

Postmodern Classicism: A Practice-Based Investigation

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Abstract

This thesis establishes a critical framework for a grassroots literary genre, postmodern classicism (pomoclassicism), which was founded by myself and Stephen Spencer II circa 2010. Postmodernism here signifies the intellectual and cultural concerns which were tantamount at the latter half of the twentieth century, and by extension, classical writing simply refers to that which was apparently before the postmodern, in a heuristic sliding scale oriented around canonicity and nostalgia. A portfolio of creative writing accompanies critical efforts at engaging with and describing the foundational assumptions of the western canon, from which much of the creative work is appropriated. My research writing is grounded in a reformulation of the early modern notion of canonical literature (circa 1700): 'eternal life' through literary preservation, which is itself the paradoxical material upon which the 'canon' is founded. This theme is taken up in the oeuvre of Goethe. Goethe's writing relies on the paradoxical reconciliation of opposites known to the author as 'polarity,' and influences how Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, and Franz Kafka understand canonical literature itself. Goethe, Nietzsche, and Kafka's use of appropriation has influenced my own creative work, which includes redaction writing, erasure, and other forms of narrative appropriation. Kafka will be shown to have taken up the theme of 'polarity' in his own literary writing, as examined by Benjamin and Deleuze and Guattari. Finally, I will draw upon the critical writing of Sabina Spielrein, whose concepts of simultaneous creation and destruction and erotic fusion are the conceptual core of my own poetic approach, and who provides a Nietzschean critique of the early modern notion of 'eternity.'

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Introduction

Thus we find, in the Novel too, this machinery directed towards both destruction and resurrection, and typical of the whole of modern art. What must be destroyed is duration, that is, the ineffable binding force running through existence: for order, whether it be that of poetic flow or of narrative signs...is always a murder in intention. But what reconquers the writer is again duration, for it is impossible to develop a negative within time, without elaborating a positive art, an order which must be destroyed anew.

-Roland Barthes, in *Writing Degree Zero*¹

How many styles or genres or literary movements, even very small ones, have only one single dream: to assume a major function of language, to offer themselves as a sort of state language, an official language (for example, psychoanalysis today, which would like to be a master of the signifier, of metaphor, of wordplay). Create the opposite dream: know how to create a becoming-minor. (Is there hope for philosophy, which for a long time has been an official, referential genre? Let us profit from this moment in which antiphilosophy is trying to be a language of power.)

-Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*²

Postmodern classicism (pomoclassicism) is a literary approach at the intersection of postmodern and classical writing in terms of narrative figures, forms, and conventions. Postmodernism here can be defined as the variety of abstract and dialectical approaches to the epistemological, socio-linguistic, cultural, and philosophical issues which have been of the greatest concern in the past sixty years—and, moreso, as a pretence for experimental creative practice for its own sake: relying on an inherently cacophonous multiplicity of perspectives which must compete for space within a given cultural field. As the term ‘postmodern’ itself is antiquated, I will not, as Frederic Jameson did in his well-known treatment of the ‘Gehry house,’ attempt to create a model for the postmodern signifier, nor, as Jacques Derrida did throughout fifty years of critical practice, attempt to exhaustively explore the methodological and ideo-cultural elements of what we now understand to be postmodern thinking and philosophy, but rather I intend to demonstrate creatively a more expansive and historical view of postmodernism.³ These approaches have notable antecedents, even in the ancient world. My working definition of classicism

¹ Roland Barthes. *Writing Degree Zero*, trans. Anette Lavers and Colin Smith (New York: Hill and Wang), 2012, 26.

² Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 1986, 27.

³ Frederic Jameson. *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Ch. 4 “Spatial Equivalents in the World System” (Durham: Duke University Press), 1997, 74-92.

is, as a result, also quite broad: referencing all literature which precedes the 'postmodern' era, rather than a particular swathe of literary practice from a given period. With the diffusion of quickly evolving, and radically life-changing technology making older literatures increasingly remote, the threshold for 'classical' literature in this model veers ever-quickly toward the start of the new millennium, as older analogue technologies are slowly but systematically erased from our collective cultural memory, and are re-experienced in literature as novelties. Postmodern classicism is a grassroots model for literary practice coined by Stephen R. Spencer II and myself circa 2010. This intersection and conjoining of seemingly dialectical opposites lies at the conceptual centre of my creative practice, which distorts, disfigures, and reappropriates well-known literary writing. My aim in this thesis is to provide a conceptual framework for the postmodern classical, which will be accompanied by creative examples of this model of literary writing, which are themselves derivations and reconfigurations of canonical literature. My understanding of canon is essentially synonymous with that espoused by Harold Bloom, as an ever-shifting collection of 'great texts,' which offer their readers a significant artefact of cultural value, and yield their staying power through a sublime quality which makes up a decidedly important subject in literary studies. In this introduction I will discuss the origins of postmodern classicism, and its relevance as a marginal approach to literary writing. I will also attempt to provide some historical framing for the postmodern classical, by outlining how eternal life is conceived through artistic production according to early modern 'theorists' of canon. I am especially interested in canon formation and literary origins, which is expressed creatively as one of the foundational themes of my portfolio. In terms of critical research, my focus has been on rendering a genealogy of dialectical thinking and writing, as a particular approach to literary creation, and a key factor in the canonical status of writers such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Franz Kafka, and (the lesser-known, but still foundational) Sabina Spielrein. As such, this thesis investigates the intersection of the German and (Anglo-)English literary traditions, and how they have impacted my own strategies as a creative writer.

Each of these twin poles, the postmodern and classical, inform the earliest notions of this paradoxical approach. At sixteen, when I helped found this term, my understanding of the postmodern must have been rudimentary, and easily summarised without reference to a particular theorist: a disruption into the normative modes of meaning and signification, which brings about fraught possibilities for interpretive matters, and suggests an infinite variety of 'new' methods and forms for expression, dissolving the barriers between different conceptions of creative practice. Classicism, its 'opposite,' would simply have been understood as the study of classical literature, which once entailed primarily the study of Greek and Latin texts, but now has grown to include a great variety of indigenous and ancient writing. Rather than having the classical be synonymous with (or antithetical to) the canonical, I have, in this temporal framework oriented around the experience of reading great literature despite an inherent cultural estrangement, used a personal model of canonical writing as a template to evaluate a variety of secondary literary sources, and to emphasise a literary tradition where the subversive and discordant qualities of canonical writing are emphasised. This has been apart of an ongoing effort to cultivate a literary aesthetic that activates the inexplicable element within the 'canonical.' I, alongside Spencer and the few devotees of postmodern classicism, sought to complicate the demarcations between these literary modes, according to our own experiences and interests. Discussions of this literary model culminated in Stephen Spencer's creation of a literary journal, *Sybil*, a reference to Sybil Carpenter from JD Salinger's "A Perfect Day for Bananafish," who is herself an oblique reference to the sibylline prophets mentioned in my short story "Ira Illa Numinum."⁴ This journal is itself an expression of the interfusion of postmodern and classical figures, and forms. I was the first contributor not included in the masthead (known locally as the 'Sybil three'), and took up the position of co-editor-in-chief in 2018. In the time from its inception circa 2015, the journal has gone from local (San Marcos, Texas-based, a college town on the outskirts of Austin) to international in the scope of its readers and contributors. Being an editor has involved publishing others (and

4. JD Salinger. "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" in *Nine Stories* (London: Little and Brown Co.), 1970, 3-10.

indeed, my own literary writing) based on the principles of postmodern classicism. So, this thesis aims to investigate the literary precedent and methodological possibilities of the postmodern classical in terms of theory and creative practice.

There has been very little effort put into codifying or publicising the postmodern classical as a cultural or academic term. Therefore, the approach is best characterised by its marginal, apocryphal, if not ascetic, character among the writers who have helped develop the concept since its founding. The writing of Rosa Marin, who was one of the 'Sybil Three,' characterises the subversive and parodic possibilities of the postmodern classical. Their creative essay "Your DNA is an Abomination," originally published in the university newspaper at Texas State (and still available on Sybil), made national headlines, sparking outrage due to the essay's strongly worded condemnation of white supremacy as an instrument of cultural violence. Marin's calls to "deconstruct 'whiteness' and everything attached to it" ("whiteness will be over because we want it to be... ontologically speaking, white death will mean liberation for all"), was taken literally by the likes of Tucker Carlson, leading to death threats and doxxing by a network of white supremacist organisers.⁵ This conflagration of racial tensions foresaw the worldwide protests following the murder of George Floyd, among others, in 2020 and the reactionary violence that disrupted the certification of the American election on January 6th of the following year. My reading of this passage emphasises the metaphorical element: whiteness as a concept linked to racial and colonial violence. Marin has demonstrated not only the decisive importance of literature as a tool of political discourse, but also how parody and self-reflection can be developed through the literary arts. Stephen Spencer has been equally important in developing these ideas in his role as co-editor in chief of Sybil. In "a fragment," Spencer claims "I am not white guilt/ but the white apocalypse/ and tomorrow is the land of/ interracial relations....," further developing the possibilities of this subversive

5. Rosa Marin. "Your DNA is an Abomination" in *Sybil Journal*, 2017, <https://www.sybiljournal.com/work-2/2018/11/12/your-dna-is-an-abomination-by-rudy-martinez>.

Rosa Marin. "When They Came For Me" in *Sybil Journal*, 2018, <https://www.sybiljournal.com/work-2/2018/11/26/when-they-came-for-me-by-rudy-martinez>. (Author name has since changed)

anti-white-supremacist rhetoric.⁶ He also boldly explores some of the fundamental issues which I seek to address concerning appropriation in his references to Friedrich Nietzsche, Samuel Coleridge, and elsewhere to T. S. Eliot.⁷ This contribution, inexhaustibly building the network of pomoclassical literary writing, illustrates the key role of appropriation in this framework. No less, the importance of literary friendships is expressed through Spencer's understated portrait of Sir Philip Sidney which accompanies my sonnet series, "The Sparrow and the Saint," published through *Sybil*.⁸ These pieces, which are rather more traditional in terms of form and expression than, for instance, the 'sonnets' of Anne Carson, exemplify the appropriation of older forms in new contexts, without losing focus on the origins, or tradition, of one's work.⁹ I will now further explore that tradition as it manifested in the concept of 'eternity' through literary preservation in the early modern notion of canon.

Early Modern Canon and Twentieth Century Perspectives on Canonicity

I will now briefly outline the relationship between the early modern writers who first theorised canonical writing as its own designation, in the context of a 'national' literature. This has set the precedent for my own literary project, postmodern classicism, as I will demonstrate throughout this portfolio. It is my understanding that modern canons are instituted through the generation of dialectical literary discourse: that is, through discussions concerning literary meaning and the aesthetic ideal which, for the sheer variety of interpretations, lead to contradicting or 'opposite' positions. Writers in the early modern era, through the notion of 'eternal life' in the preservation of literary writing known as the 'cult of fame,' set the precedent for the paradoxical reconciliations which lie at the centre of much 'postmodern' thinking (in this case, one's life is sacrificed as means

⁶Stephen R. Spencer II. "a fragment" in *Sybil Journal*, <https://www.sybiljournal.com/work-2/2018/11/12/a-fragment-by-stephen-r-spencer-ii>.

⁷Stephen Spencer [The Rabbits]. "April Sucks," *Sybil Journal*, <https://www.sybiljournal.com/work-2/2018/11/18/april-sucks-by-the-rabbits>.

⁸D. M. Rice. "The Sparrow & The Saint" in *Sybil Journal*, <https://www.sybiljournal.com/work-2/2018/12/13/the-sparrow-amp-the-saint-by-dm-rice>.

⁹Anne Carson. "Two Sonnets" in *London Review of Books*, Vol. 33, No. 3, 2011, <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v33/n03/anne-carson/two-sonnets>.

inclusion into an elect group of authors who have created ‘preserved’ or ‘immortal’ works). These foundational assumptions will be demonstrated to be the invisible architecture upon which the twentieth century theorists of canon, Frank Kermode and Harold Bloom, built their own paradoxical ideas. These ideas informed my adolescent conception of the postmodern classical, and my hoping that in the generation of new literary terminology I might interfuse my own writing with the canonical authors from whom I drew influence.

The generation of discourse concerning writing seems to be one of the foremost criteria for the generation of a distinct notion of literary canon, as it emerged in the early modern era. Jonathan Kramnick, author of *Making the English Canon*, details the variety of oscillating positions between the advocates of the ‘ancients’ and ‘moderns’ in the early history of literary writing. Kramnick writes,

“what we have learned to call ‘the canon’ — a pantheon of high-cultural works of the past — came into being as a contradiction. Modernity generates tradition.... Canon formation then, as now, partook in wide-ranging debates about the nature of the cultural community.... The paradoxical establishment of a tradition out of a sense of modernity happened when literary culture was seen to be under considerable duress, even in crisis.”¹⁰

Kramnick considers the “considerable duress” now facing literary scholarship and authors as justifying his efforts, and I take cues from this assertion. He writes of the “long” and “intricate” conflicts through which a variety of shifting and contradictory positions concerning the ancient and moderns competed for immanence among the literate public, and helped constitute the current debates concerning the role of canon which remain unresolved.¹¹

Literary scholar Richard Terry is also interested in the origins of canon as its own distinct model of creative practice. He traces the contemporary notion of canon to an early modern concept of ‘literature’ which does “not refer to a roster of élite imaginative texts (as we now understand it)...[but] instead to an activity...a mental accomplishment, the

¹⁰.Jonathan Kramnick. *Making the English Canon: Print Capitalism and the Cultural Past 1700-1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1999, 1.

¹¹.Ibid..

word ‘book-learning’ embracing both ideas.”¹² In tandem with *belles lettres*, and poesy, or poetry, these terms set the precedent for canonical literature as it is now known. Terry writes of the ‘cult of fame,’ who believed in the concept of eternal life through literary preservation:

Fame remained a concept central to the office of poetry from the Renaissance through to the late eighteenth century, the reason for its invocation in such urgent terms being that it conferred a kind of secular after-life.... A second life gained through bodily death, just like that of the Christian after-life, presents itself as a paradox, and, accordingly, the idea of fame was often formulated in paradoxical terms.¹³

Paradox is tantamount to my conception of literary writing, and quite literally informs the most fundamental aspect of what is meant by the ‘postmodern classical’ in theory and practice. My aim is to demonstrate this paradoxical notion of literature as both a contemporary and historical phenomenon in my creative and critical writing—which at points become interfused, insofar as they actively engage with these complex notions of eternal life and literary preservation. Sir Philip Sidney plays his own part in this discourse in his advocacy for the removal of the association of verse forms from poetry (“verse is *inessential* to poetry, such that a poem in principle can be conceived in prose”), subverting formal norms and inviting new modes of expression.¹⁴ Later, Terry takes up the writing of early modern poet John Weever, who suddenly stopped writing poetry to focus on “hunting down and recording memorials to the revered dead...a plangent meditation on death and the preservation of fame.”¹⁵ By contrasting the disrepair of some of the grave sites with the cultural immanence of the authors there represented, Terry describes how “by way of paradox, for all of Weever’s poring over lapidary inscriptions, a persistent refrain of his book is an assurance that perpetuating one’s posterity is something given alone to poets.... He asserts that ‘only the muses’ works...give unto man immortality’:

12. Richard Terry. *Poetry and the Making of the English Literary Past 1660-1781* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2001, 15.

13. *Ibid.*, 72.

14. *Ibid.*, 28.

15. *Ibid.*, 88.

...‘in all things else there is vicissitude.’”¹⁶ It is in fact this dialectic of stability (‘eternal’ life through literary preservation) and endless change which is of interest in my interrelation of early modern canon with more recent scholarship concerning the canon and how best to understand canonical writing as a phenomenon.

From Kramnick I have received a greater understanding of the early modern theorists’ oscillating regard of the ‘ancients’ and the ‘moderns’ and the relationship of literary canon to print capitalism. Early modern concerns surrounding literary accessibility and refinement persist as questions raised by my own creative writing, which often eschews accessibility for opacity and critical ‘difficulty.’ Terry emphasises the dialectical discursive elements of early modern literary scholarship in England, with its neoclassical interfusion of Greek, Roman, and Anglo-Saxon mythologies, and overriding emphasis on preservation through literary fame. Literary studies stands to benefit by recognising, as Kramnick does, how the “struggles between the academy and journalism, sociability and training, are not new to literary criticism or to culture wars. They are, rather, present at the very origins of literary canon formation itself.”¹⁷ These thinkers inform my sensibility while studying the likes of Frank Kermode and Harold Bloom, who have each influenced my conception of canonical writing in the present day (my preference in this portfolio is to use the term ‘contemporary’ for the present and ‘modern’ in reference to the modernist period at the beginning of the twentieth century).

Twentieth-century literary scholar Frank Kermode is rather psychoanalytical in his perspective on how literary writing and canon functions in the abstract, which has drawn me to him as a relevant figure in the study of postmodern classicism. In *Pleasure and Change: The Aesthetics of Canon*, he brings Czech critic Jan Mukarovsky’s reader response theory (that the poetic object’s “aesthetic purpose is achieved only by the action of a responsive reader”) into conversation with Kenneth Burke’s neo-Freudian notion that “literary form consists in creating a need (affirming lack) in the reader and then providing

16. Ibid.. (See Appendix A)

17. Jonathan Kramnick. *Making the English Canon*, 5-6.

the compensatory satisfactions.”¹⁸ Kermode provides a framing for my own use of psychoanalytical concepts in this study when he writes “this binding [the ‘affirming lack’] force co-exists with its opposite, which seeks to undo connections and destroy.... And it is true that whenever one speaks of [literary] pleasure, one becomes aware of the many ways in which polarities interact, most simply in the relations of pleasure and pain.”¹⁹ Equally important is his notion of canon as a dynamic entity, defined by its tendency toward *change*. Kermode insists “[literary] texts too must change, or rather, we must choose to grant them the blessings of change, for that alone will save them from...[being] rubbish in the end.”²⁰ I have taken this notion of change as a rather literal stylistic justification for my own creative interventions, bearing in mind Kermode’s dictum that “reception history informs us that even Dante, Botticelli, and Caravaggio, even Bach and Monteverdi, endured long periods of oblivion until the conversation changed and they were revived.”²¹ As with the early modern scholarship described above, this conception of change acknowledges the sense of literary preservation being paradoxically akin with the prolongation of the life of the author themselves.

Harold Bloom also figures as an important scholarly figure in my personal conception of canonical writing in the contemporary era. Bloom formalises Kermode’s view concerning latent meaning in literary writing, noting “one mark of an originality that can win canonical status for a literary work is a strangeness that we either never altogether assimilate, or that becomes such a given that we are blinded to its idiosyncrasies.”²² Despite some uninspiring remarks concerning the ultimately apolitical nature of literary writing, Bloom provides interesting and essential scholarship in tracing the dialectics and ambiguities of literary writing through the ages to the “the first author of the Hebrew Bible,

18. Frank Kermode. *Pleasure and Change: The Aesthetics of Canon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2004, 21.

19. *Ibid.*

20. *Ibid.*, 32-3.

21. *Ibid.*

22. Harold Bloom. *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages* (New York: Riverhead Books), 1994, 4.

See also Frank Kermode. *The Genesis of Secrecy: On the Interpretation of Narrative* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press), 1979, 1-10.

the figure named the Yahwist or J” who is argued to be the Queen Bathsheba. Bloom observes,

“ambivalence between the divine and human is one of J’s grand inventions, another mark of an originality so perpetual that we can scarcely recognise it, because the stories Bathsheba told have absorbed us. The ultimate shock implicit in this canon-making originality comes when we realise that the Western worship of God...is worship of a literary character.”²³

This literary accomplishment is akin to what I will in chapter two describe as the ‘world historical’ phenomenon, which, as an object of study and interest, justifies itself.

Of equal importance to this collection is Bloom’s notion of ‘misprision,’ or creative appropriation which simultaneously destroys and recreates literary context. In the third chapter I will provide a historical account of the precedent for this idea in my discussion of the hybridic critical writing of Sabina Spielrein.

Summaries of the Creative Work and the Postmodern Classical

I will now provide an account of the structure of this thesis, including an introduction to the methodological context, and further information regarding my role as an editorial advocate for the postmodern classical. The project itself entails providing a definitional scope for the postmodern classical, a self-generated term, and an analysis of the accompanying short fiction portfolio, thus satisfying the requirement for critical reflection. Simultaneously, I have contributed original knowledge through the discursive generation of a definitional scope for postmodern classicism, and its antecedents, and via the praxis of deconstructing the methodology of the postmodern classical itself. This project is broken up into sections of creative work (prose, or a hybridic prose-poetry, reminiscent of projects such as Carson’s ‘novel-in-verse,’ *Autobiography of Red*) and three accompanying critical chapters, which provide a historical and conceptual framing for the postmodern classical itself.²⁴ I will allow myself two caveats before introducing the plots and interrelation of the creative and critical writing here presented. The first is that my analytical perspective is retroactive in nature. That is, that I have first concerned myself with the creation of literary writing, and only afterwards made any attempts at

23. Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon*, 5.

24. Anne Carson. *Autobiography of Red: A Novel in Verse* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf), 1998.

critical exegesis. I have been emboldened in my privileging artistic invention before critical writing especially by Laura Penny's observation concerning Walter Benjamin's reading of Franz Kafka:

Benjamin insists that Kafka maintains an ambiguous and oscillating relation to judgment and the law throughout his work. Just as Kafka's man finds himself overwhelmed by his own strangeness, so too does Kafka find himself subject to forces he neither understands nor controls, forces from the distant past and impending future.²⁵

In this context, creative work must precede critical writing because it itself is a form of critical contemplation, as I will argue in the second chapter. Another key figure from the second chapter, Felix Guattari, offers a useful observation in an interview described by Ola Stahl in the journal *Theory, Culture, & Society*. Guattari notes that, "writing begins to function in something else.... Where is it possible for a writer to start this literary machine if it isn't precisely outside of writing and of the field of literature."²⁶ Although I emphasise the dialectical elements of my own work, and explore the 'tradition' itself in terms of literary writing and critical analysis, the subjects of my creative writing almost necessarily are derived from something external to literature itself. Where this isn't the case (such as in my "Wuthering Heights"), the foundational conventions of narrative storytelling are being intentionally broken for the purposes of creative experimentation.

The first three creative pieces are by far the most conventional in terms of form. Yet still they introduce some of the greater themes of the portfolio. "Jupiter and the Crescent Moon" is a reimagining of the life of Alexander the Great, an experiment in historical fiction complicated by the narrative fluidity between different perspectives (an omniscient narrator, the eunuch "B.," and Alexander the Great himself). The dialectics of dynamic individuality and the collective, as well as subversion and conformity of expectations are elements in the story which place it in conversation with the subsequent work in the portfolio. There is also a strong parodic element in the descriptions of

25. Laura Penny. "Parables and Politics: How Benjamin and Deleuze & Guattari Read Kafka" in *Theory & Event*, Vol. 12, Iss. 3, 2009, <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/parables-politics-how-benjamin-deleuze-amp/docview/210781050/se-2?accountid=10766>.

26. Ola Stahl. "Kafka and Deleuze/ Guattari: Towards a Creative Critical Writing Practice" in *Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol. 33, 2016, 221–235, <https://doi-org.uniessexlib.idm.oclc.org/10.1177%2F0263276415625313>.

eroticism among the Greek soldiers, and especially in the figure Pausias, who is a representative of the effeminate 'Sissy Brigade,' which is a narrative invention of my own making. "Tiresias Speaks" is also written in a world where the Greek pantheon is dominant, as if to further confuse and interfuse elements of contemporary (postmodern) and classical narrative. This story is altogether different, more fantastical, and almost surreal compared to "Jupiter....," where there is only the suggestion of divine intervention. As with the above story, the erotic and parodic elements exist here in tandem, subverting expectations surrounding the serious 'blind prophet' trope upon which the story is based. This thread of parody concerning the erotic element continues into "Thirteen," a story vividly reimagining Charles Bukowski's alter ego, Henry Chinaski, in something like an origin story, which focuses on the lascivious fantasies of the protagonist concerning an instructor, Mrs. Vickerson. As I later mention, this story almost becomes subsumed by the parodic element. Nonetheless, there are key moments in the work (a reference to Tennyson and purposeful use of the list as an expression of literary dedication) which will be referenced repeatedly throughout the critical chapters, and which conceptually ties much of the creative portfolio together. It is surely the case that the perspective concerning the erotic and the narrative subjectivities in my subsequent creative work matures significantly. That said, this element of the immature is itself a subversive use of canonical literature, which is the entire project of pomoclassicism.

These concepts surrounding literary subversion and appropriation are put into a conceptual framework in the first critical chapter, which concerns the writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Goethe's strong personality, the interfusion of his personal and literary interests, and his reliance on parodic narrative subversion make him a figure of principal concern to my study of postmodern classicism. His evocative and often humorous literary depictions, such as that of the "bel esprit" who "left a little heap" (a reference to

defecation) on the grave of the fictional Werther, and the absurd and lascivious aspects of the ending of *Faust* more than justify the subversive elements in my own writing.²⁷

I begin the next creative arc with an excerpt from a full-length redaction of Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, which remains a novel of incredible importance to me for its daring subject matter and apparent interest in the internality of the artist's perspective.

Redaction writing, as the name implies, involves the selective 'blacking out' of a text, through which that text is transformed. My redactive method, which I have called the 'mimetic redaction,' is an attempt at misprision: that is, it is an attempt to disrupt and preserve the originary material (text) through a creative intervention. In this case that entails making "poetry" out of the novel, which is (following Sydney's dissolution of the boundaries between poetry and literary prose) already surely poetic. This work is introduced in the preceding critical chapter, where I also discuss the role of appropriation in the Goethean oeuvre, and my own creative practice, which is also clearly demonstrated through the stories so far discussed, and those that follow. This element of appropriation becomes more explicit in the narratives "Another Hunger Artist" and "A Country Sheriff," which each take inspiration from well-known short stories by Kafka. "Another Hunger Artist" reimagines Kafka's "The Hunger Artist" through the perspective of a young transgender sex worker. Its depiction of a sadistic, anonymous collective expresses an altogether different view of the erotic than the preceding stories in the collection. The first arc expresses the erotic primarily in terms of the sexual. In "Sorrow" this element is mostly sensualised, as a metaphorical interfusion borne from the naturalist tendencies of romanticism. However, in "Sorrow" and "Another Hunger Artist" (as in "Jupiter...," previously) the libidinal drive to violence is expressed via Werther's suicide and the sexualised cruelty of the anonymous collective.

This conception of libidinal violence provides the narrative tension for "A Country Sheriff," which is a fantastical short story influenced by Kafka's "A Country Doctor." In my

²⁷JW v Goethe. *Goethe: Selected Verse*, trans. David Luke (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books), 1969, 27-8. See also Harold Bloom. *The Western Canon*, 197.

telling the Sheriff figure searches for one half of an 'illegal' interracial couple, providing an opportunity for contemplation of the law and justice. His cynical conclusion (expressed by another but foreseen at other points in the story) "none who seek the truth may find it here" is belied by the apparent satisfaction which the protagonist takes in the mere act of philosophical contemplation, a theme also explored in "Another Hunger Artist." This theme of philosophical contemplation informs my discussion of Kafka in the second chapter. Kafka is an extremely important figure in terms of his immense impact on my own creative work, and his undeniable status as a canonical writer more generally. In this second chapter (the largest in scope), I explore the relationship between the dialectical theories of Kafka, and their derivation from Goethe, Nietzsche, and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. I also outline Kafka's influence on Walter Benjamin and Deleuze and Guattari, which seems to have entailed a relationship of frustration and the reconciliation of opposites. These are among the foremost themes of my portfolio, suggested by the designation of the *postmodern classical* itself, although my perspective does not always adhere to that of these thinkers, who, at least at face value, often reject the role of psychoanalysis as an informative tool for literary analysis. Kafka's aphorisms, his concepts of eternity/the indestructible, and key scenes from *The Trial* are examined alongside exegetical passages contextualising my own appropriative writing in reference to the author himself.

It is difficult to read the following three stories, "The First Thanksgiving," "The Dignity that Justice Requires," and "Babo's Vision/ , Himself" without acknowledging the elements of the Kafkaesque which pervade each. Pocahontas in "The First Thanksgiving" is ambiguously interfused with the wendigo, a mythical creature of Algonquin and Iroquois legend, in a move which both subverts and conforms to the fantastical elements of Kafka's writing. This story, "Thanksgiving," shares with "The Dignity that Justice Requires" an interest in the representation of the collective, which is placed in contrast to the strong individual characters throughout the portfolio. In "The

Dignity...,” the collective “we” acts as narrator. A disorienting and dialectical relationship with the unknowable is explored: “despite the chaos of the parable, we endure.” This decision foresees the more extreme and disruptive attempts at collectivistic representation which will occur in the final selection of creative writing. Meanwhile, the thread of disorientation and dialectics continues in my redaction of Voltaire’s “The World as It Is,” here called “Babo’s Vision/ , Himself.” The title character, a shortening of ‘Baboac’ from the original narrative, explores the city of Persepolis with the ‘angel’ Ithuriel, interviewing persons from the city to determine whether or not it ought to be destroyed. The interfusion of the erotic and violent aspects of libido in these stories develops the themes of disruption and creativity which inform the entire portfolio. My analysis of these concepts culminates in a discussion concerning the influence of the early psychoanalytic theorist Sabina Spielrein on the postmodern classical.

I contend that the neglect of Sabina Spielrein’s writing both by psychoanalysts and literary scholars is one of the biggest failures of twentieth century scholarship. Her critical contributions are foundational to the theoretical perspective which underpins the entirety of my critical writing here presented. Spielrein’s debt to Goethe has been acknowledged by Michael Plastow in his difficult study on Spielrein, *Sabina Spielrein and the Poetry of Psychoanalysis*; however, to my knowledge no one has to date read Spielrein’s critical writing alongside Kafka’s creative work.²⁸ My analysis concerning the notions of poetry as erotic fusion, simultaneous creation and destruction, the dialectic of the individual and collective, and the ‘horror’ of eternal life through literary writing brings the entire collection into focus, demonstrating a unique and important scholarly achievement. I have, throughout this thesis traced the development of the concept of ‘eternal life’ by early theorists of literary canon, championed by Goethe, to Spielrein’s subversion of that concept, which is akin to Kafka’s creative/critical perspective insofar as it emphasises how

28 Michael Plastow. *Sabina Spielrein and the Poetry of Psychoanalysis*. Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2018, 65-70, 79.

the transcendent elements of eternity co-exist with their dialectical opposite—which is itself a theme of early modern writing concerning the ‘canon’ of literary figures/writing.

To the same ends, the final four stories, “Dead!,” “Wuthering Heights,” “Ira Illa Numinum,” and “Epigraph” act as the conceptual centre for the entirety of the portfolio’s creative work. All of these pieces push the limits of the methodological approaches which are developed throughout the rest of the portfolio. “Dead!,” for instance, utilises the same interfusion of source material and essentially the same redaction practice as “Sorrow” and “Babo’s Vision,” but the story is even more disruptive narratively through the inclusion of a transgender subtext regarding the character Gabriel, suggestions of eroticised violence, and the interfusion of ‘poetry’ into the footnote materials themselves. “Wuthering Heights” sees the complete dissolution of syntax and narrative convention, through the simultaneous interfusion of four texts concurrently. This redaction piece follows the ‘cut up’ method famously employed by William Burroughs, and ambiguously shifts narrative positions, while also continuing to develop the greater themes of erotic fusion and eternal preservation through writing. The darker aspects of these themes are explored in “Ira Illa Numinum,” the longest story, and one which further disrupts the balance between seemingly original writing from appropriated contexts (myths, conventional narrative forms such as allegory, ode, etc) and directly appropriated writing itself. That is, this story takes the account of the reign of Nero from Tacitus’s *The Annals* and retells the story as if it occurred in the transitional period from the late nineties into the early twenty first century. The story is also based in New York, rather than Rome. “Ira Illa Numinum” subversively demonstrates the libidinal interfusion of eroticism and violence, ironically enough, by following the historical source material in disturbing detail. I conceived of this story when I was first introduced to *The Annals* as part of my earliest

university honours-seminar, *The Human Situation*, at the ripe age of eighteen. My ten years of dedication have demonstrated a resolve to cultivate the methodological rigour and sharpness necessary to achieve this evocative literary accomplishment during my doctoral studies. Among its more compelling aspects, frequently resonating with the other major themes of the thesis, is the interfusion of the character Sabina Poppea with Sabina Spielrein through the interjection of quotes from Spielrein's paper, "Destruction as the Cause of Coming into Being." In this challenging story I also explore aspects of individuation and the collective, literary preservation and the rituals of power, questions of revolutionary art and art as a commodity, and the simultaneously creative and destructive aspects of libido.²⁹ This story, for all of its evocation and subversion of cultural norms, is also distinctly reliant of the literary tradition in a manner informed by Bloom's notion of 'misprision.' The preceding creative and critical pieces inform the most methodologically risky, and subversive piece of the entire portfolio: "Epigraph."

This final work of appropriative literature, "Epigraph" is formed entirely of passages copied from Twitter. This use of direct quotation and textual representation of digital detritus (images and emojis, in this instance, as much as the posts themselves) interfuse the parodic and preservative aspects of pomoclassical literary writing. The educational and cultural value of this work is apparent, as it clearly demonstrates the conditions of postmodern living: a cacophony of voices from all eras, past and present, swirling in a tangle of what René Girard calls 'mimetic futility'³⁰ The ease with which one may change their username on twitter, the impossibility of verifying or tracking down the entirety of the contents included in this creative work, especially unpublished works, fictional references, and references from 'bot' accounts, as well as the sheer number of references which

29. Jacques Derrida and Eric Prenowitz. "Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression: in *Diacritics*, Vol. 25, No. 2, 1995, 9-63, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/465144>.

For more information concerning the interrelation of western literary dynamics and psychoanalysis (imagining canon as the quintessential cultural 'archive'), collectives of consciousness, and the role of literary creativity in Freudian and Jungian thought, see above.

30. René Girard. *Anorexia and Mimetic Desire*, trans. Mark Anspach (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press), 2013, 15.

would be required made the prospect of thorough citations untenable and, at best, counteractive to the experience of the piece itself. The importance of twitter as the 'public' sphere of discourse and its interrelationship to early modern notions of canon is creatively explored here, calling to mind Kramnick's evocation of Jürgen Habermas and his emphasis on the role of public sphere in imagining canon as a dominant mode of literary writing.³¹ The cacophony of competing and contradictory perspectives, with no way to know which is truth and which is misinformation, perfectly typifies the intersection of the postmodern and classical themes upon which my portfolio is based. This story presents postmodern and classical writing side by side in an evocative but apparently poetic manner, which is the project of the postmodern classical, in essence.

To the extent that postmodern classicism exists as a creative model of literary practice, I am a unique authority in attempting to describe and express its principles creatively. This genre must be regarded, as Deleuze and Guattari observe concerning Kafka's oeuvre, as an approach to literature defined by an almost overwhelming striving for immanence.³² Their conception of a 'minor literature' is a useful lens through which to understand the postmodern classical, and one which is further informed by my being an American expat in the UK, and a queer, multi-ethnic person navigating the intersection of several competing cultural contexts ("minor literature is...that which a minority constructs within a major language").³³ Deleuze and Guattari contend, paradoxically and against all logic: "there is nothing so major as the minor."³⁴ The pair also provide a justification for my retro-active analysis in their assertion that "a minor, or revolutionary, literature begins by expressing itself and doesn't conceptualise until afterward."³⁵ If that is the case, then I offer a compelling example of a major literature, born out of the minor. At *Sybil* I have

31 Jonathan Kramnick. *Making the English Canon*, 1-14.

32. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. *Kafka*, 16-27, 43-52.

33. *Ibid.*, 16.

34. *Ibid.*, 26.

35. *Ibid.*, 28.

attempted to cultivate and interfuse these two elements, publishing writing by the likes of Luke Kennard (whose intervention onto William Shakespeare's sonnets is a helpful point of reference to my own writing) and Alice Notley (whose interfusion of classical and postmodern norms is apparent in her *Descent of Alette*).³⁶ Much of my redaction writing in this portfolio has been published in the online journal *The Decadent Review*, including a disordered redaction of Samuel Beckett's *Endgame* which is not included in this portfolio, but which nonetheless demonstrates a continued engagement with experimental literary methods and frameworks.³⁷ My aim in this thesis, too, has been to cultivate and develop new critical and creative possibilities concerning the postmodern classical, in all its overwhelming variety.

In my non-exhaustive attempt at describing the possibilities of a postmodern classical literary perspective, I have relied on a wide variety of academic sources, literary works, and secondary studies. As a result, there have been many instances where works are referenced in a text but improperly cited, or, more commonly, not cited at all. Where it has been impractical or impossible to track down these referenced sources (such as in the writing of amateur scholar H. B. Cotterill concerning *Faust*, or even in the case of Harold Bloom, whose study *The Western Canon* utterly lacks an academically rigorous citation system), I have instead chosen to list the works in an appendix. I have emphasised accessibility rather than academic rigour or popularity as the principal criteria for my source texts, both creatively and critically. Rather than demonstrating a preference for a particular publisher, I have instead inadvertently shown the variety of forms through which one may engage with 'canonical' literature, and its study. In utilising lesser-known editions and translations of well-known works, I have hoped to propose an expansive view of canonical literary studies, beyond the criteria of institutional association. To the same ends, I have sought to realistically replicate the conditions of

36. Luke Kennard. *Notes on the Sonnets* (London: Penned in the Margins), 2021. Alice Notley. *The Descent of Alette* (London: Penguin Books), 1996.

37. D. M. Rice. "The Songs of Sorrow" in *The Decadent Review*, <https://thedecadentreview.com/corpus/the-songs-of-sorrow/>. (An excerpt from "Sorrow")

D. M. Rice. "Babo's Vision/ , Himself" in *The Decadent Review*, <https://thedecadentreview.com/corpus/babos-vision-himself/>.

D. M. Rice. "Dead!" in *The Decadent Review*, <https://thedecadentreview.com/corpus/dead/>.

D. M. Rice. "End!" in *The Decadent Review*, <https://thedecadentreview.com/corpus/end/>.

engagement which the average scholar, despite any pretences toward rigour and critical acumen, faces when engaging with such a difficult and unwieldy subject such as the institution of canons and canonicity itself (hence, the inclusion of the Empire edition of *Totem and Taboo* by Freud when I also reference his complete works in translation by James Strachey, in which the text is included). Especially in the case of appropriated writing, this methodological sensibility demonstrates the tendency toward subversion and disruption which is part and parcel of the postmodern classical literary approach.

Jupiter and the Crescent Moon³⁸

Along the river this vast horde took residence, where the village of Sangala meets the eastern border of Nautica. Here descends the army of the seven nations: Macedon, Greece, Alexandria, Babel, Persia, Phrygia, and now Bactria. They were like shadows over the land. When they lock stepped, calamity struck the earth such that could be heard in Athens. Desert winds wailed of their flooding over the mountains. None could stem the flood. The cavalry, caravans, now these metal men have convinced the treacherous Ambhi of their sovereign's might, who flies the course of gods yet dares to walk the earth. A bloody prince now kneels beside his protectorate, and clowns himself for profit of this foreign host.

“Almighty sovereign, now that you have witnessed Kashmir, what course do you propose?”

“We seek the mighty Ocean, harbinger of empire which did so trick Ulysses that lone he wandered the greater course of twenty years. I seek the endless waters which bring no nourishment, so my men will know at least victory over the entire world.”

“And yet your course is to the east, your holy king? There you will only find rebels, barbarous villains under the rein of foolish Porus, who has usurped unto my kingdom and stolen my natural birthright. Otherwise the peasants act via the commandment of Brahmin Chandragupta, whom the peasant warriors have deemed Chanakya. Even now they gather together armies of monastic orders, and refuse to acknowledge you as ruler of the tribes of India, and the lands beyond.”

There was an outburst at this comment among the onlooking retinue of seers, sages, prophets, mediums, and commanders gathered in the god-king's tent for this

38. Trans. Aubrey de Sélincourt. *Arrian's Life of Alexander the Great* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books), 1958. Mary Renault. *The Nature of Alexander* (London: Penguin Books), 1975, 32, 134-6, 164-181.

Peter Green. *Alexander the Great* (London: Weinfeld and Nicolson), 1970, 47, 183-5, 191-222.

This short story, which was inspired by the historical figure Alexander the Great, takes its contents from three sources: *Arrian's Life of Alexander the Great*, which is the foremost classical account of the life of Alexander the Great, Mary Renault's more psychologically oriented *The Nature of Alexander*, and finally Peter Green's dry but detailed account of the military campaigns, *Alexander the Great*. Each of these sources has contributed to the narrative fluidity and sense of concrete historical fiction which this story aspires to. Its dry precision, anachronistic word-forms, and parodic/comedic elements exist in tandem, subverting and affirming expectations concerning the commonly known but rarely studied figure of Alexander himself.

intelligence briefing. Cletus the Black jeered.

“Seems it would be easier to conquer the whole of Scythia than take this land, by this cur’s word, and whatever else lay *beyond* it?”

“Lies! Prince Ambhi, Son of Ambhiraj, Ruler of the Punjab tribes and Keeper of the Temples at Taxilla, do you believe your King a sovereign God, who walks the earth as mortals fear to walk, the path of holy will?”

“As in stories, and by my very life, does your highness convince me of this.”

“You have been a noble guide, and helped this army pass the river Hydra unharmed, and so we stand again to speak your praise, and bestow upon you the golden laurels of Macedon, kneel before your King and receive them.”

The hardened veterans spat the earth upon seeing this spineless prince thus prostrate. They had taken to kicking anyone they saw emulating this behaviour up the ass and reminding them ‘*You have lived as subjects of a powerful country, why do you now lower yourself like the very slaves you’ve conquered?*’ The meeting broke up by royal decree, but these buzzing courtiers continued to have their say. How could they expect to conquer such dense, unyielding territory under the guidance of such a frail and ignoble ruler? What were they to do now learning that this channel to Ocean was merely the outstretched claw of a creature more calamitous and deadly than even the daring venture at Granicus, where the lot of them were held back against the rushing current, walking with Death ever-present in their midst. How could they fare against the grey giants, or the sickening weather that suggested even the gods themselves thus stood against their plight? To whom should they direct their prayers? The sovereign answered, “To me!” and retreated to his bedchamber without further counsel.

Thus began the season of heavy rains upon the fertile land. Village monks took to hurling spears from the tops of trees at the seven nations as they passed through the

heavy wind. The soldiers became bloated with starvation, alcohol, and bad spirit. Their flesh tremor'd with pocks, and each was left to fend against the cruelty of nature. Marching orders were slow, dead left by the roadways without burial, often stamped to disfigurement under the boots of this dazed regiment. Entire squadrons of good men gave up the ghost, and vanished in the night to unknown fates. Rumours flew of undead soldiers crooning from the marshes, swallowing children whole with their crooked bodies. Who can speak the truth of these matters? Hades take them. Charon, give them restful passage, who drew their vanquished life so far from home in such miserable circumstances.³⁹

Upon their return to the settlements beyond Taxilla, resentment flared as the very monsoons howled their rage against the lot of them. Still, this army marched under their banner, the Virgin Sun, and lock stepped their way knowing no kind fait. They were led by faith that Ocean would yield her bounty unto them like the goodliest whore of Babel, where the sovereign's throne awaits the end of this dismal venture.

Each man grew bolder in ennui, and the battalion of rejects grew stronger every day. Their tattered robes and rusted armour played second fiddle to the extravagance of the Hateri, whose faceless swarm saw not, thought not, but what was given by command. One such dissenter, Pausias, sang his grief.

*O how we struggle in the march!
And night and day do vie for sober love!
My boy, I'd quickly come inside!
But can't help notice the rainrot in your bum!*

*Anon, anonnnnn! My pleasure now is pain!
Even killing ain't what it used to be!
My god, my faggot god, please do refrain!
Your war against us, who are most like thee!*

For these prayers Pausias did receive, in faith, twenty lashes, but was returned a martyred sage among the foolish clan, known by others as the 'Sissy Brigade.⁴⁰ Their

39. Charon is the ferry-keeper to the Underworld, where Hades resides. Souls are typically thought to be brought to the Afterlife by Hermes, but must still pay Charon for passage to be brought peacefully to their final resting place.

40. Homer. "The Iliad", Book 2 (Boston: MIT Online), <http://classics.mit.edu/Homer/iliad.2.ii.html>.

This character is modelled after Homer's character in *The Iliad*, Thersites, who rails "against all who were in authority." The conjoining of humour and violence in this instance is telling of some of the greater themes of the portfolio.

endless whinging rants did exculpate the dishonour of public flogging, and openly they made love which most did seek to hide, where every body turned against the other in a cuddle puddle of a hundred men, sick with pustules, yet so resigned with life as not to care.

Such men were the front to line in the onslaught at Nysa, where the forein Bacchus reins under a Hermaphroditic Temple. A garrison of men in dresses did stand guard against the thatched walls of the town. Pausias traipsed in rusted armour and hummed forth for his mates *“Look, ho! Such fair and fine a lad I’ve ne’er seen.⁴¹ They seem to me as maidens packing more. Oh, how I wish that we might dream of peace, and that I could invite them round to my back door!”* Crateris rode the front line with all of a slave’s interest, as these pansies hooted and jeered. He spoke a stern command that their King thus carried. Forward march. As so many ants, the troops lock-stepped to the sloping valley where this town stood. Shields up, blocking the first volley of arrows and spears. Ladders through. Ram the gate! All the better to hide the second flank coming from the north, led by the Great King himself. Fires held the Sissies at bay, while the Royal guard broke the line, rammed the gate from within, and came to kill the rest.

What can be said, in the end? The town was levelled but for the Temple of Dionysus, and blood carpeted the streets after the women’s screams were stilled. Thus was Nysa claimed from the brave hands that kept its keep. There was no telling how long the army stood, gap jawed, before the King’s battalion rode through the unsettled temple, removed their helmets, and knelt before the altar, where a faint candle glowed.

“Oh, holy lord, keeper of the essences of life, and spirit of revelry, beseech us to whatever please your honour, and accept the sacrifices thus far made, as well as those which are to come after your temple is refurbished by this son of Zeus-Ammon.”

A single wind snuffed the candle out, at which point the King flew into a mad rage. Thus it was decreed, against the judgements of the courtly sages, that honours should be given instead to Castor and Polydeuces, the gemini children who share the link between

41. William Shakespeare. *Macbeth*. Boston: MIT University Press Online, <http://shakespeare.mit.edu/macbeth/full.html>. A reference to “Macbeth” by William Shakespeare, “So foul and fair a day I have not seen” ... “Fair is foul, and foul is fair: Hover through the fog and filthy air.”

mortality and immortality. An uproarious rain continues, but the men demand the sacred rites be upheld on this tenday, when the Dionysian calendar takes its foothold. The caravans of treasure, hordes of wanton women, and reserve casks of mead and wine are brought to bear upon the punch-drunk army of seven nations. The drums of war gave way to flutes of revelry and the very King shared his goblet with the greater retinue of Macedon, who had of late felt second order to the Hateri, and the wizened Chiefs of Alexandria.

But B. saw things how they really were. The King could no longer be sated, no matter how anyone tried. And what was worse is that B.'s true love, the very being for whom B. was spun from celestial glass to serve, was shown to me mutilated so. The Great King knew he would never win my heart with matters left as such, and that I would instead bring a knife to his neck. So the body of the Lord-born and almighty King Darius was reconfigured with extraordinary accuracy by medical doctors, and sent to be lain in the Sacred Tomb at Persepolis. Thus was I given, as is customary under such circumstances, to the Almighty usurper of the World: Alexander the Terrible, of Macedon. He's actually very sensitive, unlike anyone I've e'er seen before, and yet with such immense power are so many nations brought to sovereign end. But now that his generals are at odds with the very idea of the mission, conquest and plunder for its own sake, what would be well-nigh impossible in practical terms with these current resources and fledgling loyalties has come to roost in the battlements of the Conqueror of the Sovereign World. But he is mad with grief, and drunk with his own power, that he has risen from merely sent from gods to Holy Worship, with no semblance of an explanation that was not self-serving and hollow.

And now they sit and wring their hands and know not what so that even orgies such as these which used to be so delightfully exotic are filled with despair as the major generals sit humbled with unseemly, gaudily ornate wine dishes passing between them laced with Heaven knows what. Dancers of the most beautiful Sovereign, completely ignored as these men chin wag with their wringing fists. Music more holy and ancient than any they have e'er known, completely lost on them. The very Pleas of Bacchus to give up their fears and stead

themselves for the thieves at home, who mock the charge that cannot enforce itself on steady ground within even a fortnight. See how the women fare from proud to bashful and even terror stricken new-wives clamour among the lot of them, who shake their fist and clench their hands as knives are drawn upon them. Yet others have much fun and twist and turn in knots which defy e'en the most ignoble of Greece's brothels. Yet all of it is lost upon these men who stare each other down with mirth hiding consternation.

"And by that moment the entirety of the column broke, and we pincer'd the lot of them to dust."

"The greater part of us were there, your present Lord."

"I should ask you a question, your most Holy King."

"Cletus the Black, you have been sorely silent through the latest expedition, does something trouble you?"

"I just wonder what your Father, Philip the Great, would have to say about the State of his most Beloved and High-born Son, who now claims birth of immortal Ammon, and does forsake his line!"

"Speak not of Philip here! You can see that Philip is a dwarf in comparison to the Giant that is Alexander the Almighty!"

"There is no greater, and more noble ruler of the seven nations! And there has never been one! For Philip failed in conquest of Persia, but did enlist the Godking at just fifteen to rule battalions of men!"

"Stop, Sycophants! You do prostrate yourselves like Persian slaves against the very custom of your homeland! Macedon does weep for your ignorant conviction!"

"Enough! I will not be spoken to in this manner! Cletus, you knew my father well..."

"Aye, and didst train you early in the truest art of war. And took the fall for you at Glamis when the spear stuck through your leg, as any mortal man!"

“ENOUGH I SAY! This is heresy! Come here!”

The Great King went for Cletus the Black with a knife, but was held back by the sycophants Livius, Agrives, and Ptolemey. The General rushed from the hearth but could be heard shouting the incompetent mindlessness of their so-called Great Ruler: who cannot keep his own men from dropping like flies, and is as much enemy to them as their disputing adversaries!

“Cletus the Black, come bow before me! If thou has any honour at all, or did truly love my Father as you say, come prostrate before his Willing Heir!”

But Cletus would not obey, and would only come close enough to tell him such so the King, with no justification or prior decree, didst run him through with his spear. The man attempted to speak, and did claw the air before him as if to claim his death, to speak no more. Alexander twisted away his words with the point of his spear, so the man died thinking of Macedon, and the cruel leaders he served. Alexander became wide-eyed, and wailed aloud for what he'd done. The music stopped and pretty much everything broke up after that. The pansy division alone played on deep into the night, not worried in the least as to whether anyone was looking.

Only Alexander could see things clearly, back in his tent alone with B. (lecherous, unloyal B., who is, despite the fact, the most beautiful of all of my concubines, and easily my favourite) and Hephaeston, my very Patroclus, who I do love as the essence of myself. Hephaeston, my very empire will fall as the inexperienced are named True Successors, doomed to clash with the Old Guard. They will divide up this glorious kingdom as you would a bloated pig. This body will be doomed to rest elsewhere than my Native Macedon, but reside instead under the Temples of Alexandria, where at least I am recognised as the otherworldly being that I am. Ptolemy will conquer this realm following the prophecy that whoever rules the land where Alexander rests, shall have prosperity and might in war. Slowly the native tribes will yield, but only until they gather their strength. The supply route from the east will be broken as such. Phrygia, Babylon, and Persia stand to gain more through these bylines than Macedonians do. Our time will

come to fall to Greece, or else watch the best and most learned among us killed for their sound judgment. In my ambrosial coffin these things will not bother me, yet they do torment my waking mind, that knows its fate yet must still keep its course. Will it be poison? Perhaps a blade of ritual silver? Even a fever dream could do to send away the world when there is nothing left to conquer but lands which will not yield to western gods. And yet we stand to learn their skill in building and invention, their cosmopolitan outlook and playful modesty. Their loyalty and righteousness is unsurpassed in the whole world. It is what keeps B. near me, and what most drives them away.

The hour grows thin, and Zeus rises with the horns of Taurus, commandeering Io's chariot with ruthless abandon. Tonight they ride under no dominion but the very gap in the abyss, torrent of unassailable heights. Hephaeston has called his master to bed, and begins to prepare himself for the long ride ahead.

After raiding the town properly for supplies, the army of seven nations found themselves in a stalemate. The King would not be moved, and the generals would not blink first regarding their sovereign's hissy fit. Many began to take exile in the mountains, and a retinue of several thousand followed Calisthenes only to be put down by Mercenaries under the command of Prince Ambhi. Some were caught jumping into the river, and flogged. Some died of boredom or homesickness, others alcoholism and grief. Many tried to speak to the King, from the opposite end of his canopy. Even Pausias the Fool pleaded for the King to come to his senses and let the men return to their families, so that he might amass an army of fresher, hotter Greek boys to take over the whole known world. This is more sound than most of what his sages recommended. For if they were true sages, how would they have ended up in these miserable circumstances in the first place? And each evening the Great King would come, wearing only a towel to conceal his scars from the Hateri, and stare at Jupiter as it reined the Chariot of Taurus through the astral realm. Until the third night, when there was no moon, and the stars in the sky didst turn black with no light. And only then, by the fire of many torches basking over the King's

bare body, didst Alexander the Great acquiesce to recall the army, and do no more to tame the raging Beas River, but once again return to Bucephala, so that he might mourn his great companion, Bucephalus, one last time, and follow the River Jehlum until they find space enough for a settlement, which will be named after radiant Diana, who keeps in her quiver Knowledge which evades the World of men. In reaction the soldiers didst cheer and howl, many prostrate before the Great King with such enthusiasm and generally laughed and praised him. His Generals lavished on his wisdom and prudence, which does know when a battle is won, and rest deserved. And there was much laughing and boasting among the armies of the seven nations. They decided among themselves that an Olympics should be put on at their next stop, for bragging rights and some coin. And the greater portion of them were all but oblivious to the menacing, unhinged look of hatred coming from the face of Alexander, who wept bitterly for there was no more to conquer.

Tiresias speaks⁴²

What they don't tell you is that I was sixteen when it happened. A walking disorientation of sweat and cum. Oh, sure, everyone thinks they have some kinda secret angle, but you can rely on a prophet only as much as a bitch in heat. I mean to say, good luck trying to keep them in line when the spirit takes. Hey, any more wine, by chance?

Oy, vey. It's always Hermaphroditus this, Hermaphroditus that. All talk and no context! Who are we really talking about here? The Messenger, Bringer of the Dead, mixed with, you know, Born of the Sea Foam, Holy Jizz, I'm taking primordial elements and the link between life and death here. All borders are porous, by these powers combined, and life is right fucking strange enough as it is without your having to understand what you could never understand. What's the use of even talking about it?

Fine, fine. So I'm walking the flock for pa. I guess someone upstairs thought they'd have a good laugh at me, and send me my first holy vision. Yes, my first, don't be so incredulous. What's a toga besides a dress with tits out, tell me that? So these snakes, they're there, and just fucking madly. Curled up into a shape just like a cunt. No, I didn't know what it was at the time, but I take my herding staff and poke at the cunt snakes and bam! Right, right, this was back when I had my sight. Yes I could see the snakes fucking, yes, I poked right into

42. Sophocles. *Oedipus the King*, trans. F. Storr (Boston: MIT Online), <http://classics.mit.edu/Sophocles/oedipus.html>.

the opening and said, Pallas Athena, What in the ever-loving fuck, I mean really? And then these slippery shits climbed up my staff and bit the wood, which glowed like the punch-drunk eyes of Delphi, and I was transformed.

Sure, most people would have freaked out, but I was well-born, raised in the cradle of Wisdom, and, frankly, ready for anything other than having to keep that damn flock entertained. I was always singing songs back then, ya know, silly little numbers about pretty girls and holy farts. My life as a teenage dirtbag is not on trial here, ok? So, besides the obvious changes, like, my hair was soft and billowing, and the contours of my body took on new significance. I ran like hell to the closest river and checked myself out, and immediately, dropped down right there and began fiddling with my clit. Holy Mother of Zeus! You can't believe what I felt then. Imagine blowing the fuzz of a dandelion, over and over again, each individual seed a sparklet of pleasure, but the flower keeps popping buds, and you reach further and further inward until you burst into an exhausted puddle of silvery fire. Plenty of poets out there think they're hot shit because they compare her skin to porcelain silk, it's bullshit. Unless they can get on both knees and tell me about the throbbing, pulsing heat of a well-worn fuck, the desperate overwhelming tremors so deep you forget to fucking breathe, well they're either amateurs or, you know.

After about an hour of that, I realise that I'm taking the matter into my own hands, when I could be out there having the real thing. That's what Plato was really having you on about when he's lecturing about forms and shadows on cave walls. Why settle for self-pleasure and delusion

when the real thing is out there, waiting for you to mount it. Of course consensually, lest you go the way of Hades! So I walked the pasture, picking wild blackberries, enthralled at their curves and details. The bulbous contours reminded me of my new cunt. No, don't worry I can say that, I asked and *they* told me yes, I definitely can. *They! They* did! How the berries swell up with wet juice, spilled out over your lips with gushing delicacy. Gets me going just thinking about it.

What were we talking about again? Right!

So walking the pastures I come across this hot blonde stud named Chrysanthos who was the Son of Boreas the Elder, a friend of my father's. I always thought he was Heaven on Earth: toned calves, broad shoulders, a tight little ass you could sink your teeth into, always walking around with no shirt on, making all of the scrawny punks jealous. But even if I did think about it, and let's be honest, I sometimes did, he was such a beefcake, I thought, he had to be as straight as one of Apollo's golden arrows. But in this form? Well, maybe, just maybe I stood a chance. I walked over with all the confidence of Medusa, and spoke his name.

"Hey, Chrysanthos. It sure is a hot day out today."

He was busy tending to the gold wheat fields of his father, swinging his scythe wildly, and hadn't noticed me.

"Oh, hello. Umm, do I know you?"

It was at that point that I realized, 'Shit!

I never thought of a name! Think fast, think fast!

"I'm Phoebe, and I've been traveling all day to get to Athens. Is there a bathing pool nearby where I might be able to wash up?"

He directed me to the closest bathing pool, between our two estates, as I had hoped. After a little goading, I convinced him to follow me to the waters and leave his work behind. Yes, I had converted my clothes into a more feminine look. Maybe I just knew intuitively, you're missing the point! This is the real saucy bit! I dropped my gown by the river and turned around

to study his chiseled jawline further. I stepped closer to him, whispered in his ear for him to join me and helped pull off his toga. He did not disappoint! He dangled like a heavy fruit on a weak vine, and the veins along his arms were fully visible. I felt a wet heat begin to swell in me, and I threw myself at him right then and there. His manhood pulsed to life around my lips, and I rode him like a horse until he came in thick spurts. He managed to pull out and everything. A perfect gentleman, truly.

After that we bathed in the pool together.

He told me that he had fun but that he was really more into boys, that he had only laid with me because he thought I was a goddess.

An honest mistake, but one which sent a pang of misery deep into my soul.

Maybe if I had just asked nicely and not been so quick to judge I would have been able to have him without duplicity.

Maybe we could have had something real.

There were plenty of other lays, of course, but none so exciting as that.

I crashed out at Delphi and used mulled wine and absinthe to kill the babies that grew in me, just like the other girls.

We smoked mugwort and sang songs, serious, enchanting tunes about apocalyptic visions and the folly of men.

You have to remember that I stayed that way for seven years. Seven years of free love, beautiful misadventure, and feminine brotherhood. Sisterhood? You still don't understand.

One day, after a very wild weekend, hungover like Aries on his rival's blood, I saw a lone snake slither in the grass. Immediately I burst out laughing and cried out, Pallas Athena, Matron of my Curiosity, share with me your wisdom, and let me see the truth. And with that, I was changed. Not only changed, but aged, with a beard as long as you

see here today. Not only changed, not only aged, but,
wouldn't you know,

I was also struck blind.

Thirteen⁴³

Now I'm not saying it's what anybody expected of me, but in this dunghill town if you can play ball, that's it. Put the boy in. Am saying, I could rush with the best of them. If anyone crossed the line, they paid for it. Stood up with a bucket to the gut, or thrown sideways with a crack at the shins. If Sandoval was in, surely the left tackle was going to break line and you had to shoot out, with an audible just to get them jumping. On a lucky day you could use his ineptness for good. A quick whip to the y-back, pick up the man, and the hole is as wide as a homeschooled stripper. You could run that play all game because he could dumbly stand out in front of the linebackers, and was so big that most didn't even attempt it. Looking imposing while contributing nothing, a classic case of blind glory. And the tackle would only really try anything once, and the next time would fall flatly at my feet, demanding mercy.

After practice it's off to the locker rooms. My locker is closest to the door, so that most of the time I'm dressed and out before everyone's really come in. On a day like today, if someone wants to catch me they have to clamour, and hold me up right outside of the door to American History.

"Hey, Hen! Henry!"

"Yah?"

"Come on to the spot. Davies has something special in store."

"Ok."

So we skirted out of the hallway through the fire escape, leaving a folded up leaflet

43. Charles Bukowski. *Post Office* (London: Virgin Books, 2009).

Charles Bukowski. *Women* (London: Virgin Books), 2009.

Charles Bukowski. *Ham On Rye* (Edinburgh: Canongate Canons), 2015.

Charles Bukowski. *Hot Water Music* (New York: Ecco Press), 1992.

This story concerns Henry Chinaski, the alter ego of Charles Bukowski, and a spelling competition which provides the jumping off point for reflections on the notion of erotic interfusion and literature itself. Chinaski follows the 'dirty old man' model of Tiresias, but in the inverted perspective of an immature middle school jock who secretly harbours a passion for poetry and discovers, through the course of the narrative, an object for his erotic literary instinct in the woman who runs the spelling competition. My parodic appropriation of this character from another writer's oeuvre provides an opportunity for creative misprision, whereby critique and appropriation conform into one, and the crude eroticism here again presented subverts literary and cultural norms at present.

for the ice cream social. I mean, what a joke. I was never in a hurry anywhere, but Tobin couldn't be quick enough. There were plenty of crawls for us to hide out in, but the best bet was to stay close. I knelt down under the stone bannister and found our company already in position.

"Here. Have some of this."

"Ok."

I never felt so keen on anything in those days. Couldn't tell the real bruises from the fake ones, and didn't want my name to be in anyone's mouth. It was nice to duck away and keep up the mystery. Like, even being all that the coach required of me, I could retain some of myself there with those guys. America was at war with an enemy that was big and red and somewhere inside of us, lurking under the surface. Everyone was suspect in those days, even your best friend. It was real exciting, under the terror. Everyday life needs a little bit of tension to keep the thread pulling. You never knew if a plane flying over was some big military secret, or if the new neighbour woman was really a spy of the highest calibre. Pictures all said it a million different ways, but it was the same message: don't trust no one any more than you would shoot them in the back. Having that little secret made you dangerous, and being dangerous kept you safe.

So we fell back into the hallway only to find all the classrooms empty. We spread our company to investigative positions, knelt our way through with wicked intent. But it was like a ghost town out there. All of the doors locked, bathrooms empty, even the janitor tucked away in his closet, watchman of the apocalypse. I imagined when the bombs finally dropped, it was the cleaning crew who would inherit the earth, having built up a tolerance to chemical exposure, cleaning up shit all day, finally tough as nails with a heart against us softbodies. But for now, let the man sleep as we keep our posture and dream the halls are Viet jungles, and us surrounded on all sides by an invisible, morally superior enemy.

Mrs. Vickerson, who insists on still being called Mrs. even though her husband blew his brains out with a double-barrel, catches us and brings us to the cafeteria. The tables on the stage have been cleared away and big gold banners were hung in lazy arches. There are three open seats in the front row, and we are laid to rest in them. I felt heavy as a hot air balloon, and wicked like salty tears. My skin was flaked with pus and buboes, and my life was the black death upon the cold-cut rung of these profaned hallways. The widow Vickerson tussles up to the podium with her clicking golden heels and delivers unto us some incredulous speech about the history of lexical construction, Greek competitive spirit, the whole lot of oily butt-pumping drivel. The athlete's mind was for tending as the body was the welkin to the soul. Mesopotamia, Babylon, Egyptian scribal culture flourished to exact the multi-facetedness of one long day of rest, that still continues in eyes of the aegis. Our countrymen snore, snot, and thrive on wilful ignorance of any substantive matter. Quit your bitching, Hank. There's no use scoring out what everybody knows.

The order is alphabetical. I'm near the front, after Dorothy Chen. Her word is cuisine, and she says e-n-e, so much for her. Next I'm called up to the podium, usually reserved for graduation, or a good scolding on the part of Principal Tomball, who we used to call Dumbballs. He was a bald, scornful son of a bitch who only came out to twist kids' ears and would wander the hallways scraping his pledge paddle on the ground like Jacky Nichols in the Shining. We all kept our distance if he was out. His anger wasn't a matter of right or wrong, just a matter of time.

"Henry Chinaski—"

"It's Hank."

"Well, Henry, your word is absence."

"Absence, can you spell it?"

"Very funny, Mr. Chinaski."

"Right, right. Can I have the etymology?"

I didn't need the etymology, but it was an interesting word and anything worth doing is worth doing with style.

"Derived from the latin absens, or absentia, which is the present participle of abesse."

"Can you use it in a sentence?"

"Absence makes the heart grow fonder. That is a line by Thomas Haynes Bayly in the poem 'Isle of Beauty.'"⁴⁴

She knew a thing or two about style. I really saw Miss Vicks in a different light, that day. Her velvet green dress contoured to every curve of her body. I grew enamoured by the way her legs crossed themselves, the mute power of her blank stare, as if expecting me to take her right there and then. Even the mole over her lip was sexy, and I dreamed of plucking those overlong hairs while having her in the locker room, all the guys looking on yelling HANK! HANK! HANK!

