CHAPTER 5

'Recompact My Scattered Parts': the Altered Body after Death

In January 1720, the *London Journal* reported a very odd case of lost property:

> On Monday last part of the right Leg of a man was found in a Cellar Window in Bartholomew Close, which probably may have belonged to some Patient in the neighbouring Hospital, that has undergone an Amputation; some will have it otherwise, and to be a Limb of one that has been murdered. If the Owner be not living, the Flesh on it, shewed plainly that he has not been long dead.[1]

For readers of the *Journal*, this strange find must have raised many questions. How might the leg have found its way from the hospital to the cellar window? If it had come from a murder victim, where was the rest of the body? What had happened to the limb's 'owner'? Where was the leg now? For a twenty-first-century scholar, these questions may be joined by others. Did the hospital, or the amputee, care that the leg had gone astray? How was it treated after it was found? And if the limb clearly should not have been in the cellar window, where *should* it have been?

This chapter attempts to address the second set of questions, and investigates the afterlives of both removed body parts and altered bodies. As I shall show, the surgically changed body posed difficulties in religious as well as practical terms. It provoked questions about the nature of bodily identity and the specifics of bodily resurrection. The way in which early modern people asked and answered these questions was inflected by the subject/object status of the body, and in turn by its cultural, economic, and religious valences at any historical moment. It is worth noting that my analysis does not seek to provide anything like a comprehensive overview of the labyrinthine scholarly debate on bodily resurrection during the early modern period, or of the literary productions that arose from that debate. Most notably, I will omit discussion of Locke's *Essay on Human*

[1] *London Journal*, 27 January 1722, p. 2.

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Understanding. Though all other contemporary theories might be seen as, in part at least, responses to that text, I am concerned with the very corporeality which Locke seeks to eschew. Proponents of bodily resurrection sought, as I will show, to keep the body and identity together. Instead, I will look to the competing theories of Robert Boyle, Humphrey Hody, and others. Their attempts to understand how the risen body might be at once newly perfect, *and* identical with the lived body, provide an illuminating context for the creative expressions of doubt and wonder about the resurrection of the body found in the work of John Donne, and in more slippery accounts of limb restoration miracles such as the Miracle of the Black Leg. Finally, I will return to consider the ways in which 'ordinary' people treated disembodied limbs or limbless bodies. By looking at scholarly, creative, and pragmatic expressions of beliefs about the body's afterlife, I argue that we can gain a more rounded picture of the complexity of this topic.

Scholarly Contexts

Almost all early modern Christian thinkers accepted the immortality of the soul, and most also accepted that the risen soul would be united with the same body that one had possessed in life. This belief was based both in scripture and in centuries of Church tradition.[2] Seemingly the most compelling piece of scripture for early modern theologians was 1 Corinthians 15, which described the perfection of the risen body:

> [35] But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?
>
> [36] Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die:
>
> [37] And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain:
>
> [38] But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.
>
> [39] All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds . . .[42] So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:
>
> [43] It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:
>
> [44] It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. (1 Cor. 15:35–44 KJV)

[2] See especially Matthew 27:52, Revelation 20:12–13, Philippians 3:20–1.

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This passage, like others, promised a risen body which was diachronically identical with that which a person had had in life. Exactly what constituted 'identity', however, was a matter on which opinion was remarkably and consistently heterodox. The passage from Corinthians implied qualitative difference between the 'seed' lived body and the 'grain' resurrected state. By contrast, passages from Ezekiel and Revelations promised that the same bodies that were put in the grave would rise up, and the sea '[give] up the dead which were in it' (Ezekiel 37:13; Revelations 20:13). In his overview of the early modern debate on this topic, Lloyd Strickland identifies eight separate schools of thought about the way in which the body might be resurrected. At one end of the spectrum was the conviction (most favoured by the Church fathers) that the dead would rise with all and only the same matter as their bodies had had at the time of their death. At the other was the Lockean idea that identity consisted in continuing self-consciousness, and that the resurrected person did not therefore need to have their soul united with any of their lived material body in order to qualify as 'identical'.[3] Between these two points were a number of thinkers who held that, in one way or another, the body was to be resurrected with the same 'essential' matter intact as had been present in the body at its time of death, and the remainder supplied by other, undifferentiated matter. In the context of bodily alteration, this middle ground raises particularly interesting questions about bodily identity.

The interest of early modern people in matters of resurrection was far from merely scholarly naval-gazing. Churchgoers apparently pressed their clerics for answers about exactly *how* their souls and bodies were to be raised. In a sermon printed in 1636, for example, Martin Day admonished the 'foolish' people among his flock who asked such questions as:

> [W]hat *correspondence* shall there be, between man, and man? To *know* in what *kinde* of *stature* they shall *rise* in? What *colour* they shall have? What *imployment* shall they be *raised* for? Whether a *childe* shall rise as a *childe*? Whether an *old man* shall rise in his *old age*? Whether *crooked*, and *deformed* men, shall rise *crooked* and *deformed?* . . . It is an easier matter, to perswade a man of the *substance* of the *Resurrection*; then to perswade him of the *difference*, and of the *qualities* of men at the *Resurrection*.[4]

[3] Lloyd Strickland, 'The Doctrine of "the Resurrection of the Same Body" in Early Modern Thought', *Religious Studies* 46:2 (2010): 163–83.

[4] Martin Day, *Doomes-Day, or, a Treatise of the Resurrection of the Body* (London, 1636), p. 196.

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Day felt that Christians ought not to trouble themselves with such matters, but his parishioners clearly felt differently; they wanted the gritty details about their next life. Moreover, these questions persisted over several centuries, through doctrinal, social, and political change. Ephraim Chambers in his 1728 *Cyclopaedia* noted that 'The Christians generally believe the Resurrection of the same identic Body', but struggled to answer questions such as 'Which of these many Bodies . . . which the same Person has in the Course of his Life, is it that shall rise? Or does all the Matter that has ever belong'd to him, rise again? Or does only some particular System thereof?'[5] Caroline Walker Bynum has identified the same concerns in Peter Lombard's twelfth-century *Sentences.*[6] The minutiae of such questions has become famous (including, inevitably, whether the risen body would use the toilet). However, the examples with which such dilemmas were discussed were as important to the debate as the issues themselves. As Bynum argues for the medieval period:

> It is the examples to which the philosophers continually refer, rather than their abstract positions, that tell us how far we go toward assuming that material continuity is crucial for personal survival. It is in the examples also that we see reflected the extent to which popular culture has moved away from concern with mind/body dichotomies and turned instead to issues of integrity versus corruption or partition.[7]

Among the examples to which philosophers most continually referred in early modern debates were those which directly pertained to bodily alteration – in particular, the loss of body parts and bodily matter either before or after death. This concern is nowhere more evident than in the work of John Donne, who in his poetry and sermons combines detailed theological knowledge with an appreciation of the anxieties attending the resurrection of 'anomalous' bodies. A wedding sermon preached by Donne at the Earl of Bridgewater's house, for instance, dwells on the worrying possibility of being buried – and thus, perhaps, raised – without all one's body parts:

> What cohaereance, what sympathy, what dependence maintaines any relation, any correspondence, between that arm that was lost in Europe, and that legge that was lost in Afrique or Asia, scores of yeers between? One

[5] Ephraim Chambers, *Cyclopædia, or, An Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences* (London, 1728), pp. 1006–7, accessed 15 June 2018, https://uwdc.library.wisc.edu/collections/HistSciTech/.

[6] Caroline Walker Bynum, 'Material Continuity, Personal Survival, and the Resurrection of the Body: a Scholastic Discussion in its Medieval and Modern Contexts', *History of Religions* 30:1 (1990): 54.

[7] Ibid., 64.

