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The Jeremiad: Readings of African-American and Jewish Testimonial Literature

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## Abstract

### The Jeremiad: Readings of African-American and Jewish Testimonial Literature

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This thesis aims to discover similar announcements of a biblical testimonial tradition in the African-American and Jewish literary contexts. The thesis consists of four sections; a chapter discussing the poetic tradition initiated by the Book of Jeremiah; the similarities between slave and pogrom narratives' the archival projects of authors Stefan Zweig and Toni Morrison; a novella as coda written by myself. Through readings of each tradition's poetics followed by my personal response to testimonial literature, I intend to make more visible the eternal significance of community, memory, and trauma in each person's testimony. This thesis does not intend to equate the experiences of African-American, Jewish, or any oppressed peoples, but to highlight the necessity of testimony as a means of overcoming oppositional barriers to culture, language, and identity.

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Finally, I would not have the ability to speak were it not for my parents. Everything that I am proud to be was provided in lesson or love by them, and I wish everyone family as supportive of their passions as my own.

## Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. The Cycle of Prophecy and Catastrophe	3
3. Birth into Tragedy	10
4. The Obsessive Postmodernists	24
5. Ringworld	39
6. Bibliography	77

## **Introduction**

Though the framework for this thesis was solidified in the spring of my junior semester at Emory, traces of this thesis originate as early as the summer following my sophomore year. It was during that time I read Jewish testimonial literature as part of a directed study with professor Jill Robbins, a reading list originally designed by the late Elie Wiesel.<sup>1</sup> During this time, I was equally curious and horrified at what I read, for how the literature contained such depraved depictions of humanity yet retained significance to me, a Jewish-American man in the twenty-first century. I became interested in how the same vibrant voice sustained through centuries of anti-Semitic oppression, and it was from further reading I discovered its poetic roots in the Book of Jeremiah.

It was with Jeremiah's poetics in mind that I studied slave narratives the next fall, appreciating similar attention to voice and memory in a seemingly disparate literary tradition. Knowing I would complete a Comparative Literature thesis, I chose to study the similarities between both literary traditions, so that the distant voice of Jeremiah resonated clearly, connected the two cultures in mutable understanding of trauma. My approach in this thesis is to stay close to primary sources in reaction to the treatment of both literary traditions evident in my time as an undergraduate student. My thesis seeks to bring into view storytelling intertwined with exegesis.

I have included a novella to end the thesis. During my research for the thesis, I traveled to Vienna to translate Stefan Zweig's *Die Welt Von Gestern* and located the names of my own family at the Mauthausen concentration camp. Realizing my own heritage was implicated in the following testimonials, I felt compelled to respond and commit to the same tradition my identity

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<sup>1</sup> Professor Jill Robbins served as Elie Wiesel's T.A. during the 1981-1982 academic year at Yale University.



has developed out of.<sup>2</sup> As the last section on Stefan Zweig and Toni Morrison studies the literary play and possibility for the Jeremiah model to exist outside either culture, I wrote what I feel is the necessary next step in testimonial literature. Titled *Ringworld*, my novella portrays the experience of a young Jewish man in nineteenth century Vienna, utilizing elements of magical realism and futurism to portray the experience of testifying to one's genealogical experience of catastrophe.

In writing this thesis, I hope to argue for the mutability of experience between disparate cultures such as Jewish and African America. I believe the distances between the trauma of cultures shortens. The thesis never argues for the reciprocity of catastrophe, but how the testimony is an enduring model of representation that retains significance over its two thousand years of existence. The thesis never argues universality; it hopes to show common representational strategies when accounting for the experience of apocalypse.

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<sup>2</sup> The novella *Ringworld* was first written and workshopped in Professor Jim Grimsley's Intermediate Fiction class in Fall 2016.

## The Cycle of Prophecy and Catastrophe

For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself, and to all thy friends: and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and thine eyes shall behold it.<sup>3</sup>

The Book of Jeremiah's poetic diction voices multiple tragedies, but perhaps none as visceral as the prophet's own. Detained by the very same people he preaches salvation to, Jeremiah openly laments not only his fate but that of his people and their imminent destruction. In the stocks, Jeremiah recalls God's proclamation, how he become a terror to himself and his loved ones, whose future deaths he is made to witness. Why was Jeremiah detained? Because he is bound by God's will to prophesize Jerusalem's fall, a horrifying voice among his people. Jeremiah's prophecy haunts himself and those around him, as God designed. Moreover, Jeremiah has witnessed his and Jerusalem's fate since God's appointed him as prophet. The vision of his people's annihilation isolates him.

The tragedy of Jeremiah is the recognition of approaching catastrophe and the helplessness before it. Jeremiah is witness to the destruction of Jerusalem and the eventual Jewish diaspora long before it arrives, privy to an apocalyptic destruction he could never hope to prevent. And who delivers this knowledge to Jeremiah? It is God who chooses Jeremiah as prophet, but the prophet's words will not convert his people. Jeremiah is tortured by God; the prophet ceaselessly witnesses God's wrath, an apocalypse for which he feels somehow responsible. And yet, Jeremiah continues to speak God's word, there is no other choice.

Because the Book of Jeremiah centers on Jeremiah's poetic tragedy, it serves as the definitive catastrophe narrative of the Judeo-Christian Bible. My attempt to privilege the Bible

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<sup>3</sup>Jeremiah 20:4, *King James Bible* (KJB), (Holman Bible Publishers, Nashville Tennessee, 2012), and *Hebrew-English Tanakh* (HET), (The Jewish Publication Society, New York, 2000); all subsequent references are to be included in the text.

into Jeremiah services two aspects of my exegetical work: to seek common affinities in Jewish and African-American testimonial literature and to think through styles and poetic structures in relation to Jeremiah. But how does one link disparate historical contexts? In *Hurban: Responses to Catastrophe in Hebrew Literature*, Alan Mintz constructs a model of testimony that is repeated throughout Jewish literary history. In his establishment of a genealogy, Mintz asserts that Lamentations is the earliest and formative gesture by Jews in the diaspora to write on catastrophe.

I have chosen texts from Lamentations...because they work through the main features of the generic structures that play the greatest role in the later literature of Israel: lamentation, consolation, and apocalypse. I have not used Jeremiah...because [its] fierce belief in the covenant paradigm was not seriously shaken by the Destruction. The authors of Lamentations write out of traditions more deeply attached to the monarchy and the sanctuary, and the sudden loss of those institutions was experienced in a more immediately calamitous way.<sup>4</sup>

Mintz's reasoning follows historical presumption that Lamentations was written by Judeans still residing in the region following the destruction of the Holy Temple. In his terms, Lamentations is a result of latent psychological responses to the historic catastrophe that disassociated Judaism from nationalistic ties such as Jerusalem's religious monarchy. Were this work only a review of Jewish testimony, then Mintz has already written all that needs to be said. However, *Hurban* examines only the evolution of Hebrew poetics; constructing further literary analogues requires a different definition. I believe the book of Jeremiah contains essential provisions for a commonality between distinctive cultures' testimonial narratives. I have chosen to read the Bible in the King James and Jewish translations when exemplifying the poetic diction that resonates across translation traditions. Both text have also developed nuances specific to purposing their writing for distinctly Christian and Jewish audiences respectively. The Jeremiah text provides by

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<sup>4</sup> Mintz, Alan, *Hurban: Responses to Catastrophe*, (Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, 1996), 22.

way of narrative and poetic structures the emergent divide between God and his people, one that comes into view in dialogue between God and prophet Jeremiah. Within Jeremiah, a prophet is called to save his people and fails; the very function of prophecy is undone by God. The contrasts of Jeremiah are found in God's sweeping rhetorical style, one that calls not only for Jerusalem's razing but Babylon's destruction as well.

When I will deal with her images,  
 And throughout her land the dying shall groan.  
 Though Babylon should climb to the skies.  
 Though she fortify her strongholds up to heaven,  
 The ravagers would come against her from Me  
 – declares the Lord. (Jeremiah 51:52-51:52, HET)

Here Jeremiah prophesizes the horrifying wrath of God on the idolatrous kingdoms of Jerusalem and Babylon, God will destroy not only two kingdoms but a major era of history. Each declaration by God wills the destruction of Jerusalem and Babylon, but the differences in how God wills catastrophe positions apocalypse and its function in divergent ways. Through Jeremiah, God affirms that, following Jerusalem's fall, Babylon would follow. Following Jerusalem's destruction, God keeps the threat to ravage Babylon. God becomes an enemy of the prideful Babylon, its phallic climb towards the heavens recalling the Tower of Babel while also anthropomorphizing the city as a woman.<sup>5</sup> God punishes Babylon with the same ravaging that came to the Hebrew people; an ironic sort of justice.

Jeremiah's lamentation is a catastrophe narrative under the terms established by Mintz, in that "it convulses or vitiates shared assumptions about the destiny of the Jewish people in the world."<sup>6</sup> In the razing of Jerusalem, God's promise is revoked from the chosen people. This destruction disrupts the pattern of previous books, in which the Hebrew people are punished for

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<sup>6</sup> Mintz, *Hurban*, 2.

their sins, but shepherded by their prophets. In the overthrow of Babylon, the Hebrew people are freed from their captors by God, but the destruction of the Babylonian kingdom alters and inaugurates their contemporary history, the diasporic narrative will continue for the next two millennia. The catastrophe of Jeremiah occurs to the Hebrew people's history and future, upsetting expected outcomes and reinterpreting their fates. God's language towards Babylon challenges what audiences understand from oppressors. What is the significance of likening the Hebrew's captors to Biblical legends to a violated woman? When the Hebrew writers faced a context without precedent, even the historical antagonist, Babylon, received pastoral care. The book's complications arise from attempted reconciliation between the loss of faith in covenant paradigm and its renewal.

This inability to reconcile history and future, God's wanton destruction of all context, is represented in Jeremiah's lamentation. As a prophet, Jeremiah's failure is pervasive. Alan Mintz provides characteristics of the testimonial interlocutor, of which Jeremiah exemplifies three: "(1) the reflexive focus of the writer on his own ordeal in writing about the catastrophe, and thus, the balance of attention between his drama and the event itself; (2) the role of figurative language in representing this subject, especially metaphor, analogy, and parable; (3) the burden or opportunity presented by the texts of the past in the accumulating traditions of catastrophe."<sup>7</sup> Each characteristic of the testimonial interlocutor is evident in the Book of Jeremiah, but Jeremiah's trials as a prophet violently contour this format to the prophet's visceral account of subjective experience. The fate of the diasporic prophet fails to explain catastrophe through existing literary culture. The resulting text situates Jeremiah as interlocutor of history, inviting future literary cultures to appropriate the tragic prophet. The prophet's purpose in each biblical

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<sup>7</sup> Mintz, *Hurban*, 2.

narrative is to relate God's word. The biblical prophet can only ever fulfill this role; God calls to the prophet and is predetermined.

Before I created you in the womb, I selected you;  
 Before you were born, I consecrated you;  
 I appointed you a prophet concerning the nations. (Jeremiah 1:5, HET)

Before he was even conceived, a sort of pre-ordination, God designates the new prophet.

Jeremiah's designation as prophet is then God's charge to the prophet to fulfill the biblical narrative, speak God's will and convert the sinning congregation of Jerusalem. God designed Jeremiah's existence around prophesizing either redemption or catastrophe for the Hebrew people, and yet God obstructs Jeremiah in his duties. Jeremiah's prophecy of Jerusalem's fall may be averted through his people's repentance, but Jerusalem's citizens will continue to turn from God's word. Jeremiah fails to convert the people of Jerusalem back towards God, and the kingdom subsequently falls. The unprecedented diaspora necessitates an innovation. After Jeremiah prophesizes and fails multiple times, God instructs Jeremiah to repeat his efforts, but explains that he is doomed to fail.

Therefore you shalt speak all these words unto them; but they will not hearken to thee: thou shalt call unto them; but they will not answer thee. But you shall say unto them, this *is* a nation that obeyth not the voice of the LORD their God, nor receiveth correction: truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth. (Jeremiah 7:27-7:28, KJB)

In each instance of Jeremiah, the Hebrew people will not return to God and destruction will occur regardless of the prophet's action. Jeremiah is aware of his predetermined failure, yet cannot resist God's call. In Jeremiah's compulsion to speak may audiences find his tragedy. The tragedy of Jeremiah's compulsion comes from an understanding of the original Hebrew Jeremiah

speaks in a style known as “prophetic perfect.”<sup>8</sup> When Jeremiah prophesizes the certain apocalypse, he speaks as if it was already occurring around him. This event – the full sense of catastrophe – impinges on all of Jeremiah’s senses. Jeremiah will even curse God, describing the tolls prophecy takes on his body. “O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me,” laments Jeremiah, in a surprisingly intimate outcry. (Jeremiah 20:7, KJB) It is important to note that this apocalyptic designation by God is evident throughout the bible, not just within prophetic tradition. In his own desperation, Job damns his own conception, crying out “Perish the day on which I was born, and the night it was announced, ‘A male has been conceived!’” (Job 3:3, HET) Job realizes his very being is tied to God’s judgement and catastrophe wrought. For Job to no longer suffer, Job must not exist. God’s designation may charge the man with becoming prophet but this seems more a curse than a blessing.

The images of deception and overpowering recall images of seduction and assault, a moment that both signifies the oncoming apocalypse and the Hebrew community’s rage at God.<sup>9</sup> Speech by Jeremiah directly addressed to God reflects the horror of being witness to such an event at the cost of faith. Even the standard structure of prophcyt is called into question in calling God a deceiver; there is no possible reconciliation with God and biblical narrative after this point. I believe Jeremiah’s failure to convert and his lamenting God signal the end of biblical literature; the diasporic community must develop new modes of expression to reconcile their fate.

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<sup>8</sup> Fishbane, Michael, *Text and Texture: Close Readings of Selected Biblical Texts*, (Schocken Books, Berlin, 1079), 93.

<sup>9</sup> Fishbane, *Text and Texture*, 94.

The book of Jeremiah provisions for post-biblical narrative through prophethood. Jeremiah describes the experience of bodily compulsion to prophesize. It is as if Jeremiah is vessel for God's wrath, crying out "my bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart...O my soul, the sound of the trumpet." (Jeremiah 4:19, KJB) Yet Jeremiah retains knowledge of failure, conflicting prophecy and destiny. Because the Hebrew people will not heed Jeremiah, his prophecy is precognizant narrative of the fall of Jerusalem.

But I am filled with the wrath of the LORD,  
 I cannot hold it in.  
 Pour it on the infant in the street,  
 And on the company of youths gathered together!  
 Yes, men and women alike shall be captured,  
 Elders and those of advanced years.  
 Their houses shall pass to others,  
 Fields and wives as well,  
 For I will stretch out My arm  
 Against the inhabitants of the country  
 - declares the LORD (Jeremiah 6:11-6:12, HET)

God's wrath pours into the streets, on the urban and destitute. The writer of Jeremiah anthropomorphizes God, imaging arm and hand extending over the Hebrew people. Here, the literary culture of diasporic Jews appropriated biblical tradition to record and lament the destruction of Jerusalem. This is made explicit in the next book, Lamentations, which revolves around one man's lamentations following the fall of Jerusalem. The style of Jeremiah is emphatically collective. The subjective recounting of Jeremiah's collective experience offers a communicable rubric for later generations to respond to catastrophe.



