POROUS BODIES: PLAGUE AND CONCEPTIONS OF THE HUMAN BODY IN LATE
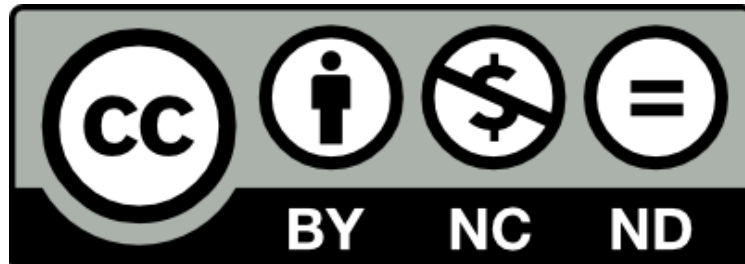
MEDIEVAL ENGLAND

by

MOHAMMAD SADEGH AHMADIAN ATTARI

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Department of English Literature
School of English, Drama and Creative Studies
College of Arts and Law
University of Birmingham
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Abstract

This thesis examines the entanglement of humans and a nonhuman agent—*Yersinia pestis*, the bacterium responsible for plague—over the course of the second plague pandemic (beginning with the Black Death in 1348 and continuing in subsequent outbreaks) up to the mid-sixteenth century. It studies how this entanglement was understood from a variety of interconnected viewpoints (medical, political, and religious), how people responded to it, and how it impacted pre-existing ideas regarding humanity (inclusive of body and soul) in late medieval England. It traces the impact of plague, in terms of cultural productions, as a force facilitating and strengthening an understanding of the human body as a porous entity.

Chapter 1 considers the chiefly medical responses to plague outbreaks and shows that in explanations of the causes, transmission, and the course of the disease as well as in proposed treatments for it, bodily porousness played a prominent part. This prominence, in turn, bolstered a conception of the body as a porous entity. Chapter 2 considers evidence of public health responses to plague, leprosy, and moral depravity—all of which were understood within the same theoretical framework—and contends that the interaction between plague and discursive understandings of its operation strengthened an understanding of the individual and urban bodies as porous. Chapter 3 studies evidence of the use of prayers and devotions to Christ and a distinct group of saints in order to protect one's body, the city, or the church space from the ravages of plague, and argues that the emphasis on porousness resulted in the popularity of holy figures whose *vitae* feature bodily disintegration. Finally, Chapter 4 traces the implications of this emergent way of understanding the emphasis on the porousness of the idealised body as the result of plague presence for how performances of porous bodies may have been understood in dramatic works.

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Introduction

In a reflection on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on how humankind's place in the world is conceived, James S. Baumlin notes that the 'viral presence, though invasive in our world, changes our self-perception: no longer a single macro-organism, we are in fact an "assemblage" of microorganisms, upon which life depends absolutely'.[1] Such an observation is not entirely novel, and similar claims have been made with regards to the entanglement of humans and various other entities on the macro and micro scales.[2] As these studies indicate, human beings have always been inseparably entangled with nonhumans, to the point where the distinction between humans and 'the external environment' is muddled.[3] This thesis examines a similar, pre-Covid entanglement—one of humans and *Yersinia pestis*, the bacterium responsible for plague—over the course of the second plague pandemic (beginning with the Black Death in 1348 and continuing in subsequent outbreaks) up to the mid-sixteenth century.[4] It studies how this entanglement was understood from a variety of interconnected viewpoints (medical, political, and religious), how people responded to it, and

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[1] James S. Baumlin, 'From Postmodernism to Posthumanism: Theorizing Ethos in an Age of Pandemic', *Humanities,* 9.2.46 (2020), Section 1.

[2] We could go back to Samantha Frost's idea of the human as a 'biocultural creature', (2016), Rosi Braidotti's conception of posthuman subjectivity (2013), Julie Guthman and Becky Mansfield's conception of the human as 'socionatural' (2013), Lennard J. Davis and David B. Morris's 'biocultures', Alan H. Goodman and Thomas L. Leatherman's 'biocultural synthesis' (1998), Keith Ansell-Pearson's 'integrated colony' (1997), Bruno Latour's hybrid networks (1991), Deleuze and Guattari's idea of assemblage (1980), and numerous other contemporary thinkers. Samantha Frost, *Biocultural Creatures: Toward a New Theory of the Human* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016); Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013), p. 82; Julie Guthman and Becky Mansfield, 'The Implications of Environmental Epigenetics: A New Direction for Geographic Inquiry on Health, Space, and Nature-Society Relations', *Progress in Human Geography,* 37.4 (2013), 486–504; Lennard J. Davis and David B. Morris, 'Biocultures Manifesto', *New Literary History,* 38.3 (2007), 411–18; Alan H. Goodman and Thomas L. Leatherman, *Building a New Biocultural Synthesis: Political-Economic Perspectives on Human Biology* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998); Keith Ansell-Pearson, *Viroid Life* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 124; Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*. trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 4; Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), passim.

[3] Guthman and Mansfield, p. 497.

[4] The year 1348 concerns the arrival of plague in Europe; on a global scale, it is believed, based on the most recent publications, that the pandemic began in 1338 in Central Asia: Maria A. Spyrou et al., 'The Source of the Black Death in Fourteenth-Century Central Eurasia', *Nature,* 606 (2022), 718–40.

how it impacted pre-existing ideas regarding humanity (inclusive of body and soul) in late medieval England.

To avoid anachronistic analysis, it is important to clarify from the outset the terminology regarding plague: the word plague was not predominantly used to refer to the disease in medieval Europe.[5] The word meant either a 'wound', 'a blow' (reflecting the meaning of its Latin etymon) or an 'affliction' or 'calamity' unleashed by God, and it only began to infrequently accommodate the association with infectious diseases (including the bubonic plague) in the fifteenth century.[6] The word which referred to plague in Middle English (and also Latin) was 'pestilence'—also used for all epidemic diseases and not the bubonic plague, specifically.[7] It was only after the Black Death that a second sense referring to the bubonic plague was added to the term.[8] This manifests how plague was understood and explained through a pre-existing theoretical framework which concerned the physio-spiritual ways infection, disease, and sin were transmitted. In other words, plague was understood through pre-existing ideas, but it also changed those ideas through its own agency and power.

The end date of mid-sixteenth century is not strict, but the majority of the materials discussed in this thesis do not go beyond this date. This is due to the decline in the number of

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[5] In contrast, in Arabic literature, the word used to referred to the bubonic plague was *ṭāʿūn* (طاعون), which is a cognate of *ṭaʿana* (طعن), meaning to wound, to pierce. General epidemics, or pestilences, were referred to as *wabāʾ* (وباء), meaning contamination. However, this distinction was not always adhered to in literature regarding the Black Death: B. Shoshan and D. Panzac, 'Wabāʾ', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs (2012), in *Brill Online* <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_1320> [Accessed on 13 May 2022].

[6] 'Plāge n.(2)', in *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. by Robert E. Lewis, et al. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1952-2001), in *Middle English Compendium*, ed. by Frances McSparran, et al. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Library, 2000-2018) <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/> [accessed 16 June 2020]; Marta Sylwanowicz, *Old and Middle English Sickness-nouns in Historical Perspective: A Lexico-semantic Analysis* (San Diego: Æ Academic Publishing, 2014), Chapter 4, 4.3.3.5.

[7] 'Pestilence n.', in *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. by Robert E. Lewis, et al. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1952-2001), in *Middle English Compendium*, ed. by Frances McSparran, et al. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Library, 2000-2018) <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/> [accessed 16 June 2020].

[8] Sylwanowicz, Chapter 4, 4.3.3.6. 'Pestilence', *Dictionary of Medical Vocabulary in English, 1375–1550: Body Parts, Sicknesses, Instruments, and Medicinal Preparations*, by Juhani Norri (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 813–14.

iconographic representations and dramatic performances, which comprise the material examined in two chapters of the thesis, during and after the politico-religious upheaval of the dissolution of the monasteries (broadly, c. 1536–50) and, more generally, the Reformation. The general geographical focus of the thesis is on England, but two chapters—one on church iconography (chapter three) and the other on dramatic performances (chapter four)—have a narrower geographical focus on East Anglia, which is due to the more substantial amount of surviving relevant evidence, both in terms of iconography and dramatic performance, from the region. The study, as a whole, then, provides an account of the overt as well as the implicit influence of plague as a nonhuman agent informing understandings of the human body as a porous entity across various dimensions of late medieval culture. In the process, it expands the existing scholarship on the intersection of medicine and the body in the Middle Ages (surveyed below) and also emphasises the necessity of interdisciplinary analysis in analysing the impact of plague on culture.

1. Literary and Historical Scholarship of Plague

Even though the Covid-19 pandemic caused a resurgence in popular interest in plague, the study of the Black Death has, over the past century, always been a vibrant field in academia and has attracted significant interest. Even after Haensch *et al.* settled the debate regarding the pathogen which caused the Black Death, and after Spyrou *et al.* determined the origin of the Black Death to be early fourteenth-century central Eurasia, the narrative of the spread of plague in late medieval Europe is still an undetermined and contentious area.[9] In addition to

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[9] Stephanie Haensch et al., 'Distinct Clones of *Yersinia Pestis* Caused the Black Death', *PLoS Pathog,* 6.10 (2010), e1001134; Maria A. Spyrou et al., 'The Source of the Black Death in Fourteenth-Century Central Eurasia', *Nature,* 606 (2022), 718–40. Studies subsequent to Haensch *et al.* confirmed their findings regarding the pathogenesis of plague. The debate regarding plague's pathogen and its mode of transmission is intense and has a rich history. See, for instance, Ole J. Benedictow and Samuel Cohn Jr.'s lingering debate, as well as works by other so-called plague-sceptics, who proposed that the responsible pathogen was something other than *Yersinia pestis*: Ole J. Benedictow, *What Disease Was Plague? On the Controversy over the Microbiological Identity of Plague Epidemics of the Past* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Ole J. Benedictow, *The Complete History of the Black Death*. Revised edn (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2021); Samuel K. Cohn Jr, *The Black Death Transformed: Disease and Culture in Early Renaissance Europe* (Oxford: Oxford

palaeopathological and bioarchaeological studies on the micro scale, there are many other studies on the economic, social, demographic, and cultural impact of the Black Death and its subsequent outbreaks both on the micro and macro scales. Some of these studies will be referred to in this thesis, but they are too many to be surveyed within the narrow confines of this introduction.[10] The critical and theoretical contexts of my study can be divided into three main areas, whose convergence constitute the focal point of this study. These are, ordered from more generally relevant to specifically connected: (1) those which study the Middle Ages through a posthumanist perspective and medieval phenomena as part of an assemblage or network of human and nonhuman agents or actants; (2) those which analyse various aspects of late medieval culture in relation to the Black Death, which includes quantitative analyses as well as qualitative studies on medical/scientific, socio-economic, religious, and cultural responses to plague; (3) those which read the intersections of literature and plague.

A. Posthumanist Medievalism

Beginning with the first group, whose relevance is more theoretical than contextual, the use of posthumanist theoretical frameworks in medieval scholarship has seen a surge since the turn of the millennium. Broadly, posthumanism emphasises the significance of material yet nonhuman actors—or in Bruno Latour's terms, 'actants'—in shaping or mediating almost all human actions.[11] Jane Bennett conceives of this capacity of things to influence the human experience as material 'vitality' or 'vibrant materiality', defined as 'the capacity of things—

University Press, 2002); Samuel K. Cohn Jr, 'Epidemiology of the Black Death and Successive Waves of Plague', *Medical History* (2008), 74–100; John Theilmann and Frances Cate, 'A Plague of Plagues: The Problem of Plague Diagnosis in Medieval England', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History,* 37.3 (2007), 371–93.

[10] For a survey introducing the recent changes to the field, see John Aberth, *Contesting the Middle Ages: Debates That Are Changing Our Narrative of Medieval History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019). Also see Sharon DeWitte and Maryanne Kowaleski, 'Black Death Bodies', *Fragments,* 6 (2017), 1–37.

[11] Latour defines an actant as 'a term from semiotics covering both humans and nonhumans; an actor is any entity that modifies another entity in a trial; of actors it can only be said that they act; their competence is deduced from their performances': Bruno Latour, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring Sciences into Democracy.* trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 237.

edibles, commodities, storms, metals—not only to impede or block the will and designs of humans but also to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own'.[12] Inspired by—and in many ways emulating/continuing—a monist tradition of philosophy of immanence in figures ranging from the Pre-Socratics and Spinoza to Nietzsche and Deleuze and Guattari, this theoretical framework seeks to:

> […] paint a positive ontology of vibrant matter, which stretches received concepts of agency, action, and freedom sometimes to the breaking point; […] to dissipate the onto-theological binaries of life/matter, human/animal, will/determination, and organic/inorganic using arguments and other rhetorical means to induce in human bodies an aesthetic-affective openness to material vitality; and […] to sketch a style of political analysis that can better account for the contributions of nonhuman actants.[13]

In the vanguard of posthumanist medieval studies were the works of Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, Jody Enders, and, to a lesser degree, Dorothy Yamamoto, who used poststructuralist theoretical perspectives, especially that of Deleuze and Guattari, in their analyses of medieval culture.[14] The employment of such theoretical frameworks has since diversified and now includes influential studies on nonhuman agency in representations of animals, monsters, their role in medieval antisemitic discourses, the power of material objects in devotional practices, development of childhood, or even mechanical contraptions.[15] My study employs a

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[12] Bennett, p. viii.

[13] Bennett, p. x.

[14] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, ed., *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Gail Weiss, ed., *Thinking the Limits of the Body* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2003); Jody Enders, *The Medieval Theater of Cruelty: Rhetoric, Memory, Violence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999); Dorothy Yamamoto, *The Boundaries of the Human in Medieval English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[15] David Carrillo-Rangel, Delfi I. Nieto-Isabel, and Pablo Acosta-García, ed., *Touching, Devotional Practices, and Visionary Experience in the Late Middle Ages* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019); Estella Ciobanu, *Representations of the Body in Middle English Biblical Drama*, *The New Middle Ages* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Hybridity, Identity, and Monstrosity in Medieval Britain: On Difficult Middles*, *The New Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Richard H. Godden and Asa Simon Mittman, ed., *Monstrosity, Disability, and the Posthuman in the Medieval and Early Modern World*,

similar theoretical framework and examines the impact of plague as a nonhuman agent on understandings of the body and related cultural practices. The latter include methods used to protect the individual and the community against plague via purging the body and community of infectious 'corrupt matter' or containing it, petitioning saints for protection, and the performance of bodies in procession or drama in a context of plague outbreaks.

Belonging to both the first and second groups (that is, with a posthumanist theoretical perspective and examining medieval society in relation to plague), Bruce Campbell's *The Great Transition: Climate, Disease and Society in the Late-Medieval World* has perhaps the largest scale.[16] Like this study, Campbell focusses on nonhuman agents: climate and disease, and their role in socio-economic change.[17] Campbell's main focus is on dramatic climatic shifts and their facilitative role in certain landmark moments in human history. He argues, by analysing an enormous amount of climatological data, that from the mid-fourteenth century to the late fifteenth century, the Earth experienced a 'great transition', during which 'favourable climatic conditions', a relative absence of epidemics, technological progress, and institutional innovation gave way to economic and demographic contraction and

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The New Middle Ages (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019); Sally Holloway Stephanie Downes, and Sarah Randles, ed., *Feeling Things: Objects and Emotions through History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Iris Idelson-Shein and Christian Wiese, ed., *Monsters and Monstrosity in Jewish History: From the Middle Ages to Modernity* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019); Grażyna Jurkowlaniec, Ika Matyjaszkiewicz, and Zuzanna Sarnecka, ed., *The Agency of Things in Medieval and Early Modern Art: Materials, Power and Manipulation* (New York: Routledge, 2018); Alison Langdon, ed., *Animal Languages in the Middle Ages: Representations of Interspecies Communication*, *The New Middle Ages* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Scott Lightsey, *Manmade Marvels in Medieval Culture and Literature*, *The New Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); J. Allan Mitchell, *Becoming Human: The Matter of the Medieval Child* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014); Asa Simon Mittman and Peter J. Dendle, ed., *The Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous* (London: Ashgate, 2013); Susan Signe Morrison, *Excrement in the Late Middle Ages: Sacred Filth and Chaucer's Fecopoetics*, *The New Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Patricia Skinner, *Living with Disfigurement in Early Medieval Europe*, *The New Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); Karl Steel, *How to Make a Human: Animals and Violence in the Middle Ages* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2011); Karl Steel, *How Not to Make a Human: Pets, Feral Children, Worms, Sky Burial, Oysters* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019); E. R. Truitt, *Medieval Robots: Mechanism, Magic, Nature, and Art* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).

[16] Bruce M. S. Campbell, *The Great Transition: Climate, Disease and Society in the Late-Medieval World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

[17] Campbell, *The Great Transition*, p. xvi.

vulnerability, 'climatic instability', and a re-emergence of pathogens (including the Black

Death).[18] This change reversed the demographic and economic development of Europe and

Eurasia, increasing trade, and 'cultural efflorescence', which took place during the previous

era.[19] As Campbell writes, 'Flora, fauna, humans and micro-organisms were all affected in

both separate and inter-connected ways as they acted and reacted to successive environmental

shocks and hazards'.[20] My study will examine such networks on a relatively smaller scale,

which enables focussing on cultural artefacts, such as medical, legislative, religious, and

literary productions within the timeframe of plague outbreaks as its subjects.

B. Plague and Plague-Related Studies

The second group covers a large corpus, inevitably impossible to comprehensively survey

here; nevertheless, important recent studies in the fields of biological anthropology, history of

public health, history of the body, and the general, encompassing field of medical humanities

have highlighted the complexity of the phenomenon of plague. For instance,

bioarchaeological studies (in tandem with certain economic analyses) have highlighted that

several factors associated with living conditions and survivorship improved after the Black

Death (albeit not evenly spread among sexes and classes), which, in turn, prompts a

reappraisal of the popular image of the post-Black Death era—reflected in many

demographic and economic analyses—as a time marked by the constant presence of

mortality, suffering, labour shortage, and demographic decimation.[21] Similarly, in the field of

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[18] Campbell, *The Great Transition*, p. 2.
[19] Campbell, *The Great Transition*, p. 2.
[20] Campbell, *The Great Transition*, p. 209.
[21] Emily J. Brennan and Sharon N. DeWitte, 'Sexual Stature Difference Fluctuations in Pre- and Post-Black Death London as an Indicator of Living Standards', *American Journal of Human Biology,* 34.10 (2022), e23783; Sharon N. DeWitte and Mary Lewis, 'Medieval Menarche: Changes in Pubertal Timing before and after the Black Death', *American Journal of Human Biology,* 33.2 (2020), e23439; Sharon N. DeWitte, 'Stress, Sex, and Plague: Patterns of Developmental Stress and Survival in Pre- and Post-Black Death London', *American Journal of Human Biology,* 30.1 (2018), e23073; Sharon N. DeWitte, 'Mortality Risk and Survival in the Aftermath of the Medieval Black Death', *PLoS One,* 9.5 (2014), e96513; Kanya Godde, Valerie Pasillas, and America Sanchez, 'Survival Analysis of the Black Death: Social Inequality of Women and the Perils of Life and Death in Medieval London', *American Journal of Biological Anthropology,* 173.1 (2020), 168–78. For studies on the impact of the Black Death and demography and economy, see: Richard Britnell,

public health studies, the interconnection of medical, theological, and political ideas in shaping the practical measures taken against plague—and other diseases thought to spread similarly—has highlighted the need to move beyond the modern distinctions between various disciplines and implement an interdisciplinarity which is characteristic of the field of medical humanities, defined as 'intersections, exchanges and entanglements between the biomedical sciences, the arts and humanities, and the social sciences'.[22] This inter- or multidisciplinary approach, as Liz Herbert McAvoy notes, is a prominent feature of medieval studies, in general, as the underlying principle of medieval conceptions and responses to disease did not involve a body/soul dualism—a dualism which has brought about the modern distinction between sciences of the body (e.g. medicine) and sciences of the mind/soul (e.g. philosophy).[23] Rather, health was maintained through a complex, intertwined, and hybrid scheme which was both physical and spiritual.

'The Black Death in English Towns', *Urban History,* 21.2 (1994), 195–210; John Hatcher, 'England in the Aftermath of the Black Death', *Past & Present,* 144 (1994), 3–35; John Hatcher, *Plague, Population and the English Economy, 1348–1530* (London: Macmillan, 1977); H. Kitsikopoulos, 'The Impact of the Black Death on Peasant Economy in England, 1350 - 1500', *The Journal of Peasant Studies,* 29.2 (2002), 71–90; Sylvia L. Thrupp, 'The Problem of Replacement-Rates in Late Medieval English Population', *The Economic History Review,* 18.1 (1965), 101–19.

[22] Anne Whitehead and Angela Woods, 'Introduction', in *The Edinburgh Companion to the Critical Medical Humanities*, ed. by Anne Whitehead et al. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), pp. 1–31 (p. 1). For studies of public health history, once again, some of such studies will be cited later, and the list of all studies on the subject is too long to be fully presented here. Nevertheless, noteworthy studies are: Patricia A. Baker, Han Nijdam, and Karine van 't Land, ed., *Medicine and Space: Body, Surroundings and Borders in Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Lukas Engelmann, John Henderson, and Christos Lynteris, ed., *Plague and the City* (London: Routledge, 2019); Isla Fay, *Health and the City: Disease, Environment and Government in Norwich, 1200–1575* (York: York Medieval Press, 2015); Guy Geltner, 'The Path to Pistoia: Urban Hygiene before the Black Death', *Past & Present,* 246 (2020), 3–33; Guy Geltner, *Roads to Health: Infrastructure and Urban Wellbeing in Later Medieval Italy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019); Lori Jones, ed., *Disease and the Environment in the Medieval and Early Modern Worlds* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2022); Carole Rawcliffe and Claire Weeda, ed., *Policing the Urban Environment in Premodern Europe* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2019); Carole Rawcliffe, *Urban Bodies: Communal Health in Late Medieval English Towns and Cities* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2013); Carole Rawcliffe, *Leprosy in Medieval England* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2006); Carole Rawcliffe, *Medicine and Society in Later Medieval England* (Stroud: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1995); Martina Saltamacchia, 'A Funeral Procession from Venice to Milan: Death Rituals for a Late-Medieval Wealthy Merchant', in *Dealing with the Dead: Mortality and Community in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Thea Tomaini (Leiden: Brill, 2018), pp. 201–20; Jennifer C. Vaught, ed., *Rhetorics of Bodily Disease and Health in Medieval and Early Modern England* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010).

[23] Liz Herbert McAvoy, 'Medievalism and the Medical Humanities', *postmedieval,* 8 (2017), 254–65 (p. 256).

In turn, this shift of perspective prompts us to reassess previously dominant analyses of cultural formations and contexts after the Black Death; many such analyses are characterised by an interpretive bias to read any association with mortality or morbidity as connected to the experience of the Black Death.[24] It is likelier, rather, that plague had a more implicit, insidious impact on late medieval culture, playing a part in a vast network of elements (which includes other diseases such as leprosy and the Sweating Sickness) shaping and reflecting the human society they interacted with.[25] While insightful in their own right, studies of public health tend not to explore cultural artefacts such as iconographic or literary evidence in detail. On the other hand, several studies in the general field of medical humanities have focussed on such cultural phenomena more closely, a large number of which

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[24] See, for instance, Albrecht Classen, 'Rural Space in Late Medieval Books of Hours: Book Illustrations as a Looking-Glass into Medieval Mentality and Mirrors of Ecocriticism', in *Rural Space in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age: The Spatial Turn in Premodern Studies*, ed. by Albrecht Classen (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2012), pp. 529–59; Jean E. Jost, 'The Effects of the Black Death: The Plague in Fourteenth-Century Religion, Literature, and Art', in *Death in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Time: The Material and Spiritual Conditions of the Culture of Death*, ed. by Albrecht Classen (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2016), pp. 193–238; Johan Mackenbach, 'Social Inequality and Death as Illustrated in Late-Medieval Death Dances', *American Journal of Public Health,* 85.9 (1995), 1285–92; Millard Meiss, *Painting in Florence and Siena after the Black Death: The Arts, Religion and Society in the Mid-Fourteenth Century* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964); Philip Ziegler, *The Black Death*. 2nd edn (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), pp. 85–111.

[25] A number of studies have highlighted the significance of the Black Death in certain cultural practices without overestimating it. Elina Gertsman points out the significance of plague outbreaks in the proliferation of *Ars moriendi* as attempts to regulate and formalise dying into a predetermined procedure, but she asserts that the pandemic was not the progenitor of tropes such as Encounter of the Three Dead and the Three Living and the Dance of Death, even though the pandemic might have facilitated their popularity in the north of the Alps. For her, the fascination with the Dance of Death imagery is the combined product of late-medieval anxieties about the nature of bodily death and its spiritual consequences stoked not only by plague, but also the Great Western Schism, among other factors: *The Dance of Death in the Middle Ages: Image, Text, Performance* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), pp. 42–4. Clifford Davidson and Sophie Oosterwijk highlight one way plague seems to have impacted the trope: the frequent presence of 'Death's fatal dart' as a motif in its post-Black Death renditions: Clifford Davidson and Sophie Oosterwijk, ed., *John Lydgate, the Dance of Death, and Its Model, the French Danse Macabre* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), p. 26. Another cultural practice which is concerned with the macabre but not necessarily plague was the production of *transi* tombs, or tombstones which depict a representation of the decomposing body of the deceased (sometimes below a representation of the healthy body of the deceased). Even though the role of plague in the production of such tombs could be analysed, this study does not engage with the form, as its connection with plague is less immediate than the iconographic evidence considered here. See Paul Binski, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation* (London: British Museum Press, 1996), pp. 139–52; Kathleen Cohen, *Metamorphosis of a Death Symbol: The Transi Tomb in the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973); Pamela M. King, 'The Cadaver Tomb in England: Novel Manifestations of an Old Idea', *Church Monuments,* 5 (1990), 26–38; Christina Welch, 'Exploring Late-Medieval English Memento Mori Carved Cadaver Sculptures', in *Dealing with the Dead: Mortality and Community in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Thea Tomaini (Leiden: Brill, 2018), pp. 331–65.

have considered medieval conceptualisations of the body in one way or another.[26] Of these,

and sitting between the second and third groups (or, in broader terms, between studying

medieval culture in relation to disease and studying disease in literature), Julie Orlemanski's

Symptomatic Subjects: Bodies, Medicine, and Causation in the Literature of Late Medieval

England is quite close to my study's subject. The book deals with the role of medical

discourses in the production and emergence of new forms of selfhood in literature (a category

which is left undefined in the work). She contends that the existing entanglement of humans

and nonhumans in medieval medicine and natural philosophy is predominantly deterministic,

and this characteristic is at loggerheads with the cultural/literary tendency to express human

agency.[27] This resulted in 'Embodied subjectivity [being] negotiated between physical

determination and willful agency and among the many historically specific ways of

describing that interplay'.[28] The undetermined status of the body in its interaction with a

variety of material and discursive factors (such as the environment, understandings of the

body's constitution, its eschatology, and its resurrection) and in relation to the Cartesian

dualism, has been the subject of prominent studies over the past few years.[29] However, the

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[26] F. Brandsma, C. Larrington, and C. Saunders, ed., *Emotions in Medieval Arthurian Literature: Body, Mind, Voice* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2015); David Fuller, Corinne Saunders, and Jane Macnaughton, ed., *The Life of Breath in Literature, Culture and Medicine: Classical to Contemporary, Palgrave Studies in Literature, Science and Medicine* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021); Hilary Powell and Corinne Saunders, ed., *Visions and Voice-Hearing in Medieval and Early Modern Contexts, Palgrave Studies in Literature, Science and Medicine* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021). Also see the special issues of the following journals on medical humanities and medieval studies: Jamie McKinstry and Corinne Saunders, ed., *Medievalism and the Medical Humanities*, special issue of *postmedieval*, 8.2 (2017); Virginia Langum and Terry Walker, ed., *The Medical Humanities, Literature and Language*, special issue of *Nordic Journal of English Studies*, 21.2 (2022).

[27] This entanglement is emphasised in numerous works on medieval medicine, but also in more culturally-oriented works such as Jeremy J. Citrome, *The Surgeon in Medieval English Literature, The New Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Faith Wallis, 'Medicine and the Senses: Feeling the Pulse, Smelling the Plague, and Listening for the Cure', in *A Cultural History of the Senses in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Richard G. Newhauser (London: Bloomsbury, 2018).

[28] Julie Orlemanski, *Symptomatic Subjects: Bodies, Medicine, and Causation in the Literature of Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), pp. 20, 278–80.

[29] One could refer to Caroline Walker Bynum, Miri Rubin, and Sarah Beckwith as the torchbearers of this field: Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), especially Part III; Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); Sarah Beckwith, 'Ritual, Church and Theatre: Medieval Dramas of the Sacramental Body', in *Culture and History 1350–1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities and Writing*, ed. by David Aers (London:

role of nonhuman agents can be explored further by focussing on the ways in which the agency of such entities shape and modify such understandings, and Orlemanski's study (and mine) take steps toward furthering this exploration.

Even though Orlemanski's readings do not consider plague in great detail, they share many key points with mine. For instance, she asserts that the entanglement of humans and nonhuman agents in medieval medicine prompted 'a model of corporeality as an amalgamated composite, knit together by the constant interchange of physical forces and stuffs [such as food, air, drugs, etc.]'.[30] Similarly, in a reading of Chaucer's 'Knight's Tale', she adopts a posthumanist perspective—albeit not specifically characterised as posthumanist—by advancing that 'Arcite's body is at the center of the tale's thinking against totality, which is to say, its efforts to imagine and represent what is not whole (what is fragmentary or in a state of becoming) as well as what escapes incorporation into unity (what is wasted, lost, or errant)'.[31] This attempt at imagination is more concerned with the entanglement of human bodies with other entities than with the composition of the body itself, although she underlines the uncertainties regarding the boundaries of the human body in medical writing elsewhere.[32] In my thesis, on the other hand, I challenge the binary opposition governing many studies of medieval medicine (such as Orlemanski's and Citrome's) privileging 'wholeness' to porousness.[33] Even though the state of health is referred to in many medical texts as 'wholeness', implying a notion of bodily integrity, I will

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Harvester/Wheatsheaf, 1992), pp. 65–89; Sarah Beckwith, *Christ's Body: Identity, Culture and Society in Late Medieval Writings* (London: Routledge, 1993); Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Miri Rubin, 'The Eucharist and the Construction of Medieval Identities', in *Culture and History 1350-1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities and Writing*, ed. by David Aers (London: Harvester/Wheatsheaf, 1992), pp. 43–63; Miri Rubin, 'The Person in the Form: Medieval Challenges to Bodily 'Order'', in *Framing Medieval Bodies*, ed. by Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), pp. 100–22.

[30] Orlemanski, *Symptomatic Subjects*, p. 27.
[31] Orlemanski, *Symptomatic Subjects*, p. 148.
[32] Orlemanski, *Symptomatic Subjects*, pp. 177, 99. Also see Citrome, p. 124.
[33] Orlemanski, *Symptomatic Subjects*, p. 40.

demonstrate that there were, simultaneously and within the same medical discourse, a conception of the healthy body as porous, thus destabilising the abovementioned binary opposition.[34]

My thesis employs the findings of studies of public health history and insights such as those found in Orlemanski's study to advance analysis of the impact of plague further into the examination of more (to use modern terms) artistically- or literary-inclined cultural artefacts—which is in line with the more explicitly cultural research introduced earlier in this section. It contends that plague and associated phenomena such as leprosy and moral depravity had to be comprehended discursively by humans (through medicine, theology, art, etc.), but they were, as nonhuman agents, capable of shaping those discursive formulations as well as materially impacting the environment, the people living in it, their bodies, and human understanding. As Timothy J. LeCain puts it, studies such as this offer

> a less anthropocentric history of our species, one in which what we had
> once understood as solely 'our' intelligence, creativity, culture, power,
> technologies, and cities are understood as emerging in significant part from
> a broader world of intelligent and creative animals, plants, metals, and
> other material things that have made us.[35]

C. Plague in Literature

Finally, the third group of relevant scholarly literature concerns works which examine the role of plague, leprosy, and diseases thought to spread similarly, specifically in literature. In previous scholarly discussions of this material, there is often some uncertainty surrounding

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[34] 'hōl(e adj.(2)', in *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. by Robert E. Lewis, et al. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1952-2001), in *Middle English Compendium*, ed. by Frances McSparran, et al. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Library, 2000-2018) <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/> [accessed 16 June 2020].

[35] Timothy J. LeCain, *The Matter of History: How Things Create the Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 8.

precisely what constitutes a literary or a medical text. My own study suggests that this

distinction is as anachronistic as the body/soul binary opposition in studying medieval

cultural productions. In other words, just as the Cartesian dualism is inapplicable to medieval

philosophy and science, so are modern conceptions of 'literature'. As, Christian Bratu notes,

the majority of medieval works lack elements considered as 'literary' in modern conception,

such as the static nature of a work of literature (i.e. a fixation with the originality and

unadulterated state of the work), textuality (as opposed to orality and performativity), and

solid authorship and authority.[36] Following the long-established

poststructuralist/postmodernist/New Historicist contention that 'the concept of literariness is

deeply unstable, that the boundaries between different types of narratives are subject to

interrogation and revision', this study moves beyond generic categorisations and considers all

cultural productions as 'fictions in the sense of things made, […] shaped by the imagination

and by the available resources of narration and description'.[37] The use of vague and imposing

generic categorisations, thus, bears no significance in my analysis, and is, as a result, kept to

a minimum, and all cultural productions are treated as belonging to the one and the same

plane.[38] This results in my analysis veering away from canonical works of literature and

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[36] Christian Bratu, 'Literature', in *Handbook of Medieval Culture*, ed. by Albrecht Classen (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2015), pp. 864–900.

[37] Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), pp. 30–31. For similar theorisations of literature and history as part of a larger plane of cultural productions, see Roland Barthes, 'Dominici, or the Triumph of Literature', in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. by Simon During. 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 42–5; Hayden White, *The Fiction of Narrative: Essays on History, Literature, and Theory, 1957–2007*. ed. by Robert Doran (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).

[38] This is not to say that poststructuralist thought does not interpret or judge cultural productions. Gilles Deleuze, for instance, considers philosophy, science, art, literature, etc. as acts of construction of 'a possibility of life', which involves 'the invention of new compositions in language (style and syntax), the formation of new blocks of sensation (affects and percepts), the production of new modes of existence (intensities and becomings), the constitution of a people (speech acts and fabulation), the creation of a world (singularities and events)': Gilles Deleuze, 'Literature and Life', in *Essays Critical and Clinical*. trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (London: Verso, 1998), pp. 1–6 (p. 4); Daniel W. Smith, 'Introduction', in Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*. trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (London: Verso, 1998), pp. xi–liii (p. lii). Deleuze explains this function in multiple ways. For instance, he describes the equal capacity of philosophy and literature to 'bring things to life' thus: 'Philosophy's like a novel: you have to ask "What's going to happen?," "What's happened?" Except the characters are concepts, and the settings, the scenes, are space-times. One's always writing to bring things to life, to free life from where it's trapped, to trace lines of flight. The language for doing that can't be a homogeneous system, it's something unstable, always

elements of late medieval culture usually associated with plague and its influence (such as the Dance of Death or the *transi* tombs). Instead, it examines sermons (also examined by Orlemanski), meditational works, iconography and visual illustrations, and dramatic texts, not all of which immediately indicate a connection with plague. Furthermore, the focus is on the wider ways in which plague as a nonhuman agent impacted how the body was understood, represented, and performed in late medieval culture. My posthumanist theoretical focus, which conceives of plague as having agency and material force, allows for a detailed study of its cultural and material operations.

One puzzling aspect of the study of the Black Death is the less-than-expected number of direct references to plague in works traditionally considered as literature, which has resulted either in the overkeen association of cultural productions such as the Dance of Death or the *transi* tombs with plague or in a narrow focus on works that specifically mention plague.[39] These works include John Lydgate's poetry on pestilence and the Dance of Death (mid-fifteenth cent.), a number of Geoffrey Chaucer's works (late-fourteenth cent.), Julian of Norwich's (late-fourteenth cent.) and Margery Kempe's (mid-fifteenth cent.) experiences, William Langland's *Piers Plowman* (late-fourteenth cent.), *Pearl* by the so-called Pearl poet (late-fourteenth cent.), the poem *A Disputacioun betwyx þe Body and Wormes* (mid-fifteenth cent.), and, finally, *The Castle of Perseverance* (early-fifteenth cent.). Leprosy was assumed

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heterogeneous': Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations, 1972–1990*. trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), pp. 140–41. This capacity is at the heart of the notion of 'minor' or 'minoritarian' language and literature, which 'induces disequilibrium in its components, taking advantage of the potential for diverse and divergent discursive practices already present within the language': Ronald Bogue, 'Minoritarian + Literature', in *The Deleuze Dictionary: Revised Edition*, ed. by Adrian Parr (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 170–71 (p. 171). Also see Ian Buchanan and John Marks, ed., *Deleuze and Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000); Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. trans. Dana Polan, Foreword by Réda Bensmaïa (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986); Anthony Larson, 'First Lessons: Gilles Deleuze and the Concept of Literature', in *Literature and Philosophy: A Guide to Contemporary Debates*, ed. by David Rudrum (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 13–23.

[39] See Siegfried Wenzel, 'Pestilence and Middle English Literature: Friar John Grimestone's Poems on Death', in *The Black Death: The Impact of the Fourteenth-Century Plague*, ed. by Daniel Williman (Binghamton: CMERS, 1982), pp. 131–59.

to have causes and modes of transmission similar to plague. As a result, it is often grouped
with plague in critical analyses. In addition to Margery Kempe's book, works such as *The
Pricke of Conscience* (late-fourteenth cent.), the poem *Amis and Amiloun* (mid-fourteenth
cent.), and John Gower's *Mirrour de l'omme* (late-fourteenth cent.) are typically mentioned.
Their references to plague (with the exception of Lydgate's plague-related poetry) are always
passing, and therefore such analyses tend to examine plague's relation to other issues,
ranging from medical conceptions of such diseases to death, the history of the body,
spirituality, gender, affective piety, or the late medieval social context, in general. I argue that
it is precisely this tendency to focus on the 'literary canon' and on explicit references to
plague, rather than, as Siegfried Wenzel suggests, the paucity of evidence, that has resulted in
the limited number of studies on the impact of plague on literature.[40] Instead, one must trace
the possibilities for the creation of new meaning (or 'possibilities of life') enabled and
actualised by the presence of plague in already existing practices (or ostensibly unrelated
ones).[41] Consequently, save for brief mentions of *The Castle of Perseverance* and Lydgate's
poems, this thesis does not discuss any of these works. Nevertheless, a number of these
studies examine areas and notions analysed in my thesis, as well, and, on occasion, arrive at
not similar, but comparable conclusions. Therefore, I shall offer a few examples of recent
work concerning the Black Death and medieval literature to illustrate my study's relation to
such existing pieces of scholarship as well as highlight its distinction.

David K. Coley's examination of the Pearl-poet's works orient plague within a
network of death, trauma, loss, grief, and survival, and argues that the corpus can help
reconstruct the experience of living with plague. In studying this network, he points to a

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[40] Wenzel, pp. 131–59.
[41] Deleuze, 'Literature and Life', p. 4.

cultural element also highlighted by this study: a 'pestilential lexicon' in the poems.[42]

However, while what is referred to in this study as 'the discourse of infection' describes the

physio-spiritual understanding of how infection, disease, and sin are transmitted, Coley's

'lexicon' comprises '"pre-existing languages" of Christian salvation and eschatology to

contain and even to transfigure the personal and the public losses of the pandemic'.[43] Despite

its validity for Coley's distinct context, I believe the 'pestilential lexicon' is less suited to

making sense of responses to plague than the discourse of infection, for, as we shall see, the

discourse of infection was employed to explain phenomena closely associated with the way

plague was thought to spread—such as other diseases, environmental hazards and public

health risks, sin, and heresy. In contrast, the eschatological, apocalyptic, and resurrection-

focussed aspects of late medieval culture encompass the entire late medieval worldview and

were used to explain an immense range of notions and phenomena and not just plague or

even diseases, in general (for instance, all didactic and moralistic works employ the same

lexicon), thus making the 'lexicon' too broad for an analysis of plague.

The other study worth examining briefly is Bryon Lee Grigsby's *Pestilence in*

Medieval and Early Modern English Literature (2003), as it will highlight the significance of

my analysis' theoretical framework in the study of plague. Grigsby considers medicine as an

extension of theology, informed solely by moral and spiritual concerns and not by anything

material, which then immediately disregards the materiality and corporeality of plague.[44]

Through this framework, matter is reduced to discourse, and everything is read in a

dichotomy between sin and virtue, damnation and salvation, overlooking the practicality of

medical literature and plague tracts. Furthermore, Grigsby only consults university-produced

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[42] David K. Coley, *Death and the Pearl Maiden: Plague, Poetry, England* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2019), p. 62.

[43] Coley, p. 62.

[44] Bryon Lee Grigsby, *Pestilence in Medieval and Early Modern English Literature* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 2.

literature regarding plague, which, once again, neglects the more accessible and widespread literature on preventing and treating plague.[45] In contrast, the theoretical focus of my thesis, outlined in the section below, accounts for the materiality as well as the discursivity of the phenomenon of plague.

2. Theoretical Focus

A. Assemblages and Nonhuman Agency

Let us revisit the quotation on the entanglement of humans and microorganisms in the case of the Covid-19 pandemic: in it, human beings were dubbed an 'assemblage of microorganisms'. Even though I do not use the term often throughout the thesis, it is helpful to use this concept to highlight the entanglement which forms the basis of my analysis. The term was popularised by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, who frequently used it throughout their work *A Thousand Plateaus*.[46] As a working definition, however, I quote a definition Deleuze provided in an essay:

> [an assemblage] is a multiplicity which is made up of many heterogeneous terms and which establishes liaisons, relations between them, across ages, sexes and reigns – different natures. Thus, the assemblage's only unity is that of a co-functioning: it is a symbiosis, a 'sympathy'. It is never filiations which are important, but alliances, alloys; these are not successions, lines of descent, but contagions, epidemics, the wind. [47]

The excerpt suggests that filiations are vertical or hierarchical relations, in which each element is defined and conditioned by another on a higher or lower level. Manuel DeLanda provides an example for such vertical or 'intrinsic' relations: 'One can only be a father if one

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[45] Grigsby, p. 12.
[46] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, passim.
[47] Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues II*. trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. Revised edn (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), p. 69.

is related genealogically to a son or a daughter, and vice versa, so that the identity of the role of father, or of that of son or daughter, cannot exist outside their mutual relation'.[48] In contrast, in an 'extrinsic' relation or alliance, all elements are on the same ontological level, not defined or conditioned by one another: 'when two groups of people related by descent enter into a political alliance, this relation does not define their identity but connects them in *exteriority*'.[49] If we are to conceive of the human as 'an assemblage of micro-organisms', governed by extrinsic relations, then we must not define bodily members, tissue cells, gut bacteria, or DNA strands as being devoted solely to the service of a whole; rather, the entirety of the body becomes an 'emergent whole' caused by the assemblage comprised of all those parts, and the characteristics of the assemblage become what DeLanda calls 'emergent properties', which are 'the properties of a whole caused by the interactions between its parts'.[50] The emergent whole shows that 'the parts retain their autonomy', and emergent properties (both of the emergent whole and the parts) reveal that assemblages are not 'a mere aggregate' of their parts, and their properties are not the accumulation of the properties of their parts.[51] This is perhaps most evident in the human microbiome, which hosts species of bacteria, archaea, fungi, viruses, and others in between (such as protists) in various parts of the body.[52] These micro-organisms are not produced by human cells, obviously; rather, they are introduced to the body at the moment of birth, diversified (or damaged) ever since, and influence human development at various stages of life (and even prenatally depending on the

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[48] Manuel DeLanda, *Assemblage Theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), p. 2.

[49] DeLanda, pp. 2, 13.

[50] DeLanda, pp. 9–10. Connected to this is the notion of 'emergent causality', which is 'causal […] in that a movement at […] [one] level has effects at another level. But it is emergent in that […] the character of the […] activity is not knowable in […] detail prior to effects that emerge at the second level. […] The new emergent is shaped not only by external forces that become infused into it but also by its own previously under-tapped capacities for reception and self-organization': William E. Connolly, 'Method, Problem, Faith', in *Problems and Methods in the Study of Politics*, ed. by Rogers Smith Ian Shapiro, and Tarek E. Masoud (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 332–49, (pp. 342–3).

[51] DeLanda, pp. 9–10.

[52] Also see Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), Chapter 3.

mode of delivery or reception of antibiotics by the mother).[53] Naturally, they retain their

autonomy after their introduction to the microbiome and could act commensally or adversely

towards the human whole depending on a variety of factors. Furthermore, the 'co-

functioning'—as Deleuze says—of models of various species of bacteria have been shown to

be able to develop 'emergent properties'. Here, the co-culturing of two species of bacteria

develops emergent metabolites—metabolites not secreted by each species when cultured

alone.[54] Finally, the microbiome initiates the process of decomposition after the death of the

human whole, once again underlining its autonomy and agency.[55] The functioning of the

emergent whole also influences how parts of the assemblage work: for instance, the overuse

of antibiotics by the human whole damages the microbiome, which in turns affects the

digestive processes of the body.[56] In this study, the body is understood as an emergent whole,

an assemblage which is also porous—an entity not completely enclosed within the boundaries

of the skin, but open to transactions and interactions with not only extracorporeal entities, but

also various internal factors. The study demonstrates that such an understanding is

compatible with late medieval understandings of the body, thereby precluding the possibility

of anachronistic theoretical imposition.

The example of epidemics provided by Deleuze—as an example of an alliance—is

quite apposite here, as we can easily witness the emergent properties of the temporary

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[53] Timothy G. Dinan, Catherine Stanton, and John F. Cryan, 'Psychobiotics: A Novel Class of Psychotropics', *Biological Psychiatry,* 74 (2013), 720–26; Irene Yang et al., 'The Infant Microbiome: Implications for Infant Health and Neurocognitive Development', *Nursing Research,* 65.1 (2016), 76–88. This process is referred to as 'upward causality' by DeLanda: p. 21.

[54] Hsuan-Chao Chiu, Roie Levy, and Elhanan Borenstein, 'Emergent Biosynthetic Capacity in Simple Microbial Communities', *PLOS Comput Biol,* 10 (2014), e1003695. A similar concept–that of syndemics–has been used in bioanthropological studies to refer to the 'synergistic interaction of two or more coexistent diseases and resultant excess burden of disease': Merrill Singer and Scott Clair, 'Syndemics and Public Health: Reconceptualizing Disease in Bio-Social Context', *Medical Anthropology Quarterly,* 17.4 (2003), 423–41 (p. 423). While the concept of assemblage is more versatile in identifying alliances across various strata, the term syndemic could be helpful with regards to specific alliances between epidemics.

[55] See also Jamie Lorimer, *The Probiotic Life: Using Life to Manage Life* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020).

[56] See Martin J. Blaser, *Missing Microbes: How the Overuse of Antibiotics Is Fueling Our Modern Plagues* (New York: Henry Holt, 2014). DeLanda refers to this process as 'downward causality': p. 21.

alliance between the autonomous entities of the Covid-19 virus and the human body in cases of Long Covid: the virus has long since departed, but there are persistent symptoms affecting the body. We can extend this model to the subject of this thesis, as well: while the alliance between *Yersinia pestis* and the human body might not have produced direct assemblages greater than rotting corpses, it did result in the production of other assemblages, indirectly, meaning that the bacteria might not necessarily have been present in the human body, but it became, nevertheless, part of an assemblage in a variety of cases which comprise the chapters of this thesis. Assemblages, of course, are not bound by time and space, so an assemblage could still be produced when elements are not in direct contact or when a particular element is no longer present.[57] The assemblages discussed in this thesis include, for instance, a human-plague-medicine (a human taking a specific medicine to prevent/treat plague), a human-plague-facemask (an individual using, for example, a vinegar-soaked sponge as a facemask), a human-plague-prayerbook (an example of using devotional prayers to protect oneself), a human-plague-saint (as a saint protecting an individual against plague), and a human-plague-Christ (a person watching Christ's bodily disintegration as part of a dramatic performance at a time which preceded or followed a plague outbreak), among others.[58] It is also evident that each element of the aforementioned assemblages can be divided into further assemblages: as we mentioned, the human is an assemblage; the facemask is made of an alliance between the sponge, vinegar, the human face, and a theory of how diseases are transmitted and how to prevent them; finally, plague cannot emerge without the work of vectors, blood, and, crucially, a conceptual understanding of how the disease is supposed to work. Despite outlining such assemblages in the thesis's chapters, I will refrain from

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[57] DeLanda, pp. 17–18.
[58] The naming template is indebted to Deleuze and Guattari.

overusing this continuous scrutiny, but it is helpful to keep this framework in mind when considering the working of such networks.[59]

As mentioned above, these assemblages—and the phenomenon of plague, in particular—cannot emerge without a knowledge of how diseases work, how they are caused, how they spread, and how they are treated—disseminated among the various strata of the population to various degrees of sophistication. In other words, there is also a discursive aspect to the phenomenon of plague, and so the discourse of infection is an inseparable part of all the assemblages at work in the thesis, which is why throughout the thesis, I refer to plague as a material-discursive phenomenon.[60] The plague is caused by a material agent, *Yersinia pestis*, which was, of course, not discovered until the late nineteenth century. In spite of this, late medieval society had a fully developed conceptual framework with regards to how diseases were engendered, transmitted, and treated. Therefore, the discourse of infection helped the material phenomenon of plague be perceptible and comprehensible to late medieval people. We must not imagine, moreover, that the inaccurate identification of the material cause of plague resulted in a disconnect between the materiality and discursivity of plague. Regardless of the lack of an awareness of the pathogenic cause of the pandemic, the materiality of plague was felt through its experience—not just for the few who caught the disease and recovered, but also for the people who knew someone who caught the disease, for those who lived in a plague-stricken city, for those who took measures to be spared by the plague, and even for those who only heard about the pandemic. Furthermore, the existence of

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[59] Similarly, Deleuze and Guattari discuss at length the processes which differentiate assemblages from 'strata', which are more homogeneous and fixed. I will refrain from discussing such processes (e.g. double articulation, (de-/re-)territorialisation, and (de-/over-)coding) in detail, as I believe the workings of power in such assemblages can be explained more straightforwardly without the need to resort to such complicated theorisations. For instance, the modification plague offers regarding how the body was understood can be described in terms of deterritorialization and decoding, but the use of the terminology would not make the analysis considerably richer. See Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 40–62.

[60] Broadly speaking, Deleuze and Guattari refer to this aspect of assemblages as 'regimes of signs', 'semiotic machine[s]', or 'collective assemblage[s] of enunciation'. However, I will maintain the more Foucauldian concept of discourse in my discussion for clarity: Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 63, 83, 88.

substantial, evolving literature on protecting oneself from plague, whether in the form of medical tracts or amulets, prayers, or visual illustrations, reflects the impact of the materiality of plague on its discursive understanding. Similarly, the discursive aspect of plague impacted understandings and experiences of its materiality: thought to have been mainly transmitted via air, the discursive understanding of plague resulted in material, concrete measures to keep the public and domestic environments clean.[61] Thus, the material-discursive nature of plague is a constant reminder of its participation in innumerable assemblages and its entanglement with other entities.[62]

Similar to the delimitation of the category of literature offered earlier, it is important to provide details regarding how the key terms constituting the core of this study's analysis are used and what is meant by them here. These terms are: 'body', 'medical', 'civic', and 'drama', which were used in the outline of the thesis provided earlier. Firstly, as noted above, it is shown that the Cartesian dichotomy of mind/soul and body does not apply to plague responses, in particular, and conceptualisations of human subjectivity, in general, and as such, it would be impractical and anachronistic to use such binary models in my analysis.[63]

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[61] The reason why the difference in ontological and epistemological existence of plague in the Middle Ages does not constitute a challenge to the study of the combined effects of plague as a material-discursive entity can be articulately outlined by quoting what Rein Raud writes on the reality of concepts and entities: 'the world is disclosed in a multitude of ways to different potential vantage points, regardless of whether there actually exists an observer who is physically present in these points and able to assemble the data available to it into a systematic vision. […] whatever we know about our world is actually conceptual extractions from it that have been formulated in a language that is particular to us'. He further notes, 'Thus, the same happening in the world can be "real" in several different ways, as a part of different causal linkages, depending on the vantage point'. He also provides an example to illustrate this: 'This is not to say that airwaves are real, but sounds are not; the claim is that sounds […] become real as "sounds" when they reach someone's ear and elicit a response'. Thus, plague as a discursive entity is as real as the bacteria physiologically causing it, but from two vantage points: Rein Raud, *Being in Flux: A Post-Anthropocentric Ontology of the Self* (Cambridge: Polity, 2021), pp. 5, 5 n. 3.

[62] This understanding of the materiality of discourse and the discursivity of matter is found in Foucault's own sense of the concept of 'discourse'. As Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin note, Foucault's 'idea of discourse […] did not start with language, but with material forms (for instance the prison-form) which came along with expressive forms like delinquency (which is not a signifier, but part of a set of statements reciprocally presupposing the material form of the prison)': Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin, *New Materialism: Interviews and Cartographies* (Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2012), pp. 76–7.

[63] For new materialist/posthumanist critiques of the Cartesian dualism, see: Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, 'Introducing the New Materialisms', in *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, ed. by Diana Coole and Samantha Frost (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 1–43 (pp. 7–15).

Plague was not considered as a solely physiological process, but a physio-spiritual one: for instance, just as a filthy environment was thought to engender infection, a sordid surrounding in which individuals engaged in sinful activities—such as bathhouses and stews—could function similarly. Just as an unbalanced diet could adversely affect one's health and make one more susceptible to contracting plague, so did illicit conduct by impacting the physiological processes of the body. Furthermore, an understanding of the body as a porous entity—capable of making interactions and transactions with entities enclosed within and without the skin—ultimately expands the limits of the body beyond the skin. This idea is not explicitly mentioned in medieval texts, and, to make things even more complicated, it exists simultaneously alongside the common conceptualisation of the body as the sum of what is enclosed within the skin. Therefore, what is meant by 'the body' in the thesis must be recognised as a hybrid concept accommodating both what is within and without the skin. For the sake of clarity, the dichotomy between inside and outside the body is preserved in my writing.

Just as the Cartesian dualism is inappropriate for the study of how the body was understood in medieval contexts, so is the modern distinction between disciplines of science, politics, religion, and culture inadequate to describe the variety of perspectives from which the phenomenon of plague was approached. Medicine was at the same time material and spiritual; political philosophy was simultaneously mundane and transcendental, reflecting, at the same time, the order of the physical body and the order of the cosmos. Thirdly, and once again following the previous two points, drama must not be solely understood as mimetic form, a work of literature, fiction, or any other representational form. The drama referred to here is simultaneously genuine and artificial, historical and literary, real and theatrical.

B. Biopolitics and Pestilence

The measures which were devised to control the spread of infection concerned, among other things, regulation and government of bodies: their movements, their actions, and even their deaths. In this section, I will briefly discuss how the government of bodies can be viewed in relation to a nonhuman agent. To that end, I will use Michel Foucault's interrelated concepts of biopower and governmentality, which refer to 'techniques and procedures for directing human behaviour. Government of children, government of souls and consciences, government of a household, of a state, or of oneself'.[64] These techniques and procedures, which appeared in the seventeenth century and persisted in various forms ever since, serve to 'administer, optimize, and multiply [life], subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations'.[65] Much has been said in criticism of Foucault's historical findings, particularly considering the implication of his theses for the Middle Ages, but Foucault's greatest legacy was arguably the critical conceptual toolbox he left for researchers, two of whose concepts are biopower and governmentality.[66] Foucault's argument concerns an expansion of the ways the sovereign exercises their power—whether over resources, goods, bodies, or life—from a deductive mode, which involves stripping that resource, product, body, or life away, to a productive mode called biopower, which involves, as already mentioned, administration, regulated optimisation, and directed multiplication. Biopower is not solely a sovereign power; it can be institutional, local, and even individual, although always situated in a network of relations of power. In a vastly influential article, Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose write that for Foucault, biopower, like the concepts of power, power relations, and

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[64] Michel Foucault, *On the Government of the Living: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1979–1980*. trans. Graham Burchell (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2014), p. 321.

[65] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*. trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), p 137.

[66] One example of medievalists' reservations about Foucault's historical theses is the following, whose concerns regarding Foucault's depiction of the Middle Ages are appropriate, even if perhaps a bit inaccurate: Anne Clark Bartlett, 'Foucault's "Medievalism"', *Mystics Quarterly*, 20 (1994), 10–18.

power/knowledge 'does not emerge from, or serve to support, a single power bloc, dominant group or set of interests'.[67] In addition to states, biopower is 'found at the sub-State level, in a whole series of sub-State institutes such as medical institutions, welfare funds, insurance, and so on'.[68] There are, according to Rabinow and Rose, three elements in the plane of biopower:

> […] biopower seeks to individuate strategies and configurations that combine three dimensions or planes—a form of truth discourse about living beings and an array of authorities considered competent to speak that truth; strategies for intervention upon collective existence in the name of life and health; and modes of subjectification, in which individuals can be brought to work on themselves, under certain forms of authority, in relation to truth discourses, by means of practices of the self, in the name of individual or collective life or health.[69]

Biopolitics, in the words of Rabinow and Rose, includes 'all the specific strategies and contestations over problematizations of collective human vitality, morbidity and mortality; over the forms of knowledge, regimes of authority and practices of intervention that are desirable, legitimate and efficacious'.[70] However, biopolitical analyses are, similar to analyses of power relations, deeply contextual; thus, while an analysis of the biopolitics of a medieval society could include the aforementioned factors, the study must not reduce itself to the examination of those factors, but seek to find others unique to the medieval context.[71]

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[67] Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose, 'Biopower Today', *BioSocieties,* 1 (2006), 195–217 (p. 199). Foucault notes of power and power relations: power 'is never localised here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power […] In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application': *Power/Knowledge*, p. 98.

[68] Michel Foucault, *'Society Must Be Defended': Lectures at the Collège De France, 1975 - 76*. trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), p. 250.

[69] Rabinow and Rose, pp. 203–4.

[70] Rabinow and Rose, p. 197.

[71] On medieval statehood, see Frederic Cheyette, ed., *Lordship and Community in Medieval Europe* (New York: Robert E. Krieger, 1975); Catherine A. M. Clarke, ed., *Mapping the Medieval City: Space, Place and Identity in Chester C.1200–1600* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011); Catherine A. M. Clarke, *Literary Landscapes and the Idea of England, 700–1400* (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2006); James B. Given, *State*

Thus, in the chapter on civic responses to plague, I will discuss measures to propagate

information regarding how infection spreads and what parishioners should do to protect

themselves and prevent infection, the various modes of measures taken to expel or contain

infection, and the various ways in which people are addressed as responsible citizens. Unlike

modern biopolitical measures, these measures cannot be classified as purely medical,

political, or even religious/moral; for, as mentioned earlier, the medieval conceptions of how

infection spreads span such discourses and categorisations. As a result, the chapter considers

the discursive hybridity of the measures as well as their materiality.

Through my engagement with governmentality, as a separate, larger concept related

to biopower, I employ an 'analytical grid for […] relations of power' at work in the

aforementioned types of measures.[72] These relations of power are, evidently, not exclusive to

civic authorities, for as Foucault himself notes, 'The state is a practice. The state is

inseparable from the set of practices by which the state actually became a way of governing,

a way of doing things'.[73] This multiplicity of sources and directions of power, which also

appears in Foucault's conception of power and power relations, allows for multidirectional

relations/enactments of power, meaning that power is not always a repressive, domineering

force.[74] Moreover, this multidirectional dynamic of power is constant; Foucault writes that

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and Society in Medieval Europe: Gwynedd and Languedoc under Outside Rule (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); John Morrall, *Political Thought in Medieval Times* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980); Saskia Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

[72] Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1978–79*. trans. Graham Burchell. ed. by Arnold I. Davidson (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2008), p. 186.

[73] Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1977–78*. trans. Graham Burchell. ed. by Michel Senellart (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009), p. 277. For literature on medieval governance, see Chapter 2. Similarly, DeLanda notes that entities such as the State and the Market cannot be considered as valid emergent wholes, for the 'whole' does not have emergent properties. In other words, entities like the State, defined as the universal focal point of various mechanisms and practices whose convergence results in new properties for the whole (i.e. the State and its powers), do not actually exist. Nor does 'the State' reflect the 'dynamics operating at different scales, and is able to capture the heterogeneity of practices and variety of social entities that constitute the real agents of […] history'. Instead, they would be better conceived of as 'a nested set of individual emergent wholes operating at different scales', such as international, Royal, civic, ecclesiastical, and communal modes of government: pp. 15–16.

[74] Foucault notes that he does not conceive of power 'with a capital P – dominating and imposing its rationality upon the totality of the social body': Michel Foucault, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other*

'Where there is power, there is resistance […] [power relations'] existence depends on a multiplicity of points of resistance: these play the role of adversary, target, support, or handle in power relations. These points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network'.[75] This is the strength of Foucault's model, which encourages the analysis of conflict and not just oppression. In comparison, for instance, Georgio Agamben's understanding of sovereignty and power over life, especially in the modern context, is monopolistic. For him, there is no longer a distinction between the direction of power exercised by 'the jurist […] [,] the doctor, the scientist, the expert, and the priest'.[76] In the second chapter of this thesis on civic responses to plague outbreaks and the spread of other diseases such as leprosy as well as spiritual-material phenomena such as licentiousness and heresy, I reflect this multidirectional dynamic by analysing not only the ways in which authorities sought to curb the spread of said phenomena and the ways in which various groups of people resisted them, but also the ways in which diseases—and specifically plague—as nonhuman agents have shaped the authorities' measures. In other words, I propose ways in which biopolitical measures enter into productive (rather than restrictive) assemblages with the nonhuman agents of pestilence to produce new ways of living.

The material reality of pestilence as a nonhuman agent and its role in not only the biopolitical dynamic of pestilence, but also in shaping responses conceptually derived from other cultural elements such as religion is what connects my employment of biopolitics with

Writings, 1977–1984. trans. Alan Sheridan et al. (New York: Routledge, 1988), p. 38. Also see Michel Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. by Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), pp. 76–100 (pp. 88–89).

[75] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I*, p. 95. Also see Rabinow and Rose, pp. 199–200; Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004), pp. 94–130.

[76] Georgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 122. Even though Agamben correctly rejects Foucault's proposition that biopower is a modern invention, his theorisation of the concept is still less productive than Foucault's. The significance of the jurist in this quotation is in the idea shared between Foucault and Agamben that pre-eighteenth century power was centred around the sovereign, and that subjects were understood 'merely as juridical subjects who must obey the laws issued by a sovereign authority': Nikolas Rose, Pat O'Malley, and Mariana Valverde, 'Governmentality', *Annual Review of Law and Social Science,* 2 (2006), 83–104, (p. 87).

posthumanism. The consequences of a new materialist/posthumanist and Foucauldian perspective for biopolitical analyses would be, first and foremost, in examining processes of becoming and the network of interrelations of humans and nonhumans, which resulted in the production and dissemination of regulations concerning bodies and life/death.[77] On the other hand, I do not aim to produce an overwhelmingly posthumanist narrative of pestilence, which would re-read the account of plague outbreaks in terms of detailed descriptions of the workings of assemblages; such a narrative would not be a helpful contextual study, as we are concerned with how medieval culture understood pestilence. Nevertheless, one can consider the impact of plague as an instance of the registration of the force of nonhuman agents on human society as well as the human body, which is itself connected in various ways to human culture. In terms of affirmative biopolitics, alongside focussing on the ways in which processes of categorisation, exclusion, and techniques of managing bodies multiplied as a result of the pandemic, one can consider the emphasis on the porousness of the body as something which was not done to control, manage, or govern populations and bodies by a governing regime of truth, but as an emergent property that arose as a result of an interaction between human and nonhuman agents. This means that biopolitical measures—involving exclusion, stigmatisation, governance of individual and collective actions, and managing spaces—formed based on a religio-medical theorisation of how infection spreads were modified as a result of their interaction (or forming an assemblage) with the nonhuman agents

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[77] For theoretical engagements with posthuman biopolitics, see William Bogard, 'Deleuze and Machines: A Politics of Technology?', in *Deleuze and New Technology*, ed. by Mark Poster and David Savat (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 15–31; Rosi Braidotti, 'Biomacht Und Nekro-Politik. Uberlegungen Zu Einer Ethik Der Nachhaltigkeit', *Springerin, Hefte fur Gegenwartskunst,* 13.2 (2007), 18–23; Rosi Braidotti, 'The Politics of "Life Itself" and New Ways of Dying', in *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, ed. by Diana Coole and Samantha Frost (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 201–18; Maurizio Lazzarato, 'The Concepts of Life and the Living in the Societies of Control', in *Deleuze and the Social*, ed. by Martin Fuglsang and Bent Meier Sørensen (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), pp. 171–90; Saul Newman, 'Politics in the Age of Control', in *Deleuze and New Technology*, ed. by Mark Poster and David Savat (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 104–24; and various essays in Rick Dolphijn and Rosi Braidotti, ed., *Deleuze and Guattari and Fascism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022).

of plague. This interaction, inevitably, resulted in regimes of truth and management of bodies in a top-down biopolitical framework, but it also brought about unique forms of managing individual and communal bodies through the growing interest in medical knowledge, *regimen*, and remedies against pestilence. Furthermore, we can view the challenge plague posed to the application of certain modes of combatting infection with regards to public health measures as an instance in which the material force of a nonhuman agent alters the biopolitical mode of governing bodies, and, as a result, strengthens other modes of governing bodies. My analysis is, in sum, an attempt to introduce nonhuman agents to a human-dominated narrative, rather than a nonhuman adaptation of a human narrative.

3. Chapter Overview

The thesis traces the impact of plague, in terms of cultural productions, as a force facilitating and strengthening an understanding of the human body as a porous entity. This impact is examined across a variety of cultural artefacts, ranging from medical tracts to records of civic responses to plague outbreaks, penitential processions, visual representations in prayer book and in churches, and dramatic texts. The disease is shown to have been conceptualised using already existing models regarding the spread of infection and, more generally, internal and external influences on the body, which, as indicated above, includes the impact of physio-spiritual factors as well as external factors such as the environment, planetary and astral figures, and divine will. Among these pre-existing models were parallel, simultaneously valid understandings of the body as a unified whole, on the one hand, and as a porous entity, on the other.

The thesis begins its analysis of responses to plague with an examination of these two understandings of the body in medical texts, which, as outlined above, must not be viewed through a modern understanding of medicine. This is more due to the suitability of the medical literature as a gateway to the intricacies of how the body and the phenomenon of

plague were understood than a bias towards considering plague as a primarily medical and material phenomenon.[78] Chapter 1 shows that continual outbreaks of plague made the latter conception, which considered the body as an entity in constant flux and capable of absorption and secretion of matter through its pores and open to interactions and transactions with other entities, more significant. This was due to the crucial role bodily pores were thought to have played in the general maintenance of individual health, the contraction of the disease, its transmission between people, and its treatment. In contraction and transmission, the pores allowed corrupt matter to enter the body and prevented the amassed corrupt matter from exiting the body. The cure for this was either through the consumption of purgatives, phlebotomy, excising the buboes, or a combined form of therapy, all of which relied on bodily pores or made the body more porous. In both cases, the openness of the body to connections and transactions with elements outside its supposed boundaries was emphasised, which, in turn, made the view of the body as a porous, permeable entity more relevant compared with that of the body as an enclosed unit.

The measures taken against the spread of plague are shown not to have been entirely specific to the plague pandemic. Rather, they belonged to an already existing framework concerning how epidemic (or pestilential) diseases operated, which was then adapted for and extended to the plague outbreaks. I refer to this framework as the discourse of infection, as it is a collection of statements forming—both in the sense of constituting and regulating—available knowledge and what is considered as truth at a given historical moment. This definition is indebted to Michel Foucault's understanding of discourse, which he defines as 'the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements,

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[78] For a work examining the adoptability of the medical discourse in various genres and media, see Michael Leahy, ''To Speke of Phisik': Medical Discourse in Late Medieval English Culture' (unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Birkbeck College, University of London, 2015).

and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a certain number of statements'.[79] Thus, the discourse of infection comprised both the collection of statements concerning infection and infectious diseases regarded as true as well as the rules and structures of their production, which determined the adoption and inclusion of plague as part of the discourse, resulting in the already-existing conceptualisations being applied to the disease.[80]

Chapter 2 focuses on the implications of the dominance of the discourse of infection for a different type of body—the urban body, which is compared to the individual body. This chapter argues that measures taken to combat the spread of disease simultaneously adhered to and challenged the two parallel understandings regarding the body. I demonstrate, through the examination of evidence of public health responses to plague, leprosy, and moral depravity—all of which were understood via the discourse of infection—that public health and biopolitical measures taken against their spread consisted of three modes. First, in accordance with the treatments for the individual body, a 'mode of excision' (e.g. excising the bubo from the body), which entailed the expulsion of the infected and infectious from the city. While this mode was readily applied to those who were thought to have leprosy or to be morally decadent, despite the similarities in the conceptualisation of all conditions (i.e. plague, leprosy, and moral turpitude), plague was combatted in a predominantly different way in terms of public health. This mode, which is referred to as the second mode of combatting infection, is characterised by containment and involves restricting the infected and infectious populations to a designated area within the boundaries of the city. This 'mode

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[79] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (London: Routledge, 1989; repr. 2002), p. 90.

[80] The role of power in the production and permeance of a discourse is also crucial: 'It is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power': Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*. trans. Leo Marshall Colin Gordon, John Mepham, and Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), p. 52. The significance of knowledge in power relations is in the production and circulation of truth, for 'one would only be in the true […] if one obeyed the rules of some discursive "policy" which would have to be reactivated every time one spoke': Foucault, *Archaeology*, p. 224.

of containment', in allowing infection to remain within the civic body, appears to undermine the understanding of the body as an enclosed whole and suggests an understanding of the body as a porous, open entity, capable of remaining functional in spite of the presence of infected matter within it. To destabilise the former characterisation of the body (as an enclosed whole), a third mode of fighting infection, referred to as 'reverse excision' or 'flight', emphasises the excision not of the infected, but rather, the uninfected from the civic body. This mode is exemplified by accounts of healthy individuals fleeing a plague-stricken city. Thus, it is proposed that the interaction between the bacterial agent of plague and the pre-existing discourse of infection has shifted the balance between the two parallel understandings of the body in favour of the body as a porous entity.

As mentioned earlier, plague cannot be considered as a purely medical (in the modern sense) phenomenon. Accordingly, religious elements occupied a special place in the treatments proposed for the protection of both the individual and public bodies. Chapter 3 examines a third type of body—the holy bodies of Christ and saints—in interactions with plague. It studies evidence of the use of prayers and devotions to Christ and a distinct group of saints in order to protect one's body, the city, or the church space from the ravages of plague. The chapter argues that in the figure of the crucified Christ and other saints who underwent physical ordeals, or passions, much like the mode of containment (or the second mode of fighting infection), infection, mutilation, and the porousness caused by them could remain within the body without endangering other parts or other bodies. The bodily disintegration concerned here is a specific kind of porousness caused by infection, mutilation, or torture, for, as we remember, the body was already thought to be porous. In contrast with the mode of containment presented in the previous chapter, however, this mode idealised the contained porous and disintegrated bodies and turned them into objects of devotion. It was by invoking—or even renewing—their porousness (achieved through their ordeals or passions)

that the petitioners could achieve their desired protection against plague. Moreover, this new fourth mode, referred to as 'idealisation', cuts across all the other modes, as the porous bodies—in all their manifestation, be it in the sign of the Cross made by a person, in the Eucharist, in visual representations of the *arma Chrisi*, the Crucifixion, the Man of Sorrows, or the saints in their vulnerable state—were specifically invoked—or 'idealised'—in their disintegrated state in order to protect other bodies via expulsion of perils. In sum, the disintegrated, porous body would act as an idealised redeemer (just as Christ and saints were) which contained all the harmful forms of porousness and disintegration in themselves, and at the same time, warded off such dangers from the supplicants. While the holy figures mentioned above are treated as the main points of focus in the chapter, there were other ways in which they were mobilised against plague. Saints invoked against plague belonged to three groups: those who triumphed against adversity without undergoing disintegration in their ordeals, those who underwent disintegration in their ordeals but survived or triumphed (the examples outlined above belong to this group), and those who succumbed to adversity in their ordeals. Tellingly, the second group was depicted not in its moment of triumph, but in instances in which the figures were at their most porous, which underlines the significance of their porousness in their protective role.

Chapter 4 traces the implications of this emergent way of understanding the emphasis on the porousness of the idealised body as the result of plague presence for how performances of porous bodies may have been understood in dramatic works. Beginning with an examination of the evidence regarding the presence of plague in the context within which dramatic performances were set, the chapter draws a distinction between the affective power of representations of porous and disintegrated bodies found in the previous chapter (via meditation, written narration, iconography, or any other form of representation) and their performance, which, I argue, moves beyond representation and towards a renewal of the

process of becoming porous. The affective force of the latter, I suggest, is greater due to its immediacy and its tangible materiality, which enables, in turn, the suffering body of Christ to communicate with the audience not via representational systems (language and visual signification), but through an affective mode in which Christ's wounds begin to relay the meaning of his Passion. Because of plague's role in refiguring bodies as porous in the social backdrop of these plays, as well as its already-established association with porous holy bodies, a strengthened understanding of porousness itself was also conveyed. Thus, not only does the performance of the Passion present the process through which Christ's body becomes disintegrated rather than represent it through textual description or visual representation, it also channels the quality of porousness itself via an affective mode of communication, making the bodies of the viewers more receptive of and sensitive to their own porousness.

Chapter One – Understanding Infection: Plague and Bodily Porousness in

Medicine

This chapter and the next discuss the impact of successive plague outbreaks on two main areas: the first is the theoretical and practical medical understandings of health, infection, and contagion, read in relation to the measures taken to preserve individual and public health in English towns between the late fifteenth and mid-sixteenth centuries. The second area relates to understandings of the human and civic bodies, and their relationship with one another as well as with infection. Together, they set the scene for further, more specific exploration of such understandings in other areas of cultural production such as popular religion, literature, and drama. This chapter explores the interactions between plague and the individual body, whereas the next chapter will focus on how plague engaged the civic body. The scope of this chapter, in terms of the medical theories discussed, spans an extended period of time from ancient Greece to late medieval England, as many of the concepts discussed here evolved and from and grew out of ancient medicine, particularly Hippocratic and Galenic medicine. I suggest that religious and cultural engagements with pestilence (discussed in later chapters) drew on these conceptualisations, and thus they are a necessary starting point for any understanding of plague and the body. Such theories highlight the degree of interconnectedness between the human body and a variety of internal and external factors in medieval medicine. The more specifically plague-related vernacular medical writings examined here, which were produced or translated in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England (discussed in more detail below), highlight how such an understanding of the human body was impacted by the experience of plague.

In this chapter, I suggest that post-1348 outbreaks of pestilence brought about a modification in medical theorisations of infection. This was due to an increased emphasis on

the role of air and airborne infection as components in the assemblages influencing human circumstances in comparison with other factors discussed in classical and earlier medieval medical literature. This emphasis was increased by a small detail that we find in medieval medical theorisations of pestilence's pathogenesis: that infected air enters the body via the pores of the skin. Given the relative extent of the circulation of vernacular medical texts, plague tracts, and recipe collections in England (which shall be discussed in more detail below), this modification most probably penetrated various social strata, potentially effecting a more widespread discursive and material emphasis on the human body as a porous entity, susceptible to plague infection. I begin with an overview of the significance of air and bodily pores in ancient and early medieval medical thought in order to demonstrate the continuity and—simultaneously—specificity in the diagnosis of pestilence. Then, I move on to two of the most popular plague tracts in England (and two versions of their translations), produced in the fifteenth century in order to track the changes in such conceptions of plague infection as well as the body.

1. Bodies Porous and Whole

A. Determinism, the Tetrad, and the Humours

The Hippocratic and Galenic medical theories of the classical age were among the longest-established and most influential discursive frameworks throughout the Middle Ages across the West and the Middle East. The framework was enormously shaped by—and simultaneously significantly contributed to—macrocosmic/microcosmic parallels between the universe and the human body based on numerical first principles.[1] Based on this perspective, human beings share a structural similarity or even unity with the universe, and thus certain

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[1] In philosophy, logic, and mathematics, first principles are propositions, assumptions, or axioms which serve as the initial points of reasoning or argumentation, but cannot be proven or deduced from other propositions through reasoning or argumentation themselves. They are, thus, accepted as *a priori* knowledge based on which other propositions are proven.

aspects of humans imitate or are influenced by their parallels in the universe; furthermore, components of the universe find counterparts in human beings.[2] As Elizabeth Sears notes, among these heterogeneous organising logics, which varied in the number of said first principles, the tetradic scheme found a special place and long-lasting impact both in the classical age as well as in the Middle Ages.[3] The tetrad manifests itself in not only Empedocles' four fundamental elements—fire, water, earth, and air—but also in the Pre-Socratic four primary qualities—hot, cold, wet, and dry—as well as the Hippocratic four humours—blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile. Among other tetradic systems are the four ages of human life—childhood, youth, maturity, and senility; the four seasons—spring, summer, autumn, and winter; the four cardinal directions and winds; the four types of fever; the four colours; and the four continents first proposed by Crates of Mallus in the second century BCE.[4] In medieval scientific discourses (including medicine), we find these schemes constantly employed to describe, organise, and make sense of the world.[5] For our medical purpose here, let us take a closer look at the humoral theory of Hippocrates, which

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[2] Beliefs regarding the impact of universal bodies on the human body and parallelisms between them are found in philosophical and medical writings dating back to the sixth century BCE, but the first express reference to the idea that the human being is a little universe is found in Plato: Elizabeth Sears, *The Ages of Man: Medieval Interpretations of the Cycle of Life* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 18. There is ample literature on such views in ancient and classical, medieval, and early modern thought, and I confine myself to naming only those most relevant to my study: for a general survey of the theories, see George Perrigo Conger, *Theories of Macrocosms and Microcosms in the History of Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1922); Ruth Finckh, *Minor mundus homo: Studien zur Mikrokosmos-Idee in der mittelalterlichen Literatur* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999). On the idea expressed in Isidore of Seville's writings, see Jacques Fontaine, 'Mundus annus homo', in *Isidore de Séville. Genèse et originalité de la culture hispanique au temps des Wisigoths* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000). For studies on medieval cosmology and cartograpgy, see Barbara Obrist, 'Wind Diagrams and Medieval Cosmology', *Speculum*, 72.1 (1997), 33–84; Evelyn Edson, *Mapping Time and Space: How Medieval Mapmakers Viewed Their World* (London: British Library, 1997).

[3] Sears, pp. 9, 10–12.

[4] Georgia L. Irby, 'Greek and Roman Cartography', in *A Companion to Science, Technology, and Medicine in Ancient Greece and Rome*, ed. by Georgia L. Irby, 2 vols (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2016), vol. II, pp. 819–835 (p. 829); Vivian Nutton, *Ancient Medicine*, 2nd edn. (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 83.

[5] They also echo in medieval contributions to scientific and philosophical discourses, most notably in the scholastic programme of the quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy) and the use of the four evangelists in a tetradic context. Of course, the existence of tetradic schemes is other cultures, such as biblical tetradic schemes, highlights that the tetrad was not unique to ancient Greece.

profoundly influenced Galen, and, in turn, the majority of medieval Western and Middle Eastern medical literature, including their discussion of plague.[6]

The theory first appears in its tetradic form in the Hippocratic treatise titled *The Nature of Man*.[7] The nature (*physis*) of the human being is comprised of, as mentioned, the four humours: blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile.[8] Heinrich von Staden observes that in the Hippocratic corpus, *physis*—usually translated as 'nature'—'frequently is used to refer to the "nature" of things in the sense of the regularly recurring cluster of characteristics by which one can always recognise a thing as what it is'.[9] In its more sophisticated expositions, the humours are described as fluids which exist not only in the bloodstream, but also more dominantly in certain organs: for instance, phlegm is usually associated with the brain, and yellow bile is naturally found in the gallbladder.[10] Each humour had dual primary qualities, and a set of functions based on their properties; each set of qualities was associated with a tetradic season—also signifying its predominance in that particular season as well as an age in the cycle of life. Concerning age, the eighteenth part of the Hippocratic *Aphorisms* notes that:

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[6] It should be highlighted, at the outset, that the humoral theory detailed in the Hippocratic corpus was far from homogeneous. As Nutton notes, theories of three humours preceded the Hippocratic versions. Moreover, Hellenistic and Roman classical medicine never really courted the tetradic humoral theory: Nutton, *Ancient Medicine*, pp. 81–2. Furthermore, even within the Hippocratic corpus itself, there is a considerable inconsistency as to what elements comprised the four humours or which of the humours played principal roles. Mirko D. Grmek notes that the tetradic form of the humoral theory was expressed in detail for the first time by Polybius in the late fifth century BCE: 'The Concept of Disease', in *Western Medical Thought from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, ed. by Mirko D. Grmek (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 241–258 (p. 248). Nevertheless, since we are mainly concerned with the legacy of such theories for the Middle Ages, I will mainly refer to the most established version, the tetradic variant. Also see Jacques Jouanna, *Greek Medicine from Hippocrates to Galen: Selected Papers*, ed. by Philip van der Eijk, trans. by Neil Allies (Leiden: Brill, 2012), p. 336–337.

[7] Jouanna, p. 335.

[8] Once again, it should be underscored that this understanding of the components of human 'nature' is the most enduring of the variants in the Middle Ages. It is through the post-Hippocratic cementing of the four humour theory, through the influence of Galen, particularly, that such an understanding was sedimented in the Middle Ages (see below).

[9] Heinrich von Staden, 'Physis and Techne in Greek Medicine', in *The Artificial and the Natural: An Evolving Polarity*, ed. by Bernadette Bensaude-Vincent and William R. Newman (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007), pp. 21–49 (p. 22).

[10] Nancy G. Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine: An Introduction to Knowledge and Practice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 105–6.

With regard to the seasons, in spring and in the commencement of summer,

children and those next to them in age are most comfortable, and enjoy best

health; in summer and during a certain portion of autumn, old people;

during the remainder of the autumn and in winter, those of the intermediate

ages.[11]

This association was also supported by Ptolemy in the second century CE.[12] Despite a few

offshoots of Hippocratic medicine which favoured the practical or empirical side of medicine

over the theoretical or rational side (the theory-focused camp considered a fully-formed

theory of the body, its workings, its health, etc. as having primacy over empirical

knowledge), it was due to Galen's initial efforts (as well as efforts attributed to him) that the

humoral theory acquired further legitimacy and a widely-accepted status.[13] Some even credit

Galen with unifying the practical and theoretical branches of medicine.[14] It was first in the

pseudo-Galenic *Definitiones medicae* that the qualities, humours, ages, and seasons were all

linked.[15] Furthermore, in other pseudo-Galenic literature as well as in Galen's commentary

on Hippocratic material, these associations were reiterated.[16] Thus, in the more evolved

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[11] Hippocrates, *Aphorismi*, ed. by Charles Darwin Adams, Section III, Part 18, in *Perseus Digital Library* <http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0627.tlg012.perseus-eng1:3> [accessed 8 May 2020],. This association between ages and seasons is also mentioned in other Hippocratic texts not entirely centred around the tetradic principles within the human body. For example, *De diaeta* or *Regimen*, a Hippocratic text, discusses the association between seasons, the ages of human life, and primary qualities while maintaining that the nature of the human body is comprised of the two elements of fire and water. See Sears, p. 13; Grmek, p. 248.

[12] Sears, p. 15.

[13] Nutton, *Ancient*, p. 191; Gotthard Strohmaier, 'Reception and Tradition: Medicine in the Byzantine and Arab World', in *Western Medical Thought from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, ed. by Mirko D. Grmek (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 139–169 (p. 142).

[14] See for instance, Nutton, *Ancient*, p. 250.

[15] Sears, p. 14. While modern scholarship is certain about the falsity of ascription to Galen, it seems that there were uncertainty regarding the authorship of the work even in late antiquity: Vivian Nutton, 'Definitiones medicae', in *Brill's New Pauly*, ed. by Hubert Cancik, Helmuth Schneider, Christine F. Salazar, Manfred Landfester, Francis G. Gentry, in *Brill Online* <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1574-9347_bnp_e312660> [12 May 2020].

[16] Jouanna, p. 339, 347. Once more, Galen's overall endorsements of the humoral scheme is not an ever-present and cohesive phenomena. For instance, in his *De temperamentis*, his discussion is centred around primary qualities and fundamental elements rather than humours; moreover, there seems to be an association between coldness, dryness, and blood as opposed to black bile. For a detailed discussion and more examples, see Jouanna, 338–340.

forms of the theory, blood—hot and wet—was associated with spring, phlegm—cold and wet—with winter, yellow bile—hot and dry—with summer, and black bile—cold and dry—with autumn.[17] In post-Galenic iterations of the theory, 'when the theory of the four humours spread to an unprecedented extent', primacy was given to the humours, and the qualities of the humours began to solidify.[18] In addition, the association between the fundamental elements and the four humours as the defining properties of the world and human beings was made in post-Galenic texts: thus, blood was associated with air, yellow bile with fire, black bile with earth, and phlegm with water.[19]

The scheme fed a tendency towards determinism already existent in classical scientific discourses. Elemental and environmental determinism had already a prominent place in the Hippocratic corpus. The effect of 'environmental (climate, seasons, winds, water) and astronomical (orientation, solstices, and equinoxes)' factors—alongside other factors such as diet, physical activity, sex, and age—on human characteristics including ethnic traits, personal qualities such as intelligence and courage, and disposition to illnesses were outlined, although these were not connected with the humours but with the primary elements.[20] In the second century, Ptolemy's model of the seven latitudinal climes and their impact on their inhabitants' traits (built on past knowledge) added further depth to this almost comprehensive

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[17] Jouanna, p. 335.

[18] Jouanna, p. 340.

[19] For instance, in later Arabic texts such as Al-Majūsī's (also known as Haly Abbas) *The Royal Book* or *Al-Kitāb al-Malakī*—written in the tenth century, the humours are called the 'daughters of the elements': Manfred Ullmann, *Islamic Medicine* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), p. 58. The association between blood and air, in particular, was not present in the writings of Galen himself even with regards to their qualities. Rather, blood was considered to be a mixture of all the elements: Jouanna, p. 346–7. As evidence for the interdependence of these tetradic principles on one another, Jouanna notes that in one of the post-Galenic texts called *On the Constitution of the Universe and of Man*, the order in which humours appear is in accordance with their corresponding season and age in human life: thus, whereas in Hippocrates' it was blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile, in this text we have blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm (corresponding to childhood and spring, primacy of life and summer, middle age and autumn, and old age and winter, respectively). In other texts, the order of presentation reverts to the Hippocratic form, but the associations persist: Jouanna, p. 342; Sears, p. 14.

[20] Georgia L. Irby, Robin McCall, and Anita Radini, '"Ecology" in the ancient Mediterranean' in *A Companion to Science, Technology, and Medicine in Ancient Greece and Rome*, ed. by Georgia L. Irby, 2 vols (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2016), vol. I, pp. 296–312 (pp. 302–5); Jouanna, p. 336.

model.[21] The model was itself part of another ordering structure which was centred around a septenary set of elements including seven ruling planets and seven cycles of life.[22] It held, for instance, that a cold, moister climate expresses its effect in the individual's fairer complexion, lighter eye colour, and bravery. The people of the opposite climate had contrary traits.[23] Astrological determinism developed into a unique genre in medieval science (with substantial material in Middle English), but it also had significant impact on medieval medicine.[24] Galen also built on these ideas. For instance, in *De temperamentis*, as quoted and translated by Jacques Jouanna, Galen observes the qualities that determine an individual's temperament also determine physical and moral characteristics. For instance, if someone 'is cold and dry from the start, the constitution of this individual's body is white, soft, hairless, without visible vessels and joints, slim and cold to the touch; and the character of his soul is retiring, cowardly and depressed'.[25] The similar, planetary principle held that the nature of the ruling planet at a particular time—for instance, the Moon—impacts an individual's life in certain ways: for example, 'the moist and unstable bodily state, the rapid growth, and the unperfected soul characteristic of infancy'.[26] According to Galen, there are, in total, nine possible states or temperaments with regards to the mixture of humours in the body: these involve a perfect

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[21] Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine*, p. 103; Dimitry A. Shcheglov, 'Ptolemy's System of Seven Climata and Eratosthenes' Geography', *Geographia Antiqua*, 13 (2004), 21–38.

[22] Sears, pp. 47–9.

[23] Irby, McCall, and Radini, p. 303.

[24] A vast number of studies on the topic exists. See, for instance, Stephen Blake, *Astronomy and Astrology in the Islamic World* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016); Laurel Braswell-Means, 'Scientific and Utilitarian Prose', in *Middle English Prose: A Critical Survey of Major Authors and Genres*, ed. by A. S. G. Edwards (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1984), pp. 231–88; J. C. Eade, *The Forgotten Sky: A Guide to Astrology in English Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984); Irma Taavitsainen, *Middle English Lunaries: A Study of the Genre* (Helsinki: Société Néophilologique, 1988).

[25] Jouanna, p. 339; Irby, McCall, and Radini, p. 302. On the microcosmic level, deterministic discourses such as physiognomy and palmistry (or chiromancy) fulfilled similar functions with regards to an individuals traits and dispositions. See Martin Porter, *Windows of the Soul: Physiognomy in European Culture 1470–1780* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005); Joseph Ziegler, 'Text and Context: On the Rise of Physiognomic Thought in the Later Middle Ages', in *De Sion Exibit Lex Et Verbum Domini De Hierusalem: Essays on Medieval Law, Liturgy and Literature in Honour of Amnon Linder*, ed. by Yitzhak Hen (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), pp. 159–82.

