A Full-Bodied Society

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Edited by

Logie Barrow and the late François Poirier

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

LOGIE BARROW

Professor Francois Poirier initiated the seminar within the biennial 2008 conference at Aarhus of the European Society for the Study of Englishes where more than half of our contributors had a trial run. Francois died at the start of March 2010. As person and activist he was a historian: his higher doctorate was on "working-class consciousness in England from 1832". But any wall between disciplines was, for him, something to be surmounted in any direction or, in Edward Thompson's livelier phrase, warrened from end to end. Thus he would have undoubtedly enjoyed all contributions to this volume and, even more, their cohabitation. The latter now lays all the heavier burden on his co-editor.

Labelling summarily, we have here one historical linguist-lettrist, two lettrists and four historians (the present writer included), few of whom may feel competent to judge the quality of anyone else's paper. Thus, it remains only to interrelate them, even more summarily. Maria Eliferova and Astrid Fellner deal, during centuries ideologically and of course chronologically far apart, with jostlings between language and assumptions about the human body. Fellner notes the accentuation, during the 18th century, of essentialist divisions between male and female human natures. Our other writers draw very much on the 19th and 20th. Maria Isabel Romero Ruiz (from now on, Romero) and Richard Sibley focus on some effects and incoherences of this essentialism, Gilbert Pham-Thanh on an ambiguously transgressive literary genre directed, earlier in the 19th, mainly at young ladies or would-be ladies. Sune Borkfelt notes convergences between imperialist attitudes to the bodies of animals and of 'subject races', while Logie Barrow highlights the self-defeat of medical and state impatience with parents over very young babies' bodies during an unprecedented age of formal political enfranchisement. Thus this volume mobilises an unusually wide range of contexts, and demonstrates that conceptual discussions can be sharper when they go via empirical complexities.

Within all the sub-disciplines drawn on in this volume, source-bias is seldom easy to correct or, directly, even to detect. Eliferova notes that the

relative paucity of pre-14th-century texts obscures the fact that Christian Anglo-Saxons were probably less dualistic about body and soul than less recently Christianised cultures, located mostly around the Mediterranean basin. This can be gauged linguistically, via translations from the Christian corpus, including the Old and New Testaments. Our dependence on literate, i.e. superficially Christian, transcriptions of pre-Christian, i.e. long orally transmitted, assumptions has spread the virus of anachronism into whole fields of study (let alone of fiction, one might add). In the same chronological direction, Eliferova also discusses the problems of the late Alan Bray's attempt to extend his analysis backwards from the 14th century.

One shudders to imagine how her still unevenly christianised Anglo-Saxons – with their mainly male, feasting warrior ex-gods still sometimes pursuing them -- would have reacted to the female metaphors with which, into the early 18th century, Fellner's New England Puritans addressed the no more than theologically male Almighty. To us, at least, these terms are often unmistakably female. However, Fellner reminds us that only during that century did differences between male and female come to be phrased in bodily terms and to be essentialised, with 'the sex', i.e. women, coming to be seen as closer to nature. The same growing chasm between female and male bodies was disruptive to Calvinist descriptions of spiritual conversion: to describe the convert's soul in 'feminised' terms was, from the middle of the 18th century, problematic. (From the middle of the 19th, spiritualists solved an analogous problem – that of the gender or perhaps genderlessness of spirit 'possession' -- defiantly, as I have argued elsewhere). Fellner documents these complexities via the epistolary diarist Esther Burr who, as daughter of the leading Calvinist Jonathan Edwards, was as aware of them as anyone could be, i.e. perhaps not fully. Via her writings, we see not merely the 'conflict' (Fellner's word) between old and new approaches to the body, but also rich indications as to why such a conflict was becoming expressible 'and intelligible' at all: becoming, though not yet fully become.

By Romero's late Victorian times, the essentialist gender-separation had had three or four more generations after Fellner's period in which to grow. In relation to the characteristics adduced for female and male children, the ages of sexual consent shifted in opposite directions. Again, sexual assault on boys was doubly unnatural because the male body ought, by definition, to remain "closed", unlike that of the sexually mature woman. Yet, because of assumptions that all moral women were sexually passive, the rape of girls was all the more shocking.. True, we might add, much of the press could certainly relish homosexual scandal – one thinks

of that about the Cleveland Street brothel where aristocratic officers, including allegedly the Duke of Clarence, second-in-line for the throne, 'debauched' Post Office boys, or of the doings of Oscar Wilde with his aristocratic lover or, during the 1st World War, of government use of Casement's diaries to secure the noose round Sir Roger's neck. Even that, then as now, highly enjoyable hysteria about enemy agents sexually blackmailing 47,000 members of the wartime elite was about indescribably homosexual, as well as heterosexual, transgressions. But remoralisation-programmes for victims were far more often about female prostitutes than about male, as also were controversies and campaigns. Nonetheless, as Romero points out, many or most working-class people remained less essentialist about maleness and femaleness than their social superiors: in this and many other ways, gender and class tended to interact unevenly.

The same applies in Sibley's area, though gender remains his focus, too. Here again we are dealing, not only with implications of our essentialist differentiation, but also with its hollowing and ultimate toppling which Sibley associates with 'the feminist challenge of the 1960s'. Admittedly, he explains that our post-1960s 'gender' paradigm is, in turn, coming under pressure. But his focus remains on the period 1860-1914 when, he argues, 'differences between men and women in sporting performance are much more a product of gender than of sex', and when a huge range of influential intellectuals – overwhelmingly male, though not all – reiterated that women's gynaecological function weakened them in sport and intellect, with the corollary that attempts to develop their sporting prowess would inevitably undermine them as mothers of the race. Here, fittingly if predictably, dissent could be heard from some of the still very rare women doctors, such as Elizabeth Garrett Anderson. Dissenters were at first seldom able to win for women a right to participate in the same sports as men, but rather in other forms of sport seen as more suitable. Nevertheless, Sibley sees most primary and secondary sources as underestimating both the amount of mixed sporting activity, even early in his period, and of working-class women's participation. One of his main windows looks onto changes in sporting dress, at least for those women able to afford it.

