

BARBARA A. HANAWALT and DAVID WALLACE, eds., *Bodies and Disciplines: Intersections of Literature and History in Fifteenth-Century England*. Medieval Cultures, vol. 9. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1996. Pp. xii, 242. ISBN: cloth, 0-8166-2714-2, \$49.95. ISBN: paper, 0-8166-2715-0, \$19.95.

The title, *Bodies and Disciplines: Intersections of Literature and History in Fifteenth Century England*, alludes to the interdisciplinary focus of the ten essays within: 'bodies' refers to the persons of the late-medieval period and to the organized assembly of evidence attesting to their pluriform social manifestations, and 'disciplines' pertains to the coercive and celebratory activities wrought by and upon fifteenth-century persons and to the academic domains of literature and history. *Bodies and Disciplines* explores and at times subverts the increasingly fluid boundary between literary analysis and historical investigation.

Ralph Hanna's 'Brewing Trouble: On Literature and History—and Alewives' uses the ale-wives of *Piers Plowman* for 'a discursive reading' that recognizes simultaneously the text's ideological dimensions, discursive registers, and historical complications. Miri Rubin's brief but evocative 'The Body, Whole and Vulnerable, in Fifteenth-Century Literature' is a meditation on the contingencies of embodied existence in the figure of the hermaphrodite or in the wounded bodies of child martyrs. In language that rises at times to the poetic, Rubin displays the medieval body as a permeable region of uncertainty rather than a privileged site of wholeness.

Seth Lerer's, "'Representyd now in yower syght': The Culture of Spectatorship in Late-Fifteenth-Century England," reads a disciplinary spectacle found in the Lydd Customal against the theatrical presentation of the wounded body in the *Croxton Play of the Sacrament*. Drawing upon Merwyn James and focusing on the visual, participatory aesthetics common to corporeal correction and dramatic production, Lerer argues that 'the *Croxton Play*...restore[s] the wholeness of the social body through its stagings of the rituals of torture, dismemberment, and reincorporation' (47). In direct contrast, the following essay, Sarah Beckwith's powerfully argued 'Ritual, Theater, and Social Space in the York Corpus Christi Cycle' argues against James that 'ritual does not so much designate an object as a process of relation' (67). In a finely nuanced reading, Beckwith contends that '[i]ntegration is established paradoxically through division' (69). Thus, the power of York's Corpus Christi cycle lies not in establishing social cohesion through reference to a static, transcendent referent—the body of Christ—but through the multiple and ultimately indeterminate representations and interrogations of this exemplary symbol during the preparation and performance of the York plays.

Returning to a conventionally historical focus and tone, Marjorie K. McIntosh's 'Finding a Language for Misconduct: Jurors in Fifteenth Century Local Courts,' selectively examines the records of presentment juries for evidence of the social attitudes underlying the prosecution of misconduct and then interprets this legal discourse in relation to a broader textual environment of sermons, moral tracts, and literary texts.

Perhaps more than any other aspect of 'nature,' gender created for medieval persons a range of life possibilities while limiting others, and taking up the gender asymmetry of medieval morality, Ruth Mazo Karras, in 'Two Models, Two Standards: Moral

Teaching and Sexual Mores,' writes that *Dives and Pauper*, a dialogue on the Ten Commandments, 'indicates that the laity held a different view of sexual behavior from the official teaching of the church' (128). *Dives and Pauper*, though explicitly addressed to males, conveys a relatively sympathetic attitude toward women and atypically suggests that adultery and fornication are greater sins for men than for women. In 'Blessing from Sun and Moon: Churching as Women's Theater,' Gail McMurray Gibson maintains that although churching appears to be a misogynistic enactment of female subjugation before the male-dominated church, it simultaneously recognizes the centrality of the female body in the drama of redemption and 'acknowledge[s] female corporate identity and power' (150).

Moving the focus to young people, Barbara A. Hanawalt's "'The Childe of Bristowe" and the Making of Middle Class Adolescence' examines literary treatments of adolescence in light of the legal records concerning apprentices and the didactic literature concerning youth to reveal the 'game of exchange between the literary and the historical [that] leads to a fifteenth-century construction of adolescence' (155). In 'Reciprocity and Exchange in the Late Medieval Household,' Felicity Heal argues that the fifteenth-century noble household was 'equally committed to a combination of practical provisioning and sociocultural display of power' (180). Through the careful examination of household accounts, courtesy books, and literary texts—most intriguingly, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*—Heal portrays the noble house as a place of ritual theater, wherein all strata of society could become symbolically joined to the noble through the carefully calibrated the exchange of gifts and gestures. Completing this trio of essays examining specific medieval subjectivities, Rita Copeland's 'William Thorpe and His Lollard Community: Intellectual Labor and the Representation of Dissent,' melds historical inquiry into the early Lollard community with post-colonial literary theory in an extended reading of the 'Testament' of William Thorpe, a Lollard priest brought before the Archbishop of York in 1407.

Paul Strohm's 'Afterword: What Happens at Intersections?' reconceptualizes the possibility of an intersection as a '*carrefour*: a crossroad or market square' (223), rather than a place of collision and danger. Drawing upon de Certeau and Bourdieu, Strohm argues that the promise of interdisciplinary study is to be found in 'the study of practices [which] draws textuality, its occasions, its uses, and the events it describes into a socially performative totality' (226). With its innovative papers fully documented and indexed, the essays of *Bodies and Discipline* answer the formidable challenge of interdisciplinary investigation and point promisingly toward increasingly sophisticated and powerful analytical possibilities in medieval studies.

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