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## Major 20<sup>th</sup> Century Writers – A Scientific Theme Analysis

### **Introduction:**

As a research and development chemist, one of my many job functions is the structuring and fulfillment of quality by design studies. To create a generic version of a pharmaceutical that already exists out on the market I must prove that the two versions, my generic version and the innovator's, are identical in composition, structure, function, and many analytical facets including blood levels and dissolution rates. It is the most time consuming and scientific function in a job where I'm usually able to show my creative side and create innovative products. While the task is tedious, it has a very important use; by comparing each ingredient in a formulation with the others, it shows that no one ingredient is having a negative effect on the product's stability and function. When one excipient ingredient is added to another the drug may degrade or fail to complete its intended purpose—without a study like quality by design, these potentially hazardous conditions may not be caught until the product is far along its development path.

Executing quality by design studies has proven to me the value of having an investigative and analytical mind. Without realizing what I was doing while reading the novels to follow, I was setting up a quality by design study of themes throughout. It was a daunting task to try to envision a singular common theme among these works, one that I feel would lessen the value of these books and the value I took from them. As I read through each novel I accounted the themes within that I felt were important to me

and my reading. After the books were completed I wrote my theme down and compared them to the books I had previously finished. I also went back and added the last book, fresh in my mind, and compared it to another book's theme. What I saw through this study is that comparative analysis of books was enjoyable and that it gave the books I was reading more substance than if I limited each to a single theme. Now, instead of comparing, for example, eight books, I was comparing 64 books. This seemed even more daunting than finding a singular theme across those books, but as I went through my writing I found how fluidly everything went. The information and feedback I was getting from the authors, cultures, locations, ideas, and characters was so much more substantial that I feel it could have been otherwise.

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**Content:**

***Loss and Change of Power***

In *Feast of the Goat*, the major theme of loss of power is seen with Trujillo. His weakness of impotency eventually leads to his downfall. There is a transfer of power from him over to Urania, which is seen after the rape scene. This transfer of power from a male antagonist to a female protagonist isn't as drastic as in other novels, because Urania is still very weak at the end of the book. I would have expected her to grow and become more powerful, but her growth seemed to peak right after the rape she endured at the hands of Trujillo. She did show some strength and power by returning to the Dominican to address her father and see her family again, but her life was put on hold, almost a case of arrested development, after her rape—Trujillo was her only sexual experience as she focused on her work and stayed very inward and introverted as a

person through her life. In this, maybe both characters eventually felt a loss of power, but Urania got whatever little power Trujillo has left at the end of this life.

### *Lolita*

The power theme can be used as a comparison of Trujillo with Humbert Humbert. Their power comes from manipulation; both of them are capable of this. HH holds a power over women because of the romantic language he uses and his dapper manner. His power shifts to Lolita when her eventual kidnapper is tailing them. Humbert lets his paranoia get the better of him and she slips through his hands. He lets this loss eat at him for the following years until she reaches out to him, showing that she held complete control on their relationship and that she could reevaluate it whenever she wanted. When they meet later in life, she has all the power over him and he breaks down emotionally begging her to resume her life with him. This meeting eventually leads to his downfall and his prison sentence where his writing takes place.

### *The Lover*

It is less obvious who holds the power in *The Lover*. The lover himself may, but he is too timid and shy to really prove that he has power, unless power and money are the same. The main character has power over the lover, but she doesn't use this to any advantage other than to get money for her family. Her mother is narcissistic and takes her daughter's love without reciprocation, but is too faulty to have power—the rest of her family either dies or is sent away, like her older brother. In this way, the real power holder here might be the narrator, who has the power to look back through this story

and narrate it with an even, sympathy-free style. At the end of the book the lover gains some slight power, not the main character, when he decides to call her.

### *Love in the time of Cholera*

Fermina Daza holds most of the power here throughout the book, but it changes hands many times as the book progresses. She starts with the power in the relationship with Dr. Urbino as he is late in life before his death, but as the book travels back in time, the major power shifts; she starts with power in her relationship with Florentino Ariza, loses it, and then gains it back in the beginning of her relationship with Dr. Urbino. He takes the power from her as he becomes her husband, but when he starts becoming senile, she gains the power back late in life and keeps it as he dies. Towards the end of the book, power switches from Fermina back to Florentino as he enters her life again. In the end, most even sharing of power between two lovers than in any other book so far takes place and remains.

### *Museum of Innocence*

Similarly to Trujillo, Kemal starts with all the power, but it slowly starts to wane as the book progresses. With a beautiful fiancé, Kemal discovers his weakness for the first time, Füsün. Like in *Feast of the Goat* where Trujillo slowly becomes more and more impotent due to his prostate, Kemal becomes weaker and weaker as his relationship with Füsün progresses, eventually causing him to call off his wedding with Sibel and slip into a deep painful depression. When it seems that Kemal is about to turn it all around and finally restart his relationship with Füsün, his weakness almost

becomes his downfall, as Füsün tries to kill them both with a car accident. This scene can be compared to the rape scene in *Feast of the Goat*, where Trujillo tries to gain back his power by taking the virginity of Urania. This doesn't give him his great power and shows just how far he has fallen from power, breaking him down. The major difference here, however, is Kemal uses the power that objects bring him to continue to live a fulfilling life with the good memories of Füsün.

### *The Patience Stone*

Power has an extreme and drastic shift between the female lead and her husband. As the book progresses, she holds all the power over him as he lays comatose and in a vegetative state. She cares for him and essentially keeps him alive—she is his only source of power. As I was reading I originally thought all of her power would come from her confessions to her Syngue Sabour, but these confessions not only give her power to become more independent and tell her husband the truth about many aspects of their relationship, but they arguably wake him out of his sleep where the transition of power is completed—the brutal murder of his wife.

### *Prodigal Summer*

Prodigal summer shifts power from a human being to nature—the first time an outside source was given the most power through a book. The scene when Eddie Bondo leaves Deanna alone in her shelter during a torrential Kentucky storm proves that human life pales in comparison to the power of mother nature. Luckily, a stray bolt of lightning didn't decide to end Deanna's life that night and other than a few broken

windows in Lusa's farm, everyone was spared. Nature can be just as mean of a tyrant, just as cynical, and just as harsh as any main antagonist. Nature, in this case, decided to take it easy on the residents of Zebulon County.

### *The Namesake*

Power shifts often through the life of Gogol and his family. Power is taken away from his father in a terrifying train accident before Gogol is born, taken away from his mother when they move away from their home to Boston, and away from Gogol when his father decides to name him after his favorite writer—an uncommon name to say the least. The characters all build up their power, his father when he explains why he named his son Gogol, his mother once he dies and she needs to become self-reliant for the first time in her life, and Gogol countless times when his relationships fail and he must pick himself back up from his lowest points. In the end, although they fought it, Gogol and his sister realized that the most power and strength come from their family. They put their stock in them and learn that their heritage is just as important as how American they have become.

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### ***The Language of Love***

In *Lolita*, love is very poetic. Being a non-translated book, there is a lot of rhythm, sentence structure, assonance, sibilance, and other literary devices. On top of that, the story is recounted by a well-educated man who shuns bad language in favor for more whimsical and airy, poetic descriptions. The love he feels for Lolita is often translated into French, a romance language. The language of love for Lo isn't the same as HH, as

they often clash. It's this comparison of a European aristocrat and an American teenager that is so sharp in contrast—it could never have been.

### *Feast of the Goat*

Urania is very curt, sometimes satirical and sarcastic in her journey for consolidation with her family. When she does find the love she was looking for from them, she is very apologetic. I think the most important topic here is that she doesn't really have love, after being raped by Trujillo. Trujillo as a *lover* is very fierce, overbearing, and eventually breaks. His language of love would be cruelty and fear where Urania's may be sarcasm and pain.

### *The Lover*

Both the main female lead and the lover share the same language of love—melancholy. It is a shame neither of them look to hold more than a sexual relationship with each other as I think they both have much of what the other needs, especially because neither of them is getting it from outside sources. Her melancholy comes from her mother, the death of her father and brother, her poor relationship with the rest of her family as a whole, and his comes with not being able to share the love he feels for her. While the end of the book does show some hope, the majority of the love spoken through this novel is unrequited.

### *Love in the Time of Cholera*

Love here is the language of poetry, much like in *Lolita*, as Florentino writes it. He is a love-lost poet who even writes love poetry for star-crossed lovers who hire him. He is never able to write business-like memos as they turn into poetry. Letters do play a major role in this story and turn into another form of language and love. Fermina, on the other hand, is as curt as Urania, but lets her love be shown by actions instead of in poetry like that of Florentino. Dr. Urbino lets his love show by the way he speaks it, his greatest moment coming right before he dies when he says, “Only God knows how much I love you.” He, as a doctor, is much more scientific with his love, often saying that he wishes he could have two wives, one to mend his socks and one to love him. These three characters all have their own language of love, which when they work together, form lasting and meaningful relationships.