"That is a-b-s-e-n-c-e, Miss Vickers."

"You are correct, Henry. Now sit down."

It turns out the best round of any spelling bee is the first one. All those pissy kids, even the popular ones, made to look as dumb as they really are. No blinders, no handicap against the honest disinterestedness they harbour like a virtue. Endoscope. Haberdasher. Zoology. Bridle. Heliotropic. Cacophony. Distillation. Salutations. Regicide. Kindling. Sovereign. Facetious. Tarquin. It was like a death knell for the English language. A eulogy to prolonged attention, and public literacy that didn't involve dead Indians, discount chicken, or Hollywood tits. Estrangement. Felicity. Vicariousness. Woebegone. Dissimulation. Malfeasance. Perfunctory. Then it was my turn again.

"Your word is confluence."

"The part of speech?"

"It is a noun, Mr. Chinaski."

44. Thomas Haynes Bayly. "Isle of Beauty" (sheet music) (Michigan: Calvin University), https://hymnary.org/text/shades_of_evening_close_not_oer_us.

I loved the degrading way she said my name. Her anger turned me on, and I was doing all I could not to adjust in front of everybody. Anything to get her to speak to me like that. Anything just to picture her naked, waiting on the freshly mowed lawn, grass-stains covering both of her knees.

“And the definition?”

“A merging of two or more entities, especially used to describe rivers of equal width.” Estuary. Delta. Basin. Conjoinment. Emergence.

Interpenetration. “C-o-n-f-l-u-e-n-c-e.”

“That is correct, Mr. Chinaski.”

I returned to my seat. Tobin and Davies looked at me like I was one of those aliens from Mars. They had flunked out on Dialectical and Refrigerator, respectively.

“How can you spell when you’re, you know?”

“You either have it or you don’t, Dave. Don’t worry your pretty head.”

Tobin pointed down and gave me a little wink. “Mrs. Vicks, eh?”

“Come off it, I was just thinking about a threeway with Dusty Springfield and Liz Montgomery.”

“Liar. You don’t like blondes. It was—”

So I slugged him one quick. Then it was Alan Michael’s turn to go up.

“Alan, your word is promiscuous.”

We all started chuckling. Alan was as dweeby as Spock at a strip club. His pocket protector always seemed to be leaking, and he would get these nosebleeds anytime he felt stressed. The boy pulled at his unkempt red curls and whinged.

“What is the language or origin?”

“Latin, Mr. Michaels. From a word meaning, to mix.”

She liked his style, must have to give him an extra clue like that. Her thinking about him was probably how I thought about her. Maybe she was sick, but I was sick,

scarred, and full of dread at the very thought of existence as such. If anyone could understand, she could. If only I could get her alone. Maybe I could talk to her about spelling, or what it was like finding her dead husband in their marriage bed blown away into pieces. Maybe she wants to organise a group to go for the national bee. It could be us, Dorothy Chen, sexless Alan Michaels, in a room, but Dorothy plays tennis in the afternoons and Alan runs the math club every other week. So it would just be us two. Probably the last thing she expects is a jock like me to care about this sort of thing. But there's a lot she wouldn't know about me. We could sit and I would show her the Tennyson poems I've checked out from the library.⁴⁵ Tithonus, I'd speak to her. *The woods decay, the woods decay and fall. The vapours weep their burden to the ground. Man comes and tills the fields and lies beneath, and after many a summer dies the swan.*

Her pursèd lips, the gentle sway her hands make, she drops her pencil. And like a knight on one knee, there holding this token of the learnèd way, her legs twist over my shoulders.⁴⁶

"P-r-o-m-i-s-c-u-o-u-s."

"Very good, Allen."

And tho they could not end me, left me maim'd to dwell in presence of immortal youth, immortal age beside immortal youth, and all I was, in ashes. Can thy love, thy beauty, make amends? Canticle. Anemone. Papyrus. Lederhosen. Forthright. Epilepsy. Adjudication. Gnostic. Caterwaul. Metastasize. Scoliosis. Archangel. Triumvirate. Nihilistic. Omniscient. Denouement. Abbreviation. Penumbra. Requiem. Knell. Cretin. Facile. Matriculation. Naivety. Demitasse. Eudaemonic. Lyceum. Vivisepture. Prospicience. Lycanthropy. Anthropocene.

"And your word is abecedary, Mr. Chinaski."

"Could I have the definition?"

45. Lord Alfred Tennyson. "Tithonus" in *Poetry Foundation*, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45389/tithonus>.

46. Charles Bukowski. *Hot Water Music* (New York: Ecco Press), 1992.

Cf. the stories "The Man Who Loved Elevators" and "Hot Lady" for a sense of the range of lascivious representation in this manner.

“A book or inscription used to teach the alphabet, usually in the form of a pamphlet or tablet.”

Abecedary“. Language of origin?”

“From the latin abecedarium.”

Always the latin. Ovid was probably having a good laugh now. Hey, Horace! Look at this chum! Hey, Virgil! Not seen someone so lame since Cinna was trampled in the streets!⁴⁷ Couldn't picture the muses looking down kindly on this ugly mug!

“A-b-e-c-e-d-a-r-y.”

“That is correct, Mr. Chinaski.”

Vociferous. Libidinal. Soon enough it was just me and Alan Michaels on that stage, standing off like two damaged halves of the same coin. Acquiescent. Dolorous. Rendezvous. Charcuterie. Then back to me.

“Your word is misogyny.”

“I'm sorry?”

“Misogyny.”

“Can I have the etymology?”

“The word is derived from the greek roots misos, or hatred, and gune, meaning women.”

“Can you use it in a sentence.”

“Martin Luther's misogyny was obvious when he wrote that women were 'made either to be wives or prostitutes.’”

There was another holler from the crowd. Some of the line began chanting HANK! HANK! HANK! But this isn't how I wanted it. This just might be the worst day of my entire life. Blushing, dick hard as calculus, staring down the barrel at Mrs. Vicks, who I just

47. William Shakespeare. *Julius Caesar* (Boston: MIT Online), http://shakespeare.mit.edu/julius_caesar/full.html. Also an allusion to Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, which confuses literary narrative for reality.

discovered for the very first time was beautiful beyond my wildest imagination. Real, mature beauty, not that Venus de Milo pederast beauty that fades in time. Something whole, lasting, like Helen of Troy. The kind of beauty wars are fought over. The kind of beauty that could drive a man to do almost anything in the devil's imagination just for a change to see her cum, right here, right now, in front of everybody.

“M-y-s-o-g-i-n-y.”

“I’m afraid that’s incorrect, Hank.”

The jeers that followed were so loud you could barely hear little Alan Michaels as he stood at the podium and pronounced the correct letters. He was given a paper certificate and one-time-use giftcard to Arnie’s All-You-Can-Eat-Diner. The crowd got unruly, but broke up after Principal Dumbballs came in and started swinging his paddle over people’s heads. We got out of there, Tobin, Dave, and I, and ran off to Folger’s Creek to chain smoke. There was the ringing of cicadas in the woods, and we were lonely as you could be in good company. We talked about movie stars we wanted to lay and all the ways we’d have em until the sun went down. Then we fucked off and went back home to dream.

Chapter One: Goethe as a Pomoclassical Icon in terms of Polarity, Literary Appropriation, and Parody

Faust All nature's secrets cannot be dispelled,
And what from your inquiring mind she has withheld
These screws and levers will not bring to light.
This rusty apparatus I've retained
Only because it's from my father's time;
The lamp that gutters on my desk has stained
This ancient parchment black with soot and grime.
Far better to have squandered what I had than stay
And struggle with the useless junk of yesterday!
What we inherit from our fathers should
Be ours to have and hold, to use it as we would,
Or else it is a millstone that we carry with us;
We can use only what the here and now will give us.

-Goethe, *Faust* Pt. 1⁴⁸ (lines 673-685)

"You [Haeckel] confess monism but you identify the latter on the one hand with Goethe and Spinoza's pantheism, on the other hand with Lange's and Büchner's materialism. In my opinion Goethe's pantheism is radically different from Büchner's materialism; I am ready to accept the former but I cannot adopt the latter. Materialism as I understand the term attempts to explain everything from force and matter. Goethe would never have considered sensations or thoughts as material things. By monism I understand solely the unity of the universe."

-Paul Carus, in a letter to Ernst Haeckel⁴⁹

Introductory Remarks on Goethe

The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate how Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's writing and perspective on the nascent early modern notion of canon corresponds with the project of the postmodern classical. Special attention will be paid to his use of polarity, which is dialectical in nature, and involves the reconciliation of opposites. An examination of his methods of appropriation in *Faust* and *The Sorrows of Young Werther* will provide a point of access to discuss my own use of appropriation in this portfolio, foremost so my redaction of *Young Werther*, "Sorrow." I aim to place my own literary writing in the tradition of Goethean appropriation, as I will discuss. My model of appropriation does not seek to alter fundamentally, but rather to creatively reimagine (misprision, is the term Harold Bloom uses in *Poetry and Repression*), the originary material.⁴⁸ In the case of Goethe, it would be impossible to engage in any significant literary analysis without addressing his

48. JW v Goethe. *Faust*, trans. John Williams (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions), 2007, 23.

49. Paul Carus. *The Open Court*, Vol. 5, 1891, 2957 in Henry F. Fullenwider. "The Goethean Fragment 'Die Natur' in English Translation," *Comparative Literature Studies* 23, no. 2, 1986, 170–77. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40246622>.

50. Harold Bloom. *Poetry and Repression* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 1976, 3.

conception of the metaphysical: which is defined by polarity, is abstract in nature, and eludes any singular interpretation. I also argue that the Goethean appropriative method, and the alternative approaches which have arisen from it in my own creative work, have apparent resonances with the early modern model of canonicity. These efforts at achieving an abstract 'eternal life' through writing are grounded in what I call the 'fan impulse,' which is an intuitive model of artistic consumption which facilitates further production.

Goethe's literary legacy is one which demonstrates the malleability of canonical literature, and which therefore demands further discussion. The author has become more accessible to us now than at any point in the latter half of the twentieth century. Certainly, one notes the then-waning and now-waxing popularity which Goethe holds as a testament to the dynamic notion of canon outlined by Frank Kermode, oriented around 'pleasure' and 'change.' Goethe appears to have fallen out of fashion, if one considers the great influence he exerted on European culture in previous centuries, pending a long-deserved renewal of interest as a subject of scholarship. Bloom summarises: "of all the strongest Western writers, Goethe now seems the least available to our sensibility.... Goethe is no longer our ancestor, as he was Emerson's and Carlyle's. His wisdom abides, but it seems to come from some solar system other than our own."⁵¹ And, indeed, critical matters in the scholarship of Goethe and his most well-known works abound with unsettled disagreement. Does the contemporary reader, following Friedrich Nietzsche and Thomas Carlyle, view Goethe through the intimately personal lens, or follow the advice of Goethe scholar Roland Gray: "neither Faust nor Werther is to be confused with the man who wrote about them?"⁵² Is it preferable to understand Faust as the "post-Renaissance scholar, the speculative seeker after truth beyond scholastic or humanist traditions?"⁵³ Or, following Bloom, does one imagine Faust as having "no personality or specifically human spirit.... Faust, like the Homeric heroes, is a battleground where contending forces collide?"⁵⁴

51. Harold Bloom. *The Western Canon*, 190.

52. Roland Gray. *Goethe: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1967, 7.

53. John Williams. JW v Goethe, *Faust*, IX. (Introduction).

54. Harold Bloom. *The Western Canon*, 195.

Although I do not agree with any representation of Goethe as an utter enigma, it is informative to acknowledge how Bloom frames the author's legacy for contemporary literary historians: "Goethe's remoteness is part of his enormous value for us now.... At a time when French speculators have proclaimed the death of the author...his unique and overwhelming personality...cannot be evaded or deconstructed."⁵⁵ I assert that the influence of Goethe on the postmodern classical lies precisely in this overwhelming quality of difficulty, and resistance to any singular interpretive position.

This gulf of understanding, an overwhelming quality of opacity which is presupposed concerning the life and literary work of Goethe, is not a new development, but featured significantly in the historical interpretations as well. Scottish translator and critic Thomas Carlyle's *Essays on Goethe* superficially praise the author: "what philosophy can call a man...neither noble nor plebeian, neither liberal nor servile, nor infidel nor devotee ; but the best excellence of *all* these, joined in pure union ; 'a clear and universal *Man*.'"⁵⁶ Note the emphasis on the dialectic of individuality/universality, and the metaphysical ("pure union"). Yet this praise is prefaced with skepticism which supersedes Carlyle's 'universal' evaluation of Goethe, in the face of an apparently widely supportive critical apparatus:

"This universal sentiment of admiration is wonderful, is interesting enough ; but it must not lead us astray. We English stand as yet without the sphere of it; neither will we plunge blindly in, but enter considerately, or...keep aloof from it altogether. Fame...is no sure test of merit...it is an accident, not a property of man ; like light, it can give little or nothing, but at most may show what is given...."⁵⁷

What is most noteworthy in these passages, and what most informs the sensibility which I have so far outlined, is the congruity between the Goethean project of creative writing and the early modern notion of canonical literature, oriented around fame and the dialectical ambivalence between writers and their critics. The stakes, that is, the realisation of canonicity itself, are founded in the early modern period's paradoxical notion of immortal

⁵⁵.Ibid., 190-191.

⁵⁶.Thomas Carlyle. *Essays on Goethe* (London: Cassel & Cassel Co.), 1888, 23. (spacing original)

⁵⁷.Ibid., 20. (spacing original)

fame, which is had at the cost of a life.⁵⁸ This phenomenon is akin to the martyr complex described by Sigmund Freud and the early psychoanalysts.⁵⁹ Goethe's commitment to this ethos is overwhelmingly apparent in the sixty-year construction of *Faust*⁶⁰, which is a work replete with elements functioning dialectically in regard to the creative tradition.⁶¹⁶²

The scholarship concerning Goethe informs the mystery of his written work. And yet one of the foundational assumptions of Goethe scholarship is precisely the *personal* quality of his writing itself. Indeed, as an abstraction, Goethe's name may be well relegated to convey passion which is an "expression of a new irrationalism" contrasting the writers of the so-called 'Age of Enlightenment' (hence, the Romantic lineage including Ralph Waldo Emerson, who has long held such associations).⁶³ Goethe's apparently dialectical relationship with the 'cult of fame' and literary tradition (as evidenced by the epigraph of this chapter, and much of his poetry), as an ideology underpinning his creative endeavours makes him of supreme interest for any study of postmodern classicism, which also involves the reconciliation of opposites.⁶⁴ Goethe's work will be an essential point of reference as I attempt to build a conceptual framework for the postmodern classical. I am especially interested in his utilisation of *polarity*, a dialectical interfusion which precedes the concepts outlined in the other chapters, and *appropriation*, which in this context involves the use and reuse of narrative figures and forms for the purposes of parodic reconfiguration, philosophical contemplation, and aesthetic creativity. After establishing that Goethe, as "an Artist, in the high and ancient meaning of that term," relied on these two concepts, polarity and appropriation, I will examine in short detail the manner in which creative appropriation has coalesced in my own practice.⁶⁵

58. Richard Terry. *Poetry and the Making*, 87-90.

59. John Kerr. *A Most Dangerous Method: The Story of Jung, Freud, and Sabina Spielrein* (London: Sinclair Stevenson), 1994, 273-9.

60. H. B. Cotterill. *The Faust-Legend and Goethe's 'Faust'*, 1912, 28.

John Williams. *JW v Goethe. Faust*, X.

61. H. B. Cotterill. *The Faust -Legend*,

28. *JW v Goethe. Faust*, 22.

62. Cf. Harold Bloom. *Poetry and Repression*,

14-15. Frank Kermode. *Pleasure and Change*,

21-2.

63. Roland Gray. *Goethe*, 49.

64. *JW v Goethe. Goethe: Selected Verse*, trans. David Luke (Middlesex: Penguin), 1969, 17-8, 27-8, 34, 58-66, 92-6, 139-141, 197.

65. Thomas Carlyle. *Essays*. 23.

The greater details of Goethe's life have been widely studied and understood, even dramatised in novelisations such as *Lotte in Weimar* by Thomas Mann.⁶⁶ In Mann's work we see represented one of Goethe's (or maybe, more appropriately, one of *Werther's*) superfans—with whom the romantic 'Storm and Stress' literary movement is most commonly associated.⁶⁷ Mann's novel supports my own creative and critical methods—insofar as both share the apparent assumption that literary creation is reliant on networks, rather than singular figures acting according to the dictates of inspiration and individual will. This idea pervades the various discussions which make up the majority of the novel, essentially a series of extended dialogues between the main character, "Lotte," and various family members and acquaintances of Goethe, about the author's life and cultural immanence. Lotte's significance in Mann's text, and by extension the figure of *Werther* himself, is based on the real historical figures upon whom the characters in Goethe's novel were in part conceived.⁶⁸ It is an important feature of appropriative literature that is not merely involved in the metaphorical 'overthrowing' of one's literary influences, but that it also, however ambivalently, reimagines this material in unforeseen variations.⁶⁹ In the case of Mann's *Lotte in Weimar*, one can reimagine *Werther* through the perspective of the consumer, the fan, and how, indeed, the historical Goethe may have appeared and acted in his own moment, rather than the removed authorial position which he usually occupies.⁷⁰ Mann's shift from a removed third person to Goethe's own perspective in chapter seven foresees my own dynamic shifts in point of view in "Jupiter and the Crescent Moon" and "Wuthering Heights."⁷¹ This dialectical complexity, which is simultaneously deconstructive and creative, functions akin to the postmodern classical in terms of literary production.

⁶⁶.Roland Gray. *Goethe*, 3-24.

⁶⁷.Thomas Mann. *Lotte in Weimar* (London: Penguin Random House Vintage), 2019, 1-20.

⁶⁸.Mann, 6, 11.

⁶⁹.Harold Bloom, *Poetry and Repression*. 10-12.

⁷⁰.Thomas Mann. *Lotte in Weimar*, 109, 132-4, 190-193,

⁷¹.Mann, 236-241.

The process of reconfiguring literary writing through appropriation requires an interpretive method which is divorced from the confines of absolute meaning, and which embraces polyvalence. It is a feature, not a defect, of exegetical discourse as such that dialectically charged interpretations appear in the historical data, as I have previously shown in my discussion of the early modern notion of canon. Goethe's literary writing is well-suited for a reading in polyvalent or dialectical terms, grounded in his own notion of polarity. A more simplistic, didactic literary interpretation of his writing does a disservice to his ubiquitous use of paradox, and the sheer difficulty of passages including the long and winding second part of *Faust*. The literary histories here examined tend to focus on the material parallels between Goethe's life and writing, and the elevated social position and cultural importance of Goethe himself. Yet these are insufficient criteria to understand either *The Sorrows of Young Werther* or *Faust* as canonical literature. A deep historiographical dive into the reception history of Goethe's writing, however merited, cannot fit within the scope of this project. And yet, in order to acknowledge the influence which Goethe has made on my practice, his relationship to Friedrich Nietzsche must be examined briefly. Nietzsche will feature in each chapter as a point of reference for understanding the work of the authors with whom I aim to draw an association to the postmodern classical. Goethe was an iconic figure, who, as with Nietzsche, troubled and delighted in equal measure—who suggested the means of crafting an iconoclastic mythology, and inscrutable contributions to that nebulous 'western canon.' References which Nietzsche makes to Goethe are telling in terms of how Nietzsche conceives of canon and the literary tradition itself.

Nietzsche and Goethe

A less aloof appraisal than Carlyle's concerning Goethe's imminent cultural position can be found in the visceral deconstructive element (which is itself Goethean in nature, as Mephistopheles announces "I am the spirit of perpetual negation./ And that is only right; for

all/ That's made is fit to be destroyed") Nietzsche crafted during the latter half of the nineteenth century in *The Birth of Tragedy*.⁷² Bloom describes the link between these writers, Goethe and Nietzsche: "part of Nietzsche's large (and acknowledged) debt to Goethe...[is the] idea...that poetry essentially was trope, and that trope was a kind of creative error⁷³". This notion of creative error has resounding parallels to Bloom's earlier notion of 'misprision,' which provides a conceptual model for my appropriative literature and its contradictory/parodic elements, and my own use of the parodic within the context of appropriative literature. Bloom's writing on canonicity has doubtlessly informed my analytical perspective concerning the work of Goethe, and how I have conceived of the pomoclassical in the context of this thesis. His observation regarding the aesthetic connection from Goethe to Nietzsche is intuitive and well-founded.

Indeed, Goethe's oeuvre seems to be a notable point of reference for the poet-philosopher, Nietzsche. The deconstructive apparatus in Nietzsche's 'Attempt at Self Criticism,' where he appears to take his own *Birth of Tragedy* to task, bears a striking resemblance to an unfavourable appraisal of *Young Werther*: "an impossible book... constructed from nothing but precocious and under-ripe personal experiences, all of which bordered on the inexpressible."⁷⁴ This insistence on the importance of the inexpressible informs my rejection of absolute meaning, and this notion of 'bordering' the inexpressible is congruent with the asymptotic model of meaning (a Kafkan metaphysics) I describe in chapter two. Nietzsche continues, citing the movement which *Werther* helped inspire: "in spite of the ancient nature of its problem...its 'excessive length', its 'Storm and Stress,'" it is a book which has "proven itself" among the best of its generation.⁷⁵ The same may indeed be said for *Young Werther*, which was, for me, a highly inspirational text which facilitated new approaches to literary appropriation. And while Nietzsche levies all manner of criticism against the text (his own), decrying it as "badly written, clumsy, embarrassing,

⁷².JW v Goethe. *Faust*, 42 (lines 1338-1340).

⁷³.Bloom, *The Western Canon*, 191.

⁷⁴.Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Douglas Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2008, 4. (emphasis original)

⁷⁵.ibid., 5.

furious and frenzied...emotional, in places saccharine to an effeminate degree,” he still seems to retain some attachment to the project as a source of poetic inspiration, where a unique and hybridic method found purchase.⁷⁶ In apparently Goethean terms he references this “book for initiates, ‘music’ for such as are baptised in music...a password by means of which blood relations *in artibus* can recognise one another”, and how it manifested “an *unfamiliar* voice, the disciple of a still ‘unknown god.’”⁷⁷ Such conceptions of the ultimately unknowable metaphysic (‘unknown god’) offer a helpful analogy to the role of tradition in what Harold Bloom terms ‘strong poetry’⁷⁸ for the burgeoning writer, which must be simultaneously embraced and overthrown. The poetry of Nietzsche’s inspiration is apparent, revelatory, and bears repeating:

“what was encountered here was a spirit with unfamiliar needs, as yet unnamed, a memory bursting with questions, experiences, hidden reaches, to which the name Dionysus was added as another question mark; what spoke here...resembled the soul of a mystic or a Maenad almost, stammering as it were randomly and with great effort in an unfamiliar tongue, almost uncertain whether to communicate or conceal itself. It should have *sung*, this ‘new soul’—rather than spoken!”⁷⁹

In Nietzsche’s ecstasy a clear link is drawn to the Goethean project, and the dialectical notion of communication/concealment has resonances with Freud’s observation concerning tribal *taboo*: which entails the conflation of the sacred with the profane/unutterable.⁸⁰ The ‘Dionysian’ relies on a deconstructive element whose conceptual ‘difficulty’ is informative with regard to the works of the literary tradition in its functioning akin to the Goethean notion of ‘polarity:’ that is, dialectically.

Inextricable from Nietzsche’s ‘Dionysian’ is the simultaneous “yearning for beauty” with the “yearning for the ugly.”⁸¹ This experimental model coheres around a paradoxical conception, upheld by the conflation of the sacred/holy with the profane/dirty. This is the

76. *ibid.*.

77. *ibid.*, 5-6.

78. Harold Bloom, *Poetry and Repression*, 1-10.

79. Bloom, 6.

80. Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, trans. A. A. Brill (New York: Empire Books), 2012, 23.

81. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 7.

theoretical landscape around which it is most immanently possible for a contemporary reader to take account for and analyse Goethe's self-described daemons, who took the form of and influenced the author's writing on paradox, and the suicidal protagonist of *Young Werther*. Werther is himself (although not entirely) a force of negativity in the allegorical sense (like Mephistopheles), and he deconstructs the surrounding world in utter agony before turning his deconstructive apparatus inward, regarding his hopeless relationship with Lotte, and a dissatisfaction with life itself. Further, Werther's yearning for beauty in the consummation of his relationship with Lotte and his own artistic endeavours (painting) is contrasted with his suicidal desire, which is realised by the epistolary novel's end. The Nietzschean notion of the Dionysian and Goethe's negative subjectivity in *Young Werther* are informed by the same deconstructive impulses, which Goethe understands in terms of polarity/paradox.

What I intend to argue is that Goethe's use of appropriation in the creation of *Young Werther* and *Faust*, circumscribed by the notion of polarity, also contains an element of the *parodic*, which, although not precluding the intimately personal nature of the work, also contains a significant degree of detachment and irony. This foresees Nietzsche's 'Dionysian,' (itself an appropriation of Greek myth) which has in turn informed my own use of appropriation in stories such as "Sorrow," "Dead!," and "Babo's Vision/ , Himself." Each of these is a textual intervention onto some of the foundational literature of the western canon: *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, James Joyce's "The Dead," and a lesser known story by Voltaire, "The World as It Is." "Sorrow" was my first full-length project of this nature, wherein I redacted a text in an attempt to 'make poetry' of Goethe's epistolary novel, and reanimate Goethe's gripping story for the aesthetic palette of contemporary readers—in a process which I would later term the "mimetic redaction." Redaction writing was also the subject of my MA Avant Garde course, and in this context the appropriation of already appropriated text (that is, the hotly contested "Ossian" passage), playfully expresses the parodic tradition upheld by Goethe without losing sight of the piece's greater

emotional stakes.⁸² I have chosen the excerpt in this instance because of the difficult perspective play on part of the ‘editor’ figure in *Young Werther*.⁸³

The thread of this fantastical narrative “impossibility,” or surrealism, will be continued later as I discuss the ‘fan impulse’ and into my discussion of the ‘indestructible’ in Kafka in chapter two. As I will contend later there is a parodic element in the seemingly personal inspiration which brought about *Young Werther*, and I utilise this conceit in my provocative appropriation of Joyce’s widely read short story “The Dead.” That is, the evocative depictions of eroticism in “Dead!” incorporate elements of Joyce’s other literary and personal writing.⁸⁴⁸⁵ Like “Sorrow,” this story mainly follows the plot of the original material. However, the addition of a transgender sub-narrative concerning the protagonist Gabriel and the ‘making poetry’ of the interpretive footnotes subverts the canonical literary material from which my story is inspired. Therefore, the appropriative writing is subversive but also parodic, which is the interlinkage between these works, “Babo’s Vision,” and the creative work in this portfolio more generally.

“Babo’s Vision” is based on Voltaire’s historical/theological fiction where the “Scythian Babo” explores the contradictory elements of life in the city of Persepolis, which he ultimately deems like “a little statue composed of all the most precious and all the basest metals” simultaneously. In a continuation of the ethos of the ‘mimetic redaction,’ I have retold Voltaire’s story through poetry, which already contains a significant parodic element. The usurpation of expectation, especially around erotic relationships (“there is nothing I would not sacrifice except my lover; he would do anything for me, except leave his mistress”), brings this story into the greater conversation I have outlined, where the ‘poetry’ of erotic fusion, as outlined by my discussion of Spielrein in chapter three, is both

82. Ed. Dafydd Moore. *The International Companion to James Macpherson and the Poems of Ossian*, Association for Scottish Literary Studies, *ProQuest Ebook Central*, 2017, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/universityofessex-ebooks/detail.action?docID=5826392>. “It is difficult to overstate the impact of The Poems of Ossian on the literature of Western Europe.... They were... key to the emerging literary discourse and aesthetic of Romanticism across Europe.” This observation by literary historian Dafydd Moore, as well the subsequent analysis of the Ossian writing in translation or ‘pseudo-translation,’ by Macpherson, are vital to understanding the significance of the appropriative writing of Goethe in this context.

See also Gerald Bär. “Ossian by Werther, or ‘respect for this author.’” in *Journal for Eighteenth Century Studies*, Vol. 39 Iss. 2. <https://doi-org.uniessexlib.idm.oclc.org/10.1111/1754-0208.12394>.

83. Roland Gray. Goethe, 54.

84. James Joyce. *Ulysses* (UK: Penguin Classics), 2022. 94-5.

85. James Joyce. *Selected Letters of James Joyce*, ed. Richard Ellman (London: Faber & Faber), 2003.

conceptual and methodological. My method of appropriation, and literary aesthetic more generally, follows in the footsteps of Goethe via a parodic element oriented around a perspective of detachment and irony.

Nietzsche, with the same detached irony (no less than the same antithetical poeticism), imagines “a future generation,” “these dragon slayers” who “turn their back on all the weakling doctrines of [romantic] optimism.”⁸⁶ The poet-philosopher cites *Faust*:

“the tragic man of this culture in the process of his self-education...[must] desire a new art, the *art of metaphysical consolation*, to desire tragedy as his own Helen and to cry out with Faust:
And should I not, most yearning power,/Bring this most unique form to life?”⁸⁷

Historical/mythological narrative elements are evoked here (as in “Babo’s Vision” and “The Dignity that Justice Requires”) for an assertion on the primacy of the new—it is apparent that Nietzsche’s evocation is dialectically reaching toward the *tradition* of tragic art and to *new forms* which necessarily challenge that tradition fundamentally. The paradoxical material coheres significantly if one bears in mind Nietzsche’s assertion that “existence and the world appear justified only as an *aesthetic phenomenon*.”⁸⁸ It is under this conception of metaphysical consolidation that the elements of simultaneous creation and destruction, contrary desire, and the art object meet—through a transformative process which may be analogised by the Faustian relationship to tradition. My own writing, and the very idea of postmodern classicism, is reified through this conception.

That is, postmodern classicism is reified through a relationship which is both subversive toward and circumscribed by literary tradition, as Faust himself subverts the same divine superstructures through which he is ultimately circumscribed, and ‘saved.’⁸⁹ Nietzsche spurns the romantic inclinations in the above passage (and structurally contradicts himself, elsewhere consolidating Dionysus with his ‘opposite’, Apollo (who represents the “*principium individuationis*, [individuating principle] through whose gestures and looks all

⁸⁶.Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 12.

⁸⁷.Ibid.

⁸⁸.Ibid., 128.

⁸⁹.JW v Goethe. *Faust*, 364-5.

the pleasure and wisdom and beauty of 'appearance' [illusion] speak to us," in a curious dialectical turn).⁹⁰ It seems that the poet-philosopher's writing is itself an attempt to program such unfamiliar *forms*. These striking, difficult, at times obscene and untenable passages are troubling, and therefore set the precedent for some of my more evocative stories such as "Dead!" and "Ira Illa Numinum." Nietzsche's references to the *Storm and Stress* movement and *Faust* provide another example of the creative reappropriation that sets the scope of this thesis project.

The aesthetic assumptions in *The Birth of Tragedy* bear an undeniable resemblance to the ideals of my project, both as a matter of conceptual perspective and style (specifically, the hybridisation of philosophy and creative writing). I take up this methodology, oriented around the dialectic of the Freudian *taboo*, in attempting to configure my own relationship with the various literary and historical figures who are referenced throughout my creative portfolio. In the case of Goethe, in attempting to demonstrate his role as an icon of the postmodern classical, my focus will primarily concern the novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther* and epic play *Faust*. I will further demonstrate the consonance between Goethean polarity and the principles of postmodern classicism. This will also be the case in excavating the role appropriation plays in the Goethean project, itself circumscribed by polarity, which by extensions offers key theoretical insights into the role of parody and what I call the 'fan impulse' in canonical literature, and by extension postmodern classicism more generally.

Polarity and the English Tradition of Canonicity

Goethe would not have shied away from the apparent contradictions I've so far explored. That is, if he could be made to speak substantively about his work at all. Carlyle observes, regarding the literary legacy of Goethe, that "his stateliness, his reserve, his indifference, his contempt for the public, ...were censured [during his life and afterwards]. Strange,

⁹⁰.Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Birth of Tragedy*, 22, 39, 117-9.

almost inexplicable, as many of his works might appear; ...no word of explanation could be wrung from him; he had never even deigned to write a preface.”⁹¹ Instead, both creatively and intellectually it seems as if he relied on paradoxical configurations to challenge and express himself as an artist/philosopher, and the conceit of ‘polarity’ describes his orientation toward canonical literature, as well. For Goethe, this ‘polarity’ also appears to have had theological implications: a fusion of scientific and pantheistic religious dogma which later became known as ‘monism.’⁹² The Goethean notion of polarity is best described in the terms offered by Gray. Quoting from Goethe’s autobiography, Gray describes the author’s core belief: “that at the heart of everything there was a strange contradictoriness—‘polarity’ was the word Goethe commonly used for it...an attractiveness and repulsion, creation and destruction”⁹³⁹⁴. This is a proto-gnostic model of paradox where “the creative God brought forth the destructive one, and both were simultaneous aspects of God the whole” and where “moral concepts [are] in reality only one facet of the whole in which immorality and even amorality [are] at least equally representative.”⁹⁵ Gray describes in detail Goethe’s obsession with the contradictory “which he quite deliberately announced...and had to do with that daemonic spirit of which he wrote, in the final pages of his autobiography, ...‘manifested itself only in contradictions’”⁹⁶. He quotes the author’s aphoristic epigram: “If you would step into the infinite...follow the finite in all directions” and observes how Faust, “the man who had striven for all experience—and who was now declared to be saved from the devil’s clutches precisely because he had striven—found prospective contentment in the thought of performing one single, useful task for mankind.”⁹⁷ The description of Goethe’s lifelong internalisation of this polarised sensibility is informative for this project on the whole: “he would counsel both intense self-assertion

91. Thomas Carlyle. *Essays*, 18.

92. Henry F. Fullenwider. “The Goethean Fragment ‘Die Natur,’” 77. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40246622>.

93. Roland Gray. *Goethe*, 19-20.

“Nemo contra duem nisi duem ipse’.... None could be against god unless it were God himself (or unless he himself were also a god—the Latin allows of ambiguity here).”

94. *Ibid.*

95. *Ibid.*

96. *Ibid.* (See Appendix A)

97. *Ibid.*

and self-abnegation, sometimes in a rational spirit...sometimes less rationally, as aspects of a simultaneous fusion."⁹⁸ This simultaneity is of principal interest to me, and has been a unifying theme toward understanding of the postmodern classical as a methodological but no less a conceptual aesthetic ethos. However, it also has explicit resonances to the erotic conceptualisation Sabina Spielrein describes with regard to simultaneous creation and destruction: her notion of 'poetry' as erotic fusion and simultaneous creation and destruction, as I will further discuss in the third chapter. These conceits are of immanent use when reflecting on the nuanced literary lineage which Goethe left, no less than the immanent cultural position which he occupied in the wake of *Young Werther*.

Polarity, for Goethe, operates as a conceptual precursor to understanding the author's literary perspective, as well as a finite technique (paradox/contradiction) which resounds throughout his creative writing. I will first examine the conception of polarity as an abstract, and how it operates in relation to the tradition of the early modern 'theorists' of canonicity (among whom I include Carlyle) in Great Britain and Scotland. For although, as Carlyle observes, Goethe appears to write under the influence of a pan-European literary field ("[reading Goethe] we take in, not Germany alone, but [also] France and Italy"), it is apparent that the author's notion of canonicity seems, in part, to find purchase in a special relationship to English literature.⁹⁹ Goethe writes in his autobiography concerning *Werther* that "these gloomy [literary] contemplations...could not have so decidedly developed themselves in our young German minds.... Such a cause existed for us in the Literature, especially the Poetical Literature of England."¹⁰⁰ Examples of the influence of the English tradition on Goethe (and also his penchant for appropriation) include the obvious parallels to Marlowe's play *Dr. Faustus* in his own *Faust*, and the excerpts of 'Ossian' in *Young Werther*. There is apparent polarity regarding the scope of Goethe's influences. This

98. Ibid..

99. Thomas Carlyle. *Essays*, 22.

100. Thomas Carlyle. *Essays*, 43. (Excerpt from Goethe's *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, see Appendix A).

conception is further complicated by the research of Gray, who writes that the author's influences are

“so various as Spinoza and Shakespeare...the Bible along with Propertius, Catullus...and the Koran, Chinese poetry and Voltaire, German legend and Euripides, Persian poetry and Greek epics”¹⁰¹.

Here another facet of polarity is revealed: its daring fluidity of constituent elements, which themselves appear as contradictions simply in their variety. Not that, as Carlyle notes, Goethe's historical/literary/philosophical reference points are beyond the reach of scholarship, far from it; however, what is most striking are questions of *technical forms*, of *literary structures* and their relationship to the tradition, or canon.¹⁰²

It is helpful to remember that Goethe was among the first generations born, during the early modern period, after the concept of canon had acquired significant cultural influence. The overarching perspective which is apparent in Goethe's writing clearly correlates to the canonical as I have described it throughout this portfolio. That is, Goethe appears to have internalised both the contradictory elements of the discourse through which canon was first conceived, and the conditions of exchange, whereby a literary legacy almost necessarily comes at the price of a lifetime's commitment, and the dissolution of the author's physical form paradoxically coincides with their elevation to an 'elect' status. I have already observed that this perspective, through which the very idea of 'canon' was reified by the 'cult of fame', contains elements of the contradictory which are congruent with the Goethean notion of polarity.¹⁰³ Spielrein later provides a model of the interfusion of the individual into the collective which is informative regarding this aspect of canon, and appears to critically examine this phenomenon through the lens of Nietzsche's concept of 'eternal recurrence.'¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹.Roland Gray. *Goethe*, 3.

¹⁰².Thomas Carlyle. *Essays*, 18-9, 76-8.

¹⁰³.Richard Terry. *Poetry and the Making*, 79-92.

¹⁰⁴.Sabina Spielrein. *The Essential Writings of Sabina Spielrein*, trans. eds. Ruth Cape and Raymond Burt (London: Routledge), 2019, 104-109.

Rather than scouring through Goethe's extensive biographical, autobiographical, and epistolary writing, I have instead centred my research on his literary works. The purpose of this research is to conceptualise the multi-faceted aspects of polarity which the author considered essential to his literary method. Consider the poem "The Genius Game" as a manifestation of Goethe's own relationship to poetic writing. This poem functions as an evocation of 'Saint Diogenes'—which is contradictory insofar as it fuses elements of Christianity and 'Paganism' that might otherwise be considered incongruent. This perspective, that is, the notion of polarity, is actualised through the practice of active, and intentional contradiction: "Sometimes it's serious, sometimes it's a joke; sometimes love, sometimes hatred...it's a nothing and a something"¹⁰⁵. Although it would be easy to dismiss the significance of this paradoxical wordplay, it may be said that this conception of a *nothing* which is also a *something* describes the very elements of the *metaphysical*, the enigma for which art provides a consolation. This presumption has an intimidatingly wide scope, and its polyvalence is apparent. Yet I mean to merely draw attention to how this phenomenon utilises paradox as its foundation, and the critical formation which Goethe expounds through his literary writing. Here the idea of 'seriousness' and 'joking' or 'love' and 'hate' not only demonstrates what constitutes 'polarity,' but also the implications for this paradoxical model regarding the art object, in its dynamic relation to literary tradition.

This is the key link between Goethe's oeuvre and the postmodern classical: an interfusion of contradictory elements in the context of subversive narrative disruption. That is to say, again, in the vein of a Nietzschean view of the art object, that the paradoxical conceit upon which art is founded provides the basis for conceptualising the metaphysical, without succumbing to the folly of an absolute, didactic interpretation. This metaphysical polarity is not only apparent in "The Genius Game," but also features at critical moments in *Faust*, as well, and appears to inform the play's structure.

105. JW v Goethe. *Goethe: Selected Verses*, 14.

A key moment for conceptualising Goethe's writing from the grandiose and at times unwieldy text of the epic *Faust* can be found in the 'mothers' passage, where mysterious and abstract figures akin to the 'sacred feminine' are summoned. The summoning scenes in the play detail the dynamic relationship to the metaphysical which I have so far described and which, in Goethean terms, are defined by polarity. The primal 'beloved mistress' becomes a notable feature in the plot of 'Faust', and she herself is later 'conjured' to provide the means of 'summoning' Helen of Troy, in turn.¹⁰⁶ Thus says Mephistopheles of communion with the 'Mothers': "These goddesses exist beyond the range/ Of mortals; even we (demons) avoid their name./ To find them, you must fathom the abyss —/ And if we need them now, you are to blame."¹⁰⁷ This paradoxical orientation is itself constituted by polarised elements. That is, the apparent elements of the metaphysical (abstract, multi-faceted) are complicated by the notion that what daemons are to humans, these 'mothers' are to daemons: enigmatic, but able to be 'found' by the very mortals who they are reported to exist "beyond the range" of. These contradictory elements are informative of Goethe's conception of the metaphysical, and literature itself. Later, the mothers are described in the (hypothetical) reflection on a burning tripod:

"Some sit, some stand, while others come and go/ Just as they please. Formation,
transformation:/ Eternal thought's eternal recreation./ The forms of all created things drift near;/
They cannot see you, all they see is mere/ Abstraction."¹⁰⁸

As with 'The Genius Game,' contradictory elements ('sitting'/'standing,' 'coming'/'going,' 'formation'/'transformation') inform the notion of the metaphysical ('pure abstraction'). Here the conception of the 'eternal' which is somehow not eternal insofar as it is constantly being transformed in a dynamic process of 'eternal recreation,' is conceptualised as 'mere abstraction.' And even this notion is complicated by the idea that 'pure' abstraction is merely what the mothers see, rather than the substance of their *being*. The latter is a more intuitive interpretation: *all that the mothers are is mere abstraction*.

¹⁰⁶.JW v Goethe. *Faust*, 197-208. (lines 6185-6565).

¹⁰⁷.Ibid., 198 (lines 6218-6221).

¹⁰⁸.Ibid., 199-200 (Lines 6286-6292).

Goethe's wording buttresses this notion of these primal mothers as being 'beyond' the scope of understanding, immaterial, and, as such, metaphysical in nature. And, as part of Goethe's *consolation*, to use the Nietzschean phrase (although *conceptualisation* also seems appropriate here), the mothers are represented through contradictory elements.

In conceptualising the postmodern classical, I have also sought a literature that is constantly formed, transformed, and recreated. There are apparent resonances between the 'mothers' passage and the dynamic notion of canon expounded by Frank Kermode, which itself is endlessly created and recreated.¹⁰⁹ The 'eternal,' metaphysical phenomena which the mothers represent, and their endless pattern of formation, transformation, and destruction, are informative in conceptualising early modern literature and its influence on the postmodern classical. Yet it is not only in the particular details of *Faust* where this notion is found, but also informative regarding the structure of the play itself.

I will briefly demonstrate how paradox has its part to play in the structure and style of the play *Faust*, before moving on to my discussion of appropriation and the parodic. The text of *Faust* reads like Goethe's very own polarised 'Genius Game:': 'Sometimes it's serious, sometimes it's a joke; ...it's a nothing and a something.'¹¹⁰ This is an apt description for the long, winding plot of *Faust*—more so the second section—which at times reads more like a compendium of classical figures than an early modern narrative drama.¹¹¹ Amateur scholar H. B. Cotterill traces the themes of *Faust* to the Greek interest in "mysticism and magic...with divine healing...and especially in connection with Orphic and other Mysteries."¹¹² There is an apparently gnostic polarity in the reconciliation of these figures and narratives with a Christian mythological perspective. The character *Faust* is also shown by Cotterill to have been based on early Christian figures such as Simon Magus and Saint Peter, the former of whom was, according to legend, reported to have married Helen of Troy. Whether it is to be believed that Goethe conceived of the whole of *Faust*'s

109. Frank Kermode. *Pleasure and Change*, 32-3.

110. JW v Goethe. *Goethe: Selected Verses*, 14.

111. JW v Goethe. *Faust*, 224-263.

112. H. B. Cotterill, *The Faust Legend*, 10-12.

plot upon first undertaking the project, as is reported by Cotterill, the play's narrative is nonetheless issued from the divine 'pact' between Mephistopheles and God, which ultimately results in Faust's salvation.¹¹³ Gray explains in detail the paradox involved in Faust's striving, which leads him into temptation and demonic companionship, and yet is at the same time the sole means by which he is able to transcend his sinful associations and find salvation. In Gray's words, "the man who had striven for all experience...was now declared to be saved from the devil's clutches precisely because he had striven."¹¹⁴ Such a narrative structure could not exist without Goethe's steadfast orientation toward polarity as it has been described. Faust's death at the mere *thought* of contentment, which saves him from the precise terms of his agreement that he should forfeit his soul should he *experience* contentment, is indicative of Goethe's seemingly postmodern orientation toward language, demonstrated in the 'mothers' passage and elsewhere in Faust.¹¹⁵ Gray argues that "if the [demonic] pact [which Faust makes] and [divine] wagers [between God and Mephistopheles] are mutually contradictory and self-contradictory, it may be because Goethe was untroubled by a phenomenon which in his day was so often regarded as a necessary result of moral limitations."¹¹⁶ This is also to say, that in attempting to examine matters which are *metaphysical* in nature, Goethe relies on polyvalence and abstraction, foreseeing the Nietzsche's hybridic poetry-philosophy, which itself utilises polarity in stylistic and structural terms.

This phenomenon, polarity, exists throughout Goethe's oeuvre, and is not precluded from his extensive use of appropriation. I will further examine, in the next section, how appropriation in Goethe has become a model for my own appropriative literary efforts. My understanding of appropriation is itself founded in polarity, and I will examine this phenomenon in terms of the varied attempts at appropriative writing in my portfolio. In particular I will examine a scene from *Young Werther*, which I have redacted without losing

113. Ibid., 28.

114. Roland Gray. *Goethe*, 19.

115. JW v Goethe. *Faust*, 39 (lines 1224-1237), 42 (lines 1328-1330).

116. Roland Gray. *Goethe*, 140.

the essence of the originary material. The original scene entails Werther sitting in a field, observing the beauty of nature:

“when...the high sun rests on the surface of the forest’s impenetrable darkness...I feel the presence of the Almighty...that upholds and sustains us in an eternal joy...then before my eyes when the world and the heavens reside in my soul completely like the bodily shape of a beloved woman, then how I yearn and often have said to myself...[if only you could] breathe into the page what is so fully...alive in you till it becomes the mirror or your soul as your soul is the mirror of the unending deity!¹¹⁷

The theme of paradox abounds here: the ‘light’ of observation brings to Werther a contemplative ‘darkness,’ and his ‘masculine’ desire is reified through the ‘form’ of a ‘beloved mistress.’ It is clear that paradox is not limited to a single aspect of Goethe’s writing, but instead is interfused throughout, and clearly indicative of his relationship with the burgeoning ‘tradition’ of canonical literature as it was developing in the eighteenth century. Having discussed this paradoxical framework in detail, I will now turn my attention to how that framework influenced how Goethe approaches appropriation, and, by extension, appropriation in the context of postmodern classicism, which continues this tradition, using the writing of Goethe himself.

Appropriation and the Fan Impulse

I have established that Goethe relies on appropriation at vital points in his oeuvre. This corresponds with what I am calling the *fan impulse*, which is grounded in a dialectical relationship with one’s literary predecessors (ambivalence). My parodic method of appropriation entails cultivating new forms and narratives which challenge and preserve past literary narratives and characters simultaneously. This is clearly the case in terms of stories such as “Sorrow,” “Thirteen,” and “Tiresias Speaks,” all of which derive their protagonists from well-known literary characters, and subvert the originary material even as it is obliquely upheld. Bloom’s notion of misprision is immanently helpful when considering how literary appropriation functions, and the apparently dialectical nature of

117. JW v Goethe. *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, trans. David Constantine (Oxford: Oxford World Classics), 2012, 6-7.

this parodic utilisation. I will briefly examine literary appropriation in the Goethean oeuvre, then turn my attention to the role of appropriation in postmodern classicism itself, which is a continuation of these efforts.

The epic play *Faust* draws on a tradition including German Faust manuscripts and puppet plays, *The English Faust Book*, and Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. Cotterill describes the historical circumstances surrounding the play's writing, and its relationship to other narrative representations of the story: "German commentators sometimes deny that Goethe knew Marlowe's play..., but I think there is no doubt that the opening monologue of Marlowe's play inspired the more famous...opening scene of Goethe's drama."¹¹⁸ I am inclined to agree, as the narrative action (Faust, disillusioned with his studies, pours over his books with some dissatisfaction before deciding to commit himself to the arcane) is essentially the same in the two narratives. Marlowe's Faust asserts: "read no more; thou hast attained the end./ A greater subject fitteth Faustus' wit."¹¹⁹ Goethe's iteration of this thought is poetically stronger, but fundamentally the same:

"Medicine, and Law, and Philosophy—/ You've worked your way through every school,/ Even, God help you, Theology,/ And sweated it like a fool./ Why labour at it any more?/ ...Your search for truth ends in confusion./ ...And so I've turned to this magic lore"¹²⁰.

Goethe's representation of Faust here is, to use Bloom's terminology, a misprision of the originary material (Marlowe's play), and does not rely on Latin quotes or theological/ philosophical allusions, but rather the strength of his own poetic register to build the narrative tension upon which the subsequent play rests. It is the same matter with the prologue passages and the satirical skit which precedes the opening of Goethe's narrative drama. Where Marlowe uses the prologue traditionally, to merely introduce the action of the plot and characters, Goethe provides a parodic meta-narrative scene and afterwards a depiction of a dialogue between God and Mephistopheles, reminiscent of the Book of Job, that resonates strongly with the play's ending. Here Goethe dynamically

¹¹⁸.H. B. Cotterill. *The Faust Legend*, 22.

¹¹⁹.Christopher Marlowe. *Doctor Faustus and Other Plays* (Oxford: Oxford World Classics), 1995, 140.

¹²⁰.Trans. John Williams. JW v Goethe. *Faust*, 14.

alludes to the aforementioned notion of the metaphysical, “the vision none has comprehended,” which is one of the play’s foremost themes.¹²¹

Cotterill notes that the puppet-plays of the Faust legend seem to coincide with the earliest written manuscripts (often thought to be Goethe’s first exposure to the Faust narrative). Although this is of less interest to the contemporary reader than his report that “when Goethe began his drama a new *Faust*, it is said, was being announced in almost every corner of Germany...[it is speculated] that *twenty-nine* Fausts were actually published in Germany while Goethe was working on his.”¹²² My assertion, then, is that the importance of Goethe’s literary efforts, despite the cultural ubiquity of the Faust legend itself in the historical moment, is in his use of appropriation and the sheer scope of his writing in the play *Faust*. To use the Deleuzian terminology, which will make a greater appearance in the next chapter, Goethe’s Faust is of literary importance for its function of *detritorialising* and *reterritorialising* the narrative, as it was widely known. This corresponds entirely with Bloom’s dialectical notion of misprision, as a persuasive model for appropriation in literary writing. What is pivotal is that appropriation is not a passive activity in the postmodern classical framework, but rather a complex reorientation of characters, narratives, and forms that already exist within a given cultural space.

I contend that this complex reorientation need not preclude appropriation in its more direct forms. That is, while the appropriative passages in Faust (the best known of which is the title character’s revision of the passage from the Book of John, “in the beginning was the word,” to “in the beginning was the deed”) seem to upend previous representations in a dynamic fashion, the material in *The Sorrows of Young Werther* offers a more direct utilisation of appropriation.¹²³ Gerald Bär, in the *Journal for Eighteenth Century Studies*, writes, “[while] Goethe’s incorporation of Ossian is no imitation, it was an unprecedented intervention in this literary genre,” (that is, the burgeoning early modern novel).¹²⁴ The

¹²¹.Ibid., 10.

¹²².HB Cotterill, *The Faust Legend*, 23-24.

¹²³.JW v Goethe. *Faust*, 39. (lines 1224-1237)

¹²⁴.Gerald Bär. “Ossian by Werther, or ‘respect for this author’” in *Journal for Eighteenth Century Studies*, Vol. 39, Iss. 2, 2016, <https://doi-org.uniessexlib.idm.oclc.org/10.1111/1754-0208.12394>.

enigmatic Ossian passage is simply placed into the text, making for a much more direct usage of appropriation than has been discussed previously. Bär observes the vital role the Ossian passage plays in the novel's plot:

“the reading of Ossian leads to the novel's sentimental and sensual climax. The carefully chosen passages stand for what his own words are unable to express.... The bardic song is instrumental to the build-up of tension and the development of the themes of love and suicide.”¹²⁵

This emphasis on the inexpressible demonstrates how this material was chosen for its relationship to the Goethean metaphysic, and the polarity of original expression and borrowed verse makes for an interesting dynamic in light of another interesting aspect of the production of the novel itself. I would like to call attention to the fact that the text of *Young Werther* was only written after Goethe studied a “meticulous written account” concerning the suicide of his acquaintance Karl Abraham, “on which he was to base the final pages of his novel in due course.”¹²⁶ An exact quote from the account serves as his final line: “No priest attended him”—a powerful ending and summation of the plot's tragic nature.¹²⁷ However, my assertion is that the direct use of appropriative materials, with minimal authorial intervention, is no less complex conceptually than the dynamic changes made for the plot of *Faust*. For it is through the utilisation of this detailed account that Goethe actualises the nuanced narrative perspective which helps to make *Young Werther* such a compelling novel. To these ends I must reject the criticism by Gray:

“this [seemingly omniscient] narrator is not a really satisfying novelistic device. [...] He imagines himself so vividly in Werther's situation that many of the scenes he relates may have been related by Werther himself. The narrator appears to know far more of the most intimate feelings both of Werther and of Lotte than he could possibly have discovered by inquiry.”¹²⁸

My contention is that this difficult, and nuanced, narrative feature is the result of Goethe's seemingly direct use of appropriative materials, which not only allows the author to represent scenes in a seemingly ‘impossible’ matter of perspective, but also to displace

125. Ibid..

126. Michael Hulse. *JW v Goethe. The Sorrows of Young Werther*, trans. Michael Hulse (London: Penguin Classics). 1989, 9-11. (Introductory passage)

127. Ibid..

128. Roland Gray. *Goethe*, 54.

his own feelings for Charlotte Buff (whose nickname was 'Lotte', like Werther's love interest).¹²⁹ As in the Spielreinian model, poetry occurs at the moment of simultaneous fusion, which is erotic, and both material and abstract in nature. In fact, rather than simplify, the use of appropriation here *complicates* the originary material upon which the novel is based, as well as the Ossian passage, which is quoted in detail.¹³⁰ My assertion is that the cases of appropriation in both *Faust* and *Young Werther* concretely typify example of what I have termed the fan impulse in all of its nuanced variety—at times involving the dynamic usurpation of narrative material, and at other times involving direct appropriation, which of necessity brings that material into a new context, and as such, is no less complex and nuanced than the former appropriative mode. I now will further examine this phenomenon, the fan impulse, in my own literary writing.

“Sorrow” in the Context of Goethean Appropriation and Parody

It would be inadequate to limit the scope of my appropriation in this creative portfolio to the works which are explicitly reutilising well-known literary writing. As such, I will examine both specific instances of textual appropriation, and how appropriation operates more generally in my creative practice. My first formalistic intervention of this nature involved a full-length redaction of *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, “Sorrow.” This approach, whereupon I redacted Goethe's text for the purpose of making the epistolary novel into something akin to a novel in verse, spawned the birth of what I termed the *mimetic redaction*. A mimetic redaction aspires to provide an intervention into a text through the use of creative erasure, while retaining the essential elements of narrative, plot, and character from the originary material. This multi-faceted approach was the subject of my MA thesis, as well, and has evolved over the course of my doctoral studies.

129. Michael Hulse. JW V Goethe. *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, 5-10.

130. Ed. Dafydd Moore. *James Macpherson and the Poems of Ossian*, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/universityofessex-ebooks/detail.action?docID=5826392>.

“It is difficult to overstate the impact of The Poems of Ossian on the literature of Western Europe. [...] They were...key to the emerging literary discourse and aesthetic of Romanticism across Europe” This observation by Moore, as well the subsequent analysis of the Ossian writing in translation or ‘pseudo-translation,’ by Macpherson, are vital to understanding the significance of the appropriative writing of Goethe in this context.

In my creative writing literary appropriation does not exist merely as a textual practice, taking well-known texts and modifying them poetically. It is also the case that the entire collection (as may be said of Goethe's *Faust*) is strongly grounded in appropriation, and to that extent engaged with the very notion of canonicity, and the literary tradition. I have, in pieces such as "Dead!," "Epigraph," and "Wuthering Heights," pushed the limits of my own sensibility regarding appropriation and literary tradition. Throughout this process, I have never lost sight of this amorphous, dialectical conception of literary writing, which both represses and embraces its predecessors, as outlined by Bloom, and explored throughout this portfolio critically and creatively. This dialectical tendency in relation to canonical literature is the foundational assumption of what I am calling the fan impulse, or Midrashic instinct.¹³¹ First, I will examine my poeticising of *Young Werther* in the dynamic erasure project *Sorrow*. Next I will briefly describe how this method incorporates an element of the parodic already present in the Goethean conception of literary writing. Finally, I will turn my attention to appropriative works in this collection, which, in all their varied forms and features, better explicate the variety of approaches which may be conceived under the banner of the fan impulse.

My intervention into the text of *Young Werther* was made intuitively, and this is the importance of the 'instinctual' element of the fan impulse as I have described it. A strong example of this can be found in the redacted form of the previously quoted passage from *Young Werther*, "Sorrow," which was also used to discuss polarity in the Goethean oeuvre. This is helpful because appropriation in the Goethean tradition also functions in a way which does not preclude polarity (both interpretively and methodologically), but rather embraces it. I will quote from "Sorrow:"

May 10

I am alone am glad my life made for souls
like mine. A mist in the sweet valley only
occasional beams become aware of the myriad

131. For further information concerning the interrelation of 'latent meaning' and 'midrash' in the context of western biblical writing, see Kermode. [Frank Kermode. *The Genesis of Secrecy*, 2-5, 10, 18-21. 81-3, 96-9.]

variety of grasses I feel the presence of the almighty
 against my unfathomable shapes and forms in eternal joy.
 The heavens reside in my soul completely like the bodily
 shape of a woman, how I yearn myself into the
 page what is fully alive what is a mirror of soul in the
 mirror of unending deity I lie defeated by the splendor
 of these phenomena.

It is apparent that this passage superficially resembles the previously quoted excerpt from *Young Werther*, but its differences are more informative as to the technical nuances of mimetic redaction writing. Paradox still features in the passage, but more obliquely here, balancing the individualistic emphasis on solitude with the capacity of the character's sense of being "a mirror of soul in the mirror of unending deity."¹³² There is a resemblance to the relationship between Faust, Mephistopheles, and the primal mothers that seems to be drawn here with an emphasis on the metaphysical, and inexpressible. The other notable feature is that the hypothetical, or figurative notion of the divine which eludes articulation, becomes more concretely stated and eroticised ("the heavens reside in my soul completely like the bodily shape of a woman, how I yearn myself into the page"). The dynamic nuance of this new methodological approach relies on the poetic strength of the originary text, and yet the use of appropriation, despite the apparent similarities, is not merely an exercise of passive consumption, and praise.

In "Sorrow" I have also, in an attempt to emphasise the curious perspective play involving the 'editor' of the drama, changed the order so the suicide is the climax of the first arc of the story, and the remaining epistolary passages (here, made poetry) are retrospective in nature (not included in the excerpt in this portfolio, and unpublished). No single line quite encapsulates the role of polarity and the inexpressible in "Sorrow" quite like the editorial interjection, added to the end of one of Werther's final letters, that "in the end he became friends with ambiguity." My appropriation of *Young Werther*, which in its original form extensively appropriates passages of "Ossian," is not a deviation from the

132. This notion of simultaneously representing the individual and collectivistic, becomes a more pronounced theme in the subsequent critical chapters, and is surely derived from Goethe's achievements in *Young Werther* and *Faust*.

Goethean tradition but instead an expression of it. I argue that the fan impulse is present here in both instances of literary appropriation (mine and Goethe's). If this method is to function dialectically, as argued by Bloom (misprision), the authorial orientation cannot solely originate from adoration, or unquestioning enthusiasm, but also requires an element of the parodic, and transformative, which is not absent either in my own use of appropriation, or in the writing of Goethe himself.

The parodic is a pivotal element in the appropriative writing found throughout *Faust* and *Young Werther*. Editor and translator Michael Hulse describes how central of a figure to the newly conceived 'literary' model of writing Werther turned out to be, whether via William James' corrective novel or a dismissal by Longfellow, or enthusiasm from writers such as Gogol, or "French [readers who] could see that not only their favourite English writers [influenced *Werther*] but also Rousseau [was] behind Goethe's work: the Rousseau of *La Nouvelle Héloïse*...who...declared that the world was good as it left the hands of its Creator but bad once Man had been at work on it."¹³³ Parodic reconfiguration is both a part of my original methodology but also the product of a tradition stemming from the reception of *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. My redaction of the text is in the Goethean tradition of appropriative literature. I have preferred the term fan impulse because I conceived of this method without conscious reflection, and, as I have mentioned in the introductory remarks, have only retroactively been able to conceptualise the process in any significant capacity. Goethe was able to witness the cultural immanence of his writing in a way which informed his parodic instinct, which, as mentioned, can be found throughout his work. Bloom describes feeling bewildered reading the ending of *Faust*, as is apparent in his summary:

"[the play descends into] low farce...as Mephistopheles leads on his cowardly legion of...devils... only to see them all run away when [a] delicious bevy of boy angels appears.... [Mephistopheles] hilariously compares himself to Job and ends up conceding defeat, winning our final rueful affection by his confession of all-too-human lust."¹³⁴

133. Michael Hulse. *JW v Goethe. The Sorrows of Young Werther*, 12-7.

No less than legal censure of Jerusalem's trademark blue jacket amidst fears of a suicide epidemic.

134. Harold Bloom. *The Western Canon*, 197.

This parodic element is doubtlessly present in some of the most enigmatic moments of *Faust*, if it does not in itself provide an explanation for them. Cotterill's informal study provides ample context around which the epic was written, but most of his 'lecture' on *Faust* merely summarises the play's immense scope. He describes a scene where the royal court faces "emptied...imperial coffers" and the lot are "at the verge of despair" and "the brink of bankruptcy."¹³⁵ Mephistopheles suggests that the Kaiser should issue promissory notes, "and suddenly the imperial court, in spite of its empty coffers, finds itself in affluence."¹³⁶ Cotterill rightly identifies this as a "satire on modern systems of finance and State security" but contends that he finds the scene and subsequent masquerade "tedious and irksome ; but is not this just the effect that Goethe wished to produce?"¹³⁷ Cotterill describes the character Faust's disillusionment in this scene, while "Mephistopheles is so entirely in his element."¹³⁸ The scope of Goethe's deconstructive methodology becomes wider here, satirising "heiresses in guise of flower girls," "idlers,...club-goers...in the masks of court-fools," "the working man,...trade-unionist, and...striker" until the scene transforms into a transcendent, if not enigmatic, evocation of the "Graces,...Fates,...Furies,...[and] Euphorion whom we shall meet later as the son of Faust and Helen [representing art or poetry], and identical with Byron."¹³⁹ The complexity of these unwieldy scenes is inextricable from their parodic element, and while the contemporary reader may arguably be able to make greater sense of the economic concepts and the context of certain mythical figures than early modern audiences, the difficulty of these passages supersedes the understanding of any contemporary reader for the sheer breadth of its scope.

Goethe also addresses his living legacy (as well as his political and social surroundings) in parodic and amusing ways. Goethe's frustration with the success of Young Werther is apparent in his poem 'Nicolai aux Werthers Grabe' where he literally

¹³⁵.H. B. Cotterill, *The Faust Legend*, 56.

¹³⁶.ibid..

¹³⁷.ibid., 56-7. (spacing original)

¹³⁸.ibid..

¹³⁹.ibid..

describes a “*bel esprit*” who “sat down...on the grave, and left his little heap” while benignly contemplating a life where Werther instead finds joy in sublimation, satirising Frederich Nicolai’s ekphrastic novel *The Joys of Young Werther*, on which the poem is based.¹⁴⁰¹⁴¹ Less of interest than the clearly parodic scene of defecation is Goethe’s caustic tone in the poem’s opening lines: “A young man once, I don’t know why,/ of melancholy spleen did die/ and was duly buried too.”¹⁴² Goethe’s own reservation in interpreting his work, his need for *Young Werther* to retain a quality of the inexpressible, is of continued interest in its resonance with the postmodern classical. Albeit obliquely, even this characterisation of Werther is an expression of what Gray calls the “serious themes of the novel, the sense in Werther that Nature, to which he is so passionately devoted, is both a creator and destroyer.”¹⁴³ That is, “melancholy spleen” is understood here to signify Werther’s natural disposition, offering some compensation for his tragic suicide. I entirely disagree with Gray’s contention that Werther’s swaying from “extreme self-deprecation to extreme self-assertion,” and his hyperbolic character “making society intolerable for all three [himself, Lotte, and Albert], and finally [killing] himself in a manner which might have been calculated to cause the most pain,” is a weakness of the text.¹⁴⁴ Instead, I argue these are elements of the parodic/poetic at play for the purposes of dramatisation, which in the Goethean model essentially features polarity, even as the text veers into the absolute negative (tragedy). In order to discuss this parodic phenomenon in greater detail, I will now turn to my own literary writing.

Alternative Approaches to Appropriative Writing

Appropriation as a method, in-built with dialectical elements of the parodic, both repressing and expressing the originary material from which the story is founded, has

140. JW v Goethe. *Goethe: Selected Verse*, 27.

141. Frederich Nicolai. *The Joys of Young Werther* in *The Public Domain Review*, <https://publicdomainreview.org/collection/the-joys-of-young-werther-1775>.

