Murdering Souls and Killing Bodies: Understanding Spiritual and Physical Sin in Late-Medieval English Devotional Works

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One of the most puzzling aspects for modern readers of the early fifteenth-century *Dives and Pauper* text on the Ten Commandments is its tendency to elide any distinction between spiritual and physical wrongdoing. For example, fully one third of the author's treatise on the injunction 'Thou shalt not kill' comprises a lengthy diatribe against flatterers, slanderers and backbiters, those who set a bad example to others, or encourage them in sin and folly, or trap them into false oaths, and clerics who fail to censure mortal sin committed by their parishioners (Barnum 1980, pp. 1–57). Since these sins, however grave, constitute spiritual shortcomings rather than physical violence, what place do they have in a didactic text against murder and manslaughter? Why should the author equate spiritual sins with physical homicide?

Our failure to understand this apparent category-confusion reflects our ignorance of the perceptions of soul/body distinctions and relationships in late-medieval English-language texts. What do we know about them? The answer, unfortunately, is 'very little'. Fine scholarly analysis has been carried out on the subtle Latin scholastic philosophies of soul and body in the high middle ages, and on their outworkings in Continental devotional practice (Bynum 1991b, 1995; Wopke de Boer 2011). But whether, or how, these perceptions were conveyed to lay audiences through the medium of late-medieval vernacular literatures remains a surprisingly underdeveloped topic. Furthermore, as I shall show, a survey of late-medieval vernacular reveals intriguing anomalies in accounts of souls and bodies in this period; instances where souls seem to behave as if they were bodies and *vice versa*, or cases where soul/body distinctions seem to be altogether elided.

The only significant corpus of scholarship on the question of soul/body relationships centres round versions of the 'Debate between the Soul and the Body'. Works in this genre, in both Latin and vernacular versions, portrayed body and soul at

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D. Kambaskovic (ed.), *Conjunctions of Mind, Soul and Body from Plato to the Enlightenment,* Studies in the History of Philosophy of Mind 15,
DOI 10.1007/978-94-017-9072-7_3,

their point of separation (the death of the subject), and have apparently fascinated English readers from Anglo-Saxon times to the twenty-first century.[1] But descriptions and narratives of body and soul in the wealth of other late-medieval English vernacular literature—encyclopaedias, theological, devotional and didactic tracts, sermons, poems and plays—remain almost completely unregarded.

Yet whatever else defined a human being in the minds of late medieval English vernacular writers, one thing was certain. Each individual was composed of an almost oxymoronic conjunction of opposite substances—the soul and the body. We are 'maid of twa naturis, bodely and spirituall' [made of two natures, bodily and spiritual], one late-medieval theologian bluntly wrote (de Irlandia 1926, p. 71). Created together, bound indissolubly together as long as the body lived and reunited at the general resurrection, body and soul were nevertheless typified as related in a series of binary oppositions. The soul *was* the soul because it was incorporeal—'of bodiless substance', as John Trevisa termed it in his late-fourteenth century translation of Bartolomaeus Anglicus' encyclopaediac *De Proprietatibus Rerum* (Seymour 1975, vol. 1, p. 90, opening of Book 3, '*De Anima Racionali*'). The body *was* the body because it lacked the capacities of the soul.

Dichotomies between body and soul theoretically operated along a number of axes. In terms of the syzygies of elemental properties, (dense/subtle, acute/obtuse, immobile/mobile), beautifully set out in the twelfth century by William of Conches in his *Dragmaticon Philosophiae* (William of Conches 1997, pp. 29–30), the body was dense, the soul 'subtle';[2] the soul acute, the body obtuse; the soul mobile, the body immobile unless activated by the soul. As Trevisa's translation has it, the soul 'geueth lif to alle the body and gouerneth and ruleth meuynges of alle the limes' [gives life to all the body and governs and rules the movements of all the limbs] (Seymour 1975, p. 92). In terms of their description and analysis, bodies, being densely material, could be measured and assigned length and breadth. The soul had no such physical dimensions–'the soule is noght … isprad in length nothir in brede in the body' [the soul is not…spread in length nor in breadth in the body] wrote Trevisa (Seymour 1975, p. 91). Bodies were necessarily visible; the soul was 'vns-eye with bodyliche yyen' [unseen with bodily eyes] (Seymour 1975, p. 92).[3] Unlike the body, the soul was unitary and unchanging—or, in Trevisa's words, 'simple in kynde he may not growe, nothir be more nor lasse on tyme than anothir' [by nature simple, it may not grow, nor be more or less one time or another]. Though the soul might incorporate many powers, it was still 'noght changeabil in his substaunce' [not mutable in its substance], and hence could not be described in terms of either its members, or its life-stage (Seymour 1975, p. 94).[4] The radically different

[1] For the modern fascination with this genre, from a variety of critical perspectives, see, e.g., editions in Conlee (1991); Ackerman (1962); Utley (1972); Bossy (1976); Matsuda (1997); Brent (2001); Raskolnikov (2009), esp. intro and Chap. 2.

[2] See, e.g., Langland, (1995), vol. 1, p. 568; B text, Passus XV l. 11: the dreamer is instructed by '*a sotil thyng withalle–Oon withouten tonge and teeth*', which proves to be the soul.

[3] The author claims to be quoting John Damascene.

[4] See Books 4–6 for the author's contrasting treatment of the different parts of the body and their development over the life-cycle.

relationship of body and soul to time and change had final consequences; bodies died and rotted, but the soul, wrote Trevisa, 'shall not die' (Seymour 1975, p. 92).[5] Soul and body could even be gendered differently. As compared to each other, the soul could adopt a masculine, as opposed to the body's feminine, persona; by long medieval tradition, as Bynum neatly puts it,

> Male and female were contrasted and symmetrically valued as intellect/body, active/passive, rational/irrational, reason/emotion, self-control/lust, judgement/mercy and order/disorder.[6]

No wonder, then, that Bishop John Fisher believed that the soul and body 'may be thought to be as brother and sister' (Fisher 1876, p. 302).[7] Other writers figured them as a heterosexual couple—John de Irlandia wrote that in this life the soul was 'married and espoused' to the body (de Irlandia 1965, p. 78).[8]

True, other gender allocations were also possible. In some Body/Soul debates, both entities were allegorised as male, in a teacher/student or foster-brother relationship.[9] In relation to Christ, the soul could be gendered female, as Christ's spouse;[10] and in one fifteenth century Body and Soul debate text, the soul is said to have been created 'lady and mistress' over the body, like the protagonist of a courtly romance (Halliwell 1855, p. 22, no. IV of the Porkington MS). Yet, as Bynum noted, the male/female dichotomy of soul and body matched well such other binary distinctions between them as reason and unreason, or governor and governed. The soul was the locus of human reason. Where the body had senses, the soul had intellect; 'as the eye is in the body so is the intellect, understanding, in the soul' ran Trevisa's translation (Seymour 1975, pp. 92–93, quoting John Damascene). In comparison to the body, the soul had five 'myȝtes and vertues' [powers and capacities]. The first was 'feeling', enabling it to acknowledge bodily sensations, and if necessary activate rightful physical desires and dislikes. Then followed 'bodiliche wit' [bodily wit], which interpreted corporeal impressions, such as eyesight; 'imagination' 'therby the soule biholdith the liknes of bodiliche thinges that beth absent' [by which the soul beholds the likeness of bodily things that are absent'; and '*racio*, reason', whereby the soul judged good from evil and true from false. Last and best was '*intellectus*, vndirstondinge and inwit' [intellect, understanding and consciousness], by which the soul 'knowith materles and bodililes thinges as God and angelis and otheir siche' [understands immaterial and incorporeal things such as God and angels (Seymour 1975, p. 95). Bartolomaeus, through Trevisa, adds that the first three of these powers were 'common to men and to other beasts' (since all created things

[5] Again allegedly quoting John Damascene.

