

Nomad

Nomad

A Collection of Undergraduate Essays

*Written for Courses in the
Program in Comparative Literature*

Volume 2, 2002

Program in Comparative Literature
University of Oregon

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Two fishermen in Goa, photograph by Ursula Lindqvist

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*If we travel in aeroplanes
rather than vurdon¹
it is because our journey has taken us
so far apart.*

*We read the future
from a fax machine
and not a crystal ball.*

*If we reconstruct history
from dust and ashes
it is because this dust
came from our own feet
and the ashes from our bones.*

—from “New Rom,” by Jimmy Story

¹ caravans

Editors' Introduction

It is our privilege to present the second volume of *Nomad: A Collection of Undergraduate Essays* written for courses in the Program in Comparative Literature. This project began two years ago under the energetic leadership of a doctoral candidate in this program, Bonnie Roos, now an assistant professor of English at Austin College; and Jennifer Cameron, an undergraduate major in Comparative Literature who is now a graduate student in German and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. Their vision was to showcase, in a refereed, academic journal, the best undergraduate writing produced in the University of Oregon's comparative literature courses in a single year; and in the process, encourage collaboration and scholarly discourse among undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty.

The journal's title, *Nomad*, reflects the interdisciplinary nature of comparative literary studies, and the essays contained in this volume are evidence of this. But this year's contributors further sought to bring to

this academic forum a plurality of voices. On the opening pages of *Nomad 2002* appears a fragment of a poem written by a modern-day "nomad," Jimmy Story, a Rom currently living in Australia. In the pages that follow, you will meet protagonists who grapple with cultural, sexual, and racial identity; the complexities of dialect and non-verbal speech; personal, collective and diasporic histories; and the transformative processes of art and language. Our essay writers also embrace a diversity of forms, from the autobiographical to the exploratory to the theoretical. And of course, in a tradition of our discipline, the literatures presented here take us to communities the world over, from Eastern Europe to Taiwan to the antebellum Southern United States. Although no journal of comparative literature can ever claim to represent all voices, we believe *Nomad 2002* is a testament to the nomadic spirit of our field.

All essays considered for publication in *Nomad* must be written for a course in the Program in Comparative

Literature and nominated by the student's instructor. (The student authors need not be comparative literature majors.) Once the *Nomad* editors receive the nominations, two readers from a group of editorial consultants—usually graduate students in comparative literature or a national literature department—evaluate each essay and make recommendations. In many cases, we require students to revise their essays prior to publication. We do what we can to make this revision process a positive experience for the student essay writer, including offering an opportunity to work one-on-one with an editorial consultant who evaluated the essay.

Thanks are due to the many collaborators who devoted much time, energy and vision to this project. First and foremost, our appreciation extends to the undergraduate students who assumed academic challenges far beyond those required in their regular course work, as well as the professors and graduate teaching fellows who nominated this exceptional work for publication in *Nomad 2002*. We were

in the enviable position this year of choosing the best seven essays from a very strong pool of nominations. It bodes well for the future of our discipline and our program that students in undergraduate courses are crafting thought-provoking, lucid essays that contribute meaningfully to current literary, cultural, and theoretical discourses.

And lastly, a dedication: to Professor Roos, the driving force behind *Nomad's* inception and a faithful volunteer to this year's effort. It is our hope that *Nomad 2002* perpetuates the ideals she and other comparatists, evolving and established scholars alike, have set.

AMBER SMITH
Undergraduate Editor

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TRANSFORMATION OF THE ARTIST:
A DEPICTION THROUGH THE PYGMALION THEME

Brooke Cedars

The Pygmalion theme of human transformation appears in numerous literary works. Shakespeare depicts it through humility, Mary Shelley through horror and humiliation. Oscar Wilde epitomizes Pygmalion in art and knowledge, while George Bernard Shaw represents it in an elitist experiment. E.T.A. Hoffmann discovers it in internal torment and torture, and Ovid reveals transformation in love, loss, and lust. Yet what ties all of these themes together? Where and what does this transformation entail? What forms do the altered take during this transition of being? James Joyce might respond through the words of Stephen Dedalus, protagonist of his novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: “These forms are: the lyrical form, the form wherein the artist presents his image in mediate relation to himself and to others; the dramatic form, the form wherein he presents his image in immediate relation to others” (Joyce 208). This concept of transformation and artistic development in stages characterizes Pygmalion. Joyce would claim this involves depiction and definition through writing and language. By referring to Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist* in a discussion of all of the above literary “arts,” one discovers the artistic theme as well as the Pygmalion theme in each one.

The Lyrical Form: The simplest verbal vesture of an instant of emotion, a rhythmical cry such as ages ago cheered on the man who pulled at the oar or dragged stones up a slope. He who utters it is more conscious of the instant of emotion than of himself feeling emotion (Joyce 208).

Here Joyce posits that there is a time, an initial period, when thought does not exist. What one depends on, usually in youth, is the actual emotion at the instant it is felt rather than a later understanding or analysis of it. Joyce's child protagonist, Stephen Dedalus, exemplifies this inability to feel an emotion even while he reflects upon the "instant" of the emotion. Stephen is reprimanded for not having his glasses on during a class lesson and although it was not his fault his glasses were broken, he is punished in front of his peers. At this "instant" of discipline, Stephen is confronted with emotions of embarrassment and pain. After the encounter, Stephen—with the rhythmical support and coaxing of his peers—decides this punishment was unjust even though he is never truly conscious of *feeling* wronged. "It was wrong; it was unfair and cruel: and, as he sat in the refectory, he suffered time after time in his memory the same humiliation until he began to wonder whether it might now really be that there was something in his face which made him look like a schemer and he wished that he had a little mirror to see" (Joyce 47). Stephen is unable to *feel* emotion while reflecting on the instant of his humiliation and responds in a literal manner.

This kind of literal, alternative response also manifests itself in E.T.A. Hoffmann's story "The Sandman." Hoffmann's protagonist, Nathanael, has a recurrent visitor to his family's home who is referred to as the Sandman. Although Nathanael has never seen him, he knows that the mood of the house turns somber when the Sandman arrives. When he asks his grandmother who this man is, her answer fills him with an initial terror that he does not try to understand but simply allows to envelop him. Her words: "Why Natty, don't you know that yet? He's a wicked man who comes to children when they don't want to go to bed and throws handfuls of sand into their eyes; that makes their eyes fill with blood and jump out of their heads, and he throws their eyes into his bag and takes them into the crescent moon to feed his own children" (Hoffmann 87). These words and the instant of terror that immediately

confronts Nathanael remains with him without his processing this feeling or trying to determine who the Sandman really is. Like Joyce, Hoffmann allows his protagonist's ignorance unfold in this tale and never has him stop to question its truth or meaning. Nathanael, like Stephen, takes the initial emotion literally and leaves the meaning of it behind.

But this ignorance is not limited to child protagonists, as is evident in Oscar Wilde's title character from the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Dorian Gray, although older, engenders an ignorance and innocence that makes him a blank canvas for those around him. He too lacks the ability to recognize emotion as an internal awareness; he cannot *feel* the emotion at the instant it emerges. The primary source of his ignorance is not youth but a lack of knowledge, and this leaves him just as easily influenced as Stephen and Nathanael by the rhythmical chats of others. During a conversation with an intellectual, Lord Henry, Dorian claims his ignorance and innocence. "Stop!" faltered Dorian Gray, 'stop! You bewilder me. I don't know what to say. There is some answer to you, but I cannot find it. Don't speak. Let me think. Or, rather, let me try not to think" (Wilde 14). This repetitive theme of ignorance, innocence and indifference is important. To create a work of art, one must start at the bottom with either nothing or something completely opposite of what the artist is trying to accomplish. These protagonists reflect that soft, malleable, fresh mold that the authors, as well as their characters, are to work with.

This then leads to Joyce's second stage of artistic development:

The Epical Form: is seen emerging out of lyrical literature when the artist prolongs and broads upon himself as the centre of an epical event and this form progresses till the centre of emotional gravity is equidistant from the artist himself and from others. The narrative is no longer purely personal. The personality of

the artist passes into the narration itself, flowing round and round the persons and the actions like a vital sea (Joyce 208-209).

At this stage in the literary artist's development, Stephen Dedalus encounters independent thought yet thrives on ignorance in regards to others. He begins to view the world in terms of what it and others hold for *him*. Although raised with the church and its instilled fear of death and the consequences of sin, he finds he can withdraw from the outside world. If he ignores the existence of morals, judgment, and sin, he can create a world all his own—a world that contains only what he wishes. He can lie to himself, deceive others, and live unabashedly simply by cutting others out of his life and living as an introvert. As this transformation initially is taking place, Joyce writes: "Another nature seemed to have been lent him: the infection of the excitement and youth about him entered into and transformed his moody mistrustfulness" (Joyce 79). As this transformation progresses, Stephen finds himself passing churches and sensing disgust for their members while he sleeps with prostitutes and writes about these encounters as if proud of his sins. He also closes himself off from friends and family so that he can avoid any guilt or shame that would take him out of his sheltered world. He wants to live with the rush of passion and power that he has found despite the fact that he is living a life of denial. Joyce writes:

A cold lucid indifference reigned in his soul. At his first violent sin he had felt a wave of vitality pass out of him and had feared to find his body of his soul maimed by the excess. Instead the vital wave had carried him on its bosom out of himself and back again when it receded: and no part of his body or soul had been maimed, but a dark place had been established between them (Joyce 97).

This transformation and indifference, based on passion and power, is also a part of developing as an artist. It is the introversion that forces that artist to live with his biggest critic and supporter—himself. The transformation involves moving from the childish and ignorant to the self-conscious artist who uses others as tools and brushes to help color and shape one's own world.

This transformation is necessary and occurs also in William Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. Leontes, the King of Sicilia, convinces himself that his wife, Hermione, is committing adultery with his close friend Polixenes, the King of Bohemia. Leontes further believes that the child with whom Hermione is pregnant is not his, but Polixenes'. Leontes, who once begged and humbled himself to win Hermione, succumbs to a passionate and powerful state and demands that Hermione be imprisoned and her baby, once born, sentenced to death. Since there is no substantial evidence that Hermione has been unfaithful, Leontes has to build himself a world that is without outside influence, much like that of Stephen Dedalus. Leontes states, "No: if I mistake in those foundations which I build upon, the centre is not big enough to bear a schoolboy's top. Away with her to prison. He who shall speak for her is afar off guilty but that he speaks" (Shakespeare 76). Leontes convinces himself that he is not the one who could possibly be wrong, for in his skewed, power- and passion-driven world, facts and truth do not exist.

Such hatred and beliefs based on conspiracy theories that condemn a person or people and ignite the introvert are found also in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The protagonist, Orpheus, uses others' tales to explain or justify his life. By using the tale of Pygmalion, the sculptor who creates an ivory maiden, Orpheus describes his disdain for women. "Orpheus had shrunk from loving any woman, either because of his unhappy experience or because he had pledged himself to do so" (Ovid 227). After the death of his wife, for which he was partly responsible, he starts to view all women, through the story of Pygmalion, as whores. He feels that those who are not

like him, those who do not fit into his world (i.e. women), should be punished. He uses the words of Venus to describe this hatred: “Let these wicked people be punished either by exile or by death, or by something intermediate between the two” (Ovid 231). This disgust and hatred drives Orpheus into a life of solitude. He becomes an introvert, just like Stephen, and judges all without any substantial proof, just like Leontes. Both Orpheus and Pygmalion retract into a world all their own, a world of self that is aware of others only as an entity rather than individual beings. Orpheus tells of Pygmalion, “When Pygmalion saw these women, living such wicked lives, he was revolted by the many faults . . . in the female sex, and long lived a bachelor existence” (Ovid 231). This second stage in the development of an artist is one of self, and the benefits and downfalls of the other in regards to the self, until the self is able to recognize the existence of the other as an independent entity.

This leads to the third and final stage of the development and transformation of the artist:

The Dramatic Form: is reached when the vitality which has flowed and eddied round each person fills every person with such vital force that he or she assumes a proper and intangible esthetic life. The personality of the artist, at first cry or a cadence of a mood and then a fluid and lambent narrative, finally refines itself out of existence, impersonalizes itself, so to speak (Joyce 209).

