



FLUID BODIES AND BODILY FLUIDS IN PREMODERN EUROPE

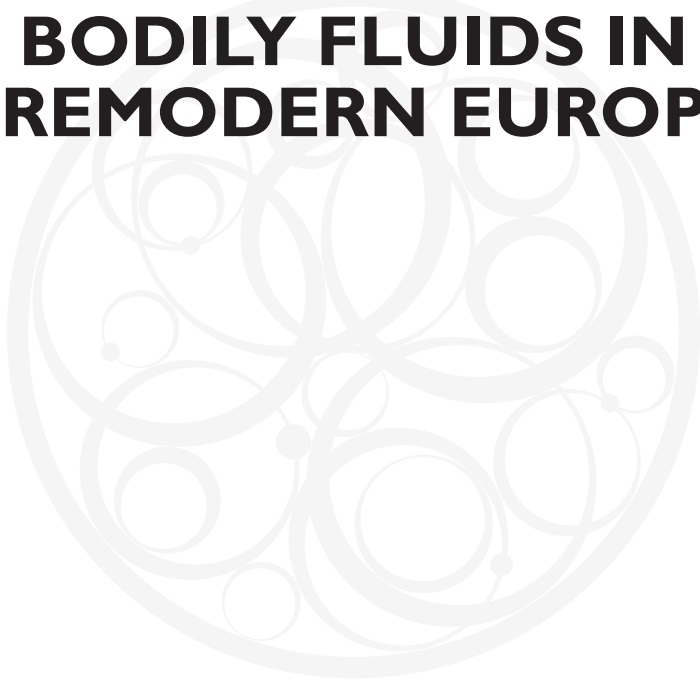
BODIES, BLOOD, AND TEARS IN
LITERATURE, THEOLOGY, AND ART

Edited by

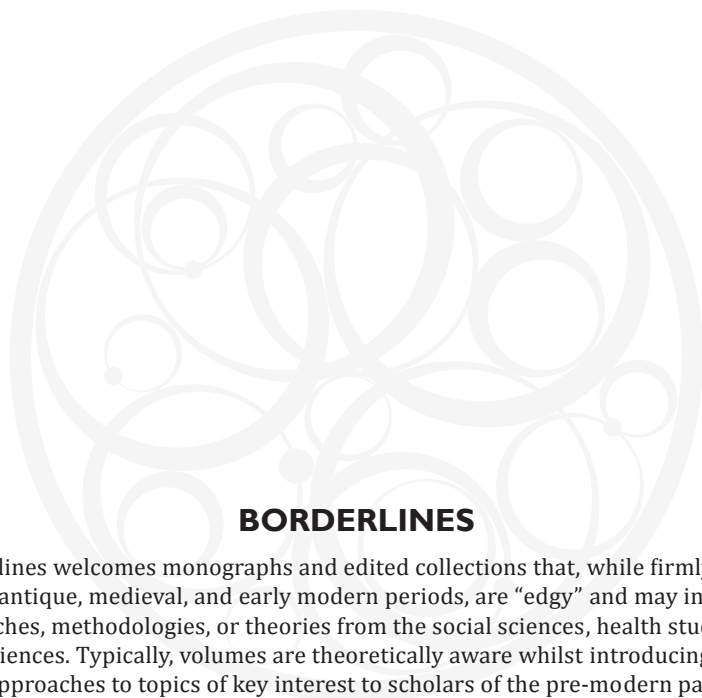
ANNE M. SCOTT and
MICHAEL DAVID BARBEZAT



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DEDICATION

This volume is dedicated to the Perth Medieval and Renaissance Group which celebrates scholarship and sustains scholars with a winning mix of collegiality, openness and friendship.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION: BODIES, FLUIDITY, AND CHANGE

Michael David Barbezat and Anne M. Scott

FLUID BODIES AND Bodily Fluids in Premodern Europe: Bodies, Blood, and Tears in Literature, Theology, and Art is an interdisciplinary collection, containing chapters from specialists in history, art history, and literature, dealing with material from the early Middle Ages to the early modern period. The essays focus on discussions regarding the body and how its fluids both signify and explain change. For medieval and early modern thinkers, the apparent solidity of the body only came about through the dynamic interplay of a host of fluidities in constant flux. The intimately familiar language of the body served as a convenient medium through which to imagine and describe transformations of the larger world, both for the better and also for the worse. Rethinking the human body was one way to approach redefining the social, political, and religious realities of the world.

