

**Landscapes of Transformation: The Role of Physical and
Psychological Geography in the Quest for Identity in Pajtim
Statovci's *Crossing***

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Declaration

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Abstract

In "Landscapes of Transformation: The Role of Physical and Psychological Geography in the Quest for Identity in Pajtim Statovci's *Crossing*," this thesis looks at how migration has a major effect on how people form their identities. It looks at how geographical settings and cultural dislocation affect the protagonist Bujar's gender and sociopolitical identities. This work explores themes such as self-balkanization, nesting orientalism, hybrid identity, and the notion of the native foreigner using an interdisciplinary theoretical framework including postcolonial theory, psychoanalysis, and gender studies. The study also interacts with Homi Bhabha's third Space theory, Judith Butler's concept of performative gender, Erikson's identity development phases, and the third individuation process to show Bujar's fractured and fluid identity. The study demonstrates that migration disturbs conventional identity structures by means of a complicated psychological process rather than only a physical change. By stressing the interdependence of geographical, cultural, and psychological aspects in forming identity, this thesis adds fresh understanding of the migrant experience and the continuous negotiation of self in a postmodern society, so contributing to the debate on migration literature.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The book *Crossing* by Pajtim Statovci presents a convincing analysis of identity development inside the framework of migration and changing geography. The book offers a great investigation on how geographical locations shape the building of personal and sociopolitical identities as Bujar, the protagonist, negotiates the path from Albania to other European countries. This thesis's key question is how physical and psychological geography shapes identity as well as how migration serves as a transforming agent going beyond simple physical travel to a deeper psychological experience. In *Crossing*, Bujar's fragmented identity is shaped by his inner problems as well as the locations he lives in, therefore posing important issues like belonging, displacement, and self-understanding.

This thesis investigates how migration and geographical settings might be drivers of creation and transformation of gender and sociopolitical identities. Bujar's stories emphasise how migration is a psychological process that profoundly influences one's sense of self as well as a physical move. His difficulties adjusting in Western Europe and unresolved trauma from his background highlight how migration could split identity, especially in cases when people are unable to fully fit into new cultural settings. Though Bujar tries to represent the identity of a "native foreigner," (Wagner 243) his constant "inability to arrive" (Amelsvoort and Bosco 8) emphasises the complexities of displacement and the restrictions of assimilation against strong psychological and cultural hurdles.

The book also tackles orientalism as a self-stigmatizing mechanism, a phenomenon common in the Balkans where Western impressions have traditionally excluded and characterised the area. Using postcolonial theory, this thesis shows how these outside stigmas become internalised and shapes Bujar's self-perception and social contacts. The idea of “Balkanism” (Hayden 920) captures this internalised orientalism as Bujar struggles to separate himself from his roots while yet facing his unavoidable links to them.

Examining the complexity of Bujar's split identity, the thesis uses Homi Bhabha's theory of the third space, a transitional area where cultural identities cross and change. Bujar's idea of a patchwork identity surface as he constantly reinterpreted his sense of self in response to evolving surroundings. This third space becomes a location of hybridity whereby new cultural meanings are created, but it also puts Bujar in a condition of constant motion, never quite belonging to any one place or identity.

Apart from geographical and sociopolitical elements, this thesis also tackles Bujar's life's influence of gender standards and transsexuality. Using Judith Butler's theory of performative gender, one can examine how Bujar's manifestations of gender identity transcend repeated behaviours to get reinterpreted under different psychological contexts. The third individuation process, Bauman's idea of liquid modernity, and Erikson's stages of identity formation all help to further this viewpoint by illuminating the flux and volatility of Bujar's identity in the framework of postmodernism.

Although current research has looked at migration and identity in *Crossing*, little is known about how physical and psychological geography interact to help to fracture and rebuild identity. This thesis seeks to close this void by proving that migration is a dynamic process influencing people in several spheres. It demonstrates how geographical mobility affects the

mind and shapes one's sense of self in addition to changing the locale. Moreover, it aims to clarify how, under various psychological settings, gender can surpass its traditional limits and produce a multifarious identity moulded by both internal changes and outside environments. This thesis aims to show the complex interaction between location, migration, and the changing character of identity by means of post-colonial theory, performative gender, and identity formation frameworks.

1.2 Background

This thesis which investigates the change of identity via the prism of physical and psychological geography in Pajtim Statovci's book, *Crossing*, finds an interesting backdrop in Albanian history. The story takes place against the stormy history of Albania, a country moulded by centuries of colonisation, conquest, communism, and continuous socioeconomic unrest. The book captures Albania's turbulent past and present, showing how historical events shape people's mentality especially those of people trying to define themselves among migration and displacement.

Foreign rule and domestic conflict have defined Albania's past. Turkish armies invaded Albanian territory in the fifteenth century, finally bringing four centuries of Ottoman authority. The nation went through stagnation during this time, and its people were deprived of Renaissance intellectual and artistic achievements. Under Ottoman administration, decline persisted under the corrupt and ineffective government they installed that helped to bring about social and economic regression. Gjergj Kastrioti, better known as Skanderbeg, led the Albanians in a protracted fight against the Turks, hence epitomising opposition to foreign rule. Though he is revered as a national hero, Skanderbeg's death in 1468 signalled the start of decades of foreign rule isolating Albania from the West.

Further upheaval for Albania came from the founding of a new Balkan kingdom headed by Serbia (later Yugoslavia) following World War I. Under internal strife and outside pressure, the nation battled a power struggle that produced Ahmed Zogu as King Zog, who sided with Serbia but was subsequently toppled by Italian forces in 1939. Italy's invasion and occupation during World War II intensified Albania's social and economic collapse, therefore preparing the basis for the communist era that followed. Under Enver Hoxha's totalitarian government, Albania becomes even more cut off from Western politics, philosophy, or culture. After Hoxha passed away in 1985, Ramiz Alia tried to welcome Albania to the world, but the fall of the communist government in the early 1990s sent the nation into anarchy with great poverty and turmoil.

Emerging from this historical context, Statovci's *Crossing* tells the tale of the hardships of the Albanian people, especially in the post-communist era when Albania became among the poorest and most underdeveloped nation in Europe. The book captures the brutal reality of post-communist Albania, including child trafficking, organ harvesting, and prostitution atrocities not only fictional but also part of the terrible past of the nation. Two boys named Bujar and Agim try to flee their depressing surroundings and seek a better life in Western Europe. But as they cross these geographical borders, the trip changes their identities as much as their physical locales.

Presenting Albania's sociopolitical scene as a reflection of the personal hardships of its characters, the book prepares the reader for an investigation of post-colonial and migratory rhetoric. Bujar's choice to leave Albania is motivated by a sense of sorrow and retribution for the abandonment he feels from his dead parents, not by a taste of adventure or world curiosity. For Bujar, a person he channels his hopes and dreams through, Agim becomes a symbol of emotional reliance; but his loss finally intensifies Bujar's existential dilemma. The way the book presents Albania as "Europe's rubbish dump, Europe's backyard, Europe's largest open prison" (Statovci

51) speaks to the hardships of its heroes, who view migration as their only means of escape from an inevitable cycle of poverty and persecution.

Bujar and Agim's personal experiences also reflect the historical and sociopolitical elements of Albania's present identity. Understanding Bujar's inner struggle depends mostly on the idea of "self-balkanizing" (Amelsvoort and Bosco 2). It speaks about the way underprivileged groups absorb negative preconceptions and come to identify as self-stigmatized. In Bujar's instance, his shame over his Albanian roots and his wish to reject his cultural past show a kind of self-balkanization that is, an attempt to separate himself from his background and embrace a new identity in Western Europe. Though he tries to hide his roots, the unresolved pain and cultural ties to Albania nevertheless define his experiences.

From Tirana to several European towns, the geographical locations of the book help to spark an exchange on the junction of migration and identity development. Bujar is under great psychological and cultural pressure to change from a modern, orthodox Muslim background in Albania into a postmodern Western civilisation. This adaptation is marked by a search for identity in a consumerist society that prioritises performance and outward appearances, not by a seamless process. From a Spanish man who captivates ladies to an embodiment of Agim's goals, Bujar's attempts to fit in a culture where he always feels like an outsider depict his struggle to do so.

The book also explores the changing nature of gender identity since Bujar's perspective of his own gender becoming more disjointed. His cross-dressing and acceptance of Agim's unrealised aspirations highlight this change especially. Performative gender theory by Judith Butler offers a prism through which one may view how Bujar's gender identity once determined by steady, repeated acts becomes unstable as he negotiates the psychological and cultural

demands of his new surroundings. Erikson's stages of development and Bauman's idea of liquid modernity both help to highlight the disturbance in Bujar's identity formation and aid to explain the fluid and always changing character of his self-conception.

In *Crossing*, migration is a psychological trip as much as a physical one. Bujar's third individuation process that which relates to the psychological effort of creating a unique sense of self apart from one's prior ties is complicated by not grieving the loss of his hometown, identity, or lover. Bujar's attempts to create a new identity are hindered by unresolved trauma and ongoing feelings of inadequacy, hence producing a fragmented personality. His failure to completely accept a new identity or reconcile with his Albanian heritage produces a patchwork identity a mix of many influences, experiences, and roles that never quite fit together.

Crossing ultimately functions as a literary investigation of how psychological and geographical shifts affect gender identity and sociopolitical context. It shows that migration means navigating difficult psychological landscapes moulded by history, culture, and personal trauma in addition to crossing physical boundaries. The book depicts the difficulties experienced by people like Bujar who, in their search for change, discover they are bound between the need to flee their past and the unavoidable reality their history still shapes their present.

1.3 Objectives

1.3.1. General Objectives

The main goal of this thesis is to investigate the intricate interaction between psychological and physical geography in forming identity in *Crossing* by Pajtim Statovci. It seeks to examine how the experience of migration and geographical settings greatly affect the development of both

socio-political and gender identity in the protagonist, Bujar. This study aims to grasp how relocation, cultural dislocation, and the need for transformation help to fragment and reconstruct identity by using post-colonial theory and associated ideas.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the thesis are:

- **Examining the impact of migration on identity formation** : Look at how the protagonist's sense of self changes when traversing geographical limits, therefore influencing gender identity and sociopolitical perspective. The aim is to show that migration transforms the personal identity by means of a great psychological trip in addition to a physical one.
- **Analysing the role of PostColonial theory in understanding self-stigmatization and identity**: The thesis will show how Albania's historical and sociopolitical context shapes Bujar's identity using ideas including balkanization, self-balkanization, and nesting orientalism. The study seeks to show how these pressures support a fractured self-concept and internalised shame.
- **Exploring the concepts of the "Third Space" and "Native Foreigner"**: The study talks about how Bujar's journey towards Europe shows an attempt to construct a hybrid identity using Homi Bhabha's concept of the third space. This thesis will look at why Bujar, in spite of his attempts, stays unable to completely arrive in Europe, hypothesising that his status as a refugee and unresolved trauma prevent his integration and self-acceptance.

- **Evaluating the impact of changing gender norms and transsexuality in the context of migration:** One specific objective of the work is to examine Bujar's gender identity's fluid character using Judith Butler's theory of performative gender, Erikson's identity development phases, and the third individuation process helps one the goal is to demonstrate how gender roles could transcend conventional wisdom and change under several psychological contexts.
- **Addressing the gaps in existing literature:** A particular motive of the thesis is to emphasise the dearth of thorough investigation on the interplay of geographical settings, migration, and identity in current studies, thus orienting this thesis as a contribution to grasp the complex character of identity transition in a postmodern, post-colonial setting.

The general goal is to offer a complex view of how geographical dislocation, cultural influences, and personal trauma interact to define identity in a society where migration is a progressively common experience.

1.4: Research Questions

This thesis seeks to address the following research questions, which explore the complexities of identity transformation in Pajtim Statovci's *Crossing*:

1. What effects does relocation and changing topography bring on the protagonist Bujar's socio-political and gender identity? How might the physical dislocations affect his sense of self, hence producing a disjointed and unstable identity?
2. How could post-colonial ideas like balkanisation, self-balkanisation, and nesting orientalism help Bujar to view his Albanian background and identity? In what ways do

Albania's sociopolitical and historical backgrounds affect his self-stigmatization and wish to hide his cultural roots?

3. In what ways does Bujar's attempt to negotiate a third space as a native foreigner mirror the difficulties of identity building in a postmodern, consumerist society? Why does he find it difficult to completely fit into the European cultural scene, and how might his position as a refugee and unresolved trauma support this "inability to really arrive"? (Amelsvoort and Bosco 8)
4. How may theories including Judith Butler's performative gender, Erikson's identity development, and the third individuation process help to understand Bujar's fluidity and fragmentation of gender identity?
5. In the framework of migration, trauma, and identity development, how does *Crossing* represent more general postmodernism and liquid modernism?
6. What fresh angles on the modern experience of displacement and identity development in a globalised society one could get from Bujar's case?

