

Neomedieval *Peregrinatio in Stabilitate*:

On the use of fourfold allegory in performance fictioning

Abstract

The responsibilities and vows owed by medieval monastics to their cloistered communities, aside from other practicalities, made leaving the monastery to embark on pilgrimage difficult. Emphasising the spiritual and allegorical character of pilgrimage—in which—the physical journey merely represented the individual moral journey from sin to grace and the collective ascent from Earth into the Heavenly Jerusalem—medieval monastics developed a set of meditational practices historiographically referred to as *peregrinatio in stabilitate*. These practices enabled pilgrimage to be conducted through the imagination while remaining within the sanctity of the cloister.

It has been hypothesised that climate change could increase the future incidence of pandemics thereby making the imposition of lockdowns and other non-pharmaceutical interventions more and more commonplace. This prospect is understood to not only threaten the future viability of conducting many forms of fieldwork but to further damage our already-weakened collective capacity to imagine emancipatory futures from within ever more restricted presents. Responding thereto this paper proposes a neomedieval method, analogous to the medieval practice of *peregrinatio in stabilitate*, by which self-isolating anchoritic practitioners may perform world-creating fictions from the safety and stability of their own cloisters.

Following the work of David Burrows and Simon O'Sullivan, neomedieval *peregrinatio in stabilitate* is proposed as a form of performance fictioning and justified according to a constructivist methodology: here it is assumed that performance fictioning has a mythopoetic capacity to not only describe realities but to create them and that imaginary fieldwork functions as 'the catalyst not for judgement or education but for the articulation and actualisation of [...] a people to come'. Medieval *peregrinatio in stabilitate* and resources used by its historical practitioners are discussed in order to demonstrate the performative qualities of the proposed practice's historical antecedent while a commentary on the concept of neomedievalism details the nature of the relation between medieval and neomedieval *peregrinatio in stabilitate*. Finally, drawing upon Fredric Jameson's Allegory and Ideology, this article finds fourfold medieval allegory to provide a model for the development of complex neomedieval performance fictions that may engender new modes of subjectivity and forms of political agency.

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Introduction

Long life to the Middle Ages and to the dreaming of them, provided that it is not the dream of reason. We have already generated too many monsters.

Umberto Eco, 1987

Drawing upon 400 years of data, a recent study found that the probability of a pandemic of equal severity to COVID–19 occurring in any given year is around 2% and rising quickly (Marani et al. 2021). The increasing incidence of pandemics, driven by globalisation and climate change, raises the awful prospect that those who declared the arrival of a “new normal” in the spring of 2020 may be proved right, that lockdowns and other non–pharmaceutical methods of containing diseases may become commonplace. Such an alarming vision raises innumerable concerns, amongst which one may consider the future of fieldwork and those avenues of scholarship that rely thereupon.

However, in the face of potential restrictions on travel in the future, the possibility of an interiorised form of fieldwork always remains to us that necessitates neither violation of any enforced *regula* nor exit from the safety and *stabilitas* of one’s own *cellula*.¹ The following article proposes such a lockdown–proof fieldwork method in the form of a mythopoetic practice of performance fiction: a neomedieval practice of *peregrinatio in stabilitate*.²

In describing the proposed fieldwork method as a form of performance fictioning, I draw on the work of theorists David Burrows and Simon O’Sullivan, who construe such practices as ‘engendering new subjectivities and collectivities [...] through actions and performances’ in which ‘different pasts and futures are manifested and made coextensive’ (Burrows and O’Sullivan 2019, 6).³ Following an introduction to the concept of performance fictioning, this article will define the medieval practice of *peregrinatio in stabilitate* with reference to historiographical literature. The discussion will then articulate the particular function that this historical model plays in the proposed methodology, namely as not merely half of a descriptive allegory but rather one level of a fourfold allegory that ‘helps set up further conditions—contours and coordination points—for the production of a different mode of being (and thus [...] a different world) from within already existing ones’ (Burrows and O’Sullivan 2019, 18).

