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Kunapipi

Volume 31 | Issue 2 Article 13

2009

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Recommended Citation
Foley, Suzanne, 'I Am a Lie': Connections between identity and narrative in Tracks and Season of Migration to the North, *Kunapipi*, 31(2), 2009.
Available at:http://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi/vol31/iss2/13

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Abstract
Tayeb Salih’s novel, Season of Migration to the North (1969), depicts the life of Mustafa Sa’eed through the medium of an anonymous narrator who is intrigued Mustafa’s enigmatic nature. The narrator and Mustafa initially encounter one another in the narrator’s native village in the Sudan. He has just returned from school in England, and Mustafa had arrived in the village during his absence. What begins as an antagonistic relationship between Mustafa and the narrator evolves into a profound understanding of one another. Both men were raised in Africa and educated in England, and both men were forced to construct fictional identities that were contingent upon the beliefs and expectations of the people around them. Mustafa incites the narrator’s interest in him when he begins reciting British poetry during a party in the Sudan, but the narrator does not immediately acknowledge their connection.

This journal article is available in Kunapipi: http://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi/vol31/iss2/13

SUZANNE FOLEY

‘I Am a Lie’: Connections between Identity and Narrative in *Tracks* and *Season of Migration to the North*

Tayeb Salih’s novel, *Season of Migration to the North* (1969), depicts the life of Mustafa Sa’eed through the medium of an anonymous narrator who is intrigued Mustafa’s enigmatic nature. The narrator and Mustafa initially encounter one another in the narrator’s native village in the Sudan. He has just returned from school in England, and Mustafa had arrived in the village during his absence. What begins as an antagonistic relationship between Mustafa and the narrator evolves into a profound understanding of one another. Both men were raised in Africa and educated in England, and both men were forced to construct fictional identities that were contingent upon the beliefs and expectations of the people around them. Mustafa incites the narrator’s interest in him when he begins reciting British poetry during a party in the Sudan, but the narrator does not immediately acknowledge their connection. He is quietly suspicious of Mustafa for some time, and when he finally develops a relationship with the man, it is a posthumous one. Mustafa dies early in the novel, and the narrator pieces together the details of his life through Egyptian, British, and Sudanese sources who knew him (or, more accurately, who knew the mythology of self that Mustafa constructed for them).

It becomes apparent that Mustafa played a fictional role for his acquaintances in each setting, and those personas fulfilled the stereotypical expectations that people held about him. In order to seduce women in England, Mustafa played on their assumptions about the exoticism of the ‘Orient’; and in order to ingratiate himself with Sudanese villagers, he adopted the persona of a humble farmer.

Neither of these identities was a fabrication, rather, they were both isolated components of his overarching hybrid identity. In order to function in a monolithic space, he needed to suppress the contradictory elements of his cultural identity and create the illusion of singularity. In the Sudan, he was African. In England, he was British enough to understand how African people wanted him to be without crossing into the treacherous territory of ‘otherness’. Mustafa figured out who everyone else was before he determined which character to become. He did reveal his inherent multiplicity to the narrator, though.

When Mustafa is perceived outside of a stifling cultural context, his complexity becomes apparent. The narrator finds himself identifying with Mustafa’s complexity, and he realises that he can see through Mustafa’s illusions because they parallel his own. The narrator also navigates the ambiguous spaces between

the Sudan and England, and he also consciously suppresses elements of himself when he is surrounded by people who would fear those elements as alien to their closed ideological universe. The narrator provides the necessary bicultural lens through which the reader may view the multi-faceted nature of Mustafa; and by scrutinizing Mustafa's nuances, the narrator confronts the multi-faceted nature of himself.

Salih presents the complications of being multicultural in one solid culture, and he suggests that a new hybrid culture is mobilised in the gaps between its stationary shaping agents. The difficulty surfaces when that new culture asks its makers to acknowledge it on its own terms. If the existing culture is confined within its own system of knowledge and perception, then how can it understand that which permeates those walls? How does one culture make sense of something that adopts a familiar form and beckons in a familiar language, yet resides in the obscurity of otherness?

