FEMALE EMBODIMENT AND THE ASCETIC IMPULSE:

IN SEARCH OF A THEOLOGY OF THE FEMALE BODY

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Declaration

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In memory of Owen Raymond Staunton and Josephine O'Brien

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Needless to say, any and all errors in this work are my own.

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Abstract

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Female Embodiment and the Ascetic Impulse: In Search of a Theology of the Female Body

This thesis explores how female embodiment has been conceived of in Christianity, extending from the patristic era – with its intermingling of Greco-Roman and Jewish conceptions of the body and woman – to the present day and the current debates around the distinction between sex and gender. Examining how women both presented and were represented in historical, theoretical and medical discourse, it argues that a continuing theme of self-discipline of the female form through asceticism – notably through fasting – is evident throughout this period. This thesis proposes that the constant of asceticism, what is termed the 'ascetic impulse' – can be traced throughout in such apparently disparate forms as the virile virgin of the early church through to the secular anorectic of today.

It argues that such ascetic acts, rather than being understood as purely self-destructive or wholly attributable to the patriarchal or misogynistic tendencies inherent in Christianity, point to a desire to establish a positive sense of being embodied as a woman in the world, and is emblematic of the highly contested nature of female embodiment, which has been read almost exclusively in terms of the erotic and the reproductive.

The thesis demonstrates that despite Christianity putting the body at the centre of its theology – through the doctrines of imago Dei, incarnation, and resurrection – no theology of the female body as such exists. Engaging critically with catholic anthropology, feminist perspectives and queer theory, it proposes an outline of a sacramental ontology of the female body. It concludes with a brief discussion of the contribution this theology could make to contemporary discussions of the female body.

Abbreviations

ANF	*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson
AP	*Apophthegmata Patrum*
APA	*Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha,* trans. M. Bonnet and R. A. Lipsius
BMJ	*British Medical Journal*
DSM	American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*
Gen. An.	Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*
LH	Palladius, *Lausiac History*
JAAR	*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
JECS	*Journal of Early Christian Studies*
MD	John Paul II, *Mulieres Dignitatem*
NFNP	*A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, 2 series
PG	*Patrologia graeca,* ed. by J.-P. Migne
PL	*Patrologia latina*, ed. by J.-P. Migne
SC	*Sources Chrétiennes*
ST	Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*
TD	Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, 3 vols
TOB	*Theology of the Body* [=John Paul II, *Man and Woman: He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*]
VCS	Raymond of Capua, *Life of St Catherine of Siena*
VMO	Jaques de Vitry, *Life of Marie of Oignies*

Introduction

This thesis emerged from an interest in the ambiguous relationship women appear to have with their bodies. The sexualisation of the female body, and the relentless pressure on women to attain a certain beauty ideal, is evident in our culture. The phenomena of anorexia, body dysmorphia and other numerous instances of women and girls experiencing dis-ease with their bodies are well documented.[1] Feminist interpretations of these phenomena tend to attribute the fear or dislike of the female body to misogyny, a tradition, they claim, which is intrinsically embedded in Western society, and thus Christianity.

Such a claim seems, on reflection, to be antithetical to Christianity. Christianity is, after all, a body-affirmative theology. Consider the incarnation with its audacious claim that God became man, or the sacraments, which are essentially material, as capable of mediating grace. The focus on the body is particularly emphasized in the eschatological hope of the resurrection of the body where the body is at the foreground as the locus of salvation, proofed in the risen Christ. The New Testament writings are replete with events of healing, eating, feasting, and suffering. The body permeates the imagery of Paul (1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians and Romans). The body is metamorphosed not just as organism (Colossians 1.18 or Ephesians 1.22-24) but as a metaphor for a way of living. What is it about the female body that appears inimical to this somatic celebration?

The central argument of the thesis is that the female body, in society, theology, philosophy and medicine, is problematised in terms of its sexual and reproductive functions and this is at the root of women's ambiguous relationship with their bodies. How women have tried to manage this ambiguity, it is argued, is through what is termed the ascetic impulse. Throughout history, the ascetic impulse – that is, the disciplining of the flesh through ascetic acts such as fasting – has always been present in the Western tradition. It has not presented itself as a constant, but possesses a protean quality, adapting to the prevailing conception of the female body of the time. This is by no means to suggest that asceticism is in and of itself a negative practice, but is to suggest that due to constructions of the female body, asceticism has been employed by women in an at times problematic manner.

Chapters 1 to 4 examine how female embodiment[2] has been theologically construed in the broader context of western civilization. Chapter 1 considers the female body in in the Patristic era (100 to 451

[1] Cristin D. Ronfola and others, 'Body Dissatisfaction in Women Across the Lifespan: Results of the UNC-*SELF* and Gender and Body Image (GABI) Studies', *European Eating Disorder Review,* 21.1 (2013), pp. 52-59. Notable works which have explored the subject generally are Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body,* Tenth Anniversary Edition (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003) and Susie Orbach, *Fat is a Feminist Issue*, 2nd edn (London: Arrow Books, 2006).

[2] 'Embodiment' can be a contested term, suggesting as it does a Platonic dualism of mind and body, or of a soul somehow 'implanted' within the body. Another alternative term could be 'corporeality' as reclaimed in the

CE), and examines how the Christian conception of the female body emerged from Jewish and Classical constructions of the female body, but was subtly altered through the theological reading of the *eschaton*. Chapter 2 considers the female body in the medieval era (from 451 to 1500), and examines how the emphasis on the materiality of the body shifted conceptions of the female body, particularly in light of of theological emphasis on materiality and the suffering Christ. Chapter 3 treats the body in the modern era (from 1500 to 1900) with the shift to the secular and the construction of the female body as object. Chapter 4 examines the construction of the female body in what could be termed the 'postmodern' era (from the turn of the twentieth century to the present day).

Each chapter examines in turn how the female body is historically situated ('Historical Bodies'), and then explores the theological and philosophical theories that informed the understanding of female embodiment in that era ('Theoretical Bodies'), and how the physical body was construed through an examination of medical opinion in each period ('Medical Bodies'). Given the breadth of research in the field, discussion is restricted to Western conceptions of the body and those theological and philosophical trends which, it is contended, directly impact the female body. In the final section of each chapter ('Asceticism') it is argued that such a construction of the female body, as erotic and reproductive, resulted in an ascetic backlash in each era, whereby women have attempted to formulate a conception of their bodies outside of such a paradigm, which has involved the repression of the female body through ascetic acts such as fasting.

In Chapter 5, it is suggested that in the absence of a coherent concept of the female body outside of the sexual and reproductive, Catholic theology may have something to offer in terms of a rebuttal for this conflation of the female body with the erotic, which could contribute to a positive construal of the female body. While other religious traditions, obviously, could provide recourse to recovering a positive construal of the body, discussion is restricted to Catholic theology for two reasons (i) the emphasis on materiality in Catholicism and (ii) in the gender complementarity of Karol Wojtyla, later John Paul II, the physical body is explicitly considered, as found in his 'theology of the body'. This is followed by an examination and critique of theologies which have arisen in response to the theology of the body in the tradition of gender complementarity, namely feminist theologies and queer theologies. It will be demonstrated that the same problem remains in the complementarian Catholic, feminist and queer theologies as in history, that is, the collapse of the female body with the erotic.

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tradition of French feminist philosophy of Kristeva, Irigaray and Cixous, who reclaim the notion of corporeality from its association as opposite of mind and its synonymity with flesh that is brute, or animalistic and conceived as ahistorical. These scholars use the term corporeality to express the body as understood as the site of the social inscription of physical projections; and of social inscriptions. Corporeality in this tradition is understood in particular in light of the sexed (or biological) body, which would be particularly relevant to discussions of the female body. However, I have chosen to employ the term 'embodiment' due to its association with the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty and also because of its usefulness as a concept in articulating a Christian conception of being-in-the-world, most notably in terms of the incarnation.

In the concluding chapter, it is argued that certain critical elements from all three theologies ought to be retained in a suggested framework for a theology of the female body, what is defined as a 'sacramental ontology of the female body', one which could point to a construction of the female body that removes the need for the ascetic impulse. A brief discussion on the possible impacts of such a theology concludes the thesis.

Chapter 1: Female Embodiment in the Patristic Era

1.1. Introduction

This chapter explores how female embodiment was construed in Christian antiquity (*c.* 100 CE to *c.* 451 CE).[1] The aims of this chapter are, first, to explore the historical influences from which the female Christian body emerged, namely the Greco-Roman and Judaic constructions of the female body and how these interacted with the defining feature of emergent Christianity, the valorisation of virginity. Second, the theological ideas that impacted the construction of the female body will be explored, namely the debates surrounding resurrection and the promise of the return to a primordial Eden, both of which were framed in terms of the virginal body. Third, the female body in medical discourse will be examined, particularly the discussions surrounding the 'porous' female body. It is argued that while the classical conceptions of the body interacted with Jewish notions of the body, Christianity elucidated its own distinctive construction of the female body. Christianity's emphasis on eschatological hope had a significant impact on how society, and therefore women within society, were realized. It will be demonstrated that female bodies were problematized in early Christianity through the practice of asceticism which ultimately came to disavow women of the positive status of wife and mother that they might have held in the classical and Jewish traditions. The result was the idealisation of the female as virgin which, ironically, resulted in women being even more fully identified with their female, sexualised nature.

1.2. Historical Bodies I: Continent Woman

The origins of Christianity are bodily. Its decisive break from Judaism was proclaimed in the declaration that the Messiah had arrived, that Jesus Christ was crucified and died, only to be resurrected in glory.[2] Its origins, from Christ's crucifixion until well into the fourth century, marked it as being apart. The Christian Church from its inception was bloodied by periodic persecutions, and its refusal to pay obeisance to the gods of the empire made it suspect. Suffering was part of the

[1] A note on periodization: I have adopted the standard timeline for the Patristic period, which dates this era from the emergence of Christianity up until the Council of Chalcedon (451).
[2] On the gradual emergence of the Christian Church see: J.G. Dunn, *Jews and Christians: The Partings of the Ways between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1991). An excellent sourcebook on writings on Judaism and Christianity is: Raymond A. Meeks and Robert L. Wilken, *Jews and Christians in Antioch in the First Four Centuries of the Common Era* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1987).

redemptive narrative and martyrdom for early Christians was central to their self-perception.[3] Christianity in its nascent state was apocalyptic, the earliest faithful were fully expectant that the end of times would materialise within their lifetime.[4] When the *Parousia* failed to materialize, the question became one of how to live in this world while waiting for the hereafter. When the sudden legitimization of Christianity came in 315, its glory acclaimed through Constantine's military victory, *imitatio Christi,* the practice of emulating Jesus, previously realised through martyrdom, was now identified with Christ's temptations in the desert rather than the passion.[5] Martyrdom was realised through the mortification of the flesh.[6]

The Christian body was therefore marked as a suffering body, one to be *transformed* in light of eschatological promise. Christianity brought a profound shift in how the body was perceived, but its shift was built solidly upon the inheritance of the prevailing worldview at the time. As Margaret Miles writes, 'Roman religions and Judaism were not background for, but interactive *with* Christianity.'[7] The Christian Body was in part the Roman Body, the body as polis or state, and informed by the Jewish conceptualisation of the body as sanctified creation.[8] The Greco-Romans understood the body as being at the service of the empire, part of a corporate identity. Similarly, Jewish identity wedded

[3] Despite the lore of the Church being in a constant state of persecution, actual active persecution of Christians until the middle of the third century tended to be localised and intermittent, occurring in Rome in 64, Smyrna in 117 and in Lyons in 177. In the early fourth century an escalation occurred, resulting in 2,500-3,000 Christians being martyred in the eastern empire between 303-312 and 3,000-3,500 in the western empire in the same period. Notable works on martyrdom include: Glen Bowerstock, *Martyrdom and Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); Patricia Cox Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination: Signifying the Holy in Late Ancient Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009); W.H. Frenn, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church: A Study of the Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965); Candida R. Moss, *Ancient Christian Martyrdom: Diverse Practices, Theologies and Traditions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

[4] This is perhaps best evidenced in the writings of Paul. 1 Thessalonians 4.13-18; 5.1-11; 1 Corinthians 15.23 28; 15.50-55; Philippians 30.20-21.

[5] Cyprian, *Ep.* 8, (ANFP 5:287-289). Cyprian (*c.* 200-258 CE) is the earliest western source to explicitly link asceticism to martyrdom in the third century. Similarly, we find in the eastern tradition, Origen (185-254 CE), who was later martyred, arguing that 'just as those who endure tortures and suffering demonstrate in martyrdom an excellence more illustrious than those not tested in this way, so also those who by using their great love for God have broken and torn part such worldly bonds as these in addition to their love of the body and life'. Origen, *An Exhortation to Martyrdom,* cited by Isabelle Kinnard, 'Imatio Christi in Christian Martyrdom and Asceticism: A Critical Dialogue' in *Asceticism and Its Critics: Historical Accounts and Comparative Perspectives*, ed. by Oliver Freiberger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 206), pp. 131-149, (p. 132). Augustine (354-430 CE) and Gregory the Great (590-604CE) both describe asceticism as a 'hidden martyrdom'. In a sermon Augustine states that if one overcomes the devil (i.e. temptation) one is a martyr, 'If you overcome not a man but the devil, […] don't count yourself as not being a martyr. Your feast day is not indeed in the calendar, but your crown is ready waiting for you.' Augustine, *Serm.,* 306E.8, in *An Age of Saints: Power, Conflict and Dissent in Early Medieval Christianity,* ed. by Peter Sarris, and others (London: Brill, 2011), p. 61. On Gregory, see for example, *Hom. in evang*. 2, 35, 7 (PL 76, 1263C-D).

[6] The classic argument for this is found in Edward E. Malone, *The Monk and the Martyr: The Monk as the Successor of the Martyr* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1950). See also S.P. Brock, 'Early Syrian Asceticism'*, Numen,* 20.1 (1973), 1-19.

[7] Margaret Miles, *The Word Made Flesh: A History of Christian Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), p. 17.

[8] Peter Brown, *The Body & Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity,* 20th anniversary edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), pp. xii-xiv.

the body firmly to the context of a covenanted people, not to the individual.[9] Christianity, however, brokered a unique relationship between God and the individual that was personal and peculiar to each person. The body was not managed for the sake of health, the good of the state or as the locus of honouring God. Rather, the body was oriented towards God and therefore beyond the concerns of society and the mortal life.

This, it could be argued, proved a unique challenge to female embodiment, in part because women's bodies were so linked with the continuation of society in the here and now. Women's bodies in antiquity formed part of the honour/shame culture whereby their activity was seen as reflecting on the honour of the male. As Margaret Y. MacDonald describes it:

> In general, anthropological studies have identified honour as a value embodied by males and shame (here, in a positive sense, as a concern for reputation) as embodied by females. Male honour is related to the struggle to preserve the shame of kinswomen. Female shame is demonstrated through sexual chastity. Therefore, male reputation is linked to female sexual conduct. When males are not successful in maintaining the chastity of females, their honour is diminished in relation to other males.[10]

The voices of women in antiquity come to us, therefore, through the male. Our textual sources for the day-to-day lives of women in antiquity are sparse. Women in Greek antiquity (*c.* 800-48 BCE) led strictly circumscribed lives.[11] They could not participate directly in politics and rarely owned land or controlled inheritance, and were 'disenfranchised … from direct, active participation in the political arena'.[12] Their main functions were to be dutiful wives, ensure the continuation of family stability through the production of legitimate heirs, and to manage the household. Any public activity was limited to participation in religious rites and family occasions such as marriages and funerals.[13] By the time of the Roman period, the legal status of women was far superior to that of their earlier Greek counterparts, but they remained very much subject to the power of their husbands.[14] While Roman

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[9] Judith Plaskow argues that the body has always been understood in Judaism as having value as being one of God's creations but is not in itself sacred: 'like all of creation it needs to be made sacred through human action'. Judith Plaskow, 'Embodiment and Ambivalence: A Jewish Feminist Perspective', in *Embodiment, Morality and Medicine*, ed. by Lisa Sowle Cahill and Margaret A. Farley (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995), pp. 23-36 (p. 26).

[10] Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Early Christian Women in Pagan Opinion: The Power of the Hysterical Woman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 28. For an overview of the honour/shame system in the classical world, see David Gilmore, 'Introduction: The Shame of Dishonour' in *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society,* ed. by Jean G. Peristnay (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholason, 1966), pp. 2-3.

[11] See, for example, David Cohen, 'Seclusion, Separation and the Status of Women in Classical Athens', *Greece & Rome*, 36 (1989), 1-15.

[12] Lisa C. Nevett, 'Towards a Female Topography of the Ancient Greek City: Case Studies from Late Archaic and Early Classical Athens (c.520-400 BCE)', *Gender and History*, 33.3 (2011), 576-596 (p. 576). Nevitt argues that women did hold authority in their physical and symbolic presence, if not in legal or recorded terms.

[13] Kerri J. Hame, 'Female Control of Funeral Rites in Greek Tragedy: Klytaimestra, Medea and Antigone', *Classical Philology*, 103 (2008), 1-15.

[14] The changes in Roman law pertaining to women have been well documented: Percy Ellwood Corbett, *The Roman Law of Marriage* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930; J.A. Crook, 'Women in Roman Succession', in *The*

women could function in the public sphere, own property and in certain cases, institute divorce, in terms of sexual ethics, women were held to a far higher standard than men. Thus we find in Cato: 'If you had apprehended your wife in the act of adultery, with impunity you could take her life without a trial; she, if you were committing adultery or if you were being adulterated, would not dare so much as touch you.'[15] This fear of the sexual female body was reflected in how women were treated in law and culture. Women presented an occasion for male sexual anxiety, a theme found throughout the ancient world.[16] The fear of the sexually voracious and therefore possibly unfaithful female is illustrated by Aristophanes' (*c*. 446 – *c.* 386 BCE) comedies which provide images of the sex-addicted female,[17] while the myth of Tiresias gives an aetiological justification for the belief that women enjoyed sex far more than men.[18] There was also a strong connection between women and gluttony. In the writings of the satirist, Semonides of Amorgos (7th century BCE), women were presented as inferior to men by nature. In Semonides' *The Types of Women*, a frequent representation of the unsuitable wife is one who is lazy, who spends most of her time eating: 'of work the only thing she knows is eating'.[19] He links gluttony to laziness and sexual voraciousness:

> Another kind comes from an ashen coloured ass, conditioned to
> the whip, so that when coerced and abused she
> grudgingly yields to do the barest amount
> of work. In the meantime, withdrawn from sight
> day and night she eats at the hearth
> she is just the same with the task of lovemaking
> and welcomes any companion who happens to come along.[20]

Family in Ancient Rome: New Perspectives, ed. by Beryl Rawson (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), pp. 58-82; Suzanne Dixon, 'The Marriage Alliance in the Roman Elite', *Journal of Family History*, 10 (1985), 353-378. Richard P. Saller, 'Familia Domus, and the Roman Conception of the Family', *Phoenix*, 38 (1984), 336-55; Yan Thomas, 'The Division of the Sexes in Roman Law', in *A History of Women: From Ancient Goddesses to the Christian Saints,* ed. by P.S. Pantel, trans. by A. Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA and London: Belknap Press, 1992), pp. 83-137; Susan Treggiari, *Roman Marriage: Iusti Conigues from the Time of Cicero to the Time of Ulpian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

[15] Cato, ORF: Fr. 222M, in *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Society and Literature: A Sourcebook,* ed. by Marguerite Johnson and Terry Ryan (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 6.

[16] Anne Carson, 'Putting Her in Her Place: Woman, Dirt and Desire' in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World,* ed. by David M. Halperin and others (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 135-169.

[17] For example, *Lysistrata*, 133-35; *Women at the Thesmophoria*, 477-96; *Assembly Women,* 877-1111, all cited in *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Society and Literature: A Sourcebook*, p. 11. Nicholas D. Smith, however, declares that traces of egalitarianism are found in 'the topsy-turvy world of the Aristophanic comedy, where its appearance is more likely to reflect a cultural bias against than in its favour.' Nicholas D. Smith, 'Plato and Aristotle and the Nature of Women', *Journal of the History of Philosophy,* 21.4 (1983), 467-478 (p. 469).

[18] When Zeus and Hera wish to resolve an argument about which gender enjoys sex the most, they call on Tiresias who spent seven years of his life as a woman. Tiresias explains that if sexual pleasure were divided into ten parts, it would be allocated as one part to the male and nine parts to the female (Apollodorus, *Library,* 3.6.7). See, *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Society and Literature*, n. 17, p. 12. On Tiresias, Nicole Loraux, *The Experiences of Tiresias: The Feminine and the Greek Man*, trans. by Paula Wissing (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).

[19] Semonides, 'Poem 7: Varieties of Wives', 8: 24, in *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Society and Literature*, p. 62.

[20] Semonides, 'Poem 7,' 8:12, pp. 62-63.

There are, however, intriguing glimpses of an alternative view of women. In the philosophical tradition, equality between men and women was generally affirmed, in theory if not in practice.[21] Scholars arguing against the trend for identifying misogynistic strands within classical antiquity often cite Plato's *Republic* as offering a less jaundiced view of women. In a famed passage, Plato argues that women are equal to men.[22] One could also point to the Pythagorean societies that included both men and women in perfect equality, or the cult of the Vestal Virgins which gave women a visible role within Roman society. Additionally, it has been suggested that the female exemplars in literature such as Lucretia and Dido, indicate that women's status in antiquity was not necessarily inferior, but rather different in kind to that of men.[23]

It may legitimately be argued that there were suggestions of parity between men and women in antiquity, but only in relation to the non-physical dimensions of woman, namely her soul.[24] Her physical reality was markedly different.[25] While the Pythagoreans did indeed argue for equality of men and women, they identified certain virtues as being peculiar to women, and these related to their roles as mothers and wives.[26] The same applies to the Vestal Virgins: it was precisely their bodies that defined them. The Vestals' sexual continence correlated to the inviolate status of the state. When the Roman state was threatened, the Virgins were thought to be *incestum,* a charge that resulted in the fallen Virgin being buried alive.[27] Analogously, Lucretia and Dido were honoured as wives and mothers, and were only truly considered in relation to how their bodies and relationships reflected on

[21] Wayne A. Meeks, 'Image of the Androgyne: Some Uses of a Symbol in Earliest Christianity', *History of Religions*, 13.3 (1974), 165-208 (pp. 170-174).
[22] *Republic V* contains two radical proposals, the first that the function of guardianship is to be performed by men and women alike (451c-457b), the second that for the guardians the private household and therefore the institution of marriage is to be abolished (457b-466d). However, this theory is rooted in the notion that women were still seen as weaker than men (455e), regardless of even their greatest capabilities. Moreover, this independence/equality between men and women is restricted to the guardian class, which is by definition an elite and whose members are not bound by the roles and rules that govern the rest of society, such as familial bonds. Plato, *Republic*, trans. by Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, repr. 2008), pp. 162-170; 170-183; 167-168.
[23] The story of Lucretia is found in Livy's *Early History of Rome*; Dido, *The Aeneid* by Virgil.
[24] E.D. Blair considers Plato's views about woman and the feminine as a whole and argues that in Plato, woman's immaterial soul as equal to man's, yet inferior in its embodied state. E.D. Blair, *Plato's Dialectic on Woman. Equal, Therefore Inferior* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 197.
[25] Plato's remarks on women that are negative appear to outweigh the good. Women are characterised as gossips, unskilled, cowardly, weak, abusive and nagging, cf. *Lysis* 205d, *Symposium* 215c, *Laws* 639b, 731d, 934e), in Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. by John M. Cooper (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1997). See also, Blair, p. 25.
[26] For a discussion on the virtues particular to women see, Voula Lambropoulou, 'Some Pythagorean Female Virtues', in *Women in Antiquity: New Assessments*, ed. by Richard Hawley and Barbara Levick (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 122-134.
[27] Robin Lorsch Wildfang, *Rome's Vestal Virgins: A Study of Rome's Vestal Priestesses in the Late Republic and Early Empire* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).

the male bodies with which they were associated.[28] Notably, when women acted outside of their traditional roles, such as Clytemnestra, Antigone and Hecuba, they were considered male.[29] 'Proper' heroines, who exhibited positive traits appropriate to their sex, tended to be those who sacrificed their lives, generally for fear of bringing shame.[30] Woman and the body were therefore inextricable. Woman *was* her body, which needed to be controlled by men.

The other influence on Christian conceptions of the female body was Judaism. In rabbinic Judaism (late second century CE to the early seventh century) when orthodox Christianity began to emerge, women were characterised – with reference to men and not as individuals as Léonie J. Archer observes – either as obedient wives and unsullied virgins or as treacherous and sexually promiscuous creatures.[31] In 'The Benediction', first formulated in or around the second century CE, thanks is given that the male speaker is an Israelite and not a woman or a boor. In prayer books, women are coupled with heathens and slaves.[32] Women are described as 'gluttonous, eavesdroppers, lazy and jealous' and it is asserted that 'women are lightminded'.[33] In the wisdom tradition (beginning with the personification of Wisdom as a woman, in Proverbs 1-9), only two types of woman are present: good wives and dangerous seductresses.[34] The purity laws in Judaism meant that, due to menstruation, it was almost impossible for women, in their active roles as wives and mothers, to participate in public

[28] For a reading of the Lucretia as embodying the ideal of female sacrifice as redemptive from Livy through to Chaucer see, Eleanor Glendinning, 'Reinventing Lucretia: Rape, Suicide and Redemption from Classical Antiquity to the Medieval Era', *International Journal of the Classical Tradition,* 20 (2013), 61-82. Glendinning argues that female heroines of antiquity functioned as rhetorical device which allowed their various narrators to further their own literary aims: 'the violated female and her subsequent brave decision to take her own life has remained a compelling and evocative motif across the ages, her rape subsequent suicide told and retold in a self-perpetuating narrative of outrage, revenge and redemption' (p. 61).

[29] For a discussion on this see, Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), pp. 99-102.

[30] For an argument of suicide as an example of female active participation in warfare see, Pasi Loman, 'No Woman No War: Women's Participation in Ancient Greek Warfare', *Greece & Rome*, 5.1 (2004), 34-54.

[31] Archer argues that the anthropomorphorisation of Israel as female was reflective of the crisis Judaism was undergoing at the time. In the aftermath of the destruction of the Temple, the exile to Babylon, and the subsequent return, a fundamentalism took hold: complex purity laws were introduced in an attempt to re-establish a sense of sovereignty. Increasingly the idea of fidelity to *Yahweh* was personified in the figure of the loyal female, virtuous and virginal as Israel. When Israel strayed, she was a harlot; when she obeyed, she was demure and obedient. Fidelity to *Yahweh* was construed in terms of the faithful woman. Shame, in the naked female form, was witness to Jerusalem/Israel's unfaithfulness. Léonie J. Archer, 'The Virgin and the Harlot in the Writings of Formative Judaism', *History Workshop*, 24 (1987), 1-16 (p. 3). See also Judith R. Baskin, *Midrashic Women: Formations of the Feminine in Rabbinic Literature* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 2002), p. 162; J.B. Segal, 'Popular Religion in Ancient Israel', *Journal of Jewish Society*, 27.1 (1976), 1-22; J.B. Segal, 'The Jewish Attitude toward Women', *Journal of Jewish Society*, 30.2 (1979), 121-137.

[32] Yoel Kahn, *The Three Blessings: Boundaries, Censorship and Identity in Jewish Liturgy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 66-77. Kahn traces the subsequent reception of the formulation relating to women, noting that, 'The literary survival of variant blessings in prayer books does not necessarily tell what Jews actually did in any particular time or place; rather, these passages only record what the compiler or copyist of a particular text wrote down' (p. 67).

[33] *Gen. Rab*. 44:5, cited by Michael L. Satlow, 'Fictional Women: A Study in Stereotypes' in *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture,* III, ed. by Peter Schafer, 3 vols (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998-2002) III, (2002), pp. 225-246 (p. 229).

[34] See also, Sir 1:4-20; 4:11-19; 6:18-31; 24:1-22; Wis. 6:12-16; 7:7-14, 25-29; 8:1-21; 9:9-11; 10:1-21. See also Jdt 8:29; 11:20-23.

life.[35] However, certain women, widows and unmarried women who were outside of the reproductive realm, unencumbered by pregnancy and motherhood, could operate as independent agents.[36] They were almost surrogate males, allowed to operate independently in the world.[37] Yet, the danger of female sexuality was a threat that was constantly posed.

As with the Greco-Romans, the female body in Judaism was a source of anxiety, with women constantly described as a source of temptation and sexual distraction for men.[38] The rabbinical laws relating to the bodies of women are predominantly concerned with covering and avoiding the female body.[39] To walk behind a woman was dangerous for it might lead to erotic meditations on the female form; to even gaze at female clothing was an invitation to lust.[40] The blame, generally, was not assigned to men: the female body itself, by its very nature, is that which incites the male to sexual misconduct. While both Daniel Boyarin and Judith Hauptman argue that a softening of the harsh legal prescriptions toward women can be discerned in the rabbinic period, one can say, with caution, that women's position gradually became more constrained between the pre-Talmudic period and rabbinical period (up to around 2 CE).[41] There is evidence that up until this period women served in public roles as judges, for example, and had participated in all religious festivals bar one (*Simhat Beit ha-Sho'evah* or the Water Drawing festival).[42] Other evidence points to the fact that women were not segregated from men in the Temple, and that they participated in prayers and study groups.[43] Yet, by the end of the first century of the common era, the participation of Jewish women in the practice of their religion was gradually restricted. Judith Wegner describes women's restriction as follows:

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[35] In her monograph, Charlotte Fonrobert argues that purity laws regarding women were not necessarily the result of negative attitudes towards women's corporeality, but rather related to the rabbis' understanding of the male body as exteriority and the female body as interiority, and emblematic of the importance of marking off Judaism from the non-Jewish world. Charlotte Fonrobert, *Menstrual Purity: Rabbinic and Christian Reconstructions of Biblical Gender* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).

[36] Bernadette J. Brooten, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue*, Brown Judaic Studies, 36 (Chicago, IL: Scholars Press, 1982). For a discussion on this liminal status of Jewish women, see Judith Romney Wegner, *Chattel or Person? The Status of Women in the Mishnah* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 114-117.

[37] Wegner, pp. 143-144.

[38] This is not to suggest that in the pre-rabbinic period that women's impurity was not considered a major bar to them participating in public life. For a reading of the purity laws in Leviticus and how this impacted on women see Marla J. Selvidge, *Woman, Cult and Miracle Recital*: *A Redactional Critical Investigation on Mark 5:24-34* (London: Associated University Press,1990), pp. 51-55. Selvidge's main argument is that women are repressed in Judaism by their biological difference. Her scholarship, however, has been criticised as only a partial reading. For a point by point critique see, Hannah K. Harrington, *The Impurity Systems of* Qumran *and the Rabbis* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), pp. 14-21.

[39] L.M. Epstein, *Sex Laws and Customs in Judaism,* 2nd edn (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1967), pp. 152 -158.

[40] Plaskow, *Standing against Sinai: Judaims from a Feminst Perspective* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco), p. 183.

[41] Judith Hauptman, *Re-Reading the Rabbis: A Woman's Voice* (Boulder, CO: Publishing House, 1998), p. 83.

[42] Mendell Lewittes, *Jewish Law: An Introduction* (New York: J. Aronson, 1994), p. 191.

[43] Barbara Crandall, *Gender and Religion: The Dark Side of Scripture*, 2nd edn (London & New York: Continuum, 2012), pp. 66-67.

> If a woman's reproductive function confined her to the domestic scene, it was her sexuality per se that kept her out of the public domain. Here, three male fears coalesce. First, the presence of women is a sexual distraction to men struggling to engage in the life of mind and spirit. Second, the status of dependent women as the sexual property of particular men militates against their appearing in public, where strangers may pay them illicit attention. Third, the taboo of the menstruant as cultic contaminant makes it dangerous to allow any woman (dependent or autonomous) to rub shoulders with men in synagogue or study house even though no actual law forbids a woman's presence there. These fears conspire to produce the result we actually find: Man is a public creature, woman a private one.[44]

The construction of women's bodies in Greek and Jewish antiquity differed more in degree than in kind. In both Jewish and classical societies of antiquity, women were regarded almost solely in terms of their reproductive functions, and significant anxiety associated with women's status accordingly followed. Both societies saw women's sexuality as something that needed to be contained, and both identified the boundaries of women's bodies with purity, namely in how they related to men.[45] Woman's body was symbolic of woman's status of 'otherness' to men and the source of male anxiety. As Judith Baskin defines it: 'Female alterity begins with the corporeal. Women are defined by their bodies and by bodily functions. As objects of temptation and sources of pollution, they are experienced by men as both sexually attractive and physically repellent'.[46]

The scarcity of textual representations of women in Classical and Judaic antiquity continues to be typical of the early Christian period. Aside from popular representations of women, as found in the martyrdom and conversion texts of the period, actual textual, historical work on women is glaring in its absence, nor do we have much evidence of women's daily lives.[47] The only texts known to have been authored by women in the early Christian era are restricted to the diary of the third century martyr Perpetua (its authorship by a woman now disputed), the centos of the aristocrat Proba and the empress Eudocia (*c.*400-460), and the travel letters by the fourth-century pilgrim Egeria.[48] Beyond these few women, to try and reconstruct the early Christian women we have to seek recourse through

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[44] Wegner, p. 166.
[45] Plaskow, *Standing at Sinai,* p. 25.
[46] Judith R. Baskin, *Midrashic Women: Formations of the Feminine in Rabbinic Literature* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 2002), p. 161.
[47] See Brown, *Body & Society,* pp. 145-155.
[48] On her revision of her opinion of the martyrdom account of Perpetua as a diary account by the saint herself before she was martyred, see *Women's Religions in the Greco-Roman World: A Sourcebook*, ed. by Ross Shepard Kraemer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 118. For arguments for authorship of this and other apocryphal accounts by women see, Steven L. Davies, *The Revolt of the Widows: The Social World of the Apocryphal Acts* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980). See also Dennis R. MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle: The Battle for Paul in Story and Canon* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1983); and Dennis R. MacDonald, 'The Role of Women in the Production of the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles,' *Iliff Review*, 41 (1984), 21-28. On Proba, Elizabeth A. Clark and Diane F. Hatch, *The Golden Bough, The Oaken Cross: The Virgilian Centonia of Faltonia Betitia Proba,* American Academy of Religion Texts and Translations, 5 (Chicago, IL: Scholar Press, 1981); Mark D. Usher, *Homeric Stitchings: The Homeric Centos of the Empress Eudocia* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998). For Egeria's account see, *Egeria's Travels*, trans. by J. Wilkinson (London: SPCK, 1971).

men, in letters that female aristocratic patrons received from their illustrious male correspondents notably Tertullian[49] (*c.* 160-*c.* 225), Jerome[50] (*c.* 342-*c.* 420), Ambrose[51] (*c.* 338-397), and Augustine[52] (354-430), among others. Our knowledge of actual historical women is restricted to Gregory of Nyssa's (*c.* 335-*c.* 395) hagiographical account of his sister, Macrina (*c.*330-379) and the aristocrats Paula (347-404), Melania the Elder (*c.* 342-*c.* 410) and Melania the Younger (*c.* 383-439), Eustochium (*c.*368-419/420) and Blaesilla (d. 384), all of whom Jerome had extensive correspondence with.[53] There are also letters and a biography of Olympia (*c.* 365-*c.* 410), a noble woman who befriended John Chrysostom (*c.* 349-407).[54] There are no extant letters written by these women, as their male correspondents did not keep them. The women are silent, and our construction of women is perforce indirect.[55]

The women we hear about, are those who are remarkable women who dedicated their lives to the Church as benefactresses, many of whom lives their lives as dedicated virgins, either sequestered in the family home or in community. While married Christian women were the norm in the early period, and the institutionalisation of virginity in Christianity a later development, virginity was seen as such an ideal to attain that it was said that every Christian household should have a virgin.[56] Unlike in

[49] For an examination of Tertullian's life and writings, see T. D. Barnes, *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971; repr. with ps., 1985).
[50] For a thematic examination of Jerome in his various guises of theologian, polemicist and ascetic see, Stefan Rebenich, *Jerome* (New York: Routledge, 2000).
[51] For an examination of Ambrose in his political context see Neil B. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994).
[52] There are numerous examinations of Augustine, the man and his theology and impact on the Church. For his own account, see, Augustine, *Confessions,* trans. with an intr. by S. Pine-Coffin (London: Penguin Classics, 1961, repr. 1981); Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1967); a sensitive and cogent review of his views on women can be found in Kim Power, *Veiled Desire: Augustine on Women* (New York: Continuum, 1996).
[53] Gregory's *vita* of Macrina can be found in *Vie to Sainte Macrine,* trans. by Pierre Maraval, SC 178 (Paris: Cerf, 1971). For an English translation, see *St. Gregory of Nyssa: Ascetical Works,* trans. by Virginia Woods Callahan, Fathers of the Church, 58 (Washington, DC: Catholic University Press, 1967), pp. 161-194. Jerome, Letter to Eustochium, *Ep.* 22; to Marcella *Ep.* 23-29, 32, 34, 37-38, 40-44; to Paula *Ep.* 30, 33, 39; to other women, *Ep.* 45, 52, 54, 64, 65, 75, 78, 79, 97, 106, 107, 117, 120, 121, 123, 127, 128, 130 (NPNF 2 / 6).
[54] John Chrysostom's female correspondents rivalled that of Jerome. There are 17 extant letters to Olympias (*Ep.*1-17); Theodora (*Ep.* 117, 120); Severina and Romula (*Ep.* 219), Euthalia (*Ep.,* 32, 178), Pentadia (*Ep.* 94,104, 185), Amprucla (*Ep.* 96, 103, 191), Adolia (*Ep.,* 33, 52, 133, 179, 231); Cateria (*Ep.* 18, 34, 227, 232); Chalcidia and Asyncrita (*Ep.* 40, 77, 99, 106); Bassania (*Ep.* 43). See Wendy Mayer, 'Constantinopolitan Women in Chrysostom's Circle', *Vigiliae Christianae*, 53.3 (1999), 265-288. Mayer has also produced a collection of Chrysostom's homilies and selection of letters which shed light on the context of his time, *John Chrysostom*, intr. and trans. by Wendy Mayer and Pauline Allen (New York: Routledge, 2000). The classic texts on Chrysostom are: Chrysostomus Baur, *John Chrysostom and His Time*, trans. by M. Gonzaga, 2 vols (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1959-1960) and by J.N.D. Kelly, *Golden Mouth: The Story of John Chrysostom Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995). The latter however, makes little reference to his relationships with women.
[55] On male texts 'to' and 'about' women, see Teresa M. Shaw, 'Askesis and the Appearance of Holiness,' *JECS,* 6.3 (1998), 458-99.
[56] Brown, *Body & Society*, p. 327. Virginity appears to have been a feature from the earliest days of Christianity. In a first-century letter reference is made to those who practice chastity, Clement of Rome, *Ep. ad Corinthios*, 38.2 (SC 167:162-163) and Ignatius of Antioch specifically greets virgins in an early second century letter to the Smyrnaeans Ignatius, *Ep. ad Smyrnaeos* 13 (SC 10:143-145). Early apologists such as Justin Martyr and

Jewish and classical thought, women could achieve a putative parity with men through virginal continence. These women frequently were heads of Christian households, mothers of Christian children who also had responsibility for property. Virginal continence did not mean, however, that women were free to live independent lives, although this was possible for wealthy women who assumed the roles of patronesses and benefactors.[57]

While there is evidence that women enjoyed a greater degree of independence in nascent Christianity, as explored in the ground-breaking work of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Christianity was thought to have brought about a high level of social innovation that empowered women.[58] It was argued that Christianity, with its emphasis on virginity, authorised women to reject marriage and to remove themselves from male control.[59] Moreover, Christianity's far stricter sexual ethic meant that adultery had equal consequences for both men and women alike.

That the virginal life appealed to women is evidenced in the writing of the time. Sexual renunciation, according to the patristic authors, had innumerable advantages for women and 'gestures of sexual renunciation took on an increasingly well-documented importance as a model for women of all classes.'[60] Virginity offered freedom from the painful consequences of the sexual act. John Chrysostom argued that by embracing the continent life women would be spared the perils of

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Athenagoras defend Christianity's superiority by appeal to its sexual ethics. Athenagoras, *Legatio,* 33.3-6*:* 'If to remain a virgin and abstain from sexual intercourse brings us closer to God, and if to allow ourselves nothing more tangible than a lustful thought leads us away from God, then, since we flee the thought, much more will we refuse to commit the deed. We are not concerned with the exercise of eloquence but with the performance and teaching of deeds-either to stay ín the state ín which a man was born or to remain satisfied with one marriage; for a second marriage is gilded adultery. For "whoever divorces his wife", it says, "and marries another, commits adultery". Neither does it allow a man to divorce a woman whose maidenhead he has taken, nor does it allow him to marry again. For he who detaches himself from his previous wife, even if she has died, is a covert adulterer. He thwarts the hand of God (because ín the beginning God formed one man and one woman), and he destroys the communion of flesh with flesh ín the unity characteristic ofthe intercourse ofthe sexes.' Athenogoras, *Legatio and De Resurrectione,* ed. and trans. by William R. Schoedel (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 81. By the third century in the writings of Tertullian we find the belief that 'abstinence from sex was the most effective technique with which to achieve clarity of the soul'. Peter Brown, *Body and Society,* p. 78.

[57] Elizabeth A. Clark, *Reading Renunciation: Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity* (London & Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 38.

[58] Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church*, Penguin History of the Church, I, rev edn (London: Penguin Books, 1993), pp. 58-59. See also, Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity* (San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins, 1997), pp. 95-128. For a contrasting view see: Ben Witherington, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Castelli also questions the methodology and evidence produced by Stark in Elizabeth A. Castelli, 'Gender, Theory and the Rise of Christianity: A Response to Rodney Stark', *JECS*, 6.2 (1998), 227-257.

[59] Virginia Burrus, *Chastity as Autonomy: Women in the Stories of Apocryphal Acts* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1987), Steven L. Davies, *The Revolt of Widows: The Social World of the Apocryphal Acts* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980); Denis R. MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle: The Battle for Paul in Story and Canon* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminister, 1983); Anne Ewing Hickey, *Women of the Roman Aristocracy as Christian Monastics* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1987). For a contrary view that Christianity resulted in new and intensified roles of sexual restraint on women's conduct, see Kate Cooper, *The Virgin and Bride: Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996). Cooper argues that any influence of power that women exerted was based on shaming men.

[60] Cooper, *The Virgin and Bride*, p. 67.

childbirth, being beaten by husbands, and the pain of loss of bereaved motherhood. This was not unique to Christianity, the perilous nature of marriage and childbirth was a common theme in the Hellenistic rhetorical tradition.[61] Chrysostom made good use of it: he devotes a full twenty-two chapters to the dangers of marriage and how a virgin escapes them.[62] Everything from importunate in-laws to the agonies of childbirth is used to convince the reader of the benefits of the continent life. Gregory of Nyssa, a married man, goes so far as to describe marriage as a disease.[63] Jerome assumes that the perils of marriage are so well known that he does not bother to expand upon them, but directs the reader to the writings of Tertullian, Cyprian and Ambrose for her edification.[64]

Despite the emphasis on continence, women's bodies were still largely understood according to the classical and Jewish paradigm of woman's identification with the erotic and the reproductive. There is evidence that the taint of menstruation still persisted in Christian communities and the dangers of the sexual allure of women is memorably present in the works of Tertullian.[65] The female body remained much as it ever was, but it had entered a heretofore unexplored vista, the continent female. This valorisation of virginity can be signified as the most innovative shift in how female Christianity differed from classical and Judaic conceptions of the body in society. It marked the removal of woman from what she had traditionally been associated with the roles of wife and mother. However, the antecedent ideas as to the female body–the erotic and reproductive–still held sway, as evidenced in the theological ideas of the time to which we now turn.

1.3. Theoretical Bodies I: Eve Eschaton(ed)

The vogue for virginity was directly related to the theological debates of the early Christian era that impacted the body. The body was a locus of theological debates and apologetics, surrounding (i) the question of the real body of Christ and (ii) the nature of the resurrected body.[66] The question of the

[61] Nancy Demand, *Birth, Death, and Motherhood in Classical Greece* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), p. 71.
[62] John Chrysostom, *De virg.,* 51-72 (SC 125: 289-327).
[63] Gregory of Nyssa, *De virg.,* 3.10 (SC 119:273-303).
[64] Jerome, *Ep.* 22 (NPNF 2 12:22-41).
[65] See Brown, *Body & Society,* p. 146. For examples on the menstruation taboo, e.g. Tertullian, *De culta feminarum* (SC 173).
[66] The three great treatises on resurrection dating from around 200, Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses* (ANF 1:305-578), Tertullian's *De resurrection carnis* (ANF 3:545-596) and Marcus Minucius Felix's *Octavius* (ANF 4:173-198) show just how radically doctrine had shifted. In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, we find his views on the resurrection to be that of being, 'sown a natural body' but shall rise 'a spiritual body' or that 'flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom' (1 Corinthians 15). Similarly, Origen and his successors, notably Evagrius, whose teachings would be adapted by John Cassian, the founder of western monasticism, argued for a body that would die and be destroyed in order for it to be reunited to its true state, which was incorporeal. This would suggest a decidedly spiritualist interpretation of resurrection. Yet Tertullian argues for the corporeality of the soul in *De resurrection carnis* with the specific purpose of countering the Gnostic views of the Valentinians, Hermogenes, and Marcion. The promise of the resurrection became a key element in the fight against the controversies of Docetism and Gnosticism. See Caroline Bynum Walker's review of the emergence of the theology of

real body of Christ–fully enfleshed, truly suffering–the reality of the resurrection, was a question of real concern. The body, both human and divine, was a subject of preoccupation. Bodily resurrection was asserted to be a reality in the *eschaton* where humanity would be raised evermore perfect than in life. Tertullian asserted that, after death, humans would be resurrected, with mouths that would not eat, complete with genitals that would not procreate, but which were essential to remain as God had created them, and were therefore beautiful.[67]

The paradoxical notion of bodily resurrection (the same, yet completely different) was made real by the continent body, anticipating bodies that were transfigured, possessing 'a beauty in the body, and yet not of the body'.[68] The yearning for this body is demonstrated in a passage from *City of God:*

> How complete, how lovely, how certain will be the knowledge of all things, a knowledge without error, entailing no toil! For there we shall drink of God's wisdom at its very source, with supreme felicity and without any difficulty. How wonderful will be that body which will be completely subdued to the spirit, will receive from the spirit all that it needs for its life, and will need no other nourishment![69]

Sexual renunciation was closely tied to the *eschaton* in that bodies of the chaste became androgynous like those of angels, a return to the paradisiacal garden, as a 'realised eschatology'.[70] This yearning to return to the primordial state would be the defining feature of early Christianity.[71]

The eschatological body, the resurrected body, was the prelapsarian body of Adam and Eve. Christian exegetes, like the Hebraic commentators, favoured the second Genesis account of the creation myth.[72] In its theological construction of women, the Genesis accounts presented an image of complementarity of woman to man. Rather than having been created as an act of punishment to man, as in the classical myth of Pandora, in the faith of the Israelites, woman is created as a creature in her own right.[73] She is as active a person as man in scripture. Adam and Eve both take of what has been denied them; both become aware of their identity as genitalized beings; both cover their nakedness, and they leave together when expelled from Eden. Emphasis is placed on the union of male and female in procreation, decreeing that husband and wife cleave together to become one flesh. While

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resurrection in, Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity*, *200-1336* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1995).

[67] Tertullian, *De ieiunio,* 17 (ANF 4:113-14)

[68] Augustine, *City of God,* 22.19, trans. by John Bettensen and intr. by John O'Meara (London: Penguin, 1972, repr. 1984), p. 1079.

[69] *City of God,* 22.24, p. 1079.

[70] Dyan Elliott, *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell: Metaphor and Embodiment in the Lives of Pious Women: 200-1500* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), p. 12.

[71] For a close reading of asceticism and paradise see, Teresa M. Shaw, *The Burden of the Flesh: Fasting and Sexuality in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis, MI: Fortress Press, 1998), pp. 164-219.

[72] Gen. 2:4b-25

[73] Hesiod describes Pandora as the first woman from whom 'originates the deadly race and tribe of women / a great plague dwelling among mortal men; / women are not suited to baleful poverty but only to surfeit. / Women are no help to men in dreadful poverty but only in wealth', Hesiod, *Theogony,* 590-601, in *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Society and Literature: A Sourcebook,* p. 61.

punishment follows, there is a parity of (gendered) labour where man's agricultural toil is equated to Eve's travail in childbirth.

While Christianity retained the primordial couple of Adam and Eve, it diverged in its reading of death. In particular, the story of the expulsion from Paradise is read through the parable of human sexuality.[74] Death was a moral condition, a punishment, rather than a physical trait. Eve's act of disobedience was the cause for the expulsion, which resulted in the entrance of death and the necessity of sexual reproduction. It followed that Eve herself, and her descendants, women, would be identified as sexual transgressors.[75]

Patristic exegesis consistently used the language of seduction or deception virtually interchangeably to describe Eve's temptation. In her plucking the apple from the tree, woman's untrammelled appetite was inscribed. Her curiosity or hunger was read as lasciviousness, a sexual sin. Tertullian read Eve as omnipresent in women of the time, 'You are the one who opened the door to the Devil. You are the one who first plucked the fruit of the forbidden tree, you are the first who deserted the divine law; you are the one who persuaded him whom the Devil was not strong enough to attack. All too easily you destroyed the image of God, namely, man.'[76]

The conflation of Eve with sexuality and temptation is remarkable when one considers that, according to all the Church fathers, sexual desire was not known in Eden, or if known, was a product of willed being, independent of desire.[77] For John Chrysostom, sexual reproduction was not part of God's plan in the prelapsarian state. Adam and Eve were created virgins and virgins they were intended to remain. Only after the first sin were Adam and Eve permitted to reproduce as compensation for their loss of immortality. His argument goes thus: if the reproduction of humanity was ever intended, an

[74] It should be noted that in the rabbinic sources, midrashic reading of Genesis has it that the serpent tempted Eve out of jealously of Adam's sexual relationship with her, thus sexuality was read in the Jewish interpretation of Genesis (T Sotah [ed. Lieberman] 4:17-18; Gen. Rabbah 18:6). Cited in Tamar Kadari, 'Eve: Midrash and Aggadah' in *Jewish Women's Archive Encyclopedia* <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/eve-midrash-and-aggadah> [accessed 23 April 2019]. Christianity, however, shaped the overall thematic scheme of its theology through the paradigm of Paradise.

[75] James L. Kugel, *The Bible as It Was* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1997), pp. 75-78. See also Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent: Sex and Politics in Early Christianity* (New York: Vintage, 1988), pp. 133-137; and Alice Ogden Bellis, 'Eve in the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books', in *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament*, ed. by Carol Meyers and others (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), pp. 82-83. William E. Phipps argues that the reading of Eve as sexual transgressor has had detrimental and even lethal consequences for women over the centuries. See Phipps, *Genesis and Gender: Biblical Myths of Sexuality and Their Cultural Impact* (New York: Praeger, 1989), pp. 51-66.

[76] Tertullian, *Cult. fem*. 1.1.

[77] Shaw, *The Burden of the Flesh,* pp. 189-191, for a review of the eastern tradition. Augustine in the west formulated the 'willed' procreation in Paradise, *City of God,* 14.10*,* pp. 567-568.

asexual means of achieving this would have been provided.[78] To return to the paradisiacal state of Adam and Eve was to be restored to a time before sin. The emulation of this original intention of sexual continence becomes the surest route to paradise. Virginity is the ideal state of being.[79]

Against the view of the lascivious woman, the Church Fathers had to balance the parity asserted in both Galatians and in the construal of women as created *imago Dei*.[80] Woman despite her physical qualities is created in the image of God, insofar as she has a rational mind.[81] Drawing upon the classical conception of the male and female dimensions of the soul, the mind, as Augustine construes it, has both male and female dimensions. The male only is fully in the image of God, '[h]e contains both "male" spirit and "female" bodiliness within himself, whereas the woman is *intrinsically* carnal, subordinate to the male, and in the image of God only insofar as she conjoins herself with her husband.'[82] This theme is found in many of the early Christian thinkers, from Origen to Evagrius of Pontus (345-399) to Jerome.[83] Yet the feminine, even in the mind, is still considered inferior to the male. While privileging the equality of men and women in 1 Corinthians 7, that is in the mind, the difference was then held to reside in the body. As Kari Elisabeth Børrensen writes:

> Certainly, woman possesses the image of God in her rational soul and so she is *homo*. But in so far as she is *femina,* differentiated from man on the bodily level, she does not reflect this image. On the contrary, man insofar as he is *vir,* represents the superior element of the soul where the image resides.[84]

Women represent the temporal aspect of the mind, and thus are doubly wedded to their identification of the body.[85] Women's bodies preserve the hierarchical state whereby woman is subordinate to man.[86]

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[78] This, of course, throws up interesting questions relating to modern methods of reproduction, such as *in vitro* fertilization, which the Catholic Church still condemns, 'Section 2377', *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1997).
[79] John Chrysostom, *De virg.* 14.3, 5, 6 (SC 125:143, 146); *Hom 20 Gen. 1* (PG 53.167); *Hom. 18 Gen. 4* (PG 53.154); *Propter fornicationes* 3 (PG 51.213); *Hom. 15 Gen*. 4 (PG 53.123).
[80] 1 Corinthians 7, 1 Corinthians 11:11, Romans 8:1, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 3:28.
[81] Augustine, *De gen. ad litt.,* 3.22; 34 (PL 34.293).
[82] Sarah Coakley, *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy and Gender* (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), p. 64.
[82]Elizabeth A. Clark has contrasted this 'sexed' view of gender, that is that the differential between men and women was there from the beginning of creation, with the theology of Gregory of Nyssa who held a theory of double creation: the first spiritual non-bodily (as Gregory would understand 'image of God' to mean, and then only afterwards is sexual distinction made. Elizabeth A. Clark, *Women in the Early Church* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1983).
[84] Kari Elisabeth Børrensen, *Subordination and Equivalence: The Nature and Role of Women in Augustine and Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1981), p. 27.
[85] Augustine, *De trin*., 12.8.13. (PL 42. 1005).
[86] Consider also 1 Corinthians 11:7: For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is God's image and glory; but the woman is the glory of the man (1 Cor 11:7). This view can be found in Philo's view of the creation. Human progress in virtue 'is indeed nothing less than the giving up of the female gender by changing it into the male' (*Questiones et solutiones in Exodum*, 1.8).

Whilst humanity was fallen, the promise of redemption was the event of Christ. As such, imaged as a fully human male, Christ was read as the second Adam. By virtue of her body which guaranteed Christ's humanity, Mary the Mother of God was read as the second Eve.[87] Marian references in the texts of the early Christian or Patristic era are represented by two overwhelming themes, assent and virginity, making her the very antithesis of the fallen Eve. Women were enjoined to imitate Mary through obedience. Faith is expressed as the antithesis of disobedience: 'And thus it was also that the knot of Eve's disobedience was lossened by the obedience of Mary. For what the virgin Eve had bound fast through unbelief, thus did the virgin Mary set through by faith.'[88] Such faith was concretized in the chaste, inviolate body. 'Death came through Eve, life through Mary. And thus the gift of virginity has been bestowed most richly upon women, seeing that it had its beginning from a woman.'[89]

The figure of Mary was the attempt to resolve this paradoxical notion of women as Eve, but as redeemed. As Kim Power observes, 'Marian doctrine created a vision of a woman with complete integrity of being, who could serve as a basis for clear categories of good and bad women, and who would erase any competing symbolism'.[90] Where Mary was all that was good, her ancestress Eve came to symbolize how evil entered into the world and how humanity, and in particular women, were tainted. The two poles of femininity were therefore established. Eve brought about the fall through tasting and feasting, while Mary ushered in redemption through her inviolate, continent and chaste body. Women's redemption came about through appetites subdued. The classical identification of women with all that was lazy, corrupt, weak or seductive and the Judaic construal of the impure, if sexually alluring, woman acquired a new reading. With the emergence of the valorisation of virginity, women's bodies with their ability to tempt, came to symbolise the great shame, the expulsion from Paradise.

Even when women embrace the virginal state, they are still problematised through their sexuality. Rather than continence representing independence, the earthly bridegroom is replaced with the celibate bridegroom. The virgin was in many ways still the archetypal Roman matron or obedient Jewish wife, only now her spouse was Christ.[91] While this would appear to be a contradiction in

[87] 'Sin began from the woman and then spread to the man. In the same way salvation had its first beginnings from woman. This is the true proof women can also lay aside the weakness of their sex and imitate as closely as possible the lives and conduct of these holy women whom the Gospel now describes', Origen, *Hom. on Luke 8*
[88] Irenaeus, *Adv. haer*., 3.22.4 (ANF 1:455)
[89] Jerome, *Ep.* 22.21.
[90] Kim Power, *Veiled Desire*, p. 172.
[91] Cooper, *The Virgin and Bride,* p. 185. For further on the spiritual marriage of the virgin and Christ, see Hans J.W. Drijvers, 'The Saint as Symbol: Concepts of the Person in Late Antiquity and Early Christianity' in *Concepts of Person in Religion and Thought,* ed. by Hans G. Kippenberg and others, Religion and Reason, 37 (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1990), pp. 137-158 (p. 150).
Elizabeth A. Clark, 'The Celibate Bridegroom and His Virginal Brides: Metaphor and the Marriage of Jesus in Early Christian Ascetic Exegesis', *Church History,* 77.1 (2008), 1-25.

terms, Teresa Shaw argues that '[t]he two foundational and legitimizing principles of the ideology of virginity are the angelic or divine "nature" of virginity (which makes the virginal lifestyle superior to any earthly choice), and the claim that the virgin is the bride of Christ (which makes their union superior to any earthly marriage and still grounds the virgin's identity in traditional patterns of gender).'[92]

Tertullian, whom Dyan Elliott credits as the originator of the *sponsa Christi* (wife of Christ) imagery, argues that, as virgins are wed to Christ, like proper married women they should be veiled and should not expose their heads and faces to public view.[93] To violate the vows was to commit adultery.[94] In one of the most popular conversion accounts of the fifth century, Mary, the niece of Abraham of Qidun, after seduction / rape by a monk which causes her to flee into a life of prostitution, mourns what she sees as the betrayal of her bridegroom, Christ.

> I am now as good as dead: I have lost all the days of my life … my tears are all wasted, for I have rebelled against God and slain my soul … They told me to be careful of myself and preserve my virginity spotless for the immortal Bridegroom. 'Your Bridegroom is holy and jealous,' they said. No longer do I dare look up to heaven, for I have died to God and to men.[95]

A legacy of the construction of the female body in classical and Jewish antiquity was that the female body, no matter how chaste, could only be described in distinctly sexual overtones. Virginity was divined as a spiritual version of sexual love,[96] and the erotic dimension was deliberately played up by the Church fathers.[97] A passage which best exemplifies, is Jerome's letter to Eustochium:

> Always let the privacy of your chamber guard you; always let the Bridegroom sport with you within. You pray: you speak to the Bridegroom. You read: he speaks to you. And when sleep overtakes you He will come behind and put His hand through the opening, and He shall touch your inner parts; and you will be aroused and rise up and

[92] Teresa M. Shaw, 'Askesis and the Appearance of Holiness', *JECS*, 6.3 (1998), 485-500 (p. 495).
[93] Tertullian, *De Virginibus velandis*, 16 (ANF 4:36). See Elliott, *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell*, p. 15.
[94] This is not only expressed by Jerome (*Ep.* 22. 13) and Chrysostom, (*De non iterando coniugio,* 3 (PG 138, 176, 178) and others (notably Basil in his letter addressed to a 'Fallen Virgin' (*Ep*. 46, NFPF 2 /8) but is also enshrined officially in canon 19 of Synod of Ancyra (314 CE). 'All who have takem a vow of virginity, and have broken that vow are to be considered as bigamists.' Charles J. Hefele, *A History of the Councils; I* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark: 1871), p. 218. See Elizabeth Castelli, 'Virginity and its Meaning for Women's Sexuality in Early Christianity', *Journal of Feminist Studies in Early Christianity*, 2.1 (1986), 61-88, for a discussion on this theme.
[94] 'The Life of Mary (niece of Abraham of Qidun)', in *Holy Women of the Syrian Orient*, trans. with an intr. by Sebastien P. Brock and Susan A. Ashbrook, updated revn (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998) pp. 27-39 (p. 30).
[96] Castelli, 'Virginity and its Meaning', p. 71.
[97] Clark, 'The Celibate Bridegroom', n. 143, p. 25. Clark also points out that the metaphor of Christ as spouse was also used by men of the period, such as Paulinus of Nola, (p. 1).

> say: 'I have been wounded by love' And you will hear Him respond, 'A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed'.[98]

While the continent body of Christianity promised new opportunities for women, the valorisation of virginity and the promise of Paradise only served to maintain the identification of women with the erotic. The inability to think of women outside of the sexual realm was a legacy of existing gender structures and conceptions of female embodiment. This was reinforced by how the female body was construed in medical discourse.

1.4. Medical Bodies I: Leaking Bodies

The collapse of the female body with the erotic, despite its recapitulation through redemption, is less surprising when one considers that in the medical textbooks of the day, the only area in which we read about women's bodies in their own right, is in the context of reproduction.[99] Indeed, women's health was considered only in relation to their ability to produce legitimate offspring. Aline Rousselle points out that should a woman experience ill health, '[s]ymptoms which might call for bandaging or muscular exercises in a man might very well necessitate treatment of genital organs in a woman. All this the ancients saw very clearly, and they took the view that all symptoms in a woman must be considered in relation to the genital area.'[100]

The ways in which women's bodies were construed in antiquity are illustrated in *The Hippocratic Collection* and the works of Galen of Pergamon (129 – *c*. 200/*c*. 216 CE). *The Hippocratic Collection* was a corpus of various works spanning about six hundred years of medical thinking, dating back from at least the sixth century BCE to the beginning of the Christian era.[101] The *Collection* was the basis for all medical studies of antiquity, and quoted as late as the fourth century CE. It comprised a selection of case histories, treatments in the form of lists of remedies, aphorisms and theoretical arguments. Simon Byl estimates that approximately a quarter of the corpus concerns the diseases of women.[102] Galen's works, first promulgated towards the end of the second century, drew on the *Collection* as well as utilising the works of Plato and Aristotle and were consulted widely until well into the 1600s.

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[98] Jerome, *Ep.* 22.25. For an examination of the eroticism of this text see Patricia Cox Miller, 'The Blazing Body: Ascetic Desire in Jerome's Letter to Eustochium', *JECS,* 1 (1993), 21-45.
[99] Lesley Dean-Jones, *Women's Bodies in Classical Greek Science* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), p. 10.
[100] Aline Rousselle, *Porneia: On Desire and the Body in Antiquity*, trans. by Felicia Pheasant (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1993), p. 24.
[101] Scott M. DeHart, 'Hippocratic Medicine and the Greek Body Image', *Perspectives on Science*, 7.3 (1999), 349-382.
[102] Simon Byl, 'L'odeur végétale dans la thérapeutique gynécologique du Corpus hippocratique', *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*, 67(1989), 53-64 (p. 55).

Medical consensus in antiquity held that men and women were physically almost the same. Thomas Laqueur argues that there was a one-sex model in during this period, and it was male.[103] Sexual difference was of degree not kind. In the medical tracts of antiquity, female sexual organs were an inverted version of the male, thus ova were testes, the vagina was an interior penis and the labia akin to foreskin; and bodily fluids—semen, blood, milk—were composed of the same basic material. The model did not imply equality; woman was a lesser man. While Helen King, amongst others, has called Laqueur's theories into question through a close reading of the medical texts of the period, Laqueur's argument can be held subject to a caveat. While sexuality may not have been as monolithic as he might claim, it does seem reasonable to assert that there was a normative body, which was male, and all other types were non-male, and therefore inferior.[104] Men were in one class, and women, slaves and children tended to occupy another. In *On the Diseases of Women,* one of the works in the Hippocratic Corpus, the female body is conceived of as 'loose' or 'porous' and thus absorbs and holds liquids more easily and releases them more prodigiously than the male body.[105] Female bodies are therefore incontinent and permeable, as witnessed by women menstruating and lactating.[106] What distinguished women from men was their ability to bear children, their health was predicated on the activity of the womb and regulated through menstruation, which maintained the 'balance' of the body. If menstruation was lacking, the female had no means of divesting herself of the excessive liquid that a female body generated. Women so afflicted could become:

> … mad from the intensity of the inflammation; she turns murderous from the putrefaction; she feels fears and terrors from the darkness. From the pressure around the heart, these young girls long for nooses. Their spirit, distraught and sorely troubled by the foulness of their blood, attracts bad things, but names something else even fearful things. They command the young girl to wander about, to cast herself into wells, and to hang herself, as if these actions were preferable and completely useful. Even when without visions, a certain pleasure exists, as a result of which she longs for death, as if something good.[107]

Fertility was so identified with womanhood that, should a woman not conceive, the womb 'gets irritable and fretful. It takes to wandering all over the body and generating all sorts of ailments,

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[103] Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp. 25-62.
[104] Helen King, *The One-Sex Body on Trial: The Classical and Early Modern Evidence* (Farnham, Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013). The main thrust of her thesis is that both the one sex and two sex model, the latter of which Laqueur posits as only emerging in the eighteenth century, actually existed alongside together in antiquity. It should be noted that her work relates to medical texts only, and does not take into account the wider cultural milieu.
[105]Helen King, *Hippocrates' Woman: Reading the Female Body in Ancient Greece* (London & New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 28.
[106] *Diseases of Women,* 2.201, in Lesley Dean-Jones, *Women's Bodies,* pp. 55-56.
[107] Hippocrates, *Peri Partheniôn' (Diseases of Young Girls),*30-45 trans. by Rebecca Flemming and Ann Ellis Hanson in 'Hippocrates' 'Peri Partheniôn' (Diseases of Young Girls): Text and Translation', *Early Science and Medicine*, 3.3 (1998), 241-252 (p. 251).

including potentially fatal problems.'[108] Plato had termed this hysteria,[109] and 'hysteria' was a common rhetorical insult used against Christian women in the second and third century.[110]

Female sexuality was regarded with ambivalence. In the gynaecological writings of Soranus (*c.*100 CE) and Rufus of Epheus (*c.* late 1st and 2nd CE), which Rousselle rather caustically refers to as 'manuals on fertilization written for husbands', sexual desire was thought to be important for women.[111] However, in the writings of Aristotle, to whom Christian thinkers would turn to in the Middle Ages, sexual desire was seen as unimportant for reproduction, serving no function, given the biological make-up of women.[112] Aristotle further argued that the sex of a child was determined by how well the child 'cooked' in the womb. If the womb was inhospitable, a female would be produced. Women were defective males,[113] described variously as 'sterile male'[114] or 'a castrated male'. Aristotle saw the female as being essentially passive, fecundity read as merely the ground of the male life force.[115] The Aristotelian model certainly configured the sexes in a hierarchal fashion. While both the Hippocratic authors and Aristotle perceived a polarity between the male and female bodies – women were cold to men's hot; wet/dry; firm/loose – Joan Cadden has argued that Hippocratic writers did not necessarily regard the qualities of women as negative: the balance theory that was prevalent in antiquity simply meant that these were just the qualities that were opposite to the male.[116] Aristotle, however, read this as a sign of the female body's inferiority.

Although Aristotle was writing three-and-a-half centuries before Soranus and Galen, who retrieved the more anatomically correct idea of the Hippocratic two-seed model,[117] Aristotle's view prevailed both regarding the aberrant nature of women's sexuality and women's physical inferiority, through

[108] Plato, *Timaeus*, 91c, in *Plato: Timaeus and Critias*, trans. by Robin Waterfield with an intr. by Andrew Gregory, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 97.
[109] Plato, *Timaeus*, 91c, p. 99.
[110] Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion*. See especially MacDonald's introduction (pp. 1-4), which includes this quotation from Origen's *Against Celsus* 2.55 and 3.55: 'But we must examine this question whether anyone who really died ever rose again with the same body [....] But who saw this? A hysterical female, as you say, and perhaps some other one of those who were deluded by the same sorcery, who either dreamt in a certain state of mind and through wishful thinking had a hallucination due to some mistaken notion (an experience which has happened to thousands), or, which is more likely, wanted to impress others by telling this fantastic tale, and so by this cock and-bull story to provide a chance for other beggars.' The hysteria charge remained, and one could argue, still exists today in the 'menstruating woman'. For a fascinating study of the changes, especially in the context of 18th century women, see Asti Hustvedt, *Medical Muses: Hysteria in Nineteenth Century Paris* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2011). This theme will be taken up in Chapter 3.
[111] Rousselle, *Porneia,* p. 40.
[112] Aristotle speculated that only men could produce seed and that the female, apart from hosting the embryo in the womb, contributed nothing to the procreative process. *Gen an*, 739a; 727b.
[113] *Gen. an.,* 4.6 775a15-16.
[114] *Gen. an.*, 1, 20; 4.6 775a15-16.
[115] *Gen. an.,* 728a.
[116] Joan Cadden, *The Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 17.
[117] See Helen King for her reading of women in the *Hippocratic Corpus*, King, *Hippocrates' Woman,* esp., pp. 21-38.

the works of Thomas Aquinas (1225 –1274) who would go on to shape natural law and views of sexuality to, one could argue, rather devastating effect.[118]

With the male body considered normative and the female body only discussed in light of its reproductive function, it would follow that women's bodies were so identified with the flesh and with nature. Women's bodies needed to be contained: they leaked, they bled, they were a mystery of fecundity, orifices and the abject, and were construed as other. Even the most continent of bodies, of holy virgins, were therefore a source of danger.

1.5. Asceticism I: The Virile Woman and Virgin Bride

The necessity to contain the female body can be seen as part of the larger development of asceticism in the early Christian era. Asceticism has long been associated with the emergence of monastic tradition in the deserts of the East under the putative founding father Anthony in the fourth century.[119]

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[118] Where Aquinas' conception of natural law has come in for most criticism with regard to women is (i) hierarchical ordering of the sexes - namely that women are created inferior to men (*ST* 92.1.1) (*De Veritate* 5, 9, d. 9) (ii) issues of birth control and rape (*Summa contra gentiles*, 3, 122, *ST* 2 154.7.4). Contemporary feminist theologians have argued that to reduce Thomist natural law to such 'physicalist' concerns obscures the true relevance of Thomist teaching. While Aquinas makes biologically deterministic judgments about sex and gender, and has a hierarchal essentialist understanding of the sexes, Cristina Traina argues that his ethics of natural law is still relevant as it sees humans, both male and female, as reasonable, free and purposive, essentially social and oriented toward the common good; grounds morality within innate inclinations and moreover that morality can be discerned reasonably, irrespective of historical change; and sees virtues as guiding practical reason prudently and effectively to action. Cristina L.H. Traina, *Feminist Ethics and Natural Law: The End of the Anathemas* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1999), pp. 85-86. Jean Porter, similarly finds merit in Aquinas, but comes to it from a more critical, historicizing tradition, arguing that 'it is possible to develop a critical appropriation of the natural law that preserves the central scholastic insights into the human and theological significance of sexuality while also allowing for subsequent developments in our understanding of what counts as natural and appropriate in sexual relations'. Jean Porter, *Natural and Divine Law: Reclaiming the Tradition for Christian Ethics* (Ottawa, ON: Novalis, 1999), p. 190. While Porter describes Aquinas's view of sexual morality as 'excessively stringent and emotionally unrealistic' and 'chilling' in its categorisation of masturbation being a greater sexual sin than rape, she finds within the virtue of chastity a framework for contemporary sexual ethics in that chastity is governed by temperance which demands 'ideals of restraint and consideration of others', Jean Porter, 'Chastity as a Virtue', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 58.3(2005), 285-301(pp. 285-286). Coming from a completely different angle, Tina Beattie, who comes from a critical essentialist perspective with a psychoanalytical edge, argues that the very gendered hierarchical characteristics of Aquinas' natural law need to be critically appropriated, and indeed *celebrated*. Drawing on the philosophical thought of Lacan, whose thesis was that lack is an aspect of all human existence, and not just the feminine, she conceptualises lack as 'expressive of a desire that which the world cannot give in any of its relationships or objects, and yet within which God is present.' Tina Beattie, *Theology after Postmodernity: Divining the Void - A Lacanian Reading of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 355. Aquinas' hierarchy of gender, according to Beattie, resulted in an entire cosmology organised around gender hierarchy, but she also argues that his theology and ethics can overcome that hierarchy, through a Lacanian reinterpretation of his Trinitarian theology, and that his natural law can be the practical means of acquiring justice for the disenfranchised, namely women and children. Tina Beattie, 'The Vanishing Absolute and the Deconsecrated God: A Theological Reflection on Revelation, Law and Human Dignity', *Understanding Human Dignity,* ed. by Christopher McCrudden, Proceedings of the British Academy, 192 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 261-76. See also Lisa Sowle Cahill, 'Catholic Feminists and Traditions: Renewal, Reinvention, Replacement', *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics*, 34.2 (2014), 27-51.

