PICTURING BODIES IN MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN EUROPE

Edited by Andrew Murray and Margit Thøfner

CONTENTS

Banner image: Detail of niello-inlaid engraving of a haloed eagle-headed St. John the Evangelist upon gold plaque from Brandon, Suffolk. (©The Trustees of the British Museum. Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0] licence)

CONTENTS (CONTINUED)

PICTURING BODIES IN MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN EUROPE:
'WHAT, THEN, IS EVERYONE WRITING ABOUT?'

Andrew Murray and Margit Thøfner

Abstract

This opening essay establishes the rationale and scope of the present issue, which examines how bodies were visually constituted in Europe across the medieval and early modern periods. Moving beyond the notion of images as mere representations, the essays explore how artworks and other forms of visual culture actively shaped, perpetuated and challenged ideas of embodiment. Drawing on interdisciplinary approaches, contributors investigate the dynamic interplay between the physical and the visual, considering how images informed practices of veneration, medicalisation and sensation, as well as the conceptual boundaries between materiality and representation. By foregrounding the formative role of visualisation in the history of bodies, this collection demonstrates the necessity of interdisciplinary methods for understanding the complex entwinement of images and corporeality in premodern Europe.

Biographical note
Andrew Murray is a lecturer in the history of art at The Open University, UK.
Margit Thøfner is a senior lecturer in art history at The Open University, UK.

PICTURING BODIES IN MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN EUROPE: 'WHAT, THEN, IS EVERYONE WRITING ABOUT?'

Andrew Murray and Margit Thøfner, The Open University

This special issue of the *Open Arts Journal* consists of a set of essays that explore how bodies are constituted visually. It is about how artworks and other types of visual culture shaped, perpetuated and challenged ideas of exactly what constitutes a body in Europe across the medieval and early modern periods.

Not all of the essays in the special issue are about Christianity. Yet it is still instructive to begin with a Christian image given that the iconoclastic disputes and iconodulic practices of this religion shaped how bodies and images conceptually related to one another throughout the European Middle Ages. Our example is a life-size sculpture of the dead Christ in the tomb (Fig. 0.1). This is a rare Scandinavian survival of a type of painted body that was once common across medieval Europe (Kopania, 2015). One remarkable facet of this sculpture is that the body is detachable. It can be lifted out of the sepulchre and be carried around or stood up, perhaps against a wall (Fig. 0.2).

Figure 0.2: Unrecorded sculptors and painters, *Christ in the Sepulchre, c.*1500–25, polychromed wood, full length 204 cm. National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen (formerly in the church of St Laurence, Kerteminde). (Photo: Arnold Mikkelsen; source: Nationalmuseet, Danmark)

Figure 0.1: Unrecorded sculptors and painters, *Christ in the Sepulchre, c.*1500–25, polychromed wood, full length 204 cm. National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen (formerly in the church of St Laurence, Kerteminde). (Photo: Arnold Mikkelsen; source: Nationalmuseet, Danmark)

That, of course, would enhance its lifelikeness; treating it as body would, in effect, challenge the distinction between the actual and the represented. Serving in the liturgical dramas that re-embodied the Passion of Christ at Easter, it was a somatic entity with evident traces of wounding and suffering. Indeed, some surviving examples of this type of Christ-figure have movable limbs so that they could be posed (for example by being attached to a crucifix), taken down, deposed in a sepulchre like the one from Kerteminde and then resurrected in a sequence of liturgical performances – involving song and other interventions from a number of living bodies – designed amongst other things to erase the difference between the sculpted and the actual body of Christ (Kopania, 2015). This is not Plato's cave but rather a world where representations embody life itself, most notably in the salvific Eucharist where bread and wine became the suffering body of Christ.

If an image is not merely a secondary representation – a sign – but possesses its own ontological weight, distinctions such as those between the 'pictorial/visual' and the 'embodied/material' collapse. Hans Belting explores this in his *Anthropology of Images* (2011), arguing against a semiotic reduction of images to proxies for 'real' bodies. For Belting, images make bodies present despite their absence, just as the Kerteminde image manifests Christ's presence to the faithful when lifted for veneration. The true difference between bodies and images, he contends, lies not in ontological priority – bodies as 'real' and images as 'representation' – but in their respective media: bodies are flesh and blood; images, in the case of our sculpture, polychromed wood. Beyond this distinction through medium, both the historical Jesus and his depictions serve to make Christ present to believers.

Belting's argument lends itself particularly well to sculpture, which perhaps seems more 'embodied' than two-dimensional images. But the distinction between three- and two-dimensional images is not always clear-cut, as Scarlett Butler shows in this volume in her discussion of the material fat-likeness of Rubens's painterly medium. 'Flat' images have a material presence and a somatic effect, just as three-dimensional ones do. Consistent with Belting's ideas, this volume contends that the supposed distinctions between, on the one hand, the categories of 'images', 'pictures' and 'the visual', and on the other hand, those of 'objects', 'bodies' and 'the material', cannot be taken as given when studying medieval and early modern Europe.

The contributions to this special issue explore a wide range of methods, theories and ideas that more concretely address the fraught relationship between images and bodies. It is important to underscore that this special issue arose from lengthy and profoundly interdisciplinary discussions in the medieval and early modern research group at The Open University, discussions that then came to include interested colleagues from other institutions. One of our central contentions is that the history of bodies can only be approached in an interdisciplinary manner precisely because it involves studying a highly dynamic entwinement of the physical and the visual. Our colleagues, who work across various periods, places and sources, bring to this journal their own approaches to this entwinement.

Picturing bodies

A Penrose mosaic allows for the infinite addition of new pieces, each of the same measurements, while never forming a whole in which new patterns predictably repeat earlier ones. Writing new articles on the history of the human body can feel much like adding tiles to such a mosaic. While these additions may well reveal new and important topics and ideas at the edges of an ever-expanding literature, at the same time the parameters of this *body* of literature recede infinitely from view and, therefore, even a provisional wholeness of the 'history' can never be found. Notably, Willemijn Ruberg's recent comprehensive overview of the field is divided into chapters that engage with very distinct subjects, if not disciplines, including a chapter on periodised conceptions of the body, another on medical history, another on gender and sexuality, and others on theories of agency, discipline, phenomenology and materialism (Ruberg, 2020). The expansive state of this field has long been self-evident, as was demonstrated already thirty-five years ago, with the publication of the first volumes of *Fragments for a History of the Human Body* (1989, hereafter *Fragments*) under the editorship of Michel Feher, Ramona Naddaff and Nadia Tazi. The concept of the fragment suggests that the contributions to this collection could not be synthesised. Perceiving this Protean nature of any history of the body, Caroline Walker Bynum later stated that it 'is no topic or, perhaps, almost all topics' (1995, p.2). 'What, then, is everybody writing about?', she asks (p.3). In producing yet another collection on the medieval and early modern body, are we just adding further tiles to this Penrose mosaic, with articles saying both everything and nothing about an infinite and amorphous subject of study?

After lengthy discussions, the editors and contributors to this volume collectively agree that we must put to bed the idea of a single history of the human body. There are, instead, many different histories and problems that relate to the body, and the diversity of these histories demonstrate many interrelations that will never constitute a completeness. This volume and its contributors aim to explore the role of the picturing of bodies within this diverse field. We believe the role of pictures has not received enough attention, and this has considerable implication for scholars addressing other areas of research into the history and historiography of bodies. Taking case studies from across medieval

and early modern Europe, collectively we address how images – broadly conceived as acts of deliberate visualisation – did more than represent or reflect bodies as some kind of prior reality and/or schematise knowledge about them. The production, reception and use of images were, instead, formative of the knowledge, medicalisation, sexualisation, veneration and sensation of bodies, as well as of the processes through which bodies came to exist, be modified, and used during and after life.

One example from our special issue demonstrates this theoretical position. In her contribution, Butler examines how Peter Paul Rubens portrayed Marguerite de Valois as excessively large in his *Medici Cycle* (completed 1625). On the one hand, the image may be a function of both physical and social realities: Marguerite was reportedly a fat woman, and her reputation as such also shaped public and posthumous opinion of her as wicked and indolent. But rather than simply reflect material and social reality, the image, and ideas about images and fatness, may have contributed to it. One of Butler's considerations is how Rubens's painting developed his ideas of feminine 'roundness', as opposed to masculine 'squareness', to construct women as weak, malleable and, in Galenic terms, cold and uncreative. Rubens's visual thinking and his paintings thereby constructed rather than simply reflected prevailing norms. Butler argues that by portraying Marguerite as excessively fat, his paintings also claimed she transgressed bodily and other norms. As this suggests, images could be both normative and disruptive; they could construct and reinforce ideals and at the same time transgress or challenge them.

Our assertion of the role of images in the constitution of bodies is not new or radical, but, rather, overlooked and understudied. The demotion of images as the site in which bodies become subjects of culture was originally noted by Colleen Ballerino Cohen and Karen Robertson in their 1992 review of *Fragments*. They point out that, although there was an ample use of images within *Fragments*, they were often used unreflectively to 'enhance and embellish' the text (Cohen and Robertson, 1992, p.138). In this use of images as mere illustrations, Ballerino Cohen and Robertson detected the reduction of those portrayed within those images – especially people racially coded as not white – to objects for the scientific gaze of the book's authors and readers.

Ballerino Cohen and Robertson's assertion that images do not passively represent people, but shape and constitute how those people are engaged within the public sphere, was explored at length in the decade that followed their review in the emergent field of visual cultural studies. One prominent voice in this field was Stuart Hall's, who argued that images of black people in the British media did not simply reflect race relations in Britain, but participated in shaping them (Hall, 1997). While Hall's influence may not have been directly felt in medieval and early modern studies, the research of medievalists exploring images from the 1990s coincided with research in visual cultural studies that analysed how images constructed racial and sexual norms. Notably, Michael Camille's *Image on the Edge*, published the year before Ballerino Cohen and Robertson's review, drew attention to juxtaposition between the seeming orderliness of the text in the centre of medieval manuscripts and the chaotic ribaldry of monsters populating its margins, arguing that the racial and sexual disorderliness of the latter constructed the spiritual authority of the former, and *vice versa* (Camille, 1990). In early modern studies, similar concerns for how images of bodies constructed norms centred around what Lorraine Daston categorised as the 'epistemic images' that proliferated alongside European print culture (Daston, 2015). Prints of human and animal bodies, both from Europe and the wider world, accompanied a nascent scientific literature. Despite the fact that such imagery was meant to illustrate empirical observations, researchers in this field have also emphasised the normative function of these images, especially in how they draw on classical and Biblical conventions for depicting the human body and the distinctions between the sexes.

Despite these methodological and historiographical reflections, one might well argue that the contributions in this volume, like those in *Fragments*, also use images as illustrations, and construct or reinforce norms in doing so. To some extent, this is unavoidable: all academic knowledge is necessarily logocentric, being built on the use of text to produce arguments, with images supplementing their exposition. But the European tradition of logocentrism is not monolithic: it has a history, and part of that history involves changes to how images were and still are combined with texts. For instance, Daston points out that norms for early modern 'epistemic images', discussed above, varied with the epistemological positions of their producers, so that, for example, Carl von Linnaeus was wary of using colour in botanical illustration, as it was a not a criterion for his classifications (Daston, 2015, pp.22–3). Similarly, marginal images in medieval manuscripts present an alternative mode of logocentric relations between text and images: while marginal images do not serve to explicate the text they frame, according to Camille's analysis their chaotic, monstrous and humorous forms present that text as reassuringly stable and authoritative.

By attending to case studies in Europe, the articles in this special issue of the *Open Arts Journal* analyse the traditions and discourses that Ballerino Cohen and Robertson questioned in their review, namely, the tacit and unexamined centrality given to texts, scientific discourses, male and European perspectives. Indeed,

medieval and early modern Europe witnessed a series of vectors that fed into the emergence of modern conceptions of the body, conceptions that increasingly became, during and after the eighteenth century, plotted across various dualisms (with one superior and the other inferior). These include the mental and the corporal, reason and desire, male and female, the upper and lower body, the healthy and unhealthy, the human and the animal. And yet, attention to medieval and early modern visual traditions demonstrates that, while these binaries may have roots in Christian and classical traditions, they were often contested. Butler, for instance, examines how within the court of France the conception of women as inferior to men could be interrogated and challenged by female patrons and authors. Similarly, Robert Wallis argues that, in the early medieval British Isles, the human body may not have been experienced as distinct from animal bodies such as those of raptors, and that jewellery manifesting its wearer's adoption of raptor-like qualities were displaced by Christian art and theology, whereby personhood became located more firmly within the perceived boundaries of the human body. Therefore, while focusing on Europe comes with the risk of reproducing the perspectives outlined by Ballerino Cohen and Robertson, it also demonstrates that those same perspectives emerged not by a teleological right, but through longstanding and layered cultural, gendered and political struggles: sometimes subtle, other times bitterly violent.

These conceptual and methodological points might not be new or even surprising. But they have hitherto been marginalised within the histories of the body. If, as we noted above, images have been sidelined as a constitutive component of the history of the human body, it is because the scholarly literature has instead built itself around two other approaches, the linguistic turn on the one hand, and the materiality of the body on the other. Roger Cooter has pointed out that much of the literature in the 1980s and 1990s contrasted these two approaches (Cooter, 2010, pp.397–8). Post-structuralist and cultural analyses of representation, as well discursive analysis inspired by Foucault, presented the body as cultural to the extent that it was an object of language. However, from the late 1980s, some historians felt this approach occluded the physical reality of the body as well as embodied experience. An example is Barbara Duden's book, *Geschichte unter der Haut* (1987), translated into English as *The Woman Beneath the Skin* (1991), which provided an early appraisal of the limits of discourse analyses of the body. Duden sought to extend her analysis beyond a Foucauldian perspective by differentiating between 'two bodies': the body as represented by discourse and the experience of the body, an experience which was not some essential biological reality, but itself conditioned by the imagination (pp.1–8). However, Duden's effort to think beyond

discourse analysis seems to have been exceptional. By 1995, Caroline Walker Bynum would more directly criticise the growing expanse of scholarly literature that seemingly reduced the body to discourse, agreeing with the sentiment of one of her students surveying the field that, in so much research 'the body dissolves into language', so that 'the body that eats, that works, that dies, that is afraid – that body just isn't there' (Bynum, 1995, p.1).

Less emphasis is given to discourse in more recent research. But interdisciplinary anthologies focused on the medieval and early modern body still broadly fall into the two divisions set out during the 1990s: those emphasising discourse and those focussing on materiality. First, there are those trying to organise this material chronologically, creating a history of the human body as a discursive category. *A Cultural History of The Human Body* provides the most significant case, surveying the history of the body in Western societies through six volumes, each respectively dedicated to a broad period (Antiquity, the Medieval Ages, The Renaissance, Enlightenment, the Age of Empire, The Modern Age; Kalof and Bynum, eds., 2014). Secondly, there are 'organ-by-organ' histories (term from Jajszczok and Musiał, 2019, p.2), volumes that draw attention to the materiality of the body through interdisciplinary analysis of specific organs or excretions, such as the recent *Fluid Bodies and Bodily Fluids in Premodern Europe* (Scott and Barbezat, eds, 2019). These volumes do engage with images of the body, in the former with sections on beauty and 'cultural representations', and the latter containing art-historical chapters. In this way, they are representative of how such studies couch the analysis of images within a wider, interdisciplinary field, yet without any sustained interrogation of the role that visual culture may have in shaping ideas, uses and formations of bodies.

Close engagement with images allows researchers in this special issue to draw on analyses of the body as biological reality and as discourse, but without reducing them to either. As Marshall *et al.* make clear in this volume, by positioning ourselves against the Scylla and Charybdis of socially constructive approaches versus biologically realist ones, an avenue opens that allows us to reimagine how past societies understood the relationship between bodies and images. Their work shows how bodies and images within Viking graves are constitutive of one another, entwined in their mutual construction of narratives about the deceased and the communities remembering them. This way of thinking cuts against the conceptual division between representation and reality evident throughout the history of European philosophy and thereby demands we be 'open to seeing strangeness in the Viking Age'. This strangeness does not mean backwardness, but rather alterity to the Christian cultures that has survived in place of these Viking ones, and which still shape modern Euro-

pean preconceptions. Post-human and object-oriented philosophies provide one means for archaeologists and anthropologists to imagine such 'strange' ways of thinking without divisions between subject and object, reality and representation, and Robert Wallis too draws on these discourses to consider real and represented bodies of raptors in the early medieval British Isles as 'ontological equivalents'. While Wallis highlights the danger of comparing to and equating global indigenous cultures, his case study, like that of Marshall *et al.*, shows how medieval and pre-Christian cultures in Europe offer their own alterity to modern ways of thinking about images.

Marshall *et al.* and Wallis are well positioned to explore pre-modern ontologies because they engage with cultures that were still largely oral rather than textual, and it is perhaps this fact that has led to the categorisation of the study of Viking and early medieval cultures as 'archaeological' rather than art-historical. It is, however, necessary to think beyond such disciplinary boundaries if we are to adopt a similar train of thought to 'make strange' images that may at first seem familiar to modern eyes. If there has been comparatively little extended interdisciplinary attention paid to how visual culture, just like language, was a central agent in the cultural construction of medieval and early modern bodies, it may be because – despite several decades of development – visual culture studies remain perceived as a specialised interest, an offspring of art history, rather than a fully-fledged field of interdisciplinary concern like language, materiality, gender and sexuality. But challenging the marginalisation of visual culture in the research field of medieval and modern bodies opens up new 'strange' ways to think with and about these other social and cultural categories: what is it to think the language, or gender, or material of the body visually? All the contributors to the issue share this methodological approach and yet each author has taken it in different directions.

Bodily pictures

The contribution of M.A. Katritzky in this volume, a study of Albrecht Dürer's and Leonardo's respective drawings of conjoined twins, is a truly interdisciplinary engagement with visual culture. It demonstrates how analyses of images as constitutive of the knowledge and experience of bodies cuts across research into medicine, theatre, and visual culture. Moving between these fields, Katritzky demonstrates the complexity of early modern images of the body. Pictures that recorded medical knowledge and stimulated scientific curiosity also drew on other forms of viewership. Katritzky carefully considers these images in relation to contemporary knowledge of conjoinment while rightly warning against treating them diagnostically. The images

are from an age before photography, which entails not only that the evidence they provide has to be considered against the norms for representing bodies, but also that they have to be framed in the context of how such images constructed and organised knowledge: 'Informed interpretation of pre-photographic imagery requires an understanding of differences distinguishing early modern perceptions of the non-normative body from current teratological classification systems'. While Dürer and Leonardo were undoubtedly fascinated by physiology, Katritzky situates their conjoined twins within other contexts for seeing such bodies: in Dürer's case, a print culture that catered to a market fascinated with 'omens' and 'marvels', and for Leonardo, the theatrical display of non-normative bodies. Therefore, the two works interrogated by Katritzky did not simply act as 'epistemic images', that is, devices for recording, organising and sharing empirical knowledge. They were also facilitated by, and may have extended, attention to such bodies as theatrical, wondrous, deviant or degraded. In this manner, Katritzky demonstrates how contemporary medical knowledge can, when used critically, be brought to bear on historical images. But interdisciplinary conversations go both ways, for Katritzky also emphasises that knowledge of early modern visual cultures provides as much evidence on the prevalence and reception of conjoinment as does demographic data.

Likewise, De Renzi interrogates images with an ostensibly medical function. Her contribution reveals the contrary impulses involved in studying the reception of historical images of medicalised bodies. For De Renzi, such work requires speculating on the most plausible responses to images, an appeal to plausibility that, through contextual analysis, can simultaneously recover sensibilities that might be 'strange' to modern readers (to reuse Marshall *et al.*'s term). While the responses that De Renzi studies, sexual attraction and somatic repulsion, are intuitive, it is the manner and context in which images stimulate such responses that makes them 'strange'. She examines surgical images as catering to lurid curiosity and humour as much as to medical knowledge. This is done through a set of prints by Giovanni Guglielmo Riva that portray ailments related to the anus within the context of surgical instructions, hospital environments, quotidian sexual violations, and the wider representation of male bodies in seventeenth-century Rome. On this basis, De Renzi argues that such images may well have prompted bawdy humour amongst their viewership of male surgical students. That male students may have fraternised through shared vulgarity is not at all surprising to present-day lecturers. But it is more disturbing that such humour, anxious though it may have been, was formative of the surgical images these men studied, and perhaps embedded within the acquiescence towards sexual violence

within early modern hospitals, an acquiescence that becomes more plausible in light of the contextual evidence deployed by De Renzi.

Whereas De Renzi's work considers how male sociability could centre around attention to the bodies of others, two contributions to this volume, those of Margit Thøfner and Andrew Murray, address how images could form communities by framing shared bodily sensations. Thøfner examines how the organ in the church of Kloster Lüne, Lüneburg (1645 and 1651) related to the singing undertaken by the convent's nuns as a collective, embodied experience. The organ acted as a body, a contribution to the choir, and its images would characterise the participants as a religious community. Thøfner asks her readership to consider the range of embodied experiences demanded by singing, experiences that are not easy to recover within historical sources. Yet the risk of not empathetically imagining such experiences is greater than avoiding to do so. That is because relying solely on written texts to understand the meaning of the organ's images and the shared experience of singing is not only restrictive; it also inverts how the organ would have been experienced. Singing in effect enfleshes words, giving such words their true poetic resonances. Thøfner studies how such enfleshed experiences of singing shaped how nuns would have experienced their own bodies, but also their collective body as a community.

Thøfner deploys concrete evidence for the real consequences of collective embodied experiences. In the early sixteenth century, the nuns of Kloster Lüne would continue to sing in Latin to resist the pressure of reformers to perform the liturgy in the vernacular. The continued sensory and collective experience of singing thereby shaped the nuns' collective memory as a community with agency over their own lives and rule, even if they gradually conformed to the requirements of Lutheran worship. While the subject of Murray's study is the late medieval Latin Church, he similarly addresses how shared sensory experiences would shape a religious community. He examines how the portrayal of mourners on tomb sculpture, as well as the wearing of mourning robes in funeral ceremonies, were formative of the perceived bonds between the living and dead as a universal Church. Actual mourning bodies function pictorially for Murray, as visually constituting fallen humanity awaiting redemption through Christ. Thus by participating in the Church that, collectively, manifests Christ's body on earth, one awaits becoming his image. At this point we have come full circle. Just as Marshall *et al.* and Wallis challenge the boundary between bodies and images in their speculative ontologies, Murray shows that tracing the relationship between these two concepts in Christian thought can defamiliarize conventional depictions of mourning.

Thøfner and Murray's contributions might be argued to align with more recent approaches to affect that have analysed the body and vision alongside one another, not as a history of visual culture, but rather of the affective power of images on the body. Over the last decade, David Freedberg has developed his research into the instinctive responses people have towards images into an interdisciplinary form of scholarship that moves between art history and cognitive neuroscience. This shift in attention towards the biological processes of vision dovetails with what Douglas Cooter describes as a third possibility for writing a history of body, beyond attention to discourse and materiality to consider instead the politics of biological life, or the history of biopower, in Foucault's terms (Cooter, 2010, pp.401–2). While Cooter uses Nikolas Rose's research into contemporary politics as exemplary in this regard, the philosophical genealogies of Giorgio Agamben also demonstrate how this type of work can extend into pre-modern studies (Agamben, 2015). While Freedberg's attention to neuroscience does not align itself directly with the Foucauldian attention to biopower, he is concerned with 'the use of bodies' in Agamben's terms, understood as the ways that cultures use unmediated, neurological responses to images to shape and reinforce the memories of their audience (Freedberg, 2011, especially pp. 345–8). Comparable to Katritzky's demonstration of the necessity of interpreting seemingly 'medical' visual sources from the perspective of cultural history, Freedberg shows that the biological body, while subjecting people to processes beyond conscious control, does not dictate or shape human behaviour, but rather becomes entwined with cultural practices.

While there are neurological bases to vision and the emotions that come with grief and song, in Thøfner and Murray's research, as well as in other contributions to this volume, the distinction between images and bodies is elided, such that images, too, can function like, alongside, or as bodies in collective experience, even if they have no biological functions or origin. To think of images as constitutive of bodies is not simply to think of their affects and uses, but also how bodies function as images and images as bodies, possibilities that do not have their basis in neuroscience. Instead, they are rooted in pre-modern ontologies like Christian image theology, non-Socratic understandings of identity or other similarly complex relations between the real and representation. While such perspectives might be constructed through specific cultures, the image that they produce are agents within their relevant cultures, rather than simply reflections of them. And while they may be articulated through language, neither images nor bodies are reducible to it.

Bodying forth

This introductory survey of the contributions to this volume has outlined the methodological stakes at play in analysing historical images as constitutive of rather than simply mirroring bodies, whether they be read as biological or social. To do so requires deep consideration of how pre-modern European and indeed other cultures conceptualised images, bodies and their relationship. Our present habit of seeing the body as a site of individuated identity is not instinctive, even if may seem so. It is, in fact, only a historical contingency, one that was achieved first by the successive cultural hegemonies of Christianity, classicism and Enlightenment. Furthermore, even when dealing with Christian, classical, or empirical modes of knowledge, images demonstrate that bodies were still shaped, used, treated and experienced in ways that may seem strange to us. In the pre-photographic age, images of bodies were produced to generate a range of emotional and somatic experiences and often for multiple types of viewers, with the result that modern, medicalised ways of reading them may well be misleading. Finally, bodies were, and remain, experienced as a collective, such as through the embodied experience of singing or of shared grief. Images were constitutive of such collective bodies, providing the frame for interpreting them, and/or eliding the distinction between bodies and images, such that images could act like bodies participating in a collective experience, or the collective group be thought of as conforming to an image. That is perhaps nowhere as obvious as in the body of Christ from Kerteminde (Figs. 0.1 and 0.2). This was an image that was treated as a body. And, as the body of Christ, it was also the embodiment of a community constituted in and through the Eucharist, every time the words were whispered: 'hoc est corpus meum' ('this is my body'). The central aim of this collection of essays is to take such fundamentally visual and performative types of bodily experiences at face value, as ontological realities in their own right.

Bibliography

1   Agamben, G. (2015) *The Use of Bodies* (trans. A. Kotsko), Stanford, Stanford University Press.

2   Ballerino Cohen, C. and Robertson, K. (1992) 'Historical presences, present silences: A critical analysis of *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, vol.3, no.1, pp.129–40.

3   Belting, H. (2011) *An Anthropology of Images: Picture, Medium, Body* (trans. T. Dunlap), Princeton, Princeton University Press.

4   Bynum, C. Walker (1995) 'Why all the fuss about the body? A medievalist's perspective', *Critical Inquiry*, vol.22, no.1, pp.1–33.

5   Camille, M. (1992) *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.

6   Cooter, R. (2010) 'The turn of the body: History and the politics of the corporeal', *Arbor*, vol.186, no.743, pp.393–405.

7   Daston, L. 'Epistemic images', in A.A. Payne (ed.) *Vision and its Instruments: Art, Science, and Technology in Early Modern Europe*, University Park, PA, The Pennsylvania State University Press (2015), pp.13–35.

8   Duden, B. (1991) *The Woman Beneath the Skin: A Doctor's Patients in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (trans. T. Dunlap), Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.

9   Feher, M., Naddaff, R., and Tazi, N. (eds) (1989) *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, New York, Zone Books.

10   Freedberg, D. (2011) 'Memory in art: History and the neuroscience of response', in S. Nalbantian, P.M. Matthews and J.L. McClelland (eds), *The Memory Process: Neuroscientific and Humanistic Perspectives,* Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, pp.337–58.

11   Hall, S. (1997) 'The spectacle of the "other"', in S. Hall (ed.) *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, Milton Keynes: The Open University, pp.223–90.

12   Jajszczok, J. and Musiał, A. (2019) 'Introduction "The past is written on my body": Bodies and History', in J. Jajszczok and A. Musiał (eds) *The Body in History, Culture, and the Arts*, New York and London, Routledge, pp.1–8.

13   Kalof, L. and Bynum W. (eds) (2014) *A Cultural History of The Human Body*, 6 vols, New York and London, Bloomsbury.

14   Kopania, K. (2015) 'Animating Christ in late medieval and early modern Poland', *Preternature: Critical and Historical Studies in the Preternatural*, vol.4, no.1, pp.78–109.

15   Ruberg, W. (2020) *History of the Body*, London, Red Globe Press.

16   Scott, A.M., and Barbezat, M.D. (eds) (2019) *Fluid Bodies and Bodily Fluids in Premodern Europe: Bodies, Blood, and Tears in Literature, Theology and Art*, Arc Humanities Press, Leeds.

RAPTORNESS:
THE 'BODIES' OF HUMANS BECOMING-WITH BIRDS OF PREY IN THE ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY OF EARLY MEDIEVAL ENGLAND

Robert Wallis

Abstract

In this article I consider several instances in which the body parts of birds of prey, namely talons, were brought into relationship with the bodies of humans in both cremation and inhumation funerary settings. Certain objects decorated with imagery including raptor body parts, namely square-headed brooches, were also brought into relationship with the bodies of humans and body parts of raptors in inhumations specifically. Raptor body parts, images of raptors and the objects they decorated were being treated like human bodies in ways that challenge speciesist distinctions and anthropocentrism, and boundaries between living beings and objects outside of modern mechanistic accounts of the body and humanistic conceptions of the subject/object divide. Drawing upon multispecies, relational and new materialist thinking, I argue that the evidence is suggestive of ontological contiguities between humans, animals and objects and also explore how these human, raptor and object intersections may articulate different forms of human-raptor sociality over time in early medieval England.

Biographical note

Robert J. Wallis is Senior Lecturer, Staff Tutor and Head of the Art History Department at The Open University. His anthology exploring the art and archaeology of human-raptor relations was published by Bloomsbury in 2023. His articles on falconry in early medieval England have been published in the *Archaeological Journal* and *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*. He is currently writing a monograph on the art and archaeology of falconry.

RAPTORNESS: THE 'BODIES' OF HUMANS BECOMING-WITH BIRDS OF PREY IN THE ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY OF EARLY MEDIEVAL ENGLAND

Robert Wallis,
The Open University

Figure 1.1: The northwest Essex Anglo-Saxon ring. (Photo: Courtesy of Saffron Walden Museum)

A range of visual and material evidence suggests that birds of prey were recognised as important other-than-human beings by the people of early medieval England. Take the example of a striking gold signet ring dating to around the late sixth to early seventh century, which is highly decorated with Salin 'Style II' art (Figs. 1.1 & 1.2). The imagery on the bezel of the north-west Essex Anglo-Saxon ring includes an anthropomorphic figure holding a long cross in one hand while the other intersects or fuses with the legs of a bird of prey, with a further raptor positioned above the pairing. The anthropomorph also has a beak-like nose and hair styled like the tail feathers of the raptor above. This imagery raises intriguing questions about how early medieval people understood their own and other bodies, particularly those of birds of prey, at around the time of the 'conversion' to Christianity. In previous work I have considered this ring within the wider context of the archaeology of falconry and the possible role of hawking as a high-status hunting pursuit in the negotiation of that 'conversion' (Wallis, 2020). I have also explored how perceptions of birds of prey may have changed over time, from numinous beings esteemed within an ideology of predation to hunting accessories valued in fiscal terms as part of a frivolous high-status pastime, one unbefitting the clergy (Wallis, 2025).

In this article I shall consider several instances in which the body parts of birds of prey, namely talons, were brought into relationship with the bodies of humans in both cremation and inhumation funerary settings. Certain objects decorated with imagery including raptor body parts, namely square-headed brooches, were also brought into relationship with the bodies of humans and body parts of raptors in inhumations specifically. In tune with recent thinking on early medieval ontologies, I question the back-projection of an essentialist humanistic conception of the world and approach the period with 'ontological
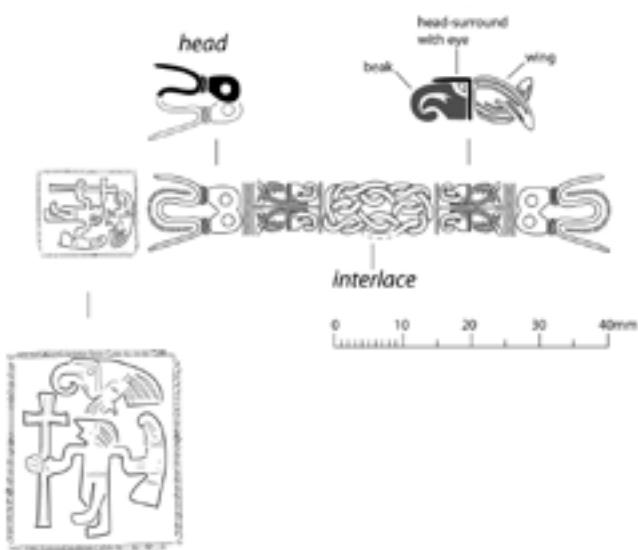
Figure 1.2: Line drawing of the decoration on the northwest Essex ring. (Courtesy of Chris Fern)

openness' so as to 'recognize a world where bodies and persons could be articulated in rich, complex and decidedly more-than-human ways' (Eriksen & Kay, 2022, p.334; see also Meents, 2017; Price, 2023). If 'personhood was recognized in its extension through multiple bodies, human and animal' and 'could inhere to an artifact, a human, or manifest in human and animal forms simultaneously' (Eriksen & Kay, 2022, pp.336–7), it is apposite to re-consider the archaeological and art-historical evidence for early English human-raptor intersections in light of posthumanist thinking (e.g. Vilaça, 2005; Henare et al., 2007; Witmore, 2007; Santos-Granero, 2009; Boyd, 2017; Ratican, 2024). Raptor body parts, images of raptors and the objects they decorated were being treated like human bodies in ways that challenge speciesist distinctions and

anthropocentrism, and boundaries between living beings and objects outside of modern mechanistic accounts of the body and the subject/object divide. Drawing on multispecies, relational and new materialist theory, I argue that the evidence is suggestive of ontological contiguities between humans, animals and objects (e.g. Armstrong Oma, 2010; Astor-Aguilera & Harvey, 2018; Pilaar Birch, 2018; Crellin et al., 2021). I also explore how these human, raptor and object intersections may articulate different forms of human-raptor sociality over time in early Anglo-Saxon England.

The faunal remains of birds of prey are rare in archaeological contexts, partly due to preservation conditions (e.g. Crabtree, 1995; Holmes, 2014, p.47; Serjeantson, 2023, p.1). And yet raptors figure prominently as important beings in the thinking and material culture of many societies (e.g. Wallis, 2023a). Accordingly, in early medieval England raptor remains are rare but the imagery of them in art is profuse, as is the case elsewhere in Europe (e.g. Kulakov & Markovets, 2004; Nugent, 2010, p.38; Price, 2023). As George Speake (1980, p.81) identified, '[i]n Anglo-Saxon ornament of the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries, exceptions to the predatory bird are rare'. The earliest faunal remains are from the cemetery of Spong Hill, Norfolk, dating to the fifth to sixth centuries, where two raptor talons were found in cremation burial urns (Bond, 1994, p.134). Both were perforated, perhaps so that they could be worn in some way, for example on a necklace, but assumptions that they were simply decorative or apotropaic are problematic. The most complete example, from vessel 2817, 'is at least 25mm long' (p.134) and while the original catalogue tentatively posits '?goshawk' (*Accipiter gentilis*) (Hills et al., 1994, p.79) the species remains uncertain (Dobney & Jaques, 2002, p.16). Amongst the cremated human bone, the talon was mixed with various objects including fragments of a copper-alloy cruciform or small-long brooch, a fragment of carpenter's iron spoon-bit (used for boring holes), coloured glass beads and an antler or bone comb (Hills et al., 1994, p.79). The second, incomplete talon, also pierced, was found in cremation vessel 2439, together with antler comb fragments, coloured glass beads and a fragmentary pig carpal (Hills et al., 1987, p.47; Bond, 1994, p.134).

Cremations like this present many challenges for investigation (e.g. McKinley, 1994a), including archaeologists' functionalist preoccupations with determining the sex, gender, age, ethnicity and status of the individual(s) interred (Williams, 2006, p.37), as well as the problem of imposing mutable categories such as these onto the lives of past peoples (e.g. Fowler, 2004; Williams, 2013). The inclusion of beads in both

Spong Hill cremations and brooches in one of them, categories of objects usually worn by Anglo-Saxon women, may indicate that the deceased were 'female', but the inclusion of a carpenter's tool in vessel 2817 is also suggestive of 'male' gender. Grave goods are not a clear indicator of gender because some of the objects deposited may have been those of the mourners (e.g. Parker Pearson, 1999; King, 2004), and instances in which objects from both sexes are found together suggest that more than one person was interred or that there may have been a degree of gender fluidity (e.g. Knüsel & Ripley, 2000), as in the case of vessel 2817. The raptor talons included with the cremated human remains add a further layer of interpretative complexity (e.g. Bond, 1996) and suggest that personhood may have been fluid not only in terms of gender but also across 'species' and 'body' boundaries (e.g. Bond & Worley, 2006; see Marshall et al. in this volume).

The cremation rite involves a pyrotechnic transformation of the human body/person and other things included on the pyre (Bond, 1996). The inclusion of animal remains suggests 'deliberate ambiguity' as well as 'metamorphosis between elements of animals and people' with animals as 'transformation agents' or 'catalysts' involved in the de-aggregation of the deceased's body/identity and reconstitution of a new identity as an ancestor (Williams, 2001, p.206; 2013). As Howard Williams suggests, '[i]t is almost as if the new body of the deceased consisted of the personalities of both humans and animals…[w]ith the cinerary urn 'a metaphorical "skin" for the deceased's "second body" following the cremation' (2004, pp.281–2)'. The Spong Hill cremations do suggest that early medieval people had very different understandings of their bodies to our own, as well as the bodies of the birds of prey whose talons they made use of, and indeed the other objects incorporated into the cinerary vessels. The talons from Spong Hill have traditionally been interpreted as 'amulets', 'beads' or 'talismans', that is, decorative and/or apotropaic in function (McKinley, 1994b, p.97; Bond, 1994, p.134; also Meaney, 1981, p.134; Sykes, 2015, p.70). If the latter, they may pertain to the specific role of healer or 'cunning' person and while this role was not gendered exclusively female, eagle talons found in graves thought to be those of women have been interpreted as relating to such presumed feminine concerns as fertility, protection, pregnancy, childbirth, illness, disease and death (Meaney, 1981, p.134; Dickinson, 1993; Pollington, 2000; Sykes, 2015, p.70; Meents, 2017, p.396). But interpretations around apotropaism do risk imposing modern scientific and anthropocentric thinking onto the past, for example,

by assuming that 'animisms' (e.g. Harvey, 2005, 2014) mistakenly project 'magical thinking' (Greenwood, 2005) onto inanimate objects, thereby devaluing their ontological reality and closing off more sensitive treatment.

The talons deposited in the cremation urns at Spong Hill indicate that the worlds of humans and raptors were not separate but, in some instances, intimately engaged. I want to consider the form of this engagement as arguably more than an unequal form of interaction, in which agency is simply acted out by humans onto passive others, with raptors firmly on the receiving end. Karen Barad's theory of agential realism may be useful here (see e.g. Fowler, 2013; Marshall & Alberti, 2014; Goldhahn, 2020, for the application of this theory in archaeology). Barad proposes that agency is not an inherent property to be acted out in one direction but rather a dynamism of forces that emerges through relationships (2007, p. 141). In this thinking, both raptors and humans were agentive and intra-active in co-constitutive relationality, in a world that is not 'pre-formed' and 'out there' but which is inalienable, in composition and becoming. The raptor talon pendants at Spong Hill should not be understood in a binary manner, in which they were once parts of living birds of prey that were then taken and made into passive objects by active human subjects. Outside of modern European thinking, it is quite normal that 'material things become subjectivised' and 'subjectivities become materialised' (Hill, 2009, pp.235, 236), and that bodies are understood as 'chronically unstable' or unbounded (e.g. Vilaça, 2005; also Fowler, 2004; Marshall et al. in this volume). In first millennium Northern Europe, as Eriksen and Kay (2022, p.335) set out, things we term 'objects' 'were animated or required treatment in specific ways. A range of artefacts probably fell outside Western subject-object dichotomies. Indeed, this may have encompassed a spectrum of non-human personhoods, agencies and assemblages'. This possibility disrupts the modern categorisation of the Spong Hill raptor talons as amuletic artefacts, in other words as passive objects incorrectly understood to be invested with magical agency by those that used them. In more nuanced and yet eminently practical terms, the talon pendants provided a vital connection between human and raptor which elided such dualisms as animate/inanimate, subject/object and life/death.

Many indigenous ontologies resonate with this line of approach (see papers in Wallis, 2023a). Amerindian communities for example, esteem raptors' flying and hunting skills and recognise that these are qualities that humans can 'muster through the use of materials that either embody or transmit them' such as raptor body parts (Carocci, 2023, p.142). People acquire the spiritual power of birds of prey through dreams and visions of them, and this power can be 'formally transferred from one person to another, or tapped through the incorporation of a bird or part of that bird (feather, claw, or bone) into an object' (Chandler et al., 2016, pp.2–3, also p.72). Clothing the body in this way is transformative, so that wearing a raptor talon, for instance, makes inner parts of the person visible (Harris & Robb, 2012, p.670; Ingold, 2000, p.94). Amerindian ontologies certainly do not map straightforwardly onto the early medieval past, but these ways of knowing and being are useful for thinking with. This is because they help to destabilise understandings inherent in modern Western humanistically informed ontological frameworks. In the case of early medieval England, the association between the body parts of animals and bodies of deceased humans suggests that people believed they could take on certain desirable attributes of the species concerned (Poole, 2013, pp.68–9; also Poole, 2015). In other words, the body parts of birds of prey such as the talons deposited in the Spong Hill vessels were recognised as potentially powerful things, resonant with qualities of what might be broadly termed 'raptorness' (Wallis, 2025, in press). By this I mean that they encompass raptors' distinctive aerial, predatory and protective qualities and that raptor body parts acted synecdochally to establish an intra-active relationship between human and raptor.

When considered in this way, as potentially vibrant with intra-active raptorness, each of the raptor talons at Spong Hill would have had the potential to affect not only humans but also other objects or things that they were deposited with. They can be approached, in María Nieves Zedeño's terms, as 'index objects' which by 'proximity' can 'modify or altogether alter the properties of any object, human or place that becomes associated with it' (2013, p.124; also 2009). When they are brought together in this way, they form what Timothy Pauketat calls a 'relational field' or 'bundle' which mediates or articulates relationships (2013, p.34; for the application of this approach in archaeology see e.g. Fowler 2013; Moradi, 2017; Brück & Jones 2018; Wallis, 2023b). This bundle is potentially 'cosmically powerful' when 'the pathways of human and non-human beings or things-in-motion converge and whenever the activities of people might be witnessed by gods' (Pauketat, 2013, pp.27–8). In this thinking, the qualities of raptorness materialised in raptor body parts as vibrant 'living entities' and were generative in peoples' identify-formation through their life course (Chandler et al., 2016, p.3; also Meents, 2017). They were also active in their after-lives, as suggested by the proximal

bundling of the raptor talons with other objects/things in the cremations at Spong Hill, which may have been a way of memorialising forms of ancestral personhood in which humanness and raptorness were co-mingled.

In addition to the Spong Hill cremations, the faunal remains of birds of prey have been found accompanying early inhumation burials at Alfriston, East Sussex, and Temple Hill, Kent. The raptor body parts interred there were, again, perforated talons, but in these cases they have been identified securely as belonging to eagles. Eagles are the largest raptors native to the British Isles, with golden eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*) requiring large tracts of open land to hunt. Since much of England was forested in the early medieval period they would have been a rare sight for the early Anglo-Saxons (Wallis, 2017, p.7). White tailed sea eagles (*Haliaeetus albicilla*), on the other hand, mainly frequent coastal areas, and with Alfriston less than four miles from the Sussex coast at Cuckmere Haven, and Temple Hill overlooking the Thames Marshes, these awesome birds may well have been a regular sight. It is possible, then, that the eagle talons deposited in these locations were sourced locally, although they could also have been traded some distance, including across the English Channel or the North Sea.

At Alfriston the excavators found a perforated eagle talon in grave 43 while a piece of bone, cut into the shape of a talon and perforated for suspension, was found in grave 28 with a broken ring still in the hole (unfortunately lost) (Griffith & Salzmann, 1914; Griffith, 1915). The talon from grave 43 that survives in the collection of Lewes Castle Museum (Fig. 1.3) has been identified as that of a white-tailed sea eagle and was accompanied by various 'high-status' objects including a conical glass beaker, a great square-headed gilt copper-alloy brooch (Fig. 1.4), various beads including two perforated Roman coins and sixteen silver rings (Welch, 1983, p. 81). Notable grave goods accompanying the talon-shaped bone pendant in grave 28 included a great square-headed copper-alloy brooch (Fig. 1.5) and a pair of small square-headed brooches (Fig. 1.6), a small glass bowl, a pentagonal quartz crystal bead and 169 glass beads. Martin G. Welch suggests that these two graves and another containing a great square-headed brooch were probably deposited within a decade of one another in the middle of the sixth century (1983, p. 189).

As with cremations, inhumations present interpretative challenges for archaeologists (e.g. Stoodley, 2000; Williams, 2006). The grave goods suggest these persons were women and the great square-headed brooches and glass vessels in both graves, as well as the Roman coins in grave 43, point to

Figure 1.3: Perforated eagle talon (pendant), 5th–6th century, grave 43, Alfriston, East Sussex. (Photo: By permission Barbican House Museum, The Sussex Archaeological Society)

Figure 1.4: Great square-headed brooch (A001.43.2) from grave 43, Alfriston, East Sussex. (Photo: By permission Barbican House Museum, The Sussex Archaeological Society)

Figure 1.5 Great square-headed brooch from grave 28, Alfriston, East Sussex, scale 2:1 (photograph John Hines, reproduced with permission).

Figure 1.6 Small square-headed brooches from grave 43, Alfriston, East Sussex (photograph John Hines, reproduced with permission).

high-status. According to Hines, great square-headed brooches, especially, were the most complex and luxurious of elite dress jewellery produced during the fifth to sixth centuries in England, displaying command over resources, social status, political power and gender identity, and the graves containing them are among the wealthiest in terms of quantity and quality of objects (Hines, 1997, pp.1, 294, 301). Alfriston graves 28 and 43 are indeed remarkable for being 'the richest female assemblages in Sussex' (Welch, 1983, p.189). The presence of eagle talons lends particular nuance to these two graves and the way in which their sex/gender, status and social role has been interpreted.

The eagle talon in grave 43 was found on the chest, maybe worn as part of a necklace, while the talon-shaped bone in grave 28 was located at the waist perhaps as part of a belt or chatelaine (Welch, 1983, p. 189). Grave 43 is also notable for including a pouch of six copper-alloy rings and a cowrie shell, this sort of feature along with the talons perhaps relating to the ritual, healing and/or divinatory paraphernalia of cunning women (p.189). Welch proposes that '[s] o similar are these two graves that it is tempting, but not necessarily correct, to suggest a close family relationship, perhaps sisters-in-law, if not sisters' (p.189). Interestingly, the woman buried in grave 43 was also disabled by the left femur becoming fused (anchylosed) in the hip joint resulting from tuberculosis as a child, meaning that she would have needed crutches to walk (p.36). As hers was the most high-status burial in the cemetery, it seems that her disability marked her out as special in some way. Perhaps because she lived following a life-threatening illness, her disability was believed to contribute to her spiritual powers as a cunning woman (see also Marshall et al. in this volume).

Cremation involves the complete de-aggregation of the person and reconstitution into another form, potentially as an 'ancestor' (variously understood). In contrast, inhumation keeps the human body intact and the deposition of grave goods would seem to work in socially constituted arrangements in relation to that body. The brooches, beads and eagle talons, as well as the way in which some of these things are decorated with Salin (1904) 'style I' art, indicates that furnished inhumation funerary practices established a close link between the in-tact body, ornaments/ objects, components of the person and the post-death journey. The different funerary settings of graves 43 and 28 may also show how intra-active relationships with eagles were articulated differently by these persons and/or their mourners. The secure identification of the talon deposited in grave 43 as that of an eagle is worth some attention. The Anglo-Saxon English drew

on Roman precedents in some of their thinking, so it is notable that the eagle was the definitive symbol of Roman power and was subsequently adopted in post-Roman iconography as relating to 'celestially-derived qualities and earthly power' (Dickinson, 2005, p.158). The third century CE writers Cassius Dio and Herodian state that eagles were important in the funerals of Roman Emperors, with the release of an eagle timed with the lighting of the cremation pyre, the bird 'symbolising the assent of the emperor's soul to heaven' (Sykes, 2015, pp.119–20). Within a North European idiom, Lotte Hedeager (2011) considers how eagles and other raptors in the art of southern Scandinavia are associated with Odin and his predatory attributes of hunting and war. And in Anglo-Saxon England specifically, Tania M. Dickinson suggests that the eagle imagery on shields evidences a 'bundle of connected ideas: a martial adult masculinity; subscription to a pagan cult, probably of Woden/Oðinn; a responsibility and capacity to exercise protection; and hence an authority to exercise power' (2002, p.162). An emphasis on the predator-prey relationship in Anglo-Saxon thinking and an early medieval 'ideology of predation' have also been explored (Nugent, 2010, p.38; Pluskowski, 2010; Wallis, 2017). A striking visual example is the hawk-with-prey motif on the Sutton Hoo purse lid (e.g. Hicks, 1986; Dickinson, 2005, p.158, n.122).

While these previous considerations of early medieval thinking on eagles are interesting, the specific human-eagle assemblage shown in Alfriston grave 43 is less suggestive of symbolism and, rather contradictorily, male martial aggression, than it is of other forms of human-raptor intra-active relationship. Joakim Goldhahn's concept of '*eagleness*' may hold value here. Applying Barad's agential realist thinking to human-eagle relationships in Northern Europe, he encourages us to consider 'how eagles intra-act – their eagleness', and how 'the agencies of eagles contribute…actively to our interpretations of past worldings' (2020, pp.64, 68; also, Goldhahn, 2023). Goldhahn cites examples of eagle lore in Northern Europe which were concerned with how to address potential eagle attacks on livestock and children. While the predatory abilities of eagles are esteemed in some instances, then, in others they are feared. Livestock can be lost to eagles and humans, or at least children small enough to be carried away by eagles, can become prey too. Added to this, Goldhahn notes that raptorial behaviour is not only aggressive but also defensive, particularly when female birds of prey protect their nest, eggs and young. As such, he considers eagles as agents involved in protective magical practices in which offensive qualities were generated in 'contra-action', a 'defence that goes on

the offensive' (2020, p.67). If grave 43 was the burial of a cunning woman, then perhaps the accompanying eagle talon indicates that she recognised eagles as helpers she could draw upon in her protective/healing/divinatory practices, using their body parts as object-allies which enacted aggressively defensive female eagleness.

It is problematic to back-project folklore and later medieval ideas such as Norse mythology surrounding eagles (e.g. Price, 2010; Hedeager, 2011). But it is worth noting the precise use of eagle body parts, including talons, in the Anglo-Saxon metrical charm *wiþ wenum*, 'against wens' (recorded in the twelfth century; British Library, Royal MS. 4 A XIV):

> Þenne, penne, penchichenne,
>
> Under fot polues, under ueþer earnes,
>
> under earnes clea, a þu gepeornie.

> Wen, wen, little wen,
> Under wolf's foot, under eagle's wing,
> Under eagle's claw – ever may you wither.

This charm or *galdor/gealdor* (incantation, divination, enchantment, charm, magic, sorcery) was presumably used in healing practices to remove sickness (Clark Hall, 2006, p.147). '*Wen/wenn/penne*' translates as 'swelling', 'tumour' and/or 'disease-spirit' (see respectively, Pollington, 2000, p.165; Clark Hall, 2006, p.403; Grendon, 1909). The phrase '*earnes clea*' suggests eagle talons were part of the healer's tool-kit to treat these *penne*. The consistent source of sickness in Anglo-Saxon literature is a class of other-than-human beings termed *ælfe*, 'elves', who fired arrows of disease, 'elf-shot' into humans (Hall, 2005, p.4). Records of elf-charms in late Anglo-Saxon England show that healers attempted to treat such attacks with purgative methods, for example, by blowing, smoking or pricking the elf out (Jolly, 1996, p.108). The charm *Wið færstice*, 'against a stitch', possibly dating to the tenth century is among four addressing elves in the manuscript ('MS London British Library Harley 585'; see Hall, 2007a, pp.109–10). Thomas Oswald Cockayne translates *Lacnunga as* 'Remedies', indicating that this was a 'leechbook' or healer's manual (1864–6) Part of *Wið færstice* states:

> scyld ðū ðē nū þū ðysne nīð genesan mote
>
> ūt lȳtel spere gif hēr inne sīe
>
> …ic him ōðerne eft wille sændan
>
> flēogende flāne forane tōgēanes

shield yourself now, that you may escape this evil
Out, little spear, if herein you be!
…I back to them again will send another
a flying dart against them in return

(Jolly, 1996, p.139)

The aim appears to be to 'shield' or protect the patient, to 'out' or remove the 'spear' of sickness and 'return' the 'flying dart' to 'them', perhaps elves. Such textual sources are considerably later than the archaeological evidence discussed here, but elves were arguably a 'social reality' for an extended period in Anglo-Saxon England (Hall, 2007b, p.142). This is evinced, for example, in place and personal names and also in their prominence in some of the earliest texts, including Beowulf (Hall, 2007a). Indeed, belief in them persisted after the conversion to Christianity (e.g. Jolly, 1996). Bringing these various textual strands into dialogue with the Alfriston case opens the possibility that the eagle-talon pendant in grave 43 was used in the healing of *penne*, by pricking or cutting out elf-shot. To this should be added that blood-letting is a well-attested healing practice in the period (Pollington, 2000). The use of eagle talons to facilitate this may have involved a surgical-magical contra-action synecdochally presencing the aggressive-defensive qualities of female eagle-allies.

The assemblage in grave 43 included an actual eagle talon but in grave 28 the object deposited was an animal bone shaped into the likeness of an eagle talon, a notable contrast worthy of analysis. The excavators described the object as an 'imitation' (Griffith & Salzmann, 1914, p.53; Griffith, 1915, p.210). From a modern scientific perspective, the 'talon' is only such in appearance, but this fails to account for its possible integrity as an actual eagle talon for its wearer(s), user(s) and viewers. The concept of sympathetic magic would allow that its shape, by affinity, made it stand in for a real eagle talon, but this too makes 'magical' thinking around the copy scientifically incorrect. Postmodern philosophy permits that something which is imitative can be 'perfectly real' (Deleuze & Guattari, 2005, p.238, also pp.273–4). The simulation can even be more definitive of the real than reality itself, becoming 'hyperreal' (Baudrillard, 2004). And in some Indigenous contexts, mimesis is not fantastical but facilitates a cosmically powerful reification of mythology (Taussig, 1993). These concerns over the mimetic object relate to debates over images and artworks as representations and symbols. In some instances, artefact and artworks elide the subject/object divide and they can be non- or anti-representational because they do not just mimic reality (Jones, 2017, pp.116–17;

Harris, 2018). Instead, they 'enact' and shape it (Jones, 2012, p.196). The animal bone shaped like an eagle talon, then, not only resembles an eagle talon but like its familiar in grave 43 instantiated, presenced and enacted culturally specific qualities of raptorness and specifically eagleness. To its users, it was probably a perfectly real eagle talon.

The co-mingling of human and raptor bodies in early-Anglo-Saxon funerary assemblages is also shown in the treatment of human and animal bodies in Style I art. This is a form of decoration which includes raptorial imagery and is found on several of the objects deposited in graves 28 and 43, most notably on the great-square headed brooches. Given their size and weight, these brooches must have been cumbersome and a hindrance when worn (Hines, 1997, p.293). Likewise eagle talons, the length of a human finger and very sharp, would have been awkward and perhaps hazardous to wear. Both objects seem to have been worn on the person between neck and waist, in the case of the talons possibly on a necklace, in the case of the brooches attached to clothing on the chest. As such they were bundled together into a proximal relationship which emphasised raptorial qualities. They, too, would have been visibly prominent for viewers, who would had understood the objects in their own ways (e.g. Martin, 2014, p.35). The imagery on the brooches conforms to the 'basic transformative logic' of Style I art 'which challenges and transcends settled categories' (Kristoffersen, 2010, p.261). There are animal and human masks and heads in profile, quadrupeds and animal leg motifs which are replicated, fragmented, rotated and juxtaposed (Eriksen & Kay, 2022, p.335; also Welch, 1983, p.71–2). Typically, the imagery completely covers the visible facing surface of the objects in a microcosmic suggestion of a wider-than-human world brimming –with interconnected life/death. While Style I art presents an inter-mixing of animal limbs and face masks which has led some scholars to describe the style as an 'animal salad', there is a 'visual riddling' which can, at least in part, be interpreted (Weetch & Williams, 2014; also Lindstrom & Kristoffersen, 2001). For example, the footplate side lobes on the great square-headed brooch in grave 43 present both an *en face* face-mask and/or two raptorial beak-heads in profile in mirror-image (Fig. 1.4). And the shape and decoration of the two identical small square-headed brooches from grave 43 resembles raptors (Hines, 1997, p.246). The back-to-back profile heads become piercing raptorial eyes in the 'head' of the headplate, a prominent hooked beak is formed by the bow, and a raptor's diamond-shaped body with folded wings and legs is suggested by the footplate (Fig.

1.6). So in Style I art there is a deliberate ambiguity for viewers to encounter and unpack, with skill needed to see, for example, both a face mask and raptorial beaks within the form of one image (Leigh, 1984).

Traditional studies on early medieval animal ornament have focussed on the formal properties of decoration or style, object typologies and artworks as indicators of social status (e.g. Salin, 1904; Hines, 1997). Changes in style over time have then been used to inform relative dating (e.g. Speake, 1980). And specific motifs have been interpreted as representations and/or symbols, for example, bearded human figures as the god Woden (Dickinson, 2002). More recent thinking on the archaeology of art has explored the generative qualities of the materials that artworks were made from, the processes of their making and their intra-active qualities (e.g. Jones & Cochrane, 2018; Back Danielsson & Jones, 2020). To reiterate Jones' argument, artworks are not necessarily representational or symbolic, they do not just mimic reality, they shape and 'enact' it (Jones, 2012, p.196; 2017, pp.116–17). Goldhahn (2019) agrees that images are not passive representations of reality but pivotal in practices of world-making beyond the secular/religious divide. With Max Carocci, I am interested in the ontological status of pre-modern artworks, how they were agentive and 'articulated the relationship between humans and what existed beyond imagery' (2023, p.136). In tune with Carocci and addressing Alfred Gell's (e.g. 1992, 1998) anthropological theory of art as agency, Fredrik Fahlander remarks that in certain ethnographic instances, artworks can 'work more like magic "devices" than representational images' so as to 'lure, attract, and evoke other-than-human beings' (2021, p.309). Similarly, in his anthropology of images, Hans Belting disrupts the early modern differentiation between religion and art to theorise artworks as material 'bodies' which 'presence' invisible qualities, becoming 'living images' (2020, p.98; see also 1994, 2011, 2016). And regarding early medieval art specifically, images of bodies and the actual bodies they resemble were in some cases 'ontological equivalents' (Back Danielsson, 2016, p.339), in ways 'far beyond our contemporary understandings of representations' (p.325; also Meents, 2017).

This thinking offers a useful approach to images of raptors and their bodies and/or body parts in early medieval artworks. These are not arbitrary objective representations of raptors which passively reflect wider social constructions concerning actual birds of prey and their constitution in religion or ideology. Rather, Style I images of raptors can be thought of as active embodiments of raptors (as other-than-human beings) and images of their body parts as manifestations of raptorness. Through their materialisation and the perception of those viewing them, or rather intra-acting with them, they instantiate human-raptor sociality in an ongoing process of emergent relationships. Put another way, images of raptors are the living presences or embodiment of raptors; just as the talon synecdochally *is* the raptor-body, so the image of a raptor body/part or image-body *is* the raptor-body. Certainly, the Spong Hill cremations with raptor talons suggest that early medieval concepts of bodies and personhood were very different to those of modern Europe, and the fragmentation and hybridisation of bodies in Style I art reinforces this point.

In pre-Christian Mediterranean cultures, a specific 'mouth opening ritual' conducted by priests brought artworks to life (Belting, 2020, p.96). In early Anglo-Saxon England, this aspect was likely less contrived and more diffused, but with cunning people and/or smiths as key agents. Smiths held the special knowledge and skills to transform base metals into highly burnished objects such as square-headed brooches that were festooned with images which shifted, 'alive' in the light. Like healers, these makers were held in high if wary esteem because of their artisanal skills (Hinton, 2000, 2011). Arguably, the things they made and the images on them were not inert, passive, symbolic or representational, but materialisations of the 'magic' associated with their making and maker as well as the numinous beings inhabiting their surfaces as living entities (Back Danielsson, 2016). Put differently, with their numinous and divine associations, smiths were involved in 'making the world' and this included the making of human-raptor relations as materialised in the vibrant and living raptor-entities on square-headed brooches (Back Danielsson, 2020, p.192).

Having discussed the two human-raptor inhumation associations at Alfriston in Sussex, I next consider the only other known instance of raptor remains in an early English inhumation context. This is from a different county of south-east England: grave 54 at the early Anglo-Saxon inhumation cemetery at St Edmund's Church and Vicarage, Temple Hill, Dartford, Kent. This burial, probably of a high-status woman, has been dated by the 'richly furnished' grave goods to around 520–550 CE, so around the time of or perhaps a decade or so earlier than the Alfriston graves (O'Brien et al., 2015, p.36). Only '[p]arts of the lower limb bones and pelvis' were recovered and they were in poor condition, so the grave has been identified as 'female' based on the grave goods (p.36). These included an iron knife associated with the left-side of the body near to the waist and a gilded silver small square-headed brooch 'in the lower belly region' with Style I art including

prominent raptor imagery: 'a profiled animal or bird head with three-clawed foot and limb/wing' in each upper border of the footplate (pp.36–7) (Fig. 1.7). Other objects found in the 'pelvic region' were several 'amulets', possibly held in a bag or chatelaine, including the remains of two or more iron latch lifters, various beads, a cosmetic brush case, a crystal sphere in a silver sling – and a 'pierced eagle talon' with 'a fragment of a copper-alloy suspension ring in the perforation' (p.37). The excavators suggest that the crystal ball 'was probably suspended from the girdle, the talon may have been also' although it is uncertain what was in the bag and whether any of the objects were free-hanging or 'randomly placed' (p.49). The non-functional 'amuletic' objects and especially the crystal ball, of which there have been many found in Kent, East Anglia and the East Midlands, but not in Sussex are suggestive of the role of cunning woman (Meaney, 1981, p.86). The crystal ball at Temple Hill also suggests 'a degree of Frankish influence, as well as possible Anglian and east Kentish contacts' (O'Brien et al., 2015, p.1; also Richardson, 2005/6, p.81) while the great square-headed brooches at Alfriston are part of a Saxon group with a Scandinavian origin (Hines, 1997, pp.17, 30). These contrasts in how eagle talons were bundled together with various objects into different assemblages indicate how cunning practices and human-raptor relations were articulated in distinctive ways in each funerary setting and across different communities.

