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Figuera: Traversals of Gender in Interactive Fiction

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Figuera: Traversals of Gender in Interactive Fiction

by

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Abstract

Figuera, a speculative interactive fiction game, uses the digital authoring system Twine to build a multilinear narrative. This work emerges from a tradition of feminist and queer authors, including New Wave science fiction writers Samuel Delany and Ursula K. Le Guin, and Twine digital game creators Anna Anthropy and Porpentine. *Figuera* acts as a critical fiction by joining what bell hooks terms a community of resistance: the Twine revolution, a school of queer and trans digital game creators who express their lived experiences of marginalization through digital games. Playfully transgressing the connection between the material body and gender identity/expression, I work to decenter dominant narratives by disrupting default novel-reading strategies. My game depicts a secondary world in which families assign their children's gender at age fifteen, a world inspired by Judith Butler's theories of gender performativity. Three narrative strands follow young people whose queered gender expression clashes with their families' wishes. In contrast with the non-linearity of postmodern hypertext fiction, *Figuera* uses digital constraints to maintain continuity and promote narrative closure. Unlike traditional interactive fiction, *Figuera* guides readers with links rather than text input. The work's visual design echoes the aesthetic of the Twine revolution, while my invitation to readers to intervene creatively with the text matches the Twine revolution's goals of accessibility and open expression. Readers may perform multiple traversals of the text; the different narrative strands act as motifs for the work's themes. The text offers the reader meaningful choices: the reader can navigate to discrete endings. Each narrative line contains deliberate gaps, such that multiple readings are required for a richer understanding of the characters and the world; the game's structure rewards playful, explorative, and repeated readings. In form and content, *Figuera* expresses a feminist and queer politics through creative intervention.

Preface

This thesis consists of an interactive fiction digital game and a critical exegesis. The interactive

fiction can be accessed through the accompanying HTML file.

Acknowledgements

Dedication

To my wife, Isabel, and my son Lucas, all my love.

Table of Contents

Epigraph

It's just as complicated as it sounds, but aren't most marriages?

Ursula K. Le Guin, "Mountain Ways", *Birthday of the World and Other Stories*

Introduction

The strands of inspiration that underlie *Figuera* wove together like a tapestry: on the front, a complete image, formed by the patterned appearance and disappearance of themes, characters, and settings. The verso, however, resembles nothing so much as a jumbled chaos of coloured knots and dangling threads. *Figuera* contains multiple storylines; like the titular fig tree, the story branches and merges lavishly. This exegesis represents my undertaking to smooth the tangle behind the scenes: to draw out ideas, examine them, and trace their connections.

I began from the author's resistant position that I couldn't possibly interrogate my own work, or perhaps that any necessary interrogation occurred during the extensive process of writing and rewriting. Yet through the process of writing my fiction, I constantly discovered ways in which my theoretical understanding affected my decisions as a creative writer. This exegesis must therefore be read as interpretive and explorative, while *Figuera* represents my innovative and speculative creative project. In these pages, I contextualize the inspiration underlying my fiction, and the paradigms to which the fictional text responds. My critical questions—concerning form, genre, and discourse—serve as the warp of the tapestry I created in *Figuera*. The weft, I wrote as a speculative fiction novel and a work of interactive fiction that explores the cultural and personal implications of an alternate world—a secondary world[1]—in which children are not assigned a gender until the age of fifteen.

In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler establishes the foundations of her theory of gender performativity through a Foucauldian reading of post-structuralist critic Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality*. Butler challenges the 'natural' divide between sex and gender, and suggests

[1] Where literary or mimetic fiction seeks to depict reality, Kathryn Hume argues that fantasy and science fictional texts depict alternate realities which "deliberately depart from consensus reality" (21). Darko Suvin calls these alternate, constructed realities secondary worlds, in contrast to the primary or 'zero' world of the author's "empirical environment" (8). For more on the secondary world as a critical concept, see the section "Speculative Fiction as Critical Fiction."

that sex cannot precede the discourse of gender and sexuality. The premise of my work can be expressed by Butler's statement that, "assuming for the moment the stability of binary sex, it does not follow that the construction of 'men' will accrue exclusively to the bodies of males or that 'women' will interpret only female bodies" (6). Butler presents this *reductio ad absurdum* to demonstrate that the sex/gender distinction is both artificial—a product of discourse—and yet reified as natural.

I defamiliarize this discourse of gender and sexuality using Darko Suvin's concept of the novum, as established in his foundational poetics of science fiction, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*. Suvin uses the novum, or 'new strangeness', to distinguish science fiction's exploration of rational conjectures, from fantasy's mythic or fanciful modes. I argue, however, that constructing a secondary world by extrapolating logical outcomes from an unlikely premise is the province of fantasy as well as science fiction. *Figuera* engages with both fantasy and science fiction genre conventions. My use of the novum arises from Suvin's science fictional tradition, but my setting, characterization, and narrative arc all engage most closely with fantasy tropes. John Rieder, a science fiction scholar, argues that "sf is not a set of texts, but rather a way of using texts and of drawing relationships among them" (193). My liminal play among science fiction and fantasy genre traditions illustrates how genre is a "historical process" that develops over time as writers draw on and combine different conventions (Rieder 192). Assigning *Figuera* to a particular genre is less important than exploring its historical contingency within genre as a process. I refer to *Figuera* throughout this exegesis as a speculative fiction text, following science fiction critic R. B. Gill's definition, which I argue can encompass both science fiction and fantasy. *Figuera* is a work which presents "modes of being that contrast with [the audience's] understanding of ordinary reality" (Gill 73). By drawing on conventions from both

science fiction and fantasy, I refute the dichotomy between these genres, a position which parallels *Figuera*'s thematic concerns. My novum of delayed gender assignment highlights the arbitrary duality of gender and compulsory heterosexuality in our primary world; in this way, *Figuera*'s discourse of sexuality both changes and depends on our own, making the text a site of gender troubling. *Figuera* becomes a critical fiction which centers queer narratives and opens space for the queer reader.

In *Figuera*, families assign a gender to their child based on economic factors, without reference to the child's physical embodiment. Yet the world of *Figuera* remains highly structured by a gender binary: access to professions is restricted by gender; arranged marriages are initially limited to one man and one woman; the physical space of the home is divided into men's and women's areas. As in our world, factors which complicate this binary remain unexamined and unquestioned. In this way, *Figuera*'s society reinforces heterosexuality, yet, because gender is not linked to the body, heterosexuality is exposed as an imitative structure (Butler 174).

Figuera imagines a radical equality. Although the characters remain inevitably enmeshed in a system of morals and taboos, the social constrictions fall equally on everyone. Gender is not assigned, either at birth or at maturity, "based on visual examination of genital configuration" (Edelman & Zimman 675). My text relentlessly undermines the reader's assumptions and expectations about the characters' physical bodies. Gender-based privilege and marginalization are inscribed—to the reader's eye—arbitrarily. *Figuera* refuses the reader's presumptive identification of some traits as masculine and others as feminine. Gender without reference to the body defamiliarizes both the sex/gender link and systems of gender stratification. With this premise, *Figuera* opens space for the queer reader to read themselves into the text (Kubowitz 206).

Crucially for my practice as a creative writer, *Figuera* is a speculative fiction text. *Figuera* presents a recognizably Earth-like world, inhabited by recognizably human people, but one in which an estranging premise fundamentally alters how society functions. The premise of delayed gender assignment divorced from physical embodiment results in ripple effects throughout the alternate, or secondary, world. Gill suggests that speculative fiction texts tend to create secondary worlds which act as "outwards manifestations of implicit values" (78). *Figuera* criticizes our dominant gender discourse by presenting a secondary world with different normative assumptions. From the predictable, such as gender-restricted modes of dress, to the logical but challenging, such as group marriage to ensure fertility, *Figuera* explores the ramifications of its premise.

In form, *Figuera* is a multi-linear interactive fiction game which engages with the concerns of the Twine revolution. Twine, an interactive fiction authoring system created by Chris Klimas in 2009, has been widely adopted by queer independent digital game creators. These creators, including Anna Anthropy, Porpentine, and Zoe Quinn, have focused on designing games based on their lived experiences, sometimes with an explicitly didactic intention, at other times with a variously camp or surreal aesthetic that emphasizes queer desire. Twine revolution creators claim their games *as games*, a stance which challenges various gatekeepers of what 'counts' as a game, including videogame developers and publishers, and academics working in game studies (Moulthrop "Intimate" np). These creators also focus on the accessibility of Twine as a tool in order to open space for marginalized voices. Games such as Quinn *et al*.'s *Depression Quest*, Porpentine's *howling dogs*, and Christine Love's *Even Cowgirls Bleed* use structural constraints as metaphors for oppression. Similarly, *Figuera* uses programmed constraints as literary devices which deepen the portrayal of queer and trans characters. Like

these Twine revolution games, *Figuera* is "less concerned with being beaten or mastered, and more concerned with being participated with in order to communicate an idea" (Keogh np). When, as a queer, feminist academic, I situate *Figuera* in the school of Twine revolution games, I act politically to center marginalized voices in an academic setting. As a creative writer and game designer, I take up space in support of queer creators.

Not only does my work center queer characters, including trans characters, but I plan to release *Figuera* as an online, free, Creative Commons licensed text, which invites further intervention by readers and creators. Due to my work with programming and visual design, the text's ideal medium is as an HTML file displayed in a web browser. I use Twine commands as literary devices, which echo and enhance the thematic concerns of my text. In so doing, I deny the primacy of literary techniques which can be deployed in print alone. Yet simultaneously, I resist the idea that digital texts are qualitatively different from print texts. *Figuera*'s storylines, though multiple, each follow a traditional arc and are resolved by endings which provide closure for the characters. The techniques I use, digital or otherwise, are not extraneous appurtenances to my fiction. As I wrote, I employed techniques that enhanced the story; as the story developed, I researched techniques that would express the themes I saw emerging in the narrative. My process involved using Twine commands as tools which shaped the narrative, but the content of the narrative also shaped how I deployed Twine commands.

In this exegesis, I show how *Figuera,* as speculative fiction and as a Twine game, acts as a critical fiction, as developed by feminist theorist bell hooks. I focus on three areas: first, how *Figuera* decenters the default reader and privileges a queer reading; second, how *Figuera*'s form and function as interactive fiction and as a Twine game requires alternate reading strategies; and third, how I deploy the strategies and genre conventions of both science fiction and fantasy

fiction to engage and defamiliarize the reader. Each reading constitutes a performance, as musicologist and philosopher Peter Kivy argues in *The Performance of Reading*. Variation and improvisation occur within performances, but every reading relies on the structure and text as I have written them. Critical readers best engage with the work when they consider it as both text and material artifact, a tapestry woven from many threads.

Synopsis

Figuera is a 200,000-word work of speculative interactive fiction. The game contains 212 narrative passages connected by more than twice as many links. The opening passage offers three choices, one for each point of view character. These entry points expand into braided middles. The player may discover three truncated or "unsuccessful" endings, or four complete, "successful" endings[2]. A single reading may include approximately 30 passages or 30,000 words. For players who explore, backtrack, retrace, and reread, the number of possible routes and the length of the story increases. No one reading encompasses all the events of the story or all the moments of each character's arc. Therefore, I include a brief synopsis which outlines the major paths.

In a world where children are genderless until they come of age at fifteen, Kell finds the most important choice of a lifetime stripped away when an older sister, Larik, dies of a fever. Suddenly Kell, the youngest and only unmarried child, is the last one left to fulfill an arranged marriage that will bring status and pride to the family. Kell must choose between accepting a duty but fulfilling a dream of journeying to the distant city, or insisting on personal freedom while sacrificing ambition.

Trenon, Larik's betrothed, appears to have everything: a prestigious career as an advocat, an old and respected family name, and an upcoming marriage into a rich and powerful family. But Trenon is bitter that he cannot marry his childhood sweetheart, Nilos. Though children are encouraged to play at making love, when they reach the age of fifteen, they must conform to the rules of marriage. Still, Trenon would rather cause a scandal and reveal his true feelings than accept an arranged marriage with Kell, a mere child. Yet Trenon's anger extends to Nilos as well,

2 For more discussion of how the story's multiple endings may be considered successful or unsuccessful, see the section "Constraint: Reading."

whom he feels betrayed him when he chose to become a man rather than the woman Trenon might have married openly. If Trenon declares his love, he could jeopardize his position and Nilos might still turn him down.

Nilos's choice to become a man when he came of age was not an easy one. Although Larik is his best friend, he envies her easy acceptance of both her gender and her profession. Larik is sympathetic, but doesn't truly understand Nilos's feelings, since her own desires have never been in conflict with the path chosen for her. Since childhood, Nilos has shown an aptitude for the healer's arts. His family agreed to let him apprentice to the master healer, but by custom, only men are healers. Nilos loves Trenon, and has always felt that he was a woman, but in the end, he chose his calling over his love. But healing isn't as simple and pure as he always believed. Nilos learns that his master can be wrong about treatments. If he attempts more experimental techniques, he will risk his apprenticeship and lose the trust of his patients.

Kell, Nilos, and Trenon each have reasons to leave their home and travel to the city. In order to challenge the conservative values of their village, they must leave and learn that other ways are possible. Yet each has ties, of kinship, love, and duty, to home.

In the first ending, Kell accepts taking Larik's place as Trenon's wife. She becomes Kelil, and apprentices to the master trader, which gives her the opportunity to visit the city. Despite this, Kelil feels rejected and depressed. Her family has used her as a bargaining chip, as though she is interchangeable with her sister.

Kelil recognizes that she owes Trenon the chance of a true marriage, even though they aren't in love. She offers him the opportunity to set up their own household, away from both their families. Trenon cannot stand the thought of settling down as a traditional husband in Kelil's household and giving his parents the satisfaction of being right. Yet he feels alienated

from Nilos, because Nilos was never prepared to change his choices and come out as Trenon's lover. To complicate matters, Trenon discovers that he is pregnant. Having the child would cement his position as Kelil's husband, but would deny Nilos any status as its parent. Trenon sees his baby as a symbol both of the traditional family that he rejects, and of Nilos, who he feels has rejected him. When Kelil travels to the city as an apprentice trader, Trenon goes with her, intending to find a healer to help him miscarry. After Trenon ends his pregnancy, Kelil establishes a household in the city with him, one based on business rather than love—and one which wrenches Kelil free of her parents' influence, asserting her right to be seen as her own person.

In the second ending, Kell cannot bear the thought of being a mere replacement for Larik, as if Kell doesn't matter as an individual. Rebelling, he becomes Kelol, a man. In order to pay back his family for the price of the broken marriage contract, Kelol joins a master trader as an outrider, though this is scant recompense for losing the chance to join the master as her apprentice.

Meanwhile, Nilos feels lost and adrift in the village without Larik. His apprenticeship is fraudulent because he doesn't believe in the traditional healing techniques. Although he loves his master, Nilos feels that his abilities and his self are being repressed by his teaching methods. He decides to force his master's hand, by revealing his feminine attire. When his master dismisses him, Nilos asks Kelol to guide him to the city, because he has heard rumours that people like him might be accepted there, despite their unconventional desires. In the city, Nilos falls in with a group of people rebelling against strict gender duality. They assert their queer identity by wearing clothing with elements of both men's and women's styles; they use the childhood gender-neutral pronoun among themselves; and they practice professions other than those

dictated by their gender. Nilos begins to feel safe expressing his feelings about the conflict between his gender expression and his inner self, and finds that his new community appreciates his healing skill.

Kelol initially mistrusts Nilos's transition, because he believes that healers must inherently be men. If Nilos is a woman, then he cannot act as a healer without endangering his patients. Kelol accuses Nilos of causing Larik's death. However, Kelol soon realizes that his own conflict with the gender duality puts him in the same position as Nilos. He acts and speaks like a trader, a woman's profession, and is dismissed from his position because of his feminine presentation. Surviving as a trader on the margins of the black market, Kelol comes to terms with his own dual nature. When he encounters Nilos again, Kelol realizes he is attracted to Nilos's feminine dress. They gradually begin a relationship. Meanwhile, Trenon chooses to raise his baby with the help of his birth family. He is bitter, and yet proudly self-righteous, about staying unmarried and living in the village, as a reminder to the community that not everyone is easily slotted into their given roles.

Figuera explores queer desire, gender expression, and how they interact with social power. The various narrative strands approach the work's themes from different points of view, creating a resonance among narrative lines that rewards multiple readings.

Gender Trouble

I created the scope of my secondary world's divergences from our own to explore

Butler's ideas of gender performativity and discursive productivity. I constructed characters,

settings, and plot through creative extrapolation from the premise of a "radical discontinuity

between sexed bodies and culturally constructed genders" (6). Butler argues that gender accrues

to bodies through repeated acts and performances. The sheer weight of repetition marks the body

with gender. A given body's possible performances are regulated by disciplinary discourses.

What is understandable and understood, what is acceptable and accepted, creates the discourse

within which the body moves. The discourse prefigures the performance and the performance

marks the body, and thus gender is not a pre-existing reality, but a subjective understanding of

how well a body is able to navigate among social roles. The appearance of gender arises from

discursive expectations but is not an inherent aspect of an embodied individual.

Tamsin Spargo, a cultural historian, argues that Butler's work remains a crucial bridge

between post-structuralist theory and queer theory due to its emphasis on the "deconstruction of

binary conceptual and linguistic structures" (41). Butler critiques the sex/gender dichotomy

because it implies that "gender becomes a free-floating artifice" (10). She contends that the

complexity of "anatomical, chromosomal, hormonal" differences in each person must necessarily

exceed the regulatory imposition of a binary division (10). Several times in *Gender Trouble*,

Butler quotes Simone de Beauvoir's famous axiom, "One is not born, but becomes, a woman"

(141). Butler immediately questions who it is that becomes a woman. Who was that *a priori* non-

woman that prefigures the woman that one becomes? "And, perhaps most pertinently," Butler

writes, "when does this mechanism arrive on the cultural scene to transform the human subject

into a gendered subject?" (142). Where Butler intervenes as a theorist, I intervene as a fiction

writer, imagining the moment when such a mechanism arrives.

The dominant criticisms of *Gender Trouble* have followed three major paths. First, critics

argue that Butler's work is theoretical and abstract, and offers few concrete solutions for women

and feminists to enact as part of their political activism (Paglia; Nussbaum). Second, Butler's

insistence on gender as an iterative accumulation of speech acts and performances obscures an

individual's agency in claiming an identity or choosing a gender (Hansen; Digeser; Nelson).

Finally, Butler's work conflates transgressive sexualities with progressive politics, imbuing

transgression with a moral weight (Glick; Digeser). Of these, I will leave the question of

abstraction aside, noting only that *Figuera* provides an example of a concretization of Butler's

theories which may successfully engage readers who prefer fiction to criticism. Agency and

transgression, however, represent important themes in *Figuera*, as I will detail below.

I depicted my protagonists succeeding when they accept support from others, privilege

self-expression over self-repression, and explore non-binary identities. My characters struggle to

choose alternate gender structures in the face of social censure. Kell, particularly, ruminates over

the decision to argue in favour of becoming a man, a choice fraught with guilt and shame due to

the loss of face it would cause for Kell's family. Lise Nelson, a women's studies and geography

scholar, argues that Butler's concept of performativity "provides no space for conscious

reflexivity, negotiation, or agency in the doing of identity" (332). In *Figuera*'s close third person

point of view, the reader can experience the characters' internal monologue, which foregrounds

the reflexivity and agency to which Nelson refers. Nelson contends that Butler's subject is

necessarily abstract, rather than a concrete, specific, and situated individual. She writes that

Butler denies the subject's ability to *choose* transgression, because transgression only occurs

within slippages between act and imitation. By contrast, the verisimilitude that I work to create as a fiction writer has the impact of situating my characters in a specific and individual conflict. However, Kell does not fully embrace transgressive choices until new gender structures become apparent and available, as when Kelol lives with Nilos in the city.

The structure of my fiction responds to Butler's theoretical stance. The imitative quality of performativity and its slippages are depicted through different narrative lines. Slippages are represented by the gaps between the different choices that players make. Vastly different outcomes result from seemingly insignificant choices in the moment. Both the Kelil and Kelol narrative lines show Kell's acceptance and imitation of gender structures. Kelil has Zayelik for a role model. Under Zayelik's tutelage, Kelil grows into her position as a trading apprentice. Kelol meets with Nilos's community of black market people ono, and constructs a more flexible gender identity based around the acceptance of different types of masculinities and femininities that these people represent. Nelson argues that identity and subjectivity should be treated as changing and contested terms, even after they have been discursively constituted. In this manner, a constituted subject can also be a conscious and intervening subject. In *Figuera*, seeing Kell's choice play out in two different ways reinforces both performativity (Kelil's successful and uncontested womanhood) and identity as a contested term (Kelol's self-doubt and struggle over the meaning of his own masculinity). I suggest that Butler's theory appears to erase agency because we live in only one timeline. But in fiction, alternate choices can be shown in the work, and the potential impact of slippages and of agency becomes clearer.

My political and ethical stance aligns closely with Butler's idealization of transgression. This is not to say that normative sexuality and gender expression are less worthy. Glick argues that Butler favours "localized resistance from *within* the terms of power" (23, italics original).

Because Butler contends that some forms of sexuality consolidate hegemonic conventions while others displace those conventions, she necessarily decides which sexual/ity practices count as disruptive and resistant, and therefore as progressive (Glick 23). Certain "sexual styles" are transgressive, while others are not; Glick argues that this categorization ranks or prioritizes sexualities and modes of enacting gender. As a result, Butler's valorization of transgression prevents her from identifying her own privilege to transgress, and which reaffirms class and racial divides. Glick gives the example that Butler valorizes butch/femme dynamics as sexually subversive without acknowledging their roots in "working class and variously raced communities" (28). Butler thereby erases the history, context, and political work of these communities. As a further result, if one feels that one's own sexual practices are sufficiently transgressive, one need not engage with the political necessities of other minority communities (Glick 31). Widespread social change becomes less important than personal lifestyle, as long as that lifestyle is sufficiently perverse. However, according to Butler, transgression is only possible when it is represented as a possibility. This is one reason why the representation of LGBTQ identities in fiction is so important: in order to demonstrate their reality and possibilities to the reader. The extra-diegetical political project of *Figuera* is not to idealize transgression, but to present it as an available space in which the reader can imagine themselves. Social change depends on the knowledge that the status quo is not inevitable; this is one of fiction's most important roles, and one which I believe *Figuera* accomplishes.

Despite these critiques, Butler's work remains foundational in gender and queer theory. In the *Feminist Philosophy Reader*, Alison Bailey and Chris Cuomo situate Butler's work as the bridge from de Beauvoir to later second and third wave feminists, including hooks (84). Butler's contribution of articulating "the idea that gender is not something we *have*, but something we *do*"

remains crucial in the field today (Bailey & Cuomo 84). As a creative writer, I engage with Butler's theoretical work speculatively; her theoretical stance acts as a creative catalyst for my fiction. My secondary world is constructed from Butler's first principles, not in refutation but in exploration. In order to pursue the ramifications of Butler's propositions, I created a world in which it is literally true that "man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one" (10). *Figuera*, as a creative text, begins from Butler, but does not engage with her work in a theoretical sense.

My work is an experiment in the style of Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness*. Le Guin created an alien world in which the inhabitants exist as androgynous bodies for twenty-five days out of thirty; during the remaining five, they enter 'kemmer', when they express either male or female anatomy. Only during kemmer are the people of Le Guin's world at all sexual or fertile. Le Guin's fiction experiment consisted of exploring the complications and consequences that arose from the single sentence, "the king was pregnant" (6). Similarly, the secondary world in *Figuera* depends on an invented social system where gender roles *are* constructed by regulatory discourses, and those discourses are more apparent and overt, since the child to whom they apply contributes to the discussion of gender choice. Indeed, then, *Figuera* returns some agency to the child, because gender does not begin to be inscribed until the child's fifteenth birthday. No matter what a child's anatomy, chromosomes, or hormones suggest, the child may choose to become either a man or a woman. Once the choice is made, their name, the pronouns used to refer to them, and the feminine or masculine language attached to their permitted roles within the community all reify their gendered status.

Children remain ungendered until the age of fifteen, whereas in our primary world, we begin the process of gendering children as soon as their gonads are perceptible on an ultrasound.

The gender children acquire in *Figuera* is more a social role than a biological one, because professions are segregated by gender to the point that professions imply gender. "That person is a farmer," is synonymous with "That person is a man." The opposite is also true; to say "That farmer is a woman," is to speak nonsensically. While some might interpret it as a bad joke, it is more likely to be taken in the same way we would respond to someone telling us, "The sky is red." We would try to understand what the person meant, and be puzzled; no information would be communicated. We would probably respond, "The sky is blue," and believe that our interlocutor had misspoken or was a bit dim, or, again, was simply being silly for effect.

