SOME ASPECTS OF THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE BODY

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The historiography of the body mirrors that of the soul to which it is closely aligned. This is, of course, to speak not simply of those texts which concern the physiological organism but of the way the body is conceived unconsciously. Here it is imagined, fragmented and is weighed down with manifold associations. From this perspective, the meaning of the term 'body' is indistinct and hard to pin down. It is a concept that shifts across a series of intersecting intellectual landscapes. Thus, answers to the question 'What is a body?' vary considerably, depending not only on the literary genre into which the text is inscribed but also on when it was written. For the topography of the body is closely linked to its chronology. In fact, we find a sequence of instants at which the body is dramatically re-conceptualised. However, these shifts in thinking are not synchronous but overlapping and tangled. We might say that different bodies coexist.

A psychoanalytic approach to the body not only amounts to a hermeneutics of subjectivity, designed to locate the truth in traces of continuity, with its anticipations of what is to come, and in its ruptures (Porter 2005). It also takes into account the woven (*texere*) nature of texts. The Homeric principle is, however, reversed by Freudian discourse, in its understanding that 'weaving' always belongs to the night. The dream, that is to say, is an analogue of writing. As unconscious conflicts and deceptions are spun into literature, philosophical and religious texts concerning the body cannot merely be read on one dimension alone. There is always a need for an exegesis. Inscribed within these languages of subjectivity, as Foucault elucidated, are sites of power, as well as of erotic pleasure. Moreover, because a number of these discourses of the body refer to forms of practice - e.g. in relation to spiritual exercises (*askēsis*), self-punishment (penance), the care of the self, and rituals of veneration - their context includes the history of thinking about the nature of practice and its relationship to experience. It is a history which revolves around the development of the concept of *phronēsis*. This notion - together with *sōphrosunē* (discretion), *katharsis* (purification), *erōs* (desire) (Nussbaum 1994) and others -

is identified by Thome (1995) as one of the psychotherapeutic aspects of Plato's philosophy (cf. Amado Lévy-Valensi 1956; and Lain-Entralgo 1958)[1].

Body and psyche

In its pre-history, as we encounter it in the Homeric poems, the body seems not to be something that people 'have' and there is no real dualism prior to the moment of death when the hero splits into a corpse and a *psuchē*. Moreover, *sōma* is not Homer's usual word for a corpse. Beginning with Homer and moving through classical-era medical treatises, and closing with studies of early ethical philosophy and Euripidean tragedy, Holmes (2010) traces the rise of the body-soul dualism in ancient Greece. She argues that it was in large part through changing interpretations of symptoms that people began to perceive the physical body with the senses and the mind. Once attributed primarily to social agents like gods and daemons, symptoms began to be explained by physicians in terms of the physical substances hidden inside the person. The symptom is now seen to have a relationship to an 'unseen interior' (Holmes 2010: 19). Imagining a daemonic space inside the person but largely below the threshold of feeling, these physicians helped to transform what it meant for human beings to be vulnerable, and ushered in a new ethics centred on responsibility for the care of the self. In so doing Holmes demonstrates that as the *sōma* became a subject of physical inquiry, it decisively changed ancient Greek ideas about the meaning of suffering, the soul, and human nature.

Plato mapped out the topography of the body principally in its relation to the soul (Courcelles 1965; 1966). It is an abstract proximity drawn out in three passages where the body is described both as a tomb (*sēma*)[2] or index of the soul (*psuchē*), and as that which in some way signifies (*sēmainei*) the soul.

