

10

History of the Body

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I said, 'we were not stocks and stones – 'tis very well. I should have added, nor are we angels, I wish we were, – but men cloathed with bodies, and governed by our imaginations.

Laurence Sterne, *Tristram Shandy*

Resurrecting the Body

In a provocative book,¹ Leo Steinberg has drawn attention to two facts. First, in a tradition of painting flourishing through the Renaissance, Christ was commonly depicted touching, or otherwise other ways drawing attention to, his penis. Second, art historians have consistently ignored this striking mode of depiction. Steinberg explains the doctrinal significance of the gesture: it was designed to signal the humanity of the Son, that He was begotten not created. But he is no less interested in exploring the art historians' blind spot. The sexuality of Christ's body has, as it were, become 'invisible', because scholars typically work within interpretative traditions for which meanings that are mental, spiritual and ideal assume an automatic priority over matters purely material, corporeal and sensual.

Steinberg's point applies more widely. Until recently, the history of the body has been generally neglected, and it is not hard to see why. On the one hand the Classical, and, on the other, the Judaeo-Christian components of our cultural heritage each advanced a fundamentally dualistic vision of man, understood as an often uneasy alliance of mind and body, psyche and soma; and both traditions, in their different ways and for different reasons, have elevated the mind or soul and disparaged the body.² This is a totally familiar aspect of the metaphysics of our civilization, needing no elaboration here. It runs deep and exerts pervasive power: even writers who have sought to rescue the body from neglect or disrepute have nevertheless commonly perpetuated the old hierarchies. Thus, as my epigraph suggests, in the mid-eighteenth

century Laurence Sterne could vindicate 'men' against the aspersion of not being purely spiritual ('angels'), but only to the extent of saying that men are beings 'cloathed in bodies' – a formula which preserves the traditional dualism and leaves the body somehow secondary and almost accidental.³ Sterne does not say that men *are* their bodies, in the way in which today's feminists can speak of *Our Bodies, Our Selves*.⁴

The implication of this last remark is that attempts are afoot nowadays to demolish the old cultural hierarchies which privileged mind over body and, by force of analogy, sanctioned whole systems of ruler-ruled power relations. This demystifying process is surely occurring, and it is easy to point to the profound cultural shifts over the last generation which have subverted the traditional puritan-cum-Platonist distrust of the body:⁵ the sexual revolution and 'permissiveness' in general, consumer capitalism, the critiques mounted both by the 'counter-culture' of the sixties and the feminism of the seventies, and so forth.⁶ This cultural revolution has clearly been influential – as the case of Steinberg's book suggests – in redirecting scholarly attention as well, away from well-established idealist sub-disciplines such as the history of ideas, and towards the exploration of 'material culture', one limb of which is the history of the body.

This new enterprise has benefited from numerous stimuli. Thanks to its intrinsic materialism, Marxism has provided a fruitful matrix, and works in this tradition such as Mikhail Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World* have offered influential models of the body seen as a focus for popular resistance and criticism of official meanings.⁷ With its ambitions to construct a total history, and sympathies for the project of a biologically grounded scientific history *Annaliste* scholarship has promoted research into all dimensions of material life from the cradle to the grave.⁸ Cultural anthropology, in both theory and practice, has afforded historians languages for discussing the symbolic meanings of the body, in particular as contextualized within systems of social exchange;⁹ and in a rather similar way, sociology,¹⁰ and medical sociology above all,¹¹ have encouraged historians to treat the body as the crossroads between self and society. Academic feminism has pointed to customarily neglected or suppressed questions of the gendering of experience.¹² And not least, the massive growth of historical demography over the last generation has impressed upon us the stark vital statistics of 'birth, copulation and death', to be regarded as the key to understanding all aspects of class, culture and consciousness.¹³

We clearly cannot expect, however, to toss all these ingredients mindlessly together into a scholarly mixing-bowl and find a history of the body automatically emerging as a perfect dish. The nature and

contents of the history of the body, and the methods whereby it should be pursued, are themselves bones of contention.

Approaches

Scholars have warned that it would be grossly simplistic to assume that the human body has timelessly existed as an unproblematic natural object with universal needs and wants, variously affected by culture and society (in one age, 'repressed', in another, 'liberated', etc.). Such a crass nature/culture division would obviously be unhelpful; and it would be misconceived – and ironical! – to give the old mind/body dualism a new lease of life by attempting to study the ('biological') history of the body independently of ('cultural') considerations of experience and expression in language and ideology.¹⁴

The point is well made. Clearly we must look at the body as it has been experienced and expressed within particular cultural systems, both private and public, which themselves have changed over time.¹⁵ If (to make a rather Berkeleyan point) bodies are present to us only through perceiving them, then the history of bodies must incorporate the history of their perceptions. But, it could surely be argued, if this is so, does not that mean that the history of the body after all forms a project in the history of ideas or *l'histoire des mentalités* – one concerned with representations of the body as distinct (say) from representations of work or power. Indeed, attempts have been made to construe the history of the body essentially as the explication of its 'representations' in 'discourse', using post-structuralist and deconstructionist techniques of textual analysis.¹⁶ I believe, however, that there is a real danger in driving this theorized repudiation of vulgar positivism too far.

Some of the most scintillating explorations of the anatomy of the body have been the work of literary critics and like-minded scholars engaged in discourse analysis and textual deconstruction, teasing out shifting 'representations' of the embodied self. But the gay abandonment of empiricism for theory and hermeneutics has pitfalls of its own, in particular the risk of decontextualized extrapolations, derived from uncritical use of unrepresentative bodies of evidence. An instance of a work caught in this trap is Francis Barker's *The Tremulous Private Body*, a bold attempt, spanning five centuries, to interpret the body's history – indeed its 'dissolution'.¹⁷ Through a 'deconstructionist' reading of what seems like a purely random sample of key texts selected from high culture (*Hamlet*, Rembrandt's *Anatomy Lesson*, Pepys's *Diary*, etc.), Barker advances the generalization that the body, which had once

been a public object, became privatized – indeed the site of narcissistic shame – within bourgeois culture. Indeed, he claims, the body 'disappeared' altogether as an instrument of eroticism, being displaced by the 'book'. These are mighty conclusions indeed to derive from a few texts scrutinized in glorious isolation from consideration of the texture of history at large. Moreover, Barker has such faith in his method of hermetic, textual, close reading that he systematically ignores the researches of other scholars – an idiosyncrasy which, as J. R. R. Christie has shown, amongst other things, makes a nonsense of his account of Rembrandt's painting.¹⁸

Other recent interpretations of the history of the body drawing principally upon the precepts of textual analysis seem equally open to objection. *The Female Body in Western Culture*, a volume of essays ranging from 'Genesis to Gertrude Stein', gives pride of place to what the editor calls '(Re)writing the Body', and stresses how the body must be seen as not just a 'flesh and blood' object but a 'symbolic construct'.¹⁹ Well and good. But too many of its contributors proceed on the assumption which underpins Barker's book that the subtle elucidation of a small corpus of classic texts will afford privileged insights into the problems and paradoxes of experience at large. This is a dubious, not to say arrogant, assumption. Thus an essay 'Speaking Silences: Women's Suicide' leaps from examining what certain novelists tell us of the bodily consciousness of their suicidal heroines to offering general conclusions about female suicide experience in reality, taking no account of a substantial body of empirical research into the testimonies of authentic female suicides which actually contradict the findings offered.²⁰

