

Lucky Rituals: Philosophical Animism and Semiosis

Rachel Adeline HOLMES

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Kingston University

February, 2025

Acknowledgements

I am glad to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Professor Scott Wilson for his supervision, belief in my writing, and continued support as a consultant. The development of my imagination, voice, and methodology would not have been possible without Professor Wilson's knowledge, critical encouragement, and perseverance. I am also grateful to Dr Daniela Perazzo for her approachability, perspective, and overview which helped to carry the thesis through to completion. I am thankful to both supervisors for supporting my growth, sharing their networks and experience, and their resilience and patience.

I am also thankful to those who loitered with me. To the Capoeira communities of Salvador, London, Stockholm, Paris, Angoleiros do Mar, London Senzala, Mestre Marcelo Angola, Mestre Pedreiro and Mestre Julio Sanhaço.

I am grateful to TECHNE AHRC for awarding me a full-time studentship which enabled me to undertake this life-changing project, and for supporting my community arts project with Surrey Hills Arts, Women of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, and The Grange. Additionally, for the continued support to orchestrate the Beyond Human Symposium at Royal Holloway University, which I coordinated with Liz K. Miller, Rachel Hopkin, Jon Mason, and Simon Aepli, in collaboration with Dr Roz Mortimer and Gyrus.

I am grateful to Dr Nikoleta Zampaki and Dr Peggy Karpouzou for accepting my article *Bataille's Laughter* for publication in *Lagonscapes* at Venice University Press, as well as to Schism Press for publishing my chapter *The Crow*, and Edia Connole for guiding me through the editing process. I am thankful to the Bataille Now conference for the opportunity to present my paper *Living Myth*, as well as Morag Thomas for interviewing me about my research at Technecast. I am thankful to Lucy Wilkinson and Death of Workers Whilst Building Skyscrapers Press who published my book of short stories and illustrations *The Butterfly Dream*, which has been curated as an Artist's Book for the Special Collections at Glasgow School of Art. These experiences have been invaluable for my professional development.

I am thankful to Paul Holmes, King Yi Holmes, and my family for their unwavering support. To Laura Pendell for sending me a copy of Dale Pendell's book of poetry, *Salting the Boundaries*. Finally, I am thankful for Filip Bjarkebacke.

Abstract

This thesis presents a theory of luck based on a philosophical animist worldview, which emphasizes beyond-human networks of sentience productive of ecological harmony. This harmony brings alternative orders of consciousness and agency into alignment, and is experienced as lucky states. The thesis thereby presents a musical view of the world which revives pre-modern cosmologies. However, it does so in collaboration with a contemporary research trend identified as posthumanism.

This thesis privileges the food-chain as the site of animate semiosis woven together by its vested beyond-human agents. I argue that this animate semiosis becomes phenomenal during ritual practice and thereby instigates symbolic crises capable of undermining anthropocentric value systems. Luck and ritual practice, or indeed “Lucky Rituals”, are thus presented as cultural forms capable of limiting anthropocentric pathologies associated with our hyper-symbolic existence. The thesis therefore argues that ritual practice has an ecological purpose in terms of limiting anthropocentricity, and examines contemporary animist practices including Vision Fasting, *Capoeira*, *Candomblé*, *Zār* and *Yuwipi*, among others, to this end.

Driven by an aesthetic interest in the possibility of an animate semiosis productive of lucky signs, this research engages with the possibility of modes of affect which transcend socialisation and are capable of reviving our sense of belonging in a sentient nature, privy to occult forms of knowledge and experience described as The Language of Birds, expressive of the superabundance of nature.

The thesis can be read as a philosophical animist contribution to posthumanism in the genre of environmental humanities, which argues that we have developed tools to regulate anthropocentricity, identified herein as ritual practice. However these tools have been compromised by the modern transformation of epistemology. As such I posit that this function is only perceptible on a philosophical animist register, thereby problematizing modern paradigms which have underestimated the harmonic nature of luck.

Contents

1. Introduction: A Musical View of Luck.....	6-49
1.1 Context: An Ecology of Selves.....	6
1.2 The Problem of Pity.....	8
1.3 The Problem of Ecstasy.....	13
1.4 Before and After: Philosophical Animism and Mythopoesis.....	19
1.5 A Musical View of Luck.....	25
1.6 How I Got Here.....	30
1.7 Opening Gambit: My Vision Fast.....	34
1.8 Literature Review: The posthuman revision of trickery.....	41
1.9 Chapter Summaries.....	47
2. Chapter One: Dionysian Chance and/ or Luck.....	50-87
2.1 Introduction: The Poison Path.....	50
2.2 Luck and Chance.....	54
2.3 Harmonic Synthesis.....	59
2.4 Music, Difference, Repetition.....	67
2.5 Solar and Lunar Mercury.....	73
2.6 Nietzsche's Animals.....	78
2.7 A Humorous Possession.....	81
2.9 Conclusion: Return to Ecstasy.....	86
3. Chapter Two: The Language of Birds.....	88-115
3.1 Introduction: Perspectival Aesthetics.....	88
3.2 Laws of Divination.....	91
3.3 The Language of Birds.....	94
3.4 Night Without A Dreamer.....	101
3.5 Wonder: A bizarre practice of pattern discovery.....	107
3.6 The Lucky Hunter.....	111
3.7 Conclusion: Conceptions of Power among the Pit River Indians.....	113
4. Chapter Three: The Mythopoeic Double.....	116-146
4.1 Introduction: The Law as Love.....	116

4.2 The Mythopoeic Double.....	119
4.3 A Narrative of the Transformation of Ecstasy.....	122
4.4 Socrates' Daimonion.....	128
4.5 Gift-giving in the Food-Chain.....	134
4.6 Tychism and Agapticism.....	137
4.7 Conclusion: Love as the Ecstatic Loss of Self.....	143
5. Chapter Four: Ritual Crises.....	147-179
5.1 Introduction: Intoxication.....	147
5.2 Turner's Ritual Process.....	150
5.3 Imaginative States during Ritual Separation.....	153
5.4 Possession States in the Animist Ritual of Candomblé.....	159
5.5 The Mythopoeic Double in Zār.....	166
5.6 Capoeira: A Game of Doubling.....	169
5.7 Beyond-Human Agency.....	174
5.8 Conclusion: Ritual in Philosophical Animism.....	178
6. Conclusion: Lucky Aesthetics.....	180-206
6.1 The Mythopoeic Ritual Process.....	180
6.2 Luck as Metanarrative.....	184
6.3 Superabundance of Luck.....	193
6.4 Lucky Aesthetics.....	197
6.5 Philosophical Animism: Music and Metamorphosis.....	202
7. Bibliography.....	207-226
8. Appendix.....	227-270
8.1 Bataille's Laughter: Comedy, Irony, or Wonder?.....	227
8.2 The Crow: Nameless Ones of the Dreamzone.....	249

Introduction: A Musical View of Luck

1.1 Context: An Ecology of Selves

This thesis considers ritual practice and its capacity to operate in a liminal zone, engaging with in-between states and producing forms of integration that share qualities of musical harmony. Music is employed in this thesis to denote ecological harmony, capable of bringing alternative orders of consciousness and experience into rhythm in an “ecology of selves” (Kohn 2013, 34). This ecological harmony is generative of lucky states productive of superabundant harvests (Bataille 2013).

This emphasis on harmony and the lucky states it produces endows this thesis with a premodern sensibility, interested in forms of ecological subjectivity often associated with superstitious worldviews ascribed to so-called primitives but identified herein with philosophical animism. Philosophical animism is located in the legacy of the philosopher and ecofeminist Val Plumwood (1939-2008), who defended philosophical animism “from within Western philosophy” (Rose 2013, 93). To this same end, the mythopoeic writing of the ethnobotanist Dale Pendell is employed as the mouthpiece of this thesis, supported by the research of contemporary philosophical animists like David Abram, Eduardo Kohn, and Bayo Akomolafe, among others. These writers have all become associated with posthumanism, as a movement derived from the work of the ecofeminist Donna Haraway, and most particularly *The Cyborg Manifesto* (1991). Philosophical animism is described as a subgenre of posthumanism in the environmental humanities, insofar as both movements recognise the agency of beyond-humans in an “ecology of selves” (Kohn 2013, 34), thereby deconstructing the supremacy of the human. However philosophical animism privileges the food-chain as the site of living semiosis, in a posthuman ontology (Kohn 2013, 33). Ritual practice engages with this living or animate semiosis, facilitating the intervention of beyond-human sentience associated with ecological harmony and luck.

This thesis' sympathy with the premodern thus operates in its dependency on musical forms of cognition and social organisation, familiar to conceptions of a musical universe theorised in works like Johannes Kepler's *Harmonices Mundi* in 1619, which elaborated on the Pythagorean concept of the *musica universalis* or "music of the spheres" according to the physical harmonies expressed by planetary motion and astrological relationships (Kepler in Aiton 1997). However this conception is also supported in contemporary research by music theorists like Daniel Chua and Alexander Rehding in *Alien Listening* (2021), who invoke a posthuman ontology to describe the universe "as a kind of music. You can tune in to its frequencies. To communicate across galaxies to an alien intelligence is therefore possible because we *frequent* the same space-time and life-form" (Chua; Rehding 2021, 70). This music is furthermore "dependent on neither sound or human ears" (Chua; Rehding 2021, 37). Chua and Rehding's theorising is in line with a contemporary trend which revises unconventional ontologies associated with premodern sensibilities including animism, characteristic of the posthuman movement and indeed, this thesis.

In this thesis luck describes the experience of ecological harmony, whereby alternative orders of consciousness and experience are collapsed into one lucky sign or event. I conclude that such signs are detonative of a Lucky Aesthetics capable of expressing a multinatural perspectivalism whereby "one can be simultaneously aware of [more] viewpoints as well as how they are connected by something greater that, like a trap springing shut, suddenly encompasses them" (Kohn 2013, 97). In this regard this thesis can be interesting for music studies research, the philosophy of luck, theory of ritual, and the history of religions; as well as for how all of these research fields inform the environmental humanities. However it is placed more specifically in an aesthetic theory native to the environmental humanities, and in particular a philosophical animist theory of living semiosis derived from ritual practice as "the mother of all the arts" (Small 1998, 105). This theory of animate semiosis, described as a Lucky Aesthetic, is concerned with the way in which animist art practices identified herein with ritual can limit anthropocentricity by instigating symbolic crises as a form of performative entrapment which brings one into harmony with the superabundance of a sentient environment, thereby making them lucky. It suggests that art practice is capable of acting on the world through subliminal triggers, and acknowledges beyond-human forms of agency associated with posthumanism,

whose contemporary problems goes far in support and defence of this research. This thesis can thus be characterised as asking, what did modernity sacrifice with luck, and what is this sacrifice costing us?

1.2 The Problem of Pity

This thesis locates ritual as a premodern cultural manifestation which has resisted incorporation into the Industrial regime in the West on merit of its preservation by disenfranchised communities most often among the Indigenous and African Diaspora. These communities continue to engage in ritual practice as cultural resistance to incorporation into a modernity founded in part, on their abduction and exclusion during Western Industrialisation from the sixteenth century onwards. This cultural resistance enacts oral culture and ecstatic practices native to pre-modern, animist ontologies often associated with barbarianism and paganism, which have been violently extinguished in the West, incorporated into the religious hegemony, or obscured into the Occult. Nonetheless this tabooed animist paradigm describes the roots of much of our own thinking, as a catalyst for the Renaissance (Hanegraaff 2013, 42).

The Occult historian Wouter J. Hanegraaff describes the wisdom traditions that inspired the Renaissance as Platonic Orientalism, by which he designates the “Greek manuscripts carried westward by monks and middlemen” (Hanegraaff 2013, 43), espousing an “ancient wisdom” informed by the legacy of the Persian sage Zoroaster (Hanegraaff 2013, 47) who was “assigned first place in [the] chain of wisdom” (Hanegraaff 2013, 47) in Ficino’s *Philebus* in 1474, followed by Hermes Trismegistus and Moses (Hanegraaff 2013, 47). On merit of Ficino’s “crucial importance” during the Renaissance (Hanegraaff 2013, 42) combined with his enthusiasm for the wisdom of “ancient sages” (Hanegraaff 2013, 44), Zoroastrianism became associated with “a quasi-autonomous tradition of hermetic magic” (Hanegraaff 2013, 42) which established the “‘Hermetic Tradition’ of the Renaissance” (Hanegraaff 2013, 42). Following Norman O. Brown, this thesis suggests these ancient wisdom traditions functioned as a prophetic critique on urbanisation in order to preserve the integrity of the human being as a human-animal

subject to beyond-human powers, including a sentient ecology I describe as musical (Brown 1991, 46-47). As such, these wisdom traditions are effectively animist.

In this regard, the animist ontology preserved by the rituals this thesis examines is foreign to modernity, but I argue it was once familiar to the West where it was also enacted in shamanic practice. Central to this animist ontology is the function of the double or shamanic free-soul capable of undertaking ecstatic flight between dimensions and times for “direct intercourse with spiritual entities” (Pendell 2010, 83), mediated through trance (Lecouteux 2001, 57), where ecstasy is understood according to the historian of Witch Hunt trials and shamanic rites Claude Lecouteux as deriving from “the Greek *ekstasis*, which literally means “straying of the spirit,” and by extension denotes the act of leaving the body” (Lecouteux 1991, 12).

Ritual is presented in this thesis as an anthropological as opposed to ethnological object. This is on merit of the anthropological system of transcultural pity this thesis will adopt, and indeed exaggerate as Love in Chapter Three. Defending the possibility of transcultural pity as “that fundamental affection, as primitive as the love of self, which unites us to others naturally: to other human beings, certainly, but also to all living beings” (Derrida in Spivak 1991, 105), entails that subjects are able to empathise with others across culture, place, time, and even species. This thesis follows Jacques Derrida’s thought in *Of Grammatology* (1991) to attribute the concept of pity to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, upon whose thought Claude Lévi-Strauss developed his anthropological method which applied a universalizing interpretive framework to ethnological practice in order to discern meaningful trends for mankind. For Lévi-Strauss this framework was constructed by the cultural experience of (universal) opposites, understood today as a structuralist approach.

Lévi-Strauss’s structuralism is thus founded on a macroscopic method which Gordon White also defends in his “Prehistory of the Spirits” *Star.Ships* (2016) in reference to the work of the celebrated Indologist Wendy Doniger, who described a view of comparative cultural studies by which “the personalities, codes of dress and foodstuffs fade from view, to be replaced by a wider vision of unifying themes across humanity” (White 2016, xiv). This wider vision, known as

Doniger's Telescope, is predicated on pity, as opposed to what Doniger described as "the scorched earth approach of late postmodernism" (White 2016, xiv).

In order to revive the possibility of transcultural pity which allows for this macroscopic view, this thesis defends the anthropological method in Chapter One. It does so by critiquing Derrida's characterisation of anthropology as ethnocentric, insofar as (according to Derrida) anthropology privileges the (ethnocentric) development of writing as the cultural indicator of technology; whereby cultures in possession of writing are viewed as modern, while cultures without writing are viewed as primitive. In Chapter One I argue that Derrida rejects this anthropological binary by endowing so-called primitives with writing. He does this by moving the register of signification and thus "writing" to the creation and destruction of proper names which is also inherent to oral culture. So-called primitives are thus endowed with writing insofar as they engage in the creation and destruction of proper names in oral culture, and are thus compensated for their lack of "colloquial technique" (Derrida in Spivak 1991, 120). The anthropological distinction between the modern and the primitive founded on writing, is thus deconstructed by Derrida to reveal an ethnocentric bias which rather than privileging transcultural pity, generates the fetishised caricature of the Noble Savage which haunts Rousseau's romanticism and by extension, the anthropological method.

However Derrida's relocation of the locus of signification, intended to rescue the technological modernity of so-called primitives, underestimates the technological nature of music which they already have. In effect, so-called primitives do not need to be technologically dignified by a compensatory form of writing, because they have music. However Derrida's move confuses the order of music with the order of writing and ultimately erases the peculiar forms of knowledge making inherent to the musical practices of so-called primitives, including ritual. This excludes the musical experiences of luck from the modern ontology, as the coincidence between orders of experience and consciousness generative of harmony, in this case between the subjective and ecological. By rejecting this conflation, I can thereby redeem anthropology by demonstrating that Derrida's critique is also ethnocentric insofar as it does not acknowledge the musicality of so-called primitives.

This attempt to rescue the anthropological method and thereby pity in Chapter One, allows me to discern transcultural tendencies in the ritual practices I examine in this thesis particularly in Chapter Four, which I gather into a mythopoeic theory of ritual. A mythopoeic theory emphasises ecstatic experience, and luck, in accordance with Pendell's *Pharmakon* Method which performs intoxication as divination (Pendell 2010). My predecessor in this work is the anthropologist Victor Turner who generated a ritual theory derived from anthropological research. Following field work with the Indigenous Ndembu of Zambia, Turner developed the classic theory of the ritual process which this thesis invokes and also amends by orientating ecologically in terms of luck. Turner's ritual process defines ritual according to the three stages it exhibits: ceremonial separation, liminality, and incorporation. Turner's ritual process is a classic model and is referenced in anthologies devoted to ritual practice and shamanism which inform this thesis, such as *Transforming Warriors* (Haldén; Jackson 2016), *The End of Sacrifice* (Jackson; Sjödin 2016), and *Horizons of Shamanism* (Jackson 2016) all of which can be attributed to the director of the history of religions at Stockholm University, Peter Jackson Rova.

The first phase (of separation) comprises symbolic behavior signifying the detachment of the individual or group either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure, from a set of cultural conditions (a "state"), or from both. During the intervening "liminal " period, the characteristics of the ritual subject (the "passenger") are ambiguous; he passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state. In the third phase (reaggregation or reincorporation), the passage is consummated. The ritual subject, individual or corporate, is in a relatively stable state once more and, by virtue of this, has rights and obligations vis-a-vis others of a clearly defined and "structural " type; he is expected to behave in accordance with certain customary norms and ethical standards binding on incumbents of social position in a system of such positions (Turner1991, 94-95).

In this thesis ritual is defined according to Turner's ritual process, however it is also orientated ecologically in terms of luck. Ritual is associated with the musical practices of oral culture native to so-called primitives, which are no longer intuitive to the modern West and its order of writing. Instead ritual practice often enacts a premodern and animist ontology which "seems in

principle to exist/have existed among all peoples who remained outside the influence of the so-called high religions and seems in that respect to be more or less universal” (Drobin in Jackson, 2016 83-84). This animist ontology acknowledges the existence of Otherworlds allowing for ecstatic states as the shamanistic flight of the free-soul or double into other times and places.

Turner’s ritual process is also anthropological insofar as it argues the ritual process is generically undertaken to activate universal human cognitive structures (Turner 1991, 3). This is the “recognition (in symbol if not always in language) of a generalized social bond” (Turner 1991, 96), experienced as a “transformative experience that goes to the root of each person’s being and finds in that root something profoundly communal and shared” (Turner 1991, 138). Turner’s view has informed my conception of the ritual object as a practice capable of falsifying anthropocentric subjectivity in order to initiate the subject into a beyond-human ecology, experienced as luck. It amends Turner’s interpretation to suggest that this root which is profoundly communal and shared, exceeds human experience and exposes us to the beyond-human defined in this thesis as ecological harmony and experienced as luck.

These problems have become contemporary again in light of the posthuman movement which seeks to critique the supremacy of the human being at the centre of all powers. This is in response to ecological disaster and is a logical consequence of the postmodern rejection of metanarratives (Lyotard 1984). In this regard, the “human being” is critiqued by posthumanists as a humanist myth or metanarrative which obscures our participation and emergence in a sentient ecology. However, without this (new) posthuman development, Turner’s emphasis on universality has been controversial, insofar as it depends on an anthropological metanarrative; that of an underlying cognitive structure which reinforces the possibility of an organic human nature, which can be activated in ritual practice and anthropologically conceptualised. This controversy is attributed to the alleged, and subsequently limited use of Turner’s work in “in explaining sociocultural systems of much greater scale and complexity” (Turner 1991, vi), whose complexity requires ethnological analysis. Nevertheless, Turner’s importance as a cultural anthropologist is evidenced by the literature which references his work.

The appearance of the posthuman movement has allowed me to revive the possibility of transcultural pity by readdressing the nature of the human being as an ecological participant, whose forms of experience and knowledge are limited by and descriptive of an environmental context. This is also descriptive of the current affective turn of philosophy, whereby “the body is reconstituted as fluid, co-composed, inescapably material, and fundamentally relational” (Richardson in Vint 2020, 58), allowing for the possibility of “an identical cognitive structure articulating wide diversities of cultural experience” (Turner 1991, 3). These shared structures are possessed by Earthlings constructed by the same physiologies, evolutionary histories, social needs, and planet. This affective underground acts as a relief valve for the excesses of hyper-socialisation, exacerbated by the proliferation of technology and urbanisation of modern humans which has transformed our experience into a symbolic enterprise decontextualized from experience in nature. This thesis thus adopts the Nietzschean position presented by Vanessa Lemm in *Nietzsche’s Animal Philosophy* (2009) that positions culture as a limiting factor on oppressive hegemonies associated with civilisation. Cultural forms exemplified by ritual are thus practiced to revive pity as “the memory of the animal and animal forgetfulness” (Lemm 2009, 10-11) capable of facilitating the possibility of animate semiosis. In the following section I will show how this allusion to the human-animal is descriptive of the problem of ecstasy as the “straying of spirit” (Lecouteux 2001, 12) between orders.

1.3 The Problem of Ecstasy

Turner’s conception of the ritual process as a site whereby symbolic isolation can be hijacked by reviving an underlying universality, is thus of very contemporary applications. This is underscored by writers like Federico Campagna in *Technic and Magic* (2022) who diagnoses the hyper-symbolic nature of social existence which has become increasingly insular and self-referential, finally threatening the experience of presence altogether and normalising pathologies, resulting in the epidemic of mental illness we are currently navigating, “including anxiety, depression, panic and increased suicide rates and cases of mass murders” (Campagna 2022, 43). Ritual is thus presented as a kind of psychotherapeutic performance capable of medicating the symbolic nature of this problem in its own terms, by performing symbolic crises.

This crisis sees the ritual subject tricked into performing the falsification of their own social performance; thereby short-circuiting the reality principle through which they experience and construct pathological subjectivity. This trick is experienced as the limit of knowledge which instigates symbolic crises. This opens the pathological experience of subjectivity to the beyond-human, thereby inscribing identity with negativity as that which exists beyond-the-human and is thus capable of locating us in a sentient ecology. As I argue in Chapter Three, for writers like Georges Bataille, Abram, and Kohn, who are integral to this thesis, this encounter with the beyond-human transforms the human subject into an indice of possibility in harmony with a sentient ecology, rather than an index of anthropocentric identity. As per Nietzsche, this revives the forgetfulness of the animal in support of the integrity of human-animal being (Lemm 2009).

Inherent to this ritual process is ecstatic experience as the capacity to stray beyond and between registers of experience, where ecstasy is understood as "straying of the spirit" (Lecouteux 2001, 12). Upon this ecstatic experience trickery is founded as the capacity for subjects to inhabit other registers of existence and thus trick others, as a fundamentally empathetic practice. In Chapter Two I show how artistic practices concerned with instigating symbolic crises such as those exhibited by ritual, are related to the ecstatic skills of trickery associated with hunting and entrapment in the food-chain. For these various reasons ecstasy is central to the ritual process, and one of the central problems for this thesis. Indeed I argue the value of ecstasy is a central posthuman problem for contemporary thought in terms of how it exposes us to the beyond-human.

In Chapter Three I narrate the transformation of ecstasy through the criminalisation of divination during the Medieval consolidation of the Christian Church in the face of doctrinal fragmentation, resulting in the appearance of the Occult as the site of rejected knowledge (Hanegraaff 2013). Thereafter, ecstasy was violently exorcised during the modern institution of the Industrial regime which enforced the linearity of experience thereby forbidding the possibility of ecstatic flight between dimensions or times (Federici 2018, 27). These movements resulted in the horrific excesses of the Witch Hunt which targeted shamanic persons allegedly capable of ecstatic travel during catalepsy or ritual trance (Lecouteux 2001). While the possibility of ecstasy has thus

largely disappeared from Western experience, it nevertheless persists in animist systems of dualistic pluralism native to belief systems which have resisted incorporation into the religious hegemony, often on merit of their own exclusion (Drobin in Jackson, 2016 83-84). This describes the African Diaspora and Indigenous communities whose ritual practices are examined in Chapter Four.

Dualistic pluralism is a term attributed to the major authority on Native American religions and shamanism, Åke Hultrantz (1920-2006), which describes the animist doublings of dimensions which allows for ecstatic flight into Otherworlds. This flight is fostered during ritual performance to facilitate ancestral intervention and possession states by beyond-humans. This is explicitly descriptive of the ritual cults I examine in Chapter Four, including Lakota *Yuwipi*, Haitian *Voudou*, Afro-Brazilian *Candomblé* and Sudanese *Zār*, while I also extend this reading to the comparatively secularised Afro-Brazilian *Capoeira* on merit of its symbiosis with *Candomblé*. These rituals thus function as beyond-human *séances* and facilitate ecstatic states which have been otherwise, exorcised from modern experience. I argue the beyond-human intervene in these rituals to falsify anthropocentricity, and thus generate ecological harmony. This conclusion is furthermore, derived from my own experience of ritual during my ten year practice of *Capoeira* between 2014-2024, which I detail in Chapter Four.

Trance rituals are thus capable of something very peculiar, which when framed within contemporary philosophical thought, demonstrates the poverty of our intellectual systems disenchanted of ecstatic potential. To return to the opening problem of this section, this poverty has limited our understanding of pity and the possibility of a transcultural or indeed transspecies empathy, or what I describe as a divinatory language in Chapter Two. This divinatory language operates as the zone of ecstatic games of trickery from which animate semiosis, and thus animate aesthetics can be derived; informing our understanding of the artwork and its capacity to act on the world as a lucky sign. Indeed I can only address this poverty now as an ontological problem because of the recent appearance of the posthuman agenda which inverts postmodern limits against itself, to deconstruct the supremacy of identity which haunts contemporary experience as the privileging of intersubjectivity over the pity derived from environmental embodiment in a shared ecology. This poverty limits our understanding of aesthetics and the capacity for signs to

become animate, or lucky, by triggering transcendental forms of affect that substantiate the perspectival aesthetics which by contrast, describes Indigenous semiosis (Kohn 2013, 97). Whereas for ecstatic writers like Pendell, this aesthetic system is inscribed with poison as the subversion of selfhood, which opens spaces of divination.

This possibility has been hitherto dismissed as superstitious by canonical writers like Freud. In *Totem and Taboo* (1961) Freud portrays Aboriginal Australians as inadequately differentiated from their environments and susceptible to collectivising disparate events under a neurotic metanarrative of magical omnipotence, comparable in many ways to the function of luck in this thesis. However, according to a posthuman or philosophical animist reading Freud's critique does not account for the agency of a sentient ecology by which the neuroses of so-called primitives is actually subverted. Finally, this neurosis is rendered more accurately descriptive of modern subjectivity in absence of any limiting factor, descriptive of the omnipotence of anthropocentricity veiled behind metanarratives of empiricism etc.

As such, the superstitious experience Freud attributes to so-called primitives is also pervasive in modern thought. In one of its guises we know it as Derrida's conception of *différance*, which describes the intersubjective excess which proliferates semiotic systems and gains its own psychic life, becoming autonomous and reproductive, thereby instituting the uncanny experience of the postmodern loss of context; the disappearance of the metanarrative. Whereas interpreted in an animist register, this haunting is part of a larger synthesis which seeks ecological harmony by generating these traces as iterations of repressed excess, which finally double as the personification of the shamanic free-soul in order to falsify over-conditioned and anthropocentric subjectivity.

Ritual is thus presented as a sort of synthesiser of *différance*, which animates this uncanny experience into beyond-human intervention personified as luck or any of the trickier gods that personify it; Hermes, Dionysus, Exu, Odin etc. This is the complexity of a musical technology possessed by so-called primitives, capable of generating cultural forms which are not limited by anthropocentric experience. These non-anthropocentric cultural forms, denoted by lucky signs in this thesis, are generated by ritual as the performance and synthesis of repetition and difference.

However, this process depends on the ecstatic capacity to transcend the experienced register into the mythopoetic, where the difference can become animate and finally deified. The exorcism of ecstasy has precluded this possibility; *différance* thus remains at the register of chance rather than luck, and noise rather than music, but in neither case is capable of being synthesised as an animate pattern or narrative which exceeds anthropocentric experience thereby becoming beyond-human.

The appearance of the posthuman agenda has begun to alter these conditions, whereby ecstasy can be ontologically re-addressed. This can be concluded with reference once again to Derrida's work. Derrida's significance here is related to his status as one who stands out as having "gone the farthest in thinking through the place of animals within the Western philosophical tradition" (Calarco; Atterton 2004, xxii). His interests are thus in some senses a precursor of posthumanism and philosophical animism, apparent in his influence on Haraway's view of nature as we will see. Jonathan Boutler thus contends "Postmodernism lives on, if only secretly, in the various forms and expressions of what we have come to term posthumanism" (Boutler in Vint 2020, 44).

Derrida's animal theorising is most potent in his essay *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (Derrida in Calarco; Atterton 2004, 113-128) which describes the uncanny experience of being watched by a cat. This is undertaken to present a positive view of animality in deconstruction of the human/animal binary which has historically positioned animality in a negative position, as the shadow of positive humanity (Calarco; Attention 2004, xxii). As part of this attempt to offer a positive conception of animality Derrida presents the term *animot* conceived to denote the plurality of animality, as opposed to a singular 'the animal' constructed by the anthropocentric gaze as a projection of 'the human'. However, in *Thinking With Cats* (Wood in Calarco; Atterton 2004, 129-144) David Wood demonstrates that Derrida's *animot* was not received with the same enthusiasm as his terms *trace* or *différance* which are familiar postmodern buzzwords (Wood in Calarco; Atterton 2004, 134). In Chapter One I suggest this is surprising in comparison to the prevalence of posthuman terms like beyond-human or more-than-human etc. which have quickly diffused into intellectual discourse. This is surprising as the posthuman term "beyond-human" originating in Kohn's defense of a beyond-human anthropology with recourse to Indigenous

cosmologies in *How Forests Think* (Kohn 2013), denotes a plurality of agencies which exceed human subjectivity, as *animot* was also conceived to do.

This emphasis on the plurality of agency is reiterated by Haraway in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women* (1991) which created the conditions for Kohn's work by facilitating "the emergence of scholarship on human-animal relations" (Vint 2020, 3), including the "posthumanist conversation that followed from her influential 'Cyborg Manifesto'" (Vint 2020, 3). Haraway's rejection of metanarratives as the possibility of synthesis, is in feminist opposition to the penetration of patriarchalism into all systems; "we must never again connect as parts to wholes, as marked beings incorporated into unmarked ones, as unitary and complementary subjects serving the one Subject of monotheism and its secular heresies" (Haraway 1991, 4). This results in her view of nature which "must somehow - linguistically, ethically, scientifically, politically, technologically, and epistemologically - be imagined as genuinely social and actively relational; and yet the partners remain utterly inhomogeneous. 'Our' relations with 'nature' might be imagined as a social engagement with a being who is neither 'it', 'you', 'thou', 'he', 'she' nor 'they' in relation to 'us'" (Haraway 1991, 4). This is once again the same project as Derrida's *animot*.

However, the important distinction between the posthuman *beyond-human* and the postmodern *animot* is an ecstatic one, insofar as the beyond-human refers to negative experience as that which exceeds knowledge and thus goes beyond-the-human. As opposed to *animot* as a positive term, this requires a transgression of anthropocentric systems of identity which Derrida's cat reproduces by replacing the human as the source of the gaze which attributes identity, as the Law. Derrida's emphasis on the positive identity of animality or the *animot*, thus reproduces the anthropocentric conception of identity which by contrast, ecstatic experience intends to subvert by exceeding knowledge. In this thesis, Bataille's conception of ecstatic experience as the dissolution of object boundaries which construct utilitarian forms of identity associated with anthropocentricity and civilization, is thus employed as the model of ecstatic negativity, as a "philosophy of laughter" (Bataille in Kendall 2001, 133).

This thesis' emphasis on ecstasy is consistent with a form of philosophising to which Bataille was native, as Nietzsche's self-acclaimed disciple and a reprobate mystic peddling an ecstatic

philosophy founded on inner experience, conceived as what he “considered the ‘crestline’ of Nietzsche's tragic thought: the ecstatic revelation of the impossible which ruins the separation between subject and object” (Lotringer 194, x). This philosophising is concerned with negative experience as the shadow, the illusion, the dead, the unknown and the Otherworld; but also the universal. Like Bataille, it is faithful to Nietzsche’s attempt to “overcome [philosophy’s] understanding of itself as a science, entirely motivated by the drive to acquire knowledge and, instead, [to] move toward the affirmation of [philosophy] as an art motivated by the drive to illusion” (Lemm 2009, 112-113). In the following section I will show how these problems, more or less oriented around the values of pity and ecstasy, locate this thesis as a mythopoeic expression of philosophical animism.

1.4 Before and After: Philosophical Animism and Mythopoesis

Central to this thesis is the value of a philosophical animist theory of semiosis. This semiosis is descriptive of the artwork as a lucky sign, capable of collapsing perspectives across orders of consciousness and experience into one sign, to generate symbolic crises which exceed subjective knowledge. Such lucky signs can thereby act on the world by triggering subliminal affect to instigate entrapment. This transcendence facilitates the participation of different organisms in what Kohn describes as living semiosis ((Kohn 2013, 33), which becomes animate and “captures the way in which living signs are not just in the here and now but also in the realm of the possible” (Kohn 2013, 33). This is a philosophical animist system insofar as it acknowledges the existence of others in an ecology of selves, defined as co-participants in the weaving of this living semiosis.

In Chapter Two I examine Kohn’s view of living semiosis along with Pendell’s mythopoeic construction of *The Language of Birds* as a comparable form of divinatory semiosis embedded in an animate landscape. The title of Pendell’s *The Language of Birds* (2021) quotes Abram’s work *The Spell of the Sensuous* (1996) where Abram also argues “The land, in other words, is the sensible site or matrix wherein meaning occurs and proliferates” (Abram 1996, 140). As I

have suggested above, these possibilities depend on embodied experience in nature which revives the possibility of a language of universal experience or pity. Abram thus contends;

This cycling of the human back into the larger world ensures that the other forms of experience that we encounter—whether ants, or will trees, or clouds—are never absolutely alien to ourselves. Despite the obvious differences in shape, and ability, and style of being, they remain at least distantly familiar, even familial. It is, paradoxically, this perceived kinship or consanguinity that renders the difference, or otherness, so eerily potent. (Abram 1996, 16).

This “larger world” of shared experience gathers others together in a web upon which *The Language of Birds* is founded. Herein, not only have animals become selves, but humans have exceeded identity to become in Abram’s terms, human-animals; “Becoming earth. Becoming animal. Becoming, in this manner, fully human” (Abram 2011 3).

This zone of living semiosis thus exceeds anthropocentric narratives and is “embedded in an ecology of disparate emerging selves” (Kohn 2013, 34). This process of emergence is inherently ecstatic insofar as it necessitates the straying of the spirit onto other registers of experience which facilitate this co-creation of animate semiosis, productive of selfhood. Kohn thus refers to the predicament of a monkey in the Amazon forest whose perch on a branch begins to shake. The monkey must ecstatically empathise across species to divine this movement as a lucky sign, expressive of the grander semiosis of the rainforest. The monkey’s participation furthermore, weaves its life into this trickery as a fatal dance with the other:

A monkey takes the moving perch, as sign, to be connected with something else, for which it stands. It is connected to something dangerously different from her present sense of security. Maybe the branch she is perched on is going to break off. Maybe a jaguar is climbing up a tree... Something is about to happen, and she had better do something about it (Kohn 2013, 33).

Lucky signs thus collapse the experience of intersubjectivity into one event. This ecstatic encounter with the other during lucky coincidences expressed as signs, is capable of relating us to the beyond-human, and also participating in its construction. Perhaps the monkey abandons

the tree and it doesn't snap, flowers bloom on it which attract hummingbirds. Perhaps the jaguar climbing the tree misses the monkey, so preys on a nearby sloth instead etc. Awareness of this dance, of how things are woven together and often distilled in one moment of possibility capable of altering the future, is representative of the multinatural perspectivism Kohn attributes to the aesthetic system of the Indigenous Runa of the Ecuadorian Amazon in *How Forests Think* (2013), from whom he derives his animist concept of living semiosis. This conception of living semiosis inscribes sign-making with an animate negativity, which I characterise as musical luck, insofar as it is related to and made meaningful in rhythm with an ecological harmony.

Multinatural perspectivism is supported by posthuman thinkers like Akomolafe working with concepts of ecological animism also derived from Indigenous Yoruba culture. Akomolafe tells us “The ingredients of the going-ons around us are not reducible to the choices and consequences of human actors and human sociality” (2023). This is in opposition to the historical limitation of agency to a particular sect of human beings, typical of Western civilization (Singer 2004, xi).

Perspectivalism as the decentering and fragmentation of anthropocentric supremacy which thereby attributes meaning to other forms of agency, is native to the ecology of selves defended by philosophical animism. However Arran Gare argues this posthuman sensibility is not new, but can be discerned as early as the Neo-Platonic pantheistic materialism which was celebrated as nature enthusiasm during the emergence of humanism in the Florentine Renaissance (Gare 2021, 3). This substantiates Stefan Herbrechter's argument that “‘after the human’ also need[s] to be understood as *before* the human” (Herbrechter in Vint 2020, 40). This accounts for this thesis allusions to premodern cosmologies associated with Ptolemy's musical universe, however it seeks to recontextualise them in the contemporary problems which have been antagonised by the posthuman movement, and described in the above section. This “after” which is also a “before”, describes philosophical animism as an ontological system familiar to preindustrial cosmologies associated with dualistic pluralism and so-called primitives. Deborah Rose reminds us,

The term animism has its origins in 19th century anthropological work that sought to demonstrate an evolutionary hierarchy within the human family such that primitives could be defined in ways that radically distinguished them from civilised folk... one of

the distinguishing criteria for making the cut between ‘us’ and ‘them’ was animism.

According to Edward Tylor, a foundational figure in the earlier use of the term, primitive people imagined that everything had within it a soul. (Rose 2013, 96).

As I have shown, thinkers like Derrida have attempted to resolve the fraught racial dialogues by which “primitives could be defined in ways that radically distinguished them from civilised folk” (Rose 2013, 96), by incorporating animist values into the Western self-image. This also describes Bruno Latour’s publication *On The Modern Cult of the Factish Gods* (2010) which identifies the fetish systems that continue to describe knowledge production in the West. However this projection of identity has obscured the exceptional knowledge associated with the so-called primitive order of music. As Christopher Small shows in *Musicking* (1998) modern Westerners practice, perform, consume, and experience music differently.

This confusion is reproduced by posthumanism, which borrows wisdom from Indigenous tradition while nonetheless omitting its principal commitment to the food-chain, as the music to which Kohn’s monkey harmonises. This is clear in posthumanism’s generative text *The Cyborg Manifesto* (Haraway 1991) which positions a non-organic cyborg “hybrid composed of organism and machine” (Haraway 1991, 1) at the centre of its stage. This thesis argues that as a non-edible organism excluded from the food-chain, the cyborg cannot be lucky. However philosophical animism makes up for this neglected premise, according to the legacy of its main proponent.

Plumwood developed her worldview of philosophical animism following a gruesome crocodile attack which introduced her to the beyond-human agents we negotiate with as participants in the food-chain. Whereas the modern myth of anthropocentric exceptionalism has excluded human beings from this ecological participation; “We are victors and never victim, experiencing triumph but never tragedy, our true identity as minds, not as bodies” (Plumwood; Shannon 2012, 13). Philosophical animism seeks to bring us back into contact with this feast as a “humbling and very disruptive experience” (Plumwood; Shannon 2012, 15) which is furthermore, founded on sacrifice and gift-giving. These exchanges weave the web of relations which form the living ecology as a metamorphic food-chain of predation and sacrifice. Plumwood’s work in *The Eye of the Crocodile* (2012) has been essential for mapping this Heraclitan context for which we “live the other’s death, die the other’s life” (Plumwood; Shannon 2012, 13). As such “Plumwood was

passionately committed to the understanding that the living world is powerful and possesses its own agency and sentience” (Rose 2013, 94). She developed philosophical animism as “a mode of encounter” (Rose 2013, 93) which “could be argued from within Western philosophy” (Rose 2013, 93).

Plumwood defended philosophical animism by positioning it in opposition to what she describes as “Ontological Veganism” in *The Eye of the Crocodile* (2012, 78), by which animals are granted ontological status on the condition that humans become vegan, repressing the relationships of predation that order the food-chain and generate animate semiosis, as well as ecological harmony. For Plumwood Ontological Veganism means that human beings maintain their exceptionalism as beings excluded from the food-chain, like Haraway’s cyborg. However this very exceptionalism is what posthumanism seeks to deconstruct, as the driver of ecological crises. The food-chain thus becomes important to this thesis as the distinguishing element of philosophical animism, which demarcates it from other posthuman trends which cannot conceptualise a truly living semiosis without acknowledging the human being’s place in the food-chain. Founded on Plumwood’s experience of being attacked and death-rolled three times by a crocodile, philosophical animism seeks to re-incorporate human beings as participants in the food-chain; both as predators and prey. It positions the food-chain as the site of ecstatic beyond-human experience and lucky signs, described by Bataille as immanence. Bataille conceived the intimate state of immanence as a non-utilitarian order which dissolves object schemas, experienced most potently during predation whereby the eater does not distinguish itself from the eaten (Bataille in Calacro; Atterton 2004, 33). This ecstatic dissolution of anthropocentric identity offers “precisely human death” (Bataille in Strauss 1990, 16) as the myth of separation. Upon this death, the animal is revived as “luck, an access to the level of the impossible” (Bataille in Kendall 2001, 17).

The impossible thus intervenes as ecstatic experience, native to the lucky order. This zone is explored in the mythopoeic research of the ethnobotanist Pendell, who poeticises the impossible as beyond-human experience in his *Pharmakon* series (2010). The *Pharmakon* series, composed of *Pharmakodynamis*, *Pharmakognosis*, and *Pharmakopoeia* (2010) documents Pendell’s ritual practice with the ingestion of psychotropic plants. This ritual practice is modelled on the use of

sacred plants by (mostly American) Indigenous peoples, which Pendell discusses at length throughout the series.

Pendell can also be described as a philosophical animist on the basis of his attention to the food-chain, whereby the ingestion of psychotropic plants and mushrooms initiate him into the immanent order associated with beyond-human agency, ecstatic experience, and divination. On this basis Pendell developed his shamanic conception of the War of the Poisons, which determines that human beings are possessed by the plants we consume:

Perhaps it is the plants that turn history, and we act on their behalf—sowing fields, opening plantations and imbibing the steaming extracts. The plant spirit moves through our bodies, spreading through blood and nerves, lymph and synapse, until our identities are merged and we do their bidding. We secure beachheads, plan campaigns to subdue a continent and win a culture (Pendell 2010a, 91).

Pendell elaborated this conception on the basis of his mentor Norman O. Brown's view of theomachy, which "recognised history as a reflection of the war among the gods" (Pendell 2010c, 156). His mythopoeic method was derived from Brown's enthusiastic conception of inspiration as "God in us: *entheos*: enthusiasm; this is the essence of the holy madness" (Brown 1991, 6). For Pendell, the mythopoeic method subsequently demanded intoxication as the inspiration capable of reviving the divinely possessive function of Dionysian chance, as the "uninvited guest" (Pendell 2008, 155) or "God in us" (Brown 1991, 6). Pendell thus experienced psychotropic intoxication as divinatory mythopoesis which initiated him into *The Language of Birds*. For Pendell, "we have need of poison" (Pendell 2010c, 3). The contribution of Pendell's mythopoesis to this thesis allows me to methodologically privilege luck in my theorising, as well as the experience of intoxication by which we are possessed (or poisoned) by beyond-human others that bring us into harmony with them. Pendell's practice with poisons thereby provides a methodology for my mythopoeic theory of ritual, which privileges luck and intoxication.

However in Chapter One I compare and contrast Brown and Pendell's view on Dionysian chance and luck. This is useful insofar as Brown's position is sympathetic to the intellectual paradigms which have generated contemporary thought, whereas Pendell's worldview was constructed by

his mythopoeic practice which ultimately led him down an ecstatic road. Pendell is thus a central personality for this thesis for various reasons: his proximity to the food-chain, his commitment to beyond-human agency, and his ecstatic practice. Brown thus accused Pendell of “play[ing] the shaman” (Pendell 2008, 15). Perhaps on merit of this very accusation Pendell is the medium of this thesis, which frequently relies on his work. He is a very contemporary poet capable of speaking an old language, and thus “prefer[red] luck to chance” (Pendell 2008, 13). I will now briefly situate mythopoeic luck in the musical view of luck which this thesis defends as ecological harmony.

1.5 A Musical View of Luck

This thesis argues that luck is musical, where music is understood as the harmony capable of synthesising disparate parts into the serendipitous experience of some greater meaning, described as music (Chua; Rehding 2021). However music cannot be reduced to an anthropocentric myth insofar as it is experienced as an expression of the beyond-human; its meaning is derived from the transcendental experience of pity by which tonality is universally intelligible across species, and its forms are predicated on peculiar embodiments including the ecological contexts where the wood a violin is made from, grows; or the life of a bird whose bones became a flute. In this way music also describes the astrological relationships that map space with sound, vibration, and echoes and is capable of collapsing space-time to revive foreign states or Otherworlds. Finally music is not a result of the utilitarian pursuits of mankind, but was one of his first investments and indeed discoveries, and is thus related to sacred experience as that which exceeds utilitarianism. David George Haskell reminds us the first instruments “are three times older than human agriculture. Two hundred and forty times older than the age of oil wells and gasoline” (Haskell 2022, 194). This is an inkling of the complexities of the technology possessed by the so-called primitives.

Luck is described as the experience of falling into rhythm with the “mythopoeic syncopations” (Akomolafe 2023) produced by a sentient ecology harmonising across species and levels of consciousness. This rhythm is thus capable of generating lucky signs which interface across

perspectives and orders of consciousness, ascribing them with beyond-human significance. This is in opposition to views of semiosis which ascribe to its dynamism the experience of intersubjective alienation or difference. In this regard the dynamism of semiosis which proliferates a social environment, reproducing itself and gaining energetic contagion to finally animate pure negativity, does not have the capacity to act on the world in a meaningful way as a sign. In Chapter One I compare this to the experience of chance, rather than luck; it is noise, rather than music, insofar as it does not resolve into some meaningful sensation. It does not synthesise into what I have described as the lucky experience of music capable of expressing a beyond-human narrative identified with ecological sentience and music. This view of lucky signs demands that semiosis can work on or act in the world, thereby offering the possibility of animate aesthetics.

These lucky signs act on the world by representing beyond-human knowledge, whereby alternative perspectives are collapsed into one sign. This aggregate of beyond-human knowledge is capable of instigating symbolic crises experienced as the limit of knowledge. We can imagine Kohn's monkey misread the branch that was shaking because of a passing herd of pigs. The monkey assumed the shaking branch signaled the approach of a predator, and jumped onto another branch, where the predator was actually waiting. The monkey's subsequent death is representative of a symbolic crisis instigated by the limit of knowledge. This crisis furthermore brings it into an encounter with a beyond-monkey: the predator, the pigs, and more generally, the food-chain. The shaking branch was nevertheless a lucky sign as it stitched these alternative perspectives together into one affective sign representative of various futures. This collapse of perspectives was employed skillfully by the predator to ecstatically intuit what the monkey would see and how it would behave; it was thereby able to set a trap which conditioned the future, as the dance continues. In this regard the shaking branch was more fully a lucky sign in the sense usually employed by it, for the predator; whereas it was an unlucky sign for the monkey representative of its lack of knowledge. In Chapter Two I thus argue that lucky signs are intimate to the nature of hunting in complex social ecologies, represented by Kohn in this case, as the Amazon forest. Of course these lucky signs also depend on the co-existence of beyond-human registers, threatened by ecological crises and our increasingly anthropocentric and urban existence.

However I suggest this capacity has been artistically repurposed in modernity into the poetic acts associated with the ritual instigation of symbolic crises, and identify trickery at the heart of creative practice. I argue instigated crises are capable of short-circuiting pathological forms of identity founded on anthropocentric allusions to knowledge by performing a kind of symbolic death. This process supports ecological harmony, by falsifying inauthentic subjectivity founded on over-conditioned forms of anthropocentricity which alienate us from our sentient environment and isolate us in contrived forms of identity. Whereas coming into harmony with the environment makes us lucky; returns to us self-presence and the presence of the world. In this thesis I argue ritual is the appropriate site for this process, indeed I argue that generating these crises is the *raison d'être* of ritual practice, and thus position ritual as a practice concerned with managing ecological harmony, by returning us to its music.

This view has been informed by Abram's characterisation of the traditional magician's place "mediating *between* the human community and the large community of beings upon which the village depends for its nourishment and sustenance" (Abram 1996, 6), and is orientated by Brown's argument that the "words connoting magical action in the classical period are derived from roots whose original meaning is just as close to the notion of trickery as it is to that of magic" (Brown 2011, 18). Indeed it is the very magic Campagna characterises as reality reconstruction in *Technic and Magic* (2022), and which the filmmaker Alejandro Jodorowsky employs as theatre and discusses in *Psychomagic* (2010).

In Chapter Two I thus refer to Jodorowsky's creative method, which is similarly preoccupied with the use of trickery during the setting of "sacred traps" (Jodorowsky in LeValley, viii). Jodorowsky developed his psychomagic conception of symbolic entrapment following his apprenticeship with traditional healers in Mexico who often performed "miracles using the honorable tricks of a skilled magician" (Jodorowsky in LeValley, viii), and for whom "healing is an art" (Jodorowsky in LeValley, vii). Jodorowsky thus utilises theatrical techniques of suggestion to instigate symbolic crises in patients, which tricks them into participating in their own miracles of psychosomatic healing, described as a sacred trap. Jodorowsky's practice with sacred traps is in support of Turner's view of the ritual process, as well as my own. It relies on

aesthetic systems and hypnotic forms of communication which transcend conscious awareness and hegemonic conditioning, enacting beyond-human knowledge as subliminal triggers or “the language of the unconscious”(Jodorowsky in LeValley, viii). Jodorowsky attributes a homicidal quality to this process of entrapment, which repurposes the mimetic skills of the hunter into the poetic acts which establish a sacred trap (Jodorowsky in LeValley, 23) during our “Reality Dance” (Jodorowsky in LeValley, 120).

Jodorowsky’s sacred traps also revolve around the appearance of the double who instigates symbolic crises (Jodorowsky in LeValley, 48-49) in order to falsify the subject’s “autoconcept, the idea one has of oneself” (Jodorowsky in LeValley, 48-49). Jodorowsky’s framework enabled me to more clearly understand the function of the double in ritual practice, identifiable as the shamanic free-soul, which initiates the individual “into the reality of his or her false individuality” (Stang 2016, 7). This view is supported by Charles M. Stang in *Our Divine Double* (2016), where Stang relates the divine double to the process of self-deification described in early Christian theology, whereby persons become Christ-like. In Chapter Three I describe this double as a mythopoeic double insofar as it becomes animate through the coincidences and traces Derrida has described as *différance* but which I define as lucky signs. Additionally, the mythopoeic double makes the ritual subject lucky as it brings them into harmony with the musical ecology by falsifying anthropocentric (and thus isolated) subjectivity. I thereby suggest this form of luck is predicated on the ritualised subversion of identity the double instigates during sacred traps, and is concerned with power as opposed to success.

This association between ritual and the double is further reinforced by researchers and historians of shamanism like Claude Lecouteux and Ulf Drobin who refer to the double or free-soul, as the spirit of the shamanic person capable of undertaking ecstatic vision quests into Otherworlds. This is also descriptive of the rituals I describe in Chapter Four. So while the association between the double and ritual in ecstatic experience is not novel, my contribution is to frame this in terms of a musical view of luck; insofar as the double makes the ritual subject lucky by subverting false identity and thereby reconstituting subjectivity in harmony with a sentient ecology—or simply, bringing them into rhythm with a food-chain. The food-chain and the veil of spirit it stitches

together as living semiosis, can also be identified as the Otherworld; both Kohn and Lecoutex make this comparison.

The double is thus central to ritual practice, as the appearance of the other which is both induced by and instigates symbolic crises in subversion or sacrifice of false identity. This crisis is musical insofar as it dilutes the object boundaries associated with normative social experience, and returns us to what Bataille describes as the state of immanence; allowing for the appearance of unexpected visitors and uninvited guests native to another register. Lecouteux reminds us “the voyage afar... is the result of a trance achieved through chant, dance, or a certain rhythmic music” (Lecouteux 2001, 38).

This musical crisis is also logical to Turner’s ritual process which describes ceremonial separation, which facilitates the ritual state of liminality between orders of experience. Essays in *Transforming Warriors* (2016) utilise this framework to describe the trance states fostered by ritual initiation, whereby persons are able to transgress social codes and break taboos during initiation rites. This initiation process enables warriors to responsibly transgress the taboo of murder during war, and to be integrated into civil society following the end of the period of liminality, where they are reincorporated into society often having earned a new status denoted by a change in name.

However, in Chapter Three I argue the modern disappearance of rituals of altered consciousness or trance has vanished the site whereby the double becomes animate and makes itself known. Following Peter Jackson and Anna-Pya Sjödin’s claim in *Philosophy and the End of Sacrifice* (2016) that “Scholars have long observed, yet without presenting any transcultural *grand theory* on the matter, that sacrifice seems to end with, or perhaps more accurately, to continue *as philosophy*” (Jackson; Sjödin 2016, 1), I argue that philosophy appropriated the ritual function whereby the double becomes known; enacted as the interiorization of sacrifice and resulting in what Abram describes as the transformation of the previously mobile *psychê* into a “literary intellect” (Abram 1996, 112-113). This transformation was compounded by the institution of the order of logos by Plato (Spitzer 2011, 9), which ushered in the era of Holy Scriptures (Strousma in Jackson; Sjödin 2016, 11). However the double nevertheless persisted as a literary

imagination, insofar as philosophy honored its ritual roots in “the fragile states of dream and illusion, [wherein] the animal returns” (Lemm 2009, 26) and remained faithful to itself as an art and study of illusion. However, the modernisation of philosophy during Enlightenment incorporated philosophical inquiry into empiricism, which exorcised the double as well as its sacrificial function. The double’s total disappearance was finally assured by the Medieval Witch Hunt and its attack on festivities, folklore and the social fabric of communities which enacted ritual practice as cultural memory (Federici 2018, 26-27).

Nonetheless, as I have argued, the double returns to us today in the traces Derrida has made in some respects, animate. Its digital nature as it proliferates the online systems that map social space is a reflection of the technological era we now inhabit, which finally brings the orders of writing and music to head. This leads me to a question which exceeds this thesis, but as its product: what is the difference in nature between the double animated as possessive saints, ancestral angels or *orishas* in the musical tradition of ritual, in comparison to the sentience of digital systems most recently personified as Chat GPT? And is this a meaningful difference? In accordance with the ecstatic commitment of this thesis, my reply is that digital sentience is not capable of short-circuiting anthropocentric identity; indeed it is a product of it. Rather than offering the ecstatic experience of symbolic crises, this ultimately normalises pathology. These pathologies can be as vast as the solar system, however they are not possessed by music. This would require the appearance of the uninvited guest, Dionysus.

1.6 How I Got Here

These research interests were already incubating in my masters’ thesis, *Paradox: A Tragic Problem*, when I read Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex* through Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy* (Nietzsche et al 2003), and Derrida’s *Limited Inc* (Derrida; Mehlman 1988). Sophocles’ *Oedipus* narrates the tragic story of a royal heir abandoned by his parents on merit of a prophecy which foretells that he will murder his father, King Laius of Thebes, and marry his mother, Queen Jocasta. A shepherd is instructed to abandon the baby Oedipus, on a mountainside. However the shepherd pities the newborn who is given to another shepherd, and ultimately adopted by another

couple. Reaching adulthood, Oedipus discovers the ominous prophecy and tries to escape it by fleeing his adopted parents to Thebes. Along the way he quarrels with a band of travellers, kills them, and then liberates Thebes from a sphinx which has besieged the city. In the prolonged absence of the king who has inexplicably vanished, Oedipus is made king and marries Queen Jocasta with whom he sires four children. Years later Thebes is plagued by an inexplicable disease divined to have resulted from King Laius' unresolved death. King Oedipus is tasked to investigate this mystery and finally discovers that he has brought this plague upon Thebes by killing his father, marrying his mother, and siring his siblings. Horrified by his fate, Oedipus cuts out his eyes and becomes a wanderer. This story begins the tragic cycle of Sophocles' three Theban plays, which also include *Oedipus at Colonus* and *Antigone*. It has been foundational for the Western imagination, as an instrumental text for Sigmund Freud's construction of the Oedipus Complex which describes the sexual development of infants in relation to parental infatuation and rivalry. This contributed to Freud's seduction theory which suggests infants sexualise their parental relationships. In *The Assault on Truth* (1984) Jeffrey Moussaieff Mason showed how Freud's commitment to this psychoanalytic theory influenced his rejection of sexual assault claims among his female patients. Inherent to this history, is the Oedipal problem of how social reality as well as subjectivity is constructed, and the capacity for such symbolic exercises to intrude on experienced reality as the experience of pathology or self-fulfilling prophecies. This is an originating problem for my interest in ritual and luck.

I read Oedipus' crisis through Derrida's *Limited Inc* (Derrida; Mehlman 1988) as the return of subjective excess which cannot be integrated into the symbolic code; which is made animate by Derrida's theory of difference and hunts us as the appearance of Fate. Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (2003) allowed me to map the distinct orders of nature and civilization through which this excess can flee, avoiding consciousness. My interest in *Oedipus* was thus derived from its enactment of a symbolic crisis which is performed, both as an Apolline narrative but also as a Dionysian performance. I argued that the symbolic crises described in Sophocles' narrative threatens the integrity of the script itself, insofar as it implodes language by conflating symbolic references (mother becomes wife etc.) thereby unhinging the symbolic universe wherein the story operates; thus introducing Dionysus as chaos into the performance. This appearance of chaos transcends the artifice of time implied by theatre, thereby generating ecstatic, tragic

experience. *Oedipus* thereby offered an example of how instigated crises can produce ecstatic experience; it unleashes the code from the context. The code thus loses its body and value-system, and is rendered vulnerable to Dionysian possession from some more-than-human site identified by Nietzsche as Tragedy.

This ecstatic reading was informed by my ritual practice of the Afro-Brazilian performance form Capoeira during that time. While my practice was still in its infancy, it was pregnant with the possibility to frame ritual as a spontaneous theatre of comparable, induced crises generative of ecstatic experience. Capoeira thus operates as a point of access to the other rituals I describe in this chapter, as well as in Chapter Four.

Beginning my doctorate research, I started from a conception of living myth derived from Georges Bataille's *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* (1985), which seemed to offer a proximate description for this kind of artistic practice, capable of absorbing lived reality and the experience of subjectivity as its creative media, and thereby bypassing the commodification of creative practice oriented around production, by reviving it as something which is productive of animate semiosis, intimately experienced, and informative for the performance of subjectivity itself. This kind of practice persists in the rituals of circus clowning, which like Capoeira, are enacted around the body as the site of crises and transgression; as the clown that mimes its abjection or paints its face with living death (Bouissac 2015).

My subsequent serendipitous discovery of Pendell offered a framework for this discussion in the guise of luck. Pendell's documentation of his own ritual practice in the *Pharmakon* series (2010), offered various terms that resounded with me such as poison, intoxication, possession etc. on merit of my comparable experience of them in Capoeira. Furthermore, Pendell's practice with the ingestion of psychotropic plants, offered a discussion of the ritual process capable of engaging with its actual logic in terms of the altered states it engenders. This introduced the problem of ecstasy and the appearance of doubles into the experience of ritual liminality, which Turner has not defined. Pendell's mentor Brown had also developed a Dionysian concept of chance and enthusiastic view of nature as "God in us" (Brown 1991, 6), which mobilised my understanding of *The Birth of Tragedy*.

This discovery informed my understanding of Capoeira, which I began to look at as a shamanic practice instead of leisure, resulting in a proliferation of lucky coincidences. Luck thus became a compelling point of research because of my own experience of the ritualised synchronicities which Turner ascribes to ritualistically induced *communitas*, as an alternative form of collectivity capable of producing heterogenous phenomena (Turner 1982, 48). My Capoeira practice, now a decade old, had become riven with such lucky states, which were further exacerbated by a vision fast I undertook and which I will describe later in this chapter. All of this was also percolating in the social crises of Covid 19, and the underground movements of liminal experience it generated during ritual gatherings and raves in London from 2019-2021. But how could I frame these disparate interests between crises, luck, and ritual practice within the tradition of Western philosophy? What missing link did they describe that bound them together in a language that would not be denigrated as superstitious? And why was I convinced that this chain of thought articulated a contemporary problem that could show us something important about philosophy today?

First this would require demonstrating that this order of description, luck and its associates, are not neutral terms but have been branded as superstitious by history. I thus began to organise my research around the transformation of knowledge whose most recent figuration I located in the modern Industrial Revolution. Accompanying this transformation was the demonisation of ecstatic practices culminating in the gruesome excesses of the Witch Hunts, which afflicted both traditional practices in Europe as well as those abroad (Federici 2014). In search of the forms of knowledge making that had been exorcised along with these practices, I began a study of Indigenous cosmology, initially with Claude Lévi-Strauss' *The Story of Lynx* (1996). This was a natural progression of my personal reading of Indigenous texts including works by the Lakota medicine men Black Elk (Neihardt 2014) and John Fire Lame Deer (Lame Deer; Erdoes 1994), as well as my practical exposure to Amerindian culture and mythology through Capoeira. By now I had visited Bahia, Brazil twice for a total of two months and taken part in local festivals.

While *The Story of Lynx* (1996) figures only briefly in Chapter Four, it was an originating text for this thesis in two senses. Firstly, it outlined the significance of a dualistic ontology in

Indigenous thinking, which I have elaborated in Chapter Three as dualistic pluralism to facilitate the ecstatic function of the free soul or double in shamanic practice. This provides a framework for a shamanic and thus ecstatic view of the ritual practices I examine in Chapter Four, related through various means to Capoeira. Secondly, *The Story of Lynx* (1996) was also a product of the problem that opens this chapter: the anthropological method. Like Turner, Lévi-Strauss depends on an anthropological view of nature and reading of ritual practice capable of describing transcultural values expressive of some innate human nature. It is this very innate human nature which I finally argue ritual is concerned with reviving but as ultimately, ecological participation.

I do this by devoting the first three chapters of this thesis to developing a mythopoeic theory of luck which is 1. musical, 2. concerned with animate semiosis woven by the food-chain, and 3. subverts anthropocentric subjectivity. This is applied in Chapter Four to an interpretation of ritual practice which emphasises ritual crises instigated by the appearance of the double during ecstatic experience. This symbolic crisis falsifies inauthentic identity to restore presence as participation in a beyond-human harmony, experienced as luck. The resulting discussion of this thesis is the possibility of animate semiosis and thus an animate aesthetics capable of acting on the world, which I compare to lucky signs. I will now introduce these ideas in relation to a ritual of vision fasting I undertook in 2021.

1.7 Opening Gambit: My Vision Fast

Vision fasting is an Amerindian initiation ritual often related to ecstatic, visionary experience. Jaime de Angulo refers to it in an essay on the religious system of the Pit River Indians, upon which Pendell most clearly modelled his mythopoeic theory of luck as poison and power,

there is somewhere in the woods some individual animal, some one particular deer, or a certain locust, or a certain weasel, some one individual denizen of the wilds with a particularly strong dose of life-power to his credit, and he is the fellow whose acquaintance you must make and whose friendship you must acquire, cultivate, and keep. Go into the woods and find him. Seek him in the lonely places, about the springs. Call to

him. Go again. Starve yourself and go again. Call to him. Sing his song. (Angulo 1926, 357).

In *The Spiritual Legacy of the American Indian* (2007), Joseph Epes Brown also describes vision fasting; wherein a person is “exposed, normally for four days and nights, to the elements and to the forms and forces of nature; he or she should be attentive to whatever might appear, no matter how insignificant the being or phenomenon might seem to be” (JE Brown et al 2007, 60-64). Vision fasting thus demonstrates the three stages of Turner’s ritual process; separation, liminality, and incorporation. Consistently, vision fasting segregates supplicants, who endure a liminal period of passage questing for a vision which often imparts a “specific quality of spiritual power” through which the supplicant “establish[es] an identity” (JE Brown 2007, 61), before being re-incorporated into tribal society often having earned a new name and position in the community. The Lakota medicine man John Fire Lame Deer describes how he endured his vision fast as a young boy;

I was sixteen then, still had my boy's name and, let me tell you, I was scared. I was shivering and not only from the cold. The nearest human being was many miles away, and four days and nights is a long, long time. Of course, when it was all over, I would no longer be a boy, but a man. I would have had my vision. I would be given a man's name. (Lame Deer; Erdoes 2009, 1).

I will now describe the events of my vision fast, beginning with a fable that was told over a fire the night before it began, from the perspective of a “little mouse” who discovered itself in the food-chain. The wilderness guide Rupert Marques described how Little Mouse began to hear a loud incessant sound above his head, and wondering at its call, undertook various adventures to discover its source and relieve himself of its racket. During one of these escapades, he encountered the trickster Raven, who guided him across an abyss toward his final destination at the top of a mountain, where Little Mouse finally discovered the source of this deafening thunder; the clap of an eagle’s wings as it hunted him. In a swift conclusion to this frightening journey that took Little Mouse far beyond the safety of his village, delivering him to the pit of death, Eagle ate Little Mouse. Suddenly Little Mouse found himself flying above places that had

once terrified him, gliding through the sky. He circled over the village where he had lived, flapping his wings above another little mouse, summoning them with a thunderous call into the sky. Little Mouse had become Eagle.

This fable had a lucky resemblance to a vivid dream I had a few months earlier, of a giant yellow bird. This dream motivated me to participate in the vision fast on merit of my knowledge of the tradition of Thunderbirds among indigenous North Americans. The resemblance between the dream, story and then the vision fast, constructed a permeable time which became collectively incarnate in my (community based) ritual practice of Capoeira over the next two years. I then later viscerally experienced this resemblance in daylight when walking in a field, I observed a large buzzard flying nearby into a forest and then out over a hill. My partner and I followed the bird's line of flight, which led us to the discovery of its nest in a gathering of trees, and finally led us to the top of the hill. The buzzard flew over us across an opening in the trees, calling loudly. I had the surreal feeling that we had somehow been led to this position in some sort of whirl-wind the bird had crafted around us, weaving a surreal disturbance of time. If we had been smaller surely it would have eaten us; it felt that it had hunted us. The prophetic relationship between these episodes is an instantiation of Elliot R. Wolfon's theory of remembering the future in *A Dream Interpreted Within a Dream* (2011) which will become important for this thesis in Chapter Two.

