Between the 1990s and the present, Ugrešić has written *Muzej bezuvjetne predaje (Museum of Unconditional Surrender, 1998)*, *Ministarstvo boli (Ministry of Pain, 2005)*, among others, and more recently, *Baba Jaga snijela jaja (Baba Jaga Laid an Egg, 2009)*, all of which have significant autobiographical components.^{xivxv} Perhaps the most well-known are *Muzej bezuvjetne predaje* and *Ministarstvo boli*, which document her experience as in exile both during and after the war. Exile, although the key theme in Ugrešić's writing, is not the only one of importance. Gender identity is also a focus of

many Serbian autobiographical novels.

Also popular, as well as controversial, is Slavenka Drakulić, whose career as a writer began in journalism. Drakulić's first major published work was her autobiographic novel, *Hologrami straha (Holograms of Fear)*, about her kidney transplant in the 1980s and her recovery.^{xvi} Since then, she has written a number of collections of essays, in addition to her novels, *Frida, ili o boli (Frida's Bed)*, a biographical work about the artist Frida Kahlo and her life-long struggle with illness, and *Kao da me nema (As if I Wasn't There)*, 2001, a novel which chronicles the experience of a young Bosnian Muslim woman in one of the many camps during the war in the 1990s.^{xvii} Both these two novels lack the narrowly autobiographical perspective found in *Hologrami straha*, but they bring up the interesting question of audience reception. Although not biographical, both works are read by critics and audiences as belonging to the biographical/autobiographical genre of literature. Furthermore, *Kao da me nema* is significant, as it undertakes a line of discussion -- the rape of women, particularly Bosnian Muslim women, during the war as a technique of warfare -- that is uncommon in the literature written by Bosnian women of any background.

Drakulić's essays, on the other hand, are quite specifically autobiographic. Both Drakulić and Ugrešić have written a variety of different works inspired by autobiographic themes, but these journalistic and essayistic works merit a analysis of their own. In many ways, the non-fiction works of Drakulić and Ugrešić belong to the newly-minted genre of "creative non-fiction" more than they do solely to "journalism" or "autobiography." Yet when considering the overlap, I believe these works remain relevant for discussion and analysis under the generic umbrella of "autobiography," as they play an important role in the oeuvres of these two writers, but

tian literature. According to some writers, this format is more easily accessible a forum for women than other forms of literature.^{xviii}

Another interesting study in autobiographic literature is Daša Drndić. Drndić, a Serbian born in Belgrade, moved to Croatia and switched from her native Serbian dialect to the Croatian. Like both Ugrešić and Drakulić, Drndić deals with the effects of immigration and/or exile in her writing. However, as can be seen in her autobiographic novel, *Maria Czestochowska još uvijek roni suze, ili umiranje u Torontu* (*Maria Czestochowska is Still Drowning in Tears, or Dying in Toronto*, 1997), she is not exclusively concerned with the “Croatian” experience of immigration and/or exile, but rather with both the Yugoslav experience, and the experience of exile in general (i.e., the experience of non-Western immigrants).^{xix} In this sense, Drndić is more akin to Ugrešić than Drakulić. Although all three of them explore the same themes and topics, Drndić and Ugrešić share a similar approach to the material. The most striking aspect of this is their sense of “Yugo-nostalgia,” the nostalgia for the multi-ethnic shared culture that began to disintegrate during the war years. Drakulić demonstrates this sentiment to a lesser degree, but within Ugrešić and Drndić’s writings, it is quite strong. Drndić and Ugrešić also share a similar interest in exile as a condition: how is it understood by those experiencing it? what effect does exile have on the culture of those in exile? what is the ultimate result of the condition of exile?