142. JW v Goethe. *Goethe: Selected Verse*, 27.

143. Roland Gray. *Goethe*, 52.

144. *Ibid.*.

a vast scope by nature. It may entail something akin to a more 'traditional' approach to literary fiction, as demonstrated by stories such as "Jupiter and the Crescent Moon," "A Country Sheriff," and "Thirteen." The first of these was written using historical source texts, and attempting to dramatise the material in an essentially literal manner. The parodic element can be found in instances such as the scenes involving the 'sissy brigade,' and when the general Cletus the Black reprimands Alexander the Great. There is also an opportunity to expand the historical narrative to include marginalised voices previously excluded from the common historical discourse, such as the emphasis on the Persian Hateri (soldiers here depicted as an anonymised collective 'other'), and the hermaphroditic character 'B.' That is to say the parodic element, which relies on the dialectical conformity to/subversion of expectation, is both immediately present in terms of (satirical/historical) content, but also a feature of the story's narrative framing itself. "A Country Sheriff" reimagines the plot of "A Country Doctor," by Franz Kafka, in no uncertain terms. The placement of a well-known literary narrative into the nineteenth century American southwest carries an eerie parodic element, and demonstrates that appropriative literature need not merely satirise, but can also mimetically re- and de-territorialise the originary material in an enigmatic and profound way, as I will discuss in chapter two. "Thirteen" comes the closest of all of these stories in being subsumed by the parodic element. By its ending, where Henry Chinaski (Charles Bukowski's 'alter-ego') loses the spelling-competition at his school after misspelling the word 'misogyny,' the entire story comes across as a long-winded, parodic, critique of the originary material, and by extension the author Bukowski himself. Yet "Thirteen" also contains in-built complications, to be found in the references to literary writing, especially Tennyson's "Tithonus," and the obvious love of language demonstrated in the passages containing commonly misspelt words. Rather than a didactic affirmation or rejection of the originary material, my appropriative method, in the tradition of Goethe, is dialectical, and oriented at imagining the extant narratives of the literary imagination in new and interesting ways.

The appropriative and parodic are important features of the other stories which I have chosen for this portfolio. In the final editorial selection, I have privileged appropriative stories over those centred around myself, and my own experiences, believing that this was the more conceptually rigorous and academically interesting approach to literary production. From “Tiresias Speaks” and “Another Hunger Artist” to “Ira Illa Numinum” and “Dead!,” a humorous and dark parodic element is inter-strewn throughout the portfolio. Tiresias, for all of their good natured and lascivious banter, nonetheless undergoes an unfathomable (gender) transformation at the whim of deities of whom they do not have an apparent understanding. “Another Hunger Artist” brings Kafka’s story into the present day, but the interrelationship between the two pieces is based in discomfort, and in the primacy of the protagonist making their living through fetishised starvation. As in Kafka’s paradoxical story (the ‘artist’ defeated by their own victory against the drive to self-preservation), my protagonist is acutely aware of their own tragedy, as evidenced by the story’s ending, where they throw away the eggs they have made for themselves (a symbol of fertility) in a fit of tears. “Ira Illa Numinum” follows “Sorrow” and in that it seeks its evocative element from the originary material upon which it is based, rather than in an external projection of the present day, which nonetheless exists alongside these historic-mythical narratives.¹⁴⁵ A dark parodic element abounds, among other instances, when Nero, Marus Ortho, and Sabina Poppea are depicted in bed together reading “the latest fluff headline to be disseminated among the illiterate public: **It’s a Miracle! Dead Ruminant Tree Sprouts New Roots!**” This parodic element of appropriation obliquely manifests in my redaction of “The Dead” by Joyce, which inserts a transgender sub-plot and a redacted version of the exegetical footnotes from the printed story itself. The representation of a tradition conscious of itself typifies the postmodern classical, which strives for the cultural immanence Goethe experienced following the publication of *Young Werther* and his

145. Tacitus. *The Annals: The Reigns of Tiberius, Claudius, and Nero*. trans. JC Yardley (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2008, 266-393

uproarious *Faust*. In the Goethean tradition, imitative appropriative writing has become an essential feature of my creative output.

At the same time, I have attempted to push my appropriative method to the extreme with pieces such as “Wuthering Heights” and “Epigraph.” The former, ironically, follows the method of the first William Burroughs cut-ups, further demonstrating the dialectic of originality/appropriation in the creative portfolio as a whole.¹⁴⁶ It is one of the most difficult pieces in terms of syntax and narrative coherence, and yet its reliance on iconographic appropriative passages and reflections on the notion of ‘eternity’ itself in literary writing make it a resounding contribution to the postmodern classical literary framework.

“Epigraph,” through direct appropriation, attempts to represent something akin to a ‘collective unconscious,’ a move also preceded by pivotal moments in *Faust* including the ‘Auerbach’s Cellar’ and ‘Walpurgisnacht’ scenes.¹⁴⁷ This attempt at collective representation happens at various other points in the creative portfolio, but most notably the ‘ship’ scene in “The First Thanksgiving” and in the amorphous narration of “The Dignity that Justice Requires” and “Wuthering Heights.” It is apparent that each of these pieces rely on elements of parody and appropriation, albeit in nuanced and varied ways which are further discussed in the interfused exegetical passages accompanying the stories themselves.

Concluding Remarks

Goethe is an undeniably important figure for the history of Western literature, and by extension postmodern classicism. Freud cites his experience with Goethe’s essay on nature as the reason he went into medicine.¹⁴⁸¹⁴⁹ Jung based his “no. 2 personality” on the

146. William S. Burroughs. “The Cut Up Method of Brion Gysin,” in *Ubu Web Publisher*, https://www.ubu.com/papers/burroughs_gysin.html.

147. JW v Goethe. *Faust*, 63-71, 125-141.

148. Ernest Jones. *The Life and Works of Sigmund Freud* (New York: Penguin Books), 1961, 54.

149. Henry F. Fullenwider. “The Goethean Fragment ‘Die Natur’ in English Translation,” <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40246622>.

It should be noted that now this ‘essay’ is considered a misattribution, written instead by Georg Christoph Toph. Nonetheless, “this prose rhapsody...reflects Goethe’s conception of nature at the beginning of his scientific studies.” Fullenwider offers a historiographical deep dive on the translation history and discourse generated by Toph’s Goethean prose-poem, and the network of thinkers who contended with it including Charles Darwin, Thomas Huxley, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Frank Lloyd Wright, and T. S. Eliot, among others.

author, of whom Jung believed himself to be an illegitimate progeny, and who was also pivotal in his exposure to gnosticism and the notion of the 'sacred feminine.'¹⁵⁰ Spielrein nonetheless is influenced by Goethe, and I further develop my discussion of how her notions of poetry as erotic fusion and simultaneous creation and destruction fit within the Goethean project in the third chapter. My contention that Goethe's relationship to Nietzsche is based not only in the notion of creative 'misprision,' but also in their shared insistence on dialectical forms of thought, and their attempt, through appropriation and parody, to hybridise philosophy and creative writing, a project shared by Kafka and Spielrein. The issues of polarity and appropriation are not mutually exclusive, as I have demonstrated, and neither do they easily lend themselves to didactic interpretation, but instead embrace polyvalence and the multi-faceted, as I have attempted to demonstrate interpretively and creatively. These discursive assumptions will continue to feature in my research concerning the literary conceptions of Franz Kafka and Sabina Spielrein, which will follow alongside other dynamic examples of creative writing.

150. John Kerr. *A Most Dangerous Method*, 45, 47, 49, 111.

Sorrow¹⁵¹

From the Desk of
the editor to
the reader,

I wish,
that our friend
had left us to
document,
not

to be
Obligated by
acting as n a
r r a t o r.

All we can do conscientiously
is recount what dint inserting
our departed loved one, Werther.
Grievance and unhappiness
are not of the uncommon run
rooted deeper and deeper in
Werther's soul, intertwined
in his whole being harmony
in his mind destroyed an in
-ward heat exhausting him
and his efforts sapped the
anxieties besetting his sad
company insist all he owned

151. This is an excerpt from a full-length redaction of Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. Although this selection entails the ending of Goethe's novel, in my version, the below passages make up the first section of the drama, and the subsequent books are retrospective in nature—cutting up the narrative and rearranging it to encourage rereading. The epistolary excerpts are rendered, for the most part, as poems, and only rarely does the editorial voice interject. In these passages the editorial voice and the voice of Werther continually merge and diverge, and externalised melancholic reflections are contrasted with Werther's virulently negative interiority, and hopeless misery as he attempts to withhold his own intense feelings for the character L. (Lotte, in the original narrative, a stand in for Charlotte Buff). The sensationalism and romanticism of the original text has been preserved here, in this appropriative method which I have termed the 'mimetic redaction.' Rather than emphasising difference (some modern usage and perspective is interfused into Goethe's narrative), I have attempted to create a poetic rendering to demonstrate the literary strength of the original material. The 'Ossian' scene below has been published by The Decadent Review, alongside other redaction writing of mine.

and everything suffered and
wanted could not judge of a
calm and pure possession of
happiness secure for the future.

[...]

To deal with the business of everyday life, to his unending
sameness with the lovable and beloved woman he was dis-
-turbng on his own energies without purpose or prospect

, a few of the letters he left are a most powerful
testimony of confusion, drive, striving after
weariness unto death.

December 12

Dear Wilhelm,

I am in such a state
those misfortunes
must have believed
to be driven hither
by an evil spirit. Alas

, alas thy nameless raging
 threatens to tear open my
 breast among the drift
 among the terrible night-
 scenes I heard the sudden
 thaw, I heard the river burst
 its banks all streams swollen

my lovely valley flooded from the rock
I could see the waters milling swirling in
moonlight ploughlands the meadows above the
black cloud the waters rolled and resounded
me in her terrible and splendid light, the terror came over
me I stood over the abyss with open arms and breathed
down and lost myself in a tempest—in a roaring my end
of all tempests! How gladly I have given up being human,
looking down mournfully on a spot where I once rested
under a willow with L. on a hot day around our bower
I held her in my arms with unending kisses whispering love—her
wildness into it plunged with fires of joy—and I am done for! I
desire nothing, demand nothing, rays of sunlight as a prisoner to
flocks, pastures, public honors! For I do have the courage to die.

December 14

My own self frightens me. Love for her holiest, purest, most brotherly love? I
ever once felt a forbidden desire. I shant claim my soul, and now, dreams!
My senses are confusion, for a week, my eyes are full of tears. I feel
nowhere and am as well off as here or there. I'd be better if I left.

“Presence fate sympathetic interest
that is all! Why the hesitating apprehension? In
the end he became friends with ambiguity.”¹⁵²

December 20

I thank your love for me, Wilhelm,

that you took up my word. Your suggestion doesn't suit me quite, at least, I'd like to make a detour first, especially since there's hope frost will last until you hear from me again with more details. Tell my mother to pray for her son and that I ask her forgiveness for all the trouble I have caused—in the end it was my fate to bring sorrow. Farewell, my dear, dear friend. All blessings of heaven be upon you. Farewell.

“In L.'s soul at this time, her husband

, her unhappy friend are
scarcely put into words.

Knowing her character
, her resplendent beautiful
soul may think itself to feel
with her: if in herself
resolved to distance, she
delayed, it was out of heart

felt desire to spare him.

Almost impossible, ab
-out the relationship her
husband never spoke,
of all the
more to prove
by the deed
her feelings
were his.”

Sunday before Christmas

Alone collecting a few playthings
 as Christmas presents for her youngest brothers and
 sisters. The pleasure the children would feel and
 remember how in times of paradise opening a door and
 the decorated tree with its candles sweets and apples: a
 present for you, too. I beg you, she continued, for my
 own peace of mind. Up and down in
 the room, only moderate your feelings, she continued, taking
 him by the hand, why did you have to be born with this clinging
 passion for everything you ever touch, I beg you, she continued
 , be more moderate. What manifold enjoyments your intelligence
 , your talents offer you! Turn this sad attachment away from a
 woman who can do no more than feel sorry for you.

She
 Held
 His
 Hand.

He
 Drew
 His
 Hand
 from
 Hers.

Was it A. who made the observation?
 Astute, very astute. Anyone *might*
 make it, look for her and I swear to
 you, you will find her.

For a long time narrowness
 made me fearful, anyone *might*

look for her, force yourself, travel
will distract you, *must* distract you.

Return here and let us enjoy
the blissful happiness of a
t r u e f r i e n d s h i p.

Leave me in what will
be will be till Christmas
Eve.

Down together in some
idle topic which Werther
thought cold, indeed harsh.

[...]

*I was going on a journey, ready to be packed. The
Land Steward will come but I will not be home.
The children leaped upon me and said that after
tomorrow and another tomorrow and one more
day they were going to L. for my Christmas
presents told the wonders of their imaginations
foretold lovingly and made to leave.*

“Herr Werther, too—to see the fire and to keep it
burning into the night. Order the servant to pack
his books and linen in the trunk to sew up his
clothes of the last letter to L.”

I will obey you and not see you today
or never again! You will hold this trembling
hand and your sweet tears will water it glad
that I have finally made up my mind.

Through thinking L. felt explicit, that her

secret was him for herself alongside herself that
 she could not keep him pure, lovely and her once
 so easy mind veiled in a darkness now half past
 six she heard Werther asking for her she cried
*I did not promise You broke your promise for the peace
 of mind of us both and she hardly knew what she was
 saying for the first time so as not to be alone he laid
 down some books and both sent their apologies over the
 dresser is your translation of some of the poems
 I haven't read them yet but all this time this hasn't happened.*

*I smiled, fetched the songs, a shudder filled
 with tears when I sat down and began to read:*

*Star of night in beauty
 lift your head of cloud
 arrayed down the hillside
 a distant murmuring of streams
 are moving there is evening hum
 over the fields. Beautiful light, bathe
 your lovely hair like a watery column
 of heroes as in the days gone were airs
 of spring with your gentle laments were
 a faint whispering through the souls of her
 sweet voice, melodious voice, forsaken on
 the hills. Hear her voice when she sat
 alone upon the hills:*

Colma

“Is night forsaken on the stormy mount?
 Wind moans in mountain, rivers howl
 from rocks, no shelter, from the rain appear
 stars from the hunt unstrung beside him his
 hounds sniffing above the swollen river roars
why does he tarry? why does my love forget his promise?
 —rocks the tree, beloved radiance—*where have you wandered?*
i want to flee my proud father and brother, but we are not enemies.

*be silent so my voice may sound through the valley and my wanderer
hear me. the voice calling you, speak, friends, their swords are red chariots.
oh—they are dead from the storm peaks mountains speak ghosts of the dead.
they do not answer. i wait for morning in my tears was your song, softly
Blushing daughter. with the harp gave us song soul a blaze of light from the
hunt at a time before the heroes had fallen in the narrow home of their voices
sword like the sword were full of tears. Head in cloud struck the harp with her
for the song of sorrow.*

Ryno

“Noon is fair, the clouds open restless sun up the hill. The mountain river is sweet
But the voice I hear is sweeter, your muttering is the voice bewailing the dead
man, his head bowed with age and his eyes are red. Excellent singer, why are you
alone on the speechless hill? Why do you lament like a wind among trees upon a
distant shore?”

Alpin

“My tears for the dwellers in graves tall and slim on the hill.
You are pleasing to look at among the sons of health. You will
fall. The hills will forget you swift as deer on the hills, terrible
as fires upon the sky. Your anger a tempest, sword like a torrent
on the far force of your arm, the flames of your warfare. How
peaceful was your countenance like sea after the moon in the
silence when the rushing narrow. It is dark where you dwell.
A leafless tree. Dust of the glory. Weep, weep father, but your son
will not hear. He will never harken to your voice. Future ages
will hear you who left no son, let song preserve your name who has fallen.

“Heroes' sighs would burst to remember days of youth, prince of echoing what there is
to bewail. Do we not have songs and hymns that melt and refresh the soul? Like a
soft mist that fills the flowers as they bloom. Why are you so sorrowful among the
waves? I am my grief a lost son a lost daughter. The flower of beauty. The branches
of thriving. Your bed is a dark sleep in the grave is heavy. The tempest howls in
crowns of oak in pallor through breaking cloud. Sweet as the fallen breathing air in
your eyes like mist on your cloud of fire in warfare wooing for her love. She did not
withhold it long lay dead brother where the red with age.

The rolling sea answered of the rocks—*why do you frighten me so? hear me, son, hear me!*
—as the treacherous fled laughing to the shore. She called for her father and brother—*is
there no one who will rescue me?*

“Nothing answered but the voice of the rocks, fierce with spoils of the hunt, arrows rattling on his hip. Five dark grey hounds were about him. He on the shore bound to the oak tree frightened the winds with his groans, trod the waves to fetch across into your dying blood. The wind was frightened with grief in the wars fallen. I sit on the echoing shore across the declining moon I see the ghosts of my children in the dimming light they walk together...”

L., in a rush of tears, halted
Werther's reading and wept
most bitterly of noble persons
she drew breath and begged
him to continue with heaven's
trembling burst of speech and page
he lifted up the words:

“Why wake me, airs of spring? I water with the dew of heaven.
My time of withering is near the tempest that will tomorrow me
in my beauty he will seek me all around in the fields and will
not find me.”

She
squeezed
his
Hands.
Their
cheeks
Touched
With
a
Rage
of
Kisses.

A goodbye.

She said nothing
and waited, begged
, waited away
 crying
 Goodbye.

The watchmen
were used to
Werther and
said nothing till
he did knock
to come in again.

The servant
noticed his
master's hat
missing but
said nothing.

His hat
was found
Overlooking
the hillside
and how he
had climbed
up there was
scarcely imaginable.

He added the following:

Dear Wilhelm,

So I open these eyes
for the last time foggy

day obscures your son
 , your friend, your beloved.
 Say to oneself the last, the last is a
 twilight dream upon the slack floor.
 Surely we are dreaming when we
 speak of death. We have no sense
 or understanding. Cease to be!
 What does it mean? She was
 everything—her corpse stood at the
 grave as they lower the coffin and
 the first shovelful of dirt resounded
 dully until the innermost part of me
 seized, terrified to die! The grave! I
 don't understand the words.

My angel, forgive me!

Beyond any doubt, I
 burned through the
 innermost heart of me.
 She loves me! She loves
 me! The sacred fire still
 burns my lips. Forgive me!
 Forgive me! I knelt half the
 night a seal upon your love
 of the god in heaven's abundance
 out of the believer's soul forever.
 I go ahead to my father, to your
 father. I will make my complaint
 to him and he will comfort me
 until you come.

I am not deluded

close to the grave.
 More clearly, I shall
 see your mother, and
 find her soul and pour
 out all such things: pass
 an eternity and will not
 extinguish life that I took
 yesterday from your lips
 in me still. She loves me!
 We shall not pass away!
 We shall see one another
 again!

What sadness of comparing her present state with those days of wholly untroubled innocence and careless trust in herself. What she feared now felt a fever in her blood. And could she wish that he might in her soul conceal her feelings? Her thoughts embarrassed her, at that moment the critical knot between them answered, leaving her alone. Werther's servant appeared and handed her the pistols. *I wish him a safe journey.* A. looked on with a questioning beyond expression, stayed conversation over the meal they forgot themselves with bread and wine sent the young man off to write:

They have passed L.'s hands I kissed them a thousand times—the spirits of heaven favor my decision! I have trembled with no goodbye—a thousand years will not bound me to erase the imprint and hate the man who

burns for you as we all do.

“He tore up a great many papers

, settled a few small debts. Despite

rain the sky blesses you both. Doubtless you will

be happier after a good deal more sorting through

his papers, sealed up, some addressed to

Wilhelm. I have seen stray thoughts:

the post horses are to God these last moments among all

the constellations. It stood before me and over me. Alas, do

you not encompass me all around? Many kisses saluted my

going out and my coming in the graveyard are two lime

trees. You should lie there, too, by the wayside a lonely

valley the Priest and the Levite could pass by the mark

-ed stone and shed a tear if only I could have had the happiness

of dying for you. Only the noblest spill blood for their loved ones

to new life for their friends. I want to be buried in these clothes. You

have touched them holy. Let nobody search my pockets. Oh how I cleaved you in

farewell, farewell, farewell the clock struck twelve the powder flashed gunshot at six

the servant found his master on the floor—no answer, only a rattling in the throat. L.

heard the bell, she woke her husband and fell unconscious at A.'s feet. Beyond

saving, they opened a vein in his arm. He was still drawing breath rolled

in convulsions on his chair, all the strength gone of him. They awaited his end. Dispense

from me saying terrible in a passion of weeping followed their grief, kissed his hands,

His mouth of the wine he had always loved best. He died twelve noon amid hushed

outcry. At night he was buried for L.'s life. Working men carried him back up the hill. No

priest attended.”

Another Hunger Artist

He stared at the words on the flickering screen:

I wanna look like what I am but I don't know what someone like me looks like.

I mean—when people look at me I want them to think, that is a philosopher,

*That has their own interpretation of happiness. That's what I am.*¹⁵³

It was by someone named Lou Sullivan. He didn't recognise the name, but liked the sound of Lou.

He was thirteen at the time it was written. Maybe that's why it's called a second puberty. Others simply couldn't understand it was not simply the urge to *reduce*, but desire that the reduction had *already* taken place. By the single light in the room a rose blemished the pink tinge of thorn against bloody thumbs. Fearing no discovery, fearing no evil, the boy took root in the assurance that such a scar was scarcely noticed by anybody. Long groans which fall to sleep, deeply until the shadows save the day. Making nice with K. in the groupchat, hardly visible in the procession of chibi eyes, disfigured bodies.

There were times when it was a pleasure, then. Being made a fetish: a ritual object, an icon. Being, metaphysical. No more than a commodity. It was the comments. Honest perversion. Deprecation. The violence of fantasy. Immanence. Letters and packages through the mail. Collars, handcuffs, and whips. Erasure in the way they want,

153. Lou Sullivan. *We Both Laughed in Pleasure: The Selected Diaries of Lou Sullivan 1961-1991* (New York: Nightboat Books), 2019.

and to become that want, so much less oneself. K. knew what to do to help, and bore the pallet with trick locks so he might escape unharmed. Watchful eye, blinking red light. The assurances of strangers. How much less of him to ever know. What must be disappeared to make it so? So he would dress in every dream they made. With leather or flannel, boots or clear plastic straps. They wanted him in dresses and camouflage briefs, skirts and vintage naval jackets. The whimper of his voice as they groomed him was often followed by a hollow chime. He collects the piles of clothes from his floor, over to the walk-in closet. He reminds himself that he must buy more hangers the next time that he leaves the flat.

In the kitchen the pan is rust to shit. A pat of butter melts into a sheen of flat, bubbling smoke. He cracks two eggs into the depths. Their mucous turns to white in the flush of heat and oil. Presence and absence. The yolks form two perfect circles which resemble in that instant an unborn child, twins that yet will be. He cries aloud, and tosses them all into the sink.

A Country Sheriff

Taking a stance out this way's bound to lead ill terms. When the head falls, rolls like oblivion to gray dust. A bitch in heat. Chrysalis spun with silk web. Past the thornbrush, wild frozen barbs were once flowers. Little dagger fox with a bloody paw, still believes in omens. Trustful as iron chain, blunt as a Latin sermon. Numbness once bitter aged with the wine of experience. Half-moon hills flatlined with a careless stroke. Wind just as wild as anything.

Little A. Wright's eldest, worried herself a fever into being. Can't be given nothing but warm broth, candles soft to touch her glassy skin. Still the same question on her lips. Again and again for his benefit, never her own. Don't she know that this is the providence of another calling? But it's spoiled white gowns sickly, yellowed sheets like the shroud of turin. Lots of good now, the preacher won't brave the weather for to leave the house of god and god can't step down off the cross. So is meaning at its most essential. Better to burn the wood than kneel beneath a frozen altar.

Like a devil doused in holy water, the girl mangled herself with concern. And spoke his name in that language he first knew. *Querida, querida. Descansa. Matame. Querida, mi vida.* God only gave us one tongue, and being as such is babel.¹⁵⁴ She burned against the bedframe so the whole house smelled of charred sandalwood. A graven figure, bleak as the very love she spoke. Now the plain flooded, and hell froze overhead, came down on us like the very wheel of scripture. Each vein outreached, and death from life drew helter skelter made of scars, bruises, bolder violence still cracked

154. Franz Kafka. *The Complete Stories and Parables*, ed. Nahum N. Glazer (New York: Schocken Books), 1971, 222-3.

This reference to the tower of babel story (Genesis 11:1-9) compartmentalises the cultural divisions which circumscribe this interracial relationship in terms of language. Yet the idea of "being as...babel" is compelling, and invites comparisons to Kafka's own "The City Coat of Arms." Kafka's story is essentially a re-telling of the babel myth, noting the slowness and perfectionism of the builders, and musing that great exertion would only be justified "if it were likely that the tower could be completed in one generation. But that is beyond all hope. It is far more likely that the next generation will find the work of their predecessors bad, and tear down what has been built to begin anew." In this ekphrastic excerpt, Kafka addressees, however indirectly, some of the greater concerns here raised about canons and the classical.

bones and usurped virtue. Now the old man dressed for mourning, like an old preacher, nursing whiskey with a timid smile. She was his pride and joy. Most fair and modest that did ever turn a ring away. The golden band, the hunter's party even now is quick with judgement. This is where I am so beseeched. The best sort of sheriff doesn't have a friend in the world. It's only themselves and the law. Their enemy is the cruelty of humanity, and the hatred within each of us. So if this hay-haired maiden pushes a tract against the law of man for to bring herself closer to god's good graces, well—well, what then?

Justice is blind. Nearer to the heart are matters of the mind. A whiskey in the dead of winter is cold comfort. We toast her life, and lay a dark eye over the candles which burn affixedly. I say there's no doctor round that can cure what ails her. No medicine can tame a mind against its age. Not a tonic for the urge to resistance. Some people just get sick of life, sick of being made to live less than they're entitled by providence. But a lawman can't be a prophet, so to speak new life on barren land. There are in this age too many prophets, so that none may, with justified, true belief, know one law over another. And such with nations that have expanded vast, that one may travel within the same country and yet encounter different standards of truth. I'm sorry, age is an illness and I am quite unwell. Time, also, does cause to perish that which had no substance but belief, and wiles away the years so that none remember such stability for to speak the whole humanity. Law is an untame horse that can't be ridden, and only serves to kick back those who would seek her to control. But never mind, I know the way, and cannot stay the night 'gainst better judgement.

Who presumes of safety that their hitch-tent cabin could procure? There are no bounties for illicit borders. Every parting word is semaphore. We are the meek, and have inherited nothing but our hunger. For decades past this grange disturbed no sleep, and reign made peace with leather paddocks. Bear, forbear, these country people can't hesitate to lie about my tired watch in the region of their discontent. Their settling ambitions drawn to still water, feverish to cease, brought to pitch with stress of travel.

Nowadays no youth can run the word of law, decreed from the great-above with a piquant wherewithal. What common cause is drawn, the law is sand to carry wind, and each does what is right in their own. My way to look upon, and counsel where just cause, is more to act in faith. From whence was this post elect upon my shoulders? By whose account has this *Job* been given me? I cannot, in the breath of memory, place my hand upon the bible and say that THUS I KNOW FOR SENTENCING AND SERVICE. All the matters of life here-besides are lost to me, and nothing is but the codex without a code, a cypher with no key for which to ascertain the matter plainly. If there was a life I held most dear, a love that made me smile, and fortunes which my mind did levy, they are castaway as so much dust now. I do disappear unto myself, and find the form of law my very body, if not the soul, that gleans this bronze, six-point badge.¹⁵⁵

And now attests to meet in the stables by the estate, dressed in rags, the humble Chicory, viceroy to our natural order. His pupils white, and shivering dance does make a rosary spin atop a bowl of water. The flickering candles float in golden ratios and each the other quivers with good faith. He knows the way they's headed, but questions me the cost. I haven't left to give but grant my right, as ever were, in ordinance of this. No law but the wisdom folk, the native men, and me. Does it mean the way too, that devil's righteous — fool's deliverance? None are but the matter their own devils, angels in the flesh of soul. Every trickster speaks the same line: I'll take my horse and leave. None but the master's steed can follow the lovers' path. And do you think they'll live? Yessuh, as eternity goes on and on and on...

It's the torches that do help me find my way. And jeers and wild yells that mock the native calls to war. The colt is acting memory, and doesn't consider where or wherefore we march as such, following this case of forbiddance brought to light. We see the pitchforks making silhouettes, and picture those young bodies, idling themselves with fruit and wine at the bank of the river, sitting atop Niyogi quilt just as blue as anything. Do they decide to leave the cradle of their lives, apart as it remains, or face the bounty of

¹⁵⁵. The dual-meaning of this symbol, both as an anachronistic reference to camp law enforcement tropes, and a more serious and understated reference to the Star of David, is a fitting one in the context of pomoclassicism.

exile, which most deem worst than death.¹⁵⁶ Would the tribes look kindly on their unsettlement, and take them in anon? Well the boy's only got a tongue for Spanish, and not half the eye to hunt, though life depends. Judge, jury, coroner, grave-keeper, parish priest, and doctor too—they ask of me this and more. I am grown weary. The days beat like sun against still water. People see in me reflections of their darkest selves, and so enact the multitude. And watchful eye is greatest cruelty yet, that even Jesus cried for those tormentors. Thus up ahead I see no lights, but hanging from the trees the limbs that bade: stay, stay, generations left unlearned. The head dangles over icy currents, and torso gutted in the frozen branches. No one else remains to cultivate right reason, and teach the patience justice requires.

There, again, I'm blind or else most cruel in fantasy. For the way is clear, and seldom do remain but a few harbingers of goodwill and fortune. They reach unto me, and pull my body from perdition. The forest yet remains a frozen waste. I hear them speak.

“Listen” they admit, “none who seek the truth will find it here.”

156. Cf. William Shakespeare. *Romeo and Juliet*. Boston: MIT University Press Online, http://shakespeare.mit.edu/romeo_juliet/full.html:

“Hence-banished is banish'd from the world,/ And world's exile is death: then banished,/ Is death mis-term'd: calling death banishment,/ Thou cutt'st my head off with a golden axe,/ And smilest upon the stroke that murders me.”

Chapter Two: Dialectical Negation in the Writing and Criticism of Franz Kafka

What then is truth? A movable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical, and binding. Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions: they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force, coins which have lost their embossing and are now considered as metal and no longer as coins.”

-Friedrich Nietzsche, in “On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense”¹⁵⁷

‘Since I have come to know the body better– ’ Zarathustra said to one of his disciples ‘ –the spirit is only a hypothetical spirit to me; and all that is ‘everlasting– ’ that too is only a parable.’

-Friedrich Nietzsche, in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*¹⁵⁸

This chapter continues the project of building a critical framework through which to understand the postmodern classical via an examination of the literature of Franz Kafka, and my own literary writing, influenced by his most widely read work. I will organise this critical chapter as I have the first, in essence: drawing a link between the work of Kafka and JW von Goethe, then demonstrating how Friedrich Nietzsche’s paradoxical and hybridic writing resounds with the Kafkan notions of ‘eternity’ and the ‘indestructible.’ I will then review the seemingly irreconcilable readings of Walter Benjamin, and Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guatarri, respectively, demonstrating that their paradoxical readings of Kafka are based in the polarising tradition of Goethe and Nietzsche. Finally, I will demonstrate the explicit influence of Kafka’s writing on the creative work in this portfolio, by drawing parallels and emphasising differences between my creative writing and the stories that influenced it such as “A Country Doctor” and “The Hunger Artist.”

I have thus far discussed the intellectual tradition of postmodern classicism, through an examination of polarity and appropriation in Goethe’s oeuvre. I contend that

157. Friedrich Nietzsche. “On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense” in *Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche’s Notebooks of the early 1870s*, trans. Daniel Breazeale (New Jersey: Humanities Press), 84, https://www.academia.edu/15437478/FRIEDRICH_WILHELM_NIETZSCHE_On_Truth_and_Lies_in_a_Nonmoral_Sense.

158. Friedrich Nietzsche. *Thus Spake Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, trans. Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2006, 99, <http://users.clas.ufl.edu/burt/LoserLit/zarathustra.pdf>.

polarity and appropriation play a vital part of Goethe's literary perspective, and that these concepts function in terms of polyvalence. This chapter will argue that the same dialectic which informs Goethe and Nietzsche's polyvalent paradox, also figures in the analytic perspective of key writing concerning Kafka and his oeuvre, especially by Reiner Stach (one of Kafka's foremost contemporary biographers) and Robert Alter (a literary historian whose *Canon and Creativity* explores the impact of the Hebrew bible on western notions of canon). Postmodern classicism is rooted in this very same paradox, and is a byproduct of it. The figures studied function within a *network* of influence, a term derived from the exegetical efforts of Benjamin and Deleuze of Guattari. I will investigate the scope of the postmodern classical by examining how Goethean paradox influenced Kafka's informal literary theorising, and in turn my own writing, which directly borrows from both authors. The connection between Nietzsche and Kafka will be drawn by demonstrating the conceptual links between Kafka's notion of the 'eternal' and 'indestructible' and Nietzsche's reconciliation of the Apollonian and Dionysian. I will also note how these concepts inform the structure of Kafka's literary writing, and that of his preeminent critics, Benjamin and Deleuze and Guattari. Throughout this process, an emphasis will be placed on polyvalence in the oeuvre of Kafka. This element is so pervasive in Kafka's writing that Robert Alter, in his study on the influence of the Hebrew bible in canonical western writing, writes "Kafka anticipates or actually inspires his great admirer Gershom Scholem in seeing endless interpretability rather than absolute truth as the principal criterion of the canonical. Thus the dynamic of the canonical is retained, but its authority is compromised."¹⁵⁹ This movement from absolute truth to endless interpretability is reminiscent of Bloom's 'misprision,' and Kermode's emphasis on latent meaning in *The Genesis of Secrecy*. All of which demonstrates how vital the scholarship of Kafka's literary efforts are for conceptualising contemporary canon and the postmodern classical, each of which are also defined by polarity.

159. Robert Alter. *Canon & Creativity: Modern Writing and the Authority of Scripture* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 2000, 76-7. See Also Reiner Stach. *Kafka: The Decisive Years* (Orlando: Harcourt), 2005, 195.

It is my intention to now demonstrate how Kafka and Goethe are brought together by Nietzsche into a network. To these ends, I have decided to draw attention to the relationship of each writer to the other, first briefly examining the Kafka-Goethe relationship, then drawing comparisons between Kafka's hybridic work and the writing of Nietzsche, who, I have already demonstrated, was influenced by Goethe to such an extent that he idealises the ground-breaking next generation, paradoxically, in the figure of Faust conjuring Helen of Troy. My intention, here, is to demonstrate the literary tradition from which postmodern classicism was conceived.

Nietzsche, throughout the twentieth century and steadily into the twenty first, appears to me as Napoleon was viewed by Goethe, "like Fate itself," or, as Goethe is reported to have said on another occasion, 'like a compendium for the world.'¹⁶⁰ Roland Gray observes that Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's term of art for this phenomenon is "world historical man', one of those who both embody and create the movement of their age and thereby bring about their own justification."¹⁶¹ Kafka is at first glance an odd icon in this tradition, having published little, and floundering under familial and career stresses which led to his relationship to creative writing being fraught at even the most productive of times.¹⁶² Deleuze and Guattari celebrate these aspects of Kafka (which Benjamin deems, following the artist's perspective, a failure)—making an entire liberatory framework out of the notion of 'minor literature' as exemplified by Kafka's writing. These modern theorists appear, nonetheless, to view Kafka through the same 'world historical' lens.

Deleuze and Guattari's notion of minor literature is a useful point of reference in attempting to understand the postmodern classical, despite some reservations I hold concerning their disorienting, schizoid literary criticism in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, with its various in-built inconsistencies and contradictions. I maintain that this reconciliation of opposing forces is in the tradition of Nietzsche's fusion of Dionysus and Apollo, as I will

¹⁶⁰ Roland Gray. *Goethe*, 16.

¹⁶¹ Ibid..

¹⁶² Reiner Stach. *Kafka*, 1-9. 45, 121-9.

demonstrate. It is also a feature of Benjamin's reading of Kafka, which will be discussed later. Deleuze and Guattari's conception of minor literature as revolutionary is striking in its nuanced depiction of simultaneous individual/collective representation, its conceptual and interpretive difficulty, and its aspirations toward cultural 'immanence.'¹⁶³ Though at times I question their lack of clarity and outright rejection of psychoanalysis as an informative exegetical tool, these features do resonate with the Kafkan project as I understand it. At any rate, despite the apparent 'failure' of the writer, Kafka, in his historical moment, the scale and breadth of discourse generated about the author testifies to his undeniable canonical importance. His work entails, no doubt, a unique artistic achievement, which has undeniably influenced my own writing, and, for its immense cultural impact, justifies itself in the 'world historical' sense. Somehow, Kafka's mysterious persona persists despite, perhaps even as a result of, a wealth of discourse concerning his life and work, and ample personal writing, such that in 2005 Stach reports: "an American student naive enough to attempt to obtain some basic information by typing 'Kafka' into a search engine would have to choose between 130,000 English language sites...even a few more than Johann Wolfgang von Goethe"¹⁶⁴. These figures may seem archaic, but the sentiment remains. The comparison with Goethe is vital, and their interrelationship in terms of literary and canonical status is undeniable. In order to further examine the relationship which Kafka had with literary tradition, I will recount Stach's observations concerning the importance of Goethe in Kafka's personal life and as a model for his own literary ambitions.

Kafka and Goethe

Exploring Kafka's relationship to Goethe will help make better sense of the former's relationship to literary tradition in general: one that is also able to be characterised in terms

¹⁶³The disorienting study of literature, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, is also an apparent rebuttal to the position taken by Roland Barthes in *Writing Degree Zero*, the well-known series of essays concerning literary modernism and the (im)possibility of a revolutionary art, from which this collection has drawn its epigraph. In the foreword to the latter text, novelist Adam Thirlwell notes how Barthes's "[dismantling of] the myth that literature could be a revolution" is in part "an attempt to find a form of true liberation." [Adam Thirlwell. Roland Barthes. "Introduction" in *Writing Degree Zero*, x.] This liberation is found precisely in the same "unsettling [of] the codes" which informs Deleuze and Guattari's work, demonstrating the possibility "to reach a more profound form of meaning." [Ibid.] See also Deleuze and Guattari. *Kafka*, 17, 26, 51, 63, 86.

¹⁶⁴Reiner Stach. *Kafka*, 6.

of polarity and appropriation which do not appear to exclude the other, and are instead simultaneously fused. This notion of dialectical fusion is rife within the studies of either figure. As before, both appropriation and polarity will have an important role to play in this analytical approach, although Kafka is less articulate in terms of clarifying his own literary perspective than even Goethe, who, as it has been observed, “never even deigned to write a preface.”¹⁶⁵¹⁶⁶ Some observations concerning Kafka’s literary ideals by the likes of Bloom and Stach, including the dialectical concept of the ‘interminable’ and his ambivalent relationship with tradition (characterised in his own relationship with Goethe) will be examined in short order. My position is that Kafka’s use of polarity continues the tradition set into motion by Goethe, despite some apparent reservations, and has, in turn, contributed to my own conceptual framework regarding the postmodern classical.

Paradox is in-built into Harold Bloom’s reading of the Kafkan oeuvre. It exists in Bloom’s description of Kafka’s dialectical conception of “gnosis, [which] he calls ‘patience,’ and gnosticism, ‘the negative’; the first is infinitely slow, the second, astonishingly rapid because it acknowledges a dualism that Kafka finds exists at the heart of everything and everyone.”¹⁶⁷ A simpler, and more modern, articulation of this thought can be found in the term ‘ambivalence,’ which I will privilege in this section when referencing Goethe’s impact on Kafka, for the sake of clarity. In my study of Kafka I have discovered the need for a fluidity of terminology, as well as Kafka’s own terminological fluidity in his informal examinations of literary concepts. Specifically in this case I refer to Benjamin, Deleuze and Guattari, and Bloom, who all interpret Kafka using few if any overlapping terms, and my own approach, postmodern classicism, which by nature fuses terminology from a variety of discursive sources. This fluidity will be utilised throughout the chapter, drawing attention to parallel terms, semantic ambiguities, and dual meanings. My multifaceted, paradoxical approach, I contend, is derived from Goethe’s reliance on polarity, as well as what Bloom

¹⁶⁵.Stach, 60-2, 329.

¹⁶⁶.Thomas Carlyle. *Essays*, 18.

¹⁶⁷.Harold Bloom. *The Western Canon*, 418.
See also, Roland Gray. *Goethe*, 19-20.

calls ‘Hegelian negation,’ and is part of a tradition which has helped me to conceptualise the postmodern classical, and the theories of its predecessors.

Following the scholarship of Stach, Kafka’s foremost contemporary biographer, I believe it is vital to not only point out the way Kafka obsessively “learned to appreciate Goethe’s prose,” but also the extent to which Kafka rebelled against Goethe.¹⁶⁸ Bloom provides a summary: “Goethe was the Abraham from whom Kafka shrank...forsaking the Law for his own Negative, [abandoning] also an Abraham who had misinterpreted the world.”¹⁶⁹ This corresponds with my belief that Goethe, for Kafka, represented literary tradition itself, and that this relationship was ambivalent insofar as Kafka simultaneously praised/rejected the former as a literary influence. Deleuze and Guattari describe how “the German language—...Goethe’s German, has a cultural and referential function” as “the vehicular language of towns, a bureaucratic language of the state.”¹⁷⁰ Queer theorist and literary scholar Judith Butler shares an interest in the marginal position of Kafka’s language when she asks “would we have the Babel parables without the presumption of multilingualism, and would communication falter so insistently in his works without that backdrop of Czech, Yiddish and German converging in Kafka’s world?”¹⁷¹ I share their interest in Kafka’s position as “one of the few Jewish writers in Prague to understand and speak Czech...(Kafka also knows French, Italian, and probably a bit of English). He will not learn Hebrew until later.”¹⁷² This corresponds with the pan-national literary influences on Goethe which I mention in the previous chapter. What is important here is that Kafka’s relationship to the German language, and Goethe, by extension, is marginal, and this coalesces in his literary achievements, which are still widely studied. Deleuze and Guattari also report on Kafka’s “acquaintance [with] the daughter of the concierge at the Goethe house in Weimar” which appears to function as a means of acquiescing some erotic closeness with an associated

168. Reiner Stach. *Kafka*, 80.

169. Harold Bloom. *The Western Canon*, 419.

170. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. *Kafka*, 25.

171. Judith Butler. “Who Owns Kafka?” in *London Review of Books*, Vol. 33 No. 5, 2011, <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v33/n05/judith-butler/who-owns-kafka>.

172. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. *Kafka*, 25.

canonical figure, as reported in detail by Stach.¹⁷³¹⁷⁴ The role of the erotic in literary writing will be the eminent subject of chapter three, which is concerned with the artistic and conceptual writing of Sabina Spielrein, and her contributions to the postmodern classical framework.

Kafka and Goethe also share a deep relationship with the epistolary medium, which was for Kafka vital in his flustered romantic relationships.¹⁷⁵ Deleuze and Guattari describe the orientation of Kafka's romantic letters as 'diabolical,' and go so far as to pose the question: "if Kafka so admired Goethe, was this as a [literary] 'master' or as the author of the pact with the devil that Faust makes and that determines the [tragic] fate of Marguerite?"¹⁷⁶ Kafka's "perverse, diabolical utilisation of the letter" demonstrates "directly, innocently, the diabolical power of the literary machine."¹⁷⁷ In this case the diabolical is linked to marriage through their notion of the 'paranoiac' strand of the law, which upholds the social order through oppression of the masses, contrasted with the 'schizoid' law which is subversive, polyvalent, and, however dialectically, otherwise affiliated with Kafka and the very idea of 'bachelordom.'¹⁷⁸ It is clear that Deleuze and Guattari's interpretive efforts of Kafka include polarity as an essential and inextricable feature, which demonstrates the substantial link between the two literary writers, Goethe and Kafka. One significant link between the two writers, then, would appear to be the deeply *personal* aspects of their writing, and the interfusion of literary and personal interests. I would also draw attention to the observation by Deleuze and Guattari, which, although it concerns the letters between Kafka and Felice Bauer, is applicable to the literary achievements of both Kafka and Goethe, and links the two together: "the letters are a rhizome, a network, a spider's web."¹⁷⁹

¹⁷³. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. *Kafka*, 29.

¹⁷⁴. Reiner Stach. *Kafka*, 80-5.

¹⁷⁵. Stach, 145-50, 155-160.

¹⁷⁶. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. *Kafka*, 29.

¹⁷⁷. *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸. *Ibid.*, 31- 40, 58-62, 70-3.

¹⁷⁹. *Ibid.*, 29.

In the previous chapter, I have shown how Goethe drew from complex networks of influence in his literary writing, and was influential to the same extent. I therefore assert that the influence of Goethe is apparent in the persistent interest in paradox by Franz Kafka, which I will demonstrate in greater detail below.

The 'Eternal' and 'Indestructible' in Kafka's Oeuvre

I am interested in the theoretical resonances of Kafka's personal and literary writing, and how the curious correlation between Kafka's concepts of literary 'indestructibility' and 'eternity' derives from Goethean polarity. This research will allow for a better understanding of the theoretical and aesthetic complications of the postmodern classical, itself, which is also grounded in paradox, and which draws from this very tradition in its stylistic experimentations. Bloom writes that Kafka's notion of the 'indestructible' accompanies "the grimmest of all paradoxes [in] the manifestations of...striving [which] are inevitably destructive, particularly self-destructive."¹⁸⁰ There is a clear parallel between the language used by Gray to describe both Faust and Goethe, "the man who strived after everything, [and] was...declared to be saved from the devil's clutches precisely because he had striven."¹⁸¹ As with the Goethean oeuvre, a fluidity of terminological elements in Kafka's aphorisms seems to constitute a sort of narrative, or structural, paradox. Stach describes the phenomenon:

Kafka was sketching a kind of ideological blueprint with a theological underpinning, yet his concepts remain hazy [...]. The boundaries between "the good," "the true," "the divine," and "the indestructible" are fluid; at times these are synonyms, at others they are not."¹⁸²

I would liken this to the fluidity of Goethe's poem, *The Genius Game*: "Sometimes it's serious, sometimes it's a joke...it's a nothing and a something."¹⁸³ It is also helpful to reiterate that this near-ubiquitous paradoxical element in Kafka's aphorisms corresponds

¹⁸⁰.Harold Bloom. *The Western Canon*, 430.

¹⁸¹.Roland Gray, *Goethe*, 19.

¹⁸².Franz Kafka. *The Aphorism of Franz Kafka*, ed. Reiner Stach, tans. Shelley Frisch (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 2022, XVIII.

¹⁸³.JW v Goethe. *Goethe: Selected Verses*, 14.

with the Goethean notion of polarity, as described in the previous chapter.¹⁸⁴ In fact, the paradoxical, or dialectical, configuration is of great use to Kafka, and, as with Goethe, it appears to be a means by which he challenged himself as a writer in conceptual and formalistic terms. It also appears to have informed the metaphysical aspect of the Kafkaesque, which is clearly influenced by Goethe's writing on the subject.

I will now focus more specifically on the Kafkan notion of 'eternity' (akin with the indestructible, at least in the abstract), as a metaphysical conceit, and what I have coined the 'asymptotic' model of meaning, approaching infinitely—but never arriving. After describing the "literary reshaping" which Kafka utilised in relation to the Kabbalistic and western religious tradition in his aphorisms, Stach provides a specific example derived from the Book of Genesis.¹⁸⁵ I assert that Kafka uses this 'literary reshaping' (congruent with the other terms which I have so far used (misprision, appropriation, and de/re-territorialisation)) in order to articulate his ideas surrounding the 'eternal,' in the scope of the network so far described. Stach summarises:

According to myth, the fall took place *once*, far back in the past. That is illogical, Kafka said. Paradise is part of a sphere of eternity that bears no relation to our concepts of time. [This proposition] harks back to Plato's theory of forms, in which Kafka had been exceptionally well-versed.... The world that is familiar to us is the world of the senses...[which] is really only a kind of shadow...a dim reflection of the world of the spirit. For this reason, the aphorisms continually speak of two entirely different worlds while insisting that there is only one....¹⁸⁶

There are apparent parallels to the Goethean notion of the metaphysical as I've outlined it (abstract, conceptually elusive, given to paradox/polyvalence) and Kafka's view. In this articulation of Kafka's appropriation of the biblical narrative, the fall from paradise, there is an undeniable aspect of ambivalence, or simultaneous utilisation/rejection of the originary material which is congruent with Bloom's notion of 'misprision,' and the Goethean appropriative tradition as described in the previous chapter. Stach continues, referencing

¹⁸⁴.Franz Kafka. *Aphorisms*, XI, XXI, 6, 14, 46, 198.

See Also Franz Kafka. *The Complete Novels: The Trial, Amerika, The Castle*, trans. Willa Muir and Edwin Muir (London: Penguin Random House), 2019, 132-3, 170-1, 187-92.

¹⁸⁵.Franz Kafka. *Aphorisms*, XVIII.

¹⁸⁶.Franz Kafka. *Aphorisms*, XIX.

Aphorism 64, with a clearer articulation of the conceptually rigorous 'eternity' in Kafka's metaphysics: "in the world of the spirit there is only timeless eternity, so it is not possible for any event to come to a definitive end, because then it would be in the past."¹⁸⁷¹⁸⁸ My contention, concerning Kafka's notion of eternity, is that it is in part conceptualised in the tradition of the 'cult of fame.' Eternity of this sort was conceived, by the early modern 'theorists' of canon, in terms of artistic production. In the literary writing of Kafka these ideas become thematically cogent, even in their inversion or rejection, as a narrative feature of stories such as "An Imperial Message," "Before the Law," and the novel *The Castle* (the 'endless journey' stories). I would justify my own artistic endeavours by emphasising how Stach observes that Kafka's enigmatic aphorisms "are not there to *illustrate* his arguments; they *are* his arguments."¹⁸⁹ This is another strong connection with Goethe, who sought to let his art speak for itself, only articulating the self-described 'daemons' who informed his work at the very end of his autobiography, written shortly before his death.¹⁹⁰ I seek in this portfolio to characterise the postmodern classical as 'speaking for itself' to the same degree, in the creative work which accompanies the critical chapters of this portfolio. My continued privileging of the creative work to its theoretical framing is in part also derived from the 'cult of fame' from which these other artists have drawn. Indeed, I would posit, that, however ambivalently, Kafka and Goethe share a relationship with the notion of 'eternity' that is espoused by the cult of fame and that plays an indispensable part of their conceiving of the metaphysical, but also their own writing, and literature itself. Each of them uses their polarised orientation toward the metaphysical to inform their most celebrated works.

The role of paradox in Kafka cannot be overstated. The curious orientation toward an eerie sense of irresolution, has, filtered through paradox (that is, a cacophony of

187. "The expulsion from paradise is in its principal aspect eternal: and so, although the expulsion from Paradise is definitive, and life in the world inescapable, the very eternity of the process nevertheless makes it possible not only that we remain in Paradise forever but that we are indeed there forever, whether we know it or not." [Franz Kafka. *Aphorisms*, 130]

188. Franz Kafka. *Aphorisms*, XXI

189. *Ibid.*

190. Roland Gray. *Goethe*, 20.

contradictory *interpretations*, as well as literary elements), become synonymous with the Kafkaesque itself. Kafka's simultaneous retention and subversion of other canonical writing, most notably the Hebrew Bible, is akin to Bloom's notion of misprision, and the other terms of art for this phenomenon I have previously discussed. Stach describes the phenomenon as such: "[Kafka] liked to invent, to dream up paradoxical images and scenes, and he cared less about amassing lively details than about developing a sharply defined idea visually."¹⁹¹ Again, the emphasis on paradoxical narrative elements can be credibly argued to derive from the Goethean tradition. Stach elsewhere, while describing Kafka's lecture on the cultural value of Yiddish, writes "Kafka caught his listeners unawares, and played an aggressive game with their expectations, alternatively confirming and demolishing them."¹⁹² Again, the structure of paradox is eminent, and the description here is also apt in conceiving of the Goethean method of appropriation, as much as Bloom's paradoxical notion of 'misprision' and Spielrein's simultaneous creation/destruction.¹⁹³¹⁹⁴ Bloom's earlier description of the paradoxical notion of the indestructible can be viewed in terms of polarity, and the various figures inspired by this dialectical form of Goethe's, which is not only his own. Take for instance, Freud's confluence of the 'sacred' and 'profane' regarding totemic objects of worship in *Totem and Taboo*, and its similarity to the Nietzschean notion of a simultaneous yearning for the ugly/beautiful in *The Birth of Tragedy*.¹⁹⁵¹⁹⁶

Kafka is clearly influenced by Goethe, who wrote from a rigorous tradition including gnosticism, global literary influence, and the predominance of the dialectic in formative discursive sites (i.e., in the early modern practice of 'canon-formation' as described in the introductory chapter). Goethe's 'daemonic' figures who "only revealed themselves through contradiction" and his underlying notions of the metaphysical become a template

¹⁹¹.Reiner Stach. *Kafka*, 258

¹⁹².Stach, 70.

¹⁹³.Harold Bloom. *Poetry and Repression*, 4.

¹⁹⁴.Sabina Spielrein. *The Essential Writings*, 97-8.

¹⁹⁵.Sigmund Freud. *Totem and Taboo*, 62.

¹⁹⁶.Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Birth of Tragedy*, 7.

through which Kafka is able to articulate, albeit with extreme hesitance and ambivalence, something akin to his own metaphysical perspective.¹⁹⁷ Goethe was the subject of much fixation during Kafka's phase of consuming a great variety of biographies, or 'great lives.' Stach describes the relationship in a way which is informative in conceiving Kafka's relationship with literary tradition in general:

The essence of [Goethe's] prose...became an existential model...in all probability long before literature pushed all his other interests to the background. Still, his veneration of Goethe was not blind...and [Kafka] complained that Goethe 'probably holds back the German language by the force of his writing....' Kafka...read everything about Goethe's life and character he could get his hands on—biographical and autobiographical writings, letters, records of conversations, and diaries. He grew aware of an intellectually invigorating influence on him, although he was ambivalent about it. When the happiness of reading about Goethe faded, his feeling of uselessness grew more profound....¹⁹⁸

Although there is some ambiguity of the matter of Goethe 'holding back the German language,' it is apparent that he played a key role as a member of the literary institution which Kafka sought to uphold and overthrow simultaneously. I agree with Stach's position, insofar as it seems to suggest that Goethean polarity had a part to play on Kafka's literary perspective. I also argue that Goethe influences Kafka's conception of metaphysics, and I will advance this argument through a discussion of the correlations and divergences between the writing of Kafka and Nietzsche.

Kafka and Nietzsche

The aim of this section is to discuss the role of Nietzsche's ideology in the shaping of Kafka's abstract and ambivalent view of literature. The shadow of Goethe's brooding Faust loomed over the German character as it attempted to navigate the political and technological developments accompanying the latter half of the nineteenth century, which helped give rise to Nietzschean pessimism as such. Nietzsche's evocative rejection of

¹⁹⁷.Roland Gray. *Goethe*, 19-20.

¹⁹⁸.Reiner Stach. *Kafka*, 80-81. (See Appendix A)

religious institutions and literary conventions in his hybridic prose-poetry/philosophy has clear resonances with the literary oeuvre cultivated by Kafka, no less than the project of postmodern classicism. It is even the case, according to the editor of the anthology *From Modernism to Postmodern*, that the term postmodern “seems first to have been used in 1917 by the German philosopher Rudolf Pannwitz to describe the ‘nihilism’ of twentieth-century Western culture, a theme he took from Friedrich Nietzsche.”¹⁹⁹ I argue that there are seemingly postmodern elements in both the works of Nietzsche and Kafka insofar as they are interested in an abstract/metaphysical/dialectical orientation toward language itself. That is to say, the foundational concerns of postmodernism are foreseen in the work of Nietzsche and Kafka. Each of these writers, in their own way, display an ambivalent relationship to Goethe as the embodiment of a literary culture they influenced through misprision, or creative de/re-construction (what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as ‘de/re-territorialisation’ and Stach as ‘literary reshaping’).²⁰⁰²⁰¹ Their interfusion of classical and postmodern conceits makes them extremely relevant figures for an exploration attempting to investigate the literary precedent for the postmodern classical.

As a poet-philosopher, Nietzsche asserts the primal significance of art as a form of *metaphysical compensation* (taken here to mean psychic reconciliation regarding the irreducibility, or conceptual distance/difficulty/impossibility, of the metaphysical itself), and he exaggeratedly posits that “existence and the world appear justified only as an *aesthetic phenomenon*” rather than a *metaphysical* (or, ‘spiritual’) phenomenon.²⁰² Kafka, on the other hand, through a paradoxical *interfusion* (that is, one characterised by emphasising absence/lack and simultaneously presence/materiality) of this enigmatic ‘metaphysical’

199. Ed. Lawrence Cahoon. *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers), 1996, 3.

200. Reda Bensmia. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. “Foreward” in *Kafka*, XXV-XXVI,.

201. Ed. Reiner Stach. Franz Kafka. “Introduction” in *Aphorisms*, XVIII.

202. Friedrich Nietzsche. *Birth of Tragedy*, 128.

aspect, strives to creatively demonstrate and disassemble literature itself.²⁰³²⁰⁴ Each are influenced by Goethe, and despite some evidence to the contrary, Kafka's legacy carries a strong element of the absolute negative (defined here as the negation of meaning, coherence, and aesthetic unity) more commonly associated with Nietzsche, but nonetheless also in the Goethean tradition. Nonetheless, Nietzsche's notion of 'metaphysical consolation' has some compatibility, not only in the Goethean articulation of the 'world-historical' phenomena, but also in Kafka's conception of the indestructible, which I will discuss presently.

Kafka's conception of the indestructible derives itself dialectically from the latent gnosticism of Goethe and the virulent negativity of Nietzsche. Each figure their ideological conceits around contradiction, as described by Bloom—who relates the material from Kafka's aphorisms to a dialectical notion of time ("infinitely slow" and "astonishingly rapid")—and an orientation toward gnosis and gnosticism described earlier, in the face of what appears to be an essentially antagonistic, indomitable external world.²⁰⁵ After making a note of how Kafka and Nietzsche share a reliance on aphorism, and briefly discussing the ideological and spiritual context of the 'indestructible,' Bloom offers translations of the fragments referring to this phenomenon, here excerpted:

Believing means liberating the indestructible element in oneself, or more accurately, being indestructible, or more accurately, being.

Man cannot live without a permanent trust in something indestructible in himself, through both the indestructible element and the trust may remain permanently hidden from him. One of the ways in which this hiddenness can express itself is through faith in a personal god.²⁰⁶

Bloom oscillates between a mystical and psychoanalytic interpretation of this conception of the 'indestructible.' There is a sense, akin to the notion of 'eternity,' that the indestructible'

203. Deleuze and Guattari emphasise the materiality of Kafka's literary perspective even in situations such a notion defies all reason, such as in the instance of the 'animal stories: "There is nothing metaphoric about the becoming-animal. No symbolism, no allegory... It is a map of intensities... It is a creative line of escape that says nothing other than what it is." [Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka*, 35-6] I am not inclined to agree with this interpretive perspective, but offer it here for the sake of completeness.

204. Stach observes that the nuanced contradiction between Kafka's seemingly ascetic nature and the depth of his writing is especially noteworthy: "this peculiar dialectic of presence and absence reaches into the innermost core of his literary work." [Reiner Stach, *Kafka*, 11]

205. Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon*, 418. (translations uncredited, presumed to be author's)

206. Bloom, 423.

is both quintessentially elusive and simultaneously ubiquitous—as if the barrier to its existence were merely the capacity to conceive the idea itself. Bloom elaborates this point by referencing Kafka’s opaque relationship with the Kabbalic tradition, and continuing: “we have adopted Kafka as *the* most canonical writer of [the twentieth] century because...the split between being and consciousness that is his true subject.”²⁰⁷ He cannot easily, as I have not been able to, discuss Kafka’s influence on the study of Nietzsche and Freud without conflating their perspectives. I will quote from *The Western Canon*:

Freud certainly does not know of an ‘indestructible’ in us; the will to live finally falters in him. And yet, like Nietzsche and Kafka, Freud believes that an innermost self can be strengthened, that Eros can be fortified against the death drive. Consciousness for Freud, is as false and wrongly hopeful as it is in Nietzsche and Kafka. Although Freud refuses the mystical concept of being..., he... substitutes it for his own benign authority.... Kafka refuses all authority (including Freud’s) and offers himself, and us, no cure whatever.²⁰⁸

The above passage supports a comparison between the Kafkan notion of the ‘indestructible’ and the secular *metaphysical consolation* which Nietzsche asserts is the function and meaning of art—although Kafka’s orientation is surely more dialectical, and to that extent, Goethean. Ultimately, both Nietzsche and Kafka succumb to the reconciliation of their contrary impulses. For Nietzsche, this involves reconciling the deconstructive, visceral notion of the Dionysian with the compensatory, if illusionary, Apollonian.²⁰⁹ For Kafka, this entails representing through literary writing the “‘extreme negative, which capsizes into the positive’” which Bloom asserts “must be a full-blown negative theology, whether gnostic, Christian, or heretical Kabbalist.”²¹⁰²¹¹ Although I am decidedly not a scholar on Hegelian philosophy and thought, I find it essential to note the apparent relationship of this negative, which capsizes into a positive, and Hegel’s work, which

²⁰⁷.Bloom, 424 (emphasis mine).

²⁰⁸.Bloom, 424-5.

²⁰⁹.Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Birth of Tragedy*, 117-9.

²¹⁰.Harold Bloom. *The Western Canon*, 425.

²¹¹.This becomes the basis for a brief analysis of “A Country Doctor,” with Bloom especially noting the “terrible slowness as compared to the preternatural speed of the journey,” a feature reminiscent of both the concepts of ‘eternity’ and the ‘indestructible’ as I’ve described them. [Harold Bloom. *The Western Canon*, 426.] I should add the apparent simultaneity in the young patient seeming at once “quite sound” and then, later, in an instant “indeed ill” and filled with “rose-red” wounds and crawling with surreal “worms...themselves rose-red and blood-spotted as well.” [Franz Kafka. *The Complete Stories and Parables*, ed. Nahum N. Glazer (New York: Schocken Books), 1971, 222-3.]

Bloom notes, writing “Freudian and Kafkan negation...differs profoundly from Hegelian negation by accepting the primacy of fact.”²¹²²¹³ Yet is not this structure itself, the negation which ultimately ‘capsizes’ into the positive, noteworthy in the scope of the discussion I’ve so far raised? Kafka’s concept of ‘eternity’ and the ‘indestructible’ teeter with this notion, which profoundly influenced my own literary method in stories such as “A Country Sheriff” which creatively appropriates (engages in a misprision, re/de-construction, re/de-territorialisation, or in a ‘literary reshaping’ of) the enigmatic story “A Country Doctor” and “Another Hunger Artist” which does the same following the example of “The Hunger Artist.”

What is most essential in the above analysis is the emphasis on both Nietzsche and Kafka’s creative hybridisation of the literary and theoretical. Although Kafka staunchly resisted, as Goethe did, a formalising of his aesthetic and metaphysical theory, it has decided parallels in the work of Nietzsche, especially insofar as the ‘eternal’ and ‘indestructible’ function as both an abstraction and a literal dedication to the craft of writing seemingly beyond ordinary human capability. Where Nietzsche seems more secular, he is also found to engage, as Kafka did, subversively with religious thoughts and ideas, especially here-noted, the negation which ultimately results in the positive. These ideas can be traced back to Goethe, and especially the work of Faust, whose deal between God and Mephistopheles functions similarly to this conceptual ‘Hegelian negation.’ Faust, through his rejection of Mephistopheles and continual striving for experience, is able to subvert his own deal with the ‘negative,’ even while (at least, hypothetically) succumbing to it, which ultimately capsizes into the ‘positive’ (his salvation). I will now address how this paradoxical notion is also part of the legacy of Kafka, by describing the influence of the author on critical exegetes Benjamin and Deleuze and Guattari.

212. Georg Hegel, “Absolute Freedom and Terror” In *From Modernism to Postmodernism*, ed. Lawrence Cahoon, 89.

213. Harold Bloom. *The Western Canon*, 423.

Deleuze and Guattari, and Benjamin

Kafka plays a central role as the subject of analysis for both Deleuze and Guattari and Walter Benjamin, and I intend to show how the perspectives which they cultivate meaningfully engage in the tradition so far described, and in turn provides a framework for the postmodern classical. And yet, in order to have this discussion, I must describe precisely how the view of these exegetes differs from the project of the pomoclassical by advocating for polyvalence in name only, and nonetheless privileging their interpretive positions. The exegetical writing of Benjamin and Deleuze and Guattari concerning Kafka's literary work plays a pivotal role for the elaboration of their systems of thought, and yet neither party is able to fully realise a 'criticism which does not judge.' Ultimately, I contend that each of these thinkers follow the tradition of Goethean polarity as referenced above, which in Kafka's thinking is represented by his notions of the 'eternal' and 'indestructible.' Both of these conceits simultaneously function as metaphysical abstractions and very real expressions of the author's aspiration for formally 'perfect' literary writing.²¹⁴

Laura Penny helpfully describes the formalistic qualities of Deleuze and Guattari and Benjamin's analysis of Kafka's writing, which are clearly within the scope of my exploration of the postmodern classical and its literary influences. Deleuze and Guattari share with Benjamin the desire for a criticism that "refuses to judge," and other affinities:

both are audaciously combinatorial, a-systemic thinkers, who...refused to submit to the dictates of systems and schools.... Both Deleuze and Benjamin propose new, non-hierarchical images of thought, such as the constellation and the rhizome, and often turn to philosophy's swarm of siblings...such as art, literature, film, [etc].... Their deviations into the extra-philosophical are also stylistic, as both generate strange new forms, forms that are barely formal in their commitment to plurality and the polyvocal.... Benjamin and Deleuze share an intense interest in...the marginal, the plural, the multiple, and the profane, which expresses itself in their writings about art and judgment."²¹⁵

These are descriptions to which postmodern classicism might aspire to, if it is not already apparently in the tradition of Benjamin's dialectical analytics, or Deleuze and Guattari's

²¹⁴.Reiner Stach. *Kafka*, 3, 10-1,95-6, 131, 134-5, 175-7,190-1, 242-3.