Fluid Bodies situates itself in the context of a rich and ongoing conversation regarding conceptions of the human body and its significations in the medieval and early modern Western world. There is no shortage of scholarship on the subject of corporeality in these periods. Past work has interrogated the range of meanings assigned to the category of body. This work has stressed the multiplicity of these meanings, destabilizing monolithic categories of universal personhood or universal body by approaching their subjects through the lenses of gender,¹ teleology,² narrative,³ sexuality,⁴ and developing notions of the role played by bodily fluids in human physiology, particularly the humoral body and its reciprocal relations with its environment.⁵

Materiality itself has also served as a frequent focus for recent research, particularly into the way the sacred and the material can interact and sometimes cohere. This work, especially as it has been developed by scholars such as Caroline Walker Bynum, has stressed the recurrent anxieties that result from the investment of the divine in the material. Most pertinently for this volume, it also explores the ultimate fruitfulness of these anxieties as drives for cultural expression and creative thought, particularly in

1 Kay and Rubin, *Framing Medieval Bodies*. The works cited here are listed in the bibliography at the end of the chapter and further key works are listed in the Select Bibliography at the end of the volume.

2 Akbari and Ross, *The Ends of the Body*; Hirai, *Medical Humanism and Natural Philosophy*.

3 Cohen and Weiss, *Thinking the Limits of the Body*.

4 Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*; Burger, *Chaucer's Queer Nation*.

5 Paster, *Humoring the Body*; Horstmannshoff, King, and Zittel, *Blood, Sweat, and Tears*; Lange, *Telling Tears in the English Renaissance*.

the signifying power of blood.⁶ Bynum's work has illustrated that speculation regarding bodily change often prompts focused reflections on personal identity. In fact, the need to maintain personal identity and the desire to keep the world recognizable have often provided limits to the imagining of a better human being or a more perfect world in the Western tradition. These speculative limits suggest some of the motivations that lay beneath thought regarding embodiment and demonstrate that a total separation between body and soul, that is, between essential personhood and the body, cannot stand at most points in the medieval and early modern tradition.

The unique contribution of this volume to ongoing scholarship is that it focuses on the body and its fluids as tools for signifying and understanding processes of change. It situates its inquiries within the imagery and discourse employed by historical actors, and through these historicized perspectives it recovers something of the productive fluidity of embodiment in medieval and early modern worlds. It questions ideas of personhood in their entanglement with embodied experience. It explores the different purposes and narratives that explained and structured the experiences of medieval and early modern bodies, both individual and collective. On the level of bodily matter, it interrogates the role of the constituent material parts of the body and their participation in a greater whole. In the sphere of heuristics, it explores the potential for the body and its changeability to function as signs. Finally, in all of these functions, its individual chapters draw attention to the different ways that speculation regarding the body reflected speculation regarding the larger political and material ordering of the world.

In early medical theory, the human body was considered to be composed of fluids and these fluids were themselves made up of the four elements that came together to constitute all terrestrial material substances. The four basic fluids, or humors, of the body—blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile—mirrored the four terrestrial elements.⁷ Arising from Hippocratic medicine, the four humors played an essential role in the body's economy, generating and sustaining it. These liquids also influenced, and sometimes were believed to constitute, individuals' psychological states. In the words of Gail Kern Paster, due to the workings of the humors in the body, the "passions were liquid forces of nature."⁸ The exact balance of these fluids in a person varied as part of their individuality. This balance, or complexion, described the humoral state natural to a given individual and defined which humor was predominant (sanguine, phlegmatic, choleric, or melancholic).⁹ Yet the individual complexion was not really stable, being subject to constant disruption through disease. In its constant negotiations for a variable and unique balance, always under some threat, the fluidity of the body reflected both the promising and the dangerous malleability of the world.

⁶ Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body; Metamorphosis and Identity; Wonderful Blood; Christian Materiality*.

⁷ As well as the four primary qualities (hot, wet, cold, dry).

