

Chapbook Mixtape Stories

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## Mojitos & Sushi

I don't need alcohol, I need alcohol to be around people— I thought this for perhaps the first time while blackout drunk with Ethel, drinking Mojitos and eating sushi, things, to that point, I'd never really experienced so fluidly with a female, but perhaps, I'm thinking now, I actually thought this sentence for the first time this morning, jotted it down while half asleep, and I'm now shamelessly superimposing the thought onto a night where I was allegedly blackout drunk with Ethel, drinking Mojitos and eating sushi. Alcohol had undoubtedly contributed as much if not more to my deterioration as an artist, to my deterioration as a human being, as any of my friends, as any of my debt. Abusing alcohol to make myself semi-functional in social settings, in many ways, killed me—it killed the “real” me (which was admittedly a me probably equally steeped in lies and denial) in favor of constructing a “socially palatable” me, or at least it made others seem “socially palatable” to me, even if I was incoherent, or perhaps because I was incoherent.

But, looking back, what choice does a person really have—assuming you always find yourself extremely socially anxious, possibly to a paralyzing degree? Is being a drunken fool worse than any of the immediate, plausible alternatives? At the time I didn't think so—being a drunken fool was perfectly fine.

Ethel didn't think so either—or at least she didn't state she thought so explicitly.

Why not be drunken fools, eating sushi and drinking Mojitos?

We were having a great time; the sushi was delicious, definitely overpriced but still delicious, and the fact of the matter was any time we weren't in the presence of Briana and Mike was refreshing to us, it seemed as though we both agreed that their presence had become increasingly cumbersome—we both agreed that since we were getting along so well, and since Briana and Mike hardly ever got along well

(never mind as well as we were getting along), that they may have been a little jealous—that maybe they were trying to “sabotage” our good times.

Who needs them?! we said, sitting at the bar, blackout drunk, eating sushi.

Honestly, and I don’t mean this in a bad way, but Briana is definitely at least a little jealous of you; she’s just, I don’t know, a little sick in the head, I said, sitting at the bar, chewing a piece of sushi.

I totally agree, Ethel said, also chewing a piece of sushi, I mean I’ve been, like, best friends with Briana for years! But we also have periods like this. When I was dating Chad she refused to talk to me, and that was for almost three years.

And Mike? Listen, I like Mike, I said, washing down my sushi with a healthy gulp of Mojito, but me and him? There’s always been a little bit of a tension there, I thought at least. It’s like, I don’t know, I kind of feel like Briana always used to come onto me, and—personally—I felt really uncomfortable about it. But what am I supposed to say?! But, at the same time, I could see where, from his perspective, that could be annoying—and maybe that’s kind of informed that tension?

Oh, totally! Ethel replied, washing down her sushi with a healthy gulp of Mojito, Briana totally wants you! And Mike knows. He’s not stupid. He knows. But it’s not like it’s your fault; it’s his girlfriend. So it’s so unfair of him to take that out on you.

Well, I don’t wanna say he’s necessarily taking it out on—

But you know what I mean!

Oh, absolutely, I said. And I totally agree, by the way ... I mean, Briana—to an extent—brings it on herself; I think we have to admit that. But don’t get me wrong, she’s great, totally great, when it comes to hospitality, when it comes to home cleanliness—she’s like the ideal girl when it comes to things like that. But let’s face it: her utter lack of

self-esteem ultimately informs the majority of her interpersonal decision making.

I began my attempt to make eye contact with the bartender, hoping to refill my Mojito.

Yes, Ethel said, she's only fucking these other dudes because she's insecure about her position with Mike, which—by the way—is partially on Mike, too! How much of a dick can you be to someone? Geez! I mean, going skiing for four days and not even replying to any of her texts—like, what do you expect?!

I began to draw the beginnings of what would later become a more fleshed out correlation between Briana “banging dudes because she's insecure about her position with Mike” and Ethel's own “banging” of “dude(s)” (myself, others?) in relation to her position with her boyfriend.

Yeah, I said, it's not totally on her. It's definitely partially on Mike. Plus, her home life? The inflection of my voice was incredulous as I finally grabbed the attention of the bartender. I said yeah, can I, uh, have a refill of this? Ethel do you want—

No, I'm ok right now, she said, I actually still have a, uh, good amount left. She motioned to the bartender and glanced at her about half-full Mojito. It was considerate of her to wait on ordering another, somewhat pricey, Mojito; why be gluttonous on another person's tab?

