THE ENDS OF THE BODY

Introduction Limits and Teleology: The Many Ends of the Body

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As everyone knows, the end of the body is in the grave, as bone and muscle, corpuscle and fibre, are disassembled into their constituent elements. But, as everyone also knew (at least during the Middle Ages), the end of the body was also at the end of time, as soul and restored flesh were reunited in the glorified body that the righteous individual would enjoy, bathed in the bliss of the Beatific Vision. Monumental tombs of the period – such as the one depicted on the medieval manuscript page reproduced on this book's cover – emphasize these two opposed states of corporeal being by placing a sculpted effigy of the perfect, glorified body at the top of the tomb, while engraving at its base an image of the bones and scraps of earthly flesh, devoured by worms. In this view of embodied human nature, the ends of the body are double – both abject and exalted – or even multiple, as the *telos* or end-point of the human being is most fully realized in the reunion of soul with glorified flesh after the Resurrection. Yet the ends of the body are even more various than these, for as historians such as Peter Brown, Caroline Bynum, and Miri Rubin (to name just a few) have shown, throughout the Middle Ages, the body was *the* preeminent symbol of community. Body was not only that which was most intimately personal and most proper to the individual, but also that which was most public and representative of the interlocked nature of the group. Just as each member of the body is both partaker and a part, so too the members of the community, when conceived as a body, participate in the being of the whole and contribute to its welfare. To be excluded from the communal body is to be cut off, even to be annihilated.

The essays in this volume trace out these multiple ends of the body, ranging from the personal, private space of the individual to the public, shared space of the community. They share a focus on the productive ca-

pacity of the body, whether expressed through the many aspects of the flesh's materiality – generation, reproduction, gestation, digestion, and so on – or through the body's role in performative expressions of meaning, as in gesture, dance, or other forms of motion. Some essays trace the use of physical remnants of the body in the form of relics or memorial monuments that replicate the form of the body as foundational elements in communal structures; others explore how bodies were used as models of communities themselves, whether torn into pieces in a replication of the disordered bonds of society or afflicted with degenerative illness in a reminder of the decaying nature of a postlapsarian world. Still other essays explore the rhetorical valences of body, whether in popular vernacular literature, learned Latin writings, or the oral performance of sermon delivery.

Before turning to a summary of the essays contained in this volume, the following pages seek to lay out in some detail the development of study of the body in medieval culture as it has evolved over the past two decades, and to establish the role of *The Ends of the Body* within this field. While the topic of embodiment is far from new in medieval studies, this volume is novel in its focus on the role of space and time in the deployment of the body as a symbol of both individual and collective identity. The ends of the body are markers of limitation in terms of both space and time; yet even as the body signifies limit and constraint, it simultaneously – and paradoxically – offers virtually unlimited potential for growth, development, and expansion. This dynamic aspect of embodiment is often expressed, in medieval texts, through a nuanced engagement with the various processes of the body: the physiology of conception, gestation, and birth; the humoral systems of the body, with their multiple sites of digestion and incorporation; disease, aging, and corruption of the flesh, as well as the passage into death itself. At other times, the dynamic aspect of embodiment is expressed through performance, whether literally acted out within the text or used as a metaphorical system that employs the body as a flexible symbol to denote religious, civic, national, or ethnic communities. Here, movement of the body in space – through gesture, dance, ritual, dramatic performance, or the gathering of many bodies into a single ordered grouping – produces an implicit timeline that juxtaposes the body's initial place of origin with the end-point of the body's motion.

The role of the body as the metaphorical heart of human culture has been made eminently clear by the work of anthropologists, cultural and social historians, philosophers, linguists, archaeologists, and literary scholars over the last twenty years. As medievalists have embraced Roy Porter's

invitation issued in 1991 to forge a history of the body that seeks to assert the pre-eminence of the body in the discourses of the humanities and to work against the distorting philosophical and cultural orthodoxies that subordinate body to mind or soul, a new history of the body in the Middle Ages has emerged. Writing in 2001, Porter reflects on the proliferation of historical work on the body that has made it 'the historiographical dish of the day' (236) with both satisfaction and disgruntlement. While clearly relishing the surge in body history whose wave he was able to ride, he also is troubled by what he sees as an inability by historians to distinguish between theories and representations of the body in the past and actual social practices; a tendency to reduce the body to a passive object that is produced, constrained, and ruled by regimes of knowledge and power; the uncritical, anachronistic application of modern theory (he takes particular aim at Freud and Lacan) to bodies of the past; and by the reductive occlusion of popular bodies by those rendered visible in the more accessible texts of high culture (237).