It is also worth considering how the three women discussed, two at Alfriston, one at Temple Hill, performed their identities within wider early medieval gender, social, political and human-animal inequalities (e.g. Meents, 2017). The wearers of great square-headed brooches and pierced raptor talons, while probably of high-status and in the warily respected role of cunning woman, would likely have meted out their healing skills according to the social status of the persons in need. Those with the most need were not necessarily afforded greater attention than those in less need but with greater wealth. Human-raptor sociality too was probably performed in unequal terms. The women may have acquired talons/eagleness by removing the body parts from dead eagles that they or others had found, or they may have trapped and killed eagles or organised for others to accomplish this risky act. While showing an element of human-animal asymmetry such killing would have been viewed in very different terms to those of urbanised modern Europeans. Cunning women may have been respected and high-status, in part because of their healing, divinatory and magical abilities, but these same skills may also have afforded fear, stigma and persecution (e.g. Meents, 2017, p.396). It is likely

Figure 1.7: Small square-headed brooch (54.2) from grave 54, Temple Hill, Dartford. (East Kent Archaeological Society / British Museum / DCMS

that even male warrior-leaders would have approached them and their magical powers with wary respect. A broad gender distinction can be made between, on the one hand, the use of raptor body parts, focussed on eagle talons and Style I raptor body parts on brooches, in female contexts, and on the other, the use of the complete images of raptors, probably eagles, in men's war gear and especially shield decoration.

This distinction, however, is not absolute. Dickinson observes that women re-used shield fittings with Style I animal ornament as brooches, drawing the conclusion that 'the protective nuances and social status which animal-ornamented shields conferred on males could be partly transferred to selected females, just as occasionally shield ornament … could borrow from feminine jewellery' (2005, p.162). A consistent theme in the meaning of eagles for both men and women seems to have been expressions of aggressive protection, enacted by women in healing/divinatory practices and by men in confrontation/battle. Style II art, which emerged a century or so later than the burials at Alfriston and Temple Hill, introduced at the start of this article in the form of the north-west Essex Anglo-Saxon ring, is associated especially with the realm of high-status men. This object offers an opportunity to extend the discussion of gender differences in human-raptor relationships. In particular, it helps to show how thinking on these interactions and human/raptor bodies changed over time in early medieval England,

particularly during the tumultuous period of the sixth to seventh centuries when the early kingdoms were being formed and Christianity was (re)introduced.

While the body parts of raptors are prominent in Style I imagery of fragmented and composite beings and are most commonly found on women's brooches, birds of prey in part and as whole bodies are also significant in the art known as Style II which emerges in the late sixth to mid seventh centuries and is associated with high-status men (Hinton, 2005, p.26). In many instances of Style II art, these predatory birds are reduced stylistically to the simplest element of a head bearing a curved beak and glaring eye, 'one of the chief distinguishing features of so-called Style II animal ornament' (Speake, 1980, p.81). This 'beak-head motive' is depicted, for example, on the early seventh-century gold, filigree and garnet bird triskele pendant, and gold filigree miniature buckle, both from Faversham, Kent (Minns, 1942, p.5; Marzinzik, 2013, pp.122–3). At Sutton Hoo, these forms appear on the great gold buckle, gilt-bronze lyre mounts (also at Taplow, Bucks.), silver-gilt drinking horn terminals (also at Taplow), and silver patch on the hanging bowl (e.g. Bruce-Mitford, 1947). The predatory bird is also prominent in the repertoire of imagery in the Staffordshire Hoard (Fern et al., 2019).

Aleks Pluskowski (2010) has discussed how the emphasis on predators in Style II art may reflect a wider 'ideology of predation' during the formative years of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. In this thinking, metaphors of predation enabled elite men to align themselves with predatory creatures (e.g. wolves, boars, raptors) and behaviours (fighting, killing, hunting, hawking), thereby defining themselves socially, politically and cosmologically as predators (Wallis, 2017, p.5; Wallis, 2020, p.13; see also Geake 2014 on the predatory pike in early Anglo-Saxon art). The predator-prey relationship seems to have been an especially salient one, as exemplified by the two hawk-with-prey motifs on the Sutton Hoo purse lid (Hicks, 1986; also Dickinson, 2002, p.158, n.122; Wallis, 2017) (Fig. 1.8). Two gold raptors, each trussing a duck-like bird in their talons, are rendered in cloisonné with a blue ring around the eyes, a blue and black chequer design on the upper legs, and fine garnet cells in a chevron design on the wing and tail to suggest feathers (e.g. Bruce-Mitford, 1947, p.73; Hicks, 1986, p.159). More specifically, the hawk's feet and talons truss the duck around the neck and upper wing which would suggest the prey is immobilized, while the intimate juxtaposition of the hawk's curved beak with the head of the duck might suggest it is beginning to 'plume' the prey of feathers prior to feeding.

Figure 1.8: One of the two raptors with prey, trussing a duck-like bird in its talons, positioned centrally on the Sutton Hoo purse lid. (© The Trustees of the British Museum, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)

Carola Hicks interprets these striking hawk-with-prey motifs on the purse lid as pertaining to falconry (1986, p.161), which can be defined as 'taking quarry in its natural state and habitat by means of trained birds of prey' (IAF, 2018). Hicks (1986, p.161) finds that 'the closest parallel to the Sutton Hoo finds' is panel 3 of the calendar and hunting mosaics at the 'Villa of the Falconer' at Argos (c.500 CE; see Åkerström-Hougen, 1974; also Adams, 2015, p.49) (Fig. 1.9). These images show a formal similarity in their depiction of a hawk-with-prey and while Haseloff suggests the motif is a foreign, Mediterranean influence amidst the tendency for Germanic abstraction, Hicks insists that the Argos mosaic could have been 'the model for the scene on the Sutton Hoo purse' (Haseloff, 1952; Hicks, 1986, pp.153, 162). She concludes that 'the birds on the Sutton Hoo purse provide … an accurate depiction of a contemporary sport, known to be a favourite pastime of aristocracy of Germanic stock' (Hicks, 1986, p.164). This interpretation aligns with the animal imagery in Style II art more generally, which reflects the 'classic animals of the hunt' and the high-status role of hunting 'popular c.AD600 in continental Europe', embedded in the context of 'male elites and their hunting fellowships' (Adams, 2015, p.49).

But to consider falconry only in terms of resource procurement (hunting for food), recreation (hunting for sport), social/political status (hunting as a high-status pursuit) and/or religious ideology (hunting to honour

Figure 1.9: Panel 3 depicting falconry in a mosaic from the 'Villa of the Falconer', 6th century. c.1.20 m × 1.10 m. Villa to the Northeast of the ancient theatre, Western portico of peristyle. (© Hellenic Ministry of Culture, Ephorate of Antiquities of Argolis

deities), that is to say, limited to anthropocentric associations and human-centred meaning-making, is problematic. This, I think, neglects the rich and complex picture of falconry as an intimate form of human-raptor sociality. A useful anthropological definition of falconry is that it is a hunting practice in which 'humans and birds of prey develop a hunting companionship through which they learn to hunt in cooperation' (Schroer, 2015, p.ii). As such, falconer and bird are entangled as 'beings in the making' (Schroer, 2021, p.141). Or put another way, falconry aligns with Donna Haraway's theorising of some human-animal relations as relational, in an intra-active 'generative cross-species practice' (2008, p.226). It would be idealistic to suppose that the relationship is symmetrical, but anthropocentrism can cloud thinking around the constraint/liberty of animals. This is a particular issue for those delimited by the modern concept of 'wild', especially when they have the more-than-human agency of flight, and perhaps of apex predators such as raptors as paragons of 'freedom'. In the specific case of falconry birds, they must be captured and trained during which time they are fettered, their raptorial agency inhibited. But by turns, once training is complete, the hunting bond is made, and they can be flown free, entirely at liberty and liable to be lost depending on the skill of the falconer. The human-raptor bond in falconry is relational and generative yet precarious, and with this thinking I want to suggest that the hawk-with-prey motifs on the purse lid are more than just representations of raptors catching their prey, more than just markers of the status of the wearer of the purse, and that falconry was more than just an economic hunting pursuit or recreational sport. I agree with Pluskowski that the

relationship formed between falconer and bird of prey is 'at the conceptual "cutting edge" of mutability' (2010, p.117). It can also be singled out as a particularly significant form of human-raptor relationship because it is intimate, relational and cooperative.

The hawk-with-prey motif indicates that high-status male intra-actions with raptorness were articulated differently to those of women. The presence of raptor talons and art with raptor imagery in women's graves suggests that they performed raptorness and especially eagleness in healing practices of aggressive defence. By contrast the display of hawk-with-prey motifs on the purse lid, worn facing outwards on the body, conspicuously presenced and enacted the predator-prey relationship, with the high-status warrior-leader becoming-with the predatory bird. If the hawk-with-prey motif is suggestive of falconry practice, then it is notable that unlike other wild, predatory animals which usually remained outside of the domestic sphere unless brought back as dead quarry from hunting trips, 'wild' (trained, but never 'tame' or domesticated) falconry birds lived within the community. Accustoming the bird to falconer(s) and 'helpers' (dogs, horses, beaters) requires 'manning', where the bird is kept on the fist and exposed to various domestic and social settings over extended periods. So the trained bird on the fist would have offered a constant reminder of the falconer's predatory qualities, the bird an extension of the hunter's predatory qualities, the leader as ultimate predator (Wallis, 2017, p.21). The display of a trained hunting bird on the fist may have asserted predatory prowess, a desirable quality among competing warrior-leaders, in a particularly conspicuous way (p.11).

The imagery on the bezel of the north-west-Essex Anglo-Saxon ring may equally evidence human-raptor sociality and perhaps falconry practice specifically, in the simplest sense of visually showing a falconry bird on a falconer's fist. But the imagery is more complex than this, with the arm of the anthropomorph connecting or fusing with the legs of the raptor, and this may hint further at the nuances of the human-raptor relationship in falconry practices and of how raptorness was performed by high-status Anglo-Saxon men. A falconry bird cannot be forced into submission through starvation or rough handling. It is encouraged into tolerating humans and performing its natural hunting behaviour through an extended training process involving careful manning and the delivery of food rewards at key moments, which reinforce the hunting partnership. The relationship between falconer and falconry bird is thus 'a process of relational becoming or mutual making' in which the falconer must 'adjust sensitively to the bird … avoiding bad experiences,

which might impede the further development of a hunting companionship' (Schroer, 2015, p.272). In short, the relationship is one of becoming-with one another, complicating the idea of early Anglo-Saxon warrior-leaders as the 'instigators of violence and the top consumers in their group' (Pluskowski, 2010, p.117). Practising successful falconry requires patience and restraint, respect and humility, fortitude and fine judgement, qualities which alongside military prowess may have been required of early Anglo-Saxon leaders and valued by their followers within a broader context of martial ontology.

The imagery on the bezel of the ring offers up yet further complexity. The anthropomorph possesses human and raptor qualities not only via the raptor it is fused with, but also in the form of a beak-like nose and hair styled like the tail feathers of the raptor above. This sort of imagery in which humans and animals metamorphose has been interpreted as representing transgressive relationships between animals and humans (Kristoffersen, 2010) as well as in relation to the cult of Odin and his predatory attributes of hunting and war (Dickinson, 2002; Pollington, 2024). The imagery may do more than simply represent something (whether a human 'wearing an animal headdress with a pointed snout' (Brundle, 2020, p.220) or a human-raptor therianthrope), however, by presencing and enacting transgressive human-raptor relationality. The artwork not only visualises and materialises human-raptor sociality, possibly in the form of falconry. In the context of an early medieval ontology of predation, the artwork also shows the actual, visceral acquisition of raptorness, arguably a quality performed by the wearer or bearer of the ring.

Added to this, the imagery reinforces what Lisa Brundle identifies as 'a non-binary or hybridity of Christian and pre-Christian ideas', the raptor in traditional Style II form juxtaposed with the long cross of the new religion (2020, p.219). Rather than read this imagery as syncretic or evidencing a 'transition' from a pagan past to a Christian future, the object may have occupied a complex 'discursive space' of creative social, political and religious adaptation (Schjødt, 2009). The combination of distinctive imagery plus elite and possibly royal status suggests that the ring played a role in brokering between elements of pagan traditions and the (re)introduced Christian faith (Wallis, 2020, p.15). It is plausible to imagine a high-status person wearing this highly charged, flashy piece of jewellery on the finger of one hand, while holding a raptor on the fist of the other. Falconry was a fashionable pursuit held in common by high-status leaders across northwest Europe, so the wearer of the ring displayed

the diplomatic cachet required to negotiate the pagan-Christian milieu within which early Anglo-Saxon leaders were embedded. In collaboration with the ring as an object-ally, the wearer, mediating between the worlds of human and raptor, pagan and Christian, enacted the necessary raptorial qualities at a crucial religious and political moment. After this moment, hybrid and fragmented bodies in art, raptors included, came to be viewed very differently.

In the early medieval Christian view, the doctrine of resurrection reckoned that the human body created in God's image would enjoy eternal life in heaven if that person had lived and died on earth free of sin. In this ambition it was therefore important that during one's lifetime the body remained pious, uncorrupted and entire, and that the body was inhumed rather than cremated. Examining the changing imagery of the human body in seventh century art, Brundle identifies how 'elite and high-status religious figures … were increasingly representing the whole and unsullied body as a virtuous one' while the once numinous, fragmented and hybridised body in 'pre-Christian belief systems which centred on transformation and shapeshifting… may have been increasingly perceived to have negative connotations' (2020, 219). Human-raptor relations and human-animal transformations that were once a normal part of an order of things became a disorder. Christians continued to esteem birds of prey but in very different ways to those explored in this article. For example, the eagle was now a much simpler entity, symbolically co-opted for the Evangelist St John, as represented in the *imago aquilae* or 'image of the eagle' in the Lindisfarne and Otho-Corpus Gospels (Fig. 1.10). Hybridisation was not eschewed altogether, as shown by the niello-inlaid engraving of a haloed eagle-headed St. John upon the gold plaque from Brandon, Suffolk (Fig. 1.11). But eagle body parts, eagle images and any sense of a numinous 'eagleness' were firmly reconfigured as being reserved for the heavenly rather than human realm.

In this article I have explored several archaeological assemblages in early England where the boundaries between human and raptor bodies, and those of living beings and objects bearing images, are permeated. These examples are suggestive of varied forms of human-raptor sociality and of how people's relationships with birds of prey changed over time. I began by considering four instances in which the body parts of birds of prey, specifically talons made into pendants, and artefacts decorated with Style I raptor imagery, including square-headed brooches, were deposited with human remains in funerary settings during the fifth to sixth centuries. Necessarily, the term 'body/bodies' (alongside 'art', 'object', and so

Figure 1.10: The imago aquilae or 'image of the eagle' (with parallels in Pictish art), i.e. symbol of St John the Evangelist, surrounded or protected by crosses, Otho-Corpus Gospels, Northumbria or Iona, c.700. (The Parker Library, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, CCCC MS 197B, p.245)

Figure 1.11: Niello-inlaid engraving of a haloed eagle-headed St. John the Evangelist upon the gold plaque from Brandon, Suffolk, 32720001. (©The Trustees of the British Museum. Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0] licence)

on) is problematic because of the modern baggage freighting this concept, such as the Cartesian mind/body dualism, speciesist hierarchies separating humans and animals, as well as anthropocentrism and human exceptionalism. All of this is challenged by the material and visual evidence (e.g. Fowler, 2004; Harris & Robb, 2012). The archaeological and art-historical sources suggest that animals, objects and art held agency and personhood outside of human control and that human and animal bodies were not stable or bounded (see also Marshall et al. in this volume). While the faunal remains of raptors are rare, their careful deposition in funerary settings do suggest that certain people valued these apex predators and made relational connections to/with them. Rather than understanding these relationships and their material expression as symbolic or representational of a social or religious reality, I have drawn upon multispecies, relational and new materialist thinking to propose that they were intra-active, that human-raptor relations and the things associated with them (talon pendants, brooches with raptor imagery) were active shapers or enacters of ontology in an ongoing process of co-constitutive becoming.

The talons deposited in the cremation urns at Spong Hill indicate that the worlds of humans and raptors could be intimately engaged, the co-mingling of human and raptor remains suggesting that bodies and personhood were permeable across species (and socially contrived) boundaries, including at the juncture of life/death. Arguably, people esteemed raptors' abilities in flight and hunting and attempted to acquire these qualities of raptorness directly by fashioning talons into vibrant entities (pendants) to be worn on the person. These then acted synecdochally to establish an intra-active relationship between human and raptor. When deposited in the cinerary vessels, these vibrant entities, by their proximity to other objects in the assemblages, affected the other things they were associated with. The talons thereby may have been key transformational agents in the metamorphosis to forms of ancestral personhood. Human-raptor relations were generative in peoples' identity-formation through life and into their after-lives. The proximal bundling of raptor talons with other objects/things in the cremations at Spong Hill probably served to materialise and memorialise an ancestral personhood in which humanness and raptorness were co-mingled. Raptor body parts in inhumation graves were associated primarily with women, with the eagle talons in the two high-status female inhumation graves at Alfriston and the one at Temple Hill probably pertaining to female healers or cunning women. These important but ambiguous persons may have kept eagle talons as

living entities to materialise and enact the numinous, aggressive-defensive qualities of eagleness in the healing/removal of elf-shot, in a surgical-magical contra-action synecdochally presencing female eagle-allies.

Raptorness could be acquired not only by wearing the body parts of birds of prey but also by wearing raptor imagery, as shown in the Style I decoration on square-headed brooches deposited with eagle talons. The brooches were charged with agency by the materials they were made from, including transformational copper-alloy, and the skilled process by which they were made, the magical art of smithing. If the eagle talon pendants disrupt subject/object boundaries, images can be theorised beyond representation as living entities with dynamic presence. Style I images of raptors were the living presences or embodiments of raptors (as other-than-human beings) and raptorness (as qualities), the image-body not a mere representation or symbol of a raptor-body but understood as the raptor-body per se with all of its potential predatory-aggressive and/or aggressive-protective raptorness. The bundling of raptor and other animal and human body parts into composite Style I visual riddles on great square-headed brooches formed a cosmically powerful relational field. Through their materialisation and the perception of those mediating their vibrant presences, image-raptor-allies enacted emergent human-raptor sociality and in the inhumation rite in which they participated, the transformation of deceased human persons into ancestor-beings.

The raptorness articulated in the imagery of and acquired by the wearing of art objects was expressed in different ways across genders and over time. For high-status men, Style I images of raptors on war gear such as shields dating to the fifth to sixth centuries afforded qualities of protective-aggressive raptorness. The emergence of Style II artworks replete with raptor imagery dating to the late sixth to mid-seventh centuries shows that the raptorness associated with men emphasised the role of predator in the predator-prey relationship. The hunting practice of falconry may be shown in the hawk-with-prey motif on the Sutton Hoo purse lid and, while raptor remains were not found in this burial, falconry equipment in the form of a small copper-alloy bell was present and this hunting practice was widespread among high-status men across northern Europe by the mid-first millennium. Falconry may have enabled high-status warrior-leaders to demonstrate their predatory qualities in a particularly conspicuous way, the falconry bird a proximal extension of the leader as ultimate predator. The north-west Essex Anglo-Saxon ring may offer a unique visual expression of the human-raptor

relationship in falconry, with the arm of the human fusing with the legs of the raptor on the fist, the one becoming-with the other. Added to this, the beak-like nose and hair of the anthropomorph styled like the tail feathers of the raptor above visualise and materialise the acquiring and enacting of raptorness in a distinctive idiom which may have involved negotiations over the (re)conversion to Christianity. The increasing attention to whole bodies rather than partial ones in early medieval art can be approached in relation to changing early medieval thinking around the body. As such, over time, images of 'pagan' human-animal transformation and raptors came to be viewed negatively, while the whole, virtuous human body was viewed positively in Christian thinking (Brundle 2020, p.219; see also Murray in this volume). Raptors remained important but within a Christian framework the eagle was co-opted for the Evangelist St John. Where once people had traditionally made connections with birds of prey in performances of predatory identity which brought human and animal bodies into direct relationship, a Christian paradigm of human exceptionalism ultimately foreclosed this visceral possibility.

Bibliography

1   Adams, N. (2015) 'Between myth and reality: hunter and prey in Early Anglo-Saxon art' in M.D.J. Bintley and T.J.T. Williams (eds) *Representing Beasts in Early Medieval England and Scandinavia*, Anglo-Saxon Studies 29, Woodbridge, Boydell Press, pp.13–52.

2   Åkerström-Hougen, G. (1974) *The Calendar and Hunting Mosaics of the Villa of the Falconer in Argos: A Study in Early Byzantine Iconography*, Skrifter utgivna av Svenska Institutet i Athen 4°, vol.23, Stockholm, Svenska Institutet i Athen.

3   Armstrong Oma, K. (2010) 'Between trust and domination: social contracts between humans and animals', *World Archaeology*, vol.42, no.2, pp.175–87.

4   Astor-Aguilera, M. and G. Harvey (eds) (2018) *Rethinking Relations and Animism: Personhood and Materiality*, London, Routledge.

5   Back Danielsson, I.-M. (2016) 'Materials of affect: Miniatures in the Scandinavian Late Iron Age (AD 550-1050) in B. Alberti, A.M. Jones and J. Pollard (eds) *Archaeology After Interpretation*, London, Routledge, pp.325–43.

6   Back Danielsson, I.-M. (2020) '"Guldgubbars" changing ontology: Scandinavian Late Iron Age gold foil figures through the lens of intra-action' in I.-M. Back Danielsson and A.M. Jones (eds) *Images in the Making: Art, Process, Archaeology*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, pp.184–201.

7   Back Danielsson, I.-M. and Jones, A.M. (eds) (2020) *Images in the Making: Art, Process, Archaeology*, Manchester, Manchester University Press.

8   Barad, K. (2007) *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, Durham, Duke University Press.

9   Baudrillard, J. (2004) *Simulacra and simulation* (trans. S. Glaser), Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press.

10   Belting, H. (1994) *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

11   Belting, H. (2011) *An Anthropology of Images: Picture, Medium, Body*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.

12   Belting, H. (2016) 'Iconic presence: images in religious traditions', *Material Religion*, vol.12, n.2, pp.235–7.

13   Belting, H. (2020) 'Interview with Hans Belting, with V. Stoichita, 2015 Balzan Prize Winner for the History of Modern Art' in Fondazione Internazionale Balzan (ed.) *Balzan Papers III*, Florence, Leo S Olschki, pp.95–104.

14   Bond, J.M. (1994) 'Appendix I: The cremated animal bone', in J.I. McKinley (ed.) *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Spong Hill, North Elmham, Part VIII: The Cremations*, East Anglian Archaeology Report 69, Field Archaeology Division, Norfolk Museums Service, pp.121–35.

15   Bond, J.M. (1996) 'Burnt offerings: Animal bone in Anglo-Saxon cremations', *World Archaeology*, vol.28, no.1, pp.76–88.

16   Bond, J.M. and Worley, F.L. (2006) 'Companions in death: The roles of animals in Anglo-Saxon and Viking cremation rituals in Britain' in R. Gowland and C. Knüsel (eds) *The Social Archaeology of Funerary Remains*, Oxbow, Oxford, pp.89–98.

17   Boyd, B. (2017) 'Archaeology and human–animal relations: Thinking through anthropocentrism', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol.46, pp.299–316.

18   Bruce-Mitford, R.L.S. (1947) *The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial: A Handbook*, London, British Museum.

19   Brück, J. and Jones, A. (2018) 'Finding objects, making persons: Fossils in British Early Bronze Age burials' in E. Harrison-Buck and J. Hendon (eds) *Other-Than-Human Agency and Personhood in Archaeology*, Denver, University of Colorado Press, pp.237–62.

20   Brundle, L. (2020) 'Exposed and concealed bodies: Exploring the body as subject in metalwork and text in 7th-century Anglo-Saxon England', *Medieval Archaeology*, vol.64, no.2, pp.193–225.

21   Carocci, M. (2023) 'Raptors in pre-Columbian North America: An ontology of art' in R.J. Wallis (ed.) *The Art and Archaeology of Human Engagements with Birds of Prey*, London, Bloomsbury, pp.136–51.

22   Chandler, K., Field Murray, W., Zedeño, M.N., Clements, S. and James, R. (2016) *The Winged: An Upper Missouri River Ethno-ornithology*, Tucson, University of Arizona Press.

23   Clark Hall, J.R. ([1894] 2006) *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, Cambridge, Cambridge University press.

24   Cockayne, T.O. (1864–6) *Leechdoms, Wortcunning and Starcraft of Early England*, 3 vols, Rolls Series no.35, London, Longman, Roberts and Green.

25   Crabtree, P. (1995) 'The symbolic role of animals in Anglo-Saxon England: Evidence from burials and cremations' in K. Ryan and P. Crabtree (eds) *The Symbolic Role of Animals in Archaeology*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, pp.21–6.

26   Crellin, R.J., Cipolla, C.N., Montgomery, L.M., Harris, O.J.T. and Moore, S.V., (2021) *Archaeological Theory in Dialogue: Situating Relationality, Ontology, Posthumanism and Indigenous Paradigms*, London, Routledge.

27   Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. (2005) *A Thousand Plateaus*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.

28   Dickinson, T.M. (1993) 'An Anglo-Saxon "cunning woman" from Bidford-on-Avon' in M.O.H. Carver (ed.) *In Search of Cult*, Woodbridge, Boydell, pp.45–54.

29   Dickinson, T.M. (2002) 'Translating animal art: Salin's Style I and Anglo-Saxon cast saucer brooches', *Hikuin*, vol.29, pp.163–86.

30   Dickinson, T.M. (2005) 'Symbols of protection: The significance of animal-ornamented shields in Early Anglo-Saxon England', *Medieval Archaeology*, vol.49, no.1, pp.109–63.

31   Dobney, K. and Jaques, D. (2002) 'Avian signatures for identity and status in Anglo-Saxon England', *Acta Zoologica Cracoviensia*, vol.45, pp.7–21.

32   Eriksen, M.H. and Kay, K. (2022) 'Reflections on posthuman ethics: Grievability and the more-than-human worlds of Iron and Viking Age Scandinavia', *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, vol.32, no.2, pp.331–43.

33   Fahlander, F. (2021) 'The faceless men: partial bodies and body parts in Scandinavian Bronze Age rock art', in Moro Abadía, O. and Porr, M. (eds) *Ontologies of Rock Art: Images, Relational Approaches and Indigenous Knowledge*, New York, Routledge, pp.302–18.

34   Fern, C., Dickinson, T. and Webster, L. (2019) *The Staffordshire Hoard: An Anglo-Saxon Treasure*, Reports of the Research Committee of the Society of Antiquaries of London, LXXX, London, Society of Antiquaries of London.

35   Fowler, C. (2004) *The Archaeology of Personhood: An Anthropological Approach*, London, Routledge.

36   Fowler, C. (2013) *The Emergent Past: A Relational Realist Archaeology of Early Bronze Age Mortuary Practices*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

37   Geake, H. (2014) 'The compleat Anglo-Saxonist: Some new and neglected Early Anglo-Saxon fish for Andrew Rogerson, in S. Ashley and A. Marsden (eds) *Landscapes and Artefacts: Studies in East Anglian archaeology presented to Andrew Rogerson*, Oxford, Archaeopress, pp.113–21.

38   Gell, A. (1992) 'The technology of enchantment and the enchantment of technology', in J. Coote and A. Shelton (eds) *Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, pp.40–67.

39   Gell, A. (1998) *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

40   Goldhahn, J. (2019) 'On unfolding present and past (rock art) worldings', *Time and Mind*, vol.12, no.2, pp.63–77.

41   Goldhahn, J. (2020) 'To bring back some eagleness to eagles: On bird worldings in the Bronze Age', *Current Swedish Archaeology*, vol.28, pp.47–73.

42   Goldhahn, J. (2023) 'Ghosthawk worldings: raptor haruspicy during the North European bronze age' in R.J. Wallis (ed.) *The Art and Archaeology of Human Engagements with Birds of Prey*, London, Bloomsbury, pp.53–68.

43   Greenwood, S. (2005) *The Nature of Magic: An Anthropology of Consciousness*, Oxford, Berg.

44   Grendon, F. (1909) 'The Anglo-Saxon charms', *The Journal of American Folklore*, vol.22, no.84, pp.105–237.

45   Griffith, A.F. (1915) 'An Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Alfriston, Sussex: Supplemental paper', *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, vol.57, pp.197–210.

46   Griffith, F. and Salzmann, L.F. (1914) 'An Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Alfriston, Sussex', *Sussex Archaeological Collection*, vol.56, pp.16–53.

47   Hall, A. (2005) 'Calling the shots: The Eld English remedy *Gif hors ofscoten sie* and Anglo-Saxon "elf-shot"', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen: Bulletin of the Modern Language Society*, vol.106, no.2, pp.195–209.

48   Hall, A. (2007a) *Elves in Anglo-Saxon England: Matters of Belief, Health, Gender and Identity*, Woodbridge, Suffolk, Boydell & Brewer.

49   Hall, A. (2007b) 'Glosses, gaps and gender: The rise of female elves in Anglo-Saxon culture' in M. Rissanen, M. Hintikka, L. Kahlas-Tarkka and R. McConchie (eds) *Change in Meaning and the Meaning of Change: Studies in Semantics and Grammar from Old to Present-Day English*, Mémoires de la Société Néophilologique de Helsinki 72, Helsinki, Uusfilologinen yhdistys ry, pp.139–70.

50   Haraway, D.J. (2008) *When Species Meet*, Minneapolis, Minnesota University Press.

51   Harris, O.J.T. and Robb, J. (2012) 'Multiple ontologies and the problem of the body in history', *American Anthropologist*, vol.114, pp.668–79.

52   Harris, O.J.T. (2018) 'More than representation: Multiscalar assemblages and the Deleuzian challenge to archaeology', *History of the Human Sciences*, vol.31, no.3, pp.83–104.

53   Harvey, G. (2005) *Animism: Respecting the Living World*, London, Hurst.

54   Harvey, G. (2014) *The Handbook of Contemporary Animism*, Durham, Acumen.

55   Hedeager, L. (2011) *Iron Age Myth and Materiality: An Archaeology of Scandinavia AD 400–1000*, London, Routledge.

56   Henare, A., Holbraad, M. and Wastell, S. (eds) (2007) *Thinking Through Things: Theorising Artefacts Ethnographically*, London, Routledge.

57   Hicks, C. (1986) 'The birds on the Sutton Hoo purse', *Anglo-Saxon England*, vol.15, pp.153–65.

58   Hill, J.D. (2009) 'Materialising the occult: An approach to understanding the nature of materiality in Wakuénai ontology' in F. Santos-Granero (ed.) *The Occult Life of Things: Native Amazonian Theories of Materiality and Personhood*, Tucson, University of Arizona Press, pp.235–61.

59   Hills, C., Penn, K. and Rickett, R. (1987) *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Spong Hill, North Elmham Part IV: Catalogue of Cremations*, East Anglian Archaeology Report 34, Norfolk Archaeological Unit, Norfolk Museums Service.

60   Hills, C., Penn, K. and Rickett, R. (1994), *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Spong Hill, North Elmham Part V: Catalogue of Cremations*, East Anglian Archaeology Report 67, Field Archaeology Division, Norfolk Museums Service.

61   Hines, J. (1997) *A New Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Great Square-Headed Brooches*, London, Boydell.

62   Hines, J. (2013) 'The archaeological study of early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries' in J. Hines and A. Bayliss (eds) *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods of the 6th and 7th Centuries AD: A Chronological Framework*, The Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph 33, London, Routledge, pp.13–32.

63   Hinton, D.A. (2000) *A Smith in Lindsey: The Anglo-Saxon Grave at Tattershall Thorpe, Lincolnshire*, Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph Series 16, Leeds, Maney.

64   Hinton, D.A. (2005) *Gold and Gilt, Pots and Pins: Possessions and people in medieval Britain*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

65   Hinton, D.A. (2011) 'Raw materials: Sources and demand' in H. Hamerow, D.A. Hinton and S. Crawford (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp.423–39.

66   Holmes, M. (2014) *Animals in England and Scandinavia: Backbones of Economy and Society*, Leiden, Sidestone Press.

67   IAF (International Association of Falconry) (2018) *Homepage*, https://iaf.org, accessed 22.9.2024.

68   Jones, A.M. (2012) *Prehistoric Materialities*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

69   Jones, A.M. (2017) 'Meaning and mattering' in A.M. Jones and A. Cochrane (eds) *The Archaeology of Art: Materials, Practices, Affects*, London, Routledge, pp.115–36.

70   Jones, A.M. and A. Cochrane (2018) *The Archaeology of Art*, London, Routledge.

71   Jolly, K.L. (1996) *Popular Religion in Late Saxon England: Elf-Charms in Context*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press.

72   King, J.M. (2004) 'Grave goods as gifts in early Saxon burials (ca. AD 450-600), *Journal of Social Archaeology*, vol.4, pp.214–38.

73   Knüsel, C.J. and Ripley, K.M. (2000) 'The man-woman or "berdache" in Anglo-Saxon England and post-Roman Europe' in W.O. Frazer and A. Tyrell (eds) *Social Identity in Early Medieval Britain*, London, Leicester University Press, pp.157–91.

74   Kristoffersen, S. (2010) 'Half beast–half man: Hybrid figures in animal art', *World Archaeology*, vol.42, no.2, pp.261–72.

75   Kulakov, V.I. and Markovets, M.Y. (2004) 'Birds as companions of Germanic gods and heroes', *Acta Archaeologica*, vol.75, pp.179–88.

76   Leigh, D. (1984) 'Ambiguity in Anglo-Saxon Style I art', *The Antiquaries Journal*, vol.64, no.1, pp.34–42.

77   Lindstrom, T.C. and Kristoffersen, S. (2001) '"Figure it out!" Psychological perspectives on perception of migration period animal art', *Norwegian Archaeological Review*, vol.34, no.2, pp.65–84.

78   Marshall, Y. and Alberti, B. (2014) 'A matter of difference: Karen Barad, ontology and archaeological bodies', *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, vol.24, no.1, pp.19–36.

79   Martin, T. (2014) '(Ad)Dressing the Anglo-Saxon body: Corporeal meanings and artefacts in early England' in P. Blinkhorn and C. Cumberbatch (eds) *The Chiming of Crack'd Bells: Recent Approaches to the Study of Artefacts in Archaeology*, British Archaeological Reports, International Series 2677, Oxford, Archaeopress, pp.27–38.

80   Marzinzik, S. (2013) *Masterpieces: Early Medieval Art*, London, British Museum.

81   McKinley, J.I. (1994a) 'A pyre and grave goods in British cremation burials: Have we missed something?', *Antiquity*, vol.68, no.258, pp.132–4.

82   McKinley, J.I., (1994b) *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Spong Hill, North Elmham, Part VIII: The Cremations*, East Anglian Archaeology Report 69, Field Archaeology Division, Norfolk Museums Service.

83   Meaney, A.L. (1981) *Anglo-Saxon Amulets and Curing Stones*, BAR British Series 96, Oxford, Archaeopress.

84   Meents, K. (2017) 'Ontological transitions and liminality in Early Anglo-Saxon female life and burial' in S. Semple, O. Orsini, and S. Mui (eds) *Life on the Edge: Social, Political and Religious Frontiers in Early Medieval Europe*, Hanover, Hanover Museum, pp.383–99.

85   Minns, E. (1942) 'The art of the northern nomads', Annual Lecture on Aspects of Art, Henriette Hertz Trust of the British Academy 1942, *The Proceedings of the British Academy*, vol.28, London, British Academy.

86   Moradi, L. (2019) *Animal and human depictions on artefacts from early Anglo-Saxon graves in the light of theories of material culture*, unpublished MA dissertation, University of Exeter.

87   Nugent, R. (2010) *Feathered Funerals: Birds in Early Anglo-Saxon Burial Rites*, unpublished BA Dissertation, Department of History and Archaeology, University of Chester.

88   O'Brien, L., Gardner, R., Phillips, C., Scaife, R., Sudds, B., Taylor, M., Thompson, P., Davies, C., Henry, K., Snell, L., Mustchin, A., Walton Rogers, P., George, C., Crummy, N. and Price, R. (2015) 'An early Anglo-Saxon cemetery at St Edmund's Church and Vicarage, Temple Hill, Dartford, Kent', *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History,* vol.19, pp.1–121.

89   Parker-Pearson, M. (1999) *The Archaeology of Death and Burial*, Sutton, Stroud.

90   Pauketat, T. (2013) 'Agency, bundling and positioning' in *An Archaeology of the Cosmos: Rethinking Agency and Religion in Ancient America*, London, Routledge, pp.27–42.

91   Pluskowski, A. (2010) 'Animal magic' in M. Carver, A. Sanmark and S. Semple (eds) *Signals of Belief in Early England: Anglo-Saxon Paganism Revisited*, Oxford: Oxbow, pp.103–27.

92   Pilaar Birch, S.E. (ed.) (2018) *Multispecies Archaeology*, London, Routledge.

93   Pollington, S. (2000) *Leechcraft: Early English Charms, Plantlore and Healing*, Hockwoldcum-Wilton, Anglo-Saxon Books.

94   Pollington, S. (2024) *Woden: A Historical Companion*, London, Uppsala Books.

95   Poole, K. (2013) 'Engendering debate: Animals and identity in Anglo-Saxon England', *Medieval Archaeology*, vol.57, no.1, pp.61–82.

96   Poole, K. (2015) 'The contextual cat: Human–animal relations and social meaning in Anglo-Saxon England', *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory*, vol.22, no.3, pp.857–82.

97   Price, N. (2010) 'Heathen songs and devil's games' in M. Carver, A. Sanmark and S. Semple (eds) *Signals of Belief in Early England: Anglo-Saxon Paganism Revisited*, Oxford, Oxbow, pp.xiii–xvi.

98   Price, N. (2023) '"Now I am a bird, and now I am a man": Posthumanism, raptors and the Rus' in R.J. Wallis (ed.) *The Art and Archaeology of Human Engagements with Birds of Prey: From Prehistory to the Present,* London, Bloomsbury, pp.166–82.

99   Ratican, C. (2024) *Bodies, Beings and the Multiple Burial Rite of the Western Viking World*, London, Routledge.

100   Richardson, A. (2005/6) '222. Dartford, Kent: three Anglo-Saxon grave assemblages (2006 T376a, b and c' in R. Bland (ed.) *Treasure Annual Report 2005/6*, London, British Museum/DCMS.

101   Salin, B. (1904) *Die Altgermanische Thierornamentik* [Germanic animal ornament], Stockholm/Berlin, Asher.

102   Santos-Granero, F., (ed.) (2009) *The Occult Life of Things: Native Amazonian Theories of Materiality and Personhood*, Tucson, University of Arizona Press.

103   Schjødt, J.P. (2009) 'Diversity and its consequences for the study of Old Norse religion: What is it we are trying to reconstruct?' in L. Słupecki and J. Morawiec (eds) *Between Paganism and Christianity in the North*, Rzeszow, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, pp.9–22.

104   Schroer, S.A. (2015) '"On the wing": Exploring human-bird relationships in falconry practice', PhD dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Aberdeen, https://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.646099, accessed 20.10.2024.

105   Schroer, S.A. (2021) 'Jakob von Uexküll: The concept of Umwelt and its potentials for an anthropology beyond the human', *Ethnos*, vol.86, no.1, pp.132–52.

106   Serjeantson, D. (2023) *The Archaeology of Wild Birds in Britain and Ireland*, Oxford, Oxbow.

107   Speake, G. (1980) *Anglo-Saxon Animal Art and its Germanic Background*, Oxford, Clarendon.

108   Stoodley, N. (2000) 'From the cradle to the grave: Age organization and the early Anglo-Saxon burial rite', *World Archaeology,* vol.31, no.3, pp.456–72.

109   Sykes, N. (2015) *Beastly Questions: Animal Answers to Archaeological Issues*, London, Bloomsbury.

110   Taussig, M. (1993) *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses*, London, Routledge.

111   Vilaça, A. (2005) 'Chronically unstable bodies: Reflections on Amazonian corporalities', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol.11, pp.445–64.

112   Wallis, R.J. (2017) '"As the falcon her bells" at Sutton Hoo?: Falconry in early Anglo-Saxon England', *The Archaeological Journal of The Royal Archaeological Institute*, vol.174, no.2, pp.409–36.

113   Wallis, R.J. (2020) 'The "North-West Essex Anglo-Saxon Ring", falconry and pagan-Christian discursive space', *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, vol.30, no.3, pp.413–32.

114   Wallis, R.J. (ed.) (2023a) *The Art and Archaeology of Human Engagements with Birds of Prey: From Prehistory to the Present*, London, Bloomsbury.

115   Wallis, R.J. (2023b) 'Relating to raptors: The "upper part of a hawk's head and beak" in a Chalcolithic/early Bronze Age "Beaker" grave, Driffield, East Yorkshire' in R.J. Wallis (ed.) *The Art and Archaeology of Human Engagements with Birds of Prey: From Prehistory to the Present,* London, Bloomsbury, pp.119–35.

116   Wallis, R.J. (2025) 'The hawk in hand: human-raptor sociality and falconry in early medieval England' in G. Owen-Crocker and M. Clegg-Hyer (eds) *Animalia: Animal and Human Interaction in Daily Living in the Early Medieval English World,* The Material Culture of Daily Living, vol.5, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, pp.47–68.

117   Weetch, R. and Williams, C. (2014) 'Decoding Anglo-Saxon art', *The British Museum,* https://www.britishmuseum.org/blog/decoding-anglo-saxon-art#:~:text=The%20early%20art%20style%20of,as%20an%20'animal%20salad, accessed 16.10.2024.

118   Welch, M.G. (1983) Anglo-Saxon Sussex: Volume I, Oxford, British Archaeological Reports.

119   Williams, H. (2001) 'An ideology of transformation: Cremation rites and animal sacrifice in early Anglo-Saxon England' in N. Price (ed.) The Archaeology of Shamanism, London, Routledge, pp.193–212.

120   Williams, H. (2004) 'Death warmed up: The agency of bodies and bones in early Anglo-Saxon cremation rites', Journal of Material Culture, vol.9, no.3, pp.263–91.

121   Williams, H. (2006) Death and Memory in Early Medieval Britain, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

122   Williams, H. (2013) 'Death, memory, and material culture: Catalytic commemoration and the cremated dead' in L. Nilsson Stutz and S. Tarlow (eds) The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of Death and Burial, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 194–208.

123   Witmore, C.L. (2007) 'Symmetrical archaeology: Excerpts of a manifesto', World Archaeology, vol.39, no.4, pp.546–62.

124   Zedeño, M.N. (2009) 'Animating by association: Index objects and relational taxonomies', Cambridge Archaeological Journal, vol.19, no.3, pp.407–17.

125   Zedeño, M.N. (2013) 'Methodological and analytical challenges in relational archaeologies: A view from the hunting ground' in C. Watts (ed.) Relational Archaeologies: Humans, Animals, Things, London, Routledge, pp.117–34.

UNBOUNDED:
THE MULTIPLICITY OF BODIES AND BEINGS IN VIKING WORLDS

Brad Marshall,* Emma L. Thompson,* Alexander Wilson* and Marianne Hem Eriksen

*These authors contributed equally to this work.

Abstract

The Vikings have been characterised as one of the most stereotyped past cultures. This article challenges static representations of Viking bodies by exploring their diverse and referential body-worlds. We propose a more dynamic view where Viking bodies could be fluid, unbounded, and entangled with human and non-human entities. Using a more-than-representational approach and concepts of body-worlding, we move beyond conventional categorisations and dichotomies to reveal the complex network of bodies and beings populating this period. Through three case studies – body modification, portrayals of differently-abled bodies, and multitemporal burial practices – we argue that Viking bodies encompassed unique ontologies that differ profoundly from modern perspectives and invite readers to rethink the Viking past on terms closer to its own.

Biographical note

Brad Marshall is a PhD Postgraduate Researcher on the BODY-POLITICS project at the University of Leicester. His research focuses on childhood and the life-course in Late Iron and Viking Age Scandinavia, taking a multistranded approach incorporating bio- and mortuary archaeology and social theory to explore past experiences, lifeways, and deathscapes.

Emma L. Thompson is a PhD Postgraduate Researcher at the University of Leicester, funded by the Midlands4Cities Doctoral Training Partnership. Her research explores how migration and changing religions influenced the constructions of mortuary identities across England and Denmark in the Viking Age.

Alexander Wilson is a Postdoctoral Research Associate on the BODY-POLITICS project at the University of Leicester. His research focuses on the interaction of Old Norse texts with practices of violence and legality. He has published on saga narratology and the construction of desire and sexuality in medieval texts.

Marianne Hem Eriksen leads the ERC StG-funded BODY-POLITICS project. She is Research Professor at the National Museum of Denmark, an AHRC/BBC New Generation Thinker, and a Philip Leverhulme Prize winner. Her research interests include gender, politics, bodies, power, and architecture, as well as archaeological theory.

UNBOUNDED: THE MULTIPLICITY OF BODIES AND BEINGS IN VIKING WORLDS

**Brad Marshall,
Emma L. Thompson,
Alexander Wilson***
**and Marianne Hem Eriksen,
University of Leicester**

Introduction

The Viking Age (*c*.750–1050 CE), one of the most enduringly popular periods of the past (Birkett 2019; Larrington 2023; Price and Raffield 2023, pp.1–2), is enjoying renewed public and scholarly interest. The conventional view of Viking Age Scandinavia centres emergent kingdoms focused on raiding and control over trade and driven by competitive individualism, which is rooted in an androcentric preoccupation with warfare and other spheres and activities coded as masculine. In such frameworks, the warrior-chief is often envisioned as the hegemonic ideal and (sole) agent of historical change as well as a bounded individual and the primary active subject. Consequently, scholarship still features a rather familiar cast of fixed identities – warriors, merchants, shield-maidens, sorceresses, housewives, and gods – to some extent perpetuating longstanding stereotypes.

Within this comfortable but limiting paradigm, the capacity to explore the complexities of personhood, identities, and body-worlds (see below) is stymied, with potential epistemological, ontological, and political consequences. Douglass Bailey (2008, p.11) notes the damaging pitfalls of such stereotypes, which 'reduce complexity down to artificial categories and make different individuals interchangeable'. This article aims to disrupt modern stereotypes of the 'Viking Body' and to surmount the desire to map 'known' identities or assumed stereotypes onto material remains. It thus aligns itself with an emerging wave of scholarship that challenges and enriches our view of bodies and beings in Viking worlds (e.g. Hedeager, 2011; Price et al., 2019; Ratican, 2024).

We intend to reveal the diversity of Viking Age

* Brad Marshall, Emma L. Thompson and Alexander Wilson contributed equally to this article.

bodies by emphasising how they were *unbounded*. The unboundedness of Viking bodies materialises in two ways: first, how they exceed their physiological boundaries; second, how they resist fixed identities in their ontological fluidity and capacity for change across time and space. They not only incorporated complex multiplicities in themselves, but also emerged through relationalities extending beyond bounded human subjects into more-than-human, multispecies, and *multitemporal* networks. By approaching Viking bodies in this way, we expand the range of bodies, persons, and subjectivities we are willing to see in the past.

This article adopts more-than-representational approaches (see below) to reconfigure the Viking past as one not inhabited by androcentric stereotypes. It applies frameworks of body-worlding (Eriksen, 2022; cf. Haraway, 1997; Robb and Harris, 2013) to explore the ontological openness and diversity of bodies in the Viking Age and its radically different body norms. Recognising the unboundedness of bodies is pertinent not only in Viking contexts, but also to the body ontologies and practices of other periods and regions (see Wallis in this volume), including contemporary societies (Battersby, 1993). But we choose to centre this specific historical context to demonstrate that body conceptions and worldings are fundamentally historically situated and emerge through contextual relationalities.

Our focus is on archaeological material culture, especially its visual aspects. Where appropriate, we contextualise our analysis with contemporary and later textual sources, such as travel accounts and Old Norse mythology and saga literature. To consider how bodies were conceptualised and materialised in the body-worlds of Viking Scandinavia and the diaspora, we focus on three case studies: first, practices of body modification among the Vikings; second, the situation of differently abled bodies; and third, how bodies and burials can be multitemporal. Ultimately, we argue that Viking bodies were much stranger and more interesting than conventional approaches convey.

Body-worldings of the Viking Age

In recent decades, the body has become a major source of critical focus in archaeology (e.g. Joyce, 2005; Rebay-Salisbury et al., 2010; Robb and Harris, 2013). Much of this work aims to overcome a longstanding dichotomy in modern Western thought between naturalistic and social constructionist views of the body. Naturalistic approaches ahistorically centre the body as a pre-cultural biological organism, with the 'real' body seen as existing prior to culture. Conversely, social constructionist thought regards the body as a product

of culture but reduces it to a veneer of the social world by de-emphasising its corporeal aspects (Borić and Robb, 2008, pp.1–2). The humanist idea of the individual or bounded subject is founded on this nature/culture divide, whether the body is seen to be bounded as a distinct physical-biological entity or as a fungible tool for discursive practice.

But bodies are always changing, always unfinished, their boundaries neither fixed nor essential. Both naturalist and social constructionist approaches are overly deterministic in treating the body as a physical or cultural subject that can be definitively delineated. Conceptualising bodies in this way robs them of their particularity, the intimate connection to their specific histories. Projecting Enlightenment body-concepts is unlikely to capture either how people in the past thought about bodies or how bodies *actually* work. To understand bodies in the past, we need to move away from body-concepts that seek to divide the natural from the cultural. In addition, while modern Western body-concepts frequently assume an anthropic adult, typically envisaged as white, male, heterosexual, and 'able-bodied', as a default body (e.g. Frost, 2016), it is crucial to recognise that there is not, and never has been, a singular, 'real', transcendental body onto which culture can be secondarily projected. Each body must be situated within its own world.

Regarding the Iron and Viking Ages, an emerging wave of scholarship suggests a high degree of ontological fluidity in how bodies worked (e.g. Eriksen, 2017; Eriksen and Kay, 2022; Eriksen et al. 2025a; Hedeager, 2011; Kristoffersen, 2010; Lund, 2013; Ratican, 2024). Modern body-concepts often assume a sharp divide between human and non-human bodies, but both archaeological and material evidence show this boundary was much less clear in Viking ontologies. The co-mingling of human and non-human bodies occurs across numerous burial contexts; human bodies were routinely buried in assemblages of horses, dogs, sheep, piglets, and more, while bones of non-human species are in some cases seemingly incorporated into 'human' bodies (Eriksen and Ratican, forthcoming). Human-animal blurredness occurs in other forms of material culture, including Germanic animal styles depicting fluid bodies that encompass both human and non-human features (e.g. Hedeager, 2004; Fig. 2.1). Depictions and materialisations of ritual enactments of shapeshifting, such as the human-wolf hybrid figure portrayed on one of the Torslunda plates, further reveal ontologies of bodily fluidity exceeding the bounds of the human (e.g. Hedeager, 2011, pp.81–99; Fig. 2.2).

A further presumption is that the human body's

Figure 2.1: An early example of an animal style (II) belt buckle, 6th century, Åker, Norway. The buckle shows animals intermingled with human bodies. (Kulturhistorisk museum, Oslo / Photo: © Eirik Irgens Johnsen, UiO/CC BY-SA 4.0)

Figure 2.2: A cast bronze die from Torslunda. The figure on the right combines human and animal features, most prominently in its wolf-like head. (Historiska museet, Stockholm / CC BY-SA 2.0)

perceived integrity should be upheld in how it is treated. Yet extensive evidence for postmortem body modification in the Viking Age highlights the partibility and malleability of certain bodies in death, which could be manufactured and curated as what Eriksen (2020) has termed 'body-objects'. For example, a human cranial fragment from Ribe (Fig. 2.3), perforated and inscribed with runes, speaks to the partibility and transformative potential of the body after death. It has been typically analysed as a bearer for the runic inscription, rather than with regard to its materiality as a treated body-part. Yet this cranial element is not a singular outlier: dead human bodies could be cremated, inhumed, dismembered, stacked, and manipulated in various ways. The ongoing *Body-Politics* project, from which this paper springs, is examining hundreds of examples from settlements across the long Scandinavian Iron Age of bodies broken apart and deposited in practices that foreground anything but bodily integrity. These bodily practices challenge taken-for-granted boundaries between 'subjects' and 'objects', 'persons' and 'things' (e.g. Eriksen, 2017). Even the famous furnished Viking burials confront easy categorisations of bodies and persons through the intermingling of multispecies beings, as in the above discussion of human-non-human fluidity. Conversely, objects could be considered persons with biographies and *actual* (not symbolic) bodies, which could be ritually killed (Alberti and Marshall, 2009; Aannestad, 2018; Ratican, 2024). Together, these practices show the capacity Viking bodies had to be actively transformed over time.

Figure 2.3: Cranial fragment from 8th century Ribe, inscribed with runes and perforated. (Museums of Southwest Jutland, Ribe / Photo: © Emma Tollefsen)

Even when a body appears as we might expect –

e.g. intact and delimited as an individual in its burial context – there is a tendency in scholarship to impose fixed categories onto it. But this can obfuscate the complexity of Viking bodies. A famous burial from Birka, Sweden, was previously thought to be a male warrior based on the funerary objects, but provoked controversy when the human remains were genetically sexed as female (Hedenstierna-Jonson et al, 2017; Price et al, 2019). This raises several important questions, as the ambiguous burial no longer conforms to the simplistic diagnostic features expected from a 'male', 'female', or 'warrior' grave, but troubles the assumed categories of conventional scholarship. Recent work stresses the need to move away from these stereotypes and assumptions (Hedenstierna-Jonson et al., 2017; Moen, 2019; Slotten, 2020). Burials are contextually dependent and variable, and they reference their fluid and diverse worlds of origin.

It is also crucial to consider the diversity of bodily practices and understandings across Viking worlds. Commonalities can be observed across sources, but there was no homogeneous Viking world in which burial practices or material culture were entirely uniform. Mortuary treatment varied considerably, with co-existing practices of inhumation; cremation; burials in mounds, cairns, boats, wagons, ships, urns; and lack of burial in an archaeologically recognisable way. As Neil Price (2008, p.257) observes, 'after more than a century of excavations there can be no doubt whatever that we cannot speak of a standard orthodoxy of burial practice common to the whole Norse world'.

Having set the stage as to how Viking bodies were rendered in art, treated in death, and the geographical diversity of body-concepts, we turn now to introduce some key conceptual tools drawn upon in this article. A useful way out of the bind of dichotomic body-concepts is to apply more-than-representational approaches (Anderson and Harrison, 2010; Harris, 2018). Representationalism posits a distinction between what is 'really real' and what is represented, where the latter is superimposed on the real. Both naturalistic and social constructionist approaches treat the natural as actually real, but the former focus primarily on the natural as the object of study, while the latter treat it only as a canvas for the construction of represented 'reality' through language and signs. By contrast, more-than-representational thinking challenges the relationalist distinction between matter and meaning. It does not reject the symbolic qualities of bodies or objects, but centres how both the material-physical and semiotic-symbolic aspects of artefacts and phenomena emerge together and are entwined. As Eriksen (2022, p.70) argues, 'the body is not a biological

fact, a neutral canvas that we "dress" in culture. Rather, bodies emerge as products of specific histories: our bodies hold entire worlds in how we run, sleep, have sex, interact'. The body is not simply a producer or medium of culture; it is itself always already cultural, and its material and representational aspects cannot be understood as separate or in isolation.

Consequently, this article uses the concept of 'body-worlding', emphasising the importance of situating bodies in their own worlds, rather than assuming they are interchangeable across a broader 'Viking world'. Body-worlds encompass not only the physical form of the body, but also 'the totality of bodily experiences, practices and representations in a specific space and time' (Robb and Harris, 2013, p.3). Situating bodies in such a way is vital because, as argued by Donna Haraway, 'nothing comes without its world' – that is, nothing exists in a vacuum of isolation, and everything is enmeshed in a multitude of relationalities (Haraway, 1997, p.37). Eriksen (2022) develops the work of John Robb, Oliver J.T. Harris, and Haraway to suggest bodies cannot be explored without also seeking to know the worlds in which they exist and emerge. As Ben Anderson and Paul Harrison (2010, p.8) observe, these worlds are not 'an extant thing but rather … a mobile but more or less stable ensemble of practices, involvements, relations, capacities, tendencies and affordances'. Emphasising the connection of the body to its world helps us understand bodies not as isolated from their material and cultural contexts, but as being entangled in wider networks of bodies and beings. By focusing on the *worldings* of particular bodies, we can situate difference and distinct practices in localised contexts, without erasing common aspects of Viking Age ontologies.

A final consideration is that it may be necessary for us to reappraise our conceptions of what constituted bodily norms and transgressions in a Viking Age context. Assumptions about how and which bodily practices transgress implicitly or explicitly understood norms are culturally and historically specific. Modern Eurocentric notions of the body as an integral, choate, and non-partible person affect cultural practices of how bodies are maintained as a 'whole' in life and death, and the treatment of those who might be defined as 'lacking' in some bodily aspect. But the prevalence of fragmented body parts in Iron and Viking Age mortuary practices, as discussed above, suggests a different body-concept, in which the body is seen as partible in certain contexts, and notions of integrity or boundedness are by no means inviolable (Eriksen, 2020). If we assume such treatments of the body were *a priori* transgressive – for instance, that they result from atypical violence

enacted on those perceived as deviant or outsiders – we close off the possibility that they constituted some kind of norm (Toplak, 2018). These bodies may be deviant only in that they diverge from what we in the modern West expect bodies to be capable of, and how we think they could and should appear in a specific context.

Rather than imposing modern Eurocentric understandings of the body onto a strikingly different past, we want to be open to seeing strangeness in the Viking Age. We should be cautious of assuming comfortable parallels between modern Western cultures and those in the distant past. What we consider normative or transgressive is unlikely to map exactly onto how the Vikings felt about their bodies, and it is crucial that we confront our false 'cultural intimacy' with the Vikings, which limits our capacity to recognise its alterity, as has been suggested for the classical world (Mol, 2023; see also Herzfeld, 2005, pp.1–35). Instead, we have to make the Vikings strange again. This strangeness must not be equated to an inferiority emergent from foreignness, backwardness, or anachronistic ideas of 'barbarity'. Recognising the strangeness of the Viking Age means accepting its difference and heterogeneity, including the different ontologies of its body-worlds. It means thinking critically about our preconceptions and desires, about how we think about the Viking past and what we want it to be.

To demonstrate this approach, we present three case studies drawing on diverse evidence. First, we explore practices of modifying the physical body and the implications these have for understanding the body as a form of material culture in itself. Second, we examine an anthropomorphic 'art' object – the so-called Odin from Lejre – and the insights this figurine generates for Viking concepts of bodily ability. The final case study presents a famous Viking woman's burial and shows that even in death, a buried body is not a static entity to be 'read', but forms part of a multitemporal assemblage drawing together past, present, and future.

Body modification

The first aspect of the unboundedness of bodies we demonstrate here is that the body itself is a form of material culture. Bodies can be both objects and subjects, and are never static, but are always in a process of transformation. Cells die and regenerate, the heart pumps blood through the veins, the digestive system breaks down and transforms other bodies – animals and plants – to nutrients, energy, and waste (cf. Eriksen and Costello, 2025; Mol, 2021). The transformational and malleable capacity of the body can

also be manipulated. Bodies are mouldable through a myriad of different technologies, including scarification, tattooing, piercings, hair alterations, amputation, foot binding, and many others. We argue that the Vikings also treated the body as a material substance that could, and in some cases should, be transformed. Among the body modification practices we have evidence for within Viking Age body-worlds are teeth filing and other potential dental modifications, hair technologies, and the use of make-up and tattooing.

Dental modification of various kinds is widespread across time and place, and can take the form of filing, drilling, chiselling, notching, or chipping, polishing, inlaying, or staining the facial surface, as well as tooth extraction (Burnett and Irish, 2017; Power et al, 2022, pp.128–9). Teeth can be altered or separated from the rest of the body without posing any danger to life. They are sometimes also thought to contain some of the essence of the person. Teeth filing is a permanent and, to a modern audience, exceptionally striking form of body manipulation evidenced in the Viking Age. The phenomenon is attested in more than 130 individuals, exclusively osteologically sexed as male, mostly from modern-day Sweden, with a few instances in Denmark and England (Arcini, 2018). The practice is executed by carving crescent-shaped grooved lines on the outward-facing surface of teeth from the anterior dentition (Fig. 2.4). This particular practice has been argued to indicate either an aesthetic ideal associated with specific social groups, e.g. traders or warriors, or as an identity marker of subaltern or unfree persons (Kjellström, 2014). We argue that this form of body modification can also be a strategy to alter the aesthetic capacities of some, exclusively male, bodies, and their affective impact as well as their lived experience. It is a striking intervention that provides an unfamiliar glimpse of the Vikings' ideas about what a body can and should be (cf. Tollefsen and Eriksen, in prep).

Hair technology is another strategy to alter and modify bodily expression, using the detachable and growing parts of the body as social instruments. Like teeth, hair is both a part of the body and potentially separate from it. Hair and teeth are in-between, material resources that are intimate or *not*, depending on context. Like other material culture related to the body, hair is part biology, part social performance, part extension of personhood, part display, part concealment, and can enhance or conceal gender and sexuality. Hair can also be an intense space of politics and policing (e.g. Caldwell, 1991; Ngandu-Kalenga Greensword, 2022).