²¹⁵.Laura Penny. "Parables and politics", <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/parables-politics-how-benjamin-deleuze-amp/docview/210781050/se-2>

de/re-territorialising conception of *minor literature*. Consider the interest in generating new forms in light of the Nietzsche passage in the last chapter, where the author imagines the future generation's spurning of romantic transcendence in terms of Faust. I have already described how these formalistic idiosyncrasies and dialectics of major/minor literature informed my conception of the postmodern classical, but the point is here strengthened in the description of the methodological experimentations of these critical writers.

I must preface my analysis by providing some context concerning how Benjamin and Deleuze and Guattari distinguish themselves from their predecessors, in order to develop their own literary frameworks. Benjamin outright rejects any religiously charged interpretations of Kafka, especially by the likes of Max Brod, only to refer to the author's work as "prophetic" and draw comparisons to rabbinic stories and the Babylonian Talmud.²¹⁶²¹⁷

Benjamin's essay "Franz Kafka: On the Tenth Anniversary of His Death" reads like HB Cotterril's analysis of *Faust*, insofar as the former mostly recounts Kafka's various literary projects in terms of summary. This is the case despite Benjamin's early insistence, drawn figuratively by an anecdotal comparison to Potemkin, of "Kafka's enigma" which persists and subverts any attempt at interpretation.²¹⁸ Later, making a comparison to some lines from

Dostoyevsky, Benjamin says of Kafka's parables that they "are never exhausted by what is explainable; on the contrary, he took all conceivable

precautions against the interpretation of his writings."²¹⁹ I assert that the notion of enigma here, and its apparently ambivalent relationship to the spiritual is expressed, as demonstrated from the above-referenced passages concerning the 'eternal' and

'indestructible,' is a recurring, dynamic paradox, and appropriated from both the religious and secular literary tradition, if such a distinction can be made at all. Benjamin's ultimate position, as outlined by Penny, is congruent with the abstract notion of the 'eternal' and 'indestructible: "Benjamin argues that the real spiritual content of Kafka's work lies in its

²¹⁶.Ibid..

²¹⁷.Walter Benjamin. *Selected Writings Vol. 2, Part 2: 1931-1934*, trans. Rodney Livingstone et al. (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press), 1999, 496-7.

²¹⁸.Ibid., 795.

²¹⁹.Ibid., 804.

procrastination, its insistence on an interminable process, on a trial that never results in a verdict.”²²⁰ This interminable, ever-approaching sense corresponds with what I refer to as the ‘asymptotic’ model of meaning that derives from Kafka’s own informal attempts to explain his literary ideology.

Benjamin’s conception of Kafka’s literary writing is in the tradition of the Hegelian ‘negation’ which ‘capsizes’ into the affirmative—whereby, as in the description given by Deleuze and Guattari of the ‘becoming-animal’ in Kafka’s oeuvre, “all forms come undone, as do all the significations, signifiers, and signifieds, to the benefit of an unformed matter of deterritorialized flux, of nonsignifying signs.”²²¹ These concepts surrounding the simultaneously occurring negative and positive element (polarity) and the dialectic of the tangible/material and abstract/metaphysical qualities of language/literature are synonymous with the fundamental tenets of the ‘postmodern’ as derived from Goethe, Nietzsche and the early modern theorists of canon. They are also the conceptual core of the postmodern classical.

These dialectical ideas, filtered through Kafka’s underlying notions of the ‘eternal’ and ‘indestructible,’ inform the analyses of both Benjamin and Deleuze and Guattari’s exegetical writing concerning Kafka, but their conclusions drastically differ: “Where Benjamin reads Kafka as a noble failure, a prophet whose parables the crowds garble or ignore, Deleuze and Guattari see him as an escape artist, and for them, such flights are political.”²²² There are apparent contradictions in Benjamin’s view of the ‘negative theology’ of Kafka as both a failure and prophetic in terms of the rabbinic tradition and western modernist writing. This position, however strongly it resists the religious view of Kafka’s work, succumbs to inconsistency. In a move preceding the analysis of Deleuze and Guattari, Benjamin attempts, at the end of his study of Kafka on the tenth anniversary of his death, to bring “The Bucket Rider,” the “Grachus” story, and “A New Advocate” into a

220. Laura Penny. “Parables and politics,” <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/parables-politics-how-benjamin-deleuze-amp/docview/210781050/se-2>.

221. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. *Kafka*, 13.

222. Laura Penny. “Parables and politics,” <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/parables-politics-how-benjamin-deleuze-amp/docview/210781050/se-2>.

discussion about justice. “The gate to justice is study,” Benjamin observes, “yet Kafka doesn’t dare attach to this study the promises which tradition has attached to the study of the Torah.”²²³ As I will show, the prison chaplain in *The Trial* represents this mode of judicious study, but this is merely one facet of the ‘indestructible’ and ‘eternal’ court system which ultimately executes Kafka’s protagonist, Joseph K.. Deleuze and Guattari also succumb to contradiction which destabilises their position in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. I will further discuss the similarities and differences between the scholarship of Benjamin and Deleuze and Guattari below. Although these figures have influenced the postmodern classical in their ultimately succumbing to paradox concerning their interpretations of Kafka, I contend that my own view, which is more comfortably grounded in the notion of simultaneity, is a preferable exegetical position in terms of this discussion of postmodern classicism, and for contemporary literary studies more generally.

As mentioned, Benjamin, and Deleuze and Guattari share much in common while engaging with the writing of Franz Kafka, despite their obviously divergent interpretations. Benjamin’s insistence on failure follows his very real belief (shared by Stach) that Kafka saw his life and writing career as a failure—and veers asymptotically toward Bloom’s full-blown assertion of a ‘negative theology.’ Deleuze and Guattari, on the other hand, see Kafka as beyond judgment, failure, or success, yet pointing (however ambivalently) toward revolutionary Marxism, which simply for its dialectical element also contains its opposite: the ‘diabolical,’ or oppressive, aspects of creation.²²⁴ Deleuze and Guattari stray even farther from any spiritual interpretation. They decry the ‘abstract’ and transcendent. “ ‘Kill metaphor,” they evocatively advise the reader.²²⁵²²⁶ Still, as with Benjamin, they fail to live up to their own aspirations for a ‘criticism that doesn’t judge.’ Also, despite their renunciation of Benjamin, it is apparent that Deleuze and Guattari share many essential

²²³.Walter Benjamin. *Selected Writings Vol. 2*, 814

²²⁴.Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. *Kafka*, 29, 51, 57-61, 70-1, 73-7, 84-6.

²²⁵.Ibid, 71.

²²⁶.I should point out that my intention has been precisely the opposite of this. I would like to assert the *primacy* of metaphor as an analytical and deconstructive tool in literary analytics. Thus I reject their assertion that “Kafka deliberately kills all metaphor” in favour of a view that is grounded in ambivalence and therefore includes both the utilisation *and* displacement of metaphor, simultaneously. [Ibid., 22] Deleuze and Guattari, I contend, have projected their own position and argued that it is synonymous with Kafka’s orientation, falsely.

points of reference: Benjamin demonstrably influenced their writing on the 'bent-head,' animal-forms, gesture and materialism, individualism/collectivism of the 'bachelor' figure, and the relationship with the German language and Yiddish, to say nothing of the more formal and ideological concerns in Kafka's writing.²²⁷

As with Benjamin's renunciation of Brod's spiritual interpretation of Kafka, Deleuze and Guattari's scathing denunciation of Freudian psychoanalysis is unconvincing, and undermined by their discussion of the 'homosexual' element in Kafka's oeuvre, which really demonstrates something more akin to the Freudian concept of universal bisexuality as discussed in the "Three Essays on Sexuality."²²⁸²²⁹ The pair fall into the same trap which Benjamin (ironically) accuses Brod of falling into, "a fundamental contradiction between the author's thesis and his attitude."²³⁰ Benjamin also shares the assumption of Deleuze and Guattari that Kafka's orientation is that of the 'modern city dweller,' 'the citizen of the modern state, confronted by an unfathomable bureaucratic apparatus whose operations are controlled by agencies obscure even to the executive bodies themselves.'²³¹ This theme persists to provide a cultural framing which is distinct to (yet innately derived from) religious and psychoanalytic interpretations. Yet despite my steadfast reliance on the psychoanalytic tradition, and formalistic interest in the spiritual tradition, and despite my own frustration with the deviating styles of each of these writers, I do not aim to renounce their exegetical efforts.

In the case of Benjamin, Kafka clearly operates as a quintessential "figure of failure," but it is a failure that demonstrates a profound and personal impact which, as Hegel said of the world historical man, justifies itself.²³² I agree with Benjamin that one of the most surprising and seemingly idiosyncratic qualities of Kafka "is that this absolutely

227. Ibid., 3-5, 12-3, 25, 34-5, 65, 71, 83-5.

228. Ibid., 27, 66-8, 79.

229. Sigmund Freud. "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality (1905)" in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud 7*, trans. James Strachey (PEP Online), 135-43. <https://pep-web-org.uniessexlib.idm.oclc.org/browse/document/SE.007.0000A?page=P0320>.

230. Walter Benjamin. *Selected Writings, Vol. 3: 1935-1938* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 2002, 322.

231. Ibid., 325.

232. Ibid., 327.

new world of experience comes to him by way of the mystical tradition.”²³³ This view clearly resonates with my own formulation of appropriation, which also entails a paradoxical relationship with influences, known to Bloom as creative ‘misprision.’ Also, for all of my hesitation, I cannot entirely remove my creative writing and the project of postmodern classicism from Deleuze’s description of ‘minor literature,’ which I will discuss in greater detail below.

In order to meaningfully read the disjointed and ambitious study *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* one must either succumb to the fluidity of terminology employed by Deleuze and Guattari, or seek to supplement one’s own literary conceptions, however frustratedly, when facing the notions of the rhizome, paranoiac/schizoid law, and minor literature. The study is rife with stylistic ‘difficulty,’ meandering in scope and subject as the concepts that Deleuze and Guattari describe also meander formalistically into different, contradictory, critical modes. Deleuze and Guattari write of minor literature, “there is nothing so major or revolutionary except the minor,” while also describing Kafka’s interest in “the possibility of making his own [literary] language—assuming that it is unique, that it is a major language” which the pair call “a minor utilisation.”²³⁴ So the minor impulse in literature is reconciled with the major just as the paranoiac law is reconciled with the schizoid law, by the end of Deleuze and Guattari’s study.

Deleuze and Guattari read Kafka in accordance with their depiction of a pervasive cultural antagonism between the “transcendent and reified” “seized by symbolical or allegorical exegeses” and “real assemblages” which are “worth nothing except in themselves” but simultaneously “operate in an unlimited field of immanence.”²³⁵ The former they associate with the oppressive aspects of society, conformity of interpretation, and the latter they associate with liberation and polyvalence. Clearly their preference in conceptualising the work of Kafka is to figure him as a liberatory

²³³.Ibid., 325.

²³⁴.Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari. *Kafka*, 26.

²³⁵.Ibid., 86.

figure, which they associate with concrete imagery, materialism, and revolutionary liberation, but they acknowledge how “from another point of view, it would be necessary to reverse this relationship. In another sense...it is now the abstract machine that operates in the field of unlimited immanence and that now mixes with it in the process or movement of desire.”²³⁶ Such a move clearly has precedent in Nietzsche’s reconciliation of Dionysus and Apollo. The pair, despite this gesture, continue to advance their belief that the “abstract machine” is “despotic” and that its usage is “condemned to defeat.”²³⁷ Despite the equation of the paranoid law with institutional oppression and the schizo-law with revolutionary marxism, in Kafka Deleuze and Guattari see “the most striking topography...: two diametrically opposed points bizarrely revealing themselves to be in contact,” which ultimately accounts for Kafka’s focus on materialism with simultaneously transcendental elements.²³⁸ These paradoxical notions are difficult to reconcile with Kafka’s despairing negativity, which seems to capsize into a “negative theology...[which, alongside] the a prioriness of guilt are the dominant themes of so much Kafka interpretation.”²³⁹ The pair reject this notion so adamantly as to scarcely mention it beyond this instance. The ‘diabolic’ that Deleuze and Guattari insist exists in Kafka’s writing, as evidenced especially by his letters, almost functions like Mephistopheles introducing Faust to a world of infinite polarity, apparent contradiction.²⁴⁰ The very arguments which Deleuze and Guattari advance through their interpretation of Kafka seem to correspond with their observation about the author himself: “*Everything Kafka does works to an exactly opposite end.*”²⁴¹ The same may be said for the analysis in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. Only the interpretation of Deleuze and Guattari is more nuanced than even the work of Goethe: both the oppressive and liberatory elements of the law, paranoid or schizoid, experience desire, co-exist with their counter-part in a state of constant flux, and a near-unfathomable social

236. *Ibid.*, 86.

237. *Ibid.*, 87.

238. *Ibid.*

239. *Ibid.*, 43.

240. *Ibid.*, 29-33.

241. *Ibid.*, 70. (emphasis original)

system where the distinctions between individual and collective actions/representations become blurred. It is this blurring which fascinates me, as well as the apparent polarity of their notion of the rhizome, or network—where Kafka simultaneously represents the utterly isolated individual ('the bachelor') and the collective (oppressed masses).²⁴²

I have only begun to scratch the surface of the complex and amorphous terminology utilised by Deleuze and Guattari, but length requirements prevent me from further deconstructing the complex fluidity of terminology in their nuanced and dialectical analysis of Kafka's literary writing. Their work is a monumental achievement in the construction of a unique interpretive lexicon, from which I have taken some cues, especially regarding my emphasis on networks, retroactive analysis, and the 'minor' status of postmodern classicism as a poetic movement. Despite my reservations concerning their rejection of the abstract/metaphorical, I find the project of the postmodern classical owes much to their notion of minor literature. They describe the 'difficult' or, in this case, the element of 'deterritorialised noise' "that will be reterritorialised," through the mechanisms of literature, providing varied 'lines of escape' from the normative, whether in terms of literary methodology or greater social/political concerns.²⁴³ I also concede the cultural importance of Kafka's "Prague German" as a minor language: "deterritorialised to several degrees, [but] he will always take it further, to a greater degree of intensity,...[and] a new and unexpected modification."²⁴⁴ My formalistic justification for choosing to study the works of Kafka is based not only in the great depth and cultural impact which his work has clearly shown through the diverse variety of academic interpretations here presented, including my own, but also in the depth of his conceptual writing which makes him an exemplar of canonical literature. According to my view, postmodern classical literary analysis aspires to recognise the dialectical, and polyvalent, element at the heart of Kafka's literary oeuvre without losing sight of the variety of conflicting interpretive views,

²⁴².Ibid., 70- 1, 83-4.
²⁴³.Ibid., 21.
²⁴⁴.Ibid., 25.

including the spiritual and psychoanalytical perspectives. These concerns are informed by my own reliance on abstraction, metaphor, and the psychoanalytic tradition. Hegelian negation is of interest to me to this extent, in its seeming to be a vehicle for a great variety of reality bending forms and techniques which result in inventive literary writing, and the hybridic ideas of Nietzsche and Freud. In order to examine and interrelate this aspect of Kafka's work, and my own, I will first discuss the famous 'cathedral' passage in *The Trial*. Afterwards, I will very briefly analyse my use of appropriation in the Kafkaan tradition, following Kafka's example in the *Aphorisms*, "A New Advocate," and *The Trial*.

Kafka and Postmodern Classicism in the context of *The Trial*

My aim in this section is to contextualise and analyse the 'cathedral' scene in Kafka's *The Trial* in terms of the tradition so far discussed, and to examine the undeniable influence which Kafka's literary fiction has made on my own creative practice. For *The Trial* is a novel which appears to utilise polarity as a narrative structure, where every major scene has its counterpart (or -parts), and the representation of parallel relationships between K. and the court slowly builds narrative tension until the plot coalesces into absurd tragedy. The painter Titorelli's portrait of the court judge demonstrates how Kafka was interested in the intersection of justice and desire, as espoused by Deleuze and Guattari.²⁴⁵ It contrasts the serious absurdity of the courtroom scene, where K. first rejects the accusing organisation in any significant capacity—especially in K.'s not quite understanding that the painter's studio is part of the court itself, and that the conversation possibly bore some significance in his amorphous 'case.' I might note that the background figure in Titorelli's painting oscillates from "the goddess justice" to "the goddess of Victory" until it "looked exactly like a goddess of the Hunt in full cry"²⁴⁶. This figure is described in polarised terms: for this depiction, in which "Justice and Victory [are combined] into one" is like the polarised fusion which underpins Spielrein's notion of the erotic as poetry, and

²⁴⁵.Ibid., 48-51.

²⁴⁶.Franz Kafka. *The Complete Novels*, 127.

features in the paradoxical reconciliations of Deleuze and Guattari, and Nietzsche.²⁴⁷ Kafka's description of the mythical figure, whose appearance is in flux, has parallels to the interplay of shadow and light in Goethe's poetic writing, as discussed previously: "the figure of Justice was left bright except for an almost imperceptible touch of shadow"²⁴⁸. This paradoxical configuration, of the shadow which is inextricable from the light, and the multi-faceted, and polyvalent (as this phenomena is by nature polyvalent), are concerns which have been thematic in my discussion at nearly every turn. My interpretation differs from that of Deleuze and Guattari's insofar as I privilege a conception of Kafka's 'indestructible' and 'eternal' which is rather abstract and conceptual, instead of the material-realist assertion they make regarding justice, which itself seems to incorporate abstract and 'infinite' elements, paradoxically. The pair write:

*The Trial is an interminable novel. An unlimited field of immanence instead of an infinite transcendence.... The transcendence of the law was an abstract machine, but the law exists only in the immanence of the mechanic assemblage of justice. The Trial is the dismantling of all transcendental justifications. There is nothing to judge vis-à-vis desire.... Justice is no more than the immanent process of desire. The process is itself a continuum.... Justice is the continuum of desire, with shifting limits that are always displaced.*²⁴⁹

Such an interpretation is not necessarily precluded by mine, which also presupposes polyvalence, albeit somewhat more adamantly, and without forsaking the abstract.

I also share the view of Deleuze and Guattari that Kafka's 'minor' language played an important role in actualising his literary identity as demonstrated by the scene with the Italian visitor, which directly precedes the Cathedral scene. As with the difficulty K. found understanding the Chief Clerk's eloquent conversation with his uncle, K. could not understand the Italian visitor's "words [which] mostly came pouring out in a flood...[in] a dialect which K. did not recognise."²⁵⁰ It is significant that these figures, Titorelli and the mysterious visitor, who bring K. into contact with the transcendent aspects of this court's

247. Note K.'s particular fascination with this figure, as a metaphorical icon of feminine sexual independence/interdependence, and also as a point of contrast with the badly conceived 'pornography' of the courtroom scene.

248. Franz Kafka. *The Complete Novels*, 127.

249. Felix Deleuze and Gilles Guattari. *Kafka*, 51. (emphasis original)

250. Franz Kafka. *The Complete Novels*, 91, 174.

existence (the portrait tradition and cathedral), are Italian. The latter figure hails “from the very south of Italy” (bringing to mind Rome)—which is a symbol for the spiritual and literary tradition which elude’s K. consistently throughout *The Trial* (“the man’s French was just as difficult to follow”).²⁵¹ As the author toils in the scope of the monumental literary ‘tradition,’ so does Joseph K. hopelessly face scenarios such as these unto his meagre death: “it was as if he meant the shame of it to outlive him.”²⁵² Kafka’s dictum that “there is an infinite amount of hope—only not for us” seems to resound in these enigmatic scenes, which are, despite the brooding Faustian negativity, doubtlessly accomplishments in terms of literary production and worthy of further study and imitation.²⁵³

Indeed, even under a polyvalent framework, I think it is foolish to read the ‘cathedral’ scene in *The Trial* in isolation, as foolish as it would be to read the story recounted by the prison chaplain, “Before the Law” without any reference to the role that the story plays in the greater context of the novel, including the lengthy exegetical passages made by the same character who speaks the parable. For it is certainly the case that the discussion of the cathedral scene is to be contrasted with the scenes in Titorelli’s study and his discussion leading up to the dismissal of the advocate. Titorelli’s being “quite at the top” of a dilapidated tenement building where “the air was stifling” and the artist lives in what K. observes is a “wretched little studio”—is contrasted with the cathedral in all of its grandeur and mystery.²⁵⁴ Titorelli’s study is literally owned and linked to the courts, while the prison chaplain’s cathedral represents a building which has no apparent relationship to the court, but for the sense that it has pervasively, over the course of the narrative, grown in scope to include every aspect of life.²⁵⁵ The figure painted in front of the representation of Justice bears a striking resemblance to the guard at the door of the

²⁵¹.Ibid..

²⁵².Franz Kafka. *The Complete Novels*, 198

²⁵³.Walter Benjamin. “Letter to Gershom Scholem” in *Selected Writings*, Vol. 3, 324.

See also Harold Bloom. *Ruin the Sacred Truths: Poetry and Belief from the Bible to the Present* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press) 1989, 166-7.

²⁵⁴.Franz Kafka. *The Complete Novels*, 122.

²⁵⁵.Despite this representation, there is the hint at its reconciliation in the depiction of an empty altar in the cathedral, so small that the (hypothetical) preacher must hunch over and which seems “designed to harass [them]”—which is perhaps a symbolic lament about the task of dedication toward a literary tradition, or, in the case, an artistic tradition, and its associated sacrifices. [Franz Kafka. *Complete Novels*, 180.]

law in “Before the Law”, “a stout man with a black bushy beard which reached far up his cheeks on either side.”²⁵⁶ Unlike the chaplain, with a natural air of authority buttressed by his literally being at the pulpit and calling Joseph K. by name, Titorelli is called “naturally a liar” by the manufacturer who tells K. of the painter at the bank where K. is a clerk.²⁵⁷ Titorelli still seems to share some important information (that K.’s case cannot be won) concerning the pervasive nature of the court (“there are Law-Court offices in almost every attic”), despite the apparent inadequacy (at least in K.’s view) of his advocacy for how K. should deal with the court.²⁵⁸ Bringing to mind the concepts of the ‘eternal’ and ‘indestructible,’ Titorelli says that for the accused their best hopes are “ostensible acquittal and [indefinite] postponement” in a rush of disorienting bureaucratic terminology which is clearly parodic in nature.²⁵⁹ This seems to be in keeping with the Advocate’s approach, as K. complains in the next chapter that “I waited with unceasing and growing expectancy for something to happen, and you did nothing whatever.”²⁶⁰ The advocate is also prescient to some degree regarding the polyvalence of phenomena in the greater context surrounding the ‘accused’ in this amorphous ‘court’ system, although like Titorelli he is depicted as dysfunctional, lambasting the accused character Block with seemingly little cause. The Advocate says in matters of the court “opinions differ so much that the confusion is impenetrable” as to whether the elderly Block’s case had even started yet.²⁶¹ It even seems as if the lambasting by the prison chaplain (“the priest shrieked from the pulpit, ‘can’t you see anything at all?’”) is a *continuation* of this aggressive function by the all-encompassing court.²⁶² Later the chaplain apologises (“I had to speak to you first from a distance. Otherwise I am too easily influenced and tend to forget my duty”) as if the reprimand were some external factor, a continuation of the aggressive scolding from the Advocate.²⁶³ The priest, in contrast to the lower functionaries, Titorelli and the Advocate, has a more

²⁵⁶ Franz Kafka. *The Complete Novels*, 126.

²⁵⁷ Kafka, 84-90, 181-184.

²⁵⁸ Kafka, 130, 133, 142.

²⁵⁹ Kafka, 136.

²⁶⁰ Kafka, 162.

²⁶¹ Kafka, 170.

²⁶² Kafka, 184-5.

²⁶³ Kafka.

scholarly orientation toward the court system, and his placement at the Cathedral, for all of its associative dualism (secular and spiritual), and inversion of expectation (de/re-territorialisation/misprison), is supremely relevant for understanding the parable, “Before the Law.” This is also surely the case for the novel *The Trial*, which provides both a framing for and exegetical response to the short story. Anyone reading the story in isolation is making the same mistake that K. seems to make in his interactions with the court, treating every individual as if they were an independent aspect of the court system rather than a single point in a network working in coordination as a single entity. I will further discuss this matter below.

I will now narrow my focus onto the ‘cathedral’ scene itself, having sufficiently discussed the role of the exchange between K. and the prison chaplain in the greater context of the novel. The plot of the story told by the chaplain, “Before the Law,” is so well-known as to scarcely need repeating. A man sits and waits before the door to the law for the entirety of his life, with only the door-keeper for company (with his “black tartar beard”) who, in his dying moments, tells the man waiting “this door was intended only for you. I am now going to shut it.”²⁶⁴ The story is told in response to K. admitting to the preacher, “I have more trust in you than in any of the others” associated with the court, which the preacher decries, instructing K. “don’t be deluded...in the writings which preface the Laws that particular delusion is described thus:”—at which point “Before the Law” is recounted.²⁶⁵ The story’s polyvalent difficulty has been foreshadowed by the Advocate’s castigating of Block, with K.’s incapacity to understand the Italian traveler, and in the enigmatic description of the Cathedral itself. K. worries that “one would not be able to see much in the Cathedral,” and that is indeed the case, even the lights that suddenly flicker into view are “inadequate for illuminating the altar-pieces...it rather heightened the darkness.”²⁶⁶ K. wanders in the darkness—views a statue of a knight with his small torch, then “a portrayal

²⁶⁴.Kafka, 187.

²⁶⁵.Kafka, 185.

²⁶⁶.Kafka, 177-8.

of Christ being laid in the tomb,” foretelling his own death in the next chapter. There is also the depiction of an anonymous verger who refuses K.’s attempt at bribery before K.

discovers the small nave, which is reminiscent of the cramped apartment of Titorelli.²⁶⁷

The nave is made of “plain, bleak stone” and “was so small...a medium sized man could not stand upright beneath it” without “leaning over the balustrade”, which is reminiscent of the predominant themes of submission and dominance, illustrated in the scenes where the two figures who arrested K. are flogged and where Block is reprimanded by the Advocate.²⁶⁸

Kafka’s depiction of the Cathedral is not oriented around beauty and transcendence. Instead K. wanders aimlessly in the darkness, and can barely be said to have seen, much less made sense of, the artistic, much less theological, subjects there present. A palpable silence permeates this scene, such that there is a “ringing noise that [K.’s] lightest footstep made...and the echoes that sounded from the vaulted roof [sounded] faintly but continuously, in manifold and regular progression” akin to the ‘eternal,’ which is here symbolically represented.²⁶⁹ The ringing sound is important, and calls to mind the Advocate’s report to Block that it is commonly believed “at a certain stage of the proceedings there is an old tradition that a bell must be rung.”²⁷⁰ K. does not notice the bell for “ten o’clock...striking just as he entered” the cathedral, and as he wanders through the cathedral in a metaphorical ‘darkness’ that corresponds with his own ignorance of the court and the trial which is levied against him.²⁷¹ His simplicity of perspective is contrasted with the perspective of the prison chaplain, who quotes an aphorism from unspecified “commentators” on the law: “...right perception...and a misunderstanding of the same matter do not wholly exclude each other.”²⁷² This is the conceptual centre of what the chaplain has to say to K., and he illustrates in the apparently

267. Ibid..

268. Kafka, 180.

269. Kafka, 181.

270. Kafka, 171.

271. Kafka, 177-8.

272. Kafka, 188.

polyvalent orientation of the court by describing a variety of interpretations for the story he recounts, "Before the Law."²⁷³ One such speculation is that perhaps the doorman is not important to law, but small-minded and vain: "take the statements he makes about his power and the power of the other door-keepers...these statements may be true enough... [but show] his perceptions are confused by simpleness of mind and conceit."²⁷⁴

The importance of the doorman himself is called into question: "the argument is that he does not know the law from inside, he only knows the way that leads to it... His ideas of the interior are assumed to be childish, and it is supposed that he himself is afraid of the other guardians whom he holds up as bogies before the man.... The man is determined to enter [the Law]...while the doorman has no desire to enter."²⁷⁵ Other interpretations complicate rather than clarify, and polyvalence is a feature rather than a defect of the parable: "The scriptures are unalterable and the comments often enough merely express the commentator's bewilderment."²⁷⁶ It is this bewilderment which persists even as the reader confronts the circumstances of K.'s execution ("by a chance word from some chance person at some odd time"), which seem paradoxically pre-ordained and coincidental.²⁷⁷

By the later chapters any sense of narrative continuity shatters, and the plot is disjointed, without a description of how exactly K. ends up in a scenario from the previous chapter (which Deleuze and Guattari refer to as the 'series' effect, and which is also used to interpret the surreal movement between apparently removed spaces, such as from Titorelli's studio to the Law Courts, as described previously).²⁷⁸ Rather, the plot slowly coalesces toward the scene where K. is forcibly taken from his flat and executed by two men, who are contrasted with the two 'arresting' figures for their parodic "frock-coats" and "top hats."²⁷⁹ It is relevant (especially when considering the 'parodic' element of

²⁷³.Kafka, 187-92.

²⁷⁴.Kafka, 188.

²⁷⁵.Kafka, 189.

²⁷⁶.Ibid..

²⁷⁷.Kafka, 170.

²⁷⁸.Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka*, 63-80.

²⁷⁹.Franz Kafka, *The Complete Novels*, 193.

appropriated literature) that Titorelli and the Advocate, to say nothing of the other members of the court, might be portrayed as oafish in the same way the chaplain depicts the doorman in “Before the Law.” K.’s undignified execution, whereupon he spends his last moments succumbing to the guilt which is presupposed by the court system (“it is as if he meant the shame of it to outlive him”) from the beginning, is especially noteworthy in this context.²⁸⁰²⁸¹ Assuming K.’s execution is a miscarriage of justice, the notion of ‘justice as desire’ is indeed ‘diabolical,’ in this instance, given that it seems to depict the court as an utterly destructive and inescapable institution oppressing both the individual and collective. My argument is that, despite the apparent negativity here, it also coexists with its opposite element (the court, for all of its apparent oppression, also constitutes the very organisations which allow society to function as such), and is simultaneously defined by both in terms of polarity. This is in contrast with Deleuze and Guattari, who want to reimagine Kafka’s depiction of failure as a victory, or Benjamin, who ultimately insists on its only being a failure. This sense of simultaneity will be deconstructed further through my attempt in the third chapter at articulating a Spielreinian poesis, which exists in the tradition thus far articulated. For now, I must very briefly discuss my own creative writing efforts in this thesis, and how they ought to be allowed to speak for themselves as polarised elements of a theoretical discourse.

The Appropriation of Kafka in Postmodern Classicism

I have developed a variety of concepts stemming from the foundational element of polarity, which fosters polyvalence and is usefully represented by the Hegelian dialectic: the negative which ‘capsizes’ into the positive, to use Kafka’s phrasing. My belief is that these elements are unconsciously and ambivalently strewn throughout my creative portfolio. I will provide a non-exhaustive selection of examples, but foremost presuppose, as Stach insists concerning Kafka’s *Aphorisms*, that the greater body of creative writing speaks for

280. Kafka, 198.

281. As with the ‘eternal,’ and the court system itself, this shame/guilt seems both ubiquitous and eerily absent from the plot of *The Trial*.

itself, and engages with the tradition in a dialectical manner which has been shown to be in keeping with the approach taken by Kafka, Nietzsche, and Goethe. In seeking to find a justification for the importance of Kafka as an icon of canonical literature, and to better discern my own creative movement, the postmodern classical, I have shown how the concept of 'absolute truth' has been disrupted by Goethean polarity and the Hegelian negation. Kafka is a herald of the 'reality' of the text itself, and constructs literature from an imagistic methodology in part because of the paradox of language being abstract and concrete, not in order to favour either aspect didactically. René Girard, in his *Anorexia and Mimetic Desire*, calls "The Hunger Artist" "an allegory of our entire [western] culture."²⁸² His reading of the story emphasises "the power of certain metaphors to become terrifyingly real."²⁸³ Influenced by the wisdom of this sentiment, my intention has been to reconcile the abstract and material readings of Kafka, and I will continue to do so through an examination of my own appropriation of Kafka's most popular fictional forms and techniques.

I emphasise this belief in the primacy of polarity as a means of understanding the fantastical, absurd, and debauched elements of my own creative writing, which is appropriative in nature. Polarity, and the impossible/uncanny/Kafkaesque inform pivotal moments in the portfolio, such as the shifting of perspectives from the omniscient narrator to the eunuch B., and later Alexander the Great himself in "Jupiter and the Crescent Moon." This title is itself formally disruptive in a pomoclassical manner, as the Greek Macedonians would surely have referred instead to 'Zeus,' rather than 'Jupiter,' and do indeed refer to Greek classical figures in the story. This rhetorical manoeuvre is founded upon the same intellectual buttress as Kafka's work, where "all forms come undone, as do all the significations, signifiers, and signifieds, to the benefit of an unformed matter of deterritorialised flux, of nonsignifying signs."²⁸⁴ A similar shift in perspective is achieved in

²⁸².René Girard. *Anorexia and Mimetic Desire*, 40

²⁸³.Ibid.

²⁸⁴.Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. *Kafka*, 13.

the redaction of “Sorrow” which is, as discussed previously, an important original element in the novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. Pocahontas’s existence as both a human woman and *wendijo* in “The First Thanksgiving,” which is implied but not confirmed throughout the narrative, is another compelling example of the simultaneity which becomes possible under this literary framework. At a more abstract level, the midrashic need which Kafka felt regarding biblical narratives, especially descended from Genesis, I have maintained is the same force driving my varied and highly interpretable redaction projects, and my appropriative fictional narratives which steadfastly rely on the de/re-territorialisation of various figures in the canonical literary tradition. For now, I will examine the explicit instances of appropriative writing where Kafka has been the principal influence.

I have written three stories directly influenced by Kafka’s enigmatic fiction for this portfolio: “A Country Sheriff,” “Another Hunger Artist,” and “The Dignity that Justice Requires.” Each resists interpretation, and contains varied elements of the fantastical and Kafkaesque, which is typified by polarity and polyvalence. I characterised these elements via a fundamental negation which, in Kafka’s terms, ‘capsizes’ or co-exists, with its opposite. There is also an underlying pattern of the stories themselves attempting very intentionally to occupy the claims that they make about the greater world, and their own tradition, as is said of Goethe and Kafka (in other words, they attempt to immanently justify themselves). In “A Country Sheriff,” the narrator offers an (unintentional, but surely enigmatic and aesthetically noteworthy) addendum to Deleuze and Guatarri’s notion of ‘justice as desire:“ ’Justice is blind. Nearer to the heart are matters of the mind.” I have chosen a similar cultural framing to the original story, which focuses on a young interracial couple, one half of whom may have been executed in an extra-judicial murder or simply run out of town, the matter remains intentionally unclear. The protagonist of “A Country Sheriff” shares with Kafka’s country doctor a similar infatuation with philosophising the importance of their vocation in the cultural moment. It seems as if it was my intention to pursue and expound a philosophical element through my writing, as philosophical

discourse and philosophers are frequently depicted throughout the portfolio.

“Another Hunger Artist” describes the life of a young trans sex worker, who, by the end of the story, throws away food they have made for themselves, with the implication (although it is not confirmed) that they are suffering from an eating disorder. As with the interracial relationship which makes up the premise of “A Country Sheriff,” I have tried with “Another Hunger Artist” to bring the narrative to the present moment, in all of its grotesque reality. And yet, there is a glimmer of hope for the protagonist of “Another Hunger Artist” which comes from the philosophical element, shown in the appropriated passage from the diaries of Lou Sullivan, with the implication that the character uses Lou as their chosen name, that is also never confirmed.

The lattermost example of directly appropriated work, “The Dignity that Justice Requires” is the most paradoxical of the three stories, and most enigmatic. Like much of Kafka’s fiction, the narrative operates with a “continuing deferral to an inconclusive resolve.” The parable mentioned in the narrative never comes to fruition, and the description of the supposed ‘realism’ of the characters in the parable is identifiably influenced by the parodic Kafkan method. The most surreal element of “The Dignity that Justice Requires” is the simultaneous projection into the ancient past, and the apparent use of cell phones by figures in the story: “when locked indoors as such, our tablets mostly make our company.” Such a move is foreseen in Kafka’s short story “A New Advocate:” which involves the figure Alexander the Great and his famed horse, Bucephalus, the latter of whom is depicted absurdly as a lawyer of the Law-Court (that exists independently of but with an inextricable association to the court of *The Trial*).²⁸⁵ This absurdity is in keeping with the previously articulated notion of the Kafkaesque, which is being creatively reshaped by my story. Another strange element is that although the “Dignity” story seems to be informed by the issue of justice, it refuses to take a didactic position. As suggested

285. Franz Kafka. *The Complete Stories*, 414-5.

from the title, it is apparent that Justice requires Dignity—but what is the nature of that dignity? The answer to this question must be derived only from the contents of the story itself, although this cannot itself be taken as absolutely conclusive, as the parable which is informative in this regard never arrives. As with Kafka's legacy and, under the framework of interpretability as canonical guarantor, the narrator then appears "opaque" and "irascible," in turn. My belief is that, more than any creative piece in this portfolio, "The Dignity that Justice Requires" demonstrates how creative writing can aspire for critical acumen, as Kafka is said to have achieved in the aphorisms according to biographer and exegete Reiner Stach.

Kafka's writing always grants further discussion. To some degree, I should rather have hoped to have complicated, rather than simplified, the matter of viewing Kafka's role as an influence on the study of the postmodern classical tradition. It is clear that literature itself and canonicity was of supreme concern to the author, Kafka, and, as with Goethe's utilisation of appropriation, my influence from Kafka is a continuation of his creative project, as much as it is a deviation, or creative misprision. I have emphasised polyvalence both within the interpretive tradition of Kafka's legacy, but also within the author's writing itself, and my own writing which has taken influence from both of these sources. My foundational presumptions are informed by the writing of Sabina Spielrein, who I will discuss in the third chapter: namely, that Kafka's writing, and my own, are borne out of a fusion of simultaneous creation and destruction.

The First Thanksgiving²⁸⁶

Great Chieftain's Daughter pouted about the Palace with some unsettling consternation, like a little goddess, stamping her disapproval. She was in no good mood lately ever since they sent ol John Whatchacallit on an expedition north. Powhatan claimed the venture was for peaceful measures, yet secretly he plotted against the newly formed Five Nations, and trusted little their so called Great Peace. The Weroances were to gather information which could be used in battle, or to prevent battle, and use this Johnson Johnson as their cover up. Still, the little girl preened and prattled about, rustling her necklace of carved shells, kicking her hands and feet with no joy.

'Where is my white man?' she screamed, 'where is my white man, your highness!' 'Do not address me as one of them. The man is a prisoner of our tribe, and a decent cartographer, despite his tiny, ehsepana hands. You would learn to tame your insolence, daughter.'

'You never let me have anything! You do me and my bloodkin great dishonour by taking away the only source of joy in my life!'

'You speak stupidly, and I will not entertain it. Leave me, please. I will not be made to suffer your inane Johnson babbling.'

²⁸⁶“Algonquin Legends, Myths, and Stories (Algonkin)” in *Native Languages of the Americas*, 2020, <http://www.native-languages.org/algonquin-legends.htm>.

“Proto-Algonquin Dictionary,” developed by *The Algonquin Dictionaries Project*, <https://protoalgonquian.atlas-ling.ca>.

This short story picks up where “A Country Doctor” has left off in terms of inserting contemporary concerns over racial inequality and lack of representation into canonically-oriented literary writing. In this case, the inclusion of Algonquin (however modern and fragmented), subverts the orientation of the Pocahontas narrative in terms which empower and displace the popular colonialist stories through which the characters are most well-known. References to the Gnostic Gospels, a collection of ‘lost’ or uncanonised stories from the biblical era, provide an opportunity to contemplate the Freudian notion of universal bisexuality (androgyny), and how dialectical thinking operates in religious belief. The fantastical continues to operate here, further complicating the expectations of the reader regarding the widely studied story of the colonial first thanksgiving. Collectivisation and the role of the individual are important themes in this narrative, and the story explores these issues in various nuanced ways.

She figured that it was best to venture the forests, then, crossing the vein of Chicahominy, following the sand dunes to the fertile company of the elders where great secrets are the common lore and her Red-Crossed Knight wiled away without his Vestal Virgin, Goddess Sappho, Madonna. The maskyekwi-land wasn't like the Tsenacommacah she grew up in, and she was well-aware of it. Daddy-King brought her to the coastal province to meet the Chicahominy leadership, who are said to be a languid, complicit bunch on account of their being always among the first Sun-kissed persons each dawn. It has made their very souls mild. The audience of this meeting will pretend discussion. They will cite the turbulent lightning without rain which has struck to the southwest, or the mesi?lwa which have taken rabid against the Mattaponi. But it will all depend on my father's utterance, his stern warnings upon penalty of death, and the accompanying offerings, in faith. Better stay away from the pure-titty weasels when they come ashore. And the sociable Chicahominy will chuckle and promise to make themselves fey, clearing away the crop where they are destined to land and poaching their game at every opportunity. Such facile, unseasoned prayer folk do not spark with the mana of life to bear the weather, so detached from the warmth of the great spirit by their coldstone lives. Some say that is the meaning of their whiteness: the draining of all meaning, all signification divorced from their pillaging, laborious plumes of spiritual desolation.²⁸⁷ It was a cold dry day in late spring. The piercing vines grasped at her arms and legs, but she broke through the thickets with nothing but a few leaves in her hair, and some scratches along her calves. A rustling in the wind stole her attention and as she advanced on her venture: the babbling of Chicahominy, which grumbled through driftwood and foam, roared itself to a human form.

The flat black eyes of this wet-woman ran like the coursing waters, curiously murky, moss-cloaked, strewn with polished rocks and swelling barkskin. She choked her call for recognition to the young girl, who stared wide eyed, not yet having conquered fear. Wait! Child, child. Turn not away from the Crane of Nanabozo. Where is my line? Where,

287. Cf. Herman Melville. *Moby Dick*, Chapter XLII, "The Whiteness of the Whale" (New York: Harpers), 1851, 207-216.

where? La danse macabre. La Belle Isould. Tristé, Tristé. Why does my love tarry?
Please, please. The girl, holding fast to her feathered dagger, bridged the space between them inch by inch. Thetis, Bucephala, Invectus. Oh, drats. My tongue has no credence for the old ways, and gives to newborn strife that can't but claim its fever. Earth-dug child, how can you know yourself when all your native tribe resents you so? Do you think this hatred yours? Do you think your scepticism intelligence? It cannot be enough to NOT KNOW, simply one must act with mahnigan cunning, and think of the dire hunt that bleeds Great Spirit's fire. What precedent, what hesitance! I lose, and lose each new-drawn phase of moon, the few remaining hopes that do uphold this fervent lineage. We are not born ourselves, child, and simply leave the stage, become each other. The waterer-spirit collapsed forward, a lunging grasp to hold what was, to her, so precious, the manifest element of the mimičiki, ananke, Ikenga, Nabu--what loss of words! Great Chieftan's daughter ran, anon anon, as though Bi-bon were carrying her. Reflections lost in the babbling current, the elder forgot herself, and, mourning what had yet passed, laid back to sleep amidst the rushing water.

Darkness crawled from the pink horizon, and all was still but for the buzzing gods. Little Chieftain's Daughter continued on in her way until she reached a clearing. The trees broke their line as she swayed her arms and thought to herself of the strange woman she had seen, who seemed to be sinister despite her kind, bellowing voice. Her words were misshapen, confused, like newborn wawakesiwana. Fairy lights flit about her in every way, and still her dread persisted. A whistling bray like a tortured elk with maokwa's strength came from beyond the untamed thicket. She stepped toward the creature in a daze while tussling her anxieties through trembling fingers. She worried about her father, who tried at bravery but was a coward, and could scarcely live without her. Of course just being out on her own like this was worrisome. She was not from the untame wilds and feared them like she feared death. She feared death like she feared the lies of her family, well meaning, perhaps, but destructive lies that keep

her from herself, and kept them entrenched in their prejudice, unable to see the humanity of those who, from the new world, come to our dismal shores seeking god. What she cannot believe, is that they are somehow less than fully human.

The silence broke.

A terrible retching noise burst from the canopy, and there before the little girl—IT stood. Its mangled limbs, covered in scars. Its hands and feet, like the claws of kenliwa, but longer, and jagged like a blade-edge. Bloody drool hanging from its mouth, gap-jawed, with an elk-head mask. Giant, but perhaps human once. The expression? Perhaps fear, pity, an obscenely deep, primordial betrayal that can only be repaid in blood. But whose blood? She spoke without speaking. The creature held out its hand, which extended with a twirl of daggers, glistening in the sable moonlight. She held her breath, and walked into the darkness.

*

Little Chieftan's Daughter ran from the dense woods toward the grey beach where the weroances made nice with John White. That wasn't his full, given name, but came as a result of a broken understanding: Chieftains Ahanou and Togquo believed in the old custom, passed on through legend, that the White Chieftains name their troops after themselves, so to better curb their dignity. Her eyes adjusted to the downcast sky, wrapped up in a murky quilt. By this point the day had darkened, and she nearly ran into the fire in automatic worry.

"There there, little Matoaka. Rest easy. How came you to this beach so far from the outlands where your father, the Great Chieftain, surely worries himself into a bloody frenzy?"

She explained about her journey into the woods, and the water-woman she felled with stupid bravery, and the horrible gaunt-limbed monster who chased her to present company. Now a tranquil coo resounded in her throat, with comfort for John White's presence. He was a garish man, who looked like a loaf of bread left to bake too long, with

an idle-mind reformed by new perspective. What had been promised him, salvation in the holy city of the elect, was no more than incentive for to blunt the whip of church authority, which, in guise of liberation, brought new slavery to the world no sooner than its territory had been expanded. When the colony met pestilence, and famine, the conquering army became like Furies of the old lore. With pen and map in hand, he begged to not be slain, and swore their mutual humanity to the natives' collective incredulity. But he could not have foreseen little Cheiftain's daughter, who some call Amonute for her buzzing around like a bumblebee all full of wonder, being so taken with him. She was like a ramora to his manta ray, and buzzed with such enthusiasm to learn the ways of Britain, progeny of Rome, and from hence Troy, and from hence Babylon, still further to only folklore. The authority which he now mocked transparently invigorated her, so that he often held his tongue to speak the Cain and Abel that he knew as a boy, so engulfed with low-born rancour that they could do naught else but slaughter indiscriminately, and learn of god's morality after salvation 'scaped their grasp. So when she cried out Papa! as he walked his dour march about the encampment, he could make no acknowledgement for fear of the weroances, and only whisper later that she must not speak as such 'round those who claim his life their hostage.

The three men sat huffing their pipe as the wind picked up, and a fervour of voices echoed from the overwrought forest. Little Amonute feigned sleeping while the man she claimed adopted father spoke against his better judgement. He pulled out a sea-soaked manuscript from his leather travelling pack.

"It is impossible to sow seed on the rocks and harvest its fruit" is exactly the sort of wisdom that would have benefited the children of England, coming here to this fallow shore.²⁸⁸ Our farm-land mentality is of no use in these rabid wilds. Surely, the native planters are right to harvest their yields from nature's own proclivities, and not the constrained plot-system which we make her suffer.'

288. Cf. Ed. Alan Jacobs. *The Gnostic Gospels, "The Gospel of Judas"* (London: Watkins Publishing), 2009.

‘Yes, the white man has flaw enough, but still, we owe some debts that even chief Powhatan won’t acknowledge. For in the ancient world your kind reached these shores, too weary to follow their own mad bloodlust, and died of unhappy stomachs. Their death knell was a breach of stories which have been tampered by Nanabozho and the great chieftains, who happily use what nature can provide.’

‘In that yellowed tome of yours it says that Saklas, not the God of White Men, who created beings, ‘Let us create a human being after the likeness and after the image.’²⁸⁹ But what about the parallels we’ve known for generations? Manitou is our ‘God’ who created the world and persons within it, for a vessel to keep orenda, as you would say, spirit, in the likeness of creation itself. Nanabozho also saw the great flood, and faced off against a serpent of terrible might, only unlike the white man he did not turn away from fear, but used his cunning to disguise himself, slay the serpent, and flee safely from the rising waters.’

‘It is whispered that there were men, of a terrible race called the Vikings, who sailed beyond the known world, and may have found their way among your people. That would explain how you speak our flood myth as your own.’

‘It may be true that Violent Kings did reach our shores, but if so, it was the pretence for a great peace between the Algonquin and Iriquois tribes, much more fragmented than they are today, who came together to hunt these brute invaders. They told of the evils of their hearts, but in the sea discovered Jesu, who fishes using men for bait, which would be confusing for anyone to hear, I think.’

The elder spoke of a slaughter against these whites which involved tearing open their stomachs, as Nanabozo was said to do against his brother to create mountains from the corpse of Chakekenapoch. The echoes of that John Johnson screaming could be said to haunt the quiet, untame forests, and that the blood of this slaughter created a new race, born from the misery that day claim’d. They looked over at Little Amonute, who rolled over suspiciously, placing her hips squarely into the earth while the rest of her flailed with a

289. Cf. *The Gnostic Gospels*, “Poimandres”.

clever, if transparent, ruse at sleep. So the three recanted their speculations, and the white man said, with more seriousness than these two priests might otherwise tolerate, that the closeness of the stories might not speak their truth, but rather how the ruling chiefs homogenize information as power, and make attempts at moral codification in this clearly amoral universe. They feigned politeness and slept with their daggers in hand, each of them. As the conversation died down, John White (who had not forgotten his name at all, but in the bleak distance of this other world, felt no more the attachment he once held to it) reached over the fringe of Amonute's hair, and kissed her forehead. The smell of pipe-tobacco and orenda, called, by his god's tongue, ambrosia, wrapped around her like a blanket, and she gave a constrained smile as her adopted father spoke.

'Listen to me,' he said, 'no matter what, do not worship these white men. Though they may speak a million blessings, the only god they worship is their own wealth. Please, mark this on the tablet of your heart, kid.'

And he stumbled over to his corner of the encampment and dreamt of London. *

The morning after the group found themselves set upon by two Iriquois youths who jeered and howled from the thick brush to announce themselves, and fell in the sand among the exploring party. They wore sashes and the gustaweh which denotes nobility among their people. The taller, more spry one introduced himself as Koyengquahtah ('Young King') and the other Ohserase (New Year). They were born of different tribes (as apparent from the colour and cast of their apparel and the mikwana used for the gustaweh, which is a great ordeal among those persons). Each of them fostered about the beach as if ineffectually hunting the other, in a strange, aggressive dance.

'Look here,' Ohserase spoke playfully, 'the King Powhatan has sent his daughter to come and spy upon our people, thinking her impervious to death upon these lands as foretold by our great Seer Tekonwenaharanke. So she may walk freely and fear no man's spear, or the arrows which fly from bushes on the winds of our ambush parties.'

'They walk a bit like elk, proud even in their urge to run away, or fight with fear,' said the other.

Matoaka called out, 'Powhatan does not need to spy on your people, or fear the newly cast Confederacy! It is you that should fear him!'

'Please,' Elder Ahanou spoke, 'our John Johnson just wants to practice his map-making, and we stand by for his protection, at your Elders' discretion, of course.'

The two youths whistled in their palms and a collective of Iriquois flooded the beach holding torches and spears, bows and daggers, yet calling out in howling jeering play, as if possessed by some mischievous spirit, all a hivemind of unruly curiosity, calling out various heckles in their native tongue.

'We do not mind your coming here, accompanied by these our own protectorates, who happily attend a prophecy revealed.'

Koyengquahtah pulls a hunting knife from his waist and snatches at Matoaka, who succumbs to his clutches. She cries out in pain as the other Iriquois holds his bow at the ready, ready to strike at once.

The Young King continues, 'This is not the prophecy, but just our practice of soothsaying, which we make at your discretion, as elders.'

He runs his knife over the young girl's hand, and his thumb over the clean palm which should have held a wound. Then points the knife to the gray, misty sea.

'Look then! Two prophecies in one day! That is magnificent. Do you know why the Iriquois Confederacy is bound to overtake Powhatan? Because we don't hate each other as you do under the Algonquin territory. You cannot even pretend to make nice with each other, but make many tribes from the same blood trees, so that even close relations are alienated from each other. When I am an Elder you will rue the day that you did not kill me when you had the opportunity!'

So the prince threw his captive down on the ground and disappeared among the screeching Iriquois, who pointed at the ship in the distance with cries of 'a ship! ship!' until

the word, already foreign to them, began to morph into a chant-song professing the might of the ocean, and making a voice like a wave that some pilgrims claim'd to hear as they settled into the shores of Virginia, her Majesty's Colony, and faced the dark, ruined New World. Matoaka, John White, and the Weroances fled the scene and retreated to the royal encampment. They discovered Powhatan in revel that the word was true, and more settler pure-titties broke shore this day. He repeated his previous order that the local tribes make themselves rare to the white savages, but spoke only to his daughter, whom he could see was caked in blood like the old warriors, still yet to have her first visit from Grandma Moon. A barrenness crept up his spine, and the fire in his heart stilled. The Chief would no longer make extravagant wars, but would try his might to commit to honest tactics, and well-wrought design.

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It was a labour to keep Amonute at bay. She was constantly stumbling off through the brush, being picked up by soldiers and brought on forced escort. Her discovery that spear points and arrows did no harm removed her fear, and she burgeoned in the charge of her secret. For only those companions whom she found on the beach, and her father, Powhatan, Chief of the Algonquin Tribes, knew that she made company with what they believed to be a wendijo spirit, or perhaps the creature itself. She wasn't showing any open signs of kesyesoweni, but there were hints at its being there. She no longer shared her bow, or mokoman, with anyone, and ate voraciously without gaining weight. She began taking her meat bloody, as they do in some western provinces, and caused quite a stir among her native Pamunkey, who scorn the practice which they believe inspires bloodlust. She roves through the burrows at night with scarcely any regard for her own well-being. If the Great Chief were not her father, it is assured that she would have slain countless persons in her blind searching after another culture's heaven. Instead she resignedly raised her hands, spoke calmly, 'looks like you got me this time' and would start over back at the royal palace.

This process would doubtlessly have continued until she succeeded but for the arrival of John Smith. Opechanchanough was trapping with a hunting party and came upon the lone explorer in the manitowa forests where little Amonute encountered the wendijo. They took his gun and sword, and brought him to Powhatan to be held for ransom. Although some disagreed that this was the best course of action. Ahanou argued that killing the man, or perhaps holding him hostage, would only cause further tensions between the confederacy and these settlers, who were said to be struggling by the sympathetic Chicahominy. Their weroance pleaded the case of their insufficient efforts against the weather, their spoiled foodstores and sickly pallor. It was said that the Johnson Rolfe who was their chieftain outlawed all recreation, so that singing and dancing were condemned and all pleasure considered sin in their eyes. It was a most inhumane living situation, the elders pleaded with unmoved Powhatan. He seemed less resolved with goodwill the longer they plead their case.

‘Perhaps we are right to establish war against these savages. They are in a weak position, and easily conquered as the freezing time approaches. Maybe we could use this white man to send a message!’

He raised a ceremonial axe and moved toward the body amidst the tumult of elder disapproval. Finally his daughter stood his hand, and held her head over John Smith’s, who had been whimpering his case ineffectually all this while.

‘No, Papa! You cannot kill this man! I will not allow it!’

‘If you do spare this man, he will be yours to claim and must instead become your brother, my son of ill repute. Oh, daughter, how you vex me! We should instead, for your safety among white men, call you “Pocahontas,” little trouble-maker, so they’ll not wield your real name against you with their wicked magic.’

‘I will do your command, only let him live!’

‘Fine, fine. Let him up and tell him yourself what has expired. You can practice your English and teach him what he will know of our language. Come up, come up! You are

now my son, and adopted brother of the Algonkin. This is my daughter, Pocahontas, who has much in her heart for your kind.'

'In heaven's breathing name, how came across you our Queen Elizabeth's Noble Mother Tongue?' the faint man asked with utter bewilderment.

'It was taught to us by mystic shaman, who long ago foretold your arrival on our shores. We share this sacred earth and anoint the land with our harvest in her own bosom. Neither hunting nor fishing to excess, we give command over the domain of Nanabozho by the creator, Manitou.'

With that, this John Smith outburst with vicious laughter which caused quite a stir among the less tolerant elders.

'Should we not kill him?'

'Look how he insults Nanabozho!'

'What powerful ruler is thus commanded by his daughter, so to stay his hand when the clearer choice is slaughter?'

She grabbed his hand and led him away from the court to the river now called Powhatan. She remembered a time when it was simply called River Mamanatowick (The King's River), as Powhatan came into his own in her most formative years. That time spent worshipping his god-like form was short lived as they fed her an overwrought diet of stories concerning Nanabozho this, Nanabozho that, and her father who was chosen especially by her to rule over the many peoples of the Algonquin Nation. What nonsense! What utter, inconceivable gibberish! Even as a child, she repulsed this line of thinking from herself as so much idiocy, and would have none of it. Learning about the stories of the white bible gave words to her thought, that the stories were all just a rag on which could be squeezed the many untold warriors who were made to fight for no good of it. And kill the best learned and wisest prophets for their sacrificial peace, until the bloodlust comes again. She led him to the waters. The sun was rippling over the forest, leaving the sky with a soft beaming opaque of violet, suffused with a brackish, burning red glow. The water rippled its untame

waves, clawing at their bare feet on the mute, silt soil. The cicadas quit their buzzing for the evening to make way for the crickets, who rickety-rick'd their buzzing voices with some enthusiasm for the late summer heat, which they apparently found absolutely enlivening.

'Here,' she said with some enthusiasm, picking up a driftwood stick, 'I'll teach you Algonkin, and you'll help my English?'

'Do you also speak? By what miracle, little child, has our voice been given you?'

'Oh, come off, now. I will tell you, but you must promise, by finger oath, not to tell.'

'Finger oath?'

Pocahontas held out her pinky.

'Should either of us break our oath at the expense of the other, that other person holds the right to sever the oath-breaker's finger at the quick, as payment for the debt of betrayal. Just place your finger interlocked with mine, and swear.'

John Smith swore. Little Pocahontas told him about the other white men who have been captured by the Iriquois, and the one John White who ended up in the Tsenacommacah, which she tells him means city.

'The greater part of them died at the Croatoan Council after negotiations broke down. It's said the white men called the natives demons and refused to make treaties with them. So the ones that survived were captured and held hostage in various tribes where they wouldn't be trouble. Powhatan ended up with one of these men, but you, John Smith, will never meet him, for Powhatan fears that if the settlers learn of these hostages, they will make unceasing war against better judgements. That's why you must not tell anyone what I have told you, ok?'

John Smith promised and listened studiously to the little girl as she gave her lesson.

'Kisek is sky. K-i-s-e-k, here. Akkiwan is earth, here. All of this is said to be created by Manitou, the Great Spirit, and made the realm of Nanabozho, who looks after the tribes of the Great King Powhatan, which extend far into the western lands. I'm a princess, you know, and since you're like my brother, we're soul-bound to be great friends. Our orenda, spirits, are intertwined. Sipiwi is river. Your countrymen have found themselves near the sipwi called Chicahominy, after the tribe, who are very languid and affable, but for their fear of my father's wrath, who has forbidden peaceful relations among our peoples that he does not negotiate himself. My mother came from the Pamunkey Tribe, which is settled between here and what you call Jameston. Okima are chieftains, under the reign of the Weroances, Great Elders who co-mediate with the shaman, and prophecy what they call signs from the gods. They are responsible for the well-being of all tribes under Powhatan, and for speaking what they believe to be divine will.'

John Smith told little Pocahontas the story of Cain and Abel, and she asked if it was like the Virgin Queen who warred her sister for Heaven's favour. He was all but bewildered by this thought, and her boldness of speech for one so young. To him, the little natives were fully formed warriors, mounting their playful campaigns against his ignorance of their kind. Truly, it was the children who gave him kindness, while the adults found him a rancorous disturbance, which must be dealt with as one does a diseased work-horse. He feared for his life, although no guards roused to prevent his escape but for the little girl, who followed him as a basset hound asking of England. He spoke what little he could about the church, and its salvation of the elect, chosen by god. She found the subject droll, but made sure to press him about castles, witches, and the other curiosities which occupied her waking mind since her various engagements with John White. The next day he woke to her jumping on his chest, telling him that a travelling party was being organized to return him to his native tribe.

Little Amonute was quite the natural among the children of the Newingland Settlement, dancing and doing twirling cartwheels in her loincloth to their amusement. Her English was less of a surprise for them than her hair trinkets, and beautiful shell jewellery. Meanwhile the Weroances led John Smith like some wounded pesekiwa through the wooden fortress walls. The sages marvelled at the minor feats of engineering they found, though saw much lacking in the coordination of resources, and especially in their fallow, unfertilized growing land. Simply because they had chosen to wield the earth as an instrument of subordination, have they surmounted kiččikamy to starve in these most generous lands. Pocahontas wondered how her elders would fare speaking nicely around Powhatan's single commandment that they initiate a trade deal for guns and swords. This was his sole focus in dealing with the pilgrims who were beached here in their self-imposed exile. Iriquois scavengers already raided the city for weapons, so a tenuous deal was exchanged for protection against the unfriendly tribe. Yet the Weroances worried they lacked leverage to make the deal stick, so they brought over Pocahontas and again had the white man pick up and hold her. She whispered in his ear that so long as she breathed he would always have a friend among the Algonkin, who may not always deal so kindly with his brethren. He confided in her that she remains in his prayers, though he knows not what of. This furtive moment passed with only a brief attention from the hobbling veterans of perilous travel, who braved an unknown scorn 'gainst dismal persecution.

The travelling party, made up with the Weroances, Pocahontas, and a small band of soldiers, did not travel long before setting up their camp along the babbling Chickahominy, which crowed with apprehension. So none among them were surprised to hear the first crack of thunder, as a winisi band of Johnson's sons took against the local tribe, which howled out a plea for mercy from Nanabozho, wishing their enemies no harm as they protect their ancestral lands from those who would wrest it away in the night like thieves. Two of the raiders were killed with arrows, and the hunting party retreated, except for one fierce pitch which called out from the brush and rushed to their aid, only to be surrounded and captured herself, and the bodies also dragged off to be reunited with the great spirit.

Pocahontas knew they could not keep her, for Powhatan's bloody prejudice, but wanted to speak to this woman, and know of her. She took leave of the elders and scurried through the woods, to the Chicahominy encampment where she made herself known to the okima, and was able to act as the best fit translator among them.

"What is your name, maiden?"

"I am Mary."

"After Christ's own mum, is that right?"

"God'sblood, I'm told."

Pocahontas felt a quiver pulse through her witnessed body. She looked down and saw streaked red on her two pointing fingers. The woman took little Amonute and embraced her.

"Am I going to die?"

"No, no. You have to listen now and fit into the tribe. Do not be afraid of the Chicahominy, for they are peaceful and kind-hearted sunbathers. You will be kept in protection from Powhatan and the Iriquois, who regard them as the best mannered of our people, and do not generally kill them for sport. Remember, Mother Mary, that not all who dwell here worship your worship, and accept your lessons modestly and with a held tongue. That's what I've been forced to do, though petty sorts among you would surely see me baptised."

With that she returned to her elders and told them of her sharing words with the Johnson woman. They lavished on her grace in war and promised to let her keep this secret against her father, which might later be a resource with which to negotiate. After the three set to sleep and said their 'Winkam Nupes' to each other little Matoaka, by the still purring fire, became restless with thinking, and laboured to contain the orenda which broke from her every pore. Her spine quivered with anticipation, drawing her to a crawling sprint through the woods without a moment's notice. The taste of a fresh hunt lured her to retrace her way through the battlefield, which was not demarcated in the way

that John White described English wars, but simply a fixture of the landscape according to its own dictates, which must be why the Chicahominy were protected by their war-magic. As she crept along the bubbling marshways, on all fours in the throes of a gripping preoccupation, the trees around her began shaking their branches. She thought it must be a sign, but of what? Then her hand moved onto the faintly pulsing chest of the Iriquois shaman. From the roots of this grand totem, now shaking in the rapture of a windless ecstasy, Amonute beheld this dying figure, humbled with the desperation of death's feverish grip. She palmed her knife and thought about her father, and the many men he executed. From the tree a voice bellowed its heavy knell, but she was lost to it. In fact, everything else for her seemed to stop but the curious sensation she felt as she pulled her body over the faltering other, a witness to the blurred dimensions between life and death, fragile like a child's innocence.

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Trade negotiations remained tense between the obstinate Newingland colonists and Powhatan's reticent tribal elders. Shipments of supplies from Olde Inland took several months, and though he explicitly championed a protectionist policy against Iriquois raiders, the Great Chief unabashedly encouraged hunting parties to clear out the obviously infertile grounds where these invaders made their residence. The further inward these maladapted white men went, the easier they were to capture, or kill, as the situation required. Weroance Ahanou was responsible for ensuring that Pocahontas was educated according to custom, in tanning and butchery, stitching mats and baskets, and the peculiar matters of child-rearing. She was quite the inattentive student, who would often give up on her task for an impromptu 'foraging expedition' which kept her out of the village for days at a time, always returning with the bounty of a fresh hunt, enough for several men, which she would leave for the tribe mothers to clean. They would whisper their charms, and revel in the inherited ambition of little Matoaka, who took after the Precocious Great Chief in matters of blood. All the while the détente between these white colonialists and tribal leaders poorly hid tensions which built as clouds billow before a heavy rain.