[119] The ascetic tradition in the desert comes to us through a number of sources: *Historia monachorum in Aegypto*, an account, partly from secondary sources, of the journey that some Palestinian monks took to

Christian asceticism had long been thought of as unduly harsh. It was thought that Christians had assimilated the thought around the classical Platonic body and married it to the 'healthy' conception of the Jewish body, thus corrupting it.[120] The Egyptian desert, the thinking went, was where the body hating Christian emerged. However, this view was significantly revised in light of two major archaeological discoveries in the mid-twentieth century which suggested that asceticism had been a feature of very early Christianity and Judaism. The first was the discovery of twelve leather-bound papyruses in caves at Nag Hammadi in Upper Egypt, dating from the second to the fifth centuries, which showed significant parallels with the orthodox New Testament writings but which displayed an inherent ascetical strain.[121] Around the same time, between 1947 and 1956, the Dead Sea Scrolls and subsequent excavations at Qumran were carried out.[122] Dating from between 200 BC and 68 CE, a third of these scrolls dealt with the day-to-day life of the Essene/Jewish community and revealed a definite ascetic trend in Judaism. Ascetic strains have also been read in the Pauline corpus (e.g. 1 Cor 7) and in the praise found in Matthew for those who became 'eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven'

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monastery centres in the Nile valley from the Thebaid to the Delta, composed *c.* 395 by one of the travellers, often transmitted together with the *Historia Lausiaca of Palladius* (c. 400). *Apophthegmata Patrum*, or the 'Sayings of the Fathers,' (and three mothers) was compiled in in the late sixth century, many of which date to the beginnings of desert asceticism in the early fourth century. This alphabetical collection presents the spiritual reflections of anchorites in the Egyptian desert. Identification of Anthony as the 'father of monasticism' goes back as early as the fourth century. An Egyptian peasant who upon hearing the gospel of story of Jesus and the rich young man, rid himself of all of his possessions and adopted a life of strict asceticism. See Athanasius, *Life of Antony* (SC 400). He was reputed to have lived until the age of 102 (*c*. 254-346). Anthony is the most prominent authority in the *Apophthegmata Patrum.* For a discussion of how Anthony came to be so identified with the origins of monasticism and the evolution of his legend, see Samuel L. Rubenson, *The Letters of St Antony: Origenist Theology, Monastic Tradition, and the Making of a Saint,* Bibliotheca Historico-Ecclesiastica Ludensis 24 (Lund: Lund University Press, 1990). See also Marilyn Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism: From the Desert Fathers to the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000). Dunn provides a helpful overview of the theology of the eastern Church theologians, especially Origen and Evagrius of Pontus and their influence of on the theology and wisdom attributed to Antony and how their message was gradually reconfigured by the likes of Jerome, Augustine and John Cassian (esp. Chapter 4).

[120] This is so widely held a view, it could be considered axiomatic. See Deborah Beth Creamer, *Disability and Christian Theology: Embodied Limits and Constructive Possibilities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 41; Lisa Isherwood and Elizabeth Stuart, *Introducing Body Theology* (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2000), p. 16; Mary Timothy Prokes, *Toward a Theology of the Body* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), pp. 7-8; James B. Nelson, *Body Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1992), p. 30. On Platonic conceptions of the soul, in the *Cratylus,* Plato suggests that the etymology of the word 'body' (*soma*) comes from the word dungeon (*sema*), as man was a spiritual or non-corporeal being trapped in the body (*Cratylus*, 400c).

[121] Most notably the *Gospel of Thomas*, *Gospel of Philip* and *Gospel of Mary*. For references and indices see, *Nag Hammadi Texts and the Bible: A Synopsis and Index,* ed. by Craig A. Evans and others, New Testament Tools and Studies, 18 (Leiden: Brill, 1993). Mark Goodacre, 'How Reliable is the Story of the Nag Hammadi Discovery?', J*ournal for the Study of the New Testament*, 35.4 (2013), 303-322, provides an excellent overview of the speculative history of the origins of the Nag Hammadi discovery. James M. Robinson, 'The Coptic Gnostic Library Today', *NTS* 14 (1968): 356-401; and idem, 'Discovery of the Nag Hammadi Codices,' 206-224.

[122] Lawrence M. Wills, 'Ascetic Theology before Asceticism? Jewish Narratives and the Decentering of the Self', *JAAR*, 74.4 (2006), 902- 925. In the Greek and Roman worlds, the Orpheus Cult, Pythagoreans, eunuch priests of Artemis and Vestal Virgins all practiced a form of asceticism. Similarly, the Jews had the Essenes at Qumran and Therapeutae in Egypt. It has been suggested, however, that the Therapeutae, our only source for whom is Philo, may not have actually existed. See Meeks, 'Androgyne' for review.

(Matt. 19.12). [123] The Apocryphal Acts, composed in or around the second and third centuries, are argued by some to be the best evidence of the social milieu of the time, and show a clear ascetic trajectory, effectively 'rewriting the Gospel Beatitudes to stress the centrality of asceticism in Christian teaching'. [124] Additionally, there is evidence that various forms of eremitic life were in existence in Syria, Palestine and Cappadocia and not just the deserts of Egypt.[125]

In light of these discoveries, early Christian asceticism was re-appraised. Scholars sought an alternative to the image of ascetic practitioners engaging in masochistic self-denial. Rather, asceticism, Elizabeth A. Clark argued, 'was not that which dualistically pitted soul against body, rather early Christian ascetics usually claimed that soul and body were tightly connected, that the actions and movements of one had a direct effect upon the other'.[126] Asceticism is not the goal in itself, or a means of punishment through suffering. It is both a way to be in receipt of what God wants to give and as an aid to resolve the central problem of existence. As Ephrem the Syrian (*c.*306-373) addresses God, 'You had joined [body and soul] together in love, but they parted and separated in pain /….Body and soul go to court to see which caused the other to sin; / but the wrong belongs to both, for free will belongs to both.'[127]

There is no doubt, however, that asceticism brought with it a highly ambivalent attitude to the body. Evagrius of Pontus (345-399 CE), one of the most influential of the early eastern ascetics, criticized those who would 'speak in an evil way of our soul's body', yet also characterized monasticism as a 'flight from the body' where the goal is liberation from the body as the body obstructs true knowledge.[128] As Evagrius understands it, human beings are naturally beset by desires and passions, predominantly in the form of demons, which turn and send the person into turmoil. [129] This is what

[123] See Liesbeth Van Der Sypt, 'The Use of 1 Cor 7:36-38 in Early Christian Asceticism', in *Asceticism and Exegesis in Early Christianity: The Reception of New Testament Texts in Ancient Ascetic Discourses*, ed. by Hans-Ulich Weidemann with an intr. by Elizabeth A. Clark (Bristol, CT: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), pp. 148-160.
[124] Clark*, Reading Renunciation,* p. 26.
[125] For an overview, see William Harmless, *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 425-435.
[126] Elizabeth A. Clark, *Reading Renunciation,* p.17.
[127] *De Nisibe*, 69.3, 5, in Ephrem, *The Harp of the Spirit: Eighteen Poems of St Ephrem the Harp of the Spirit: Eighteen Poems of St Ephrem,* ed. and trans. by Sebastien P. Brock, 2nd edn (London: Fellowship of St Alban, 1983), p. 77.
[128] Evagrius, *Keph. Gnost,* 2.62. See David Bundy's translation in David Bundy, 'Evagrius Ponticus, *The Kephalaia Gnostica*', in *Ascetic Behaviour in Greco-Roman Antiquity,* ed. by Vincent L. Wimbush (Mineappolis, MI: Fortress Press, 1990), pp. 175-186.
[129] David Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk: Spiritual Combat in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006) is one of the most informed and thorough reviews of demonology, not just regarding demons as anthropomorphised expression of desire, but also as a form of enacting identity. See also Richard Valantasis, 'Demons and the Perfecting of the Monk's Body: Monastic Anthropology, Daemonology and Asceticism', *Semeia*, 58 (1992), 47-49. Harmless provides an excellent overview of demons in the works of Evagrius of Pontus, *Desert Christians*, pp. 327-329. The importance of demons in Evagrius's thought is not to be underestimated. As Harmless points out, in Evagrius' *Praktikos*, which dealt with the practical acquisition of virtue or the first stage of monastic life, a full 67 out of the 100 chapters discusses demons (p. 327).

Augustine would later characterize as being inattentive to God, and the framing of concupiscence which would take form in the doctrine of Original Sin.[130] Asceticism was practiced to quell these desires and passions, to recalibrate the body and was the first necessary step in human being's return to God. It was not about punishing the body, but bringing a measure of ease to the soul through disciplining the body. The desert was the setting which removed any distraction from the serious business of commune with God.

Fasting, part of the practice of asceticism, was a means of achieving this longed for peace. Fasting had long been seen in antiquity as a way of calibrating the body. Philosophically, the body was thought of as a closed system, a miniature universe with a complex constellation of appetites and competing desires and dichotomies. The body in the classical world was 'a body verging continually toward disequilibrium and the need for expert advice'.[131] Balance was therefore key and moderation in food and drink was thought to prevent the body from being unbalanced and was crucial as a means of maintaining health.[132] Much as regulation of the body through frugal eating was seen in classical antiquity as being essential, and Judaism food laws were essential to marking the Jewish body, early Christians also adopted food regulation.[133] A survey on fasting in Christian patristic literature was carried out by Herbert Musurillo.[134] Fasting, according to Musurillo, was 'the vital reaction of the Christian, in the concrete circumstances and psychological presuppositions of his milieu, to the call of Jesus in the Gospels. And the words, "Take up your cross and follow me" have been transposed from

[130] Augustine's genius of course, shaped the Church to come, however, his ascendancy was by no means assured during his lifetime. His controversial reading of original sin, itself arrived at in answer to a query on the fate of unbaptised child, was not accepted until after his death, and he was in dispute with Julian of Enclanum on this subject for the last twelve years of his life. Elaine Pagels examines the emergence of the doctrine in *Adam, Eve and the Serpent*. Her comparison of Augustine and Chrysostom in their Genesis readings is also illuminating. Elaine Pagels, 'The Politics of Paradise: Augustine's Exegesis of Genesis 1-3 versus that of John Chrysostom', *The Harvard Theological Review,* 78.1/2 (1985), 67-99. For a review of original sin, and how well it stands based on the modern Church see, Stephen J. Duffy, 'Our Hearts of Darkness: Original Sin Revisited', *Theological Studies*, 49 (1988), 597-622.

[131] Judith Perkins, *The Suffering Self*: *Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era* (London & New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 161. 'If a healthy man is in the hands of a doctor versed in the art of conserving health, he will be a happy man provided his is placed in a doctor's care from birth' from Galen in, Oribasius, *Libri incerti,* 11. Cited in Rousselle, *Porneia,* p. 9.

[132] For a review of attitudes towards food in Greco-Roman antiquity, see Veronika E. Grimm, *From Feasting to Fasting: The Evolution of a Sin* (New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 35-56.

[133] The Jewish Bible lists the animals that are permitted or prohibited as food (Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14.3-12). The author of the *Letter of Aristeas*, writing in 2 BCE, seeks to illustrate the superior wisdom of the Torah's law by interpreting the eating laws as a symbolic philosophical discipline. The general purpose of these laws is, he writes, is assurance that Jews will not mix with other nations and thus remain pure in body and soul (139). However, over time the rabbinic literature provided much more elaborate system of dietary regulation from about the sixth century BCE. For a history of the development of Jewish food practices, see David Kramer, *Jewish Eating and Identity through the Ages* (New York: Routledge, 2007), in particular, pp. 9-39. Kramer argues that the food laws and practices need to be understood in the context of questions of identity and the Jewish experience of exile.

[134] Herbert S. Musurillo, 'The Problem of Ascetical Fasting in the Greek Patristic Writers', *Traditio*, 12 (1956), 1-64.

the messianic message of Christ to the precarious position of the Christian community placed between the Resurrection and the Parousia'.[135]

When the resurrected body was considered, it was imagined that it was freed from its appetites: 'The nature of their bodies / once troubled and troublesome / is now tranquil and quiet, resplendent/ from without in beauty /and from within with purity, the body in evident ways / the soul in evident ways.'[136] Managing the body was key to realising the resurrected body–slenderer flesh will pass more easily through the narrow gate of heaven, lighter flesh will rise more quickly and drier flesh, no longer moistened and heated by food and drink, will experience less putrefaction in the tomb.[137] Fasting was means of coping with the delayed promise, it was a form of coming to terms with delayed gratification.

Musurillo puts fasting behaviour–which could refer to total abstention from food but which more frequently meant restriction of the diet to bread and water–at the centre of ascetic practice and inimical to early Christianity. However, as David W.T. Brattston persuasively argues, fasting behaviour in the early Church was not excessively regulated and was a times actively discouraged.[138] Indeed, fasting was not particularly considered to be an issue in the early Church, and if anything, to distinguish itself from Judaism, Christians were those who did not adopt restrictive food practices.[139] What is most striking is that fasting, an activity that was barely remarked or commented on in the earliest period of the Church, went on to become an intrinsic part of Christianity. By the fourth century alone, every major writer was commenting on some form of asceticism, to include fasting, whether or not it was widespread in practice among ordinary Christians.

Evagrius of Pontus, in his *Eight Thoughts* which set the blueprint for the seven deadly sins, defines the first vice or 'thought' as gluttony.[140] Evagrius did not believe that gluttony was the most dangerous; this was reserved for *acedia,* a term which can be translated as restlessness or ennui. Restriction of food was the first step toward *apatheia*–loosely translated as passionlessness, not to be confused with apathy–the state of being content and unbothered by desire. However, with transmission, the emphasis of Evagrius' framework changed. John Cassian who adapted Evagrius' asceticism to the monastic west, explicitly links each vice to that which follows it, thus gluttony leads

[135] Musurillo, p. 63.
[136] Ephrem*, Parad*., 7.12, cited in Susan A. Harvey*,* 'Locating the Sensing Body'*,* in *Religion and the Self in Antiquity*, ed. by David Brakke and others (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005), p. 157.
[137] Tertullian, *De ieun.,* 17 (ANF 4:153).
[138] David W.T. Brattston, 'Fasting in the Earliest Church', *Restoration Quarterly*, 53.4 (2011), 235-245.
[139] For a close reading of the evolution of fasting in Christianity and its antecedent in classical and Jewish antiquity see, Grimm, *From Feasting to Fasting* and Musurillo's article.
[140] See Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy*: *The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 75-84.

to lust. He also notes that gluttony is unique among the eight evil thoughts because it can never be completely eliminated since food is essential to life.[141]

Where Evagrius and Cassian saw fasting as a method of containing all desire, not just sexual desire, one of the eastern interlocutors in the west, Jerome, aligned all desire to sexual desire, and fasting as the means of curtailing it.[142] While the eastern tradition's view of human sexuality and fasting was sophisticated and systematic, Jerome followed in Tertullian's tradition of rhetorical polemic. Jerome was perhaps not a theologian of any great originality, but the impact that his theological worldview had on the greater Christian community ought not to be underestimated. Jerome's theological views were indelibly stamped on how the Bible was read and construed in later periods of the Church, and in particular how female sexuality was problematized.[143] Augustine may have shaped Christianity with regard to its sexual ethics and the fateful conception of original sin, but Jerome was just as influential. Jerome brought with him to Roman society not just fellow eremites but tales of harsh austerity in the desert.[144] Jerome's highly slanted view of asceticism arguably did more to influence the sexuality/eating paradigm more than any other early Christian writer.[145]

Jerome's asceticism was something of a caricature of the desert tradition. Peter Brown argues that 'Jerome, in fact knew little of the desert about which he wrote and next to nothing of the patient disciplines on which the Desert Fathers based their certainty that even the sexual urge might be transcended'.[146] Brown further suggests that: 'In his exegesis of the Apostle, he contributed more heavily than did any other contemporary Latin writer to the definitive equalization of Paul's notion of the flesh.'[147] While the Desert Fathers used fasting as a tool to control all desires of the flesh, not just sexual desire, Jerome explicitly linked fasting to attempts to control sexuality: 'My face was pale with

[141] John Cassian, *Con.* 5.19-20 (SC 43:211-212). Cassian never acknowledged his debt to Evagrius, which in part explains why Evagrius' contribution to ascetic theory has only recently been recognised.
[142] Tertullian's influence on Jerome has been the interest of much scholarship in particular by Neil Adkin, 'Ambrose and Jerome: The Opening Shot', *Mnemosyne*, 46 (1993), 364-376; 'Tertullian and Jerome again', *Symbolae Osloenses*, 72.1 (1997), 155-163.
[143] Jane Barr has demonstrated how Jerome transformed translation of the Bible: In Genesis 39, which recounts the story of Joseph and Pophiter's Wife, Pophiter's wife commands Joseph to lie with her. In the Hebrew text, Joseph responds with a simple, 'and he refused'. Jerome, however, expanded somewhat on this, 'and he refused' morphs to 'by no means agreeing to this wicked deed'. Further language is similarly enhanced. Most tellingly, in his translation of Gen 3.16, after Eve is tempted by the serpent, God says to Eve: 'Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you', desire in the Hebrew (*teshuqah*) having a sexual connotation. Jerome perhaps in a bid to clean up the texts changes this to 'You will be under the power of your husband and he will rule over you'. Jane Barr, 'The Influence of Saint Jerome on Medieval Attitudes to Women', in *After Eve*, ed. by Janet Martin Soskice (London: Collins Marshall Pickering, 1990), pp. 89-102.
[144] Megan Hale Williams, *The Monk and the Book: Jerome and the Making of Christian Scholarship* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 2006). See also Peter Brown, *The Body & Society,* pp. 366-386.
[145] On Jerome's association with women of the Roman aristocracy see Elizabeth A. Clark, *Jerome, Chrysostom and Friends: Essays and Translations* (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1977), pp. 35-106, and J.N.D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings and Controversies* (London: Duckworth, 1975), pp. 91-103. On his social network more broadly, see Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy*, pp. 11-42.
[146] Brown, *Body & Society,* p. 373.
[147] Brown, *Body & Society*, p. 376.

fasting; but though my limbs were cold as ice, my mind was burning with desire, and the fires of lust kept bubbling up before me while my flesh was good as dead.'[148]

Should male flesh require such assiduous attention, what would this mean for women's bodies which were construed as inherently sexual: 'If such are the temptations of men whose bodies are emaciated with fasting so that they have only evil thoughts to withstand, how must it fare with a girl who clings to the enjoyment of luxuries?'[149] If fasting was a requirement for men, it would therefore be of absolute necessity for women. Fasting, practiced sufficiently, could curtail the leaking, desirous female body. Fasting could control the flesh, which was remade for the bridegroom, Christ.

The utmost attention was paid to moulding the female body, in some cases with tragic results. Infamously, one of the women that Jerome mentored, Blaesilla, is the earliest documented case of self-starvation in Christianity.[150] On a separate occasion, Jerome, a celibate male, felt entirely qualified to give detailed advice how the ideal Christian girl, defined one who 'has been consecrated to Christ before her birth and vowed to His service before her conception', should be raised and her body shaped. [151] Her body must be presented in a way that is fitting to her bridegroom, Christ. 'Let her very dress and garb remind her to Whom she is promised. Do not pierce her ears or paint her face consecrated to Christ with white lead or rouge. Do not hang gold or pearls about her neck or load her head with jewels, or by reddening her hair make it suggest the fires of Gehenna.'[152] The reason for moderating her food intake is set out clearly: 'By vigils and fasts she mortifies her body and brings it into subjection. By a cold chastity she seeks to put out the flame of lust and to quench the hot desires

[148] Jerome, *Ep*. 22.7.
[149] Jerome, *Ep.* 22.8
[150] References to Blaesilla in Jerome's letters are found in *Eps.* 38 and 39. She is mentioned in passing *Eps.* 54 and 66, and in the preface to *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*. Kate Cooper discusses the Blaesilla episode in *The Virgin and Bride,* pp. 68-72, 81-83. See also Shaw, *The Burden of the Flesh,* pp.106-108. Upon the death of her husband of seven months, in 384, Blaesilla suffered a near-fatal illness (as a result of grief or a variant on the same illness that her husband had, is not clear), but gradually recovered. Her illness, as Jerome and her mother Paula did their best to convince her, had been 'sent to teach her to renounce her over great attention to that body which the worms must shortly devour'. Furthermore, her grief for her husband would be better spent in mourning 'the loss of her virginity more than the death of her husband.' When her recovery was in progress, she was encouraged to continue the involuntary abstinence from food deliberately, so as to 'not stimulate desire by bestowing care upon the flesh.' Approvingly, Jerome relates, 'her steps tottered due to illness, and her thin neck barely held her pale, trembling face upright. And yet she always held either a prophet or a gospel in her hand.' Blaesilla followed Jerome's directions assiduously but not well. Her body was too weakened by her illness to withstand fasting, within four months she was dead. Blaesilla represents the first reported case of a woman's death by self-starvation in the Christian church. This is not to say that she died of anorexia nervosa, which is a modern disease, first documented in the nineteenth century, but it serves as a stark example of what the logical outcome of the patristic solution to the problematization of female sexuality could be.
[151] Jerome, *Ep.* 107.3.
[152] *Ep.*107.5.

of youth. And by deliberate squalor she makes haste to spoil her natural good looks.'[153] Through the repression of appetites the virgin gains accesses to the bridegroom Christ's bedchamber.[154]

Fasting was not just enjoined on the dedicated virgin. Married women whose bodies were at the service of their husbands could claim a metaphorical virginity through strategies of containment in practising ascetical acts such as fasting. Fasting could demark the woman's inviolability, by both lessening her sexual attractiveness and visibly signifying her commitment to Christ. Her worthiness was witnessed by the interpretation of character based on the appearance of the body. Christ the bridegroom, according to Athanasius, examines 'mind, appearance, lifestyle, behaviour, gait, clothing and will' for evidence of her worthiness.[155] The virgin bride was the emulative ideal, a contradiction whereby Christian women's bodies were eroticised whilst virginity was valorised.

Hunger functioned as a metaphor for the desiring bride who would be satiated in union with Christ upon her death. Reward was promised, 'Christ satisfied her needs so that she no longer felt hunger.'[156] As Teresa Shaw describes it: 'The practice of asceticism, such as fasting, coupled with the control of movements and expression, are the tools by which the virgin constructs, or sculpts, or paints, or moulds her own body in imitation of the ideal body presented to her [by the Church fathers].'[157]

Women who fasted immoderately and were renowned for their piety, were celebrated and encoded male. In the *Apophthegmata* we find images of virility and maleness, the barrenness of the desert an appropriate metaphor for dried out, virginal flesh. Of the desert hermits in the *Apopgthegmata*, three are female, *Ammas* Sarah, Syncletica and Theodora.[158] Palladius devotes about one third of the stories in his *Lausiac History* to female ascetics.[159] These he styles as male, telling of 'certain women with manly qualities, to whom God apportioned labours equal to those of men, lest any should pretend that women are too feeble to practise virtue perfectly'.[160] The annihilation of the sexual translated to the

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[153] *Ep.* 107.11.
[154] Athanasius, *De virg,* 16-17*,* 24, Pseudo-Athanasius, *Vita Syncleticae* 9 (PG 28, 1492), Jerome, *Ep*., 22, 25. See Castelli, 'Virginity and Its Meaning'. Also, Athanasius, *De virg.*, found at Appendix C of David Brakke, *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism.* Brakke provides English translations of Athanasius' two letters to virgins and his treatise on virigins (Appendices A-C).
[155] Athanasius, *De virg.*, 2 cited in Brakke, *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism*, p. 303.
[156] Jerome, *Ep.* 127.13 (NFNP 2 / 6:257)
[157] Shaw, 'Askesis and the Appearance of Holiness', p. 493.
[158] See, *The Desert Fathers: Sayings of the Early Christian Monks: The Alphabetical Collection,* trans. by Benedicta Ward (Oxford: Mowbray,1973), pp. 192-193; 193-197; 71-72. Harmless has speculated that of the three, there is only evidence to suggest that Sarah alone lived in the desert see, *Desert Christians*, pp. 440-442. Unlike some scholars however, he does not conclude that female desert hermits did not exist, only that they were underreported, as he argues that named women are more likely to have been 'real' historical figures than the anonymous ones. The coding of the female as male is witnessed by the tale where a female hermit berates a monk when he complains that he had to change his route whilst travelling in the desert so to avoid her. 'If you had been a perfect monk, you would not have looked at us to see that we are women' (PL 73:872), cited in Gillian Cloke, *This Female Man of God: Women and Spiritual Power in the Patristic Age,* p. 124.
[159] Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism*, p. 51.
[160] *LH,* 41, in Cloke, p. 131.

perfect Christ who was male. The results of extreme fasting –the withered breasts, dryness of the skin, the drying up of the typically wet female flesh, and the ceasing of menstruation –meant that women became men, and thus disavowed themselves of their feminine nature. Gillian Cloke argues that women's virtue was 'directly and proportionally linked with a perceived ability to cast off the qualities and trappings of their tainted gender'.[161]

Jerome, who praises Paula as 'male' describes the extent of fasting that is required:

> Paula often was troubled with bodily weakness (brought on by incredible abstinence and by redoubled fastings), she would be heard to say: 'I keep under my body and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I should hold myself to be a castaway'; and 'It is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine '; and 'I humbled my soul with fasting'.[162]

The flesh wasted from fasting becomes a hallmark of virtue.[163] In the perfection of asceticism, 'the question of male and female no longer exists, because the ascetic has risen above the limits determined by body, and achieved 'annihilation of sexual distinction'.[164] Fasting, with the approbation of the Church fathers, was developed purely in the context of rendering women non-female, and therefore asexual. This was an attempt of women to divest themselves – or to be divested by their male interlocutors – of their femininity, but it was ultimately a futile aim. Whilst spiritually it was possible, Didymus the Blind states, 'the one who is in the state of being a woman can grow and become male one day',[165] the female nature always remains, tempting and treacherous.

Despite this, or because of it, men's preoccupation with women being wholly identified with their bodies, meant that even 'good' women could cause male unrest. Consider a saying in the *Apophegmata* warning monks against thinking of their mothers, not for reasons of loneliness or the challenges of the ascetic lifestyle, but rather because of their association with the body: as first you think about your mother or your sister, then about some other and you are consumed by lust.

> A brother was travelling with his own mother who happened to be elderly. When they came to a river the old woman was unable to get across. Taking his stole, her son wound it around his own hands so he would not come into contact with his mother's body. Lifting her in that way, he carried her over to the other side. 'Why did you wrap your hands, my son?' his mother said to him. 'A woman's body is fire', he said, 'and from this comes the recollection of others. That is why I acted like that.'[166]

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[161] Cloke, *This Female Man of God*, p. 213.
[162] Jerome, *Ep.* 108.1.
[163] It should be noted however, that much in the literature attests to the need for moderation, such as Jerome, *Ep.* 107.4, Basil of Ancyra, *De virg. 8* (PG 30.685B*);* Gregory of Nyssa, *De virg.*, 22.2 (SC 119:520).
[164] Susannah Elm, *Virgins of God: The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 267.
[165] Didymus the Blind*, Fr. in Gen.* 63 (SC 233: 160).
[166] *AP*, 159:107

Whilst scholars such as Gail Corrington Streete argue that asceticism served as a new identification model for Christian women by showing how gendered and societal roles could be transgressed,[167] it is worth noting that popular figures such as Thecla, who performed several transgressive acts including baptizing and preaching, was admired not for her priestly activities but for her asceticism and her hard-fought virginity.[168]

Asceticism served to render the fleshly incontinent female body suitable for the holy bridegroom Christ, and also allowed women to be encoded male, although they could never quite escape their identification with the flesh. Thematically, female asceticism in antiquity can be read in four ways: as repentance, as a means of promoting sexual continence, as martyrdom, and as preparation for the resurrection. While fasting was by no means enshrined in Christianity, and in no way directed towards women exclusively, fasting came to exert a particular hold over women, a development which would reach its apogee in the Middle Ages.

1.6. Conclusion

The construction of the female body in the Patristic era set the standard for how the female body would be problematized in the western tradition, ever identified with the erotic and the reproductive. The erotic identification of women with the flesh was not unique to Christianity and yet how Christianity's problematization of female sexuality was distinctive in its valorisation of virginity. Medical theory in antiquity which understood the female body as voracious yet passive in the context of its procreative function, colluded with the theological narrative of the fall to shift the burden of flesh to the female body. The medium through which this was accomplished was in the transformation of asceticism. The ascetic female body became a simulacrum of Eden on earth, represented both in the eradication of sex where the virgin is 'made male', and in the reorientation of sexuality whereby the virgin becomes the infinitely desirous and desirable bride of Christ. While sexuality was visibly suppressed, the Christian virgin was paradoxically rendered all the more feminine by being granted the honour of becoming the bride of Christ. Early Christianity in its inheritance of the Jewish and classical traditions lacked a language and framework to conceptualise women without their sexed element: it translated to women being caught in the bind of both being women and transcending their womanhood, but forever associated with it. The next chapter examines how the erotic and reproductive reading of the female body translated in the medieval period.

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[167] Gail Corrington Streete, 'Women as Sources of Redemption and Knowledge in Early Christian Tradition', in *Women and Christian Origins*, ed. by Ross Shepard Kraemer and Mary Rose D'Angelo (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 330-353 (p. 352).
[168] 'The Acts of Paul and Thecla', (APA, 1:235-272).

Chapter 2: Female Embodiment in the Medieval Era

2.1. Introduction

The impossible bind in which women had found themselves in the Patristic era, of both being women and attempting to transcend their womanhood, continued into the Middle Ages. Women's attempts to resolve this paradox were, however, markedly different. This chapter will demonstrate the shift that occurred in constructions of female embodiment. It was a shift from the virgin bride and de-sexed woman of the Patristic era to a fully sensuous engagement with the female form. It will be argued that women embraced the identification of the female with flesh, reclaiming agency through the traditional female roles of lover, or wife, or mother. By developing a highly idiosyncratic somatic theology, women utilised their bodies in creative ways in expressing a peculiar form of female piety, what could be termed ascetic mysticism. The contention is, however, that prevailing norms and attitudes toward female embodiment persisted, with the result that women were forced to embrace an even more ascetic ideal, through self-imposed bodily discipline.

The first section of this chapter examines the historical context and treats how developments during the period affected the conception of female embodiment. The second section investigates the theological context, focussing on the shift to the central importance of the Passion in theology and the effect this had on female piety. The third section examines how the physical body was conceived of. The fourth section examines how women managed the competing constructions of the female body through the ascetic impulse.

2.2. Historical Bodies II: Material Woman

Until fairly recently, it was thought that the Early Middle Ages (*c.* 5CE – 9 CE)[1] was a time of complete chaos. Dubbed the 'Dark Ages', a picture was painted of marauding 'Barbarians' and bloodthirsty Vikings and Goths who bled all over Europe, eroding the bastions of the civilized Roman

[1] A note on the periodization. Generally, the periodization suggested by David Nichols in *The Evolution of the Medieval World: Society, Government and Thought in Europe, 312-1500* (London and New York: Longman, 1992) is followed. He suggests a periodization of Early Medieval (*c.* 700-920); Central Middle Ages (*c*. 920-1270), Late Middle Ages (1270-1500). Nichols puts the period between 312-700 as 'Percursor' period. As I have adopted the standard Patristic period as extending from c.100 to 451, the medieval period is extended back to that date.

empire, resulting in the breakdown of society. Islands of civilization, generally embodied as brave manuscript illuminating monks, were pocketed in corners of various parts of the once great empire.[2]

This view of degeneration into chaos has been greatly revised in recent times.[3] It has been generally recognised that remnants of law and order remained, and that Roman society did not completely collapse. However, relative to the Eastern Empire, the West stagnated. What we would now call Europe reverted to being an agrarian society, its cultural and economic development inevitably stunted by waves of invasions and local wars. The Church, nonetheless, persevered, in many areas taking over administrative and bureaucratic roles in the vacuum created by political upheaval. Not only did the Church survive, but it flourished, gradually converting the invading Germanic and Frankish people.[4] The conversion to Christianity of what we would now view as Europe was complete by the mid-eleventh century.[5]

That there would be cultural appropriation was inevitable. Christianity, especially under the stewardship of Gregory the Great (540-604), exhibited a genius for adaptation.[6] Existing pagan customs were incorporated and a new appreciation for the material in culture emerged. The body of the Patristic era, strongly influenced by shades of the platonic and stoic, was imbued with the material strains of pagan practice. The body was beginning to be re-imagined. Lynda L. Coon evocatively describes the medieval body as follows:

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[2] This was not just an anachronistic reading of the Renaissance, but can be read in the writings of the era: Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies* (*c*. 636) describes barbarous peoples of the empire, ignorant of the purity of the Latin language, corrupting Roman civilization through grammatical errors and uncouth speech. Isidore of Seville, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. by Stephen A. Barney and others (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[3] Chris Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome: A History of Europe from 400 to 1000* (London: Penguin Books, 2009), pp. 6-7. Wickham suggests that we ought to view the Middle Ages as being more continuous with the Roman period than previously thought. Wickham also sets out a helpful overview of the why the benign neglect of the Early Middle Ages occurred, pp. 3-18.

[4] This is quite extraordinary when one considers that at the end of the fifth century there was no major ruler anywhere in the Christian world who was in communion with the Pope. If anything, Arian Christianity was in the ascendancy as the German kings who ruled over the Roman Christian faithful were Arian. The Germanic tribes were converted by the missionary Ulifilas (c. 311-383) to Arianism and the religion was adopted by the Goths, Lombards and Vandals, from 376, which led to Arianism being a religious factor in various wars in the Roman Empire. In contrast, the Franks and the Anglo-Saxons entered the empire as pagans and converted to Chalcedonian Christianity directly, guided by their kings, Clovis of the Franks (466-511) in 496, and Æthelberht of Kent (560-616), the latter two who converted in part because of the faith of their wives. See Maurice Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy: Arianism through the Centuries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 27-40.

[5] J. N Hillgarth, *Christianity and Paganism, 350-750: The Conversion of Western Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986); Richard A. Fletcher, *The Barbarian Conversion: From Paganism to Christianity* (New York: Holt, 1998).

[6] Robert A. Markus, 'Gregory the Great and a Papal Missionary Strategy,' *Studies in Church History*, 6 (1970), 29-38; Markus, 'Gregory the Great's Pagans,' in *Belief and Culture in the Middle Ages: Studies Presented to Henry Mayr-Harting,* ed. by Richard Gameson and Henrietta Leyser (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 23-34; Judith Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 169-171. Carole Straw, *Gregory the Great: Perfection in Imperfection* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 194-235.

> Lodged between famous studies of the dazzling ascetic bodies of the holy men and women of late antiquity and the bloody mysticism of later medieval saints, is the exegetical and philosophical construction of the early medieval body- a corporeal paradigm characterised by massive continuity with classical modes of gender and sexuality embedded in and transformed by biblical ascetic and Germanic/Celtic readings of the human body and its parts.[7]

This was a materiality that was holy, where the divine was expected to intervene in the mundane. There was a readiness to see the possibility of the physical contact with the divine, a view expressed most dramatically in the honour paid to relics and the proliferation of pilgrimage.[8]

Despite the rich evidence for medieval women, there is still relatively little known about women's lives before the twelfth century.[9] A certain degree of autonomy was implicit in the emergent order. By the mid eighth century, Jo Ann McNamara and Suzanne Wemple have argued, 'the private rights of women to the control of property had been established, giving them, as daughters, sisters, mothers and wives, a position of economic equality within the family.'[10] Women, especially in the leading families, achieved a new prominence through participation in Christian charity and church building associated with the cult of the saints. Queens were instrumental in the conversion practice, including Clotilde (d.475-544) wife to Clovis and her granddaughter Bertha (*c*. 565-*c*. 601) who married the pagan Aethelbehert of Kent.[11] The dynastic nature of feudal society meant that family property in the hands of women was secured through their appointment to monastic offices. Wemple and McNamara have made the case for the early medieval period as being something of a golden age for women.[12]

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[7] Lynda L. Coon, 'Somatic Styles of the Early Middle Ages', *Gender and History*, 20.3 (2008), 463-86 (p. 463).
[8] Peter Brown has described relics as bringing the 'first touch of the Resurrection … into the present'. Peter Brown, *Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 78. Relics were a comfort in dealing with questions of the afterlife and wrestling with the notion of the corruptibility of the body. See also, Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe* (New York: Zone Books, 2011), pp. 131-139.
[9] Women of the Early Middle Ages have not received nearly as much academic attention as those of the later period, in part because of the paucity of materials available, but perhaps also because of the more spectacular behaviour exhibited by their latter-day sisters of the Central and Late Middle Ages. For a collection of primary sources see, *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages*, ed. by Jo Ann McNamara and others (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992). Good secondary sources include, Suzanne F. Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society: Marriage and the Cloister, 500-900* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985); Janet T. Schulenberg, *Forgetful of their Sex: Female Sanctity and Society, ca 500-1100* (Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998); and Bruce L. Venarde, *Women's Monasticism and Medieval Society: Nunneries in France and England 890-1215* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1997).
[10] Jo Ann McNamara and Suzanne Wemple, 'The Power of Women through the Family in Medieval Europe, 500-1100', in, *Women and Power in the Middle Ages,* ed. by Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Athens, GA and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1988), pp. 83-101 (p. 90).
[11] Helen M. Jewell, *Women in Dark Age and Early Medieval Europe c*.500-1200 (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 109-110.
[12] For opposing arguments see especially, Ruth Mazo Karras, 'The History of Marriage and the Myth of Friedelehe', *Early Medieval Europe*, 14 (2006), 119-151; Janet L. Nelson, 'The Problematic in the Private', *Social History*, 15 (1990), 353-364; Pauline Stafford, *Gender, Family and Legitimisation of Power: England from the Ninth to Early Twelfth Century* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

A similar trend occurred for women in religious life. The sixth century saw the creation of two separate ideals for women, monastic and non-monastic religious consecration.[13]

According to McNamara,

> Until the tenth century, the system was a model of near equality between women and men. The chanting of the offices was not gender specific, and monks and nuns shared the same Benedictine and Augustinian rules with common liturgies, processions, pilgrimages, and displays of relics… Reservation of the Eucharist lessened the need to have a priest for its dispensation, and monastic confession was made to both male and female heads of communities. Where powerful abbesses ruled, priests served them as chaplains and women sometimes undertook all but the most strictly sacerdotal functions of the higher clergy. [14]

Women, especially priests' wives, played an important function in the Church.[15] Additionally, there is evidence that women were ordained in various roles.[16] This relative parity that women experienced, however, was not to last. The same issues examined in the first chapter still remained, that is, the problems associated with women's bodies.

By the tenth century, the Church was in need of reform. Abuse and usurpation of ecclesiastical property was seen to be endemic.[17] With the appointment of the reform-minded Gregory VII (1015 –

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[13] Donald Hochstetler, *A Conflict of Traditions: Women in Religion in the Early Middle Ages 500-840* (Lanham, GA: University Press of America, 1992) reviews the creation of monastic and non-monastic religious consecrations in the Merovingian and Carolingian eras.

[14] Jo AnnMcNamara, 'Canossa and the Ungendering of the Public Man', in *Medieval Religion: New Approaches,* ed. by Constance Hoffman Berman (New York and London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 92-111 (p. 94). See also, Jo Ann McNamara, *Sisters in Arms: Catholic Nuns through Two Millenia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 148-201.

[15] Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society,* pp. 131-132. Dyan Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock* (Princeton and Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 87.

[16] Kevin Madigan and Carolyn Osiek in their extensive survey and translation of sources for ordained women, list 107 named women deacons and 11 women priests from late antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, *Ordained Women in the Early Church: A Documentary History* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2005). Gary Macy, *The Hidden History of Women's Ordination: Female Clergy in the Medieval West* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 35-36, 70-73. Such evidence has, of course, sparked extensive debate as to the ordination of women: was their 'ordination' akin to priestly ordination or was it essentially dissimilar and qualitatively different? Jean Danièlou was one of the first in a long line of scholars to review the historical data and conclude that the rituals for deaconesses and deacons certainly seemed to be the same, but since women deacons could not become priests, they were not truly ordained. Jean Daniélou, *The Ministry of Women in the Early Church*, trans. by Glyn Symon (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1961). There has been a strong argument made, however, by Macy amongst others, that ordination was fundamentally different in the early Church up until the 13th century, at which time ordination was exclusively linked to the performing of the sacraments. Thus women could be said to be ordained under the offices of the pre-thirteenth century Church. Macy, *Hidden History*, p. 108. See also Jean Leclerq, 'Eucharistic Celebrations without Priests in the Middle Ages,' *Worship,* 55 (1981), 160-165.

[17] '[W]e hope through [God's] serenity to renew the lost light of truth and justice; to restore the health of the whole church, weakened to the point of ruin; to reform this iron age to one of gold with the hammer of just government […] if you labour to eradicate entirely the simoniac heresy, damned from eternity to all eternity; if you persevere in rooting out the deadly unchastity of clerks; and if you yourself avoid the transgression of conferring investitures of ecclesiastical offices.' Letter from Abbot William of Hirsau, the trusted adherent of Pope Gregory VII, describing the pope's reform programme in a letter to Hermann of Salm. Cited by I.S. Robinson, 'Reform and the Church, 1073-1122' in *The New Cambridge Medieval History, IV: c. 1024-c. 1198* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 268-334 (p. 268).

1085) as pope in 1073, energetic attempts were made to rout out the excesses, in what came to be termed the Gregorian Reforms. The key tenets of this reform have been much discussed: the end to clerical marriage and concubinage, simony and lay investiture.[18] Gerd Tellenbach argued that general economic concerns–the growing distinction between lay and ecclesiastical property, the transition to single heir inheritance and land consolidation–were critical factors in spurring reform.[19] The agrarian community was ceding to urbanisation and, as Richard Southern has described it, 'as society became better organized and ecclesiastically more right-minded, the necessity for male dominance began to assert itself.'[20]

Fundamentally, the issue was about power. Church property was being divested through clerical marriage and the appointment of clerical offices to lay patronage based on proprietary interests in Church estates. Women, of course, were implicated in both areas, through noble marriage alliances which allowed them to influence investiture appointments and in the alienation of church property through their roles as priests' wives and concubines in the issue of children.[21] Inevitably the problem of female sexuality was focussed upon.[22] Able to appoint even popes through various marriages and alliances, 'carnal commerce' was seen to be endemic.[23] Liutprand of Cremona (d.972), a northern Italian chronicler, described the matriarchs of the Theophylact family in Rome, Theodora and Marozia, as presiding over period a 'pornocracy'.[24]

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[18] Gerd Tellenbach provides a pithy and comprehensive review of the issues at stake, *The Church in Western Europe from the Tenth to the Early Twelfth Century*, trans. by Timothy Reuter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 157-184.

[19] Gerd Tellenbach, *Church, State and Christian Society at the Time of the Investiture Contest,* trans. by R. F. Bennett (Oxford: Basil Blackwell & Mott, 1940). R. I. Moore, *The Origins of European Dissent* (London: Viking, 1977). Also, Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950-1250*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008); See also R.W. Southern, *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe*, vols. 1 and 2 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995 and 2001). For a review of the scholarship on the area of economic reform and an extensive bibliography see Kathryn L. Jasper, 'The Economics of Reform in the Middle Ages', *History Compass,* 10.6 (2012), 440-454.

[20] R. W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), p. 310. Southern has been criticized, however, for relegating his treatment of women under the section, 'fringe orders and anti-orders'. See Janet L. Nelson, 'Women and the Word in the Earlier Middle Ages', in: *Women in the Church,* ed. by W. J. Sheils and Diana Wood, Studies in Church History 27 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 53-78.

[21] The overwhelming majority of priests married, sometimes more than once, and their wives insisted on all the financial formalities that accompanied lay unions. Jo Ann McNamara, 'Chaste Marriage and Clerical Celibacy', in *Sexual Practices and the Medieval Church,* ed. by Vern L. Bullough and James A. Brundage (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1982), pp. 22-23. See also Anne L. Barstow, *Married Priests and the Reforming Papacy: The Eleventh Century Debate* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1982).

[22] Since the Patristic period, steps had been taken to limit female influence because of what was regarded as the polluting natures of their bodies. Council edicts and bulls were promulgated which formally excluded women from various functions. At the Council of Orange (441) clerics officially prohibited deaconesses from being ordained (Hefele, III, 163). See discussion in *Ordained Women in the Early Church: A Documentary History*, pp. 145-146.

[23] Jo Ann McNamara, 'Canossa and the Ungendering of the Public Man', p. 97.

[24] McNamara, 'Canossa and the Ungendering of the Public Man', p. 96.

Eradication of clerical marriage became a priority. In the surviving letters and clerically authored works of the period, women are referred to in increasingly derogatory terms. Paula Rieder notes '[t]he association of women with the dangers and pollution of sex became a common clerical motif, especially in times of turmoil, as during the eleventh century reforms when calls for clerical celibacy became intense.'[25] The rhetoric used, was that of pollution. Odo of Cluny, the tenth-century reformer abbot, advises men to see beneath the skin of women, to recognize women as no more than a 'bag of shit' [*saccum stercoris*].[26] The most vicious invective concerned women's emasculation of clerical males through their devouring lust.[27] Priests' wives were 'furious vipers who out of ardor of impatient lust decapitate Christ, the head of clerics'.[28] Peter Damian (c.1007-c.1072/3), one of the major ideologues for the reform movement referred to women as the 'devil's concubine'. [29]

> Oh you the clerics' charmers, devil's choice tidbits, expellers from paradise, virus of minds, sword of soul, wolfbane to drinkers, poison to companions, material of sinning, occasion of death ... the female chambers of the ancient enemy, of hoopoes, of screech owls, of night owls, of she-wolves, of blood suckers.[30]

Women were seen as a threat to the Church, and susceptible newly-ordained priests would 'fall back into the embrace of loathsome women and, like pigs, are immersed in wallows of dirty, muddy, worm-laden lust.'[31] Despite previous failed attempts to ban clerical marriage, dating back to the third century, the demise of clerical marriage was surprisingly swift, and it was eradicated by the end of the twelfth century.[32]

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[25] Paula M. Rieder, 'The Uses and Misuses of Misogyny: A Critical Historiography of the Language of Medieval Women's Oppression,' *Historical Reflections*, 38.1 (2012), 1-18 (p. 7).
[26] This was a common feature of medieval literature, see Susan Signe Morrison, *Excrement in the Late Middle Ages: Sacred Filth and Chaucer's Fecopoetics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 45-54 (p. 47).
[27] Dyan Elliott, *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality and Demonology in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1999), pp. 101-106.
[28] Peter Damian, *Ep. 112*, cited by Elliott, *Fallen Bodies*, p. 101.
[29] Barstow, *Married Priests,* pp. 58-64; See also the analysis of Peter Damian's misogynistic rhetoric in Elliott, *Fallen Bodies*, pp. 101-106.
[30] Peter Damian, *Op. 18*, cited by Dyan Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage,* p. 103.
[31] Peter Damian, (PL 145:393D) trans. by by Rieder, 'The Uses and Misuses', p. 8.
[32] Christopher Brook, 'Gregorian Reform in Action: Clerical Marriage in England, 1050-1200', *Cambridge Historical Journal*, 12 (1956), 1-21. Clerical concubinage, however, was a separate matter. James Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 222. While mention of the prohibition against wives and concubines were promulgated at Lateran I (1123) and Lateran II (1139), by Lateran III (1179) canon no. 12 makes reference to 'concubines' only, indicating that concubinage is an ongoing problem, whereas clerical marriage is not. *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. by Norman Tanner, 2 vols (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), I, pp. 191, 198, and 217. Women, surprisingly, supported the eradication of clerical marriage. McNamara suggests that perhaps 'women feared their own power and viewed it as unnatural condition that required to be regularised or atoned by support of male notions of reform and right order' (McNamara, *Sisters in Arms*, p. 216). The fate of the priests' wives remains unknown. A contemporary account reported that some went 'mad and threw themselves into the fire,' while others 'went to bed quite well but were found dead in the morning.' Paul of Benried, *Vita Gregorii*, cited in I.S. Robinson, *The Papal Reform of the Eleventh Century: Lives of Pope Leo IX and Pope Gregory VII* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 359. Georges Duby and McNamara have speculated that priests' wives became prostitutes, and Dyan Elliott references canons which suggested enslavement. Jo Ann

The extent to which this represented the general attitude towards women in the Middle Ages, is perhaps not as clear cut as one might imagine.[33] Alcuin Blamires, in particular, has highlighted previously little known-texts in which women were celebrated and defended.[34] R. Howard Bloch's dictum that medieval misogyny was 'a speech act in which woman is the subject of the sentence and the predicate a more general term'[35] has been questioned in light of the work of Caroline Walker Bynum, Barbara Newman and others.[36] Nor were women completely silenced as Helen Solterer has shown.[37] Women such as Hrosvitha (*d.c.* 973),[38] Heloise (*c.*1090-1164),[39] Hildegard of Bingen (1098-

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McNamara, *'The Herrenfrage:* The Restructuring of the Gender System, 1050-1150', in *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages,* ed. by Clare A. Lees (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994) pp. 3-29 (pp. 8, 18). Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society*, p. 12. Elliott, *Fallen Bodies,* p. 82, n.6. It is probable that priests' wives may have joined religious orders. Jacques Dalarun suggests that the early members of the monastic foundation of Fontevrault were the ex-wives and concubines of priests following reform, 'Robert D'Abrissel et les femmes', *Annales ESC,* 39.5 (1984), 140-160.

[33] Maureen C. Miller, 'Religion Makes a Difference: Clerical and Lay Cultures in the Courts of Northern Italy, 1000-1130', *American Historical Review,* 105.4 (2000), 1095-1013. Maureen C. Miller 'Masculinity, Reform and Clerical Culture: Narratives of Episcopal Holiness in the Gregorian Era', *Church History,* 72.1 (2003), 25-82. Megan McLaughlin, *Sex, Gender and Episcopal Authority in an Age of Reform, 1000-1122* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 48-49.

[34] Alcuin Blamires, *The Case for Women in Medieval Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997). Blamires explores such topics as honour due to mothers and the maternal; the exoneration of Eve, with its corollary in Marian devotion; the so-called privileges of women in theology; the catalogues of good women exemplifying stability (against the perennial charge of fickleness); and the canon of pro-feminine role models in scripture. For a list of the corpus of the pro-feminine texts see, pp. 19-49. See also, Helen J. Swift, *Gender Writing and Performance: Men Defending Women in Late Medieval France 1440-1538* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2008).

[35] R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 5.

[36] See Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982); *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1987); and *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1991); Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages: A Critical Study of Texts from Perpetua (d. 203) to Marguerite Porete (d. 1310)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Barbara Newman, *Sister of Wisdom: Saint Hildegard's Theology of the Feminine* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987); and Elizabeth A. Petroff, ed., *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986). Elizabeth A. Petroff, *Body & Soul: Essays on Medieval Women and Mysticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[37] Helen Solterer, *The Master and Minerva: Disputing Women in French Medieval Culture* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1995).

[38] Canoness in the Abbey of Gandersheim in Saxony and author of a series of plays on female chastity in an attempt to refute misogynistic charges. As is the case of most female authored work, questions were raised as to whether the plays were in fact authored by Hrosvitha. Zolton Haraszti has suggested that Conrad Celtes (1459 - 1508) and his circle might have forged her plays. Edwin H. Zeydel, 'A Chronological Hrotsvitha Bibliography through 1700 with Annotations', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology,* 46 (1947), 290-294. For Hrotsvitha generally, see Katharina M. Wilson 'The Saxon Canoness: Hrotsvit of Gandersheim', in *Medieval Women Writers* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), pp. 30-63, For a review of Hrostvita's view of the status of women and an extensive bibliography see, Colleen D. Richardson, 'Hrotsvit's Sapientia: Rhetorical Power and Women of Wisdom', *Renascence: Essays on Values in Literature*, 55.2 (2003), 133-144.

[39] Heloise is best known for her relationship with her tutor Peter Abelard, related through their exchange of letters. *Epistolae 2-8* (= Letters 2-8) comprise the famous correspondence between Abelard and Heloise, together with the *Historia calamitatum* (= Epistola 1) (written by Abelard c. 1132, but not addressed to Heloise). The *Historia calamitatum* relates the story of their early relationship, the birth of their child, Astraolabe, and Heloise's initial opposition to marriage. *Epistolae 2-8* were exchanged after Heloise took vows at Abelard's behest, following his infamous castration in 1117/1118. The authenticity of the letters has been in doubt but scholarship of Dronke and others has largely put the matter to rest. Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages,* pp. 107- 43; and Barbara Newman, 'Authority, Authenticity, and the Repression of Heloise,' *Journal of*

1179), [40] and Christine de Pizan (1364-1430?)[41] argued for the moral equivalence of men and women, if not for rights that we would today recognise as constituting equality.[42] While these women did not question the hierarchal ordering of society, they did argue for women's moral and ethical equivalence to men. While tacitly (or openly) accepting their 'infirmity' as women, as always based on their bodies, they nonetheless made impassioned arguments on behalf of their sex.

Scholars have argued that the degradation of women was a by-product of the Church's bid to create a superior clerical class rather than a deliberative attempt to demonise women. In an effort to distinguish more clearly between the clergy and the laity, the line between men and women was more clearly defined and women were more excluded.[43] The virulent language was aimed not at women, but at lay men, as a rhetorical device rather than a deliberate invocation. [44] McNamara has pointed out that '[w]e are so accustomed to thinking of the medieval clergy as violently abusive toward women that we have missed a chronological subtlety. Clerical misogyny reached a crescendo between the

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Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 22 (1992), 121-157. Retiring to a convent after the end of her relationship with Abelard, she had a very successful second act. By her death on 16 May 1164, she had founded a new abbey and generated several daughter houses, lobbied for finance and become abbess. For further reading, see, *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, ed. and trans. by Betty Radice (London: Penguin, 2003); Constant Mews, *Abelard and Heloise* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[40] Hildegard of Bingen, Abbess of Helfta and a Renaissance woman long before the time. She was an abbess, visionary mystic, musician, and physician and preached at Trier and Cologne against the Cathar heresy. Author of *Scivias, Physica* and *Causae et cura, Liber vitae meritorium, De operatione Dei.* She was also notably the first scientific writer to discuss sexuality and gynaecology from a female perspective and the first saint to compose her own memoir. Like Hrsovitha, questions have been raised as to the authorship of works attributed to her: See Barbara Newman, 'Sybil of the Rhine' in *Voice of the Living Light: Hildegard of Bingen and her World,* ed. by Barbara Newman (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), p. 3. Matthew Fox has credited Hildegaard with being the earliest proponent of 'creation spirituality', Matthew Fox, *Illuminations of Hildegard of Bingen* (Santa Fe, NM: Bear, 1985). For how Hildegard related to the idea of the feminine and the nature of women, see Newman, *Sister of Wisdom*.

[41] Christine de Pizan was born in Venice but moved to France as an infant. Educated in a manner equivalent to a boy of her social status, she began writing after being widowed at the age of 25 with three children, making her the first professional woman writer in Europe. She wrote many treatises and dialogues on women, politics, war, and peace; an autobiography and a major collection of lyric poetry. She was one of the earliest instigators of the *querelle des femmes* (debate on women) and is often referenced as an early feminist, or perhaps more accurately, proto-feminist. Charity C. Willard, *Christine de Pizan: Her Life and Works* (New York: Persea Books, 1984). Angus J. Kennedy, *Christine de Pizan: A Bibliography* (Rochester, NY: Tamesis, 1984, suppl. 1994 and 2004). The *querelle* debates will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

[42] Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies* (1405). Christine de Pizan, *Livres de la cité des dames,* trans. by Rosalind Brown-Grant (London: Penguin Books, 1999). Other works, such as *The Book of the Three Virtues* (1405) accept the hierarchal ordering of society, with men over women. Rosalind Brown-Grant has argued that one needs to understand de Pizan as arguing for ethical parity of men and women, even if conventional norms remain in place. Rosalind Brown-Grant, *Christine Pizan and the Moral Defence of Women: Reading Beyond Gender,* Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Maureen Quilligan, *The Allegory of Female Authority: Christine de Pizan's Cité des Dames* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

[43] Janet L. Nelson, 'Women in the Word and the Earlier Middle Ages', pp. 76-78. See also Janet L. Nelson 'Monks, Secular Men and Masculinity, c. 900' in, *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, ed. by Dawn Hadeley (London: Longman, 1999), pp. 121-142.

[44] Rieder has examined texts that were used by clergy who would have preached to both lay men and women and compared them to texts written concerning women which were addressed to an exclusively clerical audience. She demonstrates that rather than there being a wholesale negative attitude towards women, the texts aimed at a celibate audience were far more virulent than that of the mixed. Paula M. Rieder, 'The Uses and Misuses of Misogyny', pp. 9-15. Miller, 'Masculinity, Reform and Clerical Culture', p. 47.

mid-eleventh and mid-twelfth centuries.'[45] We can perhaps say that women were the casualty of clerical reform. While some scholars dispute this view,[46] it is clear that, with regard to the Church, women's status, in official, rhetorical and factual terms, did decline.[47] By the Central Middle Ages the number of religious communities of women had fallen.[48] The prominence and relative autonomy experienced by nuns, the powerful abbesses who presided over the double monasteries of the Early Middle Ages, were no more as they were progressively excluded from the liturgy and self-governance.[49] The twelfth-century renaissance and the rise of scholasticism, meant that centres of learning had moved to the control of the universities to which women had no access.[50] Dyan Elliott describes this period after the Gregorian reforms as the 'gradual criminalization of female spirituality'. Women were, in effect, ghettoized, officially excluded from exerting autonomy in their religious life.[51]

Yet, despite this, a somatic piety arose, one in which women deployed their bodies in a manner that allowed them to gain legitimacy in the public sphere, be they cloistered nuns and women who lived in independent communities such as the Beguines.[52] Women's bodily piety, characterised by miraculous

[45] McNamara, 'The *herrenfrage'*, p. 8. Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society*, p. 191.
[46] Constance Berman maintains that the picture was more nuanced. She argues that the period is full of accounts of powerful women and that the development of society was, if not in women's interest, certainly not against it. Constance H. Berman, 'Land, Family, and Women in Medieval Europe: Reassessing a Mentor's Classic Article', *Medieval Feminist Forum*, 41 (2006), 64-74.
[47] See Sharon Elkins, *Holy Women of Twelfth-Century England* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), pp. 105-60; Penelope D. Johnson, *Equal in Monastic Profession: Religious Women in Medieval France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 248-266; and Venarde, *Women's Monasticism and Medieval Society*, pp. 133-169. There were, however, periods of revival, notably within the Cistercians, when the numbers of female Cistercian community reached and possibly exceeded those for men by the late mid thirteenth century.
[48] Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg, 'Women's Monastic Communities, 500-1100: Patterns of Expansion and Decline', *Signs*, 14.2 (1989), 261-292.
[49] McNamara, *Sisters in Arms,* p. 227.
[50] However, women proved remarkably resilient to such setbacks and gained autonomy during periods of social upheaval such as the Crusades. Women were left as regents and agents managing the husbands' estates for the time. There is some evidence of women participating in crusade, note Megan McLaughlin's intriguing hypothesis that access for women to the male dominated sphere of warfare was much easier for medieval women than for any subsequent time period as warfare took place in feudal structures, thus training and recruitment of soldiers took place within a household context. Megan McLaughlin, 'The Woman Warrior: Gender, Warfare and Society in Medieval Europe', *Women's Studies*, 17 (1990), 193-209, (pp. 202-205).
[51] Dyan Elliott, *Proving Women: Female Spirituality and Inquisitorial Culture in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 1.
[52] First emerging in the Low Countries, the Beguines were devout lay women who were not under the care of any order or under the direct control of any confessor. It has been generally assumed that the Beguine movement emerged spontaneously in the 12th century however Carol Neel has suggested that the Beguines were successors to the great eleventh century reforms and their antecedents can be found in the tertiaries of the Cistercians and of the Premonstratensians. Carol Neel, 'The Origins of the Beguines', *Signs,* 14.2 (1989), 321-341. Their anomalous position in society created consternation (after all, the only other women who lived in an independent state were prostitutes) and attempts were made to bring them under control, albeit in a rather haphazard fashion. They were finally banned by edict of Pope Martin in 1421. The edict did not appear to have any real impact in real terms. Jennifer Deane points out that in many cases after official disbandment, the Beguines continued pursuing their life independently, becoming known instead as 'spiritual women', 'holy women', 'virgins' or 'widows'. This was, as Deane puts it, 'an elegant, if largely unconscious solution to the problem.' Jennifer Kolpacoff Deane, *A History of Medieval Heresy and Inquisition* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and

fasting, holy exuding and mystical trances, were deployed against heresy, such as Catharism, and granted women access to audiences with emperors and kings. However, any form of independence left women open to the charge of heresy at worst, or of loose morality at best, not least because the only other women who acted independently in medieval society were prostitutes.[53] Transgressive acts by women would only be tolerated so much.[54] Women who dared to try and interfere in the political realm by claiming prophetic gifts, such as during the papal schism (1378 - 1417) could be harshly punished.[55] The Low Country Beguine, Elisabeth of Spalbeek (1246/7- after 1278), vanishes from history after she incurs the displeasure of a king for not pronouncing clearly when speaking of a palace coup and conspiracy.[56] Joan of Arc (c.1412-1431) transgressed into the manly sphere in both

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Littlewood, 2011), p. 179. Herbert Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages: The Historical Links between Heresy, the Mendicant Orders, and the Women's Religious Movement in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Century, with the Historical Foundations of German Mysticism*, trans. by Steven Rowan (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995); Walter Simons, *Cities of Ladies: Beguine Communities in the Medieval Low Countries*, 1200-1565 (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001). Recent books on the Beguines include Laura Swan, *The Wisdom of the Beguines: The Forgotten Story of a Medieval Woman's Movement* (New York: BlueBridge, 2014) and *Labels and Libels: Naming Beguines in Northern Medieval Europe*, ed. by Letha Boehringer and others (Turnhot: Brepols, 2014).

[53] Deane, p. 164. See also Anke Passenier, 'Women on the Loose: Stereotypes of Women in the Stories of Medieval Beguines', *Female Stereotypes in Religious Traditions,* ed. by Ria Kloppenborg and Wouter Hanegraadd (Leiden: Brill, 1995), pp. 61-88. The justification of the deployment of the charge of heresy was rather tenuous. R.I. Moore argued that what had previously been thought of as 'heresy' from *c.* 1000 was a spontaneous response of faith communities to deviant religiosity or confessional diversity and suffered 'a disillusioned apostolic idealism'. Moore argued that these so-called heretics were in fact religious reformers consciously preaching a simpler form of Christianity closer to that practiced by the apostles, and not a resurgence of the late antique heresy of Manicheism, as previous scholars and historians had thought. Moore reads the early evidence for heresy as politically rather than doctrinally positioned, not least because it is difficult to define what was exactly heretical about putative heretics' beliefs. It is questionable that the average lay Christian was aware as to what was orthodox, let alone heterodox. Up until the Church reform and the beginning of the urban renewal in the eleventh century, Church hierarchies and structures were mainly concerned with the challenge of conversion and implementation of basic Christian observance. Where women enter into the discussion of heresy is that the Cathars, scandalously, allowed women into the ranks of the electi. R. I. Moore, *The Origins of European Dissent*. Also, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950-1250*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008); *The First European Revolution, c. 970-1215* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2000). See, Richard Abels and Ellen Harrisson, 'Participation of Women in Languedocian Catharism', *Medieval Studies*, 41 (1979), 215-251.

[54] See esp. Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), pp. 277-285; Elliott, *Proving Woman*, esp. pp. 216-219, 262-269, 284. On the impact of the Great Schism on the growing distrust of female sanctity in early-fifteenth-century clerical milieus, see also John Coakley, 'Gender and the Authority of Friars: The Significance of Holy Women for Thirteenth-Century Franciscans and Dominicans', *Church History*, 60.4 (1991), 445-460.

[55] Constance of Rabastens (active 1384-1386) received visions and spoke publicly and politically, condemning the Avignon Pope, Clement VII and proclaiming the Roman Pope, Urban VI, legitimate. Apocalyptic in tenor, her visions portrayed Pope Clement VII in hell. She was subjected to a lengthy inquisition and only extricated herself with great difficulty. Renata Blumenfeld-Kosinski, 'Constance de Rabastens: Politics and Visionary Experience in the Time of the Great Schism', *Mystics Quarterly,* 25.4 (1999), 147-168 (p. 148).

[56] The historiography in scholarship as to what actually caused the western papal schism which saw first the competing claims of two popes, and then three, is immense. For a summary on the papal schism see, Howard Kaminsky, 'The Great Schism' in *The New Cambridge Medieval History, VI*, ed. by Michael Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 674-696. See also, *A Companion to the Great Western Schism* 1378-1417, ed. by Joëlle Rollo-Koster and Thomas M. Izbicki (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

preaching and warfare and was burned for her pains.[57] Laying claim to female authority was a fraught enterprise.

Barbara Newman has suggested that one of the reasons that saintly women came under increasing suspicion from the thirteenth-century was precisely their independence.

> Once past the high-water mark of the first two mendicant generations, ecclesiastical authorities, sensing their power to be increasingly fragile and embattled, could less easily brook the challenge of charismatic voices on the fringe. Thus saintly and possessed women alike came under heightened suspicion, with the result that it became more and more difficult to tell them apart, and a fear that the fortunes of battle had turned toward the devil's side spurred a descent into deepening repression and violence.[58]

The passive female body, so apt a site for divine intercession, was increasingly viewed with suspicion. The mystic woman, the independent Beguine, needed to be brought under control. While female somatic spirituality had been deployed to good effect in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries against dualist heresies such as Catharism, its currency as the Middle Ages came to a close had sharply depreciated. Gradually, between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, charges of witchcraft were alleged against holy mystics.[59] Whereas in the early fourteenth century, men had comprised over 70% of those accused in trials for sorcery or diabolism, by the first half of the fifteenth-century, women comprised roughly 60–70 % of those accused in witch trials. [60] Jean Gerson (1363–1429), chancellor of the University of Paris, made vigorous efforts to curtail female mysticism by medicalising the

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[57] The life of Joan of Arc has long excited interest since the time of her death. Nadia Margolis writes that '[o]ne can safely estimate that, since 1429, more than 10,000 works—textual, visual, and musical—have been devoted to St. Joan of Arc, authored in languages ranging from French and English to Japanese and Maltese'. Nadia Margolis, 'The Virgin Warrior: The Life and Death of Joan of Arc (review)', *The Catholic Historical Review*, 96.4 (2010), 801-802. For the early controversy surrounding Joan of Arc, see Deborah Fraioli, *Joan of Arc: The Early Debate* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2000). On the unlikely championing of Joan of Arc by Jean Gerson, see Dyan Elliott, 'Seeing Double: John Gerson, the Discernment of Spirits, and Joan of Arc', *American Historical Review*, 107.1 (2002) 26-54.

[58] Barbara Newman, 'Possessed by the Spirit: Devout Women, Demoniacs, and the Apostolic Life in the Thirteenth Century', *Speculum*, 73.3 (1998), 733-770 (p.769). See also Sarah Kay, 'Women's Body of Knowledge Epistemology and Misogyny in the *Romance of the Rose'*, in *Framing Medieval Bodies,* ed. by Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), pp. 187-201. Kay argues that this threat from women was experienced from the twelfth century as the somatic experience of women meant that they might, 'enjoy more immediate access to knowledge than men' (p. 211).

[59] Cohn argues that a fully developed witchcraft concept did not appear until the fifteenth century and that this concept was an amalgam of four originally distinct notions, the origins of which he traces to Roman and early Christian times. Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons: The Demonization of Christians in Medieval Christendom,* 2nd end (London: Pimlico, 1993). See also Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972), pp. 23-24. A contemporary of Gerson, the Dominican theologian and reformer Johannes Nider (1380 -1438), was the first clerical authority to argue that women were more prone to become witches than men. T*he Formicarius*, written between 1436-1438 by Nider during the Council of Basel and first printed in 1475, is the second book ever printed to discuss witchcraft, the first book being *Fortalitium Fidei,* the work of the fifteenth-century Franciscan Alonso de Espina (d. *c*. 1464). Nider dealt specifically with witchcraft in the fifth section of the book.

[60] Richard Kieckhefer, *European Witch Trials: Their Foundations in Popular and Learned Culture, 1300-1500* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 106-147.

discourse around visions.[61] Attacking the clerics who supported these women, he questioned the right of women to participate publicly in Christian life.[62]

The roots of the shift from lauding to questioning female somatic mysticism is difficult to discern. Was it, as feminist scholars have argued, evidence of a virulent misogyny at the heart of the Church, more poisonous than the tenth-century reforms?[63] The confluence of heresy, political upheaval and the shifting view of the natural world meant that boundaries were ever more fearfully entrenched: 'disordered sexuality is identified with the devil, inverted gender roles and sexual dysfunction with witchcraft, and defective social and political hierarchies with women and women's sins.'[64] A key factor appears to be the impact of the twelfth century renaissance, both in cultural and economic terms. A whole host of classical, Hebrew and Arabic texts on occult arts were translated. Where once incidents of non-Christian behaviour could be considered to be womanish superstition or harmless local practice, they suddenly seemed far more sinister.[65] The ascetic virilised bride was replaced by the somatic shape-shifter. Was the somatic mystic a holy woman or libidinous witch? The fact of female fleshiness made it impossible to distinguish between the two. Dyan Elliott has described the inherent confusion thus: 'Ultimately despairing of any precise science for discernment, the experts looked on helplessly as the self-styled mystical brides of Christ, locked into erotic overdrive, veered into the diabolical ditch.'[66]

2.3. Theoretical Bodies II: Suffering Somatised

2.3.1. The Crucified Christ

The somatic practices of holy women were greatly shaped by the theology of the era. The Patristic era had focused on the resurrection and *eschaton* with Christ as King, who would reign triumphant in the next world. In the Middle Ages this was upended: it was the suffering Christ, human and broken on the cross, who became the focus of piety. Rachel Fulton has suggested that this shift in devotion occurred in response to millenarian disappointment. A thousand years had passed since Jesus' death

[61] Brian McGuire, *Jean Gerson and the Last Medieval Reformation* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005).
[62] Elliott, *Proving Women,* pp. 277-284.
[63] For a historiography from a feminist perspective, see Elspeth Whitney, 'The Witch "She"/The Historian "He": Gender and the Historiography of the European Witch-Hunts', *Journal of Women's History*, 7 (1995), 77-101. Since 1995, the consensus on scholarship has become more nuanced, e.g. Dyan Elliott's works.
[64] Hans Peter Broedel, *The* Malleus Maleficarum *and the Construction of Witchcraft: Theology and Popular Belief* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 179. See also Sydney Anglo, 'Evident Authority and Authoritative Evidence: The Malleus Maleficarum'; in *The Damned Art: Essays in the Literature of Witchcraft,* ed. by Sydney Anglo (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), pp. 1-31.
[65] Michael D. Kramer, 'The Feminization of Magic and the Emerging Idea of the Female Witch in the Late Middle Age', *Essays in Medieval Studies*, 19 (2002), 120-134.
[66] Dyan Elliott, *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell*, p. 264.

and the second coming was no less imminent.[67] This coupled with the Gregorian reforms that emphasised the sanctity and the privilege of the priesthood, meant that the suffering Christ increasingly became the focus of devotion. The increased attention to the natural world, the reclamation of geographical space in the experience of the crusades, and the fear of its lack following the fall of empire, all instigated a shift in how the world was conceived, 'matter' mattered. The concept of the material was a predominant theme in the theology of the Middle Ages, from the monophysite controversies of the Early Middle Ages to the debates over the Eucharist that raged from the tenth century onwards.[68] The Eucharist became increasingly central in devotional practice even as debate swirled as to the nature of transubstantiation.[69] Jesus' humanity, his suffering broken body, was therefore increasingly emphasised, on both a symbolic and literal level.