Dress occupies a far more central place in Pham-Thanh's focus on the 'Dandiacal Male Body', as viewed via some novels fashionable during the early 19th century. He provides valuable correction to any chauvinist-essentialist sneers that sartorial obsessions are effeminate. Here, awares or not, he is in the tradition of Mary Wollstonecraft who ironised during the 1790s that officers in the armed services – those quintessentially fine

upstanding males – were often pedantically besotted with their attire. Many of the texts he quotes were obviously part of the sub-culture they sought to portray. In describing male dress, their language is deliberately suggestive in many directions, not least of more conventional descriptions of female bodies and their dressage. This increases the fascination of their being directed at a young and female market, apparently eager to fantasise about meeting ideal upper-class partners in surroundings which seemed aristocratically lush but, at least at first sight, not sexually in the least. The morality of characterisation and plots was anyway far from subversive. However, under critical scrutiny, these novels may turn out more provocative than at first sight – as perhaps also Pham-Thanh's own "final reassertion".

Sune Borkfelt offers a provocatively contrasting cut on broad Western imperialist hierarchies. He traces links in various directions between Western perspectives on animal bodies and imperialist perspectives on colonised peoples. Further, imperialists often derived additional justification as defenders of 'weaker' races against alleged threats from wild animals. Sometimes, such races' inferiority was anyway measured by the paucity of animal species they domesticated or eat. There were differing opinions as to how reversible the causal link might be between carnivorousness and civilisatory strength. Some British observers were able to acknowledge many Indians as vegetarian, and yet civilised. In the opposite direction, the young Gandhi and some of his friends saw their British rulers' strength as resulting from Britain's being, over generations, the world's most carnivorous country. If control over nature was one mainstay of imperialist ideology, the approximately post-1970 spread of Western levels of carnivorousness may have a role in current environmental and perhaps climatic degeneration.

Persons, being embodied, usually have brains. During the rough period when vaccination against smallpox was officially compulsory (1853-1947), the body became the key site where supporters of medical orthodoxy ascribed stupidity to much, from 1914 to most, of the population for ignoring compulsion. Such generations-long impatience finally made Britain the least-vaccinated country in Europe. It also gives wings, Barrow argues, to a broader paradox: roughly during the same generations, the masses were gaining the right to vote but were written off by most supporters of vaccination and of scientific medicine as stupid, even eugenically undesirable. Admittedly, vaccination also had gender aspects – as, for example, when a father had to answer for his baby's non-vaccination, but not its mother: he possessed 'legal personality' which she

was only starting to acquire. But gender is famously not the sole way of tearing humanity up.

From outside this volume, better testimony to the undiminished liveliness and variety of body-studies is hard to imagine. So far, the clearest upshot of most of our contributions is that all the cultures dealt with here, along with no doubt very many more, usually gravitate towards essentialist divisions between male and female human natures, even though the boundary between the two essences varies constantly and often considerably. Such divisions are dogmatic, which is one reason why dissent against them is often underplayed in the sources. But their shifts sometimes make dissent visible after all, often against the grain of those very sources.

BODY AND SOCIETY IN PRE-NORMAN ENGLAND

MARIA ELIFEROVA

Introduction: Why this Article is Not about Sexuality

The seminar of ESSE-9 in Aarhus, 2008, where this work (now enlarged) was first presented, bore a suggestive heading of *A Full-Bodied Society?* These three words, plain as they are, evoke a large and (at least for a contemporary European) immediately comprehensible subtext – that is, of 'Englishness' as 'suppression of bodily functions' and 'asexuality'. Not unintentionally, this rhetorical question is linked to a variety of matters, from attacks on Thomas Hardy's novels for being 'amoral' to the famous statement of George Mikes' that the English, instead of sex life, 'have hot water bottles'. The clear irony of this interrogation presumes that even the slightest hint at the possibility of being both 'English' and 'full-bodied' challenges one's common sense.

In fact, most of the contemporary cultural stereotypes concerning the stiff-necked and restricted English derive from Victorian or Edwardian standards of behaviour. These patterns are not true for the 18th-century English, the then literary characters being indeed full-bodied – Gulliver even to a degree embarrassing for many present-day readers (remember the obscene episodes of Books 1-2!). And Shakespeare had obviously little problem with creating Falstaff, the most corporeal character in European fiction save for, perhaps, Gargantua.

So even when we do not go back further than early modernity, the notion of English culture as 'bodiless' becomes questionable. This means we have no reasons to think that 19th- or early 20th-century attitudes existed in much earlier periods. And this is what we should take into consideration when thinking of Anglo-Saxons. As the point of my work is the possible reconstruction of how the pre-Christian Anglo-Saxons would perceive their bodies, I have to make the case clear: the contemporaries of, say, King Aethelbert I were English – and they were not. In terms of language, history and geography, they were. In terms of present-day ideas

of what 'Englishness' means (see the brilliant catalogue listed by Julian Barnes in his *England, England*), they were not.

However, I would rather not go into early pre-Norman England in order to search for some golden age of primordial and sexually unrestrained heathenry. This is in fact the problem of many 'body' studies: what they refer to is not exactly the body but gender, sexuality, health, eating behaviours etc. The body is not the subject by itself, but rather stands for anything else. It is nearly impossible to perform a reverse operation and to see how this incoherent variety of social and biological phenomena constitutes an actual body of a person who once lived. So the way I have chosen is not to speak about the Anglo-Saxon body and society in terms of contemporary social and/ or psychological constructs. Gender, sexuality etc. are just the meanings we ascribe to the body; they are not given to us 'by nature' – but the body is. Before we have language or social relationship or sexual identity, we have bodies. As Alessandro Duranti notes, 'the human body is the first instrument we experience. Our mouth, hands, eyes, feet, and other body parts are the first mediating elements in our interactions with the people and objects around us'[1]. Therefore, it seems to me, the most relevant method of exploring the relations between Anglo-Saxon's bodies and their society would be – at first – the plain criticism of the written records explicitly referring to human bodies.