But yeah, I said as the bartender walked away, that probably plays a part in all of this too. Does she even know who her dad is? Environment plays a part in how each of us turn out. I hate to say it, but it's a fact.

Oh, absolutely! Ethel began, I mean, I feel like you and I—we both come from really strong family backgrounds.

Oh I'm so family oriented! I replied, now more visibly intoxicated than ever, I love my family; we're really close.

Exactly, Ethel replied, same here. I'm so close with my family, then I said I'm also extremely close with my family.

## Kyousougiga: A Review

It's only been relatively recently that I've begun to truly delve into the dark depths of the so-called anime movement, and even then it was only while seated on the passenger side, driving from Jersey City to Flushing Queens, my eyes glued vociferously to my phone screen, terrified of what Tina might be up to in the seat adjacent, unleashed behind the wheel, that I first truly delved into the depths of the Kyousougiga saga, and what I discovered I found to be both delightfully surprising and almost maddeningly profound. Of course as a caveat I should now note that I'm prone to succumb to this notion of so-called confirmation bias, this idea that observation alters the observed to some material degree, that perhaps by dint of that fact this entire kontakion should be considered dead upon arrival, and not only as it relates to the particulars of this analysis, but just as a general aspect of everything, that as it becomes clear to us that observation alters the observed—well, what can our so-called logical analyses contribute to this essentially ineffable mode of events? We should begin with Koto, the reincarnation of the drawn rabbit as wife then (perhaps?) again as granddaughter, of three children, of three generations, the reincarnation (of the imaginary, mind you) on the third iteration—three children, thrice removed from the imaginary mother, on the third iteration of their reproductive cycle animate Koto, flanked by A and Un, a child who may in fact be their mother, reincarnated (in an imaginary fashion)? In my early waking moments earlier this week the thought suddenly occurred to me that the contours of thought could perhaps mimic the contours of our internet, our World Wide Web, that our thoughts exist in a network apparatus, so to speak, and this network is perhaps regulated by a set of algorithms and/or forces we're unable to fully comprehend, but it occurred to me further, as this idea stuck with me during the day, that appropriately modal Greek thought can only be constructed in metrically constrained manners,

that the entire endeavor of philosophical speculation through prose was inappropriate. This is significant because in *Kyousougiga*, the character of the first Koto, the Beginning Koto, is understood in this way, as an imaginary thing but still imbued with being—our thoughts themselves, our imaginary things so to speak, exist in a physical space of sorts, a network apparatus of sorts, the fact is perhaps that there is no such thing as a metaphysics, but rather an alternate physics, a physics that remains physical in a sense—Koto recurs as an imaginary figure yet retains an alternative physical presence, she recurs in a manner that's perhaps appropriately refracted? The father of Inari (or Sensei (or Myou)) appears triadically, while Inari, in order to construct a family for himself, reanimated one son and then drew another two. Even the second Koto, the Ending Koto, is flanked by two brothers A and Un, and while Inari and his sibling from the Shrine took over twelve planes from their father (who exists only in thirds it seems?), Myoe, the second Myoe, son of Inari, and the second Koto (Ending Koto) end the series primed to inherit the oversight of the planes from their father Inari. We speak of Inari as the observer, yet as the observer he found himself changing the planes themselves. We speak of the second Koto, the Ending Koto yet, although she too seems one of three, it's uncertain how she relates to the original three of Yase, Kurama, and Myoe (Yakushimaru), who were animated by Inari (Myoe) and the first Koto, although the first Koto was also somewhat animated by Inari (allegedly). Perhaps we should pause here for a moment, as we've probably ran ahead of ourselves in our analysis of *Kyousougiga*! What we can say of the framework of *Kyousougiga*'s characters is that, proportionally speaking, they exist in triadic forms, and that they achieve being in ways that are relational more than essential, as essences that exist relative TO something rather than as static individuations, and I think this is fair? Perhaps, to take a phrase from Yannaras, we should speak of a *relational ontology* as it regards *Kyousougiga*'s character construction? I should probably point out that it's