## **Birth Into Tragedy: The Folk Testimonials of Slave and Pogrom Literature**

The next task is locating the creation of Jewish and African-American testimonial literature, what narratives became integral to their production and how the Jeremiad tradition provided the vocabulary. But where could one pinpoint the beginning for either culture's testimonial tradition, and what could be gleaned from their difference? The correct method towards defining testimonial literature in Jewish and African-American contexts must develop from intrinsic criteria rather than extrinsic values. It would be inappropriate to propose preexisting conditions from which testimony arose, such as structural models that catastrophic narratives must fit into. Rather, the testimonials of either culture readily inscribe a biblical background to their performative gestures. Each proceeding testimonial's immediacy elucidates an intentional, repeated cultural expression.

Moving from Jeremiah into distinct Jewish and African-American literary cultures is difficult for many reasons, chief among them the historical disparity between them. Locating the Jeremiad structures within slave narratives requires a precise separation of the impressions white political and economic interests had on the narratives of Solomon Northrup and Frederick Douglas. In the survey of rabbinical narratives of eastern Europe, one must contend with the centuries of history and culture that pogrom testimony narrates. The Jeremiad tradition provides the literary tradition that pogrom and slave narratives drew from to respond to oppression, to recontextualize and lament.

The creation of African-American testimony occurs with the birth of the culture's literary form. The horrors of colonial slave trade, the middle passage, the objectification of African peoples transmuted populations into slaves. These African peoples, in bondage and barred access from one another, experienced diaspora of physical and spiritual proportions. So caustic were the

damages wrought by slave traders and economies that this new population was no longer connected to African culture, but wholly distinct as African-American. The iconographies of African identity that did persist, despite the separation of generations, could not be recorded; slaves were kept illiterate.

Even without an archive, African-American communities were not entirely incapable of testimony; this is evident in the two centuries of poetics found in liturgy, music, and oral history. Yet without literacy, slave communities could not record their occurring apocalypse. What slaves that could escape to the North and could testify to the apocalypse of bondage, often did so under the constraints of a white interlocutor, patron or literal transcription. Those that achieved freedom of expression through their literacy were still inducted into a literary culture informed by the poetics and theology of their white handlers, Anglo-Saxon Christianity.

This inseparable distinction from early Anglo-American culture is necessary to understand the literary tools at hand for the assemblage of African-American narrative. A community without cultural archive invariably draws from its surroundings, and so the earliest African-American writings rooted themselves in the Puritan literary tradition of their white masters. The work of scholar Sacvan Bercovitch structures a genealogy of American intellectual history, titled *The American Jeremiad*. In the preface to his study, Bercovitch succinctly describes the puritanical mode of American literature:

I approach the myth by way of the jeremiad, or the *political sermon*, as the New England Puritans sometimes called this genre, meaning thereby to convey the dual nature of their calling, as practical and as spiritual guides, and to suggest that, in their church-state, theology was wedded to politics and politics to the progress of the kingdom of God.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Bercovitch, Sacvan, *The American Jeremiad*, (University of Wisconsin Press, 114 North Murray Street, 1978), xiv.

This provision of theology wedded with poetics helps to identify the conversionary sermon style of writing evident in the first African-American literature, slave narratives. Each slave narrative contains this conversionary mode; the slave begins life in bondage, but reading the Bible saves him or her to convert a white audience to abolitionism. As Bercovitch states, this puritan mode believes in an already existing kingdom of God, America. For a former slave, this ideology is not sustainable because their very existence disproves such a thing. And yet, in order to deliver not only abolitionist argument but their very identity, African-Americans had to write in a style readily accepted by white audiences.

But I forbear. Chastened and subdued in spirit by the sufferings I have borne, and thankful to that good Being through whose mercy I have been restored to happiness and liberty, I hope henceforward to lead an upright though lowly life, and rest at last in the church yard where my father sleeps.<sup>11</sup>

Solomon Northup ends *12 Years A Slave* with the most humble of returns to freedom. Following a series of heavy-handed strikes at slavery, Northup withdraws to a position of powerlessness. Northup thanks God for restoring his happiness and liberty. Rather than end in an exaltation of his return to freedom, Northup hopes for his death. Why does Northup's return to freedom after 12 years end on such terms? The reparative movement from bondage to freedom should incur joy, elation, something other than Northup's hope to join the dead. One possibility rests in Northup's already having had freedom. After losing his freedom, Northup would want nothing more than to live a calm, untampered life. Northup's reference to his spirit, however, invokes more than just a return to peace. Spirit and life are not directly linked in this passage; Northup is free but thanks God from a lowly position. While he is physically free, this passage reveals a readily occurring spiritual suffering. The movement from bondage to freedom has done nothing

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<sup>11</sup> Northup, Solomon, *12 Years A Slave*, (Penguin Books, 375 Hudson Street, NY), 217.

for Northup; the damage has already been done. When Northup looks forward to death, it comes from a man who is still feeling the violence of oppression.

The immediacy of oppression is readily apparent when one considers the rest of Northup's narrative. Though *12 Years A Slave* was dictated sometime after his freedom, Northup recalls the sensation of oppression as if it is readily occurring. Rather than relate slavery at a safe, structured distance, Northup's testimony implies a constant recollection of all experiences. The very structure of slave narratives implies this; the language and structure of key moments from bondage are not so much recreated as relayed by an active participant to their past. Rather than simply rehearse the expected puritan model of his white oppressors, Northup's style of prophecy recalls Jeremiah, whose body perpetually toiled with the oncoming apocalypse.

Though Northup testifies he is at a nadir, this does not mean he or any slave is perpetually oriented in slavery. Testimony is not a direct result of slavery, but a form of response to its oppression. To assume Northup or any former slave recollects without intention is reductive and harmful to understanding a potent literary tradition. To only read slave testimony as a literary form also ignores the intentioned sociopolitical dynamic each narrator works toward. Rather, slave narratives utilize the literary models of white oppressors to speak against puritan safeguards and presumptions. As we will see in Toni Morrison's work, African-American testimony achieves literary greatness while critically engaging with its own identity.

The intertwining of literary and sociopolitical was a fundamental aspect of the slave narrative. As scholar Frances Smith Foster explains, "it was necessary for the narrator to integrate the individual with the symbolic and the subjective with the objective."<sup>12</sup> This form

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<sup>12</sup> Foster, Frances Smith, *Witnessing Slavery*, (Greenwood Press, London), pg. 75.

developed out of necessary appeals to white readership, “attacks on American slavery and not upon the attitudes which helped introduce and sustain the peculiar form.<sup>13</sup>” While this balancing act limited the scope of criticism, it also established a new literary style. The slave narrative invited poeticization of an already harrowing experience. The slave narrative accepted its epic qualities to strengthen, rather than conflict with, the personal histories that carried works.

By the time Northup publishes his testimony, the literary tradition of slave narrative is well established. *12 Years A Slave* is Northup’s personal horrors reinforced by expected poetic qualities; his personal testimony is interlocked with a radically new form of biography. Line by line, Northup charges his experiences with potent stylings.

In a short time I became thirsty. My lips were parched. I could think of nothing but water – of lakes and flowing rivers, of brooks where I had stooped to drink, and of the dripping bucket, rising with its cool and overflowing nectar, from the bottom of the well.<sup>14</sup>  
(Northup, 17)

This moment precedes Northup’s capture. In a presumably drugged haze, Northup desires water. His desire extends not just to a drink of water but entire bodies of it: lakes and rivers and brooks. This thirst extends to larger bodies only to retract to just a bucket drawn from a well. Though Northup will momentarily sate his thirst, the “burning desire” returns to torment him. Northup relates the sensation of thirst as a being dried up, requiring vast amounts of water to fulfill the absence in his life. The two narrative units connected to this moment – Northup’s drinking liquor with the circus troop and his being captured – inform the heavy sensation of thirst in this passage. Water alleviates the hangover that often follows drinking. The want of flowing rivers symbolizes the want of free flowing life. The need of water is biological *and* metaphysical.

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<sup>13</sup> Foster, *Witnessing Slavery*, 75.

<sup>14</sup> Northup, *12 Years A Slave*, 5.

The style with which Northup recounts his illness here is markedly severe; the language of this chapter uses adjectives more frequently than the previous chapters, which had recounted Northup's free years. To a first-time reader, the transition is jarring and inorganic. *12 Years A Slave*, Northup's dictated experience of slavery, utilizes multi-temporal, conflicting experiences and visceral memory that cannot be reduced to aesthetic appropriation. This is a difficult act for autobiographical writers, to "maintain a balance between self and the world, the subjective and the objective."<sup>15</sup> With his multi-temporal strategy of testimony, Northup's narrative could be approached by white readers without modifying personal experience.

The potency of Northup's testimony in a sociopolitical context is its ability to present as visceral an experience of slavery as the reader can entertain. As Foster explains of the slave narrative's construction, "[the testimony] combined explicit assertions about the general pattern with [their] recitation of personal experiences in such a fashion that the reader saw the basic irony of the situation and began to perceive the fundamental insidiousness of the total institution."<sup>16</sup> Indeed, the slave narrative was as charged as an abolitionist construction could be. Moving through Northup's narrative requires proxy experience of his thirst, which also induces a proxy experience of bondage. The charge against slavery readily occurs in each moment of the narrative. When related through his testimony, Northup's thirst is a direct confrontation with palliative representations of slavery.

But only to imply a sociopolitical imperative to Northup's experience would be reductive. The multi-temporal thirst actively rejects definition. Rather, it would benefit to examine Northup's thirst further. In chapter IX of *12 Years A Slave*, Northup is precariously

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<sup>15</sup> Foster, *Witnessing Slavery*, 65.

<sup>16</sup> Foster, *Witnessing Slavery*, 75.

hung from a tree branch by Tibcats. Northup hangs far enough from the tree that he is exposed to the sun from noon until sunset. A recounting of thirst and thought follows:

I was growing faint from pain, and thirst, and hunger... In the very hottest portion of the day, Rachel... ventured to me, and held a cup of water to my lips... Never did the sun move so slowly through the heavens...At least, so it appeared to me. What my meditations were - the innumerable thoughts that thronged through my distracted brain - I will not attempt to give expression to...Alas! They have never drunk, as I have, from the bitter cup of slavery.<sup>17</sup>

Rather than rush the reader with his experience, Northup draws out the day line by line. The painful sensation of hanging in the sun is delayed and stressed with commas, delaying the reader's movement through the passage. At the harshest hour of the day, Rachel offers a single cup of water to Northup; it is the only intervention on Northup's behalf during the day. Northup believes even the sun is intentionally opposing him, delaying its descent. Northup says it is futile to relate the many thoughts that ran through his head, but accuses a Northern readership of never understanding his literal position of drinking from a cup.

As Foster writes, Northup's final statement utilizes the multi-temporal narrative to charge his readership guilty of voyeuristic, secondary relation to slavery. But the experience is more than that to Northup. The cup of slavery represents a political charge. The endless thoughts that occurred to Northup while hanging are apparently not as evocative as the cup. Rather than look towards the sunset, Northup ends the experience by returning to the Rachel's cup.

Why does Northup summarize his experience with Rachel's cup? On either side of the hottest time of day, Northup is worn down and removed. The cup of water immediately alleviates thirst, for which Northup is eternally grateful, but the sun does not stop bearing down, wounding as often as the noose. The cup then, is an ironic piece of the scene, negating neither

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<sup>17</sup> Northup, Solomon, *12 Years A Slave*, pg. 78.

preceding nor proceeding visceral experience. The welcome breach by water and Rachel only exist in relation to the thirst and isolation. By orienting the cup as the symbol of the day's oppression, Northup rejects even the cup as salvation. Memory of a violent day destroys the grace of water; Northup cannot drink the water without being reminded of his removal from all others. To drink the water is to remind himself of his place, hanging from the tree.

Slavery has violated the sanctity of water for Northup, actively triggering a direct association with the thirst he experienced in bondage. When Northup testifies to his thirst, it is very obviously a procedurally generated sensation given his relation of hardship to the cup. The implicit violence that slavery enacted on Northup's experience was to irrevocably associate freedom, water, to thirst. Though the physical bonds of slavery have been removed, the violence repeats in relation to all other sensations. Even when free, Northup cannot dissociate himself from the isolation and pain of thirst. The testimony procedurally reaches across into a white audience's distance, drawing the past into the present and enveloping the very biology of its audience.

When a former slave testifies to his experience, he can invoke all possible violence. Northup's employment of the testimonial tradition assaults his white audience, while other narratives strike further at temporal association. Slavery's oppression was not just the physical violence but the irrevocable damage to temporality as well. Foster lists several recurring properties of the slave narrative, noting "another piece...was the birthday or, more exactly, the absence of a birth date...the absence of a more specific birth date becomes another example of the dehumanization of slavery."<sup>18</sup> The prevention of a birth date was the removal of an origin

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<sup>18</sup> Foster, *Witnessing Slavery*, 77.



point for a slave. The birth date is important because it identifies when one began to exist; for a slave the birth date represents the beginning of slavery. Without an origin point the slave can only understand himself as perpetually existing in slavery. In his narrative, Frederick Douglass takes no time to introduce the reader to his predicament. Like Northup, Douglass employs literary tradition to connect individual instances violence to an oppressive narrative. His testimony intentionally plays with the absence of an origin point.

I do not remember to have ever met a slave who could tell of his birthday. They seldom came nearer to it than planting-time, harvest-time, cherry-time, spring-time, or fall-time. A want of information concerning my own was a source of unhappiness to me even during childhood. The white children could tell their ages. I could not tell why I ought to be deprived of the same privilege. I was not allowed to make any inquires of my master concerning it. He deemed all such inquiries on the part of a slave improper and impertinent, and evidence of a restless spirit.<sup>19</sup>

Though this is Douglass' narrative, he reminds his readers that his experience is like that of all in bondage. A slave's inability to recall an origin point is linked to the definite time spent on a plantation. What time Douglass can claim as childhood is pained by the absence of an origin. The fact white children can claim an origin extends the absence into Douglass' sense of isolation; he can neither understand his predicament nor ask his master further. Indeed, Douglass' master is right to identify his "restless" spirit because Douglass cannot recall a time before his unhappiness. Douglass' testimony is not as immediately visceral as Northup's, but provokes a deeper unease. Slavery completely erases the birth date from history; the violent removal of the origin point keeps the slave perpetually restless. The restlessness found in displaced origin is a diasporic anxiety, one that is also evidenced in Jeremiah's restless in attempt to recall a birthplace. Douglass' narrative wields this restlessness, forces the white audience to confront slavery's violence through their own models of expression.

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<sup>19</sup> Douglass, Frederick, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas*, (Dover Publications, NY), 1.

If the former slave is perpetually wounded by his temporal disorientation, then his narrative provides no means of closure. The narrative's multi-temporal structure exists without relation to origin or end; it turns on itself. Douglass' testimony operates as a narrative in conversation with itself. Douglass witnesses the repeated beating of his aunt by his master, recalls it with his revolving testimonial style.

