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The string between our lives

The healing power of a cello's music in *The Cellist of Sarajevo*



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Preface

The cello is a remarkable instrument. I often refer to it as “my voice”, something that has always been within me, that is one with me. Listening to the cello as well as playing it is the truest part of my essence, and I am constantly astonished by its capabilities. I am truly grateful for its existence and the way its music has been a healer, offering solace and hope with such power and depth. As I hug the cello, it hugs me back. My recommendation for the reader is to listen to the musical pieces mentioned on page eight in relation to reading this thesis. It is a tribute to the cello, as well as music in general. We are all as unique as each leaf; there is a branch holding us when needed. For me, it is the strings of a violoncello.

1 Prelude

“Music is the literature of the heart; it commences where speech ends.”

– Alphonse de Lamartine

The poet might speak the truth. It might as well be that literature is the music of the heart, too. Perhaps the truth of art is recognizing that monologue doesn’t always fulfill our hearts, allowing both arts the freedom of speech within one another.

The intermediality of literature and music can be referred to as a musico-literary relation. Musico-literary studies is a practice where the disciplines of musicology and literature studies are rather recent to one another, but the interest in conducting research is increasing. Stephen Benson, an Associate Professor of the School of Literature, Drama, and Creative Writing, published *Literary Music* in 2009, beginning with: “This book is concerned with music and writing, in particular with the age-old question of how to represent the musical experience in words”.¹

Based on the meaning behind musico-literary studies, analyzing “fictional representations of music” in literature, Benson uses the term *literary music* for such fictions, referring to the fact that “such music is by definition literary, a music made by the narrative in which it occurs”.² Reading music in fiction can function as a path to grasping the nature of music, its qualities, and its role in everyday life. The author seeks a deeper understanding of “what idea of music is represented, to what end, and how does this relate to other discourses of music, including those of musicology?”.³

My interest lies in reading literature from the perspective of musicology, not only in order to research literary music, but also to enter another dimension of the story. To do that, I will be conducting an interdisciplinary analysis of a musico-literary novel, *The Cellist of Sarajevo* by Steven Galloway, published in 2009. Music as a theme permeates the entire book, as it tells a story of how a cellist and his cello play an important part in the lives of three Sarajevo citizens during The Bosnian War: Alisa, a woman who acts as a sniper during the war, protecting the cellist’s life, Kenan, a young father and husband who risks his life

¹ Stephen Benson, *Literary Music*, Routledge, London, 2016, p .4.

² Benson, p.7.

³ Benson, p. 9.

walking through the city in order to carry drinking water back home, and Dragan, an older bakery worker, who is trying to cross a street full of danger. The three characters do not know of each other's existence, but they all experience the same war.

Even though the work itself is fictional, it is partly based on real life events. Galloway was inspired by Vedran Smailović, who played the *Adagio in G-Minor* for twenty-two days in the same spot as twenty-two people lost their lives while waiting to buy bread. With his cello, he spread hope and became a symbol of courage, as well as an inspiration for music and literature. However, the book provoked Smailović, as he expressed that Galloway had no right to write the story without asking for permission to include him in it.⁴ In the opening pages of the book, Galloway states that “The Sarajevo in this novel is only one small part of the real city and its people, as imagined by the author. This is above all else a work of fiction”.⁵

A previous study of *The Cellist of Sarajevo* worth mentioning is “Listening to survive: Classical music and conflict in the musico-literary novel” by Katie Harling-Lee, where she examines how music can impact conflict resolution. The author analyzes the characters’ listening experience in order to understand how it affects their efforts towards a post-conflict future. She highlights how the novel focuses on the music-listening experience and how an interdisciplinary approach is needed.⁶ Whereas the article focuses on the political and moral aspects, my thesis aims to examine the therapeutic effects of the characters’ musical experience. In order to give my study interdisciplinary depth, I focus on music psychology as well as the cello. The method I am using in order to research these aspects in literature and try to answer the questions below is an interpretative close-reading of the novel. The questions of interest for this thesis are the following:

- How are the characters’ experiences of music, the cellist, and the cello portrayed in the book?
- What therapeutic impact does the music have in the lives of the characters, and how could the cello have enhanced that effect?

⁴ CBC News, “Famous cellist claims story stolen by Canadian author”, 2008-07-17, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/entertainment/famous-cellist-claims-story-stolen-by-canadian-author-1.730813> (Accessed 2023-07-15).

⁵ Steven Galloway, *The Cellist of Sarajevo*, Riverhead Books, New York, 2008, unnumbered.

⁶ Katie Harling-Lee, “Listening to survive: Classical music and conflict in the musico-literary novel”, *Violence: An International Journal*, 2020-09-23, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2633002420942778> (Accessed 2023-08-01).

2 Background

The choice of writing about the cello in the background section comes from the belief that the instrument holds a significant symbolic value that could work as an additional layer to understanding the therapeutic aspects of music. These informative and interpretive parts allow the reader to study the rest of the thesis with further interest and depth.

2.1 The Cello of Space

The following paragraphs are the result of researching the nature of the cello. To explore the instrument's historical, artistic, and perceived characteristic features, I will be using a variety of different sources. The first part presents articles, studies, and statements of musicians in order to highlight the various aspects from which the cello can be understood. The second part is a description and interpretation of the writings of five poets who chose to dedicate some parts of their art to the cello. Perhaps a brief analysis of the cello's music in these poems creates an opportunity for a metaperspective when applied further in yet another literary piece. My interest lies in finding motives that can be used in order to analyze the cello's place in the lives of the characters in Galloway's story.

2.1.1 Violoncello's deep lyricism

The cello plays a significant part in orchestras and ensembles, simultaneously being a solo instrument with a lot of versatility. The art of cello playing has been developing since the sixteenth century, when the first cello is believed to have been built. From the very beginning, a cello's role in an orchestra was to create a deep bass sound that is there underneath, for us to hear between the lines.⁷ Even though the cello's potential goes far beyond that, it has a very characteristic sound that extracts from the bow sinking into the strings, creating vibrations that spread inside of the instrument, simultaneously projecting the cellist's mind and soul, singing through the carved f-holes out to the room and into the bodies and hearts of the audience. Its sound is often attributed to the following characteristics: deep, dark, warm, rich, mellow, melancholic, powerful, and sad.⁸

⁷ Wilhelm Joseph von Wasilewski, *The Violoncello and its History*, Da Capo Press, New York, 1968, p. 44.

⁸ Many of the terms are used by different sources throughout the essay.

