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Live thy neighbor

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LIVE THY NEIGHBOR

An Abstract of a Thesis
Submitted
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

Milica Njezic

University of Northern Iowa

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ABSTRACT

This project explored the concept of *neighboring* from the cultural perspectives of the Bosnian refugees and the researcher who is Bosnian herself. The goals were to answer several research questions: (1) what kinds of tensions do we battle in liminal spaces and how do they, grounded in culture, shape the way we communicate our roles as neighbors, (2) how do Bosnian immigrants perform *neighboring*, (3) what constitutes a good neighbor, and (4) what are the researcher's personal stories and are those experiences shared with others? The author argues that neighboring is something we perform, that Bosnian co-participants show unconditional hospitality towards their neighbors because of their collectivist culture, and that methodologically, this project provides an important intervention in the monologic nature of text-centric scholarship and treatment of the readership/viewership. The project is also significant in its contributions to a scarce body of knowledge that exists on the concept of *neighboring* in Communication Studies.

Chapter 1 offers an introduction to the thesis and poses the research questions. Chapter 2 explores the main concepts relevant to *neighboring* such as hospitality, individualism/collectivism, culture, performance, liminalities, and *communitas*. The methodology includes ethnographic interviews, autoethnography, and performance ethnography, and is discussed in Chapter 3. The following chapter contains a script of the *Live Thy Neighbor* performance, which also serves as the analysis of the data.

Chapter 5 is the conclusion chapter, where the author reflects on the themes that emerged from the interviews, her autoethnographic and directing journey, the research questions, limitations of the study, and the study's contributions to the field.

LIVE THY NEIGHBOR

A Thesis

Submitted

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

Milica Njezic

University of Northern Iowa

July 2018

This Study by: Milica Njezic

Entitled: Live Thy Neighbor

has been approved as meeting the thesis requirement for the

Degree of Master of Arts

Date Dr. Danielle Dick McGeough, Chair, Thesis Committee

Date Dr. Karen S. Mitchell, Thesis Committee Member

Date Dr. Paul J. Siddens, Thesis Committee Member

Date Dr. Patrick Pease, Interim Dean, Graduate College

Live Thy Neighbor is dedicated to those waking up and falling asleep
in the *in-between*, and to their Neighbors.

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Thank you to the *Live Thy Neighbor* cast and production staff for co-creating an incredible community and performance. Without them, this scholarship would not yet become alive and begin a powerful dialogue.

Thank you to my mother and our neighbors in Bosnia and Serbia. My life with them, and memories of them have shaped the way I perform neighboring and my own culture. Thank you to my father for countless philosophical conversations on the topic of neighboring and culture.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Growing up in post-war Bosnia, I learned to be critical of absences and their implications. For example, I learned the absence of war does not mean there is peace. I have noticed missing histories in textbooks, omitted information in the media, and the lack of interethnic dialogue in Bosnia and Serbia, even twenty-some years after the civil war. My mother is Serbian and my father is Bosnian. My teenage years were filled with confusion and questioning of homogenous social and political systems. Often, these questions turned into arguments with friends, family, neighbors, and even institutions. Years later, as I sat in my backyard in Cedar Falls, Iowa, I looked at the house across from mine and noticed an absence. *Neighbors*. Where are my neighbors? Who are they? Why don't I know their names? I know kids live there, but I never see or hear them. Why is that? I was missing a key element of my upbringing: conversations with neighbors.

It was in this moment that I realized that Bosnian and American notions of neighbors and *neighboring* differ. In Serbia, in a village where my grandma used to live, there was a very intimate relationship with neighbors. They were our friends, our godfathers and godmothers. They lent us money, and we gave them money, and, most importantly, we were always in each other's houses and in each other's lives. Our cultural rituals, from the smallest ones like drinking coffee to the life changing ones like

funerals, neighbors were always present. Why did I not feel the same connection with my neighbors? Could it be the more urban lifestyle and ways of spending free time? But then, I would remind myself that in the mid-size city in Bosnia where we lived in an apartment building, the connections were formed around the neighborhood as well as within the building. Those connections would sometimes also grow into intolerance and hatred. Inspired by a particularly bad neighbor from our apartment building and struck by the indifference I felt in the Midwest, I wrote a poem trying to explore those differences. On one hand, I had very deep and emotional connections and conflicts with neighbors back home. On the other hand, I was faced with the lack of involvement and connections I have experienced from my Midwest neighbors. I understood there had to have been more to it than the collectivist *us* and individualistic *them*. The poem carries the title “Bad Neighbor” and is a piece of writing that triggered a series of events that led me to exploring the concept of neighboring (see Appendix B).

Intrigued by these differences, I researched the topic of neighbors and their relationships. I came across the subjects of community building and interpersonal relationships, but very little research pointed to how people develop relationships with their neighbors or how these relationships might differ based on cultural experiences and expectations. For example, one study examines a “sense of community” and communication relationships in a seemingly stable neighborhood in Milwaukee and defines the sense of community as:

a term used frequently by social scientists to describe patterns of relationships and the quality of life in urban neighborhoods. Seymour Sarason, for example, maintains that sense of community refers to the “sense that one [is]... a part of a readily available mutually supportive network of relationships upon which one [can] depend and as a result of which one [does] not experience sustained feelings of loneliness. (Doolittle & MacDonald, 1978, p. 2)

What Doolittle and MacDonald talk about here is close to what I am trying to reach in some respects, but not fully. The most common approach to research on neighboring comes from the social scientific understanding of meaning-making and interpreting the neighboring community as something quantifiable and found existing. However, based on my personal experiences and the stories I was raised on, and introduced to by family and people I met, a neighbor relationship can be an intimate, transcendent connection. Hence, my approach to meaning-making, in this case, aligns itself with phenomenology, a tradition of communication that understands communication as the “experience of otherness” (Craig, 1999, p. 138). This tradition proposes that the “authentic communication, or dialogue, is founded on the experience of direct, unmediated contact with others” (Craig, 1999, p. 138). Phenomenology emphasizes the value of both the body and the mind, erasing its duality, and arguing for transformational and intimate possibilities of communicating similarities and differences simultaneously, in the moment of communicating.

There is not much research done in phenomenological tradition, or in critical interpretivist tradition, in terms of neighboring. I find that shocking because neighboring seems to be an interesting and important topic to explore from multiple angles. Imagine

someone who lives next to you, in your immediate proximity, most likely by chance, becoming meaningful in your life. And imagine living next to a person who can make decisions that shape your life by how they vote or whether they support you in times of crisis. Isn't that relationship worthy of exploration? The unique approaches to, and potentials of, neighboring are intriguing from a communicative perspective. My upbringing in a collectivist culture shaped my beliefs on what it means to be a neighbor, and those beliefs are very different than USA notions of neighbor. I began to wonder if my thoughts on *neighboring* were personal ones solely, or if I shared beliefs about neighbors with other Bosnians and Serbians. Are other Bosnians and Serbians also puzzled by the complexities of being a good neighbor during war? After war? How has immigrating to the United States shaped their view of neighbors? These questions guide this project as I explore how Bosnian immigrants create, negotiate and do *neighboring* in liminal spaces. Victor Turner defined liminality as:

Liminal entities are neither here nor there, they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. As such, their ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed by a rich variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualize social and cultural transitions" (Turner, 2017, p. 95).

As an immigrant, I find myself in these spaces in-between, constantly negotiating my Serbian/Bosnian culture and the American culture. Refugees are a group that often finds itself "betwixt and between," and there are many Bosnian refugees in the Waterloo, Iowa area. Through my friendship with several Bosnian refugee families in the

Midwest, I learned more about my own culture and about neighboring from different cultural perspectives. Although this research arose from a strong need to connect with my neighbors, it gained a new dimension when I began looking at my own culture. In the section below, I outline the structure of this project, introduce the research questions, and provide chapter previews.

Structure of the Project

I experience the world through my interactions with others, and I often make sense of these interactions through art, storytelling, and poetry. As such, autoethnography, in-depth interviews, poetic inquiry, and performance ethnography were the most suitable tools to help me explore what it means to be a neighbor. My lived experience, stories and experiences of others in wartime and postwar Bosnia, as well as the contemporary conflicts in the United States, were essential to my understanding of relationships. Autoethnography helped me interpret some of my own cultural elements. To supplement the autoethnographic elements of this project, I conducted in-depth interviews with seven Bosnian-Americans living in Waterloo, Iowa. These interviews provided a platform for Bosnian-Americans to tell their stories, helped deepen understandings of *neighboring* relations in Bosnia, as well as highlighted immigrant perspectives of American neighbors.

As a young scholar, I am often questioning the best way to pass on the knowledge I gained in graduate school to non-academics. I believe that if research is

done *for* the people, it should also be closer *to* the people. That is why *Live Thy Neighbor* is a performance. As Bochner (2012) put it: “My concern is not with better science but with better living” (Bochner, 2012, p.161). My goal was to share my findings with nonacademic audiences to equip people with ideas for better living. Hence, I translated the data I by using autoethnography and qualitative interviews into the live performance *Live Thy Neighbor*. Poetic inquiry and ethnographic performance were used to analyze the data, overcome difficulties of translation as well as to embody the experience and insights from the interviews and autoethnography. Each of the three nights of the performance were followed by a talk back session during which the audience, the cast, and myself will engaged discussions of themes, concepts, and experiences. The project is guided by the following research questions:

1. What kinds of tensions do we battle in liminal spaces and how do they, when grounded in culture, shape the way we communicate our roles as neighbors?
2. How do Bosnian immigrants perform *neighboring*?
3. What is a good neighbor?
4. What are my personal stories, and are those lived experiences shared with others?

These questions were used only as guides during the interview process, as I will elaborate in Chapter 5: Conclusion. In the following sections, I will elaborate on the content of each chapter in this thesis.

In Chapter 2: Literature Review, I examined the scholarship on neighboring as a concept in Communication Studies. Given that the existing research on this topic is scarce, I explored the main concepts surrounding aspects of neighboring, such as hospitality, culture, performance as culture, collectivist/individualist cultures, conflict, *communitas* and liminality. The purpose of the chapter is to discuss current research, and connect it to my project by relating the concepts to the relevant aspects of the thesis.

In Chapter 3: Methodology, I elaborated on the ethnographic interviews, autoethnography, and performance ethnography, and how these methods helped me understand and answer the proposed research questions. This includes explaining the collection, interpretation, and presentation of data via: autoethnography for writing personal narratives, qualitative inquiry for interviewing Bosnian refugees, poetic inquiry in analyzing and creating the script, and performance for embodying research. Also, I provide a strong justification as to why those methodological approaches are the most appropriate for answering my research questions. My core argument is that the personal experiences of people in liminal spaces, including my own, lend themselves to autoethnography, qualitative research, poetic inquiry and performance due to their unique and complementary attributes (e.g. poetic inquiry allows ambiguity).

Chapter 4: Analysis/Script, is the script of *Live Thy Neighbor*, which is the product of my analysis. Analysis was done using a grounded theory approach and coding to produce categories/themes. Poetic inquiry was used for a part of the coding to produce

the artistic and evocative script. The script consists of six scenes and poetic transitions, and is an artistic representation of personal experience, storytelling, and scholarship.

The final chapter, Chapter 5: Conclusion, reflects on the categories that emerged from the interviews, my autoethnographic and directing journey, research questions, limitations of the study, and my contributions to the field of Communication and Performance Studies. I related the conclusions to the literature review as well as my research questions.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature on *neighboring* as a communicative concept is scarce. However, the following concepts are useful in understanding the issue of *neighboring*: hospitality, culture, performance as culture, collectivist/individualist cultures, conflict, *communitas* and liminality. Refugees are among the main groups experiencing a lack of belonging. Literature on liminal spaces, or moments where people are in-between in terms of cultures, law, rituals, etc., helps inform how culture is expressed symbolically in these transitional periods (Turner, 2017). The Bosnian refugee experience is examined through conflict and tensions in those situations of in-betweenness. A performative understanding of culture recognizes that it is always in motion and because liminal states are not static, the concept of culture as performance fits well with the refugee experience (Conquergood, 2013). The concepts of individualistic and collectivist societies help with understanding the Bosnian cultural identity, and how people in individualistic or collectivist cultures may perform *neighboring*. Finally, *communitas* and hospitality connect to the idea of (not) welcoming the Other (in this case, the neighbor), and how refugees negotiate neighboring, which makes sense when looking at the neighbor's role in many cultures. In the following sections, I examine the concepts of: hospitality, culture, performance as culture, collectivist/individualist cultures, conflict, *communitas* and liminality.

On Hospitality and the Lack of Research on Neighboring

I found limited research on what it means to be a neighbor and how to communicate *neighboring*. Rather, existing research is concerned with issues such as civic engagement, diversity, and local media use (Ball-Rokeach & Kim, 2006; Kang & Kwak, 2003; Paek, Yoon, & Shah, 2005). The neighbor relationship is not often researched as a unique communicative relationship. However, scholarship on hospitality provides strong theories and ideas for doing research on *neighboring*.

Jacques Derrida theorized about the concept of *unconditional hospitality* (Derrida, 2000, 2005). He explained it as a process of constant negotiation between the unconditional welcoming of the stranger and also conditioning that hospitality with rules and laws of stay (e.g. immigration laws, work permits, house rules, etc.):

But even while keeping itself above the laws of hospitality, the unconditional law of hospitality needs the laws, it requires them. This demand is constitutive. It wouldn't be effectively unconditional, the law, if it didn't have to become effective, concrete, determined, if that were not its being as having-to-be. It would risk being abstract, utopian, illusory, and so turning over into its opposite. In order to be what it is, the law thus needs the laws, which, however, deny it, or at any rate threaten it, sometimes corrupt or pervert it. (Derrida, 2005, p. 79)

Conditions or concrete laws may be ethical, political, and/or constitutional.

Derrida wrote about the sociopolitical context of foreigners, namely from the Western perspective and in the time of hostility towards immigration in Europe. For Derrida, the foreigner who is granted hospitality (prior to providing identification, such as one's name) has obligations to respect the conditions of that hospitality, making the

relationship reciprocal. Kakoliris explains, “From the point of view of a right to hospitality, the guest, even when he or she is well received, is mainly foreigner; he or she should remain a foreigner” (Kakoliris, 2015, p. 146). This implies that the visitor is always just a visitor, and unconditional hospitality only provides a partial understanding of the Other. Thus, understanding is always reached from distance. Derrida references Kant who defined the concept of *universal hospitality* as:

the right of a stranger not to be treated as an enemy when he arrives in the land of another. One may refuse to receive him when this can be done without causing his destruction; but, so long as he peacefully occupies his place, one may not treat him with hostility. (as cited in Kakoliris, 2015, p. 146)

Even though both Derrida and Kant are referring to the complexities of hospitality on a broader map of nationalities, immigration and politics, their ideas could be used to look at the concept of hospitality among neighbors rather than foreigners in a political sense. After all, neighbors inhabit the same geographical space in which they have to negotiate access to their property, circles of friends, communicative practices, rituals, and identities. As Derrida said, hospitality explores the ethical components “for a dwelling place, for one’s identity, one’s space, and one’s limits for the ethos as abode, habitation, house, hearth, family, home” (Derrida, 2000, p. 149). Hence, how do we negotiate the tensions of conditioning and unconditionally welcoming our neighbor into our lives?