Neomedieval *peregrinatio in stabilitate* is proposed as a substitute for fieldwork methods, such as those of land artist Robert Smithson, that necessitate the practitioner’s first-hand critical and creative engagement with a given landscape. As is evident in “A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey” and “Incidents of Mirror-Travel in the Yucatan” (Smithson 1996, 68–74, 119–33), Smithson’s artistic practice involved undertaking walks through mundane landscapes and reimagining them in extraordinary ways. Emily Scott likens Smithson’s walks to a form of fieldwork practice

¹ Benedictine monks took a vow of *stabilitas* whereby they promised to remain within the monastery (1931, 83–6). The term *cellula* is used to describe monastic living spaces.

² *Peregrinatio in stabilitate* (which could be translated as interior pilgrimage) names a set of meditational practices developed by Benedictine monks to facilitate pilgrimage without violation of their vow of *stabilitas*.

³ The concept of performance fictioning bears similarities to that of hyperstition developed by the Ccru in the late 90s, as Burrows and O’Sullivan recognise (2019, 305). Hyperstition names an ‘element of effective culture that makes itself real’ and a ‘fictional quantity functional as a time-travelling device’ (Ccru, n.d.).

through which, she argues, Smithson ‘invented field destinations as a creative–critical act’ (Scott 2011, 43). Burrows and O’Sullivan similarly recognise his work as a form of performance fictioning (Burrows and O’Sullivan 2019, 130-4). Smithson insisted upon the intrinsic value of the “primary process” of artistic production—‘of making contact with matter’ (Smithson 1996, 103)—and objected to critics who, ‘by focusing on the “art object,” deprive the artist of any existence in the world of both mind and matter’ (Smithson 1996, 111). Against such reductive understandings of art, Smithson’s fieldwork stands as an experimental form of praxis within an ongoing and open–ended artistic process.

Like Smithson’s method, neomedieval *peregrinatio in stabilitate* is a means of engaging with a given landscape through performance fiction but unlike them it does not require the practitioner to go outside. Nonetheless, neomedieval *peregrinatio in stabilitate* does constitute a form of fieldwork insofar as it involves an estrangement (or fictioning) of the indoors. The prospective value of this activity hinges upon its capacity to allow practitioners to imagine alternative futures from within restricted presents. Pandemics, after all, and the non–pharmaceutical interventions used to contain them, figure not only as inhibitions upon our everyday lives but as limitations upon our capacity to imagine emancipatory futures.

Performance Fictioning

Burrows and O’Sullivan’s *Fictioning* catalogues the work of disparate artists, scientists and philosophers in a vast volume which resembles a sourcebook for the would-be practitioner of fictioning. ‘We [...] declare the possibility of practices that engender that which does not exist, that precisely, fictions it’, Burrows and O’Sullivan state, ‘it is towards such a productive notion of fictioning—beyond parody and simulation [...]—that we have written our book’ (Burrows and O’Sullivan 2019, 5). *Fictioning* is structured around the three “myth-functions” of contemporary art and philosophy (mythopoesis, myth–science and mythotechnesis) and three respective modes of fictioning (performance fictioning, science fictioning and machine ficitoning). Each “myth–function” and mode of fictioning is associated with a particular tradition of thought and history of practice—performance fictioning, for example, is associated with European and Anglo–American avant-gardism, masculine subjectivities and a tendency towards romanticism or a longing for redemption (Burrows and O’Sullivan 2019, 6-7).

The authors describe performance fictioning as ‘the art (and/or science) of calling forth *something in us that ain’t us*,’ adding that, ‘this necessarily involves the fictioning of other ways of speaking, enjoying, relating and existing [...] engendered by images, sounds, writing and events’ (Burrows and O’Sullivan 2019, 16-7). At the crux of performance fictioning is the practitioner’s own

attitude towards the story; they must not only tell the story, but *really* believe in this story themselves—we admit to proceeding as if fiction were reality, Burrows and O’Sullivan write, ‘that is [...] through experimenting with believing in what we know might not be true’ (Burrows and O’Sullivan 2019, 512). As a consequence of this attitude, unlike other forms of fiction, performance fictioning is necessarily ‘an ongoing practice that is without a set beginning or ending’ (Burrows and O’Sullivan 2019, 6).