In fact, I am bound by the texts themselves. Surely, an Anglo-Saxon identity must have been gendered; but very little information on gender matters is found in surviving primary sources, and I feel it academically improper to go on wild speculation 'by analogy'. So I must warn my probable readers that in this paper they will meet a number of *he*'s. The reason for this abundance of masculine pronouns is that in the texts on which my work is focussed, the body in question is predominantly male. (Besides, I think that, being female myself, I have at least some right not to be too politically correct to my own gender). At the same time, as I am going to demonstrate below, the actual Old English texts concerned with the body often put it into contexts other than modern notions of sexuality and gender.

My acknowledgements to Dr. Logie Barrow, Prof. of the University of Bremen, who polished up my English and gave me some extra ideas now used in the enlarged version of my paper.

[1] Alessandro DURANTI. Linguistic Anthropology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. P. 322.

1. Body as a Matter of Language

Before going into the subject in question, I would like to highlight the following points which are crucial for my further reasoning:

1. Body attitudes are culturally specific for each ethnic group and/or historical period. Their variability is enormously greater than the actual biological diversity between various groups of *Homo Sapiens*. That is, the biological body is nearly the same save for sex differences, in all people, yet the 'body' as a cultural concept is not. Cultural concepts are inevitably manifested through language, so it is in language where the body attitudes of a culture are to be found.

Turning to 'the matter of language', I mean primarily lexicology, its evidence being the most unambiguous when we deal with texts recorded centuries ago. The basic vocabulary of a spoken language is slow to change – significant changes, if they happen at all, point to major social shifts, like invasions or revolutions. Words can survive for thousands of years, with only slight phonetic changes – this is the reason why historical linguistics does exist and is used by modern anthropologists to get a better understanding of pre-modern thinking. Whatever number of words Inuits do actually have for 'snow', the essential Boasian notion that a language reflects a corresponding worldview of a certain culture is still valid.

Yet no language declares body attitudes and/or related cultural practices by itself. We can either get some information from a *text* in this language or deduce certain keys from the use of vocabulary. In any case, the cultural context is what really matters, and we should try to get at it as fully as possible. Still, we must not forget that a reconstruction, however plausible, is only a reconstruction.

2. Old English is a Germanic language, which means the following historical features:

a) taking its written form only after – and as a result of - Christianization;[2]

b) low number of loan-words.

Modern English is uncommonly heavy with loan-words when compared to other Germanic languages, but it is not the same with Old English. Before 1066 Anglo-Saxons, if they wanted to render some terms of Christian philosophy into English, would normally use either available

[2] Contrary to the popular delusion, very few runic inscriptions are actually pre-Christian and, of these, almost no inscription is vast or comprehensible or gives culturally significant information. For more on runic inscriptions, see Arild Hauge's website <www.arild-hauge.com>, where many examples are given.

English words or English-based constructions. Here are just a few random examples: *hwatung* 'divination', *ðolung* 'passion', *underðēodnes* 'submission, obedience', *wuldor* 'glory, honour'[3].

However, when a modern reader makes a reverse translation – say, from 'wuldor' to 'glory', - this process might be highly misleading, even for experts at social science. No adaptation of a language's vocabulary to the concepts of another language/ culture is perfect. Sometimes it is simply impossible: for instance, no Germanic language has any native word for 'Paradise', because the only Germanic idea of heavenly bliss (that is, Valhall) is quite incompatible with Christian ideology. As a result, all modern Germanic languages use various derivations from *paradisus*, and even Icelandic vocabulary, the most conservative, still contains the same word. I do not in the least share the theory according to which *any* word in a language cannot be translated properly into another language, yet we should take into consideration the reality of the gaps between ideas loaned from another culture and the primary meaning of the native words chosen by the translator. When an Anglo-Saxon translated the Latin word *rex* applied to Christ, as *cyning*, did he in fact think of the same kind of person as a Roman would?

Here is the problem of the gap between the original meaning of a word and its use in Christian records – since all the more or less vast Germanic texts we have, including the Eddas, were formed by Christians. (There are indeed some pre-Christian runic records, but those are either too brief or unreadable to yield any information on the subject in question). Still this very gap can also be of use in a piece of anthropological research, because it might give us some keys to understanding the pre-Christian Germanic worldview.

2. Angels, Adam and Noah

Unlike an artefact, a cultural concept cannot be observed directly – you cannot see or feel it. Yet it is a product of a certain culture as much as a sword or a brooch, and its place within this culture can be defined indirectly, through language. One of the basic questions which make up any worldview is how we perceive our own body. Body attitudes are little related to climate: in some Arctic cultures, where climate forces people to be fully clothed, it is still considered proper to go naked at home – which is more than improper for a modern European or Chinese. What really

[3] From: J. R. Clark HALL. *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*. 4th ed. Toronto – Buffalo – London: University of Toronto Press, 2006.

matters is the sum of our habits in religion, style and terms of good/ bad manners. These cultural habits are transmitted through generations and rooted in the mythological significance of the body in a culture.

A modern European belongs in the end to Christian culture, even if one identifies oneself as an atheist or a Buddhist. That is why for us the binary opposition of 'body/ soul', of 'material/ immaterial' is only natural – so natural that many anthropologists use these words casually[4]. In a more ordinary mind, this binary opposition is not only clear and unquestioned, but strangely intermingled with the idea that paganism meant worshipping the body (an idea sounding nostalgic and not unpleasing for modern masses). In fact, Christianity did not invent this opposition, but rather inherited it from Greek philosophy (was Plato not a pagan?). On the other hand, we should not follow the narrator of *La Chanson de Roland*, who makes Marcilius at the same time a Moslem, a pagan and a non-believer – that is, we must avoid regarding all the 'pagan' worldviews as parts of a single system. There is no such thing as 'paganism' in a sense we think of 'Christianity' or 'Islam'. Perhaps, there is more difference between Mediterranean and Germanic paganism than between Mediterranean paganism and Christianity.

Nor would I represent Norse paganism as 'imperfect Christianity' (an idea popular in Mediaeval and early modern antiquaries) or 'anti-Christianity' (a kind of Nietzschean position still held by some present-day researchers). The Germanic cultural system can be explained through Christianity no more than through Buddhism. Yet it is Christian authors through whom the information is available, so it is possible to use the 'noise' in translation as a source itself.