The music historian Wilhelm Joseph von Wasilewski quotes Charles Baudiot, who in his cello tutor gives an example of the cello's role by applying it to a situation in the art of acting: on the occasion where actors on scene are silent for any reason, for instance, forgetting the recitation, or when their appearance is delayed, "the accompanist (*i.e.*, the cellist) can perform short preludes and embellishments at his pleasure. But he must be modest about it, and employ his ornaments at the right moment, and always with taste".⁹ Wasilewski also argues that the cello's character is "better adapted for subjects of a serious nature" and how the cello "stirs the soul by [...] the pathos of its expression". Furthermore, he mentions the instrument's advantage in solo *Cantilena* playing¹⁰: an "instrumental passage of sustained lyricism".¹¹ *Cantilena* stands for 'lullaby' in Italian, and 'old familiar song' in Latin, suggesting it has a soothing and caring effect, given the cultural and linguistic connotations.¹²

The character of the instrument is further discussed in a *New York Times* article where a few musicians present the cello pieces that moved them deeply. The composer John Williams states that the cello is the ultimate instrument for playing *portamento*¹³, a musical technique of smoothly sliding from one note to another without emphasizing the notes in between. The words originate from the Italian expression *portamento di voce*, 'carriage of the voice', or *portamento*, 'the act of carrying'.¹⁴ The conductor Alan Gilbert's answer is the opening of Wagner's *Die Walküre*, which he argues begins with "the most striking cello lines in the repertory: a terrifying depiction of a storm that represents the emotional and metaphysical turmoil that will ultimately only be resolved with destruction and rebirth".¹⁵

The cello is frequently played in times of misery, for instance at the memorial for the terrorist attack in Paris as well as the 10th anniversary of 9/11.¹⁶ The instrument gained

⁹ Wasilewski, p. 41-42.

¹⁰ Wasilewski, p. 213.

¹¹ *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Cantilena, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cantilena>. (Accessed 2023-07-18).

¹² *Wikipedia*, Cantilena, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cantilena> (Accessed 2023-07-18).

¹³ Angie Wang "5 Minutes That Will Make You Love the Cello". *The New York Times*. 2020-06-03 <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/03/arts/music/five-minutes-classical-music-cello.html> (Accessed 2023-07-18).

¹⁴ *Nationalencyklopedin*, portamento. <http://www.ne.se/uppslagsverk/encyklopedi/lång/portamento> (Accessed 2023-07-18).

¹⁵ Wang, "5 Minutes That Will Make You Love the Cello". *The New York Times*. 2020-06-03 <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/03/arts/music/five-minutes-classical-music-cello.html> (Accessed 2023-07-18).

¹⁶ Hellen Wallace, "Vast, deep and awash with feeling: the story of the cello", *The Guardian*, 2017-01-06.

popularity during the interwar period, and many cello concertos were created by Russian composers such as Kabalevsky, Shostakovich, and Prokofiev. The arts were strictly controlled by the government, eventually leading to the rise of neoclassicism, a style imprinted by “emotional restraint”¹⁷, “where innovation in music was less desirable and where tradition took precedence”.¹⁸ One of the most important pieces written during the war is Elgar’s *Cello Concerto in E minor*, his war requiem¹⁹, written in the aftermath of the First World War and performed with a highly valued interpretation by Jacqueline du Pré. Other important works are Gabriel Fauré’s Funeral *Élégie*, beautifully performed by Nadège Rochat, and *Adagio in G-Minor*, constructed or reconstructed after the Second World War and played by Vedran Smailović during The Bosnian War. He expressed: “At some moment, I recognised that the music, pouring from me like my tears, was Albinoni’s *Adagio* [...], the saddest, saddest music I know”.²⁰

The music historian Betsy Schwarm presents the provocative history of the *Adagio* that is attributed to the Italian composer Tomaso Albinoni, but that she, amongst many other scholars, believes to be composed by the musicologist Remo Giazotto.²¹ According to Giazotto, this piece results from reassembling fragments of a sonata’s bass line composed by Albinoni that Giazotto claims to have found in the remains of the Dresden Music Library in 1945.²² His own version of the story behind the creation of this musical piece is, by many scholars, considered to be fiction itself because he is the only one who supposedly saw the rescued fragments of Albinoni’s work. Regardless, this work plays an important role in honoring the memory of both musicians.²³

The cello being “the saddest instrument” is not only an idea perceived by many writers, musicians, and individuals but also an interesting aspect for conducting research

<https://www.theguardian.com/music/2017/jan/06/story-of-the-cello-rostropovich-du-pre-yo-yo-ma> (Accessed 2023-07-18).

¹⁷ *Wikipedia*, Neoclassicism, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neoclassicism_\(music\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neoclassicism_(music)) (Accessed 2023-07-30).

¹⁸ *Wikipedia*, Cello Concertos (Kabalevsky), [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cello_concertos_\(Kabalevsky\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cello_concertos_(Kabalevsky)) (Accessed 2023-07-30).

¹⁹ Kelsey, Smith, “Romantic Topics in Elgar’s Cello Concerto”, University of Northern Colorado, 2020 p.1.

²⁰ Smailović, Sands, (1999) *Sarajevo to Belfast*. West Chester, PA: Appleseed. The source of the quote is referred to in Katie Harling-Lee’s research article.

²¹ Betsy, Schwarn, *Adagio in G Minor*, *Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Adagio-in-G-Minor> (Accessed 2023-07-18).

²² Galloway, *The Cellist Of Sarajevo*, p. XV.

²³ Schwarn, *Adagio in G Minor*, *Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Adagio-in-G-Minor> (Accessed 2023-07-18).

about instruments and their emotional qualities. In one of such studies, the cello is shown to be the instrument that has the highest capacity to express sadness, compared to 43 other instruments. According to the writers, this can be related to the fact that the cello has a low pitch level that allows it to play quietly and slowly.²⁴ Even though sadness and other emotions are universal sensations, they can be felt differently for every individual. Therefore, the referred study can't completely work as a definite answer but rather as one piece of a puzzle directing towards the cello's potential to express sadness. It does, however, show that many individuals associate the cello with feelings of sadness.

The humanities' connection to the cello in times of sorrow could be related to the cello's proximity to our own inner instrument, the human voice. The participants of the study named above judged the human voice to be the second saddest instrument after the cello, and the insignificant difference presented can point to this connection.²⁵ The cellist Steven Isserlis wrote an article where he states that he often hears the opinion of the cello being "the instrument most like a human voice.", with which he himself agrees. Thereafter, he mentions how the relationship a cellist has with the cello resembles a singer's relationship with the voice: "the cello seems to become part of one's body".²⁶ In many studies, the cello is one of the instruments that has the closest connection to our voice. The similarities are shown, inter alia, in a study resulting in the conclusion that there is a direct overlap in our brain's vocal-auditory network between singing and cello playing.²⁷

2.1.2 Poetry's warm tone

For the reason that poetry itself is a lyrical artform, it is not surprising that it often portrays music related themes. Instruments like the violin or flute are often represented throughout the history of poetry, but several poets have also written about the nature of the cello, and the metaphors and symbols occur frequently. To get a better understanding of how the cello is

²⁴ Huron, Anderson, Shanahan, "You Can't Play a Sad Song on the Banjo:" Acoustic Factors in the Judgment of Instrument Capacity to Convey Sadness", *Empirical Musicology Review*, 2014. (Accessed 2023-07-18).