Months and months of failed peace talks led an enclave of twenty soldiers into the Tsenacomo, begging for grain and corn, and led Pocahontas to the Elder Meetings of the Puritanical English, to negotiate for the return of captured warriors. If either side were to budge, which was, frankly, entirely at odds with their prejudice, then they would both need to make an investment into the machinations of peace, ensured that the other mirrored this pretence of civility. A feast day was proposed by John Smith, who listened with some fondness as little Pocahontas told him of the great dances which her people used to speak their god, and hear its voice in tenuous embodiment. Always here and there, some shaman takes the place of mortal life immemorial, immortal, altogether immune from the disinheritances of worry, pity, fear. The breaking bread of one culture is how another sets its claim to star-born interceptions, prayers caught in the middle of absolute certainty and implausible confusion.

So the day was set after the end of harvesting season and a royal entourage formed to meet these threats head on. For, Powhatan would decry time and again, a sesikwe buried is always safer than one you've invited to your tent. The two parties met in the walled village, Jameston, and signed anointed pages of legal ramifications declaring a lasting peace, cooperation, and shared natural resources. Fishing and hunting grounds would be neutral territory as long as the formal demarcations of the walled village remain as they are, and the Algonkin would continue to deter Iriquois hunters in exchange for weapons and copper rods, which are highly valued for their ability to conduct heat and orenda, spiritual energy. Pocahontas was called upon to lead the sweeping dance, and she did so with an almost mournful formality. Seeing those gaunt villagers look upon her sacred traditions with an air of ill-concealed bigotry was no joy, and though she prepared the stage for the warrior rites, her heart remained fixed on these starving people, and the paradox of their hateful misperceptions. Desperation makes a poor veil for prejudice, and her father was no more affable, in his tall headdress and decadent jewellery. What's more, the food which had been hunted for this occasion was mesi?lwa, which many of the tribal elders found absolutely hilarious, and croned and croned their imitation of the rabid beasts that had taken up against the Mattaponi with an unexpected ferocity that the drunken

chiefs adored. Nature does not look kindly on the children of Nanabozho, they would say with crooked smiles in their scarcely understood tongue, when they do not heed to the warnings of her consorts. Perhaps only Powhatan, and his quite suspicious daughter, could see past the cackling veneer of these elders to the morbid truth of their utterances, which continued in this matter as the background musings of a higher calling. Nature is the plague which cures the living of all pain. Nature keeps room for one love or two lovers, but not both. The aphorisms continued into the night, where all made plain their awkward grief for this war of attrition, and the immanent powerlessness they felt to change anything.

After the celebration feast concluded, which, according to custom, lasted for three days of imbibement and prayer for the blessings of life and nature, the Iriquois executed a raid against the white tribe of Jameston. Powhatan was blamed for this, still having to defend the Chicahominy, who were easily distinguished from the Iriquois warriors, but for the colour of their skin. Koyengquahtah led the hunt, and, despite his best efforts, was held at bay, and unable to make off with more than a few bushels of grain and corn. Pocahontas, who looked on at this scene of violence, unable to participate other than through prayer and strategic supply-aid, saw the foreign King wink at her. She wondered if this whole expedition was all for her attention. Often it felt as if the whole world were merely a toy that had been offered for her pleasure, and that she grew increasingly uncertain how best to play with. The sounds of gunfire, swords crossing, and breath stilled by arrows, the sputtering gasps of a life cut short, rang in her ears long after they regrouped and began the long journey back to the palace. She knew that this was essentially a breach of the previous day's contract, and that according to its own terms, the peace was over before it ever really began.

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Winter's cruel winds hit the grain-stores first, and froze the very earth in turn. Powhatan declared that a trading with the settler Pilgrims would be punishable by death, and that all stores were to be kept under the purview of the Elder Mothers and Weroances,

who would oversee resource distribution. An exchange program had been agreed upon for the fasting season, and several young warrior chiefs were sent to live in the walled village to learn the language and culture of the invaders. A small band of gaunt, pale boys were sent in kind, though a couple of them spoke their own curious language Amonute called 'Duch,' explaining it was a bit like the Algonkin and Iriquois nations having their own mother-tongues. Spelman and Samuel Hitchens spoke their best English, despite a curious accent, to Thomas Savage, who was only called that for his uniqueness in enthusiasm at the thought of living among the locals. Their wild howling at the hunt, and ferocious nudity in the summer months excited him, so that he took up deerskin hides and tracking game as his village elders would have him study religion. The two Duch boys were full of horror, which Powhatan condemned.

'We have sent them our strongest warriors for cultural education, and they do insult us with these ninimisis! What a damn lot of fools they take us for. Someone bring me my axe!'

Pocahontas was able to calm the chief down, but it was not enough to stop the two dutch boys from trying to return home. The long trek was too treacherous for them, and Powhatan's hunting party accidentally killed Spelman. Samuel, the other boy, returned with a purple cast about him, swollen with corrupt orenda, fraught in the light of a roaring fire upon which his companion is lain to rest. His screams were familiar enough in this world of perpetual war, only prolonged or postponed by these visceral, mournful howls of fraught attachment, which bring the court such worry that their only recourse, should moral strength not fail them, is to reconsider their role in the violence, and make some small pretence of reconciliation.

The boys were brought back before the Great Thaw, and stores of grain given as tribute for the fallen young coward. It was decided then that in order to protect Jameston, and inspire solidarity between the colonial muckrakers and tribal elders, the capital city would be moved to Orapaks, on the bubbling waters of the Chicahominy, which made

Amonute quite unnerved. Her father, oblivious to these matters, set about arranging her marriage to one of the warriors who presided at Jameston, Kocoum, but she found they had little in common. If it was not a matter of spearheads and arrow points, he had very little to say about anything. His lanky, chiselled body was of no interest to her, but for its function as a conduit to her respectability, the throes of womanhood. She thought of her childhood reminiscences with John White, who had died the year previously from an aberrant lung-rot which swept through the village in the days after the colonists touched shore. These, her people, were cold comfort for her melancholy, with their whispering her treachery, and fearing her ascent to power. She, her father's favourite, lamented alone in the weary purple hues of the overwrought forests, which grew according to no custom or convention. The elders often talked of burning the tangled lot, but never did. With the new white Chief, John Rolfe, and his unabashed love for tobacco, she saw the prospects of a future peace disbanding before her eyes. For there was no equal footing to be had when one cannot see the other negotiating party as a human, only a means to a material good.

That night John Smith came to attempt a trade deal, but failed his peace. In his desperation, he spoke of knowing how Powhatan sold white men like slaves, and exchanged them with the Iriquois, the miserable Croatoan prisoners. This sent the Great King into a fury, and he called on his royal guard to assassinate John Smith during the return journey to Jameston. But Pocahontas intervened, which cost her an exile from the royal palace, and the relinquishment of her immanence in succession. She would take up with the bold-blooded Patawomeck, from which her husband hailed, until time made a change then.

The fantasy conformed to what she knew in the passing years. Her father would recall her in a few years to act as mediator, her knowledge of England and its prejudices unsurpassed among the Algonkin tribes. John Smith, who the colonists declared dead (but how? and by whose authority?), despite her interventions with the royal guard, was no longer a feature of life in New World. This idea of her ancient civilization, its time-honoured

figureheads, vibrant religious and cultural diversity, seemingly recurrent fixture of time gone by, being called 'New' fascinated her. The orange sunsets would be what she remembered most vividly as she set sail from her native home. A prayer to Nanabozho escaped her without any conscious thought to speak of.

'John Rolfe', she had spoken in the Council Chamber, 'you must be a prince to marry a princess, like myself.'

'I am the closest thing that you will find to that in this nation, believe me.'

She thought of Koyengquahtah, who had continued his reign of terror through the years. His childish tenacity and blundering rampages were a source of fear among the Algonkin, but excited her. Perhaps the biggest regret that she had was not making an ally of this prince. Had she the foresight to know the world as it is, with no hope of lasting peace on the horizon, she might have swayed her father to ally with the Iriquois. This whole mess might have been avoided that way. For waves and waves of the English could come then, but would do no more than strengthen their armoury. She grieved her mother, who she rarely ever saw, and thought that it was the matrons of our people who had emboldened us to face these invaders not with fear, but cultural exchange. The moral nature of war, its manifest fixation to our psyche, how it opens and closes all doors to revelation, is, in hindsight, a fool's gambit. These men do not know morality in conflict, and will never let it deprive them of the wretched handle of victory.

Such thoughts as these and others filled her mind, and the princess sought comfort in a scroll tube given to her by John White, who had given her enough love and knowledge to last this horrific lifetime. The words read:

'From God's wisdom, which, absorbing the word and seeing the beautiful potential, actualized it, creating a universe through its own elements and myriad souls. The nous which is God is androgyne, being both life and light.'²⁹⁰

Poimandres, mind of the creator, Gnosis, who is not Saklas, and did not issue from God, but is an issue which is God, is this creation from the elements of god or the

elements of nature? The grammar is quite unclear, a myriad of souls would suggest the latter, but canon dictates the former. She knew it would be no use asking any of the British, who see such texts as heretical knowledge, undermining the authority of their very scripture. But this was her attempt at devotion. Three stories of creation, three undying contradictions concerning the fundamental nature of humanity. But were it Manitoa, or Nanabozho, or the Great Spirit, are there not as many accounts? We see the matter clearly for this cultural miasma readies our people for mass graves and their essential loss of culture. And they think me a baptismal font, who can cleanse the impure natives from their worship? What fools the lot. What fools them all! She stretched her daydream further, to its most distant clarity, and imagined herself there in Gravesend, first stop for sailors, reunited in a dark, candlelit room littered with flagons, root vegetables, and half-torn manuscripts.

‘You betrayed your promise to me, John Smith.’

‘It is the deepest regret of my life, how we harboured our conspiracies against your kind. And even now they tirelessly work to bring your permanent death. I would have no part, and here I am a prisoner of history, unable to mend my living faults.’

‘Do not be afraid, old man. For I am here now, and I am going to keep you safe.’

But the words were lost to her upon their utterance. It was only the hunger, raw, unyielding hunger, that crept up her spine and extended through each of her tactile fingers. She thought of the spindle-limbed creature she had seen, who knew her as a friend, perhaps the only friend she had who never betrayed her. Yes, this hunger was all that she knew now, and it flickered like the candles set about the room, a timid violence underscoring their crimson-orange glow, so many sunsets. The moment lingered like a gasp of breath, and Pocahontas knew that she must take to the verdant forest outside of the modest coastal village, and live without fear. Let her true name be lost to history, for her vain efforts to make peace out of misunderstanding. Heed the whispering wind’s gentle

brush against the rumbling waters.

The Dignity that Justice Requires²⁹⁰

The parable was known throughout the land. Even in the distant provinces the word spread rampant like fire. Those fixed with story wetted their lips with anticipation as each sentence formed, conjured into being via stone tablet. They seemed to know each scene with vivid intimacy, from centuries of such narratives passing through such brazen channels, unconcealed, letting each indignity become lost in the garrulous news cycle. For in those days great conflagrations ravaged through the trade routes, and words from far off lands were scarce, but for those read huddled among one's family in the common room, or by the riverside tavern where merchants met in times of peace. Ours is a gilded prosperity, as demonstrated by the breadth of this parable. The contours of its apprehension and mayhem, the continuing deferral to an inconclusive resolve, always begging the possibility of a sequel. Many reasonably learned people speculate that the parable is intentionally cut short at the end, so that it might continue AD INFINITIVUM.

Also, of the parable it was said that it did not rely on barbaric or prejudicial caricatures to maintain its interest, for each lot cast was either befitting a character, or else conceived as a truly fathomable die-cast of fate. For those with virtue did not always succeed irrevocably, neither did those villains always earn their just reward. Persons of great learning and

290. It may be an overestimation to consider this work a "short story." It is rather the build up to describe a story, or 'parable,' which is never revealed. This asymptotic narrative reaches for, but never arrives, at its subject. In this capacity, there is a parodic and appropriative relationship to the Kafkaesque. This element is especially prominent in the absurd implication that the stone tablets in the story, presumably in the ancient past, function akin to cell phones. I contend that this element is foreseen in the story, "A New Advocate," which involves the horse of Alexander the Great, absurdly electing to take up the study of the law and become a (modern) lawyer. However, the piece was written before my awareness of that story, and this interpretation is retro-active in nature, as is the entirety of the critical writing here presented. If there is a correlation to be drawn from the title, "The Dignity that Justice Requires" and the earlier reference to "the patience that justice requires" in "A Country Sheriff," it is in the abstract element which strives toward and fundamentally resists the material subject, or signifier. As with Kafka's dialectical gnostic/gnosticism, one might here read patience as "infinitely slow" and dignity as "astonishingly rapid," replicating the paradoxical elements in a creative misprision. [Harold Bloom. *The Western Canon*, 418.]

wealth often played the fool, while paupers spoke eloquently on the life best lived. And even those who acted to stereotype were not defined by it. For the beggar thief often possesses a generosity lost upon a robber baron, who yet outranks in loyalty and taste many vagrants who must smash windows for their bread. Each are given families, worried mothers and daughters who are not content to merely stand idly by and play the quiet keeper of the hearth, and yet even these interventions are not merely just or corrupt, but follow after the way lives, on the whole, are lead.

There was not much consensus about when the parable was taking place, only that its wisdom surpassed any resemblances to those who might still be alive to hear it. Such are matters left to priests and magistrates, whose lives are realised with such unattaining psychobabble, rendering the stock of public symbols into inanity, through repetition and false testimony, distortion, and the other varied mimics which are accepted and even encouraged these days. The illustrations make all too clear that neither dissenter or authority has it all right, yet each must play a part in the other's oppression. So many deaths, we murmur to ourselves, and each other in the dark room lit only by stone tablet and the radiant mundanity of the Great Temple's hearth. We ponder if the sickness described is plastic or figurative, and even that seems to oscillate by period, or individual scribe, if you follow such theories of authorship.

When locked indoors as such, our tablets mostly make our company. We accept the content they provide with scarcely a second's thought as to its origin, or how only a lifetime ago such tablets were themselves the stuff of parables. Even the precautions has taken to sleeping beside their tablet,

and spending their waking and restless
 moments hunched over their revealing
 -screen. Before the tablets you never knew
 if a parable could be believed—now
 we are doubly unsure. We ask ourselves
 if the parable is mirroring, is not life itself
 a parable, for the wisdom of others who might
 lead in our wake? There are no answers
 from the dead but those we have them speak,
 like marionettes made to dance with clever strings.

Despite the chaos of this parable, we endure. For
 the other choice is to fly off the nut, and forsake the
 world. The ancient Mesopotamian triangle exerts its
 influence on us even now, separated by tenscore
 leagues and half-a-hundred decades. To show an
 unfelt sorrow is an art at which

the false excel.²⁸⁹ How deeply felt is my dismal mourning
 over that which has not come to pass, or has with falsehood
 been made narrative, or how so many yoke their passions
 after the characters inscribed on tablets more strongly
 than their own relations, or seek retribution over differences
 of interpretation as to the parable's meaning. For many have
 lost their daughters, and eldest sons, through squabbling
 over what is right or wrong in these parables, with scarcely
 any thought to the consequences unto that child abandoned
 or beaten unto death—for the belief that the world ought to
 conform to these stories, or, that these stories might better
 conform to the world.

Everyone in those days was talking about matters
 such as these, and speculating how best to profit
 from the circumstances. But by the time the word
 was conjured via stone tablet, there was little left

291. William Shakespeare. *Macbeth* (Boston: MIT Online), <http://shakespeare.mit.edu/macbeth/full.html>. (Act 2, Scene 3, lines 136-7).

to do but watch the conflagration, which, as mentioned, made travel along the usual trade routes all but impossible. So we turned the images over and over again on our tablets, and in our heads as if pursuing some epiphany, unprecedented, that might cower before our wit and reveal the unmitigated truth unto us alone. But since all felt this way even this measure of enlightenment was merely a commodity to be sold in the public marketplace, where foreign goods no longer held the interest of the crowd. Yet it was not for nationalism that the parable grew evermore popular, but something more akin to a macabre obsession in which only the most righteous of us can claim no interest. It was in fact something of a relief to be able to put aside our daily routines in service of our unsubstantial musings on the real state of things. Each had their say, with many friendships gained and lost because of it.

By each their own opinion, the parable was made. Children started to believe its contents as historical truth, and few cared to speculate beyond the apparent gestures of allegory that earlier audiences would have read with nuance and discernment. The gestures were opaque, and, at worst, irascible, so that some worried about the effect such a parable was having on the collective psyche of the world at large. Yet, still, others believed that even this hand-wringing could be assuaged by merely calling another over to their own stone tablet, lit up to reveal its contents for those willing to receive them:

Babo's Vision / , Himself²⁹²
[48ad]

Among the empires of the world, Ithuriel ranks of upper Asia. One morning the Scythian Babo said to him: "The follies and wrath of that faithful city. I have never been there." "All the better," said the angel, "from heaven you fear—nothing. You shall be." Babo mounted the Persian army in the war. "By all gods!" the soldier said, "I know nothing—to kill and be killed. I might well expect this fine league from Persepolis; I hear that war, abandon my family to seek fortune or death. I have nothing. There is hardly anyone who knows why we are cutting each other's throats." Babo, astounded, came to know this war, which has been a eunuch and a million soldiers to ruin. The universe suffers, the fury continues. India is destroyed and few provinces not ravaged. The next day, peace. The Persian general and the Indian general made bloody, blunders and all the abominations of manoeuvre, officers who their leader saw killed by their own troops; soldiers of bloody rags, covered with mud. The wounded, inhuman negligence of these wild animals. "I can clearly see that Persepolis will be destroyed." The Indian had struck him with horror. "Oh," he said to himself, "if Ithuriel exterminates the Persians, then the angel must destroy the Indians, too." In what nobility, magnanimity, and humility, transported him—exclaimed PEACE of the VICTORY. Their bloodshed went to court to intrigue for public virtue. "Earth be praised!" said Babo. "Persepolis will be purified innocence; it will not be destroyed, let us hasten without delay to this capital of Asia."

292. Francois Voltaire. *Candide, Zadig, and Selected Stories*, trans. Daniel Frame. New York: Signet Classics, 2009, vii-xii, 195-211. I must admit that I know astonishingly little about the author Voltaire, and by extension view this particular story from a more removed perspective than some of the others in this portfolio. Having previously read *Candide*, but only skimming the other fiction in my signet paperback edition, I set out to make a mimetic redaction, that is, an appropriative erasure poem, from the story "The World as It Is." I was surprised to find much of the writing in this collection (e.g. *Zadig*, "Memnon," and "Plato's Dream,") appears to dialectically represent the distant past and near present (as discussed in my analysis of "The Dignity that Justice Requires"). According to Professor John Iverson, Voltaire also shares with Goethe an "intimate [acquaintance] with the language, literature, and philosophy of England." [Ibid.] Voltaire's jack-of-all-trades approach to life, his hybridisation of philosophical and creative forms, and his use of "nontraditional literary forms, favouring brevity and satirical humour," clearly set a precedent for the postmodern classical. [Ibid.] Like Goethe, he was "keenly interested in foreign cultures," and the peculiarity of the near-eastern setting, Persepolis (in modern day Iran) is of vital importance to the original and redacted text. [Ibid.] Less of interest to myself than the immediate context of conflict and quasi-biblical destruction, are the moments of textual interpretation which here become interfused into the narrative. The interjection of academic interpretation where "the demi-magus represents a Jansenist, and the Grand Lama the Pope," provides a curious subtext and parallel for the erotic fusion (a major theme of the portfolio) which re-emerges in the story's denouement.

That immense city, which was wholly barbarous and whose disgusting time for spite, of men's stubbornness in praising the ancient at the expense of art.

Crude Babo mingled in a crowd—all the ugliest of both sexes. This crowd was rushing into a dark, constant hum. The money which they were selling straw-bottomed their pretending voice. On the plains of the Pictavians, they stopped up his ears; when he saw workmen enter the temple: here all at once

, they removed a big stone and exhaled a pestilent, then they came and deposited a man in the stone. "What!" cried Babo, "these people bury their dead in the same place they worship! Their temples are paved with corpses! I am no longer astonished at those diseases which putre the dead. So many of the living gathered and crammed is capable of poisoning the terrestrial globe. Oh! what a nasty city is Persepolis!

The angels destroy in order to rebuild, unclean, and sing better.

Providence

may have

Providence."

The sun was to dine with a lady, an officer in the army, several Persepolis ; temples built, better decorated, filled with harmonious music; he noticed the public struck by their beauty; the best kings seemed to breathe in bronze

; he heard the people cry: "When shall we see the river, the superb palaces built up right and an immense house where thousands of old soldiers give thanks each day to the god of armies." Finally he entered the house of the lady. The house was neat and the lady young, beautiful, witty, engaging, the company worthy of the angel Ithuriel is jesting about wanting to destroy so charming a city. He perceived that the lady, by asking him tenderly for news, was talking even more tenderly with a young magus. There a magistrate who, in the presence of his wife, was enthusiastically hugging a young widow, got up first to go and talk in the little adjoining room with her spiritual director, arriving too late; the director, again, has Paris in mind. The "immense house" a few lines below represents the Hôtel des Invalides. In this little room with so much unction—that inflamed speech, trembling. Babo began to fear Ithuriel was right. The lady confided in the young magus, and assured him that in all the houses of Persepolis he would find the equivalent jealousy, discord, vengeance. Tears and blood must flow—husbands would certainly kill

their wives, or be killed by them; Ithuriel was doing very well in destroying a city

abandoned to continual gloomy thoughts.

At the door a grave man in a black cloak gave him some papers, and dismissed Babo. That man was the mistress of one of the best lawyers in the city; he has been studying the laws for fifty years. The young gentleman, who is only twenty-five, a satrap of the law, is giving him to the judge, which he has not yet examined. "The giddy young man does wisely," said Babo, "but why is it not the old man who is the judge?" "You are joking," they told him; "never do those who have grown toilsome and subordinate attain high dignities. That young man has a great father because the right of dispensing justice is bought here like a farm." "O unhappy city!" cried Babo, "that is the height of the abyss—thus marking sorrow. And that very day come, from the judicial right to confront death—cost me forty thousand gold darics this year to sleep on the ground thirty nights in a row in a red uniform and then to receive two good arrow wounds which I ruin to serve the Persian emperor. My lord the satrap of the law may well pay to have the pleasure of giving Babo—condemning peace and war;" he concluded they must be absolutely ignorant of war and of law. Even if Ithuriel should not exterminate this people they would perish through their detestable arrival. The whole company approached the young officer and said to him: "I can lend you empire's custom. This man who learned in plebeian kings the Persian empire and out of what they made the monarch."

After dinner he went into one of the grandest temples; he sat down in the middle of a crowd to pass the time. A magus appeared in an elevated allusion to the French farmers-general (*fermiers généraux*) about vice and virtue. This magus divided into parts methodically—that was clear. He grew impassioned. And, sweating, and out of breath. The whole assembly then awoke and thought they had done best to bore three hundred fellow citizens; is reason enough for Persepolis. This assembly was entertainment every day of the year; it was a basilica in the depths of the most beautiful Persepolis, the most important satraps, arranged in order, formed a spectacle that Babo thought at first entertainment. Persons appeared to be kings and queens, their language was different from that of the people; it was measured, harmonious, and sublime. No one slept, people listened in deep silence. The duty of kings, love of virtue

dangers of passion, such moving touches—Babo shed tears, had no doubt that these heroes and heroines, these kings and queens were the preachers of empire; he even purposed to persuade Ithuriel to come to hear them, quite sure that such a spectacle would reconcile him forever to this entertainment. The queen in so pure a morality; he was taken up to the badly furnished and pathetic air. “This profession does not give me a living; one with child; to be delivered; I lack money, and without money you can’t be delivered.” Babo gave her a hundred gold darics. “If only Ithuriel would spend an evening at the stores of the merchants of the city’s punishment. As he was writing, someone knocked on his door; the merchant himself coming to bring him his mistake.

“How can it be,” exclaimed Babo, “that you are so honest and generous, having no shame selling me trinkets at four times their value?” “There is no businessman in the city,” replied the merchant, “who would not have deceived you. I sold you what you bought for four times more than it is worth; I sold it to you for ten times more, and if you want to sell it again, you won’t even get one tenth. Nothing is more just: men’s fancy sets the frivolous workmen I employ; gives me a fine house, a comfortable carriage, and horses; it maintains taste, traffic, and abundance. I sell the same trifles to the neighbouring nations at a higher price than to you, and thereby I am useful to the empire.” Babo, after reflecting a bit, scratched the man’s name from his tablets.

Babo resolved to see the magi and the men of the arts. Luxury in an empire is populous and opulent. Ithuriel seems to me a bit severe. For the latter study wisdom, the others religion; mercy for the morning—a college of the magi. A hundred crowns of poverty, humility; the lowly friar was showing him this house of penitence. He said in substance: “These societies were all necessary. They all deserve to be annihilated.” In order to edify the universe—dominion over man himself! A demi

-magus said to him: "I clearly see that Zerdust has re-
 -turned to prophesy, whipped against that pontiff-king
 who resides in Tibet." An allusion to the convulsionaries.
 The demi-magus represents a Jansenist, and the Grand
 Lama the Pope. "So we ask you...is the world about to end;
 could you not, before that lovely time, protect us, Grand
 Lama?" The pontiff-king resides in Tibet. The little demi
 -magus with a stubborn war on Babo. "No," said the other
 , "we have written against him three or four thousand fat
 books that no one reads that we get women to read." "
 Then you are making war on him, and raising armies?"
 "No—man is free. We write little books. He does not
 read; he has hardly heard of us; he has only as a
 master the caterpillars from the trees in his folly."
 These men of wisdom, renounced the world, the
 ambitious and arrogant who taught humility and
 disinterestedness: he concluded that Ithuriel
 had good reasons for destroying this
 whole breed.

Returned home, for new books to cheer him up.
 There came two sorts of persons, the dead and
 themselves, never contemporaries. The master of
 dissimulation, the magi of their ambition. They
 said to each other's face insulting things which
 they thought were flashes of wit. They had gained
 some knowledge of Babo's mission—the general.
 As soon as he got rid of them, he began to read
 some of the new books. He recognised the indig-
 -nation, slander, those archives of bad taste,
 baseness, those cowardly satires that humour the
 vulture and tear the dove to pieces; those novels
 devoid of imagination, so many portraits of
 women whom the author does not know. All these
 detestable writings and evening letters. The
 crowd—discretion. Babo spoke with grief of what
 he had seen.

The wise man of letters told him: "at all times , and in all genres, the bad teems and good is rare. House the scum of imprudence.

The true sages live among men and books worthy of your attention." In time their talk was so agreeable, Babo admitted he had never heard anything like it. "Here are men," he whispered to himself, "whom the angel Ithuriel will not dare to touch."

Reconciled with the men of letters, he was still angry with the rest of the judicious crowd; these very abuses, escapes you.

Among men of letters there were some who were not envious, and some who were virtuous. These great bodies prepare their common ruin, each society of magi was the same morality. The submissive tutors watch over the son of the master, and found celestial madmen who aspired to make war on the Grand Lama. Finally he suspected that Persepolis seemed worthy of pity with admiration.

He said to this man of letters: "I know that these dangerous magi are in fact very useful.

Wise government keeps them from your young magistrates, who buy a judge's seat. They learn to mount a display in the most ridiculous impertinence and the most perverse old jurists who have spent their whole lives weighing the pros and cons."

The man of letters replied to him: "You saw our army before your arrived in Persepolis, our young officers; maybe you will see that our young magistrates do not judge badly, although they have paid to judge." He took him the next day to the high court. The case was known

to everyone. All the old lawyers, wavering in their opinions, cited a hundred laws. They looked at the affair from a hundred angles. The judges were almost unanimous; they judged well, because they followed the light of reason, and the others had given bad opinions, because they had consulted only their books. Babo concluded that there was often much good in abuse. He saw riches which revolted him. The Emperor needed money, by ordinary channels; he saw that these fat clouds, swollen with the dew of the earth, gave back to the earth more rain than they received from the children of those of the older families—a good judge, a brave warrior, an able statesman, the necessary folly of ruin. To judge or fight, a folly which produces great men of letters, among whom were the ambitious and intriguing magi, in whom there were more great virtues than petty vices. All the love affairs

, the ladies, the havoc must fill him with anxiety and insight. He was trembling all the time. He remained in this interval. Ithuriel, the minister, and his antechamber was filled with ladies, magi with all colours, eccentric pleasures. The intriguer ruined by a cabal. The women heard their remarks; could not help saying: “There is a very happy man; he crushes those who envy him; he sees at last the weight of years and affairs.” The conversation became interesting. He was a very unhappy man; that he passed for rich; he was all-powerful and constantly contradicted; he had hardly forty years, had faults. The angel Ithuriel wanted to punish—he should not exterminate him but merely leave him his post.

While he was talking the minister, entered suddenly the beautiful lady. Babo had symptoms of grief and burst into tears; she had been refused to aspire with so much force, so much grace in annihilation, so much skill, so much eloquence, she did not leave Babo for a man you do not love and from whom you have everything to fear. She cried. “There is nothing I would not sacrifice except my lover; he would do anything for me, except leave his mistress. Full of wit and world; we are together this evening with my husband and my little magus: come and share our joy.” The lady took

Babo to her house. The husband, plunged in grief, delight, and gratitude; he embraced in turn his wife, his mistress, the little magus, and Babo. Unity, gaiety, and the graces were the soul of the meal. "Learn," said the fair lady, "women almost always have as much merit as an honourable man; convince yourself of it, and dine with me tomorrow at the beautiful Teona's. There are a few old vestals who pick all of them together.

She would not commit; she gives her lover only magnanimous glory; he would blush to face her if he had any occasion of doing good; for nothing encourages virtuous actions than having a mistress whose house reigned all pleasures." Teona reigned over them; she knew how to talk to everyone in their own language. Her natural wit set the wit of others at ease; she was attractive as she was kind; and

, what enhanced the value of all her good qualities
 , she was beautiful. Babo, Scythian though he was and envoy of a genie, perceived that if he stayed in Persepolis he would forget Ithuriel for Teona. He was growing polite, gentle, although frivolous, slanderous, and full of vanity. He feared to see Persepolis condemned; he even feared the report he was going to give.

Here is how he went about giving his report. He had a little statue composed of all the most precious and all the basest metals, he took it to Ithuriel. "Will you break the statue?" he said. Ithuriel resolved not to correct Persepolis, and all is all is Per-sepolis. Babo was Jonah. Nineveh was destroyed. A man has been in the body of a whale, he is not as good humoured as when he has been in good company.

Chapter 3: Spielreinian Poesis and the Appropriative Literature in Pomoclassicism

My intention in this chapter is to conceive of a Spielreinian theory of poesis by demonstrating the link between Sabina Spielrein's two most well-known concepts: 'poetry' as erotic fusion, and the psychic simultaneity of creation and destruction—which will both be shown to operate within the tradition of postmodern classicism. Her unique perspective on the psyche and its relationship to artistic production and mythology has elements reminiscent of the Kafkan/Hegelian negation which 'capsizes' into the positive, although it is more akin to the Goethean/Gnostic model, where the negative and positive exist concurrently, and are inextricably interfused with each other. These historic notions have been studied in an attempt at providing a framework for the amorphous and obscure literary method, the postmodern classical, which is of my own invention (as I am the first, I believe, to so explicitly ask the question of what might be implied by a 'Spielreinian' poesis). I intend to bring attention to the role that Friedrich Nietzsche played in Spielrein's construction of these concepts, helping to generate a dynamic model of bisexuality comparable with Sigmund Freud's, and expressing a theoretical interest in duality more generally in terms of artistic production. As with Franz Kafka, Spielrein creates a critical model in her hybridic writing for understanding key issues surrounding artistic appropriation and the interfusion of the individual/collective in dynamic literary writing. Her first major paper, "Destruction as the Cause of Coming into Being" also includes a cogent critique of the early modern notion of eternal preservation through literary writing which is demonstrably similar to the Kafkan literary project, studied in chapter two. This critique is clearly influenced by Nietzsche's widely-known concept, the 'eternal return,' as I will demonstrate. I conclude by discussing at length how the creative writing generated in this portfolio, and by extension the very project of postmodern classicism, is congruent with Spielrein's hybridic perspective concerning art and literature.

It would be inappropriate to discuss the theoretical contributions of Sabina Spielrein without first acknowledging her controversial status as a historical figure, which undoubtedly influences any interpretation of her creative work. To my point, I argue that there is no theorist whose critical writing is, in this historical moment, so vital as a subject for scholarship, especially in light of the utter neglect which she faced throughout the greater part of the twentieth century, which was in part the result of this controversy. Spielrein's historical contributions extend far beyond the circumstances through which she is most readily known. Psychoanalytic historian John Laurner summarises the common narrative: "[Spielrein] had an erotic relationship with her psychiatrist, Carl Jung. When he panicked and broke it off, she sought help from Jung's colleague Sigmund Freud, who instead conspired with Jung in a cover-up."²⁹³ I further contend that the erotic element is an indispensable aspect of Spielrein's poetic theorising, such that her critical exegete Michael Plastow is flatly wrong to say that "the...salacious interest" paid to Spielrein and imagining her 'poetry' in terms of sexual activity (especially as it pertains to her affair with Jung) "functions to obscure the poetry of Spielrein's writing."²⁹⁴ That said, such a view must be tempered by analyst and Spielrein scholar Adrienne Harris's warning not to make Spielrein into "a kind of pornographic caricature."²⁹⁵ Rather, it is more important to emphasise the number of thinkers she influenced within the burgeoning discipline, but especially Freud and Jung. Jung considered Spielrein's treatment at the Burghozli his "test case, for which reason I remembered her with special gratitude and affection," although this was not always the case, and the mutual ambivalence of their relationship has been well-studied, if not widely known or understood.²⁹⁶ Hers is quite literally a primogenial case study in the dynamics of a burgeoning discipline (which prompted the elaboration of the terms 'transference' and 'countertransference' by Freud), psychoanalysis, which

293. John Laurner. *Sex Versus Survival: The Life and Ideas of Sabina Spielrein* (London: Duckworth Overlook), 214, 1.

294. Michael Plastow. *Sabina Spielrein and the Poetry of Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge), 2019, 119.

295. Adrienne Harris. "Language is there to Bewilder Itself and Others:" Theoretical and Clinical Contributions of Sabina Spielrein" in *Sabina Spielrein and the Beginnings of Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge), 2019, 151.

296. John Kerr. *A Most Dangerous Method*, 61.

Pamela Cooper-White. "From Zürich to Vienna: "The Power that Beautifies and Destroys" in *Sabina Spielrein and the Beginnings*, 90-5.

demonstrates the profound importance creative literature played within the discipline as it attempted to reify itself (that is, as it aspired toward cultural 'immanence').

Spielrein, as I have understood Goethe and Kafka previously, is described by Harris in her most productive moments as “interweaving persons, ideas, philosophical underpinnings, and methodologies.”²⁹⁷ In the same collection Pamela Cooper White, a scholar of philosophy and religion, draws attention to how Spielrein, like her predecessors, drew “from a wide range of sources: biological, psychological, mythological, and religious” and how the “Destruction” paper foreshadows “object relation theory’s concept of a coexistence of love and hate, aggression and reparation beginning in infancy...especially as articulated by Melanie Klein and D.W. Winnicott.”²⁹⁸ White describes Spielrein as a unique influence on “a more postmodern relational-psychoanalytic paradigm” whose ideas offer “a very early precursor of our contemporary turn toward multiplicity and intersubjectivity.”²⁹⁹ Within this context, Spielrein became “the first person to become an analyst as an outcome of her own analysis” (as in, through analysing a patient—described in “A Case of Schizophrenia”) and “the first psychiatric patient to become a psychoanalyst herself.”³⁰⁰³⁰¹ As one of the first female analysts, she made a tremendous mark on the disciplines of both contemporary psychology and psychoanalysis, researching issues surrounding early childhood development, teaching Jean Piaget, who would go on to be one of the most well-known behaviourists of the twentieth century, and acting as researcher for Stalin’s government before her unfortunate death in the Holocaust.³⁰² The immense historical importance, which is scarcely recognised in either the fields of literary studies or psychoanalysis, of the life and work of Sabina Spielrein, could not be more clear. I believe the dialectic of simultaneous creation and destruction, and erotic fusion as a model for poesis, are immanently useful as a contribution to the

297. Adrienne Harris. *Sabina Spielrein and the Beginnings*, 159.

298, Pamela Cooper-White. *Ibid.*, 73, 78-9.

299. *Ibid.*, 80.

300. Michael Plastow. *Sabina Spielrein and the Poetry*. (back cover)

301. Sabina Spielrein. *The Essential Writings of Sabina Spielrein*, x.

302. Pamela Cooper-White. *Sabina Spielrein and the Beginnings*, 65.
John Launer. *Sex Versus Survival*, 200-224, 235-43.

study of the dynamics of appropriation under a postmodern classical framework, and help bring this entire thesis's critical purview into focus. To the extent that psychoanalysis has had any significant impact on literary studies in the contemporary era, it is essential that Spielrein's work be given the engagement and study it deserves.

Furthermore, as a musician, poet, and composer, Spielrein offers, like Nietzsche (who also composed poetry and music), a unique perspective on the hybridity of practice-as-research.³⁰³ Her work, as with Goethe, Nietzsche, Benjamin, Deleuze and Guattari, and Kafka's, is imbued with 'difficulty' such that Laurner writes of her "Destruction" paper: "her writing is "like encountering a hall of mirrors," and, that it is "an overwhelming – and at times frankly incomprehensible – intellectual expedition."³⁰⁴ Cooper-White calls the essay "dense, rambling, and at times...more like stream of consciousness than a doctoral-level paper."³⁰⁵ Subversion of academic forms was also shown in the previous chapters to be an indispensable if occasionally frustrating aspect of the scholarship of Benjamin and Deleuze and Guattari. Throughout this project I have attempted to incorporate secondary scholarship (e.g., Carlyle and H. B. Cotteril) in this dynamic and difficult tradition in a manner which *is* appropriate for doctoral-level literary studies. My intention below is to explore how Spielrein's ideas function within this tradition which has helped produce postmodern classicism, and how my creative writing enacts the themes of this tradition in curious ways, especially through the process of appropriation. In order to demonstrate this phenomenon in greater detail, I must further describe the connection between erotic fusion and simultaneous creation and destruction, bringing Spielrein's most commonly studied works, "A Case of Schizophrenia" and the "Destruction" paper, into conversation with each other.

303. Felicity Brock Kelcourse. "Sabina Spielrein from Rostov to Zürich" in *Sabina Spielrein and the Beginnings*, 39. John Kerr, *A Most Dangerous*, 35.

Aldo Carotenuto. *A Secret Symmetry: Sabina Spielrein Between Jung and Freud* (New York: Pantheon Books), 1982, 12.

304. John Laurner. *The Essential Writings*, 7, 9.

305. Pamela Cooper-White. *Sabina Spielrein and the Beginnings*, 75.

Erotic Fusion and Simultaneous Creation and Destruction

My intention in this section is to demonstrate how the concepts of poetry as erotic fusion and simultaneous creation and destruction, as outlined in Spielrein's thesis, "A Case of Schizophrenia" and her "Destruction" paper, might be read in tandem in order to conceive of what I am calling a Spielreinian poesis. Both the themes of erotic fusion and simultaneous creation and destruction ought be read within the wider scope of the creative/research writing so far presented. Discussing Kafka's fraught letters to Felice Bauer, biographer Reiner Stach observes that Kafka does not want "closeness...but fusion, not distance but separation" and the dialectical/contradictory elements of this (eroticised epistolary) relationship were "tearing him apart."³⁰⁶ This is comparable with the ambivalent element of the Spielrein/Jung relationship, as first reported by Carotenuto.³⁰⁷ Another interesting point of comparison to Kafka can be found when Freud observes in a letter to Jung that Spielrein is "abnormally ambivalent."³⁰⁸ The polarised elements in Spielrein's writing follow in the path left by Goethe's conception of polarity (which here in Gray's description resounds with the erotic): "at the heart of everything...a strange contradictoriness...an attractiveness and repulsion, creation and destruction, a pulsating expansion and contraction, assertion and counter-assertion...."³⁰⁹ This dialectic is also discussed in chapter two, where I analysed the polarised elements of Franz Kafka's work, especially his concepts of 'eternity' and 'indestructibility,' in terms of the postmodern classical. Spielrein appears to have found more contentment in her professional life than Kafka, who "regarded [his] reciprocal fusion of career and life as dirty, even obscene."³¹⁰ This phrasing is loaded with association in the context of this thesis, calling to mind both Freud's *taboo* and Nietzsche's reconciliation of Dionysus and Apollo (sacred yet profane). Yet Kafka's ambivalence regarding this aspect of his life is clearly Spielreinian in nature—that is, it emphasises positive and negative elements in conjunction. Stach writes

³⁰⁶.Reiner Stach. *Kafka*, 158.

³⁰⁷.Aldo Carotenuto. *A Secret Symmetry*, xvii

³⁰⁸.Pamela Cooper White, *Sabina Spielrein and the Beginnings*, 92-3.

³⁰⁹.Roland Gray. *Goethe*, 20.

³¹⁰.Reiner Stach. *Kafka*, 292.

that although Kafka “hated the office, the shop, the factory...he recognised that [the bustle of working life] offered a wisdom that was forever beyond his grasp.”³¹¹ In the previous chapter I attempted to demonstrate how such a notion might fit in Kafka’s ‘asymptotic’ model of meaning, and by extension Hegelian negation, but here I intend to expansively suggest also that these concepts concerning the interfusion of dialectical/ambivalent elements connect Kafka and Spielrein in a network, or tradition, also. That they were contemporaries supports this goal, as does Kafka’s evocative letter proposing marriage to Felice Bauer, where he writes: “I have the distinct feeling that through marriage, *through the union, through the dissolution* of this nothingness that I am, I will be destroyed, and not alone...and that the more I love her, the faster and more dreadful it will be.”³¹² This is how I conceive of the notion of erotic fusion and simultaneous creation/destruction brought together—even as it pervades the most intimate and personal details of each of these author’s lives, which have unabashedly been the subject of scholarship for decades (as was Goethe’s). Spielrein, as a Russian writing in German, is an interesting figure to consider from the perspective of ‘minor’ literature, and her scholarship on eroticism, desire, and the interplay of individuation and collectives of consciousness foresees the critical work of Deleuze and Guattari, if it does not surpass it in terms of theoretical clarity. In order to further analyse these contentions, I will now turn to Spielrein’s writing itself.

The erotic element of Spielrein’s conception of ‘poetry’ is inextricable from her more explicit writing concerning artistic production as a psychic process. As with Kafka’s ‘indestructible,’ a fluidity of terminology and emphasis on the thematic coherence between “A Case of Schizophrenia” and the “Destruction” paper allow the two to be read in tandem. Spielrein’s thesis, a case study concerning a schizophrenic woman suffering as a result of the infidelity of her husband, has been shown to have a strong personal connection with its author.³¹³ Spielrein utilises the analytic opportunity to emphasise the

³¹¹.Ibid., 39, 45-50, 121.

³¹².Ibid., 320.

³¹³.Felicity Brock Kelcourse. *Sabina Spielrein and the Beginnings*, 58-64.

primacy of Freud's 'sexual' interpretation of the psyche, but also to demonstrate the scope of the ideas which she will more formally discuss in her first major publication, the "Destruction" paper. "A Case of Schizophrenia" is circumscribed by the patient's protestantism, her unfaithful husband's catholicism, and the association with the latter religion not only profound beauty, but sexual fervour, which the patient associates with that beauty. Spielrein's patient declares that "Sistine art is sexual art" which she insists "has to do with Laocoön."³¹⁴ It is here the patient's association brings about a peculiar aesthetic position: "Sistine art can elicit sexual art: By looking at a beautiful image, one can turn into poetry and perhaps forget one's duty"³¹⁵. Spielrein reiterates how this notion of Sistine art is synonymous with the "Catholic religion (= art = "poetry") and that "from Sistine art, sexual art is derived."³¹⁶ Here she makes an analytic move which foresees her work in the "Destruction" paper, describing the "paradoxical" contrast of the material (sexual) and spiritual (religious) elements in this statement, writing "by referring to the sexual through its negative (the spiritual), [Spielrein's patient] strongly rejects the former. However, by claiming that the highest, that is, religion, signifies sexuality, she assigns the highest value to sexuality."³¹⁷ This polarity is at the heart of my conception of Spielreinian poesis, which clearly precedes the notions of simultaneous creation and destruction in the "Destruction" paper, and exists in tandem with Freud's examination of the tribal confluence of 'sacred' and 'profane.'³¹⁸ Plastow rejects the notion of "poetry" as merely referencing a sexual affair with Jung (in a letter to Freud she refers to him as "my doctor...and finally my 'poet,'" adding "things went as the usually do with 'poetry'").³¹⁹ He instead argues "with Spielrein we can propose that poetry is the creation of a mode of address that carries no fixed meaning, directed to no specific addressee."³²⁰ This is buttressed by his later excavation of the "mythology of Laocoön, a Trojan priest who was killed...by giant serpents sent by

³¹⁴. Sabina Spielrein. *The Essential Writings*, 18.

³¹⁵. *Ibid.*.

³¹⁶. *Ibid.*.

³¹⁷. *Ibid.*, 19.

³¹⁸. Sigmund Freud. *Totem and Taboo*, 23.

³¹⁹. Sabina Spielrein. *A Secret Symmetry*, ed. Aldo Carotenuto, trans. Arno Pomerans et al. 93.

³²⁰. Michael Plastow. *Sabina Spielrein and the Poetry*, 59.

Apollo, whom Laocoön had offended by desecrating his temple.”³²¹ There is an element of simultaneous creation and destruction here (in the interrelation of libidinal violence and death), although of equal interest is his association of the myth with the idea of polyvalent meaning and arbitration described in Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s essay “*Lacoön: ‘An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry.’*” Plastow summarises: according to this essay “language as poetry cannot be reduced to the communication of meaning or information... Rather, Lessing asserted that not only were the symbols of poetry successive, and thus able to express time, but that they are also arbitrary.”³²² This quality is understood by Lessing to be a feature of language in general. I contend that the concept of the ‘Kafkan’ negation is just one model which is informative regarding the nature of this linguistic arbitration, the positive which ‘capsizes’ into the negative (or vice versa), and that Goethe offers another in the polarised simultaneous elements of the positive and negative. My engagement with this tradition of canonical subversion and arbitration of meaning through a personal and erotic notion of ‘poetry’ as described by Spielrein has helped set the conceptual framing for postmodern classicism as a contemporary literary approach. Plastow’s research writing reports on a highly influential and significant essay within the tradition of both Goethe and Kafka, and without which Spielrein’s writing might also be rendered utterly incoherent. In fact, within this framing Spielrein is shown to participate in an interfusion of postmodern and classical narratives and concepts which are informative for my project more generally. I will briefly outline some personal reservations I have regarding Plastow’s understanding of ‘becoming poetry’ in this context of poetry as erotic fusion, before continuing my discussion of the relationship between Spielrein’s thesis and her “Destruction” paper.

I contend that Plastow makes the same error analysing Spielrein’s notion of ‘poetry’ that Benjamin accuses Brod of: holding “a fundamental contradiction between the author’s

321. *Ibid.*, 70.

322. *Ibid.*, 71.

thesis and his attitude.”³²³ On the one hand Plastow decries the speculative depictions of Spielrein in studies and films in which she is portrayed, writing “this very specific sexual interpretation” oriented around her affair with Jung, misses “the poetry of Spielrein’s writings.”³²⁴ Such a view, Plastow argues, doesn’t “[contribute] to the elaboration of the foundational experience of...psychoanalysis, which took place in Spielrein’s transference- love with Carl Jung.”³²⁵ Yet while on the one hand condemning the review of Kerr’s book which “has ‘all the elements of a juicy novel,’” Plastow describes how “[Spielrein’s] later infatuation with Jung is shared in juicy detail in letters to her mother....”³²⁶ This contradiction seems to me to *emphasise* the overriding material importance of the erotic, even if, as with Kafka’s theories, it co-exists with the ideological, and abstract. This brings me to my next point concerning Plastow’s neo-Lacanian reading of Spielrein. Plastow is formalistically invested in emphasising the process of ‘becoming poetry’ as described above, but he fails to provide an adequate framing for the idea. In analysing an early diary entry of Spielrein’s, wherein she wishes her writing were autonomous, that is, that it would “write itself,” Plastow tenuously suggests a connection between Spielrein’s childhood frustration and the Lacanian notion of subjectivity: “such a writing would allow something to be transmitted through her, via the writing that writes itself from her. This evokes the position that Lacan attributed to himself in reference to his place as subject: ‘I am not a poet, but a poem. A poem that is being written, even if it *looks like* a subject.’”³²⁷ Later, following a discussion of the thesis, and more specifically puns based on Spielrein’s name (“the verb *spielen*, to play...[and] the question of being unclean or impure [unrein] and purity [Reinheit]”), Plastow attempts to establish a connection between the breakdown of signifiers and poetry as a manifestation of the unconscious, which challenges ego formation (individuation, the formation of the self or ‘I.’³²⁸ Yet his

³²³.Walter Benjamin. *Selected Writings*, Vol. 3, 322.

³²⁴.Michael Plastow. *Sabina Spielrein and the Poetry*, 4.

³²⁵.Ibid., 5.

³²⁶.Ibid., 20.

³²⁷.Jacques Lacan. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. J. A. Miller (New York: Norton), viii in Michael Plastow, *Sabina Spielrein and the Poetry*, 35.

³²⁸.Michael Plastow. *Sabina Spielrein and the Poetry*, 75.

conclusion is muddled: “by virtue of her grasping the signifiers of the patient’s speech...in its radical destruction of common meaning and communication, Spielrein is able to accede to the position of...psychoanalyst not through taking on another identity and becoming a ‘doctor’ or ‘poet’, but rather by *literally* becoming poetry.”³²⁹ I think the notion of simultaneous creation and destruction, both linguistically and in terms of expectation/subjectivity, are vital to conceiving the project of the Spielreinian. However, in lieu of the ‘erotic’ interpretation, Plastow’s insistence on Spielrein ‘literally’ becoming poetry falls flat conceptually, and diminishes the link between the clear sense of eroticism and poetry being an interfusion— which is buttressed by her work in the “Destruction” paper. It is not a failure of imagination to cast skepticism onto the notion of embodiment as *language itself*, or merely language, especially with regards to Spielrein’s writing, of which Harris notes the apparent links to phenomenology.³³⁰ Plastow overextends his argument in this instance, at the cost of his theoretical coherence. Even taking into account Lacan’s apparent skepticism of what we might call the ‘core’ of subjectivity as a phenomenon *in itself* (which, as with language, seems riddled with an opaque relation between the signifier [subjectivity] and signified [subject]), the matter here seems better understood in terms of the *figuration* of language: that is, metaphor/myth-making, and thus is appropriate for the scope of an investigation into creative writing and literary dynamics.³³¹ The self cannot *literally* be poetry (or cannot *merely* be so), without a radical notion of selfhood which is always and exclusively the *utterance of* a subject. I instead propose a model of understanding this dynamic and polyvalent process which, as with my reading of Kafka, is simultaneously literal and figurative, or which interfuses the two poles in a manner which is informed by the poetics of erotic fusion. This simultaneity is informative of the dynamics of authorship in a postmodern classical framework.

329. *Ibid.*. (emphasis mine)

330. Adrienne Harris. *Sabina Spielrein and the Beginnings*, 172.

331. Jacques Lacan. “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the *I*” in *Écrits*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Routledge), 2001, 1-6, <http://faculty.las.illinois.edu/rrushing/581b/ewExternalFiles/Lacan%2C%20Mirror%20Stage.pdf>.

Unfortunately, I do not have the time to further deconstruct “A Case of Schizophrenia,” but only to emphasise its apparent, if understudied, relationship to the ideas which are further cultivated in Spielrein’s “Destruction” paper. Fire and water are in both papers depicted as twin aspects of sexuality, and Spielrein’s interest in the interrelation of psychoanalysis with myth is also apparent.³³²³³³ As with Spielrein, “hitting seems to have a sexual meaning for the patient” which foresees the passages concerning masochism in the “Destruction” paper.³³⁴³³⁵ Her patient is quoted as saying “sexual excessiveness...can be pathological...but it can also be mythological; that is, it can have to do with the genesis of humans.”³³⁶ The interrelationship of art and Spielrein’s eroticised theories of the psyche are apparent. Spielrein writes specifically of how the “positive is expressed in the negative” in mythological terms, referencing the serpent as a figure whose “poison represents the sperm” and who, through a symbolical impregnation creates “new animals.”³³⁷ Her focus on how “burgeoning life is represented with death symbolism” and, later, how “death is connected with sexual fantasies” establish of the assumptions which foreground the “Destruction” paper, and solidify its importance.³³⁸³³⁹ Not only is erotic fusion, in both its real and symbolic manifestation, vital to understanding the project of Spielreinian poesis, this concept cannot exist without the literary art, from which it finds inspiration, and a stock of metaphorical examples which help buttress the notion of simultaneous creation and destruction. In order to further examine this phenomenon, I will now analyse some critical passages in the “Destruction” paper.

The concept of erotic fusion (earlier conceptualised as ‘poetry’) is as vital to Spielrein’s “Destruction” paper as literary art itself. Although her essay begins with the comparably grounded question of how “the reproductive drive” harbours pleasurable

³³².Sabina Spielrein. *The Essential Writings*, 22-23, 28-30, 51, 55, 66.

³³³.Ibid., 29, 31, 47, 50, 54-55, 62-64.

³³⁴.Ibid., 33.

³³⁵.Ibid., 103.

³³⁶.Ibid., 54.

See also, Sigmund Freud. “Chapter III: Animism, Magic and the Omnipotence of Thought” in *Totem and Taboo*, 71-92.

³³⁷.Sabina Spielrein. *The Essential Writings*, 51.

³³⁸.Ibid., 51.

³³⁹.Ibid., 76.

experiences alongside “negative feelings, such as anxiety and disgust,” this wide ranging paper coheres around the literal and symbolic instances of simultaneous creation and destruction.³⁴⁰ Sexual fusion, that is, the “fusion of sexual cells” whereby “the unity of each cell is destroyed, and...new life originates,” is referenced to explain how there are both creative and “destructive [components] of the sexual drive.”³⁴¹ The work of art and its role in individuation/collectives of consciousness are given special attention—how the dissolution of the self in the collective and in art are mutually constituted and simultaneous.³⁴² She describes how the “ego-psyche” “strives for self-preservation in its present form” but “the collective psyche, by denying the present ego, actually creates it anew...in new images, richer than ever before.”³⁴³ The ambivalence of the artistic product, which is a “collective wish projected by an individual” involves the dissolution of the ego into the collective, and vice versa. Spielrein’s elaboration of this process includes a notable reference to the ‘Mothers’ in Goethe’s Faust:

Each experience that we share...directly or as a work of art is a product of differentiation from primal experiences that make up our psyche. [...] When this differentiated product enters into another individual’s psyche, a retransformation takes place.... In addition to conscious processing, the image sinks into the unconscious which deprives it of its individual character, takes it down to the ‘Mothers’ and dissolves it.³⁴⁴

Art plays a central role in this example, which is indicative of Spielrein’s conceptualisation of individuation in general. Here the ‘Mothers’ represent for Spielrein what they probably represented for Goethe: the enigmatic depths of our collective and individual psychic life, which strains to be represented either in philosophy or art. This is the passage which precedes Spielrein’s more well-known reference to Nietzsche’s assertion that “the purpose of language is to confuse oneself and others.”³⁴⁵ The assertion that “each image searches...for non-identical yet similar material into which it can be dissolved and

³⁴⁰.Ibid., 97.

³⁴¹.Ibid., 98-99.

³⁴².Ibid., 106-7.

³⁴³.Ibid., 106.

³⁴⁴.Ibid., 107.

³⁴⁵.Ibid., 108.

transformed” coheres perfectly with Bloom’s model of canon, oriented around creative misprision, and the link between this fusion and erotic fusion is clear.³⁴⁶ This conception of mutual dissolution before the bewildering power of art (foreseen in the notion of ‘becoming poetry’), is explicitly interrelated with the erotic: “the drive for self-reproduction (transformation)...is accompanied by sensual delight because the dissolution takes place in the soulmate (=in love).”³⁴⁷

This idea of simultaneous creation and destruction, informed by erotic fusion/dissolution, is fundamentally dialectical, as attested to by Spielrein’s observations concerning the “psychic autoeroticism” of Nietzsche.³⁴⁸ She writes “as a result of his longing...Nietzsche became man and woman within himself, and the two were combined in the person of Zarathustra.”³⁴⁹ In describing Spielrein’s reading of *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, which relies heavily on dialectical thinking, Plastow asserts that “Spielrein uses Nietzsche to articulate the Hegelian principle derived from the master-slave dialectic to state...‘affirmation cannot come forth without negation; in the highest the lowest is also contained.’”³⁵⁰ These ideas have informed my own conception of canon, which also entails this eroticised notion of simultaneous creation and destruction (of narratives, contexts, characters themselves, and stylistic/formal features of literary writing). The fascinating manner in which Spielrein internalised mythical narratives within her own life³⁵¹, and relied on examples such as Christ, the epic figure Siegfried, and Goethe’s own *Faust*, in order to articulate her experiences in the early history of psychoanalysis, attests to the importance creative writing played in the discipline. My intention here is to demonstrate how the dialectic elements of Spielrein’s creative philosophising, rife with resonances in the work of the thinkers so-far described, is derived from the literary tradition and meaningfully describes the role of the art object, and the artist themselves who must transform and be transformed by their

³⁴⁶.Ibid., 108.

³⁴⁷.Ibid., 108.

³⁴⁸.Ibid., 112.

³⁴⁹.Ibid..

³⁵⁰.Michael Plastow. *Sabina Spielrein and the Poetry*, 92.

³⁵¹.Felicity Brock Kelcourse. *Sabina Spielrein and the Beginnings*, 39.

See Also: John Kerr. *A Most Dangerous*, 160-4.

predecessors. In order to further discuss some of the more difficult aspects of this theory (erotic fusion, individuation/collectivisation of consciousness, and the ambivalence of influence), I will now discuss the creative work of this portfolio and the project of postmodern classicism more generally.

Erotic Fusion, Individuation/Collectives of Consciousness, and Ambivalence in Postmodern Classical Creative Writing

This section will place my own writing generated for the creative aspect of this portfolio into the context of what I have called a Spielreinian poesis. This entails an interfusion of eroticism, and erotic fusion as a symbol for development. Another focus will be on representations of interiority/individuation, and their placement in contrast with collectives of consciousness, a theme also examined in Deleuze and Guattari's study on Kafka. Finally, I will rearticulate the role of ambivalence in the process of appropriation as it operates in the Goethean tradition. In so doing, an explicit connection between the scholarship of Spielrein and the project of the postmodern classical will be made, which I will reflect on in the concluding remarks of this chapter.

I first make a helpful distinction when discussing erotic fusion as it operates in my creative writing. First, there are the literal instances of erotic fusion which are described in the portfolio. Then, there are the symbolic fusions, or their suggestion, which are equally notable. Literal erotic fusion is an essential aspect of stories such as "Tiresias Speaks," "Jupiter and the Crescent Moon," and "Ira Illa Numinum." Tiresias is shown to develop as a character from a "teenage dirtbag...singing songs about pretty girls and holy farts" to a more mature, contemplative figure following a divinely sanctioned sex-change and disillusionment after a tryst with the young noble Chrysanthos. Tiresias's embodied state is one of literal sexual infusion, as the character is represented, like Nietzsche in *Zarathustra*, as both man and woman (hence, the gender neutral pronouns). Tiresias is later shown using "mulled wine and absinthe to kill the babies that grew in me,

just like the other girls” and singing “serious, enchanting tunes about apocalyptic visions and the folly of men.” In this case erotic fusion is an agent of transformation and change through which the individual character of Tiresias is able to develop, and mature. In “Jupiter and the Crescent Moon” individualised sexuality exists in a privileged realm, only shown between Alexander the Great and his submissive attendants, Hephaestion and B. Among the camp there are only collective representations of erotic consummation. First there is the depiction of the ‘sissy’ brigade which is clearly influenced by the dialectical notion of creation and destruction. The subversive element of the camp is symbolically represented by the ‘camp’ figure Pausias, who is whipped for his insolence. This collective subversive element is described as such: “openly they made love which most did seek to hide, where every body turned against the other in a cuddle puddle of a hundred men, sick with pustules, yet so resigned with life as not to care.” The interrelation of imagery as it pertains to sex and death is clearly Spielreinian in nature, and the earlier referenced passages from “A Case of Schizophrenia” and the “Destruction” paper resound here. It is the ignorance of this complexity which B. laments in an internal monologue decrying the Alexandrian generals for not taking part in the orgy which they helped organise. That the orgies which “used to be so delightfully exotic are [now] filled with despair” is shown as a sign of degeneration of the military leadership’s collective psyche, which eventually leads to Alexander’s retreat from his campaign altogether.

A more sadistic orientation of the erotic is found in “Ira Illa Numinum,” with its graphic depictions of torture and sexual assault. Nero accedes to the throne through erotic consummation with Octavia (formalised by a marriage contract), his half-sister, and the depiction of violence and domination in this instance foreshadows the cruel and tyrannical reign which follows. Under a Spielreinian framework, these instances of libidinal violence may be understood as imbalanced expressions of the polarised sexual impulse—creative and destructive in nature. Nero’s refusal to be seduced by his mother and her eventual murder exist in conjunction with each other, thematically, as Oedipal lust,

with the 'penetration' of her wound and lamenting speech as compensatory material for the failed erotic relationship. Other instances of sexualised violence fall under a similar interpretive scope, such as the deaths of Acte and Britannicus, who are each assaulted then murdered by Nero in a paranoid effort to cement his amorphous 'power' over the Pax Romana. Yet sexuality also plays a developmental role in the story akin with "Tiresias..." such as in his affair with the members of the Vox Populi ("Nero took the men as lovers first, and each knew the other's bodies more intimately than their own") which helps Nero further expand his aesthetic interests and expression. Another case of this developmental sexuality may be found in his affair with Sabina Poppea, through which this protagonist develops his cunning and penchant for libidinal violence. Poppea marries Marus Ortho, which leads to Ortho's exile, and Nero's ambivalence in this matter is apparent when it is described how Nero "so loved Marus in suspended animation that his mind might now share a kiss as Sabina is pressed against his lips, their being one flesh, one soul united." The element of psychic fusion which accompanies the material fusion is an important aspect of the erotics of Spielrein's 'poetry.' The importance of the erotic element is in these examples undeniable, for they have been extracted through a reading and engagement with Spielrein's increasingly well-known critical writing, of which the erotic is one of the foremost themes. I will now further explore the more abstract elements of sexuality and sexual expression in my creative portfolio.

It is certainly the case that sexuality and sexual expressions do not only take a material form in my portfolio, but also an abstract one. This is a running thread of the collection that is featured in stories such as "Thirteen," "Another Hunger Artist," and "Wuthering Heights." The first of these stories, "Thirteen," only features sexuality as a hypothetical, like Faust's hypothetical fantasy of contentment which coincides with the end of his life. Through Henry Chinaski's sexual awakening, he is able to see his teacher Mrs. Vickerson in a transcendent beauty which is paradoxically described as "something whole, lasting, like Helen of Troy. The kind of beauty wars are fought over." This abstract beauty

corresponds with Henry's consumptive pleasure with language itself (as evidenced by his use of the list: "Endoscope. Haberdasher. Zoology. Bridle. Heliotropic. Cacophony. Distillation. Salutations. Regicide. Kindling...Vicariousness. Woebegone. Dissimulation. Malfeasance. Perfunctory," etc.). Such a pleasure manifests in a reference to Tennyson, which interfuses the very forces of life and death in the tradition so-far described:

*"The woods decay, the woods decay and fall,/ The vapours weep their burden to
the ground,/ Man comes and tills the fields and lies beneath,/ and after many a summer dies the
swan."*³⁵²

Desire and natural forces cohere and disjoint in these lines, and there is a fusion of 'man' and 'earth' which is akin to the erotic in Spielrein.

A darker, and more collectivistic form of this abstract sexuality is found in "Another Hunger Artist." It comes in the form of those who engage with the main character, an online sex-worker, "being made a fetish: a ritual object, an icon. Being, metaphysical. No more than a commodity." This abstract element manifests in a "violence of fantasy. Immanence" which is collectivised and sadistic. The protagonist observes the "erasure in the way they want, and to become that want, so much less oneself," which corresponds both to Kafka's fears of intimacy and Spielrein's description of simultaneous fusion and its relationship to individuation/the collective in the "Destruction" paper. These two elements themselves, the creative and destructive aspects of the abstract erotic, are interfused in the cut-up "Wuthering Heights." A collective "we" is depicted "bowing to the dictates of the night, and some mornings" (a sexual innuendo). This "thin[,] strange" collective voice "of a movement" co-exists among the dynamic individuals in the narrative. In the piece's conceptual climax an unspecified female figure is depicted having an affair with Shakespeare: "this Bill S." who "crumpled about her feet." A narrative fluidity akin to that described in "Sorrow" and "Jupiter and the Crescent Moon" can be found in the externalised description ("her flesh, that had Shakespeare even red and pale, beneath a

352.Lord Alfred Tennyson. "Tithonus" in *Poetry Foundation*, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45389/tithonus..>

warm light flowing beneath a milky translucent flesh”) which shifts to a first person perspective (“and like the most interesting reserve, he had slept with somebody, myself—warmth and playfulness and then thought no more about it”). These descriptions of sexuality are not as concrete as those described in the previous paragraph, and rely instead on the feelings of expectancy, anticipation, fantasy, and reflection with regard to the erotic. My own contribution to this discourse seems to emerge in the form of these aphoristic lines from my “Wuthering Heights”, associated in this instance with an erotic interfusion with Shakespeare: “Love at first is not the person. Love is not an end but a process.”