[26] Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine*, p. 49.

equilibrium, the dominance of a pair, or the reign of a single humour.[27] As Sears notes, this

form of determinism incorporated the tetradic scheme of humours in late antiquity as well as

in the High and Late Middle Ages.[28] Furthermore, partly due to their connection with the

organised and glossed versions of the ancient texts in the Alexandrian school, Middle Eastern

and Islamic thinkers not only strengthened the determinism in these theories, but also

expanded the scheme.[29] Perhaps the most significant contribution of Middle Eastern and

Islamic thinkers for our discussion, however, was the translation and expansion of practical

information based on these frameworks, an issue which I will develop further below.[30]

I finish this section with an illustration of the relative comprehensiveness of the

intertwined deterministic micro/macrocosm framework in medieval Europe. Perhaps one of

the most frequently reproduced (throughout the Middle Ages) and cited (in modern historical

studies) cosmological illustrations is Isidore of Seville's *mundus-annus-homo* diagram, which

appears in his *Liber de natura rerum* written in the seventh century. In this reproduction of

the diagram from the late eighth century (Figure 1), we see the four elements—fire (*ignis*), air

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[27] Sears, p. 14; Nutton, *Ancient*, p. 240.

[28] Sears, p. 14–15. The septenary organising logic was inaccessible to Western scholars in the Early Middle Ages because the Ptolemaic texts in which these ideas first appeared had not been present in the West at the time. It was only after the translation movements, one between the eighth and tenth centuries in the Middle East and the other between the eleventh and thirteenth century in the West, during which the ancient Greek texts as well as Byzantine, Alexandrian, and Arabic commentaries on and expansions of them were translated and commented on in Latin, that such theories began to be disseminated in the West. The tetradic theories, on the other hand, had always retained a strong presence in Western scientific literature. See Sears, p. 26, 27, 29, 51–2. For an introductory survey of the influence of Hippocratic and Galenic ideas on medieval medicine, also see: Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine*, pp. 1–16.

[29] For instance, Avicenna added the distinction between 'good' humours, which ensure the nourishment of the body, and 'bad' or superfluous humours which may become problematic for the individual, as well as adding secondary humours to the scheme. Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine*, p. 105; Avicenna, *A Treatise on the Canon of Medicine of Avicenna: Incorporating a Translation of the First Book*. trans. by Oskar Cameron Gruner (New York: AMS Press, 1973), Book I, Part I, Thesis IV, 1, 69, p. 78; Ullmann, p. 55; Strohmaier, pp. 158–161; Danielle Jacquart, 'Medical Scholasticism', in *Western Medical Thought from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, ed. by Mirko D. Grmek (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 197–240 (pp. 198–9). Michael Camille claims that this deterministic framework became even stronger in the fourteenth century: 'The Image and the Self: Unwriting Late Medieval Bodies', in *Framing Medieval Bodies*, ed. by Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), pp. 62–99 (p. 67).

[30] Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine*, p. 140; Pedro Gil Sotres, 'The Regimens of Health', in *Western Medical Thought from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, ed. by Mirko D. Grmek (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 291–318 (p. 298); Guenter B. Risse, 'History of Western Medicine from Hippocrates to Germ Theory', in *The Cambridge World History of Human Disease*, ed. by Kenneth F. Kiple (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 11–19 (p. 13).

(*aer*), water (*aqua*), and earth (*terra*)—in the four cardinal points of the circular diagram. In

the same outward layer, the double primary qualities are written on either side of each

element, with common qualities between elements encircled to emphasise the commonality.

In a layer below the elements and their qualities, there are the associated seasons: summer

(*aestas*) under fire, spring (*ver*) under air, winter (*hiems*) under water, and autumn

(*autumnus*) under earth; with another arch connecting it to the double primary qualities: hot

(*calidus*), wet (*humidus*), cold (*frigida*), and dry (*sicca*). In a similar fashion, the relevant

humours are in semicircles below the seasons, which are, respectively: *colera*, *sanguis*,

humor (wrongly mentioned instead of *pituita*, phlegm), and *melancolia*. At the centre of the

circle, the three-word title of the diagram presents itself: mundus, annus, and homo.
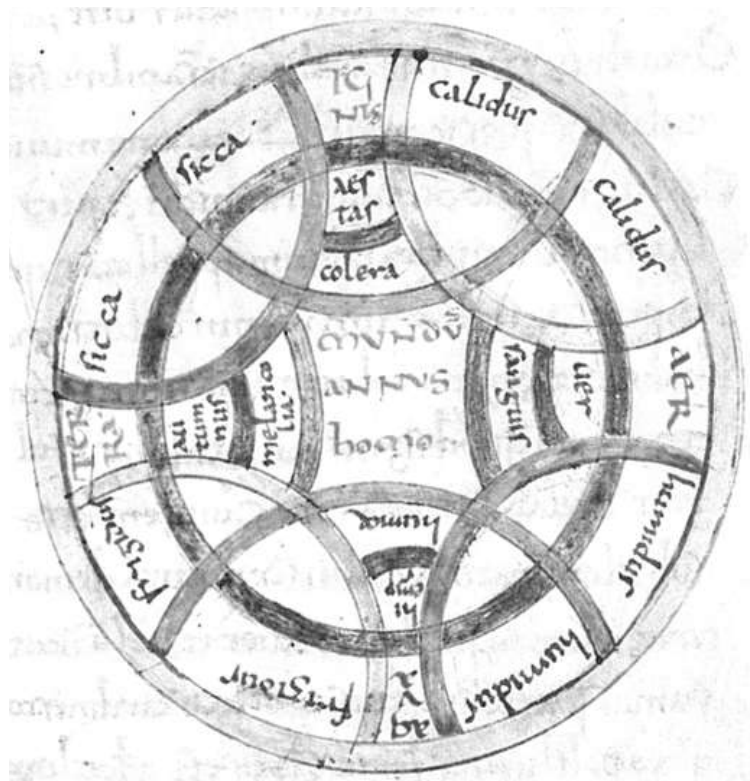
Figure 1. Isidore of Seville*, Liber de Rerum Naturae,* late
eighth century. Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, clm
16128, f. 16r.

This diagram offers a neat demonstration of the interconnectedness of the tetradic

principles and the macrocosm/microcosm dichotomy—well-known in the Middle Ages and

the Early Modern period, and relatively less so in ancient Greece—framing a relationship

between the structure of the world and the structure of the human body. Beyond its influential

articulation by Isidore, this type of understanding of the entanglement of the human and the

universe saw increased circulation in medieval Europe after access to ancient material via

Middle Eastern thinkers, who adopted and endorsed this mode of thinking.[31] However, we

must, once again, remember that even though this line of thinking was predominant in

philosophical, theological, and medical fields, it was not cohesive and unified. As I have

shown in this brief survey, determinism—which entails that humans are not totally in control

of their lives—played a significant role in pre-modern theorisations of human existence.[32]

This is not entirely compatible with the conclusions many have drawn from the

macrocosmic/microcosmic dichotomy concerning the centrality of the human being in the

universe or the wholeness and integrity of the human body as an entity analogous to the

universe.[33] While it is true that the nature of the humoral body was thought to be contained

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[31] See, for instance, Conger, p. 51; Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines.* Revised edn (Bath: Thames & Hudson, 1978), pp. 66–75, 96–106, 132–150, 236–262.

[32] It is vital to emphasise that despite the apparent comprehensiveness of the deterministic schemes, they never presupposed or inferred a complacent belief in humanity's ability to comprehend every element of the universe. Consider the thirteenth-century discussions of 'unknown synergies' and 'accidental properties' of medicines in the writings of Avicenna, Arnald of Vilanova, and Bernard of Gordon, as related by Michael McVaugh, who notes that the physicians reveal 'a certain skepticism as to whether the properties of the ingredients could ever be known with sufficient precision to make the system work with any confidence'. Or, consider the discussion in pseudo-Albertus Magnus' *De mirabilibus mundi*, that proposes that there are '"marvels" in nature […] like magnetism, or the power of amulets to cure disease, [which] had hidden causes and could be known only by experience'. Avicenna develops this in his *De viribus cordis*, arguing that by mixing various ingredients 'into a new substance, […] the complexion of the new compound will be a product of that of its ingredients; but the new complexion also prepares the way for the mixture's acquisition (from God, or the stars) of a totally new property (*proprietas*; Ar. *khāss*), specific to that substance, which cannot be related to the properties of the starting points'. This is indeed close to the notion of 'emergent property' introduced earlier, and it highlights that in spite of the apparent deterministic and mechanistic character of this framework, the vibrant materiality of nonhuman agents were considered: Michael McVaugh, 'The "Experience-Based Medicine" of the Thirteenth Century', *Early Science and Medicine,* 14 (2009), 105–30 (pp. 110–11, 115–16).

[33] See, for instances of such conclusions, Finckh, p. 446; David Hillman and Carla Mazzio, 'Introduction: Individual Parts', in *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by David Hillman and Carla Mazzio (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. xiii; Monica Green, 'Introduction' in *A Cultural History of the Human Body in the Medieval Age*, ed. by Linda Kalof (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), pp. 1–16 (p. 4).

by the individual's corporeal integrity,[34] this medieval understanding of the body conceives

of the body, its nature, and its workings as entangled with and open to external forces. These

ranged from astral influence to the entrance of elements into the body through consumption

of food, for in the Galenic framework, food was thought to be processed into the four

humours as part of the process of digestion, and thus had in it the primary qualities associated

with the humours.[35] Rather than providing an affirmative, detailed discussion of the

dichotomy, I would like to draw attention to the ways in which the very same discourses

present a challenge to the macrocosm/microcosm dichotomy, and, in general, the relationship

between the body and the cosmos. Challenges to such a unified, harmonious conception of

the relationship between the body and the cosmos can be found not only in medical writings,

but also in a variety of broader cultural media.[36] An example of such conflicting—but not

necessarily competing—parallel conceptualisation of the relationships between the body and

the cosmos in circulation at the time can be found in a text probably dating back to the

twelfth century called *De mundi celestis terrestrisque constitutione*.[37] In the opening section

of the work, it is said that the four primary elements of which the universe is comprised are

constant and persistent, meaning that their amount in the universe does not alter or fluctuate.

Human bodies, on the other hand, are volatile, and the humoral make-up of their bodies

constantly changes.[38] Here we see that the body was not solely and necessarily understood as

unified with the universe, and its workings did not correspond to the operations of the

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[34] One need only look at the Middle English word for healthy, 'hol', to see this logic at work: 'hōl(e adj.(2)', in *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. by Robert E. Lewis, et al. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1952-2001), in *Middle English Compendium*, ed. by Frances McSparran, et al. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Library, 2000-2018) <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/> [accessed 16 June 2020].

[35] Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine*, p. 106, 116, passim; Nutton, *Ancient*, p. 247.

[36] One example of such cultural contexts is cartography, and, in particular, the depiction of monstrous races in it, in which the determinism produces varied creatures. See: John Block Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981); Asa Simon Mittman, *Maps and Monsters in Medieval England* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

[37] The text used to be referred to Bede, but the published edition of the text refers to the author as Pseudo-Bede: *Pseudo-Bede, De mundi celestis terrestrisque constitutione: A Treatise on the Universe and the Soul*, ed. by Charles S. F. Burnett (London: Warburg Institute, University of London, 1985).

[38] *Pseudo-Bede*, pp. 18–19.

cosmos. Rather, it mirrored and defied the logic of the cosmos, simultaneously. But how was

the human body in perpetual alteration? What fluctuations occurred in the human body, and

how did they happen? As already noted, food was thought to be digested into the four

humours inside the body, and thus it had the capacity to alter the body's humoral make-up,

but were there other things capable of doing that? And what was the relation between these

fluctuations and disease? Was disease also something that is externally enforced, or did it

come from within?

B. Disease, Air, and Miasma

Our modern mentality is quite used to the idea of disease as a foreign intruder, and that is

perhaps why diseases such as cancer or autoimmune diseases—which appear, in the first

instance, at least, to be internally borne—manifest themselves as profoundly disturbing in our

cultural psyche.[39] But was disease understood similarly in classical and medieval medical

thought? The most recognised classical conception of disease with implications for medieval

medicine drew on Hippocratic concepts.[40] In this model, health is conceived of as a state of

equilibrium or balance—*eukrasia* or *symmetria*, which involves a balanced and proportionate

mix of all the humours in the body. Disease, on the other hand, called *dyskrasia*, signifies

considerable deviation from this proportionate state.[41] Thus, if there were significant excess

or deficiency of at least one specific humour in the body, that would be considered disease

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[39] See, for instance, Alison Bashford and Claire Hooker, ed., *Contagion: Historical and Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Lawrence I. Conrad and Dominik Wujastyk, ed., *Contagion: Perspectives from Pre-Modern Societies* (Aldershot: Routledge, 2000); Robert P. Gaynes, *Germ Theory: Medical Pioneers in Infectious Diseases*. 2nd edn (Washington: American Society for Microbiology, 2013); Rhonda J. Moore and David Spiegel, ed., *Cancer, Culture, and Communication* (New York: Springer, 2004); Kari Nixon, *Kept from All Contagion: Germ Theory, Disease, and the Dilemma of Human Contact in Late Nineteenth-Century Literature* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2020); James T. Patterson, *The Dread Disease: Cancer and Modern American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).

[40] More precisely, in sixth-century BCE Pythagorean ideas of disharmony and imbalance and Alcmaeon's conception of disease. See Grmek, p. 247.

[41] Grmek, p. 247. Despite their differences, this notion of the mean was supported by Aristotle, albeit not expressed in humoral terms: Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by H. Rackham (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926; repr. 1956), 93; Aristotle, *The Works of Aristotle*, ed. by W. D. Ross, trans. by E. S. Forster, 12 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), vol. vii: *Problemata*, Book I, 1, p. 858b.

(*nosos*). The distinction between perfect health and disease was not clear and absolute; between the two poles of perfect health in *eukrasia* and excessive deviation in *dyskrasia*, there were 'an endless array of intermediate states', which needed to be managed and improved, but not necessarily treated by a physician.[42]

Hippocratic medicine saw disease in several forms. It may be brought about, as Vivian Nutton notes, by 'peccant [or corrupt] matter, carried round until it settles on one spot; sometimes it is airs, fumes and gases', poor diet, traumas, or, as mentioned, the excess or deficiency of the humours themselves based on lack of or immoderate exercise, sleep patterns, and so on.[43] In accordance with our modern sensibilities, there were some external factors in this scheme, over some of which the individual had no complete control: airs, injuries or physical trauma, and perhaps even food, which came from outside of the body. But there were multiple internal factors whereby human activity itself could bring about illness. For instance, inordinate exercise could bring fatigue by an overproduction of black bile.[44] Alternatively, a poor diet could result in the overproduction (or deficiency) of one humour, altering the humoral make-up of the body, and possibly resulting in illness (note that diet also depends, to some extent, on individual lifestyle and choice).[45] Thus, far from being unified with the constancy of the outside world, the health of the human body was in continuous interaction with extracorporeal factors (ranging from astral figures to the air one breathes) and internal fluctuations which needed to be managed and maintained. Furthermore, the external factors were able to pierce through the body, undermining the wholeness

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[42] Grmek, p. 250; Nutton, *Ancient*, p. 81; Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine*, p. 120. Galen expands the details of these factors' impact on the humoral make-up, but retains the Hippocratic framework. For a full discussion of Galen, see: Ian Johnston, *Galen on Diseases and Symptoms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[43] Nutton, *Ancient*, p. 78–82.

[44] Galen, *Selected Works*, trans. by P. N. Singer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 339–41.

[45] Based on the Galenic definition, food can be thought of as belonging to both categories. See Jason König, 'Regimen and Athletic Training', in *A Companion to Science, Technology, and Medicine in Ancient Greece and Rome*, ed. by Georgia L. Irby, 2 vols (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2016), vol. I, pp. 450–464 (p. 458).

occasionally ascribed to conceptions of the body.[46] Nevertheless, despite significant

discussions of the extracorporeal factors, the key factor remained inside the body: the change

in the humoral mixture, without which no disease could manifest. The same logic operated in

medieval medicine. Nancy G. Siraisi notes that for medieval physicians, diseases were

divided into three types: 'congenital malformations (in medieval Latin, *mala compositio* of

the body), complexional imbalance (*mala complexio*), and trauma (*solutio continuitatis*, or a

break in the body's continuity). This classification placed almost all internal illness in the

domain of complexional imbalance'.[47]

Let us now discuss one of the external factors in the formation of disease in more

detail, one of which is the most significant in our discussion of plague: air. In Hippocratic

writings, unlike the later Galenic and medieval texts, the word *miasma* was used to refer to

the force operating within the air, which was thought to be the cause of pestilences.[48] The

idea of air as the ultimate cause of epidemic disease, however, is quite often contradicted in

other Hippocratic texts, for rational medicine include *miasma* as a vector for an individual's

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[46] The medieval body, as an entity defined according to ancient medical knowledge, is sometimes considered a unified entity enjoying some sort of integrity around it: see Hillman and Mazzio, p. xiii; Pouchelle, p. 86–7. By the time we get to the Middle Ages, the idea of bodily integrity seems even more contradictory (see below).

[47] Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine*, p. 120. Nancy G. Siraisi defines *complexion* as the quality '[t]he balance of the elementary qualities produces […] in plant and animal species, in human individuals, in parts of the body, and in medicinal compounds'. It is either temperate or intemperate, but it is not a static concept; it depends on the individual constitution, sex, age, and growth: *Avicenna in Renaissance Italy: The Canon and Medical Teaching in Italian Universities after 1500* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 26-7.

[48] Jacques Jouanna writes that this force was understood in 'rational medicine', which was practiced by ancient physicians and philosopher/physicians and focusing on drugs, regimen, and surgery, as pertaining to diseases that fall upon a city via infected air. For instance, in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, the city's predicament is caused by such a *miasma*, which is connected to the unwitting and tragic moral failings of Oedipus. In 'religious medicine', however, which was practiced by priests in temples of gods and involved chants, charms, and rituals as well as medical treatments, there was an additional sense to the word. Here, *miasma* appears as a kind of 'stain' or contagious mark—also with moral connotations—put on an individual: for instance, when discussing the condition of an individual suffering from epilepsy, a disease referred to as 'the sacred disease'. Jouanna, pp. 122–4. On epilepsy, see Hippocrates, 'On the Sacred Disease', trans. by Francis Adams, in *The Internet Classics* <http://classics.mit.edu/Hippocrates/sacred.html> [accessed 20 March 2020]. It is interesting that this description of epilepsy persists in medieval medical works even though the connection with ancient Greek religions has vanished. For instance, in the Middle English translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus' *De Proprietatibus Rerum*, epilepsy is also described as 'Goddis wraþþe', but it does not carry the religious contextual baggage: Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *On the Properties of Things*, trans. John Trevisa. ed. by M. C. Seymour. 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), vol. I, p. 352.

infection.[49] While epidemics are rooted in the presence of miasmatic air and its inhalation, individual cases of contracting a disease (be it part of a pandemic or not) are resulted from imbalance and unhealthiness of regimen (as noted in the preliminary discussion of disease above).[50] This line of thinking was systematised and expanded by Galen, who later became the primary source for, and a distinguished influence on, Middle Eastern and Muslim thinkers and Western Christian thinkers during the Middle Ages. With Galen, we move towards a more detailed theory of pestilential air. Firstly, more specific origins of pestilential air are introduced, including cadavers and swamps. Secondly, and more importantly, the emphasis shifts from the infective capacity of air and *miasma* in epidemics to the disposition of the individual to putrefaction. He writes that '[i]t is proper throughout all this work to bear in mind this—that there is no cause which is effective without a predisposition on the part of the patient'.[51] This predisposition depends, once again, on the convoluted system of interrelated factors impacting the humoral make-up of the body discussed in the previous section,

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[49] For instance, in *Breaths*, although it is said that all types of fever ('epidemic' and 'sporadic') are caused by, above all, 'air' (ἀήρ), it is also mentioned that such illnesses derive from the concentration of 'μίασμα', translated by Jouanna as *miasma*, but by W. H. S. Jones as 'air', once again: Hippocrates, *Hippocrate: Des vents; De l'art*, ed. by Jacques Jouanna (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1988), p. 110, cited in Jouanna, p. 125; Hippocrates, *Prognostic. Regimen in Acute Diseases. The Sacred Disease. The Art. Breaths. Law. Decorum. Physician (Ch. 1). Dentition*, trans. by W. H. S. Jones (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 233, 235.

[50] Interestingly, in *Airs, Waters, Places*, another work in the Corpus, the whole *miasmatic* vocabulary is abandoned in favour of a more climate-centred model, with more focus on the orientation of the city, winds, the quality of water, and seasonal changes. See Hippocrates, 'On Airs, Waters, and Places', trans. by Francis Adams, Part 3 in *The Internet Classics* <http://classics.mit.edu/Hippocrates/airwatpl.3.3.html> [accessed 20 March 2020].

[51] John Ware, 'The Classification of Fevers', in 'Galen's "De Differentiis Febrium" & "De Temperamentis": Translation & Introduction' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1928), p. 9; see also Jouanna, p. 130–1. Vivian Nutton sheds light on an alternative line of thinking in a few of Galen's works, which referred to the initiating infectious force of some diseases as 'seeds', which could, in turn, be interpreted as extracorporeal components in the air which, once absorbed and if the conditions were right, would initiate infection. Nutton asserts that the idea was ultimately rebuffed in favour of a theory of contagion based on corrupt air until the mid-sixteenth century. This account presupposes a distinction between seeds as material/tangible and air immaterial/intangible, which, I believe, is not entirely valid. The corruption in air was certainly tangible enough to interact with other elemental components as well as with humours inside the body. Therefore, I believe it is possible to consider the air-based theory of contagion as having effectively subsumed the seed-based theory in its post-Galenic development, incorporating it into itself by the late Middle Ages, as we shall see below. In the next chapter, I will show the use of this terminology in the medieval context when referring to the pestilential qualities of heresy: Vivian Nutton, 'The Seeds of Disease: An Explanation of Contagion and Infection from the Greeks to the Renaissance', *Medical History* (1983), 1–34.

which—by the time we get to the Middle Ages—would include horoscopic details, astral influence, climate, age, and lifestyle, all of which are represented in the humoral make-up of the individual's body.[52]

In post-Hippocratic works, the term *miasma* virtually vanishes, giving way to terms more common with medieval words such as 'vapours', 'pollut[ant]' air, evil air, pestilential air, corrupt air, etc.[53] In terms of the treatment of pestilence, Jouanna points out that the offered solution for pestilence is found in another Hippocratic text, *Nature of Man*, and it involves trying to breathe at little as possible in addition to undergoing a weight loss diet.[54] This suggests that for the Hippocratic school, the main means of transmission was respiration. Galen also considered that the corrupt air—which acts on the patient's *particular* predisposition—enters the body via respiration.[55] More generally, the means of absorption/ingestion and evacuation of material into and out of the body is via the pores: these include the mouth, earholes, eyes, nostrils, the anus, and other holes of the body, also including the pores of skin, through which sweat and excess humours are expelled. Furthermore, individual organs have their own pores, through which the mixture of the humours (or the bloodstream) flown in and out of the organs. Nevertheless, the existence of pores should not prompt us to completely disregard the significance of bodily integrity in understandings of the body: the textbook definition of a porous entity such as the skin, as

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[52] Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine*, p. 111.

[53] Jouanna, p. 129. In Middle English, similar terms were also used: 'Air n.', 'pestilenciāl adj.', 'vapour n.', in *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. by Robert E. Lewis, et al. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1952-2001), in *Middle English Compendium*, ed. by Frances McSparran, et al. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Library, 2000-2018) <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/> [accessed 16 June 2020]; 'evil air', 'vapour', in Dictionary of Medical Vocabulary in English, 1375–1550: Body Parts, Sicknesses, Instruments, and Medicinal Preparations, by Juhani Norri (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 35, 1166; Marta Sylwanowicz, *Old and Middle English Sickness-nouns in Historical Perspective: A Lexico-semantic Analysis* (San Diego: Æ Academic Publishing, 2014), Chapter 4, 4.3.1.2; Bartholomaeus, vol. I, p. 566. For a survey of the concept of contagion in classical Latin works, see Vivian Nutton, 'Did the Greeks Have a Word for It? Contagion and Contagion Theory in Classical Antiquity', in *Contagion: Perspectives from Pre-Modern Societies*, ed. by Lawrence I. Conrad and Dominik Wujastyk (Aldershot: Routledge, 2000), pp. 137–62 (pp. 141–2, 146–50).

[54] Jouanna, p. 126.

[55] Jouanna, p. 131.

written in Bartholomaeus Anglicus' encyclopaedia, is 'þe vtmest partie of þe body, and

biclippiþ fleisch and bones, and couere and defendi al þe inner parties […] þe skin put itself

forth aȝeines diueres greues of þe aier'.[56] At the same time, the skin is said to be 'ful of

poores' and to have the function of 'puttynge out of superfluitees of fumosite. For by hete þe

pores open, and þe superfluite þat is bytwene þe fel and þe fleisch it is iput out by vapoures

and swetes'.[57] It is crucial to acknowledge the ambivalence of classical and medieval medical

discourses of the body—or ways of conceptualising, delimiting, and studying the body—in

medical literature.[58]

The body, as a porous entity, does certainly require maintenance, care, and treatment.

The health of the body depends on maintaining a balance between what goes in and out of

one's body, as well as what one does with the body.[59] Health-impacting factors other than

managing diet and evacuation—factors which needed to be monitored and regulated—are

succinctly summarised by Jason König in his survey of regimen in ancient Greek medicine:

> [T]hings to be administered (i.e., by absorption within the body, including
>
> food and drugs and air), things to be done (including massage, walking,
>
> riding, driving, exercise, sleep, wakefulness, sex), things to be applied to
>
> the outside of the body (including oil and dust in the gymnasium […]), and
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> things to be removed from the body (including sweat and other kinds of
>
> "excrement").[60]

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[56] Bartholomaeus Anglicus, vol. I, pp. 285–6.
[57] Bartholomaeus Anglicus, vol. I, p. 286.
[58] Also see Samantha Riches and Bettina Bildhauer, 'Cultural Representations of the Body', in *A Cultural History of the Human Body in the Medieval Age*, ed. by Linda Kalof (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), pp. 181–202.
[59] Sotres, p. 291.
[60] König, p. 458. I should mention, however, that the quoted passage leaves age as one of the impactful factors unaddressed.

Thus, in order to prevent any kind of predisposition towards developing infection as a result of interacting with corrupt air, or restore humoral equilibrium after developing an infection as a consequence of such an interaction, such practices and interactions had to be regulated in various ways. For instance, one might choose to move to a new location with better air, select specific foodstuff to balance one's humoral mix, and use specific gear for exercise. These actions entailed the body creating further assemblages with disparate elements to effect changes on other bodily assemblages. However, certain elements were considered more crucial than others. In classical as well as medieval medicine, diet occupied the central position in term of its role in maintaining one's health. As Pedro Gil Sotres notes, '[d]iet is the topic found most frequently in the works that make up the Hippocratic corpus'.[61] Galen also maintained that the most important mode of treatment was diet, but his conception of diet was broader than ingestion and included exercise, sleep, and other activities.[62] In the next section, I will focus on how the concept of diet was developed in discussions of the treatment of disease by Galenists, and how they contributed to the idea of the porous body and presented a more complex understanding of the macrocosmic/microcosmic relations.

C. Treatment, The Six Non-Naturals, and the Porous Body

For the Hippocratic physicians as much as for Galenists, treatment rested on the back of preservation of health by prescribing regimens designed to deliver the humoral equilibrium. The goal of the remedial regimens was to restore the balance, and its underlying logic was a regime of 'contraries'.[63] As discussed before, humours are produced when food is digested; the same procedure applies to activities. The qualities of resultant humours correspond with the qualities of the ingested food or the performed activity. So, as a simplified example, if one eats something cold and dry, the cold and dry humour, or black bile, will be produced. In

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[61] Sotres, p. 291.
[62] Nutton, *Ancient*, p. 246.
[63] Sears, p. 14.

addition, we know that disease is caused by the overproduction or deficiency of a humour or humours. Thus, if someone is overwhelmed by black bile by consuming too much black-bile-producing food or drugs, one has to, firstly, cut down the black bile intake, and then counter the dominance of black bile with a sanguine diet—by eating hot and moist things.[64] Of course, the process of diagnosis, treatment, and prescription was not that simple. A physician had to take into account, based on all the aforementioned factors, the uniqueness of each patient's case, and prescribe an individualised regimen. Furthermore, ingested or used matter and activities do not always have only two qualities; the range of their effects is from production of one to all four humours.[65] It should be noted, in addition, that not only the overall body has a dominant temperament or complexion, each organ has also its own distinct natural temperament, which has to be taken into consideration when trying to treat individual organs.[66]

Out of the Hippocratic legacy of the influence of the outside world on the body, the Aristotelian fascination with the importance of maintaining a healthy equilibrium within, and ancient physicians' priority of preventing disease by maintaining the equilibrium rather than treating it, Galen pioneered the doctrine of the six 'non-natural' causes (*sex res non naturales*). The doctrine concerns 'a mixture of physiological, psychological, and environmental conditions held to affect health', over which an individual has some degree of control, all of which need to be monitored and managed in the quest for health and humoral balance.[67] Once again, individual disposition has a role in the dynamics of this scheme. The six non-naturals were comprised of the environment/the air, physical exercise, food and

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[64] Galen made significant contributions to the dietetics and properties of food in this regard: Nutton, *Ancient*, p. 247.

[65] Nutton, *Ancient*, p. 249.

[66] Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine*, p. 102.

[67] Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine*, p. 101; Peter E. Pormann and Emilie Savage-Smith, *Medieval Islamic Medicine* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 44–5.

drink, sleep, waste and evacuation, and emotions.[68] From the literature around this doctrine

emerged a genre of medical advice literature, based on the six non-naturals and taking its

name from Galen's treatise, *Hygieina*, translated as *De regimine sanitatis* in the thirteenth

century. In the later Middle Ages, texts in this category began to be incorporated into other

medical genres concerned with the preservation and maintenance of health (including plague

treatises, some of which were also called *regimina*).[69]

There are several factors influencing the first of these causes, the air: geographical

location, wind, and seasons, all of which have an impact on the health of the individual. Air is

considered clean when it is not spoilt by any vapour or visible substance such as smoke.

Thus, clarity is also another mark of good air. Movement, as opposed to staleness, is also

considered another positive quality; thus, open air is superior to the enclosed air indoors. The

Persian scholar Avicenna (c. 980–1037) proposed another quality for healthy air, which

lingered in later theorisations in the Middle East and Europe: 'temperateness', which denoted

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[68] John Arrizabalaga, 'Facing the Black Death: Perceptions and Reactions of University Medical Practitioners', in *Practical Medicine from Salerno to the Black Death*, ed. by Luis Garcia-Ballester et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 237–288 (pp. 273–80). The counterparts of the six non-naturals were the seven 'naturals', which were the material the body was composed of. The seven naturals usually included the elements, the temperaments or complexions, the humours, the members or body parts, the spirits (also referred to as the *pneumata* or virtues, but I shall stick to spirits in my discussion), the operations or functions, and the faculties. There were also the 'contra-naturals', which consisted of all pathological problems and conditions. For the use of different terminologies, see: Christiane Nockels Fabbri, 'Continuity and Change in Late Medieval Plague Medicine: A Survey of 152 Plague Tracts from 1348 to 1599' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Yale University, 2006), p. 59, n. 142; Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine*, pp. 101, 107–9; Ullmann, pp. 62–3. The concept of animal spirit can be traced to how bodily processes are systematised and theoretically conceived in antiquity. According to Siraisi, these processes and functions of various organs were grouped into three divisions. One of the attributes of these divisions were 'virtues', often referred to as 'spirit', as well, which can be defined as 'general powers of action or sensation belonging to each system': *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine*, p. 107–9. These spirits were first attributed in a systematic way to the three principal organs, namely the liver, the heart, and the brain by Galen: Strohmaier, p. 142. The virtues or spirits themselves were called 'natural', 'vital', and 'animal'. Bartholomaeus Anglicus writes that the 'vertu of lif … haþ place in þe herte', the animal spirit 'haþ place in … þe brayn', and the natural spirit resides in 'þe liuere': vol. I, p. 103, 104, and 107.

[69] For an example of 'regimen' in titles of plague tracts, see Kari Ann Rand, 'The Elusive Canutus: An Investigation into a Medieval Plague Tract', *Leeds Studies in English, XLI*, ed. by Janet Burton, William Marx, and Veronica O'Mara (Leeds: University of Leeds Press, 2010), pp. 186–199 (p. 186).

the complexional balance of the air in terms of its heat, cold, dryness, and wetness, properties which determined the impact of the air on the body.[70]

Regarding physical exercise, the second non-natural, Avicenna offers a useful definition: 'voluntary movement entailing deep and hurried respiration'.[71] Physical exercise is one of the activities which not only result in faster and deeper breathing, but also open the body's pores, hence the popularity of the advice against physical exercise during the time of pestilence in plague literature (including the texts discussed here; see below). The statuses of bathing and sexual activity in the scheme of the six non-naturals depend on the authority in question and the specific issue discussed; some consider them as physical activity, while others, focusing on the evacuated material (i.e. semen, exuding humours from the pores of the skin, and blood) place them in the fifth category concerning waste and evacuation.[72] As we shall see, nevertheless, the majority of medieval plague tracts are concerned with bathing and coitus as pore-opening physical exercises that must be avoided to prevent infection as opposed to waste-removing bodily functions; nor are they concerned with the ejected matter itself.[73]

Regulations concerning food and drink inform when to consume it, what to consume, how many times one should eat, how much one should eat and drink, and finally how to prepare food or drink and consume them to maintain or re-instate the healthy equilibrium based on the aforementioned dynamic of contraries. Sleep mainly concerns the length of sleep, the location of sleeping, and the position of the body during sleep. We need to bear in

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[70] Sotres, p. 302–3.

[71] Avicenna, Book I, Part III, Thesis II, 1, 736, p. 382. On exercise in late medieval England, see Carole Rawcliffe, 'Keeping Fit in Later Medieval England: Exercise for Man and Beast', *History,* 107.376 (2022), 507–25.

[72] Sotres, p. 297. The public bath was the place for cuppers, bloodletters, and barbers to provide their services in both Middle Eastern societies and European ones: Pormann and Savage-Smith, p. 135; Sidney Young, *The Annals of the Barber-Surgeons of London* (London: Blades, East and Blades, 1890), p. 24.

[73] We shall see, in the next chapter, that efforts were made by authorities at various level to regulate and curb such activities in public in order to prevent the spread of infection.

mind that these issues are closely linked to the other non-naturals, and vice versa. For instance, an English translation of *Regimen sanitatis Salernitanum*, published in 1607 (based on an original Latin written in the twelfth or thirteenth century), reminds its readers that 'Great ſuppers do the ſtomacke much offend, | Sup light if quiet you to ſleepe intend', clearly linking the third and the fourth non-naturals.[74]

According to Sotres, there are, broadly speaking, three types of waste products connected to the fifth non-natural, waste and evacuation: first, 'the waste products from the three physiological digestions', including urine, hairs, sweat, nasal mucus, tears, and earwax; second, substances produced by various organs, such as sperm (although, as noted, sex did not always have a beneficial effect on the body as it opens the body's pores, thereby making one susceptible to infection, so evacuating sperm could potentially be a double-edged sword); and third, excess humours.[75] The evacuation of all three is carried out via the body's pores. The first two types of bodily waste were regulated by dietary recommendations and lifestyle instructions, but certain practices and products could also be helpful in getting rid of excess humour: phlebotomy, cupping, using leeches, emetics, and laxatives.[76]

The six areas were to be carefully managed and maintained in accordance with physicians' dietary recommendations, chiefly based on humoral theory. While some have suggested that air is the most important of the non-naturals (including insinuations by the authorities themselves),[77] the sheer amount of dietary advice provided in the *regimina* and other medical works demonstrates that food, drink, and diet in general were the most

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[74] Sir John Harington, *The School of Salernum: Regimen Sanitatis Salernitanum* (New York: Paul B. Hoeber, 1920), p. 79.

[75] Sotres, p. 311.

[76] Sotres, p. 311. Finally, Strohmaier notes that the development of the sixth non-natural, emotions, was a Middle Eastern contribution. He argues that 'Galenic medical thought gave virtually no role whatever to the human soul'. Emotions were, therefore, the sole product of the mixture of the humours. This notion made its way into the *regimina sanitatis* of the late Middle Ages, too: Strohmaier, 161.

[77] See above for an example from the Hippocratic corpus; for similar claims among scholars, see also: Fabbri, p. 49 n. 109; Pormann and Savage-Smith, p. 44; and Strohmaier, p. 161. Fabbri's citation from Galen, however, does not corroborate her claim.

significant aspect of preservation of health and the *regimina* genre within the Galenic theoretical framework.[78] Galen was not explicitly engaged with the conceptualisation of this framework in terms of building a theory of the six non-naturals. Instead, the discourse emerged from subsequent physicians and philosophers who studied and commented on his works. By the thirteenth century, *regimina* were being produced in the West, and by the first half of the fourteenth century, translations and indeed original productions in vernacular languages became available, a sign of growing availability and accessibility.[79] In fact, the demand became so high that, according to Paul Slack, 'only one third of […] regimens […] came from the pens of established physicians' in Tudor England.[80] I should emphasise that there were variations and specific areas of contention regarding the workings of the six non-naturals between various authors, especially concerning sex, bathing, and physical activity, in medical texts in general and in the texts which will be discussed below, in particular. Nonetheless, we clearly see that the porousness of the body is constantly underlined in these discussions of monitoring and management of the air, food, and drinks entering the body as well as the waste evacuated from the body in ancient as well as medieval medical literature.

When regimen and drugs were not effective, one turned to invasive treatments. This idea was strongly advocated by Galen and medieval physicians both in the Middle East and the West, but, as we shall see, the practice of invasive treatments expanded even more dramatically in the Late Middle Ages for a variety of reasons, to which I shall attend in this section.[81] These treatments included not only surgical operations, but also other practices

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[78] As we shall see shortly, Galen himself considered regimen as the first and foremost mode of treatment, then moving on to drugs, and, as a last resort, surgery: Nutton, *Ancient*, p. 246. A similar claim is made by Christopher Alan Bonfield about *regimina* literature: 'The *Regimen Sanitatis* and Its Dissemination in England, c. 1348–1550', (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of East Anglia, 2006), p. 59. As we have seen, Sotres also supports this assertion: Sotres, p. 291.

[79] Sotres, p. 300.

[80] Paul Slack, 'Mirrors of Health and Treasures of Poor Men: the Uses of the Vernacular Medical Literature of Tudor England', in *Health, Medicine and Mortality in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. by Charles Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 238–273 (p. 252).

[81] Nutton, *Ancient*, p. 246; Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine*, p. 174.

such as bloodletting or phlebotomy, cupping, cautery. In order to operate successfully, the surgeon had to have a profound knowledge of anatomy.[82] In medieval medicine, Galen's (and Plato's) tripartite conception of the principal organs of the human body carried more weight than Aristotle's cardiocentric sovereignty. For Aristotle and the Stoics, the heart was the sole principal organ of the body. Galen, however, imagined the body as an assemblage of three nearly independent systems, with the liver, the heart, and the brain as the three principal organs.[83] Even though for Galen surgery was the last resort, only to be used in acute cases, in principle, he was an emphatic advocate of phlebotomy, so much so that he wrote a number of treatises on the subject in refutation of physicians from rival schools.[84]

In the Islamic Middle East, too, not just phlebotomy, but also cupping and cautery became popular and widely used, while more serious surgery seems to have remained infrequent both in principle and in practice.[85] The popularity of practices such as phlebotomy and cupping was partially owing to the favourable view toward them in the genre of 'prophetic medicine' as well as that of rational medicine influenced by Greek medicine. The works in this genre were written by religious scholars and not physicians, although

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[82] In both the medieval Middle East and the West, surgical practices were conducted not by physicians, but by surgeons, barber-surgeons, barbers, cauterisers, and other professional practitioners: Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine*, pp. 137–39; Pormann and Savage-Smith, pp. 121–5.

[83] Nutton, *Ancient*, p. 239. The soul was included in 'spirit' introduced above as part of the seven naturals, and it was present in the three principal organs in the three forms mentioned (natural, vital, animal), but the 'leading part' of the soul, as Peter Singer puts it, was located in the brain. Thus, not only the human body, but also the human soul and human nature were partitioned: Peter N. Singer, 'Galen', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. by Edward N. Zalta, Winter 2016 Edition <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/galen/> [accessed 17 June 2020].

[84] Peter Brain, *Galen on Bloodletting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 80. It must be said, however, that such practices were in conflict with attitudes in ancient Greece: even cutting the skin was deemed a significant violation, and the human corpse was thought to be a source of pollution. That attitude was probably most prominent in the religious context. Nevertheless, violating the boundaries of the human body was deplorable and odious enough in ancient Greek medicine, so much so that—except for two Greek physicians who practiced in Egypt—no-one ever performed dissection on the human body there. However, there seems to be a co-existing notion (in Galen, at least) of the necessity to pierce the human body to restore health: Heinrich von Staden, 'The Discovery of the Body: Human Dissection and Its Cultural Contexts in Ancient Greece', *The Yale Journal of Biology and Medicine*, 65 (1992), 223–241 (pp. 225–9).

[85] Pormann and Savage-Smith, p. 121, 135. The Middle Eastern contribution to anatomy also seems to be limited. Even though there have been statements encouraging the study of anatomy and dissection, the practice of those ideas are ambiguous and seldom corroborated by evidence: Emilie Savage-Smith, 'Attitudes Toward Dissection in Medieval Islam', *Journal of the History of Medicine*, 50 (1995), 67–110.

sometimes advice from physicians found their way into the treatises, too. [86] The objective of such works was to extract medical advice from the Quran, the life and deeds of the prophet (known as *sunnah*), and his sayings (*ḥadīth*). Diagnosis and prognosis 'played little role in this type of literature', as the cause of diseases was identified as nothing but divine will.[87] Advice mainly concerned dietary regulations, 'simple medicines, proper conduct, […] invocations to God', occasional charms and talismans, and practices such as phlebotomy and cupping.[88] For instance, in a treatise by a fifteenth-century author of the genre, there is a separate chapter on phlebotomy and cupping and the prophet's advocacy of them, highlighting that cupping is more suitable for warmer climates, and thus is more recommended.[89] Phlebotomy seems to have been more popular than cupping in the Islamic tradition.[90] Cautery was even less popular than the other two, with a saying outright forbidding the practice. However, there were scholars who offered permissive readings of the prophetic utterance.[91]

When it comes to the significance of these practices in the western medical tradition, the legacies of the transferred knowledge (i.e. Arabic medical writings translated into Latin) were quite different: without a religious decree proscribing the practice, cautery seems to have become a popular practice. The prophetic statement about the correlation between climatic variation and the advisability of phlebotomy mentioned above functioned as a booster for the validity of phlebotomy in Europe, for they considered themselves as living in

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[86] Pormann and Savage-Smith, p. 73.

[87] Pormann and Savage-Smith, p. 73.

[88] Pormann and Savage-Smith, pp. 73–4.

[89] Cyril Elgood, 'Tibb-ul-Nabbi or Medicine of the Prophet', *Osiris*, 14 (1962), 33–192 (61–2).

[90] M. A. J. Beg, 'Faṣṣād, Ḥadjdjām', *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_8543> [accessed on 18 June 2020].

[91] Irmeli Perho, *The Prophet's Medicine: A Creation of the Muslim Traditionalist Scholars* (Helsinki: Finnish Oriental Society, 1995), pp. 105–6. For the interaction between Galenic and prophetic medicine in Middle Eastern and Islamic sources, see Justin K. Stearns, *Infectious Ideas: Contagion in Premodern Islamic and Christian Thought in the Western Mediterranean* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), pp. 67–90.

a colder climate compared to Middle Eastern physicians.[92] Thus, numerous treatises on such practices began to be disseminated in Europe, and perhaps influencing the emergence of surgery as a separate discipline whose textbooks appeared independently from other medical works, something which was a specifically western innovation in the history of surgery.[93] However, cautery and phlebotomy were not incorporated into surgical textbooks.[94]

Once again, as this section of the discussion has shown, the body was understood in ancient and early medieval medicine as a partitioned, fragmented, and porous assemblage, open to both upward and downward interaction with a multitude of internal and external factors, becoming even more so in the late medieval West as a result of the developments in theorisations regarding the invasive treatments as well as the interaction between matter and the body in the context of the six non-naturals. Not only disease itself, but also the prevention of disease, treatments, and surgical practices including purgative practices such as phlebotomy involved piercing the body, drawing out what was inside the body, which was not just a generic substance, but the humoral mix thought to be the 'nature' of the human being.[95]

D. Dissection and Dismemberment

Despite the anxieties regarding invasive modes of treatment among physicians—who held a higher standing than surgeons and thus courted the social elite more often, several practices which were popular among the social elite in northern Europe mounted a further challenge to the integrity of the human body—especially dismemberment. As already noted, dissection was proscribed in ancient Greece, and the Middle East did not transfer any significant

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[92] Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine*, p. 137–140.
[93] Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine*, p. 161, 167.
[94] Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine*, p. 169.
[95] Also see: Paul T. Keyser, 'The Lineage of "Bloodlines": Synecdoche, Metonymy, Medicine, and More', in *The Comparable Body: Analogy and Metaphor in Ancient Mesopotamian, Egyptian, and Greco-Roman Medicine*, ed. by John Z. Wee (Leiden: Brill, 2017), pp. 168–203.

knowledge on the subject to Europe. Northern Europe, however, had a unique tradition of its own in the late Middle Ages, one which had less to do with the medical discourse than religious and sometimes legal practices. The first dissection in Europe performed for the sole purpose of medical study occurred in late thirteenth-century Italy, and it was performed on the body of executed criminals (especially non-native ones).[96] In contrast, it took about a few centuries for medical dissections to become normalised and more widely practiced in northern Europe.[97] The practices of dismembering and disembowelling were often employed as a public, gruesome display of punishment, but they, alongside embalming, were also popular among northern European nobility, high-ranking ecclesiastics, and the wealthier sections of the population for their funerary rites as well as in the cults of saints from the thirteenth century onward.[98]

The practice of dismembering, or division of the corpse, involved the body of a noble, who might have died far from their homeland or chosen place of burial, being first disembowelled and then cut to pieces; the severed parts were boiled, and after the separation of flesh from bone, the bones were taken to the place intended for burial, while the entrails were either buried on the spot or were salted to be suitable for transport.[99] Sometimes, different parts of the body were sent to different places: for instance, Henry I's brain was interred in Rouen, while the rest of his body was carried to be buried in Reading.[100] Elizabeth

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[96] Also see Taylor McCall, *The Art of Anatomy in Medieval Europe* (London: Reaktion Books, 2023).

[97] Katherine Park, *Secrets of Women: Gender, Generation, and the Origins of Human Dissection* (New York: Zone Books, 2006), p. 14; Katherine Park, 'The Life of the Corpse: Division and Dissection in Late Medieval Europe', *Journal of the History of Medicine*, 50 (1995), 111–132 (pp. 113–14, 130–31).

[98] Paul Binski, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation* (London: British Museum Press, 1996), pp. 63–9. A further practice, foetal excision, was apparently performed in Europe. For more on the practice, see: Park, *Secrets*; Park, 'Managing Childbirth and Fertility in Medieval Europe', in *Reproduction: Antiquity to the Present Day*, ed. by Nick Hopwood et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 153–166. I will return to the subject of the cult of saints and the significance of the fragmented body in them in Chapter 3.

[99] Elizabeth Brown, 'Death and the Human Body in the Later Middle Ages: The Legislation of Boniface VIII on the Division of the Corpse', *Viator*, 12 (1981), 221–70 (pp. 221–2); Park, 'Life', p. 111, 113. Binski notes that the boiling technique first appeared in Germany and was hence called 'the German method': p. 64.

[100] Henry of Huntington, *The Chronicle of Henry of Huntington*, trans. by Thomas Forester (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1853), pp. 262–63.

Brown notes that the place specific organs were buried was significant: '[i]f the location where the entrails were interred was largely dependent on the place of death, this was not true of the sites where the heart and bones were buried'; these sites were picked according to 'the personal sentiments and attachments of the dead persons and their survivors'.[101] In 1299, Pope Boniface VIII issued a bull against the practice and against embalming, but the nobility either disregarded the bull or began to ask for exemption from the decree so much that the papacy eventually yielded, and by the end of the fourteenth century, the bull was practically reneged by Pope Clement VI.[102] A similar story occurred with regards to embalming, with subsequent popes being embalmed themselves by the mid-fourteenth century.[103] Here we see that far from being considered a defilement of the bodily integrity or the unity between the human body and the universe, the partitioning of the body acts as a form of fulfilment for the deceased and celebration for the survivors, even though the decaying body was repulsive. In contrast to the decapitation of criminals, dismemberment here indicates that the deceased was held in admiration. In this practice we see an understanding of the preservation of identity after death and division, perceptions of what Caroline Walker Bynum has termed, in relation to the worship of saints' relics, 'material continuity'.[104] Here, each part of the body would not have been viewed as a residue, but as an undiminished presence of the whole essence of the deceased. Rather like the Galenic conception, then, the soul is scattered throughout the body and not contained in a specific location.

In the same vein, the cult of the saints considered such a special place for parts and relics and their relationship with the saintly identity that, in order to produce more relics, saints' bodies were divided. Walker Bynum and Katherine Park have separately shown that

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[101] Brown, p. 233.
[102] Brown, pp. 221–2, 228–30, 253, 266; Binski, p. 68.
[103] Brown, p. 266; Binski, p. 68.
[104] Caroline Walker Bynum, 'Material Continuity, Personal Survival, and the Resurrection of the Body: A Scholastic Discussion in Its Medieval and Modern Contexts', *History of Religions*, 30.1 (1990), 51–85 (p. 79).

this preservation functioned in conceptions of sainthood at all levels of society, from

scholastic discussions of the unity of the saint's fragmented body to the devotion to a

fragment of saint's finger bone among unlearned worshippers.[105] Park also writes that

'selfhood did not depend at all on the body remaining intact: as in the case of saintly relics,

its personal identity and properties could inhere in its scattered parts as easily as in the

whole'.[106] Furthermore, in accounts of female mystics, the imagery of a porous, fragmented,

and even hybrid body is prolific.[107] However, one might argue that these qualities of the body

in the mystical tradition do not signify the commonality of such images; rather, they signify

their monstrousness or subversive hybridity, because those experiences were supposed to be

rare, unique, and extraordinary. However, medical discussions—especially those concerned

with practical medicine—underline a non-monstrous conception of the porous and

fragmented body, which results in the extension of the porous conception of the body across

the social spectrum. Thus, although the fragmented or partitioned conceptualisation of the

body had distinct significations in both types of treatments (medical and mystical), they did

not necessarily offer contradictory views of the body.

As noted above, dismemberment was a more popular part of the funerary rites in

northern Europe than elsewhere in the continent. Park notes that the difference between

northern and southern Europe in subscribing and not subscribing to these practices lies in

different conceptions of death: in short, death was thought to occur in a process in the north,

while in the south, it was considered to happen in an instant, a sudden separation of the soul

from the body. She writes that in the north, death was seen as 'an extended and gradual

process, corresponding to the slow decomposition of the corpse and its reduction to the

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[105] Bynum, 'Material', 51–85; Park, 'Life', 115–126.
[106] Park, 'Life', p. 119.
[107] Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), *passim*; Bynum, 'Violent Imagery in Late Medieval Piety', *GHI Bulletin*, 30 (2002), pp. 3–36.

skeleton and hard tissues, which was thought to last about a year'.[108] Thus, the recently

deceased was treated 'as active, sensitive, or semianimate, possessed of a gradually fading

life'.[109] This understanding of death also explains why medical dissection took much longer

to take hold in the north, and perhaps I should emphasise here that the case I have presented

so far does not claim that there was no regard for the body in the late Middle Ages. Based on

this conception of death, if there was a violation or pollution (as in ancient Greece), it was in

opening up a body before the process of death had reached its ultimate termination.[110] If there

was a bodily integrity, as Pouchelle says, it was more abstractly and discursively conceived,

rather than simply being about making an incision on a body.[111]

In Part 1 of this chapter, we have seen how health, disease, and treatment, in general,

and pestilence and its transmission, in particular, were conceived in ancient and medieval

medical literature. It shows an understanding of the human as imbricated in a vast array of

entities, entering into networks or assemblages at various points in one's life. Although some

of these interactions might be considered deterministic, the emphasis on maintenance of

health through a variety of means highlights that the human, as one part of such assemblages,

is relatively capable of causing upward and downward influence on other entities within

those assemblages.[112] Furthermore, it is clear that the body was considered as fragmented and

porous in medieval medicine, capable of entering such networks. In the later Middle Ages,

these ideas were further modified and developed when people experienced the Black Death

and its lingering subsequent outbreaks. Plague tracts and recipes serve as prime examples of

how conceptualisations of the function of bodily pores, as well as the theorisations of disease

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[108] Park, 'Life', p. 115.
[109] Park, 'Life', p. 115.
[110] Park, 'Life', p. 126.
[111] Pouchelle, pp. 1, 70-80, 132, 204-205.
[112] An example of upward influence would be maintaining a hygienic domestic environment in order to prevent the production of corrupt air. An example of downward influence would be maintaining a healthy diet to obtain humoral equilibrium, which would make one less disposed to be stricken by diseases.

transmission and treatment, were modified, expanded, and designed for practice by elite physicians as well as popular practitioners, users, and manuscript compilers. The genre of plague tracts can be considered as a subgenre of *regimina*, as it is a fusion of the advice literature of *regimina* and the pathological genre of *consilia*.[113] I will now turn to two of the most widely circulated late medieval plague tracts: one by Joannes Jacobi, known as the 'Canutus', and the other by John of Burgundy (also known as John of Bordeaux), as well as their various Middle English translations.[114] I suggest these works reflect and reshape the earlier medical ideas presented above, but also, more importantly, deviate from them, especially regarding the significance of the body's porousness for transmission of infection. Furthermore, I will highlight the existence of a common discourse and lexicon in Middle English to discuss infection—a discourse which was employed in other fields such as public health and popular religion to engage with other phenomena and their relation to the body, which will be the subject of later chapters.

A number of recent studies have analysed the two plague tracts, many of which examine the tracts' position among plague literature in late medieval England, the variation among their multiple versions, or their influence on early modern English medical works.[115]

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[113] Elma Brenner, 'The Reception, Consumption and Broader Context of a French Vernacular Plague Tract Printed in 1495', *Nuncius,* 36 (2021), 304–24 (p. 305); Danielle Jacquart, p. 232. In one of the very first plague tracts written in response to the Black Death, the Catalan physician Jaume (Jacme) d'Agramunt wrote the 'Regiment de Preservacio a Epidimia o Pestilencia e Mortaldats' (Regimen of Pro tection Against Epideniics or Pestilence and Mortality). The main concern of the tract, in accordance with the Galenic thought, was prevention. Furthermore, the tract explicitly emphasises the interconnectedness of various elements within and without the body. It defines pestilence as 'a contra-natural change of the air in its qualities or in its substance; from which arise in living things corruptions and sudden deaths and various maladies in certain determined regions beyond their ordinary'. The tract distinguishes the current pestilence from other epidemics by specifying the role of air: 'For change of quality or of substance in the earth or in the water cannot cause the pestilence of which I speak here': M. L. Duran-Reynals and C.-E. A. Winslow, 'Jacme D'agramont: "Regiment De Preservacio a Epidimia O Pestilencia E Mortaldats"', *Bulletin History Medicine,* 23 (1949), 57–89 (p. 61).

[114] For a helpful catalogue of the contents of a large number of these tracts in existence in the United Kingdom and Ireland, see Dorothea Waley Singer, and Annie Anderson, *Catalogue of Latin and Vernacular Plague Texts in Great Britain and Eire in Manuscripts Written before the Sixteenth Century* (London: William Heinemann, 1950).

[115] Alpo Honkapohja, 'Tracing the Early Modern John of Burgundy', in *Genre in English Medical Writing, 1500–1820: Sociocultural Contexts of Production and Use*, ed. by Jeremy J. Smith, Irma Taavitsainen, Turo Hiltunen, and Carla Suhr (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), pp. 68–88; Lori Jones, 'Itineraries

For example, Carole Rawcliffe has examined the tracts in relation to conceptualisations of hygiene, while Julie Orlemanski has discussed John of Burgundy's Long Version (which, as I shall explain in detail below, was the less popular version in England) in relation to astrological and moral theorisations of plague.[116] Virginia Langum has used both the 'Canutus' and John of Burgundy's tracts (albeit the Long Version, once again) to examine the relationship between plague and the material effects of sin (i.e. disease), and my analysis will explore another aspect of the relation between plague and the body: its impact on understandings of the porous body itself (which include the issues of causation and the association between moral failings and disease discussed by the abovementioned scholars).[117]

2. The 'Canutus'

From around the late fourteenth century, a movement to translate scientific and medical texts from Latin into Anglo-Norman and Middle English brought about what Peter Murray Jones terms an 'information revolution'.[118] Among all scientific texts, medical works were the most popular in such vernacular productions, many of whose patrons and readers were not

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and Transformations: John of Burgundy's Plague Treatise', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine,* 95.3 (2021), 277–314; George R. Keiser, 'Two Medieval Plague Treatises and Their Afterlife in Early Modern England', *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences,* 58 (2003), 292–324; L. M. Matheson, 'John of Burgundy: Treatises on Plague', in *Sex, Aging, and Death in a Medieval Medical Compendium: Trinity College Cambridge MS R.14.52, Its Texts, Language, and Scribe*, ed. by M. Teresa Tavormina (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2006), pp. 569–603; L. M. Matheson, '*Médecin Sans Frontières*?: The European Dissemination of John of Burgundy's Plague Treatise', *ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes and Reviews,* 18.1 (2005), 19–30; Kari Ann Rand, 'The Elusive Canutus: An Investigation into a Medieval Plague Tract', in *Leeds Studies in English, XLI*, ed. by William Marx Janet Burton, and Veronica O'Mara (Leeds: Leeds University Press, 2010), pp. 186–99.

[116] Carole Rawcliffe, *Urban Bodies: Communal Health in Late Medieval English Towns and Cities* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2013), pp. 45, 61–1, 109, 190–95; Julie Orlemanski, *Symptomatic Subjects: Bodies, Medicine, and Causation in the Literature of Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), pp. 30–31.

[117] Virginia Langum, *Medicine and the Seven Deadly Sins in Late Medieval Literature and Culture*, *The New Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 88–94.

[118] Peter Murray Jones, 'Medicine and Science', in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, Vol. 3: 1400-1557*, ed. by Lotte Hellinga and J. B. Trapp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 433–48 (p. 434). Also see Peter Murray Jones, 'Information and Science', in *Fifteenth-Century Attitudes: Perceptions of Society in Late Medieval England*, ed. by Rosemary Horrox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 97–111.

physicians.[119] Despite proclamations in the beginning of such works that their translation was inspired by a longing to make expert information available for the lay masses, these works survive mainly in manuscripts belonging to the social elite such as aristocrats and the gentry (as well as their households) with an interest in scientific knowledge and, at best, merchants or artisans such as medical practitioners, and clergymen (both regular and secular).[120] However, the advent of printing in England expanded this readership further.[121] This ensured the formation of a 'discourse community' among various sections of the lay population, resulting in relative familiarity with medical knowledge without necessitating university education or even literacy.[122] The translated works rarely exhibited complete fidelity to their sources; instead, copyists/scribes and compilers significantly modified and adjusted works for their intended purposes, which resulted in substantial variation among iterations of the same work.[123] Furthermore, many such translations included code-mixing—that is, combining Latin and English for reasons ranging from the existence of a medical jargon, secrecy and

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[119] Jones, 'Medicine and Science', p. 446. Also see: S. H. Bennett, 'Science and Information in English Writings of the Fifteenth Century', *The Modern Language Review*, 39.1 (1944), 1–8; Rossell Hope Robbins, 'Medical Manuscripts in Middle English', *Speculum*, 45.3 (1970), 393–415; Linda Ehrsam Voigts, 'Scientific and Medical Books', in *Book Production and Publishing in Britain 1375–1475*, ed. by Jeremy Griffiths and Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 345–402.

[120] Faye Marie Getz, 'Medical Education in Later Medieval England', in *The History of Medical Education in Britain*, ed. by Vivian Nutton and Roy Porter (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995), pp. 76–93 (p. 78); Geta, 'Charity, Translation, and the Language of Medical Learning in Medieval England', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 64 (1990), 1–17; Jones, 'Medicine and Science', p. 434; Rawcliffe, *Urban Bodies*, p. 100; George R. Keiser, 'Lincoln Cathedral Library MS. 91: Life and Milieu of the Scribe', *Studies in Bibliography*, 32 (1979), 158–79 (p. 176); Julie Orlemanski, 'Thornton's Remedies and the Practices of Medical Reading', in *Robert Thornton and His Books: Essays on the Lincoln and London Thornton Manuscripts*, ed. by Susanna Fein and Michael Johnston (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2014), pp. 235–55 (p. 238). Peter Murray Jones points out, furthermore, that the perishability of frequently-used texts, and the fact that they would have been readily discarded or repurposed once illegible or dilapidated, must also be considered as a factor contributing to the more pronounced presence of examples in collections belonging to the social elite, who had less practical use for them, and thus were able to preserve them better: 'Medicine and Science', p. 437.

[121] Getz, 'Charity', p. 3.

[122] Claire Jones, 'Discourse Communities and Medical Texts', in *Medical and Scientific Writing in Late Medieval English*, ed. by Irma Taavitsainen and Päivi Pahta (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 23–36 (p. 24).

[123] For variation in plague tracts, see the studies on the genre cited above. For an example of variation in other medical works, see: Peter Murray Jones, 'Harley MS 2558: A Fifteenth-Century Medical Commonplace Book', in *Manuscript Sources of Medieval Medicine: A Book of Essays*, ed. by Margaret R. Schleissner (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 35–54.

decorum, and emphasis to textual organisation.[124] In spite of all this variation, certain concepts regarding the role of air, disease, and the body remained consistent, which suggests the existence of a discourse of infection among the discourse community. As we shall see below, the tracts examined here employ variation yet exhibit consistency in adapting works for practical purposes.

One of the earliest and most popular plague treatises in Middle English is the 'Canutus'.[125] This text was written originally in Latin (of which there are at least two versions), these Latin versions being themselves adaptations and abridgments of another Latin treatise attributed to Joannes Jacobi or Johannes Jacobus, a physician from Montpellier.[126] Jacobi's treatise was written around 1360s–70s, following the first post-Black Death outbreak of plague in the 1360s (also known as *pestis secunda*), itself followed by a centuries-long succession of outbreaks.[127] The English translation was made during this extended period—during which there was either a national or local epidemic of some sort at least once every few years until 1530, which makes it very likely that these translation were made as a result of the continuous ravages of the plague in England.[128] The Latin 'Canutus', the earliest extant version of which was printed around 1480 in Paris, was translated into Middle English at least twice: a late fifteenth-century Version A existing only in London,

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[124] See all essays in Irma Taavitsainen and Päivi Pahta, ed., *Medical and Scientific Writing in Late Medieval English* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Päivi Pahta, 'On Structures of Code-Switching in Medical Texts from Medieval England', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 104.2 (2003), 197–210; Irma Taavitsainen, 'Dialogues in Late Medieval and Early Modern English Medical Writing', in *Historical Dialogue Analysis*, ed. by Andreas H. Jucker, et al. (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1999), pp. 243–268; Linda Ehrsam Voigts, 'What's the Word? Bilingualism in Late-Medieval England', *Speculum*, 71.4 (1996), 813–826.

[125] There is a tract from the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century produced by the English physician John Malvern, physician to Henry IV, but it is in Latin, so I have not considered it here. It exists in London, British Library, MS Sloane 59 and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 147.

[126] Rand, pp. 186–99.

[127] Dorothea Waley Singer dates the Jacobi version at around 1364, but Karl Sudhoff does so at 1373: Dorothea Waley Singer, 'Some Plague Tractates (Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries)', *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 9 (1916), 159–212, (p. 184, 179); Karl Sudhoff, 'Pestschriften Aus Den Ersten 150 Jahren Nach Der Epidemie Des "Schwarzen Todes" 1348. Part XVIII: Pestschriften Aus Frankreich, Spanien Und England', *Archiv für Geschichte der Medizin,* 17.1 (1925), 12–139, (pp. 16–32).

[128] Rawcliffe, *Urban Bodies*, pp. 362–374.

British Library, MS Sloane 404, ff. 282v–293v, suggested as the earliest Middle English

translation; and a Version B in thirteen witnesses, with the earliest version from 1485.[129] I

will discuss one version of each translation.[130] The 'Canutus' gets its name from the

attribution of authorship to a bishop named Knut (whose Latinised form is Canutus) in

several versions of the text (both Latin and Middle English), though this attribution has not

been corroborated by studies of the tract's history.[131] The provenance and the readership

network of Sloane 404 remain obscure. We do not know who commissioned the manuscript,

who wrote it, what it looked like in its initial compilation before later accretions, who

translated the treatise into English, or where it was written.[132] The manuscript also includes

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[129] Rand, pp. 192–3. I have adopted Rand's designation of Versions A and B. Seven of Version B witnesses are printed editions. Rand has posited that a Version B translation in London, British Library, MS Sloane 2276, ff. 191r–199r, could possibly be even earlier than the one in Sloane 404 and the other Version B printed editions, although she does not discuss this claim in much detail (with only a brief remark on her making that judgement based on the handwriting): Rand, pp. 193–4.

[130] The citations from Sloane 404 are from: Joseph P. Pickett, 'Translation of the "Canutus" Plague Treatise', in *Popular and Practical Science of Medieval England*, ed. by L. M. Matheson (East Lansing: Colleagues Press, 1994), pp. 263–82. Among Version B translations, I use the facsimile edition of the John Rylands Library, Manchester, based on the one of the earliest printed editions published by William de Machlinia: *A Litil Boke the Whiche Traytied and Reherced Many Gode Thinges […]*. introd. by Guthrie Vine, John Rylands Facsimiles (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1910).

[131] The postscript refers to a person named 'Ramitti, Bysshope of Arusiensis'; Ramitti is thought to be a scribal error in writing 'Kamitus', Kamintus, Kamiutus, or 'Kanutti', which appear in Latin versions of the text and have been interpreted as 'Kanutus', the Latin form of Knut, and Arusiens the Latin for Aarhus. The identity of this person has not been fully clarified, but according to Joseph Pickett, it seems to be either Bengt Knuttson or Knud Mikkelsen, two Swedish and Danish bishops, both of whom died in the late Middle Ages. Furthermore, Pickett suggests that Mikkelsen's connections with England as a diplomat and a clergyman (if, that is, Mikkelsen was indeed the compiler of the Latin version) might have facilitated the translation of the text into English and the text's subsequent popularity there. Rand, however, following the path of Sudhoff, quite convincingly suggests that the whole identity of a Knut (or someone with a similar name) is a myth possibly created by a publisher after the first printed edition of the Latin tract in 1480, and that the tract is just an abridgment of the Jacobi tract compiled by a publisher Pickett, p. 265–6; Rand, pp. 186–8, 191–2, 191 n. 32. She also supports Sudhoff's assertion that the printed version of the Latin 'Canutus' (c. 1480) is probably the earliest version of the tract available, and that all manuscript versions were produced after the printed version (while at the same time acknowledging the possibility of an earlier, but lost, edition).

[132] We know that further material in Latin, German, and Italian were added to the manuscript as late as the seventeenth century, and that it was owned by a John Weston and an individual called Blaxton in late sixteenth century, and by Gabriel Gostwyke, Minister of North Tawton in Devon in early seventeenth century. Little information is available on these individuals. See 'Sloane MS 404: 15th century–17th century', *British Library Archives and Manuscripts* <http://searcharchives.bl.uk/IAMS_VU2:IAMS040-002112751> [accessed 21 March 2020]. Pickett notes, nevertheless, that the 'literalism' in the tract's translation is reminiscent of 'the first translation of the Wycliffite Bible and the earliest translation of Guy de Chauliac's *Cyrurgie*: Pickett, p. 268. Rand, however, casts doubt on this assertion, highlighting that those translations belong to the late fourteenth century, almost a century before the Middle English 'Canutus', thus making the association somewhat unlikely: Rand, p. 192. Nevertheless, if the translation could be grouped with any translation movement (not necessarily Wycliffite) of text production in the fifteenth century, then it would mean that it might be possible for this particular translation of the 'Canutus' to have had an—at the time—expanding and

an incomplete herbal in English broken into two parts in different parts of the manuscript, which was purportedly composed at the insistence of poor people who wanted to take better care of themselves, as well as an English translation of another plague treatise by Benedetto di Reguardati, originally published in Milan in 1476.[133] Thus, based on the scant information available on this manuscript, we can conjecture that the manuscript might have belonged to an educated, possibly bilingual individual or family. Such a family would have belonged to the gentry and were likely to have had ties with religious establishments (or they might have even belonged to the priesthood), institutions which were interested in medical sciences.

I base the majority of my reading of the 'Canutus' on Sloane 404—because it is possibly the earliest translation—save for a section omitted from the manuscript due to a folio after f. 285v having been lost; the lost section will be discussed using the earliest printed Middle English translation published by William de Machlinia. My argument in my reading of the Middle English 'Canutus' is that contrary to previous theorisations of the interaction between external material (such as air, food, etc.) and the human body, where diet acted as the main influencing factor, in this text, and perhaps in other plague tracts, the role and significance of air has been elevated to a new height. Thus, I focus on air and how it interacts with the body in terms of the transmission of infection, and the consequences this conceptualisation may have on an understanding of the body.

The text in Sloane 404 begins (after the author outlines his intention to help the Christian people) with the seven prognostications of the plague:

> The tokens of pestilence of the pronosticacion be vij[en], the whiche
>
> ffurdewith you shal haue kenowliche. The ffurste ys whan in a sommer

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(at least) bilingual readership if we were to assume that the original composition of the manuscript included Latin and English texts.

[133] Singer, p. 199.

day, the aer often tymes chyaunge, as in the mornyng yt appyereth as yt wolde raen, then after yt ys cloudy, and after wyndy, and namely of sowthern wynde. The ij^de token ys whan often tyme in summer the days sheod derke, as yt wil raen & raen not, & yf thys contynue longe, yt ys for to drede of gret pestilence. The iij^de token ys whan yt appyereth many fflyes vpon the yerth, and þis betokeneth that the aer ys enffect & venemouse. The iiij^or token ys whan the sterrys often tymes yt symeth that they falle adoun, & also yt ys a token that the aer ys enffect, & that many venemouse vapours be in the aer. The 5te token hys whan you sye the Sterre Cornetta, yt symeth that yt dow fflye, and as yt ys hade in Methauris, þis fortuned whan the Cornetta Sterre dow scheow, yt ys a token of mens deth in battelys, etcetera. Vnde this verse:

Mors furit, urbs rapitur,
Seuit mare, sol operitur,
Regnum mutator, plebs peste fame cruciatur.

Th' vj^te token ys whan moche lyttyngs & tounderyng beth, and namely whan yt cummeth on the south syde. The vij^en token ys whane moche wynde & ventosite cumme of þe south syde, ffor they be stynkyng & vnclenly they be. Wher whan thys token appyereth, yt ys to be drede of gret pestilence, but almyghty God of his gret pite wyl holde ys graciouse handes ouer vs and taket & remeuyd awey.[134]

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[134] Pickett, pp. 270–71. The Latin verse roughly translates as: 'Death rages, the city is destroyed / The sea is split, the sun is concealed / Reign shifts, people suffer from the plague of famine'.

Despite being a medical text, the prognostications dovetail with the existing contemporary

discourse of apocalypticism suggestive of an overlap between medical and religious

discourses.[135] One has to bear in mind, however, that parallel reference to essentially

religious notions as well as medical theorisations in a single, chiefly practical text concerning

a particular phenomenon such as pestilence underscores that both types of conceptions

(religious and medical, in our modern terms) belonged to one discursive formation of shared

status and validity.[136] In other words, science included exegesis, prophecy, and scripture.

Additionally, prognostication based on deterministic astrological and meteorological signs

had already been incorporated into the genres of scientific writing, including medicine in the

late Middle Ages.

    Just as existing medical knowledge was modified and expanded in Europe both before

and after the Black Death, rather than being reformulated or revolutionised, the already

present apocalyptic stock met the epistemic demands of medieval culture in the face of

plague.[137] This stock is most observable in responses to the Black Death in continental

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[135] Jacme d'Agramont connects plague and one such apocalyptic motif etymologically: 'It is said that pestilence when truly interpreted means a "time of tempest" caused by light from the stars. The first syllable *pes* signifies tempesta, and the second syllable *te* signifies temps, and the third *lencia* signifies light, because lencos in Greek s ignifies brightness, light, or lum in Latin': p. 63.

[136] The term 'discursive formation' is meant in the sense used by Michel Foucault, which he defines thus: 'Whenever one can describe, between a number of statements, such a system of dispersion, whenever, between objects, types of statement, concepts, or thematic choices, one can define a regularity (an order, correlations, positions and functionings, transformations), we will say […] that we are dealing with a *discursive formation*'. He uses this term instead of terms such as 'science' and 'ideology', terms which are 'inadequate to the task of designating such a dispersion', hence underlining, perhaps, the appropriateness of my usage of the term here. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of* Knowledge. trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (London: Routledge, 1989; repr. 2002), pp. 41–2.

[137] 'Episteme' is also a Foucauldian concept, defined as: 'as the strategic apparatus which permits of separating out from among all the statements which are possible those that will be acceptable within […] a field of scientificity, and, which it is possible to say are true or false. The *episteme* is the "apparatus" which makes possible the separation, not of the true from the false, but of what may from what may not be characterised as scientific'. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, ed. by Colin Gordon, trans. by Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), p. 197. Another description of the term can be found in: *The Order of Things* (London: Routledge, 1989; repr. 2002), pp. xxiii–xxiv. On the cultural stock of apocalypticism, Robert E. Lerner also notes that the Black Death seems to not have stimulated any novel apocalyptic sentiments: 'The Black Death and Western European Eschatological Mentalities', *The American Historical Review*, 86.3 (1981), 533–552 (p. 551). Laura A. Smoller notes that plague tracts form part of a unique historical moment in which science attempted to 'naturalize the apocalypse'. While this characterisation of plague tracts and their 'scientific' conceptualisation of the plague is broadly, disregarding the problematic terminology of science versus faith,

Europe rather than Britain and included traditions such as millenarianism or chiliasm, the

legend of the Last Emperor, the narrative of the tribes of Gog and Magog (including their

connection with Antichrist and Jews, which led to many antisemitic myths instigating

pogroms in continental Europe after the Black Death), and the Fifteen Signs before

Doomsday.[138] Concerning the impact of apocalyptic tropes in various texts: once again, much

like its inherited tradition, medieval culture employed such tropes as a way to represent, make

sense of, resolve, or fight against moments of crisis as well as, in Foucauldian terms,

potential epistemic shifts and changes in material conditions.[139]

Some of the signs in the opening of the 'Canutus'—such as thunders and lightnings,

thick clouds, shooting stars, wars, dethronement, and so on—are commonplace in apocalyptic

material, while some others—such as the presence of flies and southerly wind—seem to be a

blend of prognostic elements and medical ideas (here the hyperactivity of birds, strong winds,

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acceptable, the claim about the uniqueness of naturalising the apocalypse seems to be grossly uninformed, for significant scientific activity, which included prognostication, as already mentioned, took place in monasteries long before the Black Death. Additionally, there was no inherent epistemological distinction between 'science' and prediction of the future, which included the apocalypse: 'Of Earthquakes, Hail, Frogs, and Geography: Plague and the Investigation of the Apocalypse in the Later Middle Ages', in *Last Things: Eschatology and Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Paul Freedman and Caroline Walker Bynum (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), pp. 156–87.

[138] On the legend of the Last Emperor, see: Matthew Gabriele, 'Against the Enemies of Christ: The Role of Count Emicho in the Anti-Jewish Violence of the First Crusade', in *Christian Attitudes Toward the Jews in the Middle Ages: a Casebook*, ed. by Michael Frassetto (New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 61–82. On Gog and Magog, see: Andrew Colin Gow, *The Red Jews: Antisemitism in an Apocalyptic Age 1200–1600* (Leiden: Brill, 1995); Judy Schaaf, 'The Christian-Jewish Debate and the *Catalan Atlas*', in *Jews in Medieval Christendom: 'Slay Them Not'*, ed. by Kristine T. Utterback and Merrall Llewelyn Price (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 245–274; Scott D. Westrem, 'Against Gog and Magog', in *Text and Territory: Geographical Imagination in the European Middle Ages*, ed. by Sylvia Tomasch and Sealy Gilles (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), pp. 54–75. For persecution against Jews after the Black Death, see Eveline Brugger, 'Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Rulers, Cities, and "Their" Jews in Austria During the Persecution of the Fourteenth Century', in *Jews in Medieval Christendom: 'Slay Them Not'*, ed. by Kristine T. Utterback and Merrall Llewelyn Price (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 189–200; Séraphine Guerchberg, 'The Controversy over the Alleged Sowers of the Black Death in the Contemporary Treatises on Plague', in *Change in Medieval Society: Europe North of the Alps, 1050–1500*, ed. by Sylvia L. Thrupp (New York: ACC, 1964), pp. 208–26. Excellent bibliographical references about such persecutions in the Holy Roman Empire are found in n. 28, n. 32, and n. 33 in Brugger's chapter. On the Fifteen Signs before Doomsday, see: William Watts Heist, *The Fifteen Signs before Doomsday* (East Lansing: Michigan State College Press, 1952); Maíre Herbert and Martin J. McNamara, *Irish Biblical Apocrypha* (London: T&T Clark International, 2004).

[139] Foucault notes that epistemes constantly change, thereby distancing the term from the Annales School's *longue durée*, which means that the relatively short-term modifications which are the focus of this study are compatible with the idea of epistemic shift: *Archaeology*, pp. 211–212.

the pernicious southerly wind, and venomous and stinking air), emphasising a non-harmonious entanglement of the human with the world.[140] All the signs concern the air and the weather, even if they do not explicitly refer to winds or air—like darkened skies, the appearance of numerous flies in the air, the stars in the sky seeming to fall down, and seeing a comet in the sky. The author repeatedly highlights that they denote the ominous quality of the air or that the air is infected, and that there are 'venemouse' or 'stynkyng' vapours in the air. Dorothea Singer notes that the 'Canutus' expands on the significance of air in the plague's operation compared to the treatise of Jacobi (although she unifies astrological and more proximate atmospheric factors as 'meteorological', factors I will distinguish between in my reading).[141] This significance concerns both the air as a cause of pestilence and sanitising the air as a preventive/corrective measure. The only tokens unrelated to air (instead connected to meteorological influence) is the fifth sign, where apocalyptic imagery in the Latin verse is used to emphasise mortality, environmental disasters, and deposition of a ruler.[142] There is a long tradition associating pestilence with changes in rule. For example, the sixth-century historian Gregory of Tours asserts that portents of pestilence (including earthquakes, comets, and extreme weather) typically herald the death of a ruler or the destruction of a region.[143] Regardless of the text's readership, whether with or without a degree of Latin proficiency, the Latin verse here functions as evidence for the gravity of the signs, and the Latin language

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[140] Southerly wind was considered detrimental to health, in general. As Galen notes, 'in the climatic conditions in south winds, there is readily putrefaction, for this wind is wet and hot': Galen, *On Temperaments. On Non-Uniform Distemperment. The Soul's Traits Depend on Bodily Temperament*. ed. by Ian Johnston, *Loeb Classical Library 546* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020), On Temperaments, Book I, p. 49 <10.4159/DLCL.galen-temperaments.2020> [Accessed 28 Dec 2022]. For an example of tangible association between natural disasters and plague, see the graffiti on the north wall of St Mary's Church, Ashwell, Hertfordshire, which mentions outbreaks of plague in 1349 and 1350 and the great cyclone of 1362 (carved as 1361)—referred to as The Great Storm, The Great Wind, *Grote Mandrenke*, St Maurus' Wind or St Marcellus's Flood (due to its occurrence on the saints' feast days, 15 and 16 January): 'Decoding the Grafitti: Large Letters', St Mary's Church, Ashwell, Hertfordshire, <https://stmarysashwell.org.uk/decoding-the-large-letters/> [Accessed 4 May 2023].

[141] Singer, p. 183.

[142] Pickett, p. 270. The Latin verse only appears in the 'Canutus', see below for a brief discussion of the significance of its absence in other versions.

[143] Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum*, Liber IX, 5, in *The Latin Library* <http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/gregorytours/gregorytours9.shtml> [accessed 18 July 2020].

seems to have a special role in demonstrating this, as if quoting an older Latin verse corroborates that a great incident (i.e. the plague) is at hand. For those who understood it, the elevated status of Latin would enhance the legitimacy and authority of the text and its claims; for those unfamiliar with Latin, the scholarly language probably gave an air of mystery and foreboding as well as a higher sense of reliability to the text's claims.

After this preamble, we move on to discuss the causes of the pestilence, which are threefold:

> The cause of pestilence, yt cumme be iij maner wyse, for summe tyme yt cumme of the rottys in the loer partes, and summe tyme of the rottys of the hyere partys, so that sensuali yt dow appyereth vnto vs the chyangyng of the aer, and summe tyme yt cumme of bothe, as for to say of the vpper rotte & the loer togiders.
>
> And as for the rotte in the loer partys, as we may sye be ys segge, or ellys of any other thynge particulare that corrumpe the aer in substance and in qualite, and yt ys particulare, & thys may cumme every day.[144]

The corruption in quality and substance discussed here comes sometimes from of the 'aer of dede bodyes that be stynkyng, or ellys be corrupcyon of stynkyng dyches & watters'.[145] Following the Galenic perspective, this form of corruption is sometimes local and sometimes universal. On the other hand, corruption from above is chiefly due to the workings of celestial bodies; the 'impression of the ffyrmament' firstly corrupts the air, and the air, in turn, corrupts people's bodies.[146] As a result, the animal spirit working within the body becomes corrupt, and people get infected. Once again, we see the predominant role of air and in

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[144] Pickett, p. 271.
[145] Pickett, p. 271–2.
[146] Pickett, p. 272.

pestilence. We then move to a section of the text more concerned with practical

symptomology rather than theoretical pathology. When corrupted air (be it due to the

influence from above, below, or jointly together) takes hold over people, the symptoms of the

sufferers are far from similar: some experience fever, and some develop 'apostume[s]'.[147]

The text's delimitation of pestilence seems to solely include symptoms of the bubonic type of

plague, a point not shared by all material concerning the plague.[148]

The treatise then proceeds to address two key questions regarding the pestilence:

namely, 'what ys the cause that on dye & the tother not, and in summe tovne the[r] deyd men

and in another not? The secunde question beth wheter this morbes pestilencial be

contagius'.[149] The author responds to the first issue in two ways:

> Atte furste Y do say that this may fortune of ij[en] maner of causes, i. of the
>
> parte that cumme of, & of the parte of the pacient. And of the parte that yt
>
> cumme of, the influence supercelestiale more directly haue a regarde to
>
> thys man or that man, & in that place [or this place]. But of the parte of the
>
> pacient, for he ys more dysposite to deth then tother, wher yt ys to
>
> vnderstande that the bodyes be more dysposyd that be hotte, hauyng gret
>
> poorys, [than] the body enffect, hauyng ȝlso the poorys stopyd wyth moche
>
> humors. Wher also the bodyes that haue gret resolution, as men that spare
>
> no lecherye, & they [that] vse bathes, & them that swette with labour or be
>
> gret wreth, thys bodyes be more dyspossyd to the morbe pestilencial.[150]

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[147] Pickett, p. 272.

[148] For examples of plague tracts which also discuss symptoms of the pneumonic and septicaemic types of plague, which are mainly included in continental chronicle accounts of the plague (with one example from Ireland), see Rosemary Horrox, ed., *The Black Death* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), pp. 14–26, 35–41, 41–45, 82–84.

[149] Pickett, p. 272.

[150] Pickett, p. 272–3.

Although the author and translators of this text do not explain this further, this statement

implies that there is a particularity in the operations of heavenly bodies; they do not merely

condemn the entirety of the earth and humanity to a constant pestilential force, but they do so

according to complex schemes. As Siraisi has noted of other contemporary medical writings,

these involve variables such as 'position in the zodiac, relation to the cardinal points

(ascendant, descendant, and upper and lower midheaven), position on the epicycle, and

conjunctions and aspects (position in regard to other planets)' relating to the bodies

themselves, and factors such as climate, weather, and season on the terrestrial level.[151] A

person might be more vulnerable or disposed to the 'deth'—to the introduction of plague to

these assemblages—as a result of these influences.[152] Hot bodies, characterised by a

preoccupation with lechery and a tendency towards wrathfulness, and by activities such as

taking baths, extensive manual labour and sweating, are said to have great open pores. The

inclusion of sweating suggests that by pores, the text means skin pores as well as other bodily

orifices. It is as if, albeit not so explicitly, the text is suggesting that infection can be

transmitted via skin pores as well as via respiration, which is the common mode of the

transmission of infection.[153] The entrance of matter as well as spirit or pneuma—or the life-

breath circulating the body—into the body had been present in Hippocratic, and

subsequently, Galenic thought. Galen writes 'that not merely pneuma or excess-matter, but

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[151] Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine*, p. 134, 136.

[152] Pickett, p. 273. Other features influencing disposition are the individual's stage of life and horoscopic details, although they are not highlighted in the treatise: Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine*, p. 110–112.

[153] The Latin version of the tract also corroborates this: 'Et ex parte passi, quia iste est magis dispositus quam alter et corpora magis disposita sunt corpora calida latorum pororum et corpora in fecta habencia poros opilatos malis humoribus et corpora a quibus fit magna resolucio ut homines abutentes coitu uel seruientes in balneis et homines qui calefiunt magno labore uel magna ira': Sudhoff, XVIII, p. 25. Jacme d'Agramont offers a similar explanation in his tract in 1348: The most susceptible to plague are 'those that have a body full of humors, especially corrupt and putrid humors. And also those who, the whole year long, rejoice in eating and drinking much. And those who have frequent intercourse with women. And those who have the pores of their bodies kept open either by artificial means, as those who bathe frequently; or naturally, as those who are oversensitive to hot or cold; and who sweat too readily; and those whose bodies are hairy, because abundance of hair denotes wide porosities of the body': p. 70. This mode of transmission is mentioned by both Jon Arrizabalaga and Lori Jones, but none discusses the origin of such a conception: Arrizabalaga, 'Facing the Black Death', p. 260; Jones, 'From Diseased Bodies', p. 35.

actual nutriment is brought down from the outer surface to the original place from which it was taken up'.[154] This sounds perfectly commonplace, considering that the use of ointments was very regular in ancient and medieval medicine. However, disease is not mentioned in connection with this. It is in the ninth century, in the Syrian Christian physician Qusṭā ibn Lūqā's treatise *On Contagion*, that we finally see an explicit discussion of the transmission of infection through skin pores.[155] Similar to the 'Canutus', he notes that infected individuals exude corrupt air. This air is then either inhaled by the healthy individual or absorbed by 'the whole body', by which is meant 'holes/openings in the skin hidden from the sense of touch and called "pores"'.[156] The most prominent example ibn Lūqā cites for a disease which

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[154] Galen, *On the Natural Faculties*, ed. by A. J. Brock, Book Three, Part 13, in *Perseus Digital Library* <http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0057.tlg010.perseus-eng1:3.13> [accessed 21 March 2020]. For the impact of heat or cold on skin, see Hippocrates, *Aphorismi*, ed. by Charles Darwin Adams, Section V, Part 20–22, in *Perseus Digital Library* <http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0627.tlg012.perseus-eng1:5> [accessed 21 March 2020].

[155] The treatise's original title is *Kitāb fī l-Iʿdāʾ*. Justine Stearns argues that Isidore of Seville's (560–636 CE) *De Natura Rerum* also discusses this issue explicitly: Stearns, *Infectious Ideas*, pp. 42–3. It seems that Stearns asserts this on the basis of William Sharpe's translation, which says 'Then, wherever they are carried, either they fall through our pores and joined together, encompass the beginnings of death for animals […]': William Sharpe, 'Isidore of Seville: The Medical Writings; an English Translation with an Introduction and Commentary', *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society,* 54.2 (1964), 1–75 (p. 66). However, in the original Latin, the sentence is worded much more ambiguously: 'Deinde quaqua feruntur, aut cadunt per loca et germina cuncta ad animalem necem corrumput […]'. Not only does it not explicitly refer to pores at all (using '*per loca*', instead), it presents great leeway for alternative interpretations. For instance, Calvin B. Kendall and Faith Wallis put a completely different complexion on the phrase: 'Then, wherever they are carried, either they fall throughout the region and corrupt all plant life resulting in the death of animals […]'. Original Latin from: Isidore of Seville, 'De Natura Rerum Ad Sisebestum Regem Liber', in *Patrologia Latina, Vol. 83*, ed. by Jacques Paul Migne, col. 1011A, in *Documenta Catholica Omnia* <https://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/04z/z_0560-0636__Isidorus_Hispaliensis__De_Natura_Rerum_Ad_Sisebestum_Regem_Liber__MLT.pdf.html> [Accessed 10 April 2023]. Translation from: Isidore of Seville, *On the Nature of Things*. ed. by Calvin B. Kendall and Faith Wallis (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), p. 167. In the late thirteenth century, the scholar Pietro d'Abano combined the aforementioned ideas regarding airborne transmission and the interaction of skin pores with matter (i.e. absorption and excretion) and presented infection as a result of 'evil vapours, bad and corrupt breath, or a thick and viscous humour that could pass from the sufferer's skin to that of his contact': qtd. in Nutton, 'The Seeds of Disease', p. 21. Still, this does not include the absorption of corrupt matter in the air via skin pores. Similarly, Nutton demonstrates that in classical Latin sources, the general idea of transmission by proximity or 'touch'—in metaphoric as well as in possibly literal senses—is discussed. Even though the semantic ambiguity of the term presents an opportunity to move beyond the Greek theorisations of miasma towards another mode of transmission, the specific mechanics of transmission—whether via inhalation or via the dermal mode—are not addressed, which makes a dermally-oriented interpretation of the texts difficult: 'Did the Greeks Have a Word for It?', pp. 142, 144.