This question plagued a Bosnian-born scholar, Naida Zukic, who wrote about neighbor relationships in “My Neighbor’s Face and Similar Vulgarities” (2009). Zukic argued that Derrida’s absolute openness to the stranger is not only conceptual, but also dangerous. She draws from Zizek’s location of a neighbor “in its violent brutality over against Freud’s traumatic intruder (a thing that hystericizes us and disturbs the balance of our way of life)” (Zukic, 2009, p. 1). She talks through the narratives and realities from the Bosnian civil war and genocide to challenge the notions of Derrida’s unconditional hospitality and its obligatory and reciprocal ethics:

This logic is implied in the critique of Derrida’s “opening without horizon,” and contextualized in representations of the Bosnian genocide in Peter Maass’s *Love Thy Neighbor*. Ethnic cleansing, neighbor-on-neighbor violence, and dehumanization of the Other read as the portrayal of humankind at its worst. Complicating Derrida’s notion of ethical hospitality are narratives of mass atrocities within which lurks the neighbor—the unfathomable abyss, the radical otherness in all its intensity and inaccessibility. (Zukic, 2009, p. 2)

Zukic argues that the neighbor can easily be the enemy of the host, as proven by numerous human rights violations and conflicts such as the Bosnian civil war, and hence the concept of unconditional hospitality remains precisely that - a concept. The danger of unconditional hospitality, for Zukic, lies in humanizing the neighbors who commit atrocities such as genocide. Unconditional hospitality grants them agency, humanity, and makes it possible for people to have empathy towards those committing genocide, which is very problematic ethically. Similar to Zukic, Kalkoliris critiques the ethics of unconditional hospitality:

Yet, if ethics is about responsibility, the ethics of unconditional hospitality would preclude us from taking any decision - and thus any responsibility for our decisions. Unconditional hospitality requires that I cannot react in a negative or protectionist manner but must automatically welcome everything. Consequently, an ethics of unconditional hospitality would short-circuit all decisions and be the same as a complete indifference to whatever happens. (Kakoliris, 2015, p. 154)

Commenting on horrific Bosnian conflict and atrocities committed by Serbs, Zukic builds on the Zizek's argument that solipsism in societies can sometimes represent a solution, a protection from the danger a neighbor can represent:

Despite a seemingly universal neighbor-love injunction, something in this ethic of responsibility remains opaque, enigmatic, and impenetrable. Derrida's ethical hospitality does not account for the very inhuman monstrosity within us—the unfathomable abyss of radical otherness under the guise of the human neighbor. (Zukic, 2009, p. 11)

This is interesting because both the Zukic/Zizek and Derrida/Kant arguments require some kind of a distance in experiencing the Other. Even though Derrida/Kant argue for unconditional hospitality – the conditioning of the concrete laws and the distance they bring sets a distance between the visitor and the host. Zukic and Zizek require the distance between the host and the Other because of the violent, and often dehumanizing nature of the Other (and Self) as experienced during a war. This thesis and performance carry the title *Live Thy Neighbor* in an effort to explore many different types of relationships and tensions – whether Derrida's unconditionality or Zizek's radical inaccessible Other – from up close. My own experiences and the narratives of my

co-participants explored how these concepts manifest themselves in complex identities as immigrants, Bosnians/Serbs, Americans, refugees, and neighbors.

On Culture and Performance

The scholarship on culture is extensive and it varies greatly in its definition of culture. For the purpose of this thesis my approach to culture is highly subjective. Because of my position as a full member of the cultural group I am exploring, I take a social constructivist approach. According to Wuthnow (1987), there are several approaches to studying culture. One of those is the subjective approach which privileges the individual's understanding of their own beliefs, culture, and values (as cited in Bell, 2008). In this study, I apply the subjective approach to look at meaning as "the individual's interpretation of reality" (as cited in Bell, 2008, p. 11). This includes both my personal perspectives and the participants' own experiences and understandings of meanings.

My understandings of approaches to culture come from Geertz's and Conquergood's scholarship. Geertz argues that we should take a semiotic approach to culture "to aid us in gaining access to the conceptual world in which our subjects live so that we can, in some extended sense of the term, converse with them" (Geertz, 1973, p.24). For Geertz, culture is "public because meaning is" and those meanings are established, shared and belong to the cultural group (Geertz, 1973, p. 12). Hence, the

symbols we use are not only individual but also shared with the cultural group and constitutive of that cultural group.

From a performance perspective, a stance I share with Conquergood, culture is understood as a *vortex* rather than an isolated element (Conquergood, 2013).

Conquergood describes it as a flow of energies acting on an axis, using centripetal and centrifugal forces. Centripetal forces, in their nature, pull towards the center. In this case, a moral center or a cosmology. This vortex reflects a culture's layers of meanings and perceptions. At the same time, there's also a centrifugal force that stems from the culture's nature of expressing itself. This constant motion of culture is, in essence, its performative core, which enacts and reconstitutes itself every time it is performed.

Therefore, according to this view, culture is understood as a process. Davis (2009) explains:

Culture as process assumes that human communication in and through performance is active; all that makes us human is ever-changing, ongoing, and not static. Culture is the sum total of all that we are; a way of life; a blueprint for maintaining traditions; how we celebrate occasions, make memories, ritualize events, and understand the ordinariness of everyday life in our families and communities. (p.266)

Because of this intimate relationship, it is not enough to simply observe the culture from a distance, such as in early ethnographic and positivist traditions. We need to also actively engage with to understand its dynamics and meaning making holistically.

Culture does not happen separately from us as individuals, it happens with us and through us in everyday life:

Culture possesses us as much as we possess it; culture performs and articulates us as much as we enact and embody its evanescent qualities. [...] This view of culture as a swirling constellation of energies with cross-drafts, wind pressures, and choppy air currents, can help blast researchers free from positivistic moorings because culture can no longer be grasped so much as it needs to be felt and engaged. With this notion of culture, knowledge derived from systematic investigation is displaced by understanding that comes from experience - from getting caught up, or plunging into, the hurly burly of social life. (Conquergood, 2013, p. 17-18)

According to Conquergood, culture is always in motion, and so is its performance. This shift in how we view performance was possible due to the scholarship of Goffman, de Certeau, Rosaldo, Turner, Hymes, Bauman, Conquergood, and others (Conquergood, 2013). Performance made a transition from *mimesis*, to *poiesis*, and to *kinesis*. Goffman understood *mimesis*, or imitation in performance, as pure mirroring of everyday life, creating a dichotomy between reality and appearance. Turner moved towards *poiesis* and coined a term “homo performans,” understanding performance as constitutive of meaning, not merely imitating the world (Conquergood, 2013). Hymes and Bauman make the turn towards *kinesis* of performance, the way we can go beyond its content, start *doing* and explore socio-political structures of cultural performances. Looking at the culture from a performance paradigm: “prevents the reification of culture into variables to be isolated, measured, and manipulated. Moreover, it dissolves hard-edged distinctions between observer/observed, self/other,

subject/object, ‘the almost de rigueur opposition of subjectivity and objectivity’”

(Rabinow & Sullivan, 1979, p. 5, as cited in Conquergood, 2013, p. 17). Davis defines

cultural performance as:

Performance is a human act that sees culture as a way of knowing and of discovering new ways of experiencing and making meaning of the world. Cultural performance, then, becomes an active, engaging, symbiotic exchange in which culture is transacted through performance—a process of throwing off and pulling in cultural forms centered in conflict and dynamic to the total sensual experience of a culture. (Davis, 2009, p.266)

Cultural performance requires us to enter a dialogue with the Other and understand the experience from up close, exploring the intimate and subjective truths of the culture. Examples of such truths a culture may have are concepts such as collectivism or individualism.

On Individualism and Collectivism

Conquergood argued that it is necessary to have dialogue to understand a culture. Using the lenses of collectivism and individualism, I can explore how Bosnian culture and the culture in the Midwest converse with one another. The scholarship on these major categories is broad and interdisciplinary, with strong roots in sociology.

Tonnies synthesized these concepts under the theories of *Gemeinschaft* and

Gesellschaft:

It focuses on the universally endemic clash between small-scale, kinship and neighbourhood based ‘communities’ and large-scale competitive market

'societies'. This theme is explored in all aspects of life – in political, economic, legal and family structures; in art, religion and culture; in constructions of 'selfhood' and 'personhood'; and in modes of cognition, language and human understanding. (Tonnies & Harris, 2001, p. 1)

For Tonnies, *Gemeinschaft* represents an organic community which is "bound together by ties of kinship, fellowship, custom, history and communal ownership of primary goods" whereas *Gesellschaft* represents "a 'mechanical' Society (Gesellschaft) where free-standing individuals interact with each other through self-interest, commercial contracts, a 'spatial' rather than 'historical' sense of mutual awareness, and the external constraints of formally enacted laws" (Tonnies & Harris, 2001, p. 18). The collectivist societies seem to display high interdependence among themselves, group is prioritized over the individual and the behavior is influenced by communal norms and rituals (Triandis, 2001). As Tonnies explained in his theory of *Gemeinschaft*:

Neighbourhood is the general character of life together in a village. The closeness of the dwellings, the common fields, even the way the holdings run alongside each other, cause the people to meet and get used to each other and to develop intimate acquaintance. It becomes necessary to share work, organisation and forms of administration. The gods and spirits of land and water, which confer blessing or threaten disaster, have to be implored for grace and mercy. Although it is basically conditioned by living together, this kind of community can persist even while people are absent from their neighbourhood, but this is more difficult than with kinship; it has to be sustained by fixed habits of getting together and by customs regarded as sacred. (Tonnies & Harris, 2001, p. 74)

I am going to interview members of the Bosnian community who most likely grew up in socialist rural areas. It will be interesting to explore the rituals, work, and

understanding of neighborhoods in their collectivist experience compared to the more individualist culture in the USA. Research claims that the individualist societies show more autonomy and independence from the group, and individual behavior is dependent on individual attitudes rather than group norms (Triandis, 2001). Tonnies wrote about *Gesselschaft*:

Nothing happens in *Gesellschaft* that is more important for the individual's wider group than it is for himself. On the contrary, everyone is out for himself alone and living in a state of tension against everyone else. The various spheres of power and activity are sharply demarcated, so that everyone resists contact with others and excludes them from his own spheres, regarding any such overtures as hostile. Such a negative attitude is the normal and basic way in which these power-conscious people relate to one another, and it is characteristic of *Gesellschaft* at any given moment in time. (Tonnies & Harris, 2001, p. 52)

Tonnies sees *Gesselschaft* and *Gemeinschaft* as opposites without room for fluidity and insisting on the hostility of *Gesselschaft* systems. However, scholars have moved from such distinctions. Scholars accept that neither of those are mutually exclusive or isolated – there is a lot of fluidity in terms of the depth of the cultural structure, and all cultures therefore invent and reinvent the balance of the two (Greenfield, 2000). I am hoped to identify the spaces of fluidity as much as the more obvious lenses of collectivism/individualism in my autoethnographic work and fieldwork with the Bosnian community.

On Conflict, Liminalities and Communitas

Fluidity and tensions seem to be ever-present and intriguing when it comes to immigration. As immigrants, we often feel like we do not fully belong in our countries or in the country and culture of immigration (Flores, 1996). These spaces, the spaces in-between, are liminalities (Bell, 2008).

Victor Turner expanded Gennep's liminal stage in rites of passage and used it to understand the people "between social and cultural struggles," or the "betwixt and between" (Bell, 2008, p. 134). Other descriptions of the liminal include: threshold, boundary, the sense of a limit, neutral territory (Balduk, 2008). What is interesting about liminalities is not only the in-betweenness but also:

that "liminality" served not only to identify the importance of in-between periods, but also to understand the human reactions to liminal experiences: the way in which personality was shaped by liminality, the sudden foregrounding of agency, and the sometimes dramatic tying together of thought and experience. (Thomassen, 2016, p. 87)

The concept of liminality deserves attention and can be a powerful lens in understanding immigrants' or refugees' responses in *neighboring*. In particular, how do we respond to tensions and conflicts when situated in liminal spaces? I am not proposing any particular definition of conflict as I am allowing my co-participants to define it and determine what it means (whether their meanings are concrete, such as war, or conceptual and ethical, such as a dilemma). Conquergood reminds us:

Between and between worlds, suspended between a shattered past and insecure future, refugees and other displaced people must create an “inventive poetics of reality” for recollecting, recontextualizing, and refashioning their identities (Clifford, 1988, 6). The refugee condition epitomizes a postmodern existence of border-crossings and life on the margins. With displacement, upheaval, unmooring, come the terror and potentiality of flux, improvisation, and creative recombinations. (Conquergood, 2013, 89)

Liminalities are inevitably related to *communitas*, which is “a sense of sharing and intimacy that develops among persons who experience liminality as a group... the gift of togetherness... It has something magical about it” (Bell, 2008, p. 134). This concept provides room for looking at *neighboring* in collectivist cultures because of the developed interdependence and privileging of the group over the individual. *Communitas* is spontaneous in nature and it comes into being “(1) through the interstices of structure in liminality, time of change of status, (2) at the edges of structure, in marginality, and (3) from beneath structure in inferiority” (Bell, 2008, p.134). It is not something that lasts for a long time and it is often found in situations of conflict (Bell, 2008). As such, it can be experienced by refugees, by outcasts, by the poor, and by many other marginalized peoples. However, the main problem with *communitas* is that it is hard to preserve and keep alive in a particular group. My intention is to explore ways *neighboring* offers (or does not offer) the potentials to communicate *communitas* and perhaps hold on to it a little longer.

The terms examined in this chapter are rich with meanings and interpretations helpful in understanding the concept of *neighboring*. This thesis aims to expand on those concepts and deepen the understanding of *neighboring*. In the following chapter, I explain the methodology applied in this study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The concept for this thesis began with a poem I wrote, “Bad Neighbor” (see Appendix B). In this poem I compared what it means to be a neighbor in Bosnia with U.S. conceptions of *neighboring*. In it, I tried to make sense of a particularly bad neighbor I had growing up and his transformation from a bad neighbor to a good neighbor. Because the questions I asked myself were rooted in my desire to understand how people perceive neighboring, qualitative methods seemed the most appropriate methodology for my research. Qualitative inquiry is rooted in understanding (*verstehen*), where “qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 4). Qualitative methods can fall on both the social scientific and humanistic ends of the spectrum, but for the purpose of this project, I used the humanistic methods.

Qualitative methods understand knowledge as socially constructed, therefore the realities we live are perceived and created through interactions. In other words, the core of qualitative studies consists of “the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied and the situational constraints that shape inquiry” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 14). Because qualitative inquiry emphasizes the social constructiveness of reality, lay people are considered

experts and their voices are the most important ones for telling their stories. I don't believe the researcher can stay objective and, as such, their voice needs to be present and their motivations clear. This method is most appropriate for open-ended and in-depth questions that seek to explore a phenomenon in its context. To answer these questions, researchers use field notes, conduct interviews, analyze artifacts (e.g. photographs, letters, etc.), etc. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

Qualitative research understands communication as constitutive of reality (hence, a subjective reality) and it resonates powerfully with my understanding of communication and subjective approaches to this project. Qualitative inquiry works well with the questions I ask. My exploration of the concept of neighboring led me to pose the following research questions:

1. What kinds of tensions do we battle in liminal spaces and how do they, when grounded in culture, shape the way we communicate our roles as neighbors?
2. How do Bosnian immigrants perform *neighboring*?
3. What is a good neighbor?
4. What are my personal stories, and are those lived experiences shared with others?

There are several thousand Bosnians in the Cedar Valley whose lived experiences carry important stories and understandings of how members of my culture interpret and perform neighboring. Therefore, I interviewed the members of these communities in Waterloo about what it means to be a neighbor and how it is communicated.

Members of these communities are mostly refugees from the Bosnian civil war (1992-1995) and have vivid memories of their neighborhoods prior to and during the war as well as living in diaspora. I was interested in how these members talked about their neighbors and themselves as neighbors in a collectivist setting (Bosnia) and more individualistic cultures (Waterloo, Iowa). Although I did not do an ethnography where I am a participant-observer immersed in the daily lives of my co-participants, the goals of ethnographic research align with the goals of the in-depth unstructured interviews I conducted. Lindlof and Taylor define ethnography as “*describing and interpreting the observable relationships between social practices and systems of meaning, based on ‘firsthand experience and exploration’ of a particular cultural setting*” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2017, p. 174). The interviews therefore describe (graphy) the people (ethno) and how they understand and describe themselves.

Because the main motivation behind this project began with a very complex internal struggle, it was impossible to leave out my own lived experiences, culture, and thoughts on neighboring. Autoethnography is a method that combines art and science to analyze through writing (graphy) personal experience (auto) within a larger cultural (ethno) context (Ellis, 2004). Ethnography is a “cultural analysis” in which ethnographers “inscribe patterns of cultural experience” through interacting with social groups, observing them, taking field notes and using other qualitative tools (Ellis & Bochner, 1996). In autoethnography, researchers use the self as a source for data. However, they must situate those experiences within a larger cultural context. By doing so, they work

to understand the existence of the self with others. Autoethnography gives me access to rich and extensive data, unobtainable to this extent from anywhere/anyone else.

Knowing my own motivations and being an immigrant with vivid life experience who finds herself puzzled by the liminalities, makes me a valuable source for this research.

Being both researcher and subject, I am aware of my biases and subjectivity. However, those are essential to telling my story of being a neighbor and experiencing neighboring in my country.

Both in-depth interviews and autoethnographic research are analyzed through the writing of a script for the live performance, *Live Thy Neighbor*. Performance is the perfect platform for bringing this data to life, using the actors' bodies to make the language concrete and material, and to apply emancipatory and transformative effects to myself as a researcher, and to the audience and the participants. Performance ethnography is used as a method because it combines analytic and artistic ways of knowing, considering the body a site of knowledge. Conquergood states, "the performance studies project makes its most radical intervention, I believe, by embracing both written scholarship and creative work, papers and performances" (Conquergood, 2013, p. 40).