Several other Croatian authors warrant mention: Tatjana Gromača, Vedra Rudan, Julijana Matanović, Andrea Zlatar, Rujana Jeger and Maša Kolanović. Perhaps most interesting of these are Rujana Jeger and Maša Kolanović. Jeger, the daughter of Slavenka Drakulić, has published widely as a columnist in magazines and newspapers, but has also published several collections of essays and an autobiographical novel, *Darkroom* (2001), which explores the experience of grow-

among some of the younger writers to publish in post-war Croatia. There are few young, successful published writers in Croatia, but one of them is Maša Kolanović and her book, *Sloboština Barbie*.^{xxi} Published in 2008 and currently quite popular in Croatian, her debut novel explores her childhood growing up in the Novi Zagreb neighborhood of Sloboština. Kolanović offers a form of *Bildungsroman* that is unique among young Croatian female writers, although she, as a writer, has been highly influenced by Dubravka Ugrešić in her use of irony, linguistic playfulness, and in her embrace of Yugoslav material culture.

Considering the level of attention that autobiographical literature receives in Croatian scholarship, there is less need for critical analysis of the genre, given the relative thoroughness of Zlatar-Viočić and Sablić-Tomić. In Bosnian and Serbian literary circles, however, the situation is quite different. Far less attention has been paid in these countries to the genre of autobiography despite the fact that it is an active genre in these countries.

Serbian women's autobiography during the 1990s has its roots in the work that preceded it in the 1970s and 1980s, e.g., the work of Biljana Jovanović, who, despite the conservative nature of Serbian society in the 1980s, was able to produce provocative works. This trend continued into the 1990s in the writing of Judita Šalgo, who was involved in the *avant garde* movement in Vojvodina. Although Šalgo produced most of her works in the 1980s, she continued to publish until her death in 1996. Her collection of short stories, *Da li postoji život (Does life exist?* 1995), demonstrates the integration of autobiographical elements into her writing, her penchant for themes of creativity and its connection to the human experience, and an exploration of gender and sexuality, particularly as it pertained to women.^{xxii}

writer located in Belgrade who has been well-received in recent years, and is one of the best-known contemporary female writers in Serbia. Arsić, while solely a prose writer, has experimented within several genres of prose, including fiction and erotica, but has also included “quasi-autobiographical” works in her oeuvre, such as *Maco, dal’ me voliš? (Do You Love Me, Pussy Cat? 2005)*.^{xxiii} The author shares some interests with Jovanović and Šalgo, continuing a dialogue (although not necessarily a direct dialogue) on the topics of gender and female sexuality in Serbian society. As interesting as her work is, however, one suspects that the autobiographical elements of her work are more incidental and less a specific creative choice.

Svetlana Velmar-Janković shares few literary interests with Ljubica Arsić and her fellow female writers in Serbia; she is a very different type of writer, with very different concerns. Velmar-Janković, who comes from an old, aristocratic Belgrade family, has been writing for years; her first published work was in 1958 (*Ožiljak*). However, she has been prolific, publishing several books in the 1990s and 2000s, two with autobiographical content: *Lagum (The Dungeon, 1990)*, and *Prozraci (Illuminations, 2003)*.^{xxiv xxv} She has also published a number of quasi-autobiographical short stories, collected in the volume *Dorćol*, named for the Belgrade neighborhood in which she grew up. Velmar-Janković, who today remains an important cultural figure, focuses largely on the themes of identity and class, history and location, with the city of Belgrade and the events of World War II playing an important role, particularly in her novels. Her work, while notable for the concepts that it explores and admired for the lyricism in her prose, is less experimental than many of her fellow Serbian female writers, and is less interested with issues of sexuality and gender identity than her colleagues.

readers, both in Serbia and abroad. Although Tešanović had been involved in Serbian cultural activity for a number of years, her literary activity began in the early 1990s, with the publishing of *Matrimonium*, a semi-autobiographical novel written in the form of a diary. However, Tešanović began to receive international attention for *Diary of a Political Idiot*, a collection of her Internet diary entries about the events of the 1999 NATO-bombing of Belgrade.^{xxvi} The literary-ness of her texts has at times been called into question, with critics alledging that Tešanović allows too much of her activism to spill over into her prose. This observation is valid, in that the author's writing has been highly influenced by her interest in politics and her occupation as a journalist, even in her more creative literary works. An example of this is her quasi-autobiographical *Nefertiti Was Here* (2007), which explores the intersections of the Egyptian queen's life and the author's childhood in Egypt.^{xxvii} In this sense, she is unique among other Serbian female writers, who tend to be less influenced by political events and more concerned with the exploration of social and cultural standards.

