

7: The resuscitation of the twice-hanged man: miracles and the body in medieval Swansea

Harriett Webster

Introduction

The medieval body is ‘simultaneously foregrounded and made invisible; the gaze slides off it rapidly on to whatever signification it carries’

(Harris and Robb 2013, 132).

In this chapter I argue that bodies mattered a great deal in the world of medieval miracles. Indeed, it was the very matter, or materiality (cf. Boivin 2008, 26), of the body itself in which the vast majority of medieval miracles actually took place (Vauchez 2005, 466) and where the measurements for miraculous behaviour were established. Elsewhere in this volume, the connection between the body of a saint and miracles is explored by Janet Burton, but this chapter is primarily concerned with ordinary human bodies as the site of miracle cures and how the fleshy nature of form presented a material stage for the supernatural to be both visible and enacted. It will also examine the phenomenon of objects acting as proxies for the human body in the curative process. In both cases it was believed that the matter of the body or proxy could not have agency (or become vital, cf. Bennett 2010) until it was endowed with ‘form’; achieved either through the presence of the soul or by fashioning matter (e.g. wax) into a physical shape, a concept which will be discussed in greater depth below. In doing so, this chapter demonstrates how the world of materials, particularly the human body, was used to validate the immaterial, focusing specifically on notions of the separation of human flesh

from the soul, which underpins deeply rooted ideas that separate people as matter from the material world.

Saintly matters

Saintly bodies bridge the gap between normal people and Christ, and could therefore act as intermediaries with a kind of delegated power to work miracles. The power of God worked through the saint because the saint's soul (and by implication, body) was pure.

(Robb and Harris, 2013, 134)

From the thirteenth century onwards in western Christendom, direct contact with a saint's 'matter', be it relic, shrine or tomb, became less important in the working of miracles: it was no longer necessary for suppliants to physically engage with the corpse to request a cure. For example, at the tomb of St Menulphus in the parish church of Saint-Menoux, France individuals were expected to insert their heads into specially made holes in the side of tombs to request a cerebral cure (Crook 2011, 220–6, 239). Throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, miracles increasingly occurred at a distance from shrines; rather than a speculative act intended to attract the attention of a saint in the hope of a miraculous intervention, the recipient visited the tomb *after* a miracle in order to give thanks (Vauchez 2005, 446). The particular miracle at the centre of this chapter's discussion is a resurrection miracle said to have occurred in the body of one William Cragh and attributed to Thomas Cantilupe. Resurrection miracles had been relatively rare up until the thirteenth century, since transporting a corpse to the tomb or shrine of the chosen intercessor would have been

precarious, dangerous, and slow. However, as the shift towards ‘distance’ miracles increased in the later thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the number of recorded cases of resurrections increased, until they comprised around 10 per cent of all miracles in the fourteenth century (Vauchez, 2005, 467).

Scholars have traditionally looked to surviving documentary evidence related to saints and their cults as its ‘thick description’ (Geertz 1973) allows for an examination of medieval medical knowledge and insights into the lesser heard voices and ‘popular’ attitudes of the day (Goodich 2006, 6; Smoller 2011, 774). Although the thirteenth century marked the beginning of an increasingly literate and documentary-based society (Clanchy 2012), this phenomenon did not extend to all echelons of society and the voice of the ordinary person can be obscured. However, miracle collections and hagiographical texts frequently contain the reports of ordinary people and these are often used as an entry into the social and cultural norms of communities and ‘lesser folk’ in particular (Yarrow 2006; Goodich 2007, 4). From the beginning of the thirteenth century the papacy had been increasingly involved in selecting and officially recognizing saints,¹ which gave rise to a further set of documents through which we can glimpse ‘ordinary lives’: the trial transcripts produced by the papal inquisition.

There are two important extant works relating to the medieval saint Thomas Cantilupe (Bishop of Hereford 1275–1282): a miracle collection maintained at the site of his tomb in Hereford Cathedral (Oxford, Exeter College MS 158, folios 18v–19r), and an almost complete dossier produced in stages by the inquisition as part of his canonization

proceedings.² Scholars have already begun using these to investigate socio-cultural concerns such as family relations, parental neglect, and the distance between official canonization and the popularist creation of a saint's cult (Finucane 2006; Goodich 2006; Ridyard and Ashby 2015). What they have not yet explored is the materiality of the bodies in which miracle cures were said to have happened, specifically the properties of the matter of the body (cf. Boivin 2008, 26; Ingold 2013, 27). Focusing on the physical changes evident in a body at death allows us to further explore the tensions and concerns involved in proving such miracles had indeed occurred as well as the differences in elite and popular beliefs on the subject. What is more, miracles are also key to exploring medieval beliefs in the materiality and agency of the objects (cf. Bennett 2010) that acted as proxies for the bodies in which the miracles occurred. This chapter addresses these material aspects of medieval belief.