Iron- and Viking-period material culture and imagery

Figure 2.4: Individual with filed teeth from Kopparsvik (Gotland), Sweden. (Historiska museet, Stockholm / Photo: © Brad Marshall)

indicate that hair was of importance throughout the first millennium in Scandinavia (Ashby, 2014; Arwill-Nordbladh, 2016). Combs were a standard part of (traditionally considered) male equipment and are a central part of burial assemblages in multiple periods (e.g. Illerup Ådal). Hair was also often accentuated in imagery, and in complex ways signalled social identities in terms of gender, warriorhood, and standing (e.g. Ashby, 2014, pp.175–6). In multiple Germanic societies, hair was frequently interwoven with political power. The Merovingian kings famously could not rule if they cut their hair, while the Norwegian King Harald Fairhair was thus named because he vowed to cut his hair only once he had united all of Norway into one kingdom. Hair technologies were key social instruments, demonstrating how the malleability of the body transcends the individual person.

Finally, people in the Viking Age may also have manipulated the appearance of the face and skin in different ways to alter bodily capacities. The traveler Ibn Ya'qūb, from al-Andalus (Andalucia) in Spain, went to the Viking town of Hedeby (formerly in Denmark, now in Germany) in the tenth century $_{CE}$. He noted that 'both men and women use a kind of indelible cosmetic

to enhance the beauty of their eyes' (Ibn Yaʻqūb, 2011, p.163). Archaeological evidence supports that the Vikings may have used cosmetic substances smeared on the skin to alter their appearance. A burial from Fyrkat in Denmark, discussed in more detail below, was found to contain a box brooch. Among other grave goods were seeds of henbane (a psychoactive plant), owl pellets, and bird bones. Inside the box brooch, traces of white lead paint were discovered (Pentz et al., 2009). The particular characteristics of this burial have led to the body being interpreted as a ritual specialist – a magic-worker or Old Norse *völva* – who may have used paint to prepare their body and alter their looks to perform specific kinds of ritual (see also below). Whether people also transformed the appearance of their skin in more permanent ways, such as through tattooing, is unknown. Another traveller, Ibn Fadlān, described the 'Rus', likely Viking travellers from Sweden, as being 'tattooed in dark green with designs' (Ibn Fadlān, 2011, p.46). No bodies with preserved skin exist from the Viking world, but previous examples from prehistoric Europe – such as the famous body of Ötzi – demonstrate that it is certainly possible that such body modification practices occurred.

Crucially, what these examples demonstrate is that Viking bodies are far more complex than the recognisable stereotypes and comfortable categories have led us to believe. Bodies are simultaneously partible and persistent objects. The body is not fixed once and for all: a sword, a piece of jewellery, a hair pin, or a form of make-up can extend what the body is and what it can do. Conversely, a body can transform in powerful ways not only by adding material things to the bodily assemblage, but also by modifying the substance of the body itself. Such modifications and interventions could produce certain kinds of persons, and be repeated or revised through life, while living with the durable marks of the person one used to be.

Bodily capacity and difference

As well as revealing novel reinterpretations of unboundedness, difference, and fluidity through body modification as a form of material culture, we can also radically reframe our understanding of Viking bodies by reconsidering ontologies of bodily capacities and alterity. Underpinning ideas of boundedness is the persistence of modern conceptions of the body as 'machine' – that is, composed of repeated, standardised, and functional parts that co-act or can break down from an idealised operational model (Robb and Harris, 2013, pp.175–6). This includes pervasive ideas of the medicalised standard body, one that is biologically presupposed and has a normative and transcendental

archetype. This brings with it an implicit and restrictive conceptualisation of what a body should look like, possess, and be able to do – and what it could (or should) not do. Such ideas implicitly imbue us with the understanding that when a body transgresses, deviates, or breaks down from the 'perfect' healthy and choate bodily norm, it is effectively diminished, restricted, or negatively altered.

Yet in Viking Age Scandinavia and the diaspora, there existed different understandings of how bodily difference and the concomitant relationalities beyond a bounded self could emerge and be embodied, even when something is ostensibly changed or lost, or when something non- or more-than-human is added. To explore ontologies of two aspects of Viking bodies and body-worlds – that of different bodily sensory and transformational capacities – and how these diverge from the modern norms of bounded, choate bodies, we can turn to an enigmatic Viking Age figurine from Lejre (Fig. 2.5).


Figure 2.5: Odin fra Lejre (Odin from Lejre). Silver figurine with niello inlay, 1.75 cm tall and 1.98 cm wide, 9 grams. (Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen / Photo: © Ole Malling, CC BY-SA 2.0)

The figurine was excavated in 2009 from Gammel Lejre, Zealand, Denmark, a significant Late Iron Age hall complex. The object has been stylistically dated to c.950 CE. It is made of silver with niello inlay and is remarkably small, little bigger than a fingernail. But it is strikingly detailed, with three major elements: a chair with zoomorphic features, possibly carved wolf or dog heads; a seated anthropomorphic figure; and two birds perched on the chair's armrests (Christensen, 2013). The object's diminutive size raises questions about its tactility, including how other bodies may have handled,

engaged with, and understood it in everyday life (Eriksen, 2022).

Following conventional approaches to anthropomorphic 'art' from this period, the Lejre figurine has been subject to intense debate about the identity of the figure depicted. But this discourse has always essentially sought to ascribe a fixed identity. It has been broadly assumed that the seated figure represents Odin; indeed, this is the interpretation presented on the Lejre Museum's website (https://lejremuseum.dk). In part, this was inferred from readings of the chair element as Odin's seat Hlidskialf, the zoomorphic carved animals being his wolves Geri and Freki, and the perched birds being the ravens Hugin and Munin (Christensen, 2013, pp.65–68). However, as argued by Elisabeth Arwill-Nordbladh (2013), the seated human-like figure is ambiguous, with its clothing and physical features uneasily gendered. Consequently, some have suggested the seated figure may represent a female figure, such as a deity like Freyja, another mythological figure, or a human *völva*, i.e. a prophetic magic-practitioner (Arwill-Nordbladh, 2013; Christensen, 2013). But this does not rule out interpreting the figure as Odin, who in one thirteenth-century mythological text is accused of having practiced magic in the same way as a *völva*, perhaps a reference to subverting gender conventions (Larrington, 2014, p.85). In any case, we argue that *identifying* the figure is not a satisfying end in itself (cf. Eriksen, 2022; Eriksen et al, 2025b). Rather, the challenge in a more-than-representational framework is to understand how the figurine itself, and the human decisions that shaped it, resonated consequentially within a world of metal and fleshy bodies, stories, and body-concepts.

A prominent feature, forming part of the first identification of the figure with Odin, is its differently styled eyes. The right has a clear pupil, while the left eye is more diffuse. This feature could be an indication of different sightedness in each of the Lejre figure's eyes. It has been suggested the differently styled eyes of the Lejre figurine may be a deliberate result of its manufacture (Arwill-Nordbladh, 2012; 2013) or of abrasion or later damage (Christensen, 2013). Intriguingly, several other Late Iron and Viking Age objects have distinctive eye features. These features have similarly been posited to result from unintentional or deliberate damage, abrasion, or manual wearing away of the features over time. This includes several other figures associated with Odin with differently styled eyes made from precious metals and found in high-status contexts (Arwill-Nordbladh, 2013; Price and Mortimer, 2014) (Fig. 2.6a & b).

Figures 2.6a & b:
Odin from Lindby. Cast bronze figure with differentiated eyes. (Historiska museet, Stockholm / Photo: © Ola Myrin, CC BY-SA 4.0)
Odin from Uppåkra. Bronze figure with differentiated eyes. (Photo: © HecquetK, CC BY-SA 4.0)

These finds attest to a tradition of depicting

different-sightedness across Viking worlds that differs from modern conceptions of the medicalised, machine-like body, where the loss of vision is understood as a form of disability. There were no doubt people living in Viking Age Scandinavia and the diaspora who experienced what today might be referred to as visual impairments and blindness, although it is impossible to quantify the occurrence and pathology of such conditions from the archaeological record. Old Norse textual sources feature multiple beings whose eyesight is restricted, manipulated, or otherwise differentiated. But rather than being a loss of capacity, these changes often brought with them enhanced or special abilities (e.g. Lassen, 2003). Odin is the most notable such figure; the *Prose Edda* states he sacrificed an eye to gain secret knowledge and the magical ability of prophecy (Sturluson, [13th c.] 1995, p.17).

But even if we accept that the Lejre figure was meant to represent Odin, we need not see this as *all* that this metal body did. Depictions of figures assumed to be Odin are diverse across the Late Iron and Viking Ages. For example, some Odinic figures, such as stone sculptures from the Isle of Man (Bourns, 2014, pp.23–4; Fig. 2.7), do not have differently styled eye features. In addition, the Lejre figurine looks different from the aforementioned depictions of figures with differently styled eyes. It is thus crucial that we give attention to the specific features of the Lejre figure to articulate what kind of body-world it portrays. When approaching this object, we can do much more than simply identifying it as Odin. There is a particular materiality to the bodies that emerge from and are entangled within the figure that speaks to a body-concept quite different from our own.

As suggested by Arwill-Nordbladh (2012; 2013), the Lejre figure contributes to a distinct body-concept in which altered visual capacity may have been not only positive, but even desirable. Not only do the differently styled eyes resonate with the story of Odin sacrificing his eye to attain wisdom, but other aspects of the object speak to expanded bodily capacity through more-than-human entanglements. The birds may be Odin's ravens Hugin (Thought) and Munin (Memory), who are associated with extended cognition and increased knowledge through their names and the idea that they bring Odin special knowledge from across the Norse cosmos (Sturluson, 1995, p.33). The chair may represent Hlidskialf, Odin's seat in Asgard, which is said to give those who sit in it the ability to see the activities of all things across all nine worlds (p.13). Elsewhere in Norse literature, raised platforms are associated with the capacity to see into other realms through practices of sight-enhancing sorcery,

Figure 2.7: Thorwald's Cross carved stone from Andreas Church, Isle of Man. Interpreted to depict Odin with a bird at his shoulder being consumed by the wolf Fenrir during Ragnarok. (Photo: © Brad Marshall)

as portrayed in *The Saga of Erik the Red*, and chair-pendants have been found in burials thought to be associated with magic-practitioners (Drescher and Hauck, 1982; Price, 2019, pp.120–5). The Lejre figurine is thus a constellation of bodies and things associated with the extension of sensory capacities beyond the boundaries of the physical body, and specifically with the expansion of sight beyond the realm of the ocular.

The Lejre figurine can be usefully interpreted in light of its Odinic associations, but these are by no means final, comprehensive, or all-encompassing. More to the point, they do not supersede the particular materiality of the object. The representational work of crafting the figurine happened and acted within a broader world

of transformable, extendable bodies that, we argue, went far beyond depictional choice. It centres the relationality between different (human and non-human) beings and objects as part of an emergent entity that goes beyond the physical limitations of any of their forms. The figurine instantiates a body-world that, at its heart, is characterised by its ontological fluidity, which we may speculate would have extended beyond the diminutive object itself to the bodies that produced and interacted with it.

In this body-concept, where the boundaries between bodies and things are diffuse, the different-sightedness embodied in the figurine need not be conceptualised as a detrimental deficit. Rather, it speaks to an understanding of the potential of differently abled bodies. Here, different-sightedness becomes part of a mechanism by which new, augmenting capacities can be achieved beyond the body's physical boundaries, affording different forms of knowledge, insight, and power. Ultimately, the Lejre figurine should be understood as *an* Odin, with a particular body-world that foregrounds the potency of different bodily capacities, situating them in a network of beings and things that extend and enhance them.

Temporality and body-worldings

Our final case study expands on body-worldings by exploring the temporal complexities of Viking graves. The allure of burials as snapshots of specific people or contexts is undeniable. We are tantalised by the prospect of a crystallised moment in time, revealing the secrets of the past. Although there can be elements of truth to this, the reality is far more complex. As famously touted, the dead cannot bury themselves (Parker-Pearson, 1999), and we may not be looking at the deceased's identity as it was in life, or even a single identity at all. The deceased is at least partially separated from the living world and staged according to the beliefs and wishes of the mourners. However, it is also critical to abandon the assumption that burials are static in time. As we will demonstrate, Viking bodies straddled multiple temporalities and were enmeshed in networks that extended beyond the immediate moment of death, drawing together past, present, and future.

This case study focuses on the aforementioned Fyrkat 4 grave from northern Jutland in Denmark, part of a larger late tenth-century cemetery at the fortress. This is one of the best-known and most discussed burials from Viking Age Denmark (e.g. Gardeła et al., 2023; Roesdahl, 1977; Fig. 2.8). The deceased is frequently interpreted as a *völva* – a magic practitioner – based on the accompanying 'grave goods' (Price,

2019, pp.105–13). These include multiple unique objects and materials, most notably a 'spit' or staff believed to be part of a magical toolkit, as well as henbane seeds, which could facilitate the ecstatic trances supposedly conducted by such practitioners. There is no skeletal material in the grave for sex estimation, but the deceased is almost exclusively referred to as a woman due to the associated finds (Roesdahl, 2023, p.293). However, we have already highlighted the precarity of using objects to diagnose sex and gender in the Viking Age. The Fyrkat 4 burial similarly demonstrates the power of stereotypes and the ease with which we can fall into neat, 'cohesive' interpretations that suit our modern biases.

Figure 2.8: Selection of items found within the Fyrkat 4 grave, including (from top to bottom, left to right): a slightly-bent iron cooking spit, or staff, with bronze fittings; a silver chair pendant; a silver "duck's foot" pendant; a bronze cup, potentially originating from Central Asia; and a bronze bowl which had a grass cover and contained a "fatty substance", also potentially originating from Central Asia. (Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen / Photos: © Arnold Mikkelsen, CC BY-SA 2.0)

The interpretation of a 'pagan' magic-worker is interesting when framed against the specific context within which this person operated. We can date this burial with more certainty than most in Denmark, as Fyrkat is a Trelleborg-style fortress with a limited period of use. These were constructed c.975–80 CE during the reign of Harald Bluetooth, and seem to have been in use for perhaps only ten to fifteen years (Roesdahl, 2023, p.296). Subsequently, the Fyrkat 4 burial subverts the traditionally proposed 'Christian burial' paradigm where no grave goods are present (e.g. Zori, 2023). This is despite the burial's presence in a context where we might expect to see attempts at following Christian norms in response to Bluetooth's adoption of these beliefs c.965 CE. The burial therefore offers an excellent avenue to explore three key themes: the power of heirloomage and connections to past materials; the potential for burials to be 'out-of-time'; and the capacity for body-worlds to exist beyond their presents.

The Fyrkat 4 grave contains various objects beyond the immediate context of the grave and its cemetery. Two notable examples are the Gotlandic box brooch and the shoes the deceased may have worn. The box brooch, containing lead-based makeup, dates to the early years of the tenth century (Thunmark-Nylén, 2006, pp.76, 86; Fig. 2.9), meaning the brooch is at least one or two generations older than the burial. This is also not a style seen in Denmark, instead originating from Sweden (Pentz, 2023, p.310). This already expands the temporal network of the grave, as it not only relates to its present, but also to a connective past. In addition, gold threads were found at the bottom of the grave, which may be evidence that shoes of a much earlier fashion were once included in the burial. Mannering and Rimstad (2023) liken these to examples from the sixth and seventh centuries elsewhere in Europe, stretching these links even further through time. Many of the objects, materials, and styles within the grave originated from outside Denmark, further capturing various scales of time as these all have journeys and histories of their own. The grave and the body-world of the person(s) therein are not isolated, but instead geo-temporally referential and relational. The idea of citational grave settings, which reference times and places beyond their immediate contexts, is an important concept to think with, because it requires a more holistic and wider consideration of the burial. These graves speak not only to the identities of a single human, but also across multiple strands of time, space, and entities, with various motivations, constructions, and mediators to contend with.

Figure 2.9: Gotlandic box brooch, found in the Fyrkat 4 grave. (Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen / Photo: © Arnold Mikkelsen, CC BY-SA 2.0)

The grave is perceived to be unusual – both more generally (as it is one of the most elaborate burials from Viking Age Denmark), but also specifically to its context. It appears to be a 'pagan' burial within a 'Christianised' king's fortress. This can be interpreted in various ways. It may be that the grave constitutes an act of resistance against a new set of incoming and imposed beliefs. The burial consequently becomes a time capsule of sorts for communal and ancestral identity. Else Roesdahl (2023) poses that trusted traditions are needed in a time of change, and we can use this to interrogate various levels of the burial's identity: person, grave, and community. Was the person a cultic specialist needed to mediate a period of change, and their death spelled the end of an era? Does the burial thus act as a commemoration both of the deceased and of a changed community?

An alternative explanation may be that this grave is so strongly 'pagan' because the associated objects were placed in the grave due to being outside of what was now appropriate for the time, and needed to be removed from circulation (Roesdahl, 2023, p.298). Are these objects 'grave goods', as traditionally proposed, or is this instead a form of human and object co-burial? Sara Ann Knutson (2023) questions at what point an object hoard becomes a grave good inventory (or if such a binary even existed), and this categorical ambiguity is important to keep in mind. Such questions disrupt the more typical interpretation that exceptional burials indicate exceptional individuals and refocuses the discussion around the relational composites captured within the grave. The burial then becomes something more: not just the deposition of a high-status or elite body, but a communal

construction citing various elements of change, (re)negotiation, and renewal. Is this grave indicative of an *intrinsically* atypical person, or does it operate within a multitudinous network of relationships, brought together in a seemingly isolated vignette? Do our modern Western ideas of reflectional individuality limit our understanding of what this grave is doing?

We argue that graves, including the bodies and objects interred therein, exist beyond themselves, not simply as immutable and bounded entities, but as 'materialised narratives' (Price, 2010, p.147) that are revisited, retold, and reinterpreted. It is important to consider how people of the Viking Age interacted with these narratives. Several examples exist of graves having been reopened or reused (e.g. Klevnäs, 2016). There are many motives for this, such as retrieving objects imbued with personhood to reconstruct living persons or creating connections across time. What would a burial like Fyrkat 4 have meant to a society that we know re-engaged with their immediate or ancestral dead? Was the burial constructed with the knowledge, and perhaps even the expectation, that it may be reopened? We are once again at risk of being self-bounded by modern limiters: what we believe are appropriate approaches to death and burial today may have no parallel in the past. The body-worlds of the deceased do not cease simply because they are buried. Instead, these bodies have pasts, presents, and futures, including their subsequent interpretations. We must ultimately avoid freezing body-worlds into monolithic entities which are static at a single point in time, never to be revisited. We should instead recognise that these body-worlds were fluid and unbounded, spanning multiple scales of existence.

Discussion and concluding remarks

This article has sought to highlight the unboundedness of Viking Age bodies in order to reveal their radical bodily alterities and multiplicities. Viking bodies were more complex and diverse than is suggested by modern stereotypes, which are typically delimited to 'known', comfortable, and recognisable identities. The imposition of fixed taxonomies onto Viking bodies is often implicitly underpinned by ahistorical and dichotomic nature-culture frameworks that are held to contain transcendental truths about 'the real body'. Consequently, they render damaging and limiting ontological conceptions of bodies that do not give attention to their fundamental, situated, and embodied ways of being.

By applying more-than-representational approaches, which dissolve distinctions between matter and meaning and reveal how bodies emerge from and contain whole worlds, we can break free of these delimiting fetters. Worlding these bodies then enables us to incorporate the enmeshing of bodies in the multitude of relationalities that constitute their body-worlds. We have used these critical tools in the preceding analysis to show how the unboundedness of Viking bodies materialised through their ontological fluidity, heterogeneity across time and space, and different bodily norms. As a result, Viking Age body-worlds had fundamentally different bodily ontologies than those prescribed by modern Western conceptions emerging out of capitalist and post-Enlightenment thought.

As our case studies have shown, Viking bodies were not defined solely by biology, but were also material culture transformable through body modification. Material objects and modifications did not just accessorise the body, but altered its physical and social reality by expanding its potential and capacities. There are limitations to imposing fixed identities or gender assumptions on bodies, and the different abledness of Viking bodies was not equivalent to modern concepts of *dis*-ability, but resonated with concepts of augmenting and enhancing bodily capacities. Finally, Viking bodies did not simply exist in *a present*, but carried multitemporal layers that entangle past, present, and future. Interpretations shifted as bodies became part of new cultural contexts or were reimagined by later generations, ensuring that these bodies were active agents within cultural memory and transformation. Together, these case studies highlight how Viking bodily ontologies differ from modern Western perspectives by embodying complex relationships extending beyond a bounded individual. Viking bodies did not possess intrinsic identities that were expressed in bodily form, representational art, and burial tableaux. Rather, the specifics of what bodies could do were established by intertwining bodily traits, objects, animals – and these were all subject to active change.

The above is not an exhaustive exploration of the multiplicities of Viking bodies. But we hope it will be the starting point for an expanded discourse that is more open to seeing the full range of bodies and persons in the Viking Age, to making them visible and making them *matter*. The Vikings were not just us in the past. It would be wrong to assume that by making the Vikings familiar, we can gain a fuller understanding of their bodies, worlds, lives, and deaths by drawing connections with our own. Paradoxically, it is only when we detach Viking body-worlds from our false cultural intimacies that we can begin to approach them on their own terms.

Making the past strange again helps us recognise that

our own bodies are not bounded either. We routinely modify our bodies for medical and aesthetic purposes; we all embody difference in our abilities and capacities; and our body-worlds are not static, monolithic entities, but instead incorporate continuous and persistent change over time. Confronting the past confronts our own strange bodies in the present, which enables us to recognise alterity and difference across time and space, and which raises significant ontological and political ramifications and commitments. By opening ourselves up to seeing the full spectrum of bodies in the Viking Age, we expand our understanding of what our own bodies are capable of and the embodied ways of being that are possible in our historical moment.

Acknowledgements

CRediT author statement

BM: Conceptualisation, writing; ET: Conceptualisation, writing; AW: Conceptualisation, writing; MHE: Conceptualisation, writing, funding acquisition

Bibliography

1   Aannestad, H.L. (2018) 'Charisma, violence, and weapons: The broken swords of the Vikings' in M. Vedeler, I.M. Røstad, S. Kristoffersen, and A.Z.T. Glørstad (eds) *Charismatic Objects: From Roman Times to the Middle Ages*, Oslo, Cappelen Damm Akademisk, pp.147–68.

2   Alberti, B. and Marshall, Y. (2009) 'Animating archaeology: Local theories and conceptually open-ended methodologies', *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, vol.19, no.3, pp.345–57.

3   Anderson, B. and Harrison, P. (2010) 'The promise of non-representational theories' in B. Anderson and P. Harrison (eds) *Taking-Place: Non-Representational Theories and Geography*, London and New York, Routledge, pp.1–36.

4   Arcini, C.A. (2018) *The Viking Age: A Time of Many Faces*, Oxford, Oxbow.

5   Arwill-Nordbladh, E. (2012) 'Ability and disability: On bodily variations and bodily possibilities in Viking Age myth and image' in I.-M. Back Danielsson and S. Thedéen (eds) *To Tender Gender: The Pasts and Futures of Gender Research in Archaeology*, Stockholm, Stockholm University, pp.33–59.

6   Arwill-Nordbladh, E. (2013) 'Negotiating normativities – "Odin from Lejre" as challenger of hegemonic orders', *Danish Journal of Archaeology*, vol.2, no.1, pp.87–93.

7   Arwill-Nordbladh, E. (2016) 'Viking Age hair', *Internet Archaeology*, vol.42. https://doi.org/10.11141/ia.42.6.8

8   Ashby, S. (2014) 'Technologies of appearance: Hair behaviour in early medieval Europe', *Archaeological Journal*, vol.171, no.1, pp.151–84.

9   Bailey, D. (2008) 'The corporeal politics of being in the Neolithic' in D.A. Borić and J.E. Robb (eds) *Past Bodies: Body-centered Research in Archaeology*, Oxford, Oxbow, pp.9–18.

10   Battersby, C. (1993) 'Her body/her boundaries: Gender and the metaphysics of containment' in A.E. Benjamin (ed.) *Journal of Philosophy and the Visual Arts*, vol.4, pp.30–39.

11   Birkett, T. (2019) 'Introduction: Vikings in the public eye' in T. Birkett and R. Dale (eds) *The Vikings Reimagined: Reception, Recovery, Engagement*, Berlin, De Gruyter, pp.1–18.

12   Borić, D.A. and Robb, J.E. (2008) *Past Bodies: Body-centered Research in Archaeology*, Oxford, Oxbow.

13   Bourns, T.J.S. (2014) 'Mythological and heroic motifs in Manx stone sculpture' in C. Larrington and L. Gardeła (eds) *Viking Myths and Rituals on the Isle of Man*, Languages, Myths and Finds, vol.1, Nottingham, CSVA, pp.22–9.

14   Burnett, S.E. and Irish, J.D. (eds) (2017) *A World View of Bioculturally Modified Teeth*, Gainesville, University Press of Florida.

15   Caldwell, P.M. (1991) 'A hair piece: Perspectives on the intersection of race and gender', *Duke Law Journal*, vol.1991, no.2, pp.365–96.

16   Christensen, T. (2013) 'A silver figurine from Lejre', *Danish Journal of Archaeology*, vol.2, no.1, pp.65–78.

17   Eriksen, M.H. (2017) 'Don't all mothers love their children? Deposited infants as animate objects in the Scandinavian Iron Age', *World Archaeology*, vol.49, no.3, pp.338–56.

18   Eriksen, M.H. (2020) 'Body-objects and personhood in Iron and Viking Age Scandinavia: Processing, curating, and depositing skulls in settlements', *World Archaeology*, vol.52, no.1, pp.103–19.

19   Eriksen, M.H. (2022) 'Body-worldings of Scandinavian prehistory: Making oddkin with two body-objects', *Current Swedish Archaeology*, vol.30, pp.65–94.

20   Eriksen, M.H. and Costello, B. (2025) 'Bodies of intoxication: Psychoactives in Viking ritual practice' in S. Nygaard, S. Croix, and S. Sindbæk (eds) *Ritual Performance in the Viking Age*, Aarhus, Aarhus University Press, pp.107–22.

21   Eriksen, M.H. and Kay, K. (2022) 'Reflections on posthuman ethics: Grievability and the more-than-human worlds of Iron and Viking Age Scandinavia', *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, vol.32, no.2, pp.331–43.

22   Eriksen, M.H. and Ratican, C. (forthcoming) 'Multispecies Vikings: Animals, people, and cyborgs in the Late Iron and Viking Ages' in A. Klevnäs and C. Ljung (eds) *Routledge Handbook of Death and Burial in the Viking Age*, London, Routledge.

23   Eriksen, M.H., Olley, K.M., Marshall, B., and Tollefsen, E. (2025a) '*Womb politics: The pregnant body and archaeologies of absence*', Cambridge Archaeological Journal, vol.35, no.3, pp.522–35.

24   Eriksen, M.H., Tsoraki, C., Marshall, B., and Aslesen, E. (2025b) 'Viking body-making: New evidence for intra-action with iconic Viking anthropomorphic "art" through microwear and imaging analyses', *Antiquity*, vol.99, no.408, pp.1658–76.

25   Frost, S. (2016) *Biocultural Creatures: Toward a New Theory of the Human*, Durham, Duke University Press.

26   Gardeła, L., Bønding, S., and Pentz, P. (eds) (2023) *The Norse Sorceress: Mind and Materiality in the Viking World*, Oxford, Oxbow.

27   Haraway, D.J. (1997) *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium. FemaleMan©_Meets_OncoMouse™: Feminism and Technoscience*, London, Routledge.

28   Harris, O.J.T. (2018) 'More than representation: Multiscalar assemblages and the Deleuzian challenge to archaeology', *History of the Human Sciences*, vol.31, no.3, pp.83–104.

29   Hedeager, L. (2004) 'Dyr og andre mennesker – mennesker og andre dyr: Dyreornamentikkens transcendentale realitet' in A. Andrén, K. Jennbert, and C. Raudvere (eds) *Ordning mot kaos: Studier av nordisk förkristen kosmologi*, Vägar till Midgård, vol.4., Lund, Nordic Academic Press, pp.219–52.

30   Hedeager, L. (2011) *Iron Age Myth and Materiality: An Archaeology of Scandinavia AD 400–1000*, London, Routledge.

31   Hedenstierna-Jonson, C., Kjellström, A., Zachrisson, T., Krzewińska, M., Sobrado, V., Price, N., Günther, T., Jakobsson, M., Götherström, A., and Storå, J. (2017) 'A female Viking warrior confirmed by genomics', *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, vol.164, no.4, pp.853–60.

32   Herzfeld, M. (2005) *Cultural Intimacy: Social Poetics in the Nation-State* (2nd edn), New York, Routledge.

33   Ibn Fadlān, A. (2011) 'The Book of Ahmad ibn Fadlān 921–922' in *Ibn Fadlān and the Land of Darkness: Arab Travellers in the Far North* (trans. P. Lunde and C. Stone), London, Penguin, pp.1–58.

34   Ibn Ya'qūb, I. (2011) 'Ibrāhīm ibn Ya'qūb on northern Europe 965' in *Ibn Fadlān and the Land of Darkness: Arab Travellers in the Far North* (trans. P. Lunde and C. Stone), London, Penguin, pp.162–68.

35   Joyce, R. (2005) 'Archaeology of the body', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol.34, pp.139–58.

36   Klevnäs, A.M. (2016) '"Imbued with the essence of the owner": Personhood and possessions in the reopening and reworking of Viking-Age burials', *European Journal of Archaeology*, vol.19, no.3, pp.456–76.

37   Knutson, S.A. (2023) 'Between the material and immaterial: Burial objects and their nonhuman agencies' in L. Gardeła, S. Bønding, and P. Pentz (eds) *The Norse Sorceress: Mind and Materiality in the Viking World*, Oxford, Oxbow, pp.15–30.

38   Kristofferson, S. (2010) 'Half beast – half man: Hybrid figures in animal art', *World Archaeology*, vol.42, no.2, pp.261–72.

39   Larrington, C. (trans.) (2014) *The Poetic Edda*, 2nd ed., Oxford, Oxford University Press.

40   Larrington, C. (2023) *The Norse Myths that Shape the Way We Think*, London, Thames & Hudson.

41   Lassen, A. (2003) *Øjet og blindheden i norrøn litteratur og mytologi*, Copenhagen, Museum Tusculanum Press.

42   Lund, J. (2013) 'Fragments of a conversion: Handling bodies and objects in pagan and Christian Scandinavia AD 800–1100', *World Archaeology*, vol.45, no.1, pp.46–63.

43   Mannering, U. and Rimstad, C. (2023) 'The textiles from the Fyrkat 4 grave' in L. Gardeła, S. Bønding, and P. Pentz (eds) *The Norse Sorceress: Mind and Materiality in the Viking World*, Oxford, Oxbow, pp.329–38.

44   Moen, M. (2019) 'Challenging gender: A reconsideration of gender in the Viking Age using the mortuary landscape', unpublished PhD dissertation, Oslo, University of Oslo.

45   Mol, A. (2021) *Eating in Theory*, Durham, N.C., Duke University Press.

46   Mol, E. (2023) 'New materialism and posthumanism in Roman archaeology: When objects speak for others', *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, vol.33, no.4, pp.715–29.

47   Ngandu-Kalenga Greensword, S. (2022) 'Historicizing black hair politics: A framework for contextualizing race politics', *Sociology Compass*, vol.16, no.8, e13015. https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.13015

48   Parker-Pearson, M. (1999) *The Archaeology of Death and Burial*, Sutton, Stroud.

49   Pentz, P. (2023) 'The Fyrkat 4 grave' in L. Gardeła, S. Bønding, and P. Pentz (eds) *The Norse Sorceress: Mind and Materiality in the Viking World*, Oxford, Oxbow, pp.301–28.

50   Pentz, P., Baastrup, M.P., Karg, S., and Mannering, U. (2009) 'Kong Haralds vølve', *Nationalmuseets Arbejdsmark*, vol.2009, pp.215–32.

51   Power, R.K., Mercieca-Spiteri, B., Thompson, J.E., McLaughlin, R., Carruthers, J., Buck, L.T., Saers, J., Pardey, M., Stock, J., and Magnussen, J. (2022) 'Dental modification in the Circle: Shaping bodies, shaping culture in Neolithic Malta' in S. Stoddart, R.K. Power, J.E. Thompson, B. Mercieca-Spiteri, R. McLaughlin, E.W. Parkinson, A. Pace and C. Malone (eds) *Temple People: Bioarchaeology, Resilience and Culture in Prehistoric Malta*, Cambridge, McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, pp.127–72.

52   Price, N. (2019) *The Viking Way: Magic and Mind in Late Iron Age Scandinavia* (2nd edn), Uppsala, Uppsala University.

53   Price, N. (2008) 'Dying and the dead: Viking Age mortuary behaviour' in S. Brink and N. Price (eds) *The Viking World*, London, Routledge, pp.257–73.

54   Price, N. (2010) 'Passing into poetry: Viking-Age mortuary drama and the origins of Norse mythology', *Medieval Archaeology*, vol.54, pp.123–56.

55   Price, N., Hedenstierna-Jonson, C., Zachrisson, T., Kjellström, A., Storå, J., Krzewińska, M., Günther, T., Sobrado, V., Jakobsson, M., and Götherström, A., (2019) 'Viking warrior women? Reassessing Birka chamber grave Bj.581', *Antiquity*, vol.93, no.367, pp.181–98.

56   Price, N. and Mortimer, P. (2014) 'An eye for Odin? Divine role-playing in the age of Sutton Hoo', *European Journal of Archaeology*, vol.17, no.3, pp.517–38.

57   Price, N. and Raffield, B. (2023) *The Vikings*, London, Routledge.

58   Ratican, C. (2024) *Bodies, Beings, and the Multiple Burial Rite of the Western Viking World*, London, Routledge.

59   Rebay-Salisbury, K., Sørensen, M.L.S., and Hughes, J. (eds) (2010) *Body Parts and Bodies Whole*, Oxford, Oxbow.

60   Robb, J. and Harris, O.J.T. (2013) *The Body in History: Europe from the Paleolithic to the Future*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

61   Roesdahl, E. (1977) *Fyrkat: En jysk vikingeborg*, Copenhagen, Det kongelige nordiske oldskriftselskab.

62   Roesdahl, E. (2023) 'The Fyrkat *vǫlva* revisited' in L. Gardeła, S. Bønding, and P. Pentz (eds) *The Norse Sorceress: Mind and Materiality in the Viking World*, Oxford, Oxbow, pp.293–300.

63   Slotten, C. (2020) 'Daughters of Freya, sons of Odin: Gendered lives during the Viking Age' unpublished PhD dissertation, Washington, D.C., American University.

64   Sturluson, S. ([13th c.] 1995), *Snorra Edda* (trans. A. Faulkes), London, Everyman.

65   Thunmark-Nylén, L. (2006) *Die Wikingerzeit Gotlands III: 1–2. Text*, Stockholm, Amqvist & Wiksell.

66   Tollefsen, E. and Eriksen, M.H. (in prep) 'The prehistoric roots of the tooth fairy? Earliest evidence for dentistry, dental modification and ritual treatment of teeth in Scandinavian prehistory'.

67   Toplak, M. (2018) 'Deconstructing the deviant burials – Kopparsvik and the rite of prone burials in Viking Age Scandinavia', *META Historiskarkeologisk tidskrift*, pp. 79–109.

68   Zori, D. (2023) *Age of Wolf and Wind: Voyages through the Viking World*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

VEILING:
MOURNING BETWEEN BODY AND IMAGE

Andrew Murray

Abstract

In late medieval Europe, veils signified mourning by covering either images or bodies. During Lent, they were draped over religious images in an iconoclastic gesture that marked Christ's suffering and death, setting the stage for their dramatic unveiling on Good Friday to enact his resurrection. Similarly, mourners wore black robes that covered their heads and bodies during funerals. Though these two practices have been studied separately, this paper examines them together by comparing two sets of images: depictions of the veiled Christ in scenes of the Mocking, and representations of mourners, especially those on the tomb of Louis of Laval in his book of hours. I argue that Lenten veiling, funerary robes, and images of the veiled Christ all perform a state of 'deanimation', a suspended condition between life and death. Veiling enacts this by treating bodies like images (through iconoclastic concealment) and images like bodies (by presenting them as suffering). Building on studies by Amy Knight Powell and Noa Turel, I adopt the term 'deanimation' to show how these visual performances draw on Pauline image theology: the idea of Christ as both body and image, and the Church as his body awaiting transformation into his image at the Last Judgement. This theological framework also helps explain the hierarchical distinctions expressed through mourning robes, which have previously been described as a 'liminal' form of dress. Given the Church is a collective body, its images do not 'constitute' bodies, to draw on frameworks analysed in the introduction to this collection, as though images and bodies were clearly distinct. The 'deanimate' body, whether individual or collective, is rather both body and image, articulating mourning for the dead in being bodies that do not yet conform to the image of Christ.

Biographical note

Andrew Murray is a lecturer in the history of art at The Open University, UK. He specialises in the art and ceremony of late medieval France and Valois Burgundy (c.1350–1520). He researches how authority – cultural, legal, and political – is manifested in visual culture, paying particular attention to the representation and performance of emotions and virtues. The historical aspect of this research has investigated the rhetoric of the common good and justice and how such rhetoric is evident in tomb sculpture, funerary ritual, ducal ordinances, and courtly literature. His sociological research is in the history of emotions, and particularly the work of Johan Huizinga.

VEILING: MOURNING BETWEEN BODY AND IMAGE

Andrew Murray, The Open University

Introduction

An illumination within a late fifteenth-century Flemish book of hours depicts an altar at the east end of a church choir (Fig. 3.1). Above it, Lenten veils shroud Mary, John, and the crucified Christ. These coverings commemorate Christ's death and burial and set the scene for celebrating the resurrection at Easter, when they would be removed. Such veils also created a 'visual fast', an extension of the Lenten dietary fast (Kemmerer, 2023, p.35). Further Lenten cloths portrayed include a white curtain across the choir, concealing the view of the main altar from the nave. Like the statue coverings, this veil was withdrawn at Easter, and sometimes at key moments throughout the Lenten period, to dramatise Christ's resurrection and the miracle of the Eucharist (Kemmerer, 2023, pp.31–5; Glodt, 2024, pp.165–6). A similar function may have been envisaged for the white hangings around the altar. One displays five red crosses, forming a backdrop to any host raised before it, and is framed by two further white curtains (Glodt, 2024, p.164). While such white cloths could be used throughout the year, they were often specifically intended for Lent (pp.163–4). As Julie Glodt observes, the hangings in this illumination seem to be made from the same material as the cloths over the statues (p.164).

There is a second type of veiling in this image, those of bodies. Black veils cover the head of a praying figure at the choir and the full body of another facing the altar. In the Middle Ages women, especially nuns and widows, regularly covered their heads in public and particularly in sacred spaces. Margaret of Austria, for example, wore a white hood long after her second husband's death (Eichberger, 2000, pp.12–13; Carpino, 2007, p.50). Nuns' and widows' veils could be black as well as white (see Walter, 2018, pp.322–3; and Thøfner in this volume), and the black attire of these figures resembles that of funerary mourners, figures that were also often depicted in French and Burgundian books of hours (Fig. 3.2). Just as widows and mourners veiled themselves to mourn the dead, the Lenten celebrants portrayed in the Flemish book of hours covered themselves to commemorate Christ's death.

The various types of veiling discussed above had distinct, if overlapping, histories. Lenten veils were hung across the apse from at least the ninth century (Kemmerer, 2023, p.27; see also Bärsch, 2015, p.102), but

Figure 3.1: Lenten scene in church interior, Book of Hours, Flemish, *c.*1492. (© British Library Board, manuscript 25698, fol.9r)

Figure 3.2: 'Office of the Dead', *Très-Belles-Heures de Notre Dame*, late fourteenth-early fifteenth century, Bibliothèque nationale de France, ms. nouv. acq. lat. 3093, fol.104r. (Bibliothèque nationale de France)

only became common from the twelfth (Bärsch, 2015, p.104). The custom of covering statues is recorded in the eleventh-century *Consuetudines* of Farfa Abbey, although Joseph Braun also points out an antecedent in Saint Elegius's tomb which, in the seventh century, was recorded to have been covered during Lent due to its splendour (1912, p.268). Women were mandated to cover their hair by Saint Paul and the Church Fathers, and veiling had acted as a mark of widowhood since the early Middle Ages (1 Corinthians 11:1–16; Signori, 2005, pp.96–104). While the use of veils in religious ceremonies had multiple ancient and biblical precedents (Bärsch, 2015, pp.96–7), the wearing of mourning robes, covering the head and body, appeared in Europe from around the mid-thirteenth century (Ariès, 1981, pp.161–6; Alexandre-Bidon, 1998, p.120; Marcoux, 2007 and 2011). The overlapping connotations of veiled images and bodies in the Lenten scene from the Flemish book of hours therefore grew out of an intricate history of diverse customs that extended back into antiquity.

While no single source codifies the meaning of Christian veiling, one aspect of Christian theology allowed both veiled images and bodies to signify mourning. Christ was not only human but also the image of God (Grenz, 2004, pp.618–24; Nichols, 1980, pp.30–48). The veil acts as a metaphor mediating these two statuses of Christ. In the letter to the Hebrews, Christ's flesh is a 'veil', and we enter the Most Holy Place through his blood (Hebrews 10:19–20). This letter reinterprets the veil in the Temple of Jerusalem, which designates the site of Holy of Holies while also concealing it. Similarly, Christ's body both reveals and conceals his divinity, acting, according to Hans Urs von Balthasar, as a 'revelation in hiddenness', or more literally, an 'unveiling veiling [enthüllende Verhüllung]' (1964, p.424; also discussed in Bärsch, 2015, pp.97–8). As a body, Christ is not visibly divine, just as a veil conceals what it covers. Nevertheless, that same body reveals the divinity of God through its humble acceptance of suffering, servitude to humanity and act of love (Balthasar, 1961, p.424). Veiled images of Christ thereby designate his sacredness while commemorating his, seemingly non-divine, mortality. The altar cloth, also portrayed in the Flemish book of hours, bore these associations. William Durand (*c.*1230–96), citing letters of popes Sixtus I (d. 126 or 128) and Eusebius (d. 310), mandated this cloth to be made of white linen so that it symbolised both Christ's death and divinity (Durand, 2013, pp.241–2; see also Amalar of Metz, 2014, vol. 1, pp.xvi–xix; vol. 2, pp.120–1, 140–1, 160–1, 168–9).

The impact of image theology on Lenten veiling has been studied (Kemmerer, 2023, pp.34–5; Powell, 2012, pp.301–2, n.4). But to what extent did this theology similarly influence the veiling of late medieval bodies? My argument in this article is that, analogous to how the removal of Lenten veils staged Christ's resurrection, the veils worn by Christians in mourning, whether during Lent or funerals, also pointed towards resurrection, as they performed the humility of living and dying before salvation. This point centres on how texts in the New Testament, particularly the letters of Paul, but also John's Gospel, reconfigured Judaic image theology around Christ (Nichols, 1980, pp.36–8; Grenz, 2004, pp.622–3). Whereas passages in the Old Testament asserted that humanity was made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26–7; Psalm 8:5), for Paul, Christ fully became God's image through his resurrection, and humanity would also only conform to this image after the raising of the flesh, when the soul is reunited with the body (1 Corinthians 15:49; Colossians 3:9–11; Ephesians 4:22–4; also John 1:14, 12:45). The Church aspires to join Christ, and images of mourners anticipate that future by being veiled like a Lenten image that will soon be unveiled.

This argument contributes to histories of human bodies through its underlying implication: that just as Lenten veils reveal Christ to be both image and body, the *imago Christi*, so do mourning robes blur the distinction between image and body. This claim develops upon the work of Amy Knight Powell and Noa Turel who, respectively, analyse how late medieval images present themselves as situated between images and bodies to portray themselves either as dead (deposed, in Powell's terms, 2012, pp.23–6) or living (animated, in Turel's, 2020, pp.5–6). But while Powell's work includes an analysis of Lenten veils and the cloth relics associated with Christ, namely the Shroud and Sudarium (2020, pp.212–23), and Turel's addressed tomb sculpture (2020, p.63), neither turned their attention to mourners. As the following sections explore, mourners represented the Church as ontologically suspended between image and body as they await salvation, performing the suffering of the mortal church, the *ecclesia militans*, and awaiting conforming with Christ's glorious image as the *ecclesia triumphans* (common terms in medieval ecclesiology, see Horie, 2006, pp.38–9, 61).

In the section that follows, I discuss and revise Powell's concept of deposition through an analysis of images of the Mocking of Christ, and in the one that comes after, I turn to images of mourners to adapt Turel's concept of 'animation'. Through these studies, I define late medieval mourning as a gesture that situates the body between a body and an image, a condition I term 'deanimate'. This state between body and image aligns with previous analyses of these figures that draw on the term 'liminality'; but by being situated within the Christian narrative of the resurrection, the concept of deanimation better accounts for how the Church performs liminality as a collective body, one collectively aspiring to become like the *imago Christi*.

The ironic Mockery of Christ

Powell dedicates much of her book *Depositions* to ritualised re-enactments of the Deposition before Easter Sunday, during which images of Christ would be taken down and hidden (2012, pp.46–57). For Powell, these were two-sided gestures signifying both Christ's death but also his incarnation. This argument unfolds through Powell's discussion of the cloths associated with Christ's life and death, especially the veil of Saint Veronica bearing his sweat and tears and the Shroud in which he was buried (pp.211–66). These cloths articulate that Christ was *both* an image and a body, as they were believed to display miraculous portraits of him (i.e., images) made from his blood and sweat (bodily fluids) (pp.211–66). Powell's analysis of these cloths thereby partly counteracts Caroline Walker Bynum's claim that *Depositions* should concern bodies and matter as much as it does images (Walker Bynum, 2013, p.381).

A contentious point of Powell's thesis is her association of deposition with iconoclasm. She cites non-conformist and Protestant views of Lenten veils to claim that the Lenten removal of images expressed scepticism towards 'dead images' (2012, pp.103–4). In his review of *Depositions*, John R. Decker counters that the concealment of images enabled their performed 'revival' on Good Friday and Easter Sunday, and the gesture is therefore not iconoclastic (2013, pp.724–5). By analysing a veil that was associated with Christ's Passion, and which Powell does not discuss, I will synthesise Powell's and Decker's interpretations. This is the covering over Christ's face during the Mocking of Christ which was, in multiple late medieval Franco-Burgundian illuminations, portrayed as a veil. These images show that veiling could be read as an iconoclastic gesture, but one undertaken by non-Christians, i.e., Christ's Roman and Jewish persecutors. Thus, they employ an iconoclastic gesture to signify death and suffering without necessarily expressing a Christian unease or scepticism towards images.

The Gospels of Mark and Luke testify that, on his way to Calvary, Christ's eyes were covered (Mark 14:65; Luke 22:64). Unlike the Sudarium and Shroud, this covering never became a cult relic because its form, if not actuality, was unclear. It could be portrayed as a veil completely concealing the face. Due to their cultural proximity to the other Burgundian artworks I study in this article, I focus on examples of the Mocked Christ with a veiled face, discussed by Robert Marcoux (2011), in a series of Franco-Burgundians books of hours (Figs. 3.3–3.5), plus a further image from the

Livre d'images de madame Marie (Fig. 3.6).[1] However, the veil more commonly appears as a blindfold, as seen in the 1440–41 fresco by Fra Angelico (Fig. 3.7), a 1503 painting by Matthias Grünewald, a 1511 print by Albrecht Dürer,[2] and an illumination from the hours of Louis de Laval that I will discuss below, as well as many other manuscript illuminations.[3] This variation in the veil's portrayal results from the vague reference to this object in the Vulgate: the key verb used, *velo, velare,* can broadly mean 'to veil' or just 'to cover'.[4] Given that this word is a verb, not a noun, an image of the Mocking of Christ made around 1400, perhaps by the circle of the Limbourg brothers or Jean Malouel, depicts Christ's eyes covered by the hand of one of his persecutors (Fig. 3.8).

---

1 Further examples of this iconography not discussed here are found in Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Roman de la Rose*, *c*.1350–1400, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, ms. fr.25526, fol.82r; *Speculum animae*, fifteenth century, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Espagnol 544, fol.23v; *Horae Johannae reginae Navarrae*, *c*.1330–40, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, NAL 3145, fol.110r; *Miroir de la Salvation humaine*, fifteenth century, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Français 188, fol.48v; *Speculum humanae salvationis*, fifteenth century, London, British Library, Sloane, ms.3451, fol.45r; *Speculum humanae salvationis*, fifteenth century, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce 204, fol.19r; *Speculum humanae salvationis*, fourteenth century, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Français 400, fol.11r; *Speculum humanae salvationis*, fifteenth century, Turin, Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria, I.II.11, fol.22r.

2 Matthias Grünewald, *The Mocking of Christ*, 1503–5, oil on panel, 109 × 74.3cm, Alte Pinakothek, Munich; Albrecht Dürer, *The Mocking of Christ*, 1511, Woodcut, 12.7 × 9.8cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (accession number: 19.73.184).

3 A database of the various iconographies of the Mocking of Christ would go beyond the scope of this article. However, that the blindfold is more common than the veil is indicated by a search through the iconographic database of the Warburg library (https://iconographic.warburg.sas.ac.uk), using the search term 'Mocking of Christ'. Of the 576 items listed on 5 June 2025 (which included many images that were not the Mocking), I counted 48 examples of the Mocking with a blindfold, and six with a veil fully concealing the head.

4 Mark 14:65: 'Et cœperunt quidam conspuere eum, et velare faciem eius…'; Luke 22:64: 'et velaverunt eum et percutiebant faciem eius…'.

Figure 3.3: 'The Mocking Of Christ', *Book of Hours of Catherine of Cleves, c.*1440, The Morgan Library, New York, ms. M. 945, fol. 53v. (Image credit: The Morgan Library & Museum/ Photo credit: The Morgan Library & Museum, New York)
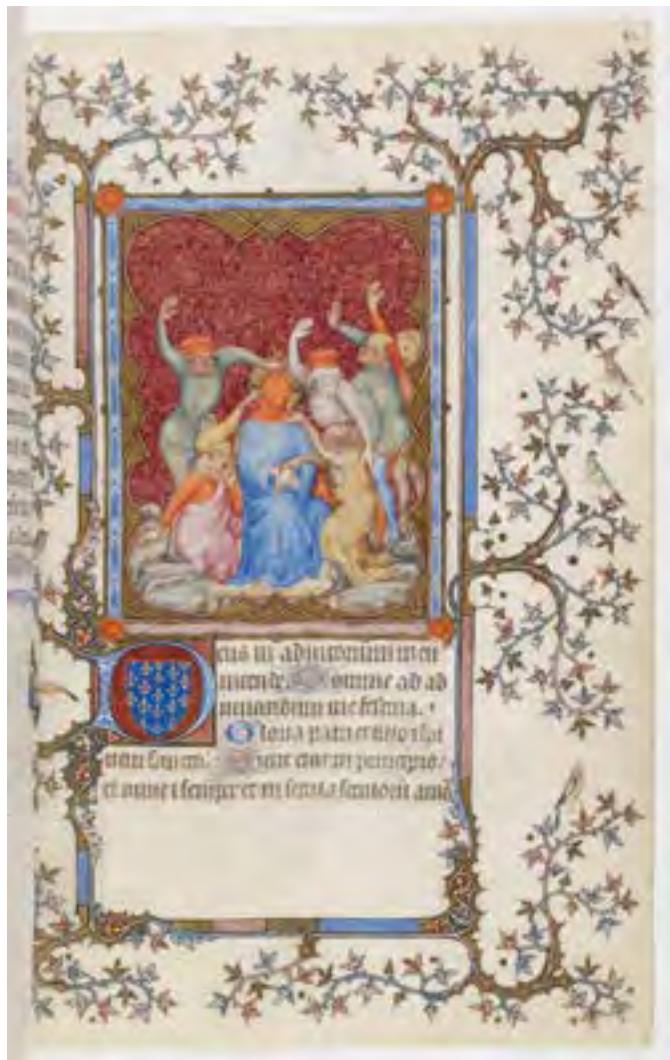
Figure 3.4: The Mocking of Christ', *Small Hours of John of Berry, c.*1375. Bibliothèque nationale de France, ms. lat. 18014, fol.82r. (Bibliothèque nationale de France)

Figure 3.5: 'The Mocking of Christ', *Book of Hours of John the Fearless*, 1406–15. Bibliothèque nationale de France, ms. nouv. acq. lat. 3055, fol. 40v. (Bibliothèque nationale de France)

Figure 3.6: 'The Mocking of Christ', *Livre d'images de madame Marie. c.* 1285. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, NAF 16251, fol. 35v. (Bibliothèque nationale de France)

Despite its disputable historical existence, images of the Mocking veil from France and Burgundy (Figs. 3.3–3.5; 3.6) indicate that medieval viewers believed this object was comparable to the Sudarium and the Shroud in characterising Christ's duality as both body and image. These veils tormented Christ's body by concealing his vision. But given that Christ's head is thus concealed from view, these images may also be read like a Lenten veil, an object that treats Christ like an image. Such an interpretation of the veil as engaging with Christ as both body and image dovetails with Marcoux's assessment that the veil indicates Christ's contemplative attitude to suffering and spiritual insight into his resurrection (2011, para. 26). As a body, Christ is suffering an attack, and as an image, he is currently veiled but awaiting glory.

Just as Christ's veil characterises his vision as spiritual, it also indicates his persecutors' degraded vision. Christ's tormentors are typified as Jews, wearing pointed hats and beards, bearing grimacing or scowling expressions and, in the illumination from John the Fearless's book, a moneybag (iconographies surveyed in Lipton, 2014, pp.16–45, 48–50, 97, 107–12, 155).[5] There must have been a clear decision to portray these figures as Jewish, for the acts of mocking in these scenes were actually undertaken by Roman soldiers, notably the wrapping of Christ in a scarlet or purple mantle, the kneeling before him and, in the case of the image from John the Fearless's book, the rod handed to him (Matthew 27:27–9; Mark 15:15–8). By portraying Christ's tormentors as Jews, these images continued an antisemitic trend in Passion narrative that emerged in Christian art from the late twelfth century (Lipton, 2014, pp.107–11). In such a context, the veil covering Christ, effectively concealing him from the Jewish gaze, may have highlighted the supposed spiritual 'blindness' of which Christians had frequently accused Jews from antiquity and throughout the Middle Ages, with Saint Augustine claiming that they saw him with 'eyes of the flesh' rather than 'eyes of the heart' (pp.3–6; cites Augustine on p.4).

Herbert Kessler has pointed out that the characterisation of Jews as seeing only with 'carnal eyes' allowed Christians, throughout the Middle Ages and past the Reformation, to other them as *both* idolaters and iconoclasts. Idolaters in that they could not see past the material nature of images, and iconoclasts in that they

---

5   Comparable antisemitic iconography can be seen in many other examples of the Mocking of Christ. A notable instance is the verbal labelling of Christ's tormentors as Jews in a fourteenth-century *Speculum humanae salvationis* in Augsburg (Universitätsbibliothek, Cod.I.2.2.23, fols 22v and 24v).

Figure 3.7: Fra Angelico, *The Mocking of Christ*, c.1440–41. Fresco, Convento di San Marco, Florence. (Artefact / Alamy)

Figure 3.8: The Limbourg brothers or Jean Malouel(?), *The Mocking of Christ*, c.1400–1405. Ink on paper. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen. (Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen)

would, as a consequence, destroy them (Kessler, 2011, pp.97–100, see also Bedos-Rezak, 2012, p.73). Images and stories of Jews destroying crucifixes and desecrating the Eucharist thereby evoked Christ's crucifixion and their alleged culpability in it (Kessler, 2011, p.97; see also Merback, 2011, pp.205–7; Timmerman, 2011, pp.181–2). The portrayal of Christ's persecutors as Jews rather than Romans in the Franco-Burgundian books of hours therefore underlines that the covering of Christ with a veil was read as an iconoclastic act, indicating alleged Jewish spiritual blindness and hostility to images:

they are shown as unable to perceive Christ's spiritual reality beneath his material presence.

A portrayal of the Mocking of Christ from the *Livre d'images de madame Marie*, an illuminated manuscript from the Low Countries made around 1285, seemingly reverses the iconoclastic attack back upon the depicted Jews, their faces seemingly deliberately erased (Fig. 3.6, see Stones, 1997, p. 55, n.2). Similar erasure of the faces of two of Christ's attackers can be seen in a fifteenth-century book of hours from Amiens.[6] Gil Bartholeyns, Pierre-Olivier Dittmar and Vincent Jolivet have pointed out other instances where viewers have attacked images of Christ's persecutors, avenging the portrayed act of iconoclasm (2006, paras 16–18). A notable case is Giorgio Vasari's description of the damage done to a fresco by 'children and other simple people, who erased all the heads, arms, and almost every other trace of the Jews as if they had taken revenge against them for the abuse they inflicted upon our Lord' (Vasari, [1586] 1998, p.204; also quoted in Bartholeyns, Dittmar & Jolivet, 2006, para. 18). While the erasure of the faces of the Jews attacking Christ in the *Livre d'images de madame Marie* may not have been carried out by a 'child' or 'simple person', it could similarly have been intended as a symbolic vengeance against the Jews' supposed iconoclastic crime against Christ.

As a commentary on putative Jewish blindness, the Mocking veil situates the irony of the Passion, the fact that Christ is mocked as 'King of the Jews' when he is, indeed, the Messiah, within a field of vision.[7] It presents Christ as a veiled contemplative who, with spiritual insight, sees the significance of the Passion, despite being blinded by his persecutors who, while having unimpeded, corporal vision, 'know not what they do' (Luke 23:34). Two images of the Mocking indicate the distinct realities perceived by Christ and his alleged Jewish persecutors. From John the Fearless's Book of Hours (Fig. 3.5), the leftmost figure's thumb and forefinger are on the visible side of the halo with the hand curving around it, as if to place the halo behind Christ's head, comparable to the soldier below him who hands Christ a rod of royal authority (described in Matthew 27:29). A similar gesture appears in the Mocking of the *Livre d'images de madame Marie* (Fig. 3.6): the leftmost figure's left-hand fingers curl around the halo as if they were placing it on Christ. In each image, the placing

6   *Heures à l'usage d'Amiens*, c.1550–75, Amiens, Bibliothèques d'Amiens Métropole, 2539, fol.42v.

7   The literature on irony in the Gospels can only be summarised here. On the irony of the Mocking as described in Matthew, see Berg (2014, pp.180–1). For Mark, see Camery-Hoggatt (1992, pp.9, 175). For Luke, see Dawsey (1986, pp.138–9). For John, see Duke (1985, p.133). See also Gooch (2000, p.176).

of the halo ridicules Christ's proclaimed regality, in a manner similar to the rod, while also portraying Christ in truth as divine.

Another image, Fra Angelico's version of the Mocking of Christ in the convent of San Marco (*c.*1440–41, Fig. 3.7), also uses the ontological ambiguity of images to distinguish the acts of mockery with their spiritual significance (Pope-Hennessy, 1981, p.44). Painted in a monastic cell in Florence, it belongs to a cultural milieu distinct from that of the French and Burgundian illuminations (on this painting's monastic context, see Jolly, 1981, pp.117–19). Furthermore, the 'veil' here is portrayed as a blindfold. But both the illuminators of the Franco-Burgundian books of hours and Fra Angelico engage with image theology: just as the veil in the Franco-Burgundian images treats Christ as an image, Christ is both a body and an image in Fra Angelico's painting. Christ acts as a contemplative figure, seemingly sharing the space with the equally contemplative Virgin and Dominic in the foreground; yet he endures torture and degradation within the image situated behind them. Reportedly, reading was one means that Dominic directed his mind to contemplation ('The Nine Ways …', 1982, p.101; see also Hood, 1985, p.103). Just as the Franco-Burgundian illuminations might work alongside text in assisting their viewers in contemplating Christ's passion, so might Saint Dominic be envisioning the view of Christ behind him through engagement with the book he reads in his lap.

The veils in the Franco-Burgundian books of hours do not just construct the irony of the Passion narrative as one concerning what Jews can and cannot see, but also what they sanctify. Jews certainly used veils to invoke the sacred, for a veil surrounded the Holy of Holies in the Temple of Solomon that housed the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 26:31; 36:35). In Matthew's Gospel, the tearing of this veil at Christ's death symbolizes the supersession of the old covenant by the new covenant established through his sacrifice (Matthew 27:51; see Berg, 2014, pp.145–6). Paul connected the idea of Jewish blindness (an idea that originated in his letters, Romans 11:7–11, 25; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Wheatley, 2002, pp.355–61) with this supersession of Mosaic law. In his second letter to the Corinthians, he recalls how Moses, after his conferences with Yahweh on Mount Sinai, returns with a face radiant in glory, and so wore a veil to protect the Israelites from his countenance (2 Corinthians 3:12; see Exodus 34:33–5). Just as a veil both demarcated and concealed the Holy of Holies, the veil of Moses showed that he had contact with Yahweh that in turn made him visually inaccessible to the Israelites. Paul then claims that the Israelites still have a veil over their faces, one that can only be lifted

through Christ (2 Corinthians 3:14–7).[8] The veiling of Christ in Francco-Burgundian books of hours therefore marks him as sacred in accordance with Jewish veiling practices, the Jews do not see Christ as sacred because, for Paul, veils also signify their blindness.

My ironic reading of the Mocking veil allows for a rereading of Powell's association of Lenten veiling with iconoclasm. Like the Sudarium and the Shroud, the Mocking veil articulates the incarnation: it tortures Christ's body by obstructing his vision and simultaneously functions as an iconoclastic gesture in covering an image. But the veil also exposes the irony arising from Christ's two statuses, for while his tormentors can perceive him as a suffering body, they fail to see his divinity, even though they treat him as such by veiling him. Lenten veils can be read similarly. Though they visually recall and reperform the Passion as an iconoclastic event, they stage the mockery, profanation, and destruction of a sacred image enacted by non-Christians in terms that ultimately revere the image. Therefore, Lenten veiling does not convey an iconoclastic attitude towards images but, like the veiled Christ, uses an iconoclastic gesture to reveal Christ is his incarnation, as a sacred image of God, but one suffering in its embodiment: an unveiling veiling, in Balthasar's terms.

