

**THE POSTMODERN NOVEL & THE DIVINE
EROS OF SYMEON THE NEW THEOLOGIAN
NICHOLAS KATSAFANAS**

Triadic Mode: > .667
2801:3634.771

- 01. 113:144 .785** 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. 194:236 .822** 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. 126:148 .851** 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. 168:208 .808** 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. 234:281 .833 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. 143:194 .737 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. 162:213 .761** 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. 121:164 .738** 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. 183:255 .718** 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. **231:326 .709** 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. 196:242 .810 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. 109:147 .741 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. **114:146 .781** 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. **141:191 .738** 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. 166:210 .790** 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.
- 16. 146:193 .756** 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. 141:192 .734 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. 113:144 .785 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.

Footnotes

---01 113:144 .785 [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]ne 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]en[c]e that re[m]ai[n]s [s]o [p]erv[a]sive [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[r]ing Ave[n]ue gets k[n]o[ck]ed [d]own.

---02 194:236 .822 I[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]oaching 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[que]n[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]s[ed] [s]olel[y] of mirrors [s]at in the [b]r[i]gh[t] [s]unl[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]ction where a voice [l] [i]denti[f]i[ed] with
[G][r]e[g]o[r]y of Na[z]ian[z]us [s]poke to [m][e]
[m]e[l]l[i]f[l]uou[s][l]y of the [f]ut[i]l[i]t[y] of
e[ph]e[m]eral things.

---03 126:148 .851 [B][u]t [p]erha[p]s we should [p]ose a
[s][u][b][s]e[qu]e[n]t [q]u[e][s]tion: 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]l[ing] to a[p]e the [s]tyl[i]i[s]t[i]c
[i][d]io[s]yn[c]ra[s]i[e]s of Homer's O[d]y[ss]e[y], while
there's [s]eeming[l]y a[n] e[n]d[l]e[ss] [l]ine of
E[n]g[l]ish-[s][p]ea[k]ers a[n]d Eur[o]-adja[c]ent f[o]l[k]s
who've sh[a]me[l]e[ss][l]y [a][p]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][a]t 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]?

---04 168:208 .808 After all, it was [n][o]ne [o][th]er [th]an
[th]e [n][o]table p[o][s]tm[o]dern [n][o]ve[l]i[s]t J[o]hn
H[a]w[k]es who [s]aid [s]o [s]tern[l]y, 'I began to w[r]ite
fi[c][ti]o[n] on the a[ss]um[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]i[r]aw[l]ing,
[p]o[l]i[t]i[c]a[l]l[y]-[m]e[te]red, [s][p]i[r]a[l]l[ed]
[v]er[s]es of [S]y[m]e[on] t[r]a[ck] the [c]on[c]e[p]tual
Haw[k]ian [n]o[vel] 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]u[e][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][ai]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]ci[p]le of [N]a[b]o[k]ov, who, [i]n
a[dd]i[t]i[on] to [p]e[n]ning a [f]ew [n]ovels
[p]o[s]t[m]o[d]ernly [p]ro[dd]ing int[o] the [d][o]'s and
[d]on'ts of [s]e[d]u[c]ing un[d]e[r]a[ge] [f]e[m][a]les, was
[r][ai]sed [i]n a [R]uss[i]an [m][i][l]ieu [s]t[i][ll]
pr[e]-[S]oviet, [s]o to [s][ay] a[n] e[ss]e[n]tia[l]l[y]
Orthodox [m]i[l]ieu.