[1] *Parrhēsia* and *exagoreusis* are the two principle concepts that need to be added to this list. On *parrhēsia* and its relationship to martyrdom see Lampe, G.W. (1981). Martyrdom and Inspiration *Suffering and Martyrdom in the New Testament* 118-35 (eds.) W. Hornbury and B. McNeill. Cambridge: CUP; cf. Foucault, M. (2001). *Fearless Speech* (ed.) J.Pearson. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e). On *exagoreusis* and its counterpart *exomologēsis* see Lampe, G.W.H. Ed. (1961) *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press); Hausherr, I. (1955) *Direction Spirituelle en Orient Autrefois* (Rome: Pont Institutum Orientalium Studiorum). Cf. also Foucault, M. (2016) *About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self. Lectures at Dartmouth College 1980* (eds.) H.-P. Fruchaud and D. Lorenzini. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

[2] Courcelle (1966: 102) considered that Plato mistakenly attributed the origin of this idea to the Orphic tradition and conflated it with the rather different notion of the body as a prison (Courcelle 1965). The latter is more likely, in his view, to be Pythagorean in origin. Dodds concurred with this opinion; cf. Dodds, E.R. (1951). *The Greeks and the Irrational* 148 and 169 n. 87. Berkley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press. But Holmes (2010: 31 n.109) somewhat underplays the significance of the *sōma-sēma* motif in Plato.

καὶ ἡμεῖς τῷ ὄντι ἴσως τέθναμεν: ὅπερ ἤδη του ἔγωγε καὶ ἤκουσα τῶν σοφῶν ὡς νῦν ἡμεῖς τέθναμεν, καὶ τὸ μὲν σῶμά ἐστιν ἡμῖν σῆμα…[3]

Grg. 493a

καὶ γὰρ σῆμά τινές φασιν αὐτὸ εἶναι τῆς ψυχῆς, ὡς τεθαμμένης ἐν τῷ νῦν παρόντι: καὶ διότι αὖ τούτῳ σημαίνει ἃ ἂν σημαίνῃ ἡ ψυχή, καὶ ταύτῃ σῆμα ὀρθῶς καλεῖσθαι. δοκοῦσι μέντοι μοι μάλιστα θέσθαι οἱ ἀμφὶ Ὀρφέα τοῦτο τὸ ὄνομα, ὡς δίκην διδούσης τῆς ψυχῆς ὧν δὴ ἕνεκα δίδωσιν, τοῦτον δὲ περίβολον ἔχειν, ἵνα σῴζηται, δεσμωτηρίου εἰκόνα: εἶναι οὖν τῆς ψυχῆς τοῦτο, ὥσπερ αὐτὸ ὀνομάζεται, ἕως ἂν ἐκτείσῃ τὰ ὀφειλόμενα, τὸ σῶμα, καὶ οὐδὲν δεῖν παράγειν οὐδὲ γράμμα[4].

Cra. 400c

μακαριωτάτην, ἣν ὠργιάζομεν ὁλόκληροι μὲν αὐτοὶ ὄντες καὶ ἀπαθεῖς κακῶν ὅσα ἡμᾶς ἐν ὑστέρῳ χρόνῳ ὑπέμενεν, ὁλόκληρα δὲ καὶ ἁπλᾶ καὶ ἀτρεμῆ καὶ εὐδαίμονα φάσματα μυούμενοί τε καὶ ἐποπτεύοντες ἐν αὐγῇ καθαρᾷ, καθαροὶ ὄντες καὶ ἀσήμαντοι τούτου ὃ νῦν σῶμα περιφέροντες ὀνομάζομεν, ὀστρέου τρόπον δεδεσμευμένοι.[5]

Phrdr. 250c

The *sōma-sēma* aphorism is found in patristic, as well as in ancient and medieval texts, where it functions as an interpretive key for various scriptural passages e.g. τάφος ἀνεῳγμένος ὁ λάρυγξ αὐτῶν (‘their mouth is an open sepulchre’ Rom. 3:13). Courcelle (1966) gives us a thorough review of the sources. As Herrero de Jáuregui (2010: 31 n. 80) perceptively points out, this saying exemplifies the complex encounter between classical culture and the Judeo-Christian tradition.

[3] ‘and we really, it may be, are dead; in fact I once heard sages say that we are now dead, and the body is our tomb’.