The miracle of William the 'Scabby'

One such miracle, is that attested materially through the body of William Cragh, or William the 'Scabby', a well-known figure in medieval Swansea: to some a hero of the ongoing Welsh rebellions against Edward I; to others a criminal, guilty of contributing to the deaths of thirteen men during his participation in an attack on the nearby Oystermouth Castle. He was captured by the Anglo-Norman lord of the region, William de Braose, and sentenced to be hanged for his crimes. On the day of the hanging itself, William was led to the gallows and hanged alongside one of his partners in crime Trahaearn ap Hywel: the crossbeam snapped, and both men had to be hanged for a second time to ensure that they were 'truly' dead. After William was cut down from the gibbet, he was taken to the house of a local burgess, Thomas Mathews, where he was laid out, apparently dead. Accounts of what happened next vary

between the surviving witness testimonies, but in essence within a couple of days William had returned to life, claiming that Thomas Cantilupe had been the cause of his miraculous recovery. Almost two decades later, nine witnesses were questioned in London and Hereford by representatives of the papal inquisition about what they remembered about the miracle: Mary de Braose, wife of the lord of Gower; William de Braose Jr, her step son; William of Codineston, their family chaplain; William Cragh, the hanged man himself; Thomas Marshall, a local priest; John of Baggeham, seneschal of Swansea castle; and Henry Skinner, Adam of Loughor, and John ap Hywel, all local men.

Before examining their depositions in detail, a comment must be made concerning the trial records in which the memories of nine witnesses are recorded. A formalized system for investigating the so-called miracles of a putative saint had been created as part of the papacy's control of the creation of new saints, which was carried out by a group of papally-assigned commissioners of the inquisition. Thomas Cantilupe's proceedings are amongst the earliest and most complete records of this type that survive from the Middle Ages: we have both the interrogatory questions and the responses from each of the witnesses to Cragh's miracle. Although it may at first seem that we are hearing the voices of the ordinary folk of Swansea, what the rigorous structuring of the interrogatory does not allow for, is a naturalized account from the witnesses themselves, many of whom would be considered subaltern, owing to the interference of the questioners (Bartlett 2004). Despite this, the interrogatory itself is invaluable as a resource demonstrating an elite perspective of what constitutes a miracle, and what had to have happened to and in the body of William Cragh for his resuscitation to be considered truly miraculous, as it was the learned of society who both compiled and asked the questions. In the Middle Ages it is difficult to define exactly what we

mean by ‘elite’, however, as there are a number of intersecting belief systems with tensions between them. First, there is the scholastic theological understanding emerging from the schools and nascent universities, embodied in the work of individuals such as Aquinas (Bartlett 2008, 8–9) the ‘archetypal thirteenth century theologian’ (Finucane 1977, 51), representing a mixture of contemporary medical and philosophical knowledge (cf. Harris and Robb 2013, 138–40). To this we must also add a traditional clerical understanding based upon biblical and hagiographical precedents (Goodich 2007, 85).

In particular, the interrogatories reflect a number of characteristics of elite culture and belief systems surrounding miracles from the second half of the thirteenth century. The universities, especially Paris with its particular focus on theology, were driving towards improving definitions and explanations of theological matters. The phenomenon of the miracle was high on the agenda, with scholars such as Aquinas beginning to amend traditional Augustinian definitions, the effects of which can be seen in the wording of the questions given above. The concept of miracles being ‘above’ or ‘against’ nature reflects the threefold definition coming out of the universities. In a movement away from the Augustinian concept of the miracle as being the acceleration of nature, Aquinas viewed miracles as a suspension of nature’s normal processes (Goodich 2007, 21): miracles could be *supra* (above), *contra* (against), or *praeter* (apart from) nature. There were commonly known biblical examples of each form of miracle: the transfiguration and resurrection were *supra naturam*; the Virgin conception and the parting of the Red Sea were *contra naturam*; and turning water into wine was *praeter naturam* (Vauchez 2005, 497).³ The use of such a lexicon to categorize the miraculous in trial settings indicates a wider dissemination of these ideas, and the possible future adoption of these concepts by the subaltern, as well as the elite.

