Transmedieval Mattering and the Untimeliness of the Real Presence

An incarnation, or a burial, I cannot say.

T. Tasso, *Jerusalem Delivered* (1581)

IT’S A BODY; IT’S FLESH; IT’S MATTERING

Vibrant matter glows in the Humanities.¹ It is quantum physics all the way down; there are not two physics, a mechanical Newtonian physics of inert matter for the macroscopic world, and a quantum one of dynamic matter for the microscopic. Time and space are not containers; they, too, are dynamic. And just like light, whose behavior as wave and

particle, confused burgeoning quantum physicists in the 1920s and 1930s, the discourse of vibrant matter, too, exhibits a duality: at times dynamic matter materializes in the humanities as a body, other times as flesh. Current debates over “body” and “flesh” are no less fierce than those over light and matter conducted back then among physicists including Niels Bohr, Albert Einstein, Werner Heisenberg. Because these controversies over body and flesh constrain and enable what can be said about materialization, they matter. This review essay reads contemporary debates over mattering (body and flesh) through the apparatus of the Real Presence—that is, the orthodox insistence, fabricated in the eleventh century, on the material presence of the flesh and blood of the body of Christ in the sacrament of the Eucharist. This essay explores how the untimeliness of the Real Presence haunted medieval discourse then and contemporary theory now.

LANFRANC (1005–1089)

Flesh is the Sacrament of the flesh and Blood is the sacrament of the blood. (Caro, videlicet, carnis, et sanguis sacramentum est sanguinis.)

Lanfranc, On the Body and Blood

Father Mark G. Vaillancourt wrote his Fordham doctoral dissertation (2004) on Guitmund of Aversa’s contribution to the Eucharistic debate over the Real Presence waged in the eleventh century. Thanks to his recent translation, scholars

2 We now know that Bohr was right, as technological developments in experimental physics are enabling a new empirical domain: experimental metaphysics. Karen Barad, Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 247–352.

without Latin proficiency can now read two treatises by Lanfranc and Guitmund crucial to this onto-epistemological controversy and study this crisis of mattering for themselves. Both medieval texts enjoyed a printed afterlife in the sectarian strife of the sixteenth century when the orthodoxy of the Eucharist and questions of sovereignty were at stake. In 1530 Erasmus printed Lanfranc’s treatise (*De Corpore et Sanguine Domine*) and it is his edition that scholars will find reproduced in the *Patrologia Latina*. Vaillancourt translated the Erasmus edition with the corrections to that text established by Jean de Montclos.⁴

My focus here is on the treatise of Lanfranc of Bec. Abbot, theologian, jurist, he also served as justiciar and archbishop of Canterbury under William the Conqueror. He wrote his famous polemic on the orthodoxy of the Real Presence in the shadow of the Norman Conquest (1066).⁵ In his famous treatise, *On the Body and Blood of the Lord*, composed around 1063, at which time he moved to William’s newly founded ducal monastery at Caen, Lanfranc attacked the arguments of his contemporary Bérenger of Tours, who outspokenly questioned the Real Presence in the sacrament of the Eucharist. Lanfranc asserted the orthodoxy that “The Flesh is the Sacrament of the Flesh” (*caro, videlicet carnis . . . sacramentum est*).⁶ Lanfranc’s treatise goes beyond the stock litany of theological polemic—Bérenger as adversary of the Catholic Church (*catholicae Ecclesiae adversario*),⁷ sacrilegious violator of oath

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(sacrilegus violator), to pioneer an accusation of treason against him (jurare perfidiam). Bérenger, in Lanfranc’s opinion, not only challenged theological orthodoxy; he also traitorously undid the universalism of the Catholic Church, a universalism constituted by the flesh of Christ. To think against this sacramental flesh is to commit treason, because, according to Lanfranc’s vision, the flesh of Christ is constitutively both sacramental and sovereign. The flesh of the Eucharist was thus, for Lanfranc, both a sacramental and a sovereign problematic. His accusation of treason brings into view both the sovereign body under threat and also the homo sacer (the one who may be killed without accusation of homicide, but who may not be sacrificed). Giorgio Agamben has argued that the murder of homo sacer and the treasonous murder of the sovereign are structurally undecidable. Treason against the sovereign (that is, killing the sovereign (crimen laesae maiestatis)) is never “just” an act of homicide, because it is always more than homicide: “it does not matter from our perspective, that the killing of homo sacer can be considered as less than homicide, and the killing of the sovereign as more than homicide; what is essential is that in neither case does the killing of a man constitute an offense of homicide.”

