

**“For We Are Neither One Thing Nor The Other”:  
Passing for Croat in Vedrana Rudan’s *Night***

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Croatian and Serbian Victims of the War in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Referring to the mixed-race Afro-Caribbean protagonist of Michelle Cliff’s *No Telephone to Heaven*, the title quote describes those whose external attributes allow them to mask a hybridized identity by choosing to pass for the dominant group. But this often results in a double-consciousness heightened by guilt and self-hatred, as Fanon makes clear in *Black Skin, White Mask*. Cliff’s words may not at first seem applicable to Tonka Babić, the Croat-Serb protagonist of Vedrana Rudan’s *Night*, who inhabits the “racially homogeneous” former Yugoslavia. But if no “racial” difference marks the inhabitants of Bosnia and Croatia, centuries of rule by rival imperial powers shaped three distinct ethnicities, Croats, Serbs, and Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims), whose divisions hardened in the wake of Enlightenment and Romantic nationalism. This paper argues that Tonka, neither Croat nor Serb, mirroring the racialized violence of her constituent ethnicities, dons Fanon’s mask when she opts to pass for Croat, thereby suffering the psychic trauma Fanon diagnosed as the problem of “the colonized.”

Let us first consider how the West essentialized and racialized Balkan ethnicities. Enlightenment travel narratives commonly figured Eastern Europe as Oriental, irrational, and barbaric, its people dark and degenerate.<sup>1</sup> Yet while historically and geographically

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<sup>1</sup> A number of recent texts have explored this phenomenon. See for example Bozidar Jezernik, *Wild Europe: The Balkans in the Gaze of Western Travelers* (London: Saqi Press, 2003), Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), and Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern*

peripheral to the West, Eastern Europe proved vital to its legitimating ideology. For this trope of the West's internal opposite, like the *topos* of Europe's external other, Africa, enhanced Western claims to civilization and reason. To escape the sting of Western stereotypes, the West of Eastern Europe named itself Mitteleuropa, Central Europe, thereby gaining distance from the Balkans, the "true threshold to the Orient," replete with barbarism, tribalism and ancient hatreds.<sup>2</sup> Internalizing Balkanist stereotypes, moreover,<sup>3</sup> the Balkans themselves scorned their easternmost parts.<sup>4</sup> Thus within Yugoslavia, Eastern Orthodox Serbs believed themselves the last proud Christian warriors in the land of the infidel Turk, while Westernized Catholic Croats projected onto Serbs the worst aspects of Eastern civilization.

Balkanism remains the essential discourse by which the West represents the region.<sup>5</sup> Thus contemporary Western scholars apply the pejorative term "Balkanization"

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*Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

<sup>2</sup> "Ancient hatreds" became the West's explanation, a kind of mantra, for both the Bosnian War and the Kosovo Crisis, particularly given President Clinton's interest in Robert Kaplan's *Balkan Ghosts* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), which famously advanced that concept. But Bosnian Serb Aleksandar Hemon's volume of interconnected stories, *The Question of Bruno* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), lampooned this Western view throughout "Blind Josef Pronek and Dead Souls," the novella at its center, and most Balkan historians argue that those events stemmed from a far more modern phenomenon: the rise of Romantic nationalism in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. As Milica Bakic-Hayden suggests in "Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of the Former Yugoslavia" [*Slavic Review*, Vo. 54, No. 4 (Winter, 1995), pp. 917-931]:

Thus, the explanatory slogan 'ancient hatreds' of the south Slavic peoples, so often referred to in the Western media, is but a rhetorical screen obscuring the modernity of conflict based on contested notions of state, nation, national identity and sovereignty. (929)

Moving beyond even this notion, V. P. Gagnon argues in *The Myth of Ethnic War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004) that the conflicts grew principally not from ethno-nationalist ideologies but from post-communist political elites who sought to maintain hegemony over existing power structures. He also suggests the need to examine why the West clings to this theory: "We need to look at what it tells us about ourselves that the myth of ancient ethnic hatreds continues to hold such a strong sway over our imaginations" (188).

<sup>3</sup> In this regard, consider Maria Todorova's introduction to *Imagining The Balkans*:

A specter is haunting Western culture – the specter of the Balkans. . . . Where is the adversarial group that has not been decried as "Balkan" and "balkanizing" by its opponents? Where the accused have not hurled back the branding reproach of "balkanism"? (3)

<sup>4</sup> So, for example, echoing Wolff and Todorova, Bakic Hayden suggests that the West regards Asia as more "other" than eastern Europe, that "within eastern Europe itself this gradation is reproduced with the Balkans perceived as most "eastern," and that "within the Balkans there are similarly constructed hierarchies" (918).