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humour of our dead body produces worms, and those worms suck and exhaust all other humour, and then all dies, and all dries, and molders into dust, and that dust is blowen into the River, and that puddled water tumbled into the sea, and that ebbs and flows in infinite revolutions, and still, still God knows in what Cabinet every seed-Pearle lies, in what part of the world every graine of every mans dust lies; and ... he whispers, he hisses, he beckons for the bodies of his Saints, and in the twinckling of an eye, that body that was scattered over all the elements, is sate down at the right hand of God, in a glorious resurrection.[8]

In Donne's rhetorical treatment of this topic, one sees him grappling with soteriology as both a cleric and a believer. Theologically, the scattering of body parts is an easy 'fix'. God's omnipotence, as Donne understands it, can readily solve the problem. As he turns the image of the dispersed body over in his mind, however, Donne aligns himself with the believer who *feels* that in losing the integrity of their body they are potentially losing spiritual integrity. Moreover, Donne's evocation of 'sympathy' in this passage shows him to have been in touch with the same scientific discourses in which we have seen animated discussions about allografting and Tagliacotian rhinoplasty. His theology is thus resolutely tied to the corporeal and the affective. The emotional pull of this image for Donne is confirmed by his return to the topic later the same year, 1627. In a sermon preached at Lincoln's Inn, he asked:

Shall I imagine a difficulty in my body, because I have lost an Arme in the East, and a leg in the West? Because I have left some bloud in the North, and some bones in the South? Doe but remember, with what ease you have sate in the chair, casting an account, and made a shilling on one hand, a pound on the other, or five shillings below, ten above, because all these lay easily within your reach. Consider how much lesse, all this earth is to him, that sits in heaven, and spans all this world, and reunites in an instant armes, and legs, bloud, and bones, in what corners so ever they be scattered.[9]

The partitioned body becomes both the topic about which Donne talks and a tool for thought which allows metaphysical speculation, both a means and an end. The utility of thinking through and with the body

[8] John Donne, 'A Sermon Preached at the Earl of Bridge-Waters House in London at the Marriage of His Daughter, the Lady Mary, to the Eldest Son of the Lord Herbert of Castle-Iland, November 19 1627' in *The Sermons of John Donne*, ed. Evelyn Simpson and George Potter, vol. VIII (of 10), no. 7 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956), pp. 4–5.

[9] John Donne, 'Preached at Lincolns Inne', in *The Sermons of John Donne,* ed. Simpson and Potter, vol. III (of 10), no. 3 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), p. 19.

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becomes evident as, via this image of dissolution, Donne reaches his emphatic conclusion:

> I, I the same body, and the same soul, shall be recompact again, and be identically, numerically, individually the same man. The same integrity of body, and soul, and the same integrity in the Organs of my body, and in the faculties of my soul too; I shall be all there, my body, and my soul, and all my body, and all my soul.[10]

As I shall discuss, Donne's tone here may betray anxiety as much as confidence; his repeated insistence that *all* his body is risen seems hyperbolic even for this habitually dramatic writer. Nonetheless, the mental image of God as a sort of giant caretaker gathering up the dispersed parts of bodies evidently appeals to Donne. It appears on his tomb, a statue of Donne standing on an urn, having been remade by God out of his ashes.[11] It is seen again in Donne's treatment of a notorious theological puzzle. The 'cannibal problem' was first posed by Augustine, and dogged virtually every discussion of bodily resurrection. In its most basic form, it posited that the flesh of one person might be eaten by another, either because the second person was a cannibal or because the flesh of the first person was consumed by an animal which was then eaten by the second person. The flesh of the second person would then have derived directly from that of the first, and that portion of flesh could not be restored to both parties at the resurrection. Donne frames the problem as one with a very similar solution to the 'scattered bodies' dilemma described above:

> And as if man feed on man's flesh, and so
> Part of his body to another owe,
> Yet at the last two perfect bodies rise,
> Because God knows where every atom lies.[12]

Donne seems to be bending the cannibal problem here to suit an image of which he had become fond, namely that of God in his counting house. This fondness was likely augmented by Donne's interest in atomism. As David Hirsch argues, '[T]he atom in its "immortality" provided the poet with a stabilizing center and limit to the dissolution of somatocentric

[10] Ibid., pp. 19–20.

[11] Donne famously posed for a portrait of himself in a funerary shroud whilst still very much alive, an act which says much about his preoccupation with the materiality of the body after death.

[12] 'Obsequies to the Lord Harrington, Brother to the Countess of Bedford', in *John Donne: the Major Works*, ed. John Carey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), ll. 47–56.

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identity.'[13] *Where* every atom lay, however, was not the real crux of this problem, as Donne must have known. The issue was rather to whom every atom *belonged*, the cannibal or the cannibalised. Nonetheless, he employed the same sleight of hand in a sermon on Easter Day, 1626:

> [W]here mans buried flesh hath brought forth grasse, and that grasse fed beasts, and those beasts fed men, and those men fed other men, God that knowes in which Boxe of his Cabinet all this seed Pearle lies, in what corner of the world every atome, every graine of every mans dust sleeps, shall recollect that dust, and then recompact that body, and then re-inanimate that man, and that is the accomplishment of all.[14]

In insisting on God's omnipotence as a solution to the cannibal problem, Donne admitted and exalted his own ignorance, which he insisted reflected the general inability of the human mind to comprehend God's workings. In this sermon, however, he also allowed that resurrection might be conceived of in several different ways, and that it was not a sin to differ in opinion on this matter (though he insisted that bodily resurrection as a general idea was an article of faith).

Donne apparently took his own advice regarding doctrinal flexibility. Though he adhered to Church orthodoxy in his sermons, his poetry reveals an emotional connection to the idea of his own corpse, and a horror of bodily partition. In 'The Funeral', for instance, Donne imagines a bracelet of his lover's hair keeping his skeleton knit together in the same way that the spinal cord connects the bones of the living body, a motif which recurs in the 'Second Anniversary' (l. 211). In 'A Valediction of My Name in the Window', the importance of the non-atomised, non-cannibalised corpse is evident even as God's power to 'recompact' parts is asserted:

> Then, as all my souls be
> Emparadised in you, (in whom alone
> I understand, and grow and see,)
> The rafters of my body, bone
> Being still with you, the muscle, sinew, and vein,
> Which tile this house, will come again.
>
> Till my return repair
> And recompact my scattered body so,
> As all the virtuous powers which are

[13] David A. Hedrich Hirsch, 'Donne's Atomies and Anatomies: Deconstructed Bodies and the Resurrection of Atomic Theory', *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 31:1 (1991): 70, https://doi.org/10.2307/450444.

[14] 'From a Sermon Preached on Easter Day, 1626', in *John Donne: the Major Works*, ed. Carey, p. 369.

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> Fixed in the stars, are said to flow
> Into such characters, which graved be
> When these stars had supremacy.[15]

Though Donne here imagines himself as preserved in memory and in text, it is clear that, as Hirsch argues, 'his conception of self is deeply rooted in the integrity of his personal body'.[16] As the stars act upon the earth, his soul will reanimate his body, but this is not a one-way affair: the nature of the stars is only fully expressed when their 'virtuous powers' flow outward, and the soul is not fully itself without the body.

Donne's particular emphasis on preserving his skeleton, the 'rafters' which hold up the house of his body, has much in common with a theory of bodily resurrection which I shall call 'essentials resurrection'. This theory – perhaps partly inspired by Donne – flourished in the later seventeenth century. Proponents of essentials resurrection were not satisfied with the vague 'God's omnipotence' solution to the cannibal problem which writers like Donne proffered. Clearly, they reasoned, some portion of matter from every person *would* probably be assimilated into other humans or otherwise lost. In addition, they speculated that it was not necessary for every atom of the material the body was composed of at death to be present in the risen body in order to proclaim that body 'identical'. So, what was necessary for continuing identity? Criticism has tended to focus on those thinkers – most notably Locke – who insisted that identity consisted in the soul, and that the same soul joined to a new body could be deemed diachronically identical. Others, however, tried to locate sameness in particular body parts, to which they believed that other, undifferentiated matter might be added to make up the whole body. Like Donne, they saw some parts of the body as 'rafters', essential to the structure of the whole, and other parts as replaceable 'tiles'. Robert Boyle's *Some Physico-Theological Considerations about the Possibility of the Resurrection* (1675) was one such text. In it, Boyle took up that concern with the partitioned body which had characterised Donne's work and gave it a newly mechanistic emphasis. It was in tune with Boyle's personal interests, but also with the ever-growing public interest in science and technology which we have seen at work elsewhere in this book.