[156] Qusṭā ibn Lūqā, *Abhandlung Über Die Ansteckung Von Qusṭā Ibn Lūqā*. ed. by Hartmut Fähndrich (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1987), p. 24. Stearns also refers to this work in relation to dermal transmission, this time accurately: Stearns, *Infectious Ideas*, p. 71. The word used for 'pores' is '*furā*', which does not have any relevant meaning in Arabic. However, it may be a transliteration of the Greek word for pores, 'πόροι'

operates in this way is leprosy, and, as we shall see in the next chapter, this understanding of

respiratory and dermal transmission of leprosy dominated the late Middle Ages and formed

the basis of multiple measures against lepers in late medieval England.[157] It is unlikely that

plague tract writers were directly influenced by ibn Lūqā, but it is telling that this

understanding of the transmission of infection resurged with successive outbreaks of

pestilence. Indeed, the role of plague in underlining the body's porousness must have played

a part in the resurgence of this theorisation of contagion.[158]

Later sources, once again, fail to discuss this explicitly. For instance, Avicenna

succinctly explains that there are three ways in which the body can be influenced from

without. The first way concerns 'penetration into the body', which has, in itself, three kinds:

first, 'attenuated' matter entering the body 'by its own penetrative power'; second, the human

tissue drawing matter 'through the pores'; and third, through a combination of the two

aforementioned ways.[159] Here, not only can external entities enter the body by force, the

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('*poroi*'), which suggests that the idea may have come from a Greek source. I thank Shahrzad Irannejad for
sharing this point, and her thoughts on the treatise, in general, with me.

[157] Compare with the assertion in Aristotle-attributed *Problems*, which notes that scurvy—which is said to be
more infectious than leprosy but operates in the same manner—is 'contracted through [corrupt matter]
appearing on the surface [of the skin] and being sticky', the exuding corruption of which is then 'inhaled' by
others. The discussion of contagion here does mention respiratory and ocular transmission but not dermal
transmission: Aristotle, *Problems, Volume I: Books 1–19*. ed. by Robert Mayhew, *Loeb Classical Library 316*
(Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), Book VII.7–8, 887a23–40, pp. 237–9
<10.4159/DLCL.aristotle-problems.2011> [Accessed 14 April 2023]. As Francois-Olivier Touati notes, an
understanding of leprosy as a highly contagious disease (which was already present in some but not all
medical writings) became dominant in European sources after the Black Death: 'Contagion and Leprosy:
Myth, Ideas and Evolution in Medieval Minds and Societies', in *Contagion: Perspectives from Pre-Modern
Societies*, ed. by Lawrence I. Conrad and Dominik Wujastyk (Aldershot: Routledge, 2000), pp. 179–201 (p.
198).

[158] In late-sixteenth-century Italy, according to Sandra Cavallo and Tessa Storey, 'a new kind of attention [was]
paid to clothing used as a protective barrier against the elements', as there are 'instructions regarding how to
"arm" the body by donning clothing made of textiles appropriate to both season and air quality'. There is even
advice from 1603 recommending those with weak chests to wear leather clothing, which would completely
isolate the body from interaction with the environment, therefore emphasising the significance of dermal
transmission of infection: Sandra Cavallo, and Tessa Storey, *Healthy Living in Late Renaissance Italy*
(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 105–6.

[159] Avicenna, Book I, Part II, Thesis II, A, ii, 18, 399, p. 231. The theories regarding the epidemiology and
pathogenesis of pestilence among Islamic physicians are predominantly similar to those in Christian lands,
with the exception of a slightly more cautious advice on remedial phlebotomy: Ullmann, pp. 89–92. One
curious theory was put forth by the fourteenth-century Ibn Khaldun, who wrote that dense populations in
congested areas tend to produce 'evil moistures' which corrupt the air: Dols, p. 90.

body itself can also absorb them. Furthermore, we have proceeded from 'pneuma' and 'nutriment' to matter in general, which could also include detrimental matter—even if it is not explicitly referred to. Nevertheless, the entrance of corrupt or infected air is not discussed in the work. Even later, in the thirteenth-century encyclopaedia of Bartholomaeus Anglicus (translated into English in the fifteenth century), there is no mention of such a form of transmission. Indeed, there are discussions of pores of the skin and them opening up (or closing), but they are mainly related to expulsion of humours or the heat inside the body from the pores as well as absorption of matter into the body through the pores rather than penetration of infected air through them.[160]

Returning to the 'Canutus', the text notes that the pores of infected people are blocked with humours. This latter assertion may seem confusing, at first; if infected air goes through the pores into the body, blocked pores must be beneficial, so why is it mentioned when discussing infection? As we saw earlier, within Galenic thought, pores serve to eject waste matter from the body; thus, blocked pores will lead not only to the inability of the body to evacuate its waste, which may, in turn, result in secondary infection, it will also hamper any chance of an effective treatment to get the corrupt matter out. This point becomes more tangible in the 'Canutus' when answering the second question regarding contagiousness: 'suche morbes pestilencial be contagius: for cause that the bodyes þat be infected, the humors cumme out of there bodyes & enffect them that be clene of complessyon'.[161] It seems, therefore, that as well as inhalation, the disease can also be transmitted via aero-dermal interaction. Additionally, the double function of the pores further underlines the fluidity of the integrity of the human body in ancient and medieval medical thought.

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[160] Bartholomaeus, vol.1, pp. 131–2, 134, 345, 346, 357, 384, 389, 392, 427.
[161] Pickett, p. 273.

It is in the advisory section of the treatise where we encounter the greatest interest in the infectiousness of air and the porousness of the human body, brought together in a practical and more tangible context.[162] The tract first and foremost advises the reader, however, to 'forsake euyl thinges & doo gode dedes & mekely to confesse his sinnes. For why it is the hyest remedie in time of pestilence, penaunce & confession to be preferred al other medicynes'.[163] This piece of advice is congruent with the rest, and confession is considered to be a purgative which gets rid of corrupt humours, while foregoing sinful deeds is on par with and connected to avoiding activities which open pores, like taking baths or debauchery. After this, however, we return to the less ostensibly moral advice. It is advised to avoid 'halle euyl aers', such as that found in stables, fields, and streets, around carrion and stinking water.[164] This can be considered another way of spreading infection coming from 'below': this does not principally have to do with celestial influence or humoral disposition, but with an unhygienic way of life.[165] Another piece of advice, mentioned twice in this text, which is connected to the ideas of infected air and contagion is about avoiding congregations.[166] This idea seems to be in direct contradiction to the fervent advocation of public processions, frequent Mass celebrations, and pilgrimages by the clergy in response to plague outbreaks. I shall discuss this tension in Chapter 3, which exclusively studies religious responses to pestilential outbreaks in late medieval England.

Among these pieces of advice, we may notice similarities between the advice found in the 'Canutus' plague tract and medical understandings of the six non-naturals. Many subgenres of medical literature were closely attentive to the healthy regulation of these

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[162] For a work moving beyond the practicality of medical recipes and analysing their aesthetic and literary qualities, see Hannah Bower, *Middle English Medical Recipes and Literary Play, 1375–1500* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022). Also see Julie Orlemanski, 'Jargon and the Matter of Medicine in Middle English', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies,* 42.2 (2012), 395–420.

[163] Pickett, pp. 273–4.

[164] Pickett, p. 274.

[165] This shall be discussed in detail in the next chapter relating to public health measures.

[166] Pickett, p. 273, 275.

factors, and plague tracts were no exception. For instance, the 'Canutus' recommends that individuals stay away from dry air and not sleep in a place with bad air.[167] This advice, which concerns one particular aspect of the six non-naturals—namely, sleep—has been overshadowed by the first non-natural, air, and it is the significance of the quality of air which envelops sleep. Another suggestion concerns avoiding overeating or repletion of the body—a piece of advice which principally concerns one of the six non-naturals, but it is immediately followed by advice against taking baths, because 'a llityl ferment [boiling water] do corrupte halle the body', which is probably another reference to open pores and air.[168] Furthermore, eating a selection of food detailed in the text will help when the weather is 'trubulde' or 'cloudy', both adjectives signifying the corruption present in the air.[169] In addition, in order to clean and disinfect the pores, washing hands, the face, eyes, and the nose with water mixed with vinegar, and in the end smelling the vinegar is advised. Using laxatives to excrete the excessive humoral matter is another recommendation, connected to the six non-naturals, which is immediately followed by lighting a fire in the house to clean the air.[170] This advice seems to be aimed at achieving the state of 'temperateness' that medical authors, in the tradition of Avicenna, ascribed to good air. One unique piece of advice found in the 'Canutus' is about not looking up when the sky is dark and appears infected. When read together with the recommendation to wash one's eyes, they seem to be

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[167] Pickett, p. 277, 274.

[168] Pickett, p. 275.

[169] See the quotation from Lydgate's *Troy Book* in the *Middle English Dictionary*, in which troubled air is associated with infection: 'Thenfeccioun of hir troubled eyr He hath venquesched': 'trŏublen v.', 1.a, in *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. by Robert E. Lewis, et al. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1952-2001), in *Middle English Compendium*, ed. by Frances McSparran, et al. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Library, 2000-2018) <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/> [accessed 16 June 2020]. Chaucer also uses 'cloudy' as an adjective for the southerly wind, which has an infectious quality, in his translation of Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiae*: 'Yif the cloudy wynd Auster blowe felliche, than goth awey the fairnesse of thornes': 'clŏudī adj.' 2.a, in *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. by Robert E. Lewis, et al. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1952-2001), in *Middle English Compendium*, ed. by Frances McSparran, et al. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Library, 2000-2018) <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/> [accessed 16 June 2020].

[170] Pickett, p. 275–6.

rooted in the theories on the anatomy of the eye: the dominant belief in the Middle Ages

centred around the idea that the optic nerve was hollow. Opinion differed on whether vision

occurred through 'extramission of rays from the eye' or by 'intromission', but the anatomic

hollowness of the optic nerve remained fairly unchallenged.[171] Thus, here we see that

pestilence not only can be transmitted via inhalation and absorption but also through another

porous orifice of the body, the eye.[172] Lastly, in an attempt to bring readers closer to the

advice offered in the text, and also perhaps to boost the text's credibility, the author recounts

a personal example about his experience with the pestilence. Due to financial stringency, it

was not possible for the author to flee the pestilence or avoid meeting people; he had to visit

the sick in order to earn money, therefore he was exposed to infection. His solution for

protecting himself was that he 'toke a sponge, or ellys brede put in vinegre, and bared with

me, puttyng to my nose & to my mouth', thereby stopping the 'venemouse thynges' coming

in.[173] The significance of vinegar is its cleansing and antiseptic properties, and it was used in

many medieval remedies as a disinfecting agent.[174] In this section, we finally witness the first

definitive introduction of inhalation as a means of transmission. This advice is repeated more

seriously in the next section, where it is said that one should be careful to 'take no breth of

another'.[175]

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[171] Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine*, p. 108.

[172] This idea was also mentioned by the so-called Montpellier doctor. See Horrox, p. 182. Within the same logic, seeing agreeable sights such as flowers and gardens as well as reading beautiful things, which included meditations on the Passion, were thought to be beneficial for health: Carole Rawcliffe, '"Delectable Sightes and Fragrant Smelles": Gardens and Health in Late Medieval and Early Modern England', *Garden History,* 36 (2008), 3–21; Daniel McCann, 'Heaven and Health: Middle English Devotion to Christ in Its Therapeutic Contexts', in *Devotional Culture in Late Medieval England and Europe Diverse Imaginations of Christ's Life*, ed. by Stephen Kelly and Ryan Perry (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), pp. 335–62.

[173] Pickett, p. 275.

[174] For instance, the early fifteenth-century Middle English herbal *Agnus Castus* (original Latin written in the fourteenth century) includes a number of remedies for wounds involving vinegar: 'Also a playster mad of þis herbe [*Apium risus*; modern name *Anthriscus cerefolium* or chervil] tempted *with* esyle [vinegar]. distroyeth wyld fyȝer and helyth þe cancre. *and* alle oþer woundys. *and* it puttyth awey þe chyllynge of alle woundys': Gösta Brödin, ed., *Agnus Castus, A Middle English Herbal* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951), p. 122; also see pp. 128, 134.

[175] Pickett, p. 276.

The next section of the treatise is concerned with dietary advice. I would now like to analyse some of the remedies provided in the text based on their medical properties. For this, I will mainly rely on Bartholomaeus Anglicus' encyclopaedia and its description of herbs and their medical properties. Firstly, the author notes that pestilence is worsened by hot things, and it is frequently recommended that one should stay away from hot food, such as chaffing, pepper, and garlic. He explains that even though pepper and garlic 'purge the braen of fleume [phlegm] & the spiritual membris of viscouse humors', they produce heat in the body, which becomes putrefied due to the blockage of pores.[176] Following advice against eating fruit (which are mainly moist), saffron is recommended as a beneficial herb, which, according to Bartholomaeus (who quotes from Pliny), is good against swellings.[177] However, saffron is described as 'hoote and drye in þe firste gree' in Bartholomaeus and as 'moyst and hote' in Gilbertus Anglicus' work. Therefore, the logic behind its recommendation in relation to the Galenic theory of contrary treatment is unclear.[178] In the first lines of this section, it is said that the following concoction is good for comforting the heart: saffron, *cassia fistula* (also known as golden shower or purging cassia), and 'planteyn' (which seems to be a herb akin to *Eleborus* in Bartholomaeus).[179] *Cassia fistula* is said to be moist and good for cleaning the blood and reducing the swellings on the throat, while the plantain is said to be a very strong herb of hot and dry nature and good for the four-day fever ('feuere quarteyn').[180] Other herbs

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[176] Pickett, p. 276. The term 'viscous humours' refers to the product of the process of digestion in the unhealthy body, which involves the production of heat by the consumption of said food, its entrapment in the body due to the blockage of pores, its resultant condensation, and its putrefaction. This material is heavy, sticky, and corrupt. See 'viscǒus adj.', in *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. by Robert E. Lewis, et al. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1952-2001), in *Middle English Compendium*, ed. by Frances McSparran, et al. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Library, 2000-2018) <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/> [accessed 16 June 2020].

[177] Bartholomaeus, vol. 2, p. 935.

[178] Bartholomaeus, vol. 2, p. 934; Faye Marie Getz, *Healing and Society in Medieval England: a Middle English Translation of the Pharmaceutical Writings of Gilbertus Anglicus* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), p. 118. The factor of 'degree' signifies the strength in the qualities of a given material; it ranges from one to four, the first being the weakest and the fourth being the strongest.

[179] Pickett, p. 275.

[180] Bartholomaeus, vol. 2, pp. 926–7, 947.

or spices recommended by the text are divided into three groups based on class: for the rich, the poor, and those in the middle. Spices for the rich include ginger, which is hot and moist and is good for digestion, calming the stomach, and removing webs in the eye; cinnamon, which is hot and dry and good for alleviating swellings; cumin, which is used in concoction for purging humours, and is hot and moist according to Gilbertus.[181] Spices for the poor include rue, which dries excess humours; sage, whose function is drying and hardening, and is probably hot and dry; walnuts, which is again good for swellings and expunging corrupt humours; and parsley, another hot and dry herb good for drying humours; and vinegar.[182] For those in between, the recommended material is selection from those accessible to both rich and poor: cumin, saffron, and vinegar.

Based on this selection of beneficial herbs, it seems that the effects of the herbs (relieving swellings as well as cleansing the blood) as well as their power against moistness are prioritised over their elemental nature. Furthermore, the humoral nature of pestilence as a disease seems to be predominantly wet. This is further explained by Bartholomaeus, who notes in relation to the pestilential capacities of seasons:

> Galien seiþ þat heruest [Autumn] is most pestilencialle þanne oþir tymes
> and more yuel *in* meny þingis; first for chaunginge of tyme, for now he is
> hoot and now coold; also for he comeþ aftir somer and findiþ meny hote
> humours þat beþ ful hote bicause of hete þat was in þe somyr; and þe coold
> of heruest smythiþ aȝeine suche humours to þe inner parties and suffrip
> nouȝt hem to passe out of þe bodyes; and so suche humours rotieþ and

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[181] Bartholomaeus, vol. 2, pp. 924–5, 1090; Getz, *Healing*, p. 118.
[182] Bartholomaeus, vol. 2, p. 985, 359, 1024. For walnuts, I consulted: Getz, *Healing*, pp. 132–3.

> brediþ ful euel sikenesse and quarteyns and feueris þat vnneþis beþ curable,
>
> and þat for haruest is colde and drye and inordinate.[183]

Here, Autumn's capacity to engender pestilence is due to the trapping and condensation of heat within the body, which putrefies it and causes it to become viscous. Therefore, we can conclude that the main elemental property of pestilence as a disease is moistness. However, as this moistness results in the blockage of pores, which, in turn, prevents the expulsion of waste, heat also becomes detrimental to the individual—hence the advice against eating hot things. Nevertheless, it is clear that the purgative qualities of herbs were thought to be more significant than their elemental heat.[184]

When discussing phlebotomy, the author mentions explicitly, for the first time, the manifestation of buboes (or 'boche') rather than just swellings. This was perhaps done to highlight the importance of phlebotomy as a crucial form of treatment. When it comes to phlebotomy, pestilence becomes a race against time: 'And halle thoo that stande in suche a case, when he ffynde hymselff so enffect, as sovne as yt may be that same day, let be mynuyshe of blod in good quantite'.[185] Furthermore, the vein cut during the process of bloodletting must correspond to the side of the body the bubo appears on. Another form of treatment which emphasises and utilises the body's porousness is the use of plasters to break the bubo open. For this, mustard seeds are used, which are also used in Bartholomaeus for opening the pores of the body.[186] A further treatment for cracking a bubo is a drink made of 'houselyke, serffenille, planteyn, & a llittyl of suttee', mixed with human milk. As we have seen, unlike the previous section of the tract which was focused on reducing inflammations,

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[183] Bartholomaeus, vol. 1, p. 527.

[184] The 'Canutus' highlights the importance of emotions, the sixth non-natural, in combatting the pestilence—and this time, much like the previous section, without reverting to the danger of foul air. The author encourages the readers 'to be mery in his hertte yt ys a gret remedye for helth of the body […] you shulde not be afferde, but caste halle maner of fantasyes away': Pickett, p. 277.

[185] Pickett, p. 279.

[186] Pickett, p. 280; Bartholomaeus, vol. 1, p. 351.

this section is set on pricking the body. The treatise ends with remarks which reiterates the aforementioned point in the text that the best purgation of all comes from having Christ by one's side:

> And they that wyl be reule[d] after the seyng þat ys rehersyd of this
> contagiuse morbe & sekenes, and wyl eschaped, he shal with the grace of
> Ihesu Criste, that without hym no thynge may be down, the whiche ys
> mighty & omnipotent & gloriuse & laudable & blessed with the intemerat
> Virgine Maria, hys gloriuse mouder euerlastyng, fro the worldys in
> euerlastyng ffor euermore.[187]

As I have tried to illustrate in this section of the chapter, in the 'Canutus' tract, the treatment of the other five non-naturals (apart from the air) is almost always interspersed with air. Infectious air and corrupting wind dominate every other aspect of the non-naturals, as we find in other medieval plague-related works. One might argue that, given the purported dominance of air over the other non-naturals, this is unsurprising.[188] However, an examination of texts unconnected to pestilential outbreaks yet dealing with the topic of the six non-naturals clearly illustrates that air was not generally the dominant factor. In *Regimen sanitatis Salernitanum*, for instance, there are only three mentions of foul air, only one of which highlighting the risk of infection from air or smell.[189] As another example, in Andrew Borde's *A Compendyous Regyment*, written in 1547, there are only three chapters which discuss the notion of foul air; these include the chapter on air itself, the chapter on sleep, and a chapter dedicated to pestilence itself.[190] Moreover, in both of these texts, dietary regulations are the most

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[187] Pickett, p. 281.
[188] Fabbri, p. 49; Pormann and Savage-Smith, p. 44; and Strohmaier, p. 161.
[189] Harington, p. 86, 87, and 154; only p. 87 mentions infection.
[190] Andrew Borde, 'A compendyous regyment or a dyetary of healthe' (London: Wyllyam Powell, 1567 i.e. 1547), Chapter 3, Chapter 8, and Chapter 27, in *Early English Books Online* <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A16471.0001.001?view=toc> [Accessed 22 March 2020].

numerous, which would not have been the case if the most important non-natural had been the air.[191] Furthermore, the fact that dietary regulations against corrupt air seldom made their way into the *regimina* written at a time other than the mid to late Middle Ages further cements the point that diet was probably a more important non-natural than the air or the environment, in general, and the air only became a dominant aspect of the non-naturals when it was identified as the cause of a crisis. Of course, the singular role of air in the transmission of plague and its close connection with bodily pores undermined the idea of bodily integrity, but the crucial role of bodily pores in prevention, transmission, and treatment of plague (through the administration of purgatives or invasive treatments) undermined the idea of bodily integrity further. Thus, the analysis of the 'Canutus' demonstrates an understanding of the body—brought about as a result of the interaction between plague and the human body, which is even more entangled with nonhuman agents and more porous than previous classical and medieval writings.

The texts based on Version B translation of the Latin 'Canutus' have a similar overall layout, except for the absence of the Latin verse at the beginning of 'Canutus'. The reason for this may have been an attempt to make the text more accessible to readers unfamiliar with Latin, particularly as the earliest examples of Version B were all printed. Three editions were published in the same year (c. 1485) by the same publisher (William de Machlinia) with small, yet noticeable variations.[192] The absence of the Latin verse also results in a deflated sense of apocalypticism, because of the aforementioned role of the Latin verse in highlighting

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[191] Also see other scholarly assertions about the predominance of diet over air in note above.

[192] These are *A Litil Boke the Whiche Traytied and Reherced Many Gode Thinges [...]*. introd. by Guthrie Vine, John Rylands Facsimiles (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1910; STC 4589); 'Here Begynneth a Litill Boke Necessarye & Behouefull Aȝenst the Pestilence', in *Early English Books Online* (London: William de Machlinia, 1485; STC 4590) <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A17929.0001.001?rgn=main;view=fulltext> [accessed 21 March 2020]; 'A Passing Gode Lityll Boke Necessarye [and] Behouefull a[G]Enst the Pestilence', in *Early English Books Online* (London: William de Machlinia, 1485; STC 4591) <https://www.proquest.com/books/passing-gode-lityll-boke-necessarye-behouefull-g/docview/2240911698/se-2> [accessed 21 March 2020].

the apocalyptic signs highlighted in the tract. George R. Keiser has suggested that there was a political dimension to this modification, arguing that the 'triple publication […] was occasioned by the outbreak of the so-called Sweating Sickness that followed within two months of the Battle of Bosworth', and, as a result of this simultaneity, 'the three Machlinia editions' may have been part of a political campaign to control the narrative and quash the rumours of an association between the outbreak and dynastic change.[193] This is especially interesting, as one of the tokens of pestilence in the 'Canutus' was regarding monarchic change, a token which is absent in the printed editions.[194]

The printed editions include the material missing from Sloane 404 due to loss of one folio: physicians, it is asserted, must stand at a distance from the patient and close to the door or window when examining people in order not to get infected.[195] The editions seem to be, moreover, less morally charged in this section, for while the 'Canutus'—when discussing those who are more disposed to the pestilence—talks of those who 'spare no lecherye', the editions phrase this as 'men whiche abusen them self with wymmen'.[196] The same phrasing is

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[193] Keiser, 'Two Medieval Plague Treatises', pp. 318–19.

[194] The John Rylands edition suggests the star foresees slaughter in battle, while another Machlinia printed version from the same year foreshadows 'grete pestilence or grete ma[n]slaghter i[n] bataille': Pickett, p. 271; . 'Here Begynneth a Litill Boke'.

[195] Pickett, p. 273; *A Litil Boke the Whiche Traytied and Reherced Many Gode Thinges […]*, f. 3r. Furthermore, patients are advised to change their rooms every day, and often have the windows open to the north and east, as the south wind has a debilitating effect on the body. If the wind is southerly, it is also better 'to be with[in] the hous al day & if it nedeth to go out yet lete a ma[n] abide i[n] his hous til the sonne be vp in the eest passing southward'. The author quotes from Hippocrates' *Aphorisms* that the southerly wind opens the body's pores, which, in turn, damages the hearing and the heart. It is possible that the mention of the afternoon sunlight hints at the neutralisation of the wind by sunlight. This is probably because, as Theophrastus (370–279 BCE) notes, sunlight dries the skin and 'blocks the pores': E. T. Renbourn, 'The History of Sweat and the Sweat Rash from Earliest Times to the End of the 18th Century', *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences, 14.2 (1959), 202–227 (p. 204). Avicenna, as a representative of the continuity of the ideas among Middle Eastern and Islamic authors, discusses this idea in relation to sun-bathing: the sun has the power to block the pores:* Avicenna, Book I, Part II, Thesis II, B, 20, 411, p. 239. *Thus, in our reading of the 'Canutus', while the southerly wind opens pores, going out in the afternoon would prevent pathogenic agents from getting in.*

[196] Pickett, p. 273; *A Litil Boke*, f. 3. 'Here Begynneth a Litill Boke'; 'A Passing Gode Lityll Boke', f. 5v. In the next chapter, we shall see how this moral angle was employed to regulate people's activities within the urban boundaries.

used in a later edition of the text, printed by Wynkyn de Worde.[197] Here, we see attempts at removing abstract suggestions, using tangible, more accessible terminology, and underlying more practically useful advice.

In contrast, later adaptations of the tract, such as the one produced by Thomas Paynell in 1534, the fifth omen is said to be harbingering—explicitly—'deathe, rape, distruction, & spoysynge of cities and townes, danger of the see, darknes of the sonne, change of kyngdomes, & afflictio[n] of the people by pestile[n]ce & famine', all apocalyptic signs restored from the 'Canutus' in Sloane 404 and translated into English.[198] More importantly, however, when discussing the causes of the plague (from above and below), this later translation says that pestilence 'cometh very often fro aboue', whereas the other texts do not employ the adverb. We may wonder if this could imply that there may have been a shift in the diagnostic trend concerning plague from the causes of corruption from below to the ones from above. Initially, Fabbri's survey of plague tracts from 1348 to 1599 does not seem to suggest so (at least on a European scale), unless we include divine judgement as one of the causes operating from above. She illustrates that from the beginning of the fifteenth century, there were a steady growth in the number of plague tracts which consider divine punishment as a source of the plague, and a steady decline in the associations between the plague and astrological conjunctions in plague literature.[199] Keiser, on the other hand, in his reading of Thomas Moulton's translation and adaption of John of Burgundy's plague tract, argues that a popular association between moral degeneracy and astral influence was formed in the

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[197] 'Here Begynneth a Treatyse Agaynst Pestele[n]ce [and] of Ye Infirmits', in *Early English Books Online* (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1509; STC 4592 [formerly 24235]) <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A17932.0001.001?rgn=main;view=fulltext> [accessed 21 March 2020].

[198] Keiser notes that this translation is likely to be based on a French original: 'Two Medieval Plague Treatises', p. 320. My citations are from: Thomas Paynell, 'A Moche Profitable Treatise against the Pestilence', in *Early English Books Online* (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1534; STC 24226) <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A13924.0001.001?rgn=main;view=fulltext> [accessed 21 March 2020].

[199] Fabbri, pp. 184–5.

sixteenth century.[200] Thus, it seems probable that, as Keiser has also suggested, we see an overall shift in emphasis from more physically immediate causes to more distant, abstract, and morally-centred causes in the first half of the sixteenth century.[201] Siraisi also asserts that the surge in astronomical and moral diagnoses was due to the inexplicability of the disease using existent theories.[202] Further exploration of why such a shift occurred in the sixteenth century is beyond the scope of this chapter. Nevertheless, as this section has shown, the impact of the material force of plague in concentrating scholarly attention on more materially immediate causes and means of transmission must not be overlooked.

Despite all their differences in content as well as their various dates of production or translation, however minute they may be, the 'Canutus' family of texts share their diagnostic groundings in the two familiar ideas encountered throughout this chapter: airborne infection, the porous body, and their close association with the spread of pestilence. These ideas form the backbone of the discourse of infection, which is present in other medical writings. In terms of structure, the tracts follow the established formula of the genre (and their source material[s]), but the expansion of the material about the impact of air on the causation of the disease, both in terms of prognostications and proximate air-related hazards, as well as the amplified significance of it in the disease's pathogenesis suggest that there might be, in the particularity of dealing with pestilence medically, two developments in the discourse of infection up until early sixteenth century: one regarding the prominence of the role of proximate air-related risks and the other—closely tied to the former—about infectious infiltration via the pores of the skin. I would now like to widen the range of my readings and focus on John of Burgundy's more popular 'Treatise' in the Thornton Manuscript (MS

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[200] Keiser, 'Two Medieval Plague Treatises', pp. 293, 304–305.

[201] Keiser, 'Two Medieval Plague Treatises', p. 322. This is also strengthened by the less significant popularity of John of Burgundy's Long Version, which includes astrological theorisations, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

[202] Thomas Paynell, 'A moche profitable treatise'; Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine*, p. 129.

Lincoln Cathedral 91), a family miscellany. I aim to demonstrate the persistence of the ideas

regarding air and the bodily porousness in the context of household miscellanies and examine

the interaction between the tract and other relevant and practical medical writings in such

household collections.

3. John of Burgundy's 'Treatise' in the *Liber de Diversis Medicinis*

The mid-fifteenth-century Thornton Manuscript in the Lincoln Cathedral Library (hereafter

Thornton) contains a compendium of remedies in English called the *Liber de diversis*

medicinis, which includes a version of the shorter plague treatise of John of Burgundy.[203]

George R. Keiser has studied the *Liber* extensively and depicts a clear picture of its

readership network. It is mainly concerned with prescriptions, recipes, and the preparation of

medicines for specific ailments, but the 'Treatise' is not always part of it.[204] Thornton's *Liber*

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[203] Lincoln, Lincoln Cathedral Library, MS Lincoln Cathedral 91 (A.5.2), ff. 280–321v. The manuscript is from East Newton, Yorkshire, where its scribe, Robert Thornton, was from. My citations of the text are from Margaret Ogden's edition: *The Liber de Diversis Medicinis*, Early English Text Society (London: Humphrey Milford, 1938). There is also another Thornton manuscript, London, British Library, MS Additional 31042, which does not include the *Liber*; thus, future reference to the Thornton manuscript only denotes the one in Lincoln. The original John of Burgundy tract was written in Latin and probably in 1365. The earliest version in existence is from 1371 France. There are more than twenty iterations of the Latin version in England. Examples of the treatise (in all languages) are generally categorised into two groups: the Long Version, which has a section on the astrological explanation of the pandemic, and the Short Version, which lacks it. The Long Version was significantly less popular than the Short Version. The Middle English translations of the tract exist in over forty examples of the Short Version and thirteen of the Long Version. Lori Jones lists the number of Middle English examples of the Long Version as fourteen, one of which is Trinity College, Cambridge, MS O.2.47, ff. 11r–18v. It appears that she has followed Lister Matheson's cataloguing in naming the manuscript as one including the Long Version of the tract. However, no such tract (nor any other plague tracts) exists in the manuscript, and the folios in question accommodate an alchemic treatise. Thus, the number of the English instances of the Long Version is reduced to thirteen: Lori Jones, 'Itineraries and Transformations: John of Burgundy's Plague Treatise', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine,* 95.3 (2021), 277–314 (p. 285); Lister M. Matheson, '*Médecin sans Frontières?*: The European Dissemination of John of Burgundy's Plague Treatise', *ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes and Reviews*, 18.1 (2005), 19–30. A later collection, Trinity College, Cambridge, MS O.8.29 includes the Long Version as well as a Hippocratic treatise preceding it whose incipit resembles the incipit of the treatise in MS O.2.47, ff. 11r–18v. However, this is mentioned by both Matheson and Jones as a copy of Trinity College, Cambridge, MS R.14.52, so it cannot be the correct manuscript mistakenly cited by them. Furthermore, Matheson lists MS O.2.47 as housing a distinct translation of the Long Version, whereas the tract in MS O.8.29 is a close copy of MS R.14.52: Matheson, '*Médecin sans Frontières?*, p. 23. Jones offers a detailed overview of the different versions of the tract: 'Itineraries and Transformations', pp. 277–314. For a study of the tract's presence in early modern textual productions, see Honkapohja, pp. 68–88.

[204] There are eighteen surviving instances of the *Liber*, the earliest of which is from c. 1330 (which, obviously, does not include John of Burgundy's tract) and the latest from 1530: George R. Keiser, 'Robert Thornton's *Liber De Diversis Medicinis*: Text, Vocabulary, and Scribal Confusion', in *Rethinking Middle English: Linguistic and Literary Approaches*, ed. by Nikolaus Ritt and Herbert Schendl (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2005), pp. 30–41 (p. 39); Tony Hunt and Michael Benskin, ed., *Three Receptaria from Medieval*

seems to be based on an unknown manuscript owned by or associated with the Pykeryng family of Oswaldkirk, another Yorkshire gentry household with an interest in books.[205] This supposed manuscript has another descendant, the sixteenth-century Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson A. 393, which is associated with yet another gentry family, the Finderns of southern Derbyshire.[206] Rawlinson's scribe, one John Reed, highlights the role of the women of such households in acquisition and dissemination of medical knowledge, as well, for he cites Lady Pykeryng as his first teacher of medicine.[207] The role becomes even more significant when we consider a late thirteenth-century surgeon in London named Thomas, whose daughter, Katherine, and son, William, were both also 'surgeons'.[208] These points illustrate the significance of medicine and plague for amateur and professional practitioners and collectors belonging to the landed gentry such as Thornton.[209] While medical books were indeed a component of this network of textual transmission among practitioners and collectors/families, the Thornton manuscript is not a medical compendium.[210] It is a

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England: The Languages of Medicine in the Fourteenth Century (Oxford: The Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature, 2001), pp. 159–92.

[205] On the ties between the Thorntons and the Pykeryngs, see: George R. Keiser, 'Robert Thornton: Gentleman, Reader and Scribe', in *Robert Thornton and His Books: Essays on the Lincoln and London Thornton Manuscripts*, ed. by Susanna Fein and Michael Johnston (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2014), pp. 67–108.

[206] A scribe other than the manuscript's first has added three recipes and mentions a George Findern, hence the connection with the family. Both MS Rawlinson A. 393 and Thornton frequently cite the Rector of Oswaldkirk, which is the link between the two manuscripts apart form shared texts: George R. Keiser, 'More Light on the Life and Milieu of Robert Thornton', Studies in Bibliography, 36 (1983), 111–19; Keiser, 'MS Rawlinson A. 393: Another Findern Manuscript', Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society, 7.4 (1980), 445–48.

[207] Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson A. 393, f. 63v. John Reed identifies himself as parson of Nether Broughton, Leicestershire, and vicar of Melbourne, Derbyshire, but he seems to have had connections with the Pykeryngs as well as the fourth and fifth earls of Northumberland: Keiser, 'MS Rawlinson A. 393', p. 446. On women's medical knowledge as well as their capacity as healthcare providers within the household, see: Ashlee Barwell, 'The Healing Arts and Social Capital: The Paston Women of Fifteenth-Century England', *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History,* 35.1 (2018), 137–59; Diane Watt, 'Mary the Physician: Women, Religion and Medicine in the Middle Ages', in *Medicine, Religion and Gender in Medieval Culture*, ed. by Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2015), pp. 27–44.

[208] C. H. Talbot and E. A. Hammond, *The Medical Practitioners of Medieval England* (London: Wellcome Library, 1965). Pp. 200, 331.

[209] Michael Johnston, 'Introduction: the Cheese and the Worms and Robert Thornton', in *Robert Thornton and His Books: Essays on the Lincoln and London Thornton Manuscripts*, ed. by Susanna Fein and Michael Johnston (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2014), pp. 1–12 (p. 9). This volume offers an excellent and comprehensive bibliography of studies on Thornton himself, his compilation and scribal methods, his manuscripts and their contents.

[210] For an introduction to scientific manuscripts which were actually used in *in situ*, see: Linne R. Mooney, 'Manuscript Evidence for the Use of Medieval English Scientific and Utilitarian Texts', in *Interstices: Studies*

household miscellany, and the *Liber* had not been initially intended to be included in the

manuscript, but unaccountably, Thornton decided to incorporate the whole *Liber* into the

manuscript.[211]

The manuscript is predominantly in English, and in the *Liber*, too, only a few recipes

and phrases appear in Latin.[212] I will discuss the significance of Latin in the text, presently,

but it is notable that Thornton seems to have been familiar with Latin and Latin material.[213]

However, despite his familiarity with Latin, his, and many others', preference for the

inclusion of English texts in his manuscript evidences the wider appeal and acceptability of

English as a language capable of conveying valid scientific information in the late Middle

Ages. This is further supported by, for instance, the decision by the Dominican friar Henry

Daniel in 1379 to translate his treatise on uroscopy from Latin to English, because 'the more

openly taught something is, the more people will take it seriously'.[214] Far from knowledge

in Late Middle English and Anglo-Latin Texts in Honour of A.G. Rigg, ed. by Richard Firth Green and Linne R. Mooney (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), pp. 184–202.

[211] John Thompson, 'Textual *Lacunae* and the Importance of Manuscript Evidence: Robert Thornton's Copy of the *Liber De Diversis Medicinis*', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society,* 8.2 (1982), 270–75. Apart from fragmentary materials such as family records and scribbles (some by Thornton's descendants) in blank spaces between different sections of the manuscript, the rest of the manuscript's contents seem to have been copied by Thornton himself. These include, respectively, romances, meditational and liturgical texts, the *Liber*, and fragments of a composite version of the *Tretys of Diverse Herbis* and a translation of the Macer's herbal. Many folios in the manuscript are fragments, and it is possible that some, especially following the herbal, were lost: Susanna Fein, 'The Contents of Robert Thornton's Manuscripts', in *Robert Thornton and His Books: Essays on the Lincoln and London Thornton Manuscripts*, ed. by Susanna Fein and Michael Johnston (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2014), pp. 13–65 (pp. 15–18). The practice of inserting additional pages into already existing quires is typical of Thornton: Johnston, p. 8. According to the catalogue, the book is made of a single quire and seven fragments ('20³⁶[lacks 36], plus fragments of 7 leaves'): 'MS 91 - the "Thornton" Romances', Lincoln Cathedral Library, <https://archive.lincolncathedral.com/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=MS+91&pos=41> [Accessed 10 April 2023]. On the herbal in the manuscript, see: George R. Keiser, 'Reconstructing Robert Thornton's Herbal', *Medium Aevum,* 65.1 (1966), 35–53.

[212] The Latin contents include the *Psalter of Saint Jerome*, which is twenty-five folios long, a Latin prayer and two meditations attributed to Richard Rolle, and some further phrases or sentences in Latin elsewhere in the manuscript, all of which amount to no more than 'a dozen pages': Fein, p. 16.

[213] Fein, p. 16. Thornton was also interested in other medical texts and has copied John Lydgate's *Dietary* in the London Thornton manuscript, MS Additional 31042, ff. 97r–v. Some material in the *Liber* appear in other recipe collections such as: London, British Library, MS Royal 12 G IV (a medical miscellany from the fourteenth or fifteenth century); London, British Library, MS Harley 2378 (another medical miscellany from the fifteenth century, but this manuscript also contains alchemical content); some recipes found in *Reliquiae Antiquae*, ed. by Thomas Wright and James Halliwell, 2 vols (London: John Russell Smith, 1845); and *A Leechbook or Collection of Medical Recipes of the Fifteenth Century*, ed. by Warren R. Dawson (London: Macmillan, 1934).

[214] Qtd. in Getz, 'Medical Education', p. 76.

being the domain of a certain social group or an institution's affiliates (such as the

university), medical knowledge seems to actually achieve more credibility by becoming more

accessible. John of Burgundy's 'Treatise' is no exception to this. The version in Thornton's

Liber is largely similar to that found in MS Rawlinson A. 393, but its point of insertion

within the *Liber* seems to have been determined by Thornton himself, which means that

Thornton was eclectic even in his selection of the medical material.[215] The tract seems to be a

favourite of household collections, for it appears, in addition to the abovementioned

manuscripts, in the mid-fifteenth-century *Collectanea medica*, a medical collection from

Norfolk and probably commissioned by John Paston.[216] Here, we see plague as a

contemporary component in this interrelated network of transference of texts, expanding

existing assemblages between families, practitioners, individual tracts, and compilations.

The plague tract in the *Liber* organises itself thus: 'The firste chapiter tells how a man

sal kepe hym in tyme þer-of. The secounde how þis sekenes comes. The thirde what medcyne

is a-gayne it. The ferthe how he sall be kepid in it'.[217] Unlike the 'Canutus', and indeed

unlike John of Burgundy's Long Version,[218] the preamble of this tract begins not with causes

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[215] Keiser, 'Robert Thornton's *Liber De Diversis Medicinis*', pp. 38–40. The *Liber* in MS Rawlinson A. 393 is structured differently to Thornton's, but the manuscript includes both a copy of John of Burgundy's Short Version similar to Thornton's, incipit 'Her foloith a good medicyn aganst pestilence in tym off seknez;, nobly devided in iiijth chapiturs, affter one mans opynioun' (ff. 95r–96r) as well as a Version B of the 'Canutus', incipit 'ȝitt the good counsell of an other doctor for the same seknes' provided by the 'bischope of Aurusiens in the realme of Daynmarke' (ff. 96r–99r) in quick succession. Keiser asserts that a 'significant aspect of the Thornton *Liber* is that it is a work of accretive character. [Some] portions of it had an independent existence—[one of which is the] abbreviated John of Burgundy treatise on the plague' (p. 38), Based on this, even though the text of the 'Treatise' in both manuscripts seems to be generally similar, and they probably were copied from the same source, it seems that it was inserted in the *Liber* by Thornton's and Reed's choice. In Thornton, the tract has a different incipit and follows a number of recipes under the heading 'Contra morbum caducum' and preceding another treatise on salves before the herbal, but in Rawlinson, the heading 'Consilium contra morbum caducum' appears much earlier, and the treatise is not the penultimate section of the *Liber*. Keiser also estimates that the precedent for the inclusion of John of Burgundy's tract in the *Liber* was set in the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century: p. 39.

[216] Keiser, 'Two Medieval Plague Treatises', p. 306; Boston, Mass., Countway Library of Medicine, Harvard University, MS Ballard 19 <https://iiif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:7416351$1i> [accessed 24 April 2023]. For more on the contents of the manuscript, see: Marta Powell Harley, 'The Middle English Contents of a Fifteenth-Century Medical Handbook', *Mediaevalia,* 8 (1982), 171–88.

[217] Ogden, p. 51.

[218] For an overview of the text, see Singer, pp. 161–172.

or signs, but with prevention. This shift from theoretical diagnosis to practical

recommendations may explain the more widespread circulation of the Short Version of

treatise (whose English translations exist in more than forty manuscripts, compared to

thirteen copies of the Long Version and fourteen examples of the 'Canutus') as well as its

inclusion in a medical work with a broader—and a notably more practical—concern such as

the *Liber*.[219] The section on prevention opens with these pieces of advice:

> For full many for defaute of gud gouernance in dietynge falls in þis
>
> sekeness, thare-fore þat tyme vse none excesse nor surfeit in mete & drynke
>
> nor bathes nor swete noghte gretly þan, for all thies opyns þe pores of þe
>
> body & makes venomous ayere to entre & þat febles þe body, et super
>
> omnia alia nocet coitus & accelerat ad hunc morbum quod maxime aperit
>
> poros & destruit spiritus vitals[.][220]

Even with the altered structure of the tract, the emphasis on infected air and porous bodies

remains constant. Equally important is the first encounter with Latin in the denunciation of

sexual intercourse, which Rawcliffe suggests is to provide greater emphasis.[221] Other

instances of Burgundy's tract provide evidence of alternative phrasings. For instance, in

Collectanea medica, we see that the reference is phrased as 'lechery'.[222] Trinity College

Cambridge MS R.14.52 uses 'lechery', too.[223] So was the choice of words only for emphasis?

We need to bear in mind that the use of Latin in medieval vernacular literature, in general,

and in medical literature, in particular, was relatively common and, furthermore, served

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[219] Despite the *Liber*'s preoccupation with practicality, there is an added (probably by Thornton) prognostication on thunder on ff. 50r–v.

[220] Ogden, p. 51. The Latin sentence translates as: 'and sexual intercourse, above all else, is harmful and speeds up this disease, which greatly opens pores and destroys the vital spirits'.

[221] Rawcliffe, *Urban Bodies*, p. 109.

[222] MS Ballard 19, f. 44r <https://iiif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:7416351$91i> [accessed 24 April 2023]. Even though lechery was occasionally used in fifteenth-century medical texts, it was inevitably a more morally-charged term than *coitus*: Norri, p. 587.

[223] Matheson, 'John of Burgundy', p. 588 (l. 215). In the Long Version in MS R.14.52, it says 'above al thynges coite or lechery is to be eschewed and fledde': p. 582 (ll. 100–101).

various purposes. Päivi Pahta argues that switching to Latin (especially in Middle English

medical writings) occurs in connection with either technical language (such as medical

terminology, quotations, or employing Latin for emphasis) or the scribe's moral concerns.[224]

In the latter case, Latin can be used as a way to veil discussions of stigmatised topics.[225]

Pahta cites the Latin passage in the *Liber* as an examples of this.[226] However, Rawlinson A.

393 has the exact same phrasing, highlighting that the phrasing was probably not due to

Thornton's choice, but his source's.[227] We also need to bear in mind that Thornton's source

was probably a relatively more technical medical text belonging to whomever supplied him

with the *Liber* (possibly the Rector of Oswaldkirk who was a practitioner), even if, as Keiser

suggests, it had inaccuracies.[228] Therefore, what we have here is a mix of Pahta's two

circumstances: in the first instance, we have a medical practitioner who preferred coitus to

emphasise the physiological aspect of the subject. In the second instance, we have Thornton,

who quotes the passage faithfully, probably because writing about an inappropriate subject in

a more distant language may have taken the edge off the taboo. Based on the contents of the

manuscript, which includes meditational, liturgical, and penitential works, it would be fair to

assume that Thornton would not have had much reservation against condemning 'lechery',

but he chose not to and stuck with the Latin phrasing.[229] Nevertheless, the emphasis on

bodily porousness remains present in this section.

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[224] Päivi Pahta, 'Code-switching in medieval medical writing', in *Medical and Scientific Writing in Late Medieval English*, ed. by Irma Taavitsainen and Päivi Pahta (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 73–98 (pp. 81–96). On the use of medical terms in religious contexts and vice versa, see: Virginia Langum, 'Metaphor as Medicine in Medieval Surgical Manuals', *UGPS Working Paper Series,* 2014 (2014), 1–16.

[225] Pahta, p. 86.

[226] Pahta, p. 87.

[227] Honkapohja, p. 81.

[228] Keiser, 'Robert Thornton's *Liber De Diversis Medicinis*', p. 33.

[229] The word 'coit(e)' appears on its own (i.e. not in a Latin phrase or sentence) in a late fifteenth-century English anatomical treatise based on Henri de Mondeville and Lanfranc of Milan in Wellcome Historical Medical Library MS 564, which suggests that it may have become a technical loanword by then: 'cōīte n.', in *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. by Robert E. Lewis, et al. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1952-2001), in *Middle English Compendium*, ed. by Frances McSparran, et al. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Library, 2000-2018) <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/> [accessed 16 June 2020].

We see another instance of such initiatives in the second chapter of the treatise:

> In a man are thre pryncypalle parties & members, þat er to say the hert, the
> lyuer, the harness, and ilkane of thies hase his place whare he may put owt
> his superflueties and are called in phisieke emundatoria eorum. The
> clensynge place of þe hert is vnder þe armes, the clensyng place of þe lyuer
> is by-twyx þe thee & þe body, and þe clensyng place of þe harnes es vnder
> þe ere & vndir þe throtte.[230]

Firstly, the phrase 'are called in phisieke' does not seem to exist in other instances of the treatise (both Short and Long versions), and it seems to be added either to signify a technical term the scribe did not understand (which, considering the scribe's familiarity with Latin and the simplicity of the phrase, is unlikely) or to show off the technical term, which is one of the functions of code-switching Pahta identifies.[231] Secondly, the euphemism employed to refer to the groin—'by-twyx þe thee & þe body' (between the thigh and the trunk)—seems to be another modification to conceal the sensitive language of the treatise.

The second chapter discusses the causes of the disease. Once again, we are reminded of the significance of infected air and the pores of the body via the discourse of infection. What is more, this time we also see the workings of the infected air inside the body:

> Þan þe seknes comes thus, when þe pores are opyn for sum encheson
> byfore said, þan entres ayere þat es venomous & als fast it is menged with a

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[230] Ogden, p. 51–2.

[231] Pahta, p. 94. Scribal errors and redundant repetitions in copying the names of ingredients and herbs further suggest that Thornton was not learned in medicine: Keiser, 'Robert Thornton's *Liber De Diversis Medicinis*', pp. 33–5.

mannes blode & þan rynnes it to þe hert þat is gorunde of mannes kynde for

to destroy it & sla a man.[232]

This movement of infection results in the other principal organs (the liver and the brain)

becoming infected, the symptoms of which are the buboes. The cure for this is bloodletting,

but one has to act fast, as time runs out quickly:

Who so feles any prikkyng of blode or flakeryng, þat is takenynge to-warde

þat sekenes, there-fore þu scholde blede & þat schuld be sone […] if it

passe nott owte bi blode latyng, it festres in some place & castes a man in-

to an agewe & makes a boche or a kille in some place bi-fore said.[233]

Here, the human body is understood as something not only under threat from the outside due

to its pores, but also as something which has to be pierced to get the corrupt matter out. The

integrity of the human body is, to some extent, valid, if at all, as long as prevention is

concerned, but when it is already too late, it has to be incised. This presents an appropriate

introduction for the next section of the text on bloodletting and operating on the buboes

caused by pestilence. As we have seen, this conception of the body was not exactly new, but

it was enforced more strongly by the idea of infected air in response to the plague.

The herbal remedies provided in this text begin with a drink composed of 'detony,

pympernole, tormentill and scabyous'. [234] Dittany is a hot herb which is an antidote good for

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[232] Ogden, p. 52. In instances of one group of translations of the English Long Version, found in the fifteenth-century Trinity College, Cambridge, MS R.14.52, ff. 153v–156v, for instance, the role of skin pores are explicitly mentioned: 'eschewe hote bathes or stiewes and al thynges that rarefien wynden of muscles of the body and open the pooris of issues of the skyn and flessh. For whan the pooris or issues bien open, the venemous aire entrith, thrillyng the body and defoulyng the spirites. And above al thynges coite or lechery is to be eschewed and fledde'. L. M. Matheson, 'John of Burgundy: Treatises on Plague', in *Sex, Aging, and Death in a Medieval Medical Compendium: Trinity College Cambridge MS R.14.52, Its Texts, Language, and Scribe*, ed. by M. Teresa Tavormina (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2006), pp. 569–603 (p. 582). For the Latin Long Version, in which there is no mention of skin, see: Karl Sudhoff, 'Pestschriften Aus Des Ersten 150 Jahren Nach Der Epidemie Des „Schwarzen Todes" 1348. III. Aus Niederdeutschland, Frankreich Und England', *Archiv für Geschichte der Medizin,* 5.1 (1911), 36–87 (p. 63).
[233] Ogden, p. 52.
[234] Ogden, p. 53.

drawing out venom when drunk or laid to wounds; it is also used to 'bryngeþ oute þe

secoundyne, þe bagge þat þe child is inne in þe modir, and bryngeþ out a deed childe of þe

mooder wombe'.[235] It is curious that the attitude toward the afterbirth, a miscarriage, venom,

and corrupt pestilential humours in the *Liber* seems to be of the same quality in the medical

logic: a miscarriage is just another detrimental matter which has to be brought out of the body

to preserve health. Dittany has also the following property:

> dryueþ and putteþ out yre out of þe body. Þerfore bestis ysmyten wiþ arwes
>
> eten þerof and druyeþ þe iren out of þe body; for þis herbe haþ a maner
>
> might of werre to dryue out arowes and dartes and quarelles, as Ysider
>
> [Isidore of Seville] seiþ.[236]

This property of dittany is particularly significant when we consider that the image of a

shooting arrow was a widespread iconographic metaphor for an outbreak of plague in post-

Black Death medieval art, literature, and parish-level religious culture. Not only does the

metaphor appear in chronicles, such as Gabriel de Mussis of Piacenza's account of the plague

in Europe in 1348, to describe the symptomatic buboes, there are depictions of the figure of

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[235] Bartholomaeus, vol. 2, p. 942. The use of the herb for 'excision of the fetus' goes back to Hippocrates: Hippocrates, *Coan Prenotions. Anatomical and Minor Clinical Writings*. ed. by Paul Potter, *Loeb Classical Library 509* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), Excision of the Fetus, p. 373 <10.4159/DLCL.hippocrates_cos-excision_fetus.2010> [Accessed 28 March 2022]; Hippocrates, *Generation. Nature of the Child. Diseases 4. Nature of Women and Barrenness*. ed. by Paul Potter, *Loeb Classical Library 520* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), Nature of Women, pp. 231, 241, 377 <10.4159/DLCL.hippocrates_cos-nature_women.2012> [Accessed 28 March 2022]; Hippocrates, *Diseases of Women 1–2*. ed. by Paul Potter, *Loeb Classical Library 538* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), Diseases of Women 1, pp. 109, 157, 179–81, 191, 195 <10.4159/DLCL.hippocrates_cos-diseases_women_i.2018> [Accessed 28 March 2022]. Trinity College Cambridge, MS R.14.52 uses 'beteyne' or betony or bishop's wort, a herb also good for wounds, shards of bone inside a wound, a swollen penis, nosebleed, headache, toothache, coughs, gout, intoxication, as well as a whole range of eye and ear problems. Perhaps due to a similar spelling, this herb has, on occasion, been mixed-up with dittany and thus made it to discussions of plague, but dittany is cited much more frequently in relation with plague: Matheson, 'John of Burgundy', p. 591; Brödin, pp. 133–5; Peter Murray Jones, 'Harley MS 2558', p. 47. For alternative spellings of both names in sources, see: Tony Hunt, *Plant Names of Medieval England* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1989), pp. 51, 101.

[236] Bartholomaeus, vol. 2, p. 943. In *Agnus Castus*, dittany is also said to be a laxative as well as being good against dropsy: Brödin, p. 149. For the quoted discussion in Isidore, see: Stephen A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach, and Oliver Berghof, ed., *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), XVII.ix.29 (p. 351).

Death shooting an arrow (previously carrying a scythe), of an arrow of plague representing the wrath of God, and another one of the Virgin protecting humanity from a barrage of arrows signifying the divine punishment in the form of pestilence.[237] Arrows also acted as a link between the plague and saints invoked for protection, namely Saint Sebastian—who was shot by a torrent of arrows, yet survived—and Saint Roch—who contracted the plague and recovered. More in line with the material so far discussed, a comet—one of the omens of the plague, could also be imagined as an arrow being shot at the earth. As John Block Friedman notes, this imagery dates back to ancient Greece, where Apollo sends arrows of plague upon people in the *Iliad*, and depictions of Saint Sebastian had already been present in pre-plague iconography, but the imagery achieved new currency after the plague.[238] In Norwich, for example, a stained glass was commissioned to highlight the omnipresence of death by Robert Jannys, mayor of Norwich in the early sixteenth century, depicting 'a man in his winding sheet, sitting in order to be shot dead with arrows', accompanied by the figure of Death by his side, with the caption, 'Jesu miserere, Fili Dei, miserere mei'.[239] Below the window, the following verse serves to drive the point home:

> For all, Welth, Worship and Prosperite
>
> Ferce Death ys cum, and rested [arrested] me,
>
> For Jannys praise God, I pray you all,
>
> Whose Acts do remayne a Memoriall.[240]

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[237] Horrox, p. 15–18; John Block Friedman, '"He hath a thousand slayn this pestilence": the Iconography of the Plague in the Late Middle Ages', in *Social Unrest in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. by Francis X. Newman (Binghamton: Medieval & Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1986), pp. 75–112; Paul Perdrizet, *La Vierge de miséricorde: étude d'un thème iconographique* (Paris: Albert Fontemoing Éditeur, 1908), pp. 107–136.

[238] Friedman, 'Iconography', p. 80.

[239] Francis Blomefield, *An Essay Towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk*, 11 vols (London: W. Miller, 1806), vol 4, part 2, p. 229. The text can be roughly translated as 'Have mercy, Jesus; O Son of God, have mercy on me'.

[240] Blomefield, p. 230.

I shall focus on iconography in more detail in Chapter 3; nevertheless, it is vital to draw attention to the fact that the imagery seems to have seeped into multiple media so much that it has literalised the metaphor in medical remedies chosen for the plague. This particular use of dittany is not haphazard, for the herb also appears elsewhere in the *Liber* as well as in other medical works and herbals as medicine to draw out thorn or iron (probably an iron arrow) and as a last resort for a wound unhealed by other herbs.[241] Thus, the plague, or rather, the buboes, must have been medically comparable to the wound of an arrow for a remedy for arrowheads to be prescribed for it. The body was, not just figuratively, but literally, pierced by the disease. Apart from the religious significance of the arrow imagery and the shape of the wounds, the corrupt air can also be imagined as an arrow penetrating the body through the pores, a speculation which might have augmented the gravity of the situation in the cultural mindset.

The pimpernel, the second herb in the recipe, is a cold herb used in Gilbertus for swellings in the stomach, much like the tormentil, the third herb.[242] Tormentil is also said to be used in bathwater when treating the peritoneum and kidney stones, but I am not sure of its function; it may be to relieve the swellings or buboes or to facilitate purgation, as Gilbertus usually follows the tormentil bath with bloodletting.[243] The last herb, scabious, is another cold herb used as a defying medicine to break down 'morbid matter or humours', which, in this case, has probably the function of breaking down the corrupt matter in the buboes.[244] Unlike in the previous tracts, the focus here is on purgation as well as the remedies' elemental properties, for the coldness of the herbs is supposed to tackle the heat, while the purgative property unblocks pores. Similar to them, however, there is advice to stay away

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[241] Ogden, p. 46, 72; Warren R. Dawson, ed., *A Leechbook or Collection of Medical Recipes of the Fifteenth Century* (London: Macmillan, 1934), p. 319; E. Ruth Harvey, ed., *The Court of Sapience* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), p. 45 (l. 1306); Brödin, p. 149.

[242] Getz, *Healing*, p. 185, 262.

[243] Getz, *Healing*, p. 238, 251, 270,

[244] Getz, *Healing*, p. 87; 'defying medicine', in Norri, p. 646.

from eating too much, especially too much red meat, as well as recommendations for using vinegar.[245]

4. Conclusion

This chapter has discussed three main points in its examination of certain concepts in the history of medicine and iterations of two plague treatises in Middle English. First, the body, throughout the history of medicine within the Hippocratic/Galenic theoretical framework, has been understood simultaneously a porous and as an enclosed entity. This resulted in conflicting conceptions of disease and its modes of transmission, treatments, and, more generally, the position of the human being in the universe. In its journey from ancient Greece and Rome to the Middle East and North Africa, and then to Western Europe, the body became more prominently porous and fragmented as medical theory became more detailed and concerned with practical issues. Second, there seems to be a minute, yet unique modification in the discourse of infection, the understanding of the plague—and more generally, disease—as a result of the succession of outbreaks during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. This modification concerns the role of infected air and its interaction with the porous body in the context of the transmission of disease, whereby it has become possible for infected air to penetrate the pores of the skin and infect an individual. This change in understanding has resulted in a preoccupation with air among various strata of society, from theoretical understandings of pestilence, its causes, its contagiousness, and its treatments to practical, quick remedies offered in plague tracts known to people at lower levels of the social hierarchy as well as those at the top. A further consequence of this preoccupation manifests itself in public health measures which engage larger sections of the population, especially the urban-dwelling population who were also the ones struggling with outbreaks of pestilence more seriously and frequently. This area will be covered in the next chapter. Third,

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[245] Ogden, p. 53.

far from being disconnected from the concerns of the general public and being dominated by university-level physicians, the medical discourse was enmeshed in the cultural mindset of its time, so much so that it manifests itself in the treatments offered for the plague. This means that medicine—as a scientific discourse—did, firstly, participate in a dynamic interaction with outbreaks of pestilence and their cultural impact in the formulation, verification, and circulation of the statements it produced and reflected, and secondly, that it was accessible to the general public and partook in other aspects of medieval life, including people's day-to-day concerns, being also shaped by their experience, as a result.

Chapter Two – Fighting Infection: Bodily Integrity and Public Health Measures

In the previous chapter, I examined the impact of plague on understandings of pestilence's transmission in the late-fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, which emphasised the role of air in contagion as well as the porousness of the human body. In this chapter, I focus on the relationship between plague and understandings of the body on a larger scale, involving how plague impacted the analogy drawn between the individual body and the civic body. I examine public health measures employed by civic authorities as well as the local gentry in the face of not just pestilence but corruption and infection in general. Not only do these measures illustrate the employment of the discourse of infection in understanding pestilence on the urban, communal, and familial levels, they also reveal distinct modes in combatting infection. They highlight a continued understanding of infection as air-mediated, and of bodily porousness, in at least three coinciding and interconnected modes encompassing various social strata: the modes of excision, containment, and inverted excision.

The first of these modes is based on the previous chapter's examination of how pestilence was contracted and treated medically. Contraction involved the violation of bodily integrity via the entrance of corrupt or pestilential air through the bodily pores, and treatment entailed a further violation of bodily integrity through the excision or purgation of corrupt matter via surgical treatment, phlebotomy, or bubo-bursting plasters and drugs with regards to the individual body. The extension of this model to the civic space would mean the penetration of infected air through the city boundaries, combatted by the expulsion of the infected or the infectious from the city (as the civic form of the body). This mode is referred to hereafter using the shorthand 'excision'. The second mode concerns containment of corruption to a limited area of the body, thereby adapting to the violation of bodily integrity

(hereafter referred to as the mode of 'containment'). This mode manifests itself most prominently in public health measures against plague and the Sweating Sickness (both of which were referred to as pestilences), which focussed on isolating infected and infectious groups within certain parts of the civic body. The third mode, found in individual responses to outbreaks in cities, inverts the first mode, meaning that it seeks to excise the healthy body or bodies (or parts thereof) from the corrupt body or bodies. I will refer to it hereafter as the 'inverted excision' mode. While in terms of the individual body, the mode of excision (the first mode) was predominantly employed, in the case of the civic body, the other two modes were more often applied or followed. I argue that one of the most significant factors in such incohesive applications of these modes is the material power of pestilence as a nonhuman agent, which made the application of the first mode at the communal level unfeasible. The contagiousness, high mortality, and rapid progression of the diseases meant that there was a very small window of opportunity to excise the infected from the civic body. The coincidence of these three modes resulted in further destabilisation of the notion of bodily integrity and strengthened the porousness of the individual as well as the communal bodies in late medieval thought.

To identify the modes, I examine the records of the measures taken in order to combat infected air in general and pestilence in particular before and after the Black Death. This will illustrate a rise in the geographical spread of policies concerned with bodily porousness and transmission of disease via air in English towns. In terms of the material discussed here, I will narrow the focus to East Anglia as, firstly, the development of a sophisticated and extensive civic and parochial structure before the Black Death has made available a substantial, detailed surviving collection of records at the parish level. Secondly, the Black Death had a devastating impact on the densely populated region, which allows me to examine the consequences of outbreaks in other areas, such as church art and dramatic performances, in

later chapters. I will, however, occasionally complement my findings with material from other locations in Britain in order to strengthen my argument. The material discussed here will engage the Foucauldian notions of biopolitics and governmentality presented in the introduction, i.e. the measures which aimed 'to conduct individuals throughout their lives by placing them under the authority of a guide'.[1] As noted in the introductory chapter, the authority mentioned here is multiple and not concentrated in a single, unified institution. In the words of Paul Rabinow and Nicholas Rose, the 'strategies and configurations' in these modes of conducting individuals, which are based on forms of 'truth discourse[s] about living beings', seek to implement 'modes of subjectification, in which individuals can be brought to work on themselves, under certain forms of authority'.[2] Thus, not only do we need to pay attention to the directives issued by national and local authorities, we need to consider the ways individuals regulated and were instructed to regulate themselves when it came to corruption, infection, and disease. Hence, there is an imperative to engage with material concerning the government of the self apart from civic ordinances. To that effect, I will analyse individuals' responses to pestilence in the epistolary record of the Paston and Cely families.

1. First Mode of Fighting Infection: Excision

A. The Individual and the Civic Bodies

I shall begin with a discussion of the relation between the individual body and the civic body, which structures the mode of excision (the first mode of fighting infection). The analogy drawn between the two bodies allows the medical modes of regulating the body discussed in the previous chapter to find their counterparts in public health measures implemented in medieval towns such as Norwich. The analogy is in continuation of the macrocosmic

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[1] Michel Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*. trans. Robert Hurley et al. ed. by Paul Rabinow, *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, 1954–1984* (New York: The New Press, 1997), p. 67.
[2] Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose, 'Biopower Today', *BioSocieties,* 1 (2006), 195–217 (pp. 203–4).

influence on the human body introduced in the previous chapter. Just as the individual body was understood as a microcosm (or *minor mundus*) paralleling the macrocosm of the universe, the city was also considered a microcosm, following the same principles governing the universe. Fusing the two similes, the individual body and the civic body were also likened, the individual body being the microcosm of the civic macrocosm. The twelfth-century French theologian Alain de Lille summarises this combined analogy well:

> […] in heaven […] the eternal commander has his imperial abode; from all eternity the order had gone out from him that each and every thing should be inscribed and made known in the book of his Providence. […] The image of this perfectly organized state shines forth in man. Wisdom, that gives orders, rests in the citadel of his head and the other powers, like demi-goddesses, obey her as if she were a goddess. For native ability, power of reasoning, as well as the faculty of recalling the past dwell in the various compartments of the head and obey Wisdom with enthusiasm. In the heart, as in the middle of the earthly city, Magnanimity has taken up her abode; she has sworn military allegiance to Wisdom, as commander-in-chief, and carries out operations according to the decisions of Wisdom's command. The loins like the city's outskirts, give the lower portions of the body wilful desires; they do not dare to oppose the orders of Magnanimity but obey her will. In this state, then, the role of commander is assumed by wisdom, the likeness of administrator by Magnanimity, while desire appropriates the image of the one obeying. In other things, too, the form of the human body takes over the image of the universe.[3]

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[3] Alain de Lille, *Alan of Lille: The Plaint of Nature*. trans. James J. Sheridan (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1980), pp. 120–22.

Here, not only do we see the reflection of the structure of the universe in the city and the individual, but the reformulation (and once again, fusion) of the Aristotelian and Galenic discussions of the principal members of the human body. The city's identity, just like that of the human, is distributed in its various principal parts in the Galenic fashion, but the vital, supreme organs (like the head and the heart) are hierarchised and located at a higher position or at the centre and the subservient organs located on the periphery, in a broadly Aristotelian sense.[4] Political thinkers such as the twelfth-century John of Salisbury expressed the same analogy—in fact, he is often credited as the first thinker who explicitly used the body metaphor not only to signify the universe but also the city (or body politic), which was reflected by later political thinkers such as the fourteenth-century Sir John Fortescue.[5] It was Fortescue who took this analogy to heart and used it to justify a theorisation of desirable government while depriving dwellers on the periphery from even the status of humanity:

> […] a people does not deserve to be called a body whilst it is acephalous, that is, without a head. Because, just as in natural things, what is left over after decapitation is not a body, but what we call a trunk, so in political things, a community without a head is not by any means a body.[6]

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[4] As a sidenote, in the discussion of the well-structured city, we meet the tetradic organising principle of the previous chapter in illustrations of the ideal city, Jerusalem, in which the city is 'foursquare, its length the same as its width', according to the Book of Revelation (the tetradic principles discussed in the previous chapter derived from ancient Greece, contrastingly). However, this was not the only way to depict Jerusalem; an alternative, more frequent design was a circular Jerusalem, which, historically, goes back to the circular design of Iron Age hillforts, at the latest. Nevertheless, it more probably had its discursive roots in the idea of the circle as the perfect shape, which had recurrence in ancient geometry. Some medieval illustrators even combined the two designs. Furthermore, although the designs seldom appeared in real urban planning, they were used to bolster the image of real cities in medieval description of cities. Another feature of such aspiring designs was the cross-shaped main streets planning, which did appear in real cities (see below): Revelation 21:16; Keith D. Lilley, *City and Cosmos: The Medieval World in Urban Form* (London: Reaktion Books, 2009), pp. 15–30. Also see pp. 7–8, 139–40.

[5] John of Salisbury, *The Letters of John of Salisbury Volume I: The Early Letters (1153-1161)*. ed. by W. J. Millor, H. E. Butler, and C. N. L. Brooke. 2 vols. Vol. 1 (London: Nelson, 1955), p. 181; John of Salisbury, *John of Salisbury: Policraticus*. ed. by Cary J. Nederman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 66.

[6] John Fortescue, *Sir John Fortescue: On the Laws and Governance of England*. ed. by Shelley Lockwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 20. Sir John's version of Alain de Lille's cosmic analogy

In addition, the fortification of towns and the position of hospitals, particularly leper hospitals, on the outskirts of towns invests the civic body with integrity, completing the creation of the city by enclosing it within a kind of protective skin just as Bartholomaeus describes the body in medical terms. Claire Weeda notes that descriptions of city walls and turrets feature in the genre of urban panegyrics significantly, an assertion which cements the idea that walls played a prominent role in the formation of the town's bodily integrity.[7] This conception of the civic body reinforces, in the words of Roberta Gilchrist, 'symbolic and physical boundaries which demarcated different social, economic and administrative traditions' as well as 'social classification of bodies as healthy or diseased, pious or sinful'.[8] Moreover, in this scheme of things, the organs on the periphery are bound to obey the supreme members, for as Alain notes:

> In air, as in the centre of the city, the celestial army of angels carry on the battle and, in the capacity of deputies, assiduously extend their protection to man. Man, however, like a foreigner, living on the outskirts of the universe, does not refuse to show obedience to the hosts of angels. In this state, then, God gives commands, the angels carry them out, and man obeys.[9]

The analogy had significant consequences for how the city itself was considered, as well. In a Latin sermon the fourteenth-century Benedictine Robert Rypon of Durham quotes Robert

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is found in pp. 20–1, 132. He does not specifically outline the types of people such peripheral groups constitute, but he generally views the 'ruled' or 'subjects' as analogous to bodily sinews: p. 21.

[7] Claire Weeda, 'Cleanliness, Civility, and the City in Medieval Ideals and Scripts', in *Policing the Urban Environment in Premodern Europe*, ed. by Carole Rawcliffe and Claire Weeda (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2019), pp. 39–68 (p. 47).

[8] Roberta Gilchrist, 'Medieval Bodies in the Material World: Gender, Stigma and the Body', in *Framing Medieval Bodies*, ed. by Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), pp. 43–61 (p. 47); Philippa Maddern, 'Order and Disorder', in *Medieval Norwich*, ed. by Carole Rawcliffe and Richard Wilson (London: Hambledon and London, 2004), pp. 189–212 (p. 194); Gervase Rosser and E. Patricia Dennison, 'Urban Culture and the Church 1300–1540', in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, ed. by D. M. Palliser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 335–70 (pp. 343–4).

[9] Alain de Lille, p. 120. Also see Michael Camille, 'The Image and the Self: Unwriting Late Medieval Bodies', in *Framing Medieval Bodies*, ed. by Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), pp. 62–99 (p. 68).

Grosseteste of Lincoln that the individual body 'is as it were a town, in which his bodily members are like the houses, his mouth, eyes and ears like the town gates, through which the populace enters and goes out', and that the ruler of this town is 'God himself'.[10] In another field, a particular type of *mappamundi* (or the map of the world) known as the Noachid, tripartite, or T–O maps in which the world was divided into three parts based on Noah's bequest to his sons (which echoes the Trinity), the T was thought to resemble a crucifix, 'symbolising [the earth's] salvation by Christ's sacrifice'.[11] This led to a number of maps such as the thirteenth-century Ebstorf map and the Hereford map (dating back to the beginning of the fourteenth century) depicting Christ as fused with the world itself, with his head at the top of the map, his hands on each side, and his feet at the bottom in the Ebstorf map.[12] Thus, the very act of living on earth could be thought of as participating in the body of Christ. Similar to the extension of the macrocosm of the universe to the microcosm of the city, the city itself (with its ideal being Jerusalem) was thought of as not just a body, but Christ's body. This is why in some cities, according to Lilley, orthogonal and proportioned layout of streets became the focus of attention, not only aspiring to bring celestial order into the city but also inevitably designing cross-shaped streets which was portrayed in an idealised description of twelfth-century Chester.[13] Lilley notes that this is not simply marking a cross

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[10] Gerald R. Owst, *Literature and the Pulpit in Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 29–30.

[11] Evelyn Edson, *Mapping Time and Space: How Medieval Mapmakers Viewed Their World* (London: British Library, 1997), p. 5.

[12] Another scheme presented in the *mappaemundi* was the mandorla-shaped world, which connected the whole world to the side wound of Christ. We shall discuss the shape in more detail in terms of its meditational and prophylactic significance in the next chapter. Also see: David Woodward, 'Medieval *Mappaemundi*', in *History of Geography, Volume One: Cartography in Prehistoric, Ancient, and Medieval Europe and the Mediterranean*, ed. by J. B. Harley and David Woodward (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 286–370.

[13] Lilley, *City and Cosmos*, pp. 23–5, 62–72. Idealised portrayals of cities constituted a genre of their own, with its precedent going back to antiquity. These works not only describe an idealised geography of the city, but also recount the perfect conduct and sanguine temperament of citizens (note the medically-rooted characteristics) alongside immaculate administrative structure. A similar work depicting London as such is the twelfth-century *Descriptio nobilissimi civitatis Londoniae* written by William Fitzstephen: Weeda, pp. 45–7, 56. Also see John K. Hyde, 'Medieval Descriptions of Cities', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library,* 48.2 (1966), 308–40.

on the city; rather, it is making the sign of the cross on the civic body—a devotional act
which extends to all citizens living and moving within the urban environment—as well as
embedding Christ in the city by mapping his body on the design of the city.[14]

Many civic rites and ceremonies reflected this embodiment. In the late fifteenth-
century *The Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*, Bristol's mayoral inauguration ceremony on
Michaelmas, for instance, is said to have involved a procession from the High Cross located
at the junction of the town's two main streets at the town centre (a place so central to the
town that the *Kalendar* actually includes an illustration of the spot) to the Church of St
Michael as well as eating 'cakebrede and wyne' at the new mayor's house, a gesture
reminiscent of the reception of the Eucharist.[15] In Norwich, too, it is noted in the
Composition of 1415 that the mayor was formally obliged to go, accompanied by the twenty-
four-strong concitizens council, to 'Cristchirche' (the city's cathedral) on feast days—or, as
the text says, 'principals dayes'.[16] At Christmas, Epiphany, and All Saints, they—along with
guild members and aldermen—were to attend a procession to the cathedral.[17] Here, it is as if
both the outgoing and the incoming mayors are paying service to the body of the city, which
also symbolises the Body of Christ. This ritualistic and performative kind of embodiment was
also used extensively in civic rites, processions, pageantry, and drama, many of which were
enacted by guilds. The guild of St. George, for instance, was closely modelled after the civic
government and was effectively merged with it from 1452.[18] Reminding ourselves of Alain's
formulation of the macrocosm/microcosm analogy, the role of Wisdom in the governance of

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[14] Lilley, *City and Cosmos*, pp. 25, 132.

[15] Robert Ricart, *The Maire of Bristowe Is Kalendar*. ed. by Lucy Toulmin Smith (London: Camden Society, 1872), pp. 10–11, 74.

[16] William Hudson and John C. Tingey, eds., *Records of the City of Norwich, Vol. 1* (Norwich: Jarrold and Sons, 1906), p. 102. The composition was an agreement between the city's civic officials detailing municipal responsibilities and the civic government's administrative processes.

[17] Maddern, p. 208.

[18] Maddern, p. 194; Christopher Harper-Bill and Carole Rawcliffe, 'The Religious Houses', in *Medieval Norwich*, ed. by Carole Rawcliffe and Richard Wilson (London: Hambledon and London, 2004), pp. 73–119 (p. 87).

the city falls on civic authorities such as the mayor. This is made explicit in one of London's

civic books: the mayor is the head of the city.[19] In Norwich, an agreement between the

mayor, sheriffs, and aldermen in 1424 refers to 'lak of good and vertuous gouernaunce' as the

source of the city's problem, a designation which connects the significance of leadership in

civic order.[20] Curiously, this phrase was used in the *Liber* to highlight that many people fall

victim to plague due to lack of dietary health, which indicates the close connection between

bodily and civic order not only in form but also in terms of regulation and health. Philippa

Maddern notes that disrupting the city's order encompassed a wide range of issues from

domestic violence, to idleness, to civil unrest.[21] The pervasiveness of this conception of

order, as we shall see, had profound biopolitical consequences for the city's dwellers when it

came to fighting infection and resulted in the regulation of both the private space and the

public space. In the medical context, Bartholomaeus writes of the relationship between

members of the individual body, and what a physician should do to preserve the health of the

individual body:

> Þe membres beþ so isette togedres þat, for þe byndinge and knettinge togedres,
>
> eueryche haþ compaciens of oþir. Þerfore þe membre lesse igreued haþ compaciens of
>
> þe membre þat is more igreued […] If a membre is irooted oþir deed it is greuous to
>
> itself and to al þe body; and þerfore is none oþir remedye but kutt*e* it of þat he
>
> destroye not and corrumpe al þe body [.][22]

Likening the role of a ruler in fighting infection and maintaining order to that of a physician

excising a rotten member in order to preserve bodily health was used quite often to draw a

parallel between the individual body and what we may call the civic body. John of Salisbury

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[19] Lilley, *City and Cosmos*, pp. 135–6.
[20] Hudson and Tingey, *Records, Vol. 1*, p. 109.
[21] Maddern, p. 191.
[22] Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *On the Properties of Things*. trans. John Trevisa. 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), vol. 1, pp. 166, 168.

employs the metaphor in the *Policraticus* to postulate that a prince can be cruel for the good of the city:

> […] for him to love his brothers, he must correct their errors in medical fashion […] It is above all the habit of physicians that when they are not able to cure an affliction with palliatives and gentle medicines, they employ harsher cures, as for example fire or iron. They would never use the harsher ones except when they have despaired in their desire to promote health gently. And thus, when mild power does not suffice for the ruler to cure the vices of inferiors, he properly administers intensely painful blows of punishment; pious cruelty rages against the evil, while the good are looked after in safety.[23]

Such notions, and, in turn, the analogy, resonated with later thinkers who made it more complicated in tandem with, as Takashi Shogimen suggests, advances in the knowledge of human anatomy.[24] Shogimen notes that of the threefold types of medical treatments we mentioned in the previous chapter (i.e. regimen, drugs, and surgery), only medicine and surgery feature in political writings.[25] What he fails to underscore here is that the primary function of regimen was prevention of humoral imbalance (or disease) rather than treatment in the form of positive action, so regimen as treatment is essentially backtracking one's divergence from health or humoral equilibrium. The fifteenth-century Nicholas of Cusa, for instance, identified the goal of good government as keeping 'the body well so that the life-giving spirit can dwell in it properly because it is well-proportioned'.[26] Medicine and surgery,

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[23] John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, pp. 49–50. Also see Cary J. Nederman, 'The Physiological Significance of the Organic Metaphor in John of Salisbury's Policraticus', *History of Political Thought,* 8.2 (1987), 211–23; Tilman Struve, 'The Importance of the Organism in the Political Theory of John of Salisbury', *Studies in Church History. Subsidia,* 3 (1994), 303–17.

[24] Takashi Shogimen, 'Treating the Body Politic: The Medical Metaphor of Political Rule in Late Medieval Europe and Tokugawa Japan', *The Review of Politics,* 70 (2008), 77-104.

[25] Shogimen, pp. 88, 91.

[26] Nicholas of Cusa, *Nicholas of Cusa: The Catholic Concordance*. ed. by Paul E. Sigmund (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 320; Shogimen, p. 89.

on the other hand, are offered as cure only when the backtracking could not be done. Thus, instead of looking for additional measures representing a regimen, one must only look at how the interrelated Augustinian ideal of order—including obedience, justice, and peace—was approached in treatises on good government, for those qualities represented the equilibrium (or the restored equilibrium after divergence).[27]

Scholars such as Ptolemy of Lucca and Marsilius of Padua compared punishment with medicine.[28] One can see reflections of such a comparison in the health measures we shall discuss in this chapter, which were concerned with fines, imprisonment, and forms of punishment other than expulsion—or the medical equivalent of excision of corrupted members. There is a degree of fluidity between these types of actions. Amercement, for instance, can be considered a preventative measure as well as a corrective measure. The fine aims to correct the individual offence committed by the offender, but it also serves as a warning to other prospective offenders, urging that if they were to put the health of the civic body in danger, they would receive the corrective measure of a fine. Incarceration can also be considered as an intermediary kind of punishment in that even though it involves a kind of segregation, it was only temporary, and after its termination or resolution (through payment of amercement) one would be allowed back into the civic body. The metaphor of surgery and amputation, specifically, was more frequent and concerned not only expulsion, but also execution. Thomas Aquinas, for instance, writes:

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[27] St Augustine, *City of God*. trans. Henry Bettenson. ed. by G. R. Evans (London: Penguin, 1984), Book XIX, Parts 13 and 14. Many of medieval political thinkers were influenced by Augustine's vision of earthly government, which had also inherited the classical macrocosm/microcosm analogy. Government was needed because people lived in the postlapsarian world where absolute obedience to God's will did not exist, thus necessitating supervision of conduct to ensure order and obedience of God's will. The divine order was equally present in the state of the body and bodily functions, meaning that the body was always in perfect balance and never suffered from illness. See St Augustine, Book XIII–XIV; Maddern, pp. 205–6. Also see Carole Rawcliffe and Claire Weeda, 'Introduction', in *Policing the Urban Environment in Premodern Europe*, ed. by Carole Rawcliffe and Claire Weeda (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2019), pp. 11–38 (p. 11).

[28] Shogimen, p. 91.

[…] if cutting off some bodily limb expedites the health of the whole

human body—for instance, if the limb is diseased and is corrupting the

other parts—then it is praiseworthy and healthy for it to be amputated.

Now each individual person is related to the whole community as a

part to a whole. And so if some man is extremely dangerous to the

community and corrupts it because of some sin, then it is praiseworthy and

healthy for him to be killed in order that the common good might be

preserved.[29]

As clear from this discussion, the issue of civic order was a moral issue just as infection was.

Despite John of Salisbury's conception that members need to assist one another with

compassion, the pious cruelty seems to have been more popular when it came to communities

such as lepers, prostitutes, and Lollards. As Lilley notes:

The body metaphor provided ruling bodies with a means of unifying the

embodied city while at the same time retaining its internal social

differentiation and hierarchies. This can be seen in the way urban laws were

used by political authorities to place certain social groups in certain spaces,

to order townspeople both inside and outside the urban body, and determine

who was where.[30]

Once again, we see the biopolitical significance of the metaphor: the body divided into

members according to the Aristotelian and Galenic medical thinking helped determine and

assert who the supreme and subservient members were, who should remain at the centre and

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[29] St. Thomas Aquinas, 'New English Translation of St. Thomas Aquinas's Summa Theologiae (Summa
Theologica)', ed. by Alfred J. Freddoso (Notre Dame: Alfred J. Freddoso, 2018),
<https://www3.nd.edu/~afreddos/summa-translation/TOC.htm> [Accessed 23 January 2021].
[30] Lilley, *City and Cosmos*, p. 144.

who should be placed on the outskirts, and who the corrupt members that needed to be cut out by the civic physicians were. The metaphor illustrates how what I refer to as the first mode of fighting infection, characterised by excision, worked. As we shall see, this mode excluded those who posed an infectious threat—physical and moral—to the civic bodily integrity by not just physically removing them from the civic bodily space but by the simple act of addressing them as such. This addressing, or, as Louis Althusser calls it, 'interpellation', is a process whereby being addressed results in the subject unwittingly accept one's position as a subject by, firstly, responding to the act of being interpellated, and thus admitting that one was correctly identified as a subject (he uses the casual example of responding to somebody saying, '"Hey, you there!"') and, secondly, by the unconscious admission that there is 'a Unique and Absolute Subject' who precedes one, is superior to one, and to whom one is subject and must respond (i.e. the interpellator).[31] We shall see both types of exclusion (physical and interpellative) at work in relation to pestilence as well as problems such as leprosy and prostitution before and after the Black Death, and heresy on a significant scale after the Black Death. More importantly, these problems were conceptualised and addressed via the same discourse of infection which tackled pestilence. This discourse, as we saw in the previous chapter, existed well before the Black Death, but pestilence offered its own modifications to the discourse, which shall be demonstrated in my analysis of the second and third modes of fighting infection (containment and inverted excision).

B. Infection and Leprosy

There is abundant literature on measures designed to improve hygiene and sanitation in medieval England, and they encompass a wide range of issues from repairing walls and roads to building gardens, to expelling loiterers, to the use of washing utensils, and even to

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[31] Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), pp. 170–182.

representations of waste in literature.[32] The nature of many of such health measures, as Dolly Jørgensen observes, was cooperative, meaning that responsibility and authority was not concentrated centrally; it fell on the shoulders of individuals appointed by councils as well as individual residents themselves (sometimes directed and/or funded by the Crown, too), which adds a biopolitical dimension to these regulations.[33] In this section, I discuss policies concerned specifically and explicitly with the idea of infection, and in particular, infected air—the common cause of pestilential maladies—along with their adverse effects and their implications for the notion of bodily porousness. These policies highlight the role of the discourse of infection in conceptualising pestilence as well as the material/biopolitical side of its implementation. I will begin by considering the mode of excision in combatting infection, which corresponds closely to removing corrupt members from the individual body.

Corrupt or infected air had been a recurrent issue in East Anglian civic records well before the Black Death. William of Newburgh notes, for instance, that during the 1196

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[32] For instance, see Miriam Carole Davis, 'The English Medieval Urban Environment: Learned Views and Popular Practice' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of California, Santa Barbara, 1994); David N. DeVries, 'And Away Go Troubles Down the Drain: Late Medieval London and the Poetics of Urban Renewal', *Exemplaria*, 8.2 (1996), 401–18; Isla Fay, *Health and the City: Disease, Environment and Government in Norwich, 1200–1575* (York: York Medieval Press, 2015); M. S. R. Jenner, 'Underground, Overground: Pollution and Place in Urban History', *Journal of Urban History*, 2.4 (1997), 97–110; M. S. R. Jenner, 'Civilization and Deodorization? Smell in Early Modern English Culture', in *Civil Histories: Essays Presented to Sir Keith Thomas*, ed. by B. Harrison P. Burke, and P. Slack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 127–44; Dolly Jørgensen, 'Cooperative Sanitation: Managing Streets and Gutters in Late Medieval England and Scandinavia', *Technology and Culture*, 49.3 (2008), 547–67; Dolly Jørgensen, '"All Good Rule of the Citee": Sanitation and Civic Government in England, 1400–1600', *Journal of Urban History*, 36.3 (2010), 300–15; D. J. Keene, 'Rubbish in Medieval Towns', in *Environmental Archaeology in the Urban Context*, ed. by A.R. Hall and H.K. Kenward (London: Council for British Archaeology, 1982), pp. 26–30; D. J. Keene, 'Issues of Water in Medieval London to C. 1300', *Urban History*, 28 (2001), 161–79; Maurizio Meloni, 'The Politics of Environments before the Environment: Biopolitics in the *Longue Durée*', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science*, 88 (2021), 334–44; Margaret Pelling, 'Health and Sanitization to 1750', in *Norwich since 1550*, ed. by Carole Rawcliffe and Richard Wilson (London: Hambledon and London, 2004), pp. 117–38; Ellie Phillips and Isla Fay, ed., *Health and Hygiene in Early Modern Norwich* (Norwich: Norfolk Record Society, 2013); Elizabeth Rutledge, 'An Urban Environment: Norwich in the Fifteenth Century', in *The Fifteenth Century XII: Society in an Age of Plague*, ed. by Linda Clark and Carole Rawcliffe (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2013), pp. 79–100; Ernest L. Sabine, 'Butchering in Mediaeval London', *Speculum*, 8.3 (1933), 335–53; Ernest L. Sabine, 'Latrines and Cesspools of Mediaeval London', *Speculum*, 9.3 (1934), 303–21; Ernest L. Sabine, 'City Cleaning in Mediaeval London', *Speculum*, 12.1 (1937), 19–43.

[33] Dolly Jørgensen, 'Cooperative Sanitation', pp. 547–8. There is also the issue of the degree to which these policies were enforced; there is evidence for both sides of the conundrum. I would argue that regardless of their enforcement, the existence of pleas and policies from various social strata highlights the significance of the issues underlined in these records among the populace to a certain degree.

pestilence, it seemed that 'the air had been poisoned by the dead bodies of the poor'.[34] In

Norwich, it was recorded that in 1279, one Thomas Dust died of corrupt air after falling in a

well.[35] The nature of this incident is analogous to what is described in a complaint from the

Carmelites of London to the parliament, in which they claimed that the stench of the River

Fleet resulted in the death of some of their brethren.[36] In a 1288 case from the Leets of

Wymer and Westwick in Norwich, William the Skinner was fined 2s. for dumping bodies of

cats in 'the pit of Lothmere' and poisoning the air.[37] Also, in 1289, a Roger Benjamin was

fined twice for disposing of waste on roads, one of which was for dumping a muck-heap in

the King's highway, which 'abominably' corrupted the air.[38] In another incident from 1312, a

woman named Christiana Avenant was fined the relatively hefty amount of 40d. for blocking

a neighbour's gutter, whose exuding corruption vexed the vicinity.[39] Beyond these

references, there are extensive records of measures taken specifically against corrupted air in

East Anglia prior to the Black Death, and it is evident that air was one of, if not the main,

vehicles of spreading noxiousness.[40] Furthermore, there is an aesthetic dimension to the

danger of the stench and the sight of rotten cadavers or blocked gutters, for they steer the city

away from the macrocosmic ideals of the earthly city, be it the cosmos, Jerusalem, or the

healthy body.[41] These records, however, highlight microcosmic efforts whose only

regulatory/biopolitical element is amercement, corresponding to limiting an unhealthy diet or,

at its most powerful form, administering simple medicines to the individual body. Closer to

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[34] Original Latin: 'tanquam ex pauperum mortibus aere corrupto': William of Newburgh, 'William of Newburgh: History', ed. by Paul Halsall (2000), Book Five, Chapter 26, in *Internet History Sourcebooks Project* <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/williamofnewburgh-intro.asp> [Accessed 9 Feb 2021]; William of Newburgh, *Historia Rerum Anglicarum*. ed. by Hans Claude Hamilton. 2 vols (London: Sumptibus Societatis, 1856), Vol. 2, p. 193.

