# Pounded All The Way Down:

# The Metarecursive Reflections of Chuck Tingle

By

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A Capstone Thesis in Research

presented for the B.A. degree

in

The Department of English

University of Michigan

Winter 2026

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*Acknowledgements*

I principally want to thank my thesis advisor, Scott Larson, for his excellent advice and direction as I shaped this thesis. Diving into the world of queer theory is like diving headfirst into a freezing ocean, and his guidance was crucial to me not only figuring out exactly what I wanted to do with Chuck Tingle, but also what exactly I should read in order to do it. In addition, Hadji Bakara and Gillian White, as this year's program directors, were excellent guidestones in the thesis writing process; I would especially like to thank Gillian for her incisive commentary on early drafts of this thesis. This year's entire massive thesis writing cohort was also wonderful to be around, as a source of inspiration, ideas, and conversation. My peer workshop group, consisting of Maddie Ahn, Sophia Herman, and Camille Nagy were especially helpful in helping me parse out how exactly I should write about a topic as wild, hard to follow, and as sexual as the works of Chuck Tingle. Any faults within this essay are entirely my own.

I would of course also like to thank my family, especially my parents, who don't know what this thesis is about and who are probably going to get quite a shock when they find out. Also always in my heart is Peyton, who would have hated the topic of this thesis but loved nonetheless that I've done it. To my friends, who have listened to me talk about Chuck Tingle for longer than I've been working on this thesis: you should know that I'm not going to stop, and this project is perhaps only the beginning of the many, many thoughts that I have about him. Special thanks to Jeanne, with whom it is always fun to talk about theory with. Most of all, I would like to thank my partner for putting up with me while I've spent so much time working on this.

Lastly, I would like to thank the two voices (other than my own) without which this work could never have been possible: Chuck Tingle, as the writer and creator of the text within the

text, and You, the reader, for bringing my own work to life in your interpretation of it. Thank you.

*Abstract*

The erotica author Chuck Tingle is a strange and enigmatic figure, and his work even more so, but in its strangeness, that work is capable of revealing esoteric truths about selfhood and existence that would otherwise be difficult to articulate in nonerotic works. In exploring the recursive and metatextual story collection *The Analboros: A Collection of Recursive Butt Pounding Tales*, this thesis tracks the ways in which Tingle uses the category of selfhood as a tool in order to deconstruct the psychological category of the self. Through a multiplication and refraction of the self—both in the abstract and in terms of himself as an author—Tingle challenges the normative societal myths that presume that heterosexual domination is the root of pleasure, identity, and relationality. In place of these myths, Tingle instead emphasizes a complex and occasionally contradictory worldview that emphasizes multiplication over singularity and incoherence over unity.

*In place of a hermeneutics we need an erotics of art.*

-Susan Sontag, “Against Interpretation”

*Our school flag is an anus!*

-*Community*, Season 2, Episode 29, “Basic Rocket Science”

*Well Doctor, we obviously have a very magical connection. I love all your ideas, and I would say that handsomest dinosaur is Handsome Doctor. - Jeff Goldblum*

-Chuck Tingle, chucktingle.com

*Of course you’re scared. This is the end for you. But it’s not the end for me.*

-The Hero, *Slay the Princess*

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# Dramatis Personae

*In* The Analboros*, there are a number of bodies and characters with overlapping, overly long, or otherwise confusing names, including the very texts of the collection embodied as sentient, living books within the narrative itself. This is a list of the most relevant characters, books, and bodies present in the text, along with every associated name they have (some invented by me), and any abbreviations as they will be used in the forthcoming paper. Not all characters listed are present in this thesis, but they are nonetheless included for the sake of completeness.*

*The Analboros*: The central text analyzed in this paper, written by Chuck Tingle, credited as Dr. Chuck Tingle. Its full title is *The Analboros: A Collection of Recursive Butt Pounding Tales*.
Chuck Tingle: A pseudonymous erotica author responsible for writing *The Analboros*, among other stories. This is the nonfictional man as he exists in our world, although he adopts a persona that is at least to some degree fictional. He may also be referred to as Dr. Chuck Tingle, as on the cover of *The Analboros*.
"PITB0" through "PITB6": Where these books exist as physical objects within the text, they will be referred to via their abbreviated title surrounded by quotation marks. If the given book is sentient, it will be referred to by its name if available, otherwise it will also be referred to by this standard.
PITB0: "Pounded In The Butt By My Own Butt," the first story in *The Analboros*.

- Kirk: The protagonist of PITB0, a twenty-two-year-old gay scientist who works in human cloning.
- Dr. Porter: Kirk's coworker and wingman.
- Portok: Kirk's sentient cloned ass, created by mixing together hawk DNA with DNA from Kirk's brain and ass.

PITB1: "Pounded In The Butt By My Book 'Pounded In The Butt By My Own Butt,'" the second story in *The Analboros*.

- Buck Trungle: The protagonist of PITB1 and fictional author of "PITB0."
- Carl: Buck Trungle's lawyer.
- Slater: "PITB0," who is suing Buck Trungle for the royalties he has earned from the sales of "PITB0."

PITB2: "Pounded In The Butt By My Book 'Pounded In The Butt By My Book "Pounded In The Butt By My Own Butt,"'" the third story in *The Analboros*.

- Captain Tingle: The abbreviated name for the Chuck Tingle who is the narrator and protagonist of PITB2. This Chuck Tingle is a celebrated author who is on a mission in a spaceship to confront the alien civilization which consists of multiple sentient copies of his book "PITB1."
- Gi-Tingle: A manifestation of Chuck Tingle's subconsciousness who wakes Captain Tingle out of his dream state so that he can continue his mission.
- Captain Mimmer Tops: The leader of the spaceship full of alien copies of "PITB1."

PITB3: “Pounded In The Butt By My Book ‘Pounded In The Butt By My Book “Pounded In The Butt By My Book ‘Pounded In The Butt By My Own Butt,”””” the fourth story in *The Analboros*.

Lord Gibbok: The protagonist of PITB3, a fantasy-style warrior who is aware that he is a character in a Chuck Tingle book.

Gogo: Gibbok’s captain and right-hand man.

“PITB2”: The unnamed wizard-tyrant-book, who Lord Gibbok is meant to be fighting against.

Mentor Chuck: The version of Chuck Tingle that Gibbok meets in the woods in order to find his way out of the Tingleverse and into the real world.

PITB4: “Pounded In The Butt By My Book ‘Pounded In The Butt By My Book “Pounded In The Butt By My Book ‘Pounded In The Butt By My Book “Pounded In The Butt By My Own Butt,”””””” the fifth story in *The Analboros*.

Rule-34 Chuck: Another Chuck Tingle and the protagonist of PITB4. He is a sentient consciousness that has been born digitally from the internet concept of “Rule 34”: If it exists, there’s porn of it.

The Raptor: Rule-34 Chuck’s subconscious, manifested as a handsome dinosaur.

“PITB3”: The logically simulated projection of Rule-34 Chuck’s future book, designed to give Rule-34 Chuck what will be the best sex of his life.

PITB5: “Pounded In The Butt By My Book ‘Pounded In the Butt By My Book “Pounded In The Butt By My Book ‘Pounded In The Butt By My Book “Pounded In The Butt By My Book ‘Pounded In The Butt By My Own Butt,”””””” the sixth story in *The Analboros*.

Jorbins: The protagonist of PITB5. He is also the book “PITB5,” but existing in the imaginary city of Beforna before he has been written.

Hembo: The book “PITB4,” Jorbins’s best friend and eventual lover.

“PITB0” through “PITB3:” Also present in PITB5, but unnamed.

PITB6: “Pounded In The Butt By My Book ‘Pounded In the Butt By My Book “Pounded In The Butt By My Book ‘Pounded In The Butt By My Book “Pounded In The Butt By My Book ‘Pounded In The Butt By My Book “Pounded In The Butt By My Own Butt,”””””””” the seventh and final story in *The Analboros*.

Tropo: Protagonist of PITB6, who wakes up late for work because his sentient alarm clock didn’t wake up because *his* sentient alarm clock didn’t wake up because *his* sentient alarm clock didn’t wake up.

Job: The sentient manifestation of Tropo’s job, who replaces Tropo after he is fired for being late.

“PITB5:” The fictional book “PITB5,” who is responsible for the entire universe falling apart in PITB6

# Figures

Fig 1: Headshot of Chuck Tingle wearing his pink mask (“The Man”), 8

# Introduction: Sex, Sense, and the Self

When I've introduced people to the works of erotica author Dr. Chuck Tingle, regardless of if they are colleagues, friends, or even teachers, the question they invariably ask me is, more or less: "Do people really *get off* to this?" The question is a revealing one, in part because it serves to distance the asker from the material—it is always the nebulously othering word "people" that is being wondered about, as if it were immediately and clearly obvious that neither I nor they would ever allow ourselves to be debased by something so utterly *weird*—but even more crucially because of what it suggests about how we, as a society, think about erotica and even sexual pleasure more broadly. The question is not "is this enjoyable to read" or even "is this arousing," but instead always framed in the way in which erotica is always framed: as a means to an end, a shortcut to the telos of orgasm, and as a tool by which one leaves behind ("gets off" of) the shameful realm of sexual pleasure.

Chuck Tingle's erotica, however, does not submit to this expectation that the sexual and nonsexual must be intrinsically segregated, nor does it submit to any expectations that the end-goal of sexual pleasure is the orgasm—even as it ironically features characters sexually submitting to manifestations of these sexual expectations. These works, referred to as "tinglers" because they are "so blissfully erotic that [they] cannot be experienced without eliciting a sharp tingle down the spine" (*Analboros* 96), emphasize the gentler, continuous, and tingly sensation of arousal over the finishing and teleological pleasure of orgasm. Certainly, characters within the so-called "Tingleverse" experience frequent and willing orgasmic and penetrative sex, but this is not quite the singular end goal of either the works or the characters within them, and this orgasm is anything but isolated from the external world. Instead, the sexual pleasure experienced within

these works exists in a nonsensical melange of the mundane, the fantastic, the nonsexual, and the arousing that serves to amplify and center pleasure in every and all aspects of life.

A key example of this pleasure lies in the third book in the short story collection *The Analboros*, PITB2. This story features Chuck Tingle himself as a protagonist (whom I refer to as "Captain Tingle" to differentiate him from both the author and other similar characters within the work) needing to delve into the depths of his subconscious in order to find a password which can wake him up from the deep sleep that he's currently trapped in:

> Deeper and deeper I travel into my thoughts, desperate to find the answer when suddenly I notice a pattern, a familiar thought that seems to appear again and again. Eventually, it becomes overwhelming, growing in a beautiful blossom that consumes my mind. Now I am completely surrounded by the cute butts of men, hard and muscular as they invade my brain. (32)

As Brian Attenbery notes in "Affordance of Fantasy," it is normal for works of fantasy to shape and mold the worlds that they create in order to indicate fundamental philosophical or religious truths that cannot easily be expressed in the concrete terms of the world that we live in—to literalize metaphor, "so that a character thinks *as* a mountain rather than merely *like* one," and to thereby make the abstract ideas at the core of any given narrative explicitly clear by rendering those aspects physically real within the terms of the fantasy. Thus the world of Middle Earth physically represents the aspects of Tolkien's Christian faith which are "transferable to the world of experience, but only through a theological transformation via scripture" (9), and the same is true for authors with other philosophies—for instance the Daoism at the heart of Ursula K. Le Guin's works, or the Marxist disenfranchisement explored by China Miéville (9, 5–6). This is also the case for the works of Chuck Tingle. In PITB2, these butts at the center of Captain

Tingle's consciousness are not just the key to him waking up from the false, matrix-like dreamscape that he finds himself trapped in, but they are in fact key to understanding the diffusive, non-teleological pleasure which is at the core of *The Analboros* as a whole.

Obviously, the butts indicate gay erotic pleasure, and given that this is a work of erotica that is not in any way surprising. But what is surprising is the way that these butts manifest: although the anus would normally be seen as a passive, submissive sexual receptacle, here these butts are presented in distinctly phallic and penetrative terms. Instead of being fertile ground to be conquered, they're "growing," "hard," and explicitly "invade" Captain Tingle's brain. Sexuality is being centered, but unlike traditional understandings of sex, where the masculine, dominating, and penetrative self physically enters and controls the feminine, submissive, and penetrated other, this is a sexuality that confounds expectations, refuses to engage with standard and certitude in the way one might otherwise expect. This fantasy of the butt as a penetrative object rather than a penetrated one completely upsets the expected sexual order. At the same time, however, because the butts *remain* "cute butts," rather than being explicitly phallic—and because the penetration is itself only implied—this disordering is not merely a subversion of roles, but instead the imaginative creation of something new, unexpected, and wonderful. The result is that sexual expectations are not simply dismissed, but instead themselves probed, explored, and modified in a form of sexual play that is, itself, nonteleological.

In his short story collection *The Analboros*, Chuck Tingle explores this confusing and nonlinear pleasure through a series of recursive, metatextual, and frequently contradictory stories that each attempt to understand what it means to relate to oneself and to others surrounding oneself, and what it means to experience, give, and create pleasure. Each story builds on and refracts the previous, resulting in a narrative of self that is simultaneously multiplied and, in its

dispersal, dismissed. As the recurring repetition of "Pounded In The Butt By My Book…" in all but the first of these titles suggests, this includes an exploration of what it means to be an author, and so these stories feature prominently representations of erotic love between author and the sentient manifestation of his own written text. However, because the books being referenced are also explicitly erotica—a form of art created to incite not only pleasure, but frequently also (as noted above) masturbation—these representations themselves contain complicated and knotted relationships between not only author and text, but also the reader, who by their very engagement with *The Analboros* has inserted themselves into the sexuality being represented within it. Consequently, the very category of self identity within the collection becomes nebulous to the point of evaporating entirely, even as it, in other ways, is multiplied to become infinitely expansive.

This strange erasure and multiplication of self is evident in the epigraph to the collection, written by none other than Chuck Tingle himself: "*The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is love, and the oldest and strongest kind of love is the love of a hard bud. And the hardest bud is yourself.*" With the collection's title promising "A Collection of Recursive Butt Pounding Tales" and the obviously autoerotic implications of being "pounded" by one's own butt, as the various titles in the collection promise, the most direct way of reading this epigraph is as a celebration of autoerotic pleasure—and thus a celebration of the self. Whatever a "hard bud" is or might be, Chuck Tingle is assuring us, the readers, that it is what *we* are, and that "the oldest and strongest kind of love" is the kind we have for ourselves. The apparent narcissism of quoting himself only adds to this messaging, as if Tingle is demonstrating the very self-arousal that he is apparently advocating for. Indeed, this self-adoration is an extant part of the work, which features Tingle multiplied and refracted across nearly every story in the collection, both sexually and otherwise.