This ability to bridge the embodied and the textual ways of knowing provides space for innovative modes of inquiry. My Bosnian participants may not understand every word of the play due to the language barrier, but they will recognize the movements, the cultural signs and clothing, the music, the visualization of their

memories. Also, my American cast members may not understand what it means to be an immigrant, but through the body and the movements, this understanding is possible to some extent. This would be difficult to achieve with typical academic text-centric research. The knowledge in performance methodology is “grounded in active, intimate, hands-on participation and personal connection” (Conquergood 2013, p. 33). I am also interested in starting a critical dialogue with the audience about what a neighbor is, and performance allows me to speak to them in a language and with visuals they will understand.

In the following sections, I elaborate on the ethnographic interviews, autoethnography, and performance ethnography, and how these methods help me understand and answer the research questions stated above.

Ethnographic Interviews

Upon Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, I began reaching out to my co-participants via phone, in person, and via Facebook messaging. Co-participants received a previously composed and IRB approved recruitment text and consent form (see Appendix A for IRB approval). Some of my co-participants were reached via their children, second generation immigrants who then communicated the information to their parents due to language barriers in understanding the formalities of the consent form. Others were recruited directly by me, in person, because we have established a relationship prior to this study.

I interviewed seven members of the Bosnian community, with anticipated time of anywhere from 20 minutes to one hour. The interviews were recorded on a phone and will entirely be conducted in Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian. I met my co-participants at the location of their choice including: their workplaces (a grocery store and a restaurant), homes, and a library. They were asked open-ended questions to facilitate the conversation and those are listed in the paragraphs below. In order to protect their identities, I have assigned my co-participants different first names. In Bosnia, it is easy to recognize someone's ethnicity and religion according to their name. Therefore, I made sure the names I chose do not reveal their ethnicity. Below are the profiles of the people I interviewed.

Rada. Rada is a woman in her late forties, living in Waterloo with her three children and husband. They came to Waterloo in the 90s, after escaping the Bosnian conflict via Croatia and then Germany. Rada and her family are my close friends, and I have known them ever since I came to the USA. Her family gained citizenship on the account of their refugee status. When they came to the USA, Rada and her family did not speak any English. She works in a factory on the production line and her husband is a construction worker.

Djuro. Djuro is a man in his early fifties and has been in the USA since the early 2000s. He left Bosnia during the conflict in the 90s and has lived in Germany with his family, prior to the USA. Him, his wife, and his son did not speak any English when they

came to Waterloo as refugees. He is now a highly successful small business owner in Waterloo. His family helps him run his business. I met him once before this interview.

Pikac. Pikac is Djuro's son and is in his early thirties. He was a teenager when he came to Waterloo, also as a refugee. He is an artist and helps his father run their business. I have met Pikac once prior to our interview, through his family business.

Emina. Emina is a woman in her late forties, who first lived in New York City and then moved to Waterloo with her husband and daughter, escaping the Bosnian conflict. None of them spoke English when they came to Waterloo. Her and her husband have a successful small business in the Waterloo area. I have known Emina for two years through her business.

Vera. Vera is a woman in her early fifties, who has come to the USA with her two daughters and a husband following the Bosnian conflict. Serbian by ethnicity, she lived in Croatia, but after her house burned down, she managed to escape to USA. No one in her family spoke any English before coming to the USA. She is a housewife and her husband is a mechanic. I had never met Vera prior to our interview.

Dalila. Dalila is Vera's daughter. She is in her early thirties and identifies as both Serbian and American. She is a professional employee at a company in Waterloo. She learned English through ESL courses in Waterloo schools, because she came here as a child. I had never met Dalila. I reached her and her mom via a mutual friend.

Selmir. Selmir is a man in his early fifties. He came here with his wife and two daughters as a refugee. They first immigrated to Serbia and then came to the USA, not knowing any English. He and his wife run a successful business in Waterloo. I met both of them once before this interview.

I developed a list of questions to serve as a guide to help me keep the conversations on topic. I let my co-participants tell me their stories by trying to answer some, if not all of the following questions:

1. Tell me about your neighbor experience in Bosnia.
2. How would you describe what a neighbor is?
3. What kind of relationships did you develop with your neighbors in Bosnia?
4. How did you feel when you moved to a USA neighborhood?
5. Can you tell me a little bit about your neighborhood and who are your neighbors?
6. When you look at neighbor relations back in Bosnia and neighbor relations in the USA, what can you tell me about that? What do you notice?
Similarities/differences?
7. Do you socialize with your neighbors? What does that look like?
8. Do you ever do favors for your neighbors, help each other or work on a project?
9. What does it mean to be a good neighbor to you?
10. How would an ideal neighborhood look like/interact like?

I audio recorded all the interviews and analyzed them through the methods of poetic inquiry and script writing for the *Live Thy Neighbor* performance. In the sections below, I will talk about poetic inquiry and its importance to this project.

Poetic Inquiry

Butler-Kisber (2010) talked about poetry as a method of inquiry, and specifically about found and generated poetry. She defined found poetry: “when words are extracted from transcripts and shaped into poetic form” and generated poetry as: “more autobiographical poetry, when the researcher uses her own words to share understandings of her own and/or others’ experiences” (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p.83). I used both found and generated poetry to create my script, in order to use my co-participants’ exact phrases with the first type and to self-reflect and rephrase research and thoughts with the latter. Within the transcripts, I identified salient words and phrases and arranged them in a way that has rhythm and style. This process is called *poetic transcription* (Butler-Kisber, 2010).

Because they became refugees at an adult age, my co-participant’s ability to speak English often does not allow them to fully express their emotions, stories, and memories. This is one of the reasons for their narratives being absent and their stories being told by others, based on their interpretations of Balkan conflicts and culture. Hence, this was a strong motivator for me to conduct interviews, translate them and incorporate them into the performance by using as many direct quotations as possible.

As a Serbian/Bosnian native speaker, I have an excellent understanding of the languages, slang and metaphors my co-participants used to tell their stories.

I find it important to give the participants voice, and a platform for their stories to matter. Poetry has the power to capture their feelings and leave room for ambiguity when there are no direct translations for concepts or terms between Bosnian and English. Poetry, in a way, expresses the liminality of experience precisely because of the ambiguity it allows, and the in-betweenness it represents. The point of poetry, as well as the point of this research, is not to represent some already existing Truths. Rather, I hope to bring out the underlying messages, social contexts, emotions, allow for connection between the audience and the performance, and to speak about highly personal truths. I anticipated hearing conflicted responses filled with tensions, in-betweenness, emotions, and nostalgia. The (news) stories I usually hear about my co-participants are filled with certainty, facts, and stripped of the emotions of lived experiences. Hence, the greater purpose for applying poetic inquiry to this project is very much political, as it has the potential to reclaim space and provide voice. However, the voice provided is a *third voice*:

According to Madison (2005), this approach developed out of feminist and multiculturalist concerns with respect to allowing the narrator's voice to emerge, concerns that are central to the larger project of feminism. Researchers committed to accessing subjugated voices might be especially inclined to this interpretation style. Furthermore, as many critical scholars believe, the respondent's narrative occurs at the point of articulation and therefore capturing the speech style of the narrator not only preserves his or her voice but

also assists in communicating the performative aspects of the interview. (Leavy, 2015, p. 76)

If found poetry is in essence a third voice, the generated poetic inquiry is my own voice. This process consisted of coming up with metaphors, words and scripts based on my self-reflections, autoethnographic research, and the creative process of writing. I wrote poetically as an intimate reflection on the Bosnian/Serbian conflict, neighbors I grew up with, dilemmas I was facing in understanding those, and an analysis of my lived experience in general. Poetic inquiry is also important to my work because of its potential to evoke and provide sensory embodied experience. I decided to write my analysis as a script for a play which was performed in front of audiences, and poetic inquiry helped the audiences connect to my experiences and the experiences of my co-participants.

Music and Dance as the Embodiment of Poetry

Another way of bringing the experiences of my co-participants to life and creatively adapting to language barriers was creating a scene using bodies and objects, accompanied by a recording of a traditional Serbian song. Immigrants and international students, such as myself, understand the value of nonverbal communication. Whether we had to rely on body language to overcome language barriers, or whether the feeling of nostalgia and lived experience was something we could not always explain and translate, the use of dance and music can help us bring those experiences to the audience.

I worked with Tina Nikolic, a musical director and choreographer in this project. I wanted to portray a scene which captures the romanticized communal experience, *communitas*, through the division of labor in Bosnian agrarian society. During the interviews, my co-participants explained how much they enjoyed working together because those moments were filled with music, singing, dancing, and feelings of belonging to a cultural group. Hence, Nikolic conceptualized a scene where actors use their bodies to create sound, movement, and their voices to create a song. The song was a take on a Serbian traditional song “Gde si bilo jare moje” (“Where have you been my goatling,” trans.) and was recorded in a studio at the University of Northern Iowa. The cast was divided into male and female groups, and assigned a series of body and object percussions to portray the traditional division of labor and relationships of the groups in rural Bosnia. The women were shown to do meal preparation in the kitchen, using tools such as a whisk, bowl, spices, and other tools to produce sounds. The men were shown on the other side, engaging in intense physical labor of scything, occasionally cheering and greeting each other. These groups occasionally interacted to show friendship and love emerging between neighbors.

Ultimately, this served as a way to convey my co-participants’ and my personal poetic experiences and descriptions of life in Bosnia and the USA. Nikolic, a full member of the Serbian/Bosnian community, created this scene based on the interviews and traditions from the Balkans (e.g. singing style). She successfully demonstrated how the

use of music and dance is a way to explore the ways our bodies can represent and also create meanings.

The non-verbal scene is an important representation of the data, culture, and overcoming of barriers for the people in liminal spaces such as Bosnian refugees. Bodies are a site of knowledge and hopefully helped my American cast understand how it feels to be an immigrant. This was by far the audiences' favorite scene from what I learned during the talk back sessions. In the book *Dancing the Data*, dance is understood as a tool to convey meaning and produce meaning in interpretations of the dance by the audience (Leavy, 2015). Therefore, dance captured the poetic stories and memories in an embodied and captivating form.

Performance Ethnography

In the previous sections, I talked about the importance of providing my co-participants space and allowing their voices to be heard in ways they want it to be heard. Performance ethnography is the method used to truly deliver on that promise. My knowledge of performance ethnography is fully shaped by the works of Dwight Conquergood. To understand the disenfranchised and provide space to their voices, Conquergood believed it is necessary to understand how people perceive themselves, resist oppression, and perform their identities in relationship to power structures. Hence, for Conquergood, performance ethnography is used as a theory, method and praxis, for the purpose of "studying up" (Conquergood, 2013, p. 10). Studying up means

that the marginalized groups determine and voice their own identities, and develop their own theories:

He wrote about these people's plight in academic venues like articles and conferences and in academic discourse, but he also used their own words and analyses to allow them to speak for themselves. Research as doing – performance – was the vehicle that he used to bridge the ethnographic divide between doing fieldwork and writing ethnography, the tension between field notes and footnotes. (Conquergood, 2013, p. 11)

I interviewed seven members of the Bosnian community, currently living in Waterloo, IA. As I mentioned earlier, the performance ethnography will help reclaim the space and the narrative about the culture I belong to. For a very long time, academia, including ethnographic praxis, relied on people for the insights and has been primarily expressed through academic writing, but rarely did the scholars engage in dialogue. This has many ethical pitfalls as it creates and re-creates the uneven power relationship where researcher is distant and holds the power over the ways to analyze and represent the participants' life. Performance ethnography allowed me to gain insights from my co-participants through a dialogic approach and share their stories as they desire (e.g. direct quotes used in the play, advice on character development, etc.). Donna Haraway called this approach a *view from a body*, in contrast to the *view from above*, typically used in positivist approaches where the researcher is distanced from the participant (Conquergood, 2013, p. 33). Which brings me to the core of performance ethnography: the dialogic performance between the Self and the Other.

During the interviews, I took a dialogic approach and shared my personal stories and identity with the co-participants. In other words, I put myself in a position to be interviewed. This means I was vulnerable and open in front of my co-participants, taking a human and empathetic approach to ethnography. As a researcher, I needed to stay aware of my performance and make it clear to my co-participants as well. Therefore, I had to balance my participation in the interview as a researcher and as a full member of the culture. These tensions are what dialogical performance aims to achieve - a balance of power, a position where both the researcher and the co-participant can challenge, debate, and question each other.

Autoethnography

During the 1980s, scholars increasingly began questioning the epistemological, ontological and axiological in the social sciences (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). Many scholars pointed out that scientific facts, findings and truths are always tied to the vocabulary and paradigms used to explain them. This initiated the idea of writing research in the form of a story to make those connections and bridge the gap between the scholar and the non-scholar. Because of the humanist nature of autoethnography, it is hard to define it as a structured methodology that fits into traditional social scientific approaches (Witkin, 2014). Due to the variety of representational forms close to the realm of literature (poetry, plays, etc.) and the evocative language of the author who is

both the subject and the researcher in the autoethnography, there are many challenges when using this method (Berry & Adams, 2016).

Autoethnographic work can fall anywhere on the continuum between the axes of auto, ethno and graphy, and so can methodological processes. This resulted in the creation of two major approaches to autoethnography: analytic and evocative. However, there are many other approaches emerging on the continuum (e.g. performative autoethnography) and a growing interest among the scholars to explore and use autoethnography. In the sections below, I elaborate on the two autoethnographic approaches I used in this project: evocative and performative autoethnography.

Evocative Autoethnography

Evocative autoethnography acknowledges that social reality is emotional and unpredictable. Therefore, the scholars using this approach apply evocative tools that can incorporate the nature of that lived experience to best examine it (Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2014). Evocative autoethnography emphasizes subjective emotional engagement for both author and the reader through storytelling. Ellis et al. (2011), claim:

When researchers write autoethnographies they seek to produce aesthetic and evocative thick descriptions of personal and interpersonal experience. They accomplish this by first discerning patterns of cultural experience evidenced by field notes, interviews, and/or artifacts, and then describing these patterns using facets of storytelling (e.g. character and plot development), showing and telling, and alterations of authorial voice. (p. 5)

Autoethnography emphasizes the importance of nuances in social realities and builds on the assumption that social reality is constructed, and that the values of the researcher cannot stand isolated from the research. The evocative narratives “move readers emotionally, using what Van Maanen (1988) called ‘an impressionist tale,’ one which includes striking stories with dramatic recall about remembered events in which the author was a participant” centering the researcher as a focus of the study in a storytelling format (as cited in Davis & Ellis, 2008, p.285). To write *Live Thy Neighbor*, I used my own lived experience to reflect on several dramatic events that shaped my idea of what does it mean to be a neighbor. One example is analyzing and telling a story of growing up in an apartment building in Bosnia. Several of our neighbors were interesting and had, at times, intense relationships with each other. Ignoring myself as a researcher and a central source of the analysis would be impossible to do. The richness of detail and insights about my neighbors at that particular point in time would be lost if I had tried to maintain my objectivity. Other dramatic events from my neighboring experience will be analyzed and elaborated on further in the script found in Chapter 4: Analysis/Script.

Evocative autoethnography takes the form of a story as a means to make sense of the world. Therefore, if we perceive the world through stories, we should research and analyze it through that form as well (Bochner, 2012). This form of social science writing breaks the tradition of already standardized forms of academic writing and

therefore opens up the space for criticism and debate as to whether this is the proper way of getting to the truth. Bochner (2012) stated the purpose of autoethnography taking the form of a story:

... but these truths are not literal truths; they're emotional, dialogic, and collaborative truths. Autoethnographies are not intended to be received, but rather to be encountered, conversed with, and appreciated. [...] and thus I am not so much aiming for some goal called 'Truth' as for an enlarged capacity to deal with life's challenges and contingencies. (p.161)

When written in the evocative form, those non-literal findings are interpreted by the author and the reader. The evocation causes the reader to re-live someone's experience in a cognitive, somatic, and emotional way - a process that is not achievable through standard social scientific writing (Richardson, 1994). The narrative form is written in first person and follows the conventions of a novel because it contains characters, dramatic tension, and a chronological timeline and carries the meaning and the value of the experience (Ellis, 2004). These choices in methodology were made to accomplish the following goals:

These writers want readers to be able to put themselves in the place of others, within a culture of experience that enlarges their social awareness and empathy. Their goals include: 'one, evoking emotional experience in readers; two, giving voice to stories and groups of people traditionally left out of social scientific inquiry; three, producing writing of high literary/artistic quality; and four, improving readers', participants', and author's lives (Ellis, 2004, p.30).

Autoethnography is considered a method and a product at the same time, combining autobiographical and ethnographic elements in methodology (Ellis et al., 2011). Autobiographical parts include writing from recall and drawing on past experiences and emotions from memory while using tools such as photos, journals, interviews or recordings to assist the process of recollection (Ellis et al., 2011). These recollections should focus on personal epiphanies, often described as moments that made the person experiencing them pause and analyze the lived experience. Ethnographic elements of the method include focus on participatory observation of the culture's beliefs, practices, and relations using tools such as interviews, field notes, cultural artifacts, language and more to analyze the culture (Ellis et al., 2011). Autoethnographers therefore balance between being the object of the study and studying the context of the social reality surrounding them.