[6] Bynum (1991b p. 151). But note the brilliant succeeding argument on how the feminine might be revalued through association with the incarnate bodily form of Christ.

[7] Cf. also Fisher (1876, p. 300).

[8] See Raskolnikov (2009, pp. 20–24) for a brief survey of the long history of this association. For more detail, Bynum (1991a).

[9] Raskolnikov (2009 pp. 24, 109–110, 117–118, 128).

[10] See, e.g., Small (1862, p. 122): 'A human soul is Christ's spouse' ['*mannes sawel ess Cristes spouse*'].

have souls of some kind). It might be argued, then, that these qualities, though still spiritual, were strongly linked to physical capacities. Hence 'bodily wit' understood corporeal things apprehended by physical organs such as the eyes and ears. But the possession of the two higher powers of reason and intellect tended to gender the soul male, and to set it irrevocably apart, both from other animals and from the body. Through reason and intellect, the soul was nearer to incorporeal beings, such as God and the angels, 'hauynge the ymage of God in myght of knowynge and the liknes of louynge' [having the image of God in power of knowing and likeness of loving]. Of the two aspects of the individual, the soul was clearly:

> the worthiere kynde…be the whiche man acordith with angels, for be the soule man is ihoue vp to heuenliche thinges aboue the kynde of the body [the worthier nature…by the which humans accord with angels, for by the soul mankind is lifted up to heavenly things, *above the nature of the body*].[11]

Indeed, John de Irlandia elevated the 'dignity' of the created soul not only above the body, but above the heavens and earth:

> for nouthire hevin, nore Erd, na vthire bodely creature may resaue, worthely knaw, nore luf, the hie diuinite as dois the saule of mane, maid and ordand for eternall beatitud and felicite conforme to the ymage and similitud of the hie and glorius trinite [for neither heaven, nor earth, nor any other bodily creature may receive, worthily know, nor love the high divinity as does the soul of mankind, made and ordained for eternal beatitude and felicity and conformed to the image and similitude of the high and glorious trinity]. (de Irlandia 1926, p. 59)

No wonder, then, that the soul not only moved, but governed, the body, as a lord his servant, a husband his wife, a parent a child, or a rider his mount. In the Porkington MS version of the Body/Soul debate Body reminds Soul that at creation, God '—'ordent the body bothe in zoughetz and age/To be thy thral, thy servant, and thi page' [ordained the body both in youth and age/To be thy thrall, thy servant, and thy page] (Halliwell 1855, p. 21). '[B]y vertu of the soule the body al aboute is iruled and imeued' [by the power of the soul the entire body is ruled and moved], wrote Trevisa, adding that the soul was:

> ioyned to the body in twey maners that is to menynge, as mevere to the thing that is imeued, and also as a schipman is i-oned to the schip [joined to the body in two ways, that is to say, as mover to the thing that is moved, and also as a sailor is joined to the ship] (Seymour 1975, p. 91).[12]

[11] Seymour (1975, pp. 95, 90); emphasis mine.

[12] Seymour (1975)The sailor/ship analogy derives ultimately from Aristotle's *De Anima*. For the rider/steed metaphor, see the Middle English Body and Soul debate 'Als I lay in a winteris nyt', in Conlee, (1991, pp. 18–39), where Body describes how he 'bore thee [Soul] on my back' everywhere (p. 33, l. 266), while Soul alleges that 'With your teeth you took the bridle', and 'ran about and brayed madly'. (p. 31, ll. 219 and 228: '*Wedir I yede vp or doun,/That I ne bar the on my bac*'; '*With thi teth the bridel thouz lauzt*'; '*renne aboute and breyd wod*'). See also the examination of this steed and rider metaphor in Vogel (1948). For an adult/child metaphor, see Halliwell (1855, p. 28), where Body complains that God gave Soul power as if Body were child, obeying its master for fear of a beating; '*as a chyld his master dothe obbaye/...for feyre he schuld be bete*'.

For late-medieval writers, however, these quantum differences between soul and body served to re-emphasise their miraculously entwined identity. It was, argued John de Irlandia, a union necessary to the perfection of original creation:

> eftir that the hie maieste had maid the spirituall natur of angell and bodely nature of hevin and element, the waurld was nocht perfit quhil he junyt baithe the naturis togiddir jn the man [after the high majesty [God] had made the spiritual nature of angels, and the physical nature of the heavens and the elements, the world was not perfect until he joined both the natures together in the man]. (de Irlandia 1926, p. 70)

God's original plan that each soul should be united to its own body displayed itself—even in the postlapsarian world—through inalienable emotional ties between souls and their bodies, as between the closest earthly relatives and friends. In the fifteenth-century Porkington MS version of the Body/Soul debate, Soul reminds Body that in life 'I was kyn to the' [I was kin to thee], and Body responds with an account of its pain when Soul 'that was my next frend' [that was my nearest friend] was torn away at death to be sent to hell (Halliwell 1855, pp. 17, 30). In *Als I Lay in a Winteris Nyt*, Soul, having castigated Body roundly for its wickedness, nevertheless admits that 'al mi loue on the I kest' [all my love on thee I cast] ('Als I Lay', in Conlee 1991, p. 35, line 314). Bishop Fisher thought the soul and the body were bound together like siblings by 'the love and amity that is between [them]'. This tie persisted even after death:

> A truth it is, the souls that are hence departed out of their bodies, have nevertheless a natural desire and appetite to be knitted and joined with them again, which thing not only the theologians witness, but the philosophers also'. (Fisher 1876, p. 302; cf. de Irlandia 1965, p. 78 (citing Aristotle))

In turn, it was the indissoluble bond between soul and body that alone constituted individual identity. Some writers evidently believed that even Christ's selfhood could not be complete while soul and body were separated. In the second Harrowing of Hell episode of the N-town plays, when Christ's soul, leaving its dead body in the tomb, descends to hell to liberate the pre-christian faithful, the stage directions scrupulously name the character '*Anima* Christi'. Only following the (tricky!) direction to the Soul of Christ to 'cross to resurrect the body' does the character reassume the true personal name 'Jesus'. (Davies 1972, pp. 328–330; '*Tunc transiet Anima Christi ad resuscitandum corpus*').