In attempting to circumscribe and categorize the omnipresence of the body in history, Porter devises a scheme that posits seven different perspectives from which scholars may approach the historical body: the body as human condition that can be accessed through religious and philosophical discourse that engages with questions of birth, death, and resurrection; the visual form of the human body in its historically reconstructed physicality; the intersection of anatomy and culture; the dynamic relationship of body, mind, and soul in the production of a 'self'; the gendering and sexing of bodies; the management of the body by political authority; and the role of the body in the civilizing process. While Porter's scheme aims at a comprehensive, synthetic view of somatic history that is sensitive to current debates on the body, its heuristically driven categorization presents a somewhat fragmented view of the body parcelled off into artificially discrete sections. Collections of essays focusing on the body in the Middle Ages are faced with the similarly daunting task of defining and circumscribing the parameters of the medieval body. Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin, in *Framing Medieval Bodies*, rely on modern theoretical frames such as Marxism, feminism, race and gender theory, deconstruction, and phenomenology to organize the specific textual and historical soundings of medieval bodies (6–7). Other collections such as that by Linda Lomperis either privilege a modern discourse (in this case, feminist theory) on the body through which to reinvigorate readings of medieval corporeality, or use the coherence of a particular medieval discourse such as theological writing or religious discourse in general to organize approaches to the body.[1]

The present collection seeks to explore how medieval notions of corporeality were elaborated not only in spatial but also in temporal terms. In its focus on the role of space and place, this collection shares some common ground with the provocative set of essays published in 2003 by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Gail Weiss: their *Thinking the Limits of the Body* explores how theories of space have inflected representations of the body, medieval to postmodern, in literature, film, and popular culture. The extraordinary heterogeneity of subject matter in that volume is centred on a theoretical core, that is, the 'limit': for Cohen and Weiss, the limit is at once both empowering and controlling, grounded in desire that is itself limitless.[2] The present volume, by contrast, takes as its subject the specifically pre-modern body as manifested in literature, history, and art, in a collection of essays that illustrate the interplay between individual and community in medieval discourses of the body. They show how body was used to represent community, both in the ecclesiastical and in the proto-national framework, and yet was also simultaneously seen as the fundamental expression of individual identity. In the discourse of body as community as understood in spatial terms, the 'ends' of the body demarcate the boundary line of the group, the line that divides those who are included from those who are excluded; yet in the discourse of the body as community as understood in temporal terms, the 'end' of the body marks the moment of dissolution, when the spatial boundary ceases to be. A similar complexity informs the discourse of body as individual: understood in spatial terms, the 'ends' of the body mark the limit separating inside from outside, that which is whole and clean from that which is fragmentary and dirty. In temporal terms, however, the 'ends' of the individual body are even more fraught with ambivalence: understood as flesh, the body ends in age, weakness, death, and decay. Understood in terms of the eternal linkage of soul and body, however, the 'ends' of the body lie in the beatific state of the resurrected body at the end of time. Time and space are thus intimately linked in medieval discourses of the body.

Although the first thing that comes to mind when one thinks of an 'end' is the closing off of future possibility, the idea of ends can, in fact, be both productive and prolific. As Vincent Leitch points out in his reflection on the 'ends' of theory in the early twenty-first-century academy, the idea of end encompasses many concepts:

> The word has numerous connotations: withering, eclipse; fullness, closure; termination, catastrophe, death; turning or stopping points; goals and targets. It summons an array of phenomena: finitude, beginnings and middles,

> expected change, nostalgia, mourning. It suggests remains, revenants, immortality. When *ends* designates regulated or calculated passing, it evokes cyclical patterns as well as shelf life, fusing historiography and fashion … Ends, like origins, appear multiple and complex. (124)