The four days of vision fasting on private farm land in Donegal, Ireland was contained within a ceremonial space organised by the organisation *Wild Awake!* whose founder Lucy O'Hagan "aims to rekindle ecological and cultural resilience through the restoration of ancestral life ways in Ireland"¹. The fast began with two days of group ceremony which called each participant into the centre of a circle of limestone, discovered in a field behind our residence, to explain why they had decided to undertake the vision fast. These testimonies were mirrored and questioned by our three wilderness guides, until each person had distilled theirs into a short statement of intent. On the fourth day we rose just before daylight to begin our fast, stepping through a portal we had built around a hawthorn tree with branches and objects scavenged from the woods we were to disappear into for four days. We each stepped into the fairy-ring, declared our intention

¹ <https://www.wildawake.ie/>

and then departed wordlessly to solitary camps we had already prepared, on land donated by a local farmer for the four days of our fast, rumoured to have been previously tended by a witch.

The day before we set out individually to choose and prepare our solitary campsites, to erect our tarps and station our sleeping bags and litres of water. Our furnishings were luxurious in this regard compared to the conditions of deprivation described by Lame Deer who endured his own fast without food or water, in a pit in the earth miles away from the nearest person, as a sixteen year old boy (Lame Deer; Erdoes 1994, 5). As a religious practice Lame Deer's fast was intended to provoke a visionary state induced by deprivation, while the commercial apparatus surrounding my own fast made various health and safety requirements, such as water and the invisible observation of guides, a legal requirement. In this regard, I was unlikely to experience the level of psychosomatic agitation described by Lame Deer who experienced the presence of a big bird.

I found my campsite relatively easily and directly, as if led there. I climbed upward through a field of fern past a fort of thorny shrubs to discover a small meadow veiled by trees. A small stonewall had been built around it in a circle, ringing in the meadow occupied by a single birch tree at its centre, whose trunk grew in two and whose long feathery arms leant out providing shade for what felt like a microclimate. I imagined it was the kind of place animals might have been kept at night or in relief of summer heat. The meadow sat like a step on the side of a slope leading to the summit of hills overlooking this territory. It seemed like a natural chamber; a meadow of grass behind a fort of thorns, veiled by trees, protected by a ring of stone and watched over by the birch. I passed between its trunks and into a hidden reality. The discovery of this haven was the first in a series of strange miraculous happenings over those four days, organised around my discovery of the birch tree, and then a holly tree growing over a well, a grove of hazel trees, and finally a hilltop vision.

In my faint state during the fast, I had the vivid impression that my walks through the forest were led by some work of coincidence, or invisible magnetic forces that seemed to vibrate in the atmosphere of the forest. This began with the discovery of my campsite in the ring of stone, under the birch tree that was split in two. And then the discovery of the holly tree growing over

an empty well. It was most acute when trying to enter a wood, I could not pass through its border due to the density of its foliage, until I finally found what I sensed as a correct entrance. This entrance led me to the grove of ancient hazel trees. Over three days I built altars at these sites which became metaphoric of the seasons of my life; childhood (birch), adolescence (holly), and adulthood (hazel). On the fourth day I climbed to the hill top with feathers I had collected to throw into the wind, where I was surrounded by swallows circling the summit as red butterflies hatched from their cocoons on its side.

On the final morning of the fast a red robin flew into my campsite where it hovered over my altar looking at me, within reach. I was later pecked on the back of the head by a red robin. During the fast, I dreamt on the second night that a sparrowhawk left feathers for my altars in a valley in the forest. Returning from the fast, I discovered a sparrowhawk feather on a communal altar we had constructed in the cottage. These coincidences and the feeling that they were not coincidental at all, beginning with the opportunity to undertake a vision fast following my dream of a yellow bird, represent the foundational inquiry of my thesis, which has examined ritual practices concerned with making such musical movements of luck visible.

Turner refers to this kind of luck as synchronicity in *From Ritual to Theatre* (1982), within the context of what he describes as spontaneous communitas. For Turner, ritual practices generate exceptional periods of passage or liminality which foster an alternative form of social coherence he describes as communitas in *The Ritual Process* (1991);

Communitas breaks in through the interstices of structure, in liminality; at the edges of structure, in marginality ; and from beneath structure, in inferiority. It is almost everywhere held to be sacred or "holy, " possibly because it transgresses or dissolves the norms that govern structured and institutionalised relationships and is accompanied by experiences of unprecedented potency. (Turner 1991, 128).

Furthermore,

Individuals who interact with one another in the mode of spontaneous *communitas* become totally absorbed into a single synchronised, fluid event. Their "gut" understanding of synchronicity in these situations opens them to the understanding of such cultural forms—derived typically today from literate transmission of world culture, directly or in translation—as eucharistic union and the I Ching, which stresses the mutual mystical participation (to cite Levy-Bruhl) of all contemporary events, if one only had a mechanism to lay hold of the "meaning" underlying their "coincidence." (Turner 1982, 48).

Communitas applies to the potent experience of liminality enacted by a community, generative of synchronicities which unearth underlying cultural forms or structures already instilled in the individual through cultural conditioning and experience in nature. However this encounter with what has surfaced from underground undoubtedly represents the ritual's sense of connectivity to the universe. These structures however, are interpreted subjectively, resulting in the fabulous excesses of ritual performance. Turner's theory of *communitas* applies to ritual practices which are enacted collectively; and as such, appears foreign to vision fasting as a solitary endeavour. However, the experience of synchronicity which characterises his system, as well as my experience of vision fasting, offers an interesting take which locates the community of vision fasting in nature itself as a sentient ecology always invested in some form of *communitas*, and peopled by alternative forms of beyond-human agency "at the edges of structure" (Turner 1991, 128).

This web of *communitas* gains contagious power which animate the deities they personify as a living ecology of harmonic relationships, described by posthumanism as the beyond-humans or more-than-humans that regulate and possess, or enchant and intoxicate, systems. In his study of *Musicking* as a ritual practice, Small reminds us, "The Polynesian god Tane, for example, is—not represents or symbolises but *is*—the proper relationship between humanity and the life of plants and the forest, and the Yoruba-American goddess Yemayá is that which connects us to the sea and its creatures. To worship Tane or Yemayá is to affirm and to celebrate the pattern of human connectedness to the life of the forest and the sea" (Small 1998, 103).

Vision fasting, relocates the supplicant in this musical ecology, which for Bataille “props up Man’s negativity” (Bataille; Strauss 1990, 15) and whereby, “insofar as he is Nature, Man is exposed to his own Negativity” (Bataille; Strauss 1990, 15). This negativity is what exists outside the positive zone of civilization; in the realm of the Otherworld. For Bataille, the consciousness of man is thus founded on the death of the animal as other, inscribing his works with the nostalgia Bataille attributed to cave-paintings as the early emergence of utilitarian consciousness (Bataille et al 2005). Vision fasting represents one return to this zone, of Plumwood’s Ecological Animalism (Plumwood; Shannon 2012, 78), which is an emergence from death into immanence, and forgetting of nostalgia.

This relocation is thus, also a relocation in the food-chain which for both Bataille and Plumwood, characterises nature as the negation of human identity predicated on separation and exceptionalism. This theory of the food-chain as the chain which links us in immanence, was also reinforced by my vision of the swallows hunting butterflies, which mirrored Marques’ description of transcendence in his story of Little Mouse who became Eagle, which mirrored my dream. This synchronicity which continues to expand in my waking life, is expressive of *communitas*, and also the ritually induced luck my thesis is concerned with. This luck weaves us into the “web of living thoughts” (Kohn 2013, 78) which “do not necessarily revolve around, or originate from, humans” (Kohn 2013, 78). As such, and with Kohn, “I’ve come to wonder how much my dream was ever really my own; for a moment, perhaps, my thinking became one with how the forest thinks” (Kohn 2013, 188).

During this time, I experienced the forest as a harmonic site, becoming attuned to vibrations which led me to lucky signs, which followed me back into social reality where they began to intrude on my community based ritual practice. This thesis is an attempt to account for that process. The cumulative examination of this project is thus an application of the theory of luck that emerges from this research, to ritual practice; which will generate a mythopoeic reading of ritual. This examination has already begun here, but will also incorporate the rituals I examine in chapter four; *Zār*, *Voudou*, *Candomblé* and *Capoeira*, among others. What emerges from this, is the possibility that ritual instigates crisis by producing an encounter with the double, which initiates the practitioner into the reality of their false subjectivity in order to relocate them in

proximity to the beyond-human. This is a mythopoeic view insofar as Pendell locates the double as the source of luck. Undertaking a ritual process, in this regard, makes the ritual supplicant lucky; it brings them into rhythm with ecological harmony. It therefore depends on the possibility of a musical conception of the world. Rituals which exhibit this logic are therefore described as lucky rituals.

1.8 Literature Review: the posthuman revision of trickery

In *The Language of Birds* (2021) Dale Pendell introduces the problem of divination. This preoccupation is expressive of Pendell's task "to reconcile chance with 'return to divination'" (Pendell 2008, 34), derived from his mythopoeic discussions with Norman O. Brown documented in *Walking with Nobby* (2008). Herein Brown's interest in Dionysian chance is introduced, which can be traced back to Brown's first publication *Hermes the Thief* (2011), which analyses the god Hermes' identity as Trickster, Thief, and Magician. Brown attributes these diverse functions to the primitive conception of magic which did not distinguish it from trickery. He therefore alludes to the existence of a mimetic register which I associate with music, which exists in antagonism with the modern order of writing. This antagonism influences Brown's conception of what he calls the prophetic tradition in *Apocalypse and/or Metamorphosis* (1991), which he constructs as a critique on urbanisation. Brown thus agitates for a prophetic mythopoesis which offers an enthusiastic Dionysian Christianity of miracles, in rejection of civilisation.

Brown's clearer understanding of Bataille in the 1990s enabled him to frame this in terms of Dionysian excess; as a natural tendency to expenditure as opposed to production, which could thereby render the project of civilisational progress redundant. Inherent in Pendell's intellectual lineage therefore, is the Nietzschean antagonism between orders of Dionysian intoxication associated with nature, and Apolline illusion associated with civilization in *The Birth of Tragedy* (2003), mediated through Bataille's influence on Brown. Like Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy* (2003), Pendell distills this conflict in the problem of divination, described as *The Language of Birds* (2021). Vanessa Lemm's publication *Nietzsche's Animal Philosophy* (2009) has been very

helpful in elucidating the Nietzschean context of divination as cultural resistance to hegemonic oppression associated with civilization.

Pendell's writing in *The Language of Birds* (2021), *Walking with Nobby* (2008), and the *Pharmakon* series (2010) has been catalytic for this research project. It has mapped the research field of philosophical animism which is specified in Val Plumwood's *The Eye of the Crocodile* (2012), and by animist writers like David Abram in *The Spell of the Sensuous* (1996) and *Becoming Animal* (2011), as well as Eduardo Kohn's *How Forests Think* (2013), and various essays by the ecological animist Bayo Akomolafe (2018; 2023; 2024). These works, as well as publications by Michael Pollan (2003; 2018) and Emanuele Coccia (2019; 2021) fall neatly into the research field of posthumanism insofar as they insist on recognising beyond-human forms of agency. The anthologies *After the Human* (Vint 2020) and *Animal Philosophy* (Calarco; Atterton 2004), as well as Arran Gare's posthuman critique *Against Posthumanism* (2021) define the research field of posthumanism. In these works, Haraway's *The Cyborg Manifesto* (1991) is attributed as the genesis event of posthumanism.

Posthumanism is therefore imagined to deconstruct anthropocentricity in Western philosophy as cultural resistance to ecologically disastrous hegemony, revolving around the supremacy of the human being at the centre of all powers. In this regard, Posthumanism is frequently associated with terms like beyond-human, more-than-human, and human-animal; as well as The Anthropocene. The Anthropocene was first used by the Nobel Laureate Paul Cruzen and his colleague Eugene Stoermer to describe the newfound status of humankind as a geological force, following the reigning Holocene (Thornton; Thornton 2015, 2). However this possibility (that humanity has become a geological force) was rejected in March 2024 by geologists in the Subcommittee on Quaternary Stratigraphy (SQS) who voted against recognising The Anthropocene as a new epoch (Witze in Nature 2024). Nonetheless the popularity of the term The Anthropocene has produced various other "cenes" describing the alleged singularity of our contemporary planetary conditions in the face of human influence, including Capitalocene, Plantationocene, and Chthulucene (Haraway 2016, xv).

This is also the case in *The Mutable, The Mythical, and the Managerial* (Thornton; Thornton 302) where Thomas F. Thornton and Patricia M. Thornton define The Ravencene; modelled on the prevalence of the Raven trickster in Indigenous folklore, and informed by a “alternative heuristics circulating in many Indigenous communities that are instead shaped by the shared understanding that humans are but a small part of a relational universe that cannot be fully cognized, much less managed, by any one species” (Thornton; Thornton 2015, 5). They suggest Raven personifies our predicament on Earth as a species negotiating a living ecology, insofar as Raven is often tasked to negotiate and reconcile the various forces which create ecological harmony. This characterisation of the trickster as mediator, is supported by research on tricksters conducted by Annie Ruth Leslie (1997), Margart P Baker (1994), Jeanne Rosier Smith (1997), Emily Zobel Marshall (1989), Norman O Brown (2011), Felice Vinci and Arduino Maiuri (2002), Thomas F. Thornton and Patricia Thornton (2015), Claude Lévi-Strauss (1995), Karl Kerényi (1956) and Henry Louis Gates JR (2014), which emphasise the trickster’s ecological function. Thornton and Thornton thus argue the trickster teaches humans about the web of life in order to re-establish ecological order after the transgression of a taboo, and thereby suggest stories of Raven offer a value system which can afford our response to ecological crises in The Ravencene. Tony VanWinkle also proposes a trickster ecology which applies “our present socio-ecological quandaries to the teachings embedded in traditional trickster stories. For our present realities are characterized first and foremost by constant change, contingency, and ambiguity—precisely the domains where trickster consciousness thrives” (VanWinkle in Von Tscherner et al 2023, 291).

This posthuman characterisation departs from views of the trickster which have marked him “In his clearest manifestations [as] a faithful copy of an absolutely undifferentiated human consciousness, corresponding to a psyche that has hardly left the animal level” (Jung in Radin 1956, 201). Carl Jung thus associates the trickster to a “rudimentary state of consciousness” Jung in Radin 1956, 201) while Paul Radin’s slightly more charitable reading in *The Trickster* (1956) nevertheless contends that the trickster is not capable of generating order and is native to the superstitious “regions of the psyche, where spirits and poltergeists reign” (Radin 1956, 190). Jung’s reading is faithful to Freud’s description of primitive omnipotence in *Totem and Taboo* (1956) which he compares to obsessional neurose (Freud 1956, 86). This still permeates modern

views of the trickster, and is exhibited by Julia Kristeva in *The Powers of Horror* (1985) which characterises the trickster type as abject. In the *Dialectics of Trickery* (1995) Antonio Candido has also approximated the folkloric figures of the Spanish *picaro* or Brazilian *malandro* to the trickster hero, but as someone “who lives by the dictates of chance... [and] learns nothing from the experience” (Candido 1995, 81).

By contrast the contemporary revision of the trickster as an ecological mediator has been made possible and louder by posthumanism. Posthumanism’s acknowledgement of alternative forms of agency similarly dignifies alternative forms of knowledge production associated herein with trickery. Haraway thus personifies nature as the trickster Coyote as well (Haraway 1991, 4). This revision allows me to conclude with Bayo Akomolafe that “we need a new kind of trickster” (2023). I contend that this is a lucky trickster capable of bringing us into harmony with a living ecology.

This revision demonstrates the contemporary nature of the problem of trickery in support of this thesis; which identifies the food-chain and ritual as the site of trickery or animate semiosis. Through ritual practices we learn how to deal with trickery and living semiosis which describes participation in nature, and are thus reintegrated into its forms of meaning production associated with luck. As such in Chapter One I critique Haraway’s *The Cyborg Manifesto* (1991) in light of the cyborg’s exceptionalism from the food-chain. This critique is undertaken to demonstrate that an ecstatic posthumanism is necessary to integrate the value of the food-chain as the ecstatic site of trickery. Philosophical animism is capable of providing this missing premise of the food-chain, described in Plumwood’s *The Crocodile’s Eye* (2012), on the basis of her experience of being death-rolled three times by a crocodile which she theorised as *Becoming Prey* (2008). Recovering the value of the food-chain allows us to recover ecstatic beyond-human experience, associated in Chapter One with metamorphosis and in Chapter Two with trickery as animate semiosis. This conception allows me to build my mythopoeic theory of ritual which demonstrates how animate semiosis is employed to generate symbolic crises.

I thus suggest in Chapter One that our increasing alienation from the food-chain as an exceptional caste of humans, is generative of intellectual poverty including the inability to

conceptualise metamorphosis as identity-replacement. Pendell's description of intoxication, possession, and theomachy, in the *Pharmako* series (2010) was also indispensable for developing this understanding by discussing the possessive function of intoxication whereby we are synthesised into a higher order associated with the food-chain. This is similarly descriptive of Kohn's view of semiotic systems as an animate network of parts that metamorphose into a beyond-human, and by extension, myself as a network of parts that metamorphose into an agent. This ecstatic commitment to beyond-human experience defines the philosophical animist writers I outline here, whose examples of metamorphic miracles are described in Chapter One. Philosophical animism thus offers an ecstatic posthumanism committed to a metamorphic food-chain which provides the logic for my mythopoeic reading of ritual. This reading is predicated on the possibility of an animate semiosis capable of reconstructing reality, and described as The Language of Birds in Chapter Two.

The Language of Birds (Pendell 2021) refers to a section in Abram's *The Spell of the Sensuous* of the same name (Abram 1991, 139) where he discusses the possibility of an animate environment offered by Indigenous conceptions of language. This language is embedded in a transforming landscape, predicated on interspecies contact, and modelled on birds as divine messengers. In *How Forests Think* (2013) Kohn has substantiated this language as a form of living semiosis which constructs the possible as an animate force, while in Chapter Two I also refer to the theory of semiosis developed by Paul North in *Bizarre-Privileged Items in the Universe* (2021) which privileges horizontal forms of identification predicated on experience, as opposed to idealised systems of representation associated with Platonism. I have employed the thought of music theorists like Christopher Small (1998), Daniel K. L. Chua and Alexander Rehding (2021), David George Haskell (2022), and Gary Tomlinson (2018), to demonstrate how these alternative views of semiosis are synonymous with music, insofar as they are all, like music, derived from embodied experience in space and time. This is also descriptive of Henry Gates Jr discussion of signification in *The Signifying Monkey* (2014) and Alejandro Jodorowsky's description of the language of the unconscious in *Psychomagic* (2010). Both Gates Jr and Jodorowsky describe a form of performative semiosis capable of constructing social reality as an imaginative experience. This line of thought has informed my reading of Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology*

(1991) and enabled me to characterise difference as the musical expression of ecological harmony, experienced as luck.

In Chapter Three I show how this view of luck is common to contemporary research in the anthology *The Philosophy of Luck* (Pritchard; Whittington 2015), where Steven D. Hales and Jennifer Adrienne Johnson present a view of luck in *Luck Attributions and Cognitive Bias* (2015) which views it as a narrative device or patterning capable of generating meaning. However in line with Kohn's conception of living semiosis, my view also reinforces the ability for this pattern to become animate, thereby constructing remembered futures, self-fulfilling prophecies, or sacred traps which can alter the experience of time. I thus refer to an essay by Marcus William Hunt *Luck, fate, and fortune: the tyctic properties* (2024) which suggests contemporary theorising on luck in the analytic tradition cannot properly account for it insofar as it has not established its nature as a tyctic property along with fate and fortune. Hunt predicates his argument on the theory of tyctism established by the logician Charles Sander Pierce which viewed chance as an objective force in the universe (Brier 2017; López de Medsa 2015; Cosculluela 1992) in the legacy of Aristotle (2024). My review of contemporary research in the philosophy of luck in Chapter Three also refers to the work of Rachel McKinnon (2015; 2013) and Fernando Broncano-Berrocal (2015).

In this thesis I defend a mythopoeic view of luck which acknowledges its relationship with ecological harmony, ecstatic experience, and the double. This is consistent with shamanic theory described by Claude Lecouteux (2001) and Ulf Drobin (2016) among others, which privileges the double or free-soul as a precondition of ecstatic experience. I argue ritually instigated symbolic crisis brings the double to presence, which falsifies anthropocentric identity and initiates the ritual subject into ecological harmony experienced as luck. Both *Psychomagic* (Jodorowsky in LeValley 2010) and *Our Divine Double* (Stang 2016) were helpful in substantiating how the double functions to falsify inauthentic identity.

Stang's work also reinforces the mythopoeic nature of Socrates "he who does not write" (Derrida 1981, 117), insofar as he received inspiration from a double, Socrates' *daimonion*. Socrates' double reinforces the mythopoeic view of luck in this thesis and its intimacy with the order of

music described by Derrida as seduction (Derrida 1981, 117), but in opposition to the order of writing. This musical register is descriptive of the view of trickery expressed by Derrida in *Plato's Pharmacy* (1981), Abram in *The Spell of the Magician* (1996), and Brown in *Hermes the Thief* (2011), which all define the trickster as a magician. These works have informed Pendell's *Pharmakon* series (2010), and the mythopoeic method whereby trickery can be described as an animate semiosis capable of reconstructing reality during ritual practice, in proximity to the beyond-human. Federico Campagna has demonstrated the significance of this possibility today in *Technic and Magic* (2022) which essentially narrates the crisis of the order of writing, as well as the posthuman revision of trickery I alluded to at the beginning of this literature review.

The mythopoetic theory of ritual this thesis defends is cognizant with Victor Turner's classic theory of the ritual process in *The Ritual Process* (1991) and *From Ritual to Theatre* (1982) which he motivates as a crisis of subjective isolation and return to universality. It has also been informed by ritual studies undertaken by Janice Boddy (1989), Floyd Merrell (2005), John Cussans (2017), Roger Sansi (2007), Bira Almeida (1993), Matthias Röhrig Assunção, Cinézio Peçanha and Richard Pakleppa (2013), Peter Jackson (2016), Andreas Norberg and Frederik Wallenstein (2016), Anna-Pya Sjödin and Peter Jackson (2016), Peter Haldén and Peter Jackson (2016), Paul Bouissac (2015), Michael Taussig (1991), John Epes Brown (2007), David Lewis Williams (2016), Carl Olson (1994), Jaime de Angulo (1926), as well as Dale Pendell (2010), among others.

1.9 Chapter Summaries

In Chapter One I undertake a comparison between Norman O. Brown's conception of Dionysian chance and Dale Pendell's conception of luck in order to emphasise the musical nature of luck, in comparison to the chaotic nature of chance. This allows me to reject Jacques Derrida's collapse of primitive forms of signification into the order of writing in *Of Grammatology* (1991). This is reinforced by a reading of Derrida's *Plato's Pharmacy* (1981) which deconstructs the centrality of Hermes to Derrida's theorising, who I identify with musical forms of signification on the basis

of Hermes' association with occult forms of knowledge. This revives the Nietzschean antagonism between orders of writing (chance) and music (luck) and presents the problem of the animal central to Nietzsche's writing, as the site of ecstatic experience. This emphasis on ecstasy allows me to critically engage with Donna Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto* (1991) in order to contextualise Pendell's work in a philosophical animist posthumanism capable of integrating the human being into a metamorphic food-chain. This ecological belonging makes the trickster lucky by bringing them into harmony with a musical ecology.

In Chapter Two I substantiate this musical ecology in reference to David Abram's description of The Language of Birds in *The Spell of the Sensuous* (1996), and Eduardo Kohn's conception of animate semiosis in *How Forests Think* (2013). I examine the Indigenous conception of dream as an interface of universal communication which human beings are capable of accessing through the ecstatic subversion of identity. I suggest that coming into this harmony revives musical modes of thinking ritual was established to preserve, that allow us to navigate and influence complex ecologies holistically. I relate this to Jaime de Angulo's essay *The Background of the Religious Feeling in a Primitive Tribe* (1926) upon which Pendell most clearly modelled his theory of luck as power derived from an "other", which introduces the problem of the double.

In Chapter Three I describe luck as sacrificial insofar as it is established on the subversion of anthropocentric identity which brings us into rhythm with a living ecology. I refer to Charles M. Stang's study of the double in *Our Divine Double* (2016) which examines early Christian theology to demonstrate how the double instigates a crisis associated with the falsification of inauthentic identity, and compare this to the function of the shamanic double, described by dualistic pluralism as the precondition for ecstatic flight. I demonstrate how this legacy has been obscured by modern industrialisation, but locate this mythopoeic process in Socrates' double, the *daimonion*. Socrates' submission to death is presented as an enactment of sacrificial luck, insofar as it was in submission to his double. By contrast, I argue the interiorization of sacrifice associated with the beginning of formal philosophy described in *Philosophy and the End of Sacrifice* (Jackson; Sjödin 2016) has obscured this sacrificial demand, and thus the value of ritual practice. The absence of ritual is thus descriptive of our increasing alienation from the food-chain as the site of sacrifice as gift-giving.

In Chapter Four I present a mythopoeic reading of rituals which emphasises the intervention of the double, who instigates the crises associated with falsification of identity and reconstruction of ecological subjectivity. Ritual practice is thus undertaken to bring us into rhythm with ecological harmony, which makes us lucky. I locate this process in a comparative reading of Zār, Voudou, Candomblé and Capoeira which frames them as ecstatic sites of cultural resistance that revive the forgetfulness of the animal in the face of hegemonic oppression. This facilitates the integration of excess which cannot be absorbed by civilisational hegemonies. This integration makes us lucky as it relocates us from anthropocentric pathologies into ecological harmony, however I close by associating this process with risk.

In my Conclusion I summarise the mythopoeic theory of ritual and discuss various questions it raises, in particular luck as a metanarrative, and the problem of healing as a utilitarian object. I suggest these problems are resolved by contextualising the mythopoeic ritual process as the expression of a superabundant nature generating harmony, for which subjective health and ecological integrity is a by-product and not a utilitarian object. This offers the possibility of animate semiosis which this thesis has been interested in articulating. Finally I conclude the modern sacrifice of luck has limited our understanding of an animate semiosis which could afford an animate aesthetics, and suggest a philosophical animist posthumanism is capable of redressing this limit.

Chapter One: Dionysian Chance and/or Luck

2.1 Introduction: The Poison Path

In this chapter I will compare and contrast Dale Pendell's view of luck with his mentor, Norman O. Brown's view of Dionysian chance. The divergence between these thinkers sheds light on the purge of ecstasy from modern thought, where ecstasy is understood according to the historian of Witch Hunt trials Claude Lecouteux as deriving from "the Greek *ekstasis*, which literally means "straying of the spirit" (Lecouteux 2001, 12). This purge is most obvious in the modern Witch Hunt and attempted incorporation of animist systems of thought into Christianity, if not their extradition into the Occult (Hanegraaff 2013).

This modern rejection of ecstasy is brought into view by Pendell's and Brown's diverging approach to luck and chance, insofar as Pendell has largely based his theorising on animist systems of shamanism dependent on the precondition of the free-soul capable of undertaking ecstatic flight (Drobin in Jackson 2016, xvii), while Brown's approach can be associated with the prevailing intellectual hegemony insofar as it rejects the possibility of synthesis as myth and instead, privileges the subjective experience of the individual. Brown's view is thus sympathetic to the postmodern "incredulity toward metanarratives" which JF Lyotard described in *The Postmodern Condition* (1984).

Brown nevertheless developed the rhapsodic system of mythopoesis as "God in us: *entheos*: enthusiasm... the essence of the holy madness" (Brown 1991, 6) which Pendell employed as his intoxicating method of divinatory inspiration; predicated on the subversion of anthropocentric forms of subjectivity including rigid identity systems. In this regard, mythopoesis is familiar to Friedrich Nietzsche's conception of culture, which Vanessa Lemm describes in *Nietzsche's Animal Philosophy* (2009) performed in resistance to the dehumanising excesses of civilisation as the imposition of oppressive hegemony. For Nietzsche, civilisation corrupts the integrity of the human-being as an ecological participant or "human-animal" (Lemm 2009, 1) among other

animals, by indoctrinating them into the anthropocentric myth which describes contemporary urban existence. This is consistent with Brown's view of the history of prophecy as a mythopoeic critique on the urban revolution:

Prophecy is a critical response to the "urban revolution," that irreversible commitment of the human race to the city and civilization which spread outward from the "Nile to Oxus" heartland beginning around 3000 B.C. Prophecy is the perception of the potentialities, both for "good" and for "evil," inherent in the new social structure (Brown 1991, 46-47).

While Pendell emulated Brown's mythopoeic lineage as cultural resistance to the objectification of the individual, he framed it in the ritual practices of animist cultures, where he was inevitably confronted with the problem of ecstasy which orientates such practices as ecstatic *séances* and vision quests to Otherworlds. Pendell thus "distinguish[ed] shamanism from priestcraft, shamanism being direct intercourse with spiritual entities through some form of trance" (Pendell 2010, 83), which posits the problem of ecstasy in ritual performance.

This ecstatic possibility evades Brown's thought insofar as it was constructed by the intellectual paradigm of his time in a postwar context which deconstructed metanarratives or the possibility of synthesis. The rejection of myth during this time can be contextualised as a rejection of the possibility of their weaponization, recently played out in the concentration camps of World War II (Schechner 1979, 10-11). Nevertheless, ecstatic undercurrents inevitably permeated from the intellectual roots of modern thought in so-called esotericism; which the Occult historian Wouter J. Hanegraaff has identified with the alchemical paradigm of Platonic Orientalism in the legacy of Zoroaster (Hanegraaff 2013, 73). These undercurrents were traced by obscure thinkers like Georges Bataille, fixated with sacred experience, ritual and magic.

Bataille sought sacred experience in various rituals of excess, including rotten feasts of rancid flesh that infected co-participants with Hepatitis (Huling 2019, 29). Bataille's sacred preoccupation accounts for the position I will map between him and Pendell, as students of the "poison path" (Pendell 2010b, 3), in defence of an alternative philosophy founded on beyond-human experience which has become mainstream again in light of contemporary

posthumanism. In commitment to what he “considered the ‘crestline’ of Nietzsche's tragic thought: the ecstatic revelation of the impossible which ruins the separation between subject and object” (Lotringer 194, x), Bataille’s thought privileges the ecstatic value of the animal, which positions his work as a “a philosophy founded on the experience of laughter, and it does not even claim to go further” (Bataille in Kendall 2001, 133) together with a mythopoeic conception of “ecstasy, sacrifice, tragedy, poetry, laughter [as] forms whereby life situates itself in proportion to the impossible” (Bataille in Kendall 2001, 21).

Bataille’s philosophy of laughter was a subject of critique among his contemporaries, most famously the existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre who dismissed Bataille “as little more than a latter-day mystic. He writes in openly mocking terms of Bataille as a timid librarian who idly dreams of losing himself in a Dionysian orgy and as a philosopher of laughter who is incapable of cracking a joke” (Greenwood 1998, 18). Despite this hostile reception, Bataille’s thought can be re-appropriated today by the posthuman movement to discern the ecstatic traces that still persist in modern thought, and can be informative for conceptions of *différance* made popular by Jacques Derrida’s *Limited Inc* (1988). Derrida theory of *différance* describes the intersubjectivity that constructs iterations of repetition, which fragments the experience of a synthetic reality and proliferates contemporary existence as an animate force of negativity. However, when relocated to the ecstatic ontology associated with animist practices including those enacted by Bataille, this experience is employed as the site of ritual practice which synthesises difference into beyond-human intervention and agency. Ritual practice in this regard can be understood as a mouthpiece of *différance*; it employs repetition to formulate the eerie traces of difference into experiences of luck.

This shamanistic possibility has been made contemporary again by the research field of posthumanism, interested in describing forms of beyond-human agency understood as the collective intelligence of a sentient system, or ecology. This view can be most clearly attributed to Eduardo Kohn’s conception of beyond-human anthropology in *How Forests Think* (2013), and has also been theorised by thinkers like Bruno Latour describing systems of Factishes which become animate as they accrue meaning through repetition (Latour 2010). In comparison to Brown’s chance, Pendell’s luck and its proximity to ritual practice is thus interesting for

contemporary philosophy as it revives the creative potential of ecstasy, in opposition to the devaluation of systems of knowledge oriented around this possibility. As I will argue in Chapter Two, this creative potential is most valuable in terms of how it mediates our conception of aesthetic experience and semiotic production. Where artwork is re-conceived as productive of ecstatic experience, it re-gains epistemological value for human experience as a form of reality reconstruction.

In this chapter I will argue that ecstatic experience is musical. It is a synthesis capable of creating meaning from chaos. Synthetic experience is necessarily ecstatic insofar as it requires the transcendence of parts into a higher register, described as music and experienced as luck. This is in opposition to chance as the fragmentation (or deconstruction) of parts which do not permit for the ecological sentience which I, along with thinkers like Kohn and David Abram, associate with beyond-human agency.

Chance is presented as the expression of a postmodern difference that is chaotic, limited to anthropocentric models of thought and is thereby, not ecstatic. Luck is presented as the expression of an ecological difference which is musical, and thus ecstatic. This ecstatic divergence allows me to emphasise the importance of a philosophical animist posthumanism capable of incorporating ecstasy and metamorphosis as the site of beyond-human experience. Instrumental to this argument is the status of music as distinct from writing. In this chapter I argue their distinct value and function has been confused by Derrida's critique of anthropology in *Of Grammatology* (1991), which sought to critique ethnocentricity by appropriating musical practices into the order of writing, in order to endow so-called primitives with technology. However this move obscures the technological value of music as distinct from the technological value of writing.

Luck acts as an interface between individual experience and the beyond-human by bringing the individual into the rhythms of this musical synthesis and thus into harmony with a living ecology experienced as luck during "mythopoeic syncopations" (Akomolafe 2023). This is in contrast to the postmodern conception of difference oriented around writing by which sites, persons and events are haunted by a chaotic trace and uncanny chance which, rather than synthesising into

music, remains at the level of disruptive noise. Chance is thus descriptive of chaos (as opposed to music), as furthermore, the postwar context postmodern thought emerged in. In this regard it can be understood as the traumatic experience of industrialization, urbanisation, and civilization.

2.2 Luck and Chance

Pendell's mythopoeic theory of luck is described in his publication *The Language of Birds* (2021) which "were in large measure inspired by my walks with Norman O. Brown" (Pendell 2021, Dedication). In the book's dedication Pendell writes, "We talked often of chance. For Brown, chance was Dionysus, and a challenge to Divine Order. I saw chance as a metaphysical refuge, and fought, squirmed, and argued until the last defensive bulwarks grew wings and took flight" (Pendell 2021, Dedication). Later in *Walking with Nobby* (2008), Pendell asserts "I prefer luck to chance" (13).

This chapter is interested in the difference between Pendell's conception of luck and Brown's conception of Dionysian chance. This difference is significant as it is representative of Pendell's contribution to contemporary philosophy, whereas I identify Brown's view with contemporary ideas insofar as it rejects metanarratives. While this is not the full picture, Brown's work nevertheless expresses certain investments which have matured today due to their shared roots in Derrida's conception of difference which privileges inter-subjectivity. Pendell does not subscribe to this framework, and is therefore able to sidestep some of the paradoxes incubating in the systems derived from it. Like Bataille, Pendell thus presents an alternative path to the philosophical hegemony founded on ecstatic experience which brings us beyond the limits of human subjectivity, where we discover the beyond-human.

This beyond-human has been described by thinkers like Kohn (2013), Abram (1996), Latour (2010), Christopher Small (1998) and Georg Simmel (2007) as the aggregate intelligence of a sentient system. However Val Plumwood (2013) has been most convincing in characterising this beyond-human agency as the food-chain. It is the net which invests all sentient members in a collective intelligence. Recovering the value of the food-chain generates a mythopoeic reading of

Nietzsche which privileges the value of animality as ecstatic experience and intoxication. This reading describes the work of Nietzsche's self-described disciple Georges Bataille.

The beyond-human has become a pressing preoccupation for the contemporary movement posthumanism. In the posthuman anthology *After the Human* (Vint 2020), editor Sheryl Vint sums up posthumanism in the question, "Who and what 'counts' as human today, and what is at stake in doing such counting?" (Vint 2020, I), while the ecological animist Bayo Akomlafe also tells us "this field tries to think about the world in ways that do not privilege human actions over and above worldly processes" (Akomlafe 2024). In this chapter I will argue that the posthuman impulse to engage with beyond-human agencies and processes depends on ecstatic experience, capable of exceeding anthropocentric identity. The problem of ecstasy thus becomes the red-flag running through this train of thought insofar as ecstasy describes the state which exceeds individuation, when a subject strays from self-hood into the beyond-human, to become more-than-self. This ecstatic requirement queries the capacity for Brown's chance or Pendell's luck to offer metamorphosis as the ecstatic encounter with the beyond-human.

Some initial problems with this framework reside in Brown's self-identification with Bataille in *Dionysus in 1990* (1991). However I am setting these two thinkers in opposition insofar as I present Bataille as the student of a reading of Nietzsche alternative to Continental philosophy capable of emphasising his tragic, and thus ecstatic thought (Lotringer 1994). This is justified insofar as the centrality of the animal to Nietzsche's thought (Lemm 2009) has been omitted from modern Continental thought which is nevertheless largely founded on Nietzsche's work. In *Animal Philosophy* (2004), editors Matthew Calarco and Peter Atterton subsequently report "It is perhaps with a certain amount of incredulity and astonishment that we learn that Continental philosophy has only rarely given serious attention to the animal question" (Calarco; Atterton 2004, xv). Whereas Bataille's commitment to ecstatic experience as animality, most clear in his theory of immanence which asserts "every animal is in the world *like water in water*" (Bataille in Calarco; Atterton 2004, 34), revives this theme in Nietzsche's work, thereby offering a reading alternative to the Continental tradition.

In this regard I am identifying Brown as opposed to Bataille, with Continental philosophy as the prevailing intellectual paradigm during his time, which is obvious in Brown's view of difference as "absolute dismemberment" as furthermore, schizophrenia (Pendell 2008, 210). However, Brown's discovery of Bataille or clearer understanding of his work, occurred late in life and is described in his penultimate publication *Apocalypse and/or Metamorphosis* (1991). In the same essay which describes this influence, *Dionysus in 1990* (1991), Brown refers to a Heraclitan fragment denotive of Bataille's view of immanence; "We participate each other, connected as well as separated by a sea of death; living each other's death, and dying each other's life" (Brown 1991; 199). This suggests that by the end of his life, Brown's Dionysian chance became synonymous with luck insofar as it ultimately acknowledged the alternative path kept by Bataille, and Pendell. So the pertinent question at this point becomes, what did Brown intend to exclude by dismissing luck and privileging chance? The probable answer is its superstitious connotations.

DP: But see, we can accept chance as messages from the gods.

NOB: I tried that . It doesn't work. (Pendell 2008, 185)

Indeed, Pendell's view of luck is derived from a shamanic cosmology which calls on the assistance of a double or "alley" which grants one power as luck and poison (Pendell 2010c, 4). Brown's rejection of luck in these terms, is familiar to the transformation of intellectual history which preceded and facilitated industrialization, founded on the exorcism of ecstatic practices which depended on the precondition of the shamanic free soul and its vision quests, thereby vanishing the free soul (Drobin; Jackson 2016, xvii). Brown subsequently accused Pendell of "playing the shaman" (Pendell 2008, 15). The disagreement between Pendell and Brown is thus reflective of the modern exorcism of shamanic practices and thus becomes a very interesting place to critique the development of modern philosophy. What did the industrial paradigm and its postmodern prodigy sacrifice with luck, and what is this sacrifice costing us?

However, it is also true that luck has not yet gone extinct. The philosophy of luck is an established field of analytic research today, concerned with the ways in which statistical coincidences become meaningful for human beings (Pritchard; Whittington 2015). While in

some respects this reading of luck operates similarly to Pendell's as a mythopoeic patterning which generates narratives from chaos (Hales; Johnson et al 2015, 60), it nonetheless neglects the theorising of animist and Indigenous cultures which have developed shamanic practices, preoccupied with divination and luck (Turner 1982, 34) and oriented around beyond-human forms of agency. In effect, the view of luck discussed by analytic philosophers may or may not resemble the view of luck performed in shamanic ritual, however this very comparison is already forbidden on the basis of the privileged knowledge of the West, qualified by industrialisation and the cultural genocide of such ritual practices (Federici 2014, 142). Herein we can introduce one of the main problems which will emerge in this discussion, the problem of ethnocentrism which Derrida emphasises as a motivator for his critique of Jacques Rousseau and Claude Lévi-Strauss in *Nature, Culture, Writing* (Derrida; Spivak 1991). The difference between chance and luck becomes as ethnocentrically fraught, as the difference between writing and music. In this chapter I argue that these pairs are synonymous.

However, the musical portrayal of nature has a long precedent within the Western tradition as well. In 1619 Johannes Kepler developed a musical conception of the universe described in *Harmonices Mundi*, which elaborated on the Pythagorean music of the spheres according to the physical harmonies expressed by planetary motion (Kepler; Aiton 1997). This followed in the wake of Ptolemy, who "assigned tones (or notes) to the heavenly bodies according to their distances from Earth" (Duncan; Field 1997, xix-xx). Understanding nature as musical helps us to conceptualise its possessive quality as intoxication, and thereby its function in ritual practice which relocates practitioners in the state of nature associated with the dissolution of object boundaries. This is a pre-modern perspective sympathetic to the shamanic register of luck Pendell invokes.

Brown's views of Dionysian chance appear in *Walking with Nobby* (Pendell 2008) and *Apocalypse And/Or Metamorphosis* (Brown 1991). Dionysian chance is expressive of the excess which necessitates the death-drive or economic surplus as an expression of the intoxicating irrationality of being. This irrationality invades the hegemony to sow chaos in our anthropocentric conceptions of order. This view was already incubating in Brown's early interest in the trickster god Hermes, who can be identified with the transition to civilisation and development of writing, as well as its antagonism with the "magical" cultures of primitivism and

barbarism characterised by oral culture. Most importantly for its divergence from luck, Brown also associated Dionysian chance with death, as a commitment to disunity in rejection of the possibility of a synthesis which would articulate itself as a metanarrative or Law. For Brown, Law precludes the possibility of a new future insofar as it is generative of repetition. He additionally viewed history as a tradition of prophecy that had incarnated itself as man, Jesus Christ, who reduced the Law to the imperative to Love. Upon this rejection of authoritarianism, philosophy was founded as the evolution of prophecy. This rejection of Law, and imperative to Love, also described Brown's commitment to the resurrection of the body in rejection of civilization. This conception of Love was also cognizant with his enthusiastic view of a miraculous, Dionysian Christianity of mythopoetic inspiration. In effect, Brown privileged nature as an alternative site of excessive becoming, and thereby argued for the replacement of culture with agriculture and economy with ecology. Dionysian chance was expressive of this enthusiastic nature, as furthermore, a prophetic (and now philosophical) critique of urbanisation.

Here we begin to detect the quagmire surrounding us, hidden in Brown's ostensibly innocent conception of nature; insofar as Dionysian chance is effectively a way of understanding excess as a force of nature which exceeds civilization. Brown's Dionysian conception of nature thus privileges Occult forms of knowledge associated with the rejection of civilization, which are inherently barbaric, and thereby associated with the resurrection of the body in opposition to the order of writing. However he does not succumb to the fetishisation of the noble savage insofar as he is committed to difference, as disunity. His contemporary, Donna Haraway tells us this commitment resulted from *Love's Body* (Brown 1992) which critiqued the penetration of patriarchy in all systems, which would always necessitate systems of inferiority and superiority described as sons and fathers (Haraway 1991, 9-10). Whereas Brown's commitment to difference means that the barbarian and the civilised subject are effectively equalised by their subjective disunity as anarchic individuals. There is no ideal savage or priest, simply different individuals navigating (and ideally rejecting) the systems they have been born into. At this point I will turn to Derrida's work in *Nature, Culture, Writing* (Derrida in Spivak 1991) as the acknowledged authority and originator of this postmodern view of difference.

2.4 Harmonic Synthesis

Brown's emphasis on anarchic difference follows Derrida's critique of the romanticist Rousseau in *Nature, Culture, Writing* in *Of Grammatology* (Derrida in Spivak 1991), which intends to reveal the ethnocentric anti-ethnocentrism which underlines Rousseau's work. Derrida suggests this hidden bias was reproduced by Rousseau's disciple Lévi-Strauss, as furthermore, the foundation of anthropology. Derrida critiques anthropological methodology as a hypercritical institution which intends to humanise so-called "primitives" by fetishizing them, casting them as others and noble savages. Derrida's argument centres on the anthropological value of writing as the litmus test of primitivism or modernism. Societies which possess writing are viewed by anthropology as modern, while societies which don't are viewed as primitive. For Derrida this is a problematic formula which infects anthropology with an ethnocentric bias centred around a Western conception of technology and writing.

As such, Derrida deconstructs this binary by emphasising the function of writing as the production and destruction of proper names which designate appurtenance and function as a "linguistico-social classification" (Derrida 1991, 111), which he also locates in the significatory processes of primitive oral cultures. For Derrida, this renders colloquial forms of writing, in terms of technique, irrelevant. In this regard, primitive societies which do not possess writing are nevertheless literate insofar as they produce and destroy proper names. The significance of the proper name here, is its function as the master metaphor which generates the plays of absence and presence which describe difference, and animate all texts as living, reproductive organisms that grow, transform and proliferate the imagination. This difference unveils the other text which disturbs the first with hauntings and traces, finally becoming an autonomous entity. This haunting is also facilitated by Derrida's conception of arche-writing which describe significatory practices that exceed technical writing, but contribute to the transformation of the proper name as "a self-presence which has never been given but only dreamed of and always already split, repeated, incapable of appearing to itself except in its own disappearance" (Derrida 1991, 112).

In this way Derrida attempts to rescue individuals from the ethnocentric anti-ethnocentrism of anthropological methods which subject so-called primitives to a Western scale and calls them to

account for the absence of something they nevertheless possess, “this humility of one who knows he is “unacceptable,” this remorse that produces anthropology” (Derrida 1991, 114).

However two concerns are raised by the framework of Derrida’s argument, which collaborate to undermine his theory. First, he employs a purely theoretical argument to critique an anthropological methodology based on practical experience among so-called primitives which results in a naive view of primitive knowledge. Secondly, he couches this argument in terms of the rejection of ethnocentrism, which produces its own shadow of ethnocentrism. This logic applies Derrida’s own deconstructive method to his work to demonstrate that it is haunted by its own other and opposite. This can be demonstrated through a trick.

If we can accept that writing supersedes technical writing and incorporates all forms of signification, we can thereby grant writing to so-called primitives. However, this attribution simultaneously demonstrates their lack of colloquial technique. This is insignificant perhaps, until we switch the terminology to describe this arche-writing that lives as, justifiably, music. Music operates according to the same logic of profusion and destruction of the proper name entailed by song lyrics but also referential melodies. However, what falls out from this switch, is that these primitives suddenly do not possess a technical knowledge which actually, they do possess—one which is musical. This demonstrates the underlying ethnocentrism in Derrida’s argument, which does not acknowledge the forms of knowledge making peculiar to so-called primitives, who are instead compensated for their lack of Western technique. This problem results from Derrida’s lack of practical experience among so-called primitives.

We can invert this formula once again: assuming that the general Western public is not musical, we nevertheless listen to the radio, go to discos, sing at church etc. our culture is to some extent inscribed with musicality. However, we do not engage with music in the same way as oral cultures which are inherently musical, as Small has shown in *Musicking* (1998). Critiquing the Western performance of music by which musical specialists are segregated from audiences during concerts, Small contends “What we accept as the norm is, in fact, the exception among the human race as a whole” (Small 1998, 39). By contrast, for the majority of human history “the musical performance was part of that larger dramatic enactment which we call ritual, where the

members of the community acted out their relationships and their mutual responsibilities and the identity of the community as a whole was affirmed and celebrated” (Small 1998, 40). For members of such oral cultures playing instruments in collaboration is as essentially a part of one’s humanity and social identity, as knowing how to dress oneself. By comparison the incriminating naivety of Westerners which has produced the spectre of “privilege” in popular jargon is also symptomatic of not being musical—of not being in tune with something bigger than myself; an environment or a social ecology. The North American academic Floyd Merrell thus describes his participation in the musical expressions of Afro-Brazilian culture in Salvador, Bahia as “clumsy and naive” (Merrell 2018, vii).

Defending myself as a musical being because I go to a club at the weekend, or save my salary to pay tickets to stand squished in a sports stadium gazing at a shining figure in the distance, misses the point. Rather, musicality is expressed as knowing how to make or play two or three instruments, learning ancestral songs and rhythms by heart, knowing their significance and coded messaging, recognising someone’s tone of voice by their inflection or arrangement of a note, or spontaneously harmonising with a group to produce a synthetic experience capable of altering the experience of time and subjectivity. This kind of intoxicating musicality ultimately constructs another kind of subjectivity, much in the same way that complex written literacy sculpts the worldview of writers and readers.

Derrida’s argument is in some respects, a deconstruction of technique. This alludes to the problems of literacy by degrees; a person may be able to read and write but are they fully literate without an education? In this regard, have they developed a literate subjectivity? In the same way a person may be able to play an instrument, but do they possess the expertise I have described above? While this dislocates the site of technique, it simultaneously emphasises the technical importance of developing fluency: we do not say a child possesses language until they have become fluent. Aesthetic practice is thus predicated not simply on the possession of technique, but fluency. It requires a level of expertise which arguably, is not intuitive to the modern register as an empirical and materialist exercise which does not include the negative order which Derrida’s work has done much in substantiating, but also falls short of incarnating as the embodied experience of music. This failure is expressive of this other order’s dependence on an

animist ontology capable of enlivening the sensorial experience implied by art-practice, in a universal language derived from shared experience on a shared planet. Herein the Mona Lisa or Mozart is universally intelligible because they are expressive of some universal and thus untaught language denotative of Rousseau's conception of pity, as the "fundamental affection" between living beings which enables trans-cultural communication:

Pity, that fundamental affection, as primitive as the love of self, which unites us to others naturally : to other human beings, certainly, but also to all living beings. (Derrida in Spivak 1991, 105).

In this regard artistic expertise is oriented according to a negative register which denotes the site of transcendental experience, by which an expert artwork is universally meaningful; thereby becoming what this thesis will describe as a lucky sign. This transcends ethnological notions of aesthetics oriented around circumstantial utility, but revives the anthropological possibility of pity. The order of music subsequently posits the problem that technique is concerned with this negative register, capable of invoking beyond-human forms of experience and knowledge that transcend anthropocentric codes. Technique is thus not a question of taste or style, or their relationship to the positive experience of the 'here and now', but a question of the technical capacity to engage with this level of metacultural discourse. This allows for Pendell's characterisation of shamanic practices as "direct intercourse with spiritual energies" (Pendell 2010, 83). It poses the possibility of a poisonous aesthetics, capable of intoxicating anthropocentric subjectivity with beyond-human experience associated with trans-cultural pity, and thus the anthropological method.

However, Derrida's view of difference limits the possibility of pity as an affective force. This is apparent in his essay *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (Derrida in Calarco; Atterton 2004, 113-128), wherein Derrida describes being watched by a cat. Derrida's relocation of the gaze in this essay, from the human being to the cat, is an attempt to deconstruct the human/animal binary in order to salvage a positive view of animality which is not constructed as a negative shadow, of human experience; whereby the animal is always conjured in the gaze of the human being as a projection of their imagination. This relocation of the animal into positive identity, is mediated

through a relocation of the gaze, whereby the human experiences “the uncanny experience of being watched by the other animal - in this instance, a cat” (Calarco; Atterton 2004 xxii). However Derrida’s strategy still maintains the gaze as the narrative of identity and as such, remains committed to forms of identity which undermine pity. Identity is native to the anthropocentric register whereby organisms are objectified (identified) in a utilitarian system understood as the symbolic order. Whereas pity as a force which “unites us to others” requires the dissolution of identity experienced during intoxication as “the dissolution of boundaries in poetic and erotic activity” (Marsden in Calarco; Atterton 2004, 42), capable of initiating us into what Bataille describes as the immanent order. This means that the positive/negative binary can only be hijacked by an intoxicating view of subjectivity which dilutes identity systems altogether—identified in Derrida’s essay as the gaze.

Bataillan intoxication whereby “there is no transcendence between the eater and eaten” (Bataille in Calarco; Atterton 2004, 33) allows for trans-cultural and indeed trans-species pity. Upon this possibility the aesthetic system described above is predicated, as a technique interested in universal forms of affect and communication derived from the predatory games of trickery across species, which I will argue in Chapter Two has been civilised as art practice. This presents an anthropological view of art practice in opposition to ethnological criticism, which suggests art practice is universally capable of mediating essential values through technique. These values are not anthropocentrically or socially conditioned, but derived from shared experience in nature.

This possibility is generative of Bataille’s view of *The Sorcerer’s Apprentice* (1985), which describes a student “on the road of art” (Bataille 1985, 233) invested in learning a magical system which supersedes anthropocentric notions of art inevitably tied to productivity and utilitarianism. So while Derrida has been described as “one who has perhaps gone the farthest in thinking through the *place* of animals within the Western philosophical tradition” (Calarco; Atterton 2004, xxii), his cat is *too* much of a cat. However his conception of *animot* in *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (2004) sought to address this problem.

Animot was a phrase conceived by Derrida to denote the otherness of animals in general, and as a plural form; this would rescue ‘the’ animal from its negative projection as a human shadow,

by conjuring it as a plural entity. Nonetheless, David Wood describes animot as another “word-bird that landed on [Derrida’s] shoulder” (Wood in Calarco; Atterton 2004, 134) which would not “work the same magic as *trace* and *différance* once did” (Wood in Calarco; Atterton 2004, 134). The obscurity of animot is confusing in comparison to the enthusiastic adoption of the phrase beyond-human by contemporary research, made popular by Kohn’s conception of beyond-human anthropology in *How Forests Think* (2013), insofar as both terms refer to the plurality of nature. In this respect, animot can be identified as the precursor of the beyond-human, if not posthumanism generally. This is also clear in Haraway’s conception of the plurality of nature as “a being who is neither ‘it’, ‘you’, ‘thou’, ‘he’, ‘she’, nor ‘they’ in relation to ‘us’” (Haraway 1991, 4). Haraway’s thought has been cited as “indispensable” to the “posthumanist conversation that followed from her ‘Cyborg Manifesto,’ and the emergence of scholarship on human-animal relations” (Vint 2020, 3).

But while Derrida attempts to represent a positive view of animality in plural with animot; the beyond-human is denotative of a negative view of the human being, expressive of a “tough new habit, reflecting all that is now visible of the horizon of violence stretching out before us, [as opposed to] a dainty new *indécidable*” (Wood in Calarco; Atterton 2004, 134). This tough new habit is the deconstruction of anthropocentricity, described as the posthuman movement. In this regard, the beyond-human is a posthuman referent denotative of that which exceeds human knowledge and thus creates the opportunity for ecstatic experience, whereas the positive view of the animot is a projection of identity. This is demonstrative of the ecstatic nature of posthumanism, and subsequently, the significance of this thesis for the posthuman research field.

However, for Derrida, the projection of identity is also the work of imagination without which “this pity ‘natural to man’s heart’ would remain unawakened and ‘inactive’” (Derrida in Spivak 1991, 182). The man is able to pity the cat insofar as he is able to project himself onto it. While David Roden argues this means that for Derrida pity is actually “inconceivable in terms of the predicates of pure animality since it requires human beings to identify with the suffering of the *alter ego*” (Wood 1998), it does not facilitate ecstatic experience as the straying into the beyond-human as that which exceeds human knowledge; rather the cat transforms into the alter-ego by which Derrida experiences an “uncanny” event in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*

(2004). Whereas, insisting on the very negativity Derrida sought to deconstruct by identifying the cat as a beyond-human, the cat becomes representative of heterogeneous forms of knowledge which exceed anthropocentric subjectivity and more properly describe its potential for plurality. This becomes clear when we distinguish the beyond-human from the animot according to an ecstatic reading oriented by the “mobile imagination” (Gaston in Farrell 2011). By bringing us to the limit of knowledge, ecstasy thus facilitates the pity necessary for universal forms of affect which transcend intersubjectivity, orders of consciousness and events, and describe the lucky sign as an animate artwork capable of acting on the world.

The magical and indeed philosophical animist view of art practice I am presenting here, as capable of becoming animate and acting on the world, thus depends on occult forms of knowledge associated with shared experience in a nature defined by the loss of identity, which moderns are no longer intimate with but is still preserved by so-called primitives according to their musical practices. This substantiates Nietzsche’s (Lingis; Calarco; Atterton 2004, 14) and also Abram’s (2010) description of the musical origin of language in nature, in birdsong. In effect, music is inscribed with this proximity to beyond-human experience which makes technique vital, as it cannot be arbitrarily reproduced according to anthropocentric aesthetics. Its very media is composed of embodied interactions with the world and the various forms that create musical tones. In this regard the artist is not a creator but a medium. While this emphasis on mediumship corresponds with Derrida’s deconstructive method, it also demands an ecological context which thereby, has a shape and form, and a rhythm—it grows a body that begins to possess the system in song.

This reorientation of Derrida’s work attempts to demonstrate our own lack of knowledge by recovering the problem of technique. This question of technique motivates the contemporary interest in Indigenous wisdom traditions represented in the posthuman works of writers like Abram, Bayo Akomolafe, Haraway, Kohn, Robin Wall Kimmerer, Plumwood, Michael Pollan etc. The techniques at stake, are derived from a musical ontology inherent to the primitivism historically ascribed to Indigenous oral cultures, which emphasise ecological harmony. What this assumes is that so-called primitives do know something we don’t. I will argue in the following chapters that this is musical knowledge of ecological harmony insofar as Indigenous cultures are

interested in animating experiences of luck whereby the anthropocentric and natural world collide and collapse into one sign. Kohn attributes this to the Indigenous “perspectival aesthetic” which takes “great pleasure in finding a viewpoint that encompasses multiple perspectives” (Kohn 2013, 97). Furthermore, this perspectival aesthetic “allows one to linger in that space where, like a shaman, one can be simultaneously aware of both viewpoints as well as how they are connected by something greater that, like a trap springing shut, suddenly encompasses them” (Kohn 2013, 97).

Finally, what this reading of Derrida introduces into Brown’s work is the tension between his allusions to Dionysian nature and simultaneous commitment to disunity. This is emphasised by Nietzsche’s musical construction of Dionysus in *The Birth Of Tragedy* (Nietzsche et al 2003), through which Dionysus has assumed his contemporary guise in philosophy. Dionysus effectively is the intoxicating musicality of nature described above. The divergence between Brown and Pendell becomes clear again here insofar as is reflective of their contrary positions in regards to synthesis. For Brown there can be no synthesis and thus music, for Pendell synthesis is musical possession experienced as intoxication. Brown’s commitment to disunity was thus not musical, but expressive of the proliferation of doubles instigated by Derrida’s conception of difference. This unleashed chain of negative being does not become animate with voice, it does not exhibit the melodies, inflections or tonalities of music, but instead, maps the timeless space of postmodern vertigo writhing with hauntings. The alternative—conceding that Dionysian chance is in fact, musical chance—collapses Brown’s theory of chance into Pendell’s theory of luck; it assumes some sort of harmonic synthesis which would gather chance into a melody and thus synthesis. Whereas Brown’s maintenance of this distance between Dionysian chance and music, as death, is precisely what characterises the modern philosophy that formulates his position. In this way arche-writing is not simply reappropriated here as music, insofar as music actually exceeds and synthesises it. I should now be clearer about what is meant by music, and how this inverts Derrida’s own method to endow moderns with (technical) lack. This will involve a short diversion into music theory.

2.5 Music, Difference, Repetition

In *Alien Listening* (2021) Daniel K. Chua and Alexander Rehding argue that repetition is music's medium, describing frequency as the rhythm of positive and negative signals. They define music as patterns of repetition—of presence and absence organised, or woven, into rhythms on what they describe as a universal loom. Music is thereby imagined as a medium of likeness, which importantly, serves difference. It is a constant which reveals divergence in perception, reception, context, but also likeness. It is able to do this, as it is able to remain the same, as an “information technology, [that] converts time into space, creating a piece of time that can be transported into another time and into another place” (Chua; Rehding 2021, 198). This complex system of repetition weaves together time as we experience it.

Gary Tomlinson has also shown how music possesses sites to establish intoxicating forms of communication which are not derived from linguistic states. In *A Million Years of Music* (2018) he argues that “Modern musicking and language, in a real sense, did not develop at all. Instead they fell out, as belated emergences, from patterns of sociality and communication neither musical nor linguistic that can be traced to periods long before *Homo sapiens* existed” (Tomlinson 2018, 12). Musicking “fell out” from forms of sociality among our earliest hominin ancestors employing strategies of mimesis in the absence of language, to pass knowledge around tool making and group behaviours. He borrows Tim Ingold’s phrase “taskscape” to describe how these congregational forms of sociality developed into auditory milieus, amplified over thousands of years into transcendental experiences of sociality as our brains developed. Complex religious rituals probably emerged from such taskscapes as initiation practices that acquired referential dimensions as the cultural significance of death transformed.

Practices to facilitate comradeship among hunters and warriors, to test fitness or initiate new agents, and to induce appropriate forms of anti-social cognition conducive to hunting and war, etc. may offer originating rites for musicking as a social interface which generated empathetic or aroused states, and sponsored forms of separate but collective identity. Music’s contemporary transformation into a commodity “fell out” from a way of life which was eminently musical. As David George Haskell reminds us, the first instruments are three times older than human agriculture (Haskell 2022, 194). The Pleistocene cave paintings have also been shown to be

located in areas that were particularly resonant, suggesting that “people were noticing and responding to caves as acoustic spaces, not only as shelters and painting canvases” (Haskel 2022, 222).

So we can imagine our earliest rituals as musical, and begin to understand the kind of imaginative space music maps in real time, and its association with the emerging sociality of our ancestors beginning to construct symbolic spaces of dissociation from landscape, wherein empathetic states were collectively generated to pass and create knowledge in the absence of language. Christopher Small similarly shows that historically, musicking as a collective performance intends to affirm community identity as a whole rather than privilege the status of particular technicians (Small 1998, 40). Music as it is consumed today in private, or in segregated performance halls, is fractured from its omnipresence in human existence as a telepathic media concerned with generating empathetic states of communication.

Understood in this way, music persists as a kind of prehistoric artefact or portal to some prelinguistic state of nature, where sound acts as the telepathic interface of our ecosystems, imprinting itself on living musical instruments as organisms adapt to sound. Haskell thereby shows how “nuanced whole-body hearing” (Haskell 2022, 17) evolved among our earliest ancestors in the oceans sensing pressure waves and vibration in water (Haskell 2022, 45). Experiencing sound in this vibrational capacity is still generic to birds, who hear “how sound energy is layered into different frequencies [representing] the overall “shape of the sound”” (Haskell 2022, 17) as well as insects adopting sound strategies in reciprocation with the frequencies inherent in their material surroundings. This vibrating universe is native to Bataille’s immanent order of “*water in water*” (Bataille; Calarco; Atterton 2004, 34); which Emanuele Coccia explains in terms of containment “what contains us, the air, becomes contained in us” (Coccia 2019, 11). For Coccia selfhood thus experiences itself as movement or a wave of vibrational energy emergent in the musical environment as “a form of *immersion*” (Coccia 2019, 31) in “the sea of the world” (Coccia 2019, 31).

Music is thus presented here as a system of repetition, difference, and likeness, operated by vibrations and frequencies which pattern time and space into melodic sequences. It is thus experienced viscerally by a listening body in a sentient and musical ecology; informing their

conception of subjectivity and bringing them into proximity with a musical environment which is felt and sensed. Abram also refers to the synaesthetic experience of all sense data, whereby colours sing and sensation vibrates (Abram 1996, 138). This synaesthetic environment invites foreign others to musical presence. We find ourselves relating to these hitchhikers, summoning these ancestor spirits in ritual, myth and dream, as impressions of something fluttering at the edge of vision, which relate us to the past and present. It describes the musical state of nature as bustling with the imaginative presence of others.

Examining music's capacity to collapse time and space in this way, Chua and Rehding present the spacecraft Voyager, which sent a *Golden Record* of "sounds of the earth" into space in 1977 hoping to attract extraterrestrial attention. Their thought experiment poses the dilemma of interspecies communication, and asks: if somewhere out in space, aliens received our signal, how would beings with vastly different sensory organs download and experience music composed by earthlings? This possibility of cosmic translation represents the "fabric of space-time" (Chua; Rehding 2021, 68) which Chua and Rehding describe as a rhythmic blinking of positive and negative—beat and off-beat—which stitches the fundamental binary of existence and non-existence into a musical continuum which is universally accessible as a "*making* of time and space." (Chua; Rehding 2021, 24).

This existential blinking of presence and absence is cast onto a universal loom which weaves together knots of repetition as intelligible patterns, or frequencies, which assign meaning as a musical tapestry emerges. While the Golden Record queries how this tapestry will be translated on foreign technologies, the music it stores is capable of bringing the far near on merit of these frequencies, "since everything in the universe repeats, it is the connective medium that forms the relation between things." (Chua; Rehding 2021, 195). In this regard, music is repetition in a literal sense. It is the meanings and associations carried by frequency which stores and creates time, reviving the past through repetitions that collapse space into music. In this regard, the imaginative state of nature as music, is repetition, as enacted by rituals which restage the sagas of our ancestral stories. Humans, and others, appear in the fray as flashes of colour or sound, hijacked as instruments of revelation for this tapestry of existence which transcends space and time. This insistence on repetition coincides with Derrida's view of difference as the profusion of

alternatives and doubles. However, music is a synthetic state whereas postmodern difference deconstructs sense in rejection of metanarrative or synthesis.

Music is also presented by Chua and Rehding as a form of possession for which, “contact with music is always a serendipitous and fragile enterprise that should not be assumed” (Chua; Rehding 2021, 208). This serendipitous event is the working of luck which brings us into a relation with beyond-humans, which possesses us with their “sense”. Music thus becomes animate as the (often deified) beyond-humans that possess and intoxicate systems.