---05 234:281 .833 The [m][o]dern n[o]vel, wh[i]ch [i]n
ou[r] [e][r]a is [e][ss]ential[l]y the po[s]t[m]o[d]ern
n[o]vel, be[c]ause it [s][ee]ms [s]e[r]i[ous] [m][o]dern
[n][o]vels [n]o [l]onger exi[s]t, [o]n[l]y [s]p[u]r[i]ou[s]
[c]o[m]mercial [n]ovels th[at] [p]erh[a]p[s] a[p]e [o]ld
[m][o][d]ern [n][o]vels ([p]oorly); [n]o, [t]o[d]ay, [t]o [th]e
[e]x[t]ent [th]e [s]e[r]iou[s] [n]o[v]el [s]t[i]ll [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]ential[l]l[y]
[p]o[s]t[m]o[d]ern [n][o]vels, 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]vel as ju[s]t the [m][o]dern
[n][o]vel---as there are [n]o [m][o][d]ern [n][o]vels
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]vel, to Haw[k]es' [c]re[dit], [n]o longer re[q]uires
any[th]ing of [n][a]rrative, of [ch][a]racter, of
[s]etting, of [th]eme; i[n] [f]a[c]t, eve[n] i[n]dulging i[n]
[s]uch a[n]tiq[ua]ted [a]tt[ri]butes 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[ent] u[r]ge [t]o [t]ell me a [s]tory [I]'ll p[l]a[c]e the
[i]tem [b]a[ck] [d]own imm[e]di[ate]l[y], at [l]ea[s]t

[s]omewhat [d][i][s]gu[s]ted [a]t [i]ts [b][r][a]zen
[n][a][r]rat[i]ve [i]n[c]li[n]ations.

---06 143:194 .737 [S]yme[o]n's E[r][o]s, [o]n the [o]ther
hand, while i[n][d]ulgi[n]g i[n] [b]om[b]a[s]tic
[d]ia[l]logues, while tea[r]ing it[s]elf [a][p]art in [a]
[p]er[p]etua[l]ly [a][pp][r]o[p][r]iate
[f][a]shion---[p]erh[a]p[s] the [s]o-[c]alled [r]e[f][r]ain of
[S]y[m]eon's wor[k] is this v[e][r]y t[e]a[r]ing [a][p]art---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]on[s]i[d]er the [m]any a[t]t[em]p[t]s [t]o
[t]urn the e[p]ic [p][o]ems of H[o]m[er] into the
[m]o[d]ern n[o]vels of, [s]ay, [G]o[g]ol or Joy[c]e, then it
al[m]o[s]t g[oe]s without [s]ay[ing] that [S]y[m]e[o]n's
e[p]ic [p][o]em is alrea[d]y a [p][o][s]t[m]o[d]ern
[n]o[ve]l in [m]a[n]y w[ay]s, as the a[dd]i[c]tion to [p]ure
[p]r[ose] of the [n]o[ve]l, the a[dd]i[c]tion [t]o the
[n]o[n-~~m~~][e][t][r][i][c]al [m]e[t]hods of [p]la[c]ing words
in [c]on[c]e[p]tual or[d]er, is [p]erh[a]p[s] a[n]other lu[r]id
[q]ui[r]k of the [n]o[ve]l that would [b]e [b]etter off [s]et
to the [s]ide!

---07 162:213 .761 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[ly]
[b]oo[k]-e[n]ds [t]o, i[f] not e[n]t[ire][ly] 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[or]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[or]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]to[r]y, o[r] as [a][n] [e][s]say, i[n][s]tead of all th[r][ee] [s]i[m]ultaneou[s]l[y], yet not [a]s [a]n a[m][a]lgam 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]to[r]y 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].

---08 121:164 .738 Wh[e]reas D[e][s][c]artes 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[ec]t of the [D]ivine Ero[s], what [m]a[k]es them [e][ss]entiall[y] nove[l]i[st]ic 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[n]d[i]v[i]dually, but they’re [n]on-[a][m]alg[a][m]ou[s]! The Ero[s] is [a][ll] of them at the [s]ame time, but [a][ll][s]o each [o]ne of them i[n]d[i]v[i]dua[l]l[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]l[y] [a]n [e][ss]ay [b]e[c]ause it’s a [p][o]em, but it’s [o]nl[y] a [p][o]em [b]e[c]ause it’s a [s]tory, and [s][o] o[n] and [s][o] o[n]---

---09 183:255 .718 Haw[k]es [s]aid, ‘I began to write fi[c]ti[on] on the a[ss]ump[ti]on [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]iu[s] [s]aid, ‘[H]as the Father [e]ver [e]xi[s]ted w[i]thout [H]is [S]on?’ Is The Divine Er[o]s of [S]y[m]e[on] the [N]ew Theo[l]o[g]ian a [p][o]s[t]m[od]ern e[p]ic [p][o]em [a]nd [a]s [s]uch al[s]o the [p][o]s[t]m[od]ern [n]ovel [p]ar ex[c]e[l]len[c]e? [P]erha[p]s we should i[n]q[ui]re [f]u[r]ther i[n]t[o] thi[s] t[er]m ‘[p]o[s]t[m]odern,’