The work of Aquinas (who was himself canonized in 1323) did not stop at definitions of miracles, but also included treatises on the body and nature of humanity that are of fundamental importance for understanding medieval notions of what a body actually was as a material being. He reasoned that the body could not be ‘human’ without the presence of the soul because the soul is the ‘form’ which turns the ‘matter’ of the body into a human being (Aquinas, *De principiis naturae*; cf. Harris and Robb 2013, 136–7). This is because human beings were believed to be ‘composed substances’, made from a balancing of matter and form – the physical body and the soul. A body cannot be fully human without the presence of the soul because ‘matter alone is not the substance of the real thing’ (Aquinas, *De ente et essentia*, 14, 15). Form, in this case the soul, is the actuality of matter, and through form, ‘matter becomes something actual and something individual’ (Aquinas, *De ente et essentia*, 18) – that is an individual human being. ‘Since humanity is not some third form in addition to soul and body, but is composed of both, we see clearly that, if the same body is restored and if the same soul remains, the humanity will be numerically the same’ (Aquinas, *Compendium*, ch. 154) – as must have occurred in Cragh’s miracle, for he was the same man once he was restored to life, albeit as a reformed character. ‘The form is an act, and matter is only in potentiality’ (Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Q. 76, Art. 1): in the context of miracles, matter itself has no agency until it is given form.

Testing miracles and the materiality of death

To return to resuscitation miracles and the body of William Cragh, the medieval definition of death was the moment the soul left the body (Daniell 2005, 1); the human ceases to be – it is dead in respect of the ‘natural order’ of things because the form/soul has left the matter of the body. Following this, ‘since all the senses and all the members of man corrupt in death, a dead man cannot be brought back to life except by divine action’: that is, a miracle (Aquinas, *Compendium*, ch. 154). According to Aquinas, living things are referred to as animate – that is endowed with a soul.⁴ What separated animals from humans was the additional quality of divinely bestowed rational thought. Together, these qualities of the human soul provided the two proofs that the matter of a human body was living – movement and knowledge, dualistic notions that in later Cartesian schools of thought separate the rational mind from the matter of the body (Harris, Robb and Tarlow 2013, 171–2). As we come to a knowledge of the world through our senses – a notion reflected in modern theories of phenomenology (Csordas 1994) – Aquinas argued (following Plato), that sensing, ‘just as understanding, belongs to the soul’ (Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Q. 75, Art. 3). Therefore, when the soul departed the matter of the body, the latter was left motionless and senseless, a state from which only God could ‘cure those who are incurable from the standpoint of natural causality.’ (Aquinas, *Compendium*, ch. 136).

By the early fourteenth century, the theory behind miracles and the tests needed to ensure that these were genuine had been established. The commissioners appointed by Rome to investigate miracles were trained theologians and lawyers, coming out of the university system, and therefore had some understanding of the scholastic interpretation of miracles and methods of testing them (Goodich 2007, 26). In Thomas Cantilupe’s case, all three commissioners were university-trained and known personally to the pope: William Durand II

was a distinguished canonist, and had been rector of the University of Toulouse before succeeding his uncle as bishop of Mende in southern France (he later went on to lead the investigation into the Knights Templar);⁵ William de Testa was archdeacon of Aran and papal nuncio to England, tasked with several duties in addition to the canonization inquiry; and Ralph Baldock, Bishop of London was also Chancellor to Edward I (Bartlett 2004, 16–21). Similarly, the notaries knew how to present a miracle in written form and hagiographers of the later Middle Ages even began using dossiers like Cantilupe's to create their *Vitae* or saint's lives (Goodich, 2007, 26).

The questions put to the Swansea witnesses pertaining to the nature of the miracle itself reflect these developments, and are found under the third of four 'articles' in the interrogatory, and are as follows:

Third, if said miracles occurred above [*supra*] or against [*contra*] nature.

Fourth, what words were used by those who sought to have said miracles performed, and how they invoked God and said Lord Thomas [Cantilupe].

Fifth, if in accomplishing said miracles, herbs, stones, and any other natural or medicinal materials were used; and if incantations or trickery [*superstitiones*] or forms of deceit [*fraudes*] were involved in the operation of said miracles.