In answer to the cannibal problem, Boyle drew on his chemical knowledge to argue that the body was constantly changing, producing over a

[15] 'A Valediction: Of My Name in the Window', in *John Donne: the Major Works*, ed. Carey, ll. 25–36.
[16] Hirsch, 'Donne's Atomies and Anatomies', 80.

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lifetime much more material than was required to make up one adult body:

> I consider that a human body … is in a perpetual flux or changing condition, since it grows in all its parts, and all its dimensions, from a corpusculum no bigger than an insect to the full stature of a man, which in many persons that are tall and fat may amount to a vast bulk, which could not happen but by a constant apposition and assimilation of new parts … And since men, as other animals, grow but to a certain pitch and till a certain age (unless it be the crocodile, which some affirm to grow always until death), and therefore must discharge a great part of what they eat and drink by insensible transpiration … it will follow that, in no very great compass of time, a great part of the human body must be changed; and yet it is considerable that the bones are of a stable and lasting texture, as I found not only by some chemical trials, but by the skulls and bones of men whom history records to have been killed an exceeding long time ago.[17]

In Boyle's view, it was therefore possible that God could unite the matter remaining in the (very durable) bones with other atoms which had been exhaled or otherwise shed from the person's body during their lifetime. As a chemist, Boyle was optimistic about the possibility of isolating these exhaled atoms from wherever they might have ended up. As he pointed out, pork from pigs fed on fish tasted fishy, and cows eating garlic produced garlicky milk. Atoms clearly retained their original properties even when they passed through the bodies of other creatures. Moreover, he, a mere mortal, was able to separate gold from other metals in a compound; God could do exponentially more.[18] Most importantly, Boyle accepted that these surviving atoms could be combined with other particles of unrelated but 'fit' matter, to 'restore or reproduce a body which, being united with the former soul, may, in a sense consonant to the expressions of scripture, recompose the same man whose soul and body were formerly disjoined by death'.[19] This was possible because diachronic identity persisted in spite of changes in the size and shape of the body, such that 'the same soul being united to a portion of duly organized matter is said to constitute the same man, notwithstanding the vast differences of

[17] Robert Boyle, 'Some Physico-Theological Considerations about the Possibility of the Resurrection (1675)', in *Selected Philosophical Papers of Robert Boyle*, ed. M. A. Stewart (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979), pp. 198–9.

[18] T.E. and Robert Boyle, *Some Considerations about the Reconcileableness of Reason and Religion. By T.E. a Lay-Man. To Which Is Annex'd by the Publisher, a Discourse of Mr Boyle, about the Possibility of the Resurrection* (London, 1675), pp. 19, 24.

[19] Boyle, 'Some Physico-Theological Considerations', p. 206.

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bigness that there may be at several times between the portions of matter whereto the human soul is united'.[20]

The notion that the bones were somehow more important to bodily resurrection than the flesh was reproduced in numerous 'essentials' resurrection arguments. In 1694, for instance, Humphrey Hody disagreed with the extent to which Boyle believed that much of the risen body could be composed of unrelated matter. However, he too viewed only certain parts of the body as 'necessary':

> [T]hough the same Body that died is to rise again, yet it is not necessary that all the Particles of it should be rais'd up. 'Tis enough that such Particles are rais'd up as made up the integrant and necessary Parts of the Body. By necessary Parts, I mean those which remain after the utmost degree of Maceration [wasting], without which the Body would not be Integral, but Imperfect. And these are chiefly the Bones, the Skin, the Nerves, the Tendons, the Ligaments, and the Substance of the several Vessels. As long as these, and all that are necessary to Life, remain, the body is truly Whole, though never so much macerated. All the Flesh that is added makes nothing at all to the Wholeness or Integrality of the Body, tho' it conduce to Strength and Ornament.[21]

Hody seems to regard 'necessity' as related to the survival of certain parts after bodily wasting; he implies that one can imagine an emaciated living body which is skin and bones, but not one *without* skin and bones. Like Boyle, he too suggests that any deficit in the flesh of the risen body can be made up with matter from elsewhere, just as long as the essential parts are the same as those which were buried. Shortly afterward, Thomas Beconsall made a similar point, attesting that the risen body might be considered the same provided that 'a fit Construction and Organization of certain Particles of Matter, whereby one common Principle of Life is begun, [is] continued, and the Integral Parts of the Man are perfected and maintained'.[22] The rest of the matter necessary to make up a human being could, as Hody had argued, be made from the lived body's surplus matter (fingernails, hair, and so on), or from 'common' matter. In effect this once again meant that bones, blood vessels, nerves, and perhaps skin and muscles were numerically the same in the risen body, but other parts need

[20] Ibid.

[21] Humphrey Hody, *The Resurrection of the (Same) Body Asserted: From the Traditions of the Heathens, the Ancient Jews, and the Primitive Church. With an Answer to the Objections Brought Against It* (London: printed for Awnsham and John Churchill, 1694), pp. 187–8.

[22] Thomas Beconsall, *The Doctrine of a General Resurrection: Wherein the Identity of the Rising Body Is Asserted, against the Socinians and Scepticks* (Oxford: printed by Leon. Lichfield, for George West, 1697), p. 19.

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not be. Beconsall ventured that the 'Integral' constituents might be viewed as the most 'serviceable' to life, or perhaps to 'the received idea of the Animal Part'.[23]

In many respects, the resurrection of 'essential' parts of the body seemed an intuitive solution. It seemed reasonable, for example, to insist that one's heart was more important to continuing selfhood than one's toenails. However, problems attended this view of resurrection, particularly when considered in relation to the altered body. Scholars such as Boyle and Hody evidently believed that the same numerical bones would be raised from the grave because these were what gave the body its framework – as Donne put it, its 'rafters'. Thus, for Boyle in particular, this resurrected body depended on the bones being a 'durable' aspect of the body, relatively impervious to decay and destruction. Boyle claimed to have proved this with chemical experiments, but not everyone agreed with his findings. There were other problems too. For Locke, Boyle did not go far enough in disavowing bodily sameness as a criterion for continuing identity.[24] Conversely, Hody admitted that while he adhered to this theory, it wasn't precisely resurrection of the *same* body.[25]

Where did this intellectual tussle leave people with altered bodies? On one matter, the different voices in the debate, across chronological and doctrinal divides, agreed. The risen body would be a perfected body, and that meant that sick and impaired people would be 'fixed'. Over and over in early modern texts, churchmen detailed how the resurrected body would be free from disease, vulnerability, and disability. There would be, argued John Bunyan in 1665, 'no lame legs, nor Crump-shoulders, no blare-eyes, nor yet wrinkled faces'.[26] Hody likewise claimed that

> Had our Bodies heretofore many Infirmities? Were they *sickly*, or *maim'd*, or *crooked*, or *old*, or otherwise deformed? These Infirmities and all Imperfections are now done away. The Body is *new-cast*, the *Mold* work'd better, and the *Mettal* refin'd: The whole *Figure* comes out with Vast Improvements; though, the same as to all the *Ideal Rudiments*, yet a much more curious and delicate Piece of Workmanship.[27]

[23] Ibid.

[24] K. Joanna S. Forstrom, *John Locke and Personal Identity: Immortality and Bodily Resurrection in 17th-Century Philosophy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), p. 112.

[25] Strickland, 'The Doctrine of "the Resurrection of the Same Body" in Early Modern Thought', 174.

[26] John Bunyan, *The Resurrection of the Dead and Eternall Judgement, or, The Truth of the Resurrection of the Bodies Both of Good and Bad at the Last Day Asserted and Proved by Gods Word: Also, the Manner and Order of Their Coming Forth of Their Graves, as Also, with What Bodies They Do Arise: Together with a Discourse of the Last Judgement, and the Finall Conclusion of the Whole World* (London: Francis Smith, 1665), p. 38.