Medieval discourse renders a similarly polyvalent understanding of 'end.' Of the ten scriptural meanings of *finis* provided by Rabanus Maurus in his ninth-century allegorical dictionary of the Bible, *Allegoriae in universam sacram scripturam* (*PL* 112, 932B–932D), several are bound up with the idea of the body: as biological process, as boundary, and as chronological terminus. *Finis*, of course, is the death of the flesh ('mors carnis') that enables the paradoxically related meaning of 'end,' that of eternal life, which can consist either of 'gaudium eternum' ('eternal joy') or, of what Rabanus gives as another synonym of *finis*, 'fovea,' the pit of eternal punishment or damnation. The end of life, which constitutes both beginning and end, is bounded by a finite sense of time, a finitude that circumscribes the body in terms that are physical as well as chronological. Rabanus reads the 'ends of the earth' ('fines terrae') or the outer reaches of the world ('extremitas orbis') as akin to the external shell of the body that houses the interior qualities found in the new man who will be judged by God: 'By *end* is meant the outer boundary of the world, as in the song of Hannah: "The Lord will judge the ends of the earth," since the newest man will be judged according to that which will have been found in him' ['Per *finem* extremitas orbis, ut in cantico Annae: "Dominus judicabit fines terrae," quod secundum id quod in novissimo homo fuerit inventus, judicabitur' (*PL* 112, 933A)]. Moreover, Rabanus also aligns these 'ends of the earth' with the 'internal thoughts' that inhabit the body: 'By *end*, is meant internal thoughts, as in the Psalms: "In his hand are the ends of the earth," that is, it is in his power to arrange all the internal thoughts of the soul' ['Per *finem*, internae cogitationes, ut in Psalmis: "In manu ejus sunt omnes fines terrae," id est, in potestate ejus est disponere omnes internae cogitationes animae' (932D)]. In his encyclopaedic work, *De universo*, Rabanus marks the congruence between the ends of body, time, and space when he establishes both the body and time as the parameters or instruments by which to conceptualize the notion of measurement: 'Measurement is something circumscribed by its mode or time. It is either of the body or of time' ['Mensura est res aliqua modo suo vel tempore circumscripta. Haec aut corporis est aut temporis' (*De univ.* VIII.2, *PL* 111, col.485C)]. Finally, the *fines* of the body are fully displaced from the spheres of time and space when the body's ends become the very biological processes internal to it and on which de-

pend its continuing existence in time and space. Rabanus, in the *Allegoriae in universam sacram scripturam* (932B), asserts that *finis* can be substituted for 'food that has been consumed,' thereby suggesting that the biological ends of consumption, nutrition, and digestion are just as important as the body's more abstract teleological and instrumental ends.

While Rabanus's integrative treatment of bodies and ends attests to the creative force of this nexus of ideas, and the extent to which medieval readers and writers were attentive to the extraordinary dynamism and generative nature of the body, it has been only in the last twenty years that scholars in medieval studies have begun to perceive the nuanced representations of the body that inhabit virtually every level of medieval discourse. The growing interest of medievalists in the body as a serious subject of research and discussion follows upon a more general rehabilitation of the body in the humanities. The neglect of the body has deep philosophical roots in the privileging of soul over body in Plato's thought, and especially in the subordination of body to mind in the influential *cogito* of Descartes. As many feminist scholars have demonstrated, the impetus for such a refusal of the body lies in the long-standing misogynist association of the feminine with the passive, labile realm of the material whose instability and alliance with the senses threatened the primacy of the active, rational male principle. Feminist theory has veered from collusion with the rejection of the body, particularly the female body marked as maternal, because of the socially limiting consequences of such a differentiated body,[3] to the embrace of the postmodern, which enables the opening up of all rigidly constructed dichotomies such as 'male' and 'female' and 'body' and 'mind' to reveal the provisional, culturally constructed nature of all such repressive binary categories of thought. As recent work in feminist thought has evinced, the space between naive essentialism and radical constructivism has yielded to a more materialist understanding of body and gender, one where bodies are understood not solely as textual entities, but as material beings whose physical labour generates the social practices and products undergirding a larger matrix of social and economic relations of production (Weissberger, xvi; McNally).