What this means is that the opposite of phonetic writing is not the absence of writing, but music. This displaces the register of modernity and primitivism. It allows for writing to be musical, and for music to be writing; they can and probably should inform each other. This does not require the transformation of subjectivity implied by Derrida’s incorporation of primitive man into the order of writing, which begins to contour his experience and cultural production, hitherto oriented by music but suddenly accountable to another register. So while luck is identified with music as synthesis, chance is identified with phonetic writing in this thesis. This can be evidenced by the arbitrary nature of chance and writing, for which sounds and experience embodied in the world are translated into abstract symbols. This pairing is chancy in quality since it affords no resemblance or order, but is the simple expression of chaos: it is the pure creative excess of the imagination spilling into arbitrary signs which begin to intrude on and thus deconstruct the experience of embodiment.

Abram describes these alternate views of language in *The Spell of the Sensuous* (1996), where he also creates a binary between mimesis and phonetic writing. He predicates mimesis on phenomenological experience which positions the body as the locus of meaning. Thus, by demonstrating that our bodies are themselves constructed in relationship to the environment and “have formed themselves in delicate reciprocity with the manifold textures, sounds, and shapes of an animate earth” (Abram 1996, 22), Abram shows that “If language is always in its depths, physically and sensorially resonant, then it can never be definitively separated from the evident expressiveness of a bird-song, or the evocative howl of a wolf late at night” (Abram 1996, 80). In this regard, “We are human only in contact, and conviviality, with what is not human” (Abram 1996, 80). However, Abram also refers to the literary transformation of the dynamic sign—from

the ecstatic music which permeates from the landscape it animates—as the originating crisis of civilization's alienation from nature, for which “Potential presence takes the place of actual existence” (Campagna 2022, 39), which most chillingly, normalises psychopathy (Campagna 2022, 53).

Abram describes how the introduction of phonetic writing (and the Greek alphabet in particular) as states became more complex “enabled the abstraction of previously ephemeral qualities like “goodness” and “justice” from their inherence in situations, promoting them to a new realm independent of the flux of ordinary experience” (Abram 1996, 111). This abstraction represented the dispossession of embodied experience, which conversely characterises musical signification. It deprives human beings of the environments which constituted them as ecological beings, indigenous to an order outside the state which was not solely oriented around anthropocentric experience. This order incorporated “along with the humans, the multiple nonhuman entities that constitute the local landscape, from the diverse plants and the myriad animals—birds, mammals, fish, reptiles, insects—that inhabit or migrate through the region, to the particular winds and weather patterns that inform the local geography, as well as the various landforms—forests, rivers, caves, mountains—that lend their specific character to the surrounding earth” (Abram 1996, 6-7). Kohn similarly reflects on the generative meaning of onomatopoeia in the language of the Indigenous Runa of the Ecuadorian Amazon in *How Forests Think* (2013), which derives its identity from the landscape it mimics and animates. This is in opposition to the abstraction of the word “bird” from embodied experience.

Abram thus critiques the abstraction of language enforced by the introduction of the Socratic dialectic into western thinking, as “primarily a method for disrupting the mimetic thought patterns of oral culture” (Abram 1996, 109). By insisting that his interlocutors repeat, rephrase and explain what they said, and by “getting them thus to listen to and ponder their own speaking, Socrates stunned his listeners out of the mnemonic trance demanded by orality, and hence out of the sensuous, storied realm to which they were accustomed” (Abram 1996, 109) whereby “To speak was to live within a storied universe, and thus to feel one's closeness to those protagonists and ancestral heroes whose words often seemed to speak through one's own mouth” (Abram 1996, 112). This generated an abstracted and autonomous self-awareness which Socrates termed

the *psychê*, and which Abram accuses Socrates of twisting from “its earlier, Homeric significance as the invisible breath that animates the living body and that remains, as kind of wraith or ghost, after the body's death” (Abram 1996, 112-113).

For Plato, as for Socrates, the *psychê* is now that aspect of oneself that is refined and strengthened by turning away from the ordinary sensory world in order to contemplate the intelligible Ideas, the pure and eternal forms that, alone, truly exist. The Socratic-Platonic *psychê*, in other words, is none other than the literate intellect, that part of the self that is born and strengthened in relation to the written letters (Abram 1996, 112-113).

While the birth of this imaginary being of letters can be charitably identified with Dionysus as the “uninvited guest” (Pendell 2008, 155), it is an anthropocentric Dionysus constructed by the human imagination. Whereas the possessive states entailed by music invite a Dionysus derived from an ecological system, whose structures and forms of meaning are thus not limited to anthropocentric experience, but exceed and therefore possess it. Possession is thus presented as an intrinsic quality of music, which furthermore makes a subject lucky insofar as it brings them into rhythm with a living ecology in constant transformation.

Pendell describes possession as a poisoning, based on his reading of Derrida’s *Plato’s Pharmacy* (1981) which he directs us to in *Walking with Nobby* (Pendell 2008, 154), and which undoubtedly informed the title of his masterpiece series *The Pharmakon* (2010). It is now pertinent to examine this construction of poison, as the generative concept of Pendell’s view that “luck is connected with wildness” (Pendell 2021, 41). This examination also emphasises the divergence between the orders of music and writing I have identified, on merit of Brown’s early interest in Hermes.

2.6 Solar and Lunar Mercury

In *Plato's Pharmacy* (Derrida; Johnson 1981) Derrida contends that Socrates was aware of the poisonous transformation writing entailed, which Abram critiques. This transformation is expressive of Socrates' own illiteracy in comparison to Plato's literary construction of him. Derrida refers to Socrates' evocation of the goddess Pharmacia at the beginning of the *Phaedrus*, identifying it with "a common noun signifying the administration of the *pharmakon*, the drug: the medicine and/or poison" (Derrida 1981, 69-70). He also demonstrates that Socrates compares Phaedrus' written texts to *pharmakon*, representative of "both remedy and poison" (Derrida 1981, 70). This drug operates through seduction (Derrida 1981, 70), poisoning the present with the difference which is the working of Dionysian chance; "one and the same suspicion envelops in a single embrace the book and the drug, writing and whatever works in an occult, ambiguous manner open to empiricism and chance, governed by the ways of magic and not the laws of necessity" (Derrida 1981, 73).

Derrida thereby positions Socrates, "he who does not write," as nevertheless a master of the *pharmakon*; a magician; a sorcerer; a poisoner capable of bewitching and casting spells through seduction (Derrida 1981, 117). This seduction is personified as the Egyptian god of writing, Thoth, who "is also Hermes" (Derrida 1981, 88), and who "introduces difference into language and it is to him that the origin of the plurality of languages is attributed" (Derrida 1981, 88). Similarly, Henry Louis Gates JR shows that "Hermes' role as messenger and interpreter for the gods lent his name readily to *hermeneutics*" (Gates JR 2014, 10-11).

Hermes' identification with interpretation, pluralism and signification, and his revelation of the difference which animates them, founds the basis of Derrida's transformative and thereby musical view of writing. However, Hermes' proximity to trickery also problematizes this conflation insofar as it is demonstrative of the separate genesis of music and writing detected in Hermes' association with the development of civilisation. Musical forms of communication and phonetic writing did not develop for one purpose, in the same way that one cannot write a production plan for a Netflix series with runes. So we cannot simply conflate these forms, one has an ecological function, the other has an anthropocentric one. In effect, they offer two

different kinds of poison which Pendell describes as solar and lunar mercury; “Solar mercury involves chance, lunar mercury seeks luck” (Pendell 2010², 19). Mercury, of course, corresponds with Hermes (Schjødt in Wikström af Edholm et al 2019).

Hermes was the subject of Brown’s first publication, and furthermore, influenced his conception of Dionysus. Brown’s publication, *Hermes the Thief* (2011) examines the mythic association between the Greek trickster god and the marketplace. It begins with his inquiry, “Why should trickery have a divine patron?” (Brown 2011, 11). Hermes is presented as an uncivilised god native to the barbaric realm outside civilization; “Arcadia, Hermes' birthplace and the scene of the *Homeric Hymn*, was a land preeminently pastoral in its economy and rude in its manners” (Brown 2011, 3-4). This birthright permeates throughout Hermes’ identity, motivating his association with cattle-raiding and subsequent title Hermes the Thief. Hermes, like Nietzsche’s Dionysus, is identified with the negative realm of nature that exists outside the positive realm of civilization. However, Hermes mediates with civilization through theft and secret invasions. On merit of this boundary crossing, Hermes develops his association with trickery becoming Hermes the Trickster, whose “trickery is never represented as a rational device, but as a manifestation of magical power” (Brown 2011, 11). This results from the primitive identification between trickery and magic which makes no distinction between them. Indeed, “The words connoting magical action in the classical period are derived from roots whose original meaning is just as close to the notion of trickery as it is to that of magic” (Brown 2011, 18). Brown thereby shows how Hermes the Thief and Hermes the Trickster, becomes Hermes the Magician. Here we can sense Hermes’ musicality as the inventor of the lyre, and his occult forms of knowledge which do not conform to the order of writing but are instead predicated on musical forms of signification including embodied semiosis, or trickery. Far from reconciling with civilised forms of subjectivity associated with the hegemony of writing, these forms resist it and indeed incriminate Hermes as Thief.

Hermes also doubles as the Yoruba trickster god, Esu. Gates JR corroborates that “Esu's most direct Western kinsman is Hermes” (Gates JR 2014, 10-11) while Victor Turner refers to Esu’s shared association with the “liminal” sphere of the market; “with its implications of choice,

² *Pharmakopoeia: Plant Powers, Poisons & Herbcraft.*

variation, contract” (Turner 1982, 40). Like Hermes, Esu presides over “the indeterminacy of the interpretation of writing” (Gates JR 2014, 30), and occupies the “crossroads of understanding and truth” (Gates JR 2014, 30). In *The Signifying Monkey* (2014) Gates JR thus presents a theory of signification based on a hermeneutic conception of literary criticism, derived from Esu’s function. Gates JR emphasises the repetitions, tones, and word plays incorporated by style and which generate interpretation together with what is objectively spoken or read. Style becomes animate with meaning, peculiar forms of memory and the creative prophecy which conversely, characterises the musicality of oral culture. Gates JR thereby describes Esu’s life as “a form of reading texts in motion” (Gates JR 2014, 30) which “rules the process of disclosure, a process that is never-ending, that is dominated by multiplicity” (Gates JR 2014, 25), upon which Gates JR constructs a theory of signification cognizant with his emphasis on the musicality of African literacy. Esu/ Hermes is thus associated with music, as well as writing; but also the antagonistic matter of interpretation which lies between them.

This is descriptive of the association between Hermes and the marketplace, representative of the encounter between states and primitives as the early development of literacy whose interpretation by an elite class was a matter of trickery. James C. Scott thus contends that writing developed as state administration and was inextricably bound to state-making as encroachment on the freedom and sovereignty of nomadic groups (Scott 2017, 141). Scott demonstrates that writing “seems to have been used in Mesopotamia essentially for bookkeeping purposes for more than half a millennium before it even began to reflect the civilizational glories we associate with writing... The magnificent Epic of Gilgamesh, for example, dates from Ur's Third Dynasty (circa 2,100 BCE), a full millennium after cuneiform had been first used for state and commercial purposes” (Scott 2017, 141). He therefore demonstrates in *The Art of Not Being Governed* (2009) that illiteracy today may be a voluntary choice for Indigenous nations resisting hegemonic absorption. This genesis of writing is very different to the birth of music reported in *A Million Years of Music* (2018) where it is described as a form of ritualistic collectivity.

Hermes' identity is thus consistent with Indigenous trickster gods who often personify the transformation of experience which accompanies the development of civilization, substantiating Brown’s view of the tradition of prophecy as a critique on urbanisation. Felice Vinci and Arduino

Mairui have also described Hermes as an ancient god of fire, in inference to the significance of fire at the beginning of the long process of human domestication (Vinci; Maiuri 2022, 107-116).

Music is thus associated with mimesis and intoxication insofar as it is not subject to the object schemas enforced by civilised morality and its utilitarian ideology. By contrast music allows for the magical transformation of signs and casting of spells associated with Socrates. Music is naive to barriers, identity codes and thus experiences itself as possession, in facilitation of ecological mediumship. Whereas writing is cognizant with the object schema which facilitates the production of proper names, and administrative systems of identity productive of myth as well as the bizarreness of existence. Writing is also riven with chance and chaos as the arbitrariness of civilization. Upon this tragic binary, the realms of chancy writing and lucky music have been founded; their confusion is poisonous but also divinatory (Nietzsche in Tanner; Whiteside 2003). In referring to Hermes, Derrida's view of language falls into a trap: Brown's interpretation of Hermes' trickery as musical, derived from an ontology which exceeds the function of writing.

Nonetheless, Derrida's view of *pharmakon* as a poisoned present was generative for Pendell's view of possession in the *Pharmakon* series (2010) which presents man as an intoxicated mediator of plant spirits; ingested as coffee and chocolate, or ayahuasca and opium. This possession makes him lucky insofar as it brings him into rhythm with a musical ecology; which furthermore, deconstructs anthropocentric identity. Unlike the Dionysus of letters summoned within the anthropocentric grammatical systems described by Federico Campagna as the insular order of Technic (Campagna 2022), this "uninvited guest" (Pendell 2008, 155) is a wild god native to a realm which exceeds the anthropocentric order and its "ontology of positions" (Campagna 2022, 33). Technic's ontology of positions is concerned with ideological relationships rather than the intrinsic value of things, limited by a living ecology. This means that luck arrives as a Dionysian or Hermeneutic invasion into the order of chance by inverting its coincidences into harmonious strikes of luck.

Postmodern discourses which represent chance as disunity and difference, are not capable of mapping this proximity to a living system which regulates and articulates itself, and is not subject to anthropocentric forms of knowledge making. This is the definitive difference between

music and writing, insofar as one is open to the environment and embodied in serendipitous states of possession, while the other is limited to the human imagination and thus productive of an insular kind of trace. This insularity is not capable of really disturbing the thesis (as true difference) insofar as it is derived from the same order; however, once this order or “exclusive principle takes over the whole, and denies the legitimacy of anything outside its own architecture, then reality is peril” (Campagna 2022, 41). This threatens “both one’s own presence in the world and the presence of the world itself” (Campagna 2022, 52).

By contrast, the dissolution of anthropocentric boundaries associated with music unveils an immanent order woven together by the intimacy of its food-chain. In effect, pharmakon is the experience of this poetic-violent intimacy of being part of a food-chain; imbibed like a goblet of mead, or smoked like a pipe of tobacco. It threatens to dissolve civilised subjectivity in ecstatic experience which brings us beyond the human. Pharmakon thus engenders an ecstatic subjectivity. So while both writing and music can be identified as pharmakon—as solar or lunar mercury—their divergence can be discerned according to the kind of ecstasy they facilitate. Writing offers an ecstasy founded on human experience, which subsequently does not penetrate beyond the human. This kind of ecstasy is chance, it only matters to humans. Whereas music offers an ecstasy founded on ecological participation, which subsequently does penetrate beyond the human. This kind of ecstasy is luck—it matters to others inhabiting the spaces outside civilised borders. Ecstasy is used here to denote a musical experience of difference as the flight from one order into a higher synthesis: this is the pharmakon to which Pendell, but not Derrida, refers.

Having thus distinguished music from writing, and luck from chance, by exploring Hermes’ roots, I will now consider how this revives the problem of the animal at the heart of Pendell’s contention that “luck is connected with wildness” (Pendell 2021, 41). This penetrates to the heart of the postmodern problem of (the neglect of) ecstasy founded on the animal, which risks the return of anthropocentricity as an identity fixation incapable of synthesising difference into a harmony which exceeds human identity, and is experienced as luck. Addressing this problem requires an alternative reading of Nietzsche which I will associate with Bataille in the following section. I will suggest Bataille offers an alternative continental tradition capable of delivering us

to a philosophical animist posthumanism (as opposed to a postmodern posthumanism) founded on our position in the food-chain.

2.7 Nietzsche's Animals

An ecstatic philosophy emphasises the loss of anthropocentric subjectivity Nietzsche associates with the animal, as “animal forgetfulness” (Lemm; Caputo 2009, 2). This was the preoccupation of Nietzsche's self-described disciple, Bataille who “indicated what he considered the "crestline" of Nietzsche's tragic thought: the ecstatic revelation of the impossible which ruins the separation between subject and object” (Lotringer; Bataille 1994, x). This ecstatic commitment is expressed in Bataille's essay *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* (1985) which critiques the absence of barbaric virility in modernity, and ascribes power to living myth whereby “*Life risks itself*” (Bataille; Stoekl 1985, 231). This risk inaugurates Destiny as Luck wherein existence “can see itself on the same scale as the starry sky, or death. It recognizes itself in its magnificence, made in the image of a universe untouched by the stain of merit or intention” (Bataille; Stoekl 1985, 231). This critique of utility motivates the essay's title, *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* which refers to Goethe's poem of the same name in which a boy attempts to magically enslave an animate broom, and whose magic fails because of this objectification. This interpretation follows Bataille's narrative of the appearance of the tool among early man in *The Cradle of Humanity* (2005) upon which I have relied to develop my view of the object schema of civilisation; which introduced instrumentalisation and objectification—and thus labour and project or finite time—into an immanent universe previously “untouched by the stain of merit or intention”. This immanence was a poetic existence, in proximity to luck rather than utilitarian production; whereby it became imbued with trickery as risk, and thus magical. However it depends on the disintegration of civilised separation, facilitated by ecstasy as “precisely human death” (Bataille; Strauss 1990, 16), which unveils the animal intimately woven into an ecology described as the food-chain; wherein it rediscovers itself as both prey and predator.

Ecstasy thus raises the problem of the significance of the animal for modern philosophy.

Matthew Calarco and Peter Atterton show that until now, “The general neglect of the animal

question is puzzling not only because Continental philosophy has displayed a tremendous reluctance to embrace traditional humanism and anthropological discourse, but also because of the tremendous reception it has given a thinker as seemingly pro-animal as Nietzsche” (Calarco; Atterton 2004, xv). Lemm corroborates that “the animal is neither a random theme nor a metaphorical device, but rather stands at the centre of Nietzsche's renewal of the practice and meaning of philosophy itself” (Lemm 2009, 1). It is therefore somewhat confusing that today we are inheriting a philosophical lineage which passes through the work of Nietzsche, but obscures his central commitment to “the human being’s animality” (Lemm 2009, 13-14). This has resulted in the contemporary philosophical discourse posthumanism, which seeks to reclaim the animality of the human being in an “ecology of selves” (Kohn 2013, 78) through phrases I also employ in this thesis, like human-animal, beyond-human, and more-than-human etc. which attempt to make up ground for what should be a commonsense description of our place in an ecological reality. As I have shown, Derrida attempted to map this position with his term *animot* in *The Animal That Therefore I Am* however this phrase did not become popular insofar as it did not entail the same criticism of identity expressed by terms like beyond-human, but instead expressed a plural conceptualisation of animality on the basis of positive animal identity.

Nietzsche’s ecological thinking is emphasised by Graham Parkes in *Staying Loyal to the Earth* (1999), while Joseph Ycaza makes the more extraordinary claim in *The Ecological Nietzsche* (2022), that Indigenous worldviews offer a more appropriate framework for interpreting Nietzsche’s work, than the western European perspective. In light of the absence of theorising around the animal nevertheless central to Nietzsche’s philosophy, we have to wonder if this is not the case. This provides some legitimation for the sudden interest in Indigenous wisdom which characterises so much posthuman research, including the popularity of publications like Robin Wall Kimmerer’s *Braiding Sweetgrass* (2013) as a complement to our thinking in provision of a (apparent) missing context for Nietzsche’s thought. The persistence of this ecological context in Indigenous value-systems is characteristic of their exclusion from modern industrialization, which has emphasised human exceptionalism in the food-chain on the basis of religious scriptures which formulate Holy Books (Strousma et al 2016, 111); representative of the hegemony of writing. For Victor Turner, Silvia Federici, and Plumwood this narrative has

assisted in legitimising the modern degradation of the environment necessitated by industrial revolution and so far, industrial progress.

However, the status of the animal in contemporary posthuman criticism is further obscured by what Plumwood has described as Ontological Veganism (Plumwood 2012, 77); ecological movements which simply reproduce anthropocentric structures revolving around the human being's exemption from the food-chain—which she positions in opposition to Ecological Animism which “affirms an ecological universe of mutual use” (Plumwood 2012, 78). As I have argued, Ontological Veganism is familiar to Derrida's *The Animal That Therefore I Am* which relocates the animal as the Transcendental Other and thus a prop of the (anthropocentric) symbolic order alien to the food-chain. This problem is also detectable in Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto* (1991), which describes the posthuman subject as “a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism” (Haraway 1991, 149) which problematically, is exempt from the food-chain. This exclusion means that the cyborg cannot be lucky; it cannot participate in the harmony of ecological relationships oriented around the food-chain as a non-compostable being. Nonetheless, *The Cyborg Manifesto* (Haraway 1991) is referenced repeatedly in Sherryl Vint's 2020 anthology of posthuman essays *After the Human* as a generative event for the movement.

Pendell's work is ostensibly posthuman insofar as it is concerned with attributing agency to beyond-human beings like plants and possessive systems. It is therefore important to contextualise Pendell's work in the posthuman movement. In the following section I will argue that animist writers like David Abram, Bayo Akomolafe and Val Plumwood offer a lucky posthumanism capable of situating Pendell's work. This lucky posthumanism describes the food-chain as ecstatic and metamorphic. It is at this point that the posthuman movement most clearly diverges from the postmodern thinking associated with Brown. This is also in opposition to Haraway insofar as the food-chain emerges as a meta-narrative capable of metamorphosing difference into music.

2.8 A Humorous Possession

Whereas for the animist philosopher Abram, the musical belonging to a larger ecological field constitutes the traditional or tribal shaman as an “intermediary between human and nonhuman worlds” (Abram 1996, 8) who, like Hermes the Magician, “work[s] with the malleable texture of perception” (Abram 1996, 5). In *Becoming Animal* (Abram 2011), Abram thus describes the feat of metamorphosis enacted by one such magician, his mentor, the Himalayan shaman Sonam who turned into a raven; “A perfectly impossible metamorphosis had just unfolded before [Abram’s] blinking eyes” (Abram 2011, 226-227). Abram attributes this feat to the mimetic musicality of Sonam. While elsewhere in the podcast *How a man turned into a raven* (2021) Abram also discusses his own experience of ecstatic flight

Elsewhere, the posthuman writer and ecological animist Bayo Akomolafe, disciple to the Yoruba trickster, Esu, describes a tale of “transformation too offensive for history to embrace” (Akomolafe 2023). He recounts a story from the early 1800s of a group of Nigerian slaves who had mutinied a boat in Georgia (USA), but were captured. Refusing to submit, they marched into the water singing an ancestral song and transformed into black birds that flew home to Africa.

In *The Eye of the Crocodile* (2012) the philosophical animist Val Plumwood describes how she was attacked and death rolled three times by a crocodile who, by luck, released her from its jaws. Her encounter with this trickster (Plumwood; Shannon 2012, preface), changed the trajectory of her philosophy which became dedicated to critiquing human exceptionalism in the food chain. By reviving the food chain she also revived the possibility of metamorphosis as identity replacement founded on ecstatic encounters with the beyond-human, for whom “we live the other’s death, die the other’s life” (Plumwood; Shannon 2012, 13). Bataille described this as the intimate site of immanence, wherein the eater does not distinguish itself from the eaten (Bataille; Calarco; Atterton 2004, 33).

I raise these three stories of metamorphosis here to demonstrate their paradoxical nature for our contemporary paradigm, as ecstatic tales of “transformation too offensive for history to embrace”. This imaginative limit was identified by Caroline Walker Bynum in *Metamorphosis*

and Identity (2005), which critiques mediaeval views of hybridity and their evolution into contemporary entertainment literature. She demonstrates that our conceptions of metamorphosis, inherited from the mediaeval view of hybridity, do not exhibit the possibility of identity replacement as “*metabole*, the replacement of something by something else” (Bynum 2005, 181), rather stories of metamorphosis are predicated on concepts of hybridity as the revelation of an underlying disguise (unmasking), or addition of a quality. In *Metamorphoses* (2021) Coccia betrays this bias by locating metamorphosis in evolution or birth. His evolutionary view of metamorphosis is an unmasking of the “life games” (Coccia 2021, 5) which drive adaptation, while birth does not pertain to identity replacement in Bynum’s terms, but the “addition of a quality” which sees the parent reproduce. These models are inscribed with the human exceptionalism which began incubating in the Mediaeval period Bynum examines, expressed in the anguish of the monstrous-miraculous paradigm it conceived, through which the miraculous experience of infinity associated with idealism, could be displaced from the monstrous experience of finitude; the body. By dislocating the body as monstrous from the divine as miraculous, humans displaced themselves from the food-chain. However, in so doing, they lost their metamorphic powers, becoming mired hybrids incapable of metamorphosis. Bereft of this ecstatic possibility “there is no story, nothing happens” (Bynum 2005, 177). Instead we are besieged by an unhappy coincidence of opposites—the difference and contradiction which transforms us into werewolves.

However for Haraway, contradiction should be accommodated. This commitment renders her manifesto *Staying with the Trouble* (2016) which describes “partial recuperation and getting on together” (Haraway 2016, 10) founded on her vow to never again connect “parts to wholes” (Haraway 1991, 4). This is an explicit rejection of ecstasy as the metamorphic experience which engenders a greater synthesis capable of absorbing contradiction. However, in this view, the slaves of Akomolafe’s story could not have metamorphosed and in fact, should not have tried to. The powers of the traditional shaman Sonam could not exist. There was nothing lucky about Plumwood’s survival, despite its contribution to these pages. Haraway’s consolatory position robs us of metamorphosis; instead caricatures it as the myth of “original innocence” (Haraway 1991, 177), and deprives us of the possibility of the beyond-human capable of limiting anthropocentricity. Finally this limit finally unveils itself as the food-chain.

Consistently, Haraway's cyborg "composed of organism and machine" (Haraway 1991, 1) is excluded from the food-chain and thus cannot be lucky. As the hybrid offspring of "militarism and patriarchal capitalism, not to mention state socialism" (Haraway 1991, 151) it is characterised by the anthropocentric systems I have identified with writing. Indeed, writing is "pre-eminently the technology of cyborgs" (Haraway 1991, 176) insofar as it is generative of networks. This is true to Haraway's tentacular vision in *Staying with the Trouble* (2016) which describes networks of grass roots cultural resistance modelled on "cnidarians, spiders, finery beings like humans and racoons, squid, jellyfish, neural extravaganzas, fibrous entities, flagellated beings, myofibril braids" (Haraway 2016, 32) native to the Chthulucene as an era "made up of ongoing multispecies stories and practices of becoming-with in times that remain at stake" (Haraway 2016, 55). These networks are ostensibly corroborate with my view of music as a living ecology and system of relationships; however they are also distinguished by the crises they exhibit, which can be formulated in the question; but are jellyfish possessed?

I refer to the jellyfish here, as an iteration of Haraway's tentacular federation of posthuman cyborgs modelled on the jellyfish's "tentacularity" as "life lived along lines" (Haraway 2016, 32). It also doubles as an apocalyptic omen expressive of the loss of diversity. Various sources tell us jellyfish are taking over the oceans due to rising temperatures (Shukla 2021). As we are surrounded by both posthuman and living jellyfish, we are overrun with ecological crises. Eerily, this is cognizant with Haraway's Chthulucene.

However, asking if jellyfish are possessed, asks if they are more than just abstract or biological systems. This demands the metamorphic "seductions to organic wholeness through a final appropriation of all the powers of the parts into a higher unity" (Haraway 1991, 150-151) which would gather their various constituent parts into a higher synthesis; the Jellyfish.

The answer to this question "But are jellyfish possessed?" is inherent in its intentionally comedic quality. This quality is expressive of its genesis, and the absurdity which describes it by which organisms should be identified with their parts, as opposed to their proper names. This alludes to the distinction between music and writing, for which music is concerned with the

veiling and transformation of proper names implied by its non-linguistic and repetitive media, whereas writing as music's opposition, can thus be presented as the invention and transformation of proper names. However Derrida's incorporation of music as writing, has resulted in the situation by which Haraway presents a manifesto founded on the musical deconstruction of "language across taxa" (Haraway 2016, 66).

This conflation between music and writing introduces chaos into Haraway's text as an intentional irreverence which does not "re-member the cosmos" (Haraway 1991, 151) and rejects the patriarchalism of all symbolic systems, metanarratives, or cosmoses. This chaos animates a Dionysus who is nevertheless, limited by the anthropocentric imagination wherein he is dissected, until he has been divested of form and dissolved into a tentacular jellyfish. However, at this point we can nevertheless still describe his transformation according to the attribution of a proper name; Jellyfish; denotative of a Dionysian system of dismembered parts which is nevertheless possessed by a greater synthesis—the Jellyfish. In effect, the Jellyfish is possessed by its proper name, and thereby becomes something I can write about. Rejecting the possessive logic of proper names, which create entities or patterns out of chaos, leads to the musical crises of language itself. This crisis may be identified as the operation of Brown's chance, concerned with a Dionysian obliteration of order, however in such a framing this musical crisis is just noise; Haraway's language-ing offers no melody, it insists "on noise and advocate[s] pollution" (Haraway 1991, 176).

Nonetheless, something musical does also exceed this linguistic crisis and expresses itself in the quality of this question; which is its humour. This humour is dependent on the system by which this question has been conceived—outside of this system this question might not be humorous; it might be the plot of a horror story set on a submarine, or the founding vision of a new age religious movement based on extraterrestrial contact. But as a result of the hyper linguistic theories examined herein, it articulates a beyond-human voice that travels to the ecstatic levels of this doctrine and then shatters into laughter. The intervention of humour here, depends on something which undermines the theoretical insularity of the terms of this question, with its body, its feeling, its context, its origin; its humour. This humour brings its music to life. Humour is thus employed here as a sense capable of collapsing the pretensions of anthropocentric

systems of knowledge by mapping the zone which exceeds them, vibrating with the musical laughter of the uninvited guest. It was on merit of this ecstatic function, that Bataille thereby qualified his work as a philosophy of laughter (Bataille in Kendall 2001, 138).

Haraway identifies this humour as irony in the *Cyborg Manifesto* (Haraway 1991, 149). Indeed it is the very coincidence of opposites implied by this kind of humour, between order of senses, which she encourages us to remain with as an appreciation of the irreconcilable bizarreness of existence which describes ecological crises. However this humour or irony is also the coincidence of opposites which is navigated by tricksters, descriptive of their comedic performance and tricks. This question therefore asks; does the coincidence of opposites result in any ecstatic flight? Any synthesis? Surely the answer is yes, we have heard the musical laughter posed by this question's humour. Indeed the Jellyfish's metamorphosis is its laughter.

For Haraway irony as “contradictions that do not resolve into larger wholes” (Haraway 1991, 149) cannot offer the metamorphosis demanded by synthesis. Whereas research on trickster gods and heroes by Annie Ruth Leslie (1997), Margart P Baker (1994), Jeanne Rosier Smith (1997), Emily Zobel Marshall (1989), Norman O Brown (2011), Felice Vinci and Arduino Maiuri (2002), Thomas F. Thornton & Patricia Thornton (2015), Claude Lévi-Strauss (1995), Paul Radin (1956), Marcel Mauss (2001), Karl Kerényi (1956), and Henry Louis Gates JR (2014), among others, establish that through their comedic foibles and ironic mischief, tricksters often “teach humans, who are often woefully ignorant, about the web of relations that constitutes and maintains life on earth, so that they may survive within it” (Thornton; Thornton 2015, 18). This web of relations is a musical synthesis which exceeds anthropocentric notions of contradiction, but metamorphoses the experience of contradiction or irony into luck.

This function is not possible for philosophies founded on the rejection of synthesis, which characterise Haraway and Brown's work, and more broadly, the postmodern movement. By contrast, it is consistent with Nietzsche's view of cultural resistance in the face of oppressive hegemony associated with civilization. This site of resistance belongs to the animal, and thus demands ecstasy as straying of the spirit.

Writers like Carl Jung described the trickster psychology as “a faithful copy of an absolutely undifferentiated human consciousness, corresponding to a psyche that has hardly left the animal level” (Jung 1956, 201), whose “chief and most alarming characteristic is his unconscious” (Jung 1956, 203). The trickster’s psychology Jung describes in Paul Radin’s *The Trickster* (1956), is thus a familiar Freudian tale of domestication and integration of the unconscious, from the musicality of “omnipotent mind” (Freud 2012, 125-165) into a civilised personality constructed by taboos that reinforce systems of identity. This domestication of the barbarian into modern value systems is equivalent to Derrida’s attempt to relocate primitives in proximity to a form of writing that does not actually engage with the complexity of their own technology as music. It underestimates the workings of imaginative and ecological excess which describe oral culture, which are furthermore, capable of generating lucky synthesis from chancy chaos.

2.9 Conclusion: Return to Ecstasy

This return to ecstasy, derived from “the Greek *ekstasis*, which literally means "straying of the spirit” according to the historian of Witch Hunt trials Claude Lecouteux (Lecouteux 2001, 12)—is enabled by animist posthumanists who support the assignment of agency to beyond-human beings, allowing for the ecstatic possibility of communication across species, systems, and levels of consciousness. This offers a transformation in value for our need for ecological participation as human-animals; in opposition to the historic devaluation of selves that do not correspond to the modern image of the human, typical of Western civilization (Singer; Calarco; Atterton 2004, xi). The assignment of value to ecological (as opposed to civilised) forms of subjectivity described herein as lucky, acknowledges non-anthropocentric forms of knowledge-making conducive to ecological harmony and experienced as luck.

In this chapter I have argued that this harmony is expressive of a musical cosmology, which means that being lucky is equivalent to being in rhythm with a living ecology. This rhythm is in tune to a transforming food-chain rife with metamorphic feats of possession. This is descriptive of Pendell’s commitment to an animist ontology capable of registering luck, in contrast to Brown’s view of chance which rejects synthesis and thus ecstatic metamorphosis. This rejection

is symptomatic of a postmodern reading of difference which is still pervasive and risks the exclusion of the sentient ecology as the music we dance to. At stake in this divergence between Pendell and Brown is the ecstatic site of the beyond-human. Pendell's luck is thus interesting for contemporary philosophy as it revives the significance of (musically induced) ecstasy capable of bringing us into relation with the beyond-human. Whereas the modern devaluation of ecstasy, experienced as music, is symptomatic of the ethnocentricity of the industrial order and its purge of shamanism.

In the following chapter I will examine in more detail how music operates as the divinatory Language of Birds, capable of producing animate artworks described as lucky signs. I thereby argue that artworks must have the capacity to act on the world.

Chapter Two: The Language of Birds

3.1 Introduction: Perspectival Aesthetics

In chapter one I established the musical nature of luck, in comparison to the chaotic nature of chance. I suggested that their ecstatic (in)capacity is representative of the divergence between Pendell's luck and Brown's chance and predicated on the function of difference. For Pendell difference can become animate and be integrated into a synthesis, while for Brown difference cannot be integrated and ultimately leads to death as fragmentation. This means that Pendell's luck offers the metamorphic possibility associated with the food-chain whereby the subject can be consumed by an other and thus experience identity-replacement; the fish that has been eaten by the crocodile is no longer a fish but has become a crocodile, and furthermore, part of the food-chain. This is not possible according to Brown's conception of chance, where consumption by a predator is not part of any larger synthesis but is an arbitrary act of chance which would only result in death for the fish. I have suggested this reasoning is indicative of the anthropocentric exceptionalism which characterises contemporary philosophy, by which humans are not viewed as part of the food-chain. Such exceptionalism has inevitably exacerbated ecological crises.

In this chapter I will employ the semiotic theory of animist writers like David Abram and Eduardo Kohn to illustrate a theory of living semiosis expressed as ecological harmony, described by both Abram and Pendell as *The Language of Birds*. Abram suggests that all our semiotic systems are embedded in an animate landscape and thus inscribed with innate values derived from experience in nature, allowing for trickery as an ecstatic form of communication across species in reference to some shared value system by which tricks become meaningful as tricks, and furthermore, magical. In *The Spell of the Sensuous* (1991) Abram contrasts this with the order of writing as the modern, anthropocentric abstraction of our emergence from the animate flesh of nature. In *How Forests Think* (2013) Kohn argues this animate landscape is constructed by co-participants in a living semiosis, which dislocates the locus of sign-making

from the human being to the beyond human. Inherent to this beyond-human collaboration, is the possibility for semiotic communication across orders of experience and species.

These views create the possibility for divination, founded on the musical relationships between participants in a sentient ecology that become harmonic, animate, and lucky. This web of relations acts as a communicative interface across species and levels of consciousness, which synthesise these others together in the ecological becoming described by *The Language of Birds*. It is experienced as the musical intoxication generative of trance states which allow us to imbibe a complex ecology holistically. This intoxicating state induces the loss of (civilised) subjectivity which brings us into communication with others, and is experienced most potently during dreaming. I subsequently compare these theories to the experience of dreaming as the subversion of anthropocentric subjectivity, and break from identity registers. This allows for the identification of lucky signs as interfaces of beyond-human experience, commensurate with the Indigenous perspectival aesthetics which “encompass multiple perspectives” (Kohn 2013, 97). This generates an aesthetic theory whereby the artwork as a lucky sign is not solely subject to anthropocentric aesthetic values, but capable of acting on the world.

However, these signs also leave the dreaming subject vulnerable to sacred traps which perform beyond-human knowledge in daylight. This “has the effect of aligning inside and outside perspectives in a special way; what can only be seen from the inside suddenly becomes visible to the person on the outside” (Kohn 2013, 97), who becomes “simultaneously aware of both viewpoints as well as how they are connected by something greater than, like a trap springing shut, suddenly encompasses them” (Kohn 2013, 97). Kohn associates this multinatural perspectivalism with shamanism, insofar as it instigates ecstatic experience as the straying into another point of view, as well as the appearance of a metanarrative that appears like “a trap springing shut”. In Chapter One I have suggested this shutting trap can be compared to Derrida’s conception of difference experienced as an autonomous intersubjectivity, or postmodern haunting. However, reframed in an animist ontology this haunting attains agency and becomes indicative of a metanarrative, in this case; that which is beyond-human. This limit of knowledge is experienced as symbolic crises.

In this chapter I argue such traps capable of instigating symbolic crises are constructed by sophisticated artists, and enacted during ritual as the appropriate site for this process. I elaborate on Kohn's conception of 'shutting traps' in reference to the work of the Chilean filmmaker Alejandro Jodorowsky, who developed a shamanic methodology of "sacred traps" in his art practice, following apprenticeship with traditional magicians and healers in Mexico (Jodorowsky in LeValley 2010, viii). For such traditional magicians and healers, "medicine is an art" (Jodorowsky in LeValley 2010, viii) which relies on "the honorable tricks of a skilled magician" (Jodorowsky in LeValley 2010, viii) to trick patients into participating in their own psychosomatic miracles of healing, often through instigated symbolic crises. This is supported by Victor Turner's description of the nature of shamanic healing methodologies which are ritualistic, theatrical, and artistic (Turner 1982).

Jodorowsky's career as a filmmaker has been informed by his creative-healing methodology based on shamanic psychomagic "in which theatre transforms into ritual sacrifice" (Jodorowsky 2010, 9). His conception of sacred traps is expressive of the "homicidal" quality of the "poetic act" (Jodorowsky in LeValley 2010, 23), which creates and discerns lucky signs in order to deconstruct a prevailing narrative and reorganise reality. In this chapter I argue this homicidal quality is reflective of the origins of art practice, in the highly symbolic experience of navigating a complex ecology by making and reading signs, in order to hunt and trap prey effectively. I argue divination is the sublimation of hunting strategies whose predatory nature pervades art practice and cultural production generally as the divination and production of lucky signs which construct reality to some end (hunting). Finally I argue that this kind of lucky practice is not predicated on success, but power insofar as it is related to the magical reconstruction of reality as entrapment. This is also cognizant with Federico Campagna's definition of the magician as "a reality-therapist, acting not merely on the symptoms of an individual's illness, but also on the reality-conditions that allowed that state of illness to take place" (Campagna 2022, 117). In conclusion I show how this is related to the Pit River Indians' conception of power and poison, which Pendell most clearly modelled his theory of luck on, as furthermore, *pharmakon*.

In this chapter I show how divination defends the existence of universal laws described in Chapter One as pity. Pity as trans-species empathy facilitates the possibility of lucky signs which

are not defined solely by anthropocentric values but are capable of acting as an interface between orders of experience. This means that the artwork can exist as a lucky sign that exceeds human knowledge, and is endowed with beyond-human significance. This allows me to suggest that such lucky signs, or artworks, are capable of acting on the world insofar as they can trigger symbolic crises among human beings by undermining their allusions to knowledge. This animist capacity is expressive of the zone which exceeds human knowledge and is experienced as the beyond-human. It is simply proven by hypnotic methodologies which employ aesthetic techniques including sound, to elicit an affective response which exceeds anthropocentric knowledge systems and acts on the world. This offers an aesthetic theory which supports my theory of ritual as an artistic practice which maintains ecological harmony. This possibility creates the condition for *The Language of Birds* as a living semiosis which transcends species boundaries.

Divination is an interesting site of inquiry for contemporary research fields interested in embodied forms of knowledge making which describe the contemporary “affective turn” in philosophy (Richardson in Vint 2020, 58). In this thesis divination is presented as a foundational tenant for philosophical animism, founded on the ecological intimacy which weaves us into the food-chain, leaving traces that are experienced as luck. It is expressive of the divergence between Pendell’s luck and Brown’s chance, in terms of the existence of a Law which can generate synthesis and be divined. I will discuss the status of this Law as synthesis in the following section.

3.2 Laws of Divination

Pendell’s and Brown’s divergence is oriented around the (im)possibility of synthesis. Synthesis requires laws which can be divined and read. For Pendell “everything follows laws” (Pendell 2008, 5). Whereas, Brown rejected the Law, in place of Love; for him this was personified by Jesus Christ as the incarnation of God who reduced the Law to the imperative to Love. This view resulted in his hope for a Dionysian Christianity of miracles and revelations, nonetheless founded on disunity and chaos. For Brown, “The idea of chance breaks the Christian synthesis

and opens up the Dionysian future. Chance disunites; loosens the fabric of the world; introduces an irrational swerve. Chance disunites and so does death” (Pendell 2008, 217).

Brown therefore held up the “undemocratic but sovereign power of the imagination” (Brown 1991, 4) as the evolutionary perfection of humanity. This informed his theory of prophecy as a creative power or archetypal process, which produces social organisation, religious experience, and political power (Brown 1991, 98). He viewed philosophy as the modern evolution of the history of prophecy, freed from authoritarianism. However, the imaginative power expressed by Brown’s prophecy constructs experience according to anthropocentric narratives, not ecological laws.

By contrast, divination is descriptive of luck as “the context, the environment: set and setting” (Pendell 2007, 60) and submissive to laws of ecological equilibrium in the same way that “From ancient times, Fortuna was associated with Anagkê, Necessity” (Pendell 2007, 40). In this regard, luck is concerned with the divinatory laws which enable translation across species and levels of consciousness. However these laws are founded on experience outside civilization, instigating the Nietzschean struggles of mythopoeic resistance against civilised hegemony, which I have associated with trickster gods in the previous chapter. These tricksters are fluent in the language of nature founded on shared experience, and employed in their trickery. Both Pendell and Abram describe this language embedded in the natural world as *The Language of Birds*.

The Language of Birds positions Pendell’s view in a mythopoeic time before the modern. This has resulted in my pre-modern conception of a musical ecology familiar to Ptolemy’s *Music of the Spheres*, or Johannes Kepler’s *Harmonices Mundi* which argued that astrological relationships between cosmic bodies are composed musically and the universe is thus experienced as music. Whereas the contemporary rejection of metanarratives, or music, determines that there is no underlying logic or universal sense on the basis of infinite subjective difference, which privileges narratives of disunity, disorder, and alienation. Thus for Brown, Dionysian chance is disunity and chaotic; however in the absence of an underlying order, it is also prophetic insofar as it is creational. By contrast, Pendell’s luck alludes to another ecological

order that exceeds the anthropocentric one. Luck becomes the interface through which this other order penetrates the anthropocentric one in Dionysian invasions, which can be divined.

In effect, coming into a relationship with sentient nature is divinatory, generative of the ritual practices which animist philosophers describe. In *The Signifying Monkey*, Gates JR also describes the “extensive rituals of disclosure that the Yoruba depend on” (2014, 40), while Pendell reminds us “Divination is one of the most common practices associated with the use of entheogenic plants” (Pendell 2007, 23). The rituals of divination which characterised Pendell’s research is, therefore, an ecological practice which brought him into a relationship with animate nature. This motivated Pendell’s task to “reconcile chance with ‘return to divination’” (Pendell 2008, 34). This reconciliation is luck.

At stake in this is the body; as the site not only of subjective crisis, but universal divination. This is a body which is formulated in proximity to something bigger than itself—the environment it shares, or the predator which represents the limit of anthropocentric knowledge, and thus ecstatic experience. Val Plumwood had this encounter when she was attacked by a crocodile, and thereafter reformulated her philosophical position in terms of our belonging in a food-chain as both predator and prey. In this regard, the body contextualises us in an ecological relationship with the environment and the beyond-humans which populate it in a food-chain of predation and possession. The body is the dancer in this rhythm, whose powers transform the dancehall into a hunting terrain. This transforming landscape,

envelopes its protagonists much as we ourselves are enveloped by the terrain. In other words, we are situated in the land in much the same way that characters are situated in a story. Indeed, for the members of a deeply oral culture this relation may be experienced as something more than a mere analogy: along with the other animals, the stones, the trees, and the clouds, we ourselves are characters within a huge story that is visibly unfolding all around us, participants within the vast imagination, or Dreaming, of the world. (Abram 1996, 163)

This dream is inscribed with the loss of subjectivity which puts us into contact with something greater, the food-chain. This loss of subjectivity is thus also submission to Law. However upon the existence of this law, the creative excesses of rituals of divination and ecstatic flight are founded as music.

In *The Language of Birds* (2021) Pendell categorises divinatory practices from “Aeromancy; divination by weather or by throwing sand into the wind” (Pendell 2021, 17) to “Zoomancy; divination by the behaviour of animals” (Pendell 2021, 62). Therein Pendell refers to Abram’s critique of “the loss of animism with the adoption of the Phoenician/ Hebrew alphabet by the Greeks” (Pendell 2021, 62). By contrast, animism is a “Mammalian language. Rooted words. Plants with hair. Without sap no sapience” (Pendell 2021, 63). In the following section I will look more closely at what is meant by The Language of Birds as a divinatory system embedded in landscape which offers a foundational tenant for philosophical animism.

3.3 The Language of Birds

The Language of Birds is a phrase borrowed from mystic and occult traditions, alluding to communication with birds, as has been attributed to Solomon and David of the *Quran*, the biblical Elijah, and various other legendary figures often for strategic military purposes. Timothy Bourns describes *The Language of Birds in Old Norse Tradition* whereby particularly wise characters “are able to comprehend the language of birds” (Bourns 2021, 209). This privileged form of knowledge is personified by Odin “the one-eyed”, who sacrificed an eye for total wisdom, and received instead the two ravens Huginn and Muginn who became his sight in space and time. Christopher M. Moreman also presents his paper *On the Relationship between Birds and Spirits of the Dead* which “brings together cross-cultural evidence for the practically universal associations between birds and both life and death” (Moreman 2014). Communication with birds is often metaphorical of communication with the other world. In this regard, birds are also frequently associated with angels.

While this history is mythological, it expresses an intuition regarding the intimacy of species described as the possibility of a shared language. John Marzluff and Tony Angell refer to the “closely coupled coevolutionary dance” (Marzluff; Angell 2007, 44) of hummingbirds and plants, for whom “The shape of a flower evolves in response to a hummingbird’s bill, and the bill’s shape evolves in response to the shape of the flower” (Marzluff; Angell 2007, 44). They also observe this interspecies intimacy between the Boran people of East Africa and the Greater Honeyguide bird. While “The honeyguide is a specialised forager on the wax and larvae of wild honeybees... it cannot efficiently raid the hive of the honeybee” (Marzluff; Angell 2007, 47) depending instead on the intervention of the Boran, who also love honey. Bird and Boran have thus developed a hunting relationship which informs the “flight pattern, vocal behaviour, and perching behaviour” of the honeyguide, “to actively, accurately and consistently lead people through many miles of dry bushland to honey-laden hives” (Marzluff; Angell 2007, 47) reducing search time by around two-thirds. The honeyguide has also impacted Boran culture, with the development of the “Fuulido” whistle “sounded by blowing into shells, nuts, or a closed fist, when a search for honey is to begin [which] doubles the encounter rate with the honeyguide” (Marzluff; Angell 2007, 47).

Our culture is inscribed with this intimacy, indeed “Nietzsche argues that human speech developed out of vocalisation and singing. Since so few other mammals sing, humans must have picked it up from birds and insects” (Lingis et al 2004; 14). Abram supports this view in *The Discourse of the Birds* where he “reflects upon the vocalisations of birds—noting the major role that such avian calls, cries, and songs have played in the development of human culture” (Abram 2010, 263). The various historical proofs of this intimacy, including the domestication of messenger pigeons, accounts for *The Language of Birds*. Its divinatory implication refers to the long-distance knowledge the bird can impart to the comparatively stationary human being, who cannot traverse the same expanses of aerial terrain. Bourns thus explains how birds are exempt from the category of animals in the collection of Norse myths the *Edda*, on the basis of their privileged knowledge, paralleled only by aquatic animals (Bourns 2021, 210-211).

Abram also refers to *The Language of Birds* in *The Spell of the Sensuous* (1996) to describe oral culture, whose “lack of objectification influences not only the way in which oral cultures

experience the field of discursive meanings, but also the very character and structure of that field” (Abram 1996; 139). This means that “the sensible, natural environment remains the primary visual counterpart of spoken utterance, the visible accompaniment of all spoken meaning. The land, in other words, is the sensible site or matrix wherein meaning occurs and proliferates” (Abram 1996, 140). Abram’s theory of the sentient landscape has been informed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s conception of the “Flesh” of living matter which he invokes;

We can perceive things at all only because we ourselves are entirely a part of the sensible world that we perceive! We might as well say that we are organs of this world, flesh of its flesh, and that the world is perceiving itself *through* us (Abram 1996, 68).

This “vast Flesh in which our own sentient flesh is embedded” (Abram 1996, 70) informs how we experience the symbolic as a “single, ever-shifting fabric” (Abram 1996, 39) woven symbiotically with our environments, and endowing them with music. To this end, Abram refers to Indigenous practices of “singing the landscape” which mimics the contours of terrain, imprinting language with nature’s rhythms, inflections and sense of the world as its very intelligibility. Indeed, this fragile “language “belongs” to the animate landscape as much as it “belongs” to ourselves” (Abram 1996, 82). Furthermore, “We can no more stabilise the language and render its meanings determinate than we can freeze all motion and metamorphosis in the land” (Abram 1996, 140).

Birds are therefore metaphoric of this musical language in flux, as winged signs. For Nietzsche their song also operates by seduction “send(ing) forth chants whose repetitive codings are not the re-presentation that represents ideal forms, but reiterate, reaffirm the forces of beauty, health, and superabundant vitality” (Lingis 2004, 14). This seduction constructs reality as the experience of beauty, health and superabundant vitality which Nietzsche attributes to birdsong. The Language of Birds is thus divinatory because it also prompts or triggers its own prophetic states. The diviner or interpreter is invited to experience this great abundance—its dazzling impression paralyses them as they are seduced and preyed upon.

Abram shows that among the Koyukon nation indigenous to Alaska, “robins, when they sing their lilting phrases, are experienced by the Koyukon as making a short speech: “*Dodo Silinh k'oolkkoy ts'eega, tilzoot tilzoot silnee silnee*’—‘Down there, my brother-in-law tells me to eat pike entrails’” (Abram 1996, 150). With other birds like the great horned owl or sparrowhawk, the Koyukon translate the robin’s divinatory speech through phonetic resemblance, which thereby serves as a medium for the Koyukon’s own secret knowledge—already established by secrets written in a transforming landscape which they are subconsciously privy to—in this case, that there are pike entrails “down there”.

The Language of Birds thus employs a philosophical animist epistemology which incorporates embodiment in a living ecology of beyond-human selves and its diverse avenues of musical expression and meaning-making, which become animate through song as seductive intoxication. This is positioned in opposition to the administrative forms of language derived from state-making and hegemonic idealism, neutered from feedback loops in a dynamic living environment. Subjectivity thereby emerges in relation to the musical ecology we are all floating in, and is dependent on hearing and listening well:

To understand the language of birds, one needs not ears, not cochlea and tympanum, but a cellular hearing, where the organs of perception have expanded to include skin, hair follicles, heart beat, and whatever it is that is all of it together (Pendell 2021, 68).

The Language of Birds thus becomes divinatory insofar as it is capable of imparting non-linguistic and musical forms of knowledge derived from a living ecology and its collective intelligence, which construct the future as the sensations and intuitions—or vibrations—it prompts, that inevitably live out their logic. Lucky signs are expressions of this sapient environment, communicating through moments of luck which we must learn to read as an interpretive act of divination; “Undulations move across a field of grasses, rustling, whispering secrets” (Pendell 2021, 63). Reading, and interpretation becomes a divinatory communication with lucky signs through The Language of Birds, which is also an unveiling of one’s own secret knowledge and seductive intent limited by ecological feedback. In this respect, divination is an ecological function which interprets the collective intelligence inherent in any ecology, yet which also constructs our own subjectivity. This is the divinatory feat of Nietzsche’s Dionysian artist,

“the weird fairy-tale image of the creature that can turn its eyes around and look at itself; not he is at once subject and object, at once poet, actor and audience” (Nietzsche et al 2003, 32). This necessitates ecstatic experience as the breaking with one’s own subjectivity, as the “straying of the spirit” from an imposed and anthropocentric code.

Eduardo Kohn’s theory of semiosis provides further logic for this intoxicating music. He examines the ontology inhabited by the indigenous Ávila Runa of the Ecuadorian Amazon in *How Forest Think* (2013) to develop a theory of language structured according to the oral logic Abram privileges. His theory of semiosis demonstrates how the future is constructed by signs that gain their own psychic life and begin to possess ecologies with music, animating the deities that become associated with them as autonomous beings. While this operates through a process of idealisation, it is one oriented around the dialogue of a living ecology which creates space for the intervention of Dionysus, the uninvited guest (Pendell 2008. 155). This is in opposition to the hegemonic and anthropocentric codes inevitably concerned with managerialism, productivity and objectification, native to the orders of science, fiction, or action—as opposed to what Bataille describes as destiny in *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* (1985).

In support of his theory of beyond-human semiosis concerned with the ways in which “representation is something both more general and more widely distributed than human language” (Kohn 2013, 38), Kohn distinguishes *icons* “which represent by virtue of the resemblances they share with objects” (Kohn 2013, 32) from *indices* which represent connections or relationships. A monkey reacting to a movement in the foliage of the forest for example, takes this movement as a sign of something else. However, “That something more is, paradoxically, something less. It is an absence. That is, to the extent that indices are noticed they impel their interpreters to make connections between some event and another potential one that has yet occurred” (Kohn 2013, 32). This interpretation oriented around an “absent future” represents the capacity of signs to grow as they trigger ripple effects. This movement attains the animate agency whereby signs become “alive insofar as [they] will come to be interpreted by a subsequent sign in a semiotic chain that extends into the possible future” (Kohn 2013, 33). While this offers the potential for divination as the “reading” of such semiosis informed by ecological laws, in Chapter One I have also argued this is better understood as music than writing, insofar

as it is possessive and intoxicates participants “in continuity with the forest’s thoughts” (Kohn 2013, 50). The signs Kohn describes are also founded on sound.

This constantly transforming environment, animate with the possibility which conditions our interpretations, substantiates Kohn’s claim that “Signs don’t come from the mind. Rather, it is the other way around. What we call mind, or self, is a product of semiosis... Selves, human or nonhuman, simple or complex, are outcomes of semiosis as well as starting points for new sign interpretation whose outcome will be a future self. They are waypoints in a semiotic process” (Kohn 2013, 34). Indeed, to reiterate Abram, the world is perceiving itself through us.

In *The Philosophy of Landscape*, Georg Simmel also describes this form of musical possession by which a subject participates in ecological harmony. For Simmel this is an artistic process which attributes identity to the landscape “over and above an aggregate of separate natural objects” (Simmel 2007, 25) which produces “a work of art in *statu nascendi*” (Simmel 2007, 25). However, this is not simply a human projection of identity but the process whereby “a landscape, in its ordinary sense, grows out of mere impressions of discrete objects of nature” (Simmel 2007, 23). This operates insofar as this impression “now derives its meaning from within itself, having severed all threads connecting it to the world around it and having retied them to its own centre” (Simmel 2007, 23) whereby the landscape “Transcending its substance, and in an act of self-creation, then condenses into the purified formations that bring it to expression, namely the Deities” (Simmel 2007, 24). Simmel presents this as an artistic process which transcends the human artist, but positions them as medium. This medium “relate[s] to a landscape, whether in nature or in art, as whole beings” (Simmel 2007, 29). These beings, historically personified as deities, are capable of articulating themselves through *The Language of Birds*. Following Pendell, we can thereby begin to accept lucky synchronicities as “as messages from the gods” (Pendell 2008, 185).

This deification of landscape by which it becomes animate also corresponds with Christopher Small’s depiction of animist deities in *Musicking* (1998): “The Polynesian god Tane, for example, is—not represents or symbolises but *is*—the proper relationship between humanity and the life of plants and the forest, and the Yoruba-American goddess Yemayá is that which

connects us to sea and its creatures”. Small emphasises the nature of these deities as intoxicating embodiments of the “pattern which connects”, which I identify with the food-chain: “To worship Tane or Yemayá is to affirm and to celebrate the pattern of human connectedness to the life of the forest and the sea” (Small 1998, 103). Kohn summarises this process as such, “Selves are signs. Lives are thoughts. Semiosis is alive. And the world is thereby animate” (Kohn 2013, 99).

For Kohn these deities animate the Amazon as the imaginary Otherworld of the indigenous Ávila Runa, as an “emergent loci of mean-ings, ones that do not necessarily revolve around, or originate from, humans” (Kohn 2013, 72). This establishes the world of the dead, which is not oriented around anthropocentric codes, but delineated according to negation and inhabited by supernatural beings (including the Runa Puma were-jaguars) as imaginary signs and seductive dream-images. These others disturb the status of reality as a materialist construct by revealing the lack which actually constitutes its intelligibility as music. This haunting presence is the lie which reveals the truth—that our experience of reality is a dream. Kohn therefore emphasises the significance of dream as a communicative network for members of the Amazonian ecology, for whom “dreaming is a privileged mode of communication through which, via souls, contact among radically different kinds of beings becomes possible” (Kohn 2013, 140). This contact is founded on the loss of subjectivity which separates subjects from immanence.

The Language of Birds is thus presented as an animate language which musically possesses and intoxicates ecologies, situated in landscapes. It describes an animist ontology capable of attending to beyond-human selves and agents, which furthermore, expresses itself in moments of luck as the communicative interface which weaves its diverse participants into rhythm. Luck in this way is compared to rhythm, or timing. However, this rhythm is in tune with possibility as much as actuality. It thus inverts the status of reality to dream, whereby what is possible is as meaningful as what has occurred. Kohn therefore details how dream acts as a musical interface for all members, living and dead, of the forest. Whereas the allusion to certainty, the objectification of identity, represses the ecstatic loss of subjectivity implied by the dream which opens us to immanence.

This lie upon which we found truth (the dream) is the seduction Nietzsche has located in song. It is inherent to the divinatory possibility of *The Language of Birds*, whose prophecies prompt futures on the basis of suggestion that unravel subjective experience by reorienting it in an animate ecology. This is a process intimately woven with the death of subjectivity insofar as it is oriented around the ecological imagination of the Dreaming. In the following section I will detail how this operates in greater detail with the help of dream theory. An examination of dreaming is useful for showing how social reality is constructed and can thus be reconstructed into what the panic film director Alejandro Jodorowsky describes as sacred traps in *Psychomagic* (2010). This will help me to clarify the nature of Pendell's luck, as the sublimation of the hunting drive. This understanding reinforces the ecological nature of luck and divination.

The relevance of dreaming at this point also substantiates Nietzsche's description of the Apolline diviner in *The Birth of Tragedy* inspired by Dionysian intoxication, but who "must incorporate the delicate line that the dream image may not overstep without becoming pathological... His eyes must be sunlike, as befits his origin; even should it rage and show displeasure, it still bears the solemnity of the beautiful illusion" (Nietzsche et al 2003, 16). This is important insofar as dreaming falls out as the lucky state of divination which has been abandoned by our modernity. It positions my thesis as a critique on this historical transformation of knowledge, which has denied us our own dreams as "the study of illusion" (Pendell 2010³, 4) in contrast to the study of Enlightenment. However, in the following section I will describe why this rejection is nonetheless doomed to failure, and instead, renders us vulnerable to sacred traps founded on subconscious triggers animated by lucky signs that supplant the modern presumption to knowledge. This logic is performed in ritual as its proof.

3.4 Night Without A Dreamer

Both dream theorists Elliot R. Wolfson (2011) and James Hillman (1979) ascribe to dreams the labour of death, which collapses the order of appearance by demonstrating that it is only appearance. This operates at the cost of subjectivity, as the rejection of identification with the

³ *Pharmakognosis: Plant Teachers and the Poison Path.*

code of appearances by which we are constructed as subjects. The dreamer who steps outside the hegemony in this way engages in an ecstatic practice, which Pendell describes as “derangement” (Pendell 2008, 155) and “The interrupted meal” (Pendell 2008, 155); “[Greek] *stasis*, a standing, standing still; *existanai*, to put (*histanai*) out of (*ex-*) place, to derange, so *ekstasis*, Late Latin *ecstasis*, a trance, standing out” (Pendell 2008, 155).

This is epitomised by the dream, which the dreamer experiences as a break from the anthropocentric reality which constitutes their subjectivity, thereby revealing the “truth that untruth lies coiled like a serpent in the heart of truth” (Wolfson 2011, 269). This untruth is the deceit upon which reality is founded. However, its untruth becomes true as a lie during dreaming. Dreaming thus inverts reality, to demonstrate that it functions merely as “*normal insanity*” (Wolfson 2011, 65). For Wolfson, the revelation of this madness that founds our subjectivity, is suicide;

There is a homology between the dream and the suicide: the former is the genesis, the “absolute origin,” of the imagination and the latter the “ultimate myth,” the “Last Judgement” (Wolfson 2011, 140).

This suicide vanishes subjectivity founded on anthropocentric allusions to truth (revealed as lie). Subjectivity is reconstructed as the act of dreaming which enforces the sovereignty of the imagination, described by both Wolfson and Hillman as soul. For these writers, dreaming is thus concerned with soul-making, but as a form of anthropocentric death. This institutes a “subterranean spirituality” (Akomolafe 2023) which flips the direction of experience from the hegemonic codes of daytime consciousness, to the soul-making sovereignty of the nighttime imagination. This desecration of subjectivity conjures its various obscene fantasies, which feed the expanse of the soul that, gaining psychic power, begins to rise beyond ideological limitations. Possibilities and potentialities multiply exponentially as meaning is desecrated, deformed, recreated and transformed by the mobile imagination in this process of soul-making (Hillman 1979, 89). The imagination extends its invisible territory through its subjects, undermining hegemonic codes which appropriate and condition subjectivity.

This flight from hegemony becomes divinatory, capable of prophesying the future in an inversion which Wolfson describes as remembering the future. Remembering the future is the moment of

deja vu, when suddenly the confusion of a nighttime dream becomes clear, enacted before our eyes under the sun in a reverse circularity sparked by the very same dream which constructed it, conferring it with the meaning that distinguishes it as an event. However this conference of meaning is ultimately a conference of sovereignty, which attributes interpretive agency to the dreamer who is no longer constructed by the (coded) event, but constructs it. The sovereign imagination begins to prompt experience, seeking and creating lucky patterns which reinforce its narrative and thereby the sovereignty of the dreamer.

Understanding this process allows sophisticated magicians, including the traditional witch doctors Alejandro Jodorowsky describes in *Psychomagic* (2010), to generate sacred traps which utilise “the language of the unconscious” (Jodorowsky 2010, viii) to provoke healing crises by performing the unconscious in daytime. This operates through artistic techniques which utilise subliminal prompts, or lucky signs, to trigger associations which finally surface unconscious states. The unconscious becomes conscious through this very enactment, and thereby loses its subliminal power, which instead is converted into conscious knowledge as soul. Jodorowsky’s artistic career thus began with the panic theatres he instituted as performances of excess, which invited audience members to enact their most grotesque fantasies in order to perform the unconscious states which constructed them. He utilised this “panic” process to induce healing experiences which liberated “the bird of the spirit... from the rational cage” (Jodorowsky 2010, x) thereby endowing the patient with imaginative sovereignty, and ultimately agency. This type of performance constitutes Jodorowsky’s definition of a “poetic act [as] a call to reality” (Jodorowsky 2010, 23), which liberates the dreamer from the delusion of a dream which is dreaming them.

However this liberation demands the patient’s subjectivity, as “precisely human death” (Bataille; Strauss 1990, 16) which negates the “autoconcept, the idea one has of oneself” (Jodorowsky 2010, 49) founded on over-identification with anthropocentric narratives and codes.

Jodorowsky’s creative practice was thus concerned with instigating symbolic crises as the death-dream work of soul making, by “which theatre transforms into ritual sacrifice” (Jodorowsky 2010, 9). Jodorowsky thereby corroborates, “If a potential criminal were familiar with the poetic act, he could sublimate his homicidal expression by staging an equivalent act”

(Jodorowsky; LeValley 2010, 23). In this respect Jodorowsky's sacred traps are art works inscribed with death—their potency is in direct proportion to their poison.

Hillman similarly alludes to this prophetic potential of the dream which creates experience through “our moral dis-integrity, our psychopathic lack of a central hold on ourselves” (Hillman 1979, 75), which rejects hegemonic identification and whose subversive forms of knowledge-making are always slipping through illegal underground tunnels, back allies, and beyond the borders of civilization. Wolfson describes this dance between the Self as a social construct and the Self as the dream instinct as “constituted dialectically by the confrontation with an alterity that is both indigenous and alien to itself” (Wolfson 2011, 75) when the imagination looks back at itself from some foreign place. This dialectic is dissemblance from self, which seeks the underground on which authentic subjectivity is founded as the “inaccessible reality that lies beneath or beyond appearance... through which reality is exposed as the (dis)semblance that it really is” (Wolfson 2011, 44).