[27] Hody, *The Resurrection of the (Same) Body Asserted*, p. 201.

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Isaac Watts, in 1755, asserted that even bodies 'in some Part defective, or redundant' would be made whole, with the missing parts being made up from the surplus matter of corpulent or dropsical bodies.[28] Thomas Watson (1692) assured readers that the 'deformed' bodies of saints would be made 'amiable and beautiful'.[29]

What the perfected body looked like was unclear. John Dunton, in 1698, suggested that the body would be resurrected as it was at the age of thirty or thirty-three (the latter being Christ's age when he died).[30] Thomas Burnet, meanwhile, attempted to suggest that heavenly bodies would not have bowels or legs:

> The parts below the Belly will be taken away likewise, or be entirely useless . . . Then the Leg, Thighs, and Feet, made for walking upon some firm and solid Pavement, as there is no such thing, and Motion will not be after the manner of walking, but as Angels move; these will be taken away as unnecessary and superfluous.[31]

Burnet's idea of a less *corporeal* sort of body suggested a return to a prelapsarian, quasi-angelic state, free from the demands of physical appetites. The dismemberment of the self, like a sort of divine drawing and quartering, marked one's purification for heaven, and mirrored the torments of the damned. As in many surgical narratives, the healer looks and acts remarkably like the torturer.

Whatever its specifics, it was made clear that the risen body would not have any impairments, and this made resurrection a matter of scientific as well as religious interest. Pondering on what kinds of monsters would undergo resurrection (all those with rational souls, but not hybrid

[28] Isaac Watts, *Philosophical Essays on Various Subjects, Viz. Space, Substance, Body, Spirit, the Operations of the Soul in Union with the Body, Innate Ideas, Perpetual Consciousness, Place and Motion of Spirits, the Departing Soul, the Resurrection of the Body, the Production and Operations of Plants and Animals: With Some Remarks on Mr Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding. To Which Is Subjoined a Brief Scheme of Ontology, or the Science of Being in General, with Its Affections*, 4th edition (London: printed for T. Longman and J. Buckland, J. Oswald, J. Waugh, and J. Ward, 1755), p. 189.

[29] Thomas Watson quoted in Darren Oldridge, *Strange Histories: the Trial of the Pig, the Walking Dead, and Other Matters of Fact from the Medieval and Renaissance Worlds* (Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2004), p. 34.

[30] John Dunton, *An Essay Proving We Shall Know Our Friends in Heaven* (London: printed and sold by E. Whitlock, 1698), p. 35.

[31] Thomas Burnet, *De Statu Mortuorum & Resurgentium Tractatus. Of the State of the Dead, and of Those That Are to Rise. Translated from the Latin Original of Dr Burnet*, trans. Matthias Earbery, 2nd edition, vol. 1 (of 2) (London: E. Curll, 1728), p. 189.

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creatures or abortive births), Levinus Lemnius assured readers of his *Secrets of Nature*:

> by rising again they [monsters] shall lay aside all deformities of their bodies that were ill favoured to behold, and be well formed like as men are, and all lame crooked imperfect limbs shall be made perfect. And though in some the force of reason shines lesse, because of the unaptnesse of the organ, as in children, old men, drunkards, mad-men, in whom the force of the Soul is hindred, or oppressed. Yet every one of them hath a reasonable soul; and what is defective shall be made up at the resurrection.[32]

Accounts such as this one must have been reassuring to readers suffering from diseases and impairments for which effective cures were often unavailable, and who faced economic and social hardship as a result of their anomalous bodies. At the same time, however, they presented an obvious problem. How could a body which was thus altered be said to be meaningfully identical?

Irina Metzler has considered this question in relation to medieval accounts of disability. In Thomas Aquinas' influential work on this subject, she finds, continuity between body and self was emphasised, such that 'the soul takes on a similar position to what psychologists would now term the location of identity'.[33] In this formulation,

> The soul does not just accidentally possess a body with a with a specific gender, skin colour, impairment or age, but the soul carries the structure of the self, of the 'ego', and this is what determines the body which will be resurrected, with all its physical characteristics . . . So the 'ego' is neither just the soul nor just the body, that 'ego' is a 'person' with an identity.[34]

Despite this argument, however, Metzler finds that theologians consistently asserted that the risen body would not suffer impairment. Ultimately, she concludes, this apparently 'schizophrenic' stance probably indicates that disability was not an identity category in the same way as, for example, gender:[35]

> Could it be, in the medieval intellectual discourse, at least, that though corporeal identity was recognised, impairment as a form of corporeality was just not considered important? Though sex, age or skin colour may have

[32] Levinus Lemnius, *The Secret Miracles of Nature in Four Books: Learnedly and Moderately Treating of Generation, and the Parts Thereof, the Soul, and Its Immortality, of Plants and Living Creatures, of Diseases, Their Symptoms and Cures, and Many Other Rarities* (London: Jo. Streater, 1658), p. 58.

[33] Irina Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe: Thinking about Physical Impairment in the High Middle Ages, c. 1100–c. 1400* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), p. 59.

[34] Ibid. [35] Ibid., p. 61.

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> been important, physical impairment was not? This seems to be the most fruitful approach. . . . I therefore propose that though the Thomist notion of body and soul may be reminiscent of a twentieth-century psychology of identity, this is not the case entirely or unreservedly. It needs qualifying to allow for the idea that although certain physical characteristics (such as sex) may matter, others do not. Among the latter, physical impairments must be grouped.[36]

In the intellectual discourse of the early modern period, this may still have been true. As the Introduction to this book has discussed, 'disability' was not a distinct category in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the same sense that it is today. David Turner and Kevin Stagg, for instance, describe disability as having been 'subsumed' into, though not identical with, other categories such as deformity and monstrosity.[37] Notably, the accounts of bodily perfection above place disabilities on a continuum with other instances of human frailty such as ageing and sickness. Despite these caveats, however, it seems clear that impairments *were* an important part of identity, both for the impaired person and for those around them. As we have seen, authors disagreed on the nature of the risen body. Nonetheless, scholars such as Katherine Eisamann Maus and Christopher Tilmouth have shown the importance of social relationships in constituting subject identity during the first half of the seventeenth century, and by extension the importance of recognising and being recognised.[38] How this could occur if the body was entirely transformed was unclear to say the least. As Roy Porter notes, this issue was thrust even more prominently into the public consciousness by Locke's bringing into question the importance of the physical body to the continuous 'self'.[39] Samuel Johnson, for instance, contended in a 1725 sermon that 'the same Marks, Features, and Lineaments are visible in Persons after the Resurrection, by which they were known and

[36] Irina Metzler, 'Disability in the Middle Ages: Impairment at the Intersection of Historical Inquiry and Disability Studies', *History Compass* 9:1 (2011): 61, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-0542.2010.00746.x.

[37] David M. Turner and Kevin Stagg, *Social Histories of Disability and Deformity: Bodies, Images and Experiences* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), p. 4; Katherine Schaap Williams, 'Performing Disability and Theorizing Deformity', *English Studies* 94:7 (2013): 757–72, https://doi.org/10.1080/0013838X.2013.840125.

[38] Katharine Eisaman Maus, *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Christopher Tilmouth, 'Passion and Intersubjectivity in Early Modern Literature', in *Passions and Subjectivity in Early Modern Culture*, ed. Freya Sierhuis and Brian Cummings (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 13–32.

[39] Roy Porter, *Flesh in the Age of Reason* (London: Allen Lane, 2003).

