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Introduction

In 1686, John Moyle published *An Abstract of Sea Chirurgery*, a book for aspiring ships'-surgeons who had yet to actually work at sea. Moyle gave instructions for many kinds of minor surgeries and physic. Particularly striking, however, was his advice for a surgeon preparing for engagement day:

> Imagine that you are at Sea now in a Man of War, and in sight of the Enemy; and all men are clearing their respective quarters, and fitting themselves for fight; at what time you, as you are Chyrurgeon of the Ship, must prepare as followeth.
>
> First you must see that your platform be laid as even as may be, with a Sail spread upon it, which you must speak to the Commander to order . . .
>
> On this platform you must place two Chests, to set your wounded men on to dress them, one for your self to perform the greater operation on, and the other for your mate to dress slighter wounds on. You are likewise to have by you two Tubs with 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.[1]

The scene brings home the dangers which attended military service in this period. Moyle fully expected that at each engagement with the enemy, he would be required to amputate so many arms and legs that he would need a designated barrel in which to stow the disembodied parts. Nor was Moyle some reckless sawbones; it was hard, he admitted, to ignore the 'sad schreeking' of the men under the knife, but it had to be done.[2] The text gives detailed instructions for conducting amputations, and for tending to the patient immediately afterward. However, it leaves many questions unanswered. What happened to Moyle's patients when they got back to shore and re-joined civilian society? How did they view their radically

[1] John Moyle, *Abstractum Chirurgiae Marinae, or, An Abstract of Sea Chirurgery* (London: Printed by J. Richardson for Tho. Passinger, 1686), pp. 21–2.
[2] Ibid., p. 25.

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changed bodies? What did they make of the fact that a part of themselves had been tossed overboard by Moyle and his mate?

This book is about questions such as these, and about people whose bodies were permanently changed by medical intervention. Patients of all kinds frequently disappear from recorded history after undergoing surgery. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century medical texts like Moyle's generally focussed intently on the act of operation and its immediate aftermath, but infrequently followed up their cases. Yet surgery created an extraordinary range of bodily anomaly. Castration, amputation, mastectomy, facial surgery: all had life-changing psychic and social effects about which we know remarkably little. In recent years, the history of people with disabilities in the early modern period has begun to be studied. These works have told us something of the experiences of people with congenital and acquired disabilities and diseases, particularly from an economic point of view.[3] This book takes a different approach, focussing on how anomalous bodies shaped and were shaped by more metaphysical concerns: beliefs about the nature of embodiment, about soul and body, and about personal identity.

In his *Sea Chirurgery*, Moyle's concern was with the short-term survival of his patients. His disposal of the amputated limbs, however, recalls a situation envisioned by John Donne half a century earlier, as he worried about how the risen body would be (re)constituted:

> 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?[4]

Donne's vision was one in which the body was endlessly susceptible to partition. While this malleability was frightening – one might literally fall apart over the course of a lifetime – it was also thrilling, hinting at new corporeal possibilities in which the body could be remade. Thus, narratives about bodily dismemberment emphasised construction as well as

[3] See, for instance, David J. Appleby, 'Unnecessary Persons? Maimed Soldiers and War Widows in Essex, 1642–1662', *Essex Archaeology and History* 32 (2001): 209–21; Rebecca A. Kahl, 'Dog-Faced Deflores: Disability in Early Modern Literature' (MA thesis) (Northern Michigan University, 2013); Eric Gruber von Arni, *Justice to the Maimed Soldier: Nursing, Medical Care and Welfare for Sick and Wounded Soldiers and Their Families during the English Civil Wars and Interregnum* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001); Mark Stoyle, '"Memories of the Maimed": The Testimony of Charles I's Former Soldiers, 1660–1730', *History* 88:290 (2003): 204–26.

[4] 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.

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destruction. Only a few years after Moyle wrote of discarding amputated limbs, Rabelais' *The Life of Gargantua and Pantagruel* was published in English, and described the reattaching of a severed head:

> Vein to vein, sinew to sinew, vertebra to vertebra ... And suddenly Episthemon began to breathe, then to open his eyes, then to yawn, and then to sneeze; and then he let off a loud, homely fart, at which Panurge said, 'Now he is certainly healed.'[5]