[h]owever, name[lly] as to [h]ow exa[c]t[lly] it's [s]aid to [d]iff[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]o[s]tm[o]dern, whereas [p]r[e]v[i]ou[s][lly] ([p]erha[p]s [f]oo[l]ish[lly]) I used [m]o[d]ern as a [s]y[n]o[n]y[m] [f]or [p]o[s]t[m]o[d]ern, [i]s th[i]s [c]on[c]e[p]tion of The [B]ig [B]ang, which has ach[ie]ved j[i]had-li[k]e [p]o[p]u[l]a[r]i[ti]ty [i]n ou[r] e[r]a. [P]erha[p]s the [m]o[s]t [m]odern [n]otion [o]f [a]ll, if we're [a]ttem[p]ting [t]o inqu[i]re about the [m]o[d]ern-[p]o[s]t[m]o[d]ern [d]iv[i]de, [i]s th[i]s [n]otion, which has [a]ch[ie]ved a j[i]had-[l]ike be[l]i[e]f [s]y[s]tem [a]round it, of the [B]ig [B]ang.

---10 231:326 .709 [N]ow, [p]er[s]o[n]a[lly], I'm [n]ot exact[lly] a [p]r[o]p[o]n[ent] of this [n]o[t]ion, [p]r[i]m[a]rily be[c]ause it [s]tri[k]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]tr[i]kes me as an i[d]ea that's [a]ttem[p]ting [t]o im[p]r[ove] [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]i[n]d[lly] [b]e[l]i[e]ving in God, and [m]a[k]ing [i]t [s]omehow [m]ore [i]d[i]oti[c]. [T]here's an i[d]ea [th]at [th]ere was no[th]i[n]g, [th]en [s]ome[th]i[n]g 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[rea]s[ing] [s]peeds. [T]here's an idea [th]at our [s]en[s]or[y] [f]a[c]ult[ie]s, which are una[b]le to [a]ccu[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]icall[y] [p]o[s]tu[l]ating what o[cc]urred [b]i[l]l[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]iu[s]. It's a[n] i[d]ea [th]at's [e][ss]ential[l][y] a[n][t]i[th][e]tical [t]o the i[d]ea that [a] [f]ather on[l][y] [a]ch[ie]ves b[e]ing through his [s]on, [th]at [th]e [f]ather and [s]on, while ex[i][s]ting [i]n[d]epen[d]ently of one a[n]other, onl[y] [a]ch[ie]ve [b][e]ing [b]ecause of one a[n]other, [th]at [w]i[th]out [o]ne a[n]other th[ey], in many w[ay]s, [c]ea[s]e to exi[s]t.

---11 196:242 .810 It's on[l]y [b]een of [l]ate that [l]ve [f]ound m[y][s]el[f] [c][r][a]ving the [c][l]a[ss]i[c] [c]oo[k]ies and [c][r]eam [f][l][a]vor, and it's [b]een i[c]e [c]ream in parti[c]u[l]ar th[at] h[a]s [s]t[r]u[ck] my [c][r]avings 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, [l]ve [f]ound m[y][s]el[f] be[n]ding to a[n] e[qua]l[l]y a[c]ute urge to try [s]omething new---hard[l]y [s]ati[s]fied 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, [l] o[f]ten [f][i]nd m[y][s]el[f] [s]aying things [l]i[ke], '[l] [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? [l] feel l[i]k[e], [l] [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[e]vitable [r]e[m]or[s]e of the [i]n[i]tial [c][r][a]v[ing] [r]e[m]ai[n]ing un[q]uench[ed]!