That question yields dismal results for Pauline in Louise Erdrich's 1988 novel, *Tracks*, which details the conflict between a Chippewa tribe and the encroaching white American society in the early twentieth century. The solidarity of the tribe is unravelling due to external and internal factors, and one of those factors is Pauline (or Sister Leopolda). Pauline, a woman of mixed Indian and European descent, co-narrates this story with Nanapush, who is one of the elders of the Chippewa tribe. She despises her ambiguous heritage and tries to force herself into a singular Christian mould. Pauline acts as a divisive figure in the tribe, and most of her narration is tainted by gloom and her increasing insanity. She struggles to claim a distinct identity in the murky space of cultural convergence, and in doing so, she sabotages members of the Chippewa tribe and clings to a perversion of Christian ideology in order to give herself a clear label. Pauline needs to make sense in assimilated white society, so she fears (and actively destroys) the Chippewa components of her identity. Erdrich's thematic focus reflects that of Salih: how does one find internal harmony between colonising culture and colonised culture when those cultures battle for dominance in one's external surroundings?

In the space of cultural collision, hybridity is the interstice between fixed cultures. To be hybrid is more complicated than just to be composed of a cultural binary or cultural multiplicity; ideally, hybridity should enable mediation between the cultures that shape one's identity, and it should become a space that elicits cultural exchange. Hybridity is a condition that can literally be described as split, but to function in this space one must become multiple, adaptive, and fluid in order to negotiate between all parts. Robert Young writes:

> it involves processes of interaction that create new social spaces to which new meanings are given. These relations enable the articulation of experiences of change in societies splintered by modernity, and they facilitate consequent demands for social transformation. (79)

The space of hybridity is perceived as a gap between recognisable cultures. Distinct definitions are broken down and boundaries are blurred here, so it becomes incomprehensible to those who function within a singular cultural definition — it is often misconstrued as an absence or a realm of confusion that must be overlooked or revised. Constructing an identity that embraces one's immersion in the space of hybridity is problematic due to the ambiguous nature of this space, and translating that identity to either side of the gulf — or gulfs — it straddles is also a concern.

In *Season of Migration to the North* and *Tracks*, two characters use storytelling to fabricate new identities which seem to fit neatly into one side of the binary that each struggles with. But in the process of narrating an artificial self into a singular cultural context, Mustafa and Pauline exclude the remaining components of their inherent cultural duplicity. Pauline refuses to identify with her Chippewa community and forcibly internalises a Christian ideology, while Mustafa composes two separate identities (one for Western company, one for Sudanese), both of which are constructed to appease his audience. In England, he embodies the over-exoticised Western paradigm of Orientalism, whereas in the Sudan, he transforms into a prototypical member of the village in which he resides. In this revision of self through narrative, the actual hybrid self is lost and all that remains is the story that the self has become.

Because both Pauline and Mustafa's identities are constructed in narrative, they have wholly transformed themselves into fictions. What may appear to be a revision (or translation) of hybrid self has realistically become a story about hybridity — revealing the ambiguous, untranslatable, alien and inescapable nature of hybrid space and identity.

Mustafa and Pauline dually function as stories and storytellers — Pauline confirms the destructive aspect of hybrid space, but Mustafa suggests a potentially positive alternative in both the contents and format of his narrative. According to Jennifer Sergi,

> [w]ithout stories there would be no articulation of experience: people would be unable to understand and celebrate the experiences of self, community, and world. And so cultures value the tellers of stories. The storyteller takes what he or she tells from experience — his or her own or that reported by others — and in turn makes it the experience of those who are listening to the tale. (279–83)

So if the ideal outcome of a story is to connect with the listener, then it seems that Mustafa is more likely to be socially valued and carried into posterity than Pauline. His confinement to and death within ambiguity is an undesirable fate for an individual, but his narrative opens up the realm of hybridity as a recognisable presence. He narrates himself into lies in England and the Sudan, but as the narrator of *Season of Migration to the North* collects the fragments of Mustafa's life to compile a meta-narrative, he illuminates the space of hybridity as one that can be occupied. Mustafa's narrative connects with the anonymous narrator and

will carry on as a vessel that articulates the experience of those who are learning to see with more than just 'one eye' or speak with more than 'one tongue' (150).