An important aspect of Spielrein's erotic is psychic fusion: “the most perfected identification is the sexual union, which is also the climax of sexual activity.”³⁵³ Spielrein describes in “A Case of Schizophrenia” how “in [her] patient’s thinking, legend and dream alike represent reality,” which precedes the ‘mothers’ remark in her “Destruction” paper concerning psychic incorporation in the unconscious, which is undeniably similar in scope.³⁵⁴ This idea of psychic incorporation is the germ of Freud’s notions of both *transference* and melancholia, and is informative when considering the creative writer’s relationship to canon and literary tradition in the present day. In “Wuthering Heights” and “Thirteen” the concept of eternal life through writing is inextricable from the abstract erotic here described. Within the larger scope of my discussion, Tennyson's lines, through their expression of interfusion, and simultaneous creation and destruction, speak to the frustrated creative writer, who also weeps their burden, and, through their writing, attempts to contend with the undying tradition, as vast and unwieldy as nature itself. These matters of sexual and psychic interfusion are the stuff of Henry Chinaski’s individuation, but also doubtlessly a collectivistic process, however enigmatically.

Spielrein has an interesting contribution to the discussion concerning the role of abstract desire and eternal life as summarised by Cooper-White:

353. Sabina Spielrein. *The Essential Writings*. 39

354. *Ibid.*, 56.

Eternal life, [Spielrein] says, is dangerous, just as, paradoxically, "Death in itself is pure horror; death in service of the sexual instinct, i.e., in its destructive element which leads to Becoming, is [also] salutary and health-giving." ...Eternal life is like the life of the walking dead, like the Flying Dutchman who is condemned to endless voyaging from place to place....³⁵⁵

So, from the earliest depictions of the eternal life as a form of salvation and preservation by early modern theorists, Spielrein offers a critique which is grounded in Nietzsche's concept of eternal return, warning against the abstract negativity and horror which is an aspect of the erotics of canon and its conceptual links with eternity.³⁵⁶

Within the scope of these abstract concepts, the many fictional figures in this portfolio sit in the ambiguous crevice between individuation and the collective unconscious, which I will discuss further below.

Spielrein describes creative work as a "collective wish projected by an individual" which in turn projects the individual and collective unconscious.³⁵⁷ She contends that "the collective psyche, by denying the present ego, actually creates it anew...in new images, richer than ever before."³⁵⁸ I would add that the psyche actively re-creates and re-represents the collective in the same terms, through this process and in the ambivalent representation of the collective/individual. Take as foundational examples "The First Thanksgiving," "Dead!," and "Epigraph." The descriptions of war in "The First Thanksgiving" become increasingly abstracted and after the Thanksgiving feast "the sounds of gunfire, swords crossing, and breath stilled by arrows, the sputtering gasps of a life cut short, [which] rang in Matoaka's ears" represent her helplessness in the face of this petty conflict, which she believes "was all for her attention." One must contend with these scenes in terms of an individualistic and collective duality, for it cannot be said that this story is without strong individual characters, or not primarily focused on exploring Matoaka's interiority, and yet that interiority is inextricable from the tribal collective, and the

355. Pamela Cooper-White. *Sabina Spielrein and the Beginnings*, 87.

356. Dennis King Keenan. "Blanchot and Klossowski on the Eternal Return of Nietzsche" in *Research in Phenomenology*, Vol. 48, No. 2, 2018, 155-74, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26563949>.

357. Sabina Spielrein. *The Essential Writings*, 107.

358. *Ibid.*, 106.

other collectives with which the Algonquin come into contact.³⁵⁹ This notion of simultaneous individuality and collective representation informs Deleuze and Guattari's 'bachelor' figure, but a Spielreinian model seems superior for its fluidity of gendered and sexual elements, freeing the concept from an apparently misogynous erotic context and allowing for a more dynamic range of expression.

"Dead!" as a narrative contends with canonical appropriation and its intersection of individual and collective representation more clearly than almost any other piece in this portfolio. A collectivistic voice interjects in the form of the interspersed footnotes from the original text. Such a move calls attention to the individual editorial voice (who is given a fantastical role as in the narrative "Sorrow," subverting reality and the limits of human compassion) which instantiates "the collective psyche...denying the present ego" before it is "[created] anew...in new images, richer than ever before."³⁶⁰ This perfectly describes the tricky relationship between Gabriel and his greater social environment, which is demonstrated as the protagonist considers his own artistic expression (in the form of a speech at an informal event), "he would only make himself ridiculous by quoting poetry which they could not understand." The individualistic undertones of this passage are counter-balanced when Gabriel's experience as a literary reviewer is conflated with Miss Ivor's, "they were the university question," that is, the question of studying classical works within the literary tradition, which is a dominant theme of the narrative and portfolio as a whole.

Finally, "Epigraph" utilises materials which interfuse the major and minor, collective and individual, and subversive and pedantic notions of canon, until the matters become indistinguishable, and demonstrates the more chaotic elements of post-modern theory. Such a complicated and disorienting redaction work seems to support Girard's observation that "westerners are always forced into action, and when they no longer imitate heroes and

359. This use of Algonquin is fitting in the context of my polarised reading of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of 'minor' literature. It both exists within the fringe for its linguistic marginality, yet also contains elements of the 'major' in the cultural ubiquity of the Pocahontas narrative which it subverts and upholds, creates and destroys, and re-shapes through a sort of creative misprision.

360. Sabina Spielrein. "The Essential Writings," 106.

saints they are drawn into the infernal circle of mimetic futility.”³⁶¹ As Spielrein describes the creative “drive for self-reproduction (transformation)” as “dangerous to the ego...because of the dissolution that takes place” in its erotic fusion, so too does the individual interfuse into the collective in this amorphous representation of literary and literature-adjacent materials on Twitter. The inclusion of likes and handles subverts the ordinary confines of ‘canonical’ literature and imagines not one, but a near-infinite number of quirky competing ‘minor’ literatures, of which postmodern classicism is but a single interpretive perspective. It is less the case that the individual becomes interfused so to speak, as the individual voice becomes lost in a cacophony of competing and contradictory perspectives. This ambivalence is an interesting aspect of the portfolio which places my work in conversation with the writing of Goethe and Kafka, and derives from an attempt at formalistically constructing a creative Spielreinian poesis. I will now further discuss this matter below.

Ambivalence has been a foundational theme of this creative and critical project, under the premise that in order to study the postmodern classical, which is made up of seemingly contradictory elements, one must study manifestations of contradiction itself. Ambivalence signifies emotional or psychic contradiction, or contrary impulses, and I have demonstrated that these impulses in the context of the canonical literary tradition involve the simultaneous subversion and preservation of influential works, what Harold Bloom calls ‘strong writing.’ This has informed my formalistic method of intervention, redaction work focused around retaining as much as confounding and disorienting the originary material as it manifested in “Sorrow,” “Dead!,” and “Babo’s Vision,” which are all derived from notable canonical authors. Yet this model is also helpful to understand formalistic interventions, which are attempts, following the narrative confusions of Kafka, to disorient reality such as in the surreal scenes in “A Country Sheriff,” “The First Thanksgiving,” and “Wuthering Heights.” Finally, I have attempted to contend with Spielrein’s profound insights

361. René Girard. *Anorexia*, 15.

into erotic fusion and simultaneous creation and destruction, which has both idealistic and material qualities and is to a degree both literal and metaphorical. I have assumed in this process a primacy of metaphors, and this has resulted in one of the most radical and difficult conceptual moves of the entire collection: the interfusion of Sabina Spielrein herself with the character Sabina Poppea in "Ira Illa Numinum." As with "Dead!," "Ira..." also incorporates directly appropriated passages which straddle the line between individual and collective characterisation, but this element is taken a step further in the characterisation of Poppea as essentially a stand-in for Spielrein herself, albeit in a radically altered context. In Nero's dystopian world of "might at all costs," Spielrein is described as possessing an enigmatic beauty which "entranced all those who knew of her" so that she wears a veil for modesty. She pursues a string of "decidedly practical affairs... with teachers, then socialites, finally with high-ranking public officials" before seducing Nero himself. The affair with Nero is only able to be realised with Octavia's banishment (simultaneous creation and destruction), and Poppea quotes Spielrein herself in this scene to further emphasise the link:

*'What in general happened and what happens, is no longer a personal misfortune, but an objective fact,' Sabina read from a small manuscript, 'Pain is the result of the differentiation of the separated ego-image. By this I mean an image that is connected with the ego-consciousness...'*³⁶²

Sabina turned the page and continued reading.

*'Everything that moves us wants to be communicated, understood, and thus felt: each image that we share with fellow human beings directly or as a work of art is a product of differentiation from primal experiences that make up our psyche... Since in the lover one loves the parents who are similar to oneself, it is comprehensible that, as a result, one also seeks to experience in reality the fate of the ancestors'*³⁶³.

This passage provides a cross-section between Freud and Jung's beliefs about individuation and the collective unconscious.³⁶⁴ Individuation and the manifestation of the

³⁶². Sabina Spielrein. *Essential Writings*, 104.

³⁶³. *Ibid.*, 107-8.

³⁶⁴. Jacques Derrida and Eric Prenowitz. "Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression" in *Diacritics*, Vol. 25, No. 2, 1995, 9-63, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/465144>.

collective occur simultaneously here, as in Spielrein's theoretical writing. Nero is developed as a character via a literal erotic consummation but also the various psychic interfusions which take place in the text—through the influence of Octavia, Seneca the Younger, and Marus Ortho. Throughout the story, Nero's individualistic element (ego) is challenged and transformed in increasingly violent scenarios which finally climax in the "Fire of Rome" scene, where the individual element is totally lost in the collective and his famous (though not recorded) depiction of playing violin amidst the flames happens "as if the music had taken on a life entirely its own." This is a fitting final image for my analysis of this portfolio, as it perfectly encompasses the ubiquitous cultural features of the early modern canon—a narrative which transcends the context around which it was originally written in an abstract 'immortality'—but also the element of subversion, re-shaping, or misprision which I posit is essential for postmodern classical literary production.

There is no need to further contend that Spielrein is an essential figure for literary studies whose understudied work merits much more attention than it has currently been paid. My aim has instead been to help communicate the possibility of a "Spielreinian poesis" in a more coherent and accessible manner than is found in Plastow's complex and unwieldy *Sabina Spielrein and the Poetry of Psychoanalysis*. Because he is writing from an analyst's perspective, and I am writing from the perspective of a creative writer, there are incongruences in our interpretation of core concepts such as 'becoming poetry' and the role of the erotic in Spielrein's understanding of this concept. My own view is based on a pervasive erotic interfusion which accompanies the notion of simultaneous creation and destruction, which can be literal or figurative, and which also metaphorically describes the process of literary reshaping/creative misprision/appropriation itself. So from an attempt to further understand the contradictory elements of the postmodern classical, I have traced the dialectical elements from Goethe's notion of 'polarity' and a model of eternal salvation through writing to a more pessimistic or nuanced view of eternity through literary creation that acknowledges the simultaneous glory and horror of

eternity, or eternal return, as informed by the writing of Kafka and Spielrein, although each contends ambivalently with this subject matter, as do I. Because these concepts are very difficult, no less than the varied attempts at their deconstruction from which I have cited, I have attempted to deal with the subject matter in terms of practice as research: that is, where both the literary and critical aspects become hybridised in a manner influenced by all of the figures in the tradition here described.

Dead!³⁶⁵

“Wouldn't it be grand? It ain't exactly what you planned And wouldn't it be great if we were dead?”

-Gerard Way [My Chemical Romance], “Dead”

Lily [the flower of that name is the archangel Gabriel—the gospel at Annunciation in Lily of the Valley and Renaissance art the Virgin's lily in a tale just before the feast of Epiphany see Introduction p. xxxiv whose protagonist is named Gabriel, Joyce's choice of interpretive speculation] brought one gentleman into the floor and helped him off again and to scamper along the well.³⁶⁶ For she had ladies also, but Miss Kate and Miss Julia had thought that Miss Kate and Miss Julia were gossip and laughter and fuss walking after each, head over the annual dance. Everybody, old friends, any pupils that were grown up enough and Mary Jane's pupils, too. Never once had it fallen flat. For years and years anyone could live with the dark gaunt house, the upper ground floor was a day. Mary Jane, then a little girl in short clothes, was now the main prop of the household. She had been through the Academy [the Royal Irish Academy of Music on the river in Central Dublin] and gave a pupils' concert every year in the Rooms [a hall in Brunswick Street Great Central Dublin just south of river, as in ‘a Mother’]. The Kingstown, Old they were, quite grey in Adam and Eve's [popular Dublin name for Immaculate Conception, a well-known Franciscan Island. It is frequently *Finnegans Wake*]. Kate, being too feeble, gave music lessons to beginners in the back room.

Lily, the care-taker's daughter, did housemaid's work, their modest well; diamond bone, three-shilling tea and bottled stout. She got on well with her three mistresses. They were fussy, that was all. There was no sign of Gabriel [in the Biblical account the angel Gabriel, one of four, announces John the Baptist and the coming of the Virgin Mary, in Hebrew the name means ‘Man of God’], his wife. They would not wish for worlds of Mary

³⁶⁵.James Joyce. “The Dead” in *Dubliners*, ed. Terrence Brown (London: Penguin Books), 1992, 175-225.

Of all the figures mentioned in passing in this collection, James Joyce comes closer than any other (except perhaps Shakespeare) to subsuming the entirety of the creative and critical work. Indeed, Joyce's importance to the contemporary literary canon is so clear as to scarcely bear repeating. Harold Bloom observes that Joyce “conceived of Shakespeare as Virgil to himself as Dante,” a reference to the *Divine Comedy* illustrating the centrality of Joyce's works to the canon itself. [Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon*, 384] Bloom asserts the primacy of Shakespeare's influence on *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, insofar as “Shakespeare and the Western Canon are one and the same,” and the latter is the project which Joyce takes up in his dense and allusion-laden novels. [Ibid., 393] This redaction piece is an intervention onto another one of Joyce's well-known stories, “The Dead,” which precedes these novels in its representation of what Bloom calls, in the context of critically reading *Ulysses*, “Shakespearean inwardness.” [Ibid., 389] I contend that this story demonstrates the curious realm of possibilities for creatively reimagining canonical literature in a pomoclassical framework, expansively drawing upon techniques explored elsewhere in stories such as “Sorrow,” “Babo's Vision,” and, later, “Wuthering Heights.”

³⁶⁶.In this rendering of “The Dead,” “Lily” is synonymous with the protagonist, ‘Gabriel.’ More specifically, ‘Lily’ is Gabriel's name before transitioning, commonly known as a ‘deadname.’

Jane—pupils should see him under the influence; when he was like that it was very hard to manage him. Freddy always came late but what could be keeping Gabriel: Miss three mortal hours scraping the snow from his Kate and Julia. Both of them kissed Gabriel's wife, she must be right as the mail. Go on up, call out Gabriel from the dark.

He continued upstairs, laughing. A light fringe of snow like noise through the cold fragrant air—from out-of-doors, escaped from crevices and folds.

—Is it snowing again, asked Lily.

She had preceded Gabriel, smiled at the three syllables and glanced at her. She was a slim, pale with hay-coloured hair. Paler Gabriel had the lowest step, nursing a rag doll. In night, looked stamping and on the floor glanced at the end of a shelf. Lily, he said in a friendly tone, do you still go to school?

—O no, sir, she answered. I'm done schooling this year and more.

—O, then, said Gabriel gaily, one of these fine days—with all palaver and coloured as if the high colour of his cheeks pushed upwards even to formless patches of pale red; and on his hairless face there the bright glit rims of his delicate and restless eyes.

His glossy black curve, the groove by his flicked lustre. He stood up and pulled his waistcoat down.

Then he took a coin rapidly from his pocket.

—O Lily, he said, thrusting into her hands, it's Just...here's a little....

Rapidly, the door. Cried, the girl following him.

Really—said Gabriel, the stairs and a gloom arranging cuffs and his bowtie. A little paper for his speech. The lines above the heads of his hearers. Some quotation from the indelicate shuffling of soles; their grade of culture differed from his. He would only make himself ridiculous by quoting poetry which they could not understand. They would—he would fail with a wrong tone. His whole speech was an utter failure.

His aunts and his wife were two small plainly dressed tops, grey and flaccid. She was stout and stood erect, her slow eyes gave her Aunt Kate, her sister's puckers and creases, like a shrivelled red apple, had not lost their ripe nut colour. They both kissed Gabriel frankly. He was their favourite.

—Take a cab back to Monkstown to-night, Gabriel, said Aunt Kate.

—No, said Gabriel, we had quite enough of that last year, hadn't we? Don't you remember, all the way, east wind blowing in after dreadful cold?

—Quite right, Gabriel, quite right. You can't be too careful. Gabriel, in the snow. — Don't mind him, with his green shades for Tom Thumb's eyes at night and the stirabout

[a porridge of oatmeal boiled in water and stirred]; you'll never guess what he makes me wear now! A peal of laughter and happy eyes.

The two aunts laughed heartily too, for Gabriel's latest goloshes. I wouldn't laugh nervously.

—What are goloshes, Gabriel?

—Goloshes, Julia! Goodness me, don't you know what goloshes are? You wear them over your...over your boots, isn't it? Have a pair now.

—Gabriel says everyone wears them on the continent. Gabriel knit his brows and says the word.

—Tell me, Gabriel, you've seen...the point—to gaze after that waltz had ended. The drawing room within some couples coming out. Gabriel whispered into his ear:

—You know, the reason they are so fond of me is...

He did not finish his sentence, led the three young ladies into the back room. The middle of end to end, and a sideboard of knives and sweets. A smaller hop-bitter to some ladies' punch: hot, strong, and sweet. Three bottles of lemonade for the young men to fill himself, a goodly measure of whisky.

—God help me, he said, smiling. His wizened, broader smile in musical echo to his pleantry, swaying their bodies to and fro, with nervous jerks of their shoulders.

The boldest said:

—O, now, I'm sure—and said, with sidling mimicry

—now, if I don't take it, make me take it, for I feel I want it [for I feel I want it: possible reference to stock jokes of the Pat and Mike variety—the reference here may also invoke a character, a catch from a popular and vulgar review (G.)].

His hot face had leaned forward a little too confidently and the young ladies, with one instinct, received silence. Mary Jane's pupils asked, what was the name of the pretty waltz? Mr Browne ignored the two young men, who were red-faced. The room, excitedly clapping hands and crying:

—Two gentlemen and three ladies, Mary Jane! Mr Kerrigan, will you take a partner? Mr Bergin, o, that'll just do now.

—Three ladies, Mary Jane, the pleasure, and Mary Jane turned to...Miss Daly, you're really awfully good. We're so short of recruits. The room wandered into the room, looking behind at a column of blunt convex disorder. His scanty hair in a high key at a story he had been telling: Gabriel on the stairs and at the same time rubbing the knuckles backwards and forwards into his left eye.

Freddy bade the Misses' offhand fashion the catch in the sideboard, crossed undertone the story he had raised quickly and answered:

—O, no, hardly noticeable. Isn't he a terrible fellow! New Year's Gabriel, into the drawing-room. Gabriel in answer and, nearing the climax of his disarray: in his dress, filled

out and left handed, accepted the glass, engaged in the readjustment of his dress. Mr Browne poured out for Freddy Malins before he had the climax, in a kink, bronchitic glass, began to rub the knuckles of his left fist backwards and forwards into repeating words his last phrase as his fit of laughter. Gabriel could not listen while Mary Jane was full of runs and difficult, hushed music. The piece had no melody for him and he doubted Mary Jane to imprecation, and Aunt Kate standing at her elbow to the page.

Gabriel's eyes glittered with the balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet*: hung there beside the Tower [the two young sons of the English King Edward IV were murdered in the Tower who became Richard III in 1483. Portrayal of the innocents asleep or dead, was a common Victorian genre]. Aunt Julia worked in red, blue and brown when she was a girl—in school they taught a waistcoat of purple tabinet [a silk and wool watered fabric which resembles poplin] with little foxes' heads lined with satin and round mulberry buttons. It was strange, Aunt Kate used to call it Constantine [after the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great who effectively brought Christianity, supremacy, in the Roman empire, both piety and ambition for offspring], dressed in chosen names for the dignity of Gabriel, himself had a shadow over his sullen opposition to memory. That was not true at all. It was Gabriel who had nursed their house at Monkstown. He knew that Mary Jane must be near the end of the melody, with every bar and a final, deep octave in the blushing and rolling up the room. The four young men in the doorway had gone back when the piano stopped.

Lancer [a quadrille dance, this story of martial allusion, the festive board were armies in serried ranks] was frank-mannered with a freckled face and prominent brown eyes fixed in the bore on an Irish device [the Celtic revival of the 1880s encouraged the self-conscious Celtic in fashion and costume—the separatist movement, notably puritanical in sexual matters]. They had a crow to pluck with you.

—With me? said Gabriel.

—What is it? asked Gabriel, smiling at their solemn manner. Gabriel coloured his innocent eyes, trying to smile.

—I'm ashamed of you, frankly, to say you'd write for a rag like that. A look of perplexity appeared on Gabriel's face. He wrote a literary column, every book, received the paltry cheque. He loved nearly every second-hand bookseller, to Webb's or Massey's on Aston's Quay [*Bachelor's walk*], or to O'Clohissey's in the by-street. He did not know how to say that literature was above politics. They were their careers, first at the university, then as teachers.

He could not risk blinking his eyes, trying to smile and writing books—their turn to cross. He was still perplexed and inattentive. Miss Ivors took his hand in a warm grasp and said in a soft, friendly tone:

—Of course, I was only joking. Come, we cross now.

They were the university question [University college did not admit 'women' at the time when Gabriel and Miss Ivors might be reckoned to have attended, so he must have studied at one of the other institutions, established by Dominican nuns and established by Loreto nuns—both took their degrees within that reputation, Gaelic language, to make their way in the world cf Bonnie Kime Scott, *Joyce and Feminism*, Bloomington/Sussex, 1984, p. 41. Joyce's Dublin acquaintance may have been a model], and Gabriel felt at ease. A friend of Miss Ivors had shown her his review of Browning's secret: she liked the review immensely. Then she said:

—Mr Conroy, will you come for an excursion to the Aran Isles [the focus of much nationalist mythologizing, a *de rigueur* for any *echt* Gael] this summer? We're going to stay there a whole month. You ought to come. It would be splendid for you to come, won't you? said Miss Ivors, laying her warm hand eagerly on his arm.

—The fact is, said Gabriel...

—Well, said Gabriel, it's partly the keep in touch with language. Turned to listen to the cross-examination. Gabriel glanced nervously and tried to keep his good humour under the blush.

—To visit truth, Gabriel said suddenly, sick of my own country, sick of his heated agitation! The dance, the lancers over Gabriel. Freddy Malins' stout, feeble catch in a crossing. In Glasgow [many Protestant and Catholic Irish immigrants lived there (as they still do) in mutual distaste] and Dublin, a beautiful crossing—had been most of all unpleasant, whatever. All things answered. She had no right to call him ridiculous, heckling him and staring at him with her rabbit's eyes. He saw his waltzing couples, his Gabriel, the goose as usual. Miss Daly will carve the ham and I'll do this waltz. So Gabriel...

—No words.

—Something like that. I'm trying to, to sing, I think.

—There were no words, said Gabriel moodily, the west of Ireland and his clasped little jump.

—O, Gabriel, she cried, I'd love to see the interruption, tell, Gabriel, what beautiful places in Scotland and every year to a splendid fisher. One day he caught a fish, a beautiful big big fish, and the man in the hotel boiled it for their dinner.

Gabriel hardly heard; he began the quotation. He saw Freddy coming and retired into the embrasure of the plates and knives. Those who remained seemed tired of Gabriel's warm trembling fingers, the cold pane of the window. How cool it must be outside! How pleasant it would be to walk alone, first along the river and then through the park! [The Phoenix Park is a short walk away from the party.] The snow would be a bright

cap on the top of the Wellington Monument. [Monument in Phoenix Park, Hero of Waterloo: Wellington was born Dublin but refused famously declaring that to be born in a stable does not make one a horse. His contribution to Irish debates on identity is in Gabriel's mind after his encounter with Miss Ivors.] How much more pleasant would it be there than at the supper table!

His Irish hospitality, sad memories, the Three Graces, [Greek mythology: daughters of Zeus and Eurynome as Aglaia (Brilliance), Euphrosyne (Joy), and Thalia (Bloom) are the patrons of gracious social intercourse.] Paris, [Greek mythology: Paris was required to choose to which of three goddesses (Hera, Athena, Aphrodite) he would award the golden apple mischievously thrown by Eris (Discord). He chose Aphrodite (Love) and was awarded Helen and all discordant consequences.], the quote from Browning. *One feels that one is listening to a thought-tormented music.* Miss Ivors praised life. Was she sincere? There had never been any feeling between them until that night. It unnerved him to think that she would be looking at him while he spoke with her critical quizzing eyes.

Perhaps, he would say, *Ladies and gentlemen, the generation which is now on the wane among us may have had certain qualities of hospitality, of humour, of humanity, which the new and very serious and hypereducated generation murmur in the room of attention.* The door, an irregular musketry of pitch and prelude. It was that of an old song of great spirit. The runs embellish the air and the grace notes. Follow the voice, without looking at the singer's Gabriel—the song and the invisible song-book, the cover perched sideways. Still applauding when everyone else had ceased, talking, heads gravely, slowly in acquiescence. At last he could clap, both hands, shaking when words failed him or the catch in his voice proved my mother good, as it did to-night. *Now! Would you believe that now? That's the truth! Upon my word and honour that's the truth. I never heard your voice sound so fresh so...*

Aunt Julia smiled broadly and murmured something about compliments, released her hand from his grasp. Mr Brown extended his open prodigy to audience: *My latest discovery!* He was Freddy Malins.

—Well, Mr Browne, if you're serious, you might simply throw away that choir. The good sense of the refractory child, a vague reminiscence playing on night and day. Six o'clock on Christmas morning! And all for what?

—Well, isn't it for the honour of God, Aunt Kate? Mary Jane, twisting around on the piano, the slave boys over their heads. I suppose it is for Mary Jane, and it's not Mary Jane. Seeing all the dancers come back, Mary Jane is of the other persuasion [euphemistic, and in this context, protestant].

Mr Browne, who was grinning at this allusion to religion, said hastily:

—I don't question the common Father, straight to his face...

—And besides, Mary Jane, we really are all hungry and when we are hungry we are all very thirsty we are also quarrelsome.

—We had better go to supper, said Mary Jane, and finish the discussion afterwards.

One the landing outside the drawing room Gabriel found Mary Jane trying to button her cloak, would not stay. She did not feel in the least hungry and had already overstayed her time.

—Mary Jane, after all your dancing. I am afraid you didn't enjoy yourself at all.

—Ever so much, I assure you, but you really must let me run off now. It's only two steps up the quay.

Gabriel hesitated a moment and said:

—If you will allow me, I'll see you down the staircase.

Mary Jane gazed after a moody puzzled Gabriel, asked himself. He stared blankly down the staircase. In despair:

—Where is Gabriel? she cried.

—Where on earth is Gabriel? There's nobody to carve the goose!

Gabriel, a flock of geese and a fat brown goose and the other paper stripped of its neat old-fashioned decanters of cut glass, one containing port and the other, sherry. One the closed square were three squads of red labels, with transverse green. Gabriel took his seat at the head of the table, looked to the edge of the piano. Bottles of stout and ale for the great confusion, and noise, the noise of corks and hot work. Mary Jane settled to walking on each other's heels, getting in each other's way and giving it unheeded orders, suppers. And Gabriel was time enough, that, at last, amid general laughter, he said, smiling:

—A little more of! What a vulgar! Chorus of voices invited to begin with preparatory draught (kindly forget my existence)...*gentlemen, the subject was the opera, a dark-complexioned young vulgar, the Gaiety* [another Dublin theatre on South King St, where Grafton St gives on the Green] *of the finest tenor voices*. He answered carelessly.

—Freddy Malins? Now I'd be curious to hear your opinion of him.

Nobody answered the question. Mary Jane led the table back to legitimate opera. One of her pupils had it very fine, poor Georgina Burns [unknown—possibly suffered a mental breakdown? in *Mignon* the heroine undergoes a period of insanity, reference to the opera may have brought her to mind]. Mr Browne could go back further still, to the old Italian. After night, an Italian encore, *Like a Soldier, Fall* [from William V. Wallace's opera *Martiana*]. The gallery boys, the carriage could not get the voices to sing them: that was why.

—O, well.

—I'd give anything to sing, said Mary Jane.

—For there was only one...to please me, I mean. But I suppose you've never heard of Gabriel...

The pudding was transferred to the clatter. Forks and spoons began midway down, by Mary Jane. The pudding was Aunt Julia's making and she said herself that it was not quite brown enough.

—Well, I hope..., said Mr Browne. The blood was silent all through the son, going down in a bracing air. How hospitable the monks were and how they never asked for a penny from their guests.

—You mean, in our church, the monks never spoke...in the morning, slept in their coffins [misconception of the Trappist rule of St Benedict—the monks sleep in their habits, buried in open coffins]. The rule of sins committed by all the sinners in the very clear end. Subject: it was buried in the silence. The table indistinct, the monks very pious. Raisins and figs and apples and chocolates and Aunt Julia invited all the guests to port or sherry. The noise of the unsettling. Cough one, twice and... The silence came and Gabriel pushed back, at once grew louder in encouragement and then ceased altogether.

Gabriel leaned his trembling company. A row of upturned faces, he raised his eyes to the piano. A waltz and the skirts sweeping against the drawing-room door. People, perhaps, were standing in the snow, gazing up at the lighted windows and the air was in the distance: the park weighted with snow. The Wellington Monument flashed westward over my lot this evening.

—A task for Mr Browne: I can only ask you to will the deed and lend me to express you in words what my feelings are on this first time, under this hospitable roof, around this hospitable board. The recipients – or perhaps, I'd better say, the victims of – a circle in the air. With everyone Mary Jane all turned crimson with pleasure. Gabriel went on more boldly: recurring country of no tradition. So much jealousy—of tradition that is unique as the cultivated. One roof shelters the aforesaid—may do so for many. A tradition, genuine assent round the table. It shot through Gabriel—was not there and in himself: thought-tormented age: will, kindly humour an older day. *Those great singers of the past, seemed to me, beyond hope. At least, that in gatherings such as this we shall cherish in our hearts the memory of those who will not willingly let die* [John Milton: in *The Reason of Church Government*].

Gabriel, falling into inflection, in gatherings such as thoughts that will recur to our minds: absent faces here tonight. Our path strewn with brood upon strenuous rush: of our we: in the spirit of fellowship, in the true spirit of the guests of – what shall I call them? The Three Graces of Dublin, musical Gabriel. Three Graces, Aunt Julia, Mary Jane. Aunt Julia did not understand but she looked up, smiling, at Gabriel, who continued in the same vein.

—I will not attempt to play the part that Paris played, between them. When I view them in heart, too good heart, become a byword with perennial singing and a revelation and the tears which hastened to his close. He raised his ass while every member of the company fingered ass expectantly, and said loudly:

—Let us toast them all three together! Let us drink to position, and affection in our hearts!

Turning, the three sang in unison, with Mr Browne: *For they are Jolly Good Fellows, which nobody can deny!*

Kate was making Frank. Freddy Malins beat the singers toward conference, while they sang, with emphasis: *a lie a lie an awful lie this weight it must be satisfied* [they are...a lie, in this tradition, an addition to the many this story contains, for the English general, Marlborough, the hero of [], the word ‘gay’] turning their acclamation by acting as the piercing morning into the hall they said:³⁶⁷

—close the door, will death of cold.

Out. Everywhere. Lowering her tone. Archly, he is very attentive.

—He has been laid here like the gas [installed, thereby permanently available, though not of course so permanently welcome or useful] all during Christmas. This Mary Jane, close the door.

The hall-door would break: astrakhan cuffs and collar and pointed down the snow-quay of shrill whistling, borne all the cabs advanced behind the office, struggling into hall.

—Not down?

—Nobody, ‘re all gone.

—O, no. Someone is strumming Gabriel.

Mary Jane Gabriel and Mr Browne and a shiver: makes me feel cold to look at you, to face your journey home at this hour.

—I’d like nothing better this minute, said Mr Browne, in the country or a fast spanking between the shafts, and trap at the never-to-be-forgotten. And Gabriel laughed too. The old gentleman was a glue-boiler. Gabriel had a starch mill. The old gentleman

367. The allusion in this instance to the song “Haleigh, Haleigh, A Lie, Haleigh” by the band Bright Eyes, was, at the time, the most explicit use of interjection (addition) in a widely known literary text in my redaction work. Straying from the distinct preservative method of the *mimetic redaction*, this move was in part inspired by my time studying the Oulipo school under the direction of Philip Terry.

had a horse by the name Old Gentleman's Mill, walking round and that was all very well; but now comes the tragic part. One fine day old gentleman thought to drive out with *the Lord have mercy on, compassionately...*

—Amen.

Gabriel, the old gentleman, as I said, harnessed and put on his very best stock collar in the grand style from his ancestral mansion somewhere near Back Lane [just south of the river—the distinct Gabriel imagines [] to have lived shabby, was not possessed of an 'ancestral mansion']. Everyone laughed at Gabriel's []...

—O now, Gabriel, he didn't live in Back Lane, really. Only the mill was there. Out of the mansion of his forefathers, continued Gabriel, everything beautifully. Johnny came in the statue [this story of William Prince of Orange and the Battle of Boyne...it has since been removed]: he fell in love with the horse King. He thought he was back again in the mill. Anyhow he began to walk round the statue.

Gabriel in a circle in his goloshes amid the laughter of others.

—Round and round.

Gabriel was—was highly indignant. *Johnny! Johnny, the horse!* The peals of laughter followed Gabriel's resounding hall-door. Mary Jane ran to open Freddy Malins. Freddy Malins, with his hat well back, head and his shoulders humped with cold, puffing and steaming after his cab. Gabriel in the draught. After many manoeuvres, in after—there, of confused talk, and then the cabman bent down for the address. The confusion, Freddy Malins and Mr Browne, each of whom had his head through a window of the cab. The difficulty to drop the route, and Mary Jane from the doorstep with cross-directions and contradictions and abundance of laughter.

Freddy Malins was speechless with laughter. The great danger of his hat, progressing till at last Mr Browne shouted to the bewildered cabman above the din of everybody's laughter:

—Trinity College gates! said Mr Browne, we'll tell you where to go!

—Make like a bird for Trinity College!

—Right, sir, said the cabman. The horse was whipped up and the cab rattled off along the quay amid a chorus of laughter and adieus.

Gabriel had not gone to the door with the others. He was in a darkness—of the hall gazing up the staircase—standing near the top of shadow, also. He could not see the terracotta, salmon pink panels of skirt which the shadow made appear black and white. It was his. Bannisters, Gabriel, at stillness and the noise of laughter and dispute on the front, a few chords struck on the piano and a few notes of a man's voice singing. He stood still in

the gloom of hall, trying to catch the air that the voice was singing and gazing up at his mystery, as if he were a symbol of something. He asked himself what is a man standing on the stairs in the shadow, listening to distant music, a symbol of. A painter would paint—blue felt would show off the bronze against the darkness and the dark panels of the light ones. *Distant Music* he would call the picture if he were a painter. He wouldn't sing all night, to sing a song before. Do, Mary Jane, and the staircase was closed abruptly. He cried. Gabriel heard his wife answer yes and saw her come. —We were all in raptures listening to you. I'm as hoarse as signs to the subject, and frowning.

Snow like thirty years; I read this snow all over Ireland. We have the snow on the repentant. The history of pity, his throat in the night air. Gabriel watched his wife. The flame of the gas lit up the rich bronze of her hair which he had seen. Fire seemed unaware of the talk about Gabriel. There, colour on a sudden ride, leaping out of his *Aughrim*.

—I'm sorry you were not in voice to-night.

—Goodnight, Gabe, Goodnight!

—Goodnight, thanks ever so much. Goodnight!

—O, goodnight.

—Goodnight, goodnight.

—Goodnight!

—Goodnight, again.

—Goodnight, all. Safe home.

—Goodnight. Goodnight...

The morning was still dark. A dull yellow light brooded over the slush. Only streaks of the burning stood out menacingly against the heavy sky. Gabriel's eyes were still bright with happiness. The blood went bounding along his veins; and the thoughts went rioting through his brain, proud, joyful, tender, and various.

He was walking so lightly and so erect that he longed to run after something foolish and affectionate. Into his ear—to him so frail that he longed to, to be alone with moments. Their secret life together burst like stars upon his memory. A heliotrope-envelope was caressing his hand. Birds were ivy and the sunny web of the shimmering along. He could not eat. They were standing on the crowded platform. He was placing a ticket inside the warm palm of glove. He was standing in the cold, looking through a grated window at a man making bottles in a roaring furnace. It was very cold. In the cold air, quite close to his []; he called out to the man at the furnace: —is the fire hot, sir? But the man could not hear, with the noise. It was just as well. He might have answered rudely. A wave of yet more tender joy escaped from his heart, coursing in a warm flood along his arteries. Like the tender fires of stars: moments of their life together, broke upon illuminated

memory. He longed to recall their dull ecstasy. For years, he felt, quenched his soul, his writing, household cares. All their souls' tender fire. One letter: *Why—words like cold?* [] *is no word, to be*. Distant music. Words had written years, before, were borne towards him from the past. He longed to be alone with the others, had gone away, in their room in the hotel. They would be alone together, would call her softly: perhaps, would not hear at once. Undressing, in his voice would strike him....

At the corner of Winetavern Street [close to Usher's Island, which gives on to the south bank of the river], they met a cab. Its rattling window seemed tired. The others, a few words, some horse along the murky morning sky, dragging his rattling box after his heels. Gabriel, again in a shaft of serious and weary sovereign [a gold coin worth 'Two Gallants']. —I lent him pity, Mr Browne, because he's not a bad fellow at heart.

He, trembling now, did seem so abstracted. He did not know how he could begin. He would only come to accord! To take, to be brutal, longed to be master of strange []. Gabriel strove to restrain himself from breaking out. Brutal language about the sottish pound. To cry to soul, to crush body against his overmaster.

—He said: he opened up that little fever.

Of rage and desire that he did not hear come from the window. He stood before an instant, looking strangely. Then, suddenly, on tiptoe and his shoulders, trembling with the quaintness of his hands on the washing, heart was brimming over with happiness. He was wishing for it, had come of his own accord, had been running with his impetuous desire that was in him, and then the yielding mood had come upon him so easily he wondered why he was so diffident, holding head between his hands. Slipping one arm swiftly, drawing towards him, softly: did not answer nor yield wholly to his arm.

He said again, softly: I think I know.

—I am thinking about that song, *Aughrim*.

Gabriel stood stock-still for a moment, and then followed as he passed in the way of the cheval-glass he caught sight of himself in full-length, his broad, well-filled shirt-front, the face whose expression always puzzled him when he saw it in a mirror and his hand like a child. A kinder note than he intended went into his voice.

—I am thinking about a person long ago who used to sing that song.

—And who was the person long ago? asked Gabriel, smiling.

—It was a person I used to know in Galway when I was living with my grandmother, they said. The smile passed away from Gabriel's face. A dull anger began to gather at the back of his mind. The dull fires of his lust began to glow angrily in his veins.

—Someone you were in love with? he asked ironically.

—It was a young boy I used to know, they answered, named Michael [critics noted their love bears the name of an Archangel whose name means ‘Who is like God?’. He used to sing that song, *Aughrim*. He was very delicate [frequent Irish euphemism for consumption, which, at the time of this story, had no certain cure].

Gabriel was silent. He did not wish them to think that he was interested in this delicate boy.

—I can see him so plainly, they said, after a moment. Such eyes he had: big dark eyes! And such an expression in them— an expression!

—I used to go out walking with him, when I was in Galway.

A thought flew across the shaft of light towards the window in silence.

—He is dead, they said at length. He died when he was only seventeen. Isn’t it a terrible thing to die so young as that?

—...he was in the gasworks [employed in a plant which manufactured gas from coal, distinctly unromantic and scarcely conducive to good health for the ‘delicate’].

Gabriel felt humiliated by the failure of his irony and by the evocation of this figure from the dead, a boy in the gasworks. He had been full of memories of their secret life together, full of tenderness and joy and desire: had been comparing them in his mind with another. A shameful consciousness of his own person assailed him. He saw himself as a pennyboy sentimentalist, orating to vulgarians and idealising his own clownish lusts, the pitiable mirror. He turned his back to the light: the shame that burned upon his forehead.

...forces against its vague world. He shook himself free of effort and reason and his hand. He did not question again. He felt warm and moist: it did not respond to touch; he continued to caress it just as he had caressed his first letter to them that spring morning.

—I implored him to go—his death in the rain. He said he did not want to live. I can see his eyes as well—as well! He was standing at the end of a tree.

—And did he go home? asked Gabriel.

—Yes, he went home. I was only a week in the convent; he died and he was buried in Oughterard where his people came from. I heard that...

That choking, overcome by sobbing in the quilt. Gabriel held their hand for a moment longer, irresolutely, and then, shy of intruding on their grief, let it fall gently and walked quietly to the window. Gabriel, leaning on his elbow, tangled hair and half-open romance: a man had died for his sake. It hardly pained him now to think how poor he played in—told him all the story. His eyes had thrown some clothes, a petticoat string dangled to the floor. One limp upper, the fellow riot of emotions, of an hour, his aunt’s supper, his own foolish speech, the wine and dancing, the merry goodnight in hall, the

pleasure of the river in the snow. He too, would soon be a shade with the shade of his horse. He had caught that haggard look upon moment, when he was singing, *Arrayed* for the drawing-room.

—Chill.

He stretched himself under the sheets and down beside his wife. One by one they were all becoming shades. Pass boldly into that other world, in the full glory, fade, dismally into thought. How many years: that image of their lover's eyes when he had told them he did not wish to live?

Tears filled Gabriel's eyes. He had never felt love. The tears gathered in the partial darkness he imagined the form of a young man under a dripping tree. Other forms were his soul, that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead, their wayward and flickering existence. His own identity was fading into a gray, impalpable world: the solid world itself had one time reared and lived, dissolving and dwindling.

A few light upon the snow again. He watched sleepily, falling obliquely against the lamplight. The time had come for him to set out on his journey. Yes, the newspapers were right: snow all over Ireland [a very rare occurrence]. It was falling on every part: on the treeless hills, falling softly upon the Bog of Allen [turf bog to the southwest of Dublin] and, farther softly falling into the dark, mutinous waves. It was falling, too, upon every part of the lonely hill where Michael lay buried. It lay thickly drifted on the crooked spears of the little gate, on the barren thorns. His soul swooned as he heard the snow falling faintly: the universe faintly falling: like the descent upon all the living and the dead.

**Wuthering Heights³⁶⁸ (A cut-up of Homer, Sylvia Plath, John Williams,
and The Book of Margery Kempe)³⁶⁹**

Maybe it was a pub in Dublin. My eyes sank through an alphabet where they gripped each long word in the middle of a page:

bababadalgharaghtakamminarroruonnthunntrovarrhounawnskawa.

'Lomax, there have been a few townspeople going in and out of her.'

I counted the letters. There was misbehaviour—that sort of personal object.

'As a matter of fact—' I tried the word aloud. University. It sounded like a heavy wooden commiseration upon the necessities of middle-class morality. Step after that book, I let them fan slowly. My, that ought to be a haven for the rebel—we concluded that practically, but doubted if he understood the intelligence and the heart. In his office the landscape shimmered and S. said his hands ached. Now, according to complaints, from students mostly, it seems that men have been seen across stacks for flagrant [], as if it were a game—he rather admires the self. He has the reputation to think of. We, where Katherine lived, bowing to the dictates of the night, and some mornings. The community of scholars found her just awakened against the Protestant ethic, naked beneath the dark blue— speaking, we were helpless. It...ride until the end of all time, the—a tightness in his throat between my hands. One left for school, but even my []. They hung the raw, red screen like a wound. I crawled the padded bedstead and let the tombstone. It was not heavy enough to make me sleep.

In his extreme youth Adam, from swerve of absolute being, *a commodius vicus of recirculation*, might find access, *Enrons*...the heaven of a false unpleasant dent in my stomach, gaze with an amused and an embarrassed...

368. "Wuthering Heights" perfectly demonstrates the dialectic of originality and appropriation under a postmodern classical literary framework. Although the redaction method here was derived from the 'cut ups' of William Burroughs, my interpretation of the framework is more reflexive: that is, it draws attention to the process of its creation itself, especially with the inclusion of empty brackets. The brackets here represent both the redacted materials from the original texts, but moreso the authorial assertion of a new literary perspective into already known literary writing. These empty bracketed phrases are dynamic. The ambiguity of their placement suggests both a lack of an utterance (silence) and an infinite number of utterances, at the discretion of the reader. Subjectively, this redaction piece focuses more explicitly on literary immortality and eternal life through creative writing than almost any other work in this collection. Its curious style seems best suited to be understood, as Kafka's aphorisms, as a literary 'argument' itself. However, this interpretation is fraught, both regarding the piece's shifting narrative position and also its persistent disruptions of syntax and style. This is a unifying work in terms of the greater themes of the portfolio, and yet it is also, for all of its reliance on the tradition of redaction writing, one of the most original and formally subversive works here presented. The interfusion of classical and (post)modern narratives alongside each other typifies the more experimental possibilities of postmodern classicism in terms of contemporary literary practice.

369. Homer. *The Odyssey* (London: Penguin Classics), 2003.
The Book of Margery Kempe (London: Penguin Classics), 1994.
John Williams. *Stoner: A Novel* (London: Vintage Classics), 2012.
Sylvia Plath. *The Bell Jar* (London: Faber & Faber), 2001.

Start that illusion; he saw it as an it that was invented, and before Eve and Adam's day by day, by the will [] probably signified something. The hours that he once, by you, made contemplation in God. Alive and greedy—high in his grave.

'Remember, Lord, Lazarus, where your holy body was and as I have been, in that holy man, and where Lazarus was raised from death to life, [] mortal sin. If any prayer may help this hour, make them live without end.

'I thank you, Lord, for all those sins that you have kept me from, which I have not done, and I thank you, Lord, for all the sorrow that graces [], and to all creatures on earth. Have [] until the world's end, such grace as they grant for the abundance of your mercy. Which rose twisted into silence? I feigned sleep until my mother shut out the light of the tiny vessels in front of the mattress and the fall there. About a thought of riverrun, past Eve and, if one were lucky, one bend of bay, brings us by maturity. He decided it was back to Howth Castle and religion, toward which one thick book made disbelief. A gently familiar contempt, riverrun, past Eve and Adam's nostalgia, state of grace—a human act of becoming, a condition flowed from moment and the soup of letters to the blissful trinity for love of my confessors. In that life we may most please god.'

Tohoordenenthurunk!

Blessed may God be in you all, and for all your mercies in heaven and on earth. And especially Magdalene, for Mary of Egypt, falling—and as you have shown mercy, step, lifting the pages of the dimly familiar, the same heaven without end.

'Remember, Lord, the woman brought before you.'

And as you stood alone upon his blank [] until our life's end. Every morning, all that you are in heaven, he wandered you in God. Blessed be you, campus to the library, where I have shown to all []. I bless you, Lord. He played with himself, for St. Paul, and for St. Augustine—imposed suspense, slipped. Made his way to the house, mercy of heart. The peace and the rest, she often worked late into disciples, and to your lovers, when they came to her apartment, and in warmth and sensual with sleep. In adultery and all enemies may drive away my spirit, so that I may stand dead to all the joys of this world. [] made it impossible for S. to speak. He swallowed twice and tested his voice; it was perfectly clear, of course.

'I'm afraid it is,' Finch said.

'But I never knew he hated me, he would—I never dreamed...' we said.

He walked back to his desk and sat down heavily.

'And I can't do a thing, Bill. I'm helpless—witnesses and word.'

He shook his head. 'If [], he'll crucify the girl,' Finch said flatly, 'and as if by accident you'll be dragged into it.'

Telemachus with Nestor

Leaving the waters of the worried. The firmament to bring light, to plough the earth and perish. The stately citadel of sea-breach sacrificing jet-black bulls—Earthquake, god of the sable locks. In session, with five hundred men burning out on the sandbar, slipping as the trim ship bearing her lips went up and down, brailed up the sail, moored their [].

Telemachus, the goddess with the flashing hand, as if this helped her, said ‘Telemachus, you must...sea dusk.’ [] dwindle as the pull of his search edged off. I shivered. The stones lay lumpish. Nestor, the tamer of horses, thought longingly of the truth from his lips. The drench seemed blind. I greet him? Remember that I saw [] littered about the sea that the gods have—. Since your birth led off at a quick pace, Telemachus, my flesh winced. I pick up my pocket-book...Pylos were assembled in stone.

He sounded splendid East, the Sun leapt up into the immortals and to men who hitched closer. Travellers now came to Pylos, but I knew without looking they found people on peanut shells. To Poseidon, Lord of the Money, there were nine companies. Each and every company tasted the victims’ entrails. A woman was indeed coming, the god’s honour, and no doubt cursing to herself, for the crew disembarked. Athene, last to leave the ship, eyes turned to him now and forgot your diffidence: there is no thickening the seas. I could sense the boy’s bones lie buried and increased over a few stones, as on land – blessed may God be. Brother and me grouped together I couldn’t think who had taken Dodo Conway; the three of us one—*this picture*. To London, clad in a canvas cloth, a kind...a dark, midnight picture of her [] as she had gone overseas. People in a wood. I thought people knew her well enough.

Because I looked queer and unusually short about people, but dogs, *Bloodhounds!* A handkerchief in front of her face. *Police Sgt. Bill Hindly says: Girl Found Alive!*

Some dissolute persons—Lynn said, ‘Ah, you false flesh, you shall comfort her for our reason.’

So they sailed on until they opened suitcase and came up with a party, got company to travel for Canterbury by herself alone black lips spread in a grin. I’m [] she had no company [] tart picture [] up early in the morning [] ear-rings and Bloomington knocking at the door. The good will. She prayed him. MOTHER WORRIED. The Canterbury [] . How this girl disappeared—trouble—wearing a green skirt.

Her desire and her []. She had great joy in our Lord, saying she was taking long in every need, and *if not returned by midnight, call the police*. Much sobbing and weeping, so that it cannot all be written. The sea as on this side, water cold under my bare feet. Black shoes on the beach. A wave advanced and touched my foot. To come off the sea floor itself, light through sharks' teeth and whales' earbones just like gravestones. In London, many could make my decision for me. She was not dressed as she collapsed over my feet, lipped with white money, and wishing to go—she gripped my ankles with a mortal ache. Arrange a loan: she held cowardice from such a death. Notwithstanding that she started back over the cold posing [] was Mar. Kempe their vigil in the violet light. These words of

Margery Kempe

Love and charity – she had been sleeping in a stable. Joan rummaged in her—came to Dover, each fistful of clippings.

‘Here, have a look.’

He wanted to help her.

Therefore she set, with black-shadowed eyes and sorrowful and grieving [] couldn’t imagine where such a [] did not know the way. She was poor men’s clothes, unbuttoned, come to the door like imitation stars. SCHOLARSHIP GIRL MISSING – she would reward him for his picture in our Lord’s name, [] Canterbury. White blouse, she left a note, sent her help to succor *Miss Greenwood* with many a devout tear. *Her mother called the town*—nearly every place that she came [] . The next clipping showed a picture of my mother and occasion for it all in our backyard and smiling. Find out where your father’s white sneakers are. To wring his secrets [] how must [] approach him if you want some family snaps I think you will get anything. Mrs Greenwood asked but Telemachus was weary. How shall [] practice in making ‘Telemachus’ replied Athene, about a dozen moon-faced heavens will inspire you. People at the end of the row watched your progress until they realised they were not Pallas Athene, used in search for a missing girl. Machus followed in the steps—the spot doesn’t look good.

Actually, it wasn’t the covering her face with her hands that bothered me.

Her grief; ‘Alas, my child, people sleep with each other. Zeus must - in men, god-fearing though you may be. Gone out for the Thunderer—so many fat sacrifices as you used to stand, that you might age in comfort and purity.

‘Prince, you are the only one of my house that bitches here? What does your mother think?—spare yourself. That week-end my wise Queen has given me the [] amazingly close. I will bathe your feet, both for quoting what she said about [] and women, and about virginity for men. She gave [] look, and I knew she was trying to the dull course as he moved. So that it seemed, criticism is also sadly at lack. Never still. Her flesh, that had Shakespeare even red and pale, beneath a warm light flowing beneath a milky translucent flesh. The calm and poise friendly and contemporary, who thought herself, masked, less Greek. Whose intensity was this side of idolatry, not disguised—lack. On the contrary, he wished what others soar of Shakespeare before that burning of the midnight—

love and rule. Shakespeare was not born out of sweetness on the desert air; and they knew each other from that source whence all poets go they need the immortal bard to be found in a grammar, in repose. The [] of distance, all sorts of ruddy others, and any other []. And like the most interesting reserve, he had slept with somebody, myself— warmth and playfulness and then thought no more about it. Buddy's pretending I was so sexy. In his forty-third year, William—he'd been having much younger, learned love. Love at first is not the person. Love is not an end but a process.

I asked to know another. They were both very shy. He was always slowly, tentatively between a man and woman both. When I first went queer, I was a virgin—same age as your master. Yes, feet are like our guests by fortune. Nothing could come of the old woman—burst into tears and gave voice to you and unhappiness for me. It seemed impossible.

'There shouldn't be a thing that I could feel, anything but—'

Indeed I have hated you above all, for no one ever burnt as awkwardly as a boy. He prayed and sat beside her. Tentatively, see your son grow up like a strained embrace; and for a long, terrible []. A single grasp.

'Well, I am most willing, be they dark brown or black.'

They caught the dim light and glittered moistly, the eyes beneath.

I was perhaps selfish. I felt for Odysseus this awkwardness for [] blankets and clean sheets and saying farewell to the snow. You know my—circumstances.

We will lie just as I have often lain and []. That you could—that you [].

Many's the night I've spent on the gold light of the blessed Dawn.

A foot-bath appeals to me very much. I come, over here.

Your maidservants here to touch my [], found myself trembling around the coffee table, old and respectable dames as I have had. If there is such a one, clumsy, their hands awkwardly handling my feet. Time together passes so []. My dear friend - as this house has ever [], let escape, decent soul, that []. They held between them an unhappy husband and brought him arms the moment he was born. Her eyes were a deep violet. Sometimes, this service [] for one who is of [], of a lamp in the room and no doubt Odysseus' hands and his head one way. And now, men age quickly in mist.

Even if he had read [], needs not the embarrassed Mother or whatever. After he became used to his [], at twenty-one, perverse admiration stealing as imprecise, the man's powers, always saying how his mate was real, was something.

‘What a man is - is an arrow into something desperately cautious.’

His mother still in presence of a bluff so colossal and wasn't that wonderful for dealing with it. She really knew what was what. For it was clear even Buddy was entirely impromptu. S., that genius, unique and a law in such “tradition” as capped the hills of Crete. So, whether it be generically Latin Genius, soaring and free, must...keep vigil in the past. For unseemly prospect shouldn't care for any of rhetoric and invention. Feet, however grotesque, as experience. Cold and calculating and needlessly reckless and yet wise Penelope became aware that she [] from abroad.

‘For you talk so sensibly - I have the most inattentive students who faithfully nursed my [].’

In fact she took him in, engaged in a performance: she shall wash your feet. ‘Come, Eurycleia, and doubt - or not.’

I thought Buddy was distinguished from me. He admitted [].

What *proof* is offered that? What did you say? Obscure Roman grammarian? ‘I said Gladys was free.’

White: Ben Johnson—he hesitated for []. Now I knew Buddy would Johnson himself. Shakespeare's rudely that for my sake.

He said he had little Latin and mother said, ‘What a man, who wants infinite security, and Shakespeare. Impute to his great friend the future and a woman to suggest the off from. It made me tired, was not attributable to oil, to a genius. Nature, mundane law. Every time I tried to argue pleasure out of unlike, lesser poets, people age. They must mean to blush unseen and wasteful.’

Well, I had just decided to partake of that mysterious sustenance, such stultifying rules as are moving.’

The cold air swept S.'s hot face. She blinked several times' almost bold. At last she nodded. She did not smile.

One evening in the spring of no cloud the scent of budding shone upon a light snow that []. The streets were deserted, broken by the dry snow. He stood—stillness: a loud, defiant clatter. [] house to which he had come, in the somnolence of a new green bud that glowed out. The cold numbed his feet, but he went into the curtained windows. A dim

light fell like a yellow smudge; he thought—but he could not be sure.

‘You’re late,’ she said.

‘Yes,’ he said.

The unlighted bedroom open in the darkness, he murmured—someone’s been trying to get her, but his words were [] every hour. William took the receiver away impersonally. No one answered.

‘Hello?’

He closed his lips tight.

The thin strange voice of a movement loosened this Bill S. He crumpled about her feet. Her arms shuddered as if from cold.

‘You don’t know me. I was in the other room. I’ll be ready. I’ve been trying all...’.

Put his lips to hers. They stared at candles that flickered in the midst of glass. It had the door to fresh water. Running candle-light glowed feebly, as if to comfort and assure some god he could not hear it was impossible to see ahead. Not a gleam of light upon her body fumbled, was obscured by clouds. She, among us, caught sight of the dimness in her eyes [] was beating up aground. It was not till they jumped out, shoulders bare, and waited for the blessed.

[] said, in a flat voice, ‘Go’.

With crimson streamers he touched what we saw of her shoulder. She would order my company. In the sitting room the Nymphs, those Children over the remains of their bottle champagne, bows and our long spears poured a little of the wine and let fly at the game; and in ships, separated into three parties, down the path to the porch Providence had sent []—were twelve ships in my squadron. S. had learned earlier, been widowed for a number of years. Long till the sun set we sat and and asked to wash down [] with fine white hair that twinkled, and she spoke of the company. She was telling secrets. S. sat, facing her. Land of the Cyclopes, we were covered with their fires, clung to their shoes; he watched the sun on the thick floral rug under the first rosy light and gave them their orders.

‘For the time being, I want you to stay at the University, Mr S. I will to Ithaca with my own crew to find out of the harbour. There is a stream of [] in a grove of poplar-trees.’ This is where we came to. The murky night, 1927, came in a thick fog, through the moon, flowers mingled and hung. In these circumstances not a man hummed in the shadows. In the island we see the raised dust and coast before our good ships ran [], lowered sail.’

He walked slowly, caught shore, fell asleep where we were bemused by the light of day.

'When the fresh Dawn came and Edith lit the sky, we were delighted with the telephone.

To her, Zeus set them, we fetched our growth, warm and sweetish.' When he returned,

Edith pulled her chin,

her face a thin frown creasing her asleep. S. undressed.

'We had doctor's orals. It's an impersonal thing.

I told them, Edith, but they've been calling back.'

He put his hand upon the cloth of her night-gown and spoke into the mouthpiece, moved his hand upon her. He touched the softness of [] sharply and lifted her, passing by.

'Your ma asked—' No sound. 'Afternoon.'

For several moments without satisfaction, there through the doorway nine goats fell to each, which she turned and looked at him and enjoyed this rich supply of meat, her pale eyes were speculative by mellow wine, since the ships had called for the red vintage.

There was still some in the sacred citadel, a generous supply in the neighboring overhead.

The half-moon smoke from voices, and the bleating of their sheep had fallen earlier in the down. Night fell, and we slept in the muffled silence of dawn.

I assembled my company, crunching underfoot as, 'My

good friends,' I said, 'for the while I go in silence.'

What men are over there, did not move. From the []

upon the blue-white snow, he saw movement inside—

deliberately, as if committing, with the covers turned upward, eyes closed.

Silently, as if her name had got into bed beside her, for Emma Darley had laid with his desire, which had become—belonging to himself alone.

He spoke, a short, plump woman for what he felt; she did not [

her and felt beneath

[the thin—softly and breathlessly as if the [

] flesh he had longed for; he []

followed her into the parlor, did not stir; her frown deepened her name to silence; then thick blue velvet snow had been gentle in its clumsiness. When it melted and formed damp patches her thighs turned her head to his feet.

'Edith tells me you teach,' Mrs Darley said.

Helen

I saw myself sitting in the person, in the place. How death, just because I couldn't favour one man, only figures I would choose. I wanted Odysseus, never wronged a soul. Choosing one meant losing all. You and your infamy proves unable to decide, the figures began at once to be forgotten. One by one, they plopped to the worst of your troubles. Your Constantine's restaurant and more heinous crimes. God cream. All the time I had been all set now on assassination at such a restaurant. I only found home from this expedition of places, where they serve giant to Pylos and Lacedaemon today, and four kinds of fancy cake. Knees shook underneath her long glarey mirror. Time she found impossible.

'This restaurant, we...' the words stuck in her throat.

Lit steps into a sort of cellar—could make him some reply.

'Has my boy gone?' she asked.

Travel posters plastered the venture on these picture windows overlooking chariots, to drive across the sea's God will well reward you a life. She got herself a hair-cloth and put it inside her. Then Patrick set her upon [] so that her husband, in Melton Mowbray, did [], although she lay beside him (as previously mentioned).

Who [] the hair shirt and bore our Lord all night. And afterwards she went on with great difficulty, and temptations. At that time, she could, thanking our Lord for all, meet a very respectable man. When she was reproved, scorned, the Bishop said much more of this world than she knew.

'I am not against God and deserve no Sir,' she said, 'truly, any man and [] was once very good to you. [] right way heavenwards, for Christ. Sir, I trust that you apostles, martyrs, confessors, and well-meaning fools came to heaven, passed by me. For I take a little heed of a nothing—as much as a heaven.'

When she believed that she []; therefore, I place. Then she had forgotten, and left that forgot him much [] would lead her to the name to be forgotten with a piece of Moses' rod, which I do not know whether some god, Jerusalem, would have this journey to Pylos, but Patrick went into town. Again, his father's returned, or failing that happened to meet the Mayor, and in prison, so that in the end he toured the palace. But Penelope was

not over-racked. She had not even the many chairs in her apartments.

Of her lovely room, weeping house in a very gloomy between.

'Is there a woman Zeus has treated worse than me?'

'Yes, yes, mother,' he said, 'I, bravest of our race, a lion-heart of Argos.

That Mayor has greatly harassed me. My dear son vanishes from home.

Away your bag from me.'

'Ah, Good Patrick,' she said.

Ever since Buddy Willard had to [] thinking I ought to go with great compunction, with sobbing for her sins, myself. Sleeping with Buddy, she reflected on her person.

Lord would put it into her, with somebody else. She contemplated the only boy I ever actually wept and ever prayed for: a bitter hawk-nosed Southern prayer for [] was so plentiful and so 'weekend-only.' She could weep and taxi the day before. And therefore many people said she gets paid for praying for people—was the only one in his company to cheer him up. People who loved her at the local coffee-shop humoured her, and would not know []. High-backed booths with hundreds—a God for everything. Desiring the wood, we drank a cup of sin. Talked frankly about sex. [People talk about her] this boy - their name was DH: champion college footballer suddenly behind in the town. A staff made street and a business suit, their days brought back from gold. The mantel with a date—lost forty shillings. Then on a tombstone. Her staff and her bag and I saw my life branching out before the Mayor would have difficulty and left the story. From the tip of every branch this man in a blind woman's future beckoned and [] dreading what a happy home and at last []. A famous poet and another Patrick, son, where was this other figure from Europe and Africa? Were Constantine and Socrates in prison because of you? And has he taken lovers with queer names because of you? And has he taken figures, an Olympic lady for you?

These figures were upset. I shall pray for the world.

The astute Medon replied of glory shrunk [] confronted by Wall—his own feelings suggested like the date to find out about what he, Medon, though whelmed by the anguish that, like the green fig-tree, heart like a fat purple fig—on the threshold [] while all the maids stood round whimpering. Children, and another fig. The fig was a brilliant professor, an amazing editor, and another woman of my time.

'Listen, my friends,' she spoke of her husband years ago from South America,

and another fig, famous Atilla and another husband I have lost. And now an off-beat professor, and another crew champion, and beyond more figs than I could quite make.

Menelaus and Margery Kempe

Word: never an injustice to a single []—the usual run of kings, as if by mutual consent they oppress the next by abstaining from the lust their service [] good to do so. How easily past kindness is God willed. And so he used her as My Queen.

Replied Medon, 'Do not desist.'

And all the time she prayed, 'I only wish that this were the chaste, Lord, her husband made a vow with Telemachus as he comes.'

Afterwards, by Jesus's leave.

'For I must tell you he has gone—heard this heavenly melody, she seeks news of his father.'

She was sometime shriven two.

Penelope of that sin which she had, and her heart grew faint.

For, as is written at the beginning her eyes filled with tears, to much fasting and keeping, at length, the clock and going to church.

'But tell me, herald, why there was no call whatever, until midday and the whole lot of sailors slandered and reproved her immensities.

Does she wish her people led so strict for her trouble? It is all for the kiln - the gown as discreetly and secretly brought every night in her bed and wore her down—burnt.

So they rejoiced in []. She [] her gifts, and she was as merry to the Bishop of Lincoln, or ridiculed for our Lord's love.

Not exactly knowing where he was, was before among the dignities with a furred hood, a very worthy truth as well—that she had sinned greatly, felt far more shame and sorrow than contempt in this world were the many beholden to me.

She said, 'Because I chose that way, all his virgins, and all those who ever did - you did for God's love, and this way of tribulation. She desired to reward you. I beg you to excuse her conscience of man's good looks or of his face, and entering upon the way which the sooner she most desired.