### *Museum of Innocence*

Love has a very different meaning in Turkey, where this story takes place. Sex before marriage is still very frowned upon and often ruins the character of the men and women who are involved in it. The main character, Kemal, has his own language of love, one that is wrought in affairs and lies. He does, however, have a very unique language with objects that doesn't seem to be shared with many other people in Turkey—his obsessions with objects allows him to gain love and personal feeling through them if they are attached, somehow, to Füsün. Füsün is a naïve little girl (at least in Kamal's eyes) whose language of love comes from movies and media.

### *The Patience Stone*



The main character's language of love is silence and eventually confessions. There is not much love between her and her husband, but the silence she keeps and the truth that she holds from him is more love than anyone can be expected to show for someone who doesn't care about a marriage and relationship. Her love for him takes a turn through the book as she starts to use him as an object, opening her up and releasing the truth and confessions she's been holding deeply inside. This is arguably the most loving thing he could have done for her through their relationship.

### *Prodigal Summer*

Moth love, coyote love, and the love of chestnuts, or other hard nuts to crack, is how love is communicated throughout Barbra Kingsolver's novel. Moths communicate their love through scents on the wind, much like how Lusa and Cole communicated it nonverbally before he was tragically killed in a car accident. Deanna and Eddie Bondo communicated their love like predators, one stalking the other, spending their summer reproducing, fighting, and eventually creating a child to extend their lifecycle as well as that of Nannie Rawley. Nannie and Garnett were most definitely tough nuts to crack, like Garnett's chestnuts, but eventually started to deal with one another, even going as far as to help each other and even care for each other. They are old, tired, and lonely, finding love amongst themselves and their farms until they decide to share it one last time. They have both lost, but gain more by the end of the story, not just with them, but with Deanna joining Nannie and Garnett's nephew and niece visiting him for the first time.

### *The Namesake*

Love is a very different language for Gogol when compared to his parents. His parents rarely show their love outwardly to each other, instead expressing it through familiarity and necessity. They were an arranged marriage and work together to create a life for each other that seems cold compared to other novels, but is just as meaningful. Gogol, on the other hand, expresses his love outwardly, like an American, instead of confined like his parents. He dates, he has sex, he loves, and he loses. He gets a divorce, something unheard of to his parents. If Gogol's language of love is English, his parents surely speak Bengali.

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### ***Love as a Photo-book, Memories, and Melancholy***

Throughout *The Lover*, it's as if the narrator is flipping through a photo-book of memories as they relate to the main character. These snapshots are often sad reminders to the past, but pave the way to painting this sad story of unrequited love.

#### *Feast of the Goat*

Much like in the lover, we see Uri traveling back to her past in the Dominican, not through a picture book, but in person. She needs to address what happened in her past and holds a level of pain with her because of what happened to her at the hands of Trujillo and also how her father treated her. In the end, we are left with a lot of pain, like in the end of *The Lover*.

#### *Lolita*

We are getting Humbert Humbert's retelling of his tale in story form, unlike in person from Uri or in photographic form from the narrator in *The Lover*. Because of this, language plays a deeper role in the book, not only because of HH's poetic and collegiate background, but because he paints his pictures with words, unlike with a photograph. We also see a similarity at the end of the book when HH travels back to the Huntsman hotel where he first slept with Lo—he finds the snapshot that was taken of him while he was in the lobby. He was forever encased in this place that meant so much to him in his life, in symbol of a photograph.

### *Love in the Time of Cholera*

Like in the other books, we see an accounting of a lifetime through memory, in possibly storybook form. There is much reminiscence of the three key players' lives, but we see the way their photos shape apart before they are taken together. Having a narrator who can travel between places and time very quickly and easily gives us much more than we would see focusing on one person. We are told distinct actions and thoughts of each character—the narrator is omniscient. The book still seems like some sort of memory, but instead of a photo book like in *The Lover*, more like a movie, as the places in time play out in an elongated fashion, giving more information about each period than in other books.

### *Museum of Innocence*

One major comparison is the thought of a museum of memories being very similar to a photo book of memories. The difference here is that these objects are very tactile to Kemal and bring him such joy, instead of pain. If they do bring him pain, at least they are connected loosely to a happy occasion for him and he doesn't dwell on it. He is also able to get joy out of photographs, though, as long as they are connected to Füsün in some way—for instance a picture of a boat that was in the same port they were near, or a location they once visited. While his love is unrequited through much of his life, he is still able to get positive things out of his obsession with objects, which is very different to how the female lead in *The Lover* sees them.

### *The Patience Stone*

All of the events that take place in this story are wrapped in melancholy, but the main character does use her husband, her patience stone, as a portal back to what their relationship looked like and how she was treated before marriage. This stirs up more sadness in her but eventually has more of a cathartic feel, almost like therapy. Perhaps sharing her memories with another person is the main difference in the output she got from them?

### *Prodigal Summer*

There were no photos taken over the course of the summer in *Prodigal Summer*. All the melancholy, too, was reserved for the beginning of summer when Cole dies. The rest of the novel, except for a few areas, is full of hope and life. Pictures are not taken but are instead measured through harvests, goats being born, and number of hard-to-

source shingles replaced. In a community so close to nature it is refreshing to see its residents, like its wildlife, appreciating the time they have in the now instead of flipping back through old photographs and even older ghosts.

### *The Namesake*

Gogol's father doesn't use photographs to remind him of his past, but instead uses the writings of his favorite authors as reminders of his past, specifically of his terrible train accident with the writings of Gogol. Once he passes away, however, he isn't enshrined under the gown with a tomb showing his last words, but in the house he spent most of his life through a photograph. This use of a photograph is unlike any other through these novels—at one point in the novel Gogol actually refers to his father's picture as his only shrine left of him on American soil. Gogol takes the photograph of him with his father and family off of his refrigerator once he cleans out his apartment and keeps it in his wallet for many years. Photographs will now keep his father alive to him and remind him of times when he was alive as long as they are there.

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### ***Love is an Eggplant***

In *Love in the Time of Cholera*, Fermina Daza explains her hatred of eggplants multiple times during the book. As the book continues on, we see her relationship with eggplants evolve from pure hatred, to surprise that it can be so good, to love when she makes it herself and for her family. I think this can be used specifically to relate to her love of Dr. Urbino, but also just how she changes through the story. It proves that you shouldn't just give something one chance, that you should try it again to make sure you

actually don't like it. If you think of it this way, that could be why Florentino got his second chance after all. Eggplants are odd vegetables, alien looking and bitter when cooked or eaten the wrong way. It is easy that someone could be swept into hating eggplant, and much like love, these feelings can be similar if someone has had a bad experience with it.

### *Feast of the Goat*

Urania's love life is much like the bitterness of an eggplant when it is not cooked correctly or eaten the wrong way. Much like Fermina, her love life began with a lot of bitterness and hatred, but unlike Fermina, she wasn't able to get over her hatred of eggplant and move on to have successful and fulfilling relationships. Urania wasn't able to give love, or eggplant, another chance and it hurt her relationships not only with her father and her family, but also with men in general. At the end of the novel after sharing the story of her rape with the rest of her family, she is approached by a man in the casino—her response is very appalled, showing that at the end of the novel she wasn't able to turn the corner and come out a better person like Fermina.

### *Lolita*

Early in Humbert Humbert's life, he had an experience with a young girl that can arguably be his eggplant—he had an initial taste of this relationship, but in the end it was so unfulfilled that he had to go in search of the same thing for the rest of his life. When he found Lolita, it was as if he was close to finally getting what he used to have. He became obsessed with finding the same thing that he had and it possibly drew him

to madness. Taste conjures up all memories of places, times, and the past—in this way, Humbert Humbert's early relationships connect to taste. He has an opposite reaction to that of Fermina, however, because he doesn't start by hating eggplant, he starts by loving it. As the book goes on he never quite fills the hole that was left in him after his first experience, so he is never able to gain the same feeling that he once had. This is regrettably his downfall.

### *The Lover*

The female character is in a relationship that is unfulfilling, but necessary for her to receive money for her family. I kept thinking of this as a child being forced to eat their vegetables by their parents—they have to eat what is on their plate, but would much rather have something else. She's in this relationship with the lover that isn't so terrible, but all she really wants is to have a relationship with her mother instead. Her mother's love is unattainable to her, so she has to be with the lover instead, her eggplant. Flipping the analogy to see it from the lover's point of view, I saw someone who was absolutely in love with her, but is so pained by the relationship because he knows she doesn't love him back. In this way, I think he loves eggplant but is allergic to it. All he wants to do is have his eggplant, but he is pained so much by it that it hurts him dearly. This would be similar to me acquiring a shellfish allergy late in my life—a food group that I love so dearly. I don't know if I could go on without eating lobster, scallops, or oysters, so the pain of being allergic would make my love all that much greater. These are both very different scenarios involving eggplant than Fermina's, but it goes to show how versatile an analogy that has been created.