[35] The Latin term for corrupt air in the text is 'corrupcionem aeris': Hudson and Tingey, *Records, Vol. 1*, p. 219.

[36] J. Strachey, ed., *Rotuli Parliamentorum*. 6 vols (London: 1783–1832), vol. I, p. 61.

[37] William Hudson, ed., *Leet Jurisdiction in the City of Norwich During the XIIIth and XIVth Centuries* (London: Selden Society, 1892), p. 29.

[38] Latin phrase: 'aer pessime corrumpitur'. Hudson and Tingey, *Records, Vol. 1*, pp. 365–6.

[39] 'sordia corruptibilia exeunt ad nocumentum viciniorum': Hudson, *Leet*, p. 56.

[40] There are also many references to cleaning and restoration projects across the region.

[41] Rawcliffe and Weeda, pp. 22–3 n. 44.

the Black Death, we find similar measures being taken elsewhere in England. In London, smelters were condemned in a patent in 1307 for 'infect[ing]' the air, signifying the common terminology regarding pollution and airborne disease.[42] Similarly, bans on the slaughter of animals within the city boundaries in 1333 in London and in 1339 in Oxford were recorded in the Crown's calendar rolls and patent rolls. The unique aspect of these two pieces of royal intervention is their mention of infected air: the London ban notes the fetid odour ('orrorem vel fetorem') of the entrails of the animals, and the Oxford ban highlights, more significantly, that the stench of the carcasses as well as 'dung' and 'filth' left in streets caused infection, which sometimes resulted in death.[43] Such pre-existing conceptions of the role of infected air would be employed when trying to understand the Black Death and its causes in the coming years.

Within this period, certain other issues came under the spotlight within the same framework of corrupt air, infection, and how to combat it. These issues included leprosy, prostitution, and heresy. Their connection with pestilence is, above all, through their shared vocabulary, or the discourse of infection. These issues, moreover, were more biopolitically significant, as they involved actual excision of corrupt members of the civic body—inspired by the analogy between the individual and the civic body. The sale of victuals in general and meat, in particular, is another area which was monitored by the authorities pre-Black Death.[44]

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[42] H. C. Maxwell Lyte, ed., *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1216–1509*. 54 vols (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1894–1916), vol. 1301–1307, p. 549.

[43] *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, vol. 1338–1340, pp. 186, 306; H. C. Maxwell Lyte, ed., *Calendar of Close Rolls, 1277–1509*. 63 vols (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1892–1963), vol. 1337–1339, pp. 634–5. In York in 1332, similarly, a royal letter condemned the stench in the city and expressed concern for the health of the people due to the corrupted air: *Calendar of Close Rolls*, vol. 1330–1333, p. 610. Three other similarly-worded rulings from Newcastle in 1336 and Carlisle in 1344 and 1345 are also found: *Calendar of Close Rolls*, vol. 1333–1337, p. 697; *Calendar of Close Rolls*, vol. 1343–1346, p. 459; *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, vol. 1345–1348, pp. 507–8.

[44] Health-related directives came from authorities on various levels, ranging from the Crown to leet courts (which, as institutions, according to Pollock and Maitland's classic history, had their origins in East Anglia but was adopted in other regions in the later Middle Ages), to hundred courts, to ward moots, and so on depending on the region: Sir Frederick Pollock and Frederic William Maitland, *The History of English Law before the Time of Edward I* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2010), p. 610. Each type of these courts is treated in detail in Book II, Chapter III of the work: pp. 555–725.

This was a hygiene-related issue but does not seem to be situated within the same discourse of infection at the first glance, as they do not explicitly talk about the infection of air. In York, for instance, the sale of substandard meat was limited as early as 1301, with the substandard meat being given to the local leprosaria.[45] Half a century later, in 1356, an agreement between the city and the Chancellor of the University of Oxford states that 'all flesh or fish that shall be found to be putrid, unclean, vicious or otherwise unfit' are to be given to St John's Hospital which accommodated lepers.[46] A century later still, in Northampton, 'susmy' or tainted, substandard meat was ordered to be collected from the market and dispensed among the inmates of St. Leonards hospital, which included lepers.[47] Other regulations about lepers and meat appear in multiple other towns, including East Anglian towns: in the 1460s, a fine was placed for selling meat infected with leprosy (carnes leprositate infectas) in Yarmouth.[48] Around the same time, the juries' oath in King's Lynn required them to report those selling unwholesome and 'mesell' meat just as they would report instances of waste disposal in the streets.[49] Direct treatment of lepers with regards to food hygiene is recorded in 1430–1, the wife of a leper in Yarmouth was prevented from

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[45] Michael Prestwich, ed., *York Civic Ordinances, 1301*, *Borthwick Paper* (York: Borthwick Publications, 1976). A similar legislation, though unconnected with leprosy, against the sale of impure ('immunde') meat was also passed in Sandwich in the same year in addition to a ban on butchering in shops and streets in the city: William Boys, ed., *Collections for a History of Sandwich* (Canterbury: Simmons, Kirkby and Jones, 1792), pp. 499–501.

[46] Quoted in G. G. Coulton, *Medieval Panorama: The English Scene from Conquest to Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1949), pp. 455–6.

[47] C. A. Markham and J. C. Cox, ed., *Record of the Borough of Northampton*. 2 vols (Northampton: Birdsall and Son, 1898), vol. I, p. 230.

[48] Carole Rawcliffe, *Urban Bodies: Communal Health in Late Medieval English Towns and Cities* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2013), p. 236. For regulations on other forms of victuals, see: Carole Rawcliffe, 'Sickness and Health', in *Medieval Norwich*, ed. by Carole Rawcliffe and Richard Wilson (London: Hambledon and London, 2004), pp. 301–24 (p. 318).

[49] Carole Rawcliffe, 'The View from the Streets: The Records of Hundred and Leet Courts as a Source for Sanitary Policing in Late Medieval English Towns', in *Policing the Urban Environment in Premodern Europe*, ed. by Carole Rawcliffe and Claire Weeda (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2019), pp. 69–95 (p. 76). Also see for a similar record, Mary Bateson W. H. Stevenson and J. E. Stocks, ed., *Record of the Borough of Leicester: Being a Series of Extracts from the Archives of the Corporation of Leicester, 1327–1509*. 6 vols. Vol. II (London: C. J. Clay and Sons, 1901), pp. 321–2.

touching victuals in the market.[50] Similarly, in 1473 it was ruled that people who bought victuals for lepers near Norwich must not touch them directly with their hands; instead they should use a wand or a stick.[51] We may ask why was substandard meat sent to leprosaria? Why was the touch of lepers a contested issue in medieval towns? And what was the connection between leprosy and the discourse of infection?

In order to explore these questions, we may revisit Bartholomaeus Anglicus's encyclopaedia. Leprosy or '"meselrye" is an vniuersal corrupcioun of members and of humours […] whanne humours beþ corrupt, membres þat beþ inorischid and ifedde wiþ humours beþ somdel corrupt'.[52] He continues:

In foure maner wise *lepra* is diuers, as þe foure humours beþ passingeliche and diuersliche imedled. […] Þan principalliche of corrupt melancolia comeþ þe *lepra* þat hatte *elephancia*; of corrupt flewme comeþ *tiria* þat hatte *serpentina*; and of corrupt blood comeþ *allopicia* þat hatte *vulpina* also; of red colera comeþ þe worste of alle þat hatte *lyonina* […] Þe breþ is corrupt, and ofte hole men beþ infect with stench þerof […] *Lepra* comeþ of diuers causes, ouþir of þe forseid humours, as of dwellynge and wonynge and companye and ofte ta[l]kynge wiþ leprous men; for þe yuel is contagious and infectiþ oþir men. Also it comeþ of fleischly lygynge by a womman sone aftir þat a leprous man haþ ilaye by here. And som[ty]me it comeþ [of] fadir and modir, and so þis contagioun passiþ into þe childe as it were by lawe of

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[50] Rawcliffe, *Urban Bodies*, p. 237 n. 43. In some parts of Europe, prostitutes, like lepers, were prohibited from touching foodstuff in the market: Danielle Jacquart and Claude Thomasset, *Sexuality and Medicine in the Middle Ages*. trans. Matthew Adamson (Oxford: Polity Press, 1988), p. 231 n. 64.

[51] William Hudson and John C. Tingey, eds., *Records of the City of Norwich, Vol. 2* (Norwich: Jarrold and Sons, 1910), p. 101. A white stick was also carried by prostitutes in London along with the striped hood they were required to wear: Ruth Mazo Karras, *Common Women: Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 15. On the regulation of meat, see David R. Carr, 'Controlling the Butchers in Late Medieval English Towns', *The Historian,* 70.3 (2008), 450–61; Carole Rawcliffe, ''Great Stenches, Horrible Sights, and Deadly Abominations': Butchery and the Battle against Plague in Late Medieval English Towns', in *Plague and the City*, ed. by John Henderson Lukas Engelmann, and Christos Lynteris (London: Routledge, 2019), pp. 18–38.

[52] Bartholomaeus, vol. 1, p. 423.

heritage. And somtyme it falliþ whanne a childe is conceyued in menstruel tyme, and

also whanne a childe is ifedde wiþ corrupt melke of a leprous norse. An som[tyme] it

comeþ of an outwarde cause, as of infect and corru[p]t aier; somtyme of yuel dyete, as

malencolik mete to colde and drye, as of fleische of reþeren, of asses, and beres, and

of oþir suche; and somtyme of hote metis, as of longe vse of stronge peper and of

garlike, and oþir suche; and somtyme of corrupt mete, and of mete þat is sone corrupt,

as of mesel swynes fleische þat haþ pesen þerinne and is infecte wiþ suche p*ese*n and

greynes, and of vnclene wyn and corrupt; somtyme of bytinge of a venomous worme,

þat infectiþ and corruptiþ þe substaunce of humours and of membres.[53]

The passage explains all the issues our public health examples introduced concerning lepers.

Firstly, much like the bubonic plague, leprosy was thought to be chiefly a result of corrupt

humours and air.[54] Secondly, as a fifteenth-century translation of Bernard of Gordon's *Lilium*

medicinae notes, it is contagious and airborne, as one of leprosy's causes is the 'ayre [which]

is corupte and pestilencyal'.[55] There are examples of such an understanding in records of

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[53] Bartholomaeus, vol. 1, pp. 423–4, 426. It is important that leprosy be understood in its medieval sense as a
historically grounded concept and not in the modern medical sense. As seen in the passage, leprosy has
varieties categorised based solely on symptoms. For an overview of the complex terminology of the term
leprosy, see Mirko D. Grmek, *Diseases in the Ancient Greek World*. trans. Mireille Muellner and Leonard
Muellner (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), pp. 155–73; Francois-Olivier Touati,
'Lepers and Leprosy: Connections between East and West in the Middle Ages', in *Leprosy and Identity in the
Middle Ages: From England to the Mediterranean*, ed. by Elma Brenner and Francois-Olivier Touati
(Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021), pp. 45–66 (pp. 46–52). In the late fifteenth and sixteenth
centuries, *Treponematosis*, one syndrome of which was the French Disease typically identified as syphilis by
modern scholars, was occasionally theorised as a variant of leprosy, as well: Carole Rawcliffe, *Leprosy in
Medieval England* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2006), pp. 87–8; Marylynn Salmon, *Medieval Syphilis
and Treponemal Disease* (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2022), p. 28.

[54] For a survey of how such an understanding of leprosy became dominant, see: Francois-Olivier Touati,
'Contagion and Leprosy: Myth, Ideas and Evolution in Medieval Minds and Societies', in *Contagion:
Perspectives from Pre-Modern Societies*, ed. by Lawrence I. Conrad and Dominik Wujastyk (Aldershot:
Routledge, 2000), pp. 179–201.

[55] Erin Connelly, 'Lylye of Medicynes: An Edition of the Fifteenth-Century Translation of Bernard of Gordon's
Lilium Medicinae' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Nottingham, 2016), p. 139. The thirteenth century
Gilbertus Anglicus connects leprosy and plague through another mode of transmission: via sight—by looking
at the infected body of a leper, one fell in the danger of contracting the disease (for an explanation of the
mechanism of transmission, see the previous chapter): Rawcliffe, *Urban Bodies*, pp. 125–6. Scholars such as
Elma Brenner and Francois-Olivier Touati emphasise that before the Black Death, the chief cause of leprosy
was thought to be humoral imbalance, yet, as these quotations from scholars from the thirteenth and
fourteenth centuries (alongside the treatise by the ninth-century Qusṭā ibn Lūqā) illustrate, leprosy was
considered a pestilential disease transmissible via corrupt air well before the Black Death: Elma Brenner, 'Diet

public health measures. In general, there have been specific and more serious regulations against lepers all over the country. In 1346 in London, the king is informed of the news of a plot concerning some lepers who were trying to deliberately infect people by being conversant with—or as the record puts it, by being in 'communion' with—the citizens, thereby transmitting the disease via breath, or by sexual intercourse employing the women 'in brothels'.[56] The king ordered the city mayor and the sheriffs of London to 'decently' remove the lepers from the city. It is further noted that regardless of the news, giving alms to the leprous people would not be prohibited.[57] Shortly after this report, another roll reiterates the same concerns and judgement, this time with the addition of a deadline of fifteen days for those 'having the taint of leprosy' to leave the city. Moreover, this time, anyone sheltering the leprous will suffer 'forfeiture of [their houses or buildings] and a still heavier penalty'.[58] A similar concern arose in Middlesex in 1348, where the leprous made 'association' with healthy people on the highway between London and Westminster; the sheriff of Middlesex was tasked with relocating the sufferers.[59] In 1366, a similar incident occurred in Colchester, when an allegedly leprous couple were ordered to leave town because they threatened public safety.[60] In Norwich, too, in 1391, the existence of lepers in the city is recorded, as if it is an offence.[61] In other instances in Norwich, lepers (or those suspected of being leprous) were

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as a Marker of Identity in the Leprosy Hospitals of Medieval Northern France', in *Leprosy and Identity in the Middle Ages: From England to the Mediterranean*, ed. by Elma Brenner and Francois-Olivier Touati (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021), pp. 161–79 (pp. 163–4); Touati, 'Contagion and Leprosy', p. 187.

[56] Similar, and arguably, more caustic cases existed in Continental Europe. For instance, in fourteenth-century France it was thought that a plot to poison Christendom's water supplies was being carried out by lepers and Jews (sometimes also involving Muslims indirectly), which was, at first, alleged to be aimed at transmitting leprosy to Christians; as mentioned in the previous chapter, the goals of the plot were extended after the Black Death to include plague, as well. See Malcolm Barber, 'Lepers, Jews and Moslems: The Plot to Overthrow Christendom in 1321', *History*, 66 (1981), 1–17; David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 93–124.

[57] *Calendar of Close Rolls*, vol. 1346–1349, p. 54.

[58] *Calendar of Close Rolls*, vol. 1346–1349, pp. 61–2. Accommodating lepers, in general, had already been associated with illicit sexual activities: Rawcliffe, *Leprosy*, p. 285.

[59] *Calendar of Close Rolls*, vol. 1346–1349, p. 509.

[60] Isaac H. Jeayes and W. Gurney Benham, ed., *Court Rolls of the Borough of Colchester*. 3 vols (Colchester: 1921–1938), vol. II, p. 185.

[61] Hudson and Tingey, *Records, Vol. 1*, p. 384.

frequently ordered to leave town and grouped with offenders.[62] In Exeter in 1428, finally, a supposedly leprous woman was ordered to leave town and was banned from continuing her profession, which was brewing and selling of ale.[63] This mode of addressing the threat of infection transmitted by leprosy through removing the infected from the urban space scrupulously mirrors the medical metaphor of infection in the macrocosm/microcosm analogy discussed earlier, and signifies the first mode of fighting infection or the mode of excision. Generally, medical texts usually focussed on the excision of corrupt matter from the individual body rather than the person, though some advocated segregation as a measure in advanced, hopeless cases.[64] Despite attempts to regulate and scrutinise the infected (resembling dietary and medicinal modes of treatment), the ultimate goal of this mode was the complete excision of corrupt matter from the body (mirroring surgery, phlebotomy, and other invasive modes of treatment). The preservation of the integrity of the civic body is the most prized ideal of this mode, something which regulation cannot sufficiently tackle.

The transmissibility of leprosy through air connects leprosy with plague, as they both share a mode of transmission. This mode of transmission, consequently, justified the efforts to segregate lepers from the rest of the population as well as explaining the efforts to curb the activity of lepers' wives (in our example, touching foodstuff). The use of the word 'stench' in the encyclopaedia is also significant for our reading of records: stench does not solely denote bad smell and polluted air, but also odour capable of engendering and spreading disease (i.e. infected air).[65] One means of the disease's transmission was thought to be sexual intercourse,

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[62] Hudson, *Leet Jurisdiction*, pp. 68, 71, 72.

[63] Rawcliffe, *Leprosy*, p. 281.

[64] See for instance Guy de Chauliac, *The Cyrurgie of Guy De Chauliac*. ed. by Margaret S. Ogden, *Early English Text Society* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 383. On classical recommendation of segregation, see Vivian Nutton, 'Did the Greeks Have a Word for It? Contagion and Contagion Theory in Classical Antiquity', in *Contagion: Perspectives from Pre-Modern Societies*, ed. by Lawrence I. Conrad and Dominik Wujastyk (Aldershot: Routledge, 2000), pp. 137–62 (p. 149).

[65] 'Stench n.', in *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. by Robert E. Lewis, et al. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1952-2001) <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/> [accessed 6 March 2021].

which explains the significance of physical association with prostitutes in the London plot.[66]

It is worth remembering that sexual intercourse and lechery, in more moral terms, were also

factors in the contagion of pestilence: it opened the body's pores, thereby rendering the

individual more susceptible to contracting plague. Leprosy was also associated with lechery:

some lepers were thought to be 'sexually voracious', capable of contaminating others.[67]

Based on the same association, and in an ingenious application of irony, a French penitential

suggested those who engaged in sinful desire by erotic kissing should kiss the hand of a

leper.[68] In leprosy's case, the mechanism of transmission mentioned in the passage is phrased

curiously: infection can be spread by 'fleischly lygynge by a womman sone aftir þat a leprous

man haþ ilaye by here'. What is the significance of the phrase 'sone aftir'? If by lying with a

leprous man, the woman would become infected and thus pass it on to other people that

copulate with her, why would 'sone' be used? This is best illustrated in an excerpt from the

twelfth-century philosopher William of Conches, who notes 'Prostitutes after frequent act of

coitus have their womb clogged with dirt […] and the villosities in which the semen should

be retained are covered over; that is why, like greased marble, the womb immediately rejects

what it receives'.[69] During the process of conception, these villosities (which, in other

translations, are referred to as hair) absorb the semen to gestate it with the menstrual blood.

We can confirm this by going to Bartholomaeus once again, who, citing Isidore, notes that

there are three 'wombes' in the body: '*Venter*', which is 'þat wombe þat fongiþ and defieþ

mete and drinke' and by which 'mete and drvnke comeþ into al þe body'; '*Aluus*', which is

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[66] The transmission of leprosy via prostitutes also features in devotional works such as Robert Mannyng's *Handlyng Synne*, written in the early fourteenth century: Frederick J. Furnivall, ed., *Robert of Brunne's 'Handlyng Synne'*. 2 vols. Vol. 1, *Early English Text Society* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1901), p. 238.

[67] Rawcliffe, *Leprosy*, p. 284.

[68] James A. Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 303.

[69] The original Latin is: 'prostitutae igitur ex frequentia coitus, matricem habent oblimatam, uillosque in quibus semen debet retinere coopertos. unde ad modum marmoris uncti, quicquid recipit, statim emittit': William of Conches, *Dialogus De Substantiis Physicis* (Rihelius, 1567), p. 241. Translation from Jacquart and Thomasset, p. 25.

'þat wombe þat fongiþ mete and drinke and is ofte iclensid'; and '*vterus* is þe wombe of a womman in þe whiche sche conseyueþ'.[70] Despite not explicitly mentioning absorption and digestion as the functions of the uterus, being considered as a parallel to the stomach and the intestines strengthens the idea that this specific function concerned here is ingestion. Thus, going back to our case in point, a prostitute's incapacity to absorb the infected semen of a leprous man would mean that she would not contract the disease herself. This was reinforced by the more general contrast between the cold and moist complexion of the female body and the hotness of males. Rawcliffe notes, with reference to a thirteenth-century Salernitan set of questions and answers, that the female body was resistant to 'male corruption'.[71] She notes that, as a result, the 'toxic semen produced from the contaminated blood of the leper […] remained secure within the thick, protective walls of her uterus. Here it turned into a clammy and putrid vapour'.[72] During the next sexual encounter, as Bernard describes, 'þe poris in a man beþ þynne and takiþ þe matere anoon and þan it passiþ into al þe body'.[73] Consequently, the next man engaging in sexual intercourse with the prostitute would come in contact with the infected semen and would contract leprosy.

This mode of transmission was not attributed only to prostitutes as in these texts, but, more generally, to all women. As mentioned in Bartholomaeus's entry, a child conceived during a woman's menstruation may engender the disease.[74] A child of an uninfected woman who copulates with a leprous man while pregnant would also be infected.[75] Because of their natural physiological and humoral resistance, they act, generally and particularly, as vectors

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[70] Bartholomaeus, vol. 1, pp. 258–9.
[71] B. Lawn, ed., *The Prose Salernitan Questions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 9, 18, ctd. in Rawcliffe, *Leprosy*, p. 83.
[72] Rawcliffe, *Leprosy*, p. 83.
[73] Connelly, p. 139.
[74] This is also repeated by Bernard, who notes that it may come when a child 'was engenderyd in tempere menstruorum': Connelly, p. 139.
[75] Connelly, p. 139. This understanding of the sexual transmissibility and congenital quality of leprosy strengthens the case regarding its conflation with treponematosis. See Salmon, pp. 28–9, 29 n. 17.

for leprosy. However, due to the uterus rejecting the infected semen, as well as the menstrual cycle, whose task was supposed to help women to be 'ipurgid of many superfluytes by menstrual bloode', the infectiousness of the vagina and the uterus is not, principally, unlimited, and this is perhaps the significance of the word 'sone'.[76] Bernard notes that if 'any maner happe oþer malice constrayne a womman þerto þei schal by wit dauncie and lepe and baþe and wasche here maris and wiþ clensynge waterys and make drye longe tyme to fore in as myche as it is possible', thus highlighting that the preservation of infection within the uterus was thought to be temporary.[77]

The fourth point we can infer from Bartholomaeus's description is that leprosy can be caused by corrupt air, too, without requiring the presence of a sufferer. A fifth way of transmission is through certain types of meat engendering the disease, but corrupt meat, in general, can transmit it, too, hence the prosecution of those who sold unwholesome meat and the regulations against lepers touching meat. Here we return to our question about why cities gave their substandard meat to leper-houses. The answer might be, as Carole Rawcliffe also suggests, the reasoning that if corrupt meat can engender leprosy, lepers themselves will not be threatened by it, as they are already infected.[78] It might, alternatively, have to do with the cost of provision for inmates: in fifteenth-century London, it was decided that unsellable fish confiscated from the market be given to the inmates of the Newgate prison.[79]

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[76] Bartholomaeus, vol. 1, p. 409.

[77] Connelly, p. 139.

[78] Rawcliffe, *Urban Bodies*, p. 236. Considering the medical advice and dietary recommendations for lepers, which insist that patients must consume victuals of good quality in order to impede the exacerbation of the disease, Rawcliffe's reasoning for such regulations regarding the donation of unwholesome meat to lepers does not seem to be justified: Brenner, 'Diet as a Marker of Identity', pp. 165–6.

[79] *Calendar of Letter-Books*, vol. D, p. 199. A similar example occurred in Rouen in 1432: Elma Brenner, 'Leprosy and Public Health in Late Medieval Rouen', in *The Fifteenth Century XII: Society in an Age of Plague*, ed. by Linda Clark and Carole Rawcliffe (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2013), pp. 123–38 (pp. 128–30). Also see Elma Brenner, *Leprosy and Charity in Medieval Rouen* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2015).

The biopolitics of leprosy seems to have been rather complex, and quite distinct from the biopolitical aspects of prostitution and heresy, even though they are connected.[80] The most important distinguishing factor is the Biblical precedent for treating leprosy: Leviticus 13 and 14 set a detailed procedure for how religious officials should address a case of what has been translated as leprosy or 'leprous disease' within the community (13:2).[81] The priest has to determine whether the symptoms have made the individual 'clean or unclean' (Leviticus 10:10) by examining the 'swelling[s]', 'eruption[s]', or 'spot[s]' (13:2), placing the individual in question under a seven-day quarantine (13:4), and, after the initial period of confinement and if the symptoms proved to be persistent, declare the person as 'unclean' (13:8). The afflicted must wear 'torn clothes […] and he shall cover his upper lip' and 'live alone […] outside the camp' (13:45–46).[82] The priest has also the functions of ritually cleansing a person who has recovered from the affliction, as well as burning contaminated garments (13:52, 14:1–32).[83] These laws were also cited in the New Testament (Matthew 8:2–4, Mark 1:40–44, Luke 5:12–14), and almost all of the aforementioned functions appeared in medieval Europe in various places and to various degrees. The examination of

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[80] R. I. Moore groups heretics, Jews, and lepers together and tends not to consider the intricacies in the case of lepers: Robert I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Authority and Deviance in Western Europe, 950–1250*. 2nd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), p. 62.

[81] The Hebrew term for the phrase is transliterated as '*tsara'ath*'.

[82] In the commentary on the verses, it is noted that the 'torn clothes' are the dress of a mourner 'because of the association between surface affliction and death': Michael D. Coogan et al., ed., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. 4th edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 161.

[83] Once again, it must be emphasised that the 'leprosy' discussed here is not meant in the modern sense. The history of the terminology itself is as contorted as the disease's biopolitics—involving mistranslations, occasional misdiagnoses, and grouping of various maladies. For a brief survey, see J. N. Hays, *The Burdens of Disease: Epidemics and Human Response in Western History*. 2nd edn (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2009), pp. 21–29. However, later advances in medicine resulted in a more detailed categorisation of leprosy, which included various types of the disease introduced in Bartholomaeus' entry above. In terms of burning contaminated clothes, there is scant evidence to suggest extensive application, but in ordinances from Berwick-on-Tweed dating back to 1284, it is ruled that if a leper intentionally enters the town their clothes 'shall be taken off […] and burnt'. The ordinance adds that there is a 'proper place' for them outside of town, which is funded by the reception of alms: Toumlin Smith, Lucy Toumlin Smith, and Lujo Brenato, ed., *English Gilds*, *Early English Text Society* (London: N. Trübner & Co., 1870), p. 341. Curiously, evidence of the burning of clothes as a countermeasure against pestilence seems not to be copious in England, either, but there are records of such measures from the Italian town of Pistoia: Horrox, ed., *The Black Death* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), p. 195. Also see John Henderson, 'The Black Death in Florence: Medical and Communal Responses', in *Death in Towns: Urban Responses to the Dying and the Dead, 100–1600*, ed. by Steven Bassett (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992), pp. 136–50.

suspects of leprosy involved examining the suspect's symptoms in the process of *judicium*

leprosorum executed predominantly by priests in the earlier Middle Ages but allowing more

involvement from individuals of a lay medical background such as surgeons in the later

Middle Ages, especially in an urban context.[84] As we shall see, however, religious authorities

continued to wield considerable influence in matters of individual and public health as well as

diagnoses of both leprosy and plague during the later Middle Ages, for not only did many

eminent physicians of the age hold clerical training and duties, and many priests practiced

medicine themselves, the clergy were also entrusted with administrative authority over

medical practitioners.[85] Even in the fifteenth century, priests continued to act on their own to

diagnose individuals with leprosy, but, in cases which involved an examining panel, its

makeup could consist, apart from the local priest, of both medically-trained members as well

as non-medical ones which could include civic authorities and juries.[86] Furthermore, as

Rawcliffe notes, preliminary assessments might even be made by 'friends, family or

neighbours'.[87] The aim of these laws, both in their biblical and their medieval iterations, is to

create individuals who regularly examine themselves for disfigurements—or, violations of

the bodily integrity in terms of ulcerations or corrosion of skin—through another instance of

interpellation. It would be fairly safe to assume, given how high the stakes were in such

situations, that few would have presented themselves as suspects, but the declaration of such

laws and regulations served to introduce criteria for categorising individuals, criteria of which

each and every single suspect would have been aware, even if they tried to conceal that

knowledge. Here, we see the introduction of another form of the idea of bodily integrity when

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[84] Luke Demaitre, *Leprosy in Premodern Medicine: A Malady of the Whole Body* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), p. 35; Rawcliffe, *Leprosy*, p. 189; Rawcliffe, *Urban Bodies*, pp. 308, 313.
[85] Angela Montford, *Health, Sickness, Medicine and the Friars in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), pp. 113–27.
[86] Rawcliffe, *Leprosy*, pp. 155–6; Demaitre, *Leprosy*, pp. 36–7.
[87] Rawcliffe, *Leprosy*, p. 167; Rawcliffe, *Urban Bodies*, p. 48.

it comes to diseases, one which has not only physical value, but also ritual and cultural significance.

As for the clothing of the leprous, beside the stick mentioned in one of the examples above, lepers are said to have carried wooden bells (sometimes called clappers) either to advertise their condition (and thus reminding people to keep their distance) or use when they were collecting alms.[88] François-Olivier Touati argues that the bell possibly had the facilitative function of assisting the leper with their call of mendicancy if their vocal chords had been damaged in more advanced stages of the disease.[89] Furthermore, in the institutions they were housed, lepers seem to have worn clothes akin to those worn by carers or the clergy with the addition a particular set of items suited for their condition.[90] In Brugge, for instance, sufferers were supplied with pairs of gloves from 1305 to 1580 by the civic authorities, most likely to prevent the transmission of infection via touching.[91] In Prestwick in 1479, an Andrew Sauer was accused of repeatedly going to the Leper Hospital of Kingcase in the 'seik folkis clathis and bonnettis'.[92] The inmates of St Julian's leper hospital in St Albans, in addition, were clad in 'a sober habit of black and russet, […] with its long sleeves, ankle-length overcoat and voluminous hooded cape'.[93] Other types of protective clothing included leather shoes, stockings, and blankets.[94] Rawcliffe argues that there was no 'uniform' designed to distinguish lepers 'from healthy members of the English public, from the people who cared for them, or, indeed, from the brothers and sisters of other charitable institutions,

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[88] Demaitre, *Leprosy*, p. 58; Rawcliffe, *Leprosy*, p. 287. Also see: Luke Demaitre, 'The Clapper as "Vox Miselli": New Perspectives on Iconography', in *Leprosy and Identity in the Middle Ages: From England to the Mediterranean*, ed. by Elma Brenner and Francois-Olivier Touati (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021), pp. 208–65.

[89] François-Olivier Touati, *Maladie Et Société Au Moyen Âge* (Paris: De Boeck université, 1998), pp. 417–20.

[90] Rawcliffe, *Leprosy*, p. 265; François-Olivier Touati, 'Facies Leprosorum: Réflexions Sur Le Diagnostic Facial De La Lèpre Au Moyen Age', *Histoire des sciences medicales,* 20.1 (1986), 57–66 (pp. 58–64).

[91] Demaitre, *Leprosy*, p. 135.

[92] James Y. Simpson, 'Antiquarian Notices of Leprosy and Leper Hospitals in Scotland and England: Part III. The Etiological Nature of the Disease', *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal,* 57.151 (1842), 394–429 (p. 419).

[93] Rawcliffe, *Leprosy*, p. 265.

[94] Rawcliffe, *Leprosy*, pp. 329–30.

who adopted a similar style of dress'.[95] The account from Prestwick indicates, however, that

at least in certain places, there were perhaps certain distinguishing features in lepers' clothes

which highlighted their condition. Perhaps the extra cover provided by the gloves and the

hood or the bonnet did, effectively, provide the Levitical requirements and prevent others

from the hazards of corrupt air in spite of the shared style among the inmates and the carers in

the hospitals.[96]

Additionally, Rawcliffe highlights that the distress conveyed by the physical

disfiguration of the leprous was also a factor for their removal from towns.[97] This, however,

does not seem to have been the main factor, for if it had been, the concealment of sores with

gloves, hoods, and bonnets would have resolved it and enabled them to continue living within

the city. Not only was segregation a crucial aspect of the issue of leprosy from antiquity due

its ceremonial significance, contagion must have also played a role in the biopolitics of

leprosy, which was aggravated, as we shall see, by the developments after the Black Death.[98]

Late medieval England included three types of charitable institutions which served

'sick paupers, pilgrims and travellers': common hospitals, leprosaria, and almshouses. The

function of these institutions, however, changed from caring for temporary residents to

providing palliative care for the chronically ill, the elderly, and the disabled, as time went

on.[99] Rawcliffe notes that lepers lived not only in leprosaria, but also in non-institutional

settlements on the outskirts of towns, in solitude at home (prior to the fourteenth century), or

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[95] Rawcliffe, *Leprosy*, p. 265.

[96] Patricia Skinner reaches a similar conclusion in her study of early medieval disfigurement: Patricia Skinner, *Living with Disfigurement in Early Medieval Europe*, *The New Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), p. 108.

[97] Rawcliffe, *Leprosy*, p. 278; Rawcliffe, *Urban Bodies*, pp. 123–4; Gilchrist, p. 48.

[98] Take, as an example, the case of Thomas Wyke, a Franciscan friar with leprosy, who, in 1392, was banished from his community with no means to support himself. He had to switch careers to secular priesthood, as a result: Donald F. Logan, *Runaway Religious in Mediaeval England 1240–1540* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 54. Such anxieties even infiltrated religious orders.

[99] Rawcliffe, *Urban Bodies*, pp. 317–18; Nicholas Orme and Margaret Webster, *The English Hospital, 1070–1570* (London: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 136–46.

living an itinerant life, with the second group probably being the largest.[100] The leprosaria,

which were institutions in which lepers could lead a regulated and calm life outside the

community, were usually located on the edges of towns to signify the physical exclusion

from the community, though this was not always the case.[101] These institutions either

belonged to a particular religious order or were non-institutional, and therefore with varying

regulations, and once an individual entered one, their legal status in secular law was virtually

annulled.[102] Before the fourteenth century, the biopolitical government of sufferers of leprosy

was rather more favourable towards them. Apart from the aforementioned option of staying

in isolation at home, they were also seen as both cursed and loved by God in their

intermediary status between life and death—between bodily disintegration and the

preservation of bodily integrity, for 'God chastises those whom he loves the most, and that

Christ himself had not only consorted with lepers but had actually come to resemble one in

his final agony, bestowed a special status upon the inmates of *leprosaria*'.[103] Lepers were,

quite significantly, allowed to 'partake of the body and blood of the Lord, but they may not

attend sacred functions with people of good health'.[104] Thus, they seem to have belonged, at

least in earlier Middle Ages, to the body of Christ, and, by extension, to the body politic

which is fused with Christ in its perfect order. Extending their connection with Christ, they

were also hailed as 'representatives of Christ' and were allowed to attend civic and

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[100] Rawcliffe, *Leprosy*, pp. 167, 190, 284, 290–91.

[101] Gilchrist, p. 49; David Marcombe, *Leper Knights: The Order of St Lazarus of Jerusalem in England, C.1150–1544* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2003), pp. 135–174.

[102] Rawcliffe, *Leprosy*, pp. 169, 266, 272. Also see Carole Rawcliffe, *The Hospitals of Medieval Norwich* (Norwich: University of East Anglia Press, 1995), pp. 33–60.

[103] Rawcliffe, *Leprosy*, p. 256; Skinner, p. 7; Rawcliffe, *Urban Bodies*, pp. 323–4. Also see: Damien Jeanne, 'The Disease and the Sacred: The Leper as a Scapegoat in England and Normandy (Eleventh–Twelfth Centuries)', in *Leprosy and Identity in the Middle Ages: From England to the Mediterranean*, ed. by Elma Brenner and Francois-Olivier Touati (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021), pp. 67–92; Carole Rawcliffe, *The Hospitals of Medieval Norwich* (Norwich: University of East Anglia Press, 1995), pp. 33–60.

[104] Charles H. Talbot, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1954), p. 82. Rawcliffe notes that this decree, which is from Pope Gregory to St Boniface and written in the eighth century, meant that, at the very least, 'separate services would be held for the sick': Rawcliffe, *Leprosy*, p. 256.

devotional festivals as well as funerals and collect alms.[105] Residents of leper-houses were

treated, for the most part, as part of the institutions or religious orders to which the leprosaria

belonged. Some were asked to join the religious order upon being admitted to the hospital,

and thus taking, for instance, a vow of chastity, but this was not always the case.[106] Lepers

were even buried alongside the carers who served the sick in the hospitals.[107]

And yet, at the same time, there were damning representations of lepers and

regulations limiting their activities even within institutions. For instance, the healthy

inhabitants of certain houses belonging to religious orders forbade them from sharing books

with the healthy or entering rooms in which communal food was being stored, while some

restricted their movement into certain parts of churches, which added another level to the

regulation of the inmates.[108] The example of the leprous Uzziah (or Azariah) was used to

denote pride and sinful defiance, and lepers were frequently singled out as being punished for

their sin.[109] Venturing into the macrocosm/microcosm analogy, leprosy was also alluded to in

order to characterise the failing kingdom and kingship of Henry VI, which might have also

been directed towards the person of Henry himself: a leprous king in a leprous kingdom.[110]

To make matters even worse, in a thirteenth century collection of English laws, it is

[105] Anna M. Peterson, 'Connotation and Denotation: The Construction of the Leper in Narbonne and Siena before the Plague', in *Leprosy and Identity in the Middle Ages: From England to the Mediterranean*, ed. by Elma Brenner and Francois-Olivier Touati (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021), pp. 323–43 (p. 333); Rawcliffe, *Leprosy*, p. 287; Rawcliffe, *Urban Bodies*, pp. 88, 326. More significantly, the life of the inmate of a hospital or a leprosarium was dedicated to prayers, masses, and devotional as well as liturgical ceremonies for a variety of individuals, ranging from the benefactors of the hospital to the dead, other patients, or Christians in general: Rawcliffe, *Urban Bodies*, p. 321; Carole Rawcliffe, 'Christ the Physician Walks the Wards: Celestial Therapeutics in the Medieval Hospital', in *London and the Kingdom: Essays in Honour of Caroline M. Barron*, ed. by Matthew Davies and Andrew Prescott (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2008), pp. 78–97. Thus, due to the sacred and humble status of hospitals, 'lewd' women, and sometimes women in general, were refused admission. On the other hand, the devotional function of hospitals fostered significant acts of kindness and charity such as raising orphans or supporting single mothers (an epithet which does not include widows): Rawcliffe, *Urban Bodies*, pp. 333–5. Also see Rawcliffe, *Hospitals*, pp. 61–80.
[106] Rawcliffe, *Leprosy*, pp. 263–4, 267.
[107] Rawcliffe, *Leprosy*, p. 262.
[108] Rawcliffe, *Leprosy*, pp. 279–80; Gilchrist, pp. 48–9.
[109] Rawcliffe, *Leprosy*, pp. 46, 49; W.O. Ross, ed., *Middle English Sermons*, *Early English Text Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940), p. 211.
[110] Rawcliffe, *Leprosy*, p. 45.

mentioned that any person expelled from the 'community of mankind' (et ita quod a communione gentium sit separatus) due to deformity would not be able to 'plead, nor claim an inheritance'; such a disease 'bars a demandant from suing, but a supervening disease does not take away an inheritance already held, only one to be held'.[111] This is a complicated picture: lepers were, at the same time within and without the community, within and without humanity; they belonged, simultaneously, to the body of Christ and were expelled from it according to Mosaic law. Things began to take a turn for the worse from the fourteenth century onwards. For instance, partly due to the population growth and economic pressure, the practice of rattling clappers to collect alms was banned in order to control vagrancy and the presence of beggars in the city.[112] Furthermore, with the advances in medical knowledge concerning infection and corrupt air and the catastrophe of the Black Death and its subsequent outbreaks, issues such as leprosy and prostitution obtained even more urgency, resulting in segregation laws being more stringently enforced.[113] The financial struggles of the institutions resulted in the admission of non-lepers into these hospitals as well as the growth of non-institutional almshouses whose services were not specific to lepers.[114] Some lepers were sponsored by the royal court or the aristocracy, a fact which allowed institutions to welcome them more warmly; the poorer folk, on the other hand, relied on public funds as well as donations to be able to live and be cared for in such institutions, thus constituting a financial burden on the almshouses and hospitals.[115] The administrative pressure put on such institutions caused some lepers to be evicted from almshouses, as in a case from the St

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[111] Henry of Bratton, 'Bracton: De Legibus Et Consuetudinibus Angliæ', ed. by George Woodbine, and Samuel E. Thorne (2003), Vol. 4, p. 309, in *Bracton Online* <https://amesfoundation.law.harvard.edu/Bracton/> [Accessed 14 Feb 2021]; Rawcliffe, *Leprosy*, p. 271.

[112] Rawcliffe, *Leprosy*, pp. 287–8.

[113] Rawcliffe, *Leprosy*, p. 261.

[114] Rawcliffe, *Urban Bodies*, p. 319. A similar situation existed in common hospitals, as well, in which the highest bidder received care and accommodation in the institution: Rawcliffe, *Urban Bodies*, p. 316.

[115] Rawcliffe, *Leprosy*, pp. 296–7. Also see J. L. Fisher, 'The Leger Book of St. John's Abbey, Colchester', *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society,* 24 (1951), 77–127 (p. 120).

Giles's hospital in Norwich in 1440.[116] Thus, it appears that pestilence heightened the anxiety regarding the leper's porous body, thereby situating it further from the ideal body (which is, at the same time, like and unlike that of Christ), and, as a result, more threatening and less human. This led to the further exclusion of the leper from the civic body.

C. Infection and Gender

The transmissibility of leprosy via sexual intercourse connects it to the issue of 'prostitution', which was often grouped with leprosy in public health measures, and we can see the same mode of fighting infection through excision working with regards to prostitution. In 1331, Edward III authorised a set of customs submitted by the Common Council of Bristol in which lepers and prostitutes were barred from the town.[117] In a similar vein, lepers and prostitutes in Yarmouth were supposed to live in the same area north of the city from at least the 1380s.[118] Rawcliffe notes that many of the prostitutes working in the city were from the Low Countries, which poses the question whether there was an additional layer of xenophobia involved in the hostility against this group of people (an issue I will later return to).[119] Rawcliffe also suggests that the substantial number of cases for expelling suspected lepers from Yarmouth between 1369 to the beginning of the sixteenth century is informed by an anxiety about pestilence, which, due to the similarities in the modes of both diseases' transmission, is plausible.[120] In yet another case from Yarmouth, a sexually adventurous woman called Alice Dymock was brought to court multiple times between 1480 and 1500 on a series of charges beginning with larceny and adultery, to brothel-keeping, and, finally, being a leper, which resulted in her expulsion from the town.[121] Rawcliffe suggests that the

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[116] Rawcliffe, *Leprosy*, p. 277. Also see Rawcliffe, *Urban Bodies*, p.320.
[117] Francis B. Bickley, ed., *The Little Red Book of Bristol*. 2 vols. Vol. 1 (Bristol and London: W. Crofton Hemmons and Henry Sotheran & Co., 1900), pp. 33–4.
[118] Rawcliffe, *Urban Bodies*, p. 112.
[119] Rawcliffe, *Urban Bodies*, p. 112.
[120] Rawcliffe, *Leprosy*, p. 282.
[121] Rawcliffe, *Leprosy*, p. 252.

charge of leprosy might have been a fabrication on the part of officials just to rid themselves

of her, but even fabricating a charge of leprosy underlines the persistent anxiety about

infection as well as its close discursive association with the moral dimension of sex among

various social strata.[122] Here, both phenomena blend into one another due to their infectious

and moral elements.[123]

Prostitutes, moreover, were connected to issues of environmental hygiene discussed

earlier. Similar to the example mentioning lepers and prostitutes alongside one another above,

an ordinance from 1301 in York bans wandering pigs and prostitutes in the same clause.[124] In

Cambridge in 1459, the University chancellor was authorised to condemn polluting citizens

to amercement or expulsion and expel prostitutes to areas outside a radius of four miles from

the university. In addition, if a banished person lived within 10 miles of the university, the

lord of the place must be warned of the expulsion and expel 'her', in turn, from where she

lives, too.[125] In 1467, Leicester had a series of ordinances regarding sanitation, which not

only concerned the cleaning of physical filth from the city, but also moral filth in

prostitution.[126] In addition, in 1417 in London, it was decided that all 'stews', which either

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[122] Rawcliffe, *Leprosy*, p. 252. Elsewhere, Rawcliffe notes that another woman named Alice, who may possibly have been the same Alice Dymock, was charged with 'night-walking in men's clothes and entertaining suspect visitors' in 1486–87: Carole Rawcliffe, 'Health and Safety at Work in Late Medieval East Anglia', in *Medieval East Anglia*, ed. by Christopher Harper-Bill (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2005), pp. 130–52 (p. 130 n. 1).

[123] Beyond East Anglia, in Bristol, a series of proclamations in the *Great Red Book of Bristol* dating back to the 1460s prohibited lepers and prostitutes from entering the town, and they appear almost alongside one another in the document; prostitutes must not come no closer than the city gates and have to wear a striped hood, a requirement not limited to Bristol, existing in other towns such as Yarmouth and York: E. W .W. Veale, ed., *The Great Red Book of Bristol*. 5 vols. Vol. 2: Text (Part 1) (Bristol: Bristol Record Society, 1933), p. 143; Rawcliffe, *Urban Bodies*, p. 112; K. J. Allison, ed., *A History of the County of York East Riding: Volume 1, the City of Kingston Upon Hull* (London: Victoria County History, 1969), p. 75. Also see Karras, pp. 15, 40, 68–9, 110.

[124] P. J. P. Goldberg, 'Pigs and Prostitutes: Streetwalking in Comparative Perspective', in *Young Medieval Women*, ed. by N. J. Menuge, K. J. Lewis, and K. M. Phillips (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), pp. 172–93 (p. 172). The injunction was repeated in 1482. The punishment for having a wandering pig and prostitution were not the same, so the two were not equated. Rather, their condemnation followed the same logic.

[125] Charles Henry Cooper, ed., *Annals of Cambridge*. 5 vols. Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 209–10.

[126] P. J. P. Goldberg only highlights the moral connection between wandering pigs, leprosy, prostitution, and heresy, but the material, infection- and hygiene-conscious reasoning for clustering these groups together is evident: Goldberg, 'Pigs', pp. 173–5.

mean public baths, brothels, or houses of ill repute in general, should be closed because they

had become meeting points for:[127]

> […] lewd men and women, of bad and evil life, [who] have [meetings] in the stews
>
> belonging to men and women in the City and suburbs aforesaid; insomuch that—a
>
> thing to be lamented—divers men and women have been of late slain, spoiled, and
>
> robbed, for the cause and reason aforesaid; and, what is even worse, from one day to
>
> another, the wives, sons, daughters, apprentices, and servants, of the reputable men of
>
> the City, are oftentimes subtly, by the false imagining, colouring, and covin
>
> [collusion, deceit], as well of those who keep the said stews, as of others for a little
>
> money, drawn and enticed thereto [.][128]

Here, the public bath as an urban space, famously a hotspot for sexual encounters since antiquity, is portrayed as a hotbed of criminal activity. Furthermore, in 1460, London saw another ruling against prostitutes, which claimed that 'owing to the number of prostitutes in Suthwerk and other places adjacent many homicides, plunderings and improprieties have occurred'.[129] A commission was tasked, consequently, to remove the prostitutes from the borough. Lastly, in Oxford in 1459, the king gave the chancellor of the University the power to fine the offenders spilling waste in the streets, with a three-day deadline for payment in order not to be fined again.[130] The chancellor had already had the power to banish offenders from the university and its neighbouring areas, but the additional prerogative of being able to

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[127] 'Steu(e n.', in *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. by Robert E. Lewis, et al. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1952-2001) <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/> [accessed 6 March 2021].

[128] H. T. Riley, ed., *Memorials of London and London Life in the 13th, 14th and 15th Centuries* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1868), pp. 647–8 ; Also see, R. R. Sharpe, ed., *Calendar of Letter-Books Preserved among the Archives of the Corporation of the City of London, 1275–1498*. 11, A–L vols (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1899–1912), vol. I, p. 178. Goldberg points out that initiatives such as the example from Southwark were attempts to meet the demands of visiting foreign workers and keep them off the city streets. Despite similarities to the continental model of regulating sex work by institutionalising it, Goldberg affirms that the structure of such establishments was more 'small, private, and ephemeral': Goldberg, 'Pigs', pp. 180, 183–6.

[129] *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, vol. 1452–1461, p. 610.

[130] *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, vol. 1452–1461, p. 479.

banish 'prostitutes' for up to 10 miles was also added to his jurisdiction. Thus, prostitution, being an ostensibly moral problem, turned out to be a medical and public health problem, as well. The interwovenness of material and moral infection is manifested further in the use of the discourse of infection to address heresy. The following section will briefly discuss how religious unorthodoxy was understood and treated through the same discourse of infection at work in pestilence, leprosy, and prostitution.

D. Faith and Infection

As we have seen, the discourse of infection was used in association with biopolitical regulations against multiple groups of people in England: lepers and prostitutes, and among them, women in particular. It is evident that these groups were intertwined in many respects. A number of the Dutch immigrants worked as prostitutes in several towns, who were also thought to play a role in the spread of disease, including pestilence and leprosy. The common mode of transmission between the two illnesses (pestilence and leprosy) also meant that lepers were subject to additional scrutiny during times of pestilence. Another factor which played a role in this network was religion. With the expulsion of Jews from England in the late thirteenth century, England did not participate in the pestilence-inspired persecution of Jews in progress on the continent, but it had its own heretical movement in the Lollards, who were also condemned for spreading infection through the discourse of infection. Much like other groups discussed here, there were pre- and post- Black Death instances in which they were condemned in records and ordinances. For instance, the twelfth-century chronicler William of Newburgh recounts the examination (and eventual punishment and perishing) of certain Arnoldist or Publican heretics who 'came to England […] infected with this

pestilence' in 1160.[131] I am, however, specifically interested in instances where the discourse

of infection was used to describe Lollardy.

In 1392 London, an order from the King regarding religiously subversive assemblies

in the town notes that 'the king's will is that within the bounds of his power shall bud forth no

heresies or errors to infect the people'.[132] Another order from 1413 against aiding Lollards

describes the perpetuating cult as planning to sow 'the pestilent seed of lollardry and evil

doctrine'.[133] This time, Lollardy is compared directly with pestilence and not just infection.

In Chichester in 1397, too, the King called on the Bishop of Chichester to arrest the Lollards,

'lest the wickedness of the lurking enemy thereby infect the people of the realm'.[134] Norwich

must have also been quite active in the battle against Lollardy, for Thomas Walsingham

reserves praise solely for Henry le Despenser, Bishop of Norwich, for his urge to put the

heretics to death in 1389.[135] In 1395, the University chancellor received orders from the King

to expel the Lollards at the university, lest the ideas spread in the same way as 'a diseased

sheep infect[s] the flock'.[136] In another order issued on the same day to the chancellor, it is

demanded that John Wycliff's book *Triolagus* be examined in front of the man himself, with

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[131] Original Latin: 'Quippe in latissmis Galliae, Hispaniae, Italiae, Germaniaeque provinciis tam multi hac peste infecti esse dicuntur': William of Newburgh, 'William of Newburgh: History', Book Two, Chapter 13; William of Newburgh, Vol. 1, p. 120. Also see: Robert I. Moore, 'Heresy as Disease', in *The Concept of Heresy in the Middle Ages (11th–13th c.): Proceedings of the International Conference, Louvain, May 13–16, 1973*, ed. by W. Lourdaux and D. Verhelst (The Hague: Leuven University Press, 1976), pp. 1–11.

[132] *Calendar of Close Rolls*, vol. 1389–1392, pp. 530–1.

[133] *Calendar of Close Rolls*, vol. 1413–1419, pp. 85–95. A similar rhetoric was used in 1317 in a letter by Pope John XXII, who described heresy as the 'seed of dissension blown abroad by Satan's pestiferous breath': Rosalind M. T. Hill, 'Belief and Practice as Illustrated by John XXII's Excommunication of Robert Bruce', *Studies in Church History,* 8 (1972), 135–8 (p. 135). For the seed metaphor, see the previous chapter and Vivian Nutton, 'The Seeds of Disease: An Explanation of Contagion and Infection from the Greeks to the Renaissance', *Medical History* (1983), 1–34. The image of infected breath was also used in hagiographic accounts as well as in feast-day processions through a representation of a pestiferous dragon (see next chapter).

[134] *Calendar of Close Rolls*, vol. 1346–1349, pp. 152–159.

[135] Thomas Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*. ed. by Henry Thomas Riley. 2 vols. Vol. II (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, and Green, 1862–64), p. 189.

[136] *Calendar of Close Rolls*, vol. 1392–1396, pp. 429–438. The rhetoric persisted well into the sixteenth century, and even proclamations by Henry VIII as late as the 1530s referred to Lollard books as well as Anabaptist ideas as 'pestiferous' and 'pestilent': P. L. Hughes, and J. F. Larkin, eds., *Tudor Royal Proclamations*. 3 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964–9), Vol. 1, pp. 194, 227.

all its errors and heretical ideas compiled into a report and presented to the chancery; the

King is said to be willing to take action against such heretical ideas, 'the publication and

unsound doctrine whereof may infect the christian people'.[137] In 1401, Archbishop Thomas

Arundel visited the University of Cambridge and enquired the chancellor about the presence

of Lollardy.[138] In 1406, he described Lollardy as a predicament ultimately caused by the

'infected waters' of Oxford, associating it closely with the experience of plague and the

discourse of infection.[139] Within the analogy between the individual and the civic body, the

Lollards were thought to be violating Christ's body on two levels by denying

transubstantiation as well as by spreading infectious ideas within towns.[140]

Thus far, I have discussed the dynamics of infection in the context of the complex

interrelationships between the concepts of infection, individual and public health in both

physical as well as moral senses in one particular mode of tackling infection which sought to

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[137] *Calendar of Close Rolls*, vol. 1392–1396, pp. 429–438.

[138] Charles Henry Cooper, ed., *Annals of Cambridge*. 5 vols. Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 147.

[139] J. I. Catto, 'Wyclif and Wycliffism at Oxford, 1356–1430', in *The History of the University of Oxford: Volume II: Late Medieval Oxford*, ed. by J. I. Catto and T. A. R. Evans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 244. Most famous, of course, were Arundel's *Constitutions* against Lollardy promulgated in 1408, but they do not employ the discourse of infection extensively. For evidence of ideas of civic order closer to Lollard beliefs, see, for example: P. J. P. Goldberg, 'Coventry's "Lollard" Programme of 1492 and the Making of Utopia', in *Pragmatic Utopias: Ideals and Communities, 1200–1630*, ed. by Rosemary Horrox and Sarah Rees Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 97–116.

[140] From the Lollard perspective, on the other hand, transubstantiation itself was a violation of Christ's body, as Margery Baxter's statement during her heresy trial in 1428 makes clear, in which she highlights the process of digestion and defecation of the Eucharistic bread—asserting that it is actually the orthodox clergy who violate Christ's divinity: Norman Tanner, ed., *Heresy Trials in the Diocese of Norwich, 1428–31* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977), pp. 44–5. Also see: Emily Steiner, *Documentary Culture and the Making of Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 229–39. There is, similarly, extensive use of the discourse of infection in both orthodox and Lollard sermons when censuring the opposing side, and there are precedents for the polemical use of the discourse of infection dating to the Gregorian Reformation in the eleventh century. Within the Franciscan Order in the thirteenth century, the image of the leper (in whose constitution infection had a crucial role) was used as a way to argue about particular ideas regarding the role of poverty and charity: J.-H. Foulon, *Eglise Et Réforme Au Moyen Age: Papauté, Milieux Réformateurs Et Ecclésiologie Dans Les Pays De La Loire Au Tournant Des XIe-XIIe Siècles* (Brussels: De Boeck, 2008), p. 365; Courtney A. Krolikoski, 'Kissing Lepers: Saint Francis and the Treatment of Lepers in the Central Middle Ages', in *Leprosy and Identity in the Middle Ages: From England to the Mediterranean*, ed. by Elma Brenner and Francois-Olivier Touati (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021), pp. 269–93 (pp. 273–4). I shall return to the Lollard view of the Body of Christ in Chapter 4. Margaret Healy traces the legacy of this mode of employing the discourse of infection in polemical writings among Protestants and Papists as well as in attitudes against the poor, who lived in the outskirts of the city, and insurrectionists in Early Modern London: 'Discourses of the Plague in Early Modern London', in *Epidemic Disease in London*, ed. by J. A. I. Champion (London: Centre for Metropolitan History, 1993), pp. 19–34.

remove it from the boundaries of the city through excision. These cases highlight the assemblage made of the phenomena of leprosy, prostitution, heresy, and the discourse of infection. However, the addition of plague to this complex assemblage resulted in its modification. While the others were removed from the city-space, plague sufferers continued to remain within the boundaries of the town even while infected. Michel Foucault considers this form of biopolitics as represented by the leper.[141] For him, leprosy marks an older mode of controlling the individual, which is characterised by expulsion and segregation of lepers. He argues that plague was a watershed moment in the history of biopolitics, and it signals a shift from the older system of segregation to a newer mode of quarantine, observation, and containment associated with plague.[142] The next section shall illustrate that this thesis is historically problematic, as the modes Foucault refers to (i.e. segregation and quarantine—corresponding to the modes of excision and containment I discuss here) coexisted before and after the Black Death, but the identification of the two forms of biopolitics is nonetheless a useful observation. It is worth remembering that in the previous chapter, while late medieval medical and religious discourses considered the body as simultaneously a porous and fragmented as well as an enclosed entity, plague's mode of transmission—that is, through bodily pores—brought further significance to the porous and fragmented conception. In terms of public health measures against infection, we shall see, once again, both modes at work. But the conception of the city as a body analogous to the individual body renders the way pestilence was combatted closer to the porous and fragmented understanding of the body. The mode of excision (or the first mode of fighting infection)—manifested in the way leprosy, prostitution, and heresy were combatted—focussed on excluding corrupt matter, excision of rotten parts, and purgation of infection. On the other hand, the second mode involved

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[141] Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1974-1975*. trans. Graham Burchell. ed. by Valerio Marchetti and Antonella Salomoni (London: Verso, 2003), pp. 44–8.

[142] Foucault, *Abnormal*, p. 48.

tolerating the violation of bodily integrity and the existence of corruption within the civic body and strived for the containment of infection.

2. Second Mode of Fighting Infection: Containment

A. Infection After the Black Death

As we have seen in the examples above, in the years following the Black Death, which were marked by a succession of pestilential outbreaks, measures against corruption and infection continued to be taken. Except for a few instances, the employment of the discourse of infection generally emulated pre-Black Death ordinances. In those few instances of difference, the distinguishing feature was the subtle indication of the mode of containment. For instance, in a royal decree addressed to the mayor of London in 1349, all human faeces and other odorous filth were ordered to be removed from the streets, so that 'no greater cause of mortality may arise from such smells'. The air was described as 'infected', and the city as 'poisoned [...] especially in the mortality by the contagious sickness which increases daily'.[143] Here, pestilence seems to have managed to find its place into the discourse of infection after the Black Death.[144] Moreover, rather than aiming for complete eradication of infection and corruption, the concern is about prevention of the exacerbation of an already existing epidemic. In contrast to the more medical approach we saw in the previous chapter, as well as the more morally-minded approach towards leprosy, prostitution, and heresy in the previous sections, this regulation seems to be directed towards containment: that is, limiting the spread of pestilence to the already infected areas and slowing it down by regulating conduct. Taking extra steps to improve the hygiene of the city served to prevent future outbreaks, but the decree also addresses the present moment in its effort to curb the infection.

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[143] *Calendar of Close Rolls*, vol. 1349–1354, pp. 65–6.

[144] Rawcliffe also detects a similar shift in Yarmouth from the 1390s onwards: Rawcliffe, *Urban Bodies*, pp. 123–4.

This measure belongs to a different mode of addressing, fighting, and even understanding plague, a mode concerned with the containment of infection.[145]

We also find an expansion in the range of hygiene-related policies across the country, involving citizens themselves in carrying out sanitation, and thus encouraging self-government. These include both rulings issued from the Crown and local regulations. For example, an order to the authorities in Norwich in 1352 demanded that people clean the city of filth.[146] From around the same time onwards, we see policies of more prominent biopolitical power, which correspond to stricter dietary and medical regimen in the individual body. In 1361, perhaps one of the most detailed policies regarding the sale of meat and slaughter of animals was recorded in London: butchers who disposed of blood in the streets and the entrails in the Thames, whose 'abominable stench' made the air 'poisonous' and 'caused sickness among those dwelling in the city and those who flock thither' were to be imprisoned for up to a year.[147] As we saw in the previous sections, regulating animals and meat production had been an important issue in cities even before the Black Death, but regulations seem to have become more geographically diverse as time went on. In Norwich, too, an ordinance was passed in 1354 concerning time and place of movements of pigs and dogs within the city.[148] In Gloucester in 1372, a castle's constable was permitted to have the area around the castle cleaned because the refuse dumped there had corrupted the air, whose

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[145] It must be emphasised that some of such policies corresponded both to dietary regulation (concerned with prevention) and medicine (treatment), thus both modes of containment and excision.

[146] *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, vol. 1350–1354, pp. 283–4.

[147] *Calendar of Close Rolls*, vol. 1360–1364, p. 248. In addition, some logistical provisions were devised to minimise the risk of infecting the air in the meat production process: animals were to be slaughtered in nearby towns, have their entrails scoured, and then transported to London only for sale: *Calendar of Close Rolls*, vol. 1360–1364, p. 248. These orders seem to have run into trouble with regards to their implementation and enforcement, for further orders regulating meat production in London appear in 1369, 1370, 1380, 1391, and 1393; more importantly, however, it underscores the urgency and significance of the problem of infected air for civic authorities as well as the Crown to attempt to fully enforce the regulations time and again: *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, vol. 1369–1374, pp. 31–2, 177–8; *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, vol. 1377–1381, pp. 363–4; *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, vol. 1389–1392, pp. 409–10, 521; *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, vol. 1392–1396, pp. 128–135.

[148] Hudson and Tingey, *Records, Vol. 2*, pp. 205–7.

stench is harmful to the people living in the area (it is more likely 'people' refers only to the castle's inhabitants rather than the general public).[149] In the 1380s, both Yarmouth and Northampton placed bans on slaughtering animals within the city walls, while in 1390–1391, a senior barber in Norwich was punished for disposing of 'putrid blood' ('sanguinem corruptum') into 'the king's highway in abominable offence'.[150] As a final example, in 1396, York's Franciscans submitted a complaint to the king about butchers who dumped their waste in the river Ouse, the stench from which generated vermin, flies, and disease.[151] The king subsequently ordered the designation of a place outside the city for dumping.[152] An increase in fines for such offences was also implemented in various places.[153] Furthermore, some of the fines placed on polluters were to be spent on the upkeep of city's infrastructure, as in a case from Yarmouth in 1426, in which the offenders were not only fined for not cleaning the gutters, but were also ordered to redress the pollution in a few weeks under the threat of an even bigger fine.[154] More crucially, Rawcliffe notes that there is evidence from local courts that citizens were actually concerned about the health and hygiene of the urban space, demanding action on such issues through their representatives in their encounters with local officials.[155]

These measures, as already mentioned, were based on a shared understanding regarding similar modes of government and regulation of the individual and the civic bodies,

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[149] *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, vol. 1370–1374, p. 243.

[150] Rawcliffe, *Urban Bodies*, pp. 149–50; Markham and Cox, vol. I, p. 335; Hudson, *Leet Jurisdiction*, p. 70. In the same year, following the earlier ordinance concerning the movement of animals, an order concerning keeping and feeding animals within the city walls was issued in Norwich. The activity was considered to result in 'the destruction of the community', just as the sale of carcasses and hides in the home environment and not in the town's market—an activity banned in the same year—must have been deemed detrimental to the health of the community, for in 1390, a horse cadaver was described as 'poisoning the air': Hudson and Tingey, *Records, Vol. 1*, p. 385; Hudson, *Leet Jurisdiction*, pp. 71, 75. A similar ordinance was promulgated in Westminster in 1393, and people were commissioned to clean the streets, because the filth polluted the air: *Calendar of Close Rolls*, vol. 1392–1396, pp. 128–135.

[151] *Calendar of Close Rolls*, vol. 1369–1374, p. 438.

[152] *Calendar of Close Rolls*, vol. 1369–1374, p. 438.

[153] Rawcliffe, 'Health and Safety at Work', pp. 138–9.

[154] Weeda, p. 60; Rawcliffe, 'The View', p. 89.

[155] Rawcliffe, 'The View', pp. 81–3.

informed by the tradition of *regimina* available and in practice among the variety of medical

practitioners active in the late Middle Ages. Despite this material-discursive connection with

plague, and even though more legislative action concerning insalubrious conduct or activities

took place by civic authorities across the country, highlighting the increased significance of

the issues of corrupt air and infection in cities, significant modifications to the discourse of

infection do not seem to have occurred after the introduction of plague to this intertwined

network.[156] Thus, even though, despite its demographic and economic impact, the Black

Death does not seem to have ushered in an immediate 'epistemological break' or introduced a

new conceptual framework in the way civic authorities thought about infection, disease, and

the body, but it seems to have calibrated the civic attention on such issues.[157] For evidence of

concerted and conspicuous impact of plague on the formation of the mode of containment in

England, we must look a bit beyond the confines of the Middle Ages.[158] For example, a royal

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[156] Carole Rawcliffe notes, for instance, that in 1409, 'physicians teaching at the University of Oxford supplied the mayor and aldermen of London with a *consilium* (copied verbatim from an earlier tract by John of Burgundy)'. Furthermore, the number of hygiene-related ordinances in London rose four times between 1350–1399 in comparison with 1300–1349 (from sixteenth to sixty five), which is significant, as the city's population was halved during this period: 'A Breath of Fresh Air: Approaches to Environmental Health in Late Medieval Urban Communities', in *The Life of Breath in Literature, Culture and Medicine: Classical to Contemporary*, ed. by Corinne Saunders David Fuller, and Jane Macnaughton (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), pp. 131–51 (pp. 140–41). Also see: Ernest L. Sabine, 'City Cleaning', pp. 23–8.

[157] The concept of the *epistemological break* was adapted by Louis Althusser from the concept of *epistemological rupture*, a concept used—albeit seldom—by Gaston Bachelard in his discussion of the history of science. In Bachelard's sense, the terms concerns the development of the discipline of science as a 'result of a change in the epistemological value attached to some particular belief or cluster of beliefs, which, having been taken for granted, are called into question' by encountering what Bachelard calls *epistemological obstacles*: Mary Tiles, *Bachelard: Science and Objectivity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 57; Gaston Bachelard, *The Formation of the Scientific Mind: A Contribution to a Psychoanalysis of Objective Knowledge*. trans. Mary McAllester Jones (Manchester: Clinamen Press, 2002), passim. Althusser notes, relatively similarly, that the term 'designates the mutation in the theoretical problematic contemporary with the foundation of a scientific discipline': Louis Althusser, *For Marx*. trans. Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 2005) p. 32. For Althusser, however, the concept appears to function more abruptly, as he is keen to demonstrate in *For Marx* that Marx lived through and contributed to one such break: pp. 32–38.

[158] The mode of containment appears much earlier on the continent, yet its discernible presence in England is not revealed until the sixteenth century. For evidence of the second mode on the continent, especially Italy, see: Ann G. Carmichael, 'Epidemics and State Medicine in Fifteenth-Century Milan', in *Medicine from the Black Death to the French Disease*, ed. by Roger French, Jon Arrizabalaga, Andrew Cunningham and Luis Garcia-Ballester (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019; repr. 1998), pp. 221–47; Guy Geltner, 'The Path to Pistoia: Urban Hygiene before the Black Death', *Past & Present*, 246 (2020), 3–33; Guy Geltner, *Roads to Health: Infrastructure and Urban Wellbeing in Later Medieval Italy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), especially Chapter 5; John Henderson, '"Filth is the mother of corruption": Plague, the Poor, and the Environment in Early Modern Florence', in *Plague and the City*, ed. by Lukas Engelmann, John Henderson, and Christos Lynteris (London: Routledge, 2019), pp. 69–90.

proclamation from 1518 orders affected houses to be marked for forty days, and the infected

were not allowed to leave unless necessary and carrying a while rod.[159] Later, in 1564, the

High Steward of Westminster and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster promulgated

royal orders concerning the quarantining of the infected or recently infected, cessation of

subletting, and provision of support for those in lockdown.[160] To focus on Norwich, however,

which features substantial evidence of various modes of engagement with plague and the

discourse of infection, I will now consider ordinances from late sixteenth-century Norwich,

which highlight the distinction between the mode of excision (first mode) and the mode of

containment (second mode) in fighting infection.

B. A Post-Medieval Anecdote[161]

The post-medieval ordinances are from 1579 written in the *Book of Dutch and Walloon*

Strangers in Norwich's civic records, titled 'Orders concerning the Plague'. The inclusion of

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[159] F. P. Wilson, *The Plague in Shakespeare's London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963; repr. 1927), p. 56. The original proclamation does not seem to be extant, but there are references to it, according to Wilson, in the *Repertories of the Court of Aldermen*, vol. iii, 184b, 191 and the *Journals of the Court of Common Council and the Court of Aldermen*, vol. xi, 319.

[160] Baron William Cecil, and Sir Ambrose Cave, 'Wyllyam Cecill knight, high stewarde of the citie of Westminster, and Ambrose Caue, knight, chauncelour of the duchye of Lancaster [...]' (London: Richard Jugge, Printer to the Quenes Maiestie, 1564; STC 16704.9), in *Early English Books Online* <https://www.proquest.com/books/wyllyam-cecill-knight-high-stewarde-citie/docview/2240937462/se-2?accountid=8630> [Accessed 4 May 2023]. The measure of quarantine was the result of the extension of the earlier policy of *trentino*—an isolation period of thirty days, established for the first time in Ragusa (modern-day Dubrovnik) in 1377. As the measure began to be adopted in other places, it was expanded to *quarantino*—or a forty-day period: Philip A. Mackowiak, and Paul S. Sehdev, 'The Origin of Quarantine', *Clinical Infectious Diseases,* 35.9 (2002), 1071–72. There is evidence that such policies were inspired by Italian public health measures. Patricia Basing and Dennis E. Rhodes discuss the reception of an Italian treatise on public health measures against plague by the government in the 1570s (the National Archives, SP/12/75/52): 'English Plague Regulations and Italian Models: Printed and Manuscript Items in the Yelverton Collection', *The British Library Journal,* 23.1 (1997), 60–67 (pp. 61–3). Also see articles from London's Court of Common Council enquiring about the implementation of more detailed measures as well as extensive documentation of the affected parishes, houses, and people: Court of Common Council, 'Articles to be enquired of, what orders haue bene put in execution, for the restreinyng of the infected of the plague, within the citie of London and liberties thereof' (London: J. Day, 1577; STC 16707.1), in *Early English Books Online* <https://www.proquest.com/books/articles-be-enquired-what-orders-haue-bene-put/docview/2240924163/se-2?accountid=8630> [Accessed 4 May 2023].

[161] The term 'anecdote' is used here in the New Historicist sense, which is used to 'show in compressed form the ways in which elements of lived experience enter into literature, the ways in which everyday institutions and bodies get recorded. And […], conversely, to show in compressed form the ways in which poetry, drama, and prose fiction play themselves out in the everyday world, since men and women repeatedly find themselves in effect speaking the language of the literary not only in their public performances, but also in their most intimate or passionate moments'. As Joel Fineman notes, 'The anecdote produces the effect of the real, the occurrence of contingency, by establishing an event as an event within and yet without the framing context of

the ordinance in a book concerned mainly with immigrants is intriguing, and begs an

examination of the possible relationship between xenophobia and pestilence, a theme we

touched on in the previous section when considering the possibility of a connection between

the activities of certain Dutch immigrants and visitors as 'prostitutes' or as their patrons and

their connection with the infection of the civic body.[162] We also know, for instance, that the

visiting flagellants, who came from Flanders, were met with astonishment by the English in

London,[163] so the notion of discrimination in England, particularly against the Dutch, is even

more likely.[164] While they were not collectively persecuted in post-Reformation England for

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historical successivity'. Although my use of a post-medieval anecdote does not strictly adhere to the definition of the term—the anecdote must not imply historical continuity, I use the post-medieval example to highlight how a fully-fledged and extensively documented public health policy against plague would have looked like and worked within the late medieval context: Catherine Gallagher, and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 30; Joel Fineman, 'The History of the Anecdote: Fiction and Fiction', in *The New Historicism*, ed. by H. Aram Veeser (New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 49–76 (p. 61).

[162] On the state and number of the Dutch and Walloon communities in Norwich, see Elizabeth Rutledge, 'Immigration and Population Growth in Early Fourteenth-Century Norwich: Evidence from the Tithing Roll', *Urban History,* 15 (1988), 15–30; W. J. C. Moens, *The Walloons and Their Church at Norwich*. 2 vols (London: Huguent Society of London, 1887); John Pound, 'Government to 1660', in *Norwich since 1550*, ed. by C. Rawcliffe and R. Wilson (London: Hambledon and London, 2004), pp. 35–61. On Dutch immigration to England in general, with excellent bibliography in Bailey's article, see Mark Bailey, 'Peasant Welfare in England, 1290–1348', *The Economic History Review,* 51.2 (1998), 223–51; Jim Bolton, '"The World Upside Down": Plague as an Agent of Economic and Social Change', in *The Black Death in England*, ed. by W. M. Ormrod and P. G. Lindley (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1996), pp. 17–78; Maryanne Kowaleski, 'The Demography of Maritime Communities in Late Medieval England', in *Town and Countryside in the Age of the Black Death: Essays in Honour of John Hatcher*, ed. by Mark Bailey and Stephen Rigby (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), pp. 87–120; L. R. Poos, 'Migration and Settlement', in *A Rural Society after the Black Death: Essex 1350–1525* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 159–80.

[163] The flagellants were a penitential movement (with its origins in the thirteenth century) that saw a surge in popularity and spread across Europe following the Black Death. Their processions included extreme forms of self-mortification and public displays of penitence in order to save humankind and urge people to mend their ways. A few accounts of their processions in response to the Black Death can be found in: Rosemary Horrox, *The Black Death*, pp. 150–4. An exotically dramatic flagellant procession in 1349 is recorded in Robert of Avesbury's *De Gestis Mirabilibus Regis Edwardi Tertii*. It is said that the group conducted similar processions every night during their stay in London. There is another, albeit more negatively decorated, account of flagellant processions from 1350 in Thomas Walsingham's *Historia Anglicana*, in which he reminds readers that the flagellants' practice is not officially endorsed. Both accounts have been translated into English and included in: Horrox, *The Black Death*, pp. 153–4.

[164] The Dutch and Walloon community mentioned here had its origins in a group of about 4000 wool-workers invited to England by Elizabeth I's privy council and welcomed by Norwich's mayor in 1565 to the depopulated city in order to boost the economy and transfer their expertise to the native English residents. There had been a number of Dutch and Walloon families in the city before that date, and there was another official (parliamentary) invitation to them in 1328, but this initial migration proved enticing to more members of the community, resulting in increased immigration and further expansion of the community which amounted to almost five thousand people by 1576 (three years before the outbreak the ordinances address): John Pound, 'Government to 1660', in *Norwich since 1550*, ed. by Richard Wilson Carole Rawcliffe, and Christine Clark (London: Hambledon and London, 2004), pp. 35–61 (pp. 40–41); Muriel McClendon and Ralph Houlbrooke, 'The Reformation', in *Medieval Norwich*, ed. by Carole Rawcliffe and Richard Wilson

their Protestantism as they were in the Spanish Netherlands, there were incidents of tension due to religious conflict.[165] Furthermore, both the city's common council as well as numerous residents complained against the unfair competition the immigrants brought to the city; this issue was aggravated due to the apparent inability of the English to adopt to the newer, more efficient wool-working techniques of the migrant community.[166]

The ordinances reflect this tension-ridden backdrop and underscore complaints to the town's assembly against the immigrants—referred to as 'straungers' in the text. Pestilence had begun its spread in the city by taking hold in two parishes of St Stephen and All Saints (this is probably St Stephen's neighbouring parish, the All Saints Timberhill parish to the south west of the city). Moreover:

> […] [G]reate complayntes [were] made agaynste the straungers for the corrupte
>
> kepinge of their howses and necessaries, and also for the great anoyance of the river
>
> by skowring their bayes and wasshinge them all alongeste the ryver to the greate
>
> infeccion of the same. And also for keaminge of woole in open shoppes and carrienge

(London: Hambledon and London, 2004), pp. 255–76 (p. 258). For evidence of earlier presence of Dutch migrants, see Hudson and Tingey, *Records, Vol. 2*, p. lxvi. Hudson and Tingey mistakenly cite this Act of Parliament (Stat. 2 Ed. III. c. 5) as from 1338 whereas the act was passed in 1328.

[165] Pound, p. 41.

[166] Pound, pp. 40–41. The data on the 'England's Immigrants 1330–1550' database shows 371 persons identified as Dutch, Zeelander, Fleming, Hollander, Brabanter, Gelderlander, and Utrechter origin settled in Norfolk, which increases to 911 when including Suffolk, 1099 including Essex, 1363 including Cambridgeshire, and 1567 including Lincolnshire. Mainly based on tax records, these almost always include male residents who settled, worked, and held property in these counties (of the cumulated total, 1481 are male, 72 female, and 14 unknown). We can estimate that even though several of these entries concern the same individuals in separate years, the total number of Dutch residents in Norfolk must have been much more. Jonathan Mackman also highlights other issues with the data and specifically its recording, such as assessors apparently ignoring several towns and recording only the individuals who paid the tax (which is usually dwarfed by the number of people who did not pay). He underscores that 'origins of most taxpayers were not recorded'. Entries are distributed quite unevenly, with most entries from 1430–1490: 'England's Immigrants 1330–1550', University of York, (2021) <http://www.englandsimmigrants.com> [Accessed 2 May 2023]; Jonathan Mackman, 'Norfolk', England's Immigrants 1330-1550, University of York, (2021) <https://www.englandsimmigrants.com/page/sources/alien-subsidies/east-anglia/norfolk> [Accessed 16 January 2021]. Considering the estimated population of Norwich in the late fifteenth century (approximately 10,000), the number of aliens does not seem to be inordinate, but it is significant, nonetheless. The city's population before the Black Death is estimated to have been as high as 25,000 people: Norman Tanner, 'Religious Practice', in *Medieval Norwich*, ed. by Carole Rawcliffe and Richard Wilson (London: Hambledon and London, 2004), pp. 137–55 (p. 154); Brian Ayers, 'The Urban Landscape', in *Medieval Norwich*, ed. by Carole Rawcliffe and Richard Wilson (London: Hambledon and London, 2004), pp. 1–28 (p. 20).

chambrewashe throughe the citye in the daye tyme, and for pouringe oute wasshe in theyr gutters, and not pouringe water after yt, wherebye it reasteth in the gutters and breadethe greate infeccions, and of manye other enormities lyke therunto.[167]

A lack of basic domestic hygiene (including the lavatorial hygiene), contamination of the river by scouring baize, polluting the marketspace by combing wool, and emptying chamber pot waste in gutters during daytime and without pouring water after it to thoroughly clean the gutters are all charges levelled against the community. The medical significance of these charges, moreover, is highlighted by the next statement: that by not washing the disposed waste properly, the stagnant waste 'breadethe greate infeccions'. What connects these charges to the biological reality of pestilence is that the community was hit hard by the outbreak: '71 per cent of all those buried in Norwich during the last months of the outbreak' were of Dutch and Walloon heritage.[168] This was, perhaps, more due to the cramped conditions they lived in as well as their proximity to wool which readily accommodates fleas.[169] We recall from the previous chapter that stagnant waste material was thought to be a breeding ground for corrupt air. The same logic must be at work here, too, so that by leaving toilet waste unmanaged, and by extension, by not maintaining an acceptable level of domestic cleanliness as well as polluting the river, the risk of infecting the air, and therefore extending the spread of pestilence, would increase. Added to these was the issue with combing wool, which although it could not generate infection independently, was understood to pollute the air and facilitate the generation and spread of pestilence.

Further support for this logic is found in the next section, which concerns the details of the imposed regulations. Issued by the mayor, they are directed at the Dutch and Walloon

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[167] Hudson and Tingey, *Records, Vol. 2*, p. 335.
[168] Pound, pp. 42, 44.
[169] It is interesting that the connection between plague and wool and cloth manifests itself in the medieval understanding of the association with infected air and pollution, one of the likeliest ways for infected fleas or lice to be able to infect humans was through clothing and especially wool.

people living in Norwich and address various groups of artisans. Beginning with the scourers, it is said that their activity not only does:

> […] poyson the whole fysshe of ye ryver, but also doth so poison the water that the corruption therof (to suche as of necessite are fayne to occupye the same) dothe breede in their bodies dyverse corrupte humours, to the great daunger of their bodies in this infectious tyme.[170]

It appears that 'their bodies' refers to those of the scourers and not the fish, implying that the corruption of water results in the transmission of corrupt humours to the body either by inhaling the infected air arising from the corrupt water or via the skin by using the river for washing. Consumption would be an unlikely mode of transmission here, for as Elizabeth Rutledge notes, the water from the river was probably not used for consumption often, and, more generally, the maintenance of the river, gutters, and cockeys (the local name for small streams) had been a long-standing problem.[171] Allowing corrupt humours to enter the body, 'in this infectious tyme' when the air is already infected, puts the body at additional risk, and that is why the ordinance decrees a ban on scouring in a part of the city supposedly used for such activities—'in the ryver of this citye from the Newe Mylles to the bridge called the Whyghtfriers Bridge'.[172] Furthermore, another ban is placed on combing wool near the streets, and scourers are ordered to dispose of their scouring waste at night, taking care to pour water after it to keep the gutters uninfected. The citizens are also asked to keep their privies ('necessaries') clean and unsoiled, as the 'wasshe [probably referring to privy waste] corruptethe and bringethe great infection, and use suche clensinge of your houses, your clothes and bodies, and also use suche fumes and preservatyves as the phisicions shall advise

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[170] Hudson and Tingey, *Records, Vol. 2*, p. 336.

[171] Rutledge, 'An Urban Environment', pp. 84–86. It is important to note that, as the last part of the sentence implies, the denoted corruption does not necessarily cause pestilence, but impairs the body via the entrance of corrupt humours, thereby making it more susceptible to pestilence.

[172] Hudson and Tingey, *Records, Vol. 2*, p. 336.

you, and as is sett downe (in prynte) to be used by her highnes commaundemente'.[173] The recommendation for using physician-approved fumes and preservatives highlights that many of the settlers might have been familiar with the medical explanations related to infectious diseases or, at least, with the concepts of corrupt air and humours.

In terms of the biopolitical significance of the ordinances, they incorporate both top-down government as well as various modes of self-regulation, in that households and neighbours could be relied on to implement or monitor the implementation of the recommendations. In turn, citizens must have been—at least in principle—familiar with such standards and accepted them as truth. Furthermore, these regulations do not solely concern hygienic standards; they are tied to the economic activities of the community as well as their spatial presence: by banning scouring and washing baize alongside the river as well as combing wool in the market, the authorities would have inevitably limited the presence of the community in the town and inflicted economic damage on their trades. A perfect incarnation of biopolitical governmentality, these regulations embody the relations of power penetrating even the most private of places, administering the government of the self through the collection and disposal of their privy waste and monitoring the adherence of others.

The existence of a written piece of advice (or an early modern protocol) is also intriguing. As the wording suggests, the guidance seems to have not been available to the general public on demand—something which would have also been true in the Middle Ages. This presupposes a system of public relations by the civic and/or religious authorities. To cement this proposition, the end of the ordinance commissions the ministers of the community to 'puplyshe these letters to your congregation for the better observing the same'.[174] The community seems to have had relative low-level administrative and religious

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[173] Isla Fay suggests that 'necessaries' refers to privies: *Health and the City*, p. 189; Hudson and Tingey, *Records, Vol. 2*, pp. 336–7.
[174] Hudson and Tingey, *Records, Vol. 2*, p. 337.

autonomy, for in a series of orders agreed between Norwich's civic authorities and representatives of the 'strangers', referred to as the 'The Book of Orders', legal and religious matters were to be referred to English authorities such as the mayor or the bishop only if they could not be determined or resolved by the community's arbitrators and ministers.[175] Furthermore, the churches of such communities were referred to in records as the 'Dutch Church', implying they had their own ministers.[176] That does not mean that they were isolated from the rest of the city, for they were, above all, under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Norwich.[177] As citizens, they were given 'certificates of good behaviour and of their occupations', issued by the local ministers, but that is not to ignore the challenges they faced by living in Norwich.[178] Similar to the hostility highlighted before, there was administrative bias against the 'strangers'. For instance, they had to adhere to a curfew, and they were not allowed to participate in elections or enter the city hall; in addition, their economic activities were also strictly regulated and limited.[179]

The practical guidelines in the ordinances are even more fascinating: one should isolate oneself and one's household indoors and arrange for food to be delivered. The ministers of the community, furthermore, are tasked to report the number of infections and deaths to the mayor every day. In addition, all dogs must not be allowed to wander in the city, and those within infected households must be killed. As we have seen, regulating the movement of animals within the city was frequently employed to combat the unhygienic and disorderly state of towns, but the specificity of actions against dogs has to do with the

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[175] W. J. C. Moens, *The Walloons and Their Church at Norwich, Vol. 1* (London: Huguent Society of London, 1887), pp. 28–29, 32. On the civic structure of medieval Norwich, see Maddern, pp. 191–2.
[176] Moens, p. 31.
[177] Moens, pp. 30–31.
[178] Moens, p. 28.
[179] Moens, p. 29; Hudson and Tingey, *Records, Vol. 1*, pp. 29, 94, 366.

medical idea that dogs can transmit plague. Mark S. R. Jenner notes that since the late

fifteenth century, there had been advice against dogs as potential carriers of infection.[180]

Two court rulings in the same and the subsequent year (1580) also shed light on

further measures against pestilence: '[…] euery person whose house is visited w[i]th

syckenes of ye plague and where any person hathe or dothe die therowte do not goe abrode

by the space of vj wekes'.[181] The other ruling concerns putting up a notice from the mayor in

every parish church in order to inform the general public of the regulations. These include:

> […] none of anye house soe enfected w[th]in this cytie or the suburbes of the same w[th]in
>
> one moneth laste passed or w[ch] shall hereafter be infected shall come abroade into
>
> anye streete, market, shoppe, or open place of resorte w[th]in the cytie or the liberties or
>
> suburbes of the same at anye tyme here after untyll the plague be ceased in the same
>
> house by the space of xx[ti] dayes at the leaste, but that euerye theim shall haue and
>
> beare in his or theire hande or handes openlye, one whighte smalle wande of the
>
> lengthe of twoo foote w[th]owte hydinge or caryenge the same close from open sighte.
>
> And suche as carye wandes not to come at the Guilde Halle nor at any comon lectures
>
> or sermons, upon payne of euerye suche offender sene by anye Alldreman or
>
> constable, or beinge convented before anye alldreman, to be sette in the stockes by
>
> anye Alldreman or constable or constables, from the tyme of his apprihension and
>
> conventynge untyll eighte of the clocke in the after none of the same daye.[182]

Just like distributing information among the Dutch and Walloon community, this notice is

also part of a public relations strategy to keep citizens informed of the situation, which

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[180] Mark S. R. Jenner, 'The Great Dog Massacre', in *Fear in Early Modern Society*, ed. by W. G. Naphy and P. Roberts (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), pp. 44–61. Also see Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England, 1500–1800* (London: Penguin, 1983), pp. 104–6.

[181] Hudson and Tingey, *Records, Vol. 2*, p. 187.

[182] Hudson and Tingey, *Records, Vol. 2*, pp. 189–90.

presupposes prior knowledge of the workings of pestilence. Apart from quarantining oneself, by carrying sticks and self-identification as sick, the sick alert people to keep their distance from them, so that the infected air would not affect them, resembling what lepers had been required to do before their expulsion from towns. The isolation of the sick indoors, punishment of the flouters outside, and circumscribing the space around a moving infected person outside by requiring them to carry a stick all serve to mark the sick and regulate communal as well as personal space.

In these documents, it is clear that a different mode of combatting pestilence is at work here, one which is concerned with containment disease rather than purging it. The parishes on the edge of town must have seemed as pestilential buboes or arrow wounds (as discussed in the previous chapter) signifying penetration points of pestilence. Curiously, these parishes are far from the sub-leets in which the Dutch and Walloon were the most populous since the Middle Ages. According to Pound, the leets of Wymer and Ultra Aquam, which were large leets covering the north and west of the city to the town centre, accommodated the majority of the community; Hudson and Tingey cite the sub-leets of St Gregory and St Andrew, both of which are located in leet of Wymer in the centre of the city, as having had the largest migrant population.[183] However, instead of excising the bubo or purging the infection by using medicinal remedies, purgation, or invasive treatments such as phlebotomy, the authorities seek to manage it. Michel Foucault identifies a similar point when studying the modes of controlling individuals: he notes that this 'different model […] was not established but reactivated. This model […] concerns the problem of plague and the spatial partitioning and control (*quadrillage*) of plague-infested towns'.[184] The reason why he rightly believes this mode was reactivated rather than established is the employment of such

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[183] Pound, p. 42; Hudson and Tingey, *Records, Vol. 2*, p. lxvi.
[184] Foucault, *Abnormal*, p. 44.

measures against epidemics in older times, albeit obviously on a more limited scale. As we established in the previous chapter, epidemics had been considered a special type of disease with both material and moral significance since antiquity. To Foucault, this level of monitoring parishes and houses, regulating household and individual conduct as well as appearance, and recording the numbers of the infected and the deceased are all manifestations of various levels of 'a kind of pyramid of uninterrupted power'; a kind of power 'that was continuous not only in this pyramidal, hierarchical structure, but also in its exercise, since surveillance had to be exercised uninterruptedly'.[185] This new mode is not primarily concerned with the excision of the disease but with 'fixing [it], […] giving [it its] own place, […] assigning places and […] defining presences and subdivided presences […] Essentially, it is a question of producing a healthy population rather than of purifying those living in the community'.[186] He puts this model in a historical narrative, concluding that this mode of control is specifically associated with plague and 'corresponds to a very important historical process that I will call, in a word, the invention of positive technologies of power', which is concerned with 'inclusion, observation, the formation of knowledge, the multiplication of effects of power on the basis of the accumulation of observations and knowledge'.[187] Here Foucault seems to be locating the birth of what he would refer to as 'biopolitics' in responses to plague. As already noted, this does not seem to be entirely accurate, but the foregrounding of observation, regulation, and containment rather than purging and expulsion as a result of the plague is, as this discussion has illustrated, evident.[188]

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[185] Foucault, *Abnormal*, p. 45.