On the other hand, Pauline has narrated herself away from all possible connections; she has convinced herself that her revised identity is a genuine transformation of self. Since she is not conscious of her containment in narrative form, she becomes a story that functions only to validate itself rather than articulate an experience to unite a community. Pauline falls short of the necessary connection between narrative and listener, and in fact, she has no human audience — her intended listener is God.

While Mustafa is the initial constructor of his fictions, and therefore the original storyteller, he is not the only medium by which the narrator comes to understand the tale of hybridity that Mustafa constructs. The narrator connects fragments of Mustafa's lies as they are relayed by the other Sudanese villagers: Hosna Bint Mahmoud, the Mamur on the train ('we nicknamed him "The Black Englishman"' [53]), the college lecturer, and Mrs Robinson. Because the narrative is not limited to one teller, Mustafa as a story is multiple and somewhat fractured, so his tale enacts hybridity in its structure and its mode of mediation between speaker and listener; it must be perceived with more than 'one eye', it is spoken with more than 'one tongue', and its truth lies in the spaces that are neither 'black or white' nor 'Eastern or Western' (151).

In the narrative condition that Mustafa embodies, the construction of fiction is a potential healing agent of a fragmented or dispossessed community. In this case, the community exists in the overlooked space of hybridity, a space in which the anonymous narrator is an isolated occupant. He struggles with his identity, unsure of how to balance his internal conflict of Sudanese and Western cultures. In seeking out the story of Mustafa, the narrator is looking for a description of himself, and when he understands that Mustafa's narrative originates from that same ambiguous space between cultures, the narrator is forced to deal with his own hybridity. Salih does not offer a solid conclusion to the narrator's realisation, but one certainty is that the story of Mustafa has forged a connection with its listener, and that connection could be the premise of a new community of hybridity once the narrator chooses to continue the story-telling chain that has begun.

The story that the narrator comes to pursue is not the tale that is explicitly narrated by Mustafa or by the random acquaintances of Mustafa who he meets throughout the novel, but instead, the narrator constructs the actual tale through the absences in those narrative accounts. This mode of story-telling is a revision of the traditional oral style — instead of gathering fragments from what is spoken and passing them along, he gathers the unspoken truth from the spoken lies and strings the absences together to form a noticeable presence. The unspoken truth is hybridity — it is the reality of Mustafa's oscillation between two cultures that both resisted his efforts at leaving 'a mark' (54). The unspoken truth encapsulates what Homi Bhabha is referring to when he writes:

> The anxiety of the irresolvable borderline culture of hybridity that articulates its problems of identification and its diasporic aesthetic in an uncanny disjunctive temporality that is at once the *time* of cultural displacement and the space of the untranslatable. (Bhabha qtd in Young 25)

Mustafa's narrative speaks from the space of the untranslatable, paradoxically illuminating it through the gaps in his translated lies. The narrator is in a unique position of understanding the untranslatable on its own terms, and he constructs his own narrative that will similarly resist translation. By continuing the narrative chain in this irresolvable space, the narrator and Mustafa assert hybridity as a new presence — one that requires a revision of the reader's mode of perception rather than a revision of the hybrid identity to fit his/her fixed perceptions.

At a drinking session in the Sudan, the narrator first notices that discrepancy in the space between Mustafa's fiction and the actual story: '…his eyes gave me the impression of wandering in far-away horizons' (14). There is something that cannot be said, that cannot be translated from hybridity into this most recently devised identity, and the narrator begins to sense this inexplicable connection. Then the connection between story and listener is solidified with Mustafa's next action: 'I heard him reciting English poetry in a clear voice with an impeccable English accent. It was a poem which I later found in an anthology of poetry about the First World War' (14). The narrator is alerted to the gaps in the narrative of self that Mustafa has constructed, and his curious response is due to his identification with the narrative manifesting itself in those gaps. When he confronts Mustafa and asks him to admit what he is, Mustafa does not blatantly tells him who he is, but he simply allows the narrator to listen to the lies and piece together the story of Mustafa by hearing everything that Mustafa is not.