Lanfranc, instead, pinned sovereignty to the Real Presence. The body that becomes excessively present in the doctrine of the Real Presence is, not Christ, but the sovereign—the one who decides on the state of exception and the one who names the enemy. This was the political theology of the Real Presence; it also secreted biopolitics by constituting the exceptional category of the “Jew” as underwriter of the Real Presence and Muslims as homines sacri of Western Christendom. The kernel of sovereignty needs to be understood,

9 Lanfranc, On the Body and the Blood, 32.
11 At the same time (c. 1063), Pope Alexander II also declared Mus-
then, as a biopolitical suture of Eucharistic and Jewish flesh.\textsuperscript{12} Political theology and biopolitics are thus entangled phenomena in the Real Presence. Biopolitics is not a sign of the modern as most theorists assume. It does not supersede political theology. Put in Foucauldian terms: the classical sovereign (to make die and let live) and biopolitics (to make live and let die) constitute the impasse of sovereignty then and now.\textsuperscript{13}

Consider some of the profound deformations of the Real Presence: space and time became entangled in transformations. Michal Kobialka, in his groundbreaking study \textit{This is my Body: Representational Practices in the Early Middle Ages}, has argued that the newly constituted orthodoxy of the Real Presence was constitutive of new forms of medieval representation.\textsuperscript{14} He tracks these changes by studying how Western Easter liturgies represented (or not) the body of Christ, which, according to the Gospels, was absent at the empty Easter tomb. Prior to the Eucharist crisis over the Real Presence in the tenth and early eleventh centuries, no cleric ever impersonated the risen Christ and spoke the gospel words (\textit{Quem queritis}) to Mary Magdalene: \textit{Whom do you seek?}/lims the \textit{hominis sacri} of Western Christendom. Christians could spill the blood of Muslims without pollution. For an incisive discussion and references, see Tomaž Mastnak, \textit{Crusading Peace: Christendom, the Muslim World, and Western Political Order} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 40–41.


\textsuperscript{13} The temporal coexistence I am arguing for changes the terms of Santner’s discussion of Foucault’s anguish at figuring out the sovereignty of the Holocaust and Esposito’s response to Foucault. See Eric L. Santner, \textit{The Royal Remains: The People’s Two Bodies and the Endgames of Sovereignty} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 12–28.

\textsuperscript{14} Michal Kobialka, \textit{This is My Body: Representational Practices in the Early Middle Ages} (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999).
Jesus of Nazareth. He is not here. He has risen just as it was predicted. An angel-actor (clearly not Christ) would voice these words at a “stage-set” of an empty tomb. As the Church promulgated the doctrine of the Real Presence, Kobialka shows how the Easter liturgy, for the first time, came to embody the absent body at the tomb. A cleric “performed” the absent body of resurrected Christ. The material embodiment of the absent body, according to Kobialka, transformed medieval representational grids of space and time. What is also chilling to realize is that it is these very same Easter *Quem Queritis* scripts embodying the resurrected Christ that also materialize the personified body of the Jewish people, who were excoriated as deicides.

Take, for example, the famous play book of the abbey of Fleury, which scripts the performance of the *Quem Queritis* at the turn of the twelfth century. What in the tenth century counted for three or four spare lines of liturgical performance now exploded into a script of 75 lines along with stage directions. Jews are personified at the opening of the script: “Alas! Wretched Jewish people, Whom an abominable insanity makes frenzied. Despicable nation.” Kobialka links this changing ontology of theatrical embodiment to changing doctrinal epistemologies of the Real Presence. The sovereign flesh and blood of the Real Presence profoundly reorganized the temporal and spatial coordinates of medieval representation. It constructed a dominant gaze organized around an absent body that was forced to materialize as flesh and blood within liturgical-theatrical space.