[186] Foucault, *Abnormal*, p. 46.

[187] Foucault, *Abnormal*, p. 48. He revises this theorisation in his later lectures, associating plague solely with the idea of quarantine; prevention—with all its controlling measures—are thought to be symbolised by the response to smallpox, a later epidemic: Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1977–78*. trans. Graham Burchell. ed. by Michel Senellart (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009), p. 10.

[188] Later epidemics/diseases also illustrate the coexistence of the models of fighting infection: while the Sweating Sickness was treated similarly to plague, the French Disease (also known as pox or syphilis—now considered one syndrome of treponematosis) was compared to leprosy: Roger French, and John Arrizabalaga,

Regulations are justified by the possibility of the infection of not just air, but also the river, the fish, and, eventually, the humours of other citizens, which, in turn, justifies harsh punishments such as being put in the stocks. In terms of truth discourse, physicians must also have been thought to possess the truth, in Foucauldian terms, for the ordinance supports their recommendations. Therefore, there is a multidirectional interaction between the civic authorities, physicians, and citizens. By this time, physicians were well on their way in terms of regulating their practice by institutionalising it as well as discrediting other practitioners. However, their authority was in no way absolute; there was even less cohesion between the mid-fourteenth century and the late fifteenth century, and no guild or college seems to have acquired the unrivalled status to enable them to produce true knowledge across the country.[189] To add further complexity to the issue of medieval status of possession and production of truth, the multiplicity of medical practitioners (which included vocational units as diverse as physicians, barbers and surgeons, phlebotomists, bone-setters and tooth-drawers, herbalists, apothecaries, and even—in some cases—some weavers and wax-makers who assumed medical responsibilities in spite of not being authorised by guilds, civic authorities, or the parliament) meant that medical truth-production was much more complex in the late medieval period.[190] Few medical practitioners were university-educated, and those

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'Coping with the French Disease: University Practitioners' Strategies and Tactics in the Transition from the Fifteenth to the Sixteenth Century', in *Medicine from the Black Death to the French Disease*, ed. by Roger French, Jon Arrizabalaga, Andrew Cunningham and Luis Garcia-Ballester (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019; repr. 1998), pp. 248–87 (p. 248); Salmon, pp. 28–31. Also see Ellis Herndon Hudson, 'Historical Approach to the Terminology of Syphilis', *Archives of Dermatology,* 84 (1961), 545–62.

[189] On this see: Richard Theodore Beck, *The Cutting Edge: Early History of the Surgeons of London* (London: Lund Humphries, 1974); Rawcliffe, *Urban Bodies*, pp. 291–311; Sidney Young, *The Annals of the Barber-Surgeons of London* (London: Blades, East and Blades, 1890).

[190] Charles Williams, ed., *The Masters, Wardens, and Assistants of the Gild of Barber-Surgeons of Norwich.* 2nd edn (Norwich: Jarrold and Sons, The Empire Press, 1900), p. 5; Robert S. Gottfried, *Doctors and Medicine in Medieval England, 1340–1530* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 46. The practice of these various groups seems to have been sanctioned by the civic and religious authorities. For instance, the late fourteenth to early fifteenth century physician John Malvern notes that they were allowed to attach advertisements of their services on church doors, something confirmed by the physician Thomas Forestier almost a century later: Michael T. Walton, 'Thomas Forestier and the 'False Lechys' of London', *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences,* 37.1 (1982), 71–73 (p. 72 n. 6); British Library, MS Additional 27582 f. 70r.

who were chose to remain close to the royal court or other wealthy patrons instead of towns.[191]

Despite the parliamentary ordinance of 1421, which disqualified any practitioner other than 'physicians in the universities, and surgeons among the masters of that art', the multiplicity of practice continued.[192] Two years later, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of London was formed, an institution which sought to validate expertise, authorise practice, and inspect conduct more successfully by giving surgeons trained outside universities some leeway in recognising them as authorised practitioners—read another way, by including them amongst the possessors of truth. Rawcliffe, however, asserts that this attempt was probably unsuccessful as it did not meet the everyday demands of Londoners, let alone people in other parts of the country.[193] Surgeons, barbers, and apothecaries had their own guilds separate from the Royal College of Physicians in London, each of which was subject to different sets of regulatory ordinances, and each vied for authorisation by civic authorities, thus making regulating their practice quite challenging.[194] That is not to say, however, that such professions did not enjoy as much official recognition as the university-trained physicians did. For instance, it was by virtue of a parliamentary act that every doctor in Bristol had to be a member of the Bristol Barbers' Guild, save for the university-trained ones.[195] That is perhaps why in 1485, the established physician Thomas Forestier sought to condemn 'false

[191] Faye Marie Getz, 'Medical Education in England', in *The History of Medical Education in Britain*, ed. by Vivian Nutton and Roy Porter (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995), pp. 76–93; Rawcliffe, *Urban Bodies*, p. 293. Inevitably, as a result of the variety of services, tensions existed between various groups of practitioners. For instance, the French physician Thomas Forestier complained about 'false lechys deceyuyng al the world' in his tract on the Sweating Sickness written in 1485: British Library, MS Additional 27582 ff. 70–77 (f. 70).
[192] 'Henry V: May 1421.', in *Parliament Rolls of Medieval England*, ed. by Paul Brand Chris Given-Wilson, Seymour Phillips, Mark Ormrod, Geoffrey Martin, Anne Curry, and Rosemary Horrox (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005).
[193] Rawcliffe, *Urban Bodies*, p. 295.
[194] The apothecaries in both London and Norwich were part of the enormous and powerful grocers' company. Rawcliffe, *Urban Bodies*, pp. 293, 296; Gottfried, pp. 26–51. Also see, Walter Rye, ed., *Calendar of the Freemen of Norwich from 1317 to 1603* (London: Elliot Stock, 1888).
[195] Gottfried, p. 45.

lechys' in his treatise on the Sweating Sickness.[196] Medical 'truth production', in other words, was a site of struggle, and one must not distinguish between the less 'expert' medical advice and the more popular material when it comes to evaluating their credibility and power of persuasion. Forestier's denunciation was not a sign of the acceptance of his institutional knowledge as truth. Rather, it was a sign of the multiplicity of truth.

In Norwich, the situation appears to be a little less complicated. The city had one of the pioneering and more dominant guilds of barber-surgeons in the country, which was established in 1349, and its members included physicians alongside surgeons, and barbers. And yet university-trained physicians still preferred to cater to wealthier patrons, and it took until 1561 to establish a united company of physicians and barber-surgeons in the city.[197] Once again, this did not mean that medical knowledge was consolidated in the hands of a few, for the other practitioners, despite being under regulation and supervision, still practiced their art. In 1539, for instance, in another example of the mode of excision (or the first mode) as an extension of fighting disorder, an apothecary named George Hill was imprisoned and then ordered to leave town after practising 'the science off Surgerye he nat beyng expert theryn'.[198]

Religious figures, on the other hand, seem to have enjoyed a relatively strong position in the production and promulgation of truth discourses, for the task of informing the public seems to have fallen on the community's ministers. Their strength seems to have exceeded (or at least paralleled) that of medical practitioners and civic authorities, because of an Act of Parliament in 1511 which stipulated that every practitioner—except those trained or approved by the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge—must be approved by the bishop of the diocese, or the vicar-general if the bishop was not available. Of course, the bishop could

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[196] British Library, MS Additional 27582 f. 70.
[197] Gottfried, pp. 45, 46–7; C. Williams, p. 5; Rawcliffe, 'Sickness and Health', pp. 318–20.
[198] Hudson and Tingey, *Records, Vol. 2*, p. 168.

consult medical experts in his examination, but this consultation was only down to the bishop's discretion.[199] Religious figures also had another task based on these regulations, which was compiling a list of casualties every day, which is, once again, a textbook biopolitical tactic: management of populations through regulation of and monitoring mortality and infection. The fact that the ordinance mentions that pestilence had begun to take hold in two parishes of the city shows that this data was being used by the authorities to enforce local measures, such as the ones imposed on the 'straungers'.

To recapitulate, we saw that the Black Death and its subsequent outbreaks adjusted medieval people's attention on the potential of infected air, and we saw, based on the discussed biopolitics of pestilence, that the idea of bodily porousness was present in late medieval English episteme. The suburban place of human beings—who are like foreigners—in the universal scheme of things corresponds to the place of the Dutch and Walloon migrant community living in the marginal parishes of Norwich and their role in harbouring pestilence and letting it into the town/the civic body, which resulted in added hostility and attempts to regulate their bodies and activities. However, they were not expelled from the boundaries of the city; instead, they were observed and regulated in several forms, ranging from having to obtain certificates to the imposition of curfews on them. This subtler mode of exclusion does not involve material removal from the city, but includes, even after being invited into the civic body officially, remaining marginal and inferior (in this case, the Subject, in the Althusserian sense, is the English). In this manner, the Dutch and Walloon community were treated with both modes of fighting infection at the same time, albeit on different fronts: via the mode of excision, they were excluded from full membership of the civic body; and via the mode of containment, they were isolated and regulated as generators and carriers of plague.

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[199] John H. Raach, 'English Medical Licensing in the Early Seventeenth Century', *The Yale Journal of Biology and Medicine,* 16.4 (1944), 267–88 (p. 274).

The two modes, as this case shows, are invariably interconnected, for one cannot be excluded without being regulated and interpellated, and one cannot be regulated and interpellated without being excluded. The difference is, nevertheless, in the dominance of one element over another in each of these modes.

So what is the reason for the dominance of one mode over the other, or, put another way, why were groups such as lepers, prostitutes, and heretics excised from the civic body, while plague sufferers remained within yet were subjected to intense regulation? In my view, this is, once again, down to the material agency and capabilities of pestilence. Despite sharing their earthly cause with diseases such as leprosy (corrupt air) and having a common discourse of infection with issues including but not limited to prostitution and heresy, and despite the efforts to frame such issues as pestilential and invest them with pestilential qualities through the discourse of infection, epidemics had been theorised and understood uniquely since antiquity, and that is, perhaps, due to the sweeping, virulent, and relentless contagiousness of epidemic diseases. The sheer power of epidemics—or at least that of the ones so great to have been recorded in history—was so much that it must have inevitably shaped their victims' responses in distinct ways. One issue I touched on in the previous chapter was the advice repeated by physicians that the best remedy is penance and confession, which may, alongside the religious significance of diseases as well as remedies, hint at the relative helplessness of humans in the face of plague. Thus, in pestilential epidemics since the Black Death, attempts to expel plague victims would have probably seemed relatively ridiculous. The epidemic was so deadly and quickly spread that there would not have been adequate time to relocate victims, or, due to the extremely fast and debilitating progression of the disease, relocation would not have been possible at all. Here, we see vital materiality piercing not only the human body but also the civic body by its sheer force, and thus undercutting the entire framework of the mode of excision—the more historically and intellectually rich mode of

fighting infection, the macrocosm/microcosm analogy, as well as ideals of bodily integrity and corporate health in the individual and the civic bodies. The infected Dutch and Walloon communities remained within the limits of the city despite being the entry point of pestilence into the city. Charges of infecting the air were not treated with expulsion but with more regulation and punishment—the civic equivalents of dietary and medicinal regulations. The mode of containment (or the second mode), as a result of the Black Death and its subsequent outbreaks, made both the individual as well as the civic body more porous by ultimately allowing the existence of infection within the body despite the fact that concerns with the ideas of infection and corruption escalated after the Black Death. There is, however, a third mode of dealing with infection, which is also unique to epidemics and further challenges the aforementioned ideas regarding the civic bodily integrity, albeit in a way different to that of the mode of containment. The next section discusses this last mode.

3. Third Mode of Fighting Infection: Reverse Excision

In 1479, John Paston III wrote a letter to his older brother, John Paston II, in whose postscript he asked:

> Also, s*yr*, I prey yow send me by the next man that comyth fro London ij
> pottys of tryacle of Jenne—they shall cost xvj d.; for I haue spent ought that
> I had w*yth* my yo*ng* wyff *and* my yong folkys *and* my-sylff. And I shall
> pay hym that shall bryng hem to me, *and* for hys caryage. I prey yow lett it
> be sped. The pepyll dyeth sore in Norwyche, *and* specyally a-bought my
> house; but my wyff *and* my women come not ought, *and* fle ferther we can

not, for at Sweynsthorp sythe my dep*artyn*g thens they haue dyed *and* ben

syke nye jn ev*ery* house of the towne.[200]

As a testament from someone stuck in the midst of an epidemic, not only does this letter

suggest a degree of medical knowledge among urban dwellers (in this case probably owing to

the possession of medical manuscripts such as the *Collectanea medica* mentioned in the

previous chapter), the household's fear of getting out of the house because there have been a

worrying number of cases in the vicinity signifies an awareness of the civic dimension of

regulations against pestilence. This is also evident from a letter written in 1479 from John

Paston II to his mother Margaret, in which John expressed his premonition of being infected

by the pestilence for 'the first iiij dayes' of his stay in London because, as he put it, '[I]

fownde my chambr*e and* stuffe nott so clene as I demyd, whyche troblyd me soor*e*'.[201] More

importantly, the letter highlights a third mode of encountering infection—which I term the

mode of inverted excision, which was probably more popular among the wealthier citizens

such as the Pastons: fleeing the city. The phenomenon of flight had not been unprecedented,

and despite attempts among both the Christian and Muslim religious authorities to regulate

people's behaviour during an outbreak, the temptation was ever-present. In the Islamic

tradition, a *hadith* from the prophet cautioning people against leaving or entering plague-

infested towns was frequently cited and discussed by both physicians and religious jurists,

with some citing an additional prophetic tradition in which it was promised that those who

bore the divine pestilential punishment patiently and piously would receive the reward of

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[200] Norman Davis, ed., *Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century*. 3 vols. Vol. 1, *Early English Text Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 614–16. On the medical content of the Paston Letter, see: Ashlee Barwell, 'The Healing Arts and Social Capital: The Paston Women of Fifteenth-Century England', *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History,* 35.1 (2018), 137–59; Hannah Ingram, 'Contagious Correspondence: Fifteenth-Century Letter Collections and the Gentry Perception of Disease', *The Mediæval Journal,* 9.1 (2019), 143–74; Hannah Ingram, ''Pottes of Tryacle' and 'Bokes of Phisyke': The Fifteenth-Century Disease Management Practices of Three Gentry Families', *Social History of Medicine,* 32.4 (2018), 751–72; Elaine E. Whitaker, 'Reading the Paston Letters Medically', *English Language Notes,* 31.1 (1993), 19–27.

[201] Davis, p. 515.

martyrdom.[202] In spite of such warnings, groups of people fled once pestilence reached their towns.[203]

In the Christian world, flight seems to have been viewed slightly more favourably, even though there have been similar warnings against leaving towns. John of Reading, for instance, bewails those who tried to escape the plague but perished because they were already carrying the infection, before quoting an apocalyptic verse which warns 'Whoever flees at the sound of the terror shall fall into the pit', which is itself about the earth-devouring 'curse' of the Lord.[204] Since the early Middle Ages, flight had been a common approach among civic officials as well as the secular clergy, especially the more affluent ones: civic officials were censured, for instance, in a sermon given by the fifth-century Caesarius of Arles.[205] At the hight of the pandemic in 1349, William Bateman, the Bishop of Norwich, found his Vicar General, Thomas de Methwold, to have gone to Essex (possibly to escape the outbreak). Bateman immediately ordered de Methwold to return, but he seems to have spent the next few months outside Norwich himself.[206] In the later Middle Ages, there is evidence of the flight tactic in documents made not by chroniclers or preachers but by those who fled towns themselves—such as the Pastons. In an example of such an approach resembling Boccaccio's *Decameron*, William Paston II wrote to his older brother—John I—in 1454 from London, expressing that 'Her*e* is gret pestelens. I purpose to fle in-to the contr*é*', similar to another letter written in 1465 from Margaret Paston to her husband, John I, in which she notes that John's mother, Agnes, 'p*u*rposyth to be at her*e* place at Caster*e* thys wyke, for þe pestylens

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[202] Irmeli Perho, *The Prophet's Medicine: A Creation of the Muslim Traditionalist Scholars* (Helsinki: Finnish Oriental Society, 1995), pp. 88–95.

[203] Michael Dols, *The Black Death in the Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), pp. 58–9, 62, 173–5.

[204] Horrox, *The Black Death*, pp. 74–5; Isiah 24:18; Isiah 24:6.

[205] Peregrine Horden, 'Ritual and Public Health in the Early Medieval City', in *Body and City: Histories of Urban Public Health*, ed. by Sally Sheard and Helen Power (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 17–40 (p. 24). The issue continued to be contentious as late as in the sixteenth century: Paul Slack, *The Impact of Plague in Tudor and Stuart England* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1985), pp. 41–4.

[206] Philip Ziegler, *The Black Death*. 2nd edn (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), Chapter 10.

ys so feruent in Norwych that thay ther*e* no lenger*e* a-byde ther*e*'.[207] Perhaps the range of

attitudes to the experience of pestilence for the wealthy can be summarised by a passage in an

urgent letter sent from John Paston II to his mother or, representing her, his younger

brother—John III—in 1471, in which he writes:

> I praye yow scende me worde iff any off owre frendys or well- wyller*ys* be
>
> dede, for*e* I feer þ*a*t ther is grete deth in Norwyche *and* in other borowghe
>
> townese in Norffo*lk*; for I ensur*e* yow it is the most vnyu*er*sall dethe þ*a*t
>
> euyr*e* I wyst in Ingelonde, for by my trowthe I kan not her by pylgrymes
>
> þ*a*t passe þe contré, ner noon other man þ*a*t rydethe er gothe any contré,
>
> þ*a*t any borow town in Ingelonde is free from þ*a*t sykenesse. God sease it
>
> whan it pleasyt hym. Wherffor, for Goddysake, late my moodr*e* take heede
>
> to my yonge brytheryn, that they be nat in noon place wher that sykenesse
>
> is regnyng, nor that they dysport not w*yth* noon other yonge peple whyche
>
> resortythe wher any sykenesse is. *And* iff þer be any off that syknesse ded
>
> or enffecte in Norwyche, for Goddes sake lete hyr*e* sende them to som
>
> frende off hyrse in-to þe contr*é*, *and* do ye þe same, by myn advyce. Late
>
> my moodr*e* rather remeve hyr howsolde i*n*-to þe co*ntr*é.[208]

Here, not only is fleeing the town treated as a way to escape the pestilence once it reached

Norwich, it is also proposed as a preventative measure. Furthermore, the urging of the youth

not to socialise with people from the affected areas offers an echo of the late-sixteenth

century social distancing measure seen above.[209] This reinforces, once again, the availability

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[207] Giovanni Boccaccio, 'The Decameron', ed. by G. H. McWilliam (London: Penguin, 2003), First Day; Davis, pp. 156, 316.

[208] Davis, pp. 440–1.

[209] Curiously, Hannah Ingram interprets the continuation of correspondence during outbreaks as a flagrant disregard for precautionary measures, solely based on the assumption that the reliance on couriers for correspondence would have naturally increased the risk of contracting the disease. However, one must bear in

of such medically-rooted information to people other than the civic authorities. The same tactic was used by other landowners in England, as a letter written in 1479 by Richard Cely (the elder) to his son George Cely (of the London-based merchants—the Cely family) reveals. Richard writes that 'the sekenese ys sore yn London werefor meche pepyll of the sete ys yn to the contre for fere of the sekenese'.[210] This also further strengthens the suggestion that this approach was, probably, specific to the wealthier of the English.

How does this mode of encountering pestilence and infection impact the understanding of the individual and civic bodies? Does it bolster the other modes or does it serve to undermine them? And ultimately, does the multiplicity of modes suggest that there was no unified and dominant response to the way pestilence and the body were understood in the late medieval English culture? Contrary to the two other modes (excision and containment), it is only the integrity of the fleers' bodies that remains unviolated: in fact, the bodies of the majority of the citizenry as well as the civic body have been compromised and incapacitated to an extent that there is no other viable course of action other than excise the healthy members from the infected body—the complete opposite of the mode of excision. If we consider the measures taken by John Paston III and his family, or remember the advice to avoid congregations in the previous chapter, or take the Middle Eastern variant in Avicenna's recommendation to isolate oneself underground, indoors, or in a cave during an outbreak into consideration, we can see an inverted approximation of the mode of containment, as well: in these instances, it is the healthy body, instead of the infected body, which is contained.[211] There is also a degree of biopolitical regulation regarding this group, but it mainly concerns lighter medical advice on how to fumigate or keep the household environment clean, avoid

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mind that in the context of successive outbreaks at short intervals, families with business in multiple areas would not have been able to afford suspending all communication: 'Contagious Correspondence', pp. 154–60.

[210] Henry Elliot Malden, ed., *The Cely Papers: Selections from the Correspondence and Memoranda of the Cely Family, Merchants of the Staple, A.D. 1475–1488* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1900).

[211] Avicenna, *A Treatise on the Canon of Medicine of Avicenna: Incorporating a Translation of the First Book.* trans. Oskar Cameron Gruner (New York: AMS Press, 1973), Part III, Thesis V, 877, p. 445.

contact and gathering, face-masks (in the form of the vinegar-soaked sponge), as well as a healthy diet to prevent infection. These common features with the mode of containment, however, are not compelling. This is due to, firstly, the complete breakdown of civic and communal bodies in the mode of inverted excision and, secondly, the lack of extensive engagement with the discourse of infection the previous two modes are enmeshed in. The third mode's manner of referring to pestilence is mainly by using the word 'sickness', and words such as 'infection', 'corruption', and 'pestilence' are much less frequently used. Thus, the mode of inverted excision goes even beyond the idea of the porous body and approaches a manifestation of a borderless, fluid multiplicity of bodies which either, as in the case of *The Decameron*, connect randomly or fall back on pre-existing relationships, as in the case of the Pastons who gathered together based on familial relationship. Here, perhaps, we see the full material force of pestilence in disintegrating bodies: without authoritative religious vindication, without substantial participation in the discourse of infection and corruption, and only half-heartedly supported by medical theorisations, the mode of inverted excision is entirely a result of nonhuman agency, rendering bodies so porous they end up without boundary.

4. Conclusion

This chapter discussed a number of issues in its examination of records of civic measures taken to combat pestilence framed within the discourse of infection and corruption—a discourse shared with a number of other diseases and social phenomena such as prostitution and religious unorthodoxy—as well as epistolary evidence written by wealthy citizens. As in medical literature, civic records use the pre-existing language/discourse of infection/corruption to discuss problems of hygiene, air quality, and areas marked as engendering physical as well as moral filth. And while there does not seem to be a significant rise in the number of cases concerned with matters of infected/corrupted air since the Black

Death, records of such problems and policies are found in more cities, which implies, at least, more widespread concern with these issues across the country.

Significantly, there seem to be three different and yet interconnected ways in which pestilence was conceived and dealt with in late medieval Norwich. First, there is a mode which, similar to the approach taken by the majority of medical advice discussed in the previous chapter concerning the individual body, seeks to purge the civic body from the infected matter by expelling what it finds infected or corrupted from the city boundaries (the mode of excision). This can be directed towards nonhuman issues such as filth and polluted air as well as communities such as lepers, prostitutes, and the heretical (all defined according to late medieval values and ideas). Inspired by the macrocosm/microcosm parallelism, it rejects and combats infection and porousness aggressively and values the notion of civic bodily integrity quite highly. Curiously, the religious understanding of leprosy in the Christian tradition serves simultaneously as a booster as well as a challenger to this mode, with the ambivalence and fluidity of the figure of Christ (and following him, saints) rendering the hideous pores and sores of disease sacred. Second, there is a mode which allows for the penetration of infection within the civic body but seeks to contain the infection by imposing extensive regulations on the citizens living in the infected areas, who could also be stigmatised as individually infected, as well (the mode of containment). This acknowledges the violation of civic bodily integrity and seems to tolerate the porousness of the civic body quite efficiently. Third, there is a mode which engages with the discourse of infection less often than the other two and has little regard for the idea of bodily integrity: the mode of inverted excision. This mode treats the urban body (as well as the bodies of those living within it) as an infected, compromised, and disintegrated body (or bodies), and its sole solution for the preservation of the health of uninfected bodies is their excision from the infected body. This mode is de-centred and does not group individuals in a unified, corporate

body. The attack on the idea of bodily integrity in the modes of containment and inverted excision may be associated with the material force of pestilence literally and figuratively piercing bodies and thus challenging the idea as well as the macrocosm/microcosm analogy.

The coexistence and interrelation of these modes show the complexity of understanding the phenomenon of pestilence in medieval culture. As we have seen in our discussion of the modes of excision and containment, religion had a significant part in shaping these modes as well as the ideas of the civic body and its integrity. Therefore, the next chapter will focus more closely on religious understandings of pestilence, bodies, and their integrity and porousness.

Chapter Three – Salvation through Porousness: Holy Bodies and Plague

In this chapter, I will discuss the more religious aspects of the responses examined in the previous chapter, and argue that despite the preservation of the excision mode of combatting infection in acts such as religious processions or devotion to figures capable of preventing the violation of the individual, civic, and communal bodies (e.g. the space of the church), there is a mode of not fighting, but adopting and assimilating bodily disintegration, and, in turn, porousness as a revered, idealised property of holy bodies. At first glance, this mode seems to exist implicitly within the mode of excision, for it acts as part of attempts to keep various kinds of spaces clean; yet, by examining the mechanics of this mode's operation, it becomes evident that it moves across the previous chapter's scheme. In the process of adoption and assimilation of porousness by holy bodies, this mode simultaneously includes the modes of containment and excision. Firstly, even though it seeks to expel infection from the body, certain holy bodies retain it at the same time as they hold prophylactic powers. Secondly, and on a larger scale, although the two key elements of infected bodies—i.e. disease and disintegration—do not exist within the larger community, they still exist within the holy bodies; in other words, they have been contained within the holy bodies. Therefore, this mode of fighting infection assimilated, contained and expelled infection at the same time—or at least sought to do so.

The porousness in this mode is not a sign of weakness but strength, as it can protect those who supplicate holy, porous bodies. Moreover, this mode idealises the process of becoming porous (whether in martyrdom, Passion, or contraction of a disease) as a way of neutralising the porous body's threatening properties. However, the process only affects holy bodies, especially those with direct connection with plague, and the supplicants are only

expected to observe and meditate instead of becoming porous/disintegrated themselves.[1] This links prophylaxis to the practice of affective piety, in which 'affective meditations on the Passion […] that ask their readers to imagine themselves present at scenes of Christ's suffering and to perform compassion for that suffering victim in a private drama of the heart' are emphasised.[2] The porous holy body has the ability to contain bodily disintegration, regardless of whether the disintegration resulted in the death of the holy figure or not, and turn it into equally material protective powers, which can be solicited against pestilence and other disasters through meditation.

This idealisation of Christ's body did not encompass all forms of religious response to plague equally widely. In penitential processions, for example, with which I begin my discussion, there was an adherence to the mode of excision, and discussions around the perils of pestilence employed the same discursive stock, highlighting the role of corrupt air, infected breaths, and arrows and swords to refer to them. At the same time, however, the relevance of the assimilation of porousness was maintained to some degree, for rituals such as the Mass and figures such as saints, whose significance strongly relied on the infection and disintegration of holy bodies, played pronounced roles in such processions. Masses, pageants, dramatic performances, and sermons accompanied processions on many occasions.[3] The Mass itself was a ritual already deeply entrenched in a porous understanding of the body, but individual, specialised masses were held against plague, and a section on them will follow the

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[1] Alexandra Barratt makes a similar point, albeit using different terms, in her discussion of a meditational text: 'At the same time as emphasising with such ingenuity the realistic details of the Passion, this meditation idealises the figure of Christ': '*Stabant Matres Dolorosae*: Women as Readers and Writers of Passion Prayers, Meditations and Visions', in *The Broken Body: Passion Devotion in Late-Medieval Culture*, ed. by H. N. B. Ridderbos and R. M. Schlusemann A. A. MacDonald (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1998), pp. 55–71 (p. 63).

[2] Sarah McNamer, *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), p. 1.

[3] Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400 - 1580*. 2nd edn (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 20; Keith D. Lilley, *City and Cosmos: The Medieval World in Urban Form* (London: Reaktion Books, 2009), p, 170; Gerald R. Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England: An Introduction to Sermon Manuscripts of the Period C. 1350–1450* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926), pp. 199–202.

section on processions. Finally, there is also an invigorated affirmation of the prophylactic powers of the porous body in post-plague era in the iconography of not only the Passion narrative, but also the devotion to saints. In these illustrations, the idealised porous holy body is capable of offering protection to those who revere its porousness.

1. Processions and the Discourse of Infection

Prophylactic processions existed before the Black Death but were also held after it, 'fortifying the community against pestilence, natural disasters, [and] demons lurking outside the city walls'.[4] In a sermon from the early fifteenth century, which was written for a specific procession, albeit on an unknown occasion, the causes of the procession are expounded as follows:

> […] þe cause of owre processyon: how it is ordaynid for gret tribulacion and vengiaunce of synne þat fallys on ylk syde vs, als principaly þe wykkyd Scysme, þat reynis and sorowfully als þis thirty wyntyr full nere hauys regnyd in haly kyrke[.] […] þe grete aduersite of enmyis bodyly on ylk syde vs—ȝa! all landys, all partese are agayns vs and redy, bot ȝeue Goddys grace sukur vs mare þan manys myth, vtturly to distroy vs. Emang owreself yn ylk party an cuntre we stand nerehand diuidyd, þe qwylk diuision ȝet is mast dredfull[.] […] þe swerd of pestylence þat wondyr scharply is schewyd emang vs, for als I here say, bath in þe sowth [and] here qwere neuyr it comys, yt takys half þe pepyll in ylk town or mare. And

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[4] Thomas A. Boogaart II, 'Our Saviour's Blood: Procession and Community in Late Medieval Bruges', in *Moving Subjects: Processional Performance in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. by Kathleen Ashley and Wim Hüskin (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), pp. 69–116 (p. 89).

trewly, wyte ȝe wele, als wyttenesse all þese myscheuis and tribulacionis þat þus comys emangys vs, [yt] is for owre synne[.][5]

As evident, the causes were varied, but, as I explored in previous chapters, the Black Death found its place within this scheme quite easily, using recognisable elements such as swords and arrows in its symbolic conceptualisation. The procession was not only viewed as a penitential spectacle; the performative aspect of processions themselves ensured their prophylactic quality. Keith Lilley notes that the connection between processions and the Mass permeated understandings of space within the medieval town:

> The embodied city was not simply a political metaphor; it was also one that was performed through specific displays of devotion in towns and cities throughout the Latin West. […] through passing spatially in and around the city they connected the urban 'body' with the Body of Christ, and hence the city with wider world.[6]

Thus, processions brought the presence of Christ to the open space of the town and presented another manifestation of the Body of Christ, functioning as the unifying factor of 'the urban social body, gathered in unity and concord to venerate the Corpus Christi, itself a central symbol of social wholeness'.[7] However, it is important to note that at the same time as the procession constituted an act of unification, it held within it the hierarchical structure of

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[5] Veronica O'Mara, ed., *Four Middle English Sermons, Edited from British Library MS Harley 2268* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 2002), pp. 126–7 (ll. 66–73, 80–5, 93–5). The manuscript was written in West Riding of Yorkshire dialect, and the sermons were possibly written by Abbot Thomas Spofford at St Mary's Abbey in York. There are signs that the sermon was preached; however, despite O'Mara's speculation that the audience comprised both laypeople as well as clerics, the sermon's critique of the clergy could suggest that the audience was predominantly clerical. O'Mara suggests that the sermon could be in relation to the plague of 1416, considering that there was a mandate to hold prophylactic and penitential processions against the plague in Durham in 1416: O'Mara, *Four Middle English* Sermons, pp. 37–50, 9–10, 127 (ll. 95–111); R. L. Storey, ed., *The Register of Thomas Langley Bishop of Durham 1406–1437*. 4 vols. Vol. 2 (Durham: Andrews, 1956 - 61), pp. 106–7.

[6] Lilley, *City and Cosmos*, p. 158.

[7] Mervyn James, 'Ritual, Drama and Social Body in the Late Medieval English Town', *Past & Present,* 98 (1983), 3–29, (p. 11).

society. In such processions, pageants, the Mass, and even dramatic performances, the higher echelons received communion first, sat closer to the pulpit, had a special view of the performance, or had their dedicated sections in the procession.[8] These processions had clearly determined routes which crossed the town's notable locations as well as its boundaries in order to ensure the urban body would have appropriate protection.[9] The boundaries were so important that, according to examples from Clare and Long Melford in Suffolk, people visited them during several feasts (namely, Corpus Christi, St Mark's, and Rogation week) carrying the blessed sacrament.[10] There, a vicar would have 'redde a ghospell', and the people would have rung bells.[11] The Gospel readings were also read at Mass on Christmas Day, Epiphany, the Feast of the Annunciation (Lady Day), and the Ascension, which strengthens the connection between the urban body and the body of Christ: to protect the urban body, one need only adopt the tried and tested formula offered by the body of Christ.[12] The excerpts were thought to have protective powers in their right. The passage from Luke

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[8] Duffy, pp. 124–6; David Harris Sacks, 'Celebrating Authority in Bristol, 1475–1640', in *Urban Life in the Renaissance*, ed. by Susan Zimmerman and Ronald F. E. Weissman (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1989), pp. 187–223 (p. 192). Also see: David Lawton, 'Sacrilege and Theatricality: The Croxton Play of the Sacrament', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies,* 33 (2003), 281–309 (p. 295); Sheila Lindenbaum, 'Rituals of Exclusion: Feasts and Plays of the English Religious Fraternities', in *Festive Drama: Papers from the Sixth Triennial Colloquium of the International Society for the Study of Medieval Theatre, Lancaster, 13– 19 July, 1989*, ed. by Meg Twycross (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1996), pp. 54–65 (p. 59). In the case of receiving communion, the elite would have received it first. In drama's case, as we shall see in the next chapter, it is more probable that the community's elite would have had special seats with a good view of the performance space, rather than sitting close to the stage. In the case of processions, too, the elite, the clergy, or the affluent would not have been at the utmost front: Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 255. Also see C. Pamela Graves, 'Social Space in the English Medieval Parish Church', *Economy and Society,* 18.3 (1989), 297–322 (p. 306).

[9] Lilley, *City and Cosmos*, pp. 170–4. There were also economic and political factors in the determination of such procession routes. As Sarah Beckwith has noted, there is evidence of conflict among civic and religious authorities of cities with regards to procession routes, the position of stations—in the case of pageants, and the performance of plays: 'Making the World in York and the York Cycle', in *Framing Medieval Bodies*, ed. by Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), pp. 254–76 (pp. 255, 260–6).

[10] Gladys A. Thornton, *A History of Clare, Suffolk* (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, Ltd., 1928), p. 96; William Parker, *The History of Long Melford* (London: Wyman & Sons, 1873), pp. 70–73; Dorothy M. Owen, *Church and Society in Medieval Lincolnshire*. ed. by Joan Thirsk, *History of Lincolnshire* (Lincoln: Lincolnshire Local History Society, 1971), p. 109; Duffy, pp. 136–7.

[11] Thornton, p. 96. The processions were used to instruct the youth about the boundaries, as well: Owen, p. 109.

[12] These included verses on the Annunciation from Luke 1:26–38 ('Missus est gabriel'), Matthew 2:1–12 ('Cum natus esset Ihesus'), which narrates the wise men's visit to the new-born Christ, excerpts from Mark's Gospel 16:14–20 ('Recumbentibus'), and the opening verses of the Gospel according to John 1:1–14 ('In principio'): Duffy, p. 215; C. Wordsworth, ed., *Ceremonies and Processions of the Cathedral Church of Salisbury* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1901), p. 17.

1:26–38 on the Annunciation was thought to be powerful against the Devil, while the names of the three wise men in Matthew 2:1–12 appeared in 'incantatory prayers for deliverance from evil, and they were invoked as protectors against the bites of mad dogs or the falling sickness […] Prayers to them were an invariable element in the small group of morning prayers included in most Books of Hours'.[13]

The significance of the passage from Mark 16:14–20 is more evident: it describes the powers of believers in Christ, three of which are the ability to cast out demons, immunity to poison, and healing the sick, which must have been the reason for the section's selection. John 1:1–14 was used in exorcisms, worn 'around the neck' of humans and animals to cure disease, and employed as a protective charm against epilepsy for newly baptised children as well as against the king's evil (scrofula) during the reign of Henry VII.[14] The spots on which these passages were recited were usually marked by a wooden or stone cross, and many of the well-endowed contributed to the setting up of such crosses in their wills as charitable contributions to the community.[15] It should be emphasised, however, that the selection from

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[13] Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400 - 1580*. 2nd edn (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 216. Subsequent mentions of Duffy refer to this source, unless otherwise specified. One example of the use of the names of the three wise men in possibly protective charms/prayers appears in the late fifteenth-century *Commonplace Book of Robert Reynes of Acle*, which simply invokes their names, titles, and places of origin: 'Iasper, Rex de Saba. | Melchior, Rex Arabie. | Baltazar, Rex Tharsis'. No context is provided for the charm, and the entries before and after it do not suggest any connection. However, the collection is abundant in devotional prayers, charms, and amulets; therefore, when considered alongside Duffy's assertion about the use of the names, it would be safe to assume that the inclusion of the names must have been due to their devotional significance: Cameron Louis, ed., *The Commonplace Book of Robert Reynes of Acle: An Edition of Tanner MS 407* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1980), p. 288. The book, located in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Tanner 407, is a collection of miscellaneous material compiled by Robert Reynes, a church-reeve and alderman of the village of Acle, Norfolk. The section in the book is titled 'Colonie', edited as '[Rexes] Colonie', which refers to the story behind a cult devoted to the kings. As Louis explains, 'In 1164 the supposed remains of the Three Kings were removed to Cologne. After the translation, the kings were associated with that city, and an enormous amount of legendary material about them was accumulated': p. 478.

[14] Duffy, p. 216.

[15] Carole Rawcliffe, *Urban Bodies: Communal Health in Late Medieval English Towns and Cities* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2013), pp. 90–2. In addition to the recitation of the passages from the Gospels, the charitable distribution of food among the attendees and the poor would have certainly aided the deceased who had donated to such causes: Samuel Tymms, ed., *Wills and Inventories from the Registers of the Commissary of Bury St. Edmund's and the Archdeacon of Sudbury* (London: J. B. Nichols and Son, 1850), p. 118; Duffy, p. 139.

the Gospels and some of the charms and prayers were in Latin, and it must not be assumed that there was some profound reflection on the content of such prayers involved. For many, the mere act of listening to the recitation of the passages and prayers would have been enough to feel protected. Some would have been able to recognise the passages from other rituals such as Mass. As already noted, however, some attendees and readers of Books of Hours and primers did indeed possess some limited knowledge of Latin, with which they would have been able to understand certain key words and phrases, if not digest a complete prayer. For those totally unlearned in Latin, there were aids to focus their attention, which included short verses in English to know what to do in a given situation as well as illustrations (or iconography in the case of the church space) to affect them without the need for close engagement with the textual content of prayers.[16]

Returning to the significance of processions, similar to specifically anti-pestilence processions, these festive processions had prophylactic purposes.[17] This can be inferred from the fact that processions in adjacent parishes occasionally resulted in skirmishes, as expelling evil forces from one community might end up directing them into the neighbouring one.[18] One such prophylactic type of procession was the Rogationtide processions during what was referred to as the 'Crosse weke' (Ascensiontide), which were held to drive evil spirits out of the community boundaries, ensuring the maintenance of both physical and spiritual health as well as the order of the community. In a sermon composed for the occasion, the fifteenth-century preacher John Mirk notes that the worshippers should fast and attend the church on the Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of the weeks and participate in processions in order to deal with the perils that accompany this particular time of year—when thunders are often

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[16] See for instance, the entries nos. 90 and 98 in Reynes's book, as well as the section of this chapter on iconography: Louis, pp. 287–8, 299–300.
[17] Owst, pp. 200–202.
[18] Duffy, pp. 11–12, 136.

heard. Quoting an individual called Lyncolnyens, the preacher proposes that when there is a thunderstorm, the fiends come to earth from the heavens and bring wars, shipwrecks, fires, and despairing suicides.[19] During the processions:

> […] bellys ryngyþe, baners ben borne befor, þe crosse comyþ aft*yr*, and all þe pepull suyth. For ry3t as a kyng, when he goþe to batayle, trompes gon befor, þe baner ys desplayde and comyþ aftyr, þen comyþ þe kyng and his ost aftyr sewyng hym; ryght so in Cristys batayle þe belles, þat ben Godys trompes, ryugen, baners byn vnfolden, and openly born on hegh yn þe ayre. Then þe cros yn Cristys lykenes comyth as a kyng of cristen men, and his ost, þat ys Cristys pepull, sewyþe hym. Þus he dryuyþ þe fend out of hys lordschip and reueþ hym liys power. And as a tyrand wold drede, and he herd þe trompes of a kyng þat wer his enmy, and se3 hys baner dysplayde *in* þe feld; ry3t soo þe fend, the curset tyrand of hell, dredyþe hym wondyr sore, when he heryþ þe Kyngys trompes of Heuen ryng, and cros and baners bro3t about. For þis cause, when any tempest ys, me*n* vsyþ forto ryng bellys, and so forto dryue þe fend away.[20]

The processions portray a spectacle akin to an army going into battle. The cross represents the king, which typically follows the banner of the army he leads, the people following the cross are the king's soldiers, and the ringing bells mirror military trumpets. It is indeed through military-like efforts, with the Cross on the vanguard, that one ensures the protection of the community. The shape and structure of the processions stress that order was a crucial

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[19] Erbe, pp. 149–50. Mirk's sermon also mentions the role of processions to subdue tempests. As we have seen in previous chapters, tempests and pestilential outbreaks were mentioned together quite frequently. In addition, one frequently-mentioned sign of a pestilential outbreak was radical shifts in the weather, which meant that the Rogation processions would be effective against pestilence, too. We may also remind ourselves of the graffiti on the northern wall of St Mary's Church, Ashwell, Hertfordshire (mentioned in Chapter 1), which marked both plague outbreaks as well as St Maurus' Wind in 1349, 1350, and 1362.

[20] Erbe, pp. 150–51.

element, and it required the participants to display solemnity. Just as it was paramount to maintain reflective piety within the space of the church, it was also essential to retain it during the processions. In a sermon from Lincoln on Rogationtide processions, the preacher urges the audience 'not to come and go in processyon talkyng of nyse talys and japis by the wey, or by the feldes as ye walke […] but ye scholde come mekely and lowly with a good devocion and follow yowre crosse and yowre bells'.[21] The solemnity and sincerity of the worship must have indubitably been thought to have had an impact on the protection received against the ills polluting the community.

The exemplum of the sermon focusses on one instance in which processions stopped a disease outbreak: in Constantinople during a prophylactic procession ('i*n* procession for a gret fray and doses') and when the litany was being sung, a girl suddenly ascended 'ynto þe ayre and soo i*n*to Heuen'. There, she was taught a song of supplication by the angels ('Sa*nctu*s Deus, sa*nctu*s fortis, *sanctus* et immortalis, mis*er*ere nobis!' or 'Holy God, holy strong, holy and neuer schall deye, haue mercy on vs!'). When she was returned to earth, she started singing the newly-learned song, which resulted in fending off the disease.[22] This account directly connects penitential processions to the issues of public health discussed in the previous chapter, especially the mode of fighting infection via excision: by disinfecting the city of sin and evil, pestilence, which is essentially God's punishment, will also subside and, as a result, the corrupt air or matter will disappear.[23] In the same way, festive

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[21] Quoted in Owen, p. 109.

[22] Erbe, p. 151. The sermon is repeated in British Library Harley 2247: Veronica O'Mara and Suzanne Paul, ed., *A Repertorium of Middle English Prose Sermons*. 4 vols. Vol. 2: London, British Library (Arundel) to London, Westminster Abbey Library (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), p. 1142.

[23] In another sermon on Rogationtide processions in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Greaves 54, written in the mid-fifteenth century Somerset, further details are provided concerning the targets of procession in their original context; however, the story seems quite chronologically incongruent with other accounts: St Mamertus (who died in the late fifth century) commanded processions in response to earthquakes, fires, and the attack of wild beasts. Pope Liberius (who lived in the fourth century) adopted this practice and added fasting to it; he urged people to come to processions to plead for cessation of wars and protection from weather: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Greaves 54, ff. 56r–v; Veronica O'Mara and Suzanne Paul, ed., *A Repertorium of Middle English Prose Sermons*. 4 vols. Vol. 3: Manchester, John Rylands University Library to Oxford, Bodleian Library (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), p. 1950.

processions were thought to be capable of offering the same kind of protection, and so they were adopted to combat pestilence, in particular.

In an address on another procession—probably held as part of Rogation ceremonies—in the mid-fifteenth century Middle English translation of the collection known as *Speculum Sacerdotale*—which was mainly targeted at priests, we are introduced to additional aspects of the procession's performance.[24] The main subject of the sermon is the litany of saints, and it is noted as a premise that on the feast of the greater litany, one should pray to avoid and stop sudden death or adversity, and crave intercession from saints.[25] There are two kinds of litany: the greater litany, which was devised by St Gregory, and the lesser litany, which originates from the story involving St Mamertus.[26] The main objectives of the litanies are described as the stability of the church, stopping war, hunger, and pestilence. People should fast, wear penitential clothing, avoid temptation, confess, and attend processions.[27] The preacher also provides the origin story of the greater litany, when St Gregory demanded prayer and procession to stop floods and a pestilential outbreak caused by 'a gret multitude of serpentes,

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[24] The collection is located in the London, British Library, MS Additional 36791 and seems to be from the West Midlands: E. H. Weatherly, ed., *Speculum Sacerdotale* (London: Humphrey Milford, 1936), pp. xvii–xviii. In his review of E. H. Weatherly's edition of the work, Gavin Bone notes that the work is not a collection 'of sermons, but of material for sermons', hence my use of 'address' instead of sermon: Gavin Bone, 'Review of Speculum Sacerdotale by E. H. Weatherly', *Medium Ævum,* 9 (1940), 181–3 (p. 181).

[25] Weatherly, p. 135.

[26] The text of the litanies generally invoke holy figures and God to provide assistance in difficult times. These difficult circumstances may not have included pestilence, in particular, but they certainly used familiar phrases. For example, in the processional order of the second ferial day in Rogationtide, there are antiphons asking for clean air ('pro serenitate aeris') and protection at times of war ('Contra mortalitatem hominum tempore belli dicatur haec antiphona'). After such antiphons, the litanies begin with calls of 'Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison' (Lord have mercy upon us. Christ have mercy upon us), taken from Greek, followed by petitions to different categories of holy figures: from angels and archangels ('Omnes sancti angeli et archangeli, Orate pro nobis' [all holy angels and archangels, pray for us]) to martyred saints ('Omnes sancti martyres, Orate pro nobis'), confessor saints, and virgin saints. Then follows a further set of prayers against various evils, ranging from the snares of the devil ('Ab insidiis diaboli, Libera') to storms and lightnings ('A fulgure et tempestate, Libera') to sudden and unexpected death ('A subitanea et improvisa morte, Libera'). Following these, there are further petitions and prayers whose lines follow a longer sentence structure and include, finally, a general reference to pestilence ('famem et pestem repelle', or repel famine and pestilence). Even though, as mentioned, such templates for prayer predated the Black Death and do not necessarily refer to outbreaks of plague, they certainly acquired new relevance once we get to the outbreaks of the late Middle Ages: W. G. Henderson, ed., *Processionale Ad Usum Insignis Ac Praeclarae Ecclesiae Sarum* (Leeds: M'Corquodale & Co., 1882), pp. 106–9, 112. The collection is based on an early sixteenth-century printed edition, complemented by other printed editions and three manuscripts.

[27] Weatherly, pp. 135–42.

and a-monge hem was a gret dragon' by whose 'blastes *and* breþes was alle the ayre corrupt and infect', resulting in an epidemic or 'evil þat is callid pestis inguinaria', a disease which affected 'the ʒerdes of men, in so moche that many men dyede ther*e*vpon', in Rome at the time of the papacy of Pelagius, who died of the disease himself.[28] In the description of the ravages of pestilence, we encounter images similar to those found in the *Decameron*: 'the inhabitato*ur*s wer*e* nye alle dede and howses vnnum*er*able were lefte voyde in the cite'.[29] Gregory is chosen as the new pope, and he urges the people to hold a procession against the 'swerd' of pestilence. During the procession, however, a new pestilential wave brews within the congregation, resulting in eight hundred more deaths. Gregory persists undeterred and encourages the crowd to persist until the pestilence subsides, which eventually occurs.[30] The processions were ordered to continue to this day:

> […] we schuld allw-way vse to say the letanyes for stabilite of holy
> chirche, for were, for hung*u*r, for pestelence, and for ayre, and ʒit for a-
> nother skille, for in that tyme of the yere are vsid batelles for to rise and
> fruytes of the erþe þ*at* þen are intem*e*ratte and in the floure vsen þen for to
> *rote and* be corru*m*pyd by *clowed and* other wayes […] let vs praye hym
> for to defende vs fro alle pestelence, hunger, corrupcion of eyre, and
> noyinge of alle woode bestis, fro the perel of oure enmyes *and* infesta*ci*on
> of alle wormes.[31]

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[28] Weatherly, p. 136. In the sermon on the feast of Saint Mark, another version of the story is recounted, in which it is said that anyone who opened their mouth to sneeze died. Pope Pelagius told people to make a cross when they opened their mouths to sneeze, and anyone who heard another sneeze say 'Christ be with thee'. He also told them to fast and go on processions barefoot, and pray. After him, Pope Gregory continued the measures every year on Saint Mark's day: Erbe, p. 136. The story in *Speculum Sacerdotale* mentions processions during the papacy of Plagius only passingly: p. 136 (l. 9). Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Greaves 54, ff. 55r–v also mentions this story, albeit in less detail: O'Mara and Paul, Vol. 3, p. 1949. Also compare with the references to heresy and their relation to infected air in the previous chapter.

[29] Weatherly, p. 136.

[30] Weatherly, pp. 137–8.

[31] Weatherly, p. 139 (ll. 9–14, 26–7).

Similarly, the lesser litany was established by St Mamertus to combat earthquakes, incursions by wild beasts, and 'a fyre comynge fro heuene' through fasting and penitential processions taking place over three days, starting on the day of the Ascension.[32] Broadly, we see the familiar elements of pestilential assemblages: the discourse of infection, air, natural disasters, dragons, infestations and diseases, the sword, and the arrow in the shape of a fire from the sky all coming together in these origin stories for penitential processions against danger, in general, and various forms of pestilence, in particular. These familiar elements were then used to exhort the community to penitential action. The action included not only forms of private or individual piety, but also public portrayals of solemnity, which, taking the form of processions, were quite similar to medical and public health invasive treatments. These were designed to fend the forces of infection (corrupt air as well as evil forces or sin) off of the community boundaries (or, in other words, excise them). In the processions, the infecting and infected breaths of the dragon, which was supposed to signify the devil, were to be represented by means of a banner of a dragon, which ought to have been carried in the procession. For the first two days, the dragon would be carried ahead of the cross to signify the scourge of pestilence reigning supreme; on the third day, however, the cross would overtake the dragon to signify Christ's overcoming of the devil.[33]

The encouraging advice regarding penitential processions, we may recall, is in contradiction with the advice in medical tracts regarding avoiding congregations: 'in the tyme of pestilence hyt ys no good nor holsum to be amonge gret multitude of people, for yt may be

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[32] Weatherly, pp. 138–9.
[33] Weatherly, pp. 139–42. Another version of the same story appears in Lincoln Cathedral Library, MS 50, ff. 1–9, another collection of sermons from the late fifteenth-century Leicestershire, which shares some material with Mirk's *Festial*, as well. In this version, it is specifically mentioned that God was angry with people's return to sin after Lent, so he sent them a pestilence. The image of the Virgin painted by St Luke was carried during one of the processions, and St Gregory saw an angel sheathing a bloody sword to signify that the pestilence was over: Veronica O'Mara and Suzanne Paul, ed., *A Repertorium of Middle English Prose Sermons*. 4 vols. Vol. 1: Introduction and Cambridge University Library to London, British Library (Additional) (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 343–3.

amonge them summe that be enffected'.[34] It would be easy to imagine, therefore, that advice regarding one mode of fighting infection can be in direct or indirect conflict with advice explaining another such a mode. This conflict also shows that different modes of fighting infection may relate to different conceptions of the body: the medical advice here concerns efforts to isolate the healthy individual body from an infected population (i.e. third mode or reverse excision, which involved the extraction of healthy bodies from an infected environment, such as when people flee the city during an outbreak), while the advice regarding processions is about excising corruption from the urban body (i.e. first mode or excision). In the former, the urban body (or the community) does not matter, for the main unit of concern is the individual body—the people involved in the cycle of the disease's transmission, while in the latter, the individual body and its preservation of health is irrelevant, for a healthy communal or urban body guarantees the health of individual bodies within it. At the same time, however, it is possible for different conceptualisations of the body and distinct modes of fighting infection to coincide within the same prophylactic strategy. In the following section, I will discuss prophylaxis in the Mass, in which an understanding of a protective, yet disintegrated body of Christ is central. As we have seen, masses were held following or as part of processions designed to keep infection outside bodies. I will illustrate that through the existence of the Mass in processions, a different mode of fighting infection, and thus a different mode of understanding the body, is operative. This mode assimilates bodily disintegration and turns it into a revered quality, a process which authorises the existence of the disintegrated body within another mode of fighting infection which is solely concerned with the expulsion of infection and the prevention of disintegration. I will also discuss standalone instances of this hybrid mode of fighting

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[34] Joseph P. Pickett, 'Translation of the "Canutus" Plague Treatise', in *Popular and Practical Science of Medieval England*, ed. by L. M. Matheson (East Lansing: Colleagues Press, 1994), pp. 263–82 (p. 273).

infection in specialised masses, which aimed to combat infection by resorting to the very porous quality of the infected bodies.

2. Mass and the Porous Body

In a meditational tract on Mass, written between the mid-fifteenth to early sixteenth century and by a clergyman called Langforde, it is said that the 'p*re*ste going to masse signifythe and rep*re*sentyd the Sauyour', and 'therfor the p*ro*cesse of the masse rep*re*sentyd the verey p*ro*cesse of the Passyon off Cryst'.[35] The reader is guided towards meditational piety at every stage of the ritual by means of a variety of acts, such as to '[r]eme*m*ber', to '[h]aue in meditatyon', to '[h]aue Afore the Eyes of our soule', to '[c]onsyder w*ith* dew thank*es* and praysing*es*', and to 'Imp*ri*nte Inwardly In yor h[art]' episodes from the narrative of the Passion, all described in great detail by the author, as the Mass occurs before their eyes.[36] Foremost, the tract emphasises the centrality of the Passion to the ritual of the Mass, in which the body of Christ undergoes a process of disintegration. The Passion, we may note, is not something that occurs in an instant; rather, it is a process. The spectator/attendee is expected to watch in awe and meditate in sincerity. Furthermore, there seems to be a duality here: on the one hand, the use of the infinitives 'to signify', 'to represent', and 'to remember' implies that the figures and activities are signifiers, and the ritual refers to something other than itself—i.e. the narrative or the truth of the Passion of Christ, which has already happened in the past. On the other hand, 'to have something before one's eyes' as the ceremony is unfolding stresses superimposing the signifier on the signified, initiating the creation of the non-representational, unified sign, which does not refer to a pre-existing narrative. In other words, in addition to an emphasis on the centrality of the Passion to the Mass, there is an emphasis to consider the Mass not as a representation of the Passion, but as the Passion itself.

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[35] J. Wickham Legg, ed., *Tracts on the Mass* (London: Henry Bradshaw Society, 1904), p. 19.
[36] Legg, *Tracts*, pp. 19–29.

We see further engagement with this idea in other late medieval commentaries. For instance, in a tract on meditation on the Passion written in the fourteenth century, the author (referred to as Pseudo-Bede) writes that 'it is necessary that when you concentrate on these things in your contemplation, you do so as if you were actually present at the very time when He suffered'.[37] The question of whether the Mass was a renewal—that is, a non-representational reliving of the Passion and a reconstitution of the body of Christ in the corporeal sense in the Host every time it was held—or a representation—that is, a symbolic re-enactment or replay of the Passion, understood to be an event that has already happened and to which the ritual refers—was at the heart of the first canon of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215. The first canon of the council's decree asserts:

> There is one Universal Church of the faithful, outside of which there is absolutely no salvation. In which there is the same priest and sacrifice, 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 [.][38]

The idea that the bread and the wine 'truly' contain the essence of the body and blood of Christ means that the body and blood transubstantiate into bread and wine every time they are administered at Mass. Therefore, every time the Mass is held, the Passion occurs anew. Karl Young points out that:

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[37] Quoted in David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 171.

[38] 'Medieval Sourcebook: Twelfth Ecumenical Council: Lateran IV 1215', ed. by Paul Halsall (1996), in *Internet History Sourcebooks Project* <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/lateran4.asp> [Accessed 22 Dec 2022]. Richard Kieckhefer has used the phrase 'the ongoing passion of Christ', which is also apt: *Unquiet Souls: Fourteenth-Century Saints and Their Religious Milieu* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 97. Also see: Miri Rubin, 'The Eucharist and the Construction of Medieval Identities', in *Culture and History 1350–1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities and Writing*, ed. by David Aers (London: Harvester/Wheatsheaf, 1992), pp. 43–63.

> The central act [in the Mass] is designed not to represent or portray or
>
> merely commemorate the Crucifixion, but actually to repeat it. What takes
>
> place at the altar is not an aesthetic picture of a happening in the past, but a
>
> genuine renewal of it.[39]

It is, then, this 'repeat' or 'renewal' of the process of Christ's bodily disintegration (or its

becoming-porous) that constitutes the centre of the ritual of Mass, for as Duffy notes, the

Body of Christ was 'made present' every day via the Eucharist in the Mass.[40] This process is

often described instant by instant to heighten the meditational experience. The

aforementioned tract on the Mass goes through the performance of the Mass action by action,

providing meditational guidance to the readers, noting, for example, that 'ffrome the last

Elevatyo*n* of the sacryng In all the secret pr*ay*ers and gesturs of the pr*est* vnto p*er omni*a

s*ecu*la s*ecu*lor*um* afore the pat*er* nost*er*', one should remember all the stages of the Passion.[41]

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[39] Karl Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church*. 2 vols. Vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), pp. 84–5. Miri Rubin also points out that from the High Middle Ages, 'the eucharist, emerging as it was as a re-enactment, not merely memorial, of the central act of sacrifice which had been foretold in the Last Supper, and suffered in the Passion': 'The Eucharist and the Construction of Medieval Identities', in *Culture and History 1350–1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities and Writing*, ed. by David Aers (London: Harvester/Wheatsheaf, 1992), pp. 43–63 (pp. 46–7). My preference for Young's quotation is due to Rubin's use of 're-enactment', which I find quite difficult to place against 'memorial'. Both seem to belong to a similar order of representation—that is, refreshing something definitely located in the past, while Young's 'repeat' and 'renewal' underscore the activity and the event occurring in the present. For Young, this obviates the categorisation of the Mass as a dramatic or theatrical act, because he considers 'impersonation' as an essential element of theatre: Young, p. 84. Also see Clifford Flanigan, 'The Roman Rite and the Origins of the Liturgical Drama', *University of Toronto Quarterly,* 43 (1974), 263–84 (p. 265).

[40] Duffy, p. 92. The concept of becoming-porous is indebted to Gilles Deleuze's understanding of 'becoming', which can be defined as 'the continual production (or "return") of difference immanent within the constitution of events, whether physical or otherwise', challenging 'the primacy of identity […] [and] a world of representation (presenting the same world once again)' in exchange for 'a world of presentation anew': Cliff Stagoll, 'Becoming', in *The Deleuze Dictionary: Revised Edition*, ed. by Adrian Parr (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 25–7 (p. 26). I will use this concept much more extensively in the following chapter on drama, in which I will discuss the concept's theorisation more thoroughly.

[41] Legg, *Tracts*, pp. 24–5. In devotional literature, such as Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Life of Jesu*, this detailed portrayal could span an entire book, but certain sentences illustrate the infinitesimal scale of the narrative: Meditation on the bodily aspects of the Passion is a characteristic of many works of the period; see for instance: 'And þan at þe biddyng of pylate, þat he sholde be scourgete & beten: oure lord was despoilete, bonden to a pilere, & harde & sore scourgete, & so stant he nakede before hem alle, þat fairest ȝonge manne of alle childrene þat euer were born takyng paciently of þoo foulest wrecches, þe hardest & moste bitter strokes of scourges, & so is þat moste innocent, faireste & clennest flesh, floure of alle mankynde, alle to rente & fulle of wondes, rennyng out of alle sides þat precious kynges blode. And so longe betene & scourgete with wonde vpon wonde & brisoure vpon brisour til boþe þe lokeres & þe smyters were werye, & þen was he bidene to be vnbonden': Nicholas Love, *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*. ed. by Michael G. Sargent (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2005), pp. 168–9. For such descriptions in other

However, this form of affective piety with its particular emphasis on physical suffering of

Christ and meditation on the Passion was not born in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Rather, the tradition goes as far back as the twelfth century, during which 'a form of

spirituality that differed from that of previous centuries by placing much greater emphasis on

self-examination, the inner emotions, and the cultivation of an interior life' became popular—

a form which Jean E. Jost attributes, perhaps too quickly, to plague outbreaks.[42] This

acceptance of the devotional journey from the physical to the spiritual was even deemed

permissible in philosophical debates of the period. Thomas Aquinas highlights a contention

premised on the claim that 'a greater devotion is frequently excited by a consideration of

Christ's passion and of other mysteries having to do with his humanity than by a

consideration of God's greatness', and therefore 'contemplation is not a proper cause of

devotion'. Aquinas responds by arguing that 'things that belong to Christ's humanity

especially excite devotion, in the manner of being led by the hand, even though devotion has

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meditational works, see: Hope Emily Allen, ed., *English Writings of Richard Rolle, Hermit of Hampole* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), pp. 60–72; Walter Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*. ed. by Thomas H. Bestul (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000), Book I, Chaps. 34–36; Nicholas Love, pp. 174–6; Lynn Staley, ed., *The Book of Margery Kempe* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1996), Chaps. 17, 29. This kind of meditation was encouraged not just in liturgy or individual prayer, but also in feasts such as Candlemas, many of the events during Holy Week, and most prominent of all, Corpus Christi: Duffy, pp. 18–19; John Block Friedman, *Northern English Books, Owners, and Makers in the Late Middle Ages* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995), p. 149.

[42] Anne Clark Bartlett and Thomas H. Bestul, 'Introduction', in *Cultures of Piety: Medieval English Devotional Literature in Translation*, ed. by Anne Clark Bartlett and Thomas H. Bestul (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), pp. 1–17 (p. 2); Jean E. Jost, 'The Effects of the Black Death: The Plague in Fourteenth-Century Religion, Literature, and Art', in *Death in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Time: The Material and Spiritual Conditions of the Culture of Death*, ed. by Albrecht Classen (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2016), pp. 193–238 (pp. 197, 204, 209, 212, 217). Many studies on affective piety and late medieval religious culture underscore the pre-Black-Death origins of the tradition. However, certain generalised histories of the Black Death have been known to hastily attribute the fascination with bodily disintegration in the genre solely to plague. See, for instance: Samuel K. Cohn Jr, *The Black Death Transformed: Disease and Culture in Early Renaissance Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 240–1; David Herlihy, *The Black Death and the Transformation of the West* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), chapter 3; Millard Meiss, *Painting in Florence and Siena after the Black Death: The Arts, Religion and Society in the Mid-Fourteenth Century* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964); Yves Renouard, 'The Black Death as a Major Event in World History', in *The Black Death: A Turning Point in History?*, ed. by William M. Bowsky (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), pp. 25–34.

to do principally with those things that belong to His divinity'.[43] Thus, similar to many other traditions that we have explored in previous chapters, this interest in the corporeality of Christ's suffering is the culmination of the development of a pre-existing practice. The added issue here is that this process of bodily disintegration becomes reframed within the context of plague outbreaks, thereby giving new meaning to the body undergoing this process—that is, the body of Christ—once it forms an assemblage with the supplicant, plague, the discourse of infection, as well as various other elements used in processions, masses, and other devotional acts. In the example of prophylactic processions, a Mass held as part of one such procession would connect Christ's bodily disintegration during the Passion to plague: it can preserve the integrity of the civic body, and thus keep the townspeople safe from plague.

Generally, participation in Mass was thought to offer protection against harm due to the remedial quality of Christ and faith in him. As one didactic poem copied into an early sixteenth-century commonplace book notes:

> Thy*n* age, at messe shall not encrese;
>
> Nor sodeyn deth þ*at* day shall not þe spill;
>
> And w*ith*owt hostill yf þou hap to dissease,
>
> It shall stond þ*er*fore; & beleve þ*o*u this skyll,
>
> Tha*n* to here messe þ*o*u mayste haue will,
>
> Thes p*ro*phitable beneffit*is* to þe be lent,
>
> Wher God, in fowrm of bred, his body doth p*rese*n*t*.[44]

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[43] St. Thomas Aquinas, 'New English Translation of St. Thomas Aquinas's Summa Theologiae (Summa Theologica)', ed. by Alfred J. Freddoso (Notre Dame: Alfred J. Freddoso, 2018), <https://www3.nd.edu/~afreddos/summa-translation/TOC.htm> [Accessed 23 January 2021].

[44] Roman Dyboski, ed., *Songs, Carols, and Other Miscellaneous Poems from the Balliol MS 354, Richard Hill's Commonplace-Book*, *Early English Text Society, Extra Series, No. 1* (London: Kegan Paul, 1907), p. 70. The manuscript was seemingly compiled for or by Richard Hill, a servant to a London alderman. The term 'sudden death' does not exclusively denote plague or pestilential disease, but there are numerous occasions in late medieval sources in which the term can be taken to refer to plague. For example, the story behind the litanies discussed above directly links sudden death to pestilence. Furthermore, the Mass discussed below, '*Missa pro*

In the same poem, it is also asserted that women in labour shall deliver safely if they hear Mass.[45] Furthermore, there were Masses specifically written for particular occasions, either as part of a feast-day ceremony or as a votive Mass. The most famous plague-related example of the votive kind of Mass is, perhaps, the 'Missa pro Mortalitate Evitanda', which is more commonly referred to as Mass against plague (or sudden death) or 'Recordare Domini' (from the commencing words of its introit), participation in which was said to have had protective and prophylactic properties.[46] The Mass was purportedly composed by Pope Clement VI at Avignon during the Black Death and promised 260 days of indulgence for those who heard it for the entirety of the five times it was held. The introductory rubric of the Mass suggests incredibly evocative scenes: the participants were urged to carry lit candles, which symbolised the light and power of the divine—and sometimes even Christ himself—against hostile forces, and kneel during the ceremony in order to be spared by the plague.[47] With references to 2 Samuel 24:15–19 during the Lesson (or 2 Kings 24:15–19 based on the Septuagint), in which God bids the Angel of Death to 'stay' his 'hand' and cease the pestilence heading for Israel in response to David's sin, and Luke 4:38–44 during the Gospel section, in which Christ's acts of healing the sick are recounted, the Mass extends its emphasis to petitioning remedies alongside calls for averting the calamity. Further chanted

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Mortalitate Evitanda', uses the broader term (i.e. sudden death) in its title, but, based on its rubric as well as studies on the text and its context (see below), certainly concerns the Black Death. Similarly, chroniclers such as Gabriele de' Mussis of Piacenza, who wrote an account of the 1348 outbreak of plague, used the same term frequently to refer to the pandemic: A. W. Henschel, 'Document Zur Geschichte Des Schwarzen Todes', in *Archiv Für Die Gesammte Medicin*, ed. by Heinrich Haeser (Jena: Friedrich Mauke, 1841), pp. 45–57. English translation can be found in: Rosemary Horrox, ed., *The Black Death* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), p. 15.

[45] Dyboski, p. 70. Mirk's sermon on Corpus Christi day repeats these same benefits among the seven gifts of hearing Mass according to Augustine: Theodor Erbe, ed., *Mirk's Festial: A Collection of Homilies* (London: Kegan Paul, 1905), pp. 169–70.

[46] Francis H. Dickinson, ed., *Missale Ad Usum Insignis Et Praeclarae Ecclesiae Sarum* (Oxford: Brantisland, 1861–1883), cols. 886*–892*. The Mass is also called, among others, the 'missa contra plaga mortalitatis', the 'missa pro mortalitate', the 'missa pro pestilencia', and the 'missa pro quacumque tribulatione': Christopher Macklin, 'Stability and Change in the Composition of a "Plague Mass" in the Wake of the Black Death', *Plainsong and Medieval Music,* 25.2 (2016), 167–89 (p. 168 n. 7).

[47] Rosemary Horrox, ed., *The Black Death* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), pp. 122–4. Candles were venerated by many as important religious objects; on their significance in late medieval religion, see Duffy, pp. 15–20, 23, 145, 183–6.

sections are similarly concerned with the sick being healed. The Offertory section evokes Numbers 16:48, in which, it is said, '[t]he priest stood between the living and the dead, with a gold censer in his hand, and offering the sacrifice of incense he appeased the anger of the Lord, and the plague ceased from the house and people of Israel'.[48] The Communion, then, simultaneously approximates a re-enactment of Christ's Passion as well as his miracles of healing the sick.[49] Christ is, at the same time, a sacrifice and a healer.

In England, too, Archbishop Zouche of York ordered similar measures to be taken at the cathedral, at other collegiate and conventual churches, and every parish church in the city and diocese, promising forty days of penance for attendees.[50] A similar letter was issued by Archbishop Thoresby of York in 1361 in response to the second wave of the outbreak.[51] Similarly, another Mass was ordered to be held in Canterbury in 1382; its content is more centred around the Lord's mercy, with references to Psalm 77, Jeremiah 14:7–8, and Luke 11:9–13, rather than explicit indications of pestilence, although the Psalm mentions the Lord's arrows of punishment, which would have probably struck those of the attendees with some knowledge of Latin and association between arrows and plague as familiar.[52] In the same year, letters were sent from the Archbishop to bishops of London and Exeter to hold similar Masses and processions to stop the pestilence.[53]

At the centre of the myriad attempts to ward off plague, cleanse the civic boundaries, heal the infected, and appease divine wrath—all of which correspond to the first mode of

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[48] Michael D. Coogan et al., ed., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. 4th edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[49] This Mass was recorded in chronicles such as Thomas Burton's *Chronica Monasterii de Melsa*, written sometime between 1388 and 1396 at the Meaux Abbey in East Riding, Yorkshire: Horrox, pp. 67–70. In the entry, the plague is blamed on the infidel. On the variations in different versions of the Mass, see Macklin, 'Stability and Change', pp. 174–88.

[50] Horrox, p. 111.

[51] Horrox, p. 119.

[52] Horrox, p. 121. Duffy suggests that a large portion of the lay audience must have been familiar with certain Latin words used as cues during rituals: p. 15.

[53] Francis Charles Hingeston-Randolph, ed., *The Register of Thomas De Brantyngham, Bishop of Exeter (A.D. 1370–1394)*. 2 vols. Vol. 1 (London: George Bell & Sons, 1901), p. 464.

fighting infection, which is excision—stands the languishing figure of Christ, becoming more and more disintegrated every moment. In order to make sense of this contradiction—that is, the existence of the porous and disintegrated body of Christ within attempts to preserve the integrity of various types of bodies (individual, religious, civic), one needs to look at whether the disintegration of the body of Christ was viewed as a threat. Unlike the disintegrating body of the plague sufferer, the disintegrated body of Christ does not threaten the integrity of healthy bodies of the worshippers; rather, it ensures it. In almost all meditational literature, the sacrificial Passion of Christ is stressed as the bargain for the remission of humankind's sins. This is perhaps made clearest in a lyric by the fourteenth-century mystic Richard Rolle, who writes:

> Ihesu swete, my soule fode,
>
> Al þi werkes ben ful goode;
>
> Thou boght vs on þe roode
>
> And sheddest þeron þi hert bloode.[54]

Christ is literally the ransom for humankind's health, and that is why the disintegrated body on the rood is, at the same time, the 'soule fode', for it is Christ's bodily disintegration that guarantees one's safety.[55] Consequently, there is no danger of humankind being punished for the original sin, and so there is no likelihood of any other body becoming disintegrated. In other words, in the devotional context (rather than the medical), becoming-porous as well as disintegration are exclusive to Christ, and so there is no threat in his disintegrated existence in

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[54] The lyrics are in MS Longleat 29, ff. 55r–56v, 58r. Sarah Ogilvie-Thompson, ed., *Richard Rolle: Prose and Verse, Edited from MS Longleat 29 and Related Manuscripts, Early English Text Society, No. 293* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 53 (ll. 93–6).

[55] This is also echoed, more generally and more prominently, in the idea of the Lamb of God (*Agnus dei*) as well as that of the Mill of the Host, which conceives Christ as grain which is brought to fruition through the Passion and eventuates in the eucharistic host. Miri Rubin notes, however, that this idea had more monastic and clerical than lay currency: Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, pp. 312–13. As Thomas A. Boogaart II points out, such a material and sacrificial conception of Christ's Passion was popular among laypeople, too: p. 78. On *Agnus dei* in art, see: Gertrud Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art*. trans. Janet Seligman. 2 vols. Vol. 2: The Passion of Jesus Christ (Greenwich: New York Graphic Society, 1972), pp. 117–121.

prophylactic rituals.[56] It is for the same reason, in contrast with the medical advice regarding avoiding crowds, that congregations are necessary. Within the devotional realm (perhaps in its most absolute form), the threat of disintegration is only present to those who have renounced Christ's ransom, and the penitential procession acts as a renewal of this pact between God and people.[57] The processions culminate in a repeat of Christ's Passion and crucifixion, a renewal of the pact to ensure that disintegration keeps away.

It is thus within this frame of understanding that meditational works such as those attributed to Rolle make sense.[58] In the longer of the meditational tracts on the Passion attributed to him, he implores Christ 'þat þese woundes be my meditacioun nyght and day, for in þy woundes is hool medicyne for euche desaise of soule'.[59] Instead of spiritual food, the wounds now seem to harbour medicinal properties, and it is via such characterisations that they become objects of reverence, because the more porous Christ's body becomes, the likelier the chance of one's salvation gets. The tract sets out to mould this venerated, porous body of Christ by describing it in vivid imagery: 'þy body is lyk to þe nette, for as a nette is ful of holys, so is þy body ful of woundes': 'cache me in to þis net of þy scourgynge, þat al

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[56] At the same time, the mutilation of Christ could be viewed, in a more medical context and as proposed by Martha Easton, as an act of phlebotomy executed to cleanse humankind of the impurities of sin: 'The Wound of Christ, the Mouth of Hell: Appropriations and Inversions of Female Anatomy in the Later Middle Ages', in *Tributes to Jonathan J. G. Alexander: The Making and Meaning of Illuminated Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts, Art and Architecture*, ed. by Susan L'Engle and Gerald B. Guest (Turnhout: Harvey Miller, 2006), pp. 395–414 (p. 398). Such readings are solely about the disintegration of Christ, which occurs in his Passion, and, in turn, in every ritual of Mass. The abilities of Christ as a healer in episodes prior to his crucifixion belonged to a different order, which could co-exist with the sacrificial understanding of Christ (like the abovementioned Mass). Furthermore, it must be emphasised that, as discussed in previous chapters, the human body had already been considered as porous, so the becoming-porous and Christ's promise of protection from it under discussion here concern bodily disintegration and infection.

[57] This is not to say that the medical and devotional understandings could not coexist: in cases other than processions, which have been analysed in previous chapters, it is evident that proportionate weight could be given to factors influencing the individual body as well as the civic body.

[58] The text in question is a meditation on the Passion, located in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. e Mus. 232, ff. 1r–18r, thought to be copied in the mid-fifteenth century. My citations are from the edition by Sarah J. Ogilvie-Thompson, who refers to the text as 'Meditation B': Sarah Ogilvie-Thompson, ed., *Richard Rolle: Prose and Verse, Edited from MS Longleat 29 and Related Manuscripts*, *Early English Text Society, No. 293* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

[59] Ogilvie-Thompson, p. 74 (ll. 201–3).

my hert and loue be to þe'.[60] The author then notes, 'þy body is like to a dufhouse, for a dufhouse is ful of holys: so is þy body ful of woundes', and beseeching Christ to give them refuge from temptation in 'some hoole of þy woundes'.[61] He continues:

> Also, swete Ihesu, þy body is like to a hony combe, for hit is in euche a way ful of cellis, and euch celle ful of hony, so þat hit may nat be touched without yeld of swetnesse; so, swet Ihesu, þy body is ful of cellys of deuocioun, þat hit may nat be touched of a clene soule without swetnesse of lykynge.[62]

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[60] Ogilvie-Thompson, p. 74 (ll. 210–11, 212–13). Even more radical than Christ's porousness, certain representations of the body of Christ depict his 'monstrousness'. See, for instance: Michael Camille, 'The Image and the Self: Unwriting Late Medieval Bodies', in *Framing Medieval Bodies*, ed. by Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), pp. 62–99 (pp. 72–4); Robert Mills, 'Jesus as Monster', in *The Monstrous Middle Ages*, ed. by Bettina Bildhauer and Robert Mills (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2003), pp. 28–54.

[61] Ogilvie-Thompson, p. 74 (ll. 221–2, 226).

[62] Ogilvie-Thompson, p. 74 (ll. 227–231). With less emphasis on the porousness, Christ's body is also likened to a 'medew ful of swete flours and holsome herbes: so is þy body fulle of woundes': p. 75 (ll. 246–7). David S. Areford notes that this motif (wounds as flowers) was quite popular in artistic representations of Christ's wounds: *The Viewer and the Printed Image in Late Medieval Europe* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 52–3. The sentence could also be read within the erotic context, for as Martha Easton notes, flowers (particularly roses) and the vagina were linked in high and late medieval literature and art: p. 405. The next sentence compares Christ's body to a book: 'þy body is lyke a boke written al with rede ynke: so is þy body al written with rede woundes. Now, swete Ihesu, graunt me to rede vpon þy boke, and somwhate to vndrestond þe swetnes of þat writynge': p. 75 (ll. 236–9). The comparison is quite common, especially in the genre of the charter of Christ, a pact between God and humankind which sometimes takes the format of a legal agreement. In its terms, humankind undertakes to adhere to God's commandments in exchange for heavenly bliss. The pact's seal (sometimes appearing in physical format) takes the shape of a wounded heart with five drops of blood—a motif which shall be discussed later on in this chapter, too. The charter comes in shorter and longer versions, and in the latter, it is noted that the document was written on Christ's own skin, because 'Ne myȝt þey fynd no parchemyne | ffor to laste wyþ-oute fine | Bot als luf bad me do | Myne awen skyn I toke þar-to': Mary Caroline Spalding, ed., *The Middle English Charters of Christ* (Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania: Bryn Mawr College, 1914), pp. 24–5 (ll. 51–4). This textualization of Christ's body will render in the passivity of the devotee in their engagement with Christ as well as limit it to the representational system of language. Both of these issues will be discussed in this and the following chapters. The earliest extant version of the long text dates back to c.1350 in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Poetry 175, ff. 94b–95a, which is the version cited above: Robert R. Raymo, ed., *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050–1500, XX: Works of Religious and Philosophical Instruction.* ed. by Albert E. Hartung. 11 vols. Vol. 7 (New Haven: Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1986), p. 2549. On the charters' textual and pictorial modes of engagement, see: Martha Rust, 'Blood and Tears as Ink: Writing the Pictorial Sense of the Text', *The Chaucer Review,* 47.4 (2013), 390–415; David A. Salomon, '*Corpus Mysticum*: Text as Body/Body as Text', in *Intersections of Sexuality and the Divine in Medieval Culture: The Word Made Flesh*, ed. by Susannah Mary Chewning (London: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 141–56. On the revisions of the charter by Lollards, see: Emily Steiner, *Documentary Culture and the Making of Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 193–228; Emily Steiner, 'Lollardy and the Legal Document', in *Lollards and Their Influence in Late Medieval England*, ed. by Jill C. Havens Fiona Somerset, and Derrick G. Pitard (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2003), pp. 155–76.

In these statements, Christ's porousness and disintegration are idealised, and readers are encouraged to heed the crucial role of Christ's bodily mutilation in their salvation. Thus, within the models of fighting infection through excision, we see the presence of a porous, disintegrated body which is not threatening, but vital in actually making the excision work. This is not necessarily in conflict with what the mode of excision aims to achieve; rather, it functions as a precondition for the operation of excision (of infection, sin, harm, etc.).

In addition to masses held as part of or concluding processions and votive masses specifically composed against pestilence, there were masses invoking particular saints whose intercession was thought to carry some weight in the fight against plague. The general invocation of Christ himself, the Virgin, and saints was, of course, extremely prevalent in the late Middle Ages, and meditation on the life narrative of such figures was the key element in the process of appealing for their help. In the section on the Feast of All Saints, the collection of the lives of saints known as *The Golden Legend* provides a number of reasons for venerating the feast of saints, the first of which is to pay 'the honor due the divine majesty, because when we pay honor to the saints, we honor God in the saints and proclaim that he is admirable in them'.[63] Similarly, when it came to saints' bodies, they were 'God's repository, Christ's temple, the alabaster vase of spiritual ointment, divine fountains, and the organ of the Holy Spirit', thus linking devotion to them with devotion to Christ.[64] Meditation on the life of saints, then, is an extension of meditation on the Passion, and saints are merely channels through whom the will of God courses.

Among the saints invoked against plague, whose masses are included in Missal collections from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, are saints Sebastian and Roche, two of

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[63] Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*. trans. William Granger Ryan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), p. 659. The work was composed around 1260. The cited translation is based on a nineteenth-century Latin edition of the work.
[64] de Voragine, p. 660.

the specialist plague saints.[65] Sebastian, a Roman soldier-martyr who was killed in the reign

of Diocletian, was thought to aid plague-stricken patients because he survived being shot by

arrows (or, as an alternative narrative states, because his invocation stopped a pestilential

outbreak).[66] He is typically portrayed as pierced by multiple arrows, and while this signifies

his martyrdom, it also highlights, as mentioned in the chapter on medical literature, the

significance of the association between arrows and plague in the iconography of plague.[67]

Roche was a fourteenth-century itinerant hermit who contracted the plague, survived it, and

subsequently was able to miraculously cure it. He is usually depicted with a plague sore on

his leg, accompanied by a dog which, according to the story, fed him while he was sick.[68] In

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[65] Dickinson, cols. 892*–896*, 900*–903*. Dickinson's edition is based on printed editions from the late fifteenth to early sixteenth centuries.

[66] David Hugh Farmer, 'Sebastian', *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*. 5th edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[67] Henry E. Sigerist proposes that Sebastian's plague powers have been bestowed on him from the cult of Apollo, the god controlling the arrows of pestilence. The assertion cannot be considered as the sole cause of Sebastian's significance in treating plague, but the medical imagery examined in the previous chapters prove that such an idea can be considered as one of the possible factors in Sebastian's significance. Louise Marshall, however, rejects such an hypothesis, arguing that it 'fails to acknowledge the radical break with the traditional world view of paganism represented by the Christian cult of the saint'. What Marshall fails to recognise, though, is the continuance of the arrow imagery through medical works, which connected ancient medical ideas with medieval Christian ones without the need to reference paganism. To take a familiar example, the herb dittany, which was included in the plague material discussed in the chapter on medical responses, also features in Aristotle's *History of Animals*, Theophrastus' *Enquiry into Plants* (both c. 4th century BC) Virgil's *Aeneid* (1st century BC) in relation to its therapeutic properties for arrow wounds: Henry E. Sigerist, 'Sebastian - Apollo', *Archiv für Geschichte der Medizin,* 19.4 (1927), 301–17; Louise Marshall, 'Manipulating the Sacred: Image and Plague in Renaissance Italy', *Renaissance Quarterly,* 47.3 (1994), 485–532 (p. 495 n. 27); Aristotle, *History of Animals, Volume III: Books 7–10*, ed. and trans. D. M. Balme, *Loeb Classical Library 439* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), Book 8 (9), p. 245 <10.4159/DLCL.aristotle-history_animals.1965> [accessed 28 Dec 2022]; Theophrastus, *Enquiry into Plants, Volume II: Books 6–9. On Odours. Weather Signs.* ed. by Arthur F. Hort, *Loeb Classical Library 79* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1916), Book 9, Chapter, 16 <10.4159/DLCL.theophrastus-enquiry_plants.1916> [accessed 28 Dec 2022]; Virgil, 'Aeneid', ed. by Theodore C. Williams (1910), Book 12, ll. 411–440 (Verg. A. 12.411), in *Perseus Digital Library* <http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:latinLit:phi0690.phi003.perseus-eng2:12.411-12.440> [Accessed 28 Dec 2022]. Also see Marilyn B. Skinner, 'Venus as Physician', *Vergilius,* 53 (2007), 87–99. Sheila Barker asserts that Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend* was instrumental in the popularisation of Sebastian as a plague saint, because in the work, the story of his intercession was resurrected. She also downplays the significance of the emblem of arrows in Sebastian's association with plague. However, as we have seen, not only the association between arrows and plague is strong, it also predate the life of Sebastian, which, in turn, undermines Barker's point: 'The Making of a Plague Saint: Saint Sebastian's Imagery and Cult before the Counter-Reformation', in *Piety and Plague from Byzantium to the Baroque*, ed. by Franco Mormando and Thomas Worcester (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2007), pp. 90–131 (pp. 95–8).

[68] Farmer, 'Roch', in *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*. 5th edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). The earliest account of Roch appears in the undated *Acta Brevora*, probably written in the early fifteenth-century Lombardy: Irene Vaslef, 'The Role of St. Roch as a Plague Saint: A Late Medieval Hagiographic Tradition' (unpublished PhD Thesis, Catholic University of America, 1984), p. 65.

terms of the style of these prayers asking intercession, they switch between pleading God to consider their case for the sake of the saint and invoking the saint directly. For instance, Saint Sebastian's Mass begins with 'Deus, qui meritis beati Sebastiani martyris tui gloriosissimi, quandam generalem pestem epidemiae hominibus pestiferam revocasti; praesta supplicibus tuis' (Lord, who by the merits of the blessed Sebastian, your glorious martyr, has revoked the widespread epidemic plague, destructive to the people; stand by your supplicants) in the *oratio*, before turning to the saint in the gradual: 'O sancte Sebastiane, nos trementes, ac flentes, imploramus tuum clemens auxilium ut possimus obtinere per te pestis mortiferae apud Christurn remedium' (O Saint Sebastian, shivering and weeping, we implore your clement help so that we may be able to obtain, through you, the remedy of the deadly plague in the presence of Christ). In the sequence, once again, the saint is addressed directly and is asked to keep the people of England safe, but in the secret, communion (*communio*), and *postcommunio* sections, the mode of address reverts to its previous form, asking for intercession.[69] St Roche's Mass follows a similar structure.[70]

It is significant that earlier collections do not seem to include such special masses to those saints. In an edition of the Sarum Missal, based on thirteen- and fourteenth-century manuscripts, the only mention of St Sebastian is in a Mass on the saint's and St Fabian's feast day in the liturgical calendar, and there is no mention of Saint Roch at all.[71] In an edition of the York Missal, too, based on fourteenth- and fifteenth-century manuscripts and printed editions, Saint Roch does not make an appearance, while the mention of Saint Sebastian is limited to the shared feast day.[72] Such changes suggest that plague outbreaks may have had a

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[69] Dickinson, cols. 892*–896*. Also see: Remi Chiu, 'Music, Pestilence and Two Settings of *O Beate Sebastiane*', *Early Music History,* 31 (2012), 153–88.

[70] Dickinson, cols. 900*–903*.

[71] J. Wickham Legg, ed., *The Sarum Missal: Edited from Three Early Manuscripts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969).

[72] W. G. Henderson, ed., *Missale Ad Usum Insignis Ecclesiae Eboracensis*. 2 vols. Vol. 2 (Durham: Surtees Society, 1874).

role in the development of new feasts and masses dedicated to plague saints.[73] This idea is strengthened by the fact that William Caxton's edition of the *Golden Legend*, printed in 1483, included for the first time in any English translation a chapter on saint Roch.[74] The account notes that 'each house that was vexed with pestilence he entered, and with the sign of the cross and mind of the passion of Jesu Christ he delivered them all from the pestilence'.[75] Here, too, we see a further instance supporting the abovementioned idea that within the devotional context, the Passion of Christ constitutes an appropriate ransom for being saved from plague. Once an appropriately devout remembrance of the Passion is invoked, one which, as we remember, is so vivid it is as though it is unfolding before one's eyes, pestilence will leave. This occurs once more when Roch meets the cardinal in Rome. There, 'Rocke did sign in the cardinal's forehead and made with his finger a cross. And anon an apparent sign and a very cross was seen impressed in his forehead, and so the cardinal was preserved from the pestilence'.[76] The saint's own ordeal with the plague and imprisonment, however, must not be read as a sign of incongruity in this thinking, for his triumph over plague serves to extend the healing powers of Christ into the contemporary world. As the closing sentences of the narrative highlight, the saint petitions God to allow 'all good christian men which reverently prayed in the name of Jesu to the blessed Rocke […] be delivered surely from the

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[73] These masses probably began to be added from the early fifteenth century: Richard W. Pfaff, *New Liturgical Feasts in Later Medieval England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 66–7.