In this revised mode of story-telling (where the actual narrative is embedded in the easily overlooked interstices between fabrications of cultural identities), hybridity also transforms into a presence that must be acknowledged. If the story connects with the experience of its listeners, then the listeners are located in those same interstices. Lack of translatability ceases to function solely as an agent of alienation, and it becomes a potential agent by which a new kind of cultural community is galvanised.

Towards the end of the novel, the narrator does not need to listen to any more of Mustafa's tale that forces itself into either side of the East/West binary because he has fully located the story of Mustafa and himself in the liminal sphere between them — the space of mediation between the two cultures. He leaves Mustafa's hidden room and says of the British aspect of his narrative: 'I left him talking and went out. I did not let him complete the story' (166). The surface story of translated identities had come together to signify the real narrative that it was not — hybridity — and the narrator of *Season of Migration to the North* is left in a position to deal with this fully acknowledged hybrid space as a presence, albeit an incomplete one.

Patricia Geesey discusses Mustafa as a model of hybridity, and in doing so, she points out another instance where he begins to draw the narrator into a chasm between dominant cultures and narratives. She writes:

> The next day, the narrator encounters Mustafa digging up the ground around a tree. After greeting the narrator, Sa'eed indicates the tree at hand: 'Some branches of this tree produce lemons, others oranges' (Salih 15). Attempting to provoke him, the narrator responds, 'What an extraordinary thing!' (15) in English, but the remarkable tree is really of no interest to him. The narrator, for all his longing to resemble the solid and ageless palm tree of his family's home, would do well to examine the very real 'extraordinariness' of that lemon-orange tree. (132)

Mustafa is implicitly centralising the hybrid space of perception by presenting the grafted lemon-orange tree. Geesey reads this tree as a symbol of the positive possibilities of hybridity because it embodies the potential for equilibrium between two differing forces in one grafted body. As the product of grafting a lemon tree and orange tree, this new species has successfully become something original, multiple, and fruitful. This tree can be understood as a botanical analogy for functioning hybridity; it goes beyond simply containing a duality, it has allowed for the interaction between lemon and orange to create something new.

The novel ends with the point of origin of the narrator's tale — the words 'Help! Help!' (169). These words are the reader's portal to his revised thread of oral tradition. Trapped in a geographical recreation of hybrid space in the middle of the Nile, the narrator is 'half-way between north and south … unable to continue, unable to return … conscious of the river's destructive forces pulling (him) downwards and of the current pushing (him) to the southern shore' (168).

His position is that of a drowning man, and he must continue the story-telling chain in order to make sense of this dangerous, chaotic region by making it habitable for the reader's perception. Mustafa's narrative has thrust the narrator into a realisation of his own cultural location as a hybrid subject but alone he is unable to continue to survive in this space. He opens up his story with a plea for acknowledgment, forcing his listeners to scrutinise the gaps mediating between definable presences (literally the waters swirling between current systems and shorelines). Saree Makdisi concludes her analysis of the novel by saying: 'While Mustafa Sa'eed's story is dedicated to a reader who could not possibly exist, *Season of Migration to the North* is dedicated to readers who do not yet exist: those who can simultaneously see with two eyes, talk with two tongues, and see things both as black and as white' (820). Mustafa's narrative passively outlines the role of that ideal reader and opens a space for the potential to eventually manifest itself in the actual. The anonymous narrator takes his story one step further: he is desperately calling the reader into action and enticing him to dive into that space to carry on the narrative chain for which Mustafa laid the groundwork.

In her discussion of the social implications of story-telling, Sheila Hughes argues:

> The authority of any speaker-in any discourse across power lines of race, class, culture, or gender lies not so much in his or her essentialised identity, but in the relational ties such speech draws upon, sustains, and seeks to create: the kind of community such rhetoric relies upon and (re) produces'. (88)

Mustafa is both the speaker and subject of this community-forging rhetoric that Hughes outlines here. He alerts the narrator to his position in a previously unknown community, and as the narrative chain extends outward from the narrator to his listeners and so on, this community will potentially continue to strengthen.

