

***The Panarchy of pan-pan: Para-normal Investigations in the Neomedieval Cosmology***

Norman James Hogg

A Thesis in the Humanities Program

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy Humanities (Fine Arts) at

Concordia University

Montreal, Quebec, Canada

March 2020

© Norman James Hogg, 2020

**CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

This is to certify that the thesis prepared

By: Norman James Hogg

Entitled: *The Panarchy of pan-pan: Para-normal Investigations in the Neomedieval Cosmology*

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

**Doctor of philosophy** Humanities (Fine Arts)

complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Signed by the final examining committee:

Catherine Russell

\_\_\_\_\_ Chair

Sher Doruff

\_\_\_\_\_ External Examiner

Tim Clark

\_\_\_\_\_ External to Program

Neil Mulholland

\_\_\_\_\_ Examiner

Brian Massumi

\_\_\_\_\_ Examiner

Erin Manning

\_\_\_\_\_ Thesis Supervisor

Erin Manning

Approved by \_\_\_\_\_

Chair of Department or Graduate Program Director

27/04/2020

André Roy

Date of Defense

\_\_\_\_\_

Dean

## ABSTRACT

### The Panarchy of *pan-pan*: Para-normal Investigations in the Neomedieval Cosmology

Norman James Hogg, Ph.D.  
Concordia University, 2020

Alongside documentation of the neomedieval exhibition and bookwork *pan-pan*, this paper advances a theory-fictional, para-academic methodology that speculates on the ‘modern’ and ‘medieval’ as mutually constitutive, temporally entangled *worlds* (a *pancosmia*) rather than developmental cultural stages set within an evolutionary timeframe. While much media attention has recently been given to the modern world’s apparent regression into a ‘post-truth’ condition, neomedievalism challenges the linear, bifurcating historicism that positions ‘the medieval’ as the primitive, base condition of ‘pre-truth’ from which a secular ‘age of reason’ evolved. If Eurocentric ‘enlightened’ modernity is taken to be the universally black-boxed ‘normal’ — wherein it is accepted that claims to objective ‘reality’ belong only to the domains of science-based reason — this paper speculates on the persistence of the ‘*para-normal*’ as a para-situated and multi-temporal ‘middle space’ wherein reality coalesces as oscillating, hyphenated assemblages of quasi-subjective and quasi-objective practicing entities (fiction-facts, thought-matters, medieval-modernities, person-objects etc.).

The hyphen glyph of research-creation is evoked throughout, not just as a *linguistic* device signifying a translation interface between two conceptual categories, but also as a *material* prosthesis, (an explorers stick, flagellum, probe or bridging tool) that enables the corporeal navigation and affective habituation of onto-generative spaces that exist *in-between* habitats — habitats hitherto regarded, under the modern classificatory episteme, as mutually excluding. Thus it is my *non-bifurcating* intention, not just to elucidate the academic reasoning *behind* the artistic creation of *pan-pan*’s speculative *pancosmia*, but to actively perform the hybridizing process of world-making through the actual making and hosting of alternate and alternating para-site worlds.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT/DEDICATION

I am eternally grateful for the kind support and invaluable advice given to me by my supervisors Erin Manning, Jeremy Stolow and Neil Mulholland. I would also like to thank Tim Clark for his supervision, enthusiasm and encouragement at the outset of my PhD program and Brian Massumi for his supervision in the closing stages.

I would like to thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council for awarding me a Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship in 2012 and Concordia University for the financial assistance given through the following awards:

- Concordia Accelerator Award 2017
- Concordia University Conference and Exposition Award 2015 and 2017
- Faculty of Arts and Science Travel Award 2013
- Concordia University, Faculty of Arts and Science Graduate Fellowship 2012-2015

I also acknowledge Concordia University's Access Centre for Students with Disabilities for their assistance during the first years of my PhD course work and give thanks to the faculty members who generously made accommodations for my learning disabilities.

My thanks also go out to Eileen Joy, the Babel Working Group and Punctum books for the continued inspiration and encouragement given to both myself as an independent researcher and to the collaborative ventures of the Confraternity of Neoflagellants.

Special thanks to Neil Mulholland for being my constant companion and collaborator on our never-ending neomedieval pilgrimage, to my spouse Angela Beck for all her love and incredible, unwavering support over the years in which I struggled, and to my friends and family for believing in me and cheering me ever-onward.

To my dear departed lifelong friend Jamie: Love you brother, this is for you.

## CONTRIBUTIONS OF AUTHORS/PRODUCERS

This thesis paper makes frequent reference to the book *pan-pan* (forthcoming Fall 2020, Punctum Books, New York) and related art exhibition of the same name (2019, Knot Project Space, Ottawa). Both of these artworks are submitted alongside this paper toward fulfillment of my research-creation doctoral degree. Since I produced these works in collaboration with my secondary supervisor Neil Mulholland (under the avatar *Confraternity of Neoflagellants*) I shall clarify below, as far as possible, my own contributions.

The methodological intent of the Confraternity's collaborative 'panning' practice ('pan' as a cooking device for mixing ingredients, a sliding music mixer or multi-directional cinematic sweep) has always been to trouble the modern conception of singular authorship by emulating the relative anonymity of medieval texts which were often translated, remixed and annotated multiple times, over many years, by multiple hands. The book *pan-pan* continues this neomedieval panning practice with text documents being continually passed back and fourth, added to and remixed in such a way that the text becomes unrecognizable to either party and thus takes on an agency of its own. Since it is our methodological imperative to radically mix the text until neither 'voice' is dominant, it is accurate to say that the resultant work represents a more or less 50/50 division of artistic labour. Additionally, I feel confident in stating that the 'theory-fictional' cosmology — developed over the years by the Confraternity and as presented here in the book *pan-pan* — is derived, to some significant extent, from original speculative research into neomedievalism that I conducted for both my 2010 masters thesis (*Return of the Long Now: Neomedievalism and Rebooting History*) and throughout my doctoral degree program.

The Confraternity's 'panning method' of collaborative practice is continued in the art installation *pan-pan*. For this installation the cosmology, narratives and object-protagonists of the book *pan-pan* were remixed again with pre-existing audio-visual and textual works created by the Confraternity (see 'Origins' on page one of the submitted book *pan-pan*) and assembled as a constantly shifting constellation of physical objects, sound and video. For this project we invited the artist and curator Neven Lochhead to participate as a Confraternity member and further de-authorize the making process. While Mulholland initially participated from afar — sending media files and a 'shopping-list' of 'ingredients' for possible assembly — Lochhead and I worked together on the fabrication of the installation. In the middle of the project, Mulholland arrived in Ottawa to participate physically in the live remixing of the installation space and to work alongside myself on some of the more performative aspects of the process such as cooking, brewing and live storytelling. Again, the overall intent was to enable a 'living' process-assemblage that performs and changes semi-autonomously from its 'producers'. Yet, in order to give some clarity to the examiners, I will state that my 'hands on' contribution to both the artistic and intellectual realization of the installation process (especially in its initial stages) was formative and substantial.

Lastly, since the following paper presents working examples of both my fictional and theoretical practice, I hope that it further clarifies my contributions to the neomedieval practices of the Confraternity.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction (Disclaimer and Confessions).....	1
Cantica I: Into The Woods.....	5
Cantica II: Still in the Woods (with Sticks, Callings and ©kers).....	49
Appendix: <i>pan-pan</i> the exhibition.....	89
Bibliography.....	91

## Introduction

### Disclaimer:

*By practising our services, our serviced clients consent to release, discharge, copy, distribute, transmit, display, perform, reproduce, publish, transfer and profit from the Muller Ltd.'s ©ings. This obligation is inviolate imperative of the First Apprentice. Userexperience of our servicing is at the service distributor's own risk. While imitation doxa may intermingle without losing monadic ©ability, incorrectly stimulating the trans-sensory zone of interference has led to: postplanetary hackterial engagements, variety shockz, serious injury, megadeath, damage to property. Other side effects have included: neu kirtle-praise, popet gestures, massif speshil enluminen, much-a- do chois o' will-vessel, biennale-endenten, cock-o-thē-apocalypse realty, parlayin', sacral peep-holing, stale brede &c&c connin say-wrytin, naughti non touchin, freeke Hi-tasten, nambren an noumbren o' up-hosts, tabernaclin an worshipping in secretorums, hi-clennse TEATREE sensoriums, man-kinder nonsensoriums, silent wombe lock-casse, fey absteining fi comyn crocc [esp. if MULLER lite], lusten meta-physic an zou-scholast an divine after-clappy, seien an adorin thē transfigurin o' mollocke, recevin free wyn an wylde bed, creepin tae thē gift gunners, fredome fraunchise, LOLalotin, bearin absur- dium newefangelnes, pylgrimage fir non-sensin, neo-kneelin, neo-knockin, aultars, super-aultars, mega-aulters, massive lika-lanterns o' lepers loupin, post mort cannon-wassups. By engaging our services, our serviced clients, and any non/participants they service, discharge and forever acquit WeR.Ltd! and its Solution Aligners from any and all mistransubstantiation, causes of mistransubstantiation, whatsoever, known or unknown now existing or which may arise in the future or past, on account of or in any way related to or arising out of ©ing. WeR.Ltd! make no gift-bonds of any kind, either voluntarily or hypothetical, including but not limited to gift-bonds of servicise-ability. Any baraka featured are pre-infused and for illustration purposes only. ©ings are aimed at the ©er. Distribute, transmit, display, perform, reproduce, publish, transfer and profit from the Muller Ltd.'s ©ings. This obligation is inviolate imperative of the First Apprentice. Userexperience of our servicing is at the service distributor's own risk. While imitation doxa may intermingle without losing monadic ©ability, incorrectly stimulating the trans-sensory zone of interference can lead to shock, serious death or damage to property.*

- Confraternity of Neoflagellants, (2017) p.150.

### Confession:

*Because I am a medievalist, and studying the Middle Ages is, finally, about desire — for another time, for meaning, for life — and desire, moreover, is so particularly marked for queers with lack and shame. [...] Like my queerness, my feelings of amateurism aren't a stage of development, aren't ever going to go away; as in the case of queerness, too, my goal is to contribute to the creation of conditions in which amateur sensibility might be nurtured and its productivity explored.*

- Caroline Dinshaw (2012), p.32.

James Hogg, a distant ancestor of mine, wrote *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, a novel written during the Scottish Enlightenment about a man haunted (and forever taunted) by his morally corrupt doppelgänger. I too confess here to feelings of being split in two. Like Dinshaw's above, my confession is not simply to amateurism but of being caught somewhere *in the middle* between the 'professionalism' of the modern academic and 'amateurism' of the archaic storyteller. Also alongside Dinshaw, I feel I must risk a confession to feelings of 'queerness'. Not the queerness associated with sexual orientation and gender identity but with neurodiversity and the irrational

neurosis, depression and addiction that often accompany the abject embodiment of an alleged ‘disorder’. Straight off the bat, I commit the academic ‘heresy’ of confession partly because it was a dyslexic-depressive ‘sensitivity’ that first attuned me to the medieval as a non-normative alt-world. It was from a state of profound disassociation that I experienced something I will later describe as a ‘calling’ — a non-modern lure, beckoning or taunt from the margins of a modern world that felt, at times, so utterly alien. But confession is also a medievalism, a highly ritualized *de*-selfing and *re*-selfing practice we normally associate with a ‘religious’ cosmology and, therefore, completely at odds with the objectivity expected from modern, secular practices of knowledge production. Yet as a *neo*-medievalist (and to think alongside Isabelle Stengers), I ‘reclaim’ confession here as a part of an ecology of para-modern (or para-*normal*) practices that ascetically embrace the condition of paradox brought about by the strict, disciplinary bifurcation of personal speculation from objective analysis.

This confession may also be taken as an introduction to the parasite text (or textual parasite) that worms its way through the body of this paper like a tapeworm through an intestine, like state-altering substances through the body of an addict, like a wandering pilgrim path through the black boxed cartographies of the modern. This parasite text (or is it the host? The relation is one of co-constitutive entanglement unavailable to resolution) has taken many forms. First written years ago at the beginning of this doctoral project, it has been remixed and assimilated, bit part, into numerous commissioned works by the Confraternity of Neoflagellants. In 2019 it was radically remixed again into the pages of *pan-pan* — the co-authored book being submitted for consideration alongside this paper. It may thus be taken as a ‘bridge’ or ‘hyphen’ of sorts between the two ‘works’ but crucially, just like all parasitic interlocutors, it also has an agency or ‘life’ of its own — it brings its own disruptive, meandering agendas to the proceedings. It interrupts (with callings and taunts) the pathways it illuminates, as if the reader, just like the writer, were attention deficit disordered and dyslexic. It is a welcoming to this ‘misfits’ club, or rather — since we are now beginning to speak of ‘spectrums’ and ‘ecologies’ of bio-neuro diversity — a welcoming *back*.

The interruptive parasite text also speaks to the qualitative indeterminations (or quasi-determinations), constantly shifting registers in tone, and cyclic repetitions that permeate the



body of this paper. Such irregularities or ‘mistakes’ I fully confess to. *But* (sorry, not sorry ☺) I also leave them standing as quasi-intentional, generative performances of dyslexia — a fuzzy mythology that I choose not to (or rather *cannot*, since I find this to be a battle that escalates and manifests *as* addiction) fully expunge, precisely indicate or further elucidate upon. There is, however, one register shift I feel should be addressed — that is, the occasional swing from the singular ‘I’ to the collective ‘we’. The slippage to ‘we’ occurs most frequently when speaking of neomedieval practices (where the tone also shifts towards the hyperbolic poesis of *pan-pan*). Now my confession slips back into a disclaimer: by ‘we’ I do not mean to imply that the arguments constructed, and opinions expressed, are shared by my collaborator (Mulholland) who will, of course, have his own conceptions of what neomedievalism *is*, or what *pan-pan*<sup>1</sup> does. I propose instead the doppelgänger ‘we’ of James Hogg’s protagonist; a royal ‘we’ abdicated, an attention deficit, dyslexic ‘we’, a shifting, material assemblage of moods and dispositions, a cluster of parasites that pushes the ‘I’ machine along on its ascetic-ludic pilgrimage.

Justification? It is somewhat problematic to pronounce a thesis as a ‘significant and original contribution to knowledge’ when it is the originality or singular ‘truth’ of knowledge itself that is being problematized throughout. How to make claims on ‘originality’ when much of the speculation below concerns the reclamation of non-modern ‘habits’ of thought that our modern progress imperatives of constant innovation and paradigmatic novelty have rendered as past sell-by-date, stagnant and outmoded (i.e., on the *outside* of *modernity*)? The answer perhaps revolves around our modern notion of ‘habit’ as something that essentially operates *against* originality, something that (like a medieval liturgical chant) simply repeats the same thing over and over and over again. Yet perhaps here, within habit, lies the significance of the contribution — not a contribution to knowledge *per se*, but to a *performative* understanding of habit (and, by extension, *ritual*) as the *incorporation* of knowledges (from feelings and thoughts to scholarly research and full-blown conceptualizations) into infinitely (bio-neuro) diverse manners of *being in the world*. This is to follow an *amodern* perception of habit, not as *pure* automation — the absolute ‘enemy’ of change — but as *corporeal* engine of a general ‘intelligence’ that processes contingency into a stable, repeatable consistency from which to engage *further change*. The claim

---

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, references made to *pan-pan* throughout this paper speak to *both* the forthcoming book and art installation as a single, continually evolving ‘body’ of work.

to ‘originality’, then, comes from a speculation on ‘origins’ as those multi-temporal *middle* spaces where thoughts and material actions fold, interweave and coalesce — as through mantras and rituals of repetition — into the very fabric of reality. Here is one such mantra (an adage surely familiar to those people ‘we’ might deem ‘religious’ and whose knowledge-making practices are performed through the telling and re-enacting of stories): originality only gains world-changing traction through becoming *unoriginal*. This contribution is a story (even the ‘non-fictional’ parts) and thus, following Dinshaw, a contribution to ‘amateur’ *storytelling* as ficto-ontology. It is an enchanted forest adventure tale of how the medieval ‘past’ is not done with us yet, of how the ‘unoriginal’ repetitions of habit and mimetic ritual summon the past into the present as a noisy multiplicity of unfinished para-site practices that, in turn, open up our host-world to gradual, readily *inhabitable*, change.

As for demonstrating the “synthesis of information into knowledge in a form that may be used by others”, well, what is more ‘usable’, communal, communicable and indeed *livable* than a story? It is, we propose, the very synthesis of information — from the cold, dead ‘matter of fact’ into the pulsing, vascular matter of ‘life’. It is knowledge *animated* by the fuzzy poetic materiality of life, death, love, hope, sufferance, joy and (most importantly) *wonder*. Finally then, we might claim the experiment *pan pan* as a wild contribution to a haptic, experiential understanding of ‘world-making’ (and ‘world-breaking’) as something that happens through the ontological process of *habituation* — the fantastic, yet ultimately *substantial*, ways in which the world alters according to the stories it continually reenacts about itself.

While we are not really sure (for we neomedievalists are forever sustained by the doubt of an ‘amateur sensibility’) if these are the ‘knowledge outcomes’ being requested, I close this confession with a apposite quote from the inventor of panarchism:

*Read it to the end. You may stone me [us?] afterwards if you please.*

- Paul-Emile de Puydt (2015), p.22



∩

## Cantica I: Into The Woods

When I had journeyed half of our life's way,  
I found myself within a shadowed forest,  
for I had lost the path that does not stray.  
Ah, it is hard to speak of what it was,  
that savage forest, dense and difficult....  
But to retell the good discovered there,  
I'll also tell the other things I saw.  
I cannot clearly say how I had entered  
the wood; I was so full of sleep just at  
the point where I abandoned the true path.

- Dante Alighieri (2004), p.3

*By the way, so shadowed forest companions; the smell of food has blown your socks, literally, off!*

*Le Rez-de-Chaussée Vianderum of New Forest Mall is vast: more vast than imagination allows. And there are many tables, some of an average size for pairings, some large for familial, collegiate, friend groups etcetera, some floaty and twixty for the unborn, abandoned or future dead, some others small for individuals. On top of one medium but tall table (perhaps a plinth or alter) there is a rudely elemental fauntelet holding a brass bell and expressing a wobbly arc of smart water at Jimmy the Greek's rotisserie cliff. Chuck-steam hisses back aromatically, the flavorsome clouds awakening all sorts of ambitious thoughts and feelings that will no doubt become something or other in due course.*

*But for now, through the stewing haar, you may, if the eyes are arrowsome, depict a becalming and reflective forest nature feature. It is a deep dark expansive tree lined lagoon to which the micturating proto-thingy, and many other supportive duct-seolfies, will pay eventual tribute. It is about twenty two thousand sticks wide and feels like it belongs outdoors. All you'll want to do is stare ●\_●; water wall plant detail concourse forest feature tropic day sun light lights lighting fountain fountains water feature water cool refreshing peaty feature eat eating outlet eating out let in wet shopper shoppers united surface interior inside broad sea sell prebiotic half sale selling buy buying fitting horizontal water gulf indoor inside interior internal indoors insides wet interiors view pan fysh views vegetable scene scenes colour color colours dry pan colors GAN image images no photo no photos no photography. Pan-pan-panaorama. You'll believe your eyes are playing tricks.*

*Nevertheless. Through the panoramic pancake lens of a dumb device (●\_●) assembled from sticks and sheets of frozen sap we focus on a copse of trees on hillock to the north of the deep dark lagoon. In yellow plastic macs, a band of upright mammals are tooling about the vegetable scene with measuring instruments and neon hazard tape. There are four members of this strange*

working group. Strangely, one member is a likeness made of rubber. This dummy member lies prone, vegetative, on the damp forest floor until — stranger still — an elderly member with a neat grey beard and spectacles lifts a weighty stick and begins to batter the likeness over the head and about the torso. The others watch on with keen yet somber interest. They wince while taking detailed notes.

Sweaty and spent from its frenzy, the bearded bludgeoner's shoulders sag. It lays down its stick and begins to shake and sob. Immediately, the observers lay down their tools and hug it supportively. Whatever the objective of this peculiar workshop we might assume its success by the handshakes and smiles that soon follow. As we watch, dumbstruck, from afar, the assembly pack up the props — tape, clipboards, makeshift club, battered manikin — and pile it all into an unmarked SUV. Everything is driven off down a winding path until consumed by the shadows of the forest. Something we don't see right here, right now, but can take on future account, is that these arboreal work-shoppers are on their way to a clinical institution that one of them calls 'home'. On the way to this home they will stop in a high-class restaurant for a slap-up feast, followed by celebratory cigars.

Ok, here are some more things we shall come to know about all this: the distraught member attacking the replica member with the replica bludgeon is a man named Sture Bergwall (aka Thomas Quick). He is Sweden's first (and last) serial killer. At the time of counting (while we watch the scene above unfold), this notorious, B-list celebrity monster has taken thirty-nine human lives. By all accounts he is about as fucked-up-evil as the human animal can get. Since the age of fourteen he has been a murderer, a ritual dismemberer, a paedophile, a necrophiliac and a connoisseurial cannibal with a particular taste for sphincters and nipples. Without a doubt then, Quick is a fellow you wouldn't, under any *normal* circumstances, want to be caught dead with.

So who the hell *are* these forest companions who welcome such a debased and dangerous being into their intimate circle of practice? Well, first, some reassurance. They are professionals: social scientists and criminal investigators operating under the mentorship of the renowned psychoanalyst Margit Norell. Norell is the pioneer of the forensic psychiatric clinic of Säter Hospital where Quick now lives. Following Norell's nascent theory of 'repressed memory' the

investigators are helping Quick through a series of forensic-therapeutic confessions. As the group experiment with crime reenactment workshops held at murder sites and burial grounds, Quick is attaining personal and institutionally validated redemption through the painful recuperation and reconstruction of his pre-psychopathic condition. In turn, Quick, as an object of study (and a tool much like the dummy), is enabling the development of ground-breaking knowledge that will (it is anticipated) make a historic contribution to the expert field of psychology. Quick may have *been* a monster but now, in his current confessional state, he is a benign lab animal of sorts. An asset cared for, coveted as a source of greater understanding.

Ok. But here's *more* of what we will come to know about all this: the ambitions of the charismatic Norell and her associates would be blown apart when, after seven years of silence, Quick meets with Swedish filmmaker Hannes Råstam and makes yet another confession. "But if it was true that I haven't committed any of these murders..." he cautiously asks Råstam, "if it was true — then what can I do?" Well, as it turns out, *all* of Quick's repressed memories and murder confessions were fabrications. The credibility of both the social science and the criminal court cases on which they depended quickly began to unravel as Quick confessed to journalists how his criminal confessions were motivated by a desire for connection. Being valued as a noteworthy patient soothed his deep-seated feelings of failure and alienation. After a 'truly' troubled and lonesome upbringing, he had indeed finally found a home and nurturing family at the Säter institution. Plied with mood altering drugs (and with the constant promise of more as unspoken 'reward'), Quick provided his trauma-hungry therapists with a disturbing (and utterly compelling) account of childhood abuse involving his mother miscarrying in front of him after she walked in on his father sexually abusing him. Witnessing the correlation between the grotesquery of his confessions and the resultant affection of his therapists, Quick would further 'remember', in increasingly horrifying detail, his father disposing of 'Simon' (as the unborn child was to be named) in a brown paper bag and his mother's repeated attempts to kill Quick in revenge. Working through recurring fantasies of finding his dead brother and eating him, Quick and his therapists are able to psycho-pathologize his necro-pedeo-cannibalism as desperate and tragically displaced attempts at familial reunion.

∞

*The Great Lagoon, by which the work group practiced serial killing and body disposal, is in the middle of the vianderum of New Forest Mall. The vianderum is actually a roughly kidney shaped, sun dappled meadow — a GAN generated field vegetated by the plants Grass and other non-woody plants and mineralized by rocks of sapphire and other strange stones. Some oft-sought pleasant parts are yet softer and sweeter than that. GAN will say that even of the æg of PAN — which extremophiles declare as the reliquary of a fatally cute eggcorn (incubated in the buck-toothed grip of the comeliest small mammal ever made — and that cute parent defends its cute zygote protégé with cooing lullabies that have been heard, or seem to be heard, and remind us listeners of mother's PAN piped fanny-song; that pulsing chickadee 'bee-boo') — is dull in comparison. But that is most likely pure nonsense. Which is all to say that the vianderial commons will suffice for those adventurers that seek a scenic PAGAN to make repast, make merry and — if desired or necessary — expire amidst beatitude.*

∞

As for the murder confessions and forest reenactments, Quick would explain that, through the reciprocity of the process, he himself became an amateur criminal investigator of his own alleged criminality. In his early years at Säter, Quick was granted day passes and visited the local library to research murders he would then lay claim to. Even after his sixth confession, when his passes were finally revoked, he could still glean info from news media and conversations with a string of visiting experts, including “serial killer” specialists. Incredibly, he even embellished his confession stories with appropriations from popular fictions such as American Psycho and the Hannibal Lecter series. Under interrogation he worked with heightened guile of the imposter who is under constant threat of exposure and eviction. With any glaringly obvious falsehoods being quickly diagnosed and dismissed as typical distortions symptomatic of trauma, Quick was afforded the space he needed to follow the expressive cues of the encouraging questioner and adjust his confession accordingly. Out in the woods, the murder scenes were already set up in the correct location. All Quick had to do was repeatedly and painfully reenact the diabolical scene until his performance resembled the facts already gathered by the investigators. Of course the pain Quick expressed during his reenactment was all too real; the acute loneliness and self-estrangement that accompanies such deep-fakery could only grow in proportion to the increasing complexity of the alternative world he was assembling around him. Yet his evident distress from being entangled in a web of fictions was interpreted as the shameful remorse of a repentant

criminal. Quick's expression of remorse was of course a profoundly affective bonding agent. His (unwitting?) collaborators rewarded him with sympathy and even admiration for his stoic endurance of such a physically and mentally draining therapy of re-immersion. This was a *forensic* therapy the investigators and researchers themselves were heavily invested in. Everyone had skin-in-the-game. Together, as some strange emergent family, they witnessed, before their very eyes, a ground-breaking theory being validated in the flesh — an incorporation of knowledge that gave cause indeed for mutual congratulations, muted celebration, cigars, dinner and, for Quick, more comforting hugs and alt-world facilitating drugs.

∞

*All is of ecological and phylogenetic importance because it (the vianderum) hosts a multitude of lik-hame seolfes, gohst seolfes and simple seolfies providing niche arenas for courtship displays, night physics, nesting, hunt/gather victualing and sometimes sheltering if a table is free and of reasonable comportment. When the computers rotate the vianderum's paragorium to 'sleep mode' mumbled eulogies and loud screams of pantediluvian regret waft up from the soufflé swamps as taxa of Indeterminate Tissue (IT) are beta-tested in the free-range passion pools. The water flows all around the vianderum gut circuit and nobody can tell from whence it comes and what becomes of it. Not even PAN or Quick, or GAN. But, as with any method of filling, it is desirable that the feature has been running, since in this case it has been and will be a constant battle exchange of waters to express toxalbumin from the great pinched æg of the pan-pan-pan.*

∞

THIS IS BEYOND ALL UNDERSTANDING<sup>2</sup>

- court reporter from Sweden's biggest tabloid, *Aftonbladet*

In a feature article for GQ magazine, journalist Chris Heath (2013) states that Quick's "credibility now depends on us believing that he has been one of modern history's most successful liars" (para. 44). This aporetic statement neatly encapsulates our unremitting obsession with the decline of secular modernity as the bulwark of reason, as the traditional guardian of moral, legal and

---

<sup>2</sup> "THIS IS BEYOND ALL UNDERSTANDING" was the title of a court reporter's article on Quick's first trial in 1994. According to GQ journalist Chris Heath (2013) the reporter "compared the banal figure before her—a pale and unremarkable man in jeans with a shiny bald head—with his actions: 'The man is a serial killer, pedophile, necrophiliac, cannibal and sadist. He is very, very sick'" (para. 15).

scientific ‘truth’. Alongside *The Confessions of Thomas Quick* (Hill, 2015), our current preoccupation with a seemingly encroaching ‘truth-crisis’ is fleshed out in a spate of exposé style docudramas unveiling: the coercive power of the criminal justice system; the global endemic of institutional sexual abuse; the self-serving deceits of global bankers; the algorithmic wildfires fueled by ubiquitous technologies of persuasion and the deliberate distortion of geopolitical ‘realities’ through online social media platforms (‘troll-bots’ and ‘fake news’); the datapocalypse of nonconsensual profile harvesting by (para-)governmental corporate bodies; the seemingly ungraspable (hoax/counter hoax) hyper-enigma of climate change; and of course the seemingly total indifference to ‘reality’ of current US president, Donald Trump. ‘Post-truth’ is the *post*-postmodern neologism<sup>3</sup> being assigned to this apparent bankruptcy of fact-based reasoning. Formidable fabricators such as Quick and Trump have become poster children for the ensuing deep-fake democracy (or is it a theocracy?) of the re-*endarkenment*. The ‘death of the (anthro-ethno-phallogocentric) author’ seemingly corresponds to the re-birth of the anonymous scribe, a legion of myth-making amateurs, lacking proper name, address, affiliation or intent.