I have often been awakened at the dawn of day by the most heart-rending shrieks of an own aunt of mine, whom he used to tie up to a joist, and whip upon her back...No words, no tears, no prayers, from his gory victim, seemed to move his iron heart from its bloody purpose. The louder she screamed, the harder he whipped; and where the blood ran fastest, there he whipped longest...to make her scream, to make her hush. I remember the first time I ever witnessed this horrible exhibition...I never shall forget it...it was the first of a long series of such outrages, of which I was doomed to be a witness...I wish I could commit to paper the feelings with which I beheld it.<sup>20</sup>

And yet Douglass commits. The detail he provides to this single beating is all the narrative needs to sustain its momentum. The master's violence is mechanical, an iron machine that only responds to black pain. The reader is made to understand that the master draws this pain carefully, tactically striking Douglass' aunt to extend her wounding. Her cries rend Douglass' heart, reinforcing the notion that the master is a mechanical violence. Douglass is doomed because without an origin point and with a future containing more violence. He procedurally witnesses an unbearable present. All Douglass can do is witness his aunt's shrieks and bleeding, which in turn create more beatings.

Though Douglass cannot commit his own feelings to testimony, he can relate the eternal return to this first violence. Douglass connects his experience of oppression to that of another person in similar circumstances. While his aunt is only ever witnessed in pain by the audience, Douglass' testifying to his aunt's experience co-implicates them. In a radically combative

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<sup>20</sup> Douglas, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas*, 3-4.

gesture, Douglass has white audiences cohabit his doomed sensation. Douglass forms a multi-experiential bond to wound and to remind. When Douglass testifies to the witnessed violence, he displays solidarity with his aunt in her experiences. Given Douglass' repeated reference to fellow slaves, this solidarity in the face of a master's abuse extends to all victims of oppression.

The literary medium uses an attentive eye to the cross-temporal, imagined landscape in order to testify to present suffering. As the authors of Jeremiah constructed a communicable prophet to link the diasporic Jews to their promised land, so too could any dispossessed community secure its experience through the craft of testimony. The testimonial rubric of Jeremiah, an individual tasked with responding to unprecedented catastrophe, provisions a tragic voice that retains its interiority. Africans-Americans, emerging from the broiling depravity of slavery, configured the testimony not only as a novel literary mode but also the tool with which each individual trial was commemorated, validated, and sanctified. This performative recognition by the slave narrative is to be an integral aspect of African-American testimony, undermining white oppression through the creation of literature that celebrates the individual.

What is the use of the testimonial narratives for the Jewish survivors of European pogroms? From the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries, the Ashkenazi Jews of Central and Eastern Europe were prey to pogrom by the local territories. During this time, the Jewish people were not so much targeted by crusade but exterminated as recourse in the shifting political landscape. The pogrom of 1648, now remembered as the Chmielnicki massacres, began with the insurrection of Ukrainian peasantry to drive out Polish colonizers, Ashkenazi Jews being the primary administrators of Polish land. Led by Bogdan Chmielnicki, the resistance of Polish rule led to the death of one hundred thousand Jews, the razing of three hundred Jewish

communities, and enslavement of many more Jews in that year alone.<sup>21</sup> Until the Holocaust, no pogrom matched the Chmielnicki massacres on such an immense scale, and it has certainly been remembered as a definite apocalypse in Jewish history. Many accounts were written following the massacres, but none so pivotal as Rabbi Nathan Hanover's *Yeven Metsulah*, or *Abyss of Despair*. The Rabbi witnessed most of the pogroms firsthand, often fleeing from the cities as the Ukrainians invaded. *Abyss of Despair* is Rabbi Hanover's firsthand testimony to the massacre, and yet the Rabbi is entirely absent from his own testimony.

That is to say, Rabbi Hanover supplants a personal self with a plurality; *Abyss of Despair* only testifies in "we" or "us." The book presents the Chmielnicki massacres without any of the emotional bereavement found in earlier iterations of Jewish testimony. For example, the following testimony chronicles the massacre of Ostrog, Rabbi Hanover's birthplace and the site of his father's death.

And it came to pass at midnight of the 19<sup>th</sup> of the aforementioned month of Adar, that many thousands of Cossacks came into the city of Ostrog and slew all the nobles and the Jews in their beds. Only three Jews and one officer of the nobles with eighty of his troops escaped. The Cossacks pursued them, and the nobles continued to flee ahead of them until several thousand Ukrainians had followed them from the city. Then the nobles turned their faces toward their pursuers and killed many among them, leaving only a few who escaped into the city.<sup>22</sup>

The account of the Ostrog massacre consists of only the first sentence in a paragraph, the rest recounts the heroic resistance of four Jews against impossible odds. The remainder of the paragraph contrasts to impossible lengths as well; the hundreds of Jews are murdered in their sleep, while less than one hundred singlehandedly repel thousands. The testimony lacks emotion, issues statements without qualification, listing the murders as consequence. The testimony

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<sup>21</sup> Mintz, *Hurban*, 103.

<sup>22</sup> Hanover, Nathan, *Abyss of Despair*, (Transcasion Publers, New Brunswick), 95.

attains an austere quality, a faux-distance which limits association, and focuses on the event of itself. The narration imitates biblical historicism, the cyclical process of God's chosen people beset by calamity understood as a result of sin. *Abyss of Despair* centralizes a literary phenomenon of post-renaissance Jewish culture, what Yosef Yerushalmi defines as the contention between biblical roots and current atrocities.<sup>23</sup> As a culture that developed out of the diasporic Hebrew people, the Ashkenazi Jews retained their tradition of biblical exegesis but broadened the context in response to pogroms, inquisitions, and crusades. By providing Biblical context to their plight, the narrator sanctifies lives lost before God. In Rabbi Hanover's case, this meant configuring the Chmielnicki massacres within the same parameters as the fall of Jerusalem. This is evident in the emotionless detailing of the massacres, which prescribes consolation to the surviving Jews at the end of the testimony to Ostrog. There, Rabbi Hanover accounts for the current Polish state, which is reigned by "the sword, famine, and a great pestilence."<sup>24</sup> The empires surrounded the again dispersed Jews recalls the book of Jeremiah's ruptured world, where catastrophe wreaks havoc on all. Jewish settlements before the Chmielnicki massacres are recounted at the end of *Abyss of Despair*, a portrait of life relaying peace and duty to God.<sup>25</sup> This idyllic Jewish history is without requisite sin to qualify the catastrophe, an issue Hanover contends with at the end of his account. The collective massacred Jews come before God to ask why, and God answers.

What can we say, what can we speak, or how can we justify ourselves? Shall we say we have not sinned? Behold, our iniquities testify against us. For we have sinned, and the Lord found out the iniquity of his servants...But we must say that "He whom God loveth he castiseth"...Read not Mimikdoshi (from my sanctuary), but read Mimikudoshai (from

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<sup>23</sup> Yerushalmi, Yosef Hayim, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, (University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1996), 5

<sup>24</sup> Hanover, Nathan, *Abyss of Despair*, 109

<sup>25</sup> Hanover, Nathan, *Abyss of Despair*, 110

my sanctified.) For since the day the Holy Temple was destroyed the righteous are seized by death for the iniquities of the generation.<sup>26</sup>

For subsequent generations, this rationalizing theodicy may alienate. But for these generations of Ashkenazi Jews, the biblical rubric of testimony provided a reason for the pogroms. This is evident in Rabbi Hanover's narration; he speaks in plurality because his experience of the massacres is that of every Jew, and every Jew's experience becomes his own.

The next generation of Jewish testimonial writers reacted to the rigid biblical structures of Rabbi Hanover's style. One such author was the Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav, who wrote Hasidic folktales. These tales drew from genres such as gothic horror, science fiction, and European tall tales to produce unapproachable, obfuscated tales of apocalypse. Rabbi Nahman's story *The Cripple* involves a king composed of clouds, a city of demons, and a hollow earth supported by a dying tree.<sup>27</sup> Parsing Nahman's fictions would require a chapter unto itself, but I believe it necessary to gesture towards the literary innovations of Nahman's style. By removing the biblical narrative while incorporating wildly juxtaposing genres into the testimonial narrative, the Rabbi argued for the testimonial's significance in all contexts.

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<sup>26</sup> Hanover, Nathan, *Abyss of Despair*, 109.

<sup>27</sup> Nahman, *The Tales of Nahman of Bratslav*, (Paulist Press, New York, 1978), 93.

## The Obsessive Postmodernists: The Reinvention of Testimony

Still und eng und ruhig auferzogen  
Wirft man uns auf einmal in die Welt  
Uns unspülen hunderttausend Wogen  
Alles reizt uns, mancherlei gefällt  
Mancherlei verdrießt uns, und von Stund zu Stunden  
Schwankt das leicht unruhige Gefühl;  
Wir empfinden, und was wir empfunden,  
Spült hinweg bunte Weltgewühl.

*Goethe*

Wenn ich versuche, für die Zeit vor dem Ersten Weltkriege, in der ich aufgewachsen bin, eine handliche Formel zu finden, so hoffe ich am prägnantesten zu sein, wenn ich sage: es war das goldene Zeitalter der Sicherheit. Alles in unsere fast tausendjährigen österreichischen Monarchie schien auf Dauer gegründet und der Staat selbst der oberste Garant dieser Beständigkeit. Die Rechte, die er seinen Bürgern gewährte, waren verbrieft vom Parlament, der frei gewählten Vertretung des Volkes, und jede Pflicht genau begrenzt. Unsere Währung, die österreichische Krone, lief in blanken Goldstücken um und verbürgte damit ihre Unwandelbarkeit. Jeder wußte, wieviel er besaß oder wieviel ihm zukam, was erlaubt und was verboten war. Alles hatte seine Norm, sein bestimmtes Maß und Gewicht. Wer ein Vermögen besaß, konnte genau errechnen, wieviel an Zinsen es alljährlich zubrachte, der Beamte, der Offizier wiederum fand im Kalender verlässlich das Jahr, in dem er avancieren würde und in dem er in Pension gehen würde. Jede Familie hatte ihr bestimmtes Budget, sie wußte, wieviel sie zu verbrauchen hatte für Wohnen und Essen, für Sommerreise und Repräsentation, außerdem war unweigerlich ein kleiner Betrag sorgsam für Unvorhergesehenes, für Krankheit und Arzt bereitgestellt. Wer ein Haus besaß, betrachtete es als sichere Heimstatt für Kinder und Enkel. Hof und Geschäft vererbte sich von Geschlecht zu Geschlecht; während ein Säugling noch in der Wiege lag, legte man in der Sparbüchse oder der Sparkasse bereits einen ersten Obolus für die Zukunft, Alles stand in diesem weiten Reiche fest und unverrückbar an seiner Stelle und an der höchsten der greise Kaiser; aber sollte er sterben, so wußte man (oder meinte man), würde ein anderer kommen und nichts sich ändern in der wohlberechneten Ordnung. Niemand glaubte an Kriege, an Revolutionen und Umstürze. Alles Radikale, alles Gewalttätige schien bereits unmöglich in einem Zeitalter der Vernunft.

Silent and cramped and calm and all  
at once we are thrown into the world,  
we a surge of hundred thousand stirred.  
Much grieves us, and from hour to  
hour swings the disquieting feeling;  
We perceive, and what do we perceive?  
The world flushed of its color.

Goethe

When I try to find words for my time and place in the world before the First World War, I hope to be concise when I say: it was a golden age for security. In our almost thousand year-old Austrian Monarchy, everything seemed built to last, the state itself representing stability. Lenient rights and limited duty for Austria's citizens were granted by Parliament, freely chosen representatives of the people. Our currency was the Austrian crown, pure gold and guaranteed immutability. Everyone knew how much they owned or could accomplish, what was free and what was forbidden. Everything had its value, its definite measure and weight. Anyone who possessed a fortune knew its measure, and each officer knew his duty from recruitment to retirement. Every family had their own budget, how much they had for food and housing, for summer travel and legal representation, and inevitably for the unforeseen sickness and death. Whoever owned a house knew it secured for children and grandchildren. Positions in the courthouse or business were inherited from generation to generation; while an infant lay in their cradle, the first investments for their future were already set in workplace arena or savings bank. Everything stood firm and immovable in its place, even the highest, our aged emperor. But if he were to die, one knew (or one thought), another would come, and nothing would change in the well-calculated order. No one believed in wars, revolutions, or upheaval. All that was radical or violent already seemed impossible in an age of reason.<sup>28</sup>

Stefan Zweig openly reflects on the Vienna of his adolescence in the most positive of lights, a pastoral without fault. From the delegation of power to the consideration of all peoples within the state, the imperial Vienna Zweig remembers was determined by its tradition and values, an unshakable adherence to reason that promised security. The way of life in Vienna was heavily preset, but only ever to secure the subsequent freedom of choice. Infancy and Monarchy are set in juxtaposition to show how each human life is weighed equally in Zweig's memory. And yet, Zweig wrote his memoir *Die Welt von Gestern* (The World of Yesterday) during political exile from his beloved Vienna; his last years were spent in the Americas as the Nazi regime annihilated Europe. Zweig's years between 1934 and 1942, the years of his departure from Vienna and of his suicide, were spent writing. Zweig wrote short stories, biographies, and this memoir in the attempt to hold on to his slowly fading world. *Die Welt von Gestern's* careful,

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<sup>28</sup> Zweig, Stefan, *Die Welt Von Gestern*, (Renovanamen Verlag, Leipzig, 2013), 5.



weighted construction of the past reflects Zweig's efforts to reclaim a world that will never return.

In this respect, the work is openly defiant of Nazi-controlled Vienna. Repeatedly, Zweig emphasizes the truest qualities of imperial Vienna: Security and Reason. Aside from the stations of a democratic empire, officers and emperor, the memoir provides no characteristics to the people of Vienna; all were provisioned and secured by the state. By depersonalizing Vienna, the city becomes the main character of this passage, making Zweig's adulation a lamentation. Vienna as a character, invariably as flawed as any penned by the reputable author, marks a significant change in Zweig's literary goals. The author had already written many biographies, but never wrote on his own experiences. And yet, Zweig's biography admits his turn to the pastoral, a need to capture his own memories in writing.<sup>29</sup> In his solitude, Zweig begins a project that pushes testimony beyond its previously understood boundaries. Zweig's memoir of Vienna, epic yet impersonal, interests itself not in the interactions of people, but decisive periods of history. This is evident in the opening passages' prideful characterization of Vienna's security, a character from which all faculties of life flourished. Zweig cannot openly recall his Jewish friends and family, for he knows where they have been led. The attention Zweig provides to security is obsessive; to recall Vienna without the catastrophe is a sanitized, perfect memory.<sup>30, 31</sup>

Though Zweig never mentioned the Nazi Anschluss of Austria, his writing retains repetitive anxieties. Removed from his home, Zweig could not contemplate contemporary political upheaval, the ensuing Holocaust, and so chose to read through older works. In Brazil,

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<sup>29</sup> Zweig, *Die Welt Von Gestern*, 1.

<sup>30</sup> For further reading on the contention between memory and identity, I recommend Frank Kermode's *The Sense Of An Ending* (Oxford University Press, New York, 2000).

<sup>31</sup> Yerushalmi, Yosef Hayim, *Zakhor*, 5.

