

The *Homonculus* Cycle: A Compositional
Examination of Poetic, Narrative, and Musical
Meaning

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ABSTRACT

This compositional thesis is a song cycle for baritone voice and small ensemble of upright bass, violin, and steel-string guitar, based on the poem “Homonculus” by MacKenzie Regier. In Part 1, I explore several sources of inspiration for the cycle’s compositional rigour, including cross-application of Stanislavski acting method to composers and the selected works of Radiohead, Tom Waits, and Koji Kondo. In Part 2, I give a detailed accounting of the application of the principles explored in Part 1 and explain many of my compositional decisions in relation to the meaning of the source poetry. The scores, program notes, poetry, and lyrics are attached in the appendices.

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Introduction: Concept and Background

Before discussion of the thesis compositions and concept, I wish to present a sense of my background to contextualize my efforts. My work as a vocalist, in solo, ensemble and choral settings, has given me a strong understanding of the demands of performing a vocal line. My experience as a contemporary composer and songwriter has made me comfortable with pushing the boundaries of that form, has developed my facility with the composition of lyric to suit a meaning, and has given me a sensibility of the connection of a text's meaning – or possible meanings – with its expression in music. My long-term involvement with theatre performance – I currently perform improvised comedy – has nurtured an interest in how the roles of actor and composer may be similar. (My identity as genderfluid, specifically in relation to the chosen text and orchestration choices, will be discussed during **Part 2.2, Orchestration.**)

This thesis therefore seeks to prove advanced skill in composition through the creation of a song cycle for voice and accompaniment, based on a pre-existing text. The form of this thesis was carefully conceived to suit my skills and interests. My familiarity with song form and its modifications, specifically in the form of voice with small ensemble, enables me to work with greater expertise on a song cycle. The connection of songs in a cycle, potentially creating both thematic and narrative meaning, allows exploration of different layers of meaning. Use of a pre-existing text allows me to demonstrate skill in analysis and interpretation of English-language text. Additionally, many of the compositional principles I attempt to follow in this work are inspired by acting method, as well as musical examples.

I have placed a further restriction on this thesis composition: each line of the short selection is expanded into its own song, as well as occurring in a setting of the complete poem. This form creates the structure of a song cycle from a single poem, both in giving a foundation for a sufficiently large number of individual songs, and in necessarily connecting those songs by theme (all belonging to the same poem, with the same imagery) and sequence, if not necessarily narrative (as the lines occur in carefully-determined sequence in the context of the original

poem).¹ As an example, Songs 2, 3, and 4 (“Sharp Root”, “Water Enough”, and “Plots”) all use plant roots as part of their imagery, although in different contexts; this is a thematic connection. These songs are also connected by the order in which their source lines occur in Song 11, “Homunculus”. In that context, the lines “inside my skull and took sharp root / when I had only water enough / for my own throat – dropped into the plots” (lines 2-4, the beginning lines of each of these songs) form part of a narrative, a greater entity that further helps to unify these songs.

The resulting song cycle presents these songs first in sequence, from the song founded on the first line through that founded on the final line, and ends with the poem selection (actually the first stanza of the three-stanza poem) set on its own. The full stanza setting notably reuses not only the same text, but the same musical background from the earlier song for each line, creating a through-composed piece. This form – a sort of in-depth examination or exploration of each line, followed by displaying the poetic selection as a whole – delves more deeply into the subtleties of meaning created by the careful choices of words, punctuation, syntax, line breaks, and other strategies employed by the poet.

A poem’s silent reader often chooses to revisit lines immediately after first completing a reading, or to linger on a certain image, as part of the process of “taking the poem in”. The intended effect of this setting is to create associations with each line of poetry through ‘ornamenting’ them in song, so that when they are heard in context in the full poem – deliberately placed last in the cycle – these rich associations are called to mind, creating a deeper, more emotionally involved experience and a fuller understanding of the poem’s thematic background.

¹ I am unaware of any prior attempt in this vein. There is some little historical precedence in Lewis Carroll’s “Tema con Variazioni”, however. Carroll here expands each of four lines from Thomas Moore’s poetic work *Lalla Rookh, An Oriental Romance* into a new four-line stanza, creating a sixteen-line comically absurd poem of his own, in turn basing this concept on a musical concept he terms “Dilution”. While a vehicle for light comedy, instead of a serious undertaking, it might be seen as a precursor to the expansion of a single poem into multiple works seen in this cycle. Source: Lewis Carroll, “Tema con Variazioni”, in *Phantasmagoria and Other Poems* (1869, reprinted Australia [online]: ebooks@Adelaide, 2014).

Part 1: Nothing Neutral – Principles of Composition

This song cycle utilizes and attempts to prove the utility of compositional principles based on both a variety of contemporary music and a cross-application of acting theory. These principles are not universally applicable or appropriate.² They are here examined and applied as an option, specifically with regard to a composer working with a source text. However, I believe they could comprise an effective tool for composers working within a wide range of circumstances. The following sections give these principles and their background in detail.

1.1 Stanislavski’s Actor and the Contemporary Composer

In searching for compositional inspiration, I found an instinctual equivalency between actor and composer, based on the potential for both of them to interpret a text into a more nuanced performance – an equivalency substantiated by acting method texts that described actors as both interpreters (of pre-existing texts) and creators (through adding their own experience and emotion to the work).³ Similarly, the composer, when working with a text, can arguably function as the primary interpreter of that text – reading deeply into it and coming to a personal analysis – and creator – assigning pitch, rhythm, orchestration, and many other specifics in order to more accurately portray that analysis.

However, even when working only with an idea (whether instinct, a mathematical principle, or whatever guiding inspirational force), the composer may still essentially interpret that idea into the abstract yet rigorously notated form of music. In other words, a created compositional piece – however absolutely abstract it is, however much it avoids the programmatic – may come from an idea. The composer’s responsibility, in this loosely-defined, meaning-based type of composition, is then to translate that idea into the parlance of music, as

² Care is taken throughout this work to emphasize that while the principles followed in its creation are applicable to more abstract types of composition than may be immediately obvious, they are not applicable to all methods of composition; nor do I espouse a superiority of any compositional method. The thesis instead details the methodology, and its sourcing, for this thesis work in specific, in the light that it has proven helpful for me and my compositional aims.

³ Charles McGaw and Larry D. Clark, *Acting is Believing: A Basic Method* (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1992), 119. See also B. E. Zakhava, “Principles of Directing,” in *Acting: A Handbook of the Stanislavski Method*, comp. Toby Cole, introduction by Lee Strasberg (New York: Crown Publishers, 1955), 182, 189, 191.

mentioned above, as interpreter and creator. In film scoring, Richard Davis notes that this responsibility can take the form of “completing the director’s vision of the film in the language of music.”⁴ Roger Sessions more bluntly names the “task of every composer” as “to give coherent shape to his musical ideas”.⁵ The potential importance of the two roles of interpreter and creator in the work of both actor and composer suggests the potential for cross-application; that is, the instructions on how actors may better fill those roles may be useful to certain composers.

This thesis takes inspiration from the principles of Stanislavski and acting method developments following from that lineage, and in cross-applying them to the role of the composer. While the research done for this thesis is not substantive enough to claim expertise in the topic, I do use the acting “method” discussed by Constantin Stanislavski as a primary source of inspiration, as most modern acting theory in the Western world is either based on the Stanislavski system, or created in reaction to it. (Barton, for example, calls Stanislavski “the father of actor training as we know it.”)⁶ In fact, much of the advice for actors is transferable to composers working within a certain value system, based on their similar roles as stated above.⁷

The two principles of **Analysis** and **Basic Meaning** are perhaps most important to the shaping of this compositional work. Both will be covered and sourced more extensively in following sections, but a working definition of each of these principles is helpful at this point.

⁴ Richard Davis, *Complete Guide to Film Scoring: The Art and Business of Writing Music for Movies and TV* (Boston: Berklee Press, 2010), 137.

⁵ Robert Sessions, *The Musical Experience of Composer, Performer, Listener* (New York: Atheneum, 1967), 43.

⁶ Robert Barton, *Acting: Onstage and Off* (Boston: Wadsworth CENGAGE Learning, 2009), xxi.

⁷ It is perhaps of interest that the “method” for actors is more a set of guidelines for self-discovery and behaving truthfully, than a set of mechanical rules as to how to properly express. Historically speaking, Stanislavski’s methods came in response to unhelpful yet rigorous acting training, wherein actors were instructed to express certain emotions through textbook postures and vocal cadences. In beginning actors, this tended to create artificiality – the postures were assumed without any sense of truth. There were a very few actors who, instinctively or through personal experimentation, happened upon a much more personal, truthful method of acting, but the system of education did not help them realize it, and may well have hindered them.

The author of this thesis lacks experience in compositional pedagogy, and so here wishes merely to suggest that more research might be done to analogize this historical state to that of the current education of young composers. Certainly it seems that some of the most innovative and skilled composers of the past were those who, like the great actors pre-Stanislavski, first were able to realize that gaps existed in their education, then filled in those gaps for themselves. Regardless of large-scale analysis, many of the concepts given in the acting method texts researched served as inspiration for the compositional precepts of this thesis.

Pre-Stanislavski European acting tradition is covered briefly in Robert Benedetti, *The Actor in You: Sixteen Steps to Understanding the Art of Acting* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2012), 11.

“Analysis” here refers to a thorough process of examination, asking questions, and creating mental associations, with the ultimate goal of a deep and nuanced understanding of the subject (in theatre, a play; in this thesis, the source poetry) and its various qualities, facets and themes. The “basic meaning” – roughly equivalent to Stanislavski’s “artistic germ”⁸ – is the “point” of the work, whatever form that might take; it is the central message that the work is attempting to communicate, or (in a more abstract work) the themes it is attempting to associate and the types of associations. Although the two principles of analysis and basic meaning are most important to the concept of this work, others drawn from acting method are worth mentioning here. McGaw and Clark classify the virtues of a good theatrical performance as follows: **Analytical, Interpretive, Formalized, Projectable, and Repeatable.**⁹ These virtues can all be applied in some measure to compositional work like that in this thesis.

The word **analytical**, similar to the definition above, refers to the immersing of oneself in the meaning, setting, and themes of the work; this will be further discussed below, but let it be described for now as the principle that it is necessary to understand an image or concept before attempting to communicate it.

Interpretive works are those which contain a personal contribution from the actor or composer; this means, after a deep analytical understanding has been achieved, choosing to express the emotions, ideas, and themes of the source work or idea in a way that uses personal associations and holds personal meaning. This extends to emphasizing themes or aspects of a theme that are especially meaningful to either the self or the work, and by doing so, commenting on the topic being presented. For example, the concept of winter can be bleak and destructive, or benign and beautiful, or both, or more; the act of emphasizing the bleakness and loneliness of winter in *Winterreise* is part of what makes Schubert’s interpretation human and unique.¹⁰

Formalized works refer to a type of consideration of the audience and of communication. If a play or composed piece of music is meant to serve as a vehicle of communication of

⁸ Constantin Stanislavski, “Direction and Acting,” in *Acting: A Handbook of the Stanislavski Method*, comp. Toby Cole, introduction by Lee Strasberg (New York: Crown Publishers, 1955), 30.

⁹ McGaw and Clark, *Acting is Believing*, 5-7.

¹⁰ Franz Schubert, *Winterreise, D. 911*, Wilhelm Müller (text) (Breitkopf and Härtel, 1897), score.

meaning, as in this thesis composition, then in order to communicate it effectively, it must be placed in a form which suits that meaning, and therefore, one that the audience will understand. A form should then be chosen with reference to its ability to effectively deliver meaning to a chosen audience; as Copland says, “composers may have to relinquish old thinking habits and become more consciously aware of the new audience for whom they are writing.”¹¹ He seeks a method of communication, “a musical vernacular which, as language, would cause no difficulties to my listeners”¹² – reiterating the responsibility of the composer with similar aims to his of placing the work in an effective form (not just structurally, but tonally, linguistically, and in all other ways) to transmit its message to a chosen audience.

Projectable works ensure that the dimensions of the piece are suitable to the method of delivery – for actors, this means ensuring that vocal volume and physical gestures are communicative to the audience at the appropriate distance; for composers, this means writing with knowledge of the type of space, instrumental forces, audience, and amplification to be used, so that the full scale of sounds can be heard.

Finally, a **Repeatable** performance for actors is one that is practised and precise enough to be repeated accurately at each performance. For composers, this instruction translates to accurate notation; if any aspects of the work must sound a specific way, a composer should then make that as clear as possible within the limits of notation and text.

1.2 Actor vs. Composer: Addressing the Comparison Further

The methodology used in this thesis – perhaps closer to a system of inspiration – depends upon the comparison of actor to composer as a primary interpreter of the text. A reader might well question why the comparison in question is between composers and actors, when a more intuitive comparison would be between performing roles (actor and musician) or writing roles (composer and playwright). It is difficult to find a useful analogue for the performative role of the actor in the work of the composer. It can also be argued that the “primary interpreter” label of composer is invalid. Musicians often play an important role as interpreters: the amount of

¹¹ Aaron Copland, *Music & Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 114.

¹² *Ibid.*, 115.

work a successful vocalist must put in before performing a period piece is intimidating, and resembles the analysis I describe as suitable for composers. More generally, a musician playing any piece does well to research and analyze that piece.

In response, I suggest it would be foolish to expect the comparison between any two art forms not to reach a point of incoherence. Finding a perfect metaphor or “best” comparison is impossible and irrelevant. The point to be proved is not that composers are the sole interpreters, or that a comparison between musicians and actors would not be fruitful in different ways. It is that composers who work within a certain framework of communicating meaning have a great analytical and interpretive role to play, similar to that of actors working in Stanislavskian tradition; and that this role is of particular importance in the methods and areas of composition investigated in this thesis. This similarity allows the benefit of the adoption of much of the well-documented Stanislavskian method as a compositional rigour. It is hoped that readers will countenance the use of the term “primary interpreter” as one applied within the limits of this thesis and its compositional process.

1.3 Analysis

One of the most apparent principles in Stanislavski-based texts is that of the importance of research, immersion, and analysis of meaning, together forming one of the largest responsibilities of the actor. Aside from McGaw and Clark’s inclusion of analytical treatment as a criterion of importance (see section 1.2 above), Michael Shurtleff’s encouragement for the actor to always know “more than the character”¹³ is telling, as is Vakhtangov’s warning that a successful actor must “agree with the author” in everything¹⁴ – not through giving up on autonomy, but through enthusiastic analysis of the piece in order to find a perspective with which the actor’s character can behave appropriately, and therefore fulfill the function required of them¹⁵ in the play. Some acting texts¹⁶ recommend that as many questions as possible should be

¹³ Michael Shurtleff, *Audition: Everything an Actor Needs to Know to Get the Part* (New York: Bantam Books, 1980), 248.

¹⁴ E. Vakhtangov, “Preparing for the Role”, in *Acting: A Handbook of the Stanislavski Method*, comp. Toby Cole, introduction by Lee Strasberg (New York: Crown Publishers, 1955), 119-120.

¹⁵ The use of “they”, “them” and “their” in this work to refer to singular subjects of indeterminate gender is considered with regard to gender neutrality and inclusion of gender non-binary individuals. The use of these

answered about the character, that specificity in these answers is key to a realistic and accurate performance (anecdotes from Stanislavski's students¹⁷ and Irene Adler's theories¹⁸ both follow this ideal), while a few texts surveyed (e.g. Alberti and Gister¹⁹, Robert Benedetti²⁰) claim that only questions of import to the work should be answered; if the meaning of the play has nothing to do with family, then asking questions about a character's family may be pointless and time-consuming.

Regardless, almost all agree (save Gister) that an understanding of the work's basic meaning – what it intends to convey – is necessary for the actors to hone their own pieces of that work and convey their parts of it. Even Gister assigns that responsibility to the director, and the composer may take on the roles of both actor and director in this incomplete comparison.²¹ For example, Schubert's *Winterreise* is sparsely written, creating both an austere, wintry sound and a lot of “white” on the page for the musicians.²² While this seems at best a clever trick when told as an anecdote, such a compositional decision, first made and then carefully adhered to, is a result of analysis and understanding of the physical and emotional landscape created in the poetry.

The level of immersion in meaning that is demanded today of the professional actor, according to the Stanislavski method and many of its descendants, serves as an inspiration to the composer. Actors working on a play are encouraged to read about the period, the social and ethical mores, the author and their history; to listen to music and speech of the period and place; to view art, museum exhibits, portraits and photographs – in general, to give themselves as much real-life understanding of the total circumstances of the piece's writing as possible, in order that

pronouns is consistent with current Oxford English Dictionary definition standards as detailed by former lexicographer Catherine Soanes on their associate blog.

Source: Catherine Soanes, “Faceoff: ‘he’, ‘he or she’, ‘he/she’, ‘s/he’ versus ‘they’”, *OxfordWords blog*, June 2012.

¹⁶ Shurtleff, *Audition*, 67.

¹⁷ V. O. Toporkov, “Stanislavski Directs Gogol's *Dead Souls*”, in *Acting: A Handbook of the Stanislavski Method*, comp. Toby Cole, introduction by Lee Strasberg (New York: Crown Publishers, 1955), 156-157.

¹⁸ Barton, *Acting: Onstage and Off*, 157-159.

¹⁹ Joe Alberti & Earle R. Gister. *Acting: The Gister Method* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Education, 2013), 17.

²⁰ Benedetti, *Actor in You*, 79.

²¹ Alberti & Gister, *Acting: The Gister Method*, 4.

²² Schubert, *Winterreise*, compact disc.

they should bring that understanding onstage in a truthful performance. A. S. Giatsintova writes that once she is assigned a part, “the part of me that is actress continues working under all circumstances, secretly gathering together all that may be useful.”²³ The above process of giving specific answers to questions about the character should be used in order to create a specific, personal, and real interpretation. This type of deep analysis should take much time;²⁴ associations should be drawn between different ideas and themes; certain themes should emerge as especially important to the actor, or in this comparison, to the composer. I have attempted to similarly value analysis in the compositional work here presented.

It was earlier mentioned that my initial approach of the comparison between actor and composer was because of an interest in the musical treatment of text, and the actor’s similar responsibility of interpreting a text. It may seem that the actor’s immersion in a play depends upon that play existing; and that similarly, composers cannot immerse themselves if there is no source text (or other source material) to call upon. This is only a surface contradiction. The composer working without a clear source may still work to express something, some idea – Stravinsky’s programmatic *Rite of Spring* is an example that is very clear in expressing the concrete idea of the performance of a pagan rite, but even an abstract symphony (say, by Beethoven or Mozart) may have some sort of character to it, an idea. At the most abstract, perhaps there is a musical theory being proven or a harmonic function being used as a centerpiece that serve as the meaning the composer wishes to communicate. Richard Davis speaks for a similar principle, albeit in relation specifically to film scoring, when he says that “the most successful scores have a concept that drives the music.”²⁵ Given the potential width of application of this compositional series of principles, then, one of the aims of this song cycle is to explore and utilize the art of analyzing, immersing in, and understanding meaning in order to create a composition that appropriately evokes that meaning.