Stephen reaches this stage when he is forced to return to the moral world in which everyone else exists. When Stephen listens to the damnation that comes with sin, he realizes that his disregard for others and his disrespect for those he loves—his family, Eileen, and his friends—will lead to a life of

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solitude. Not solely by choice but also as a consequence of his actions, he would find that he has no stability. As the priest states:

The poor sinner holds out his arms to those who were dear to him in this earthly world, to those whose simple piety perhaps he made a mock of, to those who counselled him and tried to lead him on the right path, to a kind brother, to a loving sister, to the mother and father who loved him so dearly. But it is too late . . . (Joyce 108).

Stephen is brought back to a state in which he becomes aware of the other, not simply as an object applied to his world but as an esthetic being—an entity that possesses thought, emotion, and creation and that provides to *the* world. In short, the final stage is knowledge. This knowledge is gained from the past, from initial ignorance, and from the self. It is the acceptance of others, moments of overindulgence, moments of humility. All of these things comprise the separate identity of each human being, and one may have to sin to know that sinning is wrong or know ignorance to know that awareness is preferable. The artist is a masterpiece of life and life's experiences, and his art is a representation of life. As Stephen explains:

The tragic emotion, in fact, is a face looking two ways, towards terror and towards pity, both of which are phases of it. You see I use the word arrest. I mean that the tragic emotion is static. Or rather the dramatic emotion is. The feelings excited by improper art are kinetic, desire or loathing. Desire urges us to possess, to go to something; loathing urges us to abandon, to go from something. The arts which excite them, pornographical or didactic, are therefore improper arts. The esthetic emotion (I

used the general term) is therefore static. The mind is arrested and raised above desire and loathing (Joyce 199).

Stephen's knowledge gained through his own mistakes, sins, misfortunes and abandonment are a gift. The gift is words, wisdom, and thought. Stephen has become an artist of words.

This realization of the self and the other through knowledge and experience is also a theme present in George Bernard Shaw's play *Pygmalion* and its protagonist, Liza. After she is picked up off the streets possessing poor language, dirty clothes, and little knowledge, Liza goes through the same motions as Stephen. Though Liza receives help from her creator/transformer, Higgins, she nonetheless comes to similar realizations. Liza, initially dirty and innocent, is transformed into the proper socialite while still ignorant about others' truths. Although she and Stephen differ in their approaches to the civilized world—one tries to shut it out while the other tries to fit in—both create a lifestyle based on society's modes with little knowledge of how that world and their own could harmoniously intertwine. At the end of Shaw's play, Liza says to Higgins, "I want a little kindness. I know I'm a common ignorant girl, and you a book-learned gentleman; but I'm not dirt under your feet. What I done (correcting herself) what I did was not for the dresses and the taxis: I did it because we were pleasant together and I come—came—to care for you" (Shaw 69-70). This is Liza's final transformation when she realizes, through the knowledge and self-awareness she has gained, what she wants, how she deserves to be treated, and what she has to offer. She becomes capable of thinking for herself.

All of these literary works of art depict at least one of the three stages in developing the character of an artist. By employing at least one, if not all, of the three stages—*The Lyrical Form*, *The Epical Form* and *The Dramatic Form*—each representation creates an artist as well as an artistic masterpiece.

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However, one aspect of Joyce's Pygmalion tale differs from the others. In the other renditions of the Pygmalion story discussed here, there is an artist and there is a work of art. Whether a person, a monster, or a statue, the artist and the art are two separate entities. In Joyce's novel, the artist and the art are one and the same. Stephen is the artist and he is also the art. With worldly experiences and influences as his tools, he has shaped and carved himself into the artist that he is. The intellectual, the poet, and the writer, Stephen is his own inspiration and his own creator.

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OBSCURED BY ANGELS AND DEVILS

Jon Grosh

A personal identity is most often an *external* infliction that is used to force national, political, and social obedience upon an individual. The story of *Mulberry and Peach* by Hualing Nieh describes the impossibilities of obtaining a secure personal identity during a period of world political, ideological, and social disorder. The story is situated within actual historical context during and around China's Communist Revolution. The main character, Mulberry, shows the complexities that a Chinese female may have faced in this period of intense world conflict. When analyzing Mulberry's sexuality, it becomes evident that the primary reason for her loss of self and eventual schizophrenia is the dangerous collision between her ambiguities and external inflictions of social-political binaries. Toward the end of the story, these social-political binaries, such as virgin/whore and victim/victimizer, are embodied figuratively within her extreme split personalities. Key points during Mulberry's journeys show how this schizophrenia may have occurred.

Mulberry is stranded amidst a crossfire of political and social tensions including clashing political idealism, conflicting national definitions, and cultural liberals opposing cultural traditionalists. The story begins in 1945 with the Chinese-born protagonist Mulberry leaving her home to travel north through China. At this time, China is in a process of redefinition resulting from the departure of Japanese colonizers who previously controlled much of the country. Later, a Communist revolution becomes increasingly powerful and spreads southward through China, reshaping the country. During this time (1949) Mulberry goes up north to Peking: an already occupied

Communist city. After the end of the revolution, all that is left of the supposed pre-Revolutionary China is the Communist-resisting territory of Taiwan. The two world superpowers, the United States and Russia, each supported an opposite side of the Taiwan-China partition – the US with Taiwan, and Russia with Communist China. In 1950 Mulberry is politically forced to flee China to Taiwan. She lives there with her husband and daughter for several years before fleeing to the United States, where she suffers a mental breakdown and becomes psychologically schizophrenic.

Full commitment to these political movements was often imposed through either/or classifications, or binaries, which can't allow any political or social ambiguity. Mulberry displays such political ambiguity by fleeing to a communist occupied area during the revolution, even though her father had once served as a general in the Nationalist army. As a result of these two features, she is repeatedly defined as *either* Nationalist (in support of Taiwan, the US, and pre-Revolutionary China) *or* Communist, depending on who is evaluating her. The need for strict us/them loyalty between these two powers causes Mulberry to become an enemy of both.

Political ambiguity was a feared trait to exhibit for many Chinese, since its consequences usually included relocation or imprisonment. Since consequences of *social* ambiguity are less obvious, understanding them requires taking a deeper look at Mulberry's life. In the midst of Mulberry's search for political and national belonging exists an equally difficult search, namely a search for personal identity. Analyzing the progression of Mulberry's sexuality shows how social, and specifically patriarchal binaries, contribute to her distortions of self.

Examination of Mulberry's sexuality should begin early in the story as Mulberry develops a seemingly young and innocent crush on a student. This man, who Mulberry refers to as Refugee Student, eventually becomes her first sexual experience. Having grown up in a family with an impotent father and

an abusive mother, Mulberry may have had very little exposure to patriarchal behavioral codes. This might explain Mulberry's apparent lack of guilt for losing her virginity out of wedlock to Refugee Student. Years later, the expectations men had for women in patriarchal China are made known to Mulberry – one of which is hidden, yet made very clear in a conversation Mulberry has with her soon-to-be husband. In Part II of the book, Chia-Kang (who thinks Mulberry is a virgin) describes to her a recent fantasy where he had dreamed of her naked body lying on the shrine of the Altar of Heaven. He says, "The holy grounds of the sacred temples of the past are now contaminated, but when I dreamed about the Temple of Heaven, there was one tiny part *untouched*...you were so clean and pure. I had to make love to you" (72). He not only fantasizes about her purity in general, but also about a sense of purity that resembles ancient Chinese culture. It is not difficult to imagine the inflamed sense of shame that Mulberry would likely be feeling during Chia-Kang's vivid descriptions. It is no surprise then that immediately after, when he asks her to have sex, she replies with haste, "No, Chia-Kang you must respect me" (73). She overplays the part of a virgin likely because of guilt about her lost virginity and fear of his rejection. Her sense of guilt and denial, which is clearly imposed by Chia-Kang, resembles the forces of power that men used to define and control women in China. This scene shows a good example of how Mulberry has internalized the virgin/whore binary as her only two choices of being. Forced into obedience, she chooses to play a virgin and consequently denies a piece of her identity and her past.

Mulberry soon finds that her husband cannot ensure her survival. In Part III Mulberry and her husband become fugitives from the nationalist party for embezzling money from the government. They are in Taiwan hiding in an attic and are politically unable to return to Mainland China. The only way that she can assure her family's protection from the police is by securing her landlord's agreement to hide them with the one thing de-virginized women

have to offer in a patriarchy: her body (Wong 222). She tells him, “I have only come out to repay you for saving our lives” (139). In the nighttime she remains sexual in the attic as the traditional wife; in the daytime she becomes what seems like a whore as she gives herself to the landlord. A contrast exists between the seemingly innocent sex she has when she loses her virginity to Refugee Student before she internalizes the virgin/whore binary, and the obligatory sex she has with her husband and landlord. As she enters into the virgin/whore classification, her sex life seems to lose all personal value. She becomes further distanced from a real and personal meaning of lovemaking; her sex life is, in a sense, schizophrenic (Mulberry’s actual psychological schizophrenia occurs later in the story).

Another binary that usually parallels virgin/whore in a patriarchy is victim/victimizer (Wong 222). To be considered a victim of any kind of abuse or situation in a patriarchy, a woman must experience such circumstances at the price of protecting her purity. This idea is evident when Mulberry’s husband discovers her secret about losing her virginity to Refugee Student and tries to place her sex experience into the victim category by insisting that she was raped (142). Mulberry’s lack of conformity to the sexual behavior codes for women can be seen as a treacherous act against the patriarchal system, since the system depends on these labels to enforce the obedience of women. The virgin/whore, for example, keeps women ‘pure’ as well as dependant on men for their social identity by threatening whoredom as label and lifestyle, but only when the boundaries of virgin/whore are clearly defined. When a woman asserts any sort of sexual or economic freedom outside of the stability of patriarchal boundaries (thus confusing them), she is often perceived as a victimizer. The husband wants to believe that Mulberry was the *victim* of rape, but he can’t help seeing her as a ‘victimizer’ as well, believing that she is “a broken jar” (141). It is apparent that the husband is having trouble classifying her with binaries, and he therefore finds it impossible to see the Refugee Student inci-

dent as it may have truly been. Once a person is branded 'victimizer' she loses all the sympathy and charity rights of a victim. When Mulberry offers her body to the owner of the attic in exchange for her family's safety, her husband tells her daughter "Oh that woman. She goes out to eat men" (142).

Classifications continue to distort Mulberry's sexual and social identity even as she flees Taiwan to come to America. During the immigration interview the U.S. interview official says "I am investigating your behavior. 'Committing adultery' is behavior. You must use a definite 'yes' or 'no' in reply to my questions. Did you commit adultery with Ts'ai Ch'eng-te?" (163). The immigration official's questions are intended to classify Mulberry based on cultural codes of *either* moral *or* immoral. Mulberry insists on using phrases like "was intimate" or "sleep together" to describe her sexual experience, but these terms are too vague to put her into an either/or, so the official insists on terms like "commit adultery," "sexual intercourse," "yes," and "no" (163). Towards the end of the interview the official recalls the first time that Mulberry has sex with the landlord, which happens to be immediately after the landlord's wife's funeral. "What you're saying is, after you saw his wife put in the coffin?" She answers, "Yes" (164). He then cynically responds, "so *that's* how it was" (165). The man, with his choice of language and all of America's strictly defined social codes as his backing, has succeeded in classifying her as immoral.

Although she is perceived as an immoral, man-eating traitor; a nationalist; a communist; a whore; and a fugitive; she has trouble seeing herself as entirely evil. While hiding in the attic, she speaks to Uncle Ts'ai who tells her a story about a fugitive who tried to live like an innocent man, but in doing so, continued to set a deeper trap for himself (144). Mulberry stresses that her situation is not the same because she doesn't carry around weapons to murder people as the fugitive did. But in fact, her situation is the same. By not conforming to the patriarchal and political structures of China and America, she can be

perceived as a criminal. Her disobedience of social and political orders is her weapon, because it confuses social boundaries, which then threaten the foundation of the oppressive system upheld by national and cultural powers. Mulberry is always escaping from persecution trying to live like an innocent woman, though throughout the book, the oppressive powers of impossible binaries continue to set deeper and deeper traps for her. With such constant persecution and mistreatment, it is evident that her innocent perception of herself cannot last.