Some of the best medievalist work engages with the body both as a dematerialized, abstract, representational effect and as a fully concrete, historically embedded agent fully immersed in the particulars of its social and cultural 'situation' (Moi 59–83). Caroline Bynum's groundbreaking work on the body in medieval religious and theological discourse is exemplary in this regard. In *Jesus as Mother*, Bynum demonstrates the gender-bending potentiality of the body when it inhabits discourse. Sex is severed from

gender when biologically female qualities such as the bearing and nursing of children are detached from the body and discursively applied to male bodies that now appropriate the dematerialized qualities of maternity in their pastoral relationships. In other essays such as 'The Female Body and Religious Practice in the Later Middle Ages,' Bynum's focus shifts to the signifying functions embedded in the actual bodies of spiritually powerful women. In her analysis of the strikingly somatic quality of late medieval female piety, Bynum is attentive to both the new valorization of women's bodies and the meanings with which they are charged, and to the continuity with past paradigms of body and soul and male/female dimorphism, paradigms which in the Middle Ages were never as unbridgeably dichotomous as both ancient and modern thought make them out to be. Bynum inserts the bodily practices of late medieval pious women into the currents of physiological, theological, natural philosophical, and folk discourse in order to provide a more nuanced approach to what she terms 'a turning point in the history of the body in the West' ('Female Body' 182). Her more recent work has continued her project of destabilizing any easy or pat distinctions between body and soul by an exhaustive treatment of the resurrection of the body in early Christianity until the fourteenth century that soundly demonstrates the imbrication of body and soul in medieval theological thought and ecclesiastical practice. The body, as 'the carrier or the expression … of what we today call individuality' (*Resurrection* 11), asserted itself in all its material glory and was not automatically relegated to the back seat of the spiritual bus.

To think of the body in connection with the Last Judgment and Resurrection is to think of the body in teleological terms, as a kind of seed that comes to full fruition as glorified flesh only at the end of time. This temporal dimension of corporeality has continued to inform Bynum's more recent work, not only in her collection of essays on metamorphosis (*Metamorphosis and Identity*) but in her groundbreaking study of late medieval devotion to the wounded body of Christ, *Wonderful Blood*. Here, Bynum rethinks the nature of material body through a close examination of the veneration of Christ's blood, which was both visible evidence of the sacrificial redemption of man and a focus for empathetic identification with those who witnessed Christ's suffering and death. While Bynum outlines the medieval dichotomy of 'sweet, healthy, inside blood' (*sanguis*) and 'corrupt, separated, outside blood' (*cruor*), she emphasizes the extent to which medieval blood piety resisted this straightforward distinction: 'the complex blood rhetoric of medieval devotion, soteriology, and praxis does not seem to be a conflation, or alternately a reversal, of two struc-

turally dichotomous "bloods"' (*Wonderful Blood* 17, 19). The fluidity of blood itself was a representation of its ability to resist the binary distinctions of inside and outside, clean and polluted, static and changeable.

The rigid categories of the encyclopedic tradition were also challenged by the nature of embodiment. In his thirteenth-century *De proprietatibus rerum*, Bartholomaeus Anglicus inserts the body into a hierarchical presentation of all creation, following his account of God and the angels with an account of the properties of the human soul, and then with an account of the properties of the body. Immediately, however, Bartholomaeus's account of the body is complicated by the different ways in which body can be divided up, in terms of its four-fold humoural composition (described in book 4 of the *De proprietatibus rerum*) or in terms of its various members (described in book 5). In terms of its humoral composition, the human body appears as a microcosm of the greater universe: the four humours correspond to the four seasons of the year, the four physical elements of creation, and so on. The humoral fluids flow through the body just as rivers flow through the landscape. Similarly, the human body appears as a microcosm not of the natural world, but of the political world, with its individual members each doing its part to maintain the health of the body politic. In both anatomical and physiological terms, body was the organizing principle for understanding both the natural and the social world. Crucially, however, this corporeal principle was rooted in a theological framework: not just any body was the template for these correspondences, but specifically the body of Christ. This can be seen, for example, in the Ebstorf world map, which depicts Christ's body as coterminus with the ecumene. The circular periphery of the known world is marked by the termini of Christ's body – feet at the bottom, hands at the side, and head, crowned with thorns, in the easternmost region at the top of the map. On the parchment skin of such a medieval map, the template of Christ's body as the model for all forms of community was made manifest not only in symbolic terms, but in material terms as well.