<sup>5</sup> For further discussion of Balkanist discourse, see Maria Todorova and Bakic-Hayden, as well as Miglena Todorova, in "Imagining 'In-Between' Peoples across the Atlantic," *Journal of Historical Sociology*, Vol. 19, No. 4, (Dec. 2006), pp. 397-418. Bakic-Hayden and Miglena Todorova juxtapose this discourse to Edward Said's Orientalism, while Maria Todorova critiques both Said's construct and its application to

to geopolitical situations wherein strong centers break into rival parts. Balkanist language, moreover, reveals clear racial overtones, as when the Immigration Restrictive League urged severe limits on Balkan immigrants “or else the American ‘race’ would be committing suicide” (126),<sup>6</sup> while American opposition to Balkan “half niggers,”<sup>7</sup> “our temporary Negroes”<sup>8</sup> and “dark whites”<sup>9</sup> from “savage Europe” led to the new immigration laws of 1917 and 1924.<sup>10</sup>

To understand the specific context for Rudan’s novel, we must now track how these internalized constructs marked Croatia’s history. Beginning in 1804, Serb revolts against their Muslim overlords inspired Croats chaffing under German and Hungarian rule. In the 1840’s Croat intellectuals formed the Illyrian movement, coined the term Yugoslavia – Land of the South Slavs, and aspired to South Slavic unity. But some within the group sought an independent Croatia, and by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the dominant strain of Croatian nationalism vilified Serbs as a “race of slaves, beasts worse than any.”<sup>11</sup> Serb nationalists, meanwhile, proudly served Pan-Slavism, holding that all “south Slavs” were originally Serbs, while Serb hegemony in the post-World War I Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes reversed their subaltern status in the region, further alienating nationalist Croats. Thus, once Yugoslavia fell to Axis forces in 1941, the ultra-nationalist Ustasha movement established the Nazi-backed independent state of Croatia, the NDH, as a nation of Western-oriented, pure Catholic Croats.

Racist elements permeated Ustasha propaganda. Article 11 of the *Ustasha Principles* held that “in the state and national work of the independent state of Croatia no one can make decisions who is not a member of the Croatian nation by ancestry and blood.”<sup>12</sup> Yet when Germany gave Bosnia to Croatia, home to large numbers of Muslims and Serbs, Croats became a minority in their own state. To regain supremacy, the

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balkanism. But Miglena Todorova also links balkanism to Homi Bhabha’s discussion of colonialist discourse, particularly with regard to stereotypes and mimicry (see especially pages 409-413).

<sup>6</sup> Maria Todorova, *Imagining*, 126.

<sup>7</sup> Miglena Todorova, “In-Between Peoples,” 399.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 412.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 408.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 413.

<sup>11</sup> Jonathan Gumz, “German Counterinsurgency Policy in Independent Croatia, 1941-1944,” *Historian*, Vol. 61, Issue I (Fall 1998, pp. 33 – 51), 34.

<sup>12</sup> Tomislav Dulić, *Utopias of Nation: Local Mass Killing in Bosnia and Hercegovina, 1941-42* (Uppsala, Sweden: Studia Historica Upsaliensia, 2005), 85.

Ustasha hailed Muslims as the “blood of our blood” and distanced themselves racially from Slavic Serbs by claiming descent from the Goths. If DuBois named the “color line” the problem of the 20<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>13</sup> Milan Budak, Ustasha Minister of Culture, called the Drina River “the border between the East and the West.”<sup>14</sup> And if America’s problem was the Negro, Germany’s the Jew, Croatia’s was the Serb, its “final solution” genocide. To this end, Croat and Muslim Ustashe murdered perhaps 400,000 Serbs, expelled some 200,000 more into German-occupied Serbia, and forcibly converted 140,000<sup>15</sup> others until Tito’s Partisans ended their dream.

To achieve the estimable goal of “brotherhood and unity,”<sup>16</sup> Tito suppressed this history and the ethno-nationalist aspirations of Croats, Serbs, and Muslims.<sup>17</sup> But after his death, power-hungry leaders manipulated ethnic myth and memory to resurrect them.<sup>18</sup> Croats again claimed non-Slavic origins, and in 1990 Germany became the first

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<sup>13</sup> W.E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, in *Three Negro Classics*, intro. by John Hope Franklin (New York: Avon Books, 1965), 209.