These questions seek to give a thorough knowledge of how physical and psychological geography shapes the search for identity in *Crossing*, therefore offering a critical investigation of the junction between migration, cultural history, and human transformation.

1.5: Theoretical Framework

Combining several theories, the framework for this thesis investigates into the psychological and physical geography that affect the search for identity in Pajtim Statovci's *Crossing*. Postcolonial studies, migration literature and gender theory - all these ideas offer a multifarious means of comprehending the complexity of Bujar's fragmented and unstable identity. The main elements of Bujar's path including the influence of migration, cultural history, and personal development will be examined using the theoretical lenses that follow.

1.5.1 Postcolonial Ideology of Self and Other

The postcolonial approach provides a basic mirror through which one may see the identity conflicts in *Crossing*. It looks at how colonial histories impact a person's view of their cultural identity, therefore stressing the paradox between the self and the other. Bujar's struggle with self-identity and the sense of being othered throughout the book is much influenced by Albania's past of Ottoman domination, Balkan wars, and sociopolitical upheaval. Albania's political and historical marginalisation results in a complex self-perception among its people, usually marked by internalised inferiority and a sense of separation from the civilised West. Bujar's wish to renounce his Albanian roots and fit into Western society clearly shows the conflict between the self and the other; yet, the ongoing cultural marks that define him as an outsider always obstruct his attempts.

The concepts of Postcolonial Ideology of Self and Other, Self-Balkanization, and Nesting will explain how Bujar's view of others and himself is shaped by Albania's complicated historical and cultural legacy, therefore highlighting how outside impressions could get

internalised and result in self-stigmatization. This study will explain how such processes influence identity development, particularly in light of migration and the need for belonging.

1.5.2 Self-Balkanisation and Self-Exoticism

The idea of self-balkanisation (Amelsvoort and Bosco 2) captures the absorption of negative preconceptions connected with the Balkans. It points to a process wherein people from this area see and project themselves via an angle shaped by outside impressions. Bujar's attempts to flee his Balkan identity clearly show this phenomenon since he intentionally strives to remove himself from cultural icons that define him as Albanian. He acts in a kind of self-exoticism, selectively presenting himself in ways that fit Western assumptions or fantasies about Balkan people. This inner struggle of embracing and rejecting his cultural roots addresses the postcolonial dilemma of negotiating an identity defined by the intersection of self-constructed and externally imposed definitions.

1.5.3 Nesting Orientalism

By studying the intra-European hierarchy of orientalism, Milica Bakic-Hayden's idea of "nesting orientalism" (Hayden 922) develops on Edward Said's original notion. Nesting orientalism shows up in *Crossing* Bujar's view of Albania as Europe's "backyard," (Statovci 51) a territory seen less civilised and lower than Western Europe. Bujar's attempts to deny his Albanian identity draw attention to the internalised orientalism that places the Balkans as always the other, as he

moves to different countries. Bujar's experiences of cultural alienation and attempts to negotiate Western society, where he is constantly confronted with the expectation to separate himself from his roots in order to be accepted, clearly show this dynamic.

1.5.4 Migration Literature and Hybrid Identity

Bujar's narrative revolves on migration; physical displacement sets off deep psychological transformations. In the backdrop of displacement, migration literature helps one to grasp the complexity of identity alteration, loss, and adaptability. The trip from Albania to Western Europe marks a psychological and cultural dislocation as much as a physical one. Bujar's sense of in-betweenness, as he negotiates several cultural settings, reveals the shattered character of his identity. Bujar's experiences in *Crossing* speak to the effects of leaving one's native country, including nostalgia, loss of identity, and the struggle to assimilate, all of which migration literature addresses.

Hybrid identity theory clarifies how the process of migration and cultural mixing results in the creation of a composite identity comprising components from several cultural origins. Bujar's travels throughout other nations help to create a patchwork identity that captures his attempt to combine his Albanian background with his experiences with the modern West. His endeavour to adopt several roles and personas while forsaking his Albanian background reflects the disintegration that defines hybrid identities. Emphasising the fluidity and plurality of self in a globalised society, this theory offers a prism through which one may view how Bujar's identity is created and rebuilt in response to various cultural settings.

These points of view will help to clarify how geographical mobility causes psychological change and shapes the hybrid identity. Examining Bujar's experiences under these lenses emphasises the psychological and cultural components of displacement and shows how migration causes identity disintegration.

1.5.5 Concept of Native Foreigner and the “Inability to Arrive”

The idea of the "native foreigner" (Wagner 243) explains the situation of being stuck between two worlds belonging totally to neither. For Bujar, this shows up as an ongoing battle to be accepted and a part of anything. Having Eastern European roots, he stays an outsider even if he tries to follow Western society's cultural standards. His attempts to fit in are greeted with mistrust or rejection, which emphasises the irony of wanting to be "native" (Wagner 243) in a foreign country. Bujar stays caught between his past in Albania and his present in the West, therefore forming the identity of the native foreigner from a constant condition of liminality.

The concept of the "inability to arrive" (Amelsvoort and Bosco 8) captures the experience of immigrants who, in spite of their best attempts to integrate, never feel completely accepted in their new nations. For Bujar, the feeling of "arrival" (Amelsvoort and Bosco 8) is elusive since unresolved trauma and the ongoing weight of his Albanian background impede his attempts to integrate. His psychological and cultural dislocation makes it challenging for him to develop a consistent identity. His sense of alienation is exacerbated and his identity is fragmented in part by his inability to feel like a member.

These concepts will help us investigate Bujar's continuous battle to fit into new cultural environments and the paradox of trying to fit in a place that always labels him as an alien. They underline the ongoing negotiation between origins and new identities, which is necessary to grasp how migration shapes the identity.

1.5.6 Homi Bhabha's "Third Space"

Understanding the hybridity in Bujar's identity depends critically on Homi Bhabha's idea of the "third space" (Bhabha 28). The "third space" (Bhabha 28) is a place of cultural negotiation where identities are always created and rebuilt. For Bujar, this third space allows him to fluctuate between many cultural and gender identities, therefore resisting fixed identities. But Bujar's effort to balance his Albanian background with the cultural demands of his host nations marks the third space as being one of instability and uncertainty. His attempts to create a fresh identity in the third space draw attention to the conflicts among assimilation, resistance, and self-reinventions.

The idea of "third space" (Bhabha 28) will help us examine how Bujar tries to establish a cultural identity that is neither totally Western nor just Albanian. This theoretical lens will assist to emphasise the fluidity and ambivalence of identity in the book by highlighting how change is a continuous process shaped by several psychological and cultural elements.

1.5.7 Postmodernism and Bauman's Liquid Modernity

Postmodernist works frequently examine issues of unstable identity, fractured grand narratives, and brokenness. In *Crossing*, Bujar's fluidity of identity and the absence of a clear, cogent self clearly show the postmodern backdrop. The way the book is organized which moves across several eras and places reflects the postmodern rejection of stability and linearity. Bujar's identity shows up as a mosaic of experiences, memories, and roles rather than based on any one story or cultural legacy. The emphasis of postmodernism on plurality and ambiguity offers a helpful perspective on Bujar's fractured identity.

The idea of "liquid modernity" (Bauman 15) proposed by Zygmunt Bauman is distinguished by a world in perpetual transition whereby conventional systems and identities have become erratic and unstable. Given his constant adaptation to different cultural surroundings, Bujar's lack of a solid identity reflects this liquid condition in the framework of migration. The pressure to negotiate a constantly shifting socio-political terrain in Western Europe intensifies the flux of his identity, therefore fostering a condition of ongoing transformation. Bauman's theory offers understanding of the difficulties in creating identity in a modern environment of fast change and uncertainty.

These perspectives show how fast cultural and social changes disturb conventional limits of identity, so helping one to grasp the instability and fragmentation of identity in the modern society. This will assist the thesis argument on the fluid and dynamic character of Bujar's self-conception.

1.5.8 Judith Butler's "Performative Gender" and Unstable Gender and Erikson's Identity Development: Diffusion and Despair

According to Judith Butler's theory of performative gender, repeated acts and performances help to create gender rather than it being a fixed or natural attribute. Bujar's gender identity in *Crossing* is changeable since he embraces several gender roles in several cultural settings. The horrific events and pressure to fit Western society norms add to the complexity of his gender identification. Bujar questions accepted ideas of gender by cross-dressing and playing out Agim's desire of becoming a female, therefore exposing the performative and manufactured character of identity.

Particularly the stages of "diffusion" and "despair," Erik Erikson's (9-17) theory of identity development helps explain Bujar's difficulties creating a cogent sense of self. When someone fails to overcome crises with identity development, confusion and a lack of direction follow from identity spread. Bujar's inability to respond on what he wants to be and his depressed emotions mirror the condition of hopelessness. His continuous battles with identity and unresolved trauma help to explain this psychological disintegration.

These ideas will assist to examine Bujar's changeable gender identification and his battle with self-acceptance. Butler's theories on performativity will show how Bujar's gender identification changes in response to cultural expectations; Erikson's framework on identity development will help to clarify his psychological difficulties in reaching a cohesive self.

1.5.9 Third Individuation: Mother and Child Symbiosis and Loss of a Mate

Margaret Mahler's third individuation process theory emphasises the symbiotic connection between the mother and the child. For Bujar, migration is like leaving the "motherland," (Mahler 291) and his individuation process suffers when he fails to completely cut off ties to his Albanian background. Applying the "mother-child" (Mahler 291) viewpoint helps one to grasp how Bujar's psychological struggle to separate from his cultural identity influences his capacity to fit into different cultural settings.

The third individuation phase also helps one to grasp the effects of losing a major relationship, like Bujar's friend Agim. Agim's emotional development suffers and his divided identity results from his loss. Bujar's individuation process is complicated by his reliance on Agim as an "idealised mate," (Greene 44) which results in emotional upheaval and unresolved sadness. The incapacity to appropriately grieve the loss compromises his capability to create new relationships or construct a cohesive sense of self, therefore repeating old patterns in his identity building.

These concepts together assist to shape the thesis by providing insights on how Pajtim Statovci's *Crossing's* experiences of migration, cultural displacement, and identity disintegration show. They offer instruments to examine how physical and psychological geography interact and how these changes Bujar's search for identity.

These ideas will help one to realise how Bujar's psychological growth is affected by his emotional attachments and unresolved grief. They will help to explain how loss and migration interrupt personal development, therefore fostering a broken sense of self.

Emphasising the interdependence of physical movement and psychological change, these theories will help reach the thesis goal of demonstrating how geographical settings and migration affect identity development.

1.6: Literature Review

The following will be covered in developing the literature study for the thesis "Landscapes of Transformation: The Role of Physical and Psychological Geography in the Quest of Identity in Pajtim Statovci's *Crossing*": body of current studies on Statovci's works, especially on issues of migration, the function of geography in literature, and the psychological aspects of location and identity. Furthermore, emphasised will be the gaps in the body of current research this thesis attempts to fill.

1. Existing Research on Pajtim Statovci's Work and Themes of Migration

Pajtim Statovci's works have attracted notice for their examination of migration, identity, and the effects of cultural dislocation, and it is especially so for *Crossing*. Originally from Kosovo, Statovci moved to Finland with his family at an early age. His art captures the challenges of people stuck between cultures, usually negotiating the conflict between roots and hopes for a better life. Scholars have observed that *Crossing* is a narrative that exposes the psychological and emotional struggle of being a migrant in a society where cultural boundaries and societal expectations define personal identities. The book centres on Bujar, a young Albanian immigrant trying to break free from his nation's restrictions and rebuild his identity over several European settings.

Current research emphasises how migration in Statovci's work becomes a dynamic process influencing the characters' sense of self and belonging, not only a change of place. Generally speaking, migration literature has looked at how people create hybrid identities that is, where they combine aspects of their host and home cultures. However, *Crossing* goes beyond to ask whether such hybridity really enables integration or causes a constant search for identity because of host society rejection. Recognising that Bujar's gender fluidity is a metaphor for the larger instability of migrant identities, academics such as Jesse Van Amelsvoort and Enrico Dal Bosco examine the intersections of queerness, migration, inability to arrive, and the search for selfhood in *Crossing*.

Although the body of current research does a good job of examining the fragmentation of identity in Statovci's work, less attention is paid to how geographical locations and psychological influence of those environments help to cause this fragmentation. This thesis attempts to close

this discrepancy by looking at how the psychological and physical environments affect the change of identity in the novel. It will also explore the subtle process of self-balkanization, in which internalised orientalism causes one to reject their cultural background as Bujar's complicated relationship with his Albanian background shows.

