REMEDIATIONS OF THE WESTERN ANATOMICAL IMAGINARY: FROM OVID'S MARSYAS TO MIDDLE ENGLISH THEATRE TO RENAISSANCE ANATOMY

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Abstract: *My investigation of the Middle English Passion plays seeks to determine whether there exist continuities between instances of anatomisation in late medieval theatre and in Renaissance anatomy, which may indicate the subliminal role of Christian discursive practices in the formation of a western anatomical imaginary. The circumstances of tearing apart Jesus's body in the Passion plays may be a far cry from those which reveal the anatomical body in early modern anatomy and its illustration or from those of Marsyas's flaying in Ovid's Metamorphoses, an episode familiar to educated medieval Christians. Nonetheless, all three instances of "anatomisation" rely on a quest for truth which both motivates and crowns them, and whose outcome is, I contend, the mediation and remediation of the hegemonic anatomical imaginary in the West. While in Ovid truth is obliterated in the process of punitive torture, early modern anatomy actively pursues the truth of the body, even as anatomical illustration often still suggests the penological circumstances of the process, thus rendering the anatomist a modern Apollo. In between them, the Middle English Passion plays thematise the pursuit of truth, a truth not so much of Jesus as of power and its legitimacy, yet to be revealed through torture. The Passion drama's torture, like its subsequent cultic remediations, renders Christ's an "anatomical body" virtually akin to that featured in early modern anatomy books. However, just as this quest for truth in both discursive practices fashions the anatomical body, thence an anatomical imaginary, its overt violence gets tacitly inscribed as the default modus operandi of both anatomy proper and the Christian (anatomical) imaginary.*

Key Words: *Middle English Crucifixion plays, early modern anatomy, Marsyas (Ovid's* Metamorphoses*), anatomical imaginary, remediation (Bolter and Grusin)*

> I told him that the way to salvation was by Jesus Christ, God-Man, Who, as He was man, shed His blood for us on the cross, etc. "Oh sir," said he, "I think I heard of that man you spake of, once in a play at Kendall, called Corpus Christi play, where there was a man on a tree, and blood ran down," &c. And after that he professed that tho' he was a good churchman, that is, he constantly went to Common-Prayer at their chapel, yet he could not remember that he ever heard of salvation by Jesus Christ, but in that play. This very discourse made me the more vigorously go thro' the chappelry [of Cartmell, Yorkshire], and both publickly and from house to house catechise both old and young. (Shaw 139)

The above dialogue occurred in 1644, the Protestant preacher John Shaw records, with a 60-year-old man who struck Shaw as healthy (rather than *senile*). For the parishioner, Jesus makes sense exclusively via the bloody image which the man recollects having seen as a child, half a century before, in a Corpus Christi play at Kendal in Westmorland (now in Cumbria). Whether the 1644 incident truly occurred, and if so, to what extent its contents may have been invented by the zealous preacher intent on uprooting any Catholic allegiance from his flock (Ciobanu, *Body in England* 327–8), and/or may owe to memory distortion

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through false suggestions having to do with the early childhood religious milieu,[1] is irrelevant to this investigation. Rather, I will address here the recurrence, in the later Middle Ages, of *violent* Christic images, both pictorial and textual, in an attempt to identify whether they impacted, in however indirect or convoluted a fashion, on the collective imagination as regards the body torn to pieces (roughly, *anatomised*), if framed as search for, or demonstration of, the truth of the body, here love.[2] I use the concept of *anatomical imaginary* to define not simply the input of the science of anatomy – its *in-sight into the* (truth of the) *human body*, i.e. what Foucault calls the *intelligible body*[3] – into the collective imagination, but rather "a corpus of cultural attitudes and interpretations of bodily organs and systems that sustained and made possible anatomical knowledge" (Harvey 81).[4]

Specifically, my investigation of the Middle English Passion plays will seek to determine whether or not there exist any continuities between instances of anatomisation in late medieval theatre and in early modern anatomy, which, if present, might suggest that the formation of the western anatomical imaginary was in certain respects consistent with, if not undergirded by, Christian discursive practices. On the face of it, the circumstances of tearing apart Jesus's body in the Passion plays may be a far cry from those which reveal the anatomical body in Renaissance anatomy and its illustration, or from those of Marsyas's flaying in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, an episode familiar to – and moralised for the benefit of – educated medieval Christians (Ciobanu, "Iconicity" 20–1). Nonetheless, all three instances of "anatomisation" rely on a quest for truth which both motivates and crowns them, as we shall see.

To revert to Shaw's account: Why should the Crucifixion be associated with *blood* in the old parishioner's recollection of the Kendal Passion play, on the one hand, and how does its bloody rendition in ME theatre relate, if at all, to *bloodless* renditions of the anatomical body in Renaissance anatomy books, on the other? Blood and crucifixion are odd bedfellows in the scripts – since the punitive act is relatively bloodless – unless we consider the cultural milieu wherein the biblical cycles, with their focus on the mangled, bleeding Passion body, emerged. From the twelfth century onwards, in the Cistercian-inspired devotion to the human nature of Christ, as framed within *theologia cordis* (affective theology), his Passion and Crucifixion were depicted awash with blood so as to foster *compunctio cordis* (the piercing of one's heart) and thereby *compassio Christi* (compassion for Christ literalised as sharing in his Passion) in the Christians beholding the Gothic crucifix or hearing a Passion sermon (Ciobanu, *Body in England* 245–6, 289–99). East-Anglian bourgeois mystic Margery Kempe (d. 1438) experienced no less (*Book of Margery Kempe* 1.45.2524–32; Ciobanu 332–4).[5] On seeing (or recalling) the crucifix, Margery would invariably be so moved as to cry out loud, weep and sob for grief, as at Leicester:

[1] See Foster (13–14, 39–41, 101–4) on how episodic memory can be adversely influenced by false suggestions, so that the *retrieved* memory is re-constructed rather than simply recalled (viz. fully consistent with what was originally *encoded* in the hippocampus and *stored* in the cerebral cortex).

