

THE BLUE VELVET REVIEW PRESENTS . . .
THE LOST NOVEL EBOOK SERIES



\$14.28 IS MORE ATTRACTIVE THAN \$14.00

NAS SAFA

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**\$14.28 is More
Attractive than \$14.00**

Nas Safa

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*“Just as ten and twenty can be thirty two or thirty
or twelve and twenty can be thirty.
She stands there in the doorway of her mother’s house
and thinks these thoughts.
That fourteen dollars and twenty eight cents is more
attractive
than fourteen dollars because of the twenty eight.
No one likes or dislikes zeros.”*
—Robert Ashley

1: Πρόσωπο in 3 Iterations

1.1: The Son

01—I’d already attempted to get my eyebrows threaded at Cheryl’s earlier that week, but her sign read ‘on vacation, returning Saturday,’ so I returned Saturday, unfortunately still wearing a full suit that, on the one hand, I felt deeply uncomfortable exhibiting, yet on the other hand, feeling like I had a duty to wear said suit to its logical conclusion, so I entered the parlor with my tie still in tact, and as I entered I recalled, the week previous, crossing Memorial on our way to Bayberry Garden, thinking to myself ‘I can’t feel my mouth, haha,’ tweeting text to the effect of ‘I can’t feel my mouth haha,’ only to later delete said tweet. An older lady with a stereotypically hoarse voice, a voice that alone is capable of echoing the true essence of every hair salon located on the Eastern seaboard, sat beside me on the

establishment's comfortable black couch, she said something to the effect of 'Cheryl is still jet-lagged,' not to me in particular, but instead to someone she was speaking to on the phone, she then motioned I could cut her in line if I so chose. Hesitantly but swiftly, I took the hoarse-voiced lady up on her offer—I recognized the substitute threader, as she'd lined me up on a previous Saturday, months prior, while in the months since I'd acquired the tendency of getting threads on Thursdays—it seems as though she only works intermittently, and when so, on Saturdays. 02—The two of us engaged in a rather lengthy exchange regarding the Series Seven License, which the substitute had expressed some interest in pursuing, because I'd mentioned that, nominally speaking, I work as an 'analyst,' she then assumed I possessed somewhat intimate knowledge of the License. As it so happened, I knew a decent amount about the Series Seven, but it had nothing to do with my 'analyst' occupation, no, it was only because I'd traded financial options obsessively earlier in my life—none of my knowledge regarding the exam came from my 'analyst' role, as 'analyzing' things in corporate America is the furthest thing from the volatility of public market exchanges, despite the fact the exchanges basically trade abstractions of American corporations. But with all of that said, I hadn't taken the actual test, although I'd passed the Series Three, which was somewhat adjacent to the Seven, and it was child's play, a total breeze so I suggested that the substitute maybe pay some attention to the stock and bond markets in the interim, and she'd probably be fine, to which she said 'Do you want your nose threaded too?' At the time it seemed like something I'd have some interest, in fact I recalled this substitute offering me the same upsell, which in this rare instance I actually appreciated, the prior time I'd seen her—yet on

some level I remained aware, sitting behind us, of this older lady with the stereotypically hoarse voice, who allowed me to cut her in line so graciously, no doubt expecting me to sit for a simple clean up and nothing more. To now engage in a nose thread, there was no doubt about it—it would have been a total affront to good taste. 03—Back on Mineral Spring I recalled again pontificating on the efficacy of smoking cigarettes, as opposed to eating processed foods, despite only smoking cigarettes when wildly inebriated, while standing against the patio bar at Bayberry Garden. While still nonsensically wearing my full suit I equally nonsensically recalled the composer Anthony Braxton continually repeating the word *transidiomatic* in an old YouTube interview I was watching the previous evening. Composers in America are asked to describe their compositional style, and they masturbate ruthlessly in response, they repeat phrases like *transidiomatic* and they jack off with no sense of shame. Of course, I thought to myself wearing a full suit driving down Mineral Spring, the entire American university, at its apex, is now just a factory of great masturbators—there's no heterodox thought left in our universities, I concluded, still in a nonsensical full suit, no, in place of heterodoxy there's only a factory of good to very good masturbators, people who have absolutely nothing to contribute to our culture except jacking off in a more refined manner than most.

1.2: The Father

01—We were sitting at the bar at Pasha waiting for our ice hose hookah to arrive, I was so excited, both of us drinking a bottle of Modelo a piece—I hadn't even noticed Kenny ordered a Modelo, and I asked him, 'Do you like Modelo?' to which he replied 'I'm Mexican,'

which I pondered for a moment. Kenny was Mexican, so, ipso facto, one may assume he enjoys Modelo—at the time it seemed incredibly sensible to me. Our previous meeting that evening had continued a tad too long for my personal liking—certain people, with all due respect, they lack the capacity for identifying the appropriate moment to conclude an anecdote, to cease the practice of bringing up additional anecdotes, these people, they're all great people, and of course I could hardly say a single pejorative thing about any of them, yet some of them, they're just apparently filled to the fucking brim with these anecdotes, and they're incapable of noting the correct moment to cut these anecdotes short, to taper off these limitless anecdotes, they just ordered a new pen on Amazon, and for my part, of course I appreciate an anecdote as much as the next man, I've always appreciated a modicum of restraint with regard to the anecdote. 02—All meetings, it seems to me, necessitate adjournment eventually, and a society where infinite anecdotes becomes acceptable will inevitably end with the slow deaths of its citizens in meetings that should have adjourned forty five minutes prior. With that said, I was in the mood for a few Mezcals, which we grabbed at Meloni's new bar, but we also wanted a hookah. I asked, 'Does anyone want a ... hookah?' Katreena, for her part, made it abundantly clear she had no interest in attending a particular not-to-be-named hookah lounge, and while I personally held no particular ill-will against said lounge, I utterly respected her opinion. She found herself in a bit of a beef with a not-to-be-named hookah lounge, and I supported her one hundred percent—with that said, from time to time, perhaps in a totally ill-advised fashion, I felt like a hookah at said spot was perfectly fine, but Katreena seemed to disagree somewhat vehemently, which was something we all felt was

completely understandable, it was something we all respected. 03—The reality is, when it comes to smoking hookah, I adhere to a strict pact of non-aggression. With all of that in mind we all agreed to smoke one ice hookah at Pasha. While waiting to receive our routine pat downs, two Turkish waiters conversing furtively glanced at me after I accidentally glanced at them, and I considered the possibility they were concerned that I could understand them—I've informed Katreena on multiple occasions that my boycott of Istanbul will remain in effect until the Turkish state takes accountability for its atrocities committed against the Greek people. Yet, realistically, the only path forward for either ethnicity is a merging of the Greek and Turkish worlds—Manzikert was one thousand years ago. The ice hookah, which I'd maintained was the best in the city for years on end, was a little disappointing, it left more than a bit to be desired. Jack wasn't there. I kept flipping the coals over and over, but the hookah kept disappointing me. Over and over the hookah disappointed me.

1.3: The Holy Spirit

01—Flipping myself ass up at the colonoscopy before it was appropo, there's no longer a notion of sanctity in abstract expressionism, quantum mechanics and nonlocal relations or something, John Bell was correct about the physical universe, writing 'muttering my constant curiosity got in the way of my suicide to myself' in a somewhat ironic tone but muttering nothing at all—the older woman had no interest in geriatric footwear yet wouldn't stop speaking to me of my destiny after eight o'clock at the Wrentham outlets, aged thirty six Portuguese dancers inform you in minute detail of your own acute misery then walk away unconcerned, this is why Christ had his feet rubbed— 02—Dip down like a

quick bath into the DMT-like essence of what seems poetic, breakfast and coffee spots close so quickly, yet I find myself yearning for an Americano and omelet a little after four, the clouds over one forty six south consistently look like oil paint, prior to the mental health revolution adolescents were forced to internalize trauma, many of them becoming complete assholes in the process, I've soured on the beach, skin care I suppose has become a bit of a priority, sand is somewhat of an annoyance— 03—Two midgets eating delicious looking rice bowls at Xaco Taco, repeating the phrases 'there is no image,' 'there is no memory,' there's no image and there's no memory, sans image and memory we can start to approach the fundamental nature of the universe as such, triple egg omelet with the kalamata olives, a chest crevice stained in a permanent ink of sorts, cuddly beavers eat vegetables from the hands of well intentioned human beings, the small bottles of soju were only eight bucks a piece— 04—The saki at Somo was possibly the worst alcoholic beverage I've ever sipped, the can looked like an anime juicebox, it appealed to me, it struck me Tiny Bar had a pretense about it that just struck me as completely out of line, people from various backgrounds making fast friends as I ate breakfast out on the patio at Domenic's, considering going to Chilango's, once again deciding against it, the condo complex looked like total shit, real estate as an investment has always struck me as less than a no brainer— 05—Blue light eyeglasses with the black wire rims I look like a complete douchebag, there's a document titled password is password with the dollar signs after the A, Proust was a renowned fan of male prostitutes—they think Nietzsche died of syphilis, in my mind I'm the last of a long line, made American English into Ancient Greek—consider me the twelfth

Constantine, genocides are just a matter of taste, anatoli just means East— 06—Gregory of Nazianzus implicitly understood the nature of quantum physics, of nonlocal relations, it's possible the Occident has clung to an initial linguistic reversal, a reversal creating an illusion of perspective, it's possible the perspectivism discovered by people like Nietzsche was in fact a simple byproduct of this initial reversal of the Occident, this idea of a perspective, it seems totally illogical to me, no pun intended, ice hookah with the tzatziki I wasn't quite in my right mind at the time, samurai sword in Washington Park, the car seat saw too much, videography is archaic in retrospect, the science of phonetics is still ambiguous, the conversation faded of its own accord— 07—Siberia is beautiful this time of year, all art is not necessarily ipso facto for everyone, the flesh of the human being wasn't universally appealing, believe it or not, emotional baggage lost in transit after I woke from a strange dream, my yiayia informing me she's out of sorts with smudged lipstick as I clutch a nephew that isn't mine, there are many regional differences to take into account, we construct linear states in retrospect then spit on a street in Izmir, the rolled down window was like a picture frame, memory was juvenile delinquents spraying graffiti, the Providence cop was satisfied with the answer we're just conversing— 08—The unspecified bug trapped in the spider web on the railing of the employer's entrance made me consider metaphors or something, the cashier at Job Lot of ambiguous ethnicity needs to employ social media to assist her pursuit of establishing herself as a photographer, her favorite food is pizza, the colonoscopy was unsuccessfully rescheduled on two occasions, it struck me that 'Russian whore' is one of the few misogynist phrases still acceptable to say aloud in so-called mixed company, sure it was nice enough to

have the assistance of Giovanni Guistiniani but not if he insisted on retreating the first time his chest caved in— 09—I found Marios Philippides' monograph on the last Constantine to be so pro-Latin to be nearly unreadable, which was unsurprising because it seems as though there are almost no true Greek intellectuals in the West, only faux-Greek intellectuals that shamelessly sell out their own history, who rubber stamp Anglo assertions that the Hellenic era ended after Socrates fondled Alcibiades, I often have an urge to spit on these so-called intellectuals, these scholastic imbeciles, these Levantine Benedict Arnolds, these cowards of the spirit, while I painstakingly transform American English into Koine Greek I have to deal with people of my own ancestry obfuscating in the service of secular popes, when there's nothing below a secular pope, it's why at times I feel like retiring to a monastery or something, sometimes you have to ask yourself what's the point— 10—A bit depressed without palpable cause, slowly noticing a variety of polka dots on a pristine two thousand sixteen Honda Civic clearly due to the douchebag incessantly moving his white pickup in the parking lot, inebriated and peeing on Enzo's door handle in two thousand and fourteen, two years prior to the Civic being issued, the scallops at Maria Cucina were succulent yet ridiculously overpriced, Curt alleged the pork was kind of dry, slowly noticing Milagro is a halfway decent tequila at Vino Veritas— 11—Black eyebrows plucked with a muted sense of glee, the center of gravity is ultimately elusive, there's a πρόσωπο that becomes an ουσία but not quite vice versa, we begin with the individual and think this is freedom, there is no individual, the individual is no organism, the organism is the first fallacy, I've never been a big fan of sense perception, prose is some form of telepathy, this is perilous, I've only intermittently

believed this is good, my beliefs are purely theatrical, there's no better opera house than belief, she asked me an asinine question and laughed, I chuckled nervously, it marked the beginning of a horrendous era for each of us— 12—Leaving the apartment for the first time all Friday the fresh air was a revelation, Liberian with the mask on at the Greek pizza spot, rub and tug with the open sign across the street, might get my VCR repaired at Cho's Electronics, Speedway stuck up by the black dude with balloons tucked under his shirt, he picked my key up for me on a random Sunday afternoon, I always found him a nice guy personally, take a right onto Alexander and pass the basketball courts, two thousand eighteen flashbacks, taken aback by my note but as much of an asshole as you can be it's essential to remain a man of your word, otherwise there's no redemption arc— 13—It became gradually apparent as I made incidental eye contact with a girl with a gargantuan fake ass that I'd slowly lost the ability to type words coherently into my iPhone—memory is perhaps as a concept slightly ill-advised, I considered while eating an entire rotisserie chicken at a later date, yes it was inadvisable in retrospect to give an overarching historical recap of the late Ottoman Empire to two seventy somethings I'd never met, senses get muted with age—I failed to notice the effervescent backside ambling across India Point until Katreena accused me of looking at it, orifices are ultimately negligible phenomena, Jesus didn't give much credence to bank accounts, I considered eating an entire rotisserie chicken at a later date—chanting the words 'turn my bitch up' in a soft whisper as I strenuously edit the HTML of a bootleg Tumblr page I feel at peace with the world, ten calendars on females with two kids I feel at peace with myself, ten mezcals enter an eleventh dimension I feel at peace with the world, with the

charlatan nature of mathematics, my mother ditched me at Nick-A-Nee's, but truthfully I didn't want to reveal my new Audrey Horne tattoo anyway— 14—On Mineral Spring getting my eyebrows threaded by Cheryl a self-identifying Spanish lady with a curiously Arabic accent attempts to sell off a pair of air pods to help support her alleged four children and I was a little dubious to say the least, defecating at the gentlemen's venue, off-brand dude wipes from The Christmas Tree Shop, writing essays is reprehensible, having sincere opinions is basically worse than climate change in my mind, boycotting semicolons, the irony of my New York Knicks fandom has slowly fallen by the wayside with age— 15—Pulling my penis out with a child-like sense of jubilation, I require more podcasts is the only conclusion I've come to of late, it's the only logical conclusion, there's simply a severe lack of podcasts in the current era, we've ruthlessly deprived ourselves of others' opinions, reading a Robert Ashley libretto while stroking my beard in a fashion that evinces a solemn contemplation— 16—Honduran medium roast in the Mister Coffee—brown basmati with two teaspoons from the za'atar bag, only extra virgin olive oil from the cold press, at this point I think we need to admit we've made some mistakes in an adult and calculating manner of speaking, I'm even-tempered by nature, office space two feet by four feet with the stapled carpet made from recycled styrofoam or something—reading impassioned reddit posts about the heterosexuality of male masturbation dildos, toss two cubes in the ice hose and try to see dead people, one of the most profound friends I've ever had was a floor fan— 17—Tyranny of the four-four, meaning is negotiable, the doppelganger appeared only intermittently to me on a mild Sunday afternoon, reminded me of a missed call I received five

or so years ago, but I discarded the memory to the possibility of eating a self-salted french fry—the dude who stuffed the young corpse into his trunk lived in an upscale apartment complex and didn't resemble your typical pervert murderer, eye contact is quantum computing— 18—Four walls encapsulate horrendously repetitive phenomena right around decade anniversaries, at the Italian-American club I engaged in an emo conversation regarding geographical tendencies for no particular reason, turquoise crystal covers the stab wound between the collarbones, parts and wholes are necessary, didn't need to inform myself it was slightly ill-advised, gazing mindlessly at your own history a little aloof, succumbing to nefarious literalism with friends, to be frank I couldn't comprehend how anyone would come to think political opinions are anything but art, it never occurred to me that my passion could be misconstrued as sincerity— 19—The deceased raccoon looked serene like it was sleeping on the side of one forty six, I saw Curtis texted there wasn't a cunt hair of a chance the Italian ass was authentic and I agreed, I thought about the raccoon corpse again, about the nonsensical nature of biology, about the big bottle of Soju I'd bought at the so-called discount liquor store which seemed to price items higher than MSRP, thoughts may be physical phenomena that haunt us no different than poltergeist, I can't honestly say I always select my phrasing in the most careful of manners, some names you shouldn't say— 20—Discussing espressos blackout drunk with Emilio at Amedeo, half pound of the pulled pork but only if it's completely unseasoned, succulent (pause), being the only car on Memorial brought on a somewhat nonsensical sense of foreboding, I felt an intense foreboding, could it have been the Casamigos Blanco, this continual disrespect of the agave, an ad claims to

unravel the meaning of agape, The Big Fat Greek Wedding franchise does nothing but perpetuate a generic sense of ethnicity that's as inane as it is counterproductive, something especially ironic coming from the so-called Greek east, the relational essence par excellence, Nia Vardalos it should be noted is simply no Cappadocian, this conception of essence is embarrassingly faux-Hellenic, back to Manuel at Manzikert— 21—Half Greek vacuum cleaner in a mid-August malaise, fortune read unsolicited at two pm on a Sunday smoking a ten dollar cigar drinking a vodka on the rocks, half barbarian eleventh Constantines, eleven Constantines is sufficient, half Nikola Jokic, typing the word kindly in emails, I was flummoxed at the amount of redskin on the redskin peanuts, middle aged podcast host repeatedly using the phrase 'sphincter clenching'— 22—Ingest the special star shapes there's a club above an arcade, there's a seven am showing of an uneven Netflix anime, two homosexuals dance sans irony and there's an album that will preferably be disavowed at a later date, a man my age is now dying a slow death, incoherent epidermis, I used to hit the bottle hard too—indeed I painted six hours at a time with the Sobieski by my side, screwed and chopped Bjork, a sense of adolescence existed, Markos Vamvakaris wrote about the water pipes and call girls of turn of the century Piraeus, shirt unbuttoned all the way down with profound hiccups to drown out D'Andrea's dead body, but can we confirm the Puerto Rican girl behind the bar is aware, does the butt wipe at the bar bathroom realize Ryan's died, I don't discriminate between organic entities and otherwise, another man our age is dying, second cousins we never see drop dead in Florida yet dude was always an asshole anyway, ingest the special star shapes there's a club above an arcade, I used to paint

six hours at a time with the Sobieski by my side, I found it enjoyable for the era—cigar bar with Lams, I'm well aware my charisma is unorthodox in character— 23—I can no longer consume spaghetti alio yet I've gradually come to terms with this trying state of existence, surgically inserting substances into the very essence of one's buttocks is a pure roll of the die in my humble opinion, yet a female's sexual history is frankly none of our business, we tend to view the vagina as a tissue or a kleenex when it's essentially reflexive in character, like a unique phrase or laconic collection of lexicon, that's more or less how I view the contemporary vagina at least, I was a little taken aback at the fact the wing spot only offered curly fries, that regular fries were nowhere to be found on the menu—

2: Ovoid in 3 Iterations

2.1: Andino's

—It was in the drizzling rain that I was waiting for a valet to take the keys to my parked car right in front of the restaurant entrance, thinking about how it was common enough in the past for people to think I resembled a valet, that people passing this restaurant could easily mistake me for a valet in the midst of valeting my own car, that yes it's certainly true that consciousness, as its reported by its constituents in the modern era, is absurd, probably to some extent driven by malevolent forces, that suicide may be the most efficacious solution to ending the meddling of these malevolent forces, but that it's also true that there's another side. There's another side that certainly mirrors this side via mathematical features, that by the implementation of mathematical functions we can perhaps slip between sides. When seated I immediately ordered Mezcal on the rocks, I

wasn't positive the rest of the dining party had ordered their drinks, because I was attempting to flag a valet when they initially sat down, but I also didn't care—I made a command decision to order a drink with this waitress as soon as I sat down. She came back two minutes later to tell me they didn't stock Mezcal. No one seems to have Mezcal. Respectable restaurants somehow get away without keeping a healthy stock of Mezcal in supply, they have the audacity to call themselves respectable restaurants while completely disrespecting the more subtle distillation of the agave plant. I ordered a Casamigos Blanco, foolishly confirming with the waitress that Blanco was the quote-unquote 'White' type of tequila, and I enjoyed the Casamigos Blanco—I even noted to the table that I would make a point to try Casamigos Blanco again, that my previously ambivalent attitude toward Casamigos was possibly entirely predicated on my ignorance of the Blanco variety; the pour was generous. With that said tequila is a bastardization of the agave plant when compared to Mezcal. Mezcal by contrast takes an entirely subtle approach to the distillation of the agave, with each variety of Mezcal containing its own subtle notes of flavor, whereas Tequila employs a one-size-fits-all, heavily blunted approach to the agave distillation process. Sure people tend to scoff at the so-called intensity of the Mezcal smokiness, its propensity to overpower anything it's mixed with, but that's exactly what draws me to the liquid itself. I enjoy the fact that Mezcal essentially can't be mixed, that it tastes so bold it's almost impossible to water down—these are the best natural phenomena in my mind, phenomena that are so one-of-a-kind that they need to be experienced in isolation, because in mixed company they exist in isolation anyway. I enjoy isolation—I find it underrated,

and I'll even admit that at times I find myself existing in isolation even in mixed company, in my mind, traversing complex scenarios that are no less social than your average mixed company get-together. In fact ever since I was small I've had this tendency—to find the society of my own mind more engaging than the society of my immediate surroundings. Yet frankly that's Massachusetts for you. I won't necessarily go as far to say that Massachusetts is a stain on the great country of America, yet if I'm being completely honest I can't say I've had the best of times in Massachusetts either.

—For one thing, there's the Bridgewater Triangle.

—Which it seems like almost no one even knows about, because even I—having spent a significant chunk of my life in Massachusetts, having spent the latter half of my adolescence in the state—was actually believe it or not flabbergasted to discover, especially when taking into account the fact the phenomena is more than just a web of old wives' tales, that it actually consists of substantive indirect evidence, which as I said is where I spent a good chunk of my adolescence, and in retrospect, during this lowest period of my life, I now feel with a fair degree of certainty, I was actually myself plagued by a demonic force of some sort, possibly even a demonic entity. As I said to start Stratos it seems as though consciousness is plagued by forces outside of our so-called selves that manipulate, or attempt to manipulate, or are intimately connected with the genuine stream of consciousness in ways that are no doubt at times nefarious. Just the other morning I woke up in a state where I was almost unable to control my own mind, feeling these forces more acutely than usual, thoughts and images scurrying across my consciousness in manners that struck me as illegal in principle—I had to pray to Nazianzus for this state to cease, or at least I felt Nazianzus helped put me at ease.

—His autobiography is terrific—I feel he's actually criminally understudied as a thinker as well, in the West at least?

—The West doesn't understand anything of Nazianzus—no, to this day the West understands next to nothing of Nazianzus the man, nevermind Nazianzus the structure of thought, because it was an actual structure of thought that Nazianzus assembled. The West understands nothing of Cappadocia at all—to the West Cappadocia remains a piece of arcana, an inconsequential strip in West Asia, because in the West Cappadocia is viewed as a simply Turkish locale, which isn't necessarily *incorrect*, but it's certainly *incomplete*—no nothing of note has occurred during the Turkish era; no nothing at all on par with the Nazianzus assembling of thought, the quintessential elevation of the integer three, the penultimate part-whole philosophy that occurred during the for lack of a better term *Byzantine era* of Cappadocia. In this dream Nazianzus spoke to me telepathically—

—Like what Ingo Swann alleges.

—You know Stratos I almost never listen to audiobooks, yet I made an exception for Swann's autobiography; I actually listened to the entire autobiography in a one or two day span, psychotically listening to this audiobook, completely enthralled—because instinctively we're all probably aware that audiobooks are at bottom abhorrent, that the wretched audiobook, the objectionable podcast (although I'm a fan of both formats) are displacing prose, which is a true form of telepathy. Whereas podcasts and audiobooks are blunted sorts of multi-tasked so-called modern communication, prose is a singular beam of telepathy that's actually dangerous; people encourage young children to read, when in my mind reading is one of the most dangerous

activities I've ever engaged in, simply because prose at its highest level is essentially telepathy. For this reason I generally don't read, instead listening to idiotic podcasts to fill my afternoon. The text of Swann's autobiography was unavailable for some reason, and beyond finding the voice actor unusually enjoyable I found his whole story to be simultaneously completely incredulous and entirely sensible. There are without a doubt forces that are meddling in our conscious streams, and I think this is most likely the root of all suicide, and perhaps rightly so, it may in fact be a solution, perhaps the most sensible solution, and it was certainly something I experienced first hand during a period when I lived within the Bridgewater Triangle. I even recall an instance, probably at my lowest point, when I was responsible for closing a shoe store in the Wrentham Outlets, a task that in and of itself nearly drove me to drowning myself—I was all alone closing this shoe store when an odd older lady entered, she was older yet lively, mystical and not obviously in need of footwear in general, nevermind at nearly nine o'clock at night. She basically read my life to me by looking into my eyes, alone behind the register, telling me repeatedly and intently all sorts of fanciful tidbits, a litany of tidbits were recited to me, over and over again. I actually sadly totally forget every single thing she said to me beyond an insistence that I was descended from emperors, which she repeated over and over, and oddly enough years later my uncle would casually mention to me my grandmother was from Sparta-Mystras—

—Where the Palaiologoi last resided.

—Exactly Stratos! In retrospect I do wonder where exactly this person emerged from, for whatever reason I find it hard to believe she was in need of any footwear, and I find it absurd she would be roaming around the

Wrentham Outlets after dark. As a matter of fact it wasn't the last time a person would have the audacity to approach me and attempt to tell me my own life story, and both times they struck me as totally correct!—no but in retrospect as incredulous as it may seem I do find myself wondering if this odd lady was a corporeal entity at all, or if instead she was some kind of apparition, because I've actually encountered reports of allegedly noncorporeal entities meandering around the Wrentham Outlets around closing. In any case I was sitting at Andino's on Federal Hill—I was drinking a Casamigos Blanco on the rocks, trying to enjoy myself after a long week.

—But did you know Casamigos also makes a Mezcal as well?

—Funny you should say that Stratos because I actually drank about six or so Casamigos Mezcal at The Parlour just a month or so ago—after the bartender, after I asked her for a Mezcal, asked me what kind of Mezcal I wanted, saying, after I asked her what kind of Mezcal she had, there was a Casamigos Mezcal if I wanted to try it? I said I thought Casamigos was strictly tequila, but she said they made a Mezcal as well. I took her up on the offer, yet I was ultimately unimpressed with the Mezcal. She told me some people drink it with an orange and gave me one, but I was ultimately unimpressed with the Mezcal, even with the orange. In any case I was sitting at Andino's drinking a Blanco Casamigos, thinking to myself that it was kind of a quaint interior, an inviting ambiance, a better atmosphere than I remembered, as the last time I ate at Andino's was two or so years ago, when I ordered the spaghetti aglio and the kitchen burnt the garlic, which is really all I recall of the night. In any case I was only glancing in a perfunctory fashion at the menu, as I'd already decided I'd order the Destefano

garden salad entree, as I ate a cup of brown rice with walnuts prior to arriving, because, with my current GI issues, ordering anything else would entail too much tail risk. In any case sitting at Andino's drinking a Blanco Casamigos I thought to myself that, yes, the only way to approach the other side is via a muted mathematics, a coding behind what faces us—on this side. We create something that seems to be one thing, but behind this one thing is a complex coding of another thing, another thing that communicates with the other side, a sort of mathematical telepathy to add on to our prosaic telepathy. This is the only way forward for me, I thought, taking another sip of Casamigos Blanco, actually in an increasingly jubilant mood, despite a debilitating week. A stream of consciousness must be encoded with a muted mathematics behind it Stratos, and perhaps this coding itself will not just communicate with this other side, but also protect our streams of consciousness against the meddling of forces we can only summarily understand and should probably refrain from even mentioning further!

2.2: Hot Club

—So anyway we were at the Hot Club for the first time in ages, a bartender I hadn't seen in at least four to five years was still behind the bar, she recognized me immediately, with a new purple dyed haircut that, although probably a smidgeon young for her age, suited her nicely, I thought. She poured me a healthy amount of Mezcal into a short glass, and only minutes later I'd notice her carrying a bottle of *Del Maquey Vida*, my favorite brand of Mezcal, back to the bar, and right then I surmised that I was drinking my favorite type of Mezcal. Of course healthy pours are double edged swords when you have a tendency to chug whatever's in

front of you, which for better or worse is a tendency I've never entirely managed to discard, especially when in social settings. Socially, historically, I've always found myself sprinting toward liquor, with reckless abandon almost I perform fifty yard dashes toward whatever my spirit of choice is that month, and even though on balance I've reduced these excessive tendencies with age, I'd be lying to both myself and you if I said I'd discarded them completely. And to be honest I'm unsure if I'd wish to discard them in totality, to extinguish my child-like idiocy once and for all, because sure from a certain vantage point I suppose I remain a man-child of sorts, but on the other hand man-children are necessary, no? It's man-children who make the greatest philosophical strides. To think like an adult is to take on the guise of utter rationalism, which hardly ever if not never innovates, which refuses to become idiotic enough to alter fundamental axioms, as axioms are inevitably created by the child-like thinkers, by idiots of the spirit. Even God Himself allegedly said Let there be light, which is a man-child like statement in my opinion. Personally I still refuse to sleep in the dark.

—The dark is contemptible in my mind.

—There's something inherent in being itself that's synonymous with light in my opinion.

—But how was Hot Club?

—It was interesting, intriguing, better than I anticipated, given the last couple times I'd been I felt the atmosphere to be a bit too clubby for my tastes, a tad too adolescent for even my man-child palette. I saw the doorman from The Parlour there, because apparently he works security at Hot Club as well? In any case as the party increased in size Katreena and I ended up engaged in an extended conversation with a petite fair-skinned female who adamantly claimed to be of New York origin, yet when an

appropriate opening emerged for me to ask her what part of New York she was from specifically she prevaricated, saying she was quote-unquote from all over, but then saying *The Bronx*. She was from The Bronx? She didn't strike me as someone from The Bronx, and for someone whose identity seemed to be so tied with being *from* New York, a *New Yorker*, which is the case with so many people from New York, it's actually kind of sad to me, this violent melding that seems to occur with people who identify themselves with New York City, yet this female, who for the record I found pleasant, oddly enough refused to explicitly claim a borough, until she reluctantly said *The Bronx*, which I think struck everyone as totally misguided. She wasn't from The Bronx, that much was clear. She could be from anywhere in the world except The Bronx. This idea that this female's origin story began in The Bronx was completely absurd. Which borough she was from, assuming she was from a particular borough, now that was still ambiguous, but it was clear she wasn't from the Bronx. Queens, that I could give some credence to I suppose. It might be a reasonable speculation to suggest she was from Queens. Perhaps from an opulent family in Upper Manhattan, now that was even more likely—because she certainly struck me as someone who came from money, there was no trace of a New York accent in her speech, or of any accent in her speech, and the geography of Upper Manhattan is close enough to The Bronx that she could, in her mind at least, perhaps justify claiming The Bronx as a borough, even though I find that to be a bit ridiculous, to conflate Upper Manhattan with The Bronx, to think any thinking person would buy the idea that Upper Manhattan is in any way synonymous with The Bronx. Staten Island and Brooklyn strike me as more remote possibilities of her origin, and

then we could also speculate on outer-areas as well, because while Yonkers strikes me as a stretch, I think Westchester County or Long Island are both certainly in play.

—Do you think it possible that she could have been from, say, Westchester County, which would explain her moneyed demeanor, yet moved to The Bronx for work later in life, and now, and I agree that this is misguided, feels as though that working experience justifies her claim that The Bronx is a place she's actually from?

—Giorgios, that actually strikes me as perhaps the *most* sensible explanation of all. I also noticed, and I think it's worth noting, that when she sat her posterior was a tad more ample than I'd imagined, that this posterior along with the ambiguity of her origin began to strike me as almost ominously out of place, as if another plane of existence was forming.

—That happens at times—posteriors and their relative amplitude can vary widely from expectations, the posterior is almost impossible to estimate based on face alone.

—I guess it's reasonable to assert that we often look at a person's face and almost algorithmically create a simulation of their body from this face, that our mind works essentially algorithmically, we should admit that, that our minds are probably just composed of algorithms, and that we perform a similar process with voice, which actually happened to me just recently as well, where I spoke to a person on the phone and inevitably created an algorithmic simulation of her face in my mind. When I saw her face at last online I was struck by how much this picture differed from the simulation I'd made in my mind—who was it I believed I was speaking to? I look at someone's face and then I ruthlessly algorithmically simulate their body without

consent, whereas I hear someone's voice and then I ruthlessly algorithmically simulate their face without consent, but in both cases my accuracy is totally stochastic, and by stochastic I mean terrible.

—From voice to face and from face to body, we make ill-advised, ruthless speculations regarding everyone who enters our periphery!

—In this sense the simulation of the human begins with voice. From voice alone we algorithmically simulate both face and body, because from face we simulate body, as you said. In any case as the conversation progressed we—myself, Katreena, and this female—began to touch on the topic of *what exactly* this female had been doing since leaving New York, and in the midst of this it came up that it just so happened that her and I were actually the same age, that she'd been finding locales she liked *at our age*, although she noted how difficult it was, compared to New York, where she knew the ins and outs of where to patronize and when, what establishments she enjoyed and which ones she despised. I agreed immediately, noting that at my age, at *our age*, it was one of the main deterrents to moving to another city, particularly New York, which I'd strongly considered moving to more than once, but as I said explicitly to her to have to *relearn every single place that I like to go*, and how to get there, to relearn which places offend my palate, at my age, it just struck me as way too daunting of a task to take on. It struck me as a task that would consume so much of my energy that it would essentially mute all of my philosophical energies for at least five years. She mentioned a Lebanese bar where “you walk downstairs” that she liked a lot. I said the entire city of Providence has become essentially one extended hookah lounge, which I admitted to her, full disclosure, appeals to me deeply, which, full disclosure, seemed to genuinely

surprise her, that the entire city of Providence was an extended hookah lounge. I said *the city is littered with Greek and Lebanese places like that*, which of course Giorgos we know isn't true in the least, that there are only a fraction of Greek locations compared to Lebanese locations, yet I stated it with so much aplomb she didn't question it at all, although she did immediately question whether Greeks smoked hookah, to which I simply said *Ottoman Empire*, to which she said *of course*, immediately connecting the dots.

—My goodness Markos, I have to say that's fairly impressive, that a fair-skinned female from New York would connect those dots that quickly. The Ottoman Empire, I mean at this point it's basically a piece of arcana. No one knows anything about the Ottoman Empire anymore.

—Oh I completely agree! I totally feel like there are just very few people in our general age range who know anything about the Ottoman Empire, and I'd one hundred percent wager that not one other person at Hot Club that night who knew anything about the Ottoman Empire, never mind its very specific ethnic components, who could put the pieces of Greeks ancestrally smoking hookah together by the utterance of two words: *Ottoman Empire*. In fact it seems to me that the Ottoman Empire is maybe the most neglected empire of the past half millennium, that it inherited its Byzantine predecessor's characteristic of being completely discarded by modern scholarship. No one knows what you speak of when you so much as mention the Ottoman Empire, people are flummoxed, except apparently this female who may or may not be from New York, but certainly isn't from The Bronx. In short I quickly found that the ambiguity of what New York City borough characteristic was inherent in this female became reflected right into the ambiguity

of the ethnic blocks of the Ottoman Empire, in a post-Ottoman American diaspora, in an America that is itself multi-ethnic, and not entirely differently than the Ottomans, Ottomans who were only trumped in their importation of African slaves by America's out of control love affair with the African slave. No one imported more African slaves than the Ottoman Empire, except of course the United States of America. The ambiguity of the traits displayed by a Greek versus a Turk versus a Lebanese versus a Kurd versus an Armenian in the seemingly limitless Providence Hookah Network was suddenly a direct analog to the ambiguity of the New York City borough characteristics inherent in a person who perhaps dubiously claims to be from New York City. In one instance we're unsure if we're witnessing a Greek, a Turk, a Lebanese, a Kurd, an Armenian; in the other instance we're unsure if we're witnessing a person from The Bronx, from Manhattan, from Staten Island, from Brooklyn, from Queens; in both cases the overlapping characteristics, outside of their original context (of the Ottoman Empire and New York City, respectively), become vague enough in their nuance that the identity of each bleeds into the other, until the individual identities are erased completely. The New York City diaspora in Providence can reflect characteristics associated with Staten Island, with Manhattan, with The Bronx, with Brooklyn, with Queens, while the median hookah smoker this New York City transplant may encounter in the extended Providence Hookah Network may display characteristics of the Greek, of the Turk, of the Lebanese, of the Kurd, of the Armenian. In both cases what's Staten Island, what's Queens, what's Kurd, what's Greek, what's Brooklyn, what's Manhattan, what's Lebanese, what's Turk, what's The Bronx, what's Armenian all bleed into one another until they're essentially indistinguishable

from each other, until they're essentially extinguished, until we reach a fundamental oneness of an Ottoman New York City, a legitimate plane of existence that came into being only at the Hot Club via conversation this past Friday night.

—This is a physical plane of existence now, the Ottoman New York City of Oneness.

—It can no longer be denied, an Ottoman New York City where all identity has been extinguished into a monadic Oneness came into existence on a Friday night at the Hot Club.

—Yet that girl—could she have actually been from The Bronx?

—With one hundred percent certainty I will assure you Giorgos, that the girl I spoke with Friday night was absolutely *not* from The Bronx—

2.3: Nickanee's

—Initially a thin hipster with a full red beard was in the bathroom at Nick-A-Nee's, peeing at the tall urinal, but when I went in, after he walked out, I made a point to pee at the kiddie urinal, a trademark of mine, for whatever reason I find myself more at ease at the kiddie urinals, as I'm long-torsoed in addition to being of only average height; yes, the kiddie urinals are essentially made for me, and peeing at the kiddie urinal I took note of what looked like a piece of asscrack lint connected inextricably to a long piece of ass hair. This is what it struck me as at least. I thought back to parking on the street fifty feet from Nick-A-Nee's, to my consternation with the driver wearing a snowcap in his maroon pickup truck cursing me through his windshield as I slowly scoped the one open spot on the street. At that time, with his perturbed expression and prehistoric facial features, he struck me as the worst person in the world and

frankly still does. I wished nothing but the worst things on this person as I pulled over to let him pass, haranguing him through my windshield as he simultaneously screamed at me through his windshield, then calmly hit reverse to move back into the middle of the street, to parallel park in the only open spot, just momentarily lodging the right rear wheel ever so slightly onto the attenuated curb. In my mind this man in the pickup truck was a grotesque stain on the face of our planet. His face, in both its structure and expression, sticking with me at the bar in Nick-A-Nee's, more or less revolted me in the most extreme of ways. The man to my left ordered an impressively grotesque smelling soup from the bar—it was all I could smell at the time, and the stench was such that it struck me as frankly a little unbelievable it wafted from a bowl a man was actually eating from, yet if anything this made me enjoy Nick-A-Nee's even more. The band playing the bar employed a white saxophone player, and each respective instrumentalist was drinking a separate, distinct variety of alcohol—one whiskey, one craft beer, one some type of mixed drink, one nothing at all, all four frankly looking little like typical musicians, and I found it notable how easily the saxophone, I presumed tenor, sat in the mix with just a microphone next to it, given the accompaniment of electric guitar, electric bass, and acoustic drums that were played in a thoroughly rock, as opposed to jazz, style. I guess I never knew that about tenor saxophone. Rock drums have increasingly distressed me of late. When I think of a style of drumming that offends my taste, rock drumming immediately vaults to the top of the list—in my opinion Stratos most rock music would be immeasurably improved with the simple removal of percussion, or at least with a more muted substitute of percussion. Maybe

a tongue drum? Amplified tongue drum? Distorted tambourine? But honestly that's just me, because I fully realize most people love percussion, that percussion is viewed as the so-called backbone of modern composition, that tons of listeners still venerate rock music. In any case I guess I should start to explain how I got here, shouldn't I?