[4] ‘for some say it is the tomb of the soul, their notion being that the soul is buried in the present life; and again, because by its means the soul gives any signs which it gives, it is for this reason also properly called a sign. But I think it most likely that the Orphic poets gave this name, with the idea that the soul is undergoing punishment for something; they think it has the body as an enclosure to keep it safe, like a prison, and this is, as the name itself denotes, the safe for the soul, until the penalty is paid, and not even a letter needs to be changed’.

[5] ‘the most blessed of mysteries, which we celebrated in a state of perfection, when we were without experience of the evils which awaited us in the time to come, being permitted as initiates to the sight of perfect and simple and calm and happy apparitions, which we saw in the pure light, being ourselves pure and not entombed in this which we carry about with us and call the body, in which we are imprisoned like an oyster in its shell’.

One of the primary purposes of the tomb in antiquity was to preserve the memory - and not just the cadaver - of the departed. The tomb stood metonymically for the person whose memory it sought to preserve (Keiser 2011). This critical association between tomb and remembrance is the context in which desire is already understood by Plato as something fundamentally unconscious (Cake 2009). Here, it should not go unnoticed that the basic meaning of *sēma* is sign. Thus, to speak of the tomb is already to speak of language. Indeed, with the corporeal remains of the deceased closed off within the tomb, the tomb itself operated as a 'body' with which the living interacted in a variety of ritually diverse ways and through which the social identity of the departed was articulated. This might take the form of an idealised statue or even a non-iconographical representation such as a *stēlē* which then becomes the sign of the departed in the world (Sourvinou-Inwood 1996). That is to say, the monument itself articulated the continuing presence of the deceased forming a signifying chain in the memory of the living (Immerwahr 1960). By the fifth century BC *lēkuthoi* were used as grave markers, performing in effect a double metonymic function, as a sign of the sign of the deceased[6] (Keiser 2011). Although the aphorism only hints at the way eschatology has been articulated in relation to the body, it was destined to be repeated through the centuries by a host of pagan as well as Christian authors (Courcelle 1966)[7]. Porphyry refers to it in his life of Plotinus (Porph V.P. XXII.45). The first century Jewish philosopher Philo shows a special interest in the theme in his exegesis of Genesis (*Quaest. in Gen* I.45, 70; II. 69). Augustine understood it in relation to hope (*spes*) (Lagouanère 2012). We find it developed in a new mystical sense by Cistercian writers in the twelfth century, notably by William of Saint Thierry. And it recurs again in the opera of Bossuet. In the words of Pierre Courcelle, '*Le corps-tombeau va de pair avec l'image du corps-cadavre qui gangrene l'âme et l'empêche de prendre l'essor contemplatif*' (Courcelle 1966: 122). However, the subtlety of Plato's position has consistently been overlooked, particularly in the last half century by biblical scholars who, by oversimplifying it, have contrasted it with a Judaic unitary view of man. This is mirrored in the 'turn to the body' as we find it in Foucault and others (Ferwerda 1985).

[6] Keiser quotes Roberts 'When placed on the surface of a grave white-ground lekythoi became part of the σῆμα itself. As such they could signify how the deceased should be remembered or, equally importantly, that the deceased had been remembered; Roberts, H.S. (2002). Pots for the Living. Pots for the Dead. Were Pots Purpose-made for the funeral or Reused? Can inscriptions throw light on the problem? *Acta Hyperborea* 9: 11 (eds) A. Rathje, M. Nielsen and B. B. Rasmussen. University of Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press.

[7] E.g. for Evagrius' views cf. *In Ps* XLVIII.12 (Migne PG XII: 1445D and Guillaumont, A. (1962). *Les 'Kephalaia Gnostica' d'Évagre Le Pontique et L'Histoire de L'Origenisme chez Les Grecs et chez Les Syriens* 110-11 and n. 135. Paris: Éditions du Seuil.

Suspicion of the body

Porphyry begins his life of Plotinus by saying that his master was like someone who seemed 'ashamed of being in the body' (Porph. V.Plot. 1.1). Commenting on this passage Pierre Hadot suggests that if there is a psychosis here it must belong '*de toute époque*' – to a shared attitude - which was disgusted by the body (Hadot 1973: 23)[8]. 'The first three centuries of the Christian era witnessed a flourishing of Gnosticism and mystery religions. Man felt himself to be…banished into his body…the body was considered a tomb and a prison' (Hadot 1993: 23)[9].