No more satisfactory an instance of this genre is Elaine Scarry's *The Body in Pain* (modestly subtitled *The Making and Unmaking of the World*).²¹ Combining philosophical with literary analysis, Scarry examines intellectual, artistic, and cultural representations of physically located pain from the Bible, through Marx, to the present. The drift of her substantial text is to establish that it is of the essence of pain to be 'inexpressible'. We are offered this conclusion not merely as a novel interpretation, but as a privileged insight into 'a realm of human experience that is known to all but understood by only a few'. Yet Scarry's rarefied elitism is surely contradicted by the actual accounts of pain (which, far from being 'inexpressible', are often expressed with exactitude and eloquence) that ordinary people in the past have left us in great abundance. Of course, to someone aspiring to the higher intellectual exegesis, empirical research may, like the body itself, seem gross and banal. To historians actually concerned with how real people felt pain, however, a work such as Barbara Duden's *Geschichte*

unter der Haut – a pioneering analysis of the sickness experiences of nearly two thousand women in early eighteenth-century Germany, as preserved through the medical records kept by their physician, Dr Storch – offers an illuminating start.²²

It is right for sensitive scholars to insist upon the conceptual complexity of the history of the body. But it is at least as important to avoid floating off into the stratosphere of discourse analysis, and neglecting the more everyday and tangible materials available. And in fact we need not be so dismissive about the possibilities of investigating the history of the body through the use of mundane empirical methods. Clearly on many issues our information is irremediably scanty. What coital positions did people use in the sixteenth century, or the eighteenth?²³ We hardly know. The first-hand written record of diaries and letters is largely silent – and where it is eloquent, it is probably unrepresentative; and there are obvious reasons for healthy scepticism towards using the testimony of such sources as pornographic prints or advice manuals.²⁴ Moreover, even when we have copious sources available to us, these require subtle interpretation, and may then still mystify. When we read in hospital admission registers that women were commonly admitted to infirmaries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries suffering from ‘hysteria’, it is often unclear what precisely, if anything, was physically amiss; they may have been experiencing partial paralysis, somatic or psychosomatic; they may chiefly have been simply overworked and underfed (‘hysteria’, despite the common stereotype, was a condition as much of the poor as of the rich). This may prove an instance in which the disease label served as little more than an administrative password to secure admission. It would be a hazardous enterprise to expect our records of medical diagnosis to provide us with a reliable, objective, epidemiological history of diseases.²⁵

Such difficulties notwithstanding, an enormous quantity of sufficiently dependable information survives to permit the construction of credible profiles of the vital statistics of bodies in the past. Most fundamentally there are, of course, registers of baptisms and burials for many parts of Europe from early modern times onwards, from which scholars have devised techniques of deriving reliable indices of changing birth and death rates, fecundity, fertility, disease-related mortality crises and so forth; poor law and hospital records likewise open up windows on the history of strength and sickness and the toll taken by toil.²⁶ But, in addition, particular archives survive which afford extremely delicate indicators.

For example, abundant admissions ledgers exist for orphanages and schools, and recruiting records for the army and navy, over a span of

several centuries. Between them, they give us access to the age and height of some tens of thousands of individuals. Those surviving from England have been processed to provide a collective profile of the age/height ratio of boys and young men changing over the generations. On the basis of controlled interrogation of such body data, extrapolations can be made about changes in food intake, both qualitative and quantitative, gradients of fitness, and so forth. Physique may prove a more trustworthy index than wages for assessing changes in the real standard of living.²⁷

Likewise, we possess a photographic record now stretching back almost a century and a half of people’s physical appearances. Once again, there is no need to belabour the misinterpretations which would result from a naive reliance on the veracity of visual images; of course the camera lies, or, more precisely, photographs are not snapshots of reality but, like paintings, form cultural artefacts conveying complicated coded conventional signs to primed ‘readers’.²⁸

But this caveat applies to some photographs more than to others. Posed portraits capture how people wish to be remembered, all scrubbed and dolled up in their Sunday best. But Victorian photographers were also fond of taking casual ‘documentary’ street snapshots, and these caught people in their everyday movements, gestures, and as a result, recorded such aspects as body language and social space more informatively than any printed text. The photographic archive reveals and confirms a great deal about both the physical transformations of the human condition in modern times (ageing, deformities, malnutrition, etc.), and what Goffman has called the ‘presentation of self’ (body language, gestures, and the appropriation of physical space).²⁹ Photographs remain oddly underexploited as a historical resource.

Pursuing the history of the body is thus not merely a matter of crunching vital statistics about physiques, nor just a set of methods for decoding ‘representations’. Rather it is a call to make sense of the interplay between the two. When in the world we have lost the rich looked down on the poor, that gesture was both physical and symbolic: the ‘grandees’ (above all, their ‘highnesses’) were typically centimetres taller – an advantage further enhanced by the imposing accoutrements – dress and address – with which they could afford to adorn their bodies.

Given the abundance of evidence available, we remain remarkably ignorant about how individuals and social groups have experienced, controlled and projected their embodied selves. How have people made sense of the mysterious link between ‘self’ and its extensions? How have they managed the body as an intermediary between self and society?

Certain intellectual traditions could prove fruitful in promoting such explorations.

Sociologists of the body still find Weber's work valuable, for one of the enduring strengths of his account of the Protestant ethic lies in revealing how what we might take as rather abstract ('disembodied') doctrinal commitments (questions of salvation and justification) become internalized in such a way as to have profound implications for personal body control and discipline.³⁰ Psychohistory in the Freudian mould has pointed, on the other hand, to a quite reversed chain of consequences, showing how attitudes towards the world at large are commonly projections of the ways people handle their own body functions, thus revealing the inner struggles between consciousness – above all, the unconscious – and its physical expression. Even if much psychohistory remains vitiated by dogmatic Oedipal reductionism and is grossly speculative, its thematic integration of inner and outer, private and public, is highly suggestive.³¹

Moreover certain other approaches within sociology seem particularly worth historians' attention. Phenomenology and ethnomethodology have both provided programmes for the analysis of interpersonal 'close encounters' which (unlike, say, Parsonian functionalism) pay due attention to the play of the body as an organ of communication: we talk with our bodies. And brave attempts have been made to apply such methods to systematic and public presentations of social selves in specific historical communities, as for example in Rhys Isaac's analysis of life-styles in colonial Virginia.³² Even so, the research front at present is at best spotty. A few particular areas have received attention, but mostly we are in the dark.

In the core of this paper I shall focus upon certain particular problem areas, to highlight potentially fruitful fields for a history of the body and to evaluate the implications of current research.

Body and Mind

Of cardinal importance is a grasp of the subordinate place ascribed to the body within the religious, moral and social value systems of traditional European culture. Long before Descartes, a fundamental dualism pervaded the Western *mentalité*: being human meant being an embodied mind or, in Sir Thomas Browne's formulation, 'amphibious'. It is a dualism which many thinkers found paradoxical and mystifying, because of the radical incomprehensibility of the intersections between mind and flesh. Nevertheless, such dualism has been a force profoundly

shaping linguistic usage, classificatory schemes, ethics and value systems. Mind and body have traditionally been assigned distinct attributes and connotations. Mind is canonically superior to matter. Ontologically therefore, the mind, will, consciousness or self have been designated as the guardians and governors of the body, and the body should be their servant. Yet this schema has a crucial corollary: when, like an unruly servant, the body rebels, it is not the offending fists, feet or fingers which are necessarily held culpable, but the nobler faculties whose duty was properly to have controlled them. It is a fact which creates profound tensions for all systems of personal control (e.g., regimes of education or punishment).³³