Sixth, if after said miracles had been accomplished, due to these miracles, faith or devotion had grown among those persons at whose invocation or petition said miracles had occurred; or among others to whom it became known; and they had glorified God.

Seventh, who were the persons in whom the miracle had occurred, their age and social condition; where they were from and who were their parents.

Eighth, whether before the miracle had occurred those witnesses had been acquainted with those persons who had allegedly experienced said miracles; if so then for how long had they seen them healthy.

Ninth, for how long and from what ailment had they suffered before the miracle took place, and for how many days before [the miracle] had they seen them suffering from such an ailment . . .

Thirteenth whether there was public knowledge of said miracle; if so then for how long and from what time in the places in which the said miracle were said to have occurred and in other places.

(trans. Goodich 2007, 87–8)

In the case of William Cragh, the witnesses seemed to understand the implication of many of these questions, even if the full theological distinction was not interrogated. Those witnesses who saw William's body describe a number of features from which they surmised that it was impossible for him to still be alive, and therefore that there was no 'natural' way in which he could have been revived. First, there were the signs of death which appeared while he was being hanged. Mary de Briouze describes how:

signs of death had appeared in [him] (which are customary to appear in hanged men when they were dead, evident because they naturally defecate through both lower parts)

(Webster 2014, folio 8r)

John of Baggeham, who was standing at the foot of the gallows at the time, also recalls how Cragh ‘had released through both lower passages the natural waste that is emitted by hanged men when they die after being hanged’ (Webster 2014, folio 224r), while Henry Skinner says that he saw William whilst hanging from the gallows:

emit through the lower passages of his body the natural wastes, which he had heard was a sign of death in hanged men

(Webster 2014, folio 225v)

Second, when the body had been taken down and laid out in the house of Thomas Marshall, other witnesses described further signs of death in Cragh’s body. William de Briouze emphasizes the stillness and impossibility of Cragh being able to use several of his senses:

remaining still as only a dead man can, and the witness himself and everyone else who saw William himself thought that William Cragh himself was dead . . . he had a totally black face, and with bloodied or blood encrusted parts, and the eyes of William himself had popped out of their place, hanging down outside the eyelids of the said eyes, and the hollows of the eyes themselves were filled with blood. Moreover, the mouth of the said William Cragh and [his] neck and throat and all other parts situated around about, and even [his] nostrils were full of blood . . . [I]t was impossible that the said William Cragh would have been able to breathe in or breathe out air through his said nostrils or through his mouth, or through his throat, or through his neck according to the way of nature, because it was inflamed

and swollen and misshapen on account of the aforesaid hanging. Foremost he said he believed that (according to the way of nature) he was not able to breathe in and breathe out air through the mouth, and through his throat, and also through the neck, or the neck veins, because the tongue of the said William was hanging outside of his mouth further than if it was the length of the middle finger of a man's hand; and the said tongue was black and inflamed with his own blood, and as swollen as if an ordinary man was holding two fists together at the same time; that therefore if he had been alive the said William would not have been able to withdraw his said tongue naturally for it was so swollen and inflamed, nor would he have been able to breathe in or even breathe out air through his mouth.

(Webster 2014, folio 11r)

Thomas Marshall, John of Baggeham, Adam of Loughor and John ap Hywel all described Cragh's appearance in similar terms, with John adding that 'there was as much life in him as in a stone' (Webster 2014, folio 224v). '[A]ll who saw and touched him said and reported that he was dead' (Webster 2014, folio 224v). To avoid there being any further doubt on the matter, the chaplain William Condineston confirmed that 'without a miracle it was not possible at that time to avoid death' (Webster 2014, folio 14r). The categorization of the cold, dead body of William Cragh shows us how the matter of human flesh was considered to be distinct from that of other substances, but as it is transformed by death the warm flesh was seen to become other matter, eliding with the cold, hard and nonresponsive matter of stone.