Pauline, the narrator of *Tracks*, is also a construction of fiction, but she does not provide the same degree of value to her listeners. She narrates herself away from community and into an isolated sphere of delusion and Westernisation. She even directs her narrative away from human readership. Hughes writes: '[t]here is no identifiable audience for her story, auditory or otherwise, and wherever dialogical voices enter her text, she struggles to control and judge them' (6). There is no dialogue provided in Pauline's narrative (between speaker and listener or between story and community), she is a force that needs to contain all that it encounters (including the self) within the confines of her fiction. Pauline excludes possibilities of multiplicity, and the reality that her story is ridden with hybridity-exposing gaps is purely accidental on her part.

Mustafa's presentation of hybridity is intentional — he is fully conscious of his obligation as the creator of a fiction, and he deliberately speaks with more than one tongue, juxtaposing his lies against one another to call attention to the overshadowed truth. He never deludes himself into believing that he has revised an independently functioning self — he exists for his listeners. Pauline does not operate with this same awareness. She perceives no distinction between artifice and authenticity, so she fully believes that her lies have woven a new reality, one in which fiction transformed her old self into a new one, rather than simply transforming it into a narrative. Nanapush, Pauline's co-narrator is a wholly different kind of story-teller because he remains in the role of story-teller and trickster, the one who manipulates the stories while avoiding containment within them. He says of Pauline:

> Pauline was the only trace of those who died and scattered. She was different from the Puyats I remembered, who were always an uncertain people, shy, never leaders in our dances and cures. She was, to my mind, an unknown mixture of ingredients, like pale bannock that sagged or hardened. We never knew what to call her, or where she fit or how to think when she was around. So we tried to ignore her, and that worked as long as she was quiet. But she was different once her mouth opened and she started to wag her tongue. She was worse than a Nanapush, in fact. For while I was careful with my known facts, she was given to improving truth. Because she was unnoticeable, homely if it must be said, Pauline schemed to gain attention by telling odd tales that created damage… That is all to say that the only people who believed Pauline's stories were the ones who loved the dirt. (39)

This description of Pauline reveals a few details about her character before it becomes a Christianised fiction. She begins in the space of hybridity, confusing Indians and transparent to the white people in Argus (she admits to her invisibility in the minds of whites by saying 'I never rinsed through the white girls' thoughts [15] and later she discusses her status as an absence, a shadow, or as an unseen seer). Pauline considers it impossible to establish an identity when she does not belong to any single culture or compartmentalised space that provides neat labels for its occupants, so she attempts to escape hybridity by fully immersing herself in a single culture and abandoning the other. But her account of breaking free from this space paradoxically reveals just how embedded she is in it. Failing to actually revise the self, she undergoes a transformation into fiction and narrates a self that is definable, recognisable, and void of any overt multiplicity. From the beginning, her narrative function is almost antithetical to Mustafa's: his lies provide for subtle revelation to his listener while hers are an instrument of concealment.

While Pauline claims to consist of one myopic vision — Christianity — she has gaps in her narrative that depict hybridity, as well. The gaps manifest themselves in the discrepancy between the ideology she wants to embrace and the lens of Chippewa belief and mythology through which she perceives this Western ideology. When she follows Fleur — the pillar of strength in the Chippewa community — to the Chippewa afterlife, she describes the motives of the card players: 'They play for drunkenness, or sorrow, or loss of mind. They play for ease, they play for penitence, and sometimes, for living souls' (160). The concept of this afterlife as something that does not fit into the Christian dichotomy of heaven / hell is in direct contrast to the beliefs that she is forcefully internalising. It reveals a continued, almost unquestioned, belief in Chippewa culture and mythology despite her attempted abandonment of it. She uses the word 'penitence' as something that is being gambled for here; penitence usually connotes divine forgiveness in Catholicism, so Pauline is witnessing a space removed from Christian mythology, yet familiar in design to her, and she uses newly acquired Christian terminology to describe its contents. There is an overlapping of cultures in this moment resulting in a momentary exposure of the location of Pauline's narrative in a hybrid interstice. Despite her attempt to detach herself from both Chippewa culture and the ambiguity of her hybrid cultural makeup, she, like Mustafa, is telling a story of hybridity.