This method challenges power relations and gives voice to people who usually do not have a chance to represent themselves or their social group. In transcultural settings, autoethnography can serve to inform a postcolonial research practice because it requires sensibility and acknowledging the informant as a human being and it allows him/her to use their own voice to most accurately talk about the lived experience (Butz & Besio, 2004). This effect of autoethnography is possible due to the expectations for the researcher to be reflexive and recognize how during the shared and personal experience, the researcher's practice becomes data itself. It also requires the researcher to be sensitive to forms of oppression and examine power relations through the ability

to experience what the “other” experiences (Defrancisco, Kuderer, & Chatham-Carpenter, 2007). Richness, readability, accessibility of data and emancipatory power are the strongest advantages of this method (Mendez, 2013).

Evaluating autoethnography is difficult. Critics of autoethnography struggle with the method being not completely ethnographic or autobiographical. For example, autoethnographic scholarship is often described as either too artistic or too scientific (Ellis et al., 2011). However, performance embraces these tensions and that is why performative autoethnography emerged out of the evocative.

Performative Autoethnography

One of the most important applications of autoethnography in Communication Studies is performative autoethnography, which emerged from evocative autoethnography. Performative autoethnography takes a step further and puts the conversation on stage, through performance, and while considering the audience as co-performers:

Performative autoethnography is performative due to its attempt to critically interrupt dominant narratives by offering a performance that breaks normative patternized behaviors and remakes a transgressive coperformance with others in sociocultural contexts and histories. The story comes from a critically reflexive location where the autoethnographer seeks to construct a plural sense of self, a dialectic of copresence with others in the field of study concerning how bodies are read in various contexts of culture and power. (Spry, 2009, p. 584)

Performative autoethnography challenges and criticizes the dominant narratives by taking an interpretive and often political position (Denzin, 2006; Spry, 2009, 2016). For example, performative autoethnography allows marginalized voices (e.g. queer, female) to be heard and therefore challenge the dominant voices and systems of power. Although this approach is evocative, what separates it from evocative autoethnography are its agentic, critical pedagogical, political and performative qualities (Denzin, 2006; Spry, 2009, 2016). Performative autoethnography is inevitably political because our bodies are political. For example, some bodies matter more than others, some are discriminated against, some are ignored and so on. Autoethnographers now have the ability to not only write, but to perform and reach a variety of audiences. The researcher is in a position to choose how to deliver their research and how it occupies space.

Throughout my life, and in particular my life in the United States, I have noticed that the stories of Bosnian/Serbian refugees and immigrants (particularly the stories about the wars) have seldom been told by us. Rather, media corporations, journalists, writers, academics, and others create the dominant narrative about my countries. A performance, directed by myself as a full member of my cultural group, brings agency to my cultural group. I was able to choose how to talk about our society, conflicts, traditions, and myself. It is especially important that the stories of Bosnian refugees I am interviewing are told in a way they want them to be told. I am serving as an ambassador to my co-participants and to my culture.

In performative autoethnography, as in evocative autoethnography, the focus is on the research process rather than reaching the truth or demonstrating expert knowledge: “In performance, the emphasis is on doing. Thus, performance creates a specialized (open and dialogic space) that is simultaneously asserted from inquiry and expression” (Finley, 2008, p. 105), therefore, the performance informs the method and vice versa. The aesthetic and political body is in the center of the method so “all of this rests upon reading and writing the body as a cultural text, as a personally political reaction whose evidence is an epistemic/aesthetic praxis based in performative writing,” serving as evidence, art and criticism simultaneously (Spry, 2009, p.584). The performances can include forms of “visual arts, music, dance, poetry and narrative,” and they materialize the evocative writing (Finley, 2008, p. 106). The script of *Live Thy Neighbor* is presented in the next chapter and consists of poetry, dance (body and object percussions), and narrative.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS/SCRIPT

Live Thy Neighbor was performed in the Interpreters Theatre at the University of Northern Iowa the nights of March 1, 2, and 3, 2018. The play was performed by 11 actors and produced with the help of many members of the production staff. Poems used for transitions between the scenes are provided in the Appendices C-F.

Scene I: Duplex Dilemma Scene

Tina, Andrea, and Millie are in their living room. Millie is dyeing Tina's hair.

MILLIE: Mmmm, it's gonna be awesomeeee!

TINA: Ughh. I hope so. I'm so nervous, I feel like I'm going to be a brand-new person after this.

MILLIE: Girl, I'm sure it will be great. I still can't believe this is your first time. Hold this bag.

TINA: What's the bag for again?

MILLIE: Oh, well the bag is to put on your face and b...

ANDREA (*interrupts*): Yo, I'm gonna stop you right there girl! (*To Millie, shakes her head*) You may lose a friend if you keep saying those jokes. (*To Tina*) It's for the hair, to preserve the heat so the hair dye absorbs better.

TINA: Oh, cool.

Millie places the plastic trash bag over Tina's hair and ties it well. Andrea starts playing Bosnian music on her phone.

MILLIE: Oh is that from the new episode of Bosnian Voice?

ANDREA: Yup, it's from Saturday. I wonder who the mystery judge is.

MILLIE: Tina, you're set. What's the time?

TINA (*looks at her watch*): 8:30. Half an hour?

MILLIE: Yeah, keep it for half an hour and then go wash. Oops, you have some hair dye on your face. It's ok. We'll smoke a cig and use the ashes to clean it off.

ANDREA: Hell yeah, let's smoke.

TINA: Ok.

They get up to get ready to go outside and smoke (putting shoes on).

TINA (to Millie): Do you have stuff left to do tonight?

MILLIE: I always have stuff to do every night, it seems like until I die.

TINA: Anything I can help with? I really liked reading about autoethnography the other night. Are you almost done with literature review?

MILLIE: I don't know what to tell you. I literally have no idea how I wrote this lit review. It can be tragic; it can be fantastic. For the first time in my life, I have no idea what the difference is.

ANDREA: Ugh, I'm glad I don't have to do that much writing.

TINA: Yeah, your MBA has a different program.

They're about to step outside when they hear loud repetitive noises as if someone is fighting.

TINA (worried): What was that?

ANDREA: I heard that too. Our neighbors?

They pause for a few seconds to see if they can hear anything. Noises continue.

TINA: You know what's weird? I heard them a few nights ago too. Because... my room's wall is right against their kid's room or something.

MILLIE: Hm. Never heard this before. I'm sure it's just the TV.

Loud bang. Girls are worried.

MILLIE: Ok let's figure this out. Duplexes are weird. The walls are thin, let's try and hear stuff more clearly?

ANDREA: Yeah, let's do that.

All three of them lean against the wall in an attempt to hear something.

TINA: I can't hear shit. Is it gone?

ANDREA (listening at the area below Tina): I can hear something from here.

MILLIE (giggles): I just hear Tina's plastic bag against the wall!

ANDREA (giggles): Tina move your ass so we can hear!

Tina moves. Looks at them, worried.

TINA: Guys, should we go over, see if something is happening?

MILLIE: You think they're... beating their kids?

Everyone looks worried and puzzled.

MILLIE: I have an idea!

Millie grabs three glasses and gives one to each of them.

MILLIE: I saw this in a movie – it may work!

They press their ears on the glass, leaning on the wall.

ANDREA: They are yelling something...

TINA: Yeah, I think I hear a guy yelling...

MILLIE: What should we do? Do we go over?

ANDREA: Yeah, but if he's beating the shit out of them or the wife – he won't tell us. Maybe we'll cause more trouble.

MILLIE: Yeah you're right.

TINA: Should we call the cops? You know, give them like an anonymous tip or something. We can say that we heard the noise and it has been happening in the past. And then, maybe they can stop by and see what's happening.

MILLIE: Yeah, but... I don't know... I'm scared of one thing though.

TINA: What is it?

MILLIE: They're black.

Everyone is serious and quiet, thinking.

MILLIE: You've seen all those videos, you've heard stories... We all know people who've been harassed and profiled by the cops. I'm literally scared to call them and scared not to call them.

ANDREA: I know... But, what do we do? Is it even our place to intervene? We don't have evidence, we just heard noise.

TINA: But then again, what if we don't go over there and something really bad happens?

MILLIE (*listens through the glass*): Wait, what is this...

They all listen through the glasses again.

ANDREA: Guys... It's Tom and Jerry. It's a cartoon fight!

TINA (*relieved*): Oh my god... I'm so glad... This was scary, man.

MILLIE: Guys, what are their names?

ANDREA: Tom and Jerry.

MILLIE: No, the neighbors.

TINA: I don't know.

ANDREA (*shakes her head*): Me either.

MILLIE: What do they do? Do we know anything about them?

TINA: Not really. Apart from that they suck at parking on the driveway.

MILLIE: Isn't that weird? We've been living next to these people for almost a year now.

They have little kids – we never see them in our backyard or anywhere, really. Like, what the hell. If we were back home, we'd probably already be godmothers to their kids!

ANDREA (*laughs*): True, true. I don't know, maybe they're busy. People are different here, they always work and it's not like back home where we make time to hang out with people, drink coffee, and stuff.

TINA (*sighs*): Egh.

MILLIE: Let's smoke.

They go outside to smoke.

ANDREA: It's chilly tonight. Agh! Someone remind me to take the laundry out of the dryer when we come in.

Millie and Tina are thinking and have concerned looks on their faces.

MILLIE: Would you go in?

ANDREA: Huh?

MILLIE: If this was back home, would you go in and see what's happening?

ANDREA: Probably, yes.

TINA: I believe so.

MILLIE: Then why can't we do it here?

Everyone is silent. End of scene.

Scene 2: Memory 1

Lilly is mopping stairs in the building because she had to pick up another job. She meets another neighbor.

STACA: Oh Lilly, you're always working! My, my, looks like the rest of us don't do anything around here. Why can't you leave that to the cleaning lady?

LILLY: (*mopping*) That's the thing STACA... I am the cleaning lady in our apartment building. I had to pick up another job. Millie's school is taking them for an excursion, you

know... Five days. And from my paycheck I can barely make ends meet. You know how it is...

STACA: Oh... Well, yes... We're all struggling, life is hard. So hard to earn that dime! And, you know how I went to Egypt for a vacation last week?

LILLY: Oh yes, how was your vacation? Did you have a good time? I heard the pyramids are stunning.

Misho shows up and starts urinating on the floor that Lilly is supposed to clean.

STACA: Yes, yes, they are. But I was robbed! Someone stole my golden ring, 24 karats. I left it on the table in the room and the cleaning lady must have stolen it.

Staca then inconspicuously takes off her other rings and puts them in the pocket, realizing that maybe Lilly too will want to steal them.

LILLY: Oh that's too bad. Who knows who stole it though. You sure you didn't lose it? Staca notices Misho urinating in the building.

STACA: OH MY GOD, MISHO YOU FUCKING PIG!

Misho calmly walks out, flipping them off in the process.

End of Memory 1. Lights out.

Memory 2

Misho and Hope knock on Lilly's door, looking very serious. Millie is on the floor, reading a comic book. Lilly opens the door.

HOPE: Good day Lilly. We came to do business.

LILLY: Business? What business do we have to do?

HOPE: As you know, our daughter is starting medical school to be a doctor. She needs to have her own apartment and we think it's best if she lives right above us.

LILLY: In this apartment? You must be crazy if you think I am selling this apartment!

MISHO: We are going to give you a good deal for it. You won't be able to sell it for more anyway.

LILLY: No, no. This is not for sale. I'm here to stay. Starts closing the door, Misho blocks it with his foot and leans in.

MISHO: Listen, sell it and everybody wins. You will have more than your current pitiful paycheck and government help. If you weren't a single mother and had a husband, you wouldn't be poor. But, you had to spread your whore legs for a Muslim – so take the

money, take your kid and go live with your mother in the village. This city isn't for everybody.

LILLY: (*scared*) Get the hell out of my apartment, leave me alone! We are here to stay! Don't come near us again, do you hear me?!

Lilly closes the door, shaken. She approaches Millie.

LILLY: Let me tell you something. Misho and Hope are bad people. But don't be afraid of them. They can't do anything to us and I won't let them do anything to us.

MILLIE: They can go fuck themselves!

LILLY: HEY! What kind of language is that! I don't care if you like it or not but you are not to be rude to them! When you see them, say "hello." If they don't reply, that goes on their soul. But you, you need to do what's right. Understood?

MILLIE: (*disappointed*) Ok. Understood.

End of Memory 2. Lights out.

Scene III: Basement and Food Airdrop Scenes

Scene 1, Basement:

Grandma is making coffee on the stove. Girls are sleeping. Men are playing cards and smoking at the table, slowly sipping rakija. Hope is trying to solve crosswords.

GRANDMA: We will be out of coffee after tonight.

HOPE: Really? God damn. Are the girls sleeping (*to grandma*)?

Grandma nods.

AMIR: Don't worry, we will try to get some tomorrow. My buddy from the fire station told me they'll be throwing some, with the rest of the food at the hill.

GRANDMA: Oh! Oh I almost forgot, they should be letting us know, it's almost time! Quiet!

Grandma adjusts the volume of the radio and stands by it to hear the announcement.

MISHO *annoyed*: Nobody is saying anything.

Grandma goes to turn on the radio and find the station. There's an announcement:

CITIZENS, ATTENTION! THE NEXT AIRDROP OF FOOD RELIEF IS SCHEDULED FOR TOMORROW, 7PM AT THE HILL BY THE PARTISAN GRAVEYARD. PLEASE, BE PATIENT AND DO NOT CAUSE TROUBLE. THERE WILL BE ENOUGH FOOD FOR EVERYONE. I REPEAT, NEXT FOOD AIRDROP IS SCHEDULED FOR TOMORROW AT 7PM, AT THE HILL BY THE PARTISAN GRAVEYARD.

Grandma turns off the radio and returns to her chair.

AMIR: So, are you going with me this time?

Misho is quiet. Keeps smoking and looking at the cards.

AMIR: You know, they won't be shooting at that time. They know... to stop shooting, so civilians can get food.

MISHO: Yeah... I'll go.

HOPE: You say that every time. You never go out. You haven't left this basement ever since the bombing started. (*Turns to grandma*). The fuck is he going to go.

MISHO: I'll go.

They keep playing cards. Grandma serves coffee.

HOPE: Five letters. Inventor of electricity. First letter... T.

GRANDMA: Say that again.

HOPE: Who invented electricity? Five letters.

GRANDMA: Oh my god, Hope. It's Tesla for god's sake.

HOPE: Tesla? Wasn't it Thomas, the American guy?

MISHO annoyed: American?! They did not invent anything. They steal, that's what they do. You think Thomas Edison invented shit?! Meh. We are the smartest people, the heavenly people – and they take our ideas and then they have the nerve to claim it their own. Tesla himself said, "I am not sorry they steal my ideas, I am sorry because they don't have their own ideas."

HOPE: It's what they said in that movie...

MISHO: You and your movies. You need to stop watching that shit. The West is pushing their propaganda to our country. We were eating with golden spoons in our castles while they were still eating with their hands like savages.

GRANDMA: (*Quietly*). And look what happened to our castles and our golden spoons.

HOPE: All I know is that *Gone with the Wind* and other movies are great. So romantic.

GRANDMA: Oh, and Robert Redford! And Long, Hot Summer! I remember Lilly and kids running back from school just to get on time to watch it!

AMIR: How is Lilly? Have you heard from her?

GRANDMA: She called a few days ago. Borders are still closed; she can't get through. The little one still does not know, and it's good. (*Pause*). This will be over soon. And Lilly will come back to her daughter. And me.

Longer pause before Amir speaks.

AMIR: Man, I wonder if somebody stole my meat from the smokehouse.

MISHO: Nobody stole your meat. There's nobody out there.

AMIR: Oh, but there is! There is, I know. Oh I tell ya. And you never know what people can do in these situations. It was different in our time. These times are strange. Do you

know that guy... what's his name? Oh, Stevo. Stevo got mad one day. There was this cat, alright. And the cat kept coming into his smokehouse in the backyard and stealing the bacon hung up there.

MISHO: Stevo stole his own smoked bacon?

AMIR: No, man, the cat! The cat stole it.

MISHO: The... cat? Stole it? Oh my. *(Starts laughing)*.

AMIR: I swear to you on my mother! May she die if I lie.

MISHO: Your mother died 30 years ago, brother.

AMIR: Misho, I am telling you, the cat kept stealing the bacon from the smokehouse every day.

MISHO: Well how much bacon was there to steal every day?!

AMIR gets angry: How in hell do I know how much? I just know she stole it. The sneaky cat stole it. And you know what Stevo did?

MISHO: No idea.

AMIR: Well, he hid in the smokehouse... And waited. When the cat came to steal, he jumped out and caught her!

HOPE: Did he take her to the police or did she die of his breath right then?