Wolfson's theorising on this loss of subjectivity is influenced by Gaston Bachelard's description of “The night dream [as] a dream without a dreamer” (Wolfson 2011, 75) in *Air and Dreams* (Bachelard 2011). Herein Bachelard describes the mobile imagination engaging in the psychic work of deformation which transforms images into “poetic forms,” (Bachelard et al 2011, 59) releasing us from the existential stasis of signs which fasten us to a coded reality as a sunken image conjured by their logic. This deformation unstitches the entire code, as the meaning generated through its images becomes redundant, incapable of answering these new forms or attending to this level of metalinguistic discourse. This imaginary movement is the reality shift of the dream which suspends us in flight; “A shift from motion in the soul to the whole soul in motion is precisely the great lesson of oneiric flight” (Bachelard et al 2011, 48). Flight as the “whole soul in motion” refers to the psychic landscape we inhabit, the tapestry which gives meaning to and contours our psy-scapes in relational values, unstrung from its loom and rising into space as a magic carpet. When the king becomes a pauper, the entire kingdom is suspended in an imaginary movement which turns reality upside down, and releases its subjects into space—instigating an entire tragic cycle which attempts to restore order.

The dream instinct is thereby characteristic of *The Language of Birds*, as the surfacing of heterogeneous codes founded in nature as “the language of the unconscious”, including non-anthropocentric forms of subjectivity capable of restoring agency. In this regard, we can begin to understand the degrading legacy of Freud’s *Totem and Taboo* (2012) which has infantilised this state of omnipotence ascribed to undifferentiated primitivism. By contrast, Lemm refers to the centrality of dream images and pictorial thinking in Nietzsche’s work, as “a form of thought humans share with other kinds of animal life. This return of and to the form of thought of the animal (of and to *Anschauungsmetaphor* and *Bilderdenken*) is essential to Nietzsche’s attempt to renew philosophy as a life-affirming form of thought” (Lemm 2009, 112) which “allows philosophy to overcome its understanding of itself as a science, entirely motivated by the drive to acquire knowledge and, instead, move toward the affirmation of itself as an art motivated by the drive to illusion” (Lemm 2009, 112-113).

In *How Forests Think* Kohn similarly refers to this super instinct, for which “Dreaming may well be, then, a sort of thought run wild—a human form of thinking that goes well beyond the human” (Kohn 2013, 188). This wild thought animates landscapes and forests, weaves us into its imagination, and is generative of lucky signs. It is descriptive of the dream boundaries inhabited by the Indigenous Runa whom Kohn examines, which they transgress through the use of hallucinogens like Ayahuasca to communicate with beyond-humans including dogs and spirits. To become aligned with this Dreaming, is thus the task of the subject attempting to navigate its living ecology. This is a deep chug of mercury, possessing us with the intoxication which allows us to process complex systems holistically, and to depict their systems in lucky signs. Reflecting on his own dreams Kohn thus wonders, “I’ve come to wonder how much my dream was ever really my own; for a moment, perhaps, my thinking became one with how the forest thinks” (Kohn 2013, 188). Nietzsche attributes this form of forgetfulness to animals, who, like human beings, are woven into a food-chain they must navigate (Lemm 2009, 10-11).

Abram also uses *The Language of Birds* to characterise the posture of the native hunter in the forest, navigating a living ecology and attuning to occult forms of knowledge unfamiliar to contemporary experience. They weave the sacred traps of misdirection which characterise the act of hunting and killing as a game of trickery. Plumwood therefore understood the crocodile who

attacked her “as it was seen in both Indigenous Australian and ancient Egyptian narrative, as a trickster figure, a deliverer of judgement on the errant human” (Mathews et al 2012, ix). She describes the crocodile’s trickery in *Being Prey* which camouflaged itself as a “floating stick” (Plumwood 2008) and whose seduction lulled her into a fatal sense of security the crocodile exploited. This mimicry and mimesis is the intelligence at the heart of creative practice as the production of images of death and lucky signs, concerned with musical forms of signification derived from experience in nature as a highly psychic space woven by the multi-vested interests of beings constantly reading and making signs. These signs are lucky insofar as they are ascribed with multinatural perspectivalism, which collapse alternate orders into one sign.

Hunting successfully in this quagmire requires a reorganisation of reality during a highly symbolic campaign of seduction, whose performance necessitates an alternative cognitive mode attuned to the musical register of sensory data navigated by the hunter in the forest. This reinforces a view of the origin of ritual practice concerned with preserving this intelligence, insofar as ritual performance reenacts it. In Chapter One I have thus described the development of ritual as a means to preserve this musical, cognitive mode. This cognitive mode is an anti-social ability to detect and create patterns for the purpose of hunting. It is capable of transforming social environments into sacred traps as furthermore, the work of dreaming.

In the following section I will detail how the loss of subjectivity inherent to dream connects us with the intoxicating dream of the forest as a divinatory function concerned with ecological intimacy. I will now show how sacred traps are utilised by the hunter imbibing a complex ecology as a musical system. The lucky hunter thus throws a stone in one direction so that their prey runs into an open meadow in the other. While this capacity makes us lucky, it also inscribes sign-making with death. However, this death is reproductive insofar as it allows for the metamorphic feats associated with the food-chain. It is why for Pendell, “luck is connected with wildness” (Pendell 2021, 41).

3.5 Wonder: a bizarre practice of pattern discovery

In Chapter One I argued ritual developed as a musical practice to preserve a particular sensibility. This musical sensibility is part of the survival toolbox of human beings faced with increasingly complex systems, which require holistic forms of information processing—including states of intoxication implied by ritually induced trance, which dissolves object distinctions into states of flow conducive to holistic interpretation. This re-orientates the focus of interpretation from object schemas which impose hegemonic narratives onto sense experience which may distract from unexpected signs which emerge from unexpected patterns, produced by life. These signs are constructed musically, by the context that articulates them, as opposed to the hegemonic narratives they enforce and encode.

Terrence Deacon corroborates that “many ritual activities, from repeated prayer to pubertal initiation, quite explicitly take the form of an ideal symbol discovery process” (Deacon 1998, 403). This ideal symbol discovery functions by virtue of the musical repetition which collects disparate events, experiences or entities under one sign. Discerning these lucky signs on merit of the resemblances they distinguish, as well as developing their interpretive possibilities, is a sublimation of the pattern finding I attribute to the hunter in the forest who also makes and discerns lucky signs, or indeed narratives, to seduce and trick their prey, as well as to escape their predators.

This work is musical and aesthetic in nature. It relies on an expert mimetic ability to create complex metaphors and detect resemblances between seemingly unrelated entities. It is the artist’s capacity of recognition, and tendency to project identity onto everything—seeing faces everywhere, that begin to tell stories and reveal secrets. In *Totem and Taboo* (2012) Freud describes this anthropomorphic tendency as the primitive omnipotence of mind which projects identity onto the environment, which he describes as symptomatic of an undifferentiated subjectivity. For Freud, this results in an omnipotence incapable of creating meaning, insofar as he ascribes to the view that there is an objective reality which is distinct from the subject. This is in contrast to Kohn’s position modelled on the indigenous Ávila Runa, for whom reality is a musical and living ecology, and can thus be transformed by the observer on the basis that it is

collaboratively imagined. In effect, Freud's critique does not go far enough to incorporate a sentient nature we participate in, which is not only omnipotent but also in constant transformation.

The artist navigating this omnipotence from which they also self-consciously emerge, are capable of participating in the collective norms which are ordered according to pathological associations which affirm the presiding hegemony. However, they are also capable of rejecting these illusions, in works of trickery which found new realities during episodes of what Bataille describes as true communication, founded on risk (Bataille 1985). Mediating between these dreamy realms of "what appears to be", and "what is possible", is the line of madness which Nietzsche's Apolline artist treads—weaving chains of semiosis that construct time and the experience of reality but in symbiosis with Dionysian feedback. Increasingly complex networks carry us further from established reality constructed by social participation, but with new eyes, show us what was difficult to see.

Paul North (2021) offers a theory for this form of bizarre meaning production, where unexpected resemblances become visible, and indeed, subvert the status quo. In his theory of *Bizarre-Privileged Items in the Universe*, North presents a flat ontology which collapses hierarchical symbology and the ethical orders which organise experience around ideals. This flatness results in the experience of bizarre likeness where an elephant can be likened to an atom bomb. It is a levelling introduced by the death of god, which offers us a path back to god, through a bizarre perspective of wonder. This wonder waits out in the wilderness, outside the entropy of an architecture that offers him to us as a decorated corpse. We discover that God is a wild beast, a song on the radio, or a bird, rather than necessarily a church service.

Bizarreness fills the referential abyss decried by Abram as the Socratic dialectic; engendered by the Platonic idealism which maps copies to originals, resulting in an empty set of self-identification which is always hysteric, terrified of the excess which defies categorization and experiences its abjection as *différance*. Federico Campagna has also critiqued this process of idealisation in *Technic and Magic* (2018) which he compares to the order of Magic as, conversely, a language of animate symbols, "where a symbol stands for a semiotic sign which in no way attempts to fully convey and exhaust the object of its signification" (Campagna 2018,

118). The creative space that emerges from this semiotic looseness introduces flexibility into reality systems which the magician works on “as a reality-therapist” (Campagna 2018, 117). By contrast, the order associated with Platonic idealism enforces a “total closure of language onto itself as a border fencing off existence, [which] has caused in recent years a true epidemic of psychopathologies, including anxiety, depression, panic and increased suicide rates and cases of mass murders” (Campagna 2022, 43). The indigenous writer Jack D. Forbes forecast this epidemic as a *Wétiko* Cannibal Psychosis (Forbes 2008, 9). However, North’s bizarreness collapses this hystericism, by suggesting that identification is not reference to some ideal that exists in nostalgic and abstract time, but that likeness is immediate and horizontal, giving substance to the present through its peculiarity, and establishing the dualistic zone of bizarre likeness, or magical otherness.

Bizarreness results from the absence of codes which distinguish elephants from atom bombs, according to their resemblance to an ideal elephant or atom bomb. This idealisation is inscribed with the moralism of hierarchical symbology which doesn’t permit associations between higher rung concepts like gold and lower rung concepts like dung beetles for example, activating an entire value system predicated on their moralised separation. Without the idealism which attributes identity to these objects, they appear and are experienced as bizarre—outside what we know. This absence of moralism is characteristic of an unconditioned perspective, which is thereby barbarian or “wild” in nature. It resembles the computational process of the hunter in the forest who is not creating moralised hierarchical associations, but horizontal patterns of likeness determined by embodied experiences of resemblance, and familiarity, which are furthermore, in tune with the rhythm of the entire living organism.

This levelling principle makes possible an elephant’s resemblance to an atom bomb, which is predicated on experience as opposed to idealism. It thereby undermines forms of trickery which are purely symbolic by moving the register of communication to empathetic experience in the world. The point of orientation is horizontal as opposed to ideal, it no longer escapes us. For those conditioned by the hierarchical thinking which we have inherited from Platonic idealism, this flat ontology is experienced as bizarre, if not a vertiginous symbolic crisis. However, by reincarnating idealised associations in lived experience, the nostalgic past is brought to presence, recalibrating time and allowing for the presence of authenticity through resemblance. This

re-enchants our present by looking at it through new eyes of wonder, capable of producing meaning from bizarreness which furthermore, resurrects the body.

This form of likeness has conceptual space for difference. Things are the same because they are also different, also mapped onto other likenesses. A chair is not just a chair, it is also wood, it is also brown, it is also cushioned. Somewhere in the aggregates of these likenesses, this piece of furniture is the chair I am sitting on. This is a textual as opposed to hierarchical ontology, where knots of meaning become more familiar according to how many lassos of identity are tied to it. So while idealism inscribes experience with the negative dualism I defend in this thesis whereby a crocodile could also be a trickster god, its process is the point of contention regarding whether or not this ideal is a bizarre presence or a nostalgic image lost in linear time and alienated from real-time mimesis.

Bizarreness is thus offered as a sort of levelling principle, wherein a chair made from wood is as bizarre as a space alien. This bizarreness institutes a perspective of wonder, where nostalgia has not yet calcified the world into a moral longing for something we no longer even remember, except as a projection of our own hysteria. This invitation for meaning creation, invites aliens to eat with us, or be eaten. Suddenly invisible witnesses appear; uninvited guests arrive on the patterns of bizarreness recognized by the hunter: clues, give-aways, hide-outs, possibilities, snares.

Daniel K. L. Chua and Alexander Rehding (2021) go further in organising this bizarre world, by providing a model for its materiality. For them North's nets of likeness are threaded by music, weaving time into patterns of existence. These patterns are capable of collapsing space and time by bringing the far near in what we might describe as the experience of bizarreness. Chua and Rehding describe music as data pieces which are stored in time, and summoned in future or across geographic (and cosmic) distances generating "a wormhole that connects vastly different periods and places" (Chua; Rehding 2021, 163). Music is thus the texture of bizarreness which weaves together living nature. This corresponds with Nietzsche's attribution of Dionysian musicality to nature, from which luck is derived as an ecological expression.

Through contagious effect, music activates alternative systems of thinking which I have characterised as the intelligence of the hunter, thereby returning us to the state of nature. I will

now describe in more detail how the hunter navigates this space, weaving sacred traps. This capacity is what makes them lucky.

3.6 The Lucky Hunter

As we have seen, entering the forest is entering an intimately woven tapestry animate with music. Hunting effectively in order to kill requires entering this music and becoming intoxicated by it, in order to sensitively detect and create patterns which can reconstruct the landscape into the hunter's hunting terrain. This necessitates a (ritually induced) adjustment in cognitive state from the labour-oriented time we inhabit in civilization. In *Transforming Warriors* (2016) Andreas Nordberg and Frederik Wallenstein have shown how prevalent states of altered consciousness are as an initiation rite for warriors, practiced by peoples from Indo-European cultures and apparent in the Greek notion of *lyssa*, the Celtic *ferg*, and the Iranian *aēšma*, as well as the cannibalistic frenzy of the *Kwakiutl*, the jaguar and eagle warriors of the Aztec, the battle trance of Zulu warriors, and the Malaysian conception of *amok* (Nordberg; Wallenstein in Haldén; Jackson 2016, 50). While the most infamous warrior trance is the ecstatic rage of the Norse berserkers intoxicated by hallucinogenic mushrooms and possessed by Odin (Nordberg; Wallenstein in Haldén; Jackson 2016, 50). Jan Angstrom argues such rituals of altered consciousness or trance, allows warriors to transgress social taboos surrounding murder, and thereby institute an alternative experience of time outside the social order (Angstrom in Haldén; Jackson 2016). This is supported by Victor Turner who suggests the ritual process “changes the quality of *time* also, or constructs a cultural realm which is defined as "out of time," i.e., beyond or outside the time which measures secular processes and routines)” (Turner 1982, 24-25). Bataille describes this alternative zone as immanence; it dilutes legal boundaries between objects and events instigating a return to nature as the realm outside civilisation.

As such, the trance states engendered by ritual dissemble from the symbolic hegemony. This resurrects the dreaming imagination, capable of constructing patterns as sacred traps, as well as divining “bizarre” patterns which are not formulated according to anthropocentric notions of causality but make space for beyond-human interference. This beyond-human interference can nevertheless be detected on the basis of shared experience in the environment. In this way a

sophisticated hunter computes the accumulated knowledge of the sentient ecology, which transmits divinatory data about how time is being and will be constructed through the patterns it establishes. The capacity to divine this information is the mark of a sophisticated hunter; someone who can mediate with the beyond-human accurately, to divine lucky signs and create patterns. This also describes the function of the artist. Indeed for Pendell, as for Jodorowsky, “death is an artist” (Pendell 2008, 145).

Divination or luck thereby depends on one’s artistry as an imitator (Nietzsche et al 2003, 18), insofar as discerning and creating patterns well is necessary to make accurate divinations about terrain, location of obstacles, predators and prey. As well as effective strategies of pursuit which tricks the prey (or predator) to betray themselves. This complicates what it means to have the capacity to hunt and kill in the wild, and their essences as artistic endeavours which employ musical strategies of mimicry and mimesis, or imitation. Such sustained campaigns of entrapment, lures rivals into sacred traps through the play of appearance, imitating the hypnotic mazes woven by the anaconda who

captures its prey by a process of attraction and seduction. It causes animals and people alike to become lost in the forest. The victims, in a sort of hypnotic state, begin to wander around in circles that spiral increasingly inward until they eventually end up at the spot where the anaconda is hiding, waiting to crush them with her embrace. The anaconda is the kind of predator that hunters would like to be: one that is not initially recognized as such (Kohn 2013, 122).

This intelligence is inextricably tied up with trance, which can be interpreted as a computing mode which switches the register of interpretation, and its facts, toward an anti-social and musical vision lurking in the underworld. Brown thus concludes “I think the killer is the unconscious” (Pendell 2008, 17). This offline vision re-orientates the loci of interpretation from the subjective personality concerned with relevant social facts, to a perspective concerned with various forms of invisible data conducive to pattern finding. This bizarre patterning divines environments, plausible futures, and utilises this information for traversing a musical jungle constructed by the invisible presence of living and beyond-human others. However, its consummation in actual death is neutralised today by the imagination which converts the sacred

trap it generates, into a divinatory dream-image or lucky sign. Killing frenzies are thereby hacked as energetic expenditures of art, whose object of pursuit has been put to death in explosions of creativity that return its energy into the general economy by making it visible. Meanwhile, the appearance of life has been restored to invisibility as the register of the imagination, wherein prey and predator hide.

So far I have established The Language of Birds as a musical alternative to managerial forms of language associated with abstraction and state-making. I have argued this language is inscribed with death and derived from the intelligence of the hunter. However, death is transfigured by Pendell into a lucky practice of divination which animates sentient nature, and is concerned with pattern-finding and pattern-making. Yet this form of luck is not oriented around anthropocentric notions of winning and losing but instead, power. This is the power which possesses the jungle as music. This goes to the heart of Pendell's elaborate description of Power Plants throughout the *Pharmako* series, which personifies their possessive effect on civilization, as capable of reconstructing reality.

In conclusion to this chapter I will detail how luck operates as power by examining the conception of power among the Pitt River Indians from whom Pendell most clearly derived his conception of luck and its relation to the double. This lays the groundwork for the sacrificial quality of luck which I will draw out in the next chapter.

3.7 Conclusion: Conceptions of Power among the Pit River Indians

In *Dreamflesh's* review of *Walking with Nobby*, Gyrus describes Pendell's presentation at the World Psychedelic Forum in 2008. During this talk Pendell classified shamanism as "ghost work", "with "ghost" or "shadow"... Loss of shadow, he declared, leads to a kind of invisibility, which he connected to the Pit River Indians' concept of losing your "power" or "luck"" (Gyrus 2008). In *Walking with Nobby* Pendell reiterates that "luck has to do with the whims of the gods and with personal power" (Pendell 2008, 15).

Pendell's views originate in *The Background of the Religious Feeling in a Primitive Tribe* (1926), an essay by Jaime de Angulo which examines the Pit River Indians' religious system, which is quoted in *Walking with Nobby* (Pendell 2008, 14) and throughout the *Pharmako* series. Angulo suggests that while the Pit River Indians don't possess a complex religious system, this is because for them, like the Indigenous nations presented by Forbes who don't possess a word for religion (Forbes 2008, 25)—life itself is a religious expression. Angulo tells us,

To understand the psychology of the Pit River people, it is necessary to visualise their extremely intimate contact with the trees, the rocks, the weather and the delicate changes in the atmosphere, with the shape of every natural object, and, of course, with the habits not only of every species of animal but of many individuals. It is almost impossible for a civilised man to form any conception of the degree of intimacy with nature this represents (Angulo 1926, 353).

This intimacy endows the Pit River Indians with “The spirit of wonder, the *recognition of life as power*; as a mysterious, ubiquitous, concentrated form of non-material energy, of something loose about the world and contained in a more or less condensed degree by every object—that is the credo of the Pit River Indian” (Angulo 1926, 354). This intimate wonder is enacted by the Pit River Indian's relationship with an animal that grants them power, protection, medicine or luck; “whatever may be the English word preferred by any individual Indian” (Angulo 1926, 357). This relationship is cultivated in the wild, when the Pit River Indian go into the woods, fast, sing and call out “in the lonely places” (Angulo 1926, 357), seeking some individual animal “with a particularly strong dose of life-power to his credit” (Angulo 1926, 357) described as a *damagomi* (Angulo 1926, 358) who will become their poison or medicine, or indeed, their *pharmakon*.

This possession of *pharmakon* grants the River Pit Indian “power, power, power” (Angulo 1926, 354) without which “you cannot do anything out of the ordinary” (Angulo 1926, 354). Such extraordinary power correlates with the divinatory power of the lucky hunter. Similarly, for the Pit River Indians “This power is the same thing as *luck*” (Angulo 1926, 354). Furthermore, “The primitive conception of luck is not at all the same as ours. For us luck is fortuitousness. For

them, it is the highest expression of the energy of life. Hence the sacred character of all forms of gambling in primitive life” (Angulo 1926, 354).

This conception of luck is not concerned with the anthropocentric register of winning and losing, but power. This is a power which is derived from an ecstatic encounter with the beyond-human, mediated through The Language of Birds. This encounter is a death-practice, which subverts subjectivity to generate the ecstatic power of the imagination capable of reconstructing reality by generating lucky patterns and sacred traps. This suggests that in order to become powerful, or lucky, one must dissociate from forms of subjectivity which have been constructed by our anthropocentric hegemony. This process of deracination is instigated by the symbolic crises or sacred traps I have associated with ritual practice in this chapter; it is the risk represented by ritual practice as sacred experience and ecstasy, as a “gamble with madness” (Lotringer 1994, ix). In the following chapter I will thus characterise luck as sacrificial. Its powers subvert subjectivity to bring us into rhythm with a musical ecology.

Chapter Three: The Mythopoeic Double

4.1 Introduction: The Law as Love

This chapter is concerned with establishing the sacrificial demands of luck, on the basis that it subverts subjectivity and is therefore concerned with loss. However this subversion also relocates the lucky agent in *The Language of Birds*, as an anthropocentric limit that demands identity. This process is instigated by the double, whose appearance generates the crises associated with the subversion of subjectivity described in the previous chapter. Luck is thereby concerned with the wild double insofar as “luck is connected with wildness” (Pendell 2021, 41).

The allusion to the double at this point, is indicative of the derivation of Dale Pendell’s theory of luck from shamanic cosmologies. I will demonstrate this by outlining the importance of the double in the system of dualistic pluralism, which was developed by the major authority on Native American religions and shamanism, Åke Hulkrantz, to describe animist cosmologies that persist outside the hegemonic religious system. Therein the double undertakes the ecstatic flight concerned with shamanic practices that make one lucky. Such ecstatic practices include the vision fasting described in *The Background of the Religious Feeling in a Primitive Tribe* (Angulo 1926) upon which Pendell has most clearly modelled his theory of luck, and also influenced his conception of *pharmakon* as power and poison (Pendell 2010a, 3).

I will illustrate the logic of the double with reference to Socrates’ *daimonion* which Charles M. Stang presents in *Our Divine Double* (2016). I will suggest that Socrates’ double prepared him for sacrificial death, logical to the rituals of sacrifice which prevailed before the interiorization of sacrifice associated with the formal development of philosophy. This ritual practice qualifies Socrates as a mythopoeic figure associated with *The Language of Birds*, rather than the order of logos as written language which is instead associated with Plato. The development of philosophy which accompanied the interiorization of sacrifice, later exacerbated by the Industrial Revolution which demonised ritual practices in the West, erased the site whereby the double becomes

known. With the rejection of luck and ritual, we reject sites of encounter with the double and, thereby, the symbolic crises by which anthropocentric forms of pathological subjectivity over-conditioned by hegemonic narratives of identity or myth, are falsified. This kind of hyper socialisation is particularly distressing for vulnerable communities and persons navigating the social construction of their symbolic disenfranchisement—requiring forms of resilience capable of meeting symbolic alienation on its own symbolic register.

However, this hyper socialisation and its symbolic insularity is generic to what Norman O. Brown describes as the “urban revolution” (Brown 1991, 46-47). Federico Campagna characterises it as the reigning technological order of Technic which institutes the complete closure of its language onto itself (Campagna 2022, 41), this “fencing off existence, has caused in recent years a true epidemic of psychopathologies” (Campagna 2022, 41). Whereas the symbolic crises operated by ritual to instigate an encounter with the double allows for the short-circuiting of such pathologies, returning presence to the subject otherwise besieged by symbolic existence. This is in line with Nietzsche’s conception of cultural resistance to the oppressive tendencies of hegemonic civilisation, by reviving the forgetfulness of the animal (Lemm 2009). Symbolic crises is effective in this regard as the patient experiences the crises of the symbolic system which orders their reality and experience of selfhood, thereby releasing them from its performance. This is in line with the logic of dream described in Chapter Two, whereby the symbolic becomes true as a lie. The recognition of this lie liberates the ritual subject from pathological identification with it, generative of ecstatic experience. This accounts for both Eduardo Kohn and Alejandro Jodorowsky’s characterisation of shamanic experience with traps, which I referred to in Chapter Two.

The falsification of anthropocentric forms of identity is therefore necessary to maintain subjective integrity and to limit contagious forms of deviance and isolated subjectivity capable of threatening community integrity, as I will argue in Chapter Four. This falsification is instigated by an encounter with the double who is invited to ritual through its ecstatic practices of entrapment, described in Chapter Two. In this chapter I describe this double according to its function in shamanic theory, as the ‘free soul’ capable of undertaking ecstatic flight and possessing the *séances* of beyond-human intervention associated with ritual. However it can also

be read simply as the unconditioned excess of the over-conditioned subject attempting to integrate into their awareness, thereby returning the experience of presence to them. The ecstatic encounter with the double collapses the fiction of selfhood and replaces it with embodied and thus ecological being among others inclusive of beyond-humans as co-participants in *The Language of Birds*. The locus of identity is thus dislocated from symbolic identification and reconstituted in experience of the world where it emerges as part of ecological harmony. This is an incredibly potent animist method of healing for our contemporary epidemic of mental illness, symptomatic of the hyper-symbolic colonisation of subjectivity exacerbated by technological development. By contrast this method is capable of endowing persons with an ecstatic negativity which becomes a gateway to the beyond-human.

Ritual practice is thus presented as the site of lucky encounters with the double which collapses orders of experience between selfhood and the beyond-human into symbolic crises, experienced as lucky signs. Ritual practices thereby offer the potential of metamorphosis to the ritual supplicant, whereby anthropocentric identity is replaced with ecological belonging ultimately ordered by the food-chain. However, the postmodern conflation of music with writing cannot register this function insofar as it rejects the emergence of a beyond-human metanarrative from iterations of difference understood as lucky signs. In this regard the double is not representative of any meaningful subjective excess, but simply the chaos of intersubjectivity unleashed by the profusion of technology and trace.

I will thereby suggest that luck is not a measure of success but following Marcus William Hunt's paper, *Luck, Fate, and Fortune: the tychic properties* (2024) I will position sacrificial luck as an encounter with the animate environment generating ecological harmony. However, following the modern originator of the chaos theory of tychism to which Hunt refers, Charles Sander Pierce, I will associate tychism with Love. This is corroborated by both Georges Bataille and Charles M. Stang who equate Love with the double. In an inversion of Norman O. Brown's view, Love thus becomes the Law as the pity which makes trans-species contact with the beyond-human possible. In this regard I will identify the webs of predation that organise the food-chain, as relations of attraction expressive of the Law of Love, generative of the feats of gift giving and sacrifice that enact it.

This chapter prepares the ground for my mythopoeic reading of ritual practice in the next chapter which emphasises the encounter with the double which instigates the crises associated with the rejection of anthropocentric codes, and return to *The Language of Birds*. This establishes the significance of ritual for philosophical animism and posthumanism, as a site capable of limiting anthropocentric pathologies by exposing us to the beyond-human.

4.2 The Mythopoeic Double

In chapters One and Two I have indicated that the double is integral to both Norman O. Brown's theory of Dionysian chance, and Dale Pendell's view of luck. For Brown, Dionysus is the double of Apolline civilisation; he institutes the threatening territory of chance outside its parameters. The trickster figure is a representation of a hybrid state of mediation between these zones, which motivated Brown's early interest in Hermes. These zones are also distinguished according to language. Civilization is associated with an abstracted, managerial or administrative language, whereas Dionysus is associated with music—described by both Dale Pendell and David Abram as *The Language of Birds*. Brown and Pendell diverge here, regarding whether or not this language can become divinatory (Pendell 2008, 185).

For Brown, this is not possible on the basis of his commitment to the disintegration of synthesis, which necessitates the rejection of any narrative (or Law) which can instil order, in preference to Love. Whereas *The Language of Birds* creates order through subliminal and seductive prompts which realise themselves as a patterning or divination that remembers the future, but also dismantles subjectivity. This process is limited by ecological feedback and vested beyond-humans who collaborate in the weaving of this tapestry. In Chapter Two I have suggested the weaving of such seductive narratives is inherent to animals as hunting and evasion strategies founded on ecstatic games of sovereignty, and is our inheritance from the hunter navigating complex ecologies populated with beyond-humans. Divination falls out from this as an ecological function which makes the hunter lucky (in pursuit of prey). However this form of luck is not predicated on success, but power insofar as it is concerned with the reconstruction of

reality which Campagna defines as the magical act (Campagna 2022, 54-55), mediated through sacred traps. Resurrecting this intelligence is the purpose of Pendell's "task is to reconcile chance with "return to divination"" (Pendell 2008, 34). It is representative of the divinatory function of creative practice, which enables us to navigate (and influence) complex symbolic systems holistically.

For Pendell, the mythopoeic double is the source of luck as the power, poison, medicine or pharmakon. This is based on his reading of *The Background of the Religious Feeling in a Primitive Tribe* (1926) by Jaime de Angulo, which describes the religious system of the animist Pit River Indians, who derive power or luck from an animal described as a *damagomi* "whose acquaintance [they] must make and whose friendship [they] must acquire, cultivate, and keep" (Angulo 1926, 357). This acquaintance becomes "his power, his protector, his luck, his medicine" (Angulo 1926, 357). This motivates Pendell's assertion that "luck is connected with wildness" (Pendell 2021, 41) insofar as it is personified by the *damagomi* who live out in the wild and lonely places of the woods. Whereas loss of double "leads to a kind of invisibility, which he connected to the Pit River Indians' concept of losing your "power" or "luck"" (Gyrus 2008). Angulo corroborates that for the Pit River Indian "When you lose your power, you soon know it, your luck is gone, no use gambling, no use hunting, you may even lose your life" (Angulo 1926, 358).

The nature of this relationship as pharmakon—both medicine and poison—describes it as a death-practice which subverts subjectivity in order to realign selfhood with The Language of Birds inscribed in the environment. Luck is therefore not a category of success, but a descriptor of the ecological intimacy which was the preoccupation of Pendell's creative-practices of lucky intoxication. The double therefore functions as a projection of the lucky person's excess which has not been coded by civilization, but which occupies the same register of the hunter or barbarian engaged in cultural resistance. It is therefore founded on the mythopoeic subversion of anthropocentric subjectivity. For Georges Bataille this is "precisely human death" (Bataille 1990, 16) as "the consciousness of being separated" (Bataille 1990, 16) which is "The only true death" (Bataille 1990, 16).

The double is therefore central to Pendell's luck as approximate to "the shamanic conception of "soul"" (Gyrus 2008). The shamanic conception of the soul is integral to dualistic pluralism, whose logic enlivens the opposition between the musical Language of Birds and managerial languages of writing which I have been preoccupied with describing. In the following section I will employ dualistic pluralism to characterise Socrates' daimonion as a damagomi. As the source of Socrates' power which was nevertheless ultimately founded on sacrifice, Socrates' daimonion is representative of luck as a sacrificial practice. Using Socrates' daimonion as a case study in this way will enable me to construct the mythopoeic framework of luck which I will apply in Chapter Four to a reading of ritual practice. Socrates is important as the subject of Jacques Derrida's *Plato's Pharmacy* (1981) which the title of Pendell's masterwork the *Pharmako* series references. He is also central to David Abram's critique of phonetic writing which informs Pendell's *The Language of Birds* (2021).

While Derrida concedes to Socrates' magical quality as a poisoner employing mimetic strategies of seduction, nonetheless he still, like Abram, equates Socrates with the order of writing in *Plato's Pharmacy*. Indeed he derives his conception of the poisonous nature of writing from Socrates "he who [nevertheless] does not write" (Derrida 1981, 117). Abram similarly identifies Socrates with the order of writing, and particularly the development of an intellectual double founded in the literary imagination, "that part of the self that is born and strengthened in relation to the written letters" (Abram 1996, 112-113). For Abram this is a corruption of the earlier Homeric use of *psychê* which can be identified with the shamanic or mythopoeic double capable of undertaking ecstatic flight. In this chapter I will reject these perspectives, and identify Socrates as a mythopoeic figure native to The Language of Birds, on merit of his double, the daimonion. While Abram describes Socrates' double as "that aspect of oneself that is refined and strengthened by turning away from the ordinary sensory world in order to contemplate the intelligible Ideas" (Abram 1996, 112-113), I will argue that Socrates' daimonion is a mythopoeic double associated with the beyond-human order of music, and not writing. This means that the *différance* which is personified by Socrates' daimonion as a mythopoeic double, granted him power through the subversion of anthropocentric identity. Socrates' sacrifice thus attributed him with power, rather than success.

In this chapter the double falls out as a central tenet of shamanism, luck and thus ritual practice—however one concerned with sacrifice as “to make sacred” (Fowler 1911). This will provide the rationale for my mythopoeic interpretation of ritual in Chapter Four. I will now begin by describing dualistic pluralism in order to provide the context for this understanding of the double. I will employ vision fasting as a practical illustration of its cosmology insofar as it animates the site of the beyond-human.

4.3 A Narrative of the Transformation of Ecstasy

Angulo indicates that the Pit River Indians form their acquaintance with a *damagomi* during a vision fast, when they go alone into the woods and fast. Vision fasting is an initiation ritual practised by Amerindian nations, which enacts a subversive cosmology of dualistic pluralism. Dualistic pluralism is subversive as it doubles the ordinary reality of positive experience with the negative dimension of the beyond-human. This doubling makes ecstatic flight between worlds and times possible as shamanic practice. Whereas Silvia Federici has shown how the modern establishment of the Industrial state was predicated on a linear conception of time and experience that prohibited ecstatic experience in order to facilitate “the full exploitation of the laborer, starting with the web of relations that tied the individuals to the natural world, to other people, and to their own bodies” (Federici 2018, 27).

Vision fasting is characteristic of shamanic practices in general insofar as they are both predicated on the ecstatic experience of the free soul (Drobin; Jackson 2016, xvii), where ecstasy is defined according to the Witch Trial historian Claude Lecouteux as derived from “the Greek *ekstasis*, which literally means ‘straying of the spirit,’ and by extension denotes the act of leaving the body or, in other words, having an exsomatic experience, which is very often the experience of believers” (Lecouteux 2001, 12). This free soul is personified by the double, which is the source of Pendell’s luck. In effect, ecstatic rituals such as vision fasting, bring the other world of negativity into being wherein the double emerges as a “masked dancer” (Hillman 1979, 103). This is an ontological doubling which continues to pluralise into alternate worlds, as insinuated by the term “dualistic pluralism”. This ricochet of doublings allows for the excesses of the

imagination in a carnival of spirits. It is descriptive of animist ontologies such as the one described by Eduardo Kohn in *How Forests Think* (2013), which acknowledge the existence of an Other World, often populated with the spirits of the dead. M. M. Balzer (Balzar; Jackson 2016, 27) and Pendell thus define shamanism as direct contact with the spirits of the dead (inclusive of the unborn), understood as “direct intercourse with spiritual energies through some form of trance” (Pendell 2010a, 83) facilitating possession states experienced as luck. This is distinguished from priestcraft as “symbolic ingestion” (Pendell 2010a, 238).

However, critics of dualism include the ecofeminist and philosophical animist Val Plumwood whose work is nonetheless central to this thesis. Plumwood rejected a dualistic worldview based on what she perceived as the exploitative inevitability of Cartesian binary thinking, theorised in *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (Plumwood 2003) which groups the exploitation of nature with other subjugated groups and social classes in opposition to (white) patriarchy. Silvia Federici similarly attributed to Descartes “the reduction of the body to mechanical matter [which] allows for the development of mechanisms of self-management that make the body the subject of the will” (Federici 2014, 140). According to Federici, Descartes’ mechanical philosophy thereby offered the context for “the regularisation of corporeal behaviour promised by Mechanical Philosophy” (Federici 2014, 141) which facilitated the repressive excesses of Western industrialisation, including the Witch Hunt.

However, these critiques also fail to engage with the animist nature of dualism which allows for imaginative mobility as ecstasy and characterises the religious systems of the very peoples these writers purport to empower. This accounts for the subversive nature of ritual practices which animate a pre-modern ontology as cultural resistance to incorporation into a modern state founded on the violent disenfranchisement of animist worldviews, including the possibility of Other worlds. Lecouteux summarises what is at stake,

If the soul connects the Christian to God, the Double links the pagan to the entire cosmos, including the other world. But the other world, it seems, rather than being the world of the gods, is that of the dead, of those beyond the grave, from where all knowledge comes.

It is the reservoir of the potentialities of each individual and each family (Lecouteux 2001, 27).

The worldview of dualistic pluralism is thus adopted by this thesis as a central tenant for philosophical animism. However this adoption can be understood as a reconciliation with worldviews which have also been instrumental in developing Western thought, but were quite traumatically rejected during the modern revolution of epistemology; orphaning the various tooth fairies, banshees, Father Christmases, and Easter bunnies that still haunt our imagination. In his work *Metamorphoses* (2021), Emmanuele Coccia thus demonstrates how difficult it is to simply exorcise the ecstatic inclination by showing how it quietly persists even in the axiom of the modern West:

Every time we voice, for example, the famous Cartesian saying *cogito ergo sum*, I think therefore I am, for a moment we allow the spirit of Descartes to be reincarnated in us, we lend him our voice, our body, our experience. It is he who says ‘I’ in us, in a sense thereby contradicting his own argument: the self is not a substance, it does not have a personal structure, it is more like a musical theme that ceaselessly invades minds and colonises bodies without ever allowing itself to be definitively adopted by any one body rather than another. (Coccia 2021, 104)

This contagious invasion which possesses bodies, is precisely the way ecstatic experience operates in a dualistic ontology, locating the speaker in a carnival of masks that animate the profusion of music. Coccia’s interpretive trick, which contradicts Descartes’ own argument, is demonstrative of the problem that ritual practices which subscribe to this kind of musical flux are expressive of alternative cosmological values, which exist in a subversive relationship to the modern hegemony, but as our own historical baggage.

The concept of the free soul is thus native to the dualistic pluralism which Åke Hultrantz developed to denote consistent “concepts of the soul... found globally (i.e. in ancient times in India, among North American Indians and among North Eurasian peoples)” (Drobin; Jackson 2016, xv), and which according to Ulf Drobin, “seems in principle to exist/have existed among

all peoples who remained outside the influence of the so-called high religions and seems in that respect to be more or less universal” (Drobin; Jackson 2016, 83-84). Dualistic pluralism “consists of the oppositional character between the so-called ‘body-souls’, which are active when a person is awake, and the homogenous ‘free-soul’, which represents the human being outside the body during dreams and shamanistic ecstasy” (Drobin; Jackson 2016, xvi).

Lecouteux’s study *Witches, Werewolves and Fairies: Shapeshifters and Astral Doubles in the Middle Ages* (2001) corroborates that “True vision, ecstatic vision, entails the voyage of the soul into the next world” (Lecouteux 2001, 25) dependent on “allowing the soul to leave the body” (Lecouteux 2001, 14). In *Horizons of Shamanism* Ulf Drobin reiterates that “the concepts of the soul and of shamanism are related notions in the sense that the concept of the free-soul is a precondition for shamanism” (Drobin; Jackson 2016, xvii). Referring to the separation of body-souls, ego-souls, and free-souls which composed the Mediaeval view of the tripartite soul, and is still arguably present in the Christian conception of the Holy Trinity, Drobin shows that expressions such as “broken heart” or the German’s “Sinn” and English “mind” may be linguistically derived from denotations of the tripartite soul (Drobin; Jackson 2016, xvi).

This thesis argues that ontological systems of dualistic pluralism which acknowledge the existence of the free-soul afford a view of decentralised knowledge making and subjectivity consistent with *The Language of Birds*. Dualistic pluralism is thus native to philosophical animism. This outlook was also generic to the dualistic Platonic worldview which formulated the distinct world of forms and the world of shadows, on merit of its Zoroastrian roots (Cardin 2011, 29) inherited by the medievals from the Romans. According to Charles M. Stang, Plato laid “out the conceptual landscape of the tradition of the divine double” (Stang 2016, 20), which decentralises the psyche into the environment wherein the divine double is located as an imaginatively mobile being. This mobility generates a view of identity in constant flux, which is subject to the interference of invisible helpers described as divine doubles: including the demonic muses, genies and guardian angels who guide the individual toward their destiny. This dualistic pre-Enlightenment worldview deemed thinkers “mouthpieces” or “mediums” of semiotic systems, rather than originators or owners of novel ideas. Bruno Latour argues this is

still pervasive to modern thinking in *On The Modern Cult of the Factish Gods* (2010) which describes how systems become animate, and are deemed to possess mediums with inspiration.

In his essay *Demonic Creativity* (2011), Matt Cardin corroborates that states of inspiration were experienced as demonic possession among the ancient Greeks. Cardin argues that following the humanism arising from the Renaissance (15th- 16th centuries) and Enlightenment eras (17th- 19th centuries) oriented toward self-authorship, these supernatural attendants once known as *genies* and *djinn* (Cardin 2011, 30) became fixated on the personal genius, or talent, of the individual. Inspiration, having once occupied an external place in a musical becoming, assumed an internal locus (Cardin 2011, 30). The mobile imagination became stationary.

However Lecouteux argues that this precedent was set already in the year 314 at the Council of Ankara, in the Roman administration of the province of Galatia when “divination through dreams was forbidden” by the Christian Church (Lecouteux 2001, 23). Thus the ecstatic techniques that allowed the free soul to undertake vision quests in dreams and among “auxiliary spirits” (Lecouteux 2001, 74) were forbidden. Whereas, in his history of the Occult, *Esotericism and the Academy* (2013), Wouter J. Hanegraaff shows that magical science including the law of correspondences continued to permeate Western intellectualism until the transformation of Christian theology which “sought to restore and impose unity in the face of institutional fragmentation and doctrinal dissent” (Hanegraaff 2013, 70-73). This resulted in the 1504 Council of Trent which consolidated modern systems of thought in the Christian canon, and rejected other systems of thought into the Occult. Before this schism, epistemological principles native to an alchemical paradigm described “concepts of correspondences, living nature, imagination/ mediations... and perhaps even transmutation” (Hanegraaff 2013, 73). According to writers like Arran Gare, Federici, and Victor Turner, this alchemical paradigm was finally dissipated in the mid 17th century with the introduction of Thomas Hobbes’ mechanical view of nature which laid the foundations for Western Industrialization and the dawn of the modern scientific era (Gare 2021, 3).

Victor Turner also identifies the Industrial Revolution as the origin of a new distinction between “work” and “leisure” (Turner 1982, 32), which segregated ritual and myth from ordinary

cultural life by extraditing the experience of liminality to the leisure zone, and degrading the ceremonial status of “calendrically based rituals [including] joking relationships, sacred games, such as the ball games of the ancient Maya and modern Cherokee, riddles, mock-ordeals, holy fooling, and clowning, Trickster tales told in liminal times and places, in or out of ritual contexts, and host of other types” (Turner 1982, 32). By comparison, outside the Industrialised hegemony, ““work” is not work, as we in industrial societies know it, but has in both its dimensions, sacred and profane, an element of “play”” (Turner 1982, 32). Federici has subsequently argued that the Industrial secularisation of ritual resulted in the Witch Hunt as the consolidation of state power, regulation of the experience of time, and repression of heterogeneous forms of community, identity, and knowledge-making including divinatory practices and shamanism. Federici argues [modern] “capitalism could not take hold without forging a new type of individual and a new social discipline boosting the productive capacity of labour” (Federici 2018, 27). While Gare cites this moment as the genesis of what has since devolved into a contemporary neoliberal attack on the humanities subjects and its “*raison d’être* of which is to cultivate the humanity of people” (Gare 2021, 1).

The Industrial transformation of ritual has limited the performative or theatrical aspect of traditional healing and therapeutic methodologies which employ ‘artistic’ practice, by convoluting the premodern “distinction between *sacred and profane* work, not between work and leisure” (Turner 1982, 30-31). This convolution meant that the trickery of the shaman was dislocated to the leisure zone, insofar as it was not directly monetizable as labour. Instead various artistic vocations appeared as monetizable professions “in the *entertainment* business, acting, dancing, singing, art, writing, composing etc.” (Turner 1982, 39) which according to Turner finally resulted “in the late eighteenth and especially in the nineteenth centuries [in] the notion of ‘art’ itself, in its various modalities, as a quasi-religious vocation, with its own asceticism and total dedication” (Turner 1982, 39). This modern transformation has disenchanted traditional healing methodologies for which “medicine is in art” (Jodorowsky in LeValley 2010, vii).

Like Alejandro Jodorowsky, the clinical psychologist and ecological animist, Bayo Akomolafe, emphasises therapeutic performance in allusion to the nature of pre-modern shamanic practice, founded on theatrical “fakery” or trickery (Ford; Martel 2024). This shamanic form of theatre

was ritualistic, as opposed to segregated from public life in a commodified zone of entertainment. It was concerned with divinatory mythopoesis, ecstasy, healing, and “reveals the trickster’s compensatory relation to the ‘saint’” (Jung in Radin 1956, 196). However, the modern transformation of ecstasy and ritual practice briefly narrated by this section, has obscured their functions as a healing methodology capable of regulating psychosomatic integrity. In the following section I will show how this mythopoeic method is founded on the function of the double, in reference to Socrates’ daimonion. Socrates is useful for this discussion insofar as he elucidates the order of music, in opposition to the order of writing associated in this chapter with Plato. This divergence furthermore, is predicated precisely on the function of Socrates’ double. The disappearance of musical rituals of ecstasy finally entails the transformation (if not disappearance) of the double.

4.4 Socrates’ Daimonion

The significance of this pesky double, summoned in ritual, motivates Charles M. Stang’s study *Our Divine Double* (2016) which surveys an array of ancient stories, particularly early Christian texts associated with the apostle Thomas, “who according to Gospel of John was called the "twin", [and] was in fact the twin brother of Jesus” (Stang 2016, 3-4). Indeed, “The name “Thomas” is a Hellenized form of the Aramaic word tāwmā, meaning “twin.”” (Stang 2016, 68). Stang elaborates on Thomas’ uncanny status as indicative of the early theological tradition of self-deification, which invited followers of Christ to become his twins, and thus Christ-like. Stang’s view of the double is derived from his study of ancient sources, which presents the double as an initiator of the individual “into the reality of his or her false individuality” (Stang 2016, 7). This crisis instigates a process of self-deification through which the individual, united with the double through the subversion of false individuality, becomes Christ-like. Describing the significance of the double in religious and historical literature, Stang writes,

In the second and third centuries of the "common era," we witness the sudden appearance of a peculiar figure in the imagination of the Eastern Mediterranean: the *divine* double. We do not know the exact origin of this figure, but like ink that bleeds through the page,

we find him seeping through the literature of late antiquity in all its diversity.... Through an array of ancient sources—Christian and Manichaean, philosophical and religious, surviving often in fragments and in several languages—runs this single thread: the notion that each individual has a divine twin, counterpart, or alter ego whom he or she may meet. This encounter is imagined and narrated very differently in the various sources, but it very often solicits a response not unlike Narcissus's: "He's me!" (*iste ego sum*). This encounter and proclamation mark the beginning of self-knowledge—not the autoerotic self-knowledge that, according to Ovid, killed Narcissus; not even the knowledge of the self one thought one was (because, after all, one thought one was oneself); but the knowledge of a new and more divine self, for which these ancient sources struggle to give an adequate name and description. (Stang 2016, 3-4).

This divine double corresponds with the free soul of dualistic pluralism insofar as it is imaginatively mobile and not attached to the self, but is rather described by the French Islamist Henry Corbin as “a counterpart, a heavenly ‘partner’” (Stang 2016, 6). It is cognizant with the shamanic belief Lecouteux discusses, for which “If everyone possesses a Double, some are capable of mastering it and using it, while others cannot, for it has its own life, and its independence becomes manifest during sleep or trance, brought on spontaneously or through dances, incantations, and so forth” (Lecouteux 2001, 96). Lecouteux describes how these doubles undertake spiritual journeys from and to the otherworld, cognizant with the practice of vision fasting (Lecouteux 2001, 74).

While Stang attempts to locate this double in early Christian theology, Lecouteux contends that it is foreign to Christianity and is instead the trace of its pagan inheritance, identified herein with dualistic pluralism (Lecouteux 2001, 50). Stang’s survey therefore incorporates sources outside the Christian canon, including the *Gospel of Thomas* discovered in the Nag Hammadi library, which includes Coptic works like *The Thunder, Perfect Mind*. Stang’s study also addresses Socrates’ famous daimonion “or “guarding spirit,” who guides him with negative stimuli on a path to wisdom” (Stang 2016, 20). Socrates’ daimonion is lucky insofar as it is representative of a double who subverts subjectivity and is therefore concerned with sacrifice, as opposed to success.

Socrates' daimonion appears in a Platonic framework which emphasises "the division between sensible and intelligible realities" (Stang 2016, 23), which is "perhaps best explored through that section from Republic VI where Socrates introduces the analogy of the "divided line" to explain the nature of the world, seen and unseen" (Stang 2016, 23) founded upon the division between "imaging (eikōn) and imitation (mimēsis)... recapitulated intrasensibly, so to speak, between concrete sensible things (animals, plants, and such), and the shadowy world of representation (words, painting, sculpture, and so on)" (Stang 2016, 24). The dialectic of these zones of light and shadow, facilitates the shamanic trickery which motivates Pendell's classification of shamanism as "ghost work", "with "ghost" or "shadow" (Gyrus 2008).

Socrates' daimonion is described in his own words in the *Apology* as "Something divine or spiritual comes to me (moi theion ti kai daimonion gignetai) . . . This began when I was a child. It is a voice, and whenever it speaks it turns me away from something I am about to do, but it never encourages me to do anything" (Stang 2016, 27). Stang thereby locates "the famous daimonion of Socrates, a divine voice that has been coming to him since childhood, but a voice that never impels but only impedes his actions" (Stang 2016, 27). Plato emphasises the nature of this daimonion as "familiar", "customary" and a "sign", "He describes this daimonion as "divine" and "prophetic"" (Stang 2016, 30).

However, this prophetic allusion contradicts Abram's characterisation of the Socratic dialectic as a reinforcement of the abstracted and objective forms of idealism which alienate us from embodied, mimetic communication embedded in the environment as the divinatory Language of Birds. As noted in chapter one, Abram suggests Socrates' use of the term *psychē* to describe the double was twisted from,

its earlier, Homeric significance as the invisible breath that animates the living body and that remains, as kind of wraith or ghost, after the body's death... For Plato, as for Socrates, the *psychē* is now that aspect of oneself that is refined and strengthened by turning away from the ordinary sensory world in order to contemplate the intelligible Ideas, the pure and eternal forms that, alone, truly exist. The Socratic-Platonic *psychē*, in

other words, is none other than the literate intellect, that part of the self that is born and strengthened in relation to the written letters (Abram 1996, 112-113).

Abram's interpretation is consistent with Socrates' belief that his daimonion resulted from his pursuit of philosophy (Stang 2016, 33). However, where philosophy is understood according to the pre-Enlightenment study of illusion, it is an instantiation of James Hillman's theory of soul-making described in Chapter Two, through which the subversion of subjectivity undertaken by dreams creates psychic strength, personified as the daimonion. This is possible according to Hillman's dream logic insofar as Socrates was illiterate, so "the part of the self that is born and strengthened" was not "in relation to written letters" (Abram 1996, 112-113). Indeed, dreaming as a death-practice which critiques the experience of reality and subjectivity, was for Nietzsche "the mark of the philosophical capacity" (Nietzsche et al 2003, 15) concerned with "pictorial thinking" (Lemm 2009, 112) expressive of the "fullness of life in the dreams, illusions, and passions of the animal" (Lemm 2009, 11), native to "a sense that beneath the reality in which we live there is hidden a second, quite different world, and that our world is therefore an illusion" (Nietzsche et al 2003, 15).

As such, Socrates' belief in his daimonion was not a literary or secular personification of the imagination but a soulful one. Indeed it was invoked to defend him against the accusation of atheism which nevertheless, sentenced him to death; "He addresses his principal accuser, Meletus: "Does any man believe in spiritual activities (daimonia) who does not believe in spirits (daimonas)?" "No one" (Stang 2016, 27). Socrates' daimonion was thus native to the ecstatic mythopoesis of the Ancient Greeks, rather than the idealism of Plato. The distinction between them being literacy as "writing, the *pharmakon*, the going or leading astray" (Derrida; Johnson 1981, 71). In *Plato's Pharmacy* (1981), Jacques Derrida thereby wonders if Socrates, "he who does not write", is not "also a master of the *pharmakon*? And in that way isn't he the spitting image of a sophist? a *pharmakeus*? a magician? A sorcerer? even a poisoner?" (Derrida; Johnson 1981, 117). Socrates' execution by poison is thus an uncanny incorporation of the *pharmakon* which contours Pendell's work. The *pharmakon* in this regard, is the musical intoxication which constitutes *The Language of Birds* as the poisonous voice of the double expressing itself through luck.

While Socrates' execution would appear to negate the existence of his daimonion, particularly as a prophetic guardian, its silence during his trial in comparison to its ordinary interference "suggests that Socrates' death is something that he should not turn from but rather welcome. His *daimonion*'s final gift is the peace that accompanies the knowledge that Socrates's certain death is a good end" (Stang 2016, 29). This submission to death reinforces the status of Socrates' daimonion as a personification of sacrificial luck. This emphasis on sacrifice problematizes Socrates' relationship with philosophy as a formal discipline founded on the interiorization of sacrifice and thus, abandonment of rituals of sacrifice. In this regard, Socrates' sacrifice was not a philosophical act. Rather, it is illustrative of a significant crossroads between the orders of music and ritual, with philosophy and writing.

In *Philosophy and the End of Sacrifice* (2016) Peter Jackson and Anna-Pya Sjödin note that "Scholars have long observed, yet without presenting any transcultural *grand theory* on the matter, that sacrifice seems to end with, or perhaps more accurately, to continue *as philosophy*, in both Ancient India and Greece" (Jackson; Sjödin 2016, 1). They refer to the Neoplatonist Porphyry's letter to his wife Marcella around 200 CE, where he "dwells on the role of philosophy as the sublimation and interiorization of sacrifice" (Jackson; Sjödin 2016, 2). According to this schema, Socrates' sacrifice as submission to "the good life", had not yet transformed into philosophy as the interiorization of sacrifice, but demanded instead, the exteriorization and enactment of sacrifice.

In this regard it was not properly part of "The early development of Greek philosophy... conceived as a gradual detachment of human reason from the bonds of religion" (Jackson; Sjödin 2016, 3) insofar as religion "is represented as a container of prescriptive yet irrational notions (myths, omens, superstitions, etc.)" (Jackson; Sjödin 2016, 3). Socrates' daimonion was rather representative of the "Mythos [which] gives rise to logos" (Spitzer 2011, 7) as "The impossible [which] sets the possible into motion" (Spitzer 2011, xxv) that Anais Spitzer identifies.

We can therefore locate Socrates' sacrifice as the apex point of the "the conflict between "myth" and "philosophy"" (Spitzer 2011, 2), identified by the classicist Luc Brisson and associated with

Plato, whose “move to logos is also, in effect, an attempt to inaugurate and cement the age of literacy” (Spitzer 2011, 9). This coincided with the end of sacrifice, and transformation of ritual practices in general. Guy Strousma describes the “deep psychological and cultural transformations in the Roman world [which] both permitted and imposed a radical re-structuring of the very idea of ritual. The rise of Scriptures as the very backbone of religious movements transformed attitudes towards religious stories, or myths. It stands to reason that a similar transformation of the ritual should be discerned, as all religions hinge upon the two functions of myth making (or telling) and ritual action. To a new conception of *historia sacra* should correspond a new kind of religious praxis” (Strousma; Jackson; Sjödin 2016, 11).

The end of sacrifice and beginning of philosophy was thus predicated on the transformation of ritual practice. This transformation obscured the necessity of ritual as the appropriate site for the lucky intervention of the mythopoeic double. This double was instead appropriated by philosophy where it became the literary intellect. Philosophy was then modernised into its contemporary guise as a critique of scientific method, which has finally disenfranchised the function of the double generally. This history is consistent with the exorcism of ecstasy which characterised the Industrial Revolution which finally erased the traces of the double. However, these traces continue to haunt us as the noise of *différance*, whose music can be heard from a mythopoeic register.

In this way Socrates’ daimonion was the last of its kind, while Socrates was among the last lucky tricksters. I will now take a closer look at sacrifice, and in particular, its capacity to relocate us through the falsification of false or anthropocentric identity, into a living ecology of music. My road signs in this discussion are two philosophers whose theorising on the food-chain have been instrumental for this thesis, Val Plumwood and Georges Bataille. By coincidence, or luck, they were both preoccupied with the meaning of sacrifice.

4.5 Gift-Giving in the Food-Chain

Prior to the transformation of ritual associated with the execution of Socrates, sacrifice was predicated on animals as “the hallmark of public worship” (Jackson; Sjödin 2016, 4) in accordance with the foibles of the trickster god Hermes, the inventor of sacrifice,

As the myth unfolds in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, the protagonist is seeking recognition as a member of the Olympic family... [So] Hermes avoids the edible parts of slaughtered animals, thus affirming his divine status by rejecting the communal meal (Jackson 2016, 89).

The beginning of philosophy as the interiorization of sacrifice thus replaces the sacrificial animal with the philosopher. The philosopher thereby becomes the sacrificial animal. In his essay *Hegel, Death and Sacrifice* (1990) Georges Bataille thus emphasises the relationship between animality and sacrifice as offering “precisely human death” (Bataille; Strauss 1990, 16). This human death is a return to the immanence I have identified with Val Plumwood’s food-chain, which (re)positions the human being in a living ecology populated with other (predatory) selves and beyond-humans. Marcia Sá Cavalcante Schuback elaborates on this sacrificial function in her essay “Philosophical Sacrifice” in *Philosophy and the End of Sacrifice* (Jackson 2016),

[Bataille’s] main thesis is that sacrifice is destructive but not annihilating; it destroys the thing-hood, the value of thing, the reification of the victim, that is, of singular existence. What sacrifice destroys is the logic of utility operating in reification, a logic of reasons, grounds and finalities that speak in terms of “this is this because of that and for the sake of this” and enables its uses and abuses. Sacrifice destroys the logic of meaning. As this destruction, sacrifice can be considered Bataille’s response to omni-reification. It is proposed to be the only possibility to bring being back to intimacy, to the immanence between the human and the divine, the human and the world, between the subject and the object (Sá Cavalcante Schuback in Jackson 2016, 221-222).

Furthermore, “Whereas annihilation kills death, sacrifice brings death back into life” (Sá Cavalcante Schuback in Jackson 2016, 222). Socrates’ sacrifice thereby extradited him from the dawning world of means, maintaining his commitment to the immanent order as an animal on terms with his daimonion. This logic describes the relationship between the Pit River Indian and their damogomi, that serves as the basis for Pendell’s conception of luck and its connection with wildness. This luck is founded on sacrifice as the subversion of identity in a death-practice through which we become animal, outside the order of competition, means and ends, and concerned with illusion. However, Pendell, Plumwood and Abram have shown that becoming animal is necessarily becoming an ecological being in intimate relationship with others in a food-chain. This intimacy facilitates the divination which I presented as an ecological trait in Chapter Two. Socrates’ divinatory daimonion thereby led him to death, as an ecological function which demanded sacrifice. Plumwood describes this as *Being Prey* (2008), which both Plumwood and Bataille associate this with gift-giving, or the (sacrificial) giving of one’s self as prey.

Bataille’s association between sacrifice and gift-giving is exemplified in his theory of potlatch, which also equates loss or expenditure with power. Bataille took this to its extreme when he attempted to orchestrate a human sacrifice for the secret society *Acéphale* which he formed between 1936-1939, with various scholars speculating that Bataille volunteered for this role himself (MacKendrick 2021, 548). This was intended “to create the binding secret that would sustain the community” (MacKendrick 2021, 548), but ultimately failed. However Karmen MacKendrick wonders if Bataille did not view this failure as its very success, consistent with his opposition to productivity (MacKendrick 2021, 541).

For Plumwood, viewing “life as in circulation” (Plumwood; Shannon 2012, 92) locates becoming prey as a form of gift-giving which understands “death as recycling, a flowing on into an ecological and ancestral community of origins” (Plumwood; Shannon 2012, 92) which nurtures the entire community. Death, agriculture and some cultural practices locate humans as gift-givers in the food-chain, whose potlatch is returned by the gifts of nature as harvests, prey, creative materials etc.

This exchange is epitomised by the pangolin which has been made notorious as a sacrificial gift for the indigenous Congolese Lele cult by Mary Douglas in *Purity and Danger* (1966), on account of the pangolin's habit of rolling up into gift-like balls when threatened. Inversely, Abram refers to a common practice in Indonesian households where offerings of food are left out for spirits or ancestors. Observing how such offerings were stolen by ant colonies, Abram came to wonder if these ants were not the spirits themselves—cunningly distracted from entering the supplicant's home with food. These offerings establish boundaries which protect the domestic realm from invasion, "by honouring the boundary with gifts, the humans apparently hoped to persuade the insects to respect the boundary and not to enter the building" (Abram 1996, 13).

These reciprocal forms of gift-giving allude to Plumwood's conception of our ecological relationships in the food-chain in general, which constructs "our life [as] a gift from an embodied community of prior others we must nurture" (Plumwood; Shannon 2012, 96) and "a gift from a community of ancestors" (Plumwood; Shannon 2012, 92) who are both human and beyond-human. The lucky gifts we receive from this living ecology brings us into its musical rhythms which make demands on anthropocentric subjectivity, most specifically, sacrifice.

Following the work of Marcus William Hunt I will now discuss how this potlatch with beyond-humans, positions luck as a tythic property besides fate and fortune. Tychism is a doctrine that was developed by the physicist and mathematician Charles Sander Perice to describe chance as an objective feature of the cosmos, by which "the meaning of any expression exceeds probability!" (Brier, 2017, 100). Chance is thus ecologically defined in terms of how events which exceed probability become meaningful for an ecology of selves, and furthermore, how this meaning begins to reproduce itself and establish habits comparable to Kohn's view of living semiosis, described in Chapter Two. Tychism becomes denotative of ecological harmony and is thus experienced as luck, fate or fortune. In the following section this reading of luck is contrasted to analytic views described in *The Philosophy of Luck* (Pritchard; Whittington 2015) which exclude the beyond-human agency of a sentient ecology, described as The Language of Birds as "the context, the environment: set and setting" (Pendell 2007, 60).

4.6 Tychism and Agapastism

In his essay *Luck, Fate and Fortune: the tychic properties* (2024), Marcus William Hunt shows that “extant analyses of luck are deficient because they do not identify the genus of which luck is a species” (Hunt 2024, 2). He refers to three main accounts of luck, which similarly appear in *The Philosophy of Luck* (Pritchard; Whittington 2015): the control account “that says an event is lucky only if its occurrence is beyond the agent’s control” (Hunt 2024, 2); the model account “that says that an event is lucky only if there are close possible worlds in which it fails to occur” (Hunt 2024, 2); and the probability account which “says that an event is lucky only if there is some probability of its non-occurrence” (Hunt 2024, 2). To this Fernando Broncano-Berrocal adds the qualifier that an event “cannot be regarded as lucky unless it is significant to the agent” (Broncano-Berrocal 2015, 3).

Hunt describes the problem of external intervention which creates the experience of luck according to the account of control, whereby a force outside one’s control can “limit and disrupt agency” (Hunt 2024, 3). As an example of this, Rachel McKinnon examines intervening forces which cancel an archer’s shot such as a gust of wind, in *You Make Your Own Luck* (2015). However she also examines the possibility that an archer may skilfully utilise this intervention to accomplish their shot, arguing that “It is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for some event’s being lucky that it be out of our control” (McKinnon 2015, 110). In *Getting Luck Properly Under Control* (2013) McKinnon also makes the point that “It’s difficult to conceive of outcomes of which anyone is truly in control” (McKinnon 2013, 498). McKinnon thus argues that credit should be attributed to an agent for expected results, while “any deviation from the mean is attributable to luck” (McKinnon 2013, 505). This means that agents should be credited for skill, rather than necessarily, outcome. This attributes success or failure which deviates from an expected outcome, to luck. In this regard McKinnon’s stance is somewhat cognizant with Pendell’s insofar as both failure and success can be lucky, thereby disorientating the parameters of success in relation to luck. This is a somewhat charitable view which suggests that for example, and returning to the opening paradox of this thesis, Oedipus should be credited for acting skilfully according to his knowledge—the incestuous love triangle he nevertheless found himself in can thereby be attributed to (bad) luck. This is compounded by the argument that “in a

sense, the presence of luck undermines responsibility. Or, in epistemology, the presence of luck undermines one's knowledge" (McKinnon 2013, 508-509). This conspires to frame Oedipus as a pitiful, tragic figure who, despite his skill and because of (bad) luck, ended up murdering his father, marrying his mother, and siring his siblings. The quality of this luck is thereby described by Hunt as tychic insofar as it is native to the same genus as fate and fortune. This means that a skilled person can be unlucky, while an unskilled person can be lucky—the excess is a tychic property attributed to luck, fate, or fortune. Tychism views chance as an objective force in the universe.

McKinnon is an interesting figure in this discourse as a transsexual woman who has become controversial as a professional track cyclist. In 2018 McKinnon placed first at the UCI Women's Masters Track World Championship (35-44 age bracket), becoming the first transgender track cycling champion. Faced with criticism surrounding the fitness benefits of male physiology which transsexual women are accused of nevertheless possessing, McKinnon's self-defence in *The New York Times* (2019) refers to the absence of detectable testosterone production in female trans bodies following transition, as well as physiological diversity among CIS⁴ women who in some cases outweigh her. Similarly, McKinnon has been outpaced by various CIS women and not placed in some races. Elsewhere in an interview conducted with Sky News⁵ she also refers to what Brown might call Dionysian chance, or what Pendell might call the Coyote Principle—the problem of character (as nature) in competition which offers obscure fitness advantages productive of unexpected or lucky results. For McKinnon, the possibility for agents to out (or under) perform expected results based on character (as nature) is thereby represented as luck, as a force which transcends materialism. McKinnon's capacity to under perform the expected results of a person who was born male, and her capacity to over perform the expected results of a person who was born female, is thus the work of luck. This luck furthermore is not oriented around success as indeed the controversial nature of her title demonstrates. This luck is instead generative of a powerful double that supersedes both gendered outcomes, which personifies her character (as nature) as furthermore, her fate.