[74] Satoko Tokunaga, 'A Plague Saint in Print: St Roch and Caxton's Golden Legend', in *Utrecht Centre for Medieval Studies (UCMS) Lecture Series* (Utrecht University: 2022). The added material amounted to about a third of the original Latin collection. According to Tokunaga, this specific account seems to be translated from Ulrich Zell's printed Latin edition—also from 1483. Traditionally, a French, a Latin, and an English source are cited as Caxton's source material for his collection: Judy Ann Ford, *English Readers of Catholic Saints: The Printing History of William Caxton's Golden Legend* (London: Routledge, 2020); Mary Jeremy, 'Caxton's *Golden Legend* and Varagine's *Legenda Aurea*', *Speculum,* 21.2 (1946), 212–21. Jeremy concludes that Caxton's source for the life of St Roch was a manuscript similar to the Bollandists' late fifteenth-century edition of the anonymous *Acta Breviora*. Tokunaga proposes Zell as the intermediary linking Jeremy's proposition and Caxton's English text: Mary Jeremy, 'Caxton's Life of S. Rocke', *Modern Language Notes,* 67.5 (1952), 313–17.

[75] William Caxton, 'Medieval Sourcebook: The Golden Legend: Volume V', in *The Golden Legend or Lives of the Saints*, ed. by Frederick S. Ellis (Edinburgh: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1931; repr. 1900), in *Internet History Sourcebooks Project* <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/goldenlegend/GoldenLegend-Volume5.asp#Rocke> [Accessed 27 Dec 2022].

[76] Caxton, 'The Golden Legend: Volume V'.

stroke of pestilence'.[77] The ordeal of the saint, as we saw in the prologue of the *Golden Legend*, is what enables God's power to course through him. Consequently, the porous, disintegrated saintly bodies are idealised alongside the porous, disintegrated body of Christ.[78]

In addition to plague specialists, protection against specific diseases—including plague—was added to the miracles of other saints and was appealed to in masses. For instance, in a version of the Mass of St Anthony in the late fifteenth-century York missal, diseases such as leprosy, cancer, and dropsy are incorporated into the long list of conditions hearing or saying the Mass and fasting will protect against. The list also includes the more frequently mentioned protection against general conditions such as tempests, fire, and pestilence in the sense of epidemics.[79] More importantly, however, the inclusion of Roch in these examples indicates that martyrdom was not the necessary condition for acting as intercessory or protector against plague: the disease seems to bridge the distinction between martyred bodies and diseased bodies through its unifying property of porousness and disintegration. Roch's experience of plague, therefore, must have been considered an imitation of Christ's Passion. Furthermore, as mentioned above, the focus of the iconography of St Sebastian on his survival from being shot by a barrage of arrows rather than his martyrdom further strengthens the idea that porousness was preferred over martyrdom. As a result, martyrdom does not seem to offer a privilege against disease-stricken bodies, hence the creation of new, special masses for plague specialist saints, regardless of their mode of death.

Other special festive/votive masses—celebrating not just saints, but also new focal points of devotion such as the Crown of Thorns or the Five Wounds of Christ, were added to

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[77] Caxton, 'The Golden Legend: Volume V'.

[78] Similarly, with regards to St Sebastian, Louise Marshall notes that 'the key to Sebastian's cult as a protector against the plague must be sought in the confluence of arrow imagery with the Christian concept of martyrdom as the most perfect imitation of Christ': 'Manipulating the Sacred', (p. 495).

[79] Henderson, *Missale*, pp. 233–4.

the religious calendar as a result of the influence of affective piety, which emphasised

meditation on the suffering of holy figures and included elements of suffering such as those

mentioned. These figures and elements were, on occasion, recruited into the defences against

plague as we move towards the end of the fifteenth century. Even though they did not have a

specific day to mark them in England (as did feast days), they seem to have been so

frequently observed that they were included in the missals.[80] Duffy notes that the Mass of the

Five Wounds was:

> […] one of the most popular votive Masses of the late Middle Ages and
>
> was prefaced in the missal by a legend in which the Archangel Raphael, the
>
> angel of healing, appeared to Pope Boniface I, promising deliverance from
>
> all earthly evil to anyone who procured the saying of five Masses of the
>
> Wounds, and deliverance from Purgatory for any soul for whom five
>
> Masses of the Wounds were celebrated.[81]

Furthermore, the Mass was frequently mentioned in wills, which suggests, according to

Duffy, that in addition to the devotional Mass on the Passion, it also functioned as an

intercessory Mass for the dead.[82] It is also interesting that the Mass of the Five Wounds is

sometimes grouped with the 'Recordare' Mass as well as the newly-established Mass of St

Sebastian, both of which were used to invoke protection against plague.[83] As we shall see

later, in spite of their development independent of plague, the devotional elements involved

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[80] Duffy, p. 45; Pfaff, *New Liturgical Feasts*, p. 84; Richard W. Pfaff, *The Liturgy in Medieval England: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 541. Also see: Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 302–6.

[81] Duffy, p. 243.

[82] Duffy, p. 246.

[83] Pfaff, *New Liturgical Feasts*, p. 86. Interestingly, Pfaff notes that there is no mention of the eucharist in the Mass of the Five Wounds, This could be explained, perhaps, by the aforementioned idea regarding the disintegration of Christ's body: there is no need to invoke eucharist, for the body has already been made porous: *New Liturgical Feasts*, p. 88.

here (i.e. instruments of the Passion, the five wounds, etc.) will constitute a significant part of prophylactic religious iconography, which was certainly impacted by outbreaks of plague.[84]

3. Prayer and the Reconjuring of the Ideal Porous Body

Pestilence, among other calamities and natural disasters, features in general or obligatory prayers (*oratio generalis* or *oratio imperata*) in the Missal.[85] These are general prayers that the clergy invoked for the protection of the community. A more specific mention of pestilence appears in the exorcism rite used in sacring water. Describing the desired effects upon using the blessed water, the prayer petitions: 'non illic resideat spiritus pestilens, non aura corrumpens' (let no pestilential spirit reside there, nor any corrupting air).[86] This prayer invokes, quite explicitly, the discourse of infection and the medical thinking behind the spread of plague, but it certainly predated the Black Death and can still be found it in Catholic and Anglican liturgical material.[87] Nevertheless, one may recall the similar measure of sprinkling vinegar in the domestic space to purify it and prevent the contraction of plague, and bear in mind that one tends to find older knowledge gaining new currency in the context of the Black Death. Thus, the discourse of infection is reformulated in each crisis. In addition to the Mass and the prayers included in it, protection against plague was required in private, and it is for this reason that such prayers are included in private collections.

We have established the protective role of Christ in communal prayer and participatory spirituality in the previous section on the Mass and procession, but there was

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[84] On the political significance of the *arma* as well as the Five Wounds, see: Salvador Ryan, 'The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Ireland', in *The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture*, ed. by Lisa H. Cooper and Andrea Denny-Brown (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), pp. 243–72.

[85] See, for example, Henderson, *Missale*, pp. 182–3.

[86] Legg, *The Sarum*, p. 10. This appears in later collections, too: Henderson, *Missale*, p. 194; W. G. Henderson, ed., *Processionale Ad Usum Insignis Ac Praeclarae Ecclesiae Sarum* (Leeds: M'Corquodale & Co., 1882), p. 3.

[87] Such material are still impactful today. See, for instance, devotions to Saint Sebastian and Saint Roch in the context of the COVID-19 outbreaks: Antonio Perciaccante, Alessia Coralli, Saudamini Deo, and Philippe Charlier, 'Saint Roch and Social Distancing During Pandemics: Lessons to Be Remembered', *Journal of Religion and Health,* 60.4 (2021), 2324–30.

also a more reflective and visual aspect most pronounced in prayer books and prayer rolls as well as in church iconography. This aspect is also discernible in prayers to the Virgin and the saints as well as in the iconography of saints. As already noted, meditation on the Passion was central to the various types of masses and processions, and participation in both of which was thought to have protective as well as purgative qualities via keeping evil out. These prayers and illustrations aim to keep the disintegrated body and its prophylactic qualities alive even in the most private of settings, ensuring their protective effectiveness. The prayers and illustrations concerned here are distinct from the typical contents of Books of Hours or primers, which included the Litany of the Saints as well as excerpts from the four Gospels.[88] Despite the apotropaic reading of the Gospels, the added material underscores the need for extra invocation to guarantee further protection. This additional material, according to Duffy, includes 'a range of morning prayers, devotions for use at Mass, most commonly elevation prayers such as the "Ave Verum Corpus", suffrages to the saints and angels, prayers to the Virgin Mary, and, above all, prayers to Christ in his Passion'.[89] It is among this eclectic material that we find prayers which were included for special purposes.

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[88] Duffy, pp. 210–11, 214. Edgar Hoskins offers a larger list in his catalogue of Books of Hours and primers of Salisbury, York, and monastic use. It includes '(a) A Kalendar, (b) The Hours of the Virgin from Purification to Advent, (c) The seven penitential psalms, (d) The Litany of the Saints, (e) The Office for the dead, (f) The Psalms of commendation, (g) The fifteen or gradual Psalms, and (h) The prayers […] commonly called the Fifteen Oes' for thirteenth century Latin primers. English primers produced in late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries had additional content such as 'the Hours of the Virgin from Purification to Advent with the Hours of the Cross, a Kalendar, the Seven penitential psalms, the Fifteen or Gradual psalms, the Litany, the Office of the dead, the Psalms of commendation, devotions to the Virgin, the psalm De profundis, Psalms of the passion, A Christian man's confession, Misereatur, Pater noster, Ave Maria, Credo, Ten commandments, Six manners of conscience, Seven deadly sins, Five witts outward and inward, Seven works of mercy bodily and ghostly, Seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, Seven words, Sixteen properties of charity ; together with instructions on many of the above subjects, and the words of Paul': Edgar Hoskins, ed., *Horae Beatae Mariae Virginis, or Sarum and York Primers with Kindred Books and Primers of the Reformed Roman Use* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1901), pp. xi, xiv. The 'Fifteen Oes' were traditionally attributed to St Bridget of Sweden, but the association is historically inaccurate. For an edition of the prayer, see Rebecca Krug, 'The Fifteen Oes', in *Cultures of Piety: Medieval English Devotional Literature in Translation*, ed. by Anne Clark Bartlett and Thomas H. Bestul (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), pp. 107–17. On books of hours in England, also see: Eamon Duffy, *Marking the Hours: English People and Their Prayers, 1240–1570* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); Roger S. Wieck, Lawrence R. Poos, Virginia Reinburg, and John Plummer, *Time Sanctified: The Book of Hours in Medieval Art and Life* (New York: George Braziller, 1988).

[89] Duffy, p. 211.

Duffy mentions three protective prayers included in Primers in various forms, whose veneration of Christ combines reflection on and performativity referring to the disintegrated body in private. The first appears in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century York Primers and begins with 'Deus propicius esto' and pleads for protection from angels.[90] Towards the end of the prayer, a symbol of the cross appears mid-text: 'Ecce + orucem Domini: fugite partes aduerse'.[91] Duffy notes that the 'user of the prayer was expected at this point to make the sign of the cross, either on himself or in the air […] and it is clearly envisaged that this act will cause the enemy to flee'.[92] We can expand on this argument and suggest that the sign of the cross reconjures the image of the disintegrated crucified body of Christ. He continues that the final words of the prayer, where the cross is invoked thrice—'Agyos, agyos, agyos. Crux Christi, protégé me. Crux Christi, salua me. Crux Christi, defende me ab omni malo. Amen'—is supposed to enhance the 'incantatory effect'.[93] The Greek 'Agyos' is the commencing invocation in the *Trisagion* or thrice holy—a hymn in Greek liturgy which was also sung in the Latin liturgy of Good Friday. The hymn appears fully in a late fifteenth-century Book of Hours, which also features the sign of the cross in the text, to be used 'in any heuynesse withouten counsell and comfort' as well as 'ayenste the pestilence'.[94]

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[90] Translates as 'God be favourable'.

[91] Translates as 'Behold the cross of the Lord, begone you enemies': C. Wordsworth, ed., *Horae Eboracenses: The Prymer of Hours of the Blessed Virgin Mary, According to the Use of the Illustrious Church of York* (Durham: Andrews & Co., 1920), p. 125; Duffy, 270.

[92] Duffy, p. 271.

[93] Translates as 'Agios, Agios, Agios. Cross of Christ protect me. Cross of Christ, save me. Cross of Christ, defend me from every evil. Amen': Wordsworth, *Horae*, p. 125; Duffy, 271.

[94] Cambridge, Cambridge University Library MS Dd.6.1, f. 138b: 'MS Dd.6.1', in *A Catalogue of the Manuscripts Preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1856), p. 289; Duffy, p. 271. The manuscripts was made in Flanders for English users: Patrick Zutshi, Paul Binski, and Stella Panayotova, ed., *Western Illuminated Manuscripts: A Catalogue of the Collection in Cambridge University Library* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 360–61. The catalogue notes that the hymn has been added by a later hand, but does not specify when. In the catalogue of western illustrated manuscripts, however, it is noted that the material in folios 140v–144v are from a late fifteenth- to early sixteenth-century hand, so it is possible that this added material in folio 138 belongs to the same period: Zutshi, Binski, and Panayotova, p. 361.

The other two prayers discussed by Duffy, the so-called 'Crux Christi' or the letter to Charlemagne, and the 'Omnipotens + Dominus + Christus' both use the performative sign of the cross, the former of which was also used against pestilence, while the latter solicits protection from disasters and death.[95] The former prayer reiterates the idea of Christ as health and remedy, while the latter begins with a series of invocations interspersed with signs of the cross, by making which a great number of times one would have probably strengthened the healing powers of Christ: 'Omnipotens + Dominus + Christus + Messias + Sother + Emmanuel + Sabaoth + Adonay + Unigenitus + Via + Vita […]'.[96] Prayers to the Virgin were also thought to possess apotropaic powers, sometimes specifically against disease. For instance, in two primers from around 1536–37, which accommodate content in both English and Latin, a prayer to the Virgin against pestilence ('Oratio ad beatam Virginem Mariam contra pestem') is included.[97] The prayer is essentially about the extirpation of humanity's

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[95] Hoskins, p. 124; Wordsworth, *Horae*, p. 126; Duffy, pp. 273–4. For other examples of charms in whose invocation one is expected to make the sign of the cross, see: Tony Hunt, *Popular Medicine in Thirteenth-Century England: Introduction and Texts* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1990), *passim*. Daniel McCann argues that the act of reading of such prayers and specifically meditations on Christ's Passion was thought to be prophylactic and therapeutic: 'Heaven and Health: Middle English Devotion to Christ in Its Therapeutic Contexts', in *Devotional Culture in Late Medieval England and Europe Diverse Imaginations of Christ's Life*, ed. by Stephen Kelly and Ryan Perry (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), pp. 335–62. This is in line with the medical proposition highlighted in the previous chapters that even looking at an infected person could transmit the disease. Also see Brian Stock, 'Minds, Bodies, Readers: I. Healing, Meditation, and the History of Reading; II. Healers without Books, Readers without Souls; III. Clinical Therapies, Readerly Mentalities', *New Literary History,* 37.3 (2006), 489–525.

[96] Hoskins, p. 124; Wordsworth, *Horae*, p. 126; Duffy, pp. 273–4. The latter invocation appears in a fifteenth-century heavily abridged and interpolated copy of a John of Gaddesden's work (BL, MS Add 33996, f. 150v) as a charm for ceasing the 'flow of blood' in women: Hunt, p. 30. It also partially appears in *Liber de Diversis Medicinis* examined in the first chapter as a charm against fever, and a version of the prayer in Reynes's *Commonplace*: Margaret Ogden, ed., *The Liber De Diversis Medicinis*, *Early English Text Society* (London: Humphrey Milford, 1938), p. 63; Louis, pp. 247–8. Charms used to stop bleeding usually included reference to Longinus' piercing of Christ's side. One English charm (BL, MS Sloane 962, f. 38v) reads: 'Whan Oure Lorde Jesu Criste was done on þo croys, þan com Longius thider and stong him wit þo spere in þo syde. Blode and watur com out at þo wound. He wyped his yne and saw anone thorow þo holi vertu þat God did þere. I conjure þe, blod, þat þu come not out of þo cristen man'. Once more, reconjuring the Passion was thought to have the power to stop further bleeding: Hunt, pp. 86, *passim*. In the same vein, such charms also invoked Christ's un-festered wounds on the cross; some, however, cited Christ's miracle of calming the sea: T. M. Smallwood, 'The Transmission of Charms in English, Medieval and Modern', in *Charms and Charming in Europe*, ed. by Jonathan Roper (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004), pp. 11–31. On the censorship of charms during the Reformation, see: Lea T. Olsan, 'The Marginality of Charms in Medieval England', in *The Power of Words: Studies on Charms and Charming in Europe*, ed. by Éva Pócs and William Ryan James Kapaló (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2013), pp. 135–64, (pp. 155–60).

[97] Hoskins, pp. 165, 169–70.

original sin by the Virgin, but it was repurposed for the more immediate plight of pestilence.

The making of the sign of the cross in these invocations or exorcisms highlights the necessity

of actualising the porous body of Christ and its holy ransom in private settings. It is, in a way,

quite similar to how the Mass operates: by constantly conjuring up and renewing the Passion,

or, in this case, the sign of the cross which actualises Christ's disintegrated body, the

protective powers of this holy ransom will hopefully be extended to the private setting, too.

The sign, whether made on the body of the worshipper or in the air, cleansed the individual

space in the same way as the processional cross, banners of the cross, or the eucharist acted in

cleansing the community.

In many prayer-books, specific groups of saints appear alongside Christ and the

Virgin. There are a few well-known groups of holy figures, such as the Evangelists, the

Church Doctors, and the Fourteen Holy Helpers, a group which became popular from the

fourteenth century onwards in mainland Europe, possibly in relation to the Black Death and

its subsequent outbreaks, whose members actually varied from place to place.[98] On the other

hand, there are open-ended selections of martyrs, virgin martyrs, and helpers in individual

collections, grouped for specific purposes. Members of these saintly bands become important

indicators of the purpose of the compilation of individual prayer-books. As an example, in an

incunable Primer from 1493—which belonged to Sir Thomas Parr, a courtier of Henry VIII,

and later to his brother, William Parr—a prayer to Saint Sebastian appears alongside a great

number of prayers devoted to figures including Ss Bernard, James (John the Evangelist's

brother), Christopher, George, Martin, Anthony, Francis, Anne, Barbara, as well as prayers to

the Cross, the 'proper angel', and the Five Wounds.[99] While plague is specifically mentioned

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[98] Farmer, 'Fourteen Holy Helpers', in *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*. 5th edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[99] Hoskins, pp. 112–13. Current shelfmark: Cambridge University Library, Inc.4.J.1.2[3570]. The number in brackets refers to the book's accession number in the library, as recorded in J.C.T. Oates's catalogue: *Catalogue of the Fifteenth-Century Printed Books in the University Library Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954), p. 685. The shelfmark G.3.61 is noted as an old shelfmarks in the

in the devotion to the saint ('Blessed martyr Sebastian, pray for us. So that we may deserve to pass through the pestilence unscathed and obtain Christ's promise'), the collection seems to be a general, albeit quite comprehensive, Book of Hours centred around protector saints and not plague specialists.[100] The prayer is the standard prayer to St Sebastian in books of hours. Also present in the collection is the hymn called the *Stella celi*, which is directed to the Virgin Mary in order to obtain protection against pestilence.[101] The hymn invokes the famous notion of the Virgin's reversal of Adam and Eve's original sin—referred to as a plague/pestilence of death brought about by one's ancestors ('Mortis pestem, quam plantavit | primus parens hominum'), and it is explicit to highlight the significance of plague here—'a peste succurre nobis' or save us from the plague—one which is caused by stars ('sidera').[102] As we shall see, even though all of these collections were not compiled to fight plague specifically, the presence of plague outbreaks in the context of the production of these books,

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Library's online catalogue: 'Horae : Ad Usum Sarum (Salisbury)', Westminster: Wynkyn de Worde, c. 1493, (1493) <https://idiscover.lib.cam.ac.uk/permalink/f/t9gok8/44CAM_ALMA21282452020003606> [Accessed 28 Dec 2022].

[100] Original Latin: 'Ora pro nobis beate martyr sebastiane. Ut digni mereamur pestem epidimie illesi pertransire et promissionem christi obtinere'.

[101] Hoskins, p. 111. The poem has been translated into English verse twice by John Lydgate: 'To the we pray, on vs cast doun thy siht, | Oonly of mercy that thu nat disdeyne, | Off infect heyr the mystis to restreyne, | That be thy gracious moost holsom influence | We haue no cause on hasty deth to pleyne, | Which sleeth the peeple by swerd of pestilence.': Henry Noble MacCracken, ed., *The Minor Poems of John Lydgate*. 2 vols. Vol. 1, *Early English Text Society, Extra Series 57* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1911), pp. 296–7 (ll. 11–16). In the second translation, the poem uses 'pestilence' as the refrain: 'Thou glorious sterre this world to enlumyne, | Thi name to preise I haue no suffisaunce, | On vs synneres thi mercy lat doun shyne, | Off infect heires oppresse al there vttraunce, | Vs to infect that thei haue no puissaunce; | From theire batail be thou oure cheef deffennce, | That theire malis to vs do no grevaunce, | Off infectynge or strok of pestilence.': p. 296 (ll. 17–24). Also see on the second poem: Gail McMurray Gibson, 'Bury St Edmunds, Lydgate, and the N-Town Cycle', *Speculum,* 56 (1981), 56–90 (pp. 88–9). On the medical powers of the Virgin Mary, in general, see: Diane Watt, 'Mary the Physician: Women, Religion and Medicine in the Middle Ages', in *Medicine, Religion and Gender in Medieval Culture*, ed. by Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2015), pp. 27–44.

[102] 'Stella Caeli', The Choral Public Domain Library (CPDL), <https://www.cpdl.org/wiki/index.php/Stella_caeli> [Accessed 24 September 2022]. In a books of hours owned by the Roberts family of Middlesex (Cambridge University Library, ii.6.2, f. 102v) includes an early sixteenth-century hand has written the incipit of the prayer ('stella celi') over a prayer against plague, followed by 'At ye levation tyme say Stella celi extipavit', which also signifies the hymn's importance: Christopher Macklin, 'Plague, Performance and the Elusive History of the *Stella Celi Extirpavit*', *Early Music History,* 29 (2010), 1–31 (p. 22 n. 74). In iconography, too, the Virgin seems to have acquired a special protective role. For instance, Louise Marshall considers a work by the Italian painter Benedetto Bonfigli dated at 1464, in which the Virgin's figure sidelines the wrathful God and his pestilential arrows: 'Manipulating the Sacred', p. 506. For a study of hymns and music in plague-stricken Italy, see chapters 3–5 of Remi Chiu's excellent book: *Plague and the Music in the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

select plague-specific material, as well as the continual reconjuring of the Passion imprint themselves on the rest of the material, making them more receptive of adopting porousness as a laudable quality.

In another Primer from 1536, which is much smaller than the former, there are prayers to the Virgin, the blood of Christ, St Erasmus, St Sebastian, St Roch, St Christopher, and Henry VI.[103] This edition is most probably a collection specially produced as an anti-plague prayer-book, for all the saints invoked are plague saints.[104] Here, once again, we see the primacy of bodily disintegration over martyrdom, for even though the majority of the saints included were considered martyrs, the inclusion of Roch suggests that the rationale of the collection was not exclusively martyrdom.[105] In addition to the familiar plague saints, Sebastian and Roch, the rest of the group are all healer saints who were, in way or another, related to plague and bodily disintegration. St Erasmus is one of the Holy Helpers whose emblem is a windlass, with which he was supposedly disembowelled.[106] Erasmus appears in what remains of another prayer book from 1494, but this time following the aforementioned performative prayer 'Deus propitious esto' with an *Oratio* from the Office of St Michael and preceding a prayer to St Roch, the prayer to whom is prefaced by 'Whoso saith this prayer following in the worship of God and Saint Rock, shall not die of the pestilence by the grace

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[103] Hoskins, pp. 151–2. The manuscript is located in Lincoln Cathedral Library MS RR.4.20. However, the supplied shelfmark does not exist on the Library's online catalogue. The manuscript's short-title catalogue number is STC, 16106. The manuscript was printed in Rouen for a Jean Groyat or Growte in London and one Jean Marchant in Rouen: G. R. Regrave A. W. Pollard, W. A. Jackson, F. S. Ferguson and Katherine F. Pantzer, ed., *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, and Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad, 1475–1640*. 2 edn. 2 vols. Vol. 2 (London: The Bibliographical Society, 1976–86), p. 80. The English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC) for the collection is S93647: '[Hore Bte Marie Virginis Scd'm Vsum Eborum.]', The English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC), <http://estc.bl.uk/S93647> [Accessed 28 Dec 2022].

[104] Compare with Cambridge University Library, Inc.4.J.1.2[3570] mentioned above, which was concerned with the whole spectrum of protector saints.

[105] It is possible, however, that even Roch was considered a martyr, for in some versions of his *vita* (including the one used by Caxton) he dies in unjustified incarceration. This is quite similar to Henry VI's death and his status as a martyr.

[106] Farmer, 'Erasmus', in *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*. 5th edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

of God', clarifying that the collection is also plague-centred.[107] Another reason for Erasmus'

inclusion among plague saints could be his patronage of sailors, who were thought to be the

first to bring plague to Europe. St Christopher is also a Holy Helper who is one of the most

adroit saints, offering protection not only for travellers, but also against water, tempest,

plague, sudden death (which sometimes used to refer to plague, too), and bad death (death

without receiving the last rites or, as Marylynn Salmon argues, syphilis)—dangers which, as

we remember, were frequently mentioned in masses and processions alongside pestilence.[108]

Furthermore, his legend indicates that he was shot by arrows as part of his journey to

martyrdom, a shared element with the symptomatology of plague and the life of St Sebastian,

which thus strengthens his connection with plague.[109] Lastly, Henry VI achieved palpable

popularity as a saint as a result of a disastrous reign replete with conflicts, long periods of ill

health, a troubled personality, and a mysterious death, all of which elicited a degree of

sympathy among worshippers, as well as the Lancastrian political efforts to represent his

incompetence as a form of pious helplessness.[110] Henry's miracles mainly concern sudden,

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[107] Hoskins, p. 118. The incunable is in Corpus Christi College Library, phi.C.1.3; STC (2nd ed.), 15878; ESTC, S93548. The catalogue notes that 'these fragments are sheet Y from an edition of the *Sarum Horae*; taken from the binding of delt.23.2, pasted over two leaves of the *Legenda aurea* (1493), inside a cover with Caxton's stamps. This apparently dates the cover as 1493 or 4, and the binding as 1503'. It is possible that the contents of this fragmentary collection were selected for a specific reason such as forming and anti-plague collection. '[Horae Ad Usum Sarum]', Search Oxford Libraries Online (SOLO), <https://solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/permalink/f/89vilt/oxfaleph019456370> [Accessed 28 Dec 2022].

[108] David S. Areford, *The Viewer and the Printed Image*, p. 2. The Latin phrase for bad death is 'male mort'. Salmon highlights a thirteenth-century Italian medical treatise in which the term 'mort male' was used to characterise a form of 'leprosy', which was often conflated with syphilis. She then discusses the possibility that the term 'fishing' was used, in both Latin and English, as a euphemism for sex and the presence of fishes in the iconography of St Christopher in England, before arguing that the convergence of these elements in the depictions of St Christopher alongside the medieval conception of leprosy and syphilis as sexually transmitted diseases may suggest that the saint was considered to have protective powers against syphilis or leprosy—or perhaps, sexually transmitted diseases, in general: Marylynn Salmon, *Medieval Syphilis and Treponemal Disease* (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2022), pp. 35–52.

[109] Farmer, 'Christopher', in *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*. 5th edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). Also see prayer to the saint in the *Missale*, which notes his anti-plague powers: Dickinson, cols. 903*–905*.

[110] Leigh Ann Craig, 'Royalty, Virtue, and Adversity: The Cult of King Henry Vi', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies,* 35.2 (2003), 187–209. Linda Ehrsam Voigts argues that Henry VII, and perhaps his court, too, were concerned about pestilential outbreaks, and this resulted in the king becoming interested in plague saints including Henry VI: Linda Ehrsam Voigts, 'Plague Saints, Henry VII, and Saint Armel', in *Saints and Cults in Medieval England: Proceedings of the 2015 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. by Susan Powell (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2017), pp. 101–23.

distressing emergencies, such as accidental asphyxiation, house fires, and serious accidents; under the circumstances, plague happened to be one of the major crises during the period he was popular, which resulted in plague-related miracles being the third most frequent condition his intercessions treated.[111] In one of the King's miracles, an eleven-year-old girl from Stratford of the Bow, Middlesex was sick with plague. She had swellings under her left ear, and her body was covered with spots. Upon the girl's encouragement, her father prayed to the Virgin, Christ, and the King and made a vow to go on pilgrimage to the saint's shrine barefoot. Consequently, the spots immediately healed, and the bubo opened, depleting the corrupt pus.[112] The saint also added the Sweating Sickness to the conditions under his influence once outbreaks began to occur in England.[113]

The inclusion of the prayer on the blood of Christ reminds us of the composition of masses devoted to the Christ's wounds, reiterating the apparent emphasis on the bodily disintegration of Christ. This emphasis seems to have been extended, as we have seen in the abovementioned prayer books, to other holy bodies, so that their disintegration, too, will act as ransom for people's protection and redemption. This status was even extended to the likes of Henry VI, whose death was surrounded in mystery and whose bodily disintegration remained officially unconfirmed. His mental anguish, bouts of illness, and the possibility of his bodily disintegration was sufficient to warrant his protective powers against pestilence. Thus, we have, so far, established that it was the bodily disintegration of Christ inherent in various rituals that ensured protection of the petitioners against bodily disintegration. In such

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[111] John M. Theilmann, 'The Miracles of King Henry Vi of England', *The Historian,* 42 (1980), 456–71 (p. 465). Also see John W. McKenna, 'Piety and Propaganda: The Cult of Henry VI', in *Chaucer and Middle English Studies in Honour of Rossell Hope Robbins*, ed. by Beryl Rowland (London: Allen & Unwin, 1974), pp. 72–88. On the iconography of the saint, see Richard Marks, 'Images of Henry Vi', in *The Lancastrian Court: Proceedings of the 2001 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. by Jenny Stratford (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2003), pp. 111–24. A Book of Hours from the mid-fifteenth century associated with the Paston family includes a prayer to Henry VI against the sweating sickness: Oregon, Mount Angel Abbey Library, MS 0027, f. 1r.

[112] Ronald Knox and Shane Leslie, ed., *The Miracles of King Henry VI* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923), pp. 182–6.

[113] See for instance, Knox and Leslie, pp. 127, 194–5.

rituals, we see renewals or attempts to approximate Christ's bodily disintegration (or becoming-porous) through carrying crosses, making the sign of the cross, holding masses, following cross-like procession routes, and/or specific prayers invoking Christ's bodily disintegration (such as prayers to the wounds or the blood of Christ). Certain other holy figures, furthermore, who functioned as intercessors, retained this apotropaic power through their own bodily disintegration and imitation of Christ's. In the following section of this chapter, we move to attempts to have this ideal form of porousness and disintegration present at all times, thereby transitioning from a focus on becoming-porous to an emphasis on being-porous—the body having already disintegrated. The distinction between the two can be analogised to the distinction between what is seen in the process of becoming porous in Mass and the image of an already crucified Christ. This transition may signify the recognition of the disintegrated body as an entity with inherent apotropaic powers. Therefore, rather than requiring bodies to constantly become porous in order to ensure protection, the presence of already-porous bodies would be sufficient to guarantee or reinforce protection. Furthermore, this transition results in the presence of not only disintegrated bodies, but also infected bodies, at the heart of spaces in need of protection. This idea fuses the two modes of fighting infection through excision and containment together: in order to protect bodies and expel infection, one needs to have access to disintegrated, infected bodies, which will contain infection and disintegration within themselves and thus ensure the health of the rest. However, this does not necessarily come at the expense of de-emphasising the importance of becoming-porous. Rather, as we shall see, both types of operations coexist and strengthen one another. Furthermore, we also see the presence of saints who, despite having been martyred through bodily disintegration, are not depicted as such. Thus, the multifaceted form of fighting infection is maintained, and in these examples, we see additional ways of doing it.

4. Iconography and the Preservation of the Ideal Porous Body

A. Prayer

In a sermon on the feast of Corpus Christi, John Mirk notes that 'ymages and payntours ben lewde menys bokys', emphasising the importance of iconography and illustrations of the Passion, in particular, and visual representation of other significant points and figures within the Christian faith, in general, for pious meditation.[114] Not only does adding a visual dimension preserve the presence of an already-porous body in any given space—whether it be a book or a wall, it also enhances the intensity of the experience of meditation or prayer and helps the message of devotion reach a wider audience. Illustrations offer a visual companion to the meditative experience, and, together with the performative aspect of popular religion, constitute an immersive spirituality permeating various strata of society and different aspects of piety in diverse settings and circumstances.

As suggested earlier, there seems to have been an emphasis on the vividness of the Passion, particularly the disintegration of Christ's body—'the damage wrought to Christ's body before and during the Passion and the physiological changes it underwent on the Cross'.[115] Mirk asserts, in the same sermon on the feast of Corpus Christi, that 'þer ben mony þousaund of pepul þat couþ not ymagen in her hert how Crist was don on þe rood, but as þai lerne hit be syȝt of ymages and payntours'.[116] Here, once more, we see the importance of renewing the Passion: effectively, the visual representations of Christ's Passion help recreate it in people's hearts, which is to ensure that the benefits of Christ's sacrifice will reach all.[117] This goal was pursued in visual illustrations in prayer-books and prayer-rolls which seem to

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[114] Erbe, p. 171. Duffy points out that devotion to saints became more centred around images in the late Middle Ages, resulting in shrines being built around portrayals rather than relics: p. 167.

[115] Friedman, *Northern English Books*, p. 149.

[116] Erbe, p. 171.

[117] See also Jeffrey Hamburger, '"In Gebeden Vnd in Bilden Geschriben": Prints as Exemplars of Piety and the Culture of the Copy in Fifteenth-Century Germany', in *The Woodcut in Fifteenth-Century Europe*, ed. by Peter Parshall (New Haven: National Gallery of Art, 2009), pp. 155–90.

have been specifically produced for protection against plague. My criteria for determining whether a prayer-book was produced specially for pestilence are the concentration of plague saints in a given document, the invocation of said saints distinctly against pestilence, as well as emphasis on plague-related emblems such as wounds, arrows, dragons, swords, etc.[118] Furthermore, as with previous chapters and sections in this chapter, the reason for predominantly focussing on Middle English material is to have sources with the widest possible audience. There are other elements which are found in illustrations of or connected to plague, such as an angel bearing a sword (and not just sheathing it to signify God's subdued wrath), the Virgin of Mercy trope, or the presence of the saints not specifically associated with plague—who, according to Jacqueline Brossollet, amount to around one hundred and ten.[119] However, these elements appear in illustrations unconnected with plague, too. Therefore, I have chosen not to include them and examine only elements or representations recognisably associated with plague.

In the following examples, we shall see three key points regarding the relation between plague and visual illustrations: in their attempts to renew the passions of holy figures, the producers of these prayer books and rolls tried to recreate the entire narrative of the holy figures' ordeals, conscious of their aim to not represent the passions, but recreate it. Secondly, where this is not the case due to constraints of space, for example, the alternative was recreating the holy body in question in its most vulnerable state in order to ensure that the figure in question has undergone the disintegration to an appropriate degree to be capable of protecting supplicants. Thirdly, in the case of saints who had undergone passions and came out triumphant, especially the two plague specialist saints Sebastian and Roch, we see a

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[118] I have used the following series to locate manuscripts which conform to those criteria: Kathleen L. Scott, ed., *An Index of Images in English Manuscripts: From the Time of Chaucer to Henry VIII, C. 1380–C. 1509.* 8 vols (London: Harvey Miller, 2000–2018).

[119] Jacqueline Brossollet, quoted in Christine M. Boeckl, *Images of Plague and Pestilence: Iconography and Iconology* (Kirksville: Truman State University Press, 2000), p. xii.

preference for portraying them in their disintegrated state.[120] This may be due to the desire to obtain as much protection as possible from such figures. Fourth, in addition to the aforementioned group of saints, we have a group of triumphant saints who were depicted as victorious, and another who perished in the course of their ordeals but were not portrayed in a disintegrated state. This highlights the multimodal engagement with the saints and their various ways of protecting the petitioners, which shall be discussed in this section and the one on church art following it.

The first example is a pocket-sized, mid-fifteenth-century (c. 1460) collection of prayers and hymns in the Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 1.[121] Unfortunately, not much is known of the manuscript, but we can make a few speculations based on the content of the manuscript. The manuscript can be broadly divided into two sections based on language: folios 1v–54 are in Latin, and the rest of the manuscript (ff. 54v–82v) is in Middle English, with the exception of a brief section on f. 70 and ff. 82–82v which reverts to Latin. It is possible that the two sections were written by two different hands, but both sections use the same script. Coloured initials and coloured texts, as well as the only coloured illustration in the manuscript (f. 1v) appear only on the Latin side; the Middle English side features only pen-and-ink grisaille illustrations on the parchment, which could suggest that the different sections were inscribed at different times. A list of the contents of the manuscript will readily reveal that the manuscript is plague-related, and that the insertion does not disrupt the uniformity of content in the manuscript. The collection begins with the protective passage from Luke 1:26–38 we saw used in processions ('In illo tempore, missus est angelus

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[120] This point is briefly discussed by Samantha Riches and Bettina Bildhauer, who connect it to a gendered reading of the martyr's and Christ bodies. Here, bodily disintegration denotes the passivity, submissiveness, and even femininity of saintly bodies: Samantha Riches and Bettina Bildhauer, 'Cultural Representations of the Body', in *A Cultural History of the Human Body in the Medieval Age*, ed. by Linda Kalof (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010), pp. 181–202.

[121] The manuscript is approximately 7.60 × 6 cm (3 × 2 3/8 in.). I thank the staff of the Weston Library for granting me access to the manuscript.

Gabriel'), followed immediately by the prayer to the Virgin used against pestilence, known as the *Stella celi*.[122] These are followed by hymns to the Virgin, such as *Ave*, *rosa sine spinis*, *Ave Maria*, *ancilla sanctae trinitatis*, and the *Stabat Mater*, which is followed by a prayer from the Little Office of the Seven Sorrows.[123] We also return, once again, to a familiar protective prayer, the *Crux Christi*, which ends with the *Propicius esto*, a prayer which is said to prevent sudden death, among other perils.[124]

The collection includes prayers to St Sebastian (f. 27); St Anthony (ff. 31–3), who was also invoked against plague; St Apollonia (ff. 33–4), a virgin martyr who was mainly invoked against toothache and depicted with pincers as her legend told that part of her torture was the removal of her teeth; St Dorothy (ff. 34–5), another virgin martyr who, like Apollonia, does not usually appear among the Helpers nor among plague saints, but who is invoked as a helper for pregnant women, as attested in Osbern Bokenham's fifteenth-century *Legend of Holy Women*.[125] It is also tempting to speculate whether there was a more immediate connection between saints Apollonia and Dorothy and the collection other than their being virgin martyrs or protectors. It may be possible that Apollonia was included because of the element of torture in her legend and its commensurability with the theme of violation of bodily integrity. Similarly, it is possible that the reason for the inclusion of Dorothy is a more immediate connection with pestilence, such as Dorothy's emblem—a basket of fruit and flowers. We remember from the previous chapters the importance of sweet

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[122] Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 1, ff. 2–4v; Hoskins, pp. 165, 169–70..
[123] MS Douce 1, ff. 4v–10.
[124] MS Douce 1, ff. 10v–13v; Hoskins, p. 124.
[125] MS Douce 1, ff. 27, 31–33, 33–34, 34–35; Voigts, 'Plague Saints', pp. 110–11; Farmer, 'Apollonia' and 'Dorothy', in *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*. 5th edn; Sheila Delany, ed., *A Legend of Holy Women* (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), p. 98. See the prayers here, respectively: Hoskins, pp. 113, 125. Barker distinguishes between two types of illustrations of Sebastian: the 'horrific *memento mori*' and the 'therapeutic beauty' in Italian art, each serving a unique function. My argument focusses on the protective powers of the grisly, and so does not consider Barker's former type as valid: both types had protective powers, but they were portrayed based on different concerns and criteria: p. 123. Also see: Louise Marshall, 'Waiting on the Will of the Lord: Imagery of the Plague' (unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1989). For charms/prayers invoking Apollonia against toothache in BL, MS Sloane 475, f. 169r and BL, MS Additional 15236, f. 61v, see: Hunt, pp. 98, 247.

smells and fresh air in combatting pestilence. The association between the sweet-smelling

apples and flowers and health may well be the reason for Dorothy's place in this collection.

As we shall see once we begin to examine church iconography, the inclusion of St Dorothy

may well be more than circumstantial. In this very manuscript, furthermore, these saints will

become significant as we move on in the collection.

The collection immediately returns to explicitly pestilence-related material by adding

a prayer *Contra mortalitatem hominum* (ff. 35–36v), which, in the large aforementioned

incunable from Westminster (Inc.4.J.1.2[3570]), precedes prayers to plague saints Henry VI

and Roch.[126] In MS Douce 1, too, this prayer is followed by an invocation of saint Roch and

a long prayer to saint Erasmus seeking health of body and soul.[127] The prayer itself is a

protective prayer against death and does not mention pestilence specifically. The hymn

Beatus vir from Psalm 1, which was invoked to offer protection for pregnant women, follows

next, and the coincidence of this hymn and the invocation of St Dorothy could suggest a

female patron.[128] Further in the collection, another familiar prayer, the 'Omnipotens +

Dominus + Christus', which sought protection against death and disaster, makes an

appearance, its crosses are depicted in red and blue ink alternately.[129] We remember that the

supplicant was supposed to make the sign of the cross and reconjure the Passion when they

reach the crosses in the prayer.

The Middle English section of the collection (ff. 54v–82v) begins with an illustrated

poem on the instruments of passion or the *arma Christi*. The earliest instance of these

devotions in Middle English goes back to the late fourteenth century, around the same time as

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[126] Hoskins, p. 117.
[127] MS Douce 1, ff. 36v–40v.
[128] MS Douce 1, ff. 40v–42; Hoskins, p. 120. Anthony Bale also makes a similar suggestion: Anthony Bale, *The Jew in the Medieval Book: English Antisemitisms, 1350–1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 161.
[129] MS Douce 1, ff. 43–44v.

the development of interest in the corporeal aspects of the Passion, though Gertrude Schiller

traces the presence of such devotions in Europe to the late thirteenth- to early fourteenth-

century.[130] They would describe and illustrate the tools by which Christ was tortured, the

objects which had a significant role in the narrative of the Passion, and occasionally certain

acts by people who participated in Christ's decease.[131] The earliest productions of the theme

all appear to be in illustrated rolls rather than manuscripts, which suggests that the genre

initially catered to a specific type of need which necessitated the text to be portable and

suitable for the illiterate.[132] Robbins suggests that they were displayed by preachers to exhort

the congregation to devotion. In a meditational handbook focussing on Christ's shedding of

blood published by Wynkyn de Worde, furthermore, it is noted—in quite a similar fashion to

the guidance on attending Mass—that one should 'thynke as yf thou seest hym' being nailed

to the cross, so focussed that 'it may seme to the that þu herest his joyntes to cracke & the

senewes to braste in sondre'.[133] As we saw before, meditation on the Passion was encouraged

even in ceremonies held within the church and not just in private, and Duffy points out that

when it came to iconography, there was a special phrase ('pytussely beholde') used in rubrics

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[130] Rossell Hope Robbins, 'The "Arma Christi" Rolls', *The Modern Language Review,* 34 (1939), 415–21 (p. 415); Schiller, Vol. 2, p. 191. On the history of the art form and its representations, see Hans Belting, *The Image and Its Public in the Middle Ages Form and Function of Early Paintings of the Passion.* trans. Mark Bartusis and Raymond Meyer (New York: Aristide D. Caratzas, 1990), pp. 61–5; Émile Mâle, *Religious Art from the Twelfth to the Eighteenth Centuries* (New York: Noonday Press, 1968), pp. 112–16; Schiller, Vol. 2, pp. 184–239. For reproductions of the versions of such representations in the London, British Library, MS Royal 17.A.27, MS Additional 11748, and MS Additional 22029, see Richard Morris, ed., *Legends of the Holy Rood: Symbols of the Passion, and Cross-Poems* (London: N. Trübner & Co., 1871), pp. 170–96. Also see: Lisa H. Cooper and Andrea Denny-Brown, ed., *The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016).

[131] See Ann Eljenholm Nichols, '"O Vernicle": Illustrations of an Arma Christi Poem', in *Tributes to Kathleen L. Scott: English Medieval Manuscripts: Readers, Makers and Illuminators*, ed. by Marlene Villalobos Hennessy (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), pp. 138–69.

[132] Robbins, 'The "Arma Christi" Rolls', p. 416. The table in Nichols's study also indicates that if not the earliest, rolls appeared at the same time as manuscripts including the poem, except for those Nichols refers to as 'core manuscripts', which are manuscripts that included an *arma* page—pages featuring illustrations of the *arma* and not the poem: '"O Vernicle", pp. 138–40. There are a number of *arma* badges from the beginning of the sixteenth century in the Museum of London, but their context have not been established, thereby obviating their use for my analysis: Brian Spencer, *Pilgrim Souvenirs and Secular Badges* (London: The Stationery Office, 1998), pp. 172–5.

[133] Anonymous, *Here Begynneth a Contemplacyon or Medytacyon of the Shedynge of the Blood of Our Lorde Ihesu Cryste at Seuen Tymes* (London, By Wynken de Worde, 1500), pp. 1–18 (p. 6).

accompanying woodcuts of the Passion and the *arma* to cue the worshippers towards service.[134] However, as mentioned by Michael Evans, the rolls are 'too small to have had any effect as visual aids'.[135] Evans notes that the rolls were probably used as amulets, and the inclusion of prayers to protective saints alongside *arma Christi* prayers in rolls as well as in collections supports that proposition, but it does not fully take into account the pictorial aspect of these rolls.[136] While broadly-defined pictorial amulets did exist, many amulets were solely textual, which was thought to be sufficiently effective as the pictorial types.[137] Regardless of whether rolls were used as amulets or in a congregational setting, we may find the answer to why the rolls were illustrated in the idea that representations of such instruments recreated the Passion and thus renewed the protection against peril.[138] In the case of Douce 1, despite the manuscript not being a roll, illustrations sequence the Passion narrative, as if by turning each page one causes the act depicted and described to occur to Christ's body. On folio 62, for instance, there is an illustration of the crown of thorns; on folio 62v, the caption describes the action:

> The crowne of thorne on thy heed faste,
>
> Thy heere to tome, thy skyn al braste.

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[134] Duffy, p. 37.

[135] Michael Evans, 'An Illustrated Fragment of Peraldus's Summa of Vice: Harleian MS 3244', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes,* 45 (1982), 14–68 (pp. 25–6, 26 n. 76).

[136] Also see Nichols, '"O Vernicle", pp. 141–2, 141 n. 19.

[137] See Joan Evans, *Magical Jewels of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, Particularly in England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1922); Don C. Skemer, *Binding Words: Textual Amulets in the Middle Ages* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006).

[138] Robert N. Swanson makes a similar point by noting 'the surrounding *arma Christi*, the instruments of the Passion, stir associations which are very firmly with the Passion, characteristically allowing the devotee to transport the Christ-who-suffered into the present, to become the Christ-who-suffers': 'Passion and Practice: The Social and Ecclesiastical Implications of Passion Devotion in the Late Middle Ages', in *The Broken Body: Passion Devotion in Late-Medieval Culture*, ed. by H. N. B. Ridderbos and R. M. Schlusemann A. A. MacDonald (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1998), pp. 1–30 (p. 6). Also see J. T. Rhodes, 'The Body of Christ in English Eucharistic Devotion, C. 1500–C. 1620', in *New Science out of Old Books: Studies in Manuscripts and Early Printed Books in Honour of A. I. Doyle*, ed. by Richard Beadle and A. J. Piper (Aldershot: Scolar, 1995), pp. 388–419.

> Lorde, kepe me from payne of hell pytt.
>
> Neuer to deserue it by mysspent witt.[139]

By viewing the instrument and reading/hearing the poem, one ensures that the apotropaic disintegration is inflicted on the body of Christ. Here, becoming-porous occurs while going through the narrative, yet an illustration of an already-porous Christ exists in the end, so the penitent could be certain that even if they could not renew the Passion themselves, there is a disintegrated Christ on the page, paying off the infectious debt.

The textual content of the devotion seems to remain fairly constant in Middle English sources,[140] beginning with, as in Douce 1, for instance, a prayer asking for Christ's grace and mercy, in which both the meditative and protective qualities of the prayer are emphasised:

> Enrote, good Lorde, thi greuous paynes stronge,
>
> Depe in my thought, auoydynge all synne,
>
> And purge the vyces fat hathe ben in me longe,
>
> With contrite herte these verses to begynne.
>
> Enclyne alowe of mercy, now thyne ere,
>
> Contemplynge thy paynes, vnto my peticion,
>
> And graunt me grace so to seme the here,
>
> Aflfter this lyfe to be in thi tuycion. Amen.[141]

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[139] MS Douce 1, ff. 62–62v.

[140] Nichols suggests that the poem underwent a shift in emphasis by the second quarter of the fifteenth century, in which Christ became the direct addressee of the worshipper's petitions; The two manuscripts discussed here, MS Douce 1 and MS Taylor 17 (see below), are also highlighted with further modifications to heighten the poem's sense of devotion: '"O Vernicle", p. 145.

[141] MS Douce 1, ff. 55–55v, edited in John C. Hirsh, 'Two English Devotional Poems of the Fifteenth Century', *Notes and Queries, New Series,* 15.1 (1968), 4–11 (p. 4).

The prayer is accompanied by an illustration of Christ carrying the cross.[142] Beginning with the Veil of Veronica and Christ's facial features, the text highlights numerous elements such as the thirty pennies which tempted Judas, the lantern and the swords used by the soldiers at Christ's arrest, the hands pulling Christ's hair and slapping his face, the purple robe of mockery, the dice with which the soldiers cast lots for the Seamless Robe of Christ, the whips, the crown of thorns, the three nails, the sponge, the Jews spitting in Christ's face, the cross itself, and the sepulchre, all accompanied by illustrations of not always scenes, but mainly the objects.[143] The prayer associates all these scenes with a sin or Christ's forgiveness, thus making the object or the scene relevant in asking for mercy and grace. It is not by the prevention of Christ's suffering or by expressing remorse about it that one achieves redemption; rather, it is by its occurrence that one ensures forgiveness.[144] In this new type of devotional work, it is as if the Body of Christ is at the same time compartmentalised and extended: by describing the instruments as essential elements in the narrative of the Passion—so much so that they become the site of the concentration of substantial devotion and piety, it is as if they are holy themselves—and indeed they were thought to be so, for many of these objects were considered relics.[145] These objects become

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[142] MS Douce 1, f. 54v.

[143] MS Douce 1, ff. 56–69v.

[144] One must bear in mind, however, that it is not the only way depictions of the *arma*, or indeed Christ's wounds would have been understood. Take the devotional poem on the fifteen signs of doomsday printed in the *Commonplace Book of Robert Reynes of Acle*, for example, in which humankind is charged with widening Christ's wounds by false swearing: 'Man, it was þe wel gret spite | So often to make my woundys wide': p. 283. Here, Christ's wounds are reminders of humankind's sins and are supposed to urge people to not subject Christ to further torment by repeating them. Similarly, the depiction of the *arma*, at the same time as they ensured protection for the believers, also served to remind the beholders of their sins and their complicity in Christ's Passion. Therefore, one must appreciate the complexity and multifaceted functions of late medieval religious iconography. On a separate note, it is also tempting to think what the significance of the vinegar-soaked sponge as a protective device against harm (and plague, in particular) might have been, as it is the same device advocated by physicians to use a form of mask against corrupt or infected air. While on the medical front, which, we must remind ourselves, was inseparable from the religious front, the vinegar-soaked mask was placed between the invading pathogen (infected air) and one's bodily orifices (the mouth and nose), the sponge—as part of the *arma*—was placed between the petitioner and plague as an emblem of Christ's protection on the religious front (equally inseparable from the medical aspect of plague).

[145] For another instance of compartmentalisation, in which each part of Christ's body was used as a kind of devotional mnemonic, see David S. Areford, *The Viewer and the Printed Image*, pp. 87–93.

quasi-members of Christ's body, which is being disintegrated as the narrative of the Passion progresses. At the same time, this augmentation of Christ's body means that the body, just as it was being disintegrated, is being decentred, too: Christ is not just in the violated body on the cross; he is also in the bloodied scourges and the soaked sponge, and though the invocation of Christ's suffering mediated by these objects, one can attain forgiveness and grace.

With regards to the manuscript's illustrations, the fact that, apart from the initial illustration of Mary on folio 1v, only the prayers in the Middle English section are accompanied by illustrations suggests that the visual element in these prayers is significant and fulfil a specific function. They have been clearly drawn by a separate illuminator and left uncoloured, so the purpose of their inclusion might not have been decorative; rather, they were probably seen as integral to the processes of prayer. Robbins calls this 'ocular prayer', and notes that in another manuscript from the first half of the fifteenth century, an indulgence is provided for solely 'beholding' a prayer on the 'Armes of þe Passyone'.[146] As already mentioned, the mechanics of this particular form of prayer and its resulted remission and protection involve renewing the Passion, making the sacrifice once again, and producing/having a disintegrated body as ransom. It is perhaps because of this very idea that the *arma* featured on shields alongside the crucifix as well as in certain Christ-centred coats of arms: by renewing the Passion, one could guarantee the family's status and protection against threats.[147] These illustrations sometimes depicted holy blood-drops of Christ which,

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[146] Robbins, 'The "Arma Christi" Rolls', p. 418. The manuscript in question is Cambridge, Cambridge University Library MS Ff.1.14. However, the catalogue does not mention what Robbins describes. For a study of other examples of such forms of devotional illustration, see David S. Areford, *The Viewer and the Printed Image*, *passim*.

[147] The *arma* have been typically seen as 'the weapons with which [Christ] conquered death and Satan': Schiller, Vol. 2, p. 184. Following this understanding, Michael Evans finds the origin of the *arma* on shields in the imagery of the Christ-knight in works such as the *Ancrene Riwle* and the Feast of the Holy Lance and Nails (*festum lanceae et clavorum*) in the mid-fourteenth century, which linked the narrative of the Passion to the knightly culture: Evans, p. 25. While this may explain the popularity of the imagery among the nobility and the gentry, there is a more immediate link between the Passion and political activism of lower social classes.

like the *arma* themselves, reconjured the protective powers of the Passion.[148] Another instance of this usage took place regarding the image of the Man of Sorrows against a backdrop of the *arma*, and it was noted, as Duffy recounts, that saying Paternosters and Credo while looking at the image would grant 32,755 years of pardon.[149] The number, which varies in different accounts, is related to another devotional prayer to the drops of Christ's blood, which is the prayer that follows the *arma* in Douce 1:

In 1536 and 1539, those taking part in the Pilgrimage of Grace and the Western Rebellion had badges and banners of the Five Wounds of Christ, because they thought they 'fought in Christ's cause': Diarmaid MacCulloch and Anthony Fletcher, *Tudor Rebellions*. 7th edn (London: Routledge, 2020), pp. 33, 46, 61. Furthermore, Margaret Aston has pointed out that the occurrence of the Peasants' Revolt during the feast of Corpus Christi in 1381 may be due to the narrative of the Passion's liberating and egalitarian ethos—that the Passion has redeemed everyone equally: Margaret Aston, 'Corpus Christi and Corpus Regni: Heresy and the Peasants' Revolt', *Past & Present,* 143 (1994), 3–47 (pp. 18–21). More forceful is Thomas Walsingham's account of a dispute between the abbey of St Albans and some tenants regarding the confiscation of millstones during the Peasants' Revolt in 1381. The tenants broke into the abbey and 'carried them off, took them to the commons and in their presence broke them into small pieces. They gave a piece to each rebel, just like the custom of breaking the consecrated bread on a Sunday and taking it to the churches in the parish, so that the rebels could look at the pieces in their homes and remember that once upon a time they had got their revenge on the monastery in this matter': James G. Clark, ed., *The Chronica Maiora of Thomas Walsingham, 1376–1422*. trans. David Preest (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005), p. 136. It is, therefore, clear that the significance of the *arma* also owed to the redemptive function of the Passion and its renewals, and not solely concerned with them symbolising Christ's triumph in over death and Satan. Also see Eamon Duffy, 'Devotion to the Crucifix and Related Images in England on the Eve of the Reformation', in *Bilder Und Bildersturm Im Spätmittelalter Und in Der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. by Bob Scribner (Wiesbaden: Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel, 1990), pp. 21–36.

[148] Friedman, Northern English Books, pp. 151, 162.

[149] Duffy, p. 214. Nichols notes that the iconography of the Man of Sorrows in these poems was influenced by European iconography of the Psalms of the Passion: '"O Vernicle"', p. 139. Also see Campbell Dodgson, 'English Devotional Woodcuts of the Late Fifteenth Century, with Special Reference to Those in the Bodleian Library', *The Volume of the Walpole Society,* 17 (1928), 95–108. The origins of the image of the Man of Sorrows go back to a fourteenth-century miraculous appearance of the icon during Mass at the Basilica of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem (or Santa Croce) in Rome. The inception of the image is emblematic, to some extent, of the larger shift of focus from Crucifixion as the moment of Christ's triumph to one worthy of the viewer's compassion and pity: Duffy, pp. 241–2; Bernhard Ridderbos, 'The Man of Sorrows: Pictorial Images and Metaphorical Statements', in *The Broken Body: Passion Devotion in Late-Medieval Culture*, ed. by H. N. B. Ridderbos and R. M. Schlusemann A. A. MacDonald (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1998), pp. 145–81 (p. 149). The image has had various iterations, ranging from accusatory to erotic, infantalised, agendered, and piteous. It was also mixed with elements from tropes such as the crucified Christ, the *Pieta*, and even Christ in judgment. For a pan-European survey of the iconography of the *arma* and the Man of Sorrows tradition, see Schiller, Vol. 2, pp. 184–230. Also see: Michael Camille, 'Seductions of the Flesh: Meister Francke's Female "Man" of Sorrows', in *Frommigkeit Im Mittelalter: Politisch-Soziale Kontexte, Visuelle Praxis, Körperliche Ausdrucksformen*, ed. by Marc Müntz (München: Fink, 2002), pp. 243–59; Wiltrud Mersmann, *Der Schmerzensmann* (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1952); Gert von der Osten, *Der Schmerzensmann: Typengeschichte Eines Deutschen Andachtsbildwerkes Von 1300 Bis 1600* (Berlin: Deutscher Verein für Kunstwissenschaft, 1953); Catherine R. Puglisi and William L. Barcham, ed., *New Perspectives on the Man of Sorrows* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2013).

> The numbre of the droppes of blode
>
> That Ihu Criste shed for manhode:
>
> Fyue hondred thousaunde for to tell,
>
> And eight and forty thousaunde also grete and small;
>
> Here is the numbre of them all.[150]

Once again, we have not only the sanctification of the gushing drops of Christ's blood, but also the extension of his protective powers to illustrations in manuscripts such as Douce 1. These illustrations also applied to prayers to the wounds, which are the next set of prayers to appear in Douce 1. The prayer begins with an illustration of Christ sitting on a rock with his hands tied, but there is no emphasis on his bodily injuries and blood.[151] The next illustrations, however, dedicated to the Five Wounds, all emphasise this aspect of his suffering alongside his merciful intercession.[152] They begin with an illustration of a pierced hand with a crown above it and a scroll bearing the caption 'well of mercy' below. The text reads:

> Gracious lorde for thy bitter passion
>
> Accepte my prayers that I do repete,
>
> And on my soule take compassion
>
> At my deth for all thi woundes grete.

Following this initial verse, a second describes:

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[150] MS Douce 1, ff. 70v–71. Punctuation and formatting have been modernised. The number varies in different legends, ranging from around 300 to 500,000, some having their own numeric significance, and some results of misquotations: Louis, pp. 369–72. For example, in *The Commonplace Book of Robert Reynes of Acle*, it appears thus: 'The novmbre of thes dropes all | I wyll reherse in generall: | VC ml. for to tell, | And xlvii ml. well | VC also gret and small. | Here is the nombre of hem alle': Louis, p. 152. These prayers were also associated with indulgences, and, as Louis notes, the figure of 547,500 in the above poem is rooted in the legends regarding the power of the prayer: Louis, p. 171.

[151] MS Douce 1, f. 71. In contrast, the illustration of Christ standing in his sepulchre in the roll in London, British Library, MS Additional 22029, f. 4r depicts him covered in profusely bleeding wounds.

[152] For examples of the modification of illustrations by viewers or other artists in order to augment their devotional power, see David S. Areford, *The Viewer and the Printed Image*, *passim.*

Of the ryght hande:

Wel of mercy passyng al mysdede,

Of mercy I pray the I may spede.

The ryght hand, lorde, of trought and unyte,

Thorough perced with a rugged nayle,

Be my socoure in the extremite

Of deth when he shal me assayle.[153]

The prayer moves to the left hand (well of grace), the heart (well of life), the right foot (well of pity), and the left foot (well of comfort), all of which follow the same format, beginning with a description of the member, followed by an account of how the member was injured, and concluding with how the sacred injured member can be helpful to the worshipper.[154] The

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[153] MS Douce 1, ff. 71v–72v. The punctuation and formatting is partly taken from Douglas Gray, 'The Five Wounds of Our Lord - I', *Notes and Queries, New Series,* 10.2 (1963), 50–51 (p. 50).

[154] MS Douce 1, ff. 71v–76v. The illustration of the crowned heart has a cut in the middle, from which blood is gushing out. The cut heart itself was an object of devotion and was often represented. By the thirteenth century, the German mystic Meister Eckhart was composing prayers in which the faithful engaged in conversation with the heart. The speaking heart has been represented occasionally: for instance, in a fifteenth-century Carthusian miscellany, a heavily wounded Christ presents the wounded heart, which is no longer inside Christ's body. The wound on the heart has a caption, as if it is speaking to the reader: 'This is the mesure of the wounde that our Ihesus Christus sufferd for oure redemption': 'MS Additional 37049', in *Additional Collection* (London: British Library), f. 20. The heart was also portrayed bearing the five wounds while still inside the body, thus linking it with Christ's side wound, another figure of reverence. For instance, an illustration in an early fifteenth-century Book of Hours, a collaboration between Flanders or France and England, allows the reader to view the heart through Christ's side wound, which is mandorla-shaped. Around the side wound, there is a labial caption, which reads: 'Hec plage Christi sint adveniam michi cuncti; Quinque vulnera dei sint medicina mei' ('May Christ's wounds protect me altogether, and the Lord's five wounds be my medicine'): Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Lat. Liturg. F. 2, f. 4v. Apart from the shape's gynaecological connotations, David S. Areford reads the shape as approximating a mouth, which would suggest that the wound is speaking: 'The Passion Measured: A Late-Medieval Diagram of the Body of Christ', in *The Broken Body: Passion Devotion in Late-Medieval Culture*, ed. by H. N. B. Ridderbos and R. M. Schlusemann A. A. MacDonald (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1990), pp. 211–38 (p. 238 n. 87). The mouth metaphor is even more pronounced in a modern impression of a German late fifteenth-century woodcut in the Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, Munich (1929: 268): Areford, *The Viewer and the Printed Image*, pp. 236–7. In the opening folios of London, British Library, MS Egerton 1821 (c. 1480–c. 1525), we see the wounds evolving into an entire book. The manuscript is catalogued as a Psalter and Rosary of the Virgin but includes other devotional texts, as well. Ff. 1r–2r are painted black, punctuated by bright drops of blood; from f. 6v to 9v, the pages are painted entirely red, featuring bleeding wounds of darker shades. On these are pasted devotional woodcuts on the *arma* as well as the wounds, at the centre of which is displayed the bleeding heart. The whole content of the book thus become part of a conversation with Christ. It is noteworthy that even with the efforts of Egerton 1821, all the abovementioned examples still rely on the representational system of language to initiate contact between the reader and Christ. On f. 9v of Egerton 1821, for instance, there exists a conversation between a severely wounded Christ and a Carthusian monk, in which Christ guides the monk to salvation by the following words: 'Fili fuge vince tace quiesce' (Son, shun, master, be silent, be still). Below the illustration

invocation of the Five Wounds was used in charms against wounds, bleeding, and pain during

childbirth, and it is possible that the devotions were repurposed for protection against plague,

as well.[155] Caroline Walker Bynum likens the compartmentalisation of the body of Christ in

such devotions to the relationship between 'fragments of the eucharistic bread' and Christ's

body, where 'each fragment of Christ's body […] is the whole of God'.[156] Apart from the

compartmentalisation and sacrification, the invocation of the violated body is the common

feature of most of the prayers included in this collection, so far. They became, like the *arma*,

emblems of Christian devotion and protection and appeared alongside the *arma* on personal

items carried as charms such as rings.[157] Thus, the content of these prayers seeking protection

against dangers through the disintegration of Christ's body as well as the significance of its

visual illustration are what connects these prayers to the protective invocations against

proclaims a caption: 'The greatest comfort in all temptation is the remembrance of Christ's Passion'. Despite the multisensory experience offered by the manuscript, the only way to truly interact with Christ is, the manuscript's maker seems to suggest, to *read* him, thus depending on the devotee to be able to speak, just as the iconography and meditation on the Passion relied on the observer. For the multisensory engagement in Egerton 1821, see: Michelle M. Sauer, 'Audiotactility and the Medieval Soundscape of Parchment' (17 October 2016) <https://soundstudiesblog.com/tag/ms-egerton-1821/> [Accessed 9 Oct 2023]. On the gynaecological representations of the side-wound, see David S. Areford, 'A Measure of Christ: The Form and Meaning of Fourteenth and Fifteenth Century Images of the Side Wound' (unpublished MA Thesis, Florida State University, 1995); Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1991); Martha Easton, pp. 395–414; Amy Hollywood, '"That Glorious Slit": Irigaray and the Medieval Devotion to Christ's Side Wound', in *Luce Irigaray and Premodern Culture: Thresholds of History*, ed. by Elizabeth D. Harvey and Theresa Krier (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 105–25; 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 Lesley Smith and Jane H.M. Taylor (London: The British Library, 1997), pp. 204–29; Karma Lochrie, 'Mystical Acts, Queer Tendencies', in *Constructing Medieval Sexuality*, ed. by Peggy McCracken Karma Lochrie, and James A. Schultz (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp. 180–200; Wolfgang Riehle, *The Middle English Mystics*. trans. Bernard Standring (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), chapters 2, 5, 7, and 8.

[155] Lea T. Olsan, 'Charms in Medieval Memory', in *Charms and Charming in Europe*, ed. by Jonathan Roper (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004), pp. 59–88 (p. 66); Lea T. Olsan, 'The Language of Charms in a Middle English Recipe Collection', *ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes and Reviews,* 18 (2005), 31–7, (p. 32); Lea T. Olsan, 'The Corpus of Charms in the Middle English Leechcraft Remedy Books', in *Charms, Charmers and Charming: International Research on Verbal Magic*, ed. by Jonathan Roper (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2008), pp. 214–37 (p. 229). See also: George R. Keiser, ed., *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050–1500, XXV: Works of Science and Information*. ed. by Albert E. Hartung. 11 vols. Vol. 10 (New Haven: Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1998), p. 3871, section 342, 'Five Wounds of Christ Charm'.

[156] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), p. 280.

[157] Joan Evans, p. 127.

pestilence we saw earlier in the chapter. The manuscript's other invocations follow the same

pattern. After a prayer to Mary for protection against enemies titled 'To the glorious virgyn

Mary. Quene of heuen and moder of mercy', an illustrated prayer to saint George appears.[158]

This prayer recounts that by the saint's actions 'a kynges daughter beyng in drede and danger

to be devored of an horryble dragone was graciously preserued and saued with many other'

and asks the saint to intercede in the worshipper's defence 'whan the moste tedyous and

damnable dragons of helle shal be redy to take my pore soule and engloute it into theyr

infernall belyes'.[159] The illustration depicts the saint in battle with the pestilential beast,

highlighting the moment he trounces the dragon with a charge of his lance.[160] We know the

beast is pestilential, because in the sermon on the feast of St George, the *Speculum*

Sacerdotale preacher notes that the dragon 'w*ith* his blaste fowly corrumpid *and* fowlyd the

eyre', which in turn infected the people.[161] This is followed by another illustrated prayer, this

time to St Sebastian, another plague saint. He is depicted as being hit by a barrage of arrows

while blood is flowing from his wounds, reiterating the emphasis on the dissolution of bodily

integrity. A section of the prayer reads:

> […] i synfall creature biseche the for the mynde of thy sayd passyn to ayde
>
> and socoure me whan the fals and cursed enmyes shoteth and castyth at me
>
> arows and dampnable temptacyons of vycis and synns to tortour and
>
> contrayne me to do oblagions and seruyces to the sensuall voluptuosytes of
>
> mankynd for to brynge me to the dethe eternill of hell.[162]

[158] MS Douce 1, ff. 76v–77v. See the poem in Karen Saupe, ed., *Middle English Marian Lyrics*, *TEAMS Middle English Texts* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 1998), pp. 54, 183–4.
[159] Laurel Braswell, ed., *The Index of Middle English Prose, Handlist 4: A Handlist of Douce Manuscripts Containing Middle Prose in the Bodleian Library, Oxford* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1987), pp. 1–2.
[160] MS Douce 1, ff. 78–80.
[161] E. H. Weatherly, ed., *Speculum Sacerdotale* (London: Humphrey Milford, 1936), p. 130.
[162] MS Douce 1, ff. 80v–81v; Braswell, p. 2.

Here, the ordeal of the saint constitutes a passion, which underlines its capacity to act as a sacrificial ransom in order to save the petitioner. The explicit mention of the emblem of pestilence—arrows—is certainly important in making the connection between sin, physical illness, and the mercy-seeking purpose of the collection. Lastly, a Latin prayer to St Roch, another plague specialist, is included, which is accompanied by an illustration of the saint revealing his plague wound.[163] In the image, the saint has two companions: the dog from his legend which brought him food when he was sick with plague on his left, and Archangel Raphael, who was considered to have brought him the news of his cure, to his right.[164] Marshall notes that in northern European art, the identification 'encouraged artists to represent him not simply blessing or pointing to the bubo, but actively ministering to the diseased saint'.[165] Here, too, we see the angel in a similar pose. The prayer itself is smudged, but it can be identified as the same prayer which appeared in phi.C.1.3.[166] We already know that the prayer mentions plague, but it also highlights the intercessory role of Roch: 'Confessor dei venerande, obtinuit in cellis deprecatio tua, vt qui deinceps in afflictione deuote ad te clamauerint, ab omni epidimie ac pestis periculo eius meritis [pro]tinus liberētur. Ora pro nobis bra te roche, Ut digni efficiamur promissio nibus christi' (O venerable confessor of God, your supplication has prevailed in the heavens, so that those who devoutly cry out to you in affliction shall be promptly freed from every danger of epidemics and pestilences by his merits. Pray for us, blessed Roch, so that we may become worthy of the promise of Christ).[167] The next paragraph of the prayer speaks to God directly, beseeching

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[163] MS Douce 1, ff. 82–82v.

[164] Louise Marshall, 'St. Roch and the Angel in Renaissance Art', *Studies in Iconography,* 40 (2020), 165–211 (pp. 180–83).

[165] Marshall, 'St. Roch', p. 183.

[166] See note 117.

[167] MS Douce 1, f. 82v. Prayer has been taken from: 'This prymer of Salysbury vse is set out a long wout ony serchyng with many prayers, and goodly pyctures in the kale[n]der, in the matyns of our lady, in the houres of the crosse in the. vii. psalmes, and in the dyryge' (Paris: Francis Regnault, 1531), in *Early English Books Online* <http://name.umdl.umich.edu/A05777.0001.001> [Accessed 28 Dec 2022]. Translation is mine. Punctuation has been altered. All the prose prayers to Ss George, Sebastian, and Roch are prefaced with small verses, all of which are accessible on *The Digital Index of Middle English Verse*: 'Oxford, Bodleian Library

him to stop a plague similar to the one he stopped for the saint. Here we see, firstly, the same sacrificial dynamic at work: both Christ and the saints undergo their suffering in exchange for people's redemption. Secondly, the bodies of the saints who suffered bodily disintegration are represented at their most vulnerable moment in order to ensure the renewal of their ordeal. Thirdly, the bodies of saints are both disintegrated and ideal, making them worthy of devotion. Fourthly, other saints, such as George, who were not violated, belong to a different order of holy figures: rather than taking damage on themselves, they deflect it, quite similar to the mode of excision. Thus, in these examples we see both modes of excision and containment at work separately and combined.

Here, health (alongside infection and corruption) has the capacity for porousness when it comes to how religion understood the body and pestilence in relation to it. The body of the plague-stricken individual was certainly considered as lacking the physical and moral equilibrium associated with physical and spiritual health. However, the sacredness of the bodily disintegration of Christ as well as the violation of saintly bodies signify a certain sense of veneration regarding the porousness of the human body. Saintly and Christly violation become signs of integrity as opposed to disintegration. It is not just in MS Douce 1 that we see this oxymoronic battle against infection at work: a manuscript, similar in content to the Middle English section of MS Douce 1 (and according to Nichols, based on the same source), exists in the Princeton University Library.[168] Dating to the late fifteenth century, it is similarly illustrated, albeit more colourfully, more carefully, and with more visual emphasis on the disintegration of the body, possibly due to the manuscript's slightly larger size.[169] The collection opens with an illustration of the crucified Christ bleeding from his side, surrounded

Douce 1 (SC 21575)', in *The Digital Index of Middle English Verse (DIMEV)*, ed. by Linne R. Mooney, Daniel W. Mosser, Elizabeth Solopova, Deborah Thorpe, David Hill Radcliffe, and Len Hatfield <https://www.dimev.net/Records.php?MSS=BodDou1> [Accessed 26 September 2021].
[168] Princeton, Princeton University Library, MS Taylor 17; Nichols, '"O Vernicle", p. 167.
[169] The online catalogue only seems to include the length of the manuscript, which is 12cm.

by the *arma*, and bearing the title 'Deuout prayers of the passyon of god', which is the same as the prayer to the instruments seen in Douce 1.[170] The next folios depict some of the same instruments depicted in Douce 1—but with more details: for example, in spite of narrative incompatibility, the illustration of Christ carrying the cross depicts his open nail wounds on his hand and foot; furthermore, the illustration of Christ lying in the sepulchre also emphasises the physical injury by depicting a profusely bleeding side wound.[171] In the words of Bernhard Ridderbos, what we have is 'a portrait of the dead Christ who was miraculously standing or sitting. In such a case the representation would be anomalous, since neither in the Scriptures nor in any legend is such a miracle mentioned'.[172] Surely, this is Christ undergoing his Passion *again*—this time for the sake of those who want to shield themselves against disease. In terms of the illustration, what we have here is a desire, even a necessity to have a post-Passion Christ within the narrative of the Passion, one with enough bodily disintegration to have acquired the appropriate protective qualities. The absence of any sacrificial themes such as the Lamb of God or the Eucharist, furthermore, suggests that the idea of sacrifice is present in Christ's bodily disintegration itself. Ridderbos, however, was not discussing the illustration in MS Taylor 17; rather, he was discussing the general icon of the Man of Sorrows, in some depictions of which there is a similar anomaly: Christ's wounds are visible, but he is neither crucified nor resurrected yet. He finds the icon as a fusion of 'elements from the representation of the crucified Christ and the representation of the Pantocrator', a

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[170] MS Taylor 17, f. 1. Nichols notes that the figure of the woman encircling the pillar could possibly be the manuscript's patron: '"O Vernicle", p. 142 n. 21. The main points of distinction between representations of the crucifixion and the Man of Sorrows are Christ's eyes or his posture (signifying that he is alive) as well as his position in relation to the cross. Whereas in representations of the crucifixion, Christ is on the cross with his eyes closed (signifying his death), in the Man of Sorrows portrayals, his eyes are open (therefore he is alive) and while he bears the wounds caused by his crucifixion, he is not on the cross. However, there are numerous instances in which elements from these themes, alongside others such as the *arma*, the *Pieta*, and even Christ the Judge mix. For instance, in MS Taylor 17, f. 1, no other element from the crucifixion sequence of the Passion narrative is present. Instead, we have the *arma* and the unidentified figure. Therefore, the illustration is a mix of crucifixion and the Man of Sorrows with the *arma* present.

[171] MS Taylor 17, ff. 5v, 8. Nichols notes that in some other versions of the poem, Christ is portrayed as equally bloody, and in one the blood is depicted flowing from the sepulchre itself: '"O Vernicle", p. 162.

[172] Ridderbos, p. 158.

predominantly eastern icon showing a stern Christ looking directly at the viewer, his right

hand making the gesture of teaching or blessing (and often his left holding the New

Testament).[173] This suffering yet triumphant Christ is, then, 'a visualisation of theological

antitheses', an idealised yet disintegrated body.[174]

We shall examine images of the Man of Sorrows in relation to plague shortly, but

going back to MS Taylor 17, the illustrations in the following folios include one of Mary, one

of St George, in which an arrow-tongued dragon is present, one of St Sebastian, in which his

arrow wounds are shown to be bleeding, as well as one of St Margaret, with her holding a

staff upon which is the cross with which she escaped from inside the arrow-tongued dragon

that swallowed her. In her other hand, there is a palm leaf—the emblem of virgin martyrs.[175]

One could see, once again, the various modes of fighting infection at work. In one sense, MS

Taylor 17 complements and enriches the analysis of MS Douce 1 in terms of the idealised

understanding of Christ's and the saints' disintegrated body and the protection they offer: the

inclusion of more detailed illustrations and more explicit emphasis on the bodily porousness

of holy figures highlights the significance of such ideas in both collections as well as in

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[173] Ridderbos, p. 158. On the Pantocrator, see: Belting, pp. 91–4. Michael Camille notes that 'When any character in a painting looks directly at us, conscious not only of being observed but also observing us, this crucially breaks the illusion of reality that has been constructed. Instead of being a historical narrative happening in the past, the internal gaze incorporates the viewer within the scene'. This is not the case in relation to the examples discussed in this chapter, and not always the case in examples of the Man of Sorrows or the Pantocrator's western quasi-equivalent, Christ in Majesty, but the Pantocrator seem to possess this quality—that is, being able to transpose itself into the present. In our examples, this is done by renewing the Passion in various forms: Michael Camille, 'Mimetic Identification and Passion Devotion in the Later Middle Ages: A Double-Sided Panel by Meister Francke', in *The Broken Body: Passion Devotion in Late-Medieval Culture*, ed. by H. N. B. Ridderbos and R. M. Schlusemann A. A. MacDonald (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1990), pp. 183–210 (p. 190).

[174] Ridderbos, p. 162. Mitzi Kirkland-Ives, similarly, considers the icon as an 'example of a genre of extra-narrative devotional images that cobble together and conflate a number of themes into a single image that is not only beyond the confines of the narrative but narratively impossible': Mitzi Kirkland-Ives, 'The Suffering Christ and Visual Mnemonics in Netherlandish Devotions', in *Death, Torture and the Broken Body in European Art, 1300–1650*, ed. by John R. Decker and Mitzi Kirkland-Ives (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), pp. 35–54 (p. 35). For a reading of such contradictory devotional conceptualisations in relation to the practice of surgery, see: Virginia Langum, '"The Wounded Surgeon": Devotion, Compassion and Metaphor in Medieval England', in *Wounds and Wound Repair in Medieval Culture*, ed. by Larissa Tracy and Kelly DeVries (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 269–90 (p. 290).

[175] Another manuscript which includes prayers to the *arma* as well as illustrations of saints related to the plague is a royal prayer roll from the late fifteenth century: London, British Library, MS Additional 88929.

invoking protection against harm (and more specifically plague). Furthermore, with the presence of St George and St Margaret, we see the mode of excision at work in recruiting those who have been victorious against pestilential symbols. Nevertheless, I would not go as far as declaring MS Taylor 17 a plague-related collection without a degree of hesitation. Even though St George and St Margaret were invoked against plague (among other ailments), and even though plague symbols (i.e. dragons and arrows) abound in the collection, the fact that pestilence is not explicitly mentioned in the collection at all urges me to err on the side of caution.[176] The collection, nonetheless, is definitely concerned with the health of its owner.

The last of the texts discussed in this part of the chapter is indeed plague-related: a fifteenth-century prayer roll produced in the North Riding of Yorkshire and now located in the Morgan Library in New York.[177] This roll features a devotion to the three nails used during Christ's crucifixion, the worshipping and carrying of which is described as having seven benefits, amongst them are the prevention of sudden death and being defended against 'wekid spretis[,] pestilens[,] Febers[,] with many other'.[178] The majority of the roll's textual content is in Latin, but it contains illustrations of plague saints alongside the prayers. Here, too, profuse bleeding and bodily porousness is emphasised. St Roch, for instance, is depicted displaying his bleeding plague wound, and Archangel Raphael, who is standing next to him, is pointing at it with his hand while holding an ointment jar in the other. The dog is also present, holding a piece of bread in its mouth. The *oratio* in the prayer is taken from the Mass of St Roch, and the collect is a rendition of a prayer which exists in Dickinson's edition as

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[176] In MS Douce 1, the prayer preceding those to St Roch and Erasmus was explicitly against plague; there is no such prayer in MS Taylor 17.

[177] New York, Morgan Library, MS Glazier 39.

[178] MS Glazier 39, f. 2r. For an imperfect transcription of certain sections of the roll, see: W. Heneage Legge, 'A Decorated Mediaeval Roll of Prayers', *The Reliquary and Illustrated Archaeologist,* 10 (1904), 99–112. Curt F. Bühler made an amended version of some of those transcriptions: 'Prayers and Charms in Certain Middle English Scrolls', *Speculum,* 39.2 (1964), 270–78. A similar devotion, equally thought to be protective against pestilence, exists in the *Commonplace Book of Robert Reynes of Acle*: p. 295.

part of the votive Mass of St Sebastian, but with Roch inserted instead.[179] There is a prayer to

and an illustration of St Armel (Armagilus, Ermel, Ermyn), another plague saint who became

popular in the late Middle Ages. One of the contributing factors to his popularity was Henry

VII's devotion towards him. Armel's legend was reported to have been brought to England

by Henry himself, and shrines dedicated to the saint were established in buildings associated

with the King, such as almshouses and Henry's chapel in Westminster Abbey.[180] Armel's

protective powers against multiple hazards and diseases, which included fevers but not

specifically plague, as well as his subjugation of a dragon according to his legend were the

other contributing factors to his popularity.[181] The illustration on the Glazier 39 roll includes

a dragon with two arrow-tongued heads, captured by the saint, who is carrying a crucifix on

which a small figure of Christ is bleeding profusely—to the point of the blood dripping down

from the crucifix—from his hands and his side.[182] The prayer does not mention pestilence

specifically, sufficing to solicit protection against adversities of the mind and body, but the

imagery does enough to make the association with pestilence.[183]

A prayer to the Virgin segues to a short, Greco-Latin prayer to the cross, similar in

style to the incantatory prayer to the cross we saw earlier, before turning to a prayer to St

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[179] Dickinson, cols. 896*, 892*.

[180] Voigts, 'Plague Saints', p. 101. Even the King's mother, Lady Margaret Beaufort, was said to be particularly concerned about the plague: Michael K. Jones and Malcolm G. Underwood, *The King's Mother: Lady Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 228. Voigts highlights that a statue of Henry VI was supposed to be included in the chapel in Westminster Abbey, but was never constructed. The chapel includes statues of many other plague saints, however, such Roch, Sebastian, Armel, Giles, George, Margaret, Antony, and Christopher: pp. 110–11. Giles—who was one of the holy helpers, was also considered a plague saint, due to him being shot by an arrow: Farmer, 'Giles', in *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*. 5th edn. Many hospitals are named after Giles because of his healing powers. Another instance of plague saints appearing alongside one another, but not in a specifically plague related context, occurs in the early sixteenth-century reredos of Romsey Abbey, where Sebastian, Roch, possibly Etheldreda, and Armel feature next to Jerome, Francis of Assisi, Benedict, and other unknown figures: Arthur R. Green, 'The Romsey Painted Wooden Reredos: With a Short Account of Saint Armel', *The Archaeological Journal,* 90 (1933), 306–14.

[181] For Armel's presence in badges, see: Hanneke van Asperen, 'Saint Armel of Brittany: The Identification of Four Badges from London', *Peregrinations: Journal of Medieval Art and Architecture,* 2.1 (2005).

[182] MS Glazier 39, f. 3r.

[183] 'ab omni adversitate mentis et corporis'.

Sebastian, which mentions the plague.[184] The prayer is accompanied by another bloody illustration of the saint, who is pierced by nine arrows, down all of which there is blood streaming. The next folio illustrates another amulet, a cross which features three nails, a large crown of thorns, a wounded heart in the middle, and a tau cross at the bottom. Across the vertical pole of the cross are inscribed 'signum tlau', while across the horizontal part appear the words 'Maria'. The caption beneath the cross notes the benefits of beholding and carrying the cross, which include not being harmed by 'Thonour ne leuenynge' and when 'sleppyng ne wakyng' and not dying a 'soden ne euill dede'. Furthermore, 'if a woman t*ra*well of childe, take þis crose and lay it one hyr wome and she shalbe hastely be delyu*er*ede with joy with-outen p*er*ell', which suggests that the roll might have been used by women, specifically. The caption is followed by a prayer to saints Cyricus and Julitta, the child and mother whose legend recounts that they were tortured before being executed.[185]

On the next folio, there is an illustration of Henry VI, with whose powers against plague we are already familiar (see above). However, Henry does not bear any plague-related symbols, and the prayer does not specifically mention pestilence—it asks for general protection against all adversity.[186] This is followed by hymns and prayers to other general helpers and protectors, not all of whom are plague specialists: John the Baptist, then John the Evangelist. It is St George who features in the next folio, fighting a dragon with two arrow-tipped tongues. The prayer seeks protection against enemies of the English in general and Turks in particular, rather than plague, but the presence of the arrow-tongued dragon

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[184] MS Glazier 39, ff. 5r–6r.

[185] MS Glazier 39, f. 7r; Farmer, 'Cyricus and Julitta', in *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*. 5th edn. Legge notes that below the prayer, there is an invocation of St Antony; however, the version accessible to me on the Morgan Library's website does not appear to include the aforementioned prayer: Legge, p. 104. In any case, the presence of St Antony would not have complicated the roll's relationship with my argument for its effects against pestilence. See: 'MS G.39, f. 7r', The Morgan Library, <https://ica.themorgan.org/manuscript/page/7/76975> [Accessed 4 Oct 2021].

[186] MS Glazier 39, f. 8r.

maintains the visual connection.[187] The same applies to St Christopher but in the opposite

way; he is depicted carrying the Christ Child on the next folio, but the text mentions

protection against pestilence.[188] Mary Magdalen appears on the folio after and falls in the

same category as John the Baptist and the Evangelist. Folio 14r features a prayer to the

Trinity, in which the crucified Christ appears afflicted with the same bleeding as the

illustrations mentioned before. God the Father is sitting behind the cross while the Holy

Ghost is represented as a dove perched on the cross. A prayer to St Michael appears next, in

which the archangel in credited with stopping the ten plagues.[189] St Erasmus, a holy helper

with a connection to plague, features on the next folio, in which he is depicted as being

brutally disembowelled, and the prayer beseeches the saint for protection from enemies and

all evil. St Lawrence, another martyr who suffered a gruesome death by being put on a

girdiron, appears on the next folio.[190] While the bodily disintegration is not depicted, the

illustrator made sure to emphasise the consuming quality of the flames by colouring them and

the girdiron in red in their entirety.[191] On folio 18r appears another dragon-related saint, St

Margaret: the dragon is, once more, arrow-tongued, and it has a three-headed tail, as well, all

of which have arrow-shaped tongues. The last figure to appear is St Katherine, who,

according to the author of the *Speculum Sacerdotale*, prayed to God before being beheaded

that 'who-so-eu*er* in tyme to come doþ make menc*i*on or memorie praysynge or

worschepynge of my passion […] that no man*er* of pestilence, veniau*n*ce, famyschynge euel,

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[187] MS Glazier 39, f. 11r.

[188] MS Glazier, f. 12r. On devotions to St Christopher in Britain, see, for instance: Ellie Pridgeon, 'National and International Trends in Hampshire Churches: A Chronology of St Christopher Wall Painting, C.1250-C.1530', *Hampshire Studies,* 68 (2013), 85–118; Ellie Pridgon and Susan Sharp, 'Patronage and Function: The Medieval Wall Paintings at Lacock Abbey in Wiltshire', *Journal of Medieval Monastic Studies,* 5 (2016), 113–37.

[189] MS Glazier, f. 15r.

[190] MS Glazier, f. 17r.

[191] It is curious that the tormentors appear in clothes similar to jesters' attires. This might be a critical take on the saint's reputed patronage of entertainers as a result of the saint's quips at his tormentors.

and euel eyre do noye hym ne dwelle with hym'.[192] In Glazier 39's section, however, there is no explicit mention of the disease.

Apart from the recurring plague-related visual cues given throughout the roll, the order of the subjects of the illustrations in this roll provides more proof regarding its connection, or, at least, concern about plague. From the nails to plague specialists such as saints Roch and Armel, followed by Mary and the wounds whose significance and connection with plague has already been discussed, and lastly, saints Sebastian and Henry VI as well as the prayer mixing the instruments of Passion with the invocation of wounds, incantatory mention of Mary and the prayer on the cross, all these closely-connected saints, apotropaic prayers, and plague-directed illustrations occur before the rest of the protectors. Even then, the list included martyrs associated with plague as well as other diseases who endured physical disintegration. Ann Eljenholm Nichols asserts that the *arma* poem's tone 'reflects [that] of Mass Collects, general rather than specific […] The poet uses the *arma* as focal points not for meditation on the Passion but rather for an examination of conscience'.[193] In my view, Nichols's focus on only the textual component of the poem ushers her towards such a reading. Based on what I have discussed in this chapter, so far, it is the text, rather than the illustrations, which is complementary. The illustrations aim to renew the passion Christ and the saints endured and recreate the triumph of saints against their pestilential adversaries. Such illustrations can be considered as action-images—that is, images designed to enact renewals of the passions of holy figures in order to invoke their protective powers.[194] Once the action has concluded, the prayer ensures the benefits of the sacrifice/triumph are reaped.

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[192] Weatherly, p. 244.

[193] Nichols, '"O Vernicle", p. 143.