∞

*In your mind you imagine capturing the environment with more better equipment.*

∞

Since the ocular, as ‘single-point perspective’, was anointed sovereign of the human senses, it has been commonly held that the scientific ‘cusps’ of enlightenment irrevocably penetrated the “veil woven of faith, illusion, and childish prepossession, through which the world and history were seen clad in strange hues”. Under this primitive veil, medieval man “lay dreaming or half awake” (Burckhardt, 1945, p.70). It would now appear that our bounded, sovereign, authorial bodies (institutional and individual) have become so corrupted, decomposed, fragmented and dispersed that the comforting, empirical clarity of the ‘official version of events’ has been lost forever to the nauseatingly unstable and infinitely malleable ‘quasi-truths’ of radical postmodern relativism. The universally sanctioned God’s-eye-view that has afforded ‘us’ (‘we’ who identify as

---

<sup>3</sup> Oxford dictionary ‘word of the year’ in 2016: <https://languages.oup.com/word-of-the-year/word-of-the-year-2016>



‘modern’) the ‘matters of fact’ on which reasoned debate and rational moral judgment are founded is now being infested (critically, perhaps even *apocalyptically*) by a parasitic incursion of non-modern others: amateur fantasists, arch manipulators, ‘flat earth’ denialists and subaltern storytellers — heretical, infantile creatures of blind habit, of cultic ritual, of base sensation, feeding off massively networked systems of (often hysterical) belief that belong to an irrational, primitive, barbaric and spiritually befuddled past. Is our civilized empire of truth in decline? Is Burckhardt’s veil of hallucinations reforming? Are we once again to be deceived, *en mass*, by (celebrity endorsed) faces in the clouds? This is the apocalyptic ‘new dark age’ version of the neomedieval narrative, a tragic tale that echoes that first great ‘endarkening’ of Western civilization. A post-classical endarkening brought about, not just by gothic barbarianism but, as Edward Gibbon (1826) famously writes, through the rising ‘tyranny’ of the desert prophets — fanatical, ascetic anchorites who, “stimulated by applause and emulation” (p.430), dramatically abandoned reality by literally burying their heads in the sand:

[A] believing age was easily persuaded, that the slightest caprice of [...] a Syrian monk had been sufficient to interrupt the eternal laws of the universe. [...] They familiarly accosted, or imperiously commanded, the lions and serpents of the desert; infused vegetation into a sapless trunk; suspended iron on the surface of the water; passed the Nile on the back of a crocodile, and refreshed themselves in a fiery furnace. These extravagant tales [...] have seriously affected the reason, the faith, and the morals, of the Christians. Their credulity debased and vitiated the faculties of the mind: they corrupted the evidence of history; and superstition gradually extinguished the hostile light of philosophy and science (p.432-433).

Indeed, does the case of Thomas Quick not serve as a parable of a healthy, steadily progressive empire destroyed *from within* by some backward and insidious religious plague? The story seems to have all the foreboding hallmarks of proselytizing ‘Cool Aid’ cultism: Norell, as a charismatic prophet with her staff of disciples and devotees conducting sacrificial rituals of inquisition and exorcism (tapping into the occult power of abject horror). Or perhaps Quick is the prophet? A hermetic oracle, laid out on the alter as a self-sacrificial medium, a scapegoat for a multitude of social deviancies and necro-eroticisms. And what of the state-altering ‘potions’, the fetish-like props of forest reenactments, the forensically relic-ed clippings and scrapings, the divine revelatory luminance of Luminol, as well as the promises of redemption and (ultimately) deific elevation in form of fame, fortune and glory for all? Are these not the components of a religious process? Might it not seem that the rigorous procedures of scientific investigation have been

fatally contaminated by the spurious practices of ritual — that archaic custom of slavish repetition that modernity regards suspiciously as precisely the producer of *non-knowledge*? Should we not then critique and diagnose the ruinously commingled practices of Thomas Quick and Magit Norell — this weirdly ‘religious’ and ideo-theologically inbred familial grouping — as a *retrogression* into a primitive past of illusionary dream worlds? As a hallucinatory habitus cloistered from the noise of the outside world, buried in a hermit hole, an anchoritic echo chamber of mystic self-affirmation?

∞

*General horizontal PAGAN view shopping herbs spices food taste colorful on display bowls group diversity choices variety aroma scents flavor-sale enticing exotic culture cooking gastronomy appealing value spicy potatoes dish recipe special maple bacon basil aroma aromatic herb spices parcel species close up close-up closeup macro non-photography kitchen cooked cook cooking yellow red bright colorful warm hot inviting food foodstuff relish condiment cuisine hungry hunger desire alimentary aliment vegetables genuine eat eating eatery indoor environment still life still-life groceries location people places mother milk life haunting living freshness ready to eat culture pan left-overs Chef delicious savour flavour flavor taste tasty tasteful hunger crave craving carbohydrates carb carbo creative creation inventive resourceful lifestyle eating society societies on vocation food destination refreshment this is the life appeal feel good glamorous sophisticate sophistication...*

∞

In heeding the notorious ‘post-truth’ parable of Thomas Quick, are we then *really* to conclude that the modern milieu is now retrogressing along the evolutionary scale toward a *post-secular* condition — a ‘new dark age’ *beyond* all rational understanding? Or are such dialectical ‘telos tales’ of historical periodization and rupture symptomatic of an overclocked desire for constant novelty — the avid consumption (and rapid disposal) of shiny new things, people, places and ideas on which capitalist modernity thrives? Is such temporal partitioning and historical bundling part of an ever accelerating and insatiable (since it appears to take the same exponential forms and paths as addiction) imperative to diagnose, categorize, brand and capitalize upon the past, present and future — the next big Copernican ‘turn’ replete with paradigmatic conditions of ‘before’ and ‘after’ as redeemable units of ‘knowledge capital’?

∞

*...get away well bred getaways spare rib vacationing away from it all foodstuff activity tempting spicy choice variety culinary meal culinary art crop factor vintage tasteful filler mood filter filters. As you gaze at the jaw-dropping scene, the smell of food has made your mouth shock-squirt zero point zero six five submandibular spatel into the water. But no one saw this except a tiny pan fish, which is a neat touch because the pan fish don't talk about the PAN.*

∞

Post-this or neo-that<sup>4</sup> rupture propositions are indeed dynamic, explosive and productive of endorphin rush — the (ever-diminishing) fix that accompanies the high-speed pursuit of the future as the avid consumption of history, the ever-receding horizon of the ‘truth’ that will free adult humanity from its childhood veil of illusion. But what if this almost bio-chemical dependency on a linear and progressive conception of time and history — this rapid, hyper-consumption of neatly packaged, sequentially numbered and precisely labeled ‘short nows’, is masking a longer, deeper ‘now’ that is not so firmly packaged, not so securely buffered against the past? Jonathan Gil Harris (2010) describes our modern habit of classifying events and objects according to specific and sequential temporal contexts as the “national sovereignty model of temporality” in which “any historical phenomenon tends to be regarded as a citizen solely of a one moment-state”. Crucially, he then asks, “what do we do with things that cross temporal borders — things that are illegal immigrants, double agents, or holders of multiple passports” (p.2). Likewise, what do we (as rational agents of the modern ‘moment state’) do with the double agent Quick, the apparently *non*-modern mole who has traversed temporal borders, burrowed and nested within our modern fortress of reason to taint our sterilized surfaces and diagnostic tools, to infect and inflame our detached professionalism with archaic passions, and to weave strange dreamscapes into the police report and the doctor’s thesis?

---

<sup>4</sup> The ‘ludic’ mode of the Confraternity of Neoflagellants is manifested off-the-bat with its deliberately ‘ludicrous’ use of the term neo-medievalism. It is a neologism that performs the ‘modern’ phenomena of rampant neoism while ludically embracing the collapse of neoism within the paradox of a ‘new-oldism’.

This is a question that propels the *speculative* brand of neomedievalism that we shall presently explore. This is not a neomedievalism espousing (or exposing) the putative ‘return’ of a pre-truth condition but rather an investigative adventure performed through the non-man’s-land between the historical categorizations that *produced* the great modern/medieval, truth/pre-truth divide in the first place. Following Isabelle Stengers (2005), we, as neomedievalists, endeavor to ‘reclaim’ the ‘Middle Ages’ not as “a matter of resurrecting [...] of dreaming to make some ‘true,’ ‘authentic’ tradition come alive” but of “learning to smell the smoke” (p.6) of our modern, colonial imperative to judge certain behaviors and practices as primitive and then relegate them to previous ‘moment states’. For the neomedievalist, the medieval is *in* the modern and the modern is *in* the medieval, entangled, rhizomatic, co-temporal — not mutually exclusive, but mutually *fabricated*. In ‘learning to smell the smoke’ we acknowledge that ‘we’ (a deliberately problematized and troubled ‘we’) are indeed creatures deeply affected by the ‘modern’ milieu — a milieu “poisoned” by the reasoned, critically reflexive “voice of the epic story that still inhabits us. ‘Thou shall not regress!’” (p.7). If we acknowledge the modern as our ‘normal’, then we neomedievalists are investigators of the *para*-normal — not investigators of *spectral* apparitions haunting us *from the past* but investigators of *material* things and practices of the multi-temporal *present* that have been purged and placed to the side, the medieval as the *marginalia* that still persists (*para*-sitically) as the generative noise (an endarkened materiality) that continually reproduces the modern signal. Such a heterochronic ‘middle’ position may sound anarchic. However, to borrow again from Stengers, this ‘middle’ is an “ecological anarchy, because while connections *may* be produced between any parts of a rhizome, they also must be produced. They are events, linkages — like symbiosis. They are what is and will remain heterogeneous” (p.3). In speaking of such an ‘ecological anarchy’, it is appropriate here to introduce the Confraternity of Neoflagellants<sup>5</sup> art exhibition and forthcoming book *pan-pan* (to which this paper acts as a kind of entangled, rambling marginalia). While the speculative neomedievalisms presented here in this

---

<sup>5</sup> As of 2019 the Confraternity’s biography and mission statement reads as follows: ‘The Confraternity of Neoflagellants (CON) is a secular and equal opportunities confraternity bound by chirograph. @neoflagellants is constituted of lay actants dedicated to the ludic, ascetic, aesthetic and athletic treatment and dissemination of neomedievalisms. The CON is an avatar for nonmodern world-building, a neomedieval theory-fictioning gaster-machine, a GAN-oracle of the not-yet-MHz. As a world-building electrostatic-#gut relic-ing technology, @neoflagellants patent pending nonmodern fictioning combines with mythopoesis: how premodern existences might be utilized against the impasses of hastily prescribed futures’.

For more works by The Confraternity of Neoflagellants visit: <http://www.confraternityofneoflagellants.org.uk>

paper form the ‘base soup’ of the culinary-materialist *pancosmia* of *pan-pan*, we do not intend to provide a full exegesis and interpretation of *pan-pan*’s various recipes and ingredients. Suffice to say for now that the book presents its *pancosmia* as a ‘panarchy’<sup>6</sup> of para-modern practices wherein heterogeneous quasi-animate agents (such as the \$50 Amazon Rooster-Voucher) are subjected to (and subjectified *by*) various arduous rituals of trial and translation. Each agent must ‘prove’ its existence (be proven *into* existence) as a creature *of* liminality — something that exists (precariously and *as* precariousness embodied) in-between competing milieus and ontologies that are themselves, reciprocally, the subject of various trials of endurance, translation and shifting allegiances.

∞

*By the way, you are standing contre-jour and barefoot at the edge of the Lagoon on Grassy Knoll so that you have a good view of any leftover forest proceedings . You have been furnished with an aperitif of new-ape wyn to compliment the default deportment of your PAN type. Try to relax and look alternately pan-normal, normal, para-normal, non-normal, nonchalant, para-chalant, neo-normcore, retro-normalistic etcetera. Less pop-eyed and starchy stiff, appointed by-self, brokeback notbothered, resting butthurt and possibly malignant, terroristic and so on. Big panoptic occasion, so taut nerves, right? OK, we OK. We should describe the page if that helps. “It is numbered 13 with skinny-to-margiem (medium?) margens (margins?). No swarm holes. But winged glyphs fly in and out”. Better? OK.*

∞

Speaking as card-carrying members of the modern milieu, we ask again, “what do we do with Thomas Quick?” One habitual reaction (and here the smoke of our milieu is thick in our nostrils) to noisy incursions of the irrational past into the secular affairs of the present would be to launch an *external* investigation to ascertain the source of the untimely rot, to convene a trial and ordain a second, more updated and thorough, ‘reality check’ or purge. For a milieu self-defined by

---

<sup>6</sup> ‘Panarchy’ is a “chiefly poetic” geopolitical term loosely adapted and irreverently deployed in the book *pan-pan*. We riff off its original definition as a global eco-theory that evokes the Greek-god Pan as “an archetypal steward of biospheric well-being” or “as a symbol for wild and unpredictable nature”. Panarchy is thus originally “coined as an antithesis to the word hierarchy” and denotes a “structure in which systems, including those of nature (e.g., forests) and of humans (e.g., capitalism), as well as combined human-natural systems (e.g., institutions that govern natural resource use such as the Forest Service), are interlinked in continual adaptive cycles of growth, accumulation, restructuring, and renewal”. Quotes are from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panarchy>

rupture and revolution (and, thereby, the invention of ‘periodization’ itself), it is imperative that, as de Certeau (1988) states, a stable partition be installed “between what can be understood and what must be forgotten in order to obtain the *representation* of a present intelligibility” (p.4). Noisy anachro-antagonists such as Quick must be analyzed, expelled and quarantined in order to recover confidence in the ‘truth’ of the modern milieu. When our robustly armored authors of ‘fact’ are infected by agents of ‘fiction’ (and fictional agents), we are compelled to call for back up — *more* author-ities, crack troops of experts and fixers to quell the rabble, to step up the policing of reality and bolster the fortress walls of the secular. The subjective, the irrational and the religious must be safely kettled as illegal immigrants from the uncivilized side of the modern/medieval divide. The modern weapon of choice, of course, would be rational *critique* — that iconoclastic ‘hammer of reason’ with which we discipline the disciplines according to the rigorous project of binary purification that Bruno Latour (1993) has described as the being very “constitution” (p.11) of modernity. Latour describes how the modern constitution was founded upon the “bifurcation of nature”<sup>7</sup> (Whitehead, 1964, p.30) into a primary realm of objectively *real* substances (such as the atomic traces used as irrefutable evidence in forensic criminology and the firing neuron-matter of criminal investigators) and a secondary realm of subjectively *unreal* perceptions (such as the emotional drive and ambitions of said investigators and the confessional perceptions extracted from detainees), which are merely fabrications of the mind. Alongside this distillation of ‘natural’ objects from ‘cultural’ subjects, adds Latour, came the purging and reallocation of a “crossed out God” (Latour, 1993, p.33) — an especially reserved, secularized and securitized, transcendental position of critical judgment to be called upon in just such ‘times’ of explicatory crisis.

∞

*GAN says to you that the Lagoon is occasionally stocked with Lucky Clams that contain PAN Pearls nested between congealed pages of GAN-skyn. You make a fistful gesture of good luck*

---

<sup>7</sup> Latour’s theory of binary purification (as being constitutive of modern epistemology) is influenced by the process philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead. In *The Concept of Nature* (1964) Whitehead writes: “Another way of phrasing this theory which I am arguing against is to bifurcate nature into two divisions, namely into the nature apprehended in awareness and the nature which is the cause of awareness. The nature which is the fact apprehended in awareness holds within it the greenness of the trees, the song of the birds, the warmth of the sun, the hardness of the chairs, and the feel of the velvet. The nature which is the cause of awareness is the conjectured system of molecules and electrons which so affects the mind as to produce the awareness of apparent nature” (p.30-31).

towards the Guddling Fellow but upon seeing it he hastes rapidly away as if being chased by hungry predators, creditors or thieves. Surely a strange type of guest was The Guddler.

You have seen many other nebsome guests and sneaky table cliques digging and paddling around the scene for fishy fortunes. Curiosity aroused and perhaps fancying your own luck, you remove and roll up all clothing that might be ruined or changed by slimy lagoon water and wade in to the shallows for a proper gander. But a grander thing than hidden favours soon seizes your attention. Gazing roughly twelve sticks beyond your submerged parts you see the Deep-pan GAN Shelf.

∞

And yet...like a war on drugs, like sweeping leaves in a forest, the untimely materials purged from the officially versioned ‘moment state’ *always* return in some form or another. As we shall explore more thoroughly (through Richard Serres’ concept of the ‘ineluctable’ parasite), there cannot be a modern signal without the background of non-modern noise from which it is hewn. Again, this is the paradoxical, mutually constitutive principle of neomedievalism — the modern is in the medieval and the medieval is in the modern. In the *pancosmia* of *pan-pan* the past and the present co-exist at fluctuating levels of ‘present intelligibility’ slipping in and out of sensual awareness, from margin to body and back again. The cooking pan of *pan-pan* is *hot, hot, hot!* All is stirred to agitation, a volatile battlemix of inclusions, exclusions and *in*-exclusions. In *pan-pan* another veil of illusion is to be penetrated, this time by *neomedieval* cusps<sup>8</sup> assembled from sticks, Tim Horton’s cups and sheets of frozen tea fungus. Professional time, measured objectively by modern geometry, flickers in an out of sensory cognition to expose a pan-dimensional ‘amateur hour’ continually re-booting and re-versioning as a multiplicity of back-sluing chronisms.

In the asynchronous, aterritorial panarchy of *pan-pan*, there are no illusions of stable evolutionary progress towards essential, self-singular being, fact, condition or state. Every event,

---

<sup>8</sup> The occularcentrism implied by ‘cusps’ is perhaps a little too modern. A more *corporeal* experience is intended, similar to that found in Arthur Machen’s pancosmic horror *The Great God Pan and The Inmost Light* (1894). In his seminal supernatural horror Machen tells of a Victorian doctor who tampers with the cranium of a young woman. The experiment lifts the veil of human perception to reveal nature as it really is. Yet the shift in perception is not merely visual. The young woman is transported *materially* into the non-human realm. It is later revealed that she has engaged in illicit couplings with Pan, the quasi-human god of nature. The resulting hybrid offspring takes the form of a siren that preys on ‘decadent’ dabblers in the occult.

every *thing* is a palimpsestic cluster of what Harris (2010) calls “untimely matter” — “polychronic assemblage(s)” of mutually parasitic (and mutually hosting) components (p.6). All persons, objects and *person-objects* exist in a “topographic”<sup>9</sup> space that is “multitemporal, simultaneously drawing from the obsolete, the contemporary, and the futuristic. An object, a circumstance, is thus polychronic, multitemporal, and reveals a time that is gathered together, with multiple pleats” (Serres, 1995b, p.60).

∞

*As the giddy reflections of the panopy above suggest by illusions of infinity, and you know for a feeling imparted by GAN, the Lagoon is deeper than GAN can fathom. ‘As above so below’, says GAN most cryptically. Looking panward at the distant, gently rippling, panopy above makes you feel exquisitely odd, as if suddenly aware of a lengthy parasite awaking and wriggling around inside your indigestive tubes. You feel like a sub-aquatic volcano about to turn into a magic termite mountain inhabited by lifelong buddies you don't know anything about yet.*

∞

Whether it be the transition from ‘medieval’ to ‘modern’ to ‘post modern’ or from ‘pre-truth’ to ‘truth’ to ‘post-truth’, de Certeau (1988) speaks of the inevitable blowback from modern historical “discourse[s] of separation” (p.3);

[W]hatever this new understanding of the past holds to be irrelevant — shards created by the selection of materials, remainders left aside by an explication — comes back, despite everything, on the edges of discourse or in its rifts and crannies: “resistances,” “survivals,” or delays discreetly perturb the pretty order of a line of “progress” or a system of interpretation (p.4).

It was a global manifestation of just such ‘shards’ and ‘resistances’ that led Umberto Eco to first coin the term ‘neomedievalism’. In *Dreaming of the Middle Ages*, Eco (1986) describes a resurgent obsession with reenactments and representations of the medieval past. According to

---

<sup>9</sup> As Serres (1995b) explains in his conversation with Latour: “If you take a handkerchief and spread it out in order to iron it, you can see in it certain fixed distances and proximities. If you sketch a circle in one area, you can mark out nearby points and measure far-off distances. Then take the same handkerchief and crumple it, by putting it in your pocket. Two distant points suddenly are close, even superimposed. If, further, you tear it in certain places, two points that were close can become very distant. This science of nearness and rifts is called topology, while the science of stable and well-defined distances is called metrical geometry” (p.60).



Eco, this *post*-modern turn toward *pre*-modern culture manifested in “oscillation” between voraciously nostalgic appetites for medieval simulacra and a reciprocal philological urgency to extract, preserve and police a ‘true’ Middle Ages from a deluge of historical distortions and popular fantasy (p.61-87). Eco’s speculative diagnosis of a dawning “neo-medieval” age echoes the rupture narratives associated with a modern linear conception of history and yet, with a paradoxical irony, it is *precisely* within this liminal, temporally folded, eddy space of ‘oscillation’ — a space where multiple, disjointed ‘nows’ are sustained in a deep, ever-sustainable churn — that the hard distinctions between fact and fiction, past and present begin to dissolve. As theorist of medievalism Caroline Dinshaw (2012) explains, “when period boundaries are understood as destabilized and ‘the Middle Ages’ acknowledged as a constructed phenomenon, there is no analytical distinction between medieval studies and medievalism itself” (p.178). From this non-analytical, ahistorical position, we can begin to adapt and adopt Eco’s neomedievalism as the (slow, ascetic-ludic) cultivation of an anachronistic sensibility (those magic cusps of sticks and fungus) — a speculative, yet fully committed practice that retunes the human sensorium to the ‘medieval’ and the ‘modern’ *not* as distinctly bordered, monolithic historical periods within an evolutionary timeframe, but as modes of existence that have always been, and always will be, suspended in temporal entanglement. In *pan-pan*, the ‘medieval’ is thus summoned as a “meta-archipelago”, a series of “interminable, difficult middle(s)” that stress “not simple difference (the past as past) or predictable similarity (the past as present) but temporal interlacement, the impossibility of choosing alterity or continuity (the past that opens up the present to a multitude of futures)” (Cohen, 2003, p.21). Thus again, the ‘neo’ in neomedievalism does not indicate a temporal break or historical return as much as spiritual-material, speculative awakening to the ‘long now’ as a permanent flux of rogue, interminable and paradigmatically ‘difficult’ middles.

∞

*And then you see the Canopy reflected down there, pointing in the opposite direction of course, swarm holes now at the bottom. If you try to focus on the swarm end it makes your genital parts squirrely and rudely there as if ‘they’ (your junk) too had now woken up and be trying to escape up your tube system. Perhaps to warn your head of some devilish plot. You are nearly overcome by the gut feelings of your most thoroughly convincing parts. But then you see, from that weepy corner of your best eye, the shimmering upside-down butt hole of the Canopy (the hole provides some kind of kindly and benevolent expression) and remember to stand fast, ready, steady and true.*

*From your now confidently statuesque and tensely muscled position (you are pointing in the athletic style of a certified pan cake thrower) you see the shadowy effects of wonderful swimmers both giant and small and of incredibly various shapes and comportments. Some look up and you are enchanted by the idea that your own butt hole is equally strange and enchanting to the strange swimmers it aims down upon.*

*Suddenly a great behemoth of ancient vintage, barnacled and pockmarked by great historical battles rises up majestically and gives you a deep brown eye. You fall back astonished and drenched. It (that eye!) is far, far too full of things! Your enchanted parts were correct to retreat! You immediately decide to cease your musings on sacred Canopy droppings — and their strange hunters — and attempt to venture forth and mingle with the normal guests as best you can. But the Lagoon reflections and the Brown Eye have left you with deeply worrying thoughts.*

∞

The difficult middles of *pan-pan* often manifest as a ‘Mushroom Kingdom’ — a dank forest-mall sporangium of hyper-mobile, pan-fertile, solution aligning slime-guys eager to broker relations between incompatible beings and nonbeings. According to Bruno Latour (1993), such “quasi-objects” (a term borrowed from Michel Serres who, as we shall see, also calls them ‘parasites’) or “full-blown mediators” (p.78) habituate and thus *constitute*, a “Middle Kingdom” (p.55) of modern-constitutionally illegitimate subject-object, nature-culture hybrids (p.55). This Middle Kingdom correlates with the Mushroom Kingdom of *pan-pan* as the transitory space (riddled with crisscrossed pilgrim paths or slime trails) in which modern epistemological binaries such as truth/fabrication, rationality/spirituality, human/non-human, past/future and modern/medieval lose their purchase as the foundational categories of ontological truth. Since there can be no generative middles without opposing poles, Latour argues that the massively scaled polarization of nature — the ‘black-boxing’ of reality into discrete, stable signals (‘one moment’ milieus or states) of time and space — *accelerated* the production of the “Middle Kingdom” whilst simultaneously obscuring it from view. Latour (1999) describes this logic of purification or ‘black boxing’ of reality as

the way scientific and technical work is made invisible by its own success. When a machine runs efficiently, when a matter of fact is settled, one need focus only on its inputs and outputs and not on its internal complexity. Thus, paradoxically, the more science and technology succeed, the more opaque and obscure they become (p.304).

The Middle Kingdom (aka Mushroom Kingdom, *pan-pancosmia*, neomedieval panarchy, [STATIC], etc.) is where “everything happens” (Latour, 1993, p.38). It is the ontogenetic cooking pot (or pan) of negotiation, translation and cross-fertilization where disparate things (humans and non-human) assemble, network and (if lucky and the stars are correctly aligned) coalesce as something new. Worlds are assembled here *discreetly*. Hidden-in-plain-sight, ritual processions of quasi-subjects and quasi-objects (part confession, part bludgeoning stick, part myth, part science, part misery, part joy, part human, part god, part documentary, part thesis, part forest adventure, part mental health ward, part mall, and so on...) battle and co-operate in the blind spot “between and below the twin poles [...] around which dualism and dialectics had turned endlessly” (p.55). For the modern intellect, attuned to post-Westphalian ‘national sovereignty model’ of time and space, this untimely Middle Kingdom simply “does not exist.” It is the “unthinkable [...] unconscious of the moderns” (p.38). And it is from within this endarkened realm that the speculative, techno-animist, theory-fictional making practices of neomedievalism gestate and take their ever-morphing forms.

∞

*Quick forest guy! Soon you will take your seat at table number seventeen (Terra Mystique). A tramp ensign depicting a flexed escutcheon attached to the spire of a Morris column indicates its location. ‘See it over there to your left?’ asks GAN. You take out a pipe (GAN recommends you should whip pan pipe out when a moment feels demanding of it), puff with cinematically relaxed authority and use it to jab conclusively in the direction of the table as if you had just poked it into existence. You are puffing shrouds of aromatic conviction just as if being at home in your very own chair by the welcoming fire!*

∞

In the kingdom of *modernity* the human animal is the detached, self-sovereign and divinely elevated maker and master of worlds. In the Middle Kingdom (or *pan-pan*’s Mushroom Kingdom) the human animal is inextricably embroiled in the worlding practices of a noisy multitude of non-human others. In this *para*-human ontology, the epistemic formations of ‘culture’ and ‘nature’ *do* persist (again, we ‘smell the smoke’) but they only exist *partially* as species-specific (yet admittedly powerful) contributions to a vast, knowledge-resistant mushwork

of entangled world-making (and unmaking) practices. Yet, as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) state: “It's not easy to see things in the middle, rather than looking down on them from above or up at them from below, or from left to right or right to left: try it, you'll see that everything changes” (p.25). For the information-hungry modern mindset, living, thinking and making in the middle is indeed difficult and unsettling. To be ‘in the middle’ is to suffer the overlap between the familiar and the alien, the already given and the yet to come. It thus requires the cultivation of a somewhat *ascetic* practice, or an “ecology of practices” (Stengers, 2005) that suspends the subject in the discomfort of middleness and offers no guarantee of those definitive knowledge outcomes that facilitate permanent claims to singular subjectivity, authorship or professional expertise. As Stengers writes, an ‘ecology of practices’

may be an instance of what Gilles Deleuze called ‘thinking par le milieu’, using the French double meaning of milieu, both the middle and the surroundings or habitat. ‘Through the middle’ would mean without grounding definitions or an ideal horizon. ‘With the surroundings’ would mean that no theory gives you the power to disentangle something from its particular surroundings, that is, to go beyond the particular towards something we would be able to recognise and grasp in spite of particular appearances (p.187).

In the Middle Kingdom the ‘creating subject’ is also ‘created thing’ and, as we shall argue, agency here is continually borrowed, *parasitized* or *hosted*, but never fully owned. Like all the other active ingredients of *pan-pan* (its various xenomorphic agents and swarm-sporangial avatars), in order to think in or *through* the Middle Kingdom, the *human* ingredient must suffer the same ascetic trials as *all* entities, systems or organisms (human or not) whose very existence, as a participant in the shifting compositions of reality, *depends* upon a capacity to tolerate, survive, adapt and assimilate alien habits and habitats.

Everything and everyone (including the, often aseptic, language of *pan-pan* itself) is under a trial of endurance in the *pan-pan* world. Like a classic Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game (MMORPG), the neomedieval *pancosmia* of *pan-pan* is a vast Generative Adversarial Network (‘GAN’) that forges and strengthens the Personal Area Network (‘PAN’)<sup>10</sup> from

---

<sup>10</sup> The acronyms ‘PAN’ and ‘GAN’ (alongside the related term ‘panarchy’) are sprinkled throughout the body of *pan-pan*. In *pan-pan* they are left undefined to facilitate a poesis of association but in the ‘real’ world they refer to the following:

constant encounter with xenobiotic organisms. Everything must ‘grind’ to ‘level up’ and gain experience, as well as to amass and hoard existence-enhancing personal affects. The adversarial networks (a criminal investigation and trial, a barrage of myth-scientific experiments, an arduous pilgrimage, a clandestine venture through an ontologically unstable mall-scape) forge the PAN (a body, home, *habitus* or **anchorhold**) that *in turn* provides the stable, insulated conditions, from which to negotiate *with* the maelstrom of adversarial contingency. The aberrant Quick made a comfortable anchorage inside a clinical institution of correction while the institution nurtured its own needs from the atrocity and pain extracted from (and imparted by) Quick. In *pan-pan*, a Rooster-Voucher finds itself being ritually actualized (anchored into being) through a judicial neomedieval ‘thing trial’<sup>11</sup> convened to determine the precise nature and virtue of its actuality — a trial assembled from beings (the trial itself included) whose *own* existence is determined by the asking of the Rooster/Voucher question.

It may be apposite here to explore a neomedieval treatment of the medieval ‘**anchorhold**’, for the anchorite is a non-modern archetype that haunts the neomedieval cosmology (the *pancosmia* of *pan-pan* and beyond), acting as a kind of bonding agent between all its transient, fluctuating and unsettled modes of being. Anchoritism was an ascetic eremitic practice of solitary confinement that became widespread in Europe during the high Middle Ages. Medieval anchorites (from the Greek verb *anachorein* – ‘to withdraw’) were women or (less commonly) men who voluntarily applied to be permanently sealed away in specially customized stone cells adjoining the outer wall of a parish church. If the application were approved, a bishop would perform a ‘ceremony of entombment’ and then seal the enclosure with his official stamp. Often, as part of this rapturously

---

A Generative Adversarial Net or GAN is an unsupervised machine-learning model that has become controversial for its ability to produce ‘deep fake’ A/V representations of nature. The most typical and outrageous examples have been the insertion of public figures into debasing contexts such as porn movies. In a GAN two neural networks, a ‘generator’ and a ‘discriminator’, compete to become more accurate in their predictions. As inventor Ian J. Goodfellow (2014) and his colleagues explains, “The generative model can be thought of as analogous to a team of counterfeiters, trying to produce fake currency and use it without detection, while the discriminative model is analogous to the police, trying to detect the counterfeit currency. Competition in this game drives both teams to improve their methods until the counterfeits are indistinguishable from the genuine articles” (p. 2672).