2. The Role of Geography in Literature

Geography and literature have a symbiotic relationship whereby geographical settings not only offer the background for stories but also actively define the experiences and identities of the characters. In literary studies, the concept of geography goes beyond actual locations to include the metaphorical connotations connected to sites. Scholars like Edward Said contend that geographical settings are often politically and culturally created environments reflecting power dynamics, cultural hierarchies, and social identities, thereby reflecting political and cultural construction. Particularly postcolonial studies stress how literary depictions of geography could either support or contradict colonial narratives by defining geographic settings as areas of struggle or resistance.

Geography plays a defining part in the building of a migrant's identity in migration literature most of the times. Moving from one place to another is accompanied with psychological changes that affect the person's sense of self, therefore transcending simple physical location. Often feeling estrangement or liminality, works by writers like Salman Rushdie, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and Jhumpa Lahiri show how immigrants negotiate the physical and symbolic limits of their origins and destinations. In *Crossing*, the changing topography reflects the fluid and unstable character of Bujar's personality, which is moulded and

changed by the locations he lives among. This idea fits Homi Bhabha's "third space" (Bhabha 28) hypothesis, according to which the migrant resides in an in-between area neither totally one culture nor another.

Although most of the current literature on geography in literature emphasises on cultural and political consequences, there is little study on how geographical changes affect the psychological development of identity, especially in the framework of post-communist, Balkan narratives. This thesis aims to close this void by examining how Bujar's travel around Europe reflects not only a geographical but also a psychological search for identity. This thesis will add to the research on geography's influence on literature, especially within migration stories, by analysing how the several settings of the book from the undeveloped alleys of Tirana to the cultural centres of Italy contribute to Bujar's shattered sense of self.

3. The Psychological Dimensions of Place and Identity

Literary studies, sociology, and psychology among other disciplines have looked at the interaction between place and identity. Scholars have long understood that locations are areas with psychological and emotional resonance as well as physical surroundings. Environmental psychologists such as Irwin Altman and Setha Low's idea of place attachment holds that people create strong emotional links to certain locations that help to define their identities and sense of belonging. In the context of home, where cultural, familial, and personal memories entwine to define a feeling of self, this link is especially powerful.

The psychological aspects of place become especially relevant in migration literature

since characters are often caught between the familiarity of their native country and the unknown of their new surroundings. What Bhabha describes as unhomeliness, whereby the migrant's feeling of home is disturbed and causes a condition of displacement and identity uncertainty, complicates this experience. Erikson's theory of identity development emphasises the part crises play in forming one's identity, so supporting this view even more. Bujar suffers a sequence of identity crises in *Crossing*, which are aggravated by his frequent travel and search for a place he fits. These geographical changes have psychological ramifications that emphasise how closely geography, memory, and identity interact.

Though the psychological aspects of place are acknowledged, little thorough research on how the disturbance of geographical continuity affects the process of identity development, especially in relation to forced migration and self-balkanization. This thesis seeks to solve this by analysing how Bujar's experiences in various places inspire memories, cultural dissonance, and emotional turbulence, therefore forming his changing identity. It will also examine how ideas including Erikson's identity development, Judith Butler's performative gender theory, and the third individuation process fit the psychological aspects of migration.

4. Gaps in Existing Literature

The existing literature has provided valuable insights into Statovci's themes of migration, the role of geography in literature, and the psychological aspects of place and identity. However, several gaps remain that this thesis seeks to address:

- Intersection of Physical and Psychological Geography: Little study has been done on how geographical changes affect not only character physical mobility but also their psychological development. Examining both physical relocation and psychological disorientation, this thesis will investigate how geographical settings in Crossing impact Bujar's identity issues.
- Postcolonial Implications in the Context of the Balkans: Though postcolonial literature on self-orientalisation and identity in former colonies is abundant, the particular case of self-balkanisation (Amelsvoort and Bosco 3) in Albanian or more general Balkan narratives is less often mentioned. This thesis will close this discrepancy by examining how cultural rejection and internalised orientalism show up in Bujar's identity development.
- Unstable Gender and the Fluidity of Identity in Migration Narratives: Although current research have addressed queerness and fluid gender identities in Statovci's work, a thorough investigation of how migration and cultural displacement shape these identities is much needed. The thesis will interact with Judith Butler's theory of performative gender and the idea of hybrid identities to grasp how Bujar's emotional and geographical path shapes his changeable gender identification.
- Psychological Consequences of Forced Migration and Trauma: Though there is little attention paid to the psychological effects of forced migration, particularly in relation to unresolved trauma and the inability to grieve, migration literature frequently emphasises

the societal elements of displacement. This thesis will investigate how migration could interrupt personal development and result in fractured identities by combining theories of loss, Erikson's stages of identity development (Erikson 9-23), and the third individuation process.

Through filling in these spaces, the thesis seeks to further apply psychology theory in literature, postcolonial studies, and migratory literature. It will provide a thorough study of how psychological and physical geography interact to define identity in *Crossing*, therefore augmenting already published research on Statovci's work and more general debates on migration and identity.

1.7 Research Methodology

Designed to offer a methodical approach to examining the impact of geographical settings on identity development, the thesis "Landscapes of Transformation: The Role of Physical and Psychological Geography in the Quest of Identity in Pajtim Statovci's *Crossing*" The methodological approach used will be described in this part together with the techniques for literary and thematic analysis as well as the procedures of compiling and evaluating material from the main text, *Crossing*, and pertinent secondary sources.

1. Methodological Approach

This thesis uses a qualitative approach with literary analysis as the main technique. Examining the complex and metaphorical depictions of geography, migration, and identity in the book calls especially for literary study. By means of this strategy, the emphasis will be on deciphering the text in a way that exposes the underlying themes and patterns connected with physical and psychological environments as well as the changing sense of self of the protagonist.

Thematic analysis will support the literary study by helping to find in the book repeating themes, motifs, and symbols. By means of a methodical approach, thematic analysis will enable one to methodically expose how these components support the key themes of identity, geography, and the metamorphosis Bujar experiences. A thorough study of the text depends on the combination of literary and theme analyses since it helps one to grasp the layers of the narrative and their relation to the theoretical framework.

2. Literary Analysis as a Method

The literary study will concentrate on closely reading *Crossing* to investigate how the portrayal of geographical settings shapes the development of identity. Close reading of the book will help one to find important passages emphasising Bujar's experiences with migration, dislocation, and cultural rejection. Particularly focused will be the symbolic and metaphorical usage of locations, including Albania and other European towns, to grasp how they impact Bujar's view of himself and his surrounds.

Using postcolonial theories including ideas of self-balkanisation (Amelsvoort and Bosco 3), nesting orientalism (Hayden 922), and the formation of the Other, the study will examine how outside impressions of Bujar's homeland shape his identity. The study will also use Homi

Bhabha's "Third Space" (Bhabha 28) theory to investigate the in-between areas Bujar visits as a migrant and Judith Butler's theory of performative gender to look at how his experiences subvert conventional ideas of gender identity.

To further comprehend how the character negotiates the fluid and fractured identity arising from his geographical and psychological journey, the literary analysis will also include the ideas of Erikson's identity development, the third individuation process, and Bauman's liquid modernity. These theories will help to decode the internal conflicts and outside events of the character, so offering a multi-dimensional knowledge of identity creation in the book.

3. Thematic Analysis as a Method

By methodically spotting and evaluating the topics that surface from the text, theme analysis will augment literary analysis. Using this approach, we will investigate recurrent concepts, patterns, and interpretations of geographical displacement, hybrid identity, cultural rejection, and unresolved trauma.

To conduct the thematic analysis, the following steps will be undertaken:

- **Familiarization with the Text:** The first stage consists in several readings of *Crossing* in order to get a thorough awareness of the story, the character development, and the way issues are portrayed. This technique will assist in determining the first themes such as migration, identity fragmentation, and cultural dissonance that fit the study goals.

- **Generating Initial Codes:** Important texts and fragments highlighting physical and psychological geography, performative gender, self-balkanization, and the third space will be noted and arranged. This coding system will help you find pertinent textual evidence bolstering the thesis claims.
- **Searching for Themes:** Examining the coded data will then help one to find recurrent themes and sub-themes. Key themes might be "inability to arrive," (Amelsvoort and Bosco 8) loss and mourning, and hybrid identity, for instance. Furthermore, taken into account will be the connections between these subjects and the theoretical framework.
- **Reviewing Themes:** The identified themes will be examined for consistency and coherence in respect to the goals and problems of inquiry. To guarantee a targeted and relevant study, some themes might be revised, merged, or dropped out.
- **Defining and Naming Themes:** Every theme shall be precisely described to catch its core and importance in respect to the objectives of the study. This will entail clarifying how the theme is expressed in the book and how it helps one to grasp Bujar's identity development.
- **Writing Up:** Combining the literary analysis with the thematic study will be the last stage to create a coherent story supporting the thesis claims. Linking the thematic results with theoretical ideas will help one to grasp the way the book explores geography, migration, and identity.

4. Gathering Data from the Primary Text and Secondary Sources

The main source of data for this project will be Pajtim Statovci's new *Crossing*. Close reading of the text will help one to identify pertinent sections illustrating the fundamental themes of geographical and psychological displacement, hybrid identity, and the effect of place on identity. Examined for their thematic relevance, especially those showing Bujar's experiences in other nations, his interactions with other characters, and his internal monologues on identity and belonging, are key scenes and conversation.

Scholarly papers, books, and essays covering issues of migration, identity, postcolonialism, and gender theory in literature will be among secondary materials. These materials will offer background knowledge and context for the theoretical frameworks used in the thesis that of Judith Butler's gender performativity theory, Erikson's identity development theory, and Homi Bhabha's third space theory. Furthermore, used to grasp the sociopolitical context of Albania as portrayed in the book will be supplementary material on Balkan history, culture, and postcolonial theory.

5. Analyzing Data from *Crossing* and Secondary Sources

The analysis will involve a multi-step process:

- Close Reading of Primary Text: This stage consists on a thorough examination of *Crossing* in order to spot main ideas and trends. Examining the chosen passages in line with the study topics, with an eye on how psychological and geographical settings shape the protagonist's search for identity,

- Contextual Analysis with Secondary Literature: Secondary sources will help to provide the events and settings in the book historical and cultural background. Knowing Albania's past of conflict, communism, and cultural stigmatisation, for instance, will help one to better appreciate Bujar's identification challenges and sense of rejection. Additionally included to enhance the reading of the main text are scholarly debates on postcolonialism, migration literature, and identity theory.
- Application of Theoretical Frameworks: Examined through the prism of several theories including postcolonial theory, performative gender, liquid modernity, and identity development theories the collected data will be This theoretical study will show how the motifs in *Crossing* connect with or contradict accepted literary and psychological theories, therefore helping to reveal deeper meanings in the book.
- Comparative Analysis: Comparisons between Bujar's experiences and those of other book characters as well as with those in other migration literature will be done. By means of this comparative approach, the special features of Statovci's representation of migration and identity will be emphasised as well as shared trends among several displacement narratives.

6. Addressing Limitations

The research methodology acknowledges some potential limitations:

- Subjectivity in Literary Analysis: Since the study employs qualitative analysis, the interpretations are by nature arbitrary. Several interpretations will be taken into account and theoretical frameworks will be regularly used to help the analysis in order to handle this.
- Limited Scope of Textual Data: The study centres on one main work, *Crossing*. This can restrict the generalisability of the results even while it enables a thorough analysis. Comparative analysis and secondary literature will help to offset this restriction by orienting the study within a larger literary and theoretical framework.

7. Ethical Considerations

The study will uphold ethical norms by honouring intellectual property and noting all sources. As a published work, the main text is available for literary study in public domain. Appropriate citation of secondary sources will help to preserve intellectual honesty.

This part's methodological approach is meant to help to enable a comprehensive and multi-dimensional study of *Crossing*. The thesis attempts to investigate the complexity of identity development as affected by geographical and psychological elements by combining literary analysis with thematic analysis and rooting the research on accepted theories. The approach will guarantee that the study is both theoretically informed and thorough, therefore helping to clarify migration literature and identity theory.

1.8: Scope and Limitations

This thesis's concentration on Pajtim Statovci's original *Crossing* and the investigation of how geographical settings and migration affect identity development, both gendered and sociopolitical defines its scope. The study seeks to examine the protagonist Bujar's encounters and changes as he negotiates several cultural, social, and physical environments. Particularly focused on topics of geographical relocation, cultural rejection, hybrid identity, and psychological disintegration as shown in the book is the research. It also looks at how Bujar's search for selfhood shapes ideas including self-balkanization, nesting orientalism, and the third individuation process.

Examining the portrayal of migration and identity mostly relies on *Crossing*, which forms the centre of the study. Although allusions to other literary works could be used for comparison, the in-depth study is limited to one book to offer a complete knowledge of the issues inside one text. This limited concentration guarantees a thorough literary and thematic study, thereby enabling a close inspection of the contents, symbols, and ramifications for more general theoretical debates of the novel.