²⁵ Huron, Anderson, Shanahan, "You Can't Play a Sad Song on the Banjo:" Acoustic Factors in the Judgment of Instrument Capacity to Convey Sadness", *Empirical Musicology Review*, 2014. (Accessed 2023-07-18).

²⁶ Steven Isserlis, "The cello's perfect partner: the human voice", *The Guardian*, 2017-10-27, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2011/oct/27/steven-isserlis-voice-and-cello-series> (Accessed 2023-07-18).

²⁷ Sedago, Hollinger, Thibodeau, Penhune, Zatorre, "Partially Overlapping Brain Networks for Singing and Cello Playing", *Frontiers in Neuroscience*, 2018. (Accessed 2023-08-01).

perceived in literature, the following part of the thesis will introduce poems by Artur Lundkvist, Ernst Josephson, Folke Isaksson, Adam Zagajewski, and Karin Boye. All of the quotes below are the result of my own translation from Swedish and Polish to English.

In Lundkvist's poem "Cello", the protagonist is a male musician playing his cello, but the essence of the poem is the instrument itself. He writes that the cello "sjunger djupt i sitt bröst" ("sings deep in its chest") and metaphorizes the instrument as an "älskogsrik kvinna" ("loving woman"), ascribing the cello a human nature. The cello is a functional character that pushes the plot forward, bringing life to the characters of the story. A female character hears "sitt eget tunga blod sjunga" ("her own heavy blood sing"), and another suddenly feels her heart beating fast as a "tung" ("heavy") scent emits from the flowers. Furthermore, the "tung" and "mörk" ("dark") sounds of the cello make an ill man remember listening to telephone poles, giving him nostalgic feelings for his childhood. As the music flows, the dust from the flowers in the poem spreads like smoke. The cello in this poem makes flowers, emotions, and memories bloom; its explosive features are powerful enough to awaken life. In the last line, Lundkvist writes, "Då flammar de vibrerande strängarna till som om de börjat brinna" ("Then the vibrating strings flare up as if they were on fire").²⁸

The idea of explosiveness is connected to the cello in yet another poem by a Swedish author. In Josephson's "Violoncell" ("Violoncello"), the explosion of the string would soar the "fria själ" ("free spirit") of the narrator. The poet writes how the tone has "cellosträngens vemod" ("the cello strings melancholy") and how the tuning screw takes care of grief.²⁹

In "Cellons varma ton" ("The Cello's warm tone"), Isaksson describes the cellist as "en mänsklig skulptur" ("a human sculpture") and, with words often associated with the instrument itself, heavy and powerful, in this case the cellist's "det tunga håret" ("heavy hair"), "de kraftiga armarna" ("powerful arms"). The poet writes how the warm tone of a cello fills the room, how the "bärande elementen" ("leading elements") and "susande skogarna" ("rustling woods") are nearby.³⁰

Furthermore, the cello is dedicated a piece in Zagajewski's poem collection *Ziemia ognista* (*The fiery land*), where he writes how the cello is wrongly perceived as a mutant violin that has been "usunięte z chóru" (removed from the chorus"). He emphasizes the

²⁸ Artur Lundkvist, *Svart stad*, Albert Bonniers Förlag, Stockholm, 1930, p. 46-47.

²⁹ Ernst Josephson, *Gula rosor*, Jacob Dybwads förlag, Kristiania; Wahlström & Widstrand, Stockholm, 1896, p. 7.

³⁰ Folke Isaksson, *Skiftningar i en väv*, Bonniers, Stockholm, 1985, p. 22.

cello's secretive nature and states that it does not cry but rather sings "grubym głosem" ("deep voiced"), sometimes only whispering: "jestem samotna, nie mogę zasnąć" ("I am lonely, I can't fall asleep").³¹ His writing shows the cello's marginalized and lonely character as well as giving it (or rather her, according to the poem's wording in the original work) a human voice.

Boyes "Nattens djupa violoncell" ("The Night's deep violoncello") is yet another work of art revolving around the cello. The instrument has yet again a mysterious, human, and detonative character. Boye describes the cello as "rytmens blommande skum" ("the rhythm's blooming foam") and writes about how its "mörka jubel" ("dark jubilation") can be heard "ut över vidderna" ("out across the expanses") and how images "löser sin form i floder av kosmiskt ljus" ("resolve their form in rivers of cosmic light"). The long tones flow through "nattblå evighet" ("the night blue eternity"). The narrator calls, "Du! Du! Du!" ("You! You! You!"), turning to the cello itself, giving the instrument a self. Additionally, the narrator is metaphorized as a seagull that drinks the ocean's water with beatitude while being "långt östan om allt jag vet" ("far east of all I know"), perhaps lost, but "rör vid världens hjärta" ("touching the heart of the world"), getting blinded by the white light, which can be understood as the cello's melody.³²

³¹ Adam Zagajewski, *Ziemia ognista*, National Library, Warszawa, 2021, p. 48.

³² Karin Boye, *För trädets skull*, Albert Bonniers Förlag, Stockholm, 1935, p. 14-15.

3 Theory

The theoretical background applied to *The Cellist of Sarajevo* revolves around the field of music psychology. The different aspects of it are discussed in *Musikpsykologi: En introduktion* (Music psychology: An introduction) by Alf Gabrielsson, a psychology professor, musician, and commissioner of the Royal Swedish Academy of Music.

Gabrielsson's book is the only source in this section, as it grasps the wholeness of music psychology and focuses on the aspects relevant to the thesis. It is also convenient to use one main source for the theory since many different sources were needed to create a complete understanding of the background. The quotes presented in the coming part of the essay are based on my own translation.

3.1 Music psychology

Through music psychology, we immerse ourselves in the connection between music and human experience, as well as behavior. The complexity of both music and psychology means that the field has a wide range of questions, the most relevant here being a try to grasp an understanding of how music arouses feelings inside of us, how our reactions can differ based on the kind of music, and how music can be therapeutic. My hope is that this aspect of musicology will contribute to understanding how the characters in Galloway's story experience music and how that experience can have a therapeutic effect.

3.1.1 The experience

The experience of music (here meaning various phenomena in our consciousness, such as sensations, thoughts, memories, emotions) is divided by Gabrielsson into three psychological concepts: perception, cognition and emotion. Gabrielsson divides the musical experience further into two categories: perceiving music and reacting to it. The first mentioned means our impression of the music in a purely musical manner (its key, rhythm, tempo, melody) and an understanding of its emotional expression without necessarily feeling it. The author describes it as being a neutral observer of the music.³³ However, when reacting to music, you immerse yourself in it and let it flow within you; one could argue that you become music

³³ Alf Gabrielsson, *Musikpsykologi: en introduktion*, Gidlunds förlag, Möklinta, 2020, p. 150.

itself. Furthermore, we can figuratively, but also almost literally, be moved by music; it affects our movements, feelings and thoughts, “perhaps making us forget time and space”.³⁴

Perception is the experience of stimuli through different senses. Gabrielsson mentions a few examples of perception: auditory (hearing the music), visual (seeing the musician’s body language and facial expressions), tactile (feeling the vibrations of music inside our bodies), and kinesthetic (often unaware bodily movements, invisible tension, or relaxation of our muscles).