The eventual demise of Mulberry's sense of self occurs in the United States after her exile from Taiwan. As the accumulating burdens of false classifications inevitably crumble her sense of self, Mulberry's personality splits into separate schizophrenic identities; a new personality named Peach is created. At this point in the story, Peach can be perceived as the devil on one shoulder, with Mulberry as the angel on the other. Peach sexually teases men, refuses to settle in one place, and by running from the U.S. immigration official but continuing to write to him, she seems to intentionally become a fugitive from the law. These behaviors are suggestive of Mulberry's past persecutions: an immoral, man-eating traitor; a whore; and a fugitive. Peach *is* what Mulberry has been labeled all along. Just as Mulberry chooses to become the virgin side of the virgin/whore binary in Part II, thus denying her true identity and past, she is also forced into the same kind of denial of self as she chooses to become Peach: embodying the other side of the binary. What is apparent is that Mulberry becoming Peach is not Mulberry finding her true self, but in reality, an equal if not further distortion of her true self. The Mulberry-Peach split is essentially an illustration of how political and social binaries force a once relatively ambiguous and real person to become a literal embodied example of violent contradictory labels.

By the time Mulberry leaves Taiwan and comes to the United States, the number of national, political, and cultural definitions carried on her shoulders

is astonishing. Her categorical make-up is appropriately represented in symbolism by the maps illustrated in the book. She asks the U.S. immigration man to find her on these maps filled with chaotic lines, borders, and boundaries; it would be nearly impossible for him to do so. The maps exemplify her ambivalence as well as her confusion, displacement, and lack of belonging. A description early in the book figuratively illustrates such an experience:

You're suspended there, unable to touch the sky above you or the earth below you, pitch-black mountains all around you and the crashing water underneath. You're completely cut off from the world...And you ask yourself: Where am I? Who am I? You really want to know. And you'd be willing to die to find out. (22).

This passage is intended to capture the feelings of individuals like Mulberry whose ambiguities form confusion and ambivalence to a binary-classified world. Much of Mulberry's experiences are similar to experiences many people have today. One example is the people of the Chinese or Indian Diaspora who experience multiple nations, but due to each nation's dualistic ideas of 'us and them', never achieve a feeling of national belonging. Others who share Mulberry's experiences include gender-ambivalent people who are unable to identify with either side of a binary-classified social gender (male/female), or even religiously ambivalent people whose souls are condemned by strict believers of a religion to which these 'non-believers' may actually partially adhere. Hualing Nieh's telling of *Mulberry and Peach* should be seen as a protest that speaks for all ill-defined victims of binaries. Mulberry's story, as well as all of today's stories of human displacements, cultural schizophrenia, and distortion of identities, attack binaries between the horns

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by exposing their violence and falseness. The protest is for tolerance of our ambivalent and hybrid generation as it struggles for harmony rather than contradictions among multiple identities.

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OTHER FORMS OF DIALOGUE

Nicole Henry

One accomplishment that literature makes is that it serves to illustrate the versatility of language, and recognition of this accomplishment can transcend the restrictive boundaries that societies impose. This versatility is shown throughout literary history and is a thread that runs throughout most literary genres. The majority of Lois-Ann Yamanaka's *Blu's Hanging* illustrates versatility of language in that the character Maisie is mute. It is shown, however, that her *not* speaking is in no way a hindrance to her communication with others. What a character like this does is force the reader to investigate and question the validity of other forms of communication. For example, readers must ask themselves: Is there not a legitimate language in facial expression? Authors can also use the way in which they tell a story to illustrate other forms of speaking. This is seen in *Blu's Hanging*, where the language of Hawaiian Pidgin is used. What can be concluded from this, via the character of Maisie, is that Lois-Ann Yamanaka uses different forms of language to illustrate that there are many, equally legitimate forms of speaking and also to make a clear statement about the assumption by mainstream Western culture that language is limited to verbal, conventional dialogue.

The story line of *Blu's Hanging* unravels in Hawaii, but not in the pristine vacation destination that is often pictured when Hawaii is imagined. For the family that is at the center of this story, the Hawaii that is their home is one that, rather than providing fun and leisure, often brings complication and heartache. *Blu's Hanging* is a novel where children are forced by necessity to take on the roles that the adults in their lives should occupy. Following the death of their mother, Poppy's grief-stricken withdrawal causes thirteen-year-old Ivah to assume the mother's vacated position in the family. At this point,

language and communication become crucial elements to the survival of this atypical family. Ivah feels responsible for the well being of her two younger siblings, Blu and Maisie, who both also demonstrate their own ways of dealing with the monumental changes that they have experienced. Through an obsession with food, Blu communicates that he, above all else, desires love and acceptance, whereas Maisie completely loses her ability to speak verbally.

The use of Maisie's muteness in *Blue's Hanging* serves the purpose of illustrating that just as much can be said in saying *nothing* as in saying *something*. The fact that she seldom speaks is never a hindrance to her communicating with others. It is said of Maisie that "for the girl without words, there is laughter for what is light, gesture for want, and tears for all that is dark. There is not much more. Names are nothing but extravagance" (131). This illustrates that words are simply representations of objects or feelings that one does not have to speak in order to be clear. In fact, the reader is guided to recognize that in not speaking Maisie is allowed to be *more* clear. In a novel that is focused on language and its usage, she is the only character who is not caged by language's limitations, and never has to be "at a loss for words" because she can't find a way of expressing how she feels. She, more than any character in this novel, speaks how she feels and in doing so legitimizes a form of dialogue in which the reader may not have placed much validity.

In giving Maisie's form of speaking validity, Yamanaka makes a clear statement about the assumptions that Western culture makes in regard to language and communication. Her statement that there is much more than standard verbal communication is made apparent when Ivah talks about Maisie's teacher not recognizing Maisie's need to use the restroom. Ivah says, "She cannot talk, so she cannot ask like this *haole* wants the kindergartners to ask, 'Teacher, may I please use the lavatory?'"(48). When Ivah uses the word "talk" she is referring to verbal communication. However, she knows that the repetition of Maisie's accidents should have told her teacher that Maisie, at

some point in the day, would need to use the restroom. It is important to notice that the author is not implying that the teacher failed to comprehend Maisie's predicament, she just chose not to acknowledge it, because, fitting with Western tradition, Maisie didn't ask in a way that was accepted.

The use of the Pidgin term *haole*, usually meaning a Caucasian foreigner, in the preceding quote emphasizes the point that Yamanaka is making about language. She often uses Pidgin when she wants to make a statement that defies the boundaries of her plot. In referring to Miss Owens as a *haole* she is immediately making the point that this person is not just different from the culture in which she has found herself, but that she represents Western culture itself and the value that it places on standard verbal communication.

The use of Pidgin throughout this novel is not intended to confuse the reader. On the contrary, Yamanaka uses it to clarify. In using a language unfamiliar to many of her readers, she is forcing them to investigate the validity of that language and to recognize that legitimacy belongs to forms of communication other than those accepted by Western standards. This is made clear when Miss Owens speaks about the usage of Pidgin in her classroom. She refers to her students as "filthy-mouthed kids with limited vocabularies. Good, real good. Git me a bar of Lava" (46). She sees their language as limited only because she does not understand it.

By making understanding her novel a little difficult and uncomfortable for the Western reader, the author is teaching the reader not to be so quick to judge based on ignorance. Notice that Miss Owens, who represents Western tradition, speaks in her own Texan dialect. "Git me a bar of Lava" is not the standard English on which she seems to pride herself; in fact, it is no more standard than her student's use of Pidgin. However, it is easy for Miss Owens and the reader to overlook this and go straight to censuring the use of Pidgin because it is completely foreign to many Westerners. It is easily recognizable

that “Git” is a variation of “Get.” But because it is not immediately apparent that *haole* means “Caucasian foreigner,” this term is easily labeled as wrong. By juxtaposing these two examples, the author is making the point that just because speech is not “comfortable” to the listener does not mean that it is less than standard Western speech; in fact, they are equally legitimate. Further, by incorporating Pidgin, a type of speech often deemed substandard by Western society, into her story, Yamanaka is demonstrating the value of retaining this element of culture; a heritage that, especially in the wake of the cultural assimilation that had occurred to this point, deserved to be validated. Ultimately Yamanaka uses her novel to force the reader into recognizing that legitimate forms of speaking exist apart from standard Western speech.

Throughout, Yamanaka illustrates many different mediums for encountering words. Maisie’s muteness shows that visual emotion is the medium through which comprehension is possible. Verbal confusion is the medium through which Pidgin can be given legitimacy, and writing represents yet another medium for encountering words: on the page. On a very basic level, Yamanaka is saying that significance does not lie in the form that dialogue takes, it exists in the processes that are undergone in order to achieve an understanding of what is being said. In this sense, Pidgin can be used as long as the reader comes to understand that its usage is making a statement about the importance of a cultural heritage. Maisie can be mute because her muteness is also a form of language just needing some minor translation. It is in the translation that all of these kinds of dialogue speak volumes. A paradox has occurred. In making the effort to understand these “illegitimate” forms of dialogue, the reader realizes that these forms of speaking *have* to be legitimate because of the effort he or she is making to understand them. This is why *Blu’s Hanging* does what good literature should. It takes something that is restrictive, compels the reader to question what it is he or she does not understand or is unfamiliar with, and gives birth to an informed new

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understanding. By giving other forms of communication validity, Yamanaka is making it a little easier for those within her culture and outside of it to transcend societal boundaries and really *speak* to each other.

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PARADOX BETWEEN WORLDS:
AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL EXCERPT

Theodora Ko

Here in America I am between worlds. I am an immigrant alien by status, blending into American society—a society where I am resolute in my identity of self. I am a Singaporean, comfortable in the society of roots, yet wary of speaking my voice of my identity there. I am like the Japanese *Issei*—with memories and experiences similar to the first-generation Japanese immigrants that we have read in my World of Autobiography course—the familiarity of traditions, the values that hold the community, the identity of people. These that were part of my own youth today still remain. Yet my search for identity is not unlike that of *Sansei*, the third-generation Japanese—the questioning, the sense of being neither here nor there, encased in my mold like a banana, with the independent self within me sheathed by the traditional values of my Chinese heritage, the sense of the meshed identity. The paradox of living between different worlds.

How far, how deep should I go into the recesses of the mind's eye, to rekindle and revive anew, the memory of the experiences of my search within myself—for the identity that I could recognize and proudly claim as my own?

In hindsight it was a blessing in disguise that there was not much intimate communication in my family—that I found my voice myself, in writing. At thirteen I started corresponding with my first overseas pen friend. Within a year or so I was writing every day; each day I was anxious to receive a letter. I was exchanging letters with more than thirty teenagers around the world. I was writing letters some ten-to-twenty pages long, expressing myself, my random thoughts, my budding views. That I was receiving replies from

others whom I had never met and only knew from the photographs they sent me, made the world and her people real. I was learning and understanding more about people, traditions and cultures around the world, without consciously realizing I was doing my own independent study in global cultures, without any textbook or course book. My favorite reference book in the library was the world atlas. I wanted to know where each person I wrote to lived.

Perhaps it is because I found my voice in writing that I was more curious than my peers. At parties I found myself drawn to parents who discussed the news, the political and social issues. I had little interest in mingling with my peers to talk about fashion, the fad-of-the-day or gossip about boys. There were times when some issue would set me aflame, gnaw at my senses so that I could not sleep. Crazy almost, I would—in the darkness of the night—write and write—and abandon sleep altogether. It was a sense of just having to put down my thoughts, to quell the tumult of thoughts that stormed.

Yet the world around me presented the paradox of the identity I had—that which I understood of myself and my role in my community, in my society. I was Chinese by race, in a multi-racial society. By culture I was *peranakan*—a ‘local-born’ Straits-born Chinese, a unique culture unto itself, a culture of the immigrant Chinese community who settled in the Straits Settlements of Malacca, Penang and Singapore. While we integrated elements of the Malay culture, we were proud of our Chinese heritage and rich in tradition. I suppose I may be envied—that I have no experience of being monolingual. I understood my mother tongue to be Hokkien, a Chinese dialect, but I was raised speaking English at home in my family; I spoke Hokkien to the maid; I spoke *Baba*—an eclectic mix of Malay with Hokkien loan words and a shift in pronunciation to regular Malay—to my grandparents. In Singapore we generally speak Singlish—a distinct mongrel of English,

Malay and dialect, mainly Hokkien—grammatically impaired as it was. I spoke English, Singlish, Malay, Hokkien or Baba—using different languages in different situations, communicating in the language that was appropriate with whomever I was speaking to.