—From your parallel universe you mean?

—Exactly Stratos. It now seems to me that I crossed over into this universe, or I should say I *became aware* that it had happened, precisely at the point where the bozo in the snowcap in his dark red pickup truck began yelling at me through his windshield, as I attempted to parallel park up the street from Nick-A-Nee's, where a man would then order one of the most disgusting smelling soups I've ever encountered from its bar. It was obvious as the man, who I despised, looked exactly like someone from Alabama—he was wearing a snowcap despite it being a moderately temperate day in early April, and given these facts it was obvious something had shifted significantly, but I couldn't draw any conclusions quite at that point. But these are the types of cues you have to take into account with regard to things such as these Stratos, parallel universe conundrums so to speak. How exactly it happens I'm not at liberty to detail at this time, as it's possible I'm ignorant of the mechanics of the process, or I'm aware of the process in a way I can only communicate in indirect ways.

—This makes sense, Markos. There's obviously only so much we can put into words when it comes to parallel universes.

—For example it was precisely at Nick-A-Nee's that I happened to log onto the basketball-reference dot com webpage Stratos, which only confirmed my suspicions, which had been steadily rising, which only acted as

another clue as I delved deeper into the statlines I'll detail right now. Specifically, as I recalled it, beyond a shadow of a doubt it sat in my memories, the Boston Celtic Jayson Tatum owned a statistical profile that exceeded that of Dallas Maverick Luka Doncic, whereas Luka Doncic had a statistical summation that lagged that of Jayson Tatum. And yet on basketball-reference dot com at Nick-A-Nee's, only moments after said bozo in snowcap in the Alabama-esque maroon pickup truck berated me through his windshield, it occurred to me that Luka Doncic had by far the more complete statistical profile compared to Jayson Tatum, despite both Luka and Tatum averaging above thirty points per game this NBA season. Specifically, on this side Stratos, it seemed that Luka differentiated himself from Tatum by getting to the free throw stripe at a much greater clip, by making plays for others at a clip that more than doubled Tatum's rate. Where Jayson Tatum assisted on just twenty percent of his possessions, while turning the ball over on ten percent, Luka Doncic assisted on forty three percent of his possessions while turning the ball over on only twelve percent, while both rebounded just about thirteen percent of their possible possessions and shot an aggregate percentage of sixty (true shooting percentage) on their thirty points per game. Yet I explicitly recalled Jayson Tatum being the far superior playmaker, by more than double, when compared to Luka Doncic, in those exact terms of assist percentage and free throw rate, yet when I logged onto basketball-reference at Nick-A-Nee's, to my great surprise, Luka Doncic separated himself from Jayson Tatum by his higher propensity of getting to the free throw stripe and by his stark contrast in setting his teammates up for made shots (especially when compared to his propensity to turn the ball over). It's only in the most minute of ways that we can detect these

transitions Stratos, if that makes sense, that we can conclude we've traversed across potential dimensions, if that makes sense?

—Oh, absolutely!

—And to add to the confusion it was only a night later, in a vivid dream, that I found myself in a desolate house covered with orange wallpaper, curiously preoccupied with bathing myself, apparently getting ready for something I couldn't quite put my finger on—it was in this home with the orange interior that I felt again this psychic energy with near strangers, near strangers who seem to pop into my mental space unannounced, that has increasingly struck me as an actual physical phenomenon. That I can actually think back toward these near strangers in a physical fashion. Yet this was before a particular shadow from my past appeared to me yet again in dream, in the most vivid of manners, and I began to run from something, something I couldn't identify, while simultaneously reconnecting with this shadow without either of us saying a word to each other, until I stumbled upon what looked like a locker room in an open field. I entered the building, a so-called locker room in an open field, and realized all of its memorabilia was from nineteen ninety eight—and I realized I'd traveled back to nineteen ninety eight, that everything I touched was totally nineteen ninety eight, that my own so-called identity was just a clumsy block across something that could be traversed if approached properly, and then suddenly the thought occurred to me: *Time starts in the middle and winds around*, always in the middle, I thought, that this notion of time beginning at the beginning is entirely false, perhaps even nonsensical. When awake I frantically wrote a note that simply said: *Time starts in the middle and winds around*. And as I encountered this idea streams of green

for lack of a better word *time* shot out, like Nickelodeon Gack or something, various streams of time overlapping each other in joyous bursts of green, like the word Go, and it was a sort of joyous event even in its ambiguity. I was a little disappointed to wake up.

—Did you do shrooms at all?

—No sadly Stratos I was completely free from hallucinogens when I went to sleep, when I went to Nick-A-Nee's, when the red-bearded hipster peed at the adult urinal, when the man next to me ordered the disgusting soup, when the bozo with the snowcap screamed at me, when the saxophone was surprisingly high in the mix. No we don't necessarily need to travel in the traditional sense in order to travel great distances, that much we can be sure of.

—That makes complete sense to me, Markos!

3: Footnotes

3.1: Footnote to 1.2, Section 3

Prelude—I was as surprised as anyone when the entire Licensing Board for the City of Providence directed a bright into my apartment at 6am on a Saturday, arriving unannounced to my modest apartment, ready to query me on what I knew about Pasha, a somewhat notorious hookah bar located in a modest strip mall on Allens Avenue. I retorted that, as it so happened, I knew quite a bit, although only anecdotally—perhaps wanting to pique their interests in my own perverse way. The licensing board replied that, wow, they'd love to hear it, almost in unison, so I felt compelled to share my narrative, to tell my side of the story, so to speak, and went on to say, 01—Well, I guess it's been give or take seven years since I first experienced the sublime delight of smoking the hookah at Pasha on Allens Avenue, and nearly three and half since I was introduced to the venerated ice hose, so I suppose I'm now at the point in my life where an equidistant amount of time has elapsed since I experienced the regular hose as well as the ice hose, both hoses that I'd of course recommend, although our country's rapid rate of inflation has impacted the price of each substantially, while the rapid spread of the COVID-Nineteen virus has turned smoking hookah into an increasingly frowned upon practice. 02—It was an era of lingering socioeconomic commotion when my friend Curtis and I experienced somewhat of a dual rough patch romantically—Curtis recklessly divorced, after an eight year relationship and nine month marriage, while I remained in less than infrequent communication with a person I'd inadvisably become involved with in a variety of ways, while at the same time I'd inadvisably entered a subsequent relationship with a person I'd, perhaps unsurprisingly, eventually have a dramatic falling out

with. 03—More often than not it seems our lives are little more than a series of ill-advised relationships, that whenever we escape from one ill-advised relation we find a subsequent ill-advised relation waiting for us patiently—for my part I'd acquired a custom of chasing the ill-advised in an almost mechanical manner, as if the ill-advised had some sort of direct line into my very being, and in retrospect it feels as if circumstance in the case of my life has played an outsized role, that my approach to my life has been a simple sculpting of inescapable circumstances. 04—That Pasha was a Turkish bar didn't occur to me until later, but I still hold both owners—Jack and Sal—in the highest esteem, despite the thousand-year-plus long conflict that's plagued our respective cultures. In fact it was just this past Christmas that I stopped in Pasha with Katreena and said a jovial hello to Jack, indulging in my first ice hookah in what seemed like eons, Katreena and I sitting at the counter, having exactly one beer a piece, already somewhat inebriated, watching a Mavericks game that was curiously void of Luka Doncic. 05—It's never necessarily advisable to admit that an exotic dancer quote-unquote 'fell in love with you'—yet in my particular case it was an irrefutable burden I was forced to bear. Although at the time I attempted, with some degree of success, to deny that my charismatic character was capable of making said set of events possible, if not inevitable, yet it was appropriately catastrophic for my mental well-being, as I took full responsibility for both my charisma as well as my inability to resemble a father-figure. 06—These precise circumstances led both myself and my friend Curtis into the ready-made arms of the Pasha hookah hose at least once a week for years on end—as there exist times in someone's life where there's no choice but to disassemble themselves in the most

reckless of fashions, smoking and drinking excessively and engaging in ill-advised long-term relationships excessively; the quality of the hookah at Pasha was of a height that was hard to fathom at the time. 07—We unravel ourselves, attempting to reach a core that's always unapproachable, being told by Byzantine monks that our center remains as ineffable as God's Essence—sending ill-advised messages to love interests that no longer have any interest in us. An innocent exotic dancer falls in love with us, and we choose to use the full extent of our critical faculties to disassemble this person over and over again. Continually drawn to this person, we ruthlessly destroy them critically until the situation itself becomes intoxicated in the worst of ways. 08—And after all of this is over we go to Pasha on Allens Avenue, and we enjoy the highest quality hookahs at least every Wednesday, unraveling becomes just another hobby of our's, and we drink vodka with just a splash of water, and the bartender liberally indulges us with a tall glass of this vodka, and then we drive up the street, and we laugh hysterically with Curtis as we mindlessly toss currency at a dark stage comprised of nudity, then we drive downtown to order a meatless burrito at a highly regarded Tex Mex establishment. 09—One common mistake to eschew both at Pasha and other establishments offering so-called hookah is the conflation of 'more' with 'better' with regard to flavors. Waitstaff will invariably highlight the fact that a patron can order a litany of flavors at no extra cost, implying that receiving *more* flavors for the *same* price is a 'good deal', that ordering a blueberry-peach-mint-creamsicle flavor hookah will be enjoyable when a sensible hookah should be restricted to at most two flavors—I personally recommend blueberry mint. 10—Sitting at the bar at Pasha smoking a scrumptious hookah with my friend

Curtis, watching an exciting Celtics contest, I had the misfortune of assiduously studying my surroundings with the intent of recording them, so to speak. In short, I believed events could be recorded via recollection and recreated through creative faculties, when it's now clear that nothing was further from the truth—at Pasha smoking hookah I believed I could create a nonfictional account, an autobiographical element, when autobiography and history are only the most elevated forms of fiction! 11—Our memories are by far the most specious things about us—have you ever wondered why our official histories are almost immediately checkered, biased before the first drafts are completed, why human beings are believed to have existed for tens of thousands of years, yet if we even glance a paltry millennium into our past we witness nothing but foggy notions and bitterly conflicting opinions? At times it seems I'm made up of nothing but memories, yet all of these memories seem to have minds of their own! 12—Ultimately, while the relative risk of loitering at Pasha on Allens Avenue is at this point well-established, and while the prices of the median hookah have inflated exponentially, I'd still be hard-pressed to sit here and recommend a better place to smoke hookah in the Greater Boston metropolitan region. Frankly, I've always considered it a bit of a bourgeois cowardice to avoid places solely because of a low probability chance you'll get shot—even as we age it can still be beneficial to embrace the ill-advised once in a while.

3.2: Footnote to 1.3, Section 9

“What has the dually-descended modern Greek taken from his father, what from his mother? . . . He is clever and shallow, with no metaphysical anxieties, and yet, when he begins to sing, a universal bitterness leaps up from his oriental bowels, breaks through the crust of Greek logic and, from the depths of his being, totally mysterious and dark, the Orient emerges...”

—Nikos Kazantzakis, *Journey to the Morea*

“His efforts went unappreciated by the clergy and by the superstitious mob which was under the firm control of the fanatical, ill-educated monks.”

—Marios Philippides, *Constantine XI*

“The pope demanded that the union be enforced and expressed his displeasure at the unpardonable delay.”

—*Ibid.*

Prelude—With a fair amount of ambivalence, knowing as well as anyone that Nikos typically spends the hours of 3PM through 7PM, Monday through Friday, verifying the European origin of his dietary tract, I approached Mr Kazantzakis at 6:59 PM, ambling toward the screened-in patio of his modest row house located spitting distance from Garden City, and began as such: 01—Well Mr Kazantzakis, if I’m being honest with you, completely honest with you, if I’m holding back next to no honesty whatsoever, I should note that, yes, it’s indubitably true that of late I’ve found myself gluttonously chewing four to seven slices of gum in simultaneity, for a variety of reasons—in fact, it was just yesterday afternoon, prior to leaving our apartment to go grab a coffee that I indiscriminately shoved an entire pack of gum into my mouth and exuberantly chewed this large ball of gum, wondered if chewing gum was actually good for your teeth, when the thought occurred to me: Is emo the highest form of classical music America is historically

responsible for? When discussing American music, I thought while chewing an entire pack of gum, a litany of genres, from post-bop jazz, to experimental rock, to avant-metal to the so-called classically trained composers of American descent, are discussed as ‘the truly classical music of America.’ ‘But what if emo is the truly classical American music?’ I thought to myself, chewing an entire pack of gum, preparing myself to pay full-price for a coffee out somewhere, despite the fact I had an entire pot of coffee at my apartment, waiting to be imbibed for free. The primary conceit of emo music is that its creators are young and white and male, and that they originate from neighborhoods that are safe if not opulent and utterly hate their lives. Nothing, it should be noted, is ever proceeding well for the emo band, as the slightest deviation from the emo band’s best case scenario is always apocalyptic, despite the fact that, sociopolitically at least, they have everything going for them. The emo participant exists at the apex of the American totem pole, and despite this fact everything remains essentially objectionable to them. Nothing is going well! The emo song is, in practice, the antithesis of the virtue signal. And it occurred to me, as I left my apartment to pay four dollars for a coffee that would inevitably be co-opted by an art school professor, with no regard to socially acceptable decibel levels. pontificating about people as brands to a foreign exchange student, that this type of wide-eyed narcissism, that this unironic ignorance of sociopolitical totem poles, this obsession with direct, lived experience at the expense of everything conceptual—is perhaps the apex of what should comprise American classical music? And I nodded my head at this notion as we entered the Honda asking Katreena if she’d be willing to play ‘One-Eighty by Summer’ on our way to the coffee shop. 02—I suppose you could say it was

fortuitous, if not a direct product of fate itself, that with these thoughts in mind, while browsing my Shopping List on Amazon dot com, while considering the merits of the so-called university professor after my encounter with this pea-brained art professor from Yoleni's, I noticed that the Constantine Eleven monograph by my old college professor, Marios Philippides, was now on sale—reduced from the borderline-insulting price of ninety dollars for the hardcover, to the increasingly palatable price of nine dollars for the Kindle edition. I'd had no communication with Philippides since my time at Massachusetts, which is unsurprising, as I doubt strongly Philippides recalls me in the least, as almost the entirety of my late adolescence was marked by my dedication to my dissipation-process, which I'd extended into an era some may choose to characterize as a post-youth era, so the two of us had no need, no reason to communicate with one another, primarily because Philippides had no idea who I was. Just because two persons ostensibly share a modicum of so-called 'Greek blood' in no way means they should communicate with one another. For Philippides's part, he has no idea who I am, and for my part, my only interaction with Philippides took place in the midst of my dissipation-process, of which I was dedicated to—yet being that I'd been looking for a monograph on the so-called 'last emperor of the Greeks', and being that Philippides was the only author with a recent monograph published on the final so-called Constantine of Helen, it just so happened that our paths would once again cross, this time on the Kindle app of my iPhone. Perhaps it was fate, just as it was fate that I'd sit through an ebullient bloviation session from a pea-brained art school professor on one day, then on the next day find my own old professor's monograph fortuitously on sale,

reduced to a price more appropriate for the proletariat as such. 03—After confirming the price reduction multiple days in a row I finally pulled the trigger and bought the book, only downloading said book during a solitary circular sojourn around Foxwoods, Ike busy attempting to continue his luck on the slot machines—having won two hundred dollars on one roll prior to our high class Chinese dinner, which he magnanimously comped—and Katreena passed out in the car, tired and hungover after an ill-advised decision to daydrink prior to our venturing to the casino for the night. At first, in preparation of my reading, I sat in line at Dunkin Donuts, surprisingly the only coffee shop open at the expansive casino, and bought a medium iced coffee for myself with almond milk. Three men stood in front of me and struck me as abutting old men until I began to consider they very well could be the same age as I, clinging, it struck me, to perhaps some fading beacon of youth, one of them adorned in deluxe Michael Jordan sneakers, the other making a long speech to the Dunkin Donuts barista about how much he likes his Caramel coffee yet curiously punctuating the note by repeatedly saying he’s not that picky. In the rainforest casino, sipping my iced coffee, with water audibly falling all around me, I got my five dollar double poker game out of the way, realizing slowly that the first two machines didn’t work, then slowly realizing I completely forgot how to play double poker, despite being so exuberant at the thought of finally finding a double poker machine to play. I googled ‘How to play double poker’ but couldn’t seem to find a concise explanation, an explanation that would allow me to play double poker immediately, which was the extent of everything I wanted at the time. Leaving the double poker machines after immediately losing five dollars, I decided to spend the last of my cash on an ice cream

cone, then begin reading Philippides' monograph. The ice cream barista informed me there were no cones left, which was disappointing in the extreme. Feigning no disappointment, I ordered two scoops of the cappuccino gelato and was subsequently given a spoon half the size of my own pinky finger, which isn't a particularly large pinky finger, I've never had my pinky finger described as abnormally large by anyone, to the best of my knowledge, to scoop out both scoops of ice cream from the surprisingly deep cup. I didn't object, instead feeling curiously lucky to pay seven dollars for this ice cream cup, then walking around to find myself quite enjoying said ice cream, the end-game of said ice cream of course being that I ate the last half scoop essentially with my bare hands, walking around by myself, enjoying nothing more than eating this ice cream with both an absurdly tiny spoon and also with my bare hands. Finally, after washing the cappuccino gelato off my hands in the Foxwoods rest area, I sat on a park bench and opened up my Kindle app to open up Philippides' monograph on the final so-called emperor of the Greeks. 04—It was more or less from the second I began reading Philippides' monograph that I found myself inveterately disagreeing with his tempo, his perspective, his verbiage, his temperament, as well as his method of interpreting historical tracts. To me, in short, to write a monograph on the Eleventh Constantine—for no other reason than to incessantly denigrate said final Constantine of Helen seemed to be abutting pea-brained. With all due respect to Mister Philippides, I found his text in many instances abutting the pea-brained. Philippides spared hardly a sentence in filling in potential historical gaps with doubt, in assuming that each ambivalent historical anecdote regarding Constantine should veer to the injurious, that anything aleatory in the basileus's life should be

regarded as fate if fortuitous and his fault if less so. If Constantine lost a major battle in the Morea it was due to his lack of military prowess, his ineptitude and pea-brained character, yet if Constantine achieved a modest victory at Corinth it should be chocked up to good fortune, or to an enemy's baffling myopia, or the immense bravery of his soldiers. Historical anecdote after historical anecdote is presented by Philippides, each one analyzed with this framework intact. After, say, one hundred pages of Philippides veering the reader toward the same conclusion for each gap in Constantine's record—and, it should be noted here, Palaiologos's whole life is essentially one extended gap!—after, say one hundred pages of Philippides concluding that each historical gap is an irreproachable data point, once and for all proving the pea-brained character of the last Greek emperor, as this gap-pattern-bias continued further into the monograph I began to consider the possibility that it was perhaps Philippides who was the one succumbing to borderline pea-brained notions. 05—Yet push come to shove I shouldn't claim to be fanatical about the narrative of the final free Constantine, as I wouldn't exactly consider myself the first person to go to bat, so to speak, for the final son of Helen. It's perhaps true that there's no set of people on the face of our planet that have despised authority more than the Greeks, today, in the Byzantine era (so-called), in Ancient Attica, or wherever one might encounter a Greek, that much we'll confess! Even the Orthodox conception of God is evidence of this, Person preceding Being, a Father who achieves Being only through the Act of relation with His sole Son, His Son only through the mysterious union with an unapproachable Spirit a God who in Essence will never be known, Energies that will be interacted with in ways

that will always elude communication, the real proof of the Greeks loathing of authority perhaps lays in the fact they adopted the literalist, authoritative texts of the Semites, both literally and figuratively writing the Gospels of the Jewish Jesus, and then transfigured scripture into essentially quantum mechanics within just a few short centuries. The God who rained reptiles on every sandal in the Near East became the Triad existing only in a state of One and Many in simultaneity, in perpetuity. Of course, I'm the first to speak of my pride in my Greek character—I, much like the Eleventh, being only of full-blood on my father's side, while being wholly barbarian on my mother's—that is, until I attend the Greek festival at my birth church, at which I'm almost immediately searching desperately for any other identity I could possibly claim! 06—Yet as ill-advised as I found Philippides' interpretations of historical anecdotes to be with regard to Constantine's character, these interpretations didn't particularly offend me, as I'm perfectly capable of finding something to be pea-brained without being offended by it. In our era it seems almost as though people have lost this ability, and they feel as though anything they think is dumb is ipso facto offensive—yet that in itself, in my eyes at least, is pea-brained, although I'm unoffended by it, as the world is composed essentially of both stupidity and stupid things. No, what struck me as exceedingly outlandish in Philippides' monograph wasn't his persistent pessimism with regard to Constantine's character, it was his exceedingly one-note depiction of the so-called anti-unionists of Constantinople, the group(s) of Greek speakers who opposed the idea that the Orthodox church, as a precondition of assistance from the so-called West, should capitulate to the Catholic church; in the eyes of Philippides all of these so-called

anti-unionists were little beyond petty charlatans and obsessive fanatics. In the eyes of Philippides, that is, if we were to be as liberal in filling the gaps of Marios's prose as Marios is liberal with the historical anecdotes of Constantine, we might suggest that Philippides' suggests the Orthodox anti-unionists, in their alleged allegiances with the Arab and the Turkish contingents over the Frankish and the Venetian contingents, were responsible for dragging the Greek-speaking world into the Orient, once and for all, for four hundred years or so, give or take. That it was perhaps the anti-unionist party, in its staunch refusal to become honorary Catholics, in their refusal to forget what the European world perpetrated against the Greek-speaking world in Twelve Hundred and Four, that they caused the final descent of the Greek-speaking world, its final descent into the Orient, sitting on the fence as it had for hundreds of years between the Occident and Orient, this Greek-speaking world that, post-Alexander the Great, had brushed shoulders with the Orient in only increasingly collegial terms, that it was this movement that ultimately caused the inevitable fall of the City, that sans these so-called fanatics perhaps the European contingents could have saved the Greeks from themselves! 07—It's not necessary to extrapolate to Marios' degree to identify one intrinsic aspect of this position: the fact of the matter was these religionists reduced the probability of Europe intervening, ipso facto making them lunatics, because anything other than Europe is pure lunacy. Yet the European Dark Ages were entirely absent from the Greek-speaking world just as the European Enlightenment was subsequently absent from the Greek-speaking world at large and vice versa—in fact, the Greek-speaking world and the European world have in many ways always existed in a ying and yang manner

rather than a father-son manner. 08—But there's no doubt that ipso facto equating an anti-unionist contingent as fanatical simply due to their opposing the (arguably equally fanatical) policy of the Papacy suggests that Philippides' believes Europe was the only home for the Greeks. The obvious counterargument being the subsequent Ottoman era, yet the counter to the counter is equally obvious—as the so-called Greek emancipation movement, in hindsight, has found subsequent generations of Greeks as some amalgam of human debt instrument and second class European. But perhaps Marios scorns the religionists of his race in a manner that intentionally suggests their European origin! Because it would hardly be politically viable for Mister Philippides to suggest that, say, a Syrian Moslem population was 'fanatical' about their spiritual beliefs? We would have to consider that uncouth. Yet it begs the question: was Mehmed the Second a 'fanatic' of Islam?—09—But we should be clear on this point: by the time of the Fifteenth Century there existed no viable, geopolitical avenue for the powers of Europe to save the Christian Greeks from their fate; the Greeks, regardless of your opinion on their 'ill-educated' monks, possessed a fate that was thoroughly sealed! The Europeans initially entered Levantine politics to 'save' the Eastern Christian empire that, at that point, existed almost exclusively diplomatically rather than militarily, and through jihad-like Crusades these good Europeans, rather than assist the Eastern Christians in expediting their geopolitical aims, assisted their neighboring Caliphs and Sultans in putting aside *their* petty differences; these crusading Europeans were the greatest asset to perhaps the greatest Islamic caliphate ever assembled, then eventually, after a few centuries of bickering with the Greeks over Antioch while

neighboring Caliphates consolidated gains, the descendants of said Europeans decided to put aside *their* differences with said Caliphs and Sultans and sacked Constantinople itself! 10—Perhaps to some extent, we should speculate, the modern Greeks, more than being descended from a so-called Ancient Athenian or a Byzantine monk, are more closely related to, or more accurately identified as, a post-Ottoman people, despite the fact in the West hardly anyone I know of would ever tend to depict it that way, yet the Ottoman world, while beyond the scope of this inquiry, was at least to some extent a ‘multicultural’ empire, not entirely dissimilar from its Byzantine predecessor! We speak of the Greeks today and equate them with the philosophical man-boy love of Socrates, the expansive imperialism of Alexander and the laconic Spartans, or if we’re overly educated perhaps the mythical figure of the Eleventh Constantine, or even the epoch of Justinian or the Orthodoxy of Gregory of Nazianzus and the Desert Fathers, yet the most recent ‘culture’ native to the ‘independent’ Greeks was indubitably an Ottoman culture. 11—While it remains unmentioned in Philippides’ monograph, Constantine’s own nephews, post-fall, were renamed Murad and Mesih, apparently inheriting a new religion, and manned Ottoman fleets, becoming high-ranking Balkan bureaucrats. But history, of course, is at least as fictional as the quote-unquote Great Novels, if not significantly more fabricated. We speak of History as if it’s some sort of factual field of inquiry when, in defense to Mister Philippides, it’s almost entirely populated with baseless speculation, wild extrapolation, and outright lies. There’s nothing less factual than a historical monograph, and perhaps for this reason historical monographs fascinate me to extreme degrees. More and more I find myself turning to historical monographs as

opposed to Great Novels, or if I do turn to a Great Novel it almost always mimics the form of the historical monograph. We think we identify ‘autobiographical elements’ in this work or that, yet all great autobiographical elements are all almost entirely fictional. But then again what is autobiography if not a particularly biased form of history, but then what history isn’t biased in a particular fashion? 12—Now of course we could say that this scuffle regarding the Πρόσωπο versus the Ουσία is petty in the extreme, that it’s hardly something worth perishing over, yet the course of human history is littered with cultures and peoples perishing over the pettiest of issues! The fulcrum of the issue, I suppose, is what exists as the penultimate first cause: in the words of the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, does ‘Politics precede being’? Or is it the opposite: does being exist eternally and the Πρόσωπο, the person so to speak, emerge thereafter? Is it movement that begins things, are we from the outset en medio, or is stasis pre-eminent, with movement only emerging after the fact? 13—This was the issue at hand between the Papacy and the so-called anti-unionists, so while on its surface it seemed like an issue of triviality and petty bickering, philosophically it was an issue of how do we understand the world primarily? The Greeks stood on one side, and the Papacy the other! For my part, there are times when I find myself driving on a solitary interstate highway when I look up to the sky and take note of the clouds that increasingly look almost painted on, as I increase in age these clouds I see in the sky seem increasingly artificial, it strikes me as increasingly absurd to consider the clouds I see in the sky as comprising the physical world I interact with everyday. 14—Yet Philippides’ monograph is without a doubt a worthy addition to the corpus analyzing the life of the Eleventh Constantine. The final

emperor of the Greeks, and there's yet to be another emperor since Constantine, yet there's next to no source material about his character! The greatest weakness of Mister Philippides' monograph is perhaps just that, that he's forced to extrapolate where his sources remain silent, and what other choice is there, really?—besides gregariously filling up space where your sources refuse to speak? 15—Of course we should note part of the mystique surrounding Constantine, a large part of what's allowed him to become more myth than monograph is that his physical body, to the best of anyone's knowledge, was never identified. There were, perhaps unsurprisingly, rumors that his head was sent to the Sultan, that he was identified by his royal socks among a sea of Greek and Italian corpses, but nothing of the sort has ever been verified. In many ways, I thought to myself while reading Philippides' monograph, it was a fitting end, a pitiful end, an anonymous end, yet a fitting one nonetheless! 16—To die childless at the bottom of an anonymous mound of corpses, there are indubitably worse ways to go, even now, never mind in the time of Palaiologos. Palaiologos, if nothing else, was astute enough to recognize that the end had finally approached, both for himself and for his subjects, and he acted accordingly. Even prior to the official fall, perhaps we can surmise Constantine was astute enough to recognize, even if we assume he was 'strong' enough to convince said 'fanatics' to capitulate to the Papacy—would the City's fate have differed? 17—And so it was—eleven hundred years is enough; eleven Constantines, in my eyes, is probably sufficient? Now a young Turkish sultan, possibly Greek on his mother's side, took the place of the last Greek emperor, confirmed Serbian on the same side. In conclusion, I believe one statement we can all agree on as it relates to Constantine the Eleventh, the last son

of Helen, the penultimate gasp of Byzantium, is that this modern notion of the funeral is catastrophically misguided, that it may even be criminal. It wasn't long ago that I was more or less forced to attend the funeral of a close friend, yet the moment I entered the reception room and caught eye of my old friend dead and thickly made up, I knew I'd made a grave mistake, and I vowed, sitting in the uncomfortable black fold out chair, mindlessly gazing at the corpse of this friend, this friend I used to pick up after work to go out for ice cream, either at Newport Creamery, or a venue where we could get a cup of the bullshit vegan Froyo everyone liked in that epoch, this friend I used to laugh hysterically with after One AM at Nice Slice over pizza, the friend I used to discuss girlfriends and pornographic images with at extremely Italian lounges on Federal Hill, as I gazed at his corpse I vowed to never attend a funeral again. I realized that the attendance of funerals is always ill-advised, and the attendance of one for a man who died before thirty five is always a grave mistake. 18—In the era of the Eleventh there was still a modicum of respect in the face of death; a man of Constantine's stature could disappear on a battlefield never to be seen again, to die with some modest semblance of honor. Now you sit in a room on a poorly constructed fold-out chair, and you listen to people speak of which gas stations have moved to which avenues, you stare at your friend's corpse and recall entirely nonsensical events, you go out to eat after you stare at this corpse for a while, you decide to eat at an Italian restaurant after collectively staring at a dead body, and you all eat chicken parmigiana, and the profound peculiarities of death remain unaccounted for. Now you go out and you drink copious vodka at a place called Rocco's in the face of death; now in the face of death you go to a gentlemen's

venue and you defecate in their disgusting bathroom, because there's no honor left in the act of dying anymore, and funerals should at all costs be avoided. Ultimately, inscrutable myths are the only appropriate retorts to the contours of a human life.

3.3: Footnote to the Structure of this Novel

Prelude—After a decade plus of ceaseless correspondence via a postmaster of dubious origin, Mr Pynchon finally agreed to reveal his face to me, but only if I agreed to read all 58 sprawling hymns of Symeon’s The Divine Eros to him, aloud! On the afternoon of November 30, 2021 I prepared for the task, sitting on a nondescript park bench with the beautiful old Anglo-Saxon man on 9th and West 44th—but first I said, 01—Approaching the automatic entrance of Fresh Shore’s on Mineral Spring Avenue, hoping with all of my heart that their prepared foods were in the ballpark of what my mom generally discovers at Dave’s Supermarket, I glanced across the street and saw the old building of Ken Wok Chinese Cuisine halfway torn down, and I took out my phone and made a brief note on the indefatigable impermanence that remains so pervasive all around us, as I do each time a building I felt some sort of nonsensical connection with on Mineral Spring Avenue gets knocked down. 02—In any case, it was August first of this year that I felt as though I was rapidly approaching the end of my so-called rope in an over decade-long plus dissipation process, the fact of the matter was my dissipation had extended its prime in a way that was at once mildly impressive, yet simultaneously severely depressing. Perhaps with that being the case, it was on the night of August first, the second to last night of my thirty-fifth year, that I experienced a dream sequence where I was suspended in air above a desolate plain where a skyscraper-like tall building comprised solely of mirrors sat in the bright sunlight, where a portion of said top corner reflected said sunlight in a violent fashion, and I found myself lifted to said section where a voice I identified with Gregory of Nazianzus spoke to me mellifluously of the futility of

ephemeral things. 03—But perhaps we should pose a subsequent question: while there are a litany of instances of novelists attempting to ape the stylistic idiosyncrasies of Homer's *Odyssey*, while there's seemingly an endless line of English-speakers and Euro-adjacent folks who've shamelessly aped the Athenian baboons of the Antique era without pause!—are there any that we can think of that have mimicked the mannerist quirks of *The Divine Eros*? Because it recently struck me in re-reading Symeon's central work that in many ways it reads like an epic poem cum postmodern novel? 04—After all, it was none other than the notable postmodern novelist John Hawkes who said so sternly, 'I began to write fiction on the assumption that the true enemies of the novel were plot, character, setting, and theme.' And in this way the sprawling, politically-metered, spiraled verses of Symeon track the conceptual Hawkian novel to the Nth degree, or perhaps vice versa! Should we perhaps even pose the question: How acquainted was Hawkes' with the Byzantine monk in the era of said quote? We should perhaps note Hawkes was to an extent a disciple of Nabokov, who, in addition to penning a few novels postmodernly prodding into the do's and don'ts of seducing underage females, was raised in a Russian milieu still pre-Soviet, so to say an essentially Orthodox milieu. 05—The modern novel, which in our era is essentially the postmodern novel, because it seems serious modern novels no longer exist, only spurious commercial novels that perhaps ape old modern novels (poorly); no, today, to the extent the serious novel still exists outside of, say, thesis advisory boards, all serious novels are now essentially postmodern novels, and with that being the reality I suppose I'll refer to the postmodern novel as just the modern novel—as there are no modern novels anymore, just postmodern, so the

postmodern, for myself and my peers, is ipso facto the modern. The modern novel, to Hawkes' credit, no longer requires anything of narrative, of character, of setting, of theme; in fact, even indulging in such antiquated attributes is typically a sign of poor taste! For myself, when and if, which is hardly ever, I begin a novel with a fervent urge to tell me a story I'll place the item back down immediately, at least somewhat disgusted at its brazen narrative inclinations. 06—Symeon's Eros, on the other hand, while indulging in bombastic dialogues, while tearing itself apart in a perpetually appropriate fashion—perhaps the so-called refrain of Symeon's work is this very tearing apart—is essentially a postmodern epic poem, which if we consider the many attempts to turn the epic poems of Homer into the modern novels of, say, Gogol or Joyce, then it almost goes without saying that Symeon's epic poem is already a postmodern novel in many ways, as the addiction to pure prose of the novel, the addiction to the non-metrical methods of placing words in conceptual order, is perhaps another lurid quirk of the novel that would be better off set to the side! 07—Of course the beauty of the Divine Eros, of the so-called kontakion form (of which both Symeon and Nazianzus are essentially book-ends to, if not entirely indulgent in) is that it mimics the metaphysics of these Byzantines, itself of course being a poem and an essay and a story! The digressive hymns of the Divine Eros must be all three in simultaneity, verses and stories and essays, because if they're just verses or just essays or just stories—no, that simply won't work at all! To describe a select hymn as a verse, or as a story, or as an essay, instead of all three simultaneously, yet not as an amalgam but instead as an individual essay, an individual verse, an individual story in the same breath, to do that would almost be heretical in itself.