Another important factor, the one perhaps most associated with Stanislavski, is that of the “Magic If”. The “Magic If” is a technique to achieve honesty; it requires actors to place

²³ A. S. Giatsintova, “Case-History of a Role,” in *Acting: A Handbook of the Stanislavski Method*, comp. Toby Cole, introduction by Lee Strasberg (New York: Crown Publishers, 1955), 125.

²⁴ Stanislavski, “Direction and Acting” in Cole, *Handbook*, 30.

²⁵ Davis, *Complete Guide to Film Scoring*, 133.

themselves in the position of their respective characters and use their own emotional reactions, asking what they would do “if” they were in the character’s place.²⁶ It can here be used as a lens through which to view the necessities of analysis and interpretation in conjunction with one another. The “Magic If” technique is misinterpreted, and the actor’s performance becomes untrue to the character, if the actor avoids careful analysis of the play and character. Only through understanding the wide range of forces coming to bear on their characters – the full extent of the “what if” that they must satisfy – can actors put themselves in a position to act truthfully. Once this analysis has been properly understood, and the actor understands deeply who the character is, interpretation may be successful: the actor may then use their own emotional responses truthfully within the carefully defined parameters. If either of these ideas is neglected, the performance lacks truth and the actor will not be successful.

1.4 Basic Meaning

There are other aspects of actor training that may prove useful to a composer. The creation of a “score of the role”, a detailed written guide to a character’s desires and methods of achieving them as the play unfolds, is common especially for beginning actors to understand when, why and how their character’s intentions or goals fluctuate during a scene, an act, or the entirety of the play; this kind of annotation for intention and emotion can be useful across a small, but emotionally charged text like a poem.²⁷ The concept of a character’s “Motivating Desire” – the overall need of the piece that drives them, somehow, to all their actions – can be just as present within a poem, if speech is admitted as a type of action.²⁸ (The score of the role should address both why the narrator, as a character, makes the decision to continue speaking and to say specifically each line, even each word, and why they cease speaking at the end of the work – all with reference to the Motivating Desire.)

The limitations of application of these two concepts will be briefly addressed in part **1.5, Principles of Simplicity**, but they have in common a desire to analyze a play on a larger, structural level; to find the threads running through it, whether causal or thematic, and then to

²⁶ McGaw & Clark, *Acting is Believing*, 118. Also see Stanislavski, “Direction and Acting,” in Cole, *Handbook*, 28.

²⁷ McGaw & Clark, *Acting is Believing*, 33.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 138.

use them to create a unified whole. The highest organizational factor pertaining specifically to one character is the Motivating Desire. Similarly, the highest organizational factor of the entire work is what Stanislavski once called the “artistic germ”,²⁹ and which Spolin discusses as the “theme”.³⁰ For the sake of clear communication, I choose to call this the “basic meaning” of the work: the meaning, or the element to be communicated, that is the reason for the work’s existence, and which all of the work’s parts attempt to communicate.

The principle of “basic meaning” is stated in all of the ten Stanislavski-based texts reviewed, and fit with one of the compositional beliefs originally driving this project. The composer’s first instinct was that everything in the piece should be created in service to the text. This is paralleled by the Stanislavskian idea of the “artistic germ” of a play, again here discussed as “basic meaning”; that every (well-crafted) play has a central meaning, a message, and that every single aspect of that play – every aspect of the plot, every line and character – somehow contributes ultimately to the central meaning.³¹ The principle is also applied to productions: every production decision should be made with reference to supporting and communicating the basic meaning, including lighting, costuming, set design, and so on. When cross-applied to a composer, as this thesis affords, this should logically mean that all decisions – large ones such as instrumentation, metre, key, all the way down to individual notes and melodic shapes – should be made with reference to supporting and communicating the central meaning of the text (or source idea).

There is an important corollary to this precept: If everything must support the “basic meaning” of a work, then not only should nothing detract from that meaning; there should also be no neutral elements, nothing that is there merely to take up space. Stanislavski decries these neutral elements as diluting the meaning of a play, distracting the audience, and ultimately worsening the show.³² In this light, it is even more vital that every single decision possible within a piece of music following these precepts should be made with reference to the

²⁹ Stanislavski, “Direction and Acting” in Cole, *Handbook*, 30.

³⁰ Viola Spolin, *Improvisation for the Theatre: A Handbook of Teaching and Directing Techniques* (Evanston, Ill. : Northwestern University Press, 1999), 299.

³¹ Stanislavski, “Direction and Acting” in Cole, *Handbook*, 30.

³² *Ibid.*, 29-31.

communication of the themes and basic meaning of the work as interpreted by the composer, and that jumps of intuition or guesswork (common in composition) are later carefully evaluated and either justified or discarded.

1.5 Principles of Simplicity: Radiohead, Tom Waits, and the Legend of Zelda

During this thesis, the terms “song” and “song form” are liberally used; here, before discussing some of the musical inspiration for the thesis composition, I wish to establish working definitions of these terms. As both of these terms are used colloquially for a variety of (often vague) meanings, this is difficult – but perhaps it is useful to consider a “song” as a short, self-contained composition. “Self-contained” is here used to mean that it forms a coherent whole, enjoyable in isolation, although it may gain further meaning within a greater context – as with the songs of the cycles of Schubert, or as with the collection of rock songs within an album.

“Songs” are also usually considered to focus on a vocal, melodic, and textual component; while the songs comprising this thesis follow this format, “songs” like Stockhausen’s “Gesang der Jünglinge” begin to deconstruct the boundaries of the already-shaky concept of “song”.³³ In this thesis, I use the songs of Radiohead and Tom Waits, with their varying levels of melodic and textual involvement, as inspirational sources. In addition, I draw from the short location-based instrumental compositions of Koji Kondo for the video game *The Legend of Zelda: The Ocarina of Time*. Despite their lack of text, the strong self-contained nature of these pieces – their design to each evoke a specific location – can be connected easily to the definition of “song” above, and proves a useful avenue of inquiry.

“Song form” is another uncertain piece of terminology, here referring to the song form as it is most often used in popular music. In analyzing the adherence of five Radiohead albums to a “song form”, I subjectively chose several criteria that seemed to encompass a typical “song form”.³⁴ (Because of the lack of a researched definition for “song form”, this analysis is only a

³³ Karlheinz Stockhausen, “Gesang der Jünglinge” on *Adventures in Sound* (Él ACMEM159CD, 2009).

³⁴ In alphabetical order: Radiohead, *Amnesiac* (EMI Music Canada 7243 5 32764 2 3, 2001), compact disc; Radiohead, *In Rainbows* (TBD Records TBD0001, 2007/2008), compact disc; Radiohead, *Kid A* (EMI Music Canada 7243 5 27753 2 3, 2000), compact disc; Radiohead, *The King of Limbs* (Self-released / Ticker Tape Ltd., XL Recordings TICK001CD, 2011), mp3/compact disc; and Radiohead, *OK Computer* (Parlophone 7243 8 55229 2 5, 1997), compact disc.

tool for personal inspiration, not one for scientific categorization and denotation.) I defined “song form” as a form containing textual content; a rhymed verse section occurring at least twice with the same or similar musical content, but differing lyrical content; a chorus section occurring at least twice with the same or similar musical and lyrical content; and the option of other sectional elements (intro, pre-chorus, bridge, interlude, and outro being the most common). The Radiohead albums were examined by criteria approximating these conditions:

- 1) Textual content: 3 of 51 non-textual and through-composed songs were not considered as fitting within normal form.
- 2) Section organization versus through-composed pieces: I consider songs within my intuitive definition to have some sort of section repetition, namely “verse”, “chorus”, and sometimes “bridge”, with the cultural associations those terms have. For the purpose of simple analysis, I condensed these criteria to the question of there being any section repetition. 19% of textual songs were through-composed, while 81% showed section repetition.
- 3) Textual repetition as formal element: As the above criterion does not fully address the concept of the chorus, which repeats both music and text, songs were also categorized as to whether lyrics were repeated as an indicator of form. 95% used some form of lyric repetition as a formal element, while only 5% avoided it.
- 4) Rhyme as formal element: Many songs tend to rhyme at the ends of lines, specifically throughout the verse. A full 85% of the Radiohead songs avoided rhyme throughout most or all of their lyrics.

In their frequent adapting of form through the eschewing of rhyme and through the irregular lengths of lines or sections, Radiohead shows that filling in all of the traditional formal elements of a song (again, as subjectively defined above) is of subordinate importance to something else. I believe that in light of my subjective analysis of the music’s deeply meaningful, communicative nature, and in light of its wide critical acclaim, this more important factor is a desire to communicate meaning, and a consequent willingness to excise neutral factors – i.e. unnecessary pieces of form – in doing so. (Note the confluence of this goal with the “nothing neutral” principle of Stanislavski.)

In further analysis of the five Radiohead albums above, some disagreement was discovered with the concept of narrative analysis that is prompted by ideas like the “score of the role”. While *In Rainbows*’ “Bodysnatchers” can be argued to have a constantly developing narrative, songs like “Lotus Flower” (from *King of Limbs*) or “Like Spinning Plates” (*Amnesiac*) seem more like frozen slivers of time, impressions, or facets of a moment. They develop with time in a way, and with effort a narrative may be drawn out of them, but these pieces of music seem more closely related to experimental, group-created theatre than the written play in their de-emphasis of narrative as a tool.

Instead of narrative, most important within “Lotus Flower” are the evocation and connection of different themes: meditation and quiet joy, sexuality and sensuality, patient desire, acknowledgment and deliberate avoidance of depression, and the physical joy of dancing, all merging together at different times through musical and lyrical choices and their intersections. Where a traditional play uses its plot as the main evoker of these ideas, in these songs a linear plot is not necessary; and if it is there, it is not at the forefront. Rather, the experience of associating these themes and phrases, both textual and musical, is the most important aspect of this music to my subjective ear. Although the tools given by the Stanislavski method can be of great use to composers working in an applicable style, theatre’s assumption of or reliance upon narrative as an important organizing force is misleading and limiting – rather, composers seeking to use these tools should also be aware of the effective non-narrative possibilities that song offers.

Non-narrative text is notably used in “Into This” (Song 7), where confused but joyful semi-sentences are strung together in a fast stream of experiences, evoking the feeling of existing in a state of sexuality and sensuality, rather than that state as it moves through time (i.e. experiential and thematic rather than narrative). In this way, the “basic meaning” of a song may be more vague and have more to do with a confluence of themes than a narrative moral or ideal; similarly, a poem may work in a more or less narrative fashion.

Figure 1. The melody of Song 7, “Into This”, passes by quickly, seeking to evoke an experience rather than tell a story.

A *joyous, sexual and unrestrained*

Arms and legs un - til a man gr - oped* Lim - ber legs be - neath his chest r - ose

Earth a - side the sweat of the fore - arms Win - ter ground un - til the broad back

Another idea stressed by Stanislavski and those who developed his work is that of simplicity, following from the idea of eliminating neutrality. According to anecdotes related by Benedetti, Stanislavski advised actors nearing the time of performance to “cut 80%” of their physical and vocal “business” – to distil their performance to its core, and by doing so, make it more effective.³⁵ There is certainly a link between simplicity and effective communication. Similar concepts are notable in the melodies and songs of several commercially successful, yet musically meritorious composers, whose melodies were examined during the conception and composition of this thesis project. “Lotus Flower”, from Radiohead’s *The King of Limbs* album, has already been mentioned; its melody drones on the same note for bars at a time, creating a meditative and peaceful ambience, and giving greater emphasis to movement between notes in that context of stillness.

A melodic drone is also used in the example above from Song 7, “Into This”, largely because a more acrobatic or pitch-heavy tune would have given the wrong mood; where “Lotus Flower” is meditative, “Into This” is clever and sexual, and a mid-low drone is similar to the kind of throaty speech associated with sexual desire.

³⁵ Robert Benedetti, *The Actor at Work* (Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon, 2005), 182.

Figure 2. The chorus melody of Radiohead’s “Lotus Flower”, showing a drone on F.

There's an emp - ty space in - side of my heart where the weeds take root so now I set you
free I set you free There's a

Tom Waits’ strophic “In the Neighborhood”, from *Swordfishtrombones*, is also worthy of consideration as a model of simplicity.³⁶ Its melody repeats four times, with natural, human modifications for feel, over a simple progression, using I, IV, and V chords. The melody itself alternates between arpeggiating the tonic major chord, adding the lower third (the sixth degree of the scale), and moving by neighbour notes to a chord tone on the V.

Figure 3. The melody of Tom Waits’ “In the Neighborhood” with harmonic context.

Tnr
Tbn
V IV V₇ I IV I IV

T
Tbn
I vi ii₄⁶ V₄⁷ V₇

³⁶ Tom Waits, *Swordfishtrombones* (Island Records CIDM 90095, 1992), compact disc.

The chorus reuses these same arpeggiated notes in a slightly different arc and, at the end, resolves in a very conventional stepwise downward motion to the tonic “home”. Waits’ melody moves predictably between simple notes in a simple chord progression, and the four iterations of this progression make it even more predictable. Yet this is Waits’ intent: his simple form, combined with the orchestration – two trombones, quiet snare drum, and added glockenspiel and cymbals in the chorus – evokes broken-down Americana, the fragments of a marching band playing a nostalgic waltz. The simplistic melody and chord structure speak of home and familiarity, and provide the necessary small-town American “neighborhood” setting for Waits’ piece. This piece inspired, in part, the simplicity of Song 10 (“The Dust Bowl”)’s chord structure; it focuses on a low E drone, returns to it predictably and without mercy, and provides a relentless background of mourning over which the vocalist sings a similarly organically changing, spiteful melody.

Figure 4. First melodic line of Song 10, “Dust Bowl”, with bass drone and simple melody.

6

A

8

mf

whose touch felt dry as the dust bowl whose

p *mp* *e* *e* *e*

Koji Kondo is the composer responsible for the soundtrack of the video game *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time*.³⁷ The challenges of composing for video games are many, but there are two of particular relevance to this thesis. Firstly, a composer for games is often given strict guidelines: their work must capture the essence of a developed character, of a setting, of a particular situation or feeling. This goal relates to my goal of capturing and differentiating the essence of each line of the source poetry through music. The “Kakariko Village” theme shows, through a slow, slightly rubato tempo, a combination of 6/8 and 3/4 time signatures that further

³⁷ Koji Kondo (composer), *The Legend of Zelda: The Ocarina of Time* (N64 version), Nintendo (Nintendo, 1998).

blurs any weighted notes, and the use of finger-picked acoustic guitar and harmonica, a lazy, pleasant small-town existence. Its simple I-vi-ii-V progression in the first eight bars is unambitious and simplistic, befitting a small town.

Figure 5. “Kakariko Village” theme from *The Legend of Zelda: The Ocarina of Time*.

The musical score for the "Kakariko Village" theme is presented in two staves. The top staff, labeled "Harm", is in treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat major) and a 3/4 time signature. It begins with a repeat sign, followed by a sequence of notes: a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B-flat4, a quarter note G4, a quarter note F4, a quarter note E4, a quarter note D4, and a quarter note C4. A first ending bracket encompasses the final two notes, G4 and F4. The bottom staff, labeled "Ac Gtr", is also in treble clef with the same key signature and time signature. It begins with a repeat sign, followed by an arpeggiated pattern of eighth notes: G4, A4, B-flat4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. A first ending bracket encompasses the final two notes, G4 and F4.

The “Ice Cavern” uses sparse accompaniment and no obvious melody; just the glistening of synthesized bells in upward-swept arpeggios, set in perfect fourths and fifths, as if to point out the glistening of light off of icicles as the adventurer moves through the cave and to contrast it with the atonal sound of the wind (a constant sound effect, moving irregularly up and down in pitch) as the only other moving thing in the cave. The only melody is formed by the slow parallel movement of the bell chords, most easily audible in the highest notes; the lack of melodic content befits a lack of life and an inhospitality to the adventurer. Simplicity is prominent in both of these pieces, and everything remaining in each of them is important to the full piece, exemplifying the “nothing neutral” aspect of their creation.

Secondly, the transfer of focus is expertly managed within these creations. The ear is guided in “Kakariko Village” from the acoustic guitar – lingering long enough to establish the arpeggiated pattern and chord progression once – to the solo harmonica, and the accompanying instruments – synthesized flute and violin sounds – come in at sectional transitions, contributing to the build of the melody rather than distracting from it. The play between the beginning of sound in “Ice Cavern”, its sustain, and the ongoing blowing of the wind is irregular enough to give an idea of naturally occurring noises, yet gradually creates a slow melody in the upper notes of the arpeggio as it shifts (as a whole) up and down. This concept of guiding the listener’s focus to something at all times inspired a drastic retooling of “Hand-Dug” (Song 5): unnecessary

instrumental breaks and introductory sections were removed; softer, slowly-strummed guitar sections were added to emphasize the softness and secrecy of certain lyric sections; and the bass and violin parts were changed from focus-stealing interludes to become supporting roles for the dynamic shape of the guitar and voice parts.

Figure 6. Excerpt from the chorus of Song 5, “Hand-Dug”, showing the use of raked guitar chords and simple, supportive playing in bass and violin.

The musical score is in 4/4 time and features four staves: Baritone (Bar), Guitar (G), Violin (Vln), and Bass (B). The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The vocal line (Bar) begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and includes the lyrics: "at an-y rate, at an-y rate___ it might turn out at an-y rate__ at an-y rate___ it might turn". A dashed line labeled "rake" is positioned above the vocal line. The guitar part (G) consists of raked chords, with a measure marker of 25. The violin (Vln) and bass (B) parts are marked "arco" and feature a dynamic contour of *mp* (mezzo-piano) followed by *pp* (pianissimo), then *mp*, *pp*, *mp*, *pp*, *mp*, *pp*, and finally *pp*.

1.6 Principles of Text Interpretation: Robert Pinsky

Robert Pinsky’s *The Sounds of Poetry: A Brief Guide* examines the concept of meaning being transmitted through various aspects of poetry, including syntax, line breaks, punctuation, rhythm, rhyme and like sounds, and other poetic tools, all briefly demonstrated for the benefit of the amateur reader.³⁸ Of special interest to composers setting poetry is his codification of the line break as a tool of emphasis, but specifically not of rhythm. He explains that a line break, by isolating two words visually (one on the far right of the line, and one at the beginning of the next line), gives these words greater emphasis to the reader. He clearly cautions against reading a line break as a pause, as is typically done with superficial poetry readings (e.g. in the high-school English classroom); instead, pauses should be placed in the appropriate locations dictated by punctuation.