Christ had sacrificed himself and the immensity of this was reflected in the scholastic theology of the time. The concept of debt was increasingly emphasised in theological discourse, particularly in the teachings of Peter Damian and was most thoroughly developed in the theology of atonement of Anselm.[70] The formal codification of the sacrament of penance and the doctrine of transubstantiation

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[67] Rachel Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary*, *800-1200* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002) pp. 69-192.

[68] The monophysite controversy concerned the debates over the person of Christ. Monophysites claimed that Christ's nature was divine and not human even though he took on an earthly and human body with its cycle of birth, life, and death. See, W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement: Chapters in the History of the Church in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).

[69] Transubstantiation, defined at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, was interpreted quite variously in the course of the later Middle Ages, and radically different theories of the Eucharist were a driving force in the fragmentation of western Christendom in the 16th century. From the 11th century onwards, controversy raged in Western Europe over how exactly to interpret the Eucharist. While the Eucharist was the centre of Christian practice since the second century, the exact 'how' of the wafer being the flesh of Christ was never fully explicated. Popular piety held to two key doctrines, (i) the mass as an offering or sacrifice for the living and the dead, and (ii) the belief that the elements of bread and wine are transformed into Christ's body and blood by the priest's consecration. The actual text of the doctrine is set out in the first canon of the Fourth Lateran Council: 'Jesus Christ, whose body and blood are truly contained in the sacrament of the altar under the forms of bread and wine; the bread being changed (*transsubstantiatio*) by divine power into the body, and the wine into the blood, so that to realize the mystery of unity we may receive of Him what He has received of us.' This use of the term 'transubstantiation' at Lateran IV did not result in its adoption by thirteenth-century theologians across the board. The *how* of transubstantiation was met with puzzlement, and theories fell into three categories: co-existence (i.e. did the wafer co-exist with the body and blood); was the bread substituted at the moment of consecration, or, did the bread remain yet was entirely transformed? This latter theory would be the one that would become orthodoxy, incorporating Aristotelian theory (e.g. accidents), developed by theologians such as Alexander of Hales (1185-1245), Richard Fishacre (1200-1248) and Albert the Great, culminating in the synthesis by Aquinas, whose writings whose work would become the standard of orthodoxy for Roman Catholicism after the Reformation. Aquinas in *ST* 3.75.4 sets out how the conversion from bread to body occurs. For a review of the diversity in opinion and terminology over the issue of Eucharistic change throughout the thirteenth century, see Gary Macy, 'The Dogma of Transubstantiation in the Middle Ages', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 45 (1994), 11-41. Gary Macy, 'Theology of the Eucharist in the High Middle Ages', in *A Companion to the Eucharist in the Middle Ages,* ed. by Ian Christopher Levy and others (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 365-398 (pp. 375-378). For the classic text, see Henri du Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages*, trans. Gemma Simmonds and others (London: SCM Press, 2006). See also Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 14-28.

[70] Atonement or at-one-ment refers to the reconciling act of God in Jesus Christ, through (though not always) the act of his passion which mends the rift between God and humanity caused by sin. Theories of Atonement

at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 formally expressed the theological tenor of the era, that is, a focus on sacrifice and repentance.

The thematic emphasis on sacrifice and repentance permeated every straum of society, indicated by the central focus of the human suffering Christ in the art works of the day. By the height of the Middle Ages, 'art, sermons and pious writings of every kind, devotion to the cross far outweighs the gospel of the resurrection. The Christ of late medieval piety shifts back and forth between suffering saviour and apocalyptic judge, bypassing the radiant figure of the risen Lord who dominates patristic and byzantine spirituality'.[71] He is judge and therefore there must be penance, he is suffering, and this is reflected in the Eucharist.

On the face of it, devotion to the crucified Christ would not provide an obvious access point for women to identify with Jesus and develop a powerful piety of their own. It seems rather unlikely, indeed audacious, that women could claim such kinship with Christ, but they did so through that which had heretofore limited them and prevented them from priestly office, that is, their flesh.

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have had various iterations, but broadly fall into three categories (i) the classical or ransom theory (ii) the moral influence theory and (iii) satisfaction theory. The ransom theory held sway over the Patristic period and was developed most fully by Origen. Briefly, it stemmed from Mark 10.45, 'the son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom *(lutron*) for many', but whom was Jesus ransoming his life to? The fathers responded that it was the devil. Thus, through sin the human race had fallen under the jurisdiction of the devil and Christ ransomed himself for humanity. The moral influence theory in the medieval period was most fully developed in Abelard, who argued that because Christ must suffer the painful death the sinner merits; such vicarious affliction awakens the saving love of the penitent, drawn to Christ's sacrificial work. Satisfaction, a juridical theory, finds its finest exponent in Anselm in his *Cur Deus Homo* (1094-1098). See Anselm, *Cur Deus Home: To Which is Added a Selection from His Letters* (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1909, repr. Bibliolife). By the cross of Jesus satisfies (where satisfy means to re-establish and fulfil) the demands of justice and cosmic harmony by paying the price of restitution and thereby restoring God's honour. The argument goes as follows: All human beings have sinned. To Sin in Anselm's thought means 'nothing else but not to repay to God one's debt' (1.11, p. 23). Therefore, compensation must consist in giving to God what is not his due (1.11, p. 24). Man is incapable to paying God adequate recompense, as, 'none but God can make this satisfaction' but God cannot be compensated by what he pays himself and it is necessary that the person paying the compensation be a man hence the necessity of 'both God and Man' (2.6, p. 67). But man is owes all to God, so what could he possibly pay as recompense? As mortality is a result of sin, and not essential attribute of human nature (2.11, p. 77); satisfaction for human sin should be by one who 'can die of his own free will, because this would be needful' (2.11, p. 80), therefore compensation will be made by the innocent death of the son of God. See David Brown's analysis of Anselm's atonement argument in *Cur Deus Homo,* in Brown, 'Anselm on Atonement', in *The Cambridge Companion to Anselm,* ed. by Brian Davies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 279-302, (pp. 281-282). See also, J. Patout Burns, 'The Concept of Satisfaction in Medieval Redemption Theory', *Theological Studies* 36 (1975), 285-304. Gustaf Aulen, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement* (New York: Macmillan, 1931) remains the classic text on the three models of atonement.

[71] Barbara Newman 'Henry Suso and the Medieval Devotion to Christ the Goddess', *Spiritus*, 2.1 (2002), 1-14, (p. 7). Richard Kieckhefer, *Unquiet Souls: Fourteenth Century Saints and their Religious Milieu* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 89-121. Ellen Ross, *The Grief of God: Images of the Suffering Jesus in Late Medieval England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

2.3.2. Encountering Christ in the Suffering Female Body

The crucified Christ was encountered by women in very particular ways in the context of mysticism. The mystical element of religion, its 'awe-ful' nature, the possibility of transcendence, ecstasy and transport had been present in early Christianity, notably in the works of Tertullian, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrose of Milan and Augustine. Augustine, for example, had established a hierarchy of vision in religious experience.

> …let us call the first kind of vision corporeal, because it is perceived through the body and presented to the senses of the body. The second will be spiritual, for whatever is not a body and yet is something, is rightly called spirt: and certainly the image of an absent body, though it resembles a body is not itself a body any more than is the act of vision by which it is perceived. The third kind will be intellectual, from the word intellect … spiritual vision is more excellent than corporeal, and intellectual is more excellent than spiritual. [72]

According to Augustine's definition, mystical experience, an ecstatic experience, is at its purest when experienced in the intellect. Women in their affective spirituality reversed Augustine's hierarchical vision. Corporeal vision came to dominate female mystic spirituality from the 12th century onwards when '[o]ne can almost count on the fingers of one hand those men experiencing imaginative vision: Robert of Uze, Joachim of Fiore, John of Rupecissa and Richard Rolle.'[73]

Female flesh, particularly in the area of suffering, provided access to the divine through illness, somatised miracles and fasting practices. According to Aristotelian physiological doctrine, the mother provided the 'stuff of the foetus' and the father provided the animating principle. Since Christ had no human father, Christ was seen to take his flesh from Mary.[74] A logical extension, therefore, was for femaleness to be the most effective way to atone for the sins of others, thus by virtue of their bodily suffering, 'in their suffering flesh they find true holiness'.[75] Women's 'passivity and malleability render them particularly apt sites of divine agency on earth'.[76] Part of women's defence of their somatic piety, if not expressed directly, was that as Christ assumed a lowly form to redeem mankind, there was none more lowly than woman. Oftentimes, *because* women were so lowly, this was used as an argument for their suitability for reception of God's grace. This was not just a peculiar strand identified by women in seeking to authenticate their experiences and yearning for the divine, but this

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[72] Augustine, *De gen. ad litt.,* 12.7.16 (PL 34:459), translation by Hammond, in *On the Literal Meaning of Genesis II: Books 7-12,* trans. by John Hammond Taylor, SJ, Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation, 42 (New York: Newman Press, 1982), p. 186.
[73] Rosalynn Voaden, 'Mysticism and the Body', in *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Christianity*, ed. by John H. Arnold (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 396-412 (p. 399).
[74] Bynum, *Holy Feast,* p. 285.
[75] Grace M. Jantzen, *Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 222.
[76] Amy Hollywood, *'*Gender, Agency and the Divine in Religious Historiography', *Journal of Religion,* 84.4 (2004), 514-528 (p. 515).

curious idealism was held by men within the Church. A prayer from a woman was thought to be more effective than from a man.[77] Mechthild of Magdeburg (*c.* 1207 – *c.* 1282/1294) reports that when she pleaded for understanding as to why God would appear to her, a most lowly woman, He responded, 'wherever I bestowed special favours, I have always sought out the lowest, most insignificant, and most unknown place.'[78]

The divine was accessed through identification with Christ in pain and suffering, the better to identify with his passion. Women's bodies suffered more than men and therefore they were more like Christ. Women's bodies were more tender and so more sensitive than men's, and virgins were most sensitive of all.

> When something is more tender, thus it suffers more severely. There was never a body as sensitive to suffering as the Savior's body. The woman's body is tenderer than that of a man. Christ's flesh was totally virginal for he was conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of a virgin. Thus Christ's passion was the sharpest of all, for he was tenderer than all the virgins.[79]

Pain, in the context of the suffering, sick body was predominantly experienced by women. Weinstein and Bell looked at comparative numbers of male and female saints for whom illness was a central feature of their *vitae*. Of 151 female saints examined, 25 (or one in six), illness was the main factor in their religious life. In comparison, of 713 men examined, only 22 suffered some chronic illness.[80] Even if illness was not a feature of the female saint's life, illness played an important role. Pain was an entry into Christ's suffering. Women, including the English Anchoress Julian of Norwich (*c.* 1342-*c.* 1416),[81] the married noblewoman Marie of Oignies (1177-1213),[82] and the Beguine Margaret of

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[77] Andrea Janelle Dickens, *The Female Mystic*: *Great Women Thinkers of the Middle Ages* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), p. 1.

[78] Mechthild of Magdeburg, *The Flowing Light of the Godhead,* trans. by Frank Tobin (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), Book II, 26, p. 97.

[79] Bonaventura, *The Works of Bonaventura: Mystical Opuscula*, trans. by Jose de Vinck (Paterson, NJ: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1960), p. 242.

[80] Donald Weinstein and Rudolph M. Bell*, Saints and Society: The Two Worlds of Western Christendom, 1000-1700* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 235.

[81] Julian of Norwich, following a near-death experience at the age of 31, received 16 'shewings', relating mainly to Christ's crucifixion. She wrote an initial description after the visions were given and approximately 20 years later produced a longer text which includes theological reflection on the visions, a time which appears to have coincided with her entering into anchorhold. While Julian of Norwich is seen as primarily a mystic within the medieval women mystical movement latterly she has been recognised as an innovative theologian. A recent impassioned case for this has been made by Denys Turner, *Julian of Norwich, Theologian* (New Haven, MA and London: Yale University Press, 2011). Her theology centres around the fundamental problem of how to reconcile the all loving presence of God with the presence of sin and evil and the need for evil to be punished. Broadly speaking, one can identify three major themes in her writings: the definition of sin, her emphasis on forgiveness, and her concept of the motherhood of God. Sin, defined by Julian as 'all that is not good,' is 'behovely' (a proximate equivalent would be useful or necessary). 'Sin is behovely but all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.' Sin is necessary, she argues, Sin 'brings us to self-knowledge—knowledge of our own fallibility—which in turn moves us to seek God.' Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love,* trans. and intr. by Clifton Walters (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974), p. 7. The emphasis on forgiveness is especially strong in her notion of suffering. Suffering was not a punishment that God inflicted, but was a means of drawing humanity closer to Him. This idea of God as nurturing and all loving,

Ypres (1216-1237)[83], each identified with Christ in their own way. Julian, meditating in minute detail on Christ's body on the cross, prayed for three special gifts: 'one to understand his passion, two to suffer physically while still a young woman of thirty; and three to have as God's gift three wounds.' [84] Pain, unlike sin, 'purges us and makes us know ourselves, so that we ask for mercy'.[85] Marie of Oignies mortified her flesh so as to better identify with his passion and displayed the stigmata, and Margaret of Ypres self-flagellated in order to better remember what Christ suffered.[86]

This fusion of pain with holiness was somatised in what to the modern reader seem to be excessive and destructive ways. Women hacked at pieces of their flesh, wore hair shirts, slept on hard boards, swallowed pus, ate lice, rent their clothes, cried for days, and pierced their palms, all in imitation of Christ. They engaged in this behaviour amidst protestation at their rights to engage in chaste marriage for desire of the heavenly bride groom, voluntarily renounced property and went wilfully without sleep or food for days. While their violent practices and bloody transports might cause the present-day person to look at them in askance and have spurred numerous medics and scholars to diagnose all

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was viewed in a maternal sense, and also crucially, the feminine was associated with saving. Bynum writes, 'God's motherhood expressed in Christ, is not merely love and mercy, not merely redemption through the sacrifice of the cross but a taking on of our physical humanity in the Incarnation, as a mother gives herself to the fetus she bears'. Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption,* p.163. For an overview of Julian's life and theology see especially, Liz Herbert McAvoy, 'Julian of Norwich', in *Medieval Holy Women, c.1100-c.1500*, ed. by Alastair Minnis and Rosalynn Voaden, Brepols Essays in European Culture, 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), pp. 195-215. McAvoy provides an excellent bibliography of primary and secondary sources. On the motherhood aspect see Ritamary Bradley, 'The Motherhood Theme in Julian of Norwich', *Fourteenth Century English Mystics Newsletter* 2.4 (1976), 25-30; Paula S.D. Baker, 'The Motherhood of God in Julian of Norwich's Theology' *Downside Review*, 100 (1982), 290-304. Kerry Dearborn, 'The Crucified Christ as the Motherly God: The Theology of Julian of Norwich', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 55.3 (2002), 283-302. Liz Herbert McAvoy, *Authority and the Female Body in the Writings of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe* (Cambridge: DS Brewer, 2004), pp. 64-95. On the centrality of love and suffering, Grace M. Jantzen, *Julian of Norwich: Mystic and Theologian* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987). On the soteriological dimension see Turner, *Julian of Norwich.* On Julian's legacy and importance as a spiritual figure as well as theologian today, see the collected essays of edited by Sarah Salih and Denise N. Baker, *Julian of Norwich's Legacy: Medieval Mysticism and Post-Medieval Reception* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004).

[82] Described as the 'pearl of Christ' by her biographer, Jacques de Vitry, Marie is the first of the low country Beguines whom we have knowledge of. Devout from an early age, married at fourteen, she managed to convince her husband to a life of celibacy and led a life of active work (hospital) and contemplation (Augustinian canons at Oignies). She was used as an exemplar to combat heresy, but intriguingly was deployed as a model of piety for men rather than women. 'The Life of Mary of Oignies by James of Vitry', trans. by Margot H. King in, *Mary of Oignies: Mother of Salvation*, ed. by A.B. Mulder-Bakker (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), pp. 33-127, hereinafter 'VMO'. She is also possibly the first ever individual to exhibit the stigmata. Bynum, *Fragmentation,* p. 56.

[83] Margaret of Ypres was a Beguine who came from a wealthy family. She was noted for her work with lepers and the poor and was renowned for her fasting and vigils and was the recipient of visions and miracles. Her *vita* was authored by Thomas of Cantimpré from notes by her confessor, *The Life of Margaret of Ypres by Thomas de Cantimpré,* trans. by Margot H. King, 2 edn (Toronto: Peregrina, 1995).

[84] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations*, p. 63.

[85] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations*, p. 104.

[86] Bynum, *Fragmentation*, p. 145.

manner of neurological, psychosexual, psychosomatic and psychiatric problems, medieval Christian piety needs to be contextualised within its day. [87]

In brief, pain had theological value. Esther Cohen contends that Christ's redemptive crucifixion established the spiritual value of pain for the ordinary Christian as both a penitential necessity and a purifying agent.[88] As Catherine Jones writes, 'Vernacular devotional literature focused intense meditation on the humanity of Christ, and particularly on the Passion, with the goal of achieving sorrow for sin, through which one attained a kind of subjective appropriation of Christ's objective atoning work by participation in redemptive pains.'[89] Pain is not just punishment, it brings awareness to one's own body and defines oneself as an incarnate being distinct from a carnally unencumbered divine. Pain becomes a metonym for 'the expansive nature of human sentience, the felt-fact of aliveness.'[90] If to experience pain is proof of aliveness, then imitating the suffering of Christ, the corporeal punishment from which female mystics both suffered and embraced, authorized them to interpret their own human position in relation to the divine. Pain was the gift of living closer to the life of Christ.[91]

As women were so intrinsically identified with the body, certain religious somatic experiences were almost exclusively the purview of women. Stigmata, the spontaneous or deliberate bleeding to display

[87] Joan of Arc's visions have been attributed to epilepsy, Nicolas Nicastro and Fabienne Picard, 'Joan of Arc: Sanctity, Witchcraft or Epilepsy?', *Epilepsy & Behavior*, 57 (2016), 247-250. She is also, based on the fact that she insisted on wearing male clothing, claimed by the LGBQT community, diagnosed in one case as having complete androgen insensitivity syndrome (CAIS). Patricia Neill Warren, 'Was Joan of Arc Genetically Male?', *Gay & Lesbian Review Worldwide*, 16.1(2009), 24-28. Hildegard of Bingen's visions were first diagnosed by Charles Singer in 1913 as having been caused by migraines. Charles Singer, 'The Scientific Views and Visions of Saint Hildegard (1098-1180)' in *Studies in the History and Method of Science,* ed. by C. Singer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1917), pp. 1-55. Regarding Margery Kempe, Maureen Fries describes the beginning of Margery's mystic life which occurred at the onset of her illness as 'a painful and lengthy postpartum depression (apparently at its unipolar manic phase).' Fries, 'Margery Kempe', in *An Introduction to the Medieval Mystics of Europe*, ed. by Paul Szarmach (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), pp. 217-235 (p. 219). Nancy Storke has suggested that Margery may have had Tourette's Syndrome. Storke, 'Did Margery of Kempe Suffer from Tourette's Syndrome?', *Mediaeval Studies* 59 (1997), 261-300. J. Hubert Lacey has suggested that the bearded female saint, St Wilgefortis was 'perhaps the first written attempt to understand the pathogenesis of anorexia nervosa: the symptoms and psychopathology presented in the religious jargon of her day'. His argument is based on a medical phenomenon triggered by severe malnourishment when a fine layer of hair (languno) will develop all over the body in a bid to preserve heat. J. Hubert Lacey, 'Anorexia Nervosa and a Bearded Female Saint', *BMJ*, 285 (1982), 18-25 (p.18). On anorexia and mysticism see also Rudolph M. Bell, *Holy Anorexia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988). A speculation on the various psychological state of mystics, Jerome Kroll and Bernard Bachrach, *The Mystic Mind: The Psychology of Medieval Mystics and Ascetics* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

[88] Esther Cohen, *The Modulated Scream: Pain in Late Medieval Culture* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2009), pp. 6-7, 19, 32-34, 47-49, 189.

[89] Catherine Jones, 'The English Mystic: Julian of Norwich', *in Medieval Women Writers*, ed. by Katharina M. Wilson (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1984), pp. 269-96 (p. 273).

[90] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press 1985), pp. 7, 22, 209-210.

[91] Cohen, *The Modulated Scream*, Chapters 6 & 7.

the wounds of Christ's crucifixion, were particular characteristics of female piety.[92] Elisabeth of Spalbeek (*c.*1246/7–1304), Marie of Oignies, Gertrude of Oosten (d.1358), Helen of Hungary (1207 – 1231), Ida of Louvain (*c.* 1212-1261)[93] and Margaret Ebner (1291 –1351), all displayed evidence of stigmata either internally or externally.[94] Most of these women were often said to neither eat nor excrete. The stigmatic in her miraculous exuding, represented the powerful motif of feeding, as breast milk was thought to be mutated blood in the physiology of the day.[95] The demonstration of the stigmatic was not just a sign of holiness, but was both Eucharistic (the consecrated host was actually the bleeding body which nourished) and the literal example of *imitatio Christi.*[96]

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[92] Bynum, *Holy Feast*, pp. 200-201.

[93] A merchant's daughter, Ida of Leuvan was a Beguine visionary who was forced to retreat to the Cistercian convent of Rozendaal as fame threatened to overwhelm her. Her *vita* was composed in the last quarter of the thirteenth century by an unknown cleric, probably from notes left by Ida's confessor. *Ida the Eager of Louvain*, *Medieval Cistercian Nun,* trans. by Martinus Cawley (Lafayette: Guadalupe, 2000).

[94] Dyan Elliott, 'Flesh and Spirit: The Female Body', in *Medieval Holy Women in the Christian Tradition , c.1100-c.1500*, ed. by Alastair Minnis and Rosalynn Voaden, Brepols Essays in European Culture, 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), pp. 13-46.

[95] Bynum, *Holy Feast,* pp. 273-274.

[96] Voaden, 'Mysticism and the Body', p. 407. Scholars have seen the proliferation of Eucharistic miracles from the 12th century on as a response to scepticism about the increasingly literalist understanding of real presence. Gavin Langmuir, 'The Tortures of the Body of Christ,' in *Christendom and Its Discontents: Exclusion, Persecution, and Rebellion, 1000-1500*, ed. by Scott Waugh and Peter Diehl (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1996), pp. 287-309. Eucharistic miracles came to be seen as vindication of orthodox doctrine and various preachers against the Cathar heresy embellished their sermons with tales of bleeding hosts, both James of Vitry and Thomas of Cantimpré supported the bloodiness of the Eucharistic visions as evidence that God could be present in matter. (Bynum, *Holy Feast*, p. 64). Women were the main recipients of such visions and it was a woman who was responsible, after intense lobbying, for the institution of the feast of *Corpus Christi*. The feast of *Corpus Christi* was the result of a vision of the Beguine, Juliana of Cornillon, who received the repeated vision of the moon with a piece missing. After praying that the meaning of the vision would be disclosed to her, Christ revealed that it was an image of the present Church with the missing part of the moon representing the absence of a feast to celebrate the Eucharist. Juliana went on to develop a sophisticated liturgy but despite her best efforts to found feast, it was her confidant, the anchoress Eve St Martin who successfully lobbied for support for the founding of the feast. Anneke Mulder Bakker has persuasively argued that the reason Eve St. Martin was successful where Julian was because Eve, unlike Juliana, was securely located in an anchorhold, as opposed to Juliana's more independent living state. Anneke Mulder-Bakker, 'Julia of Cornilion, Church Reform and the Corpus Christi Feast', *Lives of the Anchoresses: The Rise of the Urban Recluse in Medieval Europe*, trans. by Myra Heerspink Scholz (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), pp. 78-117. On the politics surrounding the institution of the feast and its importance in establishing orthodoxy of the Eucharist, see Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, pp.164-198. For the *vita* of Juliana of Cornillion, see Barbara Newman's translation, *Life of Blessed Juliana of Mont-Cornillon* (Toronto: Peregrina Publishing, 1988). The majority of Eucharistic visions and miracles were attributed to women - of 20 such identified, only two such visions were experienced by men, and those were linked to the consecration of the Eucharist, a male prerogative. Women also predominated among those who miraculously exuded from their body substances that healed others (*Holy Feast*, p. 273). Bynum has suggested that the connection ran deeper, women's bodies and Christ's body in the Eucharist were intimately connected: 'Like body, food must be broken and spilled forth to give life. Macerated by teeth before it can be assimilated to sustain life, food mirrors and recapitulates both suffering and fertility. Thus food, by what it is, seems to symbolise sacrifice and service and, in Christian doctrine, the suffering, broken, crucified body on the cross, from which springs humankind's salvation, is food. But food was not merely a powerful symbol. It was also a particularly obvious and accessible symbol to women, who were more intimately than men in the preparation and distribution of food. Women's bodies, in the acts of lactation and of giving birth, were analogous both to ordinary food and to the body of Christ, as it died on the cross and gave birth to salvation' (*Holy Feast,* p. 30). Late medieval piety emphasised the individual reception of 'the broken flesh' when one became one with the suffering flesh crucified on the cross. Women's bodies also nourished others, which accorded well with the traditional gender roles of wife and mother (*Holy Feast*, pp. 53, 65).

As well as exhibiting miraculous manifestations of Christ's wounds, women were also described as experiencing entrance into Christ's wounds, passing through his flesh in order to participate in his suffering. The legend of the wound in Jesus' side featured as a locus of devotion during the Middle Ages. Veneration of the wound predates devotion to the Sacred Heart and despite the implicit violence in the veneration of the wound and blood, Bynum has argued that the focus on the wounds was not primarily about Christ's suffering, but about 'access, refuge and consolation'.[97] Angela of Foligno (1248 –1309) describes the experience of drinking from Jesus' side: 'It seemed to me that I saw and drank the blood, which was freshly flowing from his side. His intention was to make me understand that by this blood he would cleanse me and at this I began to experience great joy.'[98] The wound represented access to Jesus' heart. Julian of Norwich and Catherine of Siena (1347-1380) both crawled to or peered into Jesus's side to find healing and salvation, and reported his blood to be cleansing.[99]

The violence of the wounds of Christ was explicitly linked to suffering, but it was also linked to salvation. Suffering, exploring the limits of physicality, was seen as a positive experience, hence the rejoicing in physical pain, deprivation and loss.[100] Bodily illness, for these women, heralded an encounter with the divine.

2.3.3. Mother, Lover and Bride

Intimacy with the suffering Christ is further elaborated in how the women deployed their physicality, adopting the gendered roles of mother and lover to perform a fully sensuous piety. The female affective spirituality that is a hallmark of the High to Late Middle Ages, has its roots in the

[97] Bynum, *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), p. 14. *Christian Materiality,* pp. 33-47. Many scholars have commented on the apparent eroticisation of the wound; a perceived homology between wound (vulnus) and vagina (vulva), see Karma Lochrie, 'Mystical Acts, Queer Tendencies', in *Constructing Medieval Sexuality*, ed. by Karma Lochrie and others (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1997), pp. 189-95. Elliott, 'Body and Flesh'. For a survey of visual images of the wound see Flora May Lewis. 'The Wound in Christ's Side and the Instruments of the Passion: Gendered Experience and Response' in *Women and the Book: Assessing the Visual Evidence*, ed. by Jane H.M. Taylor and Lesley Smith (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), pp. 204-229.

[98] *Angela of Foligno: Complete Works*, trans. by Paul Lachance (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), p. 128. Angela of Foligno, Catherine of Siena and Catherine of Genoa all ingested filth in a bid to overcome revulsion. Molly Morrison, 'Ingesting Bodily Filth: Defilement in the Spirituality of Angela of Foligno', *Romance Quarterly*, 50.3 (2003), 204-216 (p. 204).

[99] Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, trans. and intr. by Suzanne Noffke (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), p. 239; Julian of Norwich, *Showings*, p. 220. Both spoke of the power and cleansing plenitude of Jesus's blood (*Showings*, p. 137; *The Dialogue*, p. 139). For a further exploration of pain in the writings of Julian and Catherine, see Anna Minoe, 'Julian of Norwich and Catherine of Siena: Pain and the Way of Salvation', *The Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures*, 40.1 (2014), 44-78.

[100] Cohen, *The Modulated Scream*, p. 222.

feminisation of language that emerged in the twelfth century.[101] An inversion of gender norms occurred between the two periods, men during the twelfth-century sometimes called themselves women whereas, in keeping with the patristic tradition, early medieval women called themselves men. Twelfth to fourteenth-century texts call Jesus mother, and in the Carolingian period (c. 780 to 900) there was an iconographic tradition of the bearded Mary.[102] The possibility that Jesus could have been born a woman was even debated.[103] Jesus and God became a mother, and maternal language was used to explain the gentle love of God. There was also a rise in devotion to female figures, notably the Virgin Mary, and admiration for stereotypically female characteristics, such as crying.

With the feminisation of language came an erotic dimension.[104] The paradigmatic erotic passage, the *Song of Songs*, had long been used to describe the union between Jesus and the Church. Bernard of Clairvaux's sermons on the Song of Songs speak of a desiring God who moves towards those who desire. It is a language of immediate experience: bodies yearn, dissolve, and create, and there are images of familial devotion, sexuality and adoration. 'No maiden, or concubine, or even queen, may gain access to the mystery of that bedroom which the Bridegroom reserves solely for who is his dove, beautiful, perfect and unique … even the bride herself is at times unable to find fulfilment of her desire to know certain secrets.'[105]

This language of affect and emotion, erotic or otherwise, provided a unique access point for women and certain specifically female forms of piety began to emerge. Women's bodies became maps for their spirituality. They were both mother and lover, experiencing pain as a beloved would. Women nurse Christ from their breast, encounter him in erotic and mystical visions, some of which are sexual in tone, and rend their clothes and mourn excessively. In many cases, women collapsed all three roles

[101] In her influential work, *Jesus as Mother*, Bynum demonstrated how the Cistercians the language of mothering and motherhood to describe both their own experience with God and their relationship to the monks under their care. Bynum, *Jesus as Mother,* pp. 112-125.
[102] Bynum, *Jesus as Mother,* p. 139.
[103] Notably in Peter Lombard, *Sentences* and the assorted commentaries. For a discussion, see Joan Gibson, 'Could Christ Have Been Born a Woman?', *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion,* 8.1(1992), 65-82.
[104] Ascribing 'erotic' to the female mystic experience is not without contention. Bynum, the scholar who ignited this particular area of scholarship, has proved remarkably resistant to the term, arguing that our understanding of the erotic is markedly different to medieval conceptions, a point she argued most stridently in her critique of Leo Steinberg's work, *The Sexuality of Christ In Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1984), in her essay 'The Body of Christ in the Later Middle Ages: A Reply to Leo Steinberg' in *Fragmentation,* pp. 79-118. As Frank Graziano notes in his book, *Wounds of Love: The Mystical Marriage of Saint Rose of Lima* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), most scholars have followed Bynum's lead, despite the strong sexual dimension present in medieval mysticism (a notable exception would be Dyan Elliott's works). Graziano suggests that Bynum's reluctance to recognise the sexual dimension and devalue such dimension is in part because she was responding to more than a century of predominantly male scholarship that tended to denigrate female mysticism with allegations of psychopathology and sexual perversion, (p.15). Bynum has been critiqued for not taking seriously the homoerotic dimensions and gender subversion present in medieval mysticism in her seminal work *Holy Feast,* contradicting her previous arguments, made in *Jesus as Mother.* Lochrie, 'Mystical Acts, Queer Tendencies', pp. 182-183.
[105] Bernard of Clairvaux, 23:3, in *The Works of Bernard of Clairvaux: On the Song of Songs*, trans. by Kilian Walsh and Irene M. Edmunds, 4 vols (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1971-1980), IV (1980), p. 10.

together. Brigitta of Sweden (1303 –1373) and Dorothea of Montau (1347-1394), both experienced mystic pregnancies and encountered Christ as lover.[106] When Marie of Oignies received the Eucharist it was at times, 'she felt all delight and all sweetness of taste in the reception of the holy Sacrament. She felt this both inwardly in her spiritual consciousness and [externally in her body], for it was tasted like honey dripping in her mouth. When the Lord appeared to her in the likeness of a boy tasting of honey and smelling of spices, she would often gladly admit him into the pure and richly decorated chamber of her heart.'[107] Margery Kempe (c. 1373–after 1438) both attended at the birth of Christ and nursed him and, after her own marriage to her husband was devolved to a celibate marriage, married God.[108] She received her visions in the bedchamber and was instructed that 'when you are in your bed take me to you as your wedded husband, as your most worthy darling, and as your sweet son.'[109] Gertrude of Helfta (1256 -1302) is so intimate with God that she uses the metaphor of the long-time spouse: 'you will be a bride who knows all the secrets of her spouse, and who after having lived a long time with him, knows how to interpret his wishes.'[110]

The Beguines Hadewijch of Antwerp (*c.* 1200) and Mechthild of Magdeburg describe a very physical sense of God's presence. In Hadewijch's seventh vision, she records a series of images of Christ as babe and then as a man who 'came himself to me, took me entirely in his arms, and pressed me to him; and all my members felt his in full felicity.'[111] Mechthild describes her relationship with Christ the Bridegroom: 'The more his desire grows, the more extravagant their wedding celebration becomes. The narrower the bed of love become, the more lovingly they gaze at each other. The greater the distress in which they part, the more he bestows upon her.'[112]

Cloistered women too, display an erotic piety. Margaret Ebner, despite having been enclosed since the age of five, displays a knowing eroticism,

> I felt the sweetest thrust against my heart with the most powerful grace and the sweetest movements, so that I thought my heart would fly to pieces from His raging love and would like to be dissolved from His grace. But then he acted like a clever,

[106] See Dyan Elliott's discussion, *Bride of Christ Goes to Hell*, pp. 220-227.
[107] VMO, 2.8.92, pp. 114-155.
[108] T*he Book of Margery Kempe: A New Translation Context and Criticisms,* trans. and ed. by Lynn Staley, Norton Critical Edition (New York: WW Norton, 2001), 1:4, p. 15; 1:35, p. 64.
[109] *The Book of Margery Kempe*, 1:37, p. 66.
[110] Gertrude of Helfta, *The Herald of Divine Love*, trans. by Margaret Winkworth, (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), p. 87.
[111] 'Vision 7', in *Hadewijch: The Complete Works*, trans. and ed. by Columba Hart OSB (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), pp. 280-282 (p. 281).
[112] Mechthild of Magdeburg, *The Flowing Light of the Godhead,* pp. 49-50. See also Frank Tobin, *Mechthild von Magdeburg: A Medieval Mystic in Modern Eyes* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1995).

> knowledgeable lover and withdrew the turbulence from me so that my frail humanity could better bear it.[113]

That the erotic feminised dimension was approved of is apparent in how the women were portrayed by their hagiographers and confessors. Male authors highlighted or diminished certain aspects of the saints' *vitae*, clearly evident when the accounts authored by the mystics themselves are compared to the *vitae* penned by their generally male biographers. Catherine of Siena describes being wed to Christ–not with a ring studded with precious stones as reported by her biographer, Raymond of Capua–with his circumcised foreskin.[114] Beatrice of Nazareth's (1200-1268) *vita* is, by contrast, eroticised. In the *Seven Manners of Loving,*[115] Beatrice's biographer describes the fifth manner of loving as follows:

> Sometimes it… happens that love is vehemently excited in the soul and it rises like a storm with a great uproar and a great frenzy, as though it would draw the soul outside itself into the exercise of love and into the exhaustion.[116]

Beatrice's biographer describes the fifth manner in significantly heightened terms:

> The fifth manner was a certain madness of holy desire and love which she recognised sometimes as rioting so strongly within her that, raving like some roaring untamed beast, it struck the whole framework of her body and acted like a madman within the house of her heart as if it wished to break out and grab with violence that which it so much desired. [117]

The latter is far more violent, virulent and erotic. 'Where Beatrice couches her experience in a simile … the *vita* claims that it is physically manifest in her body, using images of her striking her body, breaking out of it, and grabbing it. Further words like 'raving', 'roaring', 'beat', and 'madman' suggest the violence of love's actions within and against the body.'[118]

Amy Hollywood describes this tendency of male hagiographers to make the woman into a 'fetishist site' on which they project their own desires or unresolved conflicts. 'Men's desire for the salvation of the body, a desire perhaps partially repressed by the claim that men are closer to reason and the higher

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[113] Margaret of Ebner, *Major Works,* trans. by Leonard P. Hindley, (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), pp. 124-125.
[114] Andrew Jacobs, *Christ Circumcised: A Study in Early Christian History and Difference* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), n. 6, p. 192.
[115] Ritamary Bradley, 'Beatrice of Nazareth (*c.*1200-1268): A Search for her True Spirituality', in *Vox Mystica: Essays on Medieval Mysticism in Honor of Professor Valerie M. Lagori,* ed. by Ann Clark Bartlett and others (Cambridge: DS Brewer, 1995), pp. 57-74; Amy Hollywood, 'Inside out: Beatrice of Nazareth and her Hagiographer' in *Gendered Voices: Medieval Saints and Their Male Interpreters,* ed. by Catherine Mooney with a foreword by Caroline Walker Bynum (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), pp. 78-98.
[116] Beatrice of Nazareth, *Seven Manieren*, trans. by Jessica Barr in 'Reading Wounds: Embodied Mysticism in a Fourteenth Century Codex', *Magistra*, 19.1 (2013), 27-39 (n.5, p. 31).
[117] Cited in Barr, 'Reading Wounds', p. 31.
[118] Barr, 'Reading Wounds', p. 29.

faculties of the soul, remerges in the suffering and ecstatic bodies of women through which men's bodies are redeemed.'[119] While the male biographers of the mystic females are wary, suspicious, and sometimes over effusive, what is clear, as John Coakley remarks, is that they recognised in the female mystic something that was missing from their own piety.[120]

At times this was displayed in inverted power relationships. While the men instruct their charges as to the extent of the legitimacy of their experience, the men also imagine themselves into the cosmic drama in subordinate positions. Henry of Nordlingen, for example, depicts himself as a kitchen boy attending the banquet table of the royal couple Christ and Margaret Ebner.[121] Similarly, Peter of Dacia (d.1289) imagines himself as the inferior sister of Christine of Stommeln (1242-1312) ingratiating himself so as to hear about the secrets of the marriage bed with Christine's bridegroom Christ.[122] 'To speak, therefore, of an idea of female sanctity in the male-authored literature … is to speak not simply of the women's virtues but also of an economy of powers in which both the women and their male collaborators have a part.'[123]

The tension between the inner male and outer female directed practice is further echoed in a mistrust that is also implicit in many of the male authored *vitae* of these women and other writings of the period. While the tone of the majority of the texts is admiring, doubts remained and women's legitimacy was repeatedly questioned. Liduina of Shiedam's (1380-1443) famed fasting is greeted with so much suspicion that the town officials were forced to issue a charter attesting that she had not taken any physical food for seven years;[124] Marie of Oignies was tested on her deathbed to see if she could eat an unconsecrated wafer; and Charles of Anjou poured molten lead on to the feet of Douceline of Digne (*c*. 1214-74) to test the validity of her ecstatic trances.[125]

In many respects, the erotic was implicitly bound up in the somatic mysticism of female spirituality, grounded as it was in an empathetic physicality. Somatic mysticism's predominant features were fire and hungering and these are two of the most pervasive images and vehicles of mystical experience.[126] Unsurprisingly, women's piety came to be closely identified with the erotic dimension as manifested in their bodies.

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[119] Amy Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy: Mysticism, Sexual Difference, and the Demands of History* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 255-256.
[120] John W. Coakley, *Women, Men and Spiritual Power: Female Saints and Their Male Collaborators* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p. 86.
[121] Coakley, *Women, Men and Spiritual Power*, p. 225.
[122] Coakley, *Women, Men and Spiritual Power*, pp. 103-109.
[123] Coakley, *Women, Men and Spiritual Power*, p. 227.
[124] Walter Simons, 'Holy Women of the Low Countries', in *Medieval Holy Women,* pp. 625-646, (p. 645).
[125] Sean L. Field, 'Agnes of Harcourt, Felipa of Porcelet and Marguerite of Oingt: Women Writing about Women at the End of the Thirteenth Century', *Church History,* 76.2 (2007), 298-339 (p. 319).
[126] Bynum, *Holy Feast*, p. 185.

The other motif that we find in the bodily piety of the female mystics is the role of mother, linked to the Eucharist.[127] Many women reported visions of the Eucharist having appeared to them as a child.[128] Oftentimes the motherhood of God was closely identified with the cult of the Virgin Mary, as in the case of Brigitta of Sweden who experienced mystical pregnancy.[129] The Beguine Agnes Blannbekin (d.1315) experienced swelling each year at Christmas time. Christine of Ebner (d. 1356) dreamt that she gave birth to Jesus without pain but could feel the movements of the child in the womb.[130] Dorothea of Montau (1347 –1394) felt God shift and turn within her like an unborn child ready to be born.[131] If not giving birth to Christ, many women assumed the maternal role of nursing Christ. Margaret of Ebner, Adelheid Langmann (d. 1375) and Gertrude of Delft (d. 1358) all miraculously nursed Jesus from their breast.[132] Willibirg of Offingen received visions of the Christ child and played with him, and felt as if she were pregnant during the Advent season. Marie of Oignies could feel Christ nestled between her breasts.[133]

Actual fleshly motherhood was not a particularly celebrated aspect of female piety in the medieval era but was implicit for the holy virgin. Spiritual birth was considered to be greater than physical birth and was one of the fruits of virginity.[134] In the devotional text *Speculum virginum* we read: 'Christ who was once born physically from his virgin mother, is always carried and born spiritually from holy virgins.'[135] As the Church Fathers had counselled against becoming a wife and mother for fear of the inevitable loss that would follow, the *Speculum virginum* intones that '[i]t is greater to conceive and give birth to Christ spiritually than to bring forth carnally children who are going to die.'[136]

Mystics were not considered saintlier if they were mothers, perhaps reflecting the ambiguity that men perceived in the sexually knowing female.[137] The penitential element that came to the fore in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries shaped a newly pious female, the mother who renounces her children and family to better serve God. One example of such a maternal saint is Elizabeth of

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[127] Bynum, *Holy Feast*, pp. 123, 211, 352-353, 396-397; Clarissa Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 184-186; Grundmann, *Religious Movements*, pp. 176, 378-379; Claire L. Sahlin, *Birgitta of Sweden and the Voice of Prophecy*, Studies in Medieval Mysticism, 3 (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2001), pp. 87-88.
[128] Rubin, *Corpus Christi,* pp. 108-129.
[129] A full one third of Brigitta's revelations involved the virgin in some way. See, Sahlin, *Brigitta,* pp. 78-79.
[130] Rosemary Hale, 'Imitatio Mariae: Motherhood Motifs in Devotional Memoirs', *Mystics Quarterly*, 16.4 (1990), 193-203, (pp. 193-195). Hale discusses six texts from the Dominican convents in Southern Germany in the 14th century arguing that, 'motherhood imagery was clearly ubiquitous, most especially in the 14th-century religious milieu', p. 193.
[131] Sahlin, p. 105.
[132] Hale, pp. 193-203.
[133] VMO, 2.10.88, p.110.
[134] Barbara Newman, *From Virile Woman to Woman Christ: Studies in Medieval Religion and Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), pp. 22-23, 36-37, 42, 45, 244, 315.
[135] *Speculum Virginum*, 3, cited in Sahlin, p. 90.
[136] *Speculum Virginum*, 5, cited in Sahlin, p. 90.
[137] Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker, *Sanctity and Motherhood: Essays on Holy Mothers in the Middle Ages* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995), p. 5.

Hungary (1207 –1231) who upon the death of her husband sent her children away to devote herself to caring for the sick. [138] 'By turning maternal passion outward toward the sick and the poor, Elizabeth of Hungary transformed mother love from a private, somewhat "selfish" emotion into holy charity'.[139] Barbara Newman calls this, 'the "maternal martyr" paradigm [which] emerges as a tenacious literary convention that duplicates tendencies in the cult of Mary, but also responds to potent social forces acting on medieval mothers, especially young widows. The maternal martyr is a woman whose holiness is enhanced by her willingness to abandon her children or, in extreme cases, consent to their deaths as the Virgin did to Christ's.'[140] Dorothea of Montau (1347-1394) was 'freed' to embrace the life of an anchoress by the deaths of thirteen of her fourteen children, all as a result of the plague.[141]

The use of the images of mother and bride demonstrates how the female body as visionary body is the best vehicle for mystic experience, as woman is penetrated by divine love and gives forth the divine word. The nature of woman was determined by the performance of her body, and a degree of sexual knowingness, be she virgin, mother or wife was implicit. The female somatic experiences of the mystic as mother, lover and bride, one could argue, supported a claim for a positive interpretation of female embodiment.

2.4. Medical Bodies II: Leaking Bodies Redux

This somatic realisation, and indeed celebration, of female embodiment is all the more remarkable when one considers the discourse surrounding the female body, particularly how the female body was read in the medical discussions of the day. Reflective of the denigration of the female body in clerical rhetoric already examined, a review of philosophical and medical texts shows a correspondingly negative view.

In the Early Middle Ages, the main authority on the biological make-up of male and female bodies and medical treatment was Soranus, whose works were partially preserved by Isidore of Seville (c. 560 – 636). [142] In the *Etymologies,* Isidore condensed most of the surviving Greek and Roman philosophical works, but as his knowledge of Greek was non-existent, great swathes of knowledge

[138] Atkinson, *The Oldest Profession,* pp. 165-169; Newman, *From Virile Woman,* pp. 76-107; Mooney, *Gendered Voices*, pp. 264-273.
[139] Atkinson, *The Oldest Profession*, p. 168.
[140] Newman, *From Virile Woman*, p. 76.
[141] Margaret L. King, *Women of the Renaissance* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 6.
[142] On the mode of transmission see Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages,* pp. 39-53. See also Marie Thesese d'Alverny, 'Translations and Translators', in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century,* ed. by Robert L. Benson and Giles Constable (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1982), pp. 421-462. See especially the bibliography for works relating to the translation movement and major texts.

were lost. [143] For the remainder of the Early Middle Ages until the great translation movement of the eleventh to twelfth centuries, scholars relied on Isidore's massive compendium as their main guide.

In Soranus' schema, the male and female body were viewed as being largely coterminous separated only by their reproductive organs which were not essential (unlike in the Hippocratic and Galenic tradition) to health. Truncated versions of Soranus' *Gynakioes,* a manual for midwives, survived and were circulated in early medieval Europe in a question and answer format. Attributed to the otherwise unknown Musico (possibly sixth century), these largely separated a woman's physical health from her reproductive faculties. Perpetual virginity was 'very healthy' and thus the Christian ideal of virginity was considered to be suited to a women's health, not least in an echo of the Church Fathers, because of the perils associated with childbirth.[144]

Isidore, the 'last great scholar of the ancient world', was vague as to the details of the peculiarities of the female body. Beyond the fact that women have a womb and menstruate, he does not elaborate any further, or link the generative features to a woman's menstrual cycle. Indeed, menstruation, far from being the regulator of health was, for Isidore, a source of anxiety and disgust. Drawing from Pliny's *Naturalis historia,* he details the noxious effects of menstrual blood:

> If they are touched by the blood of the menses, crops cease to sprout, unfermented wine turns sour, plants wither, trees lose their fruit, iron is corrupted by rust, bronze turns black. If dogs eat any of it, they are made wild with rabies. The glue of pitch, which is dissolved neither by iron nor water, when polluted with this blood spontaneously disperses.[145]

Women, Isidore says, are colder, moister and softer than men. The etymology of *mulier*, woman, is presented as derivative of *mollier*, malleability: 'Man, *vir* is so named because he has greater strength [*vir*] than women' while 'woman, *mulier* is named from softness (*mollities*)'.[146] As Nancy Caciola notes 'moistness begets a changeable, inconstant, and highly impressionable nature, like mud retaining a footprint'.[147] Isidore writes elsewhere that the word *femina* 'woman' comes from the Greek word for *fiert* meaning 'fiery force' because among humans and animals the female is more

[143] Isidore of Seville, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. Stephen A. Barney and others (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). *Etymologies* sought to be a comprehensive compendium. Comprising 448 chapters in 20 volumes, *Etymologies* was a compilation of digests of Roman handbooks, miscellanies and compendia. Isidore's work was held in such high esteem, the complete versions of scholarly work that he abridged were not copied and transmitted and thus lost.
[144] For a summary of the teachings of the Church Fathers which influenced negative medieval attitudes towards motherhood see Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation*, pp. 71-73. For an overview of the medical and anatomical theories which supported these beliefs see Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference*, pp. 93-97; and Laqueur, *Making Sex*, pp. 99-103.
[145] *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville,* 21.i.140, pp. 250-251. See also Sharon Faye Koren, 'The Menstruant as Other in Medieval Judaism and Christianity,' *Nashim,* 17 (2009), 33-59 (pp. 39-45).
[146] *Etymologies,* XI.ii.17, p. 242.
[147] Caciola, *Discerning Spirits,* pp. 145, 132.

lustful than the male.[148] Women's physicality, identified as they are with matter, accordingly has a looseness and lustfulness that signifies a moral taint. A woman's formless nature could affect the conception of a child, its sex and characteristics dependent on what a woman sees while pregnant.

With the first Arabic-Latin translations entering Europe towards the end of the eleventh century in Italy, Galenic ideals were once again circulated in the West. [149] The concepts of the two-seed generative model and the necessity of menstruation for sexual health re-entered medical discourse, but were not significantly taken up.[150] Rather it was Aristotelian concepts of the defective female that entered the mainstream. Christian theology, linking creation and natural history to the Genesis text, interpreted menstruation as 'a specifically womanly mark of the Fall'.[151]

The idea of women's health being connected to reproductive health did however displace Isidore's contention of perpetual virginity for health. This is especially evident in the *Trotula*, a collection of three treatises written by different authors, but attributed to a woman, 'Little Trota'–composed about the twelfth century, probably in Salerno–which addressed women's medicine. Two of the treatises concern reproductive health and one is a *paean* to cosmetics, which makes the *Trotula* a literal literary representation of the body as erotic and reproductive. Its popularity is attested by the nearly 200 manuscripts (Latin and vernacular) in existence today, a fraction of the number that circulated in Europe during the late twelfth- to the end of the fifteenth century.[152]

The Trotula draws heavily on the gynaecological and obstetrical chapters of Constantine the African's Latin translation of *Viaticum*.[153] Other authorities cited include Hippocrates, Oribasius, Dioscorides, Paulus, and Justinus. Menstruation is regarded as necessary for health and the 'wandering womb' is used to explain menstrual disorders and other female related complaints.

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[148] *Etymologies,* XI.ii.24, p. 242.
[149] The first translations were mainly done by the Muslim convert and monk, Constantinus Africanus (1017-1087). Monica Green, 'Constantinus Africanus and the Conflict between Science and Religion', in *The Human Embryo: Aristotle and the Arabic and European Traditions,* ed. by G.R. Dunsta (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1990), pp. 47-69.
[150] Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture. The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early Abbasid Society (2nd-4th/ 8th-10th Centuries)* (London: Routledge, 1998).
[151] Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference*, p. 174.
[152] *The Trotula: A Medieval Compendium of Women's Medicine*, ed. and trans. by Monica Green (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001) According to Green, the first and third parts were composed by men but incorrectly attributed to the famous female Salernian healer Trotula, who is referred to in the middle text. The first *Liber de sinthomatibus mulerium* (Book on the Conditions of Women) concerns gynaecology and obstetrics; the second *De curis mulerium* (On Treatments for Women) deals with gynaecology, obstetrics and cosmetics; and the third, *De ornatu mulerium* (On Women's Cosmetics) treats cosmetics alone. During the medieval period the authoress Trotula (little Trota) was widely perceived to the author of all three (pp. 48-51). See also, Green, 'The Development of the Trotula', *Revue d'Histoire des Textes,* 26 (1996), 119-203.
[153] Mary Frances Wack, *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages: The 'Viaticum' and its Commentaries* (Philadelphia, PA*:* University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990).

Even in a book ostensibly written by a woman, the assumptions of the veracity of Aristotelian perceptions of 'defective' women's bodies are present. In the opening passage from one of the early editions of the first collection, Trotula writes:

> Because, therefore women are of a weaker nature than men, so more than men they are afflicted, [especially] in childbirth. It is for this reason also that more frequently disease abound in them than in men, especially around the organs assigned to the work of nature. And because only with shame and embarrassment do they confess the fragility of the condition of their diseases that occur around their secret parts, they do not dare reveal their distress to [male] physicians. Therefore, their misfortune, which ought to be pitied, and especially the sake of a certain woman, moved me to provide some remedy for their above-mentioned diseases.[154]

In this passage, whilst the idea of the 'defective nature' of woman is present, woman's sexual nature is not represented as dangerous or evil. Over time, however, echoing the historical trajectory of the demonization of the female form, later editions import sinister aspects to the female body. Green, in her examination of the extant manuscripts, writes that 'the focus … has shifted from women and their sufferings to the product that comes out of a woman's organs.'[155] Women's bodies were read as proof of women's nature. The earlier versions of the *Trotula* acknowledged female practitioners, as women acted as midwives and medical practitioners. As the *Trotula* texts travelled through medical and clerical circles in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, they shed most of their few signs of female influence or audience. Gradually, women's voices were replaced with the rhetoric of the celibate male.[156] Darker shades of misogyny can be read in the changes incorporated into the text. One edition, after the section quoted above, inserted dialogue putatively between master and student (a common rhetorical device), on the 'secrets of women'. The text involves an excursus on why women are more sexually voracious than men, why prostitutes rarely conceive, and why some women miscarry.[157]

Aristotle's theory of women's biology melded well with the horror of the sexually voracious female.[158] The lack of necessity for female pleasure in conception coupled with the idea that women craved the heat of men's bodies meant that women's sexual enjoyment was viewed as aberrant.

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[154] Cited in Green, 'Development of the Trotula', p. 163.
[155] Green, 'Development of the Trotula', p. 164.
[156] On masculine medicine's gradual hegemony over the female body, see Monica H. Green, *Making Women's Medicine Masculine: The Rise of Male Authority in Pre-Modern Gynaecology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) and Katharine Park, *Secrets of Women: Gender, Generation, and the Origins of Human Dissection* (New York: Zone Books, 2006).
[157] Monica Green, '"Traittié tout de mençonges": *The Secrés des dames*, "Trotula," and Attitudes towards Women's Medicine in Fourteenth- and Early Fifteenth-Century France', in *Christine de Pizan and the Categories of Difference*, ed. by Marilynn Desmond, Medieval Cultures 14 (Minneapolis, MI: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), pp. 146-178 (pp.164-165).
[158] Cadden, *The Meanings of Sex Difference*, pp. 148-150. Aristotelianism was not, however, totally dominant. The so-called 'School of Chartres', of which William of Conches, Adelard of Bath, Hermann of Carinthia and Bernardus Silvestris were part of combined the new medical and astrological sources, with the doctrines of Plato's *Timaeus*. Peter Dronke, *History of Twelfth-Century Western Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 255-404. For a rather jaundiced view of Chartres see R. W. Southern, 'The Schools of Paris and the School of Chartres', in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, pp. 113-137.

Women's physical bodies were thought to dominate their actions and response, overriding the male exercise of will and intellect. Hence, with regard to rape, 'although […] a raped woman does not assent with her rational will, she does have carnal pleasure.'[159]

Women's physical nature throughout the Middle Ages was constantly associated with her moral worth. According to Albertus Magnus (1200-1280): 'The complexion of the woman is more moist than the man's, and moistness receives an impression easily, but retains it poorly. A moist thing is easily influenced, and therefore women are inconstant and are always looking for novelties[. . .] Hence there is no faith in a woman.'[160]

Albertus' professions as to the inconstancy of woman seems mild in comparison with the sentiments of the *Secretis mulierum*.[161] A tract dictated to all things pertaining to women, it was probably composed in Germany in the last quarter of the thirteenth century by a student in Albert's circle. The *Secretis* takes the form of a dialogue between two men, 'having been informed by women' and is redolent of negative attitudes towards the female body.[162] Christine de Pizan described the S*ecretis* as 'a complete fabrication and stuffed with lies'.[163] Hers was a minority opinion. The *Secretis* was a huge success and was reproduced all over Europe, with commentaries added as the text circulated. An anonymous commentator in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century warns: 'The womb of a female is like a sewer situated in the middle of a town where all the waste materials run together and are sent forth; similarly all superfluities in the woman's body run together at the womb and are purged from that place.'[164]

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[159] William of Conches (d. *c.* 1154), *Dragmaticon philosophie*, 6.7, cited by Katharine A. Park, 'Medicine and Natural Philosophy: Naturalistic Conditions', in *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe,* ed. by Judith M. Bennett and Ruth Mazo Karras (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 84-101 (p. 95).

[160] Albertus Magnus, *Quaestiones super de animalibus*, cited and translated by Caciola, *Discerning Spirits,* p. 145.

[161] Helen Rodnite Lemay, *Women's Secrets: A Translation of Pseudo-Albertus Magnus' De Secretis Mulierum with Commentaries* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992).

[162] In her introduction to the *Secretis Mulierum,* Lemay argues that its message that women were evil, lascivious creatures built on the work's Aristotelian sources and laid the groundwork for serious persecution, culminating in the witch crazes of the later Middle Ages (pp. 32-58). Although the text changed in its transmission, the virulent misogynistic strain remained. See also Sarah Allison Miller, *Medieval Monstrosity and the Female Body* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 55-89. Miller argues that the female body in *Secretis mulerium* is construed as monstrous, not because of its divergence from paradigmatic maleness, but because of it being an object of desire and material fecundity, 'the female body, dangerous not simply because of its proximity to matter without form, flesh and blood without boundaries, but also because of its proximity to the formation of all bodies out of that matter' (p. 89).

[163] Christine de Pizan, *Livres de la cité des dames,* translated by Rosalind Brown-Grant (London: Penguin Books, 1999*)* 1.9.2, p. 15.

[164] Lemay, *De Secretis Mulierum*, pp. 133-134. The commentator cites Avicenna as formulating this, however, while Avicenna does describe menstruation as a purging of superfluities from the womb, he draws no analogies to sewers (Lemay, n.119, p. 179).

Behind all this fear of the contaminating filth of the female form was the assumption that the female body was a threat to men due to its sexual allure. Green describes the text as, 'an apologia for the necessity of men's continued encounters with the opposite sex. Indeed, men are portrayed as being practically heroic in sacrificing themselves for the sake of women. Unlike women, who cannot get enough of sex, men are depleted by it, yet they must offer themselves to women therapeutically.'[165]

Women were understood and portrayed in medical discourse and natural philosophy as being voracious, defective and easily led. The female body was inextricably linked both with the erotic and the reproductive, as the popularity of both the *Secretis* and the *Trotula* attest. While the somatic piety of female mystics was celebrated, the female body was also malleable, impressionable and susceptible to sin. When one considers that such a view interacted in tension with the somatic celebration of the female mystic, who celebrated her role as lover and mother of Christ, it is unsurprising that during the Central Middle Ages, when female mysticism was at its height, asceticism also reached its apex.

2.5. Asceticism II: The Holy Faster

The necessity to repent *of* and *for* the female body was a constant theme in medieval Christianity and is reflected in the ambiguity regarding the body that we find in the female mystics' accounts. The relentless identification of woman with the dangers of sexuality and pollution was internalised. Along with clerical anxiety over women living independently, the conflation of evil acts with female sexuality, women experienced ambiguity within their bodies. While female affective piety was admired and celebrated, there was an emphasis on controlling female flesh.

While the accounts of female fasting in early Christianity are restricted to general remarks on wasted countenances and the fading of beauty, attention was not fully paid to the *how* of female fasting. In the Middle Ages, with the increased focus on and fascination with women who miraculously existed on little or no food, we get a far better idea of their fasting practices. These included excessive fasts, vomiting after eating (either self-induced or involuntary), highly restrictive food intake and ritualised eating.[166] Elisabeth of Spalbeek, a stigmatic who re-enacted the Passion on a daily basis ate so little that, 'it is truly believed that she only eats and drinks because other people want her to, not because she needs or wishes it herself. And at other times, if fruit, meat or fish is held to her mouth she sucks in some of its subtle substance, receiving none of the gross matter.'[167]

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[165] Green, '"Traittié tout de mençonges"', pp. 151-152.
[166] Rebecca J. Lester, 'Embodied Voices: Women's Food Asceticism and the Negotiation of Identity', *Ethos* 23.2 (1995), 187-222 (p. 196).
[167] 'Life of St Elizabeth of Spalbeek', in *Medieval Writings on Female Spirituality*, ed. by Elizabeth Spearing (New York: Penguin, 2002), pp. 107-119 (p.136).

The body is experienced with both distaste and pleasure. Christina of St Trond (1150 - 1224)[168] or, as she became known, Cristina Mirabilis, vacillated wildly between the two. '"O miserable and wretched body! How long will you torment me…? Why do you delay me from seeing the face of Christ?"', cried out Christina. The account continues '… [then] she dissolved into a most sweet smile … "O most beloved body! Why have I beaten you? Why have I reviled you?"'[169]

Others were more consistent. Catherine of Genoa (1447–1510), whose three main foci were the Eucharist, fasting and suffering, is depicted as full of 'despair and self-loathing'.[170] 'Do you not see that you are not beautiful, but are all spattered with mud?[171] 'I find myself unbearable',[172]'I am vile! Of what worth am I?'[173] and an 'obstinate, sensual soul'.[174] Catherine becomes, it is reported, 'an enemy of herself' at 'war on the self-loved that survived in her.'[175] She ceases to eat, sleep or talk. She lies on a bed of thorns to deny herself sleep, laces her favourite foods with hepatic oil and ground agracio, and loses all taste for things either spiritual or earthly. [176] In despair, and in an attempt to 'crush all disordered pleasures' and 'take away all things that gave her comfort', she begins to care for the poor and the sick. There she punishes her body if it reacts in disgust: if lice make her vomit, she stuffs handfuls in her mouth; if the smell of pus causes her to gag, she rubs her nose in the pus of oozing wounds.[177]

At times women's discipline of their bodies was posited as an act of resistance. Marie of Oignies' ascetic feats are described in terms of bidding for a freedom in a constrained role: 'because she clearly did not have power over her own body, she secretly wore a very rough cord under her clothing that

[168] Christine of Saint-Truiden or Mirabilis' (1150-1224) religious career began in quite a spectacular fashion when she rose up during her own funeral service in 1182. 'The Life of Christina the Astonishing', in *Thomas of Cantimpré: the collected saints' lives: Abbot John of Cantimpré, Christina the Astonishing, Margaret of Ypres, and Lutgard of Aywières*, ed. and with an intr. by Barbara Newman, trans. Margot H. King and Barbara Newman (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), pp. 127-157.
[169] 'The Life of Christina the Astonishing', 47-48, pp. 151-152.
[170] For Catherine's life and teachings, we have three works, none of which she actually authored, but were composed by her confessors and others shortly after her death based on her sayings and acts. Her spiritual writings are comprised of the meditations on purgatory, and the second an unfinished work a dialogue between Body and Soul, thought to be three distinct works gathered together. Catherine of Genoa, *Purgation and Purgatory: The Spiritual Dialogue*, trans. by Serge Hughes (New York: Paulist Press, 1979). This edition contains biographical information. The most prevalent images in Catherine's writings are fire and hunger, where hunger is a metaphor for desiring God to the point of annihilation. The classic work on Catherine is Friedrich von Hugel, *The Mystical Element of Religion as Studied in St Catherine of Genoa and Her Friends,* 2 vols, (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1908). For an examination of the themes of fire and hunger see, Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast,* pp. 181-189. Anna Antonopoulos, 'Writing the Mystic Body: Sexuality and Textuality in the écriture-feminine of Saint Catherine of Genoa', *Hypatia,* 60.3 (1991), 185-207.
[171] Catherine of Genoa, *Purgation and Purgatory, Spiritual Dialogue*, trans. by Serge Hughes (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), p. 115.
[172] Catherine of Genoa, *Spiritual Dialogue*, p. 117.
[173] Catherine of Genoa, *Spiritual Dialogue*, p. 116.
[174] Catherine of Genoa, *Spiritual Dialogue*, p. 116.
[175] Catherine of Genoa, *Spiritual Dialogue*, pp. 118-119.
[176] Catherine of Genoa, *Spiritual Dialogue*, p. 120.
[177] Catherine of Genoa, *Spiritual Dialogue*, p. 131.

she bound with great force'.[178] She was noted for her incredible bouts of fasting, prayer and lack of sleep. However, this bid for control causes her to hack at her body: 'she began to loathe her flesh when she compared it with the sweetness of the paschal Lamb and she needlessly cut out a large piece of her flesh with a knife which she then buried in the earth'.[179] If she ate it was to cause revulsion and, 'for a long time she ate such hard black bread that even the dogs could barely chew it and her mouth bled from the gashes and wounds caused by its extreme roughness and hardness'.[180] In ecstasy she cannot eat, 'while her soul was so overflowing full of spiritual sustenance, it would not let her eat bodily food'. Like Beatrice of Nazareth (1200-1268), she vomited if she smelt meat, and her throat swelled shut in the presence of food.[181] She once went without eating for 35 days, but felt no hunger or weakness thus pointing to the miraculous nature of her fasting.[182] The intensity of her fasting made her 'hard and lean', manly, rather than subject to soft female flesh. When she died after a period of having fasted continuously for 56 days, her wasted body was 'so small and shrivelled by her illness and fasting that her spine touched her belly and the bones of her back seemed to lie under the skin of her stomach as if under a linen cloth.'[183]

A similar story is told of perhaps the most famous fasting medieval religious, Catherine of Siena.[184] Her *vita,* written by her confessor Raymond of Capua, was something of a bestseller, enjoying several reprints. Numbering thirty chapters, the seventeenth was solely devoted to Catherine's food practices and went on to become something of an ascetic handbook for her admirers.[185] A glimpse into this calls to mind the pattern of a terminal anorectic. From about the age of 16 she restricted her diet to bread, uncooked vegetables, and water. Despite the entreaties of family and spiritual advisors, by the age of 20 her appetite was subdued and she lived on vegetables alone. By the age of 25, we are told that she ate scarcely anything and only when publicly demanded to do so. Physically, eating caused her pain, 'if she forced herself to eat, her body suffered extremely, her digestion would not function, and the food would have to come out with an effort by the way it had gone in.'[186] In a rather extraordinary deployment of logic, she argued that forcing herself to eat was a form of suicide, as it would be a homicide of greed.[187]

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[178] VMO*,* 1.2.12, p. 54.
[179] VMO*,*1.7.22, p. 60
[180] VMO,1.8.23, p. 61
[181] Joan Jacobs Brumberg, *Fasting Girls: The History of Anorexia Nervosa*, rev. and updated edn (New York: Vintage, 2000), p. 43.
[182] VMO,1.8.25, p. 62
[183] VMO, 2.13.108, p. 116
[184] On Catherine's inedia generally, see Bynum, *Holy Feast,* pp. 165-182.
[185] Raymond of Capua, *The Life of St Catherine of Siena,* trans. by George Lamb (Rockford, IL: Tan Books, 2003), (hereinafter 'VCS'). For a summary of the highlights of her *vitae* with regard to her asceticism, see Bell, *Holy Anorexia,* pp. 23-29.
[186] VCS*,* p. 152.
[187] VCS*,* p. 153

At first suspected of demonic possession–it was thought that she could be possessed by a symbiotic incubus, that is, literally she was being fed by the devil–Catherine was eventually told to 'do as the Holy Spirit prompts you'.[188] Freed from any strictures to eat, she existed off bitter herbs and water. Periodically she would eat publicly, but would be so unsettled by having food in her stomach that she would swallow twigs to induce herself to vomit.[189] Catherine reported that after an attempt to overcome all bodily sensations when she swallowed the pus from the cancerous sores of an elderly woman she was nursing, she was rewarded with a vision of Jesus who invited her to drink from the blood flowing from his side. This, for Catherine, meant that 'from that time forward she never wanted food or was able to take it'.[190] When asked whether taking communion did not stimulate her appetite, she replied: 'when I am unable to receive the Sacrament, I am quite satisfied to be near it and see it; in fact I get so much pleasure out of merely seeing a priest who has touched the Sacrament that I lose all memory of food.'[191] Catherine saw her asceticism as a means of offering her body for the sins of others. It would eventually kill her. She died, in her 30s, after finally going on full hunger strike, refusing even water, in an attempt to broker a deal with God to restore the papacy to Rome.[192]

According to Bynum, asceticism was a component of the affective piety of mystical experience and should not be automatically viewed as an example of women's hatred of their bodies. Women, she argued, were practising a form of agency by connecting their bodies to the symbols of food, body, milk, blood, Eucharist and the body of Christ.[193] Women used the language of food, and their manipulation of food symbols, as a means of legitimising and authenticating their experiences. Bynum sees the behaviour of medieval female ascetics as essentially positive, and frames asceticism as, 'flight not so much from as into physicality'.[194] However, asceticism and mysticism did not necessarily go hand in hand. The degree and severity of ascetic practices varied considerably over time. Of the 1,462 persons listed as saints during the medieval period in *Butler's Lives of the Saints* (1956 revision), 'only approximately 10% were recognised by their contemporaries as mystics and

[188] VCS, p. 153.
[189] VCS, p. 162.
[190] VCS, p. 149.
[191] VCS, p. 157.
[192] Her biographer describes her death in a chapter entitled 'Martyrdom' and describes how her body in this last period of her life, was 'now weighed down with every kind of infirmity, was reduced to mere skin and bone and seemed not to be alive but already devoured by the grave.' VCS, p. 318.
[193] Bynum, *Holy Feast,* pp. 294-302.
[194] Bynum, *Holy Feast,* p. 250. However, her views have not found universal favour. Grace Jantzen argues that while Bynum wants to show the creative use of symbols by these women, and how they used these to promote a certain autonomy, the symbols themselves were a creation of a misogynistic society where women are associated with the body, and the body associated with suffering, and suffering with that of salvation. Jantzen, *Power & Gender,* p. 222. See also Dyan Elliott's critique. Elliott, *Proving Woman,* p. 7. Others such as Michelle Lelwica and Kathleen Biddick argue that the model of female holiness that Bynum's analysis appreciates, pivots on the damnation of the other woman, those outside the scope of proper Christian womanhood. Michelle Lelwica, *Starving for Salvation: The Spiritual Dimensions of Eating Problems among American Girls and* Women (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 28. Kathleen Biddick, 'Genders, Bodies, Borders: Technologies of the Visible', *Speculum,* 68 (1993), 389-418.

approximately 10% as heroic ascetics. Furthermore, there was only a common overlap of 1% between the two categories in the Early and Central periods of the Middle Ages. It was only in the Late Middle Ages (thirteenth to fifteenth centuries) that the confluence between mysticism and heroic asceticism reached notable proportions',[195] in a period that also coincided with more malevolent perceptions of the female body. It was also in these later centuries that mysticism, especially in women, far outdistanced asceticism as the dominant form of the expression of holiness. Significantly, the female ascetic efflorescence took place at a time when the sacrament of penitence was established and promoted.