Zweig discovered Montaigne's *Essais*, which he studied voraciously in his last years, calling it "a huge find."<sup>32</sup> The French philosopher lived and wrote during a period of drastic upheaval in European history, and his letters on the nature of solitude and education were of interest to the exiled Jew. At some point, Zweig completed a biography of Montaigne's life. The biography is not a study Montaigne's philosophy, but an emphatic portrait of Montaigne's style of thinking. Zweig had written similar romantic biographical narratives for Goethe and Nietzsche, but either existed with the backdrop of German literary culture.<sup>33</sup> *Montaigne* is wholly insular to the philosopher, containing only brief mentions of locale or family history. What Zweig's biography turns around is Montaigne's writing process, the process that allowed the philosopher to question a world beset by catastrophe. Why does Montaigne fascinate Zweig, so much that the exiled author devotes his last years to one man? Curious, a small detail Zweig includes on the philosopher's origins, more detail than to either parent: Montaigne's mother is of Jewish descent.

To this mother of Jewish blood, with whom he lives...Montaigne apportions not a single word in his writings...this absence throughout the *oeuvre* is often attributed to Montaigne's desire to veil and conceal his Jewish origins...In him, any tension between the Gascon fish merchants and the Jewish brokers is resolved in a new, unique, and creative form. It is difficult to distinguish one line from another, leading into this wholly admirable consummation. We can only say that, through this union, he was predestined to become a man...not a son and citizen of a race or a fixed place but a citizen of the world, beyond any land or time.<sup>34</sup>

Zweig notes the lack of reference to Montaigne's mother throughout his writing, and believes the explicit reason to be her Jewish heritage. Zweig will not fault the philosopher for excluding his mother, because the tension of Montaigne's lineage presents a new opportunity for Jewish and Christian relations. In Montaigne, the difference between religions and cultures are absolved, proof that barriers of class and race can end. For Zweig, the philosopher becomes an ideal of

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<sup>32</sup> Zweig, Stefan, *Montaigne*, (Pushkin Press, London, 2015), 11.

<sup>33</sup> Zweig, Stefan, *The Struggle with the Daemon: Hölderlin, Kleist and Nietzsche*, (Pushkin Press, London, 2012), 4.

<sup>34</sup> Zweig, *Montaigne*, 62-63.

what could be rather than what has become of Europe. The notion of removing barriers of identity were integral to Montaigne's work and, with study of *Essais*, evident in Zweig's representation of Vienna. In what other ways did Montaigne's identity impact Zweig's final years? In his solitude, the Austrian author found Montaigne, another writer whose experience of war-ravaged Europe turned his thoughts inward. Zweig identified *Essais* as not only the possibility for peace between Jews and Christians, but the possibility for experience to be shared between them. Within Montaigne's life, Zweig found "the feeling, so tragically familiar to [his] time, of men who have somehow remained human and can still bear witness."<sup>35</sup> It is from Zweig's obsession that he obtained testimonial value from Montaigne's letters, a model of performance that Zweig could repeat in the twentieth century.

Only he whose soul is in turmoil, forced to live in an epoch where war, violence, and ideological tyranny threaten the life of every individual...can know how much courage, sincerity and resolve are required to remain faithful...Only he knows that no task on earth is more burdensome and difficult than to maintain one's intellectual and moral independence and preserve it unsullied through a mass cataclysm. Only once he has endured the necessary doubt and despair within himself can the individual play an exemplary role in standing firm amidst the world's pandemonium.<sup>36</sup>

Through the most circumspect manner, Zweig has encountered the Jeremiad model of testimony. The Jewish author in solitude takes great care to portray the mental and physical isolation of the testifying individual, at the precipice of total apocalypse yet unwavering in direction. Once an individual has overcome the personal turmoil of witnessing catastrophe, he may represent steadfastness for his and later generations. In locating his Jewish identity and literary culture within a French Christian man, Zweig discovered new prospects for the Jeremiah narrative. Through Montaigne's biography, Zweig understands the Jeremiad model and its significance to

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<sup>35</sup> Zweig, *Montaigne*, 47.

<sup>36</sup> Zweig, *Montaigne*, 37-38.

approach apocalypse. The biography constructs the questions each testimony must contend with, regardless of its time or culture.

How to preserve the incorruptible lucidity of my spirit faced with all the threats and dangers of sectarian turmoil? How to keep humanity intact in the throes of bestiality? How to escape the tyrannical demands that the state and Church seek to impose on me? How to protect that unique part of my soul against enforced submission to rules and measures dictated from outside? How to safeguard the deepest region of my spirit and its matter which belongs to me alone, my body, my health, my thoughts, my feelings, from the danger of being sacrificed to the deranged prejudices of others, to serve interests which are not my own?<sup>37</sup>

In the alignment of Montaigne's narrative to his own, Zweig writes manically of his own condition. Despite the security reading Montaigne and writing on his own adolescence granted, Zweig's writing is affected by obsession with his and the fate of every Jew in Europe. Zweig asks Montaigne how one contends with apocalypse and testifies, but the questions grow with intensity until Zweig enters a protest of his own turmoil. Though a master of his craft, Zweig's mental state affects his ability to differentiate the narrative of Montaigne from his own. Yet Zweig embraces this struggle, confronts his duty to write and think in protest of the Nazi regime. The contention between current and past catastrophes validates Zweig's pursuit of Montaigne; the significance of previous testimonials strengthens with each obsessive return to familiar conflict.

Zweig was aware that to carry on the Jeremiad tradition, he must write a work that carries the significance of testimony. Informed by the humanistic variant of Montaigne, which presents an all-encompassing understanding of catastrophe and trauma, Zweig wrote his experience of the Holocaust. Unlike most Holocaust narratives, which are direct testimonials by the survivor, Zweig wrote his obsessiveness into a non-Jewish victim of the Nazi regime. In his novella *The*

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<sup>37</sup> Zweig, *Montaigne*, 47-48.

*Royal Game*, Zweig captures his obsessive nature through the traumatized mind of a Viennese official, Dr. B. The novella centers on a chess match between two Austrians, the nervous Dr. B. and the aloof, condescending chess grandmaster on the ship. While attempting to humiliate the smug grandmaster through the board game, the narrator discovers that Dr. B. can not only predict every chess match's moves, but play several steps ahead of the Austrian. The narrator discovers Dr. B. has this extraordinary grasp of the game through uncanny circumstances. While a clerk in Vienna, Dr. B. was detained by Nazi officials, kept in a hotel room without windows or furnishings for several years.<sup>38</sup> The one object Dr. B. retains over the years is a pocketbook of every chess match between grandmasters. With nothing else to focus his attention on, Dr. B. studies, memorizes, and exhumes the book until he begins to play chess games in his head. The endless amount of time to play chess in his head, brain split to perform White and Black, sent Dr. B. into a fervor that almost claimed his life. On the nature of chess, Dr. B. recounts with a nervous tick.

‘It didn’t matter to me who won, Black or White....and I personally – my mind, my heart – was involved only as an onlooker, as a connoisseur of the crises and highlights of each game. However, from the moment I began to play....each of my egos, my Black self and my White, had to vie with the other and strive ambitiously and impatiently to gain the upper hand and win... I was a prisoner, locked up although I was innocent.’<sup>39</sup>

Dr. B. explains his familiarity with chess before Nazi detainment as leisurely at best. When his sanity, his life did not depend on the game, the doctor could enjoy the highlights of each match. Once he began to play, each decision equally tolled his body and mind. Chess was no longer a game, but the forcing of Dr. B.'s mind to split, fight, and overcome itself. He became a prisoner of not only Nazi occupation but his own trauma. What was once cursory play became necessary procedure to sustain his body. The nature of chess requires total commitment, and with it

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<sup>38</sup> Zweig, Stefan, *The Royal Game and Other Stories*, (Holmes & Meier Publishers, London, 2000), 21.

<sup>39</sup> Zweig, *The Royal Game and Other Stories*, 29-30.

degradation of the mind until it views all events as decisions between Black and White.

Following his interment, Dr. B. cannot play chess or he begins several games within his head, becoming enraged at the speed of his real opponent.

The case of Dr. B. in *The Royal Game* is a perplexing horror, that a man becomes obsessed with not just the precarious movements of the chess game before him, but all possible games. This character lacks experience as or treatment by the Nazis as a Jew, but it is precisely because of Dr. B.'s non-relationship to the Holocaust that his inclusion is necessary. Dr. B. is not a Jew, but a servant of the Austrian government until he is detained by the Nazis. Kept in solitude, Dr. B. can only turn his thoughts inward to his plight. The book of chess grandmasters, the conflicts of previous grand battles, becomes Dr. B.'s only relation to the outside world. Through memorizing chess matches and playing games in his head, the man constructs a viewpoint of his situation in terms of Black and White, a distinction so unilateral that all aspects of Nazi domination fit into it. Though he was previously a bystander to both chess and Nazi occupation, Dr. B. finds his entire being implicated in a struggle between powers in which both sides lose integral pieces. In his knowledge of previous matches, the doctor's understanding of chess – the second world war – is a series of conflicts that destroy the psyche. When Dr. B. plays a match, he recalls the trauma of apocalypse occurring in Europe. The construction of multiple chess matches in his mind is then the realization that catastrophe is not only occurring, but has and will continue to decimate human life. The horror of *The Royal Game* is the pervasive nature of apocalypse, that every individual will testify in response to the catastrophe of their time.

As Jewish literary tradition expanded the meaning of testimony beyond preconceived notions of theodicy to question the biblical structure of making sense, the testimonial literature of African-Americans made internal revolutions, recalling its past to

construct a much clearer, nuanced representation of itself. While Jewish testimonial literature sought to embrace a multiplicity of events and martyrdoms, the African-American mode was primarily concerned with validating itself. From their outset, the slave narratives of African-Americans were heavily edited to perform an expectation of white audiences; there was no room for weighted criticism or improvisation.<sup>40</sup> Following the abolition of slavery, African-American ventures into literature were scrutinized, lambasted, and barred by white publishers and audiences. As with Jewish communities in Europe, African-Americans' literary tradition formed in protest of its condition, but was subjugated by performative expectations. To be read, the African-American literary model had to limit the significance of its characters' endeavors.

It is from within this framework that Toni Morrison set out to remove white barriers on African-American literature. Morrison was an editor and had already published three novels, but felt white context an irrevocable pressure on black writing. With her next project, the author intended to remove white context from black experience.<sup>41</sup> To remove white context, Morrison understood her writing must construct a wholly black archive from which African-Americans could recall. But how would she contend with African-American history, its contentious past in bondage and movement from underneath white oppression? This literary project announced itself with the publication of *Beloved*, a novel containing multiple narratives of former slaves and their children. The novel's plot revolves around the titular character Beloved, the ghost of former slave Sethe's first daughter, and the trauma each character confronts to cohabit. Morrison's project with *Beloved* engages slave interiority, provisioning the nuance of psychology to the testimonials that were silenced by white publishers. Though the novel utilizes each chapter to

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<sup>40</sup> Foster, *Witnessing Slavery*, 65.

<sup>41</sup> Lubiano, Wahneema, *The House That Race Built: Original Essays by Toni Morrison, Angela Y. Davis, Cornel West, and Others on Black Americans and Politics in American Today*, (Vintage, New York, 1998), 5.

portray a character's internal process, Morrison's criticism of white context is evident throughout. This is performed through the slave's memories of their former plantation, Sweet Home, and its insidious slave master, simply titled Schoolteacher.

Schoolteacher made his pupils sit and learn books for a spell every afternoon. If it was nice enough weather, they'd sit on the side porch. All three of em. He'd talk and they'd write. Or he would read and they would write down what he said. I never told nobody this... This is the first time I'm telling it and I'm telling it to you because it might help explain something to you although I know you don't need me to do it. To tell it or even think over it.<sup>42</sup>

These passages exemplify this multi-faceted style of dialectic, delivered through the interior of former slave Paul D. "Schoolteacher made his pupils sit," Paul D recalls to Denver, how he and the men of Sweet Home were educated by Schoolteacher. Paul D describes the experience through third person in colloquial tongue, "I never told nobody this," capturing genuine African-American dialect in Ohio. Paul D repeats himself, details the need to record and rehearse Schoolteacher's words, before explaining to Denver that this is the first time he's discussed his education. He believes significance is relayed in sharing, although he believes Denver understands implicitly. This implicit understanding is Paul D's education was merely another way for Schoolteacher to control the men of Sweet Home, dictate and order their ability to form words. The significance in sharing, however, is Paul D's ability to represent himself, testify to moments in his bondage through his own words, the colloquial language Schoolteacher would have discouraged. Morrison argues with this passage that the experience of slavery is mutable between African-Americans, but the means of expression have been damaged and complicated by white oppression. To undo white context, Morrison must reinvent how African-Americans testify.

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<sup>42</sup> Morrison, Toni, *Beloved*, (Vintage Books, New York, 2004), 227-228.



Morrison's preoccupation with testimony readily announces itself throughout the novel; the author's obsession with language originates in holy word itself. One genre the novel entertains is the gothic horror story, as the ghost Beloved possesses her mother Sethe and drives out visitors from their home. Beloved might have been driven out by prayer, yet the family has lost faith. A friend of the family, Stamp Baby Suggs, to preach The Word. Baby Suggs refuses, stating "That's one other thing took away from me."<sup>43</sup> The characters of the novel have not so much lost faith as the trauma of slavery taking it from them. The Word, the ability to pray and drive away the haunt of slavery, psychically wounds not only Sethe's family, but all touched by slavery. Later, Stamp Paid reflects on the poisoning nature of white oppression.

The more coloredpeople spent their strength trying to convince...the deeper and more tangled the jungle grew inside. But it wasn't the jungle blacks brought with them...It was the jungle whitefolks planted in them. And it grew. It spread. In, through, and after life, it spread, until it invaded the whites who made it. Touched them every one. Changed and altered them.<sup>44</sup>

Rather than describe systemic oppression in her own words, Morrison revives the voices of the past to articulate themselves. Stamp Paid's criticism of racism is caustic in argument and language. Terms such as "coloredpeople" and "whitefolks" are condensed to be skimmed over, non-words Stamp Paid repeats because they are from white context. While Stamp Paid rushes through the words out of shame, Morrison minimizes their stress on the page, examining how white context is discussed and represented, until it is ultimately glossed over by the end of the novel. The detail given to the trauma of oppression, the jungle, is alarmingly evocative. The catastrophe of slavery impacts not only the slaves and their descendants, but the oppressors themselves are damaged and deranged. Why does Stamp Paid comment that the alteration of trauma persists past life? If Baby Suggs lost the ability to pray, than all those implicated by

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<sup>43</sup> Morrison, *Beloved*, 210.

<sup>44</sup> Morrison, *Beloved*, 235.

catastrophe are affected as well. The horrors of slavery persist into death, unholy and violent, and coalesce into a ghastly mass. It is from this mass that Beloved emerged to possess her mother.

The ghost Beloved's own testimony is included, brief but haunting, and Morrison details the experience of trauma after death, as Beloved's own spirit interacts with those affected by slavery.