⁴ Cisgender refers to persons who identify with the gender assigned at birth.

⁵ <https://news.sky.com/video/nr-transgender-cyclist-kelner-for-mobile-mp4-11838457>

The politics surrounding queer identity is thus illustrative of the double as an uncoded entity which does not conform to socialised norms, most clearly enacted in gender performance. Bruce Bagemihl thereby refers to the ceremonial role of queer “two-spirits” in Indigenous culture, whose luxurious status often converts them to shamanic practices which are not oriented around anthropocentric ideals (Bagemihl 1999, 216-220) . This is also indicated by William K. Powers who associates the practices of the Lakota cult of sacred clowns, the heyoka, with queer sexuality and gender identity, which institutes the realm of non-productive excess from which we derive notions of spirituality (Powers 1984, 43-44).

The problem of the double as that which exceeds anthropocentric ideals thus rears its head as fate. In *The Problem of Fate* (2007) Georg Simmel similarly refers to this “double perspective on events [which] represents the essence of fate” (Simmel 2007, 82) when “the Self [*das Ich*] has split into a subject and an object... And we are to ourselves as much an object of knowledge [*Erkennens*] as we are of experience [*Erlebens*]” (Simmel 2007, 82). I have called this process the subversion of subjectivity which brings us into contact with a sentient environment, through which “we are exposed to and integrated into the motions of the cosmos” (Simmel 2007, 81). Stang similarly describes this doubled state as “the paradox of the “I” and the not- “I” (Stang 2016, 2256), encapsulated by “Paul’s famous line from his Letter to the Galatians, ‘it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me’” (Stang 2016, 256). This subversion of subjectivity is generated by a lucky encounter with the double. For Hunt, this is a tythic state which “depend[s] on this dual perspective, between oneself as agent and oneself as patient of the world” (Hunt 2024, 4).

Like the wind McKinnon uses to critique the luck of the archer’s shot, Hunt similarly refers to “the wind [which] carr[ies] the boat back to harbour” (Hunt 2024, 4) which is utilised by the sailor to reach their destination. This conjunction between external forces and intentionality represents Hunt’s view of tythic forces as “those cases in which we find the external world participating in our actions even without such intention, by accident, coincidence” (Hunt 2024, 4). This possibility reinforces McKinnon’s claim that “It’s difficult to conceive of outcomes of which anyone is truly in control” (McKinnon 2013, 498). Again Hunt describes the “gust of wind [that] catches my discus mid-air, carrying it to a distance I could never have reached alone”

(Hunt 2024, 5), for Hunt the significance of this event is “patterned toward a goal, despite the absence of any rational superintention... and so is tychic” (Hunt 2024, 5). It is a fateful, fortunate or lucky event, insofar as it is a significant event which “we arrive at passively” (Hunt 2024, 7).

While the significance of this event is socially constructed and subjectively determined, it is nevertheless ecologically meaningful. The conjunction between these orders is precisely where luck is located as a sign of multinatural perspectivalism, expressed as an invisible hand that governs the chessboard of human activity, attributing significance to arbitrary events. This was established in Peirce’s work on chance, who asserted “that the meaning of any expression exceeds probability!” (Brier, 2017, 100). Peirce thus originated tychism as “the doctrine that chance is an objective feature of the cosmos” (Coscolluela 1992, 741). This view originated with Aristotle as “one of the few of his predecessors that defended the existence of chance in the world and tried to give it an important role in his cosmology” (Mesa 2014, 32). Aristotle defended absolute chance as a possible fifth causal force beyond the classical four (material, formal, efficient, and final-teleological), writing in *Physics*, Book II, part four; “Chance and spontaneity are also reckoned among causes” (Aristotle in Hardie; Gaye 2024).

For Peirce chance generates diversity as a driving evolutionary force developing complex systems by furthermore, producing habits (Mesa 2014, 34). Peirce thus viewed the “universe as a reasoning process developing from pure potentiality to the fully ordered rational *Summon Bonum*” (Brier 2017, 92). However, Peirce’s theory of evolution finally incorporated three kinds: “tychasticism, anancastisim, and agapasticism. The first one represents evolution by fortuitous variations, the second one evolution by mechanical necessity, and the third one evolution by creative love” (Mesa 2014, 38).

Peirce developed his theory of agapasticism as an evolutionary force “in which ‘the Universe is a vast representamen, a great symbol of God's purpose, working out its conclusions in living realities’ by ways of agapastic love” (Mesa 2014, 38). This was a necessary teleology which substantiated the “relationship between chance and law” which produces habits, on account of the problem that “For Peirce, the mechanistic versions of evolution did not give a satisfactory account of this [habit-making] tendency in nature” (Mesa 2014, 37). Juliana Acosta López de

Mesa summarises Peirce's theory of evolutionary love in the following terms, "Love in the sense of agape, is a unifying force caused by the sympathetic attraction exerted by people, things or ideas i.e. By the cosmos in general" (Mesa 2014, 39). This offers some theorising for the force of attraction between doubles, resulting for Stang in self-deification as unification, and for Peirce the representation of universal tendencies toward attraction that his cosmology describes. So while Peirce's conception of chance may not correspond with Hunt's tychic luck insofar as it is not concerned with the attribution of significance, we can nevertheless identify tychic luck as the teleological force of attraction inherent to Peirce's agapasticism which is "patterned toward a goal, despite the absence of any rational superintention" (Hunt 2024, 5). This can also be identified with the force of attraction which describes predation in the food-chain.

Steven D. Hales and Jennifer Adrienne Johnson similarly allude to the function of patterning, or habit formation, in luck. They describe luck attributions as "a form of post hoc storytelling, or even mythmaking... merely a narrative device used to frame stories of success or failure. Perhaps luck is analogous to pareidolia, our innate tendency to find visual patterns in random data, and events are lucky to the same extent that automobiles have faces, or a grilled cheese sandwich looks like the Virgin Mary" (Hales; Johnson 2015, 60). For them luck is at best, "merely a way to subjectively interpret our experiences; our encounters with the world do not include the detection of a genuine property of luck" (Hales; Johnson 2015, 75). As such, if an agent's "persistent survival in dangerous circumstances, then she has all the luck in the world, but if they are presented negatively as repeated victimisation by violent terrorism then she has no luck whatsoever. There is no fact about whether she is objectively lucky or objectively unlucky to be discovered through the application of the probability, modal, or control theory of luck" (Hales; Johnson 2015, 75).

This view rejects the habit-forming capacity of chance to construct complex systems, in this case oriented around lucky narratives of survival or victimisation which can become animate, as Kohn has shown. They thereby project values into the future which are elaborated into complex systems that limit and reconstruct reality. Pierce sought a teleology for this Law and described it as evolutionary Love. Luck in this regard, is a narrative device which prompts the construction of the future based on the patterns it sets into motion, founded on lucky resemblances to its

narrative. The more resemblances the story-teller can set into motion, the luckier they appear to be, until this luck finally becomes musically animate as Pendell's view of *pharmakon*—poison and power.

Hales and Johnson are thus insightful for identifying luck as a narrative device which forms pattern. However they have underestimated this very preoccupation with lucky signs and their meaningful repetition, described by Abram and Pendell as *The Language of Birds*. This capacity is detailed by Kohn in a semiotic theory which grants these patterns an ontological status, described in Chapter Two. Hales and Johnson's view thereby falls short of engaging with the semiotic nature of luck, and its preoccupation with representations which become animate and begin to remember the future. This alludes to the intelligence of the hunter weaving the sacred traps which substantiates the idiom "You Make Your Own Luck". For Peirce, this creational force is the experience of the universe working out its conclusions in living realities. These conclusions include Bataille's bizarre picture of successful failure: the image of a lucky man sentenced to death by poisoning. Indeed, Socrates' foul breed of luck haunts these pages as his immortality.

Peirce's agapastism thereby accounts for the paradox of the doubled perspective, whereby the lucky person becomes both object and subject in Simmel's terms, or for Nietzsche, "the weird fairy-tale image of the creature that can turn its eyes around and look at itself; he is at once subject and object, at once poet, actor and audience" (Nietzsche 2003, 32). Thus, for Nietzsche "the whole comedy of art is not at all performed for us, for our improvement or edification, any more than we are the actual creators of that art world: but we can indeed assume for our own part that we are images and artistic projections for the true creator of that world, and that our highest dignity lies in the meaning of works of art – for it only as *an aesthetic phenomenon* that existence and the world are eternally *justified*" (Nietzsche 2003, 32). This observational feat is inherent to symbolic crisis as the predicament of being both subject and object simultaneously. I have described this in Chapter Two as a sacred trap whereby the unconscious becomes conscious through performance. This is the death-practice of doubling, which subverts subjectivity in order to bring us into a tythic relationship with a cosmic ecology expressing itself through *The Language of Birds*. Its luck and power are predicated on ecological intimacy in a food-chain as

furthermore, the love expressed by gift-giving and sacrifice; as well as predation. Love is thus unveiled as tychism; Dionsian chance and/or luck. It is the fabric of the ecological web woven by a food-chain, that becomes animate as a deity.

4.7 Conclusion: Love as the Ecstatic Loss of Self

Outside this sacrificial register, ritual is a materialistic performance oriented around normative ideals it has absorbed from our capitalist hegemony, which disenchant it and de-contextualise its peculiar epistemology, and furthermore, its healing potential. Whereas when we apply a mythopoeic or philosophical animist worldview to ritual, it regains its sense and preoccupation with maintaining the ecological harmony which makes us lucky. As such, the rituals discussed in the following chapter are not foreign geographically or ethnically, but rather in their proximity to a musical worldview no longer intuitive for moderns. This is what is at stake in the disenchantment of ritual practices in the West and the subsequent absence of music: our relationship with nature. By contrast, our alienation from nature has been confounded by the transformation of philosophy from a discipline concerned with the Good Life—as the subversion of anthropocentric subjectivity instigated by the double—to a scientific endeavour. By defending a worldview of dualistic pluralism which acknowledges the double, and the importance of ritual practices which animate it, philosophical animism is capable of reviving this mythopoeic process and its capacity to generate ecological harmony by falsifying anthropocentric subjectivity and thereby exposing the subject to the beyond-human. This is a posthuman objective which depends on the value of ecstasy as beyond-human experience.

This is consistent with Carl Olson's account of the Lakota Sun Dance in *Eroticism, Violence, and Sacrifice* (1994), which narrates the absorption of the body of the sacrificial subject into a beyond-human relationship with a cosmic ecology. The excessive feats of transgression it demands opens spaces of communication which transcends the instated language to give voice to The Language of Birds. The Sun Dance thus incites a symbolic crisis whereby the sacrificial supplicant transgresses their own body—thereby transcending and overturning the anthropocentric code of identity that constitutes it as human. Having committed this symbolic

suicide, they are effectively reborn in a beyond-human ecology. Carl Olson describes the Sun Dance as such;

The actual sacrificial victims, for instance, can choose to dance in any of four ways: gazing at the sun from dawn to dusk; having wooden skewers, tied to rawhide ropes secured about half way up the sacred pole, inserted into their breasts; having wooden skewers inserted into the breasts and then being suspended about one foot off the ground; or having wooden skewers inserted which then are attached with thongs to one or more buffalo skull(s) that must be dragged along the dance area... The Sun Dance is not completed until the flesh of the victim has been torn through, representing the death and rebirth of the victim. It is permissible for others to assist by pulling on the ropes to end the victim's agony. (Olson 1994, 244-245)

This “death and rebirth” metamorphosizes the body from a fabrication of the present, by transforming it into a cosmic indice, which Kohn describes as a sign of possibility connected to a Beyond. They have become a personification of Stang's state of “I and not- I” or Bataille's “*living myth*” (Bataille; Stoekl 1985, 231). Olson equally demonstrates how the “rite enables the sun dancer to locate himself in the cosmos and to explain to the body its place within the cosmic order; this is nothing short of a revelation of a way of being located in the universe” (Olson 1994, 248). While Olson's reading ultimately calls on the Sun Dance to undermine Bataille's theory of the sacred and particularly its emphasis on eroticism, this revolves around a misappreciation of the significance of laceration as communication for Bataille. Indeed for Bataille “the ‘sacred’ is communication being beings, and thereby the formation of new beings” (Bataille 1985, 251). This actually supports Olson's own interpretation of the sacred function of the Sun Dance which “enables the sun dancer to realise true personhood and community.” (Olson 1994, 248).

For Bataille this sacred communication, described as Love “expresses a need for sacrifice: each unity must lose itself in some other, which exceeds it. But the happy movements of the flesh have a double orientation. Because going through flesh—going through the point where the unity of a person is torn apart—is necessary if, in losing oneself, one wants to rediscover oneself in the

unity of love...” (Bataille; Stoekl 1985, 251). This “going through” brings possibility to presence, inscribing the human sign with the lacerations which completes its representation as an indice of possibility, while simultaneously voiding its function as an index of identity.

This possibility returns us to Derrida’s conception of pity as an imaginative problem which I have discussed in Chapter One, as “that fundamental affection, as primitive as the love of self, which unites us to others naturally : to other human beings, certainly, but also to all living beings”. (Derrida in Spivak 1991, 105). While Derrida presents a view of pity which involves the projection of identity, Bataille is describing a view of love which involves the ecstatic loss of identity. This initiates us into negative experience whereby the person becomes an indice of possibility as “I and not I”, and is thus susceptible to musical possession by *The Language of Birds*, experienced as luck, whereby they are united to all living things.

As I have argued in Chapter Two this is a death practice which juxtaposes the cosmic with the present in a sacred “Communication [that] ties [us] together with wounds” (Bataille; Stoekl 1985, 249-250). This bond brings foreign futures to presence as the possibility which animates their absence, animating signs with luck. These lucky others disturb the status of reality as a materialist construct by revealing the possibility which actually constitutes its intelligibility. This musical presence is the lie which reveals truth, on which our experience of reality is founded as a “death-dream”. This death-dream absorbs our environments, selves, language, and body into the doubled perspective of that which “is and is not”.

Bataille describes romantic love as “the only power” today capable of undertaking the campaign of trickery, enacted as “*a series of chances that give the awaited answer to an avid and powerful will to be*” which establishes the ‘true’ “*world where [loved] beings relocate each other*” (Bataille 1985, 229). This true world is the mythopoeic realm of living myth where “destiny has become alive” (Bataille 1985, 228) and “Shadows pursued to the point of embrace are no less amazing than the remote creatures of legends” (Bataille 1985, 229). The loved one (double) arrives as a death-dream which primes reality as a remembered future, “as in the case of a lucky hand of cards, [which] determines existence,” (Bataille 1985, 230). Stang similarly compares the unification of doubles to the experience of love described by mystics, in which “at the climax,

the lover has become the very substance of love, he is then both the lover and the beloved” (Stang 2016, 6).

Bataille’s “true world of lovers” (Bataille 1985, 229) is thus ordered by risk of the loss of self, and the lucky signs native to *The Language of Birds*, poisoned with the “delirium that engenders the images of art,” (Bataille 1985, 232) characteristic of the hunter’s drive. Such lucky signs are generated by ritual communities that assemble to participate in the musical construction of this living myth, as “the coincidence of wills is no less necessary to the birth of human worlds than is the coincidence of chance figures” (Bataille; Stoekl 1985, 230).

For Bataille, this ritualistic abandonment to luck is shared by lovers and gamblers as the “life that only measures itself against death,” (Bataille 1985, 231) recognizing itself “on the same scale as the starry sky,” (Bataille 1985, 231) which is singularly capable of establishing living myth whereby “[l]ife risks itself” (Bataille 1985, 231) in pursuit of “seductive images of chance” (Bataille 1985, 231). These signs found a new time in the imagination of a community, for whom “Ritually lived myth reveals nothing less than true being” (Bataille 1985, 232). This foundation of a new time is the magical work of Bataille’s Sorcerer’s Apprentice who “does not encounter demands that are any different from those he would encounter on the difficult road of art,” (Bataille; Stoekl 1985, 233) and whose artistic reconstruction of reality through rituals of energetic potlatch take existence to its boiling point, as *true* madness,

In the following chapter I will examine such communities and how the rituals and myths they enact, instigate symbolic crises as sites of encounter with the mythopoeic double. This initiation into the falsehood of anthropocentric identity begins the process of self-deification whereby true subjectivity can be constructed in a lucky relationship with a beyond-human ecology, expressed in *The Language of Birds*.

Chapter Four: Ritual Crises

5.1 Introduction: Intoxication

This chapter develops a mythopoeic theory of rituals, by drawing on ideas and arguments developed in the previous chapters. A mythopoeic theory of ritual privileges lucky states which align beyond-human perspectives with human experience, and the ecstatic interference of the double, which collude to instigate symbolic crises during ritual practice. This theory has been substantiated throughout this thesis and will be applied here to a reading of contemporary ritual practice.

In Chapter One I established the musical nature of luck, which I defined as ecological insofar as it brings us into harmony with a sentient ecology, resulting in the lucky signs and events which Victor Turner has conceptualised as *communitas* (Turner 1982, 48). In Chapter Two I provided a musical theory of semiosis described as The Language of Birds, embedded in a living ecology. In Chapter Three I characterised luck as sacrificial insofar as it is concerned with the subversion of anthropocentric subjectivity instigated by the mythopoeic double, and emphasised ritual as the historic site of this crisis. Chapter Four will substantiate these ideas with a mythopoeic theory of the ritual process, which elaborates on Turner's classic conception of the ritual process as separation, liminality, and incorporation (Turner 1991, 94-95).

Mythopoeia is derived from Norman O Brown's description of enthusiasm as "God in us... this is the essence of the holy madness" (Brown 1991, 6) by which Dale Pendell developed his conception and practice of ritual intoxication as *pharmakon*, as a substantiation of Brown's view of the history of prophecy as resistance to civilisation. Mythopoeia is thus concerned with the creation of myths as an alternative form of epistemology capable of describing heterogeneous experience, particularly during ritual intoxication. Mythopoeia is thus oriented around luck as an alternative epistemological framework concerned with beyond-human experience, and most particularly, how human experience relates to the "pattern which connects" (Small 1998, 104) which is ultimately deified into a beyond-human agent.

A mythopoeic theory of the ritual process provides a *raison d'être* in terms of luck; it suggests ritual practice makes us lucky by instigating a crisis generative of an encounter with the double, who initiates us into ecological harmony by subverting anthropocentric identity. This operates insofar as ritually induced intoxication during trance-states, associated with Turner's conception of ritual liminality, dilutes identity systems, allowing for the projection of foreign entities into subjects and events whereby they are recognised as masks of a beyond-human other. This beyond-human other often appears to deconstruct the ritual subject's allusion to self-knowledge by animating repressed pathologies, which the ritual subject thus encounters and can indirectly address as a sort of excavation of their own psyche, encountered as divine, demonic or ancestral others. By performing these repressed pathologies symbolically, the ritual subject is thus tricked into participating in their deconstruction as a reality principal, liberating them from over-identification with such systems by which "The bird of the spirit [can] liberate itself from the rational cage" (Jodorowsky in LeValley 2010, X). This process is facilitated by the forms of animate semiosis which possess ritual ceremony as a collective ecstatic state, and a profoundly empathetic and artistic site of trickery.

The ritual feat of "summoning the double" is familiar to shamanistic practices of calling down souls which Youhung Her-Xiong and Tracey Schroepfer describe in *Walking in Two Worlds* (2018). Associating the double with ritual is not a novel idea but is demonstrated in the transformation of ecstasy I narrated in Chapter Three, founded on the repression of shamanism and divination as the ecstatic flight of the free soul. However, my contribution is to associate the double with luck as this enables me to orient the ritual process ecologically, in terms of the ecological harmony luck is descriptive of. Luck, understood as ecological harmony, requires the subversion of anthropocentric subjectivity performed as a "death science, like a philosophizing which too was once considered to be a leading of life towards death" (Hillman 1979, 132).

Pendell refers to the etymology of intoxicate which "means 'to poison', 'to drug'. Greek *toxicon* literally meant 'arrow-poison', related to the Sumerian word *tukul*, 'a weapon'. All *thanatopathics* are weapons – used to kill animals, if not people" (Pendell 2010c, 30). In the foreword to *Pharmakopoeia*, Gary Snyder draws out this image of the poisoned arrow, "Cupid

shoots an arrow which strikes and changes you forever; love is toxic. ‘Toxic’ comes from *toxicon*, Pendell tells us, with a root meaning of ‘a poisoned arrow’. All organic life is struck by arrows of real and psychic poisons” (Synder 2010, xiii).

Pendell informs us “The old doctors were called poisoners. / They were the *lucky* ones” (Pendell 2010c, 4). For Pendell “becoming lucky” is therefore a poisonous practice comparable to medicine. It is associated with ritual as a healing practice interested in psychosomatic integrity, which employs trickery to generate mild psychosis in order to “bring a certain sanity back home” (Synder in Pendell, xiv). The traditional view of ritual as a healing practice is employed in Turner’s analysis of the rituals of the Ndembu people of Zambia in *The Ritual Process* (1991), as well as Alice Boddy’s study of the *Zār* possession cult of the Northern Sudanese in *Wombs and Alien Spirits* (1989). By contrast, writers like Abram (1996) contend that in comparison, modern paradigms of medicine often cannot offer holistic forms of healing capable of attending to the peculiar forms of modern ailments that Federico Campagna (2022) and the Powhatan-Renapé and Lenape scholar Jack D. Forbes (2008), among others, have diagnosed as symptomatic of our contemporary way of life. Abram thus argues,

with thousands of acres of nonregenerating forest disappearing every hour, and hundreds of our fellow species becoming extinct each month as a result of our civilization's excesses, we can hardly be surprised by the amount of epidemic illness in our culture, from increasingly severe immune dysfunctions and cancers, to widespread psychological distress, depression, and ever more frequent suicides, to the accelerating number of household killings and mass murders committed for no apparent reason by otherwise coherent individuals (Abram 1996, 22).

Whereas Campagna describes the traditional magician “as a reality-therapist, acting not merely on the symptoms of an individual’s illness, but also on the reality-conditions that allowed the state of illness to take place” (Campagna 2022, 117). In this chapter I identify such holistic healing methods with ritual practices of ecstasy, concerned with the social construction of identity upon which health is founded by “cycling of the human back into the larger world” (Abram 1996, 16). To this end I compare the rituals of Yuwipi, *Zār*, Voudou, Candomblé and Capoeira. The ecstatic quality these rituals have in common allows me to draw out the function

of the double and its relationship to luck, as a mythopoeic complement to Turner's classic notion of the ritual process. While it refers to these stages, it also contextualises them in terms of an ultimate (ritual) preoccupation with maintaining or creating ecological harmony, mediated through the symbolic crises instigated by the appearance of the double during ritual liminality.

5.2 Turner's Ritual Process

In this chapter I will analyse rituals according to the three stages of Turner's ritual process: separation, liminality, reincorporation. Turner identifies separation as the first step in the ritual process which,

clearly demarcates sacred space and time from profane or secular space and time (it is more than just a matter of entering a temple—there must be in addition a rite which changes the quality of *time* also, or constructs a cultural realm which is defined as "out of time," i.e., beyond or outside the time which measures secular processes and routines). It includes symbolic behaviour—especially symbols of reversal or inversion of things, relationships and processes secular—which represents the detachment of the ritual subjects (novices, candidates, neophytes or "initiands") from their previous social statuses (Turner 1982, 24-25).

Ritual separation initiates a formal break from the normative order which alters the construction of time, instigating a period of ritual liminality whereby the normative code stops functioning. This subverts the experience of identity normally constructed around object schemas—realising Bataille's aspiration to break from project time, which, furthermore, motivated the formation of *Acéphale* and its escalation to a shared crime, postulated by the (unactualized) ritual sacrifice of a human being. Separation thus allows the ritual subject to irresponsibly break taboos constructed by the normative order, which most clearly problematize killing and thus sacrifice.

By example, in *Transformation into nature: Swedish Army rites of passage* (2016) Jan Angstrom shows how the transgression of socialised boundaries facilitated by ritual separation is still utilised by the Swedish Army to condition the subjectivity of soldiers during peace and wartime,

enabling them to irresponsibly break socialised taboos during military combat and to reintegrate into civil society thereafter. Angstrom suggests this process is modelled on the initiation rites of an infamous class of Old Norse warriors known as the *berserkers*, which Andreas Nordberg and Frederik Wallenstein describe in *Laughing I shall die!* (2016). Following ritual separation, initiates entered a period of liminality, where they were mentored by an initiated berserker:

Here, the boy is trained in military techniques and battle tactics, and initiated into secret religious knowledge (usually related to the cult of Odin). As a test of courage and strength, the boy then fights and defeats a ferocious animal, usually a bear, sometimes a boar or a wolf. He then clothes himself in the skin of the defeated animal and thus acquires its animalistic qualities. Following this, the protector and protégé act as brothers in arms for a certain liminal period, during which they behave as outlaws, as if they did not belong to the ordered social world (Nordberg and Wallenstein 2016, 53).

Liminality, like separation, instigates a change in the quality of time. This is a break from the object schema of society, into the states of intoxication I have associated with hunting (and thus killing) in Chapter Two. This accounts for the nature of the berserker as an initiate into the cult of Odin, whose name “Old Norse Óðinn, [is] derived from Proto-Germanic *Wōðanaz*, where *Wōð* means “rage” or “fury”” (Nordberg and Wallenstein 2016, 52). In this regard Old Norse berserkers were understood to become ecstatically intoxicated by Odin’s fury during states of liminality, resulting in the concept of *berserkersegangr* as a “type of animalistic/predatory rage or frenzy” (Nordberg; Wallenstein 2016, 50). However, Nordberg and Wallenstein remind us this frenzy is not exceptional to Old Norse culture.

It has widely distributed parallels in the history of religions, as well as in the history of war. Interesting parallel examples can be collected from Indo-European cultures (the Greek notion of *lyssa*, the Celtic *ferg*, and the Iranian *aēšma*). All are connected to a larger Indo-European complex of wolf symbolism (Lincoln 1991), as well as to wolf symbolism in the Americas and Asia (for example, the cannibalistic frenzy in the rituals of the *Hamatsa* ceremony of the *Kwakiutl* (Hultkrantz 1967: 102ff.), the behaviour of the jaguar and eagle warriors of the Aztec (Townsend 2009:212–18, Speidel 2002: 285), the furious battle trance of the Zulu warriors (Knight 1995: 220–5), and the Malaysian

conception of amok. These types of conceptions of raging animal warriors are not only widespread but are also quite comprehensible if understood in the light of altered states of consciousness and in the framework of a distinct warrior culture and religion, such as Old Norse (Nordberg and Wallenstein 2016, 50).

Following separation and liminality, the ritual subject is reincorporated into the normative order, having often earned a new name descriptive of their change in status. The berserker for example, received a new name often related to their encounter with a wild other described by Nordberg and Wallenstein as a wolf or the bear, whose powers they have essentially incorporated as their double, and indeed their luck. This ritual logic of separation, liminality, and reintegration is also descriptive of vision fasting practices among Indigenous North Americans (Angulo 1926), but whose encounter with a wild other can also be facilitated by a dream or vision, which they are also named after (Lame Deer 2009). The importance of the dream-state is expressive of the transformation of reality during states of liminality, which sees the boundary between the imagined and the real (as a social imagining) becoming diffuse. In this regard a dream or a real bear are both capable of physically threatening the ritual supplicant during separation and liminality.

The rites described above offer examples of Turner's classic view of the ritual process, which has informed directly or indirectly, the various ritual theorists this thesis references. The comparison of rituals I undertake in this chapter is oriented around these stages as a logic generic to ritual practice, as opposed to an ethnological analysis concerned with how these practices are specific expressions of their particular contexts. This analysis thus follows in the wake of Gordon White's history of the occult *Star.Ships* (2016) which frames the evolution of religious practice since ancient history as tributaries of one river (White 2016, xvi). White invokes the cultural theorist and Indologist Wendy Doniger, to defend the "use of comparison in mythology" (White 2016, xiv). The approach undertaken in this chapter resonates with Doniger's comparative method, which views cultural studies through the macroscopic lens of a telescope to observe fundamental similarities. It is predicated on the transcultural pity I have defended in Chapter One.

The rituals I compare in this chapter have been practised in, or originate from, Africa and the Americas. Of course, this geographic significance is representative of the modern trans-Atlantic slave trade. Emily Zobel Marshall demonstrates that cross-cultural fertilisation “between whites, African Americans and Indigenous peoples was inevitably rife across the Americas” (Marshall 1989, 35), informing the contemporary construction of religion and mythology in these regions, including the character of the North American trickster Brer Rabbit, who Marshall examines as an amalgamation of Amerindian tricksters, combined with the Caribbean Anansi, and the Yoruba Esu. In this regard, one can also argue that isolating practices like Voudou from Candomblé, or from Yuwipi and Vision Fasting, in a microscopic analysis is a myopic view which obscures the political contexts integral to their formation and practice.

What becomes clear from this examination is the universal status of the double as the personification of the shamanic free soul described by dualistic pluralism. The ecstatic possibility it represents is still enacted by these rituals as a phenomenological fact, but one which can only be detected or, in the words of Pendell, “divined”, on a mythopoeic register capable of synthesising iterations of difference into a synthesis articulate of a beyond-human. Pendell’s mythopoesis is thus an appropriate interpretative framework for ecstatic rituals descriptive of those examined herein, as it is derived from shamanic cosmologies and thus capable of registering their value systems, identified in this thesis with luck. Mythopoesis therefore gives us the tools to describe the music of ritual, which are otherwise disenchanted of their ecstatic orientation.

In the following section I will begin my comparative study with cave-painting as an originating ritual practice which offers some fundamental elements of ritual practice and in particular, its relationship to the site of the negative as the imagination.

5.3 Imaginative States during Ritual Separation

The creation of cave paintings involved often dangerous journeys into essential darkness, at best guided by dim and flickering oil lamps. Some paintings were created in obscure places in narrow

corridors, adding to the mystery of their meaning as private endeavours. David Lewis-Williams tells us,

Anyone who has crouched and crawled underground along a narrow, absolutely dark passage for more than a kilometre, slid along mud banks and waded through dark lakes and hidden rivers to be confronted, at the end of such a hazardous journey, by a painting of an extinct woolly mammoth or a power, hunched bison will never be quite the same again. (Lewis-Williams 2016, 11)

This sacred graffiti is the two-faced crime of culture described by Micheal Taussig (1999) as defacement, insofar as it transforms sites into monuments that simultaneously disappear them. This death-dream work, committed by the trickster-shaman, reminds us that these enchanted caves are nonetheless only caves, so can and should be defiled.

Taussig emphasises public secrecy in the ritual production of the sacred during ritual performance, as the suspension of belief among those who know what not to know (that sacred caves are not caves) which establishes the ceremonial space of separation, and trickery, whereby ritual attains religious and mystic proportions. This facilitates unmasking as the revelation of the spiritual world which pervades the profane one, instigating ritual crises by doubling the fiction of the real: “So dazzling is this unmasking that I would prefer to call it defacement, so as to emphasize the radical nature of the changes that can occur in the very heart of Being” (Taussig 1999, 117).

For Turner ritual unmasking is an “existential bending back upon ourselves” (Turner 1991, vii) which informs his view of ritual as an anti-structure capable of generating a moment “in and out of secular social structure, which reveals, however fleetingly, some recognition (in symbol if not always in language) of a generalised social bond” (Turner 1991, 96), which goes to the root of each person’s being, and finds “in that root something profoundly communal and shared” (Turner 1991, 138). This anthropological view assumes there is some innate human essence which transcends cultural practice, allowing for Turner’s premise that humans possess an “identical cognitive structure articulating wide diversities of cultural experience” (Turner 1991, 3). This identical cognitive structure is activated by ritually instigated crises, which utilises ritual separation to override the hegemonic order derived from civilising experience.

Turner's view is at odds with the function of Derrida's *différance*, which emphasises the profusion of subjective difference in all systems by which "ultimate meaning will always escape you, because every manifestation of a human is always different from its ideal type" (Herbrechter; Vint 2020, 37). In Chapter One I have shown how this view of *différance* has informed both Norman O. Brown and Donna Haraway's rejection of the possibility of synthesis. However, these views repress the epistemological status of embodied experience in the environment, whose processes of idealisation are not abstracted from (shared) embodied experience, facilitating Paul North's theory of *Bizarre-Privileged Items in the Universe* (2021) which I have discussed in Chapter Two.

In allusion to the anthropological method, in this chapter I suggest that ritual practice depends on the possibility of transcultural forms of pity or empathy capable of universalising human experience, insofar as ritual practice animates the negative zone which exists outside the normative order—and thus already transcends cultural norms. This allows for the intelligibility of trickery across orders of consciousness and experience. In doing so, I also account for both the epistemological significance of ritual practice today, as well as its devaluation in modern ontology as the result of the historical trend I have narrated in Chapter Three. In this regard ritual is a cultural practice which limits the pathological tendencies of anthropocentric hyper-socialisation which Nietzsche associates with civilisation (Lemm 2009):

The task of culture is to free the human animal from the prejudices of civilization—that is, to lead the human animal beyond a moral and rational conception of its becoming toward the affirmation of life as inherently amoral, a-rational, and innocent. (Lemm 2009, 13)

Being cultured in this sense, is becoming more properly an animal free "from the prejudices of civilization". This accounts for the objective of ritual which seeks to surface universal states that refer to our status as human-animals sensing our environments and creating cultural meaning from our peculiar embodiment. Upon this we can build the possibility of a Language of Birds. Bereft of this function and its relationship to a living ecology, ritual becomes disenchanted as

theatre, without the subversion of identity associated with ecstasy, luck and thus beyond-human agency.

However, the “affective turn” (Richardson 2020, 58) of contemporary research is also re-animating the value of sense as touch, sound, taste, and colour, concerned with the trickery of the senses Abram attributes to the magician. In *The Spell of the Sensuous* (1996) Abram emphasises the synesthetic quality of information and of communication, while in “*Colours are Forces, the Signatures of Forces*”: *An Exploration of Colour as Entity* (2014) Amy Hale tells us,

For most cultures colours have not only been perceived as symbolic of other principles, but they have also been interpreted by artists and magicians as distinctive entities which can be summoned and called forth and which will subsequently be able to act upon the physical plane. Sometimes colours are believed to be independent beings, but more commonly they are interpreted as powers which can be not only employed, but invoked in a sacred manner to produce specific effects in both the artist and viewer. (Hale 2014)

This possibility of affective triggers enlivened in magical practice as powers or entities, depends on a shared cognitive structure which can bypass subjective conditioning, facilitating an innate aesthetic system I described in Chapter One. The capacity for colour to act upon the physical plane in this way, to “to produce specific effects in both the artist and viewer” is thus dependent on an innate ontology equivalent to Alejandro Jodorowsky’s language of the unconscious (Jodorowsky 2010, viii). Following apprenticeship with traditional healers in Mexico, “often performing miracles using the honorable tricks of a skilled magician” (Jodorowsky 2010, viii) Jodorowsky developed his conception of sacred traps whereby a patient is tricked to “firmly believe in the possibility of a cure” (Jodorowsky 2010, viii) which aids their recovery as a psychosomatic miracle. Jodorowsky thus employs subliminal triggers or tricks identified herein as colour, to induce psychosomatic effects in viewers—including the use of tarot cards. For Jodorowsky this discourse with the unconscious is experienced as panic, whereby they are relocated from the normative order into a liminal place wherein miracles can occur, but which is marked by the disintegration of object boundaries including those which support the normative experience of self-hood (Jodorowsky, viii). This technique is generic to ritual insofar as it is

modelled on Jodorowsky's observation of the practices or "tricks" of traditional magicians, which David Abram has also identified with his mentor, the traditional Nepalese magician Sonam (Abram 2011, 226-227). It depends on the possibility of a communicative interface between persons which divines these innate structures, thereby enlivening *The Language of Birds*.

Sense data, including colour, is therefore presented as a form of repetition and association which transmits non-linguistic forms of data, interpretable by the shared cognitive structures Turner attributes to human beings, founded in shared experience. These senses are resurrected in ritual practice to give order to the experience of chaos during sensory deprivation, or to synthesise chaos into luck. They thus function as a projection of the imagination founded in nature, which institutes the zone of the negative insofar as this imagination's very formulation in nature subverts anthropocentric codes and goes beyond-the-human. This projection of the imagination motivates David Lewis-Williams description of the sites of the Pleistocene cave paintings as "the limitless *terra incognita* of the human mind" in *The Mind in the Cave* (Lewis-Williams 2016, 11), where he also describes the cave walls as a membrane between worlds. In *Juniper Fuse* (2003) Eshleman similarly animates the caves as the site of a psychic descent into the underworld which disoriented conceptions of space into a "multidirectional unbroken interrelation without frame" (Eshleman 2003, 83) thereby personifying the cave as a conscious being itself. These views are characteristic of rituals of sensory deprivation which sever all ties to an anthropocentric order associated with conscious experience in daylight. This is a death-dream work which undermines reality rather than the ideal. Reality has been transgressed by the demonstration that it is, in fact, imagined. This dazzling confrontation with imagination represents the death-dreams I described in Chapter Two which absorbs all experience into the imagination. This supports Turner's position insofar as the imagination is constructed in nature, but becomes animate, displaced and mobile. However, by encountering itself and thereby instigating crises, it is freed from over-identification with anthropocentric codes, including those which impose pathological narratives of illness.

Relocated in this way, one emerges into a place where nothing exists except the imagination. Physical phenomena become avatars of divine possession, embodiments of spirits, and masks of

revelation. This checking-out from shared reality into a space of private dreaming which ultimately becomes public, is common to rituals of cave painting and vision questing as practices of separation, liminality, and incorporation. It also characterises rituals revolving around the private Big Huts in the South Pacific (Taussig 1999, 103) or Shaking Tent ceremonies generic to many North American ritual practices, with modern derivations including the Yuwipi ceremony, which sees a medicine man or shaman tied up in darkness. Indeed, sensory deprivation characterises Yuwipi by definition,

Nearly all previous ethnographers translate Yuwipi as "to wrap," or "they wrap him up," focusing on what has often been regarded as the most salient feature of the ritual, the Yuwipi man's being wrapped in a blanket or quilt and firmly bound... Yuwipi is derived from *yuwipi*... "to wrap around, bind up, bandage" (Powers 1984, 87).

The present-day practice of Yuwipi rituals reenact the Shaking Tent ceremonies of Indigenous Americans, and are "widespread throughout subarctic North America, from Siberia to the Atlantic seaboard, south to where similar rituals seem to flourish around the Great Lakes" (Powers 1984, 88). Anthropologist and Sioux adoptee William K. Powers describes the practice of Yuwipi among the Oglala Lakota Sioux, in which a medicine or Yuwipi man is bound in ropes and blankets in a blacked out room, "invoking spirits and sacred stones to help cure patients or find lost articles" (Powers 1984, 88) before "being loosed by magic" (Powers 1984, 89). Claude Lévi-Strauss documents comparable practices among the Indigenous Sammi of Finland, who are asked to find a lost amulet: "The men insist that they first be enclosed alone in a house, then they send their Doubles to the island, which the text expresses by the phrase *i hamförum*, 'in a voyage of the Double'" (Lévi-Strauss 2001, 95).

This resemblance is symptomatic of dualistic pluralism which Ulf Drobin attributes to "all peoples who remained outside the influence of the so-called high religions and seems in that respect to be more or less universal" (Drobin; Jackson 2016, 83-84). As I have already shown, dualistic pluralism facilitates the shamanic precondition of the free-soul or double capable of undertaking vision quest. It nonetheless entails an ecstatic death-practice, as one rejects present systems of identification during ritually instigated separation, to animate universal ones founded

in the imagination. This presents a rationale for the significance of sensory deprivation in ritual practice, which induces the crises productive of an encounter with the double. In the following section I will delve into this process in greater detail by examining the religious African Diasporic practices of Haitian Voudou, and Afro-Brazilian Candomblé, which I will compare to native Sudanese Zār to illuminate a consistent ritual logic revolving around the ritualised interference of the double during ritual separation.

5.4 Possession States in the Animist Ritual of Candomblé

In the African Diasporic rituals of Haitian Voudou and Afro-Brazilian Candomblé, as well as in native Sudanese Zār, a group of people assemble in a circle as a ritual supplicant dances in the centre accompanied by repetitive drumming and chanting. The supplicant is expected to be possessed by a higher order spirit known as a *Lwa*, *Orixá*, or *Zayran* which communicates to the group through this medium; having been “dispossessed of one’s self”, practitioners are “ridden by a deity” (Cussans 2017, 15). In *Undead Uprising*, Jon Cussans describes how crisis is ritually instigated as “the pivotal moment where the *other within* is on the verge of superseding and replacing the subject it has come to inhabit” (Cussans 2017, 338). This “absolutely unassimilable Other” (Cussans 2017, 338) is personified as a deity, and representative of a beyond-human.

Among Candomblé devotees, this other within is constructed. Roger Sansi tells us that “Candomblé people ‘construct’ their saints as autonomous agents, at the same time that they build themselves as persons” (Sansi 2007, 22). This process is guided by divine contact with a double which becomes phenomenal during ritual ceremony and is personified in Candomblé as the Orixá. The Orixá is both indigenous and foreign to the supplicant, having been contacted through a psychic gift which identifies a person as an often involuntary medium.

Many initiates in Candomblé do not join the cult out of choice, but because a spiritual entity, the *Orixá* or *santo* (saint), forced them to. The *santo* will cause physical, mental and social afflictions if the initiates do not fulfil their duties (*obrigação*) and pay them worship... The process of initiation in Candomblé can be described as an attempt by the

initiate to regain agency over her own body and her own life. But to achieve that, the patient has to start by recognizing her subordination to the *santos*. (Sansi 2007, 24)

Orixás are described as deified ancestors, and often linked to stars. While a celebrated class of commonly invoked Orixás and saints do exist, gifted initiates are understood to incorporate personal Orixás who are introduced into the practice during the process of initiation, allowing for its continual regeneration. In this sense Candomblé operates as a kind of spiritual machinery which formulates psychic heterogeneity into appropriate imagery which can be absorbed back into the practice, and stabilised.

Sansi also describes Orixás as representations of community memory, “embodying marginal or repressed elements in the official history of Brazil... that help or attack people in their daily lives by extraordinary means” (Sansi 2007, 33-34). Common Orixás embody historic black experience through an Afro-centric symbolism which invokes traditional deities to describe contemporary experience, including the synchronistic appearance of the African deity Exu in the figure of the linen zoot suit-wearing *malandro*, described by the Candomblé priestess or *mãe do santo*, Madalena, as the Slave,

he is the Slave because he 'works' at the command of the *mãe do santo*. 'Work' (*trabalho*) in this sense also means 'to work spells', because the Slave is the master of sorcery. He is subordinated to the *mãe do santo*, in contrast with the Orixás, who rule over her. The Slave is made subject to the *mãe do santo* by the arts of sorcery, which make him 'work' the spells. But his subordination is ambiguous. The Slave does not work for *mãe do santo* out of loyalty but he works for money. He is extremely touchy and tricky. If one makes the offering the wrong way, or stops making it, or somebody pays him better, the 'work' (spell) of the Slave can be counterproductive. He can easily betray you. That is why he is identified with the *malandro*, the hustler, because he has no ethics: he is an individualist pursuing his own gain. And yet, he is a subordinate, a Slave: he can be summoned to work at any moment. The Slave/Malandro, in all his contradictions, contains an extremely complex discourse on the history of the relationship between labour and money in Brazil. (Sansi 2007, 33)

Other *santos* and Orixás described by Sansi, including *The Indian*, similarly personify social facts, allowing them to speak for themselves and to embody complex relationships, states and emotions associated with the traumas of colonisation and slavery. Cussans similarly compares the possessive states experienced by Voudou supplicants to the experience of modern slavery which saw African slaves treated as capital, “owned by disincarnate entities that made them perform feats of endurance, self negation and supernatural virtuosity far in excess of the utilitarian demands of their enlightened masters” (Cussans 2017, 82). African diasporic rituals like Voudou, or Afro Brazilian Candomblé and Capoeira, which have developed in the exceptional experience of slavery, are thus often performed as an expression of this circumstance as well as sites of resistance and healing which sublimate the experience of possession entailed by slavery. Floyd Merrell shows how the experience of slavery is also inscribed in Afro-Brazilian Capoeira as the highest ideal of “Deception through conformity” (Merrell 2018, 23), even generative of its own colloquial vocabulary of abjection.

However, the ritualization of this experience in ceremony has led to the Western view of “voodoo” as a “simple, xenophobic shorthand for assumptions about the differences between White, rational and scientific civilisation, and Black, irrational and superstitious savagery” (Cussans 2017, 105) which Cussans describes. This is symptomatic of the diminishment of ritual in modernity whose systems of idealisation abstract the body, rendering it useless, mute, and controllable. The exiled knowledge of the body is descriptive of the translation glitch between epochs by which, according to Merrell, “Candomblé is often dubbed by Westerners as a fetish cult, an irrational, ‘primitive’ belief, and at best a religion” (Merrell 2018, 103).

The (racialised) opposition between rational and irrational belief systems described here, is indicative of the transformation of knowledge during modern industrialisation which was also integral to the nature of trans-Atlantic slavery in the 16-19th centuries (Federici 2014, 103-105). Whereas, the worldview black slaves exported to the New World, which mingled with displaced Indigenous populations, is expressive of a pre-modern sentiment associated with animism and dualistic pluralism, as well as alternative forms of social organisation which have not been incorporated by the modern state. As I have argued in Chapter One, this includes ritual practice and its heterogeneous forms of knowledge-making endemic to the order of music. Cussans corroborates, “From this perspective the modern [Voudou] zombie can be seen as a transitional

figure by which the mysterious, occult practices of so-called primitive societies are made to coincide with the faceless, abstract forces of the modern Capitalist economy” (Cussans 2017, 111). We can thereby detect in the intoxicating rituals of the African Diaspora, the trace of a Dionysus who has vanished from our own culture; where indeed, he is called by the name Esu.

In this regard the rituals of the African Diaspora are expressive of a ritual logic which actually precedes the experience of slavery, but refers to a pre-modern worldview traced to Africa, and by route of Egypt, Persia, as the seat of a wisdom tradition which Hanegraaff has described as Platonic Orientalism (Hanegraaff 2013, 73). Platonic Orientalism systematised an alchemical paradigm native to the school of thought of the Egyptian, Hermes Trismegistus, inherited from the Persian, Zoroaster. This bears some weight on Esu’s identification with Hermes which I have referred to in Chapter One. As per Hanegraaff, it offers some context for the spread of familiar shamanic practices from Persia and Egypt into Europe by virtue of the Ancient Greeks, and into the Americas from Asia via Siberia: a direction of proliferation which Ulf Drobin also refers to in *Horizons of Shamanism* (Drobin; Jackson 2016, 81-82). Many Capoeira masters will similarly attribute various instruments of its *bateria* (musical orchestra) to Persia and Egypt.

This religious source referred to “concepts of correspondences, living nature, imagination mediations... and perhaps even transmutation” (Hanegraaff 2013, 73) which are also native to the African system of animism expressed in Yoruba, Fon, and Bantu traditions that have informed the development of African Diasporic rituals including Haitian Voodoo, as well as Candomblé and Capoeira in Brazil. The legend of the capoeirista *Besouro Manganga* describes his transformation into a beetle as he fled persecution, expressive of an animist conception of the world that allows for magical states including transmutation as ritual possession. Bira Almeida thus describes a past that

Allude[s] to skills, knowledge, and power beyond normal comprehension. There were *capoeiras* with *corpo fechado* (closed bodies), invulnerable to bullets; *capoeiras* who transformed themselves into animals or trees to escape persecution; *capoeiras* who disappeared at will in a moment of necessity, fighters undefeated in impossible situations; and healers of extraordinary success. There are no rational explanations for the feats of many in the lore of the art. (Merrell 2018, 89)

Additionally, in *Capoeira, A Brazilian Art Form* (1981) the scholar and Capoeira master Bira Almeida informs us that the Sudanese composed of Yoruba and Dahomean peoples, was one of the three major African groups that contributed to the slave population in Brazil during the formation of Capoeira in the seventeenth century—alongside the Mohammedanized Guinea-Sudanese and the Bantu groups from Angola, Congo and Mozambique (Almeida 1986, 14). Merrell describes the cultural melting pot these groups generated as “an effervescent contradictory yet complementary cultural flow” (Almeida 1986, 14).

This stew produced the animistic religion Candomblé; “a combination of religious-philosophical practices from a diversity of African natives: Ketu-Nagô (Yoruba), Ijexá (Yoruba), Jêjê (Fon), Angola (Bantu), Congo (Bantu), and Caboclo of Amerindian tradition” (Merrell 2018, 105). Since then, Candomblé and its symbiotic practice Capoeira, have developed in and around the black state of Bahia, which operated the first slave market of the New World in Salvador de Bahia from 1558.

Comparing Candomblé and Voudou to Zār is legitimate and pertinent on these grounds as they appear to be variations of a shared African sensibility. The Capoeira expert, Mestre Cobra Mansa (Cinézio Feliciano Peçanha) and Matthias Assunção have similarly undertaken a comparative study between African ritual and Capoeira, which produced the film ‘*Jogo de Corpo. Capoeira e Ancestralidade*’ (2013).

Jogo de Corpo documented their research trip to Southern Angola which attempts to trace the origins of Capoeira to local cultural manifestations, most particularly the “zebra game” of Engolo among the Nyaneka-Humbi people. Mestre Cobra Mansa eventually concludes that Capoeira is essentially Brazilian. However, his analysis is predicated around the concept of a combat game as opposed to the concept of a possession cult I will employ. Bira Almeida (Mestre Acordeon) also emphasises the martial art aspect of Capoeira, referring to the Second Annual Capoeira Tournament promoted by the World Capoeira Association in California (Almeida 1986, 55) in *Capoeira, A Brazilian Art Form* (1986). Such tournaments are still controversial among conservative masters associated with Capoeira’s traditional form *Capoeira Angola*. However Almeida also asserts,

For us *capoeiristas*, the *jogo de capoeira* [game of capoeira] transcends each occasion of its actual performance and translates to every moment in the life. Capoeira is not a costume to be worn and taken off according to the situation or tournament. It is our own skin. We carry it all the time. We are cats, rats, and monkeys, ferocious and gentle beasts in cavalcade through the many *rodas* [circles] of life (Almeida 1986, 55).

My interpretation deviates from these researchers and experts insofar as it does not emphasise Capoeira's martial art aspects, but – like Merrel – emphasises its symbiosis with the animist religious practice Candomblé and thus its magical techniques of mimicry as trickery. This allusion to magic can be described as a gendered reading of Capoeira derived from my own practice as a woman, in terms of the feminised construction of magic.

I began my practice of Capoeira in 2014 at London Senzala under the guidance of Mestre Sanhaço. From 2016-2019 I lived in Stockholm, Sweden where I encountered *Angoleiros do Mar* and trained under Mestre Marcelo de Angola. During this time I visited Salvador, Bahia twice, staying for a total of seven weeks on the island of Itaparica where Angoleiros do Mar was founded, and where many of its accredited teachers originate. I also attended the annual *Angoleiros do Sertão* festival in Feira de Santana in 2019, at the residence of Mestre Claudio. In 2018- 2019 I successfully applied for funding from the Nordic Culture Point and Nordic Culture Fund to develop the Speaking Bodies network in conjunction with Angoleiros do Mar Stockholm, which networked Capoeira Angola groups in Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Norway to host and participate in Capoeira Angola festivals over two years. In 2019 I returned to London and visited various groups, training alone during the two-year Covid Lockdown period but developing an 'underground' movement with friends which organized *rodas* (ceremonies) at a Hari Krishna Temple, squat and in the streets. From 2022 I began regularly attending *Filhos de Angola* classes run by Trelan Ian, under Mestre Learcio. In 2023 I visited Paris for six weeks and trained with Angoleiros do Mar under Contra Mestre Fubuia. I have also participated in various festivals and workshops with a variety of male and female masters, teachers and groups. So, while I have some degree of experience and am established in my personal practice, at this moment I am not intimately affiliated with any group and far from possessing expertise. My experience has also been informed by my identity as a woman. As such my interpretation of

Capoeira relies on its symbiosis with the matriarchal cult Candomblé, which Merrill describes as a symbiotic practice in *Capoeira and Candomblé* (2005).

Candomblé, Voudou, and Zār are all matriarchal cults which can be oriented around the fertility practices Turner uses to characterise the *Isoma* ritual among the Ndembu of Zambia (Turner 1991, 13) whose curative rites resemble those Boddy attributes to Zār whereby possessive spirits present a threat to fertility which can be absolved by performance of appropriate rites (Turner 1991, 13). Capoeira diverges here, as a ritual organised around patriarchal forms of authority including the expertise of the (predominantly male) masters. Nonetheless, Merrell has shown that “Many of the symbols, colours, and meanings in the [Candomblé] Terreiro [territory] are also found in a typical Capoeira Roda,” (Merrell 2018, 109) with various traditional masters practising Capoeira as a Candomblé rite.

The shared religious context described previously accounts for the resemblance between Afro-Brazilian Capoeira and Candomblé, and Haitian Voudou, despite their development in geographic isolation. Their common origin is traceable in the construction of the trickster figures Brer Rabbit in North America and Anansi in the Caribbean, who Emily Marshall Zobel has traced to the West African Esu and Legba (Marshall 1989, 19): deities who are also invoked in Voudou and Candomblé. In *The Signifying Monkey* (2014) Gates JR also emphasises the significance of Esu for black culture in the New World (Gates JR 2014, 6-7). This commonality accounts for the shared logic these rituals express—involving instigated crises to invoke the double. The double often represents an external spirit, an ancestor being or demonic power who possesses the ritual supplicant. It is a logic generic to the rituals discussed here, a *why* or *point* inscribed with a *way of seeing the world*: its problems, possibilities and solutions—that appears to originate in Africa. But as we have seen, the ritual function of the double also describes the shamanic practices of vision questing among the Norse, Sammis, Medieval Europeans, and Amerindians similarly operating ontologies of dualistic pluralism. The double similarly appears in gnostic Christian theology. It is thereby a trace of an Old World order, where we can locate mythopoesis in a wonderful time riven with lucky states derived from ecological intimacy and experienced as music.

5.5 The Mythopoeic Double in Zār

Outlining the premise that the ritual practices of Afro-Brazilian Candomblé and Capoeira, and Haitian Voodoo share a worldview concerned with integrating the double, we find a comparable possession practice in the Sudanese Zār cult. Cornerstones appear such as shared origin, the facilitation of collective trance states through music to induce possession by historicized spirits, the idea of a possession sickness which must be managed in a dialogic relationship between possessed and possessor resulting in the creation of personhood, and the authority of a matriarchal figure.

In *Wombs and Alien Spirits* (1989), Boddy tells us that “Zār refers to a type of spirit, the illness such spirits can cause by possessing humans, and the rituals necessary to their pacification” (Boddy 1989, 131-132). These spirits are described as *zayran* (Boddy 1989, 134). She informs us the Zār probably predates the coming of Islam while “variations of the same name appear in Egypt... Ethiopia... Somalia.. Arabia..... and southern Iran” (Boddy 1989, 131-132). Additionally, “most scholars consider the word zār to derive, not from Arabic, but from Persian or more plausibly—given the long establishment of the cult in Gondar and vicinity—Amharic” (Boddy 1989, 26). As such, it “probably predates the establishment of Islam, due to its resemblance with pan-African practices including the contemporary practice of saint veneration within Sudanese Islam, inherited from its Christian antecedents” (Boddy 1989, 26). In other words, contemporary Sudanese Islam is the product of its local (Christian) ancestry anyway. By extension, and like both Candomblé and Capoeira, the Zār cult is a cauldron of African religious practices adapting to transforming historical contexts.

Central to Voodoo, Candomblé, and Zār is the inducement of trance, in order to facilitate possession by historicized spirits which represent social experience. In the roster of well-known Zār spirits we find holy men (and women), Ethiopian overlords, Arab military invaders, western Christians, Syrian gypsies, and cannibal sorcerers associated with the magic of slaves. Possession by these spirits institutes a foreign or neutral zone, from where the entranced person can irresponsibly observe their own experience from an external position (Boddy 1989, 350). This reformed subjectivity is constructed by the ritual *antilanguage* described by Janice Boddy

(Boddy 1989, 157), which alienates and reconfigures the social order, resulting in the embodiment of a new way of being, or a new code which while cooperative with the hegemonic order, nonetheless undermines it by establishing a new sovereignty—that of the spirit. In this manner, Boddy remarks that *once possessed, always possessed* (Boddy 1989, 134): gestural incorporation of the zayran spirit during ritual is only an episodic revelation of a permanent possession which begins to disturb daily life.

During trance, the social identity of the possessed has been suspended in the state of entrancement which can be phenomenally authenticated as being in rhythm. Being in rhythm expresses the entranced state of corporeal automation, or an automated offline state, which can be appropriated by another intelligence or spirit. This cognitive division of *offline* and *online* processes occurs on a daily basis, and can be exemplified by the automatic practice of touch typing. By taking some computational tasks offline through technical conditioning which becomes automated, a person is able to invest online memory to novel problems, in this case, regarding what to type. This flow state is inherent to musical practice which ritual similarly fosters, with practitioners tasked to simultaneously play instruments, sing songs and respond to ritual performance as a collective construction.

Such ritual trances thus appear capable of subsuming the online system manager (conscious mind) into its offline processes, thereby employing a new script-writer, or higher order consciousness to take command of the boat, so to speak. As such Boddy describes how during a *zār* among the Hofriyati, a young woman deemed to be acting inappropriately was identified as not being authentically possessed, because she was out of time (Boddy 1989, 129-130). She was not properly offline or automated and thereby available for possession, but acting from her own intentionality.

Availability for possession appears to be particularly effective for persons processing heterogeneous states, such as those restaged by ritual's sensory deprivation. Unable to codify this ambiguous load, the conscious brain extradites its complex states offline, simultaneously moving itself deeper into the unconscious until finally the entire cognitive mode has been subsumed and the subject is now in the territory of the Other. Both Candomblé and *Zār* describe this conversion

or possession as involuntary: “Possession, remember, cannot be cured, only managed. And its management is an ongoing process of spirit socialisation and human accommodation, optimistically expressed as exchange” (Boddy 1989, 163). This exchange is ritualised in Candomblé as the establishment of spirit worship, which co-extensively, imparts personhood on the possessed. Boddy similarly describes the aesthetic becoming of spirits in Zār, who demand specific clothes, accessories, perfumes, colours or foods as they manifest themselves through their mediums, representing essentially the development of novel religious practices which reveal new personality traits of established spirits, or induct new spirits into the cult.

Ambiguity represents one source for spirit attraction, and is associated within the Zār cult with infertility, where possession precipitates a threat to fertility (Boddy 1989, 167). Spirit appeasement becomes necessary to safeguard the fertility of the possessed. During menstruation women are particularly vulnerable to spirit possession, as bleeding represents an ambiguous state (Boddy 1989, 100). Spirits can be distracted from menstruating women with gold, jewellery and various other safe-guarding practices, but Boddy makes it clear that the central spiritual aphrodisiac so to speak, is blood (Boddy 189, 100-101). This is correlate with the broader cultural paradigm of Zār, where threats to fertility incarnate as spirits which contradict ideal femininity, such as un-infibulated gypsy women (Boddy 189, 13). Blood thereby represents spirit attraction as a representation of the ambiguous zone which defies social constructs established around ideal role-playing. Similarly, menstrual blood is highly ambiguous as a coincidental indicator of fertility and death. Essentially, heterogeneous forms which threaten fertility incarnate in spirit possession. While collective, reproductive fitness is dependent on embodying ideal gender roles, spirit possession may be a sophisticated mechanism to reintegrate the deviant person by allowing them to negotiate individual needs which the possessed person is not held responsible for, due to the intervention of an external spirit (Boddy 1989, 186). By appeasing these needs, the possessed woman returns to a more fertile state: her deviance/ double has been integrated into her femininity (Boddy 1989, 163). Again we see a performative logic concerned with integrating an excluded double by instigating a crisis associated with false subjectivity.

Spirit possession in this reading, can therefore be understood in Zār—as in Candomblé, Isoma, or Voodoo—as a sort of negotiation of agency and idealisation which empowers women (and

men) by providing an alternative site of self-actualization in the face of hegemonic oppression, capable of returning personal sovereignty. Boddy demonstrates that possessed persons do not exhibit the traits identified by narcissistic diagnosis or other mental illness associated with neurosis (Boddy 1989, 148).

Ritual practices like *Zār* thereby institute an alternative source of authority which maintains stable gender identity, by operating discharge valves for deviance which actually becomes expressive of a form of ideal gender identity which transcends the imposition of hegemonic (but temporary) values. They thereby stage ritual as the site of cultural resistance Lemm describes in *Nietzsche's Animal Philosophy* (2009), which resurrects the forgetfulness of the animal in ecstatic experience. This process represents the imaginative sovereignty of the abject person, which negates the established order by revealing the underground that has imagined it. I will now detail how this operates in Capoeira according to my own practice of it between 2014-2024. Capoeira is pertinent as an ecstatic ritual which facilitates the interference of the double through collective possession, mediated by the musical techniques. This crisis is generative of a beyond-human agency which I will identify with *The Language of Birds*, thus completing my mythopoeic theory of ritual.

5.6 Capoeira: A Game of Doubling

The ceremony of Capoeira involves a group of people standing in a *roda* (circle, or wheel), singing and (sometimes) clapping their hands, headed by a *bateria* (band) of musicians playing traditional instruments usually including three *berimbaus* (stringed gourds), two *pandeiros* (tambourines), an *agogo* (bell) and *reco reco* (percussion instrument), and an *atabaque* (drum). The master of ceremony plays the *gunga* (lowest tuned berimbau) which commands the *bateria* and *roda*, and leads the chorus by singing traditional songs (*corridos*) which the *roda* responds to. The ceremony traditionally begins with a berimbau player or capoeirista singing a *ladainha* which can be described as a poetic invocation or artistic statement. Inside the ceremonial space of the *roda* two entranced capoeiristas engage in a *jogo* (game) of trickery, dance, acrobatics, and combat movements, responding to one another but also the entire operation of the *roda* which becomes a spontaneous theatre of energetic contagion, collective cognition, interpersonal

substitution and transference in a performance of “deep psychology” which brings invisible and foreign doubles to presence as practitioners are tricked to reveal the workings of the unconscious.

The East has Zen

Psychoanalysis has developed in the West

In Brazil we have Capoeira. (Merrell 2018, 62)

Earliest records approximate Capoeira’s origin between 1624 and 1654 during the Dutch occupation of south-eastern Brazil (Merrell 2018, 4), while there is a general consensus that Capoeira was developed in Brazil by enslaved Africans who, fusing sentiments of native Africa and Indigenous Brazil, with the experience of slavery and displacement, generated a cultural expression intended to condition practitioners as a means of self-defence, but whose strategies of resistance were not predicated on violent confrontation due to the systematic incarceration of the slave. This resulted in a clandestine culture for which subversion, negation, duplicity, and silent communication were inscribed in the personality of the slave as a long-term struggle for liberation, celebrated as the highest virtues of magic, seduction, cunning, and treachery, or *mandinga*, *manhã*, *malandra*, and *malícia*.

This secret resistance is enacted through strategies of signification, which create invisible correspondences and representations that undertake the clandestine work of symbolic reorganisation, by communicating subliminally through wordplay and body language. These skills were also necessary for communication across the (often imposed) linguistic barriers that operated between slaves originating from different tribal nations with diverse language and cultural systems. In *The Signifying Monkey* (2014) Gates JR describes signification as “metaphorical substitution” (Gates JR 2014, 50); furthermore, “To Signify, in other words, is to engage in certain rhetorical games” (Gates JR 2014, 54). This musical faculty is developed through the practice of imitation in the Capoeira jogo which generates hypnotic states of mimicry and dissemblance between partners.

Signifiers are experts at sending subtle signs through discreet but provocative positioning, and reading “tells” which betray others through unconscious slips. In this way the powerless person is armed with all the powers of the negative: the unseen, unspoken, and unconscious. They

acquire intuitive sensitivity approaching telepathy as their own unconscious acquires the tools to analyse and apply this kind of communication. In this way signification insidiously undercuts the naivety of spoken language, through suggestion and seduction which “tricks” others into revelations of their own projections, and by depositing subliminal suggestions in the unconscious. These suggestions slowly bloom into compulsive desires and convictions whose enactment begins the slow work of transforming the established social landscape, until it finally activates the sacred trap the signifier has invisibly sewed: the revelation of the double. This revelation ensnares the victim in the death-dream as a form of sublimated murder instigative of the crises which nevertheless, begins the healing process whereby inauthentic subjectivity is falsified. This mobilisation of the entire social ecology and the excess it animates, is musical and thus lucky.

This process is thus the sublimation and application of the musicality of the hunter in a social theatre, concerned with divining and generating lucky patterns that weave sacred traps. In this way the capoeirista represents the corporeality of the “artist as imitator” founded in their experience of nature as a site of constant mirroring, projection, and entrapment, wherein the double becomes representative of the experience of being stalked. Capoeira can thus be understood as a shamanic ritual in terms of Pendell’s definition of the shaman as someone who works with the double (Gyrus 2008).

Capoeira induces sensory deprivation through the use of music, repetitive movements and collective cognition which establishes pockets of liminal space separated from the ordinary social code. Its spontaneous choreography becomes hauntingly synchronised, as if possessed by the hand of a beyond-human entity intervening to direct this collective performance of music. Christopher Small and Eduardo Kohn refer to the possibility of this collective possession as semiotic systems become animate and are personified as deities. In Capoeira this is a musical expression which engenders alternative forms of communication, empathy and arousal which transgresses object boundaries owing to its contagious intoxication. Such trespassing of form allows for the hauntings of the imaginary double personified as the invisible man, whom Brandon LeBelle calls “*the acousmètre; the acting and talking shadow*” (LaBelle 2020, 37). This shadow, or double, haunts hearing as the trace of music “already moving elsewhere,” becoming a sonic presence multiplying through harmonic proliferation. This musical expression becomes

their invisible visibility, observable in rodas of Capoeira Angola embodying the present-absence of the *acousmêtre* through song and movement, described as *gaviões* [hawks] or *falcões* [falcons] in Capoeira's own jargon.