In major respects, this hierarchical subordination of body to mind systematically degrades the body; its appetites and desires are seen as blind, wilful, anarchic or (within Christianity) radically sinful; it may be regarded as the prison of the soul. Thus the body readily offends, committing evil or criminal acts. Yet because of its very nature (being imperfect, even beast-like), it may, paradoxically, be readily excused (the weakness of the flesh). The mind (self, will, or soul) by contrast, because of its nobler office, is duty-bound to rise above such disorder, such internal 'civil war'; if implicated, the will, ideally free and noble, seems all the more guilty of offence. The question of precisely how to ascribe honour and blame, duties and responsibilities, respectively to mind and body has been crucial to the evaluation of man as a rational and moral being within systems of theology, ethics, politics and jurisprudence, both theoretical and practical.³⁴

In the seventeenth century a woman suffers delusions; her behaviour is erratic and bizarre. Contemporaries agree that she is sick, indeed that she is stricken with melancholy or lunacy. But what kind of an affliction is that? It could be a disorder of her mind. In that case it would probably be seen as some form of demonic possession.³⁵ But the notion of such a Satanic invasion was clearly dangerous (in the case of a suspected witch it could require a trial, or more generally, imply damnation). There was thus good reason to advance a counter-diagnosis: the 'madness' might instead be seen as somatic in origin, the product perhaps of a head wound or of an intestinal malaise (melancholy = literally an excess of 'black bile'). It was, of course, in its own way humiliating to be diagnosed as disordered in the guts (Swift, Pope and other satirists lampooned the *soi-disant* genius poets of their day as not being truly possessed of afflatus but merely suffering from flatulence); but, unlike Satanic possession, somatic disease had the escape clause of not automatically endangering one's spiritual destiny, one's immortal soul. In discussing such issues, perceptive historians of insanity such as

Michael MacDonald have demonstrated the dangers of anachronism. What to twentieth century minds might well be a sign of a 'sick mind', and thus part of the province of psychiatry, could have been read as a 'physical distemper' three hundred years ago; the boundaries of the body are fluid.³⁶

Questions of the relative responsibility of body and soul bedevilled attempts to explain and contain disorder. At witch trials in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it was crucial to determine whether possession phenomena were due to disease, deceit, or to Satan. And the tendency, strongly supported by the medical profession, was increasingly to emphasize organic causes for what we would now always call 'mental illness'. The will was thereby granted an alibi, and the body when sick was more readily excused, precisely because it was 'lower' than the mind would have been.

A couple of centuries later, perceptions of the relative responsibilities of mind and body had notably changed. By Victorian times, both laymen and practitioners were more inclined directly to ascribe 'mental disorder' to derangement of the consciousness. With the decline in literal belief in Satan and hellfire, and the termination of witch trials – in short, with a certain degree of secularization – to venture such a diagnosis no longer raised such spectres. Indeed, the emergence of psychotherapies created a new prognostic optimism: diseases of the mind could be treated and cured (so progressive psychiatrists claimed) more readily than those of the body. Obviously the new tendency to blame insanity on disorders of consciousness could carry with it distinctive forms of stigma and censure (everyone had a duty to govern his mind). Yet a new sympathy grew up alongside. Extremely individualistic, high-pressure societies (it was explained) created great expectations and taxing responsibilities; high living in high society generated high anxiety. Thus, under appropriate circumstances, mental disorders, or, as they were latterly called, nervous breakdowns, could carry social exemption, and command sympathy, or even distinction. Thus the passage of a couple of centuries witnessed profound shifts in mappings of mind and body and their relations' regroupings with enormous implications for policy and therapy.

We must not conflate these shifts in explanations with the positive progress of medical science: no scientific breakthroughs 'proved' the respective roles of mind and body in directing action. They should rather be seen as marks of cultural reorientations which rethought the attributes of mind and body. This point, which applies to wider cultural revisions, is equally germane to the problem of interpreting particular episodes.

Take Freud. In his early psychiatric practice, Freud concluded that many of his neurotic female patients had been sexually assaulted as children; this was what they told him. For complicated reasons, some professional, some personal, Freud abandoned this interpretation, adopting instead the view that the women's stories were not after all memories but rather fantasies, rooted in the unconscious, about traumatic events which had never in reality taken place. By thus developing a theory of repressed desires, Freud gave birth to psychoanalysis. Thus Freud switched from an essentially somatic explanation (real assault) of the aetiology of mental disturbance, to one located merely 'in the mind'; and proposed an equally psychiatric treatment, the 'talking cure'. The vast majority of commentators from Ernest Jones onwards have praised Freud for his supposedly profound insight in directing attention away from the life of the body to that of the consciousness. We may, however, see this praise as reflecting the ingrained privileging of the intellectual over the physical. The interpretation of Freud's switch in explanations is altogether a more complicated matter.³⁷

Thus mind/body relations are not a 'given' but culture-dependent. This relativism is exemplified by a noteworthy cross-cultural distinction between the Western experience and the Chinese in the attribution of illness, which has been drawn by the historian and medical anthropologist, Arthur Kleinman. A twentieth-century American feels 'depressed'; he consults not a general physician but a psychotherapist; he is diagnosed as suffering from a psychiatric disorder, some form of neurosis; the therapist investigates his life history to restore him to happiness. The equivalent person in China, by contrast, ascribes a comparable malaise to a physical disorder and cause. His physician confirms that his malady is organic (it may be called 'neurasthenia'), and prescribes medicines. Designated a victim of somatic disease, the Chinaman is permitted to assume the 'sick role', and can thereby command sympathy and attention. By contrast, had he, like his American counterpart, pleaded some form of mental disorder, it would have been a terrible, debilitating admission of character defect and deviancy, which would have brought with it stigma and disadvantage.³⁸

In other words, as Kleinman's discussion of the rival somatic and psychiatric constructs of 'mental disorder' demonstrates, the 'body' cannot be treated by the historian as a biological given, but must be regarded as mediated through cultural sign systems. The apportionment of function and responsibility between body and mind, body and soul, differs notably according to century, class, circumstances and culture, and societies often possess a plurality of competing meanings. Assessing the individual case is a matter for negotiation.

A great deal has hinged upon such attributions, for example in the practical matter of legal culpability. Historians of forensic medicine, such as Roger Smith, have elucidated the dilemmas. A blow from one man kills another. Is the proprietor of that body to be held responsible? Yes, if his 'mind' directed the blow, that is, if there was *mens rea*, a guilty intention; no, an eighteenth- or nineteenth-century court would have found, if he were out of his mind, perhaps itself as a consequence of somatic disease.

If, however, responsibility is sustained, how is redress to be exacted? Till within the last couple of centuries, it was principally directed against the body, through corporal or capital punishment. Once again, however, shifting value systems intervened; especially from the late eighteenth century, penal reformers argued that it was 'nobler' or more 'humane' not to punish the body but to correct or reform the mind: in Mably's terms, 'punishment should strike the soul rather than the body'. As Michel Foucault and Michael Ignatieff have particularly emphasised, the therapeutic intention underpinning modern penology marks yet another instance of the shifting status of the body – one which by sparing the flesh serves only to reiterate its inferiority.³⁹