Body matters and the materiality of the miracle

Although they do not fully articulate it, the insistence that there was no movement or ‘breath of life’ in the body and that those brave enough to touch it claimed it was cold, were reinforcing the belief that a body was dead when its soul had departed, and signs that the soul had indeed vacated the body were typified by a lack of movement and warmth. The commonly used terms were: *corporis et membrorum immobilitas* – immobile body and limbs; *inflexibilitas iuncturarum* – inflexible joints (probably rigour mortis); *frigiditas in omni tempore* coldness in all situations; *carencia usus sensuum* the absence of experiencing feeling. (Finucane 2006, 128). For instance, witnesses claim there was no ‘breath of life’ in the body of a boy who was run over by a cart in Winterborne (Goodich 2007, 89); the mother of a boy who fell into Conway moat even stuck her tongue in her son’s mouth to check for signs, but had to withdraw it quickly because of the cold (Finucane 2006, 139). There were a number of ways in which other testimonies reveal how bodies were tested for their loss of feeling. In Cragh’s case, the uncomfortable way in which he was transported to the house of the burgess is also described as being beyond a human’s physical capacity for pain:

[the] manner in which he was carried to the said chapel on the said wooden wheel was so painful, that any healthy person who was carried from the said gallows to the said chapel as the said William was carried (it was generally said) would be almost dead

(Webster 2015, folio 8r).

In other cases, bodies were pricked with needles, splashed with hot water, or even tested with fire (Goodich 2007, 82), or else had cold water splashed in their faces and were shaken (Goodich 2007, 89).

The question of how and with what words the saint was invoked also demonstrates a concern held by the elites. A true miracle had to be from God, but also to have been requested by someone (Bartlett 2008, 20). In early fourteenth century England, it was also important for the individual to invoke the saint to have some legitimate reason for doing so, such as an existing ‘special devotion’ (Vauchez 2005, 453; Watkins 2007, 121). Again, it would seem that the witnesses understood this as both Mary (Webster 2014, folio 9r) and William Cragh testify to having a pre-existing devotion to the putative saint. William claims to have even visited the tomb on a previous occasion: ‘because before that time he had made a pilgrimage to the tomb of the said St Thomas in Hereford Cathedral’ (Webster 2015, folio 221r). The right words and assurance that no magical or other natural preventatives had been taken sought to distance miracles in the eyes of an increasingly sceptical populous from any claims of magical workings or natural remedies being used (Bartlett 2008, 23). The point of this of course was that the body had to have died naturally and fully in order for the resultant ‘recovery’ to be deemed a true miracle.

The ninth, tenth and eleventh questions concern the medieval understanding of miraculous resuscitation in the human body. William Cragh’s resuscitation is not the only case in the canon of miracles attributed to Thomas Cantilupe. There are a number of other instances

concerning children who are revived after falls, drowning, and even being run over by a cart. There is even a similar case of one Cristina Cragh (it is unknown if the two Craghs were related) who was also hanged as a criminal, in Hereford, for stealing and selling a pig. She too was brought back to life by Thomas Cantilupe, then sent to the colonies – in this case Ireland – in exile. In each of these cases, for there to be sufficient case and evidence to prove the miracle, the death of the subject has to be assured, and the recovery fast, so that it could not be seen as the body simply recovering naturally from a trauma (Goodich 2007, 85).

The questions concerning the growth of devotion and spread of news of and belief in the miracle, relate to a different type of body which was also central to miracles and saint-making in the Middle Ages: the community that constituted the cult of the putative or actual saint. Again, there are many existing studies on the subject of how saints and miracles helped form and shape the development of communities or bodies of people at this time (Yarrow, 2006; Goodich 2007, 12–13) but from the time of Albert the Great, one of the commonly used tests of a miracle was the strengthening of the faith among the body of the faithful (Vauchez 2005, 496; Smoller 2011, 796). A similar thought process lay behind the thirteenth question concerning the public knowledge of the miracle – this was because miracles needed to be public to increase their ‘efficacy’ (Goodich 2007, 9). This emphasis served a further purpose; from a legal point of view in the Middle Ages it was enough to testify to what you had heard as a witness (Finucane 2006, 130), and so *fama publica* a general rumour and public consensus that Cragh was dead would have been enough ‘proof’ that the miracle had indeed been genuine.⁶

The agency of proxy bodies

It is the physicality and how alive flesh behaves and transforms that produces and legitimates the very notion of a miracle. Without an understanding of what is natural somatic behaviour, what is un- or supernatural cannot be conceived of and/or sought for. Thus, it is the manner by which matter behaves when as a body that presents theologians with the framework from which one can imagine the miraculous. It is not just that bodies can think up miracles, and are the site of miracles, but also that bodies are the measure of them too. From Cragh's example, the consideration of what bodies are materially capable of is pivotal to the establishment of medieval Christian thinking regarding miracles. Thus, despite the flesh being considered little more than brute matter when without a soul, the entity was used to validate claims for religiosity and the divine.