The self-reflexive exploitation by medieval literary texts of the corporeal nature of the very manuscripts they inhabit makes medieval literature the natural locus for the exploration of crucial questions of bodily identity and textuality. Sarah Kay's work on the relationship between 'textual content and the material state of the page' ('Original Skin' 36) considers how the skin of both manuscript parchment and characters who undergo judicial flaying use the surface of the skin to peel back layers of textual meaning, to reveal the interplay of interiority and exteriority as determinants of an essential identity, and to shape the relationship between bodily

mortality and textual invulnerability (47). The insistently material, corporeal nature of medieval manuscript culture haunting medieval texts also asserts itself in the common metaphorical convergence of text and body in much medieval writing. The recognition of the integumental nature of many medieval texts, especially those classical texts whose *auctores* concealed deeper meanings inside layers of fable or myth, as akin to the dressing up of a body of truth in clothes or skin that must be removed, has led many critics to explore the corporeal implications of metaphor, allegory, and allegoresis. Suzanne Akbari's work on figuration highlights the tight nexus between bodily transformation and the integumentary nature of language (*Seeing Through the Veil* 11–18, 109–13; 'Metaphor and Metamorphosis'), while Jill Ross focuses on the hermeneutic implications of textual garments whose qualities of seamlessness or raggedness condition the reading process (Ross 16–49). The construction of a literary text as the proportionate, harmonious arrangement of parts forming a pleasing body is deeply rooted in both the classical rhetorical and poetic traditions inherited by and elaborated upon in the Middle Ages (Valenti). Both the Ciceronian view of a speech as a body possessing joints, blood, and a complexion (*De oratore* III.96, 199) and the Horatian recommendation that a poem's body be a seamless unity and not a hodgepodge of animal and human body parts (*Ars poetica* 1–5) became fundamental tenets of medieval literary theory.

The textual body swathed in layers of verbal clothing and meaning is, more often than not, gendered as feminine. Topping Horace's monstrous body is the head of a beautiful woman (*Ars poetica* 4), which functions to indicate the kind of ideal aesthetic appeal a poem should have instead of the incoherent joinings held up by Horace as a negative exemplum of poetic practice. Feminist scholars in particular have been innovative in their exploration of the implications of the conjoining of woman's body and text. Critics such as E. Jane Burns, Carolyn Dinshaw, Helen Solterer, Karma Lochrie, and Gayle Margherita explore how both the somatized space of the page and the textualized openings of the female body can become sites where the contestation of hegemonic, patriarchal discourse and structures of power are articulated and played out. Other scholars like Peggy McCracken and Barbara Weissberger explore the sexualized metaphors used in medieval literary discourse to describe the female body as wielding a power that is politically threatening and culturally compelling, and whose materiality often cannot be contained within the bounds of dominant symbolic structures. Critics like Louise Vasvári have productively assimilated Bakhtin's seminal treatment of the carnivalesque materiality

of the body that disrupts and contests hegemonic discourse to analyse the eruption of the feminized *bas corporel* within the dialogically structured *Libro de buen amor*, which juxtaposes officially sanctioned clerical discourse with that stemming from lower, popular strata.

Scholarly interest in the material and gendered nature of literary bodies has also been nourished by the work of queer theorists, whose insights into the historical and ideological processes governing the construction of sexuality have revealed the fictional nature of gender and have destabilized the temporal 'always already' that substitutes the dynamic, contingent nature of gender formation with one that is a fully formed and immutable reification of gender (Burger and Kruger xi–xiii). Complementing the work of social historians (Bennett, Brundage, Boswell,), cultural historians (Jordan, Murray, Dinshaw), and historians of science (Cadden, Laqueur), literary scholars have been front and centre in exploring and unsettling the sexed and gendered bodies that inhabit medieval texts. Collections of essays such as *Queer Iberia*, *Queering the Middle Ages*, and *The Tongue of the Fathers* attest to the pan-European breadth of queer readings of medieval literary texts, while recent monographs focus on the slippery nature of masculinity and the problematization of sodomy in French and English texts (Burgwinkle), the rereading of canonical texts (Klosowska, Schibanoff, Burger, Gaunt), and a queer re-evaluation of the entire generic system out of which literary texts are produced (Pugh). Some of the most stimulating developments arising from queer studies of pre-modern culture have centred on the relationship of temporality and identity, suggesting that an affective connection to the past can be not alienating, but empowering. As Carolyn Dinshaw has influentially argued, temporal distance can be not erased but, perhaps, elided through the 'touch' of present and past ('Chaucer's Queer Touches'; *Getting Medieval* 1–3, 54). In this view, the body serves as the medium through which the other is encountered and recognized, where continuities are traced even as, simultaneously, difference is acknowledged.