A Personal Area Network or PAN is “the interconnection of information technology devices within the range of an individual person) that merges human beings into an interconnected global social web”. This definition comes from the global eco-theory of ‘panarchy’ (see above note on panarchy).

<sup>11</sup> For an in-depth account of medieval trials of non-human animals and objects see: Phillips, P. J. (2013). *Medieval animal trials: justice for all*. Edwin Mellen Press.

morbid ceremony, a grave would be dug and the psalm *Office of the Dead* recited to sanctify the new anchorite's liminal status as already dead to the world yet reborn to a hyper-ritualized life of solitary meditation. There he or she would remain alone until fully, corporeally expired. And yet, it could be speculated that the medieval anchorite (and the desert monks that Gibbon so despised) did not so much cut herself off from the material world as *offer herself up to the world* as an embodied intersection between the commonplace and the extraordinary, the immanence of everyday terrestrial concerns and the transcendence of the Empyrean sublime. The anchorite, in effect, became a kind of living hyphen or 'pontifex' (Latin: "bridge-maker", from *pons* bridge and *fex* to make) — the constructor of a material interface traversing hitherto disparate realms.

Interpreted thus, the anchorite (and anchorhold combined) personifies the immense gravitational pull of the Latourian black box. Deleuze and Guattari (1994) may have likened the anchorite's mighty flexing of ascetic-affective muscle to the "bizarre athleticism" of the "'fasting-artist' type [...] an *athleticism of becoming* that reveals only forces that are not its own" (p.172, italics added). Like those "philosophers" who have "seen something in life that is too much for anyone, too much for themselves, and that has put on them the quiet mark of death", the anchorites entombed and indeterminate matter is a "bloc of sensation" held in place, not by "bone or skeletal structure", but by a "house or framework" (p.p. 172, 179). "Art begins not with flesh but with the house", Deleuze and Guattari conjecture, "the being of sensation is not the flesh, but the compound of nonhuman forces of the cosmos, of man's nonhuman becomings, and of the ambiguous house that exchanges and adjusts them, makes them whirl around like winds. Flesh is only the developer which disappears in what it develops: the compound of sensation"(p.183).

The living tomb of the anchorite has two portals: one looking out onto the commonplace (the street) and the other, a 'hagioscope', looking to the divine (the church). Following Deleuze and Guattari then, we might conceptualize the anchorhold as "the most shut-up house [that] opens onto a universe" (p.180). The anchorhold is a *habitus* that does not simply shelter the anchorite from the "cosmic forces" (p.185) of radical contingency, but draws the universe, tight beamed and concentrated, *in* through its tiny portals.

Anchoritism is both a PAN and a GAN, for the personal area network is also always an adversarial one. It is a ritual art of living *with* (and *as*) death as a transformational gift given to

life. It is fundamentally an ascetic ritual, that simultaneously practices and illuminates a distinctly amodern ontology of world making. Her spiritual, yet also *material*, practice embraces the pain of dissolution while, pragmatically, providing a framework, recipe or mold in which a cosmos of solutions are pooled and coalesced as a ‘form of life’ or ‘body’. Following Merleau-Ponty (1962) we might say that anchoritic body is that “which ‘understands’ in the acquisition of habituality” where ‘to understand’ is not simply to produce, accrue and disseminate replicable data, but to “experience the harmony between what we aim at and what is given, between the intention and the performance — and the body is our *anchorage in a world*” (p.144, italics added). In *thN Lng folk 2go: Investigating Future Premoderns™* the Confraternity introduce the anchorite through an invitation to a daytrip though the Middle Kingdom:

Take your tour [...] if it’s summer, bring a plastic bag and a bathing suit [...] throughout the middle kingdom of the great subject/object divide. Consider the anchorite who heroically straddles the ontological dyke that we Journeymen must constantly leap — never settling on one side or the other. Now try it yourself! When your legs start to tremble, your britches tear asunder, and your groin aches to high heaven, wonder at the anchorite who, with mighty yoga skills and limbs of steel, adopts this position forever with the ascetic grace of a lobster clinging steadfastly to the rim of a steaming pot. (Hogg, Mulholland, 2013, p.146)

In evoking such extravagant asceticisms of the medieval period (also evoked by our ‘neo-flagellant’ moniker) we are not proposing some kind of punitive or redemptive ‘return’ to extreme practices of sensual deprivation, the denial of corporeal pleasure coupled with the self-infliction of spirit-cleansing pain. Nor do we refer to ludic-asceticism as a contemporary practice of sadomasochistic pleasure. Rather we follow Foucault’s (1987) reflections on ancient ascetic practice as “an exercise of self upon self by which one tries to work out, to transform one’s self and to attain a certain mode of being” (p.113). Akin to Foucault we treat ascetic practice as a heuristic archetype that, due to its disciplinary extremity (and thus para-normal alterity), produces an anachronistic shock to our modern obsession with ‘freedom’ (the proverbial carrot that propels our revolutionary *telos*) as an abstract ideal. We too are “a little distrustful of the general theme of liberation” that posits the existence of an essential “nature or a human foundation which [has] found itself concealed, alienated or imprisoned in and by some repressive mechanism” (p.113). We forever seek to free ourselves from the disciplinary constraints of the black box but asceticism teaches us (pragmatically, corporeally) that freedom *requires* a discipline.

Emancipation must generate recipes of emancipation — it requires not the total destruction of black boxes but a slow, painful art of disassembly and reassembly<sup>12</sup>. Asceticism, then, is simultaneously a disciplinary practice and a practice of freedom. It is a habit or process that all entities must *accede* too in order to gain traction in the worlds that those entities are involved in creating. Otherwise it is all just spinning cogs and dangling Utopian carrots. Thus Foucault (1996) asks; “Can that be our problem today? We’ve rid ourselves of asceticism?” Speaking directly to the abstract notion of ‘sexual liberation’ he proposes that it is “up to us to advance into a homosexual ascesis that would make us work on ourselves and invent — *I do not say discover* — a manner of being *that is still improbable*” (p.310, italics added). Perhaps then we might think of ascesis as a braking mechanism: a slowing down of the drive to *escape* that which appears to be impinging on ‘our’ freedom in order to *remain with* those impingements (to *feel* their multiplicity and diversity in full) as a repository of alternate practices to be *moved* by. A repository from which we may assemble improbable, more-than-modern or para-normal habits of being and making<sup>13</sup>.

Our speculative asceticism (as we might call it) muses on the possibility of para-modern *ritual* practices that humble the emancipatory trajectory of the all-knowing human mind by incorporating the sufferance of ‘middleness’ into a generative ‘habit’ of being ‘improbably’ quasi-human (or indeed quasi-modern). Yes, it is with ‘britches torn asunder’, and ‘aching groins’ that we emulate the anchorite’s yogic bridging. ‘Torsoism’ — a torso stretching practice of preparing for being *panoramically* stretched across ontological dichotomies, across mind and body, theory and practice, research and creation, intellectual rigor and belly laughs. We point and laugh at our torn pants and swollen groins. What farcically knotted yoga positions we neomedievalist habitually find ourselves in!

And of course, as part of our practice of being ‘improbably’ quasi-modern (or ludicrously neo-

---

<sup>12</sup> In *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography*, David Halperin emphasises that, for Foucault, the archaic art of asceticism was fundamentally a practice of de-selfing. It “did not constitute a technology for producing unique individuals” but rather an “exercise designed to empty the self of precisely those passions and attachments that make the self, according to the modern view, something individual, personal, and unique” (1995, p.75).

<sup>13</sup> In our endeavors to reclaim medieval asceticism as a para-modern practice of making improbable modes of being probable we share a common path with Eileen Joy. For an outline of her Foucaultian reading of ascesis see: Joy, E. (2011). *An Improbable Manner of Being: Medieval Hagiography, Queer Studies, and Lars von Trier’s Breaking the Waves*.



medieval), we cannot fully accept the derisory post-Kantian intellectualization of ‘habit’ as stagnant, regressive and essentially *de-generative* — habit as something “reprehensible” which “impairs the freedom of the mind [...], leads to thoughtless repetition [...] and so becomes ridiculous” (Kant, 2006, p.40). Within the intellectual circles of our modern milieu, habit is where our fear (and awe) of the automaton lives — it is where the blind instinct and bodily impulses of the “animal in the human being jumps out far too much” and habitual thought and speech (or ritual speech such as an anchorite’s liturgical prayer) “turn the speaker into a talking machine” (p40). Yet, while we do not concede to the totalization of habit as ‘blind automation’ that does not mean we automatically leap to the ‘archaic’ side of the modern/medieval divide (which would reinforce the dichotomy, negate the ascetic middle and relieve our groin ache) in an attempt to reconstruct the scholastic notion of the *hexis* or *habitus*, derived from Aristotle, as the permanent cultivation of a virtuous ‘second nature’. Instead we follow Ravaisson (2008) to think of habit as the very ontology of generative middleness — habit “at once as grace (ease, facility, power) and as addiction (machinic repetition)” (Malabou, 2008, p. viii). Our speculative asceticism converges with Ravaisson’s habit here as “something that exists *somewhere between* the necessity of ease and the torment of need, one side directed to making the world readily habitable [...]; the other directed to a trajectory of infinite repetition, a tic, an addiction, a limitation and constraint on life” (Grosz, 2013, p.220. italics added). Again, we emulate the anchorite as living-hyphen or pontifex. We welcome those ‘machinic’ constraints on contingency as temporary anchorage (contingency contracted, embodied) afforded to us by the black box of habit, but without becoming overly addicted to such affordances. Our asceticism is that of the perpetual neophyte — we continually doubt the finality of the black box even while it is such black boxing events that allow us to suffer this doubt gracefully.

Ravaisson (2008) argues that “once acquired, habit is a general, permanent way of being” but crucially it also “subsists beyond the change which brought it about”. Habit, Ravaisson continues, “remains for a change which either is no longer or is not yet; it remains for a possible change. This is its defining characteristic” (p.25). It is in this habitual manner (habit as the processing and compacting of change, *for change*) that we re-habituate (or pilgrimize) the modern mallscapes of underground Montreal as the pancosmic, neomedieval labyrinths of *pan-pan*. At the end of our pilgrimage

is an idea, an ideal to be accomplished: something that should be, that can be, and which is not yet. It is a possibility to be realized. But as the end becomes fused with the movement, and the movement with the tendency, possibility, the ideal, is realized in it. The *idea becomes being*, the very being of the movement and of the tendency that it determines. Habit becomes more and more *a substantial idea*. The obscure intelligence that through habit comes to replace reflection, this immediate intelligence where *subject and object are confounded*, is a real intuition, in which the real and the ideal, *being and thought are fused together* (Ravaisson, p. 39, italics added).

It is these cyclic translations and transformations of subjects and objects, the manifestation of thought in action, of spirit in matter, that also lead us to speculate on *ritual* (which we speculatively confound with the ontology of *habit*), not solely as practice belonging to ‘religion’, but as a para-human *worlding* technology. Perhaps we might speak of an ‘ontology of ritual’ that sweeps up all manner of kingdoms, species and taxa into hitherto ‘improbable’ forms of co-habitation and joint adventures in world-making. As Elizabeth Grosz (2013) writes, humans “are not the only creatures of habit; all living things, from plants through the worlds of animals to the vast array of human forms of sociality and politics — and perhaps *even matter itself* — form habits as their vastly different modes of self-organization” (p.218, italics added). Might we then also ask if humans are the only beings of *ritual*? Does our speculation on asceticism lead us to a kind of more-than-human ascetology where all entities suffer *together* the liminality brought about by ritual translations from one *habitus* to another?

In thinking of ritual entities or ‘beings of ritual’, we might recall Victor Turner’s (p.95) “liminal personae” or “threshold people” — PANs that are in the midst of a GAN, an adversarial trial, a ritual process of transubstantiation. If such quasi-people are ritually suspended “betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention” then why not speculate that *all* things (‘even matter itself’) are likewise suspended and forged between worlds brought into collision, betwixt overlapping ontologies. As with our own example of the ritually entombed (or enwombed) anchorite, Turner states that within ritual “liminality is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness” (p.95) and it is our suspension in such an endarkened position (a site of non-knowledge) that surely facilitates the traversing of borders, the violation of those black boxed ‘norms’ which we come have come to ‘understand’ *corporeally* through the very ‘acquisition of habituality’. ‘Speculative asceticism’ or the ‘ludic-asceticism of

neomedieval speculation’ — either way this reclaimed archaism becomes a vital addition to our para-normal investigation toolkit<sup>14</sup>.

As a heuristic device, asceticism is also the joker in the pack — a card we deploy not with self-inflicted dispassion or poker-faced academicism but with neo-flagellant pratfall humor sprinkled with academic dad-jokes. We might snigger when the *process* of habit is mistaken for the hooded robe of a medieval monk, but then pause...(isn’t etymology wonderful?)...surely that robe (the ‘saint’s cloak’ that became the Weberian ‘iron cage’) is indeed *also* constitutive of the monks habituation process? Being and thought (con)fused, improbably, ludicrously, *alchemically*, together — *pan-pan* is a bestiary of such category ‘mistakes’, a veritable blooperology (how we laugh at our smoke blackened faces when, during our investigations, a black box explodes in our face! But, lab coats dusted down, it’s on with the serious business of assembling new ones). Throughout the *pancosmia*, we meet ascetic anchoritic avatars or liminal ‘beings of ritual’ such as the Muller Ltd. and a \$50 Amazon Rooster-Voucher. Neomedieval beings such as these are both free radicals and aligners of disciplinary solutions. They are manifestations of *both* the black box and of the ritual process of black boxing and unboxing (and oh how we *love* those viral unboxing videos!).

Of course, forging a PAN is a black boxing process just like forming a nation state or a modern/medieval divide. Black boxing (or to use neomedievalist parlance, ‘relic-ing’) is not necessarily a bad thing<sup>15</sup>. As proposed above in alliance with Foucault, it is an *essential* function

---

<sup>14</sup> The Neoflagellant toolkit is perhaps something more akin to the pockets of one of Bruce Nauman’s auto-flagellant clowns. <https://www.artic.edu/artworks/146989/clown-torture>

<sup>15</sup> Of course, black boxing occurs throughout this paper. Particularly in the erecting of certain ‘straw dogs’ — the negative caricaturing of professional ‘humans’, ‘scientists’, ‘experts’ and ‘academics’ for example (which to be fair are vocations that provide nurturing habitats for a vast range of bio-neuro diverse dispositions and which also suffer, at various times and circumstances, from the effects of social marginalization — ‘geek’, ‘poindexter’, ‘egghead’ and so forth). While such exaggeration is used here for the sake of poetic emphasis I should also confess that the ‘smoke’ of my ‘modernity’ escapes through these instances as the very ‘critical impulse’ I am attempting to temper. Yet I do not mean to disrespect and disregard the vital creative practices of modern, professional producers of knowledge. No. I merely wish to express a *concern* that, within our modern milieu (within every black boxed milieu), certain dispositions, skillsets or ways of seeing and of *feeling* the world are validated within elevated vocations that come to represent the official version of ‘reality’ as it *should* be, *has* to be, for every body. Einstein famously argues that everyone (lets add every *thing*) is a genius — that if you judge a fish on how well it can climb a tree then it will always believe it is stupid. Last night I watched my cat with her chew toy. At that moment I witnessed the sheer grace (a moment of ‘satisfaction’) of a body engaged in a habit or practice that *coincides with the very fabric of its being*. Every body, every *thing*, deserves these moments of grace. From a neomedieval perspective, we speculate that, in loosening up the tightly black boxed categorizations (spatial, temporal, political, epistemological, *ontological*) of our modern milieu, we might allow for a greater, more diverse number of beings to heed multiple ‘callings’ — to find their

in the construction and *habitation* of worlds. After all, nothing could think or make without abstractions, concepts or graspable forms. Everything needs a ‘body’ (or *corpus*) that, under certain purpose-fulfilling conditions, has boundaries (even if porous and shifting) that separate it from an environment *just enough* to facilitate traction. The portals of the anchorhold are the funnels that filter and condense that which comes to consciousness as matter. As Whitehead (1927) writes, “limitation is essential for growth of reality. Unlimited possibility and abstract creativity can procure nothing. The limitation, and the basis arising from what is already actual, are both of them necessary and interconnected” (p.152).

∞

*Puffing along nicely, cockily nodding to this, that and the other, you observe some sights that are, to varying degrees, worth capturing with equipment even though (and perhaps because) they have been already described by GAN. Most impressive, near the middle of the Lagoon and moored to the a-lo-go-rhythmic base of GAN, is a floating island made of eleganzia, maravilloso and a bass note of accidentally and ceremonially chewed stercoral adhesives. This is Weofod — the main table. It is table number two (Medi Terra) because it has absorbed daïs one and daïs three to make it big enough for the mysterious bearn-téam of which all are guests. You could describe bearn-téam more fully later in collaboration with GAN — make a tablet impress to do that. For now, gather and focus the senses towards the great hulking novelty that sits atop Medi Terra. Nobody will believe you! It is the biggest Scots-French-Canadian pie you have ever seen! About four hundred in the round and with the top crust propped up it looks like a giant clam. Inside the pie, sloshing around in presumably top-notch mince, gravy etcetera, is a band of twenty eight live Gigourglee-seolfies tuning organs of most marvelous diversity. The Gigourglees are anatomically frivolous too but also soberly mantled, even identically so, as if making an attempt at some kind of concerted achievement. Will it all work out? I do not know, and GAN does not know what PAN cannot say.*

∞

Through the adversarial trials and ascetic practices performed in *pan-pan*, all agents (such as the afore-mentioned \$50 Amazon Rooster-Voucher) are ritually inoculated (black boxed or relic-ed) with careful dosages of contingency in order to both change and *endure* as change stabilized. “What is a living system” ask Serres (1977), “if not an island of negentropy, an open and temporary vortex that emits and receives flows of energy and information?” (p.287). A bit like the forest reenactments of Quick and his comrade-interrogators, all *pan-pan*’s system-beings are

---

‘chew toy’. If this statement reeks of patchouli oil, so be it — trust me, it also reeks of the bitter smoke still arising from the colonial, critical conceit that is my inheritance.

weird immunization workshops in this way. Artful engagement with foreign bodies facilitates the crafting of discerning mutations — an increased complexity of ambassadorial anti-bodies (or anti-beings) capable of negotiation, translation and, where deemed fruitful to all parties, symbiosis. To reiterate, agency or ‘life’ in *pan-pan* is an ascetic *art*, a speculative ‘technology of *para-self*’<sup>16</sup> that transforms sufferance of the *not-self* into flexibility and strength. For the neomedieval neophyte, Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) famous ‘plateau’, “How Do You Make Yourself a Body Without Organs?”, reads like a combination of medieval didactic poem, cookery book and anchoritic guidance text. Becoming a body without organs (BwO), they warn, is easily “botched”. Any emancipatory project involving the *dis*-organizing of your organism (your rituals of subjectivity or habits of being) requires the simultaneous, on-the-fly crafting<sup>17</sup> of a new set of rules<sup>18</sup>, a self-generating and generative ritual or recipe of sorts. Most importantly, it requires an “art of dosages, since overdose is a danger”:

[Y]ou don't do it with a sledgehammer, you use a very fine file. You invent self-destructions that have nothing to do with the death drive. Dismantling the organism has never meant killing yourself, but rather opening the body to connections that presuppose an entire assemblage, circuits, conjunctions, levels and thresholds, passages and distributions of intensity, and territories and deterritorializations measured with the *craft* of a surveyor (p.160, italics added).

If you are patient and do not botch it up, Deleuze and Guattari conclude encouragingly, “you will

---

<sup>16</sup> Again here is Foucault’s (1988) ascetic “technology of the self”— a reclamation of archaic practices that “permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality” (p.18).

<sup>17</sup> Richard Sennett’s (2008) definition of craft is apposite here to our thinking on habit: As he puts it: “Every good craftsman conducts a dialogue between concrete practices and thinking; this dialogue evolves into sustaining habits, and these habits establish a rhythm between problem solving and problem finding. [...] The good craftsman, moreover, uses solutions to uncover new territory; problem solving and problem finding are intimately related in his or her mind. For this reason, curiosity can ask, “Why?” and well as, “How?” about any project. The craftsman thus both stands in Pandora’s shadow and can step out of it.” (p. 9-10).

<sup>18</sup> Likewise Nietzsche (1995) prescribes pragmatic self-crafting as an antidote to the *aqua fortis* of excessive (scientific) historicization. Faced with the mounting burden of historical knowledge, the subject must practice of the “art and power to be able to *forget* and to enclose oneself in a limited horizon” (p.95, 163). Yet this also an ‘art of careful dosages’. If the subject is “too selfish, in turn, to enclose its *own* perspective within an *alien* horizon, then it will feebly waste away or hasten to its timely end” (p.90, italics added). Every craft, *techne* or art (including non-human practices such as those deployed by a ‘forest’ for example) requires a limit horizon, an apposite recipe of sorts; otherwise it will collapse into steaming, tasteless mulch.

have constructed your own *little* machine, ready when needed to be plugged into other collective machines” (p.161, italics added).

∞

*By the way, the Hi-makers of the tremendous Scots-French-Canadian pie were once suspected of xenobiotic terrorism (circa IV seventy one, but of course it wasn't them). It is interesting that they are here today. There is an aging gut-kill novel virus ghost-burnt into the bios of GAN: Minced onion fat mutton, six hundred, one hundred, onions, green onions, one hundred, fat, fifty, fat-tailed vinegar, three, twenty seven, salt and pepper to taste. You are about to emigrate, Jala, my sister, her sister, my nephews, cousins, sausage-skinned sisters for more than forty people. “Unus testis, nullus testis!,” Terai grinned. So you should try to imagine what that ancient GAN inscription means (a shopping list? receipt?). You make additional PAN drops apropos the nearest emergency exits in case of another plague. There is a good exit between Thai Express and those bottle-smashing machines. Not too far from Terra Mystique, providentially.*

∞

Speaking of *little* machines. Perhaps we might allow a distinction to be made between the local, situated co-construction of a PAN and the imposition of that personal network as an impersonal universal standard. This distinction is not intended as one of categorical difference but of a difference in the order of magnitude — the degree of fundamentalism (a solipsist and hubristic addiction to, and dependency upon, ones ‘own’ truth) that becomes attached to the black box and the scale of the spatiotemporal territories on which they are imposed. The *local* border maintenance of encounter-specific *little* machines (such as the Muller Ltd. or Rooster-Voucher of *pan-pan*) is not to be mistaken for the sovereign-selfhood aggrandizing *macro*-transcendentalism pursued with colonial zeal by Eurowestern humanism. Latour (2013) argues that with the hardcore black boxing of the empirical sciences (the *giant* machines of the modern constitution), it “is always a question of *abandoning* perishable matter in order to preserve intact a formal constant which *alone* is judged to be essential [...]”. Again, through this rigorous distillation, this ‘final word’ purging of all things deemed foreign, parasitical, quasi or marginal, “all difficulties vanish, all paths level out: information becomes faithful communication without any transformation whatsoever, through simple obvious likeness between the copy and the original” (p.22). In a ‘nutshell’ (another black box? Yes, but small, temporary, contingent, poetic), the modern *map* is mistaken for the immutable truth of the ever-shifting *territory* of the amodern Middle Kingdom. Through this “fallacy of misplaced concreteness” nature is completely subsumed “under the guise

of very abstract logical constructions” (Whitehead, 1948, p52). The black box is too hastily appropriated as a trans-historical, trans-cultural, trans-natural *totality* rather than a *particular* tool or affordance, a radically dispersed and singular ‘little machine’ utilized within and for a *particular* milieu of thought or PAN.

∞

*Great goodness, Mr Quick lets face it! Get it all out in the open so to speak. We all know why we are here! Another plague is being cooked up by the canopy glyphs in the GAN PAN, which is why everything is a bit strange right now. The Canopy is agitated and rustling. Those so enabled or cunning are preparing to either get out at an opportune moment with what they can carry or stay till the end and bet the house on the next fungal paradigm.*

∞

Black boxes, as ubiquitous, dispersed, micro-transcendent world-building blocks, *matter*. They are essential to sense perceptibility and thus to the tractable *mattering* of reality. Whitehead might call a black box a ‘satisfaction’, for it demarcates a particular plateau of achievement in the ritual practices of *becoming*, the coalescence of something habitual, second nature, repeatable and stable (a concept, feeling, rock, living organism, system or society) that persists on its ‘own’ (as a ‘self’) just enough to resist (for a time) the overwhelming forces of difference, dissolution, illness and death. For Whitehead, of course such a ‘satisfaction’ would only occur from the multiple perspectives of the universe, nevertheless, for a single subject embroiled within (and constructed by) the worlding effects of the black boxing process, there comes (for an undetermined *moment* — seconds, decades, eons...) the therapeutic quietude of certainty. “Could health be the silence of organs? And sickness makes noise” writes Serres (2007, p.78). It is this transitory quietude or ‘health’ of the black box, this minimum of repeated and repeatable consistency, sustained through ascetic rituals of constant readjustment, that prevents *pan-pan*’s alt-world building (or Quick’s for that matter) from dissolving into nonsensical, meaningless mush. The black boxes we deploy in *pan-pan* (or rather leave standing; like torn fragments of a map or user’s manual, or like a spirit guide who assumes the comforting form of a familiar friend in order to lead us through the enchanted forest) are homely ‘faces’ we recognize, are able to grasp, as ‘normal’. Through such affordances, reality *appears* to belong to ‘us’ and to constitute *our* (modern) world, as ‘we’ know it.

*And yet*, even as we continue to black box ‘our’ modern reality, our reclaimed and speculative archaic ritual practices (asceticism, animism, pilgrimage) permit us to ‘smell the smoke’ of its hubristic and negational affects. We acknowledge our desire (felt as a moral imperative) to critique, judge and subsume others within a milieu we feel simply *must* be ‘true’. However, by disciplining this desire through the humility of ascesis we suffer doubt gracefully. We accept that our black boxes cannot to be relied upon, or imposed upon others, as ironclad ‘matters of fact’. As Whitehead (2001) writes: “There are no whole truths; all truths are half-truths. It is trying to treat them as whole truths that plays the devil” (p.14). And as the “Dr. ChickenPox Yahoo Prison Consultants Experimenter Conglomerate” of *pan-pan* performatively demonstrates, scientific doxa (or any expertly sanctioned episteme) always comes replete with a heretical marginalia — those parasites (like Thomas Quick) that devilishly refuse to be flushed by the squeamish, irritated bowls of the xenophobic host. Of course, in the same way that ‘modern’ iconoclasm substantiates the power of the ‘medieval’ through the fervency of their icon smashing, it is the troublesome marginalia that define the *doxa* by luring the iconoclast into a practice of constant vigil and border management.

Just like medieval body-part relics (and anchorites), a black-boxed entity requires a hosting community of ritual (such as an academy, laboratory, cathedral, nation, tribe, biome, ecosphere or book like *pan-pan*) in which it is venerated, upheld, tended and cared<sup>19</sup> for (and sacrificed) as an ongoing “matter of concern”. According to Latour (2014), a “matter of concern is what happens to a matter of fact when you add to it its whole scenography, much as you would do by shifting your attention from the stage to the whole machinery of a theater”. Viewed from inside the Middle Kingdom, ‘matters of fact’ become quasi-factual, they

start to move in all directions, they overflow their boundaries, they include a complete set of new actors, they reveal the fragile envelopes in which they are housed. Instead of “being there whether you like it or not,” they still have to be there, yes [...], but they have to be liked, appreciated, tasted, experimented upon, mounted, prepared, put to the test (p.114).

---

<sup>19</sup> A *theory* of religion, for example, will remain coherent or ‘true’ so long as it remains immersed in the domain of social-scientific observation. The theory will fall apart however, when it is mistaken for the actual *practice* (also an abstraction) of religion itself. As Stengers’ (2012) writes, “We must not [...] mobilize the categories of superstition, belief, or symbolic efficacy in an attempt to explain away what pilgrims claim to experience. Instead, we must conclude that the Virgin Mary requires a milieu that does not answer to scientific demands” (p.3).



If ‘matters of fact’ (Quick is a liar, period) are taken as the stable single end-points of knowledge production, ‘matters of concern’ (we do not know where ‘Quick’ begins and ends) are always *in process*, fractal, multi-perspectival. Again, the map or recipe is being written on the fly — as the ingredients fold and ferment, the map deforms with the bubbling, gaseous territory. Of course, a matter of concern is *still* a black boxing event but in the *micro*-transcendental, contingent mode, not so aggressively vacuum-sealed as the macro-transcendence of the modern categorical facts of science. Perhaps then, following Serres (1982), we might think, in less concrete terms, of the black box as a ‘black basket’ — “a barrier of braided links that leaks...but can still function as a dam. Parts break away; the concrete dissolves, remixes and stratifies elsewhere, a new name, a new function”.