08—Whereas Descartes noted, ‘I think therefore I am,’ Athanasius said, ‘Has the Father ever existed without His Son?’ The most important aspect of the Divine Eros, what makes them essentially novelistic in perhaps the postmodern sense of the word, is that they’re at once essays and verses and stories individually, but they’re non-amalgamous! The Eros is all of them at the same time, but also each one of them individually as well; whereas Descartes noted, ‘I think therefore I am,’ the kontakion is only an essay because it’s a poem, but it’s only a poem because it’s a story, and so on and so on—

09—Hawkes said, ‘I began to write fiction on the assumption that the true enemies of the novel were plot, character, setting, and theme,’ while Athanasius said, ‘Has the Father ever existed without His Son?’ Is The Divine Eros of Symeon the New Theologian a postmodern epic poem and as such also the postmodern novel par excellence? Perhaps we should inquire further into this term ‘postmodern,’ however, namely as to how exactly it’s said to differ from the term ‘modern’? One of the more modern notions of our era, in this instance I’m speaking of modern as non-postmodern, whereas previously (perhaps foolishly) I used modern as a synonym for postmodern, is this conception of The Big Bang, which has achieved jihad-like popularity in our era. Perhaps the most modern notion of all, if we’re attempting to inquire about the modern-postmodern divide, is this notion, which has achieved a jihad-like belief system around it, of the Big Bang. 10—Now, personally, I’m not exactly a proponent of this notion, primarily because it strikes me as idiotic, with all due respect to the scientists who developed it, it strikes me as an idea that’s attempting to improve upon a previous notion (God), but in practice is taking the idiocy of said previous notion, blindly believing in God, and making it

somehow more idiotic. There's an idea that there was nothing, then something occurred, and now things are occurring in an outward fashion at increasing speeds. There's an idea that our sensory faculties, which are unable to accurately officiate feelings at a bar after three beers, are somehow capable of taking clues from billions of years ago and somehow empirically postulating what occurred billions of years ago, trillions of miles away. But this idea of the Big Bang is more in line with, say, Descartes, than, say, Athanasius. It's an idea that's essentially antithetical to the idea that a father only achieves being through his son, that the father and son, while existing independently of one another, only achieve being because of one another, that without one another they, in many ways, cease to exist. 11—It's only been of late that I've found myself craving the classic cookies and cream flavor, and it's been ice cream in particular that has struck my cravings acutely. In our era, now I need more or less at least one night of indulging in ice cream per week. Yet at the same time, alongside this peculiar craving for cookies and cream, I've found myself bending to an equally acute urge to try something new—hardly satisfied with this cookies and cream craving, despite the fact this cookies and cream craving more or less just came over me, I often find myself saying things like, 'I don't know—maybe that chocolate chip cookie dough is good?' or, 'What if I had a milkshake? I feel like, I don't know, maybe a milkshake would really hit the spot right now?' Of course the only result of such prevarication, of such mindless deviations is the indulgence in non-cookies and cream items and the inevitable remorse of the initial craving remaining unquenched! 12—There's an idea that there was nothing, then something occurred, and is still occurring; the postmodern novel, as well as Symeon's Divine Eros, do

away with the first portion of this formula, disassociating themselves from this idea that there was nothing and also from the idea that then something occurred, instead restricting themselves to the is still occurring. For both Symeon and the postmodern novel something is still occurring, however, we're not quite as concerned with the idea that there was at one time nothing, or with this idea that then something occurred. 13—If we were bold, and I'm feeling decently bold at the moment, having indulged in a long day, all of my days these days seem exceedingly long!—but also feeling as though all autobiography is absurdist fiction, we might say that while the modern novel says something adjacent to, 'I think therefore I am,' the postmodern novel states something akin to, 'He is the Father because he eternally has a Son through whom he affirms Himself as Father.' But this is perhaps even too speculative for our tastes; it's in all likelihood beyond the scope of this inquiry! 14—Yet of course this could be considered controversial, as the median postmodernist ostensibly loves nothing more than flaunting his reckless atheism; what the postmodernist adores more than anything is to flaunt his atheism; if the postmodernist becomes peacock-like about anything it's without a doubt his fervent disbelief in God. Yet is it possible that a Byzantine monk penned the first truly monumental postmodern novel? It's an interesting query, although I have a feeling it would disgust Hawkes if not Nabokov, but most likely Nabokov as much as Hawkes. Nabokov, and I'm basing this on little to nothing, strikes me as someone who would be loath to be grouped together with Symeon the New Theologian. 15—In his fiftieth hymn Symeon sensually notes, 'she reached out to me like a breast, for me to suckle imperishable milk'—we should inquire into this note further, as perhaps curiously, our author even refers

to the Father (or the Son) in this quote as αὐτῆ the feminine pronoun, hence the quote was rendered in English as She rather than He, yet another postmodern element to be found in the Eros, referring to the Father in the feminine conjunctive in the Eleventh Century! (Perhaps even the late Tenth!) So many of us to this day still blindly refer to the Father employing primarily the male conjunctive, yet I've never personally subscribed to this conjunctive conditioning myself, although I usually refrain from engaging in public statements regarding conjunctive matters. 16—Ultimately, both the postmodernists as well as Symeon the New Theologian recognize the for lack of a better phrase quantum character of our material existence; while the postmodernists, in many if not all cases, tend to either form or support various crusades due to this characteristic, Symeon did the opposite—instead rescinding completely and making no explicit political statement on the conjunctive character(s) of his world. (Yet of course there is the speculation that Symeon himself was of a conjunctive deviation, so to speak, unique to his milieu, that of the eunuch, although we don't know this for certain.) The world, its quantum character, was no call to reform to Symeon; no it was a sign to rescind! 17—For my part, I certainly can't deny that my personal predilections fall closer to rescinding; not a week goes by that the thought of entering a monastery doesn't become at least momentarily appealing! The monastery, to me, at times, seems like a second home, despite the fact, to the best of my knowledge, I've never stepped foot into a monastery of any sort. Yet where could I possibly belong more than a monastery, with few to no possessions and nothing pressing to do besides monitor my own fleeting thoughts—isn't the assessment of one's own waves of

fleeting thought a full-time job in and of itself? How could we possibly have time for anything else, if we're attempting to maintain a modicum of honesty with ourselves? 18—Approaching the automatic entrance of Fresh Shore's on Mineral Spring Avenue, hoping with all of my heart that their prepared foods were in the ballpark of what my mom generally discovers at Dave's Supermarket, I glanced across the street and saw the old building of Ken Wok Chinese Cuisine halfway torn down, and I took out my phone and made a brief note on the indefatigable impermanence that remains so pervasive all around us, as I do each time a building I felt some sort of nonsensical connection with on Mineral Spring Avenue gets knocked down.

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01—I'd [a]lr[e]ady [a][t]t[e]mp[t]ed [t]o g[e]t m[y]e[y]e[b][r]ows th[r][e]aded [a]t Ch[e]ryl's earl[i]er th[a]t w[e]l[k], [b]ut her [s]ign [r][e]ad “on va[c][a]tion, [r][e]t[ur]ning [S]atur[d]ay,” [s]o I [r]e[t]urned [S]atur[d]ay, un[f]ortunate[l]y [s][t]ill [w]earing a [f]ull [s]uit that, on the [o]ne hand, I [f]elt [d][e]p[l]y [u]nc[o]m[f]ortable exh[i]b[i]t[i]ng, yet [o]n the [o]ther [h]a[nd], [f]ee[l]ing [l]i[ke] [I] [h]a[d] a d[u]ty to wear [s]aid [s]ui[t] t[o] its [l]ogi[c]al [c]on[c]l[u]sion, [s]o I en[t]ered the par[l]or with m[y] [t]i[e] [s][t]i[l]l [i]n [t]a[c]t, [a]nd [a]s [I] entered [I] [r]e[c]alled, the [w]e[l]k pr[e]v[i]ou[s], [c]r[os]sing [M]e[m]o[r]ial on our [w]a[y to [B]a[y]b[e]r[y Garden, thin[k]ing to m[y]sel[f] “[I] [c]an't [f]eel [m]y [m]outh, [h]a[h]a,” [t]w[e]t[ing] [t]e[x]t to the [e]ff[e]ct of “I [c]an't [f]eel [m]y [m]outh [h]a[h]a,” on[l]y to [l]a[te]r [d]e[l]e[t]e [s]aid tw[e]t. An ol[d]er [l]a[d]y with a [s]tereot[y][p][i]ca[l]ly hoar[s]e [v]oi[c]e, [a] [v]oi[c]e that [a]lone is [c]a[p]able of [e]c[ho]ing the t[r]ue [e]s[s]e[n]c[e] of [e]ve[r]y hair [s]a[l]on [l]o[c]ated on the [E]a[s]tern [s]e[a]b[oard], [s]at [b]e[s]ide me on the e[s]ta[b]lishment's [c]om[f]orta[b]l[e] [b]l[a]c[k] [c]ouch, she [s]aid [s]ome[th]ing to [th]e [e]ff[e]ct of “Ch[e]ryl [i]s [s][t]i[l]l jet-[l]agged,” not [t]o me in [p]ar[t]i[c]u[l]ar, but in[s]tead [t]o [s]ome[o]ne sh[e] [w]as [s]p[e]a[k]ing to on [th]e [ph]o[n]e, she [th]en m[ot]ioned I [c]ould [c]ut her [i]n l[i]ne [i]f [I] s[o] ch[ose]. [H]esi[t]ant[l]y but [s]wi[f]t[l]y, I [t]ook the

[h]oar[s]e-voi[c]ed [l]ad[y] [u]p [o]n [h]er of[f]fer—[I] [r]ecogn[i]zed the [s]ub[s]titute th[r]ea[d]er, as she'd l[i]ned m[e] u[p] on a [p]r[e]v[i]ous [S]atur[d]ay, [m]onths [p]r[i]or, wh[i]le [i]n the [m]onths [s]i[n]c[e] [I]'d acqu[i]red [th]e te[n]d[e]n[c]y of g[e]tting [th]r[e]ads on [Th]urs[d]ays—it [s][e]ems as [th]ough sh[e] [o]n[l]y [w]orks [i]n[t]erm[i]ttent[l]y, and [w]hen [s]o, on [S]atur[d]ays.

02—The [t]wo of u[s] [e]n[g]a]ged in a [r]a[th]er [l]eng[th]y [e]xch[a]nge [r]e[g]arding the [S]eries [S]even [L]i[c]en[s]e, which the [s]u[b]s]titute had ex[p]r[e]s]sed [s]ome [i]n]ter[e]s]t [i]n [p]ur[s]uin[g], [b]e[c]ause I'd [m]entioned that, [n]o[m]i[n]all[y] [s]p[e]a[k]in[g], I wor[k] [a]s [a]n “[a]n]aly[s]t,” she then a[s]sumed [I] [p]osse[s]sed [s]omewhat [i]nt[i]mate k[n]ow[l]edge of the [L]i[c]en[s]e. [A]s it [s]o [h]a]ppened, I k[n]ew a d[e]c]ent [a]m[ou]nt [a]b[ou]t the [S]eri[e]s [S]even, [b]ut it [h]a]d [n]othing to do with [m]y “a[n]a]lyst” o[c]c[u]p]ation, [n]o, it was [o]n[l]y [b]e[c]ause [I]'d traded f[i]n]an[ci]al [o]p]t[i]ons [o]b[s]e[s]ive[l]y ear[l]ier in [m]y [l]i]fe—[n]one of [m]y k[n]ow[l]edge [r]egarding the exam [c]ame from my “[a]n]alyt” [r]ole, [a]s “[a]n]alyzing” th[i]ngs [i]n [c]or[p]o[r]ate Ame[r]i[c]a is the [f]urthest [th]ing [f]rom [th]e vo[l]at[i]l[i]ty [o]f [p]u]bli[c] mar[k]e]t [e]xchanges, d[e]s]p]ite the f[a]c]t the [e]xch[a]nges [b]a]s[i]c]ally t[r]a]de [a]b[s]t[r]a]c]tions [o]f [A]me[r]i[c]an [c]orpo[r]a]tions. [B]ut with [a]ll of th[at] [s]aid, I h[a]dn't [t]a]ken the [a]c]tual [t]e[s]t, [a]l]though I'd [p]r[e]s]sed the [S]eri[e]s Thr[e], [w]hich [w]as [s]ome[w]h[at] [a]dja[c]e]nt to the [S]e]ven, and it was child's play, a [t]otal [b]r[e]ze [s]o I [s]u]gge[s]ted [th]at [th]e [s]u]b[s]ti]tute

[m][a]y[b][e] p[a]y [s]ome a[t]tention [t]o the [s][t][o][c]k and [b][o]nd [m]ar[k]ets [i][n] the [i][n]ter[i]m, and she'd pro[b]a[b]l[y] [b][e] fine, [t]o [w]hich she said “D[o] y[ou] [w]ant your nose [th]readed [t][oo]?” At [th]e [t]ime it [s]eemed l[i]ke [s]ome[th]ing [I]’d have [s]ome [i][n]tere[s]t, [i][n] [f]a[ct] I re[c]alled thi[s] [s][u]b[s]titute o[f]fering me the [s]ame [u]p[s]ell, wh[i]ch [i]n th[i]s rare [i]n[s]tan[c]e I actual[y] [a][p]p[r]e[c]iated, the [p][r]i or t[i]me [I]’d s[e]en her—yet on [s]ome level I remained [a]ware, [s]i[t]t[ing] behind u[s], of th[i]s ol[d]er [l]a[d]y with the [s]tereot[y]p[i]c[a]l[y] hoar[s]e voi[c]e, who a[l]lowed me to [c]ut her in [l]ine [s]o graciou[s]l[y], n[o] doubt [e]x[p]e[c]ting [m]e to [s]it for a [s]i[m]ple [c]lean u[p] and [n]othing [m]ore. To [n]ow [e]n[g]age in a [n]ose [th]read, [th]ere was [n]o d[ou]bt [a]b[ou]t [i]t—[i]t would have [b]een [a] [t]otal [a]ffront [t]o [g]ood [t]a[s]te.

03—Ba[c]k on Mine[r]al [S][p][r]ing I [r]e[c]alled again [p]ont[i]f[i]cating on the e[ff]f[ic]a[c]y of [s]m[ok]ing [c]igarettes, as o[p]p[os]ed to eating [p]ro[c]e[s]sed [f]oods, de[s]p[ite] [o]n[l]y [s]m[ok]ing [c]igarettes [w]hen [w]i[l]d[l]y in[e]b[r]i[ate]d, [w]h[i]le [s]tanding again[s]t the [p]atio [b]ar at [B]ay[b]er[r]y G[a]rden. [W]hile [s]till [n]on[s]e[n]s[i]c[a]l[l]y [w]earing my full [s]uit I [e]q[ua]l[l]y [n]on[s]e[n]s[i]c[a]l[l]y re[c]alled the [c]o[m]poser [A]nthony B[r]axton [c]o[n]tinual[l]y [r]e[p]e[ati]ng the word *[t/r/a]nsidiom[atic]* i[n] a[n] old Y[ou]t[u]be in[t]erv[ie]w I [w]as [w]a[it]ing the [p]r[e]v[i]ous [e]vening. [C]o[m]p[os]ers in [A]meri[c]a [a]re a[s]ked to de[s]c[r]i[be] their [c]o[m]p[os]i[t]i[on]al [s]tyl[e], and they ma[s]turbate [r]uthl[e]s[s]ly in [r]e[s]p[on]s[e], they [r]e[p]eat phrases li[k]e

tr[a]nsidi[o]m[a]ti[c] [a]nd they j[a][c]k off with n[o] [s]en[s]e of shame. Of [c]our[s]e, I thought to my[s]el[f] wearing a [f]ull [s]uit [d]r[i]ving [d]own [M]ine[r]al [S]p[r]ing, the ent[i]re A[m]eri[c]an un[i]ver[s]i[ti]ty, at [i]ts a[p]ex, [i]s now ju[s]t a fa[c]t[ory] of gr[ea]t ma[s][t]urb[a]tors—[th]ere's no heterodox [th]ought left in our un[i]ver[s]i[ti]ties, I [c]on[c]luded, [s]t[i]ll [i]n a [n]on[s]en[s]i[c]al [f]ull [s]uit, [n]o, in pla[c]e of heterodox[y] there's [o]nl[y] a [f]a[c]to[r]i[y] of [g]ood to ve[r]y [g]ood ma[s]tur[b]ators, [p]eo[p]le who h[a]ve a[b]s[ol]ute[l]y nothing [t]o [c]on[t]ri[b]ute [t]o our [c]ulture ex[c]ept jac[k]ing off in a [m]ore re[f]ined [m]anner than [m]o[s]t.

1.2

01—[W]e [w]ere s[i]tt[i]ng [a]t the bar [a]t P[a]sh[a] waiting fo[r] ou[r] ice [h][o]se [h]ook[a]h to [a]rr[i]ve, [I] was [s][o] ex[c]i[te]d, [b]oth of u[s] [d]rin[k]ing a [b]ottle of [M]o[d]el[o] a pie[c]e—I h[a]dn't even n[o]ti[c]ed [K]enny or[d]ered a [M]o[d]el[o], [a]nd I [a]s[k]ed him, “[D]o you [l]i[k]e [M]o[d]el[o]?” to [w]hich he re[p]l[i]ed “I'm [M]exi[c]an,” [w]hich I [p]on[d]ered for a [m]o[m]e[n]t. [K]e[n]ny was M[e]xi[c]an, [s][o], i[p]s[o] fa[c]t[o], one [m]ay [a]s[s]ume he enjoys [M]o[d]el[o]—at the time [i]t [s]eem[ed] [i]n[c]re[d]i[b]l[e] [s]en[s]i[b]le to [m]e. Our [p]r[e]v[i]ou[s] [m]eeting that [e]vening had [c]on[t]inued a [t]ad [t]oo [l]ong for my [p]r[er]sonal [l]i[k]ing—[c]ertain [p]eo[p]le, with all [d]ue re[s]p[e]c[t, they [l]a[c]k the [c]a[p]a[c]ity [f]or i[d]enti[f]ying the a[p]p[r]o[p]r[i]ate [m]o[m]ent to [c]on[c]lude [a]n [a]necdote, to [c]ea[s]e the [p]r[a]c[tic]e of br[i]ng[i]ng u[p] a[d]d[i]t[i]onal [a]ne[c]dotes, [th]e[se] [p]eo[p]le, [th]ey're all great [p]eo[p]le, and of [c]ourse I [c]ould hardly [s]ay [a]

[s]ingle [p]ejorative [th]ing [a]bout any of [th]em, yet [s]ome of [th]em, [th]ey're ju[s]t [a][p]parentl[y] [f][i]lled to the [f]u[c]king [b]r[i]m w[i]th th[e]se [a][n]e[c]dotes, [a]n[d] they're in[c]a[p]a[b]le of n[o]ting the [c]orre[c]t [m][o][m]ent to [c]ut these ane[c]d[otes] short, [t]o [t]a[p]er off these [l]imit[ed]e[s]s a[n]e[c]d[otes], they ju[s]t or[d]ered a [n]ew [p]len [o]n [A]maz[o]n, [a]n[d] for my [p]art, of course I a[p]pr[e]c[i]ate [a][n] [a][n]e[c]dote [a]s [m]uch [a]s the [n][e]xt [m][a]n, I've [a]l[w]ays [a][p]pr[e]c[i]at[ed] [a] [m]o[d]i[c]um of [r]est[r]ai[n]t with [r]egard to the ane[c]d[ote].

02—[A]ll [m][e]etings, it [s]eems to [m][e], [n]e[c]e[s]sitate [a]djourn[m]e[n]t ev[e]ntuall[y], and a [s]oc[i]et[y] where [i]nf[i]n[i]te [a][n]e[c]dotes [b]e[c]omes [a][c]c[e]pta[b]le [w]i[ll] [i]n[e]vita[b]ly [e]n[d] [w]ith the [s]low deaths of [i]t[s] [c]i[t]i[z]e[n]s [i]n [m]eetings that should have adjourned [f]orty [f]ive [m]inutes pr[i]or. [W]ith that said, I [w]as in the [m][oo]d [f]or a [f]ew [M]ezc[a]ls, [w]hich [w]e gr[a]bbed [a]t [M]elo[n]i's [n]ew [b]ar, [b]ut [w]e al[s]o [w]anted a [h]oo[k]ah. I a[s]ked, “[D]oes any[o]ne [w]ant [a] ... [h]oo[k]ah?” [K]atreen[a], for her [p]art, made it [a]bun[d]antl[y] [c]lear she had [n]o [i]n[te]rest [i]n [a]tt[en]ding [a] [p]ar[t]i[c]u[l]ar [n]ot-[t]o-be-[n]amed [h]oo[k]ah [l]ounge, and wh[i]le [I] [p]er[s]onally [h]eld [n]o [p]arti[c]u[l]ar [i]ll-w[ill] again[s]t [s]aid [l]ounge, I utter[l]y re[s]p[ec]t[ed] [h]er o[p]i[n]i[on]. She [f]ound [h]er[s]el[f] [i]n a [b]it of a [b]eef with a [n]ot-to-[b]e-[n]amed [h]ookah lounge, and I [s]u[p]ported [h]er o[n]e [h]u[n]dred [p]er[c]ent—with that [s]aid, from [t]i[m]e to [t]i[m]e, [p]erh[a]p[s] in a [t]otal[l]y ill-adv[i]sed [f]a[sh]ion, [I] [f]elt [l]ike a hoo[k]ah at [s]aid [s]pot was

[p]er[f]e[c]t[l]y [f][i]ne, but [K]atr[e]ena [s][e]emed to di[s]agr[e]e [s]ome[w]hat v[e]hementl[y], [w]hich [w]as [s]omething [w]e all felt was [c]om[p]l[]te[l]y un[d]er[s]tan[d]able it [w]as [s]omething [w]e all re[s][p]e[c]ted.

03—The real[i]ty [i]s, when [i]t [c]omes to [s]mo[k]ing [h]oo[k]ah, I ad[h]ere to a [s]t[r]i[c]t [p]a[c]t of non-[a]g[g][r]ession. [W]ith [a]ll of that in [m]ind [w]e [a]ll [a]g[r]eed to [s][m]o[k]e [o]ne i[c]e hoo[k][a]h at [P][a]sh[a]. [W]hile [w]aiting to [r]e[c]eive our [r]out[i]ne [p]at downs, [t]wo [T]ur[k]ish [w]aiters [c]o[n][v]e[r][s]ing [f]u[r]ti[v]e[l]y g[l]a[n]c[e]d [a]t m[e] [a]f[te]r I [a][c]ci[d]ental[l]y g[l]a[n]c[e]d [a]t them, [a]nd I [c]o[n]si[d]ered the po[s]sibi[l]it[y] [t]hey were [c]o[n]c[er]ned [t]hat I [c]ould un[d]er[s]tand them—I’ve in[f]ormed [K]a[t]reena on [m]ultiple o[c]casions that my [b]oy[c]ott of I[s]t[an]b[ul] will re[m]ain in e[f]fe[c]t un[t]il the [T]ur[k]i[sh] [s]t[ate] [t]a[k]es [a]c[c]ounta[b]ility for [i]t[s] [a]t[ro]c[i]ties [c]o[m]m[itte]d a[g]ain[s]t the [G]r[e]e[k] [p]eop[le]. Yet, [r]eal[i]s[ti]c[a]l[l]y, the on[l]y [p]ath forward for [e]i[th]er e[th]ni[c]it[y] is a [m]e[r]g[i]ng of the Gr[e]e[k] and Tu[r]k[i]sh wo[r]lds—[M]anzi[k]e[r]t [w]as [o]ne [t]housand years ago. [T]he i[c]e hoo[k]ah, [w]hich I’d m[ai]nt[ai]ned [w]as the [b]e[s]t in the [c]ity [f]or years on end, was a [l]i[t]tle [d]i[s]a[p]pointing, it [l]e[f]t more than a [b]it to [b]e [d]esired. Ja[c]k wasn’t there. I [k]e[p]t [f]li[p]ping the [c][o]als [o]ver and [o]ver, but the hoo[k]ah [k]e[p]t [d]i[s]a[p]pointing me. [O]ver and [o]ver the hoo[k]ah [d]i[s]a[p]pointed me.

1.3

01—[F][l]i[p]ping my[s]el[f] [a][s]s u[p] [a]t the [c][o][l]ono[s][c]o[p]y be[f]ore it was [a]p[p]r[o][p]lo, there's [n][o] [l]onger a [n][o]tion of [s][a]n[c]t[i]ty [i]n [a]b[s]tra[ct] [e][x]pr[e]ssionism, [q]uantum me[c]h[a]ni[c]s [a]nd non[l]o[c]al [r]e[l]ations or [s]omething, john [b]ell was [c]o[r]re[ct] a[b]out the ph[y]s[i][c]al un[i]ver[s]e, w[r]iting “[m]utte[r]ing [m]y [c]on[s]tant [c]u[r]io[s]ity got in the way of [m]y [s]ui[c]i[de] to [m]y[s]elf in a [s]omewhat [i]r[o]n[ic] tone” b[ut] [m]utte[r]in[g] [n]othin[g] at all, the older [w]o[m]an had no [i]nte[r]e[s]t [i]n ge[r]ia[t]ri[c] foot[w]ear yet [w]ouldn't [s][t]o[p] [s]p[e]a[k]ing to [m]e of [m]y de[s]tin[y] [a]fter [ei]ght o'cloc[k] [a]t [th]e wren[th]am outlets, [a]ged [th]irty [s]ix portuguese [d]an[c]ers i[n]form [y]o[u] i[n] [m]in[u]te [d]etail of [y]our own a[c]c[u]te [m]isery then [w]al[k] a[w]ay u[n]c[o]n[c]erned, th[is] [i]s [w]hy [c]h[r]i[s]t [h]ad [h]is feet [r]ubbed—

02—[D][i]p [d]own li[k]e a [q]u[i]c[k] bath in[t]o the [d]m[t]-li[k]e [e][s]sen[c]e of what [s]eems po[e]ti[c], br[e]a[k][f]a[s]t and [c]o[f]fee [s]pots [c]l[ose] [s]o [q]u[i]c[k]ly, [y]et [i] [f]i[n]d [m]y[s]el[f] [y]earning [f]or [a]n a[m]eri[c]ano [a]nd ome[l]et a [l]ittle [a]f[ter] [f]our, the [c]louds [o]ver one [f]orty [s]ix [s]outh [c]on[s]i[s]tentl[y] [l]oo[k] [l]i[k]e [o]il [p]aint, [p]rior [t]o the m[e]n[t]al h[e]alth r[e]vo[l]ution ado[l]e[s]cents were for[c]ed [t]o in[t]erna[l]ize [t]rau[m]a, [m]any of them [b]e[c]o[m]ing [c]o[m]p[lete] a[s]sholes in the [p]ro[c]e[s]s, i've [s]oured on the [b]e[ach], [s]k[in] [c]are, i [s]u[p]pose, has [b]e[c]ome a [b]it of [a] [p]r[i]o[r]ity, [s]and [i]s [s]omewhat of a[n] [a]nnoyan[c]e—

03—Two m[i]dg[e]ts [e]at[i]ng d[e][l][i]c[i]ou[s]
[l]oo[k]ing ri[c]e bowls at xa[c][o] ta[c][o],
[r]ep[e]at[i]ng the ph[r]ases there [i]s n[o] [i][m]age
there is n[o] [m]e[m]o[r]y, there's no [i]m]age and there's
no [m]e[m]ory, s[a]ns i[m]age [a]nd [m]e[m]ory we
c[a]n s[t]art [t]o a[p]proach the funda[m]ental [n]ature
of the u[n]iver[s]e as [s]uch, tri[p]le egg [o]me[l]et with
the [k]al[a][m][a]t[a] [o][l]ives, a ch[e][s]t [c]r[e]vi[c]e
[s]tained in a per[m]ane[n]t i[n][k] of [s]orts, [c]uddl[y]
[b][e]a[v]ers [e]at [v]ege[t]a[b]les from the [h]ands of
well i[n][t]e[n]tioned [h]u[m]an [b]eings, the [s][m]all
[b]ottles of [s][o]ju were [o]nly eight [b]ucks a pie[c]e

04—The [s]a[k]i at [s]o[m]o was [p]o[s]si[b]l[y] the
wor[s]t al[c]ohol[i]c [b]e[v]erage i'v]e e[v]er
[s]i[p]ped, the [c]an [l]oo[k]ed [l]i[k]e [a]n [a]nime
jui[c]e[b]ox, it a[p]p[e]aled [t]o m[e], it [s][t]ru[c]k me
[t]iny [b]ar had a [p]re[t]ense a[b]out it that j[u]st
[s]tr[u]c[k] m[e] as [c]om[p][l]e[te][l]y out of [l]ine,
[p]eop]le from var[i]ou[s] [b][a]c]kgrounds ma[k]ing
[f][a]s[t] [f]riends [a]s i ate [b]rea[k]f[a]s[t] [o]ut [o]n
the patio at [d]omeni[c]'s, [c]on[s]i[d]ering [g][o]ing to
chilan[g][o]'s, on[c]e a[g]ain [d]e[c]i[d]ing a[g]ain[s]t it,
the [c][o]n[d]o [c][o]mp[l]ex [l]oo[k]ed [l]i[k]e [t]otal
shit, real e[s][t]a[te] as a[n] i[n]ve[s]tment has alw[a]ys
[s]t[r]uck me [a]s le[s]s th[a]n a [n]o b[r]ai[n]er—

05—[B]lue [l]i[gh]t e[y]eg[la]sses [w]ith the [b]l[ac]k
[w]ire rims [l] [l]ook [l]i[k]e a [c]om[p]l[ete]
[d]ouch[e]b[ag], there's a [d]o[c]ument t[it]led
[p]a[s]s[w]ord is [p]a[s]swo[r]d with the [d]ollar
[s]i[gn]s [a]f[te]r the A, [P]rou[s]t was a re[n]owned
[f]an of [m]ale [p]ro[s]t[it]utes—[t]hey [th]in[k]
[N]ietzsche d[i]ed of [s]y[ph]i[li]s, in [m]y [m]i[n]d
[l]'m the [l]a[s]t of a [l]ong [l]i[n]e, [m]ade

A[m]eri[c]an Engl[i]sh [i]nto [A]ncient
Gr[ee][k]—[c]on[s]ider m[e] the twelfth
[C]on[s]t[ant]i[n]e, [g]leno[c]ides are [j]u[s]t a [m]atter
of [t]a[s]te, Ana[t]ol[i] [j]u[s]t [m][e]ans [E]a[s]t—

06—[G][r]e[g]o[r]y of [n][a]zi[a]nzus [i]mpl[i]c[i]tly
under[s]tood the [n]ature of [q]uantum ph[y]s[i]c[s], of
[n]on[l]o[c]al re[l]ations, it's p[o]s[s]ible the [o]c[c]ident
has [c]l[un]g to a[n] i[n]i[t]i[al] [l]i[n]gu[i]s[tic
[r]e[v]ersal, a [r]e[v]er[s]al [c]reating a[n] i[l]lusio[n] of
[p]er[s]p[e]c[tive, it's] p[o]s[s]ible the
[p]er[s]p[e]c[tiv[i]sm d[i]scovered [b]y [p]e[op]le
li[k]e [N]i[e]tzsche was, [i]n fa[c]t, a [s]i[m]p[le
[b]y[p]rodu[c]t of this [i]n[i]tial rever[s]al [o]f the
[O]c[c]ident, thi[s] i[d]ea of a [p]er[s]p[e]c[tive, it
[s]eems [t]ota[l]l[y] i[l]logi[c]al to m[e], no [p]un
in[t]ended, i[c]e hoo[k]ah with the [t]atz[i]k[i] [i]
wasn't [q]u[i]te in [m]y r[i]ght [m]i[n]d at the t[i]me,
[s]amura[i] [s]word in washing[t]on pa[r][k], the [c]a[r]
[s]eat [s]aw [t]oo much, videogra[ph]y is ar[c]ha[i]c [i]n
[r]et[r]o[s]p[e]c[t, the [s]cien[c]e of [p]honet[i]c[s] [i]s
[s]till amb[i]guou[s], the [c]onver[s]a[tion [f]aded of
its own a[c]cord

07—[S]i[b]eria is [b]eautiful thi[s] time of [y]ear, [a]ll
[a]rt is [n]ot [n]e[c]e[s]s[ar]ily ip[s]o [f]act[o] [f]or
e[v]e[r]yone, the [f]lesh of the hu[m]an [b]e[ing] wasn't
u[n]i[v]ersall[y] a[p]p[e]aling, [b]eli[e]ve it or [n]ot,
e[m]otional [b]aggage lo[s]t [i]n tr[an]s[i]t [a]fter i
[a]woke [f]rom [a] [s]t[r]ange d[r]e[am], my [y]ia[y]ia
in[f]o[r]ming m[e] she's out of [s]o[r]ts with [s]mudged
l[i]p[s]t[i]c[k] as [i] [c]lutch a ne[ph]ew that isn't m[i]ne,
the[r]e a[r]e man[y] r[e]gional differen[c]es [t]o [t]a[k]e
in[t]o a[c]count, we [c]on[s]t[r]u[c]t l[i]near [s]tates [i]n
[r]etro[s]p[e]c[t then [s]p[it] on a [s]treet [i]n [i]zmir,

the [r]olled [d]own [w]in[d]ow [w]as li[k]e a [p]i[c]ture
 [f]rame, [m]e[m]ory was juvenile delin[q]uents
 [s][p][r]aying g[r]a[f]fiti, the [p][r]oviden[c]e [c]o[p]
 [w]as [s]ati[s]fied [w]ith the an[s]we[r] [w]e're ju[s]t
 [c]onve[r][s]ing

08—The un[s][p]e[c]if[i]ed [b]ug [t][r]a[p]ped in the
 [s][p][i]der we[b] on the [r]ailing of the [e]m[p]loyer's
 [e]n[t][r]an[c]e [m]ade [m]e [c]on[s]ider [m]etapho[r]s
 o[r] [s]omething, the [c]ashier at j[o]b l[o]t of
 am[b]i[gu]ous eth[n]i[c]i[ty] [n]eeds to [e]m[p]loy
 [s]ocial m[e]d[i]a to [a][s]si[s]t her [p]ur[s]uit of
 [e][s]ta[b]l[i]shing her[s]elf as a [ph]otog[r]a[ph]er,
 her [f]avo[r]ite [f]ood is [p]izza, the
 [c]o[l]ono[s]i[c]o[p]y was un[s]u[c]ce[s]s[f]u[l]l[y]
 re[s]c[h]ed[u]led on t[wo] o[c]casions, it [s]t[r]u[c]k
 [m]e that [r][u]ss[i]an whore [i]s one of the [f]ew
 [m]i[s]og[y]n[i]s[t] [ph]rases [s]t[i]ll a[c]c[e]p[t]able to
 [s]ay aloud in [s]o-c[alled] [m]i[x]ed [c]o[m]p[an]y, sure
 it was [n]i[c]e e[n]ou[gh] to have the a[s]si[s]tan[c]e of
 [g]iova[n]n[i] [g]u[i]s[t]i[n]i[a]n[i] but [n]ot if h[e]
 in[s]i[s]ted on re[t]reating the [f]ir[s]t time his che[s]t
 caved in—

09—I [f]ound [m]a[r]i[os] [ph]ili[p]p[i]d[e]s
 mon[o]gra[ph] on the la[s]t [c]on[s]tant[i]ne to [b][e]
 [s][o] [p]r[o]-latin to [b][e] n[e]arly unr[e]ada[b]le,
 [w]hich [w]as un[s]ur[p]rising [b]ecause it [s]eems as
 [th]ough [th]e[r]e a[r]e alm[o]st n[o] [t][r]ue g[r]eek
 in[t]ell[e]ctuals in the w[e]st, [o]nly f[au]x-g[r]eek
 in[t]ell[e]ctuals that shame[l]e[s]sly [s]ell out
 their own hi[s]t[or]y, who [r]ubber [s][t]a[m]p [a]nglo
 a[s]sertions [th]at [th]e h[ell]e[n]ic [e]ra [e]nded
 [a]fter [s]o[c]rat[es] [f]ondled al[c]ibiad[es], i
 [o]ften have an urge to [s]pit on th[e]se [s]o-c[alled]

inte[l]lectuals, th[e]se [s][c]ho[l]a[s]ti[c] im[b]e[c]iles,
 th[e]se [l]evant[i]ne [b]enedict arnolds, these
 [c]owa[r]ds of the [s][p]i[r]it, wh[i]le [i]
 [p][a]in[s]t[a][k]ingly transform ameri[c]an engl[i]sh
 [i]nto [k]oin[e] gr[e]e[k] i have to d[e]al with
 [p][e]o[p]le of my own an[c]e[s]try obfu[s][c]ating [i]n
 the [s]erv[i]c[e] of [s]e[c]ular [p]o[p]les, when there's
 [n]othing be[l]l[o]w a [s]e[c]u[l]ar [p]o[p]le, it'[s] wh[y]
 at t[i]mes [i] feel l[i]ke re[t][i]ring [t]o a mo[n]a[s]tery
 or [s]o[m]ething, [s]o[m]etimes you h[a]ve to [a][s]k
 your[s]elf what'[s] the point—

10—A [b][i]t [d]e[p]re[s]sed w[i]thout [p]al[p]a[b]le
 [c]ause, [s][l]o[wl[y] n[o]ti[c]ing a variet[y] of
 [p]o[l]k[a d]ots on a [p]ri[s]t[i]ne [t]wo thousand
 [s]ix[t]een hon[d]a [c]iv[i]c [c]l[e]arl[y]
 [d]u[e] t[o] the [d]o[u]chebag i[n]c[e]s[s]antly m[o]ving
 his white [p]i[c]ku[p] in the [p]ar[k]ing lot,
 i[n]e[br]iated a[n]d [p]e[ei]ng on e[n]zo's door handle
 in [t]wo thousand and four[t]een, [t]w[o] y[e]ars
 [p]rior [t]o the [c]iv[i]c b[e]ing [i]ssued, the
 [s]c[al]lops at mar[i]a [c]u[c]in[a] were
 [s]u[c]cullent yet [r]i[d]ic[u]lou[s]l[y]
 over[p]ri[c]ed, [c]urt a[l]leged the [p]ork was [k]i[n]d
 of [d]r[y], [s]l[o]wly n[o]ti[c]ing mi[l]agr[o] is a
 halfway [d]e[c]ent t[e]q[ui]la at [v]i[n]o
 [v]eritas—

11—[B]la[c]k eye[br]ows plu[c]ked with a [m]uted
 [s]e[n]s[e] of [g]le[e], the [c]e[n]t[er] of [g]ravit[y] is
 ul[t]i[m]ate[l]y e[l]u[s]ive, there's a [p]r[o]s[o]p[o]
 that [b]e[c]omes an ou[s]i[a] [b]ut not [q]u[i]te [v]i[c]e
 [v]er[s]a, we [b]eg[i]n w[i]th the [i]n[d]iv[i]dual and
 [th]i[n]k [th]i[s] [i]s free[d]om, there is no
 [i]n[d]iv[i]dual, the [i]n[d]iv[i]dual [i]s [n]o

o[r]ga[n]ism, [th]e o[r]ga[n][i]sm [i]s [th]e [f]ir[s]t
[f]alla[c][y], i'[v]e ne[v]er [b]een a [b]ig [f]an of [s]en[s]e
[p]er[c]e[p]tion, [p]rose is [s]ome [f]orm of
[t]ele[p]ath[y], th[i][s] [i]s [p]eri[l]ou[s], i've on[l]y
in[t]ermittent[l]y [b]e[l]i[e]ved th[i]s [i]s good, my
[b]e[l]i[e]fs are [p]ure[l]y [th]eatrical, [th]ere's no
[b]etter o[p]era house than [b]eli[e]f, sh[e] [a][s][k]ed
m[e] a[n] [a][s]inine [q]uestion a[n]d l[a]ughed, i
chu[c]kled [n]ervou[s]l[y], it mar[k]ed the begi[n]ning of
a ho[r]rendou[s] e[r]a for each of u[s]—

12—Lea[v]ing the [a]partment [f]or the [f]irst t[i]me [a]ll
[f]ir[i]d[a]y the [f]resh air was [a] [r]e[v]e[l]l[ation],
l[i][b]e[r]ian with the m[a][s][k] on [a]t the g[r][e]e[k]
[p]i[zza] [s][p]ot, [r][u][b] and t[u]g with the o[p]en
[s]ign a[c]ro[s]s the [s]t[r]e[e]t, [m]i[ght] get [m]y
[v][c]r [r]e[p]aired at cho's [e]l[e]c[tr]onics,
[s]p[eed]way [s]t[u]c[k] [u][p] [b]y the [b]l[a]c[k]
[d]u[de] with [b]a[l]l[oo]ns t[u]c[k]ed [u]n[d]er [h]is
shirt, [h]e [p]i[c]ked [m]y [k][e]y u[p] for [m]e on a
r[a]n[d]om [s]un[d]a[y] [a][f]ter[n]oon, i alw[a]ys
[f]ound him a [n][i]c[e] g[uy] [p]er[s]o[n]a[l]l[y], [t]a[k]e
a right on[t]o [a]l]ex[a]nder [a]nd [p]l[a]s the
[b]l[a]c[k]et[b]all [c]ourts, [t]wo thousand eigh[t]een
fl[a]sh[b]l[a]c[k]s, [t]a[k]en a[b]l[a]c[k] [b]y m[y] note
[b]ut [a]s much of an [a][s]shole [a]s you [c]an [b]e it's
e[s]s[e]ntial to [r]e[m]ain a [m]an of your [w]ord,
o[th]er[w]ise [th]ere's no [r]e[d]e[m]ption arc