Everyone laughs.

AMIR: No, no... He took her, and he took those shells from the walnuts. The walnut shells. He poured cement in them, put them on the cat's legs and waited for it to dry. When it dried, he let her go and then every time she'd come back he would hear her because she made that clack-clack-clack sound like she was wearing high heels!

GRANDMA: Jesus Christ have mercy on these people.

MISHO: Well, he made Nikola Tesla look like an amateur, didn't he!

Everyone laughs.

HOPE to grandma: You should read my fortune. I think my cup will really open up this time.

GRANDMA: Let's see, dear.

Grandma flips Hope's cup upside down and then looks in it.

GRANDMA: Ughhh... Not good.

HOPE: Is it my blood pressure? I'm taking the pills! The doctor said I should not stress, but my goodness I cannot...

GRANDMA: No, no... It's not that.

MISHO: Is she going to lose her ability to speak? To Amir – fingers crossed.

GRANDMA: I see... A lot of burden.

AMIR playing cards: 19-7 buddy. You better step up your game! (*Misho grunts*).

GRANDMA: And I see a lot of words... Lots of conversations...

MISHO: Yeah, that's all from her mouth probably! She talks her own ear off.

GRANDMA: Settle down, I need to focus on what the fortune says. Oh dear...

HOPE: What is it?!

GRANDMA: Not good...

HOPE: Oh my goodness, what do you see? What is the matter?

GRANDMA: I see that I accidentally put flour instead of sugar in your coffee.

Sounds of grenades. Women scream. Lights go out. End of scene.

Scene 2: Airdrop

The hill next to the graveyard. Misho and Amir are waiting for the airdrop. Misho is very nervous.

MISHO: (*Looking up*). When the hell are they going to show up?!

AMIR: Soon brother. They should be here any minute.

MISHO: Hmm.

AMIR: Hey, do you think, you know... after the war is done... do you think Maya would give me a chance?

MISHO: Maya? The mailman's daughter?

AMIR: Yeah, that one. The way she looks at me. She knows what she's doing, I tell ya! I was doing some siding on her house with Stevo and she came out to bring us breakfast and rakija. I swear to you on my mother's grave she gave me extra watermelon because she likes me. And her melons ain't bad either... You know what I mean! Ughhh, when she walks I could just see them...

MISHO: You're crazy. She'd never look at you. Not with your paycheck, for sure.

AMIR: Whatever man. I just hope we get some coffee and maybe some sugar if we're lucky.

MISHO: I hear them coming! Are those American planes?

AMIR: I think so. My buddy from the fire station told me they have women pilots!

MISHO: Nooo... no shit! Hey I brought some beer over here and I got some cigarettes from the capital, no filter of course. I figured – we might as well have a tall one and smoke while we wait for the fuckers! Ha?

AMIR: Hell yeah man, when the war is over I am buying you a barrel.

MISHO: You'll get me a barrel? You think I was born yesterday? Haha, nah, it's all good, come on... Here.

Passes a beer to Amir. They squat and light up a cigarette.

AMIR: Let me tell you something. You know those satellite dishes we have on our house?

MISHO: Yeah, we have two of those on our house.

AMIR: I took those fuckers down, brother. My buddy is a radio amateur and he says his buddies say that those NATO dumbasses may think those are military radars and bomb our houses man!

MISHO: Are you serious?! No fucking way.

AMIR: I swear to you on my children. On my Mohammed and Amira. They confuse the signals man. Take that shit down. You never know.

MISHO: Yeah, it's better to be safe I guess. If you say so, my brother. I believe you. Oh I think they're here.

AMIR: HERE WE GO! SPREAD OUT, SPREAD OUT!

They spread out, expecting packages. Packages start falling, men are grabbing whatever they can. A heavy package hits Amir in the head and he falls down.

AMIR (*in pain, dramatically*): Oh... OHHH I SEE HIM NOW!!! I SEE...

MISHO: Who do you see???

AMIR: One of yours. One of your guys who's up there, opening the gate!

MISHO: Get up you fool – that ain't St. Peter, those are Americans and Brits throwing democracy at us! Get your ass up, we better go.

AMIR: Look Misho, look! It's coffee, I can feel it. Fuck yeah!!! (*Looks up and starts screaming at the helicopter*). THANK YOU, LADY! THANK YOU, HONEY DARLING!!! (*He suddenly pulls his pants down*). COME HERE, BABY!!!

MISHO: WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING???. HAVE YOU LOST IT FROM THAT HIT IN THE HEAD?!

AMIR: IT'S FOR THE LADIES THAT FLY THE PLANE! HERE'S SOME BIG SLAVIC DI... (*Misho pulls him away before he finished his sentence. He pulls his pants up, they run away to the car*).

Scene 3: Return to the basement

They return to the basement. Women and two girls are there.

HOPE: Oh my goodness, you brought so much food!

GRANDMA: Oh thank you Lord!

Whispers a short prayer, making a cross on her chest with her gestures. Both women start unpacking what men brought. Men sit down at the table, light up a cigarette and look relieved.

HOPE: Okay. Here are some beans, some canned meat. It says SPAM on it. What is S-P-A-M?

AMIR: It's a famous American brand!

HOPE: Oh, ok. SPAM with meat, SPAM with beans... Crackers... Something... And what is this? *(Pulls up a bag)*.

AMIR: And that my friends, is coffee! Amir is proud.

GRANDMA: Wait... *(Looks closer at the bags, puts Hope's glasses on)*. It says March 25, 1958.

MISHO: What? Let me see that. *(Takes the bag from grandma. Takes another bag from the package. And another one. Looks around them. Heavily sighs)*. Fuck. They sent us food that expired in 1958.

Everyone is speechless.

HOPE: *(Opens the pack she was holding)*. Amir, this is rice, dear. There is no coffee, Amir.

AMIR: *(Takes the bag from her violently. Looks in it. Starts sobbing. Falls down on the chair, head between his palms, elbows on his knees.)* JUST LET THEM FUCKING KILL US ALL ALREADY, MAY THEY BOMB THIS DAMNED COUNTRY!!! TO THE GROUND!!!

Lights out. End of scene.

Scene IV: The Funeral Lunch Scene

Misho's daughter committed suicide. Following the Bosnian tradition, neighbors came down to Misho and Hope's apartment to give condolences and show support. Lilly and Millie (now a 20-year-old girl) are at the door.

MISHO: *(opens the door and pauses)* You... You can't.

LILLY: *(pushes him and walks pass him)* Yes we can, it is time.

Millie follows her, leaving Misho at the door, shocked.

There is a table, several guests sitting around, quietly talking, smoking and drinking. There is a lit candle on the middle of the table, shot glasses, plates, the daughter's photo.

HOPE: *(surprised and with a shaky voice)* Lilly.

LILLY: Hope, I am so, so sorry...

HOPE: *(tearfully)* Thank you... It's not real Lilly, it cannot be. I know you lost your mother a few weeks ago. How to...

LILLY: ... I did. And I don't know.

HOPE: Today we pray for both of them.

Hope and Lilly hug tightly.

MILLIE: My condolences, Mrs. Hope.

Hope and Millie hug.

HOPE: (*wiping her tears*) Thank you both so much for coming... Keep your shoes on please. Please sit down. Please eat. There is soup and some potatoes and burek... And to drink... We have, we have. I don't know what but we have.

Misho shows up behind her, puts his hand on her shoulder.

MISHO: (*to Hope*) Let it... It's alright. It's alright. Turns to Lilly and Millie. We have some rakija, coffee, juice...

LILLY: Misho, I am so so sorry. This is a tragedy. This should not have happened.

MISHO: (*nods*) Please, let's make a toast. For my daughter's soul.

They proceed to the table. Misho pours (Lilly, Millie, Hope) shots of rakija.

MISHO: (*tearfully*) May the ground be easy on my daughter.

LILLY AND MILLIE: Amen.

They all spill a bit of rakija on the floor and then take a shot.

HOPE: Now please eat something.

They nod and join the table.

STACA: Hey there. (*She hugs Lilly, smiles at Millie.*) What a horror, my Lilly, what a horror.

LILLY: (*sighs*) May God help us and protect us all... The worst is when death doesn't take us in order. Shakes her head and sighs.

MILLIE: In order?

LILLY: Everything should go in order, my child. We lost our grandma, but it is in order. Old ones should go first. Hope and Misho lost a daughter... May God don't let anyone feel that agony, that pain.

Millie nods in understanding.

HOPE: (*serves them food*) Here's some chicken soup... Don't be shy, please eat. There... It is all there. Whatever you need, we have. We have. Just eat.
 MILLIE: We will Mrs. Hope. Thank you. Don't worry, we'll take.
 HOPE: Ok, ok... But let me know if you need more, I will bring.

Lilly drops the spoon on the floor.

HOPE: Oh, let me get that for you, sit down Lilly, don't worry – I will clean this. It helps me, I will do it. Are you sure you don't want more? Because we have...

Hope takes the plates away. Lilly and Millie look confused. Misho approaches them.

MISHO: She... She is on medications. Doctor said she has to, for her nerves. To calm her down. It's been hard.

STACA: I can only imagine. God protect us all. And how is your grandson?

MISHO: (*worried*) Little guy is ok. He does not understand yet that his mother is gone. And how would he? He is too young. But he will know...

MILLIE: (*nervously*) I need some air. Mr. Misho, may I step on your balcony?

MISHO: Of course, child. Of course. This way. Here, you can sit here, there are chairs and here's the ashtray. Do you want water or anything else to drink? Do you drink beer?

MILLIE: (*reserved*) I drink beer, but I am fine with coffee – I brought it here with me. Thank you though.

She sits down and starts looking for a lighter.

MISHO: Are you... Oh, oh. I will bring you a lighter.

MILLIE: No, I can...

MISHO: I will bring you a lighter.

MILLIE: Ok. (*Misho brings a lighter, lights up her cigarette.*) Thank you.

MISHO: You sure you don't need anything else?

MILLIE: (*sipping the coffee*) I'm sure. Thanks.

Misho pauses for a few seconds, turns around to go inside but turns back and steps outside.

MISHO: Millie... (*Pauses*). I know I have been a scum to you and your mom.

MILLIE: (*shocked and confused*) W-what? Excuse me?

MISHO: (*sits down next to her, lights up a cigarette*) I was. I was. I was nothing but a scumbag. A true scumbag.

Millie just stares at him, feeling uncomfortable but empathetic.

MILLIE: It's ok. It's in the past. It's ok.

MISHO: No, no, I have to say it. Let it. I've done horrible things to you two. I wish I was a better man when you were a child, you know. Not so angry... But you made it. And my daughter was ambitious and smart too. She finished her degree, got married and gave us our grandchild. And you two are similar. You are both fighters. I know. But something happened in her head, I don't know... But let me tell you now... And I swear on my daughter's grave – you let me know if you need anything and I will give that to you. I don't care, it can be as small as a glass of water. You say and I will give it to you. I know what I did. You should know that for the future. Ok? Understood?

MILLIE: (*moved and shocked*) Y-yes... I understand. T-thank you.

Misho touches her shoulder as a sign of a new beginning. The three women also walk outside, carrying chairs and cigarettes and coffee.

STACA: Yes, yes, it is so much better out here. Let's move here.

HOPE: Yes, it's pleasant outside – sit wherever you want. Millie, tell me, my child, how are you? My goodness you've grown so much. You're 19, right? Tell me about America.

MILLIE: Yes... Uh, it's good, it's good. I'm studying public relations and international relations. I am going back in August.

HOPE: Oh dear, that is amazing! Tell me, what will you do when you get your diploma?

MILLIE: I don't know yet, I still have a couple years until I'm done. But I do like politics and I like the media so something around that. Or maybe work in a creative agency too. We'll see what my options are – and then there are visa processes that are complicated and...

HOPE: (*interrupts*) ... You should come back home. That's all nice and good for you, but home is home. Here, you're with your people. You're a foreigner there, who knows how will they treat you.

MILLIE: I don't know if I want to come back just yet... I'm trying to figure it out. And they are treating me well, everyone seems very nice and helpful. I don't know...

HOPE: No, no. That's all good but... They will never understand our culture. You should pick the flowers from your own garden – marry our man.

LILLIE: I told her to stay in America, there's nothing here for her. And she never loved this town, I know that. And you know that in this town, you have to be someone's daughter to succeed. Or have some money. So, I tell her stay in America. That's a well-organized country, there are laws there to protect her unlike this corrupt bullshit. What will she do here?

STACA: Yeah, or she can spread her legs for some hillbilly who profited from the war, so she can get a job. Look at her, so pretty and educated – Millie, my child, I say fuck that and find a way to stay in America.

MISHO: Well I can tell you that this country needs educated young people to make some progress. That kid, Nikola, down the street – he is now running to be a representative for the government!

MILLIE: Yes, but he is with the SNSD party, right?

HOPE: Yes, he is and he should be – we all know they won't leave soon, they're too strong. Dodik has been in power for the last 20 years, and he'll stay there for the next 20 years. I'll tell you what. You want to do public relations, right?

MILLIE: Yes.

HOPE: And you like to be around politics?

MILLIE: Yeah but more like diplomacy and...

HOPE: Listen, listen. The leader of the party, of SNSD, Dodik – he was my student. I was his elementary school teacher. I know him very well. He gave my son-in-law a job. So, I can do this – I can connect you guys and he can give you a good job!

MILLIE: (*horrified*) Me?! To work for that party?

HOPE: (*excited*) Yeah, yeah – you could make his campaign posters and materials and stuff. He now spends a lot of money to make them in Italy. Why not?

Misho nods in agreement.

MILLIE: Because he is a nationalist, hateful politician who is...

LILLY: It's ok, Millie. Enough. Hope gave a good suggestion, so it's an option to have. In case you come back.

MILLIE: (*forced*) OK. Thanks Mrs. Hope, I appreciate it. We'll see what happens though. There's still time. I'll see what America offers.

MISHO: So tell us about Americans. They stupid, huh?

MILLIE: I mean... America is so diverse, I cannot really speak for everyone. It's a huge country. There are many cultures, ethnicities, languages, religions... When you meet an American, you have to understand kind of where they fit in those smaller groups and then that all depends on the...

MISHO: There are black people and Mexicans, huh?

Misho and the rest giggle.

MILLIE: (*ashamed and hopeless*) Um... Yeah but...

MISHO: Denzel Washington is my favorite actor – nobody beats him.

STACA: You know what Millie, let me tell you something. Find yourself an American husband, get your papers, be smart about that. You see how things are in this country and how much your mother works. How much we all work and for what? For some pathetic little pay that can barely keep food on the table.

LILLY: Yup... You know we all live from one loan to another loan. All my life I had loans, just to do basic stuff and survive.

HOPE: (*in support*) To make ends meet.

STACA: (*whispers to Millie who is very confused by this conversation*) Listen, child... And if you stay pregnant – give birth to that child. Give birth because nobody in this world will be a better friend to you than your child. Yeah, yeah you can love a man for a while, but he ain't your blood. But a child, that's yours! And – if it happens, you know I support you – so what, black people are people too! Staca winks at Millie. Millie is horrified and confused.

MISHO: Yeah... This country. What happened to us... Back in the day we used to be better. Better people and now – to each his own, and who gives a fuck about the rest! Where did we go wrong...?

LILLY: Times have changed, times have changed. It was all better in socialism. Different times. Remember, when we used to do youth initiatives and then we would go help build a railroad?

STACA: Oh yes, I remember my red, white and blue uniform as a young pioneer! The songs we sang were about colors too!

LILLY: Man, everything was better before the war, in Yugoslavia. Free education, free healthcare, jobs for everyone, vacations... And most importantly... God dammit, you could walk down the street at 2AM and nothing would happen to you!

HOPE: Yes, there was no fear, there was only trust. Fuck, we were together and nothing else would matter. This war. (*Shakes her head.*) This war turned a neighbor against neighbor.

MISHO: It did. I wonder what happened to Amir, our neighbor. Remember? (*Everyone nods*). I know he was Muslim... But he was a man too. We were good friends. And then all of a sudden, we did not recognize each other anymore.

STACA: Oh my goodness, that reminds me! We got a new doctor at the hospital, Dr. Samir. I mean, he is Muslim, but he is the best surgeon in the country, you know. I mean, there's some power to it, fuck it. A great man. So educated, so elegant. Ugh, I could just...

Staca smiles as she makes gestures as if she was grabbing him.

LILLY: What happened to the previous guy? Dr. Goran was it?

STACA: Well that guy was something! He talked to the nurses, one by one, and told them he will fire them unless they sleep with him. If they don't want to, he says - hasta la vista baby! So you see what you will do. There was a room at the hospital where they would...

Staca makes gestures suggesting they had sex.

HOPE: Jesus, so what did you do Staca?

STACA: Oh I told him... I told him to use his surgeon-ass knowledge and figure out how to go back to his mother's pussy! What a fucking man child!