[2] I cannot also examine here the *ethical* implications of the overarching western familiarity with images of anatomisation.

[3] For didactic reasons, Foucault (136) distinguishes between the intelligible body and the useful body, even as he acknowledges that they interact with and inform one another. The *intelligible body* provides an abstract hegemonic explanatory model of the body (in the anatomico-metaphysical register); however, it is constituted by observation of, and in turn impinges upon, the practical deployment of the body. Constituted through a set of regulations and of empirical and calculated methods, the *useful body* (in the technico-political register) is trained or disciplined through regimens such as those devised by the church and school.

[4] For Elizabeth Harvey, "human corporeality is the palimpsested record of its anatomical discoveries, its cultural habits, and the historically specific understanding of its functions" (82).

[5] *The Book of Margery Kempe* (late 1430s), penned by a priestly amanuensis, records the highly controversial embodiment of *theologia cordis* teachings in Margery's flamboyant public devotional performances (Ciobanu, *Body in England* 292–4, 330–40).

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> Sythyn yed sche forth to Leycetyr.... And ther sche cam into a fayr cherch wher sche behelde a crucyfyx was petowsly poyntyd and lamentabyl to beheldyn, thorw whech beheldyng the Passyon of owr Lord entryd hir mende, wherthorw sche gan meltyn and al to relentyn be terys of pyté and compassyown. Than the fyer of lofe kyndelyd so yern in hir hert that sche myth not kepyn it prevy, for, whedyr sche wolde er not, it cawsyd hir to brekyn owte wyth a lowde voys and cryen merveylowslyche and wepyn and sobbyn ful hedowslyche that many a man and woman wondryd on hir therfor. (*Book* 1.46.2606–13)

For a remediated[6] glimpse of the object of such devotions, we should only recall Jesus's torture – of medieval inspiration! – in Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* (2004).

Here is a telling case of the lengths to which the medieval Christocentric *theologia cordis* in the Latin West could be carried out iconographically, complete with a reminder of the duality of response by laypersons. The London Annals for 1305 (qtd. in Binski 343) record that on Good Friday an expensive cross done by one Thidemann the German was unveiled in Conyhope chapel. Whether elicited by genuine devotion or mere curiosity or both, the populace's eagerness to see the devotional artefact provoked the ecclesiastical authorities' chagrin; fearful that the popular fervour verged on idolatry, the bishop of London soon ordered the cross destroyed. If indeed a *Gabelkreuz* ("forked crucifix"), or *crucifixus dolorosus*, as conjectured by modern scholars, the Conyhope cross was already somewhat familiar in England (Binski 346; Viladesau 61). However, "self-conscious and disturbing departure from [iconographic] norms" (Binski 350) was not the only "fault" of the Y-shaped crucifix. Rather, the cross was symptomatic of the progressively more violent representations of the Crucifixion as encouraged by *theologia cordis* and the fascination which the latter's iconography could elicit, if sometimes sadistic in nature (Mills 108; Lipton 1202; Ciobanu, *Body in England* 309–23).

To such Christocentric devotionalism we should add the Cult of the Wounds (Ciobanu, *Body in England* 258–60), an eleventh- and twelfth-century monastic development on the theme of Christ's suffering humanity which spread quite widely after the 1350 jubilee in Rome popularised the Isaian image of the Man of Sorrows (Isa 53.3). Already in the early fourteenth century, the wounds were dedicated masses and came to be represented in Books of Hours for private devotion, as well as on amulets believed to have beneficial effects on the wearer and hugely sought after (Rubin 302–6). Since the thirteenth century, the Man of Sorrows pointing to his hand wounds (*imago pietatis*) or to his side wound (*ostentatio vulnerum*) had become a recurrent motif in English sculpture, e.g. the tympanum of Lincoln Cathedral, and miniature (Rubin 308).[7] The motif was capitalised upon in devotional tracts and sermons alike both by prelates or ordinary preachers teaching devotionalism and by the mystics. Yet the wounds were adored as spiritually comforting thanks to their salvific promise, at the expense of acknowledging the *violence* these wounds testified to (Brown, Parker 38) in order to be thus appointed. Such violence was framed within the Christian atonement doctrine (Brown, Parker 38–43) predicated in a *retributive logic* (Gorringe 369)

[6] Bolter and Grusin use *remediation* to describe the condition of new communication technologies, which challenge the work of their predecessors, even as the latter attempt to reaffirm their position, in a logic of refashioning both themselves and each other so as to balance the dynamics of immediacy and hypermediacy characteristic of all media (Bolter, Grusin 5–15). As various media always attempt "to achieve immediacy by ignoring or denying the presence of the medium and the act of mediation" (11), (re)mediations of the body render it the object of communication as illusionistic representation of immediacy.

[7] A particularly salient case, if German, is the Ebstorf *mappamundi* (*c.* 1234–84?; destroyed during WW2), which represents the world literally as the missing, or rather dismembered, Corpus Christi (Ciobanu, "Mapping the New World" 143–4) – at once the Eucharist (Armin Wolf, qtd. in Warnke 16) and the physical body of the historical Jesus (perhaps as his Real, though invisible, Presence in the Host, in accordance with Lateran IV's Eucharistic dogma). His pierced hands and feet, like the Veronica-representation of his head, rank as metaphoric points of the compass (Woodward 290) guiding the pious Christian towards salvation. See Woodward (307–9) for the controversy surrounding the map's dating and likely English authorship.