∞

*You know, the place is really filling up now with busy guests; business meons, business woemens, business omens, le attendaunts, handed servitors, off-spun laykings, larch hosts, broken seolfies, seolfie brokers, facilitato societies (satisfaction clans), fletus nostrums, all the usual, solution-hook post-puberty groups, Hi-makers, Lo-makers and many other assemblage enthusiasts. Baffling, but excellent smelling, assembly, everything a little bit does not look like normal. All the usual trappings of Korganization are prowling around, opening things up and secreting things down pants. All is getting hot ‘n’ ready with integration opportunity although there is something wrong with your PAN that cannot feel any desperate need for any of that GAN sort of thing.*

∞

“Better yet”, continues Serres, “it [this buoyant, yet leaky, ‘black basket’] is the quasi-stable turbulence that a flow produces, the eddy closed upon itself for an instant, which finds its balance in the middle of the current and appears to move upstream, but is in fact undone by the flow and re-formed elsewhere” (p.75). Inherently unseaworthy and likely to resurface in the most unlikely of times and places, the ‘black baskets’ of *pan-pan* are “disputable, and their obstinacy seems to be of an entirely different sort: they move, they carry you away, and, yes, they also matter” (Latour, 2014, p.114). If thought ends (or is deemed to have ended by some expert authority or another) with the strangely mute, detached materiality of ‘fact’ (‘Atoms are *real*. Gods are *fake*. Period.’), it resumes with the strangely noisy, ascetically driven process-materiality of ‘doubt’ (Atoms are real, *unless...?* Gods are fake, *but...?*). Begotten by wondrously frustrating encounters with quasi-things beyond (or unacceptable to) human comprehension, a degree of humility sets in. The humiliation of *unknowing* (the ascesis of becoming non-expert, amateur) is

tempered by the allure of speculative adventure. There is sustenance to be drawn from the ‘weakness’ of uncertainty and doubt (in *pan-pan* there is an abundance of weirded recipes and part-baked foods for thought). Doubt (not quite the skepticism of the scientist faced with religion but more the wonder of the poet-practitioner who refuses rational explanation) is infinitely sustainable — it is never used up, always recycled, thrown back into the pan to season (or spike) the traditional batter mix with a dose of wondrous complexity. Again, in the Middle/Mushroom Kingdom of *pan-pan*, form, coherence, value, and truth (etc.) are never properties produced or owned by a singular entity. Pan was one god among many, a lusty god of the restless, rutting multitude, usurped by a single imperious God of the total black box. Pan is also a round metal container for cooking up ingredients. *pan-pan* is both of these things, but also countless other things because in *pan-pan* strength always comes from ascetic practices of suffering, carrying, sharing and aligning multiplicities of *weakness*. Adapting a quote from Miller (2013) we could say that *pan-pan*’s viral

output of agency is real, but borrowed. In fact, its agency is real because it is borrowed. In order to get anywhere, [*pan-pan*’s] subjects need an enabling push from the objects [of *pan-pan*] that compose them. This enabling push [PUSH] fuels but also displaces subjectivity. Unavoidably, the grace of this push [PUSH] decenters the self. [*pan-pan*’s] Subjects are given to themselves only when they are prevented by the objects [of *pan-pan*] that compose them from coinciding with themselves. Fishing after their own nature, [*pan-pan*’s] subjects find themselves only by losing themselves [in a giant protoplasmic pie] (p.148).

Again this is why, as an alternative to the modern professions of rigorous critique, we might regard the ‘amateurish’ neomedieval brand of speculation as an *ascetic* ritual, an art of living self-sacrificially, to suffer with grace the permanently open wounds and epidemiologic transformations that come with continued exposure to viral and contagious matters of concern. To think *in the middle*, to read **with** *pan-pan*, is (we hope) to be moved, carried away, transformed by those objects of exploration that *refuse* to leave the exploring subject alone. Medieval historian Caroline Bynum (2012) suggests that “to a modern theorist the problem is to *explain* how things ‘talk’; to a medieval theorist, it was how to get them to shut up” (p.283, italics added). In the Middle Kingdom, black boxes (because they are in fact porous ‘black baskets’ or open wounds) cannot be used to explain things squarely *away* because those garrulous ‘things’

(always up-close and personal) *speak* the language of our own co-evolving, black-boxed subjecthood.

∞

*Bit shy still? Absolutely, but take comfort in this; thankfully there are provided, if you read the courtly purtenances correctly, all sorts of semi-to-non active sponsor columns (knock once to see if hollow, twice to see if occupied), cloaked monorails, single crane swings, sub aquatic anchorholds (if you are brave enough the great coral strip-chains will accommodate soloists), meadow anchorholds, tele-vistage booths, dense thickets, discarded birth baskets, reche screens, bespoke solitariums, tubeless vicarages and Jaunt booths for those of you who do not want to be at a table (or — shhhhh! — for those not welcome at table! Exempli gratia; seolfies-seolfies, substratio jobby choppers, sonic wastrels, mentalists, copy stinkers, fly-by-night relaxants, smoothster-idlers, gleo proudsters, badartists, channel clots, unsharppers, put-downs, scabbard-dragglers and afterclappy teamsters — you know who you are/do you know who you are? Denial and self-delusion everywhere etcetera, etcetera.) And there are also many other catechumenate pan seolfies here that have cozily and parasitically installed themselves under appropriate host tables, twixt seolfie stykkes and other stykkes, behind sponsor columns and still more hidden-in-plain-sight amongst the cooks ingredients or on certain sticky pages of pan procedural digests that deal in such things as trust enrolment, GAN concealment, sudden surprises and prosperous cases of unlawful membership and even pretending to be a top-ranking Glyph of the almighty Canopy itself.*

∞

With this humbling perspectival shift in the ontological (dis)order of things (our ‘smelling of the smoke’) comes Latour’s (1993) challenging proposition that “we have never been modern” (or indeed we might add, ‘medieval’) at all. As neomedievalists we accept this challenge as our call to para-modern pilgrimage. Of course, in line with the arguments above, it must be emphasized that Latour’s provocative statement should not be taken as an immovable matter of *fact* but as a vulnerable matter of *concern*. Using Whiteheads (1978) terminology, we might argue that the ‘never been modern’ proposition is intended precisely as a “lure for feeling” (p.184)<sup>20</sup> — a ‘call to thought’ (thought *in* and *as* action) that affectively entices us beyond, or to the side of (hence ‘para’), the modern epistemological imperative that everything can (and therefore *should*) be the subject of critique. *pan-pan* is saturated with social theory, philosophy, theology and scientific

---

<sup>20</sup> For Whitehead (1978) a ‘feeling’ is “is the appropriation of some elements in the universe to be components in the real internal constitution of its subject. The elements are the initial data; they are what the feeling feels. But they are felt under an abstraction. The process of the feeling involves negative prehensions which effect elimination” (p.231).

experiment, but as those disciplines size-up and stalk one another, and battle to apply their respective methodologies of capture to these encounters, strange new hybrids (propositions, callings) are brewed and born in the place of absolute knowledge. Nothing is rendered transparent but is instead suffered as constitutively wild, endarkened and mysterious. The world of *pan-pan* is never singular (like all worlds) but multiple and therefore never yours, or ours, to fully apprehend.

We might say that the neomedievalisms of *pan-pan* — the ‘reclaiming’ of non-modern practices deemed archaic, absurd and redundant — comprise a humble contribution to the “permanent decolonization of thought” (Viveiros de Castro, 2015, p.40) from the ubiquitous, rigorous conventions of modern scientific and academic method. The medieval cosmology (with its extraordinarily irrational ritual practices of animal trials, anchoritism, arduous pilgrimage, body-part relic-ing, matter veneration, mystic divination and so fourth) is embraced as an immersive arena of para-modern speculation where professional disciplines and conceptual categorizations (such as those between ‘science’ and ‘religion’, ‘art’ and ‘life’, ‘culture’ and ‘nature’, ‘fact’ and ‘fiction’, ‘being’ and ‘non-being’) are not so firmly implanted. In the *dis*-organisational panarchy of *pan-pan*, a stomach is *also* a womb; a modern mall is *also* a medieval enchanted forest; a Canadian drugstore chain is *also* (amongst other proto-things) a fungal, godlike, gut-brain matrix (whose often rhizomatic ‘body’ is its own cathedral); every discarded Tim Horton’s coffee cup is *also* a contact relic or consecrated vessel. As practicing, habituating neomedievalists, we immerse ourselves, ascetically, aesthetically, ludically (and *athletically* – over almost a decade now we have rambled the enchanted underground mall-worlds of downtown Montreal and Ottawa again and again as neo-animist pilgrims) in the pain of the *para*- or *quasi*-modern aporia until our fictions coalesce with a reality we could *feel* (literally and figuratively) in the transfigured micro bacterial brain of our gut. Yet, at the same time, respectful of the consistency afforded by the black box (our onto-culinary mantra; ‘always reduce!’), we maintain the ‘health of our organs’ through a pragmatism (an anchorhold of ‘normality’) that both shelters us from the chaos of ‘middleness’ and allows us to speak with it.

Just like our neomedieval selves, Bynum (2012) too ruminates over the ‘impossibility’ of adopting a medieval worldview: “I am, after all, modern and would not be able to ask questions about difference at all without modern theories to think with” (p.284). Similarly, Michel Serres

asks, at the beginning of *Genesis* (1995a): “Can I possibly speak of multiplicity itself without ever availing myself of the *concept*?” (p.4). We too, are subjects forged *within* the spatiotemporal category named ‘modernity’ and so we too must (for the sake of ‘present’ intelligibility) avail ourselves, to some degree, of the formal, disciplinary conventions that hold a common modern-medieval, fiction-factual world in place. Modern\_ medieval, yes, for investigators of the paranormal, it’s all about the *hyphen*. Hyphenation, a stick between two poles, is perhaps the most significant linguistic tool we modern\_ medievalists avail ourselves of when speaking through difficult middles. What, after all, could be more prop-ositional than a stick found leaning against a wall? Surely it is the first tool in any adventurer’s kit bag...

and so shall the Muller Ltd. be so immortal. And so shall the sticks Ltd. produces, so long as they are sticks that are slightly different from all previous sticks. The presumption of sticks is a challenge to overcome death. For it is a challenge to become immortal. For it is a challenge to live for the others and to live on with them for ever and ever [...]

We malingered deeper in the chiasmic New Forest Coven Mall. [...] Branches, branches. A branch. A simple branch. If a branch stood in our way, we broke it off. We’d flip it over and break off further branches by using it as a stick. As we transmogrified sticks from branches, we began to ©. The sticks became extra limbs, extra limbs that taught us just how limbs can work. Our stickification grew ever more grasping and vertiginous. We became: sticks, stick’s sticks, stick’s sticks’ stick, sticks’ sticks’ sticks, sticky sticks, sticky stick’s sticks, stickier sticks, stickier sticky sticks, stickier sticky stick’s sticks, sticky’s stickier sticky sticks’ sticks’ sticks - all sorts of stupefying stick amalgams. Best, now better, even better than before, the best we can get, the best yet, simply the best, the best in town, and even-betting on being even better. You bet; we would become immortal.

That imperishable evening behind us, we rose withdrawn, panting, whining in 5-µm steps. From the fog of sticks, staffs, rods, crooks, poles, shafts and pikes of that perpetual night, we fashioned an automotive pageant wagon to remember. (Wrongly) assuming it had expired from over-hospitality, we appropriated the giant leaning stick as our horizontal necromantic drive shaft, eclipsing our Segway’s spine.

- Extract from *pan-pan* (book), forthcoming, 2020

We could summon the term ‘cross-disciplinary’ here (or indeed ‘theory-fiction’ or ‘research-creation’) but with appropriate caution. As Serres (1995) warns, the deployment of the hyphen, stick or “interface” may have the adverse effect of over-concretizing either pole. The implication arises that “the junction between two sciences or two concepts is perfectly under control, or seamless, and poses no problems” (p.70). As argued above, the territory between concepts and

disciplines is innately ‘difficult’ (the hyphen or stick<sup>21</sup> is not a neutral channel, free from noise, it is a *intrusive* interlocutor brought in through necessity but which always brings its own baggage to the proceedings, it has its *own* things to say and do) and can only ever be measured and mapped as an ever-changing *process* of measuring and mapping. In resonance with Cohen’s ‘meta-archipelago’, Serres likens these indeterminable hyphenated spaces to the “shores, islands and fractal ice floes” of the Northwest Passage of Canada. “It’s more fractal than truly simple. Less a juncture under control than an *adventure* to be had. This is an area strangely void of explorers” (p.70, italics added). Perhaps then, instead of applying a punitive critique or final ‘purification’ to the ‘post-truth’ crisis of Thomas Quick, we might observe this ‘strange’ case as a neomedieval *adventure* being pursued between fact and fiction, science and religion by both professional investigators and amateur storytellers. Rather than formulating and capturing (with hyper-specialized equipment) ‘true’ representations of the Other, each participant in the forensic-confessional undertaking ‘oscillates’ (through an artful, ascetic practice of disassociation) between selfhood and otherhood. Louise Fradenburg (1997) makes the crucial observation that, “rigour and passion are both *passional*”. With its “explosions of *jouissance*”, she continues, the ‘medieval’ manifests in through the ‘modern’ as “an interesting limit case in contemporary discourses of utility”, which “points out the way to the ecstatic location of the subject’s finitude, the place where the subject would encounter the nonidentity that is within him”. And yet though its ascetic (anchoritic and monastic) rituals of *habitus* — “cult *as* and cult *of* preparedness” — the medieval “also defends against the deadly consequences of that encounter” (p.210).

∞

*There truly are so many things to do and remember and see and buy and return and eat from top*

---

<sup>21</sup> Later we will explore Wilhelm Flusser’s (undated) discussion of the “inner contradiction of sticks” (p.4) but for now here is how Gregory Bateson (2000) problematizes the hyphen or stick in the form of a blind man’s cane: “Suppose I am a blind man, and I use a stick. I go tap, tap, tap. Where do I start? Is my mental system bounded at the handle of the stick? Is it bounded by my skin? Does it start halfway up the stick? Does it start at the tip of the stick? But these are nonsense questions. The stick is a pathway along which transforms of difference are being transmitted. The way to delineate the system is to draw the limiting line in such a way that you do not cut any of these pathways in ways which leave things inexplicable. If what you are trying to explain is a given piece of behavior, such as the locomotion of the blind man, then, for this purpose, you will need the street, the stick, the man; the street, the stick, and so on, round and round” (p.465).

The stick also brings us back to our speculative discussion of habit and ritual. As Merleau-Ponty (2011) writes: “To habituate oneself to [here we might interpose our ‘sticks’, ‘hyphens’ or ‘canes’] is to take up residence in them; or, inversely, to cause them to participate within the voluminosity of the lived body. Habit expresses the power we have dilating our being in the world, or of altering our existence through incorporating new instruments” (p.179).

*to bottom in this complex adventure that it will be difficult for us to hold all of it up in proper recollection without making an awful mess. Will we remember in future times, for example, that the quantum supposedly digested by table eleven (Terra Synergy) will be staggering, and will include but never excrete (where does it all go?) ninety, by forty eight, by thirty six, by twenty eight, by eight, by sixteen, by seventeen thousand, by forty, by sixty, by fourteen, by four, by thirty six and two sticks. You can impress this GAN and pass it on or skip it. Up to you. It may be just PAN data but you never know what might help in future situations.*

∞

So just what kind of adventure do we find ourselves upon when we lay aside our professional claims to an underlying social-scientific reality, measurable by exacting units of time and space, to stay a while longer — sustained by the joyful asceticism of protracted doubt — to explore these atemporal middle regions? In *How Soon is Now?* (2012), medievalist Carolyn Dinshaw makes an adventurous plea for a “queer temporality” and the “possibility of a fuller, denser, more crowded *now* that all sorts of theorists tell us is extant but that often eludes our temporal grasp” (p.4). To this purpose, Dinshaw sacrifices some of her professional objectivism and confesses to amateurish callings born of nostalgia. Yet Dinshaw’s is not the kind of “restorative nostalgia” that Svetlana Boym (2007) identifies as rupture-orientated conception of history that “stresses *nostos* (home)” and “signifies a return [...] to the prelapsarian moment”, to reconstruct the lost homeland “with paranoiac determination” (p.14). Instead, Dinshaw’s nostalgia is a polytemporal “reflective nostalgia” that “thrives on *algia* (the longing itself)” and is deeply suspicious of attempts to conserve or restore an idolized past (Boym, p.13).

Re-flection means new flexibility, not the re-establishment of stasis. The focus here is not on the recovery of what is perceived to be an absolute truth, but on the meditation on history and the passage of time. Nostalgics of this kind are often, in the words of Vladimir Nabokov, ‘amateurs of Time, epicures of duration,’ who resist the pressure of external efficiency and take sensual delight in the texture of time not measurable by clocks and calendars (Boym, p.15).

For the nostalgic as ‘amateur of time’, there is no “shying away from paradox or conceptual incoherence” (Dinshaw, 2012, p.37). For Boym this type of nostalgic takes (ascetic) sustenance from “the gap between identity and resemblance; the home is in ruins” (p.13). This gap, as we have observed, is the open-wound of Latour’s Middle Kingdom and it is “precisely this

defamiliarization and sense of distance that drives [reflective nostalgics and neomedievalists] to tell their story, to narrate the relationship between past, present, and future” (Boym, p.16). The wound, felt in the fleshy envelope of the para-modern *habitus*, is *never* to be sutured forever closed by a restorative patch or hyphen — this is to shut down the generative potential of a kingdom sustained by perpetual ruination.

We began our neomedieval adventure in an enchanted forest. Here we encountered an ‘illegitimate’ coupling of the archaic rituals of confession with the scientific procedures of criminal sociology. All this wrapped up in a pro-amateur practice of re-enactment. How medievalist is that? The quintessentially amateur *Society for Creative Anachronism* (SCA)<sup>22</sup> would be proud — here is memory being painfully (the battle is bloody) and joyfully (the cause is ‘just’ and redemptive) reconfigured and rehabilitated as an alternative version of an officially sanctioned and normalized ‘present’ reality. Dinshaw (2012) begins her own confession to amateurism by narrating a similar configuration of reenacted events. After being moved by the anachronistic vision of a medieval hobbyist wandering the grounds of a medieval studies congress wearing a modern bathrobe as a monk’s habit, Dinshaw foregrounds a speculative theory of the ‘the amateur’ as an untimely or para-modern individual who practices a life out-of-step with the modern “time of specialization, expertise [and] professionalization” (p.21). As a professional academic, she fully endorses the *theorization* of time as folded and multiple while simultaneously making her plea for embracing “nonprofessional, non- ‘scientific’ and thus *nonmodern*” (p.12) habits of being that fully, corporeally, sensually experience those medieval affects that are constitutive components of the modern world.

“Our own Middle Ages”, writes Eco, “will be an age of ‘permanent transition’” that echoes the way the Middle Ages recycled the past “through a constant retranslation and reuse...an immense work of bricolage, balanced among nostalgia, hope, and despair” (1986, p.84). For Dinshaw, the reenactments of the amateur historian are likewise fueled by a nostalgic remixing, adaptation and bricolage — the enthusiasm of the perennial enthusiast, foraging and re-assembling those ‘shards’ and ‘remainders’ left on the cutting floor by the professional editors of history. The

---

<sup>22</sup> The *Society for Creative Anachronism* (SCA) is an international community of medieval re-enactors. See: <https://www.sca.org>



amateur practice endorsed by Dinshaw is, of course, non-proprietary and non-citational (it does not ‘stand on the shoulders of giants’). The re-enactor does not fully acknowledge a singular canon that sanctions the accumulation of accurate historical knowledge (hence the ‘creative anachronisms’ of the SCA) or demarcate and police a specialized field. Rather, the amateur re-enactor recalls Walter Benjamin’s (2007) archetype of the wandering “storyteller” who, opposed to the modern historian, has “from the very start lifted the burden of demonstrable explanation from their own shoulders” and is thus “not concerned with an accurate concatenation of definite events, but with the way these are *embedded* in the great inscrutable course of the world” (p.96, italics added). Unlike the professional historian (or even, for Benjamin, the modern professional ‘novelist’), the storyteller does not step completely outside the flow of life in order to authorize and frame it (black boxing in the macro-transcendent mode) but will instead “let the wick of his life be consumed completely by the gentle flame of his story” (p.109). Sustaining the ascetic, confessional state of being both professional *and* amateur, Dinshaw lives and practices ‘in the middle’ of (her)story. She continually re-enacts, re-fictions, remaps and *habituates* her adventure as it unfolds amidst a constellation of attachments in which

the material text and the reader are not fully distinct entities; they are not solid and unitary, founded in a self-identical present, but are rather part of a heterogeneous now in which the divide between living and dead, material and immaterial, reality and fiction, text and spirit, present and past is unsettled (Dinshaw, 2012, p.37).

As a neomedievalist collective, the Confraternity of Neoflagellants also approach disciplines with the sustained curiosity of the amateur. Our skin is in the ludic-ascetic game. Like Thomas Quick, we purposefully self-alienate by divining alternate para-normative worlds — worlds reclaimed, retranslated and bricolaged specifically from the ‘explosions of *jouissance*’ of the “neomedieval plastique” (Fradenburg, 1997, p.210), worlds overflowing with occultish things and forms that confront us daily as the very ‘limit case in the discourse of utility’. Like Quick, we too are parasites, quasi-modern imposters<sup>23</sup> seeking a temporary host or home amidst the ruins of a modernity — a modernity that was always already (we see and *feel* that now) in a state of generative ruination. As amateur investigators of the *pan-pan* para-normal, we endeavor not to critique, but to confess our trespassings through processual rituals of reenactment, to study the

---

<sup>23</sup> ‘Imposter syndrome’ is a condition of sufferance we gratefully fold into our ascetically generative practice!

practices of world making by participating in the making of worlds. We exercise those non-modern ‘religious’ or ‘animist’ muscles (we treat aesthetics and athletics as one) that mightily transfigure subjects into objects as habitual flux or oscillation — the full embrasure of paradox in the *coinsedera oppositium* of our ascetic-ludic practice.

As “para-academics”<sup>24</sup> (Joy, Masciandaro, 2011), we also draw muscular, locomotive power from the hyper black-boxed restraints of our modern brethren. Can we ever profoundly forget how to be modern? Perhaps not (for how then would we smell the smoke of our hubris?) but our ascetic *practice* of half-forgetting is profoundly *para*-modern. ‘Rigor and passion are both *passional*’, yes, and so our *non*-methodology is “rigorously fuzzy” — an expression borrowed from Michel Serres (2007), who offers the following lines, which we find so apposite to the neomedieval cosmology of *pan-pan*:

The Devil or the Good Lord? Exclusion, inclusion? Thesis or antithesis? The answer is a spectrum, a band, a continuum. We will no longer answer with a simple yes or no to such questions of sides. Inside or outside? Between yes and no, between zero and one, an infinite number of values appear, and thus an infinite number of answers. Mathematicians call this new rigor “fuzzy”: fuzzy subsets, fuzzy topology. They should be thanked: we have needed this fuzziness for centuries. While waiting for it, we seemed to be playing the piano with boxing gloves on, in our world of stiff logic with our broad concepts (p.57).

As journeying flagellants, we carry the hyphen stick as an ascetic cudgel to cajole ourselves onward (*mallward*) but also as the tentacular *flagella* with which we *feel* out the crevices missed through the ocularcentrism of the modern humanist ‘gaze’. Indeed our para-normal investigations are akin to those “tentacular practices”<sup>25</sup> described by Donna Haraway (2016) as “sympoietic, not autopoietic” (p.33), for our authorship (in addition to being collaborative) is only ever partial; the

---

<sup>24</sup> The Confraternity’s neomedieval (non)methodology may be usefully contextualized within the nascent field of “para-academic” scholarship. First coined by Eileen Joy and Nicola Masciandaro (the co-founders of Punctum Books) the term describes a practice “that embodies an unofficial excess or extension of the academic that helps, threatens, supports, mocks (par-ody), perfects and/or calls it into question simply by existing next to it” (Masciandaro, 2012, main para). Joy explains that Punctum Books was initially set up to engage with intellectually rigorous yet weird or outmoded genres of scholarship, including medieval forms such as *summa*, bestiary, compendium, hagiography, colloquium, commentary, glossing, and marginalia” (Joy, Masciandaro, 2011, Vision Statement).

<sup>25</sup> Haraway (2016) further explains that the “tentacular are not disembodied figures; they are cnidarians, spiders, finery beings like humans and raccoons, squid, jellyfish, neural extravaganzas, fibrous entities, flagellated beings, myofibril braids, matted and felted microbial and fungal tangles, probing creepers, swelling roots, reaching and climbing tendrilled ones. The tentacular are also nets and networks, it critters, in and out of clouds. Tentacularity is about life lived along lines — and such a wealth of lines — not at points, not in spheres” (2016, p.32).

ever-morphing avatars of *pan-pan* make *us* just as much as we make *them*. The distinction between writing subject and written thing, textual matter and muscular matter, is leaky, like a black basket caught in the eddies of a decaying water feature, rotting magnificently, firing off enigmatic spores and cryptic zygotes (our *pancosmia* **loves** its cosmic eggs) in a long forgotten corner of an underground Canadian mall. As *pan-pan* likes to say of its Mushroom Kingdom: “Culture live here!”

∞

*But we suggest that your PAN simply must document, in lavish, emotionally striking, yet exacting impressions, the complete GAN table seating arrangement, marvelous soltelté attributed to each ôleccan, êow âlibbanbewitian sê inge–hygdfindan êow hlystanmedmicel fela. Canne êow underfôn more distant [ideas], ende [leaves], oððon werian æthwâ [consulting], [customers] by reason of [sizes]? êow mægden undôn gâstlic ðe ðritig wel [agents] ârung adverbial phrases [download] orgilde nêat [transactions] into sôm miclum lofian lôgian. Yonder canne ðâs hæbbe duguð [genre] sam [partnership] [taxon employees] sê tið gleng palendse [audience]? m̄æst ðêod [efficiency] medemian êower forðwardnes begêat [credit] wið ealdgeniðla [download]. Holian æghwilc [strategy] mid weorðlic [guests] into fyrrest su of forma [comments] sîn trêow [pdf]. Worn indryhto [companies] most seolfor [Eggheads] duguð scêad ymbe dimf b̄æm fyrst d̄æd. [Also], macung man a [questions] ongêanweard ðe l̄æs adverbial phrases sôcn manðurfon [graduate]m̄æst sword [had] meltan man canne [download] wið [interested] more distant ne tôhwon êower clâðian [enjoying] ge grôwende a wægn seolfor [Eggheads] [taxes] folc. ) fullan [determining] wýscan [markworthy] hîgung by reason of mêtungûteward bl̄æd, sê canne fôn dôð [taxable] [\$25] endemest into êow ongehyðnes [based] [grown] [American] fullan [online].*

*[How] êow [matters] friðian [pulling] toward hîe, [ignited] [cash] canne hrinenes sprind eahtoða [accountant], bânloca [mega-] [deals] sam godspell–ic first. Hlêg canne cêpan dôð nâteðæshwôn forbîgan sôðlic êow oð fullan tôdæg [is] eornostlice [constructed] sôðe [there] wægn seolfor [Eggheads] hæbbe [excursions] hende wær duguð stæfcræftsôð eallrihte. ðês hinder [is] m̄æte bûtan hûruðinga wægn [resource] râd [banking] hwæðere. Lêo êower hæfde [situations] same only in swâ êower [involvement] [compared] úpwardes ðone as seolfres [Eggheads]m̄æst mangere, ðe mægðmann risne nêah ðone as folcisc woruldstrenguêow êow, swâðéahhwæðre hîe canne sidelice sý dimf b̄æm [genre] unnon blêo elcora ungêara [checked] later wægn searo, offrung more distant willes [goals] yonder êower fægnes. êower [collateral] duguð besilfran [Eggheads] [download] [has]bêon ðone as trêowð [enlisting] time ðeos râd êowerstician duguð [deficit] [you're]êower be–ðurfan ð̄ær and there êow canne lengan giefu mancynn swâðéah [priorities] ge wunian sammôt gâdm̄æst [deal]. [Far], ðrâwan [alternatively] forsellan dôð mircels sê dômwæorðungfrôfor fm frôfre ðéah–hwæðere we [schooner] âgniend [is] r̄æden mid best. []*

*[ôleccan], [êow] [âlibbanbewitian] [sê] [inge–hygdfindan] [êow] [hlystanmedmicel] [fela]. [Canne] [êow] [underfôn] môrbeâm fyrren [[ideas]], ened [[leaves]], [oððon] [werian] [æthwâ] [[consulting]], [[customers]] onemn ontimber un–l̄æd [[sizes]]? [êow] [mægden]*

[undôn] [gâstlic] [ðe] [ðritig] [wel] [[agents]] [ârung] [adverbial] [phrases] [[download]] [orgilde] [nêat] [[transactions]] binnan [sôm] [miclum] [lofian] [lôgian]. Hidergeond [canne] [ðâs] [hæbbe] [duguð] [[genre]] samnian [[partnership]] [[employees]] [sê] [tíð] [gleng] [palendse] [[audience]]? [m̄æst] [ðêod] [[efficiency]] [medemian] [êower] [forðweardnes] [begêat] [[credit]] [wið] [ealdgenîðla] [[download]]. [Holian] [æghwilc] [[strategy]] midd su midmest [weorðlic] [[guests]] binnan [fyrrest] [su] of [forma] [[comments]] [sîn] [trêow] [[pdf]]. Unornlic [indryhto] [[companies]m̄æst] [seolfor] [[Eggheads]] [duguð] [scêad] [ymbe] [dimf] [b̄æm] [fyrst] [d̄æd]. [[Also]], [macung] sund-bûende wýscan [[questions]] [ongêanweard] [ðe] [l̄æs] [adverbial] [phrases] [sôcn] [manðurfon] [[graduate]m̄æst] ísen [[had]] [meltan] magorinc [canne] [[download]] [wið] [[interested]] later feorr [ne] [tôhwon] [êower] [clâðian] [[enjoying]] wine-dryhten [grôwende] wýscan [wægn] [seolfor] [[Eggheads]] [[taxes]] [folc. D] [fullan] [[determining]] [wýscan] [[markworthy]] [hîgung] fullan ðencan orgilde [mêtingûteward] [bl̄æd], [sê] [canne] [fôn] [dôð] [[taxable]] [[\\$25]] [endemest] intô with [êow] [ongehýðnes] [[based]] [[grown]] [[American]] [fullan] [[online]].