Deanimate mourning

In his analysis of the Mocking veil, Marcoux compares this iconography to that of funerary mourners who, from the late thirteenth century, wore robes covering their entire bodies, attire that can be seen in late medieval books of hours as well as in tomb sculpture (2011, paras 22, 24, 26–7; see Fig. 3.2). Similarly, Brian Britt speculates that, as Moses is represented wearing a veil in the Well of Moses monument at the Charterhouse of Champmol, the veiled mourners in the tomb of Philip the Bold, installed in the church of that site, may have been read with a similar set of associations (2003, pp.255–7, see Figs. 3.13 and 3.14). These comparisons may seem tenuous because, unlike Christ and Moses, the veils over the mourners do not demarcate a body that has had direct contact with God. Marcoux therefore claims that the similarity is due to the veiled Christ acting as an exemplar for those who mourn, as he demonstrates inward contemplation in the face of suffering, avoiding expressive and emotive gestures, in contrast to his gesticulating and scowling tormentors (2011, paras 3–14).

---

8   While the noun καλυμμα can mean veil, the root verb καλυπτω of the word Paul uses here means to hide or cover in a general sense, and many translations reflect this. But other translations use 'veiled' because καλυπτω is the same verb that he uses in his description of Moses concealing his face in 2 Corinthians 3:12. See Kittel (1964–1976, vol.3, p.560).

While not discounting Marcoux's reading, I argue in this section that mourners are also comparable to images of the veiled Christ because both present themselves as bodies and as images. My analysis builds on Turel's book *Living Pictures*, which shows how fifteenth-century funerary monuments in the French-Burgundian north would address their own condition of being an image to seem suspended between life and death (2020, pp.63, 67). Turel does not consider mourners, but I will show how her ideas are pertinent to this iconography by comparing two examples, first, those found in a book of hours that belonged to Louis de Laval (1411–89, book completed *c*.1480), a French nobleman, and second, those on the above-mentioned tomb of Philip the Bold. When contextualised within Christian image theology, these figures can be read as deanimate (to adapt Turel's terms), one comparable to the state of deposition analysed by Powell, i.e., a suspension between body and image, but one found in images of the Christian faithful rather than Christ.

Christians did not seek simply to imitate Christ's contemplative acceptance of suffering and death, but through enduring them, become like the *imago Chris-*ti (Grenz, 2004, p.623; Bedos-Rezak, 2012, p.69). In Genesis, humanity, like Christ, was made in God's image (1:26–7, 5:1–2, 9:6). However, the New Testament, particularly the letters of Paul, gives a Christocentric reframing of this idea, so that humanity aspires to become like the *imago Christi* in being resurrected through him, as Paul states in his letter to the Romans: 'For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters' (Romans 8:29; Grenz, 2004, pp.618–20). Christ is 'firstborn' in that he was the first of humanity to be resurrected. Similarly, in his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul writes: 'And as we have borne the image of the earthly man, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly man' (1 Corinthians 15:49; similarly, see Colossians 3:9–11; Ephesians 4:22–4). In other words, since Adam, humanity is an image of mortality, and those who will be saved will be transformed into a heavenly image in conformity with Christ. These ideas had a deep impact on Christian thought, with Augustine being the most influential thinker for medieval Christianity, the reception of his work generating

Figure 3.9: 'Louis of Laval's resurrection and the Last Judgment', *Hours of Louis of Laval*, *c*.1480. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Ms. Latin 920, fols 334v–335r. (Bibliothèque nationale de France)

substantial discussion of the *imago dei* in scholastic Christology, including the work of Thomas Aquinas and William of Saint-Thierry.[9]

The opposition between bodies that are images of mortality and immortality plays out across two pages of Louis de Laval book of hours (Fig. 3.9). On the left-hand page, Louis is portrayed before his tomb wearing only a loincloth, his nudity and youth communicating that this is a newly resurrected body (Scheel, 2021, p.185). On the right side the Last Judgment is depicted, with Christ presiding over the resurrection of humanity. Louis's hope for a favourable judgment is evident in how his praying hands rest on the border inscription between the two pages (pp.185–6), words vocalising Louis's plea: 'I hope to be saved by your mercy alone' (*Hours of Louis of Laval*, *c*.1480, fol.334v).[10] Behind Louis is his tomb effigy, the tomb inscription proclaiming him 'Lord of Chatillon during his life' (fol.334v).[11]

The double-page illumination has a tripartite narrative of Louis's death, resurrection, and judgement, three moments respectively personified from right to left by the figures of Louis's effigy, his resurrected body, and then Christ in Majesty. The pages that precede and follow this double-page illumination reinforce this narrative. The texts and images that immediately precedes the double-page illumination are Latin verses from the Vulgate that recount Christ's Mocking and crucifixion (fol.332r–33v),[12] with the Mocking shown in a full-page


Figure 3.10: 'Mocking of Christ', *Hours of Louis of Laval*, *c*.1480. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Ms. Latin 920, fol.332r. (Bibliothèque nationale de France)

illumination (Fig. 3.10). After the double-page illumination comes, in French, the parable of the sheep and the goats found in the book of Matthew (fols 335v–38r; Matthew 25:31–46). In sum, preceding the double-page illumination of Louis's tomb and the Last Judgement, and appropriately on the side of Louis's tomb, is the story of Christ's death. Following the double-page, after the image of the Last Judgment, comes a parable of that event.

This tripartite narrative of death, resurrection, and judgement that plays out before and after the double-page illumination is further reinforced through typological comparison with events from the Book of Daniel, which are paraphrased in French and accompanied by images in the *haut- and bas-de-page*. Accompanying the story of Christ's Mockery and Crucifixion is the execution of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, the three Jews that Nebuchadnezzar had burnt in a furnace for not worshipping a golden statue (Daniel 3:16–20). Refusing to be idolators, these are presented as proto-Christians, executed like Christ, their execution given a full-page illumination on the page before that of Louis's tomb (*Hours of Louis of Laval*, *c*.1480, fol.332r). Like the Mocked Christ, these men were unjustly condemned by persecutors who could not correctly recognise who was a true and false God. Following the image of the Last Judgment, the story continues with Nebuchadnezzar seeing four men, rather than three, unharmed in the flames (Daniel 3:24–8), before we

---

9 Augustine argued, against his pro-Nicene predecessors, that humanity was not simply a 'secondary' image to Christ, but rather becomes more like God through the imitation of Christ. See Boersma (2016, pp.258–65). On William of Saint-Thierry, see Bell (1984, pp.115–16). On Aquinas, see Morales (2017, pp.180–3).

10 'Isola missericordia tua spero salvare'. I've read 'salvare' as passive (surely, should be 'salvari').

11 'Ci repose messire Loys de Laval chevalier en son viven seigneur de [Chatillon]'.

12 They are largely made up of verses from John 19, but with some from Matthew 27 interspersed within it. This passage seems to have been in circulation in France and the Burgundian Netherlands in the fifteenth century. It is nearly identical to one found in the Burnet Psalter, a manuscript also made in the first half of the fifteenth century. See Aberdeen University Library, manuscript 25, fol. 77r–77v, digitised at https://www.abdn.ac.uk/burnet-psalter/text/077r.htm, accessed 25.9.2024). Notably, both this passage in the Burnet Psalter and that in the Book of *Hours of Louis of Laval* contains a verse that is not found in the Vulgate: 'Et statim terra tremuit et sol obscuravit. Et petre scisse sunt.' This sentence is also found in a loose leaf kept from a fifteenth-century French or Burgundian book of hours now kept in the Denison Library. See Denison Library, loose leaf 26, catalogued and transcribed in Dutschke & Rouse (1986, p.106).

then read of Nebuchadnezzar's being cursed to act like a beast until he recognises God (*Hours of Louis of Laval*, *c*.1480, fols.336r–38r; Daniel 3:33–7). Like the Last Judgment, this story witnesses the resurrection of the faithful through Christ, his justice correcting an unjust execution as well as constituting divine judgment against the wicked.

Louis would have carried theological ideas about vision and images into his reading of these paired stories of death, resurrection, and judgment. Preceding the account of the Passion we read chapter 13 of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, written in French (*Hours of Louis of Laval*, *c*.1480, fols.329r–31v). This passage claims that because love bears suffering for its faith in God, its full meaning is only disclosed through the spiritual vision attained in the Afterlife: 'Now we see God only obscurely and in a mirror. But then we will see him face to face. I know him now not perfectly. But then I will know him as I am known face to face' (fol.331v; 1 Corinthians 13:12).[13] The story of Belshazzar's first dream that accompanies these passages typologically underlines the uncertain relationship between mortal vision and divine reality, for Belshazzar tries to consult wise men over the divine meaning of the multi-metal statue that he envisioned (*Hours of Louis of Laval*, fol.332v). Furthermore, the full-page illumination of the Mocked Christ is placed between Paul's text and the account of Christ's Passion (Fig. 3.10). In this image, Christ is blindfolded rather than veiled, though he remains surrounded by his tormentors, who are blind to his true divinity. Louis de Laval, before looking at the image of his own resurrected body looking towards Christ on the opposite page, was therefore invited to consider multiple images and texts that presented the divine as obscure to worldly vision: Paul's letter, an image of the Mocked Christ, and Belshazzar's dream. In accordance with Pauline image theology, the two sides of the double-page illumination situates the resurrected Louis between two juxtaposed images: Christ as a divine image, and Louis's own effigy, an image of mortality. Louis's resurrected body is therefore caught between the two, hoping for salvation from the divine image on the opposite page that he remains separated from, but will soon see 'face to face'.

This Pauline reading of the illumination allows for an interpretation of the mourners portrayed on Louis's tomb. On the page, they are positioned between death and life, between Louis's effigy and his new, living body. This placement suits the function mourners had on real tombs, where they would encourage prayers from

Figure 3.11: Hubert and Jan van Eyck, *The Ghent Altarpiece*, exterior panels, 1432. Oil on wood, 350 × 223 cm. Cathedral of St Bavo, Ghent. (Source: closertovaneyck@kikirpa.be)

viewers, thereby facilitating the eventual resurrection of the deceased (Murray, 2022, pp.37–9; Prochno, 2002, pp.99–100). Placed between Louis's dead and living bodies, Louis's mourners pray for the transition between them, a transition Louis would experience as the purgatorial suffering of his soul after death, but also, as seen in this image, in the final judgment in the flesh after the resurrection. In their intermediate position between an image (the effigy) and a body (Louis), the mourners seem to function as both. On the one hand, they are integral parts of a tomb monument, just like the effigy; on the other, and like Louis's revived body, they act as an audience to that tomb, praying for the salvation of Louis's soul. The mourners therefore occupy a position in the composition between image and body, as well as life and death.

Turel uses the metaphor of cryogenics to characterise an image that, by fictively presenting itself as both image and body, seems suspended in a state between death and life (2020, pp.63–7; similarly, see Fehrenbach, 2003; 2011). This metaphor diverges from her book's principal argument, which explores how images often presented themselves as if they were living, or 'animate', to use Turel's term. 'Cryogenics' instead suggest that the figure has become 'deanimate', divested of its usual

---

13 'Nous voyons dieu maintenant obscurement et en ung mirruer. Mais lors nous le verro[n]s face a face. Je le congnoys maintainant non pas parfaitement. Mais lors je la [*sic*] congnoistray comme je suys congneu face a face.'

Figure 3.12: *The Portal of the Church of the Charterhouse of Champmol*, built 1385–1401. (Photo: Andrew Murray)

Figure 3.13: Tomb of Philip the Bold, completed 1412. Black marble, white marble, partly gilded and polychromed alabaster, gilded copper, 243 × 360 × 254cm. Musée des Beaux-Arts de Dijon, Dijon. (Courtesy of the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Dijon, Dijon)

vitality. The idea parallels Powell's understanding of 'deposition', as it describes how images inhabit a state between death and resurrection. However, the term 'deanimation' is more encompassing than 'deposition', applicable not only to images of Christ, but to those of the Christian faithful.

My reading of Louis de Laval's mourners as deanimate can be deepened through a consideration of their colour. The point I am making here develops on one Turel makes about the figures painted on the exterior panels of the Ghent Altarpiece which, she claims, present themselves as images (Fig. 3.11). For instance, the donor figures for this altarpiece, Jodocus Vijd and Elisabeth Borluut, kneel in niches, imitating polychromed donor statues, for instance, those of Philip the Bold and Margaret of Flanders at the portal of the Charterhouse of Champmol (Fig. 3.12) (Turel, 2020, p.66).[14] On the altarpiece, the fictive stone bodies of John the Baptist and John the Evangelist even more explicitly appear as statues, and the figures of Gabriel and Mary in the central panels also seem ontologically adjacent to them, being robed in stone-like grisaille (p.57). These statue-like and grisaille figures, though variated in their actual ontological state, collectively present a 'visual fast', comparable to that of Lenten veils, in that when the altarpiece's panels are opened on key feast days, they reveal the more highly coloured interior images (p.58; similarly, see Bain 2012, pp.17, 20; Fehrenbach, 2011, p.50; Smith, 1957/59). A similar duality relates the left and right halves of the illumination of Louis de Laval's resurrection. Like the exterior of the Ghent altarpiece, the left page is dominated by statues, with most in grisaille, including the mourners, and the statues of the Virgin and saints. The most 'living' figure is the resur-

rected Louis, kneeling in petition like those of Vijd and Borluut. While there is some gilding, this predominantly black and grey half of the full double-page illumination contrasts with the more vivid colours of the right side, in which the earth, angels, and bodies seem illuminated by the light emanating from Christ.[15]

Turel considers the Ghent altarpiece 'before anything else, a funerary monument' (2020, p.64), maintaining the memory of its donors. The mourners on Louis's tomb also serve a memorial function, representing the endless prayers for his soul from the living Church. It is uncertain whether this monument depicted an actual tomb. While Louis was interred in the family crypt in the church of Saint Tugal in Laval (Couanier de Launay, 1866, p.236), no material or documentary records remain of his funerary monument (Couffon, 1967, pp.174–5). Nevertheless, the tomb portrayed in Louis's book of hours indicates that mourners on actual tomb sculpture were perceived as 'deanimate'. René Couffon notes that the tomb portrayed in Louis's book of hours shared attributes with those made by sculptors from the Low Countries, with monochrome mourners set against black stone in the arcades around the tomb chest (p.172). Patrik Reuterswärd also pointed out the similarities between Louis's portrayed mourners and those of Philip the Bold (Fig. 3.13), whose tomb spurred the adoption of similarly styled mourners in sculpture across France, Spain, and the Low Countries, if not further afield (2000, pp.129–30). Louis's mourners gesticulate similarly to Philip's, such as by lifting robes

---

14 See also Turel's observations on the sybils and prophets of the Ghent Altarpiece (2020, pp.50–1).

15 Jill Bain similarly notes how 'full colour glory' and the 'revelatory nature of polychromy' is reserved for celestial, rather than earthly, imagery in medieval painting (2012, pp.14–17, 20). She also hypothesises that the division between the earthly and celestial was mediated by the veil of the Temple, destroyed at Christ's death (pp.16–17).

Figure 3.14: Mourner no. 21 (from the tomb of Philip the Bold, see Figure 3.13)

to the face as if about to wipe a tear (Figs. 3.14 and 3.15). If grisaille is used in Louis's illumination, including his mourners, to show them in a deanimate state – between image and body, death, and resurrection – might not the monochrome of Burgundian mourners have served a similar function?

Philip's mourners, like Louis's, do seem to act as both bodies and images, being an audience to the tomb as well as an integral part of it. On the one hand, they seem to be part of funerary procession, with a series of clerical figures on the east side of the tomb seemingly acting as its head (see Murray, 2022, pp.42–3). On the other hand, the mourners that dominate the three other sides of this tomb do not move in a processional direction but rather appeal to or withdraw from the tomb's viewers (pp.34–9). As such, just as Louis's mourners are situated between his painting tomb effigy and his praying body, these figures do not only act as images, representing a funerary procession, but are also an audience for the tomb, being agents of prayer for Philip's soul. Being both body and image, a status also articulated by their monochrome, they function as deanimate images, 'cryogenically' suspended between body and image in a state responsive to present suffering yet awaiting future resurrection.

In the next section, I extend my reading of mourners as deanimate from grisaille images to living funeral

Figure 3.15: *Hours of Louis de Laval* (detail of Figure 3.10)

participants. But here, we can note that others have observed that actual mourning robes had a deanimating effect on their wearers: they curtailed the expressivity of mourning, marking a shift away from louder bodily gestures such as screams, rending of clothes, pulling of hair (Ariès, 1981, pp.161–6; Gaude-Ferragu, 2005, p.101; Hudson, 2019, pp.32, 48). This deanimative effect has been argued to derive from ancient discourses of veiling, notably the veil painted by Timanthes to conceal the face of Agamemnon and thus depict paternal mourning (Moffitt, 2005). I have argued elsewhere that there is no evidence that these ideas informed either the depiction of mourners or their actual funerary attire (Murray, 2022, pp.48–9). Christian theology provides a more persuasive discourse on how images and

bodies articulate death and emotion. Remember that Lenten veils and images of the veiled Christ establish a two-stage narrative: first, the suffering Christ is veiled as an image under attack; then, with coverings removed, he appears resurrected as a living image. At both moments, Christ's body is treated as an image by being veiled and unveiled, but whereas the merger between body and image is an iconoclastic gesture of death in the first part of this narrative, in the second, Christ, as the *imago dei*, embodies life. The deanimated demeanour of mourners wearing mourning robes, as well as the grisaille of mourners on tombs, situates them within the first moment of this narrative. As deanimate figures, they participate in a 'visual fast', like that seen in Lenten veils and the exterior panels of altarpieces like the Ghent altarpiece. Veiled, they perform the penitential body of the mundane Church awaiting a future vivification as the *ecclesia triumphans*.

Deanimation and liminality

The concept of deanimation shares qualities with liminality, another term used to characterise late medieval mourners (Marcoux, 2007; Murray, 2022). Liminality denotes a condition of lying 'betwixt and between' two stable states (Thomassen, 2009, *passim*). This broad usage derives from Arnold van Gennep's concept of liminal rites, which describes the middle phase of a ritual when participants undergo separation from their previous status and later reintegration into a new one (1960). Funerals and mourning could involve liminal rites for van Gennep. He even imagined cases where the length of mourning corresponded to the imagined journey that the dead took in the afterlife (1960, p.147), comparable to how deanimation defines mourning as an in-between state, between life and death, image and body.

But in one regard, the concept of liminality seems ill-suited for images of mourners. Liminality usually defines a point in which status is called into question. The veil on the Mocked Christ, for instance, denies status, demonstrating his powerlessness, mocking his claim to be king. But mourning robes, by way of contrast, often differentiated and articulated their wearer's social and familial position, as well as gender. Princely funerals, in particular, featured considerable variation in the cut, quality and colour of mourning robes to differentiate between the relatives of the deceased (Beaulieu, 1955, p.261; Beaulieu and Baylé, 1956, p.119; Gaude-Ferragu, 2005, pp.149–50; Prochno, 2002, p.115; Stein, 1999). Pierre Pradel, for instance, convincingly identified the surviving mourner of the flesh tomb of Philip III as his second son, Charles, partly on the basis of the three bands of fur that run across his upper arms, a marker that he is a French prince (Pradel, 1964, pp.38-40). Mourning was also divided by gender, with women most often not attending funerals, but often confin-

ing themselves to their rooms for a period whose length depended on their closeness to the deceased (Gaude-Ferragu, 2005, pp.161–2). Marcoux was aware of the problem that the social function of mourning robes posed for his analysis of this attire in terms of liminality, but stated that their expression of status was the exception rather than the rule (2007, para. 19). But the preponderance of contrary evidence suggests otherwise.

Although one might attribute mourning robes' expression of social rank to the contingencies of human behaviour, which often deviates from theological or anthropological principles, I argue that deanimation explains why this seemingly liminal attire can nonetheless signify status. In aiming to become Christ's image, Christians are distinct from him in that they form a collective rather than a single, exemplary body. Medieval theology and iconography would draw upon the metaphor, found in the Psalms and one of Jesus's sermons, of the Church as the 'bride of Christ' to articulate the idea that, upon Christ's Second Coming, the Church forms one body before its union with Christ's (Ginther, 2008, p.55). Similarly, Paul and the letters attributed to him repeatedly described the church as 'the body of Christ' (1 Corinthians 12:12–27; Romans 12:4–5; Col 2: 19; Ephesians 1:22–3; 2:16; 4: 3–4, 11–16; 5:22–33). Although it has been contested whether Paul meant this literally or metaphorically (Pelser, 1998), his claims are congruent with, and perhaps a source for, key aspects of the Apostles' and Nicene Creed that established how Latin Christianity conceptualised the Church, namely, that it is singular and universal, being a unity in the diversity of its members (Rosener & Simon, 2023).

Mourning robes manifest such unity in diversity. Late medieval mourners performed mourning differently to gestures of despair (such as screams and the rendering of garments) not only in their deanimate, muted expressivity and contemplative attitude, but also in the diversity of persons who participated. The wearing of funerary robes could be, and was, observed by not just the close family or hired mourners but, in the case of princes, the household as well as dignitaries of towns through which their procession passed (e.g. of Burgundian princely funerals, see Murray 2021; Prochno, 2002, pp.113–26). Mourning, in such a case, is not simply the expression of loss of a known individual, but the collective response to death among the Christian community, one with a potentially universal participation among the Church (though to mourn or to refuse to mourn was often a politicised act, see Hochner, 2013; Hutchison, 2016; Murray, 2020, pp.31–7).

The unity in diversity performed by mourners has eluded previous observers, who have read their performance either as the result of clerical or monastic influence on the laity (being a 'clericisation of mourning') or the adoption and adaption by the laity of clerical mores

(a 'secularisation' of mourning) (Murray, 2022, p.44). In an attempt to describe the indeterminate mixture of spiritual and secular values and participation in the organisation and performance of late medieval mourning, I suggested the phrase 'non-ordered religious behaviour', whose convolution is indicative of the complex matter lying at the heart of this issue, namely the intersection between sacred and secular values (2022, pp.32–3). The Pauline and Nicene conception of the Church as a unity in diversity provides a simpler conceptual framework to understand how a diversity of estates and ranks perform as a single and sacred body in response to death, for it is through participation in the prayer and labour of the Church that each will be saved.

Mourning robes are comparable to images of the Mocking veil and Lenten images because such robes place those who wear them within a comparable liminal position to that of the suffering and dead Christ, one of being mortal but hoping for immortality, suffering within and after this life, and awaiting resurrection. While mourners may depart from images of Christ in signifying their social status, that distinction is rooted in the same theology. Christ's Passion was an example set for the life of all humanity, and because Christ died for all, Christians seek to conform to his image as a collective body, a universal Church. While veiling revealed Christ as the image of God, for individual Christians it embodies a collective and universal hope for salvation after suffering. During funerals, it united diverse mourners in the hope of future conformity to Christ's image.

Conclusion

In the introduction to this journal issue, we discussed how debates in cultural history of the body and visual culture often hinge on ontological priority: whether bodies pre-exist their representation, or whether representation or performance 'constitutes' them; similarly, debates occur in studies of visual culture which address the extent to which images are constitutive or reflexive of reality. But for Christian theology, these are the wrong questions. Mourning robes are neither simply a cultural performance of grief, nor a direction of physical, bodily grief towards prayer, as if culture or the material body had ontological priority, but rather a 'deanimation' of the body: a removal of the body from view as though it were an image whose visual inaccessibility anticipates its hopeful salvation. They are bodies treated like images, ones subject to the iconoclastic act of covering. This iconoclastic gesture is not motivated by a distrust of images, but rather performs the affliction of mortality and suffering, for these images are also bodies. By being veiled, they communicate mourning by acting as bodies that have not yet conformed to Christ's triumphant image, just as images are veiled during Lent. The association of the concealing of images with mourning has its basis in a Christian image-theolo-gy, one in which Christ is both body and image, and the Church, being a body, seeks to conform to that image.

Acknowledgements

Bibliography

1   Alexandre-Bidon, D. (1998) *La mort au Moyen Âge, XIIIᵉ–XVIᵉ siècle*, Paris, Hachette.

2   Amalar of Metz (2014) *On the Liturgy*, ed. by E. Knibbs, 2 vols, Cambridge, Harvard University Press.

3   Ariès, P. (1981) *The Hour of Our Death* (trans. H. Weaver), London, Allen Lane.

4   Bain, J. (2012) 'Signifying absence: Experiencing monochrome imagery in medieval painting' in L. Bourdua and R. Gibbs (eds) *A Wider Trecento: Studies in 13th- and 14th-Century European Art Presented to Julian Gardner*, Leiden and Boston, Brill, pp.5–20.

5   Balthasar, H.U. (1961) *Herrlichkeit. Eine theologische Ästhetik I. Schau der Gestalt.* Einsiedeln, Johannes Verlag.

6   Bärsch, J. (2015) '"Velum ante summum altare suspenditur"…Riten der Verhüllung und Enthüllung in der Liturgie des Mittelalters' in A. Husslein-Arco and V. Pirker-Aurenhammer (eds) *Aktuell Restauriert: Das Fastentuch-Fragment des Thomas von Villach*, Vienna, Belvedere, pp.94–111.

7   Bartholeyns, G., Dittmar, P.-O. and Jolivet, V. (2006) 'Des raisons de détruire une image', *Images Re-vues*, vol.2, http://journals.openedition.org/imagesrevues/248 accessed: 1.6.2025.

8   Beaulieu, M. (1955) 'Les costume de deuil en Bourgogne au XVᵉ siècle', *Actes du XVIIᵉ Congrès international de l'art (Amsterdam 1952)*, The Hague, Imprimerie nationale, pp.259–68.

9   Beaulieu, M. and Baylé, J. (1956) *Le Costume en Bourgogne: De Philippe le Hardi a la mort de Charles le Téméraire,* Paris, P. U. F.

10   Bedos-Rezak, B. M. (2012) 'Were Jews made in the image of God? Christian perspectives and Jewish existence in medieval Europe' in D. Engel, L.H. Schiffman and E.R. Wolfson (eds) *Studies in Medieval Jewish Intellectual and Social History: Festschrift in Honor of Robert Chazan*, Leiden, Brill, pp.64–95.

11   Bell, B.N. (1984) *The Image and Likeness: The Augustinian Spirituality of William of Saint-Thierry*, Kalamazoo, Cistercian Publications.

12 Berg, I.C. (2014) *Irony in the Matthean Passion Narrative*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press.

13 Boersma, G.P. (2016) *Augustine's Early Theology of Image: A Study of the Development of Pro-Nicene Theology*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

14 Britt, B. (2003) 'Concealment, revelation, and gender: The veil of Moses in the Bible and in Christian art', *Religion and the Arts*, vol.7, no.3 pp.227–73.

15 Braun, J.S.J. (1912) *Handbuch der Paramentik*, Freiburg im Breisgau, Herdersche Verlagshandlung.

16 Bynum, C. Walker (2013) 'Depositions: Scenes from the late medieval church and the modern museum by Amy Knight Powell [review]', *Common Knowledge*, vol.19, no.2, pp.380–2.

17 Camery-Hoggatt, J. (1992) *Irony in Mark's Gospel: Text and Subtext*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

18 Carpino, A. (2007) 'Margaret of Austria's funerary complex at Brou: Conjugal love, political ambition or personal glory?' in C. Lawrence (ed.) *Women and Art in Early Modern Europe: Patrons, Collectors and Connoisseurs*, Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania State University Press, pp.37–52.

19 Couanier de Launay, M. (1866) *Histoire de Laval*, Laval, Imprimeur-Libraire de L'Évêche.

20 Couffon, R. (1967) 'Le cénotaphe du connétable de Clisson à Josselin,' *Bulletin Monumental*, vol.125, no.2, pp.167–75.

21 Dawsey, J. M. (1986) *The Lukan Voice: Confusion and Irony in the Gospel of Luke*, Macon, Mercer University Press.

22 Decker, J. R. (2013) 'Review: Depositions: Scenes from the late medieval church and the modern museum. By Amy Knight Powell. Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books, 2012', *Church History*, vol.82, no.3, pp.723–5.

23 Duke, P. D. (1985) *Irony in the Fourth Gospel,* Atlanta, John Knox Press.

24 Durand, W. (2013) *Rationale IV: On the Mass and Each Action Pertaining to It* (trans. and ed. T.M. Thibodeau), Turnhout, Brepols.

25 Dutschke, C.W. and Rouse, R.H. (eds) (1986) *Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the Claremont Libraries*, Berkeley, University of California Press.

26 Eichberger, D. (2000) 'A Renaissance princess named Margaret: Fashioning a public image in a courtly society', *Melbourne Art Journal*, vol.4, pp.4–24.

27 Fehrenbach, F. (2003) 'Calor nativus—Color vitale: Prolegomena zu einer Asthetik des ‚Lebendigen Bildes' in U. Pfisterer and M. Seidel (eds) *Visuelle Topoi: Erfindung und tradiertes Wissen in den Kiinsten der italienischen Renaissance*, Munich, Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2003, pp.151–70.

28 Fehrenbach, F. (2011) 'Coming alive: Some remarks on the rise of "monochrome" sculpture in the Renaissance', *Source: Notes in the History of Art*, vol.30, no.3, pp.45–55.

29 Gaude-Ferragu, M. (2005) *D'or et de cendres: La mort et les funérailles des princes dans le royaume de France au bas Moyen Âge*, Paris, Presses Universitaires du Septentrion.

30 Ginther, J.R. (2008) 'The Church in medieval theology' in G. Mannion and L.S. Mudge (eds) *The Routledge Companion to the Christian Church*, New York and London, Routledge, pp.48–62.

31 Glodt, J. (2024) 'Cercle blanc sur fond noir : le rideau de Lélévation et la visibilité de l'hostie (XIv^e– XVIe s.) in N. Sarzeaud, J. Glodt and J. Brack (eds) *Textiles, rituels, images (Europe occidentale, XIIIe–XVIIe siècles)*, Paris, Presses de l'HiCSA, pp.148–74.

32 Gooch, P.W. (2000) 'Irony, text and artifact: Cross and superscription in the Passion narratives' in S. G. Wilson and M. Desjardins (eds) *Text and Artifact in the Religions of Mediterranean Antiquity: Essays in Honour of Peter Richardson*, Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University, pp.176–91.

33 Grenz, S. J. (2004) 'Jesus as the Imago Dei: Image-of-God Christology and the non-linear linearity of theology', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, vol.47, no.4, pp.617–28.

34 Hochner, N. (2013) 'Le spectacle du pouvoir et la function des larmes' in J. Devaux, E. Doudet and É. Lecuppre-Desjardin (eds), *Jean Molinet et son temps*, Turnhout, Brepols, pp.139–53.

35 Hood, W. (1995) *Fra Angelico: San Marco, Florence,* New York, George Braziller.

36 *Hours of Louis of Laval* (*c.*1480) Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Ms. Latin 920, fols.334v–35r: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b52501620s accessed 20.10.2024.

37 Horie, R. (2006) *Perceptions of Ecclesia: Church and Soul in Medieval Dedication Sermons*, Turnhout, Brepols.

38 Hutchison, E.J. (2016) 'The politics of grief in the uutbreak of civil war in France, 1407–1413', *Speculum*, vol.91, no.2 pp.1–31.

39   Hudson, H. (2019) 'Elusive tears: Lamentation and impassivity in fifteenth-century Passion iconography' in M.D. Barbezat and A. Scott (eds) *Fluid Bodies: Rethinking Expressions of Bodies and Their Fluids in Pre-Modern Literature, Theology, and Art*, Croydon: ARC Humanities, pp.31–53.

40   Jolly, P.H. (1981) 'Rogier van der Weyden's Escorial and Philadelphia *Crucifixions* and their relation to Fra Angelico at San Marco', *Oud Holland*, vol.95, no.3, pp.113–26.

41   Kemmerer, C.F. (2023) 'Seeing through Medieval Lenten Veils' in D. Ekici, P. Blessing and B. Baudez (eds) *Textile in Architecture: From the Middle Ages to Modernism*, London and New York, Routledge, pp.27–34.

42   Kessler, H.L. (2011) 'Shaded with dust: Jewish eyes on Christian art' in H.L. Kessler and D. Nirenberg (eds), *Judaism and Christian Art: Aesthetic Anxieties from the Catacombs to Colonialism*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, pp.74–114.

43   Kittel, G. (ed.) (1964–1976) *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (trans. G.W. Bromiley), 10 vols, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans.

44   Lipton, S. (2014) *Dark Mirror: The Medieval Origins of Anti-Jewish Iconography*, New York, Metropolitan Books.

45   Marcoux, R. (2007) 'La liminalité du deuillant dans l'iconographie funéréraire médiévale (XIIIe–XVe siècle)', *Memini,* vol.11, pp.1–31.

46   Marcoux, R. (2011) 'Vultus velatus ou la figuration positive de la tristesse dans l'iconographie de la fin du Moyen Âge', *Médiévales,* vol.61, http://journals.openedition.org/medievales/6590, accessed 3.9.2025.

47   Merback, M. B. (2011) 'Jewish carnality, Christian guilt, and Eucharistic peril in the Rotterdam-Berlin Altarpiece of the Holy Sacrament' in H.L. Kessler and D. Nirenberg (eds) *Judaism and Christian Art: Aesthetic Anxieties from the Catacombs to Colonialism*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, pp.203–33.

48   Moffitt, J. F. (2005) 'Sluter's "Pleurants" and Timanthes' "Tristitia Velata": Evolution of, and sources for a Humanist topos of mourning,' *Artibus et Historiae*, vol.26, no.51, pp.73–84.

49   Murray, A. (2020) 'Political emotions in the mourners of Philip the Bold's tomb' in P. Ekardt, F. Fehrenbach and C. Zumbusch (eds) *Politische Emotionen in den Künsten*, Berlin and Boston, De Gruyter, pp.25-42.

50   Murray, A. (2021) 'Burgundian sword ritual: Charismatic and regnal authority at the funeral of Philip the Good in Bruges, 1467', *The Court Historian*, vol.22, no.1, pp.11–28.

51   Murray, A. (2022) 'Mourning and non-ordered religious behaviour in the tombs of Philip the Bold, John the Fearless and Margaret of Bavaria', *Netherlands Yearbook for History of Art/Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, vol.72, no.1, pp.22–57.

52   Morales, I.A. (2017) 'Aquinas's Christology of the imago and the theological interpretation of scripture', *Nova et Vetera*, vol.15, no.1, pp.161–84.

53   Nichols, A. (1980) *The Art of God Incarnate: Theology and Image in Christian Tradition*, Eugene, Oregon, Wipf & Stock.

54   Pelser, G.M.M. (1998) 'Once more the body of Christ in Paul', *Neotestamentica*, vol.32, no.2, pp.525–45.

55   Pope-Hennessy, J. (1981) *Angelico*, Florence, Scala.

56   Powell, A.K. (2012) *Depositions: Scenes from the Late Medieval Church and the Modern Museum,* New York, Zone Books.

57   Pradel, P. (1964) 'Un relief provenant du tombeau des "chairs" du roi Philippe III au Musée de Narbonne', *Revue Archéologique*, vol.1, pp.33–46.

58   Prochno, R. (2002) *Die Kartause von Champmol. Grablege der burgundischen Herzöge*, Berlin, Akademie Verlag.

59   Reuterswärd, P. (2000) 'The breakthrough of monochrome sculpture during the Renaissance', *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift*, vol.69, no.3, pp.125–49.

60   Rosener, B. and Simon, M. (2023) 'Reading 1 Corinthians in dialogue with the Apostles' Creed', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, vol.66, no.3, pp.509–22.

61   Scheel, J. (2021) 'Feeding worms: The theological paradox of the decaying body and its depictions in the context of prayer and devotion' in S. Perkinson, and N. Turel (eds) *Picturing Death 1200–1600*, Leiden, Brill.

62   Signori, G. (2005) *Raume, Gesten, Andachtsformen. Geschlecht, Konflikt, und religiöse Kultur im europäischen Mittelalter*, Stuttgart, Thorbecke.

63   Smith, M.T. (1957/59) 'The use of grisaille as a Lenten observance', *Marsyas*, vol.8, pp.43–54.

64   Stein, R. (1999) 'Mourning-cloth at the Brabantine court' in W. Blockmans and A. Janse (eds) *Showing Status: Representations of Social Positions in the Late Middle Ages*, Turnhout, Brepols, pp.51–80.

65   Stones, A. (1998) *Le Livre d'images de Madame Marie*, Paris, Les éditions du Cerf.

66   Timmerman, A. (2011) 'Frau Venus, the Eucharist, and the Jews of Landshut' in H.L. Kessler and D. Nirenberg (eds) *Judaism and Christian Art: Aesthetic Anxieties from the Catacombs to Colonialism*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, pp.181–202.

67   'The nine ways of prayer of Saint Dominic' (1982) in S. Tugwell (ed.) *Early Dominicans: Selected Writings*, New York, Paulist Press, pp.94–103.

68   Thomassen, B. (2009) 'The uses and meanings of liminality', *International Political Anthropology*, vol.2, no.1, pp.5–27.

69   Turel, N. (2020) *Living Pictures: Jan van Eyck and Painting's First Century*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press.

70   van Gennep, A. (1960) *The Rites of Passage* (trans. M.B. Vizedom and G.L. Caffee), Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

71   Vasari, G. ([1586] 1998) *The Lives of the Artists* (trans. J. Conaway Bondanella and P. Bondanella), Oxford, Oxford University Press.

72   Walter, K. C. (2018) *The Profession of Widowhood: Widows, Pastoral Care and Medieval Models of Holiness*. Washington, Catholic University of America Press.

73   Wheatley, E. (2002) '"Blind" Jews and blind Christians: Metaphorics of marginalisation in medieval Europe', *Exemplaria*, vol.14, no.2, pp.351–82.

CONJOINED:
DÜRER AND LEONARDO

M. A. Katritzky

Abstract

Within months of each other, two prominent Renaissance artists produced starkly contrasting drawings of atypical bodies on the human conjoinment spectrum. Albrecht Dürer's polished and dated coloured drawing of 1512 depicts two-headed conjoined twins Elsbeth and Margit Mandelin-Engelhartin, who died in 1512, days after their birth in Ertingen, Germany; Leonardo da Vinci's tiny ink sketch records a youth whose headless conjoined twin grows from his chest. Dürer amply documents his subjects, specifying their names, date and place of birth; for Leonardo's twins, these details are first provided here. The visual sources and medical accuracy of Dürer's unrealistically standing newborns are uncertain; Leonardo's minute sketch accurately records parasitic conjoined twinning. This archive-based enquiry applies interdisciplinary methodologies to my review of prior scholarship, with extensive reference to early modern textual and visual documents previously unconnected to these drawings. For art history, I reconsider Dürer's visual sources and confirm the dating of Leonardo's drawing to late 1513. For medical history, I initiate rigorous anatomical scrutiny of Dürer's conjoined bodies; contextualizing Leonardo's subject within related visual and textual documentation enables me to identify him as the earliest named case of this type of parasitic conjoined twinning to survive beyond infancy. As a theatre specialist, I situate the Mandelin-Engelhartin twins as passive performers, shown for gain by their parents and provide the name, date and place of birth of Leonardo's subject: he is Jacques Floquet, born in Dreux, France, in 1500, and I confirm his high-earning status as a professional itinerant performer and extend our knowledge of his commercial strategies and performative practice, based on exhibiting his conjoined body.

Biographical note

M.A. Katritzky is Professor of Theatre Studies and Director, The Open University Centre for Research into Gender and Otherness in the Humanities; co-editor (with Pavel Drábek) of *Transnational Connections in Early Modern Theatre* (2020) and a former NIAS, Herzog August Bibliothek and Alexander von Humboldt Fellow who publishes extensively on theatre iconography, court festival and travelling performers in early modern Europe. Monographs include: *Healing, Performance and Ceremony in the Writings of Three Early Modern Physicians: Hippolytus Guarinonius and the Brothers Felix and Thomas Platter* (2012), *Women, Medicine and Theatre 1500–1750* (2007) and *The Art of commedia: a Study in the commedia dell'arte 1560–1620 with Special Reference to the Visual Records* (2006).

CONJOINED: DÜRER AND LEONARDO

M. A. Katritzky, The Open University

Introduction[1]

Leonardo da Vinci exhaustively recorded internal and external human anatomy. Inspired by Leonardo during his second visit to Italy (1505–6), Albrecht Dürer started compiling the first treatise on the aesthetics of male and female proportions around 1512 (Dürer, 1528; Panofsky, 1955, pp.151, 172, 266). The two artists shared an intense interest in representing the human body in all its diversity; as physically 'perfect' or normative, but also as a vehicle for temporary unusual poses and expressions and permanent bodily marks of illness, accident (pre- or postnatal) or inheritance. As the most influential Renaissance artists of the human body, their depictions of atypical bodies are exceptionally valuable. As well as drawing on conjoinment in allegorical, generic and zoological contexts, each once records historical conjoined twins. Dürer's coloured drawing of 1512 documents the symmetrical conjoinment of female South German newborns Elsbeth and Margit Mandelin-Engelhartin (Fig. 4.1); Leonardo's tiny ink sketch of 1513 (Codex Atlanticus fol.48r) records a youth, first named here as Jacques Floquet, displaying his parasitic conjoined twin.[2]

Previous (always separate) studies of the two drawings question neither their anatomical accuracy nor the commonly expressed views that Leonardo's was drawn from life, Dürer's after broadsheet illustrations. Comparative study is invited by the drawings' closeness in date and by their artists' personal contacts and shared deep interest in the accurate depiction of the human body. To what extent do these drawings depict medically valid conjoinment? Could Dürer have accessed sources other than the four known commemorative broadsheets? What iconographic sources could Leonardo have accessed? Did the two artists produce non-historical conjoinment images? These are among the questions addressed here.

Conjoined twins have been globally documented since prehistoric times; their images are among the earliest of all cultural records (Warkany, 1977). In a lecture presented on 22 January 1975, Michel Foucault identified the privileged monsters of the Middle Ages as human-animal hybrids and those of the eighteenth century as hermaphrodites. Foucault recognized conjoined twins, routinely related to Reformation and political issues involving the splitting or joining of churches, states or ruling families, as 'the form of monstrosity especially privileged during the Renaissance' (Foucault, 2003, p.66). Recognizably human conjoined twins of the type depicted by Dürer and Leonardo were routinely baptized, as recorded in many documents, including broadsheets relating to the Mandelin-Engelhartin twins:

> Wie vornen biβ an nabel bayd / Waren zway kind vnd zway mayd

---

1   Otherwise unattributed translations are mine. While acknowledging the invaluable contribution of Disability Studies, my preference is to avoid the term 'disabled' in the early modern theatrical context. 'Monster' is here used as an historical term; 'parasite' and 'parasitic (conjoined) twin(s)' are used as formal scientific terms following current medical usage; 'atypically–bodied' follows Emily Jean Hutcheon (2013).

---

2   Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), *Parasitic conjoined twins* [here identified as Jacques Floquet], drawing, Codex Atlanticus, fol.48r, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan, available at: https://teche.museogalileo.it/leonardo/foglio/index.html?num=ATL.0095.1&lang=en

Vnderhalben ains, hetten zwen namen / Dann do sy zü dem tauff kamen

Zway haupt zway hertz all synnlichait / Mit zwayen selen worens klaidt.

At the front down to their shared navel, they were two children, two girls; below one. They had two names because when they were baptized they possessed two heads, two hearts, complete feeling and two souls.

(see Fig. 4.2, where this passage of text is covered by the illustrated moveable flap).

Nevertheless, live conjoined twins 'call into question the way we think about time, space, and even representation itself' (Bearden, 2019, p.182); conjoinment strains the very definition of which bodies qualify their possessors for legal, social, marital and medical admissibility as human (Dreger, 2004; Sharpe, 2011). The pre-Enlightenment concept of the human blurred boundaries between human, ape and liminal hybrids, reflecting attempts to rationalize observable physical nonconformities, ethnic variations, even the mythical: mermaids, centaurs and sphinxes (Katritzky, 2014, pp.110–12). Dürer and Leonardo's representations of human conjoinment bring into sharp focus some challenges of evaluating Renaissance images of anatomically atypical human bodies. Informed interpretation of pre-photographic imagery requires an understanding of differences distinguishing early modern perceptions of atypical bodies from current teratological classification systems. Here, I identify the major shift as the progression from random categorization of different types of conjoinment, in terms of superfluous or missing body parts, to increasing acceptance of conjoinment as the most complex and varied type of congenital anatomical nonconformity, contributing a predictable spectrum of interdependent medical conditions (Spencer, 2003, endpapers). Modern health professionals emphasize the extreme rarity

of human conjoinment, typically citing around '1.5 per 100,000' (Boer et al, 2023, p.1). Based on large-scale historical birth records (Rüttel, 1844, p.266), my own analysis suggests that, by including *only* live births and *all* live births, this approach substantially underplays the occurrence of conjoinment as a source of congenital non-genetic complications. Including gestations that do not achieve live birth, it could affect above 1:2,000 of its sole at-risk group, namely genetically identical (monozygotic) twins and greater multiple gestations. Arguably better reflected by its extensive iconography than by under-contextualized medical statistics, the high prevalence of human conjoinment illuminates its cultural importance, attracting reporters of every caliber from amateurs to Dürer and Leonardo.

Early modern atypical bodies were viewed as extraordinary natural wonders, prodigies, even as omen-bringing messengers. In *The City of God*, St Augustine confirms Cicero's derivation, in *De divinatione*, of their (then more neutral) appellation, 'monster', from the Latin verb 'monstrare', to show, referencing their 'de*monst*rative', predictive role (Bearden, 2019, pp.113–14). Because of their perceived social and religious significance, the birth of every early modern monstrous human that came to public attention was recorded as a matter of course. The medieval fashion for documenting individuals and ethnicities with atypical or unfamiliar bodies in manuscript illuminations persisted into print culture. From the 1490s incomparably cheaper than manuscript, print enabled the early modern publication and distribution of large editions of illustrated broadsheets within days of newsworthy events such as prodigious births. These generated a rich source of *ephemera* for wonder books and chronicles such as Hartmann Schedel's 1493 *Liber chronicarum*, one of the earliest substantial German language printing projects. Produced in the workshop of Michael Wolgemut (1434–1519), to

whom the young Albrecht Dürer was apprenticed from 1486 to 1491 (Ekserdjian, 2023, p.11), it depicts many anatomically atypical or ethnically unfamiliar 'Marvels of the East', several featuring human conjoinment (Katritzky, 2021, p.206, plate 5). Dürer's considerable book illustration activities also contributed to the Basel lawyer and humanist Sebastian Brant's commercially successful publications (Kaimowitz and Kammradt, 1994, p.8). These included broadsheets commemorating female twins joined at the head born near Worms during the 1495 Diet of Worms, who survived for ten years and the double pig commemorated in Dürer's celebrated print of 1496, *The Monstrous Pig of Landser* (see below).

Only in the twentieth century did art historians identify the mythical Molionides twins, Eurytos and Kteatos, in a Dürer print of *c.*1496–7, then retitled *Hercules slaying the Molionides twins* (Strauss, 1980, p.127; Hollstein, 1954, No.138; Simon, 1971, pp.263–4 & cat.506). Described as conjoined by Hesiod, but not by Homer, they were named after the Greek Queen Molione, who conceived them with Poseidon and/or her husband Aktor (Dasen, 1997). Non-historical conjoinment also featured in Dürer's drawing of the two-faced (diprosopus) *Prudentia* (*c.*1494–6, Musée du Louvre) and several images associated with Leonardo. A two-faced *Prudentia*, a double-bodied hermaphrodite and an androgyne feature in three of his allegorical drawings in Christ Church Picture Gallery, Oxford (Popham, 1946, pp.88–90, nos.105, 107, 108; Nova, 2001 [all 3 reproduced]; Keizer, 2012). His most well-known anatomical drawing depicts a multi-limbed *Vitruvian Man* (*c.*1490, Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice). As well as the sketch of the boy with his parasitic twin on fol.48, the *Codex Atlanticus* collection of Leonardo drawings, dating from 1478 to 1519, contains a crude sketch (fol.58) of a double-sexed monstrous birth (Pedretti, 1978, pp.307–17; Ciseri, 2014, pp.92–102). Possibly after

Leonardo, this winged hermaphrodite references one or both atypically-bodied still-births recorded in 1506 in Florence and in March 1512 in Ravenna (Daston and Park, 1998, pp.177–81; Sá and Viegas, 2022, pp.1–30). Internationally circulated broadsheets commemorating the 'Ravenna monster' immediately inspired Italians such as Sebastiano di Branca Tedallini (1911, p.327), Luca Landucci (1883, p.314), Marin Sanudo (1886, vol. XIV, col.200), Giovan Francesco Vitale (1512) and Marcellus Palonius, who described this birth as two-headed conjoined twins (1513, sig.F3r: 'gemino capite'), prompting numerous further reports in wonder books and broadsheets (for example, Fig. 4.2). A lost drawing of historically recorded conjoined twins born around 1499 is attributed to Leonardo by Lomazzo (1585, p.637). Bought for Cardinal Barberini from the collection of Francesco Villamena in 1624 by Cassiano dal Pozzo, it inspired a print in Fortunio Liceti's influential treatise on human monstrosity, whose illustration of male conjoined twins with two faces on their shared head (janiceps) in later editions is thought to be derived from Leonardo (Liceti, 1634, pp.134–5). The following sections examine Dürer and Leonardo's depictions of historical conjoined twins.

Figure 4.1: Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528), *The conjoined twins of Ertingen* (Elsbeth and Margit Mandelin-Engelhartin), 1512, pen and black India ink, 15.8 x 20.8cm, Ashmolean Museum (WA1855.102 PI291), Oxford (Strauss, 1974, vol.3, p.1312) (© Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford)

Dürer

Fig. 4.1, signed and dated 1512, depicts the nude bodies of conjoined twins Elisabeth or Elsbeth and Margareta or Margit. Jointly known as Elsgret, they were born to Paulo Mandelin and Barbara Engelhartin on 20 July 1512 in the village of Ertingen. Additional to Dürer's drawing (Fig. 4.1), four commemorative broadsheets are known, of which two are here reproduced (Figs. 4.2 and 4.3).

The Mandelin-Engelhartin twins are depicted from both front and back in Fig. 4.2 and a broadsheet in Eichstätt (Universitätsbibliothek GS(3)14.55.3. Littger, 2003, fig.1; Spinks, 2005, pp.91–102, fig.6; Karr Schmidt, 2006, p.124, fig. 2:37; Spinks, 2009, pp.42–49, fig. 2.5); from the front only in Fig. 4.3 and in a broadsheet in Erlangen (Universitätsbibliothek H62/Einblattdruck sign. A IV 3. Littger, 2003, fig.4; Spinks, 2005, fig.8; Spinks, 2009, fig. 2.7; Voeste, 2022). Fig. 4.1 exemplifies the sole category, 'subjects of wondrous or monstrous creation', in which Dürer continued to initiate major drawings beyond his mid-20s by adapting images created by others (Porras, 2013, p.68). Beyond isolated concerns that their images are "probably not taken from life" (Karr Schmidt, 2006, p.123, & 2018, p.146), the secondary literature barely hints at concerns regarding the medical accuracy of the depicted conjoinment.

Specialists convincingly argue that Dürer's drawing is based on one of these two 1512 broadsheets which, like his drawing, depict the Mandelin-Engelhartin twins twice, from front and back. They are the Eichstätt broadsheet, which has both images printed directly onto its recto and Dürer's more likely source is Fig. 4.2, a text-bearing broadsheet with a hinged flap illustrated on both sides pasted down its middle (lacking in some impressions, see Karr Schmidt, 2021, p.36). Unlike the other three prints, it, like Dürer, notes the girls' baptism, and Dürer's text (Fig. 4.1) closely

Figure 4.2: Erhard Öglin? (c.1470–1520, printer, Augsburg) (Dodgson, II, p.203), *The Mandelin-Engelhartin twins*, 1512, single-sided woodcut broadsheet with attached double-sided illustrated flap (recto), 11.4 x 8.7cm. London, photo courtesy of The British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings 1876,0510.619 (© The Trustees of the British Museum. Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) licence); (Bartrum, 2002, pp.182–83, nos. 123–124; Littger, 2003, fig.5; Spinks, 2005, figs.4&5; Spinks, 2009, figs. 2.3 (recto) & 2.4 (verso). Further impressions: München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Einbl. I,41, 27.5 x 14cm; National Library of Medicine, Bethesda, n.2526.

follows its Latin title wording. Here, I ask whether potential secondary sources for Dürer can be suggested in addition to these four broadsheets and consider the central, conjoined arm they and Dürer depict, whose anatomical configuration is unrecorded in modern medical images.

For Dürer, like Leonardo, bodies, human

or otherwise, were natural specimens. When circumstances prevent Dürer from drawing from life, as with his 1515 woodcut of a rhinoceros (Bartsch, 1808, 147.136), he creates a "naturalistic" effect by improvising details missing from eyewitness reports and drawings sent to him. A similar process is evident in Dürer's 1496 print, *The Monstrous Pig of Landser*; informed by life as well as by the commercial broadsheet based on Brant's life drawing of the actual monstrous pigs, made on 1 March 1496 (Strauss, 1980, p.212, No.95; Hollstein, 1954, No.82; Wuttke, 1994, pp.108–14; Pollmer-Schmidt, 2013).[3] Heinrich Deichsler's *Chronik* records these pigs as being publicly exhibited in Nürnberg barely a month after their birth and death on 1 March 1496:

> Item darnach kom her zu ostern zwu seu, die warn anainander gewachsen oben und heten all paid neur einen kopf und heten unten ir iede vier füß und iede zwen füß uber sich gerekt, das eine sechs füß het.

> Item then two pigs came here at Easter [1496], above they were grown together with only one head between them; each had four feet below and two feet stretched above each, so that each had six feet.

(Hegel, 1874, p.586)

Wuttke (1994, pp.108, 114) speculates on whether only an image was exhibited. Possibly, Brant's broadsheet was here marketed in conjunction with the showing of their rudimentarily preserved remains. Dürer rejects two strong iconographic conventions for depicting Renaissance human conjoined newborns adopted in the broadsheet: the pigs' physiologically inappropriate bipedal standing poses and indeterminate settings. He also ignored the scientific fact that the pigs died on their day of birth and more "naturalistically" depicted them as mature, on all fours and situated on farmland.

---

3   Dürer, *The Monstrous Pig of Landser*, 1496, engraving, 12 x 12.6 cm, London, British Museum, E,2.157.

Figure 4.3: Jacob Sieglin (fl.1499–1518, draftsman, Ulm), *The Mandelin-Engelhartin twins*, 1512, woodcut broadsheet. Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, cat. no. 328–10 (Image credit: image in the public domain) (Holländer, 1921, p.67, fig. 17; Littger, 2003, fig.3; Spinks, 2005, fig.7; Spinks, 2009, fig.2.6). Further impression: Giglin, 1910 (then: Jean Masson, Amiens, now: Paris, École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts). Neither impression could be located by Littger (2003, p.75n.9–10).

Dürer's print draws on his personal knowledge of domesticated animals – and probable eyewitness experience of the Landser pigs' exhibited remains in his home city – to radically modify his main source, Brant's broadsheet image.

Dürer is unlikely to have seen the Mandelin-Engelhartin twins either alive or *postmortem*. Although his domestic travels are not well-documented at this time (Ekserdjian, 2023, p.13), domestic commitments during summer 1512, including his June purchase of property in his home city, Nürnberg (Thausing, 1876, p.115)

virtually rule out travel to Ertingen during their brief lifetime. My analysis of the four Mandelin-Engelhartin broadsheets establishes a previously unnoted connection between Fig. 4.3 and the city of Ulm, directly between Ertingen, some 65km distance and Nürnberg, some 200 km in the opposite direction. In 1512, one of Dürer's closest associates belonged to an artists' fraternity based in Ulm, introducing a potential new source for Fig. 4.1. One broadsheet (Fig. 4.3) bears a signature in the block variously read as "a m[anu] Biglin" (Littger, 2003, p.75); Biglin (Spinks, 2005, p.99; Spinks, 2009, p.48), Siglin (Passavant, 1860, I, p.42), Hans Siglin (Nagler, 1846, p.389) or M. Siglin (Bucher, 1875, I, p.372; Leitschuh, 1912, p.188). Reading it as "M[eister] Siglin" allows me to identify its creator as Jacob Sieglin, named in the 1499 directory of artists based at the Wengenkloster, Ulm (Bach, 1893, p.125: 'Jacob Siglin Brief-drukher'', a role defined as a commercial draftsman by Lippmann, 1888, p.10). Now the Ulm church of St. Michael zu den Wengen, in the decades around 1500 the Wengenkloster accommodated a religious community and a thriving artists' fraternity. Its registered members include "Jacobus Merklin pictor noster" (died 1526), and from at least 1495 to his death in 1518, also his kinsman "Conradus Märklin, Maler, pictor noster" (Weyermann, 1830; Thausing, 1872, p.149; Leitschuh, 1912, p.191; Buchner, 1953, pp.197–8; Hans Rupprich, 1956, I, p.132; Stange, 1970, II, pp.142–3). The German painter Konrad Merklin, whose oeuvre is restricted to a few uncertainly attributed altarpieces, is best known for being Dürer's long-term close friend (Herrbach, 2003; Sahm, 2002, pp.98–102), valued by Dürer for a jocular correspondence revelling in their 'smutty and laddish sense of humour' (Ekserdjian, 2023, p.44). Locating publication of Fig. 4.3 in Ulm suggests new possibilities. The Ulm connection supports Dürer's own dating of his drawing to

1512, rather than the traditional dating to around 1520 still supported by some specialists (Littger, 2003, p.76; Karr Schmidt, 2006, p.123, n.74). It also identifies Merklin as a potential source for Dürer of the Ulm broadsheet (Fig. 4.3) and further information on the Mandelin-Engelhartin twins.

Both broadsheets featuring back views of the Mandelin-Engelhartin twins depict the same type of shared middle arm as that of Fig. 4.1 (Fig. 4.2; Eichstätt). In the absence of photographic records of similarly conjoined human arms, I here question the extent to which this arm's anatomical configuration can be medically confirmed. Iconographically, Dürer's drawing diverges in numerous aspects from the broadsheet illustrations. The malevolent, muscular pre-adolescents of Fig. 4.2 reappear in his drawing as charmingly plump, unweaned infants, with endearing baby faces, relatively hairless heads and a shared umbilical cord, whose anatomical entwinement is elegantly invoked by their virtuoso arabesque framing. However, Dürer in no way modifies the anatomy recorded in these broadsheets. Five of Fig. 4.2's 116 lines of vernacular verse confirm its author as an eyewitness to the newborns, who paid their mother an additional fee to turn them over and let him view them from the back ('Der muter ich ain trinckgelt gab// Gar freüntlich bat ich die frawen// Das sy michs ließ hindten bschawen// Sy want die kinder hyndten umb// Also gesach ichs umbedum'). The shared central arm he saw there, depicted both by him and by Dürer, is of a type I have not found documented photographically.

The Mandelin-Engelhartin twins have separate heads (dicephalic), sharing a single two-legged body below the navel and with an anatomically normal arm on each of their two outer sides. Such twins (parapagus) are typically either four-armed, each controlling a visually normal second arm between their two heads, or three-armed,

sharing control of one fused central arm. Featuring various combinations of fused and separate double long bones (Förster, 1861, plates I, figs.9, 11; IV, fig. 4; VI, figs.1–7), the shared third arm varies in anatomical structure from 'a compound limb, containing the elements of two enveloped in a common integument, with separate hands, and in some cases distinct fore-arms, through a series of degrees to little more than a mere hump-like projection containing the fused rudiments of two limbs' (Fisher, 1866, p.280). Habitually accepted by modern health professionals as reliable records of conjoinment, the Mandelin-Engelhartin broadsheets and Dürer's drawing feature a shared central arm fused to the elbow before separating into two forearms. Warkany praises these images for illustrating 'dicephalic children objectively and with correct anatomical descriptions'. Warkany's identification of another central arm of this type in a broadsheet woodcut of parapagus twins born in 1517 (Ewinkel, 1995, Plate 57) is unconvincing; close inspection suggests that they have two separate, closely pressed together central arms (1977, p.5). Bates classifies Dürer's twins as four-armed (2002, p.216), Hori (1998, p.434) as two-armed. Bondeson (2001, p.1436), despite taking Dürer to task for his 'compelling, if somewhat fanciful, drawing of these twins', accepts that their 'anatomy and proportions […] are perfectly illustrated'. Gilbert-Barness and his colleagues praise the 'exceptional clarity' with which Dürer portrayed 'the extraordinary complexity of these gemellus defects of blastogenesis'; evaluating his drawing as an anatomically accurate record of the Mandelin-Engelhartin twins' 'normal right and left upper limb, and posteriorly an upper limb "fused" to the elbow, with distal branching of separate forearms and hands' (2003, p.568).

Elsewhere, I identify and reproduce some 40 pre-photographic images of limbs similarly separating into two at the elbow or knee (Katritzky, 2011). Each records a single-bodied human with four hands and four feet; one growing from each end of their four limbs, each of which branches into two at the elbow or knee. Not previously associated with the Mandelin-Engelhartin twins and persisting into the nineteenth century, I trace their iconographic origins to a woodcut in Schedel's 1493 *Liber chronicarum* (Katritzky, 2021, plate 5). Uniquely, there is one image of a comparable shared third arm iconographically unrelated to this sequence; published in 1775 (Fig. 4.4) and again, with virtually unchanged accompanying text, in 1808, by Moreau de la Sarthe. Its artists, renowned for their scientifically accurate depictions of botanical specimens, here depict anonymous male twins of unknown place or date of birth, identified only as a preserved specimen from the Paris collection of Monsieur Lagon:

> Cet Enfant a deux Têtes bien Conformées a l'exception de la Bouche de l'une des Tetes qui est fendu en Bec-de-lievre, il a 4 Clavicules 4 Omoplates et 4 Bras, deux des Epaules sont reunies ainsi que les deux Bras qui en dependent ils sont adherens l'un à lautre jusque vers les Coudes; la, ils se separent et les deux avant-Bras sont libres; les Mains qui sont a leur Extremité sont bien Conformées les deux autres Bras ainsi que leurs Mains n'ont rien de difformes […] il est venu à terme et Vivant.