Our cognition is the processed information that we previously received through our perception; the sensations may give rise to different cognitive processes that are highly relevant when experiencing music, including, among others, memories and associations.³⁵ Music is strongly connected to our memory; our recognition of sounds can awaken thoughts and feelings of recollection. The associations we experience as we hear certain music can for a moment detach us from our reality; the music becomes a “ljudkuliss” (“soundstage”), as Gabrielsson metaphorizes, “before becoming aware again of what is going on in the current situation”.³⁶ Values and interpretations are yet other examples of cognitive processes that Gabrielsson connects to music. As we listen to music, we form an opinion about whether it is something we approve of and what it means to us. We wonder what the music expresses and what purpose it has.

Music is often metaphorized as “the language of emotion”. Gabrielsson mentions the importance of dividing music’s capacity to express emotions as well as awakening them. For instance, we can understand how a certain musical piece expresses sadness without awakening sad feelings within us, but on the other hand, music is known to stir our emotions. Our associations can, however, affect our emotional reactions. For instance, a piece that we generally perceive as joyful can arouse sad feelings if the situation in which we hear it is unpleasant. To examine the emotional effect of music, there are studies of people’s recognition of basic emotions (sadness, joy, anger, fear), physiological reactions (activity in the brain, breathing, blood pressure), movements, and body language. For example, Gabrielsson describes how sad music is characterized by slower tempo, muted volume, and sustained tones as well as dark sound color, and how our body language becomes slower and more subdued when we experience sadness. Another way to understand music’s emotional

³⁴ Gabrielsson, p. 151.

³⁵ Gabrielsson, p. 18-19.

³⁶ Ibid.

effect is to let the listener express the experience. This comes, however, with a few limitations, as the person might not have the capacity or be willing to use words to explain the experience.³⁷

3.1.2 The therapy

Music has been a part of our human nature since ancient times. In primitive cultures, music has been believed to have healing powers, and musical rituals were performed to cure a mentally or physically ill person. In ancient Greece, music had the capacity to restore a harmony that was out of balance (an illness), as well as liberate a person from uncontrolled feelings, leading to catharsis. The role of music in the humanities' history is discussed by evolutionary theorists, where some claim that it is unnecessary for our survival, while others argue that music potentially has roots in “motherese”, a mother's way of communicating and forming an emotional bond with the child. Music's capacity to foster community and cooperation is yet another crucial aspect of our humanity.³⁸

Music remains an important aspect of promoting our wellbeing and health. In modern healthcare, music is frequently used in order to improve the wellbeing of patients, as studies have shown that music can reduce pain, anxiety, stress, and depression and result in improved life quality.³⁹ After the Second World War, music therapy developed as a professional practice in order to help traumatized soldiers and people in general.⁴⁰

Music itself has huge therapeutic potential. It is, however, in the interaction with the person who needs it, that healing happens. Gabrielsson emphasizes how music can function as another human being, one “that understands you and speaks to you”. The expression of music gains its power in collaboration with the individual and the situation in which they find themselves.⁴¹ When needed, music can offer support, solace, hope, a feeling of community, and your own identity and function as “egenterapi” (“self therapy”).⁴²

³⁷ Gabrielsson, p. 20-21.

³⁸ Gabrielsson, p. 396.

³⁹ Gabrielsson, p. 397.

⁴⁰ Gabrielsson, p. 402.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Gabrielsson, p. 408.

4 Analysis

This part of the thesis is divided into four sections, each for every character in Galloway's *The Cellist of Sarajevo*. I will apply aspects of the theory and the background in order to analyze the therapeutic effect of music and the cello on the characters of the story. I hope to analyze different ideas, but I am also interested in noticing if there are any recurring patterns in the characters' experiences. The many aspects from which the analysis can consist will be mentioned in different amounts, depending on what's relevant for each character. It is important to remember that this is an analysis based on my own interpretation of reading the novel, supported by the knowledge gathered through research.

Only a few pages are written from the cellist's perspective, and there is no present dialogue during the chapter, creating different prerequisites for analyzing his character. It is also difficult to know how the cellist perceives himself and the cello, but as the cello's music is a huge part of him, this chapter focuses a lot on the musical piece itself. Since the cellist does not have a voice of his own, I hope to have created an understanding of his inner world, given that I play the cello myself.

Inspired by how the cello creates closeness to the "leading elements" in Isaksson's poem and the music's connection to our human nature, I have noticed a connection to nature's elements in each character. With the cello's mysterious nature and as an instrument that's involved in the lives of all the characters, it can be understood as space—the all-encompassing element. I found it challenging to categorize the coming parts in a different way because many of the therapeutic aspects are recurring, but all of them have something in common; they bring the characters closer to the nature of their being.

4.1 The Cellist of Earth

An artist's soul does not require much more than the art itself to be able to receive and spread hope and solace, and for the cellist in the story, that meant the *Adagio in G-Minor*. In the pre-chapter of the story, Galloway presents the reader with the history of the *Adagio* and writes how it gives the cellist hope, "that something could be almost erased from existence in the landscape of a ruined city, and rebuilt until it is new and worthwhile".⁴³ The author emphasizes the importance of the history of the piece, and the parallel drawn between the

⁴³ Galloway, p. xv.

miseries makes me wonder if the piece symbolized survival for the cellist; if it has the power to survive in a ruined city, it can help another ruined city survive.

If, after several hours, this hope doesn't return, he will pause to gather himself, and then he and his cello will coax Albinoni's *Adagio* out of the firebombed husk of Dresden and into the mortar-pocked, sniper-infested streets of Sarajevo.⁴⁴

Whether the piece was reconstructed out of fragments by Albinoni or entirely composed by Giazotto, it plays an important role in awakening hope in the cellist. Perhaps the cellist identifies with the piece; living in a war zone means that you can too, at any time, be "erased from existence" or at least feel like you are losing a sense of your being. The shattered pieces of the sonata could resemble the way he feels sometimes —destroyed, helpless, meaningless. As presented below, the destruction of the building in which the cellist played and in which his identity lived affects him tremendously.

When the mortars destroyed the Sarajevo Opera Hall, the cellist felt as if he were inside the building, as if the bricks and glass that once bound the structure together had become projectiles that sliced and pounded into him, shredding him beyond recognition.⁴⁵

The cellist plays music "until he feels his hope return", but when no other musical piece seems to "rejuvenate him", he turns to *Adagio* as if it was the last source of help. Galloway writes that by "the time the last few notes fade, his hope will be restored, and having to play it becomes harder with each time, there are only a certain number of *Adagios* left in him".⁴⁶ It seems that the cellist has a very personal connection to this specific piece of music. According to music psychology, there is a strong bond between the music, the individual, and his situation. The idea of "self therapy" mentioned in the theory is highly relevant here. The *Adagio* is exactly the therapy the cellist needs in these moments of hopelessness. The music speaks his misery to him, and then he speaks it through the cello.