When we come to the problem of the 'body' concept among pre-Christian or newly Christianized Anglo-Saxons, we have to overcome the automatic ways of our thinking formed by a long Neoplatonic tradition of

[4] A very typical statement: 'From Empedocles and Pythagoras to Cambridge Neoplatonism and beyond, the body has been understood as an object mediated by the mind (or the psyche, or soul, or *pneuma*, or logos, or *ratio*)' – James ELKINS. *Pictures of the Body: Pain and Metamorphosis*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999. P. 27. Or, with a little more attention to cultural relativity: 'Another persistent foundation of Western ideology that is unlike that of many non-Western tribal peoples is the dichotomy of mind and body <...> This duality has been integral to Western morality from at least the time of the ancient Greeks'. – Carole M. COUNIHAN. *The Anthropology of Food and Body: Gender, Meaning and Power*. London – New York: Routledge, 1999. Pp. 102-103. Notice the Present Perfect verb forms ('has been'), as well as equating 'Western' with 'Graeco-Roman'.

which most Anglo-Saxons knew little if anything. Surely, a surviving Anglo-Saxon poem on *Soul and Body* shows a clearly dualistic philosophy; but we must not forget that it is a purely monastic piece of literary work that contains almost nothing specifically Anglo-Saxon, being just one of numerous *de contempto mundi* written by monks throughout the Middle Ages. It is highly unlikely to represent actual body-and-soul notions of a 6th-century Beowulf.

To be academically honest, we should suppose that we know nothing on how 'body' was related to 'soul' in the mind of a Dark Age Anglo-Saxon. What is actually available is only vocabulary. This research consists of two tasks:

1) analysis of body-related vocabulary in Old English;

2) considering representations of the body in Old English literature.

Perhaps Nicolaus Pevsner would not stick so much to his idea of equating Englishness to being bodiless, had he only considered language instead of art.[5] Historically, English has a good deal of 'body' vocabulary, but, being all-too-metaphorical, it is barely recognized by an alien.[6] However, my explorations will be confined to straightforward terms only.

Body and *flesh* did exist in the earliest period, as *bodig* and *flæsc*. But the latter is hardly a native Anglo-Saxon term for human body as opposed to 'soul'. There are good reasons to suggest that its primary meaning was 'meat' and it acquired its nowadays meaning through a calque of the Latin *caro*.

1) Most non-religious derivations from this word have it for 'meat': *flæscæt*, *flæscmete* 'animal food', *flæschus*, *flæscstræt* 'meat-market', *flæscmangere* 'butcher', *flæscwyrm* 'maggot' etc.[7]

2) Modern German, lexically and grammatically the closest to Saxon, still has *Fleisch* for 'meat' rather than 'human body'.

3) At least some Anglo-Saxon scribes had no habit of applying this word to the human body. You might expect to find it in the Bible, yet the 2,938 lines of *Genesis* in Codex Junius yield *flæsc* or its derivations only twice. As Codex Junius contains in fact two *Genesis* texts composed by different authors (*Genesis A* and *Genesis B*, the latter being a translation

[5] Nikolaus PEVSNER. *The Englishness of English Art.* London, 1956.

[6] It is indeed very difficult to catch for a non-English person. This was the case of Nicolas Gerbel, a 19th–century Russian translator of Shakespeare's Sonnets. He failed to recognize the erotic meaning of *will* in Sonnets 135 and 136. Though the word play on the name 'Will' was rendered into Russian correctly, the noun *will* was understood as 'command' or 'volition'.

[7] Clark HALL 2006. Pp. 120-121.

from Old High German)[8], it is worth noticing that the B-poet did not use *flæsc* at all.

Word choice itself gives an insight into the writer's outlook and ideology. While I cannot be sure whether a word was chosen consciously or subconsciously, the very fact of the scribe's inclination to use or not to use a certain word is informative.

Instead of *flæsc* or *bodig* (the latter absent in the *Genesis* part of Codex Junius), the prevailing word for human body in both Genesis A and B is *līc*. In Genesis B it is applied not to humans only, but to Satan as well:

> cwæð þæt his lic wære leoht and scene,
> hwit and hiowbeorht.
>
> "[Satan] said that his body was light and shining, white and well-shaped" (265 - 266)[9].

It looks even stranger for a modern Christian if I point out that Satan says this *before* his fall – i. e. as an angel. Did the Anglo-Saxon angels have bodies?

I had to go into some mediaeval studies to find out that late Mediaeval and early modern lore did ascribe corporeality to demons. However, the matter is much more difficult with the early Middle Ages. It is still more difficult with angels, whose nature had been a subject of controversy. Yet even the philosophers who believed that angels had bodies would regard these as ethereal, rather than corporeal[10].

Nevertheless, it remains a question whether this or that particular poet, a pre-Norman Anglo-Saxon or a Carolingian Saxon (since Saxony had undergone Christianization by the 9th century only, that process could hardly have been more than skin-deep), had a thorough knowledge of contemporary theological discussions or even access to much literature on the subject. And in the 9th and 10th centuries – the time when the Codex Junius was compiled – religious education in England largely declined, so that most monks were unable to read in Latin (the reason why King Alfred commissioned translations of some Latin books into English).

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[8] *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records.* Vol. I. The Junius Manuscript. Ed. by George Philip Krapp. New York: Columbia University Press; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969. Pp. ix-xvi, xxiv-xxvi.

[9] Ibid. P. 11.

[10] Alexander E. MAKHOV. *Hostis Antiquus: Categories and Images of Medieval Christian Demonology*. Moscow: Intrada, 2006. Pp. 125-128.

Did perhaps the poet mean an ethereal body? *Līc* could indeed mean 'image' or 'form'; by that time it was already known as a suffix meaning 'like' or 'way of', which is nowadays English *–ly* and German *–lich*. Modern dictionaries differentiate between the *līc* root and the *lic* suffix via spelling, but the actual Anglo-Saxon manuscripts do not, or at least the Codex Junius does not. A pre-Norman Anglo-Saxon was unlikely to recognize these morphemes as crucially different[11].

This is again the case of our own 'inward translator' who might represent a logic different from that of an Anglo-Saxon. There is no single or simple pattern of transition from a direct meaning to an indirect one. Therefore, it is necessary to look more closely at the direct meanings of *līc*.