The human body was central to the working of miracles in other ways that are illuminated by the case of William Cragh; namely the fabrication of objects associated with the suppliant that act as proxies for, or representations of, the physical matter in need of a cure. The first of these is the English custom of 'measuring' to attract the attention of a saintly intercessor. The idea was that the injured part of the body was 'measured' by stretching a thread across its length and breadth – in Cragh's case his whole body. This thread was then used to make the wick for a wax candle that could be sent to the shrine of the saint being called upon. This was a common practice, as the measuring was intended to transfer the illness or affliction from the body into the string, which could then be consumed by fire once the candle was lit (Merrifield 1987, 90–1; Finucane 1995, 95–6; Goodich 2007, 95),⁷ illustrating an interesting

meshwork of entangled materials through which these miracles were invoked (cf. Bennett 2010; Ingold 2011). Put another way, it represented the transfer of materiality from the body part (flesh) to another material (wax), which was then in turn given ‘form’ (the shape of a candle). None of the Swansea witnesses go as far as expressing this purpose behind the measuring, stating simply that it was at Mary’s behest, and intended to honour Thomas Cantilupe. Whether the measuring was intended as a means of extracting the affliction from the body and disposing of it, or simply a ‘spontaneous’ procedure (Finucane 1995, 95) intended to focus attention on the afflicted or deceased, the physical body itself was central to the ritual – either in whole or part depending on the nature of the affliction.

The dimensions of the body were not so fundamental to a second practice, but its proximity equally important for the procedure’s efficacy. A number of the witnesses recall a penny being bent to the saint over the body, and then stashed or placed upon the suppliant’s person. William Cragh says he bent a penny in prison, and then stowed it in his belt so that it would be with him during the hanging (Webster 2015, folio 221r); William de Briouze said that a penny was bent over the supine figure of Cragh and placed on his forehead (Webster 2015, folio and folio11r). Again, this is not an isolated example. In the case of the boy who fell into Conway castle’s moat, a penny was bent and hung around the neck of the apparently dead toddler (Finucane, 2006 134; Ridyard and Ashbee 2015, 322). Edward I apparently bent pennies annually to ensure the continued good health of his hawks (Watkins 2007, 123). Again, it would seem that an object closely associated or in contact with the body of one afflicted, or in danger of being so, represented the transfer of the flesh’s materiality and given its own agency as a means of attracting the attention of an intercessor in the hope of a cure or protection.

There was one final act which the body had to undergo after the miracle had been worked – a pilgrimage to the tomb in order to give thanks. Cragh may not have had to go to the tomb to seek the miracle, but vows had been made by himself, and on his behalf, that he would visit his intercessor and offer thanks. Vauchez (2005, 455–6) attributes the increase in distance miracles as being due in part to the changes being made to the tone and content of this vow. One such example includes a penny being bent at the same time as the missive was made to the saint (Vauchez 2005, 456), which may explain William Cragh’s description of the scene in the dungeon before his hanging. Indeed, Cragh himself seems to exemplify this change in the nature of the vow, as he essentially offers himself in return for the miracle, a vow which – in much the same way as a pilgrim or crusader vow – entailed a special devotion from that point onwards, spreading the word of the saint’s abilities and indeed visiting his or her shrine or tomb. This illustrates how the immaterial was enabled, enacted and reinforced through the agency of the material (cf. Buchli 2016, ix). Matter (the human body and proxy bodies) is used to determine and demonstrate the spiritual, the divine is evidenced by the material and can be brought into being.

Pilgrimages in themselves were spiritual undertakings, but the rewards of that pilgrimage could be enhanced by the physical discomforts that the body went through along the way (Finucane 1995, 40–6). Thus, we are told that William Cragh walked for three days from Swansea to Hereford so that he could physically go to the tomb to give thanks (Webster, 2015, folios 9v; 11r–v; 14r; 221v; 225r; 227v). He not only walked, but did so barefoot

(Webster, 2015, folio 11v), to increase the penitential value of the performance. As a further symbolic act, he wore the heavy rope noose with which he had been hanged around his neck for the whole journey (Webster 2015, folio 224r), which cannot have been comfortable. The combination of being on foot, with no shoes, and a noose around the neck was a means of putting the body through a physically gruelling, cathartic performance, partly in recognition of the pain removed by the saint, and partly to make the body in receipt of the miracle aware of the restoration of their health (Sumption 2002, 102, 114). This illustrates how notions of the physical mortification of the flesh were embedded in medieval penitence, reflecting an understanding of the corruptible body as something separate from the soul but inextricably combined as the one fleshy material.

