

Midnight at the Arcanum

a monograph



Knight Terra Press
littera manet sed lector oraculum

Quinn Tyler Jackson

Digital Edition

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Quinn Tyler Jackson CSci FIScT FRSA



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littera manet sed lector oraculum

audere, scire, tacere

ὄπως ἐπάνω, ἔτσι και κάτω

About the Book

Quinn Jackson's *Midnight at the Arcanum* is a 106K-word illustrated meta-autobiographical monograph, composed of three sections: front-matter, the novel narrative itself, and back-matter. Despite its composite literary format (essays, autobiographical vignettes, short stories, poems, a novel, a play), it is presented as a unified monograph focusing on an examination of meta-autobiography as a transformative poststructuralist literary form, with each section of the work building toward the next or supporting what preceded. Finally, the work aspires to be of pedagogic utility, a template in meta-autobiographical praxis.

At its core, the monograph takes the reader on a journey through the emotional and intellectual landscapes of Conrad, an aspiring author. The work is divided into three distinct sections: front-matter, the main narrative, and back-matter, which weave together a tapestry of essay, memoir, poetry, drama, and fiction. The narrative serves both as storytelling and as an exploration of the intricate nature of metafiction, moving through time from the author's childhood in 1980s Canada to the adult he becomes.

The front-matter sets the tone for the novel, with an essay on meta-autobiographical fiction as a form of social justice, a foreword exploring the author's early life, and a poem that sets the tone of the central narrative that follows.

The narrative segment, presented primarily in the first-person point of view of the protagonist, Conrad, encompasses decades, shifting between the Canadian locales of Burnaby, Vancouver, Montreal, and finally, New Westminster, following Conrad's journey from his early days as an aspiring writer as he navigates his complex love affairs, all marked by growth, loss, and transformation, to the physically austere yet restorative months immediately following his departure from his marriage.

The back-matter offers a denouement rather than an abrupt end, continuing the author's personal growth journey through an afterword, an additional short story, and two concluding essays. Much like Jackson's previous work, lauded by reviewers for its precision, attention to detail, and innovative narrative style, *Midnight at the Arcanum* invites readers into an immersive and at times gregariously intimate exploration of time, emotion, and the limits of fictional narrative.

Front-matter (12K words):

- Essay: "Reclaiming the Narrative Pedagogy"
- Preface: "*Apologetica de Polyphonia Veritatis*"
- Author's Foreword: vignettes from age 5 to 18

The front-matter establishes that the book is a meta-autobiographical account of the author's early life in late-80's Canada. First, a brief treatment of meta-autobiographical fiction is presented to immediately alert the reader to the expectations one should have from this point onward. The foreword then discusses the author's life through vignettes in terms of key developmental impact factors across his intellectual, social, and emotional growth from kindergarten to high school graduation. These vignettes are put forth in a matter-of-fact format without nonlinear time shifting or narrative flourishes. Finally, it closes with a poem that sets the tone for the enclosed novel that follows.

The Novel (60K words):

- New Westminster, Winter 2007 (1 chapter)
 - Short story: “Midnight”
- Montreal, Late August 1988 (1 chapter)
 - Short story: “Zero”
- Burnaby, Fall and Winter 1987-1988 (24 chapters)
 - Short story: “Neck and Neck”
 - Short story: “Elspeth Stood at the Edge”
- Montreal, Early Summer, 1988 (10 chapters)
 - Short story: “In the Shadow of Clay Pigeons”
- New Westminster, Winter 2006-2007 (9 chapters)
 - Short story: “Wake Up!”
 - Short story: “When a Stranger Wandered In”
 - Short story: “Clean”
 - Short story: “Barefoot Sonata”

The novel begins *in medias res* with the entitled short story “Midnight” with Conrad, the protagonist, sitting on a bench outside in the cold, playing a saxophone, reminiscing about a past lover. This chapter is dated seven years into the New Millennium. The next chapter, numbered “Zero” flashes back to 1988 in Montreal, showing a much younger Conrad, clinging to a necklace with a saxophone amulet on it, straining through the last emotional disruptions of an apparently failed relationship that we as yet have not seen into. The use of the second-person addressing of a past lover and then the shift into the past and the subsequent use of this same second-person ties together the love interests of the protagonist, or at least suggests an ideal love in his emotional focus. He then regains his composure and (it is implied) centers himself to press forward with his life.