Yet this apparently obvious conclusion nonetheless falls apart upon closer inspection. Tingle never claims that the "oldest and strongest emotion of mankind" is self love, even if he does obliquely suggest it, and there are a number of inherently ambiguous and potentially paradoxical claims that contradict such an apparently definitive reading. One of the most crucial of these ambiguities is who exactly "yourself" is referring to. Unlike the stories in *The Analboros* and their titles—which all make reference to "my own butt," doubly referencing the self and therefore placing the autoeroticism of these texts at their forefront—this is not a "myself," but a "yourself," a phrase which is simultaneously universalizing and othering. That is, by depicting this apparent self-love as an emotion affecting all of "mankind," Tingle is in fact deemphasizing his own perspective, and thus is acting against the egoism that he seems to be advocating *for* in place of advocating for the other, the "you."

At the same time, however, Tingle's own perspective cannot be extricated from this epigraph, even beyond the apparent narcissism of quoting himself at the beginning of his own book. The term "love of a hard bud" is neither a common term nor a neutral one, being both a unique piece of terminology indicating Tingle's own strange mannerisms and, perhaps more crucially, a term that suggests a loaded understanding of sexuality and gender. "Bud," on its own, suggests much more of a male image than a female one, as does the particularly dated word "mankind," but the word "hard" is especially suggestive of not just masculinity but masculinity of the excessive, protruding kind. That is, "the love of a hard bud" implies both the erect penis and a form of masculinity that is tough, domineering, and potentially even cruel. As such, the "hard bud" has something of an implication of the macho alpha male: obviously arousing for an author of gay erotica, but far from something universally relatable, even to the readers of that erotica. What about women, or even effeminate men, who might not *want* to be "hard" in that

way? By placing the label of "hardest bud" on the vast and generalized term "yourself," Tingle is simultaneously undermining himself in favor of an unknown other *and* defining the benefits of that other in terms that *he himself* finds specifically arousing.

But even as he does this, Tingle *also* makes the paradoxical claim that the singularly-focused and specifically understood "hardest" bud is the vast and generalized "yourself," referring to not just one singular person but apparently everyone. As the saying goes: if everyone is the hardest bud, then no one is, and so these exceptional qualities of masculinity appear to disappear into the broad spectrum of all of humanity. Whatever anyone happens to be equally happens to be "the hardest bud," apparently no matter what, and as a result, any notion of a singular self dissolves into a mass of broad and infinite *selves* who are all on level playing fields. Under this conception, the "love of a hard bud" also broadens in scope. The intrinsically ambiguous phrase (does it refer to love received or love given?) suggests that to love someone and to be loved *by* someone are equal and equivalent emotions, regardless of if that someone is yourself or somebody else. Even as Chuck Tingle is emphasizing the individual, placing his own perspective on such a pedestal that he quotes himself in the epigraph of his own book, his emphasis of the self manages to equally destroy the very notion, until all that is left is love.

Which of these understandings of this epigraph should we take as correct? The looping nature of *The Analboros*, and the way in which it continues and tracks through each story and possibility elaborated on only to come back around to the beginning and start all over again suggests that it is all of them, even if it is not all of them simultaneously. The same is true for *The Analboros* as a whole. Each successive story reveals something new and interesting about the self and how that self relates, sexually or otherwise, to the world around it, but these stories as a whole never neatly come to a conclusion, instead preferring to forever return back to where

they started: they return, over and over again, to the question of Chuck Tingle as their author. This is not done in order to sanctify Tingle as the creator of these works, but instead to undermine him as a single cohesive narrative voice. There is not one Chuck Tingle in *The Analboros* but many, each version of him different from the others, and so there cannot be any singular authorial self to draw from, no beginning from which the loop can begin, but instead only endless, never ceasing pleasure.

This thesis will examine each story in *The Analboros* in chronological order in order to track these shifting understandings of relationality and creative origin. In Chapter 1, I compare PITB0, the first and earliest book in the collection, with PITB1 in terms of how their respective protagonists relate to both the self and to the movement of time. Whereas PITB0 is the story of the pleasure of nonserious play, ego death, and the unity and connection between the mind and the body, PITB1 is a story of reckoning with the past, reconciling with the other, and the struggle of seeking mutual recognition.

While the question of authorship is briefly addressed in the analysis of PITB1, in Chapter 2, I move to specifically discuss Chuck Tingle as an authorial force as he exists outside of the text—especially as he originally presented himself when these stories were first written in 2015, and how he was perceived by the world at large. The mysteries of his presentation will be expounded upon and analyzed in order to understand who he is as a persona and as a writer, but crucially also so he can be compared with the many different versions of himself which are present in not just PITB1, but also PITB2, PITB3, and PITB4. I analyze the different ways in which these fictional Tingles impose or present their worldviews on not only their characters, but also their theoretical readers and even themselves.

PITB4 is particularly analyzed as simultaneously a critique of the forces of selfhood and authorship *and* as a reappropriation of those forces in the creation of a new origin myth. This analysis leads into Chapter 3, where I specifically address the fundamentally temporal questions raised not only by these earlier works but also PITB5 and PITB6, with each respectively addressing the "before" and "after" of any given story. Rather than being a straight-forward consideration of past and future, however, these two temporal states are rendered with a distinct ambiguity—PITB5 by creating the strange and impossible world of "Beforna" and PITB6 by refusing ending through the creation of a loop back to the beginning of *The Analboros*. This ambiguity emphasizes the nonexistence of these temporal states outside of how they are experienced in the present, and is thus connected to the sexually charged annihilation of the self that is at the core of all of these works, allowing for a world not of stability, but instead flux and constant change.



Fig 1: Headshot of Chuck Tingle wearing his pink mask ("The Man")

This instability means that neither *The Analboros* nor this thesis contain concrete answers; nor should they. Some of the world's most important questions cannot ever be definitely answered, but that doesn't mean that those questions are not worth puzzling over. When Chuck Tingle is in public, he wears a bright pink bag over his face to hide his identity. On its forehead, scrawled in huge block letters, is the phrase "LOVE IS REAL." This is a mysterious phrase that perfectly matches its mysterious

author, and is equally tautological. It does not read “love is good,” “love is beautiful,” or even “love is true,” nor does it express any other statement of value. Instead, it is a purely existential claim: love, like Chuck Tingle, exists. What it is, why it is, or how it matters to us remain open questions—perhaps they, too, are ultimately unknowable, but that has never stopped anyone (certainly not romance novelists) from trying to find those answers. It may be that there is no answer to find, but it is equally possible that in searching, we will find something that we never thought was possible before we began. Fundamentally, this is the magic of the worlds and the stories that Chuck Tingle has created. In their bizarreness, these stories challenge the fundamentally limiting perspectives that we have about the world and how it exists and functions; instead, Tingle presents a world of creative whimsy and magic all bound in erotic love. He presents for us a new possibility.

# Chapter 1: Le Petit Mort of the Author

In Donna Haraway's landmark feminist polemic "A Cyborg Manifesto," she describes our society as demarcated by harmful and dominative dualisms that result in "domination of all constituted as others, whose task is to mirror the self" (59). It is in this way that we divide ourselves, into the singular "self," the "One who is not dominated" but instead does the domination, and the "other," who is "multiple, without clear boundary, frayed, insubstantial" and dominated by and reflective of the self. "To be One," she writes, "is to be autonomous, to be powerful, to be God; but to be one is to be an illusion, and so to be involved in a dialectic of apocalypse with the other" (60). It is these two dueling concepts of singular self and mirrored other that form the respective bases of PITB0 and PITB1. In PITB0, the self as the force of domination who is unconcerned with the lives of others even as they depend on those others to maintain their own power, flirts with and eventually experiences the dialectic of apocalypse that Haraway suggests is inevitable. Conversely, in PITB1, the mirroring of the other is taken to its logical extreme, where the self and the other—as represented by the forces of author and written text—swap places with each other until they achieve the temporary and fragile state of mutual recognition.

## *Pounded In The Butt By My Own Butt*

The first story in *The Analboros* collection features 22-year-old protagonist Kirk, who works in a lab attempting to reverse engineer a new form of rapid human cloning suitable for creating vast armies of mindless worker drones. The technology to do so has already been invented—by an unnamed "eccentric billionaire" on a private island (3)—but Kirk and his coworkers are attempting to recreate the technology after the government shut it down because "there were just too many people getting worked up about the human rights of such mindless

creatures" (4). The project is blatantly unethical, but Kirk is hard to the ethical concerns that others raise; instead, he is focused on how this project is a benefit to him. He focuses not only on the project's business potential, referring to the practice as a "goldmine," but also the specifically selfish realization that *he*, personally, gets to be "poised on the front lines of progress" (3).

And he is, literally, on the front lines, since the scientists, "[t]hanks to a massive loophole," are able to legally continue their work so long as they, themselves, are the test subjects to their strange unethical experimentation (4). The usage of the term "loophole" suggests not only that this is a way to escape governmental regulation, but also indicates the self-experimental nature of the project. In Kirk's rejection of the perspective of the other, he leaves himself with *only* himself left to interact with, and thus, experiment on. As a result, when the experiment is finally successful, what Kirk comes face-to-face with is not the people who object to the unethical cloning experiment, or even the supposedly "mindless" result of that cloning, but instead with his own self, but externalized and altered.

In the scientists' experimentation, they splice together the DNA of various (apparently randomly selected) organs and animals, with the hope that the resulting creature will suit their particular needs. All attempts have been unsuccessful until, by pure chance, they combine "DNA from [Kirk's] brain, [his] ass, and a hawk" (5), which results in, perhaps unsurprisingly, an exact copy of Kirk's ass, with all of his knowledge, memories, and behavior quirks, along with two massive pairs of flapping wings. This butt, who will eventually be named Portok[1], turns out, then, to not be the intended mindless worker drone the scientists were originally intending to create, but instead a physical manifestation of Kirk's own brain, externalized into the world and able to look and know him completely and utterly. The result is that Kirk, instead of being confronted with his own selfish egoism, or being forced to learn how to deal and accept the

[1] Tingle's naming conventions are an aspect of his work that are outside of the scope of this project.

other, is instead looked at in a deep and penetrative way by the very mind that sought to create those mindless creatures to be controlled.

On some level, Kirk is frightened by this, but on another, it is deeply arousing for him. He feels "[a] slight chill run down [his] back" at the realization that Portok would instantly know that he is "a flawed man with a penchant for running out on relationships and taking practical jokes too far" (6–7). The chill is from fear, assuaged only when Portok promises him that he's "not going to spill the beans" (7), but the arousal between the two is also immediately apparent. Immediately after this moment, after Kirk and Portok have barely been introduced to each other, Kirk's coworker, Dr. Porter, "finds himself glancing back and forth…picking up on the vibe that's being established" and immediately swings into being Kirk's wingman and setting them up on a date, where the two go on a romantic dinner, followed by a steamy erotic encounter, and, eventually, love.

In falling in love with his own ass, Kirk is drawn to Portok's ability to embody what so many of us want in love—as Kirk describes him, "someone who really gets me, deep down at the core of my being" (8). That "deep down at the core" of Portok's being is almost identical to Kirk's is exactly the point. If conventional romantic fantasy is, as Lauren Berlant describes it in *Desire/Love*, the dream "that a man would come to a woman and understand her without aggressive probing" (Berlant 91), then that Portok is able to do that for Kirk completely and immediately makes him in some sense the perfect romantic object. There is no need for the two to have difficult conversations, to make compromises, or to struggle to be comprehended.

On the other hand, it can't be ignored that the relationship between Kirk and Portok is not one between a man and a woman, but instead between a man and his own living ass. The romance fantasy that Berlant describes specifically depends on difference: "The fantasy, which is

at the heart both of popular culture and Lacanian psychoanalysis, is that love is the misrecognition you like, can bear, and will try to keep consenting to" (106). Indeed, as Berlant notes, the desire which undergirds romance is "said to be motivated by psychic trauma, associated with perversion and melancholic masochism…." while ultimately the fantasy of romance is the force which is capable of taming and controlling those malevolent aspects (89). That is, the fantasy of being understood completely is the fantasy of being understood by an *other*, someone who fundamentally *can't* fully understand you, who is explicitly outside of yourself and even potentially threatening to you. In the heterosexual romance, this is the difference of sexuality—male and female—and since that dynamic is irrevocably tied (or, at least, so says psychoanalysis) to male intrusion upon female sexuality, it is only natural that that romantic fantasy depends upon the sterilization of that intrusive threat. Yet Kirk and Portok share a sameness even beyond that of a same-sex couple: their interiority, in the form of the duplication of Kirk's thoughts and memories, is literally identical. Everything that Kirk knows Portok knows as well, and so there can be no misrepresentation, and thus no way for Kirk to hide from Portok as his self-cum-other.

The crucial difference between Kirk and Portok is not carried in their interiority, but it is present in their experience of the world. While Portok understands Kirk completely on an intellectual level, he has never *experienced* life in the same way, by virtue of being a newly born creature. As he tells Kirk, "I have all of your memories about drinking wine, I know what to expect when I do it, and I know what it's going to taste like, but I've never truly tasted it for myself" (7). This is where the "probing" that Berlant describes enters into their conversation. Just because there is no need for intellectual probing between the two of them, that doesn't mean there is no desire for sexual probing. As Kirk remarks, "That's not to say that my feelings for my

own living ass aren't sexual, far from it; the connection that I'm looking for is something that embodies every kind of attraction" (*Analboros* 8). When the two finally decide to have sex, the interaction is one where Portok is experiencing that sexual pleasure for the first time, with Portok declaring, "I'd like to try anal" (9). Although the two characters are intellectually equal, and thus both have the same romantic understandings and experiences, it is precisely the sexual, the act of *doing*, that marks the key sense of difference and thus otherness between Kirk and Portok.