Elizabeth Petroff argues that hagiographers may have played up certain ascetic practices and Amy Hollywood warns that the excessive identification of medieval ascetics with the body, was a primarily a male interpretation, and not that of the women themselves.[196] However, that asceticism is endemic to female spirituality is evidenced in the writings of women about other women. Although not the central part of the saint's *vita*, aseticism does appear to be almost a given: Agnes of Harcourt's *Vie d'Isabelle,* a biography of Isabelle of France (b. 1225-1270), the noblewoman who founded a Franciscan monastery for women in Longchamp, mentions ascetic food practices and notes that Isabelle scoured herself until her clothes were soaked with blood.[197] Unlike the more typical female mystic, whose mysticism is defined by its Christocentric nature, Isabelle's faith is not Christocentric and lacks the accompanying descriptions of various sorts of physical experience of union with Christ. There is no mention of a single reference to the Eucharist yet she still practices asceticism. A similar pattern can be found in the lives of Douceline of Digne written by Felipa of Porcelet and Beatrice of Ornacieux (d. 1303), by Marguerite of Oingt.[198]

Moreover, not all female mystics fasted. For example, Brigitta of Sweden was expressly told by Jesus in a vision not to undertake excessive fasts: 'I permit you to do three things. First to sleep moderately for the good of health; second to carry out temperate vigils to train the body; third to eat moderately for the strength and sustenance of your body.'[199] Both Lidwina of Schiedam (d. 1433) and Gertrude of Helfta experienced strong visions of feeding Christ and their piety was largely focused on the Eucharist. However, Lidwina practiced extreme asceticism and Gertrude did not.[200] Similarly while

[195] Kroll and Bachrach, *The Mystic Mind*, p. 203.
[196] Petroff, *Body & Soul,* p. 129. Petroff discusses the relationships between several holy women and their confessors: Christina of Markyate and Geoffrey, Abbot of St Albans; Marie of Oignies and Thomas de Cantimpré; and Margery Kempe and Robert Spryngolde. See also Coakley, *Women, Men and Spiritual Power.* Hollywood, 'Gender, Agency and the Divine', p. 514.
[197] Field, 'Agnes of Harcourt', pp. 298-239.
[198] Field argues that women did indeed pay less attention to the ascetic or spectacular acts of women, however, 'For Agnes, Felipa and Marguerite, inclusion of their subjects' ascetic practices seems intended to simply to satisfy a general expectation that saintly figures should mortify the body', (p. 326).
[199] Brigitta of Sweden, *Liber,* 2:16, in *The Revelations of St Brigitta of Sweden,* I, trans. by Denis Searby and ed. by Bridget Morris (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 216.
[200] Bynum, *Holy Feast,* pp. 124-128.

Marguerite of Porete (*d.* 1310) had a rather negative view of the body–the body is described as an 'enfeebling encumbrance' in her great work The *Mirror of Simple Souls*–reference to the physical body or asceticism is almost completely absent. [201]

Rudolph Bell, in *Holy Anorexia*, has documented the common patterns exhibited by extreme fasters. While perhaps guilty of applying twentieth century psychological theory in his reading, heavily indebted to Freud–for Bell, Catherine of Siena was harbouring guilt over the death of her twin sister and rebelling against her mother–there is evidence that certain features marked the more extreme ascetic. [202] He cites features such as an early piety; an emphasis on 'femaleness' being highlighted in childhood; a significant event that causes an acceleration in piety or fasting; and conflict with family over the issue of marriage, fear of sexuality.[203] The most famed fasting saints, such as Catherine of Siena, Cristina Mirabilis and Angela of Foligno, had each lived in disputed living arrangements, either defying their parent's wishes or flouting society in some way.[204]

One could also point to the phenomenon whereby women's somatic transports, their highly eroticised and bodily unions with Christ, were legitimised by asceticism. Their miraculous fasting, their bodily exuding, which were viewed with both rapt wonder and suspicious scepticism, were proof of the legitimacy of their faith. Holy fasters deployed their bodies in very feminine gendered ways (i.e. the erotic and the reproductive), by denying their female body in its fleshiness and fecundity.

2.6. Conclusion

The medieval period witnessed a complex and rich configuration of female embodiment, deeply influenced by theological themes of the era. The emergence of the feudal society and the political ramifications on the church and state resulted in the Gregorian reforms and the exclusion of women, both socially and sacerdotally. Yet, despite such strictures, medieval women managed to transgress these boundaries. Under the auspices of male collaborators, or in the transgressive figure of the Beguine, the visionary woman, transported by ecstasies to union with Christ, flourished. Women's religious legitimation, the locus of their piety and legitimation, was through the body.

Rather than having to virilise themselves in order to achieve communion with God, women came to experience God in their bodies. The labile female body, occasion for fear and suspicion entered into a period of being remade by women, even as women's status in society was downgraded. However as

[201] Reneike refers to her approach as a form of 'spiritualised asceticism' where what is emphasised is 'the annihilation of the individual's will, which is arguably a much more difficult form of asceticism than the bodily feats we see in others'. Martha Reneike, "'This is My Body": Reflection on Abjection, Anorexia, and Medieval Women Mystics', *JAAR*, 58.2 (1990), 245-265 (p. 255).
[202] Bell, *Holy Anorexia*, pp. 47-53.
[203] Bell, *Holy Anorexia,* pp. 19-21; Lester, 'Embodied Voices', p. 205.
[204] See Bell's table of characteristics of Saints over time, 'Table 2', pp. 146-147.

demonstrated, even as the performative function of the female body was celebrated, in the sphere of medical and philosophical discourse, the female body was increasingly regarded with suspicion. The ideas inherited from the Patristic era of the tainted female body were reinforced by the cultural renaissance of the twelfth-century which culminated in the witch trials of the Late Middle Ages. The major strands of development in theological discourse, the suffering Christ and the necessity for penance, subtly reinforced prejudices surrounding the female body. Associations with sinfulness, both sexual and appetitive, were re-inscribed in the faith. Women were constantly identified with their sexual nature, which was both their means of contributing to society and the source of their condemnation. This association would be more firmly entrenched as science gradually took over the construction of the female body in modernity as the next chapter explores.

Chapter 3: Female Embodiment in the Modern Era

3.1. Introduction

This chapter examines how the modern period impacted on female embodiment. The chapter considers first, the impact of the Reformation on the idea of female embodiment at the outset of the modern period. Second, philosophical ideas regarding women's status are explored through the *querelle* debates. Third, the medical conceptions of the female body in the modern period are treated, particularly in light of the Cartesian turn. It is argued that the new sciences, particularly medicine, built upon the classical and religious ideas of the inferiority of the female sex and reproduced these as 'medical fact', thus setting up the construal of the female body as pathological. The fourth section concludes with the reaction of women to this construal, in the ascetic phenomena of hysteria and chlorosis.

3.2. Historical Bodies III: Right Ordered Woman

The early modern period (from 1550-1750) was characterised by the celebration of reason, and the age of scientific revolution, originating from the humanist movement in Italy in the fourteenth century which eventually came to be the dominant intellectual movement in Europe by the sixteenth century.[1] From the upending of the physical universe that occurred when Copernicus peered through a telescope, to the discovery of the circulatory system, old truths that had been dearly held onto were called into question. The question arose: what if nature, rather than being the exclusive dominion of God, was the purview of men? The medieval conception of sanctified reality began to fracture.[2] God and Church were no longer the only authorities. Increasingly confidence began to grow that nature could be manipulated and was comprehensible. Gradually, '[n]ature replaced God as the ultimate basis for legitimation: natural law warranted the social and political orders, natural desires justified the expansion and deregulation of commerce, natural theology proved the existence and benevolence

[1] For a discussion on humanism, see Alister E. McGrath, *The Intellectual Origins of the European Reformation*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 34-39; Frank Lestringant, *Mapping the Renaissance World: The Geographical Imagination in the Age of Discovery* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994); Wallace K. Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought: Five Centuries of Interpretation* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1948), pp. 195-252; P. O. Kristeller, 'The European Diffusion of Italian Humanism,' in *Renaissance Thought II: Papers on Humanism and the Arts* (New York: Harper, 1965), pp. 69-88; and George M. Logan, 'Substance and Form in Renaissance Humanism,' *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 7 (1977), 1-34.

[2] Theodore K. Rabb identified five trends which distinguished the medieval from the early modern period: (1) transition to the early modern state in the monarchies of England, France and Spain and of the territorial states of Italy and Germany; (2) growth in demographic/economic expansion and growing imbalance between rich and poor; (3) European expansion into Africa, Asia and the Americas; (4) the cultural evolution of the Renaissance and its technologies, especially printing; and (5) the Protestant Reformation. Theodore K. Rabb, *The Struggle for Stability in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).

of the deity.'[3] The rise of the role of theory, observation and investigation in scientific method, and the increasing emphasis on the role of reason, rather than the application of logic, instituted a shift in how embodiment was construed.

The Reformation marked the beginning of the early modern period.[4] Dissension had been brewing in the Church for some time and the necessity for reform was a vexed concern. The institution of the papacy was viewed with suspiction with the Church deemed to be overly concerned with worldly pursuits.[5] The sale of indulgences was regarded as both exploitative and corrupting. Indulgences were viewed as an important source of income for the Church which permitted a *laissez-faire* attitude to morality, for what would inhibit bad behaviour in the worldly life if one could buy one's way out of purgatory?[6] Along with concerns about the institutional Church, the question of real presence in the Eucharist was still very much at issue, as was the debate surrounding the translation of the Bible into the vernacular.[7]

The dispute did not crystallise until an Augustinian monk, Martin Luther, professor of theology at the University of Wittenberg in Germany, started a widespread revolt against the Roman Church with his 'Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences', or 'Ninety-five Theses' in 1517.[8] Luther

[3] Lorraine Daston, 'The Nature of Nature in Early Modern Europe', *Configurations*, 6.2 (1998), 149-172 (p. 149).

[4] For general discussion on the contours and impact of the Reformation: Robert Bireley, *The Refashioning of Catholicism, 1450-1700: A Reassessment of the Counter Reformation* (Houndmills: MacMillan Press, 1999). Owen Chadwick, *The Early Reformation on the Continent* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Carter Lindberg, *The European Reformations* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011); Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided 1490-1700* (London: Penguin, 2003); Ronnie Po-chia Hsia, *The World of Catholic Renewal, 1540-1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Reform and Expansion 1500-1650,* ed. by R. Po-chia Hsia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); James D. Tracy, *Europe's Reformations, 1450-1650* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006); and Peter George Wallace, *The Long European Reformation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). See also, Alexandra Walsham's historiography of English Catholicism, set within the context of recent developments in research on the Continental Counter Reformation, Alexandra Walsham, 'Translating Trent? English Catholicism and the Counter Reformation', *Historical Research*, 78.201 (2005), 288-310.

[5] Bireley, *The Refashioning of Catholicism*, pp. 15-18

[6] A letter of indulgence was a certificate that allowed the relief of a certain amount of punishment in purgatory. It was issued by the Church, and its value was guaranteed by the so-called *thesaurus ecclesiae*, the treasure of good works, which could be converted into shares for sale for the benefit of those who were in need of them, both living and dead. On the development of the doctrine and idea of purgatory, see Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1984), Isabel Moreira, *Heaven's Purge: Purgatory in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). For critical comments to Le Goff, see Peter Marshall, *Belief and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), n. 5, p. 7.

[7] For a review of the position at the outset of the Reformation, see Gary Macy, 'The Medieval Inheritance', in *A Companion to the Eucharist in the Reformation*, ed. by Lee Palmer Wandel (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 15-37.

[8] Scholarly and popular books on Martin Luther are many, especially in light of the 500 year anniversary of the reformation, and focus on the various aspects of his character, ranging from the heroic Luther in the classic English language biography by Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (London: Penguin, 2002); the complicated political Luther of Martin Brecht's magisterial three volume biography, *Martin Luther*, trans. by James L. Schaaf, 3 vols (Minneapolis, MI: Fortress Press, 1985-93); to the apocalyptic Luther as portrayed in Heiko A. Oberman, *Luther: Man between God and the Devil* (New Haven: Yale University Press,

rejected several central tenets of the institutional Church: good works, the authority of papacy, and the importance of tradition. While it had never been Luther's intention to break entirely with Rome, he set in train a series of events–political as well as religious–which resulted in the Church splitting into the Roman and Reformed Churches.[9] The Reformation prompted its own response within the Roman Church. The Council of Trent was convened in 1545 and continued over a period of almost twenty years, interrupted at various stages by plague, political upsets, and the personal bias of Paul VI who was intensely opposed to Protestantism.[10] The reforms of Trent were far reaching and set the template for the Catholic Church until the convocation of Vatican II in 1963. Its objectives were twofold: (i) clarification of doctrine, such as the doctrine of justification and the sacraments, and (ii) church reform. [11]

While the Reformation had far-reaching implications, an argument has been put forward that, for the average woman, life in the emerging Protestant Churches was not significantly different to that in the Catholic Church in real terms.[12] Ostensibly, recourse to rituals that had been a source of particularly female piety–such as the rituals that assisted women during labour and the appeal to female saints and the Virgin Mary–was no longer a possibility. Effectively, this meant that male control was being exerted over women's spiritual and physical lives. Yet paradoxically, very little shifted for women in the putatively seismic event of early modernity.[13] As Merry E. Weisner writes, 'The reformers – Catholic and Protestant, magisterial and radical – all agreed on the proper avenues for female

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1989), More recently Lyndal Roper, *Luther: Renegade & Prophet* (London: Penguin Random House, 2016) has focussed on the anti-Semitic Luther.

[9] Protestantism almost immediately fractured: the emphasis on private interpretation of scripture inevitably brought about vexed questions on the nature of the sacraments and contrasting arguments on the meaning of pre-destination. Examining this in depth is beyond the scope of this chapter, however, for an overview of the main dissenting points of doctrine, see *The Oxford Handbook of the Protestant Reformations,* ed. by Ulinka Rublack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[10] For an overview of the Council of Trent, see Robert Bireley, *The Refashioning of Catholicism,* pp. 45-69. The standard history is Hubert Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent* (London: T. Nelson, 1957).

[11] This view has been disputed, the argument being that the Catholic Reformation stemmed from the same impulses as the genesis of the Protestant Reformation, seeking to 'intensify and spiritualise the piety of the populace and to prune away the dubious accretions and corruptions Christianity was perceived to have accumulated'. Alexandra Walsham, 'The Reformation and 'the Disenchantment of the World' Reassessed', *The Historical Journal*, 51.2 (2008), 497-528 (p. 501). However, it must be noted that regarding the central eventof the Catholic Reformation, the Council of Trent, all the major doctrinal decrees which were formulated, such as those on the place of tradition, justification and real presence, were promulgated in direct response to Protestant counterclaims. However, as Jedin has argued in *A History of the Council of Trent*, Trent went beyond merely defining its differences to Protestantism, it was also an important instrument of reform. This argument has been echoed in John W. O'Malley*, Trent and All That: Renaming Catholicism in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

[12] Christine Peters, *Patterns of Piety: Women, Gender and Religion in Late Medieval and Reformation England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England*, *1500-1800* (New Haven, MA: Yale University Press, 1999). Both Peters and Fletcher contend that in England that the nature of Christocentric piety and the decline in popularity of the Virgin Mary and intercessory saints mean that the change brought about by Reformation and Puritanism was not that great.

[13] Merry E. Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 78-89. See also Luebke's summary of recent research, in David Martin Luebke, *The Counter-Reformation: The Essential Readings* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), p. 9.

response to their ideas….domestic, personal, and familial: prayer, meditation, teaching the catechism to children, singing or writing hymns, entering or leaving a convent.'[14] Weisner rather drily remarks, 'few scholars working in the field today would answer the question, "Was the Reformation a good or a bad thing for women?" with anything other than "It depends"'.[15]

Weisner's ambivalence is understandable given the very real competing advantages and disadvantages experienced by women in the Catholic and emerging Protestant churches. Women both gained and lost roles.[16] In the Reformed Churches women were granted the right to read and interpret scriptures along with their husbands yet were excluded from the managerial roles in female communities granted by the Roman Catholic Church, and thus were denied access to scholarship and religious spirituality. Furthermore, in the Reformed Churches women were only identified through their reproductive role.[17] Yet, Protestantism celebrated sexuality within the confines of marriage and insisted on education for girls, albeit with the aim of habituating girls 'to the catechism, to the psalms, to honourable behaviour and Christian virtue, and especially to prayer, so that they may grow up to be Christian and praiseworthy matrons and housekeepers'.[18]

While the Catholic tradition ostensibly preserved women's access to spiritual affect, women's affective piety was supressed. The subversive identification of women with the figure of Christ faded in the early modern period, and feminine symbols, such as Mary and the female Christian saints were

[14] Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, 'Do Women Need the Renaissance?' *Gender & History*, 20.3 (2008), 539-557.
[15] Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, 'Society and the Sexes Revisited', in *Reformation and Early Modern Europe: A Guide to Research*, ed. by David M. Whitford (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2008), pp. 396-414 (p. 397).
[16] Natalie Zemon Davis was the first to highlight this ambivalence, see her chapter, 'City Women and Religious Change' in Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), pp. 65-95.
[17] There are numerous accounts of women religious actively resisting the changes of Protestant reform: from reports of Catholic women stuffing wax in their ears to prevent hearing Protestant sermons, nuns refusing to exit the convent walls, and hurling household objects at would be convertors. In *The Leaven of Calvinism*, or *The Beginning of the Heresy of Geneva,* composed between 1535 and 1547 by a nun called Jeanne de Juisse of the Order of St Clare in Geneva, de Juisse recounts how Protestant women would deliberately try to provoke by doing laundry the day after Easter or spinning wool during Church processions. Encounters could get physical: rocks were thrown and one Lutheran woman was hit on the head in a tussle. *Le Levain* was translated as part of *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe* series as, Jeanne de Juisse, *The Short Chronicle: A Poor Clare's Account of the Reformation of Geneva,* ed. and trans. by Carrie F. Klaus (Chicago & London: Chicago University Press, 2006). Although the reforms were being spoken of as a 'freedom' to reluctant nuns, de Juisse and others saw it as a form of constraint, where they would be forced to marry and be subject to their husbands. Jane Dempsey Douglass, *Women, Freedom, and Calvin* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1985), pp. 98-105. In some cases, women accepted the theological changes wrought but refused to give up their independent lifestyles, meaning effectively that that an odd anomaly occurred, Protestant convents. Merry Wiesner-Hanks, 'Ideology Meets the Empire: Reformed Convents and the Reformation', in *Germania Illustrata: Essays on Early Modern Germany Presented to Gerald Strauss*, ed. by Andrew C. Fix and Susan C. Karant-Nunn (Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1992), pp. 181-196. See also, Patricia Ranft, *Women and the Religious Life in Premodern Europe* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).
[18] *Jungfrauen-Schule,* cited in Gerald Strauss, 'The Social Function of Schools in the Lutheran Reformation in Germany', *History of Education Quarterly*, 28.2 (1988), pp. 191-206, (p. 197).

considered more appropriate for women to engage with.[19] Woman's previous dominion over the ecstatic and mystical state was increasingly greeted with suspicion. Female ecstatics and mystics were dismissed out of hand by the Reformed Church as emblematic of the excesses of superstition, and a similar attitude was adopted by the Catholic Church and codified in Trent. In the reforms of Trent, where women were concerned, three issues, all bodily, were directly commented upon: the reiteration of the superiority of the celibate state, the sacramentality of matrimony, and claustration.[20] Women who exhibited mystical experience,were regarded with clerical suspicion, most notably Teresa of Avila (1515–1582), despite her enthusiastic support for claustration which promised freedom from kin and patronage networks.[21]

Where women still figured powerfully was in their symbolic function, and in a predictably negative way: they were used to embody all that was corrupt in religious polemic. In *The Anatomy of the English Nunnery at Lisbon*, putatively an eye witness account by a Protestant English traveller, the Bridgettine convent was portrayed as a den of iniquity with naïve nuns at the sexual disposal of their priestly overseers.[22] In keeping with the previous patterns of embodying wayward states and organisations as unchaste women, the Catholic Church was regularly denounced as the 'Whore of

[19] Mary for example, is commonly presented as a very young woman - and Joseph a younger man - in the early modern period, better to emphasise the roles of virgin and motherhood and the centrality of marriage. In Protestantism Mary is stripped of her 'Empress of Heaven' designation and becomes much more passive, more 'womanly', as an exemplar of ideal behaviour for women. Although Protestants continued to adhere to the belief in Mary's virginity, virginity was not recommended as a vocational choice. Instead, the image of Mary as a wife and mother, and a helper at the wedding of Cana, is deployed to impress the value and primacy of the married life. Marian devotion remained a cornerstone of Tridentine spirituality and as the pressures of confessionalization grew from the 1570s onwards, gradually Mary's ability to err and indeed her status as a minor figure in the Gospels was increasingly emphasised. Beth Kreitzer, *Reforming Mary: Changing Images of the Virgin Mary in Lutheran Sermons of the Sixteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 145-154.

[20] The principles of claustration were enshrined in the edict *Decretum de regularbis at moniabilis,* promulgated at the final session of the Council of Trent in 1563. It decreed that claustration was mandatory at all women's convents. When claustration was unevenly enforced, the far stricter bull *Circa Pastoralis* (1566) was issued. The specifications as to how a convent should be constructed were meticulously laid out. The parlours were gone, to be replaced by a grille, and the convent gates and entrance hall all functioned to keep women at a distance, providing, as Jutta Sperling has described it, an 'additional hymen'. *Circa Pastoralis* also had limited success but, as Sperling has pointed out, even where claustration was flouted the Catholic Church was clearly stating that all religious women needed to be separated from the world. Jutta Gisela Sperling, *Convents and the Body Politic in Renaissance Venice* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 134. The enforcement of claustration depended on geographical location and the relationship of the state to the Church. Elizabeth A. Lehfeldt has argued that in Spain the cloister was far more permeable, Elizabeth A Lehfeldt, *Religious Women in Golden Age Spain: The Permeable Cloister* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2005). On women who resisted claustration, see Ulrike Strasser, 'Bones of Contention: Cloistered Nuns, Decorated Relics, and the Contest over Women's Place in the Public Sphere of Counter-Reformation Munich', *Archive for Reformation History*, 90 (1999), 255-288.

[21] Gillian T.W. Ahlgren, *Teresa of Avila and the Politics of Sanctity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996). Alison Weber, *Teresa of Avila and the Rhetoric of Femininity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

[22] Thomas Robinson, *The Anatomy of the English Nunnery at Lisbon* (1622) <http://name.umdl.umich.edu/A10852.0001.001 > [accessed 22 April 2019]. A common literary device, which is evident in *English Nunnery*, is the emphasis on the passivity and victimization of nuns - rhetoric typical of anti-Catholic propaganda that works to efface nuns' agency and reduce them to a joke. On the rhetoric of ridicule, see Frances E. Dolan, 'Why Are Nuns Funny?' *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 70.4 (2007), 509-535.

Babylon' by Protestants. Nuns embodied all the negative attributes of the female sex: they were greedy, petty, and jealous. This polemic was a continuation of the earlier Reformation pamphlets. 'By narrating tales of the nuns' sexual promiscuity and their subservience to priests, the polemical tracts not only undermined the convents' symbolism as repositories of Catholic virginal sanctity, they also reflected wider debates about women and governance.'[23] For Catholics, in turn, nothing demonstrated the scandal of the Reformation more than the figure of the nun who rejected her heavenly bridegroom for one of flesh and blood, Katharina von Bora, wife of Luther.[24]

The status of marriage clarifies the state of women in Christianity in general. While Catholics insisted on marriage as a sacrament, the Council of Trent reaffirmed the superiority of celibacy; and although Protestants denied the sacramentality of marriage, they insisted on the necessity for man and woman to marry and denied the worthiness of the celibate life. Marriage became, in the words of Ulrike Strasser, 'more than a spiritually desirable state, which every Christian capable of consent had the right to enter, matrimony became a virtual duty of a Counter-Reformation Catholic and so did sexual reproduction.'[25] Effectively, both Churches agreed on women's basic role regarding women. Marriage and motherhood were painted as recourse for the sin in Eden. Luther, in particular, exalted marriage devoting specific treatises to the estate, such as 'Sermon on the Estate of Marriage', 'On the Estate of Marriage' and on 'The Babylonian Captivity.'[26] Women's roles were to be companions to men, to exercise human responsibility for multiplying, and to safeguard against inordinate (male) sexual desire. To have such a wife, according to Luther, was the 'greatest blessing'.[27]

The Catholic Church's teaching was very similar to that of Luther:

> And this is the one cause why God instituted marriage in the beginning . . . after the Fall of the first parent was added to the other causes, when, because of the loss of justice in which man had been established, his appetite began to fight with right reason; so indeed he who is conscious of his weakness and does not wish to bear the

[23] Claire Walker, *Gender and Politics in Early Modern Europe: English Convents in France and the Low Countries* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 54.
[24] On the historiography of literature on Katharina von Bora, see Jeanette C. Smith, 'Katharina Von Bora through Five Centuries: A Historiography', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 30.3 (1999), 745-774. Since the publication of Smith's article, other accounts of Von Bora have been published. Rudolf K. Markwald and Marilynn Morris Markwald, *Katharina Von Bora* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2004), is an accessible account of von Bora's life. See also, Kirsi Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), pp. 49-70. For Luther's own writings on von Bora, see, *Luther on Women: A Sourcebook*, ed. by Susan C. Karant-Nunn and Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 186-201, to include several of their correspondences.
[25] Strasser, *State of Virginity*, p. 39.
[26] The most comprehensive English translation of selected works is the 55 volume *Luther's Works*, ed. by Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955-1986). Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks have collected the main writings which relate to women in *Luther on Women*. In their introduction, Karan-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks note that there has been relatively little scholarship on Luther and women, in comparison to say, Calvin. (p. 2, pp. 5-8). For Luther's writings on marriage, sexuality and motherhood, see, *Luther on Women*, pp. 100-137; pp. 140-170; pp. 100-185.
[27] Karant-Nunn & Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, pp. 125-126.

> battle of the flesh may use the remedy of marriage to avoid sins of lust. About this the Apostle thus writes, 'On account of fornication each man may have his own wife, and each woman her own husband.' [28]

The control of the female body was therefore within the purview of the Church or lay with the woman's husband. Both the Protestant and Catholic reformations, with their emphases on matrimony and the construction of the 'holy household', were aimed at controlling the desires of men and women alike.[29] A woman was expected to express humility and show obedience to either God or spouse. Christianity in the early modern period therefore argued that to be a sanctified female meant to give up one's body. 'Proving a woman's virtue entailed demonstrating that she has separated from her body or from her will [through marriage], or conversely, that God possessed her body in ecstasy.'[30]

From the sixteenth century, a subtle shift began to occur in the construction of female embodiment. The decline of the feudal systems and the increasing urbanisation, which was followed by industrialisation, was changing how people lived. Illegitimacy was a scourge of poverty, and increasing efforts were made to prevent and punish the birth of children out of wedlock. The regulation of the body became a priority for sixteenth- and seventeenth-century governments. The personal was most definitely political: the body was in service to the state, with the family as the basic unit of the state. The potency of men, and the fidelity and fertility of women became political concerns.

The modern state was born, with men belonging to the public sphere and women to the private sphere. Women were relegated to the domestic, to the realm of feeling and sensitivity. They were expected to be the moral lodestone in the family, responsible for the education and nurturing of children and overseers of the moral probity of the household.[31] Women had historically been portrayed as

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[28] *Roman Catechism* 2.8.13 and on the canons and reforms of the Council of Trent, promulgated at the 24 session, 11 November 1563, see Tanner, *Decrees,* pp. 754-759. For the positive emphasis of marriage in Catholic humanism see, John Thomas Noonan, *Contraception: A History of its Treatment by the Catholic Theologians and Canonists* (Cambridge, MA & London: Belknap Press, 1986), pp. 303-340.

[29] The classic argument for this is found in, Lyndal Roper, *Holy Household: Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

[30] Margaret R. Miles, *Carnal Knowing* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), p. 77.

[31] Scholarship on the emergence of the public/private sphere from the late eighteenth century vary. In England the separate sphere tended to be linked toward the emergence of the middle class, thus the bourgeois; on the Continent, to the ideals of the Enlightenment. For scholarship see Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: 'Woman's Sphere' in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977). Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Classes, 1780-1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1987), Leonore Davidoff, *Worlds Between: Historical Perspectives on Gender and Class* (New York: Routledge, 1995) Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988). For a critique of the separate sphere argument, Amanda Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *The Historical Journal*, 36.2 (1993), 383-414. Vickery acknowledges the public/private dichotomy 'as a loose description of a very long-standing difference between the lives of women and men,' but she rejects 'the argument that sometime between 1650 and 1850 the public/private distinction was constituted or radically reconstituted in a way that transformed relations between the sexes', (pp. 412-414). For a review on

lascivious lustful creatures, but 'by the middle of the eighteenth century they were increasingly reimagined as belonging to another order of being: loving but without sexual needs.'[32] This 'cult of womanhood' brought about the era of the passionless woman, whereby '[t]he satire of woman was replaced by praise of Womanhood'.[33]

The Cult of Womanhood has been tied to the creation of the bourgeoise in the wake of the industrial revolution.[34] The chaste female, ardourless and submissive, was emblematic of the new order in society, appropriate to the post-revolutionary era, the antithesis of the traditional libertine recklessness of the aristocracy. She also represented the harmony of domestic idyll, away from the cut and thrust of the capitalist marketplace.[35]

In many ways the modern period demonstrated a popular volte face in the construction of womanhood: whereas earlier woman was identified with nature and the unruliness of desire, and therefore a threat to society, by the eighteenth century, 'the family, religion, and the state are now identified with woman rather than seen as being threatened by her'.[36] Yet, this idealised version of womanhood was perhaps so highly valued because it was emblematic of a virtue that was so elusive. The animal spirit of female sexuality still lurked behind the virtuous wife. The dichotomy that characterised the perception of women was striking. While considered to be more sensitive, spiritual and more sensible (in the old sense of the word) at the same time women were prisoners of tidal currents that were animal and uncontrollable in nature and, in this way, were denied the two cardinal virtues of control and rationality.[37]

The theological tenets that acclaimed women's inferiority were employed to justify prescriptive social roles that were fixed accordingly. Whilst women's religiosity continued to flourish, and as modernity progressed, religion came to be seen as the domain of women in terms of the household, and women's bodies came to be couched in secular terms separated from the sacred. The origins for this, rather

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scholarship, which includes reference to the colonial implications, see Joan B. Landes, 'Further Thoughts on the Public/Private Distinction', *Journal of Women's History*, 15.2 (2003), 28-39.

[32] Ruth Perry, 'Colonising the Breast: Sexuality and Maternity in Eighteenth-Century England'*, Journal of the History of Sexuality,* 2.2, Special Issue, Part 1 (1991), 204-234

[33] Marlene LeGates, 'The Cult of Womanhood in Eighteenth-Century Thought', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 10.1 (1976), 21-39 (p. 24).

[34] Barbara Welter, 'The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860', *American Quarterly*, 18.2 (1966), 151-174. Welter's ground-breaking essay was succeeded by works such as Bonnie Smith, *Ladies of the Leisure Class: The Bourgeoises of Northern France in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981); Bonnie Smith, 'The Domestic Sphere in the Victorian Age', in *Changing Lives: Women in European History* (Lexington, MA: DC Heath, 1989), pp. 181-221; Martha Vicinus, *Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age* (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 1977).

[35] See LeGates, 'The Cult of Womanhood', n. 18, pp. 24-25; Nancy F. Cott, 'Passionlessness: An Interpretation of Victorian Sexual Ideology, 1790-1850', *Signs*, 4.2 (1978), 219-236.

[36] LeGates, 'The Cult of Womanhood', p. 30.

[37] Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 195-196.

ironically, involved women themselves, in the philosophic debates of the *querelle* debates, and the Cartesian turn.

3.3. Theoretical Bodies III: *Querelle* Debates and the Cartesian Turn

Resistance to male control, the argument for women having access to education and the participation of women in public discourse, were all topics of dispute in the *Querelle des femmes,* or the Question of Woman debates of the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries. While there had been a long tradition of women resisting male control in the religious tradition–such as the Beguines, and the later dissenter traditions of the Protestant Churches[38]–the *querelle* is commonly regarded as the first dawning of feminism, or proto feminism, spanning a period from the lifetimes of Christine de Pizan to Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797).[39] As opposed to religious debates in which women participated more generally, the *querelle* debates argued specifically on the question of women.[40]

The *querelle* debates flourished against the backdrop of the salon culture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and later in the drawing rooms of the nineteenth century, unique for their participation and leadership exhibited by women.[41] The movement was particularly strong in seventeenth-century Italy and France with remarkable women arguing passionately for the rights of women. The most prominent women were Lucrezia Marinella (1571-1653), who authored *The Nobility and Excellence of Women and the Defects and Vices of Men* (1601), and Marie de Gournay (1565-1645), who edited the third edition of Montparnasse's essays and penned several spirited defences of women such as *The Equality of Men and Women* (1622) and *The Ladies' Grievances*

[38] See *Non-Conformist Women Writers 1720-1840,* vols 1-4, ed. by Timothy Whelan and Julia B. Griffin (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2011).

[39] Joan Kelly's article, although published over thirty years ago, remains an excellent overview of the literary debates, Joan Kelly, 'Early Feminist Theory and the "Querelle Des Femmes", 1400-1789', *Signs*, 8.1 (1982), 4-28. There is still relatively little published in English on the *Querelle* debates. Most published work in the English language has concentrated on the individual authors involved in the debates, and not the historical phenomenon as a whole. The excellent series *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe*, published by University of Chicago Press, has published previously unavailable translations of the French and Italian *querelle* publications.

[40] Kelly, 'Early Feminist Theory', p. 5. However, as Siep Sturman rightly notes, the *querelle* disputants came from the Catholic tradition. See his chapters 'The Deconstruction of Gender: Seventeenth-Century Feminism and Modern Equality' and 'The Soul has No Sex: Feminism and Catholicism in Early-Modern Europe'in *Women, Gender and Enlightenment*, ed. by Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 371-388, 416-433.

[41] Elizabeth A. Williams, 'Physicians, Vitalism, and Gender in the Salon', *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture*, 29.1 (2000), 1-21. For a positive view of salon culture and its role that women played in it see Dena Goodman, 'Enlightenment Salons: The Convergence of Female and Philosophic Ambitions', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 22.3 (1989), 329-350; Carolyn Chappell Lougee, *Le Paradis des Femmes* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976); Elizabeth C. Goldsmith, *'Exclusive Conversations': The Art of Interaction in Seventeenth-Century France* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Press, 1988). Benedetta Craveri, *The Age of Conversation,* trans. by Teresa Waugh (New York: New York Review, 2007). Overall, there has not been much written on the salon culture, a fact which Goodman and others attribute to the fact that it was a female environment and therefore not considered worthy of scholarly attention.

(1626).[42] One of the most insightful defences was penned by Arcangela Tarabotti (1604-1652) a Venetian nun who mined her own personal experience for her book, *Parental Tyranny,* a scathing attack on the dowry system which was responsible for the enforced claustration of daughters.[43]

The opposing sides of the *querelle* debates generally adopted the following positions: for those who were taking the part of women, women's intellect was praised as equal, and it was argued that women shared the same spiritual and mental capacities as men and even excelled in wisdom and action.[44] For those who engaged in the critique of women–a far more common position as the plethora of published pamphlets attest–women's inferiority lay in their very nature. Women's only virtues lay in their chastity, their ability to bear children, and their demonstration of filial obedience.[45]

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[42] Lucrezia Marinella, *The Nobility and Excellence of Women and the Defects and Vices of Men*, ed. and trans. by Anne Dunhill with an introduction by Letizia Panizza (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007). First published in 1600, *Nobility and Excellence* was written in furious response to Giuseppe Passi's diatribe about women's alleged defects, *Deidonneschi difetti* (1599). Marinella differed from most of her female contemporaries in that she was well versed in the arts of philosophy, dialects and argument and *Nobility and Excellence* is couched as a polemic. The structure of *Nobility and Excellence* is in two parts, the first is in praise of women's virtues, the second part ascribes the vices that Passi attributed to women onto men. *Nobility* was the only polemical work that she wrote although she published eighteen other titles in her life time, which were mainly devout in nature). Her last work *Essortazionialle donnee agli altri* (1645) praised a life of seclusion for women, as part of God's and nature's design. 'Contradicting what she had said earlier,' Paninzza observes in the introduction, 'Marinella here accepts a gender-based moral code. Women would do well to stick to traditional domestic tasks of spinning and weaving. Subservience for the sake of preserving the social order is honourable. She is even disillusioned with literary pursuits, "a useless vanity and of little comfort" ('una vanita inutile e di poca consolatione'),' (p. 15).

[43] Arcangela Tarabotti, *Paternal Tyranny,* ed. and trans. by Letizia Panizza (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007). For the situation for women generally in early modern Venice and particularly in relation to marriage see, Virginia Cox, 'The Single Self: Feminist Thought and the Marriage Market in Early Modern Venice', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 48.3 (1995), 513-581.

[44] This argument was presented by the Italian diplomat and man of letters, Baldassare Castiglione (1478-1529) in *The Book of the Courtier* (1528). Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier,* trans. by Thomas Hoby (Oxford: Benediction Classics, 2012). The *Courtier* depicts a series of four evenings at the court of the Duke of Urbino where the courtiers debate literary and social issues. The *querelle* is addressed in the third of the four books, in the form of a debate between Gasparo Pallavicino and Giuiliano de Medici. Pallavicino argues that women and men are of the same essence, that they share the same spiritual and mental abilities and that women may even surpass men in wisdom and deeds. The *Courtier* was immensely popular and translated into many other languages, over 100 editions in the sixteenth century alone. For an excellent introduction to Castiglione, discussions on *The Courtier* to include a survey of Castiglione's work, see J. R. Woodhouse, *Baldesar Castiglione: A Reassessment of 'The Courtier'* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1978). There is also a persuasive argument that the querelle debates were about interrogating masculinity, Androniki Dialeti, 'Defending Women, Negotiating Masculinity in Early Modern Italy', *The Historical Journal*, 54.1 (2011), 1-23.

[45] Typical of this approach is Boccaccio's *Concerning Famous Women* (1361). Unlike the more obviously misogynist *Corbaccio* (1355) or Matheolus' *Lamentations* (*c*. 1295) which so enraged Christine de Pizan that she felt compelled to pen *The City of Ladies*, Boccaccio praises 106 notable women, 98 of whom are drawn from classical antiquity, one biblical woman (Eve) and seven from the medieval religious and cultural tradition. All women are praised for their virtues of chastity, silence and obedience. Women, however, who participated in the public arena, such as queens or warriors, are depicted as enduring terrible punishments, appropriate for a woman who stray from their rightful domestic space. Boccaccio set something of a trend for catalogues of illustrious women, with similar works by Alvaro de Luna, Jacopo Filippo Foresti and Pierre Le Moyne, amongst others. Giovanni Boccaccio, *Famous Women*, ed. and trans. by Virginia Brown (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

Works that praised women at the beginning of the Renaissance were those that stressed the contained nature of the female body, and the knowledge of the proper place of women, through appeal to chastity, silence and obedience. However, the participants in the *querelle* attempted to direct the subject away from women's bodies and towards the question of the mind. The *querelle* debates were initially infused by appeals to Plato, as well as Neo-Platonism. Plato's rationale, as found in the *Republic,* was eagerly seized upon by women, for if the only difference between men and women is their bodies, and if following Plato's conception of the person as being made up of a soul-body wherein the soul is far superior, and that bodies are merely incidental attachments to what constitutes one's true identity, then there is no important difference between men and women.[46] Plato's dialogue *Meno* also denies the possibility–where, alas, Hume and Rousseau much later did not follow–of virtues being either manly or feminine.[47] Virtue as Form is eternal; it is therefore always one and the same thing.

The appeal to Plato for equal rights and functions of women was first expressed by Christine de Pizan in the *City of Ladies* and popularised in Cornelius Agrippa's *De nobilitae et praecellentia foemina sexus declamatio* (1529).[48] The *querelle* debates took renewed impetus from the works of Descartes. While Descartes never wrote directly about women, he opted, according to his biographer, to publish his scholarship in French rather than the standard Latin so that women could read it.[49] In the 1641 *Meditationes de prima philosophia (Meditation on First Philosophy: In which the Existence of God and the Distinction of the Soul from the Body are Demonstrated)*, Descartes stated in his dedication that his purpose was to use natural reason alone to defend the existence of God and the eternity of the soul, and included a plea that theologians in the Sorbonne, 'most of the impious', would recognise 'that God exists and that the human mind is distinct from the body'.[50] This separation of the mind from the body, with its departure from Aristotelian sex-linked theories of the soul, had serious implications for women.[51] Once women and men began to read Descartes' published works, their defence of women's equal access to education with men introduced a Cartesian rationale. The concept

[46] *Republic* 454d-e, p. 165; 455e-456b, pp. 17-168.
[47] *Meno*, 73b-c.
[48] Agrippa adopted neo-Platonic arguments which asserted the moral and theological superiority of women by grounding female superiority in their beauty, arguing that such beauty indicated they were in closer proximity to the divine. See, *Declamation on the Nobility and Pre-eminence of the Female Sex,* trans. by Albert Rabil (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). Agrippa's arguments were not unique, as Rabil points out (pp. 19-21), two of which were that (i) Christ assumed male form because Adam was guiltier than Eve as his sin was made from knowledge, hers from ignorance and; (ii) all heresies were invented by men which proved women were superior. Nonetheless, Agrippa was used by many subsequent *querelle* participants.
[49] Richard Watson, *Cogito Ergo Sum: The Life of Rene Descartes* (Boston, MA: David R. Godine, 2002), p. 183. Descartes also had a number of close relationships with women and frequently dedicated his work to women.
[50] René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy with Selections from the Objections and Replies,* trans. with an intr. and notes by Michael Moriarty (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 4.
[51] Londa L. Schiebinger, *The Mind has No Sex? Women in the Origins of Modern Science* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 170-188.

of a soul freed from bodily, and therefore sexual, impediments allowed women to argue for their equality with men and Cartesianism soon displaced forms of Platonism as the foundation for the equality of women and men.[52] The Catholic priest and later Calvinist convert, Francois Poullaine de la Barre, greatly convinced by Descartes' arguments, proclaimed that 'the mind has no sex', and argued that cultural prejudice and not natural inferiority was responsible for women's lesser estate, and recommended that women receive a true education, and that all careers, including scientific careers, should be open to them.[53]

Yet by the end of the eighteenth century the unsexed, detached Cartesian ego had segued to a polarized stereotyping of men's and women's ways of thinking, such as in the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900).[54] Intelligence was gendered. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,

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[52] Erica Harth, *Cartesian Women* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992); Eileen O'Neill, 'Women Cartesians, "Feminine Philosophy", and Historical Exclusion' in, *Feminist Interpretations of René Descartes*, ed. by Susan Bordo (University Park, PA.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), pp. 232-257.

[53] 'It is easy to see that the difference between the two sexes is limited to the body, since that is the only part used in the reproduction of humankind. Since the mind merely gives its consent, and does so in exactly the same way in everyone, we can conclude that it has no sex. Considered independently, the mind is found to be equal and of the same nature in all men, and capable of all kinds of thoughts.' Poullain de la Barre, *On the Equality of the Two Sexes,* in *Three Cartesian Feminist Treatises,* intr. and annotations by Marcelle Maistre Welch, trans. by Vivien Bosley (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 82. A few years later, he defends a completely opposite point of view, in *Of the Excellence of the Men against the Equality of the Sexes* (1675). His legacy thus varies considerably from one author to another. Anthony J. La Vopa, 'Sexless Minds at Work and at Play: Poullain de la Barre and the Origins of Early Modern Feminism', *Representations*, 109.1 (2010), 57-94.

[54] Rousseau sets out most clearly his views of the differences of women in *Emile*. He also specifically considers women in, 'Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men', in *The Basic Political Writings,* ed. by Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2011), pp. 45-92. For a collection on Rousseau's views on women, see Christopher Kelly and Eve Grace, *Rousseau on Women, Love, and Family* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2009).

Kant's views on women are located in *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* (1764) and the *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798). See esp., Kant*: Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime and Other Writings,* ed. by Patrick Frierson and Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. xxix –xxxiv. There is a noticeable decline in Kant's attitude to women between the two works. From praising women's virtues in his earlier works, Kant goes to frame women in decidedly negative terms in the *Anthropology*. According to Robert Loudon, 'Kant's eventual treatment of women in Anthropology [are] as mere tools by which Nature promotes the twin ends of "preservation of the species" and "cultivation of society and its refinement"', *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, ed. by Robert B. Louden and trans. by Manfred Kuehn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. xxx. Barbara Herman describes Kant as the modern moral philosopher feminists find most objectionable. Herman, 'Could it be Worth Thinking about Kant on Sex and Marriage?', in *A Mind of One's Own*, ed. by Louise M. Antony and Charlotte Witt (Boulder, CO: Westview Press), pp. 53-72 (p. 54). For a review of the competing scholarly opinions of Kant's treatment of women see, Mari Mikkola, 'Kant on Moral Agency and Women's Nature', *Kantian Review*, 16.01 (2011), 89-111. Prudence Allen, 'Rationality, Gender and History', *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, 68 (1994), 271-288.

Schopenhauer's views of women are infamously expressed in his essay 'On Women'. While he ascribes to women clear-sightedness and being less prone to exaggeration than me–although this is attributed more to women's inferior ability to reason more than any innate superiority to men–women are inclined toward dissimulation, are incapable of producing art, childish, and responsible for the corruption of society. Nor does he have any appreciation for women's beauty: 'It is only the man whose intellect is clouded by his sexual instinct that could give that stunted, narrow-shouldered, broad-hipped, and short-legged race the name of *the fair sex*; for the entire beauty of the sex is based on this instinct. One would be more justified in calling them the *unaesthetic sex* than the beautiful.' To sum up, 'They are the *sexus sequior*, the second sex in every respect,

women's intellectual traits were thought to be corporeally grounded in their moist natures, which were rooted in the old complexion theories, where traits such as memory could be sealed in like wax.[55] Particular areas of female excellence were memory, the ability to learn (in the context of taming and therefore strongly associated with docility and pliability of character), cunning and all aspects of mental mutability. At times during the *querelle* debates, this plasticity of the female intellect led some to argue that women could be of use in academia, as the temperaments of their bodies/brains were 'the proper temperament of memory, which is the depository and nourishment of the sciences.'[56] This mimetic quality is perhaps best encapsulated by Rousseau who in his blueprint for raising the ideal man, *Emile,* lays out the education for a perfect helpmate, Sophy, an Eve for the Age of Reason. 'Sophy's mind is pleasing but not brilliant, and thorough but not deep, it is the sort of mind which calls for no remark, as she never seems cleverer or stupider than oneself.'[57] Sophy was to be a mirror for Emile, compliant and complaisant. Despite the appeal to the *equality* of male and female intellect, this did not mean *sameness.* Male and female intellects were thought to be entirely different in kind. Hence, woman's sphere of influence extended only to the salons of the seventeenth century and the drawing rooms of the eighteenth century, as the essence of woman's intellect was her sociability.

Distinctively female mental abilities, like distinctively female virtues such as feeling, intuition and empathy had almost always been classified as abilities and virtues of the second magnitude. However, they had been acknowledged as abilities and virtues nonetheless. Lorraine Daston has argued that the privileging of certain types of thinking in light of new scientific discoveries, such as the ability to

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therefore their weaknesses should be spared, but to treat women with extreme reverence is ridiculous, and lowers us in their own eyes. When nature divided the human race into two parts, she did not cut it exactly through the middle!' Schopenhauer, 'On Women,' in *Essays and Aphorisms,* ed. and trans. by R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1970), pp. 80-88.

Nietzsche's views on women were somewhat contradictory, but on balance negative, 'Woman! One-half of mankind is weak, typically sick, changeable, inconstant... she needs a religion of weakness that glorifies being weak, loving, and being humble as divine: or better, she makes the strong weak--she rules when she succeeds in overcoming the strong...Woman has always conspired with the types of decadence, the priests, against the "powerful", the "strong", the men-' , *The Will to Power*, trans. by Walter Kaufman and ed. by R.J. Hollingdale (London: Vintage, 1964), p. 451. In *Human, All Too Human*, he states that 'the perfect woman is a higher type of human than the perfect man, and also something much more rare,' Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits,* trans. by Richard Hollingdale, with an intr. by Richard Schacht, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 181. For instance, in the following passage: 'What inspires respect and, often enough, fear of women is their nature (which is "more natural" than that of men), their truly predatory and cunning agility, their tiger's claws inside their glove, the naiveté of their egoism, their inner wildness and inability to be trained, the incomprehensibility, expanse, and rambling character of their desires and virtues', in Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil,* ed. by Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman and trans. by Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 129.

[55] Ian MacLean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman: A Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and Medical Science in European Intellectual Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 34-42.

[56] Pierre Le Moyne, *La gallerie de femmes fortes* (1660), 285-86; cf. Agrippa, *De nobilitae et praecellentia foemina sexus declamatio* (1529), cited by Lorraine Daston, 'The Naturalized Female Intellect', *Science In Context*, 5.02 (1992), 209-235 (p. 216).

[57] Rousseau, *Emile, or Education,* trans. by Barbara Foxley (London & Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1921; New York: E.P. Dutton, 1921), p. 379.

synthesize general principles from the mass of recorded data, traditionally associated with 'male' thinking, meant that 'the intellect effectively became masculinized to an unprecedented extent'. Inevitably, this meant that women's intellect was categorised as other and lesser. Thus, Daston argues, this new form of intellect, 'intelligence' meant that 'the link between 'female' and 'intellect' was all but severed.'[58]

The reasons for the polarized stereotyping are varied, involving in part the popularity of neo-Epicureanism as disseminated by the influential priest Gassendi (1592-1655) an avowed anti-Aristotelian, rival to Descartes, who reconstructed Epicureanism from a Christian perspective.[59] He incorporated the Epicurean emphasis on the materiality of the body and the passions with the neo Platonic / Augustinian emphasis on the appetites and man's base desires. Its more extreme manifestation was found in Jansenism, but in 'moderate' form caused the body to be given more weight than the mind.[60] This, according to John Robertson, led to a 'shift in philosophical fashion … potentially devastating to women.' Robertson argues that 'the proposition that the mind has no sex was devalued in favour of a new interest in the apparently obvious bodily differences between men and women.'[61]

One could argue that in making the mind the cornerstone of the *querelle* debates reaffirmed the idea that the female body was inherently defective. In the early works of the *querelle,* the defective nature of women is deployed in their very defence.[62] In the later works, when women framed their rights to

[58] Lorraine Daston, 'The Naturalized Female Intellect', p. 221.
[59] Gassendi was hugely influential on Robert Boyle (1627-1691) and Isaac Newton (1642-1727). Epicurean hedonism was revised by Gassendi so that pleasure was defined in explicitly Christian terms, where the ultimate pleasure was the beatific vision of God in the afterlife. As for free will, divine providence moulded the human will so that it could make choices leading to the ultimate pleasure. Like Descartes, he was at pains to articulate a mechanical philosophy of nature that would not lead to materialism and stressed the immateriality of the soul. Howard Jones, *Pierre Gassendi, 1592-1655, An Intellectual Biography* (Nieuwkoop: B. de Graaf, 1981).
[60] Termed 'the illegitimate offspring of the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Counter Reformation,' Jansenism was particularly critical of baroque spirituality and sought a return to the patristic Church through radical reform. Jansenism, in contrast to Jesuitism which stressed the importance of the will, had predestinarianism tendencies, as set out in the posthumous publication in 1640 of the *Augustinus* by Cornelius Jansen (1585-1638). Jansenism emphasised the pervasive corruption of original sin and the impossibility of meritorious action that does not derive from God's grace to the elect. Its most famous adherents were Antoine Arnauld (1612-1649) and Blaise Pascal (1623-1662). Jansenists campaigned for the liturgy in the vernacular, were critical of the veneration of the saints and advocated a more individual, practical piety. Jansenism spread through France, Italy, Spain and the Holy Roman Empire. For a review article of the historiography of Jansenism, and particularly its political implications, see D. Van Kley, 'The Rejuvenation and Rejection of Jansenism in History and Historiography: Recent Literature on Eighteenth-Century Jansenism in French', *French Historical Studies*, 29.4 (2006), 649-684. See also Nigel Abercrombie, *The Origins of Jansenism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936).
[61] John Robertson, 'Women and Enlightenment: A Historiographical Conclusion', in *Women, Gender and Enlightenment*, pp. 692-704 (p. 697).
[62] This was mainly surrounding the theological arguments of Adam and Eve's relative sin. See especially Isotta Nogarola's (1418-66) dispute with Ludovico Foscarini on this very topic in, 'The Great Gender Debate' in *Isotta Nogarola*: *Complete Writings: Letterbook, Dialogue on Adam and Eve, Orations,* ed. by Margaret L. King and trans. by Diana Robin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), pp. 18-158. Nogarola, one of the most important of the female humanists and a noted intellectual in her day, neither married nor took vows, but

be equal to men, they assiduously avoid mentioning the body, which is perhaps an explanation for the phenomenon that Laura Gowing has noted of the body being 'oddly absent from the history of early modern women'.[63] The recourse to the ideas of Plato and Descartes' radical reorientation of the human being, which was viewed as a way toward sexual parity (if not equality), proved to be illusory. Woman, Eve, Witch and object of wonder had transformed from unknowable and uncontrollable to the charming sympathetic and docile Sophy of the Enlightenment and the 'Angel of the Household' of the Victorian era.[64] The differences between men and women were arguably never more clearly entrenched, a view that was reflected in how the physical body was construed in medical discourse.

3.4. Medical Bodies III: Pathology and the Feminine

The adoption of Cartesian philosophy had a real impact on how women's bodies were perceived due to Descartes' influence on the medical sciences. Descartes has been described as 'the philosophical father of modern medicine.'[65] The adoption of the Cartesian model meant that the Aristotelian notion of woman as incomplete man, was gradually ceding to the perception of woman as physical other, entirely different in kind. The Cartesian splitting of mind from body meant that the old ideas of the closed system of the human body–based on the notion of balance and shifting humours, where mind, body and soul were intimately connected–could be discarded. The qualitative conception of the body ceded to the quantitative. The body became something to be investigated, probed, weighed and measured.

Before the Cartesian turn, women's illness had many different meanings, religious or otherwise, and women retained the power to interpret the meaning of their illnesses. The shift in philosophical thinking brought about a mechanical reading of the body, meaning that, with the divide between mind and body, the body was seen as something as other to the self. Women's bodies were now only discernible to the medical expert. The differences between the male and female bodies, namely the

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instead lived alone in the households of her brothers, where she devoted herself to the study of humanist works and Biblical and patristic texts, eventually earning the reputation of a holy woman (although it is not known whether she in fact entered any kind of religious retreat). Her outspokenness meant that charges were levelled against her of criminal activity and incestuous promiscuity as an anonymous detractor insisted that 'an eloquent woman is never chaste' (p. 68).

[63] Laura Gowing, 'Women's Bodies and the Making of Sex in Seventeenth-Century England', *Signs*, 37.4 (2012), 813-822 (p. 813).

[64] 'Angel in the House' was an appellation coined by Virginia Woolf, 'Professions for Women,' repr. in Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar*, The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women* (New York: Norton, 1985), pp. 1383-1388. Woolf described the ideal woman, the 'Angel of the House', as a male ideal who, whispered, 'Be sympathetic, be tender; flatter; deceive; use all the arts and wiles of our sex. Never let anybody guess that you have a mind of your own. Above all, be pure.' 'Killing the Angel in the House' wrote Woolf, was 'part of the occupation of a woman writer.'

[65] Drew Leder, 'A Tale of Two Bodies: The Cartesian Corpse and the Lived Body', in *The Body in Medical Thought and Practice,* ed. by H. Tristram Engelhardt and others (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2010), pp. 17-36 (p. 17).

female reproductive system and sexual organs, her smaller statute and her inferior strength came to be viewed as what defined women.

This shift in embodiment proper has been theorised to have occurred in the eighteenth-century with a fundamental and radical reworking of the ideas of gender and sexuality. The most articulate argument for this is found in the writings of Thomas Laqueur who argues that prior to the eighteenth-century sexual difference between men and women was of degree rather than kind, and that they ought to be seen along a continuum. Laqueur makes the case that anatomical differences between the sexes were invented in the eighteenth century, in the main to justify female subordination against the enlightenment ideals of equality and universal rights.[66] Michael Stolberg and Anthony Fletcher, while largely agreeing with Laqueur on his theory of a shift from a one sex to a two sex model, argue that the shift occurred earlier, sometime in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and that this shift was not just based on political expediency, but on developments both cultural and medical. According to Michael Stolberg, this included,

> a growing preference for empirical observation and discovery, the blending of Galenic teleology with pious belief in the value and purpose of every creature, the gradual shift from more humoral to more solid conceptions of the body, and the 'gynecologists' professional interest in 'difference' as well as changing notions of woman within the urban upper classes among whom the physicians moved and whose support they sought.[67]

Another argument against Laqueur's chronology is that, in the vernacular language of the early modern period, male and female bodies were considered different in function and structure. Laura Gowing, examining court depositions of the period 1560-1640, has demonstrated that men and women understood themselves as wholly different in kind.[68] However, even if Laqueur is wrong about the conception of the two-sex model as changing significantly in the eighteenth century, there is no doubt that the conception of women had changed significantly *by* this time.

Unearthing the secrets of the female body became something of an occupation from the sixteenth century onwards. This can be attributed to two major factors, one of which was the translation in to Latin of Hippocrates' *Disease of Virgins* in 1525. This text, which had long been lost to the West, brings together the two ideas of the importance of marriage and women's reproductive health

[66] Laqueur, *Making Sex*, p. x.
[67] Michael Stolberg, 'A Woman Down to her Bones: The Anatomy of Sexual Difference in the Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries', *Isis*, 94.2 (2003), 274-299 (p. 299); also, Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination,* p. xii.
[68] Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 7.

meaning as, Lesel Dawson points out, that 'virginity is depicted not as a quality that elevates a woman, but one that makes her unnatural and diseased'.[69]

The second reason for the fascination with the female body was the heretofore unexplored process of autopsy. Previous inhibitions, religious or otherwise, on investigating the dead were pushed aside in the name of inquiry.[70] As the philosophers Michel Foucault and Hugo Englehardt have described it, in the eighteenth century, classifications of disease shifted from a basis in the symptoms experienced by the living patient to a basis in the organic lesions found in the corpse.[71] More could be learnt from autopsy than from dialogue with patients. Doctors and physicians based their diagnoses on objective facts, discernible to experts only, rather than relying on the patients' own accounts and self-reporting.[72] 'Central to modern diagnosis was a conception of specific diseases that existed independently of individual patients. Each disease had a narrative or clinical course – a history, a present, and a prognosis, as well as an underlying mechanism (or pathophysiology); the patient, rather than an individual with their own narrative, now needed to be located somewhere along this clinical continuum.'[73] Women's bodies could thus be anatomised and dissected in the probing investigations of men.

Slowly, the female anatomy began to give up its secrets. The 'wandering womb' of antiquity was deemed an anatomical impossibility by the great eighteenth century Italian physician Giovanni Battista Morgagni (1682-1771), author of the classic *The Seats and Causes of Diseases Investigated by Anatomy* (1761), but still the power of the womb was thought to dominate every aspect of a woman's life.

> Woman's reproductive organs are pre-eminent, exercise a controlling influence upon her entire system, and entail upon her many painful and dangerous diseases. They are

[69] Lesel Dawson, *Lovesickness and Gender in Early Modern English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 56.
[70] In contrast to the West, where the first recorded autopsy did not occur until the medieval era there was no such inhibition in the orthodox east. Katharine Park has however suggested that that it was 'not until mid-sixteenth century do we begin to see persistent hints of popular suspicion concerning dissection', arguing that 'suspicion was not rooted in age-old taboos; rather, it grew out of new anatomical practices widely perceived as violating the sanctity of the body fears'. Katharine Park, 'The Criminal and the Saintly Body: Autopsy and Dissection in Renaissance Italy', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 47.1 (1994), 1-33 (p. 4). It is also suggested that the resistance to dissection and performing autopsies in general was more to do with the persistence of Galenic medicine, rather than any particular religious prescription. Sanjib Kumar Ghosh, 'Human Cadaveric Dissection: A Historical Account from Ancient Greece to the Modern Era', *Anatomy & Cell Biology*, 48.3 (2015), 153-169.
[71] H.T. Engelhardt Jr., *The Foundations of Bioethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 176-184; Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic,* trans. by A. M. Sheridan Smith, (New York: Vintage, 1975), pp. 124-148.
[72] Charles E. Rosenberg, 'The Tyranny of Diagnosis: Specific Entities and Individual Experience', *The Milbank Quarterly*, 80.2 (2002), 237-260.
[73] 'Introduction', *Sociology of Diagnosis*, ed. by P.J. McGann and David Hutson (Bingley: Emerald, 2012), p. xv.

> the source of her peculiarities, the centre of her sympathies, and the seat of her diseases. Everything that is peculiar to her, springs from her sexual organization.[74]

Pregnancy was thought to be an especially fraught time for women as 'there is no organ in the body, with the exception of the stomach, that exercises a more extensive control over the female system than the womb'.[75] Aside from the dangers of childbirth, there were nine morbid conditions associated with pregnancy, extending from headaches to full blown mania. Pregnancy took on more of a pathological frame as midwifery, traditionally the competence of women, was, by the end of the seventeenth century, firmly relegated to the purview of men.[76] The net result was that the previous appeal to feeling and experience, the proper field of authority of women, was displaced by the male midwife who, with his forceps and manual technique, relegated the female patient to the 'status of silent object, composed of dismembered parts'.[77]

By the late eighteenth century, the idea of the womb exercising its malevolent effects had shifted to the potency of the ovaries and their connections with the nervous system. The formulation of the theory of 'nerves' by Thomas Willis (1622-1675) and Thomas Sydhenham (1624-1689) resulted in a gendered reading of the medical view of the female body.[78] Thomas Trotter, author of the most comprehensive treatise on nerves in the early nineteenth century, *A View of the Nervous Temperament* (1803), argues as follows:

> The female constitution, therefore, furnished by nature with peculiar delicacy and feeling, soft in its muscle fibre, and easily acted upon by stimuli, has all its native tenderness increased by artificial refinements. Hence the diseases of which we now treat, are in a manner the inheritance of the fair sex.[79]

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[74] Cited in Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct,* p. 183.
[75] Thomas Bull, *Hints to Mothers for the Management of Health during the Period of Pregnancy etc*., (1837) cited in Anne Digby, 'Women's Biological Straitjacket', in *Sexuality and Subordination: Interdisciplinary Studies of Gender in the Nineteenth Century* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 192-220 (p. 199).
[76] Historians have ascribed this to 'fashion and forceps', Sheena Sommers, 'Transcending the Sexed Body: Reason, Sympathy and "Thinking Machines" in the Debates over Male Midwifery', in *The Female Body in Medicine and Literature*, ed. by Andrew Mangham and Greta Depledge (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), pp. 89-106 (p. 90). For women to have a male midwife was a status indicator, as male midwives were more expensive than female midwives. The forceps, invented in the 1730s, revolutionised obstetrics, in that if a difficult birth occurred both mother and child could be saved. Previously men had been only called in to deliver a dead child, but with the forceps, which as an instrument were the province of men, the female midwife was displaced. Lisa Forman Cody has demonstrated that the displacement of female midwifes by the professional male midwife was a response to social and political pressure rather than out of clinical necessity. Lisa Forman Cody, *Birthing the Nation: Sex, Science, and the Conception of Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 197. See also, Carolyn D. Williams, '"Difficulties, at present in no Degree clear'd up": The Controversial Mother, 1600-1800', in *The Female Body in Medicine and Literature*, pp. 16-33 (p. 26).
[77] Sommers, 'Transcending the Sexed Body', p. 100. See also Eve Keller, 'The Subject of Touch: Medical Authority in Early Modern Midwifery', in *Sensible Flesh: On Touch in Early Modern Culture*, ed. by Elizabeth D. Harvey (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), pp. 62-80.
[78] Jose M. López Piñero, *Historical Origins of the Concept of Neurosis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 2-11.
[79] William Trotter, *A View of the Nervous Temperament being a Practical Inquiry into the Increasing Prevalence, Prevention, and Treatment of Those Diseases Commonly Called Nervous, Bilious, Stomach & Liver*

The narrative shifted to the presumption of an inherent illness or weakness of the female body. It explained every aspect of her body and nature. Woman's excellence, her sign of virtue, was re-imagined in her delicate and precarious state of health. What determined her health, indeed what marked her entire life, was her reproductive function. While the old superstitions of the 'taint' of menstruation in women fell away in the seventeenth century, and were by the eighteenth century roundly dismissed, from being a pollutant, menstruation became a pathology. 'In the rhetoric of scientific objectivity, gynaecological narratives defined menstruation as a recurrent illness, a persistent drain on the physical and mental energies of women and a handicap to female claims to equality.'[80] Menstruation for the first time in medical history, was seen as a morbid circumstance, one that impinged negatively on a woman's life.

Because of her nature, subject as it was to the vagaries of menarche, childbirth and menopause, women were argued to be unsuited to public pursuits. According to Anne Digby, in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, menstruation was thought to increase 'liability to all forms of explosive nerve disease, a period that coincided with the debates on women's suitability for education and training.'[81] The trauma caused by the menstrual cycle meant that for the best part of women's lives, they were at the mercy of their bodies and thus could not be expected to do anything outside the traditional domestic space. Dr William Tyler identified the events of puberty and menopause as the 'advent' and 'decline' of femininity.[82] Such was the influence of a woman's menstrual cycle that it affected how she thought, her reproductive efficiency compromised in the pursuit of intellectual endeavour as, 'in intellectual labour, man has surpassed, does now and always will surpass woman, for the obvious reason that nature does not periodically interrupt his thought and application'.[83]

Double bound by both intellect and physiology, women were perceived to be inferior to men. The medical community was steadfast in its assertion that woman could not escape her body. Everything about a woman marked her as inferior, her skeleton, tissues, nerves and organs 'marked by the differences that display the function to which woman is called and the passive state to which nature destines her.'[84] She 'labours under an inferiority of constitution by a dispensation which there is no gainsaying […] This is not the expression of prejudice nor of false sentiment; it is a plain statement of

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Complaints, Indigestion, Low Spirits, Gout, &c. (Troy, NY: Wright, Goodenow, & Stockwell, 1808), cited in Erin Wilson, 'The End of Sensibility: The Nervous Body in the Early Nineteenth Century', *Literature and Medicine*, 30.2 (2012), 276-291 (p. 277).

[80] Julie-Marie Strange, 'Menstrual Fictions: Languages of Medicine and Menstruation, *c.* 1850-1930', *Women's History Review*, 9.3 (2000), 607-628 (p. 607). Elaine Showalter and English Showalter, 'Victorian Women and Menstruation', *Victorian Studies*, 14.1 (1970), 83-89.

[81] Digby, 'Women's Biological Straitjacket', p. 198.

[82] William Tyler Smith, *Lancet,* 4 June 1856. Cited in Strange, 'Menstrual Fictions', p. 611.

[83] James McGrigor Allan, *Anthropological View*, 7 (1869), cxcviii-cxcvix, cited in Showalter, 'Victorian Women and Menstruation', p. 85.

[84] Pierre Roussel, *Systeme physique et morale de la femme* (1775), p. 1809, cited in Lorraine Daston, 'The Naturalized Female Intellect', p. 208.

a physiological fact.'[85] Moreover, such attempts by women to exit the domestic sphere threatened the very fabric of society. Edward Clarke of Harvard College argued in his influential *Sex in Education* (1873) that education was destroying the reproductive faculties of American women.[86] Henry Maudsley in England used Clarke's arguments to assert that women could never hope to match men in the professional sphere and nor should they, as 'women are marked out by nature for different offices in life from those of men, and that the healthy performance of her special functions renders it improbable that she will succeed and unwise for her to persevere, in running over the same course at the same pace with him.'[87] Further, as well as impeding logical thought, a woman's biology could leave her prey to bouts of insanity and generally erratic behaviour. In the nineteenth century, two areas of rapid expansion in female medicine were gynaecology and neurology, and it was assumed that there was a connection between the two, as was noted in the *Dictionary of Psychological Medicine* published in 1892:

> The correlation of the sexual functions and nervous phenomena in the female are too common and too striking not to have attracted attention at all times; but it may confidently be affirmed, that it is only within quite recent years that we have had adequate knowledge to enable us to discuss the problems arising out of these relations with scientific precision.[88]

The 'virile women' of the past were regarded with a jaundiced eye, as woman's body dictated what woman's role and self ought to be. To deny her nature was an aberration, not a source of wonder. '[N]ineteenth-century naturalizers barred the moral from the natural, made the body the causal substratum of character and intellect, and opposed obdurate nature to pliable nurture.'[89] This reading of the female body as essentially passive and fecund engendered ascetic behaviour which both resisted and highly exaggerated these tropes, hysteria and chlorosis.

3.5. Asceticism III: The Hysteric and Chlorotic

The socially imposed docility of women, it is speculated, caused constraint that resulted in a new form of heroic, if not holy, feats of illness. Diane Purkiss has argued for the continuation of the feature of illness as a means of exhibiting piety in her study of female prophets of the seventeenth century, as has Anne Lear in her examination of the autobiographical writing of the seventeenth century

[85] Andrew T. Scull, *Hysteria: The Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), n. 25, p.100.
[86] Edward H. Clarke, *Sex in Education; or, A Fair Chance for the Girls* (Boston, MA: James B. Osgood and Company, 1873).
[87] Henry Maudsley, 'Sex in Mind and Education', *Fortnightly Review*, 21 (1874), p. 468, cited in Showalter, 'Victorian Women and Menstruation', p. 87.
[88] *The Dictionary of Psychological Medicine* (1892), 1:234, cited in Digby, 'Women's Biological Straitjacket', p. 192.
[89] Lorraine Daston, 'The Naturalized Female Intellect', p. 226.

Englishwoman, Alice Thornton.[90] However, whereas before illness could be construed as a positive experience, having a performative worth and religious meaning, it was now evidence of the reality of the female body's biological inferiority.

Fasting women, previously celebrated for their prodigious feats, were recast as pathological. The various iterations of fasting behaviour varied widely in the early modern period. In the fifteenth century, bewitchment and demonic possession were thought to be the source for self-starvation. From the sixteenth century onward, in line with the increasingly objective view of nature and scepticism toward the divine, fasting became increasingly alienated from its traditionally religious background and sharply declined throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as, 'for many religiously inspired women, excessive fasting and self-castigation in general had lost its significance, as it was gradually superseded by tireless charity, teaching and care'.[91]

By and large, the accounts of fasting in the early modern period were religious and encompassed theological themes in that they always testified to the divine providence of God, but they were not *doctrinal* in that they made little distinction between Protestant and Catholic doctrine.[92] Post-reformation, the majority of fasting women were Roman Catholic. There were cases of Protestant fasters, but they tended to be rare and existed in countries where the Catholic tradition was strong.[93] The exceptional women of earlier history, the virile virgins and feeding fasters of the Patristic and medieval periods, were no more. Several factors contributed to the decline of miraculous fasting. In the case of the Protestant church, there was a strong suspicion of miracles as examples of sorcery and superstition.

> Reformed thinkers shifted the value of the body in such a way as to make it a lesser instrument of salvation than, in their view, had been advocated by the Roman church hierarchy. Rather than renounce older traditions of mortification, they reshaped doctrines of fleshly denunciation for different ends. Hence practices such as fasting had also to be reconfigured and depicted anew, not as acts that took precedence over other spiritual devotions but as their mild or subtle accompaniment.[94]

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[90] Diane Purkiss, 'Producing the Voice, Consuming the Body: Women Prophets of the Seventeenth Century', in *Women, Writing, History:1640-1740* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1992); Anne Lear, 'Thank God for Haemorrhoids! Illness and Identity in a Seventeenth-Century Woman's Autobiography', *Women's Writing*, 12.3 (2005), 337-346. Lear demonstrates how Thornton presents her Christian virtue as linked to how well she coped with her many illnesses.

[91] Walter Vandereycken and Ron van Deth, *From Fasting Saints to Anorexic Girls* (Washington Square, NY: New York University Press, 1996), p. 31.

[92] Brumberg, *Fasting Girls*, p. 50.

[93] Brumberg, *Fasting Girls,* p. 49, n. 10, p. 295. For example, two of the famed late 16th-early 17th century accounts of protestant fasting, Eva Fliegen and Apollonia Schreier, show the ambiguity with which they were perceived. Whereas Fliegen's fasting was seen as 'miraculous' in that it was represented in a popular ballad as the triumph of virtue over sensual desires (she was said to exist for 17 years on the scent of flowers), Apollonia Schreier's fasting was seen as being partly due to melancholia. See Caterina Albano, 'Questioning Salvation', *Women's Writing,* 8.2 (2001), 313-326

[94] R. Marie Griffith, *Born Again Bodies: Flesh and Spirit in American Christianity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004), p. 28.