An office colleague once asked me if I felt funny dating a Caucasian. “Funny” is a multifaceted word Singaporeans use quite loosely to mean odd, strange, peculiar, irregular, weird depending on the context it applies to or for want of a better word. I literally shared my childhood with the *ang mo*—red-haired devil, the term used for the foreigner Caucasian. It was a time when we were the only Chinese family on our street. My parents have a tale about the time when I was about five or six years old. I had locked myself in the bathroom and our British neighbors answered their call of alarm and broke down the door. It was a time when Singapore was part of the Commonwealth and the British Armed Forces were integral to our national defense. I played catch, and I think I even fought my battles with kids my age. I remember being fascinated at Guy Fawkes day festivities when they brought the effigy to the field down the street to burn, as was their tradition. Caucasians were like family, with whom I mingled unreservedly and freely. In my child innocence I was race-blind and race-color blind.

At sixteen I had curiosities and yearnings that were unbecoming of a female teenager of my culture, my society, and my time. My parents expected nothing exceptional nor extraordinary of me. Their expectations were typical of what parents expected of their daughters: a dutiful child who would come home straight after school, do homework, help around the house, and who would academically succeed as well as she could. She would later work, meet a respectable young man whom she will marry, settle down and be a parent to her family. My brother was their first child, and only son—he had the honor, and duty to carry the family name. I was their second child, and as the eldest daughter I was expected to set the example for my two younger sisters. Of

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travel, my mother expressed, “perhaps you will be lucky and your husband’s job will take you traveling. Or you can go on tour with your husband, when you are married.”

The evolving identity within me spawned questions, propelling me into a kind of rebellion much to my parents’ angst. I suffered from anorexia nervosa, an eating disorder. I remember feeling a sense of gratification—even though it endangered my health severely. I was adamant to control something in my life. I had no voice to speak of. I was tradition- and culture-bound. I could not be bold, rude or unruly, or defy my parents. I always had to be mindful of my place in the family, my family’s place in the community and society. Because my mother had suffered a nervous breakdown, my father told us that we should not anger her or she could have a relapse. I had to be silent and remain faithful to what was expected of us. I loved my parents dearly. My father doted on us. I especially did not want to disappoint him. I was emotionally, spiritually and mentally torn—trying to grapple with the twin roles within me: one that wanted to be the filial daughter my parents expected me to be, and one that wanted to learn independently of the nurturing hold of the nets that protect me from falling or making any ill-judged decision.

It dawned on me that my parents’ concern to protect me was well-intended but seemingly misplaced. There were classes of races and people they frowned upon; they frowned upon certain friendships. They had stereotypical ideals of racial groups. It bothered me that being out with a Malay, Indian, Eurasian or Caucasian was being questioned, but they were pleased that I was friends with the daughter of a Malay official. It bothered me that it was frowned upon that I had made the effort to attend the funeral of the grandmother of a friend who was like another brother to me—that in my parents’ eyes I should not have bothered because his family was not of the same social status as we were. It bothered me that I was chastised for wasting my time and told that I could have made my time more useful at a class to

improve my shorthand speed skills, when instead I had gone to see a friend perform a play and help work the props behind stage where I had thoroughly enjoyed myself. It seemed to me that what was worthwhile was the pursuit of the paper chase of certificates and diplomas—endeavors in the arts were best left forsaken. They frowned when I said I was interested in going to either a vocational or art school. The technical field is not for girls and artists don't make money, they told me. I remember how relieved I was when I graduated. I was thankful I'd passed, that I didn't waste their money. I had accomplished what they wanted me to accomplish: I had the credentials to be a private secretary, but I felt no personal joy.

My search for identity required me to leave home. It was a conscious decision. I remember looking around me. I remember asking myself why I complicated matters for myself, why I stubbornly dwelt on the issues of identity for the self. I wondered if it would be so much simpler for me—for my life—if I asked no questions and sought no answers. How simple it would be to go about my life doing what was expected of me by my family, by custom, culture and tradition; by community and society; by country. I looked around at the people passing me on the street—going about their lives engaged in their defined roles. And I felt very much singular and alone. How I wanted to be my father's daughter. How I wished I could clone myself to give them the daughter that did not disappoint them as I had. I remember the silent cry deep within me—the lament, the longing, the anguish, the pain.

I looked around me and saw the faces of the people in the street. Something stirred in me. I did not like the notion of my becoming like any of them—little caring who they are—and it seemed it mattered none for the worse. Then it dawned on me what I feared: I did not want to find myself feeble and gray at eighty, thinking back into my past sadly regretting all the 'what ifs' and 'if onlys' that I did not fulfill because I was afraid of trusting myself to even attempt or try. I realized that learning, finding answers to the

questions I had, seeing, doing, and accomplishing things for myself was important to me. I realized that it was essential—almost urgent—for me to learn from experience; I had to learn the lessons my mistakes would teach, and find the soul of the identity that would define me. I wanted to be old with rich memories that I could cherish. I feared being senile and burdensome.

In each of the readings for my autobiography course, I recognized snippets of my search for understanding of the self. To the question, *Where is home?* or *Where are you from?* I would ask what your definition is. Is it a place of belonging, or identity you wish to know about? To the question, *Who are you?* I would say: Let the person speak, let the words themselves reveal the person, the self, the identity that remains ever fragile: a woven mesh of experiences of the past, the present and the aspirations of the tomorrow. There is much to shared, understand and appreciated in each and every one of us. And leave the door open—ready to greet, welcome and be surprised by the new emerging self of tomorrow who enters.

The paradox of the identity living between different worlds remains. I cannot and will not forsake one for the other—not when every piece of the past is part of the nucleus of the person of the present, and the tomorrow.

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NOTIONS OF SELF, SPACE AND PLACE
IN HARRIET WILSON'S *OUR NIG*

Emily Mattson

Harriet E. Wilson's novel *Our Nig; or, Sketches from the Life of a Free Black*, published only a year prior to the commencement of the Civil War, went unnoticed and unstudied until very recently—perhaps because of its politically volatile subject matter, or perhaps because Harriet Wilson published it herself and had no one to help her circulate it. *Our Nig* is a novel about what it means to live “without”: without community, direction, family, money, social status, or faith. The book pays scrupulous attention to ideas of confinement and lack of personal identity in a society where the heroine, Frado (nicknamed “Nig”), is an outcast, an orphan, and a servant. Wilson's book is valuable because it adds new perspective to the volumes of pro-slavery, abolitionist, and slave narrative works in American literature.

Slave narratives are generally defined as “written and dictated testimonies of the enslavement of black human beings” (Gates, *Slave's Narrative* xii). The genre is traditionally taken to include “only those *written* works published before 1865” at the time of abolition and the end of the Civil War (xii). A slave narrative can only be authentic if written in a time and place where slavery is the legal practice: the “slave narrative proper” cannot exist where slavery does not exist (xxii). Slave narratives developed the enduring trope of “South-to-North migration” and the idea that the quest for freedom is inextricably linked with the movement from one specific location to another. In most cases of the slave narrative, the prevalent theme is one of migration from the place of slavery to the place of freedom.

The full title of *Our Nig* is *Our Nig; or, Sketches from the Life of a Free Black, in a Two-Story White House, North, Showing that Slavery's Shadows*

Fall Even There. The original title page also names the author as “Our Nig,” which not only suggests that the novel is something of an autobiography, it also expresses the controversial content of the book. By invoking the hated racial epithet “Nig” and referring to Northern “slavery” in the midst of such Civil War-era honorifics as “White,” “North,” and “Free,” Wilson introduces her audience into the fragmented life story of a Northern “mulatto” indentured servant. The title suggests that the book is merely “sketches” from the life of a black servant, unlike the ostensibly tell-all style of the male slave narrative that sought political recompense through the appearance of full narrative disclosure.

Our Nig stands in stark contrast to the slave narrative in several ways. Slave narratives’ purpose was to describe “slavery *as it is*” and to spread the “religious and political motto ‘NO COMPROMISE WITH SLAVERY!’” (Douglass ix, xiii). Wilson commences her novel with a preface that claims her purpose for writing it: “I am forced to some experiment which shall aid me in maintaining myself and child without extinguishing this feeble life,” she writes, making the audience aware that this book was written not so much because of political issues or personal vendettas, but rather because she was in need of money (Wilson preface). Within the preface is also a sort of disclaimer to the reader in regard to the context of the book. Wilson wishes her prospective Northern abolitionist audience (her “good anti-slavery friends at home”) to understand that her “mistress was wholly imbued with *southern* principles” and that *Our Nig*’s discussion of slavery’s “appurtenances North” is indeed no reference to the general attitude of Northern whites (preface).

However, the novel itself seems to contradict Wilson’s letter to the audience. In the novel, she describes the North as a place where black persons are “watched by kidnappers, maltreated by professed abolitionists, who didn’t want slaves at the South, nor niggers in their own houses, North” (129). Wilson’s novel depicts a great many things that would make abolitionists and

slave-owners alike cringe, and she seems to realize after the fact that perhaps such ideas will not be too pleasantly received. The heroine's mother and father enter into an interracial marriage, which at the time of publication was not only taboo, it was considered to represent a form of depravity. But Wilson nevertheless begins the novel with a rather detailed description of their "amalgamous" relationship, as though such a beginning would be the prelude to the even more startling information that would follow.

Our Nig's "crafted minimalization" seems to be a study in what is lacking, marginalized, and confined (Gates, "Introduction" xxiii). Wilson states in the preface that she has "purposely omitted what would most provoke shame" among white Northerners, but cautions that attention must be paid to what is *lacking* in the novel, to what it is determined *not* to say. There is a deeper sense of hopelessness, lack of direction, and individual emptiness in this novel than in other works of the "anti-slavery" genres, largely due to Nig's individual lack of agency and mobility.

Our Nig focuses on the adolescence of a black indentured servant, in an unspecified house, in an unspecified Northern state. Frado, or "Nig," begins her sojourn at the Bellmonts' house when she is six years old, and stays until her eighteenth birthday. Nig's unhappy childhood is marked by abandonment, poverty, and abuse. There is no mention of time, location, or any other identifiable landmark, omissions which immediately afford insight into Nig's confused and confined life. The closest Wilson comes to clarifying the location of the Bellmonts' house is to say that it is "two miles beyond" whatever unnamed village Nig previously lived in, and that there was a fairly large piece of land surrounding the estate (21). She does not leave the property, nor does she seem to notice that there is a "free" world going on outside it.

The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, the autobiography of a "freed" slave, begins quite opposite to *Our Nig* because Douglass' status as a

“slave” provides him with an automatic understanding of bondage and freedom. Douglass immediately discloses the place of his birth (“Tuckahoe, near Hillsborough, and about twelve miles from Easton, in Talbot county, Maryland”), and attempts to give as many specific details as possible to the “real” surrounding world (1). This insistent specificity not only verifies the truth behind his narrative, but also emphasizes that he was born in the South as a slave, and is now a “free black” in the North. Douglass’ and others’ political “abolitionist” texts all served to illuminate the dichotomy between the world of the North (one of autonomy, self-ownership, racial equality, and opportunity) and the world of the South (one of oppression, social “backwardness,” and inequality). Perhaps Wilson’s novel does not do this because she had no abolitionists with their own political agendas to back up her claims (as did so many slaves), or perhaps because she herself was made aware of the farce of Northern egalitarianism. At any rate, Douglass tends to identify easily with his *space* (the physical expanse in which the individual exists) and his *place* (social and environmental location), respectively and in connection to one another. He defines himself within two different socially constructed contexts of existence: as a slave in the South, and a free man in the North. Wilson does not.

Douglass’ situation as a slave offers him some ideal of life separate from bondage. He is acutely aware of the gray mass that is the “North,” and makes it his life’s quest to achieve residence there. Not only does the notion of the “North” give Douglass the idea of separation from slavery, it also affords him an opportunity to find his own “self.” The slave has no space, and no individual agency, because the purpose of his existence is to exercise the will of his master. But in Douglass’ schema the slave has the possibility of achieving his own space if he can only get to the place (here, the North) that makes personal space a possibility for him.