We are not crouching now    we are standing but my legs are like my dead man's eyes  
           I cannot fall because there is no room to    the men without skin are making  
 loud noises    I am not dead the bread is sea-colored    I am too hungry to eat it  
           the sun closes my eyes    those able to die are in a pile I cannot find my man  
           the one whose teeth I have loved    a hot thing    the men without skin push  
 them through with poles    the woman is there with the face I want    the face that is  
 mine    they fall into the sea which is the color of the bread she has nothing in her ears  
           if I had the teeth of the man who died on my face I would bite the circle around  
 her neck    bite it away    I know she does not like it    now there is room to crouch  
 and to watch the crouching others    it is the crouching that is now always now    inside  
           the woman with my face is in the sea a hot thing<sup>45</sup>

Beloved's experience of death is an assault on both physical and spiritual levels. The represented afterlife is a sea of flesh, writhing in pain. Declarations are nonsensical; dead interact with one another without differentiation between them. The bodies described, men without skin, are abominations. Each soul is in pain, fighting to persist and consume. Sensations improperly correlate, the only consistencies here are hunger and heat. What Morrison has imagined is Hell, the perpetual suffering of all impacted by the apocalypse of slavery. The jungle that infests the black and white populations of America connect the disfigured bodies in the afterlife, keep them in violent consumption of one another. Even Beloved, still a baby when she died, has been swept into the festering sea of death. This portrait of Hell through Beloved's testimony becomes Morrison's representation of slavery's true catastrophe, a poison that continues to haunt and claim Americans. It matters not whether an individual was slave or slaveowner, the jungle contorts them into a suffering mass for eternity.

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<sup>45</sup> Morrison, *Beloved*, 249.

*Beloved's* play with apocalypse, both physical and spiritual, is essential to the testimonial project Morrison set out towards. For how much order surrounds the individual narratives of former slaves, the ghastly chaos of Hell necessarily complicates the experience. For Morrison, "the sense of things being both under control and out of control would be persuasive throughout; that the order and quietude of everyday life would be violently disrupted by the chaos of the needy dead; that the herculean effort to forget would be threatened by memory desperate to stay alive."<sup>46</sup>The ability for Paul D to remember his slave upbringing occurs in the same moment as *Beloved's* Hell because both are essential to the context of African-American testimony. *Beloved's* testimonial is that of both Morrison's and her ancestors, the witnessing of slavery and the experience of white oppression is performed by a contemporary writer. Morrison is both the archivist and the interlocutor, passing on the knowledge of what occurred to later generations while validating the black experience long denied.

The meta-archival process of *Beloved* is then the attempt to save not only living African-Americans but also their ancestors, the characters of the novel. If Hell awaits each person incapable of saying word, then the novel illustrates that African-Americans have always communicated the Word. To speak the Word is the ability to communicate trauma, grieve, and the growth of relationships between individuals, until the work ends in an entire community praying together to exorcise *Beloved*. Morrison's narrative argues that while slave narratives portrayed surviving slaves as humble, quiet bearers of catastrophe, they communed to save one another from the Hell of white oppression. This is evident in the last dialogue between characters in *Beloved*, when Paul D returns to Sethe to save her. Following the exorcism of *Beloved*, Sethe

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<sup>46</sup> Morrison, *Beloved*, XVIII-XIX.

is inconsolable, bedridden and waiting death. Paul D arrives at Sethe's door, in love with the woman who has endured the same trials.

Only this woman Sethe could have left him his manhood like that. He wants to put his story next to hers.

"Sethe," he says, "me and you, we got more yesterday than anybody. We need some kind of tomorrow."

He leans over and takes her hand. With the other he touches her face. "You your best thing, Sethe. You are." His holding fingers are holding hers.<sup>47</sup>

It is this tenderness in the *Beloved's* final pages that Morrison celebrates, archives for future generations to understand. Paul D and Sethe, two individuals who have survived the apocalypse of slavery, are able to testify to their pain yet become intimate. Paul D admires Sethe's tenderness despite the assault of slavery, and testifies to his own experience, briefly, enough to be understood. Now that Paul D has testified, he believes they may build a future together. It is only after intimating through language that Paul D can approach Sethe, hold her hand and face, validate Sethe and her testimony. The brevity of this passage carries the weight of the entire novel, a testimony to pervasive trauma, yet states that a future beyond catastrophe will come. Each testimonial thus far has preoccupied itself with the past and present experience, but never the possibility of future. In these characters' last moments, Morrison argues that what endures of the testimonial is the prophet. As Jeremiah lived on to testify to his trial, so too will Paul D and Sethe, defiant to the endeavors of oppressors. *Beloved's* containment of multiple testimonials, Morrison's included, sanctifies and secures each generation.

Morrison's *Beloved* revolutionizes the Jeremiah model of testimony by producing a cross-temporal work that celebrates and complicates the trauma of each prophet. By producing a work in the voice of her ancestors, former slaves, Morrison's testimony becomes that of multiple

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<sup>47</sup> Morrison, *Beloved*, 322.

generations, arguing that testimony announces survival. With the construction of *Beloved's Hell*, Morrison produces a similar model of catastrophe to Zweig's, that all must testify to their time. While either's work was wildly experimental compared to their literary traditions, the innovations by the two Jewish and African-American writers of the twentieth century proposes an organic Jeremiah model of testimony. Regardless of apocalypse, culture, or time, the Jeremiah retains significance, wielded with the weight of each generation's experience. What concerns either Morrison or Zweig display in their works is whether the Jeremiah model attains mutability across cultures. Both authors' testimonial works not only acknowledge these concerns, but achieve a universality without diminishing the nuance of Christian or Jewish experience. In pursuing literary play with testimony, both authors have provisioned for testimonial outside either religion, and assured each voice of its ability to witness, grieve, and celebrate.

## **Ringworld**

The sound of nearby church bells tore through the six a.m. sky and woke up Marlon, Reubenfarber. First the great gongs bashing into his slumber, out of dreams surrounded in milk and honey, then the flutter of flocks from his apartment complex's rooftop. The city of Vienna would wake now, the habitual midsummer grog of coming to in a puddle of your own sweat and the want for something sweet to wane off the lacking rest. Marlon did not know why a church had been constructed along this particular portion of Währinger Strasse, a quarter claimed proudly by the rising Jewish elite. Though not himself of the upper echelon, Marlon identified with his community in the mutual distaste of those proud, Protestant bells. So naïve and infantile this Protestant noise, Marlon thought, to the Catholic process his people were used to. At least – at least with the Catholics you knew they wanted you dead! No, these new bells rang with an underlying intent; somewhere between the gong and pigeon flutter, Marlon felt his own flight response beg a way out.

But in Vienna, there's never a way out, only further in. All roads lead to St. Stephen's Cathedral, a second sun shining out rays of gold and black with the dim thumbing of its own bells that barely reached Marlon's street. Just four years prior, Marlon's parents brought him out of Leopoldstadt – or "Mazzainsel" as one heard snide and mighty from the passing guard – closer into the city to enjoy the highest qualities available to a Jew. Some quality, Marlon moved in to his third floor apartment across from the local farmer's market, brisk with fresh bread crackle and fat child giggle, to see the former residents moving further inward along the city walls. The former residents? Jews themselves! Seemed that now was the time for Vienna's Jews to make a diaspora of social mobility, great explications of "sense of pride with the city we belong to" by Rabbi converted to medicine and Geistwissenschaft. Maybe they too, Marlon

wondered as he slid out of bed, heard the piercing Protestant bells and sought a more secular shade of town.

Marlon's apartment was, looking back on the nineteenth century Vienna, the first to touch on vogue sensibilities within the city; he restricted his bedroom to the small closet in the corner of a large flat, so that the littering of books and paintings and scrawls of musical transcripts decorated the space invitingly to would-be patrons. Though the design intent, artist and space, agreed with Marlon's tastes, he painfully acknowledged understanding consumers coming in roughly a century. Shaking his head of temporal nausea, Marlon left the flat, barren of all human necessities, for the apartment complex's watering hole – an intentional prompt Marlon provided himself to get out each morning. Shirt half-buttoned and socks riding up the soles of his feet, Marlon skidded downstairs to greet his parents and distant cousins, the Eisenweizens, Samuel and Saul. The bell had finished ringing as Marlon's shoes clacked into the cobblestone garden.

“How goes it, Marlon?” either of the Eisenweizen brothers asked between soapsud splashes of water to the face.

“I swear – I swear on my dear mother right here,” patting his mother on the shoulder, a swift slide out from under his hand, “the church bell is getting earlier each week – “

Laughter from all around, a residual chuckle from an awakening Rebecca Steinfeld just one floor above, watching below between buttoning of her work clothes. The jester has come out to entertain the people of Wahringer Strasse, color-tattered clothes and red nosed.

“You laugh, but don't you hear the bell just before you wake up? I believe this is all some tactic they've got set up; tire us out, so that later generations don't need sleep!”

“They they they, always they with you, always someone else’s problem why you’re not sleeping!” Marlon’s father, Aaron Reubenfarber lamented, placing his palm in turn on Marlon’s shuddering shoulder. “I believe some good manual labor will help with your sleep, my Marlon. The Kaiser is asking for all young men to help in a project, why not see what that is about? Go walk with young Rebecca towards Stephansplatz, see what needs doing.”

Rebecca, combing out the knots of her hair on the windowsill, let the tufts unravel in the gentle burn of summer morning. Marlon gulped once, and that was all it took to find himself escorting Rebecca to her work in the center of the city. His steps were abrupt and stamped claps against the pavement, compared to her measured skips to catch up. She always laced her hair behind her ears before speaking with him.

“So you haven’t heard, about the Kaiser’s paper?” Rebecca began, as the two crossed streets.

“I can’t hear anything above that dammed bell ringing earlier and-“

“Well! Last night, the Kaiser published a paper titled “Es ist mein Will,” says he’s going to change the whole city from the bottom up, tear down the inner walls, make us the cultural center to all of Europe! We’re building a whole new city: new concert halls, coffee houses, the works! Says it’s going to change Vienna for the better!”

Sure enough, Marlon and Rebecca were passing several teams of young men all directed by concerned architects, each loudly interpreting copies of the Kaiser’s essay with varying degrees of frustration. One man, overweight and tired of the heat, took to striking a section of the city walls until it cracked, prompting applause and joining in, a flurry of howls as city’s inner walls, once the bulwark against Ottoman tirades, broke down brick by brick.



“Some will! If it’s his will to change the city, start with those fucking nutcases who throw firecrackers at us every Friday night, not through ‘the arts!’ When’s the last time the emperor cared for the arts? His family never paid Mozart any mind when that guy was kicking. I bet this is just some decoy maneuver to cover up another affair, I hear he has a thing for fit, menstruating women.”

“Oh shut up Marlon!” came out Rebecca’s body-laugh and crumpling over while keeping pace, the sweet shove of a childhood friend too familiar to what makes you tick. “Be a little less cynical! Those firecrackers probably came from the Rustman, you know how he is. Think, maybe a theater right near your flat, a theater of your own to walk to after coffee with me. No?”

The two had arrived at Rebecca’s workplace, a Café Konditorei that served visiting politicians. It would be another hour before the café opened; Rebecca opened and prepared the daily confectionaries on her own most mornings. Marlon swung his arms in pace as he waited for Rebecca to speak, visibly deciding with her standard cracking of the wrists.

“We’ve got a new product in stock. I think that you’d like it a lot. Wanna see?” Rebecca asked tersely, coolly, before walking in without giving Marlon a second look.

Marlon walked in and waited at his usual table, next to the oven in the back of the restaurant. He watched Rebecca excitedly move around, carrying jars and bowls of paste and cream around, battering whips into silk texture, weaving palettes faster than Marlon could focus on. He liked the focus in her eyes, the deft sleights of hands motioned in the switch from spice to jelly, the artisanal care of melting flavors without a single lock moving into her vision. Finally, she stopped moving around.

“You ready? Close your eyes.” Rebecca commanded, eyes alight.

Marlon covered his eyes with both hands and heard a plate slide towards him. He opened his eyes and found a small circular cake in front of him, about the size of his palm and just as pink. It was smooth and complete in form, slightly glistening in the natural heat of the room.

“What is it? A torte?” Marlon asked, unsure.

“Yep! It’s called Punschorte; we’re just beginning to bake it throughout the city. The outside is a pink rose icing while the inside is thick rum cake.”

Rebecca approached Marlon’s table, suddenly all high cheekbones and high-heel strut. She was wearing the blonde wig required for work. Marlon gulped.

“Now, eat it.”

Marlon did as he was told, picked up the torte in his hands, delicately holding it to his mouth. He looked up at Rebecca, who maintained a domineering glare with only the right side of her lip curling upward to give it away. Marlon pressed his mouth against the soft pink surrounding, bit down into the flesh of it all with just his lips, felt the sweet soft collapse into a coating along the roof of his mouth, the giving away into thick musk of rum from interior folds, the rise of Rebecca’s breath in pace with Marlon’s tongue exploring the torte, pressed against the resisting weight of sweet and bitter mixing in his nostrils then, a deep groan shared as his eyes closed and bit further in, felt the torte collapse fully into his mouth, burst of sugar tensioning each stroke of finger and tongue from within crying out, the collapse of resistance into his eager mouth, reaching out and in in a rhythm that maintained, stretched, ached, until Marlon could only cry out from how full Rebecca’s torte made them, the collapse into each other’s arms as he licked his lips clean of pink afterglow, her hair back in knots as they watched, from the second floor, the expansion of the inner city into morning movement.

Marlon left the Café Konditorei after an hour spent watching Rebecca prepare for the day, sliding tortes into rows and massaging the coffeemakers into motion, sputtering and pouting oils and froth, Marlon's head resting lazily on his shoulder as they beamed at one another the entire time. Once the aristocrats started dining, stuffy families in matching frilled attire, Marlon chose to leave through the backdoor, ever mindful of Rebecca's requirement to keep up Germanic appearances. Marlon moved from the back alley towards Stephansplatz, adjusted his buttons and shoelaces from a bench facing the cathedral. Though he knew the city as a sanitizer to Semitism, Marlon always felt close to conversion before the great building. Lopsided with only one steeple constructed, St. Stephen's gilded body hung great gothic shadows over the city, a remnant of a more angular era. Marlon scanned the plaza in contrast, equally heightened, aligned buildings in uniform conditioning, the pale swathe of rose pink highlighting the sides of streets, like the valves disseminating life blood from Vienna's cathedral heart. Though the cobblestone paths were uneven, each winding road had been happily mapped to Marlon's mental map of possible evening strolls, a habit he picked up to handle the stresses of being confined to this concrete maze. He walked south towards the imperial library, where the chief architect was relaying the Kaiser's will.

“All able-bodied men of the Hapsburg Empire are called to help construct Kaiser Franz Joseph's city-wide project, Ringworld! All men will be compensated for their work, just file along into the library and provide your credentials.”

Marlon stood to look up at the library, a great white three stories of gold relief adorning the entrance, but was shoved forward by the shuffling mass of men eager for work. It was inside that he saw Samuel and Saul Eisenweisen, signing papers. Marlon could never tell the two apart, so he waited for them to speak first. They did, warmly.

“Marlon! Taking a break from those paintings and plays? Saul (this one is Samuel) here says he saw you leaving Rebecca’s job earlier. When are you going to propose to the girl?”

“Oh, I know why he won’t. He knows he can’t raise children on an artist’s pay. It’s why you’re here, right?”

In all honesty, Marlon would have married Rebecca if not for his mother’s constant approval of her. However, he could never openly dissent, and so.

“Yeah, you caught me,” Marlon stretched his back away from the two, “Once I get enough money to move further into the city, I’ll pop the question, break the glass. So, where are you working, what are you working?”