<sup>14</sup> Dulić, 85.

<sup>15</sup> Serbs and Croats have generated radically disparate figures for the Ustasha campaign and have fiercely contested each other’s findings. Thus, these numbers have become potent symbols for Croats, Muslims, and Serbs. But scholarly consensus holds that we will never know the true figures, in part because so many perpetrators worked to destroy the evidence, in part because so many of the events took place spontaneously and without the rigorous record keeping that marked the Nazi administered Holocaust. The approximations given reflect those of more neutral sources, including the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, which has recently reduced its estimate from 500,000 to 400,000. For an overview of the Ustasha genocide against Serbs, see Michele Frucht Levy, “‘The Last Bullet for the Last Serb’: The Ustasha Genocide against Serbs: 1941-1945,” *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 37, No. 6 (November 2009), pp. 807-837.

<sup>16</sup> This Titoist mantra emerged from Tito’s belief that the unification of South Slavs was vital. He stated: “Without the leading role of the KPJ (Communist Party of Yugoslavia), we would today have no new Yugoslavia . . . nor can one imagine the realization of brotherhood and unity of our peoples” [Politički izvještaj, 128-120, qtd. in Ivo Banac, “Historiography of the Countries of Eastern Europe: Yugoslavia, *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 97, No. 4 (October 1992), pp. 1084-1104), 1087.

<sup>17</sup> Thus, for example, as Vesna Petic asserts in “Serbian Nationalism and The Origins of the Yugoslav Crisis” (*Peaceworks*, April 1996, No. 8, United States Institute of Peace <<http://www.usip.org/resources/serbian-nationalism-and-origins-yugoslav-crisis>>):

The scale of the massacres in the NDH (Free Independent Croatia – the name for the Ustasha puppet state of Croatia, which included Bosnia and Hercegovina) and other mass executions would not allow their examination in the atmosphere of “national reconciliation” that followed the war. Such a possibility was further denied by communist ideology, which rejected attempts to define the problems of ethnic war in “national” terms. (3)

Indeed, the concentration camp Jacenovac, notorious for the particularly grisly nature of its one-on-one tortures and murders, has come to symbolize the frustration of Jewish and especially Serb victims. Designated as an official memorial for all Yugoslav war victims, it thus buried the enormity of Serb suffering there and throughout the chain of concentration and holding camps in the NDH.

<sup>18</sup> For an in-depth exploration of this phenomenon, see David Bruce MacDonald, *Balkan Holocausts? Serbian and Croatian Victim-Centered Propaganda and The War in Yugoslavia* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002). An interesting article by Mart Bax, “Mass Graves, Stagnating Identification, and

Western state to recognize, and thereby validate, secessionist Croatia. Its new constitution proclaimed Croatia “the national state of the Croat people,” labeled Serbs a “constituent minority,”<sup>19</sup> banned the Cyrillic alphabet from official use, renamed streets and towns with Serbian or Yugoslav links, and granted Tudjman extraordinary powers, including total control over the media, shortly after which he duly denounced and dismissed mixed Serb-Croat journalists as “enemies of Croatia.”<sup>20</sup>

Multi-ethnic Bosnia’s own claim to independence then led Serb nationalists to stoke the fears of Croat and Bosnian Serbs who recalled the Ustasha genocide. The ensuing war featured ghastly Serb atrocities, Muslim-Croat retaliations against Serbs and attacks on one another, and the US-backed expulsion of 200,000 Serb civilians from Croatian borderlands.<sup>21</sup> Against this canvas of Western scorn<sup>22</sup> and indigenous ethnic strife, Vedrana Rudan exposes Tonka’s psychic wounds, common to all hybrids who, neither one thing nor the other, forsake one “root” to embrace the dominant culture.