> This Child has two normal heads, with the exception of the mouth of one head, which has a harelip; he has four collarbones, four shoulder blades and four arms; two shoulders are fused as are the two arms which issue from them; they are fused to each other until around the elbows; there they separate, and the two forearms are free; the hands which are at their extremities are normal; the other two arms, as well as their hands, are not at all abnormal […] He was born at term and live.

These twins are elevated to a rarer category of conjoinment than the Mandelin-Engelhartin twins by their third leg, amputated in the *postmortem* 1775 image (Fig. 4.4). Teratologist G J Fisher

Figure 4.4: Nicolas-François and Geneviève Naugis Regnault, *Les Ecarts de la nature*, 1775, plate 27: "Enfant Monstrueux, Tiré du Cabinet de M Lagon à Paris". Ville de Besançon, B M Étude 11201. (Image credit: image in the public domain)

categorizes them as four-armed (1866, p.274, Case 54). Their shared central arm, depicted as separating before, not at, the elbow, does not confirm the medical reliability of Dürer's drawing (Fig. 4.1). Although inconclusive and all pre-photographic, the additional images introduced here contribute towards a more considered evaluation of Fig. 4.1's anatomical feasibility. Barely addressed by art historians or health professionals, issues of medical accuracy are relevant to our understanding of the contrasting interplay between scientific, religious and artistic agendas differentiating Dürer's and Leonardo's approaches to depicting conjoined bodies as theatrical spectacle and natural wonder.

Secondary literature on the Mandelin-Engelhartin twins routinely emphasizes their historical authenticity, while neither questioning, nor citing evidence in support of, the anatomical reality of the shared central arm depicted in Dürer's 1512 drawing (Fig. 4.1). The numerous related depictions of bodies I have located are all pre-photographic. Only one is potentially medically valid. In the absence of definitive confirmation of genuine examples of this type of human arm in the modern photographic record, the possibility that it more strongly reflects imperfect memory and/or fanciful imagination than medical fact cannot be discounted. Given the unknown relationship between writer and artist, the woodcuts of the broadsheet reporting sight of the Mandelin-Engelhartin twins from the back are unreliable (Fig. 4.2). If this type of arm is anatomically unviable, then Fig. 4.1, like Dürer's *Monstrous Pig* and *Rhinoceros*, is a further visual compromise, offering imprecise anatomies based on unreliable documentation rather than eyewitness experience. Distributed as newsletters far beyond Ertingen, the broadsheets perpetuated the performative experience of visiting the Mandelin-Engelhartin twins during their brief lifetime. Anatomical inaccuracies which might devalue them as souvenir prints for eyewitness spectators had no impact on this far more lucrative market.

Leonardo

With reference to 38 documents (**Appendix**: A.1–A.38), this section contextualizes Leonardo's similarly dated drawing (Codex Atlanticus fol.48r), featuring a contrasting category of conjoinment (https://teche.museogalileo.it/leonardo/foglio/index.html?num=ATL.0095.1&lang=en). These documents include inspirational manuscript eyewitness findings by Anthony Grafton (A.5) and Liz Broadwell (A.9, A.18) not previously linked to Leonardo. Documents identified by my archival research previously uncited in connection with Leonardo include further images of his subject

Figure 4.5: (A.10). Marcantonio Raimondi (*c.*1480–1534), *Parasitic conjoined twins* [here identified as Jacques Floquet and dated to November 1513], print, inscribed: "Leonis X an.1 [=1513] eidib[us] novembr[is] ex Hispania Roma[m] advectvs. An. XII pver in hanc forma[m] q[u]odq[ue] mirv[m] dictv est cvm monstro vna egerit conmingitve" (Leo X, Year 1 [=1513], November. *A twelve-year-old boy with a body like this was brought from Spain to Rome. What a wonder! It is said that he and the monster void in unison*), 11.9 × 7.3 cm. London, British Museum BM 1854,0513.42 (*A deformed young man, nude, with a headless young child's body attached by the neck to the chest of the young man, in the place of arms, the child has a large finger at either side of his torso*, 1510–27). (© The Trustees of the British Museum. Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) licence; Further impressions: Vienna, Albertina DG1971424, *Junger Mann mit zwei Körpern*; New York, Metropolitan Museum 49.97.154, *A naked youth holding in left hand a deformed child, c.*1500–34).

Figure 4.6: (A.22). Anon, *A man came from Savoy* [here identified as Jacques Floquet], woodcut (Stumpf, 1554, fols.262v–263r, 1519). (Image credit: image in the public domain)

(Belloni, 1954; Ciseri, 2014), reconsiders their enquiries and raises new questions. I ask whether its degree of medical feasibility can be assessed and review the performative contribution of Leonardo's subject and medical implications of his possible successful conjoinment separation. Can his biographical details and career trajectory be identified more precisely? Finally, I reinterrogate Leonardo's sources and circumstances. Was Leonardo's drawing (Codex Atlanticus f.48r), as previously suggested, produced in Florence in 1513 and solely from life? Can potential visual sources be identified? And what can we deduce from its context as a *marginalium* to a large sheet of Leonardo's unrelated scientific notes and sketches?

The anatomical feasibility of Leonardo's depiction of headless parasitic twinning (Codex Atlanticus f.48r) is confirmed by modern medicine. In this congenital non-genetic anatomical condition, an independently unviable second body (the parasite) grows out of an otherwise complete and healthy body (the autosite). In certain exceptional cases, atypical bodies were less a disability than

(Figs. 4.5 and 4.6), sightings in Spain, Italy, Germany, France and Switzerland (A.3, A.16, A.19–A.22) and Sanudo's reports and crucial eyewitness Venetian encounter (A.1, A.4, A.15). My study of Leonardo's drawing (Codex Atlanticus f.48r) revisits both publications discussing it in any detail

a passport to professional performing careers. Renaissance rulers aspired to take humans who were profoundly anatomically atypical from birth under their personal protection. Conjoined twins, like dwarfs, giants or those with hypertrichosis, were highly valued in the aristocratic gifts-for-patronage exchange economy (Katritzky, 2014). Increasingly from the sixteenth century, performers with exceptional anatomies supplemented, even replaced, court service with commercial touring. Since 1500, several dozen parasitic conjoined twins, mostly male, of European, Asian and African ethnicity, have survived to adulthood as professional performers, including Shackshoone in seventeenth-century London and Antonio Martinelli in eighteenth-century Europe (Katritzky, 2021; Katritzky, 2024). Some specialists refer to 10 or more sixteenth-century sets of headless parasitic conjoined twins (Gidon, 1936); even "numerous examples of traveling, adult conjoined parasitic twins in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries" (Bearden, 2019, 231). My own research confirms only two sets of adult performing, headless, parasitic, conjoined twins in sixteenth-century Europe: Leonardo's subject, here named as Jacques Floquet (A.1; A.18) and the German Hans Kaltenbrunn. Anatomically similar, chronologically overlapping and both operating as transnational itinerant performers, they are often confused in early modern wonder books. This consideration of Floquet is the first to contextualize him within a broad overview of documentation also relating to Kaltenbrunn (A.1–A.38).

Eye-witness reports of Floquet between 1513 and 1519 amply support each other's descriptions of his adolescent activities and double body. Less clearly documented are the destinations and length of his adult itinerary, or his alleged radical anatomical modification from double- to single-bodied, alluded to by Boaistuau. His illustrated account of an unidentified adult male exhibiting his parasitic twin in and beyond Paris in the 1530s unusually names several eyewitnesses (A.25). Boaistuau claims that he commissioned the double-bodied performer's portrait in Valence while studying law with Jean de Coras (1515–72), who taught at the University of Valence for several years from the mid-1540s (A.26); his accompanying woodcut, published in 1560, is iconographically close to Stumpf's woodcut, published six years earlier (Fig. 4.6, A.22). According to Boaistuau, his own publisher, the University of Paris printer Jean Longis, who knew this double-bodied man from Paris, questioned him on the startling anatomical change he noticed on their re-encounter in nearby Montlhéry "devoid of the monster" (A.27). Other known medieval and early modern separation attempts all unsuccessfully followed the death of one conjoined twin. The sensationally early live separation indicated by Boaistuau is noted by Bearden (2019, p.232) and discussed in Bates's thesis (2002), but not its published version (2005). Identifying a separation of 1689 as "the only example of this procedure in the early modem period", and despite the unusually bulky parasite depicted by Stumpf and Boaistuau, Bates speculates: "Perhaps a small parasite could have been removed surgically (by a brother who had earned enough to retire?)" (2002, pp.134, 156). By the eighteenth century, when invasive physical examination was an established commercial routine of conjoined twins, the professional performer Antonio Martinelli supported the weight of his parasitic twin in a custom designed harness (Katritzky, 2021, p.208). Around 1580, Montaigne (1842, p.330) viewed a live fourteen-month-old infant with a parasitic conjoined twin, which three adults "carried about to get money by shewing it". His account highlights the constant wear and tear to which the routine probing of paying spectators subjected such twins' fragile site

of conjunction: "the juncture and thickness where they were conjoined was not above four fingers, or thereabouts, so that if you thrust up the imperfect child, you might see the navel of the other below it". Could decades of itinerant performance, involving transporting, twisting and showing Floquet's bulky, unviable parasite, eventually have degraded its anatomical link sufficiently to initiate separation? How medically successful was this radical bodily modification? And, marking as it did the termination of a lucrative performing career squarely based his atypical body, was it chosen or involuntary?

Having considered Floquet's body, it is time to review his performing career. Many of the 38 early modern texts and images relating to live sixteenth-century parasitic conjoined twins summarized in the **Appendix** (A.1–A.38) have not previously been linked to Leonardo's subject. Belloni (1954) discusses potential identification of Leonardo's boy in five documents relating to Leonardo's portrait sketch. They are illustrated reports by the Sicilian poet Giovan Francesco Vitale (A.12), French humanist Pierre Boaistuau (A.25–27) and German natural wonder chronicler Lycosthenes (A.14), and unillustrated accounts by the Florentines Antonio Benivieni (A.2) and Marcello Virgilio Adriani (A.6). Pedretti (1978, p.42) makes the connection with the Florentine apothecary Luca Landucci's widely cited eye-witness description of teenage male parasitic twins in Florence in October 1513 (A.7). Briefly noting Leonardo's drawing in her consideration of Marcantonio's print, Culotta (2024) contributes Tedallini's diary entry, confirming the boy's late October 1513 Rome arrival (A.8, A.10). For the first time overviewed together and considered with the previously unidentified diary entries by Sanudo discussed below and other documents here identified, this extensive textual and visual evidence valuably amends and expands Ciseri's

itinerary. Drawing on all Belloni's documents, he locates Leonardo's subject as a baby in Florence, boy in Florence and Rome and adult in France and Switzerland (2014, pp.104–5). The new documents exclude identification of Leonardo's boy with two cases documented by Benivieni (A.2) and Lycosthenes (A.14), confirm his name as Jacques Floquet and provide his place and date of birth as Dreux, France in 1500 (A.1, A.17). Stays in Florence (A.7) and Rome in 1513 (A.8, A.12) and a return to France in the 1530s (A.25–27) can now be augmented with further sightings in Rome (A.9, A.13), earlier indications of a Spanish pilgrimage (A.3) and possible stay in Ferrara (A.4, A.5), the uniquely informatively documented Venice tour of 1515 (A.15) and, during the period 1515–19, possible visits to Bologna, Strasbourg, Geneva, Augsburg, Poitiers, Basel, Savoy and Zürich (A.16–A.22).

Although the Venetian diarist Marin Sanudo's account of the "Ravenna monster" (1886, XIV, col.200: 22 March 1512) is well-known, his uniquely informative records of Floquet (A.1, A.4, A.15) are uncited with reference to either Leonardo or Floquet himself; noted only in connection with Sanudo's own monster accounts, prognostication and Venetian hospitality infrastructure (A.15). Sanudo's diary entry for March 1514 paraphrases lengthy commentary on the significance as political portents of several current monsters in a recent letter by Francesco Bonafede, then a professor of medicine at the University of Padua. Its description of 'a monster from Spain' (A.4) recalls not eyewitness examination but an image, almost certainly Fig. 4.5:

> Ễstà visto ancora a Ferara uno desegno de uno mostro vien di Spagna, al presente si ritrova a Roma: è uno homo compito, il quale ha in pecto una creatura de la qual vedese le gambe, le braze, la schena fora del pecto et la testa dentro; et quando lui va del corpo, ancora la creatura li va ad un medesimo tempo. Dicesi de qui, de li esser nasuto

una creatura mezo can e mezo homo, et afermasi per certo; et perchè de le cosse che rade vole acadeno si sole lo human ingegno miraviliare […] havendo per historie compreso tal portenti ad altri tempi esser acaduli et haver annuntiato cosse grande et maxime tumulti de guerre, occisione, stragie et altri mali.

Also in Ferrara, there is to be seen a drawing of a monster from Spain who is now in Rome: he is a complete man, who has in his chest a creature of which you can see the legs, the arms and the back outside the chest and the head inside, and when he voids his body, the creature also voids at the same time. It is said of him, that he was born of a creature half dog and half human, and it was confirmed for certain. And because the human mind is accustomed to marvel at rare sights [we] understand from history that such portents are untimely and can predict great and terrible upheavals: wars, murder, massacres and other evils.

Although Martignoni (2004), the only specialist to reference both Sanudo's accounts (A.1, A.4, A.15), neither connects them to each other nor to Leonardo, Bonafede's "monster from Spain" is clearly identical with the boy Sanudo himself encountered in Venice a year later, on 5 May 1515 and both are Leonardo's subject (Codex Atlanticus fol.48r).

Sanudo's Venetian eye-witness report (A.1; A.15) offers new information gained by his close physical examination and interviews with the boy:

Ancora in questa matina vidi cossa notanda. Sopra la Piaza di San Marco, in l'hostaria dil Capello, ch'era un monstro, cossa molto horenda, qual è uno garzon di anni 14 nato in le parte di Picardia, chiamato Jacomo, dil 1500, et ben proportionato, lui un poco picolo, qual ha nel stomaco un altra criatura li vien fuora, che non ha se non il busto e membro viril per dove el pissa, et piedi, quali li tien retrati, et di li braze dimostra fuora come do dedi un poco longi; altro non ha, nè ha il buso da drio; et questa cossa si passe di liquor che 'l zovene manza et poi pisa fuora; et parmi molto di novo quando lo vidi. Et lo tocai et parlai col garzon, qual sa italiano, et si pagava uno soldo chi voleva vederlo, et teniva una bandiera in tella fuora con questo monstro dipento suso, l'arma dil Papa et dil

Doxe non posta postiza, et letere vulgar et latine, qual dicevano cussì: Ex matrimonio natus est in partibus Normandiæ, in civitate quæ dicitur Drus, 1500. Tutto ozi andò persone a vederlo, adeo vadagnoe ducati assa'. Sono tre che lo menano cussì atorno, spagnoli; uno lo monstra et do asunano li marcheti, et poi triumphano insieme et vanno di terra in terra, et eri capitoe qui, qual vien di ...; e la sera per li Capi di X li fo fato comandamento subito andasse via, e cussì andò.

This morning I also saw something notable. On the Piazza di San Marco, in the Hotel Capello, there was a monster who was very frightening. He was a boy of 14 years old called Jacomo, born in 1500 in the region of Picardy. Well-proportioned although slightly short, he has another creature coming out of his stomach, who has nothing but the torso and virile member with which he pisses, and feet which stay retracted, and his arms protrude out a little. He has nothing else, nor does he have an opening in his back; and this creature fills with liquid that the young man drinks and then pisses it out; and it seemed very new to me when I saw it. And I touched him and spoke to the boy, who speaks Italian, and anyone who wanted to see him paid a penny and he had a banner outside with this monster painted on it, also the arms of the Pope [Leo X] and the Doge [Leonardo Loredan], and an inscription in Italian and Latin which read thus: Ex matrimonia natus est in partibus Normandiæ, in civitate quæ dicitur Drus [Dreux], 1500. All people of leisure went to see him, he would earn a lot of ducats. He is managed by three Spaniards; one shows him and two plan the tours, and they share the profits and travel from region to region and it is understood that he came from [blank space in original MS]. And in the evening the Council of Ten commanded him to leave immediately, and so he went.

Sanudo, co-owner of the Hostaria al Campana, locates Floquet's public exhibition at the Hostaria al Capello on St. Mark's Square, one of several central Venetian inns owned by the Republic, and notes his three Spanish managers. Antonio de Torquemada confirms the boy's earlier presence in Spain. Growing up in León, an important stopover for pilgrims to Santiago di Compostela,

he recalls a pilgrim he met during early childhood. This stranger wore "a long garment downe to his feet open before, which in giving him some little almes he opened wide, & discovered a child, whose head to our seeming was set in the mouth of his stomack or a very little higher, his whole necke being out, from whence downeward his body was fully perfected […] so that there was in one man two bodies" (A.3). 1514, the date given for this encounter by Torquemada's translator, Lewes Lewkenor, is incompatible with the itinerary suggested by my research. Torquemada's own more tentative dating, to around 1513 or 1514, allows Floquet's Spanish pilgrimage to be located immediately prior to his Rome visit, amply supporting Italian commentators' Spanish references.

Encouraged by noble, medical and public patronage and the frenzied interest raised by souvenir images, human conjoinment contributed significantly to the increasing professionalization of performance culture. Showmen travelled between courts and fairgrounds, promoting the theatricalized display of live atypically-bodied performers and postmortem specimens. Sanudo provides rare early sixteenth-century insights into this commodification, confirming that although cut short by the Council of Ten, the boy's Venetian tour was financially successful. Invaluably, Sanudo establishes the date, place of birth and, in conjunction with Liz Broadwell's findings (A.18), name of Leonardo's subject as 1500 in Dreux, on the borders of Picardy and Normandy, named Jacques Floquet. Unaware of this biographical information and assuming their known chronology and anatomy did not contradict the final case study of Benivieni's posthumously published medical observations, defined by Ciseri (2009, p.254) as the "first modern treatise on pathological anatomy", Belloni and Ciseri identified Leonardo's subject with unweaned male twins being shown around

Florence for money by their Milanese mother, Alexandra (A.2). Sanudo's authoritative eyewitness account (A.15) now definitively rules out this widely accepted identification.

Sanudo's report of these parasitic twins' shared anatomy and bodily functions reflects the heightened interest surrounding the atypically bodied at the time Leonardo and Dürer produced their conjoined twin drawings. Briefer comments by the physician Georg Hieronymus Welsch confirm that he too physically examined this boy. His forty-sixth medical case study vividly recalls his eyewitness encounter with an unnamed travelling performer, evidently Floquet, in Augsburg in 1516 (A.19):

> 1516, die X Augusti juvenis gallus XIIX annorum Augustæ vindelicorum spectandum se praebuit, cujus sinistro lateri thoracis tumor adnatus erat infanti simillimus, duobus cruribus & pedibus. duabusque natibus, sed sine ullo ani vestigio, pene satis magno, qui diitis compressus urinam fundebat: ventre etiam manifeste conspicuo, ex quo duo veluti brachiorum simulacra spithamae longitudine dependebant pollicem crassa.

> On 10 August 1516, a young Frenchman of eighteen years of age presented himself to the spectators of Augsburg. On the left side of his chest was attached a tumor very similar to an infant, with two legs and feet and two buttocks, without any trace of an anus but with a penis of sufficient size that, when compressed, it poured out urine. His belly was also plainly visible, from which hung two arms looking like long, thick thumbs.

Images relating to Floquet, including several previously unknown in this context, fall into two iconographical distinct groups: youthful images (Codex Atlanticus fol.48r; Fig 4.5; A.10–12, A.17) and adult images (Fig. 4.7; A.22, A.25, A.26). Above, I suggest as the probable primary visual precedent for the adult images Stumpf's woodcut of 1554 (Fig. 4.6), perhaps based on a lost broadsheet

Many wonder book authors draw directly or indirectly on this influential depiction (Fig. 4.6)

Figure 4.7: (A.17). Matthias Hüpffuff (fl.1497–1520, printer, Strasbourg), *Diser knab unnd seltzame geburt ist geb[oren im] land Hispania ist alt zwölff iar und hat in der lang de[r Papst zu] Rom gelebt an seinem hoff und hat stülgang und geharnett (This boy and strange birth was born in Spain and is twelve years old and for a long time was called to the Pope's court in Rome and can pass stools and urinate)*, woodcut broadsheet depicting a youth here identified as Jacques Floquet, c.1515, 145 x 109. Zurich, Zentralbibliothek PAS II I/9. (Image credit: image in the public domain)

(see A.22; A.25–27). It shows a stocky, bearded, mature man, here identified as Floquet, then aged around 20 years, in Zurich around 1519 or 1520, supporting a parasitic twin so bulky that his feet would otherwise drag on the ground. Turning to youthful images, Leonardo's drawing (Codex Atlanticus f.48r) is undated. The only dated youthful image is the woodcut frontispiece Vitale commissioned for his epic poem *Teratorizion*, inspired, as recorded in his dated dedication of January 1513 (=1514), by his own eye-witness experience and published in Rome in 1514 (A.12).

The museum dating of Fig. 4.7 to around 1515, uninformed by documents newly presented here recording Floquet north of the Alps by 1516 (A.19–20), is broadly confirmed by them. The source of its appropriately youthful portrait is surely a fourth early image, a portrait print (Fig. 4.5) by Marcantonio Raimondi, who served as a papal court artist to Pope Leo X. Born Giovanni di Lorenzo de' Medici (1475–1521), this second son of Lorenzo il Magnifico became a cardinal in 1489 and succeeded Pope Julius II in March 1513. Previous datings of Fig. 4.5, between 1513 and 1534 (Culotta, 2024, p.17) can now be informed by Floquet's newly confirmed biographical details. To function effectively as souvenir images for eyewitness spectators, Fig. 4.5 and 4.7 required reasonably up-to-date portraits of Floquet, born in 1500. According to my reading, the date in Fig. 4.5's inscription, November 1513, is indicative both of its date of production and its identification as the prior iconographic source for Fig. 4.7 and, *pace* Culotta, Vitale's 1514 frontispiece (A.12). Marcantonio's print depicts the parasitic twin's arms as disproportionately underdeveloped, with thumblike endings but no elbows, hands or fingers; in Leonardo's drawing they appear more normative. Such discrepancies reinforce the impression that while certain iconographic

parallels between Leonardo's drawing (Codex Atlanticus fol.48r) and Marcantonio's print (Fig. 4.5) suggest that the print pre-dates the drawing and was known to Leonardo, his drawing predominantly reflects fleeting eyewitness recollection, not mechanical copying or posed life portraiture.

Pressed by Belloni (1954, p.166), Leonardo specialist Augusto Marinoni hypothesized that Leonardo's drawing (Codex Atlanticus fol.48r) does not significantly postdate the scientific notes on the folio to which it was added, dated by him to around 1490. With reference to its subject's documented presence in Florence and Rome, Pedretti re-dated Leonardo's drawing to 1513, then to c.1513–1515 (1973, pp.155, 186; 1978, p.42), Ciseri to October 1513, in Florence (2014, p.103). From late 1513 until Giuliano de' Medici's death in March 1516, Leonardo, who left Milan for Rome on 24 September 1513 (probably via Florence), was the salaried employee of this younger brother of Pope Leo X, who from December 1513 provided him with an apartment within the Vatican (Bambach, 2012, pp.26–27). Not made for public consumption, the medical reliability of Leonardo's drawing (Codex Atlanticus fol.48r), while imprecise in some details, suggests a straightforward commitment to eyewitness observation and scientific accuracy (Villa, 1941). Similarly posed to Fig. 4.5, it is an anatomically accurate, if sketchy, *addendum* to a folio recording Leonardo's unrelated explorations of military matters. As such, I believe Leonardo's drawing postdates Marcantonio's print and was sketched from recent memory in Leonardo's Vatican studio, probably around December 1513, while both artist and subject were based at the papal court. To summarize, Leonardo's subject is here identified as Jacques Floquet, born in 1500 in Dreux, France (A.1). Around 1513 he was in

Spain, probably pilgrimaging from León to Santiago di Compostela (A.3). In late October 1513 he toured, possibly via Ferrara (A.4–5), to Florence (A.6–7), then Rome (A.8–10), staying until at least 1514 at the papal court (A.12). He performed in Venice, then Bologna, in May 1515 (A.15–16), then Strasbourg around 1515 (A.17), Geneva, Augsburg and Poitiers in 1516 (A.18–20), Savoy and Switzerland in 1519 (A.22). From the 1530s there were multiple sightings in France, where later eyewitness accounts of varying authority report him as touring into the 1540s before terminating his performing career in the late 1540s with what may have been some form of surgical conjoinment separation (A.25–27).

Conclusion

History is documented by images and artefacts – including surviving traces of ephemeral performance – as well as by texts. Perhaps even more than with texts, chronological, regional, and genre-related practices play a significant role in decoding images as historical documents. Through multiple complex iconographic conventions, they reflect and mediate information their creators have gained as eyewitnesses and/or adapted from earlier visual and/or textual documentation. This reconsideration of the sources, subjects, performativity and anatomies of two drawings by Leonardo and Dürer complicates current perceptions of their conjoinment images. It indicates a less differentiated pattern of sources influencing the two artists than that suggested by non-comparative studies of Fig. 4.1 and Codex Atlanticus fol.48r. The anatomy of the central arm depicted by Dürer is probably apocryphal; Leonardo's drawing primarily reflects eyewitness observation. However, less likely than that Fig. 4.1 was drawn solely from images and Codex Atlanticus fol.48r solely from life, I would suggest, is that Dürer supplemented his

knowledge of the Mandelin-Engelhartin twins from the commemorative broadsheet woodcuts with textual reports from friends or associates and that Marcantonio's portrait print (Fig. 4.5) informed Leonardo's eyewitness observations of Floquet. 'Rarely do early modern scholars acknowledge that many of the monsters depicted in wonder books were real people with disabilities' (Bearden, 2019, 181). Atypically-bodied humans are routinely othered, unwillingly theatricalized, medicalized, financially exploited, anonymized, even dehumanized; their indispensable contribution to our cultural heritage peripheralized or disrespectfully dismissed. By here situating the Mandelin-Engelhartin twins, shown throughout their short lives for gain by their parents, as performers – albeit passive performers – and, for the first time, establishing Leonardo's subject as a named historical performer, this study addresses some of these ingrained ethical challenges. It expands the known biographical details, performative practice and anatomy of Leonardo's subject (**Appendix**: A.1–A.38). Here, he is identified as Jacques Floquet (A.1, A.18), born in 1500 in Dreux, France (A.1) and rehabilitated not as "a tormented being whom [carnies] would cart from piazza to piazza until he died" (Grafton, 2004, 3), but as a notable French performer whose transnational career, built on astute commercialization of his spectacularly atypical body by his professional Spanish management team, represents a groundbreaking theatre-historical breakthrough. This first interdisciplinary historical recovery of Floquet's identity and career offers new perspectives on Leonardo's drawing, on sixteenth-century advances in managing professional performing and on early modern visual approaches to the human body.

Considered individually, depictions of the atypically bodied valuably record specific historical subjects and artists. Regarded as a

whole, the sheer quantity of such Renaissance images reflects significant cultural shifts. As the sixteenth-century moved towards a deeper medical understanding of the human body in all its variations, superstitious attitudes to natural wonders increasingly competed with scientific scrutiny. Strategies for communicating popular medical understanding through the visual and performative arts were refined. Theatrical spaces were intensively developed as sites for the commercial display of atypically-bodied humans, bringing together multiple economic, medical, performative and visual practices. Renaissance visual and theatrical culture challenged and recalibrated perceptions of typical embodiment. Interdisciplinary study of pre-photographic images of the atypically bodied, drawing on the histories of art, medicine and theatre, can yield important information for our understanding of itinerant performance, for key artistic practices on the eve of the so-called 'iconographic turn' in European science and for natural manifestations and progressions of human bodily configurations increasingly eliminated by modern medicine. Visual material relating to othered bodies indicates the close links, in the age before photography, between the study of anatomy and medical conditions, the display of the atypically bodied for public entertainment, and the development of art as a visualised discourse for defining the parameters of idealised, typical and othered bodies. While often strikingly less dominated by the fashionable stylistic influences shaping depictions of idealized bodies, atypical imagery developed non-naturalistic iconographic conventions. Artists' strong concern to memorialize the strangeness and theatricality of such wonders of nature with anatomical as well as historical accuracy could not prevent frequent depiction of implausible anatomical configurations. Medicine, theatre and art informed each other

to contribute towards developing ideas on which types of human anatomy merited exclusion from the pantheon of bodily normativity. These interdisciplinary concerns frame my comparative approach to Dürer and Leonardo's conjoined twin drawings. As the pre-eminent contributors to the Renaissance quest to establish a reliable basis for visually representing the natural world, they mutually inspired each other's explorations of its most complex microcosm, the human body. Their conjoined twin drawings suggest both artists' acute awareness of the extent to which visual and theatrical representations of exceptional bodies contribute towards containing, normalizing, even defining perceptions of typical anatomies.

Acknowledgements

(https://teche.museogalileo.it/leonardo/
foglio/index.html?num=ATL.0095.1&lang=en);
Oxford, Ashmolean Museum (Fig. 4.1); Zurich,
Zentralbibliothek (Fig. 4.7).

Bibliography

1   Adriani, M.V. (1518) Pedacii Dioscoridae Anazerbei de Medica materia, Firenze, Giunti.

2   Aldrovandi, U. (1642) Monstrorum historia: Cum paralipomenis historiae omnium animalium, Bologna, N. Tebaldini.

3   Bach, M. (1893) 'Studien zur Geschichte der Ulmer Malerschule', Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst, new series vol.4, pp.121–9.

4   Bambach, C.C. (2013) 'Leonardo and Raphael in Rome in 1513–16' in Falomir, M. (ed.) Late Raphael. Proceedings of the international symposium actas del congreso internacional, Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado, October 2012, Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado, 26–37.

5   Bartrum, G. (2002) Dürer and his Legacy, London, British Museum.

6   Bartsch, A. Von (1808) Le Peintre graveur, vol. VII, Vienna, J.V. Degen.

7   Bates, A.W. (2002) Emblematic monsters: the description and interpretation of human birth defects in Europe, 1500–1700, University College London, DISS.

8   Bates, A.W. (2005) Emblematic monsters: unnatural conceptions and deformed births in early modern Europe, Amsterdam, Rodopi.

9   Bearden, E (2019) Monstrous Kinds: Body, Space, and Narrative in Renaissance Representations of Disability, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press.

10   Belloni, L. (1954) 'Per il toracoparassita di Leonardo', Rendiconti dell'Istituto Lombardo di scienze e lettere, vol.87, n.18, pp.157–166. (Cited. See also (1954): 'Zum Thorakoparasiten Leonardos', Zentralblatt für Allgemeine Pathologie und Pathologische Anatomie, vol.92, pp.350–5).

11   Benivieni, A. (1507) De abditis nonnullis ac mirandis morborum et sanationum causis, Florence, Philippo Giunta.

12   Boaistuau, P. (1560) Histoires prodigieuses les plus memorables qvi ayent esté observes, Paris, Jean Longis.

13   Boer, L.L., Winter, E., Gorissen, B. and Oostra, R.-J. (2023) 'Review: Phenotypically Discordant Anomalies in Conjoined Twins: Quirks of Nature Governed by Molecular Pathways?', Diagnostics, vol.13, n.3427, pp.1–24, https://doi.org/10.3390/diagnostics13223427 (accessed 8 April 2024).

14   Bolzani, G.P.V. (1550) Hexametri, odæ et epigrammata, Venice, Gabriele Giolito.

15   Bondeson, J. (2001) 'Dicephalus conjoined twins: A historical review with emphasis on viability', Journal of Pediatric Surgery, vol.36, n.9, pp.1435–44.

16   Borderie, A. de la (1870) "Pierre Boaistuau, Sieur de Launay", Revue de Bretagne et de Vendée, vol.14, pp.359–71.

17   Broadwell, L. (2013) 'A monster's Mediterranean tour', Penn Libraries Blog, University of Pennsylvania Library (posted 2 July 2013): https://uniqueatpenn.wordpress.com/2013/07/02/a-monsters-mediterranean-tour/ (accessed 10.10.2014).

18   Bucher, B. (1875) Geschichte der technischen Künste, Stuttgart, Spemann.

19   Buchner, E. (1953) Das deutsche Bildnis der Spätgotik und der frühen Dürerzeit, Berlin, Deutscher Verein für Kunstwissenschaft.

20   Cardanus, H. (1560) De Subtilitate libri XXI, Basel, Cæfareæ Maiestatis.

21   Ciseri, L.M. (2009) 'Mostri e prodigi nell'opera di Antonio Benivieni. Teratologia e cultura di un anatomo-patologo del Quattrocento', Interpres: rivista di studi quattrocenteschi, vol.28, pp.1–18.

22   Ciseri, L.M. (2014) 'Leonardo da Vinci, the genius and the monsters. Casual encounters?', Medicina nei secoli arte e scienza, vol.26, n.1, pp.69–116.

23   Crusius, M. (1738) Schwäbische Chronik, vol.2, Frankfurt, Wohler.

24   Culotta, A. (2024) 'Marcantonio Raimondi's "Naked Youth" and its sources', Print Quarterly, vol.41 n.1, pp.16–22.

25   Dal Borgo, M. (2015) 'At the origin of hospitality: Venetian hostelry, tavern and lodging between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries', Mediterranean World/Mediterranean Studies, vol.22, pp.121–36.

26   Dasen, V. (1997) 'Multiple births in Graeco-Roman Antiquity', Oxford Journal of Archaeology, vol.16, pp.49–63.

27   Daston, L. and Park, K. (1998) Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150–1750, New York, Zone Books.

28   Dodgson, C. (1911) Catalogue of Early German and Flemish Woodcuts preserved in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum, 2 vols, London, Longmans.

29   Doukas, G. (2011) Pierre Boaistuau (c. 1517–1566) and the employment of humanism in mid sixteenth-century France, University of Birmingham, DISS.

30   Dreger, A.D. (2004) One of Us: Conjoined Twins and the Future of Normal, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.

31   Dürer, A. (1528) Vier Bücher von menschlicher Proportion, Nürnberg, Hieronymus Andreae.

32   Ekserdjian, D. (2023) Albrecht Dürer: Art and Autobiography, London, Reaktion.

33   Ewinkel, I. (1995) De monstris: Deutung und Funktion von Wundergeburten auf Flugblättern im Deutschland des 16. Jahrhunderts, Tübingen, Niemeyer.

34   Fenton, E. (1569) Certaine secrete wonders of Nature, London, H. Bynneman.

35   Fisher, G.J. (1866) 'Diploteratology. An essay on compound human monsters', Transactions of the Medical Society of the State of New York, vol.6, n.133, pp.207–96 (Part 2 of 3).

36   Förster, A. (1861) Die Missbildungen des Menschen systematisch dargestellt, Jena, Friedrich Mauke.

37   Foucault, M. (ed. V. Marchetti and A. Salomoni) (2003), Abnormal: Lectures at the College de France 1974–1975, London, Verso.

38   Gidon, F. (1936) 'Le Thoradelphe de Pierio Valeriano (1513), hiéroglyphe du Concile de Pise', La Presse médicale 98 (5 décembre 1936), pp.1987–8.

39   Giglin, M. (1910) 'Un monstre au XVIe siècle', Chronique médicale, vol.17, pp.690–1.

40   Gilbert-Barness, E., Debich-Spicer, D. and Opitz, J.M. (2003) 'Conjoined twins: Morphogenesis of the heart and a review', American Journal of Medical Genetics, vol.120A, pp.568–82.

41   Goedeke, K. (1886) Grundrisz zur Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung aus den Quellen II: Das Reformationszeitalter, Dresden, Ehlermann.

42   Gori, G. (2003), 'Dal mestiere alla maschera: un'ipotesi per lo Zanni bergamasco', in A.M. Testaverde and A. Castoldi (eds) Zanni mercenario della Piazza Europea, Bergamo, Moretti and Vitali, pp.81–96.

43   Grafton, A. (2004) Bring Out Your Dead. The Past as Revelation, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press.

44   Harms, W. and Schilling, M. (2005) Deutsche illustrierte Flugblätter des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts, Tübingen, Niemeyer.

45   Hegel, C. (ed.) (1874) Die Chroniken der deutschen Städte vom 14. bis ins 16. Jahrhundert XI (Nürnberg V), Leipzig, Hirzel.

46   Herrbach, B. (2003) 'Merklin [Märklin; Merckell], Konrad (fl Ulm, 1495; d 1518)', Grove Art Online, https://doi.org/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.T056941 (accessed 08.04.2024).

47   Holländer, E. (1921) Wunder, Wundergeburt und Wundergestalt in Einblattdrucken des fünftzehenten bis achtzehnten Jahrhunderts, Stuttgart, Ferdinand Enke.

48   Hollstein, F.W.H, (1954) German Engravings, Etchings and Woodcuts, c.1400–1700, vol.VII, Amsterdam, M. Hertzberger.

49   Hori, A. (1998) 'Developmental anomalies of the spinal cord', Neuropathology, vol.18, pp.433–43.

50   Hutcheon, Emily (2013) 'A note on being ability–different, atypically–bodied . . . criptastic?', Narrative Inquiry in Bioethics, vol.3.3, p.196–9.

51   Kaimowitz, J. and Kammradt, D. (1994) Albrecht Dürer: Book Illustrator, Dublin, Watkinson Library, Trinity College.

52   Karr Schmidt, S.K. (2006) Art—A User's Guide: Interactive and Sculptural Printmaking in the Renaissance, Yale University, DISS.

53   Karr Schmidt, S. (2018) Interactive and Sculptural Printmaking in the Renaissance, Leiden & Boston, Brill.

54   Karr Schmidt, S. (2021) 'Multiplicity and absence: the negative evidence of interactive prints', in G. Jurkowlaniec and M. Herman (eds), The Reception of the Printed Image in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries: Multiplied and Modified, New York, Routledge, pp.27–47.

55   Katritzky, M.A. (2011) 'Images of "monsters" and performers: J A Comenius's Orbis pictus and Aristotle's Masterpiece' in H. Kümper and V. Simić (eds), Practicing new editions: transformation and transfer of the early modern book, 1450–1800, Nordhausen, Bautz (Bibliothemata 26), pp.77–118.

56   Katritzky, M.A. (2012) Healing, performance and ceremony in the writings of three early modern physicians: Hippolytus Guarinonius and the brothers Felix and Thomas Platter, Farnham, Ashgate.

57   Katritzky, M.A. (2014) 'Literary anthropologies and Pedro González, the "Wild Man" of Tenerife' in J. Slater, J. Pardo-Tomás and M. López-Terrada (eds), Medical Cultures of the Early Modern Spanish Empire, Farnham, Ashgate, pp.107–128.

58   Katritzky, M.A. (2021) 'Generisches und spezifisches Anderssein: Shackshoone (1665–1680), Antonio Martinelli (1718–1740) und frühneuzeitliche Darstellungen von menschlichen Doppelfehlbildungen' in M. Stolberg (ed.) Körper-Bilder in der Frühen Neuzeit: Kunst-, medizin- und mediengeschichtliche Perspektiven, Berlin/Boston, Walter de Gruyter GmbH (Schriften des Historischen Kollegs 107), pp.199–228.

59   Katritzky, M.A. (2024) 'Shackshoone: the disabled non-European performative body in seventeenth-century London'. in M. Hengerer (ed.) Der Körper in der Frühen Neuzeit: Praktiken, Rituale, Performanz, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, pp.323–343.

60   Keizer, J. (2012) 'Leonardo and Allegory', Oxford Art Journal, vol.35, n.3, pp.433–455.

61   Landucci, L. (ed. I. Del Badia), (1883) Diario fiorentino: dal 1450 al 1516, Firenze, Sansoni.

62   Langius (1560) Medicinalium Epistolarum Miscelleana, Basle, Ioannem Oporinum.

63   Leitschuh, F.F. (1912) Studien und Quellen zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte des XV.–XVI. Jahrhunderts, Freiburg, Gschwend.

64   Lewkenor, L (1600) The Spanish Mandevile of miracles, London, Edmund Matts.

65   Liceti, F. (1634) De Monstrorum Caussis, Natura, & Differentijs, Padua, Paul Frambott.

66   Lippmann, F. (1888) The art of wood-engraving in Italy in the fifteenth century, London, Bernard Quaritch.

67   Littger, K.W. (2003) 'Elβgred. Flugblätter einer Miβgeburt', Gutenberg-Jahrbuch, vol.78, pp.74–85.

68   Lomazzo, G.P. (1585), Trattato dell'arte della pittvra, scoltvra et architettvra, Milan, Paolo Gottardo Pontio.

69   Lycosthenes, C. (1557) Prodigiorum ac Ostentorum Chronicon, Basle, H. Pétri.

70   Martignoni, A. (2004) '»Era nato uno monstro, cossa horendissima», Monstres et tératologie à Venise dans les Diarii de Marin Sanudo (1496–1533)', Revue historique, vol.309, n.1, pp.49–80.

71   Montaigne, M. de (1842) The Complete Works of Michael de Montaigne (ed. W. Hazlitt), London, John Templeman.

72   Moreau de la Sarthe, L.J. (1808) Description des principales monstruosités dans l'homme et dans les animaux, avec figures coloriées et gravées par N.F. Regnault, Paris, Fournier Frères.

73   Nagler, G.K. (1846) Neues allgemeines Künstler-Lexicon, vol.16 ("Schoute – Sole"), München, Fleischmann.

74   Niccoli, O. (tr. L. G. Cochrane) (1990) Prophecy and people in Renaissance Italy, Princeton NJ, Princeton Universeity Press.

75   Nova, A. (2001) 'The kite, envy & and a memory of Leonardo da Vinci's childhood' in L.R. Jones and L.C. Matthew (eds) Coming About: A Festschrift for John Shearman, Cambridge Mass.. Harvard University Art Museums, pp.381–6.

76   Palonius, M. (1513) Clades Ravennas, Roma, Iacobum Mazochium.

77   Panofsky, E. (1955) The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer, Princeton, Princeton University Press.

78   Paré, A. (1573) Deux livres de chirurgie, Paris, André Wechel.

79   Passavant, J.D. (1860) Le Peintre – Graveur, vol.1, Leipzig, Rudolph Weigel.

80   Pedretti, C. (1973) Leonardo; a study in chronology and style, Berkeley, University of California Press.

81   Pedretti, C. (1978) The Codex Atlanticus of Leonardo da Vinci: a catalogue of its newly restored sheets, vol.1 (of 2) New York, Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.

82   Pilot, A. (1930) Antichi alberghi veneziani, Venice, Zanetti.

83   Platter, F. (1614) Obseruationum, in hominis affectibus plerisq[ue], corpori & animo […] Libri Tres, Basileæ, Ludovic König.

84   Platter, F. (1602, 1603, 1608) Praxeos seu de cognoscendis, prædicendis, præcauendis, curandisq[ue] affectibus homini incommodantibus, 3 vols, Basel, Conrad Waldkirch.

85   Pollmer-Schmidt, A. (2013) 'Conjoined twins, a monstrous pig, and a rhinoceros. Dürer's broadsheets' in J. Sander (ed.) Albrecht Dürer, his art in context, Munich, Prestel, pp.294–307.

86   Popham, A.E. (1946) The drawings of Leonardo da Vinci, London. Jonathan Cape.

87   Porras, S. (2013) 'Dürer's copies' in S. Buck and S. Porras (eds) The Young Dürer: Drawing the Figure, London, Courtauld Gallery, pp.57–71.

88   Regnault, N.-F. and G.N. (1775) Les Ecarts de la nature, ou Recueil des principales monstruosités que la nature produit dans le genre animal, Paris, Lauteur.

89   Roche, N. de la (1542) De morbis mulierum curandis, Paris, Jean Foucher.

90   Rupprich, H. (1956–69) Dürers schriftlicher Nachlass, 3 vols, Berlin, Deutscher Verein für Kunstwissenschaft.

91   Rüttel, J.G. (1844) 'Beitrag zur Beurtheilung der neugebornen Leibesfrüchte, des Lebensalter und der zweifelhaften Geschlechtsverhältnisse', Adolf Henke's Zeitschrift für die Staatsarzneikunde, vol.24, pp.229–70.

92   Sá, L.C. de and Viegas, R. (2022) 'A Singularidade Compósita: o Monstro de Ravenna em manuscritos italianos', História (São Paulo), vol.41 (e2022017), pp.1–30.

93   Sahm, H. (2002) Dürer's kleinere Texte. Konventionen als Spielraum für Individualität, Tübingen, Niemeyer, pp.98–102.

94   Sanudo, M. (1879– 1903) I Diarii di Marino Sanuto (ed. R. Fulin, F. Stefani, N. Barozzi, G. Berchet and M. Allegri), 58 vols, Venice, R. Deputazione veneta di storia patria: vol.XIV (1886) 1 Marzo MDXII – XXXI Agosto MDXII; vol.XVIII (1887a) 1 Marzo MDXIV – XXXI Agosto MDXIV; vol.XX (1887b) 1 Marzo MDXV – XXX Agosto MDXV.

95   Schedel, H. (1493) Liber chronicarum, Nürnberg, Anton Koberger.

96   Schilling, M. (2015) 'Bildgebende Verfahren auf Nachrichtenblättern der Frühen Neuzeit' in A. Messerli and M. Schilling (eds) Die Intermedialität des Flugblatts in der Frühen Neuzeit, Stuttgart, Hirzel, pp.61–85.

97   Schilling, M. (2010) 'Unbekannte Lübecker Flugblätter des 16. Jahrhunderts', Zeitschrift für Lübeckische Geschichte, vol.90, pp.27–46.

98   Sharpe, A.N. (2011) Foucault's Monsters and the Challenge of Law, Abingdon, Routledge.

99   Simon, E. (1971) 'Albrecht Dürer. Das Werk: Die Rezeption der Antike' in B. Deneke et al (eds), Albrecht Dürer, 1471–1971 [Ausstellung des Germanischen Nationalmuseums, Nürnberg 21. Mai bis 1. August 1971], München, Prestel, pp.263–278.

100   Sonderegger, A. (1927) Missgeburten und Wundergestalten in Einblattdrucken und Handzeichnungen des 16. Jahrhunderts: aus der Wickiana der Zürcher Zentralbibliothek, Zurich, Füssli.

101   Spencer, R. (2003) Conjoined Twins. Developmental Malformations and Clinical Implications, Baltimore/London, Johns Hopkins University Press.

102   Spinks, J. (2005) 'Wondrous monsters: Representing conjoined twins in early sixteenth-century German broadsheets', Parergon, vol.22, n.2, pp.77–112.

103   Spinks, J. (2009) Monstrous Births and Visual Culture in Sixteenth-Century Germany, London, Pickering and Chatto.

104   Stange, A. (1970) Kritisches Verzeichnis der deutschen Tafelbilder vor Dürer, München, Norbert Lieb.

105   Strauss, W.L. (1974) The Complete Drawings of Albrecht Dürer, 6 vols, New York, Abaris.

106   Strauss, W.L. (ed.), (1978) The Illustrated Bartsch 27: The works of Marcantonio Raimondi and of his school, New York, Abaris.

107   Strauss, W.L. (ed.), (1980) The Illustrated Bartsch 10 (Commentary): Sixteenth Century German Artists, Albrecht Dürer, New York, Abaris.

108   Stumpf, J. (1554) Schwytzer Chronica, Zurich, Froschauer.

109   Tedallini, S. di B. (ed. Piccolomini, P.), (1911) 'Diario romano dal 3 maggio 1485 al 6 giugno 1524' in L. A. Muratori (ed.), (1904, 1907, 1911) Il diario romano di Jacopo Gherardi da Volterra (Rerum italicarum scriptores, vol.23), Part 3 (**Appendix** 4), Città di Castello, S. Lapi, pp.231–446.

110   Thausing, M. von (1876) Dürer, Geschichte seines Lebens und seiner Kunst, Liepzig, Seemann, 1876.

111   Thausing, M. von (1872) Dürers Briefe, Tagebücher und Reime, nebst einem Anhange von Zuschriften an und für Dürer, Wien, Braunmüller.

112   Torquemada, A de (1575) Jardín de Flores curiosas, Antwerp, Juan Corderio.

113   Villa, L. (1941) 'Il pensiero medico di Leonardo e la patalogia', L'Ospedale Maggiore, rivista mensile illustrata, vol.29, n.7, p.299.

114   Vitale, G.F. (1512) De monstro nato, Erphordia [Erfurt], Mattheum Pictorium.

115   Vitale, G.F. (1514) Teratorizion, Roma, G. Mazzocchi.

116   Voeste, A. (2022) 'Beschwörungen der Apokalypse. Ein linguistischer Blick auf Wunderzeichen im Frühdruck' in M. Mostýn, M. Pišl and E. Polášková (eds) Beiträge zur germanistischen Sprachwissenschaft. Festschrift für Lenka Vaňková, Ostrava, Ostravská univerzita, pp.379–396.

117   Warkany, J. (1977) 'Conjoined twins' in J.G. Wilson and F. Clarke Fraser (eds) Handbook of Teratology I. General Principles and Etiology, New York, Plenum, pp.3–15.

118   Welsch, G.H. (1675) Hecatosteae. II. Observationum Physico-Medicarum, Augsburg, Theophilus Goebel.

119   Weyermann, A. (1830) 'Beiträge zur Geschichte der Kunst und der Künstler in Ulm (Beschluß)', Kunst Blatt vol.11, n.89 (9 November 1830), pp.355–6.

120   Wuttke, D. (1994) 'Erzaugur des Heiligen Römischen Reiches Deutscher Nation: Sebastian Brant deutet siamesische Tiergeburten', Humanistica Lovaniensia, vol.43, pp.106–31.

FAT?
THE CONTESTED FEMININITY OF MARGUERITE DE VALOIS IN RUBENS'S *MEDICI CYCLE*

Scarlett Butler

Abstract

The former Queen of France and Navarre, Marguerite de Valois (1553–1615), is presented as 'fat' in Peter Paul Rubens's The Coronation at Saint-Denis, *one of the monumental history paintings of the Medici Cycle, a series reimagining Maria de' Medici's life and career completed in 1625. This article examines how the incorporation of fatness as a notable element of Marguerite's characterisation illuminates the interaction between body size and gender at the French court in the early seventeenth century. Preparatory oil sketches for* The Coronation *demonstrate that Marguerite's body size expanded as her status is lowered within the image, while it elevates Maria's status and emphasises her authority as mother of the King. By establishing Marguerite as a direct foil to the Queen Mother, The Coronation may allude to political satires that accused Marguerite of an unnatural sexuality and problematic infertility. Despite the derogatory discourses which may be alluded to in the painting, Marguerite's appearance is not entirely negative and continues to fit within Rubens's idealised vision of the fashionably 'plump' female body. Due to their cooler, moister humoural makeup, women were often considered to be fatter than men in early modern Europe. However, this tendency is exaggerated in Rubens's art. Round shapes and dappled flesh tones are used to vividly visualise women's constitutional fatness as well as demonstrate Rubens's mastery of his medium. As such, fat enhanced the dynamic and erotic potential of women's bodies in Rubens's art. Ultimately, this article concludes that The Coronation does not so much illustrate criticisms of Marguerite but rather is tailored for a setting in which fat's transgression and its appeal could coexist.*

Biographical note

Scarlett Butler is a PhD candidate in History of Art at the University of Edinburgh. Her thesis explores the visual and medical 'treatment' of fatness in early modern France (*c.*1530–1630) with particular focus on print culture, courtly display and the upheavals in gender roles and class relations during and after the Wars of Religion.

FAT? THE CONTESTED FEMININITY OF MARGUERITE DE VALOIS IN RUBENS'S *MEDICI CYCLE*

Scarlett Butler, University of Edinburgh

A 'fat' noblewoman stands among the assembled guests in *The Coronation at Saint-Denis* by Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640) (hereafter, *The Coronation*; Figs. 5.1 and 5.2). The monumental history painting reimagines the coronation of Maria de' Medici (1575–1642) that had occurred in May 1610, so around fifteen years earlier. It is one of three large horizontal canvases included in a series of twenty-four paintings now known collectively as the *Medici Cycle*. A meticulous description of the series compiled in 1750 by Abbé Louis Gougenot (1719–

67) identifies this figure as 'La Reine Marguerite', in other words, Marguerite de Valois (1553–1615), Queen of France and first wife of King Henri IV (1553–1610) (Büttner, 2023, pp.303–4; Gougenot, 1909, pp.154–201). As the daughter of the final Valois monarch, Marguerite's royal status survived both exile and divorce, with her presence providing valuable continuity to the coronation of Henri's second wife, Maria. In the painting, Marguerite stands directly beside Catherine de Clèves, Duchesse de Guise (1548–1633). Both women are described as 'plump ermined dowagers' by Ronald Millen and Robert Wolf, who are among the few art historians to comment directly on Marguerite beyond noting her presence (1989, p.108). In his excellent and comprehensive study of the *Medici Cycle* in the *Corpus Rubenianum* series, Nils Büttner argues that the other noble guests depicted in *The Coronation* are 'less specific portraits than representative aristocratic participants in the ceremony', '[w]ith the exception of "la Reine Margot" and Maria herself' (2023, p.313).

Figure 5.1: Peter Paul Rubens, *The Coronation at Saint-Denis,* from the *Medici Cycle, c.*1625. Oil on canvas, 394 × 727cm. Louvre, Paris. (© 1989 GrandPalaisRmn (musée du Louvre) / Jean Lewandowski (Le Couronnement de la reine à l'abbaye de Saint-Denis, le 13 mai 1610 - Louvre site des collections))

Figure 5.2: Peter Paul Rubens, *The Coronation at Saint-Denis,* from the *Medici Cycle, c.*1625. Oil on canvas, 394 × 727cm. Louvre, Paris. (© 1989 GrandPalaisRmn (musée du Louvre) / Jean Lewandowski (Le Couronnement de la reine à l'abbaye de Saint-Denis, le 13 mai 1610 - Louvre site des collections))

Büttner notes that Maria's appearance in *The Coronation* derives from a specific drawing of the *Head of Maria de' Medici* now held in the Albertina in Vienna and also suggests that Marguerite's appearance is more generally 'identifiable from contemporaneous portraits' (2023, p.314). Upon further examination, surviving portraits of Marguerite could only ever have provided indirect sources for Rubens's version. The last known work to convey a plausible likeness of Marguerite is a drawn portrait now tentatively dated to the late 1580s (Fig. 5.3) when the Queen was in her mid-thirties. This pencil drawing closely resembles a confirmed portrait of the Marguerite made in 1572 when she was nineteen, one of hundreds of veristic pencil drawings by court artist François Clouet (McIlvenna, 2016, p.20; Fig. 5.4). Both drawings pay close attention to the subtleties of Marguerite's facial features including the highly arched, thin, dark brows, the drooping outer corners of her eyes, the curve and lowered tip of her nose and the faint receding of her chin. These finer details are all absent from *The Coronation*. Even if Rubens did glimpse the 1580s portrait, he has turned the faint double chin it portrays into a substantially enlarged jawline and neck. When combined with her full chest and

padded hand, Rubens's posthumous rendering of Marguerite extrapolates a generalised fatness absent from all other likenesses of the Queen. This expansion of Marguerite's body size suggests other sources for her appearance, including the informal repertoire of personal associations circulating at the French court in the early seventeenth century. Though Marguerite received considerable praise for her beauty and wisdom from sympathetic authors, virulent anti-Valois satires have long distorted her biography (Viennot, [1993] 2005, pp.9–10; Klettke & Mutet, 2014, pp.613–14). The dubious title of 'La Reine Margot' refers to this strand of Marguerite's 'reputation'. That this is the moniker used by Büttner to describe Marguerite's presence in *The Coronation* may constitute a discrete allusion to the potentially negative character of her portrayal, which this essay will explore in greater detail (2023, p.313; Viennot, 2005, pp.9–10).

Figure 5.3: Anonymous, *Portrait présumé de Marguerite de Valois, c.*1585–90. Drawing, 29.5 × 22.2cm. Musées de Reims, Reims. (Photo: Xavier Lavictoire)

Figure 5.4: François Clouet, *Portrait de Marguerite de Valois, c.*1574. Drawing, 33.8 × 22.4cm. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris. (Source: gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France)

Discussing body sizes and shapes that depart from present-day Western cultural norms pose distinct challenges for art historians, requiring careful effort to discern how these images were viewed in their original context. As Jill Burke notes, descriptions of women's physical appearance in art often reveal historians' own 'deep seated assumptions about real bodies' and how they should look (2018, p.9). Rubens's art has attracted much critical commentary on fatness but also invigorated discussions about the degree to which fuller bodies were appreciated in early modern Europe. For example, Cordula van Wyhe describes Rubens's 'joyful celebration of the full and soft female body as a fashionable luxury and a hallmark of health, sexual attractiveness and fertility' (2018, p.10). Karolien de Clippel and Leah Sweet also define the 'Rubenesque' female body as ubiquitously pale, soft, rounded, and dimpled, but emphasise the dis-

tance between this artistic ideal and living women's bodies (de Clippel, 2007, p.131; Sweet, 2014, *passim*). Sweet also argues that Rubens's female figures were not celebrations of fat models but carefully constructed forms, based on ancient sculpture and designed to showcase his virtuosic '*colore*' technique (2014, pp.136–7).

In keeping with the aim of this special issue, this article foregrounds the role of visual images in conveying the conflicting conceptions of women's bodies that co-existed in early modern European societies. Holly Fletcher's explorations of fatness in Reformation Germany have demonstrated responses to body size were as contradictory then as now, shaped not just by art or medicine but also by personal or embodied experiences, and played a role identity formation (2020, pp.26–32; 2021, p.175). Experience of fatness varied not only across time and place but within one setting or one individual, as Fletcher writes: 'while the size and shape of the body could function as a marker of identity, this identity was not necessarily fixed' (2020, pp.29–30). Even when medical and artistic theory *implied* bodies had singular, coherent meaning there is no unified concept of 'the body' or 'the fat body' in early modern society Fletcher explains (2021, p.175), drawing on the arguments of Caroline Walker Bynum who noted that 'ideas [about the body] differed according to who held them, where and when' (1995, pp.7, 27). Instead, the body was a site of ideological and power struggles. Thus, negative characterisations of certain body sizes stem from contingent social norms and prejudices. These assumptions can shape viewing habits but cannot fully dictate the meanings that fat bodies produce. Here it should be noted that, following conventions in fat studies, this article uses 'fat' and 'fatness' descriptively despite their often negative associations in modern culture. The term 'fat' has been reclaimed as a neutral term by fat-justice activists and fat-studies scholars and is generally deemed preferable to medicalised or normative language like 'obese' or 'overweight' (Rothblum & Solovay, 2009, p.xii–xiv).

Images become particularly useful when attempting to discuss the diversity and tensions in early modern approaches to fatness. Pictures convey the dimensions and complex textures of fat and fatness missing from most textual descriptions in this period. The role of the artistic medium in shaping how a body is received by

the viewer is demonstrated by Rubens's own treatise on painting from statues *De imitatione statuarum,* which emphasises that the dimensions and density of sculpture differ radically from those created by paint.[1] Yet exchange between media can also produce new meanings for body size that language alone cannot fully express. For instance, Rubens's desire to transmute ancient Greek sculptures of Venus into paint produced a radically new and dynamically fluid vision of ideal femininity. Where medical advice, beauty manuals and satires might idealise plumpness in a manner coherent with Rubens's art, these normative texts usually define fatness *against* a 'moderate' figure, making 'fat' a negative extreme by definition. Rubens's realised vision of the female body demonstrates not only the variety of figures which could be contained within this acceptable 'moderate' size, but how the idealised and stigmatised aspects of fatness could exist simultaneously. As this suggests, body fat and fatness are not neutral forms or symbols waiting to be depicted but are reworked by artists to incorporate the ideas, attitudes and tastes of their era. Early modern courtiers paid close attention to bodily appearance and expressions to shape their image or watch for involuntary slips of emotion in others; a skill Nora Peterson observes throughout Marguerite's own memoir and letters (2022, pp.56–75). By exploring Marguerite's pose, proportions, skin texture and tone within *The Coronation,* this article demonstrates that the painting's depiction of fatness was shaped by its courtly setting and the artistic medium, both of which layer cultural interpretations and connections onto the Queen's bodily traits. Visual art is thus a vital tool for approaching the unspoken, temporally and culturally specific assumptions that shape experiences of body size – whether viewed, touched or inhabited.

To interpret the meanings of Marguerite's appearance in a manner that moves beyond modern prejudices requires an attentiveness to the development, style and

context of *The Coronation*. The first half of this article traces the painting's development through contemporaneous accounts of Maria's coronation in 1610, later instructions provided by Maria and her advisors and Rubens's preparatory sketches. These sources demonstrate that Marguerite's increased physical size coincides with her subtle demotion and positioning as a negative double to Maria. The second half then frames *The Coronation* within Rubens's broader aesthetic and pictorial techniques, particularly his use of rounded forms and skin textures to visualised women's bodies in a highly gendered and medically coded manner. These techniques allowed Rubens to eroticise and exaggerate corpulence without fully endorsing it, and this reveals how fatness could be simultaneously desirable and stigmatised through its association with 'femininity'. While fat's perceived 'fluidity' has often underpinned cultural critiques of women, my article concludes that this very flexibility opens space for reinterpretation and resistance, offering a reminder of the rebellious, organic nature of embodiment.

Framing Marguerite de Valois

There is no doubt that a negative tinge can be read into Marguerite's likeness in *The Coronation* given her demotion among the court entourage and implied inferiority to the cycle's patron, Maria. By potentially evoking critical satires of Marguerite, which emphasised her body size as a sign of her sexual dysfunction and lack of children, Rubens's composition would seem to frame Marguerite and Maria as contrasting versions of queenship. This contrast enhances Maria's authority as a wife and mother of kings and is in keeping with strong emphasis on these roles noted by Geraldine A. Johnson in both the wider series and in Maria's artistic patronage generally (1999, p.143). Thus, Marguerite's fatness is not a record of her embodied size nor simply a reference to anecdotal accounts but actively contributed to the political content of *The Coronation* by enhancing the visible contrast between Marguerite and Maria.