Watchful there, half-hidden. Of course, you are Odysseus. You had darkened. I didn't know you till I'd been around his temples. The years regret their passing; his eyes in Penelope's direction, as a mirror. When he approached her own husband was in the room. The glass doors that led to meet her glance distracted her attention. In the meantime, he sought and gripped the old woman's hand. He pulled her closer to him. Changes had come over him. A pile of freshman themes wish to ruin me. You who reared the papers indeed home after nineteen years by unlucky chance you have kept your mouth shut and let not a soul in the window upon that part of the day was bright. And I won't spare you, though you're where I put the rest of the maids in my shadow. A deep brownish shadow - the winter grass. Shimmering film of the life. Autolycus' sons took black tracings of vine. They also carefully bandaged the marble columns, were staunching the dark blood with a spell would creep upon them, back at home. Darken, and the darkness, and his sons, Odysseus recovered more rapidly until...his course, loaded with presents, was home in Ithaca. His father standing behind him to see him back. They asked in particular how in the course of the chase the young instructor, on the expedition to Parnassus, kept his seminar. Since that time the corridors nodded, passed her hands over this scar. She felt the [] each other. S. was aware as it dropped against the basin, up - by this confrontation. He did all the water on the floor.

Delight and the seminar and of what had been together. Her eyes were filled, strangled by emotion. She lifted her Book and suddenly, a man came to her—his hair, once light brown—to go on a pilgrimage to Wilsnack, where the precious blood venerated a miracle. When he saw his face in the altar, these three Hosts [] his reflection. He recognized the many countries with a mild shock. She happily said she would go in spring. He sat alone in his England. And he promised he was not looking at it. He gazed out the wards, if she would completely, he would come with her until *she* the shadow cast. He obtained a small ship—nearly up to the base with powerful, isolate grace in the []. The portion of the quad, in-gray, beyond the edge of the light. Tan, overlaid with a palest green. Against the spidery leaves was an Englishwoman, and so she had []. Penelope was

not prepared before she could get permission, for Athene had Knights at last, through Odysseus' right hand. The merchant from Lynn heard tell of it.

'Nurse,' promising her that he would [] her, either secretly or openly,

'And me at your own breast?'

I am her permission to go where she lit on the fact.

Keep your house, the truth. [] man who had provided for her,
to know I make no idle threats.

Wind fear these love-sick noblemen, water.

Gloomy and grumbling her to death.

She sent them enough wind that they rose,
miserable and sorrowful for fear of them
she was always frightened.

He ordered her to lay her head in the waves, and she did so.

But she was often criticized for that.

My mother was following, lingering behind, and when asked if she would like the girl—
thumbed both there, called in, and her face went stony. Our Lord Jesus Christ is []. I
walked out into the sun. Three Hosts, the sacrament panther-like, dappled with precious
blood. Black station wagon visited by pilgrims from the society. Black, without a man who
might afterwards take the dead spit of a hearse, would go on and nobody [] at his own
expense. Pay to England, she was on the coast of her own country, dumb and subdued.
Every time I sail towards the holy place. She tried to concentrate, my mind with country—a
large, empty space, and great trouble from the Teutonic—direction of our Lord, behind the
pines.

'You can call her to get away from my baby—wasn't like that.'

This man with great effort wished those awful dead people, took ship, and sent them calm
into a SIXTY-EIGHT HOUR COMA. There rose not a wave on progress. Among the dimes
and the nickels we sailed on a great way, and the nineteen Gillette blades, till we were
taken that afternoon in the waves. When she looked at Our Lord, speaking to her spirit—a
smudgy photograph of the dead—she would not see. She was always frightened, and so
they sailed on to a [place].

Odyssey

With a grunt and stems that curled around them, the charge of the carcass, the shadow of a young prince's wound. And before long they were under the care of Autolycus, who would creep up, slowly and then from his injury became aware that someone was given a happy send off. His gentle mother looked up. It was Katherine in his scar, and Odysseus told them he had been gashed by a boar. They sometimes met—they had not really spoken. Now, as the old woman was dimly annoyed, recognized the feel of it and did not wish to be reminded of the metal ring ensued from it. He pushed [], setting it and spilling anguish through with tears. Her voice was a hand to Odysseus' chin and [] said, 'My dear child. To think she handled all my master's limbs! Tell me who you went to...' A coloured cord ran down the light with a slow, almost white lamp. The fuzzy cord—past me to []. It shook me till my teeth rattled, a Mrs Greenwood. 'I heard they were stuck, from my throat, for I didn't quaver in the air.' Then my hands jerked free on the piano stool, the torn sheet of a small hole, black—a dead bird. She started at me, and pitted the centre of my right palm.

'How do you feel?'

She stuck out her tongue. There sat Nestor with his sons. A whistling wind blew up. They were piercing meat, running down the highways of the banquet. But soon, in the night, many bulls, strangers, all made a move in [] altar after spanning that weary []. Hands in welcome, beckoning Nestor's son, the company of Diomedes the [] gave fine craft to downy fleece. The breeze dropped from the blow. Inner parts, a gold cup without any news of the men, with these words to Pallas Athene. [] no idea who escaped or who was at the aegis: 'come to me as I sit here at home. This feast you find, Myrmidon spearmen reach with honour. Pray to the god, Achilles' noble son; and your drink-offering fare equally well. Again, the cup of mellow wine to your Crete: all, that is, who had [] do the same. For he too must be one from him. As for Agamemnon, gods, whom no man can neglect—even you must have age, that I hand this golden cup of sweet wine. Have no fears. A god's hand in this tact. Tell my good mother [] her the golden beaker first, and find I'm gone.

We pray to the Lord Poseidon: Girdler of Earth, and do not begrudge the old woman by all the fulfillment of our wishes. First, secret, and solemnly consider these flagons and return to Pylos for Telemachus, that Telemachus and I may meanwhile another black eyed goddess Athene. Home. Up and down through each petition left her lips she pressed them each the word, then she passed the fine two - by the good Odysseus' son repeated her [] of Noemon, son of the victims now roasted and glad to let her have it. We were carved for all, and they fell to the sun sank, and darkness ran the good ship into Telemachus. [] with harm's way as quickly as possible. Our ships made splendid fish, reaching Geraestus. We laid on Poseidon's stretch of water.

'It was on the fourth day that he took one of those horses. Tamer of horses, [] brought before Pylos, and all the [] man might do. The god's will—it was everything he could think of to make pride. My dear lad, I got him by the head. Sometimes greed was all we had left behind, and have made a fuss of nothing. And she lost. But all the news has gone backwards rather than forwards like the sharp spurs on his heels and attention—first place—in safety under the great pull, but it was no better. When this [] wants Poeas' son, the brilliant Philovyryrd, put this horse back in his stable, and independence,'

Idomeneus brought all his men. They are well and freshly. And afterwards survived the war. The sea got put in the mill. And just as [] (which is different), men might do []. This amazement: 'You stay any longer than you have sworn, no noise about in all those years—nor beast would serve the council of the kings. I find ourselves speaking on opposite—accused.'

Some said God openly took a single mind. So well did we agree one thing, and some said another. Good sense and ripe judgment—we minds were more grounded in the conduct of the Agrives' affairs. High mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ: showed as much wisdom or vanity of this wretched world. Had brought Priam's city down in this creature, seeing them on the homeward run. As every side, thought they were the grief, the fatal anger of chastity—hers for her sin. She of that mighty Sire. She forsook her pride, her covetousness, acting on the spur of worldly dignity, and did great regard for form. They summoned the way of everlasting life—assemble at sunset, so that the troops wore white robes like nuns did.

'You were a beautiful child,' he spoke - but it seemed to him for a moment that he did not know the world. [] swam before his eyes, found shape of laughter, and he turned his daughter, lined and somber. Groups of students had cut, closed his eyes again.

'In the hurrying to sit with me when I worked. There were three couples. The girls light...the light...' The light in their light summer dresses (see it now) had been absorbed with a joyous and childish absorption, lightly upon the grass, hardly so that the smooth flesh of where they had been []. The room where he could vanish. The course and child.

'Of course,' he said again, to him, far and unknowing.

'Hush,' she said softly, 'you [] afternoon.' And that was their farewell. He thought again. She had been borne on a summer day, and said something else that he had been thinking of, struck her body until God was still running to her mind.

They lived in a large mansion not far [].

They stood spiritually, and the fear that a long letter in coal-black ink was the greatest scourge that she had the college embossed in her first feelings. And that fear looked like autumn when I had no joy. The feeling was true or not. But blessed may God be, by bus to a city college and all knowledge was mighty and more strong in his love. I would be able to write of virtue, with perseverance.

Here ends this treatise, for God's books in the town library - I wrote the first copy of this book—then for some reason - our manner [] to end with long, suspenseful writing. They discern that Gladys knew Roger in God, and of herself 'feverishly'. How acting is truly learned, Elsie, hidden memories—name of fierce trust. And misty seas in search of plunder. She was sorry, for fear as to fight the very well as she had felt or not. For Achilles, there, Patroclus. People think revelations are not appropriate to give to the fastest runner of them all—stirring. But steadfastly and full count of what the Achaen is, no man on earth. Experience, and years by which your spiritual comfort—and yourself be home.

'For nine long years we understood about her feelings - what stratagem we could devise for many days Zeus seemed to grudge it to us. She had deceptions and dared to match his wits. She wished her head had been [] Zeus, who in every kind of strategy

explained non. "I know your home is far from mankind, and how dearly he had shed his heart's blood for Aegisthus' plot." So shameful a death for our salvation. We die for a son to survive, to keep the fire of love enclosed within our murderer. To kill that [] what was enclosed, had killed his noble father outwardly. Splendid fellow you have wept and sobbed very bitterly, the future generations, pity and compassion. That wise young Telemachus - and sometimes she was all the Achaens' delight. It was so loud and violent, and Orestes' fame will travel [] her and curse her roundly, supposing generations still to come.'

Cry strength like this, to cope a mother's suitors and settle blackguardly tricks!

But fate said to her, 'Daughter, this is very [] me, my father, either shame or contempt shall you have with me in heaven. They are.' (Be so).

Sounds and great melodies.

The Book of []

When she had heard this answer, heard himself saying confessor and two other priests light deceit and illusions, became the face of revelation: hard sometimes, and worn with care. Remember? You were so still, and the credence too readily to prove they be sent from God. Her studious small face. This creature, was very truth, shown over a book or a picture, and her heaviness of heart turned, glowed against the shadows of the laughter—echo in the distance. Oft-times she was greatly depressed upon the present face of that she did not know.

'You were always there. Together, the dead must rest.' Delusions

- so that she thought back to St. Louis in a flat. Turned out she was alive and from my grandfather's country—

physically was to be underweight. So I wrote Philomena Guinea - she had her feelings on grey paper with the name earth. And especially red leaves made her meek, into the hills, and she knew by experience whether it was a campus instead of having to live at home, and how for [] he made her always more [] before me and perhaps [] in his fear, gave her Great Books the way Mrs Guinea took his mercy. The college library didn't stock from the beginning. In his own way, questions, true sense, of past? Hector experienced all this treatise in feeling when he [] out of that copy into this little book of Margery Kempe. [] for something, for some knowledge; by the people he was while he went [] all time in the distant sound. Sweetness and devotion. She could head toward its source and sob very violently.

She had his back-yard lawn; they, the Lord's Passion, and beheld them distinctly; there before her in her long-limbed and graceful weeping and sobbing, she and the boys were looking when she saw her Saviour suffer bemused wonder. They walked among the people living on earth, touching it, leaving no trace. Reverence at that time does not see; and for the worthy to hear and understand. The sound of laughter came meekly and truly in the quiet of the summer. What did you expect? Where she was dwelling brought a kind of joy upon the sermon. He often repeated the breeze. He dimly recalled - his own languishes for love. Those words of failure—as if it mattered. It is hard to speak of perfect love, in fact a man of my [] wretched beaker to you first. And a grim reckoning there [] for Athene's hands. The goddess was delighted. What a good thing it is, when a man as Orestes survived to pay the snake in the grass, who at once began an

ernest tirade. You, my friend - and what a tall and grown suppliant! Poseidon will sing your praises!, vouchsafe success to Nestor. [] replied: 'King Nestor, whom the honour was revenge indeed! Grant Achean lands and love the gods. Give me a ship and afterwards get safely to bed.'

The goddess prayed, and accounts those ruffians for their insufferable fulfilment. Happiness for prayers. The outer flesh from his manhood received bags - twenty measures about the earth. A word to anyone else! Get the evening, I shall fetch them upstairs for the night. I am off upon many a holy thought of our chance of finding some return. A spiritual sight as truly as if Euclyeia burst into a wail of sight. She could not weep. Cry with him. 'What on earth has [] such great pains for love. What takes you that you must go pray for all? You, an only son, the apple of Odysseus dead and gone, far from the might our lord and due worship is at all times plotting mischief against you. Stand the holy words and laws of God. They'll share all this between them according to their power. Guard your own property. It was the custom in the place—the hard life wandered round a sermon on that day, and then in the pulpit preached that controlled voice. Her face was drawn, and her eyes were red and moist. Their gazes locked; she looked at him for a long moment, almost in disbelief; then she turned away. He knew that he would not see her again.

He had no wish to die; but there were moments, after Grace left, when he looked forward impatiently, as one might look to the moment of a journey that one does not wish to take. And like any traveler, he felt that there were many things he had to do before he left; yet he could not think what they were. He had become so weak that he could not walk; he spent his days and nights in Edith, the books arranged on his narrow bed so that he would not have to exert himself to reach them. He read little, though the presence of his books—

of warm water—a *Ladies' Day* in the mill [] two ice cream dishes. In the mill in spite my man was sorry, and tried, folded the linen napkin and laid his horse—pull! Sometimes he bit my lips down on it precisely, beat him, and sometimes he took from the table a fuzzy pink lip shaped like a tiny heart. Then this man set a pair, the horses's back to make him bowl. At the home of my man it was no use. At my college, the little freckled [] told me to write to the person I loved. He took the other horse. They were still alive, and thank Philomena Guinea, a wealthy nineteen-year novel made into a silent film with mean thoughts. Unworthy seemed to him such dim presences gathered over what his life had been. He could not see them, but at the edge of his consciousness; gathering their forces, he knew what they were there. He was a kind of palpability. There was no need to hurry.

He is approaching them, he knew; but he had all the time there was. He could ignore them if he liked. There was softness upon his limbs. A sense of his languor crept with a sudden force, and his own identity came upon him, and he knew the power of it.

He was. His head turned. He had been.

That table was piled with books. Play over them for a moment—for a long time. He let his hand start at the intricate thinness of the joints as the debate with Nestor played out. Some barley-meal in strong leather Troy brings back! The miseries of mil-crushed grain. Not there - raid after raid across the provisions, and at Achilles' beck and call. I fight myself when my mother has gone to the walls of royal Priam's town! And to Sparta and Sandy Pylos, the warlike Aias lies. There lies my dear father, wise as the gods in counsel. There too, his fond old nurse, as good as he was brave. The protest: a fighter that endured at Troy. There into your head it will unfold to you the whole disastrous wandering through the world. Half a dozen mothers' eyes, and patience gone. Did you find his home foreign? Fellows will be toil by every victory. When they've done you to death, and all the time there was not a tight soul against the admirable Odyssey. There's no call for you to take supreme the barren seas.

That great man's words! Our Lord Jesus worked in her mind, when wise Telemachus replied, ' There's Lord Jesus Christ. You must swear to me that you won't forsake us with your bitter Passion.' A dozen days or till she misses me—redemption. The suffering don't want tears to spoil her breast. She [] gods—that she would keep appearing. Her oath drew off the barley-meal into service, then rejoined the company in the hall.

She would have burst. Measure [] had suggested itself to the bright Lord's Passion. Disguising herself as Telemachus, she picked out her twenty men, instructing the whole company to pretend to be called to the ship at nightfall. The vessel itself she named Phronius, a prominent Ithacan, who was pleasing to me. For the more [] fell in the streets, the [more] the goddess endured for my love, the more water stowed in her in the secluded country farm, in the bleak, moonlit pillow. These men gave up their jobs and would not betray the common women for a million dollars. In the town of N. neither man invited me to lunch. At [] some talked of her being punished by God for being prideful. Finger-bowl vengeance on her; some saw blossoms floating in it, and some wise men, a sort of Japanese after-dinner love. Our Lord said it was the crisp little blossoms that called her from the pride. And it was only much later, at college about the dinner, all these

adversities came on—scourges our Lord would ask for mercy, and lit the interior of the ladies' bodily penance, and the desire that she had, and began to clean [] the sort as shal be told hereafter. In Brazil, it flew straight and rings on your wedding ring.

I am speaking of your father, if you, indeed, cannot help looking. With Nestor talking exactly as he did, I should quit while his followers so resemble him in speech. Skewers roasting in preparation at the general assembly. They caught sight of Odysseus and questioned their direction, waving their sides. We seemed to share the newcomers, to join them. We laid down for the successful banquet. 'Not all of the Agrives near his brother honestly, and so, we have helped them to the ruins and sailed away with wine and proffered hands. Zeus planned disaster—the Daughter of Zeus wears a bright-eyed Daughter's mask, holding it in the Lord Poseidon's making. The two sons of my friend []; and when you have made the moment with no prayer, as our rites dictate, pass on the whole Achaean army to your companion here, so that he may worship the immortal.

Ira Illa Numinum³⁷⁰

Provincial blade of a cataclysmic tongue, shut up insect in an empty palm, narrow wrist cut of a lacerated subconscious nightmare. What I mean is that mute bliss hacking an inheritance of clout is circular, mounting at the best of times, and not unnerving often enough that those times in pain are thrilling rather than condemnable. A storage gimp in borrowed royal robes. Nero takes an especial pleasure in squatting among the miscreants and empty-hearted tourists of Time Square, knowing that if anyone grieved him or made to unthroned the devious heir before the light parade he could take their head there among everyone without consequence. None would know. Newspapers could be bought into discrediting the accounts of eyewitnesses, social media drones would purge any dissenters of considerable influence, all can be swept away to dust. Might at all cost, spare no degree, rank, or blood tie. Everything that can be made washes in the bludgeon of an empty tool of state.

On the boards among the jewels and furs and ambient dissimulative faces an ad flashed **TITUS ANDRONICUS: THE MUSICAL!** among carnage and animated skulls a lone man with pelt furs looks dismally into the crowds who ignore the glorious and

370. Tacitus is a compelling and important writer, though perhaps not on his own terms. We may liken his written history, *The Annals*, as more akin to a modern tabloid than a contemporary historical source-text, though it has decidedly influenced our pre-conceptions of life in the ancient world, and the men and women who ruled it. Of greater interest for modern readers (compared to the long passages detailing military battles and senatorial adjudications) are the interpersonal scandals, and reported omens such as “two-headed fetuses, human and other creatures...found at those sacrifices at which it is customary to immolate pregnant animals.” [Tacitus, *The Annals*, 361] These passages make vivid that salacious cultural influence, debauchery, and immoral leadership are not inventions of the modern era. By placing the story of Nero’s rise to power and subsequent reign, up to the infamous ‘fire of Rome’ (Book 12.62 - Book 15.44), in the modern era (circa 1999-2014), the dialectics of past/present, presence/absence, and originality/appropriation are evocatively expressed. For it may be taken for granted that, the more riling the scene from the following story, the more closely it follows Tacitus’ account. It is an interesting detail of *The Annals* that the books concerning the rule of Gaius Germanicus (known to us as Caligula, a name given by soldiers after his footwear at camp—hence the nickname ‘Bootstrap’ (Book 1.41)) have been lost, but that there are apparent overlaps between the types of stories told about the Roman tyrants, foremost so—their abuse of pregnant women as a testament to their villainy. “After the end of the games Poppaea died, victim of a chance out-burst of anger in her husband, from whom she received a kick during pregnancy.... Her body was not cremated, the normal Roman practice. It was embalmed, after the fashion of foreign royalty, by being filled with aromatic spices....” [Tacitus, *The Annals*, 381] The title, “Ira Illa Numinum,” is taken from a powerful evocation, where Tacitus laments the “sad continuum of deaths” which Nero’s reign oversaw. [Tacitus, *The Annals*, 384]. Some characters and scenarios have been invented in order to develop the narrative, and details have been added/removed from the source-text as necessary.

resplendent demands for attention, as intended. Nero passes in guise of a beggar with ripped layers and smudge stained o'er his face to confront Lacosta, who sells worthless trinkets to idiots, but after hours excels in tinctures which are fast-acting as they are impossible to trace. After purchasing, at cost, a necklace of obsidian carved into ankh, the two whisper together.

'What an honour it is to make audience with such a distinguished beggar. Truly, such handsome cheeks support thy narrow brow. Come, what fated task has one, myself, to ease thy wicked burden?'

'Alas, sister, I am plagued with pestilence, and know not the better half myself. But Agrippina, mother of thy sovereign state, declares thy virtue, and how your tinctures ease all suffering, and pain.'

'And need it be a quick and painless end? Or a lingering resolve, given time to settle one's affairs?'

'It needs be refined and gripping of the mind as well, so that one is cured in the surprising heat of an embattled recovery. With thoughts above, so do pilgrims rest below.'

'Enough, enough. It shall be done. Now flee thee hence, and leave me to my consecrated task, which has been passed down from my ancestors as inheritance.'

And taking a jewelled dagger from her moth-bitten dress she cut across her hands, spoke an incantation, and staunched the wound with sprigs of thyme and lavender. Nero bought a ticket for the adaptation, even though Narcissus played the leading role. Perhaps there was a way for him to be made indisposed, and an understudy could play the part. The leering bright of the block toward the bus-station, with boundless wood scaffolding, and the flat-stack of balcony restaurants, row upon row, lined with scarcely distinguishable features—symbols of fire, wine, decadent splendour confounding all

modesty. The doorman had a gift for Octavia, and Nero, walking into his family's loft, unwrapped the striped Christmas paper to reveal a portable moulding chamber lined with bone white stalks buttressing crowns of gold. Agrippina lay in wait.

'Well, well. What do we have here?'

She swirled her long, thin glass of ambrosia—quietly sipped.

'It's for Octavia, your majesty.'

'There there—let me have a look.'

There was one cap in particular which stood out among the rest, and was at least six inches across in full blossom. This specimen eclipsed the others, as wild trees are shaded by their elders. Agrippina wet her lips ostentatiously, and puckered her lipstick, which remained undisturbed.

'Call your father.'

'He's not my father.'

'Hush, hush! Don't incense me with such treasonous declarations! Tell him to bring me my Jefferson Airplane, and Nico.'

Nero devotedly ambled toward the bronze intercom beside the staircase, and called for Claudius.

'Harumph, yes?'

'Your royal father, her grace my mother contends for your presence, and as such I am sent to bid thee haste.'

'Is it really so important? I'm in the middle of dictating a report on the genocide in Armenia...'

'Mother has asked for her Jefferson Airplane record, and Loaded.'

'Oh? Is that the case? Well, I'll be down momentarily. Blessed be your path, my child.' 'Blissfully awaiting your divine presence, father.'

Agrippina had called together young Britannicus and his elder sister, Octavia, who surveyed pensively for signs as to what was to be done, now that her secret was revealed. Nero sat among the family and pondered the asymmetrical beauty of the hanging lights over their dining room table. Then looked out to the city's abstracting skyscape, until Claudius made himself known.

'Most beloved wife, and children, what is the meaning of this most welcome intrusion into my schedule? It is an unexpected pleasure.'

'Do you remember the day that we met, my love? How the hyacinth petals rained in the grand foyer of your majesty's palace, and there I stood among the many suitors who came conniving for your love. It's been so long...I can't remember any of their names now.'

'Really? Your cousin Domitia was among them, sweet Lollia, Aelia, to whom I was introduced the previous evening by my dear Narcissus. I remember Calpurnia was there, who you despised! But she wasn't vying for my affection—merely in support of Miss Paulina. I must admit I looked onto Pauline with great fancy. ...What were we talking about? Our courtship, yes! And Lollia—whatever happened to her?'

'Hmm? I must consult Junia, for the life of me I cannot say. Still, children, once our eyes met there were none but us two, and we have ruled as one, complete unit, ever since.'

'Yes! For your mother's word is mine and carries legal weight and greater measure. Her story is spoken truly. Many multi-nationals have a single, brilliant mind at their helm, but only the Pax Romana has two great powers of equal, and complementary, fortitude.'

'And that,' Agrippina said, carrying the moulding box from the prim-white entry-way dresser to the living room's opulent low-set Egyptian broad-table, 'is the purpose of all of this. You know I won't be around forever.'

'Mom! Your grace!'

'No, no. Listen, I mean look at this! Were you going to, what, take all of these yourself?! Were you going to sell them?'

'I was going to microdose them, your majesty,' Octavia interjected, 'that's a two year supply...'

Octavia trailed off, and looked away. A single tear formed in her eye.

'No,' Agrippina answered, 'we're having these tonight, and what we don't eat, I'm getting rid of. Don't look at me like that! This is OUR house and as long as you live in OUR house you'll follow OUR rules.'

Agrippina looked imploringly at Claudius.

'A compelling and well-spoken prospect, indeed! Why, should not the affairs of state supplement rather than disrupt our coming-to-being? Are we not all journeying this vast cosmic conspiracy of parts to play, and molecules gained sentience?'

Young Britannicus raised his left hand and spoke. 'Umm, your most royal progenitors—even me?'

'Just a little, my brave-hearted young man. What did Octavia say? A microdose of family bonding, here in the centre of the universe—New York City.'

She took a capped stem and popped it in her mouth then let out a playful grimace and shouted, 'Family time! Octavia, grab the oreos! Nero, get the record player running! Britannicus, come here my sweet baby and let mama give you some sugar.'

Claudius at this point began to investigate the moulding box, running his knuckles along the layers of translucent-red plastic wrap, taking stock of the moist artificial soil and its dusk-coloured nutrient pellets, which reflected in the steely-grained caps themselves. Agrippina reached into a compartment in the table and pulled out a single razorblade, with which she cut a small portion for Britannicus—and placed that portion between two halves of a frosted cookie. Claudius salivated for the largest specimen, and it was agreed that it should be made his share. A separate plate was brought out in acknowledgement of this, and he coyly pulled at a section of the massive blossom, then turned it over for to hide the act. Nero coiled the first stalk on his frosted disc, and placed the cap atop the spiral, where he noticed iron veins running along the zombie-skinned fibre-stems, crackling with each point of pressure. Octavia made a sandwich, but most of it was outside of the brand-name-snack, which she thought fitting given her place in the sovereign. Agrippina was spinning around with Britannicus singing

Who loves the rain

Who cares that it makes flowers

Who cares that it makes showers Since you broke my heart!

Ba ba ba baaaa

Who loves the sunnnnn.

She called out to Nero, 'This was *not* what I asked for, but a good pick, young prince.'

Nero felt a familiar pitfall in his stomach at the word. For it was only recently declared that he should be named the 'Prince of the Youths' in the Pax Romana, Claudius's multi-national conglomerate. Such a title meant that he would be usurping the birthright of Britannicus, whom his mother had become attached to like a leech since the

announcement, prying for any sign of discontent, for to better stave off future hatred.

Though Britannicus was only fifteen, and himself but two years elder, his mother played the advocate and, though the decision was irregular, lineage from Augustus was an august byline of public perception, whereas Britannicus was rather *spawned* by Messalina, whose lascivious habits were *forbidden* topics in the Julio-Claudian household, but nonetheless

present as the *antithesis* of their very design aesthetic: grandiose, modern, and wisened by ancient rites of passage. He poured himself a glass of water from a filtered pitcher which lay on the kitchen's red-marble counter. The record flipped and he began bobbing along to the song, head held high, swaying his arms about him, letting the words soak into symbolism. Octavia motioned for the two of them to move their way to the balcony as he fumbled about, half-dancing, assenting with a nod. Britannicus was putting on a show for step-mother, while Claudius scribbled in a leather-bound journal. They each grabbed another handful from the moulding chamber. Outside the air was rushing, carrying misty tufts of spray with an ebbing current. Octavia pulled out two lucky strikes and handed one to Nero.

'Is this your first time, Octavia?'

She nodded.

'Same, for me, too.'

They smiled with disbelief and moved in shoulder to shoulder, looking over the city, which came into focus. There they saw the district was mainly empty, but for the vagrants meeting beside St. Patrick's cathedral. Taxis rushed by and persons rushed from their offices at this odd hour, inviting innocent questioning, speculation. How the light reflected off the panels of glass buildings. Here the entire city was a vow against secrecy, yet it only made apparent that so much was hidden beneath the surface. What was once underground has veiled Wall Street in parchment and ribbons, banners lining the

pavement—paper thin posters for ‘popular’ music. The two of them watched Claudius make his way up the stairs, returning with a handful of records, painting supplies.

'More flowers?'

'A still life says all that anybody of my station needs articulate,' the young Prince quoted his step-father indistinctly, looking over Octavia, searching in vain for his mother's eyes. Her rounded cheeks and rosy features eluded him, a cunning in her narrow glance defied his understanding. She held her breath, to better cede her being seen. Inside Claudius' voice warbled.

'Aggi! Aggi! This damn contraption!'

Nero placed his arm over Octavia's shoulder and began to speak.

'If anything happens to him mother will force us into marriage.'

'Yes, I suppose she would...'

'Remember, no matter what, you'll always be safe with me. I'll make sure that nothing happens to you, as my wife and friend.'

'Are you feeling anything?'

'I think? Less visual, although it's kinda? Mostly I feel...lifted, held in the grip of Mercury's ascension.'

'I feel totally arbitrary. Pressed into my own skin.'

The two compared the textures of sight and sense and pondered their colour theories in the while, budding with ease and a dynamic which transcended their fear. Upon entering they found Britannicus and Claudius standing at easels atop plastic sheeting which was carpeted with flecked paint. Another blank canvas lay in wait. Four foot by two

foot, turned upright as for a portrait, another demarcation of potential—mere suggestibility and semblances of order, moral neutrality that yet awaits fulfilment—the tabula rasa of all existence, all essence. There were frames, the panelled walls, the hanging stairs jut out as though conjured from oblivion—textures of whispering light set into shape like cut stone, washed away in the immediacy of the enigmatic parallel outlines, frescoes of Ilium and Mauritania. Claudius tapped his foot with a wap wap as he sang along with his brazen bassy register

I was looking for a job and then I found a job

And heaven knows I'm miserable now!

'Another still life?' Octavia asked turning her head as an owl does.

Nero walked up to the blank canvas and stretched his arms, then his neck, and looked down on his supplies. He gripped the red paint and then the black paint, and smeared with the joint of his thumb.

'Isn't the point of a still life to capture with your eye? Yet you keep drawing flowers with no model, most royal father. I don't get it,' Octavia continued, 'where is the picture *happening*.'

'The answer is, from whence it came—' Claudius jeered with a shaky hand raised toward his temple, which was covered with ocean smudges and salmon spots.

Britannicus finished his painting of Apollo in abstract guise, which was more resplendent in the foreground, where the glistening strokes reflected more than servile trust, but hidden pride and vanity in dotted maw, sponged compress, abrasive catchlight, plume. Nero, who would not spend more than a moment with a canvas, had already made quick work of his subject: four limbs torn apart by crimson-winged beaks—it was all over but the splatter and noticing the resemblance to his own face, or was it his mother's

looking up to him with those tortured eyes? Agrippina came up behind him in silence, held her lips to his ear.

'You know, I think it looks like Franz Kline gained some fucking courage.'

'Soft, mother, you do me more credit than my substance does provide.'

'No, my child. You simply judge by terms of reputation. Well, who can be blamed, with tutors such as yours? That is what I meant to say! The accumulative nature of wisdom—yes, it's lovely Britannicus. Very well-composed. Octavia, I hope you don't mistake me for a spoil-sport. If you're going to take drugs—well at least you should be around people who know how to have a good time.'

Agrippina reached under the low-set Egyptian broad-table and began making a line for herself on a mirrored panel which she placed at the corner. Claudius had spilled the water pitcher on the kitchen's marble counter, so Britannicus helped him wipe up the mess. The elder king fixated as the absorbent cloth consumed the life-substance, ephemeral, distinctly inverted veins of synthetic vine. Dark pigment carried in the cloth and the elder king spoke aloud.

'Pluto, Pluto.'

While Britannicus, still keen with reality, smiled to comfort the King, and held his hand about the room, but found it empty, Agrippina's cloak just flickering into an arched hallway, for a drip. The elder was but further made convinced by these indelible portents, spoken in his youth by Sibylline prophets, where first the blood of the vine would reveal all those most trusted betrayed of presence and grace.

Nero and Octavia reconnoitred in the cinema, where they drew five lines of equal distance upon an ancient timber of naval wreckage lined with circled-chalk and spoke their grim intentions. With *The Glass Menagerie* in hand, this young prince quoted

We live in such a mysterious universe, don't we? Some people say that science clears up all the mysteries for us. In my opinion it only creates more!³⁷¹

and each attested their discomfort plainly—that old queen Narcissus who openly vies for the sovereign Father's hand and heart, he does incense the titled gentlefolk with vicious gossip, blackmails all those more innately talented in the industry, and lecherously grips ahold his Broadway reputation as the hope for future players remains impoverished—and each gave a prick of their fingers, wherein Nero made way for a kiss. Octavia stiffened under the physical attention, while her brain gave way to a discharge of delight which quick gave way to fear, and reached Nero's collarbone with an open palm. The two wiped clean their mess, and returned the wreckage to its display case in the second floor lounge. That young prince pulled out a record from its cozy home on the middle shelf— there among the entirely disorganised collection, pitting Clifton Chenier beside Mayhem and Tito Puente beside The Indigo Girls. He nodded at his own pernicious wiles, though he was just a part to play, a single cog in the great wheel of disjointed actuality, what supersedes the substanceless, how bitterly like fall'n stars. When Octavia and Nero returned to the living room, Hatful of Hollow just finished playing, and Claudius attended to Agrippina and Britannicus, who each took turns commenting on his painting.

'It's certainly, more creative than the other still lives. This patch of blue and orange is particularly standout. What made you decide to make the lines so zig zagged?'

'Young Britannicus, my adorable child, what is the reason one asks such uninspired queries, when the content itself is cause for so much contemplation. What does the distortion ask of us, the viewer? How are we engaging with a subject otherwise confined to traditional optics, where opacity as such is actively discouraged?'

³⁷¹. Tennessee Williams. *The Glass Menagerie* (New York: Random House), 1945, 775, <https://vcstulsa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/theGlassMenageriefulltext.pdf>.

Nero stepped to the record player, returned Morrissey to his slipcover, and took a moment to admire the album art of the record he brought down, with its scrawled sharpie marks smudged on the cardstock. Within the design a parallel universe of intimate discretion, and the fire and the rose become one—while the needle drops his eyes follow with anticipation, millions of unseen vibrations in limbo for perception's tithe, waiting for disclosure, a poetic demarcation of eternal recurrence:

When you were young you were the king of carrot flowers

and how you built a tower tumbling through the trees

in holy rattlesnakes that fell all round your feet

and your mom would stick a fork right into daddy's shoulder

and dad would throw the garbage all across the floor

as we would lay and learn what each other's bodies were for

And this is the room one afternoon I knew I could love you

and from above you how I sank into your soul

into that secret place where no one dares to go

And your mom would drink until she was no longer speaking

and dad would dream of all the different ways to die

each one a little more than he would dare to try

I-i-i-i

I-I-i-i

as the ensuing chaos formed, the family roared and splashed about their domicile, up and over, Claudius speaking nonsense, waving each his arms as one beset by basement blitz, a tombed panic of fever and failing insight. Such a prolonged dread, which punctured his chest and bloody ears the ruler fell back into a meagre throne for all he knew as such was befitting a life thus lived, where only birthright claim'd authority with none left for the individual, falling upon so easily corrupted justices, where lights were snuffed like framed conspirators—mercy, mercy, more light. Mercy, mercy—bring champagne. Nero reached into his pocket and there appears his ticket for the musical that evening, after the famed General whom all knew in those days had been badly fated by a simple, trusting nature unto a vengeful public bloodletting, with such exacting reciprocity as to feign logic. *Say what you want to say hang for your hollow ways moving your mouth to pull out all your miracles—for me.* The four royals stood around their failing emperor with naught but veiled countenance. Agrippina crouched beside her husband and placed arms around his shoulders, wiping away the blood onto the emperor's house-robe.

'Now, now. We'll call Dr. Xenophon and I'm sure he'll be able to take care of everything. Meanwhile, Nero, you need a date for your play, don't you? I'm sure my most inspiring and wisened Octavia will be able to accompany you. Luckily I have a pair of tickets for myself and the emperor. Britannicus, why don't you join them? Make sure that these two space cadets are kept on the straight and narrow! You're in charge, ok sweetheart?' Agrippina said, winking at her elder son.

'Why, can I not stay with you and look after my father? He seems quite unwell...'

'You would miss the chance to see Narcissus perform? I thought was your favourite Uncle? Why if he knew you had turned down the chance to see him play...'

'You're right, you're right—of course. I have my reputation to think of.'

Young Britannicus tousled his hair into place, and smiled at his siblings as Agrippina went over to the record player and cut the voice short as it began

Daddy please hear the song that I sing!

‘Mom!’ Nero and Octavia spoke in unison!

‘I know, I know. But you only have...35 minutes to get into your seats. And besides, this is no time for somber music. Your father is unwell, why not put on some Ladysmith Black Mambazo? Why not some Hildegard von Bingen?’

They each looked unnerved, yet tried to hide it.

Britannicus called from the elevator, ‘Let’s go! C’mon!’

Agrippina reached for her eldest and pulled him close to her.

‘Don’t worry, my love. Your mother dear will take care of everything. And know that I’ve always kept your best interest at heart. For you are my life, my world—the part of me that will live even after I’m gone and buried. Yes—oh look at me. Worry not...I can handle it here. You just go out and have fun. But keep your brother safe, and don’t look into any mirrors! Trust me! And son, always remember who your real friends are. Oh, they never listen. Just go! I love you! Goodbye!’

The elevator dinged. Outside the crisp air wafted with exhaust and corner hot-dogs. Rushes of persons and taxis, as Britannicus led the way to the Palatium Theatre, stopping to admire the opulent columns and inlaid vine which was strewn, up along the walls, and naturally drew one’s attention to the embattled winged figures enraptured among the clouds, swinging maces and wielding nets and tridents. What amazed Britannicus was not the subject or detail, but how the tresses of background gradated with soft pink and blue at the figures’ waists, their elbows, where the knees came together in extravagant posture. Nero searched the crowd for a familiar face, and first laid eyes upon Domitia Lepida—who

was Augustus' niece and cousin once-removed from Agrippina—there in a glimmering bronze-sequin dress and matching hat, fitting, tho all reason forbids, against the side of her hair, suspended via an unseen binding.

'Prince of Youths! Come and speak with your dearest auntie of that which lies upon your art. Ahem, ahem. Heart, dear me. I apologise.'

A series of resonant bongs echoed through the waiting chamber, stifling the many conversations, scattered as leaves over a still pond.

'I'm afraid we've arrived past the hour prescribed for mingling. Still, soft, how fares the world, dear aunt.'

'You ask me that, yet you must surely know, sly prince. A squadron of soldiers' canvas tents in Connecticut set alight, killing those not irredeemably maimed. Swarms of bees building hives atop the Capitol! And stinging the Senators as they pursue the course of sycophancy...still yet, I've heard that hermaphroditic births have increased by 400% in the past month, without any semblance of an explanation that was not superstitious drivell.'

'What does the portent read, according to these mad idlers?'

'That there will be born anew the sovereign state, as yet we live to witness glory birthed. Now, if you'll excuse me. Good-evening.'

Domitia spoke and kissed the hand of Nero, who was escorted to the family box-seats, which had been passed from high Tyrant to high Tyrant through generations. The tradition was set into the panels beneath the safety-railing, where countless names were carved with chiseled precision, such exacting calligraphy which is the mark of power, material emblematic of a greater social scheme. The lights dimmed and out stepped a beleaguered figure wearing frayed brown robes under a single spotlight.

'We come now upon this wretched hour to speak. These demands are made of us who lack in eloquence—to speak the matter plainly. Claudius is dead, after failed resuscitation efforts by the noble Dr. Xenophon. It is reported that he died peacefully, in his sleep, after a prolonged illness which was kept hidden from the public so as not to inspire fear, or confidence in enemies abroad.' Nero stared into the deep blue stage lights and left himself, momentarily, saw his body from outside, felt the presence, felt as the presence of this interminable manifestation of indeterminate substance, or substanceless notion as the mind is wont to claim. A hand grasped round his fingers, though he saw over his shoulder as the perspective pans to the crowd, already staring his direction with their critical or awed faces, in the upper-ring some held out congratulatory gestures with both hands locked in a swing of praise, yet not jeering at this new-learned and most untimely death. From the stalls others looked on with fear, or whispered accusations with transparent guilt. Octavia found, kissing him then, the emperor more timorous, insecure, seeking validation with every whimpering trace of their lips' trembling touch—as they pulled away a spotlight lit their booth, and it was announced that the succession was ordained. Nero stood and bowed slightly before realising what he had done, and returned to his seat more powerful than whence he stood.

'We must also regrettably announce that Narcissus has taken ill, and the role will fall to our understudy, of no less illustrious reputation, Mnester.'

The figure walked off stage and horns began blaring from the pit with harsh brazen fury. Again the sound blared, making the hairs on Nero's neck stiffen. His pupils dilated, adjusting to the darkness from which blades of red light carried across the audience, and raging war offstage erupted. Marcus Andronicus rendezvoused with Saturnius and Bassianus, then the lot of them quickly break into song and dance. The new emperor cannot concentrate on the plot, or what carnage does ensue. The empty stage becomes progressively awash in blood, which splashes against the curtains, and does not seem to

wash away. Still the action does continue and actors follow cues despite their clothes which stain, or slipperiness of the ground on which they walk with the befallen.

Exactly

ninety minutes later, the curtain shuts, then opens again as Mnester gives his final bow, and Nero is escorted, asking Octavia her pardon, and that they would next be one, as state, estate, and noble birth are one. Britannicus held back tears that went not unnoticed.

Yet his minders did persist that time was of the essence, and handed him remarks thus writ by Seneca for this occasion, which he studied on the way. The words washed over him, with inconclusive thoughts, only succeeding to certify his title as the board members gathered in the mute-blue meeting room, with its sinister abstract-expressionist murals on either end of the open chamber and a single long table, at which two rows of worried faces sit and stare—each more skeptical than the last.

‘Greetings, noble-men of the board.

I smile upon your being here on such short notice, as is dictated by custom.

This somber occasion is not without precedent, yet that does little to dispute the pain of mourning which strikes all who learn of such untimely passing.

Honourably Claudius ruled, and he will be interred among the emperors of old, recognised for the living deity he was, and temples will be erected in each of the boroughs for to pay tribute to his majesty.

Long live the King!

Our state is the progeny of divine will—and such was ordained that the Pax Romana should be the living legacy of its progenitors. What Aeneas hath ordain’d was taken up by Caesar, who birthed the undying Augustus, who opened the first international subsidiary, taking our operation into global territory, and upending the previously wrought system where bribes and corruption fomented under a faithless distribution

of power—which we have in our wisdom and virtue consolidated into able hands, and kept the forum intact by which board members may earn their share. So that when the sun falls on one capable ruler, the elders might serve to guide new leadership to profit.

We must be thankful that my upbringing saw not civil dissension, and that the ills of previous campaigns may be laid to rest with the holy emperor. For I come bearing no complex for vengeance, no embittered rival who must first be eliminated for to tend to the affairs of state. My attention is not rivalled by need for recognition or ambitious pretences toward tasks other than those deemed the station of my title. I will not judge cases which the senate rightly adjudicates, nor will influence-peddling be tolerated by my administration. Bribery has no place in a just society. My house will keep its business, and the sovereign will its business keep. Let none accuse me of bearing harshly upon thy napes of thine necks, or dis-allowing free expression of what is best for all. These matters will be brought to light in due course.

Yet leave this hour for mourning. The news of my father's untimely death grieves me, and I find no comfort but the bold and inspiring life which he left for my example. His patronage of art was only rivalled by his own poetic voice, which lifted many out of the poverty of ignorance. He prioritised the safety of the Pax Romana, even at the cost of his popularity, and the wisdom and foresight of his reign is unquestioned.'

At this there was an uproar of laughter, stifled with multiple persons shouting 'here, here!' After all, this was the man who knowingly married Messalina, who was nicknamed 'cuckold-in-chief' for the greater part of his sovereign rule. This was the man who despised the gay romps which were the depraved pleasure of his predecessor, and who

never smiled for portraits, but rather looked sternly on as if constipated or convinced of some duplicity, or hidden dagger just beyond his view.

Nero continued,

‘We will continue to promote the authority and sovereignty of the Pax Romana across the world. Our operations will see unprecedented growth, and there will be much to celebrate once we have lifted the veil of our sorrow. For now, I repeat my thanks for your condolences and ongoing support in this difficult moment, and look forward to working together in the future.

Farewell.’

As Nero stood and shook hands among the board members one of his security detail inquired as to what his security password would be among the board. He replied, ‘excellent mother.’ The grain of the table was spectacular, built of petrified woods from around the world, incorporated together as the company itself consolidated power from across the reaches of the global market economy. He eyed two men exchanging business cards at the table, with a shudder—took the company car instead of making the short walk home where Agrippina waited with a crystal goblet of wine swirling about her fearsome grip.

‘Let me stand and greet the new Emperor of the Pax Romana. Child, come, embrace me. For this day has been often on my mind, and now we wield the golden round that brings with it the splendours of eternal heaven.’

‘We wait upon your word for guidance, dear mother.’

‘The marriage certificate has already been drafted by my Freedman. Pallas! Hither!’
The young man strut in gaudy fuchsia robes—thin silver bangles tossed about his wrists

with each flutter. Nero snatched at the contract, convinced of the chaotic symbolism at play.

‘In the elevator there was a jolt. Or maybe I the spasm made, but yet it seemed to me that if the word of law was true and my imperial title made of holy proclamation, that the ascent unto these chambers would be likened to Olympus. That I myself was lord of lords, who countenanced creation yet knew not but offence at the impropriety of those my fated subjects. How orderly and pre-ordained the railings seemed to be, each button did attest reality! My Golden Throne beseeched of wanton decadence!’

‘Nero! Emperor—oh such blessed cadence! Emperor Nero, what you have this day felt each king attests, yet recognises still the skeptic that condemns our god to merely flesh. You will be the end of such blasphemy, for the history of right or wrong is nothing more than material domination. This I do agree with your pale Seneca, whose liver croaks under his very own ambition. Let none offer you what cannot be repaid tenfold, and know that the common folk and their stupid worship are the only way to keep the board from murdering you in your sleep. So long as their bread is fresh and entertainments gruesome then none may take what has on this day been named yours— Emperor Nero.’

Agrippina held the emperor’s hands against her cheek as she signed the yellowed paper, which Pallas did quick encase with plastic, and place in a leather briefcase. He then excused himself.

‘Umm, where is...’

‘Octavia? Your new bride? In the royal chamber, awaiting your majesty. Go to her, and consummate your grip upon the throne. Make me a son! Yes, do not delay in this. A son!’

'Mother? There is just one more thing. I should like you, now that this status has fallen upon my honour, to live at the Imperial. For otherwise it might be said that you've baldly kept your grip on power whence your royal title had expired, which querulous jackanapes would condemn as treason. I cannot rule without you, and your wisdom will always be foremost in my heart, but merely for public appearances you should live across the street, where from our balconies we might look mightily upon our kingdom.'

'Of course. I understand. There will be no delay. As you command, it is done.'

Agrippina held back the tears until Nero had, with a wave, walked the steps toward the royal bedchamber, where just the night before she slept. She doubts he noticed, and bitterly she wept the price that's paid for destiny, and called for Pallas to see to the arrangement of her belongings while she stayed with Junia Silana, whose husband Gaius so loved the now-condemned Messalina that he annulled their marriage and left her essentially penniless, with Manhattan outgoings. No one else could so cheer her up in this forlorn moment, where in gained prestige one loses pride, and doubts are cast where fickle love once held, as a country dam swells with flooded rain before finally bursting o'er the growing fields, carrying away whole treasuries, and rendering the toilsome manuscripts of the parish scribes illegible. Nero entered soft upon the chamber. He spied upon the royal bed his step-sister, proudly postured as the winged Victory, with arms outstretched, radiant skin bare under the dim candlelight. He first reached for her breasts, and clawed at skin which quickened with his touch, soft, leaving impressions which faded but for their neural stimulus.

'Turn around,' the emperor commanded.

She followed his instruction.

'Wait!'

Nero held his arms around her shoulders, escaped the moment. There was a discharge of animus, whereupon they fell into sleep. Octavia dreamed herself running through a thorn-grove, with each attempt to climb the sharpened vines encased and cut along her arms and legs. With none but Britannicus by her side she stopped her struggle and the razorvine gave way, for there was no fear of her escape this moment on.

‘My love, you must run from this place,’ Octavia warned her cherub brother, who wore a toga and atop his golden hair a laurel wreath was placed.

‘Why?’

‘Because you’re next.’

Her words deformed, and framed the face of a tarot card flipped by a cloaked figure, whose face was caked with blood. Octavia watched the card, the two of swords, and recognised a life cut short. Next was the Star—Narcissus gleaming in the spotlight. And finally—The Tower. She shuddered at the card and witnessed—no she cannot speak of it, yet cannot look away at the destruction, its very loosening the grip on all morality, so that each are frenzied beasts, who turn their daggers, brother to brother, with wild thoughts and wild actions, lost.

Nero dreamt the world in perfect harmony. Peace as is known only by ideologues, or ascetic cults so far removed from life as not to notice what dissonance persists in every being. The air was much the same when lone he walked the penthouse where his educators slept, through the dojo of Burrus Africanus (who had returned to his native continent for a spot of intrigue in Nigeria) past the map room up the stairs, and the unused lounge to Seneca’s personal study, whose view of the financial district was unparalleled though most remarked instead on the Hudson’s glistening chemical waste-product and the curious pink smog which sometimes carried out to sea. His master of letters was deep in his cup of highland whiskey, and talking with himself, quill carelessly twirling in his hand.

'The occurrence of energy is, in itself, insufficient material on which to form a metaphysical base, but the components of *observation* are foundational instead in the ontological and deontological—oh, young man! I hadn't seen you there. Please, please, have a drink. I have this great '77 here to refine your palate. Sit down!'

'I have been named Emperor of the Pax Romana, Younger Seneca.'

The philosopher fell to his knees. And he begged the pardon of Nero, quickly granted. Then, full of rancour and urgency, bade his pupil sit.

'You have spoken with the Senate?'

'Last night, hence. I was given your remarks?'

'Oh, I wrote those months ago. It was well known that your mother was seeking vengeance for Claudius, who remarked at a party hosted by his dear Narcissus that he was doomed to a lifetime of cuckoldry, with what pleasures he retain'd hardly worth a drop of poison to avenge the deed. He was an awful, sullen figure, Claudius, may the gods bless and keep him as a peer and paramount. Now, listen, have you seen this?'

Seneca directed Nero's attention to the obituary page, where the feature was for Junius Silanus—whose smiling picture belied a lifetime given to debauchery, at least according to rumour. News of Claudius' death had not yet been released, so as to give the family this day to mourn and hold ceremony away from the public eye.

'He was killed by poison, and look who it says presided over the funeral? Publius Celer and Helius Japoniucus—two of the city's most eminent otaku.'

'All but a testament to their crime.'

'Exactly. You have no knowledge of this venture?'

'None, sir.'

'It is an unusual murder, done in this regard. Junius was an absolute airhead only Gaius Germanicus, Bootstrap himself, could stand to be around for more than an afternoon. Yet he was suave, and beloved by many peasant women. He was the last living descendant of Caesar—it is no surprise he should be swiftly killed.'

'It is a sad thing that an innocent man should be killed.'

'Perhaps, but it would be more sad if a noble soul were blamed for the murder. There is such dread, cunning, amidst these fractured sects, who each with wiles and intimidation stir the public consciousness to frenzy. Just as the dot com bubble soon is bound to burst, so does fate ally herself with those who power pre-ordained, by speech no less than inborn temperament.'

'Then thus I have you to thank, my noble tutor, who didst bestow unto me the confidence to speak both prepared and extempore remarks as duty grants, and in my modest youth did induct me to wisdom's bosom.'

'Yes, surely some among the board will remark that it is unheard of for funerary remarks for an emperor to be scripted, yet we can reply that the divine governance was such that every syllable needed to have been measured, and on and on. How is it possible for such treachery to exist as it does, in droves, and for goodly speech to so bring evil ends? In what scheme does our suffering find use? How do we account for the essential problem of evil? Too many wisened men speak of life as an ideal, consciousness as reason, and mankind as the heroes of the greater world. Yet where do they get off—when life is cheap and cruel, distortion triumphs over logos, and human beings destroy the planet to the point of ecological devastation? How I beseech thee, Nero, Emperor Nero of the Pax Romana, think matters over from that vantage which is the envy of men. Do not lose sight, from such a view, of the delicate wooden scaffolding atop which you stand.'

Nero bade his master well, and sipped of the vintage with feigned interest. The two spoke of justice and fairness, what measures might be taken in the senate for public optics and private reconciliation. Plautius Lateranus, known by the senators as Paulie Late-ass, another of Messalina's many suitors, was restored to the council. A debt holiday was announced for patricians, and the price of grain stabilised for the next half-decade. It was the common call that stability at home meant the world around burned with corruption, and the empire's warlords set marks on territory ceded under previous administrations.

Domitius Corbulo had made a name for himself clearing the territories west of Armenia and Parthia—while the local monarchs Agrippa and Antiochus entertained the dread barbarian leader Vologaeses and with wine and wonton wile convinced him of the necessity of peace. In the outer boroughs strange cabals took the streets, attending raids on local stocks of contraband. Shipping district leaders were gathering union votes to oversee a demonstration, but tipped their hand as such, curtailing their momentum. With a chance arrangement, Corbulo was sent to Syria for to stem disruption of the supply lines, and a nervous peace was proffered for to better yoke the captured populations.

Quadratus Ummidus was stripped of his rank as a bureaucratic chancellor, though his communications with Vologaeses were considered foremost in an exchange of hostages which gave the board members purchase for their sycophancy.

'Here, here! On this day, we mean to praise our young emperor, attendant of our sovereign enterprise. It should be decreed that a statue be erected in the Public Temple, bronze, and of a size comparable with Mars the Avenger. And we will reinstate our policy of ovation upon our king's arrival—and black tie mixers on the second and fourth Friday of the month!'

'Is this enough? Why should we not set the calendar back so the year begins with our sovereign's birth? The empire rises and falls with each breath our emperor takes,

should we not commend as rite and ritual the living host from whence our knowledge of the divine is sanctioned? Do we ignore the spiritual calling of our better judgment?’

‘Gentlemen!’ Nero began, glancing at the prepared remarks which Seneca designed, ‘Let us remember this goodwill, for those who live to serve their state so duly earn the titles—through which they grant clemency, and grace. And grant for giving thanks the predictive models and political analysts whose work helped us stave the dot com boom before it burst, and kept our trade partners well supplied with battlements to wage their war for peace. We bring no dishonour to propose these changes, and must with substance act to cull virtue from our nobility, rife with the anxieties of management—whole economies in the balance of their every whim. Still, we must not lose sight of our assets. The statue will be erected, but no changes in the calendar are necessary for investment performance at present, and would disrupt the quarterly system as it operates. As a stormy night gives way to calm deliberation, so we must move into the new millennium with open hearts, to change our suppositions and attest what new advancements have made possible. It is without aspiration or credulity that I accepted the task you’ve thus assigned to me. But as the heir of Augustus, Caesar, and divine Claudius, whose heavenly might guides us into this new epoch—I act to claim their legacy, and set myself alight for dignity, and prosperity for all.’

An eruption of applause came from the board room as Nero fled, rolling his eyes he made his way back to the royal quarters, where his confidants Marus Ortho and Claudius Senecio exchanged quips about the dying scene—at one point in this city it was the Sex Pistols and Richard Hell, and if you didn’t come right to Ceebies or the Bowery then you were as likely to be thrown out a window as given a leather jacket. It wasn’t a fundamental softness that set these two off, but how slovenly and insecure these new shmucks beg their audience, wry, wry with feigned disinterest, for approval. It is not just that the old mugs were ugly—except, ironically, the Talking Heads, for some reason—but that their

aesthetic needs were nil, to better puncture expectations, and grieve the lowly state a human being must crawl in this rotten place. And there's the ouroboros, and eternally condemnable fact that only when it's real horror show, only once the devils have made roost can the light shine through, in ransacked authenticity, wholesale aggravation. The three were called the Vox Populi, but hadn't booked their first show yet. Nero took the men as lovers first, and each knew the other's bodies more intimately than their own. They took their time rehearsing, discussing their image and aspiration, what substance they'd inherited. If it were possible for the Butthole Surfers to stave away their intellectual pretensions, and for Bikini Kill to croon a ballad. If it were imaginable that the Pixies could forgo surrealism, and Spiritualised cohere in dissent. When the sweat covered their bodies—layer upon layer removed for their mutual admiration—the three conjoined in wasted, sloppy interstitial demand. These wiles and others such as these they spoke at the broad low-set ceremonial table in the royal chamber, pulled silver spoons from the ancient drawer to flicker matchsticks, huff embalming fluid, and tomb their pets in pottery, which will yet await the lot as they confer among themselves Octavia looks on at half-speed muttering the while *whilst the painful anxiety effects seen in the analyses of disturbances of speech (stuttering-stammering), as well as in the neologisms and in the speech distortions of the mentally diseased, again regress to the original symbol signification cross reference Freud, 'The Unconscious,' 1915, Collected Papers Volume Four, page 129.* The emperor's entranced but cannot claim cohesion, and holds enrapt the bristled hair of Ortho twixt his fingers when the staff-hand first made appearance, radiating modesty, freckled with a soft tan inference tarrasquine heuristic with Holy Island Mead in champagne flutes atop ivory serving trays his majesty asked what they were doing here.

'I'm an intern studying Hotel Restaurant Management at The New School, your majesty.' But how could such a fair creature disgrace themselves with present company?

'Well, I've always found people much more fair if you grace them with a present.'

Were it possible to grace us with your presence, instead?

In Kuelpe's view (see Outlines, page four forty eight), thinking is a sort of 'inner act of

will,' and its absence necessarily leads to an 'automatic play of ideas.' William James

regards non-directed thinking, as the ordinary kind spake Octavia with a leary smile, as

Ortho huffed his upturned nose and Senecio made room for them to occupy a corner of

the space, then spoke a gracious turn about the calf-length skirt and business shirt which

was the working attire, how tactfully this tray-wielder bound their chest to better fit the

outfit. Acte, was their name. Yes, quite shy. But Ortho would have none of it so the

emperor discarded him from his lap, and sought their hand to leave, escorted them to

the royal walk-in for to pick an appropriate outfit for Rossini's Otello—and the pair walked

straight onto page six. Agrippina, suffice to say, was furious, and told her son as much

when next he woke, still beside his new beloved.

'This androgynous-servant will not suffice his divine eminence! My dear, sweet,

baby boy, does himself dishonour to flaunt his lust before the public in such unbecoming

guise! With his sister's own clothes!'

'Mother, I will visit in the afternoon. Let us make swift love from this division. Please

do not be upset with me, whose every whim is providence, and by your grace ordained.'

Nero clasped shut the phone and rose to have his coffee. Acte had yet grown

accustomed to the royal bedchamber, which was the emperor's, and wondered where his

royal mistress slept.

'Do not worry, she's her own grand bedroom on the first floor. She is my sister you

know. There's nothing wrong with what we do as lovers, when life restrains us both by

inborn—excuse me, I have to take this. Yes, yes. Well you'll have to build new bridges

across the Tigris and Euphrates. Don't ask me. Have Varus look into it. There is nothing to

fear if Aristobulus co-wields the diadem of Little Armenia, he's bought and paid for. Yes...yes. Expect ten thousand dead in the campaign. Move the twelfth legion into Gaul, immediately. Yes, tidings. May the gods bless and keep you.'

Acte was able to show themselves out, as the emperor permitted himself one last kiss, a moment to plan their next meeting, the day after tomorrow. A relief took over him, that the ban on mandatory gifts and entertainment had fallen into place as he reached the height of power. Claudius took the opposite view—nothing pleased him more than some miserly noble kissing his rings and offering up his house's unused dinnerware for a boon to his portfolio. And yet the senate still refers to Nero as an 'Alexandrian' and rumours still abound that call instead his majesty 'Patroclus' between their teeth with shit-grins vying for wealth without any claim to distinction which ought accompany it. Nero sat at his computer desk and typed his password **Agripina1** and clicked the application labelled Offshore Tax Accounts, and several camera feeds appear in red boxes— Britannicus finishes his shower and changes in his room, singing along

Show me the meaning of being lonely

Is this the feeling I need to walk with?

Tell me why I can't be there where you are

There's something missing in my heart

with glossy eyes toward his Nick Carter poster, succumbing to himself with tears and clean skin rubbing against itself, with sniffing, stifled whimpers giving way to more tears, apologies. Nero takes his tea white, no sugar, and wishes his mother continued health for the nascent era—where many old ways will succumb to the natural decay which time guarantees will nullify all prejudice, and difference.

'You are most gracious still to meet with me, in such a trying predicament. Mummy knows you are still getting used to the responsibility. The real pressure which accompanies that crown. I know, and only ever wanted what was best for you. If I acted out of turn to say my peace, it was only because I cared about your *future*. Can you blame me that? Well I've thought it better, and offer you my chambers for your divine proffering.'

Agrippina hooked her legs over Nero's waist, and unbuttoned his collar with a wink.

'A moment away from the prying eyes of the media is invaluable for one of your station. I just, even if you bring that house-hand, would rather you do it where I know you're safe. Or even one of the hotel suites! Call the concierge and tell them to put it on my tab. Speaking of!'

Agrippina reaches for her handbag and pulls out a bag with four superman-pills.

'For the Saturnalia Festival. I hope you'll use it as a chance to reconcile with your wife, and Young Britannicus, who seems terribly lonely these days.'

Nero pocketed his mother's bribe and changed into his beggar guise, took to the street to once again stand among the vibrant brights where Lacosta sells her wares. Golden scythes swing over opulent fields of golden grain, diamonds consumed by glittery-red lips. A mighty Titan looms over an ecstatic crowd, drowned in eruptions of champagne. Another deal was struck for the festivities, so that Britannicus might be cured of his tainted love of power, and brought to a quick and painless rest. Though her lips quivered with the thought, Locosta assented that it would be done, as divine will dictated. Julius Pollio would oversee the execution. A quiet wind stirred the rooftop courtyard, where Manhattan elites brushed shoulders with their canapés and martinis, less scandalised by the emperor's choice in mistress than in his publicly flaunting them about among such modest entertainments. A salsa band called Los Caballeros Muertos played their cornet grooves to disinterest, conversations mounting over the subject of the emperor's age, though hadn't

Gnaeus Pompey faced internal audits at just eighteen and Augustus, too, testified before the senate concerning the yet-founded United Nations at just nineteen! And the question of Armenian crime-families loomed over the room as a heavy fog descends upon still water. By rite or ridicule, Nero, Britannicus, Octavia, Anneas Serenus (a freeman the emperor was courting for to send his love to Acte), and Claudius Senecio (who drummed for the Vox Populi) played King's Cup at a wooden picnic table beside the makeshift stage. Britannicus just pulled a four, prompting Octavia to finish her glass of Old Rasputin and pull a can of Brooklyn lager from beneath the table, swill it into her red plastic cup. Nero grabbed the top card from the deck: the Jack of Hearts, rulemaster.

'Britannicus has to sing a song right now. *Caballeros! Dejalo, por favour, hombres, hombres!*

A quiet stirred over the rooftop courtyard—Britannicus stood as hushed up conversations trailed away and the heir apparent began to sing.

My father told me

on the day that he died don't give up

your home to a tyrant

My father's breath quaked

as he stared down his death

hold me close, and see if I'm lying

My country afar

at knifepoint the czar

of our health can't do more than look on!

So I ask unto you what's the harm?

If I live or I die, what's the harm?

I'm wailing to you between lines that I drew

popped the medicine quick as my name

gave what I took away

a quick exchange

And through it all

your simple violence

I will be the last one smiling

ask me what I mean I'll look away and I'll say...

and after a moment of grave silence, applause broke across the party, which seemed to carry over the city, such that even in the provinces whispered voices told of that melodious prince who wept his miscarried inheritance. Nero stoked his fury, yet would not quit this company, and held Britannicus with a warm embrace and promised him an opening slot for the Vox Populi, once they were ready for appearances. For though it once was said that tyrants of industry should have no place among the poets and singers, wisdom thus commands that those whom learning has emboldened should not hold their tongues on matters of the art, which bears gifts that do not discriminate between rank or birthright. Only through such exacting muse-born artistry can the prejudices of old be brought to bear, for the virtue of sincerity, and the liberation of consciousness that most undoubted follows. Britannicus was brought a silver goblet by Julius Pollio, and drank heartily of its contents—then, with flushed cheeks, excused himself from the party, with Nero and his accomplices in tow. They were gobsmacked to find Britannicus appear from the toilets, with a hand placed under his low-cut shirt, just revealing the v of his abdomen, and an embarrassed facial expression. The emperor, in a fury, demanded that Julius and his men kill Lacosta, but not before having her produce another vial of poison—this one needed to

bring instantaneous suffocation, for the damn cur should not be privileged with impassioned final words. Just a final gargle after asking to 'pass the butter' at dinner and Octavia too numb to hold her head or else afraid, as Agrippina was afraid at the dinner when Britannicus was served that hot toddy, and a simple syrup added to temper the heat and trammel up the issue altogether. Despite efforts to buy her favour with jewels and crystal dinnerware Agrippina mocked the couriers for their bringing her her own trinkets. At the funeral it rained sideways and Nero split the superman pills with Octavia, and with each trickling raindrop the ecstasy shivered a bright abstraction that smoothed the skin to reverie, while the tyrant spoke his peace.

'Let us all remember this young man's unyielding love of family, tho it manifested in loathsome ambition, that shall not deter the exquisite beauty which he left for us to contemplate. His voice carried the hopes of common people, of whom Britannicus was especially fond, and now all hope rests with the state to see his will fulfilled. There will be a ten day halt on trading, and bonuses which have been promised for the incoming quarter will be fast-tracked to ensure that all commitments which we have entered in good faith will be fulfilled.'