³⁸ Robert Pinsky, *The Sounds of Poetry : A Brief Guide* (New York : Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998).

This is exemplified in his instruction to a reader of Ben Jonson’s “My Picture Left In Scotland” to read “taking care not to pause in a stilted way at the ends of the lines, when the grammar runs over. Try to pause only as the grammar might pause, if necessary exaggerating the effect a little to hear what the author has done.”³⁹ To paraphrase his theory, the emphasis caused by the visual cue of a line break is communicated to the reader, and will be expressed via verbal emphasis (either in performance or in the voice of the mind).⁴⁰ While its application is of course limited to certain types of poetry, Pinsky’s denotation of punctuation as a dictator of rhythm (and of line breaks as notation of emphasis) has proven useful during the construction of this thesis.

Pinsky’s primer carries a further important idea which has already been hinted at: the concept of poetry as a verbal, spoken, or – perhaps most clearly – sound-based art. The title of the book *The Sounds of Poetry* emphasizes this, as does his discussion of the line break as planned by the poet versus that necessitated by printing format (bolding mine):

“The arbitrary, typographical breaks required by the fact that Williams’s lines are longer than this page is wide should be instructive. The typesetter’s (or pagemaker’s) breaks, determined by the physical dimensions of the page, are conventionally or functionally invisible in relation to the sound. **The line is vocal, a sound; the typographical arrangement is a notation for that sound.**”⁴¹

Pinsky describes the words on the page as a “notation” for the spoken delivery, and often exhorts the reader to read an example poem aloud. Even the act of reading silently creates sounds heard in the mind. Poetry lives, he attests, when it is read aloud. (It should be noted again that Pinsky’s descriptions apply only to certain types of poetry.) Following this concept, this thesis sets its poetic source and lyrics with attention to the sound of the text as an important part of the poet’s intended expression.

³⁹ Ibid., 28.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 49 – Pinsky here discusses dividing the words of a poem into different lines, and the different types of emphasis gained from placing a word at the beginning or end of a line.

⁴¹ Ibid., 109.

1.7 Summary of Principles to be Proven

In this thesis, I play a composer's role as both a communicative and an interpretive one. I consider it imperative in the style of composition I pursue that the composer has a basic meaning to communicate – whether consisting of a value or set of values, or merely the association of a group of themes. Everything must serve in communication of that meaning or those themes. In turn, the basic meaning and themes can only be usefully understood by a deep, time-intensive analysis of the source text; or in the general case, analysis and exploration of a source idea. The justification of choices as expressing these meanings, when done in an abstract art like music, can only be subjective, and therefore interpretive (returning to McGaw & Clark's terminology). It must be made with reference not only to the composer's feelings and to the analysis and research done, but also to the circumstances of listening, and considering as many factors as possible, such as live or recorded performance, the location and character of the performance (or recording) space, the identity and size of the audience, and the identity and skill level of the musicians. The principles of simplicity, guidance of audience focus, and careful thematic consideration and choices – lessons drawn from Radiohead, Tom Waits, and Koji Kondo – form alternate perspectives on the idea of nothing being neutral, and thus of everything having a clear purpose.

In short, the entirety of the methodology outlined above flows logically from, or connects clearly to, Stanislavski's supposition that every aspect of a piece should serve its basic message, transposed from the world of theatre to that of music; and that therefore, its every aspect should be justifiable by the composer in reference to that message. This thesis seeks to demonstrate the effectiveness of these applied principles.

Part 2: The *Homonculus* Cycle – Process and Justification

This section will detail important decisions made in the process of composition of the *Homonculus* cycle, from its conception to some specifics involved in planning and executing each song. Focus will be given to the final song, “Homonculus”, as its creation acted essentially as a prototype for the other ten, but all of the songs will be addressed individually as well.

Since this song cycle is unique in many ways – its varied influences and stylistic positioning between experimental rock and classical/art music; its interconnectedness; the importance of the final song on the cycle – prospective performers would benefit from supplementary information. As such, Appendix A includes performance notes before the scores. These include stylistic guidance, particularly for the vocalist; discussion of the gender of the singer; and the full text of the poetry.

One aspect of the compositional process that will not be greatly addressed here is my writing of the supplemental lyrics. It should be mentioned that care was taken to utilize similar tone and word choice as the original poet, and that all lyrics were approved by the poet as appropriate to the poem’s content and message. It may also be of note that lyric/syllable separation was done within the piece with a mind to traditional vocal technique of placing a consonant sound at the beginning of the next syllable. (This vocal practice ensures singers do not end a syllable early or linger on sustained consonants.) For example, the separation I have used would separate the word “breathing” as “brea-thing”, rather than “breath-ing”, to emphasize the placement of the “th” consonant sound at the beginning of the second syllable.

Otherwise, while creation of the lyrics may be referred to insofar as it affects the form of a song, and while I am confident in my ability to write suitable lyrics in this context, this thesis addresses the requirements of a musical composition degree, and not one involving poetry or English prose mastery.

2.1 Selection of the Text

It was difficult to find poetry that met the specific needs of this thesis. Since each line would be devoted to a song, I searched for a poem (or section thereof) between 8 to 12 lines

long, in order to create a cycle of 9 to 13 songs. According to the principles drawn from Stanislavski, I also needed to find a strong personal connection with both the work's subject and its means of expression, in terms of imagery, vocabulary, and so on; this type of personal interest is helpful to ensure I play an interpretive role (as in section 1.1) and give my own emphases to the message found in the work.⁴²

Poetry in free verse seemed to potentially benefit most from treatment in this manner; rhyme-based forms, or even blank verse, smacked too much of song-form before setting them, in the way that rhyme or steady line length gives a regular rhythmic cadence and form to a line. I felt that setting a free verse poem, and highlighting each line through creation of a song exploring its themes and ideas, would create a much more pleasing contrast – both between an unrhymed, irregular, through-composed subject and songs that all, in some way, theme themselves clearly in a listener-friendly way (i.e. that work in some manner of regularity, whether it be lyrical or otherwise); and in that starting with the possible varying line lengths and rhythms that come from free verse creates great opportunity for internalizing those varying rhythms into differing motifs for songs. (Otherwise put, a greater difference between each line can enable greater difference in the songs written based on those lines.)

Given those three constraints – 8-12 lines in length, subjectively appealing in both topic and expression, and written in free verse – I found it useful to request poetry written to these specifications from a colleague. I found MacKenzie Regier's poetry impressive not only for the density of imagery in her works, but for how this imagery contributes to the emotional impact of her ultimate meaning. She agreed to write something specifically for this project, and after a dozen poems she worked on through a period of months were reviewed for potential use, I selected "Homunculus" as the most suitable. The full text of her poem "Homunculus" is reprinted in **Appendix B** with the author's permission.

All of her created poems were longer than the 8-12 lines required, "Homunculus" among them, but its uses of both bodily terms – throat, arm, grope – and those based in gardening – soil, plots, seeds – were evocative and compelling. Regier's employment of short, simple words

⁴² McGaw and Clark, *Acting is Believing*, 5-7, 41; also see Spolin, *Improvisation*, 233, and Robert Benedetti, *Action! Acting for Film and Television* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2001), 7.

reinforces the dual, primal wants of both sexual desire and a need for companionship – “romance” may be too “high-brow” a term. Meanwhile, she expresses the pain of denial of that wanting in several images: thirst, the blight of winter, and barren earth. All of this flows quickly through the first ten lines, written as one continuous sentence. This varying imagery laid excellent groundwork for giving a strong, individual character to the song based on each line, while the consistent themes present within the stanza, and its containment with a single sentence, give it unity.

Although the initial plan for this thesis was to set an entire poem, the greater length of all of Regier’s offered works meant that my choices might be limited in this respect. “Homunculus” has three separate stanzas, each of suitable length to be isolated to set for a project like this thesis. The rooting of Stanza 2 in Georgia and Texas is outside of my experience, and thus less evocative to me, but both stanzas 1 and 3 were of interest. Ultimately, however, the struggle and the spilling-forth cadence evident in Stanza 1 seemed to carry the most possibility. Stanza 1 also seems self-contained: while Stanzas 2 and 3 express, respectively, perspectives of self-blame and self-reflection, Stanza 1 holds both the recounting of the actual event and strong emotional links expressed in how that story is told. Even the story’s conclusion made clear in Stanza 2, the failure of the seeds to sustain life, is foreshadowed in Stanza 1 with the “mid-February garden” and visible in the last line, “whose touch was dry as the dust bowl.” The thoughtfulness in Stanzas 2 and 3 adds to the reader’s impression, but is not necessary to the retelling of the story.

The exclusion of the emotional exploration of these stanzas is somewhat remedied through the emotionally communicative nature of the musical setting, which illuminates much of the subtext of this first stanza. The effects of the choice to exclude Stanzas 2 and 3 can also be mediated due to the creation of additional text – the songs based on each line. I considered it untrue to the intention of the poet to directly quote Stanzas 2 or 3 in any substance for these songs, and thus put those lines in a different context; however, the content of blame and reflection in the later stanzas is implied or stated, where appropriate, through the new lyrical content based on the existing text.

The full ensemble, then, consists of three instrumentalists, one on each instrument mentioned above, who also contribute their voices at some parts in the cycle (another folk tradition); and a baritone vocalist. The use of common instruments, the relatively lax performance conditions, and the mild to moderate challenges posed to the players in most of the cycle's pieces all contribute to its viability for performance. Together, these instruments seem to evoke the core of an American folk or country sound. The *Homonculus* cycle often employs these instruments in a way more consistent with through-composed Western art music than folk music; it is this context that gives the possibility of a mystical or alien sound to this ensemble.

It is important for clarity to address a potentially surprising point: the fact that the work is written for a baritone singer, yet the poetry is arguably from a woman's perspective. "Arguably" is a vital word here, as the only allusions to the gender of the narrator come by description of "thick shoulders and skinny hips" in the third stanza (which is itself not particularly evocative of traditional femininity). Gender might also be assigned through the assumption of autobiographical writing – i.e. the poet is a woman, therefore the narrator is probably also a woman. While the constant gardening imagery may seem to be a metaphor or indicator for womanhood (possibly via fertility), this is proved impossible when the third stanza focuses on what the lover (the man) "grew" from the narrator; the gardening is reciprocal – both lover and narrator grow a "homonculus" of the other.

In summary, then, the assumption of a woman narrator is subtle and uncertain, either from the identity of the poet and an assumption of autobiographical writing, or from the socially ingrained assumption of romantic relationships being between a man and a woman unless otherwise specified. The work is partially composed in belief that an interpretation of the poem from the voice of a man is both possible and just as fruitful as the interpretation of the narrator as a woman.

There is a second, more important defense to the choice of a baritone voice in this piece. If we agree that Regier is writing from her own perspective – that is, that of a woman – then it seems appropriate to set the poem for a woman's voice. Current choral practice (for adults) generally codes soprano and alto as female voices, and tenor and bass as male. When viewed in

the context of gender theory, however, this assignment of gender role to range is over-simplistic. If society accepts gender as social construct – in other words, if society accepts the gender of transgender individuals as valid – then we must accept their voices as valid to their gender. A baritone voice is therefore no less valid for a woman than an alto or soprano voice, and carries the additional benefits of adding needed representation within music for the voices and identities of transgender women (or otherwise non-gender-conforming individuals in this vocal range). My identity as genderfluid – identifying as a man and as a woman at different times – allows for use of an identity which is as authentic to womanhood as any other; that adds genderfluid and transgender representation to the musical community; and, finally, which is familiar and accessible during the composition and recording processes, via my own voice. (It may be noted here that this interpretation was presented to the poet to her full approval.)

Since gender identity, and thus choice of pronouns, is important to this piece, consideration must be given to what pronouns to use for the characters in the *Homonculus* cycle. The lover is referred to as a “man”, and so the “he/him/his” set of pronouns are used. While I argue that the gender identity of the narrator is not clearly defined, I ultimately believe that representation of a wide range of voices for transgender and genderfluid women is an important goal, as explained in my choice for vocal orchestration. To this end, I will refer to the narrator using “she/her/hers” pronouns during this thesis. I would like to make clear, however, that this pronoun choice does not invalidate performances of this piece by non-women; the argument above, that the narrator may be of any gender, still has merit.

2.3 Song 11: “Homonculus” – The Prototype Song

The interconnected nature of the song cycle necessitated a careful compositional approach. The main body of the song cycle is composed of ten pieces. The lyrics and music of each piece are based on a single line of the source poetry. The final song is the setting of the full stanza of the poem, where each line is musically set identically (or with minimal adaptation, e.g. for tempo transitions) to where it occurs in one of the songs earlier. With this link in mind, the two general approaches conceived in the initial stages of composition were to address Song 11, “Homonculus” first, and extrapolate the other ten songs from each line; or to write the separate

songs first, and then tie them together. The former option instantly appealed more, as the latter sound would create something more of an overture or medley – an obvious stitching-together of different songs.

My compositional aim was for “Homonculus”, the setting of the selection from the poem itself, to be a work of musical merit and the focus of the piece, and so it had to be constructed as a coherent whole. However, the first draft of this work, which included music excerpted as exactly as possible from Songs 1-10, came across as an unfulfilling pastiche. The current version of Song 11 therefore uses a greater number of transitional strategies, including very gradual tempo changes, less drastic differences in tempo, use of further transitional music to “dovetail” sections more completely, and removing unnecessary complexity to lessen abrupt stylistic change from one line to the next; this aids in the construction of Song 11 as a unified, listenable piece of music.

The next obstacle was, in composing “Homonculus”, the potential to create too neutral a set of starting points for the disparate songs; possibly the ‘opposite’ problem of the overture scenario above, in that the piece would sound **too** consistent. There was also the threat of valuing continuity to the point where it devalued each line’s character: of writing music to set each line of poetry that did not support the character of its associated song. In order to counter this, each line was analyzed as an entity, and several lists were made over the process of weeks describing the potential character of the song growing from each line.

After such analysis, a set of organizational principles was needed for “Homonculus” (Song 11 of the cycle). Its non-rhyming, free-verse nature and the demand of distinct starting points for different songs required a through-composed piece of music. The imagery in the poem suggests a night-time, winter setting – a frozen garden, out of which comes unexpectedly vital (note the frequent use of bodily words and references to gardens and growth) but ultimately failed life. This story suggested both a shape and a texture, but still left many aspects of the music to choice.

Since line breaks are already represented as the beginnings of different songs, and each of these songs should have a distinct character, emphasizing them further is unnecessary, and could

potentially break the unity of “Homunculus” too much. Pinsky’s principle in demarcating punctuation with pauses was utilized, suggesting different character to the songs containing those pauses (which became musical interludes) versus those without, but the lack of punctuation through much of the poem (for example, between lines 1 and 4, and then 4 and 8) meant that the representation of punctuation must be only a single organizing tool in a suite of others. Pinsky’s work does have further organizational applications in the present work, however, in the work’s division into what are here called “Thoughts”. The co-existence of marking systems for “Thoughts” (marked by chord changes), poetic lines (marked by song divisions and the resulting changes of character or feel), and punctuation breaks (marked by rests in the sung melody) became the method of creating a sufficiently expressive method of organization. In addition, as will be demonstrated, these three concurrent yet different methods of grouping ensure flow and unity throughout the entirety of Song 11, as where a line ends, a “Thought” often still continues.

The following sections detail the primary organizing tools used during this thesis, including certain intervallic motifs or themes present throughout the work; description of the above-mentioned “Thoughts”; and finally, an analysis of each line of poetry in its context in Song 11 “Homunculus”, juxtaposed with analysis of the song inspired by that line.

2.4 Organization: Intervallic Themes

In reviewing the source poetry, I found hope, uncertainty, and the play between them to be important themes. I would argue that the Stanislavskian “basic meaning” has to do with learning to trust and having trust broken, and that hope and uncertainty are two major emotional factors acting on the narrator’s ability to trust. Accordingly, both of these concepts are represented in the final work by simple, and therefore versatile, intervallic themes.

The major second is used to convey uncertainty, and is referred to as the “uncertainty” interval in this work. It occurs most effectively harmonically (i.e. both notes played at once), but repeated melodic alternations between two notes a major second apart also provide a similar function.

Figure 8. Table of intervallic themes and some permutations used in *Homonculus* cycle.

Interval	Meaning
Harmonic major 2nd	Uncertainty Sometimes played in alternation
Ascending perfect 5th	Hope
<i>Descending perfect 5th</i>	Satisfaction of hope
<i>Two stacked perfect 5ths, or Major 9th</i>	The greatest hope
<i>Ascending 4th</i>	Falling short of hope
<i>Ascending 6th</i>	Overextending hope, vulnerability

The ascending perfect fifth is the expression of hope, or the “hope” interval. This interval is often modified within the piece: leaping upwards a fourth often equates to not daring to hope, while an ascending leap of a sixth is an “overextension” of hope, either brave, foolish or both. Two consecutive ascending fifth leaps, comprising a major ninth in total (and sometimes shown instead as a single leap of a ninth), represent a doubling of that hope, or what I call the “greatest hope” motif – a hope almost beyond possibility. As a logical extension, the descending fifth – the reversal of this simple theme – acts as the answer, or the “satisfaction of hope” raised by the ascending fifth. The connection here of the “satisfaction of hope” to the strong harmonic resolution (the bass motion V-I), in comparison to the unfinished ascending fifth and a harmonic opening or weaker resolution (either I-V or IV-I), lends this motif the potency of traditional associations: Western audiences recognize these conventions, and are more likely to respond to them.

2.5 Organization: “Thoughts”

This section will examine the process behind dividing this piece subjectively into Thoughts, and will then explain in some detail how each thought was assigned harmonic (pitch) content, especially considering how strongly this process influences and defines each subordinate song. As these “Thoughts” examine Song 11, “Homonculus” in great detail, readers may wish to refer to that song in **Appendix A**.

A corollary of the rule to pause at punctuation marks and not at line breaks – that line breaks are used for emphasis – is that line breaks become less of a barrier to the flow of thought. This is certainly the case in Regier’s work, as one sentence continues across ten lines. Noting how often these line breaks would seem to cut a thought in half (consider the coherent phrases “which rolled / inside my skull” at lines 1 and 2, or “when I had only water enough / for my own throat” in 3 and 4 as two examples), these ten lines are subjectively separated into ten “Thoughts” of irregular length. (The number of “Thoughts” coincides with the number of lines only by coincidence; creating an equal number of “Thoughts” to lines was not my intention.)

Figure 9. Guide to division of “Thoughts” in MacKenzie Regier’s “Homunculus”.