13—It be[c]c[a]me [g]r[a]dually app[a]rent [a]s I m[a]de
[i]nc[i]dental eye [c]onta[c]t [w]ith [a] [g]irl [w]ith [a]
[g]ar[g]antuan [f]a[k]e a[s]s that I'd [s]l[ow]l[y] l[ost]
the abi[l]ity [t]o [t]y[p]e words [c]oherentl[y] in[t]o m[y]
[i][Ph]one—[m]e[m]ory is [p]erh[a]ps [a]s a [c]on[c]ept
[s]l[i]ghtly ill-adv[i]sed, [I] [c]on[s]i[der]ed while

eati[n]g a[n] e[n]tire [r]o[t][i][s]serie ch[i][c]ken at a
 l[a]ter d[a]te, ye[s], [i]t was [i]nad[v]isable [i]n
 [r]e[t]ro[s][p]e[c]t to gi[v]e an o[v]er[r]a[c]hing
 histo[r]i[c]al [r]e[c]a[p] of the late Otto[m]an Em[p]ire
 [t][o] [t]w[o] [s]e[v]enty [s]omethings I'd ne[v]er [m]et,
 [s]en[s]es get [m]uted with [a]ge—I [f][a]iled to noti[c]e
 the e[f]ferve[s]cent [b][a][c]k[s]ide [a]m[b]ling
 [a][c]ros[s] Ind[i]a Point un[t]il [K]a[t]r[e]na
 [a][c]cused me of loo[k]ing at it, or[i][f][i][c]es are
 u[l]timate[l]y [n]eg[l]igible [ph]e[n]o[m]e[n]a, J[e]su[s]
 didn't give [m]uch [c]r[e][d]en[c]e to ban[k] a[c]counts,
 I [c]on[s]i[d]ered, [e]ati[n]g a[n] e[n][t]ire
 ro[t][i][s]serie ch[i][c]ken at a l[a]ter [d][a]te—chanting
 the wo[r]ds "tu[r]n my b[i]tch u[p]" in a [s]oft
 wh[i][s]p[er] as I [s]tr[e]nuou[s]ly [e]dit the H[T]ML of
 a [b]oot[l]eg [T]um[b]l[r] [p]age I f[e]el at [p][e]a[c]e
 [w]ith the [w]orld, [t]en [c]alendars on [f][e]m[ales]
 with [t]wo [k]ids I [f][e]el at p[e]a[c]e with [m]y[s]el[f],
 [t]e[n] [m][e]z[c]als [e]n[ter] a[n] [e]leventh
 di[m]ension I [f][e]el at p[e]ace [w]ith the [w]orld,
 [w]ith the charlatan [n]ature of [m]athe[m]ati[c]s, [m]y
 [m]other [d]i[t]ched [m][e] at [N][i][c]ka[n][e]’s, but
 [t]r[u]thfully, I [d]i[dn't] [w]ant to rev[e]al my [n]ew
 Au[d]r[e]y Horne [t]att[oo] any[w]ay—

14—On [m]ineral spring getting [m][y] e[y]e[b]rows
 th[r][e]aded [b]y Ch[e]ryl a [s]e[l]f-ide[n]tifi[y]ing
 [s]p[anish] [l]ad[y] with a [c]uriou[s]l[y] [a]rabi[c]
 [a][c]cent a[t]tem[p]ts [t]o [s]ell off a [p]air of air
 [p]ods to [h]el[p] [s]up[p]o[r]t [h]er alleged [f]ou[r]
 chil[d]ren and I was a [l]ittle [d]ubiou[s] to [s]ay the
 [l]ea[s]t, [d]e[f]e[c]ating at the g[e]ntleme[n]’s
 ve[n]ue, of f-brand [d]ude wi[p]es [f]rom the
 chri[s]tma[s] t[r]ee sho[p], w[r]iting e[s]says is
 [r]e[p]rehe[n]s[i]b]le, having [s]in[c]ere o[p]i[n]io[n]s is

[b][a][s]i[c]a[l]ly wor[s]e than [c]l[i]m[ate] ch[a]nge in
[m]y [m]i[nd], [b]oy[c]otting [s]emi[c]olons, the
[i]ro[n]y of m[y] [n]ew yor[k] k[n]i[c]ks [f][a]ndom
h[a]s [s]l[ow]ly [f]a[l]len b[y] the w[a]y[s]i[de] [w]ith
[a]ge

15—[P]u[l]ling my [p]eni[s] out with a ch[i]ld-[l]i[k]e
[s]en[s]e of jubi[l]ation, [i] re[q]u[i]re more [p]od[c]asts
is the [o]n[ly] [c]on[c]l[usion] i've [c]ome to of [l]ate,
[i]t's the [o]n[ly] [l]og[i]c[al] [c]on[c]l[usion], there's
[s]im[p]ly a [s]evere [l]a[c]k of [p]od[c]a[sts] in the
[c]u[r]rent e[r]a, we've [r]uth[l]e[s]s[ly] de[p]rived
[o]ur[s]elves of [o]thers' [o]p[in]ions, [r]eading a
[r]o[b]ert ash[ley] [l]i[b]r[ett]o while [s]t[r]o[k]ing
my [b]eard in a f[a]shion th[at] evin[c]es a [s]ol[e]mn
[c]ont[em]p[la]tion—

16—Hon[d]u[r]an [m]e[d]i[um] [r]oa[s]t [i]n the
[M]i[s]ter Coff[e]e—[b]rown [b]a[s]m[at]i with
[t]wo [t]ea[s]p[oons] [f]rom the [z]a[tt]a[r] [b]ag,
[o]n[ly] extra virg[i]n o[l]i[ve] o[i]l [f]rom the c[o]ld
[p]re[s]s, at thi[s] [p]oint I thin[k] w[e] n[e]ed to ad[m]it
w[e]ve [m]ade [s]ome [m]i[s]ta[k]es i[n] a[n] adult
[a]nd [c]a[l]c[ul]ating [m]a[n]ner of [s]p[e]a[k]ing,
I'm [e]ven-tem[per]ed by [n]ature, o[f]f[i]c[e] [s]p[a]c[e]
two [f]eet by [f]our [f]eet with the [s]t[a]p[led]
[c]ar[p]et m[a]de from [r]e[c]y[c]led [s]ty[r]o[fo]am or
[s]omething—[r]ea[d]ing [i]m[p]ass[i]oned [r]e[d]dit
[p]o[s]ts a[b]out the hetero[s]exuality of [m]a[le]
[m]a[s]tur[ba]tion [d]il[d]o[s], [t]o[s]s t[wo] c[u]bes in
the i[c]e h[ou]se and [t]ry [t]o [s]e[e] [d]ead [p]e[o]p[le],
one of the most [p]ro[f]ound [f]riends I've e[ver] had
was a [f]loor [f]an

17—Tyra[n]n[y] of the [f]our-[f]our, m[e]a[n]ing is [n]eg[o]tiable, the do[p]pelganger a[p]peared [o]n[l]y i[n]ter[m]itte[n]t[l]y to [m]e on a [m]ild [S]un[d]ay a[ft]ernoon, [r]e[m]in[d]ed [m]e of a [m]i[s]sed [c]all I [r]e[c]eived [f]ive or [s]o years ag[o], [b]ut I di[s]c[ar]d[ed] the [m]e[m]or[y] to the po[s]si[b]ilit[y] of [e]ating a [s]el[f]-[s]alted [f]r[en]ch [f]ry—the d[u]de wh[o] [s]t[u]ffed the yo[u]ng [c]or[p]sle in[t]o his [t]run[k] l[i]ved i[n] an [u]p[s]c[ale] a[p]artment [c]om[p]lex and [d]idn't resemble your [t]y[p]i[c]al pe[r]ve[r]t mu[r]d[er]e[r], eye [c]onta[c]t is [q]uan[t]um [c]om[p]uting—

18—[F]our walls e[n]c[a]p[s]ulate ho[r]re[n]d[ou]sly [r]e[p]etitive [ph]e[n]om[en]a [r]ight [a]r[ound] [d]e[c]ade [a]n[n]iversaries, [a]t the it[a]lian-a[m]eri[c]an [c]lub I e[n]gag[ed] i[n] a[n] e[m]o [c]onver[s]a[t]ion [r]e[gar]d[ing] geo[g]r[a]ph[i]c[al] [t]e[n]d[e]n[c]ies [f]or no [p]ar[t]i[c]ular [r]eason, [t]ur[qu]oise [c]r[y]s[t]al [c]overs the [s]t[ab] [w]ound [b]etw[een] the [c]ollar[b]o[n]es, [p]arts and wh[o]les are [n]e[c]e[s]sary, didn't [n]eed to [i]n[f]orm my[s]el[f] [i]t was [s]l[i]ghtl[y] ill-adv[i]sed, gazing mind[l]e[s]s[l]y at your own hi[s]tor[y] a [l]i[t]tle a[l]oof, [s]u[c]cumbing to ne[fa]rious [l]i[te]ra[l]i[s]m w[i]th [f]r[i]ends, to be [f]rank I [c]ouldn't [c]om[p]rehend how any[o]ne [w]ould [c]ome to thin[k] [p]ol[i]t[i]c[al] o[p]i[n]ions a[r]e anything [b]ut a[r]t, it never o[c]curred to m[e] th[at] my [p]a[s]sion [c]ould [b]e mi[s]c[on]s[tr]ued as [s]in[c]erity—

19—The de[c]e[as]ed ra[c]c[oo]n [l]oo[k]ed [s]er[e]ne [l]i[k]e it was [s]l[e]eping on the [s]i[de] of one forty [s]ix, [I] [s]aw [C]ur[ti]s [t]e[x]t[ed] there w[as]n't a

[c][u]nt hair of a ch[a]n[c]e the I[t][a]lia[n] [a][s]s was
authe[n][t]ic a[n]d [I] [a][g]reed, [I] [t]hought [a][b]out
[t]he ra[c]coon [c]orp[s]e [a][g]ain, [a][b]out the
[n]on[s]en[s]i[c]al [n]ature of [b]i[o]logy, [a][b]out the
[b]ig [b]o[t]tle of [S]oju I'd [b]ought at the
[s]o-[c]alled di[s][c]ount l[i][q]uor [s]tore wh[i]ch
[s]eemed to [p]r[i][c]e [i]tems h[i]gher than M[S]R[P],
thoughts may b[e] [p]h[y]s[i][c]al [p]h[e]n[o]mena that
h[au]nt u[s] [n]o d[i]fferent than [p]olterge[i][s]t, [I]
[c]an't hone[s]tly [s]ay I alw[a]ys [s]e[l]e[c]t my
[p]h[r]a[s]ing in the [m]o[s]t [c]are[f]ul of [m]a[n]ners,
[s]ome [n]a[m]es you shouldn't [s]ay—

20—[D]i[s][c]u[s]sing [e][s][p]re[s]sos bla[c]kout
[d]run[k] w[i]th [e][m][i]li[o] at a[m]ede[o], half
[p]ound of the [p]ulled [p]or[k] [b]ut [o]nly [i]f [i]t's
[c]om[p]l[e]tel[y] un[s]easoned, [s]u[c]ulent
([p]ause), [b]e[ing] the onl[y] [c]ar on [m]e[m]orial
[b]rought [o]n a [s]omewhat n[o]n[s]e[n]s[i]c]al
[s]e[n]s[e] of [f]ore[b]oding, i [f]elt a[n] i[n]te[n]s[e]
[f]ore[b]oding, [c]ould it have [b]een the [c]a[s]amig[o]s
[b]lan[c]o, this [c]ontinual di[s][r]e[s]p[e]c[t [o]f the
[a]g[a]v[e], [a]n [a]d [c]laims to un[r]a[v]el the
meaning of [a][g][a][p][e], the [b]ig [f]at [g]reek
wedding [f]ranchise does [n]othing [b]ut [p]er[p]etuate
a ge[n]eric [s]en[s]e of eth[n]i[c]ity th[a]t's [a]s inane
[a]s [i]t [i]s [c]ounter[p]rodu[c]tive, [s]omething
e[s]p[eci]all[y] i[r]oni[c] [c]oming from the [s]o-[c]alled
gr[e]e[k] [e]a[s]t, the [r]e[l]ational [e][s]sen[c]e par
[e]x[c]el[l]en[c]e, [n]ia varda[l]o[s], it should be
[n]o[t]ed, is [s]im[p]ly [n]o [C]a[p]pad[o]cian, this
[c]on[c]e[p]tion of [e][s]sen[c]e is [e]m[b]arra[s]ingly
faux H[e]lleni[c], [b][a][c]k to [M][a]nuel at
[M][a]nzi[k]ert

21—Hal[f] Gree[k] va[c]uum [c]leaner in a
 [m]id-Augu[s]t [m]alaise, [f]ortune read
 un[s]ol[i][c][i]ted at [t]wo pm on a [S]unday [s]moking a
 [t]en [d]ollar [c]igar [d][r]in[k]ing a [v][o]d[k]a [o]n the
 [r]o[c]ks, hal[f] [b]ar[b]arian e[l]e[v]enth
 [C]ons[t]an[t]ines, e[l]e[v]en [C]on[s][t]an[t]ines is
 [s]u[f]ficient, hal[f] Ni[k]o[l]a Jo[k]ic, [t]y[ping] the
 word [k][i]nd[l]y in e[m]ails, I was [f][l]u[m]moxed at
 the a[m]ount of [r]ed[s]kin on the [r]ed[s]kin [p]eanuts,
 [m]iddle aged [p]od[c]a[s]t ho[s]t [r]e[p][e]ated[l]y
 using the [ph]rase [s][ph]in[c]ter [c]l[en]ching

22—Ing[e]s[t] the [s][p][e][ci]al [s]ta[r] [sh][a][p]es
 there's [a] [c]l[u][b] [a][b]ove an a[r][c][a]de, there's a
 [s]even [a]m sh[o]wing of a[n] uneve[n] [N]etflix
 a[n]ime, two h[o]m[o]s[ex]uals da[n]c[e] [s]a[n]s irony
 a[n]d there's a[n] [a]l[b]um th[at] will [p]refera[b]l[y]
 [b]e [d]i[s]avo[w]ed at a l[a]ter [d][a]te, a [m]an [m]y
 [a]ge is no[w] [d]y[ing] a [s]low [d]eath, i[n]co[h]erent
 e[p]i[d]er[m]i[s], I [u]sed t[o] [h]it the [b]ottle [h]ard
 too—i[n]d[e]ed, I [p]ainted [s]ix hours at a t[i]me with
 the [S]o[b]ie[s][k]i [b]y m[y] [s]i[de], [s][c]rewed and
 cho[p]ped [B]jork, a [s]en[s]e of adole[s]cen[c]e
 exi[s]ted, Mar[k]o[s] [V]am[v]a[k]a[r]i[s] w[r]ote
 [a][b]out the w[a]ter [p]i[p]es and [c]all gi[r]ls of tu[r]n
 of the [c]entu[r]y [P]iraeus, shi[r]t un[b]uttoned all the
 [w]ay [d]o[w]n [w]ith [p]ro[f]o[u]nd hi[c]cu[p]s to
 [d]ro[w]n out [D]'An[d]rea's [d]ead [b]o[d]y, [b]ut [c]an
 we [c]on[f]i[r]m the [P]uerto Ri[c]an gi[r]l [b]ehind the
 [b]ar is a[w]are, [d]oes the [b]utt [w]i[p]e at the [b]ar
 [b]ath[r]oom [r]eal[i]ze [R]y[an]'s [d]i[ed], [I] [d]on't
 [d]i[s][c]ri[m]i[n]ate [b]e[t]w[een] [o]rga[n][i]c
 en[t]i[t]ies and [o]ther[w]ise, a[n]other [m]an our age is
 [d]ying, [s][e][c]ond [c]ousins we n[e]ver [s]ee [d]rop
 [d]ead in Flori[d]a yet [d]ude [w]as al[w]ays [a]n

[a]sshole [a]ny[w]ay, ing[e][s]t the [s]p[e]cial [s]ta[r] sh[a]pes there's [a] cl[u][b] [a][b]ove an a[r][c][a]de, I used to [p]aint [s]ix hours at a t[i]me with the [S]o[b]j[e]s[k]i b[y] m[y] [s][i]de, [I] found it enjoya[b]le fo[r] the e[r]a—[c]igar [b]ar with Lams, I'm [w]ell a[w]are [m]y [c]ha[r]is[m]a is unorthodox in [c]ha[r]a[c]ter—

23—I [c]an n[o] [l]onger [c]on[s]ume [s]pagh[e]tt[i] ali[o] y[e]t i've [g]raduall[y] [c]ome [t]o [t]erms w[i]th th[i]s [t]rying [s][t]ate of exi[s][t]en[c]e, [s]u[r]gi[c]all[y] i[n]s[e]r[ti]ng [s]u[b]s[tan]c[es] i[n]to the ver[y] e[s]sen[c]e of [o]ne's [b]u[t]to[c]ks is a [p]ure roll of the d[i]e in [m]y hum[b]le o[p]i[n]i[on], yet a [f]e[m]ale's [s]exual hi[s]tor[y] is [f]rankl[y] [n]one of our [b]usi[n]es[s], we [t]end [t]o [v]ie[w] the [v]agina as [a] [t]issue or [a] [k]leene[x] whe[n] it's e[s]se[n]tia[l]ly [r]e[f]l[e]xive in [c]hara[c]ter, [l]ike a uni[que] [ph]r[ase] or [l]a[c]oni[c] [c]o[l]le[c]tion of [l]e[x]i[c]on, that's more or [l]e[s]s how i [v]iew the [c]on[t]emporary [v]ag[i]na at [l]ea[s]t, [i] was [a] [l]ittle [t]a[k]en [a]b[a]c[k] [a]t the [f]a[c]t the wing sp[ot] only [o]f[fer]ed [c]urly [f]r[ies], that [r]egular [f]r[ies] were nowhere to be [f]ound on the menu

2.1

—[I]t was [i]n the dr[i]zzling r[ai]n that I [w]as [w][ai]ting for a val[et] [t]o [t][a][k]e the [k]eys to my [p]ar[k]ed [c]ar [r]ight in [f][r]ont of the [r]estau[r]ant e[n]tran[c]e, thi[n][k]ing about how it was [c]ommon enou[gh] in the [p]a[s]t for [p]eo[p]le to thin[k] I [r]esembled a valet, th[at] [p]eo[p]le [p][a][ss]ing thi[s] [r]e[s]tau[r]ant [c]ould [ea]sil[y] [m]ista[k]e [m]e for a [v]al[et] [i]n the [m][i]dst of [v]al[et]ing [m]y own [c]ar, that ye[s] it's [c]ertainly true that [c]onsciou[s]ne[ss], as [i]ts [r]e[p]orted by [i]ts [c]on[s]t[itu]ents [i]n the mo[d]ern e[r]a, is a[b]surd, [p]ro[b]a[b]ly to [s]ome exte[n]t [d]riven [b]y [m]a[l]evo[l]e[n]t [f]or[c]es, that [s]ui[c]ide [m]ay [b]e the [m]o[s]t e[ff]i[c]acious [s]o[l]ution to [e]ndin[g] the [m][e]dd[l]in[g] of these [m]a[l]evo[l]e[n]t [f]or[c]es, but [th]at it'[s] al[s]o true [th]at [th]ere's ano[th]er [s]ide. [Th]ere's ano[th]er [s]ide [th]at [c]e[r]tainly [m]i[r]ro[r]s [th]i[s] [s][i]de v[i]a [m]a[th]e[m]atical [f]eatures, [th]at by [th]e im[p]le[m]entation of [m]athe[m]ati[c]al [f]un[c]tions we [c]an [p]erha[p]s [s]lip bet[w]ee[n] [s]ides. [W]hen [s]ea[te]d I imm[e]di[ately] or[d]ered M[e]z[c]al on the [r]o[ck]s, I wasn't [p]ositive the [r]e[s]t of the [d]ining [p]arty had or[d]ered their [d]rinks, [b]e[c]ause I was [a][tt]emp[t]ing [t]o flag [a] val[et] when th[ey] [i]n[i]tially sat [d]own, [b]ut I al[s]o [d]idn't [c]are—I [m]ade a [c]o[m]m[un]d [d]e[c]ision to or[d]er a [d]r[i]nk [w]i[th] th[i]s [w]aitre[ss] as [s]oon as I [s]at [d]own. She [c]a[me] ba[ck] two [m]inutes l[a]ter [t]o [t]ell me they didn't [s]to[ck] M[e]z[c]al. No one [s]eems to have [M]e[c]al. [R]e[s]p[e]c[table [r]e[s]tau[r]ants [s]ome[h]ow get a[w]ay [w]ithout [k]ee[p]ing a [h]ealthy [s]to[ck] of M[e]z[c]al in [s]u[pp]ly, they have the au[d]a[c]ity to [c]all

them[s]elves [r]e[s][p]e[c]table [r]e[s]tau[r]ants while
 [c]om[p]l[e]tel[y] [d][i][s][r]e[s][p]e[c]ting the [m]ore
 [s]ubtle [d][i][s]ti[ll]ation [o]f the [a]gave [p]l[an]t. I
 or[d]ered a [C]asa[m]igos [B]lan[c]o, [f]oolishly
 [c]on[f]irming [w]ith the [w]aitress that [B]lan[c]o [w]as
 the [q]u[o]te-un[q]u[o]te ‘[W]h[i]te’ [t][y]pe of
 [t]e[q]uila, and I enjoyed the [C]asa[m]igos
 [B]lan[c]o—I even n[o]ted [t]o the [t][a][b]le that I
 would m[a]k[e] a [p]oint [t]o [t]ry [C]asa[m]igos
 [B]lan[c]o [a]gain, that my [p]revious[ly]
 [a]m[b]ivalent [a][tt]i[t]ude [t]oward [C]asamigos was
 [p]o[ss]i[b]l[y] en[t]irel[y] [p]redi[c]ated on my
 igno[r]an[c]e of the [B]lan[c]o [v]ariety; the [p]our was
 gene[r]ou[s]. With that [s]aid, te[q]uila is a
 [b]a[s]tardization of the aga[v]e [p]lant when
 [c]om[p]ared to [M]ez[c]al. [M]ez[c]al, [b]y [c]ontra[s]t,
 ta[k]e[s] a[n] e[n]tirely [s]ubtle [a][pp]roach to the
 di[s]tillation of the [a]ga[v]e, with [ea]ch [v]ariet[y] of
 Mez[c]al [c]ontaining its [o]wn [s]ubtle n[o]tes of
 [f]lavor, whereas Te[q]uila em[p]loys a
 one-[s]ize-[f]its-all, heavily blunted [a][pp]roach to the
 [a]gave di[s]tillation [p]ro[c]e[ss]. Sure, [p]eo[p]le
 [t]end [t]o [s][c]off at the [s]o-[c]alled [i]nten[s]ity of
 the [M]ez[c]al [s][m]o[k]ine[ss], [i]ts [p]ro[p]en[s]ity to
 over[p]ower anything [i]t’s [m][i]xed w[i]th, but th[at]’s
 ex[a]c[tly what draws me to the l[i]quid [i]t[s]elf. I
 [e]njoy the f[a]c[t that [M]ez[c]al [e][ss]entially
 [c]an’t be m[i]xed, that [i]t [t]a[s]tes [s]o [b]old [i]t’s
 almo[s]t [i]mpo[ss]i[b]le to water down; these are the
 [b]est [n]atural [ph]e[n]ome[n]a in [m][y] [m][i]nd,
 [ph]e[n]ome[n]a that are [s]o one-of-a-[k]ind [th]at
 [th]ey n[ee]d to b[e] ex[p]erien[c]ed in i[s]olation,
 be[c]ause [i]n m[i]xed com[p]any they exi[s]t i[n]
 i[s]ol[ati]on a[n]yw[ay]. I enjoy [i][s]ol[ati]on—[I] f[i]nd
 it underr[ate]d, and I’ll even admit th[at] [a]t t[i]mes [I]

[f][i]nd [m]y[s]el[f] ex[i][s]ting [i]n i[s]olation eve[n] i[n] [m]ixed [c]om[p]any, in [m]y [m][i]nd, traver[s]ing [c]om[p]lex [s]cenarios that are no le[ss] [s]ocial than your average [m]ixed [c]om[p]any get-together. In [f]a[c]t, ever [s]in[c]e I was [s][m]all I've had this [t]enden[c]y—[t]o [f]ind the [s]o[c]iety of [m][y] own [m][i]nd [m]ore engaging than the [s]o[c]iety of [m]y i[m]m[e]d[i]ate [s]urroundings. Yet, [f]rankly, that's [M]a[ss]achu[s]etts [f]or you. I won't ne[c]e[ss]arily go as [f]ar to [s]ay that [M]a[ss]achu[s]etts is a [s]t[ai]n on the gr[ea]t [c]ountr[y] [o]f [A][m]eri[c]a, yet if I'm b[e]ing [c]ompl[e]tel[y] hone[s]t I [c]an't [s]ay [I]ve had the be[s]t of t[i]mes in [M]a[ss]achu[s]etts [ei]ther.

—For [o]ne [th]ing, [th]ere's [th]e Bridge[w]ater Triangle.

—[W]h[i]ch [i]t [s][ee]ms like alm[o]st [n][o] [o]ne [e]ven k[n]o[ws] a[b]out, [b]e[c]ause [e]ven I—having [s]p[ent] a [s]i[gn]i[fi]c[an]t chun[k] of [m]y l[i]fe in [M]a[ss]achus[et]ts, h[a]ving [s]p[ent] the l[at]t[er] h[al]f of my [a]dole[s]cen[c]e in the [s]tate—was [a]c[tuall[y], [b]el[ie]ve it or not, [f]l[a]b[berg]a[s]ted to di[s]c[over], e[s]pecially when [t]a[k]ing in[t]o a[c]c[ount] the [f]a[c]t the [p]he[n]ome[n]a is more than just a [w]eb of old [w]ives' [t]ales, th[at] it [a]c[tuall[y] [c]on[s]i[s]ts of [s]ub[s]t[an]t[i]ve [i]n[d]ire[c]t evi[d]en[c]e, which, as I [s]aid, is where I [s]p[ent] a good chun[k] of my [a]dole[s]cen[c]e, [a]nd in retro[s]p[ec]t, [d]uring thi[s] lowe[s]t [p]eriod of [m]y l[i]fe, I now [f]eel with a [f]air [d]egr[ee] of [c]ertaint[y], I was a[c]tually [m]y[s]el[f] [p]lague[d] [b]y a [d]emoni[c] [f]o[r]c[e] of [s]ome [s]o[r]t, [p]o[ss]i[b]l[y] [e]ven a [d]emoni[c] entity. As I [s]aid to [s]tart, [S]tratos, it [s]eems as though [c]onsciou[s]ne[ss] is [p]lague[d] by [f]o[r]c[es] [ou]t[s]ide of [ou]r [s]o-calle[d] selves that

[m]ani[p]ul[a]te, or a[tt]em[p]t [t]o [m]an[i]p]ulate, or are [i]nt[i]m]ately [c]o[n]n[e]c]ted with, the [g]enuine stream of [c]o[n]sciou[s]ne[ss] in ways th[at] are no doubt, [a]t times, nefariou[s]. [J]u[s]t [th]e of[th]er [m]orning I [w]o[ke] up in a [s]t[a]te [w]here I [w]as al[m]o]st un[a]ble to [c]ont[r]ol [m]y [o]wn [m]ind, [f]eeling th[e]se [f]or[c]es [m]ore a[c]c[u]tely [th]an [u]sual, [th]oughts and images [s]c[ur]rying a[c]ro[ss] [m]y [c]o[n]sciou[s]ne[ss] in [m]anners that [s]tru[ck] [m]e as illegall in [p]ri[n]c[i]p[le]—I had to [p]ray to [N]a[zi]a[n]zus [f]or this [s]tate to [c]e[as]e, or at l[e]ast I [f]elt [N]a[zi]a[n]zus hel[p]ed [p]ut m[e] at [e]ase. (227, 230)

—His [a]u[tobi]o[graphy] is terri[f]ic—I [f]eel h[e]’s a[c]tuall[y] [c]riminall[y] un[d]erstu[d]ied as a thin[k]er as [w]ell, in the [W]e[s]t at lea[s]t?

—The We[s]t [d]oe[s]n’t un[d]er[s]tand a[n]ything of [N]a[zi]an[z]u[s]—[n]o, to [th]i[s] [d]ay [th]e We[s]t un[d]er[s]tands [n]e[xt] to [n]othing of [N]a[zi]a[n]zus the [m]an, [n]ever[m]ind [N]a[zi]a[n]zus [th]e [s]tru[c]ture of [th]ought, [b]e[c]ause it was an [a]c[tual [s]tru[c]ture of [th]ought [th]at [N]a[zi]a[n]zus [a]ss[em]b]led. The We[s]t un[d]er[s]tands [n]othing of [C]a[pp]a[d]ocia [a]t all—to the We[s]t [C]a[pp]a[d]ocia [r]emains a [p]iece of [a]rcana, a[n] i[n]c[on]s[e]q[ue]ntial [s]t[r]i[p] in We[s]t Asi[a], b[e]c[au]se in the We[s]t [C]a[pp]adocia is viewed as a [s]im[p]l[y] Tur[k]ish [l]ocale, wh[i]ch [i]sn’t ne[c]e[ss]arily *in[c]orre[c]t*, but it’s [c]ertainly *in[c]om[p]l[e]te*—[n]o, [n]othing of [n]ote has o[cc]u[r]red d[ur]ing the T[u]r[k]ish era; [n]o, [n]othing at [a]ll on [p]ar with the [N]a[zi]a[n]zus [a]ss[e]mbling of [th]ought, [th]e qui[n]t[ess]e[n]tial [e]levation of the i[n]teger thr[ee], the [p]enultimate [p]art-whole [p]hilo[s]o[ph]y that o[cc]u[r]red [d]u[r]ing the, [f]or

la[ck] of a [b]etter [t]erm, [B]y[z]an[t]ine e[r]a of [C]a[pp]a[d]ocia. In this [d]ream [N]a[z]ian[z]us s[p]o[k]e to m[e] te[l]e[p]athic[a][ll][y]—

—[L]ike what Ingo Sw[a]nn [a][ll]eges.

—You k[n][o]w, [S]trat[o][s], I alm[o][s]t [n]ever li[s]ten to [a]udi[o][b]ooks, yet I made an ex[c]eption for [S]wann’s [a]ut[o][b]iography; I a[c]tua[lly] [l]i[s]tened [t]o the en[t]ire [a]ut[o][b]iograph[y] in a one or [t]wo day [s]pan, p[s]y[c]hotic[a][ll][y] [l]i[s]tening to thi[s] [a]udio[b]ook, [c]om[p]l[e]t[e]l[y]

enthr[a]lled—[b]e[c]ause [i]nsta[n]c[t]i[ve]l[y] [w]e’re all [p]ro[b]a[b]l[y] a[w]are that [a]udio[b]ooks [a]re [a]t [b]ottom [a][b]hor[r]ent, [th]at [th]e w[r]etched [a]udio[b]ook, the [o][b]je[c]tiona[b]le pod[c]ast ([a]ltho[ugh] I’m [a] [f]an of [b][o]th [f]o[r]mats) are dis[p]lacing [p]rose, wh[i]ch [i]s a [t]rue [f]o[r]m of [t]elep[athy]. Whereas [p]od[c]a[sts] and aud[i]o[b]o[k]s are [b]lunted [s]orts of [m]ult[i]-[t]a[s]k[ed] [s]o-[c]alled [m]o[d]ern [c]o[m]m[uni]c[ati]on, [p]rose [i]s a s[i]ngular b[e]am of telep[ath]y th[at]’s [a]c[tuall[y] [d]a[n]gerous;

[p]eo[p]le en[c]our[age] young ch[i]ld[r]en to [r]ead, whe[n] i[n] [m][y] [m]i[n]d [r]e[ad]ing is one of the [m]o[s]t d[an]g[erou]s a[c]t[i]v[i]t[ie]s I’[v]e [e]v[er] e[n]g[a]g[ed] in, sim[p]ly be[c]ause [p]rose at it[s] highe[s]t level is e[ss]entia[lly] te[l]e[p]ath[y]. For this [r]e[as]on I generall[y] [d]on’t [r]e[ad], [i]n[s]tead [l]i[s]tening to [i]d[i]oti[c] pod[c]a[sts] to [f]ill my a[f]t[er]noon. The [t]ext of [S][w]a[n]n’s auto[b]i[og]ra[ph]y [w]as un[a]v[ai]l[ab]le [f]or [s]ome r[ea]son, and, [b]eyond [f]inding the [v]oic[e] actor unusuall[y] enjoya[b]le, I [f]ound [h]is w[h]ole [s]t[ory] to [b]e [s]imul[t]aneou[s]l[y] [c]ompl[e]t[e]l[y] i[n]c[redu]cib[le] a[n]d e[n]tirel[y] [s]en[s]ib[le]. The[r]e a[r]e with[ou]t a [d]o[ub]t for[c]es that are [m]e[dd]ling

in our [c]onsciou[s] [s]treams, and I th[i]n[k] th[i]s [i]s [m]o[s]t [l]i[k]e[l]y the [r][oo]t of all [s][u]i[c]ide, [a]nd [p]erh[a]p[s] r[igh]t[y] [s]o, it [m]ay in f[a]c[t] be a [s]olution, [p]erh[a]p[s] the [m]o[s]t [s]en[s]ib[l]e [s]o[l]ution, and it was [c]ertainly [s]omething I ex[p]erien[c]ed fir[s]t hand during a [p]eriod [w]hen I l[i]ved [w]i[th]i[n] the Br[i]dge[w]ater Tr[i]angle. [I] even recall a[n] i[n]s[tan]c[e], [p]ro[b]a[b]lly at my [l]owe[s]t [p]oint, [w]hen I [w]as [r]e[s]p[on]sib[le] fo[r] [c]losing a shoe [s]to[r]e in the W[r]entham Outlets, a t[a]s[k] th[at] i[n] a[n]d of it[s]elf nearl[y] [d]rove [m]e to [d]rowning [m]y[s]elf—I was [a]ll [a]lone c[l]osing this shoe store whe[n] a[n] od[d] [o]l[d]er [l]a[d]y entered, she was [o]lder yet livel[y], m[y]st[i]cal and n[ot] [o]bviou[s]l[y] in [n]eed of footwear in general, [n]everm[i]nd at [n]earl[y] [n]i[n]e o'[c]lo[c]k at [n]i[gh]t. She [b]asi[c]ally read [m]y l[i]fe to [m]e [b]y loo[k]ing into [m]y e[ye]s, alone [b]eh[i]nd the [r]e[gister, t[e]lling m[e] [r]ep[ea]tedl[y] a[n]d [i]ntentl[y] all [s]orts of [f]an[c]i[f]ul t[i]db[i]ts, a l[i]tan[y] of t[i]db[i]ts were [r]e[c]ited to m[e], [o]ver a[n]d [o]ver agai[n]. I [a]ctuall[y], [s][a]dl[y], totall[y] [f]orget every [s]i[n]gle th[i]ng she [s]aid to me beyond a[n] i[n]s[i]stenc[e] that I was [d]e[s]cen[d]ed [f]rom em[p]e[r]ors, which she [r]e[p]eated [o]ver a[n]d [o]ver, a[n]d, oddl[y] enou[gh], years later my un[c]le would [c]a[suall[y] [m]ention to [m]e [m]y gr[a]nd[m]other was from Sparta-[M]ystras—

—Where the Pa[l]aio[l]ogii [l]ast resided.

—Ex[a]c[t]ly, [S]t[r]atos! In [r]etro[s]p[ec]t I [d]o [w]on[d]er [w]here [e]xac[t]ly thi[s] pe[r]s[on] [e]me[r]ged [f]rom, [f]or whatever r[ea]son [I] [f]i[nd] it hard to [b]el[ie]ve sh[e] [w]as i[n] n[ee]d of a[n]y [f]oot[w]ear, a[n]d [I] [f]i[nd] it a[b]surd sh[e] would [b]e [r]oaming a[r]ound the W[r]entham Outlets

a[f]ter dar[k]. [A]s a m[a]tter of [f][a][c]t it wasn't the l[a]st [t]ime a [p]er[s]on would h[a]ve the [a]ud[a][c]ity to [a][pp]roach me and [a][tt]em[p]t [t]o [t]ell [m]e [m]y own l[i]fe [s]tory, and [b]oth [t]imes they [s]tru[ck] m[e] as [t]otall[y] [c]orr[e][c]t!—no, [b]ut i[n] retro[s]p[e]c[t] as i[n][c]re[d]ulou[s] as it [m]ay [s]eem I [d]o [f]ind [m]y[s]elf [w]on[d]ering [i][f] th[i][s] odd lady [w]as a [c]or[p]oreal entity at all, or [i]f [i]n[s]tead she was [s]ome [k]ind of [a][pp]a[r]i[t]i[on], be[c]ause I've [a][c]tua[lly] e[n][c]ountered [r]e[p]orts of [a][ll]eged[l]y non[c]or[p]oreal entiti[e]s meandering [a]r[ound] the W[r]entham Out[l]ets [a]r[ound] [c]losing. I[n] a[n]y [c]a[s]e, I was [s]itting [a]t [A]n[d]ino's on [F]e[d]era[l] Hi[l]l—I was [d]rin[k]ing a [C]a[s]amig[o]s Blan[c]o on the ro[ck]s, tr[y]ing to enjoy m[y]self a[f]ter a long wee[k].

—But did you kn[ow] [C]a[s]amig[o]s [a]l[s]o [m]a[k]es a [M]ez[c]al as well?