⁸ Paster, *Humoring the Body*, 4.

⁹ Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine*, 104–6.

As medieval theologians often explained, the eventual perfection of the human body was an essential part of the perfection of the entire world.¹⁰ Speculation regarding the one frequently attracted the other. Embracing the ancient concept of humanity as microcosm, or a version of the larger universe in miniature, intellectuals imagined that transformations of the human body mirrored transformations of the world and vice versa; reimagining one involved the reconceptualization of both. Study of and speculation regarding the self, likewise, were not necessarily distinct from the study of the external processes of nature. Since humanity was an image of the elements, principles, and forces active in the world, human beings enjoyed a privileged position from which to understand the processes by which they were formed and by which the world itself continued.¹¹

The body and its processes, as a vehicle through which to rethink the world and its orderings, did not always, of course, require grand mythological, theological, and philosophical edifices such as that of the Neoplatonic *homo microcosmus* or learned medicine. Instead, just as man as microcosm drew together so many different genres, so too did other forms of speculation regarding the body and its fluids in the context of change. Beyond literature and written texts, artistic representations of the body also brought together the interests and influences of multiple genres, and such representations invoked a wide range of associations and implications just as rich as those found within textual sources.

The convergence of multiple genres, in unique and often idiosyncratic combinations reminiscent of the unstable diversity of the larger world, is the point of departure for our volume. Each chapter takes as its focus representations and conceptions of the body, its fluids, and their significations within specific historical contexts. In taking this approach it follows scholars who have insisted, “that we cannot take ‘the body’ for granted as a natural, fixed and historically universal datum of human societies.”¹² Individually, the chapters take the fluidity of the body in the terms set by a particular context, exploring what it meant in specific moments and in specific places. The authors in this collection highlight many concepts that have faded, or routes that were not taken, while identifying others that have only grown more powerful and normative over the passage of time. From the point of view inhabited by modern scholars interested in the past, these individual chapters are in a unique position to illustrate what Glenn Burger has called a process of “becoming.”¹³ In the present day, certain assumptions about the meanings of the body and its constituent parts are used to structure society and human experience. Our chapters demonstrate that there have been many other valid ways of understanding the body, and that our current interpretations reflect only a few out of many possibilities.

10 For example, Hugh of St. Victor, *De sacramentis christianae fidei*, 2.17.28 and 2.18.1, in *Patrologia Latina*, 176:609–10; trans. Deferrari, *On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith*, 466.

11 Stock, *Myth and Science in the Twelfth Century*, 275.

12 Turner, “Body in Western Society,” 17.

13 Burger, *Chaucer’s Queer Nation*, x.

The individual chapters chart an eclectic course through these issues within three main sections. Each chapter, within the bounds of its own case study, considers the role of the body in medieval and early modern culture, and explores its potential to become fluid. In those chapters that deal with blood and with tears, it becomes evident that the emission of those bodily fluids causes something to happen—they become agents of change. The contents of each section are not arranged chronologically but by theme. The first section, “Transformative and Manipulative Tears,” explores performances of weeping as attempts to invoke social, political, or personal change. The chapters in this section explore tears in a number of different modes: as a divine gift that authenticates the sanctity of its recipient, as social performances that connect the weeper to biblical figures and to God, and as a gendered political strategy. The second section, “Identities in Blood,” examines presentations of blood as a marker and a shaper of identity outside familiar categories of race or heredity. The chapters in this section question the role of blood, in itself or as an image, in the formation or reformation of the self. These chapters examine Christ’s blood as a mimetic template for the faithful and explore later understandings of the role of blood in the composition of a human individual. The third and final part of the collection, “Bodies and blood in life, death, and resurrection,” examines instances in which contemplation of the human body and its dominant fluid, blood, provided an opportunity for thinkers from late antiquity to the early modern period to critique and reimagine both their roles in society and the nature of humanity itself.