But for Nig, there is no notion of place, and therefore no idea of space. Without the *space* necessary for personal development, nor the place necessary for *space* to exist, the unidentified person must not only ask, “Who am I?” but also “What am I?” More specifically, “What am I that I cannot have my own identity and/or place like all others around me?” These questions seem to be the hallmark of Frado’s existence. But unlike Douglass’ *Narrative*, Wilson’s novel never asks the question “Where am I?” Nig’s place is simply nonexistent, and therefore movement is not even an option.

Immediately upon entering into the Bellmont household, Frado is given an apartment: “an unfinished chamber over the kitchen, the roof slanting nearly to the floor, so that the bed could stand only in the middle of the room. A small half window furnished the light and air” (27). By describing Nig’s living quarters, Wilson shows the isolation and confinement, *physical* as well as emotional, that she experienced while living at the Bellmont house. There is constantly a sense not only of the absence of an outside world, but of an actual bondage to the house itself, the house that is Nig’s whole life.

Douglass’ *Narrative* places much emphasis upon his notion of “manhood.” His life’s goal is to establish for himself a sense of “manhood” that is characterized specifically by self-motivation and individual agency. Indeed, much of Douglass’ life is spent outdoors, moving from place to place, while Frado is in one location permanently. “In becoming free,” Carolyn Porter writes, “male slaves become men” (361). The woman’s position in the slave narrative is less autonomous and more reliant upon specifically *whom* she belongs to. Both *Our Nig* and Harriet Jacobs’ *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* chronicle the incarceration and commodification of the female house-servant, in each case revealing the woman’s inability to create personal agency. The slave woman “never possesses herself. She can determine only who will possess her and her children” (Porter 362). Yet Jacobs’ *Incidents* has the common slave-narrative ideal of the “North,” the place where Linda

(Jacobs) can eventually find freedom. Although Linda's space is nonexistent while she is in bondage, the place for freedom and happiness can still exist in the abstract "North."

Nig never leaves the estate throughout the entirety of her adolescence, excepting her brief attendance at a nearby grammar school (the location of which is, of course, unspecified). All of the movement in the novel revolves around the comings and goings of the Bellmonts and their relations. When Nig has been severely punished for a small task not completed to her mistress' liking, she "runs away", first to an outbuilding, then to a swamp on the estate. When the sympathetic Aunt Abby finds her alone, all that Nig can say is: "I've got to stay out here and die. I've got no mother, no home. I wish I was dead" (46). Had Frederick Douglass been subjected to the kind of beating which Frado had endured, he would certainly have resolved to flee "North." But Nig knows not a place that would bring her solace; in fact, she has no idea of any place better than where she is. Frado is a slave in every sense but the legal one, a slave mentally as well as physically. And yet, paradoxically, the fact that she is not *legally* a slave seems to disempower her further, since the ambiguity of her status deprives her of the "slave versus free" dichotomy that structures both Douglass' life and his narrative.

Frederick Douglass' movement from South to North, slavery to freedom, subordination to "manhood," is marked by many relationships with others in his predicament. "I can say, I never loved any or confided in any people more than my fellow-slaves...I believe we would have died for each other...We never moved separately...We were one" (49). Although Douglass would later suggest that making the move into freedom was most easily done alone, clearly much of his passion and political conviction stem from the relationships he had with other slaves. Harriet Jacobs' heroine also had the support and care of a community of fellow-slaves, especially women, without which she might have succumbed to her master's sexual abuse. Without any outside influence

or anyone to assist her development, Nig grows up with even less sense of identity than a slave.

Race exists for Frado merely as a collection of epithets, a few words flung at her by Mrs Bellmont to “prove” Nig’s social inferiority. Nig can find no difference between herself and those around her, except that she is black and they are white. Wilson’s heroine is of a light complexion, however, and Mrs Bellmont forces her out of doors into the sun, that she might remain darker than Mary Bellmont (the daughter of Mrs Bellmont). Thus Frado comes to question the meanings of “whiteness” and “blackness,” especially since it is always understood wherever she is that “whiteness” is superior to “blackness.” When she has run away to the swamp, she asks James: “Did the same God that made [Mrs Bellmont] make me?” When James replies in the affirmative, she retorts, “I don’t like him...Because he made her white, and me black. Why didn’t he make us *both* white?” (51). Unfortunately for Frado, no one seems to have the answer for her. She continues to see her blackness as a stigma throughout her adolescence. When she matures and realizes that, if she stays, Mrs Bellmont may indeed work and abuse her into the ground, she “determines to flee. But where? Who would take her?...She was black, no one would love her” (108). Once again, Nig’s confinement is such that she has nowhere and no one to go to. She even suspects that her “blackness” itself is the thing that binds her to the Bellmont residence. As Gates writes, “There is a complex interaction of race-*and*-class relationships, depicted in Frado’s relation to Mrs Bellmont as inexplicably intertwined” (“Introduction” *xliv*). Nig cannot escape her “blackness,” and as far as she can tell her “blackness” will force her into servitude forever.

Slave narratives and other anti-slavery works tend to adhere to a conflict and resolution format. The conflict to be overcome is slavery, and the resolution is the abolition of slavery. Frederick Douglass’ *Narrative* finds its niche quite nicely in this genre. Douglass stands on the shore, watching the

ships as they move freely about on the water: “You are loosed from your moorings, and are free; I am fast in my chains, and am a slave!...God, deliver me! Let me be free! Is there any God? Why am I a slave?” (38). Thus we see Douglass, working through the conflict of slavery and questioning his existence in relation to it. Later, as a “free black,” he sees the resolution of this conflict when he finally gets to work for *himself*. “I worked that day with a pleasure I had never before experienced. I was at work for myself...It was to me the starting point of a new existence” (68).

So, then, where is the resolution for the already “free” black woman who has no sense of autonomy or agency? *Our Nig* has no final resolution, no feeling of hope except the fact that Nig has finally left the Bellmonts. She cannot understand that her situation is one of status (such as “slave” versus “free man”) and not of unchangeable skin color. As in the title, the book here shifts into a more openly autobiographical mode when Wilson writes (using the third person to refer to herself): “Still an invalid, she asks your sympathy, gentle reader. Refuse not, because some part of her history is unknown, save by the Omniscient God. Enough has been unrolled to demand your sympathy and aid” (130). Nig is still confined by her disability, poverty, and lack of *place*. She is unable to support herself or her child, and is confined to the bed, crippled by years of toil and abuse at the hand of Mrs Bellmont. Her only glimmer of hope is in writing down some “sketches” from her fragmented lifetime. There is no resolution, no idea of Nig’s newfound *space* or identity: she is quite literally confined to the space of a few square feet. Wilson’s novel has no location in which the possibility of happiness can exist, no realm of existence in which Nig can be free. She is bound to a lifetime of poverty and disillusionment.

Wilson’s *Our Nig* is crucial to the canon of American literature not least because it helps to illuminate the situation of the “free black” in the North. The slave narrative has added volumes to the canon, explaining the plight of

African Americans before abolition. Many post-slavery “reconstruction” novels have also been written to depict the hardships of African American life *after* slavery. But Wilson’s book addresses “free” life during the time of slavery, and the desolation that attends Nig’s life of alienation and solitude. The fate of Nig is left to the audience, whose duty it is to purchase this book if Nig is to be saved. *Our Nig* can stand in contrast to the slave narrative while also serving the same purpose—to enlighten minds to the hardship of oppression in nineteenth-century America.

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MASCULINITY AND FEMININITY IN THE PYGMALION MYTH
AND THE SUCCESSION OF THESE THEMES IN *FIGHT CLUB*

Ben Morse

There is a struggle that lies at the core of every story following in the Pygmalion tradition. This struggle has to do with the existence and interaction of two entities, masculinity and femininity, which comprise the consciousness of all humans. This struggle takes place in the mind of the male protagonist in each respective story and is reflected in his interaction with other men and women. Because he is male, the main issue in the struggle is grappling with his own inherent female nature(s). Ultimately, personal peace and freedom can only be achieved through an understanding of the feminine, making it compatible with the masculine. Of all of the male protagonists, Stephen Dedalus comes closest to this complete understanding. David Fincher's film *Fight Club* (1999), based on the novel by Chuck Palahniuk, is included and examined in this essay because of its pertinence to this issue and its succession of the themes of many, if not all, of the stories based around the Pygmalion myth. The events of every story and the actions of every leading male are a result of the struggle that takes place within them.

The men in *Fight Club* participate in these ultra-masculine, ultra-macho activities because they feel that their masculinity is being threatened or suppressed by the rules and ideologies of the modern society in which they live. In an age in which minorities and feminism have triumphed through cultural and sexual revolutions, *Fight Club* is a desperate and direct reaction and retaliation to the slow and gradual dismantling of a society in which masculinity has dominated. All of the members of this club are affluent white males. At no previous time in history could this movie have had the same sort of meaning that it has today, an age that can foresee white males as the minority

in California in twenty years and a move toward an unprecedented kind of androgyny in society as evidenced by women generating more income than ever before and by men who become stay-at-home dads.

The main character of *Fight Club* is Jack, an affluent, single man who works for an insurance company. He lives in an apartment furnished completely with items out of a single catalog, happily spending most of his time ordering new things. However, Jack suffers from depression and insomnia and starts attending support groups for diseases and disorders that he does not have. One of the first characters that Jack meets on his journey that will take him to *Fight Club* is Bob, a former champion body-builder and steroid user who used to have his own infomercial. Now, in a support group for cancer, Bob is bankrupt and divorced, and his affliction causes his breasts to swell to the size of a large woman's. Bob later joins the underground fighting circuit. This example, although extreme, reflects the motive of the others for joining Fight Club: to reclaim, in some way, their manhood. They seek to liberate their "stolen" masculinity.

"I will not serve." Through the rejection of the society in which he lives, Stephen Dedalus, the main character of James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, is finally free from the "nets" of religion, nationalism, and rules of society through which he has been enslaved (Joyce 233). The Fight Club men are enslaved, or rather they feel that their masculinity is enslaved, by the equality that modernity and social evolution has started to produce. They are liberated from these "nets" through pure masculine aggression. After joining the Fight Club, Jack states: "After fighting . . . the volume was turned down. Everything was easy to deal with. I was free." Eliza's father, in George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*, achieves this same kind of freedom in poverty. If he does not have much to lose, there is not much to worry about. Life becomes simple, as it is for Frankenstein's monster, or rather, how he wishes it were: "Alas! Why does man boast of sensibilities

superior to those apparent in the brute; it only renders them more necessary beings. If our impulses were confined to hunger, thirst, and desire, we might be nearly free; but now we are moved by every wind that blows, and a chance word or scene that that word may convey to us” (Shelley 64).

A mysterious man named Tyler Durden, the leader of Fight Club, introduces Jack to the underground fighting circuit. Durden is obsessed with cutting away all material things and getting to the basic nature of humans to achieve as complete a freedom as possible. This culminates in the final project of Durden’s army: destroying the buildings of major credit card companies, erasing debt record, going back to ground zero in an effort to achieve a kind of economic and in turn, social, equality and freedom. Indeed, Durden states: “Only after we’ve lost everything are we capable of anything.”

Aggression is indeed one of the most primitive tendencies in nature. The setting of Antarctica for much of *Frankenstein* suggests this kind of regression: little or no human civilization, a white purity, even an environment that is so harsh that it would be difficult for women to survive. The relevance of all this is the ultimate regression; the farthest one can go back in the existence of humanity is the moment at which God created Adam, before he created Eve—before women existed.

The aggression of these Fight Club men, and the project of Victor Frankenstein, is a reaction and attempt to quash all hints of femininity and subsequent impulses in the subject’s own selves. Lord Henry Wotton, from Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, hints at the complexity of the suppression of these impulses:

The mutilation of the savage has its tragic survival in the self-denial that mars our lives. We are punished for our refusals. Every impulse that we strive to strangle broods in the mind, and poisons us. The body sins once, and has done with its sin, for

action is a mode of purification. Nothing remains then but the recollection of a pleasure, or the luxury of a regret. The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it. Resist it, and your soul grows sick with longing for the things it has forbidden to itself, with desire for what its monstrous laws have made monstrous and unlawful. It has been said that the great events of the world take place in the brain. It is in the brain, and the brain only, that the great sins of the world take place also (Wilde 18).