1 After I left, | **2** seeds of you – | **3** which rolled
inside my skull | **4** and took sharp root
when I had only water enough
for my own throat – | **5** dropped into the plots
I hand-dug | **6** so that by night
the mid-February garden sprouted |
7 arms and legs until a man groped
from the soil | **8** and became you: |
9 the you I had dreamed up, | **10** the you
whose touch felt dry as the dust bowl.

These “Thoughts” are defined subjectively by similar narrative goals and emotional content; an analogy to the Stanislavski tradition’s “score of the role” may be useful, as both concepts focus on a deconstruction of the character’s intention in performing a certain action, and the moments when those intentions shift. As examples, “After I left” (Line 1) is a single Thought, implying memory and an untold story. “Seeds of you,” also in Line 1, is subjectively classified as a separate Thought, despite its being a sentence fragment – it brings the “I / you” dichotomy into play and weights “you” as heavily as “I”, as well as being a relished, precious yet foreboding phrase. After this section of the work was divided into these coherent emotional blocks labelled “Thoughts”, they were equated directly with a musical aspect through assigning a

chord, set of chords or harmonic progression to each Thought. These Thoughts, often arcing over the boundaries for lines, help to unify “Homonculus” as a cohesive song, rather than an amalgamation of parts.

2.5.1 “Thought” 1: “After I left,”

“Thought” 1 communicates the existence of an unspoken history, as well as wistfulness in its memory. It is worth noting that this “Thought” introduces the two intervallic themes that carry on throughout the cycle: The waltz moves between Bdim, a sound of dissatisfaction or disappointment, and an open fifth rising from F – the first expression of the “hope” motif. This contrast shows the conflicting feelings integral to ‘leaving’ an old section of life and starting a new one. Meanwhile, the guitar adds the harmonic major seconds of “uncertainty” in the background, representing the uncertainty of the future. The progression for this “Thought” is deliberately longer than most of the others in order to draw out the concept of an unspoken history, which the lyrics only vaguely describe. At the end of this progression, the resolution from G major (V) moves to A minor (deceptive cadence to vi), betraying the ultimate reluctance of the narrator to leave.

Figure 10. Guitar and violin in “Thought” 1 (Song 1, “After I Left”), illustrating the rising fifth (violin part) and the concurrent major second (last note of the guitar).

The figure shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is for the violin, and the bottom staff is for the guitar. Both staves begin with a measure containing a whole note chord (F and C). The violin part then moves to a rising fifth interval (F to C) in the next measure, followed by a major second interval (F to G) in the final measure. The guitar part remains on the F and C chord for the first two measures, then moves to a major second interval (F to G) in the final measure. The guitar part is marked with 'pp' (pianissimo).

2.5.2 “Thought” 2: “seeds of you—”

“Thought” 2 is the first statement that addresses the lover, and its isolation via punctuation makes the statement of “you” more precious (connecting with the similar relish of that word in the eighth line, with the words “and became you:” followed by a colon). That

preciousness, in context of the poem, draws out the unsatisfied desire of the narrator to stay rather than leave even further, and so the chord content centres much more clearly around a minor centre – the B in the bass recurs as in “Thought” 1, but this B serves as the fifth of an almost omnipresent E minor in an unexpected, but related change of context. The progression is long, similar to “Thought” 1, in part because they are contained within the same song (and thus a similar structure is helpful to the coherency of that song), and in part because both are similar in nature: reflective, slow, and separated by punctuation. The ending of “Thought” 2 moves similarly through happier associations of the lover (C major 7) via an open 5 (D-A, ornamented with E and G – no resolving third) to final disappointment in leaving (E minor, the initial chord).

2.5.3 “Thought” 3: “which rolled / inside my skull”

“Thought” 3 is the first “Thought” to cross between lines. Appropriate to the alarmingly invasive nature of the action being described, and the implied vulnerability of the narrator, the chords move between two distantly related major triads (C and A, both of which relate weakly to the previous E minor: iii of C or minor v of A / ii to A’s V) juxtaposed over a pedaled B in the bass, which fits neither chord (except as an unstable major 7 in 3rd inversion for C) – these major triads work to represent an unsteady, unsafe background, over which the vocalist sings trustingly, even as they are betrayed by the unfitting bass note. The resolution on “skull” on C major 7 is a brief bittersweet moment, which shows the positive mental reinforcement given to oneself for trusting – the continual convincing that it is the right thing to do. This contrast from the dissonance of the ‘betrayal’ idea above is necessary to depict fully the narrator’s state of mind: both distress and the mental activity necessary to resolve that distress to a level of stability.

2.5.4 “Thought” 4: “and took sharp root / when I had only water enough / for my own throat—”

The text of “Thought” 4 speaks of pain and recrimination against the lover for this abuse of the narrator’s past self. The semitone transition of the melody from the bass-note B of “Thought” 3 to the Bb (the third of G minor) allows for a “sinking feeling” sensation of realization and emotional reaction, while the single-chord structure centers the narrator deeply in a dark, reproachful memory.

2.5.5 “Thought” 5: “dropped into the plots / I hand-dug”

“Thought” 5 is negative in multiple ways. Its description of the work done by the narrator for the sake of the lover is meant to instill guilt in the lover (the focus of the text), to show how much the narrator has sacrificed for him. At the same time, the fact that the narrator has done this work is proof of her being negligent enough to be fooled; proof of contributing to her own destruction. In her own eyes, the narrator is guilty of allowing herself to be manipulated into trusting. This shift to a different aim for the guilt – being directed away from the lover and onto the narrator – is represented by a shift upwards a semitone (to mirror the melodic shift of a semitone down in “Thought” 4) to Ab minor 7, with a Bb added to clash with the Ab and evoke “uncertainty” via the major second interval.

2.5.6 “Thought” 6: “so that by night / the mid-February garden sprouted”

“Thought” 6 conveys a magical, unexplainable action, a miracle, and so the tone shifts quickly to amazement and joy. The Bb added into the Ab minor 7 of the previous “Thought” is here used as the base of the new chord, Bb major, with a heavy melodic emphasis on the raised fourth (the Lydian mode) to evoke the strangeness of the occurring events. G minor alternates with the Bb major chord occasionally and quickly as a way of relieving the single-chord drone, adding motion, and retaining the sense of the unhappy memory the narrator still has not quite left.

2.5.7 “Thought” 7: “arms and legs until a man groped / from the soil”

“Thought” 7 is an escalation of the miracle in “Thought” 6 to even further impossibility, with surprisingly sexual implications. The joy of “Thought” 6 is brought to higher levels through an even faster tempo and high dynamics. The previous thought’s strangeness is also brought higher as the quick alternations with the relative G minor are dispensed with, in favour of stronger choices: the trio of semitone-related chords Ab major, C minor, and F minor. (The whole-tone step from the previous bass note of Bb down to Ab subtly reinforces the idea of “uncertainty” amidst this miraculous happening.) To add to the playful joy of the occasion and make the chord choices bolder, both C minor and Ab major are given a chromatic blue-third

treatment, and so both the major and minor thirds are used in the violin, while the guitar plays the major form of both chords.

2.5.8 “Thought” 8: “and became you:”

“Thought” 8 brings forth a similar sort of precious appreciation as was evident in “Thought” 2. The context is different: whereas “Thought” 2 comes in the midst of memories of conflicted emotion, “Thought” 8 happens at the end of a joyous section, a remembrance of the satisfaction and happiness in seeing the object of affection appear. The emotional inertia behind “Thought” 8 is such that this line comes with an unguarded sweetness, with the chord context of G minor (yearning) and C5 – the open fifth, flavoured by the ninth before it falls down a fifth in the melody. The conjunction of two open fifths, untainted by other notes, is the largest expression of hope yet, the “greatest hope”, and the following descending fifth in the melody expresses the “satisfaction of hope”.

2.5.9 “Thought” 9: “the you I had dreamed up,”

“Thought” 9 continues the sense of deep care and appreciation. An alternation between v-I (E minor and A major) recalls the bittersweet use of E minor in “Thought” 2, but resolves it to a pleasant A major chord; however, the open fifth on D immediately following, with the concurrent major second of “uncertainty” added, hints that the final resolution has not yet been reached.

2.5.10 “Thought” 10: “the you / whose touch felt dry as the dust bowl.”

A heavy E minor pedal follows from the prior Thought’s E minor, but no longer seeks to resolve that yearning successfully. The use of a minor pedal recalls the sense of hurt and reproach in “Thought” 4 (“and took sharp root/...”). The use of E minor allows the double bass to bow its lowest note, and gives the additional resonance that comes with an open string. The melodic use of the grace note B leading downward to A on the word “dry” presents the opportunity of the “hope” ascending fifth for a moment before “crushing” it to a smaller interval.

2.6 Organization: Lines and Songs

Since “Homunculus” was composed first and contains the first lines (both textual and musical) of the other ten songs, it functioned as an early ‘prototype’ piece, necessitating the testing of musical ideas both in the context of “Homunculus” and in the context of a unique song. The questions continually arose of a section’s flow to the next, creating unity. Each poetic line also had to evoke a clearly different feeling or style from the last. These concerns necessitated a careful balance between distinction and cohesion. This section details the decisions made for the character of each poetic line as it occurs in Song 11 “Homunculus”, including the tactics used to ensure the various parts of “Homunculus” fitted together as well as possible. It also describes the decisions made in composing each full song, and attempting to ensure that its respective fragment in Song 11 was an accurate representation of its character. Readers may find it helpful to refer to the scores in **Appendix A**.

2.6.1 Line 1: “After I left, seeds of you—which rolled”

This line contains “Thoughts” 1, 2, and a portion of 3. A relatively long introduction (14 bars) is played at the beginning of the piece to establish the waltz rhythm and 8-bar structure of the song. The instruments play a delicate pizzicato here, providing a soft backdrop to the thoughts of the singer. This introduction also gives a suitable amount of preamble to the words “After I left”, emphasizing the untold story there. The placement of “After I left” in the final two bars of an 8-bar progression brings out the word “after” (i.e. ‘after’ the progression) and allows for “seeds of you” to occur near the beginning of the second phrase, after a short pause for the comma. (With this in mind, it may be more natural to view the first eight bars of the piece as introduction, while the second eight-bar phrase simply contains six bars of rest before the vocal entry.) The more emphatic pause, representing the long dash, then plays out naturally through the rest of the eight-bar progression, and “which rolled” takes place at the beginning of the third progression.

Note that while the time signature moves to 4/4 on “Which rolled”, the rhythm of the chord changes in “Thought” 3 – three beats on C, one beat on A – allows Song 1 to continue in

3/4 , treating the last beat on A major as beat one of a new bar, while the reinforcement of the four-beat pattern (divided as three plus one) brings the listener into Song 2.

2.6.2 Song 1: “After I Left”

The strophic composition of “After I Left” – two verses, focusing each on a different memory, with the title words as an opening and closing refrain to each verse – gives the necessary repetition for its otherwise disjointed melody and unusual form to make sense. The overall focus on major seconds between the voice and its chordal background reinforces the “uncertainty” interval and creates an unconventional wistfulness, a sense of wandering as the melody rarely seems to settle on a comfortable note. The two pauses necessitated by the punctuation of the piece, and the long introduction that represents the “before” to the piece’s “After”, make a sparse start to the song; as the story of the memory of each verse unfolds, the momentum increases both in the vocal part’s density and in its melodic arc.

The instrumentalists stay within assigned “roles”; although the guitar shifts to a higher chord voicing at section B, necessitated by its high range in the connecting Song 2, this range serves as another way of increasing momentum, while its rhythmic patterns remain similar to retain continuity. Meanwhile, the pizzicato violin and bass continue through the song, lending a delicacy to the piece. At the midway point (section C), the guitar’s arpeggiated major “solo” is a simple, pleasant memory that disappears into the aether just before the beginning of the second verse. This verse is identical to the first in form, as the melody, with the pauses dictated by punctuation, requires careful reinforcement in order to sound deliberate and become familiar. The ending to “After I Left” incorporates a repetition of Regier’s line of poetry in a way that throws the listener, using the ending lyric “After I left” of the prior verse as the beginning of the new line. (The identical rhythmic and pitch setting of this phrase each time aids this change.) As a result, the audience “misses” something as well – the idyllic first eight bars are cut out of the repetition. An ending is made clear as the vocal part ends mid-verse, and the instruments finish their eight-bar phrase on a *rit.*

2.6.3 Line 2: “inside my skull and took sharp root”

Some liberty is taken here with the concept of a “pause” being used only for punctuation. Specifically, the bass plays accented notes during the first three beats of bars 26 and 29 (in Song 11); I consider these sections as taking centre focus, then continuing into the vocal melody, so that they are in a sense melodic pre-extensions of the voice. The split down the centre of this line into two Thoughts, and thus two chord collections, encourages repetition of form over those two sections, so “inside my skull” and “and took sharp root” both follow the same rhythmic pattern.

The voice here displays vulnerability: an ascending fifth leap (“hope”), then a further fourth (not quite daring to “hope”/trust), then a movement up and down a major second (both “uncertainty” and the completion of the “hope”/trust idea despite that), each movement displaying a central intervallic emotion of the piece while remaining ultimately simple and honest. The eighth-note arpeggiated movement of the violin, the steady quarter-note rhythm of the guitar, and the insistent drone of the bass all add to an eeriness and sense of lack of safety that surrounds the voice.

The varying metre – 4/4, 4/4, 2/4 – is there to give a further off-balance, unsafe feeling to the line, as well as to better fit the rhythm of the text – holding “skull” or “root” too long would give too much of a sense of pause at those words. Given that the text between “—which rolled” and “for my own throat—” (lines 1-4) is without punctuation, halting or hovering over too many long notes would interrupt that momentum. Putting these important, visceral words in a 2/4 bar emphasizes them in a way different from anything that has happened yet in “Homunculus”. This ten-beat metre works on several levels and gives a distinct, eerie feeling to Song 2.

2.6.4 Song 2: “Sharp Root”

“Sharp Root” is about naïvely trusting someone, and about looking back on that trust in memory with the full knowledge of one’s past self about to be hurt. The initial downward-swept arpeggio spanning a minor ninth in the guitar is soft, but its feeling of a surprising, somewhat violent tonal break – especially when contrasted with the pure violin C – foreshadows the piece’s

themes. The violin and guitar softly introduce the form of the piece in its 10-beat repeating section, as well as moving through the first two chord patterns; the A major – C major are so unrelated as to sound dissonant in conjunction, while the G minor – D minor switch suggests depression is much more stable than positivity.

The violin moves sinuously within these chords in a repetitive eighth note line. (This insidious figure recurs in the break between the two verses, now harmonized in the bass.) The entry of the bass at A, however, is the moment when the true character of the piece takes shape: the three instruments – the not-quite-right progression of the guitar, the deliberately dissonant notes and heavy accents of the bass, and eventually the quasi-sympathetic but pessimistic descending tones of the violin all form a hostile environment for the vocalist.

The vocal melody is quiet and repetitive, adapting to the context of the new bass note in each line, and as mentioned before, illustrates both the rising fifth “hope” interval and the “uncertainty” major second in each of its iterations. This balance is only broken during each chorus, where the vocalist gets a short four bars to highlight the repeated choice to trust; the instruments here act as the vocalist’s self-reassurance that trust is the right thing, even as the lyrics betray her foolishness. The vocal line moves up first in a timid fourth, then in the fifth of “hope”, and then extends further – a total sixth, which could mean both an overextension, hoping too much, and “uncertainty” on top of that hope. Regardless, in the head of the vocalist this hope is a valuable and wonderful thing, as emphasized by the C major consonance reached on this final ascending sixth and its place of honour as the final note of the piece.

2.6.5 Line 3: “when I had only water enough”

This is the first line to take only one bar, further emphasizing the momentum between Lines 1 and 4. The phrasing of this line evokes choral spirituals, implying some sort of salvation, moral or joy by the end of it; that association is used, but without the expected resolution at the end. Because of the choral associations with this religious tradition, no instruments play during the first section of the song proper – only the lead voice sings. This silence during one bar helps to accentuate this text and gives a large enough sense of difference to evoke its source song, but is short enough that it still can fit within Song 11 as a coherent,

connecting piece. While the instrumentalists contribute their voices to the sound of Song 3, back-up singing during one bar of the entirety of Song 11 would sound too out of place, and so Song 3 as a whole is better served by saving this additional vocal context for later in the song. Finally, note the near-drone nature of the lead voice in this excerpt, centred on D – a mid-low note for a baritone. Aside from recalling the simplicity of church music, it also implies a connection with the recitation of the cantor or priest, and further distinguishes itself from the more note-heavy composition of the first two songs.

2.6.6 Song 3: “Water Enough”

“Water Enough”, as mentioned above, takes its inspiration from spirituals both instrumentally, through the choice of voice – including untrained voices – as the primary instrument, and lyrically – as wandering in the desert evokes a Biblical situation. The back-up voices play a role similar to that of a Greek chorus, reacting to the plight of the main vocalist, while the bass alternates between a light pluck to accompany the soloist and a moderately heavy bowed sound to underscore the force and gravity of the chorus versus the weak and somewhat overwhelmed storytelling of the soloist. The three instrumentalists sing; the bass is written as an extremely simple part in order to facilitate both singing and playing at once. The three parts are written in octave-down treble clef, in part because I was expecting moderately low-voiced singers for my recording, but also to aid reading by any vocal part. These simple lines can be sung in any octave and in any reasonable transposition while achieving the right effect, and are written to be sung forcefully (*mf*) by instrumentalists – not necessarily trained vocalists. The proper sound is not necessarily a beautiful one, but an emphatic and mournful one; the group both admonishes the soloist and implicitly pleads with her to return.

The piece works in a simple call and response format, with only slight musical developments (the addition of a pizzicato bass part in the verses and of a non-lyric vocal line during the chorus, and the gradual modification of the three backing vocal parts) modifying its otherwise repetitive nature. The chord structure is simple, descending from G minor through F major, D minor, C major, and down to G minor again (the bass line follows this falling description); it occurs over four bars in the verse, and double that time in the chorus,

emphasizing the losing struggle of the vocalist versus the ‘chorus’ of singers who shout her down. The three-part voicings stick to triads without sevenths or extensions, suiting the simple and unpolished feel of community choral music, and thus emphasizing the humanity and reality of the choir’s pleas. More specifically, a C7 to G minor progression, instead of C triad to G minor, would allow connection of those two chords via Bb; however, the slight awkwardness of the simple triadic voicing is chosen to evoke this imperfect, communal sense.