The drive to embody and “re-present” the absent body of Christ theatrically also exploded sculpturally in stony materi-

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alizations of flesh (human, animals, plants, insects, monsters) that changed the face of church architecture in Western Europe (but not in Byzantium as Kinoshita reminds us). Take, for example, the monumental building program at the ducal abbey at Caen, over which Lanfranc presided from 1063–1070, just at the inauguration of the orthodoxy of the Real Presence. The earliest phase of this program featured only one nave capital sculpted with a human form. Within a generation, as Eucharistic orthodoxy became a disciplinary site, sculpted matter invaded Romanesque capitals and proliferated on monumental church porches. To put this in quantum terms, the promulgation of the orthodoxy of the Real Presence was an entangled phenomena in which sovereignty, bread, wine, body, flesh, precious metal, textiles, stone, chisel, celibate clerics, texts, and Jews intra-acted and produced exceptional grids of space and time.

Lest contemporary theorists think that such transformational grids were reconfigured in secularization, a glance at contemporary debates over body and flesh shows the lingering afterlife of the Real Presence. A primal theological scene imagined by the French Jesuit Henri de Lubac (1886-1991) emplots the narrative. In his influential book Corpus Mysticum (French edition 1944, English translation 2006), Lubac argued that medieval scholastic theologians reduced and transposed the three terms of the sacramental Eucharist (corpus verum, corpus Christi, corpus mysticum) to two terms by inserting a caesura before corpus mysticum, thus collapsing

18 For the architectural program at Caen and discussion of its sculpture from the first building phases, see Eric Gustav Carlson, “The Abbey Church of St.-Etienne at Caen in the Eleventh and Early Twelfth Centuries,” PhD diss., Yale University, 1968.
two bodies (corpus verum and corpus Christi) into one and attaching the corpus mysticum to the institutional church, much to the detriment, as he saw it, of sacramental economy.\textsuperscript{20} Whether Lubac is right or wrong is not at issue here (some scholars question his plot); more important is how his story of reduction of three bodies to two serves as a resource for theories of the body and flesh now.

Exemplary for its exposition of premodern political theology is The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology.\textsuperscript{21} Ernst Kantorowicz used the same caesura, borrowed from Lubac, to fabricate his secularizing model of sovereignty. The transposition of corpus mysticum from the Eucharist to the institutional church, Kantorowicz argued, enabled the theology of the corpus mysticum to mutate into a secular politics of sovereignty represented by the two bodies of the sovereign: his mortal royal body and his second eternal body. This narrative of Kantorowicz is, as we shall see, key to Eric L. Santner’s book The Royal Remains.

More recently, Esposito also uses the self-same narrative of Lubac as a tool to periodize his own reading of flesh, a concept crucial to his project of affirmative biopolitics. Esposito rehearses that once medieval theologians detached the sacramental Eucharistic term corpus mysticum and attached it to the institutional Church, they immunized it as historical form and (with a glance toward Nancy) thus doomed new thinking on phenomenologies of the body. Further, as a medieval dogmatic-institutional form, the body, for Esposito, is no longer part of the theology of the incarnation and therefore not part of his affirmative biopolitics. Such a move enables Esposito to use flesh as a support and to distance his own affirmative biopolitics from the efforts of Jean-Luc Nancy to deconstruct Christianity by averting from the flesh to a renewed critical phenomenology of the body. Thus, we can see


\textsuperscript{21} Ernst Kantorowicz, The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).
that Lubac’s claim for a cut of three bodies to two has produced a discursive impasse between body and flesh in contemporary theory along with a complementary temporal impasse of medieval and modern. In an anxious effort to exit the impasse, theorists frequently fall back on fantasies of the messianic (as in the case of Esposito). I want to join a reading of Lanfranc with the work of a particle physicist, Karen Barad, because her concept of an apparatus helps us to understand how the doctrine of the Real Presence could matter and have an afterlife in contemporary discourse.

BARAD

(A)pparatuses are not mere observing instruments but boundary-drawing practices—specific material (re)configurings of the world—which come to matter.

Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*

Karen Barad, who holds a doctorate in theoretical particle physics and teaches as a Professor of Feminist Studies, Philosophy and History of Consciousness (University of California-Santa Cruz), clarifies the mattering at stake in the Real Presence. In *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, she succinctly reviews debates over mattering in feminist and Foucauldian studies and then turns to an erudite and passionate reading of the quantum mechanics of the philosopher-physicist Niels Bohr (1885–1962). She persuasively counters and re-define the representational legacy of mechanical physics: agency, objectivity, intention, causality, and knowing. Further, she reads the thought-experiments of Bohr back into science in order to clarify some of the persisting arguments over quantum materialities. The result is a breathtakingly diffractive reworking of the relationship of discoursing and mattering, dynamism and agency. Barad opens up new paths for connecting feminist theory, science studies, and politics. Her notion of the apparatus also offers a way of thinking of the far-reaching mattering power of what I am calling the apparatus of the Real Presence.

Barad forwards three key arguments: (1) that the primary
ontological unit is phenomena: the “ontological inseparability/entanglement of intra-acting agencies”;\(^\text{22}\) (2) that the primary modality of dynamism is performance: “if agency is understood as an enactment and not something someone has, then it seems not only appropriate but important to consider agency as distributed over nonhuman as well as human forms”;\(^\text{23}\) (3) that apparatuses “enact agential cuts that produce determinate boundaries and properties of ‘entities’ within phenomena, where ‘phenomena’ are the ontological inseparability of agentially intra-acting components. That is, agential cuts are at once ontic and semantic.”\(^\text{24}\) Put another way, Barad posits no constitutive exterior to entanglements of discourse and matter. Key, instead, for Barad, is the work of apparatuses. These produce agential separability, an exteriority within phenomena: “If the apparatus is changed, there is a corresponding change in the agential cut and therefore in the delineation of object from agencies of observation and the causal structure (and hence the possibilities for ‘the future behavior of the system’) enacted by the cut.”\(^\text{25}\) An apparatus is no mere laboratory set-up and it is too simple to think of it as an assemblage of humans and non-humans. Instead, she carefully argues for an apparatus as an entangled state of agencies without intrinsic boundaries: “Apparatuses are not located in the world but are material configurations or refiguring of the world that re(con)figure spatiality and temporality as well as (the traditional notion of) dynamics (i.e., they do not exist as static structures, nor do they merely unfold or evolve in space and time.”)\(^\text{26}\)

The “cut” matters in Barad’s argument. It produces differences within differences and is contingent with apparatuses, which are never simply human and historical. This notion (exteriority within) and nomenclature (cut) seemed to me, however, to veer, at times, into unexamined ontotheologies

\(^{22}\) Barad, Meeting the Universe Halfway, 139, emphasis in original.
\(^{23}\) Barad, Meeting the Universe Halfway, 214.
\(^{24}\) Barad, Meeting the Universe Halfway, 148.
\(^{25}\) Barad, Meeting the Universe Halfway, 175.
\(^{26}\) Barad, Meeting the Universe Halfway, 146.
of generative violence. Bohr’s engagement with the writings of his beloved fellow Danish philosopher, Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855), can provide a clue to this question of onto-theology. Kierkegaard thought deeply about the cut of Abraham’s covenant (circumcision) and the cut of sacrifice asked of Abraham (his beloved son, Isaac, on Mount Moriah). Bohr absorbed this infinite movement of renunciation explored by Kierkegaard and worked it into his physics: “the necessity of a final renunciation of the classical ideal of causality and a radical revision of our attitude towards the problem of physical reality.”

If we read Meeting the Universe Halfway not as a book but as an apparatus, then it becomes an obsidian blade, a steel knife, a diamond cutter, a laser beam that repetitiously performs the generative violence that joins feminist theory and feminist science studies. It is also a must-read for theologians, since it imagines mattering as an exteriority within without the god-trick of messianism. Barad’s study enables us to see the Real Presence as a phenomenon, an apparatus.

BENNETT

In a world of vibrant matter, it is thus not enough to say that we are “embodied.”

Jane Bennett, Vibrant Matter

Jane Bennett, Professor of Political Theory at Johns Hopkins University, exquisitely crafts a manifesto for vibrant matter and a vital materialist theory of democracy. She wants to “try to give voice to a thing-power” and her book can be read like the score for a concept opera in the style of Philip Glass. Like Barad, she seeks to “detach materiality from the figures of passive, mechanistic, or divinely infused substances.”