Plotinus was around twenty years younger than his fellow countryman Origen and only started writing the *Enneads*[10] in 253 AD, the year Origen died. However, Plotinus' attitude to the body was nearer to that of Clement of Alexandria than to Origen (Brown 1988). He thought of the body as a well-constructed house in which he dwelt for the time being but which he would eventually no longer need (VP II 9, 18, 1-9). Indeed, for Plotinus the problem is simply that anxiety about the body distracts us from spiritual concerns. Thus, Plotinus invites us to a conversion of attention (*prosochē*) away from the 'mirror of consciousness' towards the spiritual life which functions at an unconscious level (Hadot 1973; cf. VP 14, 10, 6-18) [11]. This spiritual trend in philosophy, as we find it at the end of antiquity, paves the way for the wave of Christian asceticism that emerges in Graeco-Roman culture in the fourth century. Here, the corporeal was once again reconfigured and emerge in a form marked by the intrusion of the soul into the body.

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[8] On Plotinus' surprisingly positive attitude towards the body cf. V.P. passim, especially II.9.13.1.

[9] Pierre Hadot was later to revise this view being 'much less sure about the existence of a collective mentality' (Hadot 1993: 23 n.1).

[10] The *Enneads* are a collection of six groups of nine treatises arranged according to their subject matter. They follow a pedagogic path intended to lead the reader through various degrees of knowledge of virtue. Plotinus developed the idea that our perceptual life, the outer man is considered to be, in some way unreal, like a dream, a delirium or a play. Cf. *Plotinus. Enneades* 7 vols. A.H. Armstrong (trans). The Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966-85.

[11] This motif is one that is also found in St Paul (e.g. 1 Cor 13.12; cf. Van Fleteren 1992) and Augustine. Lagouanère (2012) devotes a hundred pages to an analysis of the motif of the mirror in antiquity and amongst patristic writers including Origen and Augustine where the concept of imago plays a central role. It is also central to Lacan's theory in relation to the *stade du miroir*. Citing Lacan, Lagouanère concludes his study by discussing Augustine's hermeneutic trajectory in terms of desire and *jouissance*. Lacan, in fact, refers directly to Plotinus a number of times (e.g. S20). The intellect, as we find it in Plotinus, corresponds in a number of ways to Lacan's notion of the unconscious. As in the mirror stage, image formation in the *phantasia* (imagination) of Plotinus is 'facilitated by the *logos endiathetos*' (the unuttered word) (Hendrix 2015: 267).

Noble death and martyrdom

The tradition of noble death, as it is known - which was later understood as martyrdom[12]- is found in Graeco-Roman, Jewish and Christian antiquity. This reveals something of the chasm that exists between the view of death found in antiquity and that familiar to us today. Today death is largely inscribed within medical discourse, in which the dying become 'patients' assisted by hospital staff, as if death were an illness, and where the focus is on elevating physical pain. Philippe Ariès (1981) describes this modern attitude as part of a trend that banishes death from both the public and private spheres. In pagan antiquity, death was often public and the relationship of the subject to the pain, as well as to the gaze of the other, quite different (van Henten and Avemarie 2002). Death on the battlefield, in the games and even suicide were admired. Hardly any distinction was made between them. All were forms *biaiothanasia* (violent death). These deaths are described in elegies, tragedies, apologies, funeral orations, histories, biographies (*teleute*, *exitus illustrium vivrorum*), in diatribes and in letters (van Henten and Avemarie 2002). The oldest being that of the death of the Aramaen sage Ahiqar in the eighth or seventh century BC. The deaths of philosophers featured considerably in relation to noble suicides, notable those of Zeno of Elea and Anaxarchus, which are recorded by Diogenes Laertius and, of course, that of Socrates. The latter, especially, served as an inspiration for many Romans suicides including that of Tacitus. The overriding belief here, repeated by Epictetus, was that the philosopher somehow saved himself by taking his own life[13].