The concept of an identity formed of opposite but integral parts is beautifully captured in the C text of *Piers Plowman*. The dreamer interrogates *Liberium Arbitrium* (one aspect of the soul) as to its nature, and is told that it is 'a wille with a resoun/And may nat be withoute a body to bere me where hym liketh' [a will with reason/And may not be without a body to bear me where he chooses]. '*"Thenne is that body bettere then thou?"*' [Then is that body better then thou?] asks the narrator, to be answered:

> …Nay, no bettere…
> Bote as wode were afuyre; thenne worcheth bothe
> […Nay, no better…/But as if wood were afire; then both operate]. (Langland 1995, vol. 1, p. 569, C Passus XVI, lines 175–178)

To the alert medieval reader, no image could be more striking. Flame and wood represented opposite poles of the properties of the elements; flame, the hottest, most acute, subtle and mobile element, nearest to pure aether, wood (from earth), the coldest, densest, most obtuse, least mobile and most physical. Yet as Soul rightly understands, the *esse* of fire is the union of these opposites. Lacking either, it would be no fire at all.

The conjuction of such apparently incompatible elements allowed diverse interpretations of possible body/soul relationships. Langland's thinking and decision-making entity that nevertheless needs to be carried everywhere like a helpless infant may not seem like the authoritative mover and governor proposed to Middle English readers by Bartolomaeus Anglicus via Trevisa; but both reflect aspects of the mutual dependence between body and soul (the body enlivened by the soul, yet the soul without 'hand and foot' to move itself physically) ('Als I Lay', in Conlee 1991, p. 34 l. 292).

The ancient view of soul as the locus of identity, and the body as its hated prison or despised burden, survived in the *artes moriendi* literature. 'The Art and Craft to Know Well to Die' advised its readers that according to Plato,

> the bodily death of good people …is none other thing but the…going out, of prison and of exile, and discharging of a right grievous burden…to wit of the body'.[13]

Yet this somewhat Manicheean dichotomising took place alongside Fisher's and John de Irlandia's equally potent view of the identity of, and intense love between, body and soul.

Similarly, emphasising either the interdependence of soul and body, or their diametrically opposed qualities, led to differing interpretations of the significance of bodily illness. On one hand, spiritual disorder might manifest directly in the body, either metaphorically or in reality, as particularly loathsome diseases. One early fourteenth-century homily, for instance, relates leprosy to lechery and pride:

> For riht als leper mas bodi
> Ugli, and lathe, and unherly
> Sua mas the filth of lickeri
> The sawel ful lath, gastelye
> And the bolning of priue prid
> Es leper, that na man mai hid
> [For just as leprosy makes the body/Ugly and loathsome and repulsive/So the filth of lechery makes/The soul quite loathsome, spiritually/And the swelling of privy pride/Is leprosy that no man may hide.].[14]

On the other, the soul's contrariety to the flesh led to the supposition of an inverse relationship between the state of the soul and the health or appearance of the body. Thus the same sermon series noted that pride in wealth or good looks:

> geres it man think mar
> Of his bodi, that it wel far
> Than he of his sawel dos…

[13] Comper (1917, p. 57). Cf. similarly, but without ascription to Plato, in Comper (1917, p. 6).

[14] Small (1862, pp. 129–130). See also Rawcliffe (2006), esp. pp. 46 and 49.

> His fairnes wtout he schawes
> To sem better than his felaues…
> The liking of his wlanc wede
> Gers him tin his sawel mede
> [makes a man think more/Of the welfare of his body/Than he does of his soul…/He shows his fine looks externally/To seem better than his fellows…/His liking for his splendid clothes/Makes him lose his soul's health]. (Small 1862, pp. 42–43)

Physical illness might be spiritually efficacious if accepted as just chastisement for sin, or warning of the likelihood of imminent death and therefore the necessity for undertaking true repentance and charitable works. Hence, as the Disciple in a fifteenth-century 'Learn to Die' text trenchantly remarks, well-meaning friends who attempted to cheer the sick by persuading them that their illness was not life-threatening were disastrously mistaken—*'the frendes of the body are enmys to the saule'* [the friends of the body are enemies to the soul] (British Library Additional MS 37049, fol. 40r). Better, as the fourteenth-century French doctor Guy de Chauliac advised, for medical advisors to encourage their patients to believe that physical illness would ensure the soul's health—'First, in clepynge Goddes help, he schall comforte ham and saie that this passioun or sekenesse is saluacioun of the soule' [First, in calling on God's help, he shall comfort him and say that this suffering or sickness is salvation of the soul] (cited in Rawcliffe 2006, p. 57).

Medical and scientific theory also found ways to bridge the gulf between body and soul, by proposing mechanisms and structures by which they operated. However single its nature, the soul, Trevisa's translation tells us, has divisions and subdividisions; or, more properly, 'three sorts of capacities'. The *vegetative soul*, common to plants, animals and humans, gives life without feeling; the *sensible soul*, shared between humans and animals, gives feeling; while the *reasonable soul* pertaines to humans alone (Seymour 1975, p. 96).[15] It was the 'sensible' soul—that is, in the medieval meaning of the term, that part of the soul dealing with the physical senses—that produced movement in the body, through an elaborately anatomized system of 'wosen' [arterial tubes], 'veynes' [veins] 'smale weyes' [small tubes], sinews, spinal cord, and bone marrow. This operation of the soul was actually located in different parts of the body—in the liver for the movement of the humors, in the heart for 'the vertu of lif' [the power of life], and in 'the smale chambres of the brayn' [the small chambers of the brain] for the power to activate muscles and so move the limbs (Seymour 1975, pp. 99–100). As a corollary, this aspect of the soul was not immortal; 'whan the body dieth this soule dieth also, and the workinge therof failith' [when the body dies, this soul dies too, and its workings fail] (Seymour 1975, p. 100).

Only the human-specific rational and intellective soul, 'euerlastinge, incorruptibil, and may nozt die, [everlasting, incorruptible, and immortal], survived the cataclysmic body-soul separation at death (Seymour 1975, p. 101). But even the rational soul required some means of interaction with the body. As Rawcliffe notes, some medical theorists proposed that a process of purifying blood by air from the lungs,

[15] Chaps 7–16 of Bartolomaeus Book III deal especially with the workings of the soul in the body.

and further refining and mixing it with air from the nostrils, enabled this originally corporeal substance to ascend to the brain and dwell next to the soul. This purified substance was apparently thought to be capable of transmitting information between the bodily perception of the senses and the purely spiritual faculty of reason that would interpret the data (Rawcliffe 2006, p. 67).