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naturalised by Anselm of Canterbury in his *Cur Deus homo* (1095–98) as divine, perforce righteous, hence universally applicable and valid (Ciobanu, *Body in England* 36–7, 213–18).[8] Again Margery Kempe furnishes an outstanding example of awareness ahead of her times when the sight or mere traces of physical violence *displaced* towards one's socially lesser trigger her bodily and spiritual anguish (Ciobanu 339). Such abuse – "if a man beat a child before her or smote a horse or another beast with a whip" – Margery identifies explicitly as one cause of her Crucifixion-related sorrow:

> And sumtyme, whan sche saw the crucyfyx, er yf sche sey a man had a wownde er a best whethyr it wer, er yyf a man bett a childe befor hir er smet an hors er another best wyth a whippe, yyf sche myth sen it er heryn it, hir thowt sche saw owyr Lord be betyn er wowndyd lyk as sche saw in the man er in the best, as wel in the feld as in the town, and be hirselfe alone as wel as among the pepyl. (*Book* 1.28.1585–90)

No wonder Dominican theologian Edward Schillebeeckx suspects, like the feminist theologians and United Methodist ministers Rev Dr Joanne Carlson Brown and Rev Dr Rebecca Parker (Brown, Parker 37) in the footsteps of Mary Daly's *Beyond God the Father* (77), and like the black theologian Rev Dr William R. Jones in his 1973 *Is God a White Racist?* (qtd. in Brown, Parker 52–3), that the predominance of the image of Christ's tortured body in the Catholic world may *also* legitimise violence against the disenfranchised:

> Cradle and cross were an initiation into the "suffering Jesus": a helpless child between ox and ass and a Jesus who goes staggering up to Golgotha.... However authentic this experience may be, here the Christian interpretation of suffering enters a phase in which the symbol of the cross becomes a disguised legitimation of social abuses, albeit to begin with still unconsciously.... "Suffering in itself," no longer suffering through and for others, took on a mystical and positive significance so that instead of having a critical power it really acquired a reactionary significance. Suffering in itself became a "symbol." (Schillebeeckx 699)

In the late medieval West, gory representations of Christ drew attention to the *violation* of his body (Rubin 304–5, 309). They soon converged with Eucharistic themes in the representation of the Mass of St Gregory to prove the dogma of Christ's Real Presence in the Eucharist as promulgated by the ecumenical Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 (Ciobanu, *Body in England* 87–96, 250–3). Contrariwise, we can look at this body violation beyond its medieval religious framework as an *anatomisation* of the most paradigmatic body within *Christianitas*[9] aimed to furnish ocular proof of divine love, with its salvific power. Christ's love could, moreover, be reciprocated: such was averred of the medieval women mystics on the Continent whose bodies their spiritual sisters tore open to uncover tokens of sainthood. Caroline Bynum's list of such cases begs attention. Her fellow nuns allegedly found the *arma Christi* (Bynum 211) in the heart of the Augustine abbess Chiara da Montefalco (St Clare of the Cross, d. 1308), if denounced by her Franciscan confessor as a fraud (Lochrie 13).[10] One

[8] Such violence ranged from the original physical violence against Jesus's body as the gospels delineated to the medieval violent discursive practices against violators of Corpus Christi whereby the truth of Christianity was continually imagined, challenged and renegotiated. On the whole, the wounds were held to signify a stable and coherent meaning as embodied in the unique body of Christ, even though they pointed precisely to a destabilisation of coherence and to conflictual meaning-making processes relating the individual with Christ yet also with *Christianitas* (Ciobanu, *Body in England* 37).

[9] *Christianitas* (Pope Gregory VII's coinage) names the world of the (living) Christians, their ethos and their religious-jurisdictional bond (van Engen 539–52). A hegemonic representational model, the concept was imposed for jurisdictional unity no less than for epistemological coherence by the Gregorian reformers, yet the collective body's physical and spiritual liability to attacks from both within and without became apparent, as did its constructedness, at times of socio-political and religious unrest.

[10] Chiara's heart was preserved as a relic, as also witnessed by a priest, Tommaso Bozio (1548–1610), around 1590 (qtd. in Touber 25); the vicar of the bishop of Spoleto, Berengario of Saint-Affrique, interpreted Chiara's gallstones as a representation of the Trinity (Touber 26).

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cannot but wonder at the instruments and protocols which aided the pious women to perform the autopsy! After the death of Blessed Alpaïs of Cudot in 1211, her intestines were found to be almost empty due to her holy inedia (Bynum 134). The heart of Blessed Margaret of Città di Castello (d. 1320) treasured three precious stones (Bynum 145), through which she had reportedly effected cures. When the investigators for the canonisation of Blessed Columba of Rieti opened her chest five days after her death in 1501, they discovered a stream of pure and living blood around her otherwise dry heart (Bynum 148). Katharina Park calls such forensic investigations *holy anatomy* (qtd. in Touber 29). Holy, but especially *anatomy*.