The early Christian records of martyrdom - known variously as *martyrium*, *passio* or *acta* - show structural correspondence with Jewish accounts of martyrdom as well as parallels with the death of Jesus of Nazareth. The first document to recount such a death being a record of the martyrdom of Polycarp [155-160 AD], bishop of Smyrna (Izmir). After his death Polycarp's followers took his burnt bones away in order to commemorate him on his 'birthday'. Thus

[12] Scholarly definitions of martyrdom generally define it in relation the act of witness based on the etymology from the Greek noun *martys* which is connected to the verb *martyrein*. The word is not found prior 150 AD. See Buschmann, G. (1998). *Das Martyrium des Polykarp übersetzt und erklärt*. Kommentar zu den Apostolischen Vätern 6. Göttingen: Vanderhoeck und Ruprecht.

[13] Long points out that that Ludwig Stein had already noticed that for the Stoics what leaves the body on death is the *hēgemonikon* (the guiding part of the soul) '*aber ein gewisser Grad von ψυχή…muss selbst dem Leichnam noch innewohnen, da er noch eine Form hat*' cf. Long, A.A. (2001). *Stoic Studies* 234 n.16. Cambridge: CUP. This guiding part of the soul, according to Aëtius (4.11.1 = SVF 2.83), at birth, resembles a papyrus leaf that has been well prepared in order to be written on and receive representations (Inwood, B. (2008). *Reading Seneca. Stoic Philosophy at Rome* 272. Oxford: Clarendon Press; see also Ilsetraut Hadot's rigorous critique of Inwood, Hadot, I (2014). Getting to Goodness. Reflection on Chapter 10 of Brad Inwood's Reading Seneca 26 n.66, *Seneca Philosophicus* 9-14 (eds.) J. Wildberger and M.L. Colish. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter.

began the cult of the Christian martyr. About two decades later we find the Latin equivalent of *martys* used for the first time in the *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs*. This is the oldest document from the church in North Africa and is based on the court record of a hearing at Carthage on 17th July AD 180 (Krüger, Knopf and Ruhbach 1965). In many of the accounts one cannot fail to notice a sadomasochism element. The body of the saint becomes a battleground in which resistance and persecution fight it out, in an expression of a paradoxical satisfaction that the subject derives from bodily pain. The greater the mutilation, the greater the libidinal enjoyment. Sanctus' body was scorched and heavily mutilated (Hist. eccl. 5.1.20-4); Polycarp was bound with his hands behind his back and burned like bread being baked (Mart. Pol. 15.1). Here, the wounds and mutilation in the body function within an erotic discourse, as artificial orifices. That is, like normal orifices they have a sexual dimension because of the way they blend the inside and the outside of the body 'like certain topographical spaces' to produce pleasure (Baudrillard 2016: 114).

Magical and penetrated bodies

The body of the possessed was a body marked by contortions, perspiration, grimaces, foul smells, rolling eyes, and changes to the skin. The series of demonic possessions that appeared towards the end of the 16th century revealed a body language that is unusual. Elena Crusichi, in 1571, claimed that the devil had eaten her guts and destroyed her legs and throat. Four years earlier two young demoniacs in Brakel, Germany, started grunting like pigs. While hearing mass, in an Italian village, demoniacs shrieked like animals and contorting their bodies, pulling up their skirts. A girl from Louvain coughed up twenty-four pounds of liquid in a single day. A Franciscan at Querétaro in Mexico, pulled a large toad out of the mouth of a demoniac, by the leg, and threw it on her bed (Levack 2013). In 1662, during the exorcisms of some Ursuline nuns at Auxonne, some of the demoniacs managed to bend backwards so far that they could lick the floor. 'In Loudun, this discourse of the body takes on an obsessive character. The slightest physiological changes of the possessed women are followed with acute attention' (de Certeau 2000: 44). Many possessions, as those at Loudun, were sexually charged. Sister Clara 'exposing her person in the most indecent manner, without a blush and with foul and lascivious expressions and actions' (Levack 2013: 15). In 1632, some other Ursulines fell into strange convulsions, exposing themselves indecently, making foul and lascivious gestures and inviting those present to join in their lewd behaviour, in a manner that their chronicler suggests, would

have astonished the inmates of a brothel. This sexual element seems to have distinguished Catholic from Protestant narratives[14].