increasingly difficult to speak of Trinities of any sort in the West, as the Christian West's interpretation of the Father-Son-Spirit is so pervasive, in America at least, that at times it seems as though there's just no room for subsequent Trinitarian interpretations to breathe, as if any minor Trinitarian deviation is a heretical mirror city that must be destroyed for our subsequent Western planes to subsist! Yet there remains some substantial overlap between the ontology of Kyouougiga and, say, the metaphysics of the Desert Fathers, those Cappadocian theoreticians, as at times I felt like I was watching an anime written by Gregory of Nazianzus and directed by Gregory of Nyssa, yet to consider that prospect at first seems entirely inappropriate, in my mind at least, because we almost exclusively associate Trinities with Papacies in our era, and Papacies have preceded Western secular culture almost exclusively! In some ways, however, I couldn't help but view Kyouougiga as a depiction of Nazianzus's metaphysics, of Nyssa's metaphysics, of Basil's metaphysics, I found myself ironically muttering Is Inari Inari because he eternally has a Koto whom he affirms himself as Inari, and I actually failed to find this blasphemous at all, I actually found it, if nothing else, appropriately modern, just as the early bishops didn't view seeing themselves as Christ incarnate as blasphemous in the least, just as Symeon didn't find viewing his penis as Christ as blasphemous in the least! Why is it absurd to believe an anime could, in fact, depict the Eastern Jesus, the Cappadocian Trinity more accurately than the Papacy? In fact, I found nothing less absurd while excitedly viewing the episodes of Kyouougiga on my phone on my CrunchyRoll app, enjoying each episode both artistically as well as philosophically, finding each episode rich in irony, philosophy, and overall vivacity. We believe in an inveterate fashion that the Pope is the primary person we should look to in order to understand so-called Trinitarian ideas, that the Papacy is faithfully carrying on the legacy of the Desert Fathers, that the Cappadocian theoreticians live on in a sense, via the Pope in Rome, yet it's entirely possible, in my mind at

least, that the Desert Fathers, these Cappadocian theoreticians, so to speak, are more alive today in the anime of *Kyousougiga* than anywhere in Italy or Europe Proper. What's mostly misunderstood, and we should perhaps highlight the character Inari / Myou here specifically, is this notion, to employ the phrase of the Catholic Rene, that I think therefore I am, that the person exists as an individuated static unit a priori, with no exception, that divorced of everything I still am because I still think—when the Cappadocian Greeks didn't quite view the case in that way, they instead postulated that even the Father Himself didn't achieve being, except in relation to his Son, and that this infrastructure repeated itself infinitely into the realm of humanity as well. The Beginning Koto existed in a similar sense as the Cappadocian Father, a drawn rabbit who achieved being only in relation to a Buddha—in a certain sense, from a Cappodocian vantage point, we all first exist as cut-out, drawn and two-dimensional (much like the prosopo of Ancient Greek tragedy) until we achieve a being through relational mode, 'when I change form it is not I who experience the change,' as one monk postulated, which probably isn't an often quoted phrase in and around the Papacy? It was standing, perhaps in a semi-inebriated state, in the frigid parking lot of Escada on the North Providence-Johnston line just last night that my old friend Curtis and I reflected, at half past midnight, with the bar already shut to the public, with a mysteriously jovial guido-esque caricature revving up his ocean blue Ferrari repeatedly right next to us, that 'those days' were officially over, yes, that the world as we knew it previously, the days of approaching a public establishment at half past midnight for just 'one more drink'—those days were long gone. Yet whether we're studying the verses of Nazianzus, or enjoying an episode of *Kyousougiga*, or standing drunk in the parking lot of Escada in North Providence, it remains true beyond a reasonable doubt that each world we inhabit must have a beginning and an end, and then perhaps another beginning and end, that we're all flanked in some sense, with an A and

an Un, yet the structure of these planes are en medio, in between the A and the Un, should we say that these worlds exist in a static, continuous sense? Because I would say absolutely not—that these worlds we know via recollection are lucid falsities, and the worlds we experience through immediate sensory organs are muddled falsities, only to be interpreted into falsities through recollection's lucid rearrangements, that all around us we're surrounded with compound movements that we can't quite entirely comprehend (if we're even aware of them at all), movements that we become one with without even knowing, altering ourselves essentially to extents we cease to remain us, perhaps making these very ideas of A and Un into en medio concepts themselves!