—Funny you should [s]ay th[at], [S]tr[atos], be[c]ause I [a][c]tually dr[a]n[k] about [s]ix or [s]o [C]a[s]a[m]igos [M]ez[c]als at The [P]arlour just [a] [m]onth or [s]o [a]g[o]—a[f]te[r] the bartende[r], [a]fte[r] I [a]s[k]ed her [f]or a [M]ez[c]al, [a]s[k]ed [m]e [w]hat [k]i[n]d of [M]ez[c]al [I] [w]anted, [s]aying, [a]fte[r] I [a]s[k]ed her [w]hat [k]i[n]d of [M]ez[c]al she h[a]d, there [w]as [a] [C]a[s]a[m]igos [M]ez[c]al if [I] [w]anted [t]o [t]ry it? I [s]aid I thought [C]a[s]a[m]igos was [s]tri[c]tly te[qu]i[l]a, but she [s]aid they [m]ade a [M]ez[c]al [a]s we[l]l. I took her u[p] [o]n the [o]ffer, yet I was [u]lti[m]ately [u]nimp[re]ssed with the [M]ez[c]al. She told [m]e [s]ome [p]leo[p]le dr[i]n[k] [i]t w[i]th an o[r]ange and gave me [o]ne, but I [w]as [u]lti[m]ately [u]nimp[re]ssed [w]ith the [M]ez[c]al, even with the o[r]ange. I[n] a[n]y [c]a[s]e, I was [s]itting [a]t [A]n[d]ino's [d]rin[k]ing a Blan[c]o [C]a[s]a[m]igos,

thin[k]ing to [m]y[s]elf that it was [k]ind of a [q]uaint i[n]terior, a[n] i[n]viting [a]m[b]i[a]n[c]e, [a] [b]etter at[m]o[s]phere than I re[m]em[b]ered, [a]s the l[a]st [t]i[m]e [I] ate [a]t [A]ndin[o]’s was [t]wo or s[o] years [a]g[o], when I ordered the s[p]a[ghetti] [a]gli[o] and the [k]itchen burnt the [g]arli[c], wh[i]ch [i]s [r]eally [a]ll I [r]e[c]a[ll] of the night. I[n] a[n]y [c]a[s]e, I was only [g]l[a]n[c]ing in a per[f]un[c]tory [f]a[shion] [a]t the menu, as I’[d] alrea[d]y [d]e[c]i[d]ed I’[d] or[d]er the [D]e[s]te[f]ano gar[d]en [s]alad entr[ee], as I [a]te a [c]u[p] of [b]rown [r]ice [w]ith [w]alnuts [p]r[i]or to a[r]r[i]ving, [b]e[c]ause, with m[y] [c]u[r]rent G[I] issues, ordering anything [e]lse would [e]n[t]ail [t]oo much [t]ail r[i]s[k]. [I]n a[n]y [c]a[s]e, [s]itting [a]t [A]n[d]ino’s [d]rin[k]ing a Bl[a]n[c]o [C]a[s]a[m]ig[o]s I thought to [m]y[s]elf that, ye[s], the [o]nly way to appr[o]ach [th]e o[th]er [s]i[de] is v[i]a [a] [m]uted [m]a[th]e[m]a[ti]c[s], a [c]oding beh[i]nd what fa[c]es u[s]—on this [s]ide. We [c]reate [s]ome[th]ing [th]at [s]e[em]s to [b]e one thing, [b]ut [b]ehind thi[s] one thing is a [c]omplex [c]oding [o]f [a]no[th]er [th]ing, ano[th]er [th]ing [th]at [c]o[m]muni[c]ates wi[th] [th]e o[th]er [s]ide, a [s]ort of [m]a[th]e[m]a[ti]c[a]l [t]ele[p]athy to add on to our [p]r[o]s[ai]c [t]ele[p]athy. Thi[s] [i]s the [o]nly w[a]y [f]o[r]ward [f]o[r] me, I thought, ta[k]ing another [s]lip of [C]a[s]a[m]igos Bl[a]n[c]o, a[c]tually i[n] a[n] i[n]c[rea]s[ing]l[y] j[u]b[i]l[ant] m[oo]d, [d]e[s]pite a [d]e[b]i[l]i[tating] w[ee]k. A [s]tr[ea]m of [c]o[n]scio[us]ne[ss] mu[s]t [b]e en[c]oded with a [m]uted [m]a[th]e[m]a[ti]c[s] [b]ehind it, [S]tr[ea]tos, and [p]erh[a]p[ss] thi[s] [c]oding it[s]elf will not ju[s]t [c]o[m]muni[c]ate with [th]i[s] o[th]er [s]ide, but al[s]o prote[c]t our [s]treams of [c]o[n]scio[us]ne[ss] against the [m]e[dd]ling of [f]o[r]ces we [c]an onl[y]

[s]u[mm]aril[y] un[d]er[s]tand and should
pro[b]a[b]l[y] ref[er]ain [f]rom [e]ven [m]entioning
[f]urther!

2.2

—So any[w]ay [w]e [w]ere at the [H]ot Club [f]or the
[f]ir[s]t [t][i]me in ages, a [b]ar[t]ender I [h]adn't
[s][ee]n in at l[ea][s]t [f]our to [f]ive y[ea]rs was [s]till
[b]eh[i]nd the [b]ar, sh[e] re[c]og[n][i]zed [m][e]
i[mm][e][d][i]atel[y], with a [n]ew [p]ur[p]le [d]yed
[h]air[c]ut [th]at, al[th]ough [p]ro[b]a[b]ly a [s]midgeon
young for [h]er age, [s]uited [h]er ni[c]ely, I thought.
[Sh]e poured [m]e [a] [h][e]althy [a][m]ount of
[M]ez[c]al into a [sh]ort gl[as]s, [a]nd on[l]y
[m]i[n]ute[s] [l]ater I'd [n]oti[c]e her [c]arrying a
[b]ottle of *[D]el [M]agu[ey] [V]i[d]a*, [m]y f[a][v]o[r]ite
[b]rand of [M]ez[c]al, [b]a[ck] to the [b]ar, and [r]ight
then [I] surm[i]sed that [I] was [d]rin[k]ing [m][y]
favorite t[y][p]e of [M]ez[c]al. Of [c]ourse, [h]ealthy
[p]ou[r]s a[r]e [d]ouble edged [s][w]o[r]ds [w]hen you
[h]ave a ten[d]en[c]y to ch[u]g [w]hatever's in [f]r[on]t
of you, [w]hich, [f]or better or [w]orse, is a
[t]en[d]en[c]y I'[v]e ne[v]er [e]n[t]irel[y] managed to
[d]i[s]c[ar]d, [e]speciall[y] [w]he[n] i[n] [s]ocial
[s]ettings. [S]ociall[y], hi[s]tori[c]all[y], I've al[w]ays
[f]ound my[s]el[f] [s]prin[t]ing [t]o[w]ard l[i]q[ui]or,
[w]i[th] re[ck]le[ss] [a]ban[d]on [a]lmo[s]t I per[f]orm
[f]i[f]t[y] yard [d]ashes [t]o[w]ard [w]hatever [m]y
[s]pirit of choi[c]e is that [m]onth, a[n]d eve[n] though
on [b]a[l]an[c]e I've re[d]u[c]ed th[e]se ex[c]e[s]sive
ten[d]en[c]i[e]s with age, I'd [b]e [l]i[y]ng to [b]oth
m[y]sel[f] and you i[f] I [s]aid I'd [d]i[s]c[ar]ded them
[c]ompl[et]el[y]. And, [t]o b[e] honest, I'm unsure [i]f I'd
w[i]sh [t]o [d]i[s]c[ar]d them in [t]o[t]ality, [t]o
ex[t]ingu[i]sh m[y] ch[i]ld-l[i]k[e] i[d]io[c]y on[c]e and

[f]or all, be[c]ause, su[r]e, [f]rom a [c]e[r]tain v[a]ntage
 [p]oint I [s]u[pp]ose I re[m]ain a [m][a]n-child of
 [s]orts, but on [th]e o[th]er h[a]nd m[a]n-children are
 [n]e[c]e[ss]ary, [n]o? It's [m]an-children who [m][a]ke
 the gr[ea]test [ph]ilo[s]o[ph]ical [s]tr[i]des. [T]o thin[k]
 li[k]e an adult is [t]o [t]a[k]e on the gu[i]se [o]f [u]tter
 [r]ationa[l]ism, wh[i]ch hard[l]y e[v]er [i]f [n]ot
 [n]e[v]er i[n]no[v]ates, wh[i]ch [r]e[f]uses to be[c]ome
 [i]di[o]t[i]c e[n]ou[gh] [t]o [a]ll[t]er [f]undamental
 [a]xioms, [a]s [a]xioms are inevita[b]ly [c]reated [b]y the
 ch[i]ld-l[i]k[e] thin[k]ers, [b]y [i]di[o]ts of the [s]pir[it].
 Even God Him[s][e]lf all[e]g[e]dly [s][ai]d, [L]e[t there
 be [l]ight, wh[i]ch [i]s a [m]an-ch[i]ld l[i]ke
 [s]tate[m]ent i[n] [m][y] o[p]i[n]io[n]. [P]er[s]onall[y], I
 [s]till refuse to [s]l[ee]p in the dark.

—The dar[k] is [c]ontemptible in [m][y] [m][i]nd.

—[Th]ere's [s]ome[th]ing [i]nherent [i]n being [i]t[s]elf
 that's [s]y[n]o[n]y[m]ou[s] with light i[n] [m]y
 opi[n]io[n].

—But [h]ow was [H]ot Club?

—[I]t was [i]n[t]e[r]e[s]ting, [i]n[t]r[ig]uing, [b]etter
 tha[n] I a[n]t[i]c[i]pated, g[i]ven the la[s]t [c]ou[p]le
 [t]i[m]es [I]'d [b]een I [f]elt the atmos[ph]ere to [b]e a
 [b]it too [c]lu[bb]y [f]or my [t]a[s]tes, a [t]a[d] [t]oo
 a[d]ole[s]cent for even [m]y [m]an-child [p]a[l]ette. I
 [s]aw the doo[r][m]an from [Th]e [P]ar[l]ou[r] [th]ere,
 be[c]ause a[pp]arently [h]e [w]orks [s]e[c]urity at [H]ot
 [C]lub as [w]ell? [I]n a[n]y [c]a[s]e, as the [p]arty
 i[n]c[r]ea[s]ed i[n] [s]i[ze] [K]a[t]r[ee]na a[n]d [I]
 e[n]ded u[p] e[n]g[a]ged i[n] a[n] exte[n]ded
 [c]onver[s]a[tio]n with a [p]etite, [f]air-[s]kinned
 [f]e[m]a[le] who ada[m]antl[y] [c]l[ai]med to b[e] of
 New Yo[r]k o[r]igin, y[e]t wh[e]n a[n] a[pp]ro[p]riate
 [o]p[e]n[ing] e[m]erged for [m]e to a[s]k her [w]hat
 [p]art of [N]ew York she [w]as [f]rom

[s][p]e[c]i[f]i[c]all[y] sh[e] [p]revari[c][a]ted, [s][a]ying she was [q]u[o]te-un[q]u[o]te [f]rom all [o]ver, [b]ut [th]en [s]aying [*The [B]ronx*]. She was from The [B]ronx? She didn't [s]trike me as [s][o]me[o]ne [f]r[o]m The [B]ronx, and [f]or [s][o]me[o]ne whose [i]dentit[y] [s][ee]med to [b][e] [s]o t[i]ed with [b][e]ing from [N]ew [Y]ork, a [*N]ew [Y]or[k]er*, wh[i]ch [i]s the [c]a[s]e with [s]o many [p]eo[p]le from New York, it's [a][c]tually [k]ind of [s]ad to me, thi[s] viol[e]nt m[e]lting that [s]eems to o[cc]ur with [p]eo[p]le who [i]denti[f]y them[s]elves with New York [C]ity, yet thi[s] [f]emale, who [f]or the [r]e[c]ord I [f]ound [p]l[e]asant, oddly enough [r]e[f]used to ex[p]l[i]c[it]l[y] [c]laim a [b]orough, un[t]il she [r]e[l]u[c]t[an]tly [s]aid *The [B]ronx*, [w]h[i]ch I th[i]nk [s][t]ru[ck] every[o]ne as [t]otally [m]isguided. She [w]asn't from The [B]ronx, that [m]uch [w]as [c]lear. She [c]ould [b]e from any[w]he[r]e in the [w]o[r]ld ex[ce]pt [*The [B]ronx*]. [Th]i[s] idea [th]at [th]i[s] female's o[r]igi[n] [s]to[r]y [b]egan i[n] The [B][r]onx [w]as [c]om[p]l[e]tel[y] a[b]surd. [W]hich [b]orough she was [f]rom, a[ss]uming she was [f]rom a [p]art[i]c[ular] [b]orough, now that was [s]till am[b]i[gu]ous, [b]ut [i]t was [c]lear she w[asn't] fr[o]m the [B]ronx. [Q]u[ee]ns, that I [c]ould give [s]ome [c]r[e]den[c]e to I [s]u[pp]ose. It might b[e] a r[e]asona[b]le [s][p]e[c]ulation to [s]ugge[s]t she was from Qu[ee]ns. [P]erha[p]s [f]rom a[n] o[p]ule[n]t [f]a[m]ily i[n] U[pp]er [M]anh[at]tan, now th[at] was even [m]ore [l]ikely—be[c]ause she [c]ertainl[y] [s]tru[c]k [m]e as [s][o]me[o]ne who [c]ame fr[o]m [m]oney, there was [n]o tra[c]e of a [N]ew York [a][cc]e[n]t i[n] her [s]p[ee]ch, or of a[n]y [a][cc]e[n]t i[n] her [s][p]l[e]ch, and the geogra[ph]y [o]f [U][pp]er [M]anh[at]tan is [c]lose enou[gh] to The Bronx that she [c]ould, in her [m]ind at [l]ea[s]t,

perhaps jus[t]i[f]y [c][l][ai]ming The [B][r]onx as a [b]o[r][ou]gh, even th[ou]gh [I] f[i]nd that to [b]e a [b]it ridi[c]u[l]ou[s], to [c]on[f]i[a]te U[pp]er M[a]nh[a]ttan with The [B]ronx, to [th]i[n]k a[n]y [th]i[n]king [p]erson would [b][uy] the [i]dea that U[pp]er [M][a]nh[a]ttan [i]s [i][n] a[n]y [w]ay [s]y[n]o[n]y[m]ou[s] [w]ith The [B]ronx. [S][t]aten Island and [B]roo[k]lyn [s][t]ri[k]e [m]e as [m]ore [r]e[m]ote [p]o[s]si[b]i[l]ities of her o[r]igin, and then we [c]ould al[s]o [s][p]e[c]u[l]ate on outer-[a]reas [a]s [w]ell, be[c]ause [w]h[i]le Yon[k]ers [s][t]ri[k]es me as a [s][t]r[e]tch, I thin[k] [W][e][s]tch[e][s]ter [C]ounty or [L]ong [I]sland are both [c]ertain[l]y in p[l]ay.

—Do you th[i]nk [i]t po[s]si[b]le that she [c]ould have [b]een from, [s]ay, [W]e[s]tch[e]ster [C]ounty, [w]hi[ch] [w]ould exp[l]ain her [m]on[e]yed de[m]ea[n]or, yet [m]oved to The Bronx for work [l]a[te]r in [l]i[f]e, and now, and [I] a[g]ree [th]at [th]i[s] [i]s m[i]s[g]u[i]ded, [f]eels as [th]ough [th]at working ex[p]erien[c]e ju[s]t[i]fies her [c]laim [th]at [Th]e Bronx is a [p]l[a]ce sh[e]’s a[c]tua[l]l[y] [f]rom?

—Giorgio[s], that a[c]tua[l]l[y] [s]tri[k]es [m]e [a]s [p]erh[a]p[s] the *m/o/s/t* [s]en[s]ible ex[p]l[a]n]ation of [a]ll. [I] [a]ll[s]o [n]o[t]ic]ed, and [I] th[i]nk [i]t’s [w]orth [n]o[t]ing, that [w]hen she [s]at her [p]o[s]t[e]r[i]o[r] was a [t]ad [m]ore [a]m[p]le th[a]n I’d i[m]agined, [th]at [th]i[s] po[s]terior along with the am[b]i[g]u[i]ty [o]f her [o]r[i]g[in] [b]e[gl]an to [s]trike [m]e as al[m]o[s]t [o]m[inou[s]]l[y] [o]ut of [p]l[a]ce, as i[f] another [p]l[ane] of exi[s]ten[c]e was [f]orming.

—Th[at] h[a]ppens [a]t [t]imes—[p]osteriors [a]nd their [r]ela[t]ive [a]m[p]li[t]ude [c]an va[r]y widely from ex[p]e[c]t]ations, the [p]o[s]terior is [a]l[m]o[s]t im[p]o[s]si[b]le to e[s]ti[m]ate [b]a[s]ed on f[a]c]e [a]lone.

—I gue[ss] it'[s] reason[a]ble to [a][ss]e[r]t that we o[f]ten look at [a] pe[r][s]on's [f]a[c]e [a]nd [a]lmo[s]t [a]lgo[r]ithmi[c]a[lly] [c][r]e[a]te [a] [s]i[m]u[l]a[t]ion of their body [f]rom thi[s] [f]a[c]e, that our [m]ind wor[k]s e[ss]entia[lly] algo[rithm]i[c]a[lly], we should ad[m]it [th]at, [th]at ou[r] [m]inds a[r]e [p]ro[b]a[b]ly ju[s]t com[p]osed of [a]lgori[th]ms, [a]nd [th]a[t] we [p]erform a [s]imilar [p]ro[c]e[ss] [w]ith voi[c]e, [w]hich [a]ctually h[a][pp]ened to m[e] ju[s]t re[c]entl[y] as [w]ell, [w]here I [s][p]o[k]e to a [p]er[s]on on the [ph]one a[n]d i[n]evitably [c]re[at]ed [a]n [a]lgorithmi[c] [s]imul[a]tion of her [f]a[c]e in [m]y [m]i[n]d. When [I] [s]aw her [f]a[c]e [a]t l[a]st onl[i]ne [I] was [s]tr[u]ck by how m[u]ch th[i]s p[i]c[t]ure d[i]ff[er]ed [f]rom the [s]i[m]ulation I'd [m]ade in [m]y [m]i[n]d—who was it [I] be[l]ie[ve]d [I] was [s]p[ea]k[ing] to? I [l]oo[k] at [s]o[m]e[o]ne's fa[c]e and [th]en I [r]u[th]l[e]ssl[y] algo[r]ithmi[c]a[lly] [s]imu[l]ate their body [w]ithout [c]on[s]ent, [w]hereas I hear [s]o[m]e[o]ne's voi[c]e a[n]d the[n] I [r]u[th]l[e]ssl[y] algo[r]ithmi[c]a[lly] [s]imu[l]ate their f[a]c]e without [c]on[s]ent, [b]ut in [b]oth [c]a[s]es my a[cc]ura[cy] is [t]otally [s]to[ch]a[s]t[i]c, and [b]y [s]to[ch]a[s]t[i]c I mean [t]erri[b]le.

—[F]rom voi[c]e to [f]a[c]e and [f]rom [f]a[c]e to body, we m[a]k[e] ill-advised, [r]u[th]l[e]ss [s]p[ec]u[l]a[t]ions [r]egarding [e]ve[r]yone who [e]nte[r]s ou[r] [p]eri[ph]ery!

—[I]n th[i]s [s]en[s]e the [s]im[ulation] of the h[uman] [b]eg[i]ns w[i]th [v]oi[c]e. From [v]oi[c]e a[l]l one we algo[rithm]i[c]a[lly] [s]i[m]u[l]ate [b]oth [f]a[c]e and [b]ody, [b]e[c]ause [f]rom [f]a[c]e we [s]imulate [b]ody, as you [s]aid. I[n] a[n]y [c]a[s]e, as the [c]onver[s]a[tion] [p]rogr[ess]ed w[e]—[m]y[s]e[l]f, [K]atr[ee]na, and thi[s] [f]e[m]ale—began [t]o [t]ouch

on the [t]o[p]i[c] of *what ex[a]l[c]tly* this [f][e]male h[a]d been doin[g] [s][i]n[c]e l[ea]vin[g] New York, and [i]n the m[i]d[s]t of th[i]s [i]t [c]ame up th[at] it ju[s]t [s]o [h][a]ppened th[at] [h]er and I were [a][c]tually the [s][a]me [a]ge, that she'd been [f]inding [l]o[c]ales she [l]i[k]ed *at our age*, although she noted how d[i]ff[i]c[ult] [i]t was, [c]ompared to [N]ew Yor[k], where she k[n]ew the i[n]s a[n]d [o]uts [o]f [w]here to [p]atron[i]z[e] and [w]hen, [w]hat [e][s]tabli[sh]ments [sh]e [e]njoyed and [w]hich [o]nes she d[e][s]p[i]s[ed]. I agr[ee]d i[m]m[e]diat[e]ly, noting th[at] [a]t [m]y [a]ge, at *our* [a]ge, it [w]as [o]ne of the [m]ain de[t]errens [t]o [m][o]ving t[o] a[n]other [c]ity, parti[c]u[lar]l[y] [N]ew Yor[k], which I'd [s]trongl[y] [c]on[s]idered [m][o]ving t[o] [m]ore than on[c]e, but, as I [s]aid ex[p]l[i]c[i]tly to [h]er, to [h]ave to *re[l]earn every [s]ingle [p]l[a]c[e] that [I] [l]i[k]e to [g]o*, and how to [g]et there, to re[l]earn which [p]l[ac]es offend my [p]a[l]a[te], [a]t my age, it ju[s]t [s]tru[ck] me [a]s w[a]y [t]oo daunting of a [t][a]s[k] [t]o [t][a]k[e] on. It [s]tru[ck] me [a]s a [t][a]s[k] th[at] would [c]on[s]ume [s]o [m]uch of [m]y e[n]erg[y] that it would e[ss]e[n]tia[l]ly [m]ute all of [m]y [p]h[i]o[s]o[p]hical energ[ie]s [f]or at [l]ea[s]t [f]ive years. She m[e]ntioned a [L][e]b[an]ese [b]ar [w]here “you [w]al[k] [d]own[s]tairs” that she [l]i[k]ed a [l]ot. I [s]aid the [e]ntire [c]ity of Provi[d]en[c]e has be[c]ome [e]ss[e]n[tia]lly one [e]xte[n]d[ed] hoo[k]ah [l]ounge, which, I admitted to he[r], [f]ull [d]i[s]c[ri]osu[r]e, a[pp]ea[ls] to m[e] [d][ee]p[l]y, which, [f]ull [d]i[s]closure, [s]eem[ed] to genuinel[y] [s]urp[r]ise her, [th]at [th]e [e][n]tire [c]ity of [P]rovi[d]en[c]e was a[n] [e]x[t]e[n]d[ed] hoo[k]ah [l]ounge. I [s]aid *the [c]i]ty is [l]i]ttered w[i]th Gr[ee]k and [L]eban[e]se [p]l[a]c[es] [l]i[k]e that*, which, of [c]our[s]e Giorgo[s], we

kn[o]w is[n]'t true i[n] the [l][ea][s]t, [th]at [th]ere are [o]n[l]y a fra[c]tion of Gr[ee][k] [l]o[c]ations [c]om[p]ared to [L]eban[e]se [l][o][c]a[tions], yet I [s]t[a]ted [i]t w[i]th [s][o] much [a][p]lomb she [d]i[d]n't [q]uestion it at [a][ll], [a][l]though she [d]id imm[e]d[i]atel[y] [q]u[est]ion wh[e]ther Gr[ee][k]s s[m]o[k]ed hoo[k]ah, to which I [s]im[p]ly [s][ai]d *Otto[m]an [E]m[p]ire*, to which she [s]aid *of [c]our[s]e*, i[m]m[e]d[i]atel[y] [c]onne[ct]ing the [d]ots.

—[M]y goodne[ss], [M]ar[k]o[s], I have to [s]ay that's [f]ai[r]ly impre[ss]ive, that a [f]ai[r]-s[k]inned [f]e[m]ale [f]rom [N]ew York would [c]o[n]n[e]ct [th]ose dots [th]at [q]ui[ck]ly. The Otto[m]an Em[p]ire, I [m]ean, at thi[s] [p]oint it'[s] ba[s]i[c]all[y] [a] [p]l[ie]c[e] of [a]r[c]ana. [N]o one k[n]o[ws] a[n]ything [a]bout the [O]tto[m]an Em[p]ire a[n]y[m]ore.

—Oh, I [c]om[p]l[ie]te[l]y agr[ee]! I tota[l]l[y] [f]eel [l]i[k]e the[r]e a[r]e just ve[r]y [f]ew [p]l[ea]s[ur]e in our [g]l[e]n[er]al [a]l[g]e r[a]n[g]e who k[n]ow a[n]ything [a]bout the [O]ttoman Em[p]ire, and [I]'d [o]n[e] hu[n]dred [p]e[r]c[en]t [w]ager that [n]ot [o]ne other [p]e[r]s[on] at Hot Clu[b] that [n]ight who k[n]ew a[n]ything [a]b[ou]t the [O]tto[m]an Em[p]ire, [n]ever [m]ind its very [s]p[eci]f[i]c eth[n]i[c] [c]om[p]o[n]ents, who [c]ould [p]ut the [p]l[ie]c[e]s of [G]r[ee][k]s an[c]e[st]rally [s]m[oking] hoo[k]ah [t]o[g]ether by the utteran[c]e of [t]w[o] words: *Ottoman Em[p]ire*. In fact, it s[ee]ms to [m]e [th]at [th]e Otto[m]an Em[p]ire is [m]aybe the [m]o[s]t negl[e]c[t]e[d] e[m]p[ire] of the [p]a[s]t h[a]lf [m]i[ll]ennium, that [i]t [i]nher[i]ted [i]ts [B]yzant[i]ne [p]rede[c]e[s]sor's [c]hara[ct]er[i]stic of [b]e[ing] [c]om[p]l[ie]t[e]l[y] [d]i[s]c[ar]d[ed] [b]y mo[d]ern [s]c[h]o[l]arsh[ip]. [N]o one k[n]ows what you

[s][p]jea[k] of when you [s]o [m]uch as [m]e[n]tion the Otto[m]a[n] Em[p]ire, [p]eo[p]le are [f]lu[m]moxed, ex[c]e[p]t a[pp]arentl[y] this [f]e[m]ale who [m][ay] or [m][ay] not [b]e [f]rom New York, [b]ut [c]ertainl[y] isn't [f]rom The [B]ronx. In short, I quickly [f]ound [th]at [th]e am[b]iguity of what New York [C][i]ty [b]orough [c]hara[c]ter[i][s]t[i][c] was i[n]here[n]t i[n] this [f]emale [b]e[c]ame [r]e[f]le[c]ted [r]ight into the am[b]iguity of the ethni[c] [b]lo[ck]s [o]f the [O]tto[m]an Em[p]ire, in a [p]o[s]t-Otto[m]an A[m]eri[c]an [d]ia[s][p]ora, i[n] a[n] A[m]eri[c]a that [i]s [i]t[s]elf [m]ul[t]i-eth[n]i[c], a[n]d [n]ot e[n]t[i]rel[y] [d]ifferentl[y] [th]an [th]e Otto[m]ans, Otto[m]ans who were only [t]rum[p]ed [i]n their [i]m[p]or[t]ation of [A][f]ri[c]an [s]laves by Ameri[c]a's [o]ut [o]f [c]ontrol [l]ove [a]ffair with the [A][f]ri[c]an [s]lave. No one im[p]or[t]ed [m]o[r]e [A][f]ri[c]an [s]laves [th]an [th]e Otto[m]an [E]m[p]ire, [e]x[c]e[p]t of [c]our[s]e the United [S]tates of A[m]eri[c]a. The am[b]iguity of the tr[ai]ts di[s]pl[ay]ed [b]y a Gr[ee][k] [v]e[r][s]us a Tu[r]k [v]e[r][s]us a Leban[e]se [v]e[r][s]us a [K]u[r]d [v]e[r][s]us an Ar[m]e[n]ian in the [s]ee[m]ingly [l]i[m]itl[e]ss Provi[d]en[c]e Hoo[k]ah Net[w]or[k] [w]as [s]u[dd]enl[y] a [d]ire[c]t [a]nalog to the [a]m[b]iguity of the New York [C][i]ty [b]o[r]ough [c]hara[c]te[r][i][s]t[i][c]s [i]nherent [i]n a [p]e[r]s[on] who [p]e[r]happ[s] du[b]iou[s]l[y] [c]laims to [b]e from New York [C]it[y]. I[n] one i[n]s[tan]c[e] [w]e're unsu[r]e if [w]e're [w]itne[ss]ing a Gr[ee][k], a Tu[r]k, a Leban[e]se, a [K]u[r]d, an Armenia[n]; [i]n the other i[n]s[tan]c[e], we're unsu[r]e if [w]e're [w]itne[ss]ing a pe[r]s[on] from The [B]ronx, from M[a]nh[at]tan, from [S]t[at]en Island, from [B]roo[k]lyn, from [Q]ueens; in [b]oth [c]as[es] the overl[a]pping

[c]har[a][c]ter[i][s]t[i][c]s, out[s]ide [o]f their [o]r[i]g[i]nal [c]ontext ([o]f the [O]ttoman Em[p]ire and [N]ew York [C]it[y], re[s]p[er]e[c]tivel[y]), [b]e[c]ome vague e[n]ough in their [n]uan[c]e [th]at [th]e i[d]entity of [ea]ch [b]l[ee]ds in[t]o [th]e o[th]er, un[t]i[l] the [i]n[d]iv[i]dual i[d]entit[ie]s a[r]e e[r]a[s]ed compl[e]tel[y]. The New York [C]ity [d]ia[s]p[or]a in [P]rovi[d]en[c]e [c]an refle[c]t [c]hara[c]ter[i][s]t[i][c]s a[s]so[c]iated with [S]taten Island, with M[a]nh[a]ttan, with The [B]ro[n]x, with [B]roo[k]lyn, with [Q]uee[n]s, while the [m]e[d]ian hoo[k]ah [s]mo[k]er thi[s] New York [C]ity transplant [m]ay [e]n[c]ounter i[n] the [e]xte[n]d[ed] [P]rovi[d]en[c]e Hoo[k]ah Network [m]ay [d]i[s]p[lay] [c]hara[c]ter[i][s]t[i][c]s of the Gr[ee][k], of the Tur[k], of the Leban[e]se, of the [K]u[r]d, of the Armenia[n]. I[n] both [c]a[s]es what's [S]taten Island, what's [Q]uee[n]s, what's [K]urd, what's Gr[ee][k], what's [B]roo[k]lyn, what's M[a]nh[a]ttan, what's Le[b]an[e]se, what's Tu[r]k, what's The [B]ronx, what's Arm[e]n[i]a[n] all [b]l[ee]d i[n]to one a[n]other until they're esse[n]tially [i]n[di]s[tingu]i[sh]a[b]le from [ea]ch other, until they're [e]s[s]e[n]tiall[y] [e]xti[n]guished, until we r[ea]ch a funda[m]ental one[n]ess of a[n] Otto[m]a[n] [N]ew York [C]ity, a [l]egiti[m]ate [p]l[an]e of exi[s]t[en]c[e] that [c]a[m]e in[t]o [b]e[ing] onl[y] at the Hot [C]lub [v]ia [c]on[v]er[s]a[tion] thi[s] [p]a[s]t Frid[a]y night.

—Thi[s] [i]s a ph[y]s[i]cal plane of ex[i]s[ten]c[e] [n]ow, the Ottoman [N]ew York [C]i[t]y of One[n]e[ss].

—It can [n]o longer [b]e [d]e[n]ied, a[n] Otto[m]a[n] [N]ew York Cit[y] where all i[d]entit[y] has [b]een [e]x[t]i[n]guished [i]n[t]o a [m]o[n]a[d]i[c] One[n]e[ss] [c]ame in[t]o [e]xi[s]t[en]c[e] on a Fri[d]ay [n]ight at the Hot [C]lub.

—Yet that girl—[c]ould she h[a]ve [a][c]tually [b]een f[r]om The [B][r]onx?

—[W]ith [o][n]e hu[n]dred [p]e[r][c]ent [c]e[r]tainty I [w]ill assu[r]e you, Gior[g]o[s], [th]at [th]e [g]irl I [s][p]oke with [F][r]iday [n]ight was ab[s]o[l]ute[l]y [n]ot [f][r]om The Bronx.

2.3

—[I]n[i]tially a th[i]n h[i][p]ster with a full [r]ed [b]eard was in the [b][a]th[r]oom [a]t [N]ick-A-[N][ee]’s, [p][ee]ing at the t[a]ll u[r]i[n]al, [b]ut [w]he[n] I [w]e[n]t i[n], after he [w][a]l[k]ed out, I [m]ade a [p]oint to [p][ee] at the [k]idd[ie] u[r]inal, a t[r]ade[m]ar[k] of [m]ine, for whatever [r][ea]son [I] [f]i[n]d [m][y]sel[f] [m]ore [a]t [ea]se [a]t the kidd[ie] u[r]inals, [a]s I’m long-tors[o]ed [i]n [a][dd]i[tion] to being of [o]nly [a]verage height; ye[s], the ki[dd]ie urinals are e[ss]entiall[y] [m]ade for [m][e], and [p][ee]ing at the [k]idd[ie] urinal I too[k] [n]ote of what [l]oo[k]ed [l]i[k]e a [p][ie][c]e of [a][ss][c]r[a][ck] [l]i[n]t [c]o[nn]e[c]ted i[n]e[xtri]c[ab]l[y] to a [l]ong [p][ie][c]e of a[ss] hair. Th[i][s] [i]s what it [s]tru[ck] me [a]s [a]t l[e]a[s]t. I thought ba[ck] to par[k]ing on the [s]tr[e]et [f]i[f]ty [f]eet [f]rom [N]i[ck]-A-[N][ee]’s, to [m]y [c]on[s]ternation [w]ith the driver [w]earing a [s]now[c]a[p] in his [m]aroon [p]i[ck][u][p] tr[u][ck] [c]ur[s]ing me through h[i]s w[i]ndshield as I [s][o]wly [s][c]o[p]ed the one [o]p[en] [s][p]ot on the [s]treet. [A]t th[at] time, with his [p]e[r]tu[r]bed ex[p]r[ession] and [p]r[ehi]s[tori]c [f]acial [f]eatures, he [s]tru[ck] me as the [w]o[r]s[t] [p]e[r]s[on] in the [w]o[r]ld and fran[k]ly [s]till does. I [w]ished nothing but the [w]o[r]s[t] [th]i[n]gs on [th]i[s] [p]e[r]s[on] as I [p]ulled over to let him [p]a[ss], [h]arangu[i]ng [h]i[m]

through my [w][i]ndshield as he [s][i][m]ultaneousl[y] [s][c]r[e]amed at [m]e through h[is] [w][i]ndsh[ie]ld, then [c]almly hit rever[s]e to [m]ove ba[ck] into the [m]iddle of the [s]treet, to [p]ara[ll]el [p]ar[k] in the [o]n[l]y [o][p]en [s][p]ot, ju[s]t [m]o[m]entari[l]y [l]odging the [r]ight [r][ea]r wh[ee]l ever [s]o [s][l]ightl[y] on[t]o the a[tt]enuated curb. In [m][y] [m]i[n]d thi[s] [m]an [i]n the p[i][ck][u]p tr[u][ck] was a grote[s][q]ue [s]t[ai]n on the ffa[cc]e of our [p]lanet. His [f]a[cc]e, in both its [s][t][r]u[ct]ure and exp[r]ession, [s][t][i]ck[ing] with m[e] at the bar in [N][i][c]k-A-[N][ee]'s, [m]o[r]e or le[ss] [r]evolted [m]e in the [m]o[s]t extreme of ways. The [m]an to [m]y l[e]ft ordered an imp[r]e[ss]ively g[r]ot[e]s[que] [s]melling [s]oup from the bar—it was all I could [s]m[e]ll at the time, and the [s]t[en]ch was [s][u]ch that it [s]tr[u]ck me as [f]rankl[y] a [l]i[t]tle un[b]e[l]ieva[b]le [i]t w[a]f[t]ed [f]rom a [b]owl a m[a]n was [a]ctua[l]ly eating [f]rom, y[e]t i[f] any[th]i[n]g [th]i[s] [m]ade [m]e [e]njoy [N]ick-A-[N]ee's [e]ven [m]ore. The [b]and [p]l[ay]ing the [b]ar em[p]l[oy]ed a white [s]axophone [p]l[ayer], and each [r]e[s]p[ec]t[i]ve [i]n[s]t[r]umentali[s]t was [d]rin[k]ing a [s]e[p]arate, [d]i[s]tin[c]t variety of al[c]ohol—[o]ne [w]hi[s]k[ey], [o]ne [c]raft beer, one [s]ome type of m[i]xed dr[i]nk, one nothing at [a]ll, [a]ll [f]our [f]ran[k]l[y] [l]oo[k]ing [l]i[t]tle [l]i[k]e t[y]p[i]c[al] mus[i]cians, and I [f]ound it n[o]table how ea[s]ily the [s][a]xo[ph]o[n]e, I pre[s]umed tenor, [s][a]t in the [m]i[x] with ju[s]t a [m]i[c]ro[ph]one ne[x]t to it, [g]i[ven] the [a][cc]ompanim[e]nt of [e]le[c]tri[c] [g]u[it]ar, ele[c]tri[c] ba[ss], and [a][c]ou[s]ti[c] drums [th]at were [p]l[ay]ed in a [th]o[r]oughl[y] [r]ock, as o[pp]osed to jazz, [s]tyle. [I] gu[e][ss] [I] [n]e[ver] k[n]ew that about tenor [s]axophone. [R]o[ck] [d]rums have

in[c][r]ea[s]ing[l]ly di[s]tre[ss]ed me of [l]ate. When I think of a style of drumming that offends my taste rock dru[mm]ing i[mm][e]d[i]atel[y] vaults [t]o the [t]o[p] of the list—i[n] [m]y o[p]i[n]ion, [S]trat[o]s, [m][o]s[t] ro[ck] [m]usi[c] would [b]e [i][mm]easura[b]l[y] [i][m][p]roved w[i]th the s[i]m[p]le re[m]oval [o]f [p]erc[u]ssion, or at lea[s]t with a [m]ore [m][u]ted [s]ub[s]tit[ute] of [p]ercussion. [M]ay[b]e a [t]o[ngue] dru[m]? Amplified [t]o[ngue] [d][r][u]m? [D]is[t]orted [t]am[b]ou[r]ine? [B]ut hone[s]tl[y] that[s] ju[s]t m[e], [b]e[c]au[se] I fu[l]ly rea[l]ize mo[s]t [p]eo[p]le l[o]ve [p]erc[u]ssion, that [p]erc[uss]ion [i]s viewed as the [s]o-*called* [b]a[ck][b]one of m[o]dern [c]o[m]pos[i]tion, that tons of l[i]s[t]eners [s]t[i]ll vene[r]a[te] r[oc]k musi[c]. I[n] a[n]y c[as]e, [I] [g]ue[ss] [I] should [s]tart to ex[p]l[ain] h[ow] I [g]ot h[ere], shouldn't I?

—From [y]our [p]arallel universe [y]ou mean?