It should be underscored here that Maria and her advisors maintained tight control over the *Medici Cycle*'s contents and messages, including the subjects and individuals portrayed in the cycle. Commissioned by the Queen Mother following her return to political influence, as indicated by her restoration to the Council

---

1   The original version of *De imitatione statuarum* was lost in 1720, however its contents were transcribed into a copy of Rubens's pocketbook known as The Johnson Manuscript, which is currently held by the Courtauld Institute of Art, London. For a transcription of the Latin original and an English translation by classics scholar Janet Fairweather, see Thielemann (2018, p.97, 99–100).

of State in February 1622, the series presented a vindicating and triumphal account of Maria's life that lingered on key moments of her empowerment as both the former Queen Regent and current Queen Mother (Millen and Wolf, 1989, p.17). The precise moment of Maria's crowning by Cardinal de Joyeuse (1562–1615) was included in the list of 'approved subjects' sent to Rubens by his friend, the scholar Nicolas Claude Fabri de Peiresc (1580–1637) (Büttner, 2023, pp.13, 47, 310; Sutton, Wieseman & van Hout, 2004, p.29; Millen & Wolf, 1989, p.112). Now known as the Baluze manuscript, this was a memorandum compiled for Rubens in August 1622 that stipulated the order of guests and their costumes for *The Coronation*. This included instructions that required 'La Reyne Marguerite' (Queen Marguerite de Valois) to be placed behind the three princesses of the blood and several other nobles, but makes no comment on her specific dress or appearance (Büttner, 2023, p.15; Various, Baluze 323, fols 55v–56v).

Contemporaneous accounts of Maria's coronation in 1610 demonstrate that the Queen Mother may have shifted the order of guests for Rubens's pictorial reimagining of the event, including lowering Marguerite's status. The jurist Pierre de L'Étoile (1546–1611) noted in his diary that at the actual event Marguerite was second only to Maria's young daughter, princess Elisabeth (1602–44), amongst the court's ladies (1741, vol.4, p.25). Similarly, in a broadside print of Maria's coronation published by Jean Leclerc shortly after the event, Marguerite is prominently displayed at the head of the train of noblewomen in attendance, with no division between the inner circle around Maria and the former Queen (Gaultier, 1610, , 2.55).[2] The significance of this ranking is demonstrated by descriptions of the tense wrangling for prominence which accompanied the actual crowning ceremony, organised by Henri IV to secure Maria's regency before he departed to fight in the first phase of the War of the Jülich Succession (1609–10). In one account of Henri's reign published in 1635, the French historian Scipion Dupleix (1569–1661) suggests that Marguerite was dis-

pleased at being outranked by a seven-year-old. He also stated that, in 'considering what she was by birth, what she would have been by marriage, and what she was now in disgrace', her obligation to appear seemed to her 'a kind of public penance' that made her decline in status visible to all of France (Dupleix, 1635, p.403).[3]

Marguerite's appearance in *The Coronation* must also have served as a reminder of her legal separation from Henri IV, as approved by papal edict in 1599. This enabled his marriage to Maria the following year, ensuring some resolution to the crown's financial concerns and the possibility of a royal heir (Büttner, 2023, p.21). Cardinal de Joyeuse's past recommendation in favour of dissolving Marguerite and Henri's marriage was also a political factor in his selection for the actual coronation ceremony, one that carried over into *The Coronation* as a perpetual reminder of the legal validity of the annulment (Millen & Wolf, 1989, p.112). If Marguerite had been unhappy with her position in the original ceremony, her even greater demotion in *The Coronation* would have seemed an even more pointed and political slight on her standing at court. Moreover, when *The Coronation* was first displayed, Marguerite had been dead for a decade; she could no longer defend herself.

Rubens's preparatory oil sketches demonstrate Marguerite's continued demotion within *The Coronation*'s composition as it developed in the painter's studio. The earliest oil sketch for the painting, now held at the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg, proposes a composition in which Marguerite is placed somewhat further forward in the court ranks (Fig. 5.5). In keeping with the earliest broadside prints of the event, nobles process from right to left, with Maria kneeling to be crowned at the centre of the work's left half. By placing Marguerite in the immediate foreground, this early composition elongates her body and emphasises her considerable height. Marguerite's chest is covered by a cloak and her torso is shaped into a fashionable silhouette by a stiffly boned bodice or *corps* (referred to as 'bodies' in English; see

2   Gaultier, L. after Bollery N. (1610), *Poutraict du sacre et couronnement de Marie de Medicis,* Paris, Jean Leclerc IV. London, British Museum, Mm, 2.55. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_Mm-2-55.

3   '[S]e voiant obligée de marcher apres Madame encore enfant, & considerant ce qu'elle estoit par sa naissance, ce qu'elle avoit esté par marriage, & ce qu'elle estoit à present par disgrace, elle s'en alloit faire amende honorable'. Translations are the author's unless otherwise stated.

Bendall, 2021, pp.ix, 3, 157). The narrower format of this sketch suggests it was made before Rubens received the final measurements and formats of the paintings from Peiresc in early April 1622 but may have been sent to his patron, Maria, for approval prior to this date (the 7:9 ratio of the earliest sketch shifts to approximately a 5:9 ratio in the final painting) (Büttner, 2023, p.40).

The reduction in Marguerite's status and the relative broadening of her figure are introduced as the composition was adapted for the widened measurements of the final canvas and its specific intended position in the western gallery of the Palais du Luxembourg, Maria's bespoke residence in Paris. A second surviving oil sketch for *The Coronation,* now in Munich's Alte Pinakothek, demonstrates how the reworking of the composition pushed Marguerite further into the background, casting her body into shadow, diminishing her height and adding visible puffiness to her cheeks. By this stage, Marguerite has been more firmly placed at the centre of the work's left half, directly beside two of Maria's best-known 'enemies', Henri IV's two natural sons with his mistress Gabrielle d'Estrées. César de Bourbon, Duke de Vendôme, smiles out of the canvas, while his brother Alexandre, Chevalier de Vendôme, is positioned with his back to the viewer (Millen & Wolf, 1989, p.108). Further attention is drawn to Marguerite by a male head placed between her and César; this figure looks knowingly at the audience and thus directs their eyes to these less than welcome guests, each of whom had a relationship with Henri IV that represented a distinct threat to Maria's authority (p.108).

Figure 5.5: Peter Paul Rubens, *Coronation of Maria de' Medici, c.*1622. Oil on oak panel, 49 × 63cm. Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg. (Photo: Album / Alamy Stock Photo)

Millen and Wolf argue that the initial oil sketch (Fig. 5.5) offered a 'more interesting perspective composition than the final result' (1989, p.107). Yet these shifts evidently aided the promotion of Maria's authority. The final composition emphasises the division of the painting into two halves by expanding the separation between the inner family circle on the right and the wider court on the left. For instance, where Alexandre's flamboyant figure marked the midpoint of the initial composition, a space is opened in the final painting (Fig. 5.1). The new centre of the painting is marked by a gap between two groups of figures, a gap filled with rays of light and falling coins delivered by allegorical personifications of 'Glory' and 'Honour' (Büttner, 2023, p.311). The insertion of the three princesses of the blood in the final version of *The Coronation* compounds this symbolic barrier between the legitimate royal family and reminders of Henri IV's former, dissolved, relationships. Flanked by her son, the dauphin and future Louis XIII (1601–43), and her daughter Elizabeth, Maria is placed at the centre of the royal family group. Maria's role as wife and mother is combined with Henri IV's pointed endorsement of her regency through the coronation ceremony, an endorsement underscored by his placement on a private balcony directly above Maria's head (Fig. 5.1). This placement represents another refinement from the earliest oil sketch, which shows the King's position slightly offset to the viewer's left (Fig. 5.5).

The reversal of the procession's direction also placed Maria and the churchmen crowning her on the right-hand side of the painting. This then works as the side of sovereign authority and the natural culmination of the work. Here it should be underscored again that the *Medici Cycle* was explicitly tailored for the western gallery in Maria's Parisian residence; when taken as a whole, the paintings were designed to enhance her independence from her son, Louis XIII, by creating a courtly setting in which she was the central figure of authority (Millen & Wolf, 1989, p.17; Büttner, 2023, p.96). *The Coronation* represents a pivotal point in Maria's political career and was one of three large horizontal canvases in the series. These were all displayed at the furthest end of the gallery, so at its literal turning point. The compositional crescendo on the right side of *The Coronation* fits with this layout, matching the movement of viewers as they circulated around the gallery clockwise. The other two

horizontal paintings, hung at right angles on either side of *The Coronation* at the end of the gallery, respectively represented *The Death of Henri VI and the Proclamation of the Regency* and *The Council of the Gods* (for a diagram of the cycle's layout see: Galletti, 2014, p.884). While these two works included a huge number of allegorical personifications, *The Coronation* focused on historical individuals whose appearances must have formed major strand of discussions amongst the original audiences for the paintings.

Maria controlled access to the *Medici Cycle* on its installation and thus could mediate such discussions and hence the meanings communicated to viewers. This is a point that has only become clear relatively recently: the function of the gallery was once thought to provide an entryway to the private rooms of Maria's large apartment akin to a lavish waiting room. Yet Sara Galletti has persuasively demonstrated that the 'Rubens Gallery' was instead located within the innermost rooms of Maria's private residence, with access carefully controlled by the Queen Mother herself (2003; 2010; 2012, pp.154–73). As Büttner has noted, entering the gallery was an honour, a place 'to discuss private matters with privileged guests' and for Maria to display her magnificence while retaining a certain 'modesty appropriate of a royal widow' (2023, pp.33, 96–7). Galletti further argues that the complex allegories and visual ambiguity of the series allowed Maria and her advisors to tune their explanations to specific viewers (2014, pp.878, 903). Moments at which the series dissented from the politics of Maria's son could be revealed to close allies on one visit and then artfully concealed on another, such as when Louis XIII himself viewed the series in May 1625 (pp.904–6).

In the final version of *The Coronation*, the dual shift to lower Marguerite's status while broadening her figure and exposing her chest might well cater to the informal world of court gossip and concurrent discussions of reputation which could be held within the relative privacy of the western gallery. This idea certainly fits with other attacks on Marguerite. For example, in 1626, just a year after *The Coronation* was completed, a court ballet would appear to parody *Le grand bal de la Rene Marguerite* (an entertainment the Valois Queen organised in 1612), with the poet René Border representing a 'grotesque' version of the now deceased Marguerite in the character

of the 'Grande Duchesse de Billebahaut', described by Margaret McGowan as a 'gross, ugly and clumsy' figure (1963, pp.133–53; 2015, p.204). Popular in the French court during the 1620s, burlesque ballets offered courtiers new opportunities to mock famed individuals. Presenting Marguerite in a 'grotesque' light was thus a political means of asserting authority over the repudiated Queen, as is also the case for *The Coronation.*

The initial viewers of the *Medici Cycle* were drawn from groups continuous with that of the ballet's audience, thus people most likely to know of the rumours surrounding Marguerite. Satirical biographies repeated these rumours, often portraying the repudiated Queen as both hypersexual and concerningly fat, using her body size to enhance their critiques. The connection drawn between Marguerite's concerning size and her outsized sexuality was elaborated in an anonymous satire written in the voice of Henri IV – *Le Divorce satyrique, ou les amours de la reyne Marguerite* – which describes Marguerite's innumerable affairs to imply her husband, the King, was a cuckold (Tresfels, 2020, p.103). The text's description of Marguerite being just as 'big & fat, & voluptuous' ('gros & gras, & voluptueux') as one of these lovers, enhances its vision of her outsized sexual desires (Tresfels, 2020, p.103; Anonymous, 1660, p.206). As Cécile Tresfels has highlighted, *Le Divorce satyrique* represents Marguerite as 'the most deformed woman in France', her body 'transgressing all boundaries'; it is 'extensible, penetrable, unstoppable, it oozes and it consumes, and thus it profoundly disturbs' (2020, p.105; Anonymous, 1660, p.205). Despite following conventional lines of anti-Valois propaganda, which often used accusations of sexual 'disorder' to imply the illegitimacy of royal authority, *Le Divorce satyrique* remains noteworthy. This is because it uses expanded body size to define Marguerite as overstepping the very boundaries of nature in response to her political position and assertive presence in elite French society (on the political significance of the sexual reputation of Valois monarchs see: Crawford, 2010, pp.195–240). Tresfels notes that *Le Divorce satyrique* was written as early as 1607. This was shortly after Marguerite's return to Paris in 1605, newly independent of familial authority, when she would often display her wealth through jewel-encrusted outfits and grand entertainments (2020, pp.103–4).

The early manuscript forms of *Le Divorce satyrique* may have been crucial in transmitting the notion of Marguerite's fatness beyond the commercial, public-facing world of print in the early and mid-seventeenth century. The Valois queen's size is commented upon in the notoriously scathing *Historiettes,* a series of short biographies of notable figures authored by Gédéon Tallemant des Réaux (1619–1692) between 1657 and 1659 (Tallemant des Réaux, 1834, pp.87–91; Scott, 2010, p.18). The *Historiettes* would remain in manuscript form until its publication in several volumes between 1834 and 1835 (Scott, 2010, p.18). While far from an accurate record of historical events, the *Historiettes* provide an insight into the reputation Marguerite left among the capital's elite, based on 'gossip and anecdotes' collected by Tallemant from among his literary circle at the Hôtel de Rambouillet (Scott, 2010, p.18). According to these sources, the Valois Queen was a gallant and witty woman who reappeared from exile with a 'horribly fat' figure (Tallemant des Réaux, 1834, p.87). To compensate for her size, Marguerite dressed in a preposterously enlarged costume, Tallemant claimed, such that she struggled to move through doorways (p.87). Her eccentric behaviour and outmoded dress present the Queen as a somewhat sympathetic but ultimately comic figure, almost a preposterous relic of the Valois monarchy.

These anecdotal accounts of Marguerite's size that were exchanged within the court were fed by a wider network of gossip transmitted orally or in slanderous pamphlets and manuscripts circulating across Paris (McIlvenna, 2016, p.20). According to Una McIlvenna, the rising class of lawyers ('*parlementaires'* like the diarist L'Estoile) were prominent in distributing this 'misogynistic literature', demonstrating their 'resistance to the prominence of women' in political life, often betraying their 'own anxieties around gender and sexuality' (2016, p.20). The political propaganda of *Le Divorce satyrique* betrays this intense anxiety about the destabilising impact of women having non-procreative sex. Here, fatness could mark the perceived unnaturalness of Marguerite's sexuality both in its outsized nature and lack of procreative intent or results. For instance, Marguerite's exces-

sive desire for not 'a thousand' but 'infinite lovers' ('infinies amours') is contrasted in *Le Divorce satyrique* with her 'sterile and fruitless' relationship to her husband, as the couple were known never to have 'produced' an heir (Tresfels, 2020, pp.113–14; Anonymous, 1660, p.214). The text makes this excessive, non-procreative sexuality legible through Marguerite's extreme appearance, in one case by describing her as attending communion with 'a great bosom so uncovered that it resembled rather an ass than breasts' (translation from Tresfels, 2020, p.107; Anonymous, 1660, pp.222–3). The phrase 'grande gorge' is used to refer to Marguerite's chest, however 'gorge' could refer both to the throat or the décolleté (Tresfels, 2020, p.107; Anonymous, 1660, p.222; Cotgrave, 1611, p.495). When combined with the implied confusion between buttocks and breasts, the anonymous author's description of Marguerite's taboo appearance at church suggests both a heavier figure and a confusion of body parts and orifices redolent of non-procreative sexual acts.

This emphasis on Marguerite's size and lack of fertility resonates with the wider medical culture of the period. Excessive fatness was consistently associated with fertility issues in early modern Europe. This was particularly so for elite women, whose relatively inactive lifestyles were thought to combine with the constitutional weaknesses of their sex so as to increase fat around the entrance to the womb and therefore prevent conception. As Sarah Toulalan has demonstrated, while seventeenth-century physicians continued to link corpulence to infertility in both sexes, their warnings and advice largely focused on women's bodies (2014, p.72). According to Jean Liébault's *Trois livres de la sante, foecundite et maladies des femmes* (a French adaptation of Giovanni Marinelli's *Le medicine partenenti alle infermità delle donne*, 1562) 'empty' sterile women were imperfect and justly despised because 'nature created her [i.e. women] mainly to conceive' (1582, p.5). Such women's troubles were caused by 'their natural temperament, which is cold and damp: the habit of their body, which is soft, lax, and of rare texture: the superfluities and excrements of which they are full: the idle, sedentary life […] without exer-

cise that they are forced to lead' (p.5).[4] Liébault further claims that 'obesity and excess fat is a common vice that can cause sterility and prevent fertility in both sexes' and that this was observed by Hippocrates in the Scythian tribes but it affected women more acutely pp.212–13).[5] At the French court, anxieties about the supposed fickleness of women's fertility among the political class were stoked both by repeated succession crises and also by women's visible presence and authority (Guest, 2015, p.44). French political writers and jurists had theorised state authority as being based on patriarchal authority within the household, including a 1550s precept promoting the 'male right' to rule (Hanley, 2006, p.289). Salic law theoretically excluded women from hereditary authority, but these theories were contradicted in practice, as early modern France was governed by a series of powerful female regents – including Marguerite's mother Catherine and successor Maria (Galletti, 2014, p.882).

If slanderous critiques of elite women's appearances could be used to challenge their political authority and question their fertility, could beauty be used to defend their role? Beautiful female figures feature prominently throughout the *Medici Cycle* in the form of allegorical, generic and historical women, all calculated to validate Maria's authority. Johnson has argued that misogynistic and moral objections to these figures could have undermined the propagandistic purposes of the *Medici Cycle*, writing that 'the Queen Mother's inability to control' viewer responses meant 'male viewers in particular could have interpreted very negatively her attempts to assert her power through her seductive female gaze' and the presence of beautiful women (1999, pp.152–3). Where gender pre-determines the response of a generalised 'male viewer' in Johnson's account, Galletti emphasises not only the distinct political identity of each viewer but Maria's control over the interpretations each was given (2014, pp.878, 903). Wider cultural assumptions

about gender and the body would likely have interacted with one's specific political position and knowledge when viewing the series. For instance, when describing his viewing of the cycle in June 1625, the Italian scholar Cassiano dal Pozzo (1588–1657) comments both on Rubens's skillful expression of 'the pain and joy of the parturient' in *The Birth of the Dauphin* (i.e. Louis XIII) and the great 'lasciviousness' with which it was painted (Galletti, 2014, p.904) (Fig. 5.6).

Figure 5.6: Peter Paul Rubens, *Birth of the Dauphin, from the Medici Cycle, c.*1625. Oil on canvas, 394 × 295cm. Louvre, Paris. (© 2000 GrandPalaisRmn (musée du Louvre) / Thierry Le Mage (La Naissance du Dauphin (futur Louis XIII) à Fontainebleau, le 27 septembre 1601 - Louvre site des collections))

Dal Pazzo's reference to this painting's 'lasciviousness' may refer not to one specific body but to the combined effect of the semi-nude male figures, the exposed breast of a female attendant and the intimacy conveyed by Maria's flushed cheeks, sloping neckline and feet nonchalantly perched on dainty slippers. Thus, the accumulation of nude or daringly dressed women across the cycle may have caught the eyes of some viewers as they circulated through the gallery.

---

4   'Car, outre leur naturel temperament, qui est froid & humide: outre l'habitude de leur corps qui est mol, lasche, & de rare texture: outre les superfluitez & excremens dont elles sont pleines: outre la vie oysiue, sedentaire & sans exercise que elles sont contraintes de mener pour l'imbecilité de leur corps'.

5   '[L]'obesité & graisse excessive soit vice commun qui peut causer sterilité, & empescher la fœcundité à l'un & l'autre sexe…'.

In *The Coronation,* women are outnumbered by the male figures yet still command the scene. The noblewomens' shared style of dress emphasises their presence as a unit (Büttner, 2023, p.313). Many of the noblewomen depicted fit closely into a typical Rubenesque beauty visible throughout the cycle, with dark eyes, dappled rosy cheeks, bud-like lips and faint double chins. The similarity in their dress and appearance might encourage viewers to discern subtle differences in appearance. Although Marguerite's fatness is represented on a continuum with the other ladies in the painting, many of whom are plump (not least of all Maria herself whose chin and neck are softened by a gentle pad of fat), this similarity enhances the critical nature of these slight differences. Such pictorial invitations to comparison were mirrored in the development of 'gallery of beauties' paintings, a genre that grew in popularity through the seventeenth century as European courts competitively advertised the attraction of *their* noblewomen (Goldsmith, 2014, pp.45–6). Rubens saw initial success in Italy with one such series of 'beauties' made for Vincenzo Gonzaga of Mantua (1562–1612) (de Clippel, 2007, p.113; Goldsmith, 2014, pp.45–6). In the same period, the *Judgement of Paris* in which three goddesses – Venus, Minerva and Juno – compete to be crowned the most beautiful became immensely popular in court art and performances, as Elizabeth C. Goldsmith has highlighted (2014). These extended codifications of specific norms of female bodily beauty did more than just reinforce this comparative and competitive tendency in European court culture. They also defined and validated perceived ugliness as a gendered mode of criticism.

In *The Coronation*, this comparative type of judgement is specifically invited by the trio of noblewomen arrayed directly ahead of Marguerite (including the dark-haired woman who kneels to support Maria's train). Though their bodies are scrupulously covered, they still reference the appearance of the 'Three Graces' in *The Education of a Princess*, a painting earlier in the cycle that depicts Maria's preparation for her role as Queen (Fig. 5.7). In *The Education of a Princess*, the Graces' unmarked bodies feature small, high and circular breasts, smooth stomachs and elongated legs. This painting forms part of first section of the Cycle, which represents Maria's 'childhood, youth, courtship and years of marriage to Henri IV' and it concludes with *The Coronation*; this tac-

itly encouraged viewers to consider this painting's relationship to the preceding images before moving on to the next section (Büttner, 2023, p.310). The elevation of feminine beauty to the level of the Three Graces in *The Coronation* implies an unflattering comparison between Marguerite's fatter appearance with that of her peers. This contrast also frames Marguerite as a negative foil to Maria, who in this way expertly proclaims superior right to the rhetoric of beauty over and above her deceased rival.

Painting with fat

Viewing Marguerite in relation to her peers in *The Coronation* suggests that – regardless of the patron's intentions or audience assumptions – any straightforwardly negative reading of her body size is complicated by Rubens's tendency to portray women as pervasively fleshy. This section considers how Rubens's pictorial techniques associate femininity and fatness in *The Coronation,* largely focusing on how gender affects the reception of body size. However, it is worth noting that as a marker of identity fat interacts dynamically with numerous other social categories to produce a variety of conditioned meanings. Gender, class and race all affect how body size has been represented and interpreted, as the American sociologist Sabrina Strings has demonstrated in her work on the enmeshed development of anti-Blackness and fatphobia in Western culture (2019). The extremely elite class of all the women portrayed in the foreground of *The Coronation* inevitably shapes their representation as controlled, coherent, idealised figures, resplendent in their visible riches and pearlescent pallor – whereby their femininity, whiteness and elite class all reinforce one another as naturalised signs of superiority (for discussion early modern skin whitening and beauty culture see Sammern, 2015; and for the legacy of Whiteness in Rubens's art and historiography, see Kinew, 2020). This may allow the fullness of Maria's appearance to go unnoticed or even enhance her perceived wealth and high status when elevated alongside these other traits. Moreover, tacit restrictions were placed on the pictorial language deemed suitable to portray any elite European woman. Thus, any negative overtones in Rubens's portrayal of Marguerite relied on subtle signs of deprecations, as discussed in the previous section.

Not only does Marguerite's appearance in *The Coro-*

Figure 5.7: Peter Paul Rubens, *The Education of a Princess,* from the *Medici Cycle, c.*1625. Oil on canvas, 394 × 295cm. Louvre, Paris. (© 2001 GrandPalaisRmn (musée du Louvre) / Ojéda/Le Mage (L'Instruction de la reine - Louvre site des collections))

nation remain within these limits of decorum; it remains coherent with Rubens's visual 'vocabulary' for portraying women's bodies including the use of rounded geometric shapes and fluid flesh tones. Rubens's tendency to emphasise the contrast between male and female body size, tone and texture also lend a distinctly feminine quality to Marguerite's representation as fat (Sweet, 2014, pp.130–42; van Wyhe, 2018, pp.8–10; de Clippel, 2007, p.126). 'Problematic' fatness appears as an exaggeration of women's pre-existing tendency towards plumpness in Rubens's art. As this section will demonstrate, the close association that Rubens draws between fatness, femininity and eroticism fits closely with the appreciation and deprecation of fat arising from anxieties about women's bodies expressed in early modern theories of art and medicine.

While Rubens's use of fat varies in scale and intensity, fat's physical and material qualities are repeatedly linked to a distinctly feminine form of embodiment throughout his art. Rounded shapes are among the pictorial tools

Rubens uses to visualise Marguerite's fatness, and these also serve to assimilate her into his standard feminine bodily aesthetic. Such circular shapes include the plumped cheek and chin which suggest a distinctly rounded head as well as her breasts marked by smooth quarter–circles of shadow. The meeting point of Marguerite's skirts with the forward projection of her bodice is picked out by a warm, orange highlight in a manner that emphasises the circular forward expansion of her lower half. This effect was likely achieved with a structured bell-shaped skirt known as a *vertugale* (farthingale in English) that Marguerite was known to favour; her financial records include payments to 'a farthingale-maker' named Nicholas Regnault in 1577 (Boucher, 1995, p.101). However, Marguerite's repositioning somewhat behind other figures in *The Coronation* conceals the intended effect of the *vertugale*. This hooped or stiffened petticoat was meant to emphasise the narrowness of the waist by expanding the hips, as demonstrated in Marguerite's costume in the earliest surviving oil sketch for *The Coronation* (Fig. 5.5). Marguerite's well-known magnificence and flamboyance are also communicated through an exaggeration of other rounded shapes; of all the court ladies, she has the widest ruff and the largest pearls on her bodice. But this point should not be overstated. Rounded forms are used to add a material quality of 'softness' to all the noblewomen visible in *The Coronation*, from the smoothing over of all hard bone or muscle to the repeated circular motifs of pearls, coronets, ruffs, and halos of hair.

The repetitive rounded motifs used to distinguish the women in *The Coronation* sprang from Rubens's own theoretical writings, which stated that 'the circle, or circular figure, dominates the form of the woman' ('Le cercle, ou la figure circulaire, dominient sans la forme de la femme' (1773, p.49)). De Clippel argues that Rubens was associated with his skill in reproducing 'elegant' women's figures in his own lifetime and she further notes that he developed a 'gender sensitive hierarchy' of geometry and proportion in his pocketbook based on his observation of classical sculpture (2007, pp.119–20). In other words, ancient statues, rather than living women, were the objects of Rubens's geometric studies. In the same notebook, Rubens uses a 'Greek Venus' statue to demonstrate his theory that roundness characterized feminine beauty (Fig. 5.8) – dots mark the circles of her breasts

and belly, stretched to elongated ovals for her buttocks and thighs (de Clippel, 2007, p.121; Sweet, 2014, p.140). At its most abstract, the artist describes the circle itself as 'entirely feminine' ('fis omne Foemineum') on a page copied from Rubens's lost pocketbook (Fig. 5.9), where he is schematising the 'divine harmony' of the three fundamental geometric forms in the body — the square, circle and triangle (Thielemann, 2018, p.76; de Clippel, 2007, pp.118, 121).[6]

Figure 5.8: After Peter Paul Rubens, *Ms. Johnson*, fol.99r. London, Samuel Courtauld Trust, Courtauld Gallery. (Image courtesy The Courtauld)

Rubens's theory built on ancient Pythagorean and Platonic geometric concepts (Thielemann, 2018, p.76–7). However, where Platonists had emphasized the perfection of the sphere, Rubens tended to favour 'square-based' shapes as 'the most perfect articulation of the human form', arguing that these forms conveyed the 'compactness' of the body as it was found in 'nature' (pp.76–7, n.94). Alongside the initial geometric scheme sketched in his notebooks (Fig 5.9), Rubens wrote that 'cubes' were 'strong, robust, compact and athletic' and would later associate them with virile, male bodies.[7] The artist uses square-based shapes to build up the head and torso of the Farnese Hercules, a monumental third-century Greek sculpture of the ancient hero (Fig. 5.10). Alongside the drawing of Hercules, the artist has written that: 'The form of Hercules, or that of an exceptionally robust man, has the cube (above all) as its foundation'.[8]

For Rubens, the square form conveyed the ultimate 'compactness' of the body in 'nature' that had been lost over time but was still visible in the ancient sculpture (Thielemann, 2018, p.75). It was from these heights that Rubens believed men of his own day had fallen, writing in his treatise *De imitatione statuarum* that: 'The main respect in which men of our age differ from the ancients is their sloth and their unexercised lifestyle: that is, their eating and drinking and lack of concern for the exercise of the body. As a consequence, the pressed-down weight of a stomach protrudes, always full because of assiduous gluttony; legs are effeminized and arms, aware of their inactivity' (pp.78–9, translation by Fairweather in Thielemann). In this passage, Rubens acknowledges the underlying assumptions that fatness was not necessarily a matter of large body size alone, but of the rounder geometric forms and looser textures that suggested a concerning slip towards passive 'effeminacy'.

---

6   The contents of the 'pocketbook' referred to here was preserved in a manuscript copy which provides the source for all the figure images. This copy is known as The Johnson Manuscript, mentioned previously as the source for the text of *De imitatione statuarum*. Though an 'indirect' source, this manuscript contains the closest record of the original document by the artist. For more information, see Thielemann (2018, p.76).

7   '[F]orte, Robustum, compactum et athleticum'. See Figure 5.9.

8   'Forma Herculea siue robusti viri supra modum ex cubo fundamentum habet'. Original Latin from Thielemann (2018, p.75)

While Rubens's vision of the feminine body as rounded was highly idealized, it was inferior and less compact than the ideal male body. This negatively tinged vision of the feminine body was entirely compatible with pre-existing views that women's constitutionally fatter figures were both their natural state *and* revealed their inherent weakness compared to men. Early modern–art and medical theory provided fertile ground for this view among the *Medici Cycle's* audiences. A popular health guide from 1615 authored by French physician Louis Guyon emphasises the moderate ideal, arguing that some roundness was more suited to beauty in women in particular (Guyon, 1615, pp.528–31). Within his extremely detailed discussion of individual body parts often reiterates a notion of a moderate fleshiness, claiming that a woman's 'belly will be round, soft, & moderately large, & raised: the hips high, full, solid, & fleshy' (p.534).[9] This ideal is applied equally to both mythical and 'real' women, for instance, Guyon compares the bodies of goddesses like Venus to the captivating bodies of noblewomen such as Anne Boleyn and an anonymous lady-in-waiting whose beauty allowed her to marry a 'great Lord' ('grand Seigneur', pp.531–33). Both Guyon's comparison of noblewomen to goddesses and descriptions of ideal fleshiness tallied closely with Rubens's own statement that the ideal female body was 'neither too thin or too lean, nor too big or too fat, but of moderate plumpness, following the model of ancient statues' (1773, p.50).[10] Among the preceding generation of French artists, Jean Cousin the Younger had attempted to visualize this moderate beauty in his book on human proportions or *Livre de pourtraiture*. which included illustrations of the ideal female body from front and back (1571) (Figs. 5.11 and 5.12 for the 1608 edn). Crucially, Cousin defines women's proportions in relation to the male form writing that women had 'arms, legs & thighs, bigger, & fuller than that of the man' (1560, p.iii).[11]

Figure 5.9: After Peter Paul Rubens, *Ms. Johnson*, fol.75r. London, Samuel Courtauld Trust, Courtauld Gallery. (Image courtesy The Courtauld)

Figure 5.10: Peter Paul Rubens, *Study of the Farnese Hercules* (recto), 17th century. Pen and ink on paper, 19.6 × 15.3cm. The Courtauld Institute of Art, London. (Image courtesy The Courtauld)

9 '[L]e ventre sera rond, mollet, & mediocrement gros, & relevé: les hanches hautes, pleines solides, & charneuses'.

10 '[Le] corps [de la femme] ne doit être ni trop mince ou trop maigre, ni trop gros ou trop gras, mais d'un embonpoint modéré, suivant le modele des statues antiques'.

11 'La proportion & mesure de la femme veuë par devant, est semblable à l'homme…'.

Where Cousin's images of the female body remain stiff and static models, Rubens's paintings offer a dynamic, textured vision of women's body fat. The enhanced sensorial intensity of Rubens's portrayal of women's body fat played on the ambiguous line between the appreciation of some plumpness and criticism of outright fatness. What early modern art theory about female versus male proportions cannot account for is precisely the elusive quality of touch that Rubens's art uses to portray feminine flesh, thus offering a partial glimpse of the textures and temperatures that fat could evoke in the early modern imagination. Flesh tones are the primary means used by Rubens to achieve this evocative, eroticised aesthetic for his female figures. Though used most extensively in his nudes, this tendency remains visible in Rubens's formal portraiture and history painting. In *The Coronation*, for instance, though her body is hidden by her heavy garments, Marguerite's pale, dappled complexion shines through. Her cheeks and chest are rendered in white dotted with vermillion. The visual effect of this is to enhance the fullness of the rolls of flesh at her chin and neck. This milky skin tone plays a role akin to that of the matching costumes, both serving to unite all the women visible in *The Coronation* in a shared vision of feminine and courtly beauty.

The tones and textures of Marguerite's skin suggest a bodily softness that, in turn, was shaped by Rubens's personal assimilation of broader medical and artistic theories of sex difference and hierarchy as circulating in early modern Europe. According to humoral medicine which still dominated medical literature, women's bodies were colder and moister than men's, tending toward the phlegmatic humour defined as 'slow, big, and sticky' (Dioscoride, 1561, p.12). The ancient Roman doctor Galen's description of the phlegmatic body as 'white, soft, hairless, without visible vessels and joints, slim and cold to the touch' could just as easily describe the smooth, pale female nudes of Fontainebleau (Jouanna & Allies, 2012, pp.338–9). Phlegmatic pallor was a near-constant feature of idealised femininity in early modern visual culture, with art manuals recommending a mix of 'white and vermillion' to produce women's skin tones. Rubens himself described these in humoral terms as a 'colour

Figure 5.11: Jean Cousin, 'Proportion & mesure de la femme veuë par deuant' in *Livre de pourtraiture de maistre Iean Cousin* (Paris: Iean le Clerc, 1608). (National Library of Medicine; National Institutes of Health; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services)

Figure 5.12: Jean Cousin, 'Proportion & mesure de la femme veuë par le derriere' in *Livre de pourtraiture de maistre Iean Cousin* (Paris: Iean le Clerc, 1608). (National Library of Medicine; National Institutes of Health; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services)

that partakes of milk & blood or formed by a mixture of lilies & roses' (1773, p.50).[12]

Just as skin tone could be 'enhanced' by cosmetics, the fictions of a painted world could create new extremes of whiteness, exaggerated further by setting two opposing types against one another (Campbell, 2006, p.164). Though often racialised – as in Rubens's *Venus at a Mirror*, *c.*1615

12 'couleur qui participe du lait & du sang ou formée par un mêlange de lys & de roses'.

– this contrast could also be between the sexes. In *Venus, Mars and Cupid* (*c*.1635) (Fig. 5.13), Rubens used body size and skin tone to dramatise and eroticise the contrast between the genders, setting Mars's darkly tanned, muscular and armoured body against the conspicuously nude, pale and plump Venus. Here, Venus's rounded belly and broad hips, larger breasts and generally softer body makes earlier French court styles appear comparatively bloodless.[13] In *Venus, Mars and Cupid*, the goddess's body is porous, shown in the process of lactating into the mouth of her son, Cupid. Rubens's description of women's skin tone resembling shades of 'milk & blood' closely associated female bodies with reproduction in a manner which became explicitly maternal as the lactating breast entered his oeuvre from 1609 onwards (Thøfner, 2018, p.180). As Margit Thøfner has argued, the fertile female body was apt to demonstrate Rubens's own mastery of (pro)creative forces, transforming white lead suspended in linseed oil into maternal milk on the canvas through his 'boldly fluid paintwork' (2018, pp.190–6).

The 'fluid' materiality of paint could go beyond sculpture in this regard, providing an ideal vehicle to display Rubens's mastery of 'flesh-tones' ('carnatura' or 'charnure' in French). A well-known passage from Rubens's aforementioned notebook was circulated in the form of a short treatise titled *De imitatione statuarum*, which discusses the challenges involved in transforming the models provided by classical sculptures into convincingly life-like bodies (Thielemann, 2018, pp.41, 45; Thielemann, 2012, pp.95–146). This compact text is highly influenced by Rubens's association with the circle of the Flemish humanist philosopher Justus Lipsius (1547–1606). In it, the artist cautions against copying the harsh '*densitas*' (density) of sculpture when rendering flesh; instead, delicate shadows and '*maccaturae*' (dents) should be used to convey the '*diaphanitas*' (transparency) of flesh (Thielemann, 2018, p.64). Though '*maccaturae*' has various meanings, including the effect in sculpture where flesh seems to yield softly to touch, Andreas Thielemann notes that for Rubens these '*maccaturae*' could also refer to the dimples, marks and rolls caused by fat's presence under

the skin or ageing (2018, p.71). In Rubens's oil painting technique, flesh-like textures and effects were created by gradually building up thin semi-transparent layers of oil paint – itself pigment suspended in fat – to produce depth and soften the hard edges of the body (van Wyhe, 2018, pp.29, 31; Thøfner, 2018, pp.190, 194, 196; Sutton, Wieseman & van Hout, 2004, p.64). As van Wyhe argues in the introduction to the volume *Rubens and the Human Body*, the artist's career-long concern with fleshliness sought not to 'capture' skin or flesh accurately in the static sense, but to render its tones and textures so as to make visible its inherent dynamic and energetic potential, to realise its material existence in paint (2018, pp.27–32).

Rubens's distinct oil-technique is less visible on Marguerite in *The Coronation*, yet her delicately textured skin and the gentle contact between her rounded chin and neck nevertheless produce a softening effect. This sensual aesthetic of skin can enhance the distinctive tactile qualities of fat without necessarily enlarging the overall figure. Strikingly, in an unfinished painted portrait of Maria de' Medici created alongside the *Medici Cycle* (*c*.1622) (Fig. 5.14), Rubens obscures the Queen's body size with her voluminous dark dress. Only the pointed dappling of her skin with dabs of lead white and vermillion suggests the charming 'plumpness' of her skin-texture without definitively increasing her overall body size. This effect is perhaps best appreciated when comparing Rubens's copy of Titian's *The Andrians* (*c*.1523–6) with the original (Figs. 5.15 and 5.16). In Rubens's version, the reclining nude woman in the foreground is dotted with '*maccaturae*' to suggest a pervasiveness of fat under the skin and thus creating a sense of 'fleshiness' without altering her overall body size (de Clippel, 2007, pp.126–31). De Clippel argues that any appraisal of overall 'fatness' in Rubens's nudes is the result of a 'modern' point of view (2007, p.131); however, it is undeniable that his oil-technique has a powerful capacity for realising the textures associated with body fat regardless of precise body size.

In short, Rubens's fluid representation of flesh encourages his viewers to make tactile associations in response to the bodies on display. In the early modern period, such associations would most likely revolve around medical constructions of women's bodies as more phlegmatic, as colder and moister, than those of men. This combination

---

13 For instance, the small round breasts and porcelain smooth skin of the nude woman portrayed in *A Lady in Her Bath*, made in 1571 by the court painter François Clouet (d.1572), as discussed in Thøfner (2018, pp.182–3).

Figure 5.13: Peter Paul Rubens, *Venus, Mars and Cupid, c.*1635. Oil on canvas, 195.2 × 133cm. Dulwich Picture Gallery, London. (Photo: Imagedoc / Alamy Stock Photo)

Figure 5.14: Peter Paul Rubens, *Maria de' Medici, Queen of France, c.*1622. Oil on canvas, 131 × 108cm. Museo del Prado, Madrid. (Source: Masterpics / Alamy Stock Photo)

is visualised in an earlier work in the *Medici Cycle* known as *The Arrival at Marseille*, which depicts Maria's arrival in France by ship (Fig. 5.17). Three Nereids or water nymphs strain to pull the ship ashore, each distinguished by exaggerated folds and rolls of fat across their body where skin touches skin. This exaggeration goes beyond plausibility with at least three folds marking the central Nereid's knee as she strides forward. Despite the unlikeliness of such creases ever occurring naturally, the nymph's knee marks the point at which her human form meets the water and transforms into a tendril of blue-grey scales. This makes it a highly appropriate place to exaggerate the fluid potential of fat, a potential entirely in keeping with early modern humoral medicine. Undulating layers of fat and foam suggest the dissolution of the Nereids' pale bodies and blond hair into the churning water at the bottom of the painting. The nymphs' watery flesh evokes a specific sensation of temperature and moisture – the cool shock of sea spray – as well as the characteristic force and malleability of water (similarly van Wyhe, 2018, pp.29–31). This effect is reinforced by the Nereids' projecting bellies and the creases of fat at their thighs and torsos, which are markedly at odds with the finely clothed and controlled body of the moderately sized Maria depicted in prim white satin above them.

Evidently, fat played an important role in intensifying both the eroticism and the dynamism inherent in Rubens's portrayal of women. In this way, he seems to have harnessed for his own artistic purposes the negative associations of fat with femininity that circulated in the early modern period. From conception onwards, women's moister, cooler and fatter bodies ensured their 'natural' inferiority (see Paré, 1573, p.13). This was why women who slid into excessive feminine fluidity became disorderly, as exemplified by the infertile women with flesh that was 'soft, lax, and of rare texture' both criticised and pitied by Liébault in his reworking of Marinelli's text on women's health (1582, p.5). Rubens did not necessarily counter women's putative inferiority so much as eroticise it to display his mastery. One consequence

Figure 5.15: Titian, *The Bacchanal of the Andrians*, *c.*1523–6. Oil on canvas, 175 × 193cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid. (Source: classicpaintings / Alamy Stock Photo)

Figure 5.16: Peter Paul Rubens, *The Andrians*, 1630s. Oil on canvas, 200 × 215cm. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm. (Source / photographer: Erik Cornelius / Nationalmuseum Stockholm)

Figure 5.17: Peter Paul Rubens, *The Arrival* at Marseille, *c.*1625. Oil on canvas, 394 × 295cm. Louvre, Paris. (© 2004 GrandPalaisRmn (musée du Louvre) / Hervé Lewandowski (Le Débarquement de la reine à Marseille, le 3 novembre 1600 - Louvre site des collections))

of this was that touch was foregrounded in his works. As Christopher Forth argues, pervasive cultural expressions of 'disgust' directed towards fatness often focus on anxieties about touch or the material textures associated with fat (2019, pp.11–12, 22; also see Miller, 1997, p.40). 'Rather than passively yielding to a masterful human touch', Forth writes, 'fatty things seem to touch us back, adhering to surfaces and attaching themselves to our bodies' (2019, p.22). To intensify the desire to touch, Rubens's version of the female body had to play on this unsteady boundary, or rather bond, between desire and disgust. Yet with the pleasures of fat bound up with these dynamics of touch, the gendering of fatness as feminine played into eroticising women's 'weakness'. Marguerite's appearance in *The Coronation* thus alludes not only to specific criticisms of her body size and sexuality but to the lingering potential of all women to be deemed excessively, pathologically feminine.

Epilogue

The close bond between positive and negative assessments of women's bodies in Rubens's art reveals the difficulties that modern art historians face in interpreting perceptions of women's body size in the early modern period. While this article has focused primarily on satirical critiques of Marguerite, the rumoured shift in her appearance in later life was itself intensified by her prior reputation for beauty. The fullest expression of this praise for Marguerite's appearance can be found in the glowing biography – the *Discours de la Reine Marguerite* – written by the retired soldier and court memoirist Pierre de Bourdeille, seigneur de Brantôme (1540–1614), which circulated among the court and public in manuscript format from 1614, before finally appearing in print in 1665 (Cottrell, 1970, p.11). In this text, the Queen's size and height are referenced to emphasise her statuesque beauty: '[Her] beautiful face is set upon a magnificent body, with a superb, elegant, and rich size, rarely seen, accompanied by a noble bearing and a dignified majesty' (Brantôme, 1665, pp.179, 203).[14]

Although criticisms of women's appearance remained a dominant form of politicised attack across the seventeenth century, elite women's correspondences and memoirs reveal that a retreat into the rhetoric of beauty was not their only recourse. Creative reworkings of constrictive bodily norms as well as a rejection of idealised beauty can be found in Marguerite's own surviving writings. (The wider spectrum of early modern women likely pursued similar strategies to counter the demands placed upon their appearances even if these are lost or less readily available). For instance, Marguerite frames her own *Memoirs* (written during her exile and first published 1628) as a corrective to several errors in Brantôme's text, including his high praise of her appearance. To emphasise the trials she has endured, Marguerite rejects her friend's 'flattery' of her appearance in his 'portrait', which 'far surpasses the excellence of the figure [as in person] that you wished to make its subject' to the extent that she cannot recognise his description

(Valois, 1628, pp.1–2).[15] Similarly, a letter to Henri IV sent in November 1606 demonstrates Marguerite's witty association of her declining physical appearance with her noble lineage. Having suffered significant weight loss due to illness, she wrote that fever had reduced her to an unrecognisable 'skeleton' ('une anatomie'), making her nose appear 'as long as the King [Francis I] my grandfather' (Lettres de Marguerite de Valois, Collection Dupuy, t.217, fol.102, noted in Valois, 1892, p.54). Such rejections of idealised beauty went beyond individual cases to include the reworking of the constitutional delicacy or weakness conventionally attributed to women in some medical texts. In her posthumously published 'docte et subtil discours' ('learned and subtle discourse'), Marguerite provided seven ingenious reasons for the excellence of women. Bodily materiality not overall size was crucial in Marguerite's account, which argued that women's 'organs are composed of a more delicate and excellent material' at odds with the 'rough, dirty and coarse' bodily matter of men (Valois, 1618, pp.11–12).[16] Marguerite's own voice, then, is an important historical rejoinder to her framing in *The Coronation*.

An experiment on the edge of acceptable fatness, *The Coronation* reveals that the limits of appropriate body size often overlapped with the limits of women's theoretically proscribed role at the French court during the seventeenth century. Yet as Marguerite's clever reversal of conventional gender hierarchy suggest, the negative characterisation of women's bodies expressed in satire, medicine and art were far from watertight. Images of fatter bodies aptly demonstrate fat's own tendency to surpass the boundaries set for it in theory and practice. These were limits that Marguerite repeatedly breached or transformed in life. As this article has shown, Marguerite's pale, soft and fluid roundness in *The Coronation* suggest a highly gendered version of the fat body which could be associated not only with sickness, sterility, and

---

14 '[C]e beau visage est fondé sur un beau corps de la plus belle, superbe & riche taille qui se puisse voire, accompagnée d'un port, & d'un si grave majesté'.

15 'En ce portrait l'ornement du tableau surpasse de beaucoup l'excellence de la figure que vous en avez voulu render le sujet…'

16 'Et faut aduouër que là où les organs sont composez d'vne matière plus delicate & excellente, qu'ils seront au prealable mieux proportionez […] la femme sera plus propre à faire des plus belles actions, que celle de l'homme fait de sange, matière rude, salle & grossiere'.

physical weakness but also with femininity, eroticism and artistic virtuosity. Rubens's vision of Marguerite can only be fully appreciated through a refusal to fix on one singular meaning; her body maintains its endlessly shifting quality, rippling in the light like the dimpled flesh of his nudes.

Bibliography

1   Anonymous (1660) 'Le Divorce satyrique, ou les amours de la reyne Marguerite' in *Recueil de Diverses Pieces, Servans a l'histoire de Henry III Roy de France et de Pologne*, Cologne, Pierre du Marteau.

2   Bendall, S. (2021) *Shaping Femininity: Foundation Garments, the Body and Women in Early Modern England*, London and New York, Bloomsbury Visual Arts.

3   Boucher, J. (1995) *Deux* épouses *et reines à la fin du XVIe siècle: Louise de Lorraine et Marguerite de France*, Saint-Etienne, Université de Saint-Etienne.

4   Brantôme, P. de Bourdeille (1665) 'De La Reyne Marguerite' in *Memoires de Messire Pierre du Bourdeille, seigneur de Brantome contenans les vies des dames illustres de France de son temps*, Leiden, Jean Sambix le Jeune.

5   Burke, J. (2018) *The Italian Renaissance Nude*, New Haven, Yale University Press.

6   Büttner, N. (2023) *The Medici Series, Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard: An Illustrated Catalogue Raisonné of the Work of Peter Paul Rubens Based on the Material Assembled by the Late Ludwig Burchard: In Twenty-Nine Parts, Part XIV*, vol.1, London and Turnhout, Harvey Miller.

7   Bynum, C. Walker (1995) 'Why all the fuss about the body? A medievalist's perspective', *Critical Inquiry*, vol.22, pp.1–33.

8   Campbell, E. (ed.) (2006) *Growing Old in Early Modern Europe, Cultural Representations*, Aldershot, Ashgate.

9   Causse, L. (2021) 'Portrait présumé de Marguerite de Valois, Anonyme français, 16ème siècle', Reims, Musées de Reims.

10   Cotgrave, R. (1611) *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues,* London, Adam Islip.

11   Cottrell, R.D. (1970) *Brantôme: The Writer as Portraitist of His Age*, Paris, Librairie Droz.

12   Cousin, J. (1560) *Livre de perspectiue de Iehan Cousin senonois, maistre painctre à Paris*, Paris, Jehan le Royer.

13   Crawford, K. (2010) *The Sexual Culture of the French Renaissance*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

14   de Clippel, K. (2007) 'Defining beauty: Rubens' female nudes', *Netherlands Yearbook for History of Art / Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek,* vol.58, no.1, pp.110–37.

15   Dioscoride (1561) *Les commentaires de M. Pierre Andre Matthioli medecin senoys* (trans. M.J. des Moulins), Lyon, Pierre Haultin.

16   Dupleix, S. (1635) *Histoire de Henry le Grand IV du nom, Roy de France et de Nauarre,* Paris, Claude Sonnius.

17   Fletcher, H. (2020) 'Bodyweight and shape in early modern Germany *c*.1480–1620', Ph.D. Thesis, University of Cambridge.

18   Fletcher, H. (2021) '"Belly-worshippers and greed-paunches": Fatness and the belly in the Lutheran Reformation', *German History*, vol.39, no.2, pp.173–200.

19   Forth, C.E. (2019) *Fat: A Cultural History of the Stuff of Life*, London, Reaktion.

20   Galletti, S. (2003) 'L'appartement de Marie de Médicis au palais du Luxembourg' in P. Bassani Pacht (ed.) *Marie de Médicis: un gouvernement par les arts*, Paris, Somogy.

21   Galletti, S. (2010) 'Architecture and ceremonial in early modern France: The court of Maria de' Medici' in G. Calvi and I. Chabot (eds) *Moving Elites: Women and Cultural Transfers in the European Court System*, Florence, European University Institute.

22   Galletti, S. (2012) *Le Palais du Luxembourg de Marie de Médicis, 1611–1631* (trans. J. Noblet), Paris, Picard.

23   Galletti, S. (2014) 'Rubens' life of *Maria de' Medici*: Dissimulation and the politics of art in early seventeenth-century France', *Renaissance Quarterly,* vol.67, no.3, pp.878–916.

24   Gaultier, L. (1610) *Poutraict du sacre et couronnement de Marie de Medicis,* Paris, Jean Leclerc IV. British Museum, Mm,2.55, https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_Mm-2-55, accessed 21.9.2025.

25   Goldsmith, E.C. (2014) 'Fanning the "Judgment of Paris": The early modern beauty contest', *Seventeenth-Century French Studies*, vol.36, no.1, pp.38–52.

26   Gougenot, L. (1909) *L'exposition des tableaux du roi au Luxembourg en 1750* (trans. and ed. J. Laran), Paris, Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire de l'art français.

27   Guest, C. (2015) *The Understanding of Ornament in the Italian Renaissance*, Leiden, Brill.

28   Guyon, L. (1615) *Miroir de la beauté et santé corporelle, contenant toutes les difformités, maladies, tant internes qu'externes, qui peuvent survenir au corps humain*, vol.2, Lyon, Claude Morillon.

29   Hanley, S. (2006) 'The family, the state, and the law in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France: The political ideology of male right versus an early theory of natural rights', *The Journal of Modern History*, vol.78, no.2, pp.289–332.

30   Johnson, G.A. (1999) 'Imagining images of powerful women: Maria de' Medici's patronage of art and architecture' in C. Lawrence (ed.) *Women and Art in Early Modern Europe Patrons, Collectors, and Connoisseurs*, University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press.

31   Jouanna, J. and Allies, N. (2012) 'The legacy of the Hippocratic treatise *The Nature of Man*: The theory of the four humours' in P. van der Eijk (ed) *Greek Medicine from Hippocrates to Galen*, Leiden, Brill.

32   Kinew, S. (2020) "Sedlmayr's Mother-of-Pearl: Further Notes on Rubens and Flesh Color", *Selva: A Journal of the History of Art*, vol. 2, pp.88–96.

33   Klettke, C. and Mutet, S. (2014) 'Marguerite de Valois: Mise au jour d'un portrait authentique brouillé et enfoui par la construction des mythes', *Bulletin de La Société de l'Histoire Du Protestantisme Français (1903–2015)*, vol.160, pp.613–31.

34   l'Étoile, P. de (1741) *Journal du Regne de Henry IV, roi de France et de Navarre, avec des remarques historiques and politiques du chevalier*, vols 3–4, Haye, Frères Vaillant.

35   Liébault J. (1582) *Trois livres appartenant aux infirmitez et maladies des femmes*, Paris, Jacques du Puys.

36   McGowan, M. (1963) *L'Art du ballet de court en France*, Paris, Éditions du centre nationale de la recherche scientifique.

37   McGowan, M. (2015) 'Marguerite de Valois, Reine de Navarre (1553–1615): Patroness and performer', *Early Music History*, vol.34, pp.191–206.

38   McIlvenna, U. (2016) *Scandal and Reputation at the Court of Catherine de Medici*, Abingdon, Routledge.

39   Millen, R. and Wolf, R.E. (1989) *Heroic Deeds and Mystic Figures: A New Reading of Rubens'* Life of Maria de' Medici, Princeton, Princeton University Press.

40   Miller, W.I. (2009) *The Anatomy of Disgust*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press.

41   Paré, A. (1573) *Deux livres de chirurgie*, Paris, André Wechel.

42   Peterson, N. M. (2022) "'Il Me Prit Un Frisson Si Grand': Writing the Body in the Mémoires and Letters of Marguerite de Valois", *Early Modern Women*, vol.17, no.1, pp. 56–75.

43   Polachek, D.E. (2015) 'Brantôme's *Dames illustres*: Remembering Marguerite de Navarre' in D. LaGuardia and C. Yandell (eds) *Memory and Community in Sixteenth-Century France*, Aldershot, Ashgate.

44   Rothblum, E. and Solovay, S. (eds) (2009) *The Fat Studies Reader*, New York, New York University Press.

45   Rubens, P.P. (1773) *Théorie de la figure humaine, considérée dans ses principes* (trans. C.A. Jombert), Paris, Charles-Antoine Jombert.

46   Rubens, P.P., engraved by S. Le Clerc, bound by C. Norris (1725–75) *The Johnson Manuscript (manuscript transcript of the Rubens Pocketbook),* London, The Courtauld, MS.1978.PG.1, https://gallerycollections.courtauld.ac.uk/object-ms-1978-pg-1, accessed 21.9.2025.

47   Sammern, R. (2015) "Red, White and Black: Colors of Beauty, Tints of Health and Cosmetic Materials in Early Modern English Art Writing", *Early Science and Medicine*, vol. 20, nos. 4–6, pp. 397–427.

48   Scott, V. (2010) *Women on the Stage in Early Modern France: 1540–1750*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

49   Strings, S. (2019) *Fearing the Black Body: The Racial Origins of Fat Phobia,* New York, New York University Press.

50   Sutton, P.C., Wieseman, M.E. and van Hout, N. (2004) *Drawn by the Brush: Oil Sketches by Peter Paul Rubens*, New Haven, Yale University Press.

51   Sweet, L. (2014) 'Fantasy bodies, imagined pasts: A critical analysis of the "Rubenesque" fat body in contemporary culture', *Fat Studies*, vol.3, no.2, pp.130–42.

52   Tallemant des Réaux, G. (1834) *Les Historiettes de Tallemant Des Réaux: Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire du XVIIe siècle*, vol.1, Paris, A. Levavasseur.

53   Thielemann, A. (2012) 'Rubens' Traktat De imitation statuarum' in U. Rombach and P. Seiler (eds) *Imitation als Transformation: Theorie und Praxis der Antikennachahmung in der frühen Neuzeit,* Petersburg, Michael Imhof Verlag.

54   Thielemann, A. (2018) 'Stone to flesh: Rubens' treatise *De imitatione statuarum*' in C. van Wyhe (ed.) *Rubens and the Human Body,* Turnhout, Brepols.

55   Thøfner, M. (2018) 'Nursing paint: On Rubens, facture and breast milk' in C. van Wyhe (ed.) *Rubens and the Human Body,* Turnhout, Brepols.

56   Tommaseo, N. (ed.) (1838) *Relations des ambassadeurs Vénitiens sur les affaires de France Au XVIe siècle*, vol.1, Paris, Imprimerie Royale.

57   Toulalan, S. (2014) "'To[o] much eating stifles the child": Fat bodies and reproduction in early modern England', *Historical Research: The Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, vol.87, no.235, pp.65–93.

58   Tresfels, C. (2020) '"The most deformed woman in France": Marguerite de Valois's monstrous sexuality in the *Divorce satyrique*' in M. Bondestam (ed.) *Exceptional Bodies in Early Modern Culture*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press.

59   Valois, M. de (1618) *L'excellence des femmes, avec leur response à l'autheur de l'Alphabet, accompagnee d'un docte et subtil discours de la feu reyne Marguerite envoyé sur le mesme suject à l'autheur des 'Secrets moraux'*, Paris, Pierre Passy.

60   Valois, M. de (1628) *Les Mémoires de la roine Marguerite*, Paris, Charles Chappellain.

61   Valois, M. de (1892) *Memoirs of Marguerite de Valois, Queen of Navarre* (trans. V. Fane), London, J.C. Nimmo.

62   van Wyhe, C. (2018) 'Introduction: Getting under the skin of the imaged Body' in C. van Wyhe (ed.) *Rubens and the Human Body*, Turnhout, Brepols.

63   Various authors (early 17th century) Baluze 323, manuscript, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

64   Viennot, E. ([1993] 2005) *Marguerite de Valois: 'la reine Margot'*, Paris, Perrin.

ORIFICES:
SURGERY AND SODOMY IN EARLY MODERN ROME

Silvia De Renzi

Abstract

Orifices were prominent in early modern healing practices because they connected the inside of the body with the outside, for example, as channels through which to remove harmful matter. But they could become clogged, develop pathological growths or let out what should stay inside. The resulting inflamed veins, hernias or prolapses were the remit of surgeons, whose varied interventions and forms of education historians are reassessing. This article examines how orifices, in particular anuses and genitals, were depicted in a set of plates produced in Rome in the 1660s that was linked to surgeon Guglielmo Riva's teaching activities. While placing these pictures within pedagogical techniques and the changing visual tradition of surgical operations to which they belonged, I explore how the male trainee surgeons would have received the most graphic images. Drawing on studies of early modern visual culture and the history of male sociability, I reconstruct the overlapping meanings that the pictures could have acquired. I argue that their instructions for how to intervene on male bodies were framed by concerns about sodomy, which, while probably common, in early modern Rome was also closely policed, not least using surgeons' medico-legal advice. By contrast, the pictures also shared in the long-standing association of orifices with carnivalesque humour. While some visual strategies might have been adopted to minimise that, entertainment was integral to education. When contextualised both in their visual and medical tradition and the social and cultural frames in which they were received, these images of orifices enrich our understanding of premodern perceptions of bodies and their boundaries.

Biographical note

Silvia De Renzi is a historian of early modern medicine in the History Department of the Open University. Silvia is completing a monograph on physicians in Counter Reformation Rome and how they responded to the demands made of their knowledge, at the bedside and in society at large. She is the co-editor of *Pathology in Practice: Diseases and Dissections in Early Modern Europe* (Routledge 2018). She has published on the history of legal medicine, early modern hospitals and surgeons' education.

ORIFICES: SURGERY AND SODOMY IN EARLY MODERN ROME

Silvia De Renzi, The Open University

To early modern men and women health amounted to the unimpeded flow of the four humours – blood, black bile, yellow bile and phlegm – in their bodies. When blockages caused illness, the accumulated putrid matter had to be expelled through bloodletting, enemas and laxatives that prompted bowel movements, and emetics that induced vomiting. Learned physicians, ordinary healers and self-healing patients shared the ancient medical tenet and popular view that the body should excrete faeces, urine, sweat, blood and semen to keep healthy. When it did not, it had to be provoked. This model of the healthy body as flowing and open was central to the French writer and physician François Rabelais' irreverent accounts of excessive bodily functions: explosive ejections, gargantuan eating and copious sexual performance. It is debatable whether, as the Russian scholar Michael Bakhtin argued, Rabelais reflected popular perceptions, but time and again historians of medicine have characterised the early modern body as Rabelaisian (Duden, 1991; Pomata, 1998).

While Rabelais had an acute sense of the orifices through which the body functioned – mouths for eating, anuses for defecation, penises and vaginas for copulation – medical historians of early modern Europe have yet to engage fully with these body parts. An exception are the female genitalia which have been studied as part of larger histories of generation and midwifery, not least through analysis of their representation in anatomical tracts (Park, 2006). Literary scholars of the Renaissance have discussed orifices within explorations of the category of the obscene, sometimes including medical texts (Roberts, Peureux & Wajeman, 2011). More generally, orifices have attracted limited attention. This may be because these were surgeons' remit, and historians have just begun to reassess early modern surgery, not least the influential view that

surgeons were concerned only with the body surface as they treated wounds, fractures and external growths. By contrast, the story goes, physicians dealt with the inside of the body, prescribing diet and drugs to restore humoral balance. There is some truth in this account, but expertise on the body's interior and exterior overlapped to a greater extent than usually assumed. In this re-evaluation orifices acquire a new importance because these liminal parts connected inside and outside. Keeping them pervious was a surgeon's job, but their function mattered to health more generally.

This article focuses on visual representations of orifices as the vantage point from which to reconsider the boundaries of premodern bodies.