Transformative and Manipulative Tears

A rich scholarship on tears provides a foundation for this section. Nagy, in *Le don des larmes*, argues for tears as a purely physiological function, a view sustained by the early modern philosopher, René Descartes, in *Passions of the Soul*. The collection *Crying in the Middle Ages*,¹⁴ provides a useful starting point for charting change and development with regard to weeping as portrayed in medieval art and literature. For the early modern viewpoint, *Telling Tears in the English Renaissance*¹⁵ warns against the simplistic assumption that the reasons given for tears are unchanging. Lange points out the differences over time in attitudes to weeping, suggesting that tears are a valuable indication of fashions in conceptions about feelings. The first three chapters of this volume engage with and build on this scholarship, offering new insights with which to approach well-studied subject matter.¹⁶

First, Bale advances an original explanation of the tears shed by the fifteenth-century mystic, Margery Kempe. He argues that she represents her spirituality by “a crying that is not only socially performative but also follows and supports certain

¹⁴ Gertsman, *Crying in the Middle Ages*.

¹⁵ Lange, *Telling Tears*.

¹⁶ Nagy, *Le don des larmes*; Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*; Gertsman, *Crying in the Middle Ages*; Lange, *Telling Tears*.

rhetorical and contextual cues.”¹⁷ Rather than seeing tears as a sign of Kempe’s gender or of her “madness,” Bale’s chapter discusses Kempe’s highly logical geography of tears. It considers how her crying functions allusively not only to other holy weepers but also how it responds to certain sites connected with weeping—especially those concerned with the Magdalene and the Passion of Christ. Bale sets Kemp within a tradition deriving from other mystical and religious authorities. He calls her crying “richly allusive and intertextual,” and points out that her allusion to “the heat of the fire of love is appropriate because tears were a sign of heat and moisture.”¹⁸

Kempe’s crying is more than personal; it is public, performed in defined places which have specific significance for the medieval worshipper. In chapter 3, Hudson makes the point that the public shedding of tears is governed by certain codes of conduct, and here, Bale concurs that, “in many medieval texts, crying only means something when other people see it.”¹⁹ Nonetheless, Kempe’s crying is deeply personal, and is stimulated by her deep devotion to Christ. Her imaginative emotional oneness with the human, suffering body of Christ elicits torrential tears of empathy, a reaction that is a normal, human reaction to the suffering of a loved one whose pain cannot be eased and must be borne alone. This empathy is perfectly understandable as a human emotion, but drawing a parallel between blood and tears, Bale points out the spiritual significance of the reaction: tears and blood are both warm, wet humors, but additionally, Kempe’s tears were “pseudo-stigmatic,” since they symbolize the wounding that she experiences at Calvary. In a later chapter by Baudinette, “Performative Asceticism and Exemplary Effluvia: Blood, Tears, and Rapture in Fourteenth-century German Dominican Literature,” it will be seen that Kempe’s near contemporaries, the late fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Dominican nuns, demonstrated in their bodies the significance of shedding their own blood in empathy with the physical sufferings of Christ in his passion.²⁰

Hudson’s chapter discussing *A Lamentation of Christ* attributable to the fifteenth-century Paduan sculptor Bartolomeo Bellano, and a number of similar compositions in sculpture and painting, invites nuanced hypotheses about the relationship between the bodily expression of emotion, devotional practices, and decorum in early modern art. His analysis of the curious juxtaposition of extreme lamentation and impassivity in fifteenth-century passion iconography is closely aligned with Bale’s chapter. In this genre, biblical figures are often portrayed showing obvious signs of grief beside the crucified Christ, while the figures of the donors, who funded the work, are often shown as impassive. Like Bale, Hudson too positions the religious mourner in context, and considers the shedding of tears within the context of social mores, prescriptions of religious decorum, and historical understandings of the expression of emotion. For Hudson’s figures, even though they are static in contrast to the intensely corporeal and vibrant Margery Kempe, the shedding or the restraining of tears takes place in time, in place, and in society.

¹⁷ Bale, chap. 2.

¹⁸ Bale, chap. 2.

¹⁹ Bale, chap. 2.

²⁰ See chap. 6.