While identity, whether gender or otherwise, is an important theme in Serbian women's literature from the 1990s, identity emerges as a much more powerful theme in the writings by Bosnian women. Bosnian writers such as Jasmina Musabegović, Nura Bazdulj, Safeta Obhodaš, Alma Lazarevska, Jasna Samić, and Cecilija Toškić all explore the topic of Bosnian Muslim identity and the Bosnian Muslim woman's experience, both historically and in the present. For the writer Nura Bazdulj-Hubijar, the nature of Bosnian Muslim identity is not necessarily gender specific. The author is one of the most prolific female writers in Bosnia today, having published over 20 works in the last 30 years. Her work explores a variety of different topics and themes, with much of it incorporating autobiographical elements. One interesting example of this is her

corpus of literature, integrating thematic elements from Meša Selimović and Ivo Andrić.^{xxviii} In this novel, we see the different elements of the Bosnian cultural heritage incorporated into a discussion about identity, but gender plays a barely noticeable thematic role.

Jasmina Musabegović's body of work has autobiographical components, including her earlier novels, such as *Snopis (Dream writing, 1980)*, and *Skretnice (Switches, 1986)*. Unlike many of her Bosnian female counterparts, whose use of literary forms are not particularly innovative, she is viewed as being inventive. However, Musabegović still makes use of many of the historically traditional themes and images in Bosnian literature. One striking example of this is her autobiographical novel, *Most (The Bridge, 1996)*.^{xxix} Part *Bildungsroman* and part tribute to the city of Mostar, its bridge, and her brother (who was killed during the attack on Mostar in 1992), the novel relies on the abiding image of the Mostar bridge, which provides the most interesting image of Bosnian (although not necessarily strictly Bosnian Muslim) identity.

Other writers deal with Bosnian Muslim identity in a more oblique manner. An interesting quality of the work of Jasna Samić is her subtle interplay of personal and cultural identity. Samić, who currently resides in Paris and is an active scholar of Islamic history in the Balkans, has written several books with autobiographical content. The most directly autobiographical is her war-time diary, *Pariski ratni dnevnik (Paris War Diary, 1995)*, which chronicles both her years in Paris during the war and the war itself.^{xxx} The place of the sub-genre of the diary in BCS literature from the 1990s to the present will be discussed in greater depth below, given its special role as a creator of discussion during the war, but it is worthwhile to pause for a moment and discuss Samić's other book, *Carstvo sjenki (Empire of Shadows, 2007)*.^{xxxi} This book is notable primarily for its intimate portrayal of the author and her

authors mentioned display depth of emotion, *Carstvo sjenki* is unique for its unwavering depiction of the mother-daughter bond.

Samić is also interesting for her depiction of the life of Bosnian Muslim women, a quality that she shares with Musabegović: both women are highly educated, but while they occasionally refer to provincial life, their education and success as writers and academics is not a subject of discussion; they do not depict achievements in these realms as any kind of struggle. This is entirely different from the writings of Safeta Obhodaš. Obhodaš, the author of *Šeharzade u zemlji dugih zima* (*Šeharzade in the Country of Long Winters*, 1999) and *Legende i prašina* (*Legends and Dust*, 2002), makes the topic of struggle for education and opportunity a key focus.^{xxxii} This statement is especially true for her part/*Bildungsroman*, part-autobiographical novel, *Šeharzade u zemlji dugih zima*, which details her childhood growing up in Pale, a village outside of Sarajevo, and her efforts to gain an education and pursue her dreams of writing despite opposition from her conservative family.