The plotless novel records Tonka’s night-long rant, the dialogic monologue<sup>23</sup> of a subaltern<sup>24</sup> marginalized by, yet internalizing, the West. The Prologue begins, “Tonka,

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Violence: A Case Study in the Local Sources of ‘The War’ in Bosnia Hercegovina” [*Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 70, No. 1 (Jan., 1997, pp. 11-19)], examines one such situation in Medjugorje. Kerstin Nyström’s “The Holocaust and Croatian National Identity: An Uneasy Relationship” (in Klas-Göran Karlsson and Ulf Zander, eds., *The Holocaust on Post-War Battlefields: Genocide as Historical Culture*, Sekel BokFörlag, 2006) explores the manipulation of memory by Croats and Serbs. Finally, in “Dismembering Yugoslavia: Nationalist Ideologies and the Symbolic Revival of Genocide” [*American Ethnologist*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (May, 1994, pp. 367-390)], Bette Denich introduces her discussion by recalling the play “The Pigeon Cave,” banned by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia after its performance in Serbia during the early 1980’s. The play focused on a limestone cavern, called the pigeon cave, which held the remains of villagers massacred during World War II. Her abstract reads: “The ‘forgotten’ burial sites of massacre victims provided a powerful reservoir of traumatic memory, subject to manipulation on the part of all who seized the ‘disjunctive moment’ to reconstitute the state according to nationalist definitions” (367). Note that her position need not refute Gagnon’s view that Bosnia was not an ethnic war. Rather, it suggests how ethno-nationalism might be used to empower one group over another.

<sup>19</sup> Marcus Tanner, *Croatia: A Nation Forged in War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 230.

<sup>20</sup> MacDonald, *Balkan Holocausts?*, 101.

<sup>21</sup> Indeed, Operation Storm was the single largest expulsion of people in Europe since World War II.

<sup>22</sup> Influenced by Balkanist discourse, the Croatian diaspora, and such events as Medjugorje, which planted Croatia firmly within Western Christian mythology, the West readily sided with Tudjman’s Croatia; Germany became the first state to recognize, and thereby validate, its independence. Indeed, Tudjman hired a Washington public relations firm to enhance Croatia’s image in the West, and, it appears, successfully.

<sup>23</sup> Tonka’s first-person narrative recalls the confessions of Dostoevsky’s *Underground Man*, which exemplified for Bakhtin “extreme and acute dialogization,” without “a single monologically firm, undissociated word.” As with the *Underground Man*, about whom Bakhtin observes, “To speak for him means to address someone,” so Tonka’s “*ich Erzählung*” addresses the “they” referred to in the passage below. See M. M. Bakhtin, “The hero’s monologic discourse and narrational discourse in Dostoevsky’s

you have to explain to someone outside it all who *you* are and who *they* are.” The italicized “you” and “they,” meanwhile, and the imperious tone of Tonka’s assimilated self, underscore her doubled identity. When that *über*-voice reiterates, “And who are *they*?” Tonka replies, “They’re all around me. . . . In the room with me. In the air of the room. . . . They hear me, I hear them.”<sup>25</sup> Recalling DuBois’ double consciousness, “this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (215), Tonka’s *they* and *you*, one voice patronizing and smug, the other angry and defensive, both reflect her cultural medium and inhabit her.

Indeed, Tonka’s creation myth embodies her doubled identity. Though her Tito-loving mother never told her details of the single act by which Živko Babić, a visiting Serb party higher-up, impregnated her, Tonka imagines the scene as a site of ritualized sexual violence inflicted by the barbaric Serb male upon the civilized Croat female: “The comrade throws my mother onto the bed. He takes off her underwear that Auntie Milka made for her. . . . The comrade spreads my mother’s legs and squirts me into her” (19). Tonka assigns Živko stereotypical Serbian attributes, “Tall. Dark. With a Mustache . . . that mustached master,”<sup>26</sup> and in the phrase “squirts me into her” identifies herself with the tainted foreign sperm that defiles her mother’s body. Revealing both her self-hatred and the degree to which Western images of Serbs have colonized her mind, her fantasy recalls Fanon’s assertion:

Every colonized people – in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality – finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above

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short novels,” in *Bakhtinian Thought: An Introductory Reader*, Simon Dentith ed. (London, England: Routledge, 1995), pps. 184 and 194.)

<sup>24</sup> Reflecting in its usage Gramsci, Spivak, and Bhabha, the term “subaltern” applies here to both Tonka’s class status within Croatia and her status as a “Balkanite” within Europe

<sup>25</sup> Vedrana Rudan, trans. Celia Hawkesworth, *Night* (Normal and London: Dalkey Archive Press, 2004), 1. Hereafter page citations will appear parenthetically.