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distinguish'd from one another in their mortal Body'.[40] In this respect, ordinary humans would have something in common with Jesus, who appeared with the marks of crucifixion visible on his risen body. Notably, Johnson maintained this opinion despite also believing that only the 'Stamen', or kernel, of the mortal body was necessary to ensure the risen body's 'Sameness'.[41]

As well as providing recognisability, disability was self-evidently a shaping influence on one's way of being in the world; if not an identity category as such, it was still something that could be defined (albeit loosely) and reproduced (albeit imperfectly). The expanded welfare provisions of early modern England meant that those applying for certain kinds of poor relief would have to identify themselves as dis-abled from working. Some people faked impairments in order to access sympathy and financial aid, and these people's activities were a matter of fascination for many pamphlet readers and theatre audiences.[42] Furthermore, disability was understood to shape one's character, opening up some possibilities and limiting others. In his 1613 *Essays*, Francis Bacon solemnly explained how 'deformed' people were often morally bankrupt, adding that 'it is good to consider of deformity, not as a sign which is more deceivable, but as a cause which seldom faileth of the effect'.[43] In contrast to 'monster' narratives, his repositioning of deformity as a *cause* of sinfulness encompassed acquired, as well as congenital, disabilities. Moreover, Simon Dickie has shown how stereotypes of the jealous or conceited cripple endured despite the supposed 'civilising process' of the seventeenth century. In the eighteenth century, he records, people with anomalous bodies were still routinely mocked according to well-worn caricatures, such that 'one was

[40] Samuel Johnson, *The Resurrection of the Same Body, as Asserted and Illustrated by St Paul. A Sermon Preach'd in the Parish-Church of Great Torrington, Devon. on Easter-Day, March 25, 1733*, 2nd edition (London: printed for Lawton Gilliver, Charles Rivington, William Parker, and Samuel Birt, 1741), p. 28.

[41] Ibid., p. 18.

[42] Patricia Fumerton, 'Making Vagrancy (In)Visible: the Economics of Disguise in Early Modern Rogue Pamphlets', *English Literary Renaissance* 33:2 (2003): 211–27, https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6757.00026; Tobias Hug, *Impostures in Early Modern England: Representations and Perceptions of Fraudulent Identities* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010).

[43] Francis Bacon, 'Of Deformity', in *The Essays, or Councils, Civil and Moral of Sir Francis Bacon … With a Table of the Colours of Good and Evil. And a Discourse of the Wisdom of the Ancients (Done into English by Sir Arthur Gorges). To This Edition Is Added the Character of Queen Elizabeth; Never before Printed in English* (London: published for George Sawbridge, 1696), pp. 117–18, www.bl.uk/collection-items/bacons-essays-on-revenge-envy-and-deformity.

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defined by one's body in eighteenth-century culture'.[44] The association was not only negative: William Hay's 1754 *Deformity: An Essay* argued that by dint of such ill-treatment, 'deformed persons' commonly had fewer worldly attachments than their able-bodied counterparts, and were in this respect better Christians.[45] This defence once again had its correlate in the early seventeenth century: Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* suggested that disability might aid one's moral development.[46] Furthermore, bodily alteration and anomaly did not necessarily mean disability, as we have seen. It is difficult to believe that the castrato's 'impairment', if one could call it such, was not constitutive of his identity. As shown in Chapter 1, castration was widely believed to confer character traits as well as physical differences, and the whole course of a eunuch's or castrato's life was shaped by his castration. Likewise, cosmetic surgeries, as described in Chapter 3, were understood to fundamentally alter the way in which the altered person interacted with the world around them.

The complexity of this issue is attested to by the fact that debate over the status of disability in Christian soteriology continues within modern theology. Since the rise of disability activism, the image of the 'perfected' unimpaired body has been challenged by scholars who view it as a denial of disabled identity. Amos Yong, for instance, notes that some – though by no means all – people with disabilities object to the notion that they need 'healing'.[47] The modern response to this seems to be analogous with that of early modern writers, in arguing that disability is not an intrinsic part of selfhood. Terrence Ehrman employs what he calls a 'Thomistic hylemorphism' to distinguish between 'proper accidents' of matter, which are determined by an object's form (e.g. flying for birds), and 'contingent accidents', which are not (e.g. a broken wing in a particular bird).[48] This theory seems closest to the early modern conception in which disability merely masked or stunted intrinsic human capacities, such that madmen or 'idiots' may be called those 'in whom the force of the Soul is hindred, or

[44] Simon Dickie, *Cruelty and Laughter: Forgotten Comic Literature and the Unsentimental Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), p. 103.

[45] William Hay, *Deformity: An Essay* (London: printed for R. and J. Dodsley, and sold by M. Cooper, 1754), p. 42.

[46] Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy: what it is. With all the kindes, causes, symptomes, prognosticks, and seuerall cures of it* (Oxford: John Lichfield and James Short, for Henry Cripps, 1621), p. 387.

[47] Amos Yong, *Theology and Down Syndrome: Reimagining Disability in Late Modernity* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007).

[48] Terrence Ehrman, 'Disability and Resurrection Identity', *New Blackfriars* 96:1066 (2015): 723–38, https://doi.org/10.1111/nbfr.12126.

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oppressed'.[49] Ultimately, however, such an explanation remains at odds with the sort of individuated and personal resurrection which most early modern writers imagined, and which underpinned the notion that resurrected people would know one another in heaven.

The Miracle of the Black Leg

The strong association perceived to exist between a disabled person's impairment and their character highlighted a truth about identity in general: that one's *self*, in some essential way, seemed to be inextricably linked to the body, frailties and all. Donne, Boyle, Hody, and others strove to imagine a way in which the body could rise from the grave precisely because the body was felt to be integral to a person's subjectivity. These debates, however, were not confined to abstract philosophising. Rather, they were creatively played out in medieval and early modern miracle accounts in which limbs were restored to the faithful.

A surprising number and variety of such narratives existed. In their *Wounds in the Middle Ages*, Anne Kirkham and Cordelia Warr describe several miraculous limb restoration accounts from the tenth and eleventh centuries, as well as the better-known twelfth-century story of Peter of Grenoble. Having been struck by lightning after cursing and swearing on a feast day, Peter lost one of his legs, but regained it when the Virgin Mary and Saint Hippolytus appeared to him in a vision:

> At the Virgin's command, Hippolytus took the leg's scattered pieces, which had come together again 'in the likeness of the future resurrection', and proceeded 'to join them to Peter's body, as a slip is joined to a tree'. A year later, the Virgin and Hippolytus returned to perfect the restored leg, which in its first state had been weak and small. These miracles inspired Peter to go into religious seclusion.[50]

This tale has numerous similarities with those I shall describe below, including the intervention of the saint during a dream or vision, and the gradual return to normality of the 'restored' limb. While miraculous healings of this sort were unsurprisingly more prominent in the medieval period, early modern equivalents existed. Douglas Price and Neil J. Twombly identify five limb restoration miracles in fifteen separate

[49] Dunton, *An Essay Proving We Shall Know Our Friends in Heaven*, p. 58.

[50] Anne Kirkham and Cordelia Warr, *Wounds in the Middle Ages* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), p. 235–6.

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accounts dating from the late fifteenth to the eighteenth century.[51] These include the Miracle at Calanda, said to have taken place in Spain in 1640. Michel Pellicero, a young man from Spain, had lost his leg in an accident, and was consigned to a life of begging. The devout young man eventually made his way home to live with his parents. Thus followed the miracle in which he regained his leg:

> Soon after about midnight, his Mother entering into the place where her son lay, espied in his bed a man lying with two legs, imagined him to be another Souldier, not dreaming what had happened to her sonne, frightened and amazed, went and told her husband of the matter, who came along with her to the chamber, being much troubled with fear and admiration untill they knew and discovered that it was their son that was most strangely cured.
>
> Whereupon, they awaked him not without difficulty, being very fast asleep, to whom his Father spake thus: Son, what is the matter, how came this that we see you with two legs? He replied; saying, he knew not, onely that as he slept he dreamed he was in the holy Chapel of Pilar, annointing himself with the oyl of the lamps there: his Father powring tears of meer joy, desired him to render infinite thanks to our mercifull Lord and Saviour Christ Jesus and his ever blessed Mother . . . because this glorious Virgin as he conceived obtained this cure, whence he was restored to his leg most miraculously.[52]

Despite its Catholic character, the Miracle at Calanda was recounted in numerous English texts including Davenport's 1653 *Enchiridion* and Daniel Turner's 1741 *Art of Surgery*. Though the latter treated the account with scepticism, he included a lengthy account in the *Art* with the justification that it had been the topic of debate among his friends and colleagues at Oxford.[53] The Calanda miracle, like that of Peter of Grenoble, emphasised the devotion of the healed person and the spiritual, as well as physical, effect of their miraculous healing.