Take another example. A man is killed, not by a blow from another but by a micro-organism spread by a carrier. Is the carrier to be held morally or criminally responsible for the danger or disaster his body brought about? It has proved an immensely complicated issue, central to the politics of the regulation of high-density populations by medical bureaucracies ever since the bubonic plague epidemics of the Middle Ages. What is perhaps remarkable, however, as has been stressed by recent historians of public health, is how little the juridico-political systems of the West have held individuals responsible for the health havoc wreaked by their bodies. Despite the emergence of increasingly 'policed' welfare societies over the last two centuries, questions of health have been left surprisingly to private and confidential contractual relationships between the individual and his physician. (Samuel Butler's *Utopia*, *Erewhon*, in which it is a crime to be sick – though criminality is excused as a disease – affords a startling contrast.) Despite the 'medicalization of life', health compulsions have been few. For example, legally enforceable smallpox vaccination was briefly introduced into Victorian England, but, meeting fierce opposition, the legislation was watered down; the same is true for compulsory treatment for venereal disease.⁴⁰ This solution surely embodies a sense of that inalienable, individual proprietorship of the body stoutly advanced in the secularizing formulations of liberal political philosophy from the seventeenth century onwards. Policies and platitudes in law enforcement,

political philosophy, and social administration will often be fully grasped only if their rootedness in doctrines about the ownership and privacy of the body are first understood.⁴¹

Policing the Body

There is a deep-seated cultural stereotype – rapturous in Rabelais,⁴² reviling within Christian theology – which pictures the body as an anarch, a lord of misrule, emblematic of excess in food, drink, sex, violence – the embodiment of the principle which Freud later intellectualized as the 'id'. Historians have recently been exploring the attempts of dominant social groups to restrict, repress and reform the mayhem of the body. These strategies have obviously taken distinct forms.

Scholars have focused their attention primarily on reforms which are self-inflicted, implementing aspirations towards better self-control, associated with household education and discipline. Manuals for proper behaviour, both religious and civil, pouring off the printing presses from the sixteenth century, set great store by the submission and obedience of the body, and on the cultivation of manners, decency and decorum. Foucault has argued that the growing concern with good health and long life arising out of the Enlightenment affords a further symptom.⁴³ Vigarello has stressed the importance of enculturating the anarchic body through hygiene, cleanliness and dress, and Norbert Elias in particular has studied 'the civilizing process' visible in the development of body controls (clean bodies, clean habits, clean talk, clean minds). Moreover Schama's investigation of purity and body discipline amongst Dutch Calvinists illuminates the effectiveness (both social and psychological) of such strategies in creating a *cordon sanitaire* against moral and religious threats – both popery and pollution – seen to be dirty, dangerous, and contaminating.⁴⁴

Talk of decency, delicacy, and prudery automatically suggests the Victorians, but Victorianism long antedated those who bear its name. Thomas Bowdler was a Georgian, it was Wesley who placed cleanliness next to Godliness, and the proper comportment of the body in a polite society was never so much bruted as in the age of Addison, Steele and Mandeville. In works such as *The Virgin Unmask'd* Mandeville teasingly explored the ambivalent meanings of bodily repression, in which veiling the flesh could be more titillating than revealing it.⁴⁵

Physical self-control has typically gone hand-in-glove with the desire to police the bodies of others, so as to secure better social and moral-

religious order. Notable historians of early modern France, such as Muchembled, Flandrin and Delumeau, have laid special stress upon the attempts of religious and civil authorities to regulate the bodies of the common people through persuasion, prescription and ultimately physical coercion.⁴⁶ Muchembled above all has argued that within traditional quasi-pagan peasant culture, the body enjoyed high status as a potent instrument, and that its parts and products blood, faeces, the penis and the womb – possessed magical powers. If vulnerable to famine, disease and death, the body was also the Dionysian life-force behind riot and orgiastic excess. This carnival counter-culture of the body was, however, increasingly subjected to systematic surveillance and effective repression, through the instruments of witch trials, church courts, and confession intensified by the Counter-Reformation, and the instilling of a new sexual morality underlining marriage and legitimacy.

Early modern England also witnessed parallel movements, led by Puritans, for the religious reformation of morals and manners.⁴⁷ They may have met with some success. Historical demographers have demonstrated that bastardy figures were notably lower in Stuart times than they later became in the more secular environment of the first industrial nation, possibly suggesting that moral discipline was effective.⁴⁸ Georgian England witnessed further assaults upon an anarchic body-culture with the regulation of blood sports and prize-fighting, and a new disapproval of duelling, and with the attempts of capitalist employers to drum regular work and time discipline into their work-force.⁴⁹

Plebeian bodies had traditionally been on the receiving end of physical coercion: the whip, the pillory, the gallows. But, as Foucault particularly stressed, the people's bodies also became subjected to, and, it was hoped, regenerated by, a new political technology of the body – the routines of the factory floor, the drills of the school, the fatigues of the parade ground, the punishments of the reformatory. From swaddling and toilet training in the domestic family, through schooling, to the army or the factory floor, the state laboured to manufacture docile subjects and an obedient work-force via the systematic disciplining of people's bodies.⁵⁰ Only recently, historians of the present century have suggested, has the logic of capitalism somewhat relaxed this relentless so-called 'Protestant' emphasis on the disciplined body and on a 'this-worldly asceticism'; the imperative has recently switched from the iron-disciplined machine-like productive 'hand' to the body as consumer, brimful of wants and needs, whose desires are to be inflamed and encouraged.⁵¹

Focusing attention on the problem of the body – its dangers and its disciplines, its potential for pollution yet its productive powers – helps to

make sense of numerous disparate developments too often studied in isolation and anachronistically through the blinkers of modern disciplines. As Catherine Gallagher has argued, we misunderstand Malthus if, for instance, we treat him simply as the founding father of modern demography.⁵² Indeed he posed a dramatically new conundrum about the moral well-being of bodies politic. Traditionally the healthy body was the guarantor of the healthy state: it produced, it reproduced. But, counter-suggested Malthus, the healthy body, because of its high reproductive powers, might actually prove the state's enemy. Thus the body private and the body public might be at odds. Or, as E. P. Thompson emphasized, we miss half the significance of the quest for time discipline in factories if we see it only in terms of economic rationality and heroic captains of industry: rather it was part of a much wider attempt to govern the people through control of their bodies.⁵³

Similarly, a history of education which exclusively concentrates on the achievement of skills such as reading and writing will miss one of the prime functions of the ragged, charity or elementary school in the past: instilling physical obedience, or education as a process of breaking children in.⁵⁴ Likewise, it would be blinkered to assess the goals of sanitarians and hygienists solely in terms of miasmas and drains: their concerns were no less with moral filth and the regulation of sexual contagion and contamination.⁵⁵ In the same way, the rituals of medicine at the bedside or in the hospital cannot be explained wholly by the attainments of medical science. Broader questions of bodily taboos and decorum also dictated the nature and limits of diagnostic examinations, surgical treatment and the emergence of new interventionist and gender-sensitive specialties such as man-midwifery.⁵⁶

These wider issues show why the politics of the body demand attention in their own right; such issues are too often neglected if we pursue historical demography, the history of education, the history of medicine, and so forth through an isolated and narrow tunnel vision.

It remains unclear, however, how accurate a picture is given by historians such as Muchembled who have seen popular cultures of the body being successfully suppressed in the name of the panoptic, therapeutic state and the dictates of capitalist rationality. Aspirations may well have vastly outstripped achievements. Elite culture does not so much seem to have crushed popular culture as separated itself from it, developing its own distinct, dematerializing, expressive, body language, rituals and refinements.⁵⁷ Folklore popular sexual mores (e.g. the tradition of premarital intercourse followed by marriage on pregnancy) and grass-roots medical magic proved immensely resilient against indoctrination and infiltration from above.