But her version of hybridity is distorted into something destructive, a space where cultures and mythologies merge to form something monstrous and unnatural. If Mustafa's narrative asks the reader to make sense of the new space he/she is encountering, Pauline's narrative asserts that the reader must beware of it. For her, hybridity becomes a battleground that promises to dissipate once a single voice emerges as the victor. While Mustafa's depiction of hybridity demands its viewers step outside their preconceived notions of power structures and hierarchical categorisation, Pauline fears a breakdown into a polyphonic

equality. The loss of a power hierarchy implies the loss of a system of external identification, and since she seeks to define herself exclusively by her inclusion in white, Christian society, she is terrified by a space that would render that identity equal to any other.

Towards the end of the novel, Pauline is trying to finalise her induction into the Christian world, and her narrative fuses Christian iconography with Chippewa, skewing the meanings with which figures and symbols such as Satan, Jesus, the desert, or Misshepeshu were initially invested. She says:

> The mystery of what I saw was some diversion. He crept in one night dressed in a peddler's ripped garments with a pack on his back full of forks, scissors, and paper packets of sharp needles. He tried them all out upon my flesh. 'Are you the Christ?' I screamed at least. 'I am the light of the world', he laughed. I thought of Lucifer … I heard air rushing beneath his wide-stretched wings. 'We'll meet in the desert', he shouted … I had to wonder. Which master had given me these words to decipher? I must hate one, the other adore. (193)

Hybridity becomes a space of confusion, where concrete meaning dissolves into chaos. Since what Pauline seeks is a master who will validate her identity by association, this space is something that must be overcome. Satan, the Christian divine (Jesus or God), and Misshepeshu intertwine in the form of her visitor, and neither she nor the reader of *Tracks* is entirely sure how to decipher this moment. The vision she is having exemplifies the idea of poly-vocality and multiplicity that Mustafa ultimately endorses, but to Pauline, it takes on a nightmarish quality:

> The desert was all around me and I knew which god was which. Christ had turned His face from me for other reasons than my insignificance. Christ had hidden out of frailty, overcome by the glitter of copper scales, appalled at the creature's unwinding length and luxury. New devils require new gods. (195)

Pauline places this moment into the context of a Christian mythological binary: one is either aligned with God or the devil. If there is no definitive saviour, master, or enemy in the situation, then she must assign those roles to the ambiguous figures she has to work with. Jesus is absent, so she must fill that role (a 'new god'), and this indeterminable figure must by default be a 'new devil'. While she takes pride in her ability to enter this space where the singular figures of Christianity cannot function, her ultimate goal is to erase the lines of fragmentation that she is composed of and become singular, as well. She connotes singularity with wholeness.

> It was I with the cunning of serpents, I with the skill to win forgiveness. I was cleft down the middle by my sin of those days in Argus, scored like a lightning-struck tree. Deep inside, that crooked black vein, charcoal sweet, was ready to dissolve. If I did not forsake Jesus in his extremity, then he would have no other choice but to make me whole. (195)

This concept of becoming whole involves being re-mythologised into Christianity, and this affects her narrative status, as well. To enter Christianity

completely, she must turn her fiction away from the Chippewa and hybrid communities and contain it within Western tradition. Hughes finds a parallel between Pauline's narrative and 'the Indian autobiographical genre'. Both subordinate 'the Indian voice' and allow its experiences to be reshaped and re-spoken by a white editorial presence in order to fit the expectations of the white reader. 'The Indian element' is essentially extracted from Indian autobiography. She writes:

> Arnold Krupat explains that such texts were not technically authored but were instigated by, inscribed in collaboration with, and published under the editorial supervision of 'some white' (Indian Autobiography 262). In this case, the mixed-blood and bicultural Pauline is herself that 'white' and 'Indian who is [the text's] subject'… She is simultaneously writing a white life for herself. (7)

In 'writing a white life for herself' Pauline has allowed Christianity to literally colonise the Chippewa within her. She may never escape the space of hybridity, but she can silence the components of her identity that are cumbersome to her goal of absolute Westernisation. Pauline is incapable of the cultural exchange necessary for managing a hybrid identity, so the fictitious self that she narrates eliminates the possibilities of negotiation between cultures and allows her intrinsic multiplicity to be swallowed up by the delusion of singularity. She has abandoned hybridity and all of its possibilities of fluidity and cultural interaction.