The brothers motioned towards a sagacious, bloated man nearby, stuffing his face with croissant and m elange, bread and foam filling his beard.

“We’re working for this architect, Theophil von Hansen. Says he’s restoring the Hapsburg identity with some Greek design, pillars and shit. I was joking to Samuel we should sneak in some Ottoman tones, but the Kaiser himself would collect our asses!”

Marlon signed up, eyeing the corpulent man preparing for the day, questioning it all. This man, an architect? What lay between this man’s ears, some mass of dull pink matter coiled just right, wired in such a delicate way to see something in the city that had yet to be raised, to be erected as stark and vigorous a testament to please the Kaiser, a man of seemingly Babylonian endeavors... it might have crossed Marlon’s mind, just once, not even once, that he was envious of the Christian man and his art. The freedom to build in any direction, direct any stage design, host any event, those were aspirations a young Jewish artist like Marlon could only gasp at... but it wasn’t just about the ego! Men like these, architects with social projection, were only ever an

enemy to Marlon. Hands like theirs cupped and cornered off his great grandfather to a food stand in the slums of the city, engineered Jewish economy against itself, compelled his own inward revolution. This was no architect, no, more a pagan potter, calling out the demonic that gripped all lives contained within his city map. As von Hansen stuffed his face, Marlon could only see the crumbs as the brick and mortar of buildings yet to be raised in his design.

The three Jewish men melded into the crowd of laborers marching towards the southwestern end of Vienna's walls, through the grand gate and west towards an already deconstructed battlement, the midnight mason's work left an open dirt field for von Hansen to set up. Set up? More like set down, Marlon monitored to the brothers, how von Hansen's body was carted over by the men of Mazzainsele, rubbing soggy crumbs off on the plaster sides of his vehicle. Rather than move towards an office, one was built below the architect, his cart catapulted several stories from the ground, offices filled with busying orderlies and physically deprived managers, the impossible task of building the base of operations within an hour was the architect's magic. von Hansen's office sat on the fresh office's rooftop, complete with portable barista and chalkboard to lay out designs. A desk was placed next to von Hansen's office, where a clerk began directing workflow. When Marlon approached, the clerk, an old man with dust-gritted clothes, adjusted his glasses and ruffled through papers.

“von Hansen would like to see you in his office, Mr. Reubenfarber. Something about your art space theory, something about more money, something to incentivize your work.”

Art space theory? No one ever repeated back to Marlon his own terminology, not even the university students who lounged around in sleek black, bourgeoisie bellies spilling out of their designer pants. Was von Hansen pulling his leg, another twist at the tallit by the European machine? Nevertheless, Marlon found himself excitedly skipping up the stairs to the architect's

throne. He approached the gorging man, whose beard kept its napkin utility as he reclined in his rocking chair, stuffing his face with one hand while the other leafed through designs, his muffled voice ordering changes to the increments of the building. von Hansen saw Marlon in the corner of his eye and adjusted his body up to speak.

“Marlon! Good man. Now, I know what you’re thinking,” he began while reaching for a strawberry torte, “you know where I’m from, but that’s it, you don’t know my project, do you?”

“You’re redesigning the city on the Kaiser’s orders.”

“That’s correct, but not the whole picture! He’s given me free reign, and do you know what that means? Come here, come here, look at this board.”

Marlon came closer to von Hansen’s desk, smelt the sweet of his breath reeking the whole office. The architect’s board was covered in three-dimensional constructs, decorated and delicate, gold flowers blossoming from the city’s fecund earth, pouring nectar into the infertile comb that was “old Vienna.” This city design was visibly throbbing, pumping out mission statements in spiral coda that Marlon caught himself biting his bottom lip to. von Hansen noticed, smirked, laid his hand on Marlon’s back.

“You see it too, don’t you? By 1910, this project will be complete. We could change this city, eh? This empire, it senses a movement coming at it. They’ve only ever had to deal with the Ottomans before, a force visible at the city walls. Now, now the threat to this empire comes from within. You feel it, as do we all, at those odd hours before dawn, when the city echoes with the tin of rust. Not just Rustman’s cackle either, no, it’s the sound of a dying empire. Not many people, outside the colleges, feel it, but a great death is going to fill up our world, take out these marble empires and tear into them, gut them, preserve them. That’s the vitality of it all, this

preservation through design, the great endeavor of my architecture, Marlon. Block by block, I'll construct the history alive again, mold with my own hands this world anew, breath of life the whole thing into an empire worth living in. This architecture, ah, this reconstruction of history is so malleable. I need your help, Marlon. I need histories this empire forgets, I need more vital hands than mine to strike this city into form. Come, young boy, will you help me?"

And so Marlon served as the director of Theophil von Hansen's Parliament construction, the right hand guiding workflow into sectors, the brick by brick mortar set of a new monument. What was a monument, Marlon wondered, if not a great figure against time? This dying city, without revolution or triumph, was crumbling into the obscurity of time as empires elsewhere grew fecund with the new age, the designs of formerly decomposed eras coming together towards a climax the continent itself shook for. These monuments, integral to a world that brought forth your consciousness, stood for something more than our current worries. Whether wars were waged or taxes collapsed, the monument harkened to an immortal presence of history, of hardship, of the persistence of our life in memory. And what caused Marlon to strike the proverbial rock for water, to upset the cultural dissonance of his Semitic sentiments to work with this Germanic man?

"I'll only be gone the summer, hush up! You look like I'm leaving you starved." Chided Rebecca with one foot on a train set for Venice, her string quartet set performing abroad all summer to commemorate the Emperor's Will.

Marlon didn't want her to go, not then of all times. He needed her sweet cynicism to keep focus, her purring on his chest on the complex's rooftop, her excuse to get up in the morning. Marlon was the first young Jew to be asked of the Emperor like this, one of his architects. And it

wasn't like Rabbi could give anything useful! No, she was the sweet East to his contemplative West. Given the momentum of such need, Marlon debated proposal right then and there.

“Rebecca, I'm just hungry is all.”

She gasped a smile, laughed a little heavier, then stepped off the train, pressed her warm lips to the space between his ear and eye, put his right hand into a grip.

“My baby. Just pretend I'm right there. I'll be back soon. Goodnight, goodnight, my dumb love.”

And with that she took both feet off the platform, let the train slip off into the night sky, Marlon left alone with only his right hand to console him. That first night alone, Marlon wandered the streets with Rustman cajoling him.

*“So she left for Venice where pisswater runs. Grip your head and don't look back. If you live it up, you won't live it down.”*

Marlon remarked on the lack of light in the sky that first night, gripped his nervous cock, looked for a thought to occupy Rebecca's absence, and in a moment between erection and sleep he came to an image, the monument! The monument, ah, the first object man erected so long ago. Since the dawn of time, men have collected the earth around them, dug their hands deep into soft soil, clumped together, resisted the great maternal want of biology to rest, to die, and made a great cock to harden, to thrust against time when the monument maker may no longer. The tools of the time may change, monuments of many different forms have come to, paintings of memento mori and songs of joy, but each and all are man's press into the cunt of time, the lip spread and grasp of head and hip to declare that he mattered. That moment of fervor before climax, that visitation of immortality, that's what all monument makers move towards. While



Rebecca was abroad performing in string quartets, it was the architect's plans that offered its breast to Marlon's quivering mouth, hushed his cries out against the loneliness that we find our lives end in, promised, promised so much.

“Build me up, I'll make you in my own image, I'll sit on the face of your grave if you give me your all.”

Which, if you were to ask any monument maker, they would say it was the same promise made to them, and how hungry their throats felt at the sight of a mark against time. It only took several weeks under the monument's spell for Marlon to become permanently aroused with his work, the stiffening of his mind on one goal. For those deprived of another's thighs, they call this capital Passion. For the rest, we only see a man running through crowds with torn eyes and a knife in hand, Amok. Poor Marlon, his first time possessed. We only just met the boy, he didn't know how strong the sway of monument could be.

“Build me up, give me your all.”

A month's development on the new Parliament building passed under Marlon's process, his excitement provided little pause for much beyond discussions with von Hansen and the occasional meal. The chance to mark himself into history dissolved Marlon's constitution, the efforts leaving his body thinner and manner aggressive. Errors in the process of construction irritated Marlon greatly, prompted violent outbursts at the construction site, laborers visibly worried, Weisenstein brothers apprehensive. One morning, Marlon enjoyed the company of von Hansen as he strolled the construction site, remarking on the earth's delectable clay composition beneath the Parliament, when he overheard the crash of marble from somewhere up high. The noise shocked Marlon's worn heart, worked him into a worry, then a rage, when he saw before

him the fractured head of Athena, her helmet not strong enough to hide her face. Above, an older Austrian man looked down, hands at his face in shock. Marlon took off, up stairs and across platforms, to approach the man.

“Are you a delinquent or are you not?” was the best Marlon could posture in his huff and puff.

The man looked up at Marlon, too shocked to speak, and then.

“My hands were sweaty – no, that’s not it – the marble was too slippery, I – “

“You idiot! Don’t you know what’s at stake here? We’ve got one chance to fix this empire, and your dammed hands fuck me up! How could you, how could you!”

Marlon began striking at the man, first with his hands, then with his fists. The man, tired and old, dodged as best he could around the platform, dancing between Marlon’s emaciated strikes. The man began to cry out for help, but many of the laborers thought better than to try von Hansel’s right hand. From behind, Marlon heard two voices.

“Marlon, calm (Saul?) it down! We’ll get another Athena!”

But Marlon was wrapped up in his own wrath, claimed to run amok across the frail man’s body, fist flying after fist without any other sense than anger, no, panic.

“Marlon! (Samuel) Let him go!”

Marlon felt hands approach his body, and he reflexively swung his arms out. His fists missed their mark, and Marlon felt the weight of his body swinging in response, up and out towards the edge of the construction platform. He saw Saul, Samuel, and even the scared man reach out to him, the look of life reaching towards his moment of despair, and then the color of

sky filled his vision, then the color of the white marble, then the pale earth, then the colors revolved for what felt like more time than one should experience, the suspension of the heart collapsing in free-fall fright, the recognition of all things going wrong, the wind rush, the flush of regret flying through Marlon's mind, the collapse of his body into wet ground, the crack of all bones and teeth into a mass, the sinking of body, the expansion of his mind into darkness.

\* \* \* \* \*

**! Rustman's Intermission !**

*It's a funny fate, Jew  
and Gentile, wound  
up and against one  
another, lip and fist,  
goin' on down into  
our own hells. I set  
up shop between  
butchers and brothels,  
watch the whole Empire  
my wire cutting chord,  
this ain't more than swan  
song and simple flame.  
Jew can build home after  
home and Gentile runs it down,  
same song, different cycle,  
all tonally off kilter. Good-  
night, Marlon, sweet dreams.  
We'll see you in Mourning.*

\* \* \* \* \*

The first thing Marlon felt, upon waking, was the expanding warmth of the sun on his body, the satisfaction of a draining dream he couldn't recall, the first time in a long while his shoulders weren't tense, the expanse of white around him reflecting heat further onto his body, like a hug, like a womb. The first thing Marlon asked himself, after feeling his body light up with the morning, was why he was feeling at all, as only a blink separated Marlon's fall from the current glow. The first thing Marlon heard, shortly adjoined by a groan that rose from his body to

fill the whole room, was the violent tear of Protestant bells into his morning peace. And just like that, all priorities distinct to Marlon's life returned to him, the comfort of a lazy morning not among them. Marlon could hear a sudden shuffling of feet, orderlies alerted to his awakening, and calls for the great Dr. Joy to come for his patient. Dr. Joy? A name for a pediatrician, or a clown, maybe, but Marlon's attending physician?

“Make way! Make way! I must speak with him first!”

From the hall strode in a middle-aged man, haggard and handsome and uncomfortable in his own skin, eyeing Marlon's room from corner to corner, adjusting collars and cuffs, brushing his mild beard, before excitedly looking Marlon in the eyes and smiling. The man approached Marlon's bed in two steps, on account of his wide determined stride, and looked down with both a notepad and a journal under the wing of his left arm.

“Now, before all else, because you must have many things to ask me, let me ask this one thing, this thing that will determine the whole of your health and my work.”

Marlon gulped, saw the restraint the man held himself against defined barriers of personal space.

“Sure, ask away.”

“What was your first thought upon waking, and which body part did you reach for first with your primary hand?”

Marlon was not uncomfortable, but he did pause to gain better bearings, focused on the man entire. The man recognized Marlon's caution, assumed a composed upright stance to be examined. At least a gentleman, Marlon figured. No, there was something else there. Though the

man's voice was the high nasal of an Austrian elite, there was something just below the surface of it all, something joining the distance between the two that was not unlike disquiet.

“Uncanny,” the man offered.

“What?”

“Disquiet is a rather dated term, now. You'd rather thinking with the phrase 'uncanny,' I assure you.”

There, right there! in the way the man wanted to assure Marlon of something, anything, just one thing to reside for just one moment. It's a very Jewish thing, to want to reside with someone for a moment. It's a consignment to the terminable nature of friendship and family, the understanding that what unites us all is the couch we share following a funeral, the clasps of shoulders and knees by a solemn hand, followed by a nod and offer of a drink, preferably something to calm the innate neurosis of an individual incessantly resigned to the role of Europe's Other. Regardless of this man's role supervising Marlon, his eyes searched for a moment to share, a possible laugh at the end of a walk along Austria's wine-lined hills. Though affected accent and sanitized clothing hid it well, this man longed as only a Jew could, and in that Marlon found a man to trust wholly. He pressed his head into his pillow, rested his hands on his stomach, and spoke without reservation.

“I thought that the Protestant church bells are really trying to kill me, then of whether my mother would be upset with my striking my cousins, and then I reached for my crotch with my right hand. Not because I thought of my mother, but to un-stick my ball sac from my thigh, as the summer heat does not suit a lack of underwear.”

The man transcribed Marlon's words, then wrote for several more minutes, raised his eyes occasionally, as if it were an act of capturing a portrait of Marlon's confusion. Finally, the man put his books and journal behind him, pulled a chair to Marlon's bedside, and spoke.

"Marlon Reubenfarber, my name is Sigmund Freud and--"

"Not Freude? Joy?"

"No, that is a joke by the nurses on my profession. I am a psychologist, a physician concerned with the mind. You have been asleep for quite some time, and it has only been men like me concerned with your health."

"Lovely sentiment, but thank you for tending to me during my sleep. Some time, though? Where are my parents, how long was I asleep?"

At this, Freud realized he set the wrong foot forward in a new precedent for medical history, the catching up by the physician to the coma patient. Rather than continue as it were from this position, Freud got up to leave the room.

"When I return, remember that I am as warm as I just was, understand?"

Marlon nodded, and Freud closed the door, waited a full minute, then reentered with a stone expression. He calmly moved towards Marlon's bedside in five steps, set himself in a chair, and began.