[194] The action-image of Christ's Passion is distinct from the renewal of the Passion in Mass on two grounds. Firstly, the action-image is more representational and less immediate than the renewal of the Passion in Mass—that is, it requires the viewer to enact the entire Passion sequence in their mind in order to understand the meaning and significance of the image: therefore, the action in the action-image is dependent on discursive knowledge of the narrative of the Passion. Secondly, while the Mass renews the Passion in real-

The primacy of such action-images occurs in church iconography, too, which I shall discuss in the next part of this chapter. Before we move on to church art, however, it is important to summarise the at least trimodal ways in which saints, angels, and Christ were invoked in order to combat plague: one group of triumphant figures who vanquished plague and preserved their bodily integrity (corresponding to excision), another of those who succumbed to diseases, torments, and iniquities (corresponding to containment), and one last group of those who experienced both stages (fusing excision and containment). As already mentioned, it is precisely the surrenderers' disintegration and porousness that made them worthy of adoration. At the same time, the preservation of integrity by defeating the symbolic pestilence in the form of a dragon or healing the sick was, perhaps not equally, but significantly, nonetheless, revered. When it came to those who both experienced disintegration and triumphed over it, there seems to have been a preference for the depiction of the moment of violation rather than the moment of triumph as a fundamental component of its apotropaic function. Among those specifically invoked against plague, Roch, Sebastian, and Katherine are depicted with their means of bodily disintegration: plague wound, a barrage of arrows, and the wheel. Despite their legends noting that they survived these ordeals, the emphasis is on their injury. There could be two reasons for that: it could be for facilitating identification, or because the triumph is less significant than the creation of the disintegrated body. Wherever possible, the recruitment and recreation of more disintegrated bodies in order to reinforce the defence against plague is preferred.

The illustration on the antepenultimate folio of an illuminated Book of Hours from fifteenth-century Winchester or Norwich will be an apt concluding example, as it brings together Christ and two of the specialist plague saints—Sebastian and Roch—within the same

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time at an exact moment, the action-image was intended to ensure the constant presence, the perpetual renewal of the Passion.

pictorial frame, thereby corroborating the significance of a bodily disintegrated Christ for those seeking protection against plague.[195] The collection has its origins in wealthy patrons: it belonged, according to the manuscript's catalogue, to a Richard Gage on the eve of the sixteenth century, who is identified as the son of Sir John Gage and the cousin of William of Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester.[196] The illustrations are centred around Christ rather than the Virgin, and the folio in question depicts a crucified, emaciated, and wounded (but not visibly bleeding) Christ flanked by saints Sebastian and Roch.[197] The saints are shown kneeling in prayer: Sebastian is mowed down by arrows, and Roch displays the wound on his leg. The illustration serves as the introductory visual companion to the aforementioned 'Missa pro mortalitate evitanda' and prayers to the saints against pestilence.[198] Here, the saints do not just accompany Christ or happen to follow devotional poems dedicated to him, but they are included as part of the same cohort against pestilence, signifying the role of the disintegrated body of Christ alongside those of the saints in the fight against infection. The primacy of pestilence and porousness—evident in the inclusion of the wounded Christ and plague specialists in these items, seems to signify that porousness became more prominent and revered in the fight against infection. We see a similar attempt to preserve porous bodies in church art, which aimed to expunge infection from the communal space via re-enactment of holy figures' passion/triumph. In the next section, we will look at a few places in which some of the aforementioned figures make appearances.

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[195] New York, Morgan Library, MS M.255.

[196] 'MS M.255', The Morgan Library & Museum, <https://ica.themorgan.org/manuscript/description/77214> [Accessed 12 Oct 2021].

[197] MS M.255, f. 116r. On the rest of the manuscript's content, see Theresa Tinkle, 'York's Jesus: Crowned King and Traitor Attainted', *Speculum,* 94 (2019), 96–137.

[198] MS M.255, ff. 116r–118r.

B. Church Art

The aforementioned interest in bodily porousness in relation to plague appears in many representations of saints in East Anglian churches.[199] Some of these representations, due to the particular grouping of plague specialists together, could be argued to be intercessory representations soliciting protection against pestilence. Here, too, I will only consider places in which at least a few plague specialist saints appear independent of or alongside a severely wounded Christ.[200] I will begin with representations of plague saints and their groupings in order to establish that some of these iconographic materials are indeed plague-related, especially placed there for protection. I will then move on to argue that much like the pairing of an explicitly wounded Christ and plague saints in prayer rolls and illustrated manuscripts, the pairing in church art worked in the same way to preserve an ideal, disintegrated body within the communal space.

In St Mary's Church in North Tuddenham, several plague saints appear in wooden panels on the roodscreen dado dating to the fifteenth century. On the south side, there are Katherine, Sebastian, Etheldreda, and Roch.[201] Katherine is depicted with a sword and the wheel, while Sebastian holds an arrow in his right hand. Similarly, Roch is displaying the

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[199] An interest in the depiction of scenes from the Passion in churches, as already suggested regarding various other elements discussed in this chapter, predated the Black Death: Rachel Canty and David Griffith, 'The Passion Cycle in English Wall Paintings and Manuscript Art: Readers and Spectators in Midlands Communities in the Later Medieval Period', in *Devotional Culture in Late Medieval England and Europe Diverse Imaginations of Christ's Life*, ed. by Stephen Kelly and Ryan Perry (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), pp. 267–90 (p. 269). This section illustrates how such an already existing interest acquired new meaning and significance in the late Middle Ages in relation to plague. For studies on wall paintings, see E. W. Tristram, *English Wall Painting of the Fourteenth Century* (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1955); A. Caiger-Smith, *English Medieval Mural Paintings* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963); Roger Rosewell, *Medieval Wall Paintings* (London: Shire Publications, 2014).

[200] Nichols mentions the popularity of representations of the *arma* in Norfolk churches, but my concern here is more the representation of Christ alongside the *arma* rather than the representations of *arma* themselves: '"O Vernicle", p. 146.

[201] S1–4. I have consulted Ann Eljenholm Nichols's survey to find representations of saintly collectives in churches: *The Early Art of Norfolk: A Subject List of Extant and Lost Art Including Items Relevant to Early Drama* (Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2002). I am very grateful to Mike Smith, the warden of the church, who kindly guided me on my visit and shared some additional information with me.

means of his association with plague by revealing his wounded leg.[202] According to the legend, Etheldreda was the daughter of a seventh-century king of East Anglia, who remained a virgin throughout her life and established a monastery at Ely. She was said to have died as a result of a pestilential tumour (or a bubo) in her neck, which was attributed to her fondness for necklaces in her youth. The bubo was said to have been cut by a physician, but to no avail. However, the wound was discovered to have healed seventeen years after her death when several witnesses discovered her body intact.[203] Etheldreda, then, belongs to the second group of saints discussed above, because she lost her life as a result of pestilence, yet, Christians could invoke her suffering as a barrier between them and plague. In terms of the illustrations, apart from Roch, none of the saints show signs of injury, and even Roch's wound is not particularly severe. Here, in contrast to the manuscripts, in which the vividness of suffering had an active role in the acquirement of redemption, the emblematic mention of the saints' suffering/triumph seems to have been enough.

On the northern side of the screen, another set of saints appear, depicting saints Agnes, Gregory, Dorothy, and Jeron (also known as Jeroen, Jerom, Heron, Hieron, and Ieron. Jeron, and Jeron or Jerome of Noordwijk).[204] Agnes' legend notes that she was killed by a sword (or a dagger, according to the *Golden Legend*) piercing through her neck, which resembles the way through which Etheldreda met her death—that is, by the violation of the body through the wounded neck, thereby making the connection with pestilential violation of bodily integrity.[205] She was also reported to have cured Constantine's daughter, Constance,

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[202] Images of the panels are available at: Simon Knott, 'St Mary, North Tuddenham', (2006) <http://www.norfolkchurches.co.uk/northtuddenham/northtuddenham.htm> [Accessed 8 Oct 2021].

[203] Farmer, 'Etheldreda', in *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*. 5th edn. On her popularity in the fifteenth century, see: Mami Kanno, 'Saint Æthelthryth of Ely and the Making of a National Saint in a Fifteenth-Century *South English Legendary* Manuscript', *POETICA: An International Journal of Linguistic-Literary Studies,* 83 (2015), 93–106.

[204] N3–6.

[205] Farmer, 'Agnes', in *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*. 5th edn; Jacobus de Voragine, p. 103.

of leprosy.[206] Furthermore, her legend notes the origin of her name, *agna*, meaning lamb, which conjures up the sacrificial image we have seen throughout the chapter.[207] On the panel, she is portrayed with a dagger suspended in front of her, pointing to her neck and accompanied by a lamb. Gregory's notable role in establishing anti-pestilence processions and stopping outbreaks has also been established above in relation to the Mass of St Gregory and the Greater Litany. We also discussed the possible significance of Dorothy's connection with sweet smells in the fight against the corrupt air of pestilence.[208] Here, she is depicted holding a basket of fruit and flowers, but the figure of Jeron, depicted with a falcon on his left hand, which is a pun on his name, is more puzzling.[209] Not much is known about the cult of Jeron, who is said to have been of pre-conquest English or Scottish nobility. He went to preach in the Low Countries and was beheaded by the Normans in the mid-ninth century.[210] Usually depicted with a sword—the instrument of his execution—and a falcon (whose significance is unknown), Duffy notes that his connection with Anglo-Saxon royalty was the reason for his popularity in East Anglia, a region which, according to Duffy, valued royal saints dearly.[211] According to *Acta Sanctorum*, the Bollandist critical hagiographic project undertaken in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Antwerp and Brussels, Jeron's powers included making lost possessions return and healing sickness, but the connection to plague is not immediately clear.[212] His inclusion among three saints with clear and implicit

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[206] Jacobus de Voragine, p. 104.

[207] Jacobus de Voragine, p. 101.

[208] See section 4.A above.

[209] *Hierax* (ἱέρακας) is the Greek for falcon: W.W. Williamson, 'Saints on Norfolk Rood Screens and Pulpits', *Norfolk Archaeology,* 31.3 (1956), 299–346 (p. 315).

[210] G. J . R. Maat, 'De Relieken Van St. Jeroen', *Holland, regionaal-historisch tijdschrift,* 17 (1985), 284–94 (p. 284). Other sources attribute the murder to other northern, larger groups, such as Danes, Norwegians, or straightforward Vikings: Societé des Bollandistes, 'Acta Sanctorum: 17. August', in *Ökumenischen Heiligenlexikon* <https://www.heiligenlexikon.de/ActaSanctorum/17.August.html> [Accessed 8 Oct 2021]; Basil Watkins, *The Book of Saints: A Comprehensive Biographical Dictionary*. 8th edn (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), p. 348.

[211] Duffy, p. 166. There is also an illustration of the saint in St John the Baptist's Head, Trimingham: Simon Knott, 'St John the Baptist's Head, Trimingham' (2019) <http://www.norfolkchurches.co.uk/trimingham/trimingham.htm> [Accessed 8 Oct 2021].

[212] Societé des Bollandistes, 'Acta Sanctorum: 17. August'.

connection with pestilence suggests that he might also have been thought to have had some power in stopping pestilential outbreaks.[213]

Despite the absence of vivid bodily disintegration, the location of these panels on the church's eastern screen along the north/south transept meant that visitors would have seen them as they observed the sanctuary and the altar. Therefore, they would have functioned, not just in spiritual terms but also in literal terms, as intermediaries between Christ and the people. As the Passion of the Christ was being renewed on the altar, the audience would have seen the ordeals of the saints also renewed, and the complexity of idealised disintegration would have been resolved through the spectacle: the saints go through their passions just as Christ did, and in order to enlist Christ's help via his disintegration, one could ask for the help of saints via their disintegration. The screen itself, furthermore, would have become a porous membrane, signifying that one could understand the true meaning and power of Christ's Passion through the passions of the holy bodies present in closer proximity. Connecting saintly intercession and the Mass, the roodscreen illustrations served a unique mediatory function in exhorting piety and illustrating the significance of holy porous bodies for stopping the spread of the infection in the most apt possible manner. Furthermore, another possible function of such groupings and representations of such saints in churches concerns the space of the church itself: by placing these figures within the space of the church, these depictions can serve as purgative agents, practically turning the church into a decontamination chamber. As a result, the space of the church—adorned with the illustrations of saints and with the Mass taking place in it—brings together all the modes of fighting infection in this chapter: it includes holy bodies who have vanquished pestilential forces (excision), those who have succumbed to it (containment), and those who have remained

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[213] The screen panels on the west side of the church as well as the stained glass set on the south window also belong to the fifteenth century, but they were purchased by Robert Barry, rector of the church between 1851 to 1904, in the late nineteenth century.

disintegrated despite having conquered pestilence (the fusion of the two). A church like St Mary's thus turns into an impenetrable fortress made of porousness.

While St Mary's illustrated the grouping of plague saints for protection against pestilence, the portrayals in St Andrew's Church in Wellingham underscore, in addition to the aforementioned groupings, the significance of porous bodies in the depiction of saints and Christ, which, as suggested, must have emphasised the decontaminated state of the church. On the northern panels of the roodscreen dado, which date back to the early sixteenth century, there would have been, according to the antiquarian Walter Rye, a wooden painting of St Roch paired with St Antony, which does not exist anymore.[214] Both are saints associated with plague, and St Roch would have been marked by a maggot- or worm-infested wound on his right thigh.[215] Next to where the pair would have been, an illustration of St Sebastian paired with St Maurice exists, in which Sebastian is hit by at least thirteen arrows, the wounds from which are all profusely bleeding.[216] Nichols suggests that they were paired because they were both early martyrs.[217] Based on this, however, the pairing of Roch and Anthony would not make sense, because Roch was not an early martyr. Remi Chiu highlights the shared military background between Sebastian, Maurice, and George, who appears in the next panel. The trio, alongside St Martin, were called upon to protect soldiers and military personnel, and it is possible the grouping was done to enhance the protective power of Sebastian and George, who were military plague specialists, and thus create a defensive wall in front of the sanctuary.[218] St George, typically, appears in glory while fighting the dragon with a sword and a lance whose tip is stuck in the dragon's neck.[219] Here, only the plague

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[214] Walter Rye cited in Nichols, *Early Art*, p. 226.

[215] Screen painting N1.

[216] Simon Knott, 'St Andrew, Wellingham' (2020) <http://www.norfolkchurches.co.uk/wellingham/wellingham.htm> [Accessed 8 Oct 2021].

[217] Nichols, *Early Art*, p. 219.

[218] Remi Chiu, *Plague and the Music in the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 153–62.

[219] N2.

specialists, and, as we shall see, Christ are depicted as disintegrated, which suggests that it is only the passion of the specific holy figures which enhances protection against plague.

On the south side, there is an illustration of St Michael carrying a sword in one hand and a scale in the other. On the archangel's left, there is the Virgin Mary placing her rosary on the scales in order to tip the balance in the favour of the redeemed.[220] Next to Michael is an illustration of the Man of Sorrows, in which Christ stands in his sarcophagus surrounded by the *arma*, at which he points with his left hand. In this portrayal, Christ looks particularly battered: completely covered in injuries, almost every limb of his body is wounded, and blood is gushing from his head, hands, and side. The lower half of the panel is missing, but one can be sure that it would not have diminished the goriness of the scene. Another painted panel, had it survived, would have included the martyrdom of St Thomas Becket, another saint associated with plague.[221] In St Andrew's, much like the prayer rolls and prayer books, plague imagery, plague-induced violation of bodily integrity, and the bodily disintegration of Christ through humankind's sin converge, emphasising at the same time the necessity, oddity and adorability of bodily porousness for survival.[222]

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[220] S1.

[221] S2; Nichols, *Early Art*, p. 232. Thomas Becket's association with plague precedes the Black Death. In the Trinity Chapel Ambulatory in the Christ Church Cathedral in Canterbury, there is a stained glass set dating back to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries recounting events in the Jordan Fitz-Eisulf's household. The family's son falls sick with plague. By drinking St Thomas' water, the child is revived, and the parents promise an offering of coins to the saint's tomb. However, they forget to keep their pledge. The saint sends them a reminder by sending a leper to warn them. The couple fail to heed the warning, and, consequently, the child dies: Images available at: 'CVMA inv. no. 000508', Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi: Medieval Stained Glass in Great Britain, window nII, panels 9, 10, 11, 19, 20, 21, 14, 15, 16 <https://www.cvma.ac.uk/jsp/record.do?mode=ADV_SEARCH&gridView=false&sortField=WINDOW_NO &sortDirection=ASC&rowsPerPage=20&selectedPage=1&photodataKey=508&recPosition=2&recordView= DETAIL#> [Accessed 8 Oct 2021]; Madeline Harrison Caviness, *Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi: Great Britain. Vol. II. The Windows of Christ Church Cathedral, Canterbury*, *Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 196–9. On a different window in the Ambulatory, the saint is depicted as healing an arrow wound on the neck: 'CVMA inv. no. 000748', Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi: Medieval Stained Glass in Great Britain, , window sII, panels 16–17 <https://www.cvma.ac.uk/jsp/record.do?mode=ADV_SEARCH&photodataKey=748&sortField=WINDOW_ NO&sortDirection=ASC&rowsPerPage=20&selectedPage=1&recPagePos=2> [Accessed 8 Oct 2021].

[222] The oddity is due to the recognisability of the disintegrated body of Christ to the viewer. Therefore, the violated body is grotesque and idolised simultaneously.

These two churches contain more substantial evidence of the confluence of plague and mutilation of Christ in church art, as the number of plague saints present in artworks is greater, but there are other churches in which this correlation between bodily disintegration of figures and the presence of plague-related imagery appears in a less pronounced way. In All Saints, Poringland, there is another illustration of a wound-clad Man of Sorrows, this time as a painted glass in the east window above the altar; it originally dates back to the fifteenth century.[223] On the northern window, according to Nichols, there would have been a painted glass depiction of St Sebastian holding an arrow.[224] Considering that few illustrations existed in the church (and even fewer do today), the presence of an arrow-holding Sebastian and a heavily wounded Christ could be significant. Similarly, in St Mary's church at Stalham, several screen panels from perhaps a roodscreen panel survive from the late fifteenth century: these include illustrations of St Andrew, a pope who might be St Felix, possibly Henry VI, and Sebastian and Roch.[225] Added to this tentative group of plague-associated saints would have been a screen painting of Christ's resurrection, with him displaying his visible, bleeding wounds.[226] Christ's resurrection, of course, was the sign of his triumph over his adversaries as well as that of his successful redeeming of humankind, but, as I have shown, there was a more concerted effort to ensure protection via renewing Christ's bodily disintegration through the image of the Man of Sorrows. This convergence of mutilated holy figures functioned in the same way as collections of prayers and illustrations in prayer books and rolls did: by having the holy figure perpetually present, one could ensure the constant protective support of those figures against plague.

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[223] Nichols, *Early Art*, p. 88; Simon Knott, 'All Saints, Poringland' (2006) <http://www.norfolkchurches.co.uk/poringlandcofe/poringlandcofe.htm> [Accessed 12 Oct 2021].

[224] Nichols, *Early Art*, p. 227.

[225] Simon Knott, 'St Mary, Stalham' (2019) <http://www.norfolkchurches.co.uk/stalham/stalham.htm> [Accessed 12 Oct 2021].

[226] Nichols, *Early Art*, p. 97.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter, we have focussed on the ways in which engagements with pestilence in medical literature manifested in more communal cultural practices such as processions and the Mass as well as cultural artefacts such as prayer books and church iconography. It has been illustrated that the discourse of infection in its particular incarnation as pestilence had certainly a visual dimension, which interacted with the textual dimension of the discourse not just in prayer rolls, manuscript illustrations, or church art, but also in medical understandings of pestilence itself. The use of dittany as a remedy for pestilence (discussed in the chapter on medical responses to plague), due to its original use being for treating arrow wounds, is one example of this: the visual dimension influenced the textual side and resulted in the inclusion of the herb in medical literature without mentioning the visual similarity. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that saints invoked against the plague fell into at least three categories: those who triumphed over plague symbols without much suffering or provided protection from infection (such as George, Michael, and Dorothy—corresponding to the mode of excision), those who suffered and died of plague yet were invoked for protection (such as Etheldreda—corresponding to the mode of containment), and those who suffered and overcame plague itself, its symbols, or suffering in general, but were still portrayed in a state of suffering (Sebastian, Roch, Katherine—fusing the modes of excision and containment).

While the initial goal of masses, processions, and prayers was to keep pestilence at bay, and thus preserve the integrity of the various bodies at work in late medieval English culture (individual, corporate, religious), the production of illustrated prayer books and portrayals in churches in which saints who suffered and overcame pestilence through violation of their bodily integrity appeared alongside Christ—paired with such saints specifically because of being the ultimate example of holy bodily disintegration, brought a positive understanding of bodily porousness into sacred, integral spaces. Thus, this final type

of invocation, accompanied by illustrations of figures in their most porous, violated states, invested the human body with a kind of porousness which must not be banished or avoided, but rather meditated upon and revered. At the centre of this dynamic lay a sacrificial understanding of holy figures: as their passions, and most important of all the Passion of Christ, ensured the redemption of humankind, their renewal has the capacity to protect one against plague and infection. Consequently, attempts were made to include renewals of such processes of becoming-porous via a variety of means: holding masses, making the sign of the cross, and trying to portray the becoming-porous of holy figures. Michael Camille writes that the 'distance between words and flesh is greater than that between the viewer and the person in the image, who always stands as the 'Mirror' image of that viewer'.[227] There were, however, limitations to representation's static capacity to renew the Passion, which meant that frequently enough they had to resort to depicting them in their most vulnerable states to safeguard the apotropaic qualities of their passions.[228] In other words, as they could not actualise the process of disintegration (becoming-porous), they had no option but to represent the next best thing: a stable, permanently available disintegrated body. In the next chapter, I will consider how bodily porousness was performed in dramatic productions, and whether it was able to overcome such limitations. I will also consider whether such dramatic productions offered a potential for the audience to be more than just observers—to become porous themselves.

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[227] Camille, p. 204.

[228] In a modern study, Martin O'Kane attempts to decouple the image of the Man of Sorrows from its representational attachments, arguing that suspending the identification of the man in Man of Sorrows with Christ could enhance its affective power: Martin O'Kane, 'Picturing "the Man of Sorrows": The Passion-Filled Afterlives of a Biblical Icon', *Religion and the Arts,* 9.1–2 (2005), 62–100, p. 68.

Chapter Four – Performing Porousness: Becoming-Porous and Subversion in

Dramatic Texts

In the previous chapter, I illustrated how plague had a distinctive place in late medieval iconography and lay piety through impacting understandings and representations of the porous bodies of saints and Christ in church art and prayer books and rolls. In this chapter, the examination of the conception, construction, and performance of the porous body of Christ and its potential relationship to plague will be extended to late medieval East Anglian Passion plays of the N-Town collection and the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*.[1] I suggest that there is a distinction between the static representation of porous bodies in medieval iconography (however emotive a site of meditative engagement) and the unfolding *in situ* that we find in medieval drama, which presents the body's process of transformation (i.e. an event, not a re-enactment). As we shall see below in my examination of examples from not only the play texts, but also polemic literature against dramatic performance, the move from representation to presentation will add more immanence and immediacy to the experience of encountering and enacting porous bodies. The move, in turn, helps solidify the cultural impact of plague in making bodies more porous.

Despite evidence underscoring the impact of plague outbreaks on dramatic performances, plague is directly mentioned in the content of English plays only once.[2] I suggest that rather than looking for plague as a discrete phenomenon making a debut in plays, one needs to examine how plague spreads through other processes already at work within the

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[1] I will use the most recent editions of both texts: the TEAMS editions of the N-Town plays edited by Douglas Sugano and the edition of the Croxton *Play* published in Greg Walker's anthology: *The N-Town Plays*, ed. by Douglas Sugano, *TEAMS Middle English Texts* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007) <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/publication/sugano-the-n-town-plays> [22 April 2022]; 'Croxton, *The Play of the Sacrament*', in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, ed. by Greg Walker (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008; 5th repr. edn. 2000), pp. 213–33.

[2] The evidence has been partially discussed in Chapter 2; it will also be discussed further below. It mainly concerns cancellation and banning of plays as well as revocation of players' access to towns.

plays. Thus, I aim to demonstrate that through the performance of Christ's bodily porousness in the plays studied here, plague creeps into/seeps into how bodies are understood and performed, pushing performance beyond the realm of representation into the territory of presentation, resulting in the production of new modes of experience of the self and the body. Such new modes of experience emanated a conception of the body as porous, which may have been felt by and transmitted among the audience. This transmission is effected in a manner similar to how the practice of affective piety imparted the significance of Christ's sacrifice among the faithful—through personal and communal sensation. Sarah McNamer defines the practice as imagining oneself 'present at scenes of Christ's suffering and to perform compassion for that suffering victim in a private drama of the heart'.[3] Compassion, here, would entail an attempt to empathise with the suffering via imagination, sensation, and experience. In the process of becoming porous, Christ's body transitions from a healthy body into a disintegrated one and invokes and preserves the porous force of plague—which, as we have encountered in previous chapters, renders bodies (individual, civic, and holy) more open. Put another way, the move from representations of an already porous body (as in iconography) to actualisation or becoming of that porousness on stage and in front of spectators' eyes would have conjured up the sensation of a similar process of becoming porous in the experience of plague in towns, and thus formed assemblages between plague, bodies, and discourses in both experiences, which, as we have established in previous chapters, strengthened the understandings of bodies (individual, civic, and holy) as porous.

In considering this actualisation or becoming of the porous body of Christ, I will adopt Gilles Deleuze's theorisation of *becoming* in theatre as the polar opposite of representation. The term, in Deleuze's sense, is defined as 'the continual production (or

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[3] Sarah McNamer, *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), p. 1.

"return") of difference immanent within the constitution of events, whether physical or otherwise'.[4] It challenges 'the primacy of identity […] [and] a world of representation (presenting the same world once again)' in exchange for 'a world of presentation anew'.[5] This shift from the stable representation of what has already happened, or as Laura Cull puts it, 'discrete objects and subjects', to the presentation of something being actualised in real-time—or, 'processes, relations and happenings'—is crucial in unleashing the full porous force of plague.[6] In the theatrical context, becoming is about bringing forth 'something that does not yet exist elsewhere but comes into being only by way of the performative act/the performance that occurs'.[7] The affective power of experiences is indeed amplified by the immanence and immediacy of performance, as opposed to that of passive representation, for as Erika Fischer-Lichte notes:

> […] aesthetic experience does not refer to a 'work', but springs from what
>
> is emerging between the participants, from their bodies. It seems that the

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[4] Cliff Stagoll, 'Becoming', in *The Deleuze Dictionary: Revised Edition*, ed. by Adrian Parr (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 25–7 (p. 26). Deleuze's definitions are less concise and plain, but one could use the following for further explication of the term: 'In becoming there is no past nor future - not even present, there is no history. In becoming it is, rather, a matter of involuting; it's neither regression nor progression. To become is to become more and more restrained, more and more simple, more and more deserted and for that very reason populated. This is what's difficult to explain: to what extent one should involute. It is obviously the opposite of evolution, but it is also the opposite of regression, returning· to a childhood or to a primitive world': Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues*. trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p. 29.

[5] Stagoll, p. 26. For the Nietzschean inspiration behind this understanding of becoming, see, for instance: Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*. trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. ed. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), pp. 377–8, 546–7 (nos. 708, 1062). Deleuze was also influenced by Nietzsche's concept of the eternal return when thinking about difference and becoming, and even thought about Nietzsche's philosophy as theatrical. See: Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*. trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 8, 80–95.

[6] Laura Cull, 'Introduction', in *Deleuze and Performance*, ed. by Laura Cull (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 1–21 (p. 3). Jody Enders also cites Deleuze in her discussion of violence and pain in performance. She uses Deleuze and Guattari's idea of 'primitive territorialisation' to highlight the investment of meaning in bodies. Although the general idea is practicable and appropriate, it must be noted that 'primitive territorialisation', in Deleuze and Guattari's scheme, does not apply to modes of codification/signification in late medieval religious violence, unless it concerns affective, nonrepresentational modes of signification: *The Medieval Theater of Cruelty: Rhetoric, Memory, Violence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), p. 100.

[7] Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual: Exploring Forms of Political Theatre* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 27.

emergence of what happens is more important than what happens, and in any case more relevant than any meanings that may be attributed to it.[8]

Thus, the role of plague in transforming bodies from unified to porous is neither fully explored nor thoroughly materialised until the process of becoming porous occurs before the spectators' eyes.[9] This means that the quality of porousness, which is powered by the material-discursive force of plague, will have its most powerful manifestation in performative actions in which the porous body, as a meaningful sign, emerges in real-time. East Anglian drama seems to have had a certain affinity for accommodating this quality, for as Gail McMurry Gibson notes, it has an 'ever-growing tendency to transform the abstract and theological to the personal and concrete'.[10] Furthermore, as we shall see, the two plays examined here, especially N-Town, evidence this tendency in their propensity for not relying on representationalism in their enactments of the Passion.

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[8] Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual*, p. 26. It should be noted that bypassing representation completely is virtually impossible, because not only is language—the most dominant system within which the truth of Christ's Passion takes place and is understood—a representational system, even if we were able to present something which is un-representable (or, in other words, is 'full presence'), in order to comprehend the total non-representation of the event, we would still need representation and repetition. The capacity for being made sense of is referred to, by Jacques Derrida, as 'iterability'. For him, in order for something to make sense, 'it must carry with it a capacity to be repeated in principle again and again in all sorts of contexts ("no context permits saturation"), at the same time as being in some way singular every time ("no meaning can be determined out of context"). Iterability thus entails both "repetition" (sameness) and "alterity" (difference)'. As he points out in an essay on Antonin Artaud, 'Presence, in order to be presence and self-presence, has always already begun to represent itself': Jacques Derrida, 'Living On', in *Deconstruction and Criticism*, ed. by Harold Bloom et al., trans. James Hulbert (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), pp. 75–176 (p. 81); 'From "the Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation"', in *Antonin Artaud: A Critical Reader*, ed. by Edward Scheer (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 39–46 (p. 44). Therefore, my use of becoming does not signify a total absence of representation, but rather, a move away from representation. Similarly, and as noted by Derrida above, each iteration of a performance cannot be a perfect representation of the original, because for repetition to occur as repetition, there has to be difference. See: Jacques Derrida, 'Signature Event Context', in *Limited Inc.* trans. Samuel Weber and Jeffrey Mehlman (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1988), pp. 1–23. Mohammad Kowsar refers to this mixed state of representation and non-representation as a kind of 'bilingualism where the trace of the original dialogue and speech exists, albeit with gaps, hiatuses, and partial repetitions': Mohammad Kowsar, 'Deleuze on Theatre: A Case Study of Carmelo Bene's "Richard III"', *Theatre Journal,* 38 (1986), 19–33 (p. 22). For a discussion of the debate in the late Middle Ages, see below.

[9] As mentioned in previous chapters, the body was thought to be unified and porous at the same time. Therefore, the distinction between unity and porousness of the body is one of degree and not of kind. As a result, the transformation from the unified to the porous body could be viewed as moving from one point to another on a continuum.

[10] Gail McMurray Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 7.

In order for Deleuze's consideration of representation and becoming in twentieth-century theatre to be used in relation to late medieval drama, one needs to recalibrate his theoretical perspective to include a broader range of performative acts, for, firstly, there was no clearly defined genre of drama in the Middle Ages, and, secondly, the dichotomy between performative representation and becoming existed in ritual/sacramental acts such as the Mass, in aspects of devotional practices such as the veneration of relics, affective meditation, and processions, as well as a vast expanse of slightly more entertainment-oriented performances such as the ones under discussion here.[11] The latter reason—which concerns the existence of performative elements in a multitude of cultural practices—is not exclusive to late medieval culture, of course, and quite close to how modern performance theorists such Richard Schechner argue for a more encompassing definition of performance.[12] Similarly, scholars of medieval drama such as Katie Normington have chosen to define performance equally broadly—as 'an act which has been self-consciously prepared for deliberate spectatorship'.[13] This definition includes rituals (such as the Mass), different forms of drama, music, games, various forms of processions, and even instances of public punishment.[14] Therefore, I will read Deleuze's discussion of the power of becoming in theatre in conjunction with late

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[11] Kathleen Biddick notes, for instance, that for the twelfth-century Peter the Venerable, the Eucharist was the '"always and ever" incarnating miracle' as well as 'an "always and ever" incarnating institution': *Make and Let Die: Untimely Sovereignties* (Earth, Milky Way: punctum books, 2016), p. 98.

[12] Schechner argues that performance 'must be construed as a "broad spectrum" or "continuum" of human actions ranging from ritual, play, sports, popular entertainments, the performing arts (theatre, dance, music), and everyday life performances to the enactment of social, professional, gender, race, and class roles, and on to healing (from shamanism to surgery), the media, and the internet': Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction*. 3rd edn (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 2.

[13] Katie Normington, *Medieval English Drama: Performance and Spectatorship* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), p. 2. Also see: Kathleen Ashley, 'An Anthropological Approach to the Cycle Drama: The Shepherds as Sacred Clowns', *Fifteenth Century Studies,* 13 (1988), 123–35.

[14] For more details on the variety of works which could be studied under the epithet of drama, see: Alexandra F. Johnston, 'An Introduction to Medieval English Theatre', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, ed. by Richard Beadle and Alan J. Fletcher (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 1–25; Carol Symes, 'The Appearance of Early Vernacular Plays: Forms, Functions, and the Future of Medieval Theater', *Speculum,* 77.3 (2002), 778–831; Carol Symes, 'The Medieval Archive and the History of Theatre: Assessing the Written and Unwritten Evidence for Premodern Performance', *Theatre Survey,* 52.1 (2011), 29–58. For an attempt at distinguishing ritual from drama based on context, see: Erika Fischer-Lichte, 'The Medieval Religious Plays–Ritual or Theatre?', in *Visualizing Medieval Performance: Perspectives, Histories, Contexts*, ed. by Elina Gertsman (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 249–61.

medieval conceptions of non-representational enactment to expound the distinction between representation and becoming in the late medieval context.

In my analysis of Christ's bodily porousness, I will examine the silent, suffering figure of Christ in both plays and consider the modes through which the figure of Christ communicates his porousness. I argue that in N-Town, the becoming-porous of Christ and its communication to others reinforce the division between Christian and Jewish bodies, whereas in the Croxton *Play*, the boundaries separating Jewish bodies from Christian bodies, though still introduced, are destabilised. The spectacle of a silent Christ is common among cycle drama and has been discussed in other studies, but the East Anglian plays stress the point even more: the more pronounced silence of Christ in these plays not only puts his bodily suffering at the centre, it clearly juxtaposes—but not contrasts—the verbal/aural mode of communication of the Christian truth (exemplified in every line Christ speaks in such plays) with a visual/affective mode, in which the absence of speech does not denote meaninglessness or the absence of any form of doctrinal/scriptural enlightenment, but a different kind of enlightenment.[15] In this visual/affective mode, similar to the way in which wounds operated in iconography during meditation on the Passion, the open, bleeding wounds themselves utter the Christian truth, as if they were mouths.[16] In other words, the open wounds compensate for the silent mouth of Christ. In this process, then, the two orifices are equated. Christ's silence serves to open a new and less representational mode of

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[15] For studies focussing on Christ's silence, see: Daisy Black, 'Commanding Un-Empty Space: Silence, Stillness and Scopic Authority in the York "Christ before Herod"', in *Gender in Medieval Places, Spaces and Thresholds*, ed. by Diane Heath Victoria Blud, Einat Klafter (London: University of London Press, 2019), pp. 237–50; Alexandra F. Johnston, '"His Langage Is Lorne": The Silent Centre of the York Cycle', *Early Theatre,* 3 (2000), 185–95; Clare Wright, 'Acoustic Tyranny: Metre, Alliteration and Voice in "Christ before Herod"', *Medieval English Theatre,* 34 (2012), 3–29. I shall discuss all of these studies in more detail below.

[16] As established in the previous chapter, the metaphor of wound as mouth has featured notably in iconography. In medical literature, too, such a metaphor was used: Henri de Mondeville conceptualises the edges of wounds as lips (or labia): Marie-Christine Pouchelle, *The Body and Surgery in the Middle Ages.* trans. Rosemary Morris (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), pp. 182–3. The distinction between speaking wounds in drama and in iconography or medical literature, is the capacity of performative wounds to circumvent the representational system of language.

communication between God and the pious, for it is via the visual/affective mode of communication that Christ's truth is justified. His silence also serves to exclude Jews from the community, for it is by the inability to register the visual/affective mode of communication that Jews are singled out in the N-Town plays. This exclusion, in turn, can be read in connection with the role of porousness (in the porousness of the civic body, for instance) in the biopolitical exclusion of Jews in mainland Europe.

In contrast to what occurs in N-Town, which deprives unbelieving Jews from understanding Christ, Christ's porousness in the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament* becomes a sign for both Christians (as characters within the play and as members of the audience) and Jews (only as characters within the play), as it is there to convince and overpower the Jewish doubters as well as to exhort Christians. Moreover, the performance of Christ's body as porous coincides with the performance of the Jewish body as porous. As we shall see below, Jewish bodies were already thought to be inherently more volatile and porous, but the simultaneity of becoming-porous in both bodies (Christ's and Jonathas's—the main Jewish character) results in the Croxton *Play* uniting Christian and Jewish bodies through its treatment of bodily porousness. It will be argued that it is this shared porousness which enables the unification of Christian and Jewish bodies and infuses the play with the capacity to subvert the hierarchy of the status among bodies, especially between Christian and Jewish ones.[17] The discrepancy between the function of porousness in the two plays highlights, furthermore, the ambivalence of the concept of bodily porousness in medieval culture. In previous chapters, bodily porousness signified both a vulnerability which could be exploited by infection and the infected as well as an essential quality of the human body—which was at

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[17] It is the advantage of using Deleuze that allows us to focus on subversion. See, in contrast, Kathleen Biddick's use of Giorgio Agamben, which leads her to read the Jew as *homo sacer*, the status-less outsider whose only function is to maintain Christianity's internal integrity: *Make and Let Die*, p. 58. While such a reading is indeed apt and has its analogue in my reading of the plays, using Agamben's uncomplicated theorisation prevents focussing on the subversive potential of the texts.

times even idealised and worshipped. In the plays under discussion here, too, it serves to excludes a group from the community in one play and include the same group in the community in the other.

The existence of the porous force of plague in the plays, the communication of the Christian truth via the wounds of Christ, and the exclusionary effect of its communication to the audience are all enabled by the move from the representation of Christ's porousness to its actualisation and becoming on stage. Therefore, examining the workings of this shift towards non-representation will help us imagine how late medieval East Anglians read and saw such performances in relation to what Greg Walker calls 'the cultural assumptions of those who produce, perform and receive' those performances.[18] In other words, how did the late medieval audience view the relationship between representation and becoming? This is the question I will consider in the following section using examples from contemporary discussions as well as plays.

1. Representation and Becoming

    A. A Binary Opposition or a Continuum?

In order to understand the distinction between representation and becoming in late medieval context, I would like to begin this section with an example from a plague-related prayer book discussed in the previous chapter: the representation of the Veil of Veronica in the section of MS Douce 1 featuring the wounds of Christ and the *Arma Christi*.[19] The representation of the veil, containing a bloodied faceprint of Christ and appearing alongside representations of the instruments of the Passion, would have invoked the bodily disintegration of Christ—assisted by the portrayals of Christ in Passion, and through it, exhorted the petitioners to view

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[18] Greg Walker, 'The Cultural Work of Early Drama', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, ed. by Richard Beadle and Alan J. Fletcher (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 75–98 (p. 76).

[19] Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 1, f. 56. A similar illustration also exists in another prayer book discussed in the previous chapter, Princeton, Princeton University Library, MS Taylor 17, f. 2.

porousness as a positive mark of the possession of protective and prophylactic powers. In terms of the mechanics of representation in this case, the supplicant would have had to reconjure or imagine the narrative of the Passion, in which Christ went through the process of bodily disintegration, via imagination while being assisted by meditational aids such as illustrations of a bloodied Christ. Then, one would have had to reconjure the veil with the help of the illustration in the book. Obviously, the supplicant did not have access to the material reality of Christ's Passion or the veil (they could not go outside and see them, for instance); nor did they have access to partial copies of their material reality in the form of a memory, which they could have recalled to the present via the process of recollection.[20] Therefore, one would have had to 'present' the whole sequence 'anew' in one's imagination in the present and then place the veil in it by reference to the visual illustration, producing something only partially connected to a pre-existing event or a material object. In other words, they would have produced something which reiterated elements of the event or the object existing in the narrative of the Passion, but at the same time created unique, new iterations—a new event occurring in the present and unequal to the one in the narrative and an object materialising in real time during meditation. In a way, then, objects such as relics are not inert, fixed entities: they are simultaneously representations as well as events, for the legitimacy of the relic is closely dependant on its continual reference to its history as well as the renewal of its functions.[21] Thus, it would be more helpful to conceive of the

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[20] Deleuze notes that in the process of recollection, a memory 'retains something of the regions where we have had to look for the recollection that it actualizes or embodies. But it does not actualize this recollection without adapting it to the requirements of the present; it makes it into something of the present'. So even recollection involves a recreation of the event: Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*. trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Zone Books, 1991), p. 58.

[21] A similar argument can be made concerning the Eucharist. Miri Rubin points out that from the High Middle Ages, the Eucharist emerged 'as a re-enactment, not merely memorial, of the central act of sacrifice which had been foretold in the Last Supper, and suffered in the Passion': 'The Eucharist and the Construction of Medieval Identities', in *Culture and History 1350–1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities and Writing*, ed. by David Aers (London: Harvester/Wheatsheaf, 1992), pp. 43–63 (pp. 46–7). Similarly, Michal Kobialka and Nils Holger Petersen illustrate, in separate works, that for many of the thinkers from the ninth century up to the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, the Eucharistic transubstantiation was simultaneously both representational and non-representational: Michal Andrzej Kobialka, *This Is My Body: Representational*

representation/becoming dichotomy as a continuum rather than a binary system, for there is a simultaneity in the existence of representation and becoming in all forms of production.[22]

This example serves to illustrate the interconnectedness and the simultaneity of representation and becoming, but there are parameters which can highlight the distinction between the two and, in turn, influence where a given entity is located on the continuum. One such parameter is the tangibleness of the entity. In the above example, the Veil of Veronica is not a materially present relic, which results, in turn, in the object relying more strongly on representation in its workings: the object materialised during meditation refers, on one level, to the illustration in the prayer book, and on another level, to the narrative of the Passion and the place of the veil in it. It is, in a sense, an intangible relic. Similar to such intangible relics, tangible relics must produce constant reaffirmations of their powers (through miracles, for example) for their continued significance and signification, while reiterating, at the same time, their history. In contrast to them, however, materially present and tangible relics persist physically via their continued existence and without recourse to representational aids.[23] We see an understanding of such a parameter in attempts to replicate the material presence of objects, an example of which can be found in the prayer roll also examined in the previous chapter.[24] On the first folio of the roll, there are three nails covering more than half of the folio. The caption begins with 'Theis er the veray trew lenth of the thre Nailis of our lorde ihu

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Practices in the Early Middle Ages (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999). Nils Holger Petersen, 'Biblical Reception, Representational Ritual, and the Question of 'Liturgical Drama'', in Sapientia Et Eloquentia: Meaning and Function in Liturgical Poetry, Music, Drama, and Biblical Commentary in the Middle Ages, ed. by Gunilla Iversen and Nicolas Bell (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), pp. 163–201 (pp. 172–82).

[22] See footnote 8 above for a more theoretically detailed formulation of this idea. Deleuze extends this simultaneity even to language, in every utterance of which repetition and difference (representation and becoming) are simultaneously present. He claims that 'Every word is physical, and immediately affects the body': Gilles Deleuze, The Logic of Sense. trans. Mark Lester and Charles Stivale. ed. by Constantin V. Boundas (London: The Athlone Press, 1990), p. 87.

[23] This point is formulated using a different terminology by Seeta Chaganti, who notes that 'reliquary performatively contacted and contributed to a reality exterior to itself through its implication in ceremony and vocal utterance, while it simultaneously encapsulated a system of self-reference formed by its silent instances of written inscription': The Medieval Poetics of the Reliquary: Enshrinement, Inscription, Performance, The New Middle Ages (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 7.

[24] New York, Morgan Library, MS Glazier 39, f. 1r.

criste', emphasising that the reason for the large size of the nails is the fact that they are life-sized.[25] By bringing their representation as close to the material reality of the objects as possible, the roll aims to recreate the material presence of the nails, make the object's existence more self-referential, and, in turn, replicate their protective powers.[26] Therefore, these examples suggest the relatively more profound impact of becoming compared with that of representation.

We might also consider the role of performativity in this process as another parameter. This role concerns the successful manifestation of the object (optimally alongside its power) in real-time. In a discussion of the best ways to commit something to memory, written by the fourteenth-century scholar Thomas Bradwardine, it is argued that the image intended for memorisation 'should have […] movement, that thus it may be commended to memory more effectively than through tranquillity or repose'.[27] Movement can be understood to refer to performativity, the capacity of the image/object to be enacted in real-time, which consequently heightens the affective impact of phenomena. An object could be tangible but unable to participate in actions in real-time: think, for instance, of a saint's shrine at which no miracle occurs. While the story of the saint themselves could be performed, the shrine does not participate in the performance, unless it ends with a visit to the shrine. Furthermore, the absence of any miracles dissociates the shrine from any action other than its own continued existence. In contrast to this, we might turn to a performative example of the veil, which, as we find it represented in the N-Town Passion play provides a clear example of dramatic 'becoming' in the Deleuzian sense. In the play on the procession to Calvary, the episode of the Veil of Veronica is dramatized, and it is intent on making clear that the veil, its protective

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[25] MS Glazier 39, f. 1r.

[26] Also see David S. Areford, 'Multiplying the Sacred: The Fifteenth-Century Woodcut as Reproduction, Surrogate, Simulation', in *The Woodcut in Fifteenth-Century Europe*, ed. by Peter Parshall (New Haven: National Gallery of Art, 2009), pp. 119–54.

[27] Quoted in Anthony Bale, *Feeling Persecuted: Christians, Jews and Images of Violence in the Middle Ages* (London: Reaktion Books, 2010), pp. 92, 111.

powers, as well as Christ's wounds are tangible realities, for after Simon shoulders the cross, Veronica takes pity on the suffering Christ—exclaiming, 'Allas, Holy Prophete, Cryst Jhesus! | Careful is myn hert for thee!', she wipes his face clean with her handkerchief (veil).[28] Christ, then, says:

> Veronyca, thi whipyng doth me ese.
>
> My face is clene that was blak to se.
>
> I shal them kepe from all mysese
>
> That lokyn on thi kercy and remembyr me.[29]

Here, we do not just see the investiture of the handkerchief or veil with special powers in real time; we also see the genealogy and the futurology of the object. The first two lines underscore the event that gives birth to the relic and invests power in it: the compassionate act of Veronica. The next lines extend the temporal reach of the relic into the future by highlighting the constant becoming in it: the relic is not something of the past; rather, it continually persists and reaffirms itself through its miraculous work of preserving the supplicant from harm. Consequently, the object assumes its presence within the narrative of the performance (as an event having occurred in the biblical past), within contemporary society (as an event unfolding in real time in the performance), as well as within the spiritual economy of relics (as an object which maintains its power and can be kept, revered, and traded in the future). Instead of imagining or recalling the power of the relic by meditation upon a drawing—or representation—of the veil, the pious witness the holy object suddenly come into being—i.e. becoming—and are assured of its longevity by the last two lines of the quotation. Moreover, rather than relying on the supplicant to materialise the object in their

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[28] 'Play 32, Procession to Calvary; Crucifixion', in *The N-Town Plays*, ed. by Douglas Sugano, *TEAMS Middle English Texts* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007), ll. 43–4 <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/sugano-n-town-plays-play-32-procession-to-calvary-crucifixion> [22 April 2022].

[29] 'Play 32, Procession to Calvary; Crucifixion', ll. 45–8.

imagination, the veil as an object becomes almost self-referential in this example; it is not

even representational in its history anymore, for the genealogy of the object (i.e. its history;

the conditions of its birth) is unfolding alongside the materialisation of the object itself. Here,

one witnesses not a discrete object already infused with meaning—a copy of the signified,

but an event in which the handkerchief becomes the holy object in real time—the formation

of the sign.[30]

Robert N. Swanson notes that the experience of 'recollection' involved in meditation

(whether inspired by iconography or not) is 'necessarily exclusive and asocial: the focus is on

the personal link with Christ, rather than on sharing a devotional experience with others'.[31]

While the assertion is applicable in all contexts (as it is possible to have a communal

meditative experience assisted by iconographic representations in, say, the church space), it

would not be too far-fetched to imagine the greater impact of communal performative

experiences in which some of the audience members closer to the performance space (if the

play was ever performed) tried to touch the veil once its protective powers have been

instituted.[32] Sarah Blick points out that the majority of the medieval population would have

been rarely 'allowed to touch or examine such opulent objects [i.e. relics such as the veil]

closely'; instead, they would have 'seen them as the reliquaries were paraded past in

procession or were perched on top of lofty shrine bases'.[33] Unlike access to relics in

processions or in churches, however, to be able to touch the actualised relic in the

[30] Once again, one must not overlook the 'trace' or the capacity for iterability in all conceivable forms of becoming.
[31] Robert N. Swanson, 'Passion and Practice: The Social and Ecclesiastical Implications of Passion Devotion in the Late Middle Ages', in *The Broken Body: Passion Devotion in Late-Medieval Culture*, ed. by H. N. B. Ridderbos and R. M. Schlusemann A. A. MacDonald (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1998), pp. 1–30 (p. 14).
[32] For a history of the legend and its meditational implications in both Eastern and Western Christianity, see Ewa Kuryluk, *Veronica and Her Cloth: History, Symbolism, and Structure of a 'True' Image* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991); Flora Lewis, 'The Veronica: Image, Legend and Viewer', in *England in the Thirteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1984 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. by W. Ormrod (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1985), pp. 100–06.
[33] Sarah Blick, 'Common Ground: Reliquaries and the Lower Classes in Late Medieval Europe', in *Matter of Faith: An Interdisciplinary Study of Relics and Relic Veneration in the Medieval Period*, ed. by Lloyd de Beer James Robinson, and Anna Harnden (London: British Museum, 2014), pp. 110–15 (p. 110).

performance space was a privilege granted more frequently to the less affluent, for as John J.

McGavin and Greg Walker suggest, the wealthy were more likely to take an elevated seat

where they could have a wider view of the performance.[34] Such a suggestion is even more

likely with regards to the plays under examination in this chapter, as 'the non-cycle plays

were performed for *profit* rather than as a display of power and wealth', so there was no

incentive for the wealthy or the powerful to highlight their superiority by sitting closer to the

performance space.[35]

In sum, while both representation and becoming are present in any form of

signification and production (be it in an object/event such as a relic, a performance, an

instance of recollection, or even an act of imagination), and it is impossible to have either

pure representation or pure becoming, the affective power of such entities is amplified by

moving from representation towards becoming on the continuum. This is something which

late medieval society seems to have been aware of with regards to relics, but, as the next

section will demonstrate, the emphasis on becoming in performance, and specifically the

performance of the Passion, was subject to even more attention and scrutiny. While the

current section assessed the existence of the continuum in late medieval culture, the next

section will discuss contemporary attitudes towards the continuum with regards to the

performance of the Passion and will illustrate that there was an active interest in maximising

becoming in performances of the Passion.

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[34] John J. McGavin and Greg Walker, 'The Spectatorial Turn: Witnessing Early English Drama from the York Cycle to Shakespeare', in *Imagining Spectatorship: From the Mysteries to the Shakespearean Stage*, ed. by John J. McGavin and Greg Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 2–43 (p. 15).

[35] John C. Coldewey, 'The Non-Cycle Plays and the East Anglian Tradition', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, ed. by Richard Beadle and Alan J. Fletcher (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 211 – 34 (p. 225). One could also add Sian Witherden's extended conception of touch, which includes gazing at objects in performance, to the mix and argue that beholding the becoming of the relic is as impactful as touching it with one's hands: Sian Witherden, 'Touch in Late Medieval English Theatre' (unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Oxford, 2019), *passim*.

B. Becoming in Performance of the Passion

The contemporary view regarding the relationship between representation and becoming was far from unified. Devotional works on the life and the Passion of Christ such as Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Life of Jesu*, in which the reader is encouraged to 'behold' Christ's suffering, offer a mode of understanding performance which seems to try to move away from strict bounds of representation.[36] The fourteenth-century Pseudo-Bede puts this view more bluntly: 'it is necessary that when you concentrate on these things in your contemplation, you do so as if you were actually present at the very time when He suffered'.[37] Perhaps to actualise such a goal, a performance of the Passion took place in Abergavenny Priory, Monmouthshire, as early as 1320. However, it was censured by the Bishop on a formal visitation to the priory.[38] Nevertheless, as Fischer-Lichte notes, 'the Church [overall] acknowledged attendance at a religious play as a "good work," and actors and spectators were often granted indulgences'.[39] On the other hand, it is in Lollard polemics against representations of the Passion (in sacramental or dramatic form) that we find one of the most

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[36] Nicholas Love, *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*. ed. by Michael G. Sargent (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2005), *passim*. Also see: Richard Beadle, '"Devoute Ymaginacioun" and the Dramatic Sense in Love's Mirror and the N-Town Plays', in *Nicholas Love at Waseda: Proceedings of the International Conference, 20-22 July 1995*, ed. by Richard Beadle, Shoichi Oguro, and Michael G. Sargent (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1997), pp. 1–17.

[37] Quoted in David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 171.

[38] David Klausner, 'Living Pictures: Drama without Text, Drama without Action', in *Medieval Theatre Performance: Actors, Dancers, Automata and Their Audiences*, ed. by Philip Butterworth and Katie Normington (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2017), pp. 107–22 (pp. 109–10). On the other hand, object/events such as the Eucharist became contentious not due to elements of becoming in them, but because of their representationality. Sarah Beckwith notes that introducing an 'economy of representation' to the ritual of the Mass brought 'a trail of anxiety in its wake', as it was accompanied by the concept of impersonation: the signifier is necessarily an impersonator, and the impersonator is a sign of theatricality. 'For theatricality', she explains, 'can seem dangerous because it threatens to foreground the gestures of representation over the thing itself': Sarah Beckwith, 'Ritual, Church and Theatre: Medieval Dramas of the Sacramental Body', in *Culture and History 1350-1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities and Writing*, ed. by David Aers (London: Harvester/Wheatsheaf, 1992), pp. 65–89 (p. 77).

[39] Fischer-Lichte, 'The Medieval Religious Plays', p. 254. The early fifteenth-century treatise on the commandments, *Dives and Pauper*, also has a generally approving attitude towards 'pleyys and dauncis þat arn don principaly for devocioun and honest merthe': Priscilla Heath Barnum, ed., *Dives and Pauper*. 2 vols. Vol. 1, Part 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 293. J. W. Robinson also points to similarities between the Image of Pity in church art and Crucifixion and Resurrection monologues in mystery plays: J. W. Robinson, 'The Late Medieval Cult of Jesus and the Mystery Plays', *PMLA,* 80.5 (1965), 508–14 (p. 510).

specific discussions about the difference between iconography and drama in terms of the representation/becoming continuum. The early fifteenth-century two-parter *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge*—generally thought to have been written between 1380–1425—is a treatise which, despite being targeted at 'miraclis pleyinge', a term which seems to denote a wide range of dramatic performances, mainly discusses Passion Plays.[40] Appearing to be from the East Central Midlands in its dialect, the tract is commonly considered associated with the Wycliffite or Lollard movement, which may explain the authors' stances on representation—each part was written by a separate author.[41] In the first part, the author responds to six reasons that advocates of such performances provide in support of the 'miraclis pleyinge', which are: that they are an aid to worship, that they convert their viewer to true faith, that they (specifically those of the Passion) spur and inspire compassion and affective piety, that they captivate those who would not otherwise heed the church's teaching, that they are the lesser of two evils compared to 'pleyinge of other japis',[42] and, lastly, and perhaps most importantly:

> […] sithen it is leveful to han the miraclis of God peintid, why is not as wel leveful to han the miraclis of God pleyed, sithen men mowen bettere reden the wille of God and his mervelous werkis in the pleyinge of hem than in the peintinge? And betere they ben holden in mennes minde and oftere rehersid by the pleyinge of hem than by the peintinge, for this is a deed bok, the tother a quick.[43]

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[40] Clifford Davidson, ed., *A Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2011), p. 1. The text exists in London, British Library MS Additional 24202, ff. 14r-21r). For an alternative understanding of the term, which posits that the term refers to parodies of the liturgy or sacred events, see Lawrence M. Clopper, '*Miracula* and *the Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge*', *Speculum,* 65.4 (1990), 878–905.

[41] Davidson, *Tretise*, p. 59.

[42] Davidson, *Tretise*, p. 98 (l. 178).

[43] Davidson, *Tretise*, p. 98 (ll. 179–185). Many scholars have understood mystery plays as having a predominantly didactic function. For an introduction, see: Deane E. D. Downey, 'Images of Christ in Corpus Christi Medieval Mystery Play Cycles', in *Images of Christ: Ancient and Modern*, ed. by Michael A. Hayes Stanley E. Porter, and David Tombs (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), pp. 206–26.

Here we find two clues about the representation/non-representation (or becoming): first, that there is something extra in performance, a kind of liveliness, as the author puts it, which distinguishes it from the stable form of iconographic representation. A 'quick' book, just like the relic, has the potential to reaffirm itself and its powers in new and unique ways, which could indeed be unpredictable and/or unintentionally subversive. As the second part of the treatise posits: 'unkindely seyen men nowe on dayes, "Crist doth now no miraclis for us, pleye we therfore his olde," adding many lesingis therto so colowrably that the puple gife as myche credense to hem as to the trwthe'.[44] The problem, here, then, is not just infidelity to the source material and going beyond faithful representation, but the re-enactment—presenting anew—of Christ's acts, as well.

On this presenting anew of Christ's acts, the first author argues that 'So sithen thise miraclis pleyinge ben onely singnis, love withoute dedis, they ben […] contrarious to the worschipe of God'.[45] Here, it is made clear that for the authors all representation is indeed problematic, because they are mere signifiers (or signs, in the author's words), and they refer to something other than the material reality of the event. Every portrayal of Christ without Christ himself and his actions, then, is invalid. Just as for medieval realists, a representational understanding of things would demote them to an inferior order of existence, so for the reformists, anything other than pure becoming (or total presence without the trace of another sign) is deceitful and false. This is why for reformists, even the ritual of the Mass is representational and therefore against the truth. This criticism of representation is not extended to language and the scripture, however, which implies that for the authors of the treatise, language seems capable of reliably conveying truth without descending into

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[44] Davidson, *Tretise*, p. 111 (ll. 623–6). Theodore K. Lerud avers that the *Tretise* considers performative acts and images as part of the same category, a suggestion which is not compatible with my analysis: Theodore K. Lerud, 'Quick Images: Memory and the English Corpus Christi Drama', in *Moving Subjects: Processional Performance in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. by Kathleen Ashley and Wim Hüskin (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), pp. 213–38 (p. 216).

[45] Davidson, *Tretise*, p. 99 (ll. 197–202).

representation, thus serving as their chief and only authority. This is, of course, contrary to

the position of contemporary nominalists—for whom language was capable of producing

illusory abstractions such as the universals, as well as to that of orthodox authorities such as

Archbishop Arundel who sought to regulate the use of language in preaching via his

Constitutions.[46] More importantly, however, there seems to be a contradiction between the

authors'—and indeed other reformist thinkers'—confidence in language as a system capable

of conveying 'the absolute truth and authority of the bible as the Word' and the implied

acknowledgement of the opaqueness and unreliability of language in Wycliffite translators'

reliance on commentaries (the dominance of which over exegesis they opposed) in their

efforts to produce a vernacular version of the Bible.[47] This suggests that the supposed radical

literalism that is associated with the Wycliffite movement(s) appears to have been fuelled by

more than theoretical opposition: there was a political dimension to their struggle, one which

opposed the clergy's regulation of interpretation and, indeed, representation.

In terms of visual representation, the first author, in their response to that last

proposed benefit of 'miraclis pleyinge', writes that 'peinture, yif it be verry withoute

menging of lesingis and not to curious, to myche fedinge mennis wittis, and not occasion of

maumetrie to the puple, they ben but as nakyd lettris to a clerk to riden the treuthe'.[48] The

three conditions here can be reformulated as: the absence of any form of becoming (going

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[46] On nominalism and the problem of universals, see: Alastair Minnis, '"Authorial Intention" and "Literal Sense" in the Exegetical Theories of Richard Fitzralph and John Wyclif: An Essay in the Medieval History of Biblical Hermeneutics', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy: Archaeology, Culture, History, Literature,* 75 (1975), 1–31; Roberto Pinzani, *The Problem of Universals from Boethius to John of Salisbury*, *Brill's Studies in Intellectual History* (Leiden: Brill, 2018). Penny Granger views the *Play of the Sacrament* and the Towneley Shepherds' plays as evidence that Arundel's constitutions may not have been as influential as sometimes presented: *The N-Town Play: Drama and Liturgy in Medieval East Anglia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 58.

[47] Ruth Nisse, 'Reversing Discipline: The *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge*, Lollard Exegesis, and the Failure of Representation', *The Yearbook of Langland Studies,* 11 (1997), 163–94 (p. 166); Anne Hudson, *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 257; Tony Hunt Ralph Hanna, R. G. Keightley, Alastair Minnis, and Nigel F. Palmer, 'Latin Commentary Tradition and Vernacular Literature', in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, Vol. 2: The Middle Ages*, ed. by Alastair Minnis and Ian Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 363–421 (p. 396).

[48] Davidson, *Tretise*, p. 104 (ll. 372–8).

beyond the text or infidelity), incapacity to be affective (not appealing to people's senses), and not representing the original, true signified (idolatry). Only by removing layer after layer of any imaginable additional element which has the potential to go beyond the 'nakyd' truth (i.e. scripture) does the author finally acknowledge that a painting could conceivably be considered a faithful representation.

This view, however, was obviously not shared by the majority of the reformists, who did not even consider such pictorial depictions as valid.[49] The second clue from the block quotation above is the implication that viewers are moved more greatly when watching the tangible performances as opposed to still, iconographic representations. This second clue re-emphasises that for medieval viewers just as for modern theorists such as Fischer-Lichte and Deleuze, the affective power of becoming in performance was significant. Furthermore, as Carolyn Muessig argues, this is especially true for performances of the Passion, in which 'there is no gap between what happened at one moment in salvation history and what happens in real time, [so] the religious events are brought to the present and can occur at any moment'.[50] Of course, as noted above, it is perhaps also problematic to conceive of performance as entirely non-representational, for as Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink notes, 'an emphasis on process, experimentation, or continuous differentiation [does not lead] us beyond representation'.[51] Nevertheless, it is evident that what is extra in performance in comparison with iconography, and thus threatening for the reformists' penchant for literalism

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[49] Margaret Aston, *Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1984), p. 139. An example of such disapproving views can be found in the same early fifteenth-century manuscript that contains the *Tretise*, London, British Library, MS Additional 24202, ff. 26–28v, in a tract on images: 'Images and Pilgrimages', in *Selections from English Wycliffite Writings*, ed. by Anne Hudson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. 83–88. The tract notes that while there were images, by God's command, in the Temple of Solomon, by Christ's new law, such images are prohibited: p. 84.

[50] Carolyn Muessig, 'Performance of the Passion: The Enactment of Devotion in the Later Middle Ages', in *Visualizing Medieval Performance: Perspectives, Histories, Contexts*, ed. by Elina Gertsman (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 129–42 (p. 137).

[51] Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink, *Nomadic Theatre: Mobilizing Theory and Practice on the European Stage* (London: Methuen, 2019), p. 51.

and/or independence from the church's monopoly over exegesis, is this move away from representation towards becoming, which creates a more tangible, immediate experience. Taken together with the orthodox propensity for becoming discussed above, we can conclude that the affective potential of becoming in performance was indeed significant for late medieval society. Consequently, my analysis, in addition to highlighting instances of becoming in the N-Town plays and the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*, will focus on the potentialities of such instances.

It is here that we touch on the subversive potential of becoming, which brings us back to Deleuze. To him, becoming has the potential, in its most radical capacity, to destabilise fixed elements of power which operate through representation. So, in the example of Veronica's veil, the emergence of the veil as a relic on stage disassociates the object with the clergy as those who teach people about it, the space of the church as the place to encounter it or learn about it, and prayers on the object sanctioned by the church. In other words, the breakup of the link between the signifier (the veil) and the signified (an officially sanctioned history of what the veil stands for and how it came to be) liberates the signifier to make new connections—to forge its own path in culture. This process of 'excision' of elements of power can take place on 'gestures, in representation and in the represented'.[52] It can also take place, as illustrated, on 'history, because history is the temporal marker of power'.[53] By disassociating the veil from its history and allowing it to emerge in real time, one circumvents the role of the church in the enlightenment of the people about the sign. Finally, Deleuze instructs readers to:

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[52] Gilles Deleuze, 'One Manifesto Less', in *The Deleuze Reader*, ed. by Constantin V. Boundas (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 204–22 (pp. 205, 212, 215).

[53] Deleuze, 'One Manifesto Less', p. 211.

[…] amputate the text, because the text is like the domination of language over speech and bears witness, too, to an invariance or homogeneity. You cut back on the dialogue because the dialogue transmits to speech the elements of power and makes them circulate: it is your turn to speak, in such-and-such codified conditions […].[54]

In my analysis of the plays, I will examine, firstly, how instances of becoming preserve the idea of bodily porousness and reveal the hand of plague as a material-discursive force present in the context these plays were produced in late medieval English culture. Secondly—and closely related to Deleuze's instructions above, I will study how this plague-informed performance of bodily porousness reinforces or destabilises dominant discourses in late medieval society, specifically regarding inclusion. For, as we have established, such discourses operate via the stability of representation, and it is in becoming—and not representation—that things take a life of their own, make their mark, and produce 'difference'. [55] As we shall see presently, I will read Christ's silence as conducive to a form of becoming (i.e. speaking via wounds) that destabilises language and its power. In other words, by dismantling the elements of representation (the domineering system of power) in what Hedwig Fraunhofer phrases as the 'spatiality, corporeality and tonality' of what the plays attempt to represent (in our cases, the Passion of Christ and a Host desecration story),

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[54] Deleuze, 'One Manifesto Less', p. 211. Rephrasing his propositions in terms the dichotomy between 'majoritarian' and 'minoritarian' modes of living, acting, etc., he also steers away from absolutism regarding representation and becoming: 'one must also say that everyone is minoritarian, potentially minoritarian to the extent that they deviate from this model': 'One Manifesto Less', p. 219. He explains the majoritarian/minoritarian dichotomy as such: 'Here *minority* designates the capacity for becoming, while *majority* designates the power or incapacity of a state, of a situation. It is here that theater or art can spring up with a specific political function, on condition that minority does not represent anything regionalist, but also nothing aristocratic, aesthetic, or mystical': 'One Manifesto Less', p. 221.

[55] For a larger study of the *Tretise*, see: Sharon Aronson-Lehavi, *Street Scenes: Late Medieval Acting and Performance*, *The New Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

the plays themselves cut away representation's power and move towards the actualisation of potentialities.[56]

To elucidate further, Christ's silence activates a new mode of communication (speaking via wounds), which, in turn, destabilises the centrality of the representational system of language (or, in Fraunhofer's words, tonality). We have seen quasi-speaking wounds in the previous chapter, but they still relied on the representative system of language to speak: their words needed to be read. In other words, they were ultimately passive and depended on the devotee to be able to speak. In contrast, the performative wounds are active: they rely neither on language nor the devotees to be able to speak, and even if one spectator averts their eyes, the act of speaking continues, and the play moves on. The new bodily mode of communication, through its visual/affective means of contact, brings bodies (not of just Christians, but of Jews and Christians, too) together, thereby destabilising the corporeal boundaries between bodies enforced by language throughout the plays. Finally, this new mode of communication enables a new mode of experience for the audience, allowing them to bypass the representation of space and transport the Passion to the present, allowing them to view it in real-time (in Fraunhofer's scheme—spatiality). This dismantling of representation works not just in the performance space, but also in the bodies of the spectators through the affective power of performance, which also diverges from representation. As Cull points out, affective impact is itself a kind of becoming and cannot be engineered.[57] Thus, any form of subversion taking place within such becomings was the

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[56] Hedwig Fraunhofer, *Biopolitics, Materiality and Meaning in Modern European Drama* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), p. 205. For Deleuze, however, there is a difference between dismantling and opposition. Citing the avant-garde as well as the likes of Brecht among the popular form of theatre, he asks 'why are conflicts generally subordinated to representation, why does the theater remain representational each time it takes as its object conflicts, contradictions, oppositions? It is because the conflicts are already normalized, codified, institutionalized. They are "products." They are already a representation–all the more fit to be represented on stage. When a conflict is not yet normalized, that is because it depends on something else more profound': 'One Manifesto Less', p. 218.

[57] Cull, p. 8. Deleuze and Felix Guattari emphasise this in *A Thousand Plateaus*: *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p.

inevitable, unintended consequence of the interwovenness of becoming within the fibres of late medieval religious culture.[58] On the other hand, as John J. McGavin and Greg Walker highlight, the lack of tangible evidence regarding audience response is a major hindrance to the study of the affective impact of the performances.[59] This is even more difficult for the plays under study in this chapter, for which there are no records of performance. McGavin and Walker's workaround is context-informed speculation.[60] I will not attempt an extensive discussion of the affective impact of the plays, but I will briefly speculate on how the porous force of plague may have been preserved and transmitted among the plays' audience.

2. Old Problems Presented Anew

A. Plagued Plays: Plague in the Context of Late Medieval Drama

As indicated in the opening of this chapter, there is only one explicit mention of plague in late medieval drama. However, references to plague in the records of performances during the period establish that plague was indeed present in the context of spectatorship. The one specific mention of the Black Death in late medieval drama occurs in the *Castle of Perseverance*, an East Anglian morality play written in the early-to-mid fifteenth century, in

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256. This transmission has been likened by Antonin Artaud to the spread of plague: 'Just like the plague, [the impact of becoming] reforges the links between what does and does not exist, between the virtual nature of the possible and the material nature of existence': Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*. trans. Victor Corti (Surrey: Alma Classics, 2013), p. 16. Despite the lack of any literal connection between his understanding of the plague and how the plague actually works, Artaud's analogy can be used to think about how this creative energy, as Fintan Walsh points out, has the capacity to become subversive, as well, and '[confound] both linguistic and corporeal boundaries, bodily organization and cultural hierarchy' within late medieval culture, as well: Fintan Walsh, 'Contagious Performance: Between Illness and Ambience', in *Theatres of Contagion: Transmitting Early Modern to Contemporary Performance*, ed. by Fintan Walsh (London: Methuen, 2020), pp. 3–20 (p. 12).

[58] William Fitzhenry also sees an ambivalent understanding of drama in late medieval performance: 'This variety of vernacular drama insists upon the necessity of controlling the interpretation of the plays and respecting the didactic intent of the playwright; but it also creates a space for an intellectually active audience that is capable of constructing divergent and even heterodox interpretations of the plays': William Fitzhenry, 'The N-Town Plays and the Politics of Metatheater', *Studies in Philology,* 100.1 (2003), 22–43 (p. 23). Also see Claire Sponsler, 'The Culture of the Spectator: Conformity and Resistance to Medieval Performances', *Theater Journal,* 44 (1992), 15–29.

[59] McGavin and Walker, p. 5.

[60] Similarly, Kathleen Ashley promotes the use of other context-informed options such as reception theory and Stuart Hall's model of encoding/decoding for the analysis of audience response: Kathleen Ashley, 'Contemporary Theories of Popular Culture and Medieval Performances', *Mediaevalia,* 18 (1995), 5–17.

which the character of Death brags—when Mankind has been tempted by Avarice again and forsakes God—in his introductory speech or boast that 'In the grete pestelens | Thanne was I wel knowe'.[61] The timing of Death's appearance serves to emphasise the suddenness of death (as an event) and the unpreparedness of people in the face of it. At this point, Mankind is still within the Castle of Perseverance, where he is protected by the virtues, but once he leaves the castle, Death is there to greet him. In addition, Gail McMurry Gibson postulates that the presence of the plague hymn *Stella caeli* (which was also present in the prayer books discussed in the previous chapter) in the N-Town play of 'Shepherds' (sung before they set off looking for Christ) underlines that the author/compiler and the audience were aware of 'the ever-present threat of the plague'.[62] The hymn invokes the famous notion of the Virgin's reversal of Eve's original sin—referred to as a plague/pestilence of death ('Mortis pestem'), and solicits protection against another kind of pestilence wrought by stars ('sidera').[63] We remember the medical understanding of the role of cosmic elements in engendering pestilence from previous chapters, as well as its interconnectedness with the moral causes of pestilence; it is the same interconnectedness that forms the backbone of the hymn. Furthermore, despite the hymn having been composed and sung in Latin, the concerns surrounding and fuelling it would have been all too familiar to the audience: the need to arm oneself with prophylactic powers before going on a journey and the plague being caused by a network of natural and spiritual causes. Thus, even in such moments not explicitly concerned

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[61] 'The Castle of Perseverance', ed. by David N. Klausner, *TEAMS Middle English Texts* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2010), ll. 2815–16 <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/publication/klausner-the-castle-of-perseverance> [Accessed 22 April 2022].

[62] Gail McMurray Gibson, 'Bury St Edmunds, Lydgate, and the N-Town Cycle', *Speculum,* 56 (1981), 56–90 (p. 89); 'Play 16, Shepherds', in *The N-Town Plays*, ed. by Douglas Sugano, *TEAMS Middle English Texts* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007), l. 89 s.d. <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/sugano-n-town-plays-play-16-shepherds> [22 April 2022].

[63] 'Stella Caeli', The Choral Public Domain Library (CPDL), <https://www.cpdl.org/wiki/index.php/Stella_caeli> [Accessed 24 September 2022].

with plague, its force was present in and among the people as well as in the plays—as if hovering in the air.

There is another very brief instance in which the medical thinking behind theorisations of plague features, albeit this time more explicitly. It concerns the famous comparison between Christ and a physician in the first Passion play of the N-Town Plays. Peter says:

> Thei that be crokyd, he shal cause hem to goo
>
> In the wey that Johan Baptyst of prophecyed:
>
> Sweche a leche kam yow nevyr non too![64]

This comparison is expanded when Peter discusses purgation and its spiritual equivalent of confession, both of which examined in previous chapters. Here, Peter urges in his preaching that many of the people have become dumb due to unconfessed sins, which should remind us of the medical material regarding blocked pores—in this case, the mouth—of the sinful. Peter explains:

> Many of yow be dome. Why? For ye wole not redresse
>
> Be mowthe youre dedys mortal, but therin don perdure,
>
> Of the wych, but ye have contrycyon, and yow confesse.
>
> Ye may not inheryte hevyn, this I yow ensure.
>
> And of all these maladys, ye may have gostly cure,
>
> For the hevynly leche is comyng now, for to vicyte.[65]

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[64] 'Play 26, Conspiracy; Entry into Jerusalem', in *The N-Town Plays*, ed. by Douglas Sugano, *TEAMS Middle English Texts* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007), ll. 393–6 <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/publication/sugano-the-n-town-plays> [22 April 2022].

[65] 'Play 26, Conspiracy; Entry into Jerusalem', ll. 410–15.

Sinful activity blocks the body's pores spiritually as well as physically, and the cure for that involves purging the body of corrupt matter (humoral matter as well as spiritual) via purgation. The heavenly physician (i.e. Christ) offers such a cure here. Here, we see, once again, characters drawing on a discourse which was closely connected to the experience of plague. This time, however, in comparison with the instance in 'Shepherds', the connection is more explicit, as the theory is explained to some degree.

Other evidence of direct engagement with plague is found not in the content of plays, but in the circumstances surrounding their production and performance, where we find evidence of efforts to regulate the space in which performances took place as well as the bodies of those who attended those spaces (spatiality and corporeality). These took the form of cancelled plays and regulations around activities in the production of plays due to plague outbreaks. This has been pointed out in the chapter on biopolitical civic measures with regards to the prevention of touring players from entering towns, but we might also note a few examples here regarding the cancellation of events, too. These examples highlight the immediacy and immanence of plague not only in the plays, but also in the context of live theatre. In 1514–15 as well as in 1520–1 in Lincoln, the City Council Minute Book records disruptions in the borrowing of 'diu*ers* garment*es* [and] other he ariorment*es* […] ffor the arryeyng off ye pagent*es* off Saynt anne gyld' due to plague.[66] The proposed solution is for the civic authorities to bring their own apparel, which suggests that the issue was sharing infected clothing. In 1518–19, a record in the *King's College Mundum Book* of the University of Cambridge suggests that Christmas plays were cancelled due to an outbreak.[67] As mentioned previously, public gatherings (including dramatic performances) were imbricated

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[66] James Stokes, ed., *Records of Early English Drama: Lincolnshire*. 2 vols. Vol. 1, *Records of Early English Drama* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), p. 135.

[67] Alan H. Nelson, ed., *Records of Early English Drama: Cambridge*. 2 vols. Vol. 1, *Records of Early English Drama* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), p. 90.

in the moral as well as public health geography of towns and cities, and it was for this reason

that the universities of Cambridge and Oxford were directed to suspend 'showes of vnlefull,

hurtfull p*er*nicious [and] vnhonest games' within a five-mile radius of the town (in

Cambridge's case) as well as within the university estates themselves in order to control

outbreaks and prevent 'manye lewde and euill sports'.[68] The key issue here was

congregation, for as the letter from the Privy Council to the University of Cambridge in

1575–6 notes, 'great assemblies of vulger people should be made whereby the infection of

the plage might be browght to that Vniv*er*sitie'.[69] In sum, then, despite a lack of explicit

mention of plague in plays, plague was strongly present in the ideas expressed, the language

used, the hymns sung, and the clothes worn in plays, as well as in the space and the

environment in which such plays were performed.

B. N-Town Passion Plays

In addition to the context in which dramatic performances took place, we find the impact of

plague-informed porousness in the content of plays from East Anglia, a region in which, as

illustrated in previous chapters, clear records of the socio-cultural effects of plague exist. I

will now turn to the N-Town plays to explore becoming—more specifically, becoming-

porous—in the performance of the body of Christ in relation to how Christ communicates

with the audience to define salvation and identify those who wronged him. Current

scholarship holds that the collection in British Library MS Cotton Vespasian D. viii, despite

bearing a caption suggesting that it contains a Corpus Christi cycle, does not seem to have

had much connection to the plays performed during the feast of Corpus Christi. Furthermore,

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[68] Nelson, p. 276; Alan H. Nelson John R. Elliott Jr., Alexandra F. Johnston, and Diana Wyatt, ed., *Records of Early English Drama: Oxford*. 2 vols. Vol. 1, *Records of Early English Drama* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), p. 195. The entry from Oxford dates back to 1583–4 and is recorded in the University's *Register of Congregation and Convocation*.

[69] Nelson, p. 276. Interestingly, a promise was made by the authorities in St Jean-de-Maurienne, Savoy, in 1565 to stage a Passion play if a plague outbreak relented; the promise was kept, albeit with some delay, and a play was performed in 1573: Lynette R. Muir, *The Biblical Drama of Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 37–8.

the plays in the collection have been arranged in a Creation-to-Doom overall narrative, but that does not mean each play was written for inclusion in the collection. There are several plays, including the Passion plays, which have been added at later points or replaced some existing parts of the collection on multiple occasions.[70] The collection, overall, was probably used in play production, at various points, and it is also suggested that the original group of plays in the collection—referred to in the banns—seems to have been intended for a touring dramatic troupe.[71] It has also been suggested that the Passion Plays may be the result of religious guild activity and organisation.[72] The language, according to Alan J. Fletcher's assessment, seems to be from East Harling in south-central Norfolk, although there are alternative placements around Bury St Edmunds and Thetford, and the production and modifications of the manuscript are thought to have taken place in a period from the late fifteenth century to early sixteenth century.[73]

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[70] The original group of plays which form the majority of the collection were themselves edited at some point, but it is not certain that the revisions were done by the scribe/compiler; they might have already been in his source material. The first addition to the collection is the Mary Play, containing Joachim and Anne (Play 8), Presentation of Mary in the Temple (Play 9), the Marriage of Mary and Joseph (Play 10), the Parliament of Heaven; Salutation and Conception (Play 11), and 'possibly' the Visit to Elizabeth (Play 13). Douglas Sugano notes that 'the scribe revised Joseph's Doubt (Play 12)', part of the original group of plays based on the new material. The addition of the Purification Play (Play 19) is the next instance of modification, followed by the Passion Plays, which had been copied separately. Alan J. Fletcher notes that while Passion Play 1 shows limited evidence of incorporation of original and new material (mainly new stuff was preserved), Passion Play 2 is an example of extensive blending and amalgamation (p. 191; see source at the end of the footnote). Lastly, the Assumption play, which had been copied by a different scribe on a separate occasion was added. Sugano suggests that the last two instances of revision occurred at a later time than the first attempt of producing the compilation. At an even later date, two revisers, the so-called Reviser A and Reviser B, in the facsimile edition (see the end of the footnote) added speeches to and revised several plays. For a fuller discussion, see: Alan J. Fletcher, 'The N-Town Plays', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, ed. by Richard Beadle and Alan J. Fletcher (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 183–210 (pp. 187–98).

[71] Fletcher, pp. 185, 187; Peter Meredith and Stanley J. Kahrl, ed., *The N-Town Plays: A Facsimile of British Library MS Cotton Vespasian D.Viii* (Leeds: University of Leeds, School of English, 1977), p. xxiv.

[72] Peter Meredith, ed., *The Passion Play from the N. Town Manuscript* (London: Longman, 1990), pp. 15–19. For more context, see: Joerg O. Fichte, 'The Passion Plays in *Ludus Coventriae* and the Continental Passion Plays', in *Chaucer to Shakespeare: Essays in Honour of Shinsuke Ando*, ed. by Toshiyuki Takamiya and Richard Beadle (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1992), pp. 111–20; Peter Happé, 'Performing Passion Plays in France and England', *European Medieval Drama,* 4 (2001), 57–75.

[73] Fletcher, p. 185; Gibson, 'Bury St Edmunds', 56–90; Sugano, 'Introduction'; Douglas Sugano, '"This Game Wel Pleyd in Good a-Ray": The N-Town Playbooks and East Anglian Games', *Comparative Drama,* 28 (1994), 221–34. On the play's provenance, also see: Granger, *The N-Town Play*, pp. 39–45.

As a consequence of the collection's complicated history, it is difficult to locate the N-Town plays, in general, and the Passion plays, in particular, within a specific tradition or category: the Passion plays are, at the same time, standalone compositions and components in a larger entity.[74] As a textual composite which is itself the product of a multitude of forces and was perhaps used in various contexts and for different purposes, the collection can present us with an equally complex and singular network of engagements with the material-discursive plague in its representation of the body. Indeed, the most prominent and at the same time complex example of the body within late medieval drama is the body of Christ, and it is the body of Christ that constitutes the centre of the Passion plays. This aspect has been studied in relation to the liturgy, and especially that of the Mass, by Victor Scherb, who highlights similarities between the representation of the Last Supper and Mary's *planctus* to the liturgy.[75] Similarly, Theresa Coletti also notes the 'persistent use of stage iconography to link the sacrament of *corpus Christi* with the sacrifice of Christ's human flesh'.[76] She locates the play within the context of the increased popularity of images of the Man of Sorrows, Christ in the Winepress, and the Mass of St Gregory—the first and last of which have been discussed in the previous chapter in relation to plague, and links the play to the meditative and affective devotional movement.[77] The Last Supper play of the collection has received considerable attention as the only example in cycle plays (or those, like N-Town, those resembling them) in which the institution of the Eucharist is treated extensively. Here, the

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[74] See Clifford Davidson, *History, Religion, and Violence: Cultural Contexts for Medieval and Renaissance English Drama* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), p. 266.

[75] Victor I. Scherb, 'Liturgy and Community in N-Town *Passion Play I*', *Comparative Drama,* 29.4 (1995), 478–92.

[76] Theresa Coletti, 'Sacrament and Sacrifice in the N-Town Passion', *Mediaevalia,* 7 (1981), 239–64 (p. 239). For Passion Plays in late medieval Germany and France, see Edelgard E. DuBruck, 'The Death of Christ on the Late-Medieval Stage: A Theater of Salvation', in *Death and Dying in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Edelgard E. DuBruck and Barbara I. Gusick (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), pp. 355–76.

[77] Coletti, 'Sacrament', p. 241. Also see Penny Granger, 'Devotion to Drama: The N-Town Play and Religious Observance in Fifteenth-Century East Anglia', in *Medieval East Anglia*, ed. by Christopher Harper-Bill (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005), pp. 302–17; Clare Smout and Elisabeth Dutton, 'Staging the N-Town Plays: Theatre and Liturgy', *Research Opportunities in Medieval and Renaissance Drama,* 49 (2010), 1–30.

scene is transformed into the administration of communion, where Christ, after taking the wafer in his hand and declaring that 'this that was bred, is mad my body', calls on the disciples:

> Now have I lernyd yow how ye shal ete
>
> Youre Paschal lombe that is my precyous body.
>
> Now I wyl fede yow all with awngellys mete.
>
> Wherfore to reseyve it, come forth seryattly.[78]

The stage directions note that 'our Lord gyvyth his body to his dyscypulys', saying: 'This is my body, flesch, and blode | That for thee shal dey upon the rode'.[79] Similarly, when administering the wine, he utters: 'This is my blood that for mannys synne | Outh of myn herte, it shal renne'.[80] While not ceremonially holding Mass, the action taking place in this scene seems to have the becoming power of the Mass itself—at least for the non-clergy.[81] In Deleuzian terms, the 'constant' element of power—language, or the Latin words of institution, has been taken away, an incredibly affective action has taken place—whereby the wafer and wine have become the body and blood of Christ, and representation has been circumnavigated in favour of becoming, where transubstantiation actually occurs without recourse to the linguistic and social elements of power (the priest). In Deleuze's theorisation of moving towards non-representation, which involves cutting, that excision 'is the extraction of power manifestation from language, and to the degree that the text is dependent upon language or the domination of a language system upon the potential free play of words, why

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[78] 'Play 27, Last Supper; Conspiracy with Judas', in *The N-Town Plays*, ed. by Douglas Sugano, *TEAMS Middle English Texts* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007), ll. 380, 437–40 <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/sugano-n-town-plays-play-27-last-supper-conspiracy-with-judas> [22 April 2022].

[79] 'Play 27, Last Supper; Conspiracy with Judas', ll. 449–50.

[80] 'Play 27, Last Supper; Conspiracy with Judas', ll. 490–91.

[81] As mentioned above, transubstantiation was considered as both representational and non-representational. For a study of performing the Mass on stage in medieval drama, see Lynette R. Muir, 'The Mass on the Medieval Stage', *Comparative Drama,* 23.4 (1989), 314–30.

then, linguistic elements will be subtracted'.[82] Furthermore, enlisting the help of Fraunhofer's phrasing, the enactment of the consecration in a place other than a church also destabilises another element of power in terms of 'spatiality'. Coletti draws a parallel between paintings of the scene with the performance, arguing that similarly to 'its pictorial counterpart, the N-Town play also endows scriptural narrative with ritual characteristics'.[83] However, as I have demonstrated, there are significant differences between the performative aspects of the drama and pictorial representations. With regards to the Agony, Coletti perceptively points out that the angel who 'descendyth to Jhesus and bryngyth to hym a chalys with an host therin', which, as Richard Rastall notes, is another instance of the administration of the sacrament, is without parallel in English cycle plays.[84]

As discussed in the previous chapter, there was an emphasis on the porous bodies of saints as well as portrayals of Christ within the topos of the Man of Sorrows when petitioning divine or saintly power in relation to plague. This same emphasis finds its way into portrayals of the Body of Christ in medieval drama, particularly East Anglian plays, which are unconnected to the immediate experience of plague, but highlight how people saw, understood, and portrayed the body through the lens of their experience of plague.[85] I would like to focus on the relation between the body of Christ and speech, for there seems to be a connection between Christ's bodily mutilation, his silence, and the issue of inclusion. The

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[82] Kowsar, p. 22.

[83] Coletti, 'Sacrament', p. 245.

[84] 'Play 28, Betrayal; Procession of Saints', in *The N-Town Plays*, ed. by Douglas Sugano, *TEAMS Middle English Texts* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007) l. 52 s.d. <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/sugano-n-town-plays-play-28-betrayal-procession-of-saints> [22 April 2022]; Richard Rastall, *Minstrels Playing: Music in Early English Religious Drama II* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001), p. 109; Coletti, 'Sacrament', p. 248. She also produces a miniature from an early fifteenth-century Book of Hours (BL, MS Add 50001, ff 7r-26v) depicting a similar scene. It is interesting that Penny Granger compares the N-Town collection to a Book of Hours in terms of its ability to present liturgical material to laypeople: *The N-Town Play*, p. 195. For iconographic analysis of other plays in the collection, see: Theresa Coletti, 'Devotional Iconography in the N-Town Marian Plays', in *The Drama of the Middle Ages: Comparative and Critical Essays*, ed. by C. J. Gianakaris Clifford Davidson, and John H. Stroupe (New York: AMS Press, 1982), pp. 249–71.

[85] Coletti suggests it is possible that the resurrected Christ in 'Play 35, Harrowing of Hell (2); Appearance to Mary; Pilate and Soldiers' appeared as a Man of Sorrows: 'Sacrament', p. 256.

issue of silence is not in itself necessarily something new, for even in Isaiah 53:7, it is

mentioned that 'He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a

lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did

not open his mouth'. However, once we examine the details of the enactment of this dynamic,

we begin to see an affirmative potential for creating new modes of communication in his

silence—a mode which aims to distinguish Christ's true believers from his persecutors.