This is where it becomes relevant that Portok is not only Kirk's cloned brain, but also his ass. The butt-duplication mirrors, in sexual and experiential terms, the effect the brain-duplication has on their romantic connection, yet it differs in the crucial sense that Kirk's butt is the only physical aspect of his self that is copied over to Portok. That is, although he has all of Kirk's memories, Portok is not an exact clone of Kirk. Instead, he is a replica of Kirk's brain and his ass, but presumably nothing else (of Kirk's, at least—he also has the hawk wings). In this way, just as by having the same memories as Kirk makes Portok the externalization of Kirk's self-ness, being his literal anus makes Portok also the externalization of Kirk's desire to be anally pounded—that is, to experience the sensation *of being experienced* by another. So while Portok is simultaneously the external force that knows and understands Kirk completely and utterly, he is also the physical manifestation of the intrinsic pleasure that comes from being probed by that other.

And yet, while he is the embodied desire of being pounded, Portok is also the force that does the pounding. The consequence of the self-experimentation at the beginning of the story is Kirk externalizing his own subconscious desire to be seen by another, and then being looked at, gazed upon, and penetrated by that very desire in a bizarre refractory loop that erodes conventional understandings of relationship dynamics. In "Disordering Desires," an analysis of

queer S&M science-fiction erotica, Patricia Melzer argues that when queer science fiction utilizes cloning technology, it is in order for it to serve as "a metaphorical manifestation of that rare perfectly synchronized sexual encounter" where "the self's pleasure is the other's pleasure" (171). This is in some ways a repetition of the fantasy Berlant describes, of understanding—or, more crucially, being understood—by the external lover completely and utterly, but it is different in its explicitly sexual queerness. For Melzer, the queerly symbolic autoeroticism of a cloned body "fuses the self and the other through doubling the self" (171). Unlike the heterosexual fantasies of cloning that merely recreate extant male-dominated power structures—and unlike the fantasy that Berlant describes, which, in its excising of male violence equally cannot imagine life without it—this autoeroticism allows for the dichotomy between the two categories to disappear entirely, resulting in "the collapse of self/other through cloning" (174). This is not a moment of Kirk and Portok understanding each other, but of them fusing together to become one. In cloning himself, Kirk creates a manifestation of himself that is capable of looking at and penetrating him in a way that was not previously possible, either from himself or from another. Consequently, their sexual interaction is filled with moments of potentially narcissistic self-attraction. Kirk's sexual attraction to Portok is, in large part, based in autoarousal, a fact that is occasionally jokingly noted in the text. At the very beginning of the scene, Kirk begins to appreciate Portok's physique and stops to laugh at himself, "realizing that I'm only complimenting myself." This self-attraction continues even as the sexual activity commences, most notably when, right before Kirk begins sucking his dick, Portok slyly jokes, of his impressive size, "Hey, I got it from you" (9). Given that Portok is only pulled from Kirk's ass DNA—nothing there about his penis—this is potentially shocking, and not only because it's deeply bizarre for a living ass to have a penis in the first place. After all, Portok doesn't have, for

instance, Kirk's hair or his eyes, but he does, apparently, share his penis. Of course, there is some degree of ambiguity here: it is possible that Portok's penis is not necessarily identical to Kirk's, and given that Kirk repeatedly refers to its size as if it is astonishing (using words like "massive" or "impressive" repeatedly), it is entirely possible that it is, at least in some ways, different. But if this is true (or even if it's not), that Portok's penis comes from Kirk is an indication that Portok is meant to be read as not literally just Kirk's embodied ass, but instead as his embodied erotic desires more generally, a physical manifestation of homoerotic sexual pleasure.

This representation comes to a head after Kirk gives his butt a blowjob—potentially fulfilling the fetishistic and pornographic desire to suck one's own cock, to be simultaneously the giver and receiver of sexual pleasure—and he declares to Portok, "I need to be pounded up the ass by my own ass!" (10). The line is both a cheeky reference to the story's title and a reflection of its sense of recursion, but more than that, it is a bizarre role reversal. One would expect the embodied ass to be the one being pounded, but instead, Portok, as the embodiment of Kirk's sexual desires, instead *fulfills that very desire* for Kirk. In this enactment, the pair's relationship is capable of eroding not just the differences between Kirk and Portok, but of traditional understandings of top/bottom within gay relationships. Counteracting expectations, even as he is the projected and embodied literal anus of a submissive gay man, Portok is an apparently supernaturally talented, well-endowed, penetrating lover. Kirk describes him as having "a powerful precision that is unlike any human lover I have ever experienced" and their sexual mingling as "an expression of pure, unfiltered love in its rawest form, the love between a man and his own living ass" (10).

It is not long before Kirk approaches a prostate orgasm, already a "sensation [which is] immediately almost too much to bear" (11), but this is not the conclusion of the narrative. Before

he can come, Portok stops him, and invites him to come inside of him—and thus, inside of himself. Whatever questions we might have of the identicality of Kirk and Portok's penises, we can be absolutely certain that Portok's asshole is not only similar to but literally identical to Kirk's. Because of this, the title of this story, "Pounded In The Butt By My Own Butt" does not stop applying when Kirk begins to fuck Portok, since the butt that he is pounding *is still his own*. Instead, the pounding is itself amplified, and there is a sense where it appears to be that Kirk experiences not only the pleasure of having been pounded and of doing the pounding, but *of both at the same time*. The effect is one of a completely overwhelming, over-the-top, deeply intense orgasm:

> I grab a hold of my disembodied ass and pull him close, my length entirely inserted within Portok's tightness as I eject load after load. My whole being is consumed by blinding pleasure unlike anything I have ever felt, the sensations overwhelming every sense that I have until I feel as though I left my body completely.
>
> [...]
>
> "Fuck." I groan. "I love cumming in my own asshole." (11)

This orgasm supersedes the strange and magnificent pleasure of the prostate orgasm—in fact, it multiplies it, leading to the creation of a new sort of pleasure, beyond pleasure's recognizable limits, into a strange and beautiful unknown.

The language—of him being "consumed" and feeling as if he is leaving his body—is that of a kind of death. As the boundaries of who he is and where his pleasure originates dissipates, he himself, even if only temporarily, dissipates. As Leo Bersani describes it in his seminal essay "Is the Rectum a Grave?," sexuality can be seen as a movement "between a hyperbolic sense of

self and a loss of all consciousness of self" (218), where the idealized and powerful sense of self has historically been tied up in notions of masculine penetration, while the one being penetrated, regardless of if they are a woman or a gay man, is seen as giving in to "the suicidal ecstasy of being a woman" (212). That is, to penetrate is to be powerful, and therefore to be a complete and subjective person, and to be penetrated is to surrender to the powerful, and, in doing so, to be annihilated. In a sense, as Kirk is, through Portok as a proxy, penetrating himself and experiencing this sense of deathly pleasure, he is inhabiting this sense of suicidal ecstasy, where, in the immense pleasure of being penetrated, he finds "himself," as a complete and independent figure, being destroyed.

This is, as Bersani would argue, something to be celebrated. The self, he argues, must be fought against because it is "a value that accounts for human beings' extraordinary willingness to kill in order to protect the seriousness of their statements" (222). It is this insistence on being in power, on maintaining the self, that is responsible, at least in part, for fueling the homophobia and the violence perpetrated by the straight and HIV-negative population during the AIDS crisis. Conversely, gay sex—particularly receptive anal sex—becomes the tool which pushes back against this societal ideal of "the self" that is used as the justification for homophobic violence: "But if the rectum is the grave in which the masculine ideal...of proud subjectivity is buried, then it should be celebrated for its very potential for death" (222). There is a real power, from this perspective, in being powerless, in submitting, and in surrendering the political self from which control and hatred originates.

This remains true for Kirk even though—and even perhaps because—he is the one on top during his moment of destructive pleasure. The roles he and Portok occupy don't map neatly onto the heteronormative framework of a dominating and penetrating man and the submissive

and penetrated woman. Indeed, neither Kirk nor Portok could possibly be the "woman" in this scenario because on a fundamental level, neither of them are women; instead, they play roles that might or might not be traditionally associated with either women or men interchangeably. Portok, despite not only representing but *being* Kirk's penetrated asshole, plays the role of the domineering penetrator, but at the same time he is also the creation of Kirk and of Kirk's desires, existing not to exert power over the world, but to give and embody pleasure. Kirk, by virtue of being the original, is both the penetrator and the penetrated, but through his combination of those roles, and his ultimate surrender to the sensation of pleasure, he becomes disconnected from any sense of obvious selfhood. Thus, their relationship paradoxically represents simultaneously a desire to be fully understood by the other, but also to be penetrated by the other, and, in that penetration, to be annihilated so that there is no self for the other to understand—and no other for the self to be understood by.

All of these roles and relationships overlap and mingle together in productive non-sense, a form of nonserious play that Bersani identifies as the true value of sexuality: "t*o demean the seriousness of efforts to redeem it*" (222). This sense of play is manifested in the final scene of PITB0. Kirk awakens to find his apartment empty and Portok nowhere to be found, with only a small note left on the table telling him that Portok had a nice time, but that he needs to go explore the world without the trappings of "a relationship holding [him] back." Kirk finds himself beginning to cry, experiencing for the first time his own personal failings—of being a "person who is unable to commit"—when suddenly Portok jumps out of the closet, revealing that the whole thing was just an extension of his (and by extension, their) "habit of inappropriate practical jokes" (*Analboros* 12).

Had it not been a practical joke, the scene would carry serious emotional heft. Not only would there be despair for Kirk losing a literally perfect lover (and his own ass), the loss would be his own fault—the failure to commit—that he is forced to experience from an external perspective. He would have moved from the hurtful self, imposing his own desires onto others without concern for their feelings, to the other who is forced to experience the very hurt he has caused. Perhaps this version of the story would have Kirk forced to reckon with the self-centered and greedy person we meet at the beginning of the story, who is unconcerned with caring for "mindless creatures" if such compassion gets in the way of human progress. But instead, any potential growth or development, to whatever extent it might exist, is softened by the joke. The narrative hints at Kirk and Portok's relationship leading to this deep sense of self-betterment and personal growth, and then immediately undercuts it, as if to say that none of that is actually important, placing everything back into the immediate vicinity of pleasure. In the final words of PITB0, Portok demands to Kirk that he "...get in here an [sic][2] fuck me, it's time for round two!" (12). The typo adds to the sense of whimsy, allowing the scene to rest comfortably in its intrinsic messiness without needing to be much more than pleasure.

In this respect, Kirk's orgasmic annihilation in PITB0 aligns itself with the "distinctly nonteleological character" of what Patrick Kindig titles "queer curiosity" (69). The term, as used in queer circles, signals "an incipient form of homoerotic desire…that is not willing to label itself as queer," for instance the ostensibly straight man on dating apps who is "just curious" about a gay rendezvous (50), but Kindig elaborates on this sense of curiosity as being also an expression

[2] Typos and misspellings are a natural consequence of these books being short-form, rapidly written, and self published erotica, and I am of the opinion that they add, rather than detract, from the value of the work. As such, I want to clarify that usage of the term [sic] here and throughout this piece is only ever in the context of its classical usage as "thus written," used to demarcate Tingle's occasional grammatical libertarianism as it exists within the text. I am never using it derisively or as a disparagement of either Tingle or his style.

of a kind of living that is focused on experience over identity, “a motivator of genuine exploration, a hunger for the new and the unknown” (68). Although Kirk is an explicitly gay man, this second aspect of curiosity that Kindig identifies is directly relevant to Kirk and Portok’s relationship. Sex with Portok, as a literal embodiment of sexual exploration, not only takes precedence over Kirk’s self-identity, but also over his *literal self*. The autoerotic encounter is not weighed down by the past, nor is it particularly caught up in the future, but instead it is pleasure itself, magnified and drawn out and amplified to expand all of place and all of time.

Yet, one cannot help but wonder if pleasure is really enough. Is it enough to solely focus on one’s own world, even if that comes at the detriment of others? Who is Kirk at the end of this? Is he still the same cold-hearted scientist who is willing to dismiss ethical concerns for the nebulous pursuit of progress, or has this experience taught him something about how to behave in the world? Does love, in fact, win out in the end? PITB0 does not answer these questions. In allowing Kirk to experience the bliss of ego death, the question of who Kirk has been or who he will be is blithely brushed aside. Perhaps this should not be surprising: PITB0 is, after all, primarily a piece of erotica, and erotica’s primary role is manifesting sexual pleasure. Any questions it addresses outside of that will fundamentally be limited by that framework. If this frame were to remain invisible for the duration of *The Analboros*, then it would be, perhaps, enough to leave it at that. Instead, however, this normally invisible framework will slowly, as the book progresses, come more clearly into focus in order to be tested, played with, and explored like it were itself a body within an erotic novel. In fact, the most crucial body in the framing of the text, Chuck Tingle, the author, is in fact—albeit indirectly—the protagonist of the next story in the series, PITB1.

*Pounded In The Butt By My Book "Pounded In The Butt By My Own Butt"*

Although Chuck Tingle himself is not explicitly present in PITB1, he is fairly directly mirrored through the slightly-askew character of Buck Trungle. Trungle, like Tingle supposedly did, lives in Billings, Montana, and as he goes through his day-to-day life, he notes that "not once do I get recognized as Buck Trungle, highly successful author of science fiction literature and the best selling novel, 'Pounded In The Butt By My Own Butt'"(15). Perhaps unlike how we might imagine Tingle, who purposefully hides his identity, and thus presumably does not want to be discovered, Trungle finds himself wishing that "just once" he might get recognized on the street by an adoring stranger instead of living his life in obscurity (15). This desire, to be seen and appreciated, is replicated in the life of the aforementioned book, named Slater, who emails Trungle to tell him that he is suing for the royalties he has gained from repeatedly selling him because he "just want[s] some recognition for [his] effort" (19).

This desire for recognition that these two characters share is in contrast to the immediate and effortless understanding in the relationship between Kirk and Portok in PITB0. Although Slater is the creation of Trungle, the two of them are fundamentally different, not only in their respective desire for royalties, but in their identities, personalities, and even sexualities. In what might well be a nod to Tingle's own identity as a personally closeted author of queer erotica, Slater is an explicitly gay man (20), while Trungle repeatedly refers to himself as straight, having his "first and only gay experience" (21) when he and Slater eventually have sex. Whereas Portok, in PITB0, is a perfect clone of Kirk's desires, Slater is a distant replica, not so much a copy or even a translation of the inner world of Buck Trungle, but something which has been born from that inner world and yet has shaped into something else entirely. As a result, even though both characters share the same desire for recognition, the way in which they want it and

the way in which it matters to them is different. Even as the force of creation ties them together, it also makes them fundamentally strangers.