And not least, the politics of controlling body behaviour in the teeth of the threats posed by epidemic disease and 'dangerous sexualities' were immensely complex. In England, the aspirations of the public health and hygiene movement of the early Victorian period, associated with utilitarianism and Edwin Chadwick, were direct and statist. No such alliance between central government and mains drainage can be found, however, in Paris. But even in England, the enterprise of policing bodies by state medicine quickly foundered, wrecked on the rocks of competing political lobbies, including purity and feminist groups furious at the attempts of male legislators to control female bodies through the traditional double standard. Overall the superficially attractive notion that the growth of state power has been directed towards the social subordination of the body turns out to be naive and unconvincing.⁵⁸

Sex, Gender and the Body

If European society over *la longue durée* was a patriarchy, and still bears at least its scars, how far was patriarchy itself a direct symptom or consequence of the differentiation between male and female bodies – a difference, that is, not simply biological, but as constituted within social realities? Was the reason for the traditional subordination of women to men primarily and essentially *physical* – because the endless pregnancies which selfish husbands forced upon them in the days before effective contraception, shackled them to children and household, to premature ageing, exhaustion and frequently to death from the diseases of childbirth; and which furthermore trapped them in a women-only ghetto culture stained by menstrual blood and the pollutions of parturition? Thus Edward Shorter has argued in his *History of Women's Bodies*,⁵⁹ concluding that women have finally, over the last century, been emancipated from their primary biological chains by the coming of safe child-bearing, contraception and legalized abortion, all of which, by giving women control over their own fertility, have paved the way for the 'modern family', the 'egalitarian family' and even the post-family society.

What cannot be doubted is that traditional male doctors, theologians and philosophers ascribed the subordination of women to their inferior biological status within the scheme of Creation. According to Aristotle and his followers, women were defective or monstrous males, beings in whom the genitalia (designed to be on the outside of the body) had failed, for want of heat and strength, to be extruded. With their cooler

and weaker nature, and their genitals trapped internally, women were equipped essentially for child-bearing rather than for a life of reason and activity within the civic forum. Women were private creatures, men public.⁶⁰

Thomas Laqueur has argued that this bio-medical conceptualization of women's nature was eroded and replaced towards the close of the eighteenth century.⁶¹ The female gender ceased to be seen as literally an inferior version of the male, becoming regarded instead as essentially different, but complementary. Physiologists newly argued that the female sexual reproductive apparatus was radically distinct from that of men, a view confirmed by the discovery of the functions of the ovaries and the nature of the menstrual cycle. This in turn indicated that there was no good biological reason why women should be actively sexual (i.e., erotic) beings at all: contrary to Classical medical dogma, no sexual stimulus was needed for women to conceive: they merely had to serve as semen receptacles. The passive, desexualized, 'Victorian' woman was born (though, *pace* Laqueur, it must be stressed that Peter Gay and other historians have been arguing that Victorian women were not in that sense 'Victorian' at all; it would be a gross mistake to confuse certain prescriptions for proper female behaviour with the reality).⁶²

Laqueur seeks to relate this 'making of the modern body' to women's changing place in society. Desexualized, the lady became the angel in the house, docile, frail, passionless; and his account thus dovetails nicely with recent analyses of the emergence of 'separate spheres' for male and female household roles.⁶³ Arguing that science does not emerge from a pure logic of discovery but gives articulate form to socio-ideological pressures, Laqueur denies that the new gender image was the product of autonomous scientific inquiry. But a chicken-and-egg conundrum thus emerges. Do we accept (as Laqueur's argument implies and much feminist scholarship suggests) that cultural forces – that is, patriarchalist ideology, translated into institutional power – were primarily responsible for locking women in dolls' houses? If that is so, it becomes a matter of urgency to demonstrate why the years just before and just after 1800 should be thought to be pivotal in transforming women's social position.

Or should we rather, following Shorter, subscribe to a more 'materialist' account, in which *biological* fetters (multiple pregnancies, etc.) principally explain women's age-old servitude, and biomedical breakthroughs (contraception, abortion, etc.) are credited with doing more for women's emancipation than the agitation of feminists? But if (with Shorter) we accept the bio-medical dynamo of history, how can we explain why the ghost of patriarchy continues to rule the roost, even today, once biological emancipation has (supposedly) been achieved?

The answer perhaps is that we need not impale ourselves on the horns of a false dichotomy: the notion that explanations for gender identity must be either simply socio-cultural or simply bio-scientific. An escape route is indeed signposted by accounts, by Foucault and others, of the transformation of discourse about sex during the nineteenth century.⁶⁴ Foucault rightly stressed that the popular notion that sex, allegedly so openly discussed during the 'free' eighteenth century,⁶⁵ was silenced in the furtive nineteenth is quite false. No century had seen such extensive, almost obsessive, discussion of sex. But the focus of attention shifted.

Earlier treatments, such as that found in the popular handbook, *Aristotle's Master-piece*, regarded sexual congress essentially as the action of bodies, in accord with the urges and appetites of nature, primarily designed to secure the perpetuation of the species.⁶⁶ Nineteenth-century sexual discourse, by contrast, paid extraordinary attention to sexual disorders, abnormality and deviance. Above all, it elaborated a psychopathology of sexual perversions, linking these with practices such as masturbation and conditions such as hysteria. Sex was thus psychiatrized in the 'space' of a new theoretical construction, 'sexuality'.⁶⁷

This analysis illuminates and helps resolve the dilemma raised by the divergent analyses of Shorter and Laqueur. For it would seem that when addressing changing conceptions of women in the nineteenth century, our attention should be focused neither literally on the bio-medical history of their bodies, nor principally upon changing pressures within marriage and the family, but rather upon the development of a new metaphysic of the feminine. This found a matrix in a psycho-physiology of motherhood, and was intimately associated with what Elaine Showalter has rightly named 'the female malady' (which was, in the extreme case, the malady of being female).⁶⁸ This new discourse, eventually enshrined in Freudian psychoanalytic theory, actually recuperated the old biologism ('anatomy is destiny'), but masked it in new fancy dress (penis envy was, after all, just in the mind). Not least, in the case of Freud himself, it aspired to the liberation of women (though not from men, but from their own neuroses).⁶⁹ This is why, despite Shorter's eueptic tone, 'biological' emancipation has been of somewhat flimsy significance to women this century, in view of the emergence of other disciplines – the varieties of psychoanalysis which offer new rationalizations for the inferiority (neuroses) of women.⁷⁰

An Agenda

I have just examined three key areas in which our knowledge of the body, both in reality and in representations, is critical to wider interpretations of social change. In each, the historiographical debate is already raging. By way of coda to this skimming survey, I shall point to seven other branches of the history of the body which deserve close attention, mentioning in the references signal work which has already appeared.

1 *The Body as Human Condition* The religions, philosophies and literatures of the world chorus a commentary upon the human condition, upon birth, copulation and death.⁷¹ But how specifically and directly do the prevailing religious doctrines or artistic tempers of particular times relate to (reflect? compensate for?) the actual experiences of embodied living?⁷² Was, for example, the death-obsessed culture of what Huizinga called 'the waning of the Middle Ages' a reflex response to the realities of the epidemics of bubonic plague which swept Europe in the fourteenth century? or, following Camporesi, might we better see the macabre elements of late medieval Christianity – the fascination with Christ nailed to the cross, the incorruptible bodies of saints and so forth – as an expression of a pulsating love of life and engrossment with the flesh? Or, to take a later period, is there a genuine link – as Imhof suggests – between the recent assurance of a more secure and protracted temporal existence and, on the other hand, a declining belief in personal immortality? To use Imhof's formulation, life expectation, which was once infinite, is now reduced to a matter of three score years and ten.⁷³