"Mr. Reubenfarber, it has fallen to me to explain your health since your fall in 1860. When you fell, the recently exhumed earth of Vienna's walls was volatile. In dismantling the walls, the ancestors who defended them in 1683 were particularly upset, boiling the clay of it all into a viscous mud, the same mud you fell into. This batch of clay you fell into just happened to

be the site where Ottoman soldiers from the 1683 siege were slaughtered, many of them being Palestinian Jews. It seems you fell into clay that was quite literally drenched with the blood of your, our, ancestors, and they received you quite well, enveloped you in fact. It took twelve hours to pull your body from the clay, von Hansen was the primary voice in calling for ‘the restoration of his hand to grip his monument.’ When you were unearthed, the clay stuck you to like a suit of armor, a solid uniform layer of clay that prevented entry. There were no holes in the clay to speak of, so everyone assumed you were dead regardless, and had you laid in the family Temple. On the first Sabbath night of your body’s rest within the temple, a ragged Jew by the name of Karlheinz Reubenfarber, your great grandfather, supposedly, snuck his way in and breathed a strange wind on the face of your clay body. In the morning, your family found you following the commands of Rabbi Schwarzenherz. Your father asked for you to respond, to look at his face, but you only answered the Rabbi’s commands, which your mother found quite ironic now that you were dead. And so you followed the Rabbi throughout his tours of Leopoldstadt for four decades, yes!, that was forty years! You were a sensation, ‘The Golem of Vienna!’ ‘Protector of the Bris and Beacon for Zionists of End Times!’ Quite the mascot, great at Bar Mitzvahs. During this time, the medical consensus for your condition was that you were a Somnambulant, a sleep-walker. As a man concerned with dreams, you became a source of many early papers. It was towards the end of the century that Vienna was under the political direction of a man named Karl Lueger, founder of the Socialist Christian party. Let me take a moment to say, that all Jews understand ‘Socialist Christian’ to be code-word for ‘Cossack incarnate,’ yeah? And so Mayor Lueger was particularly aggressive to the Jews of Vienna, or those he could harass, at least. On the last day of Rabbi Schwarzenher’s life, he commanded you to return from whence you came with Lueger in hand. Oh, I remember that day actually, the rumble of this

large clay man barreling into the government building, tugging that Populist punk, crawling up to the top of Vienna's Parliament building, the very same one you constructed half a century prior. Oh, it was a show, the whole city came to watch! The Emperor's Guard came to shoot you down, often hitting Mayor Lueger in the process, until one cannonball struck you square in the chest and throttled you down, landing on the Mayor's body and shattering the clay, revealing the fair-faced boy I now sit across from. You continued on in a coma since then, awaited by academics such as myself, and now you are awake, a decade later. Welcome, Marlon, to 1910."

What did Marlon say in response? What could he say? Oh, the poor boy was thrust out of his times, yes, multiple times, the time he grew to name is own, his generation of people he could call his peers in the duress of revolutions and plagues, but also the time granted to share outward with his parents, obviously passed by this time, all possible conversations shared that would develop him into a man that carried the weight of both father and mother onto a new generation, and Rebecca? A time promised to Marlon, maybe not the best, probably not worse than the future...but it was his time damn it!

"I'd like a day alone, here, if that's fine, Dr. Freud." Said Marlon, and Freud responded with a clasp to Marlon's shoulders, looked him the eyes for a moment, nodded, and left.

Freud closed the door in time with the ringing of Protestant Bells, which was in turn in time to the erupting cry out of Marlon's body. He could not find the words to call out for his mother, father, Rebecca's warm laugh and lips. It's an ache that seizes the whole body, stretches you out in protest, like you're dying of Tetanus. Poor Marlon, young and played like this, got to a point where crying gave way to lock jaw and bloodshot eyes, not a single arm to hold him against his solitude. But Marlon could only take a day wounded; that's about as much crying out he could make with before the dull acceptance of all things to pass came over him, and he found



himself adjusting by asking Freud, the next day, the essentials: of which artists' careers flourished and whose perished without even an academic's bibliography made from the appropriate remains, to these questions Freud happily shared the new careers of Austria's foremost composers and theorists, of the wonderful life Cezanne led, and soon the comfort of monumental impacts blended in Marlon's mind a deep comfort at one consistency to be assured of when he awoke next, as Freud's history reprised took much out of Marlon's body, which no one could dispute with a snort. When Marlon next awoke, Freud happily returned to his room upon request.

“Are you ready to see what has come of yours and von Hansen's work, the work of your whole generation, the new city?” asked Freud at the exit of the hospital Marlon was housed for so long.

Despite decades in coma, Marlon's body was kept firm and active by the Rabbi's duties, his body remained as fresh as it had that morning he set out with Rebecca to heed the Emperor's call. His mind raced with the anxiety of meeting a new world, but if Freud's smile was that of his own father's, and the Protestant bells yet rang, how much could have changed? Marlon took Freud's invitation and opened the door outside.

“a-and if you don't tell your Piefke daughter away from my boy, I'll tear you a new urethra the same way the Pope did to Martin fucking Luther!”

“Oh back the fuck off my daughter, I swear if you knew how many times she woke up to your son's puckered asshole you would write up 95 complaints and post it somewhere too!”

Some things never changed in a big city, and Marlon was, somehow, elated to find the local Konditorei owner, of Protestant lineage, arguing with the Catholic baker across the street.

Only, those two were all Marlon properly recognized from where he stood. Sure, he figured from the Protestant church bells, he was roughly four blocks from his old home, much closer to Freud's house, the doctor explained, but there was something very wrong and Marlon felt it in his throat. The Konditorei and bakery Marlon remembered were simple outlets at the street corners frequented by passerby each morning, but where those once stood were constructs more ornamented than Catholic churches in France, gilded gold and reliefs a la Renaissance, complete with cherubs holding baguettes over their bodies, equal parts baby fat and Adonis muscle tone. Marlon walked towards the bakery with Freud following, scrawling notes hastily in his journal, watching Marlon's every shaky step into the shop, his surprise when greeted by a talking loaf of bread.

“Welcome to Wahringer Strasse Bakery, home of the biggest Tomtato Soup Bread Bowl, served with our Happy Hour Wahringer Wine, imported from just up the road! What would you like to order?”

“Freud, what the fuck?”

“This is a mascot, a man in a suit, advertising for the bakery, Marlon. You order bread and sandwiches from it. Didn't you have these back in 1860? I recall the first restaurant was actually opened in Salzburg during the fourteenth-“

“No, no, we had these, I had a bakery right here, but we didn't have talking bread.”

“Oh, consider it a sign of capitalist placation by growing corporations. Does that help?”

Marlon looked around the bakery, at families of disparate European origin, a visiting Indian family in the far back, all enjoying their bread without anxiety towards the dancing loaf of bread with waving arms, joined hand in hand with several toddlers, before the children tackled

the loaf and the release of small chocolates from the loaf's backside. A large menu was printed above the rows of bread with alien names to Marlon like "Morning Margherita" and "Frontier Scramble." Marlon remembered his bakery, how the man with twelve children came into the shop at three in the morning each day, knew every name in the neighborhood. Sure, he felt guilty for not walking to the bakeries of Leopoldstadt, and the man may have told his children he baked Christian blood into his Passover meals, but Marlon knew the food was the monument of a single man with dough-dried hands. A mechanized cart passed outside with the shooting out of a large package, followed by its dragging in by several workers. Unlaced, the packaged revealed symmetrical loaves of bread, stacked readily and sold within minutes of their placement. Systematic, Synthetic, White, the orderly nature of an anthemic march carried out on the level of consumption. The dancing children, the dead baker, the Protestant bells. The collision of it all brought an ache to Marlon's head, right where the two sides of the skull meet in the back and suture one to the primacy of all things.

"This isn't real, this isn't food, what is it?"

"Ah, you would get along well with Walt and Teddy, they'd love to hear someone older say the same thing."

"What? Can we just go, Doctor? Can we see the rest of the city?"

"Of course, but can we grab some food first? Surely, you must be famished."

Marlon and Freud walked out the bakery with two handfuls of Cheesedogs, loaves of bread filled with sausage, mustard, and cheese, and Marlon was given a complimentary crown after a server heard he was a first-time customer, though Freud wore it to humor Marlon's anxieties. The two walked south towards the original city's walls, but Marlon continued to be

troubled by the new Vienna. Each apartment was similarly decorated in reliefs from various time periods. Greek, Gothic, Renaissance, Rococo, or even the tasteless mismatch of all into one conglomerate, the hyper realistic narrative of European tradition worn without the slightest inflection of irony. How disgusting, how pitiful, how wildly successful to everyone but Marlon it seemed. Giant signs hung at every corner, advertising exhibition of oriental oddities and American fashions.

“What’s happened with the United States?”

“Oh, who knows, but some of your family moved across the sea. Said ‘fuck this’ to all of Europe and traveled to a land called Andover.”

Situated between caravans traveling on electric wire and public entertainers dressed in black and white, sashaying and driving along the meager pleasure of the general populace, Marlon wholly welcomed the sentiment of his relatives, wondered whether to follow suit. But first, the whole of Marlon’s body knew he had to see his project finished, the Parliament and entire of Vienna’s inner-city reconfigured. Those nights spent sprawled over urban designs, evenings distanced from his Jewish family to converse with Vienna’s nouveau-riche, all equally quotative of their Greek and Shakespeare; was all that worth it, now that Marlon was separated from them by fifty years? All their conversations, laughter, arguments, gone within a blink of Marlon’s eye. What was there to hold on to now but Marlon’s monument, the very testament he made to stand after his life. Could he see his own legacy, would he want to? Under the summer heat, Marlon’s quickened pace felt fevered and heavy with sweat, Freud kept up without committing to a trot, scribbled notes at each intersection of traffic. Motor and cable cart roar, the march of a crowd without a face, the speech of multiple lands (times?) Marlon could not disassociate from one another, but these only gave him a greater sense of purpose. Monument,

Memory, Rebecca, the ache in one's gums trying to find the right word. The wave of white surrounding Marlon, the shouts of politicians and poets climbing into each other, the reader's kaddish cyclically repeated in his head. Freud's pen, the notebook he bought from his Jewish fraternity brother, his affected aristocratic voice. The blurring of vision as Marlon drew closer, the grip into his own hands, the inability to swallow despite the heat. Moses, David, Solomon, the repetition of poems Marlon could not remember but recalled. The arrival before parliament, the crowd of tourists who cheered one another, the collapse of Marlon before Athena. The white marble pillars holding Parliament above the earth, the twenty advertising men dressed as Mozart, the large neon sign that read "RINGWORLD: THE EMPEROR'S DREAMLAND," the terror that seized Marlon at a world he did not want. Freud's call out for his possible friend, Rustman playing Jew's harp through a megaphone between the sign's "RING" and "WORLD," the blending of failed past and all possible futures, the collage of Mozart men twisting into Marlon's own ancestors. He stared at them as they swirled over in procession, cursed in many tongues, until the back of Marlon's head split in half and he collapsed below Athena, with Freud to hold his head and search for someone, anyone to help this man lost to time, his work, his own mind.

\* \* \* \* \*

! Rustman's Intermission !

*Give a man more  
time to live than God  
granted and he's bound  
to see time for what we  
all, ready, know. Time, no,  
time's nothing but the same  
damn terror turning wind  
in its fire belly. I pluck  
one string, two, ply out  
a moment for Yellow King  
yucking it up. I sing up  
storms to strike, Nero  
and Napoleon aren't but*

*babies to me. Imagine me  
Midas: I touch, You Rust.  
Marlon, him and his kin, poor  
children just happened across  
what's coming, early enough to –*

\* \* \* \* \*

Marlon's return to consciousness came during the Protestant rings in the distance, to which he made a mental note he must be getting used to the noise of it all. This time, Marlon awoke in a large study, shelves organized by parts of the world from where each book had found its way. Southern Spain, Gujarat, Palestine, Massachusetts, and Austria, all lands considered by emblazoned lettering on the outer crest of each bookshelf, a catalogue by some division Marlon could not yet arrive to. Marlon made to stand up and felt his skull explode with a tightness towards the back of his head; he reached and felt hair and scalp, yes, but something warm and writhing. His vision blurred at the slightest press of the mass, and so Marlon left it how it was, poured himself a glass of water and cautiously carried his body to the bookshelves. Or, were they? Marlon reached for a catalogue of Jewish-Austrian composers, but his vision of the books blurred with a slight hum. As he brought a book into his arms, the room hummed and the material of the book phased, from paper print to the rough texture of scroll, from leather bindings to synthetic sheen, from High German to Hebrew. Though Marlon was estranged to the object, the permeable book, his Sunday School education afforded near-seamless transition.

"It's a funny a funny thing, to read a book, isn't it?" said Freud, who Marlon just realized stood by the window, one foot against the windowsill, puffed a cigar and chewed on its texture.

"Yes, Doctor?"

"You know, Goethe called his reading 'the study of spirits,' as if you're drawing out a soul from the writing, as if there's a narrative to the object. You – you know," Freud walked

along the aisles of books, trailed his hand along the spines, “I never thought myself a good reader, because I could not guide the spirit out of any book. But I wonder what it would mean, to be able to visit the spirits that take up all things. Would I want to hear them? Oh, Marlon, would I want to?”

“I’m not sure I follow where you’re leading me, Freud,” cautioned Marlon as he set the book, now a Talmud, back in its shelf.

Marlon approached Freud by the window, saw the city glow against the tired man’s face, the curious animation of their city tour escaped. Freud turned to Marlon, set his eyes in a hard stare, and Marlon saw Freud’s face, too, phasing similarly to the books. While his reflection stayed the same, Freud’s face grew fuzzy, melted, assembled again until – ah, it makes sense now, yes! – the man resembled Rabbi Akiva, a saint not dissimilar in his fears and ambitions. The two Jewish men stared Marlon down until he backed up, onto a reclining chair, winced as the mass on his head touched fabric. The Rabbi Akiva dissipated and Freud reached out.

“Gentle, gentle, do not go into a deep sleep again. I might not be here when you wake up next! Here, sit up, let us review once again your peculiar life, Marlon.”

Freud set himself next to Marlon, pressed his wrists together between his knees, looked up, down, to the window, anywhere but at Marlon’s face again.

“Doctor, I’m seeing – “

“Seeing what? All things under the sun? What did I look as to you, hm? Where is your mind going, my boy?” Freud began with a jolt.

Marlon edged his body away from Freud, to which the doctor muttered his apologies and clasped Marlon's knee with a shake before beginning again.

“It seems that fall so long ago did more than knock you out of the nineteenth century, didn't it? If only that! were so simple, no. When you fell, you jolted a dormant part of your brain, activated a gland long ago deemed vestigial. The back of your head is raw from collision with the ground, earlier today, but that pulsing flesh reaches from our diaspora days. Seems you've awakened, with alarm, the part of a Jew's body that responds with the eternal fall of Jerusalem. Made a Jeremiah of you, just a bit, hasn't it? No, something more than that. A sample of the flesh I scalped – I hope you don't mind – kept moving in and out of time, became dark and methodic like a likely Sephardic ancestor, then fringed and red as if guessing at your eventual lineage. Changing time like this, I assume that's what everything else has become, hasn't it? This movement out of time, the spirits of history present to you: you've got an enlarged Wandering Jew gland, Marlon.”

Again, Freud's faced came unstuck, shifted into the likeness of Marlon's uncle, subsided all anxiety with the warmth of his old Hebrew tutor. Great, what did one more alienation from the time, Marlon figured, appropriate to his tireless demeanor as outsider to even himself. Odd, yes, but the book remained as valuable to Marlon throughout time. He found no reason to worry, yet.

“Well, what now then?”