Interestingly, most of the male protagonists in the literature that follows the Pygmalion theme possess strong feminine characteristics. Victor Frankenstein, Norbert Hanold, Henry Higgins, and Stephen Dedalus are all quite bookish, immersed in their studies, and therefore somewhat anti-social; they don't seem to spend much, if any, time around women. Stephen is a sensitive boy, quite susceptible to illness, and he gets bullied a bit. His getting knocked into a ditch by an older student, his subsequent illness, and the reversal of roles in his first sexual experience all indicate a sort of femininity. Dorian Gray is incredibly feminine in his physical attributes, his vanity, and his mannerisms. The female body is virtually always the one whose beauty and anatomy is worshipped, but here, Dorian is worshipped: "Lord Henry looked at him. Yes, he was certainly wonderfully handsome, with his finely-curved scarlet lips, his frank blue eyes, his crisp gold hair . . . no wonder Basil Hallward worshipped him" (Wilde 17).

Victor Frankenstein is perhaps the most interesting study, as he shares many of the shy characteristics of, for example, Stephen Dedalus, but there is evidence of even more profound issues of femininity and even homosexuality. Anne K. Mellor, in her critical essay "Possessing Nature: The Female in Frankenstein," suggests that "we might observe that Victor Frankenstein's most

passionate relationships are with men rather than with women” (Mellor 280). This is indeed the case. Frankenstein affectionately calls Henry Clerval, his best friend, “an image of my former self” (Mellor 181). Clerval is a romantic with “an imagination too vivid for the minutiae of science” and a sensitivity that Victor does not possess: “Clerval, whose eyes and ears were always quick in discerning the sensations of others” (Shelley 43). The fact that Frankenstein calls Clerval—a man with perhaps more feminine tendencies than himself—an image of his former self suggests that a great part of himself *is* this feminine side; that a struggle with the duality of masculinity and femininity is the root of Frankenstein’s story and struggle. Mellor goes on to suggest that Victor Frankenstein substitutes a homosexual relationship with his monster—or at least with the creation of his monster—in place of a normal heterosexual relationship with Elizabeth. In addition, Frankenstein’s destruction of, and eventual decision not to create, a female companion for his monster stems from his fear of female sexuality. Because of this fear, he feels he has to “violently reassert a male control over the female body” and destroys her (Mellor 279).

There is a similar moment in *Fight Club* when a rage-filled Jack badly beats another younger member relentlessly, disfiguring his face. When asked why he did it, he explains calmly that he “wanted to destroy something beautiful.” The reasons for his anger here are some of the same ones that motivate Victor to destroy his female creation. This fear and subsequent destruction of practically all things female in *Frankenstein* is a result, I believe, of the fear of female instincts brooding within Victor Frankenstein himself. Mellor explains that the fear of female sexuality is “endemic to a patriarchal construction of gender: uninhibited female sexual experience threatens the very foundation of patriarchal power” (Mellor 279). Mellor holds that evidence of this can be found in the repression of female sexuality in *Frankenstein* and, more specifically, in the setting of Geneva.

There is really only one female character in *Fight Club*. Marla Singer is an interesting study. First, she is suffering and unhealthy. In one instance, she has overdosed on medication of some kind, at which point Tyler Durden comes and both rescues her and takes advantage of her. Marla is bold in some ways: she tempts Jack with her sexuality, and Jack constructs fictitious scenes of Marla and Tyler Durden having wild sexual escapades in his house. Because he shares the same fear of female sexuality as Victor Frankenstein, he constructs this relationship in his imagination. He does this because it provides him with a way to accost and ultimately reject Marla as well as the female within and without.

Fight Club follows the same tracks established by all the other Pygmalion myths in its objectification, mystification, and fear of women. By mystification, I mean this: In virtually all Pygmalion stories, the female is looked upon as either a sinful temptation who is belittled and even despised, or an amazingly pure, almost immortal being (i.e. a statue). It seems there is hardly any middle ground; the same woman can be both worshipped and despised. When male protagonists see and idealize women, mostly visually and physically, they are bewildered—so bewildered, in fact, that they don't know what to do and often run from the female figures as Stephen does from the "birdwoman." These women, whom men transform into goddesses, become out of communication's reach because of their mortal/immortal beauty: "A wild angel had appeared to him, the angel of mortal youth and beauty, an envoy from the fair courts of life, to throw open before him in an instant of ecstasy the gates of all the ways of error and glory" (Joyce 166). Indeed, Frankenstein describes his beloved Elizabeth in the same angelic and heavenly manner, as is the case with Norbert Hanold's goddess, Gradiva, and Henry Higgin's Eliza.

If not placed upon this heavenly pedestal, the women in these stories are viewed and objectified as tools, almost a means to an end. In George

Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*, this is most evident in the initial motive of Higgins with Eliza: a research experiment to help him with his linguistic studies. The other end that women are considered a means to is sex. Certainly this is evident in *Fight Club* and in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, in young Stephen's escapades with prostitutes. They are looked upon as mentally inferior beings, to be put up with, almost, as Lord Henry Wotton describes: "My dear boy, no woman is a genius. Women are a decorative sex. They never have anything to say, but they say it charmingly. Women represent the triumph of matter over mind, just as men represent the triumph of mind over morals" (Wilde 40).

Perhaps the most profound examples of this mystification in all of these stories can be found in the relationship between the main male character and their mothers. In *Fight Club*, there is no mother figure shown; however, at one point Tyler Durden speaks of the absence of father figures and infers that in being raised by only their mothers, the men of Fight Club have inherited a certain weakness. Professor Higgins, from Shaw's *Pygmalion*, has an interesting relationship with his mother, who lives with him. She keeps him in check in a way, yet he almost always responds to her comments with a snap. Underlying this sarcastic dialogue, there is a sense that they are really very close, strangely so for a middle-aged man and his mother.

Throughout *Portrait of the Artist* there exists an underlying current that alludes to an ambiguity, a sense of Stephen not knowing how to feel towards his mother. This is reflected and exemplified by the "Do you kiss your mother?" dialogue that occurs at two separate moments in the story. Stephen's relationship with his mother is strained at best. Stephen's mother is strongly spiritual and very Catholic. As Stephen's faith wanes, hers grows stronger, which is the main cause of conflict between the two. Mothers can indeed represent purity. They are raised onto the pedestal of purity on a subconscious level, because they are the creators of the male protagonists (a sort of hubris:

“she created me, she must be pure”). Of course the ultimate symbol of purity is the Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus. At one point, upon telling Cranly about the quarrel he has had with his mother, Stephen Dedalus enters into a discussion about how Jesus treated his mother, that perhaps he shared the same kind of estrangement. Stephen states: “I am not at all sure of it [the truth of Jesus]. He is more like a son of God than a son of Mary” (Joyce 237). Stephen’s faith is shaky because he fears, as Cranly observes, that maybe the wafer and wine are in fact the body and blood of the son of God. Quite possibly, Stephen Dedalus fears and rejects Catholicism because of its focus and emphasis on the Virgin Mary. Perhaps Stephen fears Jesus because he was created by Mary, the ultimate symbol of female purity, of which he is afraid.

Through this last conversation with Cranly, Stephen becomes enlightened. Cranly’s dialogue about how, in a material, false, and fleeting world, how real and permanent a mother’s love is, moves Stephen. He comes to an understanding, or at least has started to come to an understanding, of how to deal with his mother, other women, and the femininity within himself: “He had spoken of a mother’s love. He felt then the sufferings of women, the weaknesses of their bodies and souls: and would shield them with a strong and resolute arm and bow his mind to them” (Joyce 239). Here, Stephen gives up the battle with femininity that he has been fighting from birth. Because he is bowing his mind to them, no one entity—neither the masculine nor the feminine—triumphs. Rather, Stephen allows the feminine to exist freely in his mind, to impress upon him its sensitivities and sensibilities.

Stephen is the only one to resolve, even partially, the battle that rages within the males of the stories in the Pygmalion tradition. There are moments in these stories that hint at a peace between the dualities of masculinity and femininity being obtained, for example with Victor Frankenstein: “For the first time, also, I felt what the duties of a creator towards his creature were, and that I ought to render him happy before I complained of his wickedness”

(Shelley 67). In this quote, replace the word “creator” with “man” and the word “creature” with “woman” to get a sense of one of these fleeting moments.

The struggle central to these Pygmalion myths occurs in the consciousness of all males, past and present. It is a struggle to fully understand the complexities of our opposite sex and, through this understanding, to make sense of ourselves. In fact, there is very little, at least socially, that does not revolve around this struggle. Examining these stories from this platform of understanding of the contention within the duality of consciousness (between masculinity and femininity) can help us to understand not just sex and gender issues but how we interact with others who are different and how they affect our lives. Through this knowledge, we can achieve a more complete understanding of ourselves and of the world around us.

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LANDSCAPE PAINTED WITH TEA AND THE RETURN TO IDENTITY

Ying Zhu

In the beginning there was nothing but God, and God slept and dreamed. For ages and ages did this dream last. But it was fated that he should wake up. Having roused himself from sleep, he looked round about him, and every glance transformed itself into a star. God was amazed, and began to travel, to see what he had created with his eyes. He traveled and traveled, but nowhere was there either end or limit. As he traveled, he arrived at our earth also; but he was already weary; sweat clung to his brow. On the earth fell a drop of sweat: the drop became alive, and here you have the first man. He is God's kin, but he was not created for pleasure, he was produced from sweat; already in the beginning it was fated for him to toil and sweat (Wratislaw 254).

In Serbian folklore, the creation of man is not altogether different from the Christian conception. However, the Serb "Origin of Man" is notably distinct in the prophetic idea of man's ill fate. The maxim of that fate to toil and sweat is certainly not untrue for the Serbian people in terms of retaining a transcendent identity amidst political and cultural struggle. And it is that very struggle that surfaces as a predominant theme in the postmodernist writings of Serbian poet and prose writer Milorad Pavi. Also an accomplished scholar, translator, and short-story writer, Pavi is primarily recognized for his innovative first novel, *Dictionary of the Khazars: A Novel Lexicon in 100,000 Words* (1984), which has been translated into twenty-six languages and received international praise from the literary community. Though still relatively unknown outside of Eastern Europe, Pavi has since written *Landscape Painted with Tea*, which contains varying echoes of the postmodern lexicon structure he first introduced in *Dictionary of the Khazars*.

For Pavi, the identity of the Serbian nation is strongly intertwined with its political history. It is a history that had a direct hand in shaping the Serbian identity; an allusion the reader is continually reminded of in *Landscape Painted with Tea*. Asked to comment on his thoughts on the state of the Serbian nation during an interview with journalist Thanassis Lallas for the journal *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, Pavi answered frankly, although not without his characteristic encryption:

[Serbia] is a nation without any international financial support, without any international religious support. Their isolationism is like that of the U.S. and Russia, but it has to be paid for much more. *It is a nation deprived of memory*. They never forgive, but forget immediately...they win wars, and lose battles (133-34, emphasis mine).

Being deprived of one's memory is equivalent to being separated from it, because memory acts as the preserver of identity. Identity flounders and drowns if memory, the sort of fundamental memory at the heart of a people, is not perpetuated. It must keep advancing to preserve that original, defining identity. In order to more fully understand Pavi's rather despondent perspective and also the historical precedent for *Landscape*, we must first consider the troubled political history that pervades the resilient cultural legacy of the Serbian people.

The first of numerous threats to an independent Serbian identity came as early as the fourteenth century when in 1389, the Ottoman Turks took over despite Serbian resistance. Although the Serbs were ultimately defeated, those leaders of resistance, Prince Lazar and St. Marko, would become epic heroes, the valiant figures of epic songs that exemplify Serbian defiance toward outside domination. Since then, Serbia has enchained itself in a pattern of

unwanted dependency that began with the Turks and would continue well into the Twentieth century. During the Balkans wars of 1913, Serbia, now part of the first Yugoslavia (known at the time as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes), found itself economically reliant upon a major European power, Germany, in an unbalanced liaison that would prove to be dangerous.