2 *The Form of the Body* In art, creative writing, science and medicine, but no less in proverbs,⁷⁴ clichés and metaphors, the body takes on a visual, or visualized form. Thin or fat, beautiful or ugly; the mirror of the universe, the paragon of the animals, the quintessence of dust – every picture tells its story and incorporates a value system. Few historians have as yet paid much attention to language (as contained for example in living and dead metaphors) as a vehicle for hidden messages about the body. Fewer still general historians, as opposed to specialist historians of art, have pondered deeply about the significance of real visual images of bodies (in portraits, in funeral effigies – 'anatomies' – or even in snapshot albums) as historical evidence. All too often historians use visual evidence as mere 'illustrations' rather than as explicanda. Better integration of written and visual sources is a high priority.⁷⁵

3 *The Anatomy of the Body* Bodies are objects for the external gaze; they face the outside world. But they are also subjective, integral to the internal self. Oddly, however, most accounts of the history of the self,⁷⁶ of character and personal psychology have very little to say about how people have made sense of, and related themselves to, their own bodies. We need to know much more about how particular individuals and cultures in general have ascribed meaning to their limbs and organs, their constitutions, their flesh. What is the emotional and existential topography of skin and bones? What did people mean when they talked, literally and figuratively, of their blood,⁷⁷ their head or their heart, their bowels, their spirits and their humours? How did these organs and functions embody emotions, experiences and desires? How did private and public meanings, subjective and medical connotations, interrelate? When did one feel old or young (or indeed young at heart), and what did the succession of such ages and stages mean? And how did people think of their bodies, their aches and pains, when they fell sick? The body is the primary communications system, but historians have paid little attention to its codes and keys (anthropologists may have much to teach us here).⁷⁸

4 *Body, Mind and Soul* I have alluded above to the fact that the territories of mind and body are not fixed – least of all fixed by biology – but possess boundaries subject to negotiation within particular systems of values, judgements and duties. This sense of the self, a totality divided into distinct faculties and offices, a mindful body and an embodied mind, often mutually at odds, has obviously been central to ethical theories, codes of jurisprudence, pedagogic programmes, and more generally, to notions of man's place in nature. Indeed, mind/body relations, and even more so, body/soul relations may be said not just to constitute a problem *within* ethics and theology, but to *generate* the very impetus for, the mystery behind, their profound speculations. The links and divides between mind and body, experience and lesions, are clearly no less central to the history of illness and medicines, as 'psychosomatic' conditions such as hysteria⁷⁹ and hypochondria⁸⁰ bear witness. We must remember that philosophies and world-views of man and his nature are commonly predicated upon an often unstated metaphysic of the human body.⁸¹

5 *Sex and Gender* Thanks to feminist scholarship, the constitution and reconstitution of sex and gender forms one of the very few areas of analysis of the body – specifically the female body, at once attractive yet polluted, desirable yet dangerous – which have received detailed

scrutiny. It is utterly impossible to discuss here the range of topics covered in this scholarship, or even to list it in the references.⁸² One important conclusion which seems to be emerging is worth noting; the fact that no one single, uniform attitude towards the politics of the female body *vis-à-vis* existing or a reformed society was adopted by feminist opinion. Writers differed. For example many women campaigners sought sexual emancipation; others thought the way forward lay in emancipation from sex. Many feminists argued for the essential identity between men and women, united by the common attribute of reason; others built upon the unique features of the female body (e.g., its capacity for child-bearing). The notion of a single, progressive feminist 'movement' needs to be finally discarded.

What remains pitifully ignored is the history of maleness and masculinity (all too typically taken as normal and therefore normative and unproblematic). There are some signs that this is at last changing.⁸³

6 *The Body and the Body Politic* Historians of political thought and literature have long investigated the metaphor of the body politic, and its associated and derivative concepts, such as the 'King's Two Bodies' – although they have often done so somewhat impatiently, eager to see these long obsolescent metaphors driven off the stage by a more philosophically rigorous language of politics from the seventeenth century onwards.⁸⁴ What has received far less attention are the ways in which political authority has actually treated the individual body. The high rhetorical goals of politics, the rights of man, are commonly expressed in abstract, intellectualist terms (free speech, freedom of conscience). Yet behind these lie assumptions about fundamental physical freedoms and immunities, not least *habeas corpus* itself. Yet we remain strikingly ignorant as to the circumstances and rationalizations under which states have possessed or regimented the body in military conscription, in time of plague,⁸⁵ indeed, in slavery. There is abundant scope for political historians and political scientists to be more sensitive to the power realities produced by the exercise of the state's authority over the bodies of its subjects.⁸⁶

7 *The Body, Civilization and its Discontents* History is an unfinished civilizing process – a struggle, anthropologists tell us, to affirm man's distinctiveness from Nature. Yet the writing of the history of civilization has concentrated too long on the artefacts of high culture. There is a need for a different kind of history of enculturation. We come naked into the world, but we are soon adorned not just with clothes but with the metaphorical clothing of moral codes, taboos, prohibitions, and

value systems linking discipline to desires, politeness to policing. The stories of dress, of cleanliness, of eating, of cosmetics, have too long been left to specialists relatively uninterested in the larger questions of the functions served by such objects and activities in transforming individuals and societies into culture.⁸⁷

The aim of this paper has not been to propose a new cottage industry, dedicated to weaving a gigantic tapestry of the history of the body. It has been to issue a reminder of how the body is a suppressed presence – too often ignored or forgotten – within many other, more prestigious, branches of scholarship. More alert awareness of it would undermine the enduring idealist snobberies endorsed by those whom Nietzsche characterized as the ‘Despisers of the Body’, and help its resurrection.

NOTES

- 1 Leo Steinberg, *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and Modern Oblivion* (New York, 1983).
- 2 This is of course a wildly simplistic way of putting an extremely complicated situation. For the intellectual foundations of these cultural heritages see Bennett Simon, *Mind and Madness in Ancient Greece* (Ithaca, 1978); E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley and London, 1951); and for Christianity, F. Bottomley, *Attitudes to the Body in Western Christendom* (London, 1979).
- 3 On Sterne, see Roy Porter, ‘Against the Spleen’ in Valerie Grosvenor-Myer (ed.), *Laurence Sterne: Riddles and Mysteries* (London and New York, 1984), 84–99; J. Rodgers, ‘Ideas of Life in *Tristram Shandy*: Contemporary Medicine’ (Ph.D. thesis, University of East Anglia, 1978).
- 4 For an introduction to contemporary feminist perspectives see Susan Brownmiller, *Femininity* (London, 1984).
- 5 A disparagement of course enhanced by traditional prudery, Bowdlerism etc. See P. Fryer, *Mrs. Grundy: Studies in English Prudery* (London, 1963); M. Jaeger, *Before Victoria* (London, 1956).
- 6 For critical interpretations of such processes as mere modifications within the existing system, indeed as ‘repressive desublimation’, see Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man* (London, 1964); C. Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism* (New York, 1979).
- 7 See M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968); A. Schmidt, *The Concept of Nature in Marx*, tr. B. Fawkes (London, 1971).
- 8 See Peter Burke, ‘Revolution in Popular Culture’, in Roy Porter and Mikuláš Teich (eds), *Revolution in History* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 206–25.
- 9 For an exemplary investigation see Peter Burke, *The Historical Anthropology*