Satirist, ship's-surgeon, preacher-poet – the issues of 'cohereance' raised in discussion of altered bodies affected all those concerned with personal identity, and this book will work across genres to reconstruct attitudes to bodily alteration. Texts which are not traditionally 'literary' have a central place here, as I argue that documents from newspapers to receipt books contributed to a cultural milieu in which bodily difference was both a tool for thought and a social issue. However, paying close attention to the role of the altered body in early modern society also reveals just how many such bodies populate the canonical literature of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. I will show that understanding the material circumstances of bodily difference in this period can shed new light on familiar texts by Hester Pulter, Joseph Addison, William Shakespeare, John Donne, and René Descartes, among others. This in itself is not entirely new; the 'bodily turn' among early modern literary scholars has been underway for some time.[6] However, this book will take a particularly integrative approach, drawing from medical history, disability studies, and phenomenology in order to focus intently on issues of embodiment. Thus, for example, in my reading of *Titus Andronicus* I focus on the fine detail of Lavinia's disability (her use of the writing staff) in conjunction with phenomenological theories of prosthesis which interrogate the identity-forming powers of such 'auxiliary organs'. Similarly, Donne's interest in contemporary science is well known. By paying particular attention to his writings on the matter of bodily identity after death, however, one can detect a conflict between Donne's academic orthodoxy on the matter of bodily resurrection and his personal horror of bodily partition and decay.

[5] François Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, trans. M. A. Screech, new edition (London: Penguin, 2006), p. 146.

[6] On Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, for example, see Nicola M. Imbracsio, 'Stage Hands: Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* and the Agency of the Disabled Body in Text and Performance', *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies* 6:3 (2012): 291–306; Farah Karim-Cooper, *The Hand on the Shakespearean Stage: Gesture, Touch and the Spectacle of Dismemberment* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

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To consider metaphysical and pragmatic concerns as thus closely intertwined is particularly apt to a period in which the arts and sciences had not yet been separated. Curious minds such as Donne's read omnivorously in medicine, philosophy, religion, and politics, adopting good ideas and idioms wherever they found them. Moreover, if early modern thinkers were wide-ranging in their intellectual vocabulary, I argue that they were similarly fluid in their thinking about embodiment. As I discuss below, it has often been suggested that over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a monist view of embodiment, in which flesh and mind were virtually indistinguishable, gave way to a dualist model influenced by Descartes. While that trajectory holds true in places, this book will show that if one listens to the stories told by early modern people, it is equally evident that there was no clean division between old and new modes of thought. Castrato bodies were treated as commodities, but castrati were also viewed as characterologically different on account of their physical difference. Flesh could be grafted from one individual to another, but apparently retained a sympathy for its original owner even over vast distances. The faithful declared their belief that God would make their bodies anew, yet feared being buried without all their body parts. By examining the altered body in a variety of contexts, I will contend that attitudes to bodily anomaly pushed the boundaries of thinking about embodiment and identity. Through their varied responses to bodily difference, we see that early modern people were epistemologically multilingual, strategically employing a view of embodiment which was more monist, more dualist, or somewhere in between, depending on the circumstances in which they found themselves. Moreover, their stories often show how messily these different models fit together. The body may seem at once to be mechanistic object, and acting, feeling subject – the mind's prison and its mode of expression. Scholastic, economic, and social background all made a difference, but the end result was improvisational, flexible, and heteroglossic.

To consider these questions as provoked in particular by the *altered* body is to engage with the question of bodily normalcy and disability in general. My focus in this book on bodies which were altered by surgery is motivated by several factors. This category is, pragmatically speaking, a more manageable subset than that of 'people with disabilities', which might include the temporarily impaired, the chronically unwell, and the elderly among others. People with acquired impairments were less subject to providentialist narratives in which disability was understood as a divine portent or punishment, and discourses around such people were therefore

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more open to other kinds of metaphysical questions. Perhaps most importantly, looking at people with surgically altered bodies opens a space for considering early modern categories of bodily difference and disability. In this book are amputees and other people we would readily identify as 'disabled', and who were recognised in the early modern period as unfit for work and eligible for welfare assistance. However, the category of 'altered bodies' also includes people whose bodies could not straightforwardly be categorised as impaired. Castrati, for example, were certainly physically anomalous, but their bodies were created as a means to an end, and in some cases served to bring them fame and fortune. The matter is complicated further when one considers that the very term 'disabled' is culturally inflected. Disability scholarship of the past decade has increasingly questioned the terms in which we can address past experiences of bodily difference. Lennard J. Davis, for instance, has long contended that we should 'assume that disability was not an operative category before the eighteenth century'.[7] 'Disability', he argues, emerged as a concept in relation to industrialisation, and before that point, 'deformity' was a more commonly used term. Moreover, he contends, congenital 'deformities' were differentiated from bodily differences acquired later in life.[8] Irina Metzler likewise grapples with the difficulties of using modern terminology to describe medieval conceptions of difference, arguing that '"Disability" is a term that only makes cultural sense in the present.'[9] Her analysis, like those of Elizabeth Bearden and Chris Mounsey, searches for a phrase which will encapsulate the high degree of individual variation between people who were all, in the modern sense, 'disabled'.[10] For Metzler the idea which best fits is that of 'liminality', a sense of being not only on the edge of a category but in between the categories of sick and well, static and