Hudson relates both the active expressions of grief and the passive expressions of the donor figures to traditions of affective piety, and carefully contextualizes them. As the hugely influential Thomas à Kempis suggests, there is a time and place for crying, but it is quiet tears, shed inwardly in meditation, that are spiritually efficacious.²¹ Hudson charts a pathway between texts of devotional literature which advocate emotionally involved contemplation of Christ's life and Passion and sumptuary texts and conduct books that counsel restraint in public expressions of grief. He points out that the artworks illustrate "the tension or contradiction between the appropriateness of ardent religious feeling and the inappropriateness of its embodied expression."²²

Moving the discussion of public weeping into the secular sphere, Broomhall, "Catherine's Tears: Diplomatic Corporeality, Affective Performance, and Gender at the Sixteenth-century French Court," explores the implications of Catherine de' Medici's tears both in space—in the public domain of the court—and in the context of diplomatic relationships.²³ Here, again, tears are contextual, purposeful, and related both to the space where they are shed, and the socio-political context. This chapter explores how gesture and physical performance, particularly the shedding of tears, constructed key aspects of diplomatic negotiation for both women and men at the sixteenth-century French court. The humoral constitution of the queen led her to employ tears as a political strategy. These bodily emissions helped to construct the queen's representation of particular sentiments in the context of political events. Indeed, they also helped to construct these contexts, and highlighted the challenges that Catherine faced as a woman involved in government. She had to contend with the way these gendered liquid emotions drew upon contemporary understandings of humors and gender; women were conventionally expected to be weak in government, and the use of tears, whether in women or men, was traditionally viewed as a sign of weakness. But Catherine's tears became a strategic tool, which she wielded in the face of the fears experienced by male diplomats: fears of emotional contagion, including the dangerous power of empathy in the diplomatic moment.

Identities in Blood

In the second part of the collection, blood is explored as the life force not just of the human body, but of the community. *Wonderful Blood* and *Medieval Blood* are foundational texts for the medieval period; *The Heart and the Vascular System in Ancient Greek Medicine from Alcmaeon to Galen* and *William Harvey and the Mechanics of the Heart* are two texts among many that explore the amazing bodily fluid, blood, in the early modern era.²⁴

²¹ Hudson, chap. 3.

²² Hudson, chap. 3.

²³ Chapter 4.

²⁴ Bynum, *Wonderful Blood*; Bildhauer, *Medieval Blood*; Harris, *The Heart and the Vascular System*; Shackleford, *William Harvey and the Mechanics of the Heart*.

Identities in Blood is a theme that dominates Scott's chapter: "*Piers Plowman* and the Blood of Brotherhood." In line with the theme of the collection, the poem considers Christ's materiality which coexists with his divinity, a theme that resonates with the final chapter in which Barbezat rigorously examines the young Augustine's attempts to explain various ways of conceiving of the body of God, the resurrection body, and the bodies of the elect at the end of time.²⁵ Langland approaches the idea of blood through the portrayal of Christ's body perceived in three ways: his body as human and corporeal, his body as the Church, and his body as sacramental, considered in the sacraments of both Baptism and the Eucharist.²⁶

Throughout the poem Christ's blood is said to be the cause and ground of brotherly unity and of human solidarity. In his portrayal of Christ as human and divine, unlike Margery Kempe or the Dominican nuns discussed in the following chapter, Langland does not empathize with the suffering Christ; he portrays him poetically, and blood is the main feature that he stresses. This blood is seen as the *arma Christi*, the blazon or coat of arms on the human flesh of Christ. Langland poetically refers to Christ's human body as the ceremonial knightly garment that he has put on or assumed. It is this body emblazoned with blood that defines Christ, the anointed one, as the crucified and risen one. In tune with Augustine's efforts to comprehend the implications of Christ's body both in its temporal and eternal manifestations, mentioned in the final chapter by Barbezat, Langland strives through poetry to make sense of the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ by portraying his humanity in its corporeality. The blood is the direct sign of that corporeality, just as it is the sign of his human/divine nature worshipped in the sacrament of the Eucharist. For Langland, as for worshippers in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the blood is key. And, as the liquid that is used for the mortar to build the Barn of Unity, the allegorical building that Langland portrays as the body of Christ as Church, this blood supports the building of the brotherhood of the church, just as blood courses through the veins of Christ's corporeal body.