Here are the proportions of *līc*-based words in the known vocabulary:

1) 14 derivations from 'corpse' meaning (*līcburg* 'cemetery', *līcsang* 'dirge' etc.)

2) 4 medical derivations (*līcwund, līcsār* 'wound', *līcðēote* 'pore', *līcðrōwere* 'leper');

3) 1 derivation meaning 'torso' (*līcsyrce* 'corslet')[12].

Therefore, the down-to-earth meaning of *līc* was quite obvious in Old English. The data from other Germanic languages also suggests that *līc* was rather a plain physical body than just 'shape'. The Old Norse *lik* would indeed mean the corporeal body, since both *The Poetic Edda* (*Hávamál*, 92) and *Sólarljóð* (12) use it in an apparently erotic context, speaking of the female body. The modern Dutch *lichaam* also means either a human body or a ship's frame, and the modern German *Leiche* does still mean 'corpse'.

So at least the Anglo-Saxon poet, if not his Continental predecessor, saw Satan as quite corporeal. It is even more difficult to imagine how he would see the concept of 'soul'. The modern word *soul* is certainly Anglo-Saxon (*sāwol*). But you are unlikely to trace its native usage: the recorded derivations from *sāwol* give little indication whether they are native or Latin Christian calques. The only word able to give some insight into the pre-Christian meaning of *sāwol* is *sāwoldrēor* (a metaphor for 'blood'). This blending of 'soul' and 'blood' makes it questionable whether the pagan Anglo-Saxons shared our idea of 'soul' as an 'immortal and immaterial entity retaining personal identity when out of body'. Originally, *sāwol* would rather mean some kind of life energy. The verb

[11] On the noun-derived Germanic suffixes, see Wayne HARBERT. *The Germanic Languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. Pp. 28-29. Harbert also gives the Gothic version of *–lic*, which is *-leiks*.

[12] Clark HALL 2006. Pp. 217-218.

sāwlian 'to die' might therefore be native rather than a Christian innovation[13].

A possible insight into the difficulties that Anglo-Saxons would meet when facing the idea of body /soul dualism is found in a much later poem, *St. Erkenwald*, composed in late the 14th century[14]. The poem, after the then fashion, imitates the Old English alliterative verse and is set in the Anglo-Saxon era. Its story tells us how an Anglo-Saxon bishop finds a miraculously incorruptible body of an unknown man. This man turns out to be – rather than a saint – an unbaptized pagan of Celtic origin, who is capable of speaking and telling the bishop his story. When the bishop is moved so that he drops a tear on the dead man's face, the latter says that now he has been baptized, and then his body dissolves. It is a bizarre story indeed, confronting both history (a Saxon represented as bringing Christianity to a pagan Celt)[15] and theology. How could a dead person speak, if, according to Christian ideas, their soul is detached from their body? An unbaptized pagan's soul should have been in Limbo, which he confirms himself: 'and ther sittes my soule'. Why then does he use present tense? Does he mean that his soul *is* still in Limbo? Who, in such case, is speaking through his body (and is being baptized by St. Erkenwald)?

The popular Christian lore would consider the possibility that the corpse was demon-possessed, which was a typical quasi-religious explanation of vampire beliefs. But this is not the case with the Celt of *St. Erkenwald*, because no demon would require baptism. The man apparently retains his identity. This makes it puzzling how everyone knew that he was dead. As Philip Schwyzer comments, there are 'serious theological problems thrown up by the unorthodox manner of the judge's baptism'[16].

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[13] Ibid. P. 290.

[14] Much of the text itself and analysis are found in Philip SCHWYZER. *Archaeologies of English Renaissance Literature.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. Pp. 40-59. The full text can be ordered through <http:ota.ahd.ac.uk/ headers/0053.xml>, free of charge.

[15] It is curious to see how nationalist myths have been shifted throughout ages: for instance, the Arthurian legend, originally anti-Saxon, became in 19th century part of Anglo-Saxon cultural myth (and was then debunked as such by Mark Twain).

[16] Ibid. P. 51. There are indeed critics who regard it as orthodox: see, for instance, Cindy L. VITTO, 'St. Erkenwald's Harrowing of Hell', in Cindy L. VITTO. *The Virtuous Pagan in Middle English Literature.* Transactions of the American Philosophical Society. Vol. 79, Part 5. Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1989. Pp. 50-59; Annemarie THIJMS, 'The Sacrament of Baptism in *St. Erkenwald*: The Perfect Transformation of the Trajan Legend', in *Neophilologus.* 2005. Vol. 89, No. 2. Pp. 311-328. They, however, are more interested in matters

Schwyzer speaks about a modern scholar doing research on this poem, but its 14th-century author had problems as well when he had come to the point of explanation why the dead man could speak. He makes no effort to fit it into a well-known Mediaeval type of miracle story, that of a temporary resurrection (a corpse regaining its soul just for a while in order to receive baptism or to witness their own murder). Instead, he speculates that it became possible through 'sum lant gost-lyfe' ('some borrowed ghost-life'); but how could this ghost be subjected to baptism?[17] The typical ghost acceptable for the late Mediaeval Church was either a soul from Purgatory – and, therefore, already Christian, because non-Christians were placed directly in Hell, - or a demon. In either case, they did not need baptism.

We cannot ascribe these oddities to the theological ignorance of the poet, because by the 14th century basic Christian notions of salvation had become more or less widely known among lay people: the Church worked out a consistent tradition of religious education and popularized it through preachers[18]. Now, if we pay attention to the fact that the poem is English, we should remember that it was composed in the wake of the Wyclifian movement, the largest-scale effort to educate the lay masses theologically before the modern era[19]. And the poem is not a plain record of some

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like salvation through grace and do not comment upon the striking fact that the man is long dead.

[17] Cindy L. Vitto suggests that it was the Holy Spirit who was speaking through the dead body (VITTO 1989, p. 56). 'Ghost' in Middle English could indeed be used for 'spirit'. However, this gets us to a theologically absurd conclusion that it was the Holy Spirit who had been baptized by St. Erkenwald! Besides, no 14th-century Christian would refer to the Holy Spirit as to 'some ghost', rather than 'holy ghost'.