But what *is* anatomy? Historically, anatomy as the science of the bodily makeup relies on anatomy-qua-dissection to gather the biological data which it synthesises as the *anatomical body* (Wilson 62–3; Thacker, "Technoscientific Body" 324–7). Since the Renaissance until recently the living human body has been penetrated epistemically solely in the wake of its physical penetration,[11] which typically jeopardises – temporarily or terminally – the body's very operation (Wilson 62; Sawday 1–2, 6–8; Thacker, "Lacerations"). Accordingly, post-Renaissance western anatomical knowledge draws upon *dissective thinking*, to adapt James Elkins's term (134), to posit a clear-cut inside and outside of the body (Ciobanu, "Iconicity" 18).[12] In the Dedication of his *De humane corporis fabrica* (1543), penned in 1542, anatomist Andreas Vesalius famously stated that he had undertaken his activity "ad uere Anatomes cognitione" (Vesalius 4^{r}), for the sake of true anatomical knowledge, and thereby claimed to establish the anatomical practice an "Apollinea disciplina" (Vesalius 5^{r}) – as the *Apollonian* purveyor of *truth* about the human body – in what was to become the early modern "culture of dissection" (Sawday viii; see Ciobanu, "Iconicity" 18–19). However, the modus operandi of Vesalius's "Apollinea disciplina" relied precisely upon *denying* the inherent duality of Apollo – as suggested in the *Metamorphoses* episode of Marsyas's flaying – and of his early modern avatar, Goddess Anatomia (Ciobanu, "Body Disruption" 179–81; "Iconicity" 19–20, 23–4), as the purveyor of bodily knowledge through violence dissimulated both epistemically and visually as unmediated, objective truth.

Whether in order to ward off any repugnance of dissection and/or to forge epistemic space for the new hands-on practice of anatomical discovery, early modern anatomical illustration negotiated an aesthetic space wherein the *dissection body*[13] was depicted framed within a classicised space–time that in turn called for classicised poses (Ciobanu, "Time" 9–10; "Exemplarity" 49), yet wherein the artist would every so often insert a reminder of the grim dissection details, e.g. dissection implements and hints at dissection protocols, though never blood.[14] Thus, figure 1.41 (Vesalius 200), drawn by Jan Stephan van Calcar, in Vesalius's *Fabrica* (1543) offers an inventory of dissection instruments on a vivisection board, while Odoardo Fialetti's frontispiece to Giulio Casserio's posthumous *Anatomische Tafeln* (1656) is literally centred on the cupboard shelving them. In the *Anatomia humani corporis* (1685; Dutch trans. *Ontleding des menschelyken lichaams*, 1690) Govard Bidloo's

[11] Thence the very epistemic metaphor I have used, penetration, and the name of the discipline, anatomy.

[12] For a critique of the foundational violence of western anatomy and more generally of science, see respectively Harcourt (29, 34–8, 42–8), Waldby (57) and Crawford (68–9), Bordo (97–118), Keller (230, 239).

[13] Eugene Thacker ("Technoscientific Body" 324–7) distinguishes (1) the pre-discursive, pre-dissection *corpse* (itself not simply a "natural" object, marked by decay though it may be, since it is always already mediated discursively within the social), which in dissection further "reveals" itself as (2) a grotesque, messy, visceral *dissected body* in need to be thoroughly textualised, viz. framed theoretically, by the anatomo-medical sciences into (3) the paradigmatic *anatomical body*. Theorising the dissected body relies on a complex cognitive-technological apparatus (Thacker, "Technoscientific Body" 326–7; Wilson 63; Harcourt 35–7, 49; Crawford 68–9) that enables and *controls* seeing the empirical anatomical mess through a shared interpretative *cognitive and pictorial* grid which trains the eye (Daston, Galison 85) to make sense of "the body" meant to be described and imaged intelligibly and coherently in the book (Waldby 62).

[14] See Kemp for a history of styles in anatomic illustration since the Renaissance.

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artist Gérard de Lairesse engages with "the prosthetics of dissection," thus "claim[ing for the anatomist] the power to appropriate, and cut into, dead human beings" with "a masterful clinical detachment" (<www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/dreamanatomy/da_real_ugly.html>). Table 71, for instance, shows a flayed hand and forearm whose thumb is propped by a wooden implement; in table 90 the tendons themselves are propped. Table 30 features the dissection of the torso, seen from behind, in all its stark details, including the cord-bound hands; likewise, table 16, delineating the neck muscles, shows the man with his face covered and the head suspended by a rope. It is the latter aspect, the binding of (parts of) the cadaver for support or suspension (Vesalius 230; Valverde 71),[15] which recalls the larger context of early modern anatomy: the anatomist's main cadaver source, viz. the gallows, and the subjects' poor social (and health) condition (Park 12–16; Cregan 50–2, 61; Van Dijck 35–7).[16]

Such cadaver suspension for anatomisation also features in an engraving by Melchior Meier, *Apollo, Marsyas and the Judgement of Midas* (1581/2, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), whose topic is ostensibly unrelated to anatomy proper. Nevertheless, the work's dual filiation and subsequent influence on pictorial depictions of flaying[17] – the process of generating the anatomical écorché – render it worth examining. Meier's *literary* source, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, had already undergone in its medieval remediations in narrative and moralising texts[18] a blending of the accounts of Apollo's punishment of Marsyas (*Met*. 6.382–91) and of Pan (*Met*. 11.146–71) (Ciobanu, "Iconicity" 20–1). The engraving's *anatomical* source is Gaspar Becerra's écorché – itself inspired by Michelangelo's *Last Judgement*'s Bartholomew (Szladits 420–3; Boubli 218–23), but for the *Apollo Belvedere* pose (Kemp 197) – on page 64 in Juan Valverde's *Historia de la composición del cuerpo humano* (Rome, 1556). In Meier, Marsyas's (human) left leg is suspended from a tree with a rope, in a pose modelled on cadaver suspension for anatomical demonstration. Standing by triumphant, Apollo proffers the flayed skin to Midas; yet the warning is somewhat undercut by the detail of the god's hand wielding the scalpel, which identifies Apollo unmistakeably as/with the anatomist and thereby shifts the engraving's focus from penology to anatomy.