—Ex[a]c[t]ly, [S]tr[a]to[s]. It now [s]e[em]s to m[e] that I [c]ro[s]sed o[v]er [i]nto th[is] uni[v]er[s]e, or I should [s]ay I *be[c]ame a[w]a[r]e* th[at] it [h]ad [h]a[pp]ened, [p]re[c]i[s]ely [a]t the [p]oint [w]he[r]e [th]e b[o]zo in [th]e sn[o]w[c]a[p] in his dar[k] [r]ed [p]i[ck]u[p] t[r]u[ck] beg[an] yelling [a]t me through h[is] w[ind]shield, as I a[tt]em[p]t[ed] to [p]arallel [p]ar[k] u[p] the [s]tr[ee]t from [N]i[ck]-A-[N]ee's, [w]here a man [w]ould then or[d]er [o]ne of the mo[s]t [d]i[s]gu[s]tin[g] [s]mellin[g] [s]oups I've [e]v[er] [e]ncountered from its [b]ar. It was o[b]viou[s] [a]s the m[an], who [I] [d]e[s]p[i]sed, [l]oo[k]ed ex[a]c[t]ly [l]i[k]e [s]ome[o]ne fr[o]m [A]ll[ab]am[a]—he [w]as [w]earing a [s]nowca[p] [d]e[s]p[ite] it b[e]ing a mo[d]e[r]atel[y] tem[p]e[r]ate [d]ay in earl[y] A[p]r[il], and given th[e]se [f]a[c]ts it was obv[i]ou[s] [s]omething had sh[i]f[t]ed [s]i[gn]i[f]i[c]antly, but I

[c]oul[d][n]'t [d]raw a[n]y [c]on[c]l[us]ions [q]uite [a]t th[a]t [p]oint. But these are the [t]y[p]les of [c][u]es y[ou] have [t]o [t]ake in[t]o a[cc]ount with regard to [th]ings [s]uch as [th][e]se, [S]trato[s], [p]arallel u[n]iver[s]e [c]o[n][u]ndr[u]ms, [s]o to [s][p][ea][k]. [H]ow ex[a]ctly it [h][a][pp]ens I'm not [a]t li[b]erty [t]o de[t]ail [a]t this [t]ime, [a]s it's [p]o[ss]i[b]le I'm ig[n]orant of the me[c]ha[n]i[c]s of the [p]ro[c]e[ss], or I'm a[w]are of the [p][r]o[c]e[ss] in a [w][a]y I [c]an only [c]ommun[i]c[ate] [i]n [i]ndi[r]e[c]t [w][a]ys.

—Thi[s] [m]a[k]e[s] [s]ense, [M]ar[k]o[s]. There's obviou[s][l]y [o]n[l]y [s][o] [m]uch we [c]an [p]ut into [w]ords [w]hen it [c]omes to [p]arallel univer[s]es.

—For exam[p]le, it was [p]re[c]i[s]e[l]y at [N]ick-A-[N]ee's that I h[a]p[pen]ed to [l]og onto the [b][a][s]i[k]et[b]all-[r][e]f[er]en[c]e dot [c]om [w]e[b]p[age], [S]t[r]ato[s], [w]hich only [c]onfirmed my [s]u[s]p[i]c[i]ons, [w]h[i]ch had been stea[d]i[l]y rising, which on[l]y [a]c[t]ed [a]s a[n]other [c]lue [a]s I [d]elved [d]ee[per] in[t]o the s[ta]t[i]s[t]ic[s] [I]'ll [d]etail right [n]ow. [S]p[e]c[i]f[i]cally, as I re[c]alled it, [b]eyond a sh[a]d[ow] of a [d]oubt [i]t [s]a[t] [i]n [m]y [m]e[m]ories, the [B]o[s]ton [C]el[t]ic J[a]ys[o]n [T]a[tum] [o]wned a [s]ta[t]i[s]t[i]c[al] pr[o]file that ex[c]eeded th[at] of [D][a]llas [M]a[ver]i[ck] Lu[k]a [D]onci[c], whereas [L]u[k]a [D]onci[c] h[a]d a [s]ta[t]i[s]t[i]c[al] [s]u[m]m[a]tion th[at] l[a]gged th[at] of J[a]y[s]on [T]a[tum]. And yet on [b][a][s]i[k]et[b]all-ref[er]en[c]e dot [c]om at [N]i[ck]-A-[N]ee's, onl[y] [m]o[m]ents a[f]ter [s]aid [b]o[z]o in [s]n[ow]c[a]p in the [A]la[b]a[m]a-e[s]que [m]aroon [p]i[ck][u]p t[r]u[c]k [b]e[r]ated [m]e through h[i]s w[i]ndshield, it o[cc]urred to [m]e that Lu[k]a Donci[c] had by [f]ar the [m]ore [c]om[p]lete [s]ta[t]i[s]t[i]c[al] [p]ro[f]ile

[c]om[p]ared to J[a]y[s]on T[a]tum, de[s][p]ite [b]oth Lu[k]a [a]nd Tatum [a]veraging a[b]ove thirty [p]oints [p]er g[a]me thi[s] NB[A] [s]eason. [S][p]e[c]ifi[c]all[y], on thi[s] [s]ide, [S]tratos, it [s][ee]med that Lu[k]a di[ff]e[r]enti[a]ted himsel[f] [f][r]om T[a]tum by [g]etting to the [f]ree th[r]ow [s]t[r]i[p]e at a [m]uch [g][r]eater [c]li[p], by [m]aking [p]lays [f]or [o]thers at a [c]lip [th][a]t more [th][a]n d[o]ubled T[a]tum's r[a]te. Where J[a]yson T[a]tum a[ss][i]s[t]e[d] on ju[s]t twe[n]ty [p]er[c]e[n]t of his [p]ossessions, while [t]urning the ball over on [t]en [p]er[c]e[n]t, Luka Donci a[ss][i]s[t]e[d] on forty three [p]er[c]e[n]t of his [p]ossessions [w]hile [t]urning the [b]all [o]ver on [o]nly [t]welve [p]er[c]e[n]t, [w]hile [b]oth re[b]ounded ju[s]t a[b]out [th]irteen [p]er[c]e[n]t of [th]eir [p][o]ss[ib]le [p]o[sse]ssio[n]s and [sh]ot a[n] a[ggre]g[ate] [p]er[c]e[n]t[age] of [s]ixty ((t[r]u)e sh[oot]ing [p]er[c]e[n]t[age]) on [th]eir [th]irty [p]oints [p]er game. Yet I ex[p]l[i]c[it]ly r[e]c[al]led J[a]y[s]on T[a]tum b[e]ing the far [s]u[p]e[r]ior [p]l[a]ym[a]k[er], by more than [d]ouble, when [c]om[p]ared t[o] L[u]ka [D]onci[c], in those exa[c]t [t]erms of a[ss]i[s]t [p]er[c]e[n]t[age] and [f]ree throw rate, y[e]t wh[e]n I l[og]g[e]d [o]nto [b]a[s]ket[b]all-[r]e[f]e[r]e[n]c[e] at [N]i[ck]-A-[N]ee's, to my great [s]ur[p]r[i]se, Lu[k]a Donci[c] [s]e[p]a[r]a[t]ed him[s]el[f] [f]rom J[a]y[s]on T[a]tum b[y] [h]is [h]igher [p]ro[p]e[n]sity of g[e]tting to the [f]ree throw [s]t[r]i[p]e and [b]y his [s]tar[k] [c]ont[r]a[s]t in [s]etting his team[m]a[tes] up for [m]a[de] shots (e[s]p[e]ciall[y] wh[e]n [c]om[p]ared to his [p]ro[p]e[n]sity [t]o the [t]urn the ball [o]ver). It's [o]nly in the [m]ost [m]inute of ways that we [c]an de[t]e[c]t these [t]ra[n]s[i]t[i]ons, [S]trato[s], if that ma[k]e[s] [s]e[n]s[e], that we [c]an [c]on[c]lude we'v[e]

tra[v]er[s]ed a[c]ro[ss] pote[n]tial di[m]e[n]sions, if that
[m]a[k]es [s]e[n]s[e]?

—Oh, abso[l]ute[l]y!

—[A]nd to [a]dd t[o] the con[f]u[sion] it was on[l]y a
night [l]ater, in a [v]i[v]id [d]ream, that [I] [f]ound
m[y][s]el[f] in a [d]e[s]o[l]ate house [c]o[v]ered [w]ith
o[r]ange [w]all[p][a][p]er, [c]u[r]iou[s]l[y]
[p]r[e]o[cc]u[p]ied [w]ith b[a]thing my[s]elf,
a[pp]a[r]ently g[e]tting [r][ea]dy [f]or [s]omething I
[c]ouldn't [q]uite [p]ut my [f]inger on—[i]t was [i][n]
th[i][s] home w[i]th the o[r]a[n]ge i[n]te[r]ior that I felt
agai[n] thi[s] p[s]y[c]hi[c] e[n]ergy with [n]ear
[s]tr[a]ngers, [n]ear [s]tr[a]ngers who [s]eem to [p]op
in[t]o [m]y [m]en[t]al [s]p[ac]e unannoun[c]ed,
th[at] h[as] in[c]rea[s]ingly [s]tru[c]k me [a]s an
[a]c[tual [p]h[y]s[i]c[al] [p]h[e]n[omen]on. That I
[c]an [a]c[tually [th]in[k] b[a]c[k] toward [th]e[se]
n[ear] strangers in a [p]h[y]s[i]c[al] [f]a[sh]i[on]. Yet
this was be[f]ore a [p]arti[c]ular [sh][a]d[ow] [f]rom my
p[re]s[ent] a[pp]ea[red] to [m]e yet agai[n] [i]n
[d]r[e]am, [i]n the [m]o[s]t [v]i[v]id of [m]a[n]ners,
[a]nd I beg[a]n to r[un] [f]r[om] [s]ome[th]ing,
[s]ome[th]ing [I] [c]oul[d]n't [i]denti[f]y, wh[i]le
[s]imulta[n]eou[s]ly re[c]o[n]n[e]c[t]ing w[i]th th[i][s]
shad[ow] [w]i[th]out [ei]ther [o]f u[s] [s]aying a [w]ord
to [ea]ch [o]ther, un[t]il I [s]t[um]bled u[p]o[n] [w]hat
[l]oo[k]ed [l]i[k]e a [l]o[ck]er room i[n] a[n] o[p]en
field. I entered the [b]ui[l]ding, a s[o]-[c]alled [l]o[ck]er
r[oom] i[n] a[n] o[p]e[n] field, a[n]d [r]ea[l]ized all of its
[m]e[m]o[r]a[b]i[l]ia w[a]s fr[om] [n]i[n]et[ee]n
[n]i[n]et[y] eight—and [I] real[i]zed [I]’d tr[a]v[e]led
b[a]c[k] to [n]i[n]et[ee]n [n]i[n]et[y] eight, that
e[v]erything I [t]o[u]ched was [t]otall[y] [n]i[n]et[ee]n
[n]i[n]et[y] eight, that my [o]wn [s]o-[c]alled identit[y]
was ju[s]t a [c]lums[y] [b]l[oc]k [a]c[ro]ss

[s]omething that [c]ould [b]e tr[a]ver[s]ed if [a][pp][r]oached [p][r]o[p]erl[y], a[n]d the[n] [s]uddenl[y] [th]e [th]ought occurred to m[e]: *T[i]me [s]tarts [i]n the m[i]ddle and w[i]nds [a]round*, [a]lways [i]n the m[i]ddle, I [th]ought, [th]at [th]is notion of [t][i]me [b]eg[i]nn[i]ng at the [b]eg[i]nn[i]ng [i]s en[t][i]rely fal[s]e, perhap[s] even non[s]en[s]ical. [W]hen a[w]a[k]e I franti[c]all[y] wr[o]te a n[ote] that [s][i]mpl[y] [s]aid: *T[i]me [s]tarts [i]n the m[i]ddle and w[i]nds around*. [A]nd, [a]s [I] en[c]ountered thi[s] [i]dea, [s]t[r]ea[m]s of g[r][ee]n, for [l][a]ck of a better word, *time* sh[ot] [o]ut, [l]i[k]e Ni[ck]e[l]odeon G[a]ck or [s]omething, variou[s] [s]treams of time [o]verl[apping] each other in j[o]you[s] [b]u[r]s[ts] of [g]reen, like the wo[r]d [G][o], and it was a [s]ort of j[o]you[s] e[v]e[n]t e[v]e[n] [i]n [i]ts am[b]i[gu]ity. I was a l[i]ttle d[i]sa[pp]oin[t]ed [t]o wake u[p].

—[D]id y[ou] [d]o shr[oo]ms at all?

—N[o], [s][a]dly, [S]tr[a]t[os], I was compl[e]tel[y] [f][r]ee [f][r]om hallu[c]inoge[n]s [w]he[n] I [w]e[n]t to sl[ee]p, [w]he[n] I [w]e[n]t to [N]ick-A-[N][ee]’s, when the red-bear[d]ed hi[p][s]ter [p]eed at the a[d]ult urinal, when the [m]an next to [m]e or[d]ered the [d]i[s]gu[s]ting [s]ou[p], [w]hen the b[o]z[o] [w]ith the [s]n[o]w[c]a[p] [s][c]r[ea]med at m[e], when the [s]axophone was [s]urp[r]i[s]ingly h[i]gh [i]n the m[i]x. N[o], we [d]o[n]’t [n]e[c]e[ss]arily [n]eed [t]o [t]ravel in the [t]r[ad]i[t]i[on]al [s]en[s]e [i]n or[d]er [t]o [t]ravel g[r]eat [d]i[s]tan[c]es, that much we can be sure of.

—That [m]a[k]es complete sense to [m]e, [M]ar[k]os!

3.1

Prelude—I was as surprised as anyone when the entire Licensing Board for the City of Providence directed a bright into my apartment at 6am on a Saturday, arriving unannounced to my modest apartment, ready to query me on what I knew about Pasha, a somewhat notorious hookah bar located in a modest strip mall on Allens Avenue. I retorted that, as it so happened, I knew quite a bit, although only anecdotally—perhaps wanting to pique their interests in my own perverse way. The licensing board replied that, wow, they'd love to hear it, almost in unison, so I felt compelled to share my narrative, to tell my side of the story, so to speak, and went on to say,

01—W[e]ll, I [g]u[e][ss] [i]t's been [g][i]ve or ta[k]e [s]even years [s]in[c]e I [f]ir[s]t ex[p]erien[c]ed the [s]ubl[i]me del[i]ght of [s]mo[k]ing the hoo[k][a]h at [P][a]sh[a] on [A][l]lens [A][v]enue, [a]nd n[ea]r[l]y thr[e]e and hal[f] [s]in[c]e [I] was in[t]rodu[c]ed [t]o the [v][e]n[e]rated [i][c]e hose, [s][o] I [s]u[pp][o]se I'm now at the [p]oint in m[y] [l]i[f]e where an [e]qu[i]d[i]s[tant amount of t[i]me h[a]s [e][l]l[a]p[s]ed [s]in[c]e I [e]x[p]e[r]ien[c]ed the [r]egu[l]ar [h]ose [a]s well [a]s the i[c]e [h]ose, b[o]th h[os]es that I'd of [c]ourse [r]e[c]ommend, alth[ough] our [c]ountry's [r]a[p]id [r]a[te] of [i]nfl[a]tion h[a]s [i]m[p]a[c]t[ed] the [p]ri[c]e of [ea]ch [s]ub[s]tantiall[y], while the [r]a[p]id [s][p]r[e]ad of the [C]O[V]ID-Ninet[e]en [v]iru[s] has [t]urned [s]mo[k]ing hoo[k]ah i[n][t]o a[n] i[n][c]rea[s]ingl[y] frowned u[p]on [p]ra[c]ti[c]e.

02—[I]t was [a]n [e][r]a of l[i]nge[r]ing [s]oci[o]e[c]ono[m]i[c] [c]o[m]m[un]o[tion when my

[f][r]iend [C]ur[ti][s] and I ex[p]e[r]ien[c]ed [s]omewhat of a [d]ual [r]ou[gh] [p]atch [r]o[m]anti[c]ally—[C]ur[ti][s] [r]e[ck][l]e[ss][l]y [d]ivor[c]ed, [a]fter [a]n [ei]ght year [r]e[l]a[t]i[on]sh[ip] a[n]d [n]ine [m]onth [m]a[r]riage, wh[i]le [I] [r]e[m]ained i[n] le[ss] than i[n]f[r]e[qu]ent [c]o[m]muni[c]ation with a per[s]on [I]’d i[n]ad[v]i[s]a[b]ly [b]e[c]ome i[n]volved [w]ith i[n] a [v]ariety of [w]ays, wh[i]le at the [s]ame [t]ime [I]’d inad[v]i[s]a[b]lly [e]n[t]ered a [s]u[b]s[e]q[ue]nt re[l]a[t]i[on]sh[ip] with a [p]er[s]on I’d, [p]erha[p]s un[s]ur[p]r[i]singl[y], [e]ventua[l]ly have a d[r]amati[c] falling out with.

03—[M]ore [o]ften [th]an n[ot] it [s]eems our [l]i[ves] are [l]i[t]tle [m]ore [th]an a [s]eries of [i]ll-adv[i]sed re[l]a[t]i[on]sh[ip]s, that [w]hen[e]ver [w]e [e]s[s]c[a]p[e] [f]rom [o]ne [i]ll-adv[i]sed [r]e[l]a[t]i[on] [w]e [f]ind a [s]ub[s]e[qu]ent [i]ll-adv[i]sed re[l]a[t]i[on] [w]a[iti]ng [f]or us [p]a[ti]entl[y]—for my [p]art [I]’d [a]c[qu]ir[ed] a [c]u[s]tom of cha[s]ing the [i]ll-advise[d] [i]n [a]n al[m]ost [m]e[c]h[an]i[c]al [m]a[n]ner, as [i]f the [i]ll-adv[i]sed had [s]ome [s]ort of di[r]e[c]t l[i]ne into m[y] ver[y] b[e]ing, a[n]d i[n] [r]et[r]o[s]p[e]c[t] it [f]eels as i[f] [c]ir[c]um[s]tan[c]e in the [c]a[s]e of m[y] [l]i[f]e has [p]l[ay]ed an out[s]ized role, that my a[pp]roach to m[y] [l]i[f]e has been a [s]i[m]ple [s]c[ul]p[t]ing of [i]ne[s]c[a]p[ab]le [c]ir[c]um[s]tan[c]es.

04—That P[a][sh][a] was [a] Tu[r][k]i[sh] [b]ar [d]idn’t o[ccu]r [t]o me un[t]il later, [b]ut I [s]till h[old] [b]o[th] [o]wners—J[a][ck] [a]nd [S][a]l—in the high[e]st [e]s[te]em, [d]e[s]p[ite] [th]e [th]ousand-year-[p]l[u]s [l]o[n]g [c]o[n]f[li]c[t]

that's [p][l]agued our [r]e[s][p]e[c]tive [c]ultures. In [f][a][c]t it was ju[s]t thi[s] [p][a][s]t [C]h[r]i[s]tma[s] that I [s]to[pp]ed in [P]ash[a] with [K]at[r]een[a] and said [a] [j][o]vial [h]ell[o] to [J]a[ck], i[n]dulging i[n] my fir[s]t i[i][c]e [h]oo[k]ah in what [s][ee]med l[i][k]e [e]ons, [K]atr[e]ena and I [s]itting at the [c]ounter, h[a]ving ex[a][c]tly one [b][e]er a p[ie][c]e, already [s]ome[w]hat i[n]e[b]ri[a]ted, [w]atching a Ma[v]eri[ck][s] g[a]me that was [c]uriou[s][l]y [v]oid of [L]u[k]a Don[c]ic.

05—It's [n][e][v]er [n][e][c]e[ss]arily a[d][v]isable to a[d]mit that an exoti[c] [d]an[c]er [q]u[o]te-un[q]u[o]te 'fell in [l]ove with [y]ou'—[y]et in my parti[c]u[l]ar [c]a[s]e i[t] was an [i]rre[f]uta[b]le [b]urden I was [f]or[c]ed to [b]ear. [A]lthough at the [t]ime I [a][tt]emp[t]ed, with [s]ome [d]egree of [s]u[cc]e[ss], to [d]en[y] that m[y] [c]haris[m][a]ti[c] [c]h[a]ra[c]ter was [c]a[p]able of [m]a[k]ing [s][ai]d [s]e[t] of [e]v[en]ts [p]o[ss]i[b]le, [i]f not [i]ne[v]ita[b]le, yet it was a[pp]ro[p]riatel[y] [c]ata[s]tro[ph]i[c] [f]or [m]y [m]en[t]al well-[b]e[ing], as I [t]oo[k] [f]ull [r]e[s][p]onsi[b]i[l]it[y] for [b]oth [m]y [c]h[a]ris[m]a as well as [m]y ina[b]i[l]it[y] to [r]e[se]m[b]le a [f]athe[r]-[f]igu[r]e.

06—These [p]re[c]i[s]e [c]ir[c]um[s]tan[c]es led both [m]y[s]elf and [m]y [f]riend [C]urti[s] into the [r]eady-[m]ade arms of the [P]asha [h]oo[k]ah [h]ose at [l]ea[s]t [o]n[c]e a [w][ee][k] for years on end—as there exi[s]t t[i]mes in [s][o]me[o]ne's [l]i[f]e whe[r]e the[r]e's no choi[c]e [b]ut to [d]i[s]a[ss]e[m]b]le them[s]elves in the [m][o]st reckle[ss] of [f]ashions, [s][m][o]k[ing] and [d]rin[k]ing [e]x[c]e[ss]ively a[n]d [e]n[g]aging [i]n [i]ll-advised [l]ong-term

re[l]a[tion]sh[ips] [e]x[c]e[ss]ive[l]y; the [q]ua[l]ity of the [h]oo[k][a]h at P[a]sh[a] was of [a] [h]eight that was [h]ard to f[a]thom [a]t the time.

o7—We un[r]ave[l] ourse[l]ves, a[tt]emp[t]ing [t]o [r]each a [c]ore that's [a]lways un[a]pp[r][o]acha[b]le, [b]eing t[o]ld [b]y [B]yza[n]t[in]e [m]on[k]s that our [c][e]n[t]er [r]e[m]ains as i[n]e[ff]a[b]le as God's [E][ss][e][n][c]e—[s]e[n]ding ill-advised m[e][ss]ages to [l]ove i[n]te[r]e[s]ts that no [l]onger have a[n]y i[n]te[r]e[s]t i[n] u[s]. A[n] i[n]no[c]ent e[x]otic [d]an[c]er [f]alls in l[ov]e [w]ith [u]s, and [w]e ch[oo]se to [u]se the [f]ull e[x]tent of our [c]r[i]t[i]c]al [f]a[c]ulties to [d]i[s]a[ss]emble thi[s] [p]er[s]on [o]ver a[n]d [o]ver agai[n]. [C]on[t]inua[l]l[y] [d]rawn [t]o [th]i[s] [p]er[s]on, we [r]u[th]l[e]ss[l]y [d]e[s]t[r]oy them [c]r[i]t[i]c]a[l]l[y] unt[i]l the [s]i[tu]a[tion] [i]t[s]elf be[c]omes [i]ntoxi[c]a[te]d in the [w]or[s]t of [w]ays.

o8—[A]nd [a]fter [a]ll [o]f th[i]s [i]s [o]v[er] we g[o] to P[a]sh[a] on [A][l]lens [A][v]enue, a[n]d we e[n]joy the [h]ighe[s]t [q]ua[l]ity [h]oo[k]ahs at [l]ea[s]t eve[r]y We[d]nes[d]ay, un[r]aveling [b]e[c]omes j[us]t an[ot]her ho[bb]y [o]f [o]ur's, and we d[r]in[k] [v]od[k]a [w]ith j[u]s[t] [a] [s]plash of [w]ater, and the [b]ar[t]en[d]er [l]i[b]era[l]ly in[d]u]lges [u]s with [a] [t]a[l]l gla[ss] of thi[s] [v]od[k]a, a[n]d the[n] we drive up the [s]tr[ee]t, and w[e] [l]augh hy[s]teri[c]a[l]l[y] [w]ith [C]urti[s] as [w]e mind[l]e[ss]l[y] to[ss] [c]u[r]ren[c]y at a [d]ar[k] [s]tage [c]omp[r]ised of nu[d]it[y], then we [d]r]ive [d]o[w]n[t]o[w]n [t]o or[d]er a [m]ea[t]l[e]ss [b]urr[i]to at a high[l]y [r]egar[d]ed T[e]x [M]e[x] e[s]ta[b]lish[m]ent.

09—One [c]o[m]m[on] [m]i[s]ta[k]e to e[s][ch]ew [b]oth at P[a][sh][a] and other e[s]ta[b]li[sh][m]ents offf[er]ing [s]o-[c]alled hoo[k]ah is the [c]on[f]l[ation] of ‘[m]ore’ [w]ith ‘[b]ette[r]’ [w]ith regard to [f][l]avo[r]s. [W]ait[s]ta[ff] [w][i]ll [i]nvariab[ly] h[i]gh[l]i[ght] [th]e [f][a][c]t [th]at a [p]atron [c]an order a [l]ita[n]y of [f][l]avors at [n]o ext[r]a [c]o[s]t, im[p]l[y]ing that [r]e[c]eiving *more* [f][l]avors [f]or the [s]/[a]me [p]ri[c]e is a ‘good [d]eal’, that or[d]e[r]ing a [b]lue[b]e[r]ry-[p]ea-ch-mint-[c]r[ea]m[s]i[c]le flavor hoo[k]ah will [b]e enjoya[b]le whe[n] a [s]e[n]si[b]le hoo[k]ah should [b]e [r]e[s]tri[c]ted [t]o at [m]o[s]t [t]w[o] f[l]avors—I per[s]ona[l]ly [r]e[c]o[m]mend [b]lue[b]erry [m]int.

10—[S]itt[ing] at the bar at P[a][sh][a] [s]mo[k]ing [a] [s]c[rum]p[ti]ou[s] hoo[k]ah with my [f]riend [C]ur[ti]s, watching an ex[c]iting [C]el[ti]c[s] [c]on[t]e[s]t, I had the [m]i[s]f[ort]une [o]f [a]ssid[u]o[us]ly [s]tu[d]ying [m]y [s]u[r]roun[d]ings w[i]th the [i]ntent of [r]e[c]o[r]ding them, [s]o to [s]pea[k]. In short, I [b]e[l]ieved e[v]e[n]t[s] [c]o[ul]d [b]e [r]e[c]o[r]ded [v]ia [r]e[c]o[l]le[c]tion and [r]e[c]r[e]a[te]d through [c]r[e]a[tive] [f]a[c]ulties, [w]hen it’s [n]ow [c]lear that [n]o[th]ing [w]as [f]urth[er] [f]rom the truth—at P[a]sh[a] smo[k]ing hoo[k]ah [I] [b]elieved [I] [c]o[ul]d [c]reate [a] non[f]i[c]tional [a]cc[ount], an [a]uto[b]iog[r]a[ph]i[c]al e[l]e[m]ent, when [a]uto[b]iog[r]a[ph]y and hi[s]to[r]y are [o]n[l]y the [m]o[s]t e[l]evated [f]o[r]ms of [f]i[c]tion!

11—Our [m]e[m]ories are [b]y [f]ar the [m]o[s]t [s]p[eci]ou[s] things a[b]out u[s]—[h]ave you ever [w]ondered [w]hy our offf[i]c[i]al [h]i[s]to[r]ies are al[m]o[s]t i[m]m[e]diat[e]ly che[ck]ered, [b]ia[s]ed

[b]e[f]ore the [f]ir[s]t dra[f]ts are [c]omp[ll]e[te]d, why human [b][e]ings are [b]e[ll]ie[ve]d [t]o have exi[s][t]ed for [t]ens of thousands of [y]ears, [y]et if w[e] [e]ven g[ll]an[c]e a [p]al[t]ry mi[ll]ennium in[t]o our [p]a[s]t [w]e [w]it[n]e[ss] [n][o]thing [b][u]t [f]oggy [n]otions and [b][i]tter[ll]y [c]on[f]l[i]c[t]ing op[i]n[i]ons? At t[i]m[es] it seems [I]’[m] [m]ade [u]p [o]f [n][o]thing [b][u]t [m]e[m]o[r]ies, yet all of th[e]se [m]e[m]o[r]i[e]s s[ee]m to have [m]inds of their own!

12—Ul[t]imate[ll]y, while the [r]e[ll]a[t]ive [r]i[s]k of [ll]oitering at [P]l[a]sh[a] on [A]ll[en]s [A]venue is [a]t thi[s] [p]oint [w]ell-[e]s[t]a[b]lished, and [w]h[i]le the [p]r[i]c[es] of the [m]e[d]ian [h]oo[k]ah [h]ave infl[a]ted [e]x[p]onentially, I’d [s]till [b]e [h]ard-[p]re[ss]ed to [s]it [h]ere and [r]e[c]o[m]mend a [b]etter [p]l[a]c[e] to [s]m[o]k[e] [h]oo[k]ah in the G[r][ea]ter [B]o[s]ton [m]etro[p]o[ll]itan [r]egion. Fran[k]lly, I’ve always [c]on[s]i[d]ered [i]t [a] [b][i]t of [a] [b]our[ge]ois [c]o[w]ar[d]i[c]e to [a]void [p]l[a]c[es] [s]ole[ll]y [b]e[c]ause of a [ll]ow [p]ro[b]a[b]i[ll]i[ty] chan[c]e you’ll get shot—[e]ven as w[e] [a]ge it [c]an [s]till [b]e [b][e]neficial to [e]m[b]r[a]c[e] the [i]ll-adv[i]sed on[c]e [i]n a wh[i]le.

3.2

Prelude—With a fair amount of ambivalence, knowing as well as anyone that Nikos typically spends the hours of 3PM through 7PM, Monday through Friday, verifying the European origin of his dietary tract, I approached Mr Kazantzakis at 6:59 PM, ambling toward the screened-in patio of his modest row house located spitting distance from Garden City, and began as such:

01—Well Mr [K][a]zantz[a][k][i][s], [i]f I'm [b][e]ing hone[s]t with [y]ou, [c]omp[li][e]te[ly] hone[s]t with [y]ou, if I'm h[o]lding [b]a[c]k [n]ext to [n][o] hone[s]ty what[s]o[ever], I should [n][o]te that, ye[s], [i]t's [i]nd[us]tr[ia]l[ly] tr[ue] that of [l]ate [I]'ve [f]ound m[an]u[el] [g]l[u]ttou[ry] ch[ew]ing [f]our to [s]even [s]l[i]c[es] of [g]u[m] in [s]i[m]ultaneit[y], [f]or a va[r]iet[y] of [r]easons—in [f]a[ct], [i]t was ju[s]t ye[s]terday [a]f[ter]noon, [p]rior to l[e]aving ou[r] a[p]p[ar]tment to [g]o [g]rab a [c]o[ff]ee that I i[n]d[i]s[c]r[i]m[in]ately shoved a[n] e[n]tire [p]a[ck] of [g]u[m] i[n]to [m]y [m]outh and ex[hib]erant[ly] ch[ew]ed this [l]arge [b]all of [g]u[m], [w]ondered i[f] che[w]ing [g]u[m] [w]as actually [g]ood [f]or your teeth, when [th]e [th]ought o[cc]urred to [m]e: Is [e]m[ph] the [h]ighe[s]t [f]orm of [c]l[ass]i[c]al [m]usi[c] A[m]er[i]c[a] [i]s [h]i[sto]r[i]c[ally] r[e]s[p]on[s]ible [f]or? When di[s]c[uss]ing A[m]er[i]c[a]n [m]usi[c], I thought [w]hile che[w]ing a[n] e[n]tire [p]a[ck] [o]f [g]u[m], a litany of [g]l[en]r[es], f[r]om [p]ost-bo[p] [j]azz, to ex[p]er[i]m[en]tal ro[c]k, to [a]v[an]t-[m]etal to the [s]o-[c]i[al]l[ed] [c]l[ass]i[c]al[ly] trained [c]om[p]o[s]ers of [A]m[er]i[c]an [d]e[s]cent, are [d]i[s]c[uss]ed as 'the tru[ly] [c]l[ass]i[c]al [m]usi[c] of A[m]er[i]c[a].' 'B[u]t wh[a]t if e[m] is the t[r]u[ly] [c]l[ass]i[c]al A[m]er[i]c[a]n [m]usi[c]?' I thought to [m]y[s]elf, che[w]ing a[n] e[n]tire [p]a[ck] [o]f [g]u[m], [p]re[p]ar[ing] my[s]elf to [p]ay [f]ull-[p]r[i]c[e] [f]or a [c]o[ff]ee out [s]ome[w]here, des[p]i[te] the [f]a[ct] [I] h[a]d a[n] e[n]tire [p]ot of [c]o[ff]ee at [m]y a[p]p[ar]t[m]ent, waiting to [b]e im[b]ibed [f]or [f]r[e]e. The [p]ri[m]ar[y] [c]onc[ei]t of [e]m[ph] [m]usi[c] [i]s that [i]ts [c]re[ators] are young a[n]d white a[n]d [m]a[le], and [th]at [th]ey or[i]g[i]n[al]te [f]rom [n]eigh[bor]hoods that are saf[e] i[f] n[ot] o[p]ule[n]t

a[n]d utter[ly] h[a]te their [l]ives. [N]othing, it should be
 [n]oted, is [e]ver [p]ro[c][ee][d]ing w[e]ll for the [e]mo
 band, as the [s]lighte[s]t [d][e]v[i]ation from the [e]mo
 [b]and's [b]e[s]t [c]a[s]e [s]cenario is [a]lways
 [a][p]o[c][a]l[y][p]t[i][c], de[s]p[ite] the f[a][c]t th[a]t,
 [s]o[c]io[p]o[l]iti[c]a[l]l[y] at [l][ea]s[t], [th]ey have
 [e]very[th]ing going for [th]em. The e[m]o
 [p]ar[t][i][c][i][p]ant [e]x[i]s[ts] at the a[p]ex of the
 A[m]eri[c]an [t][o]tem [p][o]le, and des[p]ite thi[s]
 fa[c]t [e]verything re[m]ains [e][ss]entially
 o[b]je[c]tiona[b]le to them. Noth[i]ng [i]s going well!
 The emo [s]ong [i]s, [i]n pract[i]c[e], [th]e
 [a]nti[th]e[s]i[s] of the virtue [s]ignal. [A]nd it
 o[cc]urred to [m]e, as I le[f]t [m]y a[p]art[m]ent to [p]ay
 [f]ou[r] dollars [f]o[r] a [c]o[ff][ee] that would
 i[n]evita[b]l[y] [b][e] [c]o-o[p]ted [b]y a[n] art [s][c]hool
 [p]ro[f]e[ss]or, with n[o] regard to [s][o]cia[l]ly
 a[cc][e]p[t]a[b]l[e] d[e][c]i[b]e[l] [l]evels.
 [p]ont[i]f[i]c[a]ting [a][b]out [p]eo[p]le as [b][r]ands
 to [a] [f]o[r]eign exch[a]nge [s]tudent, [th]at [th]i[s]
 t[y]p[e] of w[i]d[e]-e[y]e[d] [n]ar[c]i[s]s[m], [th]at
 [th]i[s] un[i]ron[i]c [i]g[n]oran[c]e of
 [s]ocio[p]ol[i]t[i]c]al t[o]tem [p][o]les, thi[s]
 ob[s]e[ss]i]on w[i]th di[r][e]c[t], l[i]ved
 [e]x[p]l[e]r[i]en[c]e at the [e]x[p]en[s]e of [e]verything
 [c]on[c]e[p]tual—is [p]erha[p]s the a[p]ex of what
 should [c]o[m]p[ri]se A[m]er[i]c]an [c]la[s]s[i]c]al
 [m]usi[c]? [A]nd I [n]o[dd]ed my [h]ead [a]t this
 [n]otion [a]s we en[t]ered the [H]on[d]a [a][s][k]ing
 [K]a[t]r[ee]na i[f] sh[e]’d b[e] [w]i[l]ling to [p]l[ay]
 ‘[O]ne-[E]i[gh]ty by [S]ummer’ on our [w][ay] to the
 [c]o[ff]ee sho[p].

02—I [s]u[pp]ose you [c]ould [s]ay it was [f]ortuitou[s],
 i[f] not a [d]ire[c]t [p]ro[d]u[c]t of [f]ate it[s]el[f], that

with [th]ese [th]oughts in m[i]nd, wh[i]lle browsing my Sho[pp]ing L[i]st on A[m]az[o]n d[o]t [c]o[m], while [c]on[s]i[de]ring the [m]erits of the [s]o-[c]alled univer[s]it[y] [p]ro[f]e[ss]or a[f]ter my en[c]ounter w[i]th th[i]s [p]ea-brained art [p]ro[f]e[ss]or [f]rom Yo[l]en[i]’s, I [n][o]ti[c]ed [th]at [th]e [C]on[s]tantine E[l]even [m]o[n][o]gra[ph] b[y] [m]y old [c]ollege [p]ro[f]e[ss]or, [M]ari[o]s [Ph]i[l]i[pp]ides, was [n]ow on [s]ale—re[d]u[c]ed from the [b]or[d]er[l]ine-[i]n[s]ulting [p]r[i]c[e] of [n]i[n]ety [d]ollars for the hard[c]over, to the [i]n[c]rea[s]ing[l]y [p]a[l]ata[b]le [p]r[i]c[e] of [n]i[n]e [d]o[l]lars for the [K]in[d]le e[d]ition. I’d had [n]o [c]o[m]muni[c]ation w[i]th [Ph]i[l]i[pp]ides [s]in[c]e [m]y t[i]me at [M]a[ss]achu[s]etts, wh[i]ch [i]s un[s]ur[p]rising, as I doubt [s]trong[l]y [Ph]i[l]i[pp]id[e]s re[c]alls [m]e in the [l]ea[s]t, as a[l]l [m]o[s]t the entirety of my [l]ate a[d]o[l]e[s]cen[c]e was [m]ar[k]ed b[y] [m]y [d]e[d]i[c]a[t]io[n] to [m]y [d]i[ss]i[p]a[t]io[n]-[p]ro[c]e[ss], which I’d [e]xte[n][d]e[d] i[n]to a[n] [e]ra [s]ome m[a]y [ch]oose to [ch]a[r]a[c]terize as a [p]o[s]t-youth [e]ra, [s]o the two of us had [n]o [n]eed, [n]o r[e]ason to [c]o[m]muni[c]ate [w]ith [o]ne a[n]other, [p]ri[m]ari[l]y [b]e[c]ause Ph[i]l[i]ppides had [n]o [i]dea who [I] was. Ju[s]t [b]e[c]ause [t]wo per[s]ons o[s]t[en]s[i]bly share a [m]odi[c]um of [s]o-[c]alled ‘Gree[k] [b]lood’ in no way [m]eans they [sh]ould [c]o[m]mu[n]i[c]ate [w]ith [o]ne a[n]other. [F]or [Ph]i[l]i[pp]id[e]s’s [p]art, [h]e [h]as no [i]dea who [I] am, and [f]or [m]y [p]art, [m]y on[l]y [i]n[t]eraction with [Ph]i[l]i[pp]id[e]s [t]ook [p]la[c]e [i]n the [m]i[d]st of [m]y [d]i[ss]i[p]a[t]io[n]-[p]ro[c]e[ss], of [w]hich I [w]as [d]e[d]i[c]a[t]ed to—yet [b]eing that I’d [b]een [l]o[ok]ing [f]or a mono[gl]ra[ph] on the [s]o-[c]alled

‘[l]a[s]t em[p]eror of the [G][r]ee[k]s’, and [b][e]ing that [Ph]i[l]i[pp][i]d[e]s was the [o]n[l]y [a]uthor with [a] r[e]c[en]t monogra[ph] [p]u[b]l[is]hed on the [f]inal [s]o-[c]alled [C]on[s]tantine of [H]e[l]en, it ju[s]t [s]o [h][a]ppened that our [p][a]ths [w]ould [o]n[c]e again [c]ro[ss], thi[s] t[i]me on the [K]indle [a]pp of m[y] [i]Phone. [P]erh[a]p[s] it was [f]ate, just [a]s it was [f]ate th[at] I’d [s]it through an e[b]u[l]lient [b]l[ov]i[a]tion [s]ession [f]rom a [p]ea-[b]r[ai]ned art [s]chool [p]ro[f]e[ss]or on one [d]ay, [th]en on [th]e n[e]xt [d]ay [f]ind [m]y [ow]n [o]ld [p]r[o]f[e]ssor’s [m]onog[r]a[ph] [f]ortuitou[s]ly on [s]ale, [r]e[d]u[ce]d t[o] a [p]r[i]c[e] [m]ore a[pp]r[o]p[ri]ate [f]or the [p]r[o]leta[r]iat as [s]uch.