While autobiographical fiction seems to be the preferred “literary genre” of the war years, a number of significant diaries and collections of letters were published from the region. Perhaps the most famous, albeit slightly controversial, is *Zlata's Diary* (1992/1993), the diary of a young Bosnian girl trapped in Sarajevo during the years of the siege.^{xxxiii} Other works, however, are equally significant.^{xxxiv} Jasna Samić kept a diary of her time in Paris, titled *Pariski Ratni Dnevnik*. This diary, although partially a chronicle of her life, is also heavily politicized, providing critique not only of the political leaders in her native region, but also of the international response to the war. Another notable example of this sub-genre from a Croatian

fashion the life of the author during the war years.^{xxxv}

The war in Croatia and Bosnia plays a much more significant role in Croatian autobiographical writings than in Serbian. Although Serbian female authors address the war at times, it is not emphasized to the same degree. Serbian male writers in Serbia do address the subject. One particularly popular writer who addresses the war in his autobiographical prose is Vladimir Arsenijević. Arsenijević, a popular younger author, focuses on both the war in the 1990s and the 1999 NATO-bombing of Belgrade in his works, *U potpaljublju (In the Hold, 1995)*, and *Mexico: ratni dnevnik (Mexico: War Diary, 2000)*.^{xxxvi} One particular work stands out for the way in which it addresses the war and its affect upon citizens of the former Yugoslavia, *Vjetar ide na jug i obrće se na sjever (The Wind Goes to the South and Veers to the North, 1994)*, a collection of the letters exchanged among Rada Iveković, Biljana Jovanović, Marusa Kreše and Radmila Lazić between 1992 to 1994.^{xxxvii} Through these letters, these women, who were scholars, writers and performers, document the struggle to survive, both physically and emotionally, during those years. Although this work, like many other diaries and letters, was not written for its creative value, the reader finds many of the same themes running through it that one does in other works from that time, but perhaps most important is its documentation of the disintegration of identity, both national and individual.

Autobiography is a genre that provides useful information for those who work in foreign cultural policy. Autobiography can be seen as a populist genre, one that offers greater accessibility to those seeking a voice. Within the Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian literary traditions, autobiographical literature has a closer affiliation with the literary establishment than in American autobiographical literature. This tendency itself tells us much about the nature of literary culture in

tion remains limited (albeit in slightly different ways). Some level of privilege remains associated with the act of literary expression, as we do not see autobiographies being written by “average” people (the one exception being some of the diaries written during the war).

Despite this, it is still possible to see autobiographical literature as an outlet for issues that might otherwise receive little exposure or discussion, or that might even be excluded from mainstream literature. Raising issues of gender and sexuality in Serbian women’s autobiographical literature, as in the writings of Judita Šalgo or Ljubica Arsić, serves as a good example. Despite the fact that Serbian society is still conservative and patriarchal, the autobiographical genre has provided a means to express gender identity, which allows readers East and West to understand better the development and of women’s concerns and issues in the former Yugoslavia.

Studying autobiographical writings opens new perspectives into the experience of war for women in the former Yugoslavia. Although this topic has been studied in a variety of ways since the end of the war, autobiographical literature provides a fresh and intimate look. For example, the fact that Bosnian Muslim women have been so prolific in the genre was a surprising discovery, yet upon closer examination of the types of autobiographical works, one notices that much of the literature explores the theme of war not directly, but peripherally, at an angle. Observations like this can help us better to understand how certain groups have been affected by the events of the war. The study of autobiographical literature in Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia also shows us the processes by which national identity is disassembled and reassembled. This offers a particularly important insight into the evolution of the changable political situation in the region. Although the citizens of the former Yugoslavia subscribed, in theory, to a policy of multi-culturalism and a shared culture of the South Slavs, the resurgence in nationalism during the war has left an uneasy

individual basis as well as a group on, will help U.S. policy analysts develop a solid cultural understanding that can inform their understandings of other aspects of events in the former Yugoslavia. Culture matters.

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