[7] Lennard J. Davis, 'Dr Johnson, Amelia, and the Discourse of Disability in the Eighteenth Century', in *Defects: Engendering the Modern Body*, ed. Helen Deutsch and Felicity Nussbaum (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), p. 57.

[8] Ibid., pp. 58–9.

[9] Irina Metzler, *A Social History of Disability in the Middle Ages: Cultural Considerations of Physical Impairment* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 4.

[10] See Elizabeth B. Bearden, 'Before Normal, There Was Natural: John Bulwer, Disability, and Natural Signing in Early Modern England and Beyond', *PMLA* 132:1 (2017): 33–50, https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2017.132.1.33; Elizabeth Bearden, *Monstrous Kinds: Body, Space, and Narrative in Renaissance Representations of Disability* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2019); Chris Mounsey, 'Variability: Beyond Sameness and Difference', in *The Idea of Disability in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Chris Mounsey (Cranbury: Bucknell University Press, 2014), pp. 1–28. See also David M. Turner, *Disability in Eighteenth-Century England: Imagining Physical Impairment* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), especially pp. 16–34.

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dynamic.[11] For Mounsey and Bearden, the concept of 'variability' most appropriately describes the wide experiential differences which exist between sensory impairments, intellectual disability, physical disability, and so on.[12] Variability, argues Mounsey, is 'a concept that enshrines uniqueness, has the patience to discover the peculiarities of each individual and by doing so captures particular people rather than an "institutionalized representation of disabled people"'.[13]

While such formulations encourage nuance, they are not always up to the task of describing what was common, as well as different, between people with various kinds of bodily difference. Disability studies has traditionally been an activist discipline, which has advocated for people with disabilities based on treating them as a group with similar social and economic concerns. Thus, at the same time as emphasising variability, Mounsey contends that 'each person's disability (under whichever banner it may subtend) is unlike any other person's, while the experience of being disabled is the same for each disabled person'.[14] The term 'disability' may be a blunt instrument but it is often a politically expedient one. With this in mind, both Bearden and Metzler thus adopt a disability studies model in which 'impairment' describes the biological fact of physical difference, while 'disability' denotes the restrictions that impairment involves, which are determined by environmental and socio-cultural factors (the provision or otherwise of assistive items, or equality legislation, for example). This approach too has its problems, and in their *Cultural Locations of Disability*, Sharon Snyder and David Mitchell collapse the impairment/disability distinction in order to 'recognize disability as a site of phenomenological value that is not purely synonymous with the processes of social disablement'.[15] As they argue, 'Environment and bodily variation . . . inevitably impinge upon each other.'[16] In the scenarios described in this book, social and environmental factors are so deeply imbricated in constructions of embodiment as to make sharp distinctions unhelpful. I therefore use 'impairment' and 'disability' here more or less interchangeably, alongside the more precise term 'bodily alteration'.

[11] Metzler, *A Social History of Disability in the Middle Ages*, p. 5.
[12] See also Allison Hobgood and David Houston Wood, 'Early Modern Literature and Disability Studies', in *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and Disability*, ed. Clare Barker and Stuart Murray (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 32–46.
[13] Mounsey, 'Variability: Beyond Sameness and Difference', p. 17. [14] Ibid., pp. 1–2.
[15] Sharon L. Snyder and David T. Mitchell, *Cultural Locations of Disability* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), pp. 6–7.
[16] Ibid.