The most significant methodological step made by Burrows and O’Sullivan—which leads them to transform “fiction” from a noun into a verb—is the ascription to performance fictioning of a mythopoetic capacity not only to describe realities but to create them—where ‘art and writing are the catalyst not for the judgement or education but for the articulation and actualisation of [...] a people to come’ (Burrows and O’Sullivan 2019, 17). Fictioning therefore presupposes a radical constructivism (though they do not describe it as such) that might be defined in opposition to *social constructivism*. Social constructivists maintain that art and writing (as forms of language) should be understood as socially constructed phenomena, that is, not as real things themselves but representations of real things—as mere words representing the world. More radical still is the notion within constructivism that entails the rejection of any fundamental distinction between the natural and the social, where art and writing (and fictioning) may be understood as processes in which human and non-human agencies are active and through which truth and reality are constructed. On this epistemological footing, inasmuch as art and writing are constructed, historically contingent and, therefore, liable to alteration, so too are truth and reality. As such, performance fictioning responds to the blockage of the collective political imagination described by Mark Fisher as “capitalist realism,” or ‘the widespread sense that not only is capitalism the only viable political and economic system, but also that it is now impossible even to *imagine* a coherent alternative to it’ (Fisher 2009, 2). Indeed, Burrows and O’Sullivan briefly describe performance fictioning as ‘a practical elaboration or manifestation of th[e] belief [...] that another world is indeed possible, besides the one of “Capitalist Realism” ’ (Burrows and O’Sullivan 2019, 34).

For their part, Burrows and O’Sullivan explicitly locate the urgency of their work in the context of the emergence of post-factual politics and the replacement of any idea of truth with ideas of perception management—fictioning, they argue (referring to all three of the aforementioned modes thereof) does not simply operate ‘as a critique of this new terrain, but as something that operates on the same level as these fictions, and engages with the strategies and tactics deployed by agencies engaging in managing and experimenting with perception and reality’ (Burrows and O’Sullivan 2019, 10). This seems to be a strategically astute political position which converts post-factualisation from a source of anxiety and despair into a promise of empowerment and emancipation. Needless to say, in recent years the COVID-19 pandemic and the prospect of lockdowns and other non-pharmaceutical interventions becoming commonplace have accentuated a sense of anxiety and despair such that constructivist practices, performance fictioning included, appear more vital than ever.

Medieval *Peregrinatio in Stabilitate*

Giles Constable observes that Monasticism and pilgrimage, two of the most familiar characteristics of medieval religious life, were also greatly incompatible with one another: while monasticism insists on an obligation to remain within the stability of the cloister, pilgrimage implies movement and travel (Constable 1977, 3). However, Constable's conflation obscures the plurality and mutability of medieval pilgrimage practices, the historical development of which was contingent not only upon theological issues but also political and socioeconomic factors. In response to this, the proposed method invokes the historiographical distinction made by Jean Leclercq between two modes of practice (Leclercq 1961, 51):

1. *Stabilitas in peregrinatione*, which requires physical movement (whether that may take the form of either a journey to one or more specific holy sites (often the earthly Jerusalem) or a more open-ended peripateticism). This is the mode of pilgrimage practice that Constable mistakes for pilgrimage per se.
2. *Peregrinatio in stabilitate*, which requires focused meditation in order to progress along an inner or spiritual journey towards the Heavenly Jerusalem. This is the mode of pilgrimage that Constable reduces to monasticism.

Constable's reduction is understandable given the predominance of *peregrinatio in stabilitate* among monastic pilgrimage practices from the eleventh-century (Leclercq 1961, 51). This was due in no small part to the influence of *The Rule of St Benedict*, a sixth-century book of precepts written for cenobitic monks, in which St Benedict stresses the virtue of monastic enclosure over peripateticism (St Benedict 1931, 7–8, 99–101). St Benedict conceived the monastic enclosure as both an Edenic paradise and a provisional heaven, a refuge from the mortal world of sin and imperfection—a metaphor that was expressed architecturally by the enclosed garth (Helms, 2002). According to St Benedict, to remain within the enclosure was to be a stranger to the world, a *viator*, a pilgrim, while to leave the monastery was to be a stranger to God, an *alienus*, as Adam and Eve became upon expulsion from the Garden (Ladner 1967, 234–8).