This link of imperfection and awkwardness with small-town community, combined with a sense of development and movement through the piece, are important to the background choir parts through Song 3’s many choruses. I felt that use of the same orchestration in each chorus would deprive the story told within the piece of its shape. As such, chorus 1 (section A) has disapproving hums over the bowed bass, giving a sense of harmonic grounding for the first time and building up to the actual remonstrance in chorus 2 (section C). The fact that only two voices sing here gives a more gradual dynamic midpoint between the first (hummed) chorus and the third (three-part full-voice) chorus, and leads less abruptly into a two-voice unison on G (bar C7), ensuring that the effect of the full-unison chorus at section I is not spoiled by an earlier use of the tactic.

The vocal melody follows the same arc each time, rising from D to A in a series of slow steps to show a struggle for “hope”, and closing off each line with “I could dream” on an ascending C major triad – the fifth of the C-G representing another quiet “hope”. This happens four times, and on the fifth and final verse – where the soloist finally loses hope – she resolves to the D instead, changing only the “hope” interval. In response, the backup voices mourn in unison through a chorus that resolves on a G, cutting off in time and leaving the bass holding its final note alone to express hopelessness and death. While this piece works in deeply explored metaphor – the wandering in the desert is really giving of herself to others and not being cared for in return – the dark pathos that this death metaphor provides brings out the heavy sense of betrayal in the third line of Regier’s poem.

2.6.7 Line 4: “for my own throat—dropped into the plots”

The central separation of the line here is similar to that in Line 2, but here is aided by an actual pause (in the form of written punctuation). This pause gives potential for some form of call-and-response between voice and instruments; however, such instrumentation would sound too busy for the first line of the song. In addition, the relatively sparse sound aids with the transition from the voice-only Line 3. Instead, the acoustic guitar arpeggio and the bass both effectively outline the chord context; the rhythmic density of both parts suggests careful planning, showing the guilt of the narrator in having planned in and contributed to her own downfall. The association with machinery in the unerring regularity of these two parts also suggests an unstoppable process being put into motion.

The semitone step from G minor to Ab minor, and the few semitones in the voice, mark both the “uncertainty” interval (at “dropped in”), and the reversed or satisfied “hope” interval (at “throat”). The rise and fall of the vocal line in the verses reaches the fifths of “hope”, but the chromatic or whole tone neighbours used in completing the fifth falls bespeaks worry about the “satisfaction of hope”. (Note, however, that the “hope” intervals of “own throat” and “into” suggest that hope is not lost completely.) The vocal shape starts low, reaches high, and returns to low; sung piano or mezzo piano, there is a place for weakness and self-blame, a faltering high and returning to a low point, as well as a place for personal strength in accusation of the lover on higher notes. This song gives the opportunity to pivot between the two.

2.6.8 Song 4: “The Plots”

“The Plots” is based on a pivotal line that moves between memory and action; while “Water Enough” (Song 3) uses a story, it works as an allegory to illustrate the narrator’s sense of loss and betrayal, and so is still based on exploration of emotional state as opposed to action. “The Plots” shows the moment when the seed is planted and the mysterious process of growth is beyond the narrator’s hands. She wonders whether she is doing the right thing, struggles between doubt and hope, and is tormented by the strangeness, the unreality of this ‘planting’. During all of her worries, the seed grows; the process has been set in motion. The constant, mechanical guitar arpeggio and bass pluck prevail in the verses, punctuated by harsh violin

double-stops in verse 1 to add a layer of complexity to the ‘machine’, and by draconian, even martial sixteenth-note-based violin lines in verse 2.

The alternation between G minor 7 and Ab minor 9 – with the Bb showing up in the bass line and at the top of the guitar arpeggio – creates an unsteady chromatic back-and-forth shift in the verse, highlighting the narrator’s own unhappiness and constant second-guessing. The movement between three substantially different sections in this piece, compared with the general thematic consistency within each of the other pieces so far – at most, there are two sections in Song 2 – shows a rising complexity in the situation: despair being leavened by hope, giving birth in turn to new doubt.

On arriving at the pre-chorus (B), the sudden switch to major in the chords and the movement to a more even rhythm in the bass help to highlight a burst of confidence in the voice, although the lyrics show the unease still present within that confidence, especially at E: “I was not qualified / For this body and brain”. The chorus proper consists of a much more dense section both harmonically – chord changes every half-bar – and rhythmically – sixteenth-note grid in the voice and steady, driving eighth notes in the bass. The drone of the voice in the chorus on a G through a changing harmonic background, combined with the tension of a sudden increase in rhythmic density, gives the sense of the narrator waiting uneasily through worrying circumstances: days passing, things growing stranger.

The ascent of the bass through stepwise motion here adds to the sense of some process escalating to a head, as does the overall form of the song: while the steady verse 1 is followed by the more melodically tense pre-chorus 1 and the more rhythmically tense chorus 1 (respectively sections A, B, C), verse 2 is followed by a double pre-chorus – in which the melody rises higher instead of repeating – and then a double-chorus, giving the whole arc further tension. (The call-and-response suggested earlier is finally seen in the second verse of Song 4, between violin and voice, at section D.) Finally, although there is a fermata as a final note on the guitar arpeggio, there is no *rit.* approaching it; the “machine” does not weaken, but continues its operation until finished

2.6.9 Line 5: “I hand-dug so that by night”

This line involves some of the same self-incrimination of the last line, but moves away from guilt into the recounting of the poem’s miracle. The sudden movement to quietude, with only voice and softly strummed acoustic guitar, suggests intimacy and secrecy. In particular, the phrase “so that by night”, when combined with the instrumentation chosen, evokes campfire music. The warmth and intimacy of this song serves to counteract the suspicion, guilt, and harshness of the previous ones and funnel audience attention into the coming miracle, mirroring the narrator’s frustrations at missing the lover giving way to surprise and satisfaction. The ending 5/4 bar serves as a transition to the 5/4 time signature of the next song, and functions as a grouping of four beats plus one beat; unlike the single-beat extension at the finish of Song/Line 1, which is drawn from Song 1 proper, this last beat is contextualized as the pick-up beat to Song 6, aiding momentum forward.

2.6.10 Song 5: “Hand-Dug”

This song plays with the familiar and unfamiliar; the objective is to give a sense of strange, yet possibly positive happenings. The lyrics here are less about waiting and more about working, and although there still is uncertainty about the outcome of the narrator’s actions, potential hope can be read in the chorus text. Familiarity is evoked for its associations with (a hope for) safety, and is drawn through the use of conventional instruments in conventional ways: the guitar strums in a traditional folk-guitar pattern, or gives single slow strums at the beginning of each new chord; the violin and bass behave as a minimized string section, working together to highlight and punctuate the harmonic and melodic shape of the piece.

The character of the harmonic progressions of the piece is both familiar and unfamiliar; the alternation between Ab minor and Bb major (with the Lydian fourth), dictated by the “Thought” structure, is a strange one to normalize within the melody, but the chord progression to “some seeds grow by moonlight” (A) is definitely a conventional one, moving from Ab minor to the relative major, Cb: Ab minor (i or vi) to Eb minor (v of Ab minor / iii, sub for V in Cb major), to Cb major, Gb major, and Cb major, a clear I-V-I reinforcing the new tonality. This is further normalized by the conventional swelling accompaniment role of the strings. However,

the shift from Cb major to Bb major in bar A4, while foreshadowed by the Bb in the melody in A2, is definitely an unconventional one.

Perhaps the most disconcerting and defamiliarizing aspect of the piece, however, is its near deconstruction of a predictable song form. The verse itself works for the first time in a 12-bar section that can be divided into three A-B-A sections of 4 bars. The first chorus-like section (at A) follows the dictates of the melody to a level of asymmetry, containing two rhythm-disrupting 2/4 bars and an unintuitive, irregular rhythm of chord changes. The second chorus-like section at B (it feels inappropriate to call A, with its length and wordiness, a ‘pre-chorus’, especially considering the deliberate bucking of form this song engages in), is much more regular both harmonically and rhythmically, illustrating the worried-hopeful lyric “at any rate, it might turn out” that shows this song’s status as border between doubt and optimism.

The 12-bar form of the second verse (bar C3) is then disrupted and made further irregular by an elaboration on the melodic figure of bar C7, a meditation on self-sacrifice on the words “the sweat of my brow / the crack of my nails” – which is itself an irregular five repetitions, or ten bars, before returning without warning to the continuation of the verse melody on the lyric “the crack of my nails”. The rest of the song (the two chorus-like sections) resolves as before, with the “at any rate” section being both the least strange part of the remaining piece and the final, optimistic endpoint of the song. Note the *mp* to *pp* dynamic shape of each string note in the “at any rate” sections (section B as example); these mimic the deep but rushed breaths of one near the state of panic, reinforcing the idea of high stress beneath the calming words and chords.

2.6.11 Line 6: “the mid-February garden sprouted”

This line tells a remarkably self-contained story of a miraculous occurrence – plants blooming in mid-winter – and so here the emotional transition to joy truly begins to take hold. To embody both the joy and the strangeness of this miracle, an unusual but insistent dance rhythm (unusual in the context of Western music) is employed: 10/8, divided into groupings of two eighth notes, two, three, and three. The Bb chord, with the raised (Lydian) fourth as an important melodic note, prevails throughout these two bars, except for the quick hint of G minor in the bass to keep the sound moving forward. The two bowed strings play energetic staccatos to

reinforce this dance rhythm; meanwhile, the guitar strums the Bb chord with a sharp, percussive attack on beat 2, which is an unimportant beat for the vocal line and so does not risk drowning out important words or notes. All three instruments function to keep the momentum moving forward. The vocal line itself has a continual, rapid “growth” upwards through a wide range, moving from the root Bb and leaping a fifth to F, then climbing a further major sixth to D.

2.6.12 Song 6: “Reckoning”

The opening line of “Reckoning” describes the beginning of the *Homonculus* cycle’s central miracle – the growth of a plant out of winter ground. As in its context in Song 11, this song marks a transition in the full cycle, from the cautious optimism and irregularity of “Hand-Dug” to a vivacious celebration of surprising good fortune. “Reckoning” is written as a playful folk-inspired dance, with many deliberate juxtapositions of quiet and loud for joyous, nearly comic effect; both strings play the core 10/8 rhythm and the guitar strums vigorously to accompany as the piece rises by whole tones through parallel chords in the verse. The vocalist’s bouncing melody rises higher and higher as well, although her voice is all but cut off by boisterous, yet well-meaning interludes in verse 1. The chorus takes two parts: firstly, via a quick homorhythmic “fanfare”, the piece transitions from the 10/8 dance to an initially rhythmically contradictory 5/4 (at B) – with the guitar playing in patterns of 2 overlapping the bar, while the strings play quarter notes that only subtly accentuate the 5/4 pattern. The voice gives a reverence to the lyrics in these four bars in an arpeggiated melody stressing a G#, a whole tone higher than the ending melody note, stressing continual growth.

This is followed by eight bars that reverse the 10/8 2-2-3-3 accent pattern to a 3-3-2-2 (a pattern more indicative of 5/4), also acting as a harmonic turn-around leading back to the home chord. The melody reverses here in a relief of another sort of tension, finally descending to a satisfying conclusion. This also marks a point of rhythmic peacefulness – everyone plays the same rhythm without further density. This heavily underlines the relief when everything “reckon[s] out all right”, especially after the doubt and uncertainty in prior songs. The dizzy shift between the out-of-context chorus major and minor chords at soft dynamic and the instrumental 10/8 dance theme follows, retrieving the concept of playful joy. The second verse

is more enthusiastic than the first, as the vocalist no longer pauses between statements of ‘miracles’, giving a little escalation by varying the form. This leads through a second pre-chorus and chorus to the final instrumental outro, where the violin takes the six eighth-note grouping at the end of its 10/8 pattern and begins phasing this rhythmically against the steady rhythmic pattern as a rising solo, supported by a farther-ranging bass. This solo ends unexpectedly in a final playful gesture as all three players hit a final short, accented note.

2.6.13 Line 7: “arms and legs until a man groped”

The transition to the 9/8 feel in this piece is aided by the two groupings of three eighth notes at the end of Song 6’s 10/8 time signature, which act almost as a “count-in”. All of the nouns and verbs in this line are linked to the body (arms; legs; man; groped), and so this section suggests a new awareness of the sexuality of this miracle. The musical setting of this line (and in large part, of the song) is determined perhaps more than any other line by its context within the poem. Thematically, this line continues an expression of great joy and wonder starting from Songs 5 and 6, and this miracle is still present here. Sexuality must therefore be combined with those earlier positive feelings; the narrator is enthusiastic. In terms of momentum, the last punctuation break was in the middle of Line 4, and the excitement and building tempo of the previous two lines must be continued in Line 7 as a part of the same event; so this song must be a fast one, despite the potential for sensuality in a slow tempo. (In fact, because of the abrupt slowdown in Line 8, this is the point of greatest momentum in the song cycle.) With all of these necessities in mind, the piece takes on a quick 9/8 dance tempo, reminiscent of the stereotypical sailor’s hornpipe or slip jig and drawing on the joyous lewdness commonly associated with sailors.

The Eb (see Song 11, bar 43) is treated as a “blue third” ornament on C major, and a similar third ornamentation is applied to the Ab major; these dual semitone alternations add a boisterous, teasing feeling to the piece. The bowed strings accent the heavy beats strongly, while the guitar keeps the eighth note pulse present.

The vocal melody highlights the first word, as a generally visceral one and an important, aggressive entry, and the two final words, as the ones with the most sexual connection, on long

or high notes – note the growl of the extended “r” in “groped” as theatrically, playfully sexual aggression. The initial melody, however, hovers around Eb, ornamenting it with the lower D – this connects it both with the “flirtatious” semitone alternation between Ab minor / Ab major and C minor / C major, and with the Lydian fourth melodic note of the previous song. This drone-like melody, especially when compared with the more note-heavy writing of previous lines, allows for a slightly *parlando* performance, which in turn allows greater expression of unrefined sexuality – especially through cultural associations with lower-class folk tradition (e.g. sailors) or music-hall songs.

2.6.14 Song 7: “Into This”

“Into This” is necessarily, because of the momentum built by the songs before it, the fastest song of the entire cycle. The bass’s arco/pizzicato alternation is, according to bassists I consulted during composition, possibly the most difficult thing to play in the cycle; however, deep questioning and a successful attempt at recording the piece indicate that it is a matter of (reasonable) mental preparation to an unusual type of coordination, and not that of a physical inability. The energy involved in playing this “riff” properly contributes to the general forward energy and busy nature of the entire piece, as do the guitar’s triplet strumming and the violin’s staccato underpinning.

The verse, in six bar sections, has a climax in the sixth (and twelfth) bar at a vocal high point, where the rhythm of the accompaniment changes from denser playing to three accents on strong beats. The melody itself moves from the initial Ab to a *parlando*-esque drone between Eb and D – introduced by the playfully restrained staccato Eb “solo” in the violin intro – to Ab, then Bb (the rising fifth, “hope”), then a triumphant C (even further than expected, with confidence). The chorus at B breaks this pattern for a drunken swaying where the vocalist, inebriated with sexuality and disbelief, expresses both her joy and disorientation at once; the bass drone provides a steady point for her to ‘hold on to’ while she regains her ability to stand, while the violin mirrors the chromatic wobble of her voice in the melody. The words “I could get used to this / I could get into this” act as a pleasant sigh, where the intensity of the accompaniment briefly dies away, before the violin returns the 9/8 jig feel with a busy, wildly swooping fiddle solo.

The same form is repeated with little alteration – it passes by quickly enough that straight repetition does not pall the ear, and is in fact welcome reinforcement of melodic and thematic ideas – until the final chorus, which lengthens its “taking a breath” section with the lines “hardly remember breathing” and further use of “I could get into this”, slowing to a gradual halt as the ‘dance’ ends.

2.6.15 Line 8: “from the soil and became you:”

The punctuation at the end of this line denotes a pause, following Pinsky’s methodology. This pause is far from abrupt; when naturally spoken, I find that the narrator’s care for the lover and the emphasis by placement end of the line cause the word “you” to be elongated. That lengthening is also evident earlier in the long diphthong of “soil”, especially in comparison to the monosyllabic text of the previous lines. The heavy *rit.* in this section is both necessary to slow to a proper tempo for the tenderness in this passage, and to communicate the slow-down in momentum of “Homonculus”, as the narrator alights on a treasured memory of a loved one. Rushed enthusiasm is replaced with lingering fondness and greater care.

The repeated alternation between G minor 7 and the open fifth on C emphasizes this sense of gladly lingering on a single memory in the lack of a true resolution (because of the missing third in the second chord). The “logical” IV-V-I progression in the bass (logical according to Western theory) is satisfying when compared to the hectic and unconventional chord choices in previous lines, giving a feeling of positivity and rightness to this line. Finally, the open fifth in C5 reminds listeners of the “hope” interval (the ascending fifth); this is accentuated by the D in the melody on beat 4 of bar 45, creating a second fifth above the G (two stacked fifths creating the “greatest hope”) followed by a resolution downwards to the G – the reversal of the “hope” interval, the “satisfaction of hope”. The simplicity and softness of the open fifth on the word “you”, especially in contrast with the complication and density of the previous lines, reinforces the care given to the concept of the lover.

The bass line here, given a bit more movement, is inspired in part by the walking, melodic style of the bass and piano duet “Rainbirds” by Tom Waits (from *Swordfishtrombones*). In Waits’ piece, the rhythms are simple, and the chord changes are not difficult to follow; but

their simplicity and the style of bass playing – pizzicato, but slowly enough for notes to ring and die between plucking – evoke both fondness and sadness. (*Swordfishtrombones* proved a study in unconventional instrumentation; this piece is relatively tame in comparison.)

The violin also plays pizzicato, interjecting in the pause created by the colon at “you:” with a simple melodic turn inspired by music boxes. The chord content and metre are given in an ascending arpeggiated pattern by the guitar, also following a slow, simple rhythm, to ensure that the form of the piece is clear. The accentuation of beat 2 recalls the initial state of nostalgia and semi-innocence of the similar accentuation in Song 1, “After I Left”.

2.6.16 Song 8: “You”

After all of the section-based songs utilizing repetition, “You” is remarkable as an arguably through-composed one; although “You” certainly uses repetition, it does not repeat clear sections in the same way that the others do. The instrumental rhythmic pattern, played at the start by the guitar and bass, emphasizes the second beat of the bar, as does the beginning of the violin note. In the melody, this beat is notable as the usual beat of resolution of the word “you” in its descending fifth, first audible in the first line at section A (but repeated throughout the piece). Section A might be loosely considered the “verse” section, where the lyrics and melody are concentrated, sung “delicately” and aided by bowed half and whole notes in the violin and bass, and by soft upwards arpeggios in the guitar. If so, there is a short interlude – where the violin imitates a music box’s simple melody – before the verse continues at B, and after which the violin reprises the music box concept with a longer, perhaps even simpler melody that resolves in a pleasant, storybook major.