As World War II developed, Yugoslavia was still riding the economic coattails of the Germans, now under the direction of Hitler and the Nazi regime. Not wishing to enter into the war, the Yugoslav government's official policy was a complacent one meant to "pursue a policy of good and friendly relations with Germany and Italy and that it will energetically resist being drawn into the present conflict" (Halasz 127). However, by 1941, Hitler had surrounded Yugoslavia. Encircled by Nazi and Fascist forces, Yugoslavia was left with no alternative but to submit to the overwhelming attack. However, like the Ottoman oppression, the Serbs did not surrender without significant resistance.

The unwelcome Nazi occupation was met with a new epic Yugoslav hero of the twentieth century, Josip Broz Tito, leader of the Partisan guerilla movement, and a character with whom the protagonist of *Landscape*, Svilar/Razin, would align himself. Tito's Partisan troops recaptured Belgrade in 1944. By spring of the following year, Yugoslavia was reconstructed once again under Tito's communist ideologies. But what remained after World War II, the Nazi invasion, not to mention the civil war caused by animosities between the six major nations that make up Yugoslavia, was described by historian Nicholas Halasz as a "Yugoslavia reborn in pain and blood" (110). According to a study performed by the U.S. Department of Foreign Area Studies of the people of the war torn nation, one in ten had perished in the war and one in four were left homeless (Nyrop 36). Though some economic growth was experienced in the 1950s and '60s, by the 1980s, Yugoslavia was one of the most heavily indebted states of Europe. The nation's relative poverty

is reflected in the lack of success experienced by the communist architect Svilar prior to his identity reversal into an American capitalist in *Landscape*.

More recently, unrest in the Balkans became international headline news as Slobodan Milosevic, president of the Socialist Party of Serbia, used brutal tactics to suppress the Kosovo Liberation Army and the Albanian minority living in Serbia to retain control in multiparty elections and overpower any political opposition. Dividing views toward what was perceived as a Serbian-biased political system sent the divided federation into bitter war. Four of the six states of the federation seceded, leaving only Serbia and Montenegro in the third Yugoslavia, a federation for the most part operative only in name.

As Pavi suggested in his observation, Yugoslavs, Serbs specifically, quickly forget the cost in blood and destruction of conflicts past before entering into yet another war fighting outside nations and even other Balkan states. So what can be done for a “nation deprived of memory?” For the answer to this question, Pavi and other writers of his generation have turned to the oral tradition, as expressed in an interview Pavi’s gave to Thanassis Lallas:

I am always trying to act as an ancient epic poet. To act the way Homer did...to me the best literature is oral. My teachers were the oral literature of the Balkans and the Byzantine church orators (Lallas 138).

Oral literature, the primary method of communicating folk stories during periods of illiteracy, such as those in Serbian history, can be thought of as expressions of cultural memory composed in symbols. Using elements of the epic tradition, folk tale, magical realism, historical allusions and its claim to tell the truth, *Landscape Painted with Tea* is Pavi’s means of reintroducing forgotten or neglected memories back into the Serbian psyche through a

postmodernist approach. Pavi's novel then functions as a validating force for culture. As folklorist Zora Zimmerman attests, the oral tradition is the spine of a culture, without which it becomes shapeless and immoveable (81). And when the social identity of a group, such as the Serbs, is threatened, it becomes much more important to maintain, validate, and preserve existent patterns. At times when fear of being culturally destroyed arises, folklore becomes instrumental in efforts to unify the group.

Consistent with Serbian traditional songs, Pavi's tales are interdependent of one another. Each story is only one scene in a continuous drama. The pattern stabilizes each individual narrative as well as the Serbian oral tradition itself. Certainly influenced by past traditions of storytelling, even so, *Landscape* remains undeniably postmodern in both its approach and its structure.

A novel in two parts, *Landscape Painted With Tea* begins with "A Little Night Novel," the story of an acclaimed but unsuccessful Belgrade architect whose designs exist on paper alone and his epic quest to the ancient Holy Mountain, or Mount Athos, in Greece in search of his father, an officer who was last seen in the mountain's Chilandar monastery during World War II and was consequently never heard from again. As the modern Odyssey continues, the novel transforms as abruptly as our architect does in Book Two, "A Novel for Crossword Fans." Using the playful structure of a crossword puzzle, the reader can read "across" or "down" with each same-numbered chapter corresponding to one of six ongoing storylines. Dispersed between the narratives in both books are various magical folktales that touch upon the dualistic elements of identity—the solidarities and the solitaires, the body and the soul, and the hunter and the hunted among others, that all trace back to the original dissent from the tree of knowledge that bears the "double fruit" depicted at the start of the novel.

Pavi explains his innovative approach in “The Beginning and the End of Reading—The Beginning and the End of the Novel,” which poses the question: must the novel have a beginning and an end? For Pavi, the answer is an emphatic “no.” Describing literature as a “nonreversible art,” that is, one that contains a strictly linear path moving from start to finish, he works to make literature into a reversible art that “enable the recipient to approach the work from various sides, or even to go around it and have a good look at it, changing the spot of the perspective, and the direction of his looking at it according to his own preference” (142). Pavi’s novels, *Landscape Painted with Tea* being no exception, have no beginning or end in order to rescue the novel and our way of reading, both of which Pavi declares to be in crisis. Indeed, Pavi describes art, or more appropriately, his art, as “a bird with long legs, standing in the gutter. It must move continuously in order not to sink. If art stops moving, even for a moment, it will drown” (Lallas 132). In other words, if the novel settles into an unchanging state of predictable comfort, then it will mean the death of the novel as art. Then Pavi’s duty, as an artist, is to ensure the perpetual motion necessary to sustain art, his art—the novel—in a way that still explores the consequences of deprived memory and lost identity. Just as the bird of art drowns without movement, so will identity if not preserved through cultural memories.

By employing a crossword structure that can be read according to the reader’s preference, the reader’s control is initially emphasized and he or she becomes included in the role of “the compilers of this book.” Pavi, explicitly wishing to enliven the roles of the author and the reader as well as the novel itself, attentively created *Landscape* in the form of an engaging mystery game. Rather than the traditionally passive reader, Pavi’s demands on the attentions of the “gifted” reader are extraordinary relative to more standard-formatted novels.

In taking on the role of the gifted reader, we become a character both within and outside of the text that exists in a limbo state described by critic Jasmina Mihajovi (also Pavi's wife) as one "whose contours are in the tones of a watercolor with the tints of tea and therefore not as easily discernible as in a photograph" (191). We are never allowed to simply sit back and lose ourselves in the narrative. Instead, we must actively unravel the intrigue in constant search of the expected solution to the puzzle. As Giuliana Perco notes, "Pavi's novels do not simply indicate a clear path in this new way of reading intertwined with that leading to a new way of writing, but they make us aware that on this path the author, far from being dead, nevertheless still needs a reader capable of engaging in the games the text confronts him or her with, a reader who could walk along that same path to prove that the novel is not dead either" (70).

As a complex game, the structure of *Landscape* has two distinct levels of difficulty. Level one is presented in "A Little Night Novel." Here the reader's ability to make the necessary connection between the present narrative of architect Svilar and the other which began two thousand years earlier, when Man parted into two tribes after tasting the "double fruit", is tested to see whether he or she is qualified to go on. Level two, "A Novel for Crossword Fans," is significantly more difficult than Book One. Along with multiple stories, subplots, folktales, and direct communication to the reader in addition to the central plot, we are cautioned that some stories are expendable while others are critical to the makeup of the novel. But exactly which stories are unimportant remain less clear. The narrator warns that the novel will easily come undone if the wrong story is thrown out; therefore we must not assume that any story is necessarily expendable. Accepting Pavi's challenge, we push our way through the intricate crossword and look toward the author, the builder of the crossword, for guidance and follow the path he has set up for us.

Evaluating the two methods of reading for his readers, the narrator clearly promotes reading “down,” the more challenging and avant-garde path, while reading “across” is equated with the choice of a passive, solitary reader who “opts for the old way of reading, for the one-way street, the reader who is determined to slide toward death by the shortest route without putting up a fight” (188). Although “down” is unconventional according to the narrator, it is in fact the more conventional of the two because the six “crossed” plot lines are separated and can be followed individually rather than following the confounding “across” method’s non-ordered chapters. Aside from the appeal of going against the grain, the narrator hints that those reading down, unlike those reading across, will be offered the clues to decipher the denouement of the novel. For the readers whose curiosity have been building since the conclusion-less Book One, “down” will appear to be the correct choice for those in search of appeasement.

In addition to more or less choosing the direction of our reading, we the readers, or rather our sex, determines the fate of the story’s heroine, Vitacha. While trying to foretell the future in a pan of water as her great-great-grandmother Yolanta had done, Vitacha sees us, the reader. If the reader is male, she will die by the hand of Razin’s servant. But if the reader is female, her life will be spared. However, when the readers come upon the solution, it quickly becomes apparent that both kind of readers have been fooled, no doubt to the writer’s great amusement. The solution, printed upside down on the last page like the solution of a crossword puzzle, reads:

(Then Vitacha Razin caught the full moon in the bucket and leaned over to see what face would appear in the water. And in the water she and her companion saw you, who are reading these lines and thinking as you sit at your desk or in your armchair that you are completely safe and out of the game; you, who are

holding this book upside down and gripping your pencil as a mother does a spoon or a murderer a knife.)

Just as the tool of a mother is a spoon and a murderer, his knife, the reader uses a pencil to solve this crossword puzzle outside the novel while simultaneously acting as Vitacha's companion within the novel. Here, the life-giving powers of woman are emphasized. It is the female sex, as the mothers who perpetuates the human race and as the nurturers who care for sons and daughters alike, who offer salvation for Vitacha and protection from the male murderer and his knife. But whether or not the readers followed the narrator's urging to read down has little or no impact on the denouement because the solution is dependent upon sex, not the direction of reading. Pavi's advice to the writer in *Dictionary of the Khazars* reveals his method of teasing and coaxing to toy with the readers present in *Landscape*:

As for you, the writer, never forget the following: the reader is like a circus horse which has to be taught that it will be rewarded with a lump of sugar every time it acquits itself well. If that sugar is withheld, it will not perform. As for essayists and critics, they are like cuckolded husbands: always the last to find out (15).

Like the circus horse, the reader has been asked to perform in order to reach the author's elusive solution, the sugar cube, at the conclusion. Meanwhile Pavi, as the author, maintains a privileged position equivalent to that of an animal trainer. But the unexpected nature of the reward is no reward at all, as it seems to work almost outside the novel. Indeed, essayists and critics, namely Hardin and Perco, have been frustrated by the bewildering upside down solution, which resolves nothing outside of Vitacha's fate. As readers,

whether we arrived at the solution horizontally or vertically is irrelevant. If the reader believed in the fabricated control first offered by the less than trustworthy narrator, that control is now illusory while being replaced by another:

The reader has entered the text, yes. He or she is responsible for Vitacha's life or death, and his or her presence does change the outcome of the novel, but such a responsibility clearly has nothing to do with the reader's individual choices, while his or her tentative steps in the fictional territory are firmly revealed as having been all along led by the author on a path from which no reader can truly deviate (Perco 66).

The solution does not offer closure and the entire game has been a joke played on the gullible reader who has followed the path directly set by the misleading narrator. What's more, it is entirely possible that the solution has nothing to do with this particular puzzle. As the narrator warns, "the solution of a crossword never lies in the crossword itself; that, as is known, is given separately, 'in the next issue'" (188). In this light, perhaps the "denouement" is in actuality the logical solution to last issue's crossword, a novel already finished or perhaps yet to be born, one that precedes the book we are now holding upside down, trying to make sense of the promised prize for our careful reading as "gifted" readers. Thus, as suggested, the solution to *Landscape* will appear in the next issue.