The focus on temporality in *The Ends of the Body* is somewhat different: here, pre-modern discourses of the body are illustrated in their historical and literary contexts, where individual and group identities are expressed through images of the body and where beginning and endings – both personal and communal – are articulated by reference to corporeal states of being. Body appears sometimes as the vehicle of transcendence, sometimes as the site of performance, sometimes as the symbolic foundation of the community. Body is not only the flesh that pulses with dynamic fluids, but also the flesh that yields to dismemberment, decay, and death. As the

body moves from one state of being to another, both its formal state and its material nature undergo change, mediated through physiological processes such as gestation, digestion, corruption, and decay. Similarly, as the body moves in space, in performative actions such as gesture, dance, or ritual, the body serves as the singular point of reference throughout that sequence of movements as they are extended in time. In either of these two frames of reference, body serves as a focal point through which discourses articulate both the nature of the individual and the nature of the community, through identifying the limits or ends of the body.

The essays in the first part of this collection, 'Foundations,' centre on the ways in which bodies – whether actual fragments of bone and skin or their representation in image or phrase – are the cornerstones upon which communities are built. In 'Books, Bodies, and Bones: Hilduin of St-Denis and the Relics of St Dionysius,' Anna Taylor describes how the ninth-century relics of Dionysius were coupled with a manuscript containing writings attributed to the saint along with accounts of his life and martyrdom. Like the body, the book was thought to provide 'a connection between the devotee and the saint, between the temporal and the eternal'; for medieval worshippers, therefore, the physical proximity of the two at St-Denis provided an even more powerful link with the saint, surmounting the boundaries of space and time. The reliquary containing the saint's bones heightened this sense of sacred power, its shining jewels a 'mirror' of the 'transformed bodies of the end days.' Together, relic and word provided the sacred centre about which the monastic community was unified, in turn affirming St-Denis's role as the spiritual wellspring of a specifically national Christendom in medieval France.

Christine Kralik's 'Death Is Not the End' is an art historical essay on the image of death and its devotional function in the Berlin Hours of Mary of Burgundy and Maximilian I. In the lavishly illustrated manuscript of the Berlin Hours, the theme of the 'Three Living and the Three Dead,' extant as both visual image and narrative unit in a wide range of medieval texts, appears in the local, private setting of an individual prayer book. The patronage of Mary of Burgundy and her consort provided a highly specific context within which the pictorial convention was adapted, showing how a widespread motif could be tailored to meet the spiritual needs of an individual patron. The high status of that patron, however, ensured that her Book of Hours would be passed on to other aristocratic readers, so that individual private devotion was, inevitably, always linked to a community of readers who participated in prayer not collectively, but sequentially. Mary of Burgundy's patronage thus established a devotional pattern

for the noble readers who would follow in her footsteps, meditating on the same images of the 'Three Living and the Three Dead' that Mary had meditated upon prior to her own death.

Part one concludes with Amy Appleford's 'The Good Death of Richard Whittington: Corpse and Corporation,' in which the pictorial and verbal description of Whittington's end helps to assure the continuation of 'an associated collective body, the Mercers' Company, by means of another perpetual corporate entity, the Almshouse poor-folk.' Here, the individual body serves as the symbolic foundation for two communities: the charitable organization of the Almshouse, and the politically engaged fraternity of tradesmen. Like Kralik, Appleford focuses on fifteenth-century views of embodiment; here, however, the focus is not on aristocratic courtly culture but rather on civic community formation. For Appleford, as for Kralik and Taylor, the death of the individual serves as the cornerstone for communal devotion, whether uniting the monastic community (St Dionysius), the devout women of an aristocratic lineage (Mary of Burgundy), or the rising middle-class readers of the urban centre (Richard Whittington).