[18] Performing baptism on corpses was strictly prohibited from the early Middle Ages, and by the late 14th century even the most illiterate Western people were generally aware of the prohibition, because it is in this time that a popular practice of faking temporary resurrections of stillborn babies (in order to have them baptized) emerged. See Jean DELUMEAU. *Le péché et la peur: La culpabilization en Occident (XIIIe – XVIIIe siècles)*. Paris: Fayard, 1983. Chap. VIII. Though Delumeau gives no evidence that this Continental practice was known in Britain, his data, in a way, indicate how unusual the *St. Erkenwald* story is in late Mediaeval context. From a Wyclifian point of view, it is even more outrageous than from a mainstream Catholic one, because Wyclif was consistently anti-superstitious and denied the idea that baptism was directly related to salvation.

[19] On the success of the Wyclifian educational effort, see Gerry KNOWLES. *A Cultural History of the English Language*. London – New York: Arnold, 1997. Pp. 63-64.

folklore, but a deliberate literary stylization, since alliterative verse was no more in use in oral tradition by the 1300s – which means a not unlearned person behind the text.

An explanation that seems plausible to me is that *St. Erkenwald* is based on a genuine Anglo-Saxon source now lost[20]. It is unclear in what language the original story could have been written, Latin or English, but it reflected the worldview of a much earlier time than the late 1300s. If 'soul', within this worldview, represented 'life energy' rather than 'mind' or 'identity', then a 'dead' person could be seen as 'lacking life energy', which did not run counter to retaining identity and mind. That fits into what is happening to a dead Celt in the poem.

So there is little reason to think that the Anglo-Saxon *sāwol* and *līc* made up originally the same binary opposition as the modern *soul* and *body/ flesh* – i. e. that of high and low, inward and outward. This opposition comes from our own thinking patterns, not from the data itself. The contemporary Latin-English translations and glossaries yield pleonastic compounds, *līcfæt* (literally, 'bodily vessel') and *līchama* ('bodily home', not unlike the modern Dutch *lichaam* or German *Leichnam*)[21]. If bookmen felt the need to complete the 'body' idea with the one of 'vessel' or 'home', it seems that *līc* by itself did not draw a perfect line between 'corporeal' and 'spiritual'.

The Anglo-Saxon translator of Genesis B also uses *līchama* in a pleonastic way:

> Bare hie gesawon
> heora lichaman

-'they [Adam and Eve] saw their naked bodies' (783-784)[22]. Since everyone knew that it was physical nudity (the pictures of Adam and Eve are found in Codex Juinus), the word-choice must have been for metrical reasons.

Līchama is unlikely to differ in any special way from *līc* in what concerns human and Satan's nature, since the A-poet, who has a much better knowledge of the Bible, uses *līc* when coming to the story of Noah's intoxication.

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[20] A vast number of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts still surviving through the late Middle Ages were lost under Henry VIII or Oliver Cromwell. See Michael LAPIDGE. *The Anglo-Saxon Library.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. Pp. 70-71.
[21] Clark HALL 2006. P. 217.
[22] *ASPR1* 1969. P. 27.

swæf symbelwerig, and him selfa sceaf
reaf of lice.

- 'exhausted by the feast, he pulled his clothes off his body' (1564-1565)[23].

So, despite the fact that at least three Anglo-Saxon individuals formed the text (the A-poet, the B-poet and the scribe who compiled both), it is highly consistent in using *līc* or its derivations. None of these people saw any particular physical difference between men and angels. This is emphasized by the composition: the fall of Adam mirrors the fall of Satan in Genesis B, both stories are almost equally apocryphal[24]. What is even more interesting is body attitudes in Genesis B.

3. Body, Shame and Sexuality

Though this is not supported by the Bible directly, in Mediaeval Christianity the original sin was normally associated, if not identified, with sexuality. Even John Milton who tried to eliminate Mediaeval inventions and made Eve Adam's actual wife, could not abandon this interpretation: his Adam and Eve make love right after having tasted the fruit, yet this time their sex is no more innocent (within *Paradise Lost*, Milton fails to explain the difference between 'good' and 'bad' sexuality). The Mediaeval tradition was much more consistent about it, deriving *all* sexuality from the original sin.

Taking this into consideration, one must notice that in this way the 'fall' story in Genesis B is very non-Mediaeval. It lacks sexual connotations. Even the subject of modesty, central in the Bible, is quite marginal in Genesis B. It is rather their vulnerability than shame that Adam and Eve discover:

'they saw their naked bodies,/ for hitherto they had in this land/ no home built, neither grief,/ nor troubles they knew/, but well they could/ live in this land/, if God's commandment/ they had followed' (783-788)[25].

A long monologue by the repentant Adam also concerns the mere climate severities (naturally absent in the Old Testament). Here are just a few lines:

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[23] Ibid. P. 48.
[24] The fall of Satan is not found in the Bible at all, save for a vague hint in Isaias (14: 14).
[25] *ASPR1* 1969. P. 27. All prose translations given here are my own.

> 'How shall we two live or stay in this land/, if wind comes, west or east/, south or north? Troubles begin/, tempest and hail come from the burdened sky/, frost bites, it is icy cold./ Or heat glows from the sky/, the hot sun burns us, and we two are standing naked' (805-811)[26].

This seems illogical, since Adam and Eve are supposed to be still in Eden at that moment and cannot either know of the world outside or foresee their exile. The Bible makes it quite clear that they did not know the consequences. The only explanation might be that the B-poet regarded Eden as a blissful state (rather than part of physical space) of which people were deprived by tasting the fruit.

The Codex Junius scribe apparently failed to notice this inconsistency with the more traditional Genesis A: he inserted the quite completed story of B, which ends with Adam and Eve's dressing in leaves and pleading for God's mercy, in the middle of the A-version. So the Genesis B finale is rather unexpectedly followed by the well-known story where God detects people's crime from the fact of their sudden modesty and punishes them.

The only thing the B-poet says about modesty is: 'but we two cannot linger naked together' (838-839)[27], even though the company is heterosexual. The A-poet who is more of a conventional Christian is much more interested in modesty. At least two episodes pay special attention to the question – the Adam-to-God conversation and Noah's drinking scene[28].