Though the focus of this study is clearly stated, some limits have to be admitted. Availability of resources and access to secondary literature are two major restrictions. Though efforts have been made to incorporate a broad spectrum of academic sources including journal articles, books, and essays on migration literature, identity theory, and postcolonial studies some pertinent works may not have been easily available due to publishing constraints or language

obstacles. For example, some academic publications on Balkan history or cultural studies might not be English-available, therefore restricting the depth of study on Albania's historical and sociopolitical setting.

The adoption of particular theoretical frameworks adds still another constraint. Although this thesis combines several theories such as Homi Bhabha's "Third Space," (Bhabha 28) Judith Butler's performative gender, and Erikson's identity development there may be other points of view or theoretical models not discussed that could offer new insights. Although their applicability to the issues of the book led one to concentrate on these specific theories, this decision also limits the study to those theoretical perspectives. Consequently, less research is done on other frameworks like trauma theory or queer theory, so restricting the range of interpretative opportunities.

Moreover, the qualitative character of the literary study imposes a restriction regarding subjectivity. The viewpoint of the researcher shapes interpretations of *Crossing* naturally, so they could differ from other readings. Although this thesis tries to apply theoretical frameworks rigorously and consistently, various scholars might approach the text with other readings, therefore producing different results.

At last, the emphasis of the study on a particular novel reduces its generalisability. The conclusions and claims of this thesis are particular to *Crossing* and might not always be relevant to all migrant literature or identity debates. Though this thesis offers a targeted and theoretically grounded exploration of *Crossing*, it acknowledges the limits inherent in the availability of

resources, chosen theoretical frameworks, and the subjectivity of literary analysis. The in-depth study aims to significantly contribute to the understanding of migration narratives and the psychological impact of geographical displacement, even if the findings are not universally applicable. These restrictions, then, do not diminish the importance of the study in advancing debates on migration, identity, and literature.

1.9: Conclusion

Pajtim Statovci's *Crossing* provides a rich resource for analysing issues of migration, displacement, and fractured identity, showing how greatly geographical and cultural settings affect the search for self-definition of the person. Postcolonial theory, performative gender, and the idea of third individuation among other theoretical frameworks help one to see the protagonist's effort to balance his past and present while negotiating several cultural environments. This thesis seeks to contribute to a better knowledge of migration literature and the psychological components of displacement by filling in gaps in current research, especially the understudied junction of geography and identity. By means of a thorough literary examination of *Crossing*, this paper aims to underline the transforming power of migration on the development of gendered and sociopolitical identities.

Chapter 2

Discussion

In Pajtim Statovci's *Crossing*, the concept of self-balkanisation takes front stage in helping to explain the identity issue Bujar the protagonist faces. Usually speaking, the word balkanisation describes the partition or fragmentation of a territory into smaller, usually hostile pieces. But in the book, this process goes beyond geopolitics to the sphere of self-perception, where Albanians and others in the area absorb and propagate the Western preconceptions directed against them. This self-othering is a kind of cultural and psychological Balkanization in which people start to regard the Balkans as a peripheral, troubled, and backward area via the warped lens used by Western discourse.

The West, sometimes known as the Occident, has mostly shaped the idea of the Balkans as both a symbolic and geographical construct since it has often treated the area as a "Third Space" (Bhabha 28) a zone on the periphery of Europe that has to be controlled or defended against the alleged threats from the Eastern Hemisphere. Emphasised in Edward Said's *Orientalism*, this view of the Balkans places the area as the Other a location of impurity, strife, and cultural diversity radically different from Western ideas of modernity, progress, and order. Said's (Said 12) critique of Orientalism exposes how "the Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories, and landscapes, remarkable experiences...the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) thereby reinforcing its own cultural superiority" (Said 92) Within this larger Eastern framework, the Balkans have also been portrayed as "under humanised, antidemocratic, backward, barbaric, and so forth," (Said 92) a territory always straddling the line between East and West. This

portrayal includes Albania in *Crossing*, when Bujar's inner monologue exposes the extreme guilt connected with being Albanian.

In the chapter "The Red Shoes," (Statovci 49) Bujar muses on his native country with a deep-seated inferiority moulded by the way the rest of Europe sees Albania. He describes the negative remarks he has come across all his life: "Europe's rubbish dump," "Europe's backyard," "Europe's largest open prison," (Statovci 51) labels that highlight Albania's marginalisation and perceived backwardness. Bujar has absorbed these outside assessments so that he shows relief that his father, now dead, was not there to see the turmoil and destruction consuming the nation. Bujar's inner struggle is evident: he is glad his father was spared the humiliation of living in a nation judged to have become devoid of morality and order. The protagonist's struggle emphasises how widespread the process of self-balkanization is since the cultural inferiority imposed by outside forces is absorbed into the personal perspective.

The way Albania is portrayed as a place where people "stole one another's property and stabbed one another in the back at the first opportunity," and where even Bujar's own "yellowed teeth" and "scruffy clothes" (Statovci 51) become sources of shame, points to a strong internalisation of the negative stereotypes about the Balkans. Bujar's self-contempt captures how Albanians, in the book, participate in a kind of self-colonization, therefore absorbing the negative opinions of the West as part of their own identification. This internalising results in a kind of self-marginalization that helps to keep the Balkans stigmatised from inside. Bujar shows how the internalisation of colonial ideology produces a process whereby the other starts to other itself, therefore sustaining the cycle of marginalisation even in the absence of outside forces by

bemoaning Albania's own inferiority. Moreover, the Balkan boundaries' fluidity which at different periods comprise several nations emphasizes the region's function as a stereotype rather than a defined geographical area. Though they remain a region stuck in the paradox of cultural hybridity and sociopolitical disintegration, the Balkans serve symbolically as a link between East and West. This view also encompasses the identities of people like Bujar, whose sense of self is distorted by the political and cultural baggage connected with Balkan origin. Thus, the protagonist's path is psychological as well as a physical one to reconcile a fractured identity moulded by external and internalised othering of the Balkans. Across boundaries.

Particularly in relation to Albania and its people, Pajtim Statovci investigates in *Crossing* the great consequences of self-orientalism and the internalising of external stigmatisation. The novel illustrates how the concept of "nesting orientalism," (Hayden 922), coined by Milica Bakić-Hayden, unfolds in the lives of displaced individuals like Bujar-

The phenomenon of nesting orientalisms is evident in the former Yugoslavia and its successor states where the designation of "other" has been appropriated and manipulated by those who have themselves been designated as such in orientalist discourse. Thus, while Europe as a whole has disparaged not only the orient "proper" but also the parts of Europe that were under oriental Ottoman rule, Yugoslavs who re- side in areas that were formerly the Habsburg monarchy distinguish themselves from those in areas formerly ruled by the Ottoman Empire, hence "improper." (Hayden 922)

The "self-orientalizing" (Amelsvoort and Bosco's 3) actions Eastern people take as they embrace the Western rhetoric of othering and subsequently focus it inward towards themselves or towards others in their region are known as nesting orientalism. Amelsvoort and Bosco's dynamic of

internalised distancing is motivated by the need to project otherness onto others regarded even more Eastern or backward, therefore aligning oneself closer to the West. This fight for proximity to the West shows itself across *Crossing*, as Bujar's self-image suffers along with his view of Albania as both are enmeshed in a process of self-exoticism and internalised shame.

The way post-communist Albania is portrayed exposes a nation engulfed in anarchy and desperation, poverty destroying any sense of pride Bujar could have had for his own nation. After his father dies and with his mother left behind, Bujar finds himself negotiating Tirana's poverty, where even the most fundamental requirements seem distant. In the chapter "The Swept City," (Statovci 53) he describes his experience of begging on the streets, surrounded by people who, like him, are struggling to survive:

I wandered around the city center like most children my age and some even younger. Tirana was chaotic; there were protests everywhere, nonstop. I tried to sell our belongings to strangers in the street, our crockery, my father's old clothes and shoes, his used razor blades with dried skin cells on the surface that still smelled of him... But nobody was interested in buying them because everybody was in the same situation, everybody was trying to sell things that were barely usable and that nobody needed. I begged shopkeepers and traders at the bazaar for water and something to eat, anything I could put in my mouth. (Statovci 53)

This striking portrayal of hopelessness not only shows Albania's extreme material poverty but also a deeper cultural and psychological impoverishment resulting from internalising the nation's degraded position in the world hierarchy.

Bakić-Hayden describes "Balkanism" (Hayden 920) as a "variation on the orientalist theme" (Hayden 920) that distinguishes the Balkans as a part of Europe that used to be under Ottoman, hence oriental, rule and, as such, different from Europe proper where those living in the so-called periphery of Europe begin to internalise the West's depiction of their homeland as backward, dire. The humiliation of asking for crumbs of food or attempting to sell items that previously belonged to his father but are now worthless due to the widespread poverty of the community demonstrates how Bujar's identity has become inextricably linked with Albania's tarnished image. He is ashamed not just of his own circumstances, but also of his country's collective fate, which is regarded as Europe's "backyard" or "rubbish dump" (Statovci 51). As Albania is marginalised on a global scale, Bujar is marginalised within his own narrative, as he represents the junction of national humiliation and personal sorrow.

This self-exoticism and internalised shame persist beyond Bujar's experiences in Albania, shaping his identity even as he crosses borders. In the chapter "Ugly/Beautiful," (Statovci 71) Bujar moves to Germany and enrolls in a writing class, hoping to remodel his life and discover a new sense of purpose. However, his internalised sentiments of inadequacy follow him and emerge in the fiction he creates about a character named Ugly. The protagonist of his story reflects Bujar's own feelings of worthlessness and alienation:

Ugly noticed that in the new country she was even uglier, even more worthless. Nobody so much as glanced in her direction, nobody answered her greetings, though for their benefit she learned to speak another language and dress a different way. Time and time again Ugly found herself in cafés watching other people, people who lowered their heads or started laughing out loud when they noticed her ugly, repellent grin and her expression

in which her crazed eyes were different sizes and her rows of teeth looked like a pocked, dusty road. (Statovci 75-76)

Ugly's character captures not just Bujar's inner struggle but also the supposed ugliness of Albania in the worldwide scene. Albania is denigrated as the "backyard of Europe," (Statovci 51) a place deemed inferior and uncivilised by Western standards, much as Ugly is laughed at in cafes and rejected by those around her. Bujar's design of Ugly as a character lets him put his personal guilt and anxiety onto a fictional character, but it also represents Albania itself as a ugly nation fighting for dignity against general stereotypes. Viewed through the prism of nested orientalism, Bujar's fight is not only with his sense of self but also with the geopolitical narrative that has long positioned Albania as a place of war and hopelessness, uneasily between East and West. Bujar's absorption of these unfavourable preconceptions about Albania shows how much geographical location shapes personal identities. The sociopolitical unrest of Albania affects not only the country structurally but also the psyche of people like Bujar, who carry the weight of their native country even when they live far away. Othering thus turns into a cyclical process whereby the same people they target absorbs and replays external judgements.

Often described as the movement of people from one place to another, migration is a psychological as well as a geographical change. Generally including a change in residence from the place of origin or site of departure to the place of destination or place of arrival, migration is a type of geographical mobility or spatial mobility between one geographic unit and another. This definition misses the deeper influence migration has on people's identities even while it catches its physical component. Migration requires a change of identity as people fit a new social environment in addition to a change of physical location. A survival tactic that let immigrants negotiate their changed situation is this merging of the original identity with new cultural

aspects. Pajtim Statovci shows in *Crossing* the change of physical and psychological identity via Bujar's trip from Tirana to several countries.

The essence of migration itself helps to define how one develops personally. Wagner lists three common forms of migration: the "refugee" (Wagner 240) kind, marked by those driven from their country in quest of a better life. Wagner says "the migrant will seek in the host country what he was missing in his home country and will miss the things he left in the country of origin" (Wagner 240). Bujar's changing identity as he tries to balance his experiences in Albania with the new reality, he comes across outside clearly shows this dynamic. His inner struggle is shown as a patchwork identity reflecting the ongoing tug between his need to flee his unstable country and his yearning for what he has lost.

As shown in the chapter "The Swept City," (Statovci 53) the book examines this conflict through Bujar and Agim's common dissatisfaction about their life in Albania. The two protagonists consider the differences between their hard realities and the apparently luxurious lives of Westerners. Frustrated, they talk about Madonna and wonder why she would pray given her life seems flawless. Agim says, "Everything here is stupid," (Statovci 55) then adds, "They dress in fancy clothes and pose in front of the camera's flashing lights and smile as though nobody else has sacrificed anything for their achievements, as if thousands of people hadn't given their lives to secure their freedom... That bitch should to come here and see whether she really needs to pray or not." (Statovci 55) This conversation emphasises the psychological stress the great difference between their poverty-stricken life and the supposed simplicity of Western living causes them. The distinction is not just psychological but also financial, therefore

supporting their sense of marginalisation and isolation.