In the Roman Catholic Church, in part reacting to the aftermath of the Reformation, the criteria established to deem an occurrence of fasting miraculous were particularly stringent.[95] Did the fast originate from an illness and, if not, did the person remain in good health during the fast? Did the fast prevent the faster from performing 'other good works'? Whereas for the fasting women of the Middle Ages and the Patristic period, the fasting practices were but one aspect of their piety, now '[l]ife without food was the miracle at the heart of the story.'[96]

Fasting women and women who defied nature in their bodies were more likely to be viewed with suspicion rather than reverence, their fasting attributed to physiological causes, as symptomatic of a digestive disorder, chlorosis or hysteria. Extravagant fasts might be possible but could be attributed not so much to supernatural as to natural causes such as nutritive particles in the air and body fat functioning as an energy reserve.[97] Women who subsisted on no or little food were subsumed under the new rubric of the hysteric and the chlorotic, their fasting cast as a by-product of their reproductively disordered bodies.

3.5.1. Hysteria

Hysteria, memorably described by Helen King as 'a parasite in search of a history', is perhaps one of the most puzzling of all medical phenomena.[98] Almost endemic at the end of the nineteenth century, it fell off the face of diagnostic medicine a mere few decades later.[99] Hysteria was a protean pathological condition defined latterly as, 'an affliction of the mind that was expressed through the disturbance of the body'.[100] Since ancient times it was understood to be a somatic reality caused by a disturbance of the womb.[101] As the neurologist Thomas Willis (1621-1675) declared:

> when at any time, a sickness happens in a woman's body, of an unusual manner, or more occult original, so that its Cause lyes hid, and the Curatory Indication is

[95] Brumberg, *Fasting Girls,* p. 49.
[96] Brumberg, *Fasting Girls*, p. 50.
[97] Vandereycken and van Deth, *From Fasting Saints*, p. 31.
[98] Helen King, 'Once Upon a Text: Hysteria from Hippocrates', in *Hysteria Beyond Freud,* Sander L. Gilman and others (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 3-90, (p. 64).
[99] Ilza Veith, the first English language biographer of hysteria, contends that hysteria is an objective disease that has been known to doctors in both east and west from as early as 1800 BC, although it was the Greeks who gave it its name. Ilza Veith, *Hysteria: The History of a Disease* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965). Veith wrote from a Freudian perspective. As the standard biography, her work has been critiqued, especially by Harold Merskey, 'Hysteria: The History of a Disease: Ilza Veith', *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 147 (1985), 576-579. Mark S. Micale, 'Hysteria and its Historiography: A Review of Past and Present Writings (I)', *History of Science*, 27.3 (1989), 223-261.
[100] Phillip R. Slavney, *Perspectives on 'Hysteria'* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), pp. 1–2, quoted in Elaine Showalter, *Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 14.
[101] Slavney, *Perspectives,* pp. 1-2. Helen King has demonstrated that despite popular belief, hysteria was not diagnosed as a discrete condition by Hippocrates. King, 'Once Upon a Text, pp. 3-90.

> altogether uncertain, presently we accuse the evill influence of the womb[…]and in every unusual Symptom, we declare it to be something hysterical.[102]

William Harvey (1578 – 1657), the doctor renowned for his discovery of the circulation of the blood, described the uterus as 'a most important organ' which 'brings the whole body to sympathize with it' Should the uterus be displaced 'mental aberrations, the delirium, the melancholy, the paroxysms of frenzy' would arise.[103] Symptoms could include inability to speak or see, inability to swallow, paralysis in the limbs, unexplained swellings of the abdomen and throat, a feeling of strangulation or suffocation, breathlessness or disturbance in breathing pattern, loss of sensation and reflex action. The hysteric's body would contort and writhe or go into paroxysms, the face might assume a rictus or grimace, and hysterics could speak with strange vocal tics.

By the late seventeenth century, emphasis had shifted from the displaced uterus to a neurological cause thanks in large part to the work of Thomas Willis and Thomas Sydenham (1624–1689). The neurological cause was linked to the inferior nature of women. Willis wrote,

> [W]hen at any time a sickness happens in a Woman's Body, of an unusual manner, or more occult original, so that its causes lie hid, and a Curatory indication is altogether uncertain […] we declare it to be something hysterical […] which oftentimes is only the subterfuge of ignorance.[104]

In theory, linking hysteria to the nervous system meant that hysteria could be found in men. Yet such a concept appeared to be inherently distasteful. Men had other conditions, symptomatically similar to hysteria, only labelled differently, and more reflective of whatever particular anxiety was convulsing society. Indeed, the so-called 'nervous diseases' were diseases of civilization, reactions engendered by living in the modern period. This was also the first time in medical history where, to a certain extent, the disorder was not so construed by the morality of the individual: diseases happened *to* rather than arose *from* an individual and stemmed from an outside cause. In the sixteenth century it was melancholia, dubbed the 'English disease', that affected men generally during the Renaissance, and was thought to be a result of the fast-paced life and unbridled luxury, the inevitable result of living in such an advanced society as England.[105] In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries this shifted to

[102] Thomas Willis, cited in Scull, *Hysteria*, p. 30.
[103] William Harvey (1651), cited in Scull, *Hysteria*, p. 31.
[104] Cited in Roy Porter 'The Body and the Mind, the Doctor and the Patient', in *Hysteria Beyond Freud,* pp. 225-344, (p. 241).
[105] The leading authority on nervous diseases was Robert Cheyne whose *The English Malady* (1733) was hugely popular and ran to many different editions. Early modern melancholy was a complicated phenomenon, a catch-all for various types of ailments, but predicated mainly on two conceptions: humoral theory, which was dependent on Galenic theory whereby melancholia was pitted as a physiological disorder, caused by the thickening and corruption of black bile which caused the symptoms of melancholia such as deluded behaviour and depression. The second conception of melancholia was far more romantic, a condition which was identified with intellectual and thoughtful behaviour, it became something of a fashionable affliction in the early modern period. For a review of the literary historiography of melancholia, Somogy Varga, 'From Melancholia to Depression: Ideas on a Possible Continuity', *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology*, 20.2 (2013), 141-155.

what was termed 'hypochondriasis', which again afflicted those who were considered more superior, more delicate. Gradually that condition became parodied – as in Jane Austen's character of Mr Wodehouse in her 1815 novel *Emma* – and the chimera shifted again, re-emerging this time in America in the late nineteenth century where men were diagnosed with neurasthenia. Its final iteration was during World War I in its metamorphosis to 'shellshock'–so named as it was thought to be caused by close proximity to exploding bombs–and by the time of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), obsessional neurosis.

Women's corresponding distress, however, oftentimes encompassing the same manifestations, was consistently named 'hysteria', implying that her distress was intimately tied to her being a woman, and indeed men who were diagnosed as hysteric were commonly called womanish.[106] Moreover, men suffered from hysteria in much smaller numbers and until Freud, who maintained that all hysteria stemmed from trauma, the causes were gendered. Hysterical women suffered from an excess of 'feminine' behaviours, hysterical men from an excess of masculine behaviours.'[107] As Susan Bordo has written, hysteria was almost a caricature of the ideal femininity of the day, characterised by 'delicacy and dreaminess, sexual passivity, and a charmingly labile and capricious emotionality'.[108] Jean-Martin Charcot (1825 –1893), the leading expert on hysteria, believed that women suffered due to their emotional natures or an inability to control their emotions, whereas male hysteria stemmed from 'working, drinking and fornicating too much'.[109]

Symptomatically, hysteria was unplottable, a feature, according to the Victorian physician Edward Tilt (1815–1893), which was in accordance with its association with women. 'Mutability is characteristic of hysteria because it is characteristic of women.'[110] Hysteria was a puzzle 'in the era

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Melancholia has also been linked to Protestantism, particularly in light of the problems of predestination posed: was one elected or damned? Angus Gowland, 'The Problem of Early Modern Melancholy', *Past & Present*, 191.1 (2006), 77-120. Timothie Bright's (1550?-1615) *Treatise of Melancholie* (1586) identifies a type of melancholia without an apparent cause that is associated salvation panic, where the sufferer is oppressed with an overwhelming sense of sin, living in fear of God's wrath and eternal damnation. See also, John Stachniewski, *The Persecutory Imagination: English Puritanism and the Literature of Religious Despair* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

[106] Cited in Porter, 'The Body and the Mind', p. 245.

[107] Mark S. Micale, 'Charcot and the Idea of Hysteria in the Male: Gender, Mental Science, and Medical Diagnosis in late Nineteenth-Century France', *Medical History*, 34.04 (1990), 363-411 (p. 366). See also Micale, 'Hysteria Male/Hysteria Female: Reflections on Comparative Gender Construction in Nineteenth-Century France and Britain', in *Science and Sensibility: Gender and Scientific Enquiry, 1780-194,* ed. by Mariana Benjamin (London: Basil Blackwell, 1991), pp. 200-239.

[108] Susan Bordo, 'The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity: A Feminist Appropriation of Foucault', in *Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing*, ed. by Susan Bordo and Alison Jaggar (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989), pp. 13-33 (p. 16).

[109]Charcot, 'A propos de six cas d'hysterie chez l'homme', in *Charcot: L'Hysterie*, ed. by E. Trillat (Toulouse: Privat, 1971), p. 156, cited in Elaine Showalter, 'Hysteria, Feminism and Gender', in *Hysteria Beyond Freud*, p. 309. See also Micale, 'Charcot and the Idea of Hysteria in the Male', p. 366.

[110] Edward Tilt, *A Handbook of Uterine Therapeutics and of Diseases of Women* (1881), cited in Showalter, 'Hysteria, Feminism and Gender', p. 286.

without demons and before Freud's unconscious, hysteria fell into a theoretical vacuum.'[111] It was a catch-all and irritatingly diffuse disorder until the nineteenth century when Charcot identified four stages of a hysterical attack: The first stage, the epileptoid phase of tonic and clonic seizures, was preceded by an aura, or prodrome, which mimicked the seizures found in epilepsy. The second stage was the phase of *grand movements*, which simulated the contortions and acrobatics of circus performers. The third stage was called the '*attitudes passionnelles'*, or 'passionate poses', during which the hysteric acted out emotional states such as terror, ecstasy, and 'amorous supplication'. The fourth and final stage of the hysterical attack was delirium.[112]

While hysteria was thought to be a disease with a somatic base–Charcot posited the existence of lesions which would show hysteria's underlying cause–there was always the suspicion that women were in some sense 'faking it'. The fits, shakes and above all the propensity of women to only suffer hysterical attacks in public were seen as cries for attention.[113] Accounts reach us of men speculating that women styled their hair so as to prevent injuring themselves when they had a hysteric episode.[114] There was also the charge levelled against Charcot shortly after his death that he 'invented' hysteria with his public demonstrations of the hysterics at Salpêtrière Hospital through the use of hypnosis and a device called an 'ovary compressor,' which applied pressure to the patient's abdomen to trigger or arrest hysterical episodes.[115]

Treatment for hysteria varied widely, ranging from the infantile to the drastic. At one end of the spectrum was the famous cure of the Philadelphia society doctor Silas Weir Mitchell (1829-1914), which involved confining women to bed rest with a diet of heavy bland food with the expressed aim of weight gain, a theory based as he put it 'on moral and physical components'.[116] The patient was also strictly enjoined to not engage in any intellectual work.[117] At the more extreme end,

[111] Hustvedt, *Medical Muses*, pp. 5-6.
[112] Hustvedt, *Medical Muses,* pp. 21-22.
[113] Porter, 'The Body and the Mind', pp. 264-265.
[114] Robert Brudenell Carter (1828-1918) was the first to explicitly link hysteria with the suppression of sexual desire, Carter, *On the Pathology and Treatment of Hysteria* (1853). See Porter, 'The Body and the Mind', p. 262.
[115] Georges Didi-Huberman and Alisa Hartz, *Invention of Hysteria: Charcot and the Photographic Iconography of the Salpêtrière* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003).
[116] Silas Weir Mitchell set out his rest cure in *Fat and Blood: An Essay on the Treatment of Certain Forms of Neurathenia and Hysteria* (Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott, 1899). The title reflected his experience that women with hysteria were often thin and anaemic. In addition to rest he insisted on removing the patient from their environment, asking them to write their life history, and using exercise, electrical stimulation, and diet.
[117]The feminist Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860-1935) wrote an infamous fictionalised account of her own 'rest cure', as proscribed by Mitchell in *The Yellow Wallpaper* and sent him a copy of it. His reaction is not known. 'The Yellow Wallpaper', in *The Essential Feminist Reader,* ed. and with an intr. by Estelle B. Freedman (New York: Random House, 2007), pp. 128-144. Other notable women who were prescribed the rest cure, be it for neurasthenia or hysteria, were Virginia Woolf and Edith Wharton. See Suzanne Poirer, 'The Weir Mitchell Rest Cure: Doctors and Patients', *Women's Studies*, 10 (1983), 15-40.

hysterectomies, oophorectomies and clitoridectomies were recommended, and expressly sought by women themselves.[118] Latterly, of course, Freud employed the 'talking cure'.[119]

With the utter faith in the new forms of medicine and the advance of science, previous aberrant behaviour in women, such as mystic and ecstatic trances which had been ascribed to saintliness, was retrospectively diagnosed as hysterical.[120] Thus as Asti Hustvedt has shown, in her study of the famous 'muse' hysteric of the Salpêtrière, Genevieve, female sexuality and religious fervour were believed by the medical profession to create a breeding ground for hysteria.[121] Marriage and family, rather than the convent, they argued, was the environment to contain female sexuality. Désiré-Magloire Bourneville (1840 –1909) the anticlerical student of Charcot and the individual responsible

[118] Jeffrey M. Masson, *A Dark Science: Women Sexuality and Psychiatry in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1986). Andrew Scull and Diane Favreu, 'The Clitoridectomy Craze', *Social Research*, 53 (1986), 243-260. See also Roy Porter 'The Body and the Mind', n.159, p. 282. Isaac Baker Brown (1812-1873) considered in the English-speaking Western world to be the 'inventor of the medical clitoridectomy', theorized that most of women's diseases were caused by 'over-excitement of the nervous system' and, more specifically, by the 'particularly powerful' pudic nerve that runs into the clitoris. He argued that when women stimulate the pudic nerve through masturbation, their health is placed under extreme duress, resulting in an eight-stage progressive disease, hysteria is followed by spinal irritation, which develops into hysterical epilepsy and then into cataleptic fits (or trance-like fits). Idiocy (or madness) follows, which progresses to mania (or obsession), and finally, to the final stage of the disease, death. Martha Coventry, 'Making the Cut', *Ms. Magazine*, Oct. (2000), 52-57 (p. 54). As Scull has indicated, general distaste for anything discussing masturbation, and Baker Brown's publishing his work in the popular press, rather than in the academy, caused the clitoridectomy to fall from favour rather than any concern about mutilation of female genitalia in general. The next treatment, in line with the posited connection between womb, ovaries and brain, was 'normal ovariotomy' where it was posited that by inducing an early menopause could both solve and prevent hysteria and various other female illnesses. Andrew Scull writes that 'once the operation became widely known, doctors reported that they were besieged by women begging for the treatment.' As Scull points out 'ovariotomies at the very least served to end the endless cycle of pregnancies and parturition that was the lot of many Victorian women, a secondary gain some of the patients may deliberately have sought.' Scull, *Hysteria,* p. 90.

[119] Freud's approach to hysteria was that the illness was traceable to an actual but forgotten occurrence, in most cases to an emotional or mental trauma, the circumstances of the forgotten occurrence being in most cases discoverable in hypnosis, whereby 'each individual hysterical symptom immediately and permanently disappeared when we had succeeded in bringing clearly to light the memory of the event by which it was provoked and in arousing its accompanying affect, and when the patient had described that event in the greatest possible details and had put the affect into words'. Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud, *Studies on Hysteria,* trans. and ed. by James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 1957), p. 255. Properly put, it was actually Breuer who first employed the 'talking cure' with Anna O. (1859-1936). The phrase 'talking cure' was invented by Anna O. herself (Scull, *Hysteria*, p. 136). Infamously the claim Anna O was 'cured' was debunked–it was a full ten years after her treatment that she recovered. While the reputation of psychoanalysis began to decline from the late sixties with critiques especially from feminist writers such as Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Norton, 1983) and Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1970) who had built upon the work of Simone de Beauvoir¸ *The Second Sex* (1948), it was not until the early 1990s that the backlash against Freud began in earnest. Two of the best-known critiques of Freud are Richard Webster, *Why Freud was Wrong: Sin, Science and Psychoanalysis* (Southwold: Orwell Press, 1995); Frederick C. Crews, *Unauthorized Freud: Doubters Confront a Legend* (London: Penguin, 2000).

[120] This was an especially strong trope in France and was linked in part to the anti-clerical agenda of the French Republic and the tendency of psychiatry in France to associate itself with the state. Jan Goldstein, 'The Hysteria Diagnosis and the Politics of Anticlericalism in Late Nineteenth-Century France', *The Journal of Modern History*, 54.2 (1982), 209-239.

[121] Hustvedt*, Medical Muses*, pp. 213-300.

for the laicisation of the nursing profession, wrote of a hysteric who was released from the Salpêtrière, 'married, had children and never suffered another attack'.[122]

Two popular explanations for the hysteria contagion are (i) hysteria as a consequence of both repressed sexuality and the constrained role of women in society; and (ii) hysteria as a non-verbal expression of distress through the body, a kind of psychological illiteracy.[123] However, both these theories are not without their difficulties. As Mark Micale points out, if sexual repression or psychological illiteracy are at the root of hysteria, one would expect that hysteria would continue as a phenomenon until much later in the twentieth century, when sexual liberation came to the fore.[124] Instead, hysteria declined rapidly from its heyday in the last third of the nineteenth century so that its demise was effectively complete by World War I.[125]

The decline of hysteria, Micale has suggested, has to do with the difference in diagnostic techniques and nosology rather than spontaneous disappearance: '[a] drastic redefinition of the concept is what has created the illusion that the pathological entity has itself disappeared'.[126] Thus, conditions that would previously have been diagnosed as hysteria were, with the advance of medical techniques, found to have an entirely different cause, such as epilepsy.[127] Edward Shorter argues that symptoms such as hysterical paralysis, which were common in the nineteenth century, have now given way to more elusive symptoms such as fatigue.[128] There is also the history of the evolution of psychiatry, what previously might have been diagnosed as hysteria would disappear into a sub-classification of an anxiety disorder. Conversion disorder could similarly have absorbed the hysteria diagnosis. As defined in the current version of the DSM-V, conversion disorder is characterised by 'one or more symptoms of altered voluntary motor or sensory function… not better explained by another medical or mental disorder. The symptom or deficit causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning or warrants medical evaluation.'[129] Indeed, one could argue that there has been a gradual somatisation of every experience. Paul Chodoff lamented the burgeoning and proliferation of new diseases and psychiatry, the 'offering a name and number for every untoward feeling or behavior in a way that trivializes the human condition by

[122] *Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière*, vol. 1, n. 1, p. 107, cited in Hustvedt, p. 148.
[123] The psychological literacy theory was first promulgated by Paul Chodoff, 'A Re-Examination of some Aspects of Conversion Hysteria', *Psychiatry*, 17.1 (1954), 75-81. See Mark S. Micale, 'On the "Disappearance" of Hysteria: A Study in the Clinical Deconstruction of a Diagnosis', *Isis*, 84.3 (1993), 496-526 (n.8, p. 500).
[124] Micale, 'On the "Disappearance" of Hysteria', pp. 498-500.
[125] Micale, 'On the "Disappearance" of Hysteria', p. 501.
[126] Micale, 'On the "Disappearance" of Hysteria', p. 502.
[127] Owsei Temkin, *The Falling Sickness: A History of Epilepsy from the Greeks to the Beginnings of Modern Neurology* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), pp. 351-359.
[128] Edward Shorter, *From Paralysis to Fatigue: A History of Psychosomatic Medicine in the Modern Era* (New York: Free Press, 2014).
[129] American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-5*, 5th edn (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 2013), (hereinafter 'DSM-V'), pp. 318-325.

denying its inescapable, somber, and even tragic elements.'[130] Hysteria, the great rubric under which anything to do with women could be heaped, was cast adrift. Its sister disorder, chlorosis, would soon follow.

3.5.2. Chlorosis

Chlorosis, the 'disease of virgins' was a condition involving 'lack of menstruation, dietary disturbances, altered skin colour and general weakness once thought to affect, almost exclusively, young girls at puberty'.[131] It was variously known from the sixteenth century as 'green sickness' (whether due to the youth of the sufferer or the colour that the skin turned is not clear) and as chlorosis from the seventeenth century.[132] The first clinical description of chlorosis was in 1554 by Johannes Lange, a writer familiar with the medical debates of the day.[133] Symptoms include paleness, difficulty breathing, dietary upset and swelling. Lange's patient, Anna, 'has an attack of dyspnoea when dancing or climbing stairs; her stomach turns away from food, above all from meat; her legs – especially near the ankles – swell at night.' Lange, far from describing this as a new condition, diagnoses Anna as suffering from a condition that had been present since Hippocrates, as found in his 'diseases of virgins.'[134] This condition is, according to Hippocrates, a very real possibility for girls who do not marry despite being 'ripe for marriage'. An excess of blood builds up, and because 'the mouth of the exit' is closed, is forced upwards through the body, becoming stuck at the heart and diaphragm putting pressure on the heart which in Greek medicine was thought to be the seat of consciousness. This, in turn, causes mental disturbances, such as seeing ghosts and can sometimes result in suicide by drowning. The recommended therapy is marriage.

Patient Anna's symptoms were not a perfect fit for Hippocrates' description of the disease but, as Helen King has demonstrated, Lange read the text through a Galenic lens and thus made the symptoms 'fit'. Anna's swollen ankles were clearly a result of the build-up of blood, as was her lack of appetite. The strangulation criterion he interprets as the sensation of being strangled, i.e. breathlessness. Three treatments are proffered: bloodletting, marriage, and emmenagogue drugs.

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[130] Paul Chodoff, 'Psychiatric Diagnosis: A 60-Year Perspective', *Psychiatric News*, 40.11 (2005), 17-17 (p. 17). See also Chodoff, 'A Re-Examination of Some Aspects of Conversion Hysteria'.
[131] Helen King, *The Disease of Virgins: Green Sickness, Chlorosis and the Problems of Puberty* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 1.
[132] King also discusses the etymology of the disorder in her earlier article Helen King, 'Green Sickness: Hippocrates, Galen and the Origins of the "Disease of Virgins"', *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, 2.3 (1996), 372-387.
[133] Johannes Lange, *Epistulae medicinales* (1554). Johannes Lange was born in 1485 in Lowenberg in Silesia and educated in the universities Leipig, Ferrara and Pisa. There does not appear to be any biographical sources on Lange available in English, but a number in German. See King, 'Green Sickness', n. 32, pp. 376-377.
[134] Helen King examines how Lange identified this disease as being the same as that described by Hippocrates. See her review of the transmission of the Hippocratic text, King, *The Disease of Virgins*, pp. 41-63.

Loudon, in his influential 1981 paper, 'Chlorosis, Anaemia, and Anorexia Nervosa', identified four phases in the history of chlorosis (i) the first, up to 1750, identified the condition as a 'disease of virgins,' a disorder due to 'unrequited love'; (ii) the second, from 1750 to 1850, held chlorosis to be a uterine disorder or a disorder of menstruation characterised by amenorrhoea; (iii) third, from 1850 to 1900, an anaemia particular to young girls; and (iv) in its final phase up to the 1920s which marked its general decline, a period which Loudon calls the 'Cheshire Cat' phase.[135] In its early and middle stages chlorosis was thought to be restricted to the affluent classes, caused by young girls' cossetted sensitive natures. Yet, from the mid-nineteenth century, chlorosis was believed to be a disease typical of servants, caused by poor nutrition and the absence of fresh air and sunlight. Cases still occurred amongst the affluent in this period and were attributed to young women's sedentary lives. As Loudon remarks, 'the evidence from all the sources is remarkably consistent: chlorosis occurred in puberty and adolescence and it was common among the daughters of rich and the poor'.[136]

Despite Sydenham's recommendation in the seventeenth century that the condition be treated with iron supplements, thus giving it a medical basis not grounded in a woman's reproductive system, chlorosis was classified among the hysterical diseases. By the end of the nineteenth century, the incidence of chlorosis apparently increased. Despite the disease being focussed on in medical literature, its true nature remained elusive. By 1890, it was generally accepted that 'there are two great and causative factors in chlorosis, namely blood loss and an insufficient supply of iron in the diet'.[137] Loudon explains this shift to anaemia as being partly due to the social climate of the day: 'firstly, it fitted with the new era of scientific laboratory medicine; secondly, it absolved doctors from embarrassing and suggestive inquiries into the menstrual state and sexual aspirations of their female patients at a particular delicate and modest stage of their lives'.[138]

Dealing as it does with the reproductive functions, it has obvious parallels with hysteria, but as King points out, in the sixteenth century Mercado carefully distinguished between the two: hysteria was caused by disturbance within the womb, chlorosis by disturbance outside the womb.[139] This shifted, however, as the causation models of the body changed. In the nineteenth century a woman could suffer simultaneiously from chlorosis and hysteria, in the early twentieth century hysteria was a symptom of chlorosis.[140] Perhaps more pertinently, there was a difference in how the two conditions were thought to be characterised: 'in contrast to the hysterical woman, who is often presented as difficult and manipulative, with the label "hysteria" being "a sneer or an insult", the pubertal sufferer

[135] I.S. Loudon, 'Chlorosis, Anaemia, and Anorexia Nervosa', *BMJ*, 281.6256 (1980), 1669-1675, p. 1669.
[136] Loudon, p. 1671.
[137] R Stockman, 'Observations on the Causes and Treatment of Chlorosis', *BMJ*, 2 (1895) 1473-1476, cited by Loudon, p. 1672.
[138] Loudon, p. 1673.
[139] Luis Mercardo, *De mulerium affectionibus* (1579), 202-203. Cited in King, *The Disease of Virgins*, p. 26.
[140] King, *The Disease of Virgins*, p. 14.

from the disease of virgins is usually seen as the ideal patient.'[141] This was however, not always the case. Chlorosis was linked to a bewildering range of causes, unrequited love, shock and constipation.[142] It also had a moral component in that it was linked to whatever was considered to be the most deleterious to young girls, be it as King notes, too much sweet coffee or masturbation.[143] In the seventeenth-century, blame for the disease was often left firmly at the feet of the sufferer.[144]

A particular aspect of chlorosis was bizarre eating practices. As well as the aversion to meat, chlorotics exhibited finicky eating habits and, at times, engaged in pica, defined as the ingestion of inedible substances as food, such as earth, slate pencils, or tobacco stems. This was attributed by Clifford Albutt (1836-1925) to 'a panic fear of obesity'.[145] Chlororis was also seen by some as an attempt to gain an attractively pale complexion. Women who would 'fayne be fayre' ate restricted foods to 'dry the blood'.[146] Loudon has argued that chlorosis today would be properly understood as anorexia, a view that has been echoed by Margaret Humphreys who has asserted that anorexia nervosa is 'a synonym for chlorosis'.[147]

By the late nineteenth century, chlorosis was the embodiment of female virtue par excellence, and the chlorotic girl was not considered to be responsible for her condition in the way that the hysteric was. She was considered 'gentle and inoffensive', weak, innocent and beautiful. Joan Jacobs Brumberg notes the frequent allusion to the looks of chlorotic girls, who suffered, according to a leading medical authority of the day, from 'the anaemia of good-looking girls'.[148] Brumberg argues that the '[t]he medical notion of the chlorotic girl as simultaneously diseased, fertile, and attractive fit within the framework of the Victorians' sentimentalization of the sickly woman.'[149]

After World War I, the incidence of chlorosis declined, and the disease ceased to be reported in the 1930s. Its demise was noted by the physician William Fowler in a 1936 article entitled 'Chlorosis – an obituary' published in the *Annals of Medical History*.[150] A disease which was considered something that all girls could fall prey too was, by the third decade of the twentieth century, almost unheard of. Brumberg suggests that the conditions that fostered chlorosis changed. Reasons for its disappearance

[141] King, *The Disease of Virgins*, p. 7.
[142] See n.16 in King's article, 'Green Sickness', p. 375.
[143] King, 'Green Sickness', p. 375.
[144] Jean Starobinski, 'Chlorosis - The "Green Sickness"', *Psychological Medicine*, 11.3 (1981), 459-468 (p. 460).
[145] *A System of Medicine by Many Writer* (1898), cited in Loudon, p. 1672.
[146]W. Bullein, *The Government of Health* (1599), cited in King, *The Disease of Virgins*, p. 89.
[147] Margaret Humphreys, 'Chlorosis: 'The Virgin's Disease', in *Plague, Pox and Pestilence: Disease in History*, ed. by in Kenneth A. Kiple (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1997), pp. 160-165 (p. 163). Loudon, 'Chlorosis.'
[148] R.L. Tait, *The Diseases of Women* (1889), pp. 282-288, cited in Joan Jacobs Brumberg, 'Chlorotic Girls, 1870-1920: A Historical Perspective on Female Adolescence', *Child Development*, 53.6 (1982), 1468-1477 (p. 1472).
[149] Brumberg, 'Chlorotic Girls', p. 1472.
[150] William Fowler, 'Chlorosis: An Obituary', *Annals of Medical History,* 8 (1936), 168-176.

at the time were attributed to such varied factors such as change of fashions which meant that women were no longer laced into tight corsets, increased physical activity in women and improved diet, with a more favourable attitude to eating meat, which previously had been linked to nymphomania. Menstrual physiology was also finally beginning to be understood from 1903. Once the menstrual cycle was discovered to be a natural occurrence, which lasted for 28 days and routinely began again, it was difficult to adhere to the belief that adolescence was a period that made young girls susceptible to disease. The weak, pale, romantic wraith was no longer considered fashionable, and cues that would have previously encouraged a chlorotic state were no longer present. Activity over inactivity was encouraged and young girls 'replaced concern about their blood with a different set of anxieties about face and figure'.[151]

Chlorosis and hysteria were thought to be clearly classified conditions that explained the extraordinary phenomena of women's behaviour in previous eras–such as witchcraft and miraculous fasting–and peaked at a time when woman's physiology was intimately linked to her reproductive and sexual nature. Diagnoses of both chlorosis and hysteria subsided at the beginning of the twentieth century and have vanished, present only in their subset of conversion disorder, pica, and anaemia. The underlying condition intrinsic to both, being a woman, was beginning to be construed differently. The avenues that came to be of pressing concern to women at the beginning of the twentieth century–such as suffrage, financial independence, and freedom–did not ally themselves to the states of hysteria and chlorosis, conditions which fostered dependence and weakness. The ascetic impulse would emerge in a new form, as is explored in the next chapter, in the form of anorexia nervosa.

3.6. Conclusion

The female body at the beginning of the modern era was perceived in three ways. First, traditionally read as Eve, the female body was viewed as the locus of sexual activity and therefore sexual temptation; second, it only had social value in performing the function of reproduction and child-raising; and third, as we saw in the last chapter, possessed a certain malleability and weakness that made it vulnerable to seduction by the Devil and evil spirits. The Garden of Eden, a rather dystopian version, was where woman's lot lay. By the end of the modern period, the female body was constrained to the domestic and private spheres, stripped of desire and rendered into something that was prone to sickness and firmly in the control of male authority.

[151] Brumberg, 'Chlorotic Girls', p. 1476.

The secular turn as an event has been identified in feminist discourse as the first opportunity for women to unshackle themselves from the patriarchy.[152] Yet whether the beginning of the decline of religious influence is to be uncritically celebrated as the flashpoint for female emancipation is doubtful. As Joan Kelly argues:

> With its renascent ideas of civic virtue, humanism was far more narrow in its views of women than traditional Christian culture. The religious conception of women, although misogynist in its own way, did regard women as equally capable of the highest states men could attain: salvation and sainthood. Classical republican thought, rooted in a society that confined women to gynacaeum and reserved political life for men, threw in doubt this sense of a single human destiny or even a single human nature.[153]

Indeed, one of the arguments of this chapter is that the truly dangerous move towards identifying women with negative embodiment occurred when the secular sphere, namely in the field of medicine, took over discussions of femininity, when the soul became separate from nature. Female somatic expression became pathologised and women's ownership and authority over their own bodies were silenced by the authority of the paternalistic medical expert. If Christian conceptions of woman provided the bones of a negative construal of female embodiment, scientific discourse provided the flesh, and shaped it into the indisputable realm of fact. The female body, then at this period in time, was clearly defined: fleshly, othered and a somatic expression of female distress. This, as we explore in the next chapter, shifts markedly, in the 'postmodern' era.

[152] Michelle Lelwica, 'From Superstition to Enlightenment to the Race for Pure Consciousness: Antireligious Currents in Popular and Academic Feminist Discourse', *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 81.1 (1998), 108-123.
[153] Kelly, 'Early Feminist Theory', p. 8.

Chapter 4: Female Embodiment in the Postmodern Era

4.1. Introduction

This chapter examines the development of thinking on the female body from the twentieth century up to the present day, what could be broadly termed the 'postmodern era'.[1] First, this chapter begins with a review of the feminist movement since the beginning of the twentieth century and how this has impacted on the framing of the female body. Second, theories of embodiment in philosophical discourse will be examined, particularly around the debates surrounding social constructionism.[2] Third, the female body and the discourse of medicalization will be examined. Fourth, it will be argued that social constructionist theory has influenced thought on the female body to such an extent that the female body has 'disappeared' as a concept, a phenomenon which is mirrored in a new form of asceticism, anorexia nervosa.

4.2. Historical Bodies IV: Emancipated Woman

The female body was, from the twentieth century, declared to be within women's rights to control, a previously unheard-of claim. Women achieved suffrage, gained access to the workplace and obtained a certain degree of autonomy over their bodies through birth control.[3] These gains were largely made under the feminist movement.[4] The first wave of feminists originated from the *querelle* debates and emphasised mind, as was espoused by Mary Wollstonecraft in the eighteenth century.[5] The first wave

[1] I am adopting the term 'postmodern' in the Lyotardian sense, as descriptive of an era where the claims of modernity have passed, that there is no one truth, but many competing narratives.
[2] Social constructionism is essentially an anti-realist, relativist stance with regard to reality. Social constructionists view knowledge as constructed as opposed to created.
[3] Women's rights over their own bodies was first developed by Josephine Butler in Britain in the 19th century, in her protest against the *Contagious Diseases Act* (1864), which permitted women to be forcibly examined for venereal diseases. Individual rights, already prominent within liberal political philosophy were to be extended as rights over one's body. Margaret Hamilton, 'Opposition to the Contagious Diseases Acts, 1864-1886', *Albion*, 10.1 (1978), 14-27.
[4] Feminism has been constituted as being a series of 'waves' informed by generational shifts. The first wave has no true origin, but could be said to have emerged in the *querelle* debates and reached its apogée in the time of the suffragettes in the early twentieth century. Members of the second wave can be typified as Baby Boomers (people born between 1947 and 1961), while third-wave feminists are easily collapsed into the larger category Generation X (people born between 1961 and 1981). We are currently now in the debated fourth wave of feminism, driven by the millennial generation (born between 1981 and 2000), its emergence characterised by social media dating from around 2010. Jennifer Baumgardner, 'Is There a Fourth Wave? Does It Matter?'< http://www.feminist.com/resources/artspeech/genwom/baumgardner2011.html> [accessed 22 April 2019]. It should be noted, that the various waves are not so homogenised and that there is crossover between the generations. The term 'waves' is a rather crude device to indicate the evolution of feminism and, as Astrid Henry points out, the picture is far more fluid. Astrid Henry, *Not My Mother's Sister: Generational Conflict and Third Wave Feminism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004).
[5] *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) is now seen as the foundational text in modern feminism. A critique of both the education available to women and the assumptions surrounding marriage and family life it

of feminism concerned itself mainly with suffrage and access to education–the enlightenment ideals–and avoided critiquing existing socioeconomic structures and gender roles. Old tropes about the female body continued largely uncontested, tacitly accepted by women themselves. As Laurel C. Schneider and Cassie J.E. Trentaz write, 'the first wave of movement found itself somewhat awkwardly trapped between trying to use part of the 'cult of true womanhood' to their advantage, which argued that women (or at least white upper and middle class 'ladies') were morally superior to men while also arguing against the notion that women were too weak to be active in the political arena.'[6]

If the first wave was about emancipation, the second wave was about liberation from the constraints that oppressed women. While the goals of the first wave–suffrage and access to higher education–had largely been achieved by the mid-twentieth century, little real appetite for further progress was found until the mid-twentieth century, when the feminist project entered a new era. Simone de Beauvoir in France and Betty Friedan in the United States railed against the societal forces that bound women to the realm of the domestic in *The Second Sex* and *The Feminine Mystique* respectively.[7] Beauvoir, in particular, with her central statement that women are not born but made, crystallised the *cri de coeur* of second-wave feminism that biology was not destiny.[8] A distinction was drawn between sex and gender.[9] Women, Beauvoir argued, could only attain equality with men when their identity became independent of sexuality, 'if the biological condition of women does constitute a handicap, it is because of her general situation … which leaves her few outlets that her peculiarities takes on importance.'[10]

Second-wave feminism was not, however, a cohesive movement, but was made up of various ideologically diverse groups that nonetheless coalesced under the demand for equal pay and reproductive rights. Aside from these broadly shared goals, second-wave feminists and their feminisms were disparate. The liberal arm sought pragmatic advancement of women within society

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was also very frank regarding sexuality, and Wollstonecraft herself had a child out of marriage. These factors caused her contemporaries to distance themselves from her, but her work latterly has been greatly appreciated. Claire Tomalin, *The Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft* (New York: Penguin, 1974, 1992).

[6] Laurel C. Schneider and Cassie J. E. Trentaz, 'Making Sense of Feminist Theology Today', *Religion Compass*, 2.5 (2008), 788-803 (p. 794).

[7] Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*. Simone Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, ed. and trans. by H.M. Parshley (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974).

[8] Yet Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* explores a phenomenology of the female body, as Sara Heinämaa points out in Heinämaa, 'Simone Beauvoir's Phenomenology of Sexual Difference', *Hypatia*, 14.4 (1999), 114-132. Heinämaa notes that Beauvoir repeatedly emphasizes that her discussion of sexual difference is based on the concept of the living body (p.128), examines Beauvoir's explicitly philosophical work, *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (1947) and her essay on the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty : Beauvoir, 'La phénoménologie de la perception de Maurice Merleau-Ponty', *Les temps modernes,* 1.2 (1945), 363-367. Heinämaa also notes that Beauvoir refers to the phenomenological method as bringing her closer to the truth than ever in her autobiography, *Prime of Life* (1960).

[530] 'Sex' being the biological body, i.e. defined by sexual characteristics and 'gender' refers to the behavioural attributes and expectations relating to that sex as construed by society.

[10] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex,* p. 356.

through access to the public sphere and the liberaton of women from the private world of childcare and domestic chores.[11] Marxist feminism, in contrast, saw women's struggle as part of the struggle against the capitalist agenda, whereas radical feminism framed women's oppression as inevitable in a patriarchal society with women shackled by virtue of their bodies.[12] Writers such as Shulamith Firestone argued that women needed to be liberated from their reproductive functions entirely.[13]

The oppression of women through their sexual objectification by men was a prominent strand in all second wave feminist politics. Andrea Dworkin and Catherine McKinnon, amongst others, criticised pornography, framing it as a form of sex discrimination and latterly a form of human trafficking.[14] Against this, there was a movement towards an affirmative view of female embodiment, celebrating women's sexual natures and their unique role in reproduction. Germaine Greer in the *Female Eunuch,* indebted to Beauvoir, exhorted women to go out and reclaim their sexuality.[15] In contrast to Dworkin and McKinnon, Greer argued that protesting pornography was censorship and denied women the full sexual pleasures afforded men.[16] Theorists such as Audre Lorde, Adrienne Rich and Nancy Chodorow argue that the female capacity to give birth shows how the female body could escape from the structures of dominance and submission.[17] This in turn was critiqued as essentialist by some who

[11] Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* is the classic text. Liberal feminism has been critiqued for identifying values traditionally identified with men (autonomy, reason) with human values. Alison Jaggar and Jean Bethke Elshtain advance critiques on this line. Alison M. Jaggar, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature* (Brighton: Harvester, 1983). Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Public Man, Private Woman* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981). More generally, especially since the 1990s, liberal feminism has been critiqued for taking the experience of white bourgeois women as normative. As Angela Davis has pointed out, many women of colour would welcome the opportunity to be able to stay home and not go out and work. Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race & Class* (New York: Vintage, 1983), p. 230.

[12] Juliet Mitchell, *Woman's Estate* (London: Verso, 2015). For Mitchell, class remained more of a problem than sex. Others, such as Iris Marion Young viewed patriarchy and capitalism as intricately linked, so much so that one could not survive the other. 'Beyond the Unhappy Marriage: A Critique of the Dual Systems Theory', in *Women and Revolution: A Discussion of the Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism*, ed. by Lydia Sargent (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1981), pp. 43-69. Radical feminism, at its most extreme, sought separation from men in society, declaring all heterosexual intercourse rape and extolling lesbianism as being the only means for women to fully own their sexuality. Adrienne Rich, 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence', in *Living with Contradictions: Controversies in Feminist Socialist Ethics,* ed. by Alison M. Jaggar (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994), pp. 487-488. Ann Ferguson, 'Sex War: The Debate between Radical and Libertarian Feminists', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 10.1 (1984), 106-112, (p. 109). Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for a Feminist Revolution* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003). Mary Daly, *Pure Lust: Elemental Feminist Philosophy* (London: Women's Press, 2001).

[13] Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex.* Firestone sought to develop in her book a vision of a feminist future, whereby technology would free women from the bondage created by childbirth and the patriarchal family structure.

[14] Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* (London: Women's Press, 1981). Catharine A. MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

[15] Germaine Greer, *The Female Eunuch* (London: Fourth Estate, 2012). First published in 1970, Greer's thesis is that the 'traditional' nuclear family represses women sexually, and that this devitalises them, rendering them eunuchs.

[16] For a discussion on the various feminist approaches to pornography see Bridget Crawford, 'Toward a Third-Wave Feminist Legal Theory: Young Women, Pornography and the Praxis of Pleasure', *Michigan Journal of Gender & Law,* 14.1 (2007), 99-168.

[17] Audre Lorde and Cheryl Clarke, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1984). Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978).

argued that for some women, motherhood was neither welcomed nor an option.[18] What of women who did not wish to, or could not, reproduce? Were they somehow less than, or not truly women as a result? Rich, in *Of Woman Born*, while reclaiming the 'body of mother' for women in positive ways, also argues that '(w)omen are controlled by lashing us to our bodies' and, 'how, under patriarchy, female possibility has been massacred on the site of motherhood'.[19]

By the 1980s, feminism in popular culture was considered a trifle *passé*. Camille Paglia, second wave's *enfant terrible*, disdainfully wrote, '[e]very year, feminists provide more and more evidence for the old charge that women can neither think nor write.'[20] Equality was at least rhetorically achieved in terms of legislation. It was argued that there was no more need for feminism as the late twentieth century was a *de facto* post-feminist era.[21] Choice and empowerment were the reality for most women and 'feminism' was seen as puritanical and demanding that women conform to a certain standard. Women were participating more and achieving more in the public sphere, able to have-it-all. All that was getting in women's way, the argument went, were women themselves.[22]

Not all women, however, were so sanguine. Naomi Wolf and Susan Faludi wrote on the perceived backlash against feminism.[23] Complacency with regard to the modest gains made by feminism, they argued, was covering up systematic oppression of women in two ways: (i) in condoning sexual harassment in the first instance in the guise of banter between the sexes; and (ii) schooling women into an acceptable way of being a woman (i.e., sexual).

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[18] Essentialism stems from the idea that things have essential properties, properties that are essential to those things being the way they are. Essentialism is the belief that there are properties essential to women and which all women share. The 1980s and early 1990s were dominated by heated debates over 'essentialism'. Numerous prominent second wave feminists endorsed particular views of essentialism. Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering.* Catherine MacKinnon, 'Feminism, Marxism, Method and the State: An Agenda for Theory', *Signs*, 7 (1982), 515-544. Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York: Norton, 1995). It can be stated that essentialism lost the argument in the feminist debates. See, Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London: Methuen, 1985), pp. 139-147.

[19] Rich, *Of Woman Born*, p. 13.

[20] Camille Paglia, *Sex, Art, and American Culture: Essays* (New York: Vintage, 1992), p. 244.

[21] Katie Roiphe, *The Morning After: Sex, Fear, and Feminism on Campus* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1993) is perhaps the best-known book in this field. Roiphe sees feminism as promoting a certain victomology. Camille Paglia, although of the age of second feminism, is of this view also. The ubiquity of the term 'post-feminism' in popular discourse about feminism during the 1980s is also discussed by Deborah Rosenfelt 'Second Thoughts on the Second Wave,' *Feminist Review*, 27.1 (1987), 77-95. See also Tania Modleski, *Feminism without Women: Culture and Criticism in a 'Postfeminist' Age* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

[22] See Camille Paglia, *Vamps and Tramps: New Essays* (New York: Vintage, 1994); and Christina Hoff Sommers, *Who Stole Feminism? How Women Have Betrayed Women* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1994).

[23] Susan Faludi, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Woman,*15 year anniversary edn (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2006). Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are Used against Women* (Toronto: Vintage, 1990).

Faludi and Wolf's contributions marked the emergence of the third wave in feminism.[24] Similar to second-wave feminism, 'third wave' is a catch-all term that covers a wide array of beliefs so held.[25] At its heart, however, is the view that there is not one right way to be a feminist. The third wave privileges individuality and identity above all else. [26] It rejects the homogenised view of shared female values and argues that the second wave was too heteronormative, too white, too middle-class, and ignored the needs of minority women.[27] The concerns of the second wave, including access to the workplace and birth control, were not necessarily those of the marginalised female. More complex and nuanced theories were required.[28] The term 'intersectionality' was coined to demonstrate how issues of gender were also connected to class, race and sexual orientation.[29]

Another distinctive trend in third-wave feminism is the shift in attitudes toward sexuality and the body. There has been a greater movement towards inclusiveness, particularly in the realm of identity politics and the inclusion of trans bodies.[30] Protesting the second wave's repeated depiction of women as victims and taking issue with views that read all intercourse as a form of rape, the third wave ironically embraced their sexualised objectified status. Adoption of certain pursuits long decried by second-wave feminists, such as pole dancing or the wearing of Playboy Bunny logoed t-shirts, was seen as a means of subverting old messages about sexism and sexual inequality.[31] 'Lipstick

[24] The term 'third wave' was coined by 22-year-old Rebecca Walker in 1992 'I am not a postfeminism feminist. I am the Third Wave'. Rebecca Walker, 'Becoming the Third Wave', *Ms,* 2.4 (1992), 39-41, (p. 41).
[25] Despite the disparities, there are several texts that lay out the individual tenets of the third wave, Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, *Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000). Barbara Findlen, *Listen Up: Voices from the Next Feminist Generation* (Seattle, WA: Seal Press, 1995). Lesley Heywood and Jennifer Drake, *Third Wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).
[26] Naomi Wolf, *Fire with Fire: The New Female Power and How It Will Change the 21st Century* (Toronto: Vintage, 1994). Wolf dubs this 'Power Feminism' and decries what she sees as the 'victim feminism' of the second wave. See her discussion in chapters 9-12.
[27] Davis, *Women, Race & Class*; bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (London: Pluto Press, 1982). Angela Davis, bell hooks, and others have argued that the non-white female, predominantly African American woman, through the experience of slavery have been exploited and sexualised in a manner that goes anything beyond the understanding of Anglo-American Feminists.
[28] Such as postcolonial feminism: Audre Lorde, 'The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House, in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, ed. by Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, 4th edn (New York: SUNY Press, 2015), pp. 94-101. For a review of the early works in postcolonialism see, Chandra Mohanty, 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses', *Feminist Review,* 30 (1988), 65-88.
[29] Kimberlé Crenshaw, 'Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color', *Stanford Law Review*, 43.6 (1991), 1241-1299. See also Anna Carastathis, 'The Concept of Intersectionality in Feminist Theory', *Philosophy Compass*, 9.5 (2014), 304-314. *Signs* in 2013 produced an issue dedicated to the issue of intersectionality, Crenshaw was one of its editors: Sumi Cho, Kimberlé Crenshaw and Leslie McCall, 'Intersectionality: Theorizing Power, Empowering Theory', *Signs,* 38.4 (2013), 785−810.
[30]Astrid Henry, *Not My Mother's Sister*. For an overview of the shift see Susan Archer Mann and Douglas J. Huffman, 'The Decentering of Second Wave Feminism and the Rise of the Third Wave', *Science & Society*, 69.1 (2005), 56-91.
[31] The success of this attempt is arguably discredited in light of the outing of sexual assault in recent years in politics, economy and the arts. Cases of men like Roger Ailes, Bill Cosby, and Harvey Weinstein, and the social media campaign of #MeToo, demonstrated how men view women's bodies as accessible to them, and a causal assumption is that women can trade their bodies for advancement. On the rise of raunch culture and the

Feminism', as it was sometimes derisively (or enthusiastically) termed, argued that women could embrace their femininity in empowering ways. Concepts of 'equality', 'subordination' and 'liberation' in certain mainstream discourses were radically redefined. Michelle M. Lazar terms this 'power femininity'–which is characterised by celebration of choice and empowerment–but argues that this actually serves to invalidate ongoing attempts to challenge pervasive, hegemonic patriarchal power structures.[32] As Lazar writes:

> [c]onformity to the (narrow) beauty ideals, paradoxically, is represented as freedom of expression for women; the liberating promise of beauty is to gain access to ways of life and styles of dressing otherwise 'denied' them, which does nothing to challenge the prevailing norms of beauty and fashion. Indeed, this (skewed) freedom only works because of the fact that the narrow beauty standards are that exist gets elided.[33]

Despite the lip service paid to the individual, the empowered female is curiously homogenised. Women are placed in the contradictory position of trying to establish their autonomy by subscribing to an increasingly narrow ideal of thin, youth obsessed perfection.[34] The performative nature of third wave feminism has also resulted in gender being read as having equal or more validity than sex. The proliferation of identity politics and the rise of the transgender individual have problematized the question of female embodiment.[35] Given the greater prevalence of transgender identification in natal

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implications for women see: Ariel Levy, *Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2006). Natasha Walter, *Living Dolls: The Return of Sexism* (London: Virago, 2010), argues that the language of empowerment, liberation and choice has been co-opted by society to sell women as sexualised objects. For a defence of this aspect of third wave feminism, R. Claire Snyder-Hall, 'Third-Wave Feminism and the Defense of "Choice"', *Perspectives on Politics*, 8.1 (2010), 255-261.

[32] Naomi Wolf and others, 'Jekyll and Hyde: Men's Constructions of Feminism and Feminists', *Feminism & Psychology*, 11.4 (2001), 439-457. Paul Peace, 'Balancing Power: The Discursive Maintenance of Gender Inequality by Wo/Men at University', *Feminism & Psychology*, 13.2 (2003), 159-180. Claire M. Renzetti, 'New Wave or Second Stage? Attitudes of College Women toward Feminism', *Sex Roles*, 16.5-6 (1987), 265-277. Sarah Riley, 'Maintaining Power: Male Constructions of "Feminists" and "Feminist Values"', *Feminism & Psychology*, 11.1 (2001), 55-78. Michelle M. Lazar, '"Discover the Power of Femininity!": Analyzing Global "Power Femininity" in Local Advertising', *Feminist Media Studies*, 6.4 (2006), 505-517.

[33] Michelle M. Lazar, 'The Right to be Beautiful: Postfeminist Identity and Consumer Beauty Advertising', in *New Femininities: Postfeminism, Neoliberalism and Subjectivity,* ed. by Rosalind Gill and Christina Scharff (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 37-51 (p. 40).

[34] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (London: Allen Lane, 1977). However, the effectiveness of this strategy is questionable. As Alison Stone writes, 'by the 1990s it had become apparent that rejection of essentialism problematically undercut feminist politics, by denying that women have any shared characteristic that could motivate them to act together as a collectivity.' Alison Stone, 'Essentialism and Anti-Essentialism in Feminist Philosophy', *Journal of Moral Philosophy*, 1.2 (2004), 135-153 (pp. 135-136).

[35] Transgender individuals are those who feel they are born to the wrong biological sex. They are currently defined as suffering from gender dysphoria which is defined as the condition of being uneasy, uncomfortable or unhappy because of one's gender. (DSM-V, pp. 451-460). Gender dysphoria is a relatively recent term, up until 2013 transgender individuals were defined as suffering from Gender Identity Disorder. The change in nomenclature reflects the movement in medicine, psychology and society toward the depathologisation of transgender. Transgender is still a newly emerging field although transgender advocates would argue that there have always been transgender individuals, they have merely been invisible. See Leslie Feinberg, *Transgender Warriors: Making History from Joan of Arc to Dennis Rodman*, 2nd edn (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2005). Theories as to the factors that cause dysphoria range from (i) the psychoanalytic (Freudian influenced disordered object relations theory) (ii) environmental (e.g. radical behaviourism, and as the infamous Money experiment

males than natal females, transgender identity has been accused of attempting to 'colonise feminist identification, culture, politics and sexuality' and of annexing the already sexist constructs of femininity, 'the attempt to possess women in a bodily sense while acting out the images into which men have moulded women'.[36] Such a critique is exclusionary and unhelpful, but does point to the fundamental question of what makes a woman, and what is meant by the female body, and underscores the fact that language to describe such a seemingly obvious material reality is lacking.

The digital landscape has complicated matters further. The gradual elision of the female body is reinforced by the rise of the 'fourth dimensional human', which realises the possibility of operating in

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arguing that gender was a question of nurture, not nature) (iii) various biological causes which centre around prenatal hormonal influences, genetic influences and brain structure. For an excellent précis of the etiology of transgender see, Randi Ettner and Antonio Guillamon, 'Theories of the Etiology of Transgender Identity', in *Principles of Transgender Medicine and Surgery*, ed. by Randi Ettner and others, 2nd edn (New York and London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 3-15. The science is still not settled, however, and there is no verifiable biological grounding for transgender, either in the body or in the brain.

[36] Janice G. Raymond, *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male*, 2nd edn (New York: Teachers College Press, 1994), p. 9. There are some uncomfortable parallels drawn in this book between transsexualism and Nazism, as well as defining transsexualism as rape of women and transsexuals as being agents of the patriarchy. Raymond was a doctoral student of Mary Daly, who was equally hostile to transsexuals, defining transsexualism as a 'necrophiliac invasion … which in invades the female world with substitutes'. Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaphysics of Radical Feminism* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1991), p. 71. Raymond's polemic did have the effect of stimulating debate and provoked responses that laid the groundwork for transgender theory. A direct response to Raymond's critique is Sandy Stone, 'The Empire Strikes Back', in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, ed. by Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York and London: Taylor & Francis, 2006), pp. 221-234. Other, more moderate, feminist critiques include that of Sheila Jeffreys who argues that if we start to construct gender as nothing more than performance that can be adopted at will, then (i) this takes the edge of feminist politics (ii) queer agenda begins from gay male experience, from which the experience of women is absent, and at times despised; and (iii) gender as performance results in the reification of gendered stereotypes. Sheila Jeffreys, *Unpacking Queer Politics* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003). For a thoughtful defence of transgender from a feminist perspective, see Cressida J. Heyes, 'Feminist Solidarity after Queer Theory: The Case of Transgender', *Signs*, 28.4 (2003), 1093-1120. For the debates in queer theory and feminism, see Patricia Elliot, *Debates in Transgender, Queer and Feminist Theory: Contested Sites* (Farnham: Taylor & Francis, 2010), especially: 'Debates in Transgender, Queer and Feminist Theory', pp. 18-31.
While all caution should be taken with regard to falling into transphobic stereotypes, it can be noted that FTM (female-to-male), that it is trans men who are born biologically female, are a far less visible part of the queer community, in part because of the fact that they tend to 'pass' better, tend not to be as active on the activist front, and are less critical of what has been termed TERF (trans exclusionary radical feminists) that is, women who claim that there are fundamental differences between cisgender (individuals identifying with their natal sex) women and trans women. Lesbian theorists and more recently the anthropologist Arlene Stein have questioned whether the increasing prevalence of transgender will ultimately result in the erasure of butch lesbians, Arlene Stein, *Unbound: Transgender Men and the Remaking of Identity* (New York: Pantheon, 2017), pp. 190-197, whereas no similar threat appears to be in train for the femme man. It should be noted however, that butch lesbians were not always claimed by women's groups. Infamously, Betty Friedan referred to lesbians as the 'lavender menace' and butch lesbians in particular were seen as embracing harmful male stereotypical behaviour and mannerisms in how they self-presented. Susan Stryker's *Transgender History*: *The Roots of Today's Revolution*, 2nd edn (Berkeley, CA: Seal Press, 2017) appears to take MTF (male-to-female) experience as normative, witnessed by the fact that a brief section of the book is devoted specifically to FTM communities (pp. 141-149). FTM as a community are also less studied in medical literature, suggesting a continuing bias against the natural female body and an assumption that 'trans' means 'transwomen' as normative . The ambiguous attitude toward the female body is also reported by Chiland who mentions in passing that some surgeons prefer to construct penises rather than vaginas, as removing a penis is organ removal, whereas constructing a penis is more 'creative'. Chiland, *Exploring Transsexualism,* trans. by David Alcorn (London: H. Karnac Books Limited, 2005), p. 80.

the world in a disembodied state.[37] In her book, *How We Became Posthuman*, N. Katherine Hyles, makes a connection between the online world and the disappearance of the body.[38] As she points out, 'living in a condition of virtuality implies we participate in the cultural perception that information and materiality are conceptually distinct and that information is in some sense more essential, more important and more fundamental than materiality.'[39] While the internet has allowed for exciting possibilities, the idea of the body as the instrument of the will, now informs every aspect of our culture, which in turn has complicated the notion of what it means to be a body. [40]

Women thus find themselves in an anomalous situation. While they have successfully emerged in the public sphere and claimed autonomy, correspondingly the idea of what it means to be a woman has shifted. Increasingly, in light of technological advances and the heated debates around gender identity the body presents as an addendum. The female body, it could be said, has been uncoupled from its identification with the reproductive, but in the absence of any other conception of what the body actually signifes, it has become untethered, and is at risk of elision.

4.3. Theoretical Bodies IV: Eliding Bodies

4.3.1. Post-structuralism: From Foucault to Butler

As the space that a woman's body occupies in the public sphere has shrunk, and disappears in the digital landscape, a similar elision has occurred in the academy, where the body as a material reality is disputed. Developments in conceptions of female embodiment have largely been construed against the background of feminist theorising of the body. While Barbara Brook writes that 'all feminist thinking might be described as an engagement of one sort or another, with what it means to be, and to be perceived to be, a female body', feminist theory during the first and second waves mainly focussed on

[37] Laurence Scott, *The Four-Dimensional Human: Ways of Being in The Digital World* (London: Random House, 2016).
[38] Nancy Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, And Informatics* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1999).
[39] Hayles, p. 18.
[40] While the internet and other technologies provide women with new possibilities and grant access to networks of power (cyberfeminism), it creates a space that perpetuates the same discrimination experienced by women, and arguably can be more vicious, i.e. the phenomenon of trolling on social media sites such as Twitter. See for example, Amnesty International's report 'Toxic Twitter – A Toxic Place for Women' published in 2018 https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/research/2018/03/online-violence-against-women-chapter-1/ [accessed 9 July 2019]. See also, Dale Spender, *Nattering on the Net: Women Power and Cyberspace* (North Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 1995) and '(Dead) Bodies Floating in Cyberspace', in *Radically Speaking: Feminism Reclaimed*, ed. by Diane Bell & Renate Klein (North Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 1996), pp. 346-358. While some feminists see the Internet as allowing women to play with gendered identities, more radical feminists suggest that information technology, sites such as the Red Pill, IChan chatrooms, or dark Reddit threads show a disturbing trend which Emma Alice Jane has dubbed 'e-bile', defined as 'target[ing] a woman who is, for one reason or another, visible in the public sphere; their authors are anonymous or otherwise difficult to identify; their sexually explicit rhetoric includes homophobic and misogynist epithets; they prescribe coerced sex acts as all-purpose correctives; they pass scathing, appearance-related judgments and they rely on ad hominem invective.' Emma Alice Jane, '"Back to the Kitchen, Cunt": Speaking the Unspeakable about Online Misogyny', *Continuum*, 28.4 (2014), 558-570 (p. 560).

the control of women's bodies, and rarely addressed the question of female embodiment.[41] This shifted, however, in the 1990s when there was a veritable explosion of feminist work on 'the body' with academics such as Moira Gatens and Susan Bordo producing provocative new work.[42]

Much of this work is heavily indebted to Michel Foucault's influential study on the body. Foucault, drawing on the work of Nietzsche, argued that the there is no history of the body, but rather genealogies. Bodies, according to Foucauldian theory, are constituted within the specific nexus of culture, and that there is no materiality or ontological independence of the body outside of any aspect of that culture.[43] The body 'is always itself always-already discursively constituted and regulated in the specificities of its socio-historically specific context'.[44] The body is too unstable to describe as a material reality; rather, it is the site of discourses of power, shaped by the contingent historical forces within which it is enmeshed.

The appeal of Foucault to feminist theorising on the body is clear.[45] His idea of disciplinary power, a form of power that does not prohibit but rather is complicit, in that it acts on and through an individual's self-forming practices so that the individual comes to desire certain ways of being and doing for herself, provides an explanation for why women are complicit in their own objectification: why they would starve themselves to look a certain way or consider certain passive behaviour as being authentically 'female'.[46] As Foucault argues, with reference to the representation of the body in consumer culture, 'we find a new mode of investment which presents itself no longer in the form of control by repression but that of control by stimulation. "Get undressed - but be slim, good looking, tanned"'.[47]

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[41] Barbara Brook, *Feminist Perspectives on the Body* (London & New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 2.
[42] Moira Gatens, 'Towards a Feminist Philosophy of the Body', in *Crossing Boundaries: Feminisms and the Critique of Knowledges,* ed. by Elizabeth A. Grosz and others (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988). Moira Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies: Ethics, Power and Corporeality* (London: Routledge, 1996).
[43] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. by Robert Hurley, 3 vols (New York: New Vintage, 1980-1986), I (1980), p. 148-155.
[44] Helen Malson, 'Womæn under Erasure: Anorexic Bodies in Postmodern Context', *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 9.2 (1999), 137-153.
[45] Monique Deveaux, 'Feminism and Empowerment: A Critical Reading of Foucault', *Feminist Studies*, 20.2 (1994), 223-247. Deveaux reviews three distinct approaches feminists have taken with regard to Foucault. (i) The effects of power on 'docile bodies' and 'biopower'; (ii) the effects of power and the body as a site of resistance; and (iii) categories of sex/gender as being a product of history.
[46] Foucault first takes up this soft power in *Discipline and Punish* where he outlines its historical evolution, from the sovereign externally imposed power, to the power of self-surveillance, a circulatory power, not necessarily located in an individual or institution but rather systemic which effects and co-opts all it touches. It fosters techniques of control and intervention which is presented as working to mutual benefit. Disciplinary power is creative, not felt as oppressive, and it shapes and is internal to the individual.
[47] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977,* ed. by Colin Gordon (Brighton: Harvester, 1980), p. 57.

Foucault provides a practical matrix for feminist discourse on the body, but his thought has also contributed toward the figurative disappearance of the body in the academy. [48] As Chris Shilling notes, 'Foucault's epistemological view of the body means that it disappears as a material or biological phenomenon. The biological, physical or material body can never be grasped by as its existence is permanently deferred behind the grids of meaning imposed by discourse.'[49]

This flight from the body is perhaps most clearly encapsulated in the work of Judith Butler who has dominated feminist theory since the beginning of the 1990s.[50] After Foucault, Butler argues that the body is socially constructed and that we have naturalised a cultural construction of body, gender and sexuality. In the social constructionist view, biology and gender are not necessarily linked, the body can even be 'inert' with respect to the gender which is the socially acquired role and sense of identity. In the social constructionist view, any essentialism, that lays claim to any innate qualities of being female (as the sexed body), falsely conflates sex with gender. Gender is properly understood as performative. For Butler the sex/gender distinction as: 'a *stylised repetition of acts* … understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self'.[51] Gender is literally a performance, constantly re-inscribed by societal norms.

Foucault acknowledged the existence of the body in that there is an ontological basis to the inscription of culture on it. Butler, on the other hand, accepted no such ontology arguing that Foucault's notion of the body was 'incoherent'.[52] This stance has proved problematic for many feminists.[53] Renate Klein, for example, asks: 'How is it possible to theorise 'bodies' in thousands of pages, yet invisibilise women?... The bodies I have been reading about in post-modern feminism writings do not breathe, do not laugh, and have no heart.'[54] In *Unbearable Weight*, Susan Bordo writes that for Butler, 'there *is* one correct, unimpeachable position: it is that any conception of the "natural" is a dangerous "illusion" of which we must be "cured"'.[55] Bordo notes that 'Butler's world is one in which language

[48] See Diana Fuss, *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature and Difference* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 41.
[49] Chris Shilling, *The Body and Social Theory*, 2nd edn (London: Sage, 2011), p. 83.
[50] Butler's two most influential books are *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity,*2nd end (New York: Routledge, 1999), first published in 1990, and *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (New York: Routledge, 1993). Sara Salih provides an accessible introduction to Butler's thought, *Judith Butler* (New York: Routledge, 2002).
[51] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 159.
[52] For a discussion on the arguments of Foucault and Butler, and in particular, Butler's critique of Foucault, see David Dudrick, 'Foucault, Butler, and the Body', *European Journal of Philosophy*, 13.2 (2005), 226-246.
[53] It is not entirely accurate to claim that Butler rejects material or materialism, since in the Preface to *Bodies that Matter* she goes out of her way to reassure the reader that she does accept the reality of 'primary and irrefutable experiences' such as eating and sleeping, pleasure and pain (*Bodies that Matter*, p. xi). It should also be noted, however, that she does not devote much attention to these actions.
[54] Renate Klein, '(Dead) Bodies Floating in Cyberspace', p. 349.
[55] Bordo, *Unbearable Weight*, p. 290.

swallows everything up' and the body seems to be the product of discourse, not its source.[56] For Toril Moi, 'Butler loses sight of the concrete, historical body that loves, suffers and dies.'[57] There is, as Butler herself admitted, the problem of agency present in both her, and generally all social constructionist arguments. If all is shaped by discourse, and even our response to said discourse is so dictated by discourse, then how can the human being ever escape such strictures and act as an independent agent?[58]

As Schilling writes:

> Social constructionist views of the body tend to tell us much about how society has invaded, shaped, classified and made the body meaningful, but we learn much less from them about what the body is and why it is able to assume such social importance. The body is named as a theoretical space, but often remains relatively neglected as an actual object of analysis. Indeed, it would probably be more accurate to categorize the more extreme social constructionist views of the body as symptoms, rather than analyses, of our modern concern with the body.[59]

The notion of the body becomes inherently unstable and the female body, always considered more volatile than the male, becomes even more opaque. It also places the woman as agent, struggling with a body that is constantly constituted by historical and social forces, in an impossible bind, and one that is curiously disembodied in its construction of what it means to be a woman. The female body is conceptualised as discursive and ephemeral, seemingly not tethered to a material reality. As Karen Barad has written, 'Language matters. Discourse matters. Culture matters. There is an important sense in which the only thing that does not seem to matter anymore is matter'.[60] The ontology of the body is called into question. The body is lost under layer upon layer of meaning, viewed as the passive inscriptor of what the mind – shaped by society – wants.

The self seems to be real only in the realm of mind. Where the female body is discussed, it is in the context of women's relationships to their bodies, almost as if their bodies are separate from themselves. Women's bodies are discussed in the context of reproductive rights, disordered eating patterns, questions of gender identity, or diseases that indicate a fundamental dis-ease with the body. This is a new form of dualism, in a sense. While the body has become hyper-managed in medicine

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[56] Bordo, *Unbearable Weight*, p. 291.
[57] Toril Moi, *What Is a Woman? And Other Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 49.
[58] Nancy Hartsock, 'Foucault on Power: A Theory for Women', in *Feminism/Postmodernism,* ed. by Linda J. Nicholson, (New York: Routledge, 1990). Shane Phelan, 'Foucault and Feminism', *American Journal of Political Science*, 34.2 (1990), 421-440. Susan Bordo's essay, 'Feminism, Foucault and the Politics of the Body' in *Unbearable Weight* is particularly accessible and deals with the problem of resistance to dominant cultural images. She also gives an apposite reminder that contrary to what we might be induced to think, feminists, not Foucault, discovered the idea of body politics. Mary Wollstonecraft for example described the production of the 'docile body' in *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792).
[59] Shilling, *Body & Social Theory*, p. 9.
[60] Karen Barad, 'Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter', *Signs,* 28.3 (2003), 801-831 (p. 801).

and culture, what it means to be a female body – the phenomenological experience of being a woman – has been largely ignored. The political implications in part make female *embodiment* almost distasteful to discuss.

4.3.2. Affirming the Body: Irigaray and Material Feminism

Elizabeth Grosz describes this reluctance to speak of the body as a form of *somatophobia*, a fear of the body inherent in much discourse in feminist philosophy, and causes her to urge the need to embrace a 'corporeal feminism' or material feminism.[61] Corporeal feminism is not biological essentialism, but rather one which fully admits the givenness of the female body read in a psychoanalytical framework. Grosz rejects the idea that the female body is fixed, but argues rather that it is open-ended, and advocates a genealogy of 'feminine becoming' which shapes the varying constructions and interpretations of the female body over time, and is the implicit recognition of the ability of bodies to be 'affected by other bodies'. This view, according to Grosz, will aid women in their 'attempt to reconceive bodies outside the binary opposites imposed on the body by the mind/body, nature/culture, subject/object and interior/exterior oppositions'.[62]

Material feminism owes a debt to the psychoanalytical tradition of the Continental School, which embraces the notion of sexual difference.[63] This thought, although frustratingly opaque and abstract at times, essentially argues that language and society are constructed by male authorship and women needed to embrace a gynocentric way of being.[64] Luce Irigaray is a focal thinker in this re-inscription of the body. According to Irigaray, women are 'othered' in the symbolic order that structures western society. 'Women's social inferiority is reinforced and complicated by the fact that woman does not have access to language, except through recourse to 'masculine' systems of representation which disappropriate her from her relation to herself and other women.'[65] Irigaray follows the psychoanalytical philosopher Jacques Lacan (1901-1981) in understanding sexual difference as a

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[61] Elizabeth A. Grosz, *Volatile Bodies, Toward a Corporeal Feminism*, Theories of Representation and Difference (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 5.
[62] Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, p. 164.
[63] Material feminism or New Materialism has its roots in the monism of Spinoza (1632-1677) and is greatly influenced by Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) and Foucault. It seeks to overcome the dualism it sees implicit in most modern and postmodern theories. In Spinoza's thought 'matter' and 'mind' both emerge from the materially grounded. Material feminists develop this to assert that the body is not just a passive substance on which gender imposes itself constructively, but rather gender and the body both act on each other. One of the earliest feminist thinkers in this regard is Moira Gatens, whose article in 1983 could be marked as the first new materialist publication. Moira Gatens 'A Critique of the Sex/Gender Distinction', *Beyond Marxism: Interventions after Marx*, ed. by Judith Allen and Paul Patton (Leichhardt: Intervention Publication, 1983), pp. 143-160.
[64] Alison Stone, *Luce Irigaray and the Philosophy of Sexual Difference* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 25.
[65] Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. by Catherine Porter with Carolyn Burke (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), p.84.

difference that is assigned in language.[66] Lacan assigned primacy to the phallus, and therefore the male, which Irigaray argues excludes the female, and means that we cannot consider the 'female' in language, culture, philosophy etc. Irigaray argues that women's inequity has been figured through sexual difference, whereby woman is construed as 'other' and only ever identified with matter and nature. What is required, she argues, is an uncovering of the 'maternal-feminine' inherent within Western philosophy to counter the supposedly 'neutral' (but in reality male figured) construction of the subject. In *This Sex which is not One*, Irigaray develops a genealogy of woman's body as morphologically different to the male, which escapes the binary division by being in movement and multiple, labile and ever expanding, and resitant to the monadic construction of the male 'I'.