Though the choice of reading styles may not impact the solution or change the exact content of the novel, it does establish the fate of the main character, our wandering architect. What has been overlooked is that the two directional approaches to the novel do indeed differ in the order in which the chapters are read, bearing tremendous change upon what becomes of Svilar/

Razin. The across reader concludes with “2 Down,” and the phrase “The reader cannot be so stupid as not to remember what happened next to Atanas Svilar, who, for a time, was called Razin” (338). Meanwhile the down reader arrives at “6 Down” as the last chapter whose last line reads, “I ran into the church” (277). Though his reversal of identities remains consistent in both approaches, the fate of Atanas Svilar/Razin is determined by the selection of the reading approach. Now Atanas Razin, president of ABC Pharmaceuticals in Book Two, seeks to buy the souls of future generations, in short, purchase the future. Unless intercepted, humanity’s future will be bought like any common commercial product, giving the unknowingly corrupt Razin control over what is yet to come. Read horizontally, the character meets with his death in the form of a baby and will perish because his death proceeds in a reverse timeline ending at infancy. But read vertically, Azeredo, Svilar/Razin’s death at age seven, has intercepted in time and Svilar/Razin runs into the church, desperate for the window of salvation that is quickly closing with the accumulation of his mistakes. As a result, the reader, without prior warning from the narrator, decides what becomes of the central character as well as Vitacha through the path chosen in addition to the reader’s gender.

In terms of the central plot, we soon learn in Book Two that Major Kosta Svilar is not even Atanas’s real father. For a man who creates “buildings without shadows,” exudes a pungently heavy “Greek” sweat, licks his spectacles, and pours wine into water rather than water into wine, Svilar’s search for his father is in reality a displacement of an internal search for masculine power seemingly missing in himself. Actual genealogy matters little; it is the strong male figure he craves, which consequently results in identification with the Yugoslav political hero Josip Broz Tito:

Atanas Razin is a man without a father and without children,
without a past or future, without an identity. Deeply aware, in

fact that he has not succeeded either as Svilar or as Razin, that he is unfulfilled, crucified, false, and sterile, he decides to make his life meaningful in the present by identifying himself with something that will bring back his lost authenticity...through identification and imitation, decides to extend his life and a specific period of time that costs him the loss and renunciation of his individuality (Mihajlovi 196).

Razin replicates himself after Tito, who easily substitutes for his father, at the cost of his own true identity. Like Tito, Major Svilar, considered a war hero, presented a strong military figure well-liked by everyone. But rather than returning home to praise and adulation following World War II, he makes a romantically mysterious exit, disappearing into the warm melting landscape of the Aegean Sea. Through his later tea paintings of landscapes on notebooks containing the residences of Tito, Svilar unconsciously connects his mythicized father to the Partisan war hero. After all, his carbon copy plans of Tito's homes are never political bases, but exotic vacation residences instead that are always near water reminiscent of Mount Athos's languid surroundings. Also, bringing the past into the present through the paintings, the careful attention to detail through which they are created focuses awareness to what is outside of the picture, outside of the past and present, that is, prophesizing the kind of future that results from a bloody past.

Architect Atanas Svilar's search for Major Kosta Svilar leads him to the peninsula of Mount Athos in Greece, known as the Holy Mountain for it is the site of several Byzantine Orthodox monasteries. Founded on the credo of allegiance to one's native land, Chilandar is the sole Serbian monastery on the Greek mountain, an appropriate destination for the pitiful Svilar's pursuit of a commanding identity. Not only the last place to observe the Major before his disappearance, Chilandar is also fittingly accepted as the home of Serbian

cultural heritage. According to historian Dimitrije Bogdanovi, Chilandar represents the Serbian cultural identity overcoming foreign influences. In the Turkish period especially, all Serbs looked to Chilandar as indestructible evidence of their former free life, their state, their church and culture (135).

The numerous Chilandar manuscripts written in Old Serbian and in Greek, Byzantine frescos, and architecture within the monastery, preserved despite occupation by the Turks, the Greeks, the Fascists, and the Nazis, open up a new window into the Serbian identity. The Chilandrian monks are thus the custodians of the Serbian heritage responsible for the revival of traditional values among the Serbs. To this day, visitors see the monastery as their fold to which they feel the need to return. Chilandrian monks openly greet visitors to the Holy Mountain with the words “Welcome brethren! ... Welcome HOME!” (Bogdanovi 7).

But despite his journey climbing up the Holy Mountain, Svilar returns from Athos with little more than the unsatisfying realization that he is an idiorrhymic, a solitary. Following the fruitless quest, Svilar constructs an identity reversal for himself through the rejection of his name, his homeland, and associations to his solitary existence. In hopes of finding the professional success that had escaped him, he suppresses his idiorrhymic nature to take on the life of a cenobite. Openly announcing the shift, architect Svilar changes his name, his native tongue, and his home. The new Atanas Razin does find the success he was lacking as Atanas Svilar, not as an architect, but as a retailer of biologically destructive chemicals in the U.S. Razin attains the status of a major American capitalist and the nickname “Mr. Two Percent” because that is how much of the world’s income he possesses from the sale of nuclear equipment.

His new business corresponds with the internal change that would transform the dowdy architect into an exploitive fiend. Undeniably, resorting to chemistry, the study of constituent elements, is the external expression of

the abandonment of his true identity through disguise; that is, the manipulation of his own original chemistry into a new form:

Chemistry is often very close to modern alchemy which attempts to create a new man – a degenerate. Atanas Razin, in full strength and with a fair number of years to his age, as well as with the sum of one billion dollars, instead of healing people, concludes one of his deals of the century by selling anti-foliage poisons to the American army for its wartime operations in Asia (Mihajovi 193).

In light of the Chernobyl disaster that occurred just two years before *Landscape* was published, his product is one that robs the well being of future generations who must indeterminately endure its punishing consequences. Indeed, the account of Major Polavich, who unknowingly and unconsciously kills his own daughters, resonates of the inadvertent damage one generation encumbers onto the next, clearly illustrating Pavi's message of the exploitation of innocent souls who pay for the mistakes of the father.

Unlike the more similar than divergent groups that descended from those living in silence and those living in quiet who first dissented from each other and the tree of knowledge bearing the double fruit, the transformation from the idiorrhhythmic Svilar to the cenobitic Razin is a striking difference as if between polar rivals though both versions contain the feeble failure intrinsic in the original. As an architect, Svilar is an impotent creator. He conceptualizes numerous ideas, but can create nothing of substance. And with a pathetic echo of Christ's miracle of turning water into wine, Svilar adds wine to water to make a diluted solution of no great potency. At the other end of the spectrum, Razin, as a pharmaceuticals tycoon first becomes a false God identified with wealth and then a false Satan in his contributions toward

human and organic devastation. He shamelessly exploits those living in the present with the facilitation of deadly substances. He also uses his immense fortune to buy pieces of land on which to build his replicas of Tito's residences. The land as well as the slowly acquired international chair collection is a progressive means of gaining power over space. But money and property are not enough, he must also exploit future generations to come and exert control over time too by attempting to buy the souls of Olga, Azra, and Cecelia's great-great-great grandchildren. In a devious impersonation of Chichikov from Gogol's *Dead Souls*, Razin seeks to possess souls yet to be born, what he calls the "white bees." Drawing from the careless complacency of the World War II generation who yielded to the Nazi invasion, and to a degree even the present generation responsible for the horrific nuclear accident in Chernobyl, Cecilia sarcastically yet purposefully uncovers Razin's extreme plan:

Besides the old way of man's exploitation by man, or the exploitation of one class by another, a far more practical solution now presents itself: the exploitation of one generation by another. Those who won the last war fully exploited you, their sons, and those who lost that war were later exploited by their sons...But this method is behind the times. Much more expedient for exploitation are future, still-unborn generations, those that have not yet found a soul on the street, those that have yet to have their fill of years, unborn little souls that are not yet subject to any legal regulations, that cannot defend themselves, not even by spitting on someone's eye...The objective is to exploit and obtain their living space as well, to possess, drink, and breathe even now their land, water, and air...And everybody knows what goes with water, land, and air. The grave... (267-9).

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Here, Pavi makes the claim that war, a hurried mistake made in the present, does not take into account its future consequences. Just as Razin's generation paid for the actions of their fathers in lost childhood, he will now perpetuate the misuse of those "more expedient for exploitation." Consistent with the political and historical undertones within the reasoning behind Razin's undertaking, the three sisters then symbolize the religious-cultural-spiritual, ideological, and economic spheres of the Balkans where the homeland can just as easily sell out man as man has done with his destruction of the homeland (Mihajlovi 195). It is a destruction that exceeds mere economic devastation, an X number of lives, or even trampled borders; war is the ultimate culmination of all such forces that leaves the future vulnerable to the predatory opportunist. Much like the invasion of the Turks from the East and the Nazis from the West, war's role in the lives of Serbs is one that enshrouds time.

Just as Cecilia foreshadowed, Razin's sinister plan does bring him face to face with the grave, more specifically, his death. In the ultimate reversal, it is Satan reborn who intercepts Razin to save the human race from ruin to preserve the former archangel's last tie to God in man. Here, Pavi critiques the abandonment of Razin's former Svilar identity since Satan himself treasures his ties to him former Nathaniel identity as Razin should treasure his solitary Svilar self:

It is through Atanas Svilar, alias Razin, who tries by means of disguise to alter all his identities and thereby lose all identity, that we are shown the ostensible result of alienation from one's own nature, from nature in general, and from the cosmically ordained order (Mihajlovi 192).

Azeredo, the innocent-looking yet demonic manifestation of Razin's death as well as the descendant of Satan, is ironically the successful savior in both directional approaches. Read vertically, the seven-year-old Azeredo reveals the catastrophic mistake Razin is making by attempting to purchase human souls. Horrified, Razin runs repentantly into the church, presumably to save himself before it is too late. Read horizontally, Azeredo appears as a baby signaling Razin's death because in the backward flow of time the savior/Satan/child exists in, infancy is the last stage rather than the first. Akin to the narrator's claim that the horizontal "across" reading is the direction for those taking the shortest route to death, Razin's false, and therefore, wrong identity takes him on the shortest route toward his death: Azeredo. The displacement of identity leads to the displacement of values, and ultimately, to personal destruction.

Aside from Satan, woman is also granted powers to save humanity. Already endowed with the capability to perpetuate life and thus the future generations, she is another possible foil to Razin's slow takeover. The death of the "childless woman," for example, Vitacha's murdered young daughters, is exponentially more appalling than the death of a "childless woman" for it is "the extinction of an entire human milkline" (255). And, as the solution indicates, the female reader shall leave Vitacha with a nurturing spoon in her mouth rather than a brutal death with a knife in her back.

Women characters are also the first to pick up on the backward flow of time that signals the cosmic mistakes and imminent death to come. As Amalia Pfister observed, "What in October seems to us like March is really January" (141). Vitacha, as her descendent, has eyes that also reflect the hourglass turned upside down as images of Taurus turn to Gemini, and then suddenly revert backward to Aquarius. Furthermore, Vitacha, the heroine, is given the opportunity to find release from the identity dysphoria in the novel by

attempting to escape outside the novel through reader. Mihajlovi points out that, etymologically, her name can be connected to words meaning eyesight (*vid*) or healer (*vidar*), thus explaining why it is she who can “see” the reader (201). In a strange mirroring, the presumed male reader becomes a voyeur watching himself in intimate relations with Vitacha. She sees us both inside and outside of the novel just as we do. To join us, the readers, outside the novel is one “solution” to escaping the perpetual cycle of exploitation made extreme by Razin.

But the transformation from Svilar to Razin would not be his last. In a bizarre turn of events, Razin temporarily takes on the physical form of his deceased sister in law, Vida Knopf. The falsity of his identity has manifested itself in an anatomically radical manner. Figuratively castrated in his inability to build as Svilar and childlessness as Razin, he is now quite literally castrated. By imitating Tito, he has only served to displace himself further from the masculine power he seeks. Just as Serbia has forgotten its former identity as the nation of epic heroes such as St. Marko, Prince Lazar, or Joseph Broz Tito, Razin has lost his ties to Svilar. However, the loss is not complete. His idiorrhhythmic personality, though suppressed, is still present throughout the Razin period as indicated by Pavi’s continued reference to the chemicals magnate Razin as “architect Razin.” Thus, unable to permanently deny his other, original self, the solidary returns to being the solitary satisfying the cosmic balance of the dualistic fruit of the tree of knowledge. After all, “he who cures himself of himself shall be undone” (346). Mihajlovi notes that the upside down world of historical and perverted reality act as a mirroring of the world we live in (203). By calling attention to the imbalance of the world, Pavi, through his moving art, hopes to realign man, and more specifically Serbia, to the harmony that once was.

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