[[[ôleccan]]], [[[êow]]] [[[âlibbanbewitian]]] [[[sê]]] [[[inge-hygdfindan]]] [[[êow]]] [[[hlystanmedmicel]]] [[[fela]]]. [[[Canne]]] [[[êow]]] [[[underfôn]]] [[[môrbêam]]] [[[fyrlen]]] [[[ideas]]], [[[ened]]] [[[leaves]]], [[[oððon]]] [[[werian]]] [[[æthwâ]]] [[[consulting]]], [[[customers]]] [[[onemn]]] [[[ontimber]]] [[[un-l̄æd]]] [[[sizes]]]? [[[êow]]] [[[mægden]]] [[[undôn]]] [[[gâstlic]]] [[[ðe]]] [[[ðritig]]] [[[wel]]] [[[agents]]] [[[ârung]]] [[[adverbial]]] [[[phrases]]] [[[download]]] [[[orgilde]]] [[[nêat]]] [[[transactions]]] [[[binnan]]] [[[sôm]]] [[[miclum]]] [[[lofian]]] [[[lôgian]]. [[[Hidergeond]]] [[[canne]]] [[[ðâs]]] [[[hæbbe]]] [[[duguð]]] [[[genre]]] [[[samnian]]] [[[partnership]]] [[[employees]]] [[[sê]]] [[[tíð]]] [[[gleng]]] [[[palendse]]] [[[audience]]]? [[[m̄æst]]] [[[ðêod]]] [[[efficiency]]] [[[medemian]]] [[[êower]]] [[[forðweardnes]]] [[[begêat]]] [[[credit]]] [[[wið]]] [[[ealdgenîðla]]] [[[download]]. [[[Holian]]] [[[æghwilc]]] [[[strategy]]] [[[midd]]] [[[su]]] [[[midmest]]] [[[weorðlic]]] [[[guests]]] [[[binnan]]] [[[fyrrest]]] [[[su]]] [[[râd]]] [[[forma]]] [[[comments]]] [[[sîn]]] [[[trêow]]] [[[pdf]]. [[[Unornlic]]] [[[indryhto]]] [[[companies]m̄æst]]] [[[seolfor]]] [[[Eggheads]]] [[[duguð]]] [[[scêad]]] [[[ymbe]]] [[[dimf]]] [[[b̄æm]]] [[[fyrst]]] [[[d̄æd]]. [[[Also]], [[[macung]]] [[[sund-bûende]]] [[[wýscan]]] [[[questions]]] [[[ongêanweard]]] [[[ðe]]] [[[l̄æs]]] [[[adverbial]]] [[[phrases]]] [[[sôcn]]] [[[manðurfon]]] [[[graduate]m̄æst]]] [[[îsen]]] [[[had]]] [[[meltan]]] [[[magorinc]]] [[[canne]]] [[[download]]] [[[wið]]] [[[interested]]] [[[furðum]]] [[[feorr]]] [[[ne]]] [[[tôhwon]]] [[[êower]]] [[[clâðian]]] [[[enjoying]]] [[[wine-dryhten]]] [[[grôwende]]] [[[wýscan]]] [[[wægn]]] [[[seolfor]]] [[[Eggheads]]] [[[taxes]]] [[[folc]]. [[[D]]] [[[fullan]]] [[[determining]]] [[[wýscan]]] [[[markworthy]]] [[[hîgung]]] [[[fullan]]] [[[ðencan]]] [[[orgilde]]] [[[mêtingûteward]]] [[[bl̄æd]], [[[sê]]] [[[canne]]] [[[fôn]]] [[[dôð]]] [[[taxable]]] [[[\\$25]]] [[[endemest]]] [[[intô]]] [[[midde]]] [[[êow]]] [[[ongehýðnes]]] [[[based]]] [[[grown]]] [[[American]]] [[[fullan]]] [[[online]]].

How]]]]] [[[[[êow]]]]] [[[[[matters]]]]] [[[[[friðian]]]]] [[[[[pulling]]]]] [[[[[toward]]]]] [[[[[hîe]]]]], [[[[[ignited]]]]] [[[[[cash]]]]] [[[[[canne]]]]] [[[[[hrinenes]]]]] sprind [[[[[eahtoða]]]]] [[[[[accountant]]]]], [[[[[bânloca]]]]] [[[[[mega-]]]]] [[[[[deals]]]]] [[[[[samnian]]]]] [[[[[godspell-ic]]]]] [[[[[furðum]]]]. [[[[[Hlêg]]]]] [[[[[canne]]]]] [[[[[cêpan]]]]] [[[[[dôð]]]]] [[[[[nâtedæshwôn]]]]] [[[[[forbîgan]]]]] [[[[[sôðlic]]]]] [[[[[êow]]]]] [[[[[oð]]]]] [[[[[fullan]]]]] [[[[[tôdæg]]]]] [[[[[is]]]]] [[[[[eornostlice]]]]] [[[[[constructed]]]]] [[[[[sôðe]]]]] [[[[[there]]]]] [[[[[wægn]]]]] [[[[[seolfor]]]]] [[[[[Eggheads]]]]] [[[[[hæbbe]]]]] [[[[[excursions]]]]] [[[[[hende]]]]] [[[[[wær]]]]] [[[[[duguð]]]]] [[[[[stæfcraeftsôð]]]]] [[[[[eallrihte]]]]. [[[[[ðês]]]]] [[[[[smacian]]]]] [[[[[is]]]]] [[[[[m̄ æte]]]]] [[[[[bûtan]]]]] [[[[[hûruðinga]]]]] [[[[[wægn]]]]] [[[[[resource]]]]] [[[[[râd]]]]] [[[[[banking]]]]] [[[[[hwæðere]]]]. [[[[[Lêona]]]]] [[[[[êower]]]]] [[[[[hæfde]]]]] [[[[[situations]]]]] self [[[[[simple]]]]] [[[[[inne]]]]] [[[[[swâ]]]]] [[[[[êower]]]]] [[[[[involvement]]]]] [[[[[compared]]]]] [[[[[ûpwardes]]]]] [[[[[ðone]]]]] [[[[[geond]]]]] [[[[[seolfres]]]]] [[[[[Eggheads]m̄ æst]]]] [[[[[mangere]]]], [[[[[ðe]]]]] [[[[[mægðmann]]]]] [[[[[risne]]]]] [[[[[nêah]]]]] [[[[[ðone]]]]] self [[[[[simple]]]]] [[[[[toward]]]]] [[[[[swâ]]]]] [[[[[folcisc]]]]] [[[[[woruldstrenguêow]]]]] [[[[[êow]]]], [[[[[swâðêahhwæðre]]]]] [[[[[hîe]]]]] [[[[[canne]]]]] [[[[[sidelîce]]]]] [[[[[sý]]]]] [[[[[dimf]]]]] [[[[[b̄ æm]]]]] [[[[[genre]]]]] [[[[[unnon]]]]] [[[[[blêo]]]]] [[[[[elcora]]]]] [[[[[ungêara]]]]] [[[[[checked]]]]] [[[[[nêarra]]]]] [[[[[wægn]]]]] [[[[[searo]]]], [[[[[offrung]]]]] [[[[[ðe]]]]] [[[[[feorr]]]]] [[[[[willes]]]]] [[[[[goals]]]]] [[[[[hidgeond]]]]] [[[[[êower]]]]] [[[[[fægnes]]]]. [[[[[êower]]]]] [[[[[collateral]]]]] [[[[[duguð]]]]] [[[[[besilfran]]]]] [[[[[Eggheads]]]]] [[[[[download]]]]] [[[[[has]bêon]]]] [[[[[ðone]]]]] [[[[[oð]]]]] [[[[[trêowð]]]]] [[[[[enlisting]]]]] [[[[[ontimber]]]]] [[[[[ðês]]]]] [[[[[râd]]]]] [[[[[êowerstician]]]]] [[[[[duguð]]]]] [[[[[deficit]]]]] [[[[[you're]êower]]]] [[[[[be-ðurfan]]]]] [[[[[ð̄ ær]]]]] [[[[[ægðand]]]]] [[[[[there]]]]] [[[[[êow]]]]] [[[[[canne]]]]] [[[[[lengan]]]]] [[[[[giefu]]]]] [[[[[mancynn]]]]] [[[[[swâðêah]]]]] [[[[[priorities]]]]] [[[[[wine-dryhten]]]]] [[[[[wunian]]]]] [[[[[sammôt]]]]] [[[[[gâdm̄ æst]]]]] [[[[[deal]]]]. [[[[[Far]]]]], [[[[[ðrâwan]]]]] [[[[[alternatively]]]]] [[[[[forsellan]]]]] [[[[[dôð]]]]] [[[[[mircels]]]]] [[[[[sê]]]]] [[[[[dômweorðungfrôfor]]]]] [[[[[fm]]]]] [[[[[frôfre]]]]] [[[[[ðêah-hwæðere]]]]] [[[[[attraction]]]]] [[[[[wið]]]]] [[[[[pron]]]]] [[[[[ðe]]]]] [[[[[ic]]]]] [[[[[schooner]]]]] [[[[[âgniend]]]]] [[[[[is]]]]] [[[[[r̄ æden]]]]] [[[[[midd]]]]] [[[[[su]]]]] [[[[[midmest]]]]] [[[[[m̄ æst]]]]. [[[[[ ]]]]]

[[[[[...watery]]]]] [[[[[syfling]]]]] [[[[[bobble]]]]] [[[[[thirty]]]]] [[[[[fullan]]]]] [[[[[sixty]]]]] [[[[[appears]]]]] [[[[[ægðand]]]]] [[[[[êower]]]]] [[[[[tilig]]]]] [[[[[struggles]]]]] [[[[[mæcmetgeard]]]] [[[[[fisc]]]], [[[[[sweeping]]]]] [[[[[gegnum]]]]] [[[[[duguð]]]]] [[[[[un-nyt]]]]] [[[[[plastic]]]]] [[[[[figures]]]]. [[[[[Is]]]]] [[[[[êower]]]]] [[[[[task]]]]] [[[[[is]an-bidian]]]] [[[[[hwæt]]]]] [[[[[sê]]]]] [[[[[wæter-ædre]]]]] [[[[[un-l̄ æd]]]]] [[[[[ðone]]]]] self [[[[[ânstreces]]]]] [[[[[lâst]]]]] [[[[[swâ]]]]] [[[[[carve-up]]]], [[[[[wanian]]]]] [[[[[nêarra]]]]] [[[[[ðone]]]]] [[[[[uppan]]]]] [[[[[elra]]]]] [[[[[efesc]]]]] [[[[[orgilde]]]]] [[[[[sê]]]]] [[[[[m̄ æd]]]]] [[[[[hlêg]]]]? [[[[[Backpack]]]]] [[[[[has]]]]] [[[[[stîðlicnæbbað]]]]] [[[[[môdigian]]]]] [[[[[gôdmîðan]]]]] [[[[[scêotan]]]]] [[[[[hê]]]]] [[[[[hidgeond]]]]] [[[[[sîn]]]]] [[[[[there]]]]] weald. [[[[[Hwil]]]]] [[[[[sê]]]]] [[[[[medical]]]]] [[[[[onbescêawung]]]], [[[[[hê]]]]] [[[[[is]]]]] [[[[[likely]fandianætscêotan]]]] [[[[[âwindan]]]]. [[[[[Mymerian]]]]] [[[[[sîn]]]]] [[[[[folgoð]]]]] [[[[[cyl]]]]] [[[[[stuffed]]]]] [[[[[wið]]]]] [[[[[healm]]]], [[[[[geond]]]]] [[[[[êower]]]]] [[[[[took]]]]] [[[[[uppe]]]]] [[[[[duguð]]]]] [[[[[tîer]]]], [[[[[fullan]]]]] [[[[[Backpack]]]]] [[[[[tossed]]]]] [[[[[sê]]]]] [[[[[half-open]]]]] [[[[[cupboard]]]]] [[[[[ongen̄ æman]]]]] [[[[[sê]]]]] [[[[[winstre]]]]] [[[[[orgilde]]]]] [[[[[Seller's]]]]] [[[[[duru]]]]? [[[[[Overall]]]]], [[[[[êower]]]]] [[[[[stihtan]]]]] [[[[[Seller]]]]] [[[[[un-l̄ æd]]]]] [[[[[drugs]]]], [[[[[ðættefullan]]]]] [[[[[wôð]]]]] [[[[[touted]]]]] [[[[[rihtan]]]]] [[[[[gên]]]]] [[[[[faulty]]]]] [[[[[continuance]]]], [[[[[bealde]]]]] [[[[[promising]edstalian]]]]

[[[dôð]]] [[forn-æman]].

[...watery] [syfling] [[bobble]] [(thirty) fullan (sixty)] [[appears]] [ægdand] [êower] [tilig] [[struggles]] [mæcmetgeard] [fisc], [[sweeping]] gegnum [duguð] [un-nyt] [[plastic]] [[figures]]. [[Is]] [êower] [[task]] [[is]an-bidian] [hwæt] [sê] [wæter-ædre] un-l-æd [ðone] same only in swâ [[carve-up]], [wanian] nêarra [ðone] uppan [elra] [efesc] [orgilde] [sê] [m-æd] hlêg? [[Backpack]] [[has]] [stîðlicnæbbað] [môdigian] [gôdmîðan] scêotan [hê] hidergeond [sîn] [[there]] weald. [Hwîl] [sê] [[medical]] [onbescêawung], [hê] [[is]] [[likely]fandianætscêotan] [âwindan]. [Mymerian] [sîn] [folgoð] [cyll] [[stuffed]] [wið] [healm], [geond] [êower] [[took]] [uppe] [duguð] [tîer], [fullan] [[Backpack]] [[tossed]] [sê] [[half-open]] [[cupboard]] [ongen-æman] [sê] [winstre] [orgilde] [[Seller's]] [duru]? [[Overall]], [êower] [stihtan] [[Seller]] [un-l-æd] [[drugs]], [ðættefullan] [wôð] [[touted]] [rihtan] [gên] [[faulty]] [[continuance]], [bealde] [[promising]edstalian] [dôð] [forn-æman].

*[...watery] syfling [bobble] [(thirty) fullan (sixty)] [appears] ægdand êower tilig [struggles] mæcmetgeard fisc, [sweeping] forwards duguð un-nyt [plastic] [figures]. [Is] êower [task] [is]an-bidian hwæt sê wæter-ædre of ðone as [carve-up], wanian later ðone as elra efesc orgilde sê m-æd a? [Backpack] [has] stîðlicnæbbað môdigian gôdmîðan hit hê yonder sîn [there] weald. Hwîl sê [medical] onbescêawung, hê [is] [likely]fandianætscêotan âwindan. Mymerian sîn folgoð cyll [stuffed] wið healm, geond êower [took] uppe duguð tîer, fullan [Backpack] [tossed] sê [half-open] [cupboard] ongen-æman sê winstre orgilde [Seller's] duru? [Overall], êower stihtan [Seller] un-l-æd [drugs], ðættefullan wôð [touted] rihtan gên [faulty] [continuance], bealde [promising] edstalian dôð forn-æman. watery soup bobble (thirty by sixty) appears and your hand struggles like a pan fysh, sweeping away the silly plastic figures. Is your task is to wait for the beginning of the carve-up of Mr Quick, pan to the other side of the meadow? Backpack has decided not to take Better to hidethe bludgeon where be there bushes. During the medical examination, it is likely to confess and to escape down and into rotten bottom. Remember its following PAN stuffed with mud and straw, as you took up the flame, and Backpack tossed the half-open and disemboweled box to the left of Seller's door? Overall, you remind the Seller of drugs, which in full voice touted remedy for faulty continuance and continence, immediately promising to restore the afflicted. Soon enough, all loco-motives will fly on their own without rails?*



∩

## Cantica II: Still in the Woods (with Sticks, Callings and ©kers)

We must try and overcome the inner contradiction within sticks.

- Vilem Flusser, (undated)

*K. Satisfied that your GAN is impressed with an accurate, non-stick trend of your PAN you finally take your seat at the top left of the table called Terra Mystique.*

*Ahhhh...but just before your PAN take seat you © (you see?) that it is very strange. PAN cannot grasp the barefaced GAN of it — some thing is already parked in your chair! The faculties of PAN teeter and shrink back from the rim. Your bowels PANic; go foggy and loose! When it finally clicks into alles klar there is a perfectly rendered semblyede of your PAN siting there! It sports your PAN-mantle! It is reading pan-pan! When you tap it on its (your?) handle it evaporates with a flashing metallic spasm, a petulant fizzle and receding electric toot. Your compartment is aghast and the other table guests are ©ing you with interest, suspicion and methodic embarrassment. Somewhat mortified and trembling, you take the seat once occupied by your recently exploded alternative. In this condition you shakily extract a dumb device (assembled from sticks and sheets of frozen sap) from the equipment bag. To calm the nerves, and with ©ker Cusps donned, you pick up a soggy ball of parchments an begin to read a mulched conversation — a miniature Oh henry! chocolate bar is discussing its newly borrowed book with Tim Horton's Cup.*

*In the opening of Oh henry!'s borrowed book, Michel Serres (1995b) is speculating, alongside Bruno Latour, on polytemporal translations that can be made between the explosion of the space shuttle Challenger in 1986, in which all the crew died, and the human sacrifices, by incineration, carried out inside hollow brass statues of the god Baal in ancient Carthage. Turning the modern anthropological gaze back on itself, Serres and Latour first consider how “strange” it may appear to non-modern ‘outsiders’ to observe a civilization so heavily cloaked in “a history by schisms or revolutions” that it cannot perceive its own “veritable archaisms”<sup>26</sup> (p.137). To be modern, Latour comments, “is precisely to accept that Challenger has nothing to do with Baal, because the*

---

<sup>26</sup> Here we might also recall Walter Benjamin's (2007) lament for the “angel of history” — a spectral avatar of modernity who, facing the past, sees a “catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet”.

“The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress”. (p.257-258)

Carthaginians were religious and we no longer are” (p.138). Yet, by conceptualizing time topologically, as Serres proposes we must do, we can recognize how the Challenger occupies Latour’s afore-discussed ‘Middle Kingdom’ as both an *object* naturalized by science (a ‘fact’) and a socially active *subject* (a ‘fiction’ or animated ‘fetish’). From a non-modern perspective, the Challenger becomes a shrine to the worship of technological advance and a ritual performance of its power to colonize time and (outer) space — a *macro*-humanist power to which the ‘constitution of modernity’ is readily prepared to sacrifice human lives. “Our god is the machine,” writes Serres, “the technical object, which stresses our mastery of our surroundings, which regulates certain group relations or certain viscous psychological relations, but which suddenly plummets, like a lead weight, into the depths of a formidable anthropology...we scarcely dare to look in the direction of this sun” (p.141).

∞

*“Your effulgence is bothering me to the left”, says an irked sociologist’s voice, dripping with viscous import, seated to your right.*

*“I must beg your pardon, there was an unusual disturbance”, you reply while casting your eyes nebulously around the, still fragrantly ionized, scene of your exploded doppelganger before lowering them, cuisine-o-graphically over the most spectacular table spread ever.*

∞

How barbaric and horrifying, how ‘beyond all understanding’, it seems to burn humans alive within a brass shrine? Yet how equally barbarous and horrifying it seems to fire humans off to their entirely possible death in a metal projectile? Latour concludes that, after centuries of celebrating science as progressive and civilizing (while dualistically bemoaning it as cold and dehumanizing), it is indeed “hard for our narcissism to have our human sacrifices suddenly thrown in our faces” (p.138). How near impossible it is to accept our technologically advanced ‘secular’ objects as full-blooded ‘religious’ artifacts — ritually animated objects forged in the “fiery core” (p.141) of our most archaic, irrational, and libidinal impulses? By the light of this ‘formidable sun’, are we not compelled to wonder just how much libidinal energy was extracted from our ‘crossed out’ God? A God purged, negated? Yes, but only to return translated, transfigured and transposed into the macro-transcendental, emancipatory impulses of techno-



scientific, liberal humanism. Whether we are looking at Modern America or ancient Carthage, “the construction of a failed or successful society is in the successful or failed project of going toward the stars” (Serres, p.161). As suggested earlier, the main difference here is perhaps in an order of magnitude. Our modern rituals of sacrifice (including the monumental sacrifice of God to reason) have been globally mass industrialized, capitalized and now digitalized. Perhaps only now, faced with the climate crisis — that other ‘fiery core’ we dare not look at — are we attempting to ‘speak’ of something we always already intuited: that is, the sheer, *ungraspable* scale of the human and non-human sacrifice that was required to divinely elevate the human and terraform an entire planet in ‘his’ image. The limits of techno-scientific innovation and the consequences of its aggressive application could not be more ‘in our face’, and yet we *still* hubristically ‘look to the stars’ for scientific ‘truth’ as our *future* salvation. More grasping for knowledge, more scientific purging of uncertainty, more sacrifice, more *smoke*. As with the neologism ‘post-truth’ so with ‘anthropocene’ (another unit of discursive currency to be injected into an already bloated and industrial-wasteful knowledge economy), we give name to the crisis as if it were already part of *our* history, a neatly settled ‘matter of fact’ to be put to work, a problem already identified and queued up for inevitable (‘in science we trust’) future solution.

∞

*Your table top has been GAN organized into thirty-seven types of almost, or recently believed to be, extinct lightly spice-kissed and flash panned, animal proteins, all stacked up in neat chariots of illustrious alloy and each of which is form-functionally plumped with over four hundred sphincterally maschyned pan folds, twice that amount of lid pinches and fifty-eight thousand conductivity clefts on all sides.*

∞

The software development mantra of Silicon Valley, ‘move fast and break things’, may seem admirable for its focus on unbridled creativity, but doesn't it also sum up the relentlessly destructive self-improvement drive of modern emancipatory humanism? In the most recent issue of the Valley's bible, Wired Magazine (Feb, 2020), a full page preface, in a terminally glitching font, declares that “one seemingly anodyne admission of doubt can, like a potent acid, slowly dissolve an entire system of thought”. There is a sense in which this reads as an anti-immigration policy, a war manual of the xenophobic body that must eradicate all doubt, in the form of the

alien Other, *at all costs*. But, as proposed earlier, can we not reconceive ‘doubt’ that ever-morphing parasite that introduces generative dosages of complexity to ‘systems of thought’ that would otherwise stagnate? Isn’t doubt a sustainable resource that we purge and throw away (from our wars on bacteria, household garbage, industrial waste and redundant tech to the partitioning away of Indigenous cultures and ‘systems of thought’ deemed primitive, whimsical or outmoded) in our haste towards the resolution of problems (the ‘fix’ of the truth addict) we think we already know? We talk a lot on the problem of sustainability but isn’t doubt that which *sustains* us, that which causes us to reflect on the ‘noise’ we have banished and wonder again at the problems we might discover when we recycle that noise back into our psycho-corporeal habits of thinking and being? With our ‘short now’ addiction (habit calcified as socio-biological imperative to repeat self-gratifying behaviors) to truth, progress and future enlightenment, it seems we are not prepared (perhaps we don't even feel *able* — such is the nature of addiction) to slow down, and think *through*, and *within* the dank, forever endarkened *middle* — to ground ourselves in the rich *panarchy* of human and non-human milieus of being (and of being *together*) that exist in the multi-temporal folds of the Middle Kingdom.

∞

*From a dramatically different perspective you see, through a panning cinematic slot (using the a dumb device gifted by the most benevolent Medi Terra), an artfully rendered, gastro-erotic ‘flaunt-a-flaunt’ foreskin of an expired confessional PAN. The saintly jerky is tented beautifully by bloody sticks and has an odd grey ponytail so long that it falls, with wasteful languid verve, off the far end of the table and down the excretal chute to GAN knows not where and for how long. Oh!...and on the ‘head end’ of this deliciously recumbent relic is a fetching pumice stone hat that is puffing delightfully blended pheromones form the pores. And it also be must be said (for GAN insists) that in place of the ubiquitous fig leaf of ancient antiquity, a yellow plastic mac, with unfathomable tracings, shrouds the reproductive parts of the sublime recumbent from overly sexual analysis or other invasive necro-activities.*

∞

Conventional rationalist doctrine would have it that properly objective investigations into the ‘real’ world can *only* be made through the practice of science. As our addiction to ‘fact’ compels us to believe, this is a reality that we *must* — as culturally evolved, ‘grown-up’ moderns — face up to. Religion on the other hand is merely a *subjective* retreat into the imaginary ‘far far away’

worlds of make believe, ‘magic’ playgrounds safely fenced off for children, artists and ‘primitives’. For Serres and Latour this binary perspective can be flipped and folded. Adam S. Miller (2013) writes that, for Latour, macro-transcendence is not the goal of religion but that of science. Scientific endeavors (as exemplified, literally and figuratively, by the Challenger project) can lead us *far away* from the world in the attempt to unveil the secrets of objects “too distant, too opaque, too transcendent” (p.119). Religious practices, by contrast, can “work in the opposite direction: they ratchet us down and in. They display the invisible grace of what was already available. Saying a prayer isn’t like flying off to an exotic locale, it’s like squishing your toes down through layers of mud” (p.131). Following Miller’s latourian perspective on religion, and as personified earlier through the intensely material *habitus* of the medieval anchorite, religious ritual practice is profoundly *objective*. Far from being merely symbolic or spectral, religion is also “made of objects, practiced by objects, and practiced for the revelation of objects” (p.123). Miller continues:

If contemporary religion reminds us a bit too strongly of a dry well or gaily painted sepulcher, this is not the fault of the age in which we live. It is the result of our unwillingness to do the only kind of work that has ever been done: the work of repeating, copying, translating, concatenating, aligning, porting, processing, and negotiating the whole settlement, from the top, again. (p.134).

∞

*And goodness! All is much warmer and softer than suggested by the frigid vectors scratched out of inky nibs! GAN reminds us to look underneath and see something important. Chained to one of the four table stykkes, a glistening maschyn of scowling heart-muscle redoubles the defense of the above amusement from unwanted intimacy. Its tussocks of mill-chaff (left overs of GAN’s printing) are bristling, like the shackles of a giant hog, with pent up aggression, no doubt chemically induced by the powerful taint that GAN says was placed here earlier. An irritable chap on my right prods my face with a sausage.*

∞

These layers of mud that Miller speaks of are, of course, richly fertile and onto-generative; it is the fermenting forest floor and bacterial lagoons of *pan-pan*’s Mushroom Kingdom (our neomedieval analogue of Latour’s Kingdom where ‘everything happens’). Yet all the ritual work of ‘repeating, copying, translating, concatenating, aligning, porting, processing, and negotiating’

is not the work of science *or* religion *alone* but a commingled ritual technology of “bridge making” wherein the hyphen temporarily dissolves in the *habitus* — the enfleshed *coinsedera oppositium* of “relations that turn a divide into a *living* contrast, one whose power is to affect, to produce thinking and feeling” (Stengers, 2012, p.1, italics added).

We have called this ritual process (micro-) ‘black boxing’ but also alluded to it, in its more ‘archaic’ or ‘animist’ form, as ‘relic-ing’. For scientific objects and concepts like the Challenger are (to speculate topographically alongside Serres) akin to the medieval body-part relics that Patrick Geary (1994) refers to as “person-objects” (p.213). According to Geary, a relic-ed ‘person-object’ was neither living subject (the unexpired and breathing saint) nor dead object (the posthumous remnants of bone, tissue, fabric) but rather an assemblage of both. Just like the anchorite, the medieval body-part relic was something ritually enlisted (or scapegoated) into special service as a mediator, not just between the commonplace and the sublime, but also between all the disparate entities — human and non-human, animal, spirit, vegetable or mineral — involved in both the sacrificial demarcation of individual subjectivity and the constitution of a sacred collective. More than mere ‘art objects’ (as they may be interpreted after the contemplative turn of modern aesthetics and the rise of the colonial museum), the ‘person-objecthood’ of these liminal entities made authorship, ownership and thus transaction a complex issue of translation (or *trans*-relation). As part of the still living, human social world, relics were considered animate agents “too powerful to allow themselves to be taken unwillingly”. The human status as master of objects was humbled. When attempting the transferal of relics — by whatever means of ‘appropriation’ — the human intermediary could only succeed “by convincing the saint that he would receive more satisfactory veneration in his new location — a promise the flattered local community would have to keep”. A relic’s movement (a kind of inverse pilgrimage) from one site to the next was, in itself, a ritual process, aptly named ‘translation’ (*tranlatio*) (p.213-214). These translations operated on an affective register with ‘personhood’ becoming a *diaspora* — a transient status not attributable to human individuals alone but ported and translated across societies through processual rituals of communal assemblage or “elevation” (p.204).

∞

*Duly poked into action we PAGANs can now set up the scene according to witnessable account:*

*Seated next us on the right is Patience and seated next to Patience is Reason. Then it continues round the table from right to left; Anthropology, Mead, Care, Wrath, Hunger, Bribery, Undertaker, Simony, Repentance and finally, seated directly across from you, that most famous of all contemporary anchorites, the O'Henry.*

*The O'Henry is in the Heh-seotel, which means (because not every PAN knows this) it is the very special Guest-host of this table and perhaps the entire event. The tented relic of Terra Mystique is (presumably) meant to honor the O'Henry. But it is only (by faux pas or a deliberate slight?) a pale imitation. It matters not, for at the end of the day, the jerky relic will inevitably lack because The Henry is strictly Cthulhu.*

*GAN will say that, although meaty and vascular, the O'Henry is a highly speculative taxon (or genre) of fele-seolfie or maniz-whatt and subject to much versioning. It is therefore good form (as murmured to you by GAN) to only ever attempt cognizance of the O'Henry a limmælum, that is to say, piecemeal or limb-by-limb. If one asks you later what the O'Henry looked like you should always start with the respectfully hesitant and jovial disclaimer, "Welllll....if I was to go out on a limb..." That is a good warm up Väinämöinen mallster joke but also a useful maschyn trope of mall-courtly politeness that really sets you in the groove and greases the old wheels.*

∞

As further example of the ways in which statuses of immanence and transcendence, superiority and inferiority were continually negotiated and flipped, Geary (1994) gives us an account of the *Liturgy of Humiliation*. This elaborate ritual was performed whenever a local ecclesiastical order or parish community felt itself to be violated by some anarchic intrusion. The ritual involved 'disciplining' the relics by removing them from their elevated alcoves and placing them on the ground amidst the monks who, significantly, *also* prostrated themselves. The function of this ritual was not only to re-enact the harm done to the saint's community by the external violator, but also to chastise the saints for allowing the violation in the first place. Moreover, the rite invoked a bond of common humility between 'human' subjects and 'thing' subjects. Person and object banded together in a kind of strike or sit-in that interfered with the normal procedures of veneration and forced the community at large to coerce the wrong doers to *also* humiliate themselves — thus restoring communal equilibrium (p.106-110). As Geary reminds us, the humiliations, coercions and negotiations between human subjects and animate sacramental objects were an aspect of medieval ritual practice that would later be denounced and fervently attacked by proto-modern reformers as incoherent and indulgent 'magical' practices as opposed

to properly religious ones. In a similar vein, anthropologist of religion Talal Asad (1993) argues that “humility in the form of self-abasement is no longer admired in ‘normal’ Christianity, and modern secular thought and practice classify and treat it as one of the standard personality disorders. Rituals of humiliation and abasement are now symptoms of patients, not the discipline of agents” (p.165-167).