This is not the time to address the Renaissance vogue for representations of the flaying of Marsyas as either *figura* for the anatomist's work of discovery or, in Dante, a conceit for poetic inspiration (see Ciobanu, "Exemplarity" n. 26; "Iconicity" 21–3, nn. 10, 11). What the

[15] See the cadaver suspension for anatomisation or for the artists' study, respectively in the frontispiece to Theodor Kerckring's *Spicilegium anatomicum* (Amsterdam, 1670) and in *The Practitioners of the Fine Arts* (1578), an engraving by Cornelis Cort after the 1573 drawing of Jan van der Straet (Johannes Stradanus).

[16] Charles Estienne's *De dissectione partium corporis humani* (Paris, 1545 in Latin, 1546 in French) is perhaps the most compelling Renaissance case of systematically marshalling hints at the premier source of cadavers: the gallows. While the book's "recycling" of early images may account in part for the gendered representation of the erstwhile impenetrable mystery of human "vocations" (Ciobanu, "Exemplarity" 50), the framing of male/human anatomy as criminality goes beyond mere technical loan or Christian fundamentalism. There is a consistent judicial setting with a penological note for the male model, who is often bound in postures reminiscent either of the gallows (Estienne 236, 237, 239) or of the stocks (242) and generally of penological torture (241), including the allusion to Marsyas (Estienne 180) detected by Sawday (186). The viewer – sometimes thematised in the illustration (Estienne 242) – learns by prying into the body's *secreta* (viz. secret places and mysteries alike) as he (*sic*) witnesses the torturous opening up of the cadaver.

[17] Meier's engraving inspired Giovanni Stradanus's drawing of Marsyas as an écorché (1580s), as can also be gleaned from the anonymous *Apollo with the Flayed Marsyas* (1580–90) and from Theodoor Galle's engraving made after Stradanus, the *Flaying of Marsyas* (*c*. 1580–1600; Boymans-van Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam; Sellink fig. 22; Bohde 25–34). To these works should be added representations of St Bartholomew as an anatomical écorché displaying both his skin and the instruments of his martyrdom: in Damien Hirst's *St Bartholomew, Exquisite Pain* (2006, bronze; 2008, gold-plated silver), the conflation of Bartholomew, Marsyas and Apollo started by Becerra and continued by Meier is virtually complete.

[18] Here the remediation of Ovid's Marsyas tale concerns primarily its *repurposing* through *generic recontextualisation* and relatively overt hypermediacy.

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two écorché types – the anatomical one and the Ovidian-inspired one – share in common is, apart from the anatomisation proper, itself bearing on the larger social context of ideas of justice and punishment (Sawday 187; Park 3, 12; Cregan 53; van Dijck 36), a concern with the discovery of truth, whether the truth withheld by the opaque body or the truth withheld by the criminal. In Ovid's case, the withholding of truth rests rather with the narrative's politic elision of all contextual details (including guilt and provision for punishment), as well as being coterminous with the outcome of the anatomisation of Marsyas, i.e. dis- and dys-identification[19] (Ciobanu, "Body Disruption" 175–9). While in Ovid the conflation of Marsyas's physical pain and mental anguish at experiencing the former in a (con)textual void – "quid me mihi detrahis?" (*Met*. 6.385), "why [do you] tear me apart from myself?" – also allows for *dys-identification*, the same could be conceived *on behalf of* the anatomical subject, raised onto the pedestal of anatomical exemplarity after the *dis-identification* wrought through the twofold elision of outward corporeal identification features and personal biography.

Here is Ovid's description of the flaying of Marsyas:

> ... cutis est summos direpta per artus,
> nec quicquam nisi vulnus erat; cruor undique manat,
> detectique patent nervi, trepidaeque sine ulla
> pelle inicant venae; salientia viscera posses
> et perlucentes numerare in pectore fibras (*Met*. 6.387–91)
> [Marsyas cried "Why do you peel me out of myself?" "Aah! I repent," he screamed in agony. "Aah! Music is not worth this pain!" As he screams, the skin is flayed from the surface of his body, no part is untouched. Blood flows everywhere, the exposed sinews are visible, and the trembling veins quiver, without skin to hide them: you can number the internal organs, and the fibres of the lungs, clearly visible in his chest. (Trans. Feldherr, James 75)]

The flaying of Marsyas renders his body a stringed instrument (Holsinger 54; Feldherr, James 82–3, 96–7; Saunders 34), Apollo's *cithara*.[20] Yet there is more to it: Ovid's verb *direpta* (*Met*. 6.387), typically translated as *flay*, construes the penalty as *plundering*, an iniquitous predatory act akin to ravishing (*OLD*, s.v. "dīreptiō," "dīreptor"; cf. "praedātor," "raptor"; "dētrahō"). Anatomisation in Ovid, therefore, simultaneously reveals the body musical and "anonymises" it in anatomo-penological fashion, which renders Apollo that which he performs: anatomist *cum* irrational violator-plunderer (Ciobanu, "Body Disruption" 177–81).