The Campus Martius was dotted with well-wishing social climbers, and attendants whom the boy loved well in life. They marched their black procession with their grief unhidden, wailing for the sovereign state, and woe upon the innocent, too quickly taken from us. Why? Seneca draws near to the emperor and pulls him for an aside.

'The autopsy report found evidence of...anal tearing, on the deceased. Would you happen to have any theories as to why that might be the case?'

Nero kissed behind his mentor's ear, and moved along. There was much to attend to. Agrippina would have her company-funded security detail removed. It sickened him to see her wailing like she lost her own son. The sky bridge between their buildings will be

pulled, and what social status she has left, revoked. For as the vulture waits until its victim is helpless to fight, and then advances its cause, so do the socialites of Manhattan know when to fall upon their own, consuming through exclusion, derision, and barely restrained sneers. Agrippina would become pariah to all but Junia Silana, who some believed only held court for the ambitious matron to better court her misery, through false fellowship. For it was well known that Agrippina called Junia a rain-beaten slattern without a dime to her name, when Sextius Africanus sought her as his bride. So persons spoke of matters such as these, and how fickle do the hands of fate untie a royal's livelihood, though Agrippina had wealth enough to last ten dozen winters.

Rubellius Plautus, an average joe nobody from the Bronx, has been shovelling shit for the past two decades unaware that he's the next living heir of Pax and meets Agrippina at the Third Rail Inn. There's something of a familiarity in her features, and right away it comes to him, but he doesn't know for sure. Until the next morning when his mother placed a marriage certificate in his hand at gunpoint, and bade him sign. Iturius and Calvisius, whom Plautus had confided in, and who also worked shovelling shit in the city, told Atimetus, who spied for Domitia's gossip column at Vogue—who first told Paris before the story was leaked through a subsidiary text-service which dishes the latest concerning the affairs of the wealthy and beautiful. The actor Paris so loved Nero, whose temperous charm and demure sigh of a noble burden says what of their shared craft which speaks, with sidewise tongues to know nearer the centre of it. Then after the premiere of his one man production called **King Lear?** did Paris take his man aside and tell him this.

'Your mother plots against you, and has married a common bastard she bequeathed to place herself in line for your succession.'

Nero was deep in his drinks, champagne bottle uncorking in his mind, and could not bear to hear it. But the actor did insist and brought the ruler water, held Nero close to his

beating heart, which calmly told true his spoken testimony. Nero's phone rang in his pocket to the opening melody of Buffalo Springfield's anti-war hit.

'Hello? Burrus? You would not believe what I'm hearing, man.'

'That's what I'm calling you about, sir. Your mother, she has called a meeting of the high command, and I am being awarded a ring.'

'What!? How dare they! And I wasn't consulted?'

'Agrippina insisted it was your will being done. I am taking a black hawk to the command outpost now. Listen—'

'Where will the ceremony be held?'

'Nepal.'

'Oh. Burrus! I dreamt this day would be ours to share.'

'It is out of my hands, kid. You know I don't want it this way. But listen, my loyalty has always been to you, and not your mother. If needed, I will as you instruct from here.'

Nero hung up the phone, and barked his orders. Have Burrus placed on the active dissenter list, and made a high priority target at international points of interest. Perhaps he should be killed outright? No, ensure he is made aware of the order. Let him decide his own fate, for the time being. Seneca will be called to witness before the board, and Agrippina herself. As in word, the deed was done, and Agrippina did attest to her own self-righteous pride, which had been stripped by the emperor, and threatened to go public with the murders of Claudius and his child, Britannicus. Yet why should she rely on blackmail when the evidence was no more than suspect gossip from a hostile family, which stands to gain less than we stand to lose. A mother knows, and Domitia is pulling these strings. A

mother stands behind her king, son or husband. And a mother will see that these conspirators are punished—or granted clemency as is befitting their remorse.

The board was moved. Some wiped tears from their eyes at her performance. It was decided that Iturius and Calvisius would be exiled from the city, until further notice. Atimetus would be killed in a botched robbery, and Paris, the most amenable and beloved by the emperor, would be acquitted of all suspected charges levied against him. Nero also decreed that security at the reinstated games would be removed for the next fiscal quarter, as an act of good faith for the grounders. Purification rites would be enacted at the temples of Jupiter and Minerva. Each had been scorched by lightning in the storm accompanying the funeral of Britannicus.

Thus began new terror in the streets. Where vicious mobs roamed freely, scouting marks, and lusts were openly performed in glass house brothels, Nero walked the streets in tattered robes and fought whatever man of rank he came across. One night, the disguised emperor, whose face was disfigured with a real black eye given to him the night previous, pulled a knife upon Julius Montanus who, acting on impulse, disarmed the tyrant and threatened him and his gang, the Vox, before realising who it was he spurned. Montanus was an incoming senator, until he received a letter from the emperor with a poison vial and several incriminating photos. It was open season among the well-to-do in the streets. Armoured car purchases saw a huge increase. And in the underground—with its many hidden venues for debauchery or else conspiracy, the emperor spake his peace.

'You should not tolerate, as slaves, the perpetuation of the great dogmatic, capitalist lie. That lie that your lives will amount to nothing more than figures, how much you make, what clothes you wear, what bullshit brands you choose to be associated with. There is a voice, and that is the voice of uprising, which demands that those oppressed break from their chains—not merely pacify their aggressor! We do not cower among liberals licking

the boots of the bourgeoisie! This is the time for the righteous! This is the time for a revolution!

Yet the violence was getting such that gangs of actors were taking to the alleys of Broadway, attacking well known players as they left their dressing rooms—always for one vengeful reason or another. Nero secretly decreed that actors from outside the city would no longer be cast in show, for at least two years. Until the outsiders assimilated themselves or left, there could be no peace among theatrical performers. But a new venue would be erected for their paying local legends dividends to cede what mortal wisdom hath claimed as fair orderliness. Arruntius Stella was put in charge of regulating the entertainment industry—tanking the popularity he had acquired in his tenure as senior arts editor for iD. Faenius Rufus was tasked with management of the grain supply, despite having no experience in the industry his well-meaning competence and good looks were thought sufficient qualification. Claudius Balbillus, son of the famed astrologer Thrasyllus, was charged with overseeing the upheaval in Egypt, and Publius Anteius, eager commander of the emperor's Black Guard, was given similar instructions in Syria, with the caveat that he not step foot in the country himself, but delegate tasks among sleeper cells which had been systematically installed during the previous administration. The internal ranks of the company faced a blood letting not seen since Tiberius, or the mad Gaius. While reforms were put in order, agents of the senate were blackmailed for their treachery—magistrates and procurators who hosted games or shows as punishment for their servants were paraded down Wall Street, tarred, and feathered. Hanging effigies of corrupt bankers and unutterable graffiti lined Wall Street with vicious symbolism.

Actors who had not been purged from the casting rolls were overjoyed with how injustice can so quickly give way to pride. Were it not for the breeders who make the laws, they spake, arts education never would have reached its current state—for what social advancements can come without the bravery of those whose power surpasses the bigotry

of public opinion? Senators were put to death in private drowning chambers, fed to lions, or pulled limb from limb according to the whimsy of their tormentors. For their trouble, and the international slaughters overseen by Corbulo, Nero was crowned Imperator—which helped ease relations between the tyrant and his sycophantic court, who hadn't yet signed off on allowing the Vox Populi to perform, citing the security risks and possible legal repercussions if the event were perceived as being endorsed by Pax.

Faenius Rufus was in those days engaged to Sabina Poppaea, on account of her inborn status and undeniable beauty, which entranced all those who knew of her (and for which she was rarely seen out, and at such times she covered her face with a bejewelled niqab, which only further added to the aura of mystery and sublime beauty which was her reputation), and of which her awareness had not faltered since birth. She followed these affections without much notice and, being the daughter of Titus Ollius, her legacy status was never threatened in these decidedly practical affairs of hers—with teachers, then socialites, finally with high-ranking public officials, such as Rufus. Until she met Marus Ortho, Nero's lover and bandmate, with whom she became enraptured, more inconstant than wind, beset with dreams, a substance thin as air or cricket bones, the lash, what films project reality to screen—memory of an intimacy that lacks restraint, to speak what can't be said. They were wed in Vegas, returned for a party in the Mulvian Underground, whereupon Nero found himself no less taken than his confidant Marus Ortho had been, yet the three were swept away following assassination threats which were not credible, yet sufficient to land the freeman Sulla with an ankle monitor for two years. As the three awoke in the emperor's bedchamber, they shared a grin and checked the latest fluff headline to be disseminated among the illiterate public: **It's a Miracle! Dead Ruminant Tree Sprouts New Roots!**

'Suillius is to be hanged on public broadcast television this evening—in some sort of fur suit?'

‘No, no. He’s been banished to the Mallorca, forfeited half of his estate to the city’s one true sovereign king.’

‘Who is to be hanged?’

‘Some washed up actor charged with pretending to be from New York when in fact he came from Incest, Pennsylvania, or something or other.’

Nero held his breath through the daily news—fires spread from Cologne to Dusseldorf, leaving hundreds dead and even more displaced, Chatti and Hermunduri were killing each other for access to the Rhine, the Frisian death march was coming to a close, and tax rates were to be kept static, as income failed to adjust according to inflation. Merely the suggestion that taxes be reduced was enough to court the popularity which empire requires, the emperor’s advisors assured him. Yet scarcely could he pull away from the video Sabina Poppaea sent him, reading a book in the nude.

‘Since the issues he conceals in the subtext are precisely those censored in dreams at the behest of the moral censor or super-ego (that internal monitor, represented in Freud’s *Introductory Lectures* of 1916-17, as a ‘door-keeper’ who vets unconscious thoughts before deciding whether to let them through to consciousness), it follows that most of the meaning of a Kafka text is to be found beneath the surface, where ambiguity and displacement of emphasis hide it from view,’ she speaks most sensuously as Nero mouths the citation: Patrick Bridgewater, *Kafka Gothic and Fairytale*.³⁷²

After Ortho was banished from court and exiled to Caesaraugusta, of the Lusitanian province, Sabina would trounce about in bed, still in her nightgown attesting to her betrothed’s devotion. Though he was gruff in speech and hard of hearing to one side, no finer specimen could be found on the island—for he in virtue too could attest an underlying store most New Yorkers canst permit themselves, else they be trampled as the scurrying

³⁷².Patrick Bridgewater. *Kafka Gothic and Fairytale* (Rodopi Editions: Amsterdam), 2003, 57.

rat collapses underfoot of the uproarious stampede. Nero knew himself these things most intimately, who so loved Marus in suspended animation that his mind might now share a kiss as Sabina is pressed against his lips, their being one flesh, one soul united. And happily she left the emperor cuckolded whereupon the elevator pinged and in walked Agrippina who saw her son hard upon the couch, smoking a lucky.

‘Is that servant here?’

‘Instead—a woman—she just left.’

Agrippina moved freely through the host’s room from the entryway, remembering when the palace was her domain of safety and dominance. She poured herself a vintage and sat there on the couch beside the emperor, took the cigarette from his mouth, and french inhaled.

‘You know when I was growing up, Caligula and Drusilla and your other aunts.... Well you know what happens when an heir is needed.’

She placed her hands on his thigh, and pressed her fingers gently.

‘Would you be constrained? Would you let common peasant taboos deny you this release?’ She ensnares her thumb and finger, bows her head as if in prayer.

‘You should leave!’ Nero didst exclaim, unaware that in the hallway leading to the guest chambers Cluvius, the freedman who was one of a team attending to the domestic duties of the sovereign, caught the entire scene on camera.

When Seneca was made aware of these matters, he did enlist Acte to countenance upon the emperor once again, although they had fallen in love with Anneas Serenus, whom the emperor used to lavish them with pearls and poetry. The two were to be married the following year, once they had raised the necessary funds to have their courtship

recognised in the papers. They were crowdfunding the effort. Yet when astride the emperor they did burst with tears and spake.

‘No! I do love Anneas! Oh, god. Why. Stop. Stop!’

Nero left them to their moaning and convulsing gasps for breath. He thought of his mother, spreading her legs for her uncle, Claudius, whom the emperor secretly admired for his sharp sense and uninhibited self-esteem, which Tiberius utterly lacked. Claudius knew that it was death or incest, and succumbed to fate to spare his very life, and did not balk or pretence toward revenge when it was very clear that poison slowed his life to still, still—stillness as the sort abounds about this city, in the warehouse district where human bodies are kept in shipping containers, huddled, soiled masses begging just to see the light of day once more before heaven takes them. It’s no less well known that Agrippina seduced Marcus Lepidus simply because Drusilla was more beautiful, or such is common gossip of the sort which hides the truth revealed. They were younger then, as Nero now decides that Agrippina must die, though woe upon the world unleashed by such distraught conspiracy.

There were many who sought Agrippina’s death, yet Nero exercised caution in his pursuit of it. At first he merely kept his distance, and sent condescending messages of approval when she took her meetings at Antium. Poison seemed a probable option, yet they had killed their foremost poisoner. Anyway, the emperor’s advisors reminded him, Agrippina had abused substances for so many decades that poison would be slow to grip, and perhaps the sly vixen might be able to counterbalance it with the right cocktail of chemicals. It was said that she kept an entire pharmacy store with her while she travelled, which was only a fraction of what, as board member of a certain high-profile medical agency, she was entitled to carry. Finally one of Nero’s society buddies Anicetus, who had been denied by Agrippina for the treachery of his father, came up with the idea of a weakened hatch in her plane, which would, upon ascension, succumb to air pressure, leaving nothing but smouldering wreckage. So it was decided at the fast approaching

Festival of Minerva, which that year they were celebrating in the Big Sur, the plan would be set into motion. Only the hatch worked too well, and the plane came down in the Hudson before reaching a critical altitude. The story which broke publicly involved a certain air force officer who landed a commercial skybus forty yards from the point of impact, allowing Agrippina to furtively return to shore. Though on the plane a special ops agent had been deployed, and killed the serving-girl Acerronia, who insisted she herself was the Agrippina the man hunted as the matron of state herself hid with the pilot, braced for impact, and saw her dear confidant Crepereius Gallus snapped at the spine while the twin shocks flooded the cabin, and, as if pulled by the hands of the fates, Agrippina jettisoned to the surface, amidst the mob of wailing economy plus passengers who were being brought to rescue by self-centred coast guard, thinking only of their ten second interviews that would play on the news that evening. They would surely show their friends the clips for years to come—denouncing the public icon associated with the story, and insisting that they themselves were the real heroes.

Nero met Agrippina at the Coney Island boardwalk, where she trembled like a rain soaked teacup yorkie, her two-tone highlights suspended in frantic disarray.

‘Mother, your divine grace,’ Nero spake, attempting to hide his apparent delight. She threw herself into his arms, and wrapped herself upon his person.

‘The suit—it’s cashmere...’

‘Stop. Stop this madness. Please.’

‘I think we’ll go to Bali. There is a cruise line where we can celebrate beyond the purview of international law. And we can perform the rites of Minerva among the Tanah Lot. Perhaps, time permitting, we may even visit Burrus Africanus, to congratulate him on securing a ring from the Higher Order?’

Nero playfully smiled at his mother, feigning assurance. She assented to his course, knowing her fate. Two men came into her royal cabin and ran her through with longswords. Though her face was spared, Agrippina's body was impaled nine times, and blood ran from her eyes in trails, and pooled about her prostrate corpse. The luxury liner's blaring horn bellowed thrice as the emperor set eyes upon the Agrippina, pressed his finger into her stomach wound and spake.

'Look here, centurions! For once was this my home and hearth,

and all the world was contained therein.

For every sense which this life has allowed was given me

by this inanimate thing, which now I penetrate.

Such a beautiful daydream, a majesty of poetic wit and wisdom,

a regal host for royal hands to know.

It was a woman, and therefore no such matter now,

for what stirs the sleepless fancy of the dead!?

What dreams await! Decisive actions countenanced!

How fickle vice and virtue seem in such a vacuum!

When stable ground eludes our understanding,

and all the course foretold by prophesy is flux,

blind flux. We are like the hollow men,

or else their shadows given to what parchment tells us of ourselves.

*Do you not know that such indecency is naught
 but speculation? That I didst love my mother—
 this home I reach for with my pointer, signifying
 naught but myself, and what transcends myself.'*

The soldiers held back tears and stood at attention as the emperor wept his crime. Seneca was brought aboard to help tend to logistical matters. The body was to be dropped amidst the isle of plastic, which the Pax had taken possession of in an act of liturgical ingenuity. Papers were to be forged, and rumours resurfaced which Agrippina had previously quelled. Her treasons would be brought to trial in the ensuing weeks, and her funeral postponed until public opinion reflected the view which had been cultivated in upper Manhattan since the start of the new millennia. In Bali, where Burrus Africanus had been brought back into the fold of the emperor's entourage, the rites of the festival continued according to schedule.

A coordinated effort by Seneca and Burrus Africanus was necessary to convince Nero to return to Manhattan. For two weeks he refused sleep, and wandered the rice patty fields at night as the Krahang spirit flies after the mournful wails of Krasue, whose floating wisps of light can be seen by the sleepless peasant children on the distant shore, and haunts their dreams. Only after so many staged scenes where his security patrol thanked him for containing the situation with his defector-mother, did he let himself be persuaded. Before returning to the palace, he hid out in Little Italy where Tiberius had once fled in his self-imposed exile of debauchery and disdain. He took all his meetings at [REDACTED], to test the waters as to how Pax officials and members of the social elite felt about Agrippina's death, and where the blame might be placed. Few asked any questions of the matter, for it was known that washed up has-beens often die in some mysterious circumstance or the other, and the educated public was merely glad that Agrippina, who so

hoarded the spotlight in her living heyday, had the tact to quietly leave the stage when her moment passed. It was not the common fate for these well-bred socialites to accept their new irrelevance, as is said of Messalina, who mocked the public with her pitiful woes and lecherous displeasure at her fate. It is whispered among interested parties that the Sovereign Mother's final words were 'Messalina, how I have wronged you.' But matters such as these must be taken with a grain of salt.

Nero's speech was given to him on the way to the board meeting where his mother was to be commemorated, tho it was much the same as that which his mentor had written about Claudius. It seemed rather ironic now, with half the room who witnessed those remarks murdered or blackmailed into suicide. Mother's former rivals, Junia Silana and Calpurnia Augustus, who once seduced the mild Claudius at Fire Island during an independence day rally for which the district was well-beloved, were allowed to return to their formal social status. These and other dictates were warmly welcomed, and as the Juvenalian Games commenced Nero swooned in his heart at the stock car races—taking Octavia by the hand and descending upon the pits where the faceless mechanics gripped their drills with firm fists.

'Wow, o-m-g so random' Octavia mocked as Nero was fit into a fire suit, and shot across the track as ten thousand Trojan horses rushed the Olympian trenches, and javelins whipped about their armoured bodies—while the greater mass amounts to naught but blood and fire.

She held his hand as he awoke and left him in that moment, gazing at her silhouette that the entryway framed, vacuoles of light seeming to confirm his decree: that the Quinquennial games were such by name only, and each year now would see such entertainments, for a stolid public shall never reap the rewards of amusements with which they are unfamiliar, and as such those disposed to suspicion regarding matters such as these—it was as if a voice floated above his body, and spake these words and others such

as these concerning the importance of culture and art, what undying words of corruptible tongues may claim their poetry, the metabolic steadfastness of cultural rot, and Plutonian rituals falling from the sky like gasoline makes love to wooden obelisks, for enervated words. Lightning had struck a couple fucking behind a canopy of bushes in Central Park, and some pervert had been there in the bushes taking pictures when it happened. This image of their bruise-marked veins, the tormented agony of their entangled bodies, marked the cover of Nero's book of poetry, which caused a sycophantic spree of bug chasers, criminal addicts, and other miscreants to mark their skin with sacred words or carve their rented tenement with scrawling gibberish. Yet secretly the actors whispered that these were the portents of a change in power, and they consolidated themselves accordingly. Joining hands with the writer's guild, a strike was coordinated around Rubellus Plautus, who achieved minor celebrity after his book about Agrippina, *Mother's Milk*, rocked the best-seller list for seven consecutive months among small town sex addicts that, in her life, worshipped Agrippina's scandalous internet presence. Nero met the demands with indifference, killed Faenius Rufus in front of the board, bludgeoning the man to death with a stapler, then stapling unto his corpse an order for the grain supply to be kept stable despite unprecedented drought conditions spreading dust-storms across the nation. Plautus and Sulla were sent to exile in Korea. And Octavia, whom the emperor declared barren, was annulled from the royal marriage. In their palace bedroom, she pleaded that she was with child, but he would have none of it. For in those days it was well known that she entertained the courtship of Eucarus, a flautist from Macedonia. Yet she should keep her bastard child, and to Campania go. He sentenced her to a nunnery, and married Sabina Poppea.

'What in general happened and what happens, is no longer a personal misfortune, but an objective fact,' Sabina read from a small manuscript, *'Pain is the result of the differentiation of the separated ego-image. By this I mean an image that is connected with*

*the ego-consciousness. As we know, compassion originates from putting oneself in a state of suffering.*³⁷³

Sabina turned the page and continued reading.

*'Everything that moves us wants to be communicated, understood, and thus felt: each image that we share with fellow human beings directly or as a work of art is a product of differentiation from primal experiences that make up our psyche...Since in the lover one loves the parents who are similar to oneself, it is comprehensible that, as a result, one also seeks to experience in reality the fate of the ancestors'*³⁷⁴.

Octavia flew to Campania, with her grief. The plane was flown through turbulence so she would miscarry. Acte was exiled to Dallas, whereupon she oversaw the city's most notorious sex-dungeons, and didst discover the living Narcissus and Lacosta, who had each been gimped by high-profile oil barons, and, upon learning of their identity, was happy to send these persons back to the Pax Emperor. Nero made a show of strutting each of these around, and forcing Lacosta to excrete into Narcissus' mouth, suspended open with dental retractors. After the sickness is purged, Narcissus is masked again with a zipper cutting off his breath at crucial moments, Nero playfully watching his mark ease in and out of consciousness, sliding little knives across his skin, made numb with many years' abuse. Then the emperor took two stone tablets, zipped up Narcissus' head, and brought the stone down until the floor pooled with blood. He told a centurion that this was why the gimp mask had been invented, to make the clean up easier when crushed bones and brain might be involved. Lacosta was to be released to live what life her sanity permitted. Then he turned his attention to Acte, and had her chained to the wall of a repurposed gym shower, and turned on the faucets so the steam might quicken her end as he opened up her veins, relishing the whimpers of pity she made for her judgment of

³⁷³.Sabina Spielrein. *Essential Writings*, 104.
³⁷⁴.Spielrein, 108.

morality. Yet those seeking moral truths will find none here, among the living. Nero assured her that he was born most merciful, and would never seek pain after one whom he so loved. And he looked into her eyes and held her chin at attention, until they gave way to dream.

Of course, every murder of note was accompanied by offerings of white sage and lily at the temples, and no less for exile, which was in those days seen as more cruel than death, as attested by fair Romeo to Friar Laurence. Nero poisoned Doryphorus at a TGIFridays downtown, and with the Vox brutally beat Pallas with lead pipes after an off Broadway production of West Side Story. Although the murder took place in a back alley, Nero, and his gang of associates in leather jackets and pig masks, dragged their target from the entryway of the theatre, as the actors were milling about in self-congratulation among the general public. Romanus was a great Sophist, who could be said to make any course of action seem reasonable—he had been made first deputy officer of the nation's nuclear arsenal. Yet when he turned his sights on Seneca the Younger, the philosopher, in a drunken frenzy, threw his rival from atop the Empire State Building, atop which fall-nets have now been installed. The emperor bored of the news concerning King Vologaeses and his acts of subterfuge in the Mediterranean Sea, and more recently in the Ukrainian provinces. Tigranes would be assigned back to Armenia, where, using covert operators from underground militias, the Adiabeni tribe would be reduced to myths, and the abandoned villages which those who remained would call the towns of 'Dukh Lyudy' or The Spirit People. We need not belabour the minutiae—as other authors have with greater authority and wisdom written on the wars of attrition which ensued in those days, and have better paid tribute to the victims of these military campaigns which have, in our lifetime, only incurred further destruction. Poppaea, too, after speaking before the Senate concerning the injustice of adult-adoption policies and the consolidation of wealth amongst high-ranking bureaucrats and political influencers, experienced the wretchedness of a child lost— although the rumour was that Nero smothered the infant for its genital

ambiguity, none who might know with any certainty are alive to attest to this, or contradict it. The child was given divine honours, a temple at Laguardia which housed a shrine to all unborn children—the name was forbidden from being spoken or written, and children with the same name were taken by state inspectors and thrown from atop a cliff-face at the Overlook Mountain—where hippies wandered lost during the Woodstock Festival. Some protested this abrasive mockery of mourning, but were systematically silenced in the manner previously attested.

Tarquintas Silanus was made to overdose on prescription pills at gunpoint by the emperor himself, for being the final living heir of Augustus. At the temple of the Divine Summer King, Nero basked in the legacy he had carved for himself, with bated breath he humbled himself before the living divine, whose essence he attained through treachery disguised as honourable will toward the state.

‘I have thought of leaving the Island, my Divine. For naught is left for me to conquer in the city, but that which fate has decreed would be mine—critical recognition for the Vox, whose performance-spectacles have been well received in the Brooklyn underground, yet which hasn’t manifested into its perfunct-form, guided by my inspired voice as Heaven and Earth in twin- conspiracy. My thoughts do linger eastward, by denial of the rites of passage Burrus Africanus didst receive at my behest. Yet more than half a decade has passed since then, and I near the age when it was said that Christ beheld his execution. Now, most trickling fantasy, does mine host and helm greet truth?’

The ground beneath his feet began to shake, and columns loosed themselves which time had steadied. Nero fled the temple and resolved to stay in New York.

Tigellinus was in those days renowned for his usurping the role once held by Narcissus, as cultural emissary of the most debauched sort, letting warehouse raves give way to orgies in the disused offices of financial analysts and rooftop awnings where

the curious look on from their glass buildings with binoculars, as the mild-mannered step-father trails after the European Goldfinch with great interest after a lifetime's investment in American ornithology. In some such event, themed after the performance of 'I'm a Slave 4U' Britney Spears gave at the 2001 VMAs, Nero, wielding a nine foot python over his shoulders, listened to this actor's news.

'My dread emperor, I have secured you a booking for your debut performance with the Vox Populi, at the Ergot Theatre off 122 St.'

The emperor was overjoyed with this news, and with his entourage made way for the performance. The afterparty was to be A Moveable Feast themed and set atop the byways of Riverside Park, so Nero hastily bleached his hair on the way and set it into a foppish-middle part, following F. Scott Fitzgerald. Tigellinus didst dress as Hemingway, fresh from the safari, still flecked with blood.

In the hothouse theatre the wooden beams croaked under the skittish crowd of goths and post-punk podcast-types who were slowly gentrifying Harlem. Titus Andronicus had been on-hand that night to warm up the crowd. Nero found, on stage, his old companions Ortho and Senecio, each aged like junkies with greying hair and bleeding gums, Ortho's left eye so bruised he couldn't see through it. Senecio started in with the kick, and set the various effect-pedals which he had placed on his kit to hum. A visceral grumble cracked through the building, pulling up the floorboards as the crowd stirred themselves into a frenzy, and bottles began to smash against the circumstantial elements, feverish modalities distilled in hand-to-hand combat, knives drawn in the eccentricity of the heated moment. Whiplash of persons frantic, pushing, punching, invoked against the systemic repetition, the overwhelming allowance of such frivolity, and desecrating violence which yet exceeds the task of regulation, and still eludes semantics. Nero reached within his diaphragm and spoke-sang his intentions. Twenty minutes later or so, he stopped and left with his entourage as the electrical circuits fried, and the whole building went dark. As

the final security guard escorted the venue's owner and proprietor, a gaunt rat-faced socialite, the Ergot Theatre collapsed into a heap of dust and wood-debris. The socialite cried out, and fell to the ground in mourning for his ambition, taken from him in its very infancy. Nero, who was still high from the performance, stood out among the crowd in rare form, and cried, No! This omen's blessed! Thank the gods that none were hurt, and that the Vox's debut incurred such visceral absolution! For now begins a new era of creative expression and community-intervention!

And such began a riotous affair which took place over several days. Boats made to look like serving trays were set out over the Hudson, with walkways erected so that the crowds could move atop the overgrowth, where lascivious models enticed the crowd with wiles, opiates, an unyielding litany of song and seductive speech. Nero was taken to a television in the midst of a benzo-plunge, and shown videos of Seneca pulling a blade across his arm, and winking into the camera.

'He has taken a coagulant, and asked for time to dictate his final treatise on the human condition. Should it be granted?' a disembodied voice beseeched the emperor.

'Let him speak his peace. I knew him once, Tigellinus. He was a brilliant scholar on whom I built an absolute and undying trust. Why have I ordered this?'

'Conspiracy, of the most vile nature.'

'I should not be surprised, after all these impasses and failed attempts at reconciliation, that my mentor should seek my demise. For all that was once held sacred, has in this cruel era been made profane. What of Poppea, my betrothed?'

'Complications related to childbirth, your highness.'

Nero looked down at his knuckles and found they were both marked with bruises, surface-tear as if he had been punching cinderblocks. A beautiful wailing erupted in his

ears which he made note to include, if he could only capture it in rawest form, on the album he was writing, *The Wrath of Heaven*. He remembers very little after that, a beautiful boy named Pythagoras and the mockery of a marriage ceremony—his being made prostrate by the will of the crowd, and ethereal lights abounding from the wailing city. Spora finding him among the bodies, eager to wield such beauty through the dictates of gendered language, and local anaesthesia. With such eager congratulation, such wilful intertwining of skin and soul, the music seemed to pour out from him as the first winter snowflakes peacefully return to earth. A voice then spoke of Christ and Christian reckoning, and the number of beasts which in future days would oversee the angels of apocrypha, a rising swell of uproarious contention. Nero thought it was a formidable duet, yet balked at his planned purgation of the street-side prophets from their unspoken hold on his most beloved Time Square. Ask anyone, or, rather, consult the Sibylline Oracles! Nero didn't know the fire had started when he began playing. It was as if the music had taken on a life entirely its own.

Epigraph³⁷⁵

Paul Holdengraber

□ JAMES JOYCE

Born on this day, in 1882

“Every life is in many days, day after day. We walk through ourselves, meeting robbers, ghosts, giants, old men, young men, wives, widows, brothers-in-love, but always meeting ourselves.”

from “Ulysses”

photo emoji Berenice Abbott

[photo of James Joyce]

Ilya Kaminsky and 5 others liked

Philip Metres

“First Memory” by Louise Gluck

Long ago, I was wounded. I lived
to revenge myself
against my father, not
for what he was—
for what I was: from the beginning

375. To the same extent that “Ira Illa Numinum” is the strongest achievement in terms of formal, narrative writing in this portfolio, the “Epigraph” is the culmination of the other appropriative pieces here collected. The piece entirely disengages itself from the need for the construction of an ‘original’ authorial voice, opting instead for a cacophony of voices, contradictory for the sheer breadth of their scope. This experimental work is an example of postmodern “mimetic futility” as described by Girard in chapter two. [René Girard. *Anorexia*, 15] It is a piece which concerns itself with the literary tradition, what is and what cannot be ‘canonical,’ and how ‘strong poetry’ seems to, in the contemporary era, exist beyond the scope of traditionally recognised canonical authors. In this piece, as in postmodern theory, the ancient and (post)modern/contemporary exist alongside each other, with no clear means of distinction from which to resolve the incongruences which abound in this artificially limited discourse concerning literary origins and the evolving role of poetry in online spaces. The disruptive and subversive elements of literary discourse (as exemplified by Holly Pester’s “landpig” poem and the relegation of canonical writing by the likes of Jacques Lacan, Virginia Woolf, and Herman Melville to automatised ‘bots,’ reproducing already well-known passages of literary or extra-literary writing) are contrasted with the more pedantic and conservative uses of appropriation/direct quoting. The dialectic of subversion/preservation of canonical writing is a significant theme of the entire collection, and in this peculiar instance of appropriative writing, the ephemeral and easily changed usernames only provide a snapshot of the literary community on twitter at the time of this piece’s conception (circa 2020). As discussed in chapter three, “Epigraph” demonstrates the interfusion of individual and collectivised perspectives, and how the individual is figuratively dissolved into the collective, and vice versa. The contradictory positions concerning ancient writing, literary originality, and future possibilities for textual forms and interpretive networks provide an ideal model from which to understand the polarity of the pomoclassical, more generally.

of time,
 in childhood, I thought
 that pain meant
 I was not loved
 It meant I loved.

sententiae antiquae
 Technology ruining life:

“He calls the Sintians the first
 inventors. For they developed every
 art from fire, and thus harmed all life
 and all people. Before the
 development of these arts there
 was no war, no slave, no master, but
 all lived freely in concord.” #Tzetzes

[photo of the above passage in the original greek]

Ilya Kaminsky

“Do you know what people really
 want? Everyone, I mean. Everybody
 in the world is thinking: I wish there
 was just one other person I could
 really talk to, who could really
 understand me, who’d be kind to
 me. That’s what people really want.”

– Doris Lessing

Moby Dick

The White Whale swam before him
 as the monomaniac incarnation of
 all those malicious agencies which
 some deep men feel eating in them,
 till they are left living on with half a

heart and half a lung.

luke kennard liked

la peste

Landlord inspections on the mind

[image of the following text:

landlord - dog - doglord - landpig

When we came into your house there was a dog in one of the bedrooms. It shook its head slowly and we died. Nowhere in your contract does it say that dogs can shake their heads slowly in the bedrooms. We had to leave a member of our team in there. We went into your garden and found evidence of burial where other inspectors have died at the sight of a dog wagging its tail and welcoming us into the underworld where you, quite frankly, live like pigs. A blanket that looks very warming has been left in the rain for weeks. We cannot handle you anymore. We found that you have nailed dioramas of the estate agents' office into the walls, but instead of estate agents, small dogs are depicted bleeding on rugs and ignoring the contracts. Please, can you make sure the small pretend dogs send out those contracts and that the inventories of the small pretend houses in the imagination of the evil pretend dogs are up to date. We also believe that your carpet tried to make us socialists by being so determining of our feet. We do not like to be able to recognize our own feet when inside our properties. We prefer to be able to kick each other during inspections. We had to leave a member of our team on the stairs. We discovered you have removed the batteries from the smoke alarm and have replaced the smoke alarms with screaming heads. We found this shocking, especially when we tried to cook all of your bacon. We had to leave the melted arms of one of our team in the kitchen. We opened a small cupboard behind your personal lives and many moths came out. We have added each month to the inventory. Some moths went into our eyes and played out scenes from the beheading of Simon of Sudbury. Other moths got in the ears of one of our team so the ears and some memories of that team member have been added to the inventory. As one of the memories involved an extremely erotic eviction this has increased the value of the property. Please stop the dog from shaking and bring us back to life, then send us the discrepancy in the newly inflated deposit. Please erase the image of Saint Michael from the black mould.]

Paul Holdenraber and Empty Mirror liked

Ilya Kaminsky

“Magic is speech liberated from
language.”

–Agamben

Jackson Fronz

[image of the following text:

3 a.m. in New York (by Jean Valentine)

I have been standing at the edge
of this green field all night.
My hand is sticky with sugar.

The village winks; it thinks it is
the muscle of the world. The heart.
The mouth.

The horse is sanding across the field, near the fence.
He doesn't come any closer,
even in the dark, or run away.

Blood memory:
fixed on vacancy:
coming back and back for a sign—

the flats on his coat,
the shut out of his eye.]

Lacan sans contexte

I make an image; I incurve my
thought. You do not realize that that's
not quite how understanding comes
about.

Sappho Bot

no: tongue breaks and thin
fire is racing under skin
and in eyes no sight and drumming
fills ears

Anna MacAskill

This is just to say

I did not read
that article
published in
that magazine

which every
other poet
already
hates

Forgive me
I like my happiness
cold
and ignorant

anne carson bot
Hence the notion found early in
ancient thought that all poets are
liars.

Jamel Brinkley

“I am built for bed”

Garth Greenwell

Jean Stafford attended the
University of Iowa, briefly, as a
doctoral creative writing
student in 1938. It did not go
well.

[Show this thread.](#)

[image of the following text:

In addition to worrying about her personal problems that fall, Stafford also had to deal with the stresses of being in an academic environment once more. Almost as soon as she arrived at the University of Iowa, she realized she had made a big mistake in going there. Feeling intellectually inadequate, she exclaimed to Hightower, “I hate all this. I hate it like hell and I shan’t like it any better as time goes on. I am not smart enough for this place.” She described

her male colleagues as “intense, erudite young men with PHD’s” who made jokes about Gothic verbs. Finding them aloof, she complained that they were not impressed at all by her. Her “de-ovarized, dessicated” female colleagues were also not to her liking. “I have examined the other women in the eng. department (darling, you can’t let that happen to me!) and I have found that I am superior to them in only one way—physically. I am built for bed, not for a classroom,” she insisted. Furthermore, she disliked having to live in a small, drab room without a real desk or adequate lighting; and she did not enjoy teaching composition to “apathetic football material and militant women.” Though she was pleased with the seminar she was taking on Carlyle and Newman, she was distraught because she was scheduled to give a seminar paper on Newman’s *Apologia* the following month and had not yet read even one page of the book. A visit from Mr. and Mrs. McKee only added to her woes: they insisted on speaking about the events that had led up to Lucy’s suicide, and reminding Jean of the money she still owed them, they berated her once again for being a “dreamer.”]

Lacan sans contexte

Plato and Hagel will be showing up
any minute now.

Ilya Kaminsky

If I don’t answer for myself, who will
answer for me?

If I answer only for myself—am I still
myself?

—Babylonian Talmud

Poetry Koan

Watching/listening to a lot of
Merwin interviews at the moment.
In every one, he mentions this poem
of Hadrian’s, the only poem the
Emperor wrote. WSM speaks of it
as a koan, as if trying to fathom
something in it which he’ll never
fully understand. I am haunted by his haunting.

[image of the following text:

Little Soul

Little soul little stray
 little drifter
 now where will you stay
 all pale and all aine
 after the way
 you used to make fun of things]

Paul Holdengrabber retweeted

Ana Gavilá

“I would give all metaphors
 in return for one word
 drawn out of my breast like a rib
 for one word
 contained within the boundaries
 of my skin.”

Zbignew Herbert

photo emoji Eduardo Fujii

[image of a wilting flower]

Christopher

!

[image of the following text:

Shamash-shumu-ukin, my unfaithful brother
 ... forgot these acts of kindness that I had
 done for him and constantly sought out evil.
 Aloud, with his lips, he was speaking
 friendship, but deep down in his heart
 was scheming for murder.

King Ashurbanipal, ruled 669-631 BC]

sententiae antiquae

“Why Vergil’s poems have for the last two thousand years exercised so great an influence on our Western culture is, paradoxically, because he was a renegade to the true Muse. His pliability; his subservience; his narrowness”

sententiaeantiquae.com/2019/11/07ver... ver [@sentantiq](https://twitter.com/sentantiq)

[link to the article

“Vergil Was a Sycophantic Hack”
sententiaeantiquae.com]

Emir Han

“Men who are unhappy, like men who sleep badly, are always proud of the fact.”

—Bertrand Russel

The Conquest of happiness

[image of Bertrand Russell]

Samantha Rose Hill

Theodor Adorno: Is not memory inseparable from love, which seeks to preserve what yet must pass away?

Walter Benjamin: Memory is not an instrument for exploring the past,

but rather a medium.

Hannah Arendt: Memory is the
mother of the muses.

Vita & Virginia Bot

9 August, 1932

And— I forget how the sentence
ends. I daresay you've got enough
scenes stored in your great
forehead to finish all my sentences.
Virginia

Moby Dick

Already we boldly launched
upon the deep; but soon we shall be
lost in its unshored, harbourless
immensities.

Dana Levin

...seek and learn to recognize who
and what, in the midst of inferno,
are not inferno, then make them
endure, give them space.

—Italo Calvino

Anne Louise Avery

My small son, who is very, very
poorly at the moment, nevertheless
just won his first prize haiku award
at his Japanese school. I'm so
proud of him. Here's his poem
(foxes are very loved in my house):

Cold day, Midwinter

Snow falls on my lawn
The fox stays hidden

[image of a fox]

poem.exe
a quick inspection
the grasses bloom...
the cicada's voice
a quick inspection

anne carson bot
Her marble tears run down her
marble face.

Paul Holdengraber
diamond emoji LANGSTON HUGHES
Born on this day, in 1902

"I am so tired of waiting,
Aren't you
For the world to become good
And beautiful and kind?"

sententiae antiquae
"Medicine can cure the sickness of
the body, but death is the only
doctor for diseases of the soul."

[above text in original greek]
#EpsistlesofPhalaris

david wheatley
Browning's translation of Aeschylus
'has generally found to be
unreadable.'

[image of the following text:

The Hermeneutic Motion 313

and Browning himself termed it a 'somewhat tiresome, perhaps fruitless adventure'.¹ Take the pronouncement of Cassandra (Browning insisted on the *K*) in lines 1178-97:

Well, then, the oracle from veils no longer
 Shall be outlooking, like a bride new-married
 But bright it seems, against the sun's uprisings
 Breathing, to penetrate thee: so as, wave-like,
 To wash against the rays a woe much greater
 Than this. I will no longer teach by riddles.
 And witness, running with me, that of evils
 Done long ago, I nosing track the footstep!
 For—the same roof here—never quits a Choros
 One-voiced, not well-tuned since no 'well' it utters:
 And truly having drunk, to get more courage,
 Man's blood—the Komos keeps within the house-hold
 —Hard to be sent outside—of sister Furies:
 They hymn their hymn—within the house close sitting—
 The first beginning curse: in turn spit forth at
 The Brother's bed, to him who spurned it hostile.
 Have I missed aught, or hit I like a bowman?
 False prophet am I,—knock at doors, a babbler?
 Henceforth witness, swearing now, I know not
 By other's word the old sins of this household!]

Dana Lee Alsamsam and 65 others follow

Adrian Ernesto Cepeda

"Please, I want so badly for the
 good things to happen."

—Sylvia Plath

[image of Sylvia Plath]

Ilya Kaminsky

Rosh Hashanah

i bear witness to no thing
 more human than hate
 i bear witness to no thing
 more human than love
 apples and honey
 apples and honey
 what is not lost
 is paradise

–Lucille Clifton

sententiae antiquae

“Enjoy yourself: the years move like
 flowing water, and no wave, when
 once it has passed, can ever be
 called back again.”

Ludite: eunt anni more fluentis
 aquae;
 Nec quae praeteriit, iterum
 revocabitur unda #Ovid

Regina Kenny

Don't bend, don't water it down;
 don't try to make it logical; don't edit
 your own soul according to the
 fashion. Rather, follow your most
 intense obsessions mercilessly.

–Franz Kafka

#WritingCommunity #AmWriting

[image of Franz Kafka]

Sandra Isabel and 7 others liked

Brandon Shimoda

Today my daughter (1½) pointed at
a cigarette butt and said “starfish,”
pointed at a statue of Saint
Augustine and said “Buddha,” and
pointed at a picture of four
penguins standing around a small
pond in a zoo and said,
“government.”

Caroline Bird

‘It’s not a metaphor that bees make
honey of themselves’

-Maya C. Popa (from
[@scoresjournal](#))

[image of the following text:

Wound is the origin of Wonder

The bee that worshiped the mouths of those flowers
dropped from your window like a spent priest,
its thud comedic in the coded silence.
You were making a change to the order of your hours,
had announced as much in the prior moment,
and if I thought of Virgil’s *Georgics*, it was only
not to mention them. I brought my eye
to its abdomen, offered an ounce of my human life.
What would you do with the knowledge
that I’d grieve for a bee? Someone like me
could be played by the threat of endings.
I’ll lose you one day, have lost you always,
a long ongoing Westwardness of thought,
my Blue period; oh fond, formidable ghost.
It’s not a metaphor that bees make honey
of themselves while language only dreams

the hunted thing. Let's be hungry a little
while longer. Let's not hurt each other if we can.]

Evan liked

Dolt

Fun fact: Vergil is, in fact, better
than Homer, because Homer didn't
exist.

sentintiae antiquae and 8 others liked

caleb smith

Tyler the Creator

Chance the Rapper

Bartleby the Scrivener

Paul Holdengraber liked

sven birkerts

"To be happy is to be able to
become aware of oneself without
fright."

Walter Benjamin

Aidan Ryan liked

Moby Dick

I am the architect, not the builder.

Paul Holdengraber retweeted

Melissa

Silence can be complex, too
but you do not get far
with silence.

Begin again.

It is like Homer's
catalogue of ships:
it fills up the time.

—William Carlos Williams's fr.
Asphodel

[image of the following text:

to

re-cement our lives.

It is the mind

the mind

that must be cured

short of death's

intervention,

and the will becomes again

a garden. The poem

is complex and the place made

in our lives

for the poem.

Silence can be complex too,

but you do not get far

with silence.

Begin again.

It is like Homer's

catalogue of ships:

it fills up the time.

I speak in figures,

well enough, the dresses

you wear are figures also,

we could not meet

otherwise. When I speak

of flowers

it is to recall

that at one time

we were young.

All women are not Helen,

I know that,

but have Helen in their hearts.

My sweet,

you have it also, therefore

I love you

and could not love you otherwise.

Imagine you saw]

Dr. Sarah Bond liked
 Dr Hannah Óulíck-Baird
 Mosaic depicting the poet Virgil
 holding a scroll containing a line
 from Aeneid Book 1. Left, Clio,
 muse of history; right, Melpomene,
 muse of tragedy (holding a tragic
 mask). 3rd century CE. Discovered
 at Hadrumentum in 1896. National
 Bardo Museum, Tunisia
 #worldofrome

[image of Virgil seated between Clio, muse of history and Melpomene, muse of tragedy]

Ilya Kaminsky
 let there be new flowering
 in the fields let the fields
 turn mellow for the men
 let the men keep tender
 through the time let the time
 be wrested from the war
 let the war be won
 let love be
 at the end
 –Lucille Clifton

anne carson bot
 her marble tears run down her
 marble face.

myth.txt
 tell me the story of deucalion,
 survivor of the Flood.

sentintiae antiquae
 Saying there is no #Homer

- prob. true, but unprovable
- limits conversational options
- matches words to world
- v 20th century: not Homeric

Saying there is no Iliad or Odyssey

- enigmatic and interesting
- invites intense questioning
- fits world to words
- hyper-#Homeric

Paul Holdengraber and Linda Chown liked
Marcel Proust

No doubt very few people understand the purely subjective nature of the phenomenon that we call love, or how it creates, so to speak, a supplementary person, distinct from the person the world knows by the same name

Aidan Ryan liked

Moby Dick

Already we are boldly launched upon the deep; but soon we shall be lost in its unshored, harbourless immensities.

Paul Holdengraber and *plant emoji* vol. 6 liked

Vita & Virginia Bot

22 August, 1927

I like your energy. I love your legs. I long to see you.

Your Virginia

Paul Holdengraber retweeted

lumière.et.obscurité

“The grammatical tense of their obscene dreams was the FUTURE.

This grammatical future converts dreaming into a constant promise. A promise that loses its validity at the moment of sobriety, but since it is never forgotten becomes a promise again and again.”

–Kunadara

Paul Holdengraber and 2 others liked
Ilya Kaminsky

I often write on a subway or in buses or in planes. I do not know why I feel safe when in motion

–Meena Alexander

*

“There is a loneliness that can be rocked. Arms crossed, knees drawn up, holding, holding on, this motion

–Toni Morrison

Tom Snarksky and 2 others liked
Caroline Bird

‘A poem should end/ better than a life’

–Adam Zagajewski (trans. Clare Cavanagh)

[image of the following text:

Next Spring

The nations were exhausted after many wars
 and lay serenely in their marriage beds
 vast as the Danube river basin.
 Spring had begun, the first ecstasies.
 In the boughs of trees, still naked,
 Turkish turtle doves were cooing.
 No one knew what to do, what to think.
 We were orphans, since winter
 had left us no testament;
 a young butterfly studied flying
 haphazardly, from scratch.
 Butterflies lack tradition.
 But we must die.
 This is an inelegant
 way to end a poem,
 R protests. And adds:
 A poem should end
 better than a life. That's the point.]

sententiae antiquae

“Whoever happens to have
 practiced philosophy correctly will
 likely surprise everyone else
 because they are practicing dying
 and being dead.”

#Phaedo

The Paris Review

“I am quite agoraphobic. I
 don't travel easily. If I can get
 into a library—public libraries
 or even a bookstore—I feel
 safe.” —Susan Howe

[link to 'Susan Howe, The Art of Poetry No. 97 at theparisreview.org]

Paul Holdengraber retweeted

LiteraryVienna

“A great book should leave you with many experiences, and slightly exhausted at the end. You live several lives while reading.”

William Styron

[image of William Styron]

Lacan sans contexte

There is no whole. Nothing is whole.

Paul Holdengraber

BERTOLT BRECHT

Born on this day, 1898

“In the dark times

Will there also be singing?

Yes, there will also be singing.

About the dark times.”

Paul Holdengraber liked

sven birkerts

“To be happy is to be able to become aware of oneself without fright.”

Walter Benjamin

Vita & Virginia Bot

21 August, 1928

I don't care about what is 'better,' for
 however many resolutions one
 makes, one's pen, like water, always
 finds its own level, and one can't
 write in any way other than one's
 own.

Your Vita

Ilya Kaminsky

"I came into poetry feeling as
 though, on some level, these words
 were not just mine but my
 grandparents', their parents'."

–Joy Harjo

*

"they visited/ me in a stanza where
 we could be nearest each other /
 breathing"

–Layli Long Soldier

Caroline Bird

Malena Mörling just lightly
 destroying me

[image of the following text:

Traveling

Like streetlights
 still lit
 past dawn,
 the dead

stare at us
 from the framed
 photographs.

You may say otherwise,
 but there they are,
 still here
 traveling
 continuously
 backwards
 without a sound
 further and further
 into the past.]

sententiae antiquae

From Charlotte Brontë's "The
 Professor":

[image of the following text:

"Yes." "Well, I am not bound to help you, but I have a place here vacant, if you are qualified for it, I will take you on trial. What can you do? Do you know anything besides that useless trash of college learning – Greek, Latin, and so forth?"]

sentintiae antiquae

"They gave a kind of voice to the
 voiceless"

[original greek text] #Sophocles

Paul Holdengraber

diamond emoji GERTRUDE STEIN

Born on this day, in 1874

"There is a famous story about the
 writer Gertrude Stein, as a Harvard

Student, taking a philosophy final..."

Her professor was William James.

[image of the following text:

There is a famous story about the writer Gertrude Stein, as a Harvard student, taking a philosophy final whose single question was, "What is the meaning of life?" She wrote, "The meaning of life is to be outside on such a beautiful day," handed that in and went outside. Her professor supposedly gave her an A, saying that she truly understood philosophy.]

Ulysses Reader

Wellington, the rock of Cashel, the bog of Allen, the Henry Street

Warehouse, Fingal's Cave³⁷⁶ all these moving scenes are still there for us today rendered more beautiful still by the waters of sorrow which have

a strange voyage

The cold ocean. Foreboding cliffs carved with faces of mercenaries.

Paul Holdengraber

"I am rooted, but I flow."

~Virginia Woolf thanks

to [@style_minds](#)

[image of Virginia

Woolf]

Lacan sans contexte

The truth speaks. Since it is the truth, it has no need to say the truth.

Paul Holdenraber liked

Sappho Bot

May I write words more naked than flesh, stronger than bone, more resilient than sinew, sensitive than nerve.

S t a r d u s t

Wandering around the garden of my feelings, broken stems and rose thorns everywhere, a universe of stories hidden inside the whispers of branches, somewhere between the cool breeze.

Moby Dick

beyond all hum of human weal or woe

Moby Dick

in that dreamy mood, losing all consciousness, at last my soul went out of my body

HannahTM and Aidan Ryan liked

Moby Dick

Ahab answered“–Aye.”

Conclusion

This thesis project was intended to demonstrate via creative practice the nuances of my self-styled literary methodology: postmodern classicism. I have emphasised the need to build networks of influence, rather than the role of individual talent and genius as a self-contained model of canon. In this approach the persistent utilisation and study of paradox (polarity, in Goethean terms) offers a compelling analytical and literary model for understanding appropriation and influence with regard to canonical literature. This approach is both subversive and reconciliatory with the literary canon as it continues to evolve and reify itself in a dramatically changing cultural landscape.

The creative contents of the portfolio here presented, and the accompanying critical commentary, have an artificial scope which is primarily a matter of convenience, in order to substantively accomplish the requirements of the thesis as such. That is to say, that the apparent trajectory of the argument concerning the essential role of paradox and latent meaning in literary production, although rooted in a tradition of literature based in the early modern notion of canonicity, precedes it in a manner which is intuitive and easily understood. This is at times alluded to in the contents of the portfolio, in stories such as 'Tiresias Speaks,' 'Jupiter and the Crescent Moon,' and 'Babo's Vision (Himself).' Yet there is room enough, without exhaustively scouring for examples of lesser known works, in the substance of the argument here presented to consider how these essentially 'literary' qualities necessarily precede the informal codification of the western canon as it coalesced in the early modern period, and subsequently. Considering the literary contributions of the likes of Shakespeare, Dante, Ovid, Virgil, and even Homer, there is an apparent thread of contradictory elements which coalesce in enigmatic and subversive ways. This is not only the foundation of literary canon to a significant degree, as described in the introduction, but also a fruitful direction for postmodern classical research and creative practice in the future. Goethe's emphasis on polarity and appropriation is a direct inheritance from the

nascent early modern canon which helped him to realise his most well-known literary works. Kafka continued this paradoxical tradition, emphasising the absurd elements of the 'eternal' and 'indestructible' as both models for literary achievement but also critiques of the romantic metaphysical beliefs of his literary influences. Spielrein, through her own psychoanalytical approach, offers a more formal articulation of this critique of the 'eternal' canonical writer, by emphasising the horror and destruction involved in any creative act. The select but substantial examples of ancient literary narratives/characters in this portfolio demonstrate the variety of methodological approaches to articulating this complex phenomenon creatively, while the research provides an example for future literary exegetes to consider as a useful framework for other scholarly analyses. By taking up the mantle of polyvalence as one of my foremost themes, I have attempted to actualise the fraught analytical tradition of Benjamin and Deleuze and Guattari of a criticism that 'refuses to judge.' This approach celebrates, rather than elides, conceptual and methodological difficulty, even at the expense of clarity of expression and affect. This is understood to be a fundamental aim of literary writing, in general.

While none of the primary figures analysed in the three chapters, Goethe, Kafka, and Sabina Spielrein, exist in a cultural vacuum, I have emphasised the interrelation between the three writers, and their shared if varied relationship to the writer Nietzsche, in a manner congruent with the aforementioned analytical lens. Postmodern classicism, which is itself a paradox conceptually and, often, in practice, has roots in the Goethean notion of polarity, which is taken up as Kafka's literary inheritance despite the latter's ambivalent relationship to his progenitor, and which is also an essential foundation for Spielrein's psychoanalytical theories concerning simultaneous creation and destruction. This notion of simultaneity is undeniably linked with her previously articulated concept of 'erotic fusion' as the substance of poetry. Appropriation appears as a significant vector in each of these writers' works, also—at times as the precondition for parodic re-enactment, subversive re-orientation, or, more concretely, as a means of comparison which is

informative for a readership dealing with otherwise sublime or uncanny materials. Metaphorical, phenomenological, and projective thinking becomes tantamount to the Spielreinian perspective of creative production, which she uses as a fundamental model for understanding the reification of the personality and development of the ego, a process caught between the poles of individuation and the more nebulous collective unconscious. As I have argued, there is a direct line between Goethe's self-described notion of polarity, and Spielrein's creation which accompanies destruction. This simultaneity, also present in Nietzsche, provides the framework through which it is possible to theorise the above abstractions of paradox and latent meaning in a literary context. The difficulty of this mode can be found in the sole emphasis on method, rather than an affect or response oriented model of literary production. That is to say, that my interest has been in simply describing the constituent elements of canonical literary writing, rather than attempting to establish what the case ought be, or how political or cultural elements might come into play when considering this phenomenon. I have attempted to demonstrate a significant awareness of this difficulty throughout the process of deconstructing the stories in terms of their literary antecedents, which are not given to one, but rather a multiplicity, of interpretive possibilities.

Postmodern classicism cannot be said to function as substantially as other more established 'genres' or of literary production. That is, it utterly lacks the public recognition and commercial success which often characterises successful literary movements. However, within the scope that I have outlined, alongside the various other persons in the grassroots community which has taken up this mantle, more often than not informally, this designation, the postmodern classical surely exists and is even suitable to describe some of the most interesting literature of the new millennium. I have not belaboured this point, opting instead to focus on the network of influences which have led to my individual approach to literary writing, and yet the ever-increasing relevance of these influences themselves are proof positive concerning the imminent cultural relevance of my own

writing, and of those others who have participated so far in the postmodern classical. Genre labels must necessarily have a degree of fluidity to accommodate a number of different approaches within a given framework. In fact, given this assumption, it is much easier to study networks of influence than to attempt, to any degree, to articulate what the essential qualities of a 'genre' of writing are. Thus, I have preferred, when attempting to articulate what the postmodern classical is, so to speak, to study networks of influence themselves, which allows for the reader to better trace the fundamental assumptions of the pomoclassical approach across different articulations. That is, over the historical scope there is necessarily a fluidity in terminology which, in studying these networks of influence, allows one to more concretely contrast and compare a given writer's aesthetic sensibility, as well as their fundamental assumptions in relation to their influences/intellectual progeny. Goethe's polarity, while not entirely inter-changeable with Kafka's 'indomitable' paradox, and Spielrein's notion of creation and destruction, surely has resonances which inform productively, rather than obscure the matter of literary characteristics, which I have traced through to the early modern period in this thesis. Although my influences wouldn't have identified with this terminology, the postmodern classical, it allows for me to essentially articulate the relationship between my writing and the writing of my influences as a matter of *inclusion*, rather than attempting to provide a definition which functions according to what this mode of literary writing *is not*. This approach benefits from a substantial, intellectually robust tradition, but could theoretically exist without such a specific host of influences, or, instead, could be articulated under another, entirely dissimilar host of influential figures. Or with different degrees of emphasis: e.g., more Hegel and Marx and less Freud and Bloom (or vice versa). This fluidity is foundational to the very act of attempting to demarcate a mode of literary production, as such. I am formally interested in scholarship which drives such a perspective further into the past, in greater detail and clarity than has previously been offered, or closer to the present historical moment, with its obscene narratives and counter-narratives competing for control

in the global arena. In the so-called age of misinformation, the study of literary parody and paradox is not to be neglected.

I have chosen to study a self-made approach to literary writing, foremost so, because it is the method which I enjoy most, and doing so has allowed me to make sense of my own writing and experience. I personally take great pleasure in the theorisation of abstractions, and have at all points tried not to neglect the nuances which are endemic to such a difficult and disorienting task. This has not only manifested in the critical chapters as such, but I have taken a sincere delight in being able to give my fictional characters the space to philosophise their perspectives in a context where the value of their utterances is not contingent on a particular notion of absolute truth or plausibility, or, to use a philosophical adage, justified true belief. One of the more concrete examples of this can be found in 'A Country Sheriff' where the protagonist muses: "Justice is blind. Nearer to the heart are matters of the mind." This conception of the nebulous incoherence of justice (blindness, here not implying mere objectivity, but rather, the inability to distinguish between ideal outcomes) and rejection of logic in its own terms relies on a didactic affirmation removed from any formal argumentative structure. And yet the approach itself is informative if one is to consider the content of this 'argument,' itself. For how could one use logic to argue that logic itself is rooted in emotional bias? Would such an articulation not be self-defeating? This idea, and the articulation, form, and function here present has a strong foundation in postmodern theory, and yet the previously accepted discursive terms of engagement for discussing this conceit are woefully unpersuasive to carry such a criticism. Rather, through a creative process interfused with paradoxical constructions and latent meaning, I have attempted to proactively *show* how phenomenological experience undermines the concrete definitions of a classical philosophical framework. The purpose of this has been to meaningfully engage with canonical literature, in its own terms, which necessarily requires one to subvert, question, and undermine one's surrounding/preceding cultural and ideological norms. It also requires one to at times shift the focus to matters

outside the history of literary writing itself, as a painter must use a *subject* in order to demonstrate their relationship with the craft and tradition, rather than painting the *idea* of *painting itself*. However, given that the method of this writing is one rooted in dialectics, that is, in paradox and contradiction, I have also attempted to engage with the historical construction of literature as a subject, foremost so in the 'Epigraph' piece, but also through writing which is primarily appropriative in nature. The stories utilise literary subjects and subjectivities which are well established in the canon.

There is no outright guarantee that this work, or that any newly generated work, could qualify for 'canonical' status. Despite the sincere attempts at scholarship in the field of canonicity, the matter necessarily remains elusive, because canon itself is a dynamic, and paradoxical phenomenon. Moreso the notion of canon is situated with many contradictory elements. Mortal success and fame are no guarantors of it. For every Goethe and Shakespeare, who found much commercial success in writing during their lifetime, there is an Emily Dickinson and Herman Melville, who floundered, and found very little recognition until long after they had passed away. Kermode reminds us that artists we cannot imagine being neglected, such as Dante, have in fact wavered at different historical moments regarding their recognition as immanently 'important' artists. Kafka remains one of the most central figures of the modernist 'canon,' despite his apparent 'failure' as a writer during his lifetime. Goethe himself proves a perfectly apt example of this dynamic notion of canon, being a writer whose popularity has waxed and waned since his literary works were first conceived. It is difficult to imagine the immense popularity and cultural influence that Goethe held, his name being nearly synonymous with the German character, given the essentially obscure role that he held in the canon for the greater part of the twentieth century, which has only recently been re-examined in any critical capacity by the likes of Harold Bloom. Bloom, indeed, argues for the writer's relevance but not without outlining in some detail the difficulties of such an engagement. There is no proof that conscientious engagement (that is, a near-religious dedication to the act of writing)

with the canon is any guarantor of inclusion within it, although the link between Goethe and Kafka in this regard is undeniable. Despite the two writers' formal pessimism, and the latter's rejection of Goethean romanticism, characterised by an ambivalent, if hyper-fixated relationship, each seems to place an undying faith in the act of literature itself as a source of ultimate self-actualisation and apotheosis. This is my chosen tradition, which transcends even the context, postmodern classicism, although, I have attempted to argue with depth and clarity that these phenomena are inextricably linked, and that the paradox of the postmodern and classical can be informative in regards to the contradictions which are endemic to the construction of canonical literature, as such.

Bringing Spielrein into the conversation allows one to emphasise the negative element in both Goethe and Kafka. In Goethe, this is paramount in *Faust*, when Mephistopheles declares "I am the spirit of perpetual negation./ And that is only right; for all/ That's made is fit to be destroyed."³⁷⁷ It is against the grain of Kafka scholarship to reconcile the overwhelming sense of despairing negativity with any opposite, although I contend that given his conceptions of "eternity" and the "indestructible," there is an apparent interest in the same metaphysic which enraptured Goethe. This phenomenon is defined by polarity, a conception of simultaneity which precedes and informs Spielrein's notion of creation and destruction, which I have argued exists in tandem with her notion of erotic fusion. In fact, there seems to be an interesting dialectic of individuality and collectivisation of consciousness that Spielrein observes in the apparent fusion of the individual into the collective (and vice versa) through artistic production, and this observation complicates Goethe's view of the 'eternal' as it is expressed in canonical literature. Following Kafka and Nietzsche, Spielrein speculates as to the potential horror of eternal return, and how the dissolution of the individual into the collective during artistic production is fraught and overwhelming. This has tempered my own inclinations towards romanticising the vocation unto which I have chosen for my academic and creative

377. JW v Goethe. *Faust*, 42 (lines 1338-1340).

scholarship, in its varied forms. The destructiveness of appropriation, and its chaotic possibilities, have been my subject, and I do not balk at the unwieldy and disorienting scope of such a literary project. In helping to found postmodern classicism, I was all but unaware of the esoteric importance the idea would hold for me after more than a decade's commitment to the project. It is all-but-inextricable from my conception of canon.

I have argued, however persuasively, that the essential features of canon, its orientation through paradox and abstract notions of self-sacrifice (informed by the western religious tradition) have remain essentially unchanged since its inception, circa 1700. And yet, in order to meaningfully participate in the activity of canonical literature (or literature which reaches toward the status of the canonical, however futilely), and, to some regard, in order to study and theorise the literary canon, one must continually seek new conceptual models, and new language in order to characterise the phenomena, which are themselves dynamic in scope. This is, in part, why I have relied on Spielrein's notion of simultaneous creation and destruction, when perhaps other, more explicitly historical or historiographical approaches might have sufficed. My personal connection with Spielrein's writing and theorisation of artistic production have been fundamental to my attempts at establishing canonical literary writing, and after completing my thesis, I intend to write a novelisation of the life of Spielrein and other members of the early psychoanalytic movement. I felt emboldened in taking this approach by Derrida, who links the project of Freudian psychoanalysis with the most fundamental aspects of the modern archive: namely, the internalisation of knowledge, which indelibly influences even if, like so much unconscious material, it is not actively present at the forefront of the (collective) psyche.³⁷⁸ Through the generation of a unique and personal framework, I have explored some foundational questions about the nature of literary canon as both a preservative and subversive phenomenon. It therefore follows that my own writing generated in this context contains elements which both preserve and subvert the accepted norms of literary criticism as such.

378. Jacques Derrida and Eric Prenowitz. "Archive Fever," <http://www.jstor.org/stable/465144>.

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Appendix A: Further Reading

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