Music plays an important role as a reminder of the cellist's identity, and as mentioned by Gabrielsson, it is one of the therapeutic aspects of music, alongside its ability to create and

⁴⁴ Galloway, p. xvi.

⁴⁵ Galloway, p. xvii.

⁴⁶ Galloway, p. xvi.

foster a community. Music offered him a community as he was a part of an orchestra. He shared his passion for music when playing in the concert hall, as well as in the streets, creating a community of his own. Galloway writes about the music's importance in the cellist's life:

He was the principal cellist of the Sarajevo Symphony Orchestra. That was what he knew how to be. He made the idea of music an actuality. When he stepped onstage in his tuxedo he was transformed into an instrument of deliverance. He gave to the people who came to listen what he loved most in the world".⁴⁷

After writing about how the cellist is "forced to resort to the Adagio", Galloway introduces the readers to how the cellist's life felt before the war. The scene portrayed below is what the cellist recalls as a time where "the promise of a happy life seemed almost inviolable".⁴⁸ He is posing for a family photograph at his sister's wedding when his father puts a hand on his shoulder, a gesture that often symbolizes solace, support, love, and hope, especially when coming from a parental figure. If he feels the loneliness of the cello in Zagajewski's poem, someone whispers back, "You are not lonely, you can fall asleep". He can rest as someone helps him with the weight on his shoulders.

his father's arm slung behind his neck, fingers grasping his shoulder. It was a firm grip, and to some it would have been painful, but to the cellist it was the opposite. The fingers on his flesh told him that he was loved, that he had always been loved, and that the world was a place where above all else the things that were good would find a way to burrow into you. Though he knew all of this then, he would give up nearly anything to be able to go back in time and slow down that moment, if only so he could more clearly recall it now.⁴⁹

The solace the cellist felt during that moment is now something he has to create himself. It is similar to the experience of music, especially when applying it to the cello. The instrument rests on the cellist's shoulder, and his hand is placed on the cello's neck. In order to create a powerful sound, the grip of the fingers on the strings has to be firm, which can be painful, but for the cellist, it is healing instead. He loves music, and it is a part of him; therefore, playing

⁴⁷ Galloway, p. xvii.

⁴⁸ Galloway, p. xvi.

⁴⁹ Galloway, p. xvi-xvii.

the cello makes him feel loved. Music is a reminder of hope, which he now spreads to the rest of the world. It is a way of returning to a different time and creating a new reality from what's left of the memories and associations. He plays the *Adagio* slowly on the cello, trying to slow down the moment of solace. Wasilewski mentions the cello's role as an accompanying instrument, that is there to offer support at the moments where it's needed. It is an instrument of a supportive nature, both literally and metaphorically. Wasilewski also mentions the cello in relation to *Cantilena* playing, and its lullaby-like style that offers care and smoothness is something I connect to parental qualities.

There is nothing that can truly and fully replace the presence of another human being and a parent, but music can, to some degree, represent the feeling of it. When Gabrielsson writes that music can function as another human, it is even more accurate, with the cello giving its human-like size and sound. The human nature of the cello creates a strong sense of familiarity. Galloway writes how the cellist was “transformed into an instrument of deliverance” and “as solid as the vise of his father's hand” when playing the cello.⁵⁰ The cellist and the cello melt together into an instrument; as Isserlis experiences, the cello becomes one with the cellist, a “part of one's body”. The feeling of his father's touch on his shoulder is the feeling that the cellist now spreads to others. By playing the music, he is touching “vid världens hjärta”, (“the heart of the world”), as the narrator in Boye's poem.

As a musician, the cellist has to perceive music in order to play it according to the composition, but he is also reacting to it, as many difficult feelings are evoked by experiencing its expression, making it emotionally draining to play. The sadness expressed in the piece is perhaps the exact sadness that the cellist experiences, the “Adagios” that he has within himself. Music gives him the opportunity to acknowledge, immerse himself in, and express his sadness. As Wasilewski implies, the cello is an instrument with the potential to express “subjects of a serious nature” and affect our emotions greatly through its expression. The possible quiet and slow playing as mentioned by Huron, Anderson, and Shanahan, as well as its characteristic sounds, make the cello very suitable to express emotional heaviness. It is no coincidence that it is often chosen as an instrument to express sadness. Based on the science and perception of the cello, I believe that it has expressed the cellist's emotions as closely as possible. It takes care of his grief, as it does for the narrator in Josephon's poem.

⁵⁰ Galloway, p. xvii.

Because of the cello's close relation to the human voice, as presented in the study "Partially Overlapping Brain Networks for Singing and Cello Playing", the cellist might have felt that it was his own voice expressed. When he hears the cello play a sorrowful melody, perhaps there is a certain recognition of the sounds that he at some point in his life created himself (like crying, screaming), which makes him relive the emotions that are being portrayed through music. Perhaps the cellist hears his internalized sadness, the emotions he didn't recognize were there, or the emotions he wasn't able to acknowledge or express through his own voice. It is, however, easy to believe that the sounds are your own, but they could never truly replace human expression. If the music has roots in "motherese", it is a result of our own voice and language, and they coexist next to each other.

The cellist admits that *Adagio*'s "effect is finite".⁵¹ Perhaps the associations created while experiencing the piece do, in the end, win over the hope it offers. As Gabrielsson states, the associations that our brain creates can impact our emotional reaction to music. Since the cellist plays the piece when feeling at his lowest, it is possible that the emotional effect that *Adagio* has on him is only temporary because of the negative associations he experiences in the background. It is acknowledged that the music experience can be so emotional that the listener has difficulty explaining it in words, but I think the experience in reality is a portal to neglected emotions, and the experience itself is only of a positive nature because it makes you feel what has to be felt. As Gabrielsson states, music is perceived as "the language of emotion". It is our narrator; it tells us something we need to hear. Since the *Adagio*'s positive effect on the cellists seems to fade away, it might mean that it is time for the cellist to speak of the misery that the cello helped him to connect to.

Despite the misery that the cellist experiences through the expression of the *Adagio*, there is hope for recovery. As Giazotto potentially "healed" the piece, so can the music continue healing those who believe in it. In the case of Giazotto being the only creator of the *Adagio*, hope can be symbolized by how uncertainty cannot stop the power of purpose, and so neither can the uncertainty of war or misery stop the cellist from truly living —playing for the sake of his own soul as well as others. The cello is a part of his experience on the earth; he grounds as he plays, his feet and soul touching the heart of the earth, sharing a part of it with the rest of the world.

⁵¹ Ibid.

4.2 The Alisa of Fire

For the entire story, Alisa is referred to as “Arrow”. She chose to call herself that, in order to separate herself from the new person that she had to become during the war—a person who takes the lives of other people. I choose to call her by her name, Alisa, because I believe that she has never truly left her true self. She holds a flame inside of her, one that holds her and the cellist alive. She never explodes but rather eases slowly, leaving tiny sparks behind.