The second part of this volume, 'Bodily Rhetoric,' explores the poetic linkage of body and meaning in Latin and vernacular texts. Body serves as a vehicle for meaning sometimes through an emphasis on its materiality and the physiological processes it undergoes, and sometimes through an emphasis on its role in performative action. In 'An Epic Incarnation of Salvation: The Function of the Body in the *Eupolemius*,' Sylvia Parsons explores how, in eleventh-century Latin literature, classical rhetorical strategies intersected with the Christian theology of salvation. In the *Eupolemius*, the central figure of 'Messiah' emerges as the focal point of a salvation history that chronicles the Jewish people ('Judas') and the Gentiles ('Ethnis'). Parsons shows how genre and embodiment are intricately linked in the *Eupolemius*, with the epic genre featuring 'violent combat,' 'corporeal norms that define appropriate participants,' and the equation of 'the destruction of bodies with cultural values worthy of poetic commemoration.' In keeping with the conventions of the epic genre, bodies are dismembered in service to the effort to construct poetic monuments: the ultimate sacrificial death, the crucifixion of Christ as 'Messiah,' is presented in epic terms in the *Eupolemius*, generating 'a transformative conflation, rather than an ironic distancing, of its divergent modes of imagining the body.' The epic genre, moreover, is combined with the satiric in the *Eupolemius*, with its 'ridiculous and disgusting excess of corporeality': this violation of 'generic propriety' allows the poem to enter a parodic mode, in which 'the two systems of meaning coexist' in what might be called 'a

quandary of irony.' The birth of Christ, however, calls into question the rhetorical and generic excess of the poem, for the integumental quality of the incarnation – in which the Word of God is literally 'wrapped up' in Mary's flesh – evokes the allegorical mode, where body is no longer aligned with meaning, but rather with the outer shell or wrapping that contains it. As Parsons shows, in the *Eupolemius*, body proves to be the fundamental vehicle not only for ornamental language, but also for the performative speech of the divine.

The vernacular literature of Ireland is the subject of Sarah Sheehan's 'Losing Face: Heroic Discourse and Inscription in Flesh in *Scéla Mucce Meic Dathó*.' This saga – which dates back at least to the tenth or eleventh century, and perhaps earlier – recounts the violent interactions of heroic men who express their status through acts of mutilation and violence. The dominant heroes 'signify their dominance in resolutely corporeal terms, using mutilated male bodies to affirm their position at the top of the warrior hierarchy.' Through these acts, the Irish heroes accrue honour and confer shame on their enemies, performing what Sheehan identifies as 'a semiotics of the body' in which 'warrior honour is specifically grounded in the materiality of the body and is consequently as vulnerable as the body itself.'

Masculine authority continues to be the focus of attention in Jill Ross's 'The Dazzling Sword of Language: Masculinity and Persuasion in Classical and Medieval Rhetoric': here, the rhetorical prescriptions of writers such as Cicero, Quintilian, and Augustine are interpreted as opportunities for masculine display. Figurative tropes such as the 'polished, glittering sword' appear as verbal weapons that affirm the status and authority of the speaker not just in gendered terms, but in terms that explicitly ground the potency of language in the phallic power of the male body. The implicit threat of dismemberment or mutilation contained in the rhetorical 'sword' of language both subjugates the audience and elevates the manly speaker.

Part three, 'Performing the Body,' turns to the ways in which the individual body functions as the medium through which the social body is maintained, whether in punitive, sacramental, or pastoral terms. In addition, these essays also gesture towards the ways in which the body at times threatens to escape from the social controls placed upon it. In 'Amputating the Traitor: Healing the Social Body in Public Executions for Treason in Late Medieval England,' Danielle Westerhof moves beyond analyses of treason executions that interpret the dismemberment of the traitor as a symbolic amputation of a weakened limb of the body politic. Instead, Westerhof suggests, the body of the traitor both represented 'the corrupt-

ed body social' and was itself figured as 'a corruption to be expelled from it during the process of the public execution.' The traitor's body thus became the stage upon which political power and, in particular, governmental surveillance could be played out in terms readily understood by 'those for whom the executions were staged.' Public executions thus performed a ritualistic 'act of cleansing the social body from disease,' educating the audience of the dramatic spectacle about the proper, well-policed boundaries of social order.

In '"A Defect of Mind or Body": Impotence and Sexuality in Medieval Theology and Canon Law,' Catherine Rider describes the evolution of theological and legal perspectives on male sexual potency, from Augustine through the canonists of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The legal ramifications of impotence were discussed and adjudicated in a wide range of social settings but had particular force in the case of those who wished to enter holy orders, because the sacraments could be consecrated only by those men who were fully 'whole,' both anatomically and physiologically. Rider shows how the increasingly elaborate views of impotence presented by canonists and theologians were inflected by contemporary scientific perspectives, especially the work of Albertus Magnus. The re-emergence and elaboration of Aristotelian theories of causality made scientists and canonists alike rethink the causes of impotence, integrating medieval science with theology. Here, the body's ability to perform is itself policed by legal, theological, and medical disciplines.