Figuera works to problematize how gender and professions are linked. I chose to assign professions to the two genders in my secondary world in a manner which best complicated the narrative of the text. These decisions, especially for the three protagonists, were not overtly political during the initial draft of the text, but rather served the plot and characterization needs of the story. For professions which did not impact the plot, I made choices intended to disrupt the default reader's assumptions about which gender is most likely to be linked with which profession. I did not want to provide a complete inversion of the stereotypes which prevail in my primary world, as I believed this would be too predictable and indeed reifying of our current historical moment, as it would suggest that only an inverse, rather than a complication, was possible. As a creative writing choice, therefore, the assignments were initially arbitrary. However, the choices I made proved to be politically productive in their effects.

The sexual division of labour in *Figuera* ensures that men and women are perceived and act as distinct, non-overlapping categories, as cultural anthropologist Gayle Rubin describes in "The Traffic in Women". The separation and dichotomy of the genders that Rubin explores in Claude Levi-Strauss's work is as important in *Figuera* as in the kinship systems that Levi-Strauss

16

describes. Heterosexuality is required for first marriages in *Figuera* precisely because "the smallest viable economic unit must contain at least one man and one woman" (Rubin 178). Different professions have different levels of social status attached to them, but the status does not depend on whether the profession is male or female. Any person, at the age of majority, can become a woman or a man. A person's appearance, abilities, and relationships do not affect whether they are perceived as or become one or the other.

As I constructed my secondary world, I had to decide whether a particularly patriarchal oppression would exist, and how it would manifest. As part of the political project of the text, I chose to depict society as having its major axis of oppression being economic. Rubin points out that "if innate male aggression and dominance are at the root of female oppression, then the feminist program would logically require either the extermination of the offending sex, or else a eugenics project to modify its character" (157). The characteristics of my secondary world prevent this type of sexism, since a person's level of testosterone production is no determiner of the gender they eventually acquire. Women alone are not responsible for bearing children and propagating the species. Men are as likely to become pregnant. As Rubin details, cultures exist in our primary world in which female or male bodied people may take on a social gender different from their anatomy. So too in my secondary world, which confronts the reader with alternate conventions that nevertheless are entirely *conventional* within the secondary world. Rubin quotes Marx as arguing that a "historical and moral element" enters into the reproduction of labour; that is to say, that culture as much as biological necessity contributes to the value of labour (164). My secondary world's apparently arbitrary links among professions and genders works to make this historical and moral element visible to the reader.

The historical and cultural contingency of the sexual division of labour is made apparent by its difference in a secondary world. Children are more likely to become the gender that economically benefits their household, aptitude notwithstanding. A farming family needs sons; a mining family needs daughters. The physical conformation of the child means little, when a family's status or profits are at stake. Sexual anatomy becomes irrelevant, but the secondary world's sex-gender system continues to dictate "who one is, what one does, and with whom one makes love" (Rubin 204). *Figuera* demonstrates how sex-gender systems can create subordination of certain individuals, which serves as a gesture towards how "the subordination of women can be seen as a product of the relationships by which sex and gender are organized and produced" in our primary world (Rubin 177). Arbitrariness which moves towards but never attains a utopian ideal stands out more overtly.

In attempting to create a lack—children who occupy a non-gendered category—I found instead that my premise was productive. Children occupy a third, rather than an absent, category. This aligns with Butler's exploration of Monique Wittig's categorization of the 'lesbian' as a third sex (142). Lesbians, in refusing compulsory heterosexuality, also refuse the either/or binary of "man" and "woman." Butler contends that the lesbian in Wittig's work appears to be "a category that radically problematizes both sex and gender as stable political categories of description" (144). I use the category of child in *Figuera* to perform the same work. I destabilize the "natural" categories of male/female and man/woman by inserting a third term.

This is not to say that children's anatomy is vestigial or disregarded. Puberty occurs between the ages of 12-15, as it does in our world. Children can be sexual and indeed sexually active prior to coming of age at fifteen. Being agender, however—or a discursively produced third gender—children do not distinguish between homosexual and heterosexual pairings. Adults

expect and indulge children in "play" which prefigures an adult sexuality. However, relationships

between an adult and child, even if the adult is fifteen and the child is fourteen, are frowned

upon. The older a young adult becomes, the more restrictions they face until their sexuality is

safely controlled within an acceptable marriage. People in *Figuera* are well aware of the

exigencies of reproduction. After all, they are farmers and shepherds who benefit from their

stock increasing. Yet in terms of physical bodies, they ignore those similarities between animals'

reproductive capacity and humans'. To discuss humans' anatomy in terms of reproduction is

considered rude to the point of crassness. In the story, this is shown through the contrast between

the characters' blithe reference to fertility clauses in marriage contracts, compared with their

embarrassment and defensive anger when they believe they are being forced to reproduce like

animals. Trenon, a cynical character who despises hypocrisy, makes the connection explicit:

> Listening to [his mother negotiating his marriage contract] is like
> watching two field hands leaning on either side of a rail fence,
> spitting as they watch the rams cover the ewes, judging the lambs
> before they drop. And after they hammer out the vows' framework,
> their husbands will move in with their hearty, bluff charm, their
> little place-dances. Tradition. (Osborne "barter")

People know how reproduction occurs; but physical, bodily processes matter less than the

regulatory discourses of gender. I emphasize this difference between humans and animals in my

secondary world through figurative language: men can be crafty as whiskey jacks and women

can be hungry as wolves. Animal species, like professions, are attached to one half of the gender

binary. People may deliberately insult others by using an epithet or simile which evokes a species

associated with the wrong gender.

Sexuality within *Figuera* offers a logical outgrowth from the gender construction as

described above, which is to say: gender rarely predicts sexuality. Even if a majority of people

have a sexual preference for people whose anatomy is complementary to their own, whether or

not that will amount to being attracted to people of the opposite gender is entirely arbitrary, since bodies do not align with genders. I create "cultural configurations of gender confusion" in order to expose and displace our primary world's notions of what sexuality entails (Butler 42). Butler argues, for instance, that butch/femme dynamics among lesbians demonstrates that what femme lesbians desire in butch women is not masculinity, but "the destabilization of both terms as they come into erotic interplay" (157). This dynamic underlies the queer relationships in *Figuera*. When characters visit bordels in the city, one of the erotic aspects of the pleasure workers is their commitment to androgynous dress and language:

> Every server in Chiason's bordel dresses aslant, [...] belts knotted askew, wearing a motley of colours. The clientele in the common room dress more properly, but more than a few keep a kerchief like Chiason's tucked in their belts. The servers fawn over them like patrons, and, Kelol realizes after some of them leave the common room in pairs and threes, that's what they are. Chiason didn't hire servers, but pleasure workers, who offer a candlemark of their time for silver. (Osborne "askew")

Within marriages, the initial pairing of wife and husband negotiate the addition of love spouses. They search for spouses who will provide the marriage with a pool of compatible sexual partners and who will increase the chances that the marriage will prove fertile. A home is considered incomplete if two separate yet complementary roles are not fulfilled: men live on the homeside and raise children; women live on the hearthside and cook meals. The physical space of each home, with its homeside and hearthside, emphasizes the necessity of initiating marriages between people who can fill the space appropriately. People firmly believe that raising children with fewer than three parents is simple madness. Marriages commonly count five to seven spouses. An uneven number is considered ideal, since each spouse may vote in family decisions.

Trenon and Nilos's relationship is forbidden because the participants are both single (not already involved in an established marriage of two or more spouses), and they both chose the

same gender, meaning that they cannot form an economically and socially sanctioned marriage. In an established marriage, fathers, uncles, and perhaps older brothers raise children. When Nilos and Trenon have a baby, both their families are obligated to raise the child. Yet since the baby is born outside a marriage contract, both families face penalties of status for claiming the child. The fact that Trenon bears the child has little to do with its placement in society, or its eventual economic and social outcome. (Likewise, if they were both women, there would be no one to raise the child, an unconscionable irresponsibility as well as a status-endangering move.) The problem with queerness has to do with reproduction only insofar as reproduction is an economic issue—which is to say, entirely.

Creating a world in which these status machinations are clear to the reader involves layering gendered distinctions into every aspect of the characters' lives. Descriptions of gendered clothing styles proves important not only for enhancing the setting and detailing characters' appearance, but to mark sites of trouble and alteration for characters who feel at odds with their assigned gender. I crafted my descriptions to take advantage of relatively arbitrary choices, which would not directly mirror but evoke the gendered differences in clothing that we use in our primary world. I begin by describing clothing neutrally, while indicating clothing style as a marker of gender identity. Men's belts and bootlaces are knotted on their left sides, women's are knotted on the right. Men wear warm colours, shading into brown, while women wear cool colours, shading into black. Children wear plainwoven, undyed material, with no patterns or markings. In Kell's point of view, receiving adult clothing marks a desired increase in status. After coming of age, either as a man or as a woman, Kell soon accepts the regulatory discourse by which gender is signified through clothing:

> At first [Kelol's] clothes snare him awkwardly. He fiddles with his
> belt or his boots, fingering the pleats of the fabric. And then, he

> forgets. He pulls clothes out of the press in the morning, or brushes
> them clean and folds them in the evening, and the shape and colour
> of them don't matter. He owns them; they fit; he can move and
> work and ride in them. A man's belt holds up trousers as well as
> child's braces. (Osborne "sweetheart")

> The next day, Kelil dresses in the simplest of Larik's remade
> clothes. She enjoys the longer, hip-length sway of women's tunics,
> but she finds Larik's clothes too fragile for any work more
> strenuous than sitting at a loom. She buys good leather trousers and
> right-draped oilskin cloaks; she wears well-fitted linens for hot
> days and thick, quilted tunics for mountain nights. (Osborne
> "grandchildren")

Kell, in either incarnation, matches Butler's assertion that "one is one's gender to the extent that one is not the other gender, a formation that presupposes and enforces the restriction of gender within that binary pair" (30). At the same time, however, the text's multiple pathways trouble Kell's ease with both masculinity and femininity. The reader can choose for Kell to become a woman or a man; "hence, gender is neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex" (10). I depict Kell as equally comfortable as either gender in order to embrace the multiplicity that binary gender otherwise evokes in subjectivity.

Trenon firmly embraces his identity as a man, his status enhanced both by his family name and his work as an advocat. Trenon acknowledges that he is gay—an invert, in the terms of my secondary world—because he loves Nilos. But this never causes him to question his gender. His "acts and gestures [...] create the illusion of an interior and organizing gender core" which typify those traits our primary world considers masculine (Butler 173)—and then he gets pregnant. He faces uncertainty, fear, and the feeling that he has lost his bodily autonomy. Trenon does not become any less male because he will bear a child. The reveal, however, demonstrates that "there is no preexisting identity by which an act or attribute might be measured; there would be no true or false, real or distorted acts of gender, and the postulation of a true gender identity

would be revealed as a regulatory fiction" (180). Trenon adheres very well to that regulatory

fiction, but the contrast in his (revealed) body and his gender identity demonstrates the existence

of the regulatory fiction for the reader.

Nilos represents the "necessary failure" of my secondary world's gender norms (Butler

185). Due to the gendered restrictions on professions, Nilos chooses to be a man in order to

apprentice to the master healer, despite feeling that he is, or ought to be, a woman. His best

friend, Larik, and his lover, Trenon, know about his feelings but don't understand them. For

them, Nilos is one of "those 'incoherent' or 'discontinuous' gendered beings who appear to be

persons but who fail to conform to the gendered norms of cultural intelligibility by which

persons are defined" (23). In one ending, Nilos travels to the city and encounters a group of

people who feel as he does. Through their clothing choices, they disrupt the gender binary, and

they welcome Nilos by demonstrating to him a multitude of gender possibilities:

> When Lethinil emerges from her sitting room, Rythel drags Nilos
> in front of her. "Nilos is ono," he says.
>
> A shout goes up from the center table. Several of them break into
> whistles, a bright bird's harmony echoing a child's coming of age,
> the liquid notes melding a boy's rite with a girl's.
>
> Lethinil takes Nilos's hands in hers, a soft squeeze rather than a
> trader's clasp. "There's a blue tunic in the winter press," she says.
>
> "I have a kerchief," someone says, waving its bright green flag.
>
> Another adds, "I'll see if I can find a belt," and starts tugging at a
> neighbour's knot. The group dissolves into laughter, everyone
> snatching at each other's women's tokens to offer to Nilos. Their
> wild motley suddenly makes sense, if this is how they welcome
> newcomers. (Osborne "affirm")

In the alternate ending, however, Nilos stays in the village as a man. Through multiple storylines

which cover the same time span, but from different points of view and through the lens of

different choices, "the rules governing signification not only restrict, but enable the assertion of alternative domains of cultural intelligibility, i.e. new possibilities for gender that contest the rigid code of hierarchical binaries" (Butler 185). As Foucault argues in *The History of Sexuality*, the world's regulatory discourses cannot be exceeded or erased, but they also produce the alternative discourses that they deny and forbid.

Since the clothing styles in the secondary do not match our primary world's fashions, I had to consider how the reader would first recognize and then respond to the characters' change of clothing. I created cognitive estrangement by demonstrating how the characters feel about and respond to their clothing, since "what we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylizations of the body" (Butler *xv*). The reader accepts the affective impact of clothing on the characters, even as they recognize that the clothing styles themselves are arbitrary.

Butler argues that gay men's drag performances illustrate the constructed and imitative structure of gender. She posits that the "performance of drag plays upon the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed" (175). Drag queens' excessive performance of femininity presented a "hyperbolic parody" which "[makes] us look again at what we think is natural" (Spargo 56). According to Butler, "if the anatomy of the performer is already distinct from the gender of the performer, and both of those are distinct from the gender of the performance, then the performance suggests a dissonance not only between sex and performance, but sex and gender, and gender and performance" (175). What drag reveals is that any apparent "heterosexual coherence" is actually an imitative and contingent (175). *Figuera* has a similar goal, to re-examine our collective presumptive defaults, but through a different tool. Rather than parody, *Figuera* presents a defamiliarizing element which provides an

earnest alternative, but one which, like drag, centers queerness. As I discuss below, any character may or may not be performing the gender that the default reader would ordinarily assign to them based on their anatomy.

Figuera centers characters with marginalized sexualities and gender identities. The system of laws and traditions in my secondary world are productive of resistances, faults, and failures within that world. I use these troubled sites as analogies for—and within—our current discourse of sexuality. Like Butler, I advocate for extending "legitimacy to bodies that have been regarded as false, unreal, and unintelligible" (*xxiii*). I create such legitimacy through fiction: through representation. I focus on characters whose bodies and desires are non-normative both within my secondary world and within our primary world. I use cognitive estrangement to depict their struggles as unfamiliar and arbitrary. Analogously, I demonstrate that the gender discourse of our primary world is as confining and heavy-handed. My work considers contemporary anxieties concerning trans bodies, queer sexualities, and gender performances. I seek to create intelligibility for marginalized bodies by creating a secondary world in which such bodies are centered. My text challenges default reading strategies using cognitive estrangement.

The Default Reader

I worked to center and privilege a queer reading in *Figuera*. Centering a queer reading moves beyond positioning *Figuera* as a text which focuses on queer characters and relationships. By depicting gender as completely, absolutely, and unproblematically unlinked from the body, I challenged the default reader's assumptions about straightness and heterosexuality.

Hanna Kubowitz, a queer scholar specializing in twentieth century British drama, formulated the idea of the default reader to address the unexamined discursive underpinnings of Wolfgang Iser's reader response theory. Iser theorized that texts' meaning must arise from their reception (*ix*). The author constructs a fictional world which includes the "implied reader", that is, "a textual structure anticipating the presence of a recipient" (Iser 34). Iser presents the implied reader as an abstract role which can accommodate multiple individual readers and individual readings (34). Rudolf Kuenzli, in a review of Iser's *The Act of Reading*, writes that texts consist of "the textual strategies, perspectives, and schemata created by the author, and the aesthetic object realized by the reader in the act of concretization" (49). The implied reader actualizes the text's meaning through the act of reading (Iser 35). However, Iser explicitly disregards the implied reader's historical context in order to include all potential readers, not only those who are contemporaneous with the text's production (34). Kubowitz critiques Iser's implied reader insofar as Iser's implied reader is defined "not by an empirical outside reality, but by the text itself" (Iser 34). Kubowitz argues that the reader must be historically situated, and therefore steeped in their dominant cultural discourses. These discourses determine which traits texts "typically, and usually implicitly, presupposes in a reader" (207). The implied reader, in other words, is not innocent, nor can the implied reader exist pre-discursively—especially since the implied reader is a textual structure which the author constructs by composing a "system of

perspectives" on the fictional world (Iser 35). This is not to say that texts inevitably address the default reader, but only that without deliberate intervention, the implied reader will most likely inhabit certain default settings (Kubowitz 208).

Two of the default settings that Kubowitz describes are "having an unambiguous gender and a straight sexual orientation" (210). Kubowitz theorizes that queer readers seeking to identify with characters and narrative structures must therefore appropriate heterosexual narratives; they must read themselves into the text. The idea of writing a marginalized identity into textual existence arises from critical race theory. One formative example is Nowile Rooks' argument that due to Black women's intersecting oppressions, there is little historical material available about Black women's lives under slavery (51). Rooks, an African American Studies and feminist scholar, asserts that Black women writers address their absence by writing fictional accounts of Black women slaves, informed by their own lived experiences and their inherited oral family histories. They create fictional narratives which repair a gap in historical scholarship, and thereby "write themselves into existence" (Rooks 62). Kubowitz describes how queer readers perform similar work by appropriating default heterosexual narrative positions: readers "who are habitually excluded by texts tend to devise and employ strategies that enable them to feel included in texts that at first glance exclude them" (205). She contends that queer reading and writing strategies are those which, respectively, readers use to "unearth queer meanings in ostensibly straight texts" and "convey queer meanings without addressing them explicitly" (202). Kubowitz positions such strategies as a means of evading censorship and repression. Authors can obliquely offer representations of queerness that would otherwise be forbidden (202). Kubowitz's writing focuses on texts in which readers with knowledge of queer culture and language practices can decode through a queer reading of the text. She gives the example of

gender switching, "reading a female character as a male character, or vice versa, in order to decode an ostensibly heterosexual couple as a homosexual couple" (202). As a result, default readers tend to find a straight meaning in the text, whereas queer readers may discover an equally valid queer reading in the text. Yet under these conditions, the default reader and default reading strategies remain centered and untroubled: default readers do not need to perform the labour of altering reading strategies in order to include themselves.

Queer texts seeking to decenter the default reader, then, must perform two tasks: first, focus on queer characters and narratives; and second, disrupt default reading strategies which presume heterosexuality and cissexuality. *Figuera* accomplishes the first through a focus on characters experiencing different levels of discomfort and resistance to their assigned genders. Trenon identifies strongly as a man; Nilos (despite his male gender) identifies strongly as a woman; and Kell, a child when the story opens, has no strong preference. At the moment of Kell's gender choice, the narrative diverges, to follow either Kelil, a woman, or Kelol, a man. Kell is physically and emotionally comfortable as either gender, an unlikely equanimity in our world. *Figuera* portrays protagonists both coming out and staying closeted; entering relationships for love or for social convenience; choosing to parent or not. In each case, these challenges are focalized through queer characters.

However, changing the default settings of a text is not sufficient to destabilize a default reading. Though my text centers queer characters, default reading strategies may still apply: the default reader may accept a narrative about queer characters, while maintaining the presumption that the rest of the secondary world conforms to their expectations. *Figuera* centers a queer reading by emphasizing the dissonance between characters' physical bodies, their performance of (and acceptance of) socially constructed gender, and their sense of self, which includes romantic

and sexual desire. The resulting dissonance between characters' gender roles and their biological capacities constantly requires the reader to re-evaluate what they think they know about each character's physical embodiment.

Figuera's central homosexual relationship is between Trenon and Nilos, who fell in love when they were still agendered children. Before coming of age, their relationship was considered acceptable, even charming. When Trenon, the elder, became a man, and Nilos was still a child, their trysts were mostly seen as immature, not consonant with an adult's responsibilities. But once Nilos came of age as a man, the relationship became queer, and unacceptable. What the characters in *Figuera* don't notice or even recognize is that Trenon and Nilos are what we would call female-bodied and male-bodied, respectively. The possibility of a relationship that is simultaneously homosexual in terms of the fictional world and heterosexual in terms of our own creates dissonance for the reader. It renders a heterosexual union unintelligible even as it legitimates a (potentially) homosexual union. The default reader must employ what I call "straight reading strategies" to understand Trenon and Nilos as heterosexual.

Trenon recognizes that he is attracted to men—men in the sense meant by his community and society. He self-identifies as gay, or, in the language of the novel, as an invert. I chose "invert" as the secondary world's word for gay as a paradoxical gesture to Freud's definition of the invert as someone who "fails to 'achieve' the genital norm" (Butler 36). As Butler describes, Wittig challenges Freud's description of the genital norm. She "[deploys] 'inversion' as a critical reading practice, valorizing precisely those features of an undeveloped sexuality designated by Freud" (Butler 36). I wield this word ironically, since Trenon, despite being culturally and socially homosexual, is textually able to achieve Freud's "norm" of heterosexual reproduction.

Nilos, on the other hand, rejects the label of invert. He identifies as a woman, and longs to be

seen and recognized as such by the people around him. The only reason he became a man when

he came of age is because it was necessary in order to study the profession he loves. Nilos's

identification as a transgender woman complicates and challenges his relationship with Trenon.

In writing love scenes between Nilos and Trenon, I work towards Foucault's emphasis on

"bodies and pleasures" as a site of resistance to the deployment of specific sexes and sexualities

(157):

> Nilos clings to him when Trenon holds him. Skin to skin, Trenon
> can finally give back the breath that Nilos so badly needs. With
> one palm, Trenon marks the dip of Nilos's spine, the curve of
> shoulder into nape, and pulls him into a kiss. (Osborne "entwine").

I wrote love scenes which could apply equally to people with a variety of genital

arrangements. In these scenes, I disperse erotic investment across the body, focusing on sites of

pleasure other than the genital (Butler 90). I structured the narrative so that Trenon and Nilos

make love before I revealed Trenon's ability to become pregnant. I create gaps where what is

"not said" in the text stimulates the reader to fill in suppositions and deductions (Iser 167). The

reader's imaginary construction of the characters' bodies may arise from the characters'

described genders rather than from any physicality overtly depicted in the text. Readers confront

their misperceptions later in the story, when "the explicit is itself transformed when the implicit

has been brought to light" (Iser 169). In one of the scenes where Trenon realizes he is pregnant,

readers must re-evaluate his gender in light of his now-apparent biological anatomy, and must

suddenly take into account Trenon's matter-of-fact understanding of his own reproductive cycle:

"He was still a child when he first needed rags and by now he can set the moon by them"

(Osborne "summer"). I challenge the default reader's assumptions by revealing that a crass,

tactless, bitter, intelligent person also has a uterus.

This moment is more likely to resonate with rather than challenge the queer reader. As Elijah Edelman and Lal Zimann describe in their study of transgender men's linguistic self-descriptions, trans men and transmasculine people may work to discursively frame their genitals "as viable and desirable features of their male bodies" (674). For these individuals, identifying as men is what makes their anatomy male (680). They challenge characterizations of their bodies as lacking or incomplete (686). Similarly, Nilos's gender dysphoria does not concern his genitals, but centers on clothing and the speech acts others use to define him. When he feels alienated from his body, he never addresses his secondary sex characteristics, but his hands, "man's hands, as healing is a man's work," because they deny him access to a woman's role (Osborne "envy"). *Figuera* refuses the "hyper-embodiment" of dominant discourses about trans bodies, in which there is a "violence of inspection, the privileging of the visual over the figurative" (Halberstam qtd. in Edelman & Zimman 676). In *Figuera*, identification, social cues, and choice trump physicality.

For the protagonists of *Figuera*, the disruption that the reader perceives between embodiment and gender does not exist. Yet these discontinuities require the default reader to constantly re-orient their understanding of the text. Cynthia Lewis, an educator studying children's identification with middle-grade books that deal with racism, suggests that some texts intentionally distance the default reader. She concludes that when default readers are decentered, "the text heightens the reader's self-consciousness and text consciousness" (263). I work to create this text-consciousness in the reader both by centering queer characters and disrupting the default reader's tendency to identify with them. These two techniques position *Figuera* as a critical fiction.

Critical Fiction

I situate *Figuera* as a critical fiction through my artistic practice, as hooks establishes in "Narratives of Struggle." hooks' work on postmodern critical race theory emphasizes personal voices which challenge established hegemonic narratives. Maria del Guadalupe Davidson and George Yancy, in their *Critical Perspectives on bell hooks*, outline hooks' "*lived* context of challenging silences" and how that led her to develop an "ethical stance, pedagogical vision, political sensibilities around the importance of transgression" (1, emphasis original). hooks asserted her politics by speaking up in environments which demanded her silence, and by carving out a "creative space" in which she was able to become a writer (2). Davidson and Yancy characterize hooks as "relentlessly questioning" (1). hooks' use and interrogation of critical theory allowed her to escape the role of observer and act as a critical subject (3). Her work demands a joining of theory and practice: writing which acts as critique.