The cellist’s playing has a significant impact on Alisa’s situation. It is, for her, “the most beautiful thing she has ever seen”.⁵² She is shaken and surprised when she, for the first time, experiences the sight of the cellist; his act of deciding to play the cello in the street makes her enter a different state. Gabrielsson mentions how our experience of music can make us forget time and space and how there is a moment before we return to our awareness of the presence as it is. There is a disbelief in her own perception; she isn’t sure if her vision is true, and she wonders whether she has been transferred into a different reality or if she has died. The hopefulness that the cellist represents must be a rare feeling in her life. Although she isn’t experiencing music just yet, she is moved by the cellist’s presence.

At first, Arrow isn’t sure whether to trust what she sees. She wonders if it’s possible she’s hallucinating, or if perhaps she has died and this is how the transition to whatever follows death takes place, through a series of unbelievable circumstances. But gradually she accepts she’s still alive, and she’s lucid, and this is happening.⁵³

The music is a “soundstage”, which allows her to disappear from reality and relax into moments of solace. Her body relaxes as she leans into a wall and lets the surface support her. Music can fill us with nostalgia, bringing back the scenarios, feelings, and sensations of the past as if they were experienced again through our present souls. Similar to indulging in books, music can function as a portal to escapism. We escape our reality, or rather, distance ourselves from it by entering an alternative one, potentially leading to a deeper experience of our own. Music can also be our moment of recovery; it touches the exact emotions needed instead of having to constantly struggle to identify and locate them. That distance is simply a

⁵² Galloway, p. 62.

⁵³ Galloway, p. 61.

break; thus, nature takes breaks in order to survive, and so shall we. Below is an example of how the cello's music creates an experience full of relief and safety in Alisa's life.

When the first notes sound they are, to her, inaudible. Sound has vanished from the world. She leans back into the wall. She's no longer there. Her mother is lifting her up, spinning her around and laughing. The warm tongue of a dog licks her arm. There's a rush of air as a snowball flies past her face. She slips on someone else's blood and lands on her side, a severed arm almost touching her nose. In a movie theater, a boy she likes kisses her and puts his hand on her stomach. She exhales, and pulls the trigger. Then sound returns to the world.⁵⁴

The experience of music is almost like a non-experience, a break from constantly experiencing the misery around her. Later in the story, Galloway writes how "the absence of shelling is almost like music".⁵⁵ Although the musical piece and the cello are of a sad character, Alisa experiences positive emotions when hearing the cellist play. It is almost as if her soul experiences a "dark jubilation", in the same way Boye metaphorized the cello's sound. She experiences many lightful pasts, yet is in a dark presence. According to music psychology, music awakens cognitive processes, and it is clearly portrayed how Alisa experiences associations and memories from her past.

Music is a reminder of Alisa's identity before the war —the moments of a regular person's life. There are many aspects that could have reminded her of those moments where life slows down, when a moment seems to last for "nattblå evighet", ("the night blue eternity") yet disappears so quickly. They are like images that "löser sin form i floder av kosmiskt ljus", ("resolve their form in rivers of cosmic light"); the power of the memories affects her as she listens to the cello's melody. The therapeutic effect that the cello's music has on Alisa is similar to the ill man's in Lundkvist's poem. The music takes him away from his illness and into an innocent and carefree time in his childhood.

One of the therapeutic aspects of music in Alisa's life is its function as another human being. The first memory mentioned is that of her mother. As seen in the literature presented in the background, the cello is often ascribed a feminine nature, possibly due to the similarities in the body construction. The cello in Zagajewski's poem is of a feminine character, and Lundkvist writes how the cello is like an "älskogsrik kvinna", ("loving woman") and how a

⁵⁴ Galloway, p. 62.

⁵⁵ Galloway, p. 81.

woman hears “sitt eget tunga blod sjunga”, (“her own heavy blood sing”). The cello’s qualities can also be understood as protecting and soothing. The cello’s advantage in playing the lullaby-like *cantilena*, as well as the *portamento* with its carrying feeling, gives the instrument motherly qualities.

Alisa perceives the cellist’s face as “the saddest face she has ever seen”, his walk is described as “calm and determined”, his arms are “hanging limp” and he “remains still”.⁵⁶ Alisa notices the cellist’s experience of sad emotions, as Gabrielsson mentioned how our body’s language becomes slower when experiencing sadness. However, when he starts to play the cello, the “sadness she saw in his face is gone. [...] His arms rise, and his left hand grip the neck of the cello, his right guides the bow to its throat”.⁵⁷ The cello is portrayed almost as a living being; it has the body parts of a human, and it “appears as though the cello stays upright of its own will, independent of the man surrounding it”.⁵⁸ The passage below shows Alisa’s perception of the cello; it is symbolized as something full of light, its wood is “lacquered” and “glows”.⁵⁹ There is an uncontrollable longing for a connection to the instrument, similar to the one in Boye’s poem. Alisa wants to connect to it “out across the expanses”. She silently calls to it, “You! You! You!” and, in a way, she is, too, blinded by the white light. She no longer only sees the misery; she is now aware of the beauty surrounding her; the beauty of the cello conquers the sad reality of the world around her.

The wood glows rich and warm against the drab gray of shattered paving stones, and she feels an urge to touch it, to run her fingers over the lacquered surface. Her hand reaches out, a futile attempt to bridge a distance far greater than the thirty or so meters that separate her from the cello.⁶⁰

Alisa’s perception of the cellist and his playing leads to yet another cognitive processes mentioned by Gabrielsson, namely valuing and interpreting. She wonders what his playing means to him, others, and herself. She wants to know what he believes in and if it is something she would want to put any value into. She perceives him as someone who “appears to care about his quality of life” and who has not “lost his will to live” in comparison to the

⁵⁶ Galloway, p. 61.

⁵⁷ Galloway, p. 62.

⁵⁸ Galloway, p. 61.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Galloway, p. 61-62.

“faces of those who have cracked”.⁶¹ She interprets the cellist’s act of playing as something that will make things happen sooner; “it involves motion”, Galloway writes.⁶²

Music is a vibrational movement itself, and Gabrielsson emphasizes music’s effect on movements of different kinds. As we experience music through auditory, visual, tactile, and kinesthetic sensations, we feel and see movements. Music can also move us in metaphoric ways; it stirs our emotions and moves us through time and space. It seems as though the cellist’s music also moves the healing closer to the listeners. He believes in the music’s power to offer hope, solace, relief, and support, anything to encourage moving forward, despite the difficulty of the past and present moments. Each note is a new movement, a new moment, a new reality.