*Museum of Innocence*

Kemal is very lucky, as he gets to eat his eggplant as often as he wants and loves it greatly, the only problem is that in this story, eggplant is shunned by society and frowned upon. It would be akin to eating eggplant, but if anyone were to figure out you were, you would be cast out of society and turned into a loner. Of course, this is an analogy to Kemal's relationship with Füsün and the social consequences of him taking her virginity before wedlock, also while cheating on his fiancé Sibel. Kemal doesn't care and goes on with his relationship anyway despite the consequences, leading him to a point where eggplant is taken away from him for an extended period of time. Eventually, it becomes okay for him to love eggplant again, but it would never be the same for him in those early days. This makes me wonder if there is perhaps an eggplant museum somewhere out there?

*The Patience Stone*

Her husband is her eggplant, but more specifically, the biggest secret she has kept from him is her eggplant—the children they had together aren't there. He is sterile and unable to have children so she had an affair with another man and timed the relationship with having sex with her husband, so he thought the children were there's. In this case, an eggplant would be considered a secret that she is keeping from her husband. Much like how eggplant caused pain and hatred in Fermina Daza, this eggplant was left to fester within the main character and eventually come out through



confessions to her husband. This does eventually cause her more pain in the end, but the momentary relief it brought her was arguably enough to bring her happiness.

### *Prodigal Summer*

Eggplants would be hard to grow and harvest in Zebulon County, and even harder to sell. Eggplant is substituted with canned peaches, fish meals, goat, apples, and a freshly slaughtered turkey. Each character and each relationship have a food that they share—Deanna and Eddie Bondo sharing their turkey dinner as the most prominent. Food is never related to pain of any kind, sickness, hate, or another other negative feelings through the whole book, exactly the way food should be.

### *The Namesake*

Like in *Prodigal Summer*, food in *The Namesake* rarely has a negative connotation. Through Gogol's life, food is a constant for him and his family, even from his earliest moments when he is offered solid food to eat for the first time in his life. He drinks beer at his first college party when he changes his name, eats wonderful charcuterie and drinks great wine with his girlfriend Maxine and her parents, and eats solemnly when his father passes away. His mother prepares samosas at her last part in America—some of this sharing of food is habit, some is love, some is religious, none is pain.

### ***The Power of Objects – Love and Pain***

In *Museum of Innocence*, Kemal finds such tactile joy in collecting, hoarding, and being surrounded with objects. He uses this as a coping mechanism for when he is unable to be with Füsün and he believes the objects hold on to some little part of her through time, like a memory of that moment where she would have touched a salt shaker, or drunk from a cup. This feeling is not only unique in Turkey at the time, but also throughout all the novels I have read. Objects bring pain to other characters, not comfort, so Kemal is very different in feeling what he does. Burning all the objects that hoarders have in Turkey if they die or can't do anything with them is very similar to *Love in the Time of Cholera*. We also see how other characters, like Kemal's mother, treat objects. She is pained when she finds an object connected to her dead husband, even crying over the phone to Kemal when she finds his shoes in the closet—Kemal has a very different reaction to them.

### ***Feast of the Goat***

Hands are a main object that bring pain throughout the book. They bring pain to Urania when she is raped by Trujillo, but they also bring pain to Trujillo as he is killed, beaten at the hands of the assassins planning to kill him through much of the book. If hands are an object that bring pain throughout the story, the Dominican itself might be the sole object that can bring love and peace, specifically to Urania. She does admit that she missed her home, but isn't ready to accept it again into her life. Her family is what eventually persuade her into feeling some semblance of love again, but it was her desire to come back to her home that brought her to them in the first place.

*Lolita*

Humbert Humbert gives Lolita objects as a way to bribe her, almost, into spending more time with him. The original trip that they took together once Charlotte died was filled with trips to clothing stores, soda shops, and souvenir stores. When they first enter their motel room for the first time he has the trunk of clothing and other knick-knacks sitting on the bed for her almost as an offering. These objects don't offer the same tactile joy that Kemal finds in the presents or objects surrounding Füsün. They also hold a very sadistic quality to them, being given for something sexual or explicit in return. Kemal offers his presents to Füsün in order to have them touch her in some way, physically or otherwise, and this brings him great joy—it is slightly odd, but not sadistic.

*The Lover*

The object, in this case, is money, what the main character receives from the lover. Money is inherently evil and she is in the relationship just to get her family by, so I'd say this is causing her pain, not comfort. I would be interested to see if money had the same reaction to Kemal that objects do, perhaps money Füsün touched would now be treated like an object instead of a currency? The major difference between the main character in *The Lover* and Kemal, however, is it seems Kemal has a lot of money, most of it expendable, so maybe money isn't an object to him that brings relief of any kind.

*Love in the Time of Cholera*

Fermina Daza makes a point of burning all the clothes and possessions of Dr. Urbino after he dies; this is the exact opposite of what Kemal would do. It is partially a practice in the Caribbean where the story takes place, but also gives her comfort as she couldn't stand to sleep in the same bed that he died in and they spent their lives together. Fermina says that these things remind her too much of him and she doesn't know what to do with them, so she burns them. She also does this to many of the letters that Florentino Ariza sends her, burning them never to be read again. This practice is foreign to me, much like Kemal's is, however. I do like to keep unique and sympathetic items for the future, but I don't find comfort and sympathy in everyday items like Kemal does—perhaps a healthy medium would be best for me.

### *The Patience Stone*

This is the closest another story comes to getting tactile joy from an object the same way Kemal gets, but there are still differences. In the beginning of the book the main character gets tactile joy from prayer beads, even correlating time and the breaths of her comatose husband to the rhythmic prayers she says. This practice has a cathartic quality, but is in a much more negative light than how Kemal uses his objects to receive pleasure. At the end of the novel the main character again gets joy from an object, this time her husband. Comparing him to the patience stone is very interesting because it actually takes the humanity out of him as a character, making the ending seem even more bizarre and unexpected. If *Museum of Innocence* were to end with both Kemal and Füsün dying instead of just Füsün, this would be similar to how *The Patience Stone* ended—not the same positive feeling.

*Prodigal Summer*

There is a contrast between weak and powerful objects in *Prodigal Summer*. Cars break down and crash, windows shatter, roof shingles go missing and break, trees fall down, fledglings are eaten by snakes. One of the most powerful object through the story is the human heart. Hearts can break, but they can also be mended. Each character goes through a life-altering and powerful even that could break any weaker person's heart with some ease. Each character, however, mends their heart and moves on, stronger than ever, once they are given the time to cope. I'm sure, too, we will see this with Garret's niece and nephew, Lusa's new children, once their mother passes away from her battle with cancer—something that was left as an inevitability at the end of the book. It is comforting to know how resilient the human heart is.

*The Namesake*

Similarly to Fermina Daza and Kemal's mother there is also an instance of cleaning up after someone who has died in *The Namesake*. Gogol travels to clean his father's apartment in once he passes away and is given the choice of what to do with his possessions—he gives most of them away to his fathers' neighbors. It is interesting that this act, not keeping many things as keepsakes, is common through multiple pieces of literature. The only things Gogol didn't give away, throw away, or return from his father were his wallet and a singular photograph. There were many objects in his apartment that I'm sure Kemal would have cherished, found solace in, and placed for all to see in a shrine for Gogol's father—Gogol might have received everything he needed

from his father once he was told where his name originated from. Whether he knew this or not at the time, I am not sure. For Gogol, he didn't need to hold onto possessions to be reminded positively of his father.

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### ***Who is the Most Patient Stone?***

This story surrounds a nameless Afghan woman caring for her husband after he received a gunshot wound, now lying in a coma for multiple weeks. She endures an astounding amount of pain because of the burden he puts on her and their children, but as the novel progresses she starts to open up her inner monologue and confess her deepest secrets to him. As a voiceless and seemingly unhearing character he serves as the most patient listener to all of her fears, secrets, thoughts on the Afghan culture, and the war raging outside the walls of their house. It seems like she is going to lose her mind caring for him, but it's when she confides in him as he never would have let her before that she becomes a truly multidimensional character. Patience is an overriding theme in the novel as she compares her motionless husband to the Syngue Sabour, or Patience Stone, a mythical stone that hears all confessions and then explodes once it has become too full. Confessions are now the way for her to gain peace with her husband after years of an insignificant sexual relationship, lies about their children, and a seemingly loveless marriage. She was so patient, much like the patient stone, until she confesses all of her secrets, even taking part in sexual relations right in front of him in the room he is being cared for. This is eventually her downfall and leads to her death at his own hands. The thought of patience made me realize how many patient characters persist through the novels I have read so far. While I know it is not a

competition, some are seemingly more patient than others. Comparing the patience of her and her husband is difficult: he is suffering from a coma and is in a vegetative state, seemingly brain dead, but she has lived in a binding Afghan culture her entire life, keeping secrets from her own husband, and even getting discouraged constantly from her mother-in-law. Patience did not prevail for her as she started to slowly break and admit all of her thoughts and feelings. If I did have to choose the most patient though, it would have to be her. The culture was like a jail cell to her, and the only way to escape was through the explosion of her Syngue Sabour.