My work embodies the traits that hooks considers essential to critical fictions. First, I confront and challenge readers' default assumptions about gender and disrupt traditional reading strategies. *Figuera* presents an alternate way of conceiving of gender and sexuality through the speculative fiction convention of a secondary world. Second, the work's form as interactive fiction challenges the reader to read iteratively and recursively. Most importantly, however, I assert my position as an author within a "community of resistance" (hooks 60), linking my creative work to an ongoing political movement. The Twine revolution refers to an outpouring of new games written by queer and trans creators using the Twine authoring system (Short "Brief History" np).

"Narratives of Struggle" appears in *Critical Fictions*, an anthology of essays dedicated to a multivocal approach to cultural identity and systems of oppression. hooks' contribution

prioritizes conscious, political resistance to dominant discourses. hooks' discussion focuses on African American and African diaspora writers whose texts challenge colonialist and racist narratives. She argues that a critical fiction is one which "effectively critically intervenes and challenges dominant/hegemonic narratives by compelling audiences to actually transform the way they read and think" (57). Furthermore, the author of a critical fiction "makes the conscious decision to locate her work in the realm of oppositional cultural production" (58). Authors of critical fictions make conscious artistic decisions which center otherwise marginalized identities and narratives, in an effort to decolonize both their own and their readers' imaginations. hooks describes the ability to imagine difference as key to a resistant artistic practice. Authors of critical fictions, then, decenter the default reader, but they also go further, to change reading practices.

I argue that hooks' concept of critical fictions can apply in analogous fashion to texts written by authors occupying other marginalized positions. hooks herself, in *Writing Beyond Race*, has stated that her intention in her writings has been to challenge domination, whether on the basis of "race, gender, class, sexuality, and/or religious differences" (1). Other theorists have broadened the scope of hooks' work to include queer theory. For example, Ebony Elizabeth Thomas and Amy Stornaiuolo, working at the intersection of critical race theory and fan studies, explore how young people "restory" dominant narratives (313). They focus on a critical race approach, but they extend their remarks to queer readers, as when they write, "we note that women, people of color, and other marginalized readers have always had to read themselves into canons that excluded them" (317). Evoking Kubowitz's default reader, they continue, "canonical texts historically assumed a White male readership as their imagined audience" (Thomas & Stornaiuolo 317). Like people of colour, queer readers have a similar need and drive to, in

33

Rooks' words, "write themselves into existence" (62). Echoing Rooks's statement, Sean

O'Connor, a theatre studies scholar, writes that queer readers "have had no choice but to read

ourselves in works about heterosexual relationships" (qtd. in Kubowitz 206). Writing the

marginalized self into existence and decentering the default reader are both elements of creating

critical fictions.

Critical fictions are intentionally and imaginatively transgressive, center marginalized

voices, and encourage alternative reading strategies (hooks 55). I see these elements as

foundational to my artistic practice as a queer writer, as when I entwine form and content to

destabilize characters' apparent gender. *Figuera*'s form as interactive fiction, and as a Twine

game more specifically, addresses players of interactive fiction games, who are familiar with the

conventions, while providing a locus of challenge for readers of linear narrative fiction. Because

Figuera has multiple storylines, I vary characters' gendered descriptions in different narrative

lines:

> Chiason himself is a tall, broad man, with a peek of woman's green
> at his belt: a kerchief. (Osborne "askew")
>
> Chiasin, tall and imposing in her flowing green tunic, a man's red
> kerchief tucked into her belt, smiles at Nyls and leaves him to
> choose which room he'll claim. (Osborne "his own")

Creative decisions such as these enhance the characters' androgyny or gender ambiguity,

furthering the thematic foundation of my secondary world.

hooks cautions that readers of critical fiction "cannot approach the work assuming that

they already possess the language of access, or that the text will mirror realities they already

know and understand" (57). She uses the example of African diaspora writers using creoles or

patois in their fiction, in order to more intimately include the audiences that are familiar with

those dialects (56). Readers unfamiliar with those modes of speech must actively strive for meaning. They are not excluded, but the demands on their interpretive abilities increases. Similarly, language acts as an estranging factor for the reader in *Figuera*. Language provides an important window into how secondary worlds both uphold and resist discourses of gender. When Wittig chose to use *elles* as the universal signifier for groups of women and men in *Les Guérillères*, she wrote, "the goal of this approach [...] is not to feminize the world but to make the categories of sex obsolete in language" (qtd. in Butler 153). Wittig challenges the default reader by breaking French language conventions and enhancing women's contribution and leadership of groups. I employ an analogous creative strategy, one which is geared towards a greater impact in English. In *Figuera*, I avoided using gendered pronouns for children in the narrative. This technique is initially invisible, since names can be substituted for pronouns in most sentence structures. Even in Kell's point of view, before adulthood, I avoid "he" or "she." However, gradually the lack becomes apparent, especially once the reader becomes aware of how childhood functions in the narrative. Only when the reader encounters particular moments when characters use the "ono" pronoun for children does the gap become apparent, as when Trenon calls Kell a "child bride": "The ugly phrase stitches a child's ono inflection to the feminine bride" (Osborne "challenge"). The narrative does not provide a linguistic gloss of Trenon's words, but it does make clear that the language he is speaking functions differently than English. Pronouns, ordinarily a closed class in English (van Gelderen np), now include a gender-neutral third-person option.

This language technique demonstrates the productivity of a third gender category. The narrative, in which some characters—particularly Nilos—grow away from the gender binary, benefits from access to a gender-neutral pronoun. I chose *ono*, a Slavic personal pronoun (used in

Czech, Polish, and others), to fill this need. Oxana Skornikova explores the use of "ono" as a pronoun. She writes that "ono" can be glossed as "it," but it is also a gender-neutral pronoun used for people (35). I felt the word's rhythm fit well in my fiction, as in sentences where it could replace "child" in the sense of an endearment: "There, there, child," becomes "there, there, ono." But it can also mark an insult, as when an older sibling or parent dismisses a child's concerns by calling them "ono," reminding them of their lack of status.

The scope of my project prevented me from inventing an entire language, a process known as conlanging[3]. Marie Brennan, a fantasy writer, argues that constructed names provide an important glimpse into a secondary world's social structure (np). I shaped the characters' names (as well as place names) to give readers insight into the language structure and how it maps onto gender construction for my characters. Children's names have fewer syllables than adult names, and adult names are gendered with an infix in the ultimate syllable. Kell is a child's name; Kelol is masculine; Kelil is feminine. When Nilos arrives in the city, he joins a group of people who fight against the binary stricture of gender through clothing and language choices. Butler argues that "language ranks among the concrete and contingent practices and institutions maintained by the choices of individuals and, hence, weakened by the collective action of choosing individuals" (35). Nilos chooses to take a child's pronoun as his adult, gender-neutral pronoun, and thereby uses the language that once trapped him to free himself. He becomes a member of the radical group through a language practice: he aligns himself with their collective choice to use the gender-neutral pronoun, and by choosing a name that reflects his adult status without revealing his gender: Nyls. To complicate Nyls's gender presentation for the reader, I randomly assign players to otherwise largely identical paths where Nyls is referred to in the text

3 Sarah Higley outlines the history of hobbyist language constructors in "Audience, Uglossia, and CONLANG: Inventing Languages on the Internet". Conlanging is a common genre technique among fantasy and science fiction authors.

as either "he" or "she." Yet despite these paths' similarity at the sentence level, the effect of Nyls's pronoun on the reader is profound. Nyls's relationship with Kelol can be read as either heterosexual or homosexual, and the emotional beats carry different weight depending on which line the player experiences.

Language plays a regulatory role in my secondary world, as shown in the rite that marks children's passage into adulthood. During the coming of age rite, a child's name is replaced its gendered alternative: "Nils removes childhood's clothes and stands naked as a man's robe settles over his shoulders. [...] *Nilos*, his family murmurs, as his robe falls into place, the cuffs a shade long at his wrists" (Osborne "envy"). Butler writes that "the 'naming' of sex is an act of domination and compulsion, an institutionalized performance that both creates and legislates social reality by requiring the discursive/perceptual construction of bodies in accord with principles of sexual difference" (147). In my secondary world, the 'naming' of sex occurs when children come of age, in a rite presided over by the world's version of a lawyer, the advocat. The child's adult body, and adult gender, is constructed in a moment of collective community action. The coincidence of puberty is incidental and irrelevant to a person's maturity and adulthood. The advocat sings the child's gender and thereby brings it into being through a formal contract. The child disappears and the gendered adult subject appears in a ritual speech act. This fictional depiction reflects the power of names for transgender people in our world. Julia Sinclair-Palm, a theorist studying trans issues as they relate to language, notes that transgender people often change their names as an early part of a transition process, and may think of their original/birth names as "dead names" (5). *Figuera*'s focus on naming as access to a social identity echoes current struggles among queer communities. I create a fiction which includes queer readers while potentially exceeding the identification of straight audiences.

The figurative language in *Figuera* is constructed to echo the society's social roles and beliefs. I minimized the description of binaries, such as mind/body, which are endemic in modern English. Since children in my secondary world represent a third (a)gender, I focused on creating a metaphorical structure which emphasized a ternary instead. I created a belief system about how the world is organized which relies on three, rather than two, elements. These are the body (physical), the ghost (mental/spiritual), and the breath (the link between the two). Nilos's master Tereos describes how this ternary system is employed in healing rituals:

> the body needs nourishment, requires water to drink. But the ghost
> tastes; the ghost takes pleasure in slaking thirst. So the body and
> ghost together breathe. Song speaks to the breath and breath carries
> the song. But no song heals without addressing each alone and all
> together. (Osborne "prudence")

The ternary is relational, and also productive in describing the physical setting. A home consists of the men's and women's areas, linked by the family room. I developed metaphors and descriptions which proceeded from the ternary system.

While characters challenge the gender role constrictions espoused in their society, no one questions the ternary metaphysics. The characters in the city who change their gender or dress "askew" never question the existence of the three-term gender system. They simply co-opt the third term, ono, meaning child, to encompass their queered gender performance. The figurative language in *Figuera* links the characters' struggle around gender expression and sexuality with the theoretical texts I used to craft the narrative's premise. Characters' resistance against the gender discourse does not break the discourse, but shifts the power relations that the characters take part in. In some endings, Nilos remains a man; in others, he crosses the divide chooses a femme androgyny. Materially, the narrative, which branches and splits only to reconnect, offers multiple endings for each character.

hooks cautions that not all authors from marginalized groups write critical fictions, or that a person who writes one critical fiction will always do so (58). Not all speculative fiction or all interactive fiction are critical fictions; quite to the contrary, many such works maintain or support the status quo. *Figuera*'s context, and my own intentions, however, demonstrate my commitment to this political work. *Figuera* makes possible and available non-hegemonic narratives and methods of reading practice. As importantly, I identify ways in which my work exists within a political moment in the gaming community: the Twine revolution.

The Twine Revolution

Anthropy, an independent digital game creator, argues in *Rise of the Videogame Zinesters* that the videogame industry exclusively targets an audience of young white men: "Games are designed by a small, male-dominated culture, and marketed to a small, male-dominated culture, which, in turn, produces the next small, male-dominated generation of game designers" (25). Anthropy's manifesto launched what has come to be known as the Twine revolution, which game creator and critic Emily Short chronicles as occurring from 2010-2013, "with ongoing effects" ("Brief History" np, *c.f.* Friedhoff). For Anthropy, the independent community of game developers using accessible authoring systems and game making programs holds more potential for minority voices to be heard. She chooses to create independent games because "as a queer transgendered woman [...] I have to strain to find any game that's about a queer woman, to find any game that resembles my own experience" (1-2). Twine games range from ones which are explicitly didactic, of the "walk in someone else's shoes" variety, to highly surreal and metaphorical. Twine revolution games often use constraint and ambiguity to challenge the reader's narrative expectations.

In 2014, Quinn, an independent game developer, submitted her Twine game *Depression Quest* to Greenlight, the community review section of Steam, a popular app and game downloading site. The game was applauded by gaming journalists and the media more broadly, winning Best Narrative at the Boston Festival of Indie Games, among other prizes (Quinn *et al*. np). However, some Steam users denied that Quinn's creation could be considered a "game," as the *Guardian*'s games journalist Keith Stuart writes (np). Subsequently, an ex-partner accused Quinn of exchanging sexual favours for positive reviews of her games (Quinn np). A constituency of self-identified gamers latched on to the issue, decrying what they termed the lack

of ethics in gaming journalism. However, this stance proved to be a front for harassing Quinn,

harassment that largely focused on her as a queer woman, and which impugned her authenticity

as a gamer and game developer. Quinn became a target of death and rape threats by a semi-

anonymous group of gamers online, who eventually coalesced around the identity of

"Gamergaters." Gamergaters used social media to attack those in the gaming community who

defended Quinn, including Anita Sarkeesian, known for her feminist critique of video games;

Brianna Wu, a game studio founder who mocked the harassers on Twitter; and journalists

Amanda Marcotte and Jessica Valenti, who wrote critically about the Gamergaters' actions

(McKeon np). To this day, Quinn writes that she remains the target of threats, and has been

unable to attend events and conferences in her field (np). Legal remedies have largely failed her.

The advice the police could give her is to go offline—and thereby lose access to her community

and her profession (Quinn np).

For women and queer people involved in the gaming industry, the threat and promise that

they will be subject to the same grueling abuse lives on, as journalist Lauren McKeon documents

(np). Since 2014, Gamergate has only grown. Due to Gamergaters' use of multiple

pseudonymous social media accounts, and their ongoing activity across many different online

platforms, it is difficult to create an accurate picture of the people involved, or even how

widespread the group has become (Lynch np). Yet Gamergaters' reactionary politics are clear

(Shepherd *et al*. 3). They despise anything that smacks of "political correctness" and deride their

culture war opponents as "social justice warriors." These feelings have long been present in the

gaming industry, where white male gamers expect developers to cater to their preferences in

terms of videogame plot, character design, and point of view—and the industry's corporate

developers have, thus far, largely rewarded them (Anthropy 24). But changing mores and

increasing critique from feminist gamers (women and men) had begun to erode these gamers' sense of their own importance as the industry's darlings and primary audience. Triple-A games (industry games with big budgets and high quality) began to emerge which allowed for queer romance or that centered female characters. Ashley Lynch, an independent film maker who was targeted by Gamergaters, writes of the movement's origins, "Suddenly every gamer with a vague sense of frustration about industry accusations of sexism and a memory of a few actual ethics violations in years past jumped at the chance to throw stones" (np). People who identified with Gamergate's core feelings of shattered entitlement and denied privilege were happy to continue harassing, threatening, and exposing those whose politics they disagreed with—whether or not they had originally participated in shaming Quinn. Lynch argues that Gamergaters' central ideology is "a rejection of progressive liberal politics":

> It's a backlash to women and minorities demanding to be treated
> with respect and a world that was increasingly starting to listen. It's
> anonymous groups that seek to discredit and destroy cultural
> progress for women and minorities. (np)

When women and queer game creators speak up, make space for queer narratives, and continue to name their art as "games," they reject these tactics and carve out space for marginalized voices. Gaming is a niche market, and many gamers work to keep it that way. They claim the authority to answer the question, "What is a game?"

Since this same question underlies the entirety of game studies, it is important to consider whether the gamers' claim to authority mirrors a consensus within the field. One area of contention in game studies that, on its surface, appears to map to the gamers' concerns is that of player agency. Game creators and scholars Michael Mateas and Andrew Stern define agency as occurring when "the player has actual, perceptible effects on the virtual world" (np). Agency is most clearly evident in games which center on a set of knowable rules and their application, with

a multitude of possible outcomes. Games which center on narrative tend not to be as responsive

to player action, because narrative requires that certain essential plot points are met in order that

the game as a whole manages to complete its narrative arc. The number and diversity of possible

outcomes is limited.

Beginning in the early 2000s, gaming studies scholars began to identify a split between

those studying the narratological features of videogames and those studying what digital media

scholar Janet Murray terms their "unique formalism," that is, the features that made them *games*

as opposed to other textual forms ("Last Word" np). Gonzalo Frasca was an early proponent of

studying video games' formal qualities. He asserts that Jesper Juul was the first to use ludology

in its current games-studies sense, but he connected the term to formal game studies and defined

a set of tools that would allow for the specific study of videogames ("Ludologists" np). Simon

Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Jonas Heide Smith, and Susana Tosca, in their history of games studies,

associate Frasca with the ludology school, along with several other Scandanavian researchers

including Juul and Espen Aarseth, an electronic literature theorist (216). Frasca frames ludology

as an alternative theoretical approach to game studies, arguing that that "even if [games] and

narrative do share some common elements—character, settings, events—their mechanics are

essentially different. More importantly, they also offer distinct rhetorical possibilities"

("Simulations" 222). While this may seem that he is discarding narratology, I argue that Frasca

intended ludology to provide a complementary approach alongside narratology, not a

replacement. Frasca himself downplayed any notion of a schism between the two camps,

insisting that ludologists do not and have never held "a radical position that completely

disregards narrative" ("Ludologists" np). Ludic qualities in games, such as interactivity, are

essential to the form, but an approach which uses a narratological frame is equally valid.

Scholars on both sides of the apparent divide agree that the differences between them were a matter of approach and emphasis rather than a fundamental difference of opinion. Murray, a narratologist, argues that narratologists have never denied the importance of ludologists' focus on videogames' rules and their application, but only used a different approach than formalism. She concludes that any debate between the two approaches is prevented by "too much mutual interest and agreement" ("Last Word" np). Aarseth likewise argues in *Cybertext* that the difference between ludology and narratology "is not clear-cut, and there is significant overlap between the two" (5). Most games include both formal and narratological features which inform how players approach the game, as well as how scholars study them. Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Smith, and Tosca conclude that the ludology-narratology debate was "a symptom of the struggle to define the new discipline of game studies," rather than a deep ideological divide (215). Games can be considered successful by both measures, especially when the ludic features enhance the narrative, and vice versa. As I detail below in the sections on constraint and coding, I constructed *Figuera*'s ludic features with the intention of echoing and emphasizing the narrative's thematic concerns.

I argue that the qualities that self-identified Gamergaters use to define 'gameness' have little connection with the games' formal features, but rather with their subject matter. Games about women, about mental illness, about queer lives, are sufficient cause for harassment and threats (Lynch; Stuart; Dewey). Due to the mainstream/indie split in game production, this tends to result in games which focus on rules, tactics, and player agency meeting Gamergaters' definition of 'game', while games which focus on narratives centering lived experiences do not. Player agency becomes a shibboleth to identify in-group members rather than a necessary feature of "games."

For proponents of the Twine revolution, therefore, claiming the term "game" is a feminist act: a means of claiming space to speak. Twine revolution creators have shaped a community of resistance, in which they "connect art with lived practices of struggle" (hooks 59). *Figuera* acts within this queer tradition, and joins a conversation among queer-authored texts. It centers characters who identify as queer. It raises questions of language, access, and reading strategies; it challenges dominant narratives about who or what 'counts' as acceptably queer, acceptably literature. In these ways, *Figuera* acts as a critical fiction.

Accessibility

I chose to write *Figuera* as a Twine game because of the software's accessibility as an authoring system. A self-taught and hobbyist programmer, I have an intermediate fluency in markup and style sheet languages. My approach to programming can be best described as Frankensteinian. I deconstruct examples—a website, a game, or a style sheet—and break them into their component pieces to learn how they were built. Then I construct my version by imitating the example's structure, and observing how my changes affect the final product. Iteration upon iteration, I break the examples I like until I can reliably recreate them in my own style.

Twine brings together a very straightforward, transparent level of mastery with a much larger, more powerful set of commands. Much like the Internet itself, Twine's basic functionality revolves around the link. Players' actions, including exploration, combat, and collecting items can be accomplished by clicking on the relevant link—though some creators intentionally conceal or limit the links which are available to the player. The program's graphical user interface depicts a pale grey box on blue graph paper. The box represents one passage, which opens as a new window when double-clicked. I often compose my narrative directly in the passage window. When I type words within double square brackets, [[like so]], they become links to new passages. For each link, Twine populates the visual map with a box representing the new passage, connected to the previous box by an arrow. I can manipulate the visual map by dragging and dropping the boxes. Some Twine authors create entire games with no commands except the link. However, Twine games can be intricately customized using a mix of Twine commands, cascading style sheets, and Javascript. Twine encourages experimentation. I was drawn to the software because I could be successful immediately by writing hypertextual stories

using only links, but I could also challenge my tinkerer's mindset by inserting different commands to see how they worked. Twine's interface is designed first for writers and content-creators, and second for coders and programmers. Jane Friedhoff, a game designer and interdisciplinary creative researcher, argues that "by using a passage system that mimics the corkboard-and-notecard paradigm, and by automating the underlying passage logic, Twine helps translate the game creation process to a potentially more familiar paradigm and presents artists with a new way of viewing their creative process" (4). As a writer, I found the Twine graphical user interface both accessible and inspirational.

In addition to its user-friendly graphical interface, Twine is available to download for free, making it accessible to people who cannot invest in proprietary software. Klimas created Twine as open-source software, meaning that volunteer programmers are invited to contribute to its continuing development, or to create their own versions adapted from the original code. Twine is far from the only free, open-source game authoring system available. Others include TADS and Inform7, which are used to create parser-based interactive fiction[4]. However, these authoring systems require much more vigorous study by authors (Porpentine np), and players require much more specialized reading strategies (Martens 73). Friedhoff contrasts Twine favourably with parser-based interactive fiction that requires the user to download and install specific applications (7). Creators export their finished Twine games as HTML files, which are small enough to host and distribute online, or even sent as email attachments which will open in the recipient's chosen browser. Games reviewer Michael Rougeau points out that Twine games "can be played in just about any web browser and on any machine" (np). Twine games, therefore,

4 Parsers are computer programs which analyze players' natural language text input and return programmed responses. Montfort believes that interactive fiction succeeds when the parser can "react to input meaningfully" with a continuation of the game's narrative (*Twisty* vii). Porpentine argues that parser-based games are less accessible, not only because developing parsers requires greater programming ability, but because of gatekeeping among the hobbyist gaming community, where "some say non-parser isn't interactive fiction" (np).

offer greater accessibility to players familiar with the Internet, who find clicking links intuitive. Quinn chose to write her semi-autobiographical take on her own experience of chronic depression using Twine because it offered greater accessibility to users. She explained in an interview, "You didn't have to download it, you could send it as a link to someone. The control system was very simple [...] it was about removing the barriers" (Stuart np). Creators often release their games for free or for the player's chosen price. Both creators and players benefit from Twine's accessibility.

Low barriers to creation, publication, and distribution allow independent game makers develop smaller, more personal games, often experimental in style or content. Friedhoff notes that Twine quickly became "the tool of choice for people who want to make games about topics like marginalization, discrimination, disempowerment, mental health, and LGBTQ issues" (2). Topics that mainstream games could never tackle due to concerns about marketing or appropriateness, such as gender expression and sexuality, are within reach of the independent creator. Journalist Carolyn Petit writes, "You'll probably never see a big-budget, mainstream game designed to speak primarily to young people contemplating suicide, or to people struggling with drug addiction. But Twine games can be about and for any group of people, however big or small" (np). In many cases, independent creators' quirky, off-beat approach to the question "What is a game?" allows them to spread virally and by word of mouth.

Accessibility extends beyond immediate concerns for creation and playability. Twine game developers, including Anthropy and Porpentine, link concerns for accessibility directly to a feminist and queer politics. Anthropy argues that intuitive game-making software programs allow potential creators to tell stories and write games without a computer science degree,

another investment which is beyond the means of many people (Anthropy 25). Porpentine argues

that under a capitalist system, creating for free is itself revolutionary:

> Rich white people create and we suck it up. This is an extremely
> profitable system. So they place unfair expectations on what you
> create. Tell you it's too short, too ugly, too personal, ask you why it
> doesn't resemble what already exists. [...] The system they desire is
> one where a select few create for the many, instead of the many
> creating for each other. When everyone is creating, we're
> destroying the dollar sign. (np)

In an interview with the *Guardian*'s game critic Cara Ellison, Anthropy shows a similar concern

for the barriers that prevent inclusion, both in terms of financing and in terms of game content:

> Gatekeeping is a big problem. On one hand we have a game
> industry where budgets for games are often in the millions and
> billions of dollars, which essentially guarantees that marketers
> have the last say over everything that is allowed. On the other
> hand, we have people who are making free games on their own
> time, but who are barred access from basic means of getting things
> out there because they simply can't afford to. (np)

Financial barriers and gatekeeping against minority voices are linked. Queer and trans people are

less likely to have financial power; they are also less likely to have their voices depicted in

cultural products. They need to overcome both these barriers in order to participate in game

making. These are the actions of critical fiction authors, who make "the conscious decision to

locate [their] work in the realm of oppositional cultural production" (hooks 58). They seek out

and use tools which by-pass gatekeepers, and they actively assert their right to claim space in an

arts community. These concerns mark Twine revolution creators as a community of resistance.