An especially attractive aspect of Irigaray's thought is that she defines femininity, not as those features that would be normally identified as feminine, but rather as what it means to be woman, although 'woman' is a notoriously difficult term to define. As she writes, '"femininity" is a role, an image, a value, imposed upon women by male systems of representation'.[67] What is considered feminine, and what anti-essentialist feminists were at such pains to distance themselves from, that is woman as sexual object and mother, is for Irigaray only a male conception of what it means to be feminine. Woman's nature is found in woman's *body*, not in the representation of her body, which must perforce always take place within a male framework. Could this be construed as essentialist? Perhaps.[68] It does, however, have the merit of assuming a *givenness,* a substance to the female body, and is affirming to the female experience of this givenness. The body, Irigaray seems to be saying, is real, and moreover, worthy of consideration and discussion in and of itself and not merely as the second order object of what it means to be female.

Material feminisms, drawing upon Irigaray and the Continental School generally, argue that biology shapes what it means to be a woman and not just at a psychic and social level. The body, they argue, needs to be taken seriously. 'Concerning the neutrality of the body, let me be explicit, there is no

[66] Lacan has had an enormous influence on post-structuralism, critical theory and linguistics. In simple terms, he fundamentally reworked the thinking of Freud extending it. Lacan sees language, and indeed all discourse, as permeated by the unconscious and so lacking in truth or stability. Irigaray, however, departs from Lacan in the sense that she argues that philosophy and psychoanalysis have excluded women. This argument is put forward most strongly in *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. by Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985).
[67] Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, p. 83.
[68] For a discussion on the charges of essentialism in Irigaray, which examines all her works not just those cited here which are reflective of her early career, see Stone, *Luce Irigaray and the Philosophy of Sexual Difference*, pp. 21-42. While Stone finds Irigaray's later work problematic, she argues that 'feminist essentialism can become coherent only if it seeks to revalue and transfigure *real* - and sexually different - bodies, by pursuing their cultural expression and enhancement', p. 19.

neutral body, there are at least two kinds of bodies: the male body and the female body.'[69] The concept of sexual difference is real and needs to be affirmed.

The work of Irigaray, Grosz and Moira Gatens is not, however, driving the discussion on female embodiment. Due to the post-structural shift in thinking, as female bodies have become ever more problematized in society and feminist discourse, the very concept of the female body has become a subject of contention, most notably in the rise of queer theory in the academy. Drawing on the work of Lacan who highlighted the instability of identity, Derrida's deconstruction and Foucault's construction of power, and the work of feminist theorists Judith Butler and Eve Sedgewick, queer theory points to the precariousness of identity and interrogated previously assumed stable realities, such as sexuality and gender. 'Queer theory calls into question obvious categories (man, woman, Latina, Jew, butch, femme), oppositions (man vs. woman, heterosexual vs. homosexual), or equations (gender = sex) upon which conventional notions of sexuality and identity'.[70]

The body, no longer an ahistorical biological entity,[71] has come to be the repository on which the philosophical and sociological anxieties of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries are explored. [72] The female body in the academy has reached a concomitant elision.[73] 'The body emerges at the centre of the theoretical and political debate at exactly the time in history when there is no more unitary certainty or uncontested consensus about what the body actually is ... The body has turned into many, multiple bodies.'[74] The female body is lost in a strand of competing academic theories of gender and sexuality. A coherent idea of the female body has been parsed to the point of elision.

4.4. Medical Bodies IV: Pathology and the Feminine Redux

Akin to societal and philosophical developments, the female body in medical discourse underwent an atomisation of sorts. New diseases specific to women, and their bodies have arisen.[75] Amorphous

[69] Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, p. 8.
[70] Katherine Watson, 'Queer Theory', *Group Analysis*, 38.1 (2005), 67-81.
[71] Susan Bordo, 'Feminism, Foucault and the Politics of the Body', in *Up Against Foucault: Explorations of Some Tensions between Foucault and Feminism*, ed. by Caroline Ramazanoglu (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 179-202 (p. 222).
[72] Bordo, 'Feminism, Foucault and the Politics of the Body', p. 181.
[73] *Body Matters: Essays on the Sociology of the Body*, ed. by Sue Scott and David Morgan (London: Falmer Press, 1993), p. 13.
[74] Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 19.
[75] Endometriosis, it has been suggested, is another example of the female centric illness that has been construed along lines similar to hysteria. Endometriosis is a gynaecological complaint which features tissue similar to the lining of the uterus being located outside the uterus, which in turn causes pain, tiredness, food intolerances amongst, other symptoms. It is generally treated with oral contraceptives. Cara E. Jones, 'Wandering Wombs and 'Female Troubles': The Hysterical Origins, Symptoms, and Treatments of Endometriosis', *Women's Studies*, 44.8 (2015), 1083-1113. Jones notes that there is not much in feminist studies or, in general, the cultural implications of endometriosis. While it is true that symptoms which were once found in hysteria are now diagnosed in endometriosis, I would follow Micale's argument that diagnostic criteria have changed,

complaints of the hysteric and chlorotic disappeared during the course of the twentieth century only to emerge as separate discrete conditions: fatigue was now ME; a lack of appetite, anorexia; and a concern with order, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. This development may be seen as part of a larger trend in medicine, one that seeks to problematize every aspect of the body. This trend has been termed 'medicalization' and is described by one of the leading authorities, Peter Conrad, as 'a process by which nonmedical problems become defined and treated as medical problems, usually in terms of illness and disorder.'[76] Medicalization may be construed as the uncoupling of sin from the body, concomitant with the gradual loosening of the grip of religions over the body. Previous behavioural traits once described as immoral or sinful, such as alcoholism or Attention Deficit Disorder (ADHD), 'have been given medical meaning, moving them from badness to sickness.'[77] Medicalization also has the impact of viewing the body as a mechanical object that does not work very well, and one that should be 'fixed' to an acceptable state of being. Moreover, even minor forms of discomfort, which would have been readily accepted in the past as a normal process of ageing, such as aching joints are fatigue, are no longer considered acceptable states of being. The body is viewed as something that ought to be at prime health, in peak condition whereby any perceived deficits or inherent tendencies, e.g., a tendency toward corpulence, need to be corrected away.[78] There is therefore nothing intrinsic to the body, of an embodied self, rather there is only an ideal to be attained.

Natural events in women's lives, such as menstruation, menopause, and childbirth, have been thoroughly medicalised.[79] Events that were once accepted as inevitable parts of life are now conditions to be managed. Contraception can be used to regularise menstruation, hormone replacement therapy (HRT) can stave off the effects of menopause, 'tricking' the body into a non-menopausal state, and childbirth without medical supervision is considered foolhardy.[80]

As well as normal female biological processes being managed, the gendered dimension of female diagnosis has continued. As Hustvedt writes, 'while modern medicine no longer talks about hysteria,

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endometriosis is, after all, a condition that pertains directly to the female gynaecological function, and impairs fertility, moreover diagnosis can only occur when lesions are confirmed. Endometriosis is a discernible disease that does compromise female fertility. While hysteria and chlorosis were clearly sociocultural phenomena, endometriosis would not appear to be in the same category.

[76] Peter Conrad, *The Medicalization of Society: On the Transformation of Human Condition into Treatable Disorders* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), p. 4. See also Peter Conrad, 'Medicalization and Social Control', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 18.1 (1992), 209-232.

[77] Conrad, *The Medicalization of Society*, p. 6.

[78] Peter Conrad, 'Wellness as Virtue: Morality and the Pursuit of Health', *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* 18.3 (2004), 385-401. Conrad has also argued that what is driving medicalization now more than ever is the consumer society. He points out that 'Big Pharma' not infrequently fund patient advocacy groups, thus fuelling demand for drugs which will treat every minute aspect of discomfort.

[79] Ruth Bleier, *Science and Gender: A Critique of Biology and its Theories on Women* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1984); Ann Oakley, *Women Confined: Towards a Sociology of Confinement* (New York: Schocken Books, 1980).

[80] Emily Martin, *Woman in the Body: A Cultural Analysis of Reproduction*, 3rd edn (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2001), pp. 25-69.

it nonetheless continues to perpetuate the idea that the female body is far more vulnerable than its male counterpart. Premenstrual syndrome, postpartum depression, and 'raging hormones' are among the most recent additions to a medical mythology that is centuries old.'[81] This trend has continued in psychiatry with the emergence of 'mood disorders'. Women are far more likely than men to be diagnosed with psychiatric conditions, and more likely to be prescribed psychotropic drugs.[82] Studies have shown that women's pain is more likely to be diagnosed as 'emotional' and not taken as seriously as men's and 'becomes clearly visible in the "undefined," medically unexplained disorders of women patients'.[83] Women are more likely to suffer from chronic pain and report medical conditions such as chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, two conditions that are poorly understood by the medical profession as no organic source of the pain/disability experienced in these conditions is discernable.[84] Women's physical distress is often construed as a manifestation of psychological distress, thus the old ideas of the incontinence of the female body, whereby the untidy mind bleeds into the body, still remain.[85] Despite the inherent belief in today's culture that nature surpasses nurture and that illness resides in biological fact, one which can be treated with drugs, no pharmacological treatment has yet to be found for what we might call female gendered illness, or at least those that affect women predominantly: anorexia nervosa, bulimia, self-mutilation, chronic fatigue syndrome,

[81] Hustvedt, *Medical Muses,* p. 6.

[82] In her much-quoted article, Ruth Cooperstock, in a bid to explain the gender discrepancy in psychotropic drug use, wrote 'Women are permitted greater freedom than men in expressing feelings. Because of this women are more likely to perceive or recognise their feelings more specifically to recognise emotional problems in themselves.' Ruth Cooperstock, 'Sex Differences in the Use of Mood-Modifying Drugs: An Explanatory Model', *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 12.3 (1971), 238-244, (p. 241). While her argument is largely considered limited (gender discrepancyis not simply due to the fact that women 'talk more') there is a general recognition that women are socialised differently to men. The trend noted by Cooperstock is well documented. In a recent study (2018) it was found that women were almost twice as likely to be prescribed psychotropic drugs as men. Camila Stéfani Estanciel Fernandes and others, 'Psychotropic Use Patterns: Are there Differences between Men and Women? *PloS one*, 13.11 (2018), e0207921.

[83] Kirsti Malterud, 'The (Gendered) Construction of Diagnosis Interpretation of Medical Signs in Women Patients', *Theoretical Medicine and Bioethics* 20.3 (1999), 275-286, (p. 275).

[84] Janet L. Armentor, 'Living with a Contested, Stigmatized Illness', *Qualitative Health Research*, 27.4 (2016), 462-473. Eva E. Johansson and others, '"I've Been Crying My Way"'—Qualitative Analysis of a Group of Female Patients' Consultation Experiences', *Family Practice*, 13.6 (1996), 498-503. Norma C. Ware, 'Suffering and the Social Construction of Illness: The Delegitimation of Illness Experience in Chronic Fatigue Syndrome', *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 6.4 (1992), 347-361. Pia Åsbring and Anna-Liisa Närvänen, 'Women's Experiences of Stigma in Relation to Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and Fibromyalgia', *Qualitative Health Research*, 12.2 (2002), 148-160. Anne Werner and Kirsti Malterud, 'It is Hard Work Behaving as a Credible Patient: Encounters between Women with Chronic Pain and Their Doctors', *Social Science & Medicine*, 57.8 (2003), 1409-1419.

[85] One of the most striking examples of the new normative, is the emergence of such gynocentric disorders such as pre-menstrual tension (PMT), which was said to put women at the mercy of their fluctuating hormones around the time of ovulation. PMT plays the same role as hysteria once did, as an argument for why women should not be in charge of public policy, hormonal imbalance and the association with 'unpredictability' this brings. PMT is considered to have a gradation of illnesses, a spectrum disorder, with its own place in the DSM-V (pp. 171-175), defined as Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder. Emily Martin sees PMT not as a proven disability that affects 75% of all Americen women, as some medical reports have held, but as a culturally constructed disease that reflects the intensive work discipline of industrial society and its structural lack of adjustment to women's cyclical changes. Emily Martin, *Woman in the Body,* pp. 113-138. PMT has also been described as 'symbolic safety valve' through which women give expression to the social contradictions that accompany expectations of reproduction and production. Alexandra Howson, *Embodying Gender*, p. 51.

and multiple personality disorder. What all of the aforementioned conditions have in common, aside from their gendered nature, is their being predicated on a battle where the individual is pitted against her body, where the condition is cast as a psychological disorder to some degree or another. The female body is still read as inferior to the male body although that inferiority is now largely read in terms of its 'sickness', as more varied and amorphous than the male.

4.5. Asceticism IV: The Anorectic

The asceticism of the postmodern era, anorexia nervosa, seems peculiarly suited to the distressed state, as illustrated above. It speaks to the anxieties that chlorosis and hysteria used to embody: (i) it is construed as a cry of women for help, (ii) it is spectacular in its presentation; and (iii) its pathology is manifest in the refusal of food, a characteristically female practice. It is also, like hysteria and chlorosis, stubbornly resistant to cure. Today, over 130 years after physicians first isolated self-starvation as a disease, biomedicine can neither adequately explain, reliably cure, nor even rigorously define anorexia.[86]

Anorexia nervosa is an eating disorder characterized by an abnormally low body weight, intense fear of weight gain, and a distorted perception of body weight.[87] Its name is something of a misnomer, meaning as it does 'lack of appetite'. The evolution of anorexia as a disease mirrors, in quite a remarkable fashion, hysteria and, as has been argued by Loudon, could be construed as a form of

[86] W. Stewart Agras and others, 'Report of the National Institutes of Health Workshop on Overcoming Barriers to Treatment Research in Anorexia Nervosa', *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 35.4 (2004), 509-521.
[87] The criteria for anorexia have shifted over time. The DSM shows how fluid conceptions of anorexia nervosa are: in the third edition of the DSM (1980 & 1983) a loss of more than 25% of body weight was considered necessary to meet the criteria of anorexia. By the time of DSM IV (1994 and 2000) it had fallen to 15%, and has been dropped altogether by the DSM V (2013) reflecting perhaps how arbitrary and contextual our understanding of what it means to be 'healthy'.
[87] Amenorrhea (where such a low body weight is reached that menstruation ceases) was once considered to be a necessary criterion, but this too has been discarded to allow for inclusion of men, pre-menstrual adolescents and those women who are considered to be anorexic but who still menstruate. Refusal to increase the body weight, integral to previous definitions, has also been dropped, because of a recognition that intention is not necessarily present in all those who suffer. It also begs the question if anorexia, as we understand it today, is the same disorder as it was first defined by William Gull and Ernest-Charles Lasègue in the 1870s. Recent studies have also shown the onset of anorexia in women in their thirties and beyond. James E. Mitchell and others, 'Diagnostic Criteria for Anorexia Nervosa: Looking Ahead to DSM-V', *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 37.S1 (2005), S95-S97; Johannes Hebebrand and Cynthia M. Bulik, 'Critical Appraisal of the Provisional DSM-5 Criteria for Anorexia Nervosa and an Alternative Proposal', *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 44.8 (2010), 665-678; Anne E. Becker and others, 'Should Non-Fat-Phobic Anorexia Nervosa Be Included in DSM-V?', *International Journal Of Eating Disorders*, 42.7 (2009), 620-635. A recent review (2016) of the incidence of and prevalence of eating disorders in Europe has suggested that the prevalence of anorexia nervosa has remained stable, whereas bulimia has declined but other eating disorders not otherwise diagnosed (EDNOS) are on the increase, or perhaps have remained undetected (or defined) until recently. An estimated 1-4% of the female population suffer from anorexia nervosa, 1-2% from bulimia, 2-3 % EDNOS. For males the figures are estimated at 0.3-0.7% (tellingly the particular rates in men are not broken down). Anna Keski-Rahkonen and Linda Mustelin, 'Epidemiology of Eating Disorders in Europe', *Current Opinion in Psychiatry*, 29.6 (2016), 340-345.

chlorosis.[88] Like hysteria, the two theories most advanced for anorexia's cause reside in psychological and sociocultural factors. Anorexia, as did hysteria, has undergone 'a nosographical inflation whereby its clinical boundaries were progressively broadened.'[89] Chlorosis, hysteria and anorexia were all thought to be 'affluent' diseases in their early stages, and all three have since been found in all socio-economic class. The proposed 'cures' for hysteria, chlorosis and anorexia are similar: food and bedrest.

Anorexia is a complex disorder, resistant in the tradition of female disease to a clear aetiology and cause.[90] Dubbed the 'slimmer's disease' upon its emergence into popular discourse with the death of the singer Karen Carpenter from complications caused by anorexia in 1983, anorexia emerged as a discrete condition in the 1870s, thought to be a subset of hysteria.[91] Generally linked with the fashion for thinness, anorexia has been predominantly linked to cultural factors, with the argument that societal pressures have forced women into unhealthy eating patterns.[92] As women have moved into the public sphere in the context of paid work and other forms of public participation and visibility, the

[88] Loudon, 'Chlorosis'.
[89] Micale, 'On the "Disappearance" of Hysteria', p. 50.
[90] As Joan Jacobs Brumberg, the author of the standard history of anorexia has outlined, current explanations generally flow from three models: biomedical, psychological and cultural (See Brumberg, *Fasting Girls*, pp. 11-42). Regarding possible biological causes, endocrinological and neurological abnormalities have been posited. The theory is that the hypothalamus which controls or modifies homeostatic functions is somehow impaired. See, Patricia A. Lipscomb, and others, 'Abnormal Hypothalamic-Pituitary-Adrenal Function in Anorexia Nervosa', *New England Journal of Medicine*, 314.21 (1986), 1335-1342. Psychological theories have their basis in Freud, who saw anorexia as 'melancholia where sexuality is underdeveloped'. Freud, *Fragmen*t, cited in Brumberg, *Fasting Girls*, p. 213. Hilde Bruche argued that anorexia is a fear of sexual maturation. Hilde Bruch, *The Golden Cage: The Enigma of Anorexia Nervosa* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978, 2001). Kim Chernin grounds anorexia in mother-daughter separation and anxiety. Kim Chernin, *The Hungry Self: Women Eating and Identity* (New York: Times Books, 1985), pp. 134-137. Anorexia has also been linked to depression, obsessive compulsive disorder and dependence disorder. See, Sidney H. Kennedy and others, 'Depression in Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia Nervosa: Discriminating Depressive Symptoms and Episodes', *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 38.7 (1994), 773-782. Mary Ann Marrazzi and Elliot D. Luby, 'An Auto-Addiction Opioid Model of Chronic Anorexia Nervosa', *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 5.2 (1986), 191-208. George I. Szmukler and Digby Tantam, 'Anorexia Nervosa: Starvation Dependence', *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, 57.4 (1984), 303-310. Szmukler and Tantam in particular have argued that anorexia fits the seven features of 'alcohol dependence syndrome' described by Edwards and Gross (Griffith Edwards and Milton M. Gross, 'Alcohol Dependence: Provisional Description of a Clinical Syndrome', *BMJ*, 1.6017 (1976), 1058-1061.
[91] John P. M. Court and Allan S. Kaplan, 'The Disjointed Historical Trajectory of Anorexia Nervosa before 1970', *Current Psychiatry Reports*, 18.1 (2016), 1-9. Anorexia nervosa was not defined as a discrete medical condition until the 1870s, when the term was almost simultaneously coined by William Gull (1816-1890) in London and Ernest-Charles Lasègue (1816-1883) in Paris. Both Lasègue and Gull laid claim to being the first to defining anorexia. For the discussion see, Walter Vandereycken and Ron Van Deth, 'Who Was the First to Describe Anorexia Nervosa: Gull or Lasègue?', *Psychological Medicine*, 19.4 (1989), 837-845.
[92] As Susan Bordo and others have demonstrated, the shape of the female body has shifted in accordance with the changes in women's relative economic, social and political position. For example, the Victorian angel of the household was an essentially passive figure, literally imprisoned by the iron cage of corsets in the nineteenth-century, which while promoting the hourglass ideal, restricted breathing, digestion, circulation and movement. The demand for the emancipation of women was echoed in the early twentieth century in the corsetless, androgynous figure of the flapper girl. In contrast, the curvy 1950s silhouette came into vogue as the push for domesticity was put in motion. The second wave of the female emancipatory movement which emerged in the 60s, that of the 'waif' - long-legged, small-breasted, and hipless - has remained with us to this day. Bordo, *Unbearable Weight,* p. 162.

thin body–a body that takes up less physical space–has been internalized as the current Western ideal.[93] Despite the advances made by women, numerous studies have demonstrated widespread body dissatisfaction amongst women and girls, particularly with regard to body shape and weight, to the extent that weight has been aptly described as 'a normative discontent'.[94]

Arthur Crisp has argued that typifying anorexia as slimming taken too far, 'trivialises the disorder, as does the term "eating disorder" which bears the same relationship to the psychopathology of anorexia nervosa as does a cough to cancer of the lung.'[95] Crisp, like the feminist theorists, Susan Bordo and Morag McSween, argues that anorexia is embedded in culture. The societal idea of the thin woman expresses the underlying logic of capitalism and patriarchy, which is characterised by the sexual divisions of labour and female subordination.[96] The management of the body is intimately connected with the management of the larger social body, through consumer culture.[97]

For the anorectic, the body is seen as the source of uncontrollable appetites against which the mind must be vigilant. In the culture of consumption, the act of refusal sets the anorectic on a separate plane. Simone Giordano has argued that eating disorders are not simply socially determined, but involve moral beliefs that need to be understood.[98] Anorexia is experienced by the sufferer in moral terms, socially sanctioned (and sanctified) cultural imperatives followed through to the extreme. Certain tenets are accepted as given: that a thin body is good, eating correctly is desirable, and health has a moral discourse. Research indicates that the 'symptoms' of anorexia (dieting and the pursuit of slimness) are considered normal female concerns and that women with anorexia elicit shocked admiration for their appearance and control.[99] Anorectics, in Giordano's view, simply take an exaggerated position on the scale of 'right' thinking on the body. [100] Anorexia is a product of the moral climate, a pathology 'which expresses in exaggerated form [the era's] underlying character

[93] Studies have consistently shown that concurrent with women's ability to expand her world, the actual space her body ought to occupy has shrunk, David M. Garner and others, 'Cultural Expectations of Thinness in Women', *Psychological Reports*, 47.2 (1980), 483-491. Claire V. Wiseman and others 'Cultural Expectations of Thinness in Women: An Update', *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 11.1 (1992), 85-89. On the confluence of factors which have given rise to anorexia, see the excellent collection of articles on the topic of female embodiment, Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight.*

[94] Judith Rodin, Lisa Silberstein and Ruth Striegel-Moore, 'Women and Weight: A Normative Discontent', *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation*, 32 (1984), 267-307.

[95] Arthur H. Crisp, 'The Enduring Nature of Anorexia Nervosa', *European Eating Disorders Review*, 14.3 (2006), 147-152.

[96] Bordo, *Unbearable Weight*, pp. 185-214; Morag MacSween, *Anorexic Bodies: A Feminist and Sociological Perspective on Anorexia Nervosa* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 52-87.

[97] Bordo, *Unbearable Weight*, p. 199.

[98] Simona Giordano, *Understanding Eating Disorders: Conceptual and Ethical Issues in the Treatment of Anorexia and Bulimia Nervosa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[99] Maree Burns, 'Eating Like an Ox: Femininity and Dualistic Constructions of Bulimia and Anorexia', *Feminism & Psychology*, 14.2 (2004), 269-295 (pp. 275-279).

[100] See also, C. Zanker, 'Anorexia Nervosa and the Body Image Myth', *European Eating Disorders Review*, 17.5 (2009), 327-330. Elizabeth Rieger and others, 'Cross-Cultural Research on Anorexia Nervosa: Assumptions Regarding the Role of Body Weight', *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 29.2 (2001), 205-215.

structure'.[101] In other words, the collective moral imperative seems to be towards a thin frame for women. There is an inherent systematic and societal predisposition that cites thin as 'good'. In manipulating food, using it to control the ways in which their body is defined, young women are seeking to articulate their own peculiar form of agency, a feature which, as has been explored in previous chapters, is found in the phenomenon of asceticism.

However, at a certain point, anorexia controls the anorectic. Starving changes brain chemistry, triggering chemical reactions in the brain that essentially disempowers female agency.[102] At a certain point, control over the disorder is lost, and anorexia takes over. Nonetheless, it is clear that women *perceive* a moral dimension to their fasting practices.[103]

In a society which fosters a particular ideal of femininity that is hypersexualised yet rigorously divorced from essentialist concepts of what it means to be a woman, anorexia presents, according to Crisp, as 'a solution to existential problems'.[104] The fragmented femininity of postmodernity has resulted in anorectics attempting to articulate their autonomy by disciplining the body through the denial of food and excessive exercising. Such behaviour is seen as conquering and destroying their own 'weak and detestable' femininity and is interpreted as a 'male' way of thinking and acting. This is about achieving a 'pure' body, that which exemplifies control and hardness, a shedding of femininity.[105] 'Denial of the body', writes Rebecca Lester, 'is both a philosophical attitude and painful daily practice, which makes them feel stronger, more in control, less vulnerable'.[106] Eating and non-eating become symbols of control, and refusal to eat is a refusal of any other control over the body

[101] Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism* (New York: Warner Books, 1979), p. 88.
[102] As Friedrich et al have written, 'altered brain activations in the ventral striatal system may underlie impaired cognitive-behavioral flexibility in patients with AN. This impairment may result from the dominance of higher-order association cortices over altered ascending motivational processing.' Hans-Christoph Friederich and others, 'Neurocircuit Function in Eating Disorders', *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 46.5 (2013), 425-432 (p. 428). Brain imaging studies of recovered anorexics 'described temperament and character traits that still persist after long-term recovery from AN, such as negative emotionality, harm avoidance, perfectionism, desire for thinness and mild dietary preoccupation. It is possible that such persistent symptoms are "scars" caused by chronic malnutrition. However, the fact that such behaviours are similar to those described for children who will develop anorexia argues that they reflect underlying traits that contribute to the pathogenesis of this disorder.' A. Hatch and others, 'Anorexia Nervosa: Towards an Integrative Neuroscience Model', *European Eating Disorders Review*, 18.3 (2010), 165-179. Thus, it is unclear, as discussed above, if the patterns cause anorexia or are indicative of a tendency to anorexia. The famous Minnesota Starving Experiments in 1944 carried out on 36 non-anorexic male participants on a highly restrictive food diet demonstrated that over time participants developed anorexic like traits. Ancel Keys and others, *The Biology of Human Starvation*, 2 vols (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1950).
[103] A recent book on anorexia suggests that that anorexia is a result of certain behaviours, such as caloric restriction and excessive exercise, rather than as a manifestation of a deep prior pathology whose meaning must be decoded from eating behaviours. It is a disorder of momentum, and the anorectic gets caught up in the disorder rather than anorexia originating from any psychological crisis. Richard A. O'Connor and Penny Van Esterik, *From Virtue to Vice: Negotiating Anorexia* (New York: Berghann Books, 2015).
[104] A.H. Crisp, *Anorexia Nervosa: Let Me Be* (Hove: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1995), p. v.
[105] MacSween, *Anorexic Bodies,* p. 244.
[106] Rebecca J. Lester, 'The (Dis)Embodied Self in Anorexia Nervosa', *Social Science & Medicine*, 44.4 (1997), 479-489 (p. 484).

than their own. [107] Thinness becomes not just a cultural obsession but a moral obligation. As Sigal Gooldin notes, 'anorexic women actively construct a 'heroic moral subjectivity', in which the experience of hunger plays a crucial role, and in which everyday (mundane) practices aquire 'out-of-the-ordinary' meanings.'[108]

The moral dimension of anorexia also possesses a religious dimension, and directly links the anorectic with the starving women of the Patristic and medieval eras. Dietary restriction is seen as 'a form of moral as well as physical self-control, its opposite being greed' as well as a form of self-denial as being a punishment for sin.[109] It implies a form of self-abnegation that has been read in the fasting body of a desert *ammah*, medieval ascetic, or in the twentieth-century ascetic, Simone Weil (1909-1943).[110] Susan Bordo has argued that even if no continuity can be demonstrated between the anorexia of the *mirabilis* and *nervosa*, there is a certain parallel between the two fasting behaviours: 'it does not follow that the contemporary slender obsession is without deep spiritual dimensions and that they cannot share important–that is, illuminating–affinities with ascetic ambitions of the medieval saints.'[111] Bordo, while describing anorexia nervosa as a 'debilitating affliction', perceptively notes that anorectics almost create their own metaphysics in their use of images and associations. She argues that this is deeply indebted to Augustine, with the recurring theme of will and appetites.[112] Augustine frequently wrote of the two wills within him, 'one the servant of the flesh, the other of the spirit'.[113] The conflict between will and appetite is the constant war that the anorectic wages on her body.[114] Bordo quotes one anorectic to illustrate her point, 'My soul seemed to grow as my body

[107] MacSween*, Anorexic Bodies,* pp. 100-101.
[108] Sigal Gooldin, 'Being Anorexic: Hunger, Subjectivity and Embodied Morality', *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 22.3 (2008), 274-296 (p. 274).
[109] Patricia Marsden and others, 'Spirituality and Clinical Care in Eating Disorders: A Qualitative Study', *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 40.1 (2006), 7-12.
[110] Francine du Plessix Gray, *Simone Weil* (New York: Viking, 2001). Gray, in particular, reads Simone Weil through the lens of her eating disorder. Weil was nonetheless far greater than the extent of her asceticism. In a review article, Laura Miller describes Weil as 'a schoolteacher who went into the factories long before such an act became commonplace; a philosopher whose writings reflect a deep need to come to terms with the 'modern condition' in its various dimensions (factory labor, to be sure, but also the attractions of fascism, the dangers of communism); child of a secular Jewish family who sought an understanding of ultimate things through Catholic rite and doctrine (though without ever converting to Catholicism herself).' Laura Downs, '"Simone Weil", by Francine Du Plessix Gray', *Source: French Politics, Culture & Society*, 22 (2004), 150-153 (p. 151). There is no doubt that she had a highly ambiguous relationship with the body, Neal Oxenhandle wrties that for Weil, 'the biological and the symbolic seemed to be at war', 'The Bodily Experience of Simone Weil', *L'esprit Créateur*, 34.3(1994), 82-91 (p. 82). Ann Loades, too, notes this in Weil, writing that Weil was consumed by suffering and it was only towards the end of her life that she seemed to see as a possilbity an alliance between matter and real emotions. Loades describes it as a tragedy that 'she was unable to live to explore, and which might have put the elements of Christianity that she did explore, into their proper perspective, and thus discover their possible proper meaning'. Loades, 'Eucharistic Sacrifice: Simone Weil's Use of a Liturgical Metaphor', *Religion & Literature*, 17.2 (1985), 43–54 (p. 53)
[111] Bordo, *Unbearable Weight*, p. 68.
[112] Bordo, *Unbearable Weight*, p. 147.
[113] Augustine, *Confessions*, p.164.
[114] Gale P. Corrington 'Anorexia, Asceticism and Autonomy: Self Control as Liberation and Transcendence', *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion,* 2.2 (1986), 51-61.

waned; I felt like one of those early Christian saints who starved themselves in the desert sun. I felt invulnerable, clean and hard as the bones etched into my silhouette.'[115]

One only has to look to current culture to see the slippage between secular and the saintly concern for thinness. Religious and moral language is rife within food advertising, particularly in advertising aimed at women.[116] Dietary-rich food is an indulgence, or temptation to be yielded to in sin, whereas advertising for low-calorie and diet-friendly cast these foods as being sin free and/or 'good'. Purity is implicit in the recent trend to eat 'clean'.[117] The highly commercially successful 'Wellness Industry' utilises quasi-religious language whereby maintaining a healthy weight is no longer sufficient, evidence of health is equated with thinness, having a 'ripped' physicality, with exhaustive exercise routines wherein the attendee is exhorted to feel the pain.[118] Even in areas that prioritise health over thinness, a content analysis of women's health magazines in 2014 found that one fifth of editorial content is devoted to the topic of diet and weight loss.[119]

The religious theme has long been implicit since the emergence of modern-day anorexia, often used by anorectics themselves to self-describe their starvation practices. Hilde Bruch describes one young woman as someone who felt she 'had found her own way to salvation'.[120] Myra Hornbacher, whose memoir *Wasted* is considered seminal as a first person account of anorexia, uses religious language

[115] Bordo, *Unbearable Weight,* pp. 146-149.
[116] J. Griffin and E.M. Berry, 'A Modern Day Holy Anorexia? Religious Language in Advertising and Anorexia Nervosa in the West', *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 57.1 (2003), 43-51.
[117] Suzanne M. Nevin and Lenny R. Vartanian, 'The Stigma of Clean Dieting and Orthorexia Nervosa', *Journal of Eating Disorders,* 5.1 (2017), 37-47. Clean eating can descend into *orthorexia nervosa*, which is an eating disorder characterised by 'healthy' or 'correct' eating. Courtney C. Simpson and Suzanne E. Mazzeo, 'Attitudes toward Orthorexia Nervosa Relative to DSM-5 Eating Disorders', *International Journal of Eating Disorders,* 50.7 (2017), 781-792.
[118] Tatiana Boncampagni, 'Higher Calling: When Your Exercise Regime Becomes Your New Religion', *Marie Claire,* 23 April 2014, <http://www.marieclaire.com/health-fitness/a10850/fitness-report-higher-calling.> [accessed 22 April 2019]. There has also been a recent boom in evangelical diet and exercise regimes. Both Martin Radermacher and R. Marie Griffith have made the compelling case that in many respects the drive toward thinness in America emerged from the evangelical sphere, with its notions of purity and pollution, and is not just the secular leftover from the devotional era. Martin Radermacher, *Devotional Fitness: An Analysis of Contemporary Christian Dieting and Fitness Programs* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017). R. Marie Griffith, *Born Again Bodies.* See also Hillel Schwartz, *Never Satisfied: A Cultural History of Diets, Fantasies, and Fat* (New York: Doubleday, 1990). Schwartz argues that dieting is a residue of the Christian culture and not necessarily religiously sourced. On the modern evangelical diet culture, see Griffith, *Born Again Bodies,* pp. 160-205. She cites influential Christian diet books such as: Joan Cavanaugh with Pat Forseth*, More of Jesus, Less of Me* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1976*)*; Patricia B. Kreml*, Slim for Him* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1978); C.S. Lovett, *Help Lord—The Devil Wants Me Fat!* (Baldwin Park, CA: Personal Christianity, 1977); and Deborah Pierce as told to Frances Spatz Leighton*, I Prayed Myself Slim* (New York: Citadel Press, 1960). The popularity of these are extraordinary, Griffith notes that 'the *Weigh Down Workshop*, a twelve-week Bible-study program founded by the nutritionist and fundamentalist Gwen Shamblin in 1986 and, by 2000, offered in as many as thirty thousand churches, seventy countries, and sixty different denominations.' (p. 176). The recent workout craze has spawned such classes as, Word-a-cise, Believercise, Cross Training, Jehobics, Faithfully Fit, and Praise Aerobics (pp. 178-181).
[119] Laura E. Willis and Silvia Knobloch-Westerwick, 'Weighing Women Down: Messages on Weight Loss and Body Shaping in Editorial Content in Popular Women's Health and Fitness Magazines', *Health Communication*, 29.4 (2013), 323-331.
[120] Bruch, *Eating Disorders,* p. xxiv.

when describing her struggles with her eating disorder, 'It becomes its own religion, and you wait for salvation, and you wait, and wait, and wait, and do not save yourself. If you saved yourself, and did not wait for salvation, you'd be self-sufficient.'[121] When describing her anorexic behaviour, she is at pains to emphasise the 'purity' and describing her anorexic behaviour as a 'crusade' on five separate occasions. Helen Baxter, a therapist, notes that for her patients suffering from eating disorders, 'religious themes and symbols seem to arise more frequently than in others [patients]'.[122] '*Anorexia nervosa*', Brumberg writes, 'appears to be a secular addiction to a new kind of perfectionism, one that links personal salvation to the achievement of an external body configuration rather than an internal spiritual state.'[123] Regina Ammicht Quinn and Hille Haker argue that, for women, to be virtuous has shifted today from 'the soul to the surface' and that female bodies 'have to be beautiful and function to be good'. The ascetic ideals of Christianity 'have not simply disappeared, but have been overwritten in secular terms', and what we have been left with is the negative, punitive elements of Christian asceticism, embedded in our cultural memory. [124]

Michelle Lelwica takes the argument further, contending that eating disorders are symptomatic of a lack of spirituality in women's lives.[125] For Lelwica, anorexia has a spiritual dimension. She suggests that the current ubiquitous desire for bodily transformation actually represents an attempt to pursue spiritual needs for meaning, purpose and value in an era marked by ambiguity between religious and secular realities. In a society where women are still judged on appearance, where sexism is still endemic, the anorectic 'may find herself resorting to whatever symbolic or ritual provisions are available to her even if those provisions deepen the hunger they are supposed to fill.'[126] The cues that were once employed in the practice of religious observance–devotional images, ritualistic gestures, clear guidelines to follow–are all provided for in the ritual of the dieter through the media, in counting calories, exercise, the demarcation between 'good' and 'bad' foods. This is not to say that anorexia is a religion, but rather, following Lelwica, anorexia apes the practices of religious observance, a liturgical accompaniment to the 'ultimate concern' (after Tillich)[127] of the age, thinness.

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[121] Myra Hornbacher, *Wasted: A Memoir of Anorexia and Bulimia* (London: Flamingo, 1999), p. 186.
[122] Helen Baxter, 'Religion and Eating Disorder', *European Eating Disorders Review*, 9.2 (2001), 137-139.
[123] Brumberg, *Fasting Girls,* p. 10.
[124] Regina Ammicht Quinn & Hille Haker, 'Women, Reproductive Medicine and Bioethical Discourse', in *The New Pontificate: A Time for Change?* ed. by Erik Borgman and others (London: SCM Press, 2006), p. 126.
[125] Lelwica, *Starving for Salvation.* Lelwica argues that the negative view of the female body in patriarchal religion has been carried through to consumer capitalism's deification of thinness where through advertising and other means, salvation is promised with the ideal body. Striving for thinness is a bid for a sense of control and meaning in life. Lelwica' position is not without its critics, namely that if eating disorders are innately connected to spirituality, she does not explain how eating disorders which involve the overconsumption of food fit within her rubric. See especially, Lucy Bregman, 'Starving for Salvation: The Spiritual Dimensions of Eating Problems Among American Girls and Women. Michelle Mary Lelwica', *The Journal of Religion*, 81.3 (2001), 474-476.
[126] Lelwica, *Starving for Salvation*, p. 104.
[127] Paul Tillich's theological project could be described as an attempt ot relate culture to theology. The 'ultimate concern' for Tillich (1886-1965), is that thing which we base our lives upon, the most important thing. The

Conceptions of salvation have changed, remarkably. The orientation to the afterlife, for union with God, has been remade over into the realisation of the self. As Lelwica points out:

> [T]he model of power that the salvation strategies of anorexic and bulimic women employ the classical theological view of ultimate power as omnipotence: as a transcendent, invulnerable governing force that rules (by coercion if need be) over all that threatens its (or 'His') Dominion.[128]

However one parses it, it must be recognised that anorexia is not merely dieting that has gone too far but is imbued with and influenced by various religious and cultural idioms. Lelwica's thesis, that such women are expressing a spiritual crisis, is challenging today in light of how anorexia narratives in medical discourse have changed from an emphasis on mind and body to focus on the anorexic body only 'in a bid to establish legitimacy within a dominant biomedical domain'.[129]

In a situation where women have been traditionally identified with the body, and specifically the Judaeo-Christian influenced perspective on the body, it is not surprising that women's primary locus of agency is experienced in how she controls the body. The collapse of the female body with the erotic and the reproductive, where sexuality is construed as dangerous, makes the autonomy of asceticism a viable means for women to express their rejection of this construal. The complex interplay of a religious heritage, and the aims of the consumer society collude to result in a society where transformation of the body becomes a religious pursuit of virtue and not merely a pursuit of the 'good life'. Part of what makes the pursuit of slenderness so compelling is that it seems to give girls and women what history has denied them, namely, the power of self-determination.[130] Fasting promises that one can dictate how one appears, and as women are traditionally understood as seen rather than seeing, as being viewed rather than voyeurs, control over how one appears is the pinnacle of power. [131]

While it is too early to state with any certainty given the paucity of research available, we can draw tentative parallels between anorexia and transgender identification, particularly with regard to what has been termed Rapid Onset Transgender Disorder (ROGD).[132] ROGD is a newly-emergent

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religious term for such concern, is God. Religion is 'being ultimately concerned about which and should be our ultimate concern. This means that faith is the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern, and God is the name for the content of that concern,' Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 40.

[128] Lelwica, *Starving for Salvation*, p. 110.

[129] Nick Fox and others, 'Pro-Anorexia, Weight-Loss Drugs and the Internet: An "Anti-Recovery" Explanatory Model of Anorexia', *Sociology of Health and Illness*, 27.7 (2005), 944-971. See also Nissim Mizrachi, 'Epistemology and Legitimacy in the Production of Anorexia Nervosa in the Journal Psychosomatic Medicine 1939-1979', *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 24.4 (2002), 462-490.

[130] Lelwica, *Starving for Salvation*, p. 89.

[131] Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen*, 16.3 (1975), 6-18.

[132] Lisa Littman, 'Rapid-Onset Gender Dysphoria in Adolescents and Young Adults: A Study of Parental Reports', *PLOS ONE*, 13.8 (2018), 1-41. Littman's paper has been roiled in controversy. Despite being peer

phenomenon that occurs predominantly in adolescent females who, despite having previously expressed no discomfort with their gender identity, suddenly identify as being trans. It has been speculated that the phenomenon of ROGD has contributed to the sharp increase in rates of gender dysphoria, brought on in part by the rise of social media, peer influence, exposure to transgender individuals and positive portrayals of transpersons in popular culture, as well as being connected to Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).[133] There is evidence to suggest that these adolescent girls in time revert back to their natal gender.[134]

Parallels have been drawn between gender dysphoria and anorexia, and some have argued that gender dysphoria is a fashionable moniker for the age-old phenomenon of discomfort within the adolescent body, rather than dissatisfaction with gender.[135] Littman, the author of a paper on ROGD, herself noted in a recent interview with the online journal *Quillette*:

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reviewed, Brown University ordered a review of the methodology and removed information on site linking to Littman's paper, following significant backlash from the trans community. Brown released a statement to that effect <https://news.brown.edu/articles/2018/08/gender> [accessed 14 April 2019], but the link has since been taken down [as of 22 April 2019]. The paper was reviewed and republished on 19 March 2019. Other than the addition of a few missing values in Table 13, the Results section is unchanged in the updated version of the article: see correction <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0214157> [accessed 22 April 2019].

[133] Derek Glidden and others, 'Gender Dysphoria and Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Systematic Review of the Literature', *Sexual Medicine Review,* 4.1 (2016), 3-14. The Tavistock Clinic for children and adolescents in London has seen referral increases of about 50% a year since 2010-2011. In 2015-2016 there was an unexpected and unprecedented increase of 100%: 2,016 children and adolescents were referred to the Tavistock Clinic in 2016-2017 (compared to 1,398 the previous year) and of that number 69% were girls, increasing to over 70% in the adolescent age group. Calum McKenzie, 'Child gender identity referrals show huge rise in six years', BBC, 11 February 2016,< https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-nottinghamshire-35532491> [accessed 22 April 2019]. In June 2019, the Times reported that 75% of children referred to the Tavistock Clinic were girls and that 54% of the total number of children were 14 years of age or under. The rise in numbers from previous years was reported as being due to the acceleration in girls seeking treatment. The number of boys had remained static. Andrew Gilligan, 'Tavistock clinic reveals surge in girls switching gender', *The Times*, 30 June 2019 <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/surge-in-girls-switching-gender-pwqdtd5vk/> [accessed 12 July 2019].

[134] T.D. Steensma and others, 'Factors Associated with Desistence and Persistence of Childhood Gender Dysphoria: A Quantitative Follow-Up Study' *Journal of American Academy of Child Adolescent Psychiatry,* 52.6 (2013), 582-590. This seems to be part of the trend of little academic support for work in what is termed the 'gender critical' area, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/sep/25/bath-spa-university-transgender-gender-reassignment-reversal-research> [accessed 22 April 2019]. There has been alarm raised more generally given the trend to 'affirm' unconditionally a child's questioning of their gender. As Susan Bewley notes, 'with 85% desistance amongst referred transgender children and increasing awareness of detransitioning, unquestioning "affirmation" as a pathway that leads gender dysphoric patients to irreversible interventions cannot be considered sole or best practice.' 'Safeguarding Adolescents from Premature, Permanent Medicalisation', *BMJ*, 11 February 2019, <https://www.bmj.com/content/364/bmj.l245/rr-1> [accessed 22 April 2019]. See also Gary Butler and others, 'Assessment and Support of Children and Adolescents with Gender Dysphoria', *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, 103.7*,* (2018) <https://adc.bmj.com/content/early/2018/04/26/archdischild-2018-314992> [accessed 22 April 2019]. JL Turban and AS Keuroghlian 'Dynamic Gender Presentations: Understanding Transition and "De-Transition" Among Transgender Youth', *Journal of American Academy of Child Adolescent Psychiatry*, 57.7 (2018), 451-453.

[135] Lisa Marchiano, 'Outbreak: On Transgender Teens and Psychic Epidemics', *Psychological Perspectives*, 60.3 (2017), 345-366. A recent study on the prevalence of eating disorders in gender non-conforming individuals found that those assigned a female sex at birth appear to have heightened lifetime risk of eating

> [T]here were many potential parallels between anorexia nervosa and gender dysphoria. I found the research about friendship cliques setting a level of preoccupation with one's body, body weight and techniques for weight loss to be compelling, and thought that this might also be applicable to gender dysphoria. The specific group dynamics of mocking "outsiders" and praising "insiders" that has been observed in treatment settings for patients with anorexia seemed consistent with anecdotes I was hearing parents describe about their children's friend groups regarding transgender-identification.[136]

One can note the parallels as follows:- (i) a teenage onset age in adolescent girls (ii) linked to societal trends, and (iii) strong association with dissatisfaction with the body.

Transgender identity appears congruent to the changes in society. With the promise of unlimited possibility through our hyperconnected world, the body is being reconfigured, its materiality disputed:

> To affirm a materiality—or, to be less abstract, to insist on the livability of one's own embodiment, particularly when that embodiment is culturally abject or socially despised—is to undertake a constant and always incomplete labor to reconfigure more than just the materiality of our own bodies. It is to strive to create and transform the lived meanings of those materialities.'[137]

Such a statement could refer to the virile virgin or the secular anorectic, but instead is written about the transgender individual. In an age where the traditional markers of the erotic and reproductive are no longer identified with the female body, or are identified in a negative light, the solution posed by transgender identification, or simply the possibility it provides, seems like a logical inference. One could suggest that the new ascetic *is* the transgender individual, intent on a *techne* of asceticism that truly transforms.

4.6. Conclusion

Even as women have gained immeasurably in the public space, though the historical advances if feminism, the female body is literally disappearing, parsed to the point of elision in theoretical discourse and the fraught debates around gender identity. The shift to medicalization reads female distress as locked in a battle between the mind and the body, whereby the body is viewed as something to be improved or overcome. Echoing the figurative disappearance of the female body in its philosophical construct, the female body of the anorectic literally disappears in the postmodern world, thinned by dint of will. Helen Malson sees the anorexic body as the ultimate post-modern

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disorders relative to MTF participants. Elizabeth W. Diemer and others, 'Beyond the Binary: Differences in Eating Disorder Prevalence by Gender Identity in a Transgender Sample', *Transgender Health*, 3.1 (2018), 17–23.

[136] Jonathan Kay, 'An Interview With Lisa Littman, Who Coined the Term "Rapid Onset Gender Dysphoria"', *Quillette*, March 19, 2019, <https://quillette.com/2019/03/19/an-interview-with-lisa-littman-who-coined-the-term-rapid-onset gender-dysphoria/>[accessed 22 April 2019].

[137] Gayle Salamon, *Assuming a Body: Transgender and the Rhetoric of Materiality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), p. 42.

expression of fragmented femininity.[138] It is an observation that seems particularly apposite. Anorexia is, in many respects, both a response to and a simulacrum of female embodiment in postmodernity.

[138] Helen Malson, 'Women under Erasure', p. 146.

Chapter 5: Contemporary Theologies and the Female Body

5.1. Introduction

The ascetic impulse, arguably, is a constant throughout history, and is shaped by a peculiarly Christian logic. Physiologically, there is no difference between the twenty-first century anorectic and Catherine of Siena. Although one could no more retroactively diagnose Jerome's Blaesilla as anorectic than diagnose today's anorectic as expressing eucharistic piety, in the transition from 'sainthood to patienthood' in Joan Jacobs Brumberg's evocative phrase, the phenomena of fasting women has been remarkably consistent. [1] While intention must be considered seriously, and the difference behind the rationale for fasting acknowledged, we should perhaps query why the behaviour of the medieval ascetic and her less-famed sister, the virile virgin, is considered culturally meaningful but dismissed as pathological in her latter-day counterpart of hysteric and anorectic. Rather, perhaps we should ask, do all the forms of asceticism examined speak to a fundamental distress regarding how the female body is framed? It has been demonstrated that the ascetic impulse is a female response to the historical, theoretical and medical discourse around the female body. Asceticism is a consistent hallmark in how women manage their bodies and seek meaning within their environment. It is a response to the lack of any conception of the female body outside of the erotic and reproductive.

It is time that we examine what contemporary theology has to say specifically about the female body. While this may seem counterintuitive – indeed it has been demonstrated that the Christian conception of the female body, influenced by classical and Judaeo-Christian thought, is a largely negative enterprise – the reasons are threefold. First, female embodiment is informed by the Christian tradition. If the blame lies with patriarchal religious traditions, as many contend, then surely those traditions should assist in resolving the crisis. Second, Christianity, with its explicit statements about the goodness of creation, could perhaps offer a positive critique of female embodiment.[2] Rather than women trying to establish herself through the limitation of appetites, by denying her fleshiness and fecundity, she ought to be able to rediscover the more positive elements of being created *imago Dei*.[3] Third, as demonstrated, conventional wisdom, medicine, and indeed society, fail to adequately redress the reasons behind the ascetic impulses in woman. If, as Lelwica has speculated, anorexia is representative of spiritual crisis, perhaps theology could assist in offering a solution.

[1] Brumberg, *Fasting Girls,* p. 41.
[2] Lelwica, *Starving for Salvation*, pp. 125-148.
[3] Janet Martin Soskice, *Kindness of God: Metaphor, Gender, and Religious Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 35-52.

Arguably, we are at something of a crisis of embodiment. Theologians argue that attempts to corral the body through the application of will– through bids for longevity, reproduction aids for the infertile, and the obsession with diet and exercise– is a form of 'gnostic liberalism'.[4] Sarah Coakley argues that such obsessive attention is a direct consequence of a desacralisation of the body. '[T]he obsessive interest in the "body" which has been such a marked feature of the late twentieth-century Western culture hides a profound eschatological longing; only a *theological* vision of a particular sort ... can satisfy it.'[5]

To suggest that Catholic theology–broadly conceived–could provide the resources to think positively about the female body, and enable women to achieve a positive sense of their body-person outside of the autonomy of asceticism, implies that two requirements ought to be met (i) an examination of what theology has to say *specifically* about the body and (ii) how such a theology of the body can be applied to the female body. It may be argued that such a project is overly ambitious. Ostensibly, there is *no* theology of the body. Or to be more precise, there is no actual doctrine of the body, as there is 'no somatology as there is an ecclesiology or eschatology, but rather, somatology would be part of an anthropology and/or Christology.'[6]

But where are we to discover such a theological vision? The purpose of this chapter is to examine the various attempts to locate what contemporary theologies say about the female body. The first section examines the gender complementarity of contemporary Catholicism, or the theology of sexual difference. The second section treats feminist theological treatment of the body, much of which flows from the perceived shortcomings of the theology of sexual difference. The third section examines how the intersection of feminist thought and the postmodern turn gave rise to 'body theology'. In conclusion, it is contended that these three approaches, while each contributing something important to constructions of the female body, ultimately fall short in articulating a positive theology of the female body, and reinforce the collapse of the female with the erotic.

5.2. Gender Complementarity in Contemporary Catholicism

Traditional thinking on the body in Christianity, encompasses two competing tensions: the body is created good as affirmed by scripture, but considered slightly inferior to the soul. The body is inclined to disorder due to original sin, and thus is the place in which sin manifested itself. Augustine and Aquinas, whose arguments as to the sexual difference between men and women was so brilliantly

[4] Robert P. George, 'Gnostic Liberalism', *First Things*, December 2016, 33-38.
[5] Sarah Coakley, 'The Eschatological Body: Gender, Transformation, and God', *Modern Theology*, 16.1 (2000), 61-73 (p. 61).
[6] Ola Sigurdson, 'How to Speak of the Body? Embodiment Between Phenomenology and Theology', *Studia Theologica - Nordic Journal of Theology*, 62.1 (2008), 25-43 (p. 30).

outlined by Kari Børrensen, dominated well into the medieval era.[7] Francis Martin argues that, from the fifteenth to the twentieth century, there is little development in the theology of the body.[8] The Enlightenment ushered in a more mechanistic era, and the Catholic Church retreated into Neo-Scholasticism, officially appointing Thomistic thought (in its dominantly neo-scholastic form) as the mode of Catholic thought. 'Neo-Scholasticism', writes Walter Kaspar, 'was the attempt to solve the modern crisis of theology by picking up the thread of the high scholastic tradition of medieval times. The aim was to establish a timeless, unified theology that would provide a norm for the universal church.'[9] While, as Kaspar remarks, this imparted 'a certain grandeur', the result was an entrenched mentality, as encapsulated in the *Syllabus of Errors* (1864).[10] What was celebrated was an ahistorical literal application of Thomism. Recourse to experience or historical consciousness was firmly outlawed, suspected of being a form of modernism, and was viewed as a scourge of early twentieth century practices. The study of the body, never a primary theological concern, fell to the remit of the sciences. Although appeal was made to natural law, the Church largely ceded matters of the body to the secular arena, save for issues of the body and morality in sexual ethics. Where the body was considered, it was in strictly neo-scholastic Thomistic terms. 'Hence' concludes Martin, 'there is little real development concerning the theology of the body in this period.'[11]

Gradually, however, by the mid-twentieth century, new shifts in theological scholarship came into being, particularly in the work of scholars such as Henri du Lubac, Yves Congar, Hans Urs von Balthasar and others. The *Ressourcement* movement encouraged a creative return to the biblical, patristic, liturgical and other sources. Alongside this creative renewal there was an increased interest in the realm of social sciences.[12] Vatican II made an unprecedented attempt to open the Church to the world and, as a result, interest in the body re-emerged in theological discourse. Francis Martin characterises this, in part, as

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[7] Kari Elisabeth Børrensen, *Subordination and Equivalence: The Nature and Role of Women in Augustine and Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1981).
[8] Francis Martin, *The Feminist Question: Feminist Theology in the Light of Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), p. 373. See also Frank Bottomley, *Attitudes to the Body in Western Christendom* (London: Lepus Books, 1979), p. 223, n. 50. Mary Timothy Prokes also sets out eight reasons why the body was viewed as suspect: (i) taboos (ii) generalised ignorance (iii) dualism (iv) impact of barbarian invasions (v) Thomistic interpretations of Aristotle (vi) abuses of sacraments and sacramentals prior to the Reformation, and the ensuing backlash (vii) dualism of the Enlightenment (viii) technological revolution whereby the human being became an artefact. Prokes, *Toward a Theology of the Body*, pp. 3-23.
[9] Walter Kaspar, *Theology and Church* (London: SCM Press, 1989), p. 1.
[10] The *Syllabus of Errors* is an annex to the encyclical *Quanta cura* (1864). The encyclical addressed what Pius XI identified as the 'snares of error' plaguing the modern world. The syllabus was effectively a list of 80 ideas – political, religious, and philosophical – that the Church condemned, ranging from pantheism to socialism, liberalism to decrying the supremacy of civil authority and abrogation of Church privileges. Pius IX, *Syllabus errorum*, 8 December 1864 <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius09/p9syll.htm> [accessed 22 April 2019]
[11] Martin, *The Feminist Question*, p. 375.
[12] See Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray, *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Hans Boersma, *Nouvelle Theologie and Sacramental Ontology: A Return to Mystery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

> a reaction against the mechanism and rationalism of much Enlightenment thought (already underway in Romanticism and Idealism), the rise of phenomenology and its utilization by theologians, a growing interest in theological anthropology as a prime category for theological reflection, and an increased interest in the theological significance of human sexuality and sexual differentiation.[13]

Theologically, the body in contemporary Catholicism is framed in terms of gender complementarity. The roots of complementarianism, argues Prudence Allen, the author of an exhaustive three volume series exploring the nature of woman, lies in the intersection, or tension, between *sex polarity* and *sex unity* or *unisex,* as exemplified by Aristotle and Plato respectively.[14] The unisex model posits that there is no significant differentiation between men and women while affirming their basic equality. The polarity model accepts gender differentiation but does not affirm equality. Allen argues that most philosophical theories of gender range between these two views. Catholic philosophers adopt a midway point between the two, termed gender complementarity, which contends fundamental equality but significant difference between the genders (women and men have equal human worth, while in their different natures each completes the other), grounded in the works of Augustine and Aquinas.[15] In the doctrine of *imago Dei* the equivalence between the two sexes is emphasised, even as they are distinguished. Gender complementarians hold that essential differences between men and women are part of God's plan. The differences between men and women are not merely biological or sociologically constructed, but go to the very heart of what makes man *qua* man and woman *qua* woman. Advocates of complementarity have argued that scripture indicates that complementarianism is a foundational topic in Christianity. Benedict Ashley argues that complementarity 'is precisely what Genesis 1-2 teaches, Jesus affirms … and St Paul sums up (1 Cor 11:11-12).'[16]

The theoretical framing of gender complementarity was greatly aided by the employment of phenomenological analysis by Dietrich von Hildebrand (1889-1977)[17] and Edith Stein (1891-1942)[18],

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[13] Martin, *The Feminist Question*, p. 377.

[14] Gender complementarity, that is, the idea that man and woman are fundamentally different, but equal, is present in most evangelical forms of Christianity and the Roman Catholic tradition. For an overview see, Prudence Allen, 'Man-Woman Complementarity: The Catholic Inspiration', *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture*, 9.3 (2006), 87-108. The three book series comprise of, *The Concept of Woman I: The Aristotelian Revolution, 750 B.C. - A.D. 1250*, 2nd end (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997). *The Concept of Woman, II: The Early Humanist Reformation, 1250-1500* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997). *The Concept of Woman III: The Search for Communion of Persons, 1500-2015* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016).

[15] Allen sees the period 1250-1500 as a breakthrough moment when, for the first time, earlier concepts of woman-those based on gender neutrality (women and men are the same, in the Platonic ideal) and gender polarity (women and men are opposites in the Aristotelian concept) build toward the deep humanity of gender complementarity. Allen credits in no small part the work of Hildegard of Bingen, as being the 'foundress of the philosophy of sex complementarity'. Prudence Allen, 'Two Medieval Views on Woman's Identity: Hildegard of Bingen and Thomas Aquinas', *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses*, 16.1 (1987), 21-36. For further discussion on Hildegard by Allen see, *The Concept of Woman I,* pp. 292-315.

[16] Benedict M. Ashley, 'Gender and the Priesthood of Christ: A Theological Reflection', *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review*, 57.3 (1993), 343-379 (p. 371).

[17] Von Hildebrand, similar to many of the Catholic phenomenologists, was a convert to Catholicism, in part due to the influence of Max Scheler, who is one of the philosophical partners in the work of John Paul II. An influential figure in German Catholic thought due to his pioneering study of marriage, von Hildebrand argued

both of whom studied under the founder of phenomenology Edmund Husserl (1859-1938).[19] Crucially, both von Hildebrand and Stein saw the body *and* soul as being either male or female. According to von Hildebrand, 'it would be incredibly superficial to consider as a mere biological difference the distinction between man and woman, which really shows us two complementary types of the spiritual person of the human species.'[20] Sexual difference is not only physical but metaphysical.

While von Hildebrand treated the nature of women largely through the prism of marriage, Edith Stein considered women extensively in their own right. Stein was especially interested in the corporeal influence on the male/female divide. Applying the principle that the soul is the form of the body, she believed in the essential distinction of the sexes through their bodily difference.[21] A woman's essential difference lies in her receptivity, or her ability to bear a child. Hanna-Barbara Gerl-Flakowitz describes certain aspects of Stein's thinking as 'conditioned by the time' and at times 'disquieting',[22] in its identification of the female role as reproductive. For Stein, the reproductive

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that the marital act has both procreative meaning and equally unitive meaning. His influence can be traced to the celebration of marriage in the Second Vatican Council's *Gaudium et Spes.* Hildebrand was also distinctly personalist in his account, believing that individuals owed a duty to one another. See, Kevin Schemenauer, *Conjugal Love and Procreation: Dietrich Von Hildebrand's Superabundant Integration* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011).

[18] On Edith Stein's fascinating life and tragic death: a convert from Judaism, and Carmelite, she was eventually executed by the Nazis, see, Sarah R. Borden, *Edith Stein* (London: Continuum, 2003), pp. 1-19. Borden also provides a succinct outline of Stein's major ideas. On Edith Stein's phenomenology in the context of gender essentialism see, Jennifer Hockenbery Dragseth, *Thinking Woman: A Philosophical Approach to the Quandary of Woman* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015), pp. 15-23.

[19] Husserl distinguished between the inanimate physical body *(Körper)* and the living animate body *(Leib),* situating the body as the medium of experience. Phenomenology is conceived of as a scientific method whereby what is examined is the thing itself, or how it presents of the viewer. It is means of understanding the experience *of the experience.* For an excellent introduction, see Dermot Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (London & New York: Routledge, 2000). It should be noted however, that phenomenology is largely characterised by its fragmentation, there being very little in the way of constant thought in not only a general school, but also in the evolution of thought of the thinkers themselves. Nonetheless, the basic 'grammar' of phenomenology has remained the same: 'epoché' or 'bracketing', is the process involved in blocking biases and assumptions in order to explain a phenomenon in terms of its own inherent system of meaning; 'intentionality' is the characteristic of consciousness whereby it is conscious of something—i.e., its directedness toward an object. Phenomenology has been noted to have a peculiar appeal to Catholicism in particular (e.g. Hildebrand, Stein and Maritain were all converts to Catholicism), which has not been greeted favourably in some quarters, notably by Dominique Janicaud in his (in)famous 1991 essay, *Le tournant théologique de la phénoméologie françise*. Janicaud distinguishes between the 'historical phenomenology' of Husserl and (the early) Heidegger on the one hand, and the 'new phenomenology' of a Henry Emmanuel Levinas (1906-95), Michel Henry (1922-2002), Jean-Luc Marion (1946-), and Jean-Louis Chrétien (1952-). Janicaud alleged that these thinkers were introducing God, and thus the element of the transcendental into phenomenology, which undermined the 'scientific' discourse of phenomenology. See the English translation of the essay, and the responses it engendered in, Dominique Janicaud and others, *Phenomenology and the 'Theological Turn': The French Debate*, trans. by Bernard G. Prusak (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000).

[20] Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Marriage: The Mystery of Faithful Love* (Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute, 1997), p. 13.

[21] See, for example, Edith Stein, 'The Ethos of Women's Professions', in *Essays on Women* (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1996).

[22] Some of her views are typical of her time. For example, on the carnality of woman, 'In the fall woman rebelled against God and exalted herself above man by corrupting him, therefore she was punished by being

function was indicative of the distinction between male and female. Woman, responsible for nourishing new life, receives the world through the passions. Man, through detachment of the seed, is more attuned to the world through the intellect. Woman is more emotional and intuitive, and receives the world in its totality.[23]

According to Stein: 'The impossibility of being rid of the body indicates its special givenness. This union cannot be shaken; the bonds tying us to our bodies are indissoluble.'[24] For Stein the natural vocation of woman is motherhood. Women's attributes and gifts of gentleness, nurturing, motherhood, even obedience, are not weaknesses, but complementary to men's more forthright gifts. Enlightenment feminism is viewed by Stein as negating women, women were not men, and to advocate for women as having the same gifts as men was merely promoting a male political view and denigrated the gifts that a woman naturally possessed.[25]

While contemporary thinking would find such arguments reductive, Stein is insistent that the specific nature of woman meant that she could contribute to both private and public life.[26] This was not to say that men could not have feminine aspects or women male aspects. Such integration of the male and female prevents the more extreme of gender propensities, the over emotional woman, the cruel rational man.

A second important philosophical influence on theology of the body is personalism, as best exemplified by Jacques Maritain (1892-1973), Raissa Maritain (1893-1960), and Emmanuel Mounier (1905-1950). Personalism may be defined as 'a Christian version of existentialism stressing communion on the basis of shared values, with the person, as distinct from the political individual, as the locus of a 'unique vocation' directed towards fellowship.'[27] Based on existentialism's insight that human beings are to a certain degree responsible for their self-definition, personalists ground their

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subjected to him. Because the sin she tempted him was probably one of sensuality, woman is exposed more than man to the danger of succumbing entirely to a merel sensual life', 'The Separate Vocations of Man and Woman According to Nature and Grace', in *Writings of Edith Stein,* selected, ed. and trans. by Hilda Graef (London: Peter Owen, 1956), pp. 101-125 (pp. 116-117). Notwithstanding such sentiments, Stein herself had a robust view of the dated nature of some of the scriptural exhortations. Witness her dismissal of the apostle Paul on the issue of women covering their heads in Corinth: 'We do not think we shall offend the apostle if we say that in his instruction to the Corinthians, divine and human, temporal and eternal things are mixed up. Hair styles and clothes are matter of custom, as St Paul says himself … if his decision on the appearance of the Corinthian women in church was binding for the Church he had founded, this does not mean that that it should be vaild for all times', (pp. 107-108).

[23] Stein, 'The Separate Vocations of Man and Woman', pp. 101-125.

[24] Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, trans. by Waltraut Stein, 3rd edn (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1989), p. 46.

[25] Edith Stein, 'Problems of Women's Education', in *Essays on Woman,* ed. by Lucy Gelber and Romaeus Leuven, trans. by Freda Mary Oben, 2nd edn, rev (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 2010), pp. 147-236, (pp. 153-154; p. 158).

[26] Edith Stein, 'The Separate Vocations of Man and Woman', p. 122.

[27] Alastair Hannay, 'Personalism' in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 69. E. Mounier, *Le Personnalisme* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1949).

notion of responsibility in the Christian concept of free will. Unlike existentialists, personalists believe that the human person does not distinguish him or herself from the rest of humanity as a unique individual. In personalism the human person 'actively creates the self through relationship with other persons in social and communal bonds'.[28] Thus, all humans are responsible—to a degree—for their own self-definition. Advocates of personalism argue that such an approach prevents complementarianism from descending into essentialism as it preserves both the uniqueness of the individual and asserts the primacy of free will. The twin approaches of personalism and phenomenology deemphasise the hierarchical subordinatist argument that figured women as inferior to men.

While complementarity was always present in Christian thinking, parity between the sexes was not always assumed. It was not until the twentieth century that women were explicitly said to be created in equal dignity to men. Prior to this the spectres of Augustine and Aquinas hung over theological anthropology, with their qualified statements as to the dignity of the female body.[29] Gradually, in response to the shifts in the greater world, the position of the Church began to change. Old strictures and suspicion of women's bodily functions were gradually excised, for example, the purification ritual of women that women had to undergo after childbirth before they could step back into the Church and rules that forbade menstruating women to serve as lectors at the liturgy were dropped.[30] Initially hostile to the movement for female emancipation–Pope Pius XI condemned feminism as undermining the divinely founded obedience of the wife to her husband and a false deflection from her true and sole role as mother and homemaker in *Casti Conubii* (1930)– the Magisterium's position gradually became less entrenched.[31] Yet despite this, according to Susan Ross, 'a careful reading of the magisterial teaching will show that womanhood is still largely understood in maternal and subordinate terms, despite the Vatican claims to affirming women's full equality.'[32] Christine Gurdof has described the trajectory of the Catholic Church as moving 'from teaching that women were equal to men in the eyes of God, but were subject to them in the material world (through John XXIII), to teaching that women were equal to men both in society and in the eyes of God, but subject in the

[28] Prudence Allen, 'Integral Sex Complementarity and the Theology of Communion', *Communio*, 17.4 (1990), 523-44 (p. 537).
[29] See, Børrensen, *Subordination and Equivalence*.
[30] Mary Aquin O'Neill, 'The Nature of Women and the Method of Theology', *Theological Studies*, 56.4 (1995), 730-742 (p. 730).
[31] For a survey of the various papal pronouncements regarding women up to and including the first half of the pontificate of John Paul II see, Richard L. Camp, 'From Passive Subordination to Complementary Partnership: The Papal Conception of a Woman's Place in Church and Society since 1878', *The Catholic Historical Review*, 76.3 (1990), 506-525. Camp intersperses careful reading of magisterium documents with excerpts and comments from interviews, etc. by various popes. See also Ivy A. Helman, *Women and the Vatican: An Exploration of Official Documents* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012).
[32] Susan A. Ross, 'Joys and Hopes, Griefs and Anxieties: Catholic Women Since Vatican II', *New Theology Review*, 25.2 (2013), 30-38 (p. 30).

family and the church (Paul VI), to teaching that women were equals of men in society and the family, but not the church (John Paul II)'.[33]

When Karol Wojtyla became Pope John Paul II in 1979, the language of subordination was replaced with that of 'receptivity'. Whilst the 'woman question' had been alluded to during earlier papacies, John Paul II was the first pontiff to engage fully with the question of women. His main, oft debated, writings on women as pope were the apostolic letter *Mulieres Dignitatum* (1988)[34], the encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* (1995)[35] and the somewhat controversial *Letter to Women,* an address to mark the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women.[36] The rubric under which he read the nature of women was in her relationship to man.

5.2.1. John Paul II, Hans Urs von Balthasar and Catholic Complementarity

The relative riches of the published academic work of Karol Wojtyla before he became pope provide a rigorous examination of his philosophical and theological grounding, and the key to understanding his thought on women and on the nature of the body. John Paul II's understanding of the nature of woman (and man) can be traced in his earlier work such as *Love & Responsibility* (1960),[37] *The Acting Person* (1969),[38] and a series of lectures given in 1974-1975, collected in *Community and*

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[33] Christine E. Gudorf, 'Strategic Essentialism and Vatican Policy', *Political Theology*, 15.3 (2014), 231-238 (p. 233). Significant moments have been the encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (1963) authored by John XXIII which states that women have the right to equal inclusion in society and entrance into public life, work and politics: 'women are gaining an increasing awareness of their natural dignity. Far from being content with a purely passive role or allowing themselves to be regarded as a kind of instrument, they are demanding both in domestic and in public life the rights and duties which belong to them as human persons' [PT,41]. John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris (Peace on Earth)*, 11 April 1963 <http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html> [accessed 22 April 2019]. At the closing of Vatican II Paul VI declared, 'The hour is coming, in fact has come, when the vocation of women is being acknowledged in its fullness, the hour in which women acquire in the world an influence, an effect and a power never hitherto achieved. That is why, at this moment when the human race is undergoing so deep a transformation, women imbued with a spirit of the Gospel can do so much to aid humanity in not falling.' Paul VI, *'Address of Pope Paul VI to Women',* 8 December 1965 <https://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/speeches/1965/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19651208_epilogo-concilio-donne.html> [accessed 22 April 2019].

[34] John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem (On the Dignity and Vocation of Women on the Occasion of the Marian Year)* 15 August 1988 <http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1988/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19880815_mulieris-dignitatem.html> [accessed 22 April 2019], (hereinafter referred to as 'MD').

[35] John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae (The Gospel of Life),* 25 March 1995, <http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae.html> , [accessed 22 April 2019].