### *Feast of the Goat*

The most patient character in *Feast of the Goat* is Urania as she must wait through much of her lifetime in order to talk about how she was raped and also meet with her family and father for the first time since her childhood. Being raped by Trujillo when she was younger has noticeably changed her, not only her relationship with her father but also her relationships with men in general—she confesses to her family that Trujillo was the only sexual experience she had and she has not been able to keep a stable relationship over in the United States, instead focusing on her work. The fact that she keep her rape secret so long is enough to prove how patient of a woman she is. After holding it inside for so long, finally confessing the act doesn't have the effect on her that I thought it would, but her patience as a person is still undoubtable.

### *Lolita*

Humbert Humbert proves how patient he is twice in the novel, although he admits that his agitation is the reason he is writing from prison—we just don't learn why until the end of his tale. HH has to wait through much of his adult life to find a substitute to the love he had when he was a child. He finally finds what he feels is an adequate substitution for this when he meets Lolita and begins a sexually stimulating relationship with her... where his childhood relationship left off. Patience is then proven again when she is taken away from him towards the end of the book. He then unrelentingly hunts down her and her captor, leading to his incarceration from where he writes his story. While he is a patient character, it is hard to compare him to the rest of the main characters in terms of patience. He begins a satisfying (at least for him) relationship with Lolita soon after they meet and the hardships he faces before then are because of his own lust. He is a seemingly stable man that could have had his choice of any meaningful relationship, so unfortunately, HH is not the most patient stone.

### *The Lover*

The two main characters in the lover are both patient and it is hard for me to decide which is more patient than the other. The main character has to be patient with the relationship with her mother and the rest of her family. She also has to be patient when losing her father and her brother. The lover is a patient man who is waiting for her love through their entire sexual relationship, and not receiving it, waits until he is much older to telephone her and confess his love. Both are patient characters that gain my sympathy for different reasons. Because they both have my sympathy, it is hard for me to call one more patient than the other. What I do believe is that the patience the lover



needed to have waiting to confess his love would have been unnecessary if she has had a consenting relationship with him, but if he were less timid, the patience may not have been necessary either.

### *Love in the Time of Cholera*

Patience is a common theme in *Love in the Time of Cholera* as well; all three main characters show brutal patience throughout the story. The best case of patience from Dr. Juvenal Urbino is during the soap argument he has with Fermina Daza. He lets the argument spiral out of control when neither wants to confess that they are to blame for there being no soap in the bathroom. While Fermina did forget to restock the soap, she is stubborn and uses this as an excuse to bring up many other conflicts the two had had during their marriage. Not wanting to sleep alone any longer, Dr. Urbino admits that there was soap in the shower. Fermina Daza shows patience during her relationship with Dr. Urbino as he wants things a specific way—tidy and well kept. He even admits he would want two wives when Fermina doesn't complete her sewing of his clothing on time, but the two do love each other, as apparent with his last words and the pain she feels after he is dead. She does, however, need to show her patience when he cheats on her. Their love eventually overcomes the pain of deception. Nevertheless, the real winner of the patience competition is Florentino Ariza. He not only has to wait to gain the acceptance of Fermina Daza when they are younger, but then to get betrothed to her. She is taken away from him and he has to wait his entire life for a chance to get her back. Almost blowing it when Dr. Urbino dies he has to patiently continue to gain her trust and prove to her he is different and that he loves her. His patience pays off as a

spend the rest of their lives together once they are old and feeble ferry-goers, but the decades of patience gain him a large amount of respect from me.

### *Museum of Innocence*

Patience is shown and broken in *Museum of Innocence*. Kemal and Sibel have to show their patience before getting married, but not only to they not follow their culture's values of not having pre-marital sex, but Kemal then cheats on Sibel aside with Füsün. Sibel has is slightly patient with Kemal as they try to work out his painful relationship with Füsün, but it doesn't last long as she leaves him shortly after to get re-married. Kemal is very patient through Füsün's hiatus from him, and when he eventually finds her she has been married to another man. He then spends the next years visiting her family while continuing to be there for her, patiently waiting for his chance to marry her. When that chance finally comes, she is taken away from him in a car accident and their marriage is never seen to fruition. Kemal, refusing to let the thought of Füsün wither decided to open up the museum of innocence, showing the possessions he takes pride in and how they connect to her. His patience to finally marry Füsün never materializes, but he still holds onto the thought of objects and the power she has through them—this is where his true patience is show in the acquisition of possessions of meaning.

### *Prodigal Summer*

Patience is primarily shown by Deanna, one of the main characters in the book who lives on a remote mountain for her job as a park ranger and wildlife observer. She is there for years at a time with little to no contact with the outside world, only observing

nature. Garret is much the same way with his chestnut, trying to cultivate a blight-hardy American chestnut tree that has since become endangered. He has been patiently developing these hatchlings generation after generation in order to create the tree of his childhood—unfortunately, he no longer feels he can accomplish his work in his lifetime. Lusa, too, is patient, but with Cole's family. It takes a long time before she is accepted by them and it only comes after Cole's death. Of the three I really can't say who is more patient—they all lead these lives of patience so close to one another, separated by only a few minutes at any given time. Zebulon County as a whole, in turn, must be the most patient location throughout these novels.

### *The Namesake*

Gogol's parents show a lot of patience with America and Americans as foreigners trying to assimilate into a society that they know nothing about. Gogol, too, shows a lot of patience with the name that he was given, although neither have to deal with patience that much, his parents creating an imitation-Bengali lifestyle for themselves in Massachusetts and Gogol legally changing his name. Gogol's father does show a lot of patience with waiting to find the right time to tell his children about the train accident he was involved in that almost took his life. While all characters show patience in some form, their patience is hard to compare with the rest of the characters from the rest of the novels, some of which show tremendous patience throughout lifetimes.

So, who then is the most patient character? Many show admirable and stoic patience through the novels they populate, but none show more patience to me that

Florentino Ariza in *Love in the Time of Cholera*. His is a patience that spans decades and shows that true love is timeless. I do realize, however, that patience is not a competition—it is a virtue, one that is the most praiseworthy quality of some of these characters. When patience isn't the only virtue a character has, this is when they can receive my sympathy and become a tragically palpable character. This is where, at least for me, Florentino shines. He is such a multidimensional character, but throughout his entire journey, his love for Fermina Daza shines through. Although they are almost too old to enjoy their newfound love together, their symbolic ferry ride can deliver them to an everlasting existence together once they eventually pass away. Florentino is arguably rewarded for his patience by knowing he is the final one to hold Fermina's love.

\* \* \*

### **Seasons**

It's been a common theme through my reading this semester that my horizons have been broadened and the list of my favorite books has slowly been making way for some of these, now all-time favorites; it's very possible number one has just been surpassed by Barbara Kingsolver's novel, *Prodigal Summer*. I've been lucky to expand my view of American culture over the past few years, meeting my fantastic girlfriend from Kentucky and traveling to many places that have since been untouched for me across the country that I call home. While many of the other books on this list did a fantastic job at transporting me to new places I have never traveled around the world and times I have never existed in, I was very familiar with Kingsolver's locale. From the

moment I set foot in the eastern side of Kentucky I knew I had found a place that would instantly become a staple and a love in my life, much like this book.

The rise in conflict takes place soon into *Prodigal Summer* with the death of Lusa's husband, Cole. The rest of Lusa's story focuses on the impact Cole had on everyone's lives in Zebulon Country, but his death arguably betters her life greatly, opening her up to his family and saving her perilous monetary situation. Deanne and Eddie Bondo have a summer romance—like summer love it is fleeting and torrential, but the only hint of conflict is the death of a turkey, a few fledglings, and a summer storm. Garnett Walker and Nannie Rawley have a relationship based around misunderstandings and hard feelings for no reason other than the stubbornness of old age. Minor conflicts are all because of hard-headedness and driven by what turns out to be very similar lives the two have lived separately. Conflict never really drives the storyline other than a snapping turtle, a downed tree, and a few missing shingles. Even though the story is set entirely in one summer, there is more summer color and tone in the book that proves this book to be set in a summer theme, even if it was a cool, rainy one.

I'm yet to mention seasons in any of my analyses so far, but *Prodigal Summer* gives me a chance to look back through all of the books we have read and see how seasons relate to the Shakespearean concept of tragedy and comedy—light and dark. I often think of summer-themed novels as comedies, or works not containing any or close to any conflict. Winter tragedies, on the other hand, are dissonant and offer little to no positivity—we have read across this spectrum, but also those that fall within the other two seasons, fall, which ends in conflict or despair, and spring, which ends with hope

and optimism. This is a personification of the seasons used so effectively in many works. *Prodigal Summer* is the closest novel to a pure comedy in my opinion, but always had an underlying theme of death, destruction, and pain. Unlike others, though, it was almost as if Kingsolver held back from any more underlying conflict, some of which was looming at the end of summer. Maybe Zebulon Country had suffered enough pain from the loss of a beloved citizen, many past and present poor tobacco harvests, and, depending on who is asked, the introduction of coyote into the natural ecosystem.