As the cellist plays, Alisa’s emotions are affected by the music’s sad expression. She doesn’t only perceive the music as sad; it makes her sad, “You will not cry, she tells herself, and she wills herself calm”. Her body wants to react to the experience, but she doesn’t allow there to be a “crack in her”.⁶³ There are emotions neglected and restrained during this experience, as the expression of the piece makes her relive the heaviness of her sadness. The music “makes her sad. A heavy, slow kind of sad, the sort that does not bring you to tears but makes you feel like crying”.⁶⁴ The cello in Zagajewski’s poem does not cry either; it sings “grubym głosem”, (“deep voiced”) and whispers about its loneliness. The feeling Alisa experiences is a quiet and secretive cry for help, the depth of her sadness makes it difficult for her tears to come to the surface.

During the interwar period and neoclassicism, restraining emotions was preferred; perhaps it functioned as a coping mechanism, denying the tough emotions because the trauma of war was too difficult to deal with. It can be difficult for Alisa to believe that change is possible, and there is a tendency to keep things as they were. It creates a feeling of familiarity and a false sense of security and safety. Galloway writes how from “the first time she picked up a rifle to kill she has called herself Arrow”⁶⁵, how she “herself is a weapon”⁶⁶ and how her rifle’s “familiar weight comforts her”.⁶⁷ There is an underlying belief of helplessness in her

⁶¹ Galloway, p. 83.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Galloway, p. 62.

⁶⁴ Galloway, p. 134.

⁶⁵ Galloway, p. 6-7.

⁶⁶ Galloway, p. 8.

⁶⁷ Galloway, p. 179-180.

own situation. In order to survive, she has to convince herself of the belief that she is more like a subject, than a human being.

She loses her identity, her will to feel and to live. During a scene where she gets injured, “the insignificance of her injury does not bring her any particular sense of relief”.⁶⁸ Galloway writes: “That life will end has become so self-evident it’s lost all meaning. But worse, for Arrow, is the damage done to the distance between what she knows and what she believes”.⁶⁹ On the contrary, we get to look into a moment of Alisa’s life before the war. She drives her father’s car and moves together with it, she listens to one of her favorite songs, and the sunlight reaches her through the trees; “tears began to slide down her cheeks” as she experienced this moment of pure joy to be alive.⁷⁰

Although it is nearly impossible for that feeling to exist during the misery of war, the emptiness that Alisa experiences turns into hope as the story continues. The music makes her feel again. The tactile perception of music affects her body as the vibrations spread inside of her, and she experiences physiological reactions due to the emotions that the music evokes. Galloway writes: “Arrow let the slow pulse of the vibrating strings flood into her. She felt the lament raise a lump in her throat, fought back tears. She inhaled sharp and fast.” She tries to stop her tears, but this time they find their way to the surface of her eyes as “the notes” that “had become a part of her” and “she knew“ [...] “ascended the scale”.⁷¹ The music helps Alisa find acceptance for everything that she has been through and compassion for herself. She felt a familiarity and identification in the notes, and as she saw the beauty in them, she also saw the beauty in herself and the world that surrounds her.

They told her that everything had happened exactly as she knew it had, and that nothing could be done about it. No grief or rage or noble act could do it. [...] She didn’t have to be filled with hatred. The music demanded that she remember this, that she know to a certainty that the world still held the capacity for goodness. The notes were proof of that.⁷²

The first time we get to know Alisa’s name is in the very last sentence of the story. Before that, Galloway writes of the cellist’s last performance in the streets, where he has played for

⁶⁸ Galloway, p. 12.

⁶⁹ Galloway, p. 6.

⁷⁰ Galloway, p. 5.

⁷¹ Galloway, p. 228.

⁷² Ibid.

the past few weeks. In the end of the piece, he drops his bow on a pile of flowers, where Arrow would later place her rifle. With his bow playing on the strings of the cello, the cellist had brought Alisa comfort that she had been giving back by protecting him with her rifle. Her purpose was to keep the cellist alive, no matter what. All this time, they had both believed in the same thing: following their purpose.

When she returns to her hiding spot in a building above the cellist's playing spot, she no longer hides from the snipers or herself. Although the cellist stopped playing, the music stayed with her. She became like music that eventually has an ending, but its presence helps others until the very end. She dedicated herself to saving the cellist's life, and the music he played saved her death. She became like the sound of a cello's strings. She flares strongly, like the strings in Lundkvist's poem, but the fire inside of her is quiet.

She closes her eyes, recalls the notes she heard only yesterday, a melody that is no longer there but feels very close. Her lips move, and a moment before the door splinters off its hinges she says, her voice strong and quiet: "My name is Alisa".⁷³

4.3 The Kenan of Water

Before the war, the streets of Sarajevo had been a home for Kenan. Galloway writes how "he'd come here often with his family to hear outdoor concerts", emphasizing music's place in his life.⁷⁴ As he travels through the city in order to fill up the water bottles, "something of an art in this city", he experiences the horrible sounds of war.⁷⁵ The war has made him feel "afraid", "useless", "helpless"⁷⁶, older than he is, and his "movement is slow and stiff".⁷⁷

Portrayed below is an example of Kenan's misery.

He cries out, but doesn't recognize the sound that comes out of him. It's a baby and an animal and an air-raid siren and a man who has been knocked over by his own burden. He listens to it as it dissipates, gone like it never happened, and then he rolls over onto his back and looks at the sky.⁷⁸

⁷³ Galloway, p. 231.

⁷⁴ Galloway, p. 149.

⁷⁵ Galloway, p. 16.

⁷⁶ Galloway, p. 18.

⁷⁷ Galloway, p. 13.

⁷⁸ Galloway, p. 151.

Before the cellist comes into the picture, Kenan hears “unintelligible” music that “blends together”, “muddy noise of strings struck by hammers” playing in a Music Academy he passes by. There is a harp and pianos, but the experience isn’t given any further attention.⁷⁹ At a different point in the story, he hears the beating of drums as the bottles he carries bump into each other, a noise that “frightens him, makes him think someone is hunting him”.⁸⁰ The cello, however, has made a particular impression on Kenan; the experiences and effects of the cellist’s music are portrayed with depth. After the last performance, Kenan engages in a conversation with a woman who has lost her daughter, one of the victims that the cellist honored by playing. Kenan asks, “Did your daughter like the cello?” [...] “surprising himself. He doesn’t know why he’s asked this, isn’t sure why it matters”.⁸¹ Perhaps the cello has caught his attention as it feels like a part of him; its humanlike sounds create a recognition of his own emotions, and without him knowing it, he has become like a mutant violin, who no longer recognizes its own expression. His feeling of uselessness could reflect on the cello’s history of deprioritization. As in Zagajewski’s poem, he resonates with being “usunięte z chóru”, (“removed from the chorus”).

As he watches and listens to the cellist play, Kenan values and interprets the act as something unnecessary. He wonders what the cellist could “possibly hope to accomplish by playing music in the street. [...] It was a foolish gesture, he thought, a pointless exercise in futility”.⁸² There is a sense of hopelessness, but as he listens and reacts to music, his perspective changes. There is a denial of music’s capacity to make a change because it “wouldn’t bring anyone back from the dead”⁸³. However, Kenan “stands in the street with his back pressed against a wall and watches as the city is reassembled and its people awaken from hibernation”.⁸⁴ Kenan starts to believe in the spiritual power of music and refuses to be a “ghost”. He keeps telling himself a sort of mantra, “You are not a ghost”, but he admits how words can’t stop him from fading away”.⁸⁵ As the words fail to help, the music steps in with its power to deal with the emotional burden.