03—A[f]ter [c]onf[ir]m[ing] the [p]r[i]c[e] [r]e[d]u[c]tion [m]ultipl[e] [d]ays in a [r]ow I [f]inally [p]ulled the t[r]igger and [b]ought the [b]ook, [o]n[l]y [d]ownl[oad]ing said [b]ook [d]u[r]ing a [s]o[l]ita[r]y [c]ir[cu]lar [s]o[j]urn a[r]ound [F]oxwoods, I[k]e busy a[tt]emp[t]ing [t]o [c]on[t]inue his [l]u[ck] [o]n the s[l]o[t] machines—[h]aving wo[n] two [h]u[n]d[red] [d]o[ll]ars on o[n]e [r]oll [p]r[i]or to our [h]igh [c]l[as]s Chin[ese] [d]i[n]ner, wh[i]ch he [m]a[gn]a[n]i[m]ou[s]l[y] [c]om[p]ed—[a]nd [K]a[t]reena [p]a[ss]ed out in the [c]ar, [t]ired a[n]d hungover a[ft]er a[n] ill-[a]d[v]i[s]ed [d]e[c]ision to [d]ay[d]r[in]k [p]r[i]or to our [v]entu[r]ing to the [c]a[s]i[n]o for the [n]ight. At fir[s]t, in [p]re[p]a[r]ation of my [r]ea[d]ing, I [s]at in l[i]ne at [D]un[k]in [D]onuts, [s]urp[ri]singl[y] the on[l]y [c]o[ff]ee sho[p] o[p]en at the ex[p]a[n]sive [c]a[s]ino, a[n]d bought a [m]e[d]i[um] i[c]ed [c]o[ff]ee [f]or [m]y[s]el[f] with al[m]ond [m]il[k]. Three [m]en [s]t[ood] in

[f]r[o]nt of [m]e and [s][t]r[u][ck] [m]e as a[b][u]tting
 old [m]en un[t]il I [b]egan [t]o [c]on[s]ider they very
 well [c]ould [b]e the [s][a]me [a]ge as I, [c][l]i[n]g[i]ng,
 [i]t [s]tru[ck] me, to [p]erha[p][s] [s]ome fa[d]ing
 b[ea][c]on of youth, one of them a[d]orned in [d]eluxe
 [M]i[ch]ael Jor[d]an [s]n[ea][k]ers, the other [m]a[k]ing
 a long [s][p][ee]ch to the [D]un[k]in [D]onuts bar[i][s]ta
 about [h]ow [m]uch [h]e li[k]es his [C]ara[m]el
 [c]off[ee] yet [c]uriou[s]ly [p]un[c]tu[a]ting the [n]ote
 by [r]e[p]eatedly [s][a]ying he's [n]ot that [p]i[ck]y. In
 the [r]ain[f]ore[s]t [c]a[s]i[n]o, [s]i[pp]ing my i[c]ed
 [c]off[ee], [w]ith [w]ater [au][d]i[b]l[y] [f][a]lling [a]ll
 [a]round m[e], I got my [f]ive [d]ollar [d]ou[b]le
 [p]o[k]er g[a]me out of the w[ay], rea[l]izing [s]l[ow]ly
 [th]at [th]e [f]i[r]s[t] two machines [d]i[d]n't wo[r]k,
 then [s]l[ow]ly rea[l]i[z]ing [I] [c]om[p]l[e]te[l]y
 [f]orgot how to [p]lay double [p]o[k]er, [d]e[s]p[ite]
 [b]eing [s]o exu[b]erant at [th]e [th]ought of [f]i[n]ally
 [f]i[n]d[ing] a [d]ou[b]le [p]o[k]er machine to [p]lay. I
 [g]oo[g]led 'How to [p]lay [d]ou[b]le [p]o[k]er' [b]ut
 [c]oul[d]n't [s]eem to f[i]nd a [c]on[c]i[s]e
 ex[p]lan[a]tion, an ex[p]lan[a]tion that would a[ll]ow me
 to [p]l[a]y [d]ou[b]le [p]o[k]er imm[e]d[i]atel[y],
 [w]hich [w]as the [e]xtent of [e]verything [I] [w]an[t]ed
 at the [t]i[m]e. [L]eaving the [d]ouble [p]o[k]er
 [m]ach[i]nes a[f]ter i[m]m[e]d[i]ate[l]y [l]osing
 [f]ive [d]o[ll]ars, I [d]e[c]i[d]ed to [s]p[en]d the [l]a[s]t
 of my [c]a[s]h o[n] a[n] i[c]e [c]ream [c]one, then begin
 [r]ea[d]ing [Ph]i[i]pp[i]d[e]s' monog[r]a[ph].
 The i[c]e [c]r[ea]m ba[r]i[s]ta in[f]ormed me there
 were n[o] [c]o[n]es le[f]t, [w]hich [w]as
 di[s]a[p]pointing in the extr[e]m[e]. [F]eig[n]ing [n]o
 [d]i[s]a[p]p[oi]ntment, I or[d]ered t[wo] [s]c[oo]p[s] of
 the [c]a[pp]uccin[o] ge[l]at[o] and was
 [s]ub[s]e[qu]ent[l]y given a [s]p[oon] hal[f] the [s]ize of

my own [p]i[n]kly [f]i[n]ger, wh[i]ch [i]sn't a [p]arti[c]u[l]ar[l]y []arge [p]i[n]kly [f]i[n]ger, I've ne[v]er had my [p]i[n]kly [f]inger de[s][c]ribed [a]s [a][b][n]orma[l]ly []arge [b]y anyone, to the [b]e[s]t of my k[n]owledge, to [s][c]oo[p] out [b]oth [s][c]oo[p]s of i[c]e [c]ream from the [s]ur[p]risingl[y] [d][e]e[p] [c]u[p]. I [d]i[d]n't obj[e][c]t, in[s]t[e]ad fee[l]ing [c]urious[l]y []u[ck]y to [p]ay [s]even [d]o[l]lars for thi[s] i[c]e [c]ream [c]u[p], then wal[k]ing around to [f]i[n]d m[y][s]el[f] [q]uite [e]njoying [s]aid i[c]e [c]ream, the [e]nd-game of [s]aid i[c]e [c]ream of [c]our[s]e [b]eing that I ate the [][a][s]t [h][a]lf [s][c]oop e[ss]entia[l]ly [w]ith my [b]are [h][a]nds, [w]al[k]ing around [b]y m[y][s]elf, enjoying nothing more than [e]ating thi[s] i[c]e [c]r[ea]m with [b]oth [a]n [a][b][s]urdl[y] tin[y] [s]poo[n and al[s]o with my [b]are h[a]nds. [F]ina[l]ly, [a]fter washing the c[a]p puccin[o] ge[l]at[o] off my h[a]nds in the [F]oxwoods [r]e[s]t a[r]ea, I [s]at on a [p]ar[k] bench and o[p]ened u[p] my [K]in[d]le a[pp] to o[p]en u[p] [Ph]ili[pp][i][d]e's' mo[n]o[log]r[a]ph on the [f]i[n]al [s]o-[c]alled em[p]e[r]or of the [G]r[ee]k[s].

04—It was more or l[e][ss] f[r]om the [s][e]cond I began [r][ea][d]ing [Ph]i[l]i[pp][i][d]e's' [m]onog[r]a[ph] that I [f]ound [m]y[s]el[f] invete[r]atel[y] [d]i[s]ag[r]ee[ing] w[i]th h[i]s tem[p]o, [h]is [p]ers[p]ec[t]ive, [h]is verbiage, [h]is [t]e[m]p[er]a[m]ent, [a]s well [a]s his [m]ethod of [i]nter[p]r[et]i[n]g h[i]s[t]o[r]i[c]al [t]r[a]c[ts]. [T]o [m]e, in short, [t]o w[r]ite a [m]o[n]o[log]r[a]ph o[n] the Eleventh [C]on[s]tant[i]ne—[f]or no other r[ea]son than to in[c]e[ss]a[n]t[l]y de[n]igrate [s]aid [f]inal [C]on[s]tant[i]ne of He[l]en [s]e[m]ed to [b]e a[b]utting [p]e[re]-[b]rained. With all [d]ue re[s]p[ect] to

[M][i][s]ter [Ph][i][l][i][pp][i][d][e]s, I [f]ound his text
i[n] [m]any i[n][s]tan[c]es a[b]utting the
[p]ea-[b]rained. [Ph][i][l][i][pp][i][d][e]s [s][p]ared
[h]ar[d]l[y] a [s]enten[c]e in [f][i][l][i]ng i[n]
[p]otential [h]i[s]torical ga[p]s with [d]oubt, in
a[ss]uming that each [a]mbivalent hi[s]to[r]i[c]al
[a]ne[c]dote r[egar]d[ing] [C]on[s]t[an]tine should
veer [t]o the [i]nju[r]iou[s], that [a]nything
[a]ll[ea]t[or]y in the [b]a[s]i[l]e[u]s’[s] [l]i[f]e
should [b]e regarded as [f]ate i[f] [f]or[t]uitou[s] and his
[f]ault i[f] [l]e[ss] [s]o. If [C]on[s]tantine [l]o[s]t a
[m]ajor [b]attle in the [M]orea it was due to his [l]a[ck]
of [m]i[l]i[t]ary [p]rowe[ss], h[is] i[n]e[p]t[ite]ude and
[p]ea-[b]rained [c]hara[c]ter, yet i[f] [C]on[s]tantine
a[ch]ie[v]ed a [m]ode[s]t [v]i[ct]o[r]y at [C]o[r]inth it
should be [ch]o[ck]ed u[p] t[o] g[oo]d [f]ort[un]e, or to
a[n] e[n]e[m]y’s [b]a[f]fling [m]y[o]p[ia], or the
i[m]m[en]s[e] [b]ravery of his [s]o[ld]iers. Hi[s]to[r]i[c]al
[a]ne[c]dote a[ft]er hi[s]to[r]i[c]al ane[c]dote is
[p]re[s]ented by [Ph][i][l][i][pp][i][d][e]s, [ea]ch one
[a]nalyzed w[i]th th[i]s [f]ramewor[k] int[er]a[c]t.
[A]ft[er], [s]a[y], o[n]e hu[n]dred [p]ages of
[Ph][i][l][i][pp][i][d][e]s v[ee]r[ing] the [r]ea[d]er
toward the [s]a[m]e [c]o[n]c[lu]sion for each gap in
[C]o[n]s[ta]ntine’s [r]e[c]ord—and, it should be n[ot]ed
here, [P]a[ul]ai[o]go[s]’s wh[o]le [l]ife is
[e]ssentia[l]ly one [e]xtended ga[p]!—a[ft]er, [s]ay
o[n]e hu[n]dred [p]ages of [Ph][i][l][i][pp][i][d][e]s
[c]o[n]c[lu]d[ing] th[at] each histo[r]i[c]al ga[p] is an
i[r]re[p]roachable [d]ata [p]oint, on[c]e and for all
[p]roving the [p]ea-brained [c]ha[r]a[c]te[r] of the
la[s]t [G]r[ee]k em[p]e[r]or, as thi[s]
[g]l[a]p-[p]a[tt]ern-bia[s] con[t]inued [f]urther in[t]o
the mono[gra]ph I [b]egan to [c]o[n]s[i]d[er] the
[p]o[ss]i[b]i[li]t[y] that it was [p]erhap[s]

Ph[i]l[i]pp[i]d[e]s who [w]as the [o]ne
[s]u[cc]umbing to [b]or[d]erline [p]ea-[b]rained
notions.

05—Yet pu[sh] c[o]me to [sh][o]ve I [sh]ouldn't [c]laim
to [b]e [f]a[n][a]ti[c]al a[b]out the [n][a]rrative of the
[f]inal [f]r[ee] [C]onstant[i]ne, as I woul[d]n't exa[c]tly
[c]on[s]i[d]er my[s]el[f] the [f]i[r]st [p]e[r]s[on] to go
to bat, [s]o to [s]p[ea]k, [f]or the [f]inal [s]on of Helen.
It's [p]erh[a]p[s] true [th][a]t [th]ere's no [s]et of
[p]eo[p]le on the [f]a[c]e of our [p]lanet th[at] h[a]ve
de[s]i[p]ised auth[o]rity m[o]r[e [th]an [th]e
G[r]eek[s], [t]od[ay], [i]n the B[y]z[a]n[t]ine e[r]a
([s]o-[c]alled), [i]n [A]ncie[n]t Atti[c]a, or [w]he[r]ever
[o]ne [m]ight en[c]ounter a Gree[k], that [m]uch we'll
[c]o[n]fe[s]s! Even [th]e Or[tho]d[o]x
[c]o[n]c[e]ption of G[o]d is [e]vi[d]en[c]e of thi[s],
[P]e[r]s[on] [p]r[e]c[e]ding [B]e[i]ng, a Father who
ach[ie]ves [B]e[i]ng [o]nly [th]rough [th]e Act of relation
with His [s]o[le] [S]on, His [S]on [o]nly [th]rough [th]e
my[s]te[r]iou[s] un[i]on w[i]th a[n] u[n]a[pp]roachable
[S]p[i]r[it] a God who i[n] [E]s[s]e[n]c[e] will [n]e[ver]
[b]e k[n]own, E[n]ergi[e]s that will [b]e i[n]tera[c]ted
[w]ith in [w]a[y]s that [w]ill a[l]l [w]a[y]s e[l]ude
[c]o[m]muni[c]a[t]ion, the [r]eal [p]r[oo]f of the
G[r]eek[s] [l]oa[th]ing of au[th]o[r]ity [p]erh[a]p[s]
[l]a[y]s [i]n the fa[c]t they [a]do[p]ted the [l]itera[l]ist,
[a]uthori[t]a[t]ive [t]exts of the [S]emites, both
[l]i[te]ra[l]l[y] and f[i]gurative[l]y writing the
Go[s]pels of the [J]ewish [J]e[s]u[s], a[n]d the[n]
[t]ra[n]s[cr]i[ptu]red [s]c[r]i[ptu]re [i]n[t]o
e[s]s[ent]iall[y] [q]uan[t]um me[ch]ani[c]s w[i]th[i]n
ju[s]t a [f]ew short [c]enturi[e]s. The God who [r]ai[n]ed
[r]e[p]t[iti]les on [e]very [s]andal in the [N]ea[r [Ea]s]t
bec[a]me the [T]riad exi[s]ting onl[y] in a [s]t[ate] of

One and Ma[n][y] in [s]imul[t]an[ei]t[y], in [p]er[p]e[t]uit[y]. Of [c]our[s]e, I'm the fir[s]t to [s][p]ea[k] of m[y] [p][r][i]de in m[y] G[r]ee[k] [ch]a[r]a[c]ter—[I], much [l]i[ke] the E[l]eventh, [b][e]ing onl[y] of [f]ull-[b][l]ood on my [f]ather's s[i]de, wh[i]le [b][e]ing who[l]l[y] [b]ar[b]arian on [m]y [m]other's—that is, u[n][t]il I a[tt]e[n]d the Greek festival at my b[i][r]th ch[u][r]ch, at which I'm al[m]o[s]t i[m]m[e][d]i[ate]l[y] [s]earching [d]e[s]p[er]ate[l]y for any other [i]d[e]ntit[y] [I] [c]ould [p]o[ss]ib[ly] [c]laim!

o6—Yet [a]s ill-[a]dv[i]sed [a]s [I] [f]ound [P]hi[l]i[pp]i[d]e's [i]n[t]er[p]re[t]ations of h[i]s[t]ori[c]al a[n]e[c]dotes to b[e] with regard [t]o [C]on[s]tan[t]i[n]e's [c]hara[c]ter, th[e]se in[t]er[p]re[t]ations [d]i[d]n't [p]ar[t]icu[lar]l[y] o[f]fend m[e], as I'm [p]er[f]e[c]tly [c]a[p]a[b]le of [f]inding something to [b][e] [p][ea]-[b]rained without [b][e]ing o[ff]ended [b]y it. In ou[r] e[r]a it [s]eems alm[o]s[t] as th[ou]gh [p]eo[p]le have [l]o[s]t th[i]s ab[i]l[it]y, and they [f]eel as [th]ough any[th]ing [th]ey [th]in[k] is dumb [i]s [i]p[s]o [f]a[c]t[o] o[ff]en[s]ive—yet that [i]n [i]t[s]e[l]f, [i]n m[y] [ey]es at lea[s]t, is pea-[b]rained, although I'm [u]n[o][ff]ended [b]y it, as the world is com[p][o]sed e[ss]entially of b[oth] [s]tu[p]i[d]ity and [s]tu[p]i[d] th[ings]. No, wh[at] [s]tr[uc]k me as ex[c]e[e]d[ing]l[y] outl[an]d[i]sh [i]n [Ph]i[l]i[pp]i[d]e's [m]onogra[ph] [w]asn't his [p]er[s]i[s]tent [p]e[ss]i[m]ism [w]ith [r]egard to [C]on[s]tan[t]i[n]e's [c]hara[c]ter, it [w]as his ex[c]e[e]d[ing]ly [o]ne-n[o]te [d]e[p]i[c]tion of the [s][o]-[c]alled anti-u[n]ionists of [C]on[s]tanti[n]o[p]le, the [g]l[ou]p(s) of [G]r[ee]k s[p]ea[k]ers who o[pp]osed the i[d]ea

[th]at [th]e Or[th]o[d]ox [ch]ur[ch], as [a] [p]re[c]ond[i]t[i]on of [a][ss][i][s]t[a]n[c]e from the [s]o-[c]alled We[s]t, should [c]a[p]itu[ll]ate to the [C]atho[li]c [ch]ur[ch]; in the eyes of [Ph][i][l][i][pp][i]d[e]s all of th[e]se [s]o-[c]alled anti-unionists were [l]ittle [b]eyond [p]etty char[lat]ans and o[b]s[e]ssive [f]anatics. In the eyes of [Ph][i][l][i][pp][i]d[e]s, that [i]s, [i][f] [w]e [w]ere to [b]e as [l]ib[er]al in [f]i[ll]i[ng] the ga[p]s of [M]a[r]i[o]s's [p]r[or]se as [M]a[r]i[o]s [i]s l[i]b[er]al w[i]th the h[i]s[t]ori[c]al ane[c]dotes of [C]on[s]tan[t]ine, we might [s]ugge[s]t that Ph[i]l[i]pp[i]d[e]s' [s]ugge[s]ts the Ortho[d]ox [a]nti-unioni[s]ts, in their [a]ll[e]g[e]d [a]ll[e]g[i]ances with the [A]rab [a]nd the [T]ur[k]i[sh] [c]on[t]i[n]gents over the Fr[a]nki[sh] [a]nd the Venetian [c]on[t]i[n]gents, were [r]e[s]p[on]sible for d[r]a[g]g[ing] the [G]r[ee]k-[s]p[ea]k[ing] [w]orld in[t]o the O[r]i[e]nt, [o]n[c]e and [f]or all, [f]o[r] [f]ou[r] hundred years or [s]o, [g]ive or [t]a[k]e. Th[at] it was [p]erh[a]p[s] the [a]nti-[u]n[i]oni[s]t [p]arty, [i]n [i]t[s] [s]taunch [r]ef[er]ence to be[c]ome hono[r]a[r]y [C]atholi[c]s, in their [r]e[fer]ence to [f]o[r]get [w]hat the Eu[r]o[pe]an [w]orld [p]er[p]et[r]ated again[s]t the [G]r[ee]k-[s]p[ea]k[ing] [w]orld in Twelve Hund[r]ed and Four, [th]at [th]ey [c]aused the [f]inal [d]e[s]cent of the G[r]ee[k]-[s]p[ea]k[ing] world, its [f]inal [d]e[s]c[e]n[t] into the O[r]i[e]n[t], [s]itting on the [f]en[c]e as it [h]ad [f]or [h]und[reds] of years between the O[cc]id[e]n[t] and O[r]i[e]n[t], thi[s] [G]r[ee]k-[s]p[ea]k[ing] world that, [p]o[s]t-Alexan[d]er the [G]r[ee]k, had b[r]ushed shoul[d]ers with the O[r]i[e]n[t i]n o[n]ly i[n]c[r]easingly [c]o[m]p[lex] terms, [th]at it was [th]is [m]ove[m]ent [th]at ultimately [c]aused the

inevitable f[a]ll of the [C]ity, [th][a]t [s][a]ns [th]ese [s]o-[c]alled [f]anatic[s] [p]erha[p]s the Euro[p]ean [c]ontingents [c]ould have [s]aved the Gree[k]s [f]rom them[s]elves!

07—It's [n]ot [n]e[c]e[ss]ary to extra[p]olate to Marios' [d]egree to i[d]enti[f]y one [i]ntr[i]n[sic] a[s][p]e[c]t of th[i][s] [p]o[s]i[tion]: [th]e [f][a][c]t of [th]e [m][a]tter was [th]ese [r]el[i]gi[on]i[s]ts [r]edu[c]ed the [p]ro[b]a[b]l[i]i[t]y of Euro[p]e [i]ntervening, [i]p[s]o [f]a[c]t[o] [m]a[k]ing them lunatic[s], be[c]ause any[th]ing o[th]er [th]an Eu[r]o[p]e is [p]u[r]e luna[c]y. Yet the Euro[p]e[an] Dar[k] Ages were e[n]tirel[ly] ab[s]e[n]t from the Gr[ee][k]-[s]p[ea]k[ing] world just as the Euro[p]e[an] E[n]l[i]ghte[n]me[n]t was [s]ub[s]e[que]n[t]l[y] ab[s]e[n]t from the [G]r[ee][k]-[s]p[ea]k[ing] wo[r]ld at [l]arge and [v]i[c]e [v]e[r]s[a—in [f]a[c]t, the [G]r[ee][k]-[s]p[ea]king [w]orld and the Euro[p]e[an] [w]orld have in many [w]a[ys] al[w]a[ys] ex[i]s[te]d [i]n a [y]i[n]g and [y]a[n]g [m]a[n]ner r[a]ther th[a]n a [f]ather-[s]on [m]a[n]ner.

08—[B]ut there's n[o] [d]oubt that ip[s]o [f]a[c]t[o] e[qu]ating a[n] a[n]ti-[u]n[i]oni[s]t [c]ontin[ge]n[t] as [f]a[natic]al [s]im[p]ly [d]ue to their o[pp]osing the (argua[b]l[ly] e[qu]al[ly] [f]anatic[al] [p]o[l]i[c]y of the [P]a[p]a[c]y [s]ugge[s]ts that Ph[i]l[i]p[pi]d[e]s' bel[ie]ves Euro[p]e was the [o]nly h[ome] for the [G]r[e]eks. The obv[i]ou[s] [c]ounterar[g]u[m]ent [b]e[i]ng the [s]ub[s]e[que]n[t] Otto[m]an [e]ra, yet the [c]ou[n]t[er] [t]o the [c]ou[n]t[er] is e[qu]all[y] obv[i]ou[s]—as the [s]o-[c]alled Gree[k] e[m]an[c]ipation [m]ove[m]ent, in [h]i[n]d[s]i[gh]t, [h]as found [s]ub[s]e[que]n[t] ge[n]e[r]ations of

[G][r]ee[k]s as [s]ome a[m]al[g]am of hu[m]a[n] d[e]bt
 i[n][s]tru[m]ent and [s][e][c]ond [c]la[ss] Euro[p]ean.
 But [p]erha[p]s [M]a[r]jos [s]corns the
 [r]el[i]g[i]on[i][s]ts of his [r]a[c]e i[n] a [m]anner that
 i[n]tentionally [s]ugge[s]ts their European or[i]g[in]!
 [B]e[c]ause it would hard[ly] [b]e
 [p]o[li]t[i]c[a]l[ly] via[b]le for [M][i]s[ter]
 Ph[i]l[i]pp[i]d[e]s to [s]ugge[s]t that, [s]ay, a [S]yrian
 [M]oslem [p]o[p]u[la]tion was ‘f]anatical’ a[b]out their
 [s][p]iritual [b]e[l]ie[f]s? [W]e [w]ould h[a]ve to
 [c]on[s]ider th[at] un[c]outh. Y[e]t it [b]e[lg]s the
 [q]ue[st]ion: was [M][e]h[m]e[d] the [S][e][c]ond a
 ‘fanati[c]’ of Islam?—

09—[B]ut we should [b]e [c]lear on thi[s] [p]oint: [b]y
 the t[i]me of the [F]i[f]t[e]nth [C]entur[y] there
 exi[s]ted no [v]ia[b]le, geo[p]o[li]t[i]c[a]l a[v]enue for
 the [p]owers of Euro[p]e to [s]ave the [C]hr[i]st[i]an
 [G]ree[k]s [f]rom their [f]ate; the [G][r]ee[k][s],
 [r]egardle[ss] [o]f your [o]p[in]ion [o]n their
 ‘ill-edu[c]ated’ mon[k]s, [p]o[ss]e[ss]ed a fate [th]at was
 [th]oroughly [s]ealed! The Euro[p][ea]ns [i]n[i]tia[ly]
 [e]n[t]ered [L]evan[t]ine [p]o[li]t[i]c[al] [s] to ‘[s]ave’ the
 [Ea][s]tern [C]hr[i]st[i]an [e]m[p]ire that, [a]t th[at]
 [p]oint, [e]xi[s]ted a[l]l[m]o[s]t [e]x[c]l[u]sive[ly]
 di[p]l[om]ati[c]a[ly] [r][a]ther th[a]n
 [m]ilita[r]i[ly], and th[r]ough [j]i[had]-li[k]e
 [C]ru[s]ades th[e]se good Eu[r]o[p][ea]ns, [r][a]ther
 th[a]n a[s]si[s]t the [Ea][s]tern [C]hr[i]st[i]ans [i]n
 ex[p]e[d]iting their [g]l[ob]o[li]t[i]c[a]l aims,
 a[s]si[s]t[ed] their neighboring [C]a[l]i[ph]s and
 [S]ul[t]ans in [p]utting a[s]ide *their* [p]etty
 [d]i[f]ferences; these [c]ru[s][a]d[ing] Euro[p]eans
 were the [g]r[ea]te[s]t [a]s[s]et to [p]erh[a]p[s] the
 [g]r[ea]te[s]t Islami[c] [c]a[l]i[ph]ate [e]ver

a[ss][e]m[b]led, the[n] eve[n]tuall[y], a[f]ter a [f]ew [c]e[n]tur[ie]s of [b]i[ck]ering with the [G]ree[k]s [o]ver Anti[o][ch] while neigh[b]oring [C]a[l]i[ph]ates [c]on[s]o[l]i[d]a[te]d [g]a[ins], the [d]e[s]ce[n]d[an]ts of [s]aid Euro[p]eans [d]e[c]i[d]ed to [p]ut a[s]ide *their* [d]i[ff]eren[ces] with [s]aid [C]a[l]i[ph]s a[n]d [S]ulta[n]s a[n]d [s]a[ck]ed [C]on[s]t[an]tino[p]le it[s]el[f]!

10—[P]erha[p]s to [s]ome extent, we should [s]pe[c]ulate, the [m]o[d]ern Gree[k]s, [m]ore than [b]eing [d]e[s]cen[d]ed from a [s]o-*called* Ancie[n]t [A]the[n]ia[n] or a [B]yzantine [m]on[k], [a]re more [c]l[os]e[l]y re[l]ated to, o[r] mo[r]e a[cc]urately [i]dentif[i]ed [a]s, a [p]o[s]t-Ottoman [p]eo[p]le,[d]e[s]p[ite] the fa[c]t in the [W]e[s]t hardly any[o]ne I know of [w]ould [e]ver t[e]nd to [d]e[p]i[ct] [i]t that [w]ay, yet the Ottoman [w]orld, [w]hile beyond the [s]c[o]p[e] of th[i]s [i]nquiry, was at [l]ea[s]t to [s]ome [e]xtent a ‘mul[t]i[cu]ltural’ [e]m[p]ire, not [e]n[t]ire[l]y [d]i[ss]i[m]i[l]ar from [i]ts [B]yzan[t]ine [p]re[d]e[c]e[s]sor! We [s]p[ea]k of the [G]ree[k]s [t]o[day] and e[q]ua]te them wi[th] [th]e [p]h[i]lo[s]o[ph]i[c]al m[a]n-boy [l]ove of [S]o[c]rates, the ex[p]a[n]sive [i]m[pe]ria[l]i[s]m of A[l]exa[n]der a[n]d the [l]a[c]oni[c] [S]p[artans], o[r] i[f] we’r[e] ove[r]ly edu[c]ated [p]erha[p]s the m[y]th[i]c[a]l [f]i[g]ure of the E[l]eveth [C]on[s]tantine, or [e]ven th[e] [e]p[oc]h of Jus[t]i[n]ian o[r] [th]e O[r]thodox[y] of [G]re[g]o[r]y of [N]a[z]ian[z]us and the [D]e[s]ert Fathers, yet the [m]o[s]t [r]e[c]ent ‘c[u]lture’ [n]ative to the ‘i[n]depen[d]e[n]t’ [G]r[e]e[k]s was i[n]dub[ita]bly a[n] Otto[m]a[n] [c]u]lture.

11—While it re[m]ains un[m]e[n]tio[n]ed i[n] [P]h[i]l[i]pp[i]d[e]s' [m]o[n]ogra[ph], Con[s]tantine's own [n]e[ph]ews, [p]o[s]t-[f]all, were [r]e[n]amed [M]urad and [M]esih, appare[n]tly i[n]h[e]riting a [n]ew [r]e[l]i[g]ion, a[n]d [m]a[nn]ed Otto[m]a[n] fleets, [b]e[c]oming high-[r]an[k]ing [B]al[k]an [b]u[r]eau[crats]. [B]ut hi[s]tor[y], of [c]our[s]e, is [a]t lea[s]t [a]s [f]i[c]t[i]onal as the [q]u[o]te-un[q]u[o]te Great [N]ovels, i[f] [n]ot [s]i[gn]i[f]i[c]antl[y] more [f]a[b]ri[ca]ted. W[e] [s]p[ea]k of Hi[s]to[r]y as [i]f [i]t's [s]ome [s]ort of [f]a[c]tual [f]ield of i[n]q[ui]r[y] when, i[n] [d]e[fe]n[s]e to [M]i[s]t[er] [P]h[i]l[i]pp[i]d[e]s, it's almo[s]t en[t]irel[y] [p]o[p]u[la]ted [w]ith b[a]sele[ss] [s]p[ec]u[la]tion, [w]ild extra[p]o[la]tion, and outri[gh]t l[ie]s. There's nothing le[ss] [f]a[c]tual than a hi[s]tori[ca]l [m]onog[r]a[ph], and [p]erh[a]ps for thi[s] [r]eason hi[s]to[r]i[ca]l [m]ono[g]r[aph]s [f]a[s]cinate [m]e to extr[e]me de[g]r[ee]s. [M]ore and [m]ore [I] [f]i[n]d [m]y[s]el[f] [t]urning [t]o hi[s]to[r]i[ca]l [m]ono[g]r[aph]s as opposed to [G]r[eat] [N]ovels, or if I do [t]urn [t]o a [G]r[eat] [N]ovel it [a]ll [m]o[s]t [a]llways [m]i[m]i[c]s the [f]orm of the hi[s]tori[ca]l [m]ono[g]r[aph]. [W]e thin[k] [w]e [i]denti[f]y 'auto[b]io[g]r[aph]i[ca]l elements' in [th]is wor[k] or [th]at, yet [a]ll [g]r[eat] [au]to[b]io[g]r[aph]i[ca]l [e]l[em]ents are [a]ll [a]llmost [e]ntirel[y] [f]i[c]tional. [B]ut the[n] agai[n] what is auto[b]iogra[ph]y if not a [p]arti[c]ularl[y] [b]ia[s]ed [f]orm of hi[s]to[r]y, [b]ut then what h[i]s[t]or[y] [i]sn't [b]ia[s]ed in a [p]arti[c]ular [f]a[s]hion?

12—Now of [c]our[s]e we [c]ould [s]ay [th]at [th]i[s] [s]c[uff]le [r]egarding the [p]r[o]s[o]p[o] ver[s]u[s]

the ou[s]ia is [p]etty in the ext[r]eme, that it's [h]ardly [s]ometh[i]n[g] worth [p]er[i]sh[i]n[g] over, yet the [c]ourse of [h]uman [h][i]s[tory [i]s l[i]ttered w[i]th [c]ultures and [p]eo[p]les [p]erishing over the [p]ett[i]e[s]t of [i]ssues! The [f]ul[c]rum of the [i]ssue, I [s]u[pp]ose, [i]s what ex[i]s[ts] as the [p]enultimate [f]ir[s]t [c]ause: in the words of the [F][r]ench [p]hi[l]o[s]o[ph]er Gilles [D]e[l]euze, [d]oes 'P[o]l[i]t[i]c[s] [p][r][e]c[e]de b[e]ing'? Or [i]s [i]t the o[pp]os[i]te: does [b]e[ing] exi[s]t [e]ternall[y] and the [p]ro[s]o[p]o, the [p]er[s]on [s]o to [s]p[ea]k, [e]me[r]ge the[r]eafte[r]? [I]s [i]t [m]ove[m]ent that [b]eg[i]ns th[i]ngs, are we [f]rom the out[s]et [e]n [m]e[dio, or is [s]ta[s]i[s] [p]re-e[m]ine[n]t, with [m]ove[m]e[n]t onl[y] [e]m[er]ging [a]f[te]r the [f]a[ct]?

13—Th[i]s was the [i]ssue at hand betw[ee]n the [P]a[p]a[c]y a[n]d the [s]o-called a[n]ti-un[i]on[i]s[ts], [s]o while on it[s] [s]urfa[c]e it [s]eemed li[k]e [a]n [i]ssue of trivia[l]it[y] and [p]etty bi[ck]ering, [p]hilo[s]o[ph]i[c]a[l]it[y] it [w]as [a]n [i]ssue of how [d]o [w]e un[d]er[s]tand the [w]orld [p]r[ima]r[i]l[y]? The G[r]eeks [s]tood on [o]ne [s]ide, [a]nd the [P]a[p]a[c]y the other! [F]or m[y] [p]art, there are t[i]mes when [I] [f]i[n]d m[y]s[e]l[f] dr[i]ving on a [s]ol[i]tary [i]n[t]er[s]tate h[i]ghway when [I] loo[k] u[p] to the [s]k[y] and [t]a[k]e n[o]te of the [c]l[ou]ds that in[c]rea[s]ingl[y] [l]oo[k] alm[o]st [p]ainted on, as I i[n]c[re]ase i[n] age th[e]se [c]l[ou]ds [I] [s]ee i[n] the [s]k[y] [s]ee[m] i[n]c[re]a[s]ingl[y] art[i]f[i]cial, it [s]tri[k]es m[e] [a]s in[c]r[e]a[s]ingl[y] [a]b[s]urd to [c]on[s]i[d]er the [c]l[ou]ds [I] [s]ee in the [s]k[y] as [c]ompr[i]sing the ph[y]s[i]c[al] [w]orld [i]nterac[t] [w]ith every[d]ay.

14—Yet [Ph][i][l][i][pp][i][d][e]s’ monogra[ph] is [w]ith[ou]t a d[ou]bt a [w]orthy a[dd][i]t[i]on to the [c]or[p]u[s] ana[l]y[zi]ng the [l][i][f]e of the E[l]eventh [C]on[s]tantine. The final em[p]e[r]or of the G[r][ee][k]s, and there’s yet to [b][e] a[n]other em[p]e[r]or [s]in[c]e [C]on[s]tant[i]ne, yet there’s [n]ext to [n]o [s]our[c]e material a[b]out his [c]hara[c]ter! The [g]reate[s]t w[ea]kne[ss] of [M][i][s]ter [Ph][i][l][i][pp][i][d][e]s’ [m]o[n][o]g[r]a[ph] is [p]erh[a]p[s] ju[s]t th[at], th[at] he’s [f]or[c]ed to extr[a]p[ol]a[te] where his [s]our[c]es rem[ai]n [s][i]lent, and what o[th]er choi[c]e is [th]ere, [r][e]a[l]l[y]?—be[s]ides [g]l[or]e[gl]a[r]iou[s][l]y [f]i[l]ling u[p] [s]p[ac]e where your [s]our[c]es [r]efuse to [s]p[ea]k?

15—Of [c]ourse we should note [p]art of the [m]y[s]t[ri]c[que] [s]urrounding [C]on[s]tan[t]i[n]e, a [l]a[r]ge [p]a[rt] of what’s a[l]lowed him to [b]e[c]ome [m]ore [m]y[th] [th]an [m]onogra[ph] [i]s that h[is] [p]h[y]s[i]cal [b]ody, to the [b]est of anyone’s k[n]owledge, was [n]ever [i]denti[f]i[ed]. There were, [p]erh[a]p[s] un[s]urp[r]i[s]ingly, [r]umors th[at] h[is] [h]e[ad] was [s]ent to the [S]ultan, that he was [i]denti[f]i[ed] [b]y his [r]oyal [s]o[ck][s] a[m]ong a [s]ea of G[r][ee][k] and Italian [c]or[p]s[es], [b]u[t] [n]o[th]ing of the [s]o[r]t has e[v]er [b]een [v]erif[i]ed. In [m]a[n]y ways, [I] thought to [m]y[sel]f wh[i]le [r][ea]d[ing] [Ph][i][l][i][pp][i][d][e]s’ [m]onogr[aph], [i]t was a [f]i[t]t[ing] end, a [p]i[t]t[i]f[ul] e[n]d, a[n] a[n]o[n]ymou[s] e[n]d, yet a [f]i[t]t[ing] o[n]e [n]o[n]ethele[ss]!