In situating my work as a critical fiction, and myself as a contributor to the Twine revolution, it is

important to discuss my position as a creator. I am privileged to be working in an academic

setting, where hypertextual fictions have been extensively theorized as digital literatures (Bolter

& Joyce; Howell & Yellowlees Douglas; Bell *Possible*). Many hypertext fictions, certainly those

considered canonical by scholars, were written by authors working within academia, a privileged perspective compared with trans indie game developers. Hypertext fiction authors, who tend to also be hypertext theorists, connected these texts' branched structures, open-ended narratives, and experimental style with post-structural literary theory. Critic and hypertext fiction author Stuart Moulthrop argued that "every hypertext is an instance of Barthes' text-as-network" which would eliminate "the 'patriarchal' function of author, editor, and critic" ("In the Zones" 20). Early hypertext criticism viewed the reader/player as the creator of the text, since each reading of the text would be generated by the reader's choice of links and passages. Gordon Howell and Jane Yellowlees Douglas, in a close reading of Michael Joyce's *afternoon: a story*, suggest that hypertext marked the end of the "tyranny of linear progression" (100). Moulthrop enthusiastically applauds prose that is "no longer constrained by pagination and binding" ("In the Zones" 18). Hypertext fictions were viewed as an innovative disruption of the dominance of print texts.

These claims to democracy were not fulfilled. Hypertext fiction reached its peak in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Though some creators working in electronic literatures continue to write hypertext fiction, this medium never achieved popular or widespread attention, and by 2000, interactive fiction scholar Nick Montfort declared that the "hypertext corpus has been produced; if it is to be resurrected, it will only be as part of a patchwork that includes other types of literary machines" ("Cybertext" np). I contend that this happened because hypertext fiction authoring systems, and published hypertext fiction, were not accessible to creators and audiences outside of academia.

The accessibility of hypertext fictions suffers on at least three fronts. Michael Joyce, a hypertext author and theorist, and Jay Bolter, a programmer and new media scholar, developed

the authoring system Storyspace together. Storyspace became the software of choice for hypertext fiction authors. The program cost $300 when it was first released, and still costs $150 to purchase today ("Storyspace" np). Hypertext fictions authored with Storyspace cost in the range of $20-$30 to purchase and play. This price is comparable to a hardcover novel, and a significant investment when many other electronic texts are available for free or under a $5 price point. Second, early canonical hypertext fictions are difficult to access due to software deprecation. I have been unable to read seminal hypertext fictions, including as Joyce's *afternoon: a story*, because they aren't compatible with modern computer systems. Fortunately, several of Joyce's other works such as *Twelve Blue* have been ported to modern formats and remain accessible. Yet most crucially, hypertext fiction lacks accessibility because it is deliberately positioned as "highbrow" compared with other digital texts.

The post-structuralist hypertext fictions which have been canonized by scholars represent an experimental, literary perspective. Interactive fiction prospers among a community of hobbyists and tends to be linked with a more popular aesthetic. Interactive fiction developed from text adventure games in which a heroic "you" explored unknown spaces, battled wizards, and gathered treasure. Interactive fiction encompasses a wide range of genres, including fantasy, science fiction, and mystery. Hypertext fiction authors and theorists positioned their texts in opposition to interactive fiction. Bolter and Joyce were aware of interactive fiction when they released Storyspace, but considered it a lesser example of digital literature: "the text of the current games is simple-minded, but the method of presentation is not. This method of presentation can now be applied to serious fiction" (42). Ziegfeld suggested that interactive fiction had the potential to be read as a new genre (or medium), but he regrets that "interactive fiction's reality is disappointing because it is often associated with adventure software" (358).

These dismissals of popular and genre texts acted to widen the highbrow/lowbrow divide between hypertext fiction and interactive fiction. Storyspace remains popular among poets and new media creators, but has not been widely adopted among interactive fiction creators. By contrast, Twine has been variously described as empowering, democratic, and DIY (Heaven; Harvey; Hudson; Compton & Mateas). Its technical features have supported its political deployment in the Twine revolution.

I position myself as both an academic and a Twine game creator writing popular genre texts. By theorizing Twine games and the Twine revolution, I demonstrate how accessible and popular texts represent an important, emerging digital literature. I work to amplify the voices of trans indie game creators within an academic context, particularly by respecting and centering their self-identification as gamers and game creators. Porpentine, for example, claims Twine games as interactive fiction: "If the words can be interacted with, it's interactive fiction" (np). Anthropy speaks more broadly about videogames or digital games and encourages her readers to consider themselves game creators. The reason for this is one of inclusion—another form of accessibility. Through these acts of naming, Anthropy hopes to broaden and exemplify a "plurality of voices" among gamers (8). I perform similar work of naming, and of claiming, when I identify *Figuera* as an interactive fiction game in the school of the Twine revolution. My political stance in favour of accessibility shows my commitment to "alternate sites of literary production" (hooks 59). I will release *Figuera* under a Creative Commons remix license (Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License). The license terms state, "You may rewrite, remix, redistribute, tweak, and build upon *Figuera* non-commercially, as long as you credit Heather Osborne and license your new creations under identical terms" (Osborne "license"). *Figuera* will be available for free, but also available to any creator who

chooses to further intervene in the story. Anyone can download the HTML file and load it into

their instantiation of Twine to view its current structure and make changes of their own. The

license thereby becomes part of the text's materiality; it shapes and structures how players are

invited to participate in the text. As a creator, I first adopted Twine because of its accessibility as

software, but the Twine games I encountered have inspired how I frame *Figuera* as a queer and

feminist text.

Creative Writing Praxis

Choosing Twine as an authoring system shaped the content, themes, and materiality of *Figuera*. I used a practice-based approach to incorporating Twine commands and multimodal elements. To illustrate: I wrote an early draft of *Figuera* as a linear narrative, and only after I learned about Twine did I realize that *Figuera* needed a branching structure. The decision at the core of the story is that the characters must choose one of two adult genders. When I reached Kell's choice to become a man or a woman, I wrestled with my initial choice for Kelil to become a woman. Would the story would be more complex if Kelol chose—apparently against his own interests—to become a man? In a novel, I would make the choice as the author, and whatever I decided would foreclose the story on the reader's behalf. The more I worked out the possible events that might follow in a novel's narrative order, I regretted the half of the story that would be discarded. I realized that both halves needed to be told. In order not to privilege one gender choice over the other, both Kelil and Kelol's journeys needed to be part of the story. Using Twine allowed me to accommodate both possibilities. The structure of a Twine game echoed the thematic concerns of my text. Once I decided to split the story at this decision point, other bifurcations suggested themselves, each based on the characters as I had developed them. As Kell's arc is defined by the choice to become either a woman or a man, so is Nilos's by his choice to leave his healing apprenticeship, and Trenon's by his choice of whether to have Nilos's baby. By creating characters that might plausibly choose either path set before them, I added complexity to *Figuera*'s characterization and plot.

As Jaishree Odin writes in her close reading of Stephanie Strickland's digital poetry, I became "aware of how medium specific possibilities and constraints shape a text" (np). Twine games are generally written in short, spare scenes. Their opening passages may contain no more

than a fragmented sentence offering a multitude of choices. For example, Porpentine's *metrolith*

opens with "The [[metrolith]], vast and stony, rises from the mist" (np). Three descriptions of

possible characters follow, each only a sentence long. When player refreshes the opening

passage, the three possible characters are replaced by three others. The link [[metrolith]] leads to

a slightly expanded description, but still less than fifty words, again in fragmented sentences:

> smooth stone sides—something like the exterior of a valley, crater, colosseum, a city of carved cliffs
>
> holes that could be windows, caves, erosion
>
> towers worn inscrutable by weather
>
> a steep ascent of rubble (Porpentine *metrolith* np)

As a novelist, I was accustomed to developing my openings on a more expansive scale. I needed

to balance the two styles—long and intricate enough to establish my worldbuilding for narrative

readers, and yet short enough, with enough gaps in meaning, to intrigue Twine game players. I

cut and reshaped the opening considerably to make my game accessible to the reading strategies

employed by both audiences, which deeply affected my writing style. I moved away from

extensive description and towards a more frugal voice which left gaps, like puzzles, for the

player to solve.

Figuera's design evolved "in tandem with the text," as artist Anne Burdick writes about

the process of developing the materiality of postmodern literary critic N. Katherine Hayles'

Writing Machines (140). As I developed *Figuera*'s rural setting, I decided to enhance the

descriptions by incorporating images of the route the characters take from the mountains to the

plains. I took the photographs which accompany the story during a day hike from Highway 940,

south of the Highwood Pass, across the Highwood River, and up to the base of Mount Odlum[5].

5 The Highwood River and the route described herein are part of the Blackfoot Tribes Traditional Territory, of
particular importance to the Kainai Nation ("History" np).

The images appear in the background, and are intended to complement but not overwhelm the text. Players may recognize that certain images denote certain locations, and thus have a visual clue to the setting before reading the passage text. As each location is visited at different times by the three main characters, I have used three similar photographs for each location to indicate the difference in point of view. When the player switches among point of view characters, they will see a similar, but not identical, view of the same area. All passages consist of black text on a textured grey background, but each point of view character has a slightly different background—a visual clue to point of view, which is useful when a link leads to a passage with a different point of view. Visual and audio design in Twine games offers a method of establishing the game's genre, setting, and mood. My photographs reinforce a common fantasy trope, the pre-industrial rural setting.

In addition to these multimodal elements, I used design to emphasize *Figuera*'s narrative coherency. *Figuera* does not require players to solve puzzles to advance through the game, nor is it structured as a maze. Therefore, I created a visual design that centers the text and establishes a sense of flow and progression for the player. My work tends towards longer, more complex passages than many Twine games, so I favoured a clear, clean, readable design in order to minimize player attrition. Using cascading style sheets, I styled the Twine passage as a box with rounded corners, which has the visual effect of leading the player's eye back towards the text, rather than off the page. The scrollbar is unobtrusive, being visible only during active scrolling. Links are styled differently from other text in order to make them clear. There are no hidden links that a player has to hunt for using mouseover. Links which lead to subsequent passages are green and situated at the bottom of the current passage. Links which expand descriptions or elaborate the narrative with further explanations are blue, underlined, and situated within the

passage. These links, which provide hints and embellishments for the player, can be toggled on and off globally. I use these hint links to amplify my secondary worldbuilding by calling players' attention to important names and concepts. The game's visual design reinforces its genre and its central themes.

Each draft of *Figuera* was accompanied by changes and refinements in the game's design. As an interactive fiction game, *Figuera* can be called a "technotext," created through "recursive feedback loops between form and content," as Hayles and Jessica Pressman describe. Hayles and Pressman, a media theory critic, advocate for a medium-specific analysis of texts, which includes scrutiny of the texts' materiality. I programmed *Figuera*'s appearance; which passages were available to the player; how transitions between passages manifest; and in which passages the player has access to extradiegetic commands. These considerations are, as Hayles would have them, intensely *material*; they are intended to manipulate the player's perception and interaction with the text in order to create a certain affect or an atmosphere which enhances the work. In order to create *Figuera*, I needed to be "multilingual" and conversant in the programming possibilities provided by my chosen authoring system, as Strickland contends ("Hypertext" 92). I wrote in a fluent mixture of Twine commands and English. Knowing what effect I hoped my writing would achieve, I switched back and forth between narrative and code to accomplish that goal. I used code to make material design decisions, as well as authoring decisions about the variety and changeability of the passages' narrative content.

I constructed *Figuera*'s branching structure to create a profusion of events. The various choices are braided into sequences which run parallel to each other. The majority of the passages end with links to one to four possible subsequent passages. The previous passage (a step backwards in the player's history) is also available. Each sequence begins from the opening

57

passage's inciting incident and follows through on different versions of the consequences. Twine, like all authoring systems, offers creators trade-offs in terms of the available commands and which features are easier or more difficult to implement[6]. I used Twine commands primarily to control the player's ability to access the text. Players cannot, like curious mystery readers, jump ahead to the final passage to discover who the murderer is. All passages in *Figuera* are designed to flow into those which follow. Passages display different text depending on the player's history of previous passages. If the player chooses a passage in which a character acts selfishly, then the player's future choices are constrained to display paths which are consonant with the consequences of the character's action. The player narrows the possible choices as they proceed, gradually funneling into a single ending. A player may not notice the text's constraints until they revisit a passage and find it changed. Rereading also allows players to access a passage again, but within a different context. Aarseth writes that users who encounter cybertexts[7] are

> constantly reminded of inaccessible strategies and paths not taken, voices not heard. Each decision will make some parts of the text more, and others less, accessible, and [the player] may never know the exact results of [their] choices; that is, exactly what [they] missed. [Inaccessibility] does not imply ambiguity but, rather, an absence of possibility—an aporia. (3)

Only by rereading can a player experience more than a small portion of *Figuera*. The game branches from the opening passage, offering players the choice to follow one of three protagonists. Each character's branch provides an alternative perspective on the other two

6 An author's choice of authoring system determines the field of possibilities, but does not determine how the author implements those possibilities. For example, using Storyspace, the author cannot avoid including a default pathway through the text (Howell & Yellowlees Douglas; Bolter *et al.*). Therefore, even using an authoring system designed for non-linearity, linearity is always inevitably included. How an author chooses to work with that constraint in constructing a given story, however, depends on the work's artistic strategy. An author can choose but not necessarily shape the authoring system.

7 Aarseth's own coinage, a cybertext is a text with a computational component. Aarseth's categorization includes hypertexts with conditional links, interactive fiction, and other forms of electronic literature such as automatic writing programs. Aarseth contends that users must perform "significant work" to progress through a cybertext (4).

characters' actions. The player can only access a full understanding of each character if they replay the game and choose a different point of view. In passages where all three characters meet, I have included three (or more) versions of events. When Kell discovers Nilos and Trenon kissing in the forest after Larik's death, Kell accuses them of indifference. From Kell's perspective, this may well seem true; from Nilos's point of view, however, his grief is equally legitimate:

> "Do you think you can comfort me?" Kell asks. Larik claimed
> Nilos as her friend, once, and this is how he mourns her. "I should
> tell your holding you play invert in the forest." (Osborne
> "betrayal")

> Larik's absence looms suddenly larger than the mountain. Tereos
> was right. A healer owes his comfort to the holding after a vigil.
> Instead Nilos indulged his self-pity, seeking out comfort for
> himself. (Osborne "seen")

The player is unlikely to encounter these different passages on a single traversal of the text, and the protagonists routinely misinterpret each other's motivations. Deliberate gaps in meaning and understanding puncture the otherwise novelistic continuity of the narrative.

These gaps became both necessary and productive in *Figuera*. I integrated *Figuera*'s narrative themes—regarding the inflexibility of the world's social roles, the claustrophobic weight of gender dysphoria, the ways in which the characters' choices invisibly funnel them into situations they cannot easily escape—with the structure and materiality of the text. In a novel, having complete access to a character's motivations gives a text continuity and coherence. In a Twine game, the aporias that Aarseth identifies become structurally and thematically relevant. As hypertext theorist Alice Bell argues, "hypertext fiction reading is characterized by rereading" ("Unnatural" 192). Multiple re-readings contextualize passages differently and foreground the

59

text as a digital object. My artistic practice has involved shaping how constraint works within the

text, and shaping the text based on the requirements of the constraints involved.

Constraint: Coding

Constraint lies at the heart of *Figuera*. I considered when and how players can intervene in the text, and to what extent, as part of my work's artistic strategy. My programming represents a significant component of *Figuera* as a text. I deployed Twine commands to the same ends that I used literary devices[8] such as metaphor or foreshadowing—as techniques to enhance the narrative's richness and affectivity. Digital media scholar Mark Marino argues that "code becomes a crucial component to understanding the conceptual framework and practical methods used to produce the piece" (285). My programming provides the parameters or structure of the work's constraints. *Figuera* includes conditional passages, which can only be read if the player has met certain conditions, such as reading another passage first, or prioritizing certain links over others. In portions of the game, I have implemented a points system, in which certain outcomes become available only if the player accumulates enough points. My programming becomes part of the work's materiality and reflects my artistic and thematic concerns.

Figuera consists not of a single text, but of a corpus of texts which are linked across readings, as Hilary Binda argues in her critique of Aarseth's *Cybertext*. The player rarely has access to my code as part of their engagement with the text, yet the code profoundly affects how the work can be read. I use code to incorporate the player's actions into the development and gradual deepening of the characters' personalities. In different narrative lines, players' choices have different effects on how I depict the characters in subsequent passages. However, since *Figuera* also owes a debt to narrative fiction, the constraints are deployed invisibly to the player.

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8 Early hypertext theorist Richard Ziegfeld, arguing that interactive fiction represents a genre discrete from fiction, drama, or poetry, suggested that "in interactive fiction the transition may become a new literary device that has meaning of its own" (363). My argument expands Ziegfeld's; I consider all programming in digital texts, not only the transition, to be writerly techniques which can be utilized like literary devices.

Only when the player replays the game and makes different choices are the different outcomes

revealed, as I will show with the following examples.

The link among *Figuera*'s various narrative lines depends on characterization. The

characters have the potential to choose each of the actions presented to the player as possible

paths, but the player chooses which path most interests them or suits the narrative as they explore

it. The game's various narrative lines "look very different on the surface [but derive] from the

same underlying moral physics" (Murray *Hamlet* 207). To establish a character's consistent

moral approach to decisions, while still allowing for variation, my characterization requires both

an element of randomness and a certain stability across possible narrative lines. In the excerpt

below, Trenon demonstrates his tendency towards impolitic bluntness. The (random:) command

is a Twine-specific command which evaluates an expression, then produces an output. In this

case, (random: 0,2) will randomly generate a number, either 0, 1, or 2. The following function,

(if-else:), dictates what text will be displayed depending on the random number. If the expression

results in a 0, then the first text string will be shown to the reader. But if the expression results in

either 1 or 2, then the second text string will be displayed.

> Larik was ill when Trenon left Asaresta two ninedays ago.
>
> (if: (random: 0,2) is 0)["How fares my much beloved betrothed?"
> he asks.](else:)["Dead, or dying?" he asks.]
>
> Zayelik laughs. "So even advocats get trapped in contract
> marriages, hm?"
>
> That hits the mark a little too closely, but Trenon's not about to
> admit it. (if: (random: 0,2) is 0)["A mother has the disposing of her
> sons," he says, with bitter piety.](else:)["If he's a good advocat, the
> trap is at least well-baited," he says.]

The result is that Trenon is twice as likely to say something deliberately tactless than he is to be merely sarcastic. With this code, four different possible passages can be generated, such as this one:

> Larik was ill when he left Asaresta two ninedays ago.
>
> "Dead, or dying?" he asks.
>
> Zayelik laughs. "So even advocats get trapped in contract marriages, hm?"
>
> That hits the mark a little too closely, but Trenon's not about to admit it. "A mother has the disposing of her sons," he says, with bitter piety. (Osborne "her betrothed")

A player who refreshes this passage will most likely see a different output the second time. Yet each possible version of Trenon's dialogue is guided by his self-righteous disgust at what he sees as others' hypocrisy. Each possible passage is linked by Trenon's moral position, but separated by the vehemence with which he expresses it.

Character development can also be guided by code. When Nilos invents an experimental treatment for Larik's illness, he knows that his master would not approve of him deviating from traditional cures. The passage presents the player with the choice between giving Larik the treatment or refraining. The treatment is effective, so if Larik drinks Nilos's tea, then her health improves, though only briefly. If she drinks only water, then her health deteriorates. Simultaneously, when Nilos gives Larik the tea, he is making a selfish decision to prioritize his own beliefs over established treatment protocols. If he withholds the tea, then he is making a responsible decision to follow his master's instructions. Players make the choice based on narrative tension and curiosity, without knowing that the choices are scored in this way. Each choice results in a tally in either the "selfish" or "responsible" columns:

> (link: "The ewer beside the tea holds water.")[(set: $responsible to it + 1)(goto: "prudence")]

(link: "But it won't do anything for her cough, for her hot restless fever. Water and vigils won't save Larik tonight.")[(set: $healthier to true)(set: $selfish to it + 1)(goto: "recourse")]

If Nilos gives Larik the tea, then the variable $healthier resolves to *true*, and the description in the following passages changes to reflect Larik's slight improvement. Yet this choice has much more far-reaching consequences. Nilos begins to wonder whether his master's traditional healing practices are effective, and starts questioning authority more openly. On the other hand, if $healthier is *false*, then Nilos feels immensely guilty when Larik dies. What if he could have cured her, but he turned away from that possibility out of cowardice? Every major choice that Nilos faces pits his sense of duty against his personal desires. Should he tell his master about his dereliction of duty, or should he hide the truth? Should he run away with his lover, Trenon, who is engaged elsewhere, or should he buckle down to his studies until his parents choose a good match for him?

Each choice has the potential to increase Nilos's $responsibility or $selfish scores. This conflict comes to a head when Nilos has the opportunity to abandon his apprenticeship and travel to the city. Earlier in the story, the player made the choices without knowing how they were scored. Once the choice to travel is on the table, however, the game's mechanics take over. If the majority of Nilos's choices—as made by the players—have been responsible ones, then Nilos regretfully decides that he can't abandon his career. If, on the other hand, Nilos has largely acted on his impulses, then at this point he throws caution to the wind and leaves the village. The player may not know the quantitative scores that have accumulated for each variable, but in terms of characterization, Nilos's ultimate choice must follow from the passages the player has previously accessed. The opposite path is invisibly foreclosed. There can be no abrupt about-face

at this critical moment. Thus, a selfish Nilos is not able to pick a responsible course of action; a responsible Nilos is not able to conceive of taking the selfish path.

At the level of narrative, Nilos tends to be cautious rather than bold. He doesn't make life-changing decisions all at once. But gradually, over the course of many interactions, his characterization solidifies as he is faced with personally painful dilemmas. The player has no access to the code; they cannot see Nilos's $selfish score. But when Nilos makes the final decision whether to travel to the city, the preponderance of previous choices causes one pathway to become available rather than the other. I use this mechanic as a metaphor for the fact that we rarely make a life-altering decision on the spur of the moment. Our previous experiences shape how we face a momentous choice. In *Figuera*, "as code and text collide and intermingle in various portions of the work, the line between the processed data (text) and the processing code is not just blurred but wiped away as the two texts (code and story) are imbricated together" (Marino 285). In this case, the player navigates through Nilos's smaller decisions, only to have the code invisibly emphasize the consequences of those decisions. In rereading the text, the player may encounter the blockage that remains invisible in the first performance. This aporia then becomes part of a critical evaluation of the text.

Finally, code can also provide a means for the player to affect decisions which impact characterization, within the confines of the fictional world. When Larik dies, her family needs a way to save face rather than let her arranged marriage with Trenon lapse. The family has one unmarried child, Kell. By having Kell come of age as a woman, they can substitute Kell for Larik in the betrothal, instead of paying a substantial sum of money to Trenon's family and enduring the mockery of their status-conscious neighbours. Kell, a fourteen-year-old child when the story opens, has little say in this decision. Indeed, Kell's parents believe that becoming a

woman is the best outcome, since Kell's plan has always been to apprentice to a trader, a woman's career. But Kell finds plenty to object to. Trenon had some respect for Larik, his social equal and a skilled craftsperson, but he sees Kell as a child who is being used. Kell feels that the family wants a replacement for Larik, rather than seeing Kell as an individual with personal desires and ambitions. Even though Kell wants to be a trader, it is better to reject that dream in the name of freedom from Trenon and a life apart from inheriting Larik's contracts and expectations. Kell pleads with several family members to change their minds and allow Kell to come of age as a man instead. Some of Kell's parents are sympathetic to the problem; others believe Kell should simply do what's best for the family as a whole. The decision the family faces is resolved democratically: each parent has a vote. Kell can request and influence, but not choose.

The player has the opportunity to evaluate Kell's feelings and arguments, and weigh them against Kell's family's concerns. The player clicks the link, choosing for Kell to become either a son or a daughter. Therefore, the decision is literally out of Kell's hands. The choice occurs not diegetically, within the narrative, but extra-diegetically, through the player's input. Kell, as a child, has no power, and can only react and make the best of the situation.

The code in this case is the most basic of a Twine game, the link. However, this particular choice is different from the majority in the game because of how the link text is structured. In most cases, *Figuera*'s link text can be read as part of the narrative. The link text may be part of the point of view character's internal monologue, or it might be a line of dialogue one character speaks to another. All the choices are written to be emotionally consistent and believable at the level of characterization. All the choices, whether taken or discarded, are Kell's possible choices.

When Kell's mothers discourage Kell from visiting Larik, the choice is between a path that leads to eavesdropping, or sneaking into Larik's sickroom:

> [[Mothers and fathers have been muttering, where they think Kell
> can't hear.->chores]]

> [[If Kell doesn't see Larik now, it may be too late.->begging]]
> (Osborne "her sibling")

Kell's choices—the link text—promote the character's agency, and portray Kell's state of mind on the morning that Larik dies. Grieving, but also feeling hard-done-by, and, like adolescents everywhere, certain that parents are being unfair. Both choices are true to the character's situation and emotions, and give an idea of what the character will do next if the player picks that option. They center Kell's perspective and approach.