The possessed body and the convulsive body

In his analysis of the new phenomena of demonic possession in the 16th and 17th centuries, and the earlier phenomena of witchcraft, Foucault distinguishes between two distinct conceptualisations of the body (Foucault 2003). The witch's body carried magical and diabolical spells and powers. For example, it could transport itself or disappear becoming invisible. In other words, it had a kind of transmateriality. In addition, it conveyed signs or areas of insensitivity that allowed both the demon and the Church inquisitors to identify someone as a witch. Thus, the body of the witch could escape those who pursue it but at the same time was marked and so could be recognised. But the body of someone possessed was quite different. Rather than being a place enveloped by magical powers, it was a theatrical stage. Instead of being a body transported, it was a body penetrated. A fortification surrounded by an enemy. 'It is a citadel body, the stake in a battle between…the part of the person possessed that resists and the part of herself that gives way…a constantly agitated and shaking body in which one can follow the different episodes of the battle: a body that swallows and spits out and that absorbs and rejects in this kind of physiological-theological theater that constitutes the body of the possessed' (Foucault 2003: 212). The identifying feature of the possessed body is not the mark or spot associated with the witch but the convulsion – characterised by inflexibility, shaking, choking, fainting and insensitivity to blows - which stands for the struggle taking place within the body and which emerges here for the first time. In addition, various involuntary bodily movements accompany convulsions - spitting, and emitting blasphemous expressions and obscenities[15]. These things all speak of several stages in the conflict.

[14] Levack notes that while Catholic texts record demoniacs entertained in sexual fantasies, sexually suggestive gestures and accusing the witches who caused their possession of enticing them sexually, 'Protestant narratives rarely describe sexuality as a central aspect of their possession' (Levack 2013: 164). This may, in part, be explained by the fact that a substantial number of Catholic demoniacs were nuns. In the 'predominantly sexual script' (ibid. 165) of the possession of the nuns at Louviers, one of the nuns, Madeleine Bavent, described being raped by an incubus exhibiting a huge penis, 'just like a man's', cf. Desmarets (1878). *Histoire de Madeleine Bavent, religieuse du Monastère du Saint-Louis de Louviers*. Rouen: J. Lemonnyer.

[15] As well as convulsions, physical pain, rigidity of limbs, trances, muscular flexibility and contortions, swelling and vomiting, Levack also considers 'language' and a 'change of voice' as symptoms of possession (Levack 2013: 11-13)

Foucault considers that the landscape of the body in its relation to the soul is re-configured in the literature of spiritual direction during the Counter Reformation (Foucault 1999). For convulsive flesh, to adopt Foucault's idiom, is the culmination of a process in relation to the body and the power of spiritual direction, in the new form it adopted after the Council of Trent [1545-1563].

> The convulsive flesh is the body penetrated by the right of examination and subject to the obligation of exhaustive confession and the body that bristles against this right and against this obligation. It is the body that opposes silence or the scream to the rule of complete discourse, the body that counters the rule of obedient direction with intense shocks of involuntary revolt or little betrayals of secret connivance. The convulsive flesh is at once the ultimate effect and the point of reversal of the mechanisms of corporeal investment that the new wave of Christianization organized in the sixteenth century. The convulsive flesh is the resistance effect of Christianization at the level of individual bodies.
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> Foucault 2003: 213

Foucault argues that despite being an extremely elusive concept, the notion of convulsion is fundamentally important not only in relation to religious history in the West but also in relation to medicine and particularly psychiatry. For this reason, it is unimportant whether or not we consider witchcraft or demonic possession real or illusory. Both belong to a discourse of the body. That is to say, to the subjection and resistance of the body to the Inquisition (in the sphere of witchcraft), to spiritual direction (in the sphere of possession) or to psychiatry (hysteria). It is power, therefore, that is one of the most durable factors in the transition of the examination, control and resistance of the body from religious to medical discourse (Foucault 2003).