Both Michel Pellicero and Peter of Grenoble have their original limbs restored to them, and in both cases, it is clear that this restoration represents more than a simple return to bodily function. In Pellicero's

[51] Douglas B. Price and Neil J. Twombly, *The Phantom Limb Phenomenon: a Medical, Folkloric, and Historical Study. Texts and Translations of 10th to 20th Century Accounts of the Miraculous Restoration of Lost Body Parts* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1978).

[52] Christopher Davenport, *An Enchiridion of Faith. Presented in a Dialogue, Declaring the Truth of Christian Religion in Generall* (Douay [Douai, France]: S.N., 1655), pp. 139–40.

[53] Daniel Turner, *The Art of Surgery: In Which Is Laid down Such a General Idea of the Same, as Is . . . Confirmed by Practice, . . . In Two Volumes. The Sixth Edition, Corrected. By Daniel Turner*, 6th edition, vol. 1 (of 2) (London: printed for C. Rivington, and J. Clarke, 1741), p. 216.

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case, in particular, the restoration of the limb is a return to wholeness, in a broad sense. The deposition of the Archbishop of Saragossa, which is reproduced in Turner's *Art of Surgery*, specifies that the new leg is known to be Pellicero's own by some distinguishing marks upon it. Moreover, we know that the amputated leg has been treated as a part of the human subject rather than as a piece of meat. Davenport reports that, when Pellicero lost his leg, 'His leg being cut off, some four inches below the knee; was carried to be interred in the place of that holy Church where dead bodies and all such members cut off, are dayly buried.'[54]

Even within the context of a miracle, however, restoration to bodily wholeness is a tricky affair. Restoring the lost limbs in these cases entails reconstituting those limbs from the decayed or obliterated fragments created by burial or by lightning. It is thus shown to be important that the restored limbs are made of the same numerical flesh, whatever may have happened to that flesh in the interim. Yet, what is restored is not the perfect body promised in resurrection discourses. Peter's leg and Michel's are both said to be *im*perfect when they are restored. Where Peter's is stunted and small, Michel's is – in some accounts at least – 'much wrested to one side'.[55] The limbs, we are told, return to normal over time. This detail implies that return to full bodily health is a process which takes place alongside the spiritual work of accepting and proselytising from the healing miracle. Seeing the join in this way raises questions about the status of body parts in relation to bodies whole.

These questions are explored more fully – if peculiarly– in the Miracle of the Black Leg. Also known as the Miracle of Cosmas and Damian, this account had circulated since the medieval period. It appeared in Jacob de Voragine's *Golden Legend* and in William Caxton's 1483 translation of the same, which was widely read throughout the early modern period. Moreover, as I describe below, it remained the subject of artistic representations and re-workings throughout the seventeenth century. The account centres on a pious sacristan, afflicted with cancer of the leg, who falls asleep in the church after praying to Saints Cosmas and Damian:

> as he slept, the holy martyrs Cosmo and Damian, appeared to him their devout servant, bringing with them an instrument and ointment of whom that one said to that other: Where shall we have flesh when we have cut away the rotten flesh to fill the void place? Then that other said to him:

[54] Davenport, *An Enchiridion of Faith*, p. 138.

[55] E.W., *Reason and Religion, or, The Certain Rule of Faith* (Antwerp: Michael Cnobbaert, 1672), p. 330.

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> There is an Ethiopian that this day is buried in the churchyard of S. Peter ad Vincula, which is yet fresh, let us bear this thither, and take we out of that man's flesh and fill this place withal. And so they fetched the thigh of the sick man and so changed that one for that other. And when the sick man awoke and felt no pain, he put forth his hand and felt his leg without hurt, and then took a candle, and saw well that it was not his thigh, but that it was another.[56]

The Miracle of the Black Leg implies a certain interchangeability of flesh: what is important is not the origin of one's limbs but their usefulness. In this respect it rehearses the preoccupation with prosthetic functionality which I explored in Chapter 4. However, the apparent pragmatism of the surgeon-saints in swapping a healthy for a diseased limb is also deeply problematic. There are obvious questions to be asked here. Given the saints' ability to perform miracles, why do they remove the sacristan's leg rather than healing it? Why do they replace it with that of the recently buried Ethiopian, when presumably they do not require the expediency of a local and recently deceased limb? Moreover, why is that intact but dead limb considered healthier than the sacristan's cankerous but nonetheless living flesh?

As textual and pictorial accounts of the miracle circulated, this strangeness was apparently exacerbated. Sheetal Lodhia traces representations of the black leg miracle from the early to late medieval period. Over this period, she argues, the blackness of the 'donor' is steadily emphasised, with descriptions switching from 'Moor' – a category of religious difference – to the racially determined 'Ethiopian'.[57] In so doing, successive retellers of the story amplify the gulf between the white and the non-white body, and raise the possibility of the sacristan's 'contamination' by racial and/or religious Otherness. Furthermore, early and late versions of the miracle differ in their description of the donor corpse. As Lodhia observes, the diseased white leg is consistently said to have been placed in the tomb with the Moor/Ethiopian, but whether it is grafted on to that body is often unclear.[58] Caxton's rendition is typically indeterminate: when the onlookers realised what had happened, 'they sent hastily to the tomb of the dead man, and found the thigh of him cut off, and *that other thigh in*

[56] Jacob de Voragine, *Legenda Aurea*, ed. F. S. Ellis, trans. William Caxton, vol. v (of 7) (Temple Classics, 1900), n.p. Via Fordham University Internet History Sourcebooks Project, https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu, accessed 17 March 2019.

[57] Sheetal Lodhia, 'Material Self-Fashioning and the Renaissance Culture of Improvement', Ph.D. (Queen's University, 2008), pp. 30–88.

[58] Ibid., p. 52.

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the tomb instead of his' (emphasis added).[59] If, as this phrase implies, the white leg does not belong to the Moor, can the Moor's leg belong to the sacristan? The burial of the white leg with the donor body implies that this flesh is put aside for some purpose. At the resurrection, will the sacristan have his white leg restored to him, healed by God though not by the saints? Or will he retain the donor leg, which is, after all, the flesh which more properly 'belongs' to him at the time of his death?

The black leg miracle raises these questions but fails – or refuses – to answer them. Both the black and white legs in this story have the potential, though not always realised, to change the fate of their new 'owner'. In this respect, they closely resemble the prostheses I describe in Chapters 3 and 4, which both integrate with and impose upon the body. One might expand that reading, however, to note that the indeterminate status of the black leg raises questions which we have seen recur throughout this book – questions about the status of the body per se as object or subject, mere 'stuff' or inhabited self. Furthermore, there is evidence that audiences hearing or reading about this miracle understood its relevance to matters of bodily alteration. Lodhia describes how in pictorial representations, the apparel and instruments of the operating saints change over time. At first standing with hands off the sacristan's body and replete with aureoles, in later images of the miracle the saints' apparel becomes identical with that of contemporary surgeons, and they are shown manipulating the new leg. An earthy description of the miracle account by a 1623 Protestant text betrays how far the miracle might come to be seen as surgical in character:

> Pope *Felix*, the eighth after S. *Gregory*, built a Church in the honour of S. *Cosmas*, and S. *Damian*, wherein one had his thigh almost rotted off with a canker: but these Saints came with Salves and Ointments, yea tooke very excrements to cure the fellow: but when they sawe they could doe no good, they cut off a legge of an Aethiopian newly buried, and put it to the man, and so cured him.[60]

If the saints are surgeons in this image, it follows that the ideal surgeon – one who could restore as well as take away parts of the body – might be imagined as divine. For their part, Cosmas and Damian were (and are) known in Catholic countries as the patron saints of surgery and physic. (See Figures 5.1 and 5.2.)

