

# Dr. Identity

— D. Harlan Wilson —

## Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the main characters in *Dr. Identity*, especially Dr. Identity, Dr. Blah Blah Blah and Achtung 66.799. Is Dr. Identity a protagonist or antagonist? What is significant about the fact that Dr. Blah Blah Blah and Achtung 66.799 lack real names?
2. Dr. Identity (the character and the novel itself) is self-consciously ultraviolent. Why?
3. The novel is told from three different points of view (Dr. 'Blah, Dr. Identity, and a third person omniscient narrator). What is the effect of this multiperspectivalism?
4. In what way(s) does Wilson appropriate, critique and lionize media culture?
5. What is "plaquedemia"?
6. Metanarratives call attention to themselves as texts and artistic productions. How is Wilson's novel a metanarrative? What purpose does this metanarration serve?
7. The title page of *Dr. Identity* refers to it as a "pulp" science fiction novel. What are the characteristics of pulp science fiction? Are they visible in Wilson's novel? To what degree?
8. What does *Dr. Identity* say about urban selfhood, human nature, and identity?
9. What is the significance of the "Stick Figure Prize"?
10. Why is the universe of Bliptown and "Amerika" at large flagrantly misogynistic?
11. Naziism lurks beneath the fabric of the entire novel. Why?
12. SF comic writer Robert Venditti writes that, in *Dr. Identity*, "D. Harlan Wilson shows us everything we know—but wish we didn't—about ourselves," and SF theorist Larry McCaffery writes that the novel "is a funhouse mirror whose cartoonish distortions continually amaze and amuse—until one realizes that what we're seeing is a disturbingly accurate vision of ourselves." *Dr. Identity* is set in an unreal, alternative future, but it seems to be more about the present (and the past that has produced the present). How does this work?

# Writing Prompts

— Based on the Work of —  
**D. Harlan Wilson**

1. Set a story in Pseudofolliculitis City from the *Pseudo-City* collection or the Schizoverse from *Dr. Identity*.
2. Invent a neologism, a new word or phrase created from existing words, for example the Papanazzi from *Dr. Identity*. Use it in a story .
3. Practice unreal writing; take a dream you had and turn it into a story.
4. Create the most outrageously violent action sequence that you can. Make it totally unbelievable.
5. Wilson often uses metanarrative, (a story told to justify another story, esp. involving artifice; a story about oneself that provides a view of one's experiences— *Webster's New Millennium™ Dictionary of English*). Use this technique to write a tongue-in-cheek story about yourself.
6. Exaggerate a social convention to make it ridiculous.
7. Pen a tale in which there is no plot and nothing of consequence happens. Make it interesting
8. Much of the interaction between characters in Wilson's work is hostile. Write a dialogue between strangers who disagree on some minor point.
9. Many of Wilson's characters are defined by their odd names. Create some descriptive names and use them in a story.
10. Write a story in which a common but specific everyday item takes on a disproportionate significance (ie bowler hats, sandwiches and moustaches in Wilson's work).
11. Tell a story using at least two different first-person perspectives.
13. Use traditional elements of two different genres (ie Science Fiction and Surrealism) to create a cross-genre story.