### *Feast of the Goat*

*Feast of the Goat*, is a tragedy ripe with conflict, hardships, and pain. Urania has no summer as a child and is thrown right into adulthood carrying the burden of rape and hatred for her family. The end of the story has a chance for hope, as she opens up to her family, but is immediately snuffed out as we see she hasn't changed as much as we hoped. Death and internal suffering plague this novel—it is set in winter.

### *Lolita*

*Lolita* could be seen as spanning different seasons as the story progresses; it starts in spring with the genesis of Humbert Humbert's relationship with Lolita, travels into summer as the two take a trip around the continental United States, and then collapses into fall with the abduction of Lo, and the eventual murder of her kidnapper. Winter could be the unread moments after the book when H.H. writes this plea to his readers, but he may consider the murder of the director completely necessary and more of a summer experience, the summer of a madman, prolonging his bliss with Lo. Other's

who read the book might find too many sexual and pedophilic undertones to classify it as anything other than a winter tragedy.

### *The Lover*

*The Lover* is a melancholic novel for every character—the main character needs to sell her body to a man in order to support the rest of her family and her lover is hopelessly in love with her with no return of affection. Her mother is spiteful and sick, her brother has been sent away due to his behavior, and her other brother is heartbreakingly killed—the closest thing she really had to family. There is little hope in the novel other than the money that is given to her allowing her family to survive, but money is synonymous with greed and pain when used in this way.

### *Love in the Time of Cholera*

*Love in the Time of Cholera* follows a very similar design to that of *Prodigal Summer*, but travels back in time between characters instead of traveling through a linear path. An early death also paves the way for this novel, but opens up hope for the characters throughout the lives they live and in the future. Like Garnett and Nannie, old age solidifies the end of Florentino Ariza and Fermina Dazas' lives together, eventually setting them off into eternal bliss and infinity, much like how hopeful an end Garnett and Nannie are given. There is the elemental theme of Cholera throughout one novel, and predators and prey in the other—these are very similar as well. The theme of unrequited love throughout *Love in the Time of Cholera*, however, keeps the feel slightly cooler, almost like spring.

### *Museum of Innocence*

*Museum of Innocence*, like *Lolita*, falls during many different seasons, taking a linear path through a full year. It starts in summer with Kemal's upcoming marriage, but quickly descends into fall as his marriage dissolves along with his relationship with Füsün. Kemal survives a long a harsh winter as his life comes undone to the pain of losing Füsün. Hope is breathed into his life when he meets her again and starts to rekindle their relationship, but much like in *The Patience Stone*, a sudden unseasonably cold spell brings an end to spring as Füsün is killed in a car crash. Unlike *The Patience Stone*, however, the novel returns to summer as the rest of Kemal's life is spent preserving the love he felt for Füsün and the items she enchanted.

### *The Patience Stone*

*The Patience Stone* is like a spring where a late cold frost kills a garden of fresh seedlings and stalls an entire seasons of warmth and happiness. The novel warms up as the main character finds solace in her newfound ability to express herself to her comatose husband, but all is taken away from her, like a late frost, as her husband wakes to find hear her most sinister secret.

### *The Namesake*

*The Namesake* is a coming of age novel, an evolution of Gogol and his parents, an assimilation of foreigners into America, and the realization that their children are automatically assimilated by being born there. The feel of the story ebbs and flows from happy and optimistic, to sad and pessimistic, often from one page to another. It seems like a year of seasons, only placed on fast-forward. There were at least three instances



of a winter feel throughout the book, three of spring, multiple cases of summer for multiple characters, but very little fall. The winter seasons always fell so quickly into despair that there was almost no signs pointing to eventual deaths or near deaths. The once case of fall came when Gogol's wife cheated on him—we were given an inside into her life for one chapter before Gogol realized she was cheating on him, leading to a divorce. This span of sentiment keeps the reader on their toes through the whole book, but the succinct writing style of Jhumpa Lahiri keeps the story moving along quickly.

\* \* \*

### ***Conclusion: The Namesake***

*The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri was a book recommended to me by my girlfriend, who has also taken an interest in our itinerary for this semester. The thought this would fit some of the themes of cross-cultural analysis in our other books but with a fresh take, much like look into Southern American life in *Prodigal Summer* by Barbara Kingsolver. I'm not sure how well she thought the book would fit, just telling me to read anything by Jhumpa Lahiri, one of her favorite authors, and expected I'd probably choose *Interpreter of Maladies* instead of *The Namesake*, but it actually fit perfectly as a conclusion to this semester.

The first thing I noticed about the book was how it focuses on a Bengali family from Calcutta choosing to live in the Boston to start a new life away from their home. I got a look into Indian culture not from inside the country, but outside. This is different from most other books I have focused on, surrounding a native in their homeland, only straying with books such as *Lolita* and *Prodigal Summer*. There was something gripping and interesting about seeing a family cope with a new life outside of the only country

they knew, but never really losing the things that are important to them about their culture; they eat the same food, socialize with the same nationality as theirs, and practice the same beliefs. It is only until their children start growing up as first generation Americans that we see them, not their parents, lose what makes them Bengali. It's confusing, heartbreaking, and powerful to see the everyday struggle of this family trying to find where they fit in and who they are in our country, but not just our country, my locale, where I grew up, places I know very well.

That was the next thing I noticed--every place they visit in America, every new location is a place that I have either lived, traveled to, or spent a long period of time in. I've spent my whole life in the Northeast and I've never thought to expand my view on how many cultures really populate these few states. This story is one of millions that I'm sure are very similar, but the personal draw this book had on me might have been what made it one of my favorites this semester, even though I am not Bengali myself—I shared more with Gogol and his family than other main protagonists, even if we don't share the same culture. Books, especially those I have mentioned, have a special ability to transport the reader into a new time, new culture, new place they have never been—for me this was important because I haven't traveled much outside of the United States, but reading an outside perspective on my home was particularly eye-opening for me. I could use these books as tools if I were ever to travel to the places they take place, because after reading the travels of Gogol and his family through places so familiar to me, I can only assume other authors like Lahiri take the same care to encapsulate the locales they are putting onto paper.

It's fantastic to hear my city or my homeland put into a light by someone who isn't

me, or who hasn't shared a similar background to mine; in *Prodigal Summer* it was Lacie's proclamation that all New Yorkers do is eat... which is completely true by my account. Everyone has a different view on who I am much the same as my view on another culture may be different from a peer's. It's not only transformative gives me a new look on something that I love and am so close to. Lahiri is an Indian woman writing in English, not like many of our books that were translated, so no color or tone is lost through a translation, making this a very *homey* book. The poetic detail, even during mundane scenes in the book, are brought out because it feels like someone is looking into them with a fresh eye, maybe through the eye of one of the characters? This isn't just seen from train scenes traveling back and forth from New York City to Boston, but also in the family's journeys back to Calcutta, giving multiple points of view from Gogol and his sister, to his parents and relationships. In this way there's a feel of home from more than just one person, and a different definition of what home is.

I could go through each and every book defining what home means to the main protagonists (and antagonists), but I thought better of that; home is so very personal. It's best left to the description of the author, and so brilliantly done through the text with sprinklings of personification, hyperbole, color, tone, and many other literary devices. It takes hold of every sense, often bringing the reader back to a personal memory they have, even if home isn't the same as the main character. Even though home is personal, it is also transferable, in some senses, that certain aspects of home are interchangeable; warmth, comfort, familiarity. Home doesn't need to be a place, but can be a person or an activity, something cathartic. By shifting the definition of home slightly from a place where one lives, to a point in time where one is secure, every character

from every book was at home, at least at some point through their novel, even if their novel was inherently melancholic or pessimistic in tone.

Everyone has a home—our professor, Julia Keefer, mentioned in her syllabus for this course that, “If you are sick or plagued by family disasters, channel your energy into your work and use great literature to transcend your pain.” This, I feel, is another way to say that books can be a home for anyone, no matter the circumstances. It is amazing that every character, no matter their plight, attempted to get back to set point, back to some sort of comfort at certain places in their lives—this was often through change, or acceptance, grief, or waiting, but they all had something in mind, a higher place than where they were at that moment, of home.

**Form:**

***Feast of the Goat***

Paperback edition – pages 389-390

1. Did she smell them? Did she? She'd have a chance to see the countryside—

[Referring to the grove, trees, and fruit. Repetition with her questions and the word 'She.' The use of an em dash is very informal, possibly due to Urania's age in the scene.]

2. the river, the valley, the sugar mill, the stables on the Fundación Ranch—

[The em dash is adding emphasis to these locations, but they are very terse details of the countryside void of life or imagery. The use of an em dash continues the thought instead of a more formal semi-colon.]

3. early in the morning, when the sun came up.

[The first movement of time takes place going from the current night scene to a future morning. The scene is currently taking place at night, meaning Urania is aware she is spending the night with Trujillo. This is the first reference to this, using morning and sun as similar symbols both pointing towards an overnight event.]