[59] De Voragine, *Legenda Aurea*, n.p.
[60] T.G., *The Friers Chronicle: Or, The True Legend of Priests and Monkes Liues* (London: John Budge, 1623), sig. G2v.

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Figure 5.1 Detail from 'A Verger's Dream: Saints Cosmas and Damian, 1495' by Master of Los Balbases.
Credit: Wellcome Collection. CC BY

The medical and metaphysical implications of the Miracle of the Black Leg may be most strikingly highlighted by the account's parallel with a modern instance of limb transplantation. In 1998, Clint Hallam received a hand transplant from a brain-dead donor, having lost his own hand in an accident fourteen years earlier. The operation was the first of its kind, but bore odd similarities with the medieval sacristan's leg restoration. Hallam's new hand and his body were both Caucasian, but the 'join' between the two remained clearly visible, with the new limb somewhat larger and paler than his other 'original' hand. In this case, however, the difference between new and old limbs became construed as something uncanny rather than evidence of a miracle. Hallam reported that other people avoided shaking his new hand, and his relationship with his wife deteriorated. He later stopped taking immunosuppressant drugs in order to force medical staff to perform an amputation, complaining that his limb felt alien to him: 'As it began to be rejected, I realised that it wasn't my hand after all.'[61]

[61] Donna Dickenson and Guy Widdershoven, 'Ethical Issues in Limb Transplants', *Bioethics* 15:2 (2001): 117.

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Figure 5.2 Saints Cosmas and Damian, *c.* 1370–5, Master of the Rinuccini Chapel (Matteo di Pacino) (Italian, active 1350–75), tempera and gold leaf on panel. North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation

Analysing this episode through a phenomenological lens, Jenny Slatman and Guy Widdershoven conclude: 'Being able to be the body one has, implies for the hand transplant recipient being able to appreciate and accept both the strange body's visual features . . . and its haptic, affective aspects.'[62] In spite of having sensorimotor and proprioceptive abilities in the new hand, Hallam could not accept the visual aspects of the limb or its role in his intersubjective experience of his body. Despite its impressive abilities, the transplanted part thus remained, for Hallam, a foreign object. Though bodily integrity is for Slatman and Widdershoven a psychological rather than spiritual issue, the 'alien' quality of Hallam's mismatched hand strongly evokes the conspicuous difference between the sacristan and his black leg. Furthermore, the surgeons in the Hallam case – just as in that of the sacristan – endeavoured to replace the limb of the donor body. The deceased person was buried with a prosthetic hand in order

[62] Jenny Slatman and Guy Widdershoven, 'Hand Transplants and Bodily Integrity', *Body and Society* 16:3 (2010): 75, https://doi.org/10.1177/1357034X10373406.

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'to restore ... dignity'.[63] This gesture belies the clinical nature of the procedure. At some level, those involved still believed that the corpse-object retained some relation to the person-subject, and therefore needed to be buried with all its parts.

Returning to the Grave

As we have seen thus far, early modern people were consistently inconsistent in their beliefs about the resurrection of the body, and in particular of the impaired or altered body. This is not to say that their views on the risen body were not fully developed, or deeply considered. Rather, they kept at the forefront of their thinking questions that seemed to have no clear answer – questions about the relationship between body and soul, object and subject, and lived and risen selves. In light of this complexity, how did early modern citizens treat their disembodied parts and altered corpses? What should have happened to the amputated leg at the beginning of this chapter, which ended up ownerless in a London cellar window?

In the twenty-first century, patients undergoing amputations in the United Kingdom can expect the removed limb to be incinerated as clinical waste, though some patients have established a burial ground for the removed parts.[64] In the early modern period, the picture was less clear. The report of the leg in the window suggests that disembodied parts were treated rather casually, and there is evidence elsewhere for this. We know that, at sea, severed limbs were tossed into the water. This book began with an excerpt from John Moyle's *Abstract of Sea Chirurgery*, which advised young ship's-surgeons on preparing for engagement day. Moyle rather grimly informs the aspiring ship's-surgeon that, before a battle, one should prepare two tubs of water: 'the one to throw amputated Limbs into until there is conveniency to heave them over-board; and the other to dip your dismembring Bladders in'.[65] Such advice suggests that early modern surgeons did not worry much about where the limbs ended up, or the fact that parts of different bodies were mixed in together.

In less pressing circumstances, however, there is evidence that people undergoing amputations thought carefully about what to do with their severed limbs. In 1725, five years after the discovery of the leg in the cellar

[63] Dickenson and Widdershoven, 'Ethical Issues in Limb Transplants', 119.
[64] Pamela Parkes, 'Leg-Loss Patients Left in Limbo', *BBC News*, 17 January 2016, www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-somerset-34879100.
[65] John Moyle, *Abstractum Chirurgiae Marinae, or, An Abstract of Sea Chirurgery* (London: printed by J. Richardson for Tho. Passinger, 1686), p. 22.

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window documented at the start of this chapter, the *Weekly Journal* reported that

> A Gentleman in the North of England having lost a Leg by Amputation, caused a Monument to be erected over it in the Church-yard where it was buried, with this Inscription:
>
> Here lies the Leg of Master Conder:
> But he's alive, and that's a Wonder.
> It was cut off by Dr Johnson,
> The famousest Surgeon of the Nation.[66]

This jovial inscription may have been undertaken as a display of the patient's wit and a means of asserting his continuing economic and social agency. Nonetheless, it suggests that Master Conder hoped to be reunited with his leg at death, and was prepared to pay to secure that right. A less pithy example of the same practice can be found in Strata Florida, Wales, where Henry Hughes Cooper buried his amputated limb in a grave complete with tombstone bearing the inscription 'The left leg and part of the thigh of Henry Hughes Cooper, was cut off and interr'd here, June 18, 1756.'[67] Such examples are few and far between, but they bespeak a desire among some amputees to bury their body parts in hallowed ground, and possibly to have their bodies buried with or near the severed part at their eventual death. Sarah Tarlow asserts that numerous examples exist in the early modern period of 'care taken to inter amputated limbs alongside other whole bodies', indicating that the people in question felt that the amputated parts continued to house part of their 'individuated self'.[68] Henry Hughes Cooper and Mr Conder clearly felt that their severed legs retained some connection to the living body and therefore to its subjectivity, rather than being merely decaying objects.

The mixed treatment of amputated limbs in this context reflects the heterogeneity of early modern burial practices in general. Even as theologians asserted God's capacity to reunite scattered parts wherever they might be, early modern people continued to engage in rituals which treated the lived body, the buried corpse, and the risen body as continuous in a very literal sense. Claire Gittings, for instance, describes early modern burials in which the individuals concerned specified that only they were to be allowed space in their plot or tomb, even to the exclusion of their

[66] *Weekly Journal or British Gazetteer*, 9 October 1725

[67] Cited in Sarah Tarlow, *Ritual, Belief and the Dead in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 66.

[68] Ibid.

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children.[69] As Gittings recognises, these requests reflect a fear that at the day of resurrection, parts of different corpses might get mixed up with one another in the melee of bodily reassembly.[70] The shrouding of corpses was likewise deemed to be of material importance. Gittings writes that a tightly wound shroud was sometimes recommended to prevent the ghost of the dead person from walking, but in other instances it was suggested that the shroud should be loose 'lest it impede the wearer on the day of resurrection'.[71] A sense of literal continuity between living, dead, and risen bodies was also apparent in the burying of items with the deceased. Putting pennies in the mouth of a corpse was by the seventeenth century viewed as a popish and superstitious practice, but this did not stop Donne from imagining a similar talismanic power when he proposed carrying a bracelet of his mistress's hair from life into death.[72] Did people similarly take their prostheses with them to the grave? Evidence of prosthesis burial in early modern England is entirely absent, but this does not necessarily mean that no such burials took place. The majority of prostheses, as we have seen, were wooden, and would rot away in the grave. According to virtually all theologians, prostheses would be unnecessary for the risen, perfected body. Nonetheless, there are a handful of examples of medieval Europeans having been buried with their prosthetic limbs: a sixth-century wearer of a foot prosthesis was excavated in Austria in 2013.[73]

The existence of such practices does not imply that theologians believed one thing about bodily resurrection and 'ordinary' people another. It does, however, point to a tension in practice, as in theological argument, about whether the risen body would be composed of all and only the material belonging to the corpse. In her analysis of medieval heart burial and relic worship, Bynum argues that medieval believers' apparent readiness to divide up the body did not preclude a general horror and fear of bodily partition. On the contrary, the pious practice which invested saints' body parts with holy powers also implied that subject identity inhered in all the parts of one's body wherever they might be. It was therefore desirable,

[69] Mass graves, in which the bodies of some plague victims and war dead were interred, must have had a profound effect on beliefs about bodily integrity, but this topic remains relatively unstudied. See Sarah Covington, *Wounds, Flesh, and Metaphor in Seventeenth-Century England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 91.