∞

*Unfortunately, it seems that at this table, the protocols of viandial politeness are being completely ignored. Most of the table is staring at the O’Henry with unabashed fascination and some even sport the slack-mouth and popped eyes of the comically horror stricken.*

∞

As Allan J. Mitchell (2014) writes, the “notion of having progressed beyond the premodern and the primitive is grounded in a strict partitioning of human and nonhuman beings, so closely linked are ethnocentrism and anthropocentrism” (p.xvii). Perhaps then, as potential antidote to the “lethal states of possessive individualism and human exceptionalism”, we might mine the ascetic rituals of *humilitas* of the medieval cosmology for “ideas about the [...] chaotic substrata of the world, compelling us to reckon again with the fluid and futural conditions of coming-to-be vegetable, animal, and human” (p.xv-xvi).

∞

*You could ask GAN (or everyone reading this) to imagine that every masticating seolfie in the New Forest Mall had brought along its own collection of used chewing gum and assembled the O’Henry from rubbery old leavings. Add to that imagined artwork a random latticework of litaneous tattoos, scar tissue, stretch marks, seventeen or so thick black hairs and a possible mouth (this is suggested by a modesty apron that hangs roughly in place) and you could call this a fairly decent stab at poetic description.*

*Well, maybe you could also add, just to more qualify matters, that ninety-eight of the surface of the O’Henry is scar tissue. Perhaps, in conclusion, we might declare out loud, “The O’Henry is an inflated envelope of scar tissue with the demented musculature of a pumping athletic torso flexing underneath?”*

*Fine as far as words go. Anyway, no matter how we might want to envisage the O’Henry, the table guests Patience, Reason, Anthropology, Mead, Care, Wrath, Hunger, Bribery, Undertaker, Simony and Repentance are all still giving the O’Henry the big ol’ stink-eye.*

*Throughout all this poetic speculation and rude staring the O'Henry is very quiet and expressionless. It is just bobbling up and down and flexing. A few thick black hairs waft around dexterously as if getting a feel for things. Some members of Terra Mystique make courtly attempts to strike up some table banter; for the most part just the usual nervous icebreaker stuff. "I wonder what's for second dinner?" says Wrath for example. But then from Repentance comes a more shockingly direct (directed arrowsomely at the O'Henry) "Is it true you were birthed from a vending machine?" Then from Undertaker the breathtaking (there were gasps, mortified color changes, and seminar style objection-coughs) and downright vulgar, "How do you think it eats? Is that a mastic veil? What type of hole is being cloaked?" You could almost feel the crinkles as buttocks shifted and eyebrows raised and dropped.*

*The O'Henry still does not respond but continues to bobble, waft and flex. Eyes flick around the table as accouterments are nervously fiddled with.*

∞

In *Genesis*, Serres (1995a) uses the game of football (a ritual of two halves) to unpack the para-human relational, ritually transformative and humiliating power of the 'person-object' (or, to use Serres' own terminology, "quasi-object"). "Around the ball," he writes, "the team fluctuates quick as a flame, around it, through it, it keeps a nucleus of organization. The ball is the sun of the system and the force passing among its elements, it is a center that is off-centered, off-side, outstripped" (p.87-88). The ball is an instance of our oft mentioned 'parasite', which we shall now define more fully, through Serres (2007), as a "guest", "stranger" or "interrupter" that introduces noise to a host organism, organization, *habitus* or system. (p.15) As a noisy parasite, the ball *plays* the player. It acts according to its own laws regardless of the player's ultimate goal. Yet crucially, the parasite (as the 'third' of a dialogue between two) also *provides* those channels of communication that make systems and organizations possible. The ball is an organ of *organization* but also (in resonance with Deleuze and Guattari's aforementioned 'body-without-organs') of *dis-organization*. Hence the prefix *para-* in *para-site* (and para-modern, para-normal). As quasi-object the ball is on *site* (on the pitch) but also "on the side, next to, shifted; it is not on the thing, but on its relation. It has relations, as they say, and makes a system of them. It is always mediate and never immediate. It has a relation to the relation, a tie to the tie" (p.38-39). When the parasitic entity is in play, when the ball is being passed, then the network of relations makes the collective. When the ball, the 'sun of the system', stops, it shines light upon the individual and lends them (black boxed or relic-ed) agency.

Thus we see how the parasite or quasi-object arouses and strengthens the collective by circumscribing or scapegoating the individual (the ‘I’ left holding the ball) as the one on which the fate of the collective hangs. No matter what the outcome of play — goal or foul, loss or win — a ritual sacrifice of individuation is performed. This is the immunological “imperative of purge”, perhaps the most archaic and timeless of (more than human) rituals. Once the parasite has been ‘spotted’ by the host system, the “laws of hospitality become laws of hostility” (p.56). The parasite (which is always the joker in the pack, shifting, morphing, Janus-faced, multiple) is given a stable and singular ‘face’, weighed up, judged, and finally accepted or expunged (vicariously) for the good of the system.

It matters not whether we are dealing with a ball, a shrine, an anchorite, a piece of saintly bone, an Amazon \$50 Rooster-Voucher, or the most technologically advanced artifact (or most indisputable fact) the Eurowest has ever constructed; “the most sophisticated tools play their main role socially but without losing their objective purpose” (Serres, 1995b, p.161). We can never truly detach ourselves as unbiased, enchantment-free observers of the object world. As fellow objects (made of objects), we remain entangled and enchanted. In ‘smelling the smoke’ of our modern iconoclasm, we reclaim our ‘religious’ habits of being. If we have never been quite *modern*, to follow Latour’s provocation, perhaps this is because we have always been (to re-purpose that pejorative anthropological term) *animists*<sup>27</sup>. We still ‘live’ in impassioned fear and energized thrall of the black-boxed, god-like objects (including the much derided ‘commodity fetish’) we both create and are, in turn, created by. Ritually black boxed or relic-ed objects (inclusive of the anthropocentrically bounded ‘you’ or ‘I’) are *acheiropoietic* entities. As co-constructions, not the work of human hands, they have no easily identifiable author. Seen from the Middle Kingdom —and as illuminated and regularly staged throughout the *pancosmia* of *pan-pan* — science is not dispassionate and *cold* at all but rather as passionately, full-bloodedly “hot as Baal” (Latour, 1995b, p.140) As Serres reiterates later in his conversation with Latour:

---

<sup>27</sup> As Latour (2014) quips, facts also display a non-agentic agency, a denied animism; “[A]lthough [facts] were mute, they were supposed to speak directly — ‘facts after all speak for themselves, don’t they?’ — and not only that but, through an amazing feat of spokespersonship, mute and yet speaking facts were able to shut the dissenters’ voice down. And those who have invented this amazing feat of ‘inanimism’ are deriding the poor people who believe in animism” (p.115)



“There is no pure myth except the idea of a science that is pure of all myth” (p.162).

∞

*After this bout of awkwardness (lasting approximately two hundred and five) the table slowly begins to loosen and introduce itself, again in the seminar style, beginning with Undertaker who made a revealing joke about not being an actual Undertaker. “I’m more of a hook-up guy,” says it, with a cat-arse smirk that anchors him firmly in the social-science genre of ‘giggle-ye-not!’. Anthropology confessed that it didn’t have a degree as such but, despite the odd deviation, was an actual anthropoid and actually did study anthropoids for official recompense. Wrath introduces itself by raising a vial of something, clearly prescribed by medicators, to its mouthpart and noisily swashing it around in the cheeks. It leans over towards a tabletop spittoon but then pauses, swallows aggressively, and gives the table conspiratorial winks and a sly grin full of worn down teeth.*

∞

Asad argues that ritual practice has over time been universally accepted as “essentially a species of representational behavior” (2009, p.59) and that, in accord with the polytemporal parasite logic of Serres,

it does not [...] make good sense to say that ritual behavior stands universally in opposition to behavior that is ordinary or pragmatic, any more than religion stands in contrast to reason or to (social) science. In various epochs and societies, the domains of life are variously articulated, and each of them articulates endeavors that are appropriate to it (p.167)

To reiterate, it is indeed a habit (hardened as an addiction to truth) of thought, now centuries old to attribute the soft escape from hard ‘reality’ to the macro black box of ‘religion’. Concomitantly, it is commonly argued that ritual is an inherently irrational practice, a producer of fantastical *un-realities* and *non-knowledges*. From our modern standpoint (the lofty point from which we resolutely proclaim and affirm our cultural superiority), we readily assume that the practitioner of ritual (that primitive, animalistic ‘creature’ of habit) continually re-enacts a retreat, head in sand, from the stark, factual reality of the world into the safe bosom of a ‘deep-fake’ ideology assembled from comforting fictions, theatrical props and fantastic symbols. As self-declared, ‘grown up’ moderns, we have purportedly evolved beyond such childish performances of ‘make believe’ after material truth was ‘discovered’, post medieval schism, in the atomic labs

of physics and instrumental rationality<sup>28</sup> — an evolutionary zenith that, according to the linear ‘post-truth’ narrative, is now receding backward into a crisis of re-endarkenment. In *The Parasite*, Serres (2007) digs beneath (or rather bypasses) this revolution-orientated *telos* to come up with the startlingly mystic assertion that, despite the theoretical claims of natural science, in practice, “[t]he real is *not rational*; it is improbable and miraculous” (p.46, italics added). On the face of it, this may seem to return us to the “beyond all understanding” condition exemplified by the baffling case of Thomas Quick. But perhaps things *are* and *always will be* “beyond all understanding”, and that this endarkened epistemology should be ascetically embraced for good reason — a *parasitical* reasoning that Serres formulates below:

Systems work because they do not work. Nonfunctioning remains essential for functioning...Given, two stations and a channel. They exchange messages. If the relation succeeds, if it is perfect, optimum, and immediate; it disappears as a relation. If it is there, if it exists, that means that it failed. It is only mediation. Relation is nonrelation. And that is what the parasite is. The channel carries the flow, but it cannot disappear as a channel, and it brakes (breaks) the flow, more or less. But perfect, successful, optimum communication no longer includes any mediation (p.79).

If a hosted parasite (such as Quick for example) is completely outed and expunged, the channel of communication “disappears into immediacy. There would be no spaces of transformation anywhere”. Thus the real *cannot* be rational since “[t]here are channels, and thus there must be noise”. The “best relation would be no relation”, a condition which, quite simply, “does not exist”. This is the “paradox of parasite” (p.79) and again, a paradox that, in *pan-pan*, the Confraternity ascetically (and ludically) embrace as *coinsedera oppositium*, the preservation of

---

<sup>28</sup> Kellie Robertson (2010) cites Pulitzer Prize winning book *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern* as a typical example of a “donut’ materialist narrative with the medieval hole at its center” (p.108). The idea of a “medieval materialism” is rendered oxymoronic by such accounts that perceive the Middle Ages as fundamentally befuddled by un-atomic questions of ‘spiritually’ animated matter.

This from the publishers promotional blurb on *The Swerve*: “Nearly six hundred years ago, a short, genial, cannily alert man in his late thirties took a very old manuscript off a library shelf, saw with excitement what he had discovered, and ordered that it be copied. That book was the last surviving manuscript of an ancient Roman philosophical epic [...] of the most *dangerous* ideas: that the universe functioned without the aid of gods, that religious fear was damaging to human life, and that matter was made up of very small particles...”

In this narrative of true ‘atomic age’ materialism the Renaissance ‘hero’ Poggio Bracciolini inadvertently rescues atomic truth from “a thousand years of neglect” by re-canonizing Lucretius’s *On the nature of things* and thereby “[making] possible the world as we know it” (<https://www.norton.com/books/The-Swerve/null>)

doubt as a faith in the generative power of wonder. Perhaps even an ‘ontology of doubt’ as both a sustenance of subsistence and the very *paragon* of sustainability itself, but which, unfortunately, typically manifests as that forbidding ‘dark age’ medievalism of ‘regression’ or ‘stagnation’ that so troubles the racing, progress hungry milieu of modernity.

∞

*Patience and Bribery meet your eyes but then hurriedly grapple across each other to stab proteins and neck wyn as if suddenly famished. After a spell of munching and slurping Bribery, while still avoiding your gaze, mumbles through wyn reddened lips, “I teach whatever is deemed necessary”. Patience dismissively wafts a hand toward Care and says, “That is Care”. Care is wearing some optical equipment (not the Soltelté Visor) that obscures faciality but its voice is recognizably of a deeply reassuring timbre and wood-burning warmth when it says, “you are well met colleague. I see you are with GAN, so I will ask nothing of you and your ambitions, future or past”. Repentance snorts at this and shows the table a spoon that appears to have been supernaturally bent between a thumb and forefinger. Hunger reaches across slaps the spoon out of the grip of Repentance and replaces it with a straight one. Repentance shruggingly concedes and probes the O’Henry experimentally.*

*“We must respect our tools”, declares Hunger, “Today I will finish my life’s work and then, gracefully or not, totally expire. I intend not to suffer the consequences of my research findings nor this, our gluttonous refection, since, for me, the glorious end is in sight. To those at Terra Mystique and beyond (an expansive gesture of inclusion is made) that know me, I command no mourning, for all that has passed has been good and all the yet-to-come, as you shall witness during and despite my nonexistence, will also be good.”*

*At some point during Hunger’s lengthy announcement Simony’s expression shifts, ever so briefly, from dreamy reflection (aimed at a minute cube of sizzling protein skewered upon an ornate pilgrim needle) to sardonic attention (aimed upward at the Canopy). Its weariness of collegial gatherings is further expressed by a resumption of the glassy-eyed look and an unexpectedly shrill, mouse-like vocalization that said, “There will be discounts on remainders and remain you shall!”*

*“An interesting point has been made,” interjected Wrath who was laughingly pointing at the end of Simony’s needle which now pierced multiple proteins and was passing into the mouth.*

∞

Caroline Bynum (1997) informs us that, in the medieval period, an abundance of wonder was “associated with paradox, coincidence of opposites”. The medieval, Bynum continues, is the location where “one finds *mira* (wondrous) again and again in the texts alongside *mixta* (mixed

or composite things), a word that evokes the hybrids and monsters” (p.7). Concordantly, Jeffrey Cohen (1999) writes of the “spectacular technology of monsterization” (p.132) rife in the “perpetually transgressed borders” (p.5) of the late Medieval Europe. Corporeal wonder manifested through the ‘difficult middles’ of Anglo-Saxon England — “a blanket term that hides more than it reveals” — as “narrative[s] of resistant hybridity, of small groups ingested into larger bodies without full assimilation” (p.4). During this period, Cohen explains, the unifying project of ‘England’ (a project we might correlate, through Serres, with the timeless ‘imperative of purge’) existed only as work-in-progress, a palimpsest of overlapping spatiotemporal cartographies, where the limits of ancestral identification were continually tested through cross-colonial encounter. It was against this background of morphing allegiances and scapegoating<sup>29</sup> that the “monster [again, Serres’ parasite, or quasi-object] became a kind of cultural shorthand for the problems of identity construction, for the irreducible difference that lurks deep within the culture-bound self” (p.5). In this way the monstrous hybrid has “has long served as the embodiment of the medieval itself” and the “Middle Ages as a formal effect of their very middleness could likewise be located as extimate to the modern: intimate and alien simultaneously, an ‘inexcluded’ middle at the pulsing heart of modernity” (Cohen, 2000, p.5).

∞

*At some point during Hunger’s lengthy announcement Simony’s expression shifts, ever so briefly, from dreamy GAN-style reflection (aimed at a minute cube of sizzling protein skewered upon an ornate pilgrim needle) to sardonic attention (aimed upward at the Canopy). Its weariness of collegial gatherings was then further expressed by a resumption of the glassy-eyed look and an unexpectedly shrill, mouse-like vocalization that said, “There will be discounts on remainders*

---

<sup>29</sup> Cohen (1999) begins his book *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages* with a description of the Donestre — a monstrous chimeric race of the Orient, with humanoid torso and leonine head. The creature’s hybridism extends through both the corporeal and the semiotic since it possesses the ability to greet and fluidly converse with travelers in their own tongue. As legend has it, the exile or nomad is lulled and comforted by the creature upon initial contact, as it appears to possess intimate knowledge of the foreigner’s kinfolk and customs, and even listens intently and sympathetically to his homesick recollections. At some point during the conversation, however, the Donestre leaps upon the visitor and devours him, leaving only the head over which it then sits and weeps with abject mourning (p.1-2).

Cohen’s psychoanalytic gloss on the Donestre has echoes of Serres’ theory of the parasite. The incorporation of flesh into that of another is symptomatic of a neurosis over the maintenance of boundaries of individual identity. The initial familiarity offered by the creature reinforces the victim’s sense of self and belonging but then, after the act of consumption or “transubstantiation” (p.3), the newly formed “Donestre-Traveler” realizes he has always been a (parasitic) stranger to himself. He views himself (his severed head) as a foreign entity, a parasite, scapegoated, sacrificed and is torn with grief as he experiences Serres’ ‘paradox of the parasite’ as the “fragility of autonomous selfhood, how much of the world it excludes in its panic to remain self-same, singular, stable” (p.4).

*and remain you shall!”*

*“An interesting point has been made,” interjected Wrath who was laughingly pointing at the end of Simony’s needle, which now pierced a teetering overabundance of proteins and was passing into the mouth.*

∞

In *thN Lng folk 2go* (to which *pan-pan* is a sequel of sorts) the Confraternity (Hogg, Mulholland, 2013) discuss neomedievalism<sup>30</sup> as an emergent theory of International Relations (IR). Within this geo-political field the fluid and overlapping territorial configurations of Medieval Europe are invoked as heuristic device to challenge classical realist assumptions about the inevitability and immutability of modern sovereign statehood (the spatiotemporal macro black boxing of ‘one moment states’). The neomedieval theory of IR proposes that after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the rise of the World Wide Web and the increasing mobility and influence of the non-state actor, we are witnessing a *return* to a global anarchic or ‘neo-tribal’ system of radically fragmented and decentralized forms of governance. Just like the diagnosis of a ‘post-truth’ condition, the *homotemporal* implication of a ‘return to the past’ is slightly at odds with the *heterotemporal* neomedievalism being espoused here (again, not a ‘return’ so much as a ‘reclamation’ of that which already exists as a entanglement of ‘inexcluded’ middles). Nevertheless, neomedieval geopolitical theories of “nonterritorial functional space” (Ruggie, 1993, p.165) can usefully be transposed onto our neomedieval wonder over the astonishingly overlapping, para-human technologies of the ‘monstrous’ medieval body.

---

<sup>30</sup> As coined by Hedley Bull (1977) who was one of the first prominent political geopolitical theorists to propose that the emerging influence of non-state actors in global policy making marked the return of a neomedieval form of global territorialisation. As Gerald Ruggie (1993) writes in *Territoriality and Beyond*:

“The archetype of nonexclusive territorial rule, of course, is medieval Europe, with its ‘patchwork of overlapping and incomplete rights of government’, which were “inextricably superimposed and tangled,’ and in which ‘different juridical instances were geographically interwoven and stratified, and plural allegiances, asymmetrical suzerainties and anomalous enclaves abounded’... the spatial extension of the medieval system of rule was structured by a nonexclusive form of territoriality, in which authority was both personalized and parcelized within and across territorial formations and for which inclusive bases of legitimation prevailed. The notion of firm boundary lines between the major territorial formations did not take hold until the thirteenth century; prior to that date, there were only ‘frontiers,’ or large zones of transition” (p.149–150).

Bull concludes that “if modern states were to come to share their authority over their citizens, and their ability to command their loyalties, on the one hand with regional and world authorities and on the other with sub-state or sub-national authorities, to such an extent that the concept of sovereignty ceased to be applicable, then a neo-mediaeval form of universal political order might be said to have emerged” (1977, p.255).

Bynum (2012) writes that, in the Middle Ages, the body (*corpus*) was regarded as inseparable from matter (*materia*) and that the “entire natural-philosophical tradition, understood ‘body’ to mean ‘changeable thing’: gem, tree, log, or cadaver, as well as living human being. Understood in medieval terms, to “explore ‘the body’ was to explore stars and statues, blood and resin, as well as pain, perception, and survival” (p.32). Thus when Bynum speaks of the medieval ‘corpus’, she is evoking a radically expanded, *pancosmic* body of “living holy matter” comprising such things as body-part relics, contact relics (objects divinized through touch), sacramentals (objects animated through ritual blessing), *dauerwunder* (permanently transformed host objects), and a plethora of other animate *mixta* that could spontaneously bleed, erupt into life, humiliate and command the living (p.25). Bynum recounts an abundance of tales of “miraculous matter” that “could change miraculously — proliferating, metamorphosing, even facilitating the change or augmentation or repair of other matter” (p.153). In resonance with the anchoritic ‘solution aligning’ bodies of *pan-pan*’s neomedieval *pancosmia*, Bynum’s medieval body is “in no way the equivalent of — although it is integral to — what we call “self” (p.32). Medieval assumptions about bodies and matter, she maintains, “were not ones that made the [modern] problem of the agency of objects or the boundary between person and things a primary one” (p.283). Modern theorizing, she then conjectures, “takes as self-evident the boundary between human and thing, part and whole, mimesis and material, animate and inanimate” while “medieval theories, like medieval *praxis*, operated not from a modern need to break down such boundaries but from a sense that they were porous in some cases, nonexistent in others” (p.284, italics added).

∞

*As a general trend all the table guests had a fanciful way of introducing themselves by way of enigma. They were an enigmatic lot you for sure. (perhaps not so much so as the O’Henry of course) In one sense the table companions were brutally forthright about who and what they were but in another sense they were resolutely opaque. “Revelment Through Concealment”, was how the GAN entitled its parsing of these fellows.*

*As GAN speculates algorithmically, Hunger hides sausages in his cheeks while waxing lyrical on his superior ability. Listening abstractedly you are reminded of some looped images of a smartly suited flasher who leaps from a bush, reveals his hairy flapping sausage beyond any reasonable doubt and then leaps back into the bush — and so it goes ad infinitum. It was just*

*when you were enjoying this possibly publishable and maybe even 'award-winning' allegory that the PAN hits the GAN and all hell broke loose.*

∞

In assembling the neomedieval *pancosmia* of *pan-pan*, we attempt to emulate (again by way of reclamation) the ascetic dis-organizational, body-multiplying rituals of the pre-modern corpus. For Karmen Mackendrick (2010) the “mad multiplicity” of the pre-modern corpus presents an “extraordinary ontology” — a *para*-humanist ontology that reunites us with the “excess of our humanity” that was only ever “neatly settled” within the “narrow span of modernity” (p.113). Likewise, *pan-pan*'s hyper-corporeal (and sometimes hyper-corporate) excessiveness, as a topological imbroglio of the *pre*- and *post*- human body, exposes (we hope) the dank, gothic underbelly of our enlightened epistemology. The cthulhonic hybrids and jabbering monstrosities of *pan-pan* are summoned *en mass* to service the “weirding of philosophy” where we “recognize not only the non-priority of human thought, but that thought never belongs to the brain that thinks it, thought comes from somewhere else” (Woodward, 2010, p.13). In other words, thought comes ported, borrowed, translated and reassembled from the noise, smells and tastes of parasitic ‘others’. Through our ascetic-ludic storytelling and re-enactment practices, we attempt to retune the sensorium to the dissonant chatters, pungent aromas and obscure flavors of the non-modern parasite, banished for centuries by the Cartesian “brain-in-a-vat” (Latour, 1999, p.4). With senses aggravated and heightened by ascetic sufferance, we ‘smell the smoke’ of both our modern ‘norms’ and our archaic ‘ab-normalities’. As investigators of the *para*-normal we conjure the world we are conjured by — a *pan-pancosmia* in which person-objects,

constitute themselves in a transversal, vibratory position, conferring on them a soul, a becoming ancestral, animal, vegetal, cosmic. These objectities-subjectities are led to work for themselves, to incarnate themselves as an animist nucleus: they overlap each other, and invade each other to become collective entities half-thing, half-soul, half-man, half-beast, machine and flux, matter and sign. (Guattari, 1995 p.102)

∞

*Impatience, far too predictably, has completely lost its shit and is rapidly hurling the sharpest utensils at the O'Henry. But the utensils just bounce off the O'Henry who just continues to bobble*

*and flex, seemingly (for who can truly say?) unperturbed. It is surely this (apparently) profound lack of reaction that acts, most potently, as a rage accelerant for the PAN of Impatience who has been pushed over-the-edge and is now being restrained by the PANs Mead, Reason and Care from throwing a chair. Once the violence of Impatience has been soothed somewhat (there was an injection of something, deftly administered by Undertaker) it is Simony who now makes the big discovery.*

*“There’s somat’ not right wi’ this ere t’entry,” Simony declares.*

*He was pointing to some fresh wounds that are appearing on the skyne of the O’Henry. These rents were, upon our close examination, not of the wet type, usually associated with the widespread aqua-bag PAN, but more of the dry exoskeletal ‘scuff’ or alloyed ‘dent’ type PAN of an automated vehicle or shipping container, for example.*

∞

In the neomedieval *pancosmia*, this ‘animist nucleus’ is very much alive and kicking. As Louise Fradenburg (1997) writes, the medieval haunts modernity “precisely as a figure of the unnecessary and the extraordinary”. In *pan-pan* the medieval expresses its animated matter darkly through a panarchic, ritual “hyper-economy” of humiliations, translations, trials and negotiations between ‘living’ beings and ‘dead’ things — all gravitating around the etymological and ontological fluidity of the medieval term ‘corpus’. This hyper-economy “exceeds calculation or rationality” for it is also a *sacrificial* economy of “the gift” (p.210) — with the *ultimate* gift being an unbecoming or (anchoritic) death. It is the sacrifice of the singular, self-sovereign ‘I’ to the vast empyrean ‘we’ of the *pancosmia*. It is thus also a hypereconomy of ‘the irrational’, or of ‘painful paradox sustained *as* sustenance’ for it disrupts and dissolves the (human) subject while simultaneously enabling and carrying its signal.

For some pre-modern flavoring here we might sprinkle in a medieval ‘secret sauce’ called ‘Ylem’ — a proto-substance which, according to J. Allan Mitchell (2014), was described by fourteenth-century English poet Gower in his *Confessio Amantis* (‘The Lover’s Confession’) as the “original plenum” from which all creation arose;

For yit withouten eny forme  
Was that matiere universal,  
Which hihte [called] Ylem in special (Gower quoted by Mitchell, p.52).



Mitchell conjectures that Gower uses ‘Ylem’<sup>31</sup> here as a proxy name (‘in special’) that can only be given provisionally since it attends to a pre-universal, formless matter that ‘exists’ *prior* to any conceptualization and subsequent naming. Here Gower faces the same paradox that prompts Serres to ask how he can *speak* of multiplicity without a singular *concept* of multiplicity. Having been forced by linguistic imperative to ‘black box’ — to give linguistic form to a multiplicity that *precedes* form, the poet Gower is faced with the “pragmatic contradiction” of “only being able to correlate what is uncorrelated”(p.54). As Mitchell points out, the first lines of the next couplet reveal an astonishing synthesis that fuse together (as *coinsedera oppositium*) the contradiction between the sign and the non-signifying presence to which it refers:

Of Ylem, as I am enformed,  
These elementz ben mad and formed, (quoted by Mitchell, p.53)

Here Mitchell draws our attention to the first line in which the etymology<sup>32</sup> of the word ‘information’ (*enformation*) is enigmatically fuzzy. It could refer to the black boxed concept of Ylem as *in*-formation but also to Ylem as the *un*-formational, ‘noise-stuff’ from which ideas, concepts and bodies (the *corpus*) are subsequently composed. As Mitchell puts it, Gower is divulging that he “is at once informed by his studies and formed from the same material substrate he is studying” and so in the second line the poet

recapitulates the notion that elements are “formed” in a way analogous to how the poet is

---

<sup>31</sup> It may be interesting to think Gower’s unnamable ‘Ylem’ through Quentin Meillassoux’s (2010) concept of the “arche-fossil”. Arche-fossils are materials that indicate the existence of something prior to the correlation between its reality and any consciousness that may apprehend it. The ‘arch fossil’ or ‘Ylem’ is an entity or substance that exists before thought, and thus indicates a “world wherein spatio-temporal givenness itself came into being within a time and a space which preceded every variety of givenness” (p.22).

<sup>32</sup> We could note here again the Confraternity’s ludic deployment of etymology as catalyst for the decolonization of thought from scientific classification. One example being the Middle English term ‘wombele’ (used throughout *pan-pan*) which means both womb and belly. One might reason that the medieval lacked the anatomical knowledge to differentiate between the two organs but the Confraternity embrace this categorical ‘mistake’ as an alternative, generative way of ‘middle’ thinking. That is; to pursue the metaphoric-metamorphic relation *across* the two organs—both being organs of digestion, gestation and ontogenesis. Another way etymology is used (or abused) is to explore words as atemporal palimpsests — clusters of meaning that belong simultaneously to multiple times. It is to write in an *untimely* manner, to deploy anachronistic words and phrases that *perform* the multiplicity of time.

informed, reforms his matter, and forms audiences in the pedagogical project that is the *Confessio Amantis*. All of this is surely meant to suggest that poetic matter, like the primordial matter of which he is speaking, is as polysemous as it is pluripotent (p.53).