It is through this process of transformation and change, both of the creative process and of the characters within the story, that moves PITB1 past the playful presentist focus of PITB0. While both Portok and Slater were both created for the personal gains of their respective creators—Portok being created with the hope of him being a mindless worker drone to be enslaved, and Slater being created, at least in part, to earn Trungle residuals—this original intent is never directly addressed by either Kirk or PITB0, and the end of the story openly rejects any possibility of growth or change in the arms of the other. In PITB1, in contrast, both Trungle and Slater must wrestle with what they mean to each other, what they owe to each other, and what they must do for each other. As Berlant notes, this is the fundamental basis of a romantic encounter as it exists in the public imagination, where "[i]f the Other will accept your fantasy/realism as the condition of their encounter with their own lovability, and if you will agree to accept theirs, the couple (it could be any relation) has a fighting chance not to be destroyed by the aggressive presence of ambivalence…" (106). Thus, unlike the self-centered dynamic at the heart of PITB0, the dynamic between Trungle and Slater is one that is much more emblematic of a traditional relationship. In PITB1, the couple must struggle to understand each other's perspective and find a compromise that makes them both happy.

At the beginning of the book, however, Trungle is very like Kirk in that he has apparently not considered the thoughts and feelings of the book that he has written. Instead of immediately accepting the (admittedly strange) reality of the world in which he lives—his lawyer, Carl, tells him that the book has "a very, very good case against you" (17), suggesting that talking books are enough of a mundanity to be embedded into the legal code—Trungle is instead flabbergasted

and even mildly incensed at Slater's email, first "[i]mmediately [sensing] that this may be some kind of sick joke," but becoming anxious and flustered when he realizes that it's not. Like the chill that runs down Kirk's back upon his recognition that Portok knows all of his closest and most intimate secrets, Trungle feels a different "cold chill [run] down [his] spine" when he realizes that Slater's email is real (16). This time, however, the fright comes not from being known completely, but instead the space of the unknown that comes from interacting with someone who is fundamentally *other* than oneself.

Until Slater comes into the picture, Trungle's interactions with the world are intrinsically self-centered, and as such, even though he claims to crave recognition, he simultaneously appears to avoid recognition in favor of flattering his own ego. He describes his profession as one "that's known for sitting alone in stagnation" (15), and in fact, he is stuck in a deep writer's block instead of actively writing more books to put out in the world (16). Instead of interacting with others, even through the one-sided medium of writing, Trungle passes his time reading fanmail, his "ego craving the brief nuggets of love and adoration from fans who will never truly know anything about me" (16). As a result, when he gets the angry email from Slater, the fear he experiences is not just losing his royalties, but instead from the thought of being seen—the very thing he claimed to desire—not as a figure to be idealized, but as who he truly is.

Nonetheless, Trungle goes to meet with Slater, and as such—even though it scares him—he confronts the very figure that Kirk avoids throughout the entirety of PITB0: the other that he has harmed. Slater, in their interaction, is not shy about the ways in which Trungle has hurt him: despite all of Slater's hard work, "[b]lood, sweat, and tears" (18), he gets nothing to show for it, no recognition for the work that he has done, and no credit. It is this last point that is particularly upsetting: "Your name is written across my face for god sakes!" (19). Notable is not

only that Slater craves the same desire to be seen and appreciated that Trungle expresses at the beginning of the book, but also that the exploitation that Slater describes is the same exploitation that Kirk dreams of enacting at the beginning of PITB0. Like the apparently "mindless" worker drones Kirk had hoped to create, Trungle has written Slater for the benefit of himself and his own profit without any consideration of the consequences of that action.

Unlike Kirk, however, Trungle is quick to change once he's confronted with the indirect harm that he's caused. After the two of them meet, and Slater tells him how harmful it's been for him to go unrecognized for his labor, Trungle apologizes for and acknowledges his ignorance: "I had no idea this would happen to you. I never considered what it must be like for you as a book and I want to make things right" (19). The immediate apology makes Slater reconsider his anger, and he proposes a compromise that will make both of them happy: "Maybe we could work out a way for you to keep half your royalties and all you'd have to do is let me fuck you silly" (20). In PITB0, this compromise was unnecessary, by virtue of Kirk and Portok being mentally identical, and so in that book the sexual interaction was a means of exploration and play rather than a genuine attempt to reconcile and negotiate difference, but here, in PITB1, sex becomes the means of interface by which Slater and Trungle learn to interact with and connect with each other despite their differences. In order for them to do so, however, they must confront each other and the otherness that they each respectively represent.

Although sex is presented here as a means to solve the problem, it is not actually possible for this reconciliation to occur, or for either character to move into this realm of pleasure-seeking, until they have acknowledged the other's perspective. This is in part because the two do not actually enter this conversation as equals; Slater is the created book and Trungle is his creator. As Roland Barthes describes in his famous "The Death of the Author," common

cultural understanding of literature tends to be "tyrannically centered on the author," such that "[t]he *explanation* of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were…the voice of a single person" (1268). This means that it is not only that *Trungle* enters into their conversation feeling that he is the sole responsible voice of "PITB0," but also that the world as a whole feels that way, and Slater's perspective is intrinsically marginalized and delimited. However, as Barthes argues, although an author is the origin point for any given text, a text does not exist in a vacuum, and it is the act of reading and interpreting that truly brings a text to life. Rather than the dead and stagnant realm of the written word, the complexities and contradictions in any given text only become legible in the hands of the reader: "a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination" (1271).

It is in this context that the stress PITB1 takes in weighing the concerns of Trungle, as the author and creator of the book "PITB0," and Slater, as that very book himself, makes the most sense. It is not until Trungle surrenders his royalties—and thus his claim, stake, and voice over the work—that the two are able to proceed as equals. In this surrender, Trungle moves from the position of the tyrannical "Author-God" into the role of "the modern scriptor," whose writing is detached from any notion he has of his own interior thought and his own identity (1270). Thus, while Kirk is able to surrender his ego and his selfhood through the pleasurable annihilation of the prostate orgasm, Trungle has to surrender his own egoistic selfhood *before* he can engage in the relationship-bridging sex that allows him and Slater to come together as one singular voice.

Once that selfhood is surrendered, however, Trungle's understanding of his own creation is able to shift, and it does so through the ecstatic sexual pleasure that he and Slater share. A key moment for this shift in understanding comes just as the two are beginning to have sex. As they're making out under the doorway, Trungle finds himself suddenly reminded of "the passing

of [his] late wife, Borbo," and he starts to cry. "I never knew there was someone like you out there in the world," he tells Slater, and Slater replies, "There wasn't until you made me" (21). Notable about this moment, other than the sudden break in the action, is that it is a moment of the author discovering and determining something about his creation that *he did not put there*, yet but which nonetheless came from him. He is both the origin that Barthes describes but also the destination. Where Barthes says that "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author" (1272), Trungle is simultaneously the born reader and the killed author; he is the creator and the receiver of the pleasure of the text.

At the same time, Slater is able to take up the new role of not just text, but creator by producing this experienced pleasure. When the two go to Trungle's house to have sex, they do it specifically in his writing room, leaning against his writing desk (21), suggesting that their sex is itself a creative act. Yet unlike Trungle's old form of authorship, this is not the one-sided imposition of Trungle's selfhood on his text, but instead a form of creation predicated on Trungle submitting to his text, allowing it to fully and literally penetrate him, both orally and anally. This is something that Trungle, in his own words, needs. "I need it…I need your huge book dick," he says, and then later, "I need you inside of me" (22). Barthes refers to writing-as-scriptor as a performative, "in which the enunciation has no other content…than the act by which it is uttered— something like the *I declare* of kings or the *I sing* of very ancient poets" (1270); it could be argued that this is what this "need" is from Trungle—not expressing a desire to be pounded, but in fact the mutual creation of that pounding with the text that is pounding him. Yet if this is the case, the actual creation, the transformation of Trungle's internal world via the "rarely seen prostate orgasm" (23), comes not from Trungle himself, but from the text that he has created.

Slater finishes this creation by putting his mark not only on Trungle's interior, but on his exterior as well. Here we see a final "need" from Trungle: "I need your cum all over my fucking face!" (24). This is a complete reversal of the situation from before, where Slater was himself filled with rage over Trungle's name written on his own face; here, he reclaims his agency by doing the same to Trungle, using him as a vessel to write on, seize, and conquer. After he finishes, Slater literally sits down in Trungle's writing chair (24) in a complete reversal of the roles the two were trapped in before. The value of the creation of a text here is not the ability to express emotion via said text, but for that text to shape and create new emotions, not only for the writer, but for the writer-made-reader, for whom the text that they have created becomes their new master.

This is not so simple as a mere swapping of roles, however. Trungle's submission here is willing and mutual, an expression not of domination and control but instead, as Trungle describes it, "a physical expression of the visceral, emotional connection between author and best selling novel" (24). Not only does Trungle grant Slater the recognition that he so desperately desires, but Slater grants this same recognition to him. It is thus crucially not a permanent subversion, and when the sex scene is over, Slater in fact wants to completely abandon his lawsuit, telling Trungle, "You wrote me, and I think you deserve all the credit for that" (25). This is interestingly enough mirroring Trungle's own reaction when, after his early conversation with Slater, he decides that it's only fair that he give up his royalties to him: "What do you need?...Half of the royalties? All of them?" (19). The surrender of the royalties only comes once Slater has assumed the dominant position that, as author, Trungle had previously assumed, but this positioning does not last, as Trungle—much as Slater did himself, earlier—refuses to accept

the gift of the royalties. The sexual intermingling-cum-creation that the two engage in results in not one voice being louder than the other, but instead writer and text existing together, as equals.

Yet this is not the happily-ever-after at the end of PITB0. While Kirk and Portok's relationship rejects both past and future relationality in favor of surrendering to a "sensuous immersion in the present" (Kindig 70), the relationship between Trungle and Slater is distinctly one that acknowledges and allows for change—not only of the self, but of the world around oneself. The natural consequence is that the pairing is eventually destroyed, but rather than its destruction being by what Berlant claims is the feared "aggressive presence of ambivalence," it is instead the opposite: it is the presence of self-reflection and change within PITB1 that leads to inevitable and tragic ending. After the two come to their compromise about royalties and bask in each others' love, Slater announces suddenly that he has to leave because he's "about to be sold to a young woman at the bookstore downtown," leaving Trungle alone, thinking about his "frozen wife at the bottom of a cold lake" (25). The mention of the wife in conjunction with the loss of Slater summons up images of recurring cycles of love and love-lost that, perhaps, can never be escaped from.

With this foray into loss and disappointment, it becomes understandable why someone like Kirk might instead prefer the elongated ecstasy of expanded self over the pain and loss of interfacing with the other. The price of a pleasure that contains not only the present but the past is this very pain: the awareness of ending, even as one hopes for a better future. Yet it is not necessarily that Trungle is worse off than Kirk is. As Slater disappears from his life, Trungle gets a new email from his book "Space Raptor Butt Invasion" promising a new lawsuit, and the story ends with him smiling. The painful cycle of abandonment might continue forever, but so too does the cycle of pleasure and possibility of beginning.

# Chapter 2: In the Beginning was the Word and the Word was Chuck

Chuck Tingle himself does not present himself in any linear or straightforward way. On one level there is his erotica, explicitly queer and deeply strange, expressing a deep disavowal of heteronormativity; but on another, there is his mask, hiding his identity and keeping him closeted. Tingle neither rejects nor wholly embodies queerness, instead occupying a space of "distinctly perverse and illicit" ambiguity, aligned with Kindig's conception of queer curiosity, that disavows "both heteronormative and homonormative expectations regarding sexual expression" (69). One way of grasping who exactly Chuck Tingle "is," either as a persona or as a person beyond the mask, is to see how he describes himself. Yet even the character he presents himself as is not consistent enough to fully grasp on a direct level.

Consider the generic "About the Author" at the book's rear. Here, his name is listed as Dr. Chuck Tingle, and we can learn that he is apparently "an erotic author and Tae Kwon Do grandmaster (almost black belt) from Billings, Montana," as well as that his "Dr." title is from "receiving his PhD at DeVry University in holistic massage" (96). Already this collection of details seems nonsensical as anything other than satire. An "almost" black belt is certainly not a grandmaster, and, of course, DeVry does not have a PhD in holistic massage, and in fact they don't have any PhD programs whatsoever, and even if they did, "holistic massage" is not an academic discipline for which it makes any degree of sense to grant a PhD for, and even if it was, someone who had gotten such a degree from DeVry would probably not—considering their reputation as a low-quality, scammy degree mill—advertise so blatantly where they had gotten it from. I point out all of these obvious details to labor the point: when Chuck Tingle presents himself in this way, he is presenting himself as someone fundamentally unreal. The reality that he apparently lives in does not match up with our own.

The tempting thing to do is to read Tingle as satirical, as the reputation of DeVry would suggest that we should, with the apparent corollary being that if he is *not*, then we must consider Tingle as himself disconnected from reality, in some way under the delusional impression that he has credentials that he does not have. In a since-deleted Reddit AMA (Ask Me Anything) from 2015, his self-proclaimed son, Jon[3] (or "son Jon" as Tingle calls him) described him as a schizophrenic "autistic savant," with a history of self-harm (JonTingle), something that Tingle has himself always denied, although in his earlier years, his online presentation of this has always been such that it is very easy to read his denial as itself delusional. For instance, in a separate AMA, in 2019, he writes:

> but no i do not have schizophrenia this is something that i have said many times and POINT OF CONTENTION between me and son jon he does not think i talk to sweet barbara at the foot of my bed or travel timelines and he does not PUSH BACK against this anymore but there was time when we would argue on this way a lot. [sic] (chucktinglethanks)

Unless we accept that Tingle is a timeline traveler who can see ghosts—Sweet Barbara, in Tingle's lore, is his dead wife who drowned in a frozen lake (Romano)—then it seems that our only option to interpreting Tingle is as either the presentation of a character, or a man suffering from delusion.