Pursuing the concept of flowing blood, Baudinette in the next chapter gives an analysis of the penitential practices of medieval Dominican nuns in what is now modern Germany. He examines how, in their bloody somatic piety, the religious women seek a greater connection to Christ through the emulation of his suffering, just as Margery Kempe does with her tears. Baudinette carefully contextualizes extreme penitential practices within the Dominican Order, showing how, in their efforts to achieve oneness with the crucified Christ, early founding fathers and later Dominican nuns both practised intensely corporeal penances. Baudinette explains their deliberate drawing forth blood and shedding manifold tears as a bodily manifestation of their union with God through the crucifixion of the human body of Christ, and subsequent eucharistic transubstantiation of Christ's glorified, or as Barbezat names it, "resurrection" body and blood. The flowing blood is both spiritual and material, transforming each of the practitioners into an *alter Christus* (another Christ), a concept pursued further by Hiller who considers the

²⁵ Chapter 10.

²⁶ Chapter 5.

blood shed by the popular saints, Sebastian, Francis of Assisi, and Peter Martyr.²⁷ Where Margery Kempe is presented by Bale as empathizing with Christ in his sufferings, and involuntarily shedding tears in grief, the Dominican nuns emulate Christ's sufferings by purposefully drawing blood to achieve an ecstatic oneness with the divine and human nature of Christ. In this suffering emulation, the nuns play out in their bodies a desired transition from a corporeal existence to an experience of what they perceive to be the resurrection body. In subjecting their bodies to bloody torment, they experience, by imitation, the sufferings that led to the death and Resurrection of Christ, and they perceive their experience as a spiritual validation. By enduring extreme corporeal torment which leads to spiritual ecstasy, they get as close as is humanly possible to the transubstantiation of Christ's body and blood into the much venerated eucharistic elements of bread and wine.

The final chapter in this section, "'Bloody Business': Passions and Regulation of Sanguinity in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *King Lear*," transitions from explorations of Christ's bloody body, and the empathetic shedding of their own blood by the Dominican nuns, towards an early modern medical understanding of blood. Sellberg argues that historians of science have overlooked the central congruence between the passions and the humoral body fluids in early modern scientific thought. Even before the publication of William Harvey's *De Motu Cordis* in 1628, ideas of circular sanguinity were in fact widespread in medical as well as in cultural conceptions of the body, and she examines several of these texts, less well-known today, but influential in their own period: "Blood was an element that bridged the spiritual and physical world in early modern science and culture. It was the humor of the human body facilitating communication between flesh and soul, inner passions and social and political interaction."²⁸ Sellberg exemplifies this in an analysis of *Macbeth* and *King Lear*, demonstrating how the sickened and disrupted familial relationships of blood within these plays permeate the whole community in each realm. They give rise to moral diseases and sicknesses within the polity and among its members that can only be purged by catastrophic blood letting.

Bodies and Blood in Life, Death, and Resurrection

The final section in the volume places the human body centre stage visually, in Rembrandt's painting of an anatomical dissection, and in several images of the act of martyrdom. Interwoven with this strongly corporeal presentation is an emphasis on the immaterial person, and the concluding chapter of the book brings this preoccupation to the fore. Throughout the volume authors have argued, each in a unique case study, that the body in all its facets, material, sensuous, feeling, and vibrant, is the earthy manifestation of the whole human being, body, mind, emotions, and spirit. The collection comes full circle with an analysis of Augustine's exhaustive attempts to explain, within

²⁷ Chapter 8.

²⁸ Sellberg, chap. 7.

the thought processes of late antique Christendom, how the body can achieve resurrection after corporeal death.

The first two chapters of this section offer a view of saintly bodies pierced and mutilated in a sacrificial martyrdom (Hiller), and a secular, quasi-sacrificial treatment of the body on Dr. Tulp's anatomy table (Gramotnev). The final chapter (Barbezat), acts as a coda, reflecting on the tension between corporeal and spiritual bodies, voiced in antiquity, and still reverberating among philosophers, theologians, and Scripture scholars. The rich historiography on the body, much of which has been referenced at the start of this introduction, is extended by these chapters. Particularly pertinent are studies of body as an object used to enhance scientific knowledge, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture*, and *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe*.²⁹