Everyone laughs.

LILLY: Alright, I think it's time for us to leave. Thank you all so much and know that we're here for you, for whatever you need. (*Turns to Misho and Hope.*) This pain tears you apart, I know, but pray to God he has a plan and that the holy ground is gentle to your daughter...

HOPE: Thank you, thank you both so much... We will mark the 7-day of the death on Sunday and you should come for lunch, and we should talk, please.

MILLIE: Yes, we will do that. We will be here, don't worry.

LILLY: Ok, yes, we are leaving now. Take care and we're just a door away, you know that.

HOPE: Oh, do you want to take some food – I will prepare and pack it!

MILLIE: Thank you, Mrs. Hope – but there's no need. We're fine, I promise. We'll eat here on Sunday again so...

HOPE: Ok, but if you're hungry, just come downstairs, we have... We have.

MISHO: (*quietly to Millie*) And Millie, remember – even if it's a glass of water, I will...

MILLIE: (*touches his arm*) I know. And I will bring one to you too.

They leave. End of scene.

Scene V: Bosnian Refugee Story

Rada and Djuro are on the loveseat in their living room. Djuro is trying to use Skype to call his relatives in Bosnia. They are expecting Millie and Andrea to come for coffee.

RADA (*bringing coffee to the table*): Girls will be here any minute, Andrea called a while ago.

DJURO (*focused on the phone*): Motherf... Why doesn't it work? It says C-A-L-L. I press "call" and there is no call. This technology, I swear. Where are the kids?

RADA: They are all out. Maybe the girls can help us when they come?

DJURO: A-ha! Got it, it is ringing now! O-ho! Let's see.

Rada and Djuro squint and try to come closer to the phone screen. The connection is established and they both start shouting.

RADA AND DJURO: O-HO! HELLO BROTHER! HELLO, HOW IS EVERYBODY? I CAN'T SEE YOU, SPEAK LOUDER!

Connection weakens and they start losing the signal. Djuro is energetic, Rada is confused and entertained.

DJURO: H... HELLO? SPEAK UP! CAN YOU HEAR ME! TURN... TURN THE VOLUME! THE VOLUME UP, UP! (*Djuro starts using hand movements to explain the process to his brother*) YOU SEE MICROFONE – YEAH? NEXT TO – THEN LEFT, THEN UP, UP! HELLO?

Millie and Andrea show up.

MILLIE: Hi Mrs. Rada, how are you?

ANDREA: Hello, hello!

RADA: Come on in, girls.

They hug and kiss, and take off the shoes. Djuro ends the call.

DJURO: O-hooo, hello girls, welcome, welcome!

MILLIE AND ANDREA: Hi! How are you?

DJURO: Ma, I was trying to call my brother. This technology, I swear. I like to see the world progress, you know, but sometimes it bothers me. It tells me I can see my brother and I believe it, and then when I want to see him – it can't let me have it! Ayyy.

Millie and Andrea chuckle.

RADA: Ooooh Djuro leave that, let's forget that! The girls don't wanna talk about that. Are you cold? It's freezing outside. Here, I made coffee – it's still hot!

ANDREA: Mhmmm, it smells so good. Ugh, I was craving it the whole day!

RADA (*quietly, to Millie*): Millie, would you read my fortune today? Everything you told me last time – came true!

DJURO: Yes, yes. It did! You saw a document in there, and later that week I sold my truck!

MILLIE: Oh wow! I didn't know I'm that good. Of course I'll read your fortune. It's been a while!

RADA: I have no idea how you do it. I told the ladies at work – they all want to come so you can read their fortune. Start charging them and you can start a business! (*chuckles*) How did you learn that?

MILLIE: Well, I grew up in a village in Serbia. A lot of grandmas would do it and in time, my friends and I picked up on it and learned. My grandma didn't do it anymore after the war. I don't know why, she just didn't. But I remember she used to tell me that during the war, they were hiding with some neighbors, and she did it to pass the time.

DJURO: Were you with your mom then?

MILLIE: No, I was with her. Somehow, my mom couldn't get through the borders for a few months. But I was with my grandma and our neighbors. You know, I had something on my mind for a while. Well, ever since I came here, six... Seven years ago.

DJURO: What is it? Tell us, did something happen?

MILLIE: No, no. It's just... Ever since we moved to our current house in Cedar Falls, I thought we will make friends with our neighbors. But, for some reason, that still did not happen. And we live in a duplex, you know. Like, we're right there. And you know how it is back home – everyone comes in whenever they want, you see people on the streets all the time. But here, everything is quiet. Everyone is inside. I don't even know who lives on my street!

RADA: Yeah... Yeah, well it's a different system here. You know – here, you go to work when it's dark. You come back home when it's dark. You work 24/7.

DJURO (*offers the girls cigarettes*): Here, take a cigarette please. Take!

ANDREA: Mr. Djuro we have ours, we'll smoke these!

DJURO: Take these cigarettes! Please, let's not argue.

Girls chuckle and accept Djuro's cigarettes. Rada jumps and gets an ashtray. Everyone lights up a cigarette.

DJURO: You know, when we first came here... We had nothing. Maybe two hundred dollars in my pocket. With children, and her... Our house was burned down, you know. And of course, we did not know English. Not even a bit! The world looked so different to us. We were now refugees.

News frame scene where Djuro and Rada show the audience a news flashback, performed by them, as TV anchors/reporters:

DJURO: Following the violence in their home country, more than 3,000 Bosnians moved to the Cedar Valley, near Waterloo. While they were forced to leave their homes in Europe, they carried the memories of the horrific civil war with them. Fox 28 news reporter Steffi Lee is here tonight with more on their story.

RADA: Well Matt, it's still extremely hard for many survivors and their families to open up, but they say they need to start building up the courage to move forward.

End of news frame flashback.

DJURO: Those were hard times for us, child. We were scared. But, our neighbors received us so nicely and welcomed us into this country with so much respect.

MILLIE: You say you didn't speak any English... Then, how did you communicate with your neighbors?

DJURO: Oh, well, with hands and legs of course!

ANDREA: Ha! I can only imagine how creative you had to be.

DJURO: Well yes, yes, my child. That's how it was. For example, I work at the construction site when I first came. And, one day, I really got thirsty. But I did not know how to say I need water. So I stand up, come to my manager and show like this (*makes the gesture of drinking water*). He gives me water. Sometimes, I show that – and I get beer. You take what you are given, what can you do, ha!

Everyone chuckles.

RADA: Our neighbors, they were so, so nice to us. They saw that we could not speak English but that we are good people, hard workers. They helped us a lot to find jobs, to find grocery shops. In the beginning, I didn't drive so I would walk to the store and I would get lost! They would see me and take me back to the house.

ANDREA: So you had good neighbors here. Are all of them Americans?

RADA: Oh yes, yes. The grandma to the right, her husband died a few years ago. Tara across the street – (*whispers*) the lesbian. Bob and Rob two houses down. Their wives got sick and both passed away. I liked Susan. When we heard the ambulance took her to the hospital, Djuro came from work and we both went there. We brought her some of our food. She was so surprised! Then she told all the doctors (*laughter*) how I cooked food, how she liked the pita. When she was sick, I call her and tell her: "Susan ... Here's pita!" She was like "aaaaah" (*laughter*). And so, her family came and spoke to me: "Thank you, thank you." Then, when she died, we asked them what kind of customs they had, what we need... We went... They were all surprised.

MILLIE: Ohhh. That's too bad... But speaking of pita, would you teach me today how to make it?

RADA: Of course. We can still talk from the kitchen too.

Rada and Millie get up and go to the kitchen. Andrea and Djuro stay in the living room. Rada advises Millie on what to do with the dough saying "flatter," "roll it out," "like this," and so on.

DJURO: Heh! I remember when Rada first planted her flowers here. (*Pause. Andrea sighs with delight.*) They died right away. (*Andrea gasps*). Listen child, we can explain things with our hands and legs, with our eyes - it's an international language - and people understand you. They read it with their mind, their heart. Our neighbor Susan came and somehow explained to Rada that she planted them flowers at the wrong time, didn't she Rada?

RADA: Oh yes she did. She showed me the calendar and put her finger on May so I knew to plant them in May. One time, I had a real problem with the rabbits. I mean, they were just... (*rolls her eyes*). They kept eating my plants. She brought some hot pepper and put

it on the leaves on my plant. When I saw her do that I thought “This is a crazy woman!” But, I watched her and that is how I learned she did it so the rabbits quit eating my plants!

MILLIE: Oh wow!

RADA (*preparing the table for pita making*): It was funny. Then, we learned the language and slowly we began talking with them and visiting each other for their Christmas and our holiday -Eid.

MILLIE: They didn’t have a problem with you being Muslim?

RADA: Oh no, no! Never! We were always so good to each other. They always gave us a gift for Eid and came for lunch. And we did the same for Christmas. We have to learn from each other. We learned their language, they learned about our food and traditions.

MILLIE: Wow, that’s so wonderful. But, isn’t it different from what you had back home?

RADA: Different for sure. Back home... It was a different story (*sighs*). It will never happen again.

MILLIE: Would you tell me about it? What does it mean to be a neighbor back home?

DJURO (*yells*): It was a fantasy! People did everything together, they worked together. People loved and respected each other!

RADA: Yes, indeed. It is hard for me to explain, but we really did everything together. For example, when we collected wheat. It was all manual labor, done by hand. We had 10-12 people, it depends. You go to (*help*) him today - tomorrow he comes to help you. Us women would make food together while men were at work. Everything was together.

DJURO: We used to sing all the time. So we sing, and we dance, oh ... How wonderful it was ... Oh, you go out, sit in the yard, we sing - all the village echoes. Or when it’s time to collect the wheat or cut the grass.

Movement scene where women prepare food together and men scythe, both groups singing.

DJURO: Yes, yes. We would hug each other, we would give each other a kiss, we talked to each other. We are the people of love!

ANDREA: But how come the war back home broke out among the neighbors if we loved each other?

DJURO: My child, something happened to us. Politics, jealousy. People suddenly started envying each other on many things – the cars they bought, the houses they built, the successes of their children... Pih, I don’t know what to tell you...

RADA: Jealousy ... I do not know. People back home... They are not happy. They have, but they are not satisfied. A good neighbor should not look at what you have and be jealous. They say – you have plenty. I do, I work for it, but you also work - I don’t know what the point is. I do not know why. Maybe it's human nature, maybe the war has

done its thing... They retreat in themselves, they are isolated from each other. They have no future.

MILLIE: I understand that... I think we both (*pointing at Andrea*) can see that when we go back to visit. But tell me one more thing – how do you have the love for these neighbors here, after all you've been through from the neighbors during the war? Is it possible to have that same connection?

DJURO: A man must adjust like a chameleon. At home (*Bosnia*), it is not how it used to be and it can never be. Longing for something is, after all, a waste of time. We don't live a thousand years. We can still be good neighbors even if our English is not perfect. Life is simple, we are the ones making it complicated.

RADA: The neighbor is family, my dear. Because, my neighbors will help me before my mother will be able to. Because the neighbor is right there - on my doorstep. My mother always said: the neighbor is more important to you than I am. Why? If something happens to you, if your house sets on fire, for example, he will be the first to get to you. We share both good and evil. And that is beyond language and beyond nationality. It's unconditional, dear.

MILLIE: This was... Thank you so much for sharing all of this with us. Ms. Rada, would you mind if I stop by later this week and read your cup? I sort of have an idea and I think we need to go now! (*to Andrea*).

RADA: Oh but where are you going, I haven't even finished the pita and you two did not eat at all!

MILLIE: It's ok, we are not hungry anyway, but I promise we will come back soon and we'll eat!

Girls start putting coats and shoes on.

DJURO: Sit down, stay a bit longer, why the rush! Ay the technology, the times, the rush... Okay, I understand you have your things to do but don't forget us! You're like our family, you know that.

ANDREA: Mr. Djuro, we know, and we love you.

DJURO (*opens up his wallet*): Here, take this and buy yourselves some chocolate or something (*gives them both money*).

MILLIE AND ANDREA (*resisting*): Oh my god, no, no! We don't need it, don't do that!

Everyone starts shouting – girls are refusing to take money, Rada and Djuro are insisting.

DJURO: Take, take it. Let's not argue. You're young and you need it.

ANDREA (*shakes her head*): Uh...

MILLIE (*sighs*): Always like this... Thank you so much! We will see you soon!

Girls leave. Rada and Djuro stay behind, waving through the window.

DJURO: We really made it a long way, didn't we honey?

RADA: Yes, we did, dear. We were the luckiest unlucky people from that unfortunate Balkan destiny.

DJURO: Immigrants. We have that incredible will and we fight for the beauty of living. Even though we were always somehow, in between - in between countries, religions, language, culture... We lost our country, but we created a new one here. We made all this progress because of our will to live and to make that life a worthy one. A dignified one. Isn't that something, honey? We are now Americans and Bosnians. Nowhere in the world is that possible. In Germany, we would always be outsiders, foreigners. Here, we can be Americans. You know what, honey?

RADA: What?

DJURO: With you, I'd do it again. I don't care, as long as I have you. Honey, I'd marry you again any second.

They hug. End of scene.

Duplex Finale

Millie storms into the living room, followed by Andrea. Tina is sitting on the couch, looking deeply engaged in what she's reading on her laptop.

MILLIE: TINA!!!! TINA COME HERE!

ANDREA (*smiling*): Millie, wait up bro!

TINA: I'm here, I'm here... What the hell is happening?

Millie drops on the floor next to the couch, catching her breath. Andrea sits on the couch by Tina and takes off her shoes, followed by Millie.

MILLIE: Give me a minute. I am SOOO out of shape. In the meantime, tell us... Tell us how was your day, what are you up to?

TINA: Nothing, I was just reading stuff... About the whole visa issue.

ANDREA (*leans in to see what is on the laptop*): What is that, what's going on? Did Trump change the laws again?!

TINA: Well, look at this checklist. This is the new immigration shit, for our visas. It's not looking good guys. It's like, you have a higher education degree – check, English proficiency – check, Nobel Fucking Prize – check, and you are STILL a few points short to get a green card!!!

ANDREA: Jesus! What the hell?? (Pauses) Ok, let's chill, he won't implement that anytime soon. It needs to pass so many things to become the law. Can we worry about it in 3-5 months please? And then if it's bad, we go to Canada.gov and peace out?

TINA and MILLIE: (Look at each other, laughing) Ok.

TINA: So tell me, what's going on girl? How are Mrs. Rada and Mr. Djuro?

MILLIE: Oh they're good, they're good. But, oh my god, I like, got really inspired. It's hard for me to explain it really. But, you know how we talk all the time about being neighbors here and being neighbors back home and how we think it's really, really different?

TINA: Yeah.

MILLIE: Well, I've been doing a whole lot of thinking, all right? We were brought up in a very, very collectivist culture, you know.

ANDREA: VEEERY. Sometimes, semi-unhealthy collectivist.

MILLIE: Yeah, true, true. And people here are taught to be more like individuals and all that, right?

TINA: Yeah, for sure.

MILLIE: We just visited Rada and Djuro and we talked about neighboring here and neighboring back home. And you know what surprised me the most from our entire conversation?

ANDREA: What?

MILLIE: They have a life here. And, I don't mean like just a house and kids and all. But, they live here. In this moment, they are present. And when you are present somewhere you connect with the ones around you. It doesn't matter too much which language you speak or...

ANDREA: ...or is your neighbor a lesbian. But, that's a whole other issue. (laughter) We'll explain later.

MILLIE: What I'm trying to say is, even though we find ourselves in-between, like back home and here, it is still possible to negotiate some things and understand the other person... So, it's not enough to just be aware of your neighbor, Jim or Bob, or whoever, but you should do more... Not only love thy neighbor, but also... Like, live thy neighbor!

TINA: I think... I think I see what you mean, sort of.

ANDREA: What I learned from all of this is that a neighbor is family. You don't get to choose them, but you still gotta feel them, you know?

MILLIE: Let's go for a cig and talk!

TINA: Actually guys. I'm done with smoking.

MILLIE and ANDREA: WHAT?!

TINA: Yeah... We don't have to carry everything from our culture, I realized. So, I will try to do my best and like you said – be present in the moment, and just, negotiate what's best for me.

MILLIE: Oh my god, that's beautiful. We fully, fully support you Tina.

ANDREA: Yeah Tina, I'm proud of you!

MILLIE: Ok, so no cigarettes. We should do something to celebrate!

ANDREA: Oh my god, I have an idea! Let's go to Burger King! We'll order some shakes, some burgers, and some 30-40 chicken nuggs...

TINA and MILLIE: Ohhh yes!

They get up and start getting ready, putting coats and shoes on.

MILLIE: Let's go, let's go! But, you have to help me figure this neighbor thing out. I don't know what to do with it yet but I feel like we could be onto something.