The sociopolitical environment of Albania aggravates this feeling of pessimism even more and fuels Bujar's and Agim's need to get away. Their country is rife with violence and instability, where families are split apart and daily living is beset by hazards unthinkable to people in more stable areas. In the civilisation the book presents, "Children are abducted from their parent's arms, they are drugged to make them fall into a deep sleep, and when they wake up again, if they wake up at all, if their organs haven't been cut out and sold, they are already far away." (Statovci 26) The way such crimes are portrayed emphasises the desperation Bujar and Agim must seek safety elsewhere. Agim's battles with his abusive father, Bujar's abandonment by his mother, and the disappearance of his sister drive them towards a future they hope will provide stability and a feeling of belonging, so weakening the social fabric in Albania.

Agim's own struggle with his gender identity also adds still another depth to this intricate travel experience. He struggles not only outside but also inside in a world that rejects him as he negotiates his changing sense of self. Bujar and Agim search for settings where they can live freely and truthfully, hence this psychological change corresponds with the physical migratory trip. Wagner says "The refugees, the asylum seekers are forced to migrate for many reasons; their decision is not voluntary but imposed. The factors that impose migration are those that produce tension, the "Push" factors, as political or religious pursuit, wars, natural disasters or economic crisis" (Wagner 240). The worsening situation in Albania thus motivates Bujar and Agim to search for a better life outside their homeland thinking "how immigrants coming to Europe from Africa managed to get themselves an education and turn into successful doctors and lawyers"

(Statovci 55), aligning with Wagner's idea of the refugee migrant seeking to fulfil unmet needs while grappling with the sense of loss accompanying departure resulting Bujar's hybrid identity.

Often noticed among migrants, the idea of a hybrid identity consists in many cultural backgrounds, a constant interaction between the self and external circumstances, and an ongoing process of negotiating personal identities. The core of hybrid identity is the sensation of belonging, which could show itself in several forms. Some immigrants, especially those of the first generation, have strong mono-affiliation to their nation of origin. This emotional link endures even as their cognitive awareness of diversity creates a degree of hybridity ranging from small to medium, with limited reflections and internal negotiations (Wagner 242). Through the figure of Bujar, whose experience as a migrant mark a significant change from his Albanian roots to a more fluid identity seeking belonging in different nations, Pajtim Statovci conveys in *Crossing* the obstacles and transitions of this hybrid identity.

Migration is the psychological effort to fit a new environment as much as the actual physical journey from one nation to another. Particularly in terms of cultural belonging, leaving the country-of- origin causes one to lose aspects of their identity. Often suffering cultural dissonance whereby, the normal ways of functioning from the nation of origin no longer evoke familiar responses in the new setting, the uprooted migrant must then face the unfamiliar norms, values, and behaviours of the host country. This partial loss of identity has to be resolved if one is to lead a secure life; diverse approaches of rebuilding a sense of self are therefore emerging. For Bujar, his identity negotiation takes a convoluted trip of abandonment and reconstruction in which he progressively removes himself from his Albanian background.

One such approach in identity reconstruction is reflected in the name "Native Foreigner." (Wagner 243) This idea relates to Bujar's experience since he tries to fit into the host society by renouncing important elements of his original identity. The "Native Foreigner" (Wagner 243) is a migrant who fully embraces the cultural mass of the host country, relinquishing his native cultural identity by becoming "more native than the natives" (Wagner 243). Bujar shows this behaviour throughout the book by stating his want to cut off himself from being Albanian on several times. Emphasising strongly, "I would not be an Albanian, not in any way, but someone else, anyone else," he says (Statovci 11). This deliberate rejection of his cultural background reveals a tactic to cut links with his past and embrace a new identity in his adopted surroundings. The story shows Bujar picking several identities and personas to fit his situation, seeking a change whereby his identity might be as flexible as it calls for.

In the introductory chapter, "God's Rib," (Statovci 9) Bujar writes of himself as "a twenty-two-year-old man who at times behaves like the men of my imagination: my name could be Anton or Adam or Gideon, whatever pleases my ear at any given moment. I am French or German or Greek, but never Albanian" (Statovci 9). Here, his conscious denial of Albanian identity and his claim of other European identities highlight his internalised wish to totally fit into the Western cultural scene. The fluidity of his identity emphasises the degree to which he is ready to give up his background to join the host society a typical trait of the "Native Foreigner" (Wagner 243) trying to blend in by following the local customs.

The trip of the "Native Foreigner" (Wagner 243) is not without complexity. Those who

use this approach often have a better knowledge of the benefits provided by the host nation and follow these chances with a will to create a new life. As they try to satisfy the high standards, they set for themselves, "which often leads to hate or self-abnegation," says Wagner (243), so burdening their shoulders with a great weight of responsibility. For Bujar, losing his Albanian identity is not only a passive loss but also a deliberate act of survival and adaptation in a society where his past is perceived as a liability rather than an advantage. But Bujar separates from his cultural background, which causes self-loathing "I tell myself this, then go look at myself in the mirror; I am ugly, I say, I am alone. I am very, rather ugly." (Statovci 66), and he has to balance the contradictory needs of assimilation and self-preservation. He must fight against the conventions, language, and customs of his origin if he is to internalise the new culture as much as feasible. For Bujar, this process becomes especially strong since the bad events in Albania marked by poverty, loss, and abandonment force him to reject not just the negative but also the positive features of his cultural background. Sometimes his need for acceptance in the host community causes self-abnegation since he ignores his roots to the degree, he runs the danger of eradicating the fundamental basis of his identity.

Bujar's path as a "Native Foreigner" (Wagner 243) is further convoluted by the idea of "self-orientalism," (Armelsvroot & Bosco 3). Bujar reflects the Orientalist discourse Edward Said criticises, in which the East is built with "Oriental backwardness, degeneracy, and inequality with the West," (Said 119) by absorbing the Western views of the Balkans as an Other, so mirroring with her "nesting orientalism," Milica Bakic Hayden (Hayden 922) properly captures these phenomena whereby people who are orientalised by the West subsequently orientalise others or even themselves. This entails Bujar separating himself from the East to more precisely

align with the West. This internalised distance shows up in his rejection of his Albanian identity and his efforts to fit the cultural norms of his host nations.

The hardships of the "Native Foreigner" (Wagner 243) are heightened by the society rejection in the host nations, where Bujar's attempts to integrate are sometimes greeted with apathy or hostility. His Roman encounters, for example-

The authorities and social workers didn't care for my plans and hopes, they scoffed at my dreams of studying psychology at the University of Rome, though I explained I'd read the basic texts many times. Shouldn't you study a vocation instead? they asked. You don't even have a high-school diploma; most people your age has one of those, some even have a university degree, they argued and sent me home to consider my limited options: a career in the construction or customer-service industry, a life not significantly better than the one I had left behind. (Statovci 12)

The following given example exposes the limits of this identity approach. Bujar still feels excluded despite learning new languages and adopting new cultural practices; this is shown in his reflections from a writing course: "Nobody so much as glanced in her direction, nobody answered her greetings, though for their benefit she learned to speak another language and dress a different way." (Statovci 75) This experience of invisibility and rejection emphasises the boundaries of assimilation and the ongoing feeling of being a foreigner independent of degree of cultural adaption.

Bujar's situation also shows the risks of entirely cutting off one's cultural background. In trying to be "more native than the natives," (Wagner 243) he runs upon an identity conflict when his original self is neither totally retained nor totally supplanted. His wish to reject his background and fit into the host community drives him into an endless cycle of self-negotiating where his sense of self is changing. The rejection of his history does not absolve the cultural baggage he carries; rather, his hybrid identity stays a patchwork of experiences moulded by loss, longing, and adaptation.

Rejecting their native cultural identity is more likely for migrants like Bujar, who come from backgrounds tarnished by unpleasant events and a lack of respect in their countries of origin. Driven by a need to flee the stigma connected with their background, this rejection covers both the good and negative sides of their legacy. As the book implies, nevertheless, the results of such self-denial might create an internal emptiness in which the migrant tries to bridge the void created by the abandoned identity. This struggle begs significant issues regarding the limitations of integration and the expenses connected with the search of belonging in a new country.

Amelsvoort and Bosco say *Crossing* "is about the hopeful projection of space and the rootless migrant's inability to really arrive" (Amelsvroot and Bosco 7). This concept sums up Bujar's trip, in which he is unable to break free from the draw of his past even if he is trying to totally cut links with it and create a new identity. Bujar embraces a Native Foreigner strategy, which means totally submerging oneself in the customs of his host nations, thereby trying to erase his history throughout the book. But the process of losing one's natural identity is difficult, as Bujar discovers he cannot totally distance himself from his Albanian roots no matter how

much he tries to hide them.

Statovci's narrative style, in which Bujar often muses about his past, emphasises this conflict. Bujar is plagued by recollections and stories from his early years even as he tries to create a fresh present. These legends including ones passed on by his father regarding Skanderbeg, the Eagle, the Lion, and the Don showcase Albania's historical significance, cultural values, and gender roles. By means of these folktales, readers get understanding of the position of women in society, the expectations imposed on men, and the essence of the Albanian people. Bujar's memories show that he cannot completely separate himself from his background even if he is conscious in trying to reject his history. This continuous link to his roots exposes the psychological aspects of his migration, in which case even physical distance cannot cut off the ties to his cultural identity.

Whether in New York or all throughout Europe, Bujar's sense of alienation in other locales mirrors his inner struggle between his need to move on and the draw of his past. Bujar is conflicted from the very start, when he and his companion Agim want to leave house. Bujar says they left feeling "at once light and heavy" (Statovci 103). Angry and resentful towards his family, he yearns for retribution by withdrawing from their life. He does, however, also feel a "pang of guilt," (Statovci 103) as though he ought to have told someone of their absence should something happen. This inner struggle exposes that his migration was always a complex combination of emotions motivated by dissatisfaction and longing rather than a wholehearted choice. The hesitation he shows even declaring that their decision to depart seemed "childish and stupid" (Statovci 105) once the trip started clearly reveals the psychological element of his migration.

Though he yearned for the comfort of home and mourned his mother, he kept following Agim, his compass in this strange planet.

Bujar's move entails a deep psychological change in addition to physical ones. The geographical and sociopolitical circumstances of Albania drove the first choice to flee, thereby fulfilling the profile of a refugee migrant. For Bujar, though, the decision is exacerbated by his never really embracing the concept of leaving. He started this road more for Agim's benefit than for his own, and upon Agim's death Bujar's sense of direction became entwined with preserving his friend's memory. He begins to dress like Agim and adopt his gestures, so virtually living out Agim's dreams to keep him alive in spirit. Bujar's personal identity is further blurring by this act of living for another person, which makes him live in a space of continual change.

Bujar's experiences in Europe and the United States repeatedly centre "the inability to arrive" (Amelsvoort and Bosco 8) in any meaningful sense. Agim and he both imagined "Europe was our America," (Statovci 116) a place where their aspirations might be fulfilled. But they never really looked at what Europe really stood beyond a romantic getaway from their problems in Albania. Travelling alone following Agim's death, Bujar discovers he is leading a life based on lies, changing names and identities, and battling to keep a cogent sense of self. His path leads him to the centre of their dreams New York only to meet a severe disillusionment. Arriving, Bujar notes that "The United States spits on the very people that have built its countless skyscrapers and bows down to those with money." (Statovci 88) His dreams for a fresh life soon fall apart, revealing the limits of his "Native Foreigner" approach (Wagner 243).

Bujar's New York experiences highlight his two disillusionments: first in Europe and later in America. Working eighty-hour weeks across several jobs, despite his best attempts to fit into New Yorker life, he discovers he is caught in a cycle of exploitation. His savings are pilfered, so he has nothing to show for his diligence. To him, New York was another Albania with a trendy outer shell catches the reality that the city reflects the same hardships he hoped to flee under below its flashy surface. New York drowns the ambitions of incoming immigrants "by drowning them in endless everyday problems, by endlessly grabbing money from people for anything and everything," (Statovci 92) whereas Albania's poverty confines its people in an inevitable circle. The metropolis leaves people little time to engage in other activities than income generation, therefore fostering a system whereby "everybody is up to their neck in debt." (Statovci 92)

Bujar's path around cities including Rome, Germany, New York, and finally Finland simply helps him to feel more displaced. His inner conflict as much as his physical wandering show in his inability to relax anywhere. The parallels he discovers between his host nations and Albania aggravate his sense of hopelessness as he battles the collapse of his "Native Foreigner" (Wagner 243) identity.