On the other hand, Constable's later assessment that monasticism and pilgrimage were functionally similar is more discerning. As he suggests, both institutions imply withdrawal from the world and constitute, in the lives of individual practicing Christians, a rite of passage, the beginning of 'une nouvelle vie religieuse, coupée des valeurs et des chemins du siècle' (Constable 1977, 6).⁴ Monasticism and pilgrimage (in either mode of the practice), both address the oppositional relationship between God and the world established in the First Epistle of John (2:15-16),⁵ providing means for Christians to live out the scriptural ideal of being a future citizen of heaven while in the temporary exile of earthly life (cf. Psalms, 39:12; Philippians, 3:20; Hebrews, 11:9; 1 Peter, 2–11) (Dyas 2001, 27–55).

⁴ 'a new religious life, cut off from contemporary values and ways of life' (my translation).

⁵ 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world'.

Throughout the medieval period, resources were produced to support practitioners of *peregrinatio in stabilitate*. Daniel K. Connolly describes one such resource, Matthew of Paris' thirteenth-century itinerary maps, as having dynamic and interactive qualities that have been overlooked by earlier scholarship:

The Benedictine brother who perused these pages understood this map primarily through its performative possibilities, as a dynamic setting, the operation of whose pages, texts, images, and appendages aided him in effecting an imagined pilgrimage (Connolly 1999, 598).

Connolly notes the embodied language used to annotate the maps and their orientation such that the route to Jerusalem is marked by a vertical line reaching away from the viewer towards the horizon at the top of each page (Connolly 1999, 608), arguing that in the act of studying the codex, 'the place of the viewer [...] becomes also the place of the body in the world, and it is this "placeness" that is part of the performance' (Connolly 1999, 610). Connolly compares Matthew of Paris' itinerary maps to other medieval texts that advocate a form of embodied performance fiction in which the reader's *cellula* is imagined as a given pilgrimage site (Connolly 1999, 610).⁶ One such case is the fourteenth-century *Libro d'Oltramare* by Niccolò da Poggibonsi which relates many measurements that would be helpful to pilgrims physically travelling through the Holy Land but, as John K. Hyde argues, 'when we are told, for example, that the Holy Sepulchre is nine palms long by three and a half wide and stands four palms above the ground, or that the chapel of Mary Magdalene is ten paces from the Sepulchre, the aim was clearly different' (1990, 22). Such resources are testament to the performative quality of medieval *peregrinatio in stabilitate* and may also indicate what sort of tools may be useful to practitioners of its neomedieval counterpart.

Analogical vs. Allegorical Neomedievalism

Neomedievalism first gained traction within the discipline of political theory. Following the publication of Hedley Bull's *The Anarchical Society* (Bull 1977, 254), the neomedieval was used to draw an analogy between the political system of medieval Europe and that of post-Fordist transnational capitalism. The pre-Westphalian political system of medieval Europe—in which authority and sovereignty were vertically-stratified through the complex, asymmetrical system of overlapping liege-lord relationships characteristic of feudalism—provided an analogue, so early neomedievalists argued, to the system that was emerging in world politics during the late twentieth-century in which the growing political influence of intergovernmental organisations, transnational corporations and other non-governmental organisations was increasingly challenging the exclusivity of state sovereignty.

⁶ This particular form of performance fiction is remarkably similar to that which was advocated by Xavier de Maistre on occasion of his imprisonment (1828).