- of *Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge, 1987); highly useful also are Michael MacDonald, ‘Anthropological Perspectives on the History of Science and Medicine’, in P. Corsi and P. Weindling (eds.), *Information Sources in the History of Science and Medicine* (London, 1983), 61–80.
- 10 B. S. Turner, *The Body and Society: Explorations in Social Theory* (Oxford, 1984). Turner’s book is the boldest attempt yet to create a sociology of the body. There is a stimulating discussion of the neglect of the body in literature in Virginia Woolf’s essay, ‘On being ill’, in *Collected Essays*, vol. iv (London, 1967), 193–203. For Woolf’s own problems with ‘embodiment’ see S. Trombley, *All that Summer She Was Mad. Virginia Woolf and her Doctors* (London, 1981).
 - 11 The best, and most up to date, survey is Bryan S. Turner, *Medical Power and Social Knowledge* (Beverly Hills and London, 1987).
 - 12 For a bibliographical entry see the essay by Joan Scott in this volume.
 - 13 Arthur Imhof has been to the fore in attempting to relate technical historical demography to wider questions of social existence. See for instance his ‘Methodological Problems in Modern Urban Geography: Graphic Representations of Urban Mortality 1750–1850’, in Roy Porter and Andrew Wear (eds), *Problems and Methods in the History of Medicine* (London, 1987), pp. 101–32.
 - 14 The psycho-physiological interpretation of the body is of course important in its own right. See Jonathan Miller, *The Body in Question* (London, 1978). Debate continues as to whether sociobiological perspectives can illuminate historical research.
 - 15 W. I. Watson, ‘Why Isn’t the Mind-Body Problem Ancient?’, in Paul K. Feyerabend and Grover Maxwell (eds), *Mind, Matter and Method* (Minneapolis, 1966), 92–102; L. J. Rather, *Mind and Body in Eighteenth Century Medicine* (London, 1965).
 - 16 See R. Barthes, *Le Plaisir du Texte* (Paris, 1973); J. Derrida, *Writing and Difference* (London, 1978).
 - 17 F. Barker, *The Tremulous Private Body* (London, 1984).
 - 18 Barker’s scholarship is gloriously demolished in J. R. R. Christie, ‘Bad News for the Body’, *Art History* 9 (1986), pp. 263–70.
 - 19 S. R. Suleiman (ed.), *The Female Body in Western Culture* (Cambridge, Mass., 1986), 2 (editor’s introduction).
 - 20 Margaret Higonnet, ‘Speaking Silences: Women’s Suicide’, in Suleiman (ed.), *The Female Body*, pp. 68–83; many of the assertions made there about female suicides being abandoned by men run counter to the careful empirical analysis in Olive Anderson, *Suicide in Victorian and Edwardian England* (Oxford, 1987).
 - 21 Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain. The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York and London, 1985).
 - 22 Barbara Duden, *Geschichte unter der Haut* (Stuttgart, 1987). Duden also shows how her group of women espoused a vision of their own bodies as dynamic and powerful, the great centres of life-creation.

- 23 See the discussion in the introduction to G. S. Rousseau and Roy Porter (eds), *Sexual Underworlds of the Enlightenment* (Manchester, 1987).
- 24 For an introduction to such sources, see R. Maccubbin (ed.), *Unauthorized Sexual Behavior during the Enlightenment* (special issue of *Eighteenth Century Life*, May 1985).
- 25 See G. Risse, 'Hysteria at the Edinburgh Infirmary', *Medical History* 32 (1988), pp. 1–22.
- 26 See classically E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield, *The Population History of England 1541–1870* (London, 1982).
- 27 Roderick Floud, Kenneth Wachter and Annabell Gregory, *Height, Health and History* (Cambridge, 1990).
- 28 For the problems of interpreting such evidence see D. M. Fox and C. Lawrence, *Photographing Medicine: Images and Power in Britain and America since 1840* (Springfield, Conn., 1988). For valuable interpretations see David Piper, *The English Face* (London, 1957) and *Personality and the Portrait* (London, 1972).
- 29 See E. Goffman, *Stigma, Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (Harmondsworth, 1968); *idem*, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (London, 1959); *idem*, *Strategic Interaction* (Oxford, 1970); *idem*, *Interaction Ritual* (London, 1972).
- 30 For the construction of the self see P. M. Spacks, *Imagining a Self* (Cambridge, Mass., 1976), especially chapter 5; J. N. Morris, *Versions of the Self* (New York, 1966); S. D. Cox, 'The Stranger Within Thee': *The Concept of Self in Late Eighteenth Century Literature* (Pittsburgh, 1980); J. O. Lyons, *The Invention of the Self* (Carbondale, 1978).
- 31 See Lloyd DeMause, *The New Psychohistory* (New York, 1975). David E. Stannard, *Shrinking History: On Freud and the Failure of Psychohistory* (New York and Oxford, 1980) has argued that psychohistory is bunk.
- 32 See for instance Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia 1700–1800* (Chapel Hill, 1981).
- 33 Thus all forms of materialism produce dilemmas about personal responsibility. For the Enlightenment, see Lester Crocker, *An Age of Crisis: Man and World in Eighteenth Century French Thought* (Baltimore, 1959).
- 34 Roger Smith, *Trial by Medicine: Insanity and Responsibility in Victorian Trials* (Edinburgh, 1981).
- 35 D. P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella* (London, 1958); Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (Harmondsworth, 1978).
- 36 For the intellectual and cultural contexts of these notions of madness see Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: a History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. Translated by Richard Howard (New York, 1965); Michael Macdonald, *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety and Healing in Seventeenth Century England* (Cambridge, 1981); fundamental here is G. S. Rousseau, 'Psychology', in G. S. Rousseau and Roy Porter (eds), *The Ferment of Knowledge* (Cambridge, 1980).
- 37 On Freud, see H. F. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious: the*

- History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry* (New York, 1971); R. W. Clark, *Freud: The Man and the Cause* (London, 1982). Frank J. Sulloway, *Freud: Biologist of the Mind* (New York, 1979) and J. M. Masson, *The Assault on Truth: Freud's Suppression of the Seduction Theory* (New York, 1983).
- 38 Arthur Kleinman, *Social Origins of Distress and Disease. Depression, Neurasthenia and Pain in Modern China* (New Haven, 1986). See also Carney Landis and Fred Mettler, *Varieties of Psychopathological Experience* (New York, 1964). For broader discussion of the 'sick role' see D. Mechanic, 'The Concept of Illness Behaviour', *Journal of Chronic Disease* 15 (1962), 189–94.
- 39 See M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Harmondsworth, 1979); M. Ignatieff, *A Just Measure of Pain* (London, 1978).
- 40 W. M. Frazer, *History of English Public Health 1834–1939* (London, 1950), pp. 70–72, 106–112; P. McHugh, *Prostitution and Victorian Social Reform* (London, 1981) and J. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society* (Cambridge, 1980).
- 41 Public and private dimensions are explored in R. Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (Cambridge, 1976).
- 42 M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968).
- 43 See M. Foucault, *A History of Sexuality*. Vol. 1. *Introduction* (London, 1978); J.-L. Flandrin, *Un Temps pour embrasser* (Paris, 1983).
- 44 See generally N. Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (Oxford, 1983), and more specifically S. Schama, 'The Unruly Realm: Appetite and Restraint in Seventeenth-Century Holland', *Daedalus* 108 (1979), 103–23.
- 45 For early Georgian opinion see Fenella Childs 'Prescriptions for Manners in Eighteenth Century Courtesy Literature' (D.Phil. thesis, Oxford, 1984).
- 46 Jacques Donzelot, *The Policing of Families*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York, 1979); Jean-Louis Flandrin, 'Amour et mariage', *Dix-huitième Siècle*, 12 (1980), 163–76. See also M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, tr. H. Iswolsky (Cambridge, Mass., 1968); and J. Starobinski, 'The Body's Moment' in *Montaigne: Essays in Reading* (Yale French studies no. 64, 1983), pp. 273–305.
- 47 K. Wrightson, *English Society 1580–1680* (London, 1982); E. J. Bristow, *Vice and Vigilance: Purity Movements in Britain since 1700* (Dublin, 1977).
- 48 P. Laslett (ed.), *Bastardy and its Comparative History* (London, 1980).
- 49 R. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society 1700–1850* (Cambridge, 1973).
- 50 Foucault's main relevant works are *Madness and Civilization: a History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (London, 1967); *The Order of Things: an Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London, 1970); *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London, 1972); *The Birth of the Clinic: an Archaeology of Medical Perception* (London, 1973); *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison* (Harmondsworth, 1979); *The History of Sexuality*. Vol. 1. *Introduction* (London, 1978). See also C. Gordon (ed.), *M. Foucault: Power/Knowledge* (Brighton, 1980), especially the essay 'Body/Power', pp. 55–62.