None of these understandings of soul and body can be termed new or original to late-medieval England. They reflected theological and philosophical discussions of human nature that had already enlivened nearly two thousand years of philosophy and theology. Aristotle's writings on the independence and immortality of the soul continued to be quoted to the end of the fifteenth century (de Irlandia 1965, pp. 103–104). Augustine specifically wrote on the nature of the soul, and devoted much of Book 22 of *The City of God* to the philosophical problems attaching to the resurrection of the body (Augustine 1998, Book 22).[16] Discussions of the most correct analogies of soul-body relationships engaged scholars from the patristic period to the fourteenth century, as did debates on the nature of the risen body, its continuity with its original form and its continued relationship to the soul.[17] Thirteenth and fourteenth-century philosophers and theologians debated at length how, and how much, the soul could be said to inhere in the body (did it, for instance, act as a force perfecting the body, or as a kind of Aristotelian substantial form, organising the body's naturally shapeless and disorganised matter?) (Wopke de Boer 2011). The Body/Soul debate genre itself (some scholars argue) may derive ultimately from pre-Nicean Christian Egyptian writings, and certainly enlivened Latin and vernacular text traditions from the early middle ages onwards.[18]

Yet a closer reading of the wide range of late-medieval English texts and references on souls and bodies discloses initially surprising anomalies in the presentation of these apparently well-understood dichtomies of the body and soul, and reveals a number of reversals and grey areas in the way bodies and souls were perceived. Sometimes—as in the *Dives and Pauper* text with which this chapter began—spiritual and physical matters were so closely equated that it seems the author made no distinction between them, in defiance of the weight of tradition that defined the physical and the spiritual as essentially different (Bynum 1991, 1995; Wopke de Boer 2011). Even more surprisingly, as I shall show, bodies and souls sometimes seemed to swap essential characteristics. In these texts, souls apparently suffer physical torment, helpless to oppose it or avoid it by reason, while bodies—even dead ones!—move independently of their souls, or engage in sophisticated philosophical debate, of which they should, by nature, be incapable. How, then, can we best make sense of, one the one hand, the drastic elision of the physical and the spiritual in devotional tracts such as *Dives and Pauper*, and on the other the representations of souls and bodies as exchanging essential characteristics?

[16] See article by Karen Pratt, this volume.

[17] See e.g., Bynum (1995); for a particular analysis of the long history of the horse and rider analogy, see Vogel (1948, pp. 31–36).

[18] E.g. Matsuda (1997, p. 132), citing Louise Dudley, *The Egyptian Elements in the Legend of the Body and Soul* (1911). Cf. Utley (1972), esp. p. 691.

The Body/Soul debate literature is full of cases where soul and body appear to exchange essential and well-established characteristics. As Raskolnikov puts it, by the end of these dialogues, 'the Body possesses a Soul's capacity to reflect and to have opinions' while 'a Soul will proceed to hell, having apparently gained some of the Body's faculty to suffer, to act, and most of all, to be acted on by violent means' (Raskolnikov 2009, pp. 80 and 87–88, quote from p. 87).[19] But the debates are not the only gernre to display these bewildering transformations of soul/body characteristics. In a great variety of late-medieval vernacular discourses souls assume vividly corporeal characteristics, such as distinct body parts, emission of bodily fluids (blood and tears) and intense physical suffering. Stories of souls in hell portrayed them as tortured not spiritually, but in literal physical reality. John Myrc's template sermon for Advent Sunday recycled an allegedly ancient exemplum of a man who, recovered from a near-death experience, took up extreme ascetic practices because of the terrifying vision he had seen in his coma. Guided by an angel, he had witnessed in the fires of hell:

> sowles bulmyng vp and don, crying horrybuly, and a noyse of fendes crying: "Sle, sle, sle, sle, sle, sle opon the broche, rost hote, cast ynto the cawdren, seethe fast yn pyche…and brymston, and hot leed! [souls surging up and down crying horribly, and a noise of fiends crying: 'Slay, slay, slay, slay, slay, slay upon the spit, roast hot, cast into the caldron, seethe fast in pitch…and brimstone and hot lead]. (Erbe 1905, p. 5)

Similarly, in the 'Childe of Bristowe' tale, the good son receives a vision of his errant father's soul:

> …burning as a live coal,
> The devil led him by the neck,
> In a burning chain. (Anonymous 1992–1995, p. 318)

It is clear that the souls do not merely suffer these tortures, but feel them acutely, and are terrified by even the prospect of such pain. In the 'Learn to Die' dialogue of Add. MS 37049, the Image of Death motivates the Disciple to timely repentance by urging him to bear in mind a picture of his soul's post mortem fate should he die unrepentant:

> and so behold oft tymes thi saule amongis the brynyng coles crying O thu beste beloued of al frendes helpe thi wrecchyd saule haue mynde of me now that is in so hard prison [and so behold oftentimes thy soul among the burning coals, crying 'O thou best beloved of all friends help thy wretched soul, have mind of me now that is in such hard prison].[20]

Late medieval Body/Soul debates not only show the Soul weeping with fear, anguish and fruitless regret ('By the body the spret stod and weppyd' [By the body the spirit stood and wept]; they also recount demonic tortures inflicted on souls, itemising in gruesome detail the body-like parts the demons attack. In *Als I Lay*:

[19] For another clear account of the apparent transfer of characteristics between Body and Soul in these debates, see Bossy (1976, pp. 144–163, esp. pp. 146–154). For a similar analysis of rationality displayed by the body in the Latin tradition, Brent (2001, pp. 13–18).

[20] British Library Additional MS 37049, fol. 40r.

> Some the chaules it towrasten
> And zoten in the led al hot
> And bedin him to drinke faste…
> A deuil kam ther ate laste
> …A colter glowende in him he thraste
> That it thoruz the herte it smote
> [Some [devils] forced open the jaws/And poured in the lead all hot/And bade him, drink fast…/A devil came there at last…/A sharp glowing stake he thrust into him/That through the heart it smote]. (Conlee 1991, p. 44, lines 513 ff)

The Porkington MS version adds that Soul was 'dismembered' (as if the soul had members!) with the fiends' nails and beaten 'full hard and sore' with staves (Halliwell 1855, pp. 33–34; *'And with here naylys he was dysmemborte*', '*Sume with zerdys smothe ful hard and soore*').

It is hardly surprising that a soul liable to suffer such physical assaults should be subject also to death. Indeed much late-medieval devotional and didactic literature seems preoccupied with the possibility that the soul could actually undergo either suicide or murder, and the necessity for timely conversion to right living to prevent these final catastrophes. Thus despite Trevisa's assurance that the reasoning soul is immortal, the Wycliffite version of the *Lay Folks Catechism* specifically warns readers against spiritual suicide—'thou schalt not sle thyn owne sowle be consent to dedly synne' [thou shalt not slay thine own soul by consent to mortal sin] (Simmons and Nolloth 1901, pp. 46–47). Hence the *Dives and Pauper* author's otherwise odd classification of such sins as flattery and backbiting as homicide; he believed that they cause the death not of bodies, but of the souls both of perpetrators and victims. Flattery, for instance, according Pauper 'sleth the soule bothe of hym that flatryth & of hym that is flatryd' [slays the soul both of him that flatters and of him that is flattered], because lying praise itself is 'deadly sin', and is also perilously liable to lead the flattered to the mortal sins either of spiritual blindness and false pride or (when the lies of flattery are discovered) of despair (Barnum 1980, pp. 2–5). Literally a spiritual suicide, the flatterer is also so insidious a murderer of other souls that the flattered never realise their own danger—they 'slepyn in her synne & deyyn gostlyche withoutyn peyne & nout perceyuyn her owyn deth' [sleep in their sin, and die spiritually without pain and do not perceive their own death] (Barnum 1980, p. 5). Indeed, any who by bad example or encouragement hinder others from performing good deeds or encourage them to sin and folly are:

> lymys of the fend, whiche, as Crist seith…is a manqweller from the begynnynge of the world, for…he slow al mankende bothin bodlyche & gostlyche at the begynnynge of the world' [limbs of the fiend, who, as Christ says, is a murderer from the beginning of the world, for…he slew all mankind both bodily and spiritually at the beginning of the world] (Barnum 1980, pp. 19, 21; 'eggyn hem to synne & folye').