27 Cited in Barad, Meeting the Universe Halfway, 129, emphasis mine.
29 Bennett, Vibrant Matter, xiii.
There are eight movements. Chapter One turns objects into things with thing-power, or actants (a term that she borrows from Bruno Latour), meaning a source of action human or non-human. Baruch Spinoza holds the baton and marks the conative (a striving or desire present in everybody) tempo: trash becomes a vital assemblage of things; Kafka’s story of a broken-down spool of thread, called Odradek, embodies multiple ontologies; the sample of Gunpowder Residue presented in trial proceedings works as a legal actant; and the phenomenon of mineralization becomes an architect of evolution. In the second movement (Deleuze and Guattari at the podium), Bennett complicates her theme. To speak of things is just too simple—they might be mistaken as some kind of pre-existing, individual form, when in fact vibrant matter is always becoming in groupings—assemblages—a key concept of Deleuze and Guattari: “assemblages are living, throbbing confederations that are able to function despite the persistent presence of energies that confound them from within.”

She exemplifies the great blackout of 14 August 2003, as an assemblage of non-human and human actants (electricity, power-lines, brush fires, corporations) that acted in disconcert to produce the grid failure. As a reprise she considers the question of intentionality and causality in assemblages and swerves to Jacques Derrida and his messianic account of the unfillable promise to account for drive in assemblages without insinuating intentionality and purposiveness. My argument is not with Derrida, but with the way in which Bennett uses his concept of the messianic as a placeholder for the proliferation of unmarked political theologies in contemporary theory. When Bennett concluded, playfully, with “a kind of Nicene Creed” for vital materialists, I paused. After all, an inaugural experiment of imperial political theology fabricated itself at the Council of Nicaea (325).

Chapters Three and Four offer two more examples of as-

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30 Santner also reads Odradek in *The Royal Remains*, 83–85.
32 Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 32.
33 Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 122.
semblages of vibrant matter at work. Chapter Three addresses food as a conative body intra-acting with the complex bodies of American consumers (note that her typology of vibrant bodies is multiplying—conative bodies, proto-bodies, complex bodies). The question of the inanimate, in this case metal, is the challenge of Chapter Four. Bennett staunchly defends the dynamic conative properties of metals, even though “they are not quite ‘bodied’.” This meditation leads to the key question of Chapter Five: how to account for the intrinsic vitality of things without resorting to some mysterious value-added, for example, a soul? This question fascinated American and European audiences in the period leading up to World War I. Bennett takes as her interlocutors Henri Bergson and Hans Driesch with an important detour through Immanuel Kant. This chapter is on the verge of realizing that agency itself needs to be rethought, but Bennett pulls back from the edge. Chapter Six asks how narratives of intrinsic vitality of things linked up to an American “culture of life” produced policies prohibiting stem-cell research and brought on the war in Iraq.

At this intermission, Bennett leaves her reader asking: does Newton ever let go? Is it enough to change the sign on the matter of mechanical physics from inert to dynamic without rethinking fundamental epistemological and ontological concepts (discourse, causality, agency, knowing, power, identity, embodiment, objectivity, space and time)? Chapter Five opens with her genealogical loyalty toward a tradition of thinking inhabited by “Epicurus, Lucretius, Thomas Hobbes, Baruch Spinoza, Denis Diderot, Friedrich Nietzsche, Henry David Thoreau and others” (the “and others,” as we have already noted, include Bruno Latour, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Henri Bergson and Hans Driesch). The genealogy intrigues for its exclusions. It skips from classical to early modern thinkers (forget Western medieval thinking of mattering by such as Bernard Sylvestris and Nicolas Oresme); then it pauses at Bergson and Driesch, who wrote just prior

34 Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 56.

35 Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 62.
to the quantum revolution of matter in the 1920s and 1930s. It then leaps over to theorists of the later twentieth century. With the exception of her passionate claim on dynamic matter, Bennett leaves most of the representationalisms of mechanical Newtonian physics in place. This framework hobbles her important effort to think the question of the concluding two chapters: what are the implications of vibrant materiality for political theory?

Bennett’s project is too urgent to be lost to Newtonian representationalism and Barad’s profound reworking of Newtoniasms based on her quantum knowledge of dynamic matter (for a schematic summary of issues at stake) can be of great use. I propose a *postmedieval* Symposium that would bring Bennett and Barad together. Imagine them interacting with this list of Bennett’s questions: that discourse is for humans, that non-linguistic things can’t know, that a parliament of things might undo the hard boundaries between human and non-human, that vibrant matter might “cause” political outcomes.