16—To [d]ie ch[i]ldle[ss] [a]t the [b]o[tt]om of [a]n an[o]ny[m]ou[s] [m]ound of cor[p]s[es], there are

in[d]u[b]ita[b]ly [w]or[s]e [w]ays to go, even [n]ow,
 [n]ever [m][i]nd in the t[i]me of [P]a[l]ai[o][l][o]g[o][s].
 [P]a[l]ai[o][l][o]g[o][s], i[f] [n]othing el[s]e, was
 [a][s]tute e[n]ou[gh] to recog[n]ize [th]at [th]e end
 [h]ad [f]i[n]ally [a][pp]roached, both [f]or [h]im[s]el[f]
 and [f]or [h]is [s]ubje[c]ts, and [h]e a[c]ted
 a[cc]ordingly. Even [p]rior to the o[ff][i]c[i]a[l] [f]a[l],
 [p]erha[p] [s] we [c]an [s]urmise [C]on[s][t]an[t]ine was
 [a][s]tute e[n]ough to re[c]ognize, e[v]en i[f] [w]e
 [a][ss]ume he [w]as ‘[s]trong’ e[n]ou[gh] to
 [c]on[v]in[c]e [s]aid ‘[f]anatic[s]’ to [c]a[p]itulate to
 the [P]a[l]a[c]y—would the [C]ity’s [f]ate h[a]ve
 di[ff]ered?

17—And [s]o it was—[e][l]e[v]en hundred years is
 [e]nou[gh]; e[l]e[v]en Con[s]tantines, in m[y] e[ye]s, is
 [p]ro[b]a[b]ly [s]u[ff]icient? Now a young Tur[k]ish
 [s]ultan, [p]o[ss]i[b]ly [G]ree[k] on his mother’s [s]ide,
 too[k] the [p]la[c]e of the la[s]t [G][r]ee[k] em[p]e[r]or,
 [c]onfi[r]med [S]e[r]b[i]an on the [s]a[m]e [s]ide. In
 [c]o[n]c[lu]sion, I be[l]ieve one [s][t]a[t]ement we [c]an
 [a]ll [a]gree o[n] as it re[l]a[tes] to [C]o[n][s][t]an[t]ine
 the E[l]eventh, the [l]a[s]t [s]on of He[l]e[n], the
 pe[n]ul[t]imate [g]a[s]p of Byz[a]ntium, is [th]at
 [th]i[s] [m]odern [n]otion of the [f]u[n]eral is
 [c]ata[s]tro[ph]i[c]all[y] [m]i[s]g[uid]ed, that it [m]ay
 [e]ven b[e] [c]r[i]m[in]al. It wasn’t [l]ong a[g]o that I
 was [m]o[r]e o[r] [l]e[ss] [f]o[r] [c]e[d] [t]o a[tt]e[n]d the
 [f]uneral of a [c]l[os]e [f]ri[e]n[d], yet the
 [m]o[m]e[n]t I e[n]ter[ed] the [r]e[c]eption [r]oom and
 [c]aught [e]ye of [m][y] old fri[e]nd d[ea]d and thi[ck]ly
 [m]a[de] up, [I] knew [I]’d [m]a[de] a [g]r[a]ve
 [m]ist[a]k[e], and I vowed, [s]i[t]t[ing] [i]n the
 un[c]om[fo]rta[b]l[e] [b]l[a]ck [f]old out chair,
 [m]i[n]d[le]ssl[y] [g]azing at the [c]or[p]s[e] of thi[s]

[f]riend, thi[s] [f]riend I u[s]ed to [p]i[ck] u[p] a[f]ter wor[k] to [g]o out [f]or i[c]le [c]r[ea]m, [ei]ther at New[p]ort [C]r[ea]mer[y], or a [v]enue [w]here [w]e [c]ould [g]et a [c]u[p] of the bullshit [v]egan [F][r][o]y[o] e[v]er[y]one li[k]ed in that [e][p]o[ch], thi[s] [f][r]iend I u[s]ed to [l]au[gh] hy[s]teri[c]a[lly] [w]ith a[f]ter [O]ne AM at N[i]c]e Sl[i]c]e over [p]izza, the [f][r]iend I u[s]ed to [d]i[s][c]u[ss] [g]irl[f]r[i]ends and [p]orno[g]r[a]p[h]i[c] i[m]ages w[i]th at ext[r][e]me[l]y Ita[l]ian [l]ounges on [F]e[d]e[r]al Hill, [a]s I gazed [a]t his cor[p]s[e] I [v]owed [t]o ne[v]er [a][tt]e[n]d a [f]une[r]al [a]gai[n]. I [r]eal[i]z[ed] [th]at [th]e [a][tt]e[n]d[an]c]e of [f]une[r]als is [a][l]ways i[l]l-a[d]v[i]s]ed, and the [a]tt[en]d[an]c]e of one [f]o[r] a [m]an who [d]i[ed] bef[o]r[e] thirty [f]i[v]e is [a]lw[ay]s a gr[a]ve [m]i[s]t[a]ke.

18—In [th]e [e]ra of [th]e [E]leventh there was [s]till a [m]o[d]i[c]um of re[s]p[e]c[t in the fa[c]e of [d]eath; a [m]an of [C]on[s]tan[t]i[n]e’s [s]tature [c]ould [d]i[s]appear on [a] [b]attlefield never to [b]e [s]ee[n] [a]gain, to [d]ie with [s]ome [m]o[d]e[s]t [s]em[b]l[an]c]e [o]f h[o]nor. Now y[ou] [s]it in a r[oo]m on a [p]oorly [c]on[s]tru[c]ted fold-out chair, and you [l]i[s]ten to [p]le[as]u[r]e [s]p[ea]k of which g[a]s [s]tations h[a]v[e m[o]v[ed] to which [a]v[en]ue[s], you [s]t[ar]e at your [f]riend’s [c]orp[s]e and re[c]all [e]n[t]irely non[s]e[n]s[i]c]al [e]ve[n]ts, you go out to [e]at a[f]ter you [s]t[ar]e at this [c]orp[s]e [f]or a while, you [d]e[c]ide to [e]at [a]t a[n] It[alia]n [r]e[s]tau[r]ant after [c]o[l]l[e]c[tive[l]y [s]taring at a [d]eath bod[y], and you all eat ch[i]ck[en] [p]arm[i]giana, and the [p]ro[f]ound [p]e[c]ulia[r]ities of [d]eath [r]emain una[cc]ounted [f]or. Now [y]ou g[o] out and [y]ou [d]rin[k]

[c][o][p]iou[s] v[o][d][k]a at a [p]la[c]e [c]alled [R][o][cc]o's in the [f]a[c]e of [d]eath; now in the [f]a[c]e of [d]eath you [g]o to a ge[n]tleme[n]'s ve[n]ue and you [d]e[f]ecate in their [d]i[s][g]u[s]ting [b]athroom, [b]e[c]ause there's no honor le[f]t in the [a][c]t of [d]ying anymore, and [f]unerals should [a]t [a]ll [c]o[s]ts [b]e [a]voi[d]ed. Ult[i]mate[l]y, [i]n[s][c]rut[a]ble m[y]ths are the [o]n[l]y [a][pp][r]o[p]r[i]ate [r]e[t]o[r]ts [t]o the [c]on[t]ou[r]s of a human [l]ife.

3.3

Prelude—After a decade plus of ceaseless correspondence via a postmaster of dubious origin, Mr Pynchon finally agreed to reveal his face to me, but only if I agreed to read all 58 sprawling hymns of Symeon's The Divine Eros to him, aloud! On the afternoon of November 30, 2021 I prepared for the task, sitting on a nondescript park bench with the beautiful old Anglo-Saxon man on 9th and West 44th—but first I said,

01—[A][pp][r]oaching the [a]uto[m]atic ent[r]an[c]e of [F][r]e[sh] [Sh]ore's on [M]i[n]e[r]al [S][p]r[ing] Ave[n]ue, [h]o[p]ing with all of my [h]ea[r]t [th]at [th]eir [p]re[p]ared [f]oods were in the ball[p]a[r][k] of what [m]y [m]om gene[r]all[y] [d]i[s][c]overs at [D]ave's [S]u[p]er[m]ar[k]et, I gl[a]n[c]ed a[c]ro[ss] the [s]t[r]e[et] [a]nd [s]aw the old buil[d]ing of [K]en Wo[k] Chin[e]s[e] [C]ui[s][i]ne hal[f]way [t]orn [d]ow[n], and I [t]ook out my [ph]o[n]e and [m]ade a [b]rie[f] [n]o[te] o[n] the [i]nde[f]atiga[b]le [i]m[p]er[m]a[n]e[n]c]e that re[m]ai[n[s] [s]o [p]erv[a]s[i]ve [a]ll [a]round u[s], as [I] [d]o each t[i]me a buil[d]ing [I] felt [s]ome [s]ort of [n]on[s]en[s]i[c]al [c]o[n]n[e]c[t]i]on w[i]th on Mi[n]e[r]al [S]p[ring] Ave[n]ue gets k[n]o[ck]ed [d]own.

02—[n] a[n]y [c]a[s]e, it was [A]ugu[s]t [f]ir[s]t of thi[s] year that [I] [f]elt as though [I] was [r]a[p]id[l]y [a][pp][r][o]aching the end of my [s][o]-[c]alled [r][o][p]e i[n] a[n] [o]ver [d]e[c]ade-[l]ong [p][l]u[s] [d][i][ss][i][p]ation [p]ro[c]e[ss], the f[a][c]t of the [m][a]tter was my [d][i][s][s][i][p]ation had exten[d]ed [i]ts [p]rime in a [w]ay that [w]as at on[c]e [m]il[d][l]y im[p]re[ss]ive, yet [s]i[m]ultaneou[s][l]y [s]evere[l]y [d]e[p]re[ss]ing. [P]erh[a]p[s] with th[at] b[e]ing the [c]a[s]e, it was on the [n]ight of Augu[s]t [f]ir[s]t, the [s]e[c]ond to la[s]t [n]i[gh]t of m[y] thirty-[f]i[f]th year, that I ex[p]e[r]i[en]c[ed] a [d][r]e[am] [s][e][q]uen[c]e [w]here I [w]as [s]u[s]p[en]d[ed] in air [a]bove [a] [d]e[s]o[l]ate [p][l]ain where a [s]k[y][s][c]r[a]p[er]-l[i]k[e] tall [b]uilding [c]om[p]r[i]sed [s]ole[l]y of mirrors [s]at in the [b]r[i]gh[t] [s]un[l]i[gh]t, where a [p]ortion of [s]aid to [p] [c]orner [r]e[f]le[c]ted [s]aid [s]un[l]ight in a vio[l]e[n]t [f]ashio[n], and I [f]ound my[s]el[f] [l]i[f]ted to [s]ai[d] [s]e[ct]ion where a voice [I] i[denti]f[i]ed with [G]r[e]g[o]ry of Na[z]ian[z]us [s]poke to [m][e] [m]e[l]i[f]l[uou][s][l]y of the [f]ut[ur]e of e[ph]e[m]eral things.

03—[B]ut [p]erh[a]p[s] we should [p]ose a [s][u]b[s]e[qu]e[n]t [q]ue[st]ion: while there are a l[i]ta[n]y of [i]n[s]tan[c]es of [n]ove[l]i[s]ts a[tt]em[p]t[ing] to a[p]e the [s]tyl[i]s[t]ic [i]d[i]o[s]yn[c]ra[s]i[es] of Homer's O[d]y[ss]e[y], while there's [s]eem[ing]l[y] a[n] e[n]d[l]e[ss] [l]ine of E[n]g[l]ish-[s]p[ea]k[er]s a[n]d Eur[o]-adja[c]ent f[o]k[s] who've sh[a]me[l]e[ss]l[y] [a]p[er]ed the [A]thenian [b]a[b]oons [o]f the Anti[q]ue er[a] without [p]ause!—are [th]ere any [th]at we [c]a[n] [th]in[k] of [th]at h[a]ve [m]i[m]i[ck]ed the [m][a]nne[r]i[s]t

[q]uir[k]s of The Divine E[r]os? Be[c]ause it
[r]e[c]entl[y] [s]t[r]u[ck] m[e] in [r][e]-[r][ea]ding
[S]y[m]e[on]’s [c]ent[r]al [w]or[k] that in [m]a[n]y
[w]ays it [r]e[ads] li[k]e an e[p]i[c] [p]oem [c]um
[p]o[s]t[m]o[d]ern [n]o[vel]?

04—After all, it was [n][o]ne [o][th]er [th]an [th]e
[n][o]table p[o][s]t[m]o[d]ern [n]o[ve]l[i]s[t] J[o]hn
H[a]w[k]es who [s]aid [s]o [s]ternl[y], ‘I began to w[r]ite
fi[c]t[i]o[n] on the a[ss]u[m]p[t]i[o]n [th]at [th]e t[r]ue
e[n]em[ie]s of the [n]ovel were plot, [c]hara[c]ter,
[s]etting, and th[e]me.’ And [i]n th[i]s way the
[s]p[r]aw[ling], [p]o[l]i[t]i[c]a[l]l[y]-[m]e[te]red,
[s]p[i]r[it]ual [v]er[s]es of [S]y[m]e[on] t[r]a[ck] the
[c]o[n]c[e]p[t]ual Haw[k]ian [n]o[ve]l to the [N]th
deg[r]ee, or [p]erha[p]s [v]i[c]e [v]er[s]a! Should w[e]
[p]erha[p]s [e]v[en] [p]ose the [q]ue[s]tion: [H]ow
a[c]quainted was [H]aw[k]e[s]’ w[i]th the [B]y[zantine
mon[k] in the [e]ra of [s]a[i]d [q]uote? We should
[p]erha[p]s [n]ote [H]aw[k]e[s] was [t]o a[n] ex[t]e[n]t a
di[s]c[i]p[le] of [N]a[b]o[k]ov, who, [i]n a[dd]i[t]i[o]n to
[p]e[n]ning a [f]ew [n]ovels [p]o[s]t[m]o[d]ernl[y]
[p]ro[du]cing int[o] the [d]o’s and [d]o[n]’ts of
[s]e[d]u[cing] un[d]e[r[a]ge [f]e[m]a]les, was [r]ai[s]ed
[i]n a [R]uss[i]an [m]i[l]i[ta]r[y] [s]t[i]l[l] pr[e]-[S]oviet,
[s]o to [s]ay a[n] e[ss]e[n]tia[l]l[y] Orthodox
[m]i[l]i[ta]r[y].

05—The [m]o[d]ern n[ov]el, wh[i]ch [i]n ou[r] [e]r[a] is
[e]ss[ent]ia[l]l[y] the po[s]t[m]o[d]ern n[ov]el,
be[c]ause it [s]eems [s]er[i]ous [m]o[d]ern [n]o[ve]ls
[n]o [l]onger exi[s]t, [o]n[l]y [s]p[u]r[i]ou[s]
[c]o[m]mercia[l] n[ov]els th[at] [p]erh[a]p[s] a[p]e [o]ld
[m]o[d]ern [n]o[ve]ls ([p]oorly); [n]o, [t]o[d]ay, [t]o
[th]e [e]x[t]e[n]t [th]e [s]er[i]ou[s] [n]o[ve]l [s]t[i]l[l]

[e]x[i]s[ts] out[s]ide of, [s]ay, the[s]i[s] ad[v]iso[r]y
 [b]oards, all [s]e[r]iou[s] [n]o[v]els are [n]ow
 e[ss]entia[l]ly [p]o[s]t[m]o[d]ern [n]o[v]els, and with
 that [b]e[ing] the [r][e]a[l]it[y] [I] [s]u[pp]ose [I]'ll
 [r]efer to the [p]o[s]t[m]o[d]ern [n]o[v]el as ju[s]t the
 [m]o[d]ern [n]o[v]el—as there are [n]o [m]o[d]ern
 [n]o[v]els any[m]ore, ju[s]t [p]o[s]t[m]o[d]ern, [s]o the
 [p]o[s]t[m]o[d]ern, [f]or [m]y[s]el[f] and [m]y [p]eers,
 i[s] i[p]s[o] [f]act[o] the [m]o[d]ern. The
 [m]o[d]ern [n]o[v]el, to Haw[k]es' [c]re[d]it, [n]o
 longer re[qu]ires any[th]ing of [n]a[r]rative, of
 [ch]a[r]a[c]ter, of [s]etting, of [th]eme; i[n] [f]a[c]t,
 eve[n] i[n]dulging i[n] [s]uch a[n]ti[qu]ated
 a[tt]ri[b]utes is [t]y[p]i[c]ally a [s]ign of [p]oor
 [t]a[s]te! [F]or my[s]el[f], whe[n] a[n]d [i]f, wh[i]ch
 i[s] hardly ever, I [b]egin a no[v]el with a [f]e[r]v[er]ent
 u[r]ge [t]o [t]ell me a [s]tory [I]'ll p[ro]a[c]e the [i]tem
 [b]a[ck] [d]own imm[e]d[i]ate[l]y, at [l]ea[s]t
 [s]omewhat [d]i[s]gu[s]ted a[t] i[ts] [b]r[an]zen
 [n]a[r]rat[i]ve i[n]c[li]n[ati]ons.

o6—[S]yme[on]'s E[r]o[s], [o]n the [o]ther hand, while
 i[n]dulgi[n]g i[n] [b]om[b]a[s]tic [d]ia[l]ogues, while
 tea[r]ing it[s]elf a[part] in a [p]er[p]etua[l]ly
 a[pp]ro[p]riate [f]a[sh]ion—[p]erh[a]p[s] the
 [s]o-caled [r]e[fr]ain of [S]y[m]eon's wor[k] is this
 v[e]r[y] t[e]a[r]ing a[part]—is e[ss]entially a
 [p]o[s]t[m]o[d]ern [e]p[i]c [p]oem, wh[i]ch i[f] we
 [c]o[n]s[i]d[er] the [m]any a[tt]em[p]ts [t]o [t]urn the
 e[p]ic [p]oems of H[er]m[es] into the [m]o[d]ern
 n[ov]els of, [s]ay, [G]o[go]l or Joy[c]e, then it
 al[m]o[s]t g[oes] without [s]ay[ing] that [S]y[m]e[on]'s
 e[p]ic [p]oem is alrea[d]y a [p]o[s]t[m]o[d]ern
 [n]o[v]el in [m]a[n]y w[ay]s, as the a[dd]i[c]tion to
 [p]ure [p]ro[s]e of the [n]o[v]el, the a[dd]i[c]tion [t]o

the [n][o]n-[m][e][t][r][i][c]al [m][e]thods of [p]la[c]ing words in [c]on[c]e[p]tual or[d]er, is [p]erha[p]s another lu[r]id [q]ui[r][k] of the [n]ovel that would [b]e [b]etter off [s]et to the [s]ide!

o7—Of [c]ourse the [b]eauty of the [D]ivine Er[o]s, of the [s][o]-[c]alled [k]onta[k]ion [f]orm (of which [b][o]th [S]yme[o]n and Na[z]ian[z]us are e[ss]ential[l]y [b]oo[k]-e[n]ds [t]o, i[f] not e[n][t]ire[l]y i[n][d]ulgent i[n]) [i]s that [i]t [m][i][m][i]c[s] the [m]etaph[y]s[i]c[s] of th[e]se [B][y]zant[i]nes, it[s]elf of [c]ourse [b]e[ing] a poem a[n]d a[n] e[ss]ay and a [s]tory! The [d][i]gre[ss][i]ve h[y]mns of the [D]i[v]i[n]e E[r]os [m]u[s]t [b]e all th[r][ee] in [s][i][m]ul[t]aneit[y], [v]er[s]e[s] and [s]t[ro]p[ies] and e[ss]ays, [b]e[c]ause if they’re ju[s]t [v]er[s]e[s] or ju[s]t e[ss]ays or ju[s]t [s]t[ro]p[ies]—n[o], that [s]imp[l]y [w]o[n]’t [w]or[k] at all! To de[s]c[r]ibe a [s]e[l]e[c]t hymn as [a] [v]er[s]e, or as [a] [s]t[ro]p[er], o[r] as [a][n] [e]s[s]ay, i[n][s]tead of all th[r][ee] [s]i[m]ultaneou[s]l[y], yet not [a]s [a]n a[m]algam but i[n][s]tead as a[n] i[n][d]i[v]idual e[ss]ay, a[n] i[n][d]i[v]idual [v]er[s]e, a[n] i[n][d]i[v]idual [s]t[ro]p[er] i[n] the [s]ame [b]r[ea]th, t[o] [d]o that would almo[s]t [b]e he[r]e[tical [i]n [i]t[s]e]lf.

o8—Wh[e]reas D[e]s[s]c[ar]tes noted, ‘I [th]in[k] [th]ere[f]ore I am,’ [A]th[a]n[a]s[iu]s [s]aid, ‘Has the [F]ather [e]ver [e]xi[s]ted w[i]thout H[i]s [S]on?’ The [m]o[s]t i[m]p[or]tant a[s]p[ect] of the [D]ivine Ero[s], what [m]a[k]es them e[ss]entia[l]ly nove[l]l[i]stic in [p]erha[p]s the [p]o[s]t[m]o[d]ern [s]en[s]e of the word, is [th]at [th]ey’re at on[c]e e[ss]ays a[n]d [v]er[s]es a[n]d [s]tories [i]ndi[v]idually, but they’re [n]on-[a]l[g]a[m]o[s]! The Ero[s] is [a][ll] of them

at the [s]ame time, but [a][l][s]o each [o]ne of them [i]n[d][i]v[ia]du[al][y] as [w][e]ll; [w]h[e]reas [D][e]s[c]artes [n]oted, ‘I [th]in[k] [th]erefore I am,’ the [k][o]nta[k]i[o]n is [o]n[ly] a[n] [e]ss[ay] [b]e[ca]use it’s a [p]o[em], but it’s [o]n[ly] a [p]o[em] [b]e[ca]use it’s a [s]tory, and [s]o o[n] and [s]o o[n]—

09—Haw[k]es [s]aid, ‘I began to write fi[c]ti[on] on the a[ss]ump[ti]o[n] [th]at [th]e true e[n]emies of the [n]ovel were plot, [c]hara[c]ter, [s]etting, and theme,’ while [A]th[a]n[a]s[i]u[s] [s]aid, ‘[H]as the Father [e]ver [e]x[i]s[te]d w[i]thout [H]is [S]on?’ Is The Divine Er[o]s of [S]y[m]e[on] the [N]ew Theo[lo]gian a [p]o[st]m[od]ern e[p]ic [p]o[em] a[n]d a[s] s[uch] al[s]o the [p]o[st]m[od]ern [n]ovel [p]ar[ex]c[e]ll[en]c[e]? [P]erha[p]s we should i[n]q[ui]re [f]u[r]ther i[n]t[er]m[s] ‘[p]o[st]m[od]ern,’ [h]owever, name[ly] as to [h]ow exa[c]t[ly] it’s [s]aid to [d]i[ff]er [f]rom the te[r]m ‘mo[d]e[r]n’? One of the [m]ore [m]o[d]ern [n]otions of ou[r] e[r]a, [i]n th[i]s [i]n[s]tan[c]e I’m [s]peaking of [m]o[d]ern as [n]o[n-]p[ost]m[od]ern, whereas [p]r[e]v[i]ou[s][ly] ([p]erha[p]s [f]o[olish][ly]) I used [m]o[d]ern as a [s]y[n]o[n]y[m] [f]or [p]o[st]m[od]ern, [i]s th[i]s [c]o[n]c[e]p[ti]o[n] of The [B]ig [B]ang, which has ach[ie]ved j[i]had-li[k]e [p]o[p]u[la]r[i]ty [i]n ou[r] e[r]a. [P]erha[p]s the [m]o[st] [m]o[d]ern [n]otion [o]f [a]ll, if we’re [a]t[te]m[pt]ing [t]o i[n]q[ui]re about the [m]o[d]ern-~~p~~o[st]m[od]ern [d]iv[i]de, [i]s th[i]s [n]otion, which has ach[ie]ved a j[i]had-~~l~~ike be[lie]f [s]y[s]tem a[r]ound it, of the [B]ig [B]ang.

10—[N]ow, [p]er[s]o[n]a[lly], I'm [n]ot exact[lly] a [p]r[o]p[er] of this [n]otion, [p]ri[m]a[r]i[lly] be[c]ause it [s]trik[es] [m]e as id[i]oti[c], with all [d]ue [r]e[s]p[ect] [t]o the [s]cien[t]i[s]ts who [d]evelo[p]ed [i]t, [i]t [s]trik[es] me as an i[d]ea that's [a]ttem[p]ting [t]o im[p]rove [u]p[on] [a] [p]r[e]v[i]ou[s] notion (God), [b]ut in [p]ra[c]t[i]c[e] [i]s [t]a[k]ing the [i]d[i]o[c]y of [s]aid [p]r[e]v[i]ou[s] notion, [b]lind[lly] [b]e[l]iev[ing] in God, and [m]a[k]ing [i]t [s]omehow [m]ore [i]d[i]oti[c]. [Th]ere's an i[d]ea [th]at [th]ere was no[th]i[ng], [th]en [s]ome[th]i[ng] o[cc]urred, and now [th]ings are o[cc]u[r]ring i[n] a[n] outwa[r]d f[a]shion [a]t i[n]c[re]a[s]ing [s]p[ee]ds. [Th]ere's an idea [th]at our [s]en[s]or[y] f[a]c[ult]ie[s], which are una[b]le to [a]c[c]u[r]ate[lly] o[ff]iciate [f]ee[l]ings at a [b]ar a[f]ter th[r][ee] [b]e[er]s, are somehow [c]apa[b]le of ta[k]ing [c]lues [f]r[om] [b]ill[i]ons of [y]ears ago and [s]omehow em[p]i[r]i[c]a[lly] [p]o[s]tu[l]ating what o[cc]urred [b]ill[i]ons of [y]ears [a]go, tr[i]ll[i]ons of miles [a]way. [B]ut thi[s] i[d]ea of the [B]i[g] [B]ang [i]s more [i]n line with, [s]ay, [D]e[s]cartes, than, [s]ay, [A]th[a]n[a]s[i]u[s]. It's a[n] i[d]ea [th]at's [e]ss[ential]l[y] a[n]t[hi]t[h]e[tical] [t]o the i[d]ea that [a] [f]ather on[lly] [a]ch[ie]ves b[e]ing through his [s]on, [th]at [th]e [f]ather and [s]on, while ex[i]s[ti]ng [i]n[d]ep[en]d[ent]ly of one [a]n[other], onl[y] [a]ch[ie]ve [b]e[ing] [b]e[cause] of one a[n]other, [th]at [w]i[th]out [o]ne a[n]other th[ey], in many w[ay]s, [c]lea[s]e to exi[s]t.

11—It's onl[y] [b]een of [l]ate that [I]ve [f]ound m[y]s[e]l[f] [c]r[av]ing the [c]l[as]sic [c]o[ok]ies and [c]r[eam] [f]l[av]or, and it's [b]een i[c]e [c]ream in parti[cu]lar th[at] h[as] [s]t[r]u[ck] my [c]r[av]ings

a[c]ute[l]y. In ou[r] e[r]a, [n]ow I [n]eed mo[r]e o[r] [l]e[ss] at [l]ea[s]t one [n]ight of i[n]dulging i[n] i[c]e [c]ream per [w]ee[k]. Yet at the [s]ame t[i]me, a[l]ong[s][i]de thi[s] pe[c]u[l]iar [c][r]aving for [c]oo[k]ies and [c][r]eam, [I]’ve [f]ound m[y][s]el[f] be[n]ding to a[n] e[q]ua[l]l[y] a[c]ute urge to try [s]omething new—hard[l]y [s]ati[s][f]ied with this [c]oo[k]ies and [c][r]eam [c][r]aving, de[s]pite the [f]a[c]t thi[s] [c]oo[k]ies and [c][r]eam [c][r]a[v]ing mo[r]e o[r] [l]e[ss] ju[s]t [c]ame o[v]er me, [I] o[f]ten [f]i[n]d m[y][s]el[f] [s]aying things [l]i[k]e, ‘[I] [d]on’t kn[o]w—maybe that [ch]o[c]olate [ch]ip [c]oo[k]ie [d]o[ugh] is good?’ or, ‘What [i]f I had a m[i]l[k]sha[k]e? [I] feel l[i]k]e, [I] [d]o[n]’t kn[o]w, [m]a[y]be a [m]il[k]sh[a]ke would [r]eally hit the [s]p[ot] [r]ight now?’ Of [c]our[s]e the only [r]esult [o]f [s]u[ch] [p]re[v]a[r]i[c]a[ti]o[n], [o]f [s]u[ch] mindle[ss] [d]e[v]i[a]ti[o]n[s] [i]s the [i]n[d]ulgen[c]e [i]n non-[c]oo[k]ies and [c]ream items and the [i]n[ev]itable [r]e[m]or[s]e of the [i]n[iti]al [c][r]a[v]ing [r]e[m]ai[n]ing un[q]uenced!

12—There’s an idea [th]at [th]ere was no[th]i[ng], [th]en some[th]i[ng] o[cc]urred, and [i]s [s]t[i]ll o[cc]urring; the po[s]t[m]o[d]ern n[o]v]el, [a]s well [a]s [S]y[m]e[o]n’s [D]i[v]ine Er[o]s, [d]o away with the [f]ir[s]t po[r]tion of thi[s] [f]o[r]m]ula, [d]i[s]a[ss]ociating them[s]elves [f]rom thi[s] i[d]ea [th]at [th]ere was no[th]i[ng] and al[s]o from the idea [th]at [th]en [s]ome[th]i[ng] o[cc]u[r]red, [i]n[s]tead [r]e[s]tr[i]c]ting [th]em[s]elves to [th]e [i]s [s]t[i]ll o[cc]u[r]ring. For bo[th] [S]y[m]e[o]n and the [p]o[s]t[m]o[d]ern n[o]v]el [s]omething [i]s [s]t[i]ll o[cc]urring, however, we’re [n]ot [q]u[i]te as [c]on[c]e[r]n[ed] [w]ith the [i]dea [th]at [th]ere [w]as at

[o]ne t[i]me [n]o[th]i[ng], or w[i]th th[i][s] [i]dea [th]at
[th]en [s]ome[th]i[ng] o[c]cu[r]red.

13—If [w]e [w]ere [b]old, and I'm f[ee][l]ing
[d][e]cent[l]y [b][o]ld at the [m][o][m]ent, having
[i][n][d]ulged [i][n] a [l]ong [d]ay, all of my [d]ays
th[e]se [d]ays [s][ee]m ex[c][ee][d]ing[l]y
[l]ong!—[b]ut [a][l][s]o [f][e]eling as th[ough] [a][ll]
[a]uto[b]iogra[ph]y is a[b][s]urd[i]t [f]i[ct]ion, [w]e
[m]ight [s][ay] that [w]hile the [m][o]dern n[o]vel [s]ays
[s]omething adj[a]c[en]t to, 'I [th]ink [th]ere[f]ore I
am,' the po[s]tm[o]dern [n][o]vel [s]tates [s]omething
[a][k]in to, 'He is the [F]ather be[c]ause [h]e eter[n]ally
[h]as a [S]on thr[ough] wh[o]m [h]e [a][ff]irms
[H]im[s]el[f] as [F]ather.' [B]ut th[i][s] [i]s [p]erha[p]t
even too [s]p[e]c[u]lative for our ta[s]tes; it's i[n] all
[l]i[k]e[l]hood [b]eyond the [s][c]o[p]e of th[i]s
[i][n]q[ui]ry!

14—Yet of [c]our[s]e thi[s] [c]ould [b]e [c]o[n]s[i]d[er]ed
[c]o[n]troversial, as the [m][e][d]i[an]
po[s]t[m]o[d]erni[s]t o[s]ten[s]i[b]lly [l]o[ve]s
n[ot]hing [m]ore than [f]l[au]nting his reck[l]e[ss]
atheism; what the po[s]t[m]o[d]erni[s]t a[d]o[r]es
[m]o[r]e than anything is to [f]l[au]nt his a[th]eism; i[f]
[th]e [p]o[s]t[m]o[d]erni[s]t [b]e[c]omes
[p]ea[c]o[ck]-[l]i[k]e a[b]o[ut] any[th]ing [i]t's
w[i]th[ou]t a [d]o[ub]t his [f]ervent [d]i[s]b[e]l[i]e[f]
in God. Yet [i]s [i]t [p]o[ss]i[b]le that a [B]yza[n]tine
[m]onk [p]enned the fir[s]t [t]ruly [m]o[n]u[m]en[t]al
[p]o[s]t[m]o[d]ern n[o]vel? [I]t's a[n]
[i]n[t]e[r]e[s]ting [q]ue[r]y, although I have a [f]eeling it
would di[s]gu[s]t H[aw][k]es i[f] [n]o[t] N[a]b[ob]o[k]ov,
[b]ut most [l]i[k]e[l]y N[a]b[ob]o[k]ov [a]s much [a]s
Haw[k]es. N[a]b[ob]o[k]ov, and I'm [b]a[s]ing thi[s] on

[l]ittle to [n]othing, [s]trikes [m]e as [s]ome[o]ne who [w]ould [b]e l[oa]th to [b]e [g]rouped to[g]lether with [S]y[m]e[o]n the New Theol[o]gian.

15—[I]n [h][i]s [f]i[f]tieth [h][y][m]n [S]y[m]e[o]n [s]ensually n[otes], ‘sh[e] [r][e]ached out to me li[k]e a [b][r]ea[s]t, [f]or [m]e to [s]u[ck]le imperisha[b]le [m]il[k]’—we should [i][n][q]uire [i][n]to th[is] note [f]urther, as [p]erhap[s] [c]u[r]iou[s]l[y], our [a]uthor even [r]efers to the [F]ather (or the [S]on) [i]n th[is] [q]uote as [α][v]τῆ the [f]em[i][n]i[n]e p[r]o[n]oun, he[n][c]e the qu[ote] was [r]e[n]dered i[n] E[n]glish as Sh[e] [r]ather than H[e], yet a[n]other [p]ost[m]odern element to be [f]ound in the [E][r]o[s], [r]e[fr]e[r]ring to the [F]ather in the [f]em[i]n[i]ne [c]o[n]ju[n]c[t]i[ve] i[n] the [E]l[e]v[en]th [C]entury! ([P]erhap[s] e[ven] the [l]ate [T]enth!) [S]o [m]an[y] of u[s] to thi[s] day [s]till b[l]indl[y] [r]e[fr]er to the [F]ather em[p]loying [p]r[i]m[ar]i[l]l[y] the [m]ale [c]o[n]ju[n]c[t]ive, y[et] I’ve n[e]ver [p]ersonal[l]l[y] [s]ub[s]c[ri]b[ed] to thi[s] [c]o[n]ju[n]c[t]ive [c]o[n]d[i]t[i]oning my[s]el[f], although I usual[l]l[y] [r]e[fr]ain [f]r[om] en[g]a[ging] in pub[l]ic st[ate]m[en]ts [r]e[g]arding [c]o[n]ju[n]c[t]ive [m]atters.

16—Ulti[m]ate[l]y, [b]o[th] the p[ost]m[odern]i[s]ts [a]s well [a]s Sy[m]e[o]n the [N]ew Theol[o]gian re[c]og[n]ize the [f]or la[ck] of a [b]etter [ph]r[ase] [q]uantum [c]ha[r]a[c]ter of our [m]at[er]ial exi[s]t[en]c[e]; while the p[ost]m[odern]i[s]ts, [i]n [m]a[n]y if [n]ot all [c]a[s]es, [t]end [t]o either fo[r]m or [s]uppo[r]t va[r]iou[s] [c]r[is]t[ian]i[s]m [d]ue [t]o thi[s] [c]ha[r]a[c]t[er]i[s]t[i]c, [S]y[m]eon [d]id the o[pp]os[i]te—[i]n[s]tead [r]e[s]c[i]n[d]i[n]g

[c]om[p]l[e]te[l]y and [m]a[k]ing no ex[p]l[i]c[it] [p]o[l]i[t]i[c]al [s]tatement on the [c]o[n]ju[n]c[tive [c]hara[c]ter(s) of his world. (Yet of [c]our[s]e there is the [s]p[e]c[ulation] that [S]y[m]eon hi[m]s[elf] was of a [c]o[n]ju[n]c[tive deviation, [s]o to [s]p[ea]k, [u]n[i]q[ue] to his mil[ieu], [th]at of [th]e [eu]n[u]ch, alth[ough] we d[o]n't kn[ow] thi[s] for [c]ertain.) The [w]orld, its [q]u[antum] [c]ha[r]a[c]ter, was n[o] [c]all to [r]eform to [S]yme[o]n; n[o] it was a [s]ign to [r]e[s]cind!

17—[F]or my [p]art, I [c]ertain[l]y [c]an't [d]e[n]y that m[y] [p]er[s]o[n]al [p]r[e]d[i]c[tions] [f]all [c]l[os]er to [r]e[s]cin[d]ing; [n]ot a wee[k] goes [b]y [th]at [th]e [th]ought of en[t]e[r]ing [a] [m]on[a]s[t]e[r]y doesn't [b]e[c]ome at [l]ea[s]t [m]o[m]en[t]ari[l]y [a]ppea[l]ing! The [m]ona[s]t[er]y, [t]o [m]e, at [t]imes, [s]eems [l]i[k]e a [s]e[c]ond home, de[s]p[ite] the [f]a[c]t, to the be[s]t of [m]y k[n]owledge, I've [n]ever [s]tepp[ed] [f]oot in[t]o a [m]o[n]a[s]t[er]y of an[y] [s]ort. Yet where could I [p]o[ss]i[b]l[y] [b]e[l]ong [m]ore than [a] [m]o[n]a[s]t[er]y, with [f]ew to [n]o [p]oss[e]ss[i]ons and [n]othing [p]r[e]ss[i]ng to do [b]e[s]ides [m]o[n]itor [m]y own [f]leeting thoughts—isn't the a[ss]e[ss]m[ent] of [o]ne's own [w]aves of [f]leeting thought a [f]ull-time job [i]n and of [i]t[s]e[l]f? [H]ow [c]ould we [p]o[ss]ibly [h]ave [t]ime [f]or anything e[l]s[e], if we're a[tt]em[p]t[ing] [t]o [m]ai[n]t[ain] a [m]o[d]icum of h[o]ne[s]ty with our[s]e[l]ves?

18—[A]pp[roaching] the [a]uto[m]atic entran[c]e of Fre[sh] [S]hore's on [M]i[n]eral [S]p[ring] Ave[n]ue, [h]o[p]ing with all of my [h]ea[r]t [th]at [th]eir [p]re[p]ared foods were in the ball[p]a[r]k of what

[m]y [m]om generally [d]i[s][c]o[v]ers at [D]a[v]e's [S]u[p]er[m]ar[k]et, I gl[a]n[c]ed a[c]ro[ss] the [s]treet [a]nd [s]aw the old buil[d]ing of [K]en Wo[k] Chin[e][s]e [C]ui[s][i]ne halfway tor[n] [d]ow[n], and I took out my [ph][o]ne and made a [b]rief n[o]te o[n] the i[n]de[f]atiga[b]le i[m][p]er[m]anen[c]e that rem[ai]ns [s]o [p]erv[a][s]ive [a]ll [a]round u[s], as I [d]o each time a buil[d]ing I felt [s]ome [s]ort of [n]on[s]en[s]i[c]al [c]o[n]te[n]t[i]on w[i]th on Mi[n]eral [S]pring Ave[n]ue gets k[n]o[ck]ed [d]own.