<sup>26</sup> With regard particularly to the physical attributes of the stereotype, see Maya Miskovic’s “Fierce Mustache, Muddy Chaos, and Nothing Much Else: Two Cinematic Images of the Balkans” (*Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (2006, pp. 440-459). Miskovic examines the archetype of the villainous Serb in two post-Bosnian War and Kosovo Crisis American films.

his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle.<sup>27</sup>

Indeed, Tonka's civilizing "mother country," Croatia, in 1941 and 1990 banned the Cyrillic alphabet and the Croatian Serbian, Shtokavian, dialect. And as Tonka embraces her mother's culture, she sheds her Balkan identity, becoming more Croatian as she renounces Serbianness, her jungle.

To clarify her dilemma, Tonka invokes the black-white paradigm:

Black men are black. . . . They can't go around passing themselves off as white people. They can't add 'from Korčula' and turn white. Get it? But, if you're a Serb in Croatia, it's far worse than being black because you can add 'Korčula' and deceive decent people. You may get away with it. You may not. Then you'll be screwed. But you'll be screwed even if you get away with it. Sooner or later. Because you've never fucking seen Korčula. (15)

While Tonka here dismisses visible racial difference as easier to handle than more subtle distinctions, her situation precisely parallels that faced by light-skinned blacks who conceal their African roots to pass for white. Her subsequent statement, "That's why blacks have it easier. You're black and who gives a shit? But this, white, but black. Screwed" (16), echoes Cliff's quote, for Tonka is Croat, but also Serb. Indeed, her Croat self repudiates Serbs who pass for Croat, as she does, and thus "deceive decent people," i.e. pure Croats. Such Croats claim descent from a group of early, unchristianized Serbs who settled the Adriatic island of Korčula, allied with Dalmatian Croats, and so constitute, despite Serb genes, *authentic* Croats.

But even while loathing the mask of "adding Korčula," Tonka fears that nationalists will see through her act: "It's a mess. I'm not a Serb. But I have to add 'Korcula.' I'm not a Serb! I would most like, right now, to get up and yell into the darkness: 'I'm NOT a Serb!' But who gives a shit? If they're Croats, they don't care . . . . If they do care, I'll never convince them" (16). Still her fragile psyche yearns

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<sup>27</sup> Frantz Fanon, trans. Charles Ian Markmann. *Black Skin, White Mask* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1967), 18.

acceptance. In line for a residence permit with “all those Muslims, Albanians, Bosnians, and Serbs who pretended to be Croats,” she thus curses her father for having engendered her: “Think whatever you like about me! I’m not a Serb! I’m not a Serb! I’m not a Serb! Fuck fucking Živko Babić” (34).

Desiring at least mental purity, Tonka wishes “being a Serb was not a state of mind but biology.” Yet her internal voices actively dismantle this notion: “You can’t prove Serbianness. . . . Of course you can bullshit all over the place that you are a Croat in your head, who’s stopping you, you can talk nonsense about breathing in Croatian . . . Bullshit! That’s not an argument. That’s interpretation” (159). She sees that no true escape exists from dual identity, as “Serbianness” contaminates both body and mind.

Growing ethnic tension in Yugoslavia, as well as Western support of Croatia and scorn of Serbs,<sup>28</sup> intensifies Tonka’s internal struggle:

I still can’t stand it when those guys from Europe come and start giving me shit about how all of this around us is happening just because I’m Živko’s daughter. I don’t like that. I don’t appreciate that. I don’t believe it. That my Živko was an animal. The only one on the planet. I think that we are all Živkos. (85)

“We are all Živkos” shows her awareness that she too embraces Western values. But she now sees that in blaming “her Živko,” she, Croatia and the West evade responsibility for their own barbarities: “I go nuts when I hear that we are the ‘Balkans.’ We are ‘wild! We aren’t the only ones who slit throats, rape and burn” (85). Tonka’s Serb self thus rebels against hypocritical Croats, Westerners, and her own internal Croat, who condemn Serbs as savage while relentlessly pursuing their own ends.

As escalating tensions further polarize ethnicities, Tonka’s split psyche absorbs the impact: “Suddenly I was Tonka, with no Mrs.” To Croat deployment of ethnic cleansing, she responds:

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<sup>28</sup> As MacDonald notes, “Tudjman’s party with its Western designed posters and slogans, appeared Western and progressive” (100). In fact, it appeared so not only to Croats but also to the West, whose image it sought to mirror and whose support it ultimately received.

But you're the majority and I'm the minority. . . . Our problem has been solved. 'Ours'! There, you see what you've done to me! I've become *us*. I've become *us*. *Our* problem. Why the fuck is it *our* problem. I'm me! Me! I'm me! Someone wrote with spray paint on the door of our apartment, 'get out of Croatia!' (37)

Reduced to just another Serb body contaminating Croat space, Tonka becomes increasingly vulnerable in a land where ethnic purity now rules.