He never settles anywhere, as Albania always looms in the background as something he left but can never forget. The dream projected onto Europe always seems to be found in another 'Europe' than where he currently is. Wishing to restart his life with each new location, foregoing a stable sense of self, Bujar's self-realization as a singular person and his satisfaction with life is always deferred to the next place. *Crossing* documents this inability to arrive, and to form a stable sense of self, and its imbrication with an impossibility to disconnect from one's origins. (Amelsvoort and Bosco 8)

The underlying problems remain shockingly familiar even if the places are appealing with their trendy clothing and air conditioning could provide a surface of distinction. Bujar's migration thus becomes a continuous flow between locations without ever finding a real home, a result of the "inability to arrive" Amelsvoort and Bosco describes (Amelsvroot and Bosco 8).

Bujar's inner conflict gets much more intense as he grows disappointed with the West. Bujar gets jealous when Maria talks tenderly about Finland, her native tongue. "If only I could think of my home country the way you do" (Statovci 89). His complicated relationship with his country stems from both a deep-seated affinity to its cultural narratives and a rejection of its sufferings, which keeps him from feeling like he belongs as others appear to enjoy. His identity is still changing; neither the past nor the present offers a solid basis on which he may grow.

Bujar's experiences as a "Native Foreigner" (Wagner 243) ultimately expose the shortcomings of relying just on identity to meet the social and cultural obligations of the host nation. The surface acceptance of new cultural identities does not offer the comfort he is looking for, and the recurrent disappointments reflect the same sense of captivity he experienced in Albania. Mourning and disillusionment define his physical and psychological travel, which leaves him locked in a state of unresolved flux and continually searching for a place where he may really feel at home as "Albania always looms in the background as something he left but can never forget" (Amelsvroot and Bosco 8). The continuous battle to fit his fractured identity with the expectations of his host countries emphasises the shortcomings of the "Native Foreigner" (Wagner 243) approach and the great influence of forced migration on the sense of self of the individual.

Shaped by his geographical experiences, Bujar's sociopolitical identity strongly corresponds with Homi Bhabha's idea of the "third space" (Bhabha 28). Proposing that the cultural interaction between the coloniser and the colonised generates an in-between place he names the "third space" (Bhabha 28) of cultural enunciation, Bhabha presents this theory as a strategy to undermine colonial dominance. By so undermining the strict divisions between self and other, coloniser and colonised, East and West, this conceptual space disturbs "the binary thought and essentialist identities produced by colonial knowledge" (Bhabha 276). It captures a world of doubt, uncertainty, and the rejection of colonial power, therefore destroying the authenticity and essentialist oppositions usually connected with cultural identities.

According to Bhabha's concept, globalisation and colonialism have encouraged cultural exchanges that resulted in the hybrid "third space" (Bhabha 28). Negotiating helps one to grasp the cultural interpretations that result when colonists and colonised people gather in this area. This bargaining produces a conflicted retention of identities that disrupt essentialist ideas and question the hegemony of colonial power systems.

Especially pertinent to the political debate of hybridity and in-betweenness in colonial and postcolonial settings is Bhabha's analysis of the "third space" (Bhabha 28). He examines how colonised people create hybrid identities via cultural interactions under systematic inequity and colonial control. For Bhabha, hybridity is the process by which colonial power tries to force a homogeneous identity on the colonised inside a global. He emphasizes that such act does not merely recall the past as social cause or aesthetic precedent; it renews the past, refiguring it as a

contingent 'in-between' space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. The past-present becomes rather necessary rather than the nostalgia of life (Bhabha 7). Bujar's path speaks much to this idea of transcending the past and present via a distinct space.

Bujar reflects this "third space" (Bhabha 28) attitude in *Crossing* as he strives to become an individual free from any particular attachment politically, nationally, or even gender-wise desiring to exist just as a human being. In "God's Rib," (Statovci 9) Bujar writes, "I am nobody" (Statovci 11). This proclamation exposes his rejection of his Albanian identity as well as the historical and cultural baggage that goes along. Indicating a want to create his own identity free from the limitations of his cultural heritage, he shows a strong disinterest in maintaining the conventional ideas of masculinity rooted in his civilisation. Bujar's idea of himself as an individual without a clear label reflects his connection with Bhabha's "third space," (Bhabha 28) marked by the release from the boundaries of one's cultural background. Bujar's interactions with Agim reveal his want to go beyond traditional identities. Bujar responds, "I don't know, a policeman maybe, maybe a lion," when Agim asks about his goals (Statovci 27). Agim, on the other hand, emphasises a need for individuality and difference by outlining certain goals, including becoming a physician or a lawyer. Bujar's answer captures his basic conflict with the idea of identity itself; he wants to live as a person, not define himself by accepted criteria of success or distinctiveness. Bujar's lack of attachment to a predefined identity highlights his desire to occupy the "third space," (Bhabha 28) in which he may negotiate and traverse his own identity free from the weight of historical association or cultural expectation.

Although Bhabha's concept of the "third space" (Bhabha 28) stresses release from

cultural roots, he sometimes minimises the importance of historical genealogies in forming identities. As Bhabha has noted, "the transformational value of [third space] lies in the rearticulation, or translation, of elements that are neither the One...nor the Other...but something else beside" (Bhabha 28). The third space is marked as a realm of freedom where interlocutors may engage in open negotiation and reconciliation of cultural differences free from ties to their past affiliations. In a same line, Bujar's search for identification shows a need to establish a distinctive sense of self free from reliance on his background. "I can choose what I am, I can choose my gender, choose my nationality and my name, my place of birth, all simply by opening my mouth. Nobody has to stay the same person they were born; we can fit ourselves together like a jigsaw" (Statistovci 11). Bujar's grasp of identity as a fluid and dynamic construct rather than a fixed category is shown by this metaphor of building oneself like a jigsaw puzzle. He welcomes the concept that events and personal decisions can help one to choose and define their identity. This viewpoint fits Bhabha's claim that the third space provides a venue for creative identity development thereby enabling people to reconcile their past with their present aspirations.

As Bujar works through the complexity of migration, memory, and identity, his path might be regarded as an inquiry into this third space. His rejection to fit the norms connected with his background highlights the difficulty many immigrants have creating new identities that go beyond their pasts. By means of his experiences, Bujar negotiates the boundary of culture, nationality, and selfhood, so capturing the conflict between a need for belonging and the wish for uniqueness.

Moreover, the "third space" (Bhabha 28) is "a problematic of colonial

representation...that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other “denied” knowledge enters upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority” (Bhabha 156), This idea thus provides a conceptual framework for comprehending Bujar's experiences in respect to the larger sociopolitical scene of migration. His attempt to define himself outside of conventional labels shows the continuous negotiating that defines the life of many immigrants who have to deal with the legacies of colonialism and the complexity of globalisation. Bujar's path thus becomes a microcosm of the more significant cultural interactions defining the modern migrant experience, where people must negotiate the sometimes-tumultuous seas of identity development in an increasingly linked world.

Bujar's portrayal of Bhabha's "third space" (Bhabha 28) finally emphasises how agency and self-definition may flourish despite cultural displacement. Bujar not only claims his uniqueness but also questions the accepted narratives of cultural essentialism by working to create a hybrid identity that transcends conventional loyalties. By doing this, he creates opportunities for fresh kinds of identification reflecting the complexity and uncertainty of the migrating experience. Bujar's path shows that the search of identity is a multifarious process including negotiation, reconfiguration, and the acceptance of one's own agency in forming the self rather than a straight-line road. By means of this investigation of the "third space," (Bhabha 28) the story emphasises the transforming power of migration as a stimulant for human development and cultural creativity.

Apart from Bujar's socio-political identity created by geographical landscapes, Bujar's fluid gender identity throughout *Crossing* can be effectively analysed through Judith Butler's

theory of "gender performativity," (Butler 10-11) which distinguishes that "sex is as culturally constructed as gender" (Butler 10-11). Early in Bujar's adolescence, his gender identification seems to be somewhat consistent, fitting with his Albanian background. But as the story goes on, his gender expression gets more erratic, shifting in line with his own tastes and experiences. By the end of the book, Bujar says he is "nobody," (Statovci 11), meaning "nobody has to remain the person they were born; we can put ourselves together like a jigsaw" (Statovci 11). Butler's argument that gender is a fluid and performative construct that can be moulded and changed over time is reflected in this comment.

Butler argues that the difference between gender and sex seeks to isolate the biological body from socially created gendered behaviours. She contends that "if sex and gender are radically distinct, then it does not follow that to be a given sex is to become a given gender" (Butler 142). Biological sex does not always define one's gender identification, she says. Stated differently, gender is a sequence of behaviours influenced by culture and society rather than a natural or inherent quality of a person. The characteristics connected to distinct sexes, including clothes, roles, and even colours, can change with time and depend on diverse historical and cultural setting. Pink, for example, was traditionally connected with boys, but in modern Western countries it is usually seen as a colour for girls. Similarly, standards for gender expression vary worldwide; what would be considered traditional in one society might be uncommon in another. This variety emphasises how cultural interactions involving geography, class, and colour continually influence gender.

Butler's idea of "gender performativity" holds that one "does" (Butler 23) gender, not something

one naturally owns. She argues in *Gender Trouble* that repeated gendered activities create identity rather than it is pre-established. For Butler, "gender proves to be performative that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be" (Butler 33). From this perspective, gendered actions actively create and reinforce what we know as gender rather than passively expressing a pre-existing identity. Over time, these activities help to create a consistent gender identity. Still, gender is created by this continuous performance, hence it is always intrinsically erratic and subject to change. Butler notes, "gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylised repetition of acts" (Butler 179). Gender identity is thus always changing and is moulded by outside cultural forces, not set or natural.

Using the experiences of the protagonist Bujar, Pajtim Statovci presents a sophisticated picture of traditional gender roles in Albanian society in *Crossing*, therefore highlighting how these positions define identity. The book shows how strongly ingrained in cultural tales and folklore gender expectations are and how these old roles are passed down through the generations. Bujar's interactions with his father, sister, and society allow us to observe the rigidity of gender roles in Albania as well as the protagonist's effort to balance these standards with his own flexible sense of identity.

The chapter "The Marbles" (Statovci 17) demonstrates among the first instances of performative gender roles. Here, Bujar's father brings him to tour the fortification at Krujë while narrating the story of famed Albanian hero Skanderbeg. "His spirit rests across the land of Albania, the heart of an immortal man beats in the breast of the black two-headed eagle on the flag, and the red surrounding the eagle is the colour of the endlessly shed blood of an immortal

people," his father says in great respect (Statovci 20). This striking picture not only captures the cultural value of Skanderbeg but also depicts the ideal of Albanian masculinity, marked by bravery, honour, and sacrifice. The trip to the fort is meant to be a rite of passage and a bonding event for Bujar, a means for his father to steer him towards the correct route of manhood before his death. But Skanderbeg's horse, which suggests a gulf between Bujar's inner proclivities and the conventional definition of masculinity offered to him, grabs his attention rather than the heroic figure of Skanderbeg.

As Bujar remembers tales from his father, it becomes clearer how performatively gender roles are in Albanian society. For instance, after Bujar's father got married and had his sister, Ana, traditional gender roles were clearly delineated: "The woman remained at home to look after their daughter and the man went to work. He could not have been prouder of his wife and daughter and of the fact that he was able to be the breadwinner" (Statovci 33). The book runs repeatedly on this concept of masculinity, in which a man's self-worth is determined by his capacity to provide for his family financially. Maintaining these cultural expectations as a "breadwinner" (Statovci 33) helps Bujar's father to represent a society in which the roles of men and women are clearly defined and thus supports his honour and dignity.

Bujar's father also relates traditional tales stressing the need of honour in the life of an Albanian man. In one such story, the twelfth boy Jakupi learns that an "Albanian man's self-

respect must be defended to his final breath, and that an Albanian man's honour, the offending of which was the greatest sin of all, carried with it the responsibility for the dignity of his family" (Statovci 34). The warning story of Jakupi's dishonesty, his bean stew spilt on a guy's boots, ignites a protracted conflict between families; helps to emphasise the need of upholding one's reputation and meeting the standards connected with being a man. Bujar deviates from these expectations even though he is exposed to such cultural narratives by opting to create his own identity and reject the conventional marks of manhood, including marriage, parenthood, and cultural pride. He even shows guilt for his mother's illiteracy, suggesting his unease with the cultural values he is absorbing.

The book also tackles the conventional roles of women, especially via the figure of Ana, Bujar's sister. In "The Swept City," (Statovci 53) Bujar muses over Ana's expected place within the family and society: "Ana would begin a new life elsewhere, she would be brought into her husband's family and she would look after someone else's parents instead of her own, and gradually she would forget where she had come from and start to call another place her home... a system that had lasted for thousands of years" (Statovci 56). This remark exposes the performative character of gender expectations for women in Albanian society, where their value stems mostly from their domestic tasks and expected to fit into their husband's family following marriage. The customs around Ana's predicted future show the strict cultural scripts that control women's behaviour and life decisions, therefore supporting the belief that gender roles are firmly ingrained in cultural past.