⁷⁹ Galloway, p. 43-44.

⁸⁰ Galloway, p. 102.

⁸¹ Galloway, p. 190.

⁸² Galloway, p. 186.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Galloway, p. 220.

⁸⁵ Galloway, p.192.

Kenan lets himself indulge in the visual and auditory perception by watching the cellist and feeling “himself relax as the music seeps into him”.⁸⁶ Kenan recognizes the cellist, but he can’t remember where from. It seems as though he identifies with the cellist. He listens to “the cellist’s tune” for the first time, but feels like “he knows it anyway, its notes familiar and full of pride, a young boy in a new coat holding his father’s hand as he walks down a winter street”.⁸⁷ Before he lets himself react to music, he perceives the cellist as someone who’s “been in a fight, and he looks like he’s lost”. The looks of the cellist point at his misery.⁸⁸ As he listens to the music, he notices how the cellist rejuvenates, and how people “stand up taller, their faces put on weight and color”. Galloway also writes how clothes “gain lost thread, brighten, smooth out their wrinkles”.⁸⁹ Kenan feels himself becoming young and alive again; he becomes the boy who holds his father’s hand, a man whose soul is less wrinkled.

As Kenan “watches as his city heals itself around him”, he enters a different reality, a time and space in his life before the war. He imagines himself kissing his wife “like he used to when they were much younger”, imagining a regular day in the life of a young man, surrounded by his loved ones, walking around in the city of Sarajevo.⁹⁰ When the music stops, he finds himself back in his reality and wonders “if he was ever there”.⁹¹

4.4 The Dragan of Air

Although Galloway doesn’t portray Dragan’s experience of the music, the cellist’s playing is present in his story. It revolves around him trying to get to his workplace as he hesitates to cross a street guarded by snipers. Dragan is terrified of death, especially of being conscious while dying and “gulping air like a fish in the bottom of a boat”.⁹² As he tries to cross, he takes a deep breath, and his “lungs are raw”.⁹³

⁸⁶ Galloway, p. 186.

⁸⁷ Galloway, p. 186-187.

⁸⁸ Galloway, p. 186.

⁸⁹ Galloway, p. 187.

⁹⁰ Galloway, p. 187.

⁹¹ Galloway, p. 190.

⁹² Galloway, p. 33.

⁹³ Galloway, p. 77-78.

In the streets, he meets his wife's friend, who speaks of the cellist. She tells him: "I don't know the piece he plays, what its name is. It's sad tune. But it doesn't make me sad".⁹⁴ and wonders what the purpose of his playing is. Dragan responds:

"Maybe he's playing for himself," he says. "Maybe it's all he knows to do, and he's not doing it to make something happen." And he thinks this is true. What the cellist wants isn't a change, or to set things right again, but to stop things from getting worse.⁹⁵

As a man gets shot in the street, Dragan puts himself in a dangerous situation in order to prevent his body lying in the street from being filmed. He does something for someone else, despite his own fear. The act of the cellist's playing is something that speaks to him, like music can to each individual, according to Gabrielsson. The cellist's playing in the streets is considered courageous, but Dragan believes that in such moments, fear is nonexistent, there is no bravery. As he interprets the cellist's act, he forms values regarding an emotion he is struggling with, which helps him overcome it.

He believes that the cellist simply does what he can do, and that inspires Dragan to do the same. Dragan tries to restore his hope in humanity; he believes that civilization is something that needs to be "re-created daily", perhaps as the cellist's music.⁹⁶ As he decides to cross the street, he thinks of the fact that the cellist will soon "play for the final time" and plans to share the experience with his wife's friend when he heads back home.⁹⁷ The thought of music liberates him from the feelings of fear and motivates him to stay hopeful in his reality.

⁹⁴ Galloway, p. 109.

⁹⁵ Galloway, p. 110.

⁹⁶ Galloway, p. 223.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

5 Discussion

Literary music, the idea of music that the novel represents, is one that relates to the psychological aspect of musicology. Galloway's *The Cellist of Sarajevo* portrays the characters' musical experience and how its effect on their everyday lives is of a therapeutic nature. As the characters experience the music through their perceptions, it affects their cognitive processes and emotional reactions.

Music is a passage to a different reality, often one they experienced at some point before the war started. The associations and memories that their minds create as they experience music remind them of their ability to feel positive emotions, and the emotional impact of music helps them with acknowledging and processing the negative ones. The process of interpreting music is also valid, as it might make the characters realize that they have the right to value their inner selves and their lives, creating a possibility for change.

The musical experience is a moment of relief or catharsis —something otherwise rare as the war continues to have a traumatic impact on the characters' existence. Often without them knowing, music offers them hope, support, and solace and functions as another human being who comforts them in times of misery and inspires them to share these pieces of hope with the people around them, which creates a sense of community, companionship, and connectedness. Although some parts of the characters don't allow them to believe in music's power, the cello quietly and mysteriously finds an open space.

There is, however, a reason for the development of music therapy as a practice that requires a professional therapist who helps the patient work through the trauma of war. Even though music can be a remarkable source of self-therapy, it is valid to treat deep traumatic experiences with the help of another person, where both languages are involved —music and words. The aspect of applying the cello helps with forming an understanding of the character's perceptive, cognitive, and emotional experiences of the cellist's music.

The cello's role in creating depth in the music is similar to the way it creates depth in the characters' lives. The cello's humanlike qualities, as well as its sad sounds, resonate with some of the character's existence.

Identity is an important therapeutic aspect of the music presented in Galloway's story. The characters identify with either the music, the cello, or the cellist, which allows them to open up to the experience and let it affect them in the ways they need. It is a language that

speaks to them and exists within them. The characters come closer to the core of their being, as music is a part of human nature. Though the music helps them with their emotional endurance, it is their choice to eventually accept healing that allows them to heal. The bravado of a cello makes them realize the power they all hold; the sounds create an explosion of aliveness, as it does in the poetry presented previously in the thesis. The cello's strings are a symbol of the character's resilience, and the cellist's music inspires them to move forward.

For further research, an addition to studying a musico-literary novel would be to consider a deeper musical analysis of the piece in order to compare the dynamics of storytelling between the media. I would also be interested in researching the bibliotherapeutic aspects of *The Cellist of Sarajevo* and how reading the novel and empathizing with the characters could function as therapy for the reader.

I find it captivating how Alan Gilbert's portrayal of the cello lines in a musical piece resembles and summarizes Galloway's literary art work. The inner lives of the characters are, too, an "emotional and metaphysical turmoil" that eventually destroys them in order for them to "rebirth". During that storm, there is a line that holds them closer to the surface of the earth—a string between their lives.

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