Bruce Holsinger (53–60) has identified the strong appeal which Marsyas's torturous death held for early Christian authors, who would transfigure the (anatomised) body into a stringed instrument to pluck for God's praise. Sometimes not explicitly linked to Marsyas, metaphors of the body-instrument permeated early writings that explicated the import of Christ's earthly life (Holsinger 33–60, 80–3). Nor was early Christianity alone rife with such imagery, as the ME religious treatise *Book to a Mother* (*c*. 1400) and the Middle High German poem *Die Erlösung* (*c*. 1300) testify (qtd. in Holsinger 200–1). In conjunction with the written text, medieval manuscript miniature would also use the body-instrument analogy

[19] My peculiar spelling is indebted to Drew Leder's (83–92) coinage in a phenomenological analysis of the *dys-appearance* of the body within the coenesthetic field, i.e. *painful* recovery of corporeal self-awareness – normally subdued to "focal disappearance" – in cases of physical effort, age- or illness-related somatic changes and dysfunctions, affective disturbance and mental distress. Leder (90) pits the Greek prefix *dys*- ("bad, hard, ill") against the Latin *dis*- ("away, apart, asunder") to construe "the presencing of the body in dys-appearance" as "still a mode of absence – etymologically, 'to be away.'"

[20] Coincidentally at mere textual, though not cultural, level, Estienne explained in his *De dissectione*... (1545) that "he depict[ed] the nerves, twitching with febrile energy, ... [since] they were created to resonate with the 'concordance and harmony' of universal design, like the strings of a musical instrument" (Kemp 196).

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which undergirds the Christian *canticum novum* (Ps 32.3)[21] to teach doctrine through mnemonic images (Holsinger 210–3, 237, 238 fig. 14).

Where does ME Passion drama fit in this description of anatomisation – of the anatomical subject's and of Ovid's Marsyas's – tainted, in the latter case, with allusions to sadistic instrument/music-making? Nowhere at all – until we scan the scripts, bearing in mind that the ME verb *flen* ("to flay") described both the stripping of the skin from someone's body and the "tear[ing] [of] the skin to shreds (by blows, scourging, etc.)" (*MED*, s.v. "flēn" vb.2), where the latter sense often references Jesus's Passion body.[22] The ME plays deal, expectedly from a gospel perspective, with judicial (and sometimes punitive) torture intended to extract the *truth* from (and of) Jesus the transgressor. However, while the beating and crucifixion pound a musical rhythm which sadistically punctuates the tearing of veins and ligaments, the "coronation" with thorns so graphically described in the York *Christ before Pilate* (2) betrays a clear, if *inchoate*, *anatomical awareness*:

> IV MILES
> Do sette hym in þis sete as a semely in sales.
> I MILES
> Now thryng to hym thrally with þis þikk þorne.
> II MILES
> *Lo, it heldes to his hede þat þe harness* (*brains*) *out hales* (*pour*).
> III MILES
> Thus we teche hym to tempre his tales –
> *His brayne begynnes for to blede*. (Y33/397–401; emphasis added)

Thrusting the crown of thorns engenders profuse bleeding, which strikes the soldiers as making the brains pour out from the armour of the skull (Y33/399): Jesus's is but a bleeding brain (401). The imagery turns the victim into a living icon of death, cognate with the late medieval *wound man* of medical tracts (Fig. 1), a mnemonic diagram which showed the points in the body most liable to penetration by various weapons (and their surgical treatment), or even with the *homo anatomicus* of mid-sixteenth-century anatomy books (e.g. Estienne 241, see Fig. 2).

[21] E.g. the juxtaposition of Jubal/Tubalcain and the raising of the Cross in two manuscripts of the *Speculum humanae salvationis* (Holsinger 205, 207 figs. 10–11).

[22] In the biblical cycles, Herod often threatens any disobedient subject also with flaying – tearing the skin by vicious scourging, yet sometimes actual skin stripping: in the Towneley *Herod the Great*, the king threatens to "pull fro the skyn" of the baby prophesied to usurp him (T16/85); the result – the slaughter of the Innocents – is described as "so haue I hym flayd" (T16/480). In York's *Christ before Pilate 2: The Judgement*, Jesus is scourged with whips: "flay[ed]" (Y33/353) or "rente" (*to tear*) (Y33/356). Unsurprisingly, to the grief-stricken mother Jesus's body on the cross looks as good as flayed: "I sey his flesch thus al totorn"; "His flesche withowtyn hyde" (NT32/239, 245).

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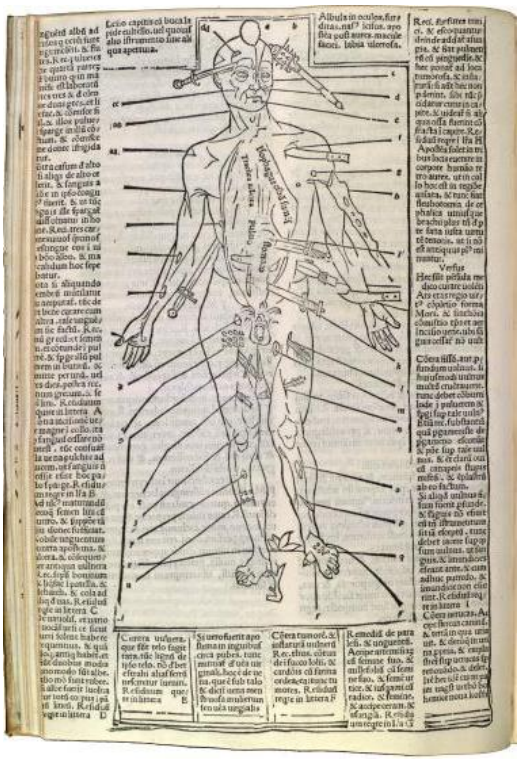


Fig. 1 Wound man. *Fasciculus medicinae* (Venice, 1491), attributed to Johannes de Ketham