Bujar battles to completely separate himself from the identity markers set by his Albanian

Muslim background even if he rejects many conventional gender roles. Bujar laughs when he tries on one of Rosa's clothes while she is residing in Madrid. Bujar, who feels a mix of shame and anger, responds strongly to Rosa's comment which is "You look so ugly as a woman" (Statovci 84). "I'm not sure whether my next movement is because of Rosa's hysterics or because she won't obey me, her boyfriend, who has specifically asked her not to laugh" (Statovci 84). Bujar's response in exposes an internalised commitment to conventional gender roles, in which he unintentionally expects his partner to fit the standards of masculine authority despite his attempts to separate himself from such conventions. This conflict shows how "it is impossible to view gender separately from the 'cultural intersections' that 'produced and maintained'" (Butler 6-7) how deeply ingrained in one's psyche gender norms can be even when one is consciously rejecting.

Bujar's sense of need to carry out manly responsibilities becomes especially clear once his father dies. In line with conventional expectations in Kosovo's Muslim society, Bujar is expected to take on duties usually reserved for male relatives and assume the role of the head of the household overseeing funeral preparations. "I wasn't allowed to cry because people would say the deceased's son was deranged with grief" (Statovci 47) he says, stifling his feelings to conform to the society standard of stoicism in men. Upon returning from Kosovo, he worries about his mother's health and his sister's future prospects: "I thought about how long my mother would live, whether she might become ill like my father, and how long I'd have to look after her. I thought about Ana, wondered whether she'd ever find a husband, and who would decide whether the man was upstanding enough. I thought about where I could find a job" (Statovci 48). Bujar is the youngest family member, hence social expectations force him to act in line with the

recommended gendered acts of a male, thereby fulfilling the duty of protector and provider. These passages from the book help Judith Butler's gender performativity theory to be supported. Butler argues that gender is a socially manufactured identity constantly formed through a "stylised repeat of acts" rather than a natural attribute (Butler 179). Bujar's experiences highlight how deeply established gender roles are in cultural practices and expectations, therefore proving that society rather than biological determinism shapes what is thought to be male or female behaviour. The stories Bujar's father tells and the Albanian cultural standards draw attention on how gender is played and reinforced in daily life.

With geographical changes from conservative, traditional Albania to the more liberal and expressive surroundings of postmodern Europe playing a major impact, Bujar and Agim, whose changing sense of self is influenced by several elements, The loss of their nation, the deaths and vanishings of loved ones, and a process of "third individuation" (Greene 45) producing a fractured, consumerist identity are further elements influencing their fluctuating gender identities.

The postmodern era is distinguished by a response against modernist values. It covers a spectrum of critical, strategic, and rhetorical techniques meant to undermine conventional ideas including unity, historical progress, and identity. Unlike modernism's drive for totality a cohesive worldview, set of values, or cultural identity postmodernism favours fragmentation and multiplicity, therefore resisting such coherence. Butler notes this change, pointing out that postmodernism is distinguished by a stress on the flexibility of self-understanding and a rejection of homogeneity of narratives (Butler 5). In this regard, identity becomes what power discourses

determine it to be, implying that the self is subject to continuous change rather than being a fixed thing.

The changing gender identities of Bujar and Agim depict very precisely the postmodern disintegration and instability. Growing up in a rigorous Muslim Albanian home, Agim battles early gender roles. He acts in ways that others find feminine, which draws hostility and bullying. "He looks just like a girl," (Statovci 26) Bujar notes. "When I tell him so Agim smiles... though my intention is to make him understand that's why people beat him and call him names at school" (Statovci 26). Agim keeps expressing his gender identification by means of actions and decisions that challenge conventional masculine roles, such trying on his mother's clothing, despite the mistreatment. This results in physical punishment from his parents, therefore underlining the strict gender norms in his traditional surroundings. Agim's consistent identification as female is clear throughout the book, even when he and Bujar play "husband and wife," (Statovci 28), where Agim unquestioningly assumes the part of the woman, therefore attesting to his alignment with feminine gender roles despite social rejection.

Bujar's path towards gender identification clarity is more convoluted. Driven by his family's and society's cultural standards, Bujar first fits conventional ideas of masculinity. Enquiring "Why don't you dress more normally?" (Statovci 26) he expresses anxiety for meeting his obligations as a man, including seeing to his mother and sister following the death of his father, and challenges Agim's gender-nonconforming behaviour. These behaviours imply that Bujar initially felt confident in his masculine identity and followed the conventional roles recommended by his modern-era background.

However, as Bujar and Agim head out from home, his sense of self starts to fall apart. The loss of his father, the fall-off of his family, his sister's abduction, and his mother's desertion all contribute to the uncertainty and existential turmoil his leaving marks begins. Fear of losing another person in his life drove Bujar to follow Agim: "Two people had already disappeared from my life at what felt like the flick of a switch, and I didn't want him to be the third" (Statovci 107). Under these conditions, Bujar's once-solid identity gets more and more linked to Agim, whose changing gender expression shapes Bujar's own self-discovery.

Bujar's metamorphosis is sparked by an unintentional murder of Agim. Apart from severing the most important emotional link in his life, this tragic incident marks a turning point in his identity building. Bujar gets free after Agim dies, and his trip throughout several European towns depicts the fractured character of his personality. Bujar's changing perspective of self clearly shows the postmodern influence on his identity since it progressively welcomes flexibility over stability. Bujar's experiences show a break from the rigid gender roles of his upbringing as he travels from one area to another assuming numerous identities and participating in varied gender manifestations. His identity moves between these and other options, therefore reflecting the postmodern theory that identity is created via a process of repetition, revision, and reinventions. The binary divisions of male and female no longer define him.

Bujar changes significantly following Agim's death to reflect the turn from contemporary to postmodern influences in his life. Bujar, who formerly epitomised the conventional ideals of Albanian culture, clearly moves from these foundations to embrace a fractured, individualised

identity shaped by Western postmodernism. Bujar dives into a life marked by uncertainty, fluidity, and the rejection of defined roles and origins, so erasing the ideas of the modern era union, collective identity, and cultural continuity.

Bujar first follows the cultural norms taught in Albanian society and by his family. Leaving his mother behind exposes his inner conflict with the sense of duty and familial responsibility that defined his upbringing, hence triggering the "pang of guilt" (Statovci 103). Moreover, his early dreams to be the great Albanian hero Skanderbeg show an affinity to the values of honour and masculinity his country honours. But Bujar starts to lose these conventional beliefs as he distances himself from his native country and lives in Western Europe, substituting an individualism that stresses self-discovery over cultural loyalty.

The scattered character of Bujar's self-identity emphasises this change. He opens the first chapter introducing himself as "a twenty-two-year-old man who at times behaves like the men of my imagination" (Statovci 9-10). He says, "Sometimes I am a twenty-two-year-old woman who behaves however she pleases," and further muddies this picture by saying, "I am a man who cannot be a woman but who can sometimes look like a woman" (Statovci 9-10). These statements capture not only his changing gender identification but also his absorption in the postmodern condition, in which identity wanders between several forms rather than being stable. Bujar's "game of dress-up" (Statovci 10) marks his capacity to freely move between identities, therefore embracing the postmodern rejection of consistent, essentialist notions of self. This performative approach to gender stands quite apart from the expectations of Albanian culture, in which roles are more precisely defined.

Bujar's fractured sense of self reflects a more general existential conflict than only gender identification. This is evident in his feelings of insignificance during his time in Rome, where he realizes, "I no longer considered myself special or unique" (Statovci 12) after facing rejection from authorities who dismiss his dreams and aspirations. Being one among many in a multicultural environment disturbs his previous ideas of self-worth, which had been connected with cultural and family expectations. During a TV program audition in Finland, when he remembers the judge's words: "We've been looking for you, someone like you," (Sataovci 168), his need for validation becomes clear. Bujar pledges to "do everything I can to live up to her words" (Sataovci 168), shows his frantic need for validation in a society in which he battles to discover a solid identity or sense of belonging.

His attempts to reject his Albanian background and embrace a cosmopolitan image highlight even more his lack of influence over his identity. Bujar assures himself he "would never care what other people think of me" and shows contempt for the Albanian concern with keeping honour remain intact. He settles "not to be an Albanian, not in any way, but someone else, anyone else" (Statovci 11). This renouncement of his cultural identification exposes his inner struggle and the degree to which he connects his background with restrictions and limits. Still, he struggles with the "impossibility to disconnect from one's origins" (Amelsvroot and Bosco 8) even as he tries to separate himself from his roots. When he painstakingly cleans public bathrooms "so that nobody using the toilet after me think I would have left such a mess," (Statovci 12) he demonstrates his residual commitment to social impressions. This act suggests that even in his attempts to reject his cultural identity, he cannot escape the strongly rooted need

for acceptance and validation and the permanently ingrained colonial ideology of being the other, so symbolising his continuous struggle with the expectations of others and the tendency to self-stigmatize.

Bujar's self-fragmentation is further complicated by his fruitless attempts to fit into Western societies, as he seeks to become a "Native foreigner," (Wagner 243) or a "cosmopolitan" (Wagner 242). Yet, he Bujar "never finds his 'Europe' but keeps searching, as unable to accept the irreality of the Europe he imagined as to accept the past he attempted to exchange for it." (Amelsvoort and Bosco 10). This constant sense of dislocation emphasises the paradox at the root of his identity crisis: he cannot completely assimilate into the civilisations he encounters, therefore placing him in a condition of in-betweenness even if he is trying to shed his Albanian origin. Bujar's failure to develop a consistent sense of belonging becomes still another factor contributing to his fractured self since he always moves between several identities without ever discovering one that is real or whole.

In Bujar's life, the change from modern to postmodern ideals marks a change from a communal cultural identity to a fractured, personal one. Rooted in a shared vision of identity, his concept of self was moulded in the modern era by cultural expectations and family responsibilities. But the postmodern era brings complexity and uncertainty into his existence, letting him explore several identities but also causing existential crisis. Bujar's experiences show how the postmodern rejection of permanent categories such as country, gender, and cultural identity results in a condition of eternal change in which the self is constantly rebuilt in response to changing social and cultural settings.

According to Zygmunt Bauman's theory of liquid modernity, modernity has grown into a constant transforming and unstable form. Liquid modernity stresses fluidity and the continuous movement of people inside a fast-changing social scene, unlike the rigid buildings of traditional modernism. In this stage, people have several options and the freedom to negotiate between social positions, which, although providing flexibility, nevertheless results in a disorderly scenario. Often the flexibility to migrate between identities and roles leads to a social hierarchy whereby the rich can flourish while the poor and underprivileged remain deprived. "In the city of reason, there were to be no winding roads, no cul-de-sacs and thus no unattended sites left to chance and so no vagabonds, vagrants, or nomads," Bauman says in describing this phenomenon (Bauman 15). His idea of liquid modernity catches the always shifting character of society, in which nothing is stable and the drive to adjust to ongoing change takes front stage.

Agim's financial choices on their trip provide a striking illustration of the flux connected with liquid modernity. Agim acts as though they are "on drugs," (Statovci 106) capturing the excitement and appeal of consumerist freedom, having acquired fresh financial independence. Spending "half of his money to pay for a hotel room...frittered away his money on macchiatos, clothes and jewellery, expensive food, things that not even people with a job could afford in this city" (Statovci 106). This overspending emphasises Bauman's theory that people in liquid modernity are motivated to constantly create their self-identity via consumption, which causes more individuation. The concept of self gets interwoven with the products and experiences one

can have, and people become consumers who have to always participate in this rat race to define and change their identities.

Later in the book Bujar's comments on consumerist society expose the darker side of this search for identity. He bemoans the demands of a consumerist society and expresses dissatisfaction with his incapacity to create a solid sense of self among the anarchy of consuming. This struggle is captured in his conversation with a doctor, where he asks, "Do you know how humiliating it is when you can't even get the things you don't want? You're a doctor, so you probably don't know" (Statovci 63). The remark captures his hopelessness about the widespread effect of consumption culture, in which a sense of inadequacy results from not being able to get particular products or experiences even those that might not be really desired. Bujar's ongoing dissatisfaction with his identity's stabilisation inside a consumer-driven society highlights the natural instability of life in liquid modernity. The book shows how, rather than coherence, the search of identity within a liquid modern framework usually results in disintegration. The struggles of the protagonists to negotiate and survive in these surroundings expose the limits of a consumerist society that offers freedom and self-determination but generates dislocation and instability. Agim and Bujar's attempts to create new identities are laden with conflict since the freedom they yearn for both alienates them from their roots and forces them to adopt several, erratic identities to fit their environment. The emphasis of liquid modernity on ongoing transformation drives them into a lifetime of becoming instead of enabling them to reach a stable, real sense of self.

The disturbance of the third individuation processes a phenomenon resulting from a crisis is the last element for Bujar's fractured and unstable gender identity in *Crossing* to be distorted. Along with losing a partner or loved one, these crises could involve leaving behind one's nation, family, friends, and cultural identity. These incidents can seriously interfere with the individuation process, resulting in a split sense of self and reliance on others. For Bujar, the loss connected with movement and the experience of mobility seriously impede his growth of a coherent identity.