4. Would she have a Dominican breakfast, with mashed plantains, fried eggs,

[Focusing again on the future morning after the current night scene, this time with breakfast—another symbol of morning. No detail of the food, very terse again, like the countryside.]

5. sausage or smoked meat, and fruit juice? Or just coffee, like the Generalissimo?

[Continues listing the breakfast items, focusing on the future. Brings the scene back to the present night scene by asking a question about the Generalissimo. Doesn't mention him by name, but instead using a formality and symbol of power]

6. “It was from Benita Sepúlveda that I learned I was going to spend the night there,

[Time moves from the past scene of young Urania to the current story telling in true present time. Benita is a female variant of Benedict, possibly alluding to Benedict Arnold, a common reference to a traitor.]

7. that I would sleep with His Excellency. What a great honor!”

[Staying in present time. Her reference to him is again very formal, showing his position of power in the meeting. The final phrase is very sarcastic.]

The final chapter in *Feast of the Goat* by Mario Vargas Llosa is the culmination of Urania’s first trip back to the Dominican since leaving for the United States as a

teenager. She is sitting down with her Aunt, Cousins, and Niece as we learn the reasoning behind both her hesitation in returning to her childhood home and the harbored resentment of her father. One scene in particular travels through both time and timelines offering many different foreshadowing themes as well as hinting at the power struggle between Urania and Trujillo. Urania struggles to cope with her rape at the hands of Trujillo—her coping and power struggle have continued through her whole life as she tells her family of her tragedy for the first time.

The use of powerful symbols foreshadows the eventual rape scene from the beginning of the chapter. Numerous mentions to wood starts just before the scene outlined above, starting with the, “grove of oaks,” (Llosa 389) as well as, “cedars... almond and mahogany trees...” (Llosa 389) These are symbols of power, especially that of men, referencing our reproductive organs. The house they are visiting, a real location, is called the Mahogany House. If Llosa chose to continue the ‘wood as a power symbol’ idea, it could have stemmed from that. The symbols of power continue through the whole chapter not only by referencing wood, but with every time Urania mentions Trujillo; she uses the most formal acknowledgment, calling him, “Generalissimo,” as well as, “His Excellency.” (Llosa 390) This introduces the struggle of power in the scene between the two, giving it to Trujillo before taking it away from him.

One of the most interesting things that I noticed about the story is the nonlinear style of narrative, or disjointed narrative chosen as the main structure. As a reader, I have been puzzled by my personal affiliation for linear versus nonlinear writing styles; I love classic books such as *A Farewell to Arms* by Ernest Hemmingway which as I recall follows a mostly linear structure, ending resolutely at the completion of the book. *Feast*

*of the Goat* as well as many other modern novels take the opposite approach by giving the reader what could very well be a concrete conclusion to a linear book at or near the beginning rather than at the end. In *Feast of the Goat*, we know that the brutal dictator Trujillo has been killed, part of an assassination plot, but what we don't know are the events leading up to the moment. By splitting the story up into multiple narratives, that of three distinct main characters, Llosa jumps back-and-forth from the past when Trujillo is still alive to the present where are main character Urania is traveling back to her childhood.

While this style is present in a much larger format throughout the book by jumping from character-to-character and past-to-present at each chapter, the use of a disjointed narrative on a micro scale occurs during the above scene. The narrative starts in the past night, jumps to the past morning (a fictional event assumed by Urania) and then jumps back to the true present day with Urania narrating her own story to her family. This style is interesting, but leads to more of a fevered tempo and setting for the inevitable rape scene—It allows the reader to experience the writing style they have been reading through the whole book, but condenses it down to its purest form. This allows for minute details of the young Urania's power struggle to shine through, especially in the choice of punctuation with multiple em dashes. When the time period shifts from the story she is telling to the true-present day, we now get a sarcastic comment from Urania. We are able to compare the struggle of a young Urania to a present one with how both of them cope differently to the same situation. Without a nonlinear writing style, we never could have had this comparison.



***Lolita***

Paperback edition – page 96

1. I set out two glasses (to St. Algebra? to Lo?) and opened the refrigerator.

[He's wondering to whom the letters are made out. St. Algebra is a girl's school Lo is meant to attend. Very firm sentence, brief, and to the point.]

2. It roared at me viciously while I removed the ice from its heart.

[Personification, roaring refrigerator. Also, hyperbolic imagery of a viscous refrigerator and its heart. Dark sentence. Begin alliterations.]

3. Rewrite. Let her read it again. She will not recall details.

[Sentence fragments. Refers back to the inner monologue of HH. He once again implies Charlotte is not smart by saying, "She will not recall details."]

4. Change, forge. Write a fragment and show it to her or leave it lying around.

[First sentence fragment is powerful. Single syllable words. Second sentence fragment is not powerful, missing commas, run-on. He's devising a plan to play his notebook off as nothing to Charlotte.]

5. Why do faucets sometimes whine so horribly? A horrible situation, really.

[Completely off topic. His mind is wandering. More personification with a whining faucet. Emphasis on "whine" in the sentence.]

6. The little pillow-shaped blocks of ice—pillows for polar teddy bear,

[Alliteration. Imagery of pillow-shaped ice cubes. Brings the idea back to a young, child-like metaphor of a teddy bear before referring back to Lo]

7. Lo—emitted rasping, crackling,

[Lo, only singular syllable word in the line. End rhymes with the *ing*. Slightly pained and somewhat sexual words to use.]

8. tortured sounds as the warm water loosened them in their cells.

["Tortured" seems somewhat out of place, no longer sexual, but possibly foreshadowing something terrible? Assonance with "tortured," and "sounds," and "loosened," More alliteration. Could cells refer to jail? Beautiful imagery of ice adjusting to tap water.]

Nabokov's writing style shines in the above passage. Unlike any other book mentioned thus far, *Lolita* is not a translated novel, so sentence structure, rhyme, assonance, and alliteration all play a major role throughout. These literary devices are not seen in translated novels due to not being in the author's native tongue—some of

that may have been present before but is naturally lost in translation. Seeing a novel in my native tongue, English, for the first time through these novels was a welcomed change of pace, inviting an almost poetic feel to much of *Lolita*. Very minute details, such as the use of vocabulary like, “whine,” and, “tortured,” actually serve as foreshadowing to Charlotte’s death in the coming pages. His pacing to this passage and much of the novel contribute to dramatic tempo and pave the way for upcoming events, much like how he used short and terse sentences and facts in the above passage, something that isn’t common through the whole novel.

The rest of the novels are translations, so to analyze form one should look at personification, symbols, and tone of the writer, but none of the color of the writing shows through. Writing color is something I haven’t always paid close attention to, but when it is taken away from me during my reading, I start to miss it—this was made obvious to me once I finished *Feast of the Goat* and began reading *Lolita*. It is a great case for being bi or multilingual, because I’m sure there is a lot of color left in the original versions that is lost to an English translation. The translators for the rest of the books must do a wonderful job trying to keep some of that color, but it can’t all be maintained.

I believe Nabokov was able to create a character in Humbert Humbert who personalized his writing style. As a well-educated, erudite man, HH uses a poetic form in his writing and speaking. Reading the novel gives this poetic feel while adding to the strength of the character himself. With every instance of color, poetic license, and literary devices the sense is given that HH is the one using that device and naturally can’t help himself from being poetic. To add to this, French is used throughout the novel

by HH and adds to his romantic and poetic style, French being a romance language after all. Contrasted with Lolita's American girl style of speaking, we see just how scholarly HH is. Lo's method of speaking is very slang-heavy, giving her the feel of a young girl, but she is made to seem even younger by the way he speaks to her and how she responds to him with disdain by the way he speaks. This all adds to the feel of the book, making his crimes seem more outrageous by the reiteration of Lo's young age—this is all done by Nabokov's word choices. This shows the power these choices have over voice throughout a novel. Without the constant drilling that Lo is still a young girl it could be easy to forget, turning the novel into a *normal* love story.

***The Lover***

Kindle edition – Page 36

1. She says, I'd rather you didn't love me. But if you do,

[Starts with the third person narration and then moves into a first person dialogue as the female lead. References unrequited love. It's a very melancholy concept to ask someone not to love you.]

2. I'd like you to do as you usually do with women. He looks at her in horror, asks,

[The outright statement gets a reaction from the lover, one that is shocked. The third person narrator takes over after the first person of the female lead is concluded. Horror is a strong word to use when compared to the concept of love.]

3. Is that what you want? She says it is. He's started to suffer here in this room,

[Third person narration moves into first person, now speaking for the lover and then quickly moving back to the third person narrator instead of her as first person—the focus of the dialogue moved from her to him. Horror and suffer are used to describe the pain of his unrequited love.]

4. for the first time, he's no longer lying about it.

[He is either referring to his first time being rebuffed in love or his first time being rejected in his attempts at having sex with someone else. He's making it clear that he has done this before, but it's different with her this time.]