By contrast, in the moment when Kell is most powerless, the link text details nothing of Kell's desires. The writing style becomes spare and distant. The family speaks; Kell's perspective vanishes along with the character's agency. Only the player has power in this moment. Importantly, the player's power is not one of controlling or directing the narrative. Since I wrote both the storylines that result from this choice, the player cannot change the outcome, only explore the possible outcomes that have already been written. Instead, the player's power is one over the character.

> [[Iryu speaks for a son.->son]]

> [[Iryu speaks for a daughter.->daughter]] (Osborne "decision")

At the critical moment when Kell loses agency, the link text is structured in an omniscient or distant third-person description. The player can't change the outcomes or the narrative of the following passages. But they (in the guise of Kell's family) change Kell's life. The player affects how Kell's characterization will develop in the remainder of the narrative.

In each of the examples above, I have used a specific Twine command—links, variables, and if-else structures—to affect the characterization in *Figuera*. The materiality of the text affects how the player can access different passages, and which passages are prioritized or foreclosed. Therefore, each reading of *Figuera* will consist of a different subset of the full game. *Figuera* is a not a single text, but a set of texts which resonate thematically and which are linked by common motifs.

Constraint: Writing

Composing conditional passages and multiple storylines in *Figuera* required anticipating the different paths by which players would navigate the game's spaces. As players move through the braided middles of the story, all the possible endings must remain plausible. I worked to sustain narrative engagement for first-time players, while also providing interest for the multiple-time player, giving them glimpses of alternate endings which were also foreshadowed. Therefore, the authoring system and my focus on constraint affected the writing and revision of the story.

Early drafts of *Figuera* focused on Kell as the main character and were written in a close third person. Twine games tend to use a second-person focalization rather than third[9]. As part of the Twine revolution aesthetic, Twine games' use of second person both follows and critiques the interactive fiction convention of interpellating the player directly as "you." Actions that the player takes—in Twine games, the text of a link—are generally written in the imperative ("Go south," "Fight," "Examine the room."). This use of the imperative conflates the player and the character. The result in interactive fiction adventure games is that the player becomes the treasure-hunting protagonist, who is otherwise a cipher. In Twine revolution games, however, second-person focalization self-consciously plays with the relationship between player and character. In Quinn *et al.*'s *Depression Quest*, the player takes the role of a character with chronic depression. Actions that a player without depression might prioritize as a matter of course—talking to a friend, making a doctor's appointment, or seeing a therapist—are listed as possible choices that the player can make, but they are greyed out and impossible to click. Thus, the player, who may not be depressed, is presented with a conflict between knowing what needs to

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9 The only exception I have found is Dan Waber's *a kiss*, which has two equally weighted third-person protagonists. Sections of Porpentine's howling dogs are written in third person, but these occur within the game's nested narrative, rather than in the frame, where the player is addressed as "you."

be done, and the futility and impossibility of achieving that goal. Interpellating the character and the player simultaneously forces the player to inhabit the depressed character's feelings of apathy and futility. Second person focalization in Twine games is not innocent.

I developed Trenon and Nilos as equally important protagonists in order to deepen and complicate *Figuera*'s plot and characterization. I used a close third person for each protagonist because using second person for only one character would weight them above the other two. Third person for each protagonist, rather than second person for each, offered greater narrative clarity, especially in moments when the player switched points of view. I also used third person to shape the player's expectations. Third person is more common in narrative fiction, so it indicates that the work's narrative arc supersedes game elements like mazes and puzzles. *Figuera* branches from the opening passage, offering players the choice to follow the character who most piques their interest. I retained the possibility that players might want to jump from one narrative line to another, or view a different character's perspective on an event.

The different points of view therefore represent remixes of one another. In fan fiction, remixes are challenges which impose a specific constraint on the fan fiction writer: each writer who participates in the challenge is assigned another writer's story, and must retell or reconceptualize that story, often from another character's point of view (Stein & Busse; Stedman). Stein and Busse, fan scholars, write that remix challenges "double the constraints on fan fiction, demanding that the remix writer not only take into account canon characterization and plot but also acknowledge the limits offered by a particular story's interpretation" (199). *Figuera*'s multiple narrative lines represent such doubled constraints: given an inciting incident and a consistent characterization (or in Murray's terms, a consistent moral physics) for the primary protagonists, what different interpretations or retellings are available? Though I have

included only two endings in this version of the game, I have written drafts of three others, and by leaving my text available to further remixes through its license, other writers are invited to remix as many more as they would like to see. Each text is both separate and inseparable from the whole, increasing *Figuera*'s potential corpus of texts.

I used Twine commands to ease players through the transitions among the different narrative lines and among points of view. In the section above, I demonstrated how I used code to affect the protagonists' characterization. But players, too, learn new information about the world as they progress through the story. My writing practice was constrained by keeping track of which paths could bring players to a particular passage. What information would they have already encountered? What new information would need to be conveyed to them in order to make the current passage narratively legible? To do this, I treated each passage as John Slatin suggests in his essay on hypertext reading order: "as if it was certain to be the reader's next destination" (877). I incorporated alternate transitions which allowed different lines to merge together. In the passage "betrayal", Nilos has not yet heard Kell's approach, which necessitates alerting him, and the reader, to Kell's arrival.

> (if: (history:)'s last is "downmountain")[Nilos startles at the sudden scrape of boot on rock behind them.] A gangly child stands on the path below them. Trenon twists on his toe when Nilos stiffens, putting a pointed distance between them. Cold air rushes between them, bleeding out the moment's warmth. (Osborne "betrayal")

The (history:) command examines the list of previous passages the player has visited. If the player arrived at "betrayal" by means of "downmountain", then the passage begins with "Nilos startles." If the player's antecedent passage was not "downmountain", then the passage opens with "A gangly child." Furthermore, depending on the player's path, they may or may not have

read the earlier passage "ghost shell". Therefore, including Nilos's memories of the events of

"ghost shell" into the description requires a conditional (if:) command.

> Nilos can't help shooting Trenon an exasperated stare. //Let's tell
> all of Asaresta//, in one breath; and //Don't—they'll see us//, in the
> next. Nilos finally recognizes Kell—Larik's younger sibling. The
> youngest child in iryu holding. (if: (history:) contains "ghost
> shell")[Only this morning, the child helped him wrap Larik for her
> giving.]All through Larik's illness, Kell moped underfoot, slinking
> into iryu hearthside or haunting the dooryard. (Osborne "betrayal")

I set variables which keep track of which passages have been visited. A variable can be set to true

if the user has visited a given passage. Description in future passages changes depending on what

information the user has, and what information they need to acquire to understand the current

circumstances.

> (if: $fromAngry is true)[Trenon bangs the guest door open and
> drops the saddlebags heavily on the flags. He digs his boot soles on
> the scraper, but leaves the growing puddle under him unwiped.]
> (else:)[The guest entrance is marginally less narrow and dim than
> the homeside, and the flagged floor easier to sweep clean. Trenon
> drops the saddlepacks and reaches for the boot jack.] (Osborne
> "mother")

In this example, the actions at the beginning of the passage are identical: Trenon returns home

and takes off his boots. However, his emotional state is affected by the previous passage. If he

was raging in the previous passage, then this passage needs to open with a portrayal of how his

anger is affecting him. If he comes home in a more neutral frame of mind, then the passage

opens with a less fraught description. Through these alterations, I keep the flow of events the

same, while maintaining the character's different narrative arcs.

Dialogue and description can be altered by which characters are privy to what

information. After Larik's death, Nilos has two different encounters with Kelol—one in which

Kelol accuses him of causing his sister's death, or one in which Kelol admits that Nilos did his

best in difficult circumstances. Subsequently, the two lines merge into one when Nilos goes to

Kelol with a request.

> After Kelol's (if: $freedom is true)[earnest understanding](else:)
> [angry independence] in the street, Nilos wants to ask his
> forgiveness for Larik's death. Larik once offered to help him, if
> only he'd let her. Kelol (if: $freedom is true)[repeated](else:)
> [rejected] that promise. (Osborne "tentative")

Nilos knows it will be a challenge to admit his culpability in Larik's death to Kelol. While

Kelol's emotions do have an effect on him, his desire for forgiveness and understanding is the

determining factor in his actions. Depending on which passages the player has visited, in which

Kelol has offered either sympathy or rebuff, Nilos is either encouraged or determined. The events

don't change, but the emotional tenor of the narrative does. My writing practice required shaping

each dialogue exchange to have a different impact based on its changing context.

I used similar tools to increase the probability that a player will choose a different

narrative line in a replay of the game. *Figuera* opens with three descriptive passages that

describe the main characters' roles and how they will be affected by the story's inciting incident,

Larik's death. My intent in this opening is to make each of the three passages equally enticing.

However, interest notwithstanding, players with little investment in the opening passage are

more likely to choose the first option on a list of three. Therefore, I have used the (display:)

command in conjunction with a (random:) command to alternate the order of the links which

lead to each character's narrative line. In a three-item list, there are six possible orders. The

(display:) command displays the named passage within the opening passage. Using the

(random:) command like a dice roll, I give each possible list order an equal chance of being

displayed to the player. This mechanic does not affect the story's characterization or other

narrative aspects; it is intended to offer players a balanced approach to the text.

The most important moment in *Figuera* is Larik's death, because it sets off a chain reaction for each of the protagonists. In order to emphasize its narrative importance, I used Twine commands to force the player to linger on it.

> {(set: $counter to 30)
>
> (live: 1s)[(set: $counter to it - 1)
>
> (if: $counter is 0)[(goto: "vigil")]
>
> (replace: ?amount)[$counter]]
>
> $il[L]arik sleeps quickly, after that.} ===><=
>
> <div class="fade-in one">Drifts.</div> =><==
>
> <div class="fade-in two">Nilos centers himself to resume the vigil, pushing aside the coil of guilt at straining (if: $healthier is true)[Larik's momentary burst of strength](else:)[what strength Larik had left].</div> ==>
>
> <div class="fade-in three">He sings in a grey doze. Larik's ghost dances in the fog ahead.</div> =><=
>
> <div class="fade-in four">A spire of smoke rises
from the mosswick candle.</div> (Osborne "lingers")

The passage "lingers", in Nilos's point of view, forces the player to both slow down and to quicken their pace. In its use of white space and line breaks, the text of this passage reads more poetically than the narrative that surrounds it, a slowing technique. In this passage alone, the player cannot make even a nominal choice. There are no links to click. Thus, the player must pause, and has no role to play at this moment, much as Nilos, despite his role as a healer, can do nothing to prevent Larik's death. Instead, the narrative advances to the subsequent passage at the end of a timer countdown. The text fades in at timed intervals, too quickly for the average reader to entirely absorb the text. The player has only moments to assimilate the passage's meaning

before it disappears. Nilos hopes to prolong Larik's life, but has no control over the moment

when lingering becomes death.

 Figuera's ideal medium is digital, an HTML document displayed in a web browser.

While the game *can* be rendered as a print text changing the game's materiality affects how

players encounter passages. In print, "lingers", and the game as a whole, loses "something of its

aesthetic and semiotic function," as Bell and Ensslin describe in their paper on the focalization of

digital fiction (311). The conditional passages, too, must either be eliminated or else doubled in

print, with the player sent in one of two directions rather than having the transition handled

through code before being rendered as a complete passage. Twine's available commands

provided the set of commands I was able to use. Therefore, my writing practice revolved around

exploring the creative possibilities within the constraints I set for myself in using Twine as an

authoring system. I played with resonances and motifs among the different possible paths, such

that multiple readings of the text allow for a deeper understanding of the characters and the

fictional world.

Constraint: Reading

Players of digital games employ different reading strategies than readers use for narrative fiction. Readers of print books consider the materiality of the codex as normative and therefore unmarked, because it is profoundly familiar. Encountering digital games or hypertext fiction, readers must alter their reading strategies to glean the most meaning from the work. Perhaps for this reason, early hypertext theorists considered whether the reader's role itself might be altered: in choosing—and therefore creating—one path among many, the reader might act as an author of the text. Storyspace developers Bolter and Joyce suggest that "the reader joins in actively constructing the text by selecting a particular order of episodes at the time of reading" (42). Strickland proposes that the link itself is a gap, one which the reader navigates in a manner that "[shifts] the focus away from interpretation and toward co-composition" ("Seven" np). However, critics of the early hypertext theorists rejected the reader-as-author stance. They argue that readers of hypertext fiction are far more constrained than they are empowered by hypertexts' non-linearity. Hypertext critic Eric Zimmerman contends that authorial control over the development of narrative branches means that "each click reinforces the rigid authority of the author" (82). As David Miall, a film studies theorist, points out, despite hypertext writers' and theorists' emphasis on the decentered, unhierarchical text, readers necessarily encounter text in a linear fashion, one passage after the next (166). Following these critics, I argue that interactive fiction players do not act as creators or authors of the text. Going further, however, I argue that interactive fiction players employ different reading strategies when they experience digital texts.

Players do not *create* an interactive fiction game by traversing its passages; they *perform* it. In *The Performance of Reading*, Kivy aligns reading with performative arts such as music performances, rather than with imitative arts such as sculptures. He argues that written texts are

the types of a work, analogous to a musical score, and that each instance of a reader reading the text is a token of that type, analogous to a performance of a score. Furthermore, each copy of a given text is a token of the type "notation of the work" (4). Each reading represents independent tokens of the work. A reading involves not only experiencing a text aesthetically, but experiencing it "*qua* art work of that kind: all the art-relevant ways of experiencing it" (5). A player can explore an interactive fiction many times, and gain new insight from multiple traversals, and even choose to play counter-intuitively without arriving at a successful conclusion, but they cannot *author* the work by changing its fundamental structure or possible outcomes. The structure (puzzles and/or narrative) exists prior to the player's engagement, and the player's input cannot alter the corpora of possible texts, no matter how numerous. The player may not be a co-author, but their engagement is central to the experience of the text.

In order to perform *Figuera*, the player must intervene with the text's materiality, much as a reader turns pages or a musician runs a bow across a string. The copy of the interactive fiction work is a token of the type "notation of the work," which includes its code. The audience who listens to the performance of a symphony will hear a crescendo, but will not see the notation which appears on the work's score. Likewise a user of interactive fiction will not see the code that is part of the work's notation, but they will nevertheless experience it as part of the "art-relevant ways" in which interactive fiction is experienced (5). By Kivy's lights, a print novel is a token of the type "notation of the work," and an e-book of the same novel is a different token of the type "notation of the work." They are separate tokens of the type, a separation that depends on their different physical and material characteristics. Therefore, if a reading is token of the type "performance of the work," then that token must also include the materiality of the text. *Figuera* as Twine game represents a different token than *Figuera* as a LibreOffice document, even if that

document includes links among passages. The materiality of a text affects how a player performs it.

Murray uses the analogy that the interactive fiction author is like a choreographer who "creates not just a set of scenes but a world of narrative possibilities" which the dancer then embodies (*Hamlet* 153). The choreographer decides "the conditions under which things will happen in response to the participant's actions", but the dancer's movement interprets those conditions, just as an interactive fiction player creates an individual performance of the work (*Hamlet* 152). Chris Funkhouser, a communications and media scholar, employs a similar metaphor, situating the reader as a player involved in a sport. Participants accept the rules of a sport as the boundaries of play, and create a distinct and original performance within those guidelines each time they play the game. Indeed, Aarseth concludes that the user does not occupy an authorial role, not least because in playing/reading an interactive text, the user does not transmit meaning to others. Technology by itself cannot "promote readers to authorship"; this would suggest a technological determinism that Aarseth argues against (171). The reader hopes to gain meaning and enjoyment from the work. Hypertext fictions and interactive fictions may reward different approaches, but both require the player to perform different physical engagements (clicking versus typing). The goal of acquiring meaning and enjoyment does not change, but the means of acquiring it—reading strategies—does.

When I argue that players of interactive fiction perform different reading strategies, I contend that they are not performing more, or more *significant*, work than readers of print fiction. Hypertext theorists have argued that digital texts' interactivity is their most significant feature, and that the act of typing input or clicking links in order to progress through the work represents significant work. Aarseth argues that cybertexts—texts which require computation to

78

complete—require "non-trivial effort" to experience (1). Correspondingly, he suggests that

reading non-cybertexts is "arbitrary" (2) and "safe, but impotent" (4). Readers of non-cybertexts,

Aarseth argues, can only take on an interpretive role. When players can explore, configure, and

add to a text, then the text requires work to navigate (65). I reject this division between

cybertexts and non-cybertexts based on the perceived level of effort required. The difference

Aarseth examines in cybertexts is not a difference in the significance of the work required, but its

non-normative quality. Print books are artifacts "whose physical properties and historical usages

structure our interactions with [them] in ways obvious and subtle" (Hayles 22). In contrast, the

materiality of cybertexts, both print and digital, asserts itself. A reader turning pages from right to

left, reading from left to right and top to bottom performs expected, invisible work. Give an

English reader a translated manga and tell them to read it from right to left, and suddenly a non-

cybertext requires nontrivial effort to read. What readers of cybertexts experience is not *more* or

different reading work, but rather a different experience of the text's materiality. When readers

approach interactive fiction games, they are more likely to struggle to apply appropriate reading

strategies. In *Figuera*, I worked to balance the reading strategies that narrative fiction readers and

interactive fiction players would bring to my game. Below, I outline three examples of reading

strategies that benefit players of *Figuera*.

First, interactive fiction players anticipate gaps in the text and employ reading strategies

to fill or otherwise bridge them. One strategy is employing the "examine" command.

Descriptions in interactive fiction games tend to be spare and minimalist, but items or areas of

potential interest are likely to have further description attached to them[10]. I included a "Game

10 Different interactive fiction games and hypertext fictions may give more or less indication that an examine command is available. In parser IF, which does not use links, the player must decide which items are likely to yield more information when they input "examine item." In his hypertext fiction *afternoon: a story*, Joyce leaves links unmarked: any word can be a link, which can only be discovered through trial and error as readers click on words that seem significant.

Hints" mechanic in *Figuera* which acts as an "examine" command. Each hint is a link within the text of the passage. Some, associated with character names and consistent worldbuilding terms, are subtly formatted in green but not underlined. These give the player access to a set of epithets which describe the character or term. The set varies depending on the point of view character, since different characters will apply different epithets to those around them. Trenon, for example, might label Berin as "his mother", but Kell will see her as "iryu's first wife" (Osborne "suit"). The set also varies depending on narrative time, since the point of view character's sympathies change over the course of the story's events. For more general worldbuilding hints, which allow the player to access a greater level of detail in the narrative, I chose to make these links clear to the player by formatting them with blue, underlined text.[10] These links highlight important worldbuilding details that players might otherwise overlook. Players click the links to access expanded descriptions or orienting details. In an early passage, a description of Kell includes the fact that Kell is nearly fifteen. This is a significant element of worldbuilding, because fifteen is the age of majority.

> Kell's eyes close. Larik may die, and all fathers can think about is
> sending Kell out to chores. Water the ponies. Milk the goats.
> Gather eggs. Kell is fourteen. Almost fifteen.{ (if: $allowHints is
> true)[(click-replace: "fifteen.")[$il[fifteen]. Once Kell comes of
> age, fathers won't be able to flick their fingers and expect
> obedience. Kell will have dignity then, place. At fourteen Kell
> might as well be a suckling infant: loved, patted, and ignored.]] }
> If only Kell could go to Larik's giving—if they give her. If only
> Kell could see her. (Osborne "chores")

If players have switched on Game Hints, then the word "fifteen" appears as a link which, when clicked, expands the description of Kell and emphasizes the importance of a fifteenth birthday. Furthermore, after the player's click, the word "fifteen" is formatted in a larger font size. Players may choose to toggle the Hints mechanic on or off in each passage. When the Hints are off, then

the links (and their expanded descriptions) become invisible and unavailable. Some experienced

interactive fiction players enjoy the challenge of completing games without hints. I chose to

implement my hints diegetically, as part of the narrative, rather than as, for example, extra-

diegetic paratext addressed to the player directly. In this way, my hints further emphasize the

importance of a complete, coherent narrative.

Reading strategies also affect how players experience the narratively unsatisfying endings

that *Figuera* contains. In games with multiple endings, one or more endings may be marked as

the "winning" ending, superior to the other available endings. As Short describes, players will re-

play games to reach each possible ending, or to increase the percentage of the game's content

they have accessed ("Multilinear" np). *Figuera* contains three endings in which the point of view

character chooses to stay home rather than leave on an adventure to the city. These endings

provide a reversal to the common fantasy fiction trope involves forcing a young character out of

their parochial village in order to experience the wider world, and therefore may be considered

"unsuccessful traversals" of a fantasy narrative structure (Montfort "Towards" 11). In *Figuera*,

these endings are those in which Nilos resigns himself to life as a man and a traditional healer; in

which Trenon decides to raise his child in his parents' household; and in which Kelol determines

to repay his debt to his parents with an early marriage. These endings involve characters

swallowing their pride, hiding their identities, and submitting to their families' wishes—all

plausible variations on *Figuera*'s central themes. Murray argues that "the stories in which

characters are unsuccessful will add resonance to the one in which they are" (*Hamlet* 207).

Because *Figuera*'s characters *may* choose prudent courses of action, their bold alternate choices

become more marked and more rewarding to players. That *Figuera*'s unsuccessful endings

abruptly truncate the work's otherwise novelistic arc only increases the work's replay value as a

game. Completing an unsuccessful traversal is akin to encountering a constraint, one which can be solved by further, more explorative, play.

By confronting the lack represented by un-visited passages, players adopt reading strategies suited to digital games, including recursion and re-reading, or attempts to retrace a previous path exactly. Players become improvisers, performing the text anew with each attempt, to see how different narrative lines compare to one another. Players may achieve a single, deterministic closure by reading a single story line, but *Figuera* is designed to reward rereading as a more satisfying engagement with the text (Bell *Possible Worlds*). I considered, but ultimately chose against, disabling the "back" and "forward" arrows in *Figuera*. Players are not constrained from retracing their paths, or forging new ones. I included details in the narrative that reward rereading. In different storylines, characters who visit the city are likely to encounter the same secondary characters. A player who encounters only one narrative line accepts the secondary characters as part of the narrative. But a player who reads two or more lines is likely to see links among the lines. In one line, Kelil absently offers a coin to a street musician she encounters. In another line, Nilos sees the same musician but learns that street musicians act as distraction and cover for the black market—a black market that Kelil fails to notice.

Finally, *Figuera* has a "Save Game" link on each passage, allowing players to save their games as part of a reading strategy. Players can re-open their saved game at the last passage they visited. This is far more powerful than a bookmark in a print text, since it includes the complete history of their traversal, including the settings of the conditional variables they encountered. Strategically, a player can save their game after an important or significant choice, then choose not to save when they stop reading. Upon re-opening the text, they are returned to their save

point with their history after that point wiped clear, allowing them to forge a new path from that point onwards.

Figuera's multiple narrative pathways, including those which can viewed as narratively unsatisfying, disrupt "conventional ways of thinking about the imagination and imaginary works" and "resist passive readership" (hooks 56). I made material and structural choices intended to bolster players' engagement with the text as narrative, such as reducing extra-diegetic obstacles and establishing sequentiality. Ultimately, however, Kell can grow up as both a woman and a man, and so, the game's structure emphasizes the queer desire at the center of the narrative. Players must alter their reading strategies in order to successfully explore the text, especially as they navigate among the mutually contradictory narrative lines.

Secondary Worlds as Critical Fictions

Figuera's form is an interactive fiction game; its genre is speculative fiction. In addition to the material and structural concerns discussed above, the narrative content of *Figuera* could not be told as mimetic or literary fiction. The story of delayed gender assignment in our world today is a story about breaking social norms in order to deliberately conceal a fact that people feel entitled to know: what genitals a baby has. In our world, this is the story of Storm, the baby of a Toronto couple who chose to raise their child without a specified gender. Jayme Poisson, a journalist with the *Toronto Star*, recounts that Storm's parents' announcement to friends and family about their choice was "met with stony silence. Then the deluge of criticisms began" (np). In our world, such a choice is *newsworthy*—so far outside the norm that it provokes public debate. Delaying gender assignment challenges the fundamental construction of gender and sexuality in our society. *Figuera*, instead, presents an alternative view of gender assignment that the characters understand as natural, for the very purpose of disrupting what "natural" means to a default reader. My characters consider their practices not only correct but inevitable. In our terms, their culture is reified by their discourses in much the same way as we reify our own. The speculative fiction genre allows me to create and explore such an alternative understanding of the natural.

Figuera is set in a secondary world in order to defamiliarize how readers think about the connection between embodiment and gender. Suvin describes secondary worlds as fictional creations which hinge on a crucial difference from the author's empirical reality. In contrast to the author's constructed alternate reality, the primary world—sometimes called the zero world— refers to the author's context in the real world. Suvin described the creation of secondary worlds as the author's effort to "isolate, as in a laboratory [...] human motivations" (9). Secondary

worlds hinge on a catalyst which provides the point of rupture from the author's primary world; this catalyst is, in Suvin's terms, the novum. The novum, or new strangeness, changes "the whole universe of the tale, or at least of crucially important aspects thereof (and is therefore a means by which the whole tale can be analytically grasped)" (64). The novum sparks cognitive estrangement in the reader, caused by the schism between the secondary world and the primary world. I created my secondary world to provide an alternate, critical view of my primary world.