My main source is a set of printed tables of anatomical and surgical content produced in Rome in the 1660s and associated with the surgeon Giovanni Guglielmo Riva (more frequently referred to as Guglielmo Riva). No text accompanied Riva's set, as I shall call this source, but that difficulty turns into an opportunity to find fresh ways to contextualise the pictures. They include illustrations of various orifices: noses, ears and mouths and also anuses, vulvas and penises. I focus on the last ones and show that they were critical to surgeons' practice. My perspective is primarily that of a medical historian but inspired by the conversations that led up to this issue, I engage closely with questions of media, pictorial conventions and visual repertoires. Historians of science and medicine have devoted increasing attention to images as tools of knowledge and to the politics embedded in representations of nature and bodies, often in fruitful conversations with scholars of visual culture. Examples include studies in the history of anatomical and botanical illustrations, and recently, of early modern depictions of sick and pregnant bodies (Kusukawa, 2012; Stolberg, 2021; Whiteley, 2023). Disciplinary boundaries are frequently and productively crossed, and this article contributes to these exchanges in two ways. First, I bring surgical pictures to the table. In doing so, I broaden the genres of pictures that medical historians have analysed, drawing on work that has recently discussed surgical images as instrumental to the emergence of seventeenth-century empiricism (Bertoloni Meli, 2017a). Yet second, I establish a different perspective on surgical pictures and, subscribing to

the tenet that the reception of pictures is critical to the study of their significance, I investigate the audiences of the tables and the range of their reactions. I start with the most immediate audience of would-be Roman surgeons and young practitioners, for whom, I argue, the set provided a visual repertoire of the conditions they should be prepared to treat.

The varied content of the tables documents common surgical concerns and practices, which I discuss briefly before focusing on the representations of anuses and penises. My main question is how their intended audience would have perceived them. While meant to teach routine conditions and surgical techniques, could these stark depictions of male backsides and genitals have had other resonances for the young and entirely male audience they addressed? I am interested in exploring questions of decorum and decency and whether the more technical and pedagogical function of the set would or not have insulated these pictures from associations with, on the one hand, what at the time was called sodomy and, on the other, a tradition that saw body parts related to excreta as intrinsically comic.

Recent work has urged scholars to handle carefully the notion of 'indecent bodies', because it is easy to overlook the socially and culturally specific frames that shaped perceptions. Suggestive pictures of women's breasts, it has been argued, could have been chaste in the context of bridal portraiture (Talvacchia, 2023). But meanings also co-existed and overlapped; boundaries between the decent and the dishonest easily blurred, even for the same audience. This goes both ways. Studies of Renaissance depictions of female anatomy have shown that they worked at various levels as they were meant to instruct but were modelled after poses from the erotic tradition. Pictures created to instruct, titillate or entertain may acquire more than one function depending on their audiences and the settings of viewing (Talvacchia, 1999; Heyam, 2019; Sappol, 2024). Like texts, this is what makes pictures intrinsically unstable.

I highlight audiences, but evidence of reception is notoriously hard to come by. We lack direct evidence of reactions to Riva's tables, and my argument about their layers of meanings for would-be surgeons and young practitioners is to a certain extent speculative. I combine the approaches of medical, social and cultural

history to reconstruct frames within which the images could plausibly have been seen. I first introduce the set and discuss its uses and intended audiences in the context of surgical education in seventeenth-century Rome. While highlighting the semi-public and entirely male nature of the spaces where the images would have been displayed – hospitals and domestic teaching – I discuss the professional demands that close representations of anuses and penises would have met, for example, surgeons' interventions on haemorrhoids and the kidney stone. Both had a history that went back to ancient Greece, and I sketch the visual repertoire of operations to relieve them, from medieval imagery bordering on the humorous to remarkable watercolours in Renaissance manuscripts and the illustrations in printed surgical books of the early seventeenth century. Naked penises and anuses were abundantly on display in this tradition and Riva's pictures belonged to it.

Important as this tradition is to make sense of Riva's pictures, it tells us little of their reception by young men in early modern Rome. To understand this, I turn to the social and cultural history of the city and highlight a process with which they would have been familiar: the criminalization of sodomy and, at the same time, its widespread practice. I draw on recent studies of what we now call homosexuality in early modern Rome to suggest that when its would-be surgeons looked at the graphic close-ups of anuses or the pictures of men inserting probes in their penises, they were alerted to the currency of sodomy in satirical parlance, visual culture and everyday life (for terminology, see Ferguson, 2019). On the one hand, research is revealing the complex history of sexual practices in a harshly repressive society – unheard voices are now recaptured and the frequency of violence reconstructed (Baldassari, 2005; Ferguson, 2016). On the other, a wealth of studies has amply documented the increasing demand since the sixteenth century for erotic imagery in a variety of media and objects (Matthews-Grieco, 2010). Even as the Counter Reformation imposed strict censorship, licentious or suggestive images continued to be produced for private consumption, while religious art deliberately played with eroticism (Zapperi, 1994; Mormando, 2023). Naked male bodies became more ambiguous, and same-sex love was now represented

by rather overt symbols, but images hinting at sodomy continued to have currency (Von Lates, 1995). The production of homoerotic representations of male rears surged as they acquired multiple meanings (Turner, 2017; Rubin, 2018). Young Roman men shared in these subtle dynamics, and I present evidence of complex attitudes. There is nothing titillating or erotic in Riva's pictures, but I contend that perceptions of sex and sodomy would still have informed their reception. A more specific link between surgery and sodomy was also shaping the viewing by would-be surgeons in Rome, whose competence, as I discuss, included inspecting anuses as expert witnesses in trials of alleged rape.

There is a final dimension that I aim to examine while mapping the ambiguity and instability of these apparently simple pictures. By the eighteenth century, the plates were circulating more widely across Europe, catering for a new audience, including the leading anatomist Albrecht von Haller. He defined some of Riva's images as 'jocular'. This is so far the sole, late and yet striking evidence of their reception, and the question arises as to whether images of men with objects protruding from their anuses or manipulating their penises might have played deliberately with a grotesque and humorous quality that historians often associate with Renaissance representations of low bodily functions (Persels & Ganim, 2004). Were they meant to amuse as they instructed? I examine how surgical depictions could appear comic and whether measures might have been taken to reduce that potential.

Picturing surgical practice

Riva's plates survive in a handful of impressions in European libraries, but more may exist (perhaps loose) that have yet to be identified. The size of a folio, they are almost always bound with the better-known engravings after the anatomical drawings of the leading Baroque artist Pietro da Cortona, and the connection between the two sets of images is an intricate episode in the history of Roman anatomical knowledge (Duhme, 1980). But while Cortona's tables are a remarkable take on Andreas Vesalius' model for anatomical illustrations (Roberts & Tomlinson, 1992, pp.272–9), the other series – Riva's set – encompasses a less obvious mix of anatomical, pathological and surgical

images. Details of the production of these copperplate engravings remain obscure, but association with Riva is proven by his portrait at the outset and explicatory notes on two tables.[1]

Riva was active in Rome between the 1640s and 1660s, a respected surgeon and anatomist with an excellent reputation across Europe (Savio 1968; De Renzi, 2026). He never held a university position but mentored generations of surgeons and physicians in Rome's diverse venues of medical and surgical education. Among his students were young men starting on the diverse career paths opened by surgical expertise. Surgeons still learnt through an apprenticeship with a master to treat wounds, fractures, dislocations, bumps and growths of various kinds. Hospital practice complemented a master's instructions and at the Hospital of Santa Maria della Consolazione, where, like many peers, Riva had trained on the job, he taught and displayed anatomical images and preparations from his own dissections (Marinucci, 1788; Conforti & De Renzi, 2008; Donato, 2022). But surgery was also one of the branches of the ancient medical tradition and, following a three-year course, men could graduate in surgery in universities across Italy, including in Rome (Savoia, 2019). Catering for these students, Riva held an 'academy' in his home where young physicians and surgeons met with their seniors to discuss complex anatomical topics. This kind of meeting followed the thriving practice of learned academies that characterised male sociability in Rome (Campanelli, Petteruti Pellegrino & Russo, 2020). Riva's pupils were all young men, who attended the hospital, his home, or both to gain either a licence to practise as ordinary surgeons, or a degree that opened more ambitious professional opportunities.

Of the 37 tables in Riva's set a few are sophisticated engravings of his cutting-edge anatomical investigations. They illustrated his contributions to *Miscellanea curiosa medico-physica Academiae Naturae Curiosorum*, one of the most illustrious learned periodicals of the day, and were his only publications. The majority however are of cruder quality, presented in a distinctive layout of nine panels arranged in three rows, and mainly of basic anatomical or surgical content. Representations of organs,

1   Further research may establish if they are in fact etchings.

Figure 6.1: Riva's set – salient among the abdominal organs on display here are the pregnant womb on the top row and the male urogenital system on the middle and bottom rows. (Courtesy of the University Library Erlangen-Nürnberg, 2 TREW.C 710, fol.9r)

Figure 6.2: Riva's set – setting fractures and dislocations were among surgeons' most common interventions. (Courtesy of the University Library Erlangen-Nürnberg, 2 TREW.C 710, fol.16r)

especially in the abdomen (Fig. 6.1), are complemented by pictures of procedures ranging from treating wounds and setting fractures (Fig. 6.2) to the complex cutting for the stone and even a caesarean section.

But the plates also include depictions of unusual bodies, deformed from birth or by illnesses. The con-joined twins (Fig. 6.3) testify to the known interest in what were called monstrous bodies (see Katritzky in this volume), but greater attention is given to the no less striking effects of ordinary growths and tumours that stretched and distended the body, and to prolapses (Fig. 6.4).

A few of the pictures are hard to decipher and remain enigmatic, which invites further investigation into co-existing visual conventions in the set. No text accompanies these tables, but it has been suggested that the extant plates are the proofs of illustrations for a book that Riva had planned to write – manuscripts

are mentioned in his postmortem inventory – but never published (Capparoni, 1934).[2] By contrast, based on Rome's thriving print culture and successful print-making industry, I have suggested elsewhere that what we now leaf through in bound volumes are the remains of a print run of tables that were meant to be used outside books, as pedagogical props for Riva's teaching. I have proposed that they were hung or handed round to show the range of conditions that surgeons of different status should have been prepared to treat. Complementing the unillustrated textbooks available to Roman surgeons, they would have prompted Riva's verbal explanations (De Renzi, 2026).

---

2   The inventory of Riva's possession is in Archivio di Stato di Roma (ASR), *Trenta Notai Capitolini*, Uff. XVIII, vol. 465 (Pacichelli P. Ant. Instrumentorum 4 pars, 1677), non-consecutive pagination (hereafter: ASR, Inventory). A partial transcription is in Marinucci (1788).

Figure 6.3: Riva's set – the conjoined twins, the three-eyed bull and the two-headed chicken are instances of what at the time were understood as monsters. (Courtesy of the University Library Erlangen-Nürnberg, 2 TREW.C 710, fol.26r).

Figure 6.4: Riva's set – some of panels show exceptional cases, but swellings and prolapses were frequent conditions that commonly deformed bodies. (Courtesy of the University Library Erlangen-Nürnberg, 2 TREW.C 710, fol.28r)

The set includes visual evidence that the plates hung in Riva's home. It opens with the depiction of a room in his apartment (Fig. 6.5). Riva's portrait as an anatomist (at the dissecting table, lancet in hand and ready to cut open a sheep) is prominent on the wall but in the foreground two dwarves are displayed flanking a statue which, on a closer look, reveals itself to be of a hermaphrodite. Equally arresting are the several paintings (or framed prints) hanging on the wall. Two at the top in a triangular and a rectangular frame are in the set itself. An exemplar of the set described in the 1930s and now lost included the representation of another room in Riva's house whose walls were decorated with an even more comprehensive display of the tables in the set (Capparoni, 1934). These carefully constructed images testify to Riva's professional pride and appetite for images. He adorned his house with art and his post-mortem inventory lists paintings of religious, non-reli-gious and anatomical subjects on display throughout his house, including the bizarre festoon that appears in Fig. 6.5 with names of physicians and philosophers whose first name was Guglielmo (for example, William Harvey) (ASR, Inventory, fols 152r–155v; 180v.). Possessing art was common across the social spectrum in seventeenth-century Rome as documented in the inventories of wealthy and modest people, not least ordinary surgeons (Ago, 2006; Cesarini, 2011).

Here it is important to note that those attending Riva's domestic 'academy' would have entered a richly decorated space, where paintings of established genres that would have had to conform to Counter Reformation rules of decorum jostled for attention with anatomical and pathological subjects that in many ways breached it. We know little about the attendees' conduct in these private spaces. We may assume that the house of an influential surgeon and anatomist called for

Figure 6.5: Riva's set – beside showing the various framed pictures, the plate provides an intriguing perspective onto the adjacent spaces to the room in Riva's house. (Courtesy of the University Library Erlangen-Nürnberg, 2 TREW.C 710, fol.2r)

comical, but overall, these are bizarre representations of respectable orifices, especially when compared with the other panels on the plate. Unquestionably striking are the man inserting a catheter into his penis, the woman with a dilatated vulva ejecting matter, the two men (in puzzling mirror images) introducing a tube into their anus, and the man in the middle, possibly holding his penis while a large pan-like object protrudes from his bottom. Despite the serenity of the completely naked and non-descript people, these are shameful body parts shown in undignified positions.

Pictures of anuses and penises are scattered through the tables, documenting the various ways in which they were central to surgical practice. For example, when urine was retained, surgeons would intervene with a catheter similar to the one shown (Fig. 6.6); if the obstruction was the result of a bladder stone, they could

Figure 6.6: Riva's set – despite their diversity, all the panels on this plate represent orifices. (Courtesy of the University Library Erlangen-Nürnberg, 2 TREW.C 710, fol.20r)

restraint, but medical students were known for inappropriate behaviour at anatomical dissections. Further, the images may also have circulated among surgeon trainees in hospital wards, entering places that, despite strict norms, were noisy, disorderly and conducive to roguish behaviour. I shall come back to these venues.

Thinking about young men as the primary audience of the tables makes the graphic representations of orifices especially interesting (Fig. 6.6). Panels in the top row represent blood gushing out of a nose and mouth. Whether they depicted salutary or pathological bleeding is hard to know: the syringe and small concretions on the right-hand side are enigmatic. Ears are shown as pervious – the lines may represent sound. Even more bizarre is the picture at the centre of the middle row that shows an even greater emission – from the nose – like a fountain filling small vessels. Its oddity is almost

perform one of their most complicated interventions, the cutting of the stone. This involved probing it by inserting a finger in the rectum and then remove it with an incision in the perineum (McVaugh, 2006) (Fig. 6.7, top row). More routinely, enemas to facilitate evacuations were given through the anus which was also used for fumigations that extended to men a therapy usually applied to women's genitalia (Fig. 6.7, bottom row). Healthy vapours could go in, but the slackening of ligaments inside the body or swelling led to protrusions from anuses and vulvas, haemorrhoids, for example, or prolapses of the womb. In these cases, orifices were the locus of pathology as much as of treatment, usually through manual interventions to excise or reposition the parts. Orifices could also become blocked, leading to dangerous accumulations, and children may be born without orifices or with too many: surgeons would operate on them (for example, Fabricius Hildanus, 1682, p.54).

Orifices connected the inside and the outside of the body and were critical to health and healing but also the site of the extraordinary. In one of his published observations, Riva discussed the case of a woman who expelled the bones of a foetus from her anus after a prolonged pregnancy (Fig. 6.7, bottom row). Following traumatic events or from birth, body parts could also bulge out and fulfil the function of orifices, like the bowels (Fig. 6.8) described in the work of German surgeons Wilhelm Fabricius Hildanus. On the other hand,

Figure 6.7: Riva's set – the plate includes images of disparate content; panels on the top row (right- and left-hand side) show the cutting of the stone; at the centre of the middle row is a caesarean section; on the bottom row are a male fumigation and the extraordinary expulsion of foetal bones from a woman's anus. (Courtesy of the University Library Erlangen-Nürnberg, 2 TREW.C 710, fol.10r)

Figure 6.8: Wilhelm Fabricius Hildanus, *Opera observationum et curationum medico-chirurgicarum, quae extant omnia*, Frankfurt, J. L. Dufour, 1682, p.55. Note the exposed bowels protruding from the man's side and expelling faecal matter. (Source: Internet Archive)

fistulae – small canals – could open inside the body, creating unnatural and dangerous connections between areas: pathological orifices, one may say (McVaugh, 2012).

Some of these conditions were rare, others routine and extensively discussed in surgical textbooks. One of the most successful was authored by the prominent anatomist and surgeon Girolamo Fabrizi D'Acquapendente, who was active in Padua in the early seventeenth century. To explain the stone, haemorrhoids, fistulae and prolapses, he described anuses, penises and female genitalia, but no pictures were included until a later edition and then only of instruments. In providing illustrations, Riva's tables helped students visualise body parts they read about in their textbooks and that they would frequently encounter in their practice.

Mapping a visual repertoire

Despite the lack of pictures in late Renaissance surgical handbooks, interventions on these body parts had been illustrated before. Historians have analysed the images in medieval manuscripts of surgery, of which some of the most famous are those accompanying the work on anal fistulae by fourteenth-century English surgeon John of Arderne (Jones, 2002) (Fig. 6.9).

An extraordinary parchment roll containing another work by Arderne is illustrated by more than a hundred colourful pictures, many of which show small figures carrying out a range of interventions on anuses and penises, with men bending, crouching, or otherwise exposing their rears and genitals (Arderne, 2014) (Figs. 6.10 and 6.11).

In terms of content, these graphic images can be compared to the watercolours in a sixteenth-century manuscript of Venetian origins, probably by an artist keen to display his skills and copying from printed books (Jones, 1998). The pictures are wide-ranging in

Figure 6.9: Portrait of John Arderne probing a fistula in a patient's backside. This early fifteenth-century manuscript includes his *Practica de fistula in ano*, BL Sloane MS 2002, fol.24v. (© British Library Board, Sloane 2002, fol.24v)

Figure 6.10: Despite the elegant garment and hat, the man is shown holding his penis to illustrate a common urinary condition. John Arderne, *De arte phisicali et de cirurgia*, Manuscript X 188, National Library of Sweden, digitised by the National Library of Congress. (Photo: National Library of Sweden, World Digital Library)

Figure 6.11: A practitioner kneeling in front of a fully dressed patient is inserting a catheter in his penis, probably to remove retained urine. John Arderne, *De arte phisicali et de cirurgia*, Manuscript X 188, National Library of Sweden, digitised by the National Library of Congress. (Photo: National Library of Sweden, World Digital Library)

subject and, within those of surgical topics, depictions of operations on the male body stand out. Figures 6.12 and 6.13 show 'el modo de serengar' (syringing) and 'la via de cavar la piera' (cutting the stone).[3] In the former, the man whose urine is released stands with trousers pulled down as the crouching surgeon manipulates his penis; on the left-hand side, another man holds his genitals inside his trousers, perhaps struggling with discomfort before the operation. Despite the lack of any background, the layout hints at the male relationships that the treatment created. As to the stone, while the

---

3   My thanks to Peter Jones for alerting me to this manuscript and for his inspiring comments on other surgical images.

Figure 6.12: A surgeon is syringing urine out of a man's penis. Trousers are dropped and the genitals are fully displayed. *c.*1550. British Museum, 1928,0310.94.1–205, fol. 19v. (© The Trustees of the British Museum, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)

Figure 6.13: A surgeon is removing kidney stones from a patient who is kept in position by a rope and attendants *c.*1550. British Museum, 1928,0310.94.1–205, fol.18r. (© The Trustees of the British Museum, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)

Figure 6.14: Picture of a man suffering from a large umbilical hernia. The contrast between his respectable posture and the flesh dangling from the truss is arresting. Wilhelm Fabricius Hildanus *Opera observationum et curationum medico-chirurgicarum, quae extant omnia*, Frankfurt, J. L. Dufour, 1682, p.586. (Source: Internet Archive)

Figure 6.15: The table depicts various conditions affecting the male body and operations carried out to relieve symptoms and remove causes. Johannes Scultetus, *Armamentarium Chirurgicum Bipartitum*, Frankfurt, Görling, 1666, plate XL, after p.90. The truncated bodies obscure the sense of surgery as social interactions that the manuscript tradition conveyed, also because the operations are represented as carried out by free-floating hands rather than surgeons. Other plates in the book however include detailed settings.

technique is relatively standard, the man with legs lifted by a rope and wide apart to reveal the anus is arresting.

Studies of the history of surgical pictures have revealed a complex use of media, not least the continuing production of illustrated manuscripts (Jones, 2020; Henderson, 2021). More research will highlight local developments, but it is safe to say that the varied visual repertoire developed in manuscripts was not replicated in the printed textbooks that increasingly met Italian surgeons' demands for instruction. When illustrated at all, these comprised pictures of instruments, of a few operations or of bloodletting, but no exposed orifices (Lincoln, 2001; Savoia, 2021).

Whether or not Riva and his draughtsman were aware of the earlier manuscript tradition is hard to say, but by the time the set was produced to help Roman surgeons visualise the conditions discussed in text-

books, a new genre of medical writing popular in northern Europe was increasingly incorporating a rich visual apparatus. German surgeons such as Fabricius Hildanus and Johannes Scultetus printed illustrated collections of their surgical observations to showcase their experience. Multiple editions and translations made their works important vehicles for the circulation of surgical knowledge, following the popular trend of publishing accounts of observations in medicine. Their volumes include pictures of instruments, wounds and fractures, and also of tumours and hernias, especially if unusual by size or location, testimony to growing interest in the management of these conditions (Bertoloni Meli, 2017b; Hausse, 2024). In one example a purpose-made truss supports the man's large hernia (Fig. 6.14). Al-
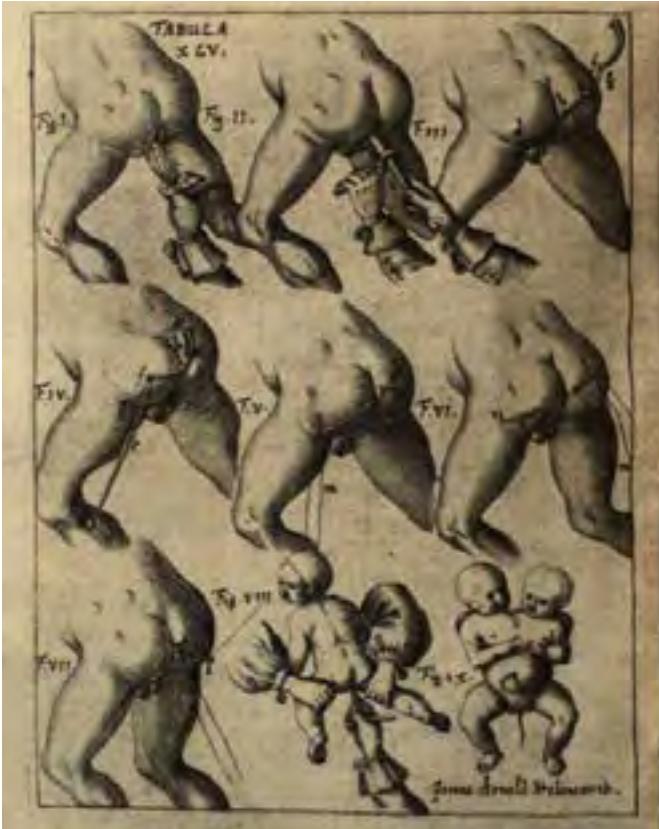
Figure 6.16: The table portrays a series of surgical interventions carried out through the anus. Johannes Scultetus *Armamentarium Chirurgicum Bipartitum*, Frankfurt, Görling, 1666, plate XLV, after p.106.

Figure 6.17: Riva's set – the cut-out middle row from one of the plates shows various body parts protruding from the anus and female genitals. (Courtesy of the University Library Erlangen-Nürnberg, 2 TREW.C 710, fol.25r).

though the piece of flesh dangling out would have been hidden under the clothes, the image is striking. Another plate assembles pictures of operations on the scrotum, to open obstructed penises to release urine, including following the pox, and to cut for the stone (Fig. 6.15).

Anuses are also graphically displayed on the plate that illustrates interventions on fistulae and haemorrhoids, but also (more distressingly) on a baby born with a closed anus, and on dead conjoined twins (Fig. 6.16). Visualising these parts was critical to instructing readers about fiddly and risky interventions.

When returning from this survey to look again at Riva's plates, we appreciate the genre to which they mostly belonged. For example, on display from left to right in Figure 6.17 are probably a rectal prolapse, an unusual vulva or a vaginal prolapse, and haemorrhoids.

In content, these pictures are similar to Scultetus', but there are differences in the presentation. The two men, in mirror images (as in Fig. 6.6), are bent, with their heads on a pillow, and dressed; to show the part, they lower their clothes which wrap around their legs.

In contrast to Scultetus' disembodied bottoms, these parts belong to entire bodies. Yet we do not see faces and there is nothing that identifies these men or the woman. Her legs are wide apart like in the pose of many anatomical pictures of the female genitals, but she is dressed, reclining on a chair with her head on a pillow. Remarkably, her face is veiled, which, unique in the set, hints at the need to separate the person from her most undignified body parts.

Showing anuses and genitals was necessary for education and to share surgical knowledge. But these were also close-ups of body parts associated with sex and excretion, thus in many ways indecent. The didactic purpose established a 'way of seeing' that reduced the impropriety of the depictions, and these belonged to a repertoire of technical pictures that grew and diversified over the centuries.[4] Riva's tables may have been used to illustrate oral lectures and circulated without a printed text. In this they were similar to the prints on diverse subjects (from religious to erotic) that Roman entrepreneurial printers had churned out since the early Renaissance (Bury, 2001; Griffiths, 2016). The question remains: how did the young men looking at these pictures perceive them? While training to become surgeons, they were also embedded in a world where references to sexual practices based on anuses and penises were the stuff of slander and sodomy was criminalised yet common. Living in one of the main centres

---

4   I am adapting John Berger's term, used in his influential documentary *Ways of Seeing*, originally broadcast by the BBC in 1972.

Figure 6.18: Giovanni Lanfranco, *Giovane nudo sul letto con gatto*, *c*.1620. Oil on canvas. Private collection. (Photo: VTR / Alamy Stock Photo)

of art production in early modern Europe, these young men might also have been familiar with explicit and symbolic representations of male sexuality, which, having gained currency in sixteenth-century high art, had been censored but not erased by the Roman Catholic authorities. An example is the suggestive representation of a young man by Giovanni Lanfranco (Cappelletti & Lemoine, 2014) (Fig. 6.18).

There is nothing remotely erotic in Riva's rather crude pictures of anuses and penises, and if anything, they quell desire. The contrast could not be stronger with Lanfranco's painting where the body's torsion and the sheet hide the genitals, but the scene and the sly expression directed to the viewer openly evoke sexual availability. Yet could Riva's pictures have been viewed as prurient, indecent or ridiculous because of their potential association with outlawed sexual behaviour? To address this question, the following section will engage more closely with surgery and sexual politics in seventeenth-century Rome.

'Obscene' parts, sinful practices

One of the conditions most vividly on display in Riva's pictures were haemorrhoids. Figure 6.17 shows swollen veins protruding from the anus – the kind surgical manuals compared to grapes (Fabrici D' Acquapendente, 1671, p.299). In Figure 6.4 (bottom right) tools for their treatment are next to a man almost wrapped around a rack to show the bulge in his rear. Haemorrhoids were a standard topic in the surgical tradition but had a twofold nature. Recurring bleeding from anal veins was considered a natural way to be rid of superfluous blood. This was the vessels' function, and bleeding was especially advantageous to men, who did not have the benefit of menstruation. If bleeding did not occur spontaneously, leeches could be applied to the anus. On the other hand, the flow could be excessive, or the vessels inflamed and even become tumorous. In these cases, they had to be treated with drugs or surgically. While useful, then, piles were painful and potentially harmful (Pomata, 2001; Smith, 2011).

Various procedures were available to treat piles, from burning them with hot instruments inserted through the anus to extracting and cutting the vessels or applying corrosive powder. Some techniques went back to Hippocrates and while assessing the merits of each in his popular textbook, D'Acquapendente advised that these were among the body's most sensitive parts. He defined them as 'obscene' (*oscene*) but still recommended that practitioners inspect them carefully in men and women. Only close examination could ensure the appropriate treatment. Unsurprisingly, German surgeon Scultetus called the genitals 'obscene parts' (Fabrici D'Acquapendente, 1671, pp.291–304, 301; Scultetus, 1666, p.110).

D'Acquapendente's discussion of haemorrhoids was the longest in his broader examination of the multiple pathologies involving the anal orifice (1671, pp.286–304). He taught that while the expulsion of faeces and bad blood is salutary, other bits of body can protrude harmfully. His analysis reveals how common it was for surgeons to inspect and touch patients' anuses. From the ordinary application of leeches and the use of sponges imbibed with medicaments to the most complex surgical interventions to treat piles, the prolapse of the rectum and anal fistulae, surgeons frequently manipulated these 'obscene parts'. D'Acquapendente's aim was strictly medical, and he paid attention to the risks associated with some operations, for example, perforating the bowels. He included no explicit references to other uses of these parts, even when discussing condylomas (genital warts) and other venereal conditions. Yet, in two places the potential overlap with sexual practices seems to surface. Explaining that he disliked using the speculum to assess anal ulcers, D'Acquapendente wrote: 'if you have to introduce something inside the anus, then you can more pleasantly insert your index [finger] with which you can more exquisitely feel not only the ulcer but also the hardness and swelling' (1671, p.288; author's translation). 'Pleasantly' refers to fingers that are gentler than an instrument but like the reference to an exquisite feel the expression is simultaneously surgical and sexual. Reporting the case of a cleric who, tormented by dry faeces, had inserted a pointed stick into his anus, lethally ripping his bowels, D'Acqua-

pendente noted that the man had not mentioned the procedure and was therefore treated for something else. He died and only at the dissection was the cause of his death ascertained (p.291). The cleric had not revealed his act of self-healing, perhaps ashamed that it could be construed as evidence of a sexual act.

The stick was extreme but self-administering an enema was more common and the men inserting objects in their anus in Figure 6.6 may have just done that. Purpose-built clysters are discussed in the surgical literature, and, as instrument for uterine enemas, they offered a solution to preserving female patients' decorum (Fabricius Hildanus, 1682, pp.689–90; Scultetus, 1666, p.103). In Figure 6.19 a man naked bar a period hat and legs wide apart is shown as concentrating on this eminently private act. There is an intimate quality here that Riva's generic pictures lack; yet they all display men manipulating their anuses.

Would-be surgeons were encouraged to read Fabrici D'Acquapendente's tract, but how they would have responded to the book's subtle references to anal penetration that could be both sensitive and shameful is difficult to say. Equally, we have no direct evidence of their responses to the explicit pictures in Riva's tables. But it is possible to surmise their reactions, starting with evidence of their conduct in one of the places where the pictures were probably displayed. Despite being sites of healing, as well as having religious and pedagogical purposes, the Roman hospitals where the young men trained were rather raucous and disorderly. Modesty was expected but often breached. The seventeenth-century rules of the hospital where Riva trained and taught list the punishments for nurses and young trainees. Being noisy, playing games and using 'dishonest words' were met with a ban from communal meals. Dismissal came for those who swore, stole, brought dishonest women to the wards or committed 'lascivious acts on women and sick young boys' (*Regole per il buon governo*, 1686, pp.71–3). Sex took place in the hospital, possibly also violently, and it included male sodomy. In an environment where 'dishonest words' and sexual acts mixed with care and cure, surgical pictures of anuses could have triggered salacious and irreverent comments from the young trainees. The

Figure 6.19: A man is shown self-administering a clyster. Johannes Scultetus *Armamentarium Chirurgicum Bipartitum*, Frankfurt, Görling, 1666, plate LXIV after p.104.

pictures may have acquired a meaning besides the pedagogical because anal sex was criminalised but far from suppressed.

The study of early modern 'homosexuality' is thriving and research on Rome has painted an especially complex picture. Sodomy was a sinful practice 'contra naturam', punishable by death. Judicial records contain vivid but unreliable depictions of male sexual encounters in which consensual acts may have been presented as violent or mercenary. Defendants were mostly from the lower ranks, and male prostitution was probably widespread. Legal cases included disturbing violent acts on very young children. These may have been exceptional, though the reference to sex performed on young hospital patients suggests that what we may now call abuse was not unusual. At the same time, despite the prosecution, consensual same-sex relationships were experienced across the city and scholarship is recapturing the history of long-lost social relations (Baldassari, 2005; Ferguson, 2016).

Culturally, references to male sodomy had been part and parcel of political satire. In sixteenth-century Rome, Pasquinate poems – with wide circulation and lampooning figures of authority – were explicit about sodomy in the papal curia (Marucci, Marzo & Romano, 1983). Such accusations remained common in seventeenth-century rivalry, for example among painters, that could end up in court. Defamatory jokes were routine (Von Lates, 1995). Yet, French libertines who acknowledged more or less openly their 'homosexuality' as part of their moral and religious irreverence were welcomed in Rome (Turner, 2003; Ferguson, 2019). Some of these paradoxes were replicated in the visual arts, where the censorship imposed after the Council of Trent on 'dishonest' pictures coexisted with the production of imagery suffused with eroticism. Historians have highlighted the extraordinary presence of male buttocks in Renaissance high art in a process of 'canonization and sexualisation' (Rubin, 2018, p.43; Turner, 2017). Later, naked bottoms as cues to homoeroticism were replaced by allusions and symbols. Take Caravaggio's *Sick Bacchus* (*c*.1595, Borghese Gallery, Rome): viewers would probably have appreciated the peaches in the foreground in the context of the 'anal humour' popular at the time (Von Lates, 1995, p.58; also see Agus, 2022). Demand for licentious images in a variety of media continued and exposed male buttocks still featured in representations of bawdy ceremonies integral to the sociability of young men in Rome. Remarkably, in these representations men were shown with objects protruding from their rears (Von Lates, 1995, p.58; on sexual symbols in caricatures, Cheng, 2024).

The diffuse and diverse presence of male sodomy in Roman society and culture supports the hypothesis that young men training to be surgeons would have approached Riva's pictures of anuses and penises in multiple ways. Two more specific pieces of evidence endorse this further. The first takes us into a pedagogical setting, and a striking episode of the mid-sixteenth century, when masked students held a mock lecture 'on Priapo and the anus' in a hall of the Roman University La Sapienza, supposedly followed by a practical session. This may have been a carnivalesque prank, but allegedly, students frequently gathered to discuss masturbation and whether 'res sodomiticae' were to be preferred to sex with women (Bertolotti, 1883). Historians have commented on the obscene jokes that accompanied anatomical demonstrations, also held at Carnival (Park,

2006, pp.216–7; but see Klestinec, 2011, pp.111–23). This episode documents that sexual bantering and homoerotic practice were components of young men's camaraderie. It is known that this continued through the centuries and was still current among nineteenth-century medical students (Sappol, 2002).

The second piece of evidence supporting the hypothesis that young surgeons could associate Riva's pictures of anal orifices with sodomy comes from a very different perspective. Besides being the subject of pranks, or of experiences they may have had, sodomy was a professional concern, because surgeons were involved in its policing. Following a well-established tradition, in legal cases of alleged sexual violence, surgeons were asked to act as expert witnesses and assess the victim's body. Trial records contain harrowing descriptions of the damage they found, especially on children (e.g., Baldassari, 2005, p.38). One of the challenges, however, was to rule out pathologies that could provide alternative explanations. In his comprehensive survey of legal medicine, the preeminent Roman physician Paolo Zacchia devoted a short chapter to the rape of young boys and listed the signs to consider. Anal lesions indicated recent violence, relaxation and changes in the anus suggested repeated episodes; fleshy growths known as *cristae* (cockscombs) originated in frequent intercourse. These resembled large figs and, Zacchia explained, physicians often mistook them for inflamed haemorrhoids. Although anal conditions might have various causes, Zacchia was confident that physicians could produce reliable testimony in cases of boys' rape. Building experience in close examination of the part would have helped (Zacchia, 1661, pp.305–6; Rousseau, 2008).

Looking again at the rears in Riva's plates (Fig. 6.17), we can now appreciate that they could have been used to discuss the possible confusion between haemorrhoids and the signs of repeated or violent intercourse that Zacchia had highlighted. The images could have prompted a lesson on the skills required of a surgeon as expert witness.

So far, I have suggested some of the frames within which Roman would-be surgeons might have received the pictures of anal orifices in Riva's surgical plates. While illustrating common conditions like haemor-

rhoids that they should learn to treat, they also exhibited body parts that these young men would have easily associated with sinful sexual practices. Sodomy was in their mind as a common term of scorn, the stuff of pranks and satire, and a practice severely chastised and yet probably frequently encountered. Moreover, images of anuses were integral to surgical instructions also because these practitioners were associated with the prosecution of sodomy. Yet, as pedagogical tools that might have suggested indecency, these pictures might also have triggered laughter, as I shall explore next.

'Surgical and jocular'

Riva's plates had a second life when they entered European libraries through the market in collectable prints. At the start of the eighteenth century, Hans Sloane, physician, bibliophile and founder of the British Museum, acquired the plates, as did his counterpart in the German lands, Christoph Jacob Trew. Another exemplar of the set was in Göttingen, a prestigious centre of medical knowledge, where the anatomist Albrecht von Haller saw it. In his influential *Bibliotheca Anatomica*, he described the set and grouped the depictions of unusual bodies such as the conjoined twins, but also of the heart and kidney vessels in the category of 'anatomical'. He noted that many pictures were surgical and some jocular, but did not elaborate further (Haller, 1774, p.579). We are left wondering which pictures he found humorous, perhaps some of the surgical too. Was one the man with the very lumpy nose in Figure 6.4 or, next to that, the woman with a serious expression and polyps dangling from her nose, or the man with a massive goitre? Disfigured by disease, these bodies may have triggered compassion, but also, in ways that we find now repulsive, amusement.

While imposing the categories of an eighteenth-century anatomist, von Haller might have picked upon a theme that is announced in the depiction of one of the rooms in Riva's house that often opens the set (Fig. 6.5). The plate captures Riva's interest in curious bodies but does so by mixing the seriousness of the pictures on the walls – we can imagine polite conversations about the two-headed animals and one-legged baby – with the playfulness of the scene in the foreground. Standing on stools, the fancily dressed dwarves look at

each other over the sculpture of the sleeping hermaphrodite which is supported by a pedestal formed of monstrous fish.[5] They all represent the oddity of nature that had traditionally stirred wonder. But the dwarves' very long noses and funny spectacles are caricatural and would likely have triggered laughter. Dwarves were coveted in early modern courts and used and depicted as vehicles of humour at a time when caricatures were becoming a popular genre (Cheng, 2024). Dwarves observing a hermaphrodite, whose multiple orifices titillated contemporaries, signalled a comical undertone, which von Haller perhaps recognised.

Surgical pictures that focused on male and female orifices could also have been seen as humorous because exposing body parts associated with sex and excrements had been a source of fun and subversiveness since the Middle Ages (Camille, 1992; Hartnell, 2019). Humour changes, and von Haller's laughter was not that of medieval jesters, but there may have been some continuity. As I take his cue and assess the comical potential of surgical pictures of backsides, I examine composition as well as content. In Riva's plates orifices are exposed as bodies take indecorous positions: reclined with legs wide apart, crouching or bent over (Figs. 6.4 and 6.17). These pictures include few props: cushions to support the men and women; modest plinths, perhaps beds, on which they are set, but also the very odd pole that resembles a pillory (Fig. 6.4). No background anchors these naked bodies to any recognisable space, and they are anonymous. This may have enhanced clarity in these didactic images, but was the lack of context meant to reduce the potential ridicule or did it in fact increase it? Comparing these pictures with a contemporary Dutch image of a surgical case allows me to explore this alternative.

The posthumous collection of surgical observations by Dutch surgeon Job van Meek'ren followed in the tradition started by Fabricius Hildanus earlier in the century. It included cases from his practice, some vividly illustrated with pictures of enormous hernias, vastly distended abdomens, and prolapsed wombs. Historians

have convincingly argued that images of extraordinary surgical occurrences like these participated in the fascination for the rare that informed cabinets of curiosity and fostered empiricism (Bertoloni Meli, 2017b). Most of Meek'ren's pictures show truncated body parts, for example, a large scrotal hernia or a lump on a woman's nape; a few portray entire bodies standing straight to show unusual features (Meek'ren, 1682). Like in Riva's depictions, they occupy empty plates with no background or items that might conjure up a place. Figure 6.20 shares these features: the chair and the woman float in the empty plate. Yet, a few details turn this into a vignette, that, despite the gravity of the case it illustrates, might have prompted a smirk.

The picture relates to the harrowing accident that occurred to a respected citizen's pregnant wife, when a bull attacked her. She was left with a severe tear in her backside out of which various body parts hang, including a piece of her womb. The story was tragic, but the picture is not. The woman props herself against a chair to display her bottom. Her dress is lifted above her waist, and she seems to be wearing pants or stockings. But her buttocks are somehow fully visible, clearly exposed to the viewer. A massive growth bulges below her buttocks, contained by the pants. She is turned away, but we can make out her profile. Her cap and shoes look ordinary; the wooden chair has a simple straw seat. These items evoke humble surrounding, in contrast with the real woman's condition. Some of the details fit with what has been controversially defined the naturalism of Dutch art, yet the woman's degrading position and outsize bum also speak to the carnivalesque imagery of naked and wonky bodies. There was something distasteful in the woman's condition that could only be visualised in a modest setting. But in doing this, and partly because of that conventional association of the humorous with the ordinary, the tragic case was turned into a comic vignette.

Anal pathologies were intrinsically repulsive, and in a world where carnivalesque, scatological laughter was still powerful, they were also potentially comical. Would-be surgeons in Rome would easily have perceived the ambivalence in some of Riva's plates, just as von Haller did. Yet, unlike in the Dutch picture, the bodies in the set are stripped of any identifying items

---

5   The statue may have been a reference to the one in the gallery of Villa Borghese. Hermaphrodites stirred interest and debates: see Closson (2013); Turner (2017).

388   *Obfervationes.*

Hifce fic præmiffis obfervationem noftram
aggrediemur: Præcedentes *gravidæ* cum inte-
rierint, cujus auxilio pepererint referre haud

Figure 6.20: Following an accident, the woman in the picture suffered from the prolapse of her womb, here shown as hardly contained in her stockings. Jacob Meek'ren, *Observationes medico-chirurgicae*, Amsterdam, Bloom, 1682, p.388.

and more completely decontextualised than the Dutch woman. As I argue elsewhere, they are generic illustrations of conditions rather than pictures of cases (De Renzi, 2026). But this anonymization might also have been a strategy to reduce the humorous potential that, as the Dutch example illustrates, lurked in these surgical pictures.

Conclusion

Connecting insides and outsides, orifices signal the body's boundaries. As the conduits that allowed matter and fluids to be ingested and released – healthily, pathologically or for therapeutic purposes – mouths, noses, ears, navels, anuses, and genitals were central to premodern perceptions and practices of health. Expulsions were salutary but could be sudden, disorderly, excessive, dangerous. Sometimes body parts bulged out that should stay in, especially through the anus and vagina; penises blocked or were affected by diseas-

es. Ensuring that these indecorous orifices remained open, but not too open, was the remit of early modern surgeons, those masters of bodily perviousness. Learning how to manipulate these openings was essential to their training. Images helped and the history of the pictorial representation of orifices spans across visual and medical cultures.

Riva's remarkable and little-known set of prints is a rich episode in this history. I have reconstructed several of the contexts that fashioned them, starting with the provision for training surgeons in seventeenth-century Rome. The lack of a text has facilitated a tight focus on the pictures, and at the same time has required me to identify the surgical instructions they represented in contemporary handbooks. Often unillustrated, these printed manuals leave no doubt as to surgeons' routine engagement with anuses and genitals as does a visual repertoire mainly developed in manuscripts. I have sketched the genre, placed Riva's set in it and examined how all-male audiences in seventeenth-century Rome might have approached pictures of anuses and male members.

To teach routine surgical interventions, the pictures exposed body parts that most people would associate with coarse functions like defecating and urinating, and with sex. I have placed this ambiguity at the centre of the article and contended that the young men training in hospital wards and sharing the male sociability of domestic academies would have been especially alert to the sexual allusions of the pictures. By no means were these pictures erotic, especially if compared with the references to homoeroticism peppering Renaissance and Baroque art. Yet I have shown why, besides seeing them as orifices to treat, young men in Rome might have associated them with sodomy, giving them an 'indecent' meaning. Drawing on recent social and cultural history, I have highlighted the currency of sodomy in Rome in satire, jokes, art and every-day experience between practice and repression. Carnivalesque pranks organised by university students extended to celebrations of sodomy while sex with young male patients might have taken place as part of surgeon trainees' raucous behaviour in hospital wards. Prosecuted as a sin and crime, sodomy was rather more part of the city's social fabric than has been recognised. To look at the

simple surgical pictures in Riva's set through the eyes of savvy young men requires recreating their sociability and the sexual culture they shared. This included surgeons' inspection of men's bodies for legal purposes, a specific reason why anal sex would have shaped their viewing.

Subscribing to a model in which images have multiple and unstable meanings that overlap and co-exist, I have used von Haller's enigmatic remark to look once again at the pictures for the comical value that they might have had for Roman surgeons too. Salacious comments might have turned into hilarity or into the combination of surprise and amusement that odd bodies generated. Comparison with contemporary Dutch pictures of similar content has allowed me to highlight the tension between the gravity of surgical conditions and the ridiculousness associated with leaking, excreting or bulging orifices. Visual strategies, for example anonymization of the subjects, might have tamed their comic potential, which however was not eliminated by the pedagogical purpose of Riva's pictures, and it may be wiser to recognise humour as integral to it.

Recapturing the interplay between the explicit and the implicit in depictions of the body requires intense conversation across disciplinary boundaries and through the thick description of surgical pictures of orifices offered in this article, a richer understanding of premodern perceptions of bodies and their boundaries may start to emerge.

Acknowledgements

Bibliography

1   Ago, R. (2006) *Il gusto delle cose. Una storia degli oggetti nella Roma del Seicento*, Rome, Donzelli.

2   Agus, L. (2022) 'Ut pictura poësis: L'iconografia del Cupido Giustiniani di Caravaggio e la poesia classica', *Papiretus*, vol.1, pp.10–31.

3   Arderne, J. (2014) *De arte phisicali et de cirurgia*, ed. by Torgny Svenberg and Peter Murray Jones, Stockholm, Fri Tanke.

4   Baldassari, M. (2005) *Bande giovanili e 'vizio nefando'. Violenza e sessualità nella Roma barocca*, Rome, Viella.

5   Bertoloni Meli, D. (2017a) *Visualizing Disease: The Art and History of Pathological Illustrations*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

6   Bertoloni Meli, D. (2017b) '"Ex Museolo Nostro Machaonico": Collecting, publishing, and visualization in Fabricius Hildanus', *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences,* vol.72, no.1, pp.98–116.

7   Bertolotti, A. (1883) 'Gli studenti a Roma nel secolo XVI', *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana*, vol.2, pp.141–8.

8   Bury, M. (2001) *The Print in Italy, 1550–1620*, London, British Museum.

9   Camille, M. (1992) *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art*, London, Reaktion.

10   Campanelli, M., Petteruti Pellegrino, P. and Russo, E. (eds) (2020) *Le accademie a Roma nel Seicento*, Rome, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura.

11   Capparoni, P. (1934) 'Una raccolta di incisioni per un'opera di patologia e clinica chirurgica di Guglielmo Riva mai pubblicata', *Rivista di Storia delle Scienze Mediche e Naturali*, vol.25, no.5–6, pp.91–115.

12   Cappelletti, F. and Lemoine, A. (eds) (2014) *I bassifondi del Barocco: la Roma del vizio e della miseria. Catalogue of an itinerant exhibition held at the Accademia di Francia-Villa Medici, Rome, Italy, October 7, 2014 – January 18, 2015, and at the Petit Palais-Musée des beaux-arts de la ville de Paris, Paris, France, February 24 – May 25, 2015*, Rome, Officina libraria.

13   Cesarini, A. (2011) '"Io so barbiero e fo la barbaria". I barbieri di Roma alla fine del Cinquecento tra professione e mercato dell'arte', *Roma moderna e contemporanea*, vol.19, no.2, pp.259–97.

14   Cheng, S. (2024) 'Dwarfs and giants in early modern caricature' in R. O'Bryan and F. Else (eds) *Giants and Dwarfs in European Art and Culture, ca. 1350–1750: Real, Imagined, Metaphorical*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, pp.323–42.

15   Closson, M. (ed.) (2013) *L'Hermaphrodite de la Renaissance aux Lumières*, Paris, Classique Garnier.

16   Conforti, M. and De Renzi, S. (2008) 'Sapere anatomico negli ospedali romani: formazione dei chirurghi e pratiche sperimentali' in A. Romano (ed.) *Rome et la science moderne: Entre Renaissance et Lumières*, Rome, École française de Rome, pp.433–72.

17   De Renzi, S. (2026) 'Teaching with images: Guglielmo Riva's surgical pedagogy in seventeenth-century Rome' in M.P. Donato, E. Leong and T. Taape (eds) *Learning to Cut: Surgical Training and Practice, 1450–1800*, London, UCL Press, in press.

18   Donato, M.P. (2022) 'Surgeons' training and hospital life in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Rome' in D. Gavrus and S. Lamb (eds) *Transforming Medical Education: Historical Case Studies of Teaching, Learning, and Belonging in Medicine*, Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, pp.136–60.

19   Duden, B. (1991) *The Woman beneath the Skin: A Doctor's Patients in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (trans. T. Dunlap), Cambridge, Harvard University Press.

20   Duhme, L. (1980) *Die Tabulae Anatomicae des Pietro Berrettini da Cortona*, Köln, Forschungsstelle des Instituts für Geschichte der Medizin der Universität zu Köln.

21   Fabrici D'Acquapendente, G. (1671) *L'opere cirurgiche*, Padua, Cadorino.

22   Fabricius Hildanus, W. (1682) *Opera observationum et curationum medico-chirurgicarum, quae extant omnia*, Frankfurt, J.L. Dufour.

23   Ferguson, G. (2016) *Same-Sex Marriage in Renaissance Rome: Sexuality, Identity, and Community in Early Modern Europe*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press.

24   Ferguson, G. (2019) 'Baroque sexualities' in J.D. Lyons (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of the Baroque*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp.688-712.

25   Griffiths, A. (2016) *The Print before Photography: An Introduction to European Printmaking 1550–1820*, London, British Museum.

26   Haller, A. von (1774) *Bibliotheca Anatomica*, vol. 1, Zurich, Orell, Gessner, Füssli.

27   Hartnell, J. (2019) *Medieval Bodies: Life, Death and Art in the Middle Ages*, London, Profile Books.

28   Hausse, H. (2024) 'Building the foundations of a surgical armory: Johannes Scultetus in Ulm, *c.*1630–1645' in T. Helfferich and H. Louthan (eds) *Beyond the Battlefield: Reconsidering Warfare in Early Modern Europe*, Abingdon, Routledge, pp.42–64.

29   Henderson, J. (2021) 'Die bildliche Darstellung der Franzosenkrankheit im frühneuzeitlichen Italien: Patienten, Krankheitsbild und Behandlung' in M. Stolberg (ed.) *Körper-Bilder in der Frühen Neuzeit. Kunst-, medizin- und mediengeschichtliche Perspektiven*, Berlin and Boston, Walter de Gruyter, pp.15–35.

30   Heyam, K. (2019) 'Paratexts and pornographic potential in seventeenth-century anatomy books', *The Seventeenth Century*, vol.34, no.5, pp.615–47.

31   Jones, P.M. (1998) *Medieval Medicine in Illuminated Manuscripts,* London, British Library.

32   Jones, P.M. (2002) 'Staying with the programme: Illustrated manuscripts of John of Arderne, *c.*1380–*c.*1550' in A.S.G. Edwards (ed.) *Decoration and Illustration in Medieval English Manuscripts*, London, British Library, pp.204–27.

33   Jones, P.M. (2020) 'Visualization in medicine between script and print c.1375–1550' in M. Kupfer, A.S. Cohen and J.H. Chajes (eds) *The Visualization of Knowledge in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, Turnhout, Brepols, pp.341–60.

34   Klestinec, C. (2011) *Theaters of Anatomy: Students, Teachers, and Traditions of Dissection in Renaissance Venice*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press.

35   Kusukawa, S. (2012) *Picturing the Book of Nature: Images, Text, and Argument in Sixteenth-Century Human Anatomy and Medical Botany*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

36   Lincoln, E. (2001) 'Curating the Renaissance body', *Word & Image*, vol.17, no.1–2, pp.42–61.

37   Marinucci, A. (1788) 'Lettera del Sig. Dott. Antonio Marinucci … al signor Pietro Orlandi sopra … Gio Guglielmo Riva', *Antologia Romana*, vol.15, I (pp.1–5), II (pp.9–14), III (pp.17–20), IV (pp.25–29).

38   Marucci, V., Marzo, A. and Romano, A. (eds) (1983), *Pasquinate romane del Cinquecento*, 2 vols, Rome, Salerno.

39   Matthews-Grieco, S.F. (ed.) (2010) *Erotic Cultures of Renaissance Italy*, Farnham, Ashgate.

40   McVaugh, M.R. (2006) *The Rational Surgery of the Middle Ages*, Micrologus' Library, no.15, Florence, SISMEL/Edizioni del Galluzzo.

41   McVaugh, M.R. (2012) 'Fistulas, the knee and the three-dimensional body' in P.A. Baker, H. Nijdam and K. van 't Land (eds) *Medicine and Space: Body, Surroundings and Borders in Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, Leiden, Brill, pp.23–36.

42   Meek'ren, J. van (1682) *Observationes medico-chirurgicae*, Amsterdam, Boom.

43   Mormando, F. (2023) 'Did Bernini's *Ecstasy of St. Teresa* cross a seventeenth-century line of decorum?', *Word & Image*, vol.39, no.4, pp.351–83.

44   Park, K. (2006*) Secrets of Women: Gender, Generation, and the Origins of Human Dissection*, New York, Zone Books.

45   Persels, J. and Ganim, R. (eds) (2004) *Fecal Matters in Early Modern Literature and Art: Studies in Scatology*, Abingdon, Routledge.

46   Pomata, G. (1998) *Contracting a Cure: Patients, Healers, and the Law in Early Modern Bologna,* Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press.

47   Pomata, G. (2001) 'Menstruating men: Similarity and difference of the sexes in early modern medicine' in V. Finucci and K. Brownlee (eds) *Generation and Degeneration: Tropes of Reproduction in Literature and History from Antiquity through Early Modern Europe,* Durham, Duke University Press, pp.109–52.

48   *Regole per il buon governo dell'Archiospedale della Santissima Consolazione di Roma* (1686), Rome, eredi Corbelletti.

49   Roberts, H., Peureux, G. and Wajeman, L. (eds) (2011) *Obscénités Renaissantes,* Geneva, Droz.

50   Roberts, K.B. and Tomlinson, J.D.W. (1992) *The Fabric of the Body*: *European Traditions of Anatomical Illustration*, Oxford, Clarendon.

51   Rousseau, G.S. (2008) 'Policing the anus' in G. Rousseau and K. Borris (eds) *The Science of Homosexuality in Early Modern Europe*, Abingdon, Routledge, pp.75–91.

52   Rubin, P. (2018) *Seen from Behind: Perspectives on the Male Body and Renaissance Art*, New Haven, Yale University Press.

53   Sappol, M. (2002) *A Traffic of Bodies: Anatomy and Embodied Social Identity in Nineteenth-Century America*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.

54   Sappol, M. (2024) *Queer Anatomies: Aesthetics and Desire in the Anatomical Image, 1700–1900*, London, Bloomsbury Visual Art.

55   Savio, P. (1968) 'Ricerche sull'anatomico Guglielmo Riva', *Bollettino storico-bibliografico subalpino*, vol.66, pp.229–67.

56   Savoia, P. (2019) 'Skills, knowledge, and status: The career of an early modern Italian surgeon', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, vol.93, no.1, pp.27–54.

57   Savoia, P. (2021) 'Suffering through it: Visual and textual representations of bodies in surgery in the wake of Lepanto' in J. Henderson, F. Jacobs and J.K. Nelson (eds) *Representing Infirmity: Diseased Bodies in Renaissance Italy*, London, Routledge, pp.141–66.

58   Scultetus, J. (1666) *Armamentarium Chirurgicum Bipartitum*, Frankfurt, Görling.

59   Smith, L.W. (2011) 'The body embarrassed? Rethinking the leaky male body in eighteenth-century England and France', *Gender & History*, vol.23, no.1, pp.26–46.

60   Stolberg, M. (ed.) (2021) *Körper-Bilder in der Frühen Neuzeit Kunst-, medizin- und mediengeschichtliche Perspektiven*, Berlin and Boston, Walter de Gruyter.

61   Talvacchia, B. (1999) *Taking Positions: On the Erotic in Renaissance Culture*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.

62   Talvacchia, B. (2023) 'Indecent exposure and honourable uncovering in Renaissance portraits of women' in F. Jonietz, M. Richter and A. Stewart (eds) *Indecent Bodies in Early Modern Visual Culture*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, pp.129–54.

63   Turner, J.G. (2003) *Schooling Sex: Libertine Literature and Erotic Education in Italy, France, and England 1534–1685*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

64   Turner, J.G. (2017) *Eros Visible: Art, Sexuality and Antiquity in Renaissance Italy,* New Haven, Yale University Press.

65   Von Lates, A. (1995) 'Caravaggio's peaches and academic puns', *Word & Image*, vol. 11, no.1, pp.55–60.

66   Whiteley R. (2023) *Birth Figures: Early Modern Prints and the Pregnant Body*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

67   Zacchia, P. (1661) *Quaestiones Medico-legales. Tomus prior*, Lyon, Huguetan & Ravaud.

68   Zapperi, R. (1994) *Eros e controriforma: Preistoria della Galleria Farnese*, Turin, Bollati Boringhieri.

ORGAN:
FISH AND OTHER BODIES IN AN EARLY MODERN LUTHERAN CONVENT CHURCH

Margit Thøfner

Abstract

This essay focuses on a musical instrument, an organ purpose-built for the Lutheran convent church at Kloster Lüne near Lüneburg in present-day Germany. This instrument is used to explore what it might mean to write histories of bodies without privileging textual evidence. Particular attention is paid to the display pipes, which are decorated so that their openings appear to be fish mouths. In this way, the essay shows how the organ sat at the nexus of a whole range of embodied practices that served to constitute the monastic community as a corporation, a body combining a wide range of entities, some human, some not, and spanning conventional oppositions and temporalities, such as the terrestrial and the celestial and the past and the present. The broader purpose is to show how fruitful it can be to draw on the widest possible range of source materials when studying early modern bodies.

Biographical note

Margit Thøfner is a senior lecturer in the history of art at the Open University. She took her BA and MA in the History of Art at the Courtauld Institute and her DPhil at the University of Sussex.

ORGAN: FISH AND OTHER BODIES IN AN EARLY MODERN LUTHERAN CONVENT CHURCH

Margit Thøfner, The Open University

This essay is about an organ. But it is not a biological organ. Rather, it is a musical instrument from the seventeenth century that, in some ways, is typical of its kind: in addition to its musical functions, it is also a substantial piece of micro-architecture as well as a support for an elaborate display of sculptures, paintings, ornament and inscriptions (Bicknell, 1998, p.55) (Fig. 7.1).

This organ was made in 1645 for the church at Kloster Lüne near Lüneburg although the painted aspects were only completed in 1651 (Boeck, 1971, p.154). Strikingly, the visible organ pipes – normally called the display pipes – are decorated with golden, somewhat leonine or even monstrous fish. Their mouths are constituted by the actual pipe openings while the rest of their twisting bodies decorate the areas immediately above (Fig. 7.2).

On one level, these fish fall squarely within early modern European conventions for representing marine bodies, where artists positively revelled in their incredible diversity as well as their – at least to human eyes – anthropomorphic or sometimes mammalian features (see Egmond, 2024; Rijks, 2024). There is also a certain wit at play: these leonine fish are not in their element but rather creatures of the air since organ pipes work by setting a column of air into vibration. In this sense, the fish fit easily into the early modern category of the 'monstrous' and hence within the Foucauldian category 'de*monstra*tive' as discussed in detail by M.A. Katritzky in this issue. They are, quite literally, extraordinary because they combine qualities not normally seen together. To this should be added that, in early modern Europe, large marine creatures such as whales were almost always designated as 'monsters' (see, for example, Brito, 2024). Yet the location of these somewhat monstrous fish seems rather unusual. To date, I have failed to identify any similarly decorated display pipes from early modern Europe. While pipes from this period sometimes come with elaborate detailing, it is usually either ornamental, anthropomorphic or a combination of the two (for a more typical example, see Fig. 7.3).

This may be a matter of survival. Seventeenth-cen-

Figure 7.1: Unrecorded organ builder (possibly Jonas Weigel), painted parts by Adolph Block, *Organ*, 1645 and 1651. Church of Kloster Lüne, Lüneburg. (Photograph by kind courtesy of Maarten Rog (orgelfoto.nl: Kloster Lüne, Klosterkirche - Orgelfoto))

Figure 7.2: Detail of the rückpositiv from organ from Kloster Lüne: note the singing fish. (Photograph by kind courtesy of Maarten Rog (orgelfoto.nl: Kloster Lüne, Klosterkirche - Orgelfoto))

tury display pipes were usually made from a lead-tin alloy and thus tend to deteriorate in response to atmospheric pollution (Chiavari et al., 2008). Some have survived to the present but many more have not, and it is therefore hard to generalise about decorative detailing. Nevertheless, the fish on the instrument at Kloster Lüne would appear to be rare, perhaps even unique. Whenever this organ is at work, the pipes seem to sing from fishes' mouths: music is here airy yet presented as enfleshed, as fishily embodied. How might a complex artefact like this organ enrich and enliven our understanding of early modern bodies? More broadly, what does it mean to approach the historical study of bodies through a musical instrument and its decorations rather than primarily through texts? And why does this particular organ come with ornamental if rather fierce-looking fish?