Once at the tomb, William offered a replicative gift (Finucane, 1995, 97) in the form of an effigy of a body being hanged on the gallows as a gift to St Thomas. He left it there, among the other wax gifts: feet, heads, eyes, each representing the part of the body in which a miracle had happened, or otherwise where a miracle cure was hoped for. Offerings of wax body parts donated at tombs were common in the Middle Ages (Vauchez 2005, 456–7). In 1943 a hoard of votive offerings was found in Exeter Cathedral, which included wax arms, legs and one instance of a whole body (Orme, 1986, 58) and they have even been depicted in stained glass, such as at York Minster Cathedral. From the time Richard Swinefield began spreading word of Thomas' miracles, the donations at Thomas' tomb in the years following were such that the immense value of the wax became a recurrent source of argument among the chapter and clergy of Hereford Cathedral. When the commissioners arrived in Hereford to begin the second round of their inquiries into the miracles of Thomas Cantilupe, they documented a vast number of wax offerings, including 1,424 representations of wax bodies

or human limbs (Vauchez 2005 457/PC TC fol.74). These items, intimately associated with and even representative of specific parts of the body, present a distributed network of agency that aims to act on the living flesh (Boivin 2008; Bennet 2010; Latour 1993). The specific malleable properties and capacities (Bennett 2010) of the wax, which allowed it to be shaped into realistic, almost lifelike copies of the human form albeit non-responsive and cold formed into the shape of a body on a gibbet, or the taper made from the measurements of the afflicted area of the body to which the agency of the miracle is transferred.

Interrogating miracles

During their investigation the papal commissioners examined William Cragh's body for lasting material evidence of the hanging and miracle. There they found scarring around his neck and a misshapen tongue that corroborated what the witnesses had said about his having clamped his teeth shut on his tongue (Webster 2015, folios 11v and 224v). Even after two decades, the physicality of the body still mattered when seeking proof that a miracle had taken place. After the miracles of Thomas Cantilupe were reviewed on two further occasions (Webster 2015), the final papal bull was published, officially marking Thomas as a saint, despite being called such since his first miracle had been worked. Ten of Thomas' miracles were recorded as part of the bull, including a woman's hump that had miraculously disappeared. William Cragh's resuscitation, however, did not make it to the final selection; a note in the margins of a manuscript forming part of the notes on the progress of the canonization process reveals why. By this time, returning to life after having been hanged – though accepted as a genuine miracle – was simply too common an event to be noteworthy.

The type of questions asked and the responses gained under cross examination in the case of William Cragh's miracle became the model for future resuscitation miracles (Goodich 2007, 98). In the same way that the earlier medieval miracle collections had become little more than *topoi* in their recounting of each marvellous event, the formulaic questioning of the canonization process gave rise to a new formalized description of a miracle and the necessary components. Goodich (2007, 5) goes further stating that the 'sameness and stereotypical quality' of events was in fact a form of proof of their reliability. This repetition of the concerns displayed in the case of William Cragh and Thomas Cantilupe's canonization becomes a social norm for the remainder, and is therefore representative in what it reveals about the period's understanding of miracles, the body and death.

Although this form of evidence is often treated by scholars as an entry point into understanding the beliefs and customs of the subaltern, what we actually see is a far wider reaching set of beliefs and understandings over the nature of the supernatural and miracles in particular, and their impact on and in the human body. Vauchez (2005, 498) cites the anonymous editor of the intermediary notes made on Thomas's canonization dossier as evidence of this, but one could go further. By showing that the transference of the names, and biographical details of the witnesses provided in the raw oral testimony, together with the repeated assurance that these views were commonly and publicly held, we can see a continuation of the old form of saint confirmation – by public agreement (Webster 2015) and the significant role of the flesh in validating Christian ideas in the Middle Ages. The trial transcripts allow us to see that many societal groups in Middle Ages were in agreement that

matter only gained agency after it had been given form: in the case of the body, this was described as the soul; in the case of the wax image, this was the fashioning of it into a recognisable and symbolic shape – the (twice) hanged man. The string, the wax from which the model was made, these ‘matters’ had the ability to affect human life, but only once they had been given ‘form’ by their association with the human body.