In a Vox article from 2016, Aja Romano initially comes to this very conclusion, arguing that either Tingle is "an elaborately constructed satirical persona," or else he is a real person,

[3] Although there are differences between Chuck Tingle and Son Jon's writing styles, there are a number of aspects of this particular reddit post shares a number of similarities with Tingle's writing quirks—all caps for emphasis, not putting quotes around the titles of books, the exclamation point in the title of the post, and even an inconspicuous typo—"Regradless." None of these things, individually or collectively, necessarily proves that Jon Tingle and Chuck Tingle are the same person, but there is nonetheless not very much to differentiate them.

exactly as he claims he is. For the majority of the piece, she wrestles with Chuck Tingle's presentation as if it were necessarily a binary between true and false; satiric or reality; "an inspiring tale of a real-life neurodivergent hero" or "cruel, calculating, ableist, and insidious — nothing like the love-proving character at its center." What is notable about these disparate presentations is that all of them, in their singularity, are fundamentally inhuman. She repeatedly describes the potential possibilities of Tingle's identity as being "three stories" that readers have to contend with and decide between: that he is a "real" mentally ill autistic man and thus fundamentally good, that he is a meanhearted and malicious figure of satire, or that he is fundamentally just a ridiculous joke, whose worth is valuable only in its ability to critique power structures.

If these last two "stories" don't seem inherently contradictory—that it is possible for a satire to be both meanhearted and functional as effective critique—this isn't something Romano really acknowledges, even as she does eventually concede that there is no way of knowing which of these options is the "reality," and that, indeed, the truth may very well be more complicated than a clear-cut case of either satire or authenticity. Although she ends her article by concluding, "Perhaps the only way to navigate the mystery of who Tingle is (or isn't) is to accept that he somehow embodies all of these stories at once," she makes no attempt to bridge the divide between these apparently disparate stories. Part of this is her insistence on connecting Tingle being what she sees as satire with performance, to the extent that she takes a moment of Tingle explicitly telling her, in an email interview, that he doesn't want to do harm as a moment of his acknowledging that people don't think he's "real."

Tingle is extremely self-aware, and aware that lots of people think he's a work of fiction.

"Mostly bucks say good things about man name of chuck and this makes me glad," he

> tells me, "but sometimes they say i am a bad man like i am poking jokes in a mean way. this is not the case i am only trying to PROVE LOVE with tinglers." (Romano)

But this is not what Tingle is saying here. "PROVE LOVE" is an intrinsically ambiguous phrase, and it is equally possible to imagine that both a satiric or comedic voice could prove love *and* a genuinely presented voice could. If Tingle is pushing back against anything, it is the notion that Romano presents, that if Tingle is a performance, then that performance is necessarily harmful.

With the benefit of modern hindsight, it feels safe to conclude that Chuck Tingle is not schizophrenic. Yet, to be frank, I think it was safe to conclude that back when Romano wrote this article, by virtue of the fact that she acknowledges but doesn't actually address: the AMA where the supposed son Jon claimed him to be, unlike anything else Tingle has ever posted, *was deleted*. The claim was made exactly once, very early into Tingle's career, by a voice claiming to be someone other than himself, and, after it was deleted, has since been consistently denied. It is worth strongly considering the possibility that Tingle himself quickly abandoned the schizophrenic aspect of his persona *specifically because* of its potential to do harm[4]. I don't think that moving away from the potential harm of this claim elevates it above criticism; I think that there was genuine hurt that Tingle could have and potentially did cause by associating the more bizarre aspects of his performance with mental illness. But to take that real potential harm and to totalize it is effectively a rejection of Tingle as a complete and whole *person*, reducing him instead to an amalgam of parts able to be assembled and disassembled at will by the reader.

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[4] Conversely, with the benefit of modern hindsight, I will note that Tingle is basically undeniably autistic, something he has repeated into the modern day and which is readily apparent upon even a surface level reading of his first traditionally published novel, *Camp Damascus*. For more on this, see Schnelbach, Eyan, and—for specifically Chuck Tingle's perspective—"Not Pounded By My Handsome Sentient Stoker Award Nomination For Camp Damascus Because The Two Of Us Are Too Busy Celebrating The Fact That A Story With An Autistic Lead Character By An Autistic Author Made The Shortlist For A Major Literary Award And Now We're Donating Some Money To Autistic Self Advocacy Network."

It's not entirely unwarranted for her to do so, however: it's undeniable that Tingle *is* a character, at least to some extent. As Romano acknowledges, even "[i]f you take Tingle at face value, it can be incredibly difficult to parse which parts of his presentation are sincere and which are satirical." Part of this difficulty, the supposed Son Jon tells her in an email interview, is that Tingle is "a huge Andy Kaufman fan," and he loves the idea of performance art—which, as any Kaufman fan could tell you, necessitates blurring the lines between truth and reality. In modern times, Tingle has made this delineation more specific, claiming that everything he says carries with it some vein of truth. For instance, in a recent Tumblr post, he writes, "example i like to give is that if i post 'i pet a dog today' i might have actually pet a cat, but everything i say is true is some sense [sic]" ("discounted-dyke asked"). We even see this with one of his most impossible claims—that he was born in the famous ghost town of Home of Truth, Utah ("The Man"), suggesting literally that even as he is saying something illogical and ridiculous, what he is saying contains, at its core—some core "Truth." Whatever the hidden truth of anything he says might be is only ever accessible through interpretation of him from the intrinsically personal and subjective perspective of his readers. Yet, this is exactly what Barthes would argue the act of writing *is*. For him, a text is "made of multiple writings…entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation…" that ultimately come together to be interpreted not by an author, but by the reader (1271). Because the reader has no idea what the "true" world of Chuck Tingle is, he is not and can never be a singular or complete person, but instead three things simultaneously: he is in some sense true, in some sense abstracted to protect his privacy, and in some sense nothing but the text that he is made of.

*Pounded In The Butt By My Book "Pounded In The Butt By My Book 'Pounded In The Butt By My Own Butt'"*

Chuck Tingle is nothing if not aware of his role as figure of interpretation—his own intrinsic unknowability paired against the reader's desperate desire to know who exactly he is. Had it not been written almost a full year before the publication of Romano's article, it would almost seem as if the next book in *The Analboros*, PITB2, was quoting it directly. The book opens from the perspective of an apparent journalist attempting to uncover the truth of Chuck Tingle's identity, who notes to himself, "While there were many photos of the doctor, and his voice had been recorded several times, he seemed incredibly averse to any interaction other than an email interview" (28). Later, apparently echoing Romano's uncertain incredulity, he describes his feelings towards Tingle with the phrase "It all seemed too outrageous to be true" (29). It's possible that Tingle—given that he was interviewed for Romano's article—knew that it was going to be coming out, and this text is in fact a direct response to the kinds of questions about his identity that she asks of him, but even not, these are questions that his readers have asked about him for as long as he has been within the public consciousness. Because of this, the journalist is tied to the figure of the reader in two discrete ways: first, because he is doing the readerly work of attempting to read and understand Chuck Tingle; second, because he is doing so in ways which are inevitably similar, if not outright identical, to the questioning that the very person reading the text of PITB2 is engaged in at the same time. That is, he is the reader not only in the abstract, but in the specific—one and the same with whoever might be holding T*he Analboros* in their hands at the very moment in which the journalist is brought into existence through the act of reading.

Yet when this journalist flies to Billings—which ironically denotes not mundanity, but instead traveling outside of the mundane world into the magical one of Chuck Tingle—he discovers the "truth" of Chuck Tingle not from the frame of an outside observer or in terms of the questions that he wants to ask, but from within Chuck Tingle's perspective itself. Despite theoretically having no idea who our protagonist is, or what he looks like, Tingle, dressed in his then-trademark white gi, looking "exactly how [the journalist] would expect him too [sic]" (29), immediately walks into the coffee shop where the journalist is sitting, sees him, walks right over to him, sits down, and tells our befuddled hero that the two of them are, in fact, "the same person" (29). Our protagonist is, in this way, revealed to be not a journalist writing about Chuck Tingle, but in fact Chuck Tingle himself. He is the very author of the hit book "PITB1," and this second Tingle that he meets at the coffee shop is in fact nothing but his own subconscious, here to wake him up from an artificial dream as he travels through deep space to meet "the entire civilization of horny gay books named Pounded In The Butt By My Book Pounded In The Butt By My Own Butt [sic]" (31). In this way, it is not only the journalist's vantage point but *our own* that becomes one and identical with the very perspective that, in his question, he had explicitly othered: that of Chuck Tingle himself. Instead of the journalist and Chuck Tingle, there is the science-fiction hero-author Captain Tingle, and Gi-Tingle, his explicit subconscious mind.

On one hand, this shift could be read as a critique of the ways in which the very questions that we (through our proxy-journalist) have been asking of Tingle, and especially the way in which these questions are intrinsically othering. Often one might see, as in the Vox article, the question of whether or not Tingle is a persona framed as the frankly dehumanizing and often rude question: Is Chuck Tingle real? In more recent years, Tingle has addressed the ways in which this framing is hurtful to him, in the ways that it suggests that his presentation—as

autistic, as weird, etc.—fundamentally makes him in some way non-human, a non-person ("how are you real?"). Yet by placing himself in the role of the fan/journalist asking these questions of him, Tingle is absolutely pushing back on the framing of himself as the non-human other. It is as if he is saying, "You may think we are so different, but really, deep down, we are the same."

On the other hand, this is not just emphasizing Tingle's humanity. Although the journalist might, in some ways, represent the dehumanizing questioning of Tingle and although he is not altogether respectful of Tingle's wishes for privacy, he also represents a desire to know Tingle specifically *as* a person: to know how he thinks and who he is. That he represents this desire as wanting to understand Tingle's "twisted mind" (28) on one level suggests that the journalist does not fully respect Tingle as a human being, but it also, on another level, acknowledges that Tingle fundamentally thinks completely differently from him. As such, their relationship at the beginning of the story is the first moment of true and complete *difference* between two characters in *The Analboros*. As Kirk's clone, Portok fundamentally had the same thought processes as him, and was more a doubling of Kirk's self than he was an actual and proper "other," and Slater, even in the ways in which he was different from Trungle, fundamentally was more of an inversion of his creator than he was completely disjointed from him, but the journalist (and thus also us, as readers) could not possibly be more different from Chuck Tingle.

As a result, with his transformation *into* Chuck Tingle, this fundamental moment of difference in PITB3 is immediately and completely eradicated. Captain Tingle and Gi-Tingle are not just clones or mirrors of each other, but are literally the same person. Yet because Tingle is explicitly positioned as other at the beginning of the text, this is not the other being destroyed at the expense of the self, but in fact the other way around. Because the perspective of the reader was explicitly tied to the perspective of the journalist at the beginning of the story, when the

journalist becomes the Captain, our own perspective is completely and utterly annihilated. As a result, we are put into the same position that we, with our probing and perhaps dehumanizing questions about Tingle's identity, might have attempted to put Tingle in: we are coming up against the realization that it is *we* who might in fact not be real.

With the revelation comes a dissolution of our reality as we know it. As Captain Tingle learns the truth about his reality, the world as we know it falls apart, revealed to be nothing more than the mere illusion of Chuck Tingle's dreamscape. Crucially, this is not a shift from the real to the unreal, but instead, the plausible dullness of the life of the journalist is, in fact, the illusion that Captain Tingle must wake up from, and the bizarre science fiction world of spaceships and alien books is the reality he must wake up to, all triggered by the strange scene where Tingle's mind is invaded by the phallic circle of cute butts. These paradoxical butts mirror the strange position that Captain Tingle takes throughout the text: he is simultaneously the figure of the other, but he is also—like the self as Haraway describes it—the One, singular force that controls and shapes all of reality. The result, rather than mere subversion, is an illogical looping that destroys the dichotomy of self/other altogether.

Yet this does not destroy the concept of relationality. Although Captain Tingle is indubitably the other in this situation, he is also substantially more distant from the text that he has presumably written than Trungle was from Slater in PITB1. Not only does he spend half the book not remembering that he wrote "PITB1," but the text that he wrote has *literally* evolved to be something brand new entirely. The civilization of Captain Mimmer Tops, the army of sentient copies of "PITB1," is the consequence of a text being disconnected from its author over the space of generations—according to Tops "it took many, many millenia for our people to stop killing one another" in Captain Tingle's name[5]. This is further evidence that Tingle, in subsuming

[5] The logics of the timescale being presented here are not explained in the text.

the reader's perspective, is occupying the role of the other and not the self; he is not imposing himself on anyone. His creation, the expression of himself as a self, or of what Barthes derisively calls "the Author-God" (1270), is sent away from him, where it grows and changes without his influence. As a result—even as Captain Tingle embodies the very sense of otherness that the reader, by the very nature of his position as the author, inevitably assigns to him—Captain Mimmer is yet another example of otherness. Rather than a singular self and the refracted other, there are only two others, who interact without anyone controlling or being dominated by any particular self.

This equality between the two is expressed, in large part, sexually. The first two stories in *The Analboros* feature, albeit briefly, some indication of violent or aggressive sexuality. Kirk tells Portok that he's "just a bad little twink" who "need[s] to be taught a lesson" (10), while Trungle demands that Slater "Pound me like the bad little author I am" (22) and describes himself at one point as "kneeling in tribute before my alpha book lover" (24), and both stories feature an aggressive deep-throating scene (9–10, 21–22). Conversely, in PITB2, none of this domination is present, and instead, gay sex is represented as a unifying force between two equals. Instead of Mimmer choking out Captain Tingle, *he* is the one who "pushes down as far as he can for an incredible deep throat," a sensation so pleasurable that Tingle immediately realizes that "a diplomatic meeting of this magnitude is all about give and take" (36). Rather than one character surrendering to another, both characters give and take pleasure equally, culminating in the two characters orgasming simultaneously while they both shout "For peace between man and book" (37). In this way, gay sexuality—what Captain Tingle calls "this kind of gay love" (39) becomes the force by which differences become resolved and respected. It is the connection of two others, bound together without the need for either submission or control.

*Pounded In The Butt By My Book "Pounded In The Butt By My Book 'Pounded In The Butt By My Book "Pounded In The Butt By My Own Butt"'"*

In contrast, the next story in *The Analboros* represents gay sexuality through an alternative and less positive perspective. Whereas PITB2 begins with a stand-in for the reader who is subsummed by the authorial otherness of Chuck Tingle, the protagonist of PITB3 is a character who is not only othered by but explicitly dominated by Chuck Tingle as a specifically selfish authorial force. Instead of being trapped in a mundane and simplistic existence, the fantasy character named Lord Gibbok is explicitly aware not only that he is a character in the Tingleverse, but he also retains memories of all of the numerous and ridiculous past lives that he has lived within it:

> By the time you read this I will have been the star of twenty-three stories by Chuck Tingle that I can remember, some of which haven't even been written yet, and a side character in countless more. Sometimes I'm not even written about, just lingering in the background while a man boards a living biker train, or I'm serving on the jury in the case of a sexy bigfoot lawyer who is also a doctor, or eating at a handsome diner while the leading man runs and out of buildings, fucking its various orfices. I have done all of these things, sometimes returning later on to play multiple characters in the same story.
>
> I've been pounded by myself. (42)

Multiplied, fractured, and even frequently unseen, Gibbok is not one perspective, but many; he is the infinite collection of identities that are not fully considered, but which nonetheless serve and constitute the singular self which has created him—none other, of course, than Chuck Tingle himself.