## John Tesh at the Bolivian Restaurant

I was unironically playing the John Tesh NBA on NBC Theme Song on my phone, sitting at a new Bolivian restaurant that was gaining a sterling reputation around Providence when my friend Mo walked in—his Gucci brand wire-rimmed glasses floated above his bushy black beard; he looked miserable and sat down.

The restaurant apparently specialized in breakfast and brunch buffets, so we walked to the buffet area where they had a solid selection of fish, including tilapia, which I thought was an underrated and underrepresented fish, that, at a later date, my uncle would tell me was a “dirty fish”; the implication, of course, being that there were “better” fish to eat, but I still thought tilapia had a unique taste to it.

The Bolivian restaurant cooked everything on the spot; you just threw whatever you wanted into a bowl.

We walked over to the buffet area and Mo sighed ayyyyyyyyy longingly as he picked up a pair of tongs and started to fish through a container of capicola; we stood at opposite ends of the omelette section. Mo sighed ayyyyyyyyy longingly as he dropped a modest scoop of the heavily processed meat into his bowl.

Mo began to exhibit physical tics that led me to believe he was about to start discussing his estranged wife then told me he thought he might actually still be in love her—then paused and turned in my direction and asked what I thought, asked what would I do, if I were him?

I dropped three chunks of tilapia into my bowl, didn't make eye contact, and told him confidently he should probably take some time for himself, to assess how he really feels, knowing for a fact he had no intention of doing that—that the last things in the world Mo would be interested in doing were taking time for himself and assessing how he really feels. I was slightly perturbed but, admittedly, took a perverse pleasure in indulging said types of questions.

Mo was three months younger than I was but was also relatively inexperienced in that he'd been with his wife for nearly ten years, including their time dating. He entered into a life of monogamy with her at a very young age. He had minimal adult dating experience outside of his time with her—I actually had reason to believe his only extramarital sexual experience was a blowjob he received when he was seventeen, so I made salient, rational points that I, personally, wouldn't have taken into account when it came to my relationships, and Mo agreed with me. He told me my advice was the right advice—that, as hard as it was to hear, that I was absolutely right.

He scrolled through what looked like days of text messages and shouted look-at-this! and pointed at his phone, anxiously rotated it into my periphery and asked me to read a particular exchange; his tone was legal—but also desperate and broken. He read the text bubble aloud before I could fully register the text; he asked me if he should tell his estranged wife he drove by her mom's house the previous afternoon, and I told him probably not.

He said he was going to—that he wasn't the type of person to lie about things, although we both knew he was the type of person to lie about things, all sorts of things (as was I), but the state of shock and hurt he was enduring had apparently turned him into a temporary ascetic, which wasn't uncommon, I thought, having endured similar episodes myself. I was actually feeling a little off myself.

He hand-plucked a piece of capicola and popped it into his mouth; his desperation was gradually lifting my spirits.

He told me if he drove by her mother's house she deserved to know it, that he wasn't gonna lie; he was gonna tell her how he felt because that's who he was, that she needed to know that, and I told him he should tell her how he feels.

## An Extremely Italian Bar & Lounge

L, K, and I were sitting outside of an extremely Italian bar and lounge, and L and K were discussing what a dickhead N was as I sipped nonchalantly on a light beer, somewhat regretting going out for drinks, strenuously considering the fact I really needed to get my budget in order, sooner rather than later. He's suuuuuchh a dickhead, L said.

Suuuuuuuuch a dickhead, K replied.

I'd just given myself somewhat of a drastic haircut and, in the interim, more than a few people had complimented me on the cut, L and K both complimented me on my haircut as we sat at the extremely Italian lounge.

L said I like you hair, did you cut it?! and K agreed, more or less reiterating L's comments. Having said that, I'd noticed the compliments, including L and K's, were being relayed in a way that seemed to denigrate how my hair was, as if people were denigrating how I had had my hair as much as they were actually complimenting my current hair. I'd only cut my hair by mistake, and I hated how short it was— I only meant to give myself a light trim but cut one strand too short and was subsequently forced into a full blown cut.