The novel hereafter progresses linearly from roughly a year prior to the scene in sweltering hot Montreal. We are with Conrad at his bathroom mirror, ready to head out into the world to find a job before he starves. Through chance and charm, he lands a decent job at a jewelry store, and he and Vanessa, one of his coworkers, fall into a weekend of lusty activity together that ends quickly in the fracturing of his life as a consequence of a hot-headed outburst on Conrad’s part.

After this weekend, he eventually falls sick while at work due to severe pneumonia, loses his job and income, and endures the consequences of his destroyed relationship and health. He slowly pulls out of the effects of his illness and begins a plan to improve his French by socializing at a French bookstore in Vancouver, where he meets H el ene, a theatre director who becomes charmed by him in a way that pulls him into an almost ethereal relationship almost centering on his play-in-progress (included as an appendix herein). This relationship eventually ends on mutually agreed terms, and Conrad makes the decision to move to Montreal and try his hand at survival there.

The novel then shifts to Montreal and Conrad's immediate tone is one of regret. Even so, he pulls himself together, finds a job, and begins pushing through the days. During this time he sees and is compelled to approach Anne-Jolie, a dead-ringer for Vanessa, and they begin to talk. He learns she is married but declares that this does not matter to him. Their relationship builds into something more intensely connected than he is used to. This stolen love affair comes to an end, however, when her husband gets a job location change to Paris and expects Anne-Jolie to come with him, which she decides to do.

We then jump forward, to a time just before the first chapter of the novel ("Midnight"). Conrad, much older now, finds himself being prodded awake by his wife, Roxana, in the chapter "Wake Up!", and in a following chapter is in a dark hotel room in New Westminster, in the chapter entitled "Clean," presented in the third person. As suggested by the transitional-period short story "When a Stranger Wandered In," that serves as the next, allegorical examination of his interior life, he here seems to be coming out of many years of trauma that he insists must be washed from him.

The jump to 2007 after so many missing years brings us to Conrad's post-marriage voyages. He meets Phoebe in a nightclub and begins talking with her about her anxieties and concerns, and he shares how he has found some peace. We progress through their relationship, and then are brought to the close of the novel, where we see that the lover in the first chapter ("Midnight") is, in fact, this same Phoebe, bringing us full circle.

Back-matter (34K words):

- Author's Afterword: vignettes from age 19 onward
- Short story: "It Ain't Never Gonna Happen"
- Essay: "Call your Play; Call your English"
- Essay: "Dismantling Lionization in STEM"
- Annotated Bibliography: Thematic Annotated Bibliography
- Memorandum: "Notes for the Acquisitions Editor"
- Postscript: "A Poststructuralist Postscript"
- Playbill: Playbill to the Appendix
- Appendix: The Play: *Empty Rooms: a play in 3 acts*