TINA: I agree, let's talk more in the car. Do you have the keys?

MILLIE (*checks her jacket*): Yeah, yeah, they're here. Ugh I hope they parked nicely on the driveway so we can just leave normally for once!

ANDREA: I don't understand them, how do they not get they're blocking the damn sidewalk!

TINA: Dude, I was coming back from work today and the guy across the street – the one who fixes his stupid car at, like, one in the morning – he was just sitting in his garage... I could clearly see it was him, because the light was so fucking bright – and guess what he was doing?

MILLIE: What?

TINA: Blowing bubbles. I kid you not.

ANDREA: Whaaaaat! Like some kind of a perv? (*Tina nods*) That's even worse than the guy around the corner who charges people to come to his garage party.

MILLIE: Yeah, we're supposed to pay to watch him hit the drums?

ANDREA: Oh, ooooooh! Speaking of ridiculous stuff... I forgot to tell you this but the other day, the lady on the right, she had her tiny daughter push the trash bin down the driveway. The mom was like: "Push harder, goddamit!" The kid was like (*imitating a crying child*) "But I'm trying! I'm trying!" And it was freaking hilarious. I waved at them as I walked by but I about lost it...

*They walk off the stage and the audience hears their voices continue in the distance.
End of scene.*

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This project is a multi-layered exploration, which often left me in awe of human nature, culture, connections, and lived experiences. The most important insights derived from this project came from my co-participants, who helped me understand our Bosnian culture and my own experience of liminality in relationship to the way we perform neighboring. There are several themes that emerged from the in-depth interviews I conducted. These themes shaped my research and the script for *Live Thy Neighbor*. These categories provided a major dimension to this project, as my co-participants shared intimate aspects of their own lives and neighboring experiences.

Autoethnography, in combination with directing *Live Thy Neighbor*, served as a main guide in my methodological exploration of neighboring. In the following sections, I reflect on the categories that emerged from the interviews, my autoethnographic and directing journey, address the research questions presented in Chapter 1, limitations of the study, and discuss the contributions this project makes to the fields of Communication Studies and Performance Studies.

Discussion of the Categories

I used grounded theory as the main approach to analyzing the data. The first stage of coding was open and *in vivo*, which involves listening to the audio of the

interview and writing down salient words and phrases as said by the participants. I began to make connections among phrases and words and put them into broad categories (e.g. family, resources). Certain categories were apparent and emerged quickly from the data. Next, I listened to the interviews again, redefining and narrowing the categories. This phase is called axial coding and it serves to make “a new set of codes whose purpose is to make connections between categories” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2017, p. 252). It is in this phase that the categories started to make more sense in relationship to each other and, as a result, five categories emerged. In the final phase of coding called dimensionalization, I looked at the categories for their theoretical value. The coding process produced the following categories, which will be discussed below:

1. “Neighbors are Family”
2. Neighbor as a Resource
3. Economy of the Front Lawn
4. “With Hands and Legs”
5. *Žal*

“Neighbors are Family”

“Neighbors are family,” was the most dominant theme among the participants, who frequently used the word *family* to talk about their neighbors. My co-participant, Emina, said during the interview:

I have had so many wonderful neighbors and the neighbors are in the first place - if we can understand what *the neighbor* means. Because, neighbors will help me before my mother will. Because he's on my doorstep. My mother always said: the neighbor is more important to you than I am. Why? If something happens to you, if your house sets on fire, for example, he will be the first to get to you. We share both good and evil.

Each co-participant referenced *family* by emphasizing the neighbor's importance over biological family members (brother, mother, etc.). Interestingly, the participants never distinguished between a good neighbor and a bad neighbor. Several of the participants stated that we need to be by our neighbor's side "in good and evil" and that those are not contingent on any other factors such as culture, language, and so on. This implies that all of the participants consider neighboring to be unconditional in terms of providing support and "being there" for our neighbors, resembling Derrida's concept of *unconditional hospitality*. Derrida argued for being unconditionally welcoming towards others, even before we know their names, with the implied duty of respecting mutually binding laws, such as intervening in case of an emergency like a fire. However, the unconditionality does not mean absolute closeness, which is to be clarified in this comparison to family. Family implies closeness, though not necessarily the transcendence of souls. Rather, family comes with a sense of obligation. Just like one would do with family, whether they liked them or not, there is a sense of implied duty and pride in "being there" for a neighbor. When asked why they considered neighbors family, the majority of the participants indicated physical proximity as the main reason for the relationship, rather than sentimentality. Being there, and being physically there,

was necessary to the concept of neighboring. Just as family ties are involuntary—we do not get to choose our family nor do we choose our neighbors—we are obliged to be unconditionally welcoming and supportive of our neighbors.

As families tend to do, neighbors also participate in religious and other cultural traditions. My co-participants reported that both in the USA and in Bosnia neighbors visit each other and exchange gifts on the major religious holidays. In the words of Emina, “When it’s my holiday, Bajram (Eid), one of my greatest holidays, a gift is waiting for me in front of my door. And when it’s their holiday, Christmas, the biggest holiday... Gifts. That has to be!” Intercultural and interfaith understanding is of bonding and respecting neighbors. Another participant, Vera, talked about the importance of being there in a crisis and in moments of hardship, such as funerals:

Our neighbor went to the hospital and we heard that the emergency car carried her away. I came off work and took some of our (food) products from the store. She was so surprised. Then she told all the doctors (*laughter*) how I cooked food, how she liked the *pita* (pie). When she was sick, then I call her, Jane ... Here’s *pita*, and she was like “aaaaah” (*laughter*). And so, her family came and spoke to me: “Thank you, thank you.” Then, when she died, we asked them what kind of customs they had, what we need... We went... They were all surprised...

Another co-participant, Rada, explained how her family supported and hosted their neighbors’ two small children after the parents ended up in jail. She said: “They (other neighbors) said that they are bad neighbors. Because they did all kinds of suspicious stuff. But they never did anything bad to us. Never. And their children - those

are children! Good children. So we took them in.” Participants described showing affection and care during celebratory times as well as during the hard times.

Rituals are learned and respected in USA and Bosnian cultures and are a crucial part of the neighbor relationship. Collectivist societies place more emphasis on rituals, allowing them to inform and even shape individual behaviors (Triandis, 2001). It was clear from the interviews that there is a difference between USA and Bosnian cultures in terms of rituals such as visitations, coffee drinking, and sharing meals. The majority of co-participants stated that in Bosnia neighbors would come in and out of their house whenever they wanted. There was no announcing or calling the house before stopping by, rather it was an “open door relationship,” as Emina called it. In the USA, regardless of the subculture or the specific neighbors, those rules have changed, co-participants agree, largely due to the business of daily life as described by Rada: “Here (USA), you work a lot. You go to work when it’s dark, you come back when it’s dark.” Dedication to work, long hours, and the lack of free time emerged as underlying themes for the difference in how neighbors spent time together. This brings us to the next interdependent categories: Neighbor as a Resource and The Economy of the Front Lawn.

Neighbor as a Resource

When my co-participants first moved to the USA, their American neighbors provided information needed to manage their day-to-day lives, do projects, and find

jobs. Neighbor as a source of information was an important resource as Bosnians adjusted to the new country. Djuro and Pikac, a son and a father, both said their neighbors helped them find jobs and launch their careers. Pikac, now a famous artist, said:

When I still lived at my parents', I had a neighbor. Terrence P, was his name. I remember, I drew until late at night... It was fucking cold, I had no money. No ketchup, no sugar, nothing... He left me a key and said I can come in whenever and go to the garage. He put a fridge there so I can go to the fridge and take anything... He was a real neighbor. Moved here from Chicago. Whenever I needed something, for my web page or something, he'd come. He also found me a huge gig in Cedar Falls. That's how I got my name... I painted a company across from Tony's. I got big in the paper. That's how other people heard of me, all thanks to him.

Other examples included neighbors help in directing the participants to the right places to buy things, get cars, do administrative or legal things, etc. Exchanging tools for yard work or housework was commonly mentioned, as well as advice for gardening and lawn care. Vera said:

We asked some questions like this, for something we didn't know. I planted flowers, so I planted it early. It was cold, and she said we do it in May here (*laughter*). So some questions like, for example, when a rabbit bit the flowers, she said to put hot peppers on the leaf...

In Bosnia, the neighbor served as a resource and as a provider of physical help as well. Most of my co-participants come from rural areas of Bosnia that are mainly agrarian. Hence, working the land was a major part of their jobs. It is in the following

descriptions of Bosnian rural life (and in the Žal category) that the concepts of *communitas* and *Gemainschaft* are very present:

“It was a fantasy. People did everything together, they worked together. People loved and respected each other.” Djuro

“For example, when we collected wheat. It was all manual labor, done by hand. We had 10-12 people, it depends. You go to (help) him today - tomorrow he comes to help you. Everything is together. Or, when you collect the hay, it’s all together.” Vera

“We would spend time together when we work. We (women) would make food together while men are at work. We would help each other out, yes. It was really nice.” Rada

“Men would especially sing when we had to collect corn and we would all get together and work. Oh yes.” Rada

“In our country, people have organized themselves into the community and helped each other, the village takes care of the person...” Vera

The interaction with neighbors in terms of physical work is not absent from the neighborhoods in the USA, but it is most vivid in participants’ memories of life in Bosnia. The sense of magical togetherness and community was really strong when my co-participants talked about their agrarian, collectivist way of living. There was a sentiment that such a life is gone and will never return, which is explained in-depth in the Žal category. The USA experience with neighbors as resources mostly reflected the importance of neighbors to their integration into the new culture, their attempt to build a new life, and to find jobs.

Economy of the Front Lawn

This category is intriguing to me as a researcher and as a Bosnian because I had not recognized such an emphasis on material wealth and aesthetics in my culture before. Co-participants emphasized the importance of keeping your property nice and clean so that the whole neighborhood will look nice as well. Dalila explained that a good neighbor always needs to “think about the neighborhood “and in doing so will keep their lawn and their property clean and beautiful. This, for her, means that other people who pass by the neighborhood will feel safe and will want to go through there. It is evident that the perception and concern about safety stem from privileging the importance of material conditions (showing the status) rather than internal (e.g. having a shelter, living in a safe place) conditions for Dalila, which can be understood through her growing up in the USA as a second-generation immigrant and adopting many of the local cultural and middle-class traits.

However, the concerns that stem from materialism and can define neighboring for my participants are also related to neighbors’ income, as emphasized by Selmir: “How would you feel? You are powerful, and I am not powerful. Instantly, the relationship can change.” The participants often used the word *jealousy* when talking about those power and income inequalities, especially when talking about the post-war Bosnia.

“There (in Bosnia) people changed. There's a lot of jealousy there. Everyone speaks, but no one is really close anymore.” Rada

“Jealousy ... I do not know. They are not happy. They have, but they are not satisfied. A good neighbor should not look at what you have and be jealous. They say – you have. I do, but you also work, I don’t know what the point is. I do not know why. Maybe it's human nature, maybe the war has done its thing... They retreat in themselves. And there are a lot of people who are sick. They have no future.” Vera

Everyone seemed to believe that things have now changed among neighbors and that when they “had less, [they were] were happier,” as Vera said. Economic differences emerged as an underlying theme for something that can easily turn a good neighborly relationship into an envious and unhealthy relationship, which was very concerning and puzzling to my participants. This can also be tied back to the communal living and the interdependence of collectivist societies. Where resources were low, people tend to rely on each other and come up with solutions that benefit the individual and the group.

“With Hands and Legs”

I call this category “With Hands and Legs” because that is the exact expression several of my participants used to describe how they first communicated with their neighbors after immigrating to the USA. Body language was an essential form of communication in the early stages of their integration into English-only speaking neighborhoods. The participants explain:

“We spoke with both hands and legs. Believe me. We showed them (nonverbally). Until the children were able to master it (English), and then there was no problem.” Emina

“With hands and legs, with eyes - it's an international language - and people understand you. They read it with their mind, their heart.” Djuro

“Well, we definitely try to explain. But they were persistent and explained to us. We did not know anything but we tried with both hands and legs.” Vera

This category demonstrates the creativity that is produced in liminal spaces. People had to be creative in their attempts to communicate without a translator and to try and connect with their neighbors. Djuro said, “they read it with their mind, their heart.” This suggests how much creativity and faith in the Other the refugees had to have. Again, the concept of unconditional welcoming of a stranger and the desire for *communitas* seem to be engraved in the Bosnian refugees’ belief system. When asked about the process of learning a new language in a hard situation of refuge, Djuro poetically explained: “It’s an incredible will and a battle for the beauty of living.” The liminal space placed a lot of burden on my participants, and not knowing the language made it harder for them to express their feelings, yet somehow easier to connect and be creative.

Another topic related to nonverbal communication that often appeared in the interviews is that of music and physical contact. Nearly every participant talked about the sessions of *prelo*. *Prelo* is a gathering of neighbors, friends and/or family, usually in the evening on weekends, filled with singing, dancing, drinking, talking, and joking. Members of all ages would gather and spend the night enjoying each other’s company. Even though these acts are by no means only nonverbal, I placed them in this category because of the emphasis on embodied performance and music, rather than the narrative. The *prelo* events are a thing of the past because current circumstances such

as one's work schedule and/or language barriers do not allow these to happen to the extent that they remember. However, physical closeness and nonverbals are still an important way Bosnians communicate:

"We hug each other, we give each other a kiss, we talk to each other. We are the people of love." Djuro

"So we sing, and we dance, oh ... How wonderful it was ... Oh, you go out, sit in the yard, we sing - all the village echoes." Emina

"More houses is combined at prelo. Five-six families in one house, and then we talk and sing... Men really loved singing." Rada

"And when the weekend comes we all organized, Saturday night, for the prelo. So there's a large village, and we were gathered, singing, so it was beautiful. Never will it be like that again." Vera

The rituals of dance, singing, and being physically with one another are crucial ways my co-participants felt connection with their neighbors and shared the feelings of togetherness. This category contains poetic elements, which I tried to preserve by representing them through the body/object percussion scene and throughout scenes in *Live Thy Neighbor*. Poetry for my co-participants is inevitably grounded in the nostalgia for the past times. In a very specific way I have seen and felt before in the Balkans all of my participants experienced *Žal*.

Žal

The literal translation of the Slavic word *Žal* is sorrow, grief, or sadness, but it is actually very hard to define. It is a word specific to Slavic languages that symbolizes longing and sorrow for the events or people from the past, yet at the same time it

provides pleasure because those events have been experienced and have existed.

People intentionally seek out this feeling, consciously choosing to expose themselves to it through music, drinking, conversations, etc. Many of our traditional songs deal with this feeling, and it is one that I have experienced myself many times. I could clearly recognize it from the words of my participants:

“At home (Bosnia), it is not how it used to be and it can never be. A man must adjust like a chameleon. But... Longing for something is after all, a waste of time. We don't live a thousand years.” Djuro

“Because that was a friendship like there's no other... It doesn't exist anymore.” Emina

“Never. It does not exist. The people were cheerful and healthy. Much healthier people. Both physically and psychologically. And certainly... Somehow it was better.” Vera

The majority of my participants were visibly nostalgic, yet happy. They could not explain what exactly was missing, what exactly was more wonderful back home. Even if it was more wonderful back home, all of them emphasized that their lives in the United States are better. In the United States, they are able to work and provide for their families, help others, and live a safe life away from the Balkan conflicts. That means that their identities are often perplexed by the ambiguity of liminal spaces, full of memories of their neighbors, their community, and their current lives. They describe their experiences of neighboring back home as utopic, yet recognize the Bosnian civil war happened among neighbors. Zukic could now warn them about the very cause of their in-betweenness, the brutality of their neighbors. Hence, my co-participants are caught

in-between countries, in-between neighbors, in-between ways of living, and in-between moving away from the war. However, even in moments of telling me about the war and their status of refugees, my co-participants never told me about the monstrosities of their neighbors fighting in the civil war.

The answer why could be found in looking at the research questions that led the study. Some of those were: What kinds of tensions do we battle in liminal spaces and how do they, when grounded in culture, shape the way we communicate our roles as neighbors? How do Bosnian immigrants perform neighboring? My co-participants definitely helped me begin understanding the answers to these questions. By analyzing the categories that emerged from their interviews, it is clear that the collectivist Bosnian culture shaped how my co-participants interact and treat the others. For collectivist cultures, as discussed in the literature review, interdependence and prioritizing the group over the individual is very important. Hence, my neighbors put aside the horrible experiences they have been through with their neighbors during the war in order to have new, close connections with the neighbors in the United States. Their identities as Bosnians directed them to seek connection, even in times of high uncertainty when they did not speak the language or understand the rules of a new culture. In liminal spaces, my co-participants had a strong identification with the cultural norms they knew best. The tensions here seem obvious: collectivism versus individualism, *us* versus *them*, inside versus outside, etc. However, it is very interesting that my co-participants understand these tensions as mostly philosophical, and often spoke about it poetically,

especially through *Žal*. For them, the existence of these tensions allows them to cherish the past and romanticize it, while not being unhappy in the present. Because, ultimately, the reality of their neighboring overcomes the tensions through the culturally imposed ideology that “Neighbor is family.”