Mystic bodies

Mysticism in its concern for rapture and ecstasy refers to a way of understanding the body within a peculiar *modus loquendi* that gives a privileged place to sexuality. As Sophie Kluge (2003) has clearly demonstrated, whereas in other passages Teresa of Avila complains about the soul's imprisonment in the body (XXI)[16], in the famous passage on mystical penetration

[16] 'Oh, what it is for a soul which finds itself in this state to have to return to intercourse with all, to look at this farce of a life and see how ill-organized it is, to spend its time in meeting the needs of the body, in sleeping and in eating. It is wearied by everything; it cannot run away; it sees itself chained and captive; and it is then that

[She] sublimely orchestrated [a] three-stage *correctio*, [in] the relation between body and soul in mystical ecstasy…as the experience goes from being un-physical (‘*no es corporal*’) over ‘somewhat’ physical (‘*no deja de participar el cuerpo algo*’) to being very physical indeed (‘*y aun harto*’).

Kluge 2013: 271

This illustrates the central place of eroticism in mystical texts. The literary sources for erotic imagery to describe mystical experience include both Plotinus’ and Origin’s use of Plato’s *Symposium* and the latter’s use of the *Canticle of Canticles*. Rist shows that Plotinus uses *erōs* to describe the experience of the soul at the very moment of mystical union where desire gives way to adoration (Rist 1964). Indeed, both Origen (Rist 1964) and Gregory of Nyssa frequently use the words *agapē* and *erōs* interchangeably (Dodds 1965)[17]. Here, terms such as love and lover, marriage, and penetration, take on new meanings in relation to the body and sexuality. For the concept of the mystical itself stretches all representations and is outside all systems of thought. As such, it is only in the traces of its absence that it is glimpsed. Wittgenstein’s contention in the *Tractatus* is that there is a whole realm of human life made up of the things that belong to the limit of the world – things, that is, that cannot be put into propositions. In this sense mysticism signifies the realm of the unsayable[18].

As *idées reçues*, older views of the body are interwoven with newer notions which emerge gradually. Different pictures being privileged, as it were, at different moments. The body as the place of absence - of the *psuchē* - (the corpse); as a metonym of the cadaver[19] (the tomb – *sēma*), or double metonym (grave markers – *lēkuthoi*), and as a metonym of the body of Christ

it feels most keenly the imprisonment into which we are led by our bodies and the misery of this life’ Allison Pears, E. (Trans. and ed.) *The Life of Teresa of Jesus. The Autobiography of Teresa of Ávila* 121.

[17] Cf. Rist, J.M. (1966). A Note on Eros and Agape in Pseudo-Dionysius *Vigiliae Christianae* 20: 235-43.

[18] However, when we think about the inexpressible, we are already engaged in language. By turning words round, in order to reach out beyond the symbolic, the mystical instigates a new kind of discourse (de Certeau 1977). Tugendhat (2003) notes that ‘One can perhaps say – to adopt the terminology of his [Wittgenstein’s] later works – that he has given us an instance of one particular language-game, from which already the feeling of something “mystical” emerges’ (D’hert 1978: 32). Thus, language – and this includes the language of empiricism – always points beyond itself in the sense that ‘aspects of things which are most important for us are hidden’ (Wittgenstein 1999: 129).

[19] Although cadaver is the older word it has come to refer in particular to a dead body used for medical or scientific purposes, for example, for medical students to dissect, while corpse is used more generally and evokes the embalmed dead body. Alternative terms for the dead body include the word ‘carcass’ which has not been used of humans since the middle of the 18th century, and is now reserved exclusively for the body of a dead animal which is used for food.