Christ's silence has been examined in a number of studies. Alexandra F. Johnston

highlights the contrast between Christ's silence and the raucous sound of his foes in the York

cycle, noting that the silence allows the antagonists to condemn themselves using their own

words.[86] The play also juxtaposes public and private spaces in relation to truth: Christ only

speaks truth and in public—embodying the figure of the preacher to the fullest extent, while

the condemnation, plotting, and lies that pervade the speeches of his foes are done in courts

and private spaces. He does not—and perhaps cannot—participate in the discourse of his

accusers/tormentors, because his speech cannot include anything but truth.[87] Daisy Black

takes the issue of Christ's silence derailing his foes' authority further as she studies the

centrality of Christ in the plays despite him being silent in the York 'Trial Before Herod'

play. She writes that as Christ remains silent, 'the other characters' speeches and actions

become [more artificial]. As the scene continues, their speech disintegrates from the street-

filling, highly wrought alliterative schemes at the pageant's beginning, to a barrage of

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[86] Alexandra F. Johnston, '"His Langage Is Lorne": The Silent Centre of the York Cycle', *Early Theatre,* 3 (2000), 185–95 (p. 191). Also see: Clare Wright, 'Acoustic Tyranny: Metre, Alliteration and Voice in "Christ before Herod"', *Medieval English Theatre,* 34 (2012), 3–29.

[87] Johnston, '"His Langage Is Lorne"', p. 194. She traces this conception of Christ as the Word/Logos/Truth to Augustinian teaching: Alexandra F. Johnston, 'The Word Made Flesh: Augustinian Elements in the *York Cycle*', in *The Centre and Its Compass: Studies in Medieval Literature in Honor of John Leyerle*, ed. by Patricia J. Eberle James F. Burke, Ian Lancashire, Brian S. Merrilees, Robert A. Taylor (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1993), pp. 225–46. Also see: Alexandra F. Johnston, "At the Still Point of the Turning World': Augustinian Roots of Medieval Dramaturgy', *European Medieval Drama,* 2 (1998), 1–19; Alexandra F. Johnston, 'The Emerging Pattern of the Easter Play in England', *Medieval English Theatre,* 20 (1998), 3–23.

exclamations, questions, mock Latin and French and, finally, incoherent noise'.[88]

Furthermore, she highlights a similar kind of subversion at play in terms of the contrast

between Herod's gaudy costume and Christ's austere, 'still', and 'silent body'.[89] In a way,

Christ exposes the artificiality and fraudulent nature of Herod's authority by his lack of

participation in the court's garish culture.[90] The closest anyone has come to an understanding

of Christ's silence as an action rather than inaction is Rosemary Woolf, who argues that 'Far

from Christ's silence being solely a manifestation of his unquestioned submission to human

suffering, it becomes rather a sublime expression of his divinity'.[91]

I, too, would like to take the idea of Christ's silence further, but I would argue that

instead of a juxtaposition between speech and silence, participation and lack thereof, we see

different modes of communication—one through discursive means via one bodily orifice (the

mouth) and the other through visual/affective means via other bodily orifices (the wounds).[92]

It is this visual/affective mode of communication that preserves and coveys the porous force

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[88] Daisy Black, 'Commanding Un-Empty Space: Silence, Stillness and Scopic Authority in the York "Christ before Herod"', in *Gender in Medieval Places, Spaces and Thresholds*, ed. by Diane Heath Victoria Blud, Einat Klafter (London: University of London Press, 2019), pp. 237–50 (p. 247).

[89] Black, p. 248. Valerie Gramling also makes a similar argument by focussing on the flaying of Christ's skin during his torture. The premise of her argument is quite problematic, but her conclusion is similar to Black's. She contends that Jesus' skin separates his humanity from his divinity; thus, 'his transformation from mortal to divine [via flaying his skin] is a threat to the integrity of the social body since it signifies the ability to transcend social borders as well as physical ones, and, ironically, as his tormentors peel his skin away, they hasten both his transformation and their societal disintegration': Valerie Gramling, '"Flesche Withowtyn Hyde": The Removal and Transformation of Jesus' Skin in the English Cycle Passion Plays', in *Flaying in the Pre-Modern World: Practice and Representation*, ed. by Larissa Tracy (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2017), pp. 240–60 (p. 250).

[90] Herod's outrageous costume and over-the-top behaviour in this scene raises the issue of artificiality, theatricality, and its impact on the audience, which has been discussed in a number of works including the following: Elizabeth Burns, *Theatricality: A Study of Convention in the Theatre and in Social Life* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972); Philip Butterworth, *Staging Conventions in Medieval English Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Clifford Davidson, 'The Realism of the York Realist and the York Passion', *Speculum,* 50 (1975), 270–83; Nicole R. Rice and Margaret Aziza Pappano, *The Civic Cycles: Artisan Drama and Identity in Premodern England* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015); Victor I. Scherb, *Staging Faith: East Anglian Drama in the Later Middle Ages* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2001).

[91] Rosemary Woolf, *The English Mystery Plays* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972), p. 257. Also see Estella Ciobanu, who argues that Christ's disintegration is part of an 'argument' or contesting of claims to power by Christ and his torturers: *Representations of the Body in Middle English Biblical Drama*, *The New Middle Ages* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 125–88.

[92] Alexandra Barratt's reading of Julian of Norwich's account of the Passion broadly hints at the same idea, but leaves it undeveloped: p. 68.

of plague in and to the bodies on stage as well as those of the spectators. Arguably, this visual/affective mode of communication through the wounds is already at work in iconographic depictions of the bodies of plague saints and the Man of Sorrows discussed in the previous chapter. What separates the iconographic and the dramatic modes is the emergence of porousness—the becoming-porous, which brings the force of plague to drama not just via the enacting the transformation of the unified body into a disintegrated one, but also via its affective impact on the audience, which I have introduced in the previous section. Speaking through the wounds in both iconography and drama effectively bypasses language, thereby destabilising its primacy and strengthening the significance of affective piety. However, the dramatic becoming of this mode of communication goes one step further than iconography, because it bypasses representation altogether: it bypasses the visual mode of representation active in iconography. By bypassing representation and giving free rein to the affective impact of the experience, becoming-porous raises the potential for the creation of new meaning and prepares the scene for the subversion of the authority of acceptable interpretations of the Passion narrative.

However, the play does not quite seize becoming's subversive potential, for the speech through wounds is only comprehensible to Christ's friends, which excludes Jews from those capable of receiving his message and recognising his innocence. Thus, while this mode of becoming has a subversive potential in one respect—i.e. bypassing the dominance of representation, it bolsters and develops discrimination towards Jewish members of the community (whether real or fictive). Anthony Bale argues that the historical absence of Jews from England must not distract us from the symbolic role and function of the Jew in their interactions with Christian symbols in English society, pointing out that 'the "likeness" of Judaism derives from a moral or religious sense of representation, not from an actual

recollection'.[93] Therefore, examining Host desecration stories (of which the Croxton *Play* is one which we shall see below) and the riots and violence incited by them against Jews demonstrate moving examples of how becoming can and indeed has reared its ugly head.[94] Focussing on N-Town Passion Play 2, I shall also demonstrate that Christ's silence throughout his process of becoming-porous facilitates the experience of meditation on the Passion by focussing on corporeal elements of the Passion.

Christ is even less talkative in the corresponding N-Town trial play (Play 29: Herod; Trial before Annas and Cayphas) than the York plays Johnston and Black examine; Christ only speaks twelve lines compared to the twenty-four in York. When charged with proclaiming himself as the Son of God by the doctors and Caiaphas, Jesus utters his last lines in the play:

> Goddys Sone I am. I sey not nay to thee.
>
> And that ye all shal se at Domysday
>
> Whan the Sone shal come in gret powere and magesté
>
> And deme the qweke and ded as I thee say.[95]

There is a finality to his words; he will not engage with Caiaphas or the rest of his accusers again. However, that does not mean others will not be able to understand him. Take, for instance, Peter: after denying that he knows Jesus three times, the now wounded and silent

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[93] Anthony Bale, *Feeling Persecuted: Christians, Jews and Images of Violence in the Middle Ages* (London: Reaktion Books, 2010), pp. 111–14. David Lawton asks whether the expulsion of Jews from England in 1290 is a convincing enough basis for relying on the total absence of Jews in late medieval England in our analyses: David Lawton, 'Sacrilege and Theatricality: The Croxton Play of the Sacrament', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies,* 33 (2003), 281–309 (p. 293).

[94] See Michael Frassetto, ed., *Christian Attitudes toward the Jews in the Middle Ages: A Casebook* (New York: Routledge, 2007); Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999); Kristine T. Utterback and Merrall Llewelyn Price, ed., *Jews in Medieval Christendom: 'Slay Them Not'* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

[95] 'Play 29, Herod; Trial before Annas and Cayphas', in *The N-Town Plays*, ed. by Douglas Sugano, *TEAMS Middle English Texts* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007), ll. 169–72 <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/sugano-n-town-plays-play-29-herod-trial-before-annas-and-cayphas> [22 April 2022].

Christ looks at him in a meaningful way, prompting Peter to remember what Christ had said

to him the night before. He is then described in the stage direction as weeping and saying:

> A! Weelaway! Weelaway! Fals hert, why whylt thu not brest?
>
> Syn thi maystyr, so cowardly, thu hast forsake!
>
> Alas, qwher shal I now on erthe rest
>
> Tyl he, of his mercy, to grace wole me take?
>
> […]
>
> Whan I herd the cok crowyn, he kest on me a loke
>
> As who seyth, "Bethynke thee what I seyd before."
>
> Alas the tyme that I evyr hym forsoke,
>
> And so wyl I thynkyn from hens evyrmore.[96]

Here, unlike the corresponding York play, Christ speaks without uttering a word.[97] Rather, he

speaks via affect—casting a look as well as showing the effects of his torture, which will

have begun to appear on his body by that point, for the stage directions for some preceding

lines note that the torturers 'shal bete Jhesus about the hed and the body and spyttyn in his

face and pullyn hym down, and settyn hym on a stol and castyn a cloth ovyr his face'.[98] The

beating presumably continues for some further lines as the characters of 'Jews' play the game

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[96] 'Play 29, Herod; Trial before Annas and Cayphas', ll. 213–16, 221–224.

[97] In the York play, Jesus utters the following to Peter: 'Petir, Petir, thus saide I are | When thou saide thou wolde abide with me | In wele and woo, in sorowe and care, | Whillis I schulde thries forsaken be' (ll. 162–5). 'Play 29, the Trial before Cayphas and Anna', in *The York Corpus Christi Plays*, ed. by Clifford Davidson, *TEAMS Middle English Texts* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2011) <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/publication/davidson-the-york-corpus-christi-plays> [22 April 2022].

[98] 'Play 29, Herod; Trial before Annas and Cayphas', l. 180, s.d. Christ might also have looked at the audience, which, as Michael Camille notes, 'breaks the illusion of reality that has been constructed. Instead of being a historical narrative happening in the past, the internal gaze incorporates the viewer within the scene'. This will result in what Richard Kieckhefer has called 'the ongoing passion of Christ', which is an issue discussed in the previous chapter and this chapter in detail: Michael Camille, 'Mimetic Identification and Passion Devotion in the Later Middle Ages: A Double-Sided Panel by Meister Francke', in *The Broken Body: Passion Devotion in Late-Medieval Culture*, ed. by H. N. B. Ridderbos and R. M. Schlusemann A. A. MacDonald (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1990), pp. 183–210 (p. 190); Richard Kieckhefer, *Unquiet Souls: Fourteenth-Century Saints and Their Religious Milieu* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 97.

of 'Whele and pylle', in which they spin a blindfolded Jesus and beat him on the head, mockingly asking if he could identify the person who had beaten him.[99] In the next play, Jesus returns to verbal/aural speech—but only when listened to and treated non-violently, strengthening the point that unresponsiveness to his teachings and physical harm prompt Christ to move to a different mode of communication: a *woundly* one—a mode which excludes the offenders and makes them unable to understand him.[100] His conversation with Pilate is one example of his elocution when he is not being shut out or physically harmed.[101] What is unique in Pilate is his openness towards Jesus, and that seems to be why he is granted verbal/aural communication with him. Pilate, in quite a Pauline way, seems to at least have the capacity to understand Christ, and that allows Christ to engage in verbal/aural communication with him and explain his destiny.

The most significant exchange in the play, however, takes place between Christ and Herod, in which Herod is entirely incapable of understanding Christ's status and teaching. Herod begins his speech in a welcoming but contemptuous tone, demanding tricks from him as if he is a street magician. He begins with 'Jhesus, thu art welcome to me', but later asks: 'Now, Jhesu, I pray thee — lete me se | O meracle wroughth in my presens!'.[102] However, he quickly becomes frustrated with Jesus' silence, and as a result, becomes increasingly vulgar

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[99] 'Play 29, Herod; Trial before Annas and Cayphas', l. 190. Verdel A Kolve reads the comic elements in enactments of Christ's Passion as ways to control the 'horror of the Passion' via 'breaking the flow of its action', which approximates the interpretation of such scenes as comic relief. I understand such readings of those scenes and agree with them to some extent, but my point is that there is also an affirmative, oxymoronic action taking place in these episodes—they show the total disconnect between the torturers and truth, and they subsequently show the exclusion of the unbelievers from the community via the power of Christ: Verdel A Kolve, *The Play Called Corpus Christi* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966), p. 200.

[100] Gramling also makes an analogy broadly connected with mine: she textualizes the body of Christ and compares it with parchment, noting that it 'records his suffering and his sacrifice; the audience is called to witness the transformation and to remember the words/wounds written upon it': p. 256. While her analogy brings Christ's body under the dominance of representation, mine seeks to see Christ's as surpassing it.

[101] 'Play 30, Death of Judas; Trials before Pilate and Herod', in *The N-Town Plays*, ed. by Douglas Sugano, *TEAMS Middle English Texts* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007), ll. 60–80, 100–110 <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/sugano-n-town-plays-play-30-death-of-judas-trials-before-pilate-and-herod> [22 April 2022].

[102] 'Play 30, Death of Judas; Trials before Pilate and Herod', ll. 193, 203–4.

in his tone, moving from 'Jhesus, why spekyst not to thi kyng?' to 'What? Spek, Jhesus! And telle me why | This pepyl do thee so here acuse!', and then to 'What? Thu onhangyd harlot! Why wylt thu not speke?'.[103] Eventually, he is so outraged by this breakdown of communication that he spews insults before ordering the Jews to punish him:

> What? Spek, I say! Thu foulyng, evyl mote thu fare!
>
> Loke up! The devyl mote thee cheke!
>
> Serys, bete his body with scorgys bare
>
> And asay to make hym for to speke![104]

Jesus is then unclothed and whipped, and while Herod is exasperated by his inability to communicate, Christ's ensuant wounds as a result of his torture begin to speak of his redeeming mission to the audience. Nicholas Love's account of Christ's passion, one of the sources of the play for depicting the Passion, continually emphasises that 'onely for oure sauacione þis harde deþ is beden of þe fadere [and] taken of þe sone', and the play ensures that this message comes across in its portrayal of the distinction between the verbal/aural mode of teaching (employed in the presence of characters who are receptive of Christ's message and included in the Christian community) and the woundly mode (employed when overpowered by antagonistic forces, aimed at bypassing the 'Jewish' element of power—the language of the Old Law—and directed towards those who observe him receptively, such as Peter and the audience).[105] In the N-Town play, the whipping occurs due to this absence of receptiveness and the silence of Christ. The character of Judeus 3 says:

> Serys, take these whyppys in youre hande
>
> And spare not whyl thei last

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[103] 'Play 30, Death of Judas; Trials before Pilate and Herod', ll. 209, 213–214, 221.
[104] 'Play 30, Death of Judas; Trials before Pilate and Herod', ll. 229–32. Also see: C. Wright, 'Acoustic Tyranny: Metre, Alliteration and Voice in "Christ before Herod"', *Medieval English Theatre,* 34 (2012), 3–29.
[105] Love, p. 162.

> And bete this tretoure that here doth stonde!
>
> I trowe that he wyl speke in hast.[106]

Here, the issue of silence is at the centre of the conflict, and the whipping is supposed to make Christ submit to a normalised mode of speech recognised by Jews, whereas in the York play, the instance of whipping does not occur until the second trial before Pilate, when Pilate orders the soldiers to torture Jesus because of his claim to be king.[107] This is further corroborated by the way Herod orders a stop to the torture. When Jesus has been beaten to the point that he 'is alle blody', Herod emphatically says: 'Sees, serys, I comawnde you be name of the devyl of helle!'.[108] Here, rather than a consequence of a verbal exchange, it is seeing the wounded, bloody body of Christ that finally gets the message through to him and leads him to stop the torture, and it is at this point that Herod shows some form of openness to what Jesus, as a physical as well as a symbolic entity, stands for. He still does not understand Jesus, but upon seeing him still not engaging verbally after being injured, Herod asks in confusion, 'Thu haddyst levyr be betyn lame | Than thi defawtys for to telle?', which

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[106] 'Play 30, Death of Judas; Trials before Pilate and Herod', ll. 241–4. Even though it has been suggested that the blood used in such plays as well as in re-enactments of the Passion on Palm Sunday processions might have been 'animal blood as a theatrical substitute for the blood of Christ', Andrea Stevens' idea regarding the use of paint seems more likely: Clifford Davidson, 'Sacred Blood and the Late Medieval Stage', *Comparative Drama,* 31.3 (1997), 436–58 (p. 443); Bob Scribner, 'Popular Piety and Modes of Visual Perception in Late-Medieval and Reformation Germany', *The Journal of Religious History,* 15.4 (1989), 448–69 (p. 456); Andrea Stevens, *Inventions of the Skin: The Painted Body in Early English Drama, 1400–1642* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), pp. 51–4. Pigs' bladders or leather bags would have been used as the sack holding the artificial blood: Philip Butterworth, *Magic on the Early English Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 171; Butterworth, *Staging Conventions*, p. 144; Margaret E. Owens, *Stages of Dismemberment: The Fragmented Body in Late Medieval and Early Modem Drama* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), pp. 31, 38, 216; Scribner, p. 456. Marla Carlson also points out that in Passion sequences, bloody sponges were used during the crown of thorns episode and when the thieves' legs were broken with clubs in order to release blood slowly and continually. A suit of pigskin, painted with wounds, was also used for Christ: Marla Carlson, *Performing Bodies in Pain: Medieval and Post-Modern Martyrs, Mystics, and Artists* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 40–41; Peter Meredith and John E. Tailby, ed., *The Staging of Religious Drama in Europe in the Later Middle Ages: Texts and Documents in English Translation* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 1983), pp. 104–5, 109.

[107] 'Play 33, the Second Trial before Pilate', in *The York Corpus Christi Plays*, ed. by Clifford Davidson, *TEAMS Middle English Texts* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2011), ll. 328–39 <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/davidson-play-33-the-second-trial-before-pilate> [22 April 2022].

[108] 'Play 30, Death of Judas; Trials before Pilate and Herod', l. 245.

indicates that Jesus' case is no longer a matter of amusement for him.[109] The Jews torture Christ in order to get him to 'speke in hast', and he certainly does begin to 'speke in hast', but in a different system: an affective, non-representational system rather than the representational system of language or the pictorial system of iconography. The other Jews are still unaware of this new mode of speech, but Herod is exhorted to become more open to Christ, and consequently, bids the torturers to stop. Larissa Tracy notes that in many texts 'torture is a symptom of corrupt governance and disregard for law in opposition to the basic elements of English identity'.[110] Thus, Herod's command to stop the torture suggests that even he himself has realised his own fallacy and corruption through hearing the voice of the wounds. In a way, Christ's wounds make Herod himself 'speke in hast', too, in that he bids the torturers to stop, and it is an indication of the affective power of the actualisation of Christ's wounds. The gory aspects of the torture would have also facilitated the transmission of Christ's verity to the audience, because in this context, being wounded is not so much a sign of weakness, but a sign of power and righteousness.

This also happens in the next play when Satan realises that by allowing things to unfold as they appear, at that point, he will have effectively undermined himself, as Christ's death would result in the Harrowing of Hell, inevitably. Pilate's wife's account of her dream highlights that Christ's wounds even make Satan 'speke in hast': she says that the fiend in her dream told her that 'Thei that bete Jhesus or bownd hym fast — | Withowtyn end dampnyd shal be!'.[111] Later on, we see Jesus conversing with Pilate verbally/aurally once again, and here, unlike the York play, Pilate does not seem to find much threat in Jesus' regal title, even

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[109] 'Play 30, Death of Judas; Trials before Pilate and Herod', ll. 248–9.

[110] Larissa Tracy, *Torture and Brutality in Medieval Literature: Negotiations of National Identity* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2012), p. 136.

[111] 'Play 31, Satan and Pilate's Wife; Second Trial before Pilate', in *The N-Town Plays*, ed. by Douglas Sugano, *TEAMS Middle English Texts* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007), ll. 68–9 < https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/sugano-n-town-plays-play-31-satan-and-pilates-wife-second-trial-before-pilate> [22 April 2022].

going as far as asking, 'Serys, wolde ye youre kyng I shulde on the cros don?', to which one

of the doctors of law replies that it is actually the accusers that feel threatened by Jesus'

claim, as they only recognise the emperor as their sovereign.[112] In the march to calvary and

crucifixion episode, the same rule of Jesus only speaking verbally/aurally to those who are

open to understanding him is applied, and he only speaks, in accordance with scripture, of

course, to the women who mourn how he has been treated, Veronica—the legend around

whose veil/cloth containing a bloodied face-print of Christ we have discussed earlier, Mary,

Dismas (Dysmas in the manuscript)—the good thief, and God the Father. Mutilation

continues throughout the play, and episodes of scourging, coronation with the crown of

thorns, tearing off the purple robe, fastening of ropes are highlighted in the stage

directions.[113] In fact, the play is careful to depict the *arma Christi*—discussed in more detail

in the previous chapter, and it would be fair to assume that throughout these episodes, the

audience would have been expected to focus on the suffering, for as has been noted many

times, meditation on the suffering became a central point in late medieval religious culture

and art.[114] Anthony Bale points out that the use of the *arma Christi* in the play, and indeed in

other portrayals of the Passion, serves to intimately connect the disintegration of Christ's

body to Jews.[115] Thus, the wounds, like language—and even more so, function to bring

Christ and those open to his message together and exclude those who are not, who are

predominantly Jewish. This is made clear one last time in the final play of Passion Play 2,

where the knights tasked with guarding Christ's tomb connect what happened to him to those

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[112] 'Play 31, Satan and Pilate's Wife; Second Trial before Pilate', l. 165.

[113] See Nicholas Love's and Richard Rolle's meditations on the same episodes for some context regarding how the performance of the Passion might have been understood by the spectators: Love, pp. 160–71; Richard Rolle, *Richard Rolle: Prose and Verse Edited from MS Longleat 29 and Related Manuscripts*. ed. by Sarah Ogilvie-Thompson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 65–76. Similarly, the focus on the Passion has also been prominent in sermons: Gerald R. Owst, *Literature and the Pulpit in Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 508–9.

[114] Émile Mâle, *Religious Art from the Twelfth to the Eighteenth Centuries* (New York: Noonday Press, 1968), pp. 112–13.

[115] Anthony Bale, *The Jew in the Medieval Book: English Antisemitisms, 1350–1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 152–3.

who might wish to take the corpse. Affraunt, who is supposed to guard Christ's head, starts

with Christ himself, saying:

> Now, in this grownnde
>
> He lyeth bounde,
>
> That tholyd wounde
>
> For he was fals.[116]

Cosdram, the next guard watching the feet, says that he 'shal hym chide | With woundys

wyde' anyone who tries to steal the body.[117] Ameraunt promises 'Crownys I crake', and

Afraxat boasts that those who take any risks with him will be '[…] ful wete, | Walterid in

blood'.[118] By connecting Christ's believers to him through the exact wounds Christ himself

received during his Passion, a closer understanding of Christ is achieved through meditation

on the wounds and bodily porousness in a manner similar to that of affective piety.

Furthermore, the protective power of those wounds define the disintegration of the body not

as a threat or something to be avoided, but something to be considered, evoked, and

worshipped in moments of piety as well as in the face of trouble. The continued presence of

Christ in the Eucharist, moreover, proves once again that Christ has vanquished his enemies

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[116] 'Play 34, Burial; Guarding of the Sepulcher', in *The N-Town Plays*, ed. by Douglas Sugano, *TEAMS Middle English Texts* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007), ll. 270–72 <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/sugano-n-town-plays-play-34-burial-guarding-of-the-sepulcher> [22 April 2022].

[117] 'Play 34, Burial; Guarding of the Sepulcher', ll. 282–3.

[118] 'Play 34, Burial; Guarding of the Sepulcher', ll. 291, 296–7. This connection does not appear in the other Passion plays, nor in *The Northern Passion*, which is credited as being one of the sources for the plays: 'The Northern Passion', in *Codex Ashmole 61: A Compilation of Popular Middle English Verse*, ed. by George Shuffelton, *TEAMS Middle English Texts* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2008) <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/shuffelton-codex-ashmole-61-northern-passion> [22 April 2022]. Peter Meredith notices that the names of the knights, save for Affraunt, appear in Robert Reynes' *Commonplace Book*: Cameron Louis, ed., *The Commonplace Book of Robert Reynes of Acle: An Edition of Tanner MS 407* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1980), p. 257; Peter Meredith, ed., *The Passion Play from the N. Town Manuscript* (London: Longman, 1990), p. 217. Also see the notes on these verses in Spector's edition: Stephen Spector, ed., *The N-Town Play: Cotton MS Vespasian D.8*. 2 vols. Vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

through the manifold layers of becoming—that is, his bodily disintegration, his woundly speech, and the enactment of Mass within the play.

The reference of the text to the guardians as 'knights' raises the issue of anachronism in medieval plays and its relation to the whole debate about representation. It is possible that the knights were dressed in medieval gear rather than in an attempted historically accurate costume, following the famous costuming of Annas as being 'beseyn after a busshop of the hoold (old) lawe', which probably meant that they were supposed to wear the attire of contemporary bishops.[119] These are usually attributed to satirical, subversive, or parodic intentions.[120] Karen Ward understands such anachronisms in the York crucifixion play as a breakup of the 'mimetic frame'.[121] However, according to Deleuze, one cannot acknowledge representational 'conflicts' such as anachronisms as abandonment of representation.[122] Furthermore, the anachronism itself, which involves moving away from the closely-guarded, metahistorical scriptural narrative and world to the inclusion of contemporary issues, gestures, and costumes, is still representational, because it does not destabilise the order of things at work within society; they merely substitute one signifier for another. As Ward points out, such a substitution, nevertheless, has the potential to enhance the affective power of performances.[123] Such anachronistic representations, nevertheless, may well have invoked the contemporary experience of porousness in the struggle with pestilence and facilitated its connection to the becoming-porous of the body of Christ on stage.

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[119] 'Play 29, Herod; Trial before Annas and Cayphas', l. 164 s.d.
[120] See, for instance, Sugano's note on l. 164 s.d.
[121] Karen Ward, 'Polysemy, Metatheatricality, and Affective Piety: A Study of Conceptual Blending in the York Play the Crucifixion', in *Spiritual Temporalities in Late-Medieval Europe*, ed. by Michael Foster (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publisher, 2010), pp. 127–38 (p. 128).
[122] Deleuze, 'One Manifesto Less', p. 218.
[123] Ward, pp. 127–8. Also see Elisabeth Dutton, 'The Croxton Play of the Sacrament', in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama*, ed. by Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 56–71 (p. 62).

C. The Croxton Play of the Sacrament

A similarly powerful, positively porous enactment of the body of Christ (both in the form of the Host and the image of a wounded child) occurs in the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*. It is a miracle play centred around transubstantiation, which now exists in Trinity College, Dublin MS F.4.20 but was inscribed independently as a standalone text.[124] The copy of the text, the only one in existence, was produced in the mid sixteenth century, but the text itself claims that its events took place in 1461. The association with a village of Croxton (of which there are more than one in the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk) also comes from a reference to the town in the Banns. Due to the mention of another village, that of Babwell Mill near Bury St Edmunds, it has been suggested that the Croxton the text refers to is one near Thetford.[125] The play depicts the conspiracy of a group of Jews in late medieval Spain to 'examine' the Host, subjecting it, in the process, to a second Passion.[126] Similar to the Passion in scripture, Christ is resurrected and vanquishes doubt. The play concludes with a Corpus Christi procession and the conversion of the Jews.

There have been extensive and conflicting discussions of the play as an example of antisemitism, anti-Lollardy, and at the same time openness towards heterodoxy and alterity—

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[124] For a different assessment of the context of the manuscript's production, see: Tamara Atkin, 'Playbooks and Printed Drama: A Reassessment of the Date and Layout of the Manuscript of the Croxton "Play of the Sacrament"', *The Review of English Studies, New Series,* 60.244 (2009), 194–205.

[125] 'Croxton, *the Play of the Sacrament*', in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, ed. by Greg Walker (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), pp. 213–33 (214).

[126] Typically known as Host desecration narratives, the earliest instance of such stories occurs in Gezo of Tortona's treatise on the Eucharist, written around 981, in which a Jew steals a consecrated host in order to disgrace it: Phyllis G. Jestice, 'A Great Jewish Conspiracy? Worsening Jewish–Christian Relations and the Destruction of the Holy Sepulcher', in *Christian Attitudes toward the Jews in the Middle Ages: A Casebook*, ed. by Michael Frassetto (New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 25–42 (p. 38). On the tradition in France, see: Jody Enders, 'Dramatic Memories and Tortured Spaces in the *Mistere De La Sainte Hostie*', in *Medieval Practices of Space*, ed. by Barbara A. Hanawalt and Michal Kobialka (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), pp. 199–222. Many critics have also referred to the Passion taking place in the Croxton play as a 're-enactment': Heather Hill-Vásquez, '"The Precious Body of Crist That They Treytyn in Ther Hondis": "Miraclis Pleyinge" and the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*', *Early Theatre,* 4 (2001), 53–72 (p. 61); Richard L. Homan, 'Two "Exempla": Analogues to the "Play of the Sacrament" and "Dux Moraud"', *Comparative Drama,* 18.3 (1984), 241–51 (p. 245); Sister Nicholas Maltman, 'Meaning and Art in the Croxton Play of the Sacrament', *ELH,* 41 (1974), 149–64 (p. 157); Muessig, p. 137; Ann Eljenholm Nichols, 'The Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*: A Re-Reading', *Comparative Drama,* 22 (1988), 117–37 (p. 128); and so on.

something which connects the play to the previous chapters' focus on the discourse of

infection and its relationship to heterodoxy.[127] While many have persuasively written against

the Lollard connection, Ann Eljenholm Nichols notes that the author must have been familiar

with the anti-Lollard discourse as well as the vocabulary used by Lollards themselves, for the

text 'uses Lollard vocabulary to characterize the non-believing Jews'.[128] Thus, the text is

consciously aware of the issue of exclusion at work within it. Another extensively debated

point has been concerning the degree of antisemitism in the play, for apart from the body of

Christ, the text foregrounds the Jewish body, its location on the unified-porous continuum, as

well as its role in the torture of Christ. Critics generally fall into two broad camps, those who

see the play as emblematic of the exclusionary forces of antisemitism at work within late

medieval society and those who see a challenge to such forces in the play's depiction of the

interaction between Jews and the Host.[129] Jody Enders notes that Passion plays and Host

desecration plays provided a 'golden opportunity to purge audience emotion and give them

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[127] For the frequently challenged connection with Lollardy, see Cecilia Cutts, 'The Croxton Play: An Anti-Lollard Piece', *Modern Language Quarterly,* 5.1 (1944), 45–60; Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion*, pp. 34–42.

[128] Ann Eljenholm Nichols, 'Lollard Language in the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*', *Notes and Queries,* 36 (1989), 23–25 (pp. 23, 25). For the vocabulary used by Lollards, see: Anne Hudson, *Lollards and Their Books* (London: Bloomsbury, 1985); especially pp. 165–80. Penny Granger highlights that 'little correspondence between the incidence of drama, fonts, and Lollardy', therefore making it even unlikelier for the play to be part of a systematic campaign against Lollardy: *The N-Town Play*, pp. 67–8.

[129] Former camp includes: Robert L. A. Clark and Claire Sponsler, 'Othered Bodies: Racial Cross-Dressing in the *Mistere De La Sainte Hastie* and the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies,* 29.1 (1999), 61–87; Donnalee Dox, 'Medieval Drama as Documentation: "Real Presence" in the Croxton *Conversion of Ser Jonathas the Jewe by the Myracle of the Blissed Sacrament*', *Theatre Survey,* 38.1 (1997), 97–115; Lisa Lampert, 'The Once and Future Jew: The Croxton "Play of the Sacrament," Little Robert of Bury and Historical Memory', *Jewish History,* 15.3 (2001), 235–55; Steven Kruger, 'The Spectral Jew', *New Medieval Literatures,* 2 (1998), 9–35; Stephen Spector, 'Time, Space, and Identity in the Play of the Sacrament', in *The Stage as Mirror: Civic Theater in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. by Alan Knight (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), pp. 197–98. The latter camp could be said to include: Sarah Beckwith, 'Ritual'; Richard L. Homan, 'Devotional Themes in the Violence and Humor of the *Play of the Sacrament*', *Comparative Drama,* 20 (1986), 327–40; Elisabeth Dutton, 'The Croxton, pp. 56–71; Greg Walker, 'And Here's Your Host…: Jews and Others in the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*', *Jewish Culture and History,* 11.1&2 (2009), 40–56. There is a third camp, which considers the play as reflective of the urban mercantile culture of the late Middle Ages and the Early Modern period, and includes studies such as: Derrick Higginbotham, 'Impersonators in the Market: Merchants and the Premodern Nation in the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*', *Exemplaria,* 19.1 (2007), 163–82; Kathy Lavezzo, *The Accommodated Jew: English Antisemitism from Bede to Milton* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016), pp. 135–171; Alexandra Reid-Schwartz, 'Economies of Salvation: Commerce and the Eucharist in the Profanation of the Host and the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*', *Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies,* 25.1 (1994), 1–20.

pleasure by staging the unjust punishment of Christ and the presumably just punishment of the Jews for having punished him'.[130] In other words, the performance of suffering and the disintegration of the body was designed to induce affective piety, on the one hand, and catharsis, on the other. It is quite typical of Host desecration plays to feature the two instances of bodily disintegration—that of Christ and the Jewish villain. However, it is the simultaneity of the disintegration of bodies which distinguishes the Croxton *Play* from other examples of the genre. My analysis of the Croxton *Play* will show that despite focussing on the disintegration of the Jewish body extensively, the very act of performing it simultaneously with the bodily disintegration of the Host (or the body of Christ) ends up uniting the Jewish body with the body of Christ in their porousness, even though their respective disintegrations are intended for opposite effects. This shared quality will then enable the Jews to understand Christ and eventually convert, undermining the general reasoning for performing the torture of Jewish bodies (i.e. the cathartic punishment of Christ's torturers). I find the subversive force at work within the play substantial enough to challenge the ostensibly dominant exclusionary elements concerning Jewish bodies there, and so I would be more inclined towards the latter position, which emphasises the *Play*'s subversiveness. However, I do not, in any way, suggest that the play is not antisemitic; it certainly is, both in terms of its depiction of Jews as well as the context within which the play takes place. It has been highlighted by David Nirenberg that violence against Jews, literally and symbolically, was a ritualised aspect of Holy Week festivities in mainland Europe, sometimes following performances of the Passion of Christ.[131] As Nirenberg suggests, one of the aims of the Holy Week cycle was to 'make brutally clear the sharp boundaries, historical and physical , that separated Christian from Jew'.[132] In practice, these boundaries were enforced via biopolitical

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[130] Jody Enders, *The Medieval Theater of Cruelty*, p. 183.
[131] David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 214–15.
[132] Nirenberg, pp. 217–19.

means, as well, as Jews were separated from Christians throughout Holy Week.[133]

Furthermore, rumours of Host desecrations were often followed by riots against Jews.[134] I

argue, however, that the interaction between porous bodies poses a challenge against the

dominant medieval position of antisemitism. My main focus is on the Passion sequence and

how, once again, the silent Host or the Body of Christ overcomes adversity, communicates

with the audience as well as the Jewish characters, and in moving beyond representation,

melds the bodies of the same and the other by turning porousness into an affect—something

which can, in a plague-like manner, be exuded by bodies, be transmitted, and affect other

bodies.

In order to focus on the play's bodily performances, I turn to another article by

Nichols, who reorients the analysis of the *Play* towards its engagement with the elements of

Eucharistic and affective piety popular in the fifteenth century.[135] Further to what we have

discussed in the previous chapter, she points out that the 'symbols of the Passion are

ubiquitous in East Anglian parish churches; they are carved on baptismal fonts and porch

facades, decorate roodscreens, and are held by myriads of angels on hammerbeam roofs from

which the reserved Eucharist was suspended'.[136] This image is fused with the Eucharist in the

iconography of the Mass of St. Gregory, in which the Man of Sorrows appeared or came to

life on the altar during Mass held by the Pope praying to convince doubters of

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[133] Shlomo Simonsohn, *The Apostolic See and the Jews: History* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1991), pp. 131–2. This was, one must bear in mind, at the same time as lepers were allowed into the community to participate in rituals or collect alms, especially before the Black Death: Anna M. Peterson, 'Connotation and Denotation: The Construction of the Leper in Narbonne and Siena before the Plague', in *Leprosy and Identity in the Middle Ages: From England to the Mediterranean*, ed. by Elma Brenner and Francois-Olivier Touati (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021), pp. 323–43 (p. 333).

[134] Jestice, pp. 25–42.

[135] Ann Eljenholm Nichols, 'The Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*: A Re-Reading', *Comparative Drama,* 22 (1988), 117–37 (pp. 117, 121). Also see: Michael Jones, 'Theatrical History in the Croxton "Play of the Sacrament"', *ELH,* 66.2 (1999), 223–60.

[136] Nichols, 'The Croxton', p. 122. Once again, it is useful to remind ourselves of the impact such decorations had on mystics such as St Bridget, as seen earlier.

transubstantiation.[137] Finally, the variety of Host miracles or Host desecration stories, which, as Miri Rubin notes, developed from an account from 1290 Paris and became popular in the late Middle Ages, form the narrative backbone of the *Play*.[138] Thus, the play seems to be already centred around bodies, and the first action in that direction is taken by Jonathas, the Jewish merchant, who intends to put the Host 'in a prefe' (to a test); Jason, the first of his attendants, proposes:

> Yff þat thys be he that on Calvery was mad red,
>
> Onto my mynd, I shall kenne yow a conceyt good:
>
> Surely wyth owr daggars we shall ses on thys bredde,
>
> And so wyth clowtys we shall know yf he have eny blood.[139]

The subsequent suggestions are equally disturbing and sacrilegious: one says that 'wyth our strokys we shall fray hym as he was on þe Rood', another advances that 'smyte ye in the myddys of þe cake | And so shall we smyte þeron woundys five!'.[140] When inflicting those wounds, the characters emphatically emphasise the force with which they bore the Host, describing their every strike and its intended goal, but this turns into confusion as soon as Jonathas pierces the middle of the Host—the equivalent of Christ's side.[141] The Host starts bleeding profusely, and before they can immerse it in the cauldron full of boiling oil which

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[137] The origins of the image of the Man of Sorrows go back to a fourteenth-century miraculous appearance of the icon during Mass at the Basilica of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem (or Santa Croce) in Rome: Nichols, 'The Croxton', p. 122.

[138] Rubin, 'The Eucharist', p. 54; Nichols, 'The Croxton', p. 123. Also see: W. C. Jordan, *The French Monarchy and the Jews: From Philip Augustus to the Last Capetians* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), pp. 191–4.

[139] 'Croxton, *the Play of the Sacrament*', p. 223 (ll. 369–72).

[140] 'Croxton, *the Play of the Sacrament*', p. 223 (ll. 375, 377–78).

[141] Seth Lerer likens this emphasis on each element of torture in such sequences to records of the practice of law in late medieval society, where there is a 'growing emphasis on visualization', 'a theatrical mechanics to enacted law', and a 'liturgy of punishment'—a term he borrows from Foucault, especially in the context of the proceedings of public punishments, through which 'The lines between action and mimesis, between practice and performance, are continuously and constructively blurred': Seth Lerer, '"Representyd Now in Yower Syght": The Culture of Spectatorship in Late-Fifteenth-Century England', in *Bodies and Disciplines: Intersections of Literature and History in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. by Barbara A. Hanawalt and David Wallace (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 29–62 (pp. 34, 36, 38); Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), p. 34.

they have prepared, it sticks to Jonathas' hand, who starts running around in desperation.[142]

They tie the Host to a post and drive three nails into it, and then they try to remove it from

their master's hand, but somehow end up ripping it off: 'Here shall thay pluke þe arme, and

þe hand shall hang styll with þe Sacrament'.[143] This moment has also been the subject of a

significant amount of critical attention. Robert Clark and Claire Sponsler highlight that '[l]ike

women, Jews were frequently defined as "body," and, again like women, their bodies were

often seen as dangerously porous and open, threatening contamination of those (Christian

males) who came into contact with them', arguing that the same dynamic is at work in the

threat of contamination posed by Jewish bodies to the Host in this scene.[144] For them, it is the

Jewish body that has the potential to 'pollute' the Host. However, their reading is quite

unbalanced in their characterisation of the attachment of the Host to Jonathas's hand. They

emphasise that when Jonathas's 'hand becomes so strongly attached to the Host that it is

actually ripped from his body, pollution is vividly explored as the body of the Jew conjoins

with the body of Christ'.[145] It is true that the conjoining highlights an anxiety in terms of the

proximity of the threatening, polluting, and excluded body to a perfectly pure one, mirroring

the anxieties previously discussed in terms of the proximity of lepers, prostitutes, Lollards

(and Jews in mainland Europe) to the uninfected within the urban environment in civic

regulations against infection. Jews were associated with a variety of diseases and conditions,

some of which involved bleeding (such as menstruation, haemorrhages and haemorrhoids),

and the unease around contact with a Jewish body must have been recreated among the play's

audience.[146] However, to characterise what occurs here as the hand becoming 'so strongly

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[142] The significance of oil in the cauldron is that it parallels the anointing of Christ's body in the Passion narrative.

[143] 'Croxton, *the Play of the Sacrament*', p. 224 (l. 436 s.d.).

[144] Clark and Sponsler, p. 72.

[145] Clark and Sponsler, p. 72.

[146] Joshua Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews: The Medieval Conception of the Jew and Its Relation to Modern Anti-Semitism* (Skokie, Illinois: Varda Books, 2001), pp. 50, 149, 228 n. 27. Bale disagrees with characterising the medieval understanding of the Jewish body as something degenerate and contaminating. Rather, in his analysis of Chaucer's 'The Prioress's Tale', he emphasises that 'The Jewry is not a contagious

attached […] that it is actually ripped from his body' is quite misleading. The hand does not come off on its own in the pandemonium in order to signify that the polluted and the pure cannot naturally co-exist at any cost; it is ripped off in the middle of an attempt at treatment—in order to separate the Host from the hand. The hand is still Jonathas's hand, the hand of a Jew attached to the Host, and nowhere in the scene or in the play is the hand disowned and treated as an entity that no longer belongs to Jonathas. Furthermore, at the same time, we cannot ignore that for an 'othered body' to become melded with the body of Christ, a boundary has to be crossed—a new assemblage has to be established. If the sole concern had been pollution, an excision—the first mode of fighting infection, as we recall from the chapters on medical and civic responses to infection—would have been more than sufficient: the Host would have had to reject the hand, not take it and keep it.

Clark and Sponsler's reading goes on to argue that 'the dismemberment of Jonathas is the counterfigure of the wafer's enduring wholeness', and that this dismemberment is materialised in order 'uphold the wholeness of Christian community'.[147] The proposition here is based on the mistaken binary opposition which privileges wholeness to porousness, and it is through this privileged sign that they read the entire text. For them, the Host has to remain intact the whole time, otherwise the play will become too subversive to remain contextually, representationally, and discursively stable: wholeness is only for the same, and porousness only belongs to the other. It is due to this hierarchic binary opposition that they underline a 'risk of self-implication in the disavowed qualities projected onto [the western Christians'] racial others' as their conclusion.[148] The self-implication, by which it is meant the doubt of

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or leaking corrupt body, but rather an entity which is entered by non-Jews'. Here, Bale reverses the direction of the Jewish body's flow of power, underlining that it is the absorptive porousness of the Jewish body, its adaptive instability, as one of the reasons why it is treated with hostility: *The Jew in the Medieval Book*, pp. 132, 83.

[147] Clark and Sponsler, p. 73. David Lawton opposes this view by casting doubt on the whole ideas of 'wholeness' and 'community' in relation to dramatic performances: p. 295.

[148] Clark and Sponsler, p. 80. The same binary hierarchy governs Steven Kruger's analysis, who claims that 'the Christian body resists disintegration, and Jewish violence is finally visited back upon the Jews themselves,

Christians in transubstantiation, is not a deconstructive glitch in the play's discursive system that has somehow made its way into the play. Rather, it is the result of a parallel conception of the body, one that is porous and permeable, allowing for the Jewish body to be conjoined with that of Christ. As I have established throughout this thesis, not only was porousness not always the unprivileged sign, it was idealised, as in the cases of protective saints and the icon of the Man of Sorrows. Further proof is provided by the doctrine of concomitance itself, which states that each crumb of the broken Eucharistic wafer contains the unbroken, undiminished blood and body of Christ, thus signifying that porousness and disintegration do not render the body feeble or any less active.[149] Here, too, it cannot be any more obvious that the bleeding, bored-through Host is not intact, and if we were to tear the binary opposition down and dethrone wholeness, we would discover that when Jonathas's hand is ripped off, porousness and bodily disintegration are the only things in common between him and the Host; it is what unites Christ with the Jews.[150] It is here in this episode that the Passion moves

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demonstrating simultaneously the corruptibility of their unholy bodies and the miraculous vitality of the sanctified body of Christ. […] Bleeding, for any normal body a sign of the loss of physical wholeness, here paradoxically proves the host's life—a life that the remainder of the play's action will demonstrate to be ultimately inviolate': Steven Kruger, 'The Bodies of Jews in the Late Middle Ages', in *The Idea of Medieval Literature: New Essays on Chaucer and Medieval Culture in Honor of Donald R. Howard*, ed. by James M. Dean and Christian K. Zacher (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1992), pp. 301–23 (p. 312). In terms of the self-implication, David Lawton expresses a similar view by claiming that 'The Jews are the true Christians, who know the value of the Host throughout': p. 296. Also, Walker, 'And Here's You Host', p. 52. These ideas beg the question whether the woundly mode of communication works for Jews? In my view, the reception of the woundly message must result in the cessation of torture and a shift from antagonism to amity, as it does in N-Town. However, the Jews do not stop torturing the Host until they have been completely overcome in the end.

[149] See Rubin, 'The Eucharist', p. 50. Also see Miri Rubin, 'The Body, Whole and Vulnerable, in Fifteenth-Century England', in *Bodies and Disciplines: Intersections of Literature and History in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. by Barbara A. Hanawalt and David Wallace (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 19–28.

[150] In the N-Town 'Assumption of Mary' play, a similar episode occurs: a conspiring Jew tries to attack the funerary bier of Mary, but his hand gets 'fastened sore to this bere' (l. 424). He then converts and is saved from his painful predicament. This episode has also been illustrated multiple times, especially in Oxfordshire. Sian Witherden dedicates a chapter to this episode and reads the attachment as punishment for a kind of transgressive, polluting touch associated with Jews. Based on such an assumption, she offers a reading of the Croxton *Play*, which is quite similar to Clark and Sponsler's. However, when considering the moment in which Jonathas's hand is made whole, she wonders, 'how far has the rest of Jonathas' body become "hole", Christian, and healthy? The play gives no clear answer' (p,138). Her confusion is, in my view, due to the use of the same privileged binary opposition that Clark and Sponsler use. None of the two episodes should be read based on the assumption that bodies are fixed and continue to remain so after interaction with other bodies. In the Virgin's bier episode, just like Jonathas's case, un-whole bodies are the only things that unites the Jew and the Virgin. 'Play 41, Assumption of Mary', in *The N-Town Plays*, ed. by Douglas Sugano, *TEAMS Middle*

beyond representation on to becoming, where the boundaries between same and other are

crossed beyond the narrative through a positive, simultaneous violation of bodily integrity,

which unites the ostensibly excluded Jewish bodies and the Body of Christ (as opposed to a

negative disintegration, which we saw in the N-Town plays, which reinforced exclusion).[151]

The chain of becoming seems irreversible, for here, the famous quack doctor interlude

takes place, which removes the performance from the supposed source material by another

degree.[152] The episode does not move the plot forward in any way, but it transports the

setting of the play from Heraclea in Spain to Norfolk when Colle, the doctor's assistant, says

'Inquyre to þe colkote, for ther ys hys loggyng, | A lytyll besyde Babwell Myll, yf yhe wyll

have und[er]stondyng'.[153] The element of 'spatiality' is once again destabilised, and if we are

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English Texts (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007)
<https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/sugano-n-town-plays-play-41-assumption-of-mary> [22 April 2022].

[151] Lisa Lampert notes that the fusion of representation and becoming in the Passion narrative and Passion-related stories such as Host desecration ones 'creates a conception of the Jew as perpetual murderer, guilty not only of crucifying Christ in the historical past, but in the present, and until the Parousia, in the future'. While this may be true about N-Town and other cycle plays, the persistent unification of Jewish and Christian bodies on and off stage prevents the successful creation of such a concept in Croxton: 'The Once and Future Jew: The Croxton "Play of the Sacrament," Little Robert of Bury and Historical Memory', *Jewish History,* 15 (2001), 235–55 (p. 235). Also see Ruth Nisse, *Defining Acts: Drama and the Politics of Interpretation in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), p. 122.

[152] I agree with Jillian Linster in that the episode does not necessarily need to be read as a parody, but she also points out the Jews' refusal of treatment is a further indictment of their opposition to enlightenment and learning, something which I find difficult to accept: 'The Physician and His Servant in the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*', *Early Theatre,* 20 (2017), 31–48 (p. 43). For a reading of the episode as a parody, see Victor I. Scherb, 'The Earthly and Divine Physicians: *Christus Medicus* in the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*', in *The Body and the Text: Comparative Essays in Literature and Medicine*, ed. by Bruce Clarke and Wendell Aycock (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 1990), pp. 161–72. Nisse suggests that the episode harbours some of the animosity directed towards the migrant Flemish, Dutch, Walloon, and Brabantine communities active in East Anglia since the mid-fourteenth century: *Defining Acts*, p. 118. See the chapter on civic responses for more information about their treatment in relation to plague. Interestingly, all the herbs the doctor has given to the sick lady are purgatives, but they, according to Colle's sarcastic remark—'Nay, than she ys full save!', seem to have caused the patient's death, although Linster seems to disagree with the idea: p. 225 (l. 508). This is among the reasons why Linda Ehrsam Voigts argues that the doctor is genuinely a medical man: Linda Ehrsam Voigts, 'Fifteenth-Century English Banns Advertising the Services of an Itinerant Doctor', in *Between Text and Patient: The Medical Enterprise in Medieval & Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Florence Eliza Glaze and Brian K. Nance (Firenze: Sismel, 2011), pp. 245–278. See Elizabeth Dutton's essay for a slightly different reading of the doctor: Elisabeth Dutton, 'The Croxton Play of the Sacrament', in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama*, ed. by Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 56–71. On mumming plays, to which this episode has been generally linked, see: Richard Axton, *European Drama of the Early Middle Ages* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1974), Part I and Part III, Chapter 9, especially pp. 175–82; Hagen Bastian, *Mummenschanz: Sinneslust Und Gefühlsbeherrschung Im Fastnachtspiel Des 15. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt a. M.: Syndikat, 1983); Alan Brody, *The English Mummers and Their Plays: Traces of Ancient Mystery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970).

[153] 'Croxton, *the Play of the Sacrament*', p. 226 (ll. 540–41).

transferred from a narration of something which happened in Spain to something which is happening now, we have crossed the threshold separating representation from becoming once again. The difference between this scene and the aforementioned anachronisms in terms of costumes and the inclusion of local lay liturgy in N-Town is that here, the transposed setting envelops everything on stage—the plot, the characters, and the authority of the narrative, while in N-Town, the changed costumes are still encircled by the biblical setting, even if it is taking place somewhere in Norfolk. In Croxton, the authority of the narrative derives from the recording of its occurrence in Spain, and the transposition destabilises the representational structure of the play.[154] Furthermore, similar to the torture of Christ in front of Herod in the N-Town play, if we consider the confrontation between the Host and the doubters, the moment of the doctor's entrance marks the first stage of their defeat; the Host has repelled attacks by being violated and bled—by coming to life and moving beyond passive representation. In other words, the blood functions both as a sign of physical disintegration, through which Christ speaks, and a weapon with which the Host disrupts the aggressors' scheme. We can even view the farcical pandemonium of the Jews in this light and see it as when this defeat is laid bare. The fooling around serves to deflate the built-up tension in the situation and establish Christ's dominance. Richard Homan goes even further to view the scene as serious: he attempts to justify at length that the acts taking place on stage are not necessarily ridiculous.[155] However, it seems to me that his focus is misplaced, for the actions (screaming, running around aimlessly, foolishly chopping one's hand off in a desperate attempt at treatment, etc.) could arguably be determined as silly and farcical, but not as a result of frivolity or indiscretion on the author or audience's part; rather, a power play is taking place on stage, and the comedy is, in effect, the condescension of the losers and a

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[154] See Granger, *The N-Town Play*, p. 133 for a similar argument.
[155] Richard L. Homan, 'Devotional Themes', pp. 331–3.

show of dominance by the Host.[156] After this episode, the doubters, already on the backfoot,

pull the nails out of the Host, wrap it in a cloth, and toss it into the cauldron. Then, however,

'shall þe cawdron byle, apperyng to be as bloode', consequently overflowing.[157] Bewildered,

they resort to trying to get rid of the Host, and Jonathas suggests that they should 'make an

ovyn as redd hot | As ever yt can be made with fere', chuck the Host in it, and shut the lid

(mirroring the entombment of Christ).[158] The distressing, gory scenes of bodily

disintegration, in which Christ's body slowly transforms from an immaculate one to a

disintegrated one, may well have been reminiscent of the body's transformation during the

course of its struggle with plague. On the other hand, such scenes are overwhelmed or at least

paralleled by the Host's triumphant meekness, silence, and overpowering of the offenders,

and this is concluded with the explosion of the oven with blood gushing out of the cracks. In

this way, Christ's overcoming of adversity may have appeared encouraging in face of

pestilential disease. A victorious Christ, or rather, 'an image [which we later learn is one of

the Christ child] appere owt with woundys bledyng', calling on the Jews:[159]

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[156] Kruger and Walker have similar arguments: Kruger, 'The Bodies', p. 314; Walker, 'And Here's Your Host', p. 51. Hill-Vásquez notes that this episode acts, apart from offering comic relief, as an advocation for the role of Christ as the true physician: the doctor symbolises earthly physicians who are unable to cure their affliction: p. 65.

[157] 'Croxton, *the Play of the Sacrament*', p. 227 (l. 592 s.d.).

[158] 'Croxton, *the Play of the Sacrament*', p. 227 (ll. 603–4).

[159] 'Croxton, *the Play of the Sacrament*', p. 228 (l. 632 s.d.). Richard Homan finds a similar depiction of a wounded victorious Christ Child in a fifteenth-century exemplum in Lincoln Cathedral Library, MS 50, ff. 126v-127r, and while he refutes the connection between the image of the child and Man of Sorrows, as Nichols's reading and my analysis below will illustrate, the similarities are not easy to overlook: Homan, 'Two "Exempla"', pp. 241–51. On another sermon in the collection, see Gerald R. Owst, *Literature and the Pulpit*, p. 475. Furthermore, the role of blood libel stories must not be underemphasised. For instance, the analysis of visual representations of the story of Simon of Trent (alleged death in 1475), one of the most famous iterations of blood libel canards, by David S. Areford demonstrates the parallelism between its iconography and that of Christ's: the child is depicted among the instruments of his torture (similar to the *arma Christi*), in a wounded state (like the Man of Sorrows), dead (as in the *Pieta*), and in a triumphant state (mirroring Christ's resurrection), highlighting that the portrayal of Christ as a triumphant child would certainly not have been deemed outlandish by the audience: *The Viewer and the Printed Image in Late Medieval Europe* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 165–227. On the story of Simon and its impact, see Klaus Brandstätter, 'Antijüdische Ritualmordvorwürfe in Trient Und Tirol: Neuere: Forschungen Zu Simon Von Trient Und Andreas Von Rinn', *Historisches Jahrbuch,* 125 (2005), 495–536; R. Po-Chia Hsia, *Trent 1475: Stories of a Ritual Murder Trial* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Wolfgang Treue, *Der Trienter Judenprozess: Voraussetzungen, Ablaufe, Auswirkungen (1475–1588)* (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlungen, 1996).

> *O mirabiles Judei, attendite et videte*
>
> *Si est dolor* [*sicut*] *dolor meus!*
>
> Oh ye merveylows Jewys,
>
> Why ar ye to yowr kyng onkynd,
>
> And [I] so bitterly bowt yow to My blysse?
>
> Why fare ye thus fule wyth yowre frende?
>
> Why peyne yow Me and straytly Me pynde,
>
> And I yowr love so derely have bowght?
>
> […]
>
> Why blaspheme yow Me? Why do ye thus?
>
> Why put yow Me to a newe tormentry,
>
> And I dyed for yow on the Crosse?[160]

It is only after completely vanquishing the Jews, once they have been virtually beaten into submission and are unable to harm Christ anymore, that Christ begins to speak orally. During that whole sequence, the wounds and the blood speak to the audience and Jews simultaneously about how Christ was wronged as well as his power in overcoming his enemies and death. Much like the oxymoronic protective power of wounds in iconography and the N-Town play, here the blood performs two functions: on the one hand, it dramatically illustrates and emphasises Christ's innocence. On the other hand, in contrast to iconographic representations of the Passion, in which Christ is presented 'as passively exposed to the gaze of the devotee', it is the blood that actively disrupts the Jews' scheme and makes a mess of their arrangements.[161] Unlike similar Host desecration narratives, the Jews repent, and they

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[160] 'Croxton, *the Play of the Sacrament*', p. 228 (ll. 637–44, 651–3). The Latin translates as 'O you strange Jews, behold and see if any sorrow is like unto My sorrow'. See Lamentations 1:12.

[161] Alexandra Barratt also links this passivity to femininity in iconographic representations of Christ: Alexandra Barratt, '*Stabant Matres Dolorosae*: Women as Readers and Writers of Passion Prayers, Meditations and

are told by Jesus that they should go to a priest to become his 'servauntys' (Luke 17:14).[162]

Jesus also restores Jonathas' amputated hand, which has by this point been 'soden' and boiled to the point of tissue disintegration, and tells him:

> Thow woldyst preve thy power Me to oppresse.
>
> But now I consydre thy necesse;
>
> Thow wasshest thyn hart wyth grete contrycyon.
>
> Go to the cawdron, þi care shal be the lesse,
>
> And towche thyn hand, to thy salvacyon.[163]

Nisse avers that the play's mode of converting the Jews—through miracle rather than exegetical reasoning, 'offers a critique of the predominant English urban dramatic model, the typological play cycle in which the spiritual or allegorical senses attempt to neatly resolve history and the carnal, literal Jews ultimately disappear'.[164] This signifies the affective mode through which the play impacts the audience and undermines the discursive/representational system governing the play. After this, they go to the bishop and explain what they have done. The bishop petitions Christ to 'From thys rufull sight þou wylt reverte', which then leads to a procession to the church headed by the Host (similar to Corpus Christi and certain feast processions).[165] The second narration of the second Passion, taking place when the Jews are confessing, takes a much more solemn tone. The emphasis, however, is still on the wounds, and the Jews describe what each of them has done, which includes admitting 'Wyth daggars styckyd Hym wyth grevos wonde | New naylyd Hym to a post, and with pynsonys pluckyd

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Visions', in *The Broken Body: Passion Devotion in Late-Medieval Culture*, ed. by H. N. B. Ridderbos and R. M. Schlusemann A. A. MacDonald (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1998), pp. 55–71 (p. 55).

[162] 'Croxton, *the Play of the Sacrament*', p. 229 (l. 682). Ruth Nisse locates this scene within an apocalyptic context, in which the conversion of Jews is a necessity for the Christian teleology: *Defining Acts*, p. 102.

[163] 'Croxton, *the Play of the Sacrament*', p. 229 (ll. 693–7).

[164] Nisse, *Defining Acts*, p. 103.

[165] 'Croxton, *the Play of the Sacrament*', p. 230 (l. 737).

Hym down'.[166] Jason avows that 'in a cawdron we dyd Hym boyle' and 'In a clothe full just

we Hym wounde | And so dyd we seth Hym in oyle', while another notes 'In an hott ovyn we

speryd Hym fast'.[167] The narration emphasises, once again, the overwhelming power of

Christ in the face of such brutal attacks. This final procession to the church could have

included the audience, as well—if the play was ever actually performed.[168] Dutton notes that

the church here would have been 'another scaffold or another theatrical re-designation of a

single stage' and not a real church, which has been touted as a possibility by several critics.[169]

Furthermore, the inclusion of the audience, for Dutton, would imply their identification, 'by

the miracle of theatre, as a Jewish crowd'.[170] This is another instance of destabilisation,

involving both the corporeal as well as the tonal elements of discursive power. Here, the

union between the Host and the Jewish body is extended to the entire audience, therefore

blurring the lines of exclusion of bodies at work in other plays such as the N-Town Passion

plays. In addition, the terms in the Bishop's words, typically addressed to a Christian crowd

are applied, this time, to ethno-religious others, thereby removing the tonal and linguistic

exclusionary power from the play. Greg Walker highlights that 'the Croxton play seems

perversely to insist on alienating its audience, unsettling familiar conventions, and blurring

the very distinctions between the domestic and the foreign, the familiar and the alien, virtue

and vice, that such drama conventionally takes for granted', and it is indeed this effect that

comes with a successful move from representation (conventions) towards becoming.[171] This

is achieved, most prominently of all, I suggest, by the porousness which links various bodies

on stage as well as in the audience, and I argue, in the next section, that this porousness

would have been transmitted to the audience, as well, if the play was ever played.

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[166] 'Croxton, *the Play of the Sacrament*', p. 231 (ll. 854–5).
[167] 'Croxton, *the Play of the Sacrament*', p. 231 (ll. 857–9, 861).
[168] David Lawton dismisses this idea as a fantasy, arguing that the stage is simply cleared at the end: p. 296.
[169] Dutton, p. 68. Lawton casts doubt on the idea of the play being performed near an actual church: p. 294.
[170] Dutton, p. 68.
[171] Greg Walker, 'And Here's Your Host', p. 45.

3. Conclusion

Victor Turner describes public performances as part of a culture's 'subjunctive' mood, which opens up a realm of desire and possibilities.[172] It is within this realm of possibilities that through the performance of the porous body, not only the authority of language and the location of Christ's Passion, but also, crucially, the distinction between Jewish and Christian bodies evaporates in the Croxton *Play*. In the enactment of the Passion in both plays, there is a focus on the silence of Christ and the Host. This silence is only silence within the representational system of language—the representational system which the plays (particularly N-Town) associate with the Old Law, but we may also associate with one part of liturgical culture, as well. Rather than indicating passivity, the lack of oral speech hints at another mode of communication—one which works not so much through representation, but becoming and affect. In this woundly mode of speech, Christ and the Host speak through their wounds, circumnavigating and excluding their adversaries—i.e. the Jews, and eventually overcoming them through Resurrection, the Harrowing of Hell, affective piety, as well as the longevity of Christ in the Eucharist. Second, the plays themselves move beyond representation of scriptural material as well as certain other modes of communication in liturgical culture (e.g. the spatiality of the Mass, semiotics of iconography, corporeality of Christ's body, and the tonality of priestly address) towards a non-representational form of communication, in which the Passion as well as transubstantiation occur in real time and right on the spot. Third, while this move results in the reaffirmation of the exclusion of Jews from the community in N-Town, the dissolution of boundaries in Croxton, materialising through the fusion of the Host with a Jew's hand and the inclusion of Jews in the concluding procession, would have further destabilised the exclusionary forces regarding Jews within the

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[172] Victor Turner, 'Liminality and the Performative Genres', in *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle: Rehearsals toward a Theory of Cultural Performance*, ed. by John MacAloon (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1984), pp. 19–41 (p. 21).

play itself as well as in late medieval culture. Thus, porousness would be the factor uniting Jews and Christians. This ambivalent function of bodily porousness can be seen as an extension of the ambivalence we saw in previous chapters, where porousness was viewed both as a threat as well as a natural quality—and, at times, even a divine quality.

Informed by my earlier references to the experience of affective piety and the similar affective elements in the discussed plays, I would also like to reiterate and emphasise, in this concluding section, that regardless of whether the performances reinforce or subvert the idea of exclusion in their interaction with Jewish characters, the performance of porousness in the plays discussed above would have endowed the audience, at least to some degree, with a sensation of porousness, and this sensation would have been aided and amplified by the plague-ridden context in which they lived. Even though there is not ample evidence of audience reaction to the performance of plays during plague outbreaks, I would argue that there is a spectacle, close enough to performances of the Passion in terms of its affective capacity, for which there is evidence of audience reaction: that of the procession of the flagellants. It has been noted that the flagellant movements were indeed inspired by and partial re-enactments of the Passion of Christ.[173] The renowned chronicler of the Black Death, Gilles li Muisis, notes that in the summer of 1349 in Tournai, a Dominican friar gave a sermon in which he 'compared the blood of those whom he called the red knights [i.e. the flagellants] to the blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ'.[174] What is more, what links the two performances is that both involved the production of the porous body.[175] The chronicler

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[173] John Henderson, 'The Flagellant Movement and Flagellant Confraternities in Central Italy, 1260–1400', *Studies in Church History,* 15 (1978), 147–60 (pp. 156–60); John Henderson, 'Penitence and the Laity in Fifteenth-Century Florence', in *Christianity and the Renaissance: Image and Religious Inspiration in the Quattrocento*, ed. by Timothy Verdon and John Henderson (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990), pp. 229–49; Richard Kieckhefer, 'Radical Tendencies in the Flagellant Movement of the Mid-Fourteenth Century', *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies,* 4 (1974), 157–76; Swanson, pp. 23–4.

[174] John Aberth, *The Black Death: The Great Mortality of 1348–1350, a Brief History with Documents* (New York: Palgrave, 2005), p. 133.

[175] Another issue to which both sets of activities are linked is violence against Jews: while Host desecration stories, as discussed above, resulted in attacks against Jewish communities, the flagellants were blamed,

Robert of Avesbury reports that, in 1349, a large group of penitents came to London (from

Flanders) and 'went barefoot in procession twice a day in the sight of the people':

> […] their bodies naked except for a linen cloth from loins to ankle. Each
>
> wore a hood painted with a red cross at front and back and carried in his
>
> right hand a whip with three thongs. Each thong had a knot in it, with
>
> something sharp, like a needle, stuck through the middle of the knot so that
>
> it stuck out on each side, and as they walked one after the other they struck
>
> themselves with these whips on their naked, bloody bodies […]. Three
>
> times in each procession they would all prostrate themselves on the ground,
>
> with their arms outstretched in the shape of a cross. Still singing, and
>
> beginning with the man at the end, each in turn would step over the others,
>
> lashing the man beneath him once with his whip, until all of those lying
>
> down had gone through the same ritual.[176]

The gruesomeness of the experience is stressed in Henry of Herford's account of such

performances in 1348 Germany, in which, quite similar to the description of Christ's

suffering in each verse of the plays, it is said that 'they beat and whipped their bare skin until

their bodies were bruised and swollen and blood rained down, spattering the walls nearby'.[177]

He emphasises that he himself saw 'bits of metal [penetrate] the flesh so deeply that it took

more than two attempts to pull them out'.[178] He goes on to discuss how moving the spectacle

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mainly by hostile chroniclers, for inciting or committing pogroms against Jews for reasons ranging from the flagellants' refusal of the role of Jews in the narrative of the apocalypse to well poisoning, which was an accusation levelled against Jews for the spread of plague, among other things: John Aberth, *Contesting the Middle Ages: Debates That Are Changing Our Narrative of Medieval History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), pp. 113, 127, 134 n. 61.

[176] Rosemary Horrox, ed., *The Black Death* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), pp. 153–4.
[177] Horrox, *The Black Death*, p. 150.
[178] Horrox, *The Black Death*, p. 150.

was, specifying that a 'man would need a heart of stone to watch this without tears'.[179] Gilles

li Muisis notes that the performance was so poignant that 'those watching were amazed and

wept and had compassion on their sufferings'.[180] Indeed, it is possible that the poignancy of

both displays of suffering elicited similar emotional responses from the audience—i.e.

weeping and amazement. However, this does not mean that the onlookers considered both

experiences similar. Even though performance itself relies more significantly on becoming,

and even though producers of dramatic performances of the Passion strove to make the

experience as tangible and viscerally immediate as possible, the audience would have

indubitably been aware of the relative theatricality of what they were seeing in front of them.

Similarly, those watching the procession of the flagellants, while cognizant of the penitents'

emulation of the Passion of Christ, knew that there was an ontological difference between

their suffering and that of Christ's. Rather, what I am suggesting is that it is the affective

impact of both spectacles which functions in a similar way and transcends the discursive

knowledge of the narrative holding actions in place. Going back to the impact of the

performance on the audience, John McGavin and Greg Walker highlight with regards to the

York Crucifixion pageant:

> In the course of the pageant, the audience is encouraged to lose sight—both
>
> literally and metaphorically—of the significance of what is happening to
>
> Jesus, and instead to identify vicariously with the efforts, pains, jibes, and
>
> squabbling of the soldiers who are performing the Crucifixion.[181]

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[179] Horrox, *The Black Death*, p. 151. Henry, as well as other chroniclers such as Fritsche Closener of Strasbourg, take time to censure, even disparage the flagellants for their unorthodox behaviour, but they emphasise the emotional impact of their practice, as well: .

[180] Aberth, *The Black Death*, p. 136. Also see Philip Ziegler, *The Black Death*. 2nd edn (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), 'Germany: The Flagellants and the Persecution of the Jews'.

[181] McGavin and Walker, pp. 9–10. On studies analysing the affective impact of medieval plays using cognitive theory, see: Jill Stevenson, *Performance, Cognitive Theory, and Devotional Culture: Sensual Piety in Late Medieval York* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

In other words, the affective impact dissociates the experience from the narrative, thus inducing further becoming on the part of the audience. But at what is this becoming directed? We can speculate on this based on the elements of this affective force, which include, as Robert of Avesbury's account shows, the sight and feel of the coarse, bloodied garment of the flagellants, the sight and scent of their blood, their wails and cries, the crack of their whips, and their stooped bodies shuffling away at the end of their ritual. These assertions are also applicable to the audiences of N-Town as well as Croxton plays. Being confronted with the gushing wounds of Christ, as the tormentors narrate every single lashing of the whip or pounding of the hammer, the audience would have registered the visceral sensation of being made porous either visually, aurally, or even kinetically, tactilely, and aromatically, no matter where they were sitting or standing. The movements across the performance space, the banging of the hammer, or even the roars or cries of the actors may have struck those close enough to the performance space, and the blood used in such scenes may have splattered on those who were watching from a close distance. The blood and artificial wounds used may have had distinctive scents, which may have been sensed by the spectators. For those watching from a distance, this would have entailed witnessing the raising of the cross, tying the Host to the post, and the emergence of the wounded child from the oven as the central actions of the play. What the audience saw in both cases is, in short, the process of becoming-porous.

In the early 1360s, the chronicler Fritsche Closener of Strasbourg wrote that 'wherever [the flagellants] came, many people of the cities also became flagellants, both laymen and priests, but no learned priest joined them. Many well-meaning men joined this whipping pilgrimage; in their simple-minded way, they could not see the falsehood which resided there'.[182] Similarly, Mathias of Neuenberg recorded that in 1349 more than a

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[182] Aberth, *The Black Death*, p. 130.

thousand people joined the movement in Strasbourg.[183] Why would not the 'learned' clergy join the movement? Apart from authorial bias, another reason for this refusal may have been the stronger dominance of discourse over those whom the author calls 'learned'. As discussed with regards to the *Tretise* as well as the plays, reformist distate for the types of dramatic and ritual performances that we might associate with becoming was rooted in the potential of such performances to separate the experience from the narrative governing it, in ways which might prove potentially subversive. Here, too, the 'learned' clergy would have been able to see the 'falsehood' of the practice, because they would have recognised becoming's potential to transcend discourse and separate the experience from its governing narrative. Finally, why would such a large number of people join a movement whose main activity involves an emulation of Christ's suffering? The straightforward answer would be to show penitence in order to appease God's anger and stop the plague outbreak. But if we consider the implications of the answer, we will realise that it presupposes that becoming-porous is, rather than a display of submission, is an affirmative action capable (at least potentially) of change—just like Christ's porousness. Thus, by undergoing the experience of watching the process of becoming-porous, the onlookers would have felt the affirmative power of porousness and been encouraged to emulate Christ's suffering (or becoming-porous) themselves.

Thus, the audience of the plays would have felt that bodies could be porous yet remain strong, alive, and well. More importantly, however, this immediate, visceral affect may have been pondered on later, thus becoming digested through the discursive understanding of human identity and returning from becoming to representation,[184] and it may have reminded them of those affected by the pestilential outbreaks, which they must

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[183] Aberth, *The Black Death*, p. 130.
[184] Because reflection on the experience of becoming-porous takes place within the representational system of language, it is more pronouncedly located within the realm of representation.

have witnessed at least once in their lifetime: covered with oozing wounds, abandoned by their friends and families, contained in their houses or neighbourhoods; or those who were thought to spread infection: sinners, women, heretics, foreigners, and Jews. It may have also reminded them of the protective powers they could invoke to fight pestilence, ranging from the saints to perhaps even the flagellants themselves, who emulated Christ by becoming porous almost a century ago; or to what they saw before their eyes: the porous body of Christ. One is also inclined to speculate that those watching the Croxton play may have even considered, upon seeing the Jews joining them and fusing with the body of Christ, that they might indeed have something in common with them. Unlikely as this last suggestion was, this expansive gamut of signs did reinforce (in N-Town) as well as undermine (in Croxton) the regimes of exclusion in late medieval English culture as it escaped the representationalism of liturgy. Such signs were indebted to one element running through them all: the porousness of the body.

Conclusion

In the years following the Black Death, England experienced further entanglements with nonhuman agents of disease. In 1485, 'a newe kynde of sicknes came sodenly through the whole region euen after the first entryng of the kyng [Henry VII] into this Isle'.[1] Thomas Forestier, a physician who wrote a tract at the end of the fifteenth century in response to the outbreak, struggled to name the disease in the opening sentences, contenting himself with calling it a 'feuer of pestilens'.[2] The Cambridge physician John Caius writes in his treatise on the disease (1552) that 'because it most did stand in sweating from the beginning vntil the endyng', the disease was called 'the Sweating sickenesse: and because it firste beganne in Englande, it was named in other countries, the englishe sweat'.[3] Caius, however, opts for more medically specific terms: English *Ephemera* or pestilent *Ephemera*. *Ephemera* denotes a fever lasting one day, but as this fever originated in England (and the English) and was

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[1] Edward Hall, *Hall's Chronicle: Containing the History of England, During the Reign of Henry the Fourth, and the Succeeding Monarchs, to the End of the Reign of Henry the Eighth, in Which Are Particularly Described the Manners and Customs of Those Periods*. ed. by Sir Henry Ellis (London: J. Johnson etc., 1809), pp. 425–6. Hall is not the earliest chronicler who mentions the epidemics of the Sweating Sickness, but he offers the earliest detailed account. The earliest is in *Fabyan's Chronicle*: Robert Fabyan, *The New Chronicles of England and France, in Two Parts: By Robert Fabyan. Named by Himself the Concordance of Histories*. ed. by Henry Ellis (London: F.C. & J. Rivington [etc.], 1811; repr. 1516).

[2] London, British Library, Additional MS 27582, ff. 70–77 (f. 70).

[3] Studies by James R. Carlson, and Peter W. Hammond, and by Alan Dyer show that disease outbreaks between 1485 and 1551 (when the disease disappeared) occurred with less frequency and mortality rate than plague. Furthermore, the disease was more widespread in rural areas than in cities, and among the higher echelons of society more than the rest: James R. Carlson, and Peter W. Hammond, 'The English Sweating Sickness (1485—C. 1551): A New Perspective on Disease Etiology', *Journal of the History of Medicine,* 54 (1999), 23–54 (p. 29); Alan Dyer, 'The English Sweating Sickness of 1551: An Epidemic Anatomized', *Medical History,* 41 (1997), 362–84 (p. 378); John Caius, 'A Boke or Counseil against the Disease Commonly Called the Sweate or Sweatyng Sicknesse (1552)', in *The Works of John Caius, M. D.*, ed. by E. S. Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912), Chapter 3, p. 10. The identity and cause of the disease (*Sudor Anglicus* in Latin) are unknown, yet they have been the subject of substantial debate. See, for instance: Carlson and Hammond, pp. 34–54; William P. Cheshire, Jay A. van Gerpen, and James J. Sejvar, 'Sudor Anglicus: An Epidemic Targeting the Autonomic Nervous System', *Clinical Autonomic Research,* 30 (2020), 317–23; Dyer, pp. 362–84; John L. Flood, ''Safer on the Battlefield Than in the City': England, the 'Sweating Sickness', and the Continent', *Renaissance Studies,* 17.2 (2003), 147–76; Robert S. Gottfried, 'Population, Plague, and the Sweating Sickness: Demographic Movements in Late Fifteenth-Century England', *Journal of British Studies,* 17.1 (1977), 12–37; Paul Heyman, Leopold Simons, and Christel Cochez, 'Were the English Sweating Sickness and the Picardy Sweat Caused by Hantaviruses?', *Viruses,* 6 (2014), 151–71; Mark Taviner, Guy Thwaites, and Vanya Gant, 'The English Sweating Sickness, 1485–1551: A Viral Pulmonary Disease?', *Medical History,* 42 (1998), 96–98; Mark Taviner, Guy Thwaites, and Vanya Gant, 'The English Sweating Sickness, 1485 to 1551', *The New England Journal of Medicine,* 336.8 (1997), 580–82. Studies such as Dyer's and Gottfried's confirm that the epidemic was not as deadly as plague.

caused by 'infection and putrefaction', a special term needed to be employed.[4] Both diseases

were considered pestilential or epidemic, and Caius highlights this explicitly: 'infection [is]

most lyke to this [plague]'.[5] The sweating is, thus, the body's defence mechanism to purge

the corrupt, heated humours from the body's pores.[6] The causes of, important factors in the

transmission of, and treatments for the disease also mirrored those of/for plague. Corrupt air

due to unhygienic environment featured as the main cause, followed by astral influence on

the quality of air. Individual disposition (managed through regulation of the six non-naturals)

and the state of bodily pores were still crucial factors. Even in terms of treatment, dittany

appeared as an ingredient in a purgative remedy.[7] Caius's treatise does not discuss the moral

aspects of infection closely, but we know that divine punishment became the most important

cause in plague tracts by the mid-sixteenth century.[8] In terms of public health measures, too,

the same policies that were implemented for plague examined in Chapter 2 continued to be

exercised with regards to the Sweating Sickness.[9] On the political significance of the

epidemic, Hall writes, quite similarly to what was implied in the 'Canutus':

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[4] Caius, p. 10. The one-day fever can be caused by both cold and heat, and as the outbreaks always began in warm seasons, it seems that similar to plague, the Sweating Sickness was thought to have been caused by hot infected air. Bartholomaeus Anglicus notes that this fever is capable of generating swellings and buboes, which strengthens the pathogenetic connection with plague: *On the Properties of Things*. trans. John Trevisa. ed. by M. C. Seymour. 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), vol. 1, p[. 379–80; Carlson and Hammond, p. 20.

[5] Caius, p. 13.

[6] Caius, p. 12.

[7] Caius, p. 32.

[8] Christiane Nockels Fabbri, 'Continuity and Change in Late Medieval Plague Medicine: A Survey of 152 Plague Tracts from 1348 to 1599' (unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Yale University, 2006), pp. 184–6.

[9] There is not much evidence of policies specifically against the Sweating Sickness, and it seems that ordinances under the umbrella terms of 'pestilence' covered the Sweating Sickness, too. One of the very few exception is a report of 'the annual grand march of the city watch' being cancelled due to the epidemic in 1528: John Noorthouck, 'Book 1, Ch. 7: Henry VII and Henry VIII', in *A New History of London Including Westminster and Southwark* (London: R. Baldwin, 1773), pp. 106–22, in *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/new-history-london/pp106-122> [Accessed 4 May 2023]

> This contagious and euell plague chaunced in the first yere of kyng
>
> Henryes reigne as a token and a playne signe […] that kyng Henry should
>
> haue a harde and sore beginning […].[10]

In spite of such similarities, the conceptualisation of the disease seems to have diverged from that of plague in certain respects. Christiane Nockels Fabbri has shown that references to astrological causes in plague tracts steadily declined from the mid-fifteenth century up to the end of the sixteenth century just as references to divine punishment as a cause saw a sharp rise.[11] In comparison, in an as-of-yet unreviewed study of the mentions of the Sweating Sickness in texts between 1485 and 1700, Derek Gatherer points out that references to the disease were most frequent in 1630–1690 (almost a century after the disease disappeared), during which moral and astrological explanations for the epidemics surged.[12] Why would this disparity occur, when the discourse of infection was initially employed to conceptualise the Sweating Sickness in almost exactly the same way as it was to understand plague in late fifteenth century, as discussed in Chapter 1? What has changed in the constitution of the assemblages to cause this mutation of the discourse of infection? I do not intend to give detailed answers to these questions here. Rather, I would like to use this example to highlight the generative and combinational quality of historical assemblages. Evidently, the material nonhuman agent causing the disease has changed, resulting in changes in symptoms, yet it was still considered part of the same category of pestilential diseases—with similar causes and modes of transmission. In addition, the Reformation was in full force, but as we saw in Chapter 2, the tension between orthodoxy and heterodoxy was also present in how the discourse of infection was employed with regards to plague in the fourteenth and fifteenth

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[10] Hall, p. 426.
[11] Fabbri, p. 184.
[12] Derek Gatherer, 'Discourses on the "English Sweat" in the Early English Books Online Corpus', *Preprints* (2023) <10.20944/preprints202302.0404.v1>

centuries. The period also saw the birth of Humanism, but the emphasis on divine power seems to work against the movement's ethos. Why was it that, despite the continued presence of the material force of nonhuman agents, the discourse of infection became less immediately material and privileged distant and abstract causes such as divine intervention or astral influence?

Perhaps a second new disease could help us make sense of the dynamics of the reconstitution of these assemblages. According to Ulrich von Hutten, whose treatise was translated by Thomas Paynell (whose translation of the 'Canutus' we saw in Chapter 1) in 1533, the 'frenche pockes' emerged in 1493.[13] The causes of the disease was still a matter of debate, but physicians were all agreed 'that through som vnholsom blastes of the ayre, […] the lakes, fountaines / flodes, [and] also the sees were corrupted, And therof […] venemus vapors to come down from the ayre, which liuinge creatures (in drawyng the breth) receyued'.[14] The astrological explanations of the disease seem to be the chief factors, which, in this case, have resulted in the concentration of corrupt air in Northern Europe. The disease is classified as another epidemic. However, it belongs to a group of diseases which includes 'Elyphancia / lepre, tetters, and al yl kynd of scabbes and boils, and what so euer euils deformeth and vnfasshioneth the body, as the gout, palsey / sciatica / ioynt ache, and other lyke dangers', which direct corrupt humours to the skin, causing symptoms such as ulcerations and chancres.[15] These swellings are untreatable except with mercury, which

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[13] Ulrich von Hutten, 'De morbo gallico [De guaiaci medicina.]', trans. by Thomas Paynell (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1533; STC 14024), p. 1r <https://www.proquest.com/books/de-morbo-gallico/docview/2240907672/se-2> [Accessed 4 May 2023]. The disease referred to as the French pox here is one or more in the *Treponematosis* group, which denotes diseases (syphilis, yaws, bejel, pinta) caused by the bacterial genus *Treponema*. It was thought, for a long time, that syphilis was introduced to Europe from the New World as a result of Columbian explorations. Palaeopathological studies have now refuted this view, as evidence of *Treponematosis* diseases has been found in pre-Columbian remains: Marylynn Salmon, *Medieval Syphilis and Treponemal Disease* (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2022), pp. 1–5.

[14] von Hutten, p. 3v.

[15] von Hutten, pp. 3v–4r.

actually can be effective against the infection, yet poses the risk of poisoning.[16] Curiously, skin pores are not mentioned in explaining the mechanics of infection, but, as the disease was grouped with leprosy, it is possible that leprosy's mode of transmission was also deemed valid with regards to the pox. The treatise notes that the disease often progresses into leprosy, highlighting the high degree of conflation between them. The connection with leprosy also emphasised the significance of sexual conduct in the transmission of the disease as well as the role of women in it. In contrast to leprosy, however, the treatise notes that women infected with the pox suffer more severe symptoms.[17]

With regards to treatment and protection, chastity and abstinence as factors facilitating the effectiveness of mercury are greatly emphasised in the treatise, and they involve not having sex and shunning wine for forty days after mercury treatment.[18] Furthermore, much like Chapter 3, saints were petitioned for help against the disease. The treatise mentions that 'There was ymages offered and hanged before saynt Roche, and his olde sores were newe remembred', clearly signifying the attempt to recreate the saint's passion (or becoming-porous) as a protective act.[19] We also saw in the same chapter that, as Marylynn Salmon has argued, the significance of representations of fishes in the iconography of St Christopher in England, highlighting that the saint was considered to have protective powers against syphilis or leprosy.[20] In terms of public health measures, too, patients seem to have been either cared for and taken to hospitals or expelled from cities.[21] Finally, we come to what we saw in Chapter 4: was there a performative power to porousness in early modern drama? It becomes clear, based on plays such as Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*

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[16] von Hutten, pp. 5r, 6v; Salmon, p. 29.
[17] von Hutten, p. 5v.
[18] von Hutten, pp. 35v–36r.
[19] von Hutten, p. 1v.
[20] Salmon, pp. 35–52.
[21] John Arrizabalaga, John Henderson, and Roger French, *The Great Pox: The French Disease in Renaissance Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 36, 197.

(1603/1604) that the coital aspect of the pox was widely-known.[22] On the other hand, Kelly J. Stage illustrates that Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton's play *Westward Ho* (1604) represents moral depravity in two types of bodies—the individual and the civic—via equating pox (or the French Disease) with plague.[23] Furthermore, as Ernest Gilman notes, by the seventeenth century, references to pox and plague lose their material referent and become interchangeable, functioning as curse words rather than medical or moral terms.[24]

It seems, then, that what we witness here is the unlinking of the discourse of infection and the material reality of disease. As a result, even though diseases were discussed via the same medical theories and responded to through the same medical and biopolitical measures, there was a preference for distant and abstract theorisations of the causes of disease. Furthermore, despite the idealised porous bodies of saints holding fast against new diseases, the iconoclasm of the Reformation and the cessation of mystery plays meant that the renewal of their (and Christ's) passions would have only taken place in Holy Communion or in meditations on the Passion. Thus, the performance of porousness, discussed in Chapter 4, would not have happened anymore or would not have had the same affective power. The unlinking of the discourse of infection and the material reality of plague has been usually interpreted as a reaction to medicine's inability to address and treat such diseases, thus prompting people to view macrocosmic causes as more prominent.[25] However, the persistence and survival of medical theories through at least three epidemics (plague,

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[22] See, for instance, James D. Mardock, '"Thinking to Pass Unknown": Measure for Measure, the Plague, and the Accession of James I', in *Representing the Plague in Early Modern England*, ed. by Rebecca Totaro and Ernest B. Gilman (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 113–29.

[23] Kelly J. Stage, 'Plague Space and Played Space in Urban Drama, 1604', in *Representing the Plague in Early Modern England*, ed. by Rebecca Totaro and Ernest B. Gilman (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 54–75 (pp. 66–7).

[24] Ernest B. Gilman, *Plague Writing in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), pp. 150–69.

[25] For instance, see: Roger French, *Medicine before Science: The Business of Medicine from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 159; Robert S. Gottfried, *The Black Death: Natural and Human Disaster in Medieval Europe* (New York: The Free Press, 1983), Chapter 6; Nancy G. Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine: An Introduction to Knowledge and Practice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 129.

Sweating Sickness, and pox) challenges this: if people had lost hope in science and medicine, why was it continuously employed and why did it remain relatively unchanged? Furthermore, such a move seems to have made the porousness, openness, and the networked conception of the body less significant. Firstly, Roger French notes that in the sixteenth century, dissections of the victims of the pox 'were generally looking for an intrusive substance' and found 'white or viscous matter close to the bones'.[26] This entailed that instead of corrupt matter and corrupt air entering the body and infecting the humours through a process of synthesis, foreign matter was thought to enter and remain un-synthesised within the body. Almost impossible to excise via surgery due to its deep-seated location, such an understanding of disease would have only made the idea of bodily integrity more relevant, encouraging the prevention of the infiltration of corrupt matter.[27] Moreover, the modes of fighting infection seem to have now been conflated in popular imagination, as we have analogies drawn between two diseases addressed via distinct modes: the mode of excision in tackling pox, which valued the integrity of the body, is equated with the mode of containment employed against the Sweat, which emphasised the body's fragmented nature.

Thus, without extensive revision of the discourse of infection (i.e. what diseases are and how the discourse of infection operated), we see old assemblages disassembled and new ones formed within early modern culture using generally the same building blocks; porousness dethroned by integrity. The causes and consequences of these instances of disassembling and re-assembling (or, in Deleuzian terms, deterritorialization and reterritorialization) are the matter of future, more detailed explorations; as is examining the role of nonhuman agents in them. Nevertheless, this study has, for its part, explored the

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[26] French, *Medicine*, p. 159.

[27] We may also remind ourselves of the advice from 1603 in Italy, which urged those with weak chests to wear leather clothing, thereby completely isolating the body from interaction with external entities, which would have also bolstered the idea of bodily integrity: Sandra Cavallo, and Tessa Storey, *Healthy Living in Late Renaissance Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 106.

capacity of analyses of assemblages for uncovering minute changes with great consequences in a limited timeframe. It has offered a multidisciplinary account of how nonhuman agents (i.e. diseases such as plague) impacted diverse ideas regarding the composition of the human body, the maintenance of its health, and its powers and capacities. It has used novel theoretical models to examine how plague's nonhuman agency simultaneously informed and destabilised how bodies, spaces, and activities were understood, governed, portrayed, and performed. It has examined a multi-generic range of material to identify how infection was conceptualised and combatted using four interconnected modes. The multiplicity of factors in the unfolding of such events and ideas necessitates change in a given time's episteme. Indeed, as Gilles Deleuze writes, 'time is the most radical form of change'.[28]

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[28] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*. trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 89.

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