[36] John Paul II, *Letter to Women,* 29 June 1995 <http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1995/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_29061995_women.html> [accessed 22 April 2019].

[37] Karol Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibilit*y, trans. by Grzegorz Ignatik (Boston, MA: Pauline Books & Media, 2013). This work treats sexual ethics.

[38] From his second thesis. It struggles to marry Thomism and Phenomenology. A difficult work, so much so that on review Tadeusz Styczen famously remarked to Wojtyla: 'It's a good first draft. Perhaps it could be translated first from Polish into Polish, to make it easier to understand for the reader—including me.' Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, p. 74. A study on the interior subjectivity of the person, the argument is that we can understand the richness of the person by a close examination of his acts: 'Action *reveals* the person, and we look at the person through his action.' Wojtyla, *The Acting Person,* trans. by Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka and Andrzej Potocki (Dordrecht; Boston, MA: D. Reidel, 1979), p. 258. The metaphysical unity is assumed of a body-soul composite. In acting, the person defines himself.

Person.[39] Also significant for understanding the concept of gender complementarity, and the theology of the female body in general, is the cycle of 130 audience addresses from 5 September 1979 to 28 November 1984, which were later collected as *Theology of the Body.*[40] He also dealt with questions of the body, in the encyclical on moral theory *Veritatis Splendor* (1993)[41] and addressed issues around the beginning and ends of life in *Evangelium Vitae.*

Indeed, much of Wojtyla's work can be seen to be remarkably consistent with his later work as pope. Wojtyla followed in the steps of previous complementarians of the twentieth century, grounding his understanding of gender complementarity (and therefore the body) from two perspectives, Thomism and phenomenology. '[M]y personal philosophical outlook moves, so to speak, between two poles: Aristotelian Thomism and phenomenology.'[42] Jameson Taylor describes John Paul II as 'both a Thomist and phenomenologist... [but] ultimately a personalist '[43] The person is at the centre of his thought, and the human being is the only basis upon which 'the integration of the objective philosophy of being and the subjective philosophy of consciousness can occur.'[44]

The Aristotelian concept of hylomorphism is key to the pontiff's formulation of man (and woman). Hylomorphism is based on the Aristotelian metaphysics that 'matter' (pure, abstract essence) combines with 'form' (that which gives something its nature) to make 'substance' (what we usually consider matter).[45] In Christian anthropology, this translates to the person as substance, the body as matter, and the soul as form which are inextricably linked together.

Phenomenology, in the form of the work of Max Scheler (1874-1928), with which Wojtyla engaged in his second habilitation thesis, assisted his thinking on the body in several ways.[46] Employing the

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[39] Karol Wojtyła, *Person and Community,* trans. by Theresa Sandok (New York: Peter Lang, 2008).
[40] On the evolution of the text see Waldstein's introduction, John Paul II, *Man and Woman: He Created Them: A Theology of the Body,* ed. and trans. by Michael Waldstein (Boston, MA: Pauline Books & Media, 2006) (hereinafter 'TOB'), pp. 1-23.
[41] John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor (The Splendour of Truth),* 6 August 1993 <http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_06081993_veritatis-splendor.html> [accessed 22 April 2019].
[42] Pope John Paul, *Rise, Let Us Be on Our Way*, trans. by Walter Ziemba, (New York: Warner Books, 2004), p. 90.
[43] Jameson Taylor, 'Beyond Nature: Karol Wojtyla's Development of the Traditional Definition of Personhood', *The Review of Metaphysics*, 63.2 (2009), 415-454 (p. 416).
[44] Taylor sees certain limitations in his philosophy: 'From a Thomistic perspective, Wojtyla's philosophy is frustrating because he does not 'demonstrate' his assertions using traditional logical methods. From a phenomenological perspective, his philosophy is frustrating because it sets limits to and supplements phenomenology by incorporating metaphysical realities inaccessible to subjective experience'. Jameson Taylor, 'The Acting Person in Purgatory: A Note for Readers of the English Text', *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture*, 13.3 (2010), 77-104 (p. 78).
[45] *De anima,* 412a16.
[46] Three elements of Scheler's thought in particular were helpful in the context of Catholicism: (i) against Kant, Scheler maintained that the mind does have access to reality and moral values, thus shoring up the thought explicated by Paul, Aristotle and Aquinas; (ii) Scheler asserted the importance of the imitative factor, that is, the necessity for a person (here Jesus is the prime example) of someone to imitate and follow; and (iii) the link between the capacity for knowledge and emotional response, e.g. empathy, sympathy and love. See, Edward

phenomenological method enabled Wojtyla to understand the person in his or her subjectivity. He described phenomenology as 'a style of thought, a relationship of the mind with reality, whose essential and constitutive features it aims to grasp, avoiding prejudice and schematisms […] an attitude of intellectual charity to the human being and the world, and for the believer, to God, the beginning and end of all things.'[47] For Wojtyla, phenomenology was a method whereby the experience of being human is placed at centre stage. It is thus a mode of realising personalism.[48]

Wojtyla's thinking on the body is informed by two guiding principles: the reference to the affective, with particular focus on the individual experience and the centrality of the person; and the objective reality of the human body, and its creation in the image of God. 'When we speak of the meaning of the body, we refer in the first place to the full consciousness of the human being, but we also include every effective experience of the body in its masculinity and feminity, and in any case, the constant predisposition to such experience. 'The "meaning" of the body is not something merely conceptual,' he wrote, thus emphasising the subjective and objective dimension of the human person. The body cannot be separated from the person.[49] However, the body is subordinate to the soul. While the body is the means of performance of the action and the person's fulfilment of that action, the body is 'the territory and means' for the soul's manifestation.[50] The body is essential to the soul's operation, in that the person realises his/her choice through the body. The body has its own subjectivity: the body informed by the soul has its own 'moral meaning'. '[T]he body can never be reduced to mere matter:

Barrett, *Persons and Liberal Democracy: The Ethical and Political Thought of Karol Wojtyla/Pope John Paul II* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010), p. 22. For an account of Scheler's life, see the 'Introduction' by Harold J. Bershady, in Max Scheler and Harold J. Bershady, *On Feeling, Knowing, and Valuing: Selected Writings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 1-46. On Scheler's place in the history of the phenomenological movement, see Herbert Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement*, 3rd edn, trans. by Karl Schuhmann (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1994), pp. 268-305. Scheler's most important work was *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Value*, first published in 1916. Max Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*, ed. and trans. by Manfred S. Frings and Roger L. Funk (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1985). Famed throughout his lifetime, Scheler's reputation languished in the post-second world war period, and he is now generally regarded as an interesting, if minor, figure in the Weimar landscape.

[47] John Paul II, *Address to a Delegation of the World Institute of Phenomenology* (22 March 2003). Cited in Waldstein, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, p. 65.

[48] Karol Wojtyla, 'The Problem of the Separation of Experience from the Act in Ethics in the Philosophy of Immanuel Kant and Max Scheler', in *Person and Community*, pp. 23-44. Wojtyla was however highly critical of Scheler. Scheler's emphasis on the importance of emotion and affect were, for Wojtyla, dangerous in that they did not pay sufficient attention to the dangers inherent in human appetites and desires. Scheler maintained that it was emotion that could only convey value. Reason, according to Scheler, 'only apprehends being; it does not apprehend the good'. As a Thomist, Wojtyla maintained that reason provided a complementary, more discerning, role than emotions in understanding the value of an object of consciousness. This perceived flaw in Scheler's thought led to the second major contention that Wojtlya had with Scheler: Scheler's analysis did not allow for human agency. Reading Scheler, one comes across the idea of the human being as not being free, which was anti-ethical to the idea of free will and the role of conscience, the central aspect of personalism. I am indebted to Barrett, pp. 22-23 for this analysis.

[49] John Paul II, TOB 31:5, (p. 255).

[50] Wojtyla, *Acting Person,* p. 205.

it is a *spiritualised body*, just as man's spirit is so closely untied to the body that he can described as an *embodied spirit.*'[51]

His most theological reflection on the body can be found in *Theology of the Body*, an 'extended theology of the marriage and sexual love'[52] and can be viewed as an elaboration on and justification of *Humanae Vitae.*[53] The body is read through the prism of sexuality, that is, the relationship between man and wife. The unitive dimension of spousal union is defined to be as important as the procreative function.[54] While traces of his philosophical project are present, the theology of the body is pastoral and draws heavily on scriptural references, including the traditional scriptural texts of the two creation accounts in Genesis, Ephesians and, more innovatively, the Song of Songs. The homilies, densely written and oftentimes repetitive, are notoriously difficult to engage with, but three central strands in this thought on the body can be discerned: (i) body as a gift (ii) body as sacrament; and (iii) body as essential. All three themes are informed by nuptial theology. [55]

Nuptial theology is grounded in the mystic tradition, tracing its origins back to the biblical texts of Ephesians and the Song of Songs, particularly Origen's visions of the relation between the Christ as bridegroom and the Church as bride. Nuptial theology marries, one could say, the relationship between man and woman to the larger drama of salvation.[56] Nuptial theology receded in the wake of Vatican II, but came back into dominance in the 1980s, largely thanks to the influence of John Paul II and the Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905–1988).[57] As Fergus Kerr muses, 'that the

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[51] John Paul II, *Gratissimam sane* (*Letter to Families)*, 2 February 1994, <https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_02021994_families.html> [accessed 22 April 2019], n. 19.
[52] Alternative titles referred to by John Paul II were 'Human Love in the Divine Plan' or 'The Redemption of the Body and the Sacramentality of Marriage'.
[53] Paul VI, *Humanae vitae (On Human Life*), 25 July 1968 <https://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_25071968_humanae-vitae.html> [accessed 22 April 2019].
[54] TOB 118, pp. 617-620. *Evangelium vitae*, 23. Also *Humanae vitae*, 12, *Gratissimam sane*, 12; CCC, #2363.
[55] His interest in mysticism can be traced to his first doctoral dissertation on St John of the Cross. *Questio de fide apud S. Joannem a Cruce (The Question of Faith according to St. John of the Cross)* (Warsaw: Collectanea Theologica, 1950).
[56] Nuptial theology has its roots in the 'spousal language' found in the Hebrew Bible, especially Prophets, whereby Israel described as wife to her husband, YHWH. See also Israel as adulterous wife to YHWH (Jer 2:32; 3:20; Ex 16:32-34; Hos 1:2; 9:1); the initial devotion of Israel to her spouse (Jer 2:2); the covenant of YHWH with Israel as marriage bond (Hos 2:19-20). Spousal language shifts to the presentation of Jesus as Bridegroom in the New Testament (Jn 3:28-29; Mt 9:14-15) and in Paul, whereby Paul marries his disciples to Christ (2 Cor 11:2; Rom 7:4). In Ephesians 5:21-33, Christ's salvific relationship to his Church is revealed to be the same as that of a marriage to his husband and wife. For a discussion, see Angelo Scola, 'The Nuptial Mystery: A Perspective for Systematic Theology?', *Communio*, 30 (2003), 209-233. See also, David H. Delaney, 'The Nuptial Mystery, the Sacrament of Marriage and John Paul II's Man and Woman He Created Them', *Antiphon: A Journal for Liturgical Renewal*, 18.1 (2014), 69-105. Henri du Lubac's work on Origen is also an important influence, he draws attention to Origen's biblical exegesis of the Song of Songs, in his *Histoire et Esprit: L'intelligence de L'Ectriture d'après Origéne,* published in 1950. For the English translation, see Henri de Lubac, *History and Spirit: The Understanding of Scripture According to Origen* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2007).
[57] For an analysis of the influence of Balthasar on John Paul II, see Susan Rakoczy, 'Mixed Messages: John Paul II's Writings on Women,' in *The Vision of John Paul II: Assessing His Thought and Influence*, ed. by Gerard Mannion (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008), pp. 159-183. See also Brendan Leahy, 'John Paul II and

[twentieth] century ended with a reaffirmation of nuptial mysticism by influential theologians, we did not anticipate.'[58] Balthasar defines the project of theology as a 'dialogue between bride and Bridegroom in the unity and the communication of the Sprit.'[59] The love between Christ and the Church (cf. Ephesians, Song of Songs) is analogous to the love between husband and wife (cf. Eph. 5:22–33). Close reading of Genesis 1–3 has in particular shaped this nuptial imagery, with the marriage between Adam and Eve being projected onto that between Christ and the Church and/or Christ and Mary and the relationship between man and woman.

The influence that Balthasar exerted on the nuptial theology of John Paul II has been the subject of much speculation. David Delaney disputes that Balthasar had much influence, pointing out that Balthasar's primary text on this, *Theo-Drama* II, was published in 1976, two years after Wojtyla published 'The Family as Community of Persons', which contained the main elements of his nuptial theology.[60] Notwithstanding this, the two men's theologies of sexual difference are remarkably similar. Curiously, perhaps because of his pastoral position as pope, John Paul II's work has not attracted the same critical examination as Balthasar.[61] While Balthasar has been hailed by Tina Beattie as the only theologian to engage seriously with sexual difference, and his work has drawn comparisons with that of Luce Irigaray, John Paul II's theology of sexual difference, commonly known as the theology of the body, has been either restricted to discussion by lay Catholics, conservative Catholic feminists (the 'new feminists'), or critiqued by feminist theologians, such as Rosemary Radford Ruether, in the context of Catholic magisterial teaching generally, e.g. on the

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Hans Urs Von Balthasar', in *The Legacy of John Paul II* (London & New York: Continuum, 2008), pp. 17-30. Leahy argues that the while John Paul II admired Balthasar, the latter did not have any great degree of influence over the former's thinking. Balthasar was a scholar of the Calvinist theologian, Karl Barth – notably, Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth,* trans. by Edward T. Oakes (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992) – and John Paul II an admirer. Barth defined the man-woman relationship as the 'paradigm of the community dimension which characterises man's entire nature' and that the human being is called to 'express himself as the image of God, *Deus triunus'.* Barth wrote significantly earlier than either John Paul II or Balthasar: he wrote extensively on the Song of Songs in *Church Dogmatics* III/1.41, completed in 1945. In many respects, the thinking of the three men around complementarity is remarkably similar, although obvious differences apply: the Mariology which is so central to both Balthasar and John Paul II is not present in Barth, nor is marriage considered a sacrament by the Calvinist. For a comparison of the three men's thought around the complementarity of the sexes, see Agneta Sutton, 'The Complementarity and Symbolism of the Two Sexes: Karl Barth, Hans Urs von Balthasar and John Paul II', *New Blackfriars*, 87.1010 (2006), 418-433. Sutton writes in her conclusion, 'fundamentally there is no difference between the three theologians in regard to their understandings of trinitarian understandings of the trinitarian symbolism of the creation of man and woman in the image of God.' (p. 433).

[58] Kerr, *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians*, p. vi.

[59] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Explorations in Theology I: The World Made Flesh* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), p. 203.

[60] Delaney, 'The Nuptial Mystery', n. 40, pp. 78-79. This footnote also contains a comprehensive list of Balthasar's and John Paul II's writings on nuptial theology.

[61] Jameson Taylor has speculated that this is because in part, that Wojtyla's major philosophical work, *The Acting Person's* translation into English was superseded by his becoming pope, and that his attempt to write phenomenologically yet to be religious, resulted in neither side being willing to embrace him. Jameson Taylor, 'The Acting Person in Purgatory', p. 77.

question of the priesthood.[62] This, according to Prudence Allen, has caused feminists in particular to overlook the significance of his contribution, which she defines as the *sine qua non* of what she terms, 'integral complementarity'.[63]

If the relationship between man and woman is found in the nuptial mystery–whereby the complementarity of man and woman reflects the relationship between God and humanity, Christ and Mary, and the cosmos itself–then the body represents the relationship of God to the Church, and extending the metaphor, the relationship between male and female, where male represents God/Jesus and the female represents humanity as a whole. The meaning of the body is found in the Genesis texts. [64] Male and female sexuality are distinguished by their unique features: for men, it is the initiation of love, and for women, it is receptivity to love. The relationship of bridegroom and bride is not an egalitarian one, the love is initiated by the bridegroom and the female receives it. While this suggests a lack of agency on the female part, John Paul II is quick to stress that receptivity is itself a form of activity.[65]

Balthasar also places man in the active role, 'If man is the word that calls out, woman is the answer that comes to him at last (in the end)'[66] Man is … primary and woman secondary, where the primary remains unfulfilled without the secondary. The primary needs a partner of equal rank and dignity for its fulfilment.'[67] While woman is equal, she is after. Woman is both answer and face, 'not only man's delight she is the help, the security, the home man needs; she is the vessel of fulfilment specially designed for him… So we can speak of a kind of natural vocation on woman's part much more explicitly than man's case; for the call to 'be fruitful' and 'subdue the earth' is addressed to both of

[62] Lucy Gardner and David Moss, 'Something Like Time, Something Like the Sexes-an Essay in Reception', in *Balthasar at the End of Modernity*, ed. by Lucy Gardner and others (Edinburgh: Clark, 1999), 69-137; Corrine Crammer, 'One Sex or Two? Balthasar's Theology of the Sexes', in *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. by Edward T. Oakes and David Moss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 93-112; Michelle Gonzalez, 'Hans Urs von Balthasar and Contemporary Feminist Theologies', *Theological Studies* 65.3 (2004), 566-95; Tina Beattie, *New Catholic Feminism: Theology and Theory* (London: Routledge, 2006); Barbara K. Sain, 'Through a Different Lens: Rethinking the Role of Sexual Difference in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar', *Modern Theology*, 25.1(2009), 71-96; and Linn Marie Tonstad, 'Sexual Difference and Trinitarian Death: Cross, Kenosis, and Hierarchy in the Theo-Drama', *Modern Theology*, 26.4 (2010), 603-631.

[63] Prudence Allen describes integral gender complementarity as 'each man and each woman is a complete person, in an ontologically important sense. When they enter into interpersonal relations, the effect is synergetic; something more happens in relationship than parts of a person adding up to one person; something new is generated. While fractional complementarity can be represented by the formula ½ + ½ = 1, integral complementarity can be represented by the formula 1 + 1 → 3.' (Allen, 'Man-Woman Complementarity', p. 95.

[64] TOB 14 & 15, pp. 181-190.

[65] TOB 17:4: 'giving and accepting the gift interpenetrate in such a way that the very act of giving becomes acceptance and acceptance transforms itself into giving', (p. 196).

[66] Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*: *Theological Dramatic Theory III: The Dramatis Personae: Persons in Christ,* trans. by Graham Harrison (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1992), pp. 284, (hereinafter 'TD3').

[67] TD 3, p. 284

them.'[68] The body as nuptial, therefore refers to the inextricability of the male body from the female body, it is always made for the other, with the female body being in answer to the male.

5.2.1.1. The Body as Gift

This nuptial (or spousal) meaning of the body is where the body as gift is realised. The body as gift, has two meanings. First, in the context of creation, we have been gifted life by a creator God, who has made us in his image. '[T]he theology of the body, at its core, is a study of what it means to be a human person made in the image of God'.[69] Second, the body is the gift that is freely given to the other. Complete self-giving, as one does to a spouse, is a mirror of the Trinitarian communion.[70] The body is how we receive and experience the other as subject.[71] '[T]he power to express love: precisely that love in which the human person becomes a gift and—through this gift—fulfils the very meaning of his being and existence.'[72]

This gift is made through the 'language of the body' which is the language and act of marital love.[73] As well as being the gift that is given to the other, the body is an 'anticipatory gift', in that through the act of self-giving mutual love, one anticipates that eschatological body, with the taint of concupiscence removed. As a gift that is both present and anticipatory, the body as gift symbolises the inner mystery of the Trinity.

Balthasar and John Paul II each note the parallel between the self-communication of the Trinity and the procreative role:

> the child would already be immediately present in their generative-receptive embrace, this would be simultaneously the expression of their reciprocal love *and* going beyond it, its transcendent result… To that extent perfect creaturely love is a genuine *imago Trinitatis*[74]

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[68] TD 3, pp. 285-6.
[69] TOB 63:2, p. 376.
[70] This central notion of 'self-giving' is one of the reasons for the later pontiff's refusal to countenance the licitness of birth control. For, in order to give fully of the self in the act of love, this must therefore be open to the possibility of conception, a defence that was first articulated by von Hildebrand in his *The Encyclical Humanae Vitae: A Sign of Contradiction* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1969), one of the earliest and most influential defences of *Humanae Vitae.*The contraception debate has of course, roiled the Catholic Church, which is the only Christian denomination which insists on the prohibition of artificial means of birth control. For an account of the issues surrounding *Humanae vitae* and a trenchant critique see, Charles E. Curran, *Loyal Dissent: Memoir of a Catholic Theologian* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2006), Chapter 3. In 2018 he published an article entitled 'Humanae Vitae: 50 years on', *Theological Studies*, 79.3 (2018), 520-542, which summarises most arguments and examines its implications for today.
[71]TOB 63-69, pp. 374-401.
[72] TOB 15.1, pp. 185-186.
[73] In the '"language of the body" ... man and woman reciprocally express themselves in the fullest and most profound way made possible for them by ... their masculinity and femininity' (TOB 123.4, p. 632).
[74] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic III: The Spirit of Truth,* trans. by Graham Harrison (San Francisco, CA: St Ignatius Press, 2005), p. 160.

John Paul II parses it thus:

> [M]an and woman, created in a 'unity of the two' in their common humanity, are called to live in a communion of love, and in that way mirror in the world the communion of love that is in God, through which the three Persons love each other in the intimate mystery of the divine life.[75]

This Trinitarian aspect is bound up with human beings as created *imago Dei.* While John Paul II refers to the *imago Dei* being present in the union of male and female, Balthasar writes that man and woman *individually* (and not only *together*) constitute an 'image of God', thus each has access to God.[76]

The location of God's image in the body, particularly in the model of human nuptiality and procreation, was rejected by both Augustine and Thomas Aquinas.[77] Moving *imago Dei* to the body is a decisive move, although, as Kathryn Tanner notes, man imaging God in the body, has precedent. 'Human materiality is essential to the image of God so as to take the whole existence to God. This is why angels or disembodied pure intelligences are not traditionally said to be the image.'[78] In conceiving the body as gift, *imago Dei* takes on an enfleshed reality, privileging the body.

5.2.1.2. The Body as Sacrament

The body is privileged as a site of reflection in theology because of the mystery and reality of the incarnation. When the Word became flesh, the body entered into theology. 'Man appears in the visible world as the highest expression of the divine gift, because he bears within himself the inner dimension of the gift.' [79] The body is a sacrament whereby '[t]he sacrament, as a visible sign, is constituted with man as a "body" by means of his "visible" masculinity and femininity. The body in fact, and only the body, is capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and the divine. It has been created to transfer into the visible reality of the world the mystery hidden from eternity of God, and thus to be a sign of it.'[80] It is because our bodies are so intimately 'ourselves', they deserve full dignity and respect. Emphasis on the body as sacrament, serves to draw attention to the body in way that speaks to its value, a feature that John Paul II felt was sorely lacking in the world: 'the body is no longer perceived as a properly personal reality, a sign and place of relations with others, with

[75] MD, n. 22-23.
[76] For Balthasar on imago Dei, Balthasar, T*heo-Drama II: Dramatis Personae: Man in God* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1990), pp. 355-394; *Theo-Logic II: Truth of God*, trans. by Adrian J. Walker (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1990), pp. 35-62; *The Christian State of Life*, trans. by Mary Frances McCarthy (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1983), pp. 224-249.
[77] Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 12.5. Affirmed by Thomas Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 93, a. 6.
[78] Kathryn Tanner, 'Grace without Nature', in *Without Nature: A New Condition for Theology,* ed. by David Albertson and Cabell King (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), pp. 363-375 (p. 368).
[79] TOB 19, pp. 201-204.
[80] TOB 96:6, pp. 505-506; 19:4, p. 203. Of note, both the body and marriage are described as a primordial sacrament, which illustrates the identification of the body with its complementarian, spousal function.

God, and with the world. It is reduced to pure materiality: it is simply a couple of organs, function as and energies to be used according to the sole criteria of pleasure and efficiency.'[81] Questionable as such a depiction of the body-in-the-world may be, it does point to the theological significance that the body was now accorded. Maria-Teresa Porcile-Santiso, writes, 'theological teaching about the body has undergone a surprising development: we have passed from a certain mistrust of the body to an appreciation of the human dimension of corporality in terms of expression, communion and relationship, as constitutive of being a person.'[82] The body is a sacrament by virtue of its very fleshiness.

5.2.1.3. The Body as Essential

The body as essential has two meanings: (i) as a condition of human existence; and (ii) as essential. The idea of the body as essential might strike the reader as self-evident, but without the body there would be no possibility of the resurrection. Intrinsic to the Christian view of the human person, is the indissoluble link between body and soul, and the truth of the body/person.

> The body is the place in which salvation happens and the instrument by which it is done. The body is more than the physicality of our existence; it provides the activity, or external expression, by which the salvific process takes place. Bodily acts express the believer's interior condition even as they display the living image of the body, individual and collective, redeemed.'[83]

The body is essential for self-realisation, a necessary condition of existence. As explored in *Acting Person,* 'Man manifests himself – even from the static point of view – through his body its specific, strictly individual build…the body is the territory and in a way the means for the performance of action and consequently for the fulfilment of persons.'[84] The body is essential because it enables us to know ourselves. We know ourselves as male or female only in the presence of the sexually differentiated other and understand ourselves as limited.[85]'[T]he body', writes John Paul II, 'reveals man… as being that is, also in all its bodilness, "similar" to God.'[86] Awareness of the body, as distinct from that of animals, enables man (meant in this sense as the sexually undifferentiated) to grasp personhood, gifted with agency and consciousness. [87] 'The body, in fact, and only the body, is capable

[81] *Evangelium vitae*, 23.
[82] Maria-Teresa Porcile-Santiso, 'Roman Catholic Teachings on Female Sexuality', in *Women, Religion & Sexuality: Studies on the Impact of Religious Teachings on Women*, ed. by Jeanne Becher (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990), pp. 192-220 (p. 193).
[83] Susan A. Harvey, 'Embodiment in Time and Eternity: A Syriac Perspective', in *Theology and Sexuality: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, ed. by Eugene F. Rogers (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 3-22 (p. 10).
[84] Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, pp. 203-204; and p. 205.
[85] TOB 10:2, p. 167.
[86] TOB 9:4, p. 164.
[87] TOB 37, pp. 274-278.

of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and divine. It has been created to transfer into the visible reality of the world the mystery hidden from eternity in God, and thus to be a sign of it.'[88]

Specifically regarding the female body, woman's body is indicative of her role. In *Love and Responsibility*, Wojtyla writes that 'sex can be defined as a specific synthesis of properties that are clearly delineated in the psycho-physiological structure of man'.[89] Sex is not just physical, but pervades every aspect of being. While women and men are equal in worth and dignity, their physical and anatomical differences are evidence that God intends different roles and purposes for them.[90] Thus woman's body, in its functions of ovulation, menstruation, of the presence of the womb, denotes woman's receptivity, and this remains true whether or not she ever bears a child.[91] John Paul II is clear that while biology is not destiny, granted as persons are with free will, the body situates persons phenomenologically, disposing them to act in a certain manner.[92] He described women as having a 'feminine genius', that is, a special capacity to offer tenderness and nourishment to the community by virtue of the operations of her body.[93]

Echoing Balthasar's disfavour of 'monosexism', the collapse of traditional femininity,[94] John Paul II called for a 'new feminism' which 'rejects the temptation of imitating models of "male domination", in order to acknowledge and affirm the true genius of women in every aspect of the life of society, and overcome all discrimination violence and exploitation'.[95]

In summary, the Church, having so long maintained suspicion and fear of the female body has, in the theory of complementarity, a body positive anthropology, in that it states firmly and unequivocally that the body is an ontological reality and that it is created in the image of a loving God. A crucial move was the location of *imago Dei* in the *bodies* of men and women, thus arguably eradicating the most damaging aspects of an anthropology that devalued the body at the expense of the soul. The nuptial idea of the body, its sacramentality, emphasised the goodness of the body's sexual character. Whether or not it will go on to be the theological time bomb of the third millennium, as John Paul II's biographer George Weigel has described it, is debatable.[96] The very fact that the pontiff's meditation

[88] TOB 19:4, pp. 203.
[89] Karol Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, p. 32.
[90] MD 6. In many respects, the apostolic letter, *Mulieres dignitatem* is the theology of the body distilled, condensed down from the rather unwieldy and repetitive collection of catechesis, down to a pithy 25 pages.
[91] MD 21.
[92] MD 29.
[93] MD 29.
[94] Balthasar, 'Mary-Church-Office', *Communio*, 23 (1996), 188-197. Balthasar, 'Thoughts on the Priesthood of Women', *Communio*, 23 (1996), 701-709 (p. 705). Balthasar, 'Women Priests? A Marian Church in a Fatherless and Motherless Culture', *Communio*, 22.1 (1995), 164-170.
[95] *Evangelium vitae,* 99.
[96] George Weigel, *Witness to Hope: The Biography of John Paul II (1920-2005)* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), p. 342. Charles E. Curran is especially critical of the late Pope's moral theology regarding women and human sexuality. See Charles E Curran, *The Moral Theology of Pope John Paul II* (Washington, DC:

on marriage is equated with the body is indicative of the collapse of the erotic with the physical. However, there are significant limitations to the theology of the body, as the following section will outline.

5.2.2. Critique of Theology of the Body

In gender complementarity, while women are celebrated, and their bodily nature affirmed, it must be noted that the theology of the body, even allowing for the personalist emphasis on the role of free will, is essentialist. This is largely unavoidable in that Catholic anthropology does not recognise distinctions between sex and gender, yet in certain respects, the teaching of the Church employs this very distinction in the deployment of its nuptial theology. For example, in the analogical reading of the relationship between Bridegroom-Church, Man-Woman, men are considered in female-gendered terms. Both John Paul II and Balthasar, amongst others, characterise the relationship between man and God as female, that is, that man is ultimately *receptive* to God's love in a way which fits with the feminine principle. The 'psycho-physical structure' of women is therefore confusingly deemed specific not only to female humanity, but all humanity. In a critique of *Mulieres Dignitatum*, Ruether describes John Paul II's anthropology as:

> …a confused mixture of egalitarian and complementarian models of relationship of men and women. He is also unable to sort out the difference between 'masculinity' and 'femininity' as symbols and real human men and women. The Pope seems to feel that the qualities of femininity' better express the redemptive mystery of Christ than 'masculinity'. 'Femininity' essentially means, for him, selfless self-giving. Christ is the ultimate exemplar of this self-giving but women are said to be naturally better at it than men, and they need to teach men how to do it.[97]

As Ruether observes, 'One might conclude from this that it is women, rather than men, who are the "natural" symbolic representatives of Christ.'[98] However, John Paul II insists that man can only image Christ, and thus the vocation of priesthood, as Christ represents the 'bridegroom' in relation to the church as bride (on a questionable reading of Ephesians 5:21-33).[99] As Reuther demonstrates, this is incoherent when read against the fact that, almost in the same breath, John Paul II avows that men

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Georgetown University Press, 2005), pp. 176-201. While acknowledging the important contributions that the late pope made to social teaching with his personalism, social teaching and use of scripture, Curran is critical of Pope John Paul II's emphasis on universalism over the historical, and his stance on the infallibility of the magisterium. God's plan for all time, as Curran drily notes, with regard to human sexuality, was found in Genesis. Curran, *Loyal Dissent,* p. 219.

[97] Rosemary Radford Ruether, 'Imago Dei, Christian Tradition and Feminist Hermeneutics', in *The Image of God: Gender Models in Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, ed. by Kari Elisabeth Børrensen (Minneapolis, MI: Fortress Press, 1995), pp. 267-288 (p. 269).

[98] Ruether, 'Imago Dei', p. 270.

[99] Ruether notes that John Paul's reading depends on an incorrect reading of Christ and Church analogous to priest and laity, a reading, as Ruether notes is 'never used for priest-laity relations in the New Testament. The term priest is not present in the New Testament as a term for a separate sacerdotal class.' Ruether, 'Imago Dei' (n. 8, p. 289).

especially celibates, are symbolically, 'brides of Christ'. Reuther concludes, 'If men can be "brides", symbolically, why can't women be symbolic "bridegrooms"?'[100] Richard Viladesau inverts the question, 'The notion of "representation" needs close examination and clarification. In exactly what sense does a priest in fact "represent" God or Christ, and precisely *as* "bridegroom"? […] Could not the reasoning in fact be reversed: the priest "represents" the Church and acts "in persona ecclesia"; the church is female, and the bride of Christ; therefore, the priest ought to be female.'[101] Following on from Viladesau, Tina Beattie argues that rather than women being absent from creation with the task of feminist theology to retrieve the feminine, theology would be better placed to go in search of the masculine.[102] If humanity is represented by woman, then where do men figure? Does the masculine rest only in the divine?

The constant affirmation of the male as the active principle is problematic, seeming to place women in the passive role. The male sacramentalises the active and the receptive, whereas the female can only ever sacramentalise the receptive.[103] Defining male and female as disparate, if complementary, means that gender complementarity strongly asserts polarity to such an extent that it can undermine the fundamental unity of equality between men and women. It denies the fullness of the individual human by characterizing certain attributes based on biological sex as conceived, seeing the individual through male and female polarities (activity/passivity, reason/intuition, emotion/will, etc.). 'In this vision of humanity, the activities of each sex are rigidly limited, as is the scope of human freedom, judgment, and responsibility over nature.'[104] Moreover, the female always appears as the complement to the male, and not the other way around.[105]

The nuptial dimension of the theology of the body is also problematic. The identification of man with Jesus and woman with Church does not extend the equality metaphor between man and woman as Christ and Church can never be presented as equal. Benedict Ashley, adopting a Thomistic methodology, has parsed this by arguing that Christ and Church is akin to the form and matter, in that form cannot exist without matter, thus affirming woman's importance.[106] Clearly, however, there is an obvious hierarchy in form over matter in Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics. Aquinas privileges the soul over the body, as does John Paul II himself. Moreover, the analogy of form and matter has an uneasy echo of the idea of woman identified with flesh and man with intellect. Such essentialism also

[100] Ruether, 'Imago Dei', p. 270.
[101] Richard Viladesau, cited in Deborah Halter, *The Papal 'No': A Comprehensive Guide to the Vatican's Rejection of Women's Ordination* (New York: Crossroad, 2004), p. 84.
[102] Beattie, *New Catholic Feminism*, pp. 101-102, 126-127.
[103] TD 3, p. 340, TD 3, p. 285.
[104] Anne E. Carr, 'Feminist View of Christian Anthropology', in *Women's Spirituality: Resources for Christian Development*, ed. by Joann Wolski Conn, 2nd edn (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005), pp. 386-403 (p. 392).
[105] Daphne Hampson, *After Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1996), p. 192.
[106] Benedict Ashley, *Theologies of the Body*: *Humanist and Christian* (St. Louis, MO: Pope John Center, 1985), p. x.

tends to invoke the eternal feminine which can denigrate actual women. The cult of Mary, a woman who is a contradictory combination of eternal virgin, obedient wife and mother of God, has also been cited as proving an impossible ideal for women.[107] The hierarchy, too in the account of creation is especially problematic. Balthasar explicitly states that 'the woman is taken from the man; the substance from which she is made is masculine'[108]

The identification of women with the reproductive function is also controversial. Lisa Sowle Cahill writes, 'if a "theology of the body" is focused on the body's reproductive capacities, and if those capacities are seen to involve an unnecessary and unequal division of male and female personalities and roles, with women more than men assigned to the home and parenthood, then such a theology cannot truly advance the full dignity and equality of women - or of men.'[109] Cahill concludes, 'I do not believe it is now, or ever will be, possible for Christian ethics to enumerate fixed normative lists of male and female characteristics and concomitant social roles.'[110]

Nor is John Paul II's (cautious) celebration of sexual love seen as unequivocally good. Luke Timothy Johnson has argued that John Paul II reduces theology of the body to sexuality only, ignores lived experience (despite the Pontiff's exhortation of this in *Dei Verbum*) and that his theology is based on a narrow scriptural reading. Johnson is puzzled by *which* scriptural passages are employed. While Genesis is employed liberally, the Song of Songs, a riotous celebration of the body and the sexual body at that, is only referenced three times, despite the fact that it would appear to be a natural fit for the pontiff's nuptial understanding.[111] Johnson's critique speaks to one of the major issues that critics of complementarity raise with regard to a theology of the body: the scriptural passages used are those that imply a hierarchal relationship between men and women. Galatians is rarely invoked, whereas headship in Paul (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:23), and the second account of Genesis, rather than the more egalitarian first account, are the texts most emphasised.

The only sexuality, moreover, that is celebrated is heterosexual married love. Gender complementarity is also clearly inadequate in light of the biological reality of the intersexed and the increasing visibility of transgender individuals.[112] Balthasar's claim that the male body is 'male

[107] See, Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (New York: Vintage, 1983).
[108] Balthasar, *A Theological Anthropology* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1967), p. 313.
[109] Lisa Sowle Cahill, 'Catholic Feminists and Traditions: Renewal, Reinvention, Replacement', *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics*, 34.2 (2014), 27-51 (p. 31).
[110] Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Between the Sexes: Foundations for a Christian Ethics of Sexuality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), pp. 99-100.
[111] Luke Timothy Johnson, 'A Disembodied Theology of the Body', *Commonweal*, 128.2 (2001), 11-17.
[112] For a fascinating and nuanced look at the question of intersex in Christian Theology, see Megan K. DeFranza, *Sex Difference in Christian Theology: Male, Female and Intersex in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015). DeFranza makes a compelling case that intersex individuals, ought to be included in Christian anthropology. Indeed, the biological reality is far more complicated than anyone could argue. It is

throughout, right down to each cell of which it consists, and the female body is utterly female; and this is also true of their whole empirical experience and ego-consciousness',[113] has been proven to be simply incorrect.[114] What use is a theology of the body that is only representative of certain bodies, i.e. those that are cisgender (those who identify their gender with their natal sex) and heterosexual? Does this imply that those who do not exist within that paradigm are somehow inferior? Moreover, in the procreative and unitive equivalence of the 'language of the body', it is only the fecund body that is affirmed. Can the theology of the body speak to the bodies of children, the elderly and the non-religious celibate, although John Paul II affirms the religious celibate as the most nuptial?[115] John Paul II's assertion of the potentiality through the body as 'anticipatory gift' does not go far enough, and again, risks essentialising women. It cannot but be acknowledged that the theology of the body leaves out more categories of human embodied experience than it includes.

The theology of the body also reduces the body to that of archetype, where the female is represented by Eve and the male as Adam/Christ. This in effect means that all the negative associations with those figurative types are essentialised as to what it means to be embodied male or female. Thus, if you are a woman, you are prone to possessiveness and deceptiveness, if you are male you are prone to violence and dominance.[116] Complementarity is a theory that is peculiarly ahistorical. Complementarians fail to recognise the effect that society has had on how women have been conceived, and this, as has been demonstrated in previous chapters, has had a very significant impact. Arguably, the 'new feminism' that complementarity enjoins is, in many respects, onerous on women. It calls upon women to be companion and mother, but in a world that is geared towards men. Women are to check the excesses of men, through the functionsh of their body, as mother, wife and gentling influence.[117]

In conclusion, we can state that the theology of the body, notwithstanding its contribution to the celebration of women's dignity, reduces women to their sexual function, a problem that has bedevilled the Church since its inception. The female body is still seen through the matrix of sexuality. 'Woman's genius' lies in her capacity to care for others, through her natural affiliation for motherhood.

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estimated that 1.7% of the population are intersex. Melanie Blackless and others, 'How Sexually Dimorphic Are We? Review and Synthesis', *American Journal of Human Biology*, 12.2 (2000), 151-166.

[113] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama II,* p. 364.

[114] See note on intersex above.

[115] See Scola's discussion, Angelo Scola, *The Nuptial Mystery*, trans. by Michelle K. Borras (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 2005), pp. 269-271.

[116] MD 10.

[117] For a sophisticated critique of the new feminists, see the first chapter in Tina Beattie's, *New Catholic Feminism.*

5.3. The Body in Feminist Theologies

5.3.1. The Argument

While gender complementarians would describe themselves as broadly feminist, the body in feminist theology has been very differently construed. The majority of feminist theologians would view complementarianism as essentialism, and see it as applying a biologically determinist view of the female body.[118]

Feminist theology emerged in the 1960s, alongside and influenced by liberation theology. Like liberation theology, it began from the context of the oppressed identifying oppression as particular to the experience of women. Although the first work of feminist theology emerged in the late nineteenth century with the publication of Elizabeth Cady Stanton's *The Woman's Bible,* what we would recognise as the beginning of feminist theology proper begins with the publication of Valerie Saiving's article, 'The Human Situation: A Feminine View' in 1962. In it, Saiving criticized male theologians, particularly Reinhold Niebuhr, for failing to note that their models of human experience were written from the perspective of men's experience, not that of women.[119] In Christianity, bodies are never thoroughly for the embodied subject alone, but exist for the sake of building up others through the act of self-giving love. In a society where women are essentially called to be self-sacrificing and their needs ignored, Christianity could therefore be *damaging* to women. What was required, argued Saiving, was an attempt to write systematic theology from a feminist perspective.

Feminist theology thus begins from women's experience. Elizabeth Johnson summarises the tasks of feminist theology: 'feminist theology engages in at least three interrelated tasks: it critically analyses inherited oppressions, searches for alternative wisdom and suppressed history, and risks new interpretations of the tradition in conversation with women's lives.'[120] Politically, it calls for 'the

[118] Rosemary Radford Ruether, 'Catholicism, Women, Body and Sexuality: A Response', in *Women, Religion, and Sexuality: Studies on the Impact of Religious Teachings on Women*, ed. by Jeanne Becher (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1991), pp. 221-232. Mary Aquin O'Neill, 'The Mystery of Being Human Together: Anthropology', in *Freeing Theology: The Essentials of Theology in Feminist Perspective*, ed. by Catherine M. LaCugna (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), pp. 139-160 (p. 140).

[119] Valerie Saiving, 'The Human Situation: A Feminine View', in *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*, ed. by Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow, 2nd edn (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), pp. 25-42. While this essay was ground-breaking, it received little attention at the time, and has of recent years been criticised as being written from an essentialist white middle class perspective. On the fiftieth anniversary of the article's publication a number of articles were written on the impact of Saiving's writing. For a review of the various critiques and history of the favour/disfavour with which Saiving has been variously considered by the academy, see Rebekah Miles, 'Valerie Saiving Reconsidered', *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 28.1 (2012), 79-86.

[120] Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Continuum, 1998), p. 29.

deconstruction of these ideological justifications of male domination and the vindication of women's equality as the true will of God, human nature, and Christ's redemptive intention'.[121]

The literature is rich, extensive, and multivalent.[122] The earliest works range from Mary Daly with her blistering critique of Catholicism, which she criticises as inherently misogynistic, to the work of Rosemary Radford Ruether, who is highly critical of the dualism which she sees as endemic to Christianity and which have marked women as intrinsically othered.[123] Others such as Catherine Mary LaCugna, Ann E. Carr and Elizabeth A. Johnson attempt reform from within the tradition.[124] All of these scholars sought to recover something of the divine feminine within traditional doctrines of Christianity. Many feminist theologians of all denominations have made a persuasive argument for a female reading of God including, Letty Russell's retrieval of the female divine in the Hebrew Scriptures, the work of Virginia R. Mollenkott work on the female in the Bible generally, and Sandra Schneiders on the feminine in God in the New Testament.[125] Alongside these transformationist theologians are Beverley Wilson, Carter Heyward, and Rita Nakashima Brock, who de-emphasise Christian doctrine, stressing the erotic dimension of the right relationship in God. [126] While some of these feminist theologies are critiqued as being too white, too middle class, too exclusionary (as per Audre Lorde's attack on Daly),[127] feminist theologies have expanded to include the voices of African

[121] Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Women and Redemption: A Theological History* (Minneapolis, MN.: Fortress Press, 1998), p. 8.
[122] Ethna Regan divides feminist scholarship into three strands: (i) radical, which she defines as 'generally rejectionist in terms of the Christian tradition', e.g., the work of Mary Daly; (ii) transformationist, those feminists who while remaining rooted in the Christian tradition seek 'theological and ecclesial transformation' to various degrees of radicality and (iii) revisionist feminism, or 'new feminism' which arose in response to John Paul II's call for a new feminism in, one which recognised women as complementary and ontologically distinct to men. Ethna Regan, 'Women Theology and the Church: Whose Expertise?', *Doctrine and Life*, 61.7 (2011), 1-12 (pp. 3-5).
[123] Mary Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968); Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1985); Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1983).
[124] Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper, 1993). Anne E. Carr, *Transforming Grace: Christian Tradition and Women's Experience* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988).
[125] God is often referred to in female terms, and the Shekinah (glory of God), Chokmah (Pre-cosmic deity) and Torah (laws of guidance). Letty M. Russell, *Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective - A Theology* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977). Virginia R. Mollenkott, *The Divine Feminine: The Biblical Imagery of God as Female* (New York: Crossroad, 1983). Sandra M. Schneiders, *Women and the Word: The Gender of God in the New Testament and the Spirituality of Women* (New York: Paulist Press, 1986).
[126] Beverly W. Harrison, 'The Power of Anger in the Work of Love', *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, 36 (1981), 41-57; Carter Heyward, *Touching our Strength: The Erotic as Power and the Love of God* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1989); Rita Nakashima Brock, *Journeys by Heart: A Christology of Erotic Power* (New York: Crossroad, 1988).
[127] Famously, Audre Lorde, following the publication of Daly's *Gyn/Ecology*, wrote to Mary Daly accusing her of ignoring the needs of black women. Failing to get a response, she published an 'Open Letter to Mary Daly'. The letter can be read in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches by Audre Lorde* (Freedom, CA: The Crossing, 1984), pp. 66-71.

Americans and other minorities, in the form of womanist[128], Latina, mujerista[129] and other contextual theologies read through a post colonialist lens.[130]

All feminist theologies point to the importance of the body in Christian discourse.[131] Grounding their work in the Bible, scholars emphasise the central role the body played in early Christianity. Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza's pioneering work demonstrated that women in the early Christian movement were assigned functions and roles within the Christian Church, thus escaping Greco-Roman ideas of what was proper to female bodies.[132] Lisa Sowle Cahill argues that the body, identified as it is with women, is anti-dualistic in the Gospels.[133] The requirement to care for the body is implicit in the repeated themes of illness rewarded by faith, the call to feed and clothe the poor, and the resurrection of the body as being drawn into the love and life of God. The central tenet of Christianity, the incarnation, the bodily Jesus, points to sensuality as an element of redemption, and therefore something that should be embraced. The body is therefore a place of revelation and moral imperatives. Sallie McFague's *The Body of God* notes that theology is done by embodied individuals, the act of worship is done through the body, and the world is encountered through the body. 'The

[128] Womanist theology speaks of the African American women's experience. Delores Williams, Jacquelyn Grant, Katie Cannon, and others, drawing on the work of bell hooks and Angela Davis, exposed the race-blindness of white feminist theology. Jacquelyn Grant, *White Women's Christ and Black Women's Jesus: Feminist Christology and Womanist Response* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1989). Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994); Katie G. Cannon, *Black Womanist Ethics* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006).

[129] Mujerista theology emerges from reflection on the experience of Hispanic women oppressed by sexism, ethnic and racial prejudice and poverty in the United States. While mujerista and Latina theologies deal with similar themes, Mujerista theologies speak specifically to the Hispanic female experience and disavows 'feminism' which it critiques as being a white woman's experience. Latina theologies in contrast argue for a broadening of feminism to incorporate Latina experience, and critique mujerista experience as being too narrow and exclusionary. See Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *En La Lucha: Elaborating A Mujerista Theology* (Minneapolis, MI: Fortress, 1993), Miguel De La Torre & Edwin D. Aponte, *Introducing Latino/a Theologies*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001). *A Reader in Latina Feminist Theology: Religion and Justice*, ed. by María Pilar Aquino, Daisy L. Machado, and Jeanette Rodriguez (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2002). See, Maria Pilar Aquino, 'Including Women's Experience: A Latina Feminist Perspective', in *In the Embrace of God: Feminist Approaches to Theological Anthropology*, ed. by Ann O'Hara Graff (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), pp. 51-72.

[130] Kwok Pui-Lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), see esp. 125-149. See also, *Postcolonialism, Feminism and Religious Discourse*, ed. by Laura E. Donaldson and Kwok Pui-Lan (London: Routledge, 2002). Mercy A. Oduyoye, *Introducing African Women's Theology* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2001).

[131] Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, *A Land Flowing with Milk and Honey* (London: SCM Press, 1986). Brock, *Journeys by Heart.* Lisa Isherwood, *The Good News of the Body* (New York: New York University Press, 2000). Lisa Isherwood, 'The Embodiment of Feminist Liberation Theology: The Spiralling of Incarnation', *Feminist Theology*, 12.2 (2004), 140-156.

[132] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins.* Tenth Anniversary Edition (New York: Crossroad, 1994). Schüssler Fiorenza in turn acknowledged her debt to Mary Daly who in turn was influenced by Beauvoir (woman is not born she is made). However, Fiorenza took a far more optimistic view than did Daly, who deemed the Bible irredeemably sexist. Schüssler Fiorenza advocated adopting a 'hermeneutics of suspicion' when reading texts.

[133] Lisa Sowle Cahill, '"Embodiment" and Moral Critique: A Christian Social Perspective', in *Embodiment, Morality and Medicine*, ed. by Lisa Sowle Cahill and Margaret A. Farley (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995), pp. 199-215 (p. 201).

body is not a minor matter; rather it is the main attraction.'[134] Feminist theologies argue for an embodied morality, 'one which one's rationality and emotions are integrated, and one which considers the concrete, as well as the theoretical, consequences of one's actions, and which celebrates the joys and delights of women's sexuality.'[135]

Female embodiment is thus considered seriously:

> What distinguishes feminist theological treatments of embodiment are these related features: (1) a suspicion of views that see women as being more 'naturally' embodied than are men; (2) a rejection of a dualist framework (e.g. body–soul) for conceptualising embodiment; (3) a concern to place embodiment in a historical and social context (4) an extension of embodiment as a value to wider issues, such as the nature of the person, norms for moral action, and the human relationship to the earth (5) a celebration of embodiment in new forms of ritual and liturgy.[136]

The creativity extends to the area of doctrine in which affirming the female body as equal to the male's is arguably the most problematic: Christology and the restriction of the priesthood to men only. The official Vatican position is set out in *Inter insigniores* which based the exclusion of women from ordination on the grounds that sex, unlike race or ethnicity is an 'essential difference'. The incarnation of the Word to the male sex, 'while not implying an alleged natural superiority of man over woman, cannot be disassociated from the economy of salvation: it is indeed, in harmony with entirety of God's plan as God himself has revealed it'.[137] The maleness of Christ is therefore intrinisic to the priesthood.[138] It is hard to dispute the argument that such a theological perspective privileges the male body.

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[134] Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993), p. 16. One of the more recent developments within feminist theology has been that of ecofeminism - the identification of the woman with the earth, or in drawing the connection between toxic pollution, hunger and unemployment and the patriarchal image of God. Ivone Gebara, *Longing for Running Water: Ecofeminism and Liberation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999) cited in Lisa Isherwood, 'Dancing Theology on Earthquakes: Trends and Direction in Feminist Theologies', *The Expository Times*, 122.4 (2010), 157-166 (p. 161). Isherwood defines Ecojustice as 'grounded in an affirmation of our bodies as part of the sacred body of the earth and our relatedness is also earthy and does not rely on some transcendent reality (p. 164). The term was initially coined by Francoise d'Eaubonne in her 1974 book, *Le Féminisme ou la Mort (Feminism or Death).* Another foundational text is Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992).

[135] Elizabeth A. Johnson and others, 'Feminist Theology: A Review of Literature', *Theological Studies*, 56.2 (1995), 327-352 (p. 333).

[136] Johnson, and others, 'Feminist Theology: A Review of Literature', p. 331.

[137] Congretation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Inter insginiores (On the Question of Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood),*15 October 1976 <http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19761015_inter-insigniores_en.html > [accessed 22 April 2019].

[138] The argument for ordination as being restricted to men only in modern documents are in (i) *Inter insigniores* and (ii) the pastoral letter *Ordinatio sacerdotalis (On Reserving Priestly Ordination To Men Alone),* 22 May 1994< http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19940522_ordinatio-sacerdotalis.html> [accessed 22 April 2019]. More recently Pope Francis refused to revisit the question of ordination for women in *Evangelii gaudium*, 'The reservation of the priesthood to males,

Feminist Christology, must perforce pose the following question, *qua* Reuther, 'can a male saviour save women?' Some, such as Daphne Hampson, have rejected the possibility of a feminist Christology, arguing that 'through the very nature of Christology, there can be no Christology which is compatible with feminism'.[139] Mary Daly, even more trenchantly, argued that Christology made the second order status of women inevitable: 'Indeed the Christological tradition itself tends to justify such conclusions. The underlying – and often explicit – assumption in the mind of theologians through the centuries has been that the divinity could not have deigned to "become incarnate"; in the "inferior sex", and the "fact" that "he" did not do so of course confirms male superiority.'[140] She refuses to speak of Christology but rather refers to 'Christolatry'. Others, such as Ruether, Anne Carr, Catherine Lowry LaCugana and Johnson, affirm Christological doctrine, but read it within a feminist hermeneutic.[141] A similar approach is taken by Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Letty Russell and Patricia Wilson Kastener in the Protestant Tradition. Carter Heyward calls for the necessity of 'imaging Jesus' whereby tradition may need to be re-imaged in order to visualise him not as divine, but as a human being who knew and loved God.[142]

Reuther argues for a move towards seeing Christ as a symbol for the universal, not in an abstract sense, but operating from a liberating praxis. Her Christ is a liberator of the oppressed. We should not, writes Reuther, deny that Jesus was a Jewish sexed male who emerged from a particular historical milieu. Rather, if we are to take seriously the notion that Christ came to redeem all, then we must 'be able to encounter Christ as black, as Asian, as Aboriginal, as women'.[143] Against this, other feminist theologians such as Rita Nakashima Brock have directly criticised Radford Ruether arguing that making Christ a hero, as a historical phenomenon, disables the followers of Jesus, a difficult area for

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as a sign of Christ the Spouse who gives himself in the Eucharist, is not a question open to discussion', [104]. Francis, *Evangelii gaudium (On the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World),* 24 November 2013 <http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html> [accessed 22 April 2019]. In the 1976 document, the argument against ordination is argued for on two fronts (i) the 'iconic' argument, which follows on from Bonaventure and Aquinas' argument that the priest must resemble Christ, and thus be male and (ii) that Jesus chose male apostles. Interestingly, in the 1994 document, the iconic argument is dropped, a period that coincides with the years in which a theology of women was developed (Helman, *Women and the Vatican*, p.12). An interesting article which argues that the argument from Jesus maleness is not only a novel one but perhaps doctrinally dangerous is R.A. Norris, 'The Ordination of Women and the "Maleness" of Christ', in *Feminine in the Church*, ed. by Monica Furlong (London: SPCK, 1984), pp. 71-85. See also Deborah Halter, *The Papal 'No'*. A midway position, one that argues for the necessity of the ordination of women deacons, if not priests, is Phyllis Zagano, *Women & Catholicism: Gender, Communion and Authority* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). For a review of the main arguments of the official position, see Benedict M. Ashley, 'Gender and the Priesthood of Christ', 343-379. Ashley engages with feminist theological arguments, even if he ultimately disagrees with them.

[139] Margaret Daphne Hampson, *Theology and Feminism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 59.

[140] Daly, *Beyond God the Father*, p. 70.

[141] See, *Reconstructing the Christ Symbol: Essays in Feminist Christology*, ed. by Maryanne Stevens (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004) for essays.

[142] Heyward, *The Redemption of God: A Theology of Mutual Redemption* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, c1982), p. 16.

[143] Rosemary Radford Ruether, 'Christology and Patriarchy', in *Thinking of Christ: Proclamation, Explanation, Meaning*, ed. by Tatha Wiley (New York and London: Continuum, 2003), 122-134 (p. 133).

women particularly in the realm of atonement theology, and that it is Christ as symbol that should be emphasised.[144]

This symbolic Christ is differently signified in the work of Elizabeth Johnson who opts for a high Christology where the female personification is identified with the divine. 'Jesus came to be seen as God's only-begotten Son only after he was identified with Wisdom.'[145] She posits that '[t]he fluidity of gender symbolism in Jesus-*Sophia* breaks the stranglehold of androcentric thinking which fixates on the maleness of Jesus, the male metaphors of *Logos* and Son, and the relationship between Father and Son.[146] Therefore, Johnson argues, '[i]f Wisdom herself became a human being, then the very matter of creation in the flesh of humanity belongs to her and is precious to her.'[147] Moreover, the doctrine of the incarnation affirms the flesh – a concept traditionally identified with women, and celebrated by feminists – even for God. '[I]n the light of Jesus-Sophia we can see that the living God is *capax hominis*, capable of personal union with what is not God, the flesh and spirit of humanity.'[148] Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza similarly adopts the Wisdom theme but refigures it and sees Jesus as the prophet of Sophia.[149]

Womanist, mujerista and other postcolonial Christologies have specifically embraced the bodiliness of Christ. Kelly Brown Douglas, operating from a liberation perspective, sees the face of Christ in the liberation of oppressed black women. Jacqueline Grant identifies Christ as a black woman.[150] Some theologians, rather than seeing Christ as female, lay claim to the bodily dimension: Gabriele Dietrich connects the salvific blood of the crucified Jesus with the menstrual blood of women, 'menstruation is a holy Eucharist through which the renewal of life becomes possible.'[151] Maria Bingemar describes woman's body as Eucharistic, and posits that the female body is uniquely placed to perform the divine Eucharistic action.[152] The *Christa* figure, here, is also important. In reimagining Christ as female, 'this

[144] Brock, *Journeys by Heart.* This is especially a critical concept in womanist theology, which is suspicious of doctrine which appears to celebrate suffering, given the history of enslavement the background against which womanist theology is read (Williams, *Sisters in The Wilderness*). Feminist theologians have refigured atonement in light of the difference of sin in men and women (c.f. Valerie Saiving, *Original Sin*) moving from an Anselmian concept of debt or punishment to that of consequence, in that, God does not demand reparation or repayment, but bears the cost of inviting humanity to share in that costly divine life of love. See also, Dorothée Soelle, *Christ the Representative: An Essay in Theology after the 'Death of God'* (London: SCM, 1967); Mary Grey, *Redeeming the Dream: Feminism, Redemption and Christian Tradition* (London: SPCK, 1989), chapters 6 and 7; and Eisa Tamez, *The Amnesty of Grace* (Nashville, TX: Abingdon, 1993).
[145] Elizabeth A. Johnson, 'Wisdom Was Made Flesh and Pitched Her Tent Among Us', in *Reconstructing the Christ Symbol*, pp. 95-117 (p. 106).
[146] Johnson, 'Wisdom Was Made Flesh', p. 108.
[147] Johnson, 'Wisdom Was Made Flesh', p. 109.
[148] Johnson, 'Wisdom Was Made Flesh', p. 109.
[149] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus: Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet: Critical Issues in Feminist Christology* (London: SCM Press, 1995).
[150] Grant, *White Women's Christ, Black Woman's Jesus*.
[151] Cited in Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus: Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet*, p. 103.
[152] Maria Clara Lucchetti Bingemer, 'The Eucharist and the Feminine Body: Real Presence, Transubstantiation, Communion', *Modern Theology*, 30.2 (2014), 366-383.

does not intend' writes Elizabeth Johnson 'to deny the male Jesus of history but to evoke the all-encompassing scope of God's identification with crucified people, including and in particular abused women'.[153] Mary, too, has been 'redeemed' from the impossible Madonna, reimagined in the postcolonial mujerista and womanist theologies. In mujerista theology, particularly, Mary's virginity, her inviolability, is seen as evidence of her self-sufficiency and sexual autonomy. Her status as virgin is counterintuitively reclaimed as a position of power. Mary as an emulative ideal for women is, however, still seen as highly controversial, which much of the debate coalescing around the question of her body and her autonomy of desire. Despite Mary being imagined as 'a rich white woman who cannot walk', the attention is still drawn to the female body.[154]

According to Rachel Muers, 'Feminist theology's commitment to "thinking the body" is not merely a shift in the subject matter of theology; it reflects a methodological move with significant political implications.'[155] This shift is what Sallie McFague terms 'attention epistemology' which begins with an awareness of our bodies and those of others, which in turn enables us to come to understand God. She asks that we see the figure of Jesus Christ as different. All eras have their Christ: the Patristic had Christ ascendant, the medieval era the suffering Christ, the modern era the historical Jesus. McFague defines the Jesus of the late twentieth century as 'paradigmatic of God's love for bodies.'[156]

Such reform-minded retrieval has not been welcomed by all. Some, including Naomi Goldberg, Melissa Raphael and Carole P. Christ, have turned to an exploration of Goddess-centred religion. Christ has offered a threefold explanation for why the goddess symbol is powerful from a female perspective: (i) it legitimised female power as beneficent and independent; (ii) it affirms the female body and the lifecycle so expressed, valuing not only women's ability to bear children but also the female body in old age, in direct contrast to the traditional religions ; and (iii) it celebrates the positive valuation of will, a feature that has tended to be identified with sinfulness (after Neihbur) when it appears in the male.[157]

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[153] Discussions of Christa, or the female Christ, are centred around the Edwina Sandys sculpture, the first known female representation of Christ crucified (1974). See Julie Clague, 'Symbolism and the Power of Art: Female Representations of Christ Crucified' in *Bodies in Question: Gender, Religion and Text,* ed. by Darlene Brid and Yvonne Sherwood (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 29-56. Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is*, p. 264.
[154] Marcella Althaus-Reid, 'When God is a Rich White Woman Who Does Not Walk: The Hermeneutical Circle of Mariology and the Construction of Femininity in Latin America', *Theology & Sexuality,* 1.1 (1994), 55-72.
[155] Rachel Muers, 'Feminism, Gender and Theology', in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology Since 1918*, ed. by David Forde, 3rd edn (Malden and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), pp. 431-450, (p. 437).
[156] Sallie McFague, *The Body of God*, p. vii.
[157] Carol P. Christ, 'Why Women Need the Goddess: Phenomenological, Psychological and Political Reflections', in *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*, 2nd edn (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), pp. 273-286. Valerie Saiving put forward the classic argument that sin does not fit in with the female experience, where sin is typically construed as 'underdevelopment or negation of the self'. Valerie Saiving, 'The Human Situation', p. 37. Such a sin does not fit with female experience where women have traditionally been forced into a position of negating themselves in favour of men and children. Saiving was

Goddess-centred religions, although disparate, can be loosely gathered under the rubric of 'thealogy', and is defined as the process and content of reflection upon the divine in female.[158] Arguing that the Judaeo-Christian tradition is essentially dangerous to female vitality,[159] thealogy is offered as a means of celebrating the female body: it is biophiliac, positively celebrating the divine feminine and the lushness of the female form. The goddess movement allows the female body a dignity not traditionally afforded within 'malestream' Christianity. 'Reclamation of the body leads us to the feminist reclamation of the goddess as an ancient metaphor for a holistic, organic orientation of life that includes the affirmation of women's bodily functions, sensuality, connectedness, life-giving powers, and knowledge of healing.'[160]

In summary, we can say that feminist the(o/a)logies bring attention to the female body, and female experience generally, in a way that traditional theologies have not. Through creative reworking of doctrine from a feminine perspective, and critically engaging with theologians of a more conservative tradition, they sought to foreground the female body in a way that could offer positive interpretations of female embodiment and stressed the distinctiveness of female experience, calling for justice for women and overcoming the patriarchal framework. Feminist theologies and thealogies however pose significant limitations, as the next section will outline.

5.3.2. Critique of Feminist Theologies

Critiques of feminist theologies begin with their grounding ethos. To begin from the standpoint of women, it is argued, is inherently problematic. This charge has been levelled at it by both conservative Catholics and liberal theologians. This critique posits that female theologies privilege experience over doctrine or rigorous theory. From a liberal perspective, Linda Woodhead, a religious studies scholar, wrote in 1997 that despite the great opportunities that feminist theology promised at the outset:

> … feminist theology has failed to be sufficiently theological … the result of a failure to engage in any serious and sustained way with the realities of Christian faith and tradition. This failure mars both the critical and the constructive projects of feminist theology: the former is marked by a tendency to ignore the more complex realities of

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critiquing sin as conceived by Reinhold Niebuhr, who built upon Kierkegaard's notion of anxiety arguing that sin is a refusal of theocentric dependence. Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation, I* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941). See also Daphne Hampson's discussion of Saiving and other feminist theologians' critiques of Niebuhr. Hampson, *Theology and Feminism*, pp. 121-126.

[158] Naomi R. Goldenberg, *Changing of the Gods: Feminism and the End of Traditional Religions* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1979).

[159] Goldenberg and Christ went on to publish *Womanspirit Rising,* the seminal text in thealogy after organising a conference at the University of California in 1978. Melissa Raphael, *Thealogy and Embodiment: The Post-Patriarchal Reconstruction of Female Sacrality* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996). See also the Afterword to the third edition of *Diving Deep and Surfacing,* Carol P. Christ, *Diving Deep & Surfacing: Women Writers on Spiritual Quest* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1995).

[160] Brock, *Journeys by Heart*, p. 22.

> the Christian faith, past and present, and by a preference for a rather simplistic modern construal of Christianity, whilst the latter similarly shuns attentive engagement with Christian tradition, scripture, and community in favour of the higher authority named 'women's experience' or 'women's discourses' [161]

A similar critique is mounted by Francis Martin. Martin contends that feminist theology is part of the larger failed project of the Enlightenment. As feminist theology arose in the context of Enlightenment values which stress individual rights, this position is ultimately at odds with classical theology, which emphasises assent to the divinely ordained plan. Moreover, he implies that feminist theology does not engage with classical theology, but with the caricature of theology as read through the Enlightenment lens. 'Christian feminist thought is faulty from a methodological point of view insofar as it is not *from* revelation. It is deficient in its content insofar as it does not have a biblical view of God, and this, I believe, is the area of its greatest weakness, a weakness that it shares with most Western thought'.[162] Ursula King has characterised this approach as deeming 'feminist theology as unbiblical and heretical, pseudo-theological and confused, that it is uncontrollable because it is being developed outside the sphere of influence of official church institutions'.[163]

Not only critiqued in the confines of the theological community, feminist theologies receive little consideration from secular feminists. In a memorable turn of phrase, Tina Beattie described feminist theology as the Cinderella at the feminist ball, uninvited, but there nonetheless.[164] Dawn Llewellyn and Marta Trzebiatowska point out that theological feminism is largely ignored by secular feminism, which adopts a pessimistic outlook as to the values of a religious perspective. 'This pessimism', they write, 'is a shadowy and incongruous over hang from feminism's own Enlightenment legacy. As "reason" unseated systems of faith, and "religion" became separated from the public sphere, the secular/sacred binary infiltrated Western thinking and became inscribed onto disciplinary boundaries. Feminist theologies have fallen on the wrong side of this hierarchy which prefers, in a very modern sense, secular sources.'[165]

Feminist theologians' reluctance to engage in the debates around essentialism, preferring rather to take it as read that a monolithic view of women was anathema, further problematizes their position. While appealing to women's experience as embodied, feminist theology is curiously reluctant to

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[161] Linda Woodhead, 'Spiritualising the Sacred: A Critique of Feminist Theology', *Modern Theology*, 13.2 (1997), 191-212.
[162] Martin, *The Feminist Question*, p. 409.
[163] Ursula King, 'Feminist Theologies in Contemporary Contexts', in *Is There a Future for Feminist Theology?,* ed. by Deborah F. Sawyer and Diane M. Collier (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), pp. 100-114, (p. 101). See also Nancy A. Dallavalle, 'Neither Idolatry nor Iconoclasm: A Critical Essentialism for Catholic Feminist Theology', *Horizons*, 25.1 (1998), 23-42; and Beattie, *New Catholic Feminism*, p. 10.
[164] Tina Beattie, 'Global Sisterhood or Wicked Stepsisters: Why Don't Girls with God-Mothers Get Invited to the Ball?, in *Is There a Future for Feminist Theology?*, pp. 115-125 (p. 116).
[165] Dawn Llewellyn and Marta Trzebiatowska, 'Secular and Religious Feminisms: A Future of Disconnection?', *Feminist Theology*, 21.3 (2013), 244-258 (p. 248).

speak specifically to the female body. The rejection of biological essentialism by feminist theologians, Nancy Dallavalle observes, is almost universal.[166] As Sally Alsford suggests:

> While Christian feminist theology has up to now rested on rejection of patriarchal definitions of female nature and on the articulation of a theology for women, it has not tended to formulate *explicit* alternative essentialist views of female nature. There are likely to be a number of reasons for this, including the intractability of nature/nurture debates, where statements about the essential nature of women often function more as statements of aims/ideals, as prescriptions, than as conclusions or descriptions we should ever be sure about; a desire to get away from such oppositional thinking; growing awareness of diversity; a concern for praxis rather than theory; and the impact of postmodern questions about the very notion of human nature.[167]

While the experience of being a woman has been fruitfully explored, the body itself has not been fully grappled with. This, writes, Michelle Gonzales, is fundamentally unsatisfactory:

> To put it rather bluntly, men and women are embodied in very different and distinct ways. If you take the body seriously, then you must examine how this distinctive embodiment shapes one's theological anthropology. However, feminist theologians often want to resist discussing any essential attributes to a particular sex, simultaneously celebrating the body, toeing the line between essentialism and constructivism. I am not sure one can have it both ways.[168]

Thealogies, which do embrace a form of biological essentialism, are inherently problematic.[169] While some scholars have sought recourse to the idea of a matriarchal culture, others, such as Starhawk, argue that myth suffices: 'we need not look to [history] to justify the re-emergence of the feminine principle. Whether or not women ever ruled in matriarchies, women are taking power today.'[170] Feminist theologians, however, are generally against such an ahistorical approach.[171]

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[166] Dallavalle, 'Neither Idolatry nor Iconoclasm', p. 30.
[167] Sally Alsford, 'Women's Nature and the Feminization of Theology', in *Is There a Future for Feminist Theology*?, p. 128.
[168] Michelle A. Gonzalez, 'Hans Urs von Balthasar and Contemporary Feminist Theology', pp. 591-592.
[169] While the Goddess movement originally attracted mainstream attention and was debated in academic circles, it has fallen into disfavour. In 1993, Goldenberg confidently stated that '[e]ventually, theology and each disciplinary speciality within religious studies - history of religion, sociology of religion, philosophy of religion and psychology of religion - will have to face "the Goddess" and to encounter the "theology" that reflection on her is creating,' This has yet to come to pass. While the feminine principle has been engaged with, there has been little attempt to retrieve the Goddess outside of a limited circle. Naomi Goldenberg, 'The Return of the Goddess: Psychoanalytic Reflections on the Shift from Theology to Thealogy', in *Religion and Gender*, ed. by Ursula King (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), pp. 145-164 (p. 146). Perhaps, rather unfairly, it was confused with self-help movement, particularly in light of Carole P. Christ's work, coming as it does from a journey of self-exploration, rather than from academic reflection. Jacqueline da Costa, 'From Feminist Theologian to Thealogian: The Life and Work of Carol P. Christ', *Feminist Theology*, 14.3 (2006), 311-326.
[170] Starhawk, cited in Naomi Goldenberg, 'The Return of the Goddess', p. 156.
[171] Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine: A Western Religious History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005). Cynthia Eller's scholarship in particular is dedicated to the debunking of the argument for the existence of a pre-patriarchy matriarchy. Cynthia Eller, *The Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory: Why an Invented Past Won't Give Woman a Future* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2000).