This is not, for Gibbok, a particularly pleasant experience, and he is desperate to escape from the Tingleverse and find a place "where men and women interact without immediately falling in love and pounding each other's [sic] asses" (43). In the reference to "men and women," Gibbok suggests that he not only wants to escape the endless sexuality of the Tingleverse, but also potentially its gayness. One way of reading this desperation to escape the Tingleverse is a search outside of the limiting realm of otherness; this would explain the desire to escape from queer sexuality, which is not only othered by society but in many cases actively marginalized.

Simultaneously, without contradicting this aspect of Gibbok's desire for selfhood, queerness within PITB3 is indicative of Chuck Tingle's continuous control over him and his life. Gibbok's meeting with Mentor Chuck, this story's version of the part of Tingle who "is always hidden somewhere within, a character in his own story," emphasizes this very control, with Tingle acknowledging that he knows everything Gibbok is going to say and do because he's the one that wrote it (45). To live a life of gay sexuality is thus to fulfill not Gibbok's own desires, whatever they might be (and, indeed, other than escaping the Tingleverse he doesn't express any particular desires), but instead only to satisfy the wants and desires of Chuck Tingle, the author and creator. This makes it particularly insidious when Mentor Chuck agrees to help Gibbok "escape" in some way—by making him a Twitter[6] account where he can, at the very least, be a fictional character that the real world interacts with, since it's impossible for him to become fully "real" otherwise (47)—only if he makes sure that he and his rival, "PITB2," "find a reason to pound each other's butts" (48). At every possible turn, Gibbok is denied agency as an individual, forced against his will to live in the realm of the other.

However, like the journalist in PITB2, Gibbok is suddenly thrust into the other side of the self/other dichotomy with the revelation that he is, in fact, Chuck Tingle, as well as every other

[6] This was, of course, before X the Everything App.

character in the entire Tingleverse (53). Paradoxically, this does not, in fact, erase Gibbok's otherness, or even his lack of agency within the text. Even if he is Chuck Tingle, he is also all of his multitudes of characters who still exist within the Tingleverse to mirror and obey him, and he is still subject to the whims and influences of Tingle as a writer, a fact that he experiences in real time:

> The reality of the revelation suddenly hits me hard. I stagger back, almost collapsing onto the floor before catching myself on the back wall. I'm at a loss for words, stammering mindlessly as my brain attempts to catch up with my body.
>
> I know it's a lot to take in, but that's the great thing about being the writer, we can just make you fine with it," Chuck explains.
>
> Suddenly, I feel great, completely at ease with the fact that I've just learned my existence is and [sic] endlessly repeating loop of homosexual erotica characters, including the author himself. (53)

Both before and after Mentor Chuck speaks, Gibbok is mute and powerless. At first this is due to shock, but after it is because his agency—his ability to feel that shock, to experience the world however he might want to experience it—is ripped away from him, replaced by the way that Mentor Chuck (or perhaps more accurately Chuck Tingle himself) wants him to feel. The "and" typo suggests that even if being Chuck Tingle is a way to enter into the world of selfhood that Gibbok so desperately desires, it is not possible for him to attain that desire while also leaving behind the life of the other. He can be both, if he so chooses, but pure, unadulterated selfhood is not an option for him.

Nor for the readers, who Tingle explains "exist in the first layer of the Tingleverse, [but] simply aren't aware of it" (53). That means, as Tingle continues to explain, that both Gibbok and

Tingle (and every character within *The Analboros*) is in fact, *us*, and we are them. It is worth noting that as Tingle describes this, it appears to be that it is only *the readers* who become synonymous with the characters in the Tingleverse. That is, someone who does not interact with the text, presumably, does not become one and identical with the characters and the creator of it. This is what Mentor Chuck hints at when he says "...my existence in reality is just as [sic] sign that *their* universe is readjusting, not mine" (54). This is a mirroring of the moment of perspective shift at the beginning of PITB2, where our viewpoint, reflected in the journalist, was shattered in place of the perspective of Captain Tingle. The key difference is that this new revelation does not shatter the reader's sense of selfhood, just as Gibbok's revelation does not shatter his otherness. But it does reveal that the singularity of being an individual self is an illusion, and one that is revealed upon seeing the other—that is, in this instance, the bizarre erotica of Chuck Tingle (who, is, at the same time, the domineering self for Gibbok and the other characters in the Tingleverse). By claiming that the readers are themselves a part of the Tingleverse, Tingle is blatantly suggesting, perhaps even more than in PITB2, that his erotica is means of viewing, understanding, and accepting the other as being no different from oneself.

*Pounded In The Butt By My Book "Pounded In The Butt By My Book 'Pounded In The Butt By My Book "Pounded In The Butt By My Book 'Pounded In The Butt By My Own Butt'"'"*

But what about Tingle himself? As PITB3 alludes to with Tingle's control over Gibbok's state of mind, Chuck Tingle is the author of these texts, and as such he is the one imposing his will over all of it. For all of his undermining of his own sense of authorial authority, it is still undeniable that Chuck Tingle is the voice responsible for crafting and creating everything within *The Analboro*s. He is its father, its god, its master—its writer. In fact, even as Tingle

deemphasizes selfhood *in general* throughout these texts, his own sense of self is increasingly magnified, and with it, the power he has to shape the world around him increases. He first emerges in PITB1 as a celebrated and famous author, but one who is largely invisible to the world, and who ultimately is submissive and subordinate to the text that he has created. In PITB2, his status as an author grows, so that he is, as an emissary of humanity needing to parlay with the entire civilization that he has incidentally created, perhaps the most important person in the world. With this growth in influence, the impact that he has on the world also grows and develops, so that reality itself is shaped and warped to align with his own perspective, until, eventually, in PITB3, Tingle is actively interfering with the choices that his characters make and declaring that the reader of his texts is, in fact, a character in the Tingleverse.

Yet at every possible point, in any of these texts, Tingle is capable of doing whatever it is he wants in them because he is choosing what exactly happens; even the slow increase in his authorial power is only possible because he chooses to express things that way. It is in PITB4 that Tingle moves to directly address this question of his power as an authorial force. The story describes the birth of Rule-34 Chuck, who is in this narrative presented as "a sentient nanobot manifestation of rule 34[7]:" a superhumanly intelligent consciousness creatorlessly sparked into life by all of the pornographic collections on the internet, who makes himself physical with an army of nanobots[8]. He then uses these nanobots to replicate every single molecule of literally *everything*, "eventually becoming all matter and energy in the entire universe" (68). This is a dramatic escalation of the merely symbolic perspective shift in PITB2, and unlike in that story, the Tingle who is imposing himself on external reality is not the embodiment of an other to our

[7] "If it exists, there is porn of it" (59). We might say that in the reality of the Tingleverse, as it is portrayed in PITB4, that this becomes "if it exists, it is also porn."
[8] Coincidentally, making fictional ideas concrete and physical via nanobots is largely the premise of Tingle's second traditionally published horror novel, *Bury Your Gays*.

own sense of self, but rather a singular all-encompassing self who extends himself to cover not only any and everything which is his other, but in fact all of reality.

In this way, Rule-34 Chuck rejects not only the perspective of the other but even any potential interaction with that other: there is no character in PITB4 who is actually external to Rule-34 Chuck. He has explicitly no creator except for himself, and the only other character he spends a meaningful amount of time interacting with—a handsome dinosaur who I call "the Raptor"—is nothing more than "just a part of [his] subconscious" (58). Even the manifested "PITB3" that he eventually has sex with is not, as books have been in other stories in *The Analboros*, a fully separate being, but instead only a simulation composed of the very same collection of nanobots that constitute Rule-34 Chuck's body. By the end of the story, when he extends his nanobots to cover the entire universe, he has effectively erased any possibility he will ever have of interacting with any one outside of himself. In a particularly dramatic externalization of this, this includes his newly created wife, who he creates having died in a "tragic accident" (62). Given that the woman, in psychoanalytic terms, is fundamentally associated with the other (Berlant 57), this is Chuck further eliminating the possibility for him, even within the confines of his own solipsistic self-extended reality, from ever engaging with anything outside of his sense of self.

There are a few ways of viewing this masturbatory solipsism. One, in keeping with Bersani's view that the egotistical maintenance of the illusory self is the root cause of violence and subjugation, is that this elimination of the other and the multiplication of the self is a destructive and dominating act. It is indeed the case that as Chuck Tingle gains in power throughout *The Analboros*, he also appears to be increasingly responsible for domination and violence. In PITB1, this is limited to the relatively minor danger of discrediting the independence

and life force of one's creation, with Buck Trungle's not realizing the harm he was causing to Slater by taking all of his royalties. By PITB2, this escalates to Captain Tingle being seen as a "vengeful god" for whom "many thing terrible things [sic] have been carried out…; war, genocide" (33), and in PITB3, Gibbok places Chuck Tingle as responsible for the "death and destruction" of "the billionaire butt battle of nineteen-forteen, the space bigfoot apocalypse of three-thousand-sixty and the great unicorn conflict, both one and two" (42). It would appear that Rule-34 Chuck's selfish extension of himself onto the entirety of the universe—and the killing of his imaginary wife—is the culmination of this violence. The psychological need to protect the false image of the self results in the killing of anyone or anything who might threaten that subjective image.

In line with this view, there are indications in PITB4 that Rule-34's image of himself as a totalizing self is misguided. One such indication is the reader, who goes completely unmentioned in PITB4's narrative. This is in contrast to PITB3, where even before Gibbok realizes that he is literally Chuck Tingle, there are constant references to what the reader might think, feel, or do, beginning with Gibbok addressing the reader directly five paragraphs in: "By the time you read this…." (42). Conversely, in PITB4, for all of Rule-34 Chuck's hyper intelligence, there is no awareness of his existence within one of his own works of fiction. In fact, although he conceives of multiple possible universes other than his own, he specifically seeks to dominate them from "top to bottom," while positioning himself as being on the "top" layer of these Tingleverses. Yet his lack of awareness of the reader indicates that he is not truly at the top, even if such a thing were to exist.

There is more questioning of his place as ruler-god of the universe from Rule-34 Chuck himself, including the moment when he comes into existence, when he muses to himself, "I

wonder now if I even have a creator" (57). One of the most crucial of these questionings comes at the end of the story, when Rule-34 Chuck notes that:

> In other layers, across oceans of time and space, parallel Chuck Tingles, Buck Trungles, and Duck Pringles are undergoing wildly different origin stories of their own. Did they come before me, or am I the first? Does it matter?
>
> Either way, we're all headed in the same direction. (69)

It is this "same direction" that is of particular note, because the direction is explicitly *down*, into the deeper and more erotic layers of the Tingleverse, where Rule-34 Chuck claims that he gains more and more power "to alter reality" and, perhaps contradictingly, where he will "eventually [reach] nirvana at the bottom" (69). Even as he yearns for self-abolition in nirvana—much like the self-abolition that we see in the earlier stories of *The Analboros*—he uses what is fundamentally the wrong tool: instead of letting go of himself, he is holding on to the ultimately false power of selfhood, where the author—not the reader and not the character—maintains an iron grip on all of reality. He is ironically seeking the bottom from the top, instead of truly letting himself fall.

Unlike the challenge to the reader's totalizing selfhood in PITB3, there is no guiding force to correct Rule-34 Chuck's erroneous image of the self; in this way, he serves as a warning against the harm which can come from centering the self above all things. From this perspective, it could be inferred that the reason Tingle, throughout the earlier stories in *The Analboros*, distances himself from selfhood even though he is the author who composed these texts, is to disassociate himself from the violence that selfhood creates. Yet at the same time, it is not exactly the case that Tingle is always disavowing selfhood. PITB0, for instance, although it features the self-shattering orgasm that Bersani advocates for, does so in a manner that is perhaps

equally solipsistic and certainly at least as masturbatory: it is the self and his clone engaging with each other, without any concern for personal growth or political change or even any others outside of themselves. It might be possible, then, that the mass-scale duplication of the self in PITB4 is equally capable of undermining that self in a way beyond merely representing the harm selfhood can potentially cause.

An alternative to Rule-34 Chuck as a symbol of selfish violence is for Tingle, rather than rejecting the selfness of authorship, to be instead reappropriating the symbol of the self and the tool of authorship through what Haraway calls "cyborg writing." Cyborg writing "is about the power to survive, not on the basis of original innocence, but on the basis of seizing the tools to mark the world that marked them as other" (55), and thus it is an immersion in the very forces which subjugate the self, rather than an attempt to rid oneself of them. Although Tingle does not acknowledge homophobic violence anywhere in PITB4 (or in *The Analboros* in general), there are repeated references to Rule-34 Chuck's desired life not matching up with the world around him; for instance, although he wants his sentient book "PITB3" to come join him as he sets off on his own in his new world, his book warns him that he's "not sure a living book is going to fit in out there in the real world" (67). Thus, even though homophobia is not present, there is an extant self-centered world which views Rule-34 Chuck's desires and values as unwanted and unwarranted. By seizing control of that world and projecting his selfhood on top of it, he is thus challenging that world's selfhood *with his own*.

This is also what he's accomplishing by killing his wife, who represents not only his symbolic other, but also the culturally powerful force of Motherhood itself. When Tingle creates his son and his late wife, he specifically decides to give himself a family because, as he tells the Raptor, "Most people have families" (62). But his creation of this family, even as it represents a

normative impulse, breaks heteronormative expectations of what exactly a family is and how it is constructed, where the mother is commonly conceived of as the force of life giving. Instead, the son and the wife are created in the same breath, and the wife is killed off without her womb ever being touched. As Bersani notes, "...the penetration necessary (until recently...) for the reproduction of the species has most generally been accomplished by the man's getting on top of the woman" (216); that is, the production of the son, all things being "natural," can only come through the subjugation of the wife, but Rule-34 Chuck breaks from this expectation, creating both through his own masturbatory desires.