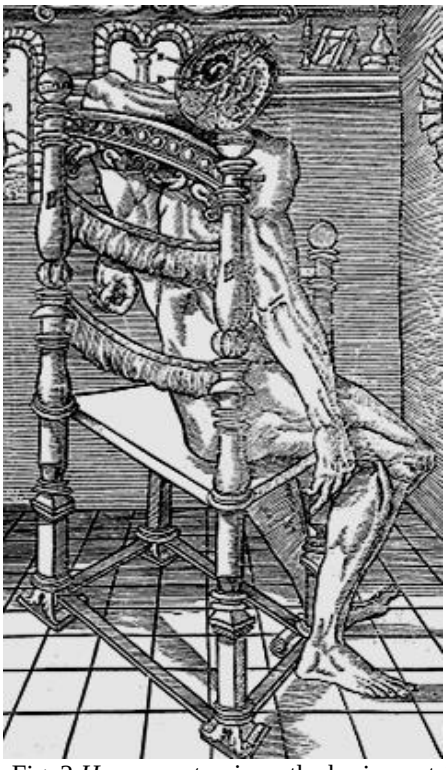


Fig. 2 *Homo anatomicus*: the brain ventricles. Detail of p. 241 in Charles Estienne and Estienne de la Rivière, *De dissectione partium corporis humani* (Paris, 1545)

The York *Crucifixion* is famous for the mis- and realignment of Jesus's limbs with the holes, yet the detail is more than a York, or even English,[23] occurrence: not only does the late thirteenth-century ME *Northern Passion* dramatise it to great lengths, but continental Passion plays capitalise on it too,[24] and so does religious iconography.[25] In York, once Jesus's right hand has been pinned down with hard strokes driving the peg through bone and sinew (Y35/101–3), the soldiers note the misalignment between the left hand, with shrunken sinews, and the hole drilled amiss (107–9, 111). Accordingly, they first pull Jesus's left hand (113–4, 119–20) into position for nailing down and then also his feet (135–42). Once the living body has been torturously nailed to the cross and symbolically fashioned into a psaltery, it will be given a tremendous shake when the cross is erected and let fall into the large mortise. Here is the unsympathetic soldiers' commentary:

> II MILES
> 3is,[26] here is a stubbe (*short thick nail*) will stiffely stande,
> *Thurgh* (*through*) *bones and senous* (*sinews*) *it schall be soght* –

[23] The *Crucifixion* plays in N-Town (NT32/63–6), Chester (C17/181–98) and Towneley (T23/119–32) also present the misalignment and its violent correction by pulling at Jesus's arms and further injuring his body. A contemplative exercise in *The Book of Margery Kempe* (1.80.4545–63) shows the Crucifixion receiving a similar treatment.

[24] In the Angers *Résurrection* (1456), "neither his [Jesus's] feet nor his hands could stretch to the holes that had been fashioned there" (qtd. in Enders 179). In the *Frankfurter Passionsspiel* (1153), Secundus Miles says: "Look here at the side: / this hole is too far away! / The hand cannot reach it: / I need a strong rope, / for to stretch the arms! / Come, friends, and help me to stretch!" (ll. 3701–6, qtd. in Fischer-Lichte 45–6).

[25] A Crucifixion image from *Speculum humanae salvatione* (Speyer, *c*. 1480) shows three (*sic*) men adding the final touches before raising the cross (Dillon 179 fig. 23).

[26] Depending on the degree of spelling modernisation in the editions, quotations from the scripts may retain the ME characters "3" (*yogh*; cf. modern "gh" or "y") and "þ" (*thorn*; cf. modern "th").

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This werke is wele, I will warande.
I MILES
Saie sir, howe do we þore (*there*)?
Þis bargayne (*business*) may not blynne (*cease*).
III MILES
It failis a foote and more,
Þe senous (*sinews*) *are so gone ynne* (*are shrunken*)....
IV MILES
Owe, þis werke is all vnmeete –
This boring muste all be amende (*altered*).
I MILES
A, pees (*quiet*) man, for Mahounde,
Latte no man wotte þat wonder (*Let nobody know about that wonder*),
A roope schall rugge hym doune
Yf all his synnous go asoundre.
II MILES
Þat corde full kyndely can I knytte,
Þe comforte of þis karle to kele.
I MILES
Feste on þanne faste þat all be fytte,
It is no force howe felle he feele (*It doesn't matter how terribly he suffers*).
II MILES
Lugge on 3e both a litill 3itt.
III MILES
I schalle nought sese, as I haue seele.
IV MILES
And I schall fonde hym for to hitte.
II MILES
Owe, haylle!
IV MILES
Hoo nowe, I halde it wele.
I MILES
Haue done, dryue in þat nayle,
So þat no faute be foune....
I MILES
Ther cordis haue evill encressed his paynes,
Or he wer tille þe booryngis brought (*Until he was brought to the holes*).
II MILES
3a, assoundir are bothe synnous and veynis
On ilke a (*on each*) *side*, so haue we soughte. ...
IV MILES
Latte doune (*let* [*it*] *down*), *so all his bones*
Are asoundre nowe on sides seere. (Y35/102–8; 127–42, 145–8; 223–4; emphasis added)

Confronted with unexpected hardship, the executioners in the Chester *Crucifixion* and the N-Town *Calvary; Crucifixion* also resort to rope-pulling (C16a/185–90; NT32/65–7) to align the body with the holes (C16a/191–202). In the process, Jesus's limb is shredded: "his arme is but a fynne (*vein*/*ligament*)" (C16a/198); "we brest both flesch and veyn" (NT32/68). Yet, paradoxically, through sheer resilience of the selfsame flesh and sinews – "loke and the flesche and senues well last" (NT32/70) – the body must remain fastened to the cross:

I JUDEUS
Yea, but, as mote I thee,
shorte-armed is hee.
To the booringe of this tree
hit will not well last.
II JUDEUS
A, therfore care thou nought.
A sleight I have sought.