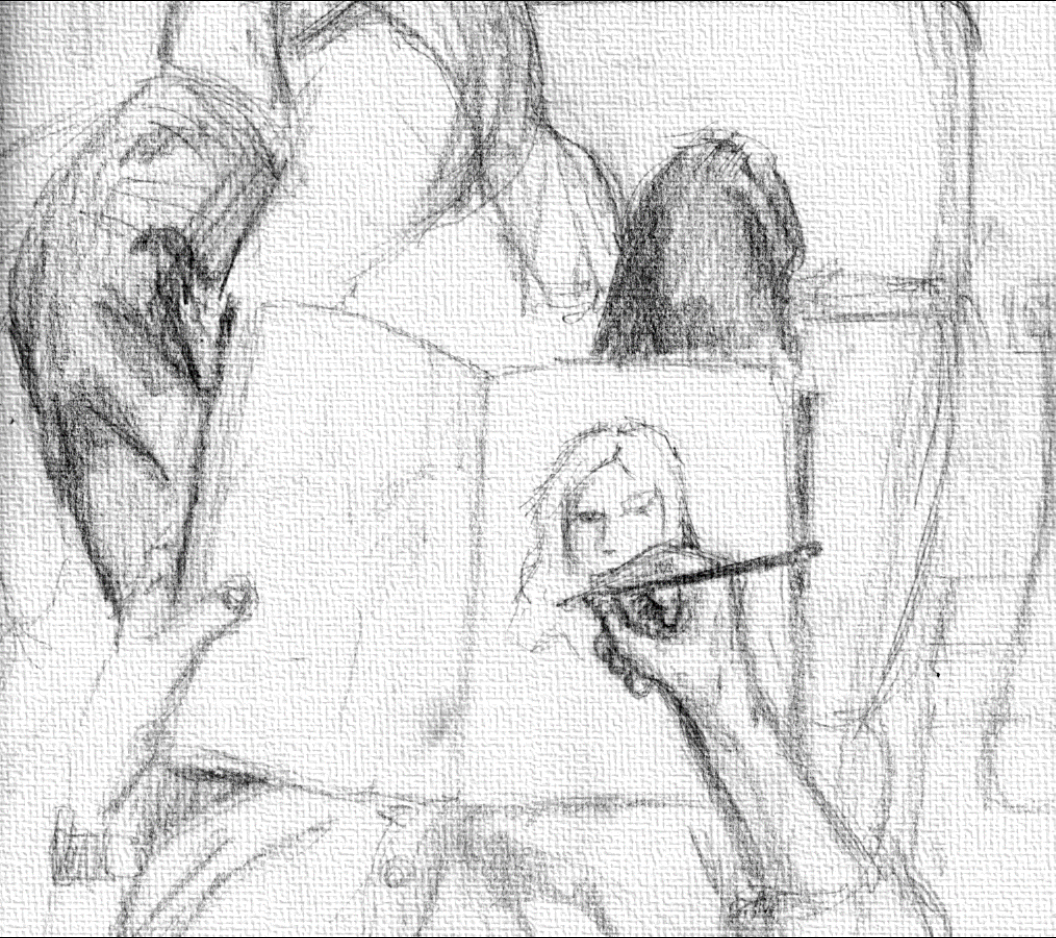
Whereas the front-matter establishes the context of the work, the back-matter provides a denouement rather than abruptly end the work on the last word of the novel portion. As this is meta-autobiography, there are matters of conflation to consider when it comes to the portrayal of past loves, for instance, and the afterword addresses some of these items. It also continues with the linear, straightforward approach of presenting the author's growth as an artist and citizen of the world.

The author presents a short story, "It Ain't Never Gonna Happen," that recounts the tale of how he, in an attempt to prove to his stepfather once and for all that he had the "discipline" to become a novelist, ended up caught silenced in the promise of non-disclosure he had made to his mother. This bond of his promise prevented him from proving to his stepfather that he did, indeed, have that discipline, and the very existence of this story in the back-matter of a novel become monograph is intended as an ironic metafictional conceit, as well as further background information on the character interpretation of Conrad from the earlier novel.

This is followed by two self-reflective essay treatments that tie to other matters presented. The monograph is then completed with the present memorandum summarizing its structure, a thematic annotated bibliography of key works, and a final word from Jackson on the entirety of the present opus. An appendix, *Empty Rooms*, a three-act play, the inspiration for a play central to the Hélène relationship in the early novel, is included for reader enjoyment and to make this oeuvre self-contained.

meta-autobiographical monograph (*noun*):

A meta-autobiographical monograph is a self-contained and self-referential literary study that blends autobiography, self-reflection, fiction, autotheory, and literary analysis. It strives to simultaneously challenge and entertain readers through its interpretations, focusing on the reader-author dialogue in a milieu of broader social themes.



TO BE READ AT MAXIMUM VOLUME
CARPE DIEM SED FINEM RESPICE