Section C, which serves as the closest analogue for a chorus, is constructed of the continuing repetition of “you” in the melody line with the same descending fifth (D to G), heavily emphasizing the significance and beauty of the lover to the narrator. The violin, bass, and guitar play simple rhythms and stick to them throughout the entirety of this nineteen-bar section; the event for the listener, then, is the juxtaposition of the changing harmonic background with the continuing sweetness of the word “you”. The chords used in the verse and introduction are used in the same sequence here, although each chord is given a full bar instead of the half-bar

that some receive in their other context – a musical lingering on each individual facet. The harmonic progression in the verse is here given a greater significance, as the D-G fifth begins as a beautiful, if strange, addition to the chord, but quickly becomes alien in some contexts (over Ab major it is strange; over the later Db major it may even be ugly if the vocalist does not continue to sing sweetly). The final two chords are elongated to several bars each to emphasize the final resolution of this long section.

2.6.17 Line 9: “the you I had dreamed up, the you”

A return to the reverie-like waltz time of Song 1 “After I Left” marks a further return to a mental or reflective state. The realm of daydreams is evoked, but perhaps also nostalgia for that innocent time before the narrator understood that her concept of the lover was false, and so the chord progression flows here in a more (unrealistically) neat, Classical notion of harmonic movement than in any other piece of the cycle. The comma after “up” is marked with a pause, but shorter than the colon pause of the previous line; this is reflected by a single extra bar, creating an irregular, somewhat otherworldly five-bar pattern that supports a strong dynamic ebb and flow. The melody uses the fifth interval three times during each melodic pattern: “the you” rises a fifth, “I” falls back down a fifth immediately, and “dreamed up” is another dropped fifth, suggesting a double “satisfaction of hope”, another indication of a more-than-perfect ending. There is an implication in this penultimate line that if the narrator could stop at this moment, the story would turn out all right; but the story is unfinished, and the song is too brittle and ‘perfect’, for this to be more than a passing possibility.

2.6.18 Song 9: “Palette and Colour”

Where in “You” the narrator loses the faculty to speak with eloquence, “Palette and Colour” regains it in returning to the world of memory and daydream. The narrator retains her appreciation for the lover, but is now able to channel it into greater words, explaining how she imagined him in every detail. The harmonic background and instrumental realization – with swelling and falling bowed strings, a guitar rhythm evocative of waltz, and a relatively lush series of chords – denotes a romance that denies reality. The chorus lyric, sung over a simple V-I-IV-V-I progression and doubled by the acoustic guitar, hints at the lack of truth in this

daydream: “You are a vision as you appear to me now,” may imply the perfection of the lover’s appearance, just as it was in the narrator’s daydream, but it also implies his insubstantiality.

The five-bar phrases of the verse give a moment for the vocalist to breathe, as well as creating a lovely, if unusual and surreal, rhythm for ebb and flow. In the second part of each verse, these five-bar phrases are doubled, creating longer (and tenser) ten-bar phrases with greater chord variety. The minor ending chords here illustrate the longing and uncertainty of the narrator – for example, at B8, the C# over a B minor chord in the harmony creates the major second “uncertainty” interval. In conjunction with this, the chorus and its six-bar phrases act as a relief from this uneven flow by adding another “extra” bar to the previous pattern of five, within which the melody rests. The chorus is a ‘safe space’ for the narrator more than any other part of this song. Due to the lengthy form of this piece and its positive, safe character, a predictable (unchanged) repetition of the form closes the song, with a *rit.* to signal the end.

2.6.19 Line 10: “whose touch was dry as the dust bowl.”

Line 10 serves merely as the ending of a single stanza in the original poem; Regier uses two further stanzas to reflect on the failure of the relationship and the nature of the guilt and blame involved. As a result, its message of barrenness and infertility, and thus of failure, is perhaps subtler in a reading of her poem in full, and its implications become clear only with further elaboration. In this context, however, this one line must make that message clear. The setting is stark and sparse, perhaps similar in nature to something like “The Hurdy-Gurdy Man” in Schubert’s *Winterreise*, and the bass’s emphatic and unmerciful drone on its absolute lowest note places the vocalist in the context of loss and unpleasant reality. The bleakness of a lonely winter is suggested by the minimal orchestration.

The drop of an octave, then a further fourth in the bass line gives the drastic sinking feeling of the “floor dropping out”, while deliberately avoiding the interval of a fifth; the only allusion to the “hope” interval is in the vocal melody, where hope is (as mentioned above in “Thought” 10) quickly “crushed” downwards, as if the narrator is furious with herself for even daring to hope. The period at the end of the sentence is emphasized in the long held bass note at the end of the piece, at last giving a clear and definite stopping point.

2.6.20 Song 10: “The Dust Bowl”

After the fragile idealism of “Palette and Colour”, and after the run of positive songs starting with “Hand-Dug”, a heavy disillusionment is necessary to deliver the ultimate message of the cycle: the ‘ritual’ doesn’t work, the love affair was not as the narrator thought it was, and she is left alone and betrayed, blaming both the lover and herself. The heavy, largo bass solo paints a bleak, empty picture, gradually enhanced by the low E drone that dominates the piece, bell-like peals of the guitar (starting in bar A10), and the long notes of the violin, oppressive in their unwillingness to move melodically.

“The Dust Bowl” can be divided into three sections, separated by brief instrumental interludes: section A, where the narrator sings about the lover’s ‘dryness’ to her and the violin and guitar are slowly introduced, focuses melodically around an E drone with variations upwards and downwards in the voice.

Section B is marked by a swell in all parts and a change to a more active chord progression in the bass, although the chosen progression – C major, A minor, E minor (or VI, iv, I, with the VI serving as a substitute i) – is still simple and without hope; the downward movement from A to E in the bass distinguishes it as a fourth descent, rather than the “hope” ascending fifth. During this section, the vocal line swells upwards from its E drone to a climax at “I, gnawing at apple cores”, a cry of pity and of invoking guilt, before dipping back down to voice her hard-earned lesson that “sand holds no water” – that trust is impossible. The guitar chords on constant half notes here sound as funereal bells, while the violin interlude – the last violin notes of the cycle – mercilessly repeats the “crushed fifth” or “crushed hope” interval.

The third section, C, works firstly on the descending series of intervals C-E-B – note the same minor ninth foreshadowed in the introduction to Song 2, “Sharp Root”, recurring here at the moment of pathos, as well as the avoidance of the fifth in this descent – which is repeated twice before being reduced, first to the E-B only, then to a mere semitone variance between B and C on the line “and dies off”. This is followed by the gradual “dying off” of the guitar’s heavy bell motif. The final note is the stark E drone of the bass, the harsh reality remaining long after the narrator ceases to protest.

3.1 Conclusion: “Homonculus” as a Song

Because of the construction of the *Homonculus* cycle, Song 11 “Homonculus” must walk a careful balance between unity and distinction of lines. The resulting composition flows from line to line; it moves quickly between different styles, yet those styles and the overall melodic line are chosen in order to give a fluidity and ease of movement from one to its neighbour. In total, “Homonculus” is a through-composed work that concludes quickly, its mourning punctuated by a hope that is broken almost as soon as it is raised; it is comprehensible in a single listening, but it depends upon the context of the other songs in the cycle, and its reference to them, to communicate the full effect of its emotional and thematic narrative.

3.2 Conclusion: The *Homonculus* Cycle as a Whole

In listening to the *Homonculus* cycle as a whole, the story of the narrator is made emotionally clear. Her initial nostalgia in Song 1 retreats to doubts, pain, and guilt through 2 to 4, which gradually move to positivity and hope through 5 to 6, become rapture in 7 and near-worship in 8, and then become a fragile reverie in Song 9 before being shattered irrevocably in Song 10. The whole message, the “basic meaning” – of the human pathos of learning to trust and then having that trust broken – is made absolutely clear, if not during the first ten songs of the cycle, then in the recapitulation that is Song 11, when the entire journey is revisited with the added benefits of a quicker connection of these emotional events in time and of the narrative nature of the connected lines of the stanza.

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Appendix A: Scores of the *Homonculus* Cycle

Performance Notes

Performance Instructions

This song cycle was influenced largely by both rock and Western art music. Vocalists in particular would do well to consider performance conventions appropriate to both schools, and utilize both at different times as appropriate for various songs.

Instrumentation

Homonculus is written for baritone voice, acoustic guitar, violin, and double bass. The gender of the narrator is not specified within the poetry or the lyrics of this piece. A baritone voice was chosen in an effort to represent specifically trans and genderfluid women, who often have lower voices and who are underrepresented in classical repertoire. Due to this intention, I will use “she/her” pronouns when referring to the singer or narrator. However, anyone with a voice capable of singing this piece, of any gender, is an equally valid singer for this work.

For All Performers

The structure of *Homonculus* is rather unique: the first ten songs provide a “deep reading” for the final setting of the poetry in the eleventh. Song 11 is meant to clearly evoke each of the prior ten songs, including the emotional explorations and lyrical ideas, while at the same time sounding like a complete and coherent unit. Players wishing to perform this cycle should be aware of the exceptional importance of Song 11 and practice accordingly.

This piece is intended to be played acoustically, with no amplification, and is best suited for a small chamber.

Full Poem

Knowledge of the full poem “Homonculus” will be useful for a more nuanced interpretation from all performers. Programmes for a performance may include this poem. Alternately (or in addition), performances may be prefaced with a recitation of the poem.

“Homonculus” by Mackenzie Regier

After I left, seeds of you—which rolled
inside my skull and took sharp root
when I had only water enough
for my own throat—dropped into the plots
I hand-dug so that by night
the mid-February garden sprouted
arms and legs until a man groped
from the soil and became you:
the you I had dreamed up, the you
whose touch felt dry as the dust bowl.

I loved you even as you withered
below the windowsill. Me, the failed farmer.
Maybe something in the soil? The remnants
of my last man slashed and burned, the season
too early, the worms outnumbered by rocks.
The wrong seeds, or did I lack skill?
Georgia clay spilled different ilk
than the stingy Texas floorplan.

Mirror-view, sometimes, I see
what you grew from me. The thick
shoulders and skinny hips
watered to drop nightflowers
for your mind's hothouse.
I know the moonlight in my petals
only shines just so to hide
the mouth seeking flies. From the dirt
under your nails, you raised me,
until my roots took too much for us both.

After I Left

61

"After I left, seeds of you--which rolled"

lyrics and music
by Dylan Hillyer

Homonculus, Song 1 of 11

Based on the poem *Homonculus* by MacKenzie Regier

$\text{♩} = 110$ **Poco rubato**

Baritone

Acoustic Guitar: finger pluck, *pp*

Violin: *pp*, pizz.

Double Bass: pizz., *p*

A

With calm, pleasant nostalgia

Baritone: *p* Af-ter I ____ left,

G: *pp*

Vln: *pp*

B

17

Bar

seeds of you

G

Vln

B

B

Bar

which rolled from my pock - ets where your

G

Vln

B

p

mp

29

Bar $\frac{8}{8}$

hand snuck in *mp* (Pa - per dry) *pp*

G *pp* *p*

Vln *mp* *pp*

B *p*

33

Bar $\frac{8}{8}$

I must have left a blos - som - ing trail be - low my fin - ger - tips Af - ter I left,

G *mp* *p* *mp* *mp*

Vln *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *mp*

B *mp*

C Più rapido e rubato

Bar $\frac{8}{8}$

G *p*

Vln *pp*

B *p*

45 **Tempo primo**

Bar

45 *p* Af - ter I _____ left,

G

45 *pp*

Vln

mp *pp*

B

mp *p*

D

Bar

songs of you _____

G

49

Vln

49

B

E

Bar

which called _____ from the clock _____ that mi - mics a

57

p

Vln

p

B

mp

61

do - zen birds _____ (On the hour) _____

mp *pp*

61

mp *pp*

Vln

mp

B

mp *p*

65

Bar *p* Pale hun - ter I caught se-ven *mp* Per - ching on my lips *p* Af - ter I ____ left,

G *p* *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *mp*

Vln *p* *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *mp*

B *mp* *p* *mp* *mp*

F

rit.

Bar

G *pp*

Vln *pp*

B *p*

Sharp Root

67

"inside my skull and took sharp root"

lyrics and music
by Dylan Hillyer

Homunculus, Song 2 of 11

Based on the poem *Homunculus* by MacKenzie Regier

♩ = 90

Baritone

Acoustic Guitar

Violin

Double Bass

5

G

Vln

A *a tempo* *vulnerably*

Bar

G

Vln

B

in - side my skull and took sharp root

Text of subtitle from *Homunculus* by MacKenzie Regier. © Copyright 2013 by MacKenzie Regier and used with her permission.
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14

Bar

and ten - drils tight on ar - ter - ies

G

Vln

B

mp *p* *mp* *p*

20

Bar

p Here I hold hands with the pa - ra - site Here I o - pen my mouth wide *poco rit.*

G

Vln

B

pp *pp* *pp*

B *a tempo*

Vln

B

pp *mp* *pp* *mp*

Sharp Root

poco rit.

27

Bar

Vln

B

pp *mp*

pp *mp*

C *a tempo*

Bar

G

Vln

B

now flo - wers bloom in hol - low bones

mp *p* *p* *mp* *p*

36

Bar

G

Vln

B

Brit - tle as tin - der choked with saw - tooth leaves

p *mp* *p* *mp* *p*

Sharp Root

D

Bar

8 *pp*
Here I hold hands with the pa - ra - site Here I o - pen my mouth wide

42 *pp*

42 *pp*

42 *pp*

B

pp

Detailed description: This musical score is for a piece titled 'Sharp Root' on page 70. It features four staves: a vocal line (Bar), guitar (G), violin (Vln), and bass (B). The key signature is D major, indicated by a 'D' in a box. The time signature is 4/4. The vocal line begins at measure 8 with the lyrics 'Here I hold hands with the parasite Here I open my mouth wide'. The guitar, violin, and bass parts all start at measure 42. The guitar and bass parts are marked with a piano-piano (*pp*) dynamic and feature a series of tremolos. The violin part also starts at measure 42 and is marked with a piano-piano (*pp*) dynamic. The bass part is marked with a piano-piano (*pp*) dynamic and features a series of tremolos. The score is written in 4/4 time and includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

Water Enough

"when I had only water enough"

lyrics and music
by Dylan Hillyer

Homunculus, Song 3 of 11

Based on the poem *Homunculus* by MacKenzie Regier

$\text{♩} = 85$
honest, beaten-down but strong

Baritone
mp
when I had on - ly wa - ter e - nough I would bathe my face in dust

Voice 1
Voices 1-3 are meant to be sung by the instrumentalists, NOT trained vocalists.
They may be octave-transposed to comfortable ranges.

Voice 2

Voice 3

Double Bass

³

Bar
swol - len knuck - les and palms grown rough I promised my - self that I could dream

A

Bar

V 1
mp
Mm _____ Mm _____ Mm _____ Mm Mm

V 2
mp
Mm _____ Mm _____ Mm _____ Mm Mm

V 3
mp
Mm _____ Mm _____ Mm _____ Mm *mp* Mm

5
arco


B
mf

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Water Enough


B

Bar 8



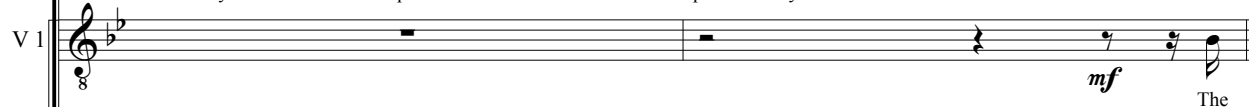
wa - ter e - nough to stand the worst the hol - low face of a sun - burnt ghost

Bar 15



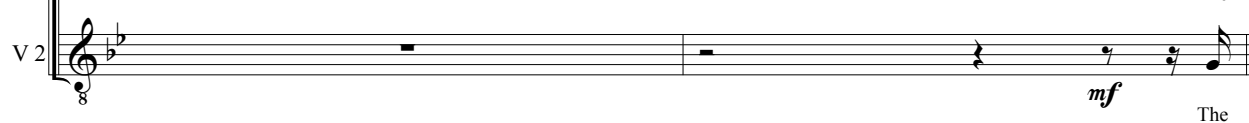
half my wa - ter to quench his thirst for I promised my self that I could dream

V 1



mf The

V 2



mf The

C

Bar 8



de - sert _ is wide _ _ The de - sert _ is dry _ _ Some dreams will die Some dreams will die.

V 1



de - sert _ is wide _ _ The de - sert _ is dry _ _ Some dreams will die Some dreams will die.

V 2



de - sert _ is wide _ _ The de - sert _ is dry _ _ Some dreams will die Some dreams will die.

17

arco

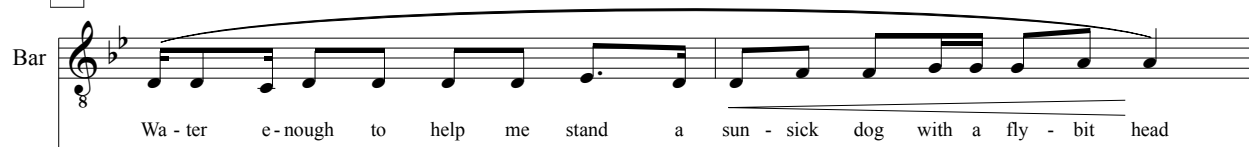
B



de - sert _ is wide _ _ The de - sert _ is dry _ _ Some dreams will die Some dreams will die.

D

Bar 8

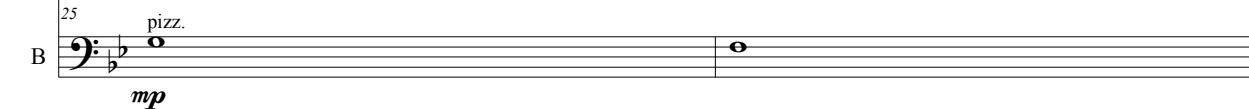


Wa - ter e - nough to help me stand a sun - sick dog with a fly - bit head

25

pizz.

B



mp

27

Bar 8

licked its fill from the palm of my hand for I pro-mised my - self that I could dream

V 1

V 2

V 3

B

mf

The

The

The

E

Bar 8

Ah _____ Ah _____ Ah _____

V 1

V 2

V 3

B

arco

mf

de-sert _ is wide _____ The de-sert _ is dry _____ Some dreams will die Some dreams will die.

de-sert _ is wide _____ The de-sert _ is dry _____ Some dreams will die Some dreams will die.

de-sert _ is wide _____ The de-sert _ is dry _____ Some dreams will die Some dreams will die.