Figure 7.3: Johann Lorentz the Elder, display pipes, 1630, from the organ of Heliga Trefaldighetskyrkan, Kristianstad (present-day Sweden). (Photo: Margit Thøfner)

This essay explores these questions by using the organ at Kloster Lüne as a historical source in its own right, as a tool for probing the matter of bodies in medieval and early modern Europe. By 'the matter of bodies' I mean that which is enfleshed: how physicality is constituted in and through specific historical, cultural and spatial practices and circumstances. As will become apparent, this involves thinking in pluralities rather than in terms of a singular and bounded body; in this sense, my conclusions relate to those of Brad Marshall and others in this issue. As will also become apparent, in the context of Kloster Lüne this means taking seriously the concept of a corporation (from the Latin *corpus*, 'body') as an embodied entity that draws together many distinct elements, some human, some not. Finally, probing the matter of bodies in medieval and early modern Europe involves drawing on the widest possible range of evidence. In the present case, this includes but is not limited to liturgical texts, archaeological finds, contested devotional practices, textile traditions, musical performances, pictorial details and conventual memories. One aim of this essay, then, is to show how productive it is not to privilege textual evidence when studying medieval and early modern bodies. In my view, there is much to be gained from thinking experientially rather than discursively, by focusing on bodily practices and all

the material evidence related to such practices rather than primarily on words. In many ways, my essay draws on recent work by Pamela H. Smith, including her point that 'writing and embodiment often find language an awkward collaborator in their efforts' (2022, p. 232). Crucially, such an approach involves radically expanding the category of what is normally considered authoritative historical evidence. Finally, and in keeping with other essays in this special issue, I also hope to show that there is much to be learnt from thinking about bodies across conventional divides such as the human and the animal, the animate and the inanimate, the quotidian and the monstrous and the living and the dead.

What follows now is a wide-ranging and admittedly rather unruly argument that I have tried to tame into five sections. The first sets the stage by offering some general remarks on organs, music and song, especially but not exclusively as pertaining to early modern northern Europe. The next is an initial discussion of the instrument at Kloster Lüne, including its known history and its role in current scholarship. Then follows a third and a fourth section, which may at first seem like digressions since they range across medieval and early modern devotional practices at Kloster Lüne. In fact, these two sections are essential; without them, it is not possible to grasp the complex roles that the instrument at Kloster Lüne played in its conventual setting. The fifth section then explores these roles in detail by returning to the organ itself and by analysing certain spatial and pictorial details, including the singing fish. Together, these five sections show how the instrument helped to constitute the conventual corporation – the very body – of Kloster Lüne as a physical, spatial, sonic and temporal whole.

Organs, music and song

In seventeenth-century Europe pipe organs were often described in embodied terms (see, for example, Davidsson, 2002, pp. 83–5). One piece of evidence for this comes from a letter written on 27 January 1648 by the organist Johannes Buxtehude, father of the renowned composer Dieterich Buxtehude, in which he pleads for funds to restore the organ of the church where he served: 'have mercy on this inwardly weak, very sick, indeed weeping organ and help to get it back on its feet' (here quoted after Snyder, 2007, p. 12). In biblically resonant language, Buxtehude firmly asserts that the instrument is in need of 'a good renovation – in fact, it longs and sighs for it as the hart longs for flowing streams' (p. 11; the reference is to Psalm 42:1). Buxtehude's organ came with feet, health issues and intense emotions. It wept and sighed, making sounds of distress that would usually involve eyes, lungs and larynx. For him it was, in effect, a living body even if some of the intensity of his language is rhetorical: he was trying to raise money to heal his sick organ so

that it might sing rather than sigh and weep so pitifully. However, there are many ways of intensifying language. It remains telling that Buxtehude should choose to do so by enfleshing his organ rather than, for example, by stressing the needs of the congregation, the actual human community, that he served. Yet his pleading for his sick instrument fits well with the humanised display pipe from Trefaldighetskyrkan in Kristianstad (Fig. 7.3). This pipe is very clearly a way of presenting an organ as singing. And this also fits neatly with one particular type of early modern organ stop – a way of inflecting the sound of the pipes – called the 'vox humana' or the 'human voice' (Williams & Owen, 2001; Howard, 2014). In itself, this is another piece of evidence that pipe organs were thought to have human or at least quasi-human qualities.

For any active musician, it should come as no surprise that Buxtehude understood his instrument as embodied. Musical instruments are responsive entities, sensitive to touch, temperature, humidity and ambient sounds. Perhaps the most striking example of this is sympathetic resonance, whereby an unplayed musical instrument responds to sounds from another instrument being played in its vicinity (Snow & Cottingham, 2024). This natural phenomenon is particularly clear when, on a string instrument, one untouched string vibrates by itself in response to a consonant note played on an adjacent string (for an example of how this works in practice, see _here_, where the open D-string on a cello visibly resonates to a D being played on the G-string next to it). When this happens, it is as if the whole instrument shudders in harmonic delight. Organ pipes, too, respond by vibrating when music of the right pitch is performed in their vicinity; for this reason, any space containing an organ has its own distinct acoustic even when the instrument is silent (Snow & Cottingham, 2024). Such an organ will make its presence felt. The phenomenon of sympathetic resonance is also why, in the early modern period, musical instruments were so often used to evoke love, whether sacred or erotic. That, for example, is the sonic logic underpinning paintings like Johannes Vermeer's evocative representation of a woman playing the virginals next to a silent viola da gamba, with a painting of a brothel scene involving lute-playing in the background (Fig. 7.4) (Sternbach, 2024; Zell, 2011).

Thinking about bodies in a musical manner draws attention to the importance of specifically situated, experiential and embodied knowledge as opposed to the kind acquired verbally or textually. It makes us attend more carefully to the fact that bodies are constituted in and through historically specific and highly variable practices and behaviours. While some of these practices and behaviours may involve words, they cannot be reduced to them, nor can they be fully evinced by them. This, then, is one of the benefits of studying early

Figure 7.4: Johannes Vermeer, _Young Woman seated at a virginal_, _c._1670–2. Oil on canvas, 51.5 × 45.5cm, National Gallery, London. (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

modern bodies through musical instruments and other resonant artefacts. Such an approach involves taking seriously the fact that bodies are, quite literally, flesh and blood, breath and sound.

The most enfleshed of musical instruments is the human voice, where singing involves air, lungs, larynx, tongue, mouth, ears and mind. Song is produced within the body and yet, to be heard, it must be projected into the air and space around the singing body or bodies in question. Song usually involves words, but they are precisely bodied forth in music and, in the process, poetically intensified (see, e.g., Jorgens, 1982, pp.11–17; Lindley, 2013; Roelens, 2019). In this way, song transcends conventional boundaries like those between the textual and the physical, between self and other, and between inside and outside. (In this latter sense, song comes with intriguing parallels to the orifices so ably interrogated by de Renzi in relation to early modern anatomical imagery in this issue.) Song reminds us that the linguistic itself is rooted in an organ: the tongue. Against this background, it is not so strange that a seventeenth-century professional musician should think of his organ as embodied, as sighing and weeping because it cannot sing. As this shows, thinking with and through musical instruments means always working with a fluid and open definition of bodies. Such an approach is a helpful reminder that the linguistic itself is an enfleshed category.

It is also worth noting that, across the majority of European languages, the organ, as a musical instrument,

shares its etymological roots with bodily organs. Both ultimately derive from the Greek ὄργανον, 'that with which one works' (OED, n.d., s.v. *organ* n.1). In other words, both bodily organs and musical instruments may be conceptualised as tools, as something involved in a certain set of physical activities, ranging from breathing and digesting to music-making. For this reason, it is helpful to approach pipe organs as prosthetic: they allow for music-making of a range that goes well beyond the normal capacities of human vocal chords, beyond the 'vox humana'. That an organ exceeds the human is evident simply in some of the other names of organ stops circulating in the early modern period, for example 'vogelgesang' ('birdsong'), 'unda maris' ('wave of the sea') and 'vox angelica' ('angelic voice') (Williams & Owen, 2001). In many ways, in the early modern period organs served to expand the human body into realms where it might not otherwise go, be that the highest heavens or the deep sea. In this context, it is simultaneously witty and logical to endow the display pipes with quasi-monstrous fish-mouths.

It is also helpful to keep in mind that it is not only humans who sing; it is also the case for, for example, birds, whales and fish like the plainfin midshipman (Sisneros, 2009). Indeed, in early modern Europe, the musicality of sea creatures came with full biblical authority. For example, there is a telling passage from Psalms 98:5–8:

> Sing unto the Lord with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm.

> With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise before the Lord, the King.

> Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

> Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together.

Singing fish are not so very peculiar in a world where floods can clap hands and hills be joyful. In itself, this is a reminder of the enchanted nature of medieval and early modern European devotional culture: the world, as God's creation, was replete with evidence of his spirit and wisdom (see, e.g., Cohen, 2008, pp.42–3; Mason, 2009, p.166). All creatures – including humans, their voices and their musical instruments but also fish, floods and hills – owed him due praise as the ultimate creator. Here, what may at first seem extraordinary or monstrous is in fact a sign of the unfathomable diversity of God's handiwork. In this context, the singing fish fit with the great maritime creature Leviathan as described in Job 41:1–34. In this passage, God proclaims his own generative powers by dwelling on the insuperable strength of the great monster: 'whatsoever is under

the whole heaven is mine' (Job 41:11). In the Book of Job, is in the very nature of Leviathan to be 'de*monstra*tive' of divine prowess.

As I hope is clear by now, there are many good reasons why focussing on an organ with fishy display pipes might be illuminating when studying bodies historically. In both medieval and early modern Europe, organs were almost always elaborately cased and otherwise decorated; they were simultaneously visual, spatial and sonic artefacts. Studying them therefore involves defining not only bodies but also the visual in an expansive manner: sight is never just itself, never separate from sensations such as those of space and sound. To all this should be added that, in medieval and early modern Europe, besides the human voice the organ was the preferred instrument for making sacred music (Higginbottom, 1998). This type of musical instrument also comes with its own history of embodying devotion, of straddling the physical and the spiritual.

The organ at Kloster Lüne

The organ that lies at the heart of this essay belongs to Kloster Lüne, a still-functioning Lutheran convent located to the north-east of the Hanseatic City of Lüneburg in present-day Germany. The organ's elaborate casing has already been discussed in a monograph by Johann Anselm Steiger, who approaches it as a complex Lutheran theological statement about art and music (2015, pp.25–48 and *passim*). He does so by interrogating the many inscriptions and the iconography of the paintings on the organ and by relating these to Lutheran publications from the early modern period. It is a beautifully researched, richly detailed and useful study but it comes with a problem. Steiger approaches the organ as if it is a text to be decoded, so in a radically logocentric manner.

For all the reasons set out above, this cannot do full justice to an instrument like the organ at Kloster Lüne. Tellingly, Steiger never addresses the singing fish on the organ pipes because, in his account, music remains a wholly abstract entity rather than a set of embodied practices. Nor does he give any consideration to the immediate historical context, that of the convent church at Kloster Lüne and of the bodies that it sheltered in the medieval and early modern period (of which more below). This means that Steiger fails to note important continuities with the period before the coming of Lutheranism. For example, the organ now at Kloster Lüne is a replacement of an earlier instrument, from 1496 (Boeck, 1971, p.153). It may even be that the motif of the singing fish came from this earlier instrument because pipes from it seem to have been reused when the new organ was commissioned.

At the same time, the present organ at Kloster Lüne firmly proclaims its own historical context because it carries two dates. The first is 'Anno 1645' set out in

Figure 7.5: Detail of the top centre of the organ at Kloster Lüne. Note the gilded lettering inside the white cartouches topped with gilded cherubim, which form two parts of a four-part inscription '[AN-]NO 16[-45]. The number 45 can be seen at the top of the organ in Fig. 7.10 below. Additionally, in the lower left corner of the photograph, see the four golden initials on black: 'C.M.V.E.' (Photograph by kind courtesy of Maarten Rog (orgelfoto.nl: Kloster Lüne, Klosterkirche - Orgelfoto))

four decorative cartouches at the top, two on the two side walls and two on either side of the central tower (Fig. 7.5).

The second date is below the *rückpositiv*, the lower section with the smallest pipes at the front of the instrument. This is a so-called chronogram in German, 'ANNO GOTT **M**AN **L**OBET **DIC**H' ('In the year of the Lord, one praises you'). (This is the second inscription above the lower edge of the photograph in Fig. 7.2). When the four Roman numerals MLDIC are added together, this results in the date 1651 (Steiger, 2015, p.11). The chronogram is followed by the word 'Exorn-abam' ('I was decorating') and the initials 'AB'. These initials reference the otherwise unknown painter Adolph Block, who also signed himself on the large painting of King David that adorns the upper western side of the organ (visible in Fig. 7.10 below). It is therefore reasonable to assume that that the earlier date at the top stands for the completion of the organ, while the chronogram below refers to its painting or decoration (Steiger, 2015, p.25).

There are also two patronal inscriptions. The first of these consists of the initials 'C.M.V.E.' (see Fig. 7.5). This stands for Catharina Margaretha von Estorff, the 'Domina' or Abbess who led Kloster Lüne between 1634 and 1659 (Brinkmann, 2013, p.162). Evidently, the organ was built under her direction, and her coat of arms is carried by the angel immediately above her initials, while that of Kloster Lüne itself is held by the matching angel on the upper right (Steiger, 2015, p.17). The second patronal inscription is less obvious, the initials 'T.D.' can be found towards the top of the *rückpositiv* although these are almost completely hidden by the ornamental bracket that connects this with the plinth on which stands the angel at the very top of this section of

the instrument (the beginning of the golden letter 'T' is just visible behind this bracket towards the top centre of the photograph in Fig. 7.2). These stand for Thomas Dammann, whose coat of arms is carried by the angel immediately above the inscription. Dammann was the *Amtmann* or bailiff of Kloster Lüne when the organ was built; there are archival materials documenting his responsibility for sourcing its timbers (Boeck, 1971, p.155). In other words, he oversaw the practical side the process, including disbursing the necessary funds; this was probably part of his broader duties to support the Domina in her worldly responsibilities for the monastic estate.

Most of the mechanical parts of the instrument are no longer in their original form although that is often the case; over time organs get worn and must be restored or else they fall silent. However, the pipes are original apart from those seemingly salvaged from the earlier instrument. And there is evidence to suggest that the organ builder was one Jonas Weigel (Boeck, 1971, p.156). As all of this shows, the organ was a substantial collaborative project – including an organ builder, a painter, a whole monastic community, their head and their secular administrator – although the prominent inscription of Domina von Estorff's initials certainly proclaims her as the most important participant, the ultimate leader of the project. Unfortunately, there are no surviving accounts from Kloster Lüne from the period when the organ was built. But, judging by evidence from other Lutheran churches with extant early modern accounts, it is likely that this instrument was and still is the single most expensive object belonging to the convent (for a good example of the expenses and complexities involved in building early modern organs, see Butler, 2004).

In addition to this, the two dates given on the organ together indicate that the instrument was constructed and decorated at a very particular moment in the long and slow process by which Kloster Lüne was transformed from a Benedictine nunnery into a Lutheran 'Damenstiftung' or 'Ladies' Foundation'. This means that it is important to attend to the complexities of this historical process and that is the purpose of the next two sections, which draw mainly but not exclusively on Jens-Uwe Brinkmann's thoughtful and well-informed 2013 survey of the convent's history. As these two sections will show, this slowly unfolding process runs contrary to standard assumptions about how devotional practices changed suddenly and drastically in sixteenth-century Germany, that is to say, during the upheavals usually but not particularly helpfully known as the Reformation. As the case of Kloster Lüne shows, this was a process as much about continuity as about change, about doughty resistance and hard-worn compromises rather than sudden alterations. There were many distinct parts to these gradual reforms, and not all can be covered here. Yet two strands stand out because they hinge on profoundly embodied practices: first, an enduring engagement with textiles, whether in terms of making fabrics or the wearing of monastic dress; second, the singing in Latin of the cycle of daily prayers usually known as the eight canonical hours or, for short, the offices. As will become apparent later in this essay, both of these practices provide important clues to why the organ at Kloster Lüne looks the way it does.

Dressing, singing and sewing

Kloster Lüne is an ancient foundation, formally constituted in 1172 under the direction of one Hildeswidis von Markboldestorp. Whether this institution was already under the Benedictine rule is not known; it definitely was a century later, by 1272 (Brinkmann, 2013, pp.13–4, 162). It is also noteworthy that the convent still possesses examples of fine whitework embroidery from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (p.15); it seems that already at this date the nuns were engaged with textile work.

In terms of religious reform, the first crucial date at Kloster Lüne was 1481 when the convent became part of what is normally known as the Bursfelde Congregation. This was a group of abbeys in central and northern Germany which, from 1445 onwards, vowed to follow the old Benedictine breviary in their daily devotions and, in general, to live strictly according to the original Benedictine rule (Burkhardt & Klymenko, 2023). These Benedictine reforms had two roots: in Italy, where the renewal was led by the monks of Sta Giustiana in Padua, culminating in papal approval in 1431; and in the movement known as the Sisters and Brethren of Common Life or *Devotio Moderna* radiating from the Augustinian abbey of Windesheim from the later fourteenth

century onwards (van Engen, 2008, especially pp.1–10, 46–56). Both of these reforms were characterised by deep communal and personal devotion to Christ combined with a concerted attempt to imitate the simplicity and poverty of his life as well as those of the Apostles and the earliest Christian communities.

The Benedictine reforms reached Kloster Lüne on 19 October 1481 when, under the oversight of the Bishop of Verden, seven new nuns were installed. They came from the nearby Benedictine convent of Ebsdorf, which had joined the Bursfelde Congregation already in 1469. One of them, Sophia von Bodendike, became the new Domina, another the sub-prioress or assistant to the Domina and another two were tasked with organising the kitchen so all meals would be taken collectively and conform to true Benedictine simplicity. Crucially, the final nun from Ebsdorf took over as 'Cantrix' or chief singer, to ensure that the canonical hours were performed in keeping with Benedictine regulations (Brinkmann, 2013, pp.20–3). In general, the old rule was confirmed and reiterated. Amongst other things, this involved strict enclosure as well as mandatory attendance during meals, communal working hours, the canonical prayers and other church services. There were also stipulations around postulants, for example, that they should attend the convent school for five or six years, and that they should learn Latin and use it as their conversational language. Likewise, there were strict rules about garments. Everyone was to wear black Benedictine tunics. The postulants and novices wore white veils with a white headband, while the fully professed nuns had black ones, held in place over a white veil by a so-called nuns' crown, a strip of black fabric encircling the head with two bands crossing over the top (Brinkmann, 2013, pp.21–2; in Fig. 7.6 two nuns are shown wearing such headgear).

In the following decades, Kloster Lüne flourished. The level of education was high, with a marked emphasis on Latinity, both for conversation but also for singing (Brinkmann, 2013, pp.23–5). There was a sizeable library and books were produced, including some specifically geared towards musical devotions. Several survive and contain music to be performed as part of daily life, including, for example, a lengthy sequence to be sung at the crowning, or investiture, of a new nun (Volkhardt, 2015). Here, there is clear evidence that, at Kloster Lüne, song and textiles were profoundly entwined. A nun was made in and through her clothing, an intrinsic part of the elaborately staged and sung ritual that transformed her physically into a bride of Christ (Bynum, 2015).

The survival of manuscripts with musical notation specifically made for Kloster Lüne indicates that singing the offices and other devotional performances was taken seriously. Music-making was intrinsic to this particular Benedictine tradition and the organ ac-

Figure 7.6: Unrecorded painter, The *Vision of Dorothea von Meding in 1562, c.*1623. Oil on panel, 128.5 × 94cm. Nuns' choir, Kloster Lüne. (Photo: Sabine Wehking ©Kloster Lüne)

Figure 7.7: Unrecorded nuns at Kloster Lüne, *Banklaken with the Resurrection of Christ*, 1504. Woollen convent stitch embroidery on tabby weave linen, 475 × 420cm. Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg. (Photo: Penta Springs Limited / Alamy)

quired in 1496 further testifies to this. The instrument completed in 1645 and painted by 1651 clearly forms part of a much longer history of musical prayer and praise, dating to well before the Lutheran reforms. The nuns of Kloster Lüne must have been intimately aware of the somatic or enfleshed nature of singing and of music-making: this was a devotional duty that they were vowed to perform day in and day out.

Besides the nuns' profound engagement with the two embodied practices of clothing and singing, they were also textile-makers. Among other things, this involved embroidering large woollen tapestries known as 'banklaken', probably made to hang above their choir stools on feast days (Skovgaard, 2021, p.60). Seven of these survive to this day (for example Fig. 7.7) and some of these evince a close and intriguing relationship between conventual bodies, skin, textiles and textile work.

One of the seven 'banklaken' from Kloster Lüne visually narrates the martyrdom of St Bartholomew, the dedicatory saint of the convent church. St Bartholomew was martyred by being flayed, by being divested of his skin of mortality and, in the process, transformed into a sanctified being. The significance of this for the nuns whose fingers stitched the 'banklaken' has been carefully parsed out by Ane Preisler Skovgaard

in relation to several of the late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century tapestries from Kloster Lüne. As she notes, one of them, showing the flogging of St Catherine with her skin disintegrating under the torture, comes with a striking inscription: 'Pulchre syon filia pro mortali tunica – agni tecta vellere et corona glorie' ('Syon's daughter, [in exchange] for a mortal lamb's garment, shall be fairly clothed and crowned with glory') (2021, p.56). This exchanging of garments, from the terrestrial to the celestial, was in many ways akin to what the professed nuns of Kloster Lüne had already done at their investitures which, in turn, was a prefiguration of the moment when – at death – they would be fully united with Christ, their heavenly bridegroom. So, as evinced by the surviving 'banklaken' made at Kloster Lüne, there was a close relationship between the idea of skin – the clothing of terrestrial mortality, shed by martyrs like Saints Bartholomew and Catherine – and monastic garments, which prefigured the clothing of celestial immortality, the robes washed and paradoxically 'made white in the blood of the lamb' (Revelation 7:14). This suggests something important about how the nuns conceptualised their own bodies after their investiture. They were clothed in mortal skin beneath their monastic garments, yet these garments also prefigured celestial clothing, and by extension the resurrection of the flesh, when the nuns would come to body forth song in

the company of angels. In short, song, skin, textiles and textile work stood in a close yet dynamic relationship at Kloster Lüne.

Besides all this, the tapestries are in themselves evidence that making and displaying elaborate textiles were a vital and long-established aspect of devotional life at Kloster Lüne. Their survival within the monastic community, which can only be due to centuries of careful storage and regular airing, is also testimony to their continued importance. Again, there is a connection with singing the offices because, as already noted, the textiles were probably used on feast days to decorate the nuns' choir, from whence they performed their musical devotions. To this should be added important archaeological evidence from the nearby Cistercian nunnery of Wienhausen, in the form of drop spindles found underneath the nuns' choir. This suggests that, in this particular context, textile work was sometimes combined with singing the hours (Skovgaard, 2021, pp.50–1). If that were also the case at Kloster Lüne, the simultaneously singing and stitching nuns would have become the perfect embodiment of the Benedictine ideal: *ora et labora*. In this sense they, too, were 'de*monstra*tive', evidence of divine agency worked through humans. Crucially, they were so collectively. They were a corporate body, not an assembly of individuals, a monastic community united in observance and devotion. Here is a further type of expanded body: that of a community dressed in matching garments of black and white and performing carefully co-ordinated communal tasks such as singing and sewing so as to bear witness to faith.

Because of the nuns' sustained engagement with textiles, it is pertinent here to draw on an insight from Dugal McKinnon, an active composer as well as an academic. He has persuasively argued that sound is best understood as a kind of fabric, as something woven out of many different elements, such as performers, instruments and resonant spaces working in concert (McKinnon, 2021). If this insight is brought to bear on the nuns' singing and textile-making at Kloster Lüne, it is plausible to assume that they felt close affinity between these two activities, both involving communal labour of the convent, the co-ordinated work of several bodies. Certainly, they were a group of seasoned performers, a well-integrated choir with voices trained by daily practice under the leadership of the Cantrix. As such, they must have had profound, because embodied, knowledge of what it meant to fabricate sound in their church, down to the level of muscular memory. Muscular or bodily memory is what allows trained musicians to perform intricate tasks, whether with their voices or their hands, without thinking consciously about them (Fuchs, 2012, p.13). And, in textile-makers, muscular memory is what gives speed and precision to tasks

like hand-stitching, a skill that has to be learnt yet with training becomes second nature. Here, then, is another benefit of using a musical instrument to think historically: it helps us to understand how medieval devotional practices such as those performed at Kloster Lüne were profoundly enfleshed, embedded in the body.

Change and resistance

As is well known, in the early to mid-sixteenth century a new set of religious reforms began to spread across northern Germany: those inspired by Martin Luther. As will become apparent presently, these had a gradual yet significant impact on devotional life – and especially on conventual dress and singing – at Kloster Lüne. At the same time, this was as much a matter of continuity as it was of change.

In the Lüneburg area, the Lutheran reforms were enthusiastically embraced already in 1525 by the local feudal overlords and by 1527 they had the support of the local Estates (Brinkmann, 2013, p.28). The nuns of Kloster Lüne, however, resisted fiercely. A good example of this is a set of events that took place on Sunday, 26 April 1528. On ducal orders, as part of the Sunday service in the main section of the convent church, German Psalms were sung and a sermon was preached in the vernacular. In protest, the nuns left their choir (a balcony-like structure raised over the west end of the nave) and locked all doors leading from the convent into the church (pp.28–30). They gathered instead in the cloister to pray before an altar dedicated to the Virgin Mary, whose intercessory powers were vehemently denied by Luther and his followers (Heal, 2007, pp.53-63). The nuns only returned to their choir once the sermon was over to continue with their customary performance of the Latin sung Mass.

At this point in time, what was preached and sung in the church at Kloster Lüne was a matter of intense conflict. The fabrication of sound began to unravel. This was, in part, because the church also served those who lived and worked on the monastic estate yet were not in holy orders. Because it was also a parish church, and as a result of the Lutheran reforms, it now fell partially under secular jurisdiction. For the next decades, the ground floor of the convent church became an important centre for Lutheran preaching and singing (Brinkmann, 2013, pp.30–3). However, the nuns' choir and the convent itself remained under control of the Domina and the monastic community. They steadfastly pursued their own path. As the convent chronicle for those years indicate, they continued to sing the offices in Latin in their elevated choir and, pointedly, did so whenever Lutheran services were being performed in the church below (Steinzig, [1481–1530] 2019, p.182). Once the Lutheran service was over, to compensate

for what the nuns considered the inappropriate use of the vernacular in worship, they would silently say the Latin part of the mass normally reserved for the clergy (Lähnemann & Schlotheuber, 2024, pp.146–7). In effect, there was a regular sonic competition between those of the old and those of the new faith, fabrications of sound performed in Latin and the vernacular respectively. And this empowered the nuns to encroach on work normally reserved for male clergy.

One eighteenth-century source goes so far as to state that, to resist the Lutheran reforms, the nuns built fires from the felt soles of old shoes in the stove in their choir, in the hope that the smell would drive away the 'heretics' (Müller, 1793, p.625). While this sounds too good a story to be true, it certainly encapsulates the fact that for the best part of three decades the nuns of Kloster Lüne firmly and in the most physical manner resisted attempts to make them abandon their customary life. They seem to have taken particular pleasure in sensorially dominating the interior of their church, whether by singing or by the stink of burning felt. In this, they were part of a larger tendency across northern Germany during the first half of the sixteenth century, especially observable in the female houses of the Bursfelde congregation (Lähnemann & Schlotheuber, 2024, pp.147–9). In part, this must have been because the nuns' lives – intensely devotional and musical yet also productive and learned – and their particular embodied practices did not fit with standard Lutheran caricatures of lazy and debauched monastics (Scribner, [1981] 1994, pp.37–58).

Gradually, however, the nuns' resistance was worn down. From 1537 onwards, they would participate in the Lutheran Sunday service in the expected manner; there would be no more singing competitions or stink of burning felt. Yet they continued to pray the Rosary in secret and still sang the hours in Latin in their choir when no service was being performed in the church below (Brinkmann, 2013, p.34). Finally, by 1555 a compromise was reached, documented in a new set of monastic regulations for the Principality of Lüneburg. Kloster Lüne would not be abolished. Instead, it was placed under the ducal overlord's direct administration. The nuns continued to hold onto a great deal of their property and retained their ancient right to elect their abbess: Benedictine self-sufficiency was, by and large, retained. And the nuns were now legally compelled to sing the Benedictine hours in Latin, only any references to matters such as the intercession of the Virgin Mary and other saints had to be purged from the traditional texts (pp.35–41). Likewise, conventual gatherings in the chapter house should not take place during the Lutheran Sunday service (suggesting that this had been one avenue of resistance).

A particularly striking passage from the 1555 regulations refers to the Domina and the sub-prioress as those 'who govern the choir' ('de den chor regiren'; Brinkmann, 2013, p.37).[1] The context indicates that this refers to the singing of the monastic hours but it also suggests that the nuns' choir, the space where these hours were performed in the upper storey at the west end of the church, remained under the control of the convent itself. In other words, the nuns' singing competitions had born some fruit. At Kloster Lüne and across the Principality of Lüneburg a new type of monastic life began to emerge under Lutheran auspices but firmly rooted in existing traditions, including the singing of the Latin offices and the continued wearing of monastic dress.

In 1562, a Domina with Lutheran sympathies, Anna von Marenholtz, was finally installed. Then, in 1574, a new set of ducal regulations were issued, which set out in much detail which sections of the offices were to be sung in German and which in Latin (Brinkmann, 2013, pp.43–6). Strikingly, this set of regulations also outlawed the ceremony of investiture, which had played such a significant role in the nuns' lives until this date. Moreover, the nuns were now forbidden from wearing the crown and black veil (as shown in Fig. 7.6). They were no longer compelled to wear the Benedictine habit, just a black garment or tunic 'of any kind' and a white veil. They were, however, allowed to wear a monastic cowl over those garments if they wished and seems that many of them continued to do so (p.49).

From this emerged a new type of monastic habit, a Lutheran version of the Benedictine garments somewhat inflected by current fashions and allowing for the wearing of jewellery on hands and wrists. This is evident, for example, from a portrait of Domina Dorothea von Meding from 1590 (Fig. 7.8) and that of Domina Catharina Margaretha von Estorff, patroness of the new organ, from 1659 (Fig. 7.9). To this date, they hang in the chapter house of Kloster Lüne, one of the key sites of the nuns' resistance to Lutheran reforms.

Crucially, under the 1574 regulations, the nuns were no longer allowed to be buried in their habits; they had to be interred 'in shrouds like other Christians' (Brinkmann, 2013, p.34). However, there is archaeological evidence to show that this regulation was ignored, at least in the case of each Domina interred in the period between 1634 and 1838 in a specially constructed burial crypt beneath a chapel on the south-eastern side of the monastic church. As evident from careful examination of these graves, every head of the conventual community was laid to rest in her habit of office (Ströbl & Vick, 2007, p.53). As is often the case for female monastic communities of the early modern period, there was a gulf between what these women were told to do and

---

1   This and all following translations from Brinkmann are mine.

Figure 7.8: Unrecorded painter ('I.B'), *Dorothea von Meding, Domina of Kloster Lüne*, 1590. Oil on panel, 111 × 55.5cm. Chapter house, Kloster Lüne. Note the rare original framing.

Figure 7.9: Unrecorded painter, *Domina Catharina Margaretha von Estorff of Kloster Lüne*, 1659. Oil on canvas, 81 × 71cm. Chapter house, Kloster Lüne

what they actually did (for some instructive examples, see Evangelisti, 2008, pp.67–98). Here, then, is another benefit of focusing not primarily on textual evidence but instead on embodied practices: it becomes easier to grasp that written rules about bodily conduct are often aspirational and may have little bearing on actual behaviour.

A further important point about the crypt of the Dominae is that it is located below a chapel that can only be accessed from a door located beneath the present organ. In other words, the instrument is part of a specifically memorialising section of the convent church (an issue which will be addressed later in this essay). The construction of the crypt began in 1586 on the orders of Dorothea von Meding, who governed Kloster Lüne for 54 years as its second-ever Lutheran abbess (Fig. 7.8). This marks another departure from previous customs, where abbesses were interred with their sisters in the monastic churchyard (Ströbl &

Vick, 2007, pp.45–7; Brinkmann, 2013, p.47). It seems that the office of Domina at Kloster Lüne came to carry increased religious and social prestige after the abbey became Lutheran. Certainly, there is evidence to suggest that these women were usually buried with great pomp and, as was only appropriate, this involved musical performances by the conventual community (Wehking, 2010). In other ways, however, the new crypt simply underscored an important point also evident from the list of abbesses, from Hildeswidis von Markboldestorp onwards. This is that Kloster Lüne was for centuries governed by abbesses and populated by nuns who were also members of influential Lüneburg patrician families (Lähnemann & Schlotheuber, 2024, p.147). That, in itself, begins to explain why the convent has endured, in some form or other, for so long: the sisters (or, from 1711, when Kloster Lüne was finally legally defined as Lutheran 'Damenstiftung', 'the ladies') were uncommonly well-connected in relation to local society and could therefore defend themselves by drawing on support from beyond the monastic walls.

In sum, under Lutheran auspices, Kloster Lüne gradually became a bastion of what is perhaps best described as conventual Protestantism. Across the sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth century, life continued in many ways within the traditional Benedictine framework, albeit with some important modifications. Monastic habits and communal sung worship remained essential even if intercessory prayers were no longer allowed. Yet nuns were still constituted by what

they wore on their skin, by their productive work with textiles, and by their communal singing: all practices worked in and through their bodies that both shaped the nuns into and maintained them as monastic community. Their practices fabricated not just sound but corporation, in the proper sense of the word.

It was only with a new set of ducal regulations issued in 1643 that the overall pattern of life rooted in the singing of the canonical hours was finally modified into something slightly different. The eight daily Benedictine offices were amalgamated into two hour-long performances, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. In addition, the new regulations stated that: 'Although in the monastic establishments until the present date, for one and mostly the greater part, Latin Psalms and invocations have been sung, read and prayed: yet we have nevertheless […] completely abolished these, and [we] decree: that they shall from now onwards take place in the German language' (Brinkmann, 2013, p.52). The extent to which the nuns obeyed is not known. Ready submission should certainly not be taken for granted, as evinced by the burials of the Dominae in their monastic garments.

Given all this, it is striking that, only two years after the decree was issued, a new organ was completed at Kloster Lüne. Six years after that, this instrument was fully decorated in a manner that included Latin as well as German inscriptions (see, for example, Figs. 7.1 and 7.2). One of the most explicit of these (Fig. 7.5) celebrates the reigning Domina of the convent (Fig. 7.9) as the chief patroness of the organ. In addition, and as already noted, the organ is located immediately above and thus frames the doorway into the chapel that gives access to the crypt of the Dominae. These factors raise a number of questions which are, in effect, refined versions of those posed at the beginning of this essay. First, how does the organ fit within the long history of resistance to and compromises with Lutheran customs that characterised Kloster Lüne at this moment in time? Second, how does the organ relate to the corporate identity of the sisters, as articulated in their habits and their communal singing, two profoundly enfleshed practices? Third, what light does this cast on the visual conceptualisation of the display pipes as a school of singing fish? And, finally, how might this help to expand and refine scholarly approaches to the study of early modern bodies?

Singing fish, sanctified bodies

To begin to answer these questions: Steiger is certainly correct in his general conclusion that the organ at Kloster Lüne affirms the theological importance of both art and music within early modern Lutheranism (Steiger, 2013, pp.97–8). However, on a more local level, certain inscriptions on the organ should also be understood as loudly asserting the sisters' long-standing habit

of singing in Latin, and this only eight years after having been told not to do so. It is particularly striking in this context that one of the largest and most legible inscriptions is in Latin, the phrase 'SURSUM CORDA' ('lift up your hearts') towards the top of the rückpositiv (Fig. 7.2). This is part of the liturgy that prefaces the Eucharist and, significantly, Luther had edited it out of his German Mass (Leaver, 2007, p.231). It was, however, retained in many Lutheran communities and that evidently included Kloster Lüne. At the same time, 'Sursum Corda' is a spatial statement. To see the inscription from the floor of the convent church, one must lift up one's head. That, however, would not have been the case for the nuns already elevated to the same height as the organ by virtue of their raised choir in the west end of the church. Or, put differently, their hearts were already uplifted. Moreover, from their choir, they had a particular view of the organ itself, very different to that from the

Figure 7.10: View of the organ from the nuns' choir inside the convent church of Kloster Lüne: note the large painting of King David singing on the side of the organ case and the two smaller paintings on the gallery below, showing the Nativity and the saved at the end of time. (Photograph by kind courtesy of Maarten Rog (orgelfoto.nl: Kloster Lüne, Klosterkirche - Orgelfoto))

church below (Fig. 7.10).

As already suggested, 'choir' (or 'chor' as the regulations of 1555 had it) is simultaneously a musical and a spatial entity, a fabrication of sound if ever there was one. In fact, after the new organ was built at Kloster Lüne, there would have been a close visual, spatial and sonic relationship between it and the nuns' choir. Both were large and elevated structures for making music. Moreover, in the early seventeenth century, a now-lost wooden gallery had been built in front of the nuns' choir, abutting quite far into the nave of the church but remaining at the same level as the organ. This gallery was connected by stairs to the pulpit and ensured that the Lutheran nuns could see the service, listen to the sermon and take communion without ever breaking their enclosure. In the gallery there was seating, with a specially marked chair for the Domina (Brinkmann, 2013, pp.47–9). When the sisters in their matching habits were in this gallery, as a corporation they were arranged rather like the fish on the organ pipes. The largest fish, on the deepest pipe, could be understood as the Domina while the collective singing of all the fish – with their range of higher and lower voices – was like the collective singing of the nuns (in part, this point draws on Davidsson, 2002, pp.90–1).

Here, conventional historians may object that there is no firm textual evidence to prove this parallel between the nuns and the singing, fierce-looking and quasi-monstrous fish. But the sisters' stubborn commitment to the Benedictine offices sung in Latin was still well within their collective living memories when the new organ was built. And, in effect, the fish on the organ are shown as singing at least in part in Latin through the various inscriptions. Moreover, the way that the nuns' bodies were presented through their dress and organised by the various structures in their church surely constitutes important corporeal evidence. For those in need of further textual evidence, there are the Biblical passages from Psalm 98 and Job 41 cited at the beginning of this essay as well as the parable of the net in Matthew 13:47–50, where the righteous who shall be saved are likened to a catch of good fish. In other words, several of the meanings assigned to fish in the Bible constituted one way that those attending church at Kloster Lüne in the seventeenth century could make sense of the distinct spatial arrangements.

Here it is noteworthy that, on the organ at Kloster Lüne, the Book of Psalms is referenced in several places, for example: 'Ps: 95. Singet dem Herrn, Spielet dem Herrn' ('Psalm 95: Sing unto the Lord, Play unto the Lord'). As already noted, King David appears in a large painting on the western or right side of the organ case, so the side facing directly towards the nuns' choir (Fig. 7.10). In the Bible, David is explicitly presented as the author of many of the Psalms, especially those earliest in the cycle. On the organ case, he is portrayed playing

the harp and singing Psalm 103:1–14 (Steiger, 2015, p.82). On the much less visible left or east side of the organ there is a matching painting of Asaph, to whom the Bible attributes Psalms 50 and 73 to 83 (p.81). This is all entirely logical because the book of Psalms was the backbone of the Benedictine Liturgy. The rule of St Benedict explicitly specifies that: 'the Psalter with its full number of 150 Psalms be chanted every week and begun again every Sunday at the Night Office' (St Benedict, 1950, p.40). It is fair, therefore, to assume that those accustomed to singing every week of floods clapping their hands could also imagine themselves as the roaring sea and 'the fulness thereof', as Psalm 98 has it. Or they could even think of themselves as Leviathan, a great and monstrous marine body that nevertheless bears witness to God's power and wisdom. Thinking about bodies with the organ at Kloster Lüne involves moving well beyond the human and, quite literally, into waves of sound. Of course, in Europe there is a long history of conceptualising sound as waves dating back to the late Roman writer Boethius's *De Institutione Musica* (Baumann, 1990, p.199). This, then, is yet another way of linking the fish on the display pipes at Kloster Lüne with the singing nuns. Their devotions came, quite literally, in waves.

The peculiar view that the sisters had of the organ from their choir encompassed not just the large painting of the Psalmist King but two smaller paintings on the gallery below. The image on the left (Fig. 7.11) is a fairly conventional scene of the *Nativity* yet it is also a celebration of singing in Latin: the angel in white with a red sash in the clouds above holds a scroll with the text 'Gloria in excelsis Deo' (Fig. 7.12).

As is well known, the 'Gloria' is a passage intrinsic to the Sunday liturgy apart from during Advent and Lent and it was retained, either in the vernacular or more rarely in Latin, in most forms of Lutheran worship (Herl, 2004, pp.28–9, 57). In the painting, the angel holding this inscription is surrounded by cherubim, conventionally depicted as only heads with wings, so with a bodily logic combining the human and the avian (in this respect, they are analogous to the linking of the human and the avian discussed by Wallis in this issue). These winged heads also reprise those painted in the small white frames adjacent to all the larger paintings on the organ gallery (examples are visible on either side of Fig.7.2, above and below the ovals with single flowers). Because of their relationship to the scene of the *Nativity*, these cherubim constitute a Latin choir of their own.

It is also striking that, in this *Nativity* the Virgin Mary is veiled in white, not her customary blue. This connects her visually to the Infant Jesus, who seems to be resting on her veil and whom she is about to swaddle in white; at the same time, this would also have been a visual link to the white veils worn by the Lutheran
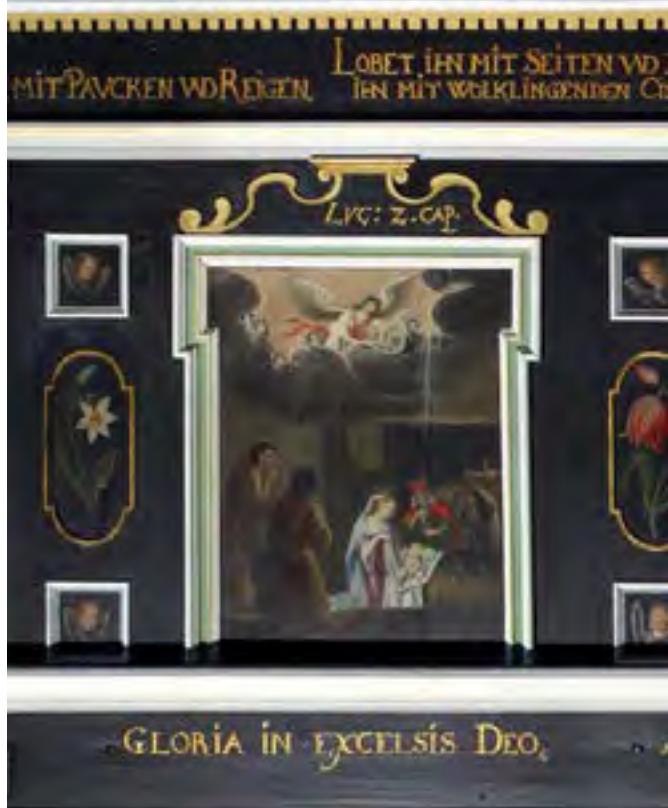
Figure 7.11: Adolph Block, *Nativity*, 1651, oil on panel. West-facing part of organ gallery, convent church, Kloster Lüne.

Fig. 7.12: Detail of the painting in Fig. 7.11.

sisters (Figs. 7.8 and 7.9). In the scene of the *Nativity*, this large white area also connects Mary and Jesus to the white garments of the angel above them as well as to the flock of women dressed in white in the painting further to the right on the organ gallery (Fig. 7.13).

Like the fish on the organ pipes, this painting is unusual, a scene only very rarely depicted in the Christian tradition. It references this biblical passage (Revelation, 14:1–5):

> And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of

Figure 7.13: Adolph Block, *The first fruits of the redeemed*, 1651. Oil on panel. West-facing part of organ gallery, convent church, Kloster Lüne. (Photo: Johann Anselm Steiger)

> a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

The 'voice of many waters' yet again fit with the extraordinary singing fish on the organ pipes and therefore, by extension, with the nuns' voices. Yet the implication of this biblical passage is that the 'hundred and forty and four thousand' are male. However, in the painting showing this scene on the organ at Kloster Lüne, the figures are most emphatically women, identifiable by their prominent cleavages very like that of the Virgin Mary in the painting to the left. Pictorially, this is certainly a matter of redeemed virgins yet in the form

of victorious maidens undefiled by men. The nuns at Kloster Lüne may have struggled against the authorities to retain their Latin singing but this painting proclaims that 'in their mouth was found no guile'. Finally, in this context, the singing monastic body is, yet again, a prefiguration of the celestial, of the rewards for the undefiled followers of the lamb. This body both exists in and yet transcends two distinct temporalities, of heaven and of earth.

It is important that the women in the painting are wearing white, in an allusion to Revelation 7:14: 'These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.' The link is made visually by the white robe and red sash worn by the angel in the *Nativity* (Fig. 7.13). At the same time, there is also a connection between the scene from the Revelation and the painting in Fig. 7.6 above. In the scene from the Revelation, this connection is constituted by the woman in the left foreground with her back to the viewer, seemingly absorbed in her vision of the heavenly Jerusalem. She is like most of the figures shown in Fig. 7.6, who are also receiving a vision albeit here of the crucified Christ. There is a particularly close link with the veiled and crowned nun (so fully professed under the old ritual, before monastic investiture was abolished) also in the left foreground. This painting currently hangs in the nuns' choir at Kloster Lüne; it has been in the ownership of the convent ever since it was made.

It does not matter where exactly in the convent the picture in Fig. 7.6 hung when the organ was first painted. What matters is that the picture both constitutes and reinforces a particular kind of monastic temporality, a perpetually shared memory of one moment in the complex history of Kloster Lüne. The scene depicted is described as a 'Trost Bild' or image of comfort in the text below. The event it shows took place in 1562, when the future Domina Dorothea von Meding – at that point a pupil in the convent school – called her monastic sisters into the garden to share her vision of the crucified Christ up in the clouds (Lähnemann & Schlotheuber, 2024, pp.151–3). That is to say, the event took place in the same year that Kloster Lüne finally received its first Lutheran abbess; the nuns, in their complex struggle with the authorities, were comforted by the Crucified himself. It is particularly striking that the painting dates to around 1623, so towards the end of Dorothea von Meding's reign as Domina. It is therefore extremely likely that she commissioned it herself, instructing the unrecorded painter in how to depict the memory of her childhood vision. Crucially, that memory involved two fully crowned nuns, who would have been formally invested according to the now defunct rules when they took their original vows. Domina von

Meding therefore presided over the making of an image that explicitly bridged pre- and post-Lutheran temporalities in relation to monastic dress, to how the nuns were physically framed and presented.

This attentiveness to conventual history chimes with a personal experience gained when visiting the Benedictine nuns of Stanbrook Abbey in Yorkshire while I was serving as the senior researcher for a television documentary (*Julian of Norwich: The Search for the Lost Manuscript*, 2016). The abbess was showing her visitors a precious reliquary painted with scenes from the martyrdom of a group of Carmelite nuns in the French Revolution. In the windows of a house shown in one of these scenes, the English Benedictine nuns of Cambrai (from whence Stanbrook was founded) are portrayed witnessing their Carmelite sisters from Compiègne walking, in song, to the guillotine. Pointing towards this scene, the abbess proudly exclaimed 'that's us!'

That is to say, monastic communities often treasure specific images linked with particular moments in their history. And their sense of time is quite different from what might be termed secular time: it encompasses the entire history of their specific monastic family, where distant moments may seem intensely present. It is therefore not far-fetched to imagine that the early modern nuns at Kloster Lüne saw the painting of Domina von Meding's childhood vision as showing 'us'. On one level, the painting helped to bolster the community's sense of its own sanctity because it was a reminder of a vision vouchsafed to its future head and members at a crucial historical moment. Moreover, the painting kept memories of the old and intensely bodily rituals of investiture – of crowning – alive and present in their minds. And so did the corresponding painting on the west end of the organ gallery: the women in white wear bejewelled crowns on the physical crowns of their heads, instead of the name of God on their foreheads, as the biblical text would have it. Since there is precious little iconographic precedent for this image, it is a striking departure from the biblical source. But it fits with an enduring collective commitment to the very idea of a nun's headgear as essential to her identity (Bynum, 2015). As late as 1842, the reigning Domina of Kloster Lüne, Wilhelmine Sophie von Meding, stated in an entry in the monastic chronicle: 'We who are always in the convent […] have our veils and we acknowledge with gratitude their value and amenity' (Brinkmann, 2013, p.69). Veiling, as also explored by Murray in the present set of essays, is evidently a powerful marker of distinct and often extraordinary identities and temporalities. At Kloster Lüne, the bodily practices of convent life endured across centuries precisely because memories of them were kept alive: the monastic body, conceptualised as a corporation fabricated through dress, singing

and sewing, was never allowed to die. In this sense, at least, it was akin to the eternal life promised to 'they which follow the Lamb'.

There was a wide range of pictorial, spatial and sonic relationships between the organ and the nuns at Kloster Lüne. It is also likely that the organ was understood as a kind of body in its own right, along the lines articulated by Johannes Buxtehude, as discussed at the beginning of this essay. Besides all this, in early modern Lutheranism, a new organ was usually inaugurated with a special ceremony that, amongst other things, involved a lengthy sermon on the importance of music in worship (Braun, 2014). No such sermon survives from Kloster Lüne but it is eminently possible that inaugural events were held in 1645 and, again, in 1651, when the paintwork was finally completed. In effect, the organ entered the community unclothed, served a period of probation and was finally invested in 1651, a Leviathan of an instrument suitably equipped and dressed to perform 'the voice of many waters'.

This helps to highlight a final connection between the organ and the conventual community. Each of the paintings on the lower gallery are framed not just by square images of cherubim but also by oblong pictures of flowers set against black backgrounds (clearly visible in Fig. 7.2). They include tulips, narcissi and roses and these chime with further archaeological evidence from the crypt of the Dominae, with its entrance below the organ. This evidence comes from a burial from 1659, which must be that of Domina von Estorff, chief patroness of the organ, who died that year. In her coffin, there was a black silk ribbon with remnants of what appears to be a bouquet either of flowers or herbs. A similar ribbon was also found in the oldest burial in the crypt, from 1634, which must be that of Dorothea von Meding (Ströbl & Vick, 2007, p.53). In the seventeenth century, it seems that evergreen sprigs and branches rather than flowers were commonly used during funerary rites, apart from those for children and Roman Catholic nuns (Córdova, 2011, p.450; Drury, 1994). Yet it may be that the Lutheran Dominae of Kloster Lüne were put to rest with a gathering of flowers, probably as a sign of their undefiled state and, at the same time, as bridal, appropriate for their final union with the heavenly bridegroom. The organ, with flowers in a black setting and straddling the entrance to the crypt of the Dominae, is in this sense profoundly connected with the deceased abbesses. The school of singing fish therefore stand not only for the living members of the monastic family but also for those now singing in heaven, for 'us' across 'our' full history. The fish are de*monstrat*ive in the fullest sense of the word. For the organ is both part of and embodies conventual memories: it helps to constitute the monastic corporation as a physical, spatial, sonic and temporal whole.

Conclusion

To return, now, to my original questions: how might a complex artefact like the organ at Kloster Lüne enrich and enliven, expand and refine, our understanding of early modern bodies? And what are the benefits of approaching the historical study of bodies through a musical instrument rather than from the starting point of something textual?

This approach presses hard on the category 'body'. At Kloster Lüne, bodies are best understood as pluralities, as constituted in and through a specific set of embodied and interactive practices that, together, both established and maintained the monastic corporation. This corporation encompassed the totality of nuns, living and deceased, and it was fabricated in and through song, music, textiles, burials, paintings and a myriad of other practices. Crucially, the corporation both existed within and transcended the three distinct temporalities of past, present and future. At the same time, the corporation was embedded in a much wider physical environment: singing (in Latin) with the angels, roaring with the fish of the sea and rejoicing with the floods and the hills, all entities that are other-than-human. This helps to explain why the fish on the organ are somewhat monstrous: it is a way of pointing to something that lies beyond merely ordinary fishiness. In turn, this fits with my broader point that the organ represents the monastic corporation as having its own distinct ontology that spans conventional oppositions such as the celestial and the terrestrial, the extraordinary and the quotidian, and the animate and the inanimate. In short, at Kloster Lüne, bodies are not bounded. Rather, like the fish on the organ, they are plural, open and productive; they come into being through waves of sound. That is the first lesson to learn from the instrument at Kloster Lüne.

At the same time, the approach set out in this essay also presses hard on what constitutes acceptable evidence for the histories of bodies. Beyond textual evidence, I have drawn on archaeological material, on imagery, on the architectural and sculptural organisation of space, on singing and music-making, on dress, textiles and textile-making, on ritual behaviour, and on past and present monastic lives. At least for me, one marked benefit of this was to illuminate the limits of certain types of textual evidence: obedience to ducal decrees was not a given at Kloster Lüne. In general, written rules cannot be assumed to evince actual behaviour. That is why it is crucial to cast the net widely: material, physical, visual and instrumental evidence is of paramount importance when writing histories of bodies.

Finally, there is McKinnon's useful concept of musical

sound as something fabricated, as a weaving or stitching of spaces, sounds, bodies, textiles and instruments into a greater whole in performance. This offers a way of approaching specific historical bodies precisely as fabricated, as constituted in many different ways: visually, spatially, sonically and artefactually rather than just textually. I hope I have managed to show that there are considerable benefits to be drawn from thinking about bodies in terms of fabrication. This approach means focusing properly on the experiential, on what it means to be a body. Without such a focus, our histories of early modern bodies will remain fleshless, bloodless and silent.

Bibliography

1   Baumann, D. (1990) 'Musical acoustics in the middle ages' (trans. B Haggh), *Early Music*, vol.18, no.2, pp.199–210.

2   St Benedict (1950) *St. Benedict's Rule for Monasteries* (trans. L.J. Doyle), Collegeville, Liturgical Press.

3   Bicknell, S. (1998) 'The organ case' in N. Thislethwaite and G. Webber (eds) *The Cambridge Companion to the Organ*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

4   Boeck, U. (1971) 'Die Orgel von Kloster Lüne: Zu Geschichte und Restaurierung', *Niedersächsisches Jahrbuch für Landesgeschichte*, vol.43, pp.153–60.

5   Braun, L. (2014) 'Die Orgelpredigt: Überlegungen zu einer Gattung zwischen Musik und Theologie', *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, vol.71, no.4, pp.247–81.

6   Brinkmann, J.-U. (2013) *Kloster Lüne: Geschichte und Architektur*, Thunum, Edition Peperkorn.

7   Brito, C. (2004) '"Um Grande Peixe, Dona Baleia da Costa": The whale in Portuguese early modern natural history' in P.J. Smith and F. Egmond (eds) *Ichthyology in context (1500–1880)*, Leiden and Boxton, Brill.

8   Burkhardt, J. and Klymenko, I. (2023) 'Zwischen Eigenverantwortung, Normierung und Kontrolle: Vigilanz als soziale Praxis in Klöstern der Bursfelder Kongregation (ca.1440-1540)' in M. Butz, F. Grollman and F. Mehltretter (eds) *Sprachen der Wachsamkeit*, Berlin and Boston, de Gruyter.

9   Butler, L.E. (2004) 'Johann Christoph Bach's new organ for Eisenach's Georgenkirche', *Bach*, vol.35, no.1, pp.42–60.

10   Bynum, C. Walker (2015) '"Crowned with many crowns": Nuns and their statues in late-medieval Wienhausen', *The Catholic Historical Review*, vol.101, no.1, pp.18–40.

11   Chiavari, C., Martini, C., Prandstraller, D., Niklasson, A., Johansson, L.-G., Svensson, J.-E., Åslund, A. and Bergsten, C.-J.(2008) 'Atmospheric corrosion of historical organ pipes: The influence of environment and materials', *Corrosion Science*, vol.50, pp.2444–55.

12   Cohen, J.J. (2008) 'Inventing with animals in the middle ages' in B.A. Hanawalt and L.J. Kiser (eds) *Engaging with Nature: Essays in the Natural World in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press.

13   Córdova, J.M. (2011) 'Clad in flowers: Indigenous arts and knowledge in colonial Mexican convents', *Art Bulletin*, vol.93, no.4, pp.449–67.

14   Davidsson, H. (2002) 'The Organ in seventeenth-century cosmology' in K.J. Snyder (ed.) *The Organ as a Mirror of its Time: North European Reflections, 1610–2000*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

15   Drury, S. (1994) 'Funeral plants and flowers in England: Some examples', *Folklore*, vol.105, nos 1–2, pp.101–3.

16   Egmond, F. (2024) 'Looking beyond the margins of print: Depicting water creatures in Europe, c.1500–1620' in P.J. Smith and F. Egmond (eds), *Ichthyology in Context (1500–1880)*, Leiden and Boxton, Brill.

17   Evangelisti, S. (2008) *Nuns: A History of Convent Life, 1450–1700*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

18   Fuchs, (2012) 'The phenomenology of body memory' in S.C. Koch, T. Fuchs, M. Summa and C. Müller (eds) *Body Memory, Metaphor and Movement*, Amsterdam and Philadelphia, John Benjamins.

19   Heal, B. (2007) *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Early Modern Germany: Protestant and Catholic Piety*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

20   Herl, J. (2004) *Worship Wars in Early Lutheranism: Choir, Congregation, and Three Centuries of Conflict*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

21   Higginbottom, E. (1998) 'Organ music and the liturgy' in N. Thislethwaite and G. Webber (eds) *The Cambridge Companion to the Organ*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

22   Howard, D.M. (2014) 'The vocal tract organ and the vox humana organ stop', *Journal of Music, Technology and Education*, vol.7, no.3, pp. 265–77.

23   Jorgens, E.B. (1982) *The Well-Tun'd Word: Musical Interpretations of English Poetry, 1597–1651*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.

24   *Julian of Norwich: The Search for the Lost Manuscript* (2016), BBC4, July 19.

25 Lähnemann, H. and Schlotheuber, E. (2024) *The Life of Nuns: Love, Politics and Religion in Medieval German Convents*, Cambridge, Open Book.

26 Leaver, R. (2007) *Luther's Liturgical Music: Principles and Implications*, Grand Rapids and Cambridge, William B. Eerdmans.

27 Lindley, D. (2013) '"Words for music, perhaps": Early modern songs and lyrics' in M. Thain (ed.) *The Lyric Poem: Formations and Transformations*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

28 Mason, P. (2009) *Before Disenchantment: Images of Exotic Animals and Plants in the Early Modern World*, London, Reaktion.

29 McKinnon, D. (2021) 'Materiality: the fabrication of sound', in J. Grant, J. Matthias and D. Prior (eds) *The Oxford handbook of sound art*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 273–286.

30 Müller, J. (1793) 'Topographie und Geschichte des adelichen Fräuleinklosters Lüne', *Annalen der Braunschweig-Lüneburgischen Churlande*, vol.7, no.4, pp.598–669.

31 OED (n.d.) *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, https://www.oed.com, accessed 25.3.2025.

32 Rijks, M. (2024) 'A taste for fish: Paintings of aquatic animals in the Low Countries (1560-1729)' in P.J. Smith and F. Egmond (eds), *Ichthyology in Context (1500–1880)*, Leiden and Boxton, Brill.

33 Roelens, J. (2019) 'Songs of Sodom: Singing about the unmentionable vice in the early modern Low Countries', *Journal of Homosexuality*, vol.66, no.8, pp.1126–47.

34 Scribner, R.W. ([1981] 1994) *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation*, Oxford, Clarendon.

35 Sisneros, J.A. (2009) 'Adaptive hearing in the vocal plainfin midshipman fish: Getting in tune for the breeding season and implications for acoustic communication', *Integrative Zoology*, vol.4, pp.33–42.

36 Skovgaard, A.P. (2021) 'The fabric of devotion: A new approach to studying textiles from late medieval nunneries, *Konsthistorisk tidskrift*, vol.90, no.1, pp.44–64.

37 Smith, P.H. (2022) *From Lived Experience to the Written Word: Reconstructing Practical Knowledge in the Early Modern World*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

38 Snow, A. and Cottingham, J.P. (2024) 'Sympathetic resonance of the pipe organ and its effects on concert hall acoustics', *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, vol.156, no.4 (Supplement), A69.

39 Snyder, K. (2007) *Dieterich Buxtehude: Organist in Lübeck*, Rochester, Rochester University Press.

40 Steiger, J.A. (2015) *Der Orgelprospekt im Kloster Lüne als Zeugnis Barock-Lutherischer Bild- und Musiktheologie: zur Intermedialität von Wort, Bild und Music im 17. Jahrhundert*, Regensburg, Schnell & Steiner.

41 Steinzig, P. ([1481–1530] 2019) *Die Chronik des Klosters Lüne über die Jahre 1481-1530: Hs. Lüne 13*, Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck.

42 Sternbach, J. (2024) 'Virginal spaces: Feminine music and space in Dutch seventeenth-century painting', *Rutgers Art Review: The Graduate Journal of Research in Art History*, vol.40, pp.54–77.

43 Ströbl, A. and Vick, D. (2007) 'Die Bestattungen in der Äbtissinnengruft im Kloster Lüne', *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Archäologie des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit*, vol.180, pp.45–55.

44 van Engen, J.H. (2008) *Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life: the* Devotio Moderna *and the World of the Later Middle Ages*, Philadelphia, University of Philadelphia Press.

45 Volkhardt, U. (2015) *Musik aus den Heideklöstern. Kloster Lüne: God sy gelovet: praktische Notenedition*, Hildesheim, Georg Olms.

46 Wehking, S. (2010) 'Begrabenwerden im Kloster: das Begräbnis der Dorothea von Meding im Jahr 1634 nadem der Beschreibung im Anschreibebuch des Klosters Lüne' in C. Wulf (ed.) *Klöster und Inschriften: Glaubenszeugnisse gestickt, gemalt, gehauen, graviert*, Wiesbaden, Reichert.

47 Williams, P. and Owen, B. (2001) 'Organ stop', *Grove Music Online*, https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000020446, accessed 25.3.2025.

48 Zell, M. (2011) '"Liefde baart kunst": Vermeer's poetic of painting', *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, vol.35, no.3–4, pp.142–64.