---12 109:147 .741 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]ing and al[s]o from the idea [th]at [th]en [s]ome[th]ing o[cc]u[r]red, [i]n[s]tead [r]e[s]tr[i]c[t]ing [th]em[s]elves to [th]e [i]s [s]t[i]ll o[cc]u[r]ring. For b[o]th [S]y[m]e[o]n and the [p][o][s]t[m][o]dern n[o]vel [s]omething [i]s [s]t[i]ll o[c]curring, however, we're [n]ot [q]u[i]te as [c]on[c]e[r]ned [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.

---13 114:146 .781 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]l[s]o [f][e]eling as th[ough] [a][l]l [a]uto[b]iogra[ph]y is a[b]s[ur]d[i]s[t] f[i]ction, [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]t[m]o[de]rn 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]ffirms [H]im[s]el[f] as [F]ather.' [B]ut th[i]s [i]s p[er]ha[p]s 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]uiry!

---14 141:191 .738 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]l[y] l[o]ves n[o]thing
 [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]l[th]o[ut] a [d]o[ub]t his [f]ervent [d]i[s]b[e]l[ie]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]onu[m]en[t]al
 [p]o[s]t[m]o[d]ern n[o]vel? [I]t's a[n] [i]n[te]r[e]s[t]ing
 [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[o]k[ov], b[ut] most l[i]k[e]l[y]
 N[a]b[o]k[ov] a[s] much a[s] Haw[k]es. N[a]b[o]k[ov], and
 I'm [b]a[s]ing thi[s] on l[i]ttle to [n]othing, [s]trikes [m]e
 as [s]ome[o]ne who w[ould] b[e] l[oa]th to b[e] g[r]ouped
 to[g]ether with [S]y[m]e[o]n the New Theol[o]gian.

---15 166:210 .790 [I]n [h]i[s] [f]i[f]tieth [h]y[m]n
 [S]y[m]e[o]n [s]ensually n[o]tes, 'sh[e] [r]e[ach]ed out to
 me li[k]e a [b]r[e]a[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[i]s note [f]urther, as [p]erha[p]s [c]u[r]iou[s]l[y], our
 [a]uthor even [r]e[f]ers to the [F]ather (or the [S]on) [i]n
 th[i]s [q]uote as [α][υ]τή the [f]em[i]n[i]ne
 p[r]o[n]oun, he[n]c[e] the qu[o]te 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 ele[m]ent to be [f]ound in the [E]r[r]o[s],
 [r]e[f]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]erha[p]s e[v]en 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[f]er to the
 [F]ather e[m]p[loy]ing [p]r[i]m[a]r[i]l[y] the [m]ale
 [c]o[n]ju[n]c[t]ive, y[e]t I've n[e]ver [p]er[s]ona[l]l[y]
 [s]ub[s]c[ri]bed 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]y

[r]e[f][r]ain [f][r]om en[g][a]ging in pub[l]i[c]
st[a]te[m]ents [r]e[g]arding [c]o[n]ju[n][c]tive [m]atters.

---16 146:193 .756 Ulti[m]ate[l]y, [b][o]th the
p[o][s]t[m]oderni[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]uan[t]um [c]ha[r]a[c]ter of our [m]a[t]e[r]ial
exi[s]ten[c]e; while the po[s]t[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]u[s]ades [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[ng]
[c]om[p]l[e]te[l]y and [m]a[k]ing no ex[p]l[i]c[i]t
[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[e]lf was of a
[c]o[n]ju[n][c]tive deviation, [s]o to [s]p[ea]k,
[u][n]i[que] to his mil[ieu], [th]at of [th]e [eu][n]u[ch],
alth[ough] we d[o]n't kn[o]w thi[s] for [c]ertain.) The
[w]orld, its [q]u[ant]um [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!

---17 141:192 .734 [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]el[f]? [H]ow [c]ould we [p]o[ss]ibly [h]ave [t]ime [f]or anything e[l]l[s]e, if we're a[t]t[em]p[t]ing [t]o [m][ai]nt[ai]n a [m][o]di[c]um of h[o]ne[s]ty with our[s]e[l]ves?

---18 113:144 .785 [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 [t]hat [t]heir [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]eet [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]ne 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]en[c]e that re[m][ai]ns [s]o [p]erv[a]sive [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[r]ing Ave[n]ue gets k[n]o[ck]ed [d]own.