Such sins are more to be castigated than mere physical murder, because of the superiority of soul to body. As one *Ars Moriendi* writer put it:

> though bodily death be most dreadful of all fearful things…yet spiritual death of the soul is as much more horrible and detestable, as the soul is more worthy and precious than the body (Comper 1917, p. 5).

Yet understanding this logic does not help us to comprehend how the supposedly 'immortal' soul could be said to die.

The soul's signs of physical suffering were not, however, always or necessarily associated with hellfire and damnation; they might might appear in accounts of eternal life. John Myrc, in his sermon for the feast of St. Thomas A Beckett, relates a vision of the saint's entry into heaven vouchsafed by a particularly pious twelfth-century monk in Jerusalem who on his own deathbed saw a bishop entering the celestial courts:

> wyth a huge company of angeles and of othyr seyntys. And as he stode befor God, his hed dreppyd downe of blode of his wondes that he had [with a huge company of angels and of other saints. And as he stood before God, his head dripped down blood with the wounds that he had]. (Erbe 1905, p. 43)

Not only did these souls behave like bodies; bodies, in contradistinction to all received wisdom, sometimes acted like souls. Theology, philosophy and medicine alike adamantly maintained that at death the soul survives, while the body, until the last judgement, loses all existence and function. It cannot see, speak, listen or move; it rots, is devoured by worms, and eventually returns to the dust of its original creation. 'Each corpse is earth' wrote Myrc in his template funeral sermon (Erbe 1905, pp. 294–295). Yet dead bodies in late-medieval vernacular exempla and debate literature, move, speak and rise, well before doomsday, in a variety of circumstances. The Body/Soul debates portray astonishingly lively corpses, both physically and mentally. At Soul's address they move, sometimes only lifting the head and groaning 'as if it were sick', sometimes (as in the Porkington MS), flinging off the coffin lid 'Wyth gret vyolens' (Conlee 1991, p. 27; Halliwell 1855, p. 20). Furthermore, one of the most puzzling aspects of the Body/Soul debates, often remarked on, is the extent to which Body matches, or even excels Soul in argument, employing that highly intellectual rationality which it should, by nature, never have possessed independently of the Soul. Though supposedly mute, witless, and imminently decaying, the *Als I Lay* Body anomalously argues its case at length, despite Soul's repeated attempts to to shut it up ('Body, be still!'). In vain. The corpse continues to declaim, rendering Soul's pronouncement that 'thy tongue hath lost [leid] the speech', ironic at best (Conlee 1991, pp. 27 (the body '*Lift vp his heued'* from the funeral bier), 30, 42, 43–44). The Porkington MS Body lectures the Soul at length, acutely, and correctly, both on Soul's created characteristics and its consequent responsibilities:

> Reysone, mynd and wyll, God of his goodnyse
> Ordent to the only, to this conclusione,
> That thou schulddyst kepe thi body from confusion,
> And azeynst al synne to make resistense…
> Hit may not be the bodye schold be blamyte,
> But only the sole that hath the soffrentté;
> Thow haddyst the governans: art thou not a-schamyd?
> [Reason, mind and will, God of his goodness/Ordained to thee only, to this end/That thou shouldst keep thy body from confusion/And against all sin to make resistance…/It may not be that the body should be blamed/But only the soul, that hath the sovereignty/Thou hadst the governance: art thou not ashamed?]. (Halliwell 1855, p. 22)

Indeed the whole relationship of Soul and Body in these debates seems, in theological terms, queasily topsy-turvy.

Again, other genres convey similar messages. In Myrc's sermons, dead bodies rise even more effectively than in the Body/Soul debates, to protect those who pray for their souls. Preaching on the efficacy of prayers for souls in purgatory, Myrc told the story of the pious man who, living near the churchyard, never failed to say at least a short 'De Profundis' for christian souls as he passed the graves. His diligence was rewarded when enemies attacked him, pursuing him as he fled homewards. Even in this extremity he knelt down to pray, whereupon 'all the chrych-yeorde rose full of bodyes, yche on wyth an ynstrument yn hys hond of his craft, and dryuen ayeyne his enmyes' [all the churchyard rose full of bodies, each with an instrument of his craft in his hand, and drove away his enemies]. Another exemplum relates how a crowd of corpses rose up to reproach a bishop who had suspended their local parish priest for his inability to sing any mass but the requiem, which he performed daily for the health of souls. 'Aghast' at this demonstration, the bishop promptly reinstated the priest (Erbe 1905, pp. 269–71).

To date, two explanations have been proposed for the transfer of characteristics between Body and Soul in the debate literature: the first, that these anomalous presentations are the result of the debates drawing on, and exploiting, homiletic traditions and themes from late-medieval popular devotion;[21] the second that the debate genre itself, and the debates' purpose to produce a sophisticated understanding of self, necessitates vividly personifying, and granting voice to, both parties to the dispute.[22] Yet however plausible these proposals, neither adequately explains both spiritual/physical elision *and t*ransfer of essential characteristics; and the first, particularly, is far more often alleged than well thought-out. Naturally a debate must have two voices. Undoubtedly the Body/Soul debates do have a didactic purpose, well served by their vivid portrayals of lively corpses and suffering souls. No doubt, too, as I have shown above, similar themes occur in the vernacular sermon literature of the late-middle ages. But then why should writers, particularly from the thirteenth-century onward, have been happy to use a debate format if it meant giving voice to a mute corpse? And why should preachers have chosen these particularly theologically dubious motifs for their homiletic purposes? Is their only aim to enliven the debates and engage readers' attention (and alarm) by grisly extravagances? What particular features of late-medieval devotion might produce these narrative effects and why? Ackerman's survey of late-medieval treatises and sermons effectively shows that representations of controversy between bodies and souls, and references to such themes as the need for confession, 'the hideousness of the rotting corpse' and the delusive pride of life were common; but his much less detailed narrative of broader late-medieval devotional concerns is of little help in

[21] For assertions of the homiletic origins of the genre, see, e.g., Utley (1972, p. 691); Matsuda (1997), pp. 130–146 and 257–258); Reichl (2000, p. 228). For the debates and popular devotion, see Ackerman (1962). Ackerman is almost invariably cited in this context—see, e.g., Raskolnikov (2009, p. 110).