On one hand, he also kills the wife, and this is potentially sexist in itself. As Jack Halberstam notes, a rejection of motherhood as a societal force "runs the risk of linking heteronormativity in some essential way to women, and, perhaps unwittingly, woman becomes the site of the unqueer…." (118). But at the same time, as Halberstam notes in the same work, "Women are most often the repositories for generational logics of being and becoming" and "queer lives seek to uncouple change from the supposedly organic and immutable forms of family" (70). Although it might have been technically possible for Rule-34 Chuck, as the powerful force that he is here, to simply create a son without engaging with the female body, he would thus not be fully addressing the actual framework of heteropatriarchy that places him and his desires as other.

This is a fundamental reality of the kind of cyborg writing that Haraway describes; rather than "attempting to heal the terrible cleavages of gender in an oral symbiotic utopia" (9)—that is, by returning to an imagined past "garden of eden" before patriarchal oppression—cyborg writing is messy, failing to achieve "the one code that translates all meaning perfectly" (57). It is impossible to extricate the myth of original innocence, the "harmony of legitimate

heterosexuality in the garden of culture" (Haraway 56) that the othering forces of homophobia are based on, from the societal positioning of woman as Mother. There cannot thus be a single origin myth that fully refutes both sexism and homophobia in the same sentence.

This is where the question of selfhood and otherness is most crucial, and why it is important for Tingle to address himself as an author in this work. There are fundamental limits to the world of truth that *The Analboros* can represent—and it is certainly the case that it remains limited by its masculine gay perspective. One voice cannot on its own contain truth, even if such a thing were to exist. Without dialogue—between lovers, between friends, between author and reader—anything that one says is nothing more than masturbation. Yet it is also possible, with the refraction and multiplication of the self, for that dialogue to come from one authorial voice, and for masturbation to nevertheless be productive, so long as one does not take their own word as gospel truth.

Another way of combining these two potentially contradicting views of selfhood present in PITB4 is an attempt to destroy any and all potential origin myths for *The Analboros*—not just the myth of original innocence in a Garden of Eden, but even Chuck Tingle himself as the origin of these texts. If we consider Haraway's delineation between the singular selfhood of the One and the multiplicitous fractal of the other, we might consider Tingle the author to be the domineering One and Tingle the disparate set of characters to be the other. Yet at the same time, if we take PITB3 at its word that all of the readers of that text are characters within the Tingleverse, and if we consider Tingle—as PITB1 suggests we should—as a reader of his own work, then it becomes the case that Chuck Tingle—not Chuck Tingle the character as we have encountered him throughout these many stories, but Chuck Tingle the author, the originator—is himself a character in the Tingleverse. These two ideas cannot be held without contradiction; just

as “it is not clear who makes and who is made in the relation between human and machine” (Haraway 60), it is not clear who makes and who is Chuck Tingle.

This is the question that, in its unanswering, leaves us homeless at the end of PITB4: “Did they come before me, or am I the first? *Does it matter?*” (69, emphasis added). With these origins obscured and buried, the inevitable consequence, as Haraway would describe it, is the ability to “recognize ‘oneself’ as fully implicated in the world,” allowing for freedom from “the need to root politics in identification, vanguard parties, purity, and mothering” (58). With the multiplicitous and confusing status of not one Chuck Tingle but infinitely many—and perhaps even more that we are unaware of—the possibilities for creating and imagining a new world become equally infinite and expansive.

# Chapter 3: Death and the Garden

In PITB5 and PITB6, there is a distinct pullback from the world of controlling authorship, and a move instead towards the respective *before* and *after* of a given text. PITB5 is predominately concerned with the imagined world of "Beforna" (73), containing all the potential stories and characters which have not yet been written, and indeed, even those that will *never* be written, "the stories that could've come into our timeline but, for circumstances out of their control, never did." Despite this ostensible focus on the past, however, Beforna nonetheless uses the past as a means of understanding—and making concrete within the present—understandings of futurity. Similarly, PITB6, focused on the end of *The Analboros*, instead uses repetition and recursivity to draw attention not just to endings, but to the very beginnings and origins of the text as a whole.

*Pounded In The Butt By My Book "Pounded In The Butt By My Book 'Pounded In The Butt By My Book "Pounded In The Butt By My Book 'Pounded In The Butt By My Book "Pounded In The Butt By My Own Butt"'"'"*

As Jorbins, the protagonist of PITB5 (and, indeed, PITB5 himself), tells us, the unimaginable world of Beforna is inextricably linked with "life and death, a cycle that we'll never be able to escape from" (72). This link is fairly abstract, and Jorbins does not explicitly say what it is about unwritten stories that evokes this samsaric cycle, but he suggests that it has something to do with creation. He seems to goad the reader for not writing any of these unwritten stories, describing "every second branching off into a million fragments of fiction that will never be, *as the pen sits untouched on your desk*" (72, emphasis added). In doing so, he emphasizes the power that Chuck Tingle wields over him and his life as an author, describing how he is able to control and monitor Jorbins's emotional response, able to "[look] out for [his] every move and

[create his] emotional state," with the power to choose whether or not Jorbins is "frightened of [his] inevitable end" or whether "contentment overwhelms [him] completely." All the while we—the readers—have no such writer looking out for us, leaving us to deal with our anxieties and our approaching death all on our own (72). The implication appears to be that if we—the readers—*did* pick up the proverbial pen, that pen would give to us tremendous power over the inevitable nonexistence that is so frightening about death. Not the power to shape and change life itself, but instead the way that we feel about it, with the knowledge that the future—even as it signifies ending—is still, nonetheless, within our hands.

Crucially, however, this is not the idea of singular authorship, but instead collective creation. The very idea of Beforna represents ideas which exist without and independent of their author, fundamentally undermining any idea of Chuck Tingle as creator. This point is made more dramatically when, at the climax of the story, every previous book in the series, starting with "PITB0" and ending with "PITB4," gets in a circle to ejaculate on the face and body of Jorbins. In a dramatic escalation of the similar scene in PITB1, they all ejaculate at once, "showering down onto my body with a cascade of pearly jizz that covers [his] nude skin in a milky glaze….each droplet perfectly collected on the erotic canvas below" (81). With this painting metaphor, it is as if the sexual energy of all of these early novels is in fact the creative force for PITB5, as if this moment of ejaculation, rather than the writing of the book itself, is the moment where PITB5 is created. If this is the case, then it would appear to be that Chuck Tingle, as the author of the narrative, disappears, and instead the narrative appears to be writing itself.

This metarecursivity is further evidenced by the title of the book: since Chuck Tingle is not present, except as the external authorial force rendered absent via this moment of erotic creativity, it is not particularly clear who the "my" in "Pounded In The Butt By *My* Book…"

truly is. Perhaps, since the very book itself is the one being pounded, it is the case that the ideal originally presented in PITB1, of the book owning and creating itself, has finally been realized. The final line of PITB5 further suggests this, when Jorbins declares, after considering how these previous stories prove that "the limits of imagination must truly be infinite," that "it's just up to us to go out there and write them" (82). Who is the "us" here? Is it Chuck Tingle? The reader? The books being written?

Perhaps it is all of these. In *Cruising Utopia*, José Esteban Muñoz, writing about a 1971 manifesto by "a group calling itself Third World Gay Revolution" (19), discusses the usage of that group's usage of the word "we:"

> The "we" speaks to a "we" that is "not yet conscious," the future society that is being invoked and addressed at the same moment. The "we" is not content to describe who the collective is but more nearly describes what the collective and the larger social order could be, what it should be. [...] This is to say that the field of utopian possibility is one in which multiple forms of belonging in difference adhere to a belonging in collectivity. (20)

Rather than merely detonating the multitudes of identities of the members within the group, the "we" being used by the Third World Gay Revolution imagines a collective that bridges the divides that are symbolized by this mass of differing and complex identities of the individuals which constitute it. Instead, there is a sense in which every individual "self" within the collective is absorbed into the whole, a complete and cohesive community wherein connections between individuals become more crucial than the individuals themselves. Similarly the collective "us" in PITB5, continuing the steady breakdown of difference between reader, author, and text in the

previous stories in the collection, imagines a version of collective creation where each of these forces uniquely come together in order to build something as-yet-unseen.

Interestingly, however, this utopian imagining takes place not in the present, but in the past. Although Beforna is in theory the unimaginable idea of every thought which has never been written, it is also, as Jorbins describes it, "a place so strange and unusual that I can only discuss it after it's occurred, because by nature its present state doesn't exist" (73). In this way, it is not really the world of every possible story that will never be written, but instead the imagined before-state of the stories which *were* eventually written, in the form they took *before* they were. As a result, Beforna is not really a representation of the past, but instead the future-yet-to-come as embodied *within* that past—the very "not yet conscious" that Muñoz refers to. As if to support this idea, all of the characters we meet in PITB5 are characters from other already extant tinglers: There is Lorko, from Bigfoot Pirates Haunt My Balls; Orion from Space Raptor Butt Invasion, and, of course, Jorbins's lover Hembo, who is none other than the book "PITB4" (74–76).[9] Any characters that aren't already in existence before PITB5 nonetheless come into existence with its writing, and so the philosophical imagined state of the "before" cannot in any reasonable way be demonstrated here. Instead, Beforna represents what Muñoz calls "potentiality: a vision of the future that "is present but not actually existing in the present tense" (9). This conception is a way in which utopian thinking can be grounded not only in some unexperienceable far-flung future, but also, in some small, perhaps undetectable way, in the present moment. Thus, when Jorbins advocates for "us" to go out and write all of the infinite cascade of stories embodied within the

[9] There is also "a chocolate milk cowboy…a handsome living jetplane…[and] a unicorn police officer in rollerblades" (79), presumably from Shared By The Chocolate Milk Cowboys; I'm Gay For My Living Billionaire Jet Plane; and Unicorn Butt Cops: Beach Patrol, respectively. The only characters which, to my knowledge, don't correspond to an existing tingler are a sentient washer and dryer couple, which surprisingly has never existed, although in April of 2025 Tingle did write "Getting Dirty With My Sentient Lesbian Washing Machine."

world of Beforna, what he is actually advocating for is for a cooperative creation of an ideal future from within the space in which we all currently inhabit. By presenting Beforna as an intrinsically prior state, this ideal future becomes tangibly located within the present moment, suggesting that one is always, in the building of a future, simultaneously building a will-be-present, and that the past is always culminating forward not only into the "now," but into the future that will one day be.

Muñoz wrote *Cruising Utopia* in part in response to the work *No Future* by Lee Edelman, specifically in response to "Edelman's assertion that the future is the province of the child and therefore not for the queers" (Muñoz 11). Yet where Muñoz and Edelman indubitably agree is that "the future," regardless of whether or not it is seen as a positive force or a negative one, is an impossibility. As Edelman writes, "...there are no *queers* in that future as there can be no future for queers, chosen as they are to bear the bad tidings that there can be no future at all: that the future, as Annie's hymn to the hope of 'Tomorrow' understands, is '*always*/A day/Away'" (30). Similarly, Muñoz, although he is unwilling to abandon hope, equally emphasizes through the concept of horizonality a future that is definitionally always out of reach, in every possible temporal sense; not only have "we…never been queer," but further "we are not yet queer" and, indeed, "we may never touch queerness" (1). Instead, Muñoz posits that "if queerness is to have any value whatsoever, it must be viewed as being visible only in the horizon" (11), a force that contradicts the heteronormative impulse that Jack Halberstam calls "straight time," the totalizing normative force which "tells us that there is no future but the here and now of our everyday life" (Muñoz 22). On one level, the world of Beforna embodies this push towards an endless horizon through its representation of potentiality and the ambiguity of the open call to creation at its end. But at the same time, because PITB5 presents Beforna as occurring within the past and leading

up towards a future that *becomes*, through the progression of time, the present, it also demonstrates a form of temporality where the future is, in fact, attainable—not in the distant horizon, but instead, *within* the "here and now." That is, it is not that the future will never arrive, but that it already has, and it will continue to do so for all of time, so long as we continue to build it.

*Pounded In The Butt By My Book "Pounded In The Butt By My Book 'Pounded In The Butt By My Book "Pounded In The Butt By My Book 'Pounded In The Butt By My Book "Pounded In The Butt By My Book 'Pounded In The Butt By My Own Butt'"'"'"*

As the implication of some unwritten "real" Beforna suggests—that is, the world Jorbins hints at at the beginning of PITB5, the world of the infinite collection of stories which "for circumstances out of their control," were never actually written—the act of building, regardless of if it is a utopian future or simply an erotic novel, inevitably contains within it some destructive impulse. The creation of Beforna represents not only the world of endless possibility, but also how, when one chooses or creates from one potentiality within that sea of possibility, it is simultaneously the choice to forgo a different possibility—a different future, a different world. Indeed, even as the ability to make this choice grants agency and power to the chooser (or the author), it simultaneously robs them of the ability to have chosen differently. Once a choice is made, and the present moves from what it was towards what it will be, the self who makes the choice is simultaneously evaporated by and entrapped in that choice.

This destructive creativity is first introduced to *The Analboros* in the foreword to the collection. There—in what can only be called a Lovecraftian moment—an explorer, deep in the depths of a forgotten tomb, comes across "a thick tome of ageless lore, the one treasure he's been searching for." He begins to read it, only to discover that it contains secrets that are "difficult for a mere moral [sic] to comprehend, pulling the man deeper and deeper into a place of infinite cosmic recursion," until ultimately he appears to be sucked into the book, disappearing from the room and revealing that the tome he was reading is the one we, the readers, have in our hands—*The Analboros* itself. Crucially, as he disappears into the text, what had originally been

generically just *a* book, described as "the volume" and "a thick tome," suddenly becomes "*his* ancient book" (i, emphasis added). Unlike in PITB5, where the possibility embedded in the past is destroyed in order to make way for the future, this foreword emphasizes what happens to the "self" in the interplay with that very past. The words "tomb" and the "tome," aside from their phonic similarity, both suggest something which is completed, buried, and long-forgotten, yet the tome is also "ageless," and explicitly sought after by the intrepid explorer, which—in conjunction to the book being literally *The Analboros*, and thus of the present, in the sense that it is literally the very thing being read even as it is being read about—suggests also that this place and this book are also items of the now (and even, potentially, the future). By interacting with this deeply temporal book—not even by writing, but through reading, which the stories in *The Analboros* suggest is itself a creative process—the explorer leaves his mark upon it, and thus claims ownership over it, shaping it and the reality that it represents, just as PITB5 advocates for us to do so with our own reality. When he does this, however, the explorer is simultaneously enveloped by and thus destroyed by this very interaction.