I would like to pose my own question to this proposed symposium: can there be a vital materialist psychoanalysis? Bennett broaches the psychoanalytic when she invokes the process of identification: “To put it bluntly, my conatus will not let me ‘horizontalize’ the world completely. I also identify with members of my species, insofar as they are bodies most

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36 For a schematic summary of issues at stake, see Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 88–89.
37 Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 88–89.
38 Please note that I have offered page references to where Barad takes up just these questions posed by Bennett.
similar to mine.” When she criticizes demystification, “that most popular of practices in critical theory” as always being about something human, Bennett forecloses her own powerful constitution of the “human” in *Vibrant Matter*. The human is never given in advance as Barad argues. How the human might be given is the quandary at stake in Santner’s *The Royal Remains*.

**SANTNER**

Political theology and biopolitics are, in a word, *two modes of appearance of the flesh* whose enjoyment entitles its bearers to the enjoyment of entitlements in the social space they inhabit.

Eric L. Santner, *The Royal Remains*

Eric L. Santner is the Philip and Ida Romberg Professor of Modern German Studies at the University of Chicago. *The Royal Remains* is a love story, a *carniture*. Santner asks how humans might come to love the undead flesh of the king’s second body that has taken up shelter, like an inflaming splinter, in modern bodies. This excessive matter lodged itself, when, during the French Revolution, the transfer of the second body of the King to the new bearers of sovereignty, the People, failed. Santner claims the French Revolution as his “historical index”—sign of the modern: “the task would be, in a word, to *incarnate* in some ostensibly new way, the *excarnated* principle of sovereignty.”

His allegory of this breakdown is Jacques-Louis David’s *The Death of Marat* (1793). As a failed cult object (Marat could not be converted into the *new* Real Presence of the

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43 Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 104.
47 Santner, *The Royal Remains*, 89.
Revolution), this painting inaugurates visual modernism. David brings this historical impasse to presence in the painterly void of the empty upper half of the canvas. This abstract space stands in for the missing and impossible representation of the People—a kind of “ectoplasmic substance of this haunting,”48 or what Santner more closely defines as the “representational deadlock situated at the transition from royal to popular sovereignty.”49

Santner unfolds his philosophy of the flesh in six chapters. Each one transposes a major debate in contemporary theory of sovereignty into a Lacanian psychoanalytic key.50 Only those creatures that enter the symbolic space of the signifier matter. Up to the French Revolution, according to Santner, the sovereign was the one who decided on human signification in this field of immanence.51 This is an unflinching account of the human (non-signifiers need not apply). Those thinkers, such as Spinoza and Deleuze, who have focused on the conatus, especially the conatus of “becoming animal,” he calls practitioners of “pantheism of flesh and nerve” or “biopolitical pantheism.”52 Santner thus misses an opportunity to expand his analysis to include creatures that know and do become what I call res sacra (things which can be abandoned and destroyed by political theology and biopolitics), even if the things do not signify.53 My concern with his stance can be rephrased: how can theorists of sovereignty raise questions in the psychoanalytic register in such a way that they do not consolidate that register, that is, decide on

48 Santner, The Royal Remains, 93.
49 Santner, The Royal Remains, 95.
50 If readers are not familiar with the terms of this debate, Santner provides a clear guide and I will not attempt to define this extensive vocabulary here.
51 Santner’s concept of immanence: “immanence is itself an internally disordered space, one ‘curved’ by the presence in it of an element that belongs to neither nature and culture” (The Royal Remains, 209).
52 Santner, The Royal Remains, 133–138, emphasis in original.
53 Barad, Meeting the Universe Halfway, 340–342.
that register? The sovereign is the one who decides. How may psychoanalytic theorists remain open to a notion of psychoanalysis that is always differing from itself and, perhaps as my conclusion will suggest, a psychoanalytic theory in need of mourning its own sovereign trauma?

Most of all Santner is interested in the fantasy of sovereignty. In the first chapter he needs to distinguish his philosophy of the flesh from that articulated by Esposito in *Bios* and he offers a trenchant critique of Esposito’s formulation of immunization. Because Esposito remains at the conceptual level of his dialectic, he cannot understand the fantasy of immunization: “there is, I think, still a great deal of work to be done before one can attach any sort of radical hope, let alone messianism, to a new thinking of the flesh.”