I wrote *Figuera* against and within a background of feminist and queer science fiction and fantasy texts, drawing on narrative tropes and conventions from both genres. Works such as Samuel Delany's *Trouble on Triton*, Joanna Russ's *The Female Man*, and Le Guin's "Mountain Ways" and "Unchosen Love" use a variety of techniques to defamiliarize gender and sexuality, and therefore highlight how these categories are or were constructed in the moment of the texts' creation and reception. In writing *Figuera*, I found the tension between my primary and secondary worlds creatively productive and politically useful (Delany "Science Fiction"). *Figuera* responds intimately to the historical moment in which I wrote it. I intended to show how the "default," the "norm" of gender, is both arbitrary and constructed. What better technique to use than the creation of a secondary world in which the constructedness of gender contrasts so insistently with our own? In *Figuera*, a child's embodiment—what we might call their biological sex—does not determine which gender they become. Bodies and genders appear contradictory to the default reader. The secondary world I depict has an intentional, dialogical, and critical relationship with my primary world.

Queer and feminist SF and fantasy writers have used secondary worlds as part of critical projects. Secondary worlds are necessarily political. They arise from their historical and sociological contexts, such that the secondary worlds that authors create are necessarily

analogous to their primary worlds. The ruptures, or novums, which authors imagine emerge as a response to the environment in which they were written. Those secondary worlds which reinforce the status quo are as political as those which critique it; as Gill argues, secondary worlds act as "the outward manifestation of implicit values" (78). The science fiction convention of cognitive estrangement allows that which "could not have happened" to be depicted, in a secondary world, as natural and reified (Russ "Speculations" 16). Secondary worlds can provide a counterpart to mimetic fiction's attempts to accurately portray the primary world. Delany locates science fiction and fantasy at the periphery of mimetic fiction's center ("Science Fiction"). He argues that science fiction and fantasy writers occupy the margins and there inhabit a space of critique of the literary center. In *Trouble on Triton*, Delany explores a society which recognizes "forty to fifty" basic sexes and at least nine sexualities (*Triton* 253), and where "women [bear] 70 percent of the children" (*Triton* 209), leaving thirty percent to be borne by men and people of other genders. Delany created his secondary world in the historical and sociological context of the gay rights movement in New York, not long after the Stonewall Riots. Delany presents the open, polyamorous society on Triton as peaceful and advanced in relation to a conservative, reactionary Earth. Similarly, in Russ's *The Female Man*, four secondary worlds are placed in contrast to one another, each of them depicting a different level of patriarchal control over women's agency. One of the worlds is an all-woman utopia where women are strong, self-reliant, and completely indifferent to how the men of Earth perceive them. In another, Russ depicts her own experiences as a woman writing science fiction and feminist criticism, and her fictional persona's satirical response to men's criticism of women's writing. Both Russ's *The Female Man* and Delany's *Trouble on Triton* act as critical fictions.

My creation of a secondary world and use of cognitive estrangement in *Figuera* comprise my engagement with science fiction conventions. My novum depends on alternate kinship systems, arising out of social science, which Suvin allows under his definition. The scope of the changes I made thereafter became a matter of development and extrapolation, but always based on logical progressions. Anthropologist Beth Baker-Cristales, in examining Le Guin's short fiction in the collections *Birthday of the World* and *Changing Planes*, argues that "the fact that each [secondary world] is experienced as absolutely normal to its inhabitants [has] the effect of demonstrating one of the primary insights of cultural anthropology—cultural relativism" (21). The short stories in *Changing Planes* are written as parables, with the secondary worlds depicted each offering a single contrast to one element of our world. *Figuera* offers a larger scope than a parable. The characters develop and change, rather than act as foils for an anthropological observer from Earth. Human emotions such as love, attraction, and jealousy remain central in *Figuera*, but I use the genre convention of the secondary world to show that constraint, law, and tradition are culturally relative. However, unlike Le Guin's sedoretu stories, *Figuera* does not gesture towards a larger universe where space travel and instantaneous communication exist. My work remains firmly grounded in a fantasy setting.

It is crucial to note that Suvin's poetics of science fiction rejected the possibility that the novum and particularly cognitive estrangement could be applied to texts which simultaneously draw on fantasy conventions. Suvin defines science fiction by the fact that the secondary world can be extrapolated logically from the primary world. Fantasy fiction, which seems to call for a suspension of disbelief because of its use of magic, is outside the realm of cognition under Suvin's conditions. Suvin argues that fantastical changes from the author's primary world renders the secondary world absurd or incoherent. He specifies that science fiction evokes

cognitive estrangement, by which he means a rational and explorative mode which he distinguishes from a mythical, essentialist mode. I contend that Suvin's concepts of the novum and cognitive estrangement are not exclusive of texts which use fantasy conventions, or indeed of fantasy fiction. As critics have noted, in excluding fantasy entirely from his poetics of science fiction, Suvin creates rigid boundaries that cannot encompass an increasingly diverse genre (Kelso; Brînzeu).

Fantasy conventions, as much as science fiction, provide a pattern through which *Figuera* is intelligible. *Figuera*'s setting is rural, the culture agrarian. The characters embrace an alternate spiritual practice, demonstrated early in the text by Larik's death and funeral. In terms of plot, *Figuera* is based on a common fantasy structure, in which a young person must set out from a small village on a quest to gain wisdom. Iser argues that the reader's expectations shape how they approach a text, and the author structures the text to bring about the reader's perspective. Kubowitz's default reader, too, has expectations shaped by their historical and cultural situatedness. Le Guin suggests fantasy readers will be more alert to the genre's conventions, because "the expectations and skill a reader brings to reading [fantasy] differ significantly from those they bring to realistic fiction" ("Critics" 84). In style, setting, and plot, I created a textual structure which anticipates a fantasy reader, yet, in contrast to most fantasy fiction, no characters in *Figuera* have magical powers, nor do miracles occur, nor do supernatural forces intervene in the story's events. In some science fictional works, characters live in agrarian societies and have a low or moderate level of technology. In *The Gate To Women's Country* by Sheri S. Tepper, communities of women rebuilding after a devastating war use the principles of eugenics and artificial selection to reduce men's aggression, with the goal of preventing future wars. Tepper depicts a rural setting governed by a handful of small, fortified

towns—what I describe below as fantasy neo-medievalism[11]. However, the text's thematic question of humanity's salvation depends on a scientific understanding of genetics and breeding. This is not the case in *Figuera*, where characters' problems are neither framed by nor solved through scientific discourse. In terms of genre *Figuera* remains a liminal text which draws on strands from both science fiction and fantasy traditions.

Literary scholar Franco Moretti argues that genres are historically contingent. They consist of an accumulation of traits which, over time, offered some "artistic usefulness" to the author (77). I deployed those science fictional and fantasy conventions which proved "artistically useful" to developing my novum of a delayed gender assignment. What makes my secondary world coherent and recognizable is the system of rules that it follows—a logical set of possibilities, limitations, and consequences—not whether those rules are scientific or fantastical. Science fiction critic Paul Kincaid describes science fiction as a braid in which each thread represents a subgenre, none of them complete on their own nor necessary to the whole, but which combine to form the whole (417-418). By considering genre as a pattern "in a state of constant flux" (Kincaid 413), rather than a checklist of attributes, I was able to intervene, develop, and play with the conventions I used in creating *Figuera*.

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11 Although, given Tepper's focus on Greek myths, perhaps fantasy neo-classicicism is more apt.

Fantasy Neo-medievalism

Understanding *Figuera* as a speculative fiction text requires an understanding which elements of the fantasy and science fiction patterns I chose to emphasize, and which to interrogate. My choices are set against history of generic development and history in speculative fiction. Below, I discuss how *Figuera*'s setting, worldbuilding, social systems, and character appearances emerge from a tradition of neo-medievalism in fantasy fiction.

Figuera is not set on Earth nor are the people depicted meant to be mapped onto any Earth culture or people. In terms of fantasy fiction, *Figuera* can be viewed as an immersive fantasy, a label that fantasy scholar Farah Mendelsohn applies to texts in which the secondary world has no connection to the primary world[12]. Immersive fantasy requires mimesis: that is, a full commitment to verisimilitude, within the boundaries created by the secondary world's novum. I maintained realism by creating sympathetic characters whose decisions are understandable in their social context, but even more importantly, by placing them in an evocative setting. I adapted recognizable, mimetic elements from my primary world using my knowledge of the Canadian Rockies, an area that I know well through personal experience. I changed the geography considerably, as my fictional mountain range runs east-west rather than north-south, and the ocean, in a north-reaching bay, approaches much closer to the foothills. However, the species described throughout the narrative largely reflect the flora and fauna of the Rocky Mountains, and the weather would not be out of place in a particularly wet year in that part of the world. Thus, I used description to ground my secondary world with rich, believable physical details.

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12 Mendelsohn contrasts the immersive fantasy with the portal fantasy, where characters move from the primary world into a secondary world; the intrusive fantasy, in which fantastical elements disrupt the primary world; and the estranged fantasy, where fantastical elements in the primary world are met dispassionately.

Figuera's Canadian Rockies-inspired setting responds to a history of fantasy texts which settled—as though by default—for a Western European medieval mise-en-scène. Literary author and critic Umberto Eco coined the term "fantastic neo-medievalism" to describe modern Western enthusiasm for the Middle Ages, not in the interest of historical accuracy, but in a romantic and escapist mode (qtd. in Selling 211). Fantasy neo-medievalism seeks to create authenticity by appealing to what audiences believe about the Middle Ages. Audiences generally encounter medieval material through fantasy media rather than scholarly sources, so a fantasy text's historical accuracy matters less than its familiar deployment. Le Guin considers the "Vaguely Medieval Kingdom" a "stock setting" in fantasy fiction, which relies on the audience to fill in the details more than on the author's ability to paint a crisp and believable setting (Baker-Cristales 23). Medievalist Kim Selling, describing fantasy neo-medievalism, argues that when "the characters wear medieval dress, fight with swords, and live in hierarchical, vaguely feudal, semi-pastoral societies with low levels of technology," audiences feel that a text meets generic expectations (212). Escapism and wish fulfillment underlie the deployment of the Vaguely Medieval Kingdom, which authors often romanticize or idealize. The Vaguely Medieval Kingdom's advantage is that it provides an engaging milieu against which the novum can stand out effectively. Yet it also represents a failure to imagine more diverse settings.

I complicated *Figuera*'s connection with the Vaguely Medieval Kingdom while maintaining a fantasy textual structure. I hoped to disrupt the Vaguely Medieval Kingdom's Western European geography; its feudal social system characterized by a nobility/church/peasant class divide; and its capitalist economic mode (in rather ironic conjunction with feudalism) which prioritizes owning land. From its opening passage, *Figuera* emphasizes the mountainous, near-wilderness location: "Asaresta's cloven mountain smells of pine and stone. Grey rain scuds

91

in from the south and blows around the curling clamber of Asaresta's streets" (Osborne "begin").

As the story progresses, characters contrast the village with the city, Sareya, which shows only a

slightly more elevated technology, with its open sewers, densely populated slums, and

townhouses away from the unhealthy conditions for the city's rich and privileged.

> Kelil watches the city's scum creep up past her boot laces. Little
> banlieue markets—a weaver darning sweaters, a butcher with a
> brace of mallards quacking in a wicker cage, a kitchen gardener
> with a barrow of potatoes—cluster in the mouths of alleys, or in
> the open doors of narrow deepstones. (Osborne "wander").

These urban characteristics align *Figuera* with a setting very common among fantasy

texts: a late medieval European-influenced feudal society. However, I challenge the basic feudal

social structure of many neo-medievalist fantasy texts from *Figuera*'s opening passage: "The

village deepstones crouch shoulder to shoulder, blinking out at the stepped furrows where cairns

edge last year's fields" (Osborne "begin"). This sentence introduces a difference from the

reader's expectations of a feudal society. Land ownership is not permanent, but contingent on

cairns. Building on these hints, I show that the legal system and the role of social status do not

reflect a feudal system. Patronage occurs, and powerful families are gradually introducing

generational serfdom, but the main economic unit is the holding: a family or group of families

who act as a bargaining unit when claiming land and water rights, or when competing for status,

such as when an arranged marriage is negotiated. *Figuera* depicts no royalty or aristocracy.

Status can be inherited, but it can also be lost or gained within a generation. The merchants,

rather than becoming a bourgeois class unto themselves, integrate with the holdings. People

neither carry nor wield weapons, and there is no professional class of soldiers or mercenaries. I

deliberately avoided metaphors which emphasize combat (e.g. "He battled with himself") in

favour of those which evoked trade and economics. The world has no organized church, as I will

detail further below. Without these institutions, the setting challenges any connection to fantasy neo-medievalism.

Beyond a desire to create a more interesting and original secondary world, my motivation for disrupting the Vaguely Medieval Kingdom arose out of ongoing debates among fantasy and science fiction writers regarding cultural appropriation. In literary fiction, set in the "real" or primary world, cultural appropriation becomes an issue when privileged writers try to tell stories not their own from an uninformed and dismissive perspective. However, in fantasy texts, the question of cultural appropriation is made more complex by its extension into the secondary world. How should minorities and oppressed people be depicted in an immersive fantasy where these groups' history of marginalization does not exist? As hooks writes, no fictional work emerges "in a realm outside history" (58). My work as a creative writer is situated in a historical context in which I, as a queer creator, am looking for a means to express my voice; yet at the same time, I recognize that I have privilege as a White writer. My choice to set the story in a secondary world inspired by the Canadian Rockies raises the issue of appropriation of Indigenous cultures and practices.

Figuera includes references to herbal healing and focuses on a culture in which status is accorded through a mixture of a gift economy and an oral tradition, concepts which may evoke Indigenous practices. In earlier drafts, I included reference to specific Haida rituals, such as the potlatch; however, concluding that I had used the name of a specific spiritual and cultural practice without a thorough understanding of that practice, I chose to remove those references. I did not want to treat the Haida, or any other First Nation, as a source for incident details. I wrote with the goal of creating fantasy verisimilitude, and I hope that the culture I have constructed is sufficiently original to stand on its own as an invented secondary world.

93

In revisions, I differentiated my secondary world from real-world practices. Just as my practice as a speculative fiction writer involves adapting the generic pattern to my narrative, it also involves shaping social and cultural practices so that they become secondary world mirrors of their primary world counterparts. In *Figuera*, a wife's family pays a dowry to the husband's family, and the husband joins the wife's holding. Names and the status accorded to them are patrilineal. Marriages in *Figuera* begin with one husband and one wife, but eventually expand to include multiple spouses. These later additions have less status than the original spouses, and therefore their presence, and terms such as "second wife," evoke patriarchal polygyny. However, my marriages approach closer to a more egalitarian polyamory, since each spouse has an equal vote on important family decisions, and sexual relations may occur among any combination of the spouses. Elements of the gift economy depicted in *Figuera* owe a debt to the concept of weregild. The host/guest relationship, which central to how different holdings relate to one another, is also derived from ancient Germanic practices. I depict a highly oral society: there is no written language, and all contracts are sealed by sung vows. My borrowings extended to other fantasy texts, as well. "Place" in *Figuera* echoes Le Guin's *shifgrethor* from *The Left Hand of Darkness*. In *Figuera*, news and new songs are disseminated by travelling actor-singers called jongleurs, a Western European element. The only jongleur we meet on the page is a tertiary character, yet she plays an important role in disrupting established gender roles in the city. All of these elements represent intentional borrowings which I shaped to the needs of my narrative. I used these combinations to add depth and density to my secondary world.

Secondary worlds depend on a mimetic connection to the primary world, in order to keep the secondary world intelligible to the reader. Medievalist Helen Young argues that audiences find the medievalist setting "manageable":

> The world of the narrative is not ours but it is familiar enough,
> particularly when placed within the genre of fantasy fiction, not to
> be unsettling, in and of itself. This general 'otherness' permits
> problematic, complex, or sensitive contemporary issues to be
> explored and examined. (168)

I wanted the opening of my text to be as familiar and as engaging as possible to the widest spectrum of readers, in order for my defamiliarizing strategies to have the greatest effect when they emerged. Layering the familiar with the strange eases the reader into a deeper consideration of the thematic issues that I raise in my work.

I chose a rural setting because it would not be overly challenging to the default reader. As Kubowitz recognizes, "the non-marginalized reader, who encounters a text that apparently excludes her/him, may simply turn to another text better suited to her/his individual situation" (206). The text's novum, that gender is completely divorced from a person's embodiment, provides the story's grist; the secondary world I construct around the novum supports and complicates that premise. My knowledge of the patterns of science fiction and fantasy allowed me to deploy elements such as fantasy neo-medievalism while shaping them to the narrative at the heart of *Figuera*.

Conclusion

For the critical reader of *Figuera*, the speculative genre provides a lens of intelligibility, but *Figuera* must be read first and foremost as an interactive fiction game.

At its core, *Figuera* decenters both the default reader and default reading strategies. The full impact of the text requires re-reading and a critical evaluation of code and design aesthetic. When readers perform the text, they make interpretive choices, which includes which links they click on, and their path through the narrative. The reader's experience shapes but does not create the text, because I have used constraint to shape each possible sequence of passages. Kivy writes that readers experience a work in "art-relevant ways", and in the case of interactive fiction, the gaps and aporias of un-visited passages become part of that art-relevance (5). The successful critical reading of *Figuera* will ask questions similar to those Bell poses in *Possible Worlds*, paraphrased here:

> 1. How does the work's opening passage situate the player within the fictional world?
>
> 2. How do some passages or narrative lines contradict others? What playfulness exists in the presentation of alternatives?
>
> 3. How are contradictions handled within the passages?
>
> 4. How are logical impossibilities made evident and dealt with? Is the player prevented or discouraged from seeing one path as "actual"?
>
> 5. How do the work's themes resonate with its structure?
>
> To Bell's questions, I add the following:
>
> 6. How do the different narrative lines foreground or combine a narrative or a ludic reading of the work?
>
> 7. How does the work's materiality (including code, visual design, or digital presentation) affect the player's performance of the text?

8. How does the work's genre landscape interact with the work's form and structure?

These questions presume a willingness to reread. *Figuera*'s branching narrative lines, which may deepen or contradict previous passages, create an echoing motif of meanings. However, digital texts display one passage at a time, and not all passages are available during a given reading. Therefore, it is not enough to consider the variability of the passages or even the collective possibilities of the corpora of texts. As Bell argues, "the different paths are certainly important, but their resonance lies in their coexistence rather than their individual credentials as a privileged or authentic solution" (*Possible* 29). The critical reader must examine the text's materiality, which includes its visual design and, thereby, its code. Reading alone does not convey the full story. Hayles argues that a text's materiality emerges from a combination of the physical qualities of the artifact, the creator's choices which foreground those qualities, and the user's interactions which manipulate the artifact both physically and as a conceptual framework (*Possible* 33). Players must discover the advantages and limits of the narrative's presentation; as they perform the text, their actions become part of its materiality. Though the player may not have access to the code, they experience its effects; part of a critical reading includes inferring the role that code plays. Coding can be evaluated as part of an author's technique in much the same way as figurative language or focalization. The text's materiality, in the form of its implemented code, must be analyzed as well.

Figuera is a bold, insistent Copernican inversion. Its political work takes place at both the diegetic level, where the secondary world acts as a critique of our own sex-gender system, and at the extra-diegetic level, where my work as a creative writer engages with feminist and queer theory. While my political stance must inevitably colour my work as a writer, in *Figuera* I center the political. The heart of the narrative is queer love, queer desire, queer gender identity and

97

expression. Furthermore, *Figuera* takes up space as a speculative fiction text which does not shy away from sexuality, the erotic, the dysphoric. It makes the political statement that gender is fluid, but that fluidity itself exists on a spectrum: that some people choose gender, and some people accept the gender assigned to them, and some people identify as a gender other than the one they are forced into. I write characters whose choices, whose narratives, are embodied but do not rely on the body. *Figuera* is a story about people whose bodies are part of but not determinative of their sense of self. A story in which the "normal" body doesn't exist, because the body itself is deliberately obscured. Bodies, materiality, are important, but the reader can only grasp at which bodies match their standards of "normal" based on inference. The norm is approached but never achieved. In these ways, I situate *Figuera* as a critical fiction.

I encourage readers to approach the text with a playful, investigative attitude; an eagerness to circle back and discover new paths. A single thread abuts many others. The tangle of knots at the back of a tapestry should not discourage the reader, but rather arouse curiosity, to see how the materiality of the weaving produces the complete image: how the coding, design, and writing emerge as the text.