[22] Raskolnikov (2009, esp. pp. 4–6); Matsuda (1997, p. 254).

understanding why they should have been so, or how anomalous and intertwining narratives of body and soul might have allayed or contributed to those concerns.[23]

I argue that we cannot properly understand these intriguing representations of the changing relationships between soul and body without setting them in the context of a much grander, yet very widely accepted, late-medieval narrative of the salvation history of all humans. It is, after all, a mistake to assume that late-medieval vernacular writers envisaged the nature and relationship of souls and bodies as unchanging throughout history, either species-wide or individual. On the contrary, at each stage of the story of humanity from creation to last judgement, and of the individual from birth through death to resurrection, the configurations of body and soul changed radically.

Following Augustine, almost all fifteenth-century theologians held that by God's intention, in the original creation body and soul were perfect, and their relationship entirely harmonious. Though body and soul were created different in nature, they were, in the beginning, united in an equal will to love and serve their creator, and in ability to manifest different aspects of perfection. Thus, in the state of innocence before the Fall, the soul was 'right perfect' in 'science and knowledge', while the body, mirroring this faultlessness, was flawless and invulnerable, not to be hurt *'nore perist jn his body, be fyre, wattir, best, hurt ore ony vthire thinge'* [nor perished in his body by fire, water, beasts, hurt or any other thing]. Indeed, according to John de Irlandia, the prelapsarian body was:

> jnmortale be possibilite, and, endurand that state, he had bene translatit fra paradice to hewin without sekness ore deid' [potentially immortal, and, had that state [innocence] endured, would have been translated from paradise to heaven without sickness or death].[24]

The soul in paradise acted in perfect obedience to God's commands; and the body, created to be subordinate to the soul, likewise (it was believed) would have performed its proper duties in unstinting obedience to the soul. Hence, the theologians wrote, children would have been generated without sin; God having commanded humans to 'increase and multiply', Adam's and Eve's souls would dutifully have commanded their bodies to achieve this task; and their bodies, equally deferent to the soul's command, would undertake coition and conception at the dictate of 'reason and wit', and entirely without the 'filth' of lust (de Irlandia 1926, pp. 65–67).

This picture of a soul infallibly and always able to perceive and obey the will of God, partnered by an incorruptible and potentially immortal body which inevitably acceded to the soul's will, is at radical odds with the variance between soul and body—in characteristics, purpose and actions—described as typical of human life in this world. How did the change come about? Obviously through the Fall. According to John de Irlandia (quoting Augustine) when humans, for the first time, disobeyed God, the harmony of soul and God and soul and body was shattered. The first consequence of the Fall, he noted, was that 'the reason of man is fallen from

[23] Ackerman (1962), esp. pp. 549–551.

[24] de Irlandia (1926, pp. 62–64); 'sa was his saule jn sciens and knawlage…tht js richt perfit'. How, when, and on what grounds the transfer from Paradise to Heaven would have occurred in the absence of the Fall is not made clear.

high knowledge and noble state to great blindness and ignorance', leaving it capable only of imperfectly apprehending God. It followed that in the light of its weakened command of reason, the soul was unable completely to control human will, which was henceforth inclined to follow 'desire and pleasure' rather than obey 'the bridle of reason'. The soul's troubles were compounded by the fact that, mirroring the spiritual uprising against God, the post-lapsarian flesh commenced 'the rebellioune of the sensuale appetit agane ressoune, and of that how we are jnclinit to fleschly pleasaunce and lust…' [the rebellion of the sensual appetite against reason, and from that, how we are inclined to fleshly pleasure and lust] (de Irlandia 1926, p. 85).

In paradise, then, body and soul were noticeably more alike, with more consonant interests, than in the post-lapsarian world. The body was capable of feeling, but like a spirit, invulnerable to pain, injury, disease, ageing and possibly death. Body and soul together could delight in activities that, following the Fall, would become the sinful desire of the flesh alone. John de Irlandia, for instance, thought that sex in paradise would be of 'mare dilecacioune and luf than now, for…doand that werk had bene meryt, obeyand to the command of god' [more delight and love than now, because doing that work would have been meritorious, obeying the command of God]; hence something in which the soul could freely join (de Irlandia 1926, p. 67). Only after the Fall did body and soul become unwilling partners, dichotomous entities, often determined to pursue opposite courses, locked in a perpetual struggle of control and recalcitrance. This battle between opposing principles, however, was very much a civil war. Both entities were bound together in one individual identity, and the body continued to reflect, imperfectly, the structures of the soul. Thus, for example, the physical sense of sight could be viewed as the corporeal version of the remaining spiritual capacity of intellection.

Hence in the long process of salvation the aim of each postlapsarian individual should be to return their soul, as far as possible, to a relationship of pure obedience to God, and their body to correct and willing subservience to the soul. Though difficult, this objective was apparently thought not impossible—otherwise what was the point of relating stories of saints such as St. John the Evangelist who had so successfully overcome fleshly predilections as to achieve a paradise-like perfection of both body and soul? According to Myrc, when unbelievers offered the saint a poisoned chalice, the venom had no effect on him. Why? Because his steadfast rejection of all lust and sin and perfect virginity of both body and soul returned his body to the invulnerable condition of its first creation. Physical resistance to poison was thus both sign and result of his corporeal and spiritual chastity, and also proof that the characteristics of the prelapsarian body could to some extent be regained by perfect obedience to Christ in this life. Myrc draws the moral:

> he that hath grace to kepe hym clene yn body and sowle, thagh the fende held ynto hym venym of lechery or of othry synne, hyt schall do hym no harme; but yn the ageyneston-dyng of his lust, he ys a martyr before God [he that has grace to keep him clean in body and soul, even if the fiend held out to him the poison of lechery or of other sin, it shall do him no harm; but in resisting lust, he is a martyr before God]. (Erbe 1905, p. 32)

Such extreme virtue, however, was held to be rare. Fallen humans much more easily adopted the lifestyle vividly evoked in the Body/Soul debates, where the body, denying all proper allegiance to the soul, heedlessly and treacherously insisted on following its own sinful course. Soul in the Porkington MS admits that 'I should have made resistance/Against the flesh, false and deceptive', but submits in defence that its Body was 'never favourable' to Soul:

> When thy concianse wold the have made chastessed,
> With wygellus, fastynge, or with allmysded
> Thow woldyst say nay…
> Thow soffyrd me never to have the soffyriantté
> After thi lust thou wenttust always at learge
> [When thy conscience would thee have made chastised/With vigils, fasting, or with alms deeds/Thou wouldst say nay…/Thou suffered me never to have the sovereignty/After thy desire thou wentest always at large]. (Halliwell 1855, pp. 24–25)

In *Als I Lay* Soul succinctly accuses its Body of flagrant disobedience; '*With thi teth the bridel thouh lauht:/Thouh didst al that I the forbed*' [Thou took the bit between thy teeth; Thou didst everything that I forbade thee] (Conlee 1991, p. 31). Such independent initiative—unnatural to the prelapsarian body—presumably occurred only because the Fall radically disturbed both the characteristics of Soul and Body, and the relationship between them.