5. He says he knows already she'll never love him. She lets him say it.

[Instead of moving to a first person dialogue like before, it stays in the third person narration. The melancholy feel of this passage carries through to this statement. She makes him tell that she'll never love him, almost to hear it for herself. It feels painful.]

6. At first she says she doesn't know. Then she lets him say it.

[She leaves a trace of a possibility by saying that she doesn't know, but reiterates the same message as the line before that she lets him say it out loud. She wants to be reassured that he and she will not love.]

7. He says he's lonely, horribly lonely because of the love he feels for her.

[Third time using a strong word, horribly, to counter the concept of love, this time attached to loneliness, keeping the melancholic tone of this passage moving forward. He needs to emphasize that he is lonely by adding the qualifier that he is horribly lonely.]

8. She says she's lonely too. She doesn't say why.

[She brings a motive into light for the first time, that she is lonely as well, but he doesn't know why she is. She might be referring to her family, her brothers and her mother and the reason that she is seeking out this relationship. There's a level of awkwardness throughout the whole passage.]

The structure in *The Lover* is received through a limited third person narrator, who at points shows they are omniscient by jumping into first person becoming the lead character, sometimes becoming another character such as the lover in the above passage. This adds structure to the story, but it feels more like it is moving along in

someone else's head, like the narration is coming while the narrator is looking through the events in photograph form. On top of that, there are many references to photographs, making the story as a whole seem even more like a picture book or photo album. There is an overriding theme of melancholy through many passages in the book, including the one above. Love and melancholy can often be used interchangeably and it creates sympathy for the characters, specifically the female lead and the lover.

Jumping from third to first person, but primarily the use of first person at times gives the novel an autobiographical feel to it—this is no coincidence in my mind because Duras and the main female lead share many things including their gender and ethnicity. Because this is a translated book there is no intentional color, so the story gets an even more melancholic feel, almost sounding straightforward at times. The above is an example of this, melancholy presiding throughout the entire passage. It makes me feel sorry for both the main female lead and the lover. In this way, lack of color through a translation may have actually helped give the feeling of this sad story and made the main characters more sympathetic.

This is one of the first times a singular symbol has been used in one of the novels I read—photographs. It's a way for the narrator to transcend time and space by focusing on one key snapshot. This gives the narrator almost an omniscient feel, but really they are just focusing on a picture. Pictures can be used as a way to go through time, and in this case works for a narrator who is mostly limited in their telling of the story. It is a great technique used by Duras to give the novel more movement and to make the story travel further and across longer periods of time.



***Love in the Time of Cholera***

Paperback edition – Page 220-221

1. She began with a good portion, but she liked it so much that she took another

[Purposely vague in the beginning. Very simple vocabulary use with 'good' and 'like.'  
Mysterious and unassuming beginning.]

2. of the same size, and she was lamenting the fact that urbane etiquette did not

[Gives the allusion of two large portion sizes. Genuine sadness and annoyance that style doesn't allow Fermina Daza to have more portions. Lamenting is a powerful word choice.]

3. permit her to help herself to a third, when she learned that she had just eaten

[Very long sentence, almost run-on. Sudden realization is about to occur.]

4. pureed eggplant. She accepted defeat with good grace, and from that time on,

[Discovery. We learn she had just eaten eggplant. Earlier in the chapter, we are introduced to her hatred of eggplant, so it is still fresh in our minds. Very long sentence ends. Use of commas to lengthen the sentences, creating an airy and whimsical feel. Mentions defeat—very interesting word choice for a food, much like 'lamenting' in line 2.]

5. eggplant in all its forms was served at the villa in La Manga with almost

[Use of the word 'was' instead of 'were' is the use of a past indicative, which states fact. This means all of its forms were really used and it stresses how much she learned to love it.]

6. as much frequency as at the Palace of Casaldueiro, and it was enjoyed so much

[Continuation of a long sentence. Reiteration of the frequency of how much eggplant was eaten by referring back to where they used to live when Dr. Urbino's mother cooked a lot of eggplant. Sentence starts the instill humor into the passage.]

7. by everyone that Dr. Juvenal Urbino would even lighten the idle hours of

[Continuation of a long sentence. Humor continues through the line, using the word, 'lighten.' Length of the sentence now starts to peak interest before a climax, like rising action.]

8. his old age by insisting that he wanted to have another daughter so that he could

[Continuation of a long sentence. A comical hyperbole is introduced with the thought of having another daughter due to Dr. Urbino's old age.]

9. give her the best-loved word in the house as a name: Eggplant Urbino.

[Long sentence ends. Here is the punch line of the joke, and one of the best comedic relief moments in the whole book, the second consisting of eggplant. We are brought back to the love of eggplant before the climax of the joke to strengthen the delivery.]

I began appreciating the writing style and approach in Gabriel García Márquez' *Love in the Time of Cholera* especially when he starts to inject a slight humor into an otherwise serious novel on unrequited love and the love triangle that forms between Fermina Daza, Florentino Ariza, and Dr. Juvenal Urbino. In the above passage, Márquez uses pace and length of sentences to deliver one of the best comedic lines of

the entire book. It starts very discretely without making any reference to eggplant, almost like a mystery. As of yet, Fermina Daza has dread eggplant, and hasn't loved any food, so this was the first time hearing of her really loving something. As the sentence structure continues to drag on, the vocabulary that Márquez uses plays towards his ultimate punch line; words such as "lamenting," "defeat," and eventually "lighten," take us through her mind at the time of eating her dish and the pain she must have felt at realizing she had eaten, and loved, eggplant. Márquez also uses slight hyperbole through the passage, pushing us to realize just how much eggplant Fermina Daza would cook in the upcoming years even leading to Dr. Juvenal Urbino's wanting to name their next, hypothetical daughter, Eggplant Urbino. It is also very interesting that Márquez would choose to make the eggplant female, something that I would never think to do—personally, if an eggplant has a gender, I would imagine it to be male.

Márquez' style during this passage is very straight forward, leading into his trap of a punch line at the end, something that I honestly wasn't expecting and made me laugh out loud when I was reading the novel. It is also interesting to note the only other time I laughed during the novel also made reference to eggplant when Fermina Daza accepted Florentino Ariza's proposal by writing him a note containing, "*Very well, I will marry you if you promise not to make me eat eggplant.*"

While eggplant is Márquez' go to source of comedic relief, I looked at it as much more—a symbol for Fermina Daza's love throughout the whole story (possibly why he decided to make his eggplant female). She explains her hatred of eggplants multiple times during the book, and as it continues on, her relationship with eggplants evolves from pure hatred, to surprise that it can be so good, to love when she makes it herself

and for her family. I think this can be used specifically to relate to her love of Dr. Juvenal Urbino, but also just how she changes through the story. It proves that you shouldn't just give something one chance, that you should try it again to make sure you actually don't like it. If thought of this way, it could be why Florentino Ariza got his second chance after all. Eggplants are odd vegetables, alien looking and bitter when cooked or eaten the wrong way, especially when chased with castor oil! It is easy that someone could be swept into hating eggplant, and much like love, these feelings can be similar if someone has had a bad experience with it.

***Museum of Innocence***

Paperback edition – Page 157

1. I would usually spend my two hours in the apartment daydreaming in bed,

[Starts with a whimsical notion of daydreaming, coupled with the symbol of the bed, where Kemal and Füsün made love so often.]

2. having selected some object charmed with the illusion of radiating

[Quickly refers to objects, Kemal's coping mechanism. Hyperbole and poetic justice taken by referring to these objects as magic, and actually glowing. Very great symbolism.]

3. the memories of our happiness—for example, this nutcracker, or

[Objects and memories. Melancholic scene using the word happiness, almost a farce. The em dash keeps the sentence informal.]

4. this watch with the ballerina, with Füsün's scent on its strap,

[Continues with the memories found in objects. The use of a ballerina could be a symbol of Füsün or of her innocence.]

5. with which I would stroke my face, my forehead, my neck,

[Repetition with the body parts around his head give emphasis to his action of trying to get happiness out of the object.]

6. to try to transfer the charm and soothe the ache—until two hours had passed,

[The word charm is almost reminiscent of a serpent. Ache refers to a pain that he is feeling from not being with her. Time shifts, but nothing takes place during that time. We assume it would be the same action as before. Another em dash for informality.]

7. and the time had come when we would have been awakening

[Referring back now to memories of his time with Füsün and spending it in the bed.]

8. from the velvet sleep our lovemaking induced, and, depleted,

[Velvet sleep refers to a soft and luscious fabric, and compares it to lovemaking.]

9. I would try to return to my everyday life.

[The word try is important because it alludes to Kemal having a problem and not being able to cope with his loss of Füsün. The paragraph is one long sentence.]

With Orfan Pamuk's writing style, specifically with this story, there is almost the overriding theme of personification in terms of objects and symbols. Kemal gets much more out of an object than many would, so when he mentions a nutcracker or a wrist watch, there is more involved in that object than just the object itself. If put into Kemal's skin I could see how these objects would hold memories of the people that have touched them, specifically Füsün. Knowing this, Pamuk writes his style putting

emphasis on things other than the objects that Kemal holds so dear. This not only makes them seem ordinary but when the emphasis is placed on objects as a whole, “radiating,” then the complete aura of the objects is made special, not just the objects themselves.