Reflections on my Autoethnographic Journey

An audience member asked me during the talk back session after the *Live Thy Neighbor* premiere, “how was my experience writing and directing the play?” In conversation with her, I realized I have adopted distance for three reasons: (1) as a way of protecting myself from reliving some intimate and painful truths, (2) as a way of remaining critical and as a consequence of being trained to be “objective” in academia, and (3) as a struggle to balance the researcher and the individual Self.

The first reason is a very obvious connection between autoethnographers and their research on topics of painful and traumatic events. One of the incredible potentials of autoethnography is to serve a therapeutic and cathartic purpose. I consciously tried to protect myself from it because I thought I needed to appear stable and calm for my cast, thesis committee, classes, friends, family, and everyone else. I thought that allowing myself to feel and process the emotions this kind of research brought would be more harmful to my work than I could afford. Hence, I postponed my reactions as much as I could, sometimes crying in the car on the way home after the rehearsals, but still not attributing those emotions to my work. I needed that sharpness of the mind,

unaffected by the overwhelming stream of emotions, to preserve a critical approach as a researcher and director. I drew on the Brechtian concept of alienation, which served to “not allow feeling to preempt the field of observation, nor does he want us to get into other people’s skin, lest we fail to observe them, assess them, and draw objective conclusions” (Gassner, 1952, as cited in Bell, 2008, p. 203). Although I was not searching for objectivity, my resistance to dealing with personal emotions during the autoethnographic process pointed me in that direction. This is where I still felt the consequences of being brought up in highly social scientific rigor of the academic household.

Subconsciously, I attempted to legitimize the personal as scholarship by weaving scholarship into my script. At first, this was about proving myself as intelligent, hardworking, and credible. However, when the scenes where I had done this were performed by the cast, it was clear that scholarship in such analytical and social scientific manner had no place in what I was trying to do. Hence, I rewrote the ending focusing on the story that emerged from personal experience and interviews. I learned that the academy, and myself as a part of it, struggle a lot with legitimizing non-social-scientific approaches to the representation of knowledge at a high cost. The risk of constantly accentuating the scholarship in performances (and other areas of communication) is in stripping performance of its core potential—the ability to foster creative and embodied inquiry, representation, and activism.

Last, I struggled with understanding myself as a researcher and as an individual throughout my work. I was not fully ready to allow my professional and personal selves to inform one another. However, seeing and empowering my cast to shape the characters (including my own character) by using their own lived experiences to understand them, proved to be more autoethnographic than I thought. I saw the magnified Self being used to look at Others. I saw the value of one Self (an actor) being influenced by the Other (myself) and how important that is in embodying a story I was telling. One of the actors, Yobel, told me how intimate his relationship was to his character because of the shared experience of immigration by his father. He talked about how he changed his approach to performing his character once he realized he could tell his father's story through his character. He too was a researcher, and he too was an autoethnographer in his reflections. It is then that I could allow myself to be in harmony with the researcher Self and the individual Self. This revelation came late in the directing process, but in hindsight this process needed to unfold over time as I needed time to reflect. Given the pressures of directing and writing a play, attending class, working, and teaching a class, taking time to reflect can feel like a "waste of time." So, once I realized the value of different elements flowing into one another, I allowed the time for reflection and emotion. At the same time, as a director, I was both inside and outside, constantly negotiating the ethics, scholarship, community, and art to create *Live Thy Neighbor*. I think that performance (auto)ethnography in this particular case

truly testifies to the power of this tri-method, on which I will elaborate in the section below.

Contributions to the Method, Theory, and Community

As a young scholar, I tend to question my credibility, a common issue graduate students face. What can I say or do that is revolutionary? It is not so much about generating the groundbreaking insights (although they would be wonderful to achieve), as much as it is about finding new connections among existing tools. Hence, here are a couple of thoughts on how this project contributes to the field of Communication Studies.

In terms of methodology, this project provides an important intervention in the monologic nature of text-centric scholarship and treatment of the readership and viewership. Autoethnography, ethnography, and performance were a methodologic trio with the primary purposes of (1) being ethics-centered and (2) navigating and embodying the truths of Self and Others (audience, cast, and co-participants). Ethics was central to the methodological approach. I was particularly careful to do my co-participants justice by providing them a space to tell their stories, making sure their words hold the same or as close as possible meaning after translations, and not harming them emotionally during the retelling of the stories. Next, I had to be kind and ethical to myself, balancing my own truths and hence the truths of the lives I've touched in the process. Were others' stories mine enough to tell them? Was my story truly my story?

Am I hurting the ones I am representing? And what did having others embody my truths do to my understanding of those truths? These were hard questions to battle with, especially during the directing process. Even with so much caution, there are risks involved with this type of scholarship. It was hard to expose others to my perception of them at times and not hurt them, and it was hard for me to recognize my own faults and leave room for forgiveness. In this process, I unintentionally hurt the feelings of a friend I was representing and simultaneously – I hurt my own feelings. There was never a single answer to my questions, there was never a doubtless period. However, by checking in with myself to make sure my motivations are grounded in goodness and the desire to learn and be taught, and by engaging in dialogue with scholars, friends, and the cast - I have managed to build this project as a multi-level intervention, rather than a static and passive Truth. In other words, this project is a motion, rather than a state, a verb rather than a noun, and that is a methodological core of my understanding of neighboring. So how do we make it embodied? A body is mortal, it exists until it does not. However, its mortality is motion as well, and in this case, the methodology privileges the body as a site of knowledge - a sentient and intelligent one. A cast member told me they learned from a life they *lived with* their characters (as opposed to life their characters lived). The methodology treated the bodies in dialogue - how bodies perform neighboring, how bodies respond to one another, play with one another, and learn about the Other.

This leads me to reflect on one of my research questions: What are my personal stories and are those lived experiences shared with others? As discussed earlier, what is mine and what belongs to others was a constant ethical battle filled with negotiations, doubt, and checking in with my moral compass. My lived experiences on the other side, had a much clearer and simpler connection to others. I learned from my cast who have drawn parallels to socio-political, economical, and personal aspects of my lived experience and theirs. This was actually a key element in their understanding of characters and their culture – the commonalities served as a bridge to a cross-cultural understanding of lived experience. Even though each story is unique, there are multiple connections we have as humans and that are universal. Another example would be a talk back session where people often said “Oh, I also had a bad experience with a neighbor!” or have shared their stories of living in liminal spaces as a member of a marginalized groups (e.g. LGBTQ) and how they too have to balance their sense of belonging and doing neighboring.

This project therefore makes the assumption that neighboring is something we *do*. There is definitely uniqueness in neighboring as a cultural performance, based on my understanding and the understanding of my co-participants in their in-betweenness. There is not a definite answer to my research question of what a good or a bad neighbor is; rather, those categories are a constant negotiation of cultural performances. One insight does stand out - that neighboring has a transformational potential. The strong sense of duty to be there for the Other opens up the space for learning, sharing, caring,

and forgiving. There are some cases where an absence of something can be transformational as well. For example, I learned well that the absence of war does not mean peace because other battles are affecting people's lives and hurting them (e.g. politicizing education). However, when neighboring is performed from a radical distance and there is no acknowledgement of the Other, there is no room for transformation or any kind of motion. Without the *doing*, there does not seem to be communicating or co-existing - only existing in its solipsistic way. Hence, neighboring requires the balance by negotiating of what it means and constitutes for the ones doing it.

Exploring neighboring as a concept in general is needed in the field. In this project, I looked at neighboring from very particular perspectives: Bosnian refugees and myself, a Bosnian international student. The research on this topic is very limited, and I believe this thesis initiates conversations in our field as they are very much needed due to their political nature. Another member of the audience asked me during the talk back session whether it is possible to separate the public and private when talking about neighboring. No, we cannot. Our bodies, culture, identities, they're all political. Hence the title of the play, *Live Thy Neighbor*. It is not enough to wave back at the neighbor as one walks on their driveway. If one votes for Donald J. Trump who runs on the very platform of harming one's immigrant neighbor then we have wrongly assumed that public and private must be or should be separate in neighboring. Neighboring is doing, and every doing carries responsibilities and negotiations. Loving is coexisting, but living

is truly understanding. *Live Thy Neighbor* grew a body of knowledge, both in theorizing and in embodying it.

Limitations and Conclusion

In the very beginning of the recruitment process, I had several participants decline participating in this project at the last minute. I learned from several conversations with my co-participants that they were scared of the word *interview*. To them, an interview was associated with an official procedure where the consent form was seen as a legal document. I overlooked that my co-participants' experience as refugees in multiple countries and the non-Western educational backgrounds could guide them to interpret the very formal IRB approach as intimidating, confusing, and even dangerous. One of my co-participants, Vera, was shaking right before we began the interview. I postponed the interview and instead engaged in a very informal conversation with her, sharing my life story and reassuring her that there will be no legal consequences to her statements. Hence, if I could change something, it would be to call the interview process a *conversation* instead. This would include rewording the recruitment text and my ways of reaching out to the participants. I would probably try to contact everyone directly so I could make sure the purpose and the procedure of the interviews was explained fully, but is non-threatening and said in a language that makes sense to them.

My personal relationship to the topic and my full membership in the Bosnian community may have given me an easier access, but I have definitely been affected throughout this project. I do recognize the importance of acknowledging my own bias and my own voice. However, during one of the interviews the roles changed when Selmir asked me: “What about you? Who are you, you tell me? Who were your neighbors?” In that moment, I was the participant only, and I was not ready to be that vulnerable. However, I felt that I owed my participant honesty and the opportunity to connect through dialogue – so I gave him my answers, and I was hurt. As my tears were falling down, my co-participant and I shared a moment of togetherness and *Žal*. Therefore, the final limitation I discuss is about self-care and emotional investment in the interview process. I shielded myself in autoethnography, but I was still very vulnerable to my co-participants.

Finally, even though my project did not seek to generalize, it would be comforting to find universal ways to help everyone who has experienced something as painful as war, displacement, and times of instability in a country where you do not speak the language and do not have a strong support system. This project was limited to the stories of several people, including myself, and can only provide insights into the lives of those people. There are parts of our culture we are sharing with other members of our group, but those elements are small when compared to the multiplicity of lived and interpreted truths of other individuals. Hence, the limitation of this project is in its inability to be a cure-all, even though I do not believe there is an absolute definition for

better neighboring, and ultimately for better living. With that being said, it is absolutely necessary to keep exploring the various ways we perform neighboring in our day-to-day lives and uncover relationships to Self, society, politics, power, and many other larger categories. A neighbor is an overlooked relationship that holds so much potential for explorations of performance, transformation, and meaning making. I hope that this thesis will not become just one of the many on the university's book shelves and instead will begin a much-needed conversation on how we perform neighboring.

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APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL

Dear Investigator(s):

Your study, *What Does It Mean To Be A Neighbor?*, has been approved by the UNI IRB, effective 11/21/17. You may begin recruitment, data collection, and/or analysis for your project. You are required to adhere to the procedures and study materials approved during this review, as well as to follow all IRB policies and procedures for human subjects research posted on the IRB website at rsp/uni.edu/IRB-home.

Your study has been approved in the following category: Expedited 6.

Approval for your study will expire one year from your approval date above. Beyond that date, you may not recruit participants, or collect and/or analyze data without continuing approval. To renew approval for your project, submit the Continuing Review and Closure form before the expiration date. The IRB office will email you the form 4-6 weeks prior to expiration or you can download it from the IRB website. When your study ends, you must download and submit the Continuing Review and Closure form as a brief final report on your project. If you are a student and planning to leave campus at the end of the academic year, make sure to submit this before you leave.

If you need to make any changes to your study, you must request approval of the changes before continuing with the research. Requests for modifications should be emailed to the IRB Administrator at anita.gordon@uni.edu.

If during the study you observe any problems or events pertaining to participation in your study that are *serious* and *unexpected* (e.g., you did not include them in your IRB materials as a potential risk), you must report this to the IRB within 10 days. Examples include unexpected injury or emotional stress, missteps in the consent documentation, or breaches of confidentiality.

If you need a signed approval letter, contact the IRB office and one will be provided for your records.

Best wishes for your project success.

Anita Gordon
IRB Administrator

APPENDIX B
BAD NEIGHBOR
BY MILICA NJEZIC

Mister Misho was a bad neighbor
putting-shit-in-our-lock-
-stealing-from-the-shared-basement-
-screaming-at-kids-
-you're-worthless-because-your-mother
-is-not-married
kind of bad
the whole building would go mute
when Misho walked the stairs
his eyebrows thick and frowned
like the dusk over the battlefield
of the nineties Bosnia
and when his daughter jumped
off the third-floor window
the whole building came
down to his apartment
his grandson held the door

unaware that this occasion
his mother will not attend
everyone ate in silence
at the table in front of a candle
and Misho brought coffee
or rakija
or water
to everyone who wanted
he looked at me and said
all men are bastards
he did bad things to my mother
and I, but
“let me know if you ever need
anything, even the smallest thing,
even a glass of water”
I was passing through the hallway
last Saturday
people were dressed in costumes
here in Waverly
K. was laying on the floor
drunk as a gypsy wedding night

“I don’t want to touch her,

I am not a nurse”

Two of us picked her up

K. rolled her eyes back in

and started shaking –

“Imma faint”

her roommate said

we should let her

stay on the floor

it ain’t our job

it ain’t our fault

APPENDIX C

REMEMBERING MISHO

BY MILICA NJEZIC

Back home, huh?

I remember all our neighbors

it was an apartment building

each apartment had two lovers

like we were some vertical Noah's ark

except ours, with me and mom

we were not really in their Bible

so our neighbor Misho

turned the building into Babel

Mister Misho was a bad neighbor

putting-shit-in-our-lock-

-stealing-from-the-shared-basement-

-screaming-at-kids-

-you're-worthless-because-your-mother

-is-not-married

kind of bad

the whole building would go mute
when Misho walked the stairs
eyebrows thick and frowned
like the dusk of the battlefields
of Bosnia,
this no man's land
was shaped by his insomnia
insomnia shaped by his anger
and anger shaped like a neighbor

APPENDIX D

A MUSLIM, A CHRISTIAN, AND A GRENADE

BY MILICA NJEZIC

But, Misho was also *a neighbor*

I was told about the nights

It was raining iron

over our houses and hospitals

I asked my grandma if that is

maybe God, having fights

with the merciful angels

I don't remember her words

but I remember her arms

carrying me across the street

half asleep, looking up and seeing

the red skies above us

the sirens piercing my ears

the lightness of her feet

rushing to our neighbor's basement

a Muslim, a Christian, and a grenade
walk into a basement
sounds like a beginning of a joke
only, in Balkans, the powder keg of Europe
that keg tends to easily explode
and not with laughter
between the bombings
we have engineered basements
to also be coffins

So maybe it was on my neighbor's
chair that I realized
god is a short-tempered guy
the bombing was called
the Merciful Angel
I thought the gray hair grandma got
must have been his dust

Later on I learned
Serbians misinterpreted the name
of the military action
later on I learned
everything depends on interpretation
my people lost their dictionaries
so meanings and words
levitated around our nation
I told you this story in English
but it truly has no translation

APPENDIX E
MISHO'S TRAGEDY
BY TINA NIKOLIC

In order. People should leave the Earth in order
From older to younger, not younger to older
But what do you do when your own daughter takes away her life?

My wife, roaming our apartment,
Moving around like a headless fly,
Now offering coffee to neighbors
Who gave us their shoulders to cry

Those same shoulders that shrugged
After they saw me treat them like shit
For the hundredth fucking time
Are now soaked in my shame and regret

I hope to help Hope be less hopeless one day,
That's all that I can try... I'll give my blood, tears, and sweat.
I need to rectify.

APPENDIX F
THE REFUGE
BY YOBEL ANDE

I like America.

Sure, it has its problems:

strict police,

few good paying jobs

and a president who looks

like a *Cheeto*

But, I don't believe in perfect:

I brought my family here

with less than a month's rent

after my homeland was torn up

by a war that turned brother

against brother

a war fueled by

greed

politics

and jealousy
that engulfed the country
in flames of anger and desperation

We left the fire for freedom
in the Land of the Free
hoping we too could be free
It was difficult at first but
through the love from our neighbors
we slowly learned to stand
on our own two feet
to help support others
as we've been supported

Now I can smile because my children
will never have to know what we had to go through
so when I see Millie and Andrea
I stay patient and listen and pray they
never have to know what it's like to hate your neighbor
without ever taking the time to know them