In his seminal essay, “Dreaming of the Middle Ages” (1986), Umberto Eco used the term to describe the widespread tendency in European and American pop culture to splice the archaic and the futuristic together—for example, Eco reads “Star Wars”, in which an order of knights defend their code in a galactic war by making use of faster-than-light interstellar travel, as a neomedievalism. Remarking upon the contradictory ways in which neomedievalisms represent the medieval, Eco expressed concern that some may be ‘supporting, perhaps without realising it, some new reactionary plot’ (Eco 1986, 72). Similarly, Burrows and O’Sullivan suggest that neomedievalism may provide impetus to reactionaries who reject the principles of democracy and egalitarianism in favour of greater social stratification and a return to pre-modern authoritarian forms of monarchical government, combined with futuristic technology and hypercapitalism (Burrows and O’Sullivan 2019, 104–107). In voicing such concerns, Eco assumes that neomedievalisms are ‘works of fiction that can have traction on reality beyond their status as literature’ (Burrows and O’Sullivan 2019, 26). Thus, whereas Bull deploys the neomedieval as a descriptive analogy, Eco recognises the mythopoetic potential of neomedievalisms, that is, their prescriptive capacity to gain traction on the real and instantiate the worlds they describe.

Burrows and O’Sullivan also seem to recognise this distinction between the analogical and allegorical as well as the mythopoetic potential of allegory. They praise Arnold Williams’ “operational approach” to fourfold allegory ‘that points to fictioning modes that can address the “horizontal” [...] aspect of postmodern culture’ (Burrows and O’Sullivan 2019, 109). They contrast the fertility of Williams’ approach—which the historian himself describes as ‘a method of interpretation and a method of creation’ (Williams 1969, 77)—to Jameson’s dismissal of allegory as a method of ‘static medieval or biblical decoding’ operating via ‘one-on-one conceptual labels’ that is incapable of producing novelty (Jameson 1991, 168, cited in Burrows and O’Sullivan 2019, 109). Here Burrows and O’Sullivan seem to inadvertently pre-empt Jameson’s later rejection (in *Allegory and Ideology*, published three months after *Fictioning*) of such static, dualistic forms of allegory as little more than analogy (Jameson 2019, 7). There, Jameson likewise finds in fourfold allegory a process through which, by shifting back and forth between the neomedieval present and the medieval past, ‘the old levels enter on a variety of new and impermanent relationships and complex structural adjustments’ (2019, 310).

Burrows and O’Sullivan’s are interested in neomedieval performance fictions ‘as a means of resisting those dominant forms of globalisation that have transformed societies’ (Burrows and O’Sullivan 2019, 103). They approvingly recall Fredric Jameson’s description of globalisation as a representational problem, namely as the historical process by which postmodernity ‘finally succeeded in transcending the capacities of the individual human body to locate itself, to organise its immediate surroundings perceptually, and cognitively to map its position in a mappable external world’ (Jameson 1991, 44, cited in Burrows and O’Sullivan 2019, 106).

Jameson provisionally refers to one means of overcoming this problem of mapping the complexities of the globalised world and the subject's position therein as “cognitive mapping”, which has been the goal of his ongoing research since at least 1984 (Jameson 1984, 92). While reference to cognitive mapping in *Allegory and Ideology* is conspicuously scant, Jameson seems to have found in fourfold allegory a practice that is functionally similar, remarking that the ‘interrelationship between the various levels of allegory invents connections between dimensions of reality otherwise imperceptible in the complexities of modern social life’ (Jameson 2019, 347).

The fourfold schema is expounded by Jameson with reference to a specific biblical example:

Its founders and practitioners [...] posited the events of the Old Testament as a literal text in which a different and future event was prefigured. Thus famously the descent of the Hebrews into Egypt, grasped as an event that really happened in history, is also read as a foreshadowing of Christ's descent, after his crucifixion and death, into Hell [...] their exodus from Egypt then clearly prefigures the resurrection; and these two events, taken stereoscopically, may also serve to characterise the wallowing of the soul in sin and earthly misery and its emergence into salvation by way of a radical conversion. At the same time, this earthly and individual parallel also prefigures the fate of the collectivity itself, which can be redeemed by the Last Judgement (2019, 18-9).