The former keeps quite close to the Bible, yet slightly differs from its source in some nuances. In the Vulgate, God just asks Adam who told him that nudity was an embarrassing state, because it is only through the forbidden fruit that he could get this knowledge. In Genesis A, it is Adam's state of mind that God sees first, and the new feeling of shame is motivated by guilt for which physical nudity is only a metaphor:

> 'Tell me, my son, why do you seek/ For shelter, ashamed? You did not avoid me/ Before, but was fully happy. /Why are you now so sad, covering your shame/, Grieving and clothing/ Your body with leaves, saying, full of

[26] Ibid. P. 27.
[27] Ibid. P. 28.
[28] Genesis A and Genesis B use different vocabulary to signify nudity: *nacod* in A and *bar* in B. Both words indeed existed in Old High German as well, so it is quite difficult to explain the word choice or to decide whether it came from the original or from the translator.

> care,/ that you need clothes/, - unless you have tasted the apple/ Of the tree, that I forbade you?" (873-881)[29].

Such interpretation of the original sin might seem astonishingly modern until we realize that an Anglo-Saxon could not have read, say, William Blake. The sources he could presumably have known (if only he *had* known them), such as Augustine or Gregory the Great[30], cannot explain the poem's loss of sexual subtext and the fact that it stresses rather Adam's moral frustration than nudity as a 'dirty' state. This might reflect the poet's particular view of the problem, quite unlike the conventional Augustinian ideology of the early Middle Ages.

This view becomes even more particular in the 'drunken Noah' scene where all the actions and motives of the characters get jumbled. When the narrator comes to the subject of Noah's nakedness, he digresses from the story, returning to Adam and Eve's fall. He says that Noah was unable 'to reach out for his clothes/ And cover his shame, as it was bidden/ To men and women, since the time when the glorious warrior [i. e. the angel]/ From our father and mother, by his fiery sword/ Blocked the land of life' (1572-1576)[31].

An ancient Jew hardly needed such an explanation, nudity being tabooed both in public and private life (Lev 18: 6-18), even a random exposure prohibited (Ex 28:42-43)[32]. But an Anglo-Saxon would have some difficulties in understanding why Noah could not sleep naked in his home. Neither Romans, nor Germani wore night clothes. Our nightgowns and pajamas are part of Mediaeval ascetic tradition introduced by the Church. It was only by the early modern era that preachers had succeeded in preventing lay people from sleeping naked, not in the Dark Ages. Charlemagne, a devoted Christian indeed, would sleep or even have his

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[29] *ASPR1* 1969. P. 29.

[30] On Patristic literature in pre-Norman England, see LAPIDGE 2006. Pp. 275-342. There is a complete catalogue of Latin texts composed or translated before 700 A. D. to which Anglo-Saxon sources, in whatever language, had ever referred. However, it only tells us that *some* clerics *did* know this or that piece of theological work. It still remains unclear how many people knew these texts, how influential this reading was and whether the authors of the biblical poems belonged to a better-read part of the society.

[31] *ASPR1* 1969. Pp. 48-49.

[32] The King James Bible renders the Vulgate *turpitudinem* ('low, indecent parts of the body') as 'nakedness', just as the Russian Synodal Bible, issued in the 19th century and somewhat relying on English translating experience, does.

daytime rest naked, of which Einhard wrote casually.[33] So a Germanic recipient would not easily recognize nudity as 'improper in *any* context'.

The story gets even more confused when introducing Ham:

> 'with no respect/ at his aged father did he/ look, nor did he at least/ cover his lord, but laughing/ he told his brothers' (1579-1583)[34].

But if you were an ancient Jew, you could not look at the naked Noah with respect – you could not look at him at all! What Ham did was breaking the taboo on seeing his father naked. This is an early 'laughing-at' version of the story – the version still popular in Christian Europe, yet absent in the Bible. What the Bible says exactly is *nuntiavit duobus fratribus suis* ('informed his two brothers', Gen 9: 22). It must have been Graeco-Roman readers who first felt that Ham's punishment for just *seeing* his father naked was inadequate, and added the 'laughing' motif[35]. Yet the use of this motif in Genesis A is consistent with the general way of treating the body in the poem: for an Anglo-Saxon, the idea of the body being tabooed by its nature was not easy to take up.

The strangest of all is the story of what Shem and Japheth did. The Bible clearly puts it that they go into the tent *backwards* and do not see Noah while covering him. But in Genesis A, their main act is rather reporting on Ham's guilt than dressing Noah (the latter absent in the poem). What is left in the poem of the brothers' propriety sounds like this:

'and they hurried up,/ covering their faces/ with the edges of their cloaks, so that their dear person/ they could console, good were both of them/, Shem and Japheth' (1584-1588)[36].

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[33] *Vita Caroli Magni*, 24 <http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/ein.html>.

[34] ASPR1. P. 49.

[35] The Wikipedia authors put it just that way: 'The curse seems unusually severe for merely observing Noah unclothed' <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Curse_of_Ham>, and speculate that exposing one's father's nudity might be an euphemism for incest. (However, the references from the Old Testament cited by them clearly tell that incest would stand for exposing one's father's nudity and not vice versa). We should restrain from judging another culture by our present standards.
The quotations given in the Wikipedia show that the explanation of this story had become difficult even for the later Jewish commentators. In fact, the taboo on seeing your parents' genitals plainly parallels the taboo on seeing God who, in the more archaic Jewish tradition, was rather 'not to be seen' than 'invisible' (Lev 16: 1-2; Ex 19: 12-14, 21-24; Deu 5: 24-26). Renaissance artists would also misunderstand Noah's story (see Figs. 1-2.).

[36] *ASPR1* 1969. P. 49.

The men's covering their own faces instead of Noah's body must be misreading of the Latin *pallium inposuerunt umeris suis* (Gen 9:23)[37]. What follows it is entirely messed up. What kind of consolation was it, and how exactly did Shem and Japheth perform it? Did Noah dress himself then?

It seems that the poet did not grasp how exactly Shem and Japheth were 'respectful' and Ham was not. The Vulgate does not miss the taboo on nudity and its link to sexuality: where the King James Bible reads 'nakedness', the Vulgate puts *verecundum* ('disgrace') and *virilia* ('male genitals'). Yet the Anglo-Saxon poet leaves this subject out.

