

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

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PROPOSAL FOR CREATIVE THESIS

a+

by

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a+ is a collection of lyric poems about the connections between human beings, following an ekphrastic model that seeks truths about the world “second-hand”: through the language and images of other artists. A large section of the poems address the life and work of composer Morton Feldman, while many others explore the world of cinema. The poems are particularly conscious of received forms. a+ takes to heart Harold Bloom’s assertion that “every poem is about another poem” and interprets this dictum as a celebration of formal structure. Whether through a traditional model like a sonnet or ghazal, a loosely-interpreted stanzaic form invented by Elizabeth Bishop, or the re-writing of a single line by Denis Johnson, a+ takes joy in re-treading the ground of the poems that made its author want to write poems. The title “a+” refers to the possibilities inside those arbitrary systems of structure by virtue of its range of possible pronunciations (A Plus? Ah Ploose? A Cross?).

In the tradition of Frank O’Hara’s Personism, each poem in the collection adopts a specific speaker and listener, for the purpose of meditating on the nature of human connections themselves—by what wire or frequency are they formed? Are they intangible? Can they cross physical and metaphysical distances, death for instance? At the very least, each speaker believes his words can *cross* the path of the person addressed by earnestly reaching out to some part of her, be she Morton Feldman and his curious musical notation or Roberto Rossalini and his spare and gorgeous film *Voyage to Italy*. The speaker believes that these works of art were designed to be intersected—and so the poems seek to reach *a-cross* (a+) to these other artists, creating quaint, formal spaces that form an intersection (a+).