[70] Clare Gittings, 'Eccentric or Enlightened? Unusual Burial and Commemoration in England, 1689–1823', *Mortality* 12:4 (2007): 332, https://doi.org/10.1080/13576270701609667.

[71] Ibid., 112. [72] Ibid., 111.

[73] M. Binder et al., 'Prosthetics in Antiquity: an Early Medieval Wearer of a Foot Prosthesis (6th Century AD) from Hemmaberg/Austria', *International Journal of Paleopathology* 12 (2016): 29–40, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijpp.2015.11.003.

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though not theologically necessary, for the whole body to be buried in one grave.[74] The Church of England may have rejected reliquary culture, but it retained, both theoretically and ritually, the notion that subject identity inhered in the body. It therefore just *felt* better to have the body buried in certain ways in certain places. In his work on Reformation-era burials, Peter Marshall notes how people writing their wills couched the desire to be interred among their ancestors as an expression of belief that did not detract from their faith in God's ability to resurrect their bodies from any place, in any state:

> In North Yorkshire a woman stipulated that her body was to be buried 'in Askrigg church yeard amongst my ancestors, trusting that I shall receve the same againe, not a corruptible, mortall and vile body, but an immortall, uncorruptible and a glorious body'. In his will of 1585, Thomas Andrew of Bury St Edmunds requested burial 'in the churche yarde nighe unto the southe syde of St James Churche wheare myne Auncestors lye buried, not for that I thinke any place better then other but to declare my hope and beleve that they and I shall ryse together in the last day throughe Jesus Christ our onely saviour and Redemer to lyfe everlasting'.[75]

Though some modes and rites of burial changed over the seventeenth century, this theme endured through all kinds of burial practices which sought to keep the body intact. In the eighteenth century, embalming of corpses became commonplace. The best embalmers were those who could keep the body from putrefaction for the longest time. This was not merely for funerary purposes: skilled embalmers used multiple coffins of various materials to preserve the body in the grave.[76] Yet the embalmers, like the will-makers above, insisted that they were not keeping bodies intact in order for them to rise intact. In fact, as the author of one 1705 text pointed out, even burial was not really *necessary*:

> Neither is our Faith in his [Jesus'] assured Promise so frail, as to think ravenous Beasts or Birds of Prey can any ways make the Body want any part at the *Resurrection*; but on the contrary, we are well satisfied that in a Moment there shall be given such a new Restitution, not only out of the Earth, but out of the most minute Particles of all the other Elements, wherein any Bodies can possibly be included, that not a hair of our Heads shall be missing.[77]

[74] Bynum, 'Material Continuity, Personal Survival, and the Resurrection of the Body', 78–9.

[75] Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 210.

[76] Jolene Zigarovich, 'Preserved Remains: Embalming Practices in Eighteenth-Century England', *Eighteenth-Century Life* 33:3 (2009): 65–104.

[77] Thomas Greenhill, *Nekrokedeia: Or, the Art of Embalming* (London, 1705), p. 19.

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The writer of this text, Thomas Greenhill, drew explicitly on the Bible, where it was promised that each hair on the heads of the faithful was under God's superintendence (Luke 12:7, 21:18). In talking of extracting human matter from the minutest particles, he was also clearly influenced by thinkers such as Donne, Boyle, and Hody, for whom belief in resurrection was bound up with their understanding of atomism. The desire to embalm the body was, as Zigarovich has acknowledged, linked to the incorruptibility (and implied virtue) of saints' bodies. Yet, as Greenhill admitted, the desire to take any care of the body after death – including preserving it or gathering up its amputated parts – might be viewed as incompatible with earnest belief in bodily resurrection. In theory, the body would rise perfected regardless of what happened to it on earth. In practice, missing a body part was clearly a cause for concern.

Conclusion

At many points in the foregoing chapters I have argued that early modern people exercised a remarkable mental flexibility in their discourses about the body. This is nowhere more evident than in approaches to bodily resurrection, and the paradoxes of resurrection become particularly evident when one considers the fate of the altered body. As we have seen, most learned debate on the risen body accepted that God might gather up one's scattered parts wherever they might be. As Donne evocatively put it, He could pluck an amputated arm from one continent and a leg from another as easily as reaching for coins strewn across a table. As Donne's own work reveals, however, this solution failed to quell people's anxieties about whether and in what form their body would rise at the Last Day. If maintaining the *same* body – at least in essentials – was so important, then how was sameness to be measured? The surgical alteration of the body demonstrably affected every aspect of a person's life, so that it was sometimes difficult to conceive of a 'perfected' body which maintained an identity with the lived, impaired individual.

While theologians tried to square this circle, in pious practice, people lived with and even embraced the contradictions. In creative expressions of belief such as Donne's poems, in the miracle stories people favoured, and the ways they buried their dead, one sees the body treated as object and subject, 'me' and 'mine', exterior carcase and lived identity. As so often, anxiety about this matter was most pointedly illustrated through satire. In a 1782 cartoon (Figure 5.3), Thomas Rowlandson depicted William Hunter's famous anatomy museum at the day of the resurrection.

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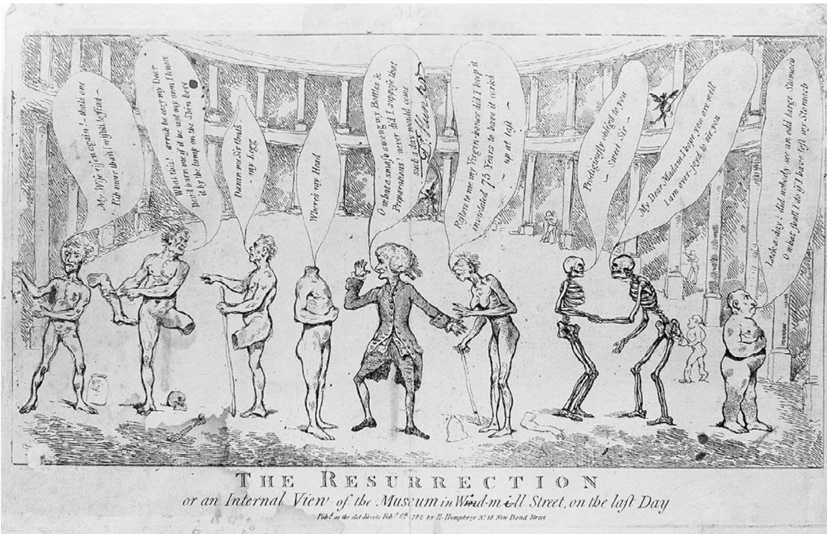

Figure 5.3 'The Resurrection or an Internal View of the Museum [of William Hunter] in Windmill Street, on the Last Day', attributed to Thomas Rowlandson, 1782.
Credit: Wellcome Collection. CC BY

The unfortunate 'owners' of Hunter's collections of disembodied limbs scramble to retrieve their missing parts, which have been lost, stolen, or misappropriated in the confusion. Despite the promises of churchmen, even of the Bible, they are neither recompacted nor miraculously restored. God has forgotten about these altered bodies.

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