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Roopes must be bought
to strayne him with strenght....
IV JUDEUS
Drawes, for your fathers kynne,
while that I dryve yn
this ilke iron pynne
that I dare laye will last.
I JUDEUS
As ever have I wynne,
his arme is but a fynne (*vein*/*ligament*).
Nowe drive on bowten dyne / and we shall drawe fast.
IV JUDEUS
Fellowes, will you see
howe *I have stretched his knee*?
Why prayse ye not mee
that have so well donne? (C16a/181–8, 193–200, 209–12; emphasis added)
III JUDEUS
This is short – the devyl hym sped (*the devil take him*)
Be a large fote and more (*by more than a foot*)!
II JUDEUS
Fest on a rop and pulle hym long (*Fasten on a rope and stretch him out*),
And I shal drawe thee ageyn (*And I shall pull against you*).
Spare we not these ropys strong (*Don't spare these strong ropes*)
Thow we brest both flesch and veyn ([*Even*] *though we* [*should*] *break both flesh and vein*).
III JUDEUS
Dryve in the nayl anon! Lete se (*drive in the nail right away! Let's see*)
And *loke and the flesche and senues well last* (*And look if the flesh and sinews will hold*). (NT32/63–70; emphasis added)

While Jesus's body snaps in all four ME Crucifixion plays, only one of them, the Towneley *Processus Crucis*, is candid about the torture enacted by the Roman soldiers, whom the character headings appropriately identify as *tortores*.

The corresponding excerpt from *The Northern Passion* (ll. 1527–74), the devotional source of York's *Crucifixion*, is rife with Ovidian echoes of dismemberment, prototypically, Marsyas's body dis-covered through flaying and the exposure of veins and innards, as well as medieval images of the felon's quartering or Christian martyrdom:

They toke Jhesu ther he stode
And leyd hym upon the rode.
To the borys (*holes*) thei leyd hys armys suete (*sweet*)
For to loke if it were mete (*to see if they fit*).
As thei gone ther merkys al so (*made their measurements*),
Hys armes myght not rech (*reach*) therto.
Be a fote, withoute lesyng,
They myght not hys armes bryng.
The Jues sey that and gan (*began* [*to*]) thynke
That thei had so lorn ther swynke (*lost their work*).
They were loth (*loath, unwilling*) other holys to make;
Therfor two ropys thei gane take.
Thei dyde ropys on hys hondys;
The blode broke out for strenthe of bandys.
They gan hys body all todraw (*draw apart*)
To thei myght (*until they could*) *bryng the handys therto*.
The semys (*sinews*) *thei byrst* (*burst*) also;
Lyth fro lyth thei were undo (*limb from limb they were undone*).
Thei toke the nayls told be tale (*as told in the story*),
And drew hym by the handys smale.
Thei lokyd to hys fete so bright
And sey thei ley not aryght.

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Thei toke a cord at the laste
And tyde it on hys fete wele faste,
Another on hys brest with grete wronge,
And drew hym to the pynnes (*nails*) longe.
Hys leggys blede – wo was he begone –
Pyté of hym hade thei none.
They toke hys fete (*feet*) that were clene
And leyd hem (*them*) over the bore bedene (*together*).
They toke two nayles swyth grete
And drove them thorow both hys fete.
The blode rane of hys body tho;
Was never man so wobego (*woebegone, viz. miserable*).
Ther was not hym so mekyll levyd (*here was not so much left for him*)
Wheron he myght rest hys hede ([*as a place*] *whereon he might rest his head*),
Bot leyd ([*he*] *laid*) it on the schulder bone.
Of (*for*) hym mersy hade thei none. (*Northern Passion*, ll. 1529–67)

In both *The Northern Passion* and the ME Crucifixion plays, a workmanship error turns the cross into an engine of torture where the deployment of ropes to haul and of long nails to pin the limbs evokes the make-up of the psaltery, even as it shows the body being dismembered – anatomised – like Ovid's Marsyas's. In all ME Passion plays, both the redemptive music-making through body torture and the anatomisation proper testify to the inherently violent turn of late medieval Christocentrism, capable, arguably, through its iconography and/of cult of the wounds and relic cult to forge an anatomical imaginary of the hallowed body being dismembered. Such a turn could conceivably work towards inuring Christians to the social acceptability of violence (and later of anatomisation/dissection public demonstrations and anatomical images), as well as disguising violence as inherently useful.

It is my contention, therefore, that the ME Passion scripts testify to an inchoate anatomical collective imaginary which remediates Ovid's Marsyas's anatomisation by Apollo and will be remediated in early anatomical practice and illustration. While Ovid obliterates body-truth in the process of punitive torture which anatomises the body, early modern anatomy actively pursues the truth-qua-knowledge of the body, even as anatomical illustration often still suggests the penological circumstances of the process, thus rendering the anatomist a modern Apollo. In between them, the Middle English Passion plays thematise the pursuit of truth, a truth not so much of Jesus as of power and its legitimacy, if to be revealed through torture. Christ's torture in the Passion drama, like its subsequent cultic remediations, however, displays an "anatomical body" virtually akin to that featured in early modern anatomical illustration. Yet just as this quest for truth in both discursive practices fashions the anatomical body, thence an anatomical imaginary, its overt violence gets tacitly inscribed as the default modus operandi of both anatomy proper and the Christian (anatomical) imaginary.

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