Migration is a multifarious psychological process with long-term consequences for a person's sense of identity. Deep psychostructural alterations might result from the changes experienced during migration driven by a mix of cultural shock and grief over the losses inherent in leaving one's country. Many times, these developments lead to the development of a hybrid identity that battles to balance the opposing cultural values and social conventions of the host and origin countries. For Bujar, the forced character of his migration aggravates these challenges and makes it almost hard for him to develop a consistent identity.

Migration can be compared to the mother-baby symbiosis as psychiatrist Margaret Mahler describes, "between mother and child that best allows the infant to develop those faculties which he needs in order to grow, that is, to individuate" (Mahler 291). According to Mahler's concept, a child's effective individuation depends on the mother letting the child grow on their own, therefore separating from a reassuring, familiar presence. Using this framework, the child stands for Bujar personally while the mother Albania represents his native country. He has to let go of the collective identity connected to his native country and create a new identity in

the host nation if he is to undergo a healthy individuation process. As the motherland, Albania must also let Bujar go so he may establish an autonomous identity in the new cultural setting.

Bujar's forced relocation upset the natural process of separation and individuation since it went against his will. Psychoanalyst Werman claims that "the failure of mourning leads to a continuous search for the idealised lost object, an inability to love new objects, a depravity of objects in one's current life, and an endless pursuit of nostalgic memories" (Werman 399). Bujar's path is defined by his inability to appropriately grieve the loss of his own country and his cutting of cultural relations. He tries to hide his Albanian identity, but these attempts only backfire and cause him to fight continuously with his fractured self. His identity dilemma stems from his failure to balance the past with the present, therefore trapping him between opposing ideas of who he is and who he ought to be.

Erik Erikson's stages of identity development allow one to study Bujar's challenges with identification by focusing especially on the stage of "identity versus role confusion" (Erikson's 9–13). Erikson saw every developmental period as offering different crises or problems for which people must negotiate to attain normal psychological development. When someone neglects to address these crises, they could go through what Erikson describes as "diffusion," marked by a lack of direction, indifference, and a damaged sense of self (Erikson 9–12). Bujar finds himself in this condition of diffusion after failing to go beyond his problem connected to migration. This is clear from his difficulty to express his future ambitions and his repeated "I don't know" (Statovci 27) responses to questions about his objectives. This ambiguity points to a deep-seated role misunderstanding whereby Bujar struggles to match his own wants with the

expectations of his surroundings.

Moreover, Erikson's idea of "despair," (Erikson 9-17) which fits the later phases of identity development, also speaks to Bujar's encounters. Erikson (9–17) defines despair as a loss of further hope and usually results from unmet potential or a perception that one's life has been spent without the possibility of atonement. Particularly when he compares himself to women, Bujar's sentiments of inadequacy and despair show up in his gender identification problems. Saying, "All I can ever have been a copy of their life, a photograph in which I look almost like them but not quite, a lie that must be created from nothing," he says in expressing envy and resignation" (Statovci 14). This comment captures his awareness that he can only pass for the identities of others, never really assuming any one function or identification. His effort to negotiate his gender identity and his inability to combine his cultural history with his current situation prolongs a cycle of hopelessness and instability.

Bujar feels dislocation that goes beyond his gender identification to include his sociopolitical identity as well. His effort to establish a consistent sense of self is shown by his conflicting emotions about his Albanian background and his want to fit into various Western civilisations. Declaring, "I wanted nothing more than to be an Italian, I wished that by putting on their clothes I would change and become them," (Statovci 162) Bujar's attempts to reject his Albanian identity in favour of a new westernised identity, makes him feel isolated and uncomfortable even as he tries to embrace the elements of superior culture. Declaring he "hated them with all my heart," (Statovci 162) exposes the conflicting feelings and inner struggle connected with his attempts at cultural absorption.

Particularly when that partner is an "idealised" (Greene 44) person whose presence is entwined with one's identity and sense of self, the death of a spouse can be a major disturbance to the third individuation process. Agim is this idealised person for Bujar in *Crossing*, a comfort and direction source among the turbulence of migration and the search for identity. Martin Greene further claims that false many people really believe they may find themselves by choosing an idealised mate (Greene 44). This is the romantic myth, one that the loss of a friend could suddenly destroy and cause hopelessness and disappointment. Agim's death thus not only marks the loss of a friend but also the fall of Bujar's dreams and aspirations, closely entwined with his friendship with Agim.

Bujar's bond to Agim is beyond simple friendship or company; Agim was a pillar in his life. Bujar was comforted when Agim said, "Everything will be all right, we'll be fine," (Statovci 108) thinking, "maybe it was the way Agim was speaking, maybe it was his soothing voice, but when he said that everything would be all right...for the first time in weeks my foremost thought was not how I could get Agim and myself back home safely" (Statovci 108). Agim's calming presence was sufficient to momentarily calm Bujar's fears This song shows Bujar's reliance on Agim for hope, comfort, and strength. Agim was the one who dreamed of leaving Tirana, wanting to see the globe, become "unique" (Statovci 28), and lead a life free from the restrictions of their background. Though Bujar relied more on Agim's leadership and bravery, Agim's desire to be someone different and even to investigate his gender identification as a female set a shared vision that Bujar welcomed.

Paradoxically, Bujar was the one who unintentionally killed Agim just before they arrived at their long-awaited location. Bujar underwent a transforming effect from a great sense of shame mixed with the anguish at losing the person he loved most. It changed his character and aggravated his struggle with identity building. As Greene notes, "if adequate individuation is not accomplished through the dissolution of earlier ties, relationships to new, adult objects will be precluded or will be limited to the replication or substitution of old objects" (Greene 45). This comment fairly reflects Bujar's psychological condition after Agim's death. Bujar struggled to separate his own identity from that of his lost lover, emotionally depending on the memory of Agim and their shared dreams and lacking individuation process. His attempts to live out their ambitions and other activities following Agim's death expose his incapacity to let go and move on.

Following Agim's death, Bujar sets on a course that seems more like attempts to preserve Agim's memory than actual endeavours to forge his own road. He visits several nations, dresses like a girl Agim had dreamed of, and creates false narratives about his past's each activity serving to keep Agim's presence within him. Here Greene's observation on the phenomena of utilising "strong and powerful" (Greene 45) persons as "auxiliary ego supports" rings true (Greene 45); Bujar clings to the image of Agim, copying his behaviours and desires in an attempt to offset his fractured self. Agim's aspirations and way of life are replicated into a coping strategy that helps Bujar keep some degree of consistency in his life. Still, this strategy finally accentuates his fractured identity instead of enabling him to create a cogent sense of self.

Bujar's attempts to carry out Agim's ambitions and values show the great influence unprocessed loss and unresolved grief can have on the individuation process. Agim's death did not inspire Bujar to create a new identity; rather, it caused him to keep re-enacting aspects of their common history. Bujar stayed caught in a cycle of copying and substitution, unable to sufficiently grieve and let go, therefore extending his fight with identity creation. His memory of Agim and the life they had imagined together anchored his sense of self rather than his own experiences or aspirations. Bujar's attempts to negotiate the consumerist search for identity in different Western countries thus only served to accentuate his fractured condition since he was unable to really incorporate the new cultural influences into his current identity. His attempts to fit various social conventions were greeted with a continuous sense of alienation since he realised his external adjustments were surface-level and lacked a more profound shift.

Bujar starts to face his history and overcome the psychological struggle resulting from Agim's death only when he goes back to Tirana, the city he previously yearned to flee. Bujar allows him to interact with the unresolved components of his personality by symbolically returning to the scene of his first crisis. Agim shows in his dreams at this period as a "beloved appears as a horse" (Statovci 183), a picture that captures both the weight of his past and yearning. For Bujar, this respect of Agim not as a partner to copy but as a beloved memory marks a sea change. He begins to re-connect with facets of himself he had earlier denied, including cultural ties and family obligations.

One of the most significant changes occurs when Bujar begins to take care of his mother wondering "how can she have lived in this stench all these years? Has she been alone all this

time?" (Statovci 183) assuming the position of her only son and main supporter, he had long neglected. This behaviour suggests that Bujar is at last starting to embrace who he is rather than trying to flee his Albanian background, therefore signifying a kind of acceptance and reconciliation with it. Bujar makes a vital step towards combining the several aspects of his identity by serving his family. He lets himself flourish outside of his history while yet appreciating its impact. Bujar can approach a steadier sense of self by means of acceptance and readiness to face his roots.

Bujar's trip finally shows how losing an idealised friend affects the individuation process. Agim's death set Bujar into a protracted period of identity uncertainty marked by a search for self-realization and a struggle to balance his past with the demands of a consumerist society. His attempts to recreate Agim's existence were attempts to hang onto a lost ideal, which only served to further fracture his identity. Bujar starts the road towards recovery, nevertheless, by facing his unresolved sadness and accepting his responsibility in his family. This change suggests a resolution of the third individuation process: a step away from a reliance on Agim's recollection and towards an acceptance of myself. By doing this, he at last discovers a means to steady his identity, embracing his history and so constructing his future.

Chapter 3

Conclusion

The thesis summarises the main points and discoveries resulting from a study of Pajtim Statovci's *Crossing*. The cornerstone of the first chapter is the basic question: in the framework of migration, how physical and psychological geography shape the development of socio-political and gender identities? The assertion of the problem underlined the need of looking at identity transition among the dislocation of geographical and cultural sites, particularly in view of Albanian history and the Balkans. The background gave a summary of Albania's turbulent past and Statovci's own experience as a migrant, therefore orienting the book in the larger framework of postcolonial, migration, and identity debates. The goals defined the direction of this study, which is to show how the act of migration affects identity beyond physical movement, thereby including psychological and cultural changes accompanying displacement.

Drawing on postcolonial theory, psychoanalysis, and gender studies to question the protagonist Bujar's fractured identity, the theoretical framework used an interdisciplinary approach. Among the key theoretical points of view were Homi Bhabha's third Space, which acted as a prism through which Bujar negotiated between his past in Albania and his aspirations in the West, therefore exploring the transitional areas where he strives to recreate his identity. The ideas of self-balkanization and nesting orientalism helps the reader to better understand the internalised othering process and cultural stigmatisation Bujar encountered. Using Erikson's theory of identity development, this thesis also particularly addressed stages of diffusion and despair as observed in Bujar's battle with unresolved trauma and loss. Further aggravating Bujar's gender

identity's fluidity and volatility was Bauman's liquid modernity theory and Judith Butler's performative gender theory. Examined through both the loss of Bujar's familial ties and the horrific death of his mate, Agim, the third individuation process was seen to show how both events disturb conventional identity formation.

The assessment of the literatures highlighted already conducted studies on the work of Statovci, literary geography, and the psychological aspects of location and identity. This thesis sought to fill in the knowledge vacuum on the interaction between geographical locations and identity development in migration stories. The study approach depended on literary and thematic analysis of *Crossing*, supplemented by pertinent secondary materials to investigate how Statovci presents identity as a multifarious, developing concept influenced by migration. The limits of this research were admitted, especially with regard to the emphasis on one original and the restrictions presented by particular theoretical models.

The thesis showed during the conversation how, both physically and psychologically, migration functions as a catalyst for identity change. Bujar encounters a hybrid identity reflecting the mix of his history and present as he crosses several geographical and cultural boundaries, always striving to belong. His search to be a native foreigner and his constant inability to arrive relate to the conflict and fragmentation migrants caught between several societies go through. The idea of third Space by Bhabha clarified how these in-between areas both aggravate sentiments of alienation and dislocation and open fresh opportunities for identity development.

Furthermore, the examination of gender in *Crossing* demonstrated how the fluidity and

performative elements of gender as suggested by Butler impact Bujar's identity in addition to geographical changes. Under the pressure of migration, the performative acts and cross-dressing in the book highlight the flux of gender roles that results in a patchwork identity marked by components of cultural mimicry and self-exoticism. Together with Erikson's psychological phases, the third individuation process demonstrated how disturbances in important relationships whether family or romantic intensity identity diffusion and instability, hence contributing to Bujar's fractured self.

Finally, this thesis offers a thorough study of *Crossing*, showing how geographical changes and migration greatly affect gender identities as well as sociopolitical ones. It has maintained that migration is a transforming psychological process that disturbs and reorders the sense of self of the individual rather than only a move. This study has enhanced the knowledge of identity development in migration literature by including ideas from postcolonial studies, psychoanalysis, and gender studies, so providing insights on the great psychological influence of geographic environments. With important consequences for how we view the migrant experience in modern literature, the results imply that the search for identity in the framework of migration is an ongoing negotiation moulded by the intersections of geography, culture, and personal history.

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