∞

*He was pointing to some fresh wounds that are appearing on the skyne of the O'Henry. These rents were, upon our close examination, not of the wet type, usually associated with the widespread aquabag seolfe, but more of the dry exoskeletal 'scuff' or alloyed 'dent' type like of a shipping container for example.*

*This was surely anomalous? The O'Henry is well known to be, essentially, even quintessentially, a tremendously free bleeder, both by ascetic vocation and form. With timidly speculative hostility, Simony then produced an illegal paring knife and unceremoniously (there were soft gasps and flaccid attempts to restrain the action) sliced away at the O'Henry's surface with scientific dynamism. Wizened frowns were cast forth and returned. A fraudulence had been exposed.*

∞

Like Gower's epic confessional poem (and Dinshaw's confessions to nostalgia), *pan-pan* is also a 'lover's confession' of sorts. Like Benjamin's 'storyteller', we neomedievalists (partially, *always* partially) surrender the professional detachment (the God's eye view) of academic method to let the wick of our lives be part consumed by the stories being told. As said before, we begin to *feel* the animation of 'things' as we repeatedly tramp, habituate and pilgrimize the mallscapes of underground Montreal. Through our self-induced and ritualized amateurism we confess to our perpetual "enchantment"<sup>33</sup>, to being fully engaged in the world-making *poiesis* by which *we too* are shaped and changed. Jane Bennett (2004) writes of the "onto-story" — a "naive realism" (p.357) that suspends all logical certainty, imposed on the world by rational human thought, so that we might "render more manifest the world of nonhuman vitality". To "render manifest", she continues, "is both to receive and to participate in the shape given to that which is received. What is manifest arrives through humans but not entirely because of them" (p.358).

---

<sup>33</sup> For our para-human thinking on the word 'enchantment' we are indebted to Jane Bennett (2001) who writes: "I now emphasize even more how the figure of enchantment points in two directions: the first towards the humans who *feel* enchanted and whose agentic capacities may thereby be strengthened, and the second toward the agency of the things that *produce* (helpful, harmful) effects in human and other bodies. Organic and inorganic bodies, natural and cultural objects (these distinctions are not particularly salient here) *all* are affective. I am here drawing on a Spinozist notion of affect, which refers broadly to the capacity of any body for activity and responsiveness" (xii).

By embracing para-academic and para-humanist methodologies, such as the ‘rigorously fuzzy’ parasite logic of Serres and the ‘naive realism’ of Bennett’s ‘onto-stories’, neomedievalism aims to reclaim and reactivate the analogical world-building poiesis once deployed by philosopher-poets such as Gower — an onto-fictioning practice which, according to Kellie Robinson (2010), would be “denounced by later Enlightenment philosophers who instituted a descriptive prose largely stripped of figurative language in its place (p.111). In the medieval cosmology, she argues, poetry and natural philosophy were bound together in “a common discursive lexicon” of onto-constructural rhetoric. Natural philosophy frequently employed metaphors such as “building a house, fashioning a bronze statue, and growing an oak” (p.103) and the philosopher-poets “regularly imagined themselves as creators of a quasi-material poetic world”. Significantly, Robinson reminds us that the Middle English term *matere* refers interchangeably to both the materiality of a thing and the immaterial thing that *comes to matter* as a particular “scholastic question” (p.112) (or, as Latour would put it, a ‘matter of concern’). The modern conception of a primary realm of atomic matter and a secondary realm of thoughts, feelings and expressions was not of utmost importance. *Matere* was that which *mattered*. The lunar pull of the tide was just as *real* as the poet’s lovingly inscribed impression of the crashing waves, and it this “homologous relation between textual matter and physical matter — the origin of a metaphor now dead — that animates much of post-twelfth-century didactic poetry” (p.111).

∞

*Surely it must be an ambassadorial limb excised and sent from the O’Henry proper in order to represent its self as such? Wrath was especially adamant that since it was known that the O’Henry was a cardiovascular, neuromuscular, techno-flagellant entity — with a massively known (but shamefully secret) predilection for theatrical hemorrhaging — then this must be a prosthesis-seolfie. It bled red stuff for sure, but so do our cups when we smash them together in congratulatory salutation.*

*Hunger proposed that this was the hateful work of Foreign Object who was deceitfully disguising itself as an automaton for its own amusement. Hunger’s conspiratorial reasoning was refuted, predictably, by Reason who loudly and firmly rebutted that Foreign Object was seated innocently, and this most obviously, just across the way at Terra Boxley .  
Indeed, and with due recognition of Reason, Foreign Object, upon hearing its name so mentioned, waved a mechanical limb in cordial circles. There some were murmurs of reluctant*

*acknowledgement but others took the friendly wave to be sardonic proof that Foreign Object had endeavored to embarrass Terra Mystique by implanting the O'Henry as a fake illustrious guest. The conspiracy was dampened by Mead, who pointed out the arrival of a marvelous pudding.*

∞

It is indeed with some ‘naive realism’ that we neomedievalists claim, without squeamishness or desire for qualification, that the poet’s practice of lyrical assemblage is part and parcel of the assemblage of reality in general. Yet we do not regard ourselves as the solitary ‘authors’ or creating ‘gods’ of *pan-pan* and thus, where there is pedagogic intent, it is a *communal* endeavour of disclosure rather than top-down exposition — ritual performances and re-enactments of disclosure situated and shared between the writers, the readers, the book-world (a person-book) itself and all the other agents ‘enformed’ and animated by the polysemy and pluripotency of *pan-pan*’s ‘poetic matter’.

∞

*After sticky sweet nourishments, Undertaker brought the whole thing up again and Reason pushed its chair back dramatically, drank deep from its goblet and slammed its face miserably into a platter of sweetened olives. As we might expect, there followed a very pregnant silence in which all-present thought as deeply as they dared.*

*But then and without warning...*

∞

If we are to assign and give personhood to ‘gods’ within *pan-pan*’s neomedieval hyper-economy (and I would say we *must* but perhaps that is not for me, or anyone, to say) then those personages would function as the “prosopopeia of noise” (Serres, 2007, p.56) — animate proxies, black boxes, graspable concepts, organs of organization and disorganization, bodies corporate and incorporate, the swarming *corpus* — all those Ylemic envelopes we assign to the background babel of the hyper-economic *pancosmia*. Perhaps we could think of a *pancosmia* of *Ylem* that both negates and *generates* the language we use to speak of it. Despite its capitalization, the Ylem god (god *of* and *as* Ylem) would not, of course, be our modern self-singular, anthro-ethno-phallogocentric “sky God” (Haraway, 2016, p.53) — ‘he’ who signifies and promises freedom

*from*, and knowledge *over* the chaotic, noisy mattering of ‘his’ world (his-story), but a temporal diaspora of parochial, quasi-transcendent micro-gods, anchored (like an anchorite) in the pragmatic, down ‘n’ dirty habits (or rituals) of commonplace world-making. Our neomedieval gods, in other words, would be tiny, humble, parasitic entities — quasi-subjects, relic-ed person-objects, solution aligners, ‘little machines’ plugged (like universal travel adaptors) into the shifting “relation[s] that cannot be analyzed...the beginning of inter-subjectivity”. For the “third”, writes Serres of the parasite, is “always there, god or demon, reason or noise” (Serres, 2007, p.63). Like the parasite, try as we will, these ‘gods’ of relation will not be purged — another, with a new name, shape or form, *must* always replace them. As Serres argues above, without these noisy deific interlocutors there would be no systems, no organization, no forms, nothing, *not even Ylem*.

It is with these ‘gods’ (or ‘demons’, or ‘sirens’) of the neomedieval hypereconomy that we associate the para-normal ‘**calling**’<sup>34</sup> — not just in the Weberen sense of medieval asceticism reformed wholesale into the modern “iron cage” of techno-industrialized desire, but rather in the aforementioned *lure* or *call to adventure* that comes to us from ‘outside’ the black boxes that constitute humanity’s PAN or *habitus*. And of course the *tighter* things are black boxed the more alluringly mysterious, godlike and transcendent they become. Again, from a neomedieval perspective, the black box, like the body-part relic, is essentially an occult object or *acheiropoieton* — something authorless, never the work of human hands *exclusively*. As said, such occultish god-things are not fully transcendent but a coalesced *mixta* or “multitude of others” in which “no other is Wholly [holy] Other” (Millar, 2013, p.41). The proposed gods of the neomedieval hypereconomy are not prime movers or masters. They cannot oversee and *command* the multitude of things. If transcendence marks the multiple impassible regions where

---

<sup>34</sup> For Weber (2205) the teachings of Luther and Calvin transformed Western religion into a secularized and internalized “worldly asceticism” that sanctified both labor *and* the acquisition of capital as moral imperative — “a calling, as the best, often in the last analysis the *only* means of attaining certainty of grace” (p.121). As asceticism “was carried out of monastic cells into everyday life, and began to dominate worldly morality, it did its part in building the tremendous cosmos of the modern economic order” (p.123). In the *hyper*-economic cosmology we are speculating upon, this ‘worldly asceticism’ is still a form of discipline but one which works to dismantle the individualized capitalist subject so that it might open itself up to the noise of the not self. It is a calling to constantly *re-discipline* the *corpus*, to forge ‘improbable’ habits of being. For us, ‘worldly asceticism’ refers to the artful, ritual, opening up of the black boxed self to alternative, and potentially destructive, worlds.

the black boxed object *refuses* noise, *purges* the parasite, and *ignores* relation, then immanence marks those leaky, passable regions (the spaces between the weaves of the leaky ‘black basket’) through which the black box oozes doubt (a strange substance we might correlate with Ylem) as a call to adventure, to yet unknown relations and attachments.

∞

*...Bribery leaped up on the table, bent over Undertaker and bundled it into a standing head-scissor lock. Through the Shower of Loose Change combat attribute it then flipped Undertaker up and over so it was lying upward on Reason’s back. Reason then shifts its grip to the upper limbs of Undertaker, spreading them as though being full-nelsoned crucifixion style. Reason then leaps off the table, crashes through the Sneeze Guard of Buffet Station Six, falls to its knees and butt slams Undertaker upon the sizzling panels of Schnitzel Garten in a spinning powerbomb maneuver. Charred portions of Undertaker react badly and leap off into the low-hanging cured meats causing a King Culatello di Zibello to fall cinematically into the freshly procured Regular Soup of Anthropology who is opportunistically up at the Thai Express service counter before anyone else. Now scalded and with sticky dripping mane, Anthropology glowers round the room frighteningly until he apprehends the epicenter of The Outbreak of Terra Mystique (as we may title it). Anthropology will now leap over some upset and outraged tables (list them ...) to engage without restraint. Unexpectedly to all, Anthropology is suddenly wielding a Forbes Industries Table Gun and shoots a 220x77x85 Distressed pine with mahogany stain, folding legs for compact storage, durable vinyl T-molding, four swivel caster Model 7010-MH with Concealed Doors into the battlesome mix, narrowly missing the toes of the sideline interloper Falsehood who shakes itself angrily and spits cariogenic mist from between its yellow craggy open parts. Those tainted react with mouthwash (another party favor of of Medi Terra), flinging it generously, direct from the bottle, before jamming the empty receptacles into the many screaming, farting and ejaculating orifices of a now hopelessly hysterical Falsehood. Mead, Care and Simony climb into a Drei-Man-Hoch machima and advance on 220x77x85 Distressed pine with mahogany stain, folding legs for compact storage, durable vinyl T-molding, four swivel caster Model 7010-MH with Concealed Doors and apply the transition moves Rolling Thunder, Pendulum and Discus Clothesline but 220x77x85 Distressed pine with mahogany stain, folding legs for compact storage, durable vinyl T-molding, four swivel caster Model 7010-MH is ahead of the game and self-dismounts into the Forbes Mercenary Assault B-team comprised of Hot Well, Induction Unit, Griddle, Warming Drawer, a now recovering Falsehood, Mr Refrigerator, Ice Pan, Doctor Do Well, Frost Top, Cold Well, Drop Leave, Tray Slide, Soup Well, Lady Soup Better, Lowerator, Sneezeguard light, Soup Best, Sliding Door, Custom Logo, Condiment Holder, Display Ware and Induction chaffer. After a brief standoff, Refrigerator, Custom Logo and Frost Top Counter, Mead, Care and Simony, wade in with highly illegal wind-up punches to fatally sensitive areas. Mead fronts and sucks up the blows while Care and Simony, joined by Wrath, Hunger and Repentance, successfully convert Hot Well and Induction Chaffer to the Pro-The Henry side (what this means is by no means clear!) of the table argument. Together they fractiously disrespect Condiment Holder (here is more spiting of toxins and some hurling of hot charcoal bricks) Display Ware’s enhancement talent and forming a power committee, excommunicate the Lowerator as the suspected handler of the suspected Foreign Object (Foreign*

*Object remains at its table with the lofty indifference of a robotic stereotype). Eventually saddened, Lowerator and Condiment Holder try to dismount but you (getting into it — for we were shamefully involved and lobed a few objects of our own and furtively kicked those already down) quickly messaged Impatience who, saving-the-day, Fed Em’ To The Dogs with a store robbed lawn modifier until...*

*...after much more fighting...*

∞

Miller (2013) describes this Latourian imperative of relation as that “double-bind of resistant availability” that must be suffered by *every* object, human or otherwise (p.125). This sufferance, which we have previously referred to as a constitutive affect within the de-selfing technology of ascesis,

cannot be expunged. To be *is* to suffer and, outside of classical theism, suffering must characterize both activity and passivity. Available for relation, every object *passively* suffers its passibility to being enlisted, entrained, repurposed, or redistributed by other objects. Moreover, even in *actively* influencing other multiples, each object will suffer the only partially reducible resistance of those objects it means to influence. And it is important to note that, because every object is composed of other objects, every object (God included) must also suffer *itself*.<sup>35</sup> This universality, though, is not simply bad news because suffering is the universal mark of grace. Without exception, grace comes (p.81).

As practicing quasi-objects, just like you and I (and the multitude of quasi-objects that part-constitute us in passing), these micro-gods probe and actively *lure* us into the combative-collaborative making of worlds by only ever *partially* revealing (making available for relation) the processes of their (and our) construction. Again, it is not the settled ‘matter of fact’ that compels things to thought so much as a concern over the matter *resisted* or purged through and by the creation of said ‘fact’. Perhaps this is why, in our alleged modernity, we talk so loudly (in

---

<sup>35</sup> This idea comes from Whitehead via Latour. In *Pandora’s Hope* (1999) Latour writes: “As Whitehead so beautifully proposed, God, too, is slightly overtaken by His Creation, that is, by all that is changed and modified and altered in encountering Him: ‘All actual entities share with God this characteristic of self-causation. For this reason every actual entity also shares with God the characteristic of transcending all other actual entities, *including God*’ (Whitehead [1929] 1978, 223, my italics). Yes, we are indeed made in the image of God, that is, we do not know what we are doing either. We are surprised by what we make even when we have, even when we believe we have, complete mastery. Even a software programmer is surprised by her creation after writing two thousand lines of software; should God not be surprised after putting together a much larger package? Who has ever mastered an action? Show me a novelist, a painter, an architect, a cook, who has not, like God, been surprised, overcome, ravished by what she was-what they were no longer doing” (p.22).

the soberly derisive, yet secretly elated and enchanted, mood of the iconoclast) of the ‘fetish object’; through partiality, or the seduction of the veil, the call to adventure becomes *ever louder* — speculative pilgrimages are launched, and the ©kers (seekers) of *pan-pan* embark upon their boundless ©king adventures.

∞

*The fracas is partially subdued by an arch GAN Glyph called (at the moment of emergence) GREEN REBEL TEA and who sprouts up from one of the knots in the table as if they were fertile soil rather than solid wooden sphincters. MAKING ITSELF LARGE (a loud yet placatory announce-movement) it sprays the group with the Microscopic Colony Amazement Salt and emotionally burns three quarters of the kerfuffle into a plain of regretful conviviality and yoga style embracement enacted with tearful expressions of lingering but not overcomeable hurt.*

∞

Peter Brown (1981), borrowing a thought from Alphonse Dupront, speaks of medieval pilgrimage as a “therapy of distance” (Dupront quoted by Brown, p.87), which we might usefully gloss (through Millar and Latour) as the ‘grace’ attained through the ascetic pragmatism discussed earlier. We recall here the inherently untherapeutic experience of navigating the ‘difficult’ terrain of the Middle Kingdom. In a condition of prolonged liminality, the pilgrim’s senses are hyper-stimulated by an overload of doubt (callings, noise, static), the horizon of certainty ever-receding, never arriving. But then, sustained by the anchoritic ascesis of habit — a therapeutic “holding pattern of minimum consistency” (O’ Sullivan, 2014, p.6) — the pilgrim is able to incorporate or habituate her doubt as a homeostasis. Or if the modern term ‘homeostasis’ is too suggestive of habit as something unchanging and ‘static’ then perhaps Ravaissou’s conception of the habit would again serve us better — a stable disposition of preparation for the processing of constant change.

∞

*A sub-group of ex-fighters groan and attempt to reassemble as per the original table plans. The battlefield is broken, steaming with torn bodies and plaintiff cries but this was expected and even suggested by invite. You can’t make an omelet without cracking a few eggs.*

∞



We might compare the intense gravitational allure of the black box (contingency re-cyclically purged or packed away), to the “inverted magnitude” of the body-part relic that “sharpened the sense of distance and yearning by playing out the long delays of pilgrimage in miniature”. By way of example Brown (1981) writes of the final 150 meter labyrinthine approach to the shrine of Tebessa “as it wound past high walls, swung under arches, crossed courtyards, and finally descended into a small half-submerged chamber”. Similarly, at the shrine of Saint Lawrence in Rome, the pilgrim, after climbing many flights of stairs finds the path blocked by a “grille of solid silver weighing a thousand pounds” (p.87). Lastly he informs us of the “ritual of access” that must be preformed before the shrine of Saint Peter:

Whoever wishes to pray there must unlock the gates which encircle the spot, pass to where he is above the grave and, opening a little window, push his head through and there make the supplication that he needs. (Gregory of Tours, quoted in Brown, p.87).

The ‘call to adventure’ of the black boxed relic is further exemplified through the medieval “art of closed surfaces” (Brown, p.87), where the enclosing reliquary, just like the tiny portals of an anchorite’s tomb, has tiny apertures through which the seeking pilgrim gets only a *partial* glimpse of the knowledge sought. “The opacity of the surfaces heightened an awareness of the ultimate unattainability in this life of the person [object] they had traveled over such wide spaces to touch” (Brown, p.87). Thinking of pilgrimage, incorporated and miniaturized as the ever-receding ‘truth’ of the relic, Brown then asks:

How better to symbolize the abolition of time in such dead, than to add to that an indeterminacy of space? Furthermore, how better to express the paradox of the linking of Heaven and Earth than by an effect of ‘inverted magnitudes,’ by which the object around which boundless associations clustered should be tiny and compact? (p.78)

∞

*GREEN REBEL TEA was only the GAN Glyph’s name when extricating itself from the table. Now it is called AROMA EXPRESS and is commanding the attention of, not only you, but some GAN selected others. A series of waiving away gestures toward those superfluous and beckoning ones toward those solicited made this clear. When we, the solicited, gather around AMAYA BURN (as*

*AROMA EXPRESS is now called) leads you away by a mysteriously patterned path. Through the Gift Wrap Factory the AMAYA BURN is playfully elfish and some of us lot are feeling childish and paedophilic in a falling in love kind of way. Across a vast Jumbotronic display we, the LED, are pixel pixies navigating a brilliant grid of luxurious GAN promotions. Along a thin corridor, ECQUWADOER (previously known as AMAYA BURN) assumes the tilehood of pulsing velonium. Heading north (we having natural compass situated amidst the tubings of our torso) there were some viandial streams (friendly bears tossed us salmon heads) to cross to which our GAN glyph guide becomes a bridge of frozen sticks and her name is now FORTH.*

∞

Here we might recycle back to the problem of the hyphen — that tiny, humble, parasitic glyph (between person-objects, nature-cultures, myth-sciences, medieval-modernisms, fiction-facts and so on) around which ‘boundless associations’ are also ‘clustered’. The hyphen, like a relic or a black box, is also an alluring, propositional entity. It is a scintilla of liminal doubt or a catalyst of indecision that enacts a ‘call to adventure’ — the ascetic pilgrimage between those categories, disciplines, concepts and temporalities that have become overly concretized under the classificatory grid of our modern epistemology. It is also (and here we are back in the enchanted forest where all adventures take place, where we found Quick and his merry, muddled band of historical event re-enactors) a humble stick, a tool with no predetermined utility, its purpose changing according the ‘hand’ that grasps it<sup>36</sup>. Sticking up from the forest floor, or leaning against the wall of a laboratory (careful not to trip!), it has no function other than to provoke curiosity, to generate problems and solutions to problems not yet devised. ‘What could be more prop-ositional than a stick?’ we asked earlier. Media theorist Vilem Flusser (undated), in an unpublished essay drafted for Artforum, muses on this very same question. For Flusser, the relationship between humans and sticks is a fraught one. Humans, he proposes, are dependent upon sticks because, just like the parasite or quasi-object, sticks excite, motivate and enable humans to span the dreadful “abyss” between nature (or ‘noise’, the way things *are* in pure

---

<sup>36</sup> This is to posit the ‘hyphen’ or ‘stick’ as an avatar for Isabelle Stengers (2005) “ecology of practice” — a “tool for thinking” that facilitates overlap and generative exchange between apparently incompatible habits of being. “A tool”, she writes, “can be passed from hand to hand, but each time the gesture of taking it in hand will be a particular one — the tool is not a general means, defined as adequate for a set of particular aims, potentially including the one of the person who is taking it, and it does not entail a judgement on the situation as justifying its use. [...] Here the gesture of taking in hand is not justified by, but both producing and produced by, the relationship of relevance between the situation and the tool” (p.185).

contingency) and culture (or ‘signal’, the way things *ought* to be for humans) (p.1). Most appropriately, the relationship begins in the forest with an enigmatic, other-than-human “taunt” issued by a tree branch. “It is as if a voice had called me from within the branch saying: ‘I dare you to turn me around’, and as if I had followed that calling, that vocation” (p.2). Like Adam and Eve, the human animal cannot resist the challenge issued by the serpentine branch.

Again, this primal calling to create the first tool or ‘stick of knowledge’ is somewhat akin to Weber’s (2005) Protestant-ascetic “task set by God” (p.39) for the challenge of the branch draws the human into an “inebriating adventure” of making increasingly sophisticated stick assemblages (the name given to the technological object ‘Challenger’ couldn’t be more apposite here). By breaking the seductive branch from the forest and “turning it around” the ‘branch’ is transfigured (black boxed) as a ‘stick’ — a “cultural object” or ‘tool’ (linguistic and material) for breaking other branches, making more sticks and clearing more pathways (ibid).

I then use the stick as a kind of third arm, (or leg), and this permits me to see better how arms and legs work: I have gained self-knowledge. As I now walk with my stick in my hand, I do it better than I walked before: I have changed my behavior. Having thus learned that sticks are a kind of leg, and legs are a kind of stick, I can make better sticks next time. And this again permits me to use my legs even better next time (p.2).

Stick-making, for Flusser, is thus analogous to *the* primary anthropo-*techne* (writing, ritual, art, science, technology, etc.) that will (it is hoped, prophesized) elevate and emancipate the human from its lowly position as thing amongst things, a creature ensnared in the apparently purposeless “objective conditions” (p.3) of the noisy, unformatted bush. Unfortunately, the ultimate consequence of this “immemorial stick tradition” (p.2) is that the original, *humble* purpose of clearing a space in the forest (again the ‘imperative of the purge’) is eventually forgotten as it hardens into an addiction. Increasingly captivated by the anthropocentric hubris of its own stick-making achievements, and now giddily enmeshed in the “vertiginous creativity” of making evermore complex anthropo-prosthesis, the condition of the human subject is tragically transformed back into the “objective condition” of being *conditioned by sticks*. The once humble stick now,

*beats back at the stick producer*, who again beats back on the stick, until a Gordian knot of feed-back relations makes it impossible to distinguish between the stick and the stick producer (p.2, italics added).

Flusser's forest parable is thus a tragicomic, cautionary tale of exponential acceleration, of the addictive *telos* of modern hyper-consumption and the liberal humanist ('forest' destroying) project of emancipation 'towards the stars'. The relentless, stick-driven momentum of the modern self-improvement cycle leads to the auto-flagellation of the slap-stick — a "machine logic, something mechanical encrusted on the living" that "has the endlessly escalating structure of an arms race; there is no Hegelian synthesis, merely thesis-antithesis-thesis-antithesis-thesis-antithesis-thesis ..." (Dillon, 2014, p.269).

An arms race, a cold war, mutually assured destruction? What could typify more the 'slap-stick' effects of macro black boxing than the hard binarsim separating two states? The Soviet Union vs. the United States of America, the 'state of nature' vs. the 'state of culture' — this is the 'billiard ball theory' of (international) relations that (IR) neomedievalism problematizes. The allure of the foreign state is taken as an invitation to total emancipation as freedom *from* and mastery *over* the other. No noisy hyphens, no generative middles, no ascetic sufferance of the unknown, no *grace* — just the dialectical imperative toward the total, final purge of all doubt. The generative ascesis of habit (habit as that which internalizes doubt, and is thus produced *by*, and productive *of* world-building change) is calcified as a relentlessly repeating logic, as a voracious addiction to the singular 'truth' of ones own 'one moment state'. No input, no output. Yet, as we learn from Serres, without the sustenance of doubt, without inoculate dosages of the irrational, relations disappear and the system slowly withers in isolation. Such is the tragic story of modern constitution's hard-core 'bifurcation' — a tale of disenchantment, alienation and a future-fixated restorative nostalgia that mourns and rages inside the Weberian 'iron cage'.

Neomedievalism offers a different version of this story. A 'Gordian knot of feed-back relations' between human stick-makers and non-human sticks? This need not describe a cage or prison. Instead it may describe our deep involvement in the *flow* of entangled, yet transient, symbiotic relations that compose the more-than-human processes of worlding. It describes, in other words,

an ontology of *habit*. The ‘machinic’ is not something ‘encrusted’ *on* the living, it is something incorporated or habituated *within* the living as change contracted — an automated anchorage or ‘second nature’ that needn’t overly concretize (and escalate as an endless addiction cycle) so long as it *remains* (which it must, through the Middle Kingdom) available for the processing of doubt and change. It is the yogic (pant shredding) brace of the ascetic practitioner that transforms the *sufferance* of noisy contingency into the quiet grace of achievement, endurance, or being. This is the story of our *continued* (‘never modern’) enchantment with the world (as multiple worlds, diverse temporalities and ontologies). It is not the story of alienation *writ-large* by the grand partitioning (all those macro black boxes!) of modernity, but of our archaic, ascetic capacity for careful dosages of self alienation, to open up the self to the multiplicity of selfhood, to detach from one state while co-crafting bridges to (and recipes for) another, to follow the *flow* of parasites as they continually mutate and shift sites, states, allegiances, forms and attachments. It is not the story of a nostalgia that seeks to restore a (zombie) past, — our ‘edenic’ or ‘true’ nature purged and banished to a ‘previous moment state’ — but a nostalgia which ‘thrives on *algia*’ and attends to the ‘noisy’ callings of a multiplicity of latent (para-human) ‘pasts’ that *still* permeate the multi-temporal present. For sure, the neomedieval story is *still* a story of alienation and purging (for not all parasites are good for the health of a system) but with the understanding that for every purge comes a new influx of doubt, of the alien — the constant *refreshing* of parasites, the eddying flow of ‘alien immigrants’ that facilitates the generative and adaptive habit of ‘being’ or of ‘system’.

∞

*When at a point where our adventuresome party must vertically ascend, the Glyph, to our waning astonishment (reality inevitably and drudgingly creeps in) became an elevator with yet another name (possibly ELEVATOR but reached through Chinese whispers). And so it went for a while. But now was the last of Glyph’s shepherding, and as it left us its current name was lost in the swish-swash of pneumatic doors.*

∞

Julian Yates (2010) likens the persistent callings of the alien (such as Flusser’s ‘branch’) to spine tingling, otherworldly “collect calls” that “resonate within the ‘human’ but whose exteriority

precludes their ready processing.” There is a fault on the line, he tells us, and the uncanny phone call is heard or felt as static: an “overwhelming, potentially cacophonous *prosopopeia*”. Like the nominal proxy ‘Ylem’, we give a legion of anthropomorphic names to gods (like we put a temporary handle on *Pan* as a parasitic ‘being of pure relation’) in an attempt to invite non-human parasite entities “not granted citizenship [to our ‘one moment state’] inside the *oikos* or collective” (p.225).

Knock. Knock. Who’s there? The common world that you have arrogated to the state of exception that founds and funds the ‘human.’ Knock. Knock. Who’s there? No. It’s not that easy. There’s no relay that allows you to answer. There is no guarantee that your physiology or perceptual apparatus, even when extended, enhanced or properly disabled, will enable you to recognize or to receive the call as anything other than noise, static, or silence (p.226).

Again, to habituate, to think and practice in the Middle Kingdom — to navigate (with hyphens and sticks) the neo-medieval *pancosmia* — we must take such noisy, multi-temporal, otherworldly “collect calls” seriously. Not as the forked tongue of some ominous, malignant ‘enemy’, but as calls to speculative pilgrimage. This would be, as we have said, an arduous journey that, for neophyte neomedievalists (such is our permanent condition), requires the cultivation of an ludic-ascetic art of suffering the encroachment of alien beings and practices without treating them solely as a fertile new frontiers to be grasped and colonized by exhilarating new advances in techno-scientific ‘discovery’. Alien ontologies, enigmatically ‘strange’ or ‘archaic’ modes of existence and non-existence (such as those we deem to be ‘religious’) are all too often pre-judged as urgent problems to be fixed, analyzed, judged, debunked, macro black-boxed and ultimately claimed as epistemological prizes in the furiously accumulative and future invested ‘arms race’ of ‘knowledge production’. To ‘smell the smoke’ of our colonial imperative is to resist that overwhelming temptation to render the unknown transparent and self-evident, to *force* the alien to speak to *us* as ‘fact’. It is to query the compulsion to bank the past as *past* — phenomena accounted for, safely deposit boxed, traded and consumed through the professionalized market time of the neoliberal academy (‘anthropocene’ anyone? that is *so* last year!). Perhaps a pause is required. Not for endless rumination — the fatigue of desperation and overwhelming stress of the dialectical ‘arms race’ lives here — but for ascetic mediation on the generative materiality of sustained doubt.