Santner also chastises Agamben for being too literal about the flesh (it is not what you think—that stuff underneath the skin) and, therefore, Agamben cannot discern fully what is at stake with the state of exception. Santner makes his first pass through defining what he means by the flesh: “It (the flesh) is, in a word, the peculiar substance that ultimately drives the political theologies of sovereignty and the science fictions of immunological monstrosities, two seemingly disparate traditions that in some sense converge in Hobbes’ *Leviathan*.”

Chapter Two is devoted to a reading of Santner’s “key guide,” Ernst Kantorowicz’s study *The King’s Two Bodies* (1957). He shows how Kantorowicz’s famous reading of the deposition of King Richard II in Act 4 of Shakespeare’s tragedy by that name can be understood as the paradoxical exposure of the sovereign to the state of exception. Santner uses his reading to reformulate Agamben’s concept of bare life: bare life does not involve the separation of zoê from bios, as Agamben would have it; instead, it marks their jointure in a surplus of immanence, that surplus, the matter of the flesh.

When Richard is deposed what is left on stage is a fleshly organ without a body.

Paradoxically, Santner never addresses how Kantorowicz’s text functions as its own fantasy of sovereignty written in the mid-1950s, written at the same time and under the same signifying pressures faced by the other interlocutors of Santner’s study: for example, Lacan was lecturing on the psychoses (1955-1956); Francis Bacon was painting his study of Pope Innocent X; Carl Schmitt was publishing *Hamlet or Hecuba* (1956), Samuel Beckett was drafting his *Endgame*, which was first performed on 3 April 1957, just one month after the publication of the *King’s Two Bodies*. Santner staunchly dismisses studies that have attempted to “deconstruct” or “historicize” Kantorowicz on the claim of his interest in the “underside of fantasy.”

To read Kantorowicz at the historiographical level, as Santner does, that is, as the underwriting of the *Royal Remains*, is to stop too soon. His reading misses a crucial opportunity for his love story: to love the undead flesh of the sovereign that resides at the heart of Kantorowicz’s own fort/da game. Here is another side of Kantorowicz, what I like to think of as the “hole” in his immanence, to be found in an article he published three years before his death. In it he held a séance with his Warburg Institute colleagues (dead and alive) Ernst Kitzinger, Fritz Saxl, and Meyer Schapiro, each of whom had written on an early medieval carved stone cross, a “tree of life cross,” known by the name Ruthwell Cross. Kantorowicz offered a midrashic reading—uncharacteristic of his research—of a disputed carved figure on the cross, known in the art historical literature as the “archer.” Relying on the scholarship of Louis Ginzberg, a noted Talmudist and author of the multi-volume series *Legends of the Jews*, Kantorowicz argued that the archer represented Ishmael, son of Abraham’s evicted concubine, Hagar. Christians

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imagined Muslims as sons of Hagar. A midrash of Ishmael as wilderness archer and wild man grew up around him. In this midrashic essay, Kantorowicz touches his own (suppressed) genealogy as a grandson of a noted Poznan rabbi, and his work as a young military attaché in Istanbul during World War I, where he supervised the German work on the Orient Express and went on to write a dissertation on Muslim craft guilds. Kantorowicz was interested in the Tree of Life. It appears as an entry in the index of The King’s Two Bodies, “Tree, Inverted.”

The zombie flesh of the sovereign and psychoanalysis are closely bound. In Chapter 3 Santner traces how Freud, “philosopher of the flesh,” in his insights into the libido and the death drive offers a new thinking that can be an endgame for the failed sovereign transference to the People during the French Revolution. Santner broaches a psychoanalytic theory of trauma (to be adumbrated in Chapter 6) with a beautiful analysis of Freud’s writing on the fort/da game. What interests him about the nature of a traumatic tear and its naming is its undecidability:

… the facilitation of human vitality within a field of representations is driven by an excess that has no proper place within that field; in every such “matrix” there remains a surplus. Freud’s fundamental insight was that without that surplus element (the flesh in Santner’s terms) we would never experience questions of meaning as being genuinely meaningful, as being truly worth our while.

