



Preface

The Seven Courts of the Mall (or, We Have Always Been Medieval)

Simon O'Sullivan

PREAMBLE

The Brothers had asked me for a preface (as if there is really anything left of the faciality-machine in our contemporary scene!) and I am happy to oblige . . . me, whom they did formerly cast out on the basis of misuse (oh, the irony) of Confraternity Technology, i.e. phee-loss-so-phee, and, in general, speculative thinking (and, in turn, the positing of a diagrammatics for the production of new selves at odds to their own strictures). A Free School did I set up, away from the aforementioned Confraternity, nay Church, for it is my belief that the technologies in question—including the grasping of our own age as neomedieval (in both its geopolitical and ethico-aesthetic character) has much to offer those who refuse the Church (however this be articulated) and its scriptures. Be that as it may. What could I do? Perhaps the invite were also a sign of sorts that my long days of exile are

at an end and that once more I will be embraced by the joys of collaborative Neoflagellant writing and art-werke. Avalon once more! Certainly it has been testing to ruminate alone on questions of art, the subject and ontology in a time of Capital that is so late that it loops around—like Ouroboros—to its own beginning, nay, pre-beginning. This fact being, in fact, not tangential to the matters here under dispute.

So, how to understand the following thesis that masquerades as print-on-demand, para-academic and post-USB art? If this tome is a space-time-capsule, then what are the operating protocols hidden within its arcane coding? It seems to me that there are seven logics—or, more specifically, courts—that might operate as guidance system for any reader.

1 FICTIONING

What follows is a schizo-comic fictioning that lays bare the connections between our hyper-modernity and a medievalism that is its appropriate accompaniment and frame of reference (this being precisely, neomedievalism, or, in short, the laying out of a 'Medieval-Tech®' as the only adequate frame of reference for these Troubled Times). Old World meets New World in an untimely assemblage (or, 'Mall') in which, in fact, all temporalities—futures, pasts, future-pasts, past-futures—are deployed, mashed up and then realigned so as to open, at last, a space for something different (this most cramped court allows us, at last, to breathe!).

2 ACCELERATION

In this speculative venture avatars and scenarios proliferate and spin out as redundant probe-heads from the central processing machine that is Capital. Indeed, such a book as this accelerates the process. Here one finds characters composed of advertising refrains and slogans, cruising the medi-escape, guided by a telematics standardization that manifests itself in brands and slogans, fast-food outlets and joust-

ing tournaments. This book speaks of consumers and commodities that move at a pace which outruns the regulative speeds of the market, but that also move slower. Is this the future of Capital? If it is, then it is also its past. A court *sub specie aeterni*.

3 GEOPOLITICS

Contained within these pages is a further treatise—and prophesy—on a ‘new’ geo-political order that harks back to a pre-modern landscape. Apparently contemporary global relations (and their attendant intra/supra-national citizenships) become evidence for a neomedievalism that has run underneath—and against—the stories of the achievements and advancements of our so-called Western civilization. For, let it be known: We Have Always Been Medieval. This book lays bare these often-conflicting logics—the causes beneath the surface effects of what we witness in our age as chaos and confusion. The medieval grid is revealed! Modernity? A ruse, a veil . . . an attempt at spinning an alternate narrative pitched against what has always been a Dark Age.

4 THE SPECTACLE

A meta-comment on this commentary: what follows is an account of the ‘Spek-taa-kal’ in its most advanced phase . . . so advanced that it starts to mutate, producing experimental and only half operational assemblages. In this grey zone, agents and counter-agents slip and slide, double one another in a game of ‘this-and-that’, waiting for the dust to settle so that they (and we) can see, finally, ‘who-is-who’. Indeed, who is this book written for? Certainly for those few intent on producing a New World Order out of the ruins of this one, but also for those even fewer intent on bringing all such New World Orders down! In particular, an online hyperstitional-economics becomes the stage set on which a number of strange currencies and transactions are played out: a groundless-ground of a virtual gaming terrain. Forsooth, all

becomes increasingly psychotic as the book in your hand involves the Symbolik (including the Economik) bending back on itself and generating new combinations. Has the sinthome ever meant anything else?

5 SCENES

Herein is the telling of the tail of the contemporary scene of art—from a future-past perspective that is at once learned and partisan. In this account art scenes operate as, and across, fiefdoms in a world in which vassals, overlords, and the omnipresent mercenary (all had already recognized this figure!) determine the relational aesthetics of practice. At certain key junctures alchemical workshops and laboratories attempt something transformative (this book is nothing less than this). This account is a looking for signs and sigils within the present: of the past; of the future (all around us, patchwork like); and of pasts that are yet to come about. In other, more strictly speaking, mathematical terms: a looking for the Universal in the local and the local in the Universal. This is then a specialist meditation and manifesto on a certain kind of neomedieval 'contemporary art' when the latter is understood as post-post-internet, or, indeed, specifically pre-internet, and when the so-called 'world-wide-web' is itself the violent and bloody dream of Modernity (Q.E.D.).

6 GIFTS

In this adventure and survey numerous allies are ushered in to play their part: Gilles Deleuze, Georges Bataille, a host of other players . . . all, it is shown, having a neomedieval aspect to their thought (the 'general economy' of the sun; a 'rhizosphere' of man/animal/plant relations). Within this dense web of references, gifting and relic-ing become the signifiers for an alternate cartography of a capitalism that has outrun the uses of its previous protocols (shedding these as a viper sheds its many skins . . . SSSSSS). At last! A market set free! Here entrepreneurs as storytellers are the nodal

points of far-fetched conspiracy theories. Is this something anti-capitalist then? Only if anti- is read as a platform for the launching of that which it appears to be against.

7 THINGS

Finally, clarity emerges from obscurity, a clear zone is drawn: this is a Magikal and ritualistic account of the possibility of a different kind of subject. A statement of the self-as-thing—and the associated practices of such a production. At last, the rival Confraternity of SpeculativeRealism® has its missing subject! Here, the human-object/thing sits-still-as-stone, disconnected from one regime in order to connect to another. As such, this book is a contribution to Thing Theory, but of a very queer and wonky kind. An object-oriented ontology© on amphetamines and psilocybin. This conjured figure is not a simple return to a pre-modern assemblage composed of animist object-subjects and a close infinite-finite weave, but nor is it the imposition of a transcendent enunciator that reduces and standardizes the aforementioned heterogeneity (under the single eye of a single £, and a curtain drawn against the infinite). Indeed, it is a return to pre-modernity, but one that is indelibly marked—branded—by its passage through an increasingly moribund modernity. Good news! There is a third way! Neomedievalism as the autopoietic nuclei (the strange attractor, the partial object, the Z-point) around which something else might, finally, begin to constellate and cohere