F

Bar 8

Wa - ter e-nough to wet my tongue I found a with-ered dan - de - lion whose

37

pizz.

B

mp

39

Bar

wil - ted roots I poured it on for I pro-mised my - self that I could dream

V 1

The

V 2

The

V 3

The

B

39

G

Bar

Ah Ah Ah *pp* when

V 1

de-sert is wide The de-sert is dry Some dreams will die Some dreams will die.

V 2

de-sert is wide The de-sert is dry Some dreams will die Some dreams will die.

V 3

de-sert is wide The de-sert is dry Some dreams will die Some dreams will die.

B

41 arco *mf*

H

Bar

I did not have wa - ter e-nough I lay on the edge of a red - stone bluff my

49 pizz.

B

p

51

Bar

fool - ish face cracked un - der the sun for I'd pro-mised my - self some - one would come

V 1

The

V 2

The

V 3

The

B

51

I

V 1

Unis.
de-sert _ is wide _ _ The de-sert _ is dry _ _ Some dreams will die Some dreams will die.

V 2

Unis.
de-sert _ is wide _ _ The de-sert _ is dry _ _ Some dreams will die Some dreams will die.

V 3

Unis.
de-sert _ is wide _ _ The de-sert _ is dry _ _ Some dreams will die Some dreams will die.

B

53
arco
mf

The Plots

76

"for my own throat--dropped into the plots"

music and lyrics
by Dylan Hillyer

Homunculus, Song 4 of 11

Based on the poem *Homunculus* by MacKenzie Regier

$\text{♩} = 85$ Poco marcato

Baritone

Acoustic Guitar

Violin

Double Bass

5

Bar

G

Vln

B

mf

mf

pp

*arco**

mf

mp

pizz

mp

2

pained, weak, but controlled

for

*This figure indicates an artificial harmonic sounding two octaves above the written Ab.

The Plots

A

Bar 8

my own throat *mf* > *mp* dropped

G

Vln

B

Bar 13

in - to the plots *mp* the

G

B

Bar 17

earth might breathe *mf* > *mp* through

G

Vln

B

21

Bar

such a small hole

G

B

B *masking uncertainty with confidence*

8 *mp* Time is hea-vi-er than doubt *mf* I will ne-ver be the same *mf*

25

G

Vln

B

C *almost trance-like*

8 *p* days are turn-ing ev - er on - ward sea - sons ripe and fall a - way

29

G

Vln

B

31

Bar

leaves are turn-ing e - ver on - ward I whet my scythe and wor - ry

mp

G

mf

Vln

B

mf

33

Bar

the

mp

G

Vln

mf

B

D

emotional directions as before

Bar 8

mud of the field *mf* > *mp*

G 37

Vln 37 *mp*

B

Bar 41

thrum - ming with heat *p*

G 41

Vln 41 *p*

B

45

Bar *mp* my hands are cold *mf* *mp*

G

Vln *mp*

B

49

Bar my pulse is weak

G

Vln *p*

B

E

Bar 8 *mp* Time is hea-vi-er than *mf* doubt *mp* I will ne-ver be the same *mf*

G 53

Vln 53 *mp*

B

Bar 57 *mf* I was not qua-li-fied *f* For this bo-dy and brain *mf* *f*

G 57 2 2

Vln 57 *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp*

B *mf*

F

Bar 8 *p* days are turn-ing ev-er on-ward sea-sons ripe and fall a-way

G 61 *mp*

B *p*

63
Bar 8
leaves are turn-ing e - ver on - ward I whet my scythe and wor - ry — *mp*

G 63 *mf*

Vln 63

B 63 *mf*

65
Bar 8
days are turn-ing ev - er on - ward sea - sons ripe and fall a - way

G 65 *mp*

Vln 65 *p*

B 65 *p*

67
Bar *mf*
leaves are turn-ing e - ver on - ward I whet my scythe and wor - ry

67
G *mf*

67
Vln

B *mf*

G

69
Vln *mp* *p*

B

Detailed description: This page of a musical score, titled 'The Plots' and numbered 84, contains two systems of music. The first system (measures 67-70) features a vocal line and instrumental accompaniment for Baritone (Bar), Guitar (G), Violin (Vln), and Bass (B). The vocal line is in a treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a common time signature. The lyrics are: 'leaves are turn-ing e - ver on - ward I whet my scythe and wor - ry'. The instrumental parts are in bass clefs. The Baritone part has a melodic line with accents. The Guitar part has a rhythmic accompaniment with chords and accents. The Violin part has a long, sustained note with a fermata. The Bass part has a rhythmic accompaniment with accents. The second system (measures 71-74) features instrumental parts for Guitar (G), Violin (Vln), and Bass (B). The Guitar part has a melodic line with a fermata. The Violin part has a long, sustained note with a fermata. The Bass part has a rhythmic accompaniment with accents. The score includes dynamic markings such as *mf* (mezzo-forte) and *mp* (mezzo-piano), and a key signature change to one flat (B-flat) in the second system.

Hand-Dug

85

"I hand-dug so that by night"

music and lyrics
by Dylan Hillyer

Homunculus, Song 5 of 11

Based on the poem *Homunculus* by MacKenzie Regier

$\text{♩} = 120$ *energetic, hopeful despite pain and uncertainty*

Baritone
p I hand-dug so that by night _____ the moon would shine _____

Acoustic Guitar
strum with soft pick
mp

Violin

Double Bass

5
Bar
mp deep - er down the earth *mf*

5
G
p strum *mp*

7
Bar
mp kneel - ing long *mf*

7
G
p *mp*

9

Bar *mp* dirt be neath my nails *p* ground in to my knuck - les

G *p* *mp* *p*

A

Bar *mf* some seeds grow by moon - light some leaves like the dim

G *mf* *p*

Vln arco *p* *mp* *p* *mp*

B arco *p* *mp* *p* *mp*

17

Bar *p* some roots need o - pen air ah

G *pp* *p*

Vln *pp*

B *pp*

21

Bar *p* moon - light seeds and dim leaves are a lit-tle rare —

G *pp*

Vln *pizz.* *pp*

B *pizz.* *pp*

B *forcing yourself to calm down, "deep breaths"*

21


Bar *p* at an-y rate, at an-y rate — it might turn out at an-y rate at an-y rate — it might turn

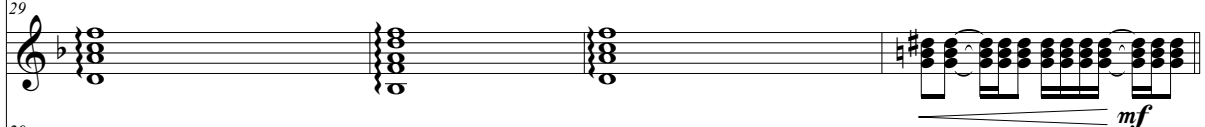
G 25


Vln *arco* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp*


B *arco* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp*

29


Bar  out at an-y rate at an-y rate — it might turn out at an-y rate at an-y rate —


G  *mf*


Vln  *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mf*


B  *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mf*

C


Bar  *mp* I fussed on it like a po - tion i - *emotional instruction as before*


G  *p* *mp* *p* *mp*

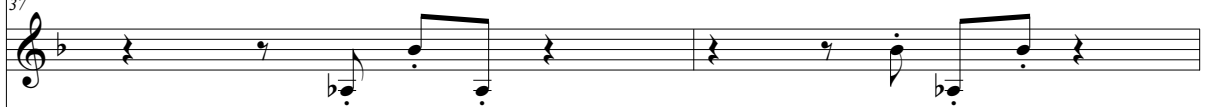
Vln  *p*


B  *p*

37

Bar 
de - as com - - - post

G 
p *mp*

Vln 


B 

39

Bar 
mp rust - ling in the dark *mf* *mp* dwell - ing long *mf* *mp* the

G 
p *mp* *p* *mp*

Vln 
p *mp* *p* *mp*

B 
p *mp* *p* *mp*

D

Bar 43

Bar 43: *mf* sweat of my brow _____ *mp* the crack of my nails _____ *mf* *mp* the

Guitar (G): *p* *mp* *p* *mp*

Vln: *p* *mp* *p* *mp*

Bass (B): *p* *mp* *p* *mp*

Detailed description: This system covers measures 43 to 46. The vocal line (Bar) features a melodic line with lyrics: "sweat of my brow _____" (measures 43-44), "the crack of my nails _____" (measures 45-46), and "the" (measure 47). Dynamics are *mf* and *mp*. The guitar (G) part consists of a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth-note chords, alternating between *p* and *mp*. The violin (Vln) and bass (B) parts provide harmonic support with sustained notes and dynamics of *p* and *mp*.

Bar 47

Bar 47: *mf* sweat of my brow _____ *mp* the

Guitar (G): *p* *mp*

Vln: *p* *mp*

Bass (B): *p* *mp*

Detailed description: This system covers measures 47 to 50. The vocal line (Bar) continues with "sweat of my brow _____" (measures 47-48) and "the" (measures 49-50). Dynamics are *mf* and *mp*. The guitar (G) part continues with rhythmic accompaniment, alternating between *p* and *mp*. The violin (Vln) and bass (B) parts continue with sustained notes and dynamics of *p* and *mp*.

49

Bar

crack of my nails _____ *mf* *mp* the

G

p *mp*

Vln

p *mp*

B

p *mp*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 49 and 50. The vocal line (Bar) starts with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a common time signature. It features a melodic line with a slur over measures 49 and 50. The lyrics are "crack of my nails" followed by a long line, then "the". Dynamic markings are *mf* at the end of measure 49 and *mp* at the start of measure 50. The guitar part (G) is in the same key and time, featuring a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes with a *p* dynamic in measure 49 and *mp* in measure 50. The violin (Vln) and bass (B) parts provide harmonic support with long notes and slurs, with dynamics *p* and *mp* indicated.

51

Bar

sweat of my brow _____ *mf* *p* the

G

p *mp*

Vln

p *mp*

B

p *mp*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 51 and 52. The vocal line (Bar) continues the melodic line from the previous system. The lyrics are "sweat of my brow" followed by a long line, then "the". Dynamic markings are *mf* at the end of measure 51 and *p* at the start of measure 52. The guitar part (G) continues with the same rhythmic accompaniment, with dynamics *p* and *mp*. The violin (Vln) and bass (B) parts continue with their respective parts, maintaining the *p* and *mp* dynamics.

53

Bar

crack of my nails all wood - y stems ske - le - tal

p

G

pp *p*

Vln

pp

B

pp

E

8

Bar

some seeds grow by moon - light some leaves like the dim

mf

G

mf *p*

Vln

p *mp* *p* *mp*

B

p *mp* *p* *mp*

61

Bar *p* some roots need o - pen air — ah —

G *pp* *p*

Vln *pp*

B *pp*

65

Bar *p* moon - light seeds and dim leaves are a lit-tle rare —

G *pp*

Vln *pp* pizz.

B *pp* pizz.

F

Bar 69

p at an-y rate, at an-y rate it might turn out at an-y rate at an-y rate it might turn

p

mp *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp*

Bar 73

out at an-y rate at an-y rate it might turn out at an-y rate at an-y rate

rit.

p *pp* *p* *pp* *p* *pp* *p* *pp*

p *pp* *p* *pp* *p* *pp* *p* *pp*

Reckoning

95

"the mid-February garden sprouted"

lyrics and music
by Dylan Hillyer

Homunculus, Song 6 of 11

Based on the poem *Homunculus* by MacKenzie Regier

$\text{♩} = 190$

Baritone

Acoustic Guitar

Violin

Double Bass

5

8

5

5

5

8

playful and full of joy

p

the

Bar

G

Vln

B

A

Bar

mid - Feb - ru - a - ry gar - den sprout - ed

G *pp* *mp*

Vln *p* *mf*

B *p* *mf*

Bar

leaves from au - tumn bran - ches put down green roots

G *pp* *mp*

Vln *p* *mf*

B *p* *mf*

17

Bar 8

mp

co - lours blos - som - ing fresh as flow _____ ers _____

G

p *mp*

Vln

mp *mf*

B

mp *mf*

21

Bar 8

mp *mf*

jea - lous stars out - shone the sun

G

mp *mf*

Vln

mp *mf*

B

mp *mf*

25

Bar

G

Vln

B

p the

p

mp

mp

B

Bar

G

Vln

B

sky breathed *mp* in *p* the earth sang for the *mp* joy of it *p*

31

Bar

p like a day of reck - on - ing where we reck - oned out all *mp* right

G

p rake low to high

Vln

pp

B

pp

35

Bar

p like a day of reck - on - ing where we reck - oned out all *mp* right

G

p rake low to high

Vln

pp

B

pp

C

G

pp *mp*

Vln

39 *p* *mf*

B

p *mf*

41

G *pp* *mp*

Vln *p* *mf*

B *p* *mf*

43

G *p* *mp*

Vln *mp* *mf*

B *mp* *mf*

45

G *mf* *mp*

Vln *f* *mp*

B *f* *mp*

Detailed description: The musical score is for a piece titled 'Reckoning' on page 100. It consists of three systems of music, each with three staves: Guitar (G), Violin (Vln), and Bass (B). The music is in 5/4 time and has a key signature of one flat (B-flat).
- System 1 (Measures 41-42):
 - G: Starts with a melodic line in measure 41 marked *pp*. In measure 42, it changes to a chordal accompaniment marked *mp*.
 - Vln: Measures 41-42 feature a melodic line starting with a *p* dynamic, moving to *mf* in measure 42.
 - B: Measures 41-42 feature a melodic line starting with a *p* dynamic, moving to *mf* in measure 42.
- System 2 (Measures 43-44):
 - G: Measures 43-44 feature a melodic line starting with a *p* dynamic, moving to *mp* in measure 44.
 - Vln: Measures 43-44 feature a melodic line starting with a *mp* dynamic, moving to *mf* in measure 44.
 - B: Measures 43-44 feature a melodic line starting with a *mp* dynamic, moving to *mf* in measure 44.
- System 3 (Measures 45-46):
 - G: Measures 45-46 feature a melodic line starting with a *mf* dynamic, moving to *mp* in measure 46.
 - Vln: Measures 45-46 feature a melodic line starting with a *f* dynamic, moving to *mp* in measure 46.
 - B: Measures 45-46 feature a melodic line starting with a *f* dynamic, moving to *mp* in measure 46.

D

Bar 8 *p* and ill - ness lif - ted from the old - est bones the North - ern lights a - live ho - ri - zon wide *mp* the

G *pp*

Vln *p*

B *p*

Bar 51 *mp* mi - ser turned his dreams to cha - ri - ty — the mis - siles — turned to rice — *mf*

G *p*

Vln *mp*

B *mp*

55

Bar 8

G

Vln

B

mf *p*

mp *mp*

mp *mp*

E

Bar 8

sky breathed in the earth sang for the joy of it—

mp *p* *mp* *p*

G

Vln

B

57

F

Bar 8

p like a day of reck - on - ing where we reck - oned out all *mp* right

rake low to high -----

G 61 *p*

Vln 61 *pp*

B *pp*

65

Bar 8

p like a day of reck - on - ing where we reck - oned out all *mp* right

rake low to high -----

G 65 *mp*

Vln 65 *pp* *mp*

B *pp* *mp*

G

G *mp*

Vln 69 *mf*

B *mf*

The musical score for measures 73-80 of the piece "Reckoning" is presented in three staves: Guitar (G), Violin (Vln), and Bass (B). The music is in G major (one flat) and 4/4 time. Measure 73 is marked with a repeat sign. The guitar part consists of a series of chords and dyads, many with accents. The violin part features a melodic line with slurs and accents. The bass part provides a rhythmic foundation with a mix of quarter and eighth notes, also including accents.

Into This

105

"arms and legs until a man groped"

lyrics and music
by Dylan Hillyer

Homunculus, Song 7 of 11

Based on the poem *Homunculus* by MacKenzie Regier

$\text{♩} = 140$

The musical score is arranged in two systems. The first system includes Baritone, Acoustic Guitar, Violin, and Double Bass. The second system includes Guitar (G), Violoncello (Vln), and Bass (B). The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 3/8. The Baritone part consists of whole rests. The Acoustic Guitar part features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with chords, marked 'strum with soft pick' and 'f'. The Violin part plays a rhythmic eighth-note pattern, marked 'arco' and 'f'. The Double Bass part plays a rhythmic eighth-note pattern, alternating between 'arco' and 'pizz.' (pizzicato), marked 'f'. The Guitar part continues the eighth-note rhythmic pattern with chords, marked 'f'. The Violoncello part plays a rhythmic eighth-note pattern, marked 'f' and 'mf'. The Bass part continues the eighth-note rhythmic pattern, alternating between 'arco' and 'pizz.', marked 'f'.

A *joyous, sexual and unrestrained*

The musical score consists of four staves: Bar (vocal), G (guitar), Vln (violin), and B (bass). The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 8/8. The vocal line starts with a dynamic of *mp* and includes a long slur over the first two measures. The guitar part starts at measure 9 with a dynamic of *p*. The violin part starts at measure 9 with a dynamic of *mp*. The bass part starts at measure 9 with a dynamic of *mp* and includes markings for *arco* and *pizz.*. The second system starts at measure 11 and includes dynamics of *mf* and *f*. The bass part in the second system includes alternating *arco* and *pizz.* markings.

Bar
mp
Arms and legs un - til a man _____ gr - oped*

G
p

Vln
mp
arco pizz. arco pizz.

B
mp

11
mf *f*
Lim - ber legs be - neath his chest _____ r - ose Earth a - side the sweat of the fore - arms

G
mf

Vln
f

B
arco pizz. arco pizz. arco pizz. arco
mf

*For this note, sing the initial eighth note on an "r", and only open to the vowel on the accented dotted quarter.

15

Bar *mp*
Win - ter ground un - til the broad _____ back

G *p*

Vln *mp*
arco pizz. arco pizz.

B *mp*
arco pizz. arco pizz.

17

Bar *mf* *f*
Sweat to glist-en in the arm _____ hair Man - i - fes - ted of the cold _____ air

G *mf*

Vln *f*

B arco pizz. arco pizz. arco pizz. arco *mf*

B *dizzy, "taking a breath", almost ecstatic*

Bar 8 *mp* No need to sit down, I am *mf* diz - zy, de - fi - ant

G 21

Vln 21 *p* *mf* *p* *mf*

B *p* *mf* *p* *mf*

Bar 25 *dim.* *mp* I could get used to this I could get in - to this *p* I could get in - to this *mp*

G 25 *pp* *p*

Vln 25 *pp* *p*

B *p* *pp* *p*

C

G *mf*

Vln *f*

B *mf* pizz. arco pizz. arco pizz. arco pizz.

G

Vln

B arco pizz. arco pizz. arco pizz. arco pizz.