The neo-pagan dimension of the goddess movement in particular is viewed as problematic. Eleanor McLaughlin argues that the goddess movement while full of 'unquestioned spiritual creativity' is rather lacking in its focus on alternative mythological retellings. 'For women, a historical sacred narrative does better than a mythological one, as it presents the opportunity to deal with embodiment as an aspect of the sacred.'[172] Another problem, one which is echoed by all critics of the goddess movement, is that it commits the same offence of which it accuses traditional religions: that of excluding entirely half of the human race, namely the male sex. McLaughlin and others also question the lack of the ethical dimension of the goddess religion: sin and its remedy.[173]

Unsatisfactory as the project of thealogy ultimately is, Nancy A. Dallavalle is concerned that 'the contemporary sundering of the sexual body from gender identity, a claim that some feminists deem necessary for women's full equality, has led to a worrisome cultural inability to assert anything normative about the human person.'[174] She suggests that it would be better to adopt a 'critical essentialism' which accepts that our understanding of the sexed body is seen only through the constructive lens, while asserting that there is something distinctive about the female body.[175]

Such concerns are reflective of the problem facing feminism generally and pose specific problems with regard to feminist theology. With the contention that theology is written with the male experience as normative, feminist theologians perforce reject large swathes of traditional teaching. Some, such as Mary McClintock Fulkerson, argue that feminist theology in its refiguring of certain teachings is as exclusionary as traditional theology. The female *imago Dei*, Fulkerson argues, invoking the arguments of Ruether, 'diminishes male humanity'.[176] It cannot be denied that the feminist theologians most concerned with the body, operating from a liberation perspective, are selective in their writings, stressing certain aspects of doctrine (incarnation) while avoiding, or

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She argues that the idea that society 5000 years ago 'was matriarchal is simply not backed up by historical and archaeological evidence.' (p. 8)

[172] Eleanor McLaughlin, 'Feminist Christologies: Redressing the Tradition', in *Reconstructing the Christ Symbol*, pp. 118-149 (p. 123). See also her essay which sets forth an argument for such a historical reclamation, arguing that women have creatively worked around the androcentric elements in the tradition, 'The Christian Past: Does It Hold a Future for Women?', *Womanspirit Rising*, pp. 93-106.

[173] In general, feminists have largely ignored the question of sin as they are preoccupied with valorising 'women's experience'. Additionally, Original Sin has largely been collapsed into the idea of female sexuality and the body, as per the arguments of Mary Daly and Rosemary Radford Ruether. See Mary McClintock Fulkerson, 'Sexism as Original Sin: Developing a Theacentric Discourse', *JAAR*, 59.4 (1991), 653-675.

[174] Nancy A. Dallavalle, 'Backhanded Complementarity', *Commonweal*, 9 October 2015, 30-32, (p. 31).

[175] A similar argument is adopted by Serena Jones, which she terms 'strategic essentialism'. 'The strategic essentialist is a "pragmatist" or "functionalist" because she uses "practical effect" as the measure of theory. Instead of relying on rigid principles…she asks: Will their view of women's nature advance the struggle for women's empowerment? She also makes calculated, "strategic" decisions about which universals or essentials might work in a given context and which might fail'. Serene Jones, *Feminist Theory and Christian Theology: Cartographies of Grace* (New York and London: Routledge, 2000), p. 44. See also Diane Fuss, *Essentially Speaking*.

[176] Mary McClintock Fulkerson, 'Contesting the Gendered Subject: A Feminist Account of Imago Dei', in *Horizons in Feminist Theology: Identity Tradition and Norms*, ed. by Rebecca S. Chopp and Sheila Greeve Davaney (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1997), pp. 99-115 (p.102).

radically reinterpreting others (e.g., theology of the cross, resurrection).[177] Some of the work can appear, at times, tenuous, lacking the robust and heavily annotated recourse to classical theology, such as in the erotic theology of Carter Heyward. This is apparent in both Catholic theology, which stresses tradition and revelation equally, and Protestant theology with its emphasis on *sola scriptura*.

Similarly, some feminist Christologies run the risk of ignoring the historical Christ, leaving the fleshly Jesus for the more cosmic Christ, thus eliding the central event of the incarnation. Moreover, given that women have traditionally been identified with the body, in de-emphasising the sexed nature of Jesus Christ, that is his bodily, fleshy reality, one could inadvertently erase the validity of woman's experience. Hannah Bacon argues that 'there is a danger in overlooking the historical particularity of the embodiment of Jesus in that this may provide little reason for not overlooking the historical particularity of female embodiment and, as such, the historical particularity and concreteness of women's experiences and the multidimensionality of oppression'.[178] She points out that other particular aspects of Jesus (i.e. his profession, his origins, his *situatedness),* have not precluded any man from identifying with him:

> If the body of Jesus is indeed read as 'situation,'… then his maleness need not be given priority. Jesus was not simply male; his 'situation' comprised other aspects, including his age, his Jewishness, his Galilean roots, his social class, and so on. There is therefore no need to insist that any of these aspects of his embodiment should be tied to the being of God.[179]

[177] See for example, Delores Williams who queries that given the high value Christianity has placed on redemptive suffering, should images of the cross and the crucifix 'maintain their status as major sacred emblems of our faith'. Delores S. Williams, 'A Crucifixion Double Cross?', *The Other Side*, 29 (1993), 25-26, (p. 25). Theologians such as Carter Heyward and Rita Nakashima Brock outright reject a theology of the cross. Elizabeth Moltmann-Wendel was one of the first to draw attention to what she alleged was a flaw in feminist theologies. Moltmann-Wendel, 'Is There a Feminist Theology of the Cross?' in *God: His and Hers,* Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel and Jurgen Moltmann-Wendel (New York: Crossroad, 1991). Kim Power notes, 'Christian feminism cannot erase the cross. Moreover, although women have historically been identified with suffering and passivity, their suffering, apart from the female martyrs, has rarely been considered redemptive. There is need to tease out the meaning of suffering as the [necessary?] precursor to resurrection and what that implies for women especially, because the crucifix is at the heart of faith, of Eucharist, and of praxis.' Kim Power, 'Embodying the Eucharist', *Reinterpreting the Eucharist: Explorations in Feminist Theology and Ethics*, ed. by Anne Elvey and others (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 152-185 (p. 162). Sarah Coakley also points to this, noting that in avoiding the concept of suffering, feminist theologians are taking it as read that the concepts of the enlightenment, e.g. autonomy are correct. Rather, she argues, such concepts ought to be critically interrogated. Sarah Coakley, *Powers and Submissions,* pp. xii-xx. Regarding the resurrection, most feminist theologians reject the idea of bodily resurrection, arguing that the doctrine reinscribes the dualism at the heart of spirit and matter. Moreover, abandoning the notion of bodily resurrection both removes the solipsism implicit in the idea that we survive the world and brings attention to focusing on the here and now. If there is no eschatological horizon of death, our focus remains on this world, which has the dual result of both affirming the importance of female bodily existence, and the call to care for the world today. See Ruether, *Sexism and God Talk* and McFague, *The Body of God*. Heyward, *Redemption*.

[178] Hannah Bacon, 'A Very Particular Body: Assessing the Doctrine of Incarnation for Affirming the Sacramentality of Female Embodiment', in *Women and the Divine: Touching Transcendence*, ed. by Gillian Howie and J'annine Jobling (Houndsmills and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 227-252 (p. 236).

[179] Hannah Bacon, 'A Very Particular Body', p. 234.

While this is not necessarily true for Latina/womanist theologies, which tend to stress the historical figure of Christ of the gospels, by the same token, the Latina/womanist Christologies tend to contextualise Christ to their own specific situation, losing the universal aspect which is present other Christologies. The same problem is present throughout: Christ's body is a *male* body. Feminist Christologies generally resolve the 'problem' of Christ, by making reference to Christ's humanity, thereby bypassing the body and the vexed question of sexual difference.[180] Yet, where a theology of the female body is concerned, such recourse to a rather vague 'humanity' not differentiated to female bodily experience, is far from satisfactory.

Some Catholic feminists point to the person of Mary as role model for women, and proof of the positive nature of female embodiment.[181] However, this is still problematic given the Church's insistence on the infallibility of the doctrine of the immaculate conception which arguably dehumanises Mary herself and, further, the absolute insistence on her sexually pure state.[182] While the same charge could be levelled at Christ in his conception and his celibate state, nonetheless his humanity is emphatically declared alongside his divinity. Mary's qualitative humanity is celebrated as an exception to the female sex, whereas Christ's humanity is that which is in accordance with his divinity. The identification of women with Mary only serves to emphasise women's status as subordinate, since 'subordinate role' is the terminology that was used at Vatican II to describe Mary's role in redemption relative to Christ's.[183]

Given the critiques outlined, the female body appears to be elusive in feminist theology. For all the talk about the centrality of embodiment in feminist theology, it is mainly a deconstructive move.

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[180] Radford Ruether, for example, describes Jesus as 'the representative of liberated humanity' *Sexism and God-Talk,* p. 137.

[181] See for example, Charlene Spretnak, *Missing Mary: The Queen of Heaven and Her Re-Emergence in the Modern Church* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 55-85. Spretnak avers to a 'quiet rebellion' against the dismissal of Mary as being a patriarchal construct which disempowers women. While dated, Elizabeth Johnson provides an excellent summary on how Mary has been used to denigrate women, Elizabeth A. Johnson, 'The Marian Tradition and the Reality of Women', *Horizons*, 12. 1 (1985), 116-135. Johnson puts forward her own constructive theology of Mary, 'to envision her as a concrete woman of our history' in *Truly Our Sister: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints* (London and New York: Continuum, 2005). See also Ann Loades 'Feminist Theology: A View of Mary', in *Mary is for Everyone: Essays on Mary and Ecumenism,* ed. by William McLouhglin and Jill Pinnock (Leominister: Gracewing, 1997), pp. 32-40. Loades makes reference to the arguments put forward for the Assumption representing 'a categorical "no" to the peculiar association of women with sin-flesh-matter', pp. 32-40 (pp. 34-35).

[182] Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus (The Immaculate Conception)*, 8 December 1854 <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius09/p9ineff.htm> [accessed 22 April 2019]. Simply put, the dogma stated that Mary was conceived without the stain of original sin. With regard to perpetual virginity, while never explicated in full, has been present since the early Church as found in 3rd century baptismal formula. It was officially affirmed no less than three times, at Constantinople (553) Lateran (649), and Niceae II (787). The insistence on Mary being conceived 'purely' and her virginity came about in the course of discussion on the nature of Christ. It was important that no taint could be passed on to the divine.

[183] Vatican II, *Lumen gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution of the Church), 21 November 1964 http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html>, 62 [accessed 22 April 2019]

Feminist theology has been more interested in deconstructing what patriarchal constructions of religion have been wont to say, rather than affirming what female embodiment is. Out of an understandable fear of reifying woman's identification with the body, the result is that there is very little sense of the body in feminist theology. All agree that the female body is to be engaged with *seriously* but offer little explication of what this means.

This is in no small part due to the postmodern *maelstrom* of the debates between social constructive theories of gender and essentialist ideas of gender. Feminists are acutely conscious of the charges that early feminist theory was guilty of universalising 'women' as middle class, educated and white, and are reluctant to the point of evasiveness to explicitly state anything as to the nature of the body. Instead feminist theology has engaged more fruitfully in the theme of interconnectedness, mutuality and the metaphorical identification of what the body is like. Indeed, the most fruitful engagement within feminist theology and classical Christian doctrine are those around the Trinity, that is, that which is most open to mystery, and which emphasises relationality rather than enfleshment.[184]

The more conservative critics question even the utility of feminism as a matrix. Feminist complementarians, the 'new feminists', argue that feminist theologians have an overinflated view of the gains that feminism has made.[185] Elizabeth Fox-Genovese writes, '[f]ew would contest that feminism has done much to improve aspects of the lives of many women, but those who see to formulate a new feminism know, the "improvements" have often come at a daunting cost that feminists are loath to acknowledge.' She continues, 'the strategies of old feminism have seriously undermined essential features of our cultural and moral life, notably our ability to value and nurture human life in all its diversity, our respect for a uniform standard of justice, our willingness to honor any form of natural or divine authority (although other forms of authority are flourishing), our

[184] The Trinity has been seen as a stumbling block for feminists in two areas: (i) Trinitarian theology is thought to reinforce a hierarchical relationship between the sexes in that the relationship between the divine persons is hierarchical; and (ii) the male naming of the persons of the Trinity. However, there has been ample scholarship done to refute this reading. This tradition began arguably with Julian of Norwich, Julian of Norwich, *Showings*, eds. Edmund College and James Walsh (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), pp. 295-296. Julian uses the gendered scriptural terms of Father-Son, but complements these with maternal functional language. God is both father *and* mother. Elizabeth A. Johnson stresses the feminine *Sophia* in Johnson, *She Who Is*, esp. 191-223; Soskice, *The Kindness of God,* pp. 100-124. As Soskice points out, 'The doctrine of the Trinity tells us nothing about how men and women should relate to one another as males and females. It does not show that all men should be like the 'father' and all women model themselves on a feminized Spirit. In this sense the doctrine tells us nothing about sexual difference. But it does let us glimpse what it is, most truly, to *be*: 'To-be' most fully is 'to-be-related' in difference (p. 124). For the Trinity as irredeemably patriarchal, the classic text is Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father*, p. 13. Daly argues that the language and imagery in classical theology perpetuates male transcendence and self-sufficiency, naming God in relation to male being, thus robbing women of their own ability to name God and themselves. For an argument on the maleness of the Trinity, see Mary Grey, 'The Core of Our Desire: Re-Imaging the Trinity', *Theology*, 93 (1990), 363-372. The classic in Catholic feminist theology is Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for* Us. See also her summary article 'God in Communion with Us', *Freeing Theology*, pp. 83-114.

[185] *Women in Christ: Towards a New Feminism*, ed. by Michelle Schumacher (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), pp. 297-311. *Promise and Challenge: Catholic Women Reflect on Feminism, Complementarity, and the Church*, ed. by Mary Rice Hasson (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2015).

willingness to nurture children and protect childhood, and our ability always to see the other person as ends in themselves – never means to another end.'[186] Fox-Genovese, much like Francis Martin, sees feminism as the 'handmaid of individualism' and 'the premises of individualism, with their emphasis upon autonomy interdependence and self-determination, have made it virtually impossible to imagine an equality grounded in difference, with the result that feminists who seek equality for women have almost invariably been led to deny or abstract from sexual difference.'[187] Nor are the new feminists sympathetic to critiquing authority. Fox-Genovese goes so far as to the describe the attempts of Catholic feminists to introduce feminist principles into the Church as 'insolent'.[188]

Francis Martin lauds 'new feminism' as 'a definitive shift from a consideration of women's rights to reflection on the very nature of woman herself.'[189] The 'new feminists' argue that Anglo-Saxon feminism with its radical separation of gender and sex are guilty of sloppy philosophy: 'the idea of 'women being equally human' slowly degenerated into 'women being equal to men', and eventually into 'woman are identical to men'[190] This, they say, has led women to disavow their female nature and expressly try to be more like men. Questionable though such a critique may be, the critiques of the new feminists do point to the fact that for many women, feminist theology simply does not speak to their experience. The delights of post structuralism may entrance some but, as Tina Beattie points out, speak very little to the average Catholic woman.[191]

In summary, we can state that while feminists tend to emphasise themes of mutuality, relationality and connectedness and stress the importance of the body, they also tend to avoid explicitly stating what it means to be a woman, out of an understandable desire to avoid charges of essentialism. Critiqued both by complementarians and secular feminists, feminist theological approaches to the body are therefore limited.

5.4. Body Theologies

5.4.1. The Argument

The ultimately unsatisfactory effort to redeem traditional theology of the body within a feminist framework resulted in a new development, that of 'body theology'. Despite its similar nomenclature, it is philosophically and theologically very different. While a theology of the body maintains a certain

[186] Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, 'Equality, Difference, and the Practical Problems of a New Feminism', in *Women in Christ: Towards a New Feminism*, pp. 297-311 (pp. 298-299).
[187] Fox-Genovese, 'Equality, Difference,' p. 303.
[188] Fox-Genovese, 'Equality, Difference', p. 304.
[189] Martin, *The Feminist Question*, p. 141.
[190] Beatriz Vollmer Coles, 'New Feminism: A Sex-Gender Reunion', in *Women in Christ*, pp. 52-66 (p. 58). Coles view of what she dubs 'gender feminism' is extreme to say the least: it has resulted, she alleges, in 'exalting one sex over the other, but it has also encouraged homosexual lobbies, new witchcraft, and other extreme ideologies, which exist almost exclusively in contemporary Western culture' (p. 59).
[191] Beattie, *New Catholic Feminism*, p. 22.

categorical ontological fixity, body theology is disruptive and malleable. Whereas a theology of the body has been influenced by certain historical and philosophical insights, from the Neo-Platonist flavour of Augustine to the personalism of Wojtyla, body theology has largely been forged in the discipline of queer theory.[192] In taking 'the female body as normative', the female body is immediately foregrounded in a way that is impossible in a theology of the body.[193] Its application in theology, and in particular with regard to a theology of the body has mainly manifested in two areas (i) as a corrective of Christianity's suspicion of sexuality; and (ii) as disruptive in its transgressive roots which has made it particularly appealing to feminist theologians operating out of a liberation praxis.[194] Queering theology means 'questioning the (hetero)sexual underlying of theological reflections. [Q]ueer theory has produced what might be considered a qualitative change in theological thinking by unveiling the extension of the influence not just of heterosexuality but of heteronormativity in radical theology and specifically feminist theology.'[195] As it is concerned with subverting heteronormativity, the body is conceived of in terms of the performance of gender and sexuality.

Against the obvious argument that queer theory speaks to the 'other' rather than to what is the 'norm' and therefore cannot speak to the vast majority, Lisa Isherwood argues that queer does not just mean gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered:

> The queer body itself is more an attitude than a particular set of genitals and orientations. The queer Christian body is a transgressive signifier of radical equality. It attempts to subvert the weight of patriarchy upon it through counter cultural actions. This body lives in the world but is not chained by its narrow definitions and hierarchical power systems. It is a body that acts stubbornly in the face of life as it is, and is a space in which creative rebellion is rooted in the everyday business of life. In the language of Christianity, it is a redemptive space. The queer body is any body.[196]

Elizabeth Stuart outlines four distinctive characteristics of queer theology: (i) it rejects a metaphysic of substance and deconstructs both gender and sexual identities; (ii) a Christocentric strain runs through all queer theologies, especially evident in the incarnation and Trinitarian reflections, that

[192] See discussion in Chapter 4.
[193] Lisa Isherwood and Elizabeth Stuart, *Introducing Body Theology* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2000), p. 10. The authors add, rather exasperatedly, 'It is necessary to state this as we do not wish to be accused of reinstating the old chestnut that woman is most strongly body and her biology is destiny' (p. 10).
[194] Marcella Althaus-Reid and Lisa Isherwood, 'Thinking Theology and Queer Theory', *Feminist Theology*, 15.3 (2007), 302-314 (p. 302).
[195] Marcella Althaus-Reid and Lisa Isherwood, 'Introduction: Queering Theology: Thinking Theology and Queer Theory', in *The Sexual Theologian: Essays on Sex, God and Politics*, ed. by Marcella Althaus-Reid and Lisa Isherwood (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2004), pp. 1-15 (p. 4).
[196] Lisa Isherwood, 'Queering Christ: Outrageous Acts and Theological Rebellions', *Literature and Theology*, 15.3 (2001), 249-261(p. 252).

Christ always stood out again the norm, and 'queered' the world;[197] (iii) as it challenges the notion of a metanarrative (asserting that sexuality and gender is unstable), this means that all 'reality', including all doctrines, is also unstable, which Stuart sees as an opportunity to 're-enchant the world'; and (iv) queer theology begins with sexuality and takes its insights from early lesbian theologians.[198]

Body theology, like the theology of the body begins from the incarnation. From here however, body theology and theology of the body diverge radically. The difference is of first and second order. Body theology begins with the body, whereas a theology of the body is a reflection on what theology has to say of the body. The incarnation, for body/queer theologians, is the epitome of queerness: God became flesh, what God does that? 'What else so fundamentally challenges the nature of human and divine identity?'[199] Central as the incarnation is, three other important tenets at the heart of body theologies are sin and redemption (thereby overcoming the most glaring lack in thealogies); and women's experience.

James Nelson, one of the first body theologians, defined body theology as 'nothing more, nothing less than our attempts to reflect on body experience as revelatory of God'.[200] Body theologians argue that the theology of the body emphasises the Augustinian body, which is fallen and sinful whereas body theology incorporates the eastern emphasis that embodiment is stressed less as a punishment of original sin, but as the action of a compassionate God following the Fall. 'Christianity was located in the body because the body, in the most literal sense, was what God has fashioned in the beginning and where God has chosen to find us in our fallenness.'[201] If the spectre of Jerome haunts a theology of the

[197] See Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, *Omnigender: A Trans-Religious Approach* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2007) and Justin Edward Tanis, *Trans-Gendered* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2003). Both scholars suggest that the very divine-human nature of Jesus is itself 'queer'.
[198] Elizabeth Stuart, *Lesbian and Gay Theologies: Repetitions with Critical Difference* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), p. 102. This notion of 'flux' is based on the concept of *eros* developed in the works of Adrienne Rich, Susan Griffin, and Audre Lorde. Lorde's essay 'Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power', in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Freedom CA: Crossing Press, 1984), pp. 66-71, has been very influential, particularly in the work of feminist theologians Rita Brock and Carter Heyward (Brock, *Journeys by Heart* and Carter Heyward, *Touching Our Strength*). According to Lorde, the erotic properly understood lies on a 'deeply feminine and spiritual plane, firmly rooted in the power of our unexpressed or unrecognised feeling.' (p. 54). 'When I speak of the erotic, then, I speak of it as an assertion of the life force of women; of that creative energy empowere, the knowledge and use of which we are now reclaiming in our language, our history, our dancing our loving our work, our lives. (p. 55). While eros is not just sexual, it is foreground in sexuality. Heyward particularly identifies the understanding of *Eros* as the sensual and sexual unity of lovers, and finds within this the presence of love of God, linked to intimacy. She is however, careful to stress that the erotic can include the darker side of Eros. Because of the inherent power differential that Heyward reads in heterosexual relationships, 'at no historical point have the links between sexual, gender and economic control been more pernicious than today' (p. 46), and she sees mutuality as essential to relationship (p. 23), this then poses the question: could true mutuality exist in the context of heterosexual relationships? She argues that sexual yearning, while not exclusively the domain of woman, is a far more dominant than in traditional, or 'malestream' theologies. (Heyward, *Touching Our Strength).*
[199] Marcella Althaus-Reid and Lisa Isherwood, *The Sexual Theologian,* p. 7.
[200] Nelson, *Body Theology*, p. 50.
[201] Harvey, 'Embodiment in Time and Eternity: A Syriac Perspective', p. 9.

body, Evagrius Pontus, it is argued, is a more benign influence at play here.[202] For Nelson, the question is not simply what theology has to say about the body, but what it means that we as body-selves participate in the reality of God, and how we as body-selves reflect on that reality. 'Theology cannot be done in the abstract but must start with the bodily experiences of life.'[203]

Nelson, like all body theologians, places sexuality at the centre of body theology. He argues that when individuals become alienated from their bodies, they become less human, losing the capacity for passionate caring.[204]

> God is uniquely known to us through human presence, and human presence is always embodied presence. Thus body language is inescapably the material of Christian theology and bodies are always sexual bodies, and our sexuality is basic to our capacity to know and to experience God.[205]

With its focus on the incarnation, body theology is highly Christocentric. Due to their commitment to disruption, body theologians are to a certain extent freed from having to deal with the struggles that transformationalist feminists have engaged with, namely the problem of the maleness of Christ. They can merely 'disrupt' traditional notions of Christology arguing, as James Nelson does, 'I realize that I have met many Christs'.[206] Pamela Dickey Young calls for a 'queer Jesus' who does not conform to the dimorphic categories of tradition.[207] Lisa Isherwood advocates for the necessity of a 'fat Jesus'.[208] She uses Althaus Reid's notion of the obscene Christ, where the obscene uncovers what needs to be visible,[209] arguing that 'we need the abject fat Jesus who bulges out over all the edges and carries her embodiment proudly and differently in the world'.[210] The divine, in Isherwood and Althaus-Reid's point of view, defies fixed boundaries of the acceptable, or the static shape. They highlight the audacity of the Incarnation – the divine becoming human – and take it to celebrate all that is transgressive and seek to include the abject. Indeed, Isherwood uses the terms 'body theologian' and 'incarnational theologian' interchangeably.

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[202] E.g. the apophatic tradition one finds in the Eastern Church, see Tina Beattie's brief discussion, *New Catholic Feminism,* pp. 104-107.
[203] Nelson, *Body Theology*, p. 17.
[204] Nelson, *Body Theology*, p. 38.
[205] Nelson, *Body Theology*, p. 36.
[206] Nelson, *Body Theology,* p. 192.
[207] Pamela Dickey Young, 'Neither Male nor Female: Christology beyond Dimorphism' in *From Logos to Christos: Essays on Christology In Honour of Joanne McWilliam*, ed. by Ellen M. Leonard and Kate Merriman (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2010), pp. 181-196.
[208] Lisa Isherwood, *The Fat Jesus: Feminist Explorations in Boundaries and Transgressions* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2007).
[209] Marcella Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology: Theological Perversions in Sex, Gender, and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2001).
[210] Isherwood, *The Fat Jesus,* p. 142.

This commitment to inclusivity has also provided a framework for transgender theologies. First collectively explored in the 2009 book edited by Isherwood and Althaus Reid,[211] proponents of trans theology argue that both scriptural (as in the Yahwist account of creation) and Catholic teaching generally support transgenderism, in as much as these areas concern human dignity, in all forms; the celebration of diversity; the central dimension of the welcoming of the stranger and the goodness of creation.[212] Scholars such as Susannah Cornwell ground their arguments in the apophatic tradition, pointing especially to Gregory of Nyssa, for whom sexual difference had no ontological significance.[213] In recent years, evangelical first person accounts have been offered by transgender individuals who claim identity with God. 'Being trans gave me a sense of kinship with God. I had a body that concealed who I was; God had no body at all. Both of us were stranded in the wilderness beyond human categories, invisible and incomprehensible to human beings who mistook bodies for selves.'[214] Proponents argue that body theology 'implies a broadening of scope beyond narrow, hierarchical categories to inclusivity and the embracing of diversity, but it places emphasis on ambiguity, process, and perpetual becoming. Transgender offers a challenge to several attitudes that are prevalent in certain religious denominations as in society at large: patriarchy, misogyny, body-hatred, homophobia, and heteronormativity'.[215] In conclusion, body theology offers a positive

[211] Trans-theology as discussed in *Trans/formations*, ed. by Althaus-Reid and Lisa Isherwood. *Trans/Formations,* ed. by Lisa Isherwood and Marcella Althaus-Reid (London: SCM Press, 2009). A recent review of the literature in trans studies and religion is Siobhan M. Kelly, 'Multiplicity and Contradiction: A Literature Review of Trans* Studies in Religion', *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 34.1 (2018), 7-23.
[212] Virginia Mollenkott, '"We Come Bearing Gifts": Seven Lessons Religious Congregations Can Learn from Transpeople', in *Trans/Formations*, ed. by Marcella Althaus-Reid and Lisa Isherwood (London: SCM Press, 2009), pp. 46-58.
[213] See for example, Gregory's reading of nuptial symbolism, where he expressly disavows any analogy to bodily sexual difference. See the seventh homily on the Song of Songs. Susannah Cornwall argues that 'much of the value of apophasis for reading transgender … may lie simply in its capacity to endorse multiplicity even when this is discomfiting.' Susannah Cornwall, 'Apophasis and Ambiguity; The 'Unknowingness of Transgender', in *Trans/Formations*, pp. 13-40 (p. 35). Virginia Burrus, 'Queer Father: Gregory of Nyssa and the Subversion of Identity', in *Queer Theology: Rethinking the Western Body*, ed. by Gerard Loughlin (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 147-162. Michael Nausner, 'Toward Community Beyond Gender Binaries: Gregory of Nyssa's Transgendering as Part of His Transformative Eschatology', *Theology & Sexuality*, 16 (2002), 55-65. Sarah Coakley, *Powers and Submissions*. V.E.F. Harrison, 'Gender, Generation, and Virginity in Cappadocian Theology', *The Journal of Theological Studies*, 47.1 (1996), 38-68. This claiming of Gregory of Nyssa is not unproblematic, after all Gregory was not claiming gender transformation so much as transcendence, i.e. to sameness, a point which has been noted by Gerard Loughlin in, 'What Is Queer? Theology after Identity', *Theology & Sexuality*, 14.2 (2008), 143-152 (p. 146). See also Hans Boersma, *Embodiment and Virtue in Gregory of Nyssa: An Anagogical Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 9-12.
[214] Joy Ladin, 'In the Image of God, God Created Them: Toward Trans Theology', *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 34.1 (2018), 53-58 (p. 53)
[215] Virginia Mollenkott has argued that religious congregations can learn much from their transperson members. The 'seven lessons' are: (1) The scriptures are trans-friendly; (2) Transgender members help congregations transcend gender stereotypes that alienate men from women; (3) Transgender members remind congregations to use diverse and inclusive language when speaking about God; (4) Transgender people have traditionally been recognized in many cultures as bridges between the seen and unseen worlds;(5) Transgender people have often reflected deeply on the connections between faith, justice, gender, and sex; (6) Being of the 'forgotten middle,' transgender people can help congregations get over their addiction to certainty;(7) Transgender people demonstrate powerfully that just as all races share one blood, so do all genders, share one continuum. Mollenkott, '"We Come Bearing Gifts"', pp. 46-58.

celebration of embodiment that is far more inclusive of all individuals, and uncouples sexuality from reproduction and essentialised views of the body.

5.4.2. Critique of Body Theologies

Such an inherently celebratory view of the body – of all bodies – is to be lauded. What resemblance this has to theology is open to debate. 'Scriptural texts' writes Moulaison 'are sparsely engaged, except insofar as it is urged that Christ too displays ambiguous and rebellious sexuality'.[216] Moreover, unlike a theology of the body which has a defined, albeit limited, concept of the body, there is nothing *definitive* one could say as to what the body is. The queer body is impertinent and subversive, seen to be a construct, but following the logic of the thought, is not the body as construct a construct itself?

The affinity of queer theology with the body is particularly interesting and not a little startling in that, as David Halperin puts it, queerness is 'an identity without an essence',[217] a point which seems to preclude such a material thing as the body. Moreover, if one follows the logic of queer theory, a logic that queer theory by definition does not seem to allow itself to have, it implies that to queer the queer sufficiently, you are queering back to heteronormativity. You are queering back to fixity and materiality. This begs the question as to whether queer theory, or indeed a queer theology, can ever have something constructive to say to the body.

Despite body theologians adopting a social constructionist approach to the body, Moulaison accuses body theologians of nonetheless making assumptions about the body, even in the seemingly obvious claim that the body is created good. Second, she points to the fact that using the body as a source of theology renders the body individually experienced and not primarily socially apprehended.[218] Such individualism appears to undermine the more social corporate roots to a theology of the body.

As exciting and provocative as such theology is, the irony remains that because body theology is so influenced by queer theory, it has very little to say about the body itself, as it states that the body is discursively created. There is no 'body' only individual 'bodies' which are inherently unstable. It is strongly influenced by postmodernism, and thus has a reluctance to pronounce upon anything absolutely. The body is always mediated, performed and constructed. Although its fleshiness can be emphasised, and in some case its 'indecentness' (looking up under the skirt of theology *à la* Althaus Reid) celebrated, thus embracing the marginalised body, the body is still curiously occluded. Body

[216] Jane Barter Moulaison, '''Our Bodies, Our Selves?'', The Body as Source in Feminist Theology', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 60. 3 (2007), 341-359 (p. 349). See for example, Mollenkott's argument that the fact of the virgin birth indicates that Jesus was genetically female, but phenotypically male. Mollenkott, *Omnigender*, p. 106.
[217] David Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 62.
[218] Moulaison, p. 346.

theology retreads the suspicious path of postmodernism and feminist's fear of essentialism. It speaks of embodiment but is reluctant to speak of the body.

As an 'erotic' spirituality, body theology could be seen as reinforcing traditional sexual dualisms, in that women are identified as sexualised in their natures. This is problematic on two levels, firstly, with the implication that heterosexual women can never be in loving mutual relationships; and secondly, its identification of female with a particular bodily claim. As Moulaison points out, 'Women's proximity to nature, dirt, flesh and so on, in Heyward's erotic theology, strikes me as a curious reaffirmation of traditional sexual dualisms.'[219] Furthermore, the erotic dimension of body theology and its collapse with sexuality, with an emphasis on pleasure and right relationship, ignores the fact, as Karen Lebacqz points out, that we all enter the world single and depart from it single.[220] Body theology only considers properly the erotic body first, all else is second. In its laudable aim to recover the female body, specifically its agency, it seems to only reiterate the essentialised notions of the female body–as primarily sexual–and reproduces them.

There is also something implicitly dualistic about body theology. Queer theory, with its emphasis on play and performativity, disruption and contrarian readings, places discourse as central. Materiality is only ever second-order. With its insistence on transgression and play, the queer body is open to whatever the mind chooses it to be. It can thus be seen as essentialist, taking up a position not that dissimilar, if oppositional, to strict complementarity.

Critics of body theology also point to the implications for transgender individuals. Catholic bioethics has been preoccupied with this question of late in regard to the licitness of gender reassignment surgery. The general consensus is that as this results in infertility, it is contrary to the Catholic ethos.[221] Critics argue that transgenderism is premised on a difference between the perceiving mind and the existing body, and as such is a form of dualism, and so goes against the essential unity of the person that is premised by Catholic anthropology.[222] Moreover, they argue, the privileged subjective experience does not necessarily reflect reality, as evidenced in forms of mental disorder, such as schizophrenia. This last argument however, is premised on the belief that transgenderism is a form of

[219] Moulaison, p. 347.
[220] Karen Lebacqz, 'Appropriate Vulnerability: A Sexual Ethic for Singles', in *Sexuality and The Sacred: Sources for Theological Reflection*, ed. by Marvin M. Ellison and Kelly Brown Douglas, 2nd edn (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994, 2010), pp. 272-277 (p. 277).
[221] For a contrary position which argues that on the principle argument of double effect sexual reassignment surgery is permissible, see Carol Bayley, 'Transgender Persons and Catholic Healthcare', *Catholic Health Association*, Winter 2016, 1-5.
[222] Elliott Louis Bedford and Jason T. Eberl, 'Is the Soul Sexed? Anthropology, Transgenderism, and Disorders of Sex Development', *Health Care Ethics USA*, 24.3 (2016), 8-33. For an argument that cautiously affirms 'incongruent gender identity without being untruthful or contradicting a sound Catholic anthropology', see David Albert Jones, 'Truth in Transition? Gender Identity and Catholic Anthropology', *New Blackfriars*, 99.1084 (2018), 756-774.

mental illness, an argument that would be disputed by transgender individuals themselves.[223] In summary, we can state that while body theology is inclusive and celebratory of all bodies, it is unable to say anything constructive about the body, tends to reinforce the identification of the female with the sexual, and can promote a new form of essentialism, wherein the mind has authority over the body.

5.5. Conclusion

This chapter has explored gender complementarian Catholic, feminist and body theologies. As demonstrated, despite the relative strengths of all three, their weaknesses throw up serious problems for the construction of a positive theological understanding of the female body. Notwithtanding their avowed differences in approach to the question of female embodiment, the challenges examined in the previous chapter remain the same: a reluctance to speak to the female body outside of the erotic and/or reproductive body. A theology of the female body that removes the need for the ascetic impulse through formulating a theology of the body that does not involve the collapse of the erotic with the reproductive, still remains to be developed. The concluding chapter suggests a framework for such a theology, what is termed a 'sacramental ontology of the female body'.

[223] Transgenderism is increasingly being premised as a naturally occurring reality, much in the same way as being homosexuality is no longer see as a pathology. See Stein, *Unbound*, p. 59. See also Colette Chiland's provocative contributions, *Transsexualism: Illusion and Reality*, trans. by Philip Slotkin (London and New York: Continuum, 2003) and *Exploring Transsexualism.* As a psychotherapist, Chiland treated transsexuals and worked in a gender identity clinic. She argues that transsexuals see themselves as being born in the wrong body and desire to be assigned their true body. 'The statement "Give me back my true body," and the belief that someone will be able to give them a real body of the opposite sex, are madness… It is madness because it is impossible.' (*Exploring Transsexualism*, p.14). Chiland's argument is that on the basis of current treatment, ie. sexual reassignment and hormone therapy, the most that the transsexual can ever hopeful is to be rendered intersex - the biological reality always remains. Chiland sees the problem with transsexuality in part being concerned with the age-old problem of mortality and wrestling with finitude: 'We can never attain serenity unless we relinquish our impossible dreams, and accept our ontological and temporal finitude and that imposed by our sex.' (*Transsexualism,* p. 165)

Chapter 6: A Sacramental Ontology of the Female Body

6.1. Introduction

It has been the contention of this thesis that women have attempted to resist the construction of the female body as solely erotic and reproductive through bodily acts, even those bodily acts that paradoxically cause the erasure of the female body, what has been described as the 'ascetic impulse'. As this thesis has demonstrated, particular historical events, the theological and philosophical ideas which were dominant in each period, together with the prevailing medical views of the time, all shaped how women viewed and experienced their bodies.

The first four chapters examined how the conception of the female body as erotic and reproductive arose, and the corresponding ascetic impulse that was particular to each time period. Chapter 1 examined the female body in the Patristic era. In the earliest period of Christianity, women, read in terms of her fecundity and desirability, aspired to the valorisation of viriginity. In the absence of a language to conceive of women outside of the paradigm of the erotic and reproductive, in the ascetic impulse, the virile virgin or virginal bride was born, one who could attain redemption through the practice of asceticism. Chapter 2 demonstrated that the foci on materiality and the suffering Christ in the medieval era resulted in a highly somatic understanding of women, with women's legitimacy justified by the ascetic impulse of the holy faster. Chapter 3 examined the modern era, a period when ostensibly the construction of the female body became uncoupled from Christianity, when the female body was read as compliant yet pathological. The protest against this reading was realised in the hysteric and chlorotic. The fourth chapter considered the postmodern era, and the effect that this had on the female body, particularly in light of developments in society. The ascetic impulse, it was argued, resulted in the anorectic, who attempted to thin to the point of elision, or disavow her femininity altogether.

It was suggested that in a bid to retrieve a positive reading of the female body, one which escapes the construction of the erotic and reproductive, theology could provide a solution, not least because it is clear that the ascetic impule is theologically informed. Chapter 5 reviewed complementarian Catholic, feminist theologies, and body theologies approaches to the body, and two problems became readily apparent: (i) the collapse of the female body into the erotic, which more than anything seems to reaffirm misogynistic associations of woman/body and (ii) the reluctance to positively affirm what the female body *is*. In the theologies of Karol Wojtyla, Carter Heyward and James Nelson, the

identification of the body is almost entirely with the sexual body.[1] While there have been commendable attempts to extend beyond the theology of the body's almost exclusive focus on the reproductive, essential body, the body is still seen through the lens of sexuality. Such an approach is short-sighted when one considers that, while Christianity has been preoccupied with the body, the preoccupation has not just been limited to the sexual body. Within Christianity, and in Paul's distinction between *soma* and *sarx*, body and flesh, there is a sense that a body is more than an add-on extra that encumbers and ages. Yet, as demonstrated, complementarian Catholic theology is highly problematic in its essentialist and subordinate reading of the female body. Attempts to correct this tendency, in feminist and body theologies have tended to marginalise doctrine in a bid to embrace a positive construal of the body. We are therefore caught between essentialist orthodox readings and multiple views on the variance of the bod(ies) which are often questionable in their theological content.

Such a state of affairs is fundamentally unsatisfactory. Christianity is a historically embedded religion. It is impossible to radically restructure the faith and still call it Christianity. Furthermore, to reject the historicity of theology is to reject women's creative efforts to conceptualise their embodiment in a Christian setting. Nor can we attribute the negative attitude toward the female body purely to Christianity. As the review of the female embodiment in Christianity has shown, misogyny existed long before the emergence of Christianity.

This concluding chapter argues that tradition, rather than being rejected, should be retained in a critical way through the realisation of a sacramental ontology of the female body. Sacramental ontology, as defined by Hans Boersma, holds that 'external temporal appearances contained in spiritual external realities which they represent and to which they dynamically point torwards.'[2] The body, in this case the female body, is both sign and symbol, infused with grace. Sacramental ontology of the female body proposes to escape the essentialist trap posed by the theology of the body by creatively re-working John Paul II's iteration of the body as (i) essential, (ii) gift and (iii) sacrament using the philosophical method of new material feminism in tension with phenomenology.

6.2. The Body as Essential: New Material Feminism

The first element of sacramental ontology holds that the body is essential. The great insight of phenomenology, as the complementarians pointed out, is that it situates the individual, and allows for the his/her experience to be taken seriously. Ola Sigurdson describes phenomenology as 'helpful for

[1] No doubt, a response to this would be, following the dictates of John Paul II's argumentation that as potentiality is what defines certain qualities of femininity and masculinity, sexual complementarity does speak to the pre-pubescent (what will come) and post-menopausal body (what was). However, the sweeping, if specific, definition of sexual body remains problematic.
[2] Boersma, *Nouvelle Theologie and Sacramental Ontology*, p. 289.

theology in that it offers resources for a self-critical, reflexive attitude for a theological investigation of how to speak of the body.'[3] The phenomenological approach has the benefit of meeting women in their bodies as they experience them, and thus retains the insight of feminist and body theologies regarding the importance of grounding theology in experience. In its attentiveness to epoché and intentionality, phenomenology suspends judgements and takes seriously the object as it appears to the subject. In this context, it avoids pathologising the ascetic woman, but instead considers her aims, understanding where she is in the context of her lived world.

Rather than adopting Husserl or Scheler as the phenomenological partner, sacramental ontology of the female body employs Maurice Merleau-Ponty as interlocutor. As an existential phenomenologist, Merleau-Ponty's mode of thinking is not entirely disparate from that of personalism. The experiencing subject is not a consciousness detached from the world, but a living body that dwells in the world with other bodies.[4] He also explicitly rejects dualist ontology.[5] In his assertion that 'the body is our general medium for having a world,'[6] the body is foregrounded in a way that is particularly useful for formulating a theology of the body which 'is neither biological, nor essentialist; rather, the body is the starting point for having a (cultural) world and for relating that world to others.'[7] Merleau-Ponty has been criticised as presupposing a male subject, oblivious to institutional effects on the body and accused of naturalising a cultural construction of body, gender and sexuality.[8] Nonetheless, he is acutely conscious of the interaction of culture on the body and his scholarship is used to great effect by feminist theorists such as Iris Marion Young, Gail Weiss, and Susan Bordo, all of whom find his theoretical framework useful for how women experience the world.[9]

Merleau-Ponty, while seeing sexuality as intrinsic, has a fluid conception of what it means to be male or female. Sexuality is understood as mode or a style of being. As Heinamäa writes, for Merleau-Ponty, 'femininity or womanhood, when conceived as a style of being, cannot be pinned down by a common source or form; it can only be conceived by studying its concrete manifestations and the

[3] Sigurdson, 'How to Speak of the Body?', p. 40.
[4] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. by Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 2002), p. ix.
[5] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* pp. 401-402; 496-520.
[6] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 169.
[7] Annemie Halsema, 'Phenomenology in the Feminine: Irigaray's Relationship to Merleau-Ponty', in *Intertwinings: Interdisciplinary Encounters with Merleau-Ponty* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008), pp. 63-96 (p. 64).
[8] See Judith Butler's critique: 'Sexual Ideology and Phenomenological Description: A Feminist Critique of Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception', in *The Thinking Muse: Feminism and Modern French Philosophy,* ed. by Jeffner Allen and Iris Marion Young (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989). For a critique of Butler's reading of Merleau-Ponty, see Anna Petronella Foultier, 'Language and the Gendered Body: Butler's Early Reading of Merleau-Ponty', *Hypatia*, 28.4 (2013), 767-783. Sigurdson, 'How to Speak of the Body?', p. 36.
[9] Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight*; Iris Marion Young, *Throwing Like a Girl and other Essays in Feminist Philosophy* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990); *Intertwinings: Interdisciplinary Encounters with Merleau-Ponty*, ed. by Gail Weiss (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008).

various relations between them'.[10] Essentialism is rejected, 'we have no grounds to speak of "the" masculine and "the" feminine since each civilization, according to its mode of existence, elaborates a certain type of masculinity in correlation to a certain type of femininity.'[11] What makes woman as woman is dynamic, not fixed, and thus avoids one of the central problems with complementarian essentialism, but still assumes 'woman' as enfleshed to be real.[12] Merleau-Ponty sees the body as our means of mediating the world, but never distinguishes between the male and female body. While he sees the body as essential, he does not say *how* it is essential. The body while real and a unique centring focus for the individual still remains undefined.

Our first task, therefore, is to assert that the female body *is*, and that it has a material real presence, that is particular to women. The feminist philosophical school of new materialism could be of assistance here, discussed in the fourth chapter. While it may prove impossible to think of the body outside of discursive practices, one can agree that there is such a thing as the body. Susan Hekman argues that 'the material is not only a social construction; it is not a passive object in our linguistic creation.'[13] Together with other material feminists such as Claire Colebrook, Elizabeth Grosz, Elizabeth A. Wilson, Karen Barad and Moira Gatens, Hekman does not see the body as a blank slate, waiting for cultural discourse to give it shape and definition, but rather the body is a state of positive difference.[14] The body, no matter in which way it is parsed, possess a givenness of its own, and shapes how we perceive the world around us. Whilst feminist theologians and body theologians are correct in their arguments that the body is always constructed, be it through the values of a society (patriarchy) or otherwise, it does not follow that we cannot state anything about the body at all. We need to assert the inviolability and inherent dignity of the body before we can state anything else. It would seem logical to infer that we ought to be able to say something about the female body that is positive, without collapsing women's bodies with the erotic and the reproductive, as has been the dominant perspective of tradition.

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[10] Sara Heinämaa, 'What is a Woman? Butler and Beauvoir on the Foundations of the Sexual Difference', *Hypatia*, 12.1 (1997), 20-39 (p. 27).
[11] Merleau-Ponty, *Child Psychology and Pedagogy: The Sorbonne Lectures 1949-1952*, p. 497. Cited in Talia Welsh, 'The Developing Body: A Reading of Merleau-Ponty's Conception of Women in the Sorbonne Lectures', *Intertwinings,* pp. 45-62 (p. 50).
[12] Merleau-Ponty*, Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 154.
[13] Susan Hekman, 'Constructing the Ballast: An Ontology for Feminism', in *Material Feminisms* ed. by Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008), pp. 85-119 (p. 92).
[14] See, Claire Colebrook's essay, 'On Not Becoming a Man: The Materialist Politics of Unactualized Potential' in *Material Feminisms*, pp. 52-84. Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies;* Elizabeth A. Wilson, *Psychosomatic: Feminism and the Neurological Body* (2004); Karen Barad, 'Posthumanist Performativity'; and Moira Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*. Hekman's article 'Constructing the Ballast' is an excellent review of the scholarship in the field. See also her book, Susan Hekman, *The Material of Knowledge: Feminist Disclosures* (Indiana, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010).

Material feminists also assert that the body, as biological artefact, in its processes and structure, shapes women's realities.[15] Women's bodies, therefore, shape women's experience. This is not to exclude the experience of transgender individuals or those who do not fit into the traditional heteronormative ideal, but it is to say that women's bodies produce experiences distinctive to women. How women's bodies are interpreted, is another matter. As this thesis has demonstrated, since the emergence of Christianity, there is a constant theme of women articulating agency and or distress by the suppression or negation of the female body. This points to the fact that there has been no truly positive articulation of the female body, that we in fact lack the language to conceive of the female body outside of the erotic and reproductive. It should first be asserted that the female body is a site of positive difference, that its createdness is *good*. To paraphrase John Paul II then, the body is thus in all respects, as a means of operating in the world, in the nature of its operations, indubitably *essential.*

6.3. The Body as Gift: The Disabled Body

The second dimension of a sacramental ontology of the female body sees the body as 'gift'. In reformulating the notion of body as 'gift', the insights of a theology of disability could be useful.[16] This does not mean to seek a false equivalence between the disabled person and an adolescent girl who has made herself disabled through wilful self-starvation, or the categorisation of holy women of the past as disabled, but rather posits that a theology of disability foregrounds the body in a way that few other theologies do. Yet, the study of disability has by and large been an exception in theology. Indeed, disability is largely ignored in all contexts, notwithstanding the fact that all people experience disability at some stage or another in their lives, even if only in the natural debilitation of old age.[17]

Disability, of course, has not always been construed positively in theology. Jackie Leach Scully has outlined the varying theological conceptions of disability: (i) as punishment for individual or collective sin; (ii) as a consequence of possession; (iii) as materialising the struggle between good and evil; (iv) as a test of faith; (v) as a learning process; (vi) as a means of participating in the suffering of Christ; (vii) as an opportunity for a spectacular show of God's power through healing; and (viii) as a

[15] Elizabeth Grosz for example argues that Darwin's evolutionary theory, normally taboo in feminist theories of the body, can be useful. 'The Nature of Sexual Difference: Irigaray and Darwin', *Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, 17.2 (2012), 69-93.

[16] 'Disabilities is an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. An impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations.' World Health Organization, *Disabilities,* <http://www.who.int/topics/disabilities/en/> [accessed 22 April 2019].

[17] The disabled are 'the world's largest (cultural) minority', over a billion people, about 15% of the world's population, have some form of disability, *WHO Disability Report, 2011*<http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/70670/WHO_NMH_VIP_11.01_eng.pdf;jsessionid=3A2500945B9B2BB978BA4769D6F878E2?sequence=1 > [accessed 22 April 2019].

means of drawing the sufferer close to God.[18] Such ambivalence fostered a negative construal of disability, but what displaced the religious model in how we understand disability, namely the medical framework, attaches no 'meaning' to suffering, leaving it to random mutations of genes, or malformation, or perhaps, most perniciously, places the cause at the feet of individual themselves. '[I]n the absence of an overtly "religious" context, disability may still be interpreted as punishment for a form of sinful individual behaviour, such as poor diet or wilful exposure to risk.'[19] Disability is seen as a deficiency or self-inflicted harm rather than constituent of meaning.

Similarly, within queer and feminist studies, disability is largely ignored. Despite 'revealing the intersections between the politics of appearance and the medicalization of subjugated bodies,'[20] feminist disability theory is largely marginalised. Jenny Morris suggests that this overall neglect stems from the fact that the central notion of autonomy, which enshrines much of feminist theology, is implicitly exclusionary of the disabled body.[21] In a different manner, the problem with reading the body through a queer lens, is that it presents the body as an endless site for amelioration, with no sense of boundary, only possibility.[22]

Disability theology recognises the ambiguity of what it means to be embodied and takes seriously the *limitedness* of being human, recognising vulnerability as being what it means to be human. '[E]mbodiment is not a purely agreeable reality; it incorporates profound ambiguity sometimes downright distress'.[23] Theology, at its core, is the coming to terms with suffering. As Kim Power notes, 'we cannot ignore the fact that suffering is an inescapable aspect of life; that every religion is,

[18] Jackie Scully, 'When Embodiment Isn't Good', *Theology & Sexuality*, 9 (1998), 10-28. In the Jewish tradition illness or disability is seen as a sign of the morally depraved, as seen in Leviticus 21:17-23 which prohibits anyone impaired from fulfilling a priestly function (Nancy L. Eiesland, *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), p. 71). This is an extension of the body-corporate dimension of Jewish anthropology. Yet, there are also elements which imply the value of suffering and endurance, most notably in Job. The New Testament is equally ambivalent: Jesus is a healer, thus ridding people of their disability. This could be seen as being further proof that disability is undesirable, requiring curing or healing. Nancy Eisland writes quite movingly about this impasse in her book *The Disabled God*. Eisland, herself disabled, asks what does God have to say to her, a disabled woman?

[19] Scully, 'When Embodiment Isn't Good', p. 24. See for example the trend in modern neoliberal society where the good citizen is someone who actively participates in society and the economy, is rationally self-directed and is independent and responsible. See Rose Galvin, 'Disturbing Notions of Chronic Illness and Individual Responsibility: Towards a Genealogy of Morals', *Health: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the Social Study of Health, Illness and Medicine*, 6.2 (2002), 107-137.

[20] Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, 'Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory', in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed. by Lennard J. Davis, 2nd edn (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 257-274 (p. 262).

[21] Jenny Morris, 'Feminism and Disability', *Feminist Review*, 43 (1993), 57-70.

[22] A recent development in disability studies, but one which does not appear to have been fully explored in theological readings, is Crip theory, which refers to the political dimensions of disability, 'deployed to resist the contemporary spectacle of able-bodied heteronormativity' Robert McCruer, *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability* (New York: Temple University Press, 2006).

[23] Nancy L. Eiesland, *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994).

at heart, a theodicy.'[24] It also refuses to accept that there is one way of being, but counsels the acceptance of the type of being that one is. '[I]nstead of flagellating ourselves or aspiring to well-behaved 'perfect' bodies, we savour the jumbled pleasure-pain that is our bodies. In a society where denial of our particular bodies and questing for a better body is normal, respect for our own bodies is an act of resistance and liberation.'[25]

Valerie C. Stiteler writes:

> The disabled body is a powerful image. It has the potential to help us move out of the confining images of bodily perfection and unity inherent in patriarchal religious doctrines by representing us with a new image of a disabled God. It can provide us with the foundation for a relational model of cooperation based in the ongoing renewal of beloved Creation. Valuing the disabled body presents opportunities for feminists to re-examine their beliefs about their own embodiment by learning how disabilities provide positive aspects to our embodiment.[26]

The importance of recognising human limitation is something that has been lost in the post-humanist world. The insight of disability theology is that 'limits', whether physical or intellectual, do not make one 'less than'. Deborah Creamer coins the term 'limitness' to 'highlight the fact that human limits need not (and ought not to) be seen as negative, as something that cannot be done, but rather as an important part of being human.'[27] Reformulating the body as gift in light of disability theology, draws attention to the preciousness of the body, in a manner which brings to the fore both its uniqueness and its finitude.

6.4. The Body as Sacrament: Sacramental Theology

Reading the body as essential and as gift brings us to the third and central dimension of the sacramental ontology of the female body, the body as sacrament. To conceive of the female body outside of the erotic and the reproductive requires that the material female body be celebrated. An obvious theological resource for this would be sacramental theology. Susan Ross suggests that a feminist critique of sacramental understanding of body may help clarify basic principles involved in feminist thought.[28] Yet, as Susan K. Roll notes, '[s]acraments are not high on the list of well-cultivated fields of feminist theological investigation'.[29] This observation is well borne out: the only

[24] Kim Power, 'Embodying the Eucharist', p. 161.
[25] Eiesland, *The Disabled God,* pp. 95-96.
[26] Valerie C. Stiteler in Elly Elshout and others, 'Roundtable Discussion: Women with Disabilities a Challenge to Feminist Theology', *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion,* 10.2 (1994), 99-134 (pp. 121-122).
[27] Deborah Creamer, 'Including All Bodies in the Body of God', *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health*, 9.4 (2006), 55-69 (p. 64).
[28] Susan A. Ross, '"Then Honor God in your Body" (1 COR. 6:20): Feminist and Sacramental Theology on the Body', *Horizons*, 16.01 (1989), 7-27.
[29] Susan K. Roll, 'Sacraments as Energy: A Search for a New Paradigm', *Feminist Theology*, 21.3 (2013), 259-268 (p. 259).

explicitly feminist investigation of sacramental theology has been Ross' *Extravagant Investigations: A Feminist Sacramental Theology*, published 20 years ago. The 1994 article 'Sacramental Theology: A Review of The Literature' which treated the developments in sacramental theology between the years 1980 and 1993, devoted a section to feminist theology, but gave most space to the influence of Julia Kristeva than that of any other feminist theologian.[30] More recently, *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology* (2015) considers feminist theology only in a brief subsection of a chapter on twentieth century theologies.[31] This seems all the more remarkable when one considers that out of all the fields of theology, the sacraments would appear to be the most readily accessible to the traditional categories of female experience. Christine Gudorf, for example, argues that the sacraments are at their core, a celebration of what women do naturally, birthing, feeding and comforting.[32] As Karl Rahner writes, 'bodily existence asserts itself in the doctrine of the Church and the sacraments.'[33] The sacrament has been spoken of as an expression of embodiment of faith.[34] Why would women exclude themselves from this rich resource of theology?

The answer is, of course, that this is due, in no small part, to the exclusion of women from the presiding over the sacraments in the Roman Catholic tradition. The only sacraments that women can administer, or are necessary for, are baptism and marriage.[35] Tina Beattie rather bleakly notes, 'the female body is always a sign of sacramental exclusion, never of sacramental inclusion'.[36] This raises the question of whether 'the sacramental system is intrinsically sexist and whether a feminist sacramental theology is even possible, much less necessary.'[37]

However, the potential is still there. Sigurdson has pointed out that the Eucharist and its act of reception is one 'which disrupts and challenges every centered subject position – every attempt to dominate the divine' and, he argues, 'a unisexed, or hierarchically sexed sacramental body is quite

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[30] Regis A. Duffy and others, 'Sacramental Theology: A Review of Literature', *Theological Studies*, 55.4 (1994), 657-705 (pp. 693-702).
[31] *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology*, ed. by Hans Boersma and Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). A notable exception would be David Power, *The Eucharistic Mystery: Revitalising the Tradition* (New York: Crossroad, 1992).
[32] Christine E. Gudorf, 'The Power to Create: Sacraments and Men's Need to Birth', *Horizons*, 14.02 (1987), 296-309. Schüssler Fiorenza also makes this point: 'Feminist Spirituality, Christian Identity, and Catholic Vision', in *Womanspirit Rising,* pp. 136-148 (p. 144).
[33] Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations: Jesus, Man and the Church, XVII* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1984), p. 79.
[34] Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, trans. by Patrick Madigan SJ and Madeleine Beaumont (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), p. 152.
[35] As has been pointed out, the sacrament of priesthood is the only sacrament from which women are explicitly excluded.
[36] Tina Beattie, 'Vision and Vulnerability: The Significance of Sacramentality and the Woman Priest for Feminist Theology' in *Exchanges of Grace: Essays in Honour of Ann Loades*, ed. by Natalie K. Watson and Stephen Burns (London: SCM Press, 2008), 235-249 (p. 240).
[37] Mary Veeneman, 'Feminism and Womanism,' in *Christian Theologies of the Sacraments: A Comparative Introduction*, ed. by David A. Johnson (New York: New York University Press, 2017), pp. 352-365 (p. 358).

simply theologically impossible.'[38] Moreover, some of the most creative theology historically deployed by women was in the somatic theology of the medieval period, where women's bodies were arguably a site of grace, their bodies imagined as Eucharist. The medieval mystics embodied sacramental theology in a profound way.[39]

Framing the body as sacrament is arguably present in contemporary Catholic theology.[40] Sacramental theology up to Vatican II, despite dealing with materiality and material acts, is largely an abstract discipline, preoccupied with matter and form, institution and causality.[41] After Vatican II, the legalistic, strictly Aristotelian-Thomistic framework shifted to a more personalist hermeneutic, 'centring on Christ as the primary and fundamental sign (sacrament) of God's love as experienced in the life of the Church ... [t]he language of ontology generally yielded to that of encounter and union.'[42] This is perhaps best exemplified in the theologies of Edward Schillebeeckx (1914-2009) and Karl Rahner (1904-1984), and emphasised in John Paul II's Theology of the Body.[43] Schillebeeckx emphasised the importance of personal encounter and Rahner the symbolic character of human knowledge and experience in his meditation on the theology of grace. Grace—the mystery of God's life and covenant love—is communicated through the 'stuff' of our humanity, not despite it. According to Schillebeeckx, everything is 'grace made visible' and this extends to the bodiliness of this world.[44] What is emphasised is the personal, communal and embodied context of the sacraments. Sacramental theology both privileges the body and emphasises relationality. The 'sacramental imagination' extols the God who is self-communicating love, the creation of human beings in the

[38] Ola Sigurdson, *Heavenly Bodies: Incarnation, the Gaze, and Embodiment in Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), p. 518.
[39] See discussion in Chapter 2. The book to most successfully explore this aspect of medieval women, is of course, Bynum, *Holy Feast, Holy Fast*.
[40] This would also apply in Anglican theology, which emphasises the sacramental universe and takes the concept of embodiment seriously. Moreover, the admission of women to the priesthood in the Anglican Church speaks to its contribution to a sacramental ontology of female embodiment. The work of David Brown, Sarah Coakley and Ann Loades would be particularly relevant here, for the varied approaches to gender, sexuality and embodiment pervaded by sacramentality. Because, however, I am critically reworking the work of Roman Catholic complementary, while I engage with Brown and Loades in the course of this chapter briefly, a detailed discussion of the implications of Anglican theology for a sacramental ontology of the female body is not engaged with but would be a rich resource to explore.
[41] For a history of the sacraments see Joseph Martos, *Doors to the Sacred: A Historical Introduction to Sacraments in the Catholic Church* (New York: Doubleday and London: SCM Press, 1981).
[42] Kevin W. Irwin, 'Recent Sacramental Theology: A Review Discussion', *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review*, 47.4 (1983), 592-608 (p. 593).
[43] 'We are always in spiritual communion with Christ (or we could be), whether we kneel in church or walk the dusty streets of everyday life …The enduring sacrament reminds *us* to take up this task', Karl Rahner, *Meditations on the Sacraments* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1977), p. 36. Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Collected Works of Edward Schillebeeckx: Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, ed. Frederiek Depoortere and others, 11 vols (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), I.
[44] Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament,* p. 156.

image of God.[45] The body, its centrality in the act of worship, is the medium for how we encounter God in the sacraments.[46]

Yet, by emphasising the body as a vehicle through which the sacraments are encountered, the body becomes a neutral conduit, sacramental by that which it conveys (i.e. grace) but is not in and of itself sacramental. While much has been done regarding the body in worship and liturgy, and investigations have been carried out as to the sacramentality of the body in dance, in music, in art, it is the body *doing* rather than the body *being* which is considered sacramental.[47] The body's goodness is only ever second order, despite the reality that 'human embodiment is a general principle in sacramental theology: the corporeal dimension of human life is the basis for all sacramental activity.'[48]

The body as 'symbol' is what is realised, pointing to the ineffability and unknowingness of God, possessing a 'tragic quality of mediation', as Louis-Marie Chauvet described it.[49] Chauvet, along with Jean-Luc Marion is part of the shift in theology towards the linguistic turn, which disputes the metaphysical reality of the sacraments, a shift which has been critiqued by Susan Ross as not particularly open to feminist experience.[50] While Ross ultimately proposed the model of the family as embodied context for sacramentality, which in turn seems to suggest a concept of social body rather than the body proper, what is proposed is a return to the body itself.[51] This is not to say that the body as category is 'fixed'. Ross adopts Ruth Page's concept of 'metaphysical ambiguity' whereby natural law, rather than being understood as a fixed objective reality, is subject to flux. '[A]mbiguity is a structural feature of reality; it is not an aberration from a fixed point of reference. Development and change are thus part of the structure of reality itself', a point congruent with the position of the new

[45] Mary Catherine Hilkert, *Naming Grace: Preaching and the Sacramental Imagination* (New York: Continuum, 1997), p. 15.
[46] Kevin W. Irwin, 'Sacramental Theology: a Methodological Proposal', *The Thomist*, 54.2 (1990), 311-342 (p. 325).
[47] *The Sense of the Sacramental: Movement and Measure in Art and Music, Place and Time*, ed. by David Brown and Ann Loades (London: SPCK, 1995). From the Introduction: 'The Sacraments are about development and growth ('movement') within certain specified parameters or boundaries ('measure'); so wherever such movement and measure occur elsewhere in the wider field of God's creation, it becomes plausible to view such a dynamic as enabling us to participate in grace, and so share sacramentally in the life of the Creator from whom this dynamic takes its origin' (p. 2).
[48] Susan A. Ross, *Extravagant Affections: A Feminist Sacramental Theology* (New York: Continuum, 1998), p. 98.
[49] Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, pp. 8-12.
[50] Susan A. Ross, *Extravagant Affections*, n.61, p. 41. Jean Luc Marion, *God Without Being: Hors-Texte*, trans. by Thomas Carlson (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1984).
[51] Grounding her argument in part in psychoanalysis on parent-child relations, Ross argues that model of the family as embodied context for sacramentality. She suggests that the model of family is useful in that 'God is revealed in the world not part from it. If the family is a historical and social construct, as well as a relatively stable biological reality, it will have the capacity both to expose the fragile and sinful structures of our humanity as well as potentially to transform those structures of our humanity as well as potentially to transform these structures for human flourishing…help[ing] in both critical and constructive perspectives on women and the sacraments' (p. 160).

material feminism.[52] The concept of metaphysical ambiguity helps resist essentialist notions, while insisting that we take the ontological reality of the body, its materiality, seriously. [53]

A feminist sacramental exploration of the body would also, by re-engaging with Christian doctrine–an area from which feminist theology has largely drifted away from–provide an avenue for critical engagement while still remaining a recognisably Catholic undertaking, insofar as it engages in a meaningful way with Catholic teaching.[54] In its assertion of materiality, a sacramental ontology can also avoid conflation with experience, which can arguably result in fracturing rather than unifying feminist theory. As Beattie elegantly describes it, 'feminist sacramentality needs to begin not with women's experience but with the body's grace.'[55]

6.5. Conclusion

Reading the female body as essential, gift and sacrament provides a basic framework for a sacramental ontology of the female body. It calls to attention the givenness, finitude and graced aspect of female existence. Such a proposed theory is not intended to be exhaustive, but encapsulates the best of the various approaches in treating the female body. It would incorporate the originality of body theology and its placement of the body at the centre of theology, employ the incisive critiques of feminist theologies and their grounding of theology in female bodily experience, while still remaining broadly within traditional Catholic theology, as well as employing the method of phenomenology and ontology as deployed in Catholic complementarity. Such a theology can assert the female body as a given, and real, if individual, form.

Sigurdson has rightly cautioned that 'there is no possibility for any unequivocal philosophy or theology of the body. Any such attempt would be a version of the domestication of the body through its objectification and abstraction'.[56] Yet an attempt ought to be made to articulate such a theology,

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[52] Ross, *Extravagant Affections,* p. 71. Ruth Page, *Ambiguity and the Presence of God* (London: SCM Press, 1985). See also Cahill, *Sex, Gender and Christian Ethics.* Cristina L.H. Traina, "Oh Susanna': The New Absolutism and Natural Law', *JAAR,* 65 (1997), 311-402. See also Christine Battersby, *The Phenomenal Woman: Feminist Metaphysics and the Patterns of Identity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), ch. 1.

[53] This is an echo of process theology, which is explicitly non-dualistic and relational whereby history is the site of ever becoming unfolding of revelation, a position that has been somewhat hesitantly proffered by Susan Hekman in her article, 'Feminist New Materialism and Process Theology: Beginning the Dialogue', *Feminist Theology*, 25.2 (2017), 198-207. Indeed, process theology has been deployed productively by the feminist theologies, but a sacramental ontological approach has the benefit of retaining focus on the female body *qua* female body. On feminist theology and process theology see, Catherine Keller, *From a Broken Web: Separation, Sexism, and Self* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1986); Marianne Suchocki, *God, Christ, Church: a Practical Guide to Process Theology* (New York: Crosssroad, 1989).

[54] See, for example, the recent *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theology*, ed. by Sheila Briggs and Mary McClintock Fulkerson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) which deals with themes of globalization and culture rather than doctrine.

[55] Beattie, *New Catholic Feminism*, p. 42.

[56] Sigurdson, 'How to Speak of the Body?', p.40.

one which forecloses the female identification with the sexualised body that has resulted in women's abjection from their flesh in a bid to escape negative construals of the female body, a position that as Ann Loades has noted, gives rise to 'the last kind of Christianity that women are likely to need'.[57] While there is no final account of being embodied, one can surely begin with the premise that the female body is real and it is good. 'Bodilness and sexuality are not simply identical', writes John Paul II in one of his homilies on the body. 'Although in its normal constitution, the human body carries within itself the signs of sex and is by its nature male and female, the the fact that man is a "body" belongs more deeply to the structure if the personal subject than the fact that in his somatic constitution that he is also male or female.'[58]

Sacramental ontology can provide the grounding for a new language for the female body, one which escapes the twin poles of the erotic and the reproductive upon which conceptions of the female body ultimately have come to rest. A sacramental ontology, it is suggested, provides an outline for a theology of the female body, one that can articulate female embodiment in a manner that removes the need for the ascetic impulse. In reworking of the notion of body as essential, gift and sacrament, sacramental ontology of the female body points to a way forward out of this impasse. Sacramental ontology takes seriously the historical experience of female embodiment, but begins with the premise that before we can say what the female body does or how it should be construed, we assert its materiality as good, as gifted as creation.

A sacramental ontology of the body also has implications for theological anthropology. Broadly stated, is an adequate anthropology of women possible if the female body lacks, as has been argued, a positive construal outside of the erotic and reproductive? Theologies that deal with the body – the gender complementarity of the work of John Paul II, feminist theologies and queer theologies – either reinforce the collapse of the female with the erotic, or avoid talking about the physical female body in its entirety. The spectre of gender complementarity still remains, a complementarity that sees the female body as less than, an addendum to the male. A sacramental ontology calls for the development of a fully integrated, enfleshed understanding of the female person. It calls for the necessity to reconceive of the female body beyond the reproductive and the erotic, and requires that the female body is conceived, not terms of the male body, but as ontologically real in its own right. This could contribute to a more fulsome theological anthropology for men and women.

A sacramental ontology of the body, with its insistence on the material reality of the female body while calling attention to the needs of individual experience, can also provide a more robust framework in which to consider theological ethics. If the argument of this thesis is correct, that

[57] Ann Loades, *Searching for Lost Coins: Explorations in Christianity and Feminism* (London: SPCK, 1987), p. 57.
[58] TOB 8:1, p. 157.

women's bodies have only ever been figured in terms of the erotic and reproductive, any discussions surrounding the ethics of the body, i.e., sexual ethics and bioethics, and moral theology more broadly conceived, have perforce been incomplete. Ethics, after all, is concerned with the behaviour of material bodies. If understand ethics as the 'interrogative practice of that which constitutes our sexed and embodied place in the world' then this requires a comprehensive understanding of the female body. [59] Before we can speak constructively about ethics, we must articulate what we mean by the bodies upon which, and by which, ethics are enacted and effected.

Such a sacramental ontology also serves to ground ethics in anthropology. While feminist theological ethics has interrogated the dominant ethical readings of distinct and hierarchally related male and female roles, and how this has impacted on women's experiences of oppression, female moral theologians have critiqued the appeal to experience as the paramount authority for feminist thought. Theologians such as Jean Porter, Lisa Cahill and Cristina Traina have argued that the current trend in feminist theological ethics poses serious epistemological challenges to the possibility of objectivity, or the 'truth' value of knowledge and moral judgment.[60] Is it possible to establish a norm, an ethical grounding outside of the contextual? Asserting a sacramental ontology, that incorporates the experiential with the ontological, can provide a frame of reference through which to adequately address the particular requirements of justice for women may be adequately addressed.

In *The Word Made Flesh,* Margaret Miles writes:

> The religion of the incarnate Word consists of the struggle to 'keep body and soul together.' It is a *project* of comprehending, incorporating, and participating in the 'Body of Christ'. Addressing the deep human longing for integrity of body and soul, Christianity makes the wildly counter-evidential, counter-cultural claim that 'in my flesh shall I see God.' The meaning of the claim can never be definitively articulated, but it forms and informs historical and contemporary Christians who seek to understand it, not only conceptually, but also, and more importantly, *in the life.*[61]

The question which opened this thesis asked why some women experience ambiguity in their body. We can perhaps pose an answer to that question now. The ambiguity arises from an inadequate conception of the female body, a reading of the body as sexual and erotic and not as reflective of woman in her enitrety. A sacramental onotology of the body, it is suggested, provides a way forward to resolve such ambiguity, where the female body can be celebrated, in its *fleshiness*.

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[59] Rosalyn Diprose*, The Bodies of Women: Ethics, Embodiment and Sexual Difference* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 121.
[60] Lisa Cahill*, Sex, Gender and Christian Ethics;* Cristina L.H. Traina, *Feminist Ethics and Natural Law: The End of the Anathemas*; Jean Porter, *Natural and Divine Law: Reclaiming the Tradition for Christian Ethics*.
[61] Margaret Miles, *The Word Made Flesh,* p. 391.

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