Thus, there are four levels: the literal, the allegorical, the moral and the anagogical. Jameson points to the obvious qualitative differences between the levels and the asymmetrical relationships which bind them, suggesting the diagrammatic form of Algirdas Julien Greimas's semiotic square as ‘an apt vehicle for its analysis’ (Jameson 2019, 331). Like the Greimas square, fourfold allegory is ‘not some replication of two simple dualisms added together,’ Jameson argues, ‘but rather a distinction between two kinds of negations’ (Jameson 2019, 16).

Neomedieval Peregrinatio in Stabilitate as Fourfold Allegory

The fourfold schema provides a model for the development of complex neomedieval performance fictions and, therefore, may indicate how such practices engender novel forms of subjectivity and collectivity. In this final section, drawing upon two neomedieval guidebooks that address similar neomedieval meditational practices in the contemplative tradition, neomedieval *peregrinatio in stabilitate* will be articulated as a fourfold allegory.

The literal level, being the first, can be freely nominated and is constituted here by the practice of medieval *peregrinatio in stabilitate*. The second, allegorical level, must be occupied by something analogous to the first, in this case, the practice of neomedieval *peregrinatio in stabilitate*. Yet the relationship between these two initial levels must be construed as more intimate than simply analogy. It is instructive to think of this relationship as that of typology—the ancient art of reading the New Testament as the fulfilment of the Old Testament in such a way that neither is complete without the other. This relationship is one of prophecy rather than causation and, as Jameson notes (Jameson 2019, 21), is that which is described by Walter Benjamin as being surmounted by the tiger’s leap—‘a past charged with the time of the now [...] blasted out of the continuum of history’ (Benjamin 1973, 263). Thus, the medieval and neomedieval practices of *peregrinatio in stabilitate* must not be grasped as two sequential historical events on a timeline but as two eternal events according to what Benjamin referred to as the *jetztzeit* (Benjamin 1973, 263).

The events of the first level, when read stereoscopically with those of the second, imply a form of subjectivity proper thereto: this normative subjectivity constitutes the third, moral level. In Jameson’s example, the descent of the Hebrews into Egypt and their subsequent deliverance, when read stereoscopically with the crucifixion of Jesus and his subsequent resurrection, served to remind the individual medieval Christian of the promise of their salvation: that they were temporary exiles on Earth but future citizens of the Heavenly Jerusalem. The third level of the fourfold allegory we are developing here need not refer to salvation, redemption or an afterlife, as Jameson suggests (Jameson 2019, xvi).

Schott, Smith and Whitehead, authors of the neomedieval *Guidebook for an Armchair Pilgrimage*, resist alluding to such themes: upon reaching the goal of their pilgrimage, they implore their readers to engage in ‘not a reassuring worship; these things do not promise redemption, but a connection that will take you into unpredictable relationships’ (Schott, Smith and Whitehead 2019, 108).⁷ They recognise that the emergence of such new relationships is dependent upon the practitioner undergoing a process by which they lose their sense of self, imploring their readers to do so at multiple intervals. For example, they write:

Give up any templates you still have left. Let them dissolve and slip between the currents. Let nothing frame how you see the world. Then follow their example: liquefy your self [...] take a few minutes to dissolve (Schott, Smith and Whitehead 2019, 12).

Unlike medieval guidebooks, such as that of Goscelin, an 11th century monk, which advocates the practice of anchoritism for its capacity to foster a closer relationship with God (1955, 89, cited in Hughes–Edwards 2012, 81), such passages in *Guidebook for an Armchair Pilgrimage* suggest that the same meditational devices employed by anchorites might lead the practitioner to re-evaluate their relationship with all things.

⁷ Schott, Smith and Whitehead’s guidebook, based on a walk they took through an undisclosed landscape, is a large format pressing packing over 100 photographs, many of them full-page, into 144 pages. They implicitly relate their work to medieval *peregrinatio in stabilitate*, acknowledging the influence on their guidebook of Felix Faber – ‘a fifteenth-century monk, who drew upon his visits to Jerusalem to write a handbook to be used by nuns for a virtual pilgrimage to that city’ (Schott, Smith and Whitehead 2019, 3) – yet, due to its pictorial qualities and frequent injunctions to the reader, it is equally reminiscent of Matthew Paris’ itinerary maps.