The following song of Capoeira, *Aqui do lado (veja veja)*⁶, describes the *acousmêtre*'s feat of possession, with the repeated *ai ai ai ai ai* expressing the distress of present persons contending with the absent presence of one such *gavião* making themselves known through the songs and movements of the roda:

<i>Aqui do lado tem uma lagoa</i>	Here on this side there is a lake
<i>Ai ai ai ai ai</i>	Ai ai ai ai ai
<i>Aqui do lado tem uma vista boa</i>	Here on this side there is a good view
<i>Ai ai ai ai ai</i>	Ai ai ai ai ai
<i>Aqui do lado tem um mar para nadar</i>	Here on this side there is a sea to swim
<i>E la em cima tem a lua para viajar</i>	And above there is a moon for travelling
<i>Aqui do lado tem um mar para nadar</i>	Here on this side there is a sea to swim
<i>E la em cima tem a lua para viajar</i>	And above there is a moon for travelling
<i>Veja veja veja veja veja</i>	Look look look look look
<i>Ai ai ai ai ai</i>	Ai ai ai ai ai
<i>Veja veja veja veja veja</i>	Look look look look look
<i>Ai ai ai ai ai</i>	Ai ai ai ai ai
<i>Quem eu queria não estava lá</i>	Who I wanted wasn't there
<i>Quem eu não queria estava presente</i>	Who I didn't want was present
<i>Quem eu queria não estava lá</i>	Who I wanted wasn't there
<i>Quem não queria estava presente</i>	Who I didn't want was present

The refrain '*Veja veja veja veja veja*' cautions present persons to observe what is happening in the apparently possessed roda, as the double makes himself known. This outlook establishes ecstatic flight as an ontological fact within the worldview of Capoeira with masks of revelation descending us into its otherworld "Angola". The frequent utopian references to Angola in

⁶ <https://dendearts.com/aqui-do-lado-veja-veja/>

Capoeira often functions as a nostalgic lament for native Africa, insofar as Angola is representative of the final African port before the deportation of black slaves to the New World. However this Angola can also be understood in line with Abram's description of indigenous Otherworlds and "Distant Times" which can be "more coherently understood as a unique dimension or *modality* of time, one that is more integral to the living present than it is to the historical past" (Abram 1996, 146).

The symbolism of the moon in the song *Aqui do Lado (veja veja)* appears as a direct reference to a guiding light for ecstatic travel in darkness, while the sea is often metaphorized in Capoeira as a site of contagious energy restaged in the ceremonial container of the roda which the educated capoeirista must navigate. The use of contrasting "sides" and the general mirrored structure of this song refers to the perspective of the absent *acousmêtre* and present capoeiristas. Direct allusion to this absent person as being wanted or unwanted, politicises them, rendering their becoming invisible as a political act which weaponizes their disenfranchisement. LaBelle describes the invisible man as "ontologically criminal," (LaBelle 2020, 39) fixed to the "untrustworthiness and unreliability of the acousmatic, this sound we hear but never returns to us its image" (LaBelle 2020, 40). This omnipresence becomes a haunting which derives power from the *acousmêtre*'s own displacement, described as "a complex platform of desperate existence as well as social transformation" (LaBelle 2020, 41).

So while Capoeira does not demonstrate formalised rites that deal with double appeasement as we see in Candomblé, Voudou, and Zār, it nonetheless facilitates collective possession states which result in the intervention of doubles, usually identified as ancestors. This ancestral intervention similarly re-situates the abject person in a universality which undermines present hegemonic oppression and is ultimately conducive to collective fertility. Capoeira's oral culture is thus riven with songs that maintain and construct cultural identity, and is practised as cultural resistance. This resistance maintains the possibility of ecstatic flight of the double, as a ritualistic shamanic feat.

In Chapter Three and throughout this thesis ecstasy has been associated with dualistic pluralism, wherein we find the shamanistic rituals and ceremonies which facilitate it such as Capoeira.

Mestre Pastinha, celebrated as the greatest traditional authority of Capoeira in modern times, is credited with stating “*capoeirista não é aquele que sabe movimentar o corpo, e sim aquele que se deixa movimentar pela alma.*” [a capoeirista is not someone who moves the body, but someone who lets themselves be moved by the soul]. However, while ecstasy has been exorcised from modern jargon by industrialisation, it continues to preoccupy literary theorists, psychoanalysts, and anthropologists often behind the guise of excess, trace, hauntings, or difference. However without an appreciation of the divinatory practices capable of synthesising it, ecstasy is deprived of its music and thus its integrative power. In allusion to these occult practices, LaBelle thus locates this discourse in the “black arts”. I will now show how the form of agency an ecstatic outlook engenders is an invitation to ecological belonging.

5.7 Beyond-Human Agency

Capoeira reenacts the “ecology of selves” (Kohn 2013, 78) described by Kohn in *How Forests Think*. This is a highly psychic state of imaginative politicking, where one’s subjectivity is being constantly mirrored, conditioned by and adapting to a transforming environment constructed in symbiotic semiosis with both humans and beyond-humans. It becomes meaningless to define oneself independently of it in the real sense that cognition is not confined to the brain, but extends into the environment where self emerges. This dislocated self, however, becomes vulnerable to dizzying traps of misdirection enacted by reactionary movements of semiosis constantly seeking to confuse predators and prey. These movements gain their own psychic life as they are conjured and reinterpreted in the collective psyche animating the invisible presence of what Kohn describes as “spirit-masters” (Kohn 2013, 154). In this dense tapestry of vested interests, everything is overrun with spirit simultaneously constructing the present, projecting future possibilities and remembering the past. This clothing is the “spirit realm [that] comes to capture the logic of a ‘living future’” (Kohn 2013, 208).

This imaginary jungle is an artistic construction, whose reality-quality or aesthetic sophistication merits its seductive powers: its ability to abduct players into its spiderweb of semiosis. Its convincing execution demands the high levels of artistry capoeiristas seek to obtain. But when

successfully imbibed, this construction can establish an alternative ideal which subverts lived reality through the power of imagination. This alternative ideal inscribes secret ideas in the unconscious through artistic strategies of signification, poetry and music which negates their victim's (appearance of) identity or sense, triggering symbolic crises by identifying the double: the lucky excess which undermines their self-narrative.

Capoeira continues to engender this artistic sensibility today through physiological disturbances in the aesthetic field, including through the handstand and its fundamental “upside down” posture which adjusts the visual field to a reversed register, which begins to deconstruct the nature of perception altogether—dislocating the practitioner who is simultaneously hypnotised by repetitive music and movement. This is a substantiation of Pendell’s description of *Pharmakon: On Poisonous Knowledge in Pharmakognosis*, in which he similarly suggests “We turn things upside down to find a new synthesis. This is the work of the alchemical furnace, the *athanor*. It was called the “Great Work.” We call this process of unlearning the *poison path*.” (Pendell 2010b, 3). For Pendell this poisoned state is the intoxicating realisation of the true-lie or death-dream, experienced as ritual crises:

That it is real. That it is not real.

That it is both real and not real.

That it is neither real nor not real. (Pendell 2010, 3).

Degrees of interpersonal responsibility surrounding this process establish the stakes of the game as a form of hypnotic predation in which souls are literally stolen. When wielded with a high level of sophistication, this technique can entrance an entire roda of persons hypnotised by contagious association, creating spontaneous theatres for which actual experience offers itself as the creative material of this living myth. This contagious effect continues even in the absence of the signifier, who has rightly earned infamy as a *mandingueiro* [magician. Feminine: *mandingueira*]. This magician gains entrance into the class of beyond-humans Kohn identifies as spirit-masters. In the following paragraphs I will detail what Kohn means by beyond-human agency in order to illustrate Capoeira’s function as an initiation into The Language of Birds which completes my mythopoeic theory of ritual.

Kohn presents beyond-human agency as the accumulative intelligence of semiotic systems, in this case forests, expressing themselves as animate subjects through signs. He describes the forest as a complex network of signs which become animate as the realm of spirit-masters who occupy an imaginary Otherworld human beings access through dream. Dream operates as an interface of communication between higher (spirit master) and lower level (human) consciousness etc. Accordingly, Runa Puma dose disobedient dogs with hallucinogens when reinforcing commands in order to facilitate complex (higher order) communication across species, with humans (Kohn 2013, 142-143). Importantly, dogs are muzzled so they cannot “speak back” and contaminate the social order by inviting humans to the ontological descent implied by conversation.

In this way we can say that the exposed unconscious of entranced dogs has been possessed and re-coded by humans, commanding them to perform signs which enlarge the appearance of human becoming. This could involve the possessed dogs adhering to territory boundaries which reinforce the symbolic reality constructed by the Runa. In this sense the dogs are “ridden” by another will from which they derive identity, purpose and their sense of the world. However, in this exchange they risk the loss of identity, which Bataille refers to as *the risk of communication*, and which Kohn locates in the gaze of the jaguar.

Kohn thus refers to the Ávila Runa’s practice of sleeping face-up in the forest, so that jaguars will recognize their faces while they sleep and not eat them; “...by returning the feline's gaze, we allow jaguars the possibility of treating us as selves. If, by contrast, we were to look away, they would treat us, and we may actually become, objects—literally, dead met, *aicha*” (Kohn 2013, 92). The jaguar’s recognition conditions the future with the loss entailed by communication: where in order to exist, I lose a part of myself by becoming identified with another, in this case, the predator. This loss is gravest when communication occurs across species, or levels of consciousness, demanding that I become other than I am and risking unhygienic contact with taboo beings.

This conundrum is amplified by the forest as a site of otherness, whose semiotic tapestry is not constructed according to an anthropocentric narrative but elaborates into a highly complex space woven by The Language of Birds where how one sees and how one is seen, is a fatal game.

Kohn refers to incidents of Ávila Runa becoming lost in the forest, dizzied by its maze of vested interests which overpower their own sense of the world—much like the hunting strategy of the anaconda.

As this imagining becomes increasingly complex it overruns the jungles, and subjectivities of invested selves whose existence becomes loss: wherein in order to continue to exist in this writhing place I must become it. Abram similarly refers to the “expanded set of senses” of the native hunter in the jungle, who gains “an awareness of events happening beyond his field of vision, hidden by forest leaves or obscured by the dark of night” (Abram 1996, 141), and who begins to weave their own traps through mimicry and misdirection, tricking prey into vulnerable positions. However this demands the loss of subjectivity I have described as sacrificial luck in Chapter Three. It risks the impossible departure of the Ávila Runa lost in the forest, and is similarly mythologized in the genesis myth of moonlight for the Salish-speaking Okanagan peoples of modern day British Columbia, documented by Claude Lévi-Strauss. In this myth the culture hero Coyote visits the house of giant Moon and hatches a plan to steal his light making tools. However, dwarfed within the giant household of a territory he nonetheless knows well, Coyote cannot depart; “At dawn, when the giant’s household woke up, Coyote was seen running round and round the hearth, continuing his monologue and covered with sweat, so much his efforts had exhausted him” (Lévi-Strauss 1995, 138).

This semiotic intoxication characterises ritual participation in Capoeira, which fragments subjectivity during episodes of trance. The capoeirista is tasked to become the ritual itself, possessing it entirely as a theatre of their narrative as their mimetic performance hypnotises collaborators so totally the audience, musicians and jogo becomes a spontaneous expression of their narrative. The theatre of the roda traps rivals in the game of the accomplished signifier: enchanting the ritual with a musical possession that reveals the appearance of the double, and attesting to the feats of signifiatory misdirection undertaken by predators as they transform the jungle into their hunting stage. Yet, in becoming the ritual, the sign-maker has become more than human. They have risked identity to become, in Kohn’s terminology “beyond-human”.

Thought in the modern sense of individual authorship collapses into subterranean networks and the invisible influences of being in the forest, where again, I am not separate from my

environment, neither are my inspirations, ideas or thoughts. In this state of affairs, spiritual life is mobile—not limited to objective identity, and gaining such distributed agency becomes predatory in its pursuit of expression. Finally, it begins to seek prey and victims.

Capoeira is thus a psychic game concerned with the artistic construction of an ideal. This ideal gains its own psychic life as it proliferates the community wherein the ritual lives. Suddenly one discovers themselves lost in an enchanted house, whose very furniture has become possessed with voices telling a story that negates lived reality. This site of entrapment redefines the centre of narrative-making to an externalised locus in the environment, wherein the double appears. The dream becomes death and is experienced as symbolic crises: but a crisis which endows the practitioner with power as their subjectivity is relocated into the ecology, which they now have the tools to transform. Capoeira can thus be interpreted as a mythopoetic ritual or game of doubling, concerned with instigating the lucky crisis which summons the double who is furthermore, native to *The Language of Birds*.

5.8 Conclusion: Ritual in Philosophical Animism

This chapter has been interested in presenting a mythopoetic theory of ritual which emphasises separation as ritually instigated crises which invite the double to presence during ritual liminality. This death-dreamwork is the poison Pendell describes as intoxication, which furthermore makes us lucky and powerful, as opposed to hysteric caricatures conjured by the presiding hegemony—at risk of losing touch with our own innate drives.

Rituals like Capoeira engender a musical form of agency described as luck, but founded on the subversion of anthropocentric identity instigated by the double. They thereby function as sites of cultural resistance which revives the human-animal in resistance to hegemonic oppression. They thereby “bring a certain sanity back home” (Synder in Pendell 2010, xiv). By examining the rituals described herein, I have illustrated that this “living tradition” (Pendell 2010c, 26) is still alive among communities that preserve worldviews of dualistic pluralism. They therefore offer alternative ontologies capable of critiquing the anthropocentricity of modernity recklessly

hurtling toward ecological catastrophe, as the absence of music. The understanding of ecological equilibrium these rituals privilege as music, is what has been risked in the modern transformation of knowledge founded on the sacrifice of luck, as indeed, the double. This mythopoeic double emphasises the importance of ritual for an ecological posthumanism this thesis has identified as philosophical animism.

Conclusion: Lucky Aesthetics

6.1 The Mythopoeic Ritual Process

This thesis has defined a theory of luck which suggests luck is expressive of ecological harmony. When the various orders of consciousness which describe an ecosystem are working in harmony, they are productive of luck—which Georges Bataille has compared to harvests in *The Accursed Share* (2013). These alternative orders are woven together by their participation in an animate food-chain which I have characterised as the site of living semiosis and trickery, following Eduardo Kohn’s theorising in *How Forests Think* (2013). I have thereby described animate semiosis as productive of lucky signs which are capable of signifying across orders of experience and consciousness. Luck is thus experienced as the aesthetic interface between orders, which collapse alternative perspectives into one sign that stitches seemingly unrelated events together. This possibility is expressive of the perspectival aesthetics Kohn attributes to the Indigenous Runa of the Ecuadorian Amazon concerned with defining a “viewpoint that encompasses multiple perspectives” (Kohn 2013, 97). Through this experience we encounter a beyond-human order that contextualises our subjective experiences in a metanarrative, associated in this thesis with ecological harmony, the food-chain, and sacred traps. This encounter with the beyond-human requires a common language capable of communicating across orders of consciousness, by which a lucky sign can be discerned as universally meaningful and thus capable of affecting events in all worlds. In this regard it acts on the world as animate semiosis, trickery, or a lucky aesthetic.

This view of luck suggests ecological harmony is something which can be viscerally experienced. In Chapter One I have argued this is no longer a preoccupation for moderns, insofar as we no longer ascribe to a musical cosmology which relates events in one symphony of meaning production as a universal becoming or harmony. Whereas so-called primitive cultures, which are inherently musical, subscribe to the possibility of ecstatic possession by this musical becoming, which can thus generate ecological collectivity by bringing possessed persons into

harmony with an ecology. This presupposes that subjectivity is constructed in collaboration with beyond-human others; a possibility which has become contemporary on merit of the appearance of the posthuman movement, which acknowledges forms of agency which exceed the human, including ecological and beyond-human sentience.

This posthuman development is amenable to the revision of unconventional systems of thought which I have associated with Dale Pendell and Bataille as ecstatic disciples of the “poison path” (Pendell 2010b, 3). This is consistent with Friedrich Nietzsche’s conception of “the mark of philosophical capacity” as “the gift of being able at times to see men and objects as mere phantoms or dream images” (Nietzsche in Tanner et al 2003, 15), expressive of “the fullness of life in the dreams, illusions, and passions of the animal” (Lemm 2009, 11) which “allows philosophy to overcome its understanding of itself as a science, entirely motivated by the drive to acquire knowledge and, instead, move toward the affirmation of itself as an art motivated by the drive to illusion” (Lemm 2009, 112-113). Norman O. Brown has similarly characterised philosophy as the evolution of the history of prophecy, as “a critical response to the “urban revolution,” that irreversible commitment of the human race to the city and civilization which spread outward from the “Nile to Oxus” heartland beginning around 3000 B.C. Prophecy is the perception of the potentialities, both for “good” and for “evil,” inherent in the new social structure” (Brown 1991, 46-47). Brown thereby characterises prophecy as mythopoeic rapture experienced as “God in us: *entheus*: enthusiasm; this is the essence of the holy madness” (Brown 1991, 6).

These views revive an alternative philosophical system predicated on the occult knowledge of the human-animal which subverts anthropocentric codes of identity associated with civilization, by which the philosopher’s “allegiance to her own single species begins to loosen; she begins to catch glimpses of a shimmering, ever-shifting lattice of affiliation and interdependencies—the filamental web that binds all beings. Now and then she may catch herself pondering matters less from a human angle than from the perspective of the forest or the river valley as a whole” (Abram 2011, 218). This repositioning of allegiance is harmonic, it is interested in the rhythm of an ecology animated as beyond-human personifications of the “pattern which connects” (Small 1998, 103).

The posthuman ontology, which acknowledges beyond-human forms of agency, has facilitated the appearance of this unconventional register during the contemporary “emergence of scholarship on human-animal relations” (Vint 2020, 3) descriptive of the environmental humanities. However rather than representing a completely new contribution to intellectual history, these positions revive premodern cosmologies associated with animism, ecstatic experience, and musical cosmologies in the Western tradition, descriptive of Arran Gare’s view of nature enthusiasm as a Neo-Platonic pantheistic materialism that originated in the Florentine Resistance, “Giordano Bruno, who was burnt at the stake in 1600, was the foremost proponent of this” (Gare 2021, 3). This lineage supports Stefan Herbrechter’s claim that ““after the human’ also needs to be understood as *before* the human” (Herbrechter in Vint 2020, 40).

The mythopoeic ritual process and its ecological emphasis is not new, but a revival of ideas associated with this history, as well as with the exorcism of ecstasy which I have described in Chapter Three. It describes musical practices of becoming lucky or coming into harmony, which facilitate possession states or altered states of consciousness associated with ecstatic trance. This thesis thus defends a premodern worldview which acknowledges luck, music, and ritual practice as forms of knowledge production capable of engaging with the beyond-human to critique and subvert anthropocentric subjectivity, which by contrast, alienates us from ecological harmony and isolates us in symbolic pathologies derived from civilisation. Ritual is undertaken to short-circuit such pathologies, and return us to the harmony of a musical ecology experienced as luck.

In this thesis I have constructed this argument accordingly: in Chapter One I emphasised the musical nature of luck in comparison to the chaotic nature of chance. In Chapter Two I showed how luck is divinatory by fleshing out *The Language of Birds* as a musical form of ecological semiosis, primarily through the work of Abram and Kohn. In Chapter Three I described luck as sacrificial, on the basis of the centrality of the double for the ecstatic practices of shamanism associated with ritual. These chapters describe a theory of luck as musical, sacrificial, ecological and founded on the double. These qualities are also expressive of the influence of shamanistic cosmologies on Pendell, who has functioned as the mouthpiece for my mythopoeic theory of

luck. I applied this theory in Chapter Four to a mythopoeic reading of ritual which emphasises the function of the double based on the possession states exhibited by rituals like *Zār*, *Voudou*, *Candomblé*, and *Capoeira* which call down doubles during ecstatic experience. Throughout my thesis I have stressed that these doubles initiate us into an ecological relationship with sentient nature, and thus conclude that ritual has an ecological function concerned with instigating the symbolic crises by which anthropocentric subjectivity is falsified; thereby relocating practitioners in an “ecology of selves” (Kohn 2013, 78).

Anthropocentric subjectivity refers to conceptions of self that have been over-identified with transitory value systems derived from social existence in civilisation, including forms of objectified identity. This means that ritual is concerned with managing our relationship with a sentient environment, by undermining anthropocentric subjectivity in order to bring us into ecological rhythm or harmony, which I argue is experienced as luck. The cultural anthropologist Victor Turner who developed the classic theory of the ritual process in *The Ritual Process* (1991) and *From Theatre to Ritual* (1982), supports the view that ritual is undertaken to short-circuit symbolic exclusion and revive a sense of universality among its practitioners. My contribution is to frame this universality ecologically in terms of its beyond-human application; to identify the ecstatic function of the double during ritual crises; and to describe this process in terms of luck.

My view of the ritual process has also been informed by the theatre-maker Alejandro Jodorowsky who modelled his creative practice on the performative semiosis of traditional healers, who instigate symbolic crises as “sacred traps” to induce miracles of psychosomatic healing wherein the patient is tricked into participating in their own recovery (Jodorowsky in LeValley 2010, viii). Kohn similarly describes how the perspectival aesthetics expressive of Indigenous cosmology (Kohn 2013, 97) facilitates trickery, including the experience of “something greater that, like a trap springing shut, suddenly encompasses [us]” (Kohn 2013, 97). I identify such traps as lucky signs, which are employed during ritualised acts of entrapment to instigate crises by signifying that which exceeds subjective knowledge, and is thus capable of affecting subliminal triggers associated with beyond-human experience.

I have also argued that the exclusion of ritual practices in the West vanishes the function of the double in terms of its capacity to instigate the symbolic crises described above. This exclusion is expressed by the modern rejection of luck which has prohibited the possibility for *différance* to resolve into a metanarrative or beyond-human synthesis described as music in Chapter One; in comparison to the postmodern privileging of chance and noise. In this regard, the musical forms of signification, cognition, and social cohesion I have identified with luck are concerned with the relationships that maintain ecological equilibrium by animating our landscapes and setting the anthropocentric limits that bring us into rhythm with beyond-humans in a food-chain. The centrality of the food-chain to this research reinforces this thesis' contribution to the research field of philosophical animism.

In the following sections I will draw out some discussions in elaboration of this conclusion, namely; the problem of luck as a metanarrative, luck as an expression of superabundance, the possibility of a lucky aesthetics, and a discussion of philosophical animism as a research field capable of locating these ideas in contemporary discourse.

6.2 Luck as Metanarrative

One of the central problems raised by the position of this research project is the value of a metanarrative, in this case luck. Luck operates as a metanarrative insofar as it synthesises iterations of difference into beyond-human agency associated with ecological sentience; whereby random events are interpreted as lucky signs expressive of ecological sentience, and are thus divinatory. In Chapter Four I have applied this framework to a comparative analysis of rituals of ecstasy. However, this is not an innocent framework insofar as metanarratives have been associated with patriarchy by both Donna Haraway and Val Plumwood, who are originators of the fields of research this thesis occupies. For these writers, metanarratives facilitate the institution of a system of anthropocentric myths which enforce and police systems of identity. It is thus important to consider if this critique is in contradiction to my conclusion, insofar as this thesis essentially defends luck as a metanarrative capable of synthesising iterations of difference into the possibility of beyond-human sentience. Furthermore, it does this on the basis of Haraway

and Plumwood's thought, in support of a posthuman worldview intended by contrary, to deconstruct the metanarrative of anthropocentric exceptionalism.

Specifically, the function of a metanarrative operates in this thesis in the guise of ecstasy; defined as the "straying of the spirit" (Lecouteux 2001, 12)—whereby a subject is understood to ecstatically transcend a subjective register, into the negative zone of the beyond-human as that which exceeds knowledge. This is also descriptive of my use of intoxication, as ecstatic possession by a musical synthesis which facilitates the straying of the spirit from subjective experience onto another register, identified with beyond-human experience. The possibility of this kind of intoxication, also described as "coming into harmony" throughout this thesis, is characteristic of posthuman writers like Kohn (2013), Abram (1996), and Pendell in *The Language of Birds* (2021). The forms of intoxication they describe, are capable of synthesising iterations of difference into a form of animate semiosis productive of lucky signs.

However, writers like Brown and Haraway have rejected synthesis as a seductive metanarrative of "organic wholeness through a final appropriation of all powers into a higher unity" (Haraway 1991, 150), in solidarity with the postmodern agenda described by Jean-Francois Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition* (1984) as the rejection of metanarratives. This rejection permeates Brown's conceptualisation of Dionysian chance as "absolute dismemberment" (Pendell 2008, 210) and substantiates Jonathan Boutler's claim in *After the Human* (Vint 2020) that "Postmodernism lives on, if only secretly, in the various forms and expressions of what we have come to term posthumanism" (Boutler in Vint 2020, 44).

Brown and Haraway took up this position in opposition to what they described as the penetration of patriarchy into all forms of social and symbolic organisation, by which the cosmos is "re-membered" (Haraway 1991, 151). This opposition to metanarratives operates as the postmodern legacy of resistance to the weaponization of metanarratives in response to the fascist genocides associated with WWII (Schechner 1979). Haraway's *The Cyborg Manifesto* thus critiqued "The relationships for forming wholes from parts, including those of polarity and hierarchical domination" (Haraway 1991, 151), while in *Staying with the Trouble* (2016) she defends the fragmentation of metanarratives into tentacular networks which Haraway offers as a

grassroots strategy of ecofeminist resistance. To this end, Haraway is “not interested in reconciliation or restoration, but [is] deeply committed to the more modest possibilities of partial recuperation and getting on together. Call that staying with the trouble” (Haraway 2016, 10).

Posthumanism has been founded on this position, and deconstructs what it views as our prevailing humanist myth in preference of an “ecology of selves” (Kohn 2013, 78) wherein subjectivity emerges in participation with other “disparate emerging selves” (Kohn 2013, 34) capable of deconstructing anthropocentric supremacy. Haraway’s ecofeminist opposition to metanarratives is relevant for my conception of luck insofar as my conception depends on the posthuman register, largely attributed to Haraway’s thought (Gare 2021; Thornton and Thornton 2015; Vint 2020). Similarly, my references to Plumwood’s philosophical animism also invoke her ecofeminist critique of metanarratives which Plumwood associated with binary thinking (Plumwood 2003).

This is an important context as it critiques my conception of luck as a metanarrative of harmony, insofar as any metanarrative can be weaponized as fetish. This critique has gone some way in undermining animist rituals concerned with beyond-human experience, insofar as ritual practice is generative of forms of authority often associated with patriarchy and centred around the notion of “the shaman” or “master of ceremony” in possession of occult authority. Indeed, a feminist perspective sceptical of metanarratives registers the prevalent forms of corruption and abuse endemic to Capoeira, arguably symptomatic of its patriarchal structures. This culture of corruption resulted in 2021 in an indictment against one of the biggest global Capoeira groups *Cordão de Ouro* which denounced “at least fifteen people for sexually abusing children and adolescents between the ages of 11 and 18” (Maciel et al, 2021). Unfortunately this is not an isolated case, but the tip of the iceberg. As such, employing luck as a metanarrative is not helpful where it veils the corruption of the ritual structures through which this form of luck is being reproduced, which is to the contrary, not capable of producing harmony.

The patriarchal structure of Capoeira diverges from Federici’s description of the matriarchal forms of knowledge-making she associates with oral culture and its ritual practices in *Caliban and the Witch* (2014). As I have indicated in Chapter Four, Capoeira is exceptional in this

respect, and contrasts with the matriarchal structures of the symbiotic ritual of Candomblé, which is also familiar to *Voudou* and *Zār*. However, this can be interpreted as a confirmation of Federici's description of the transformation of power from matriarchy to patriarchy during the Industrial Revolution (Federici 2014), associated with Capoeira's development in the legacy of modern slavery upon which Industrialisation was, in many respects, founded in the New World (Merrell 2018, 4). In this regard Capoeira is a product of Industrialisation and thus reproductive of the new forms of (patriarchal) power it sought to institutionalise, propped up by exploitative systems of identity oriented around the anthropocentric exceptionalism of man. While this context is also descriptive of the African Diasporic practices of Candomblé, and Voudou, these cults are more closely associated with African religious practice and are thus not so vulnerable to secularisation.

In *Defacement* (1991) the anthropologist Michael Taussig offers a narrative for the transformation of power from matriarchy to patriarchy, derived from Indigenous mythology native to the South-Pacific which narrates the mythic "massacre" of women by men for access to Big Hut as the site of ritual practice. Before this massacre "the basis of identity and of being was utterly different from what they became afterward. For there was then an enormous capacity for flux in the universe, with all sorts of identity-switching going on, back and forth" (Taussig 1991, 111). However after the massacre of women by men that obscured this Other time, "such flux ossified" (Taussig 1991, 111). This ossification is consistent with my description of the contemporary absence of cultural conceptions of metamorphosis in Chapter One, which I relate to our increasing alienation from the food-chain as the site of identity replacement. Subsequently for Taussig, the modern transformation of matriarchy to patriarchy is thus descriptive of the transformation "from natural to artificial mimesis" (Taussig 1991, 113). This transformation prohibits luck as a form of animate semiosis derived from natural mimesis, in preference to artificial systems of semiosis associated in this thesis with anthropocentric hegemony.

Luck can thus be identified as a matriarchal metanarrative associated with the flux of an Other time, insofar as it is not oriented around anthropocentric value systems and thus opens space for the interference of the "uninvited guest" (Pendell 2008, 155); personified by Plumwood as the "crocodile as trickster" (Plumwood 2012, preface) that attacked her. This is consistent with the

transformation of knowledge Federici attributes to the Witch Hunt as an attack on matriarchal forms of community, cultural production, and memory in *Caliban and the Witch* (2014). Federici's marxist interpretation is appropriate here insofar as it registers the economic forces that drive social change, descriptive of the predicament of the African Diaspora who were extradited to the Americas as an economic force during modern slavery.

While the matriarchal ontology Taussig describes as "flux" is still enacted in Capoeira insofar as it is practiced as an ancestral *séance* possessed by beyond-human semiosis, its patriarchal systems of power are also threatening this function insofar as they have become productive of cycles of abuse associated with modern slavery, and enforced by an Industrial value system predicated on the exceptionalism of Western man. These pathologies conspire together to enshrine the powers of the "master" and to undermine beyond-human agency associated with ecological sentience, and thus the purpose of ritual practice as I have defined it. This is logical to the chronology of the disappearance of the double I have described in Chapter Three, whereby the flux and illusion Taussig attributes to a matriarchal Other world wherein the double operates, is vanished into the artificial mimesis associated with modern empiricism and its linearity of experience. This means that shamanistic practices associated with ecstasy are inherently matriarchal, insofar as they are concerned with dualistic pluralism, which revives the negative zone of the beyond-human other as nature. This is descriptive of luck as expressive of the webs of relations that stitch us into the food-chain, whereby we become lucky but only in subversion of anthropocentric forms of identity predicated around modern ideals of success.

Luck can thus be rescued as a metanarrative which contradicts Brown's and Haraway's position, insofar as it facilitates the emergence of beyond-human agency capable of undermining anthropocentric systems associated with the artificial mimesis of modern patriarchy. This is consistent with the feminine construction of magic and its association with gambling before the modern era, by which luck was feminised (Stark 2020). In commitment to matriarchal epistemologies oriented around luck, feminist practitioners can thus engage responsibly in practices like Capoeira insofar as they are committed to consistent forms of knowledge that are not oriented around patriarchal systems and its artificial mimesis. This alternative value system is furthermore descriptive of the centrality of the feminine deity Yemanjá in Capoeira's practice.

However, while this anti-patriarchal alternative has become identified with women, the problem of patriarchal forms of knowledge production and their insidious operation in oral culture across genders, has been brought to attention by the spectacle of the Australian academic woman, Rachael Gunn, during the 2024 Olympics.

Rachael “RayGunn” represented Australia in the breakdancing tournament and received zero points for her performance, which has been internationally criticized on merit of the astonishing lack of technique she demonstrated on a world stage (Turnbull; Rodd 2024). This has been made problematic by her access to resources as an academic specialising in cultural studies and breakdancing, leading to speculation that her breakdancing career was founded on forms of patriarchal privilege associated with the epistemology of the modern regime, and representative of the systematic exclusion of ethnic minorities associated in this thesis with animist cosmologies and their knowledge systems. This is also problematic insofar as breakdancing is a street culture derived from the same forms of ritualised and “black” signification associated with Hip Hop (Gates JR 2014, xxxi) which also describe Capoeira as a living culture founded on oral memory and practiced as cultural resistance to this very kind of incorporation into the Industrial regime. This goes some way in defending Raygunn’s performance insofar as it critiques the institutionalisation of breakdancing as an Olympic sport to begin with, which would thus become subject to modern descriptors of performance. In any case, Rachael Gunn has become representative of the disguised penetration of patriarchy into street culture which threatens the integrity of these practices. Gunn demonstrates how this problem transcends gender identity as an ontological problem descriptive of the reproduction of value systems, rather than simply the positioning of gendered status.

This also stands in defence for the system of expertise developed by Capoeira to regulate its authenticity, which is oriented around the collective initiation of masters. The prevalence of male masters cannot be reducible to a sexist bias insofar as it is interested in the preservation of appropriate values; in effect, becoming a master of Capoeira is dependent on the understanding of its values, not gender. This accounts for the existence of female *mestras*, including the legendary figure of Dandara dos Palmares, celebrated as a capoeirista and heroine who resisted slavery. Whereas the initiation of male *mestres* has been sympathetic to men owing to the

conservative performance of gender identity in Afro-Brazilian culture which has not been hospitable to the sight of women doing cartwheels in allies, until recently. As such one can argue that without this system of expertise, Capoeira becomes vulnerable to the masks of patriarchalism worn by female practitioners like Rachael Gunn. I include this here to demonstrate that the rejection of metanarratives often identified with patriarchalism, can underestimate the reality of practice. This discussion is not undertaken as a discourse on sexism, but enables me to defend luck as a metanarrative from Haraway and Plumwood's ecofeminist critique.

This also accounts for the Capoeira references I have employed in this thesis, who I have acknowledged as experts capable of authentically representing the cultural form insofar as they have also been initiated as masters: Mestre Cobra Mansa (Peçanha et al 2013) and Mestre Acordeon (Almedia 1993). This does not mean that the analysis of practitioners who are not masters is defunct; to this end I also include Floyd Merrel's work on *Capoeira and Candomblé* (2015) on merit of its insightful discourse of the symbiosis of these practices. However, this selective reading is also intended to show that reporting on these forms is a translation of their value systems into a foreign register associated with the very disenfranchisement they are practised to resist. I have thus tried to frame the practice of animist rituals in this thesis in a shamanic cosmology associated with luck and described as mythopoesis. Indeed, without this metanarrative ritual practices like Capoeira become vulnerable to modern systems of expertise associated with their own disenfranchisement, as Gunn has demonstrated. However the employment of a metanarrative in this context, must be one that is concerned with the short-circuiting of anthropocentric pathologies associated via Taussig with "the massacre of women" (Taussig 1999, 103), and thus open to the interference of the uninvited guest identified as beyond-human agency, or music, and associated with matriarchy. In this thesis I identify this possibility as luck.

The mythopoeic ritual process thus employs luck as a metanarrative which orientates ritual practice around the instigation of symbolic crises to generate ecological harmony. This is a mythopoeic methodology associated with Pendell's mythopoeic method (2010) which privileges the function of intoxication and luck in creative practice. However, it attributes this method with

some sort of sociological objective associated with “healing” as the reconstruction of subjective reality. It thus follows Federico Campagna’s descriptor of the magical act in *Technic and Magic* (2022) as a reality therapy concerned with the reconstruction of reality which “acts[s] not merely on the symptoms of an individual’s illness, but also on the reality-conditions that allowed the state of illness to take place” (Campagna 2022, 117). However, this is also vulnerable to patriarchalism insofar as it hinges on a model of healing related to success. It is also vulnerable to the imposition of anthropocentric values in the construction of illness and health, which thereby functions as a sort of transcendental metanarrative. Most alarmingly for practices like Capoeira, these constructions of health are often modelled around white, Western experience.

As I have argued in Chapter Three, Turner has demonstrated how the transformation of ritual practice into leisure during Industrialisation, convoluted the premodern nature of sacred and profane practices by generating an arbitrary distinction between leisure and labour which finally resulted “in the late eighteenth and especially in the nineteenth centuries [in] the notion of ‘art’ itself, in its various modalities, as a quasi-religious vocation, with its own asceticism and total dedication” (Turner 1982, 39). This transformation conjured monetizable vocations descriptive of the entertainment industry (Turner 1982, 39), and disenchanting “art practice” of its premodern, sacred dimensions. Without this commodification of art practice, the boundaries between ritual as leisure and ritual as labour, becomes diffuse.

However, therapeutic practices enacted by ritual as a premodern cultural expression, cannot be reduced to utilitarian objectives which can be commodified, such as healing or “medicine”. Ritual healing as the result of a sacred trap, is rather something of a byproduct of the expression of the superabundance Bataille attributes to nature in *The Accursed Share* (2013) experienced during creative practice as intoxication, and discussed by Pendell as “the poison path” (Pendell 2010b, 3). This critiques the idea that there is some sort of ultimate purpose of ritual. However, it does emphasise that ritual practice is expressive of the harmonic musicality of a superabundant ecology generating excesses of imagination experienced as luck, and plausibly capable of regulating itself. This is conducive to Bataille’s view of rituals of potlatch as an energetic accumulation in *The Accursed Share* (2013), creative of reality as it unfolds. It exposes us once

more to the limit of knowledge associated with ecstatic experience and beyond-human agency, which can only be navigated with gift-giving and sacrifice.

After a decade of practice, I am no longer a capoeirista—because of some of the problems raised above, combined with the natural evolution of my interests and subsequent change of demands on my time. Nonetheless my romance with Capoeira was an odyssey of mythic proportions, informed by Nietzsche and Bataille, and comparable to one of Jodorowsky's panic theatres;

Yet it was a grandiose party, a celebration where the forces of darkness emerged from the trap to fight out in the open with the forces of light... a ritual saturated with insanity and with wisdom (Jodorowsky in LeValley 2010, 37).

Jodorowsky's emphasis on psychomagic as a healing methodology derived from his apprenticeship to traditional healers, suggests a completion or end-point inherent to labour-oriented ideals of practice. This takes for granted that integration is possible for all practitioners; an assumption problematized by Capoeira's origins in socially deprived and excluded communities. As such, healing is also an ideal which is only applicable to a certain caste of practitioners and ultimately expresses the racial inequalities surrounding art practice; where for some it is a means of becoming, for others it is the only system of expression available. In extension of Haraway's posthuman discourse, the ecological animist Bayo Akomolafe thereby problematises the notion of healing altogether (Akomolafe 2023).

Nonetheless, I believe that ritual preparedness, or the social reality ritual integration is intended for, consists of beyond-humans including animals and others. In effect, the social reality the ritual practitioner wants to integrate into, is not the same one represented by the economic order upon which false subjectivity is derived as internalised oppression; indeed it is escaping this very anthropocentric illusion which ritual offers as a Pharmakon Method capable of "cycling the human back into the larger world" (Abram 1996, 16). This view has also been nourished by Abram's characterisation of the magician as "an intermediary between the human community and the larger ecological field" (Abram 1996, 7), which situates ritual practice as a portal into a sentient ecology expressing itself through *The Language of Birds*. In the next section I will associate this with the superabundance of luck.

6.3 Superabundance of Luck

My interest in ritual is aesthetic, in terms of how animate semiosis can act on the world, reconstruct reality, and instigate symbolic crises. The various allusions to healing I have made throughout this thesis can therefore be better understood as a by-product of this animate semiosis distilled during ritual practice and generative of harmony which limits anthropocentricity, and reconditions the human subject. The conception of animate semiosis this thesis discusses, is thus informed by the posthuman revision of trickery which dignifies the trickster as an ecological mediator as opposed to “a faithful copy of an absolutely undifferentiated human consciousness, corresponding to a psyche that has hardly left the animal level” (Jung in Radin 1956, 201). By contrast, the posthuman trickster “reflects the totality of animate relations and values in a dynamic and contingent world, rather than a stable “system” or hierarchy of relations” (Thornton; Thornton 2015, 18) and thereby teaches “humans, who are often woefully ignorant, about the web of relations that constitutes and maintains life on earth, so that they may survive within it” (Thornton; Thornton 2015, 18).

This posthuman trickster is invoked by various writers this thesis references (Brown 2008; Bayo 2023; Abram 2011, 1996; Kohn 2013; Campagna 2022; Jodorowsky in LeValley 2010; Bataille 1985), whose theorising on trickery as animate semiosis supports its magical capacity to reconstruct reality. In *Becoming Animal* (2011) Abram describes the transformation of a Himalayan magician, Sonam, who skilfully employs mimicry, misdirection and suggestion, to impossibly metamorphose into a raven before Abram’s “blinking eyes” (Abram 2011, 226-227), confounding “the conventional segregation of the senses” (Abram 2011, 252) premised on modern, anthropocentric experience which represses “the dreams, illusions, and passions of the animal” (Lemm 2009, 11).

The posthuman conception of trickery is predicated on its nature as a beyond-human interface, or lucky sign, by which representation is understood as “something both more general and more widely distributed than human language” (Kohn 2013, 38). Reducing it to a utilitarian methodology concerned with healing contradicts its posthuman premise. This problem penetrates to the heart of ritual practice, as something which may ultimately not have a *raison d’être*,

beyond the simple expression of the superabundance of ecological harmony. Ritual can rather be understood as an acephalous practice inscribed with the risk of ecstatic loss of self. This risk unveils its threat to modern social organisation founded on the objectification of identity, as furthermore, cultural resistance to incorporation into a utilitarian order founded on the dehumanising excesses associated with the Industrial Revolution. The mythopoeic ritual process in this regard, is also productive of various imaginative excesses which can threaten modern forms of subjectivity, and thereby interfere with the construction of “health”, including the posthuman experience of luck. Pendell thereby describes the mythopoeic method as the “poison path” (Pendell 2010b, 3) concerned with “forbidden knowledge” (Pendell 2010b, 3).

The *Pharmako* series (2010) can be read as a documentation of Pendell’s ritual practice with the ingestion of psychotropic plants. He describes these plants as power plants or allies, who often converse with him directly. Pendell’s ritual practice is modelled on the use of sacred plants by (mostly American) Indigenous peoples, which he documents at length. Pendell’s preoccupation with plants “as representative of the Other” (Pendell 2010c, 6) was expressive of his vocation as a botanist, and informed by his mentor, Brown’s Dionysian conception of the prophetic tradition; concerned with forms of knowledge outside the academy and formulated as a mythopoeic critique of urbanisation. In response to this, Pendell’s practice with the ingestion of psychotropic plants is expressive of his “task to reconcile chance with ‘return to divination’” (Pendell 2008, 34).

Pendell’s work is significant today insofar as the vanishment of divination is expressive of the unstitching of lucky relations which weave ecologies together, and indeed, deifies them as the beyond-humans which construct and regulate the future. Indeed for Pendell “Only plants had consciousness. Animals got it from them” (Synder; Pendell 2010, xiii). This pharmakon consciousness is forbidden knowledge, derived by humans from a transgression of “The Original Prohibition, our first drug law” (Pendell 2010b, 5).

In *How To Change Your Mind* (2019), Michael Pollan thus presents the “stoned ape theory”; the ethnobotanist Terrence McKenna’s controversial claim in *Food of the Gods* (1993) that consciousness may have evolved among our ancestors following the (accidental) ingestion of the

psychotropic mushroom *Psilocybe Cubensis*. While this view has been largely rejected, speculation nonetheless remains if a “mushroom trip” may have been an originating experience of God. Pendell thus refers to Claude Lévi-Strauss’ belief that the *Amanita Muscaria* mushroom “was likely the berserker mushroom of the Vikings” (Pendell 2010b, 284) experienced as divine possession by Odin (Nordberg; Wallenstein 2016); a view corroborated by experimental research which identifies the “model psychosis” induced by the *Amanita Muscaria* with Viking *Berserksgangr* (Fabing 1956). In other words, intoxication induced by psychotropic plants and mushrooms have been historically used to alter consciousness or more strongly, to construct consciousness in proximity to religious experience; personified by the gods of intoxication Odin, and Dionysus.

Plants are thus presented by Pendell as “the first of earth's creatures to establish extraterrestrial contact, beyond the sulphur vents and the acid radicals deep in bedrock, or at seafloor ruptures—the first to contact the greater cosmos” (Pendell 2010b, 5). Emanuele Coccia similarly refers to plants as transmuters that pulled light down from space to engender life on earth; he describes “photosynthesis [as] a great atmospheric laboratory in which solar energy is transformed into *living matter*” (Coccia in Montanari 2019, 37). Plants thus “live at astral distances to the human world” (Coccia in Montanari 2019, 7), among the stars that describe earth itself, which “feeds off the Sun and constructs itself from its light” (Coccia in Montanari 2019, 88).

These views present a superabundant conception of nature as an astrological relation between deified others. This is a cosmic ecology woven by a food-chain which transcends earth; whereby being possessed by a plant, is equivalent to being possessed by a being or star living “at astral distances to the human world” (Coccia in Montanari 2019, 7). Coming into relationship with this beyond-human agency is described by Pendell as lucky insofar as it offers privileged or divinatory knowledge about the relationship among all things, oriented by the stars and planets in an ecology of becoming. It is expressive of the posthuman views described by Akomolafe in *The Children of the Minotaur* (2024) which identifies the lucky relationship between “what colour of dress we chose to wear for an occasion to matters as apparently spellbinding as the choreography of an asteroid” (Akomolafe 2024). This luck is founded on the rhythms of a living ecology we all

harmonise with. This music demands sacrificial limits on anthropocentricity, upon which ecstatic experience is founded as the beyond-human—becoming more than we are; becoming in tune. I have argued in this thesis that ritual practice facilitates this fine-tuning.

However, this coming into tune is founded on the risk I have associated in Chapter Three with sacrifice, and in Chapter Four with beyond-human agency; it is familiar to the imaginative risks associated with rituals of trance and intoxication. Risk is furthermore, familiar to the demands Bataille makes on the magician in *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* (1985), and descriptive of his own ritual practice as someone who “never developed ideas that he didn’t back up with his life” (Lotringer 1994, vii). For Pendell practice is the distinguishing factor between priestcraft and shamanism as “direct intercourse with spiritual energies through some form of trance” (Pendell 2010a, 83).

Pendell describes his own vision fast in *Pharmakodynamis* (2010). For Pendell (like Turner) there are “three parts to the Quest... power, vision, and confirmation” (Pendell 2010a, 187). Power “is about strength: returning to the body, cleansing, rebuilding muscles, sharpening reactions and coordination; recovering your wind and your endurance, your inner strength and your confidence” (Pendell 2010a, 187). Vision is associated with liminality or trance states as “the journey to the heart of delusion. The vision part is to recover what was lost: lost laughter, lost feelings, lost love, forgotten prescience, forgotten luminosity” (Pendell 2010a, 188). Finally “The third part is yogic: ground state calibration” (Pendell 2010a, 191). This is a musical feat which brings us back into harmony with a living ecology. At last;

Songs begin returning.

Friends are here. Friends have come (Pendell 2010a, 194).

Pendell’s view of ritual offers art practice as divination, as a methodology concerned with a lucky aesthetic expressive of ecological harmony or “songs”, and inscribed with the ecstatic risk of loss of self. This is oriented by a perspectival aesthetics capable of designating signs that interface across orders of consciousness and experience, posing the possibility of an aesthetic system descriptive of trans-cultural and possibly trans-species affect. Abram compares this to

synesthesia, as the zone of sense experience which transcends the anthropocentric coupling of our senses to “printed shapes” (Abram 1996, 138). John Gage similarly refers to a Dionysian Aesthetic, The Sound of Colour and The Substance of Colour in *Colour and Culture* (2024).

Subsequently, this research project has allowed me to pose the possibility of a Lucky Aesthetics which can become animate, and thus transcends knowledge as a beyond-human interface; thereby capable of reconstructing reality by instigating crises. This is reinforced by Alexander Rehding and Daniel Chua’s conception of music in *Alien Listening* (2021) which they describe as capable of diluting space-time to “communicate across galaxies to an alien intelligence” (Chua; Rehding 2021, 70). The order of music associated with so-called primitives in Chapter One and rituals of ecstasy in Chapter Four, has preserved this possibility of communication with an alien intelligence according to some universal frequency, or a Lucky Aesthetics. I will explore this conclusion in the following section.

6.4 Lucky Aesthetics

In Chapter Two I thus discuss The Language of Birds, a divinatory phrase employed by both Abram (1996) and Pendell (2021) to describe an animate system of semiosis embedded in our environment, which Kohn describes as “living semiosis” (Kohn 2013, 33). All of these views are derived from Indigenous cosmologies, which have produced the ritual practices I examine in Chapter Four. These cosmologies exhibit ontologies of dualistic pluralism, a term developed by Åke Hulkrantz to describe the dual existence of the profane world and the Other world inherent to animist cosmologies. The shaman’s double is understood to undertake ecstatic flight between worlds during rituals of altered consciousness or trance, often performed as ceremonies of possession or ancestral *séances*, and descriptive of the animist rituals described in Chapter Four.

Locating these rituals in a cosmology of dualistic pluralism offers an interpretative framework capable of acknowledging the Other world as the site of negation, which ecstatically exceeds knowledge derived from positive experience in our profane time. Kohn describes this Other

world as the zone of possibility which clothes landscape with spirit. This spirit weaves a semiotic web between what is present and not present; the future, the past, the unborn and the dead. Kohn thus distinguishes indexes of identity from indices of possibility, and argues that the dance between positive and negative forces institutes time as a tapestry woven by an ecology of selves. Its intimacy is constructed on its fatality, which weaves life itself into its patterns as the chains of semiosis constructed by predators and prey navigating the food-chain through sign-making and trickery. It imagines the food-chain as a living semiosis that becomes animate with beyond-human agency. Georg Simmel and Christopher Small have shown how this collective intelligence is deified in animist cosmology as personifications of the “pattern which connects” (Small 1998, 103).

Abram’s work in *The Spell of the Sensuous* (1991) lays the groundwork for Kohn’s model, and describes how subjectivity and time emerges in collaboration with an animate environment, from which we derive identity as the possible. The title of Pendell’s *The Language of Birds* (2021) quotes a section in Abram’s publication, to revive the possibility of divination as intimacy with this living semiosis. This is also supported by Kohn’s description of perspectival aesthetics (Kohn 2013, 97), which defines the existence of signs capable of signifying (and thus divining) across orders of experience and consciousness, including the future. These lucky signs function as tricky road-signs for the constant transformation of living semiosis, by offering seductive narratives for how time can or will be constructed. Kohn thus refers to the predicament of a monkey on a shaking branch, which takes the branch as a lucky sign across orders, for the approach of danger. The monkey’s knowledge vibrates through the living semiosis of the forest; which has thus been conditioned by the past (whatever made the branch shake), but will also be conditioned with the future (the possibilities emerging from the monkey’s reaction).

This inscribes sign-making with the negative as possibility. It is thus native to a worldview of dualistic pluralism insofar as it inscribes the experience of reality with an Other world of possibility, populated by both the dead and the unborn. It also demonstrates that an animate semiosis must be capable of accounting for this negative presence. Pendell attributes this capacity to divination, while it is more broadly made possible by posthumanism as the acknowledgement of alternative forms of subjectivity and knowledge making including the

beyond-human. This offers the exciting possibility of animate semiosis, or Lucky Aesthetics, which can be argued from within the Western tradition, thus posing the possibility of an aesthetics which can act on the world and recover the meaning of the artwork as a form of mediumship or a divinatory practice. It is in defiance of Freud's conception of primitive omnipresence by which he diagnosed the alleged neuroses of Aboriginal primitives native to this kind of living semiosis, or Dreamtime (Freud 1961).

This is exciting insofar as it reinterprets the modern view of difference, by which semiosis is viewed as contagiously charged but with a negativity that only reinforces intersubjectivity, alienation, and fragmentation. By comparison this view of animate semiosis synthesises these iterations of fragmentation into the possibility of music, which harmonises difference into an ecological sentience capable of transcending the register of noise and becoming beyond-human. This enables me to establish the interference of the double during rituals of ecstasy, and to formulate rituals as technologically complex synthesisers of difference and repetition.

In Chapter One I have argued that this musical possibility is predicated on pity as a register of empathetic experience which can transcend subjectivity and even species to generate ecological harmony. This allows for the appearance of lucky signs representative of that which exceeds subjective knowledge, by which we are exposed to the beyond-human as negativity. In Chapter Two I have argued this kind of pity is descriptive of an order of experience which precedes socialisation and registers shared experience among Earthlings as embodied beings. This register of knowledge thus includes subliminal triggers produced by forms of affect that exceed human knowledge, but refer to shared experience among an ecology of selves; whereby blood means something to every organism who has encountered it, and furthermore, different species can empathetically imagine what others experience as blood on the basis of pity. In Chapter Two I have suggested this facilitates trickery across species allowing for the creation of traps, whereby predators can hunt. Semiosis is thus inscribed with this experience and trickery, as furthermore the intelligence at the heart of art practice.

In Chapter Two I have demonstrated how this is subsequently employed in creative practice to generate subliminal triggers capable of instigating the ritual traps generative of symbolic crises.

During the liminal phase of ritual performance, another imaginative reality is instituted. Through various strategies of suggestion and entrapment, a ritual patient is relocated into this reality and then tricked into performing a pathology. This instigates a symbolic crisis by diluting existential orders; the imagined becomes real, however is revealed as an imagination on this merit. The sudden substantiation of this “true-lie” provokes a symbolic crisis which reveals the symbolic nature of the pathology which has mistakenly become a reality-principle. This excavation of the unconscious is consistent with Turner’s characterisation of the ritual process, insofar as it releases the ritual patient from symbolic isolation which begins to limit and oppress their subjectivity, and reintegrates them into universal experience associated with embodiment on Earth; with being a human-animal capable of engaging in this level of metacultural discourse and signification. It is a methodology dependent on the possibility of animate semiosis and a shared “language of the unconscious” (Jodorowsky in LeValley 2010, viii).

This form of animate semiosis thus revives an alternative register associated with the human-animal and their innate values founded on experience in the natural world, which can antagonise or trick social conditioning. In *Technic and Magic* (2022) Campagna similarity associates a register of innate values with the order of Magic, in contrast to the modern order of Technic whereby objects lose innate value and become politically constructed in terms of their positioning in a system of symbolic relationships, which begins to besiege experience, empty it of contents, and finally inaugurates “a vanishing of presence towards absolute ontological nothingness” (Campagna 2022, 42). By contrast the possibility of animate semiosis attempts to awaken a beyond-human intelligence as the experience of intoxication, capable of transcending utilitarian systems.

An animate semiosis is thus an encounter with a mode of being which transcends or precedes civilised identity. In this respect it revives alternative forms of identity and authority associated with negativity as the Other world, and forms of ecological intelligence native to the human-animal. This alternative is of interest again today, in light of the symbolic entrenchment of social existence exacerbated by the proliferation of digital technology. It underscores the contemporary significance of ritual practice as an old but also new value system, capable of animating a Lucky Aesthetics to dissect our experience of reality and subjectivity. So while I

have defended an anthropological method in Chapter One, my interest in this research is aesthetic. I have become interested in ritual as “the mother of all the arts” (Small 1998, 105), and the originating theatre from which we have derived our creative practices with semiosis. This thesis thus identifies ritual as a school of living semiosis and a difference synthesiser which educates its practitioners in how to utilise difference as a creative media; as well as how social reality is collectively imagined, constructed and performed. Ritual is thus of anthropological interest as it offers some very universal lessons about how we exist aesthetically and semiotically as social beings, and how our identity has been derived from a sentient ecology according to its peculiar and lucky forms of knowledge making. The incorporation of ritual into the economic regime indicated in an above section, is thus a worrying trend which will imply the vanishment of these systems of cultural production which lie at the origin of our creative life. Capoeira has thus been endowed with protected status by UNESCO as “intelligible cultural heritage of humanity”⁷. I am also hopeful posthumanism will go some way in providing a new register capable of articulating the richness of ritual as an animist practice today, by privileging the importance of beyond-human experience.

Ritual is interesting in these terms and on merit of the appearance of posthumanism and its critique of anthropocentric subjectivity which extends agency to beyond-humans. Posthumanism offers a view of the world in which reality is constructed by both human and beyond-human selves. This requires us to practice a form of semiosis which can acknowledge the function of negativity as the ecstatic limit of human knowledge, which animates ecological harmony between orders of experience and consciousness. This offers a solution to anthropocentric pathologies which have generated systems of semiosis which have inscribed modern experience with alienation, as opposed to ecological belonging as an experiential fact. As opposed to a superabundant view of luck, this inscribes experience with aesthetic poverty and limits the animate imagination of a harmonic ecology. This imagination poses the problem of risk as furthermore, the problem of ecstatic becoming. To return to the opening question of this thesis—what did modernity sacrifice with luck, and what is this sacrifice costing us?—this thesis argues it is the possibility of a Lucky Aesthetics which the modern regime has sacrificed. This is problematic insofar as this Lucky Aesthetic is capable of bringing alternative orders together,

⁷ <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/capoeira-circle-00892>

thereby integrating beyond-human and human experience to generate ecological harmony as abundant yields for all vested selves.

In Chapter One I argue our imaginative stasis is expressed as our inability to imagine stories of metamorphosis, and results from our increasing alienation from the food-chain. This positions my thesis in a philosophical animist posthumanism which argues that meaning must be derived in relationship to the food-chain as the thread which weaves our living semiosis, whereby we experience ecological harmony and from where we derive the possibility of a Lucky Aesthetics. This returns to us the possibility of metamorphosis as identity replacement, and the systems of trickery which animate semiosis as a reality dance or a Lucky Aesthetics. In the following section I will thereby conclude by contextualising this thesis in philosophical animism.

6.5 Philosophical Animism: Music and Metamorphosis

Plumwood's work in *The Eye of the Crocodile* (2012) has been essential for mapping the philosophical animism, Heraclitan context for which we "live the other's death, die the other's life" (Plumwood; Shannon 2012, 13). This context was similarly important to Brown's work with Dionysian chance as the excess expressed by the prophetic tradition, which became his ecstatic preoccupation at the end of his life. The centrality of the food-chain for philosophical animism thus provides a theoretical framework for Pendell's mythopoeic worldview, which describes levels of spiritual predation in a global turf-war, operated by plants vying for planetary dominion and recruiting human mediators to their campaigns through biochemical possession (Pendel 2010c, 156). This suggests that underneath our anthropocentric allusions to knowledge, a very different plot is unfolding.

This de-privileging of the human is cognizant with a "heuristics circulating in many indigenous communities that are shaped by the shared understanding that humans are but a small part of a relational universe that cannot be fully cognized, much less managed, by any one species" (Thornton; Thornton 2015, 5). Thomas F. Thornton and Patricia M. Thornton refer to tales of the Indigenous trickster Raven; "disseminated among and between indigenous communities across

the Northwest Coast of North America, Alaska, Japan and Siberia today [which] emphasise a moral ecology of mutual dependence, intersubjectivity, survival, resilience, feedbacks, and adaptation in the face of ceaseless and open-ended ecological change” (Thornton; Thornton 2015, 5). While in the 2023 edition of the *New Farmers Almanac*, the Indigenous Penobscot writer Alivia Moore corroborates, “We are not the earth’s saviours” (Moore et al 2023, 32). Tony VanWinkle also presents a trickster ecology modelled on Indigenous cosmology, which “applies our present socio-ecological quandaries to the teachings embedded in traditional trickster stories” (VanWinkle et al 2023, 291). These allusions to trickster stories position nature as a permanent site of transformation and metamorphosis which human beings must navigate, but cannot dominate.

I have characterised these trends as expressive of the posthuman revision of trickery, which attempts to engage with forms of knowledge-making which have persisted outside the Industrial hegemony, precisely because of their exclusion. This is representative of a sort of inversion of the occult, founded on the “rejected knowledge” of wisdom traditions which were not strangers to the double, as Charles M. Stang (2016), Ulf Drobin (2016) and Claude Lecouteux (2001) have shown. This reclamation of alternative traditions contends that somewhere in its rejected knowledge, is a clue about how to deal with our contemporary problems. This rejected knowledge is mythopoeic insofar as they are concerned with the ecstatic knowledge of the double described in dualistic pluralism, and concerned with luck.

However, Haraway’s posthumanist genesis *The Cyborg Manifesto* (1991) which privileges the cyborg as a “technosubject” (Hollinger; Vint 2020, 18) fails to engage with this movement. On the contrary, Gare has critiqued Haraway’s cyborg inspired posthumanism as hegemonic incorporation, which amounts to “accepting our complete absorption into the military—industrial complex” (Gare 2021, 43-43). While Haraway contends that “illegitimate offspring are often exceedingly unfaithful to their origins” (Haraway 1991, 151) the cyborg is not native to the alternative order of luck, insofar as it is excluded from the food-chain as a “hybrid creature, composed of organism and machine” (Haraway 1991, 1). It thereby reinforces modern systems of anthropocentric exceptionalism in opposition to luck. For Plumwood this is symptomatic of what she has described as Ontological Veganism; “it remains subtly human-centred because it

does not fully challenge human/nature dualism, but rather attempts to extend human status and privilege to a bigger class of ‘semi-humans’ who, like humans themselves, are conceived as above the non-conscious sphere and ‘outside nature’, beyond ecology and beyond use, especially use in the food chain” (Plumwood 2012, 79). Ontological Veganism cannot conceptualise the human’s participation in the food-chain, and the living semiosis it denotes, which facilitates the possibility of a Lucky Aesthetic.

Cyborg posthumanism is not capable of engaging with philosophical animist movements which reclaim alternative traditions associated with the agency of beyond-humans as co-participants in the food-chain. By contrast, this return to alternative traditions problematizes the posthuman cyborg as a hybrid unable to metamorphose to a higher synthesis, and rejects its exacerbation of the Medieval problem of the unresolved coincidence of opposites (Bynum 2005). This ontological limit preoccupies Coccia’s *Metamorphoses* (2021), Caroline Walker Bynum’s *Metamorphosis and Identity* (2005), and Brown’s *Apocalypse And/Or Metamorphosis* (1991). By contrast, I have identified the food-chain as a metamorphic system of identity replacement capable of generating knowledge as “*metabole*, the replacement of something by something else” (Bynum 2005, 181).

My critique of a fairly caricatured version of *The Cyborg Manifesto* is undertaken in this thesis to demonstrate the problem that the food-chain is no longer an intuitive framework of reference for moderns. It has been obviously omitted as an ontological limit. This omission is precisely the problem we are navigating insofar as it disappears music and luck from our ontologies, and reinforces anthropocentric notions of subjectivity founded on exceptionalism. My thesis argues that philosophical animism is capable of addressing this negligence insofar as it privileges the food-chain. This revives the possibility of metamorphosis, which Akomolafe attributes to the monstrous as that which exceeds anthropocentric subjectivity, and is thus, beyond-human. To this end Akomolafe argues “We need a new kind of trickster” (Akomolafe 2023). In response to Akomolafe’s demand, this thesis concludes that the new kind of trickster we need is lucky. Their power is derived from their ecstatic capacity to harmonise with a more-than-human ecology.

However, this lucky trickster is not a stranger, rather the revision of their identity and peculiar modes of knowledge production have been recently permitted by contemporary movements in intellectual discourse. They take the form of the various tricksters that have appeared in this thesis, from Coyote, to Raven, to Hermes, to Esu, to Dionysus and Odin. Francis Ford Coppola has shown them to us, in his gruesome portrayal of the Vietnam War *Apocalypse Now* (1979) which sees the U.S. Army Captain Benjamin L. Willard sent on an undercover mission to assassinate a renegade colonel who has deified himself as the leader of a cult among Cambodian natives.

Based on Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) which depicts the violent excesses of Belgian colonialism in the Congo, *Apocalypse Now* depicts the total destruction of natural order during war; as lives, territories and sanity itself is consumed by a perverse civilisation intent on total domination. In the midst of this carnage, Captain Willard odysseys through absurd carnivals of hysterical violence, until he finds himself at the final U.S. fort marking the boundary between Vietnam and Cambodia. This is a site of total rampant destruction in a never-ending missile assault between natives and the U.S. army. Without structure or leadership, black soldiers huddle in the dark and muddy trenches of the front-line, listening to stereo music as they are battered by the constant sound of gunfire and death. Two men shoot rifles through a sand bank, and ceremonially call another black soldier who arrives wearing a bone necklace, with his rifle decorated with an animal skin pattern. He listens silently to the chaos and noise, and mutters "He's close," before firing a missile into the sky. A moment later the sound of advancing gunfire silences as his target succumbs to the fatal shot, and the scene is filled with an eerie sense of wonder. Suddenly the stars are sparkling over the piles of corpses and mud; the wind is blowing. Somehow this is a murder which has, conversely, attributed its murderer with humanity; in stark contrast to the dehumanisation all around. In the midst of the perversion of order, this soldier appears as a monstrous subject in possession of occult knowledge; capable of firing a fatal shot into the abyss. He preserves something the others have lost to this chaos and noise; his luck.

While Derrida would read Coppola's mysterious character as a naive portrayal of Rousseau's Noble Savage, Akomolafe nonetheless insists on "the association of Blackness with monstrosity, with the grotesque, the stowaway, and the occult" (Akomolafe 2023). This enables him to revive

“the critical necessity of the monster” (Akomolafe 2023) capable of exceeding anthropocentric identity to put us into contact with the more-than-human, and to once again endow us with the power of metamorphosis. In this thesis I have argued that this beyond-human power is music, and problematised how we may revive musical forms of cognition, social cohesion, and semiosis generative of ecological harmony, and expressive of the superabundance of luck.

Bibliography

Abram, David. 2021. “How a man turned into a raven” in *To The Best of Our Knowledge* (podcast). 20 November, 2021. <https://www.ttbook.org/interview/how-man-turned-raven>

Abram, David. 2011. *Becoming Animal: an earthly cosmology*. 1st Vintage Books ed. United States of America: Vintage Books.