(the Eucharistic bread)[20]; as 'the flesh' (*sarx*) in relation to the practice of spiritual exercises (the ascetic body) in the context of what Foucault designated 'the care of the self' (*sui cura*), and self-punishment (the penitential body)[21]; as the locus of magical powers (the demonic body), and of penetration (the possessed or convulsive body); as a place impregnated by the real (the mystic body), by madness (the psychotic or fragmented body), and the erotic (the hysterical body); as the site of mutilation (the body of the martyr)[22]; as 'the remains' - elevated for the purpose of veneration as 'relics'(parts of the dead body of the saint which have been intentionally cut off or extracted – e.g. a bone, the skull, a limb; hair or blood). In avowing these 'places' as discourses of subjectivity, we are intentionally resisting all attempts to tidy up the complexity of the body by coercing it into a simplistic schema. Much here, it will be noticed, refers to the phenomenology of religious life as it is woven into the fabric of cultural experience. This necessarily locates it within the realm of those things which interest psychoanalysis. Indeed, this is evident in the way many Freud's texts are written in relation to the Torah and midrashim (cf. Ostow 1982; and Merkur, D. 1994), and Lacan's in reference to the New Testament, to theological, mystical and hagiographical texts, particularly Augustine, Pascal, Meister Eckhart and Teresa of Avila. Indeed, this latter example led Michel de Certeau to describe Lacan's work in its history, narratives and theoretical loci as Christian (de Certeau 2006)[23].

Abbreviations

Cra.	Plato. *Cratylus*. (trans.) H.N. Fowler. Loeb Classical Library Vol. 167. Cambridge (Mass) and England: Harvard University Press, 1939.
Grg.	Plato. *Gorgias* (trans.) W.R.M. Lamb. Loeb Classical Library Vol. 166. Cambridge (Mass) and England: Harvard University Press. 2001.

[20] By the 12th century there was a general agreement in the Latin Church that the eucharistic 'body' and the historical body of Christ were identical, although the nature of this identification was far from clear. Cf. Stacey, R.C. (1998). From Ritual Crucifixion to Host Desecration: Jews and the Body of Christ *Jewish History* 12 (1): 11-28.

[21] Although this may suggest a perverse structure, as in masochism, this is only the case where the subject experiences sexual pleasure by inflicting pain on him/herself. Cf. Freud, S. (1905). Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality 157-60 *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* VII [1901-1905] (trans. and ed.) J. Strachey. London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, London.

[22] Despite the recent use of the word martyr to refer to those who take their own life, martyrdom refers to those who witness to their faith, often suffering death but not necessarily so, at the hand of their persecutors. Cf. Frend, W.H.C. (1965). *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church*. Oxford: Blackwell.

[23] This view is echoed by Roudinesco echoes in defining mysticism and the Trinity as two of the great myths on which Lacan based his reading of Freud. Cf. Roudinesco, E. (1993). *Jacques Lacan. Esquisse d'une vie, histoire d'un système de pensée*. Paris: Fayard.

Hist.Eccl.	Eusèbe de Césarée. *Histoire ecclésiastique*, tome II. Livres V-VII (ed. et trans.) G. Bardy. Sources chrétiennes 41. Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1955.
Mart. Pol.	The Martyrdom of Polycarp. *Ante-Nicene Christian Library* Vol. 1. (trans.) A. Roberts, J. Donaldson and F. Crombie. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1867.
Phdr:	Plato. *Phaedrus* (trans.) H.N. Fowler. Loeb Classical Library Vol. 36. Cambridge (Mass) and England: Harvard University Press, 1999.
V.P.	Porphyry. On the Life of Plotinus and the Order of his Books *Plotinus. Porphyry on Plotinus. Ennead 1* (trans.) A.H. Armstrong. Loeb Classical Library Vol. 440. Cambridge (Mass) and England: Harvard University Press, 1966.
Quaest. in Gen.	Philo. Questions on Genesis (trans.) R. Marcus. Loeb Classical Library Vol. 380. Cambridge (Mass) and England: Harvard University Press, 1953.
SVF	von Arnim, H. (1903-1905). *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*. Leipzig: Teubner.

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