⁸ The Confraternity of Neoflagellants’ ‘The Journeyman’s Guide to Anchoritism’ is a guidebook to various neomedieval anchorholds. Anchoritism is an ancient hermetic tradition of solitary confinement and contemplative prayer established by the Desert Fathers. The Confraternity of Neoflagellants refer to guidebooks produced in medieval England for prospective anchorites which were largely written in an accessible style because, as Mari Hughes-Edwards argues, in medieval England ‘anchoritism functioned as an increasingly accessible spiritual model for the laity’ (Hughes-Edwards 2012, 25. See also: Dyas 2001, 214). While the lay style of such guidebooks distinguishes medieval English anchoritism from the formalised practice of monastic *peregrinatio in stabilitate*, the two practices are similar insofar as they both emphasise stability of place as conducive to the contemplative life (Hughes-Edwards 2012, 32).

The Confraternity of Neoflagellants (a collaborative neomedieval theory–fiction project by Sergeant–at–Law Norman Hogg and Keeper of the Wardrobe Neil Mulholland) likewise recognise the potential of anchoritism in this regard.⁸ Recalling the offices ‘recited to signify the new anchorite’s liminal status as already dead to the world yet reborn to a life of solitary spiritual communion,’ they write, ‘the anchorite abandons its person-assets and becomes quasi-object’ (The Confraternity of Neoflagellants 2013, 110). Popularised by Bruno Latour in *We Have Never Been Modern* (1993), the notion of quasi–objects describes entities that are neither passive recipients of human action (natural objects) nor capable of intentionality or self-direction (social subjects), but hybrids –‘monstrous composites circulating in (and crucially as) networks of translation and mediation’ (The Confraternity of Neoflagellants 2013, 132). Anchorites become quasi–objects, not because they forfeit their personhood and withdraw from the world, but because they ‘paradoxically find themselves at the centre of parish life,’ a nodal point at the centre of a network dispensing spiritual counsel and connecting ‘this world and the next’ (The Confraternity of Neoflagellants 2013, 122).

The self–isolating practitioner of neomedieval *peregrinatio in stabilitate*, unlike the anchorite, does not paradoxically become a quasi-object mediating between subjects in a network—they remain a subject engaged in a network limited primarily to their *cellula* and the objects therein. Within this limited network the guidebooks and other meditational resources must be recognised as quasi–objects insofar as they propel the practitioner–subject’s imagination. After all, such effects cannot be accounted for without recourse to quasi–objects: the guidebook’s authors are not present, they act vicariously *through* their writings as quasi–objects. Moreover, the products of the practitioner’s imagination themselves, insofar as they cannot always be controlled by the practitioner, must also be recognised as quasi–objects that ‘[call] forth *something in us that ain’t us*’ (Burrows and O’Sullivan 2019, 16). Insofar as neomedieval *peregrinatio in stabilitate* demands acknowledgement of the reality of quasi–objects it effectively requires us to adhere to Latour’s thesis—that we have never been modern. Thus, the subjectivity proper to neomedieval *peregrinatio in stabilitate* is no less than that described by Latour as that of the nonmodern (Latour 1993, 47).

The fourth level of the fourfold allegory, Jameson writes, is that which retroactively reveals the former to be a mere ‘supplementary interpretive and individual commentary of a far more fully formed and fleshed out anagogical or collective meaning’ (Jameson 2019, 20). In Jameson’s biblical example, the salvation of the individual’s soul prefigures the collective redemption of mankind in the Last Judgement. However, he stresses the difficulty of identifying the fourth level in any given allegorical schema (Jameson 2019, 352). Neither of the neomedieval guidebooks considered above make specific reference to what collective change contemplative practice may affect, and such ambitions also lie outside the remit of this article. Nonetheless, it is clear that, unlike in Jameson’s

example, the fourth level need not necessarily refer to a redemptive eschatology. Against such transcendentalism—where this names a belief that the capacity to transform the world lies beyond the limits of human reason and resources—Burrows and O’Sullivan advocate performance fiction as an ‘invention in the realm of life (a technology of immanence as it were)’ (Burrows and O’Sullivan 2019, 2). Nonmodernity, therefore, need not be heralded by the divine nor entail the redemption of mankind and their ascent from this world into heaven—another world is possible within this one.