“I'd like to continue research on you, Marlon. You are a permanent guest of my house, as long as you wish. I suggest you travel the city tomorrow, grow accustomed as you can to the new Vienna. And just be careful of how time slips on you.”



With a considerably large allowance provided by Freud, Marlon set out the following morning to tour the city. Sure, there was something medically peculiar about his head, Marlon recognized, but how different was it really from the rest of his life? If – if anything, the paranoia was validated, yeah! Marlon smugly smiled as the façade of new Vienna gave way to the Catholic province of the past, revealing the roots that had not given way.

“Come hear Beethoven live, like you’ve never heard Beethoven before, this Friday at the Musikverein with special guest Anton Webern!” cried out a man in Mozart paraphernalia, and Marlon could actually see the a moonlit Mozart hiding within all along.

It just goes to show that history is the same wherever you go, that the impulse of a time to secure itself keeps with every generation before or after it. The synthetic bakery collaged perfectly with the family owned property of yester-year, the aristocratic high-mighty Jewveauriche was in fact a Hassidic dancer after all. The clothes and titles changed, but the city was just as it had been before, Marlon’s home. What had the architect von Hansen, or even himself, known anyway? Though the city decorated itself in collage and glitter, it was just as situated in its imperial past as the day Marlon walked with Rebecca to the Konditorei and – walked with Rebecca to the – and that was when Marlon felt a lump in his throat, stopped outside a Konditorei, the Konditorei from so long ago. The rising sun, the curl of the lip, the lips, the warmth of it all on his face. Where was Rebecca? Was she even possible, after all this time? The scent of the torte, all too familiar, after all this time, clung to his collar, dragged him through the Konditorei doors.

“Welcome to Café Mozart, please find a seat anywhere you like,” said a rushed young man handling coffees and checks to various tables.

Marlon chose a rounded booth in the corner of the Konditorei, which had apparently garnered brand naming in his time gone. He ordered a coffee and took out his sketch book, traced the phasing lines of the restaurant interior, pleased with how much remained the same after so long. And there! A figure who rushed around, ordered around the young and uninitiated, could it be? Obviously older, much older, more seasoned, could Marlon be so sure? No, the blonde wig, the touch of another's elbow to reassure, the lift of the upper right lip, it was, it was, it was! Marlon brought the sketchbook to his face, shielded Rebecca's view of him until he was ready, as if he could be! For Marlon, it was only one summer ago she left on tour, pressed his hand and left the warm impress of her kiss on his face. He could still feel her warmth; it never left, even with the phasing of time and the tear down of skin and memory. He watched from his usual post-coital lounging spot her daily strides, the command of a woman in love with her work, the winding and unwinding of hands in brewing, directing, guiding the anxiety of youth she too once occupied. The care, the compassion, the contact of eyes and laughter with other women, and there, Rebecca phased into and alongside the images of Marlon's mother, aunt, niece, the matriarchs Rebecca, Leah, Sarah, and then the daughter Marlon wished he shared with Rebecca in the time that they held together, and suddenly came the ache in his chest for the only monument that ever mattered, his union with his best friend, the interlacing of the fingers along the Donau's nightlights, the double-image of their love in the flowing water that promised many more walks, the smile their daughter would have worn with his crinkled eyes as she skipped around the café teasing children and chatting up adults, the pride Marlon wish he could wear for his Jewish family, the promise of a son in Rebecca's soft pouch, the emptiness that came with his trickled out coffee cup as Marlon watched the Konditorei trickle of all its patrons until he sat tense, waiting for Rebecca to turn and...

“Oh god!” was how Rebecca greeted Marlon, let go of her plate and the crash of crumbs and foam against the floor.

Reflexively, Marlon stood and went to Rebecca’s side, grabbed towels and tissues and helped wipe up the mess without much thought, his firm veined hands crossing her worn tender fingers, the hushed giggle of two caught in a mistake. When the mess was gone, the two recomposed, realized the gravity of it all; Marlon pushed himself against a table and Rebecca pressed her hands to her face, then to his, his cheekbones and hair and hands.

“It’s really you, and just as I remember. God, it really is you. Marlon – oh my god – Marlon, what the fuck are you doing here?”

And Marlon sat them down to explain what had passed. Sure, she knew about his time as a Golem, even tried to get his attention once or twice during Sabbath, but he told her also of his work that summer so long ago, the now-famous architects he knew as drunken fraternal buffoons, his residency as Freud’s specimen (Freud? The cunnilingus doctor? No shit?), and all the while they held each other’s hands to reassure of their coexistence once again. While Marlon spoke, he pressed his thumbs into Rebecca’s palms, watched her body phase into all possible pasts and futures they might have once had, until she regained the image of her girlhood self. But that wasn’t on account of the gland – no no! – any lovers reunited remain lovers honest, are remembered and remained the same person you fell in love with all this time. And her laugh especially, oh man, nothing had changed but time on Rebecca’s face. Her whole body still shook laughing at his self-deprecation, and he in turn fake-flustered at her chiding. But not even a reunion can go too long without the times catching up, because Marlon had to go and ask:

“A-and what about you? You run this café, what else?”

And it took a moment of Rebecca catching her breath, biting her top lip before speaking again.

“Yes, I’ve been here, running the café into good shape, but I’ve also found someone, Marlon.”

The sinking of Marlon’s eyes into his throat, the hollow of his heart, the return of his hands at his waist.

“You what?”

Rebecca’s voice anxious now. Couldn’t Marlon let her pretend, just once?

“He’s a very kind man, preaches at St. Stephen’s Cathedra-“

“You’re married to a Catholic?”

“Oh god, no, Catholic priests can’t marry Marlon. We’ve just been close all this time and \_“

“Rebecca, you’ve been with a Catholic?”

“Oh, let me talk, Marlon! You’re acting as if he’s a Protestant! He’s a scholar of Aquinas and we take weekend trips to Salzburg, sometimes to the Opera! Oh, we could never get married, but he’s always been here for me and the kids.”

“Children, Rebecca? Children?” Marlon had sunk into his ass by then, red faced and tight-mouthed; Rebecca realized how little could remain secure.

“You promised you’d see me again. What happened?”

“Marlon! Don’t be so childish! What did you expect? You weren’t here, fifty fucking years Marlon! What did you want me to do, wait for the fucking Golem to hike up my skirt? I – I spent a long time grieving, twenty years, let’s me be honest. You don’t know what it means, you here right now, as handsome as you’ve always been, but I’ve had to live without you, and I’ve been happy. I have – I have had – I’ve had a wonderful life, even if it wasn’t what I expected.”

Rebecca got up from the table, sat herself up on the counter, held her face in her hands.

“I’ve had to make a life without you. Please, please don’t do this.”

“Rebecca, I only – “

“I just think, I would like you to leave me be. Don’t do this, be right here, the way you’ve always been. I think it’d be better if you leave here.”

How could Marlon say no? His eyes were red and his stomach was knotted, but Rebecca’s word was law. He walked out the Konditorei, sat on the curb for a good time, tried to imitate the impression of her left hand on his right with his trailing fingers. After a while, Marlon heard the door behind him open and close, got up to see who visited Rebecca’s café at such a late hour. Marlon peeked through the window and saw an older man, cornfed and healthy red in the face, a balding red head with streaks of gray, rush to Rebecca who was still frozen on the counter. Marlon could not hear any words, but saw how the man held Rebecca’s hands, stroked her wrists, her head shaken in response, his kisses on her hands and arms and face until she pressed her face against his robe. He helped Rebecca off the counter, guided her upstairs. Marlon found a pipe alongside the café’s walls, climbed up to see the moment unfold, crouched on the corner of the windowsill. Marlon found Rebecca and the priest seated on the foot of her bed, his hands too pressing her palms as she spoke without pause. The priest held Rebecca’s face in his

palm, then, and kissed her head, removed her blonde wig and wiped her tousled locks from her red face, warm then and so in love with the man who held her, so in love that Marlon knew he could not be angry. Rebecca held the priest's face, pushed him further onto the bed, removed his robe and then her shirt, his hands guiding hers along his body, the sight of communion taking place. Yes, this man was an honest savior. In the twenty – oh god, it really was twenty – years, Rebecca must have been this alone and lost, frozen in her pain, and came this humble man, with bread loaf hips sticking out of his trousers now, with such compassion and genuine trust to provide Rebecca, and she in turn kneeled before him, promised to keep living as her lips parted in prayer, accepted his honest breadcrumb of grace and love, the heightening of their faces and arms and breaths as they held each other for dear life, provided each other the best they could in a world that swept them by, the soft collapse of Rebecca into sleep with her new faith.

“How was your evening, Marlon?” Freud asked as Marlon entered the study, sat across from the doctor and picked at his plate of fresh rabbit.

“I've been made a cuckold.”

“You and every Jewish man, to one thing or another.” And at that the two men toasted and drank their mead.

“Oh, I joke, but I can guess at who you finally saw today. A shame, that there's no one else left to visit.”

“Not even my cousins?”

“Saul or, or, oh what was his name?”

“I forget too.”

“Well, they too perished several years ago. They worked in Rebecca’s bakery, tried to sneak Jewish deli food in the furnace one night, were consumed by a strange fire. No one’s phasing in and out of time like you, but we’ve all our own ghosts that visit, in ways no less painful than yours.”

“God, oh Freud, oh god.”

Marlon threw his plate, gripped at his face and sobbed into his lap, let the heave of his own breath carry out a moan that brought Freud to tears, could only pat and rub Marlon’s back with the occasional kiss to the back of his head.

“Perhaps it’s time we left this city. I’ve work in London, a more accepting city. We can set tomorrow morning, I’ve decided, a much healthier place for you as well, less of a history you have to contend with. But, let’s walk one more night along the Donau, say goodbye to this city.”

The first hour of their walk, along the city’s great river, was silent save for the snuffle of a congested nose, but then Freud ventured to ask.

“How was the city, way back then. Can you still see it?”

And Marlon could, the stroll of children he grew up with and their parents lagging, right alongside the food stands and late-night dates Freud knew well. The two compared landmarks, Marlon’s memory visible before him, and the two found themselves making a great historical tour of their home. Oh, I hope you never know the pain of losing your home, the sight of all memories merely an image you could barely express to a good friend. It’s always like that, whether you’re the Wandering Jew or not; there’s the love bright in your head and eyes as you give your whole life in rushed, fumbled words, and then the weight of your carried memory coming to a halt, as you look your friend in the face and tell them that there’s nothing of your

home left to share. But there was just one thing, one person left, to whom both Marlon and Freud could locate their lives in Vienna, the Kaiser himself. The two stood in front of the palace's entrance, now a theme park with coasters and candy, looked up to the royal library, where a single office's window was lit by a flickering candle.

“Why not visit the Emperor, see what he might say? I'll wait down here, give you a final goodbye.”

Marlon made his way up the palace's grand steps, Roman gods and Greek goddesses, depending on the decade currently phased in, towered over with raised spears, ceiling decorations of women in gold and specters in shades, as Marlon entered the empty halls of the Royal library, where books rose to a ceiling so high it seemed the night sky loomed above. And in the far end of the library was a single wooden door slightly ajar, wavering flame cast the shadow of a lounge chair in idle movement. The last monument to which all Vienna prayed, the Emperor, a man Marlon's age when he decreed city reconstruction. Sure, von Hansen had the wit to fill the city fertile, but only one man had the power to attempt against time. What an honor, for it to even be possible for a Jew to approach the Catholic god-king. Marlon crossed the library cautiously, peered into the candlelit room, saw a hunched figure held above a bible.

“Your majesty, it is a great honor to say this, hello your majesty,” Marlon began as he entered the room, “I'm Marlon Reubenfarber, the 'Golem of Vienna.' Sorry about Mayor Lueger, but, you know, fuck him too, pardon my language, your majesty. I've come here because, well, I don't even know why. But you're all that's left of it, you know? You're all that's left of what we were, and I can't go back. I want to go back. That summer building your Will, I didn't think – I thought – that we could keep the rust out of our home. But we can't, can we? It's going to claim Vienna, isn't it?”



The chair continued to creak, the bible's pages continued to flip, the candle continued to flick its flame, dance vibrant shadows around the room.

“Your majesty, please, you must know some way to – “

And the hunched man began to laugh all copper wire and smoke. Marlon approached the chair, peered over, and saw Rustman looking up at him, black gums grinning, laughed even harder.

*“Nothing left of ol’ Owl-Eyes Kaiser here. Better run while you can, Marlon my boy. Architecture’s going Modern from here on out. Oh, oh! Here comes the beauty, get out quick!”*

Rustman laughed harder at that, left Marlon horrified and running out the library, but not before the boom of blasts around him. Marlon looked over his shoulders, saw the Greco-Roman replaced with some design concrete and violent, all visible bolts and block lettering, slamming down the past with erasing force. As Marlon raced down the palace's steps, the building around him slammed down all solid stone and iron will, pressed out the life of pseudo-history into modern grotesque. Freud was waiting at the entrance, visibly shook.

“Marlon! What’s wrong? You look like you’ve seen a ghost!”

“We need to leave, now! It’s happening!”

But before Freud could ask the pivotal “what,” Marlon grabbed him by the wrist and ran. On either side of them on their run to Freud's home, the city lost its shine as plaster cast and gilded window were replaced with the violent lack of modern design. White, uniform, consuming, the rush of an era Marlon could not identify. The two arrived at Freud's building,

Marlon rushed him to finalize his plans, gather his family and patients and books, and the two again set out, this time for an airship outside the city limits, the last one for the week to London.

“Marlon, Marlon! What is it?”

“I don’t know, but we must leave!”

But, ah, Marlon was coming to realize the sight of it all. History phases as long as it repeats, but the rust of something cancerous had killed off Vienna’s royal heart, taken siege to the culture and people, systematically tore up the streets. Cobblestone wound paths, interlaced streets, ivy covered plaques all passed by Marlon’s eyes, as they had just one summer ago, dissolved with the boom of modern block and striking. Faceless, minimalist, perfect, the architecture of a new era arriving before Marlon’s eyes. Ah, the perfect architecture, here to haunt the city at last. Consider perfection, the lack of imperfection: seamless, procedural, all-consuming. Consider perfect at its chemical core, the composition of Nitrogen achieved its perfect design. It’s a horrifying perfection, Zyclon-B, the most beautiful of chemical bonds, now achieved on the level of city design, the overlapping of cement and iron until Vienna achieved the compound’s shape, which would be finalized with the final boom of the entire city, but not before Marlon and Freud raced out.

“Last call for London! Last boarding, now!” cried out the pilot as Marlon and Freud ran up airship ladder to the ship’s balcony.

The great construct rose in the sky, Marlon and Freud held tight to the balcony’s railing, Marlon’s eyes concentrated, waiting.

“What are you looking for, Marlon?” Freud roared over the sound of the ship’s engine.

“Not looking for, hearing for!”

And then it came. The morning bells of the Protestant church. Procedural, Productive, Perfect, the burst of violent waves that rocked the ship from high above, the passing of time with each strike at the church’s bell, each boom securing another sector of Vienna under modern block, the release of perfect architecture into the air, the sealing of the city under concrete roof, until each proceeding bell secured the city into a perfectly silent mass of choking families under the weight of a new era, the seal of all lives considered, the rust over of the city’s latch until, with the final bell’s ring tearing into the sky, Vienna resembled a museum, a tomb.

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