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Appendix II. Cascading Style Sheets

```
/*HTML Class: Paratextual, including all non-narrative passages, e.g. Main
Credits*/


html.nohead tw-include[type="header"] {

      display: none;

}

html.nofoot tw-include[type="footer"] {

      display: none;

}

html.paratext {

      background: url(https://i.imgur.com/vvhspsd.jpg) fixed;

      background-size: cover;

}


/*HTML Class: Paratextual. This image backgrounds passages with an

omniscient, distant third point of view, e.g. Start.*/

html.loc-nopov {

      background: url(https://i.imgur.com/zDrckeP.jpg) fixed;

      background-size: cover;

}

/*HTML Class: Location. Nilos, lost within the vigil.*/

html.loc-death-nilos    {

      background: url(https://i.imgur.com/P6Cyqyp.png) repeat 0 0;

}

/*HTML Class: Location. Above iryu holding, where Kell sees Nilos and Trenon

kissing*/
```

```
html.loc-aboveiryu-kell {

      background: url(https://i.imgur.com/r2exsRD.jpg) fixed;

      background-size: cover;

}

html.loc-aboveiryu-trenon {

      background: url(https://i.imgur.com/Ujl7HKk.jpg) fixed;

      background-size: cover;

}

html.loc-aboveiryu-nilos {

      background: url(https://i.imgur.com/3YYCYyI.jpg) fixed;

      background-size: cover;

}

/*HTML Class: Location. Asaresta, including non-specific village settings and

the market square*/

html.loc-asaresta-kell {

      background: url(https://i.imgur.com/VDlEIhb.jpg) fixed;

      background-size: cover;

}

html.loc-asaresta-trenon {

      background: url(https://i.imgur.com/gkYeP93.jpg) fixed;

      background-size: cover;

}

html.loc-asaresta-nilos {

      background: url(https://i.imgur.com/pkBRDPh.jpg) fixed;

      background-size: cover;

}

/*HTML Class: Location. Asarotha, a village-next Trenon visits as a

journeyman*/
```

```css
html.loc-asarotha-trenon {

      background: url(https://i.imgur.com/Uc8CO5s.jpg) fixed;

      background-size: cover;

}

html.loc-belowAsa-kell {

      background: url(https://i.imgur.com/RX2XScX.jpg) fixed;

      background-size: cover;

}

html.loc-belowAsa-nilos {

      background: url(https://i.imgur.com/9DTtNdh.jpg) fixed;

      background-size: cover;

}


/*HTML Class: Location. The holding of Trenon's master, Dalor.*/

html.loc-dalor-trenon {

      background: url(https://i.imgur.com/97F9tco.jpg) fixed;

      background-size: cover;

}


/*HTML Class: Location. The place Nilos gathers healing plants.*/

html.loc-gather-nilos {

      background: url(https://i.imgur.com/3CZCuYo.jpg) fixed;

      background-size: cover;

}


/*HTML Class: Location. The glade where Nils and Trenn meet.*/

html.loc-glade-trenon {

      background: url(https://i.imgur.com/ETTIqNb.jpg) fixed;
```

```css
        background-size: cover;

}

html.loc-glade-nilos {

        background: url(https://i.imgur.com/IwEyjZu.jpg) fixed;

        background-size: cover;

}


/*HTML Class: Location. Tereos's herbary in the village.*/

html.loc-herb-trenon {

        background: url(https://i.imgur.com/er75rLW.jpg) fixed;

        background-size: cover;

}

html.loc-herb-nilos {

        background: url(https://i.imgur.com/BTG7Q92.jpg) fixed;

        background-size: cover;

}


/*HTML Class: Location. Irbu, a holding in Asarotha*/

html.loc-irbu-trenon {

        background: url(https://i.imgur.com/ztP4m8Z.jpg) fixed;

        background-size: cover;

}


/*HTML Class: Location. Irlu, Nilos's family holding.*/

html.loc-irlu-trenon {

        background: url(https://i.imgur.com/Q4Qeozb.jpg) fixed;

        background-size: cover;

}
```

```css
html.loc-irlu-nilos {

        background: url(https://i.imgur.com/sHgqy26.jpg) fixed;

        background-size: cover;

}


/*HTML Class: Location. Irthu, Trenon's family holding.*/

html.loc-irthu-kell {

        background: url(https://i.imgur.com/OIgPHV3.jpg) fixed;

        background-size: cover;

}

html.loc-irthu-trenon {

        background: url(https://i.imgur.com/TyBXzJr.jpg) fixed;

        background-size: cover;

}

html.loc-irthu-nilos {

        background: url(https://i.imgur.com/9kLF40h.jpg) fixed;

        background-size: cover;

}


/*HTML Class: Location. Iryu, Kell's family holding.*/

html.loc-iryu-kell {

        background: url(https://i.imgur.com/ehiHhNz.jpg) fixed;

        background-size: cover;

}

html.loc-iryu-trenon {

        background: url(https://i.imgur.com/W1ZiusF.jpg) fixed;

        background-size: cover;

}
```

```
html.loc-iryu-nilos {

        background: url(https://i.imgur.com/UcXkDgt.jpg) fixed;

        background-size: cover;

}


/*HTML Class: Location. The bottom of the route Kelol and Trenon take when
they get lost on the way to the city.*/

html.loc-lostb-kell {

        background: url(https://i.imgur.com/NqRwV3V.jpg) fixed;

        background-size: cover;

}


/*HTML Class: Location. The overlook above iryu where Kell watches the
giving.*/

html.loc-overlook-kell {

        background: url(https://i.imgur.com/ID6X2Yd.jpg) fixed;

        background-size: cover;

}


/*HTML Class: Location. The top of the pass where Trenon meets Zayelik.*/

html.loc-passtop-trenon {

        background:url(https://i.imgur.com/sYpejhT.jpg) fixed;

        background-size: cover;

}


/*HTML Class: Location. Poor locations in the city, various.*/

html.loc-poorcity-kell {

        background: url(https://i.imgur.com/ncNzSVq.jpg) fixed;
```

```css
        background-size: cover;

}

html.loc-poorcity-trenon {

        background: url(https://i.imgur.com/mLBw1W8.jpg) fixed;

        background-size: cover;

}

html.loc-poorcity-nilos {

        background: url(https://i.imgur.com/u1D5f0k.jpg) fixed;

        background-size: cover;

}


/*HTML Class: Location. The poor herbary in the city.*/

html.loc-poorherb-nilos {

        background: url(https://i.imgur.com/JCMK71o.jpg) fixed;

        background-size: cover;

}


/*HTML Class: Location. Rich locations in the city, various.*/

html.loc-richcity-kell {

        background: url(https://i.imgur.com/nCPqxxR.jpg) fixed;

        background-size: cover;

}

html.loc-richcity-trenon {

        background: url(https://i.imgur.com/hPxf3KX.jpg) fixed;

        background-size: cover;

}


/*HTML Class: Location. The rich herbary in the city.*/
```

```css
html.loc-richherb-trenon {

      background: url(https://i.imgur.com/3g0qvqH.jpg) fixed;

      background-size: cover;

}



/*HTML Class: Location. The glen where Kell and Trais meet.*/

html.loc-trais-kell {

      background: url(https://i.imgur.com/q5lU4aC.jpg) fixed;

      background-size: cover;

}



/*HTML Class: Location. The bottom of Zayelik's trader route to the city. */

html.loc-zaybottom-kell {

      background: url(https://i.imgur.com/5dK1Sj7.jpg) fixed;

      background-size: cover;

}

html.loc-zaybottom-trenon {

      background: url(https://i.imgur.com/Sw4Nw7T.jpg) fixed;

      background-size: cover;

}



/*HTML Class: Location. The middle of Zayelik's trader route to the city.*/

html.loc-zaymiddle-nilos {

      background: url(https://i.imgur.com/Nj6lBWQ.jpg) fixed;

      background-size: cover;

}
/*HTML Class: Location. The top of Zayelik's trader route to the city. */

html.loc-zaytop-kell {
```

```
        background: url(https://i.imgur.com/liyf5nx.jpg) fixed;

        background-size: cover;

}

html.loc-zaytop-trenon {

        background: url(https://i.imgur.com/eRGND2U.jpg) fixed;

        background-size: cover;

}

html.loc-zaytop-nilos {

        background: url(https://i.imgur.com/V7pETtN.jpg) fixed;

        background-size: cover;

}


body {

        background-color: transparent;

}

/* The tw-story container holds the tw-passage container. */

tw-story {

        background-color: transparent;

        width: 80%;

        padding: 1em;

        border-radius: 15px;

}


/*HTML Class: POV. The paratextual material uses a personal/academic point of
view.*/

tw-passage.paratext {

        background-color: transparent;

        background: url(https://i.imgur.com/uM2IoMq.png) repeat 0 0;
```

```
      width: 100%;

      padding: 2em 5em 5em 5em;

      border-radius: 15px;

  color: black;

      font-family: Verdana, sans-serif;

      font-size: 14px;

      line-height: 1.5em;

}


/*HTML Class: POV. The first passage, Start, which introduces the three

characters, uses a distant third omniscient POV.*/

tw-passage.loc-nopov {

      background-color: transparent;

      background: url(https://i.imgur.com/uM2IoMq.png) repeat 0 0;

      width: 100%;

      padding: 1em 5em;

      border-radius: 15px;

  color: black;

      font-family: Verdana, sans-serif;

      font-size: 14px;

      line-height: 1.5em;

}


/*HTML Class: POV. Trenon's POV.*/

tw-passage.povtrenon {

      background-color: transparent;

      background: url(https://i.imgur.com/Mfd4dfh.png) repeat 0 0;

      width: 100%;
```

```
      padding: 1em 5em;

      border-radius: 15px;

  color: black;

      font-family: Verdana, sans-serif;

      font-size: 14px;

      line-height: 1.5em;

}


/*HTML Class: POV. Kell's POV. Note that the styling for Kell's POV does not

change even when Kell comes of age and chooses a gender. This is intended to

signal that gender in this world is entirely constructed and Kell's choice

does not change Kell's POV.*/


tw-passage.povkell {

      background: url(https://i.imgur.com/LfEKwqf.png) repeat 0 0;

      width: 100%;

      padding: 1em 5em;

      border-radius: 15px;

      color: black;

      font-family: Verdana, sans-serif;

      font-size: 14px;

      line-height: 1.5em;

}


/*HTML Class: POV. Nilos's POV.*/


tw-passage.povnilos {

      background-color: transparent;
```

```css
        background: url(https://i.imgur.com/P6Cyqyp.png) repeat 0 0;

        width: 100%;

        padding: 1em 5em;

        border-radius: 15px;

        color: black;

        font-family: Verdana, sans-serif;

        font-size: 14px;

        line-height: 1.5em;

}


/*HTML Class: POV. Nilos's POV at the moment of Larik's death.*/


tw-passage.povnilos-death {

        background-color: transparent;

        width: 100%;

        padding: 1em 5em;

        border-radius: 15px;

        font-family: Verdana, sans-serif;

        font-size: 14px;

        line-height: 1.5em;

}


tw-link {

color: #006633;

font-weight: normal;

text-decoration: none;

}
```

```
tw-link:hover {

    color: #339933;

    font-weight: normal;

    text-decoration: underline;

}


tw-link.visited {

    color: #003366;

    font-weight: normal;

    text-decoration: none;

}


tw-link.visited:hover {

    color: #339933;

    font-weight: normal;

    text-decoration: underline;

}


.enchantment-link {

color: #0000cc;

font-weight: normal;

text-decoration: underline;

}


.enchantment-link:hover {

color: #0066ff;

font-weight: normal;

text-decoration: underline;
```

```
}


.enchantment-link.visited {

color: #000066;

font-weight: normal;

text-decoration: underline;

}


.enchantment-link.visited:hover {

color: #0066ff;

font-weight: normal;

text-decoration: underline;

}



/*HTML Class: POV. Distant third person omniscient POV.*/


tw-sidebar.loc-nopov {

            background: url(https://i.imgur.com/uM2IoMq.png) repeat 0 0;

      border-radius: 10px;

}


/*HTML Class: POV. Trenon's POV.*/


tw-sidebar.povtrenon {

            background: url(https://i.imgur.com/Mfd4dfh.png) repeat 0 0;

      border-radius: 10px;

}
```

```css
tw-sidebar.povkell {

        background: url(https://i.imgur.com/LfEKwqf.png) repeat 0 0;

    border-radius: 10px;

}


tw-sidebar.povnilos {

        background: url(https://i.imgur.com/P6Cyqyp.png) repeat 0 0;

    border-radius: 10px;

}


tw-icon.undo {

        opacity: 1.0;

}


tw-icon.redo {

        opacity: 1.0;

}


.title {

    background-color: transparent;

    color: black;

    font-family: Georgia, serif;

    text-align: center;

    font-weight: italic;

    font-size: 5em;

    text-shadow: 4px 4px 4px #aaa;

    padding-top: 0.5em;
```

```css
}


.author {

        background-color: transparent;

         color: black;

        font-family: Georgia, serif;

        text-align: center;

        line-height: 1.5em;

        font-size: 2em;

}


.menu {

        display: inline-block;

        color: black;

        font-family: Georgia, serif;

        text-align: center;

        font-size: 2em;

        line-height: 1.5em;

        border: solid black 1px;

        border-radius: 15px;

        padding: 1em;

}


.header {

        font-family: Georgia;

        font-size: 12px;

        text-align: right;

}
```

```css
.footer {

      font-family: Times;

      font-size: 12px;

      text-align: right;

}


.opener     {

  color: black;

      font-family: Verdana, sans-serif;

      font-size: 16px;

      line-height: 1.5em;

      font-style: strong;

}


@-webkit-keyframes fadeIn { from { opacity: 0; } to { opacity: 1; } }

@-o-keyframes fadeIn { from { opacity: 0; } to { opacity: 1; } }

@keyframes fadeIn { from { opacity: 0; } to { opacity: 1; } }


.fade-in {

      opacity: 0;

      -webkit-animation: fadeIn ease-in 1;

          -o-animation: fadeIn ease-in 1;

             animation: fadeIn ease-in 1;


      -webkit-animation-fill-mode: forwards;

          -o-animation-fill-mode: forwards;

             animation-fill-mode: forwards;
```

```css
    -webkit-animation-duration: 1s;

        -o-animation-duration: 1s;

            animation-duration: 1s;

}


.fade-in.one {

    -webkit-animation-delay: 1s;

        -o-animation-delay: 1s;

            animation-delay: 1s;

}

.fade-in.two {

    -webkit-animation-delay: 3s;

        -o-animation-delay: 3s;

            animation-delay: 3s;

}

.fade-in.three {

    -webkit-animation-delay: 5s;

        -o-animation-delay: 5s;

            animation-delay: 5s;

}

.fade-in.four {

    -webkit-animation-delay: 9s;

        -o-animation-delay: 9s;

            animation-delay: 9s;

}
```

Appendix III: Header

```
{<!-- This script determines which CSS selectors are applied to each passage.

First, any classes left over from the previous passage are stripped out.

Then, if the passage has tags, the corresponding classes are applied to the

HTML. The script targets the passage and the sidebar. -->


(print: "<script>$('html').removeClass(\)</script>")

(if: (passage:)'s tags's length > 0)[

(print: "<script>$('html').addClass('" + (passage:)'s tags.join(' ') +

"'\)</script>")

(print: "<script>$('tw-passage').addClass('" + (passage:)'s tags.join(' ') +

"'\)</script>")

(print: "<script>$('tw-sidebar').addClass('" + (passage:)'s tags.join(' ') +

"'\)</script>")

]


} <div class="footer">//Figuera// | hko | (print: (passage: )'s name)</div>

<hr>

{ <!-- open allowHints -->

(if: $allowHints)[

(replace: "homeside ")[(link-replace: "homeside ")[men's side ] ]

(replace: "hearthside ")[(link-replace: "hearthside ")[women's side ] ]

(replace: "iryu holding ")[(link-replace: "iryu holding ")[(either: "Peris

and Maron's holding ","a weaving holding ","Maron and Peris's holding ")] ]

(replace: "irthu holding ")[(link-replace: "irthu holding ")[(either: "Berin

and Ralon's holding ","a silverworking holding ","Ralon and Berin's holding

")] ]

(replace: "irlu holding ")[(link-replace: "irlu holding ")[(either: "Dayon

and Cayir's holding ","a farming holding ","Cayir and Dayon's holding ")] ]
```

```
(replace: "irvu ")[(link-replace: "irvu ")[a mining holding ] ]

(replace: "irdanu holding")[(link-replace: "irdanu holding")[an
overholding] ]

(replace: "sung to irdanu ")[(link-replace: "sung to irdanu ")[contracted to
irdanu overholding ] ]

(replace: "irunu")[(link-replace: "irunu")[a smallholding] ]

(replace: "irkayu")[(link-replace: "irkayu")[a smallholding] ]

(replace: "ghostless")[(link-replace: "ghostless")[(either:
"loveless","contract")] ]

(replace: "ghost shell")[(link-replace: "ghost shell")[(either: "breathless
body","empty body","hollow remains","vacant flesh")] ]

(replace: "Lethinil ")[(link-replace: "Lethinil ")[(either: "Lethinil,
lodgestone keeper, ","Lethinil, a smallholder, ","Lethinil, contracted to an
overholding, ")] ]

(replace: "Chiason ")[(link-replace: "Chiason ")[(either: "Chiasin, bordel
keeper, ","Chiasin, a woman's kerchief tucked into a man's belt, ")] ]

(replace: "Chiasin ")[(link-replace: "Chiasin ")[(either: "Chiason, bordel
keeper, ","Chiason, a man's kerchief tucked into a woman's belt, ")] ]

(replace: "Belim ")[(link-replace: "Belim ")[Belim, iryu's daughter, ] ]

(replace: "Katir ")[(link-replace: "Katir ")[Katir, iryu's daughter, ] ]

(replace: "Firinol ")[(link-replace: "Firinol ")[(either: "Firinol, iryu's
second husband, ","Firinol, Nilos's father, ")] ]

(replace: "Janis ")[(link-replace: "Janis ")[either: "Janis, Nilos's sister,
","Janis, journeyman carpenter, ")] ]

(replace: "Renik ")[(link-replace: "Renik ")[(either: "Renik, irlu's
daughter, ","Renik, journeyman forester, ")] ]

(replace: "Hayn ")[(link-replace: "Hayn ")[(either: "Hayn, irlu's child,
","Hayn, Nilos's sibling")] ]
```

(replace: "Tilm ")[(link-replace: "Tilm ")[either: "Tilm, irlu's child, ","Tilm, Nilos's youngest sibling, ")]]

(replace: "Ferok ")[(link-replace: "Ferok ")[(either: "Ferok, an outrider, ","Ferok, with his harsh joking, ")]]

(replace: "Jiron ")[(link-replace: "Jiron ")[(either: "Jiron, an outrider, ","Jiron, defensive and shifty, ")]]

(replace: "Sirol ")[(link-replace: "Sirol ")[(either: "Sirol, head outrider, ","Sirol, Zayelik's second on the trail, ","Sirol, an old mountain hand, ")]]

(replace: "Birn ")[(link-replace: "Birn ")[(either: "Birn, the baby, ","Birn, Varin and Hiron's baby, ","Birn, iryu's first grandchild, ")]]

(if: ((passage:)'s tags contains "povtrenon") and ((passage:)'s tags contains "child"))[(replace: "Peris ")[(link-replace: "Peris ")[(either: "Peris, Larik's first mother, ","Peris, iryu's first wife, ","Peris, the master dyer, ",)]]

(replace: "Maron ")[(link-replace: "Maron ")[(either: "Maron, Larik's first father, ","Maron, Kell's first father, ","Maron, chamois shepherd, ","Maron, iryu's first husband, ","Maron, a magpie in his gaudy nest, ")]]

(replace: "Grenor ")[(link-replace: "Grenor ")[(either: "Grenor, Larik's second father, ","Grenor, Kell's second father, ","Grenor, herdsman and gardener, ","Grenor, tall and square, ")]]

(replace: "Shayin ")[(link-replace: "Shayin ")[(either: "Shayin, Larik's second mother, ","Shayin, Kelol's second mother, ","Shayin, iryu's sometime trader, ","Shayin, bound to her daughter's bedside, ")]]

(replace: "Amoz ")[(link-replace: "Amoz ")[(either: "Amoz, Larik's third father, ","Amoz, Kell's third father, ","Amoz, iryu's young husband, ","Amoz,

iryu's love-spouse, ","Amoz, with his hair plaited softly back from his handsome face, ")]]

(replace: "Varin ")[(link-replace: "Varin ")[(either: "Varin, Larik's oldest sister, ","Varin, Kell's oldest sister, ","Varin, iryu's oldest daughter, ","Varin, iryu's apprentice weaver, ","Varin, Hiron's wife, ")]]

(replace: "Hiron")[(link-replace: "Hiron")[Hiron, Varin's husband,]]

(replace: "Berin ")[(link-replace: "Berin ")[(either: "Berin, Trenon's mother, ","Berin, master silversmith, ","Berin, irthu's first wife, ","Berin, large-framed but spare, ","Berin, who trades her holding's name for silver's sake, ")]]

(replace: "Ralon ")[(link-replace: "Ralon ")[(either: "Ralon, Trenon's father, ","Ralon, Berin's first husband, ","Ralon, who makes land claims without raising a cairn, ","Ralon, who lives by Berin's silver, ","Ralon, gentleman farmer, ")]]

(replace: "Tereos ")[(link-replace: "Tereos ")[(either: "Tereos, Nilos's master, ","Tereos, the master healer, ","Tereos, who can't hear a new song, ","Tereos, whose gentle dismissals hurt Nilos more than he knows, ")]]

(replace: "Tethin ")[(link-replace: "Tethin ")[(either: "Tethin, irthu's second wife, ","Tethin, Trenon's borne mother, ","Tethin, whom he never knew, ","Tethin, Berin's love spouse, ")]]

(replace: "Cayir ")[(link-replace: "Cayir ")[(either: "Cayir, irlu's first wife, ","Cayir, Nilos's mother, ","Cayir, a better negotiator than irlu deserves, ","Cayir, canny enough to cage her son, ")]]

(replace: "Dayon ")[(link-replace: "Dayon ")[(either: "Dayon, irlu's first husband, ","Dayon, Ralon's farm labourer, ","Dayon, blunt and stubborn, ","Dayon, Nilos's father, ")]]

(replace: "Dalor ")[(link-replace: "Dalor ")[(either: "Dalor, master advocat, ", "Dalor, Trenon's master, ","Dalor, complacent in his mastery, ")]]

(replace: "Trayis ")[(link-replace: "Trayis ")[(either: "Trayis, apprentice miner, ")]]

(replace: "Rythel ")[(link-replace: "Rythel ")[(either: "Rythel, ono, ","Rythel, a slanted advocat, ")]]

(replace: "Zayelik ")[(link-replace: "Zayelik ")[(either: "Zayelik, master trader, ","Zayelik, wearing her face like a mask, ","Zayelik, a shrewd trader, ")]]

] <!-- close Trenon + child -->

(if: ((passage:)'s tags contains "povtrenon") and ((passage:)'s tags contains "son"))[(replace: "Peris ")[(link-replace: "Peris ")[(either: "Peris, Larik's first mother, ","Peris, Kelol's first mother, ","Peris, iryu's master dyer, ","Peris, iryu's first wife, ","Peris, lean as a spring coyote, ")]]

(replace: "Maron ")[(link-replace: "Maron ")[(either: "Maron, Larik's first father, ","Maron, Kelol's first father, ","Maron, chamois shepherd, ","Maron, iryu's first husband, ","Maron, weathered as a sandstone boulder, ")]]

(replace: "Grenor ")[(link-replace: "Grenor ")[(either: "Grenor, Larik's second father, ","Grenor, Kelol's second father, ","Grenor, herdsman and gardener, ","Grenor, iryu's second husband, ","Grenor, quietly disdainful, ")]]

(replace: "Shayin ")[(link-replace: "Shayin ")[(either: "Shayin, Larik's second mother, ","Shayin, Kelol's second mother, ","Shayin, iryu's sometime trader, ","Shayin, iryu's second wife, ","Shayin, remote as the snowline, ")]]

(replace: "Amoz ")[(link-replace: "Amoz ")[(either: "Amoz, Larik's third father, ","Amoz, Kelol's third father, ","Amoz, iryu's young husband,

","Amoz, iryu's love-spouse, ","Amoz, with his hair plaited softly back from his handsome face, ")]]

(replace: "Varin ")[(link-replace: "Varin ")[(either: "Varin, Larik's oldest sister, ","Varin, Kelol's oldest sister, ","Varin, iryu's oldest daughter, ","Varin, iryu's apprentice weaver, ")]]

(replace: "Hiron")[(link-replace: "Hiron")[Hiron, Varin's husband,]]

(replace: "Berin ")[(link-replace: "Berin ")[(either: "Berin, Trenon's mother, ","Berin, master silversmith, ","Berin, irthu's first wife, ","Berin, large-framed but spare, ","Berin, who clings to place as a chamois clings to the cliff's edge, ")]]

(replace: "Ralon ")[(link-replace: "Ralon ")[(either: "Ralon, Trenon's father, ","Ralon, Berin's first husband, ","Ralon, who makes land claims without raising a cairn, ","Ralon, who lives by Berin's silver, ","Ralon, gentleman farmer, ")]]

(replace: "Tereos ")[(link-replace: "Tereos ")[(either: "Tereos, Nilos's master, ","Tereos, the master healer, ","Tereos, who can't hear a new song, ","Tereos, whose gentle dismissals hurt Nilos more than he knows, ")]]

(replace: "Tethin ")[(link-replace: "Tethin ")[(either: "Tethin, irthu's second wife, ","Tethin, Trenon's borne mother, ","Tethin, whom he never knew, ","Tethin, Berin's love spouse, ")]]

(replace: "Cayir ")[(link-replace: "Cayir ")[(either: "Cayir, irlu's first wife, ","Cayir, Nilos's mother, ","Cayir, a better negotiator than irlu deserves, ","Cayir, canny enough to cage her son, ")]]

(replace: "Dayon ")[(link-replace: "Dayon ")[(either: "Dayon, irlu's first husband, ","Dayon, Ralon's farm labourer, ","Dayon, blunt and stubborn, ","Dayon, Nilos's father, ")]]

(replace: "Dalor ")[(link-replace: "Dalor ")[(either: "Dalor, master advocat, ", "Dalor, Trenon's master, ","Dalor, complacent in his mastery, ")]]

(replace: "Zayelik ")[(link-replace: "Zayelik ")[(either: "Zayelik, master trader, ")]]

(replace: "Harin ")[(link-replace: "Harin ")[(either: "Harin, master miner, ","Harin, Finoc's mother, ")]]

] <!-- close Trenon + son -->

(if: ((passage:)'s tags contains "povtrenon") and ((passage:)'s tags contains "daughter"))[(replace: "Peris ")[(link-replace: "Peris ")[(either: "Peris, Larik's first mother, ","Peris, Kelil's first mother ","Peris, iryu's master dyer, ","Peris, iryu's first wife, ")]]

(replace: "Maron ")[(link-replace: "Maron ")[(either: "Maron, Larik's first father, ","Maron, Kelil's first father, ","Maron, chamois shepherd, ","Maron, iryu's first husband, ","Maron, sun-browned and complacent, ")]]

(replace: "Grenor ")[(link-replace: "Grenor ")[(either: "Grenor, Larik's second father, ","Grenor, Kelil's second father, ","Grenor, herdsman and gardener, ","Grenor, iryu's second husband, ","Grenor, Maron's love-spouse, ","Grenor, roughly kind, ")]]

(replace: "Shayin ")[(link-replace: "Shayin ")[(either: "Shayin, Larik's second mother, ","Shayin, Kelil's second mother, ","Shayin, iryu's sometime trader, ","Shayin, iryu's second wife, ","Shayin, remote as the cold stars, ")]]

(replace: "Amoz ")[(link-replace: "Amoz ")[(either: "Amoz, Larik's third father, ","Amoz, Kelil's third father, ","Amoz, iryu's young husband, ","Amoz, iryu's love-spouse, ","Amoz, barely old enough to sing a marriage, ")]]

(replace: "Varin ")[(link-replace: "Varin ")[(either: "Varin, Kelil's oldest sister, ","Varin, iryu's oldest daughter, ","Varin, iryu's apprentice weaver, ","Varin, Hiron's wife, ", "Varin, who gave iryu its first grandchild, ")]]

(replace: "Hiron")[(link-replace: "Hiron")[(either: "Hiron, Varin's husband, ","Hiron, father to iryu's first grandchild, ")]]

(replace: "Berin ")[(link-replace: "Berin ")[(either: "Berin, Trenon's mother, ","Berin, master silversmith, ","Berin, irthu's first wife, ","Berin, large-framed but spare, ","Berin, who sold Trenon to iryu holding, ")]]

(replace: "Ralon ")[(link-replace: "Ralon ")[(either: "Ralon, Trenon's father, ","Ralon, Berin's first husband, ","Ralon, who makes land claims without raising a cairn, ","Ralon, who lives by Berin's silver, ","Ralon, a raven stooping over place, ")]]

(replace: "Tereos ")[(link-replace: "Tereos ")[(either: "Tereos, Nilos's master, ","Tereos, the master healer, ","Tereos, who can't hear a new song, ","Tereos, whose gentle dismissals hurt Nilos more than he knows, ")]]