He concludes the chapter with a reading of Kafka’s Odradek, a character, as we have seen, also read by Bennett in Vibrant Matter. More than a lively thing, Odradek, spool-creature, is for Santner another example of an organ without a body (kin to the deposed Richard II), a spectral materialization of the zombie flesh of the sovereign.

61 Kantorowicz, The King’s Two Bodies, 565.
62 Santner, The Royal Remains, 73, emphasis in original.
But is Freud’s theory of trauma more of a medievalism, rather than a modernism, as Santner robustly contends? Freud’s exemplary example of traumatic repetition, cited at the opening of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, is drawn from Tasso’s epic of the First Crusade, published in 1581. Readers of *Jerusalem Delivered* will know that Freud truncated the account of the second wounding of Clorinda, a Muslim warrior, by the Christian Crusader, Tancred. When she speaks through the wound of the tree bludgeoned by Tancred (his second wounding of Clorinda), she lets Tancred know that she is not alone. Buried with her, she explains, are fellow martyrs (Saracens and French soldiers who have fallen in the fight). Tasso intended the wounded tree as the second burial-place for the Crusader archive—a poetic crypt that would silence once and for all the noisy ghosts of the First Crusade. So successful was his encryption that Freud was deafened to the words of Clorinda’s ghost who spoke as “dying of the dying voice” and so he repeated the Crusader trauma in his paradigm of Western trauma in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. What happens when the trauma of the medieval theologico-political is foreclosed in the very theory of trauma? What happens when the theory of trauma is itself a traumatic crypt of medievalism?

Santner devotes Part Two of the *Royal Remains* (Chapters 4, 5, and 6) to exquisite readings of visual modernism (David’s *Death of Marat* and the paintings of Francis Bacon) and two examples of literary modernism: the *Chandos Letter* by Hugo von Hofmannsthal, published in 1902, and *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* by Rainer Maria Rilke, published in 1910. He joins these readings with critical studies of Deleuze and Esposito, both of whom have published on Bacon. He explores the resonances of Walter Benjamin with Rilke. These literary readings exemplify Santner’s methodology: “what I have attempted to do in this study is also, in

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64 Santner, *The Royal Remains*, 160.
some sense, to bring together texts and figures that exhibit similar ‘frequencies’ of vital intensity, with the aim of clarifying just what it is that is vibrating, just what sort of vital intensity is at issue.”\textsuperscript{65} The frequencies, in the end, vibrate with love: “this is a love that is willing—that gathers the will and the courage—to endure the encounter with the flesh that twitches in an always singular fashion in the other.”\textsuperscript{66}

In contrast, the frequencies of the critiques advanced in Part Two (Bataille, Deleuze, Esposito and others) jolt like flesh caught in the tuner. The impasse comes, I argue, from the project’s stranglehold on its “precise historical index.” My reading of Lanfranc has sought to show the untimeliness of the flesh. It cannot support a historical index and a historical index cannot support the flesh. With great clarity Shakespeare understood such untimeliness of the flesh and staged it in Acts 4 and 5 of the tragedy of \textit{King Richard II}. Kantorowicz and Santner exit the play after their analysis of the deposition scene of Act 3. In these crucial and under-analyzed final two acts, Shakespeare audaciously uncouples the Real Presence from sovereign flesh where it had been pinned for five centuries. The playwright also understood how the sovereign flesh could be and was re-constituted fantastically off stage in the Christian Crusader imaginary. In the closing lines of \textit{King Richard II}, Bolingbroke vows to go on Crusade: “I’ll make a voyage to the Holy Land, / To wash this blood off my guilty hand: / March sadly after; grace my mourning here. / In weeping after this untimely bier.”\textsuperscript{67} A decade prior to staging Shakespeare’s tragedy, Clorinda had already whispered of the undecidability of the Crusader Imaginary, “An incarnation, or a burial, I cannot say.”\textsuperscript{68}

\textsuperscript{65} Santner, \textit{The Royal Remains}, xix, emphasis in original.
\textsuperscript{66} Santner, \textit{The Royal Remains}, 243.
\textsuperscript{67} William Shakespeare, \textit{King Richard II}, 5.6.49–52.
\textsuperscript{68} Tasso, \textit{Jerusalem Delivered} (1581), trans. Anthony M. Esolin (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), Canto 13, ll. 51–52.