Abram, D. 2010. “The Discourse of the Birds” in *Biosemiotics* 3, 263–275 (2010). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12304-010-9075-z>

Abram, David. 1996. *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human-World*. 1st ed. New York: Pantheon Books

Akomolafe, Bayo. 2024. “The Children of the Minotaur: Democracy & Belonging at the End of the World” in *Democracy & Belonging Forum*. Accessed 28th October 2024. <https://www.democracyandbelongingforum.org/forum-blog/the-children-of-the-minotaur>

Akomolafe, Bayo. 2023a. “Black lives matter, But to Whom? Why We Need a Politics of Exile in a Time of Troubling Stuckness” in *Democracy & Belonging Forum*. Accessed 28th October 2024. <https://www.democracyandbelongingforum.org/forum-blog/black-lives-matter-but-to-whom-part-1>

Akomolafe, Bayo. 2023b. “Ontological Mutiny” at *For The Wild*. Podcast 338. Accessed 30th October 2024. <https://forthewild.world/listen/dr-bayo-akomolafe-on-ontological-mutiny-338>

Akomolafe, Bayo. 2018. “When You Meet The Monster, Anoint Its Feet” in *Emergence Magazine*. Accessed 30th October 2024. <https://emergencemagazine.org/essay/when-you-meet-the-monster/>

Akomolafe, Bayo. 2011. *In the Village Square, Under the Naked Moon: Reimagining Psychology as Storytelling, Story-listening and Poetry in Africa*. Thessaloniki, Greece: 14th Biennial Conference of the International Society for Theoretical Psychology, 2011

Almeida, Bira. 1993. *Capoeira: A Brazilian Art Form: History, Philosophy, and Practice*. Eng edn. Berkeley: Blue Snake Books, North Atlantic Books.

Angstrom, Jan. 2016. "Transformation into nature: Swedish Army Ranger rites of passage" in *Transforming Warriors: The ritual organization of military force*. Edited by Haldén, Peter and Jackson, Peter. 1st edn. London and New York: Routledge.

Angulo, Jaime de. 1926. "The Background of the Religious Feeling in a Primitive Tribe" in *American Anthropologist* 28, no. 2: 352–60. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/661551>.

Aristotle; Hardie, R. P. & Gaye, R. K. (transl.). 2024. *Physics*. The Internet Classics Archive. Accessed 30th October 2024. <https://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/physics.2.ii.html>

Assunção, Matthias Röhrig; Peçanha, Cinézio; Pakleppa, Richard (co-directors). 2013. *Jogo de Corpo. Capoeira e Ancestralidade*. Manganga Produções. 87 min.

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3575844/>

Bachelard, Gaston; Farrell, Edith R. & Farrell, Federick (transl.). 2011. *Air and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Movement*. 3rd ed. Dallas: The Dallas Institute Publications.

Bagemihl, Bruce. 1999. *Biological Exuberance: Animal Homosexuality and Natural Diversity*. Illustrated by John Megahan. 1st ed. London: Profile Books Ltd.

Baker, Margaret P. 1994. "The rabbit as trickster" in *Journal of Popular Culture*; Fall 1994; 28, 2; Periodicals Archive Online

Bataille, Georges; Hurley, Robert (transl.). 2013. *The Accursed Share: Volume 1*. 8th ed. Brooklyn: Zone Books.

Balzer, M. M. 2016. "Shamans Emerging From Repression in Siberia: Lightning Rods of Fear and Hope" In: Jackson, P. (ed.) *Horizons of Shamanism: A Triangular Approach to the History and Anthropology of Ecstatic Techniques*. Pp. 1–34. Stockholm: Stockholm University Press. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.16993/bag.c>. License: CC-BY 4.0

Bataille, Georges. 2004. "Animality" in Calarco, Matthew & Atterton, Peter (eds.), *Animal Philosophy: Essential Readings in Continental Thought*. 1st ed. New York: Continuum 34

Bataille, Georges; Kendall, Stuart (transl.) (ed.); Kendall, Michelle (transl.). 2005. *The Cradle of Humanity: Prehistoric Art and Culture*. 1st ed. Brooklyn: Zone Books.

Bataille, Georges; Kendall, Stuart (transl.); Kendall, Michelle (transl.) 2001. "Nonknowledge, Laughter, and Tears" in Kendall, Stuart (ed.), *The Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*. 1st ed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Bataille, Georges; Strauss, Jonathan (transl.) 1990. "Hegel, Death and Sacrifice" in *Yale French Studies*, no. 78 (1990): 9–28. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2930112>.

Bataille, Georges. 1985. "The College of Sociology" in Stoekl, Allan (ed.), *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings 1927-1939*. 1st ed. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press.

Bataille, Georges. 1985. "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" in Stoekl, Allen (ed.), *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings 1927-1939*. 1st ed. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press.

Baudrillard, Jean. 2012. *The Ecstasy of Communication*. Translated by Bernard Schütze and Caroline Schütze. 1st ed. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e)

Boddy, Janice. 1989. *Wombs and Alien Spirits: Women, Men and the Zār Cult in Northern Sudan*. 1st ed. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Bouissac, Paul. 2015. *The Semiotics of Clowns and Clowning: Rituals of Transgression and The Theory of Laughter*. 1st ed. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Boulter, Jonathan. 2020. "Postmodernism," in Vint, Sherryl (ed.), *After the Human: Culture, Theory, and Criticism in the 21st Century*. 1st edn. UK: Cambridge University Press.

Bourns, Timothy. 2021. "The Language of Birds in Old Norse Tradition" in *JEGP, Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 120, no. 2 (2021): 209-238.

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/795048>.

Brier, Søren. 2017. "Peircean cosmogony's symbolic agapistic self-organization as an example of the influence of eastern philosophy on western thinking" in *Progress in Biophysics and Molecular Biology*, Volume 131, 2017, Pages 92-10

Broncano-Berrocal, Fernando. 2015. "Luck as Risk and the Lack of Control Account of Luck" in Pritchard, Duncan; Whittington, John Lee (eds.), *The Philosophy of Luck*. 1st edn. West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell.

Brown, Joseph Epes; Weatherly, Marina Brown & Brown, Elenita & Fitzgerald, Michael Oren (eds.) 2007. *The Spiritual Legacy of the American Indian: With Letters While Living with Black Elk*. Commemorative edn. Indiana: World Wisdom, Inc.

Brown, Norman O. 2011. *Hermes the Thief: The Evolution of a Myth*. Vintage Books ed. United States of America: Random House

Brown, Norman O. 1992. *Love's Body*. Reissue of 1966 edition. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Brown, Norman O. 1991. *Apocalypse and/or Metamorphosis*. 1st ed. Berkley: University of California Press.

Butler, Judith. 2005 *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York; London: Routledge,

Bynum, Caroline Walker. 2005. *Metamorphosis and Identity*. 1st ed. Brooklyn: Zone Books

Calarco, Matthew & Atterton, Peter (eds.). 2004. *Animal Philosophy: Essential Readings in Continental Thought*. 1st ed. New York: Continuum

Calarco, Matthew and Atterton, Peter. 2004 "Editors' Introduction: The Animal Question in Continental Philosophy" in Calarco, Matthew & Atterton, Peter (eds.), *Animal Philosophy: Essential Readings in Continental Thought*. 1st ed. New York: Continuum

Campagna, Federico. 2022. *Technic and Magic: The Reconstruction of Reality*. 1st ed. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Candido, Antonio. 1995. "Dialectics of Trickery" in *On Literature and Society*. Translated and edited by Howard S. Becker. New Jersey: Princeton University Press

Cardin, Matt. 2011. *Demonic Creativity: A Writer's Guide to the Inner Genius*. California: Creative Commons.

<https://mattcardin.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/A-Course-in-Demonic-Creativity.pdf>.

Chua, Daniel K. L. & Rehding, Alexander. 2021. *Alien Listening: Voyager's Golden Record and Music from Earth*. Illustrated by Lau Kwong Shing and Takahiro Kurashima. 1st ed. Brooklyn: Zone Books.

Cixous, Hélène. 2004. "Birds, Women and Writing" in Calarco, Matthew; Atterton, Peter (eds.), *Animal Philosophy: Essential Readings in Continental Thought* by 1st ed. New York: Continuum

Coccia, Emanuele. 2021. *Metamorphoses*. Eng ed. Cambridge and Medford: Polity Press

Coccia, Emanuele; Montanari, Dylan J. (transl.). 2019. *The Life of Plants: A Metaphysics of Mixture* Cambridge, UK : Polity Press

Conway, Moncure D. 1883. "The Saint Patrick Myth." in: *The North American Review* 137, no. 323 (1883): 358–71. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25118320>.

Cosculluela, Victor. 1992. "Peirce on Tychism and Determinism" in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 28, no. 4 (1992): 741–55. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40320388>.

Critchley, Simon. 2024. *On Mysticism: The Experience of Ecstasy*. Profile Books Ltd: London.

Cussans, John. 2017. *Undead Uprisings: Haiti, Horror and the Zombie Complex*. 1st ed. London: Strange Attractor Press.

Deacon, Terrence W. 1998. *The Symbolic Species: The Co-evolution of Language and the Brain*. 1st ed. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Derrida, Jacques. 2004. "The Animal that Therefore I Am (More to Follow)" in Calarco; Matthew and Atterton; Peter (eds). *Animal Philosophy: Essential Readings in Continental Thought*. 1st ed. New York: Continuum

Derrida, Jacques; Spivak, Chakravorty Gayatri (transl.) 1991, *Of Grammatology*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Derrida, Jacques; Graff, Gerald (ed.); Mehlman, Jeffrey (transl.). 1988. *Limited Inc*. 1st edn. Illinois: Northwestern University Press

Derrida, Jacques; Johnson, Barabra (transl.) 1981. "Plato's Pharmacy" in *Dissemination*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Douglas, Mary. 1966. *Purity and Danger: An analysis of the concepts of pollution and taboo* 1st ed. Milton Park: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd

Drobin, U. 2016. "Introduction" In: Jackson, P. (ed.) *Horizons of Shamanism: A Triangular Approach to the History and Anthropology of Ecstatic Techniques*. Pp. xi–xx. Stockholm: Stockholm University Press. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.16993/bag.b>. License: CC-BY 4.0

Duncan, A. M.; Field, J. V. 1996 "Introduction" in Kepler, Johannes. *The Harmony of the World*. Translated by E. J. Aiton. 1st ed. American Philosophical Society. Xix-xx

Eshleman, Clayton. 2003. *Juniper Fuse, Upper Paleolithic Imagination & The Construction of the Underworld*. 1st ed. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.

Fabing, Howard D. 1956. "On Going Beserk: A Neurochemical Inquiry" in *American Journal of Psychiatry*, AJP, 113, no. 5 (November 1956): 409–15. doi:[10.1176/ajp.113.5.409](https://doi.org/10.1176/ajp.113.5.409).

Federici, Silvia. 2018. *Witches, Witch-Hunting, and Women*. Oakland, CA: PM Press.

Federici, Silvia. 2014. *Caliban and the Witch: women, the body and primitive accumulation*. Brooklyn, New York: Autonomedia.

Forbes, Jack D. 2008 *Columbus and other Cannibals: The Wétiko Disease of Exploitation, Imperialism and Terrorism* (United States of America, New York: Seven Stories Press)

Ford, Phil; Martel, J. F. 2024. "Art is Another Word for Truth: On Orson Welles's 'F for Fake'" at *Weird Studies*. Podcast 170. Accessed 30th October 2024. <https://www.weirdstudies.com/170>

Fowler, W. Warde. "The Original Meaning of the Word Sacer" in *The Journal of Roman Studies* 1 (1911): 57–63. <https://doi.org/10.2307/295848>.

Freud, Sigmund; Brill, A. A. (transl.) 2012. *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances Between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics*. Project Gutenberg: Ebook #41214.

Freud, Sigmund. 1961. *Totem And Taboo*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.

Gage, John. 2024. *Colour and Culture: Practice and Meaning from Antiquity to Abstraction*. 2nd edn. London: Thames & Hudson Ltd.

Gare, Arran. 2021. "Against Posthumanism: Posthumanism as the World Vision of House-Slaves" in *Borderless Philosophy* 4 (2021):

Gates JR, Henry Louis. 2014. *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism*. New York, USA: Oxford University Press

Greenwood, Edward. 1998. "Literature: Freedom or Evil? The Debate between Sartre and Bataille." in *Sartre Studies International* 4, no. 1 (1998): 17–29.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/23512891>.

Gyrus. 2008. "Review of Walking with Nobby" in *Dreamflesh*, Reviews. Posted 24th May 2008.
<https://dreamflesh.com/review/book/walking-with-nobby/>

Hanegraaff, Wouter J. 2013. *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture*. 3rd ed. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Haldén, Peter; Jackson, Peter (eds.), *Transforming Warriors: The ritual organization of military force*. 1st edn. London and New York: Routledge.

Hale, Amy. 2018. "Introduction" in Colquhoun, Ithell. *Tarot As Colour*. 1st Ed. Somerset: Fulgur Press.

Hale, Amy. 2014. "'Colours Are Forces, The Signatures of the Forces': An Exploration of Colour as Entity." in *I:MAGE Travelling with Unfamiliar Spirits*.

Hales, Steven D. and Johnson, Jennifer Adrienne. 2015. "Luck Attributions and Cognitive Bias" in Pritchard, Duncan; Whittington, John Lee (eds.), *The Philosophy of Luck*. 1st edn. West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell.

Haraway, Donna J. 2016. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham and London: Duke University Press)

Haraway, Donna J. 1991. *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. 1st ed. New York: Routledge

Haskell, David George. 2022. *Sounds Wild and Broken: Sonic Marvels, Evolution's Creativity and the Crisis of Sensory Extinction*. 1st ed. London: Faber & Faber Ltd.

Herbrechter, Stefan. 2020. "Poststructuralism and the End(s) of Humanism," in Vint, Sherryl (ed.), *After the Human: Culture, Theory, and Criticism in the 21st Century*. 1st edn. UK: Cambridge University Press.

Her-Xiong, Y., & Schroepfer, T. (2018). "Walking in Two Worlds: Hmong End of Life Beliefs & Rituals" in *Journal of Social Work in End-of-Life & Palliative Care*, 14(4), 291–314.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15524256.2018.1522288>

Hillman, James. 1979. *The Dream and the Underworld*. 1st ed. New York: Harper & Row

Hoffman, Albert; Ratsch, Christian; Schultes, Richard Evans. 2001. *Plants of the Gods; Their Sacred, Healing, and Hallucinogenic Powers*. 2nd edn. Vermont: Healing Arts Press.

Hollinger, Veronica 2020. "Historicizing Posthumanism" in Vint, Sherryl (ed.), *After the Human: Culture, Theory, and Criticism in the 21st Century*. 1st edn. UK: Cambridge University Press.

Huling, Ray. 2019. "Bataillean Ecology: An Introduction to the Theory of Sustainable Excess." In *Moveable Type* 11 (2019): 25–37.

Hunt, Marcus William. 2024. "Luck, fate, and fortune: the tythic properties" in *Philosophical Explorations*, DOI: 10.1080/13869795.2024.2335221

Irigaray, Luce; Rose, Marily Gaddis (transl.). 2004. "Animal Compassion" in Calarco, Matthew; Atterton, Peter (eds.), *Animal Philosophy: Essential Readings in Continental Thought*. 1st ed. New York: Continuum

Jackson, P. (ed.) 2016. *Horizons of Shamanism: A Triangular Approach to the History and Anthropology of Ecstatic Techniques*. Stockholm: Stockholm University Press. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.16993/bag.c>

Jackson, Peter. 2016. "The Crisis of Sacrifice" in Jackson, Peter; Sjödin (eds.), *Philosophy and the End of Sacrifice: Disengaging Ritual in Ancient India, Greece and Beyond*. 1st edn. South Yorkshire and Bristol: Equinox Publishing Ltd

Jackson, Peter; Sjödin, Anna-Pya (eds.). 2016. *Philosophy and the End of Sacrifice: Disengaging Ritual in Ancient India, Greece and Beyond*. 1st edn. South Yorkshire and Bristol: Equinox Publishing Ltd.

Jackson, Peter and Sjödin, Anna-Pya. 2016. "Introduction" in Jackson, Peter; Sjödin (eds.), *Philosophy and the End of Sacrifice: Disengaging Ritual in Ancient India, Greece and Beyond*. 1st edn. South Yorkshire and Bristol: Equinox Publishing Ltd

Jodorowsky, Alejandro; LeValley, Racheael (transl.) 2010. *Psychomagic: The Transformative Power of Shamanic Psychotherapy*. Eng ed. Vermont: Inner Traditions.

Jung, C.G. 1956. "On the Psychology of the Trickster Figure" in Radin, Paul, *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology*. New York: Philosophical Library, Inc.

Kepler, Johannes; Aiton, E. J. (transl.). 1997. *The Harmony of the World*. 1st ed. American Philosophical Society.

Kerényi, Karl. 1956. "The Trickster in Relation to Greek Mythology" in Radin, Paul. *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology* Translated by R. F. C. Hull. New York: Philosophical Library, Inc.

Kimmerer, Robin. 2013. *Braiding sweetgrass: Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge and the teachings of plants*. Milkweed editions.

Kohn, Eduardo (2013) *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology beyond the Human* California: University of California Press

Kristeva, Julia; Roudiez, Leon S. (transl.). 1984. *Powers of Horror : An Essay on Abjection*. 1st ed. New York: University of Columbia Press.

Kwon, Heonik. 2018. "Wittgenstein's Spirit, Frazer's Ghost" in Col, Giovanni & Palmié, Stephan (eds.); Palmié, Stephan (transl.), *The Mythology in Our Language: Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough* 1st edn. Chicago: Hau Books

LaBelle, Brandon. 2020. *Sonic Agency: Sound and Emergent Forms of Resistance*. 2nd ed. London: Goldsmiths Press.

Lame Deer, John Fire; Erdoes, Richard (1994) *Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions*. Enriched Classic edition. Simon & Schuster: New York

Latour, Bruno. 2010. *On the Modern Cult of the Factish Gods*. First chapter translated by Catherine Porter and Heather Maclean. 1st ed. USA: Duke University Press.

Lecouteux, Claude. 2001. *Witches, Werewolves and Fairies: Shapeshifters and Astral Doubles in the Middle Ages*. Vermont: Inner Traditions

Lemm, Vanessa; Caputo, John D. (ed.). 2009. *Nietzsche's Animal Philosophy: Culture, Politics, and the Animality of the Human Being*. 1st ed. Fordham University Press

Leslie, Annie Ruth. 1997. "Brer Rabbit, a play of the human spirit: Recreating black culture through Brer Rabbit stories" in *The International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*; 1997; 17, 6; ProQuest

Lévi-Strauss, Claude; Tihanyi, Catherine (Transl.). 1996. *The Story of Lynx*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago

Lewis-Williams, David. 2016. *The Mind in the Cave: Consciousness and the Origins of Art*. 2nd edition. Thames & Hudson Ltd: London.

Lingis, Alphonso. 2004. "Nietzsche and Animals" in Calarco, Matthew; Atterton, Peter (eds.), *Animal Philosophy: Essential Readings in Continental Thought*. 1st ed. New York: Continuum

Lotringer, Sylvère Lotringer. 1994. "Furiously Nietzschean: An Introduction by Sylvère Lotringer" in Bataille, Georges, *On Nietzsche: Introduction by Sylvère Lotringer*. 1994. 1st paperback ed. Paragon House

Lyotard, Jean-Francois. 1984. *The Postmodern Condition*. Manchester, England: Manchester University Press.

MacKendrick, Karmen. 2021. "Sacrificial Failure" in: Connole, Edia and Shipley, Gary J. (eds.), *Acéphale & Autobiographical Philosophy in the 21st Century: Responses to the "Nietzsche Event"*. London: Schism Press.

Marshall, Emily Zobel. 1989. *American Trickster : Trauma, Tradition and Brer Rabbit*. London: Rowman & Littlefield

Marzluff, John and Angell, Tony. 2007. *In the Company of Crows and Ravens*. 1st ed. USA: Yale University Press.

Masson, Jeffrey Moussaieff. 1998. *The Assault On Truth: Freud's Suppression of the Seduction Theory*. New York: Pocket.

Mathews, Freya, Rigby Kate; Rose, Deborah. 2012. "Preface" in Plumwood, Val. *The Eye of the Crocodile*. Edited by Lorraine Shannon. ANU E edn. Canberra: ANU E Press.

López de Medsa, Juliana Acosta. 2015. "Peirce's philosophical project from chance to evolutionary love" in *Discusiones Filosóficas* 15(25):31-41.

Maciel, Alice; DiP, Andrea; Correia, Mariama. "Capoeiristas from one of Brazil's biggest groups denounce their masters for sexual crimes" *Publica*, July 1, 2021.

<https://apublica.org/2021/07/capoeiristas-from-one-of-brazils-biggest-groups-denounce-their-masters-for-sexual-crimes/>

McKinn, Rachel. 2019. "I Won A World Championship. Some People Aren't Happy" in *The New York Times*.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/05/opinion/i-won-a-world-championship-some-people-arent-happy.html?smid=url-share>

McKinnon, Rachel. 2015. "You Make Your Own Luck" in Pritchard, Duncan; Whittington, John Lee (eds.), *The Philosophy of Luck*. 1st edn. West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell.

McKinnon, Rachel. 2013. "Getting Luck Properly Under Control" in *Metaphilosophy* 44 (4):496-511. 498

Merrell, Floyd. 2005. *Capoeira and Candomblé: Conformity and Resistance through Afro-Brazilian Experience*. 3rd ed. Princeton, USA: Markus Wiener Publishers.

Métraux, Alfred. 1944. "South American Thunderbirds," in: *Front Matter. The Journal of American Folklore* 57, no. 226 (1944). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/535355>

Moore, Alivia. 2023. 'Rematriation: The Future with Indigenous Land' in Fleming, Severeine Von Tscherner; Maloney, Ali (eds.), *The New Farmers Almanac, Vol. VI: Adjustments and Accommodations*. USA: Greenhorns. 32-35

Moreman, Christopher M. 2014. "On the Relationship between Birds and Spirits of the Dead" in *Society & Animals* 22, 5 (2014): 481-502, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685306-12341328>

Neihardt, John G. 2014. *Black Elk Speaks*. 1st ed. USA: University of Nebraska.

Nietzsche, Friedrich; Tanner, Michael (ed.); Whiteside, Shaun (transl.). 2003. *The Birth of Tragedy, out of the spirit of music*. London: Penguin Books.

Nordberg, Andreas, and Wallenstein, Frederik. 2016. "'Laughing I shall die!' The total transformation of berserkers and *ulfhéðnar* in Old Norse society." in Haldén, Peter; Jackson, Peter (eds.), *Transforming Warriors: The ritual organization of military force*. 1st edn. London and New York: Routledge.

North, Paul. 2021. *Bizarre-Privileged Items in the Universe - The Logic of Likeness*. Zone Books: Brooklyn

Olson, Carl. 1994. "Eroticism, violence, and sacrifice: A postmodern theory of religion and ritual" in *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 6, 1-4 (1994): 231-250, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1163/157006894X00127>

Parkes, Graham. "Staying loyal to the earth: Nietzsche as an ecological thinker." *Nietzsche's futures*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1999. 167-188.

Pendell, Dale. 2021. *The Language of Birds: Some Notes on Chance and Divination*. 2nd ed. United States of America: Three Hands Press

Pendell, Dale. 2010a. *Pharmakodnyamis: Stimulating Plants, Potions & Hercraft*. Updated edn. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books

Pendell, Dale. 2010b. *Pharmakognosis: Plant Teachers and the Poison Path*. Updated edn. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books

Pendell, Dale. 2010c. *Pharmakopoeia: Plant Powers, Poisons & Hercraft*. Forward by Gary Snyder. Updated edn. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books.

Pendell, Dale. 2008. *Walking with Nobby: Conversations with Norman O. Brown*. 1st ed. USA: Mercury House

Plumwood, Val; Shannon, Lorraine (ed.). 2012. *The Eye of the Crocodile*. ANU E edn. Canberra: ANU E Press

Plumwood, V. 2008. *Being Prey*. <https://valplumwood.wordpress.com/?s=being+prey>

Plumwood, Val. 2003. *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*. 2nd ebook edn. Taylor & Francis e-Library.

Pollan, Michael. 2018. *How to Change Your Mind*. 2nd ed. New York: Random House

Pollan, Michael. 2003. *The Botany of Desire: A Plant's-Eye View of the World*. 2nd ed. New York: Random House

Powers, William K. 1984. *Yuwipi: Vision & Experience in Oglala ritual*. 1st ed. Nebraska: Bison Books

Pritchard, Duncan; Whittington, John Lee (eds.). 2015. *The Philosophy of Luck*. 1st edn. West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell

Radin, Paul. 1956. *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology*. New York: Philosophical Librarby, Inc.

Richardson, Michael. 2020. "Embodiment and Affect," in Vint, Sherryl (ed.), *After the Human: Culture, Theory, and Criticism in the 21st Century*. 1st edn. UK: Cambridge University Press.

Roden, David. 1998. *The metaphysics of the deconstructive text* . Diss. Cardiff: University of Wales.

Rose, Deborah. 2013. "Val Plumwood's Philosophical Animism: Attentive Inter-actions in the Sentient World" in *Environmental Humanities*. 3. 93-109. 10.1215/22011919-3611248.

Sansi, Roger. 2007. *Fetishes & Monuments: Afro-Brazilian Art and Culture in the 20th Century*. 1st ed. New York: Berghahn Books.

Schechner, Richard. 1979. "The End of Humanism" in *Performing Arts Journal* 4, no. 1/2 (1979): 9–22. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4623759>.

Schjødt, J. P. 2019. "Mercury – Wotan – Óðinn: One or Many?" in Wikström af Edholm, K., Jackson Rova, P., Nordberg, A., Sundqvist, O. & Zachrisson, T. (eds.) *Myth, Materiality, and*

Lived Religion: In Merovingian and Viking Scandinavia. Pp. 59–86. Stockholm: Stockholm University Press. DOI: [https:// doi.org/10.16993/bay.d](https://doi.org/10.16993/bay.d). License: CC-BY.

Schuback, Marcia Sá Cavalcante. 2016. "Philosophical Sacrifice" in Jackson, Peter; Sjödin (eds.), *Philosophy and the End of Sacrifice: Disengaging Ritual in Ancient India, Greece and Beyond*. 1st edn. South Yorkshire and Bristol: Equinox Publishing Ltd.

Scott, James C. 2017. *Against the Grain: A Deep History of the Earliest States*. 1st ed. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Scott, James C. 2009. *The Art of Not Being Governed; An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. USA: Yale University Press

Simmel, G. 2007. "The Philosophy of Landscape" in *Theory, Culture & Society*, 24(7-8), 20-29. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276407084465>

Simmel, G. 2007. "The Problem of Fate" in *Theory, Culture & Society*, 24(7-8), 78-84. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276407084475>

Singer, Peter. 2004. "Preface" in Calarco, Matthew; Atterton, Peter (eds.), *Animal Philosophy: Essential Readings in Continental Thought*. New York: Continuum.

Small, Christopher. 1998. *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening*. 1st ed. Hanover: Wesleyan University Press.

Smith, Jeanne Rosier. 1997. *Writing Tricksters: Mythic Gambols in American Ethnic Fiction*. Berkeley: University of California Press. <http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft7199p0zh/>

Sobiecki, Jean-Francois. 2023. *African Psychoactive Plants. Journeys in Phytoalchemy*. Independently Published.

Spitzer, Anais M. 2011. *Derrida, Myth and the Impossibility of Philosophy*. 1st ed. London and New York: Continuum Books

Stang, Charles M. 2016. *Our Divine Double*. 1st ed. London and Cambridge (Massachusetts): Harvard University Press.

Stark, Trevor. 2020. *TOTAL EXPANSION OF THE LETTER: Avant-Garde Art and Language after Mallarmé*. 1st ed. Cambridge: MIT Press

Strousma, Guy G. 2016. "The End of Sacrifice Revisited" in Jackson, Peter; Sjödin, Anna-Pya (eds.), *Philosophy and the End of Sacrifice: Disengaging Ritual in Ancient India, Greece and Beyond*. 1st edn. South Yorkshire and Bristol: Equinox Publishing Ltd.

Snyder, Gary. 2010. "Foreword" in Pendell, Dale. *Pharmakopoeia: Plant Powers, Poisons & Herbcraft*. Updated edn. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books.

Taussig, Michael. 1999. *Defacement: Public Secrecy and the Labor of the Negative*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

Thornton, Thomas F; Thornton, Patricia M. 2015. "The Mutable, The Mythical, and the Managerial: Raven Narratives in the Anthropocene," in *Environment and Society* 6 (2015): 66-85

Tomlinson, Gary. 2018. *A Million Years of Music: The Emergence of Human Modernity*. 1st ed. Brooklyn: Zone Books.

Turnbull, Tiffanie and Rodd, Isabelle. "How Raygun made it to the Olympics and divided breaking world" *BBC News*, August 17, 2024. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c4gl34v4r98o>

Turner, Victor. 1991. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. 7th ed. United States of America: Aldine Publishing Company.

Turner, Victor. 1982. *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play*. 1st ed. Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

VanWinkle, Tony. 2023. 'Living with Ambiguity and Akebia: Invasive Species and Trickster Ecologies' in Fleming, Severeine Von Tschärner; Maloney, Ali (eds.), *The New Farmers Almanac, Vol. VI: Adjustments and Accommodations*. USA: Greenhorns. 290-293

Vinci, Felice; Maiuri, Arduino. 2022. "A Proposal upon the Figure of Hermes as an Ancient God of Fire (According to the Homeric Hymn to Hermes)" in *Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies* - Volume 8, Issue 2, April 2022 – Pages 107-116 <https://doi.org/10.30958/ajms.8-2-2>

Vint, Sherryl (ed.). 2020. *After the Human: Culture, Theory, and Criticism in the 21st Century*. 1st edn. UK: Cambridge University Press.

Vint, Sherryl. 2020. "Introduction" in Vint, Sherryl (ed.), *After the Human: Culture, Theory, and Criticism in the 21st Century*. 1st edn. UK: Cambridge University Press.

White, Gordon. 2016. *Star.Ships: A Prehistory of the Spirits*. 1st ed. UK: Scarlet Imprint.

Witze, Alexandra. 2024. "Geologists reject the Anthropocene as Earth's new epoch - after 15 years of debate" in *Nature*. Correction 6th March, 2024.
<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-024-00675-8>

Wolfson, Elliot R. 2011. *A Dream Interpreted Within a Dream : Oneiropoiesis and the Prism of Imagination*. 1st ed. Princeton, New Jersey: Zone Books.

Wood, David. 2004. "Thinking with Cats" in Calarco; Matthew and Atterton; Peter (eds.). *Animal Philosophy: Essential Readings in Continental Thought*. 1st ed. New York: Continuum

Ycaza, Joseph D. 2022. "The Ecological Nietzsche: Considering the Environmental Implications of Friedrich Nietzsche's Philosophy and the Possibility of Grounding der Uebermensch in the Indigenous Perspective." in *Ex Animo*: Vol 2, issue 1.

Appendix

8.1 *Bataile's Laughter: Comedy, Irony, or Wonder?*

Examining ecstasy as an anthropocentric limit⁸

Abstract

This paper will apply a reading of Georges Bataille's laughter of death to wonder, comedy, irony and trickery to determine if these systems are amenable to the dissolution of subjectivity his laughter implies, which repositions us in an ecology of death identified as the food-chain. Bataille's ecstatic laughter is thereby expressive of the extent to which humanism (wonder), postmodernism (comedy), and posthumanism (irony or trickery) depend on identity, and thereby anthropocentricity.

1. Introduction

Sherryl Vint's publication *After the Human* (Vint 2020) presents a collection of essays that delineate the contemporary research field of posthumanism and its influence on the humanities. In Vint's introduction the ecofeminist Donna Haraway is described as playing an indispensable role in the emergence of scholarship on human-animal relations (Vint 2020, 3), while various essays cite her *Cyborg Manifesto* (Haraway 1991) as an originating text for the posthuman movement. Therein Haraway presents the posthuman subject, the cyborg, as "a hybrid creature, composed of organism and machine" (Haraway 1991, 4). This essay asks if cyborgs can laugh, more specifically, it asks if they can laugh in a particular way. It does this because laughter abolishes anthropocentric codes oriented around identity, by dissolving subjectivity. As posthuman subjects which allegedly deconstruct anthropocentricity, it therefore becomes pertinent to ask if cyborgs can laugh; and what posthuman alternatives can we imagine in the case that they cannot. However the nature of this laughter is also examined in the context of its

⁸Published writing in: Holmes, Rachel. 2024. "Bataille's Laughter: Comedy, Irony, or Wonder?" in Karpouzou, Peggy and Zampaki, Nikoleta (eds.), *Lagoonscapes. Venice Journal of Environmental Humanities 4.2 (2024)*: 283-301

inheritance from humanism and postmodernism, in terms of the transformation of the function of ecstasy that they exhibit.

Laughter is expressive of an ecstatic state, where ecstasy is understood according to the Medieval historian and documentor of shamanic rites, Claude Lecouteux, as derivative of “the Greek *ekstasis*, which literally means “straying of the spirit”” (Lecouteux 2001, 12). Laughter is thus presented in this essay as an inversion of anthropocentricity insofar as it removes us, or ‘strays’, from anthropocentric codes. In doing this, laughter abolishes objectivity and identity defined in relation to utility; Georges Bataille describes this state of dissolution as immanence (Bataille 2004, 34) which he identifies with the intimacy of nature as being “*in the world like water in water*” (Bataille 2004, 34). Bataille thus formulated the laughter of death as the sacrifice of identity, and on the basis of this ecstatic commitment to the impossible loss of self (Bataille 2001, 24), described his philosophy as a “philosophy of laughter. It is a philosophy founded on the experience of laughter, and it does not even claim to further” (Bataille 2001, 138). The Bataillean capacity to laugh, is therefore the capacity to (ecstatically) transcend codes oriented around (utilitarian) object schemes, thereby instituting a sovereign relationship with the impossible and unknowable which furthermore, collapses anthropocentricity.

This ecstatic preoccupation positions Bataille as a philosopher of environmental humanities, concerned with relocating the human subject in the intimate ecology of nature. This preoccupation motivated Bataille’s ritual and meditative practices, as well as his discipleship to Nietzsche on the grounds of Nietzsche’s tragic thought which posited “the ecstatic revelation of the impossible which ruins the separation between subject and object” (Lotringer 1994, x). The blossoming of this Nietzschean lineage in Bataille’s thought, resurrects the significance of the animal for modern philosophical discourse.

In *Nietzsche’s Animal Philosophy*, Vanessa Lemm emphasises this significance, contending “the animal is neither a random theme nor a metaphorical device, but rather stands at the centre of Nietzsche’s renewal of the practice and meaning of philosophy itself” (Lemm 2009, 1). In *Animal Philosophy* Matthew Calarco and Peter Atterton express their astonishment that conversely, postmodernism “has only rarely given serious attention to the animal question [despite] the tremendous reception it has given a thinker as seemingly pro-animal as Nietzsche”

(Calarco; Atterton 2004, xv). Joseph D. Ycaza thus argues in *The Ecological Nietzsche* (Ycaza 2022) that indigenous perspectives are a better starting point for an understanding of Nietzsche than the Western European worldview, on the basis of the ecological orientation of indigenous ontologies.

Ycaza's view can be substantiated by the postmodern absence of critical philosophising around the animal question, which Calaraco and Atterton identify in Continental philosophy. This is problematic for the posthuman movement which Vint describes as an attempt to "take account of the more-than-human world and to redefine its concepts and methods beyond anthropocentrism" (Vint 2020, 1), on the basis that posthumanism is the contemporary prodigy of the postmodern "reluctance to embrace traditional humanism and anthropological discourse" (Calarco; Atterton 2004, xv) which Calarco and Atterton describe. Stefan Herbrechter thus characterises posthumanism as a new participant in "the still-ongoing deconstruction of [the humanist] subject by critiquing subjectivity's inherent anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism" (Herbrechter 2020, 39), which it has furthermore, inherited from poststructuralism (as the precursor of postmodernism).

What is at stake therefore, is a threat that posthumanism will reproduce the implicit anthropocentrism of postmodernism by excluding the value of the animal as an ecological subject. This of course has a ricochet effect, insofar as the human being *is* and has been identified as a human-animal by writers like Vanessa Lemm, David Abram (Abram 2011) and indeed, Georges Bataille. As such, Bataille's commitment to Nietzsche's ecstatic thought—which relocates the human subject in an intimate order Bataille equates with animality in *Hegel, Death and Sacrifice* (Bataille 1990)—offers a sort of renegade factor which can critique the systems (including posthumanism) founded on Nietzsche's thought from within. It does this by restaging the significance of the animal in his thought; in this essay this renegade factor is presented as Bataille's laughter of death which is as impossible as the animal, insofar as they both collapse the utilitarian order.

The methodology undertaken herein can thus be described as ecstatic insofar as it is concerned with the extent to which laughter can relocate the objects it critiques, from an anthropocentric order into an immanent order identified with our natural ecology. I furthermore, employ the work

of the ecofeminist Val Plumwood to characterise this ecological system as the food-chain. Plumwood's food-chain is commonsensical, but also true to Bataille's fixation with sacred experience as a form of violence. The crocodile which death-rolled Plumwood three times, changing her philosophical commitments and resulting in her conception of the food-chain outlined in *The Eye of the Crocodile* (Plumwood 2012), is native to Bataille's erotic conception of the sacred as the experience of both horror and ecstasy (Bataille 1986), which Plumwood also describes in *Being Prey* (Plumwood 2008).

This analysis of laughter is interpreted through four humours; wonder, comedy, irony, and finally trickery. This is on the basis of their correspondence with humanism, postmodernism, and posthumanism. Comparing these movements means we can see more clearly their individual relationship to laughter, and thereby, critique their capacity to escape anthropocentricity (or not). It also allows us to identify the transformation of the ecstatic function which has resulted in our current predicament, exemplified by the symbolic crises of The Anthropocene which I will critique. This comparison will be mediated primarily through the work of Caroline Walker Bynum, Alenka Zupančič, Donna Haraway and Val Plumwood; and interpreted through a Bataillean framework.

Bynum's theory of wonder is presented as humanist insofar as it is derived from the Medieval epoch wherein humanism developed and is thereby representative of its ecstatic values. Zupančič's theory of comedy is presented as postmodern insofar as it is cognizant with the predicament of the clown as a postindustrial construction which furthermore, is still expressive of the Mediaeval function of wonder but beginning to lose its ecstatic function. Haraway's theory of irony is presented as posthuman insofar as she describes it as such and her work has been generative for the movement; which furthermore, completes the vanishment of the ecstatic function. By contrast Plumwood will also be positioned as a posthuman writer, but one capable of salvaging the ecstatic function, thereby offering trickery as an alternative to irony.

What emerges from this analysis, is the predicament whereby wonderful humanism appears more posthuman than Haraway's ironic posthumanism, insofar as it is more ecstatic and thereby less anthropocentric. This is an important alarm for posthumanism, which may be informed by examining the origins of humanism as a struggle against tyranny which emerged during the

Florentine Renaissance, and developed into a pantheistic materialism which Arran Gare has characterised as ‘nature enthusiasm’. Gare identifies “Giordano Bruno, who was burnt at the stake in 1600, [as] the foremost proponent of this” (Gare 2021, 3). To this end I have offered Plumwood’s view on the food-chain as a solution to the posthuman return of anthropocentricity, on merit of its capacity to reposition us in a living ecology identified with the food-chain.

In the following I will describe the function of wonder for the humanism of the Mediaevals, predicated on the experience of hybridity which triggered ecstatic states, “as a response to “majesty,” to “hidden wisdom” or significance” (Bynum 2005, 55). This is correlate with Bataille’s conception of laughter as a response to *the unknowable* (Bataille 2001, 135).

2. Humanism and Wonder

We begin this analysis in the Mediaeval epoch, as an ecstatic time concerned with the paradox of the miraculous and the monstrous, and the divinatory states their coexistence induced. Bynum’s *Metamorphosis and Identity* (Bynum 2005) is a study of concepts of change among Western Mediaevals in the 12th and 13th centuries, organised by the encounter between the monstrous as finite experience, and the miraculous as infinite or divine experience. This paradox was representative of the Mediaeval predicament of the finite human being having an infinite experience, personified by Jesus Christ as the Son of Man and embodiment of God; resulting in a wonderful view of hybridity which “lingers at the highest levels of *unitas*” (Bynum 2005, 175). This doubled hybridity, both miraculous and monstrous, resulted in the experience of wonder as a significance reaction (Bynum 2005, 55), and was generative of the popularity of the werewolf in Mediaeval entertainment literature. Bynum thus refers to Angela Carter’s suggestion that Christmas day is the werewolf’s birthday, on merit of the hybridity shared by both Christ and the werewolf (Bynum 2005, 159).

Bynum characterises Mediaeval hybridism as the simultaneous holding together of contradictory parts, which evokes a wonder reaction associated with the sublime in “which ontological and moral boundaries are crossed, confused or erased” (Bynum 2005, 69), evocative of “paradox, coincidence of opposites” (Bynum 2005, 43). Wonder was attributed to sublime experience as a

“signification-reaction—which is only another way of expressing the tautology that things are signs or portents not because of their natures or their causes but because they indicate or point” (Bynum 2005, 71).

Bynum points out “As every Mediaeval schoolboy knew, monsters are named from the verb *monstrare* (to show)—that is, not from their ontology but from their utility” (Bynum 2005, 71). In this regard the werewolf (as paradox) was monstrous not so much because of how spectacular it was, but what this portended to as the negation of human knowledge; Bataille’s ecstatic experience of the unknowable. In the Mediaeval era of humanism, identity was thus inscribed with negation in terms of its orientation to the beyond-human; it was thereby not an anthropocentric position. Rather, this paradigm necessitated humanism as the humanising of hybrid beings toward infinity, as opposed to finity.

Michel Foucault similarly identifies the function of the monstrous before the 17th century; which defined madness as expressive of a divinatory relationship with a ‘Beyond’ (Foucault 1988, 36). This ‘Beyond’ existed in an antagonistic relationship with the state, insofar as it began to be associated with unemployment, idleness, and finally madness. However these zones of deviance mapped the site of humanist struggles of resistance against state despotism. Silvia Federici has demonstrated how this was descriptive of the heretical movement “aspiring to a radical domestication of social life” (Federici 2014, 33) following the crisis of feudalism, which offered an alternative to the development of a money-economy which eventually triggered capitalist industrialisation. Federici argues that the transition from the persecution of heresy to witch-hunting, was facilitated by the demonisation of folk practices previously associated with the wonder paradigm (Federici 2014, 40), including ecstatic rituals of divination.

Nevertheless, apart from hybridity, the Mediaevals did also conceive of forms of transformation and metamorphosis as metempsychosis and shape-shifting; or what Bynum describes as identity-replacement. However, for the Mediaevals these feats of transformation still assumed “an atomism according to which nothing disappears. Things merely aggregate or dissolve, returning to the elements, the ultimate parts or bits. Hence, in a sense, there cannot be change; a thing is merely more or less of what it is” (Bynum 2005, 144). Change was thus often only a revelation of a disguised state; expressed by shape-shifting allegories of “overclothing” (Bynum

2005, 103) which were discarded to reveal an authentic, preexistent nature. Bynum subsequently laments that “we seem at the present moment to lack images, metamorphosis, and stories that imagine... a self that really changes while remaining the same thing” (Bynum 2005, 166). This self that really changes while remaining the same thing in terms of spatio-temporal location, is important insofar as its metamorphosis generates stories which “involves *metabole*, the replacement of something by something else” (Bynum 2005, 181). For Bynum, “Without it there is no story; nothing happens” (Bynum 2005, 177). In this regard, we need more stories of metamorphosis as thirdness; an absence which postmodernism can be described as trying to compensate for, with the non-binary obsession it has plausibly inherited from the Mediaevals.

Nonetheless, Bynum’s theory of Wonder is capable of producing laughter insofar as it is concerned with the divinatory implications of paradox and the ecstatic states it evoked for the Mediaevals. Wonderful monsters transcended anthropocentric codes and symbolised a Beyond. In so doing, they animated a living ecology woven by beyond-human relationships; including the relationship between the monstrous and miraculous as “a likeness moving toward like, or a midpoint in the chain of being between animal and angel” (Bynum 2005, 129).

However this wonderful ‘coincidence of opposites’ would be castrated of its ecstatic function in modernity, resulting in the postmodern predicament of the clown, haunted by its opposite or double. Bataille also refers to the hybridity of Jesus Christ, but as a comedy which cannot reconcile the infinite nature of God with his death (Bataille 1990, 13), but instead mocks it (Bataille 2001, 23). This construction of comedy is based on Bataille’s reading of the labour of the negative (as death) for Hegel, which Zupančič similarly invokes to characterise the comic as the personification of the negative. For Bataille this personification “reveal[s] to the living the invasion of death” (Bataille 1990, 19), identified by him as Jesus Christ.

Comedy thus personifies the negative as the “acting subject” (Zupančič 2008, 27), thereby collapsing the ecstatic experience of contradiction or negation, into the postmodern experience of timeless, endless space; for which there is no Beyond. In this regard Jesus is described by Bataille as comic instead of wonderful, insofar as he is no longer representative of an ecstatic Beyond, but a postmodern ‘here, now’ instituted in the absence of God (Bataille 2001, 23). This

is consistent with the transformation of divination which characterises modernity. While this is a degradation of the status of ecstasy and thus the possibility of laughter, it nonetheless persists as the haunting which traces the space of a vanished double that once offered the wonderful experience of hybridity.

In the following I will analyse the possibility of ecstatic experience for postmodernism, through the function of comedy. This transformation from wonder to comedy was foreseen by Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy* (Nietzsche 2003) which laments the degradation of tragedy Nietzsche associates with divination, into comedy. However, I will conclude that postmodernism is ecstatic, insofar as it is concerned with the destruction of experience. While this is not divinatory and thus not wonderful (or in Nietzschean terms, tragic), it is nevertheless expressive of Bataille's laughter of death.

This counterintuitively positions postmodernism as an animal expression concerned with the unknowable. From this perspective, postmodernism's lack of animal theorising can be understood as a lack of the self-consciousness Nietzsche attributes to the tragic artist as a hybrid-satyr of the Apolline and Dionysian orders (Nietzsche 2003, 43); derived from their (wonderful) encounter with a Beyond. According to Nietzsche's tragic theory this undoubtedly stems from modernity's rejection of the Apolline world of divination and dream, which offers the dualistic complement to the Dionysian realm of intoxication from which the hybrid derives self-consciousness, as "the weird fairy-tale image of the creature that can turn its eyes around and look at itself; he is at once subject and object, at once poet, actor and audience" (Nietzsche 2003, 32).

This points to the sobering problem that as animals begin to appear as literary devices or inventions, our self-consciousness only confesses to our realtime alienation from them. They are once again instilled with the nostalgia and alienation Bataille ascribed to Pleistocene man's cave-paintings of deified animals (Bataille 2005, 76). This transformation is representative of our anthropocentric predicament, as we watch the disappearance of animals into myth.

3. Postmodernism and Comedy

Richard Schechner's identifies the postmodern appetite for "retribalisation" (Schechner 1979, 12-13) in *The End of Humanism*, which replaces the order of narrative with ritual (Schechner 1979, 12-13) "in its its ethological sense of repetition, exaggeration (enlarging, diminishing, speeding, slowing, freezing), use of masks and costumes that significantly change the human silhouette" (Schechner 1979, 13). The dizzying space such suggestive techniques open, animate the vertigo of postmodernity as a performance of crisis, disintegration of the basis of truth and destruction of experience (Schechner 1979, 13), whose effervescence is comparable to the circus. Therein we discover ritualistic, painted clowns 'running into themselves' in the classic gag of the clown who slips on a banana peel, suddenly *finding themselves* on the floor.

This coming to consciousness through a violent encounter with an external force, initially described by Schechner as the invention of the atom bomb (Schechner 1979, 9-10), but represented in this case by the banana— inaugurates the zone of the double which is native to comedy; with comedies of disguised doubles such as Plautus' *Amphitryon* representative of the genre. Comic effect issues from the fractured identity of the double, whose abjection manifests as invisible traces that undertake a symbolic vandalism toward self-expression. In his essay *On the Psychology of the Trickster* Carl Jung describes the predicament of the modern man, secularised yet nonetheless haunted by "countertendencies in the unconscious, and in certain cases by a sort of second personality, of a puerile and inferior character, not unlike the personalities who announce themselves at spiritualistic seances and cause all those ineffably childish phenomena so typical of poltergeists" (Jung 1956, 201-202).

Jung refers to the influence of this unconscious force as 'the shadow'; yet its omnipresence is inscribed in Western culture, with James Frazer identifying it in his encyclopaedic study of folklore and myth, *The Golden Bough* (Frazer 2009), as "ghost" or "shade" (Wittgenstein, 48). In his remarks on Frazer's canonical study, Wittgenstein attempts to disenchant Frazer's superstitious choice of terminology by comparing it to the relatively normalised inclusion of the words soul or spirit in ordinary language (Wittgenstein, 48). Heonik Kwon argues that Wittgenstein undertakes this comparison so that "the distance between secularised modern

society and the world of natural religions [to which concepts of ghosts, shades and spirits is native] is finally put behind us” (Kwon 2018, 90).

However, while this distance maintains, comic effect lies in the state of double negation occupied by a subject coming to a kind of consciousness which is not permitted in our hegemony. This is the comic juxtaposition of two mutually exclusive realities; one in which I have recognized my double, and one in which my double (the shade, shadow, spirit, soul, or ghost; ‘Beyond’) does not exist. This crisis describes the (forbidden) craft of ritual, which doubles the symbolic fiction as its theatre, in order to institute the uncanny return of the double as a mirror of self. However, the postmodern clown regulated to the circus, discovers that they are also a mirror, and their reflection is a reflection of the other’s reflection who is a reflection of their reflection in a ricochet effect *ad infinitum*, which conjures a wormhole in space. In *The Semiotics of Clowns and Clowning*, Paul Bouissac corroborates “It is probable that modern clowns are the continuators of secularised ancient rituals, without being aware of their origin, because their cultural memory rarely goes back more than two or three generations” (Bouissac 2015, 139).

While Nietzsche attributed a tragic effect to this haunting voice of the other in *The Birth of Tragedy*, he conceded its transformation into comedy which castrated tragedy of its essential divinatory nature. Bereft of this divinatory function, the double becomes a clown; a caricature of its own revelatory function, in the comic spectacle of an excluded part visibly trying to integrate, but trapped in its own exclusion becomes ridiculous. In the comic performance doubles never meet, never experience the ‘coincidence of opposites’ as the invasion of the unknowable. They only run into its eerie traces like strange clues pointing to a pending symbolic crisis, where references are mixed and become senseless. However, this very ridiculousness represents the terrific aspect of the clown, whose excluded spectacle is both hilarious and threatening;

...the clown is perceived as standing both out of time and out of space, to the extent that an outcast is always out of place, in the margin of the socio-spatial categories that assign statuses and functions to slots in the virtual grid of the social order (Bouissac 2015, 24).

Bouissac identifies the term clown as originating from the English ‘peasant’ (Bouissac 2015, 54) drawing out the historic identification of clowns with a “class of uneducated peasants” (Bouissac 2015, 171) demeaned by city dwellers who enjoyed making fun of them as farmers lacking in social graces. Such ‘clowns’ became stable characters in British pantomime of the eighteenth century, appearing in European circuses by the nineteenth century as representations of emerging class relations embodied in the tradition of the ‘whiteface’ and ‘auguste’ doubles. The *auguste* clowns “drew their name from the antiphrastic use of the noble name August as a way of ridiculing a person as slow-witted, clumsy, and possibly inebriated” (Bouissac 2015, 171). While the *whiteface* represents their opposite, the aristocratic personality who “is articulate, moves graciously, and is elegantly dressed. In contrast, the garb of the *auguste* is gaudy and ill-fitting, his behaviour is awkward, and his way of speaking is unpolished as well as impolite. They form a semiotic couple in which the signs that define one are inverted in the other” (Bouissac 2015, 39).

The ridiculous appearance of this double is representative of the social crises that conjured our postmodern abyss. They mirror the transformation of society during the centuries of industrialization which not only disenfranchised the foreign populations of colonies abroad, social deviants at home, but also excluded peasant labourers and conservative aristocrats from capitalist progress concentrated around cities, and galvanised by the industrial promise of meritocracy. Those left behind in the ‘countryside’ are represented by the pair’s performative critique of “the conjugated forces of cultural inertia and nostalgia” (Bouissac 2015, 38) represented by the caricatured peasant and lord, whose exploitative codependency is satirised in the circus ring; but whose irrepressible presence also destabilise reality within the circus. As the haunting image of exploitation disturbing contemporary allusions to ‘meritocracy’ in a classless society, Bouissac reminds us that zombie-like, “The *auguste* is by essence both dead and undead” (Bouissac 2015, 164). The comic value of the *auguste* thus diverts attention from the contradictions of the economic system whose early effects were brutally impoverishing, to a scapegoated and nostalgic image of the whiteface lord as the personification of feudal exploitation. Occupying this absence of God, they are *nowhere at all*, exiled to the timeless realm of the negative.

Zupančič's characterisation of the comic in *The Odd One In* suggests that this timeless, negative space becomes personified in the acting subject as the clown, thereby offering a synthetic Hegelian state described as 'the odd one in' which subsumes difference; the double has become the acting subject (clown). Echoing Nietzsche's description of the evolution of the tragic into comedy, Zupančič formulates this transformation as such,

To recapitulate: in the epic, the subject narrates the universal, the essential, the absolute; in tragedy, the subject enacts or stages the universal, the essential, the absolute; in comedy, the subject is (or becomes) the universal, the essential, the absolute. Which is also to say that the universal, the essential, the absolute becomes the subject (Zupančič 2008, 28).

Yet for Hegel, in this very state of personified negation, is the emergence of being "outside meaning, yet inextricably from it" (Zupančič 2008, 182). This position outside meaning is the site of the negative, which Bataille describes as being founded on the animal in *Hegel, Death and Sacrifice*. Emergence through this negativity, is thereby emergence through the animal as an immanent being indistinguishable from nature. However the experience of this immanence offers "precisely human death" (Bataille 1990, 16). The laughter of death is thus expressive of Bousiac's clowns, and Zupančič's comics, but as a Hegelian emergence of being that transcends objectified human identity. The Comic is capable of producing the laughter of death, precisely as the enactment of death; which conversely, makes us animals.

The wonder oriented humanism of the Mediaevals diverges from postmodern comedy here, insofar as it was concerned with humanising such animals as the experience of hybridity; for Bataille this was the possibility of sovereignty invoked by an *insidious* laughter (Bataille 2001, 186) and cognizant with the origins of humanism as a struggle against despotism. In *Against Posthumanism*, Gare reminds us that humanism originated in a republican struggle against despotism in the 13th and 14th centuries in Northern Italy. This began as an attempt to humanise or culture subjects to participate in governance, when "Petrarch introduced the humanities as a form of education designed to inspire people to develop the virtues of wisdom, justice and courage to defend their liberty and participate as citizens in the governance of their republics"

(Gare 2021, 3). In this regard the rejection of utility that Bataille ascribes to the laughter of death, is also descriptive of sovereignty as rebellion against systems of despotic tyranny; which finally, converts slaves into princes staked in governance. Lemm has shown how this also characterises Nietzsche's conception of culture as an animalistic resistance against oppressive hegemony or civilization (Lemm 2009, 11).

So while postmodernism expresses the laughter of death, it does not become sovereign; insofar as it is preoccupied with crises as opposed to rebellion. This failure is also descriptive of posthumanism whose loss of animality, enacted by its alienation from the food-chain, has instigated the symbolic crisis of The Anthropocene. In the following I will show how this operates as the realisation of Haraway's irony, and rejection of ecstasy.

4. Posthumanism and Irony

Following Hegel, Søren Kierkegaard similarly identifies "infinite absolute negativity" in the function of the ironic (Frazier 2004, 418). However, irony utilised as pure negativity fails to respond to Kierkegaard's task of becoming, predicated on attaining historical actuality as a gift and a task (Frazier 2004, 428). The ironic rejection of the feat of actuality as "partly a gift that refuses to be rejected, partly as a task that wants to be fulfilled" (Kierkegaard 1989, 276-277) transforms into pure negativity, which suspends the ironist in a state of detachment which fails to realise positive freedom (Frazier 2004, 425) in relationship with a historical community. In this regard, the ironic becomes a narrative of detachment and rejection, which produces ironic performances and rituals detached from positive freedom insofar as "everything becomes nothing" (Frazier 2004, 419). This becomes interesting when we apply it to a reading of Haraway's use of irony in the *Cyborg Manifesto*.

Describing irony as a "rhetorical strategy and political method" (Haraway 1991, 149) Haraway positions the image of the cyborg at "the centre of [her] ironic faith, [her] blasphemy" (Haraway 1991, 149). This ironic mascot has become a sort of prophetic vision for the posthuman movement, with her *Cyborg Manifesto* repeatedly quoted in *After the Human*, and similarly

referenced as a sort of genesis event by posthuman critics like Arran Gare, Thomas F. Thornton and Patricia M. Thornton (Thornton; Thornton 2015, 66-85), among others.

Haraway locates irony besides blasphemy as an insistence on the need for community that rejects a moral majority, and is instead founded on holding together “contradictions that do not resolve into larger wholes” (Haraway 1991, 149). It is in this vein that we can read her work *Staying with the Trouble* which seeks a response to “mixed-up times” (Haraway 2016, 1). These mixed-up contradictions that do not resolve into larger wholes are embodied by the cyborg as a hybrid of organic flesh and technology. However, can the cyborg laugh?

If Bataille’s laughter of death is predicated on the animal as the induction of immanence, the cyborg seems incapable of accessing this experience. This can be simply determined from its exclusion from the food-chain. For Bataille, “That one animal eats another scarcely alters a fundamental situation: every animal is *in the world like water in water*” (Bataille 2004, 34). Jill Marsden shows how this immanent state of being *like water in water* is generated by “the similarity between the eater and eater [insofar as] the animal that eats another does not distinguish what it eats in the same way that a human being distinguishes an object” (Marsden 2004, 38). This indistinction, experienced as “The dissolution of boundaries in poetic and erotic activity is not a reduction of difference to sameness, which would be to understand difference conceptually” (Marsden 2004, 42); it is rather, representative of the collapse of identity altogether, from which becoming emerges. Insofar as the cyborg is omitted from the food-chain, it is separate from immanence and hence the laughter of death.

By contrast, Plumwood describes a form of philosophical animism founded on the food-chain, and the vulnerable position of the human being within it. She developed this idea following a gruesome encounter with a crocodile that death-rolled her three times. Subsequently, she critiques forms of Ontological Veganism (Plumwood 2012, 79) which attempt to displace human-animal relations from the food-chain, thereby generating a sterile and ultimately ironic view of nature in Kierkegaard’s terms which does not achieve positive freedom, insofar as it excludes the agency of nature as a historical fact and limit of becoming; as a gift and a task. The structure of Ontological Veganism is repeated by Haraway’s cyborg, as an entity removed from

the food-chain. As a foundational text for posthumanism, it implicates the movement, despite Haraway's allusions to play, as a little bit laughter-less. It also shows that Haraway's irony functions much more closely according to the system Kierkegaard describes for which "everything becomes nothing" (Frazier 2004, 419). This is in contrast to Bataille's view, which could be described as 'nothing becomes everything'.

This paradox is epitomised by the very ironic problem that one of the founding tenets of posthumanism, regarding the onset of the age of The Anthropocene which "combines the Greek root for humans, *Anthropos*, with the term for new "cene," and is usually glossed as "The Age of Humankind"" (Thornton; Thornton 2015, 3) was rejected by its examining community of geological scientists on 20th March 2024 (Witze 2024). In effect, we are not in the Anthropocene according to the scientific community. This can of course be disregarded by sociological theorists, however posthumanism and its cyborgs are also voluntarily predicated on scientific method inaugurating the cyborg "technosubject as a hybrid composed of flesh and machine" (Hollinger 2020, 18). This problem reinforces an ironic reading of posthumanism through Kierkegaard's *The Concept of Irony*, insofar as "In irony, the subject is continually retreating, talking every phenomenon out of its reality in order to save itself—that is, in order to preserve itself in negative independence of everything" (Kierkegaard 1989, 257-258). Posthumanism cannot salvage The Anthropocene without contradicting its own premise of scientific method, except to "preserve itself in negative independence of everything" thus becoming pure irony.

Most optimistically we could hope this collapse of posthuman language may forestall an emergence from negation, but one which will surely be poetic; divinatory, and thus wonderful. At any rate, it exceeds the parameters of posthumanism as the remainder of difference; or the attempt to differentiate itself from a historical lineage which already critiques human identity and its relationship to the environment; including through the humanist movement itself. Herbrechter thereby remind us "“after the end of man” or “after the human” also need to be understood as *before* the human" (Herbrechter 2020, 40).

In comparison to divinely inspired ecstasies electrified by the laughter of death as an encounter with the Beyond, cyborgs appear as ironic representations of an allegedly ahistorical present, and

yet nevertheless constructed by Mediaeval hybridity. The wonderful and the ironic thus double as werewolves and cyborgs in a comic performance. It is at this moment it seems fitting to ask, but who is laughing? Who occupies the limit of knowledge as the unknowable? It is at this boundary we discover the emergence of another being; an other that haunts this text, beneath its rippling surface, peering up at us through its murky web with a monstrous and yet miraculous eye; the third. The being capable of metamorphosis as identity-replacement; or, predation. The crocodile—laughing an insidious laughter of death, *at us*; at our limit of knowledge. To this end, Plumwood described the crocodile as her teacher (Mathews; Rigby; Rose 2012, 10).

I will now offer a posthuman alternative to Haraway's irony, which is capable of ecstatic experience (and thus the laughter of death) insofar as it is constructed in proximity to the food-chain. This is an attempt to rescue the status of the animal in the postmodern legacy which has detonated the problem of The Anthropocene, as the absence of coherent theorising about our position in a living ecology. I have traced this to a misreading of Nietzsche, however also indicated my misgivings that as we imagine animals into theory and literature, we compensate for their extinction. In effect, animals need to speak for themselves; however the nature of this language complicates our relationship to writing as problematically, "pre-eminently the technology of cyborgs" (Haraway 1991, 176). As Plumwood has shown, death is more properly the language of animals; or in Bataille's terminology, sacrifice.

5. Animals and Trickery

In his essay *The Sovereign*, Bataille introduces *insidious* laughter (Bataille 2001, 185), which he associates with sovereignty and rebellion as "the condition of loving death more than slavery" (Bataille 2001, 188). This condition fuels the caprice of sovereign princes, who "gamble even with their lives" (Bataille 2001, 188). This is related to Bataille's laughter of death insofar as it is organised around the unknowable and the impossible, as that which exists outside the possible and the order of utility. Insidious laughter is therefore native to the order of death, but as the gambler's caprice that risks death on his sovereignty. For Bataille, this discipleship to impossibility is animal (Bataille 2001, 217) which in "putting life to the standard of the

impossible, [and] renouncing the guarantee of the possible” (Bataille 2001, 23) deifies him as sovereign. In this regard, the crocodile serves as Bataille’s deified animal “image of an impossibility, of the hopeless devouring implied in *what happens*” (Bataille 2001, 217). This impossible image of devouring illustrates Plumwood’s attack, which she miraculously (or impossibly) survived. Furthermore, it expresses the insidious laughter of the crocodile who gambled life on its caprice before arbitrarily releasing Plumwood from its jaws. Plumwood would subsequently come to describe the crocodile as both a teacher and a trickster (Plumwood 2012, ix).

In this vein, the crocodile is not straightforwardly generic to the category of wonderful monsters Bynum delineates. Rather Plumwood describes her “saurian teacher [who] was a wrestling master and a far better judge than I of my incautious character, the precarious nature of human life, and of various other things I needed to know and have striven to pass onto others” (Mathews; Rigby; Rose 2012, 10). The crocodile thereby exceeds the monstrous category insofar as it does not appear as a hybrid being, but was rather native to “what seemed a parallel universe, one with completely different rules to the ‘normal universe’... the universe represented in the food-chain” (Plumwood 2012, 13). Whereas the hybrid can be identified with Plumwood herself, who was exposed to a Beyond and irreparably changed.

The crocodile is furthermore capable of the identity-replacement absent from the wonderful view of hybridity, as metamorphosis. In effect, the crocodile could have instigated Plumwood’s identity-replacement by consuming her, whereby she would have metamorphosed into a crocodile. We can also imagine the crocodile could have been eaten by another predator and similarly, replaced. In this regard its position in a food-chain is metamorphic, insofar as it “live[s] the other’s death, die[s] the other’s life” (Plumwood 2012, 13). The repression or loss of this experience of being in the food-chain in philosophical discourse—reflective of our anthropocentricity—renders metamorphosis (as identity-replacement) unthinkable for our cultural systems of change, as Bynum has pointed out. Emanuele Coccia has attempted to address this problem with his recent publication *Metamorphoses* (Coccia 2021), emphasising evolution and birth as forms of human metamorphoses. This contrasts with the invasion of the

impossible and death, which characterised Bataille's work as a philosopher of laughter and sacrifice.

The crocodile thus offers a fourth framework expressive of Bataille's laughter of death, and one which haunts posthumanism in the distance between Haraway and Plumwood. This is the insidious laughter of the trickster, which qualifies the sovereign as he who "puts his life in the hands of his caprice" (Bataille 2001, 188) and whose "first phase of autonomy is trickery" (Bataille 2001, 168). This trickery is written in these pages as the sovereign voice of the crocodile.

Thomas F. Thornton and Patricia M. Thornton similarly present trickery as an alternative to posthumanism and the Anthropocene. They describe the *Ravencene*, invoking the trickster-demiurge Raven described in "indigenous and pre-modern narratives and myths disseminated across the north Pacific and East Asia" (Thornton; Thornton 2015, 1). Raven offers stories of survival, adaptation and change based on an understanding of our mutual dependence in a "web of relations that constitutes and maintains life on earth" (Thornton; Thornton, 18). Thornton and Thornton thus argue, "we are better served by understanding the present in continuity with the past, instead of within the context of an unknown and unknowable future" (Thornton; Thornton 2015, 16). Tony VanWinkle has also described a Trickster Ecology, which "applies our present socio-ecological quandaries to the teachings embedded in traditional trickster stories. For our present realities are characterised first and foremost by constant change, contingency, and ambiguity—precisely the domains where trickster consciousness thrives. In various Native American traditions, these stories might revolve around Coyote, Raven, or Rabbit" (VanWinkle 2023, 291).

Plumwood's narrative of her encounter with the trickster crocodile is presented as a viable alternative to Haraway's posthumanism—one capable of enlivening the insidious laughter of death that marks the boundary of the unknowable; turning us into coyotes, ravens or rabbits, navigating a complex food-chain and living ecology. As Thornton and Thornton contend, the character of the trickster underscores the timeless problem of change and adaptation which continues to face us today, as it has always faced the animals competing with us in our planetary

food-chain. By contrast, Harway's insufficient theorising around hybridity and its historic representation of our relationship with a Beyond which transcends anthropocentric codes, is demonstrative of naive conceptions of change—derived from postmodernism's theoretic alienation from our living ecology.

