

## CFP — Northern Osmosis: Literary Viscosity as Material Solidarity (IONA 2019)

*Ic þa wiht geseah on weg feran  
heo wæs wrætlice wundrū gegierwed  
Wundor wearð on wege wæter wearð to bane*

*I saw the wight going on its way.  
It was splendidly, wonderfully arrayed  
The wonder was on the wave; water became bone.*

— Exeter Book, Riddle #7 (Baum)

In “Water and Gestationality: What Flows Beneath Ethics” (2013), Mielle Chandler and Astrida Neimanis describe a feminist, eco-materialist theory of watery sociality. Understanding water in its material and metaphoric modes, Chandler and Neimanis highlight the responsiveness, reciprocity, and facilitative potential of a water-based social milieu: “All bodies,” they write, “necessarily ‘water’ one another in key co-constitutive ways.” Geological, bacterial, human, and other bodies sustain mutual and transformative relations through a shared, osmotic wateriness.

Yet bodies that flow together also resist flowing. Refusing a full meld, watery relations maintain a viscous threshold of resistance. A theory of viscosity, we contend, honours the discreteness of all bodies while facilitating co-constitutive collective formation, generating intrahuman and human–nonhuman solidarity amid an affirmation of difference.

In this IONA lab, we invite scholars and artists to test the theoretical capacity of viscosity. We will begin charting viscosity’s theoretical realm by experimenting with Exeter Book riddles, with modern English translations provided. Old English riddles congeal unsettled identities in a material network of viscous substances: blood, ice, ink, mead. A viscous reading of the Exeter riddles, we propose, resists conventional Western epistemology’s insistence on the duality of active subjects and passive non-subjects. Together, we will discuss the ways in which these riddles may assert a material sociability that ventures beyond a human-hegemonic hierarchy of relation. (Or, indeed, not.)

We will then move into a participant roundtable. Engaging with premodern, non-Western, or otherwise immodern texts (broadly construed), participants will share and discuss proposals on how theories of viscosity may shape their research. Taking modernity, with its homogenizing constructs of territory, identity, and time, as a Western construct up for osmotic challenge, we solicit proposals exploring viscous immodernities, including:

- *Contemporaneities*: Indigenous and postcolonial onto-epistemologies; transformative resistance; politics of refusal
- *Worldings*: Modes of relationality, praxes, and models of kinship informed by anticapitalist, decolonial, antiracist, queer, feminist, and other critical theories
- *Textualities*: Unwritten or nonverbal texts; horizons of new media; artistic and/or poetic interventions in conventional understandings of “text”; radical accessibility
- *Premodernities*: Early medieval texts of the North Seas, and other pre-modern works; the “futures past” of non/Western histories; pasts’ speculative presents

These categories, of course, do not have fixed borders. We encourage and welcome explorations of their mutual porosity and the waterways connecting them.

You may reach the organizers (Sarah-Nelle Jackson, C. Elizabeth Rosch, and Scott Russell) at [IONA2019.viscosity@gmail.com](mailto:IONA2019.viscosity@gmail.com). Please submit proposals to this address by **July 1, 2018**, including “Northern Osmosis” in the subject line. Roundtable presentations will be 8-10 minutes depending on final lab participant numbers. Proposals should include a 250-word abstract, a brief biography, and any A/V requirements. Institutional affiliations may be included but are not required.

*IONA 2019: Seafaring runs April 11–13, 2019, at Simon Fraser University: <http://www.sfu.ca/english/iona/>. SFU’s campuses are located on unceded, traditional, and ancestral xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sk̓wxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), and səlilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) territories.*