This does not mean that Anglo-Saxons made no distinction as to whether the body was naked or dressed - just that a Dark Age Anglo-Saxon, even seemingly a Christian one, would not automatically equate 'body' with 'sex' and 'shame' like most Christians do even now (all modern eroticism being based on this equation[38]).

We are so ready to identify 'body', 'sex' and 'shame' that historians often fail to recognize this equation as a mere cultural construct[39]. Yet historically, the body has much more meanings beside sexuality. When the narrator in *La Chanson de Roland* blames Ganelon for kissing a Moor on the lips, does this mean an accusation of sodomy? Not at all; if we look into the cultural context we shall see that a kiss meant contract and was codified by law and tradition[40]. Therefore, the body is also social; what is nowadays regarded as purely private, could once function in public ways. Supposing that an Anglo-Saxon body was mostly social, we can get a better insight into the transformations of biblical stories.

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[37] The apparently poor Latin of the A-poet makes it still more doubtful that he could know contemporary theology.

[38] As represented in *Gilda*, a film noir by Charles Vidor (USA, 1946), where taking off just a pair of gloves by the heroine unmistakably signals her promiscuity.

[39] For instance, those commenting upon the Bayeux Tapestry nudes do not see them as anything other than 'sexual' or 'obscene'. (See: *The Bayeux Tapestry: The Complete Tapestry in Colour* /Intr., description and comment. by David M. Wilson. London: Thames &Hudson, 2004. Pp. 178-179, 188-189; Carola HICKS. *The Bayeux Tapestry*. London: Vintage Books, 2007. Pp. 37-39, 60). The latter considers whether eleventh-century queens or nuns could broach sexual topics, yet she does not consider the question whether the Bayeux images *are* sexual at all.

[40] Yanick CARRÉ. *Le baiser sur la bouche au Moyen Age. Rites, symboles, mentalités, à travers les textes et les images, XI-XV siècles*. Paris: Le Léopard d'Or, 1992.

Fig. 1. The Noah scene by Bellini, early 16th century.

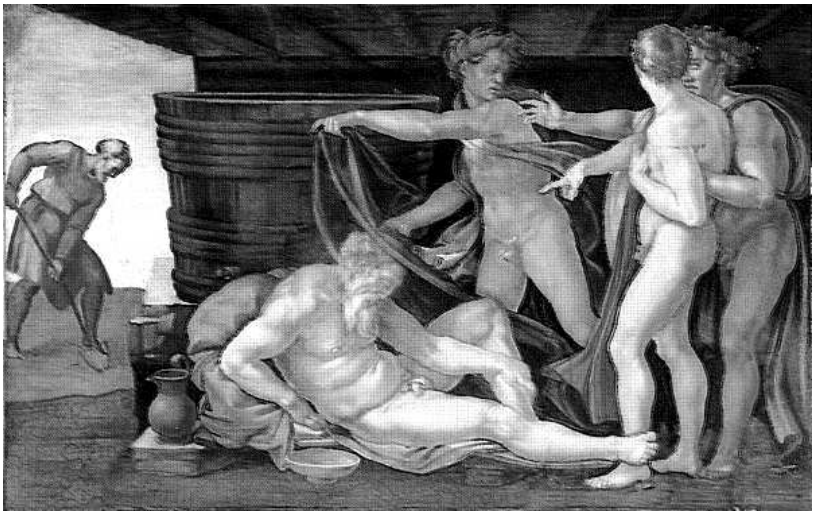

Fig. 2. The Noah scene by Michelangelo, early 16th century.

4. Body and Society

Alan Bray has collected a good deal of evidence concerning the social semantics of body in late Mediaeval and early modern Europe[41]. He shows that various physical contacts – such as kissing, hugging, sharing cups and beds – which in our time are either totally unacceptable or a matter of private life, were between the 14th and the 17th centuries necessary tokens of friendship which was not so much a private matter as a social institution. Is the same true with the pre-Christian Germani?

Friendship was indeed a formal social institution in Viking Age Scandinavia. Jesse L. Byock points out that the modern 'friendship' is not a correct word for the Norse *vinfengi*, since *vinfengi* was not a matter of private life but rather a political union[42]. What part did the body play in social relations? Longhouse daily life could hardly cherish privacy – even a king would not enjoy complete solitude[43]. Icelandic sagas, which record a not-so-ancient-Germanic past, are still full of situations quite embarrassing for a modern reader. In *Heimskringla*, a certain Thorarin shares a bedroom with the king and his retinue, evoking a funny discussion of his ugly feet and showing perfect self-irony[44]. In *The Story of Hreiðar the Fool* the king himself, surprised yet not in the least shocked, has to stand up before Hreiðar and take off his cloak, so that the fool could have a better look at him – which ends in mutual liking[45].

It seems that contemporaries did not see this as embarrassing. Even a king's body did not fully belong to himself - Hreiðar did nothing bolder than a mere shift of subordination, and this is just the thing a fool in folklore is expected to do. Our idea of body as a private matter carefully detached from public ones, is alien to saga-tellers.

From *Beowulf* we know that the Anglo-Saxon warriors did certainly enjoy the same way of life, such as feasting and sleeping together in the

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[41] Alan BRAY. *The Friend*. The University of Chicago Press, 2006. (mostly *The Body of the Friend*, pp. 140-176).

[42] Jesse L. BYOCK. *Viking Age Iceland*. London – New York: Penguin Books, 2001. Pp. 192-195.

[43] In fact, the notion of privacy did not exist then, and solitude or seclusion were not valued. On this, see my work 'Public and Non-Public Space in Anglo-Saxon and Norse Culture', in *Cultural Perspectives: Journal for Literary and British Cultural Studies in Romania.* University of Bacau, 2008. No. 13. Pp. 8-20.

[44] *Saga of Olaf the Saint*, in Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla: History of the Kings of Norway*, transl. by Lee M. Hollander, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964. Pp. 327-329.

[45] *Hrafnkel's Saga and Other Icelandic Stories.* Transl. with an introduction by Hermann Pállson. London – New York: Penguin Books, 1971. Pp. 98-99.