The non-necessity of redemptive themes within the latter levels of fourfold allegory, returns us to Eco’s concern that some neomedievalisms may unwittingly abet reactionary causes. Ultimately, as Burrows and O’Sullivan write, ‘it all comes down to a question of how the past is activated or fictioned in the present’ (Burrows and O’Sullivan 2019, 106). The achievements of democracy and egalitarianism may be rendered an aberration, the possibility of their destruction as an opportunity for atonement and redemption, while the medieval past may be nostalgically romanticised as an ideal model. On the other hand, neomedieval practices may be used ‘to explore the potential of allegory and fiction combined with performance to find alternatives to globalising tendencies’ (Burrows and O’Sullivan, 2019, 106). Only the latter promises the exciting mythopoetic potential of constructivism:

[...] the transformation of all the unlovely advances of capitalism’s universal accelerationisms into humanising achievements: the transmutation of ecological disaster into the terra-forming of the earth, and of population explosion into a genuine human age, an Anthropocene to be celebrated rather caricatured in second-rate dystopias (Jameson 2019, 37).

The Mythopoetic Capacity of The Eerie

Following Burrows and O’Sullivan, this article has outlined neomedieval *peregrinatio in stabilitate* as a lockdown-proof form of performance fictioning. With reference to Fisher’s *Capitalist Realism*, the urgency of the proposed method has been anchored to the risk that future pandemics may threaten our already-weakened collective capacity to imagine emancipatory futures. Burrows and O’Sullivan make an insightful connection between the overtly political *Capitalist Realism* and Fisher’s later work, *The Weird and the Eerie*, ostensibly a literary study of horror and science fiction of little political consequence: the eerie, they suggest, may function as ‘an antidote to capitalist realism’ (Burrows and O’Sullivan 2019, 139). Fisher describes the eerie as a mode of feeling that clings to ‘landscapes partially emptied of the human’ (Fisher 2016, 11). Notably, Smithson’s work, and that of others which Burrows and O’Sullivan identify as instances of performance fictioning, are preoccupied with such landscapes (Burrows and O’Sullivan 2019, 125–42). The perspective of the eerie, Fisher argues, ‘can give us access to the forces that govern mundane reality but which are ordinarily obscured, just as it can give us

access to spaces beyond mundane reality altogether' (Fisher 2016, 13). Burrows and O'Sullivan's suggestion, then, is that the eerie has the potential to inspire the restoration of our collective capacity to imagine emancipatory futures. As such, performance fictioning, when utilised as a method of engaging with a given landscape—and, by extension, neomedieval *peregrinatio in stabilitate*—may be most effective when attuned to the eerie.

The mythopoetic capacity of the eerie may be further demonstrated by grasping four terms deployed in *The Weird and the Eerie* (the familiar, the *unheimlich*, the weird and the eerie) as a fourfold allegory. Fisher's primary argument in *The Weird and the Eerie* is that, despite all three concerning the strange, the weird and the eerie are distinct modes of being from the *unheimlich*: 'Freud's *unheimlich* is about the strange *within* the familiar', Fisher argues, while on the other hand, 'the weird and the eerie make the opposite move: they allow us to see the inside from the perspective of the outside' (Fisher 2016, 10). Is this not the task to which third and fourth levels of medieval fourfold allegory were set: to locate the individual Christian within a universal cosmology? Regardless, such avenues of thought lead us to reiterate once more the second aim of this article: to augment Burrows and O'Sullivan's project with Jameson's discussion of fourfold allegory. It has been argued here that Jameson's fourfold schema of medieval allegory, as a conceptual tool capable of calling forth new forms of subjectivity and collectivity, represents a fertile model for the development of neomedieval performance fictions.

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