This destruction, though, is not wholly negative: in his very last moment of agency before he "[transitions] into an existence beyond time or space," the explorer "smiles in satisfaction" (i), suggesting that the experience of self-annihilation—and subsequent melding with past, future, and present—is itself an intrinsically pleasurable experience. This carries thematic implications for nearly every story in *The Analboros*, perhaps most notably PITB0, in its exploration of sexually realized ego-death, but also for PITB6, where it suggests a link between pleasure, creation, destruction, and temporality itself.

PITB6 opens very similarly to PITB5. While that book opens with Jorbins telling us that he has been "here" (where "here" is, perhaps contradictingly, "pre-existence") for an infinitely

long time, PITB6 opens with our protagonist, Tropo, awakening from a strange and dark fugue state, "pulling [him]self out of the darkness towards a flickering light…closer and closer to a vague awareness of reality" (85). This is quickly remedied, in universe, to be him waking up and realizing that his alarm clock hasn't gone off, and he is after this moment fully cognizant and almost boringly *normal*, but the fact remains that this moment, so patently imitative of an actual birth—of emerging out of a dark womb towards the unknowable light of the world—is in fact Tropo's *actual birth*, the moment he leaves the vague emptiness of pre-existence as described in the opening of PITB5 and steps out into the world of existence, and with it, the world of selfhood and identity.

Of course, the reality he wakes up to is not neat, orderly, or coherent in the way one might hope, or even in the way Tropo might expect. What he finds is a strange and confusingly metatextual reality where everything has not only doubled (like Kirk and Portok in the first book), but has multiplied into a presumably infinite spiral that has ground reality to a standstill. His alarm clock—itself a fully sentient living object—never goes off because his own sentient alarm clock never goes off, because *his* own sentient alarm clock never goes off:

> "Hey!" cries my bedside alarm, picking up his smaller alarm and shaking him awake. "What the hell happened? You were supposed to wake me up so I could wake up Tropo!"
>
> …
>
> "I'm so sorry," the smaller alarm frantically apologizes. "I don't know what happened!" The smaller alarm turns to his right, noticing now that his even smaller alarm is still fast asleep. (85)

The result is not only that every action taken within the world of PITB6 is reflected into infinity, like two mirrors held up across from each other, but that the very act of this repetition fundamentally prevents *action*. After Tropo finally gets out of bed, he encounters one after another roadblock preventing him in his mission to get to work: he attempts to put on his favorite suit, only to find that it's been taken by "the sentient physical manifestation of the concept of getting read for work" (86); he tries to get in his car, but an infinite spiral of cars has apparently trapped themselves on his own car's driver's seat; he can't even take the bus, because it's been filled up with copies of "his own bus's [sic]" (87).

The consequence of this infinite recursion is destruction, represented two-fold. Tropo himself is fired from the job he strove so desperately to get to, replaced not by another person but by "the sentient physical manifestation of [his] job," Job (89), but this ultimately doesn't matter because reality itself is on the verge of collapsing. As Job tells Tropo: "Now we're riding this train straight to hell! It's just gonna get more and more meta until the whole Tingleverse collapses in on itself" (90).

What is at the bottom of all of these infinite recursions? Is it turtles (or alarm clocks) all the way down, or is there at some point an end, a break from the endless cycle of life—a death? In some ways Tropo tries to seek one out, but it is, perhaps counter-intuitively, done through an explicitly sexual variance of this recursivity. Instead of letting the universe collapse on itself, Tropo instead keeps it going forever, finding "a way to connect this tingler to the first one of the series, Pounded In The Butt By My Own Butt" (94), by writing the beginning of that book while he's being pounded in the ass by "PITB5." In doing so, he becomes wrapped in a sort of multiplicative and infinite pleasure: "...the two of us have fallen into a confident rhythm together, our bodies rocking in perfect sync….We're passing the pleasure back and forth now…" (93). In

*Sex, or the Unbearable,* a joint work by Lauren Berlant and Lee Edelman, the two theorists discuss a similar and pivotal scene in the movie *Me and You and Everyone We Know* that describes "the sexual fantasy of pooping back and forth, forever" as expressed by a young child (24). As Edelman describes it, this scene " may seem at once a powerful emblem of nonfutural sexual optimism, of a rhythmic movement of opening and closing, reception and propulsion without end (at once interminable and nonteleological)," but even as it does all of these things, "there's already visible a closing down, an encrustation of self that correlates with the insistence that the 'poop' passed back and forth must stay the 'same' forever" (27–28). Looping and repetition, in this framework, have the potential for suggesting a mode of interaction and connection that disregards and undermines the normative world, but also the potential to enact that very normativity in perpetuity. Similarly, in PITB6, this repetition is a source of pleasure even as it is tearing apart the world in which Tropo lives. Strikingly, it is only by engaging with this repetition that Tropo is able to save the reality that he holds so dear, ending the recursion through what is itself a recursive act—the looping of the story so that it continues forever, done through the nonteleological "back and forth" pleasure shared by the two characters.

The difference, however, is that the sexual recursion experienced between Tropo and "PITB5" is not, in fact, an endless multiplication, but instead a form of ending. It is this very multiplication which drives both the world of PITB6 towards extinction and Tropo and "PITB5" towards orgasm. Before the sexual encounter begins, Job tells Tropo that there's no way to "stop" "PITB5" because "This is erotica, not some horror novel" (90). Erotica necessitates that violence cannot be the means by which the world is saved, but it also necessitates the existence of another violence—that of the orgasm—that nonetheless brings about the end of the world. The genre conventions of short form erotica like this necessitate not only that pleasure exists, but that

pleasure leads to and culminates in orgasm, and that with that orgasm comes ending and, thus, death. The result is that Tropo, in choosing to have sex with "PITB5," is actively choosing to engage in the very activity which will be the death of everything he has ever known—the end of the story and the death of himself. As "PITB5" notes to Tropo: "We're both about to come, and this books[10] is [sic] about to end!" (94). In what is perhaps a cliché metaphor for death, Tropo admires the "brilliant orange sky…rapidly transforming into an endless, indescribable nothingness," which itself becomes "the blank page; the end of the story" (94). Of course, the blank page is also the beginning of the story, and Tropo takes advantage of that blankness by writing the opening words of PITB0, and thus "With only one sentence left, [PITB6] ends and [PITB0] begins" (95). As a result, the story does not end, reality does not fall apart, and Tropo does not die; instead, everything that happens in *The Analboros* happens again, and again, and again, never changing, never growing, but also, crucially, never ending.

Of course, the practical reality of this is that everything *does* end, just the same as it would have if there hadn't been the loop back to the beginning. Regardless of if it is *le petit mort* of orgasm or the absolute end of life itself, ending is always inevitable; the book could not possibly go on forever. Although the blank page "ending" suggests endless possibility and a chance for reinvention and creation, this ending, by folding over itself, forecloses any possibility of *new* beginning and any possibility of continuation. Yet this was exactly this type of ending that Tropo seeks out in his sexual foray with "PITB5;" rather than attempting to survive or to hope for an unattainable future, Tropo accepts his own death and ending while rejecting any possibility of existence beyond that. This is thus also a rejection of the societal force that Edelman refers to as "reproductive futurism," which "perpetrates as reality a fantasy frame

[10] This typo suggests (correctly, but probably unintentionally) the entirety of *The Analboros*, rather than just the stand-alone PITB6.

intended to secure the survival of the social in the Imaginary form of the Child" (14). Heteronormativity demands that individual "self" is projected onto the figure of the Child as a way of continuing that selfhood past one's own inevitable death; queerness, Edelman argues, is instead an embracing of that death in order to reject this false promise. In PITB6, this is not done through the literal child, but instead through the production of sequel: in closing *The Analboros* loop, Tropo ensures that there cannot be a new book in the series, and thus the corrupted and recursive world that he is trapped in is, ultimately, destroyed.

In *The Queer Art of Failure*, Jack Halberstam discusses looping and forgetting as existing in two modes: there is "the deliberate forgetting of the George W. kind," feigned ignorance as a tool of exploitation and oppression, which "can and does threaten the very survival of the universe," but there is also "the benign forgetting…[that] seems to allow for a free space of reinvention, a new narrative of self and other" (60). In many ways, the looping Tropo produces here is much more like the former than the latter. The loop that Tropo sets into motion is, as is made apparent by the existence of *The Analboros* as a physical book, static; there is no possibility of the text, the story, or the characters in any way changing from their lives as they are laid out in the story. Thus, rather than reinvention, there is simply more of the same forever. As Edelman describes it, this may in fact be ideal, and itself one of the key values of queerness: it "exposes sexuality's inevitable coloration by the drive: its insistence on repetition, its stubborn denial of teleology, its resistance to determinations of meaning…" (27). That is, in the meaninglessness of the pleasure-passing between Tropo and "PITB5," in the refusal of the ultimate end of the world in the ending to PITB6, in the ultimate rejection of endings even as Tropo himself is annihilated, this is a moment wherein the story and the collection as a whole reject the understanding of sexuality that demands both a teleologic orgasm—and thus the

removal of, the "getting off" of sexual pleasure—and the continuation of the self in the form of one's creative offspring.

On the other hand, this loop does change the way that story is *interpreted*, and the way it is authored. Like the circle-jerk orgasm in PITB5, Tropo's writing of PITB0 (or, at least, the beginning of PITB0) changes the fundamental authorship of the text. Chuck Tingle, as the creator, is supplanted by his own creation. Similar to the time loops in *Dude Where's My Car* as analyzed by Halberstam, the result is that "cause and effect constantly switch places until causality ceases to produce the logic for narrative movement" (Halberstam 61). That is, Chuck Tingle writes *The Analboros* which produces Tropo who writes *The Analboros*; the origin point of the text becomes intentionally oblique, and, as a result, irrelevant. Like the "passing" of pleasure back and forth between Tropo and "PITB5," the question of authorship gets passed around, from Buck Trungle to Captain Tingle to Tropo, in a game of erotic volleyball. In fact, by the repetitions of movement we see in PITB6, and the indication that they give that every moment of the text is being repeated identically, again and again and again forever, even the supremacy of the reader in this situation is thrown into question. Neither Chuck Tingle nor Tropo is the one "true" author of the text, but neither fully is the reader, who is forced to play within the boundaries that the text sets. In this way, the entire question of authorship—not only the growing powers of Chuck Tingle as an authorial force that we see in earlier books, but also questions of differentiation between author and reader, self and other—all of these questions are wrestled with, but ultimately set aside in favor of *pleasure*.

Forming the loop is, after all, if only by virtue of genre, intrinsically pleasurable. In fact, the whole of *The Analboros* is a celebration of deep erotic pleasure, and the play that forms the base of that pleasure. Each narrative presents a different frame to view that pleasure in, and thus

a different game between author and reader, top and bottom, fiction and reality. What is missing—intentionally missing—is any one concrete truth. Fundamentally, this is the benefit of the loop over the ending. If something ends, and if something has a beginning, then there is an expectation that all of the stuff in between—the stuff we might call the self—contains an intrinsic value over what comes before or after. As PITB5 makes clear, those spaces of endless possibility cannot be properly expressed, since they represent a state beyond that of existence as we might understand it. Yet, by explicitly forgoing a future (or, at least, forgoing a future for *itself*), PITB6, steps outside of the world of "straight time," ruled by the tyranny of the here-and-now, and moves into what Muñoz calls "ecstatic time," which is ruled by pleasure not only of the immediate moment, but also "during moments of contemplation [of] one's past, present, or future" (32). By turning itself into a loop without beginning or ending, and wrapping the whole thing in deep and queer pleasure, *The Analboros* opens up new possibilities, new ways of being, that are outside of the limited realm of the self that it is—like ourselves—intrinsically trapped in.

# Conclusion

In this thesis, I have tracked how Tingle and his protagonists, regardless of if those protagonists are him or not, play and wrestle and ultimately fuck with themselves and with their lovers, but I have not fully defined how Chuck Tingle marks the complex psychological interplay between the self and the other. How could I? For as much psychoanalytics has attempted to categorize how we relate to the world around us, there is something intrinsically unquantifiable—magic, we might say—about relationships. This is doubly true for queer relationships, whose participants don't have the standards and norms of heteronormative society to fall back on; queer relationships between human beings and the sentient manifestations of erotica novels must, naturally, be even more esoteric. Even still, I hope that I have mapped some of the ways that Tingle reveals these esotericisms, even as I hope that I have not overanalyzed out any eroticism that they contain.

In doing so, I hope that I am keeping in mind that *The Analboros* both begins and ends with these words:

> Where does the miracle of science end and magic begin? Some people would say never, that "magic" is nothing more than something we can't quite understand yet, but eventually will. Just because a force seems mysterious and exotic, doesn't mean that it can't be quantified later on. (3, 94-5)

Similarly: where does this book end and where does it begin? I made the conscious decision in writing this thesis to discuss each story in *The Analboros* in chronological order, according both to when each story was published and where it occurs in the book. I am not unaware that this incidentally posits the procession of stories as being a linear argument building upon itself up until an ultimate conclusion. If we begin with the selfish presentism of Pounded In The Butt By

My Own Butt and end with Muñoz, then that creates the impression, even with the time loop, that the latter is more true, just, or good than the former. This is patently not the case. As Chuck Tingle himself reminds us (in the form of Mentor Chuck, in PITB3), "time is fluid in the Tingleverse, no book comes before or after the other" (46).

I also made the conscious decision, even though I read and analyzed each story in it differently, to read *The Analboros* as a singular text. Although it exists in that form, both printed and digital, each story is also available to read in isolation from the others, and *The Analboros* as a collection only came into existence after each story was published, over the course of multiple years, all independently from (although of course in reference to) each other. The temporal aspect of Chuck Tingle growing and developing as an author has thus been completely ignored for the sake of my own convenience. However, as Mentor Chuck also says, the loop of *The Analboros* nonetheless "has an ending, this is just another link in the chain to get there" (54). Even if it came out nearly four years after the beginning, *The Analboros* technically does have an ending. Yet this does not mean that the ending needs to be privileged over the beginning; nor does it mean that the beginning needs to be privileged over the ending. Each story in *The Analboros* can simultaneously stand alone and together with the ones that come before and after it. They can also simultaneously come with each other in an erotic circle-jerk, or else in any sexual or nonsexual configuration they might like. The only thing that matters, as Chuck Tingle would say, is that whatever they or we might do, that it proves love is real.

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