In this scene, there is almost this cross between a dream world and reality. The style of writing, one long sentence, has a whimsical feel to it and is immediately cut off at the end by returning to everyday life. This works on multiple levels for me: Kemal is made out to seem genuinely hurt and a little distraught, possibly going mad, and the objects again get this magical power that is even referenced right in the writing. Whether this puts emphasis on the objects or emphasis on Kemal’s condition, I am not sure.

The whole pace of the passage, run on and connected with disjointed thoughts, almost seems like a museum curator is giving a tour. This is how the whole book plays out—one long museum tour with a story intertwined. Maybe by thinking of the voice of the narrator is enough to place all the emphasis on the objects and not on Kemal, because it is Kemal who is telling the story through the writing of a narrator. By having this limited viewpoint, much like in *The Lover*, there are things that aren’t said or remain unknown to us in the story, leading to suspense and surprise. Things like the whereabouts of Füsün and Sibel are unknown to Kemal, so they are unknown to us. We also don’t get their point of views unless they are stated to Kemal. Kemal is very closed minded throughout the book so we are led to assume his views are correct on things like what Füsün and Sibel are thinking.



***The Patience Stone***

Kindle edition – Page 78-79

1. these words burst from her mouth: “Sang-e saboor!” She Jumps.

[Bursting, similar to the gunfire and bombs outside. An exclamation and exuberance from jumping at figuring out the name of the stone.]

2. “That’s the name of the stone, sang-e saboor, the patience stone!

[She reiterates, and says the stone again, then translating it to English.]

3. The magic stone!" She crouches down next to the man.

[She refers to the stone as magic, as if it is going to help her with her pain.]

4. Yes, you, you are my sang-e saboor!" She strokes his face gently,

[Reiterating the word, you and again with sang-e saboor. Still exclaiming. She touches the man, which is uncommon unless to help him heal. It shows gentleness.]

5. As if touching a precious stone. "I'm going to tell you everything,

[The word precious hasn't been used to describe her husband. She is treating him like a confession.]

6. my sang-e saboor. Everything. Until I set myself free from my pain,

[Reiterates sang-e saboor again. Reiterates 'everything.' again. Refers to freedom, something that she has never had for herself or in Afghanistan.]

7. and suffering, and until you, you ..." She leaves the rest unsaid.

[Foreshadowing based on the story of the patience stone. Makes the reader think about death, but her husband's death and not hers. She still can't tell him she wants him to die because he holds a purpose for her now.]

This story and the writing style are all about transformation—the main character transforms from an abused and victimized Afghan woman to a more open and liberal person through her confessions. The constant theme of the patience stone serves as a reminder to her relationship with her husband, a foreshadowing tool, and also a symbol of patience, hard life, like stone, and an eventual “explosion.” The comparison of the stone to her comatose husband is also a metaphor. Putting a story to a mythical tale is

very interesting and serves almost as a parable, though it lacks a moral victory or lesson at the end.

Religion is a constant theme not only in Afghanistan but also in the lives of the main character, her children, and her neighbors. Using a mythical symbol always brings around the thought of religion as the story goes on. This could be part of what is binding the main character—that and living in an oppressive warring country. There is a duplicity with the main character as the only way to free herself from these chains is to confess all of her sins to her husband, who we are left to believe is not listening, but may be through the whole novel. Whether he is listening the whole time or just at the end, it doesn't matter. The foreshadowing laid out across the book with the constant recalling of the patience stone leads to it exploding, not in its own death, but the death of the main character.

It's such a hard life to live that this story is the most purely winterized one thus far—if following the Shakespearean concept of seasons and mood or atmosphere of a play or novel, this one starts with a pessimistic and negative feel, very briefly transitions into a positive one, and is immediately brought back to the negative as the rising action takes place and the book concludes. While I am not a fan of tragic novels, this one is one of the most powerful I have read, astonishing, being that the story is so short. Because the story takes place in such a cramped space with such few characters, it is easy to get to know them all, even though one is voiceless.

***Prodigal Summer***

Paperback edition – Page 116

1. They stood side by side with their arms crossed, looking over toward her

[Side by side offers a connection, but crossed arms is usually a symbol for resilience or stubbornness. They're looking away from each other, out towards life.]

2. blossoming garden and his field of young chestnuts behind it.

[Blossoming brings the idea of life into the passage, and youth is introduced with Garnett's chestnuts. They are both being compared to their prospective flora.]

3. At such a close range, standing quiet this way, Nannie lacked her usual force.

[Nannie is now made to seem less threatening to Garnett. Her height and closeness to him make her out to seem like a normal woman. They are quiet where they are usually arguing with each other.]

4. She just seemed small—the crown of her head barley came up to his shoulder.

[Small, like his chestnuts maybe? Emphasis on her size by comparing her to him—they have more in common than he thought.]

5. *Goodness, we are just a pair of old folks*, he thought. *Two old folks*

[Beginning of an inner monologue. They are similar in many ways. Country *slang* is used in his inner thoughts.]

6. *with our arms folded over our shirtfronts and our sorry eyes looking for heaven.*

[Where life was brought up before, now death is introduced. Sibilance with *folks* and *folded, shirtfronts* and *sorry*.]

7. "We've both had our grief to bear, Miss Rawley. You and I."

[He speaks his inner monologue, but is still very formal. He puts her before him. Is it just their grief in life, or for each other as well?]

8. "We have. What worse grief can there be than to be old without

[Agreement for the first time.]

9. young ones to treasure, coming up after you?"

[Life and death is brought up again. The comparison to chestnuts is brought up again, bringing the conversation back to focus on Garnett.]

Barbara Kingsolver's writing style in *Prodigal Summer* uses southern dialect, eastern Kentucky slang, as well as many elements from nature, such as the blossoming garden above in line two. The major slang from this passage comes from Garnett's inner monologue—using goodness, folks, and even describing their eyes as *sorry*. It's a beautiful way to write, especially for me, a born American who has spent time in Kentucky recently—in fact, every part of Kentucky is beautiful. I can see why Kingsolver combined nature and the eastern Kentucky dialect to paint the picture that is *Prodigal*

summer. Her style is rather simple, but injects color from nature, animals, and landscape to be very vivid at points throughout the book. One of the best scenes comes during a summer squall, the noise of the rain on a tin roof almost seemingly jumping out of the pages. I will be reading a lot more of Barbara Kingsolver in the near future because of how much I loved this book.

***The Namesake***

Paperback edition – Page 140

1. Within six months he has the keys to the Ratcliff' house,

[Familiarity, short amount of time, and a feeling of acceptance, of being home]

2. a set of which Maxine presents to him on a silver Tiffany chain.

[Opulence with the gift of the keychain—very opposite from his parents.]



3. Like her parents, he has come to call her Max.

[Familiarity. The use of a nickname is very different from his nickname.]

4. He drops off his shirts at the dry cleaner around the corner from her place.

[Familiarity again. Starting to paste examples of everyday living in New York City, but a change of location from his previous apartment that makes this new place feel like home.]

5. He keeps a toothbrush and razor on her cluttered pedestal sink.

[Familiarity again. Bringing items into Maxine's life.]

6. In the mornings a few times a week he gets up early and goes running

[Familiarity again. Starting to bring the relationship with Maxine's parents up, very different from his parent's relationship.

7. before work with Gerald along the Hudson, down to Battery Park City and back.

[Again, very common things that every New Yorker does, but different for Gogol because he has just changed locations from his old, to Maxine's parent's house.]

8. He volunteers to take Silas out for walks, holding the leash as the dog sniffs

[Silas, the dog. Very American symbol, one that Indian cultures do not partake in. He does this of his own accord.

9. and pokes at trees, and he picks up Silas's warm shit with a plastic bag.

[and the ultimate symbol of being an American, having a dog and then having to clean up after him. The only use of profanity in the entire book, but made humble by describing it as 'warm.' Almost like a warm home. ]

Jhumpa Lahiri writes with a very succinct, factual kind of tone in *The Namesake*. The book moves along at a fever pace through much of the timeline spanning most of Gogol's' parent's life and a lot of his. She uses food so frequently and so skillfully through her writing that it almost becomes an afterthought, but it helps drive home her theme of *home* in this book. Specifically in the above scene there is a familiarity for Gogol and his newfound lifestyle in Maxine's parent's house. For the first time through

the whole novel she uses profanity to further the familiarity by describing how Gogol picks up her dog's *shit*. It's an interesting way to inject humor into the book, create a feeling that Gogol is being accepted, and put a succinct end to a listing of facts, which consists of much of this passage. For such a terse writing style, Lahiri does a great job painting Gogol and his parent's lives assimilating to American culture, the differences they have, and the hardships they share. I think this can only come from someone who has been in the same place as those characters she is writing about.

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