We sat outside at the extremely Italian lounge looking onto Atwells Avenue. To some extent, those who accept the utter irrelevance of their existence become free to do as they please, whereas those who fail to accept utter irrelevance become doomed to become stars in their own eyes and live lives of 'social people', doomed to repackage this utter irrelevance into utterly irrelevant episodes of micro-drama; they become stars in the micro-soap operas of their social circles; they become entirely fueled by their own micro-relevance, their shifting roles and arcs in these micro-theaters, and, of course, none of it can ever change the immutable nature of our utter irrelevance, and that

immutability can only be suppressed for so long, and at some point most of us stumble upon just that: we come face to face with that unbearable fact right in its unbearable, terrible face.

L, of course, was engaged in so much micro-drama that, to her credit, it may have well been macro-drama. Her life could only be understood through drama, the manufacturing of drama, the distribution of drama, the interpretation of drama, the dissection of drama, and, finally, the deconstruction of drama. As objectionable as her methods were in concept, they were, if we're being honest with ourselves, equally admirable in execution.

N's Suuuuuuuch a dickhead L said, delicately sipping from a glass of house white wine.

Are you babysitting this weekend? K asked pensively.

I felt a sudden, somewhat muted, urge to slit my wrists.

House sitting. Yes, L said.

Of course, K replied, well, I was thinking maybe we could ... come over one night?

L glanced at me in an impish but good natured manner and said Of course! and I felt a sudden, somewhat muted, urge to slit my wrists.

## Memorial Day

On Memorial Day or Veteran's Day, I always confuse the two, N— and L— invited me to Fat Belly's to day-drink, and I was immediately amenable to the idea, although it was admittedly slightly ill-advised, as L— used to be good friends with a girl who was my ex-girlfriend to a certain extent, and their falling out was at least somewhat related to our relationship, although I vehemently denied any involvement, despite the fact my denials were laughable, as L— knew exactly what happened, and so did I.

Sitting in a large bar booth with a large group, all of whom were drinking heavily (myself included), I'd noted one of L—'s acquaintances seemed to find me unamusing, and initially her nonverbal disdain for me didn't particularly bother me, obviously not everyone is going to find you amusing, and of course it would be ridiculous to think everyone will like you, much less find you amusing, but at the same time I thought it would be nice if, somehow, everyone on the planet could like me, if all of the attention available in the known universe could be paid to me and me alone, and also if everyone found me amusing as well, I thought that would be nice.

The girl mentioned, not to me directly, as she clearly found my personality innately distasteful, but to the group as a whole, that she was working on acquiring her masseuse certification, and I mentioned, just in passing, that a handful of massage parlors around Providence allegedly offered so-called happy endings following their massages, that they whacked you off after the massage, if you wanted. After she'd apparently vehemently expressed her disdain for me to a number of people in the venue, I mentioned to N— that I never insinuated she was in the business, would be in the business, of performing happy endings, that I simply noted happy endings were, allegedly, an aspect of the massage industry,

or at least that's what I'd heard, not that I'd ever been whacked off after a massage myself, I mentioned to N—.

I mentioned to N— that people in accounting embezzle funds all the time, that she could mention generic embezzlement around me, and I

wouldn't be offended, I wouldn't automatically assume she was insinuating I was personally embezzling funds; if anything, wouldn't that make it seem like I was personally embezzling funds. When her boyfriend arrived she informed him of the whole ordeal, and I left shortly following the arrival of her boyfriend.

You know my friend said she would totally fuck you if she didn't have a boyfriend, said L, and my ears perked upward noticeably as the words my friend were uttered, my eyes darted upward immediately as the words totally fuck were uttered, I held a public pool stick that had most likely never been wiped down or thoroughly cleaned in my bare hands, I was hunched over a public pool table in the process of losing my third straight game of pool by a wide margin, wondering how my pool skills could fluctuate so violently, acutely cognizant of the fact I hadn't fucked in quite some time, feeling completely engulfed in a financial and emotional malaise that I speculated could easily endure for the remainder of my sentient life. We were hanging out at a sports bar that had pool tables and pool cues that definitely weren't wiped down often, and I had a thing about my hands being clean because I felt like I involuntarily touched my face a lot.

L was wearing a turquoise blue dress that was a little boxy around her thin frame, and I felt fairly strongly she was a completely untrustworthy person, although I couldn't pin the feeling on any particular event, but her general style of speech (disingenuous, overly enthusiastic, pandering) seemed to exude either a subdued nefariousness or just a deep, probably irreversible, self-loathing. Oh yeah? I said, now definitively holding up the game of pool then asked

What's her name again? despite the fact I knew her friend's name, but I said What's her name again? despite knowing her friend's name with a fair amount of certainty.