This part concludes with Linda Jones's 'Bodily Performances and Body Talk in Medieval Islamic Preaching,' which, like Westerhof's opening essay, shows how the body could serve as a medium through which the audience might be educated. Jones surveys 'the representation, function, and cultural import of the body' in late medieval sermons delivered in the Iberian Peninsula and the Maghreb: by placing these sermons in the context of Islamic theological and legal texts, she shows how the relationship of body to soul served as a pattern in prescribing righteous behaviour. Jones points out that 'spiritual dispositions,' whether virtuous or deviant, were necessarily 'imagined as embodied': instead of a stark binary distinction between body and soul, medieval Muslim preachers instead distinguished between moral opposites, such as remembering and forgetting God, or showing and withholding gratitude. In this formulation, 'body talk' provided a 'focusing lens' through which right and wrong behaviours could be made intelligible to the community of the faithful.

Part four, 'Material Body,' comprises three essays that turn from the anatomy of the body to the processes of corporeal being, ranging from the

energetic flow of humoral liquids to the decay and dissolution of the flesh after death – or, as Elma Brenner shows, even before death. In 'The Leprous Body in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Rouen: Perceptions and Responses,' Brenner chronicles the social and cultural history of Mont-aux-Malades, an important leper house in Normandy that was not simply a haven for the physically afflicted, but also a focus of lay piety. The community at Mont-aux-Malades maintained strong connections with the city of Rouen, showing that those who became lepers were not simply cast out of their place in society, but maintained it in some sense, albeit at a distance. The distinctive practices of Mont-aux-Malades show that there was a great range in the actual treatment of lepers and in social attitudes towards the leprous body: while the disfigurement caused by leprosy was clearly shocking and disturbing to medieval communities, the leper's 'bodily appearance had only a limited significance.' Social ties were not dissolved entirely by the scourge of leprosy, even though the flesh itself might be in an apparent state of decay.

The dissolution of the flesh remains central in Wendy Matlock's 'The Feminine Flesh in the *Disputacione betwyx the Body and Wormes*,' which focuses on a late medieval debate poem that, uniquely, features a female corpse. As in Christine Kralik's art historical essay on the Berlin Hours of Mary of Burgundy, gender here appears as a category that inflects the status of the body, even after death. By figuring the allegorical Body as female corpse, Matlock argues, the poem sheds light on 'the perceived relationship between femininity and carnality so frequently asserted in medieval texts.' Moreover, the conventional binary opposition of body and soul is here recast as an opposition of body and worms: the living, wriggling bodies of the worms thus provide the dynamic counterpart to the body that gradually surrenders to its annihilation. The work thus functions as an aid to devotion, emerging from a Carthusian monastic community but addressing an increasingly broad audience of lay readers of the vernacular.

Part four – and the volume as a whole – concludes with Suzanne Akbari's 'Death as Metamorphosis in the Devotional and Political Allegory of Christine de Pizan.' In this essay, death appears not as the site of bodily dissolution and decay, but rather as the site of bodily revivification: in the devotional allegory of Christine's biography of Charles V, the late monarch sheds his corporeal vestments for the eternal life of the soul, and as the French nation maintains its body politic even as its head – the king – is replaced. In the biography of Charles V, as in the political allegory of Christine's *Corps de policie*, the body politic is figured in terms that are simultaneously Christological and physiological, with the flow of *vertu*

throughout the flesh appearing simultaneously as humoral liquid and spiritual nectar. Together, the essays that make up *The Ends of the Body* illuminate the interplay of individual and community in pre-modern culture, and show the interrelation of space and time through the symbolic system of the body.

NOTES

1 See, for example, *Medieval Theology and the Natural Body*, or *The Broken Body: Passion Devotion in Late Medieval Culture*.
2 'We are interested in what limits propose ... what they make possible ... what they incorporate ... as well as how the limits are themselves constructed in and through particular cultural matrices which they cannot escape but always exceed. Limits, in other words, are grounded in desire' (Cohen and Weiss, 'Bodies at the Limit' 2–3).
3 See, for example, Susan J. Hekman's treatment of Simone de Beauvoir's understanding of the idea of otherness and the feminine in *The Future of Differences: Truth and Method in Feminist Theory* 1–17.

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