Hiller's chapter, "Saintly Blood: Absence, Presence, and the *alter Christus*" substantiates many of the themes explored by others in this collection. Her unique contribution to study of the depiction of bodies and blood in Renaissance art is to suggest a congruence between the blood shed by Christ in scenes portraying his Passion, and the blood shed in martyrdom by three particular saints: St. Sebastian, St. Francis, and St. Peter of Verona. Hiller points out that the presence of blood in visual images has received far less attention from scholars than references to blood in texts; and furthermore, such studies "have concentrated almost exclusively on the bodily fluids of Christ."³⁰ Bodies, and even body parts of saintly martyrs are often depicted as bloodless: a statuesque St. Agatha holds her bloodless breasts on a plate, for example. But in the case of St. Sebastian, St. Francis, and St. Peter of Verona, their bodies bleed profusely during their actively violent martyrdom. Hiller traces the conformity of each of these saints to the iconography of Christ in his passion, and suggests that they are being portrayed as the figure of an *alter Christus*.

Gramotnev offers an example of a more secular understanding of corporeality. Her analysis of Rembrandt's *Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp* may seem to take the reader far away from the religious concerns of other authors examined in this collection; yet, the questions she identifies and explores remain firmly rooted in the same tradition. Rembrandt is intensely conscious of the physical and lifeless body on the dissecting table. Yet the very bloodlessness of the corpse accentuates the fact that it was once vibrantly alive and emotionally motivated. The author ponders the identity of this person, and the cessation of his life. The dissection is presented as a clean, bloodless opening of an arm, with the body surrounded by a theatrical staging of animated surgeons. This staging reflects the fluidity of contemporary Dutch society, not only emphasizing its progressive structures, but also challenging the place and the meaning of a human body. Rembrandt offers no answers to the enigma of what the body can reveal about the vital spirit that once infused it. But the observers within the picture, and we, as onlookers at one remove, are forced to consider the corporeal and incorporeal or spiritual nature of

²⁹ Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned*; Hillman and Mazzio, *The Body in Parts*.

³⁰ Hiller, chap. 8.

the man, according his body the respect given to it by the infinitely careful actions of the surgeon.

The last chapter in the collection brings many of the themes explored in the volume back to their beginning, illustrating the deep thematic continuities in the use of the body's fluids to imagine and to conceptualize processes of change. Barbezat examines the views of Augustine of Hippo on the nature of the resurrection body as offered in his *De fide et symbolo* and subsequent *Retractions* of thirty-six years later. He interrogates Augustine's attempt to imagine a human body after the Resurrection that would have no flesh and no blood. In his *De fide et symbolo*, Augustine argues that such a body would be changeless and perfect, because "all flesh is also body, but not every body is also flesh."³¹

As an older man, Augustine changed his position on the resurrected body, insisting that to be human it will have to possess both flesh and blood made somehow immune to change. Augustine sifts through the heritage of ancient scholarly medical and theological proposals, carefully avoiding the pitfalls open to those who suggest that anything without a corporeal presence does not exist. He wrestles with the concepts of flesh, spirit, and the nature of God, attempting to make sense of the transformations that must take place in the human body as it prepares for transition from a temporal to a resurrection body. Augustine negotiates a place for the resurrection body in lines of discussion that lead to "the meeting space of our body and the perfect."³² The earlier chapters in this volume testify to the ongoing attempts of later authors to negotiate just such a meeting place, by examining the transforming power of bodily fluids, and the enduring importance of corporeality.

The ten chapters of this volume make a vital contribution to the study of corporeality and change. They illustrate the ways in which conceptions of the body and its fluids acted as forces that moved individuals as well as societies. They tell stories about the theorization of change in the context of ongoing processes of historical change. As explored in these chapters, such inquiry was able to make use of the body and its fluids as its object, and equally as a model and a metaphor. While the material of the human body sustained and transformed itself according to principles that could be understood and sometimes altered, so too could the larger processes of the world that authors and artists often likened to the body and its members. Like communication through words, the place of individual and social bodies in space, as well as fluids flowing from the flesh, conveyed meaning. This volume interrogates these communications seeking to access the richness and multiplicity of medieval and early modern encounters through fluid bodies.

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31 Barbezat, chap. 10.

32 Barbezat, chap. 10.

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