L stated the name of her friend aloud and said I'm, um, pretty sure you guys met before, which I was aware of, and I admitted I'd actually thought that was the case, that I just wasn't one hundred percent sure what her name was, and that was actually why I asked the question, yes, I actually admitted to disingenuously asking for her friend's name again.

To be honest, I didn't particularly like L, although I didn't feel like I had a legitimate reason to dislike her, I couldn't successfully pin my dislike to any particular event, as she was always kind enough to me, and that surface level kindness caused me to struggle with the fact I found myself instinctively disliking her. Sometimes I asked myself why I found myself instinctively disliking L, as I was always nice to her, and I was always polite, I definitely kept my dislike latent, or at least I believed I did, but how could I know for sure? It was definitely possible L was actually talking large amounts of shit behind my back, saying things like He can't at least keep his dislike latent?! and excoriating me for allowing my true feelings to seep so shamelessly to the surface, despite the fact I, personally, went around believing I kept my dislike latent. Yeah, she's cute, I said, although I wasn't all that attracted to her friend. L's boyfriend was eyeing me, seemingly increasingly eager to continue the game of pool, but also, possibly equally, interested in the tabloid-like scenario L was clearly encouraging.

Oh yeah, she definitely wanted me to bang her friend who had a boyfriend, that was clearly how she got off, me having sex with her friend, who had a boyfriend, was preferable to her having the most mind blowing sex of her life, there was no doubt about that.

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 Palaiologii 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 Mezcals 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!

## Preparing to Peruse A Historical Monograph

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 Tina if she'd be willing to play 'One-Eighty by Summer' on our way to the coffee shop.

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.

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 Tina 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.

## Pasha: A Review

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.

It was an era of lingering socioeconomic commotion when my friend Ralph and I experienced somewhat of a dual rough patch romantically—Ralph 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.

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.

That Pasha was an Israeli-owned bar didn't occur to me until later, but I still hold both owners—Jack and Sal—in the highest esteem, despite the century-plus long conflict that's plagued our respective cultures. In fact it was just this past Christmas that I stopped

in Pasha with Tina and said a jovial hello to Jack, indulging in my first ice hookah in what seemed like eons, Tina 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.

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.

These precise circumstances led both myself and my friend Ralph 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.

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.

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 Ralph 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.

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.

Sitting at the bar at Pasha smoking a scrumptious hookah with my friend Ralph, 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!

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!

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.

## Postmodern Novelists

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.

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.

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?

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.

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.

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!

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.

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—

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.

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.

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!

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.

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!

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.

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 *αυτή* 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.

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!

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?

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.

## Blowing Up Myself In Public

We sat on the east side of Providence where the waiter looked vaguely familiar, vaguely familiar in a manner that, in my view at least, foreshadowed ominous events, in a way that caused me to irrationally speculate that this waiter possessed some of my darkest secrets, that he could now, if he so chose, irrevocably expose me in front of my girlfriend, expose all, or at least a portion, of my darker recesses, my errant past, as he clearly, by way of body language and skittish eye contact, possessed my darkest secrets. There was something about dining out that gave rise to my most homicidal tendencies.

Why do I feel like blowing up, not only myself, but this entire establishment right now? I thought, quaintly inquiring if my girlfriend found any of the listed appetizers appealing. It has to have something to do with capitalism, doesn't it? The pernicious nature of exchanges and whatnot, doesn't it? I thought, quaintly agreeing to order the fish taco appetizer plate.

Yet I'm not nearly well-versed enough in the mechanics of capitalism to draw that type of correlation, one between pernicious cores of financial exchanges and moderately priced, bustling restaurants conjuring homicidal urges, I thought, noting a quaint smile emerge on the face of our waiter as he jotted down the order.

Upon noting the waiter's quaint smile, I came to the conclusion he may not have possessed my darkest secrets, that we actually just shared a mutual acquaintance from years past, a girl I acted inappropriately toward on a particularly heated night out, and that was the most likely source of my, still mounting, anxiety. I ordered a beer and attempted to calm my nerves; my girlfriend sedulously studied the one page menu; the restaurant was one of my favorite restaurants; I never had a bad meal there.