- 51 M. Featherstone, 'The Body in Consumer Culture', *Theory, Culture & Society* 1 (1982), pp. 18–33.
- 52 For discussion of Malthus's wider concerns see Patricia James, *Population Malthus: His Life and Times* (London, 1979), chapter 2, part 4; and R. M. Young, 'Malthus and the Evolutionists: The Common Context of Biological and Social Theory', *Past and Present* 43 (1969), pp. 109–45.
- 53 E.P. Thompson, 'Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism', *Past and Present* 37 (1967), pp. 56–97.
- 54 On the wider dimensions of education see B. Haley, *The Healthy Body and Victorian Culture* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978).
- 55 Virginia Smith, 'Physical Puritanism and Sanitary Science: Material and Immaterial Beliefs in Popular Physiology 1650–1840', in W. F. Bynum and Roy Porter (eds), *Medical Fringe and Medical Orthodoxy 1750–1850* (London, 1986), pp. 174–97.
- 56 See R. L. Engle and B. J. Davis, 'Medical Diagnosis, Present, Past and Future', *Archives of Internal Medicine* 112 (1963), pp. 512–43.
- 57 For such divisions see P. Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1978); H. C. Payne, 'Elite versus Popular Mentality in the Eighteenth Century', *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture* 8 (1979), pp. 201–37.
- 58 The best and most recent introduction is in Frank Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Politics in England since 1830* (London, 1987).
- 59 E. Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family* (London, 1976).
- 60 J. Morsink, *Aristotle on the Generation of Animals* (Washington, 1982).
- 61 T. Laqueur, 'Orgasm, Generation and the Politics of Reproductive Biology', in C. Gallagher and T. Laqueur (eds), *The Making of the Modern Body* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1987), pp. 1–41. Compare Pierre Darmon, *Le Mythe de la procréation à l'âge baroque* (Paris, 1977).
- 62 P. Gay, *The Bourgeois Experience, Victoria to Freud*, Vol. 1. *A Sentimental Education*, vol. 2. *The Tender Passion* (New York, 1984, 1986).
- 63 Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes. Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780–1850* (London, 1987).
- 64 M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1. *Introduction* (London, 1978).
- 65 For the Enlightenment's claim that the erotic is the healthy see J. Hagstrum, *Sex and Sensibility: Erotic Ideal and Erotic Love from Milton to Mozart* (London, 1980); Roy Porter, 'Mixed Feelings: the Enlightenment and sexuality in Britain', in P. G. Boucé (ed.), *Sexuality in Eighteenth Century Britain* (Manchester, 1982), pp. 1–27.
- 66 Roy Porter, 'Spreading Carnal Knowledge or Selling Dirt Cheap? Nicolas Venette's *Tableau De L'Amour Conjugal* in Eighteenth Century England', *Journal of European Studies*, 14 (1984), pp. 233–55; P. G. Boucé, 'Aspects of sexual tolerance and intolerance in eighteenth-century England', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 3 (1980), 180.
- 67 For one dimension of this new sexual psychiatry, see E. H. Hare, 'Masturbatory Insanity: The History of an Idea', *Journal of Mental Science*, 108 (1962), pp. 1–25.

- 68 Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady* (New York, 1985).
- 69 An attempt to marry psychoanalysis with feminism is made in Juliet Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (New York, 1974). For a much more sceptical set of views see Charles Bernheimer and Claire Kahane (eds), *In Dora's Case: Freud, Hysteria, Feminism* (New York, 1985).
- 70 For helpful general perspectives on the historiography of sex, see Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society* (London, 1981); Michael Ignatieff, 'Homo Sexualis', *London Review of Books* (March 4–17, 1982), pp. 8–9.
- 71 For attitudes towards death see J. McManners, *Death and the Enlightenment* (Oxford, 1981). P. Ariès, *The Hour of our Death* (Harmondsworth, 1981); and W. F. Bynum 'Health, Disease and Medical Care', in G. S. Rousseau and Roy Porter, *The Ferment of Knowledge* (Cambridge, 1980), 211–54.
- 72 See the discussion in J. Broadbent, 'The Image of God, or Two Yards of Skin', in J. Benthall and T. Polhemus (eds), *The Body as a Medium of Expression* (London, 1975), pp. 305–26.
- 73 P. Camporesi, *The Incorruptible Flesh: Bodily Mutation and Mortification in Religion and Folklore*, tr. T. Croft-Murray (Cambridge, 1988).
- 74 For proverbs see F. Loux, *Sagesse du corps* (Paris, 1978).
- 75 On the important field of physiognomy see G. Tyler, *Physiognomy in the European Novel* (Princeton, 1982); M. Shortland, 'The Body in Question. Some Perceptions, Problems and Perspectives of the Body in Relation to Character c.1750–1850' (Ph.D. thesis, Leeds University, 1985).
- 76 See note 30.
- 77 Richard M. Titmuss, *The Gift Relationship: From Human Blood to Social Policy* (New York, 1971); and more generally on the metaphorical resonance of the body C. G. Helman, 'Feed a Cold, Starve a Fever': Folk Models of Infection in an English Suburban Community, and their Relation to Medical Treatment', *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* II (1978), pp. 107–37; *idem*, *Culture, Health and Illness* (Bristol, 1984); J. B. Loudon (ed.), *Social Anthropology and Medicine* (London, 1976).
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11

History of Events and the
Revival of Narrative

Peter Burke

Narrative versus Structure

Like history, historiography seems to repeat itself – with variations.¹ Long before our own time, in the age of the Enlightenment, the assumption that written history should be a narrative of events was under already attack. The attackers included Voltaire and the Scottish social theorist John Millar, who wrote of the 'surface of events which engages the attention of the vulgar historian'. From this point of view, the so-called 'Copernican Revolution' in historiography led by Leopold von Ranke in the early nineteenth century looks rather more like a counter-revolution, in the sense that it brought events back to the centre of the stage.²

A second attack on the history of events was launched in the early twentieth century. In Britain, Lewis Namier and R. H. Tawney, who agreed on little else, suggested at much the same time that the historian should analyse structures rather than narrate events. In France, the rejection of what was pejoratively called 'event history' (*histoire événementielle*) in favour of the history of structures was a major plank in the platform of the so-called 'Annales school', from Lucien Febvre to Fernand Braudel, who regarded events, like Millar, as the surface of the ocean of history, significant only for what they might reveal of the deeper currents.³ If popular history remained faithful to the narrative tradition, academic history became increasingly concerned with problems and with structures. The French philosopher Paul Ricoeur is surely right to speak of the 'eclipse' of historical narrative in our time.⁴

Ricoeur goes on to argue that all written history, including the so-called 'structural' history associated with Braudel, necessarily takes some kind of narrative form. In a similar way, Jean-François Lyotard