The theme of mutual recrimination survived even when translated into different genres. The Welsh drama 'The Soul and the Body', possibly composed in the late fifteenth century, preserves faithfully the interchange in which the soul accuses the body of rebelling against reasonable control, while the body objects that the soul gave bad leadership, adding only a scene in which the Virgin Mary successfully pleads with Christ to save even this unpromising duo of warring partners (Jones 1939, pp. 100–120, 238–259; edition and translation of the play).

For contentious and unlike as Soul and Body might be in life, the moment of their greatest separation (and sometimes greatest mutual antagonism) came at death, when the mortal body, together with the sensible powers of the soul that gave it life and movement, were consigned to the grave, while the soul—whatever its state of righteousness—lived on, maintaining its power to think, feel and speak. Awaiting final resurrection in the grave, the body, as Bishop Fisher pointed out, retained all its disabilities resulting from original sin and more; helpless, inert, corruptible, incapable, attacked by air, moisture and worms,'vile and loathly to behold' (Fisher 1876, p. 304). If the illustration to the MS 37049 Body/Soul disputation is any guide, however, the soul, even if in purgatory, retained its incorruptible form. The text is illustrated by a horridly-grinning, half-decomposed corpse confronting a Soul risen from it, naked, but with perfectly-formed body, and even beautifully groomed hair (BL MS 37049 fol. 82r; Fig. 1).[25]

At this moment of the dreadful rift of ideally inseparable entities, even righteous souls might suffer grief for the loss of a well-conducted body. Bishop Fisher, for instance, imagined that Lady Margaret Beaufort's soul:

[25] In this dispute, unlike most others, the soul is apparently bound for purgatory rather than hell.

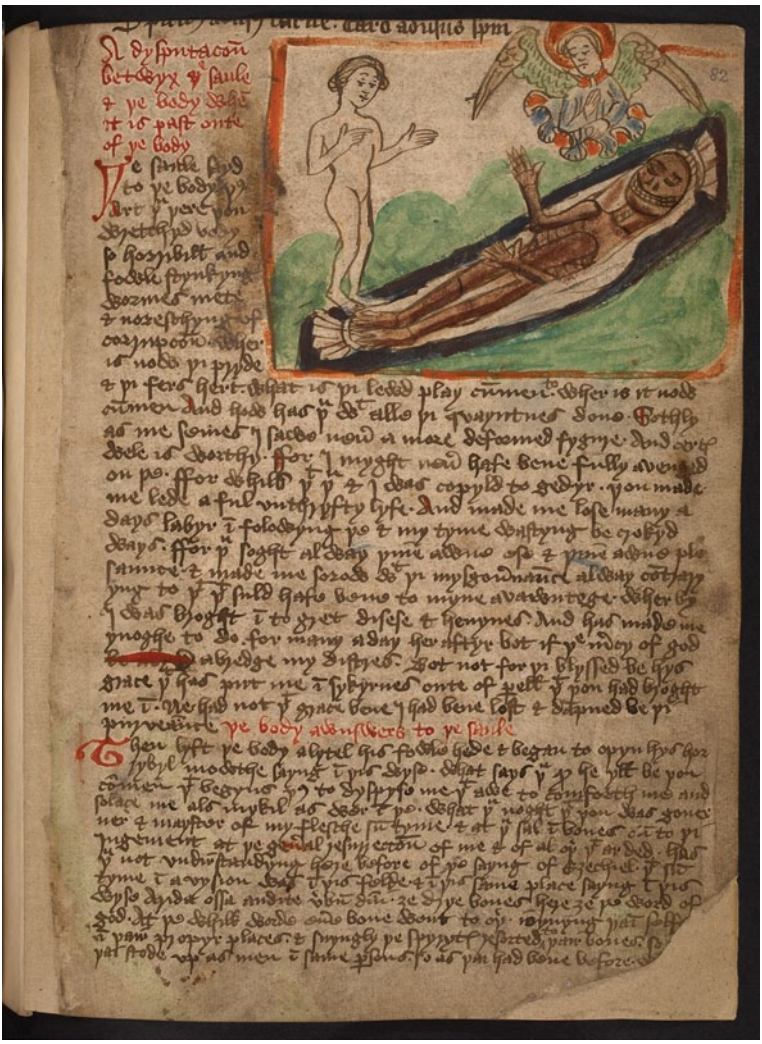

Fig. 1 Illustration to the MS 37049 Body/Soul disputation (BL MS 37049 fol. 82r). (Used with the permission of the British Library Board)

> which had the body adjoined unto it in favour and love as sister and brother…might complain for the death of the body, since every part of that same body had been so occupied in the service of God before. Her eyes in weepings and tears, sometimes of devotion, sometimes of repentance, her ears hearing the word of God…[her tongue occupied in prayer] much part of the day…her hands in giving alms unto the poor and needy.

The only hope for such a soul, he remarked, was anticipating 'that the body shall rise again' at the last judgement; its only consolation for the long wait, that the reunion would signal the beginning of a new life in Christ; a life 'pleasant and…

sweet', 'full of joy and pleasure' and free from the sorrow, 'bitterness' and fear necessarily attending earthly life (Fisher 1876, pp. 300, 302, 304–305).

Yet the risen body, though retaining the identity of its original individual, would not be in exactly the same form as its earthly counterpart. On the contrary, the virtuous body would not only regain some of its original paradisal qualities, but would attain new perfections, rising:

> in that condition that neither the air, nor the water, nor fire, nor knife, nor weapon, nor stroke, nor sickness shall annoy it….it shall rise bright and glorious….[I]t shall be more nimble and more ready to be conveyed to any place where the soule would have it than is a swallow….[I]t shall be [so] subtle that it shall pierce through the stone walls.[26]

It followed that the disastrous body/soul contention arising from the Fall will be stilled forever in the life of the redeemed. As John de Irlandia wrote, on earth the corruptible body hinders the soul, but after 'the resurreccioun quhen the body sal be incorruptible it puttis na maner of impediment bot helpis the noble operacioun of the saule' [the resurrection when the body shall be incorruptible it puts no sort of impediment, but helps the noble work of the soul]. Only following the resurrection, then, will soul and body recover the true, unmarred accord originally intended for them. Then:

> the saule sal haue mar ioy and plesaunce na befor for the persoune sal haue the eternale beatitud baith in saule and in the body and of that the saule sal haue gret plesaunce for it desirit befor richt gretlie the vnioun and coniunccioun with the body for that is the werray natur and perfeccioun of the saule to be vnyt wt the body
> [the soul shall have more joy and pleasure than before, for the person shall have the eternal blessedness both in soul and in the body, and because of that the soul shall have great pleasure, for it desired right greatly before, the union and conjunction with the body]. (de Irlandia 1965, pp. 79–80)

Together, though each in their still-distinct ways, they would enjoy the perfect vision of God, both in His divinity and in His humanity as Jesus:

> as oure saule jn eternall glore sal haue beatitude jn the sicht and intwicioune of the diuinite, sene jt is a spirituale nature, sa sall oure body & all oure wittis haue gret and merwalus felicite & beatitud jn hevin in euirlestand joy, seyand the blist sone of god ihesu jn owur humanite [as our soul in eternal glory shall have beatitude in the sight and perception of the divinity, since it is a spiritual nature, so shall our body and all our senses have great and marvellous felicity and beatitude in heaven in everlasting joy, seeing the blessed son of God Jesu in our humanity]. (de Irlandia 1926, pp. 70–71)

What of the damned? They, too, as the Body/Soul debates invariably make clear, will suffer the separation of soul and body at death, though their typical reaction is mutual aggression and blame rather than sorrow—the soul taunting the body with the loss of its worldly riches, pride and friendships and blaming it for their joint everlasting destruction, the body retorting that the blame should rest completely with the soul. The end is always the same; the body declines to corruption while Soul is dragged off to hell to experience tortures that will last till judgement day and beyond. At the last judgement, the damned, like the saved, would experience complete

[26] Fisher (1876), p. 304. Cf. de Irlandia (1965), p. 79.

reunion of body and soul–but to an exactly opposite fate of eternal torture. Soul, in the Porkington MS version, reminds the corpse that though in the interval between death and resurrection it is insensible to pain, when revived at the Last Judgement it will not attain the painless status of the saved body. Instead:

> At the hy jugement doutles we twayne
> Schall be sore poonneschyde, we may hit not esschew;
> And suffure endles payne ever new and newe
> [At the high judgement doubtless we two/Shall be sore punished,
> that we may not avoid,/And suffer endless pain, ever renewed]. (Halliwell 1855, p. 20)

Thus after final judgement the soul, having forfeited its original natural immortality, would literally join the body in its most typical characteristic—death. As the body rotted in the grave, perforated by worms, so the souls of the damned in hell might continue to exist; but that existence, as Augustine remarked, should more correctly be termed death than life, in the absence of God (Augustine 1998,Book 13, Chap. 2).

Viewed in the light of this grand narrative, the various late-medieval English-language discourses of soul and body, whatever their diversity or apparent inconsistency, can be read as both coherent and significant. Their authors were not ignorantly misinterpreting a more sophisticated Latin tradition, though they often rewrote it apparently with didactic purposes in mind. Nor should they be seen as mere spiritual sensationalists, creating thrilling debates and grisly exempla for the entertainment (or possibly edification) of a lay audience whose attention might be elsewhere. All their apparent anomalies add up to a self-coherent discourse. Since souls could be consigned to an eternal 'death' of Godless and lifeless torment, no wonder that didactic texts took care to stress that wilfully dividing oneself from God in this life by engaging in unrepented mortal sin, would lead to the death of the soul. The acknowledged fact that the Fall comprised both a spiritual and a physical sin (pride, in the case of the soul) (see de Irlandia 1926, p. 63 on Eve's sin of pride) and entailed consequences on both body and soul, meant that in life there must be correspondences between spiritual and physical virtues and sins. Even the strange exchanges of characteristics between bodies and souls can be read as signs of the stages of salvation reached by the protagonists. The bodies rising from their graves in Myrc's exempla to defend the prayers of the righteous merely foreshadow their eventual resurrection at the last judgement—in better shape specifically because of those prayers. Martyred souls appear in heaven bleeding from their wounds because the wounds themselves, as Augustine proposed 'will not be a deformity but a badge of honour, and the beauty of their virtue—a beauty which is in the body, but not of the body—will shine forth in it' (Augustine 1998, Book 22, Chap. 19, pp. 1149–1150). Similarly, the sufferings—however apparently corporeal—of souls in hell or purgatory were, for fifteenth-century writers, a well accepted theological necessity; central, indeed, to the doctrine of purgatory. As Bynum notes, 'preachers, hagiographers, and schoolmen saw nothing fundamentally inconsistent in depicting the bodily tortures of disembodied spirits' (Bynum 1995, p. 281).[27] For how were

[27] She adds, 'although they sometimes admitted it was odd.' The whole of her Chap. 7, "Somatomorphic Soul and *Visio Dei*: The Beatific Vision Controversy and its Background" is relevant.

souls to be refined after death, and made worthy to receive the full beatific vision in eternal salvation, unless they retained a capacity for suffering like that of the body?

Indeed, the reversal of roles of Soul and Body in the debate literature—the soul distraught with fear of imminent physical torment, the body preternaturally vocal and rational—may vividly evoke the fundamental wrongness of this moment in the history of a person's salvation (or, in this case, damnation). It is important to remember that these debates almost invariably take place between the two parts of a *damned* individual; only the short prose Additional MS 37409 version has the Soul in purgatory, and none present the moment after death of a righteous individual, bound for heaven after the shortest of purgatorial stays. Body and Soul in these circumstances have squandered their chances of repentance and right living, and in doing so have disastrously re-shaped their relationship. They do not love and care for each other as souls and bodies should; they have not worked together under the leadership of the soul; in life, the body was consistently rebellious and high-handed towards the soul. No wonder then that their relationship at the moment of death realises in hard-edged detail the state of the individual as compared to what was intended for them in the first creation. Soul and Body display bitter rancor towards each other that mirrors their divided loyalties in life. Like the first humans at the Fall, these individual's souls on earth followed their own priorities rather than the purposes of God. No wonder, then, firstly that they could not bring their living bodies to obedience, and secondly that they now find their place as the guardian of eloquence and reason usurped by dead bodies. Yet Body's unnaturally rational arguments, unlike the powers of reason properly owned and used, cannot act to snatch salvation for the damned individual. They operate only as a sign of a thoroughly dystopic inversion of the state of the ideal individual.

Late-medieval vernacular English narratives, then, surrounding the account of the soul-body relationships of any one individual in life and death with the interconnecting, but much grander, narrative of the salvation history of all humankind, provide a rich, complex, subtle and flexible discourse on the many variants of human soul-body relationships and of the significance of each of these variants as stages in the salvation of each individual. No use for the *Dives and Pauper* author to castigate only physical violence under the rubric of the commandment 'Thou shalt not kill'; no human could be saved without extirpating also the spiritual sins giving rise to, or even equating to, physical violence. As Pauper is quick to inform Dives, merely having a 'herte consentynge to [someone's] deth' is to break the commandment, as is slaughter 'with our tongue', by lying, bearing false witness, slander, or flattery. Since the soul was perceived not only as an essential, but the better, part of the individual's identity, these sins were not mere metaphors for physical violence. Killing the soul had more devastating and long-lasting results than killing the body; no wonder it attracted such detailed attention and censure from the writers, and was treated as being on the same, or an even more intense, level of 'reality' as attacks on the body. In this frame of understanding, spiritual slayers were not just *like* murderers; as *Dives and Pauper* puts it, '*bacbyteris & wyckynd spekerys ben manquelleris'*—backbiters and wicked speakers *are* murderers (Barnum 1980, p. 1; my emphasis).

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