(replace: "Cayir ")[(link-replace: "Cayir ")[(either: "Cayir, irlu's first wife, ","Cayir, Nilos's mother, ","Cayir, a better negotiator than irlu deserves, ","Cayir, canny enough to cage her son, ")]]

(replace: "Dayon ")[(link-replace: "Dayon ")[(either: "Dayon, irlu's first husband, ","Dayon, Ralon's farm labourer, ","Dayon, blunt and stubborn, ","Dayon, Nilos's father, ")]]

(replace: "Dalor ")[(link-replace: "Dalor ")[(either: "Dalor, master advocat, ", "Dalor, Trenon's master, ","Dalor, complacent in his mastery, ")]]

(replace: "Trayis ")[(link-replace: "Trayis ")[(either: "Trayis, apprentice miner, ")]]

(replace: "Rythel ")[(link-replace: "Rythel ")[(either: "Rythel, ono, ")]]

(replace: "Zayelik ")[(link-replace: "Zayelik ")[(either: "Zayelik, master trader, ","Zayelik, wearing her face like a mask, ","Zayelik, trader enough to be ruthless, ")]]

(replace: "Hezibor ")[(link-replace: "Hezibor ")[(either: "Hezibor, master advocate, ","Hezibor, Zayelik's patron, ","Hezibor, advocate for irdanu holding, ")]]

(replace: "Jeramol ")[(link-replace: "Jeramol ")[(either: "Jeramol, journeyman healer, ", "Jeramol, a smallholding healer, ","Jeramol, honourable and humourless, ")]]

] <!-- close Trenon + daughter -->

(if: ((passage:)'s tags contains "povnilos") and ((passage:)'s tags contains "child"))[(replace: "Peris ")[(link-replace: "Peris ")[(either: "Peris, Larik's mother, ","Peris, iryu's first wife, ","Peris, the master dyer, ", "Peris, Kell's mother, ")]]

(replace: "Maron ")[(link-replace: "Maron ")[(either: "Maron, Larik's first father, ","Maron, Kell's first father, ","Maron, chamois shepherd, ","Maron, iryu's first husband, ","Maron, pride eroded by Larik's death, ")]]

(replace: "Grenor ")[(link-replace: "Grenor ")[(either: "Grenor, Larik's second father, ","Grenor, Kell's second father, ","Grenor, herdsman and gardener, ","Grenor, slumped and close-mouthed, ")]]

(replace: "Shayin ")[(link-replace: "Shayin ")[(either: "Shayin, Larik's mother, ","Shayin, Larik's borne mother, ","Shayin, Kelol's mother, ","Shayin, who trades for iryu holding, ","Shayin, iryu's second wife, ","Shayin, eyes like a rabbit's when the hawk strikes, ")]]

(replace: "Amoz ")[(link-replace: "Amoz ")[(either: "Amoz, Larik's father, ","Amoz, Kell's father, ","Amoz, who keeps iryu deepstone, ","Amoz, who married into iryu for love, ")]]

(replace: "Varin ")[(link-replace: "Varin ")[(either: "Varin, Larik's oldest sister, ","Varin, Kell's oldest sister, ","Varin, iryu's oldest daughter, ",

137

"Varin, the elder but unable to match Larik at weaving, ","Varin, resentful
of Larik's talent, ")]]

(replace: "Hiron")[(link-replace: "Hiron")[(either: "Hiron, Varin's husband,
","Hiron, Kell's marriage-brother, ")]]

(replace: "Berin ")[(link-replace: "Berin ")[(either: "Berin, Trenon's
mother, ","Berin, master silversmith, ","Berin, irthu's only wife, ","Berin,
who traded Trenon for silver, ","Berin, place-proud and distant, ")]]

(replace: "Ralon ")[(link-replace: "Ralon ")[(either: "Ralon, Trenon's
father, ","Ralon, irthu's only husband, ","Ralon, who hires Nilos's parents
to farm his claimed fields, ","Ralon, who lives by Berin's silver, ","Ralon,
gentleman farmer, ")]]

(replace: "Tereos ")[(link-replace: "Tereos ")[(either: "Tereos, Nilos's
master, ","Tereos, low-voiced and firm, ","Tereos, who sees Nilos's grief
without bowing to it, ","Tereos, with his finger on a lifepoint, ")]]

(replace: "Tethin ")[(link-replace: "Tethin ")[(either: "Tethin, Trenon's
mother, ")]]

(replace: "Cayir ")[(link-replace: "Cayir ")[(either: "Cayir, Nilos's mother,
","Cayir, master carpenter, ","Cayir, first mother of irlu holding, ","Cayir,
who bargains for her daughters, ")]]

(replace: "Dayon ")[(link-replace: "Dayon ")[(either: "Dayon, Nilos's father,
","Dayon, sturdy and warm, ","Dayon, careworn and thoughtful, ")]]

(replace: "Dalor ")[(link-replace: "Dalor ")[(either: "Dalor, master advocat,
","Dalor, Trenon's master, ")]]

(replace: "Trayis ")[(link-replace: "Trayis ")[(either: "Trayis, apprentice
miner, ","Trayis, Ganil's sister, ","Trayis, Kell's sweetheart, ")]]

(replace: "Rythel ")[(link-replace: "Rythel ")[(either: "Rythel, ono, ")]]

(replace: "Zayelik ")[(link-replace: "Zayelik ")[(either: "Zayelik, master
trader, ")]]

] <!-- close Nilos + child -->

(if: ((passage:)'s tags contains "povnilos") and ((passage:)'s tags
contains "son"))[(replace: "Peris ")[(link-replace: "Peris ")[(either:
"Peris, Larik's mother, ","Peris, Kelol's mother, ","Peris, the master dyer,
","Peris, iryu's first wife, ","Peris, spare and strong, ")]]
(replace: "Maron ")[(link-replace: "Maron ")[(either: "Maron, Larik's father,
","Maron, Kelol's father, ","Maron, chamois shepherd, ","Maron, iryu's first
husband, ","Maron, broad and brown, ")]]
(replace: "Grenor ")[(link-replace: "Grenor ")[(either: "Grenor, Larik's
father, ","Grenor, Kelol's father, ","Grenor, herdsman and gardener,
","Grenor, resigned and quiet, ")]]
(replace: "Shayin ")[(link-replace: "Shayin ")[(either: "Shayin, Larik's
mother, ","Shayin, Larik's borne mother, ","Shayin, Kelol's mother,
","Shayin, who trades for iryu holding, ","Shayin, iryu's second wife,
","Shayin, her ghost heavy, ")]]
(replace: "Amoz ")[(link-replace: "Amoz ")[(either: "Amoz, Larik's father,
","Amoz, Kelol's father, ","Amoz, who keeps iryu deepstone, ","Amoz, who
married into iryu for love, ","Amoz, broad-shouldered and softly handsome,
")]]
(replace: "Varin ")[(link-replace: "Varin ")[(either: "Varin, Larik's oldest
sister, ","Varin, Kelol's oldest sister, ","Varin, iryu's oldest daughter, ",
"Varin, the elder but unable to match Larik at weaving, ","Varin, resentful
of Larik's talent, ")]]
(replace: "Hiron")[(link-replace: "Hiron")[(either: "Hiron, Varin's husband,
","Hiron, Kelol's marriage-brother, ","Hiron, baby Birn's father, ")]]

(replace: "Berin ")[(link-replace: "Berin ")[(either: "Berin, Trenon's

mother, ","Berin, master silversmith, ","Berin, irthu's only wife, ","Berin,

who traded Trenon for silver, ","Berin, brittle as ice, ")]]

(replace: "Ralon ")[(link-replace: "Ralon ")[(either: "Ralon, Trenon's

father, ","Ralon, irthu's first husband, ","Ralon, who hires Nilos's parents

to farm his claimed fields, ","Ralon, who lives by Berin's silver, ","Ralon,

gentleman farmer, ")]]

(replace: "Tereos ")[(link-replace: "Tereos ")[(either: "Tereos, Nilos's

master, ","Tereos, gentle and firm, ","Tereos, who can't see truth in Nilos's

songs, ","Tereos, whose gentle dismissals hurt Nilos more than he knows,

")]]

(replace: "Tethin ")[(link-replace: "Tethin ")[(either: "Tethin, Trenon's

mother, ")]]

(replace: "Cayir ")[(link-replace: "Cayir ")[(either: "Cayir, Nilos's mother,

","Cayir, master carpenter, ","Cayir, first mother of irlu holding, ","Cayir,

who bargains for her daughters, ")]]

(replace: "Dayon ")[(link-replace: "Dayon ")[(either: "Dayon, Nilos's father,

","Dayon, sturdy and warm, ","Dayon, careworn and thoughtful, ")]]

(replace: "Dalor ")[(link-replace: "Dalor ")[(either: "Dalor, master advocat,

","Dalor, Trenon's master, ")]]

(replace: "Trayis ")[(link-replace: "Trayis ")[(either: "Trayis, apprentice

miner, ","Trayis, Ganil's sister, ","Trayis, Kell's sweetheart, ")]]

(replace: "Rythel ")[(link-replace: "Rythel ")[(either: "Rythel, ono,

","Rythel, trader aslant, ","Rythel, advocat askew, ")]]

(replace: "Zayelik ")[(link-replace: "Zayelik ")[(either: "Zayelik, master

trader, ","Zayelik, a stern master, ","Zayelik, who contracted Kelol, ")]]

(replace: "Kerajin ")[(link-replace: "Kerajin ")[(either: "Kerajin,

lodgestone server, ","Kerajin, Lethinil's foster-daughter, ","Kerajin,

trapped in her fosterage debt, ","Kerajin, round with bearing, ","Kerajin, with her sweet smile, ")]]

] <!-- close Nilos + son -->

(if: ((passage:)'s tags contains "povnilos") and ((passage:)'s tags contains "daughter"))[(replace: "Peris ")[(link-replace: "Peris ")[(either: "Peris, Larik's mother, ","Peris, Kelil's mother ","Peris, the master dyer, ","Peris, iryu's first wife, ")]]
(replace: "Maron ")[(link-replace: "Maron ")[(either: "Maron, Larik's first father, ","Maron, Kelil's first father, ","Maron, chamois shepherd, ","Maron, iryu's first husband, ","Maron, complacent as a summer grizzly, ")]]
(replace: "Grenor ")[(link-replace: "Grenor ")[(either: "Grenor, Larik's second father, ","Grenor, Kelil's second father, ","Grenor, herdsman and gardener, ","Grenor, warm-eyed and content, ")]]
(replace: "Shayin ")[(link-replace: "Shayin ")[(either: "Shayin, Larik's mother, ","Shayin, Larik's borne mother, ","Shayin, Kelol's mother, ","Shayin, who trades for iryu holding, ","Shayin, iryu's second wife, ","Shayin, sorrow limned in bright anger, ")]]
(replace: "Amoz ")[(link-replace: "Amoz ")[(either: "Amoz, Larik's father, ","Amoz, Kelil's father, ","Amoz, who keeps iryu deepstone, ","Amoz, who married into iryu for love, ")]]
(replace: "Varin ")[(link-replace: "Varin ")[(either: "Varin, Larik's oldest sister, ","Varin, Kelil's oldest sister, ","Varin, iryu's oldest daughter, ","Varin, the elder but unable to match Larik at weaving, ","Varin, resentful of Larik's talent, ")]]
(replace: "Hiron")[(link-replace: "Hiron")[(either: "Hiron, Varin's husband, ","Hiron, Kelil's marriage-brother, ","Hiron, baby Birn's father, ")]]

(replace: "Berin ")[(link-replace: "Berin ")[(either: "Berin, Trenon's mother, ","Berin, master silversmith, ","Berin, irthu's only wife, ","Berin, who traded Trenon for silver, ","Berin, place-proud and distant, ")]]

(replace: "Ralon ")[(link-replace: "Ralon ")[(either: "Ralon, Trenon's father, ","Ralon, irthu's first husband, ","Ralon, who hires Nilos's parents to farm his claimed fields, ","Ralon, who lives by Berin's silver, ","Ralon, gentleman farmer, ")]]

(replace: "Tereos ")[(link-replace: "Tereos ")[(either: "Tereos, Nilos's master, ","Tereos, tender and inexorable, ","Tereos, who gave Nilos his love of healing, ","Tereos, who teaches with kindness, ")]]

(replace: "Cayir ")[(link-replace: "Cayir ")[(either: "Cayir, Nilos's mother, ","Cayir, master carpenter, ","Cayir, first mother of irlu holding, ","Cayir, who bargains for her daughters, ")]]

(replace: "Dayon ")[(link-replace: "Dayon ")[(either: "Dayon, Nilos's father, ","Dayon, sturdy and warm, ","Dayon, careworn and thoughtful, ")]]

(replace: "Dalor ")[(link-replace: "Dalor ")[(either: "Dalor, master advocat, ","Dalor, Trenon's master, ")]]

(replace: "Trayis ")[(link-replace: "Trayis ")[(either: "Trayis, apprentice miner, ","Trayis, Ganil's sister, ","Trayis, Kell's sweetheart, ")]]

(replace: "Zayelik ")[(link-replace: "Zayelik ")[(either: "Zayelik, master trader, ")]]

] <!-- close Nilos + daughter -->

(if: ((passage:)'s tags contains "povkell") and ((passage:)'s tags contains "child"))[(replace: "Peris ")[(link-replace: "Peris ")[(either: "Peris, Kell's mother, ","Peris, who left Larik's care to Shayin, ","Peris, who honours place like a magpie gathers mica, ", "Peris, who orders iryu holding to her liking, ")]]

(replace: "Maron ")[(link-replace: "Maron ")[(either: "Maron, Kell's father, ","Maron, who claims the most chamois pastures in Asaresta, ","Maron, irritable and morose, ","Maron, who leads iryu holding with Peris, ")]]

(replace: "Grenor ")[(link-replace: "Grenor ")[(either: "Grenor, Kell's father, ","Grenor, whose close hugs soothe, ",)]]

(replace: "Shayin ")[(link-replace: "Shayin ")[(either: "Shayin, Kell's mother, ","Shayin, still fretting over Larik, ","Shayin, hands wringing together, ","Shayin, who lived by Larik's pallet during her illness, ")]]

(replace: "Amoz ")[(link-replace: "Amoz ")[(either: "Amoz, Kell's father, ","Amoz, who keeps the deepstone, ","Amoz, the only parent who listens to Kell, ")]]

(replace: "Varin ")[(link-replace: "Varin ")[(either: "Varin, Kelil's oldest sister, ","Varin, who gave iryu the holding's first grandchild, ","Varin, who was always jealous of Larik's talent, ","Varin, who sought place while Larik earned it, ")]]

(replace: "Hiron")[(link-replace: "Hiron")[(either: "Hiron, Varin's husband, ","Hiron, Kell's marriage-brother, ")]]

(replace: "Berin ")[(link-replace: "Berin ")[(either: "Berin, Trenon's only mother, ","Berin, master silversmith, ","Berin, irthu's only wife, ", "Berin, who the traders call monogamist behind her back, ")]]

(replace: "Ralon ")[(link-replace: "Ralon ")[(either: "Ralon, Trenon's only father, ","Ralon, irthu's only husband, ","Ralon, a field-claimer but hardly a farmer, ","Ralon, a raven for place, ")]]

(replace: "Tereos ")[(link-replace: "Tereos ")[(either: "Tereos, Nilos's master, ","Tereos, the healing master, ","Tereos, whose songs never touched Larik's illness, ")]]

(replace: "Tethin ")[(link-replace: "Tethin ")[(either: "Tethin, Trenon's mother, ")]]

(replace: "Cayir ")[(link-replace: "Cayir ")[(either: "Cayir, irlu's first wife, ")]]

(replace: "Dayon ")[(link-replace: "Dayon ")[(either: "Dayon, irlu's first husband, ")]]

(replace: "Dalor ")[(link-replace: "Dalor ")[(either: "Dalor, master advocat, ","Dalor, Ralon's crony, ","Dalor, Trenon's master, ")]]

(replace: "Trayis ")[(link-replace: "Trayis ")[(either: "Trayis, who became a daughter, ","Trayis, an apprentice miner, ")]]

(replace: "Zayelik ")[(link-replace: "Zayelik ")[(either: "Zayelik, master trader, ","Zayelik, whose train has more mules than any, ","Zayelik, who trades to the city, ","Zayelik, who fills the market with her tales, ")]]
] <!-- close Kell + child -->

(if: ((passage:)'s tags contains "povkell") and ((passage:)'s tags contains "son"))[(replace: "Peris ")[(link-replace: "Peris ")[(either: "Peris, Kelol's mother, ","Peris, the best dyer on the mountain, ","Peris, who guides iryu holding with a steady hand, ", "Peris, who grieves Larik's broken contract more than Larik herself, ")]]

(replace: "Maron ")[(link-replace: "Maron ")[(either: "Maron, Kelol's father, ","Maron, who claims the most chamois pastures in Asaresta, ","Maron, impatient as a spring bear, ","Maron, who takes pride in iryu holding's wealth, ")]]

(replace: "Grenor ")[(link-replace: "Grenor ")[(either: "Grenor, Kelol's second father, ","Grenor, with broad, gentle hands, ","Grenor, who tends the garden with silent care, ","Grenor, tall and square, ")]]

(replace: "Shayin ")[(link-replace: "Shayin ")[(either: "Shayin, Kelol's mother, ","Shayin, Larik's borne mother, ","Shayin, who trades for iryu

144

holding despite having little inclination for it, ","Shayin, thinner since the winter, ","Shayin, whose eyes rest on distant peaks, ")]]

(replace: "Amoz ")[(link-replace: "Amoz ")[(either: "Amoz, Kelol's youngest father, ","Amoz, who keeps the deepstone, ","Amoz, Shayin's chosen husband, ","Amoz, who was never chivvied into a contract he didn't want, ")]]

(replace: "Varin ")[(link-replace: "Varin ")[(either: "Varin, Kelol's oldest sister, ","Varin, who gave iryu the holding's first grandchild, ","Varin, who was always jealous of Larik's talent, ","Varin, who sought place while Larik earned it, ")]]

(replace: "Hiron")[(link-replace: "Hiron")[(either: "Hiron, Varin's husband, ","Hiron, Kelol's marriage-brother, ")]]

(replace: "Berin ")[(link-replace: "Berin ")[(either: "Berin, Trenon's only mother, ","Berin, master silversmith, ","Berin, irthu's only wife, ","Berin, who tried to trade Trenon for silver, ","Berin, who the traders call monogamist behind her back, ")]]

(replace: "Ralon ")[(link-replace: "Ralon ")[(either: "Ralon, Trenon's only father, ","Ralon, irthu's only husband, ","Ralon, a field-claimer but hardly a farmer, ","Ralon, who lives by Berin's silver, ","Ralon, a raven for place, ")]]

(replace: "Tereos ")[(link-replace: "Tereos ")[(either: "Tereos, Nilos's master, ","Tereos, the healing master, ","Tereos, whose apprentice saw beyond him, ")]]

(replace: "Tethin ")[(link-replace: "Tethin ")[(either: "Tethin, Trenon's mother, ")]]

(replace: "Cayir ")[(link-replace: "Cayir ")[(either: "Cayir, irlu's first wife, ")]]

(replace: "Dayon ")[(link-replace: "Dayon ")[(either: "Dayon, irlu's first husband, ")]]

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(replace: "Dalor ")[(link-replace: "Dalor ")[(either: "Dalor, master advocat,
","Dalor, who lives in Ralon's pocket, ","Dalor, Trenon's master, ")] ]
(replace: "Trayis ")[(link-replace: "Trayis ")[(either: "Trayis, bright in
the sun, ","Trayis, a daughter of irlu, ","Trayis, an apprentice miner, ")] ]
(replace: "Rythel ")[(link-replace: "Rythel ")[(either: "Rythel, ono, ",
"Rythel, a trader askew, ","Rythel, advocat aslant, ")] ]
(replace: "Zayelik ")[(link-replace: "Zayelik ")[(either: "Zayelik, master
trader, ","Zayelik, who contracts outriders, ","Zayelik, who leaves Kelol
beneath her notice, ")] ]
(replace: "Kerajin ")[(link-replace: "Kerajin ")[(either: "Kerajin,
lodgestone server, ","Kerajin, round with bearing, ","Kerajin, bound to a
fosterage contract, ")] ]
] <!-- close Kell + son -->


(if: ( (passage: )'s tags contains "povkell") and ( (passage: )'s tags
contains "daughter") )[(replace: "Peris ")[(link-replace: "Peris ")[(either:
"Peris, Kelil's mother, ","Peris, the best dyer in Asaresta, ","Peris, who
leads iryu holding with Maron, ","Peris, clinging to Larik's betrothal
contract, ")] ]
(replace: "Maron ")[(link-replace: "Maron ")[(either: "Maron, Kelil's father,
","Maron, who claims the most chamois pastures in Asaresta, ","Maron, steady
and satisfied, ","Maron, who sees his place growing with his land claims, ")]
]
(replace: "Grenor ")[(link-replace: "Grenor ")[(either: "Grenor, Kell's
father, ","Grenor, a quiet, steady presence, ")] ]
(replace: "Shayin ")[(link-replace: "Shayin ")[(either: "Shayin, Kell's
mother, ","Shayin, Larik's borne mother, ","Shayin, paler despite the rising
summer, ","Shayin, eyes turned empty and inward, ")] ]
```

146

(replace: "Amoz ")[(link-replace: "Amoz ")[(either: "Amoz, Kelil's youngest father, ","Amoz, who keeps the deepstone, ","Amoz, Shayin's chosen husband, ","Amoz, who listens, but cannot understand, ")]]

(replace: "Varin ")[(link-replace: "Varin ")[(either: "Varin, Kelil's oldest sister, ","Varin, who gave iryu the holding's first grandchild, ","Varin, who was always jealous of Larik's talent, ","Varin, who sought place while Larik earned it, ")]]

(replace: "Hiron")[(link-replace: "Hiron")[(either: "Hiron, Varin's husband, ","Hiron, Kelil's marriage-brother, ")]]

(replace: "Berin ")[(link-replace: "Berin ")[(either: "Berin, Trenon's only mother, ","Berin, master silversmith, ","Berin, irthu's only wife, ","Berin, soon to be Kelil's marriage-mother, ","Berin, who the traders call monogamist behind her back, ")]]

(replace: "Ralon ")[(link-replace: "Ralon ")[(either: "Ralon, Trenon's only father, ","Ralon, irthu's only husband, ","Ralon, a field-claimer but hardly a farmer, ","Ralon, who lives by Berin's silver, ","Ralon, a raven for place, ")]]

(replace: "Tereos ")[(link-replace: "Tereos ")[(either: "Tereos, Nilos's master, ","Tereos, the healing master, ")]]

(replace: "Tethin ")[(link-replace: "Tethin ")[(either: "Tethin, Trenon's mother, ")]]

(replace: "Cayir ")[(link-replace: "Cayir ")[(either: "Cayir, irlu's first wife, ")]]

(replace: "Dayon ")[(link-replace: "Dayon ")[(either: "Dayon, irlu's first husband, ")]]

(replace: "Dalor ")[(link-replace: "Dalor ")[(either: "Dalor, master advocat, ","Dalor, Trenon's master, ","Dalor, who favours irthu holding, ")]]

```
(replace: "Trayis ")[(link-replace: "Trayis ")[(either: "Trayis, apprentice
miner, ","Trayis, a woman now, ","Trayis, a friend only, ")] ]
(replace: "Zayelik ")[(link-replace: "Zayelik ")[(either: "Zayelik, master
trader, ","Zayelik, bound to her patrons, ","Zayelik, close-mouthed, ")] ]
(replace: "Hezibor ")[(link-replace: "Hezibor ")[(either: "Hezibor, master
advocat, ","Hezibor, Zayelik's patron, ","Hezibor, advocat for irdanu
holding, ")] ]
(replace: "Jeramol ")[(link-replace: "Jeramol ")[(either: "Jeramol,
journeyman healer, ", "Jeramol, a smallholding healer, ","Jeramol, honourable
and humourless, ")] ]
] <!-- close Kell + daughter -->
] <!-- close allowHints -->
}
```

Appendix IV: Footer

{

<!-- The footer of each passage allows the player to turn Hints (extended descriptions which give further context to the story's fantasy elements) on or off. Each time the switch is toggled, the passage will refresh, which causes any in-passage commands to re-run.

The footer also has the save-game link. Saved games can be reopened from the main menu and will retain the player's history of visited passages and the state of any set variables. --> }

<hr> { <div class="footer">

(if: $allowHints is true)[(link: "Turn Hints Off")[(set: $allowHints to false)(goto: (passage:)'s name)]]

(else:)[(link: "Turn Hints On")[(set: $allowHints to true)(goto: (passage:)'s name)]]

 |

 (link: "Save Game")[(if: (save-game: "FileA"))[(print: "Game saved!")]

  (else:)[Sorry, I couldn't save your game.]]

 |

(link-goto: "Main Menu","Front Credits")

</div> }