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Though they remain unresolved, these debates demonstrate that there are multiple ways in which the distinction between normatively bodied and other-bodied might be configured, and multiple axes along which normalcy and non-normalcy might be plotted. One aspect of disability history which remains underdeveloped is the intersection of disability, deformity, or other degrees of 'impairment' with race and gender.[17] The difficulty for early modern scholars attempting to develop this intersectionality is immediately apparent in the fact that most chapters of this book feature far more writing by and about men than by and about women – and no writing by people of colour. This is instructive in itself; in my sources, the white male body is, as ever, the paradigm for considering subjectivity. Nonetheless, considerations of gender and race also inform the stories in this book in subtler ways. Chapter 2, for instance, considers how the 'exotic' one-breasted body of the Amazon woman teetered between abjection and erotic spectacle. In Chapter 5, the appearance of the raced body in discourses about bodily resurrection is connected to uncertainty about the spiritual status of non-whites and non-Christians.[18] Altered bodies could be radically different in their affects depending on what kind of body was being altered, as well as on what kind of alteration took place.

As this lability indicates, the body in early modern culture is a particularly slippery subject (or object). The definitional status of the body is bound up with material practices that reshape the flesh and cultural mores which determine its uses, such that the body may be seen both as individuated and as interacting with a socio-cultural ecology. The topic is further complicated by the dominance in much early modern thought of the humoral model, which has loomed large in literary criticism of the past two decades. According to the neo-Galenic model of bodily function, ebbs and flows in the body's fluids, or humours, might affect not only one's physical state but one's mental processes, a symbiotic relationship so close

[17] Notable exceptions to this rule include Felicity Nussbaum, *The Limits of the Human: Fictions of Anomaly, Race and Gender in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Helen Deutsch and Felicity Nussbaum, 'Introduction', in *Defects: Engendering the Modern Body*, ed. Deutsch and Nussbaum, pp. 1–30; Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000).

[18] As Stephen Burwood points out, the ability to 'forget about' one's body is often not afforded to those deemed 'Other', particularly when that Otherness is deemed to include a greater susceptibility to bodily appetites (Stephen Burwood, 'The Apparent Truth of Dualism and the Uncanny Body', *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 7:2 (2008): 263–78, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11097–007-9073-z).

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as to be impossible to pull apart into 'body' and 'mind'. Thus Gail Kern Paster, a leading proponent of the 'bodily turn' in Renaissance literary studies, describes how

> physiological knowledge intersects with early modern behavioral thought to produce somatically based theories of desire and affect. The penetration of flesh by spirit that was accomplished by the vessels had the effect of distributing needs and affects outward to every part, of radically decentralizing what might be called the body's intentionality or even the physiology of its ensoulment.[19]

Paster sees somatic and emotional experience in this period as indivisible; early modern people, she argues, would have found it odd to differentiate between mental and physical health. Because emotions were not experienced in isolation, health itself was also profoundly relational. As such, she contends, in studying early modern literature and history we should be thinking less of the embodied soul and more of the ensouled body. The maelstrom of somatic, relational, emotional, and cognitive experience was apprehended as an 'ecology of the passions', in which each aspect depended on relationships within and without the bodily envelope.[20]

Paster's work has been seminal in understanding aspects of early modern culture and literature; this emphasis on bodily materiality has produced a whole genre of Shakespearean criticism, often intersecting with the study of gender and race.[21] At the same time, however, other scholars have warned against overlooking the importance of the immaterial soul in early modern culture. Jonathan Sawday and Angus Gowland are foremost among those who analyse descriptions of the emotions, and even of the body itself, in terms of intellectual and spiritual curiosity.[22] Gowland, for

[19] Gail Kern Paster, 'Nervous Tension: Networks of Blood and Spirit in the Early Modern Body', in *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe*, ed. David A. Hillman and Carla Mazzio (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 118.

[20] Mary Floyd-Wilson et al., 'Shakespeare and Embodiment: An E-Conversation', *Literature Compass* 2:1 (2005), https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-4113.2005.00180.x.

[21] See, for example, Dympna Callaghan, *Shakespeare without Women: Representing Gender and Race on the Renaissance Stage*, Accents on Shakespeare (London: Routledge, 2000), on the production of gender difference in early modern theatre; Karim-Cooper, *The Hand on the Shakespearean Stage*; Carol Thomas Neely, *Distracted Subjects: Madness and Gender in Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2004); Katharine A. Craik and Tanya Pollard, eds., *Shakespearean Sensations: Experiencing Literature in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), on the affective and humoral impacts of reading and viewing plays; Michael C. Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert, and Milton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[22] Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013); Angus Gowland, 'Melancholy, Passions and Identity in the