The oral story-telling tradition has been shattered here. Pauline actually severs the narrative chain, whereas Mustafa, by contrast, reinvented it. Her tale is not being spoken in the context of the oral story-telling community; instead, it seems to take on the form of a confession, if not directed at God, then at another member of white, Christian society. She says:

> I am now sanctified, recovered, and about to be married here at the church in our diocese and by our bishop. I will be the bride and Christ will take me as wife, without death. For I was caused by my sisters' most tender ministrations to regain my sense, to wash in the name of my Divine Husband, to eat His provender and drink His Blood, so brutally spilled. (224)

When her narrative concludes, she is about to take her vows. She has just been renamed and she seems to be confessing before she is officially transformed into Sister Leopolda. Whether or not this is God receiving her formal confession, it is someone associated with the church, a person to whom she must justify the history behind her arrival in this place. Instead of passing this story of Chippewa history on to the inheritors of the culture, or of hybrid culture, she discards it to the forces that helped destroy those cultures.

Whether or not her narrative can be termed a formal confession, it still takes on the characteristics of the confessional format. Confessions do not share narratives' concern with posterity and community; they are isolated accounts that are told under the premise of being sinful or wrong. The act of confessing implies participation in an ideology that unequivocally determines what is right and

wrong, and it can be assumed that the listener also functions within that ideology. Pauline's confession is another vessel through which she forces her duality into the Christian right/wrong binary. In describing the path she took to joining the convent and taking her vows (presumably the actions that would be 'right') she must also detail her Chippewa identity ('sinful').

Framing cultural multiplicity in this irrelevant binary serves to detach the two worlds from each other. If hybridity is the fluid space between cultures, then it would be suffocated by the imposition of inflexible binaries. As E Shelley Reid writes: '[i]t is not, then, the multiplicity of perspectives or the cultural fragmentation itself that is destructive, but an inability to mediate the differences' (82). Mustafa does mediate the differences in his own way, but Pauline fears her disappearance into untranslatability in the liminal spaces, so she confines herself in a single lie. In doing so, she confirms the theory that the irresolvable of hybridity is ultimately destructive. While she has re-mythologised herself into Christian culture, she has distorted the basic tenets of that culture. She is isolated in her own insane universe that is a kaleidoscopic fusion of Christianity, Chippewa culture, and individual delusion. Her confinement within her own alienated space of distortion is due primarily to her frustration at the reality of her untranslatability.

Narratives build up communities by establishing a shared point of origin and connecting chains of dialogue as part of a continued cultural construction. Stories are a community's mythology, and narrative dialogue allows mythology to encompass the new stories that stem from the old. But when a mythology becomes myopic and operates on a principle of exclusion, then the evolved, hybrid person (who cannot recognise the pre-existing narrative as one that he or she can fully identify with) loses his or her position within a single community. This fractured identity resists a connection with the solidified wholeness of a singular mythology. This condition produces Bhabha's accurate description of hybridity as 'irresolvable'. One must either find a way to eschew pre-existing conceptions of solvability and embrace a hybrid identity, or one can spend a lifetime clinging to the delusion of having discovered a method of translatability.

Mustafa and Pauline were both faced with this problem, but Mustafa authored a new mythology — one composed of fragments. This mythology will facilitate the ideal dialogic connections between members of its poly-vocal community, because fragments will not form a closed structure. This space of hybridity that Mustafa calls forth with his mythological groundwork will still be irresolvable, but also inclusive, fluid, and adaptive.

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