D

Bar *mp* *emotional instructions as before* *mf*

Gas - ping twice in - side the heart - beat Pul - ses of a thou - sand heart - beats

G *p*

Vln *mp*

B arco pizz. arco pizz. arco pizz. arco pizz. *mp*

E

Bar 8

mp No need to sit down, I am diz - zy, de - fi - ant *mf*

G 51

Vln 51

B

p *mf* *p* *mf*

Bar 8

dim. Hard - ly re - mem - ber brea - thing I hard - ly re - mem - ber brea - thing

G 55

Vln 55

B

p *pp* *pp*

59

Bar 8

I could get used to this — I could get in - to this —

G

Vln

B

63

molto rit.

Bar 8

I could get in - to this *pp* I could get in - to this...

G

Vln

B

ppp

ppp

ppp

You

113

"from the soil and became you:"

lyrics and music
by Dylan Hillyer

Homunculus, Song 8 of 11

Based on the poem *Homunculus* by MacKenzie Regier

$\text{♩} = 85$

The musical score is arranged in two systems. The first system includes Baritone, Acoustic Guitar, Violin, and Double Bass. The second system includes Guitar, Violin, and Bass. The Baritone part consists of six whole rests. The Acoustic Guitar part is marked 'finger pluck' and 'p', with a dynamic range from *pp* to *mp*. The Violin part is marked 'arco' and features a dynamic range from *pp* to *mp* with accents. The Double Bass part is marked 'pizz.' and features a dynamic range from *p* to *mp*. The Guitar part is marked 'p' and features a dynamic range from *pp* to *mp*. The Violin part in the second system is marked 'pp' and 'mp' with accents. The Bass part is marked 'mp' and 'p' with accents.

A *delicately*

Bar 8 *p*
from the soil and be-came you:—

G 11

Vln 11 *pp* *pizz.* *mp*

B *mp*

B


Bar 8 when my still - ness must have shown you grate - ful and how ter - ri - fied

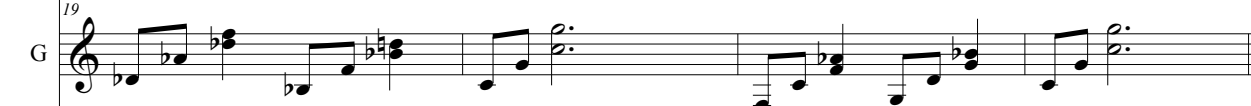
G 15

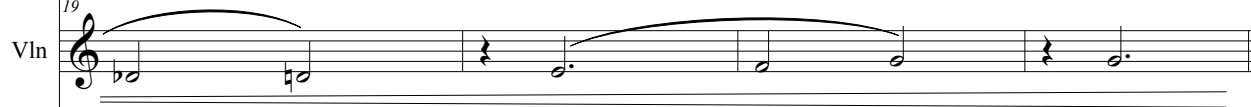
Vln 15 *arco* *pp*

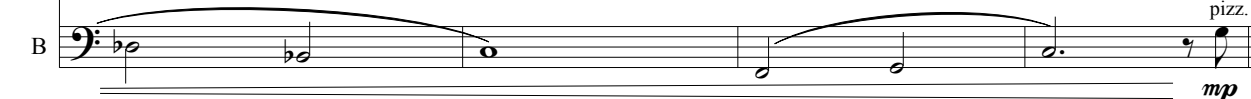
B *p* *pp* *arco*

19

Bar 
that you might tear — like news - pa - per — to catch in the wind

G 

Vln 

B 
mp pizz.

23


G 
mp


Vln 
mp pizz.


B 


C

precise and sweet

Bar 
8 *p*
you — you — you — you — you — you — you —

G 
27 *pp*

Vln 
27 arco *pp*

B 
pp

34

Bar 
you — you — you — you — you — you —


G 
mp

Vln 
mp

B 
mp

40

Bar 
you — you — you — you — you — you —

G 
pp

Vln 
pp

B 
pp

Palette and Colour

"the you I had dreamed up, the you"

117

lyrics and music
by Dylan Hillyer

Homunculus, Song 9 of 11

Based on the poem *Homunculus* by MacKenzie Regier

♩ = 105 A *espressivo*

Baritone
8 *mp* The you I had dreamed up, *mp* The

Acoustic Guitar
finger pluck
mp

Violin
arco
p

Double Bass
arco
p

Bar
6
8 you I made as my lo - ver, I

G
6

Vln
6

B
6

11

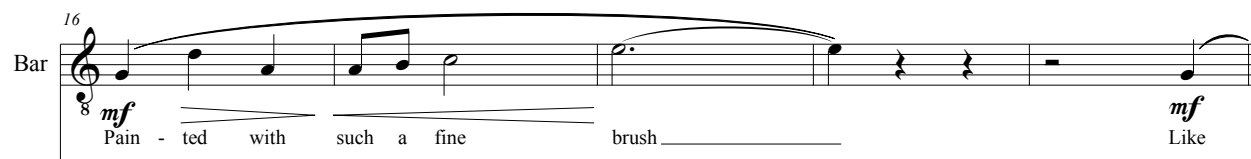
Bar  chose your *mf* pal - ette and col - our


G  *mf*


Vln  *mp*


B  *mp*

16

Bar  *mf* Pain - ted with such a fine brush *mf* Like

G  *mf*

Vln  *mp*

B  *mp*

B

Bar 8

8
church win - dows at dawn, or but - ter - fly wings sec - tions

21
mf *p*

21
mf *p*

B
mf *p*

Bar 26

26
8
neat - ly di - vi - ded

26
mf *mp* *mf*
1

26
mf *p*

26
mf *p*

B
mf *p*

31

Bar 8

chose care - ful the *p* gold and green of your i - ris, the

G *mf* *p*

Vln *mf* *p*

B *mf* *p*

36

Bar 8

tone of your *mf* kind - *mp* ness

G *mf* *p*

Vln *mf* *p*

B *mf* *p*

C

Bar

p You are a vis - ion — as you ap - pear to me — *pp* now

G

p *pp*

Vln

p *pp*

B

p *pp*

47

Bar

p You are a vis - ion — as you ap - pear to me — *pp* now *mp* I

G

p *pp*

Vln

p *pp*

B

p *pp*

D

Bar 8
strained sight to see you *mp*

53
G

53 arco
Vln

53 arco
B

58
Bar 8
mouthed your voice to my - self I

58
G

58
Vln

B

63

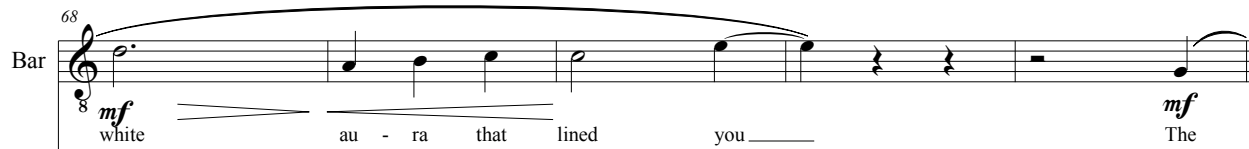
Bar 
8 knew your *mf* cor - ners and swells _____ The


G 
mf


Vln 
mp

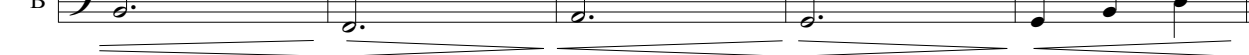
B 
mp

68

Bar 
8 *mf* white au - ra that lined you _____ *mf* The

G 
mf

Vln 
mp

B 
mp

E

Bar 8

nights ink - ing your frames in cy - an, ma - gen - ta and

G *mf* *p*

Vln *mf* *p*

B *mf* *p*

Bar 8

yel - low, a long la - bour That's

G *mf* *p*

Vln *mf* *p*

B *mf* *p*

83

Bar *mf* *p*
 how you would have been in front of me, in my in -

G *mf* *p*

Vln *mf* *p*

B *mf* *p*

88

Bar *mf* *mp*
 dul - gence that's how you were

G *mf* *p*

Vln *mf* *p*

B *mf* *p*

F

Bar 8

p You are a vis - ion — as you ap - pear to me — *pp* now

93

G *p* *pp*

Vln *p* *pp*

B *p* *pp*

99

p You are a vis - ion — as you ap - pear to me — *pp* now

slight rit.

G *p* *pp*

Vln *p* *pp*

B *p* *pp*

The Dust Bowl

127

"whose touch felt dry as the dust bowl."

lyrics and music
by Dylan Hillyer

Homunculus, Song 10 of 11

Based on the poem *Homunculus* by MacKenzie Regier

$\text{♩} = 42$

Baritone *vicious and unflinching*
mf
whose

Acoustic Guitar

Violin

Double Bass *arco*
p *mp* *p*

A

Bar *8*
touch felt dry as the dust bowl whose

Vln *7*
arco
pp

B *mp*

11

Bar *8*
palms blotched brown and grey who

Vln *11*
p

B

15

Bar

tum - bled like grit through a sieve whose

G

finger pluck

mf *mp*

Vln

p *mf*

B

19

Bar

fin - gers were brit-tle

G

mf *mp*

Vln

mp *mf*

B

23

G

p *pp*

Vln

p *pp*

B

p *pp*

The Dust Bowl

B

Bar 8 *mp* I, fa - mine-mouthed and hot-eyed *mf* I, a - ma - teur - ish and knock-kneed

27 *mf*

Vln *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp*

B *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp*

31 *f* I gnaw-ing at ap-ple cores *mf* learned sand holds no wa - ter

31 *mf*

Vln *mf* *mp*

B *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp*

35 *mf*
a

Vln *f*

B *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp*

The Dust Bowl

C

Bar 8

cold wind *mp*

G 39

B

Bar 43

half a flat a-cre *mp*

G 43

B

G 47

B

B 51

Homonculus

131

Homonculus, Song 11 of 11

music by Dylan Hillyer

A setting of the first stanza of the poem *Homonculus* by MacKenzie Regier

(Song 1)
♩ = 110 **Poco rubato**

Baritone

Acoustic Guitar
finger pluck
pp

Violin
pizz.
pp

Double Bass
pizz.
p

9
G
pp

9
Vln
pp

B

13

Bar

8

p
Af - ter I _____ left,

G

Vln

B

17

Bar

8

seeds of you _____

G

Vln

B

21 *rit.* ♩ = 90

Bar 8

which rolled

G *p*

Vln

B *mp*

(Song 2)

26

Bar 8

mp in - side my skull and took sharp root *mp* when

G

Vln *arco*

B *mp* *p* *mp* *p*

(Song 3) $\text{♩} = 85$ (Song 4)

Bar 8 *mf* I had on - ly wa - ter e - nough for my own throat

G *mf*

Vln *mp*

B *mf* pizz.

35 *mp* *accel.* *p* I dropped in - to the plots

G

Vln **2**

B

Homonculus

(Song 5) $\text{♩} = 120$ *accel.* (Song 6) $\text{♩} = 190$ *accel.*

Bar $\text{♩} = 120$ $\text{♩} = 190$

hand-dug so that by night _____ the mid - Feb - ru - a - ry gar - den sprout - ed

play with soft pick (or fingers) strum with soft pick (or finger pluck)

G *mp* *pp*

Vln *p*

B *p* arco

(Song 7) $\text{♩} = 140$

Bar $\text{♩} = 140$

arms and legs un - til a man _____ g - roped

strum with soft pick

G *p* *mf*

Vln *mp* *mf*

B arco pizz. arco pizz. *mf*

Homonculus

(Song 8) *molto rit.*
45 $\text{♩} = 85$ *accel.*

Bar 8
from the soil and be - came you: *mp*
the

G
45 finger pluck (or soft pick)

Vln
45 *pp* *mp* *pizz.*

B
p *mp*

(Song 9) *delicately*
49 $\text{♩} = 105$ *rit.*

Bar 8
you I had dreamed up, *mp* *mf*
the you whose

G
49 *mp*

Vln
49 *arco* *p*

B
arco *p* *mp*

(Song 10) *vicious and unflinching*
55 $\text{♩} = 42$

Bar 8
touch felt dry as the dust bowl.

Vln
55 *pp*

B

**Appendix B: Full Text of the Poem “Homonculus”, by MacKenzie Regier
(reprinted by permission of the author)**

Homonculus

After I left, seeds of you—which rolled
inside my skull and took sharp root
when I had only water enough
for my own throat—dropped into the plots
I hand-dug so that by night
the mid-February garden sprouted
arms and legs until a man groped
from the soil and became you:
the you I had dreamed up, the you
whose touch felt dry as the dust bowl.

I loved you even as you withered
below the windowsill. Me, the failed farmer.
Maybe something in the soil? The remnants
of my last man slashed and burned, the season
too early, the worms outnumbered by rocks.
The wrong seeds, or did I lack skill?
Georgia clay spilled different ilk
than the stingy Texas floorplan.

Mirror-view, sometimes, I see
what you grew from me. The thick
shoulders and skinny hips
watered to drop nightflowers
for your mind's hothouse.
I know the moonlight in my petals
only shines just so to hide
the mouth seeking flies. From the dirt
under your nails, you raised me,
until my roots took too much for us both.

Appendix C: Collected Lyrics of the *Homonculus* Cycle**Song 1: “After I Left”**

After I left,
seeds of you—

which rolled
from my pockets
where your hand snuck in
(paper dry)
I must have left
a blossoming trail
below my fingertips
After I left,

After I left,
songs of you—
which called
from the clock that
mimics a dozen birds
(on the hour)
pale hunter
I caught seven
perching on my lips
After I left,

seeds of you—
which rolled

Song 2: "Sharp Root"

inside my skull
and took sharp root
and tendrils tight
on arteries

Here I hold hands with the parasite
Here I open my mouth wide

now flowers bloom
in hollow bones
brittle as tinder
choked with sawtooth leaves

Here I hold hands with the parasite
Here I open my mouth wide

Song 3: “Water Enough”

when I had only water enough
 I would bathe my face in dust
 Swollen knuckles and palms grown rough
 I promised myself that I could dream

(The desert is wide, the desert is dry
 Some dreams will die, some dreams will die.)

water enough to stand the worst
 The hollow face of a sunburnt ghost
 Half my water to quench his thirst
 For I promised myself that I could dream

(The desert is wide...)

water enough to help me stand
 A sunsick dog with a fly-bit head
 Licked its fill from the palm of my hand
 For I promised myself that I could dream

(The desert is wide...)

water enough to wet my tongue
 I found a withered dandelion
 Whose wilted roots I poured it on
 For I promised myself that I could dream

(The desert is wide...)

when I did not have water enough
 I lay on the edge of a redstone bluff
 My foolish face cracked under the sun
 For I promised myself someone would come

(The desert is wide...)

when I had only water enough

Song 4: “The Plots”

for my own throat—
dropped into the plots
the earth might breathe
through such a small hole

time is heavier than doubt
I will never be the same

Days are turning
Ever onward
Seasons ripe
And fall away
Leaves are turning
Ever onward
I whet my scythe
And worry

the mud of the field
thrumming with heat
my hands are cold
my pulse is weak

time is heavier than doubt
I will never be the same
I was not qualified
for this body and brain

Days are turning...
Days are turning...

Song 5: “Hand-Dug”

I hand-dug so that by night
The moon would shine
Deeper down the earth
Kneeling long
Dirt beneath my nails
Ground into my knuckles

Some seeds grow by moonlight
Some leaves like the dim
Some roots need open air
Ah
Moonlight seeds and dim leaves are a little rare

At any rate, at any rate, it might turn out (x3)
At any rate, at any rate

I fussed on it like a potion
Ideas compost
Rustling in the dark
Dwelling long
The sweat of my brow, the crack of my nails (x3)
The sweat of my brow
The crack of my nails
All woody stems skeletal

Some seeds grow by moonlight...

At any rate, at any rate, it might turn out...

Song 6: “Reckoning”

The mid-February garden sprouted
Leaves from autumn branches put down green roots
Colours blossoming fresh as flowers
Jealous stars outshone the sun

The sky breathed in
The earth sang for the joy of it
Like a day of reckoning where we reckoned out all right
Like a day of reckoning where we reckoned out all right

Age and illness lifted from the old bones
The Northern lights alive horizon wide
The miser turned his dreams to charity
The missiles turned to rice

The sky breathed in
The earth sang for the joy of it
Like a day of reckoning where we reckoned out all right
Like a day of reckoning where we reckoned out all right

The mid-February garden sprouted

Song 7: "Into This"

Arms and legs until a man groped
Limber legs beneath his chest rose
Earth aside the sweat of the forearms
Winter ground until the broad back
Sweat to glisten in the arm hair
Manifested of the cold air

No need to sit down, I am
Dizzy
Defiant
I could get used to this
I could get into this

Gasping twice inside the heartbeat
Pulses of a thousand heartbeats
Took me smelling of the outside
Hands and stubble throat and chapped lips
Smell of sweat comes after snowfall
Condensation on the window

No need to sit down...

No need to sit down, I am
Dizzy
Defiant
I hardly remember breathing
Hardly remember breathing
I could get used to this
I could get into this
I could get into this
I could get into this

Song 8: “You”

from the soil and became you:
 when my stillness must have shown you
 grateful and how terrified
 that you might tear like newspaper
 to catch in the wind

you
 you
 you
 you...

Song 9: “Palette and Colour”

the you I had dreamed up,
 the you I made as my lover,
 I chose your palette and colour,
 Painted with such a fine brush

Like church windows at dawn, or butterfly wings sections neatly divided
 I chose careful the gold and the green of your iris, the tone of your kindness

You are a vision as you appear to me now
 You are a vision as you appear to me now

I strained sight to see you,
 I mouthed your voice to myself,
 I knew your corners and swells,
 The white aura that lined you,

The nights inking your frames in cyan magenta and yellow, a long labour
 That's how you would have been, in front of me in my indulgence that's how you were

You are a vision as you appear to me now
 You are a vision as you appear to me now

Song 10: “The Dust Bowl”

whose touch felt dry as the dust bowl.
 whose palms blotched brown and grey.
 who tumbled like grit through a sieve.
 whose fingers were brittle.

I, famine mouthed and hot eyed
 I, amateurish and knock kneed
 I, gnawing at apple cores
 learned sand holds no water

a cold wind
 blows weakly
 over half a flat acre
 and dies off.

Song 11: “Homonculus”

(excerpted from “Homonculus” by MacKenzie Regier, reprinted with her permission)

After I left, seeds of you—which rolled
 inside my skull and took sharp root
 when I had only water enough
 for my own throat—dropped into the plots
 I hand-dug so that by night
 the mid-February garden sprouted
 arms and legs until a man groped
 from the soil and became you:
 the you I had dreamed up, the you
 whose touch felt dry as the dust bowl.