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example, insists that 'What was fundamental in conceptions of passions and the human subject was not materialistically conceived "embodied emotion", but the relationship between the functions of the body and those of the soul.'[23] For these critics, the embodied soul retains supremacy over the ensouled body.[24] The 'subject', they argue, is the thinking soul; the body is objectified by comparison. Comparing early modern 'passions' with modern 'affect', Benedict Robinson offers a third option, in which the passions are 'kind[s] of cognition', 'qualities of a substance' rather than substances in and of themselves.[25] Moreover, all these scholars position the difference between ensouled bodies and embodied souls as, to some extent, one of chronology. What is being described here is a shift, over time, from a monist to a dualist conception of the body. The reasons for this shift have been explored in great detail in works including Roy Porter's influential *Flesh in the Age of Reason*, which identifies a number of contributing factors to the conceptual division of soul from body.[26] Descartes' *Meditations* is, of course, prominent among these factors. However, the popularity of Cartesian dualism depended on a raft of social, cultural, and economic changes, many of which are touched upon in this book. The following chapters will show how the new science of the seventeenth century arguably encouraged natural philosophers to think of the body as a composition of parts which might be removed and replaced, and how a mechanistic view of the flesh was likewise fostered by the rise of automata. The execution of Charles I, and later, the Glorious Revolution, brought into question the idea of the noble body, while the later seventeenth century witnessed a 'crisis in paternity' which lent new urgency to issues of inheritance.[27] Economic factors loom particularly large here; I will argue that with the rise of consumer culture, the body might be viewed as a commodity to be bought and sold, manipulated, and enhanced. Such changes were communicated and facilitated by the rise of print culture, particularly advertisements and newspapers. Most crucially, all these

Renaissance', in *Passions and Subjectivity in Early Modern Culture*, ed. Freya Sierhuis and Brian Cummings (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 75–94.

[23] Gowland, 'Melancholy, Passions and Identity in the Renaissance', p. 87.

[24] See also Scott Manning Stevens, 'Sacred Heart and Secular Brain', in *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe*, ed. David A. Hillman and Carla Mazzio (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 263–84.

[25] Benedict S. Robinson, 'Thinking Feeling', in *Affect Theory and Early Modern Texts: Politics, Ecologies, and Form*, ed. Amanda Bailey and Mario DiGangi (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 111, 113.

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

[27] Mary Elizabeth Fissell, *Vernacular Bodies: The Politics of Reproduction in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 197–242.

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changes took place against a backdrop of innumerable armed conflicts which created a steady supply of amputee or otherwise anomalous bodies.

This is not to imply that conceptions of embodiment followed a neat track from Renaissance to Enlightenment. It is very often the case that procedures or phenomena which are commonly taken to have contributed to the segregation of body from mind may, under the right circumstances, be read in the opposite direction. When the body was carved up, augmented, or examined, discussions emerged which might as easily insist on the 'person-ness' of the body as on its 'thing-ness'. The contested boundaries between things and people have been recognised in recent scholarship in a number of works on subject–object relationships in the early modern period. In particular, scholars have noted the ability of objects to shape subjectivity, acting as interfaces between the flesh and the wider world which transform the potentialities and boundaries of the body. In Margreta de Grazia, Maureen Quilligan, and Peter Stallybrass's *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture*, they explain:

> The very ambiguity of the word 'ob-ject,' that which is thrown before, suggests a more dynamic status for the object. Reading 'ob' as 'before' allows us to assign the object a prior status, suggesting its temporal, spatial and even causal coming before. The word could thus be made to designate the potential priority of the object. So defined, the term renders more apparent the way material things – land, clothes, tools – might constitute subjects who in turn own, use, and transform them. The form/matter relation of Aristotelian metaphysics is thereby provisionally reversed: it is the material object that impresses its texture and contour upon the noumenal subject. And the reversal is curiously upheld by the ambiguity of the word 'sub-ject,' that which is thrown under, in this case – in order to receive an imprint.[28]

As this book will explore, when the categories of object and subject are interrogated, the body itself may appear as either or both object and/or subject, a shaping influence on the mind or a constitutive part of it.

This flexibility can be difficult to envision from within the confines of a post-modern society which has embraced a mechanistic view of both flesh and, increasingly, experience. One of the ways in which this book seeks to access the different dimensions of early modern selfhood is through the application of phenomenological theory. Branches of phenomenology are almost as numerous as phenomenological critics, but here I borrow from

[28] Margreta de Grazia, Maureen Quilligan, and Peter Stallybrass, 'Introduction', in *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture,* ed. de Grazia, Quilligan, and Stallybrass (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 5.

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