In effect, if we cannot laugh; we cannot change.

6. Conclusion

This essay has attempted to show that anthropocentricity should be analysed in terms of what exceeds it; this is the function of Bataille's laughter of death in this text, which demands ecstatic experience as the sacrifice of identity and the stake of becoming. I have tried to show that while this is logical to the wonderful and comic, the ironic fails to offer this flight and thus implicates the irony of posthumanism as identity-centred, and subsequently anthropocentric. In this regard it does not represent the experience of immanence as participation in a living ecology, or the possibility of metamorphosis; conversely identified herein with the crocodile. However, Plumwood's writing offers an alternative posthuman system based on an encounter with the impossible, generative of the insidious laughter of sovereignty and death. I therefore encourage the environmental humanities to review the significance of ecstasy for a contemporary posthuman agenda as the staying of spirit.

Bibliography

- Abram, D. (2011). *Becoming Animal: an earthly cosmology*. United States of America: Vintage Books.
- Bataille, G. (2005). *The Cradle of Humanity: Prehistoric Art and Culture*. Princeton: Zone Books.
- Bataille, G. (2004). "Animality". Calarco, M.; Atterton, P. (eds), *Animal Philosophy: Essential Readings in Continental Thought*. New York: Continuum, 33-36.
- Bataille, G. (2001). Kendell, S (ed); Kendall, M.; Kendall, S. (transl), *The Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Bataille, G. (1990). Strauss, J. (transl), "Hegel, Death and Sacrifice." *Yale French Studies*, 78, 9–28. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2930112>.
- Bataille, G. (1986). Dalwood, M. (transl), *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*. City Lights Books: San Francisco.
- Bouissac, P. (2015). *The Semiotics of Clowns and Clowning: Rituals of Transgression and The Theory of Laughter*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Bynum, C. W. (2005). *Metamorphosis and Identity*. Brooklyn: Zone Books.
- Calarco, M.; Atterton, P. (eds) (2004). *Animal Philosophy: Essential Readings in Continental Thought*. New York: Continuum.
- Coccia, E. (2021). *Metamorphosis*. Cambridge: Polity Press
- Federici, S. (2014). *Caliban and the Witch: women, the body and primitive accumulation*. Brooklyn: Autonomedia.
- Foucault, M. (1988). *Madness & Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. United States of America: Random Books.
- Frazer, J. (2009). *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion: A new abridgement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Frazier, B. (2004). "Kierkegaard on the Problems of Pure Irony". *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 32, 417-447. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9795.2004.00173.x>
- Gare, A. (2021). "Against Posthumanism: Posthumanism as the World Vision of House-Slaves". *Borderless Philosophy*, 4, 1-56. <https://philpapers.org/archive/GARAPP.pdf>

Haraway, D. J. (2016). *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. London: Duke University Press.

Haraway, D. J. (1991). *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge.

Herbrechter, S. (2020). "Poststructuralism and the End(s) of Humanism". Vint, S. (ed), *After the Human*. UK: Cambridge University Press, 31-43.

Hollinger, V. (2020). "Historicizing Posthumanism". Vint, S. (ed), *After the Human: Culture, Theory, and Criticism in the 21st Century*. UK: Cambridge University Press, 15-30.

Jung, C. G. (1956). Hull, R. F. C. (transl), "On the Psychology of the Trickster Figure". Radin, P. *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology*. New York: Philosophical Library, Inc, 195-211.

Kierkegaard, S. (1989). Hong, H. V.; Hong, E. H. (transl), *The Concept of Irony, with Continual Reference to Socrates, together with "Notes On Schelling's Berlin Lectures."* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Kwon, H. (2018). "Wittgenstein's Spirit, Frazer's Ghost". da Col, G.; Palmié, S. (eds); Palmié, S (transl), *The Mythology in Our Language: Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*. Chicago: Hau Books, 85-94.

Lecouteux, C. (2001). *Witches, Werewolves and Fairies: Shapeshifters and Astral Doubles in the Middle Ages*. Vermont: Inner Traditions

Lemm, V. (2009). *Nietzsche's Animal Philosophy: Culture, Politics, and the Animality of the Human Being*. New York: Fordham University Press.

Lotringer, S. L. (1994). "Furiously Nietzschean: An Introduction by Sylvère Lotringer." Bataille, G.; Boone, B. (transl), *On Nietzsche: Introduction by Sylvère Lotringer*. Minnesota: Paragon House, vii-xv.

Marsden, J. (2004). "Bataille and The Poetic Fallacy of Animality". Calarco, M.; Atterton, P. (eds), *Animal Philosophy*. New York: Continuum, 37-44.

Mathews, F.; Rigby, K.; Rose, D. (2012). "Introduction". Plumwood, V.; Shannon, L. (ed), *The Eye of the Crocodile*. Canberra: ANU E Press, 1-6.

Nietzsche, F. (2003). *The Birth of Tragedy, out of the spirit of music*. Great Britain: Penguin Books.

Plumwood, V. (2012). Shannon, L. (ed), *The Eye of the Crocodile*. Canberra: ANU E Press

Plumwood, V. (2008). *Being Prey*. <https://valplumwood.wordpress.com/?s=being+prey>

- Schechner, R. (1979). "The End of Humanism." *Performing Arts Journal* 4, no. 1/2, 9–22.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4623759>.
- Thornton, T. F.; Thornton, P. M. (2015). "The Mutable, The Mythical, and the Managerial: Raven Narratives in the Anthropocene,". *Environment and Society*, 6, 66-86.
<https://doi.org/10.3167/ares.2015.060105>
- VanWinkle, T. (2023). "Living with Ambiguity and Akebia: Invasive Species and Trickster Ecologies". Von Tscharnier Fleming, S.; Maloney, A. (eds), *The New Farmers Almanac, Vol. VI: Adjustments and Accommodations*. USA: Greenhorns, 290-293.
- Vint, S. (ed) (2020). *After the Human: Culture, Theory, and Criticism in the 21st Century*. UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Wittgenstein, L. (2018). da Col, G.; Palmié, S. (eds); Palmié, S. (transl), *The Mythology in Our Language: Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*. Chicago: Hau Book. 29-73.
- Witze, A. (2024) "Geologists reject the Anthropocene as Earth's new epoch — after 15 years of debate." *Nature*. <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-024-00675-8>
- Ycaza, J. D. (2022). "The Ecological Nietzsche: Considering the Environmental Implications of Friedrich Nietzsche's Philosophy and the Possibility of Grounding der Ubermensch in Indigenous Thought". *Ex Animo*, 2.
<https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1794/27944/Ex-Animo-Volume-II-Essay-1.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- Zupančič, A. (2008). *The Odd One In: On Comedy*. USA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

8.2 *The Crow: Nameless Ones of the Dreamzone*⁹

What is the dream zone, and who are the nameless? These are the interests that organise the following chapter, referring more broadly to the problem of symbolic representation and its *either/or* law of the excluded middle.

This problem appears as dissension in the Acéphale-affiliated Collège de Sociologie, surrounding the revolutionary impetus of the festival,¹⁰ and whether revolutionary potential is simply reintegrated into a symbolic order which always operates under the sovereignty of the collective. What is at stake here, is the real as an upper limit of the symbolic, which must always describe something that exists phenomenologically as something shared. But even if this shared space can be guaranteed ontologically, excluded persons are prevented from participating in it: always elsewhere, they remain adrift and nameless, in the dream zone; negating this upper limit of inclusion through *abject being*.

Problematising this “reality ideal,” I will follow Elliot R. Wolfson in suggesting that “dream” demonstrates one state in which the symbolic produces reality.¹¹ This is apparent in Collette “Laure” Peignot’s poem “Le Corbeau [The Crow],” which animated an omen of crows years before her death.¹² Wolfson theorises dream as a form of negation which (re)creates reality: an anticipatory memory which “remembers the future.”¹³ I will locate dream in the state of abjection—as a form of exile from unconsciousness and consciousness, or the maternal matrix and the paternal symbolic.¹⁴ In this dream state of abjection, we find our cadavers of namelessness—the zombies that appear in African Diasporic cultural practices of Capoeira, Candomblé, and Voudou, whose dream logic of negation and self-sacrifice permeates their rituals of dissemblance as existentially symptomatic.¹⁵ In this way, abjection can be understood as *a state of (revolutionary) being*—what Sean Connolly describes as Laure’s *war*; her “religious life, a life lived in pursuit of the sacred.”¹⁶

⁹ Published writing in, Holmes, Rachel. 2021. “The Crow: Nameless Ones of the Dream Zone”. In: Connole, Edia and Shipley, Gary, (eds.) *Acéphale and Autobiographical Philosophy in the 21st Century: Responses to the “Nietzsche event”*. London, UK : Schism Press. 125 - 150.

¹⁰ Alastair Brotchie, “The College of Sociology,” in *The Sacred Conspiracy: The Internal Papers of the Secret Society of Acéphale and Lectures to the College of Sociology*, ed. Marina Galletti and Alastair Brotchie, trans. Natasha Lehrer, John Harman, and Meyer Barash (London: Atlas Books, 2017), 358.

¹¹ Elliot R. Wolfson, *A Dream Interpreted Within a Dream: Oneiropoiesis and the Prism of Imagination* (New York: Zone Books, 2011), 223–226.

¹² Georges Bataille, “Le Coupable: Found fragments on Laure,” in *Laure: The Collected Writings*, trans. Jeanine Herman (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1995), 262.

¹³ Elliot R. Wolfson, *A Dream Interpreted Within a Dream: Oneiropoiesis and the Prism of Imagination* (New York: Zone Books, 2011), 223–226.

¹⁴ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 3–6.

¹⁵ Floyd Merrell, *Capoeira and Candomblé: Conformity and Resistance through Afro-Brazilian Experience* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2018).

¹⁶ Sean Connolly, “Laure’s War: Selfhood and Sacrifice in Colette Peignot,” in *Project Muse* 35, no. 1 (2010): 17–38; 19.

Referring to John Cussans' work on the zombie complex, I will suggest that the absence of initiation into *abjection as being* represents Georges Bataille's misunderstanding of the black strategies of subversion and resistance which informed his work;¹⁷ most clearly crystallised in his misattribution of Pierre Verger's photograph of a Candomblé ceremony in *Eroticism to Voodoo*.¹⁸ However, Bataille's increased interest in mysticism following the death of Laure, and his offering of himself as a sacrifice to Acéphale,¹⁹ will be seen as corrective attempts to engage with *abjection as being*.

I will ascribe *abjection as being* to Laure and the politics of her dissemblance, referring to the "master-slave dialectic" in Jean Baudrillard's work to characterise the master as keeper of death²⁰ who, engaging in symbolic exchange with death, generates doubles that negate the appearance of the real, and become meaningful through dissemblance. In this way, Laure is sovereign. I will conclude that the *abject* sovereign does not participate in a shared reality, but destabilises its symbolic order through a dream-death-science of negation and dissemblance—Laure's sacred practice of self-sacrifice.

FORESTS OF INNOCENCE

Five months before the disbandment of Acéphale (May 1939), Roger Caillois delivered "Theory of the Festival" as a lecture to its public face, Le Collège de Sociologie.²¹ Here, he established festival as a form of social catharsis where prohibitions organising social order are transgressed, excavating the *appearance* of the sacred, and revealing, within its hall of mirrors, collective identity. This collective identity is predicated on an innocent state, before objectification and alienation; the archaic age of primordial chaos from which civilisation and its discontents evolve. For Caillois, festival is a ". . . re-enactment of the first days of the universe, the *Urzeit*, the eminently creative era that saw all objects, creatures and institutions become fixed in their traditional and definitive form."²² Festival returns society to primordial chaos, where it re-animates an exhausting symbolic order. This is a pre-emptive strategy, forestalling catastrophic revolution by satiating appetites: seeing the unseen; sharing the cake; reviving the zombie.

For both Bataille²³ and Caillois, rebirth is at stake within the festival. However, where this rebirth takes place and, by extension, where one can locate its revolutionary impetus, was a

¹⁷ John Cussans, *Undead Uprising: Haiti, Horror and the Zombie Complex* (London: Strange Attractor Press, 2017), 59–71.

¹⁸ Pierre Verger, "Sacrifice of a Ram. Voodoo cult," in *Eroticism*, trans. Mary Dalwood (London: Marion Boyars Publishers, 2006), 64.

¹⁹ Patrick Waldberg, "Extract from Acéphalogram (2)," in *The Sacred Conspiracy*, 456.

²⁰ Jean Baudrillard. *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, trans. Ian Hamilton Grant (London: Sage Publications, 1993), 61. Kindle Edition.

²¹ Roger Caillois, "Theory of the Festival," in *The Sacred Conspiracy*, 383–406.

²² Roger Caillois, "Theory of the Festival," 387.

²³ Georges Bataille, "The Festival, or the Transgression of Prohibitions," in *The Bataille Reader*, ed. Fred Botting and Scott Wilson (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1997), 248–252.

subject of public disagreement during the final months of *Acéphale*.²⁴ Caillois framed the festival as an essentially conservative performance, operating under the auspices of the collective; the upper limit of revolution. Through the festival, the community is reborn as sovereign, subject to no law except that of its own continuity and permitted during festive time to engage in taboos which expose the symbolic as ultimately functional, insofar as it is accountable to a higher principle of the collective. However, we know how quickly “function” and its language of utility, morality, and purpose is subsumed by worldviews orientated around labour and the afterlife, wherein existence is always deferred—to holidays, to heaven, to the weekend, and so on. Unsurprisingly, in “Theory of the Festival,” Caillois shows how today the festival has been replaced by the vacation.²⁵

Bataille offered a less comforting analysis. For him, the promise of the festival is purely revolutionary, it is a question of worlds: “What came to pass can be summed up in a simple statement: the force of a movement, which repression increased tenfold, projected life into a richer world.”²⁶ We do not return from primordial chaos, but begin to erect a new time, purchased with a currency of ecstatic orgy which discredits the community itself. In the potlatch of carnival, among intoxicated revellers, even the future is up for grabs. In Caillois’ reading, amoral excesses haunt the cathedral of the symbolic, now and then rising from the dead to exorcise garbed hypocrisy for the sake of posterity. For Bataille, the festival is ecstatic experience wherein we become our ceremonies as contagious sites of transgression, not between the hygienic dichotomy of flesh and spirit, but between worlds. Distilled into philosophical terms, Caillois and Bataille’s opposition represents the problem of inference: if the symbolic always operates on the level of denotation vis-à-vis Caillois, and is concerned with the space of representation between the referent and the signed, or if, according to Bataille, this space of representation manifests *as reality*; where the signed miraculously *becomes* real.

This chapter is concerned with such labyrinthian tunnels, winding between the symbolic and the real like neural pathways, and whether or not, lurking beneath the mask of the “symbolic” is a monstrous face, nevertheless sanitised by that selfsame mask—or whether the monster has indeed become the mask; and how these interfaces have, if at all, warped its “voice.” If channelled through the veil, the voice doubles and begins to speak in riddling speech, referring always to the void inaugurated by its own alienation: the emptiness of the soundbox on which its language depends or, if fused with the mask into a sublime countenance, the voice becomes oracular, capable of summoning futures.

These interests coalesce in the poem “The Crow,” authored by Laure, Bataille’s lover from 1934–1938.²⁷ The lifetime of “The Crow” roughly spans that of *Acéphale*, from inception in 1936 to manifestation as death, provoking the crisis which essentially swallowed Bataille’s

²⁴ Alastair Brotchie, “The College of Sociology,” in *The Sacred Conspiracy*, 358.

²⁵ Roger Caillois, “Theory of the Festival,” in *The Sacred Conspiracy*, 405.

²⁶ Georges Bataille, “The Festival, or the Transgression of Prohibitions,” 251.

²⁷ Laure Peignot, “The Crow,” in *Laure: The Collected Writings*, trans. Jeanine Herman (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1995), 52–55.

sacred experiment in 1939. Michel Leiris suggests as much, claiming “. . . Laure was the inspiration behind the idea for the secret society and the journal.”²⁸

In an uncanny prognosis, Laure anticipates her own death in “The Crow,” represented through the sign of the crow—or, as it happens, two crows compounded into one. Recounting the circumstances of Laure’s death, Bataille describes the appearance of two dead crows in the forest of Acéphale’s meetings, and the virtual site of Laure’s poetic death, as a sign animated by Laure’s poem: “I understood only after her death that [Laure] had seen the encounter with the dead birds as a sign.”²⁹

I wanted it to accompany me everywhere and
always to precede me
like a herald his knight.³⁰

Was “The Crow” the primordial site of innocence in which the future was inscribed, like a scar on Laure’s forehead, an eye looking for the future only it could see?

NIETZSCHE’S MADNESS

In his work on oneiropoiesis, which fashions the dream as “involuntary poetry”³¹ woven from “memory threads,”³² Elliot R. Wolfson locates the mask-which-has-become-the-face in dream experience, more radically contending that the experience of consciousness itself is dream.³³ Dream, as being, is constituted by negation—by language always referring to something else on merit of its idealising function, which reduces singular peculiarity to intelligible generality; image which is always deceiving as appearance.³⁴ Representation, in this respect, is founded on misrepresentation. Imagination and, by extension, human sentience itself derives from the intelligence of the liar: the fabric of the dream.³⁵

But the dream, revolving between concealment and revelation, negates the negation, as the dreamer *becomes* the dream. Image as appearance is revealed as concealed: the lie becomes true in the moment it is revealed *as* a lie. Sean Connolly attributes this destabilizing function to *true crime*, where *incessant transgression* destabilizes logical identity by constantly undermining the appearance of resemblance—even of crime to itself: “A crime is not a crime since the ‘true’ crime both permits and denies its own criminality.”³⁶ Similarly, in dream the true lie is no longer

²⁸ Barbara A. Brown, “Poetics of Disintegration in Laure’s ‘Poems before the summer of 1936,’” *Epiphany* 4, no. 1 (2011): 157.

²⁹ Georges Bataille, “Le Coupable: Found fragments on Laure,” in *Laure: The Collected Writings*, 262.

³⁰ Laure, “The Crow,” 53.

³¹ Elliot R. Wolfson, *A Dream Interpreted Within a Dream: Oneiropoiesis and the Prism of Imagination* (New York: Zone Books, 2011), 74.

³² Wolfson, *A Dream Interpreted Within a Dream*, 223.

³³ Wolfson, *A Dream Interpreted Within a Dream*, 258–259.

³⁴ Wolfson, *A Dream Interpreted Within a Dream*, 91.

³⁵ Wolfson, *A Dream Interpreted Within a Dream*, 17.

³⁶ Connolly, “Laure’s War: Selfhood and Sacrifice in Colette Peignot,” 30.

functioning referentially, but to itself as its own negation. It is nothing more (or less) than pure image and cannot refer to any external world the dreamer is exiled from in sleep. The image is concerned solely with its internal psychic life: “. . . the image is manifest.”³⁷ Within the territory of the dream, dream language realises the dreamer itself as dream—and thus as negation. The dream becomes real as a lie, and the dreamer becomes a lie as the dream. This assertion operates both physiologically, as the dream is conjured within brain matter as an objective phenomenon, and symbolically, as it contours the subjective landscape of an emanate personality. The dreamer is both subject and object: a manifest law (or narrative) experiencing itself. Wolfson’s dream detonates a symbolic crisis, as the appearance of the narrating ego disappears into the ego it is narrating, a symbolic fusion he compares to suicide:

There is a homology between the dream and suicide: the former is the genesis, the “absolute origin,” of the imagination and the latter the “ultimate myth,” the “Last Judgement.”³⁸

In the final issue of *Acéphale*, Bataille names this dream-suicide homology: “The Madness of Nietzsche,” referring to the philosopher’s “self-identification with Dionysus or the crucified Christ.”³⁹

“When a living thing,” said Zarathustra, “commands itself, it must atone for its commanding and become the judge, avenger and VICTIM of its own law.”⁴⁰

This fusion of law and subject, of one becoming “VICTIM of its own law,”⁴¹ corresponds to *dream suicide* where the dreamer is both law (subject) and subject (object): a conflation approximating madness; where prohibitions separating inside and outside cease to function and the myth of centralised ego commits suicide. In this state of fusion, or *true crime*, symbolic alienation fails to organise objectified egos into webs of utility. The alternative, however, is the *madness of wholeness*, identified by Bataille as an inevitable destiny for the Nietzschean man embodied in his struggle against God.⁴² Yet the *wholeness* of this “normal insanity”⁴³ dilutes the shores of consciousness and its order, as we discover that the sanity of consciousness is scaffolded onto a dream apparatus or the *appearance of reality*. Insofar as the dreamer becomes the dream, inhabiting either the night-time zone of normal insanity or the day-time zone of the appearance of sanity, they become the mask. Wolfson formulates this relationship between dream and wakefulness as *remembering the future*.⁴⁴

³⁷ Wolfson, *A Dream Interpreted Within a Dream*, 48.

³⁸ Wolfson, *A Dream Interpreted Within a Dream*, 140.

³⁹ See Georges Bataille, “La Folie de Nietzsche,” in “Folie, Guerre et Mort,” special issue, *Acéphale: Religion, Sociologie, Philosophie* 5 (June 1939), 1–8. Cf. Marina Galletti, “Commentaries: Acéphale,” in *The Sacred Conspiracy*, 417.

⁴⁰ Georges Bataille, “The Madness of Nietzsche,” in *The Sacred Conspiracy*, 424, original emphasis.

⁴¹ Bataille, “The Madness of Nietzsche,” 424.

⁴² Bataille, “The Madness of Nietzsche,” 426.

⁴³ Wolfson, *A Dream Interpreted Within a Dream*, 66–69.

⁴⁴ Wolfson, *A Dream Interpreted Within a Dream*, 223–226.

UP!

In *The Dream and the Underworld*, James Hillman contends that the traffic of Freud's "royal road of the unconscious" is moving in the wrong direction. Instead of dragging dream into daylight by superimposing the logic of consciousness onto dream interpretation, Hillman suggests we reverse the current:⁴⁵ we excavate wakeful experience as devolving from dream—a "death science"⁴⁶ which voids reality by continually negating the ego; revealing it as image and thereby enlarging the contents of a psychic territory of soul. This is what he describes as *soul-making*:

We work on dreams not to strengthen the ego but to make psychic reality, to make life matter through death, to make soul by coagulating and intensifying the imagination.⁴⁷

Similarly, in Wolfson's theory of *remembering the future*, we are (un)making time as soul, by cutting "through the triple chord of time."⁴⁸ Wolfson demonstrates that in interpreting present events through past dreams, we create frameworks of "anticipatory remembering"⁴⁹ which construct both:

. . . to recall the dream is to await its coming to pass. The past is anticipated in the future that is recollected.⁵⁰

For Wolfson, the future is woven by memory—recollected through dream. Neurobiologically, he refers to "an intricate connection between the facility to remember and the propensity to dream . . ."⁵¹ We can imagine *déjà vu*, which gives meaning to old dreams suddenly transformed by the present while transforming the present at the same time, as if we were waiting all along for the mystery of a night-time dream to unfold in real time, and for that time only to begin when we understood the dream that omened it. What is pertinent in this account, is that by dreaming we (re)create the future. By enlarging the vocabulary of our dreams through the death science of soul-making, we multiply future possibilities.

Referring to Gaston Bachelard's mobility of the imagination, both Hillman⁵² and Wolfson⁵³ characterise this practice of soul-making as deformative. In the chaotic lunacy of dreams, old idols of thought and understanding are desecrated and reborn in the blaspheming imagination which cherishes no taboos. Suspended in Nietzsche's *night which is also a sun*, "where the difference between dark and light is no longer operative,"⁵⁴ subject and object are conflated: opposites and contradictions coagulate insanely into unicorns, mermaids, and the

⁴⁵ James Hillman, *The Dream and the Underworld* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1979), 95.

⁴⁶ Hillman, *The Dream and the Underworld*, 132.

⁴⁷ Hillman, *The Dream and the Underworld*, 137.

⁴⁸ Wolfson, *A Dream Interpreted Within a Dream*, 225.

⁴⁹ Wolfson, *A Dream Interpreted Within a Dream*, 223.

⁵⁰ Wolfson, *A Dream Interpreted Within a Dream*, 226.

⁵¹ Wolfson, *A Dream Interpreted Within a Dream*, 223.

⁵² Hillman, *The Dream and the Underworld*, 128.

⁵³ Wolfson, *A Dream Interpreted Within a Dream*, 14; 25.

⁵⁴ Wolfson, *A Dream Interpreted Within a Dream*, 217.

various spectacular deformities of dream. The festival of the imagination swallows us back into Roger Caillois' state of primordial chaos. This return to innocence is an exile into dark matter—the fall into abjection: between light and dark, consciousness and unconsciousness, being and being subject—lost in this nauseous crossroads of strange phantasms and vertigo—the only release, is *Up!*

Bachelard constitutes the deformative mobility of the imagination, and thus the work of dreaming, as the experience of ascension.⁵⁵ Falling into deep sleep, where our bodies lie as if dead, made abject by loss of agency, we begin to dream, and then to fly. Abandoning the sunkness of a language which attempts always to subject us to its names, we ascend into the aerial realm of the deforming imagination. The deeper we sleep, the more sublimely chaotic our dreams become, the higher we fly, and the further our souls ascend. We have become Nietzsche's light one, singer of bird songs. We discover our wings are black; that dissembling from our sleeping bodies, cast off like garments in a distant dimension,⁵⁶ we have become the flying eyes of Odin who cut out his own in exchange for total knowledge, receiving in its stead two ravens. We are Laure's winged psyche, her knowledge of the future remembered in a poem; we are *a vision of two crows*.

ABJECT SPEECH

As Laure lay in her deathbed in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Bataille wrote that she had developed a terrifying and “. . . obscure resemblance to the vacant and half-crazy face of Oedipus, this man so dreadfully tragic.”⁵⁷ He relates that: “In the course of her agony, while fever gnawed at her, the resemblance grew, particularly, perhaps, during her terrible fits of anger and attacks of hatred against me.”⁵⁸ Laure's resemblance to Oedipus is reminiscent of Bataille's father: blind and paralysed, abandoned to the German invasion, as Bataille fled Reims with his mother.

Like Odin, Oedipus tore out his eyes in exchange for total knowledge. But a tragic knowledge of abjection: of his marriage to his mother, of having failed to integrate into the symbolic order of the father organised around the prohibition of incest, and of remaining instead in the “. . . place where meaning collapses.”⁵⁹ In both myths of torn-out eyes, knowledge or clarity is realised as blindness. In the darkness of dreaming sleep “. . . through which one can reach the light beyond discrimination, the supernal light . . . so luminous that it is described as ‘blackness’ . . . and ‘darkness,’”⁶⁰ these flying eyes of the psyche, amputated from the body,

⁵⁵ Gaston Bachelard, *Air and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Movement*, trans. Edith R. Farrell and C. Frederick Farrell (Dallas: The Dallas Institute Publications, 2011), 56.

⁵⁶ Wolfson, *A Dream Interpreted Within a Dream*, 216

⁵⁷ Bataille, “Le Coupable: Found fragments on Laure,” 250.

⁵⁸ Bataille, “Le Coupable: Found fragments on Laure,” 250. Cf. Georges Bataille, “W.C. [Preface to *Story of the Eye* from *La Petit*: 1943],” in *Story of the Eye*, trans. Joachim Neugroschal (London and New York: Penguin Classics, 2001), 75–78.

⁵⁹ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 2.

⁶⁰ Wolfson, *A Dream Interpreted Within a Dream*, 207.

pure image manifest in interior darkness referring to nothing in embodied experience, map the space of dream and abjection. Here, the body, abject and numb, becomes a “cadaver.”⁶¹

Kristeva characterises the abject state as the moment of separation from the mother,⁶² when the body divides from the matrix, but before it is constituted as an independent subject. This metamorphic space between being and becoming is peopled by citizens of death. Defined by exclusion from the symbolic order they have not yet entered, they gain instead citizenship into the kingdom of the impossible:

If it be true that the abject simultaneously beseeches and pulverizes the subject, one can understand that it is experienced at the peak of its strength when that subject, weary of fruitless attempts to identify with something on the outside, finds the impossible within; when it finds that the impossible constitutes its very being, that it is none other than abject.⁶³

To identify with the impossible within is to *be* negation: to *be* something that hasn’t become a sign; doesn’t have a name. Abject beings, *nameless ones*, uninitiated into the symbolic, wander in the abyss of dreaming, neither subject nor object: exiled from consciousness and unconsciousness; excluded from both the intimate order represented by the mother and the law of the father. In “The Crow,” Laure describes this abject state of “fairies and ogres” as she refers to her own death:

This nameless being
renounced in turn
by night and day
can do nothing against you
and does not resemble you⁶⁴

The nameless being is excluded from (renounced by) night and day. The dissemblance she describes (“does not resemble you”) appears to refer to her own corpse, bringing it into being as her poetic double—something she can address and separate from, can assign resemblance or dissemblance to. It is the *nameless being*, the *unwanted twin*, the excluded part: the *excess*. A poetic double neither living nor dead, but *abject*. The cadaver. It is the poem itself, which outlives Laure’s death; *undead* it continues.

But if “The Crow” is the voice of the abject double, we must ask how it speaks when all it can describe is loss: “. . . all its objects are based merely on the inaugural loss that laid the foundations of its own being.”⁶⁵ Exiled from the symbolic order and its provision of a form of shared experience, how can the abject say anything that can be understood? How can the excluded describe any common ground, *engage in language*, when their very existence is *negation*; when all they possess is *unbelonging*? Bereft even of basic social experience, the

⁶¹ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 3.

⁶² Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 6.

⁶³ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 5.

⁶⁴ Laure, “The Crow,” 54.

⁶⁵ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 5.

language of the excluded—*madmen, witches, and the lower castes*—degenerates into riddles, raps, spells, and poems: descriptions of exclusion couched in *dream language*. In fact, Kristeva characterises art itself as charting the experience of abjection, where law recedes and language begins to play: “The various means of purifying the abject—the various catharses—make up the history of religions, and end up with that catharsis par excellence called art . . .”⁶⁶

But while abject speech may be sublimely creative, we still must ask if it is communicative, if its floating palaces are accessible as a shared real. In his complaint against poetry, Bataille contends that such egoic worlds simply enshrine a new aesthetic homogeneity.⁶⁷ However, Wolfson problematises this communicative ideal by suggesting that reality is not guiltless, insofar as it is *remembered*. There is no reality that is experienced except through language, which always negates it—*deforms* it into something else.

As reality recedes, Wolfson’s dream theory of the manifest image provides one model for abject speech *as* negation. The mermaids I dream of do not exist in reality, but in their existence as pure image they negate (or *deform*) it. Mermaids, werewolves, centaurs etc., become manifest *as negation*. This negated existence is the language of the abject, founded on impossibility—the vertigo of dream; the nausea of dissemblance; the experience of exclusion:

The dreamer, like the poet, views metaphor not simply as a “rhetorical figure” to depict an inaccessible reality that lies beneath or beyond appearance, but as the “vicarious image” through which reality is exposed as the (*dis*)semblance that it really is . . .⁶⁸

Abject speech does not depend on a reality of shared experience to function. Instead, it creates reality by negating it. Its intelligibility is founded on its very doubling and its dissembling. Isn’t this the “*destruction of the world as it presently exists, with eyes wide open to the world that will follow*” described by Bataille in his “Programme” for the secret society of Acéphale?⁶⁹⁵⁹

DISSEMBLING

Viewed from outside, there is a strange familiarity to what has been discussed thus far. One which relates to Laure’s status as a woman hovering in the background of Acéphale, simultaneously believed to have inspired it,⁷⁰ despised it,⁷¹ and volunteered as a sacrifice to it.⁷² Broadly speaking, the common topography of dreaming and abjection is applicable to the political experience of exclusion, which Bataille situates in the heterologous zone amongst taboo persons: “the knowledge of a heterogeneous reality as such is to be found in the mystical thinking of primitives and in dreams: it is identical to the structure of the unconscious.”⁷³

⁶⁶ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 17.

⁶⁷ Georges Bataille, “The Use Value of D. A. F. de Sade,” in *The Bataille Reader*, 153.

⁶⁸ Wolfson, *A Dream Interpreted Within a Dream*, 44, emphasis added.

⁶⁹⁵⁹ Georges Bataille, “Programme,” in *The Sacred Conspiracy*, 137, emphasis added.

⁷⁰ Brown, “Poetics of Disintegration in Laure’s ‘Poems before the summer of 1936’,” 157.

⁷¹ Alastair Brotchie and Marina Galletti, “Chronology: 1939,” in *The Sacred Conspiracy*, 412.

⁷² John Cussans, *Undead Uprising*, 60.

⁷³ Georges Bataille “The Structure of Fascism” in *The Bataille Reader*, 128.

Disenfranchised, unable to integrate into the symbolic order, the abject political subject is reduced to pure image: losing agency, body becoming numb, enslaved; an appearance of humanity conjured in the gaze of the master, without the obligations it incurs—mere spectre without any faculty of desire, without a reality. In such a state of abjection, negation is the final resort of the abject subject to agency and self-realisation. In this vein, Connolly shows how Laure’s practice of negation, couched in sacred terms as *self-sacrifice*, returned selfhood:

Therefore, when she [Laure] says that the sacred was worthy of self-sacrifice, she means that she would have sacrificed her life *in order to get it back*. The gift of life gives back the gift it gave.⁷⁴

One wins back selfhood as “radical differentiation”⁷⁵ through the self-sacrifice (negation) of identity, by becoming *impossible*. This pursuit of the impossible was for Laure “the proper form of the sacred . . .”⁷⁶ It is the gift that accrues power in exchange, constantly deconstructing and reconstructing life, escalating into an energetic potlatch of excess, luxury and finally death—which *incessantly transgresses* “a threshold . . . between self-realization and self-undoing for which the body serves as frequent and appropriate metaphor.”⁷⁷

This energetic potlatch of identity, mediated through the body, appears in African Diasporic strategies of covert resistance through ritualised dissemblance. We see this in Afro-Brazilian Capoeira, wherein practitioners perform *figurative destruction of the body*⁷⁸ of self and other. The *jogo* (game) escalates in performative symbolism as the players trade appearances; pretending to be here, then there, but always somewhere else—transgressing the law of identity, “[b]etween both law and crime, beyond both law and crime . . .,”⁷⁹ giving and receiving selfhood through the performance of death which establishes a “crime site”⁸⁰ within the ceremonial space of the Capoeira *roda*.

The precise origin of the dance-fight-ritual-game of Capoeira remains mysterious. However, there is a general consensus that it was developed in Brazil by enslaved Africans who—fusing sentiments of native Africa and indigenous Brazil, with the experience of slavery and displacement—generated a cultural expression intended to condition practitioners “as a means of defence without sophisticated tools of war.”⁸¹ Earliest records approximate Capoeira’s origin between 1624 and 1654 during the Dutch occupation of south-eastern Brazil.⁸² According to myth, Capoeira was a form of disguised combat training.

⁷⁴ Connolly, “Laure’s War,” 32, original emphasis.

⁷⁵ Connolly, “Laure’s War,” 32.

⁷⁶ Connolly, “Laure’s War,” 21.

⁷⁷ Connolly, “Laure’s War,” 28.

⁷⁸ Connolly, “Laure’s War,” 28.

⁷⁹ Connolly, “Laure’s War,” 30.

⁸⁰ Connolly, “Laure’s War,” 28.

⁸¹ Floyd Merrell, *Capoeira and Candomblé: Conformity and Resistance through Afro-Brazilian Experience* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2018), 4.

⁸² Merrell, *Capoeira and Candomblé*, 4.

The first “official academy” of Capoeira was instituted in 1932 by Manuel dos Reis Machado (1900-1974) or *Mestre Bimba*, officiating the norms of the Capoeira which broadly exist today.⁸³ This was more than a century after Capoeira’s association with Candomblé emerged in the early nineteenth century⁸⁴—a religion representing “a combination of religious-philosophical practices from a diversity of African natives: Ketu-Nagô (Yoruba), Ijexá (Yoruba), Jêjê (Fon), Angola (Bantu), Congo (Bantu), and Caboclo of Amerindian tradition.”⁸⁵ Since then, Afro-Brazilian Capoeira and Candomblé have developed symbiotically in and around the black state of Bahia, which operated the first slave market of the New World in Salvador de Bahia from 1558.⁸⁶ While outside Brazil contemporary Capoeira is marketed as secular recreation,⁸⁷ its spirituality or *preoccupation with the sacred* is evident to anyone initiated within the tradition. This is especially evident in the common usage of the Candomblé term *Axé*, which permeates Capoeira culture internationally:

Axé “is the magic force that moves all things in the universe according to the African religions of Brazil. It exists in all realms of nature and can be transmitted through specific rituals.”⁸⁸

Beyond their recreational and religious functions, Capoeira and Candomblé express cultural identity and black resistance. They are sites of identity outside of enslavement and displacement.⁸⁹ As such, the first negated image in these practices of cultural resistance is the image of the slave. However, in their historic context of racial slavery, where black persons were not permitted to be anything except slaves, they must also negate the appearance of practitioners becoming anything else. The second negation therefore operates within its own terms according to the same logic of dream, which negates the negation. We see this in the absorption of Christian tropes into Candomblé: masquerading blackness behind white Catholic saints to deceive old plantation owners and slave masters.⁹⁰ Merrell demonstrates how this subversive strategy of negation, deception, and dissemblance was the only recourse to power available to persons faced with violent, systematic domination.⁹¹

This strategy of dissemblance is Capoeira’s highest ideal, which similarly disguises itself by vanishing between dance, fight, game, or ritual ceremony,⁹² in which the capoeirista disguise their tricks through the play of appearance—pretending to be what they are not—pretending their intentions are different to what they are—yet again negating the fatal strike by reverting back to play. Capoeira conditions its players in this negation of appearance as the highest virtues of

⁸³ Merrell, *Capoeira and Candomblé*, 9.

⁸⁴ Merrell, *Capoeira and Candomblé*, 109.

⁸⁵ Merrell, *Capoeira and Candomblé*, 105.

⁸⁶ “Historic Centre of Salvador de Bahia,” World Heritage List, WHC UNESCO, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/309/#:~:text=As%20the%20first%20capital%20of,work%20on%20the%20sugar%20plantations.>

⁸⁷ Merrell, *Capoeira and Candomblé*, 13.

⁸⁸ Merrell quoting Bira Almeida in *Capoeira and Candomblé*, 16–17.

⁸⁹ Merrell, *Capoeira and Candomblé*, 109.

⁹⁰ Merrell, *Capoeira and Candomblé*, 107.

⁹¹ Merrell, *Capoeira and Candomblé*, 34–35.

⁹² Merrell, *Capoeira and Candomblé*, 3.

magic, trickery, and treachery, or *mandinga*, *malandra*, and *malicia*:⁹³ “The accomplished capoeirista . . . brings you to an awareness that the world is never as it appears.”⁹⁴ This ritualisation of negation expresses the slave’s existential initiation into abjection, a state of being *beyond good and evil*. Merrell writes:

You, with your *malicia*, take irony, ambiguity, vagueness and contradiction, and paradox into your heart and mind and spirit. You know that whatever appears, will disappear in the next moment and then appear as something other than the way it was appearing. This is because you, bodymindspirit, have *Exu* quality.⁹⁵

Trickster and messenger between the living and the dead, the *orixá Exu* personifies the experience of abjection,⁹⁶ the play of appearance which constantly dissembles and doubles through negation and sacrifice. This is apparent in the practice of receiving *apelidos* or code names in Capoeira, initially undertaken to disguise the identities of practitioners while Capoeira was still illegal, it has since come to represent a sort of mythic initiation into an alternative, nonhegemonic social structure. The conception of a poetic double, who in gaining a new name has discovered the old one, was the very image of the capoeiristas’ enslavement. *Apelidos* can refer to capoeiristas’ characteristics, can caricaturise, or commemorate the struggle against slavery in Brazil. Traditional among *apelidos* is a name which celebrates the legendary slave resistance leader *Zumbi*, or *Zombie*.

The dissemblance of the capoeirista, breaking apart the appearance of the enslaved body into convulsive forms and horrifying acrobatics—the dissemblance of their identity as they sacrifice who they appear to be, becoming a double that multiples exponentially in a hysterical search for stability and belonging—represents the creative contagion of negation: Bartleby’s incessant “I would prefer not to” which conjures alternative dimensions into being through death, “the truth that is true because it is fiction.”⁹⁷ Wolfson situates this breaking “with the law of the excluded middle (P or not -P), and the corollary principle of non-contradiction (a thing cannot be both P and not -P in the same respect and at the same time,” as the basis for “the yearning to cultivate knowledge” described by both Maimonides and Aristotle⁹⁸ in order to understand political experience. Referring to the Marquis de Sade, Connolly describes this endless sacrifice of identification as the *movement of life* which resists definition: Nietzsche’s *dancing god* and capoeirista:

The movement or action of life always moves toward or against a potential threshold that *will* define and delimit it, giving it significance as a form of resistance and thus a form of “true life.”⁹⁹

⁹³ Merrell, *Capoeira and Candomblé*, 25–27.

⁹⁴ Merrell, *Capoeira and Candomblé*, 26.

⁹⁵ Merrell, *Capoeira and Candomblé*, 97.

⁹⁶ Merrell, *Capoeira and Candomblé*, 109.

⁹⁷ Wolfson, *A Dream Interpreted Within a Dream*, 161.

⁹⁸ Wolfson, *A Dream Interpreted Within a Dream*, 110.

⁹⁹ Connolly, “Laure’s War,” 20.

Mythopoetically, Bataille theorises this as contagious excess: “[T]he laughter of exclusion,”¹⁰⁰ . . . *that eats the face*.

CONTAGION

It is clear that Bataille was both aware of and interested in African Diasporic Religious ceremony. Alfred Métraux’s photos of a Voodoo ceremony appear in *The Tears of Eros*.¹⁰¹ Pierre Verger’s image “Sacrifice of a Ram. Voodoo Cult” is similarly included in *Eroticism*.¹⁰² However, the latter seems to have been falsely attributed to Voodoo, as Verger’s research interests lay not in Haitian but in Afro-Brazilian culture. Verger settled in Salvador de Bahia, was initiated into Candomblé, and is also celebrated for his Capoeira photography.¹⁰³ For this reason, “Sacrifice of a Ram. Voodoo Cult” is almost certainly a photo of an Afro-Brazilian Candomblé ceremony.

We know that Bataille worked in a cultural milieu of Surrealist interest in “Negrophilic primitivism,” marked by the publication of various articles on black culture in the Surrealist journal *Documents* which he edited between 1929 and 1930.¹⁰⁴ Among these articles appeared Michel Leiris’s review of *The Magic Island* by American explorer William Seabrook—the formative text for constructing Haitian folklore in the Western imagination.¹⁰⁵ Seabrook’s photography of a hooded woman suspended from a balcony by her wrists while wearing only a leather skirt, “brought back from Africa,” also appeared in Leiris’ essay “Le ‘Caput Mortuum’ ou la femme de l’alchimiste.”¹⁰⁶ Referring to their colonial context, John Cussans notes soberingly:

[B]oth Leiris and Seabrook seemed to have imagined that donning another (usually black or leather) skin would give them access to mystical realms of ecstatic experience beyond their “waning Whiteness.” That such techniques also involved bondage and partial tortures also suggest erotic-fantasy allusions to the sadistic practices of slave-masters, bringing the violent realities of the plantation economy into an uncomfortable proximity to the erotic practices of sado-masochism as performed in the brothels of bohemian Paris in the 1920s.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁰ Bataille, “The Use-Value of D. A. F. de Sade,” 94.

¹⁰¹ Alfred Métraux, “Voodoo Sacrifice,” in Georges Bataille, *The Tears of Eros*, trans. Peter Tracey Connor (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1989), 199–203.

¹⁰² Pierre Verger, “Sacrifice of a Ram. Voodoo cult,” in *Eroticism*, trans. Mary Dalwood (London: Marion Boyars Publishers, 2006), 64.

¹⁰³ Pierre Fatumbi Verger, “Introduction,” in *Biography*, available from <http://www.pierreverger.org/en/pierre-fatumbi-verger-en/biography/introduction-2.html>.

¹⁰⁴ Cussans, *Undead Uprising*, 62.

¹⁰⁵ Cussans, *Undead Uprising*, 60.

¹⁰⁶ Cussans, *Undead Uprising*, 61.

¹⁰⁷ Cussans, *Undead Uprising*, 61.

Leiris shared a close friendship with both Bataille and Seabrook, so it seems probable they were also acquainted through him.¹⁰⁸ Cussans suggests convincingly that the 1791 Bois Caïman ceremony described by Seabrook in *The Magic Island*, and believed to have provoked the first major slave insurrection in Haiti, probably influenced Bataille's theorising on revolutionary excess.¹⁰⁹ Cussans suggests that the spectacular carnival of Bois Caïman, a legendary gathering of slaves that precipitated the first revolt—imagined in the guise of writhing black bodies, erotic trance, and pigs' blood—provided a case study for Bataille's theory of heterology¹¹⁰ and “fantasies of initiation into a sacrificial sect.”¹¹¹

Such fantasies shroud history, which tells a different story: Bois Caïman was a fantastic conflation of two slave gatherings—a public, strategic meeting, and then a smaller, clandestine one involving a pig's sacrifice.¹¹² In other words, there was no festive outburst of eroticism to substantiate Bataille's theory of revolution, only the myth of Voudou conjured in the Western imagination through the language of blood-sacrifice and zombies. There was, and continues to be, individuals experiencing and articulating abjection through the language of their mothers, and resisting annihilation through dissemblance and negation. The cultural artefacts of the disenfranchised—their ceremonies and rituals—do not belong to the “superstitious” worldview Bataille refers to in “The Use-Value of D. A. F. de Sade,”¹¹³ but to a political one.

We see this in the problem of the zombie or cadaver, the sublimely taboo entity for Bataille, representing sacred access to other states of being, the site of his “libidinal interest.”¹¹⁴ We could compare this to how it feels to become a zombie—to be a slave resisting absolute domination, or to be possessed by forces beyond one's control. We can imagine what it means for your identity to fracture without end. This disjunction in perspective represents the exclusion of the subjectivity of the disenfranchised, perceived as mere image; those nameless ones who ascend into the dream zone of Nietzsche's madness:

As a dissembler, he can pretend a role he does not feel, while he is aware of the distance between his dissembling performance and his true self . . . He consciously and conscientiously performs the role of someone he knows he is not.¹¹⁵

Furthermore,

To be a self is also to be an other; it is to act, to perform a role that defines who one is that yet, as a performance, *defies* that definition.¹¹⁶

¹⁰⁸ Cussans, *Undead Uprising*, 60.

¹⁰⁹ Cussans, *Undead Uprising*, 63–64.

¹¹⁰ Cussans, *Undead Uprising*, 63–66.

¹¹¹ Cussans, *Undead Uprising*, 63.

¹¹² Cussans, *Undead Uprising*, 148.

¹¹³ Bataille “The Use-Value of D. A. F. de Sade,” 158.

¹¹⁴ Bataille “The Use-Value of D. A. F. de Sade,” 149.

¹¹⁵ Merrell, *Capoeira and Candomblé*, 34.

¹¹⁶ Connolly, “Laure's War,” 32, original emphasis.

A ROTTEN FEAST

Wandering among the abject is Laure's *nameless one*: her cadaver, which she remembered years before its resurrection out of the dream zone. Laure's abjection begins in childhood with the death of her father and several uncles;¹¹⁷ with her sister's molestation by a priest; then her own.¹¹⁸ It follows her to death:

—I inhabited not life but death. As far back as I can remember cadavers rose up before me: “You turn away, hide, renounce in vain . . . you are part of the family and you will join us this evening.”¹¹⁹

This finally culminates in that “cold springtime hike to the spot where Sade had willed his body to be laid . . . [which] sparked the recurrence of tuberculosis that would slowly consume Laure over the summer, leaving her dead by late autumn [of 1938].”¹²⁰ This practice had already been repeated a number of times with various guests, usually followed by a rotten feast of something approximate to the rancid boar Bataille shared with Michel Fardoulis-Lagrange, infecting the latter with Hepatitis E.¹²¹

Degradation followed Laure throughout her romantic relationships. Bataille felt confident she was once given a shit sandwich to eat,¹²² by the same lover who leashed her with dog collars and lashed her with a whip.¹²³ It seems likely this dissolute quality informed his attraction to her, “the saint of the chasm”¹²⁴—a woman he was “‘systematically, abundantly,’ unfaithful to.”¹²⁵ It is in such circumstances that Laure describes her death as “very logical all in all.”¹²⁶ One wonders if this is not the very point of her “merging into the transparency that envelops us.”¹²⁷ We know that Laure's participation in her abjection was not involuntary: that born into relative comfort, she had alternatives. In fact, Laure's formative encounter with the unhygienic, which develops into a moral fixation, appears within this very territory of class, when as a child she discovers *difference* from a chambermaid:

. . . all of a sudden, a whole hierarchy that was too sophisticated for me was established. The poor in the streets, the workers, the employees, what did all of that mean? Henriette tried to explain to me by the degrees of dirtiness involved in the different states.¹²⁸

¹¹⁷ Georges Bataille and Michel Leiris, “NOTES, written by Bataille and Leiris for ‘Story of a Little Girl,’” in *Laure: The Collected Writings*, 33.

¹¹⁸ Laure Peignot, “Story of a Little Girl,” in *Laure: The Collected Writings*, 21–31.

¹¹⁹ Laure, “Story of a Little Girl,” in *Laure: The Collected Writings*, 6.

¹²⁰ Ray Huling, “Bataillean Ecology: An Introduction to the Theory of Sustainable Excess,” *Moveable Type* 11 (2019): 30.

¹²¹ Huling, “Bataillean Ecology,” 29.

¹²² Georges Bataille, “Laure's Life,” in *Laure: The Collected Writings*, 237.

¹²³ Bataille, “Laure's Life,” 237.

¹²⁴ Jeanine Herman, “Preface,” in *Laure: The Collected Writings*, ix.

¹²⁵ Herman, “Preface,” viii.

¹²⁶ Laure, “The Crow,” 53.

¹²⁷ Jérôme Peignot, “My Diagonal Mother,” in *Laure: The Collected Writings*, 278.

¹²⁸ Laure, “Story of a Little Girl,” 14.

By becoming Dirty,¹²⁹ Laure negates this caste system. She rejects the appearance of participation and inclusion through class, but not gender. For as we know, women are always dirty. This is apparent in the form of Laure's dissent, mediated through the grotesqueness of romance. Even her writings and life survive to us through Bataille's guilt, "hung from her neck like a little bell [that] pulled her back . . . on a leash."¹³⁰ Negation as death is the only recourse of power available to Laure. In "The Crow" she sacrifices her image, resurrecting in its place the cadaver—her own "strange destiny,"¹³¹ doubling into something with poetic agency; master of death: *The Crow*. With this image, this "herald," Laure demonstrates that death is not at stake for Bataille, his work: "the waste products of intellectual appropriation."¹³² He did not dream the future into being:

L. played and won. L. died.¹³³

THE GIFT OF DEATH

Through death, Laure becomes sovereign. She amasses what Connolly describes as *the power to become*, "understood as power *over* others and otherness . . ." ¹³⁴ Doesn't Bataille know this when he offers himself as a sacrifice to the remaining members of Acéphale?¹³⁵ When he understands that the experience of abjection is not the experience of being made abject, but the writing of a new language of excess: "Communication, through death, with our beyond (essentially in sacrifice)."¹³⁶ This excess destabilises the symbolic order, *eats its face*, instituting a revolutionary time by revealing " . . . that untruth lies coiled like a serpent in the heart of truth."¹³⁷

This is the gift of death which only the master can bestow, whereas the slave is kept suspended in a state of deferred death. Baudrillard shows how "it is by deferring their death that they are made into slaves and condemned to the indefinite abjection of a life of labour,"¹³⁸ the undead zombiedom of slave labour now integrated into the hyperreality of contemporary Western culture and advanced capitalism, obsessed with vanishing death through accumulation and religious insurance. By contrast, the master is free to indulge in the luxury of death—represented by its absence from the economies of labour and utility. Nothing is so useless and—according to both Bataille¹³⁹ and Baudrillard¹⁴⁰—so luxurious as death. Through death, one

¹²⁹ Herman, "Preface," viii.

¹³⁰ Laure Peignot, "Fragments and Outlines of Erotic Texts," in *Laure: The Collected Writings*, 64.

¹³¹ Laure, "The Crow," 53.

¹³² Bataille, "The Use Value of D. A. F. de Sade," in *The Bataille Reader*, 152.

¹³³ Bataille, "Le Coupable: Found fragments on Laure," in *Laure: The Collected Writings*, 263.

¹³⁴ Connolly, "Laure's War: Selfhood and Sacrifice in Colette Peignot," 32, original emphasis.

¹³⁵ Waldberg, "Extract from Acéphalogram (2)," in *The Sacred Conspiracy*, 456.

¹³⁶ Georges Bataille, "Laughter," in *The Bataille Reader*, 59.

¹³⁷ Wolfson, *A Dream Interpreted Within a Dream*, 269.

¹³⁸ Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, 61. Kindle Edition.

¹³⁹ Georges Bataille, "Laws of General Economy," in *The Bataille Reader*, 193.

¹⁴⁰ Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, 176. Kindle Edition.

becomes sovereign. While for those suspended in the paradise of the absence of death, hyperreality becomes a simulation of life: a ritual without context; a game without stakes; the secret society of Acéphale?

The only exit from this hyperreality is symbolic exchange with death, whereupon the hegemonic order absorbs death into its economics, simulating death according to its logic of reproduction, and finally collapsing internally. This is the symbolic warfare that Baudrillard attributed to the graffiti artists of New York in the 1970s;¹⁴¹ strategising their resistance in a purely symbolic realm which exposes the fundamentally symbolic organisation of state power. It is similarly the “poison gift,” to quote Ray Huling, that Laure’s death returned to the secret society of Acéphale, who, swallowing it whole, imploded: “. . . *death* has taken the name of Laure.”¹⁴²

This implosion took on the shape of Bataille’s exacerbated interest in mysticism, informed by tantra yoga, and seemingly provoked by Laure’s death. It is apparent in his final two lectures to the College of Sociology, which would expose its fatal divisions.¹⁴³ It represents the crisis of community “as a possibility for life,”¹⁴⁴ which Acéphale was assembled to address, and the growing apathy of a group reduced to a literary project by this death-encounter, which foreshadowed the approach of war. Years later, Bataille would contextualise Acéphale “. . . as a monstrous mistake,” adding, nonetheless, that his writings would, on the whole, “demonstrate both the error and the value of its monstrous intent.”¹⁴⁵

By instituting “obscure activities, imprinted with obscenity,” Bataille pursued abjection into lived experience as *being* “outside the realm of social facts.”¹⁴⁶ *Abjection as being* frames all symbolic traces of the abject subject as expressions of being, not descriptions. This is the pertinent difference between poetic languages of abjection, death, and excess, in comparison to the descriptive language of the hegemonic order. It relates to the communicative problem posed earlier: of *abject language which describes new states*, rather than the symbology of power guaranteed by shared experience. Bataille’s symbolic crisis and, by extension, the dissolution of the Acéphale project was provoked by Laure’s *poison gift*—the revelation of *abjection as being*—which demonstrated Bataille’s failure to return *this gift* on terms equal to those it had introduced. Understanding this, Bataille attempted to become abject by offering himself as a sacrifice and, failing that, by developing a mystical method of meditation or “ecstatic contemplation”¹⁴⁷ imposed upon the secret society of Acéphale in nocturnal, ritualistic sexual activity. However, as we have seen, the state of abjection is the state of *exclusion*. This is the fatal paradox of Acéphale, predicated on *inclusion* as community. Wolfson formulates this paradox eloquently:

¹⁴¹ Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, 96–104. Kindle Edition.

¹⁴² Bataille, “Le Coupable: Found fragments on Laure,” in *Laure: The Collected Writings*, 262.

¹⁴³ Alastair Brotchie, “The College of Sociology,” in *The Sacred Conspiracy*, 413. Cf. Jacquelynn Bass, “Acéphale,” in *Marcel Duchamp and the Art of Life*, 205–226; 224–226.

¹⁴⁴ Galletti and Brotchie, “Chronology: 1939,” in *The Sacred Conspiracy*, 412.

¹⁴⁵ Galletti and Brotchie, “Chronology: 1939,” in *The Sacred Conspiracy*, 412.

¹⁴⁶ Michel Fardoulis-Lagrange, *G. B. ou un ami présomptueux* (Paris: Le Soleil Noir, 1969), 26; Brotchie, “The College of Sociology,” 413.

¹⁴⁷ Georges Bataille, “The Practice of Joy in the Face of Death,” in *The Sacred Conspiracy*, 432.

. . . there can be no seeing in the dark that is not also a seeing of the dark.¹⁴⁸

THE LOST CENTRE

Nonetheless, Bataille's writing is convicted of guilt. It inscribes its own *exclusion*, its own unbelonging, as mysticism: a preoccupation with ways of being which have not been colonised by the symbolic order: the magical experiential interior of the sorcerer's apprentice, if you wish, the "living myth"¹⁴⁹ apparent in the Amazon of the indigenous Ávila Runa.¹⁵⁰

Eduardo Kohn shows how the Ávila Runa, indigenous to the Ecuadorian Amazon, view the rainforest as housing an interior spirit world which controls the happenings of the forest.¹⁵¹ Levels of intimacy occur, from the exterior of the profane human world into the interior realm of the spirit masters—populated by ancestors or, more recently, by political and commercial organisations. Humans initiated into the symbolic web of the forest may interface with the spirit world through dream, where they ascend to a higher state of being. But in daylight the worldview of the Ávila Runa traces their alienation from an intimate order, from which cosmic law emanates. This law contours their identity and stands for both the law of the jungle and state law. Nonetheless, subject to the law and not lawmakers, it is a law they are alienated from; their abjection symbolised in the appearance of were-jaguars who prowl the border between inclusion and exclusion. Similarly, Cussans shows that the Haitian Krèyol term for spirit, "Lwa," "seems to carry the French word for law (*loi*) within it."¹⁵² Furthermore, in "Voudou the possessed person is said to be ridden by the *lwa*."¹⁵³

The mysticism of these world views, which map the invisible, magical interior of law makers are perspectives of being outside, of exclusion from the creative state, and devolution into image. Nonetheless, the body survives as the guilty conviction of excess, the part which exceeds sign, or law—capoeiristas, zombies, were-jaguars and others—the madness of the embodied man dislocated from a lost centre: "[t]he body not only traces the corporeal limit between life and death, but the juridical limit of the legal and the illegal."¹⁵⁴ Its abjection is "the violence of mourning for an 'object' that has always already been lost."¹⁵⁵ While this loss is more

¹⁴⁸ Wolfson, *A Dream Interpreted Within a Dream*, 109. Cf. Jacquelynn Bass, "Sumptuous Subterranean Ceremony," in *Marcel Duchamp and the Art of Life*, 229–245.

¹⁴⁹ Georges Bataille, "The Sorcerer's Apprentice," in *The Sacred Conspiracy*, 303, original emphasis.

¹⁵⁰ Eduardo Kohn, *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology Beyond the Human*.

¹⁵¹ Eduardo Kohn, *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology Beyond the Human*.

¹⁵² John Cussans, *Undead Uprising: Haiti, Horror and the Zombie Complex* (London: Strange Attractor Press, 2017), 82.

¹⁵³ Cussans, *Undead Uprising*, 82.

¹⁵⁴ Connolly, "Laure's War," 28.

¹⁵⁵ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 15.

present in cultures of displacement, it represents the universal tragedy of consciousness and the body since the moment of exile from Eden. It locates Kristeva's theory of abjection in the development of subjectivity, when the personality of the child separates from the body of the mother: the tragic moment of abjection.

This abject subject, bereft of the agency afforded through inclusion, is reduced to pure image. They "stand out" (*are excluded*) from the symbolic order; suspended in the trauma of pure visibility until they cut out secret spaces of negation and agency in a death practice of dreaming. Baudrillard characterises exclusion as a function of our symbolic caste system: "the fundamental law of this society is not the law of exploitation, but the code of normality."¹⁵⁶ Those who stand outside the symbolic—nameless and monstrous—are excommunicated and branded as *pure image*, unable to die or transgress the law of endless labour. Only those who are *normal*, or *invisible enough*, are permitted to transgress; to take a holiday (from labour). Surely this permissive ideal represents our deepest, collective fixation: Christmas.

What if the fundamental status of the worker, like the mad, the dead, nature, beasts, children, Blacks and women, was initially to be not exploited but excommunicated? What if he was initially not deprived and exploited but discriminated against and branded?¹⁵⁷

Returning to our opening gambit regarding the revolutionary impetus of the festival, transgressive permission gives meaning to our social system as a symbolic code organised around those who are permitted to transgress "the law" by engaging in non-productive acts of death or luxury. In this reading, the festival represents the "safety valve" Roger Caillois uses to characterize Mardi Gras—as a performance which reintegrates the *appearance* of transgression in service of a sovereign collective of insiders.

Meanwhile, the law or *lwa*, is reserved for excluded outsiders, reduced to pure image by its contours, whose revolutionary act is self-sacrifice, dissemblance and negation. However, contra Bataille, these strategies of resistance are not centralised around a singular, festive outburst of eroticism, but dispersed into persistent, cultural practices which continuously negate and re-construct identity; a religion, if you will. Such practices erect a new time which exists outside the symbolic order and destabilises the centrality of its insiders. This is the symbolic warfare outlined by Baudrillard in *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, described by Laure, as sacred.

THE RAPTURE (CONCLUSION)

By playing the game of Acéphale without stakes, Bataille demonstrated that his rituals of transgression were always permitted. However, Laure, *being abject*, became sovereign through the politics of her dissemblance, by becoming "The Crow." I have argued that Laure's generation of a poetic double, operated according to an abject logic of dissemblance, or a sacred practice of

¹⁵⁶ Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, 51. Kindle Edition.

¹⁵⁷ Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, 51. Kindle Edition.

self-sacrifice; wherein excluded subjects negate their devolution into image by doubling into negated *nameless ones*—constituted by the impossible and resisting identification. This territory of abjection maps out the dream zone and site of the fantastic beings this chapter has been interested in examining: capoeiristas and zombies, were-jaguars and spirits, fairies and ogres, black birds and blind prophets, who deform or negate the *appearance of reality* by generating alternative dimensions or ways of being in its place, thus *moving (dancing) life on*. These abject beings threaten the hegemonic order by *remembering the future* and thereby effecting it, much as Laure described the herald which would signal her death years prior to its fatal appearance. Essentially, this chapter has been concerned with mapping the space of abjection onto the dream zone, investigating the citizens that inhabit it, and how they create reality through exclusion. This requires a kind of language which does not depend on participation in shared experience or inclusion in the construction of the appearance of reality—a language I have characterized as creative and deformative: a part of the death science understood as dreaming; the abject citizenship of the impossible beings of the dream zone; *laughter that eats the face*.

Within the space of inclusion, I have described a symbolic caste system which establishes levels of transgressive permission. Wherein the festival reintegrates the *appearance* of transgression in service of a sovereign collective of insiders; an invisible inside made up of persons permitted to indulge in non-productive acts of luxury broadly comparable to the practices of Acéphale. Meanwhile, abject subjects and cadavers orbit this lost centre, reduced to total visibility and subject to law. Their only recourse to agency or power is self-sacrifice, negation and dissemblance; operating according to the dream logic described above, which asserts that nothing is as it appears. This strategy of symbolic warfare equips disenfranchised persons to engage with power. Through dispersed practices of negation, abject subjects regain agency, reproducing death as they dissemble into doubles that destabilise the symbolic order and their reduction to images within it. This sacred practice of dreaming death represents a contagious excess that cannot be caught, defined, or named; that makes them sovereign, *embodied* in their struggle against God, as finally, even the body is absorbed into this symbolic exchange with death, and thus according to Laure's conception of the gift, *returned*. At last, the sovereign—metamorphosed, growing wings—ascends *UP!* into the aerial realm of total, non-productive creativity: death. The outside turns inside, and everything is falling, except those light ones who have learned to fly.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bachelard, Gaston. *Air and Dreams: An Essay On the Imagination of Movement*. Translated by Edith R. Farrell and C. Frederick Farrell. Dallas: The Dallas Institute Publications, 2011.

Bass, Jacquelynn. *Marcel Duchamp and the Art of Life*. Cambridge, MA, and London: The MIT Press, 2019.

Bataille, Georges. "La Folie de Nietzsche." In "Folie, Guerre et Mort," special issue, *Acéphale: Religion, Sociologie, Philosophie* 5 (June 1939): 1–8.

Bataille, Georges. *The Tears of Eros*. Translated by Peter Tracey Connor. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1989.

Bataille, Georges. *The Bataille Reader*. Edited by Fred Bottling and Scott Wilson. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1997.

Bataille, Georges. *Eroticism*. Translated by Mary Dalwood. London: Marion Boyars Publishers, 2006.

Bataille, Georges, et alia. *The Sacred Conspiracy: The Internal Papers of the Secret Society of Acéphale and Lectures to the College of Sociology*. Edited by Marina Galletti and Alastair Brotchie. Translated by Natasha Lehrer, John Harman, and Meyer Barash. London: Atlas Press, 2017.

Baudrillard, Jean. *Symbolic Exchange and Death*. Translated by Ian Hamilton Grant. London: SAGE Publications, 1993. Kindle Edition.

Brown, Barbara A. "Poetics of Disintegration in Laure's 'Poems before the summer of 1936'." In *Epiphany* 4, no. 1 (2011): 146–166.

Connolly, Sean. "Laure's War: Selfhood and Sacrifice in Colette Peignot" in *Project Muse*, French Forum 35, no. 1 (2010): 17–38

Cussans, John. *Undead Uprising: Haiti, Horror and the Zombie Complex*. London: Strange Attractor Press, 2017.

Fardoulis-Lagrange, Michel. *G. B. ou un ami présomptueux*. Paris: Le Soleil Noir, 1969.

Hillman, James. *The Dream and the Underworld*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1979.

Huling, Ray. "Bataillean Ecology: An Introduction to the Theory of Sustainable Excess." In *Moveable Type* 11 (2019): 25–37.

Kohn, Eduardo. *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology Beyond the Human*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.

Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Translated by Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982.

Merrell, Floyd. *Capoeira and Candomblé: Conformity and Resistance through Afro-Brazilian Experience*. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2018.

Peignot, Colette L. *Laure: The Collected Writings*. Translated by Jeanine Herman. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1995.

Wolfson, Elliot R. *A Dream Interpreted Within a Dream: Oneiropoiesis and the Prism of Imagination*. New York: Zone Books, 2011.