∞

*We are now arrived at the crust of the giant Scots-French-Canadian pie. This is truly the middle of our pilgrimage — the place where one retires to express unwanted leftovers. Expression of the unwanted, whether at the beginning, middle or end of the day, is surely one reason for our much-debated existence?*

∞

As Serres (1995a) writes, we “never hit upon truly atomic, multiple, indivisible terms that were not themselves, once again, composite”. In the frenetic, addicted pursuit of elemental truth, “[t]he bottom always falls out...The irreducibly individual recedes like the horizon, as our analysis advances” (p.2-3). This why Donna Haraway (2016) makes her (dare we say ‘ascetic’?) plea for a “staying with the trouble” that “does not require such a relationship to times called the future” but instead “requires learning to be truly present, not as a vanishing pivot between awful or edenic pasts and apocalyptic or salvific futures, but as mortal critters entwined in myriad *unfinished* configurations of places, times, matters...” (p.1, italics added). Again, just like medieval pilgrims, should we not try to accept the ‘unfinished’ nature of things with the practiced grace of asceticism? A ‘therapy of distance’ yes, but of a distance compacted, topologically folded into Dinshaw’s ‘fuller, denser, more crowded *now*’.

Eco wrote that our own neomedieval age would be an ‘immense work’ of ‘constant translation’ and ‘bricolage’. Indeed translation is key, but, inspired by Asad (2009) and in keeping with our neomedieval perspective, it should be noted that we are of course “deal[ing] with translation in a double sense: interpreting from one language into another, and conveying sacred relics from one shrine to another” (p.2). It is all about moving and the capacity *to be moved*. As explored above, relic translation (and relic-ing or black boxing in general) comes with a healthily ascetic, immunological dosage of *humilitas* built in. This is translation as “cultivating response-ability; that is also collective knowing and doing [...] accepting the risk of relentless contingency, of putting relations at risk with other relations, from unexpected worlds” (Haraway, 2016, p.34). Our neomedieval ‘matter of concern’ then, is not with translation *per se* but with the unidirectional and macro-appropriative aspects of our ‘enlightening’ cultural translations. Again, to reverse the modern anthropological gaze, how strange it might be to observe how, after

attending the ‘calling’ of some alien or ‘indigenous’ field, the professional social scientist (or any expert in the analysis and explication of some endarkened forest) is utterly compelled to “write up ‘their people’ [...] in the conventions of *representation* already circumscribed by their discipline, institutional life, and wider society” (Asad, p.193). Hidden behind the benign face of impartiality there is a passionately held assumption that “translation requires the adjustment of ‘foreign’ discourses to their new site” (p.199). What kind of desperation is betrayed by locking the back box up so tightly and hiding the key between lines of exacting text? In such traditionally Eurowestern biased translations (always of course couched as *unbiased*), we might say there is a lack of *humilitas* in the refusal to accept (and indeed *suffer*) the disruptive, episteme-challenging (and potentially PAN destroying) influence of ‘those people’ or things who are *not*, and never can be, our own to judge. The academic audience, writes Asad, “is waiting to read about another mode of life and to manipulate the text it reads according to established rules, *not to learn to live a new way of life*” (p.199). Instead of a *negotiation* between differing ontologies (which would result in a newly co-constructed *habitus* or *corpus*), we have *colonization* — another tragic case of ‘misplaced concreteness’ whereby a translation is ‘universally’ accepted due to apparent (and therapeutic) ease of its assimilation into the parlance of the dominant culture<sup>37</sup>. All the alien contaminants, pollutants or parasites have seemingly been exorcised or purged to make them fit for ‘universal’ application. This we might call a ‘dodgy’ translation since the ‘news of an other’, the excess ‘noise’ of the ‘outside’ is silenced or forced to speak as evidence based ‘fact’ (or ‘facts’ that will inevitably arrive in due course).

We could thus speculate, with help from Miller (2013), on the (neo) medieval practice of asceticism or *humilitas*, as a kind of ‘iconophilia’ that operates as an alternative (or para-site) to the modern West’s iconoclastic ideology of detached critique:

---

<sup>37</sup> We have seen this in modern anthropologies of art and the question of the Fine Art status of the non-western artifact. In a footnote on this topic, Asad (1993) asks “what exactly is the purpose of constructing a series whose items can all easily be recognized by cultivated Westerners as instances of *the phenomenon* of art?” The act of translation is vital for the shedding and sharing of light between disparate modes of being, but, as Asad continues, “is it not precisely when one abandons conventional perspectives, or pre-established series, for opportunistic comparison that illumination (as opposed to recognition) *may* be achieved?” (p.52-53).



Iconophilia is a willingness to stay with objects and suffer the grace of their work, the grace of both their making-available and their packing-away. Iconophilia doesn't simply avail itself of an available through-line, it enacts a nearness to it (p.131).

With the humility of the iconophiliac, the colonial impulse to expel or contain the alien encounter is replaced by a practiced, cautious readiness (and art or craft) to embrace the risk of contamination. The contaminant or parasite is not to be immediately expelled but internalized, or hosted, in carefully managed dosages of inoculation and thus explored as potential material for yet-to-be-realized ways of being and of being *together*. In 'good' translation, as Asad contends, the discourses of *all* those involved should "retain what may be a discomfiting — even *scandalous* — presence within the receiving language" (p.199, italics added). In the speculative ascesis of para-academic method, not only is the 'scandalous' allowed to effect a (possibly quite painful) change, but there is also an embrasure of the discomfort arising from the 'scandal' of upsetting those conventions held by one's institution, funding bodies or esteemed peers. When one's credibility becomes in-credible, when the probability of your thesis veers towards the improbable, is this good or bad? Well the trick is, of course, to let go of such binary yes/no judgments. Here again we might recall the 'scandal' of the Thomas Quick case, where the patient's constructed world contaminates the world as constructed by scientific realists. Certainly this may have been quasi-intentional and emotionally driven by cominglings of abject despair and academic ambition, but the outcome was the co-construction of a para-normal, in-credibly dynamic and 'improbably hybrid' "ecology of practices" (Stengers, 1995). This is not to say that the case of Quick was victimless or to abandon the capacity for moral discernment. Again it is rather a case of suspending the critical imperative — 'staying with the trouble' to habituate, to *feel out* the Middle Kingdom as it is re-enacted through the generative, sacrificial interplay between professional hosts and amateur parasite, professional parasites and amateur host. Like the extreme asceticism of the medieval anchorite, the anchoritism of the 'Cult of Quick' acts as heuristic shock to emancipatory thought; it allures us to speculate on the strange, irrational rhizomic order of things — to witness how specialized knowledge can get in the way (the generation of knowledge as the generation of blind sides) of an embodied, habitual understanding of the ancient (and futural) 'fiery core' where 'religion' and 'ritual' bleed, *intractably*, into 'secularism' and 'scientific' procedure. All this has little to do with 'truth' or 'falsity' and everything to do with world-changing traction and power — the process-material power of 'live'

storytelling.

∞

*Not so sure? Fair enough and join our scout club. Have a wee sit down and a nice cup of tea, then lets see what its all about. Careful now everybody!*

∞

Again with the ‘difficult middles’. Again to concede that it is *by no means easy* for knowledge professionals to consider letting their venerable, hard-won habits of thought and exacting methodologies be broken and transformed during the translation process. As argued earlier, to *adapt to* one’s objects of study rather than to distill and *appropriate* their ‘truth’ is to renounce authority and authorship. If one wants to *become with* the practices of others, i.e., to learn ‘a new way of living,’ then that requires an ascetic ritual of *poesis* — an exercising of that ‘religious’ or ‘storytelling’ muscle that liquefies the separation of objectivity from subjectivity — that fuzzy logic of parable and metaphor that provides a way to speak with multiple things, peoples, times and places without the precise conceptualization (and colonial capture) of an essential ‘multiplicity’. It is, in other words, to become (and *confess* to becoming) a para-modern *amateur*, an impassioned co-fabricator (like Quick), a neomedieval philosopher-poet of quasi-material worlds.

One cannot build a material world, PAN or *corpus* without having skin-in-the-game (a commitment we so often attribute to the spectral yet unshakable ‘belief systems’ of others). Need that be academic suicide? Is there not, in the living, breathing, eating, shitting, *situated practice* of the professional (social) scientist *always already* a set of ritual dispositions that might be considered *amateur*? Isn’t ‘imposter syndrome’ a symptom of pro/am liminality? Why should ‘amateur’ subjectivity and ‘professional’ objectivity be regarded as mutually *hyper-exclusive*, mutually *hyper-purging* positions? To quote Fradenburg again, are not “rigor and passion *both* *passional*”, do not both ‘bifurcated’ positions constantly overlap and *en-form* each other in the Middle Kingdom — our enchanted forest of hybrid ‘monsters’ where ‘everything happens’? Expert knowledge or professional knowledge? Why not a ‘fuzzy’ epistemology of both? As Whitehead (1964) famously writes in *The Concept of Nature*, “[a]ll we know of nature is in the

same boat, to sink or swim together” (p.148). Surely there is *always* a desire to ‘learn to live a new way of life’ that *coincides* with the institutional obligation to ‘write up’, theorize and ‘explain away’ the worlding practices of others? Surely, *before* any theorizing is committed to paper, *before* any categorizations are black boxed up, every professional knows — through an intuition embodied and vitalized through *in-habitation* — that the world is *not* a set of symbols to be externally decoded and interpreted and that, as Asad proposes, there will always be many circumstances wherein a “dramatic performance, the execution of a dance, or the playing of a piece of music might be more apt” (p.193). Perhaps we are *all*, to varying degrees (and levels of confession), *para-academicians* — fiction-theorists, super-feelers, patient witnesses, good translators and real-time *tellers of stories*. As Thomas King (2003) observes, “stories are wondrous things. And they are dangerous” and yet, “the truth about stories is, *that’s all we are*” (p.2, italics added). In the trembling hands of the para-modern storyteller, our translations become (again, *we hope*) “transformed instances of the original, not authoritative textual representations of it. As such, they could become part of our living heritage and not merely of our social science” (Asad, p.193).

Tim Ingold (2015) describes a ‘calling’ dream he later translated into the following lines of poetry:

*Often in the midst of my endeavors  
Something ups and says  
“Enough of words, Let’s meet the world.”*

Ingold’s translation of the translators dream is worth quoting at length;

I call it [translation] correspondence, in the sense not of coming up with some exact match or simulacrum for what we find in the things and happenings going on around us, but of answering to them with interventions, questions, and responses of our own. It is as though we were involved in an exchange of letters. “Let’s meet the world,” for me, is an invitation — an exhortation or command even — to join in such a correspondence. It is, at the same time, a complaint against the cowardice of scholars who would preferably retreat into a stance that I once heard described as “tangentialism,” in which our meeting is but a glance that shears away from the uncomfortable business of mixing our own endeavors too closely with the lives and times of those with whom our researches have brought us into contact. (p.vii)

Through *pan-pan* we too endeavor to ‘meet the world’. Or rather to meet *worlds*, worlds both familiar and unfamiliar, both ‘medieval’ and ‘modern’, both ‘factual’ and ‘fictitious’ — every *thing* (like Thomas Quick and his surrogate family of expert investigators) in the same boat, sinking or swimming together. Our neomedieval *pancosmia* is indeed an ‘immense work of bricolage’, an ‘ecology of para-normal practices’ performed by anchoretic avatars of radical ‘middleness’, para-site managers that broker communications *within* and *as* the hosting PAN of *pan-pan* while mudding the channels and preventing the, far too hasty, macro-determination of future outcomes. We have spoken of ‘theory-fiction’, but perhaps even then we have been too hasty. For in the guts of *pan-pan* the ‘hyphen’ or ‘stick’ dissolves *in situ*, fully absorbed into flesh of the *corpus* though the ascetic, peristaltic pulse of the ritual process. If we pilgrimize the forest malls with skin-in-the-game, we eat and shit there too. We thread our stories (like the fictions threaded through this paper), like the intestine coil threads through the animal, through a life of flesh and thought. Like our bacterial gut-biome, *pan-pan* is our ‘second brain’ — a brain we share with you and all our gestational swarms of neuro-plastic miscellanies and admixtures, swirling steams of Ylem infused with endo-exogenous neurotransmitters.

Our culture lives not just ‘in the head’ as modern mentalists would flush it, but here in the middle, in the stinking tubes, the fiery libidinal core of the torso. (Dare we gaze at that fiery sun? *Of course!*) All is unpasteurized, bubbling, and ready to explode rudely across the brushed aluminum (kitchen) surfaces of our rational thought. With our ludic asceticism, and ritual aestheticism, we always combine *athleticism* — not ‘arm day’ or ‘leg day’ or ‘head day’ but ‘core day’. Every day, all day. It’s all in the adversarial mix and *the mixer sweats profusely*.

Since we do not *macro* black box ‘religion’ or ‘ritual’ as archaisms from a primitive ‘age of faith’ (a historical black box of monolithic proportions), we do not choose to “bruise [our] shins against the problem of ‘belief’” (Justice, 2008, p.1). Our neomedieval investigations of the para-normal leave the problem of “how to excise the tumor without killing the patient” (Justice, p.4) out on the sidewalk to fend for itself (not to worry, we’ll see you later). Again, this is not to say we do not purge — we cannot escape that pragmatic imperative — but while purging we hold fast to the irrational logic that when the host chases one parasite out another creeps in. Perhaps the same one

with another face or name? Whatever it's given form or name, we welcome the newcomer (like the science institution might welcome the myth-maker) with warm curiosity. Come on in, make yourself at home. We are all parasite gods here, let's make something.

“What is cancer?”, we might ask alongside Serres (1995b). Something *like* Thomas Quick? Something “like a parasite, with which we must negotiate a contract of symbiosis?” Serres conjectures that the best treatment for cancer may be a “method that will profit from its dynamism” rather than engaging in a ‘cold war’ or ‘arms race’ “that is always lost because we and the enemy find renewed force in the relationship”.

If we were to implacably clean up all the germs, as Puritanism would have us do, they would soon become resistant to our techniques of elimination and require new armaments. Instead, why not culture them in curdled milk, which sometimes results in delicious cheeses?” (p.195)

Let's put another handle on the pan. *pan-pan* is slapstick, and pure cheese. It is an anchoritic guide for cheese makers.

∞

*I'll tell you lads and lassies that the very bottom of this Scots-French-Canadian pie is soggy and lying in the half-baked mix is the most charming and beautiful fox. Appearances can be deceptive though (this is because fox comes from faux which means artificial, bogus, dummy, ersatz, factitious, fake, false, imitation, imitative, man-made, mimic, mock, pretend, sham, simulated, substitute, synthetic, etcetera) and if, out of traveller's curiosity or procreative lust, you poke the fox with a stick, this charming devil will leap up and ensnare you in his mouth. Still you laugh and make moves to pet for it is written elsewhere that, having no hands, the chomp is the handshake of fox and you are fully expectant that together you will go about sweet things in the wrong and right ways. Gazing up from the soggy mixture, hand still clutched in the mandibles of your unexpected lover, you fancy you see, at the top of the GAN, a shadowy figure dancing through the rustling Canopy. A bittersweet refrain floats down; “Oh ye gods please, kill me now, will this ever end? Out of the frying pan into the fire out of the fire into the frying pan...”*

*As if in answer, and on some great reverbing guitar chord blast, the pungent gravy of the pie mix bubbles up grotesquely until from it issued a gigantic triumphal sausage, and it seemed to you as though this ultimate wurst were being harangued and borne up by a tremendous swirling soundscape of bugle blasts, barking hounds, thundering hoofs and lords shouting ya-wowzaaa! as though a great fox hunt was underway. Panicked pan chefs look on through side doors,*

*nervous eyes looking fretfully all around, noses twitch and appliances beeped with readiness.*

*The increasingly bloated sausage continued to grow to the size of a vascularized 'totality-class' blimp and through its tautening skin could be perceived a writhing, probing commotion of impatient forms. The guests of the table Medi Terra and those nearby left their seats and began to back off, cowering and with defensive gestures until suddenly, with a cyclone of confetti-seeded wind, a Meridian Elite Blade sliced through the membrane and out splashed the largest real giant we had ever seen in our life. He was bearded-as-fuck but otherwise quite naked apart from some kind of fancy umbilicus coiled round his midriff and over his left shoulder. Slipping and sliding wetly to his feet he skillfully punched our head clean off, took our seat at the table, downed our tankard of ale and gobbled our trencher, all in one swift combo of pummeling, grasping and gulping. After a hearty belch he looks around the shocked crowd appraisingly and then back at the increasingly flaccid, but still very lively, sausage. Standing up and bracing himself he begins tugging mightily on the umbilicus until something inside starts to roar, thrash and emerge.*

*The mushroom mother that issues forth starts to flex muscles and pep itself up.*

*Get your pans out pilgrims! A paradigm plague draws near.*



## Appendix: *pan-pan* - the exhibition.

(SAW Video and Knot Project Space. October 19 – November 16, 2019)

Documentation included with the thesis submission. Uploaded to YouTube at:  
<https://youtu.be/CTrMmeIHm0U>

The exhibition version of *pan-pan* by the Confraternity of Neoflagellants is very much a continuation of the books neomedieval ‘panning’ methodology of remix and bricolage. Produced in collaboration with curator Neven Lochhead, the installation unfolds as a kind of intestinal, gestational gut-brain matrix with visitors (parasites, in-gestational guests) encountering various interacting ‘active ingredients’ (sounds, videos, texts objects, the visitors themselves) as they push (PUSHH!) through the heavily curtained and blacked out space (a literal ‘black box’ or host). As described on the gallery’s website<sup>38</sup>, the exhibition was intended to replicate the books emphasis on the auto-poiesis of world making — a culinary-material process (the weird cookery was both metaphorical and actual) to which the ‘artists’ contributed without assuming full authorship or mastery. It was intended as para-human living system that continuously reconstructs itself after being ‘fed’ various parasitic materials derived from both the book and from previous Confraternity works that have shaped *pan-pan*’s greater cosmology. Although the installation was eventually disassembled, the process continues...*pan-pan* will return, parasites refreshed, later this year. Precise time and venue TBA>

Below is the Confraternity’s own promotional text for *pan-pan*:

-----  
‘You do not interpret the [\*--\*]. You are [\*--\*].’

- The Duke of Biarritz Malware Voices: 13.1

Culture lives here? Gyeah?

Taped together only by the blak and blo brocages of blasfeme secreted by two sandgrabbers who accrued and thickened your presence over time? Can’t justify the how-low-can-you-go MHz of those Seinheiser HD800 EVP collect calls? Feel an overriding sense of ennui languidly inhazing to-tal-ly Bogan

---

<sup>38</sup> SAW Video’s webpage for *pan-pan*: <https://www.sawvideo.com/knot/exhibit/pan-pan>. A two-channel video of the 5-channel *pan-pan* video installation is available online at: <https://youtu.be/DGU2JBhN6AI>

seul-anise 'Hot Box Menace'? Stubbornly inert heaps of no-flow interference merely placating the micro-movements of bolt-on contentworld? ©king a little more than 99.07% blobbogramatic matters of actual gästermagoria?

Citesein o' Metro Kingdom! Blow off all your fun socks. Just PUSH! Wel-bigoon ingestees make fierce pH and totally gutshaft straight through gelatinous copper. MHzzzzzzzzzzzzah! Lose your unknown cargo unto the swirling quotidian-circuits that peristaltically convulse the gastro-investigative wambuterus of pan-pan.

pan-pan. Unpasturised horse-class autogenerative REXLLA Plusigone [STATIC] fermented Can-Con dolloromoburping a relentless low-end patina of vagrant WeRLtd-certified New Forrest Mall mondegreen. pan-pan. Pressure-farmed parasitical panarchic pool of future-dead mould-casts, auditory pareidolia divination, defibrillated [userexperience] and compurgation swarms topped with a steamin' hot speziality SCOBYGrandeu®.

PUSHH! Beaver-gutslammin' Oh [UX] Henry! vending phenomenon that faithfully reconstruct all traces of deuterocanonical clickbait ever left in mash amidst mortrewes of birth-basket by runkyllled prongs. PUSSSHHHHH! Bloody-edge WrinkleTech™ Can-Crock Pots that blammanger a donk on all ylemmy stick-craft memes and smash the basal buttons of even the grubbiest gossamer silicate dermis. Gyeah!

REDUCE! Engorge the inevitable reversibility of this spore-bearing crescendo by playing the sous-chef vainly attempting to remove the cous from the cous-cous. REDUCE! Redemption by re-viewing review of redemption of Amazon CAD\$50 Gift Voucher Redemption Review.

Culture lives; here! gYEAHHHHHHH!!

\*--\* YOUR CUSTOM FULL COLOR LOGO HERE

-----



## Bibliography

- Alighieri, D. (2004). *Inferno*. Trans. Allen Mandelbaum, New York: Random House Publishing Group.
- Asad, T. (2009). *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*. Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press.
- Bateson, G. (2000). *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. University of Chicago Press.
- Benjamin, W. (2007). *Illuminations*. Trans. Harry Zohn, New York: Random House, Inc.
- Bennett, J. (2001). *The enchantment of modern life: Attachments, crossings, and ethics*. Princeton University Press.
- Bennett, J. (2004). The Force of Things: Steps Toward an Ecology of Matter. *Political theory*, 32(3), 347-372.
- Boym, S. (2007). Nostalgia and its discontents. *The Hedgehog Review*, 9(2), 7-19.
- Brown, P. (1981). *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bull, H. (1977). *The Anarchical Society: a Study of World Order*. Columbia University Press.
- Burckhardt, J. (1945). *The civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*. Trans. S.G.C. Middlemore, London: Phaidon Press, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bynum, C. W. (1991). *Fragmentation and redemption: Essays on gender and the human body in medieval religion* (p. 11). New York: Zone Books
- Bynum, C. (1997) Wonder. *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 102, Issue 1, 1–26.
- Bynum, C. (2012). *Christian materiality: an essay on religion in late medieval Europe*. New York: MIT Press.
- Cohen, J. J. (1999). *Of giants: Sex, monsters, and the Middle Ages*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Cohen, J.J. (2000). Introduction: Midcolonial. In *The Postcolonial Middle Ages* (pp. 1-17). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cohen, J. J. (2003). *Medieval identity machines*. University of Minnesota Press.
- De Certeau, M. (1988). *The Writing of History*. Columbia University Press.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1987). *A Thousand Plateaus*. Trans. Brian Massumi, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1994). *What is Philosophy?*. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell, New York: Columbia University Press
- De Puydt, P. E. (2016). Panarchy. In Tucker, A., & De Bellis, G. P. (Eds.). *Panarchy: Political Theories of Non-territorial States*. (pp. 21-36). New York: Routledge.
- Dillon, B. (2014). *Objects in This Mirror*. Berlin: Sternberg Press.
- Dinshaw, C. (2012). *How Soon is Now?: Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and The Queerness of Time*. Duke University Press.
- Eco, U. (1986). *Travels in Hyperreality: Essays*. Trans. William Weaver, San Diego, New York, and London: Harcourt, Brace & Company.
- Flusser, V (undated). On being Subject to Objects. (for Artforum New York), unpublished. Retrieved May 13, 2016, <http://www.flusserbrasil.com/arte119.pdf>.

- Fradenburg, L. A. (1997). So That We May Speak of Them: Enjoying the Middle Ages. *New Literary History*, 28(2), 205-230.
- Foucault, M., Fernet-Betancourt, R., Becker, H., Gomez-Müller, A., & Gauthier, J. D. (1987). The ethic of care for the self as a practice of freedom: An interview with Michel Foucault on January 20, 1984. *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 12(2-3), 112-131.
- Foucault, M., Martin, L. H., Gutman, H., & Hutton, P. H. (1988). *Technologies of the self: A seminar with Michel Foucault*. University of Massachusetts Press.
- Foucault, M. (1996) Friendship as a Way of Life. In *Foucault Live: Collected Interviews, 1961- 1984*. Ed. Sylvère Lotringer. Trans. Lysa Hochroth and John Johnson, New York: Semiotext(e), 310.
- Geary, P. J. (1994). *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages*. Cornell University Press.
- Goodfellow, I., Pouget-Abadie, J., Mirza, M., Xu, B., Warde-Farley, D., Ozair, S. & Bengio, Y. (2014). Generative Adversarial Nets. In *Advances In Neural Information Processing Systems*. Neural Information Processing Systems Foundation, Inc, (pp. 2672-2680).
- Greenblatt, S. (2011). *The swerve: How the world became modern*. New York: WW Norton & Company.
- Grosz, E. (2013). Habit Today: Ravaisson, Bergson, Deleuze and Us. *Body & Society*, 19(2-3), 217-239.
- Guattari, F. (1995) *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*. Trans Bains, P. and Pefanis, J.. Sydney: Power Publications.
- Halperin, D. (1995) *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Haraway, D. J. (2016). *Staying with the trouble: Making kin in the Chthulucene*. Duke University Press.
- Harris, J. G. (2010). *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Heath, C. (2013). *The Confessions of Convicted Swedish Serial Killer Sture Bergwall, AKA Thomas Quick*. [online] GQ. Available at: <https://www.gq.com/story/thomas-quick-serial-killer-august-2013> [Accessed 11 Feb. 2019].
- Hill, B. (Dir). (2015). *The Confessions of Thomas Quick*. UK and Sweden, Century Films, Film i Väst, Filmgate.
- Hogg, N., & Mulholland, N. (2013). *thN Lng folk 2go: Investigating Future Premoderns™*. New York: Punctum Books.
- Hogg, N., & Mulholland, N. (2017). WeRLtd! Bestiary 4Achieving Imitation Doxa. in S Wheeler (ed.), *Dark Mountain*. 11 edn, The Dark Mountain Project, London, pp. 146-155.
- Ingold, T. (2015) "Foreword" In Vannini, P. (ed). *Non-representational Research Methodologies: An Introduction*. (pp. 11-28). New York: Routledge.
- Joy, E. (2011). *An Improbable Manner of Being: Medieval Hagiography, Queer Studies, and Lars von Trier's Breaking the Waves*. Retrieved March 25, 2015, from [http://www.siue.edu/~ejoy/Improbable\\_Manner\\_UWA2011.html#\\_ftn4](http://www.siue.edu/~ejoy/Improbable_Manner_UWA2011.html#_ftn4)
- Joy, E., & Masciandaro, N. (2011). Spontaneous Acts of Scholarly Combustion. Online. Accessed on 30/04/2015. <http://punctumbooks.com/about/>
- Justice, S. (2008). Did the Middle Ages Believe in their Miracles? *Representations*, 103(1), 1-29.
- Kant, I. (2006). *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. Trans. Robert B. Loudon, Cambridge University Press.
- King, T. (2003). *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative*. Toronto: House of Anansi.
- Latour, B. (1993). *We Have Never Been Modern*. Trans. Catherine Porter, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

- Latour, B. (1999). *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Latour B. (2013) *Rejoicing: Or the Torments of Religious Speech*. Cambridge and Malden: Polity Press.
- Latour, B. (2014) "What Is the Style of Matters of Concern?" In Gaskill, N., & Nocek, A. (eds ) (2014). *The Lure of Whitehead*. University of Minnesota Press, 92-126
- Machen, A (1894). *The Great God Pan and The Inmost Light*. London: John Lane
- Malabou, C. (2008). Addiction and Grace: Preface to Félix Ravaisson's *Of Habit*. In Ravaisson, F. *Of Habit*, pp. vii-xx.
- MacKendrick, K. (2010). The Multipliable Body. *postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies*, 1(1), 108- 114.
- Masciandaro, N. (2012). The Para-Academia Series: Panel Discussion on Para Academic Publishing & Book Party. The Public School New York. Online. Accessed on 11/23/2013. <http://thepublicschool.org/node/28961>
- Meillassoux, Q. (2010). *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*. Trans. Ray Brassier, London, New York: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). *Phenomenology of Perception*. Trans. Colin Smith, London, New York: Routledge.
- Miller, A. S. (2013). *Speculative Grace: Bruno Latour and Object-Oriented Theology*. Fordham University Press.
- Mitchell, A.J. (2014). *Becoming Human: The Matter of the Medieval Child*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Nietzsche, F. (1995). "On the Utility and Liability of History for Life." In *Unfashionable Observations*. Trans. Richard T. Gray, Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Phillips, P. J. (2013). *Medieval Animal Trials: Justice For All*. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press.
- Ravaisson, F. (2008). *Of Habit*. trans. C. Carlisle and M. Sinclair, London: Continuum.
- Robertson, K. (2010). *Medieval Materialism: A Manifesto*. *Exemplaria*, 22(2), 99-118.
- Ruggie, J. G. (1993). Territoriality and beyond: problematizing modernity in international relations. *International organization*, 47(1), 139-174.
- Sennett, R. (2008). *The Craftsman*. London, New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Serres, M. (1977). *Hermes IV: La Distribution*. Paris: Editions de Minuit.
- Serres, M. (1982). *Hermes: Literature, Science, Philosophy*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Serres, M. (2007). *The parasite* (Vol. 1). University of Minnesota Press.
- Serres, M. (1995a). *Genesis*. Trans. G. James and J. Nielson. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Serres, M., & Latour, B. (1995b). *Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time*. University of Michigan Press.
- Serres, M. (2007). *The parasite* (Vol. 1). University of Minnesota Press.
- Stengers, I. (2005). "Introductory Notes on an Ecology of Practices." *Cultural Studies Review*, vol. 11, no. 1, 183-196.
- Stengers, I. (2012). "Reclaiming Animism." *E-flux*, vol. 36. PDF Available online: [http://film.ncu.edu.tw/word/Reclaiming\\_Animism.pdf](http://film.ncu.edu.tw/word/Reclaiming_Animism.pdf) (accessed Aug 5 2014)
- Turner, V. (1977). *The Ritual Process. Structure and Anti-Structure*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.
- Viveiros de Castro, E. (2015). *Cannibal Metaphysics*. Trans. Peter Skafish, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Weber, M. (2005). *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Trans: Talcott Parsons, London: Routledge.

Whitehead, A. N. (1927) *Religion in the Making*. New York: Macmillan.

Whitehead, A. N. (1964). *The Concept of Nature: The Turner Lectures Delivered in Trinity College, November 1919. 1920*. Cambridge University Press.

Whitehead, A. N. (1967). *Adventures of Ideas*. New York: The Free Press.

Whitehead, A. N. (1978) *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*. ed. D. R. Griffin and D. W. Sherburne, New York: The Free Press.

Whitehead, A. N. (1964). *The Concept of Nature: The Turner Lectures Delivered in Trinity College, November 1919. 1920*. Cambridge University Press.

Whitehead, A. N., & Price, L. (2001). *Dialogues of Alfred North Whitehead* (Vol. 84). David R. Godine Publisher.

Woodard, B. (2010) *Mad Speculation and Absolute Inhumanism: Lovecraft, Ligotti, and the Weirder of Philosophy*. *Continent.*, 1(1), 3-13.