Her mask unravels further as ethno-racial hatred and violence against Serbs escalate. She *must* hate her father: "You can't sit by with your arms folded while a Chetnik screws your mother. I can see that." Here she employs the pejorative term Chetnik, once applied to World War II Serb royalists, then revived by Croats and defiantly adopted by Serb paramilitaries in Bosnia, which signifies wild-eyed, hairy, bearded barbarians.<sup>29</sup> Yet she adds: "We can agree about that. Some of that. That's what all my friends think . . . Everyone has a right to his opinion" (85). Initially accepting the prevailing stereotype of Serbs, then gradually distancing herself from her "friends," Tonka here discloses both her need to pass for Croat and the pain of that closeted Serb self with which she has begun to identify.

These internal divisions lead Tonka to attempt suicide. In her Croat voice she suggests as reasons: "Your mother's a whore. Your father's called Živko and you live in Croatia. War. Poverty. . ." (60). But when pressed to consider her loved ones, she retorts: "Who am I living for? Who does my life belong to? My life! My life! What's mine if my life isn't mine" (61). Indeed, her life has been dictated by cultural constructs that pulled her in two. To paraphrase from DuBois, "torn asunder" by the "warring ideals within her,"<sup>30</sup> Tonka embodies the trope of the tragic mulatta.

But like James Weldon Johnson's ex-colored man, his precarious southern and African heritage submerged by his economically secure northern white existence, she

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<sup>29</sup> "Chetnik" originally referred to the Macedonian guerillas who assembled in bands of ten, *cheta*, to fight against the Ottoman Turks in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Serbs adopted the term for their own ethno-national struggles. In response to Ustasha massacres in Bosnia-Hercegovina in early 1941, Draža Mihailović organized a resistance that sought to reposition the Serb royal family at the helm of a unified Yugoslavia. While early in the war the West allied with his forces, later massacres and expedient political alliances earned his Chetniks a reputation not unlike that of the Ustasha.

<sup>30</sup> DuBois, *Souls*, 215.

deadens her inner pain with Western material goods that mask her class and ethnic origins:

I hate poor people. They make me sick. I always thought I'd be rich. We are in fact rich, in a way. When my Kiki sells five or six stolen suits, then we get two thousand German marks. A person with money feels different. When you wear a Paloma Picasso round your neck, Bruno Magli on your feet, when you're tucked into a Barberi chasmere . . . somehow you're a different person. (20-21)

“Different person” evokes someone successful, powerful, Western. Moreover, Tonka’s admission, “I’m happiest being what I’m not” (174), acknowledges that passing enables both escape from her conflicted identity and apparent assimilation into the mainstream.

Finally, *Night* resists closure. While Cliff’s Creole Clare finally embraces her African heritage and dies attempting to subvert the dominant power in Jamaica, Tonka resembles Johnson’s protagonist, whose last words famously affirm the cost paid for passing: “. . . I have sold my birthright for a mess of pottage.”<sup>31</sup> As she turns on the t.v. at dawn, Tonka’s own final statements slyly reinscribes her dual identity: “I’m crazy about documentaries. Maybe it’ll be hippopotamuses?! Animals full of themselves. Sure of themselves. Non-swimmers that spend their lives in the water. I turn on the sound” (211). Like the non-swimming mammals in their watery milieu, the half-Serb Tonka lives suspended in a still hostile Croatia, passing for Croat and letting the surface joys of Western materialism, akin to Johnson’s “mess of pottage,” soothe the pain of her split self.

Ultimately, the negative consequences of socially constructed ethnic and racial identities led Marx to embrace internationalism and Tito, following the tradition of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Illyrians, to try to shape a pan-Slavic identity that resisted essentializing ethnicity. But the thirst for power continues to trump idealism, and even now, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, politicians manipulate ethnic or racial history to stir emotion, just as capitalists manipulate symbols to stir desire. Let me note at last that most of my friends from the former Yugoslavia decline to label themselves according to their ethnic identities, having

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<sup>31</sup> James Weldon Johnson. *The Autobiography of An Ex-Colored Man*, in *Three Negro Classics*, 511.

long ago embraced Tito's ideal of brotherhood and unity over the more restrictive world of ethno-nationalism. Instead, even in its absence they remain proud citizens of Yugoslavia.

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