Concluding remarks

A final bodily twist in the tale resides in the matter of Thomas Cantilupe himself. Unlike many other medieval saints, his body was not one of those exciting, incorruptible, saintly bodies later subjected to relic theft (see Burton, this volume); instead his body was subjected to other forms of material transformation. Thomas Cantilupe died in Italy on his return from seeking an audience with the pope, in an attempt to overturn the excommunication placed upon him by his arch-rival the Archbishop of Canterbury (Finucane 1982). As already mentioned, travel was slow in the Middle Ages, and so there was no way in which the corpse could be returned to England whole for burial. The decision was made to boil and dismember the body at a nearby monastery. Although this was a common practice for bodies of dignitaries who died far from ‘home’, the deliberate removal the corruptible mortal flesh and transformation of the matter of the physical body into clean bones had an added benefit – ease of transport (Korpiola 2015, 19–21). Only the bones and heart were taken back to England and buried in the Lady Chapel of Hereford Cathedral (Crook 2011, 235), where his cult was promoted by his successor as bishop of Hereford, Richard Swinefield. Such ‘dispersed burials’ that included the heart’s transport were intended to indicate patronage (Korpiola 2015, 20–1), in this case, Thomas Cantilupe’s eternal association with the seat of

his bishopric in life, Hereford Cathedral. Why saints such as Thomas became popular as intercessors in the Middle Ages is unclear, but it would seem that some of their power comes from their status as having once been of this world, that their souls had once inhabited a physical living body, which made them more relatable and more human to the suppliant.

The matter of medieval bodies was clearly of prime importance; bodies had agency and could effect change (see also Burton, this volume). This chapter attends in part to the materiality of death and the physical transformations evident in the matter of the human body. Also explored here is the materiality of miracles and how the material body was used to demonstrate the immaterial and the spiritual. As such this chapter throws light on some of the origins of ideas that intellectually separate the body from the mind/soul and thus disconnects as matter from wider matter in the world.

References

- Bartlett, R., 2004. *The Hanged Man: A Story of Miracle, Memory, and Colonialism in the Middle Ages*. Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press.
- Bartlett, R., 2008. *The Natural and the Supernatural in the Middle Ages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bennett, J., 2010. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham (NC): Duke University Press.
- Boivin, N., 2008. *Material Cultures, Material Minds: The Impact of Things on Human Thought, Society and Evolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bornstein, D., 1997. Dominican friar, lay saint: The case of Marcolino of Forli. *Church History* 66, 252–67.
- Buchli, V. ed., 2016. *An Archaeology of the Immaterial*. Abingdon; New York (NY): Routledge.
- Clanchy, M.T., 2012. *From Memory to Written Record England 1066–1307*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Craster, H.E. (ed.), 1952. The Miracles of St Cuthbert on Farne. *Analecta Bollandiana* 70, 5–19.
- Crook, J., 2011. *English Medieval Shrines*. Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer.
- Daly, P.H., 1982. The Process of canonization in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. In *St Thomas Cantilupe Bishop of Hereford: Essays in His Honour*, ed. M. Jancey. Hereford: Friends of Hereford Cathedral Publications Committee for the Dean and Chapter, pp. 125–35.
- Daniell, C., 2005. *Death and Burial in Medieval England, 1066–1550*. London: Routledge.

- Darlington, R.R. (ed.), 1928. *The Vita Wulfstani of William of Malmesbury to which are added the extant abridgments of this work and the miracles and translation of Wulfstan*. Camden 3rd Series. London: Offices of the Society
- DeMaitre, L., 2013. *Medieval Medicine: The Art of Healing, from Head to Toe*. Santa Barbara (CA): Praeger.
- Fasolt, C., 2002. *Council and Hierarchy: The Political Thought of William Durant the Younger*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Finucane, R.C., 1982. The Cantilupe-Pecham controversy. In *St Thomas Cantilupe Bishop of Hereford: Essays in his honour*, ed. M. Jancey Hereford: Friends of Hereford Cathedral Publications Committee for the Dean and Chapter, pp. 103–24.
- Finucane, R.C., 1995. *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Finucane, R.C., 2006. The toddler in the ditch: A case of parental neglect? In *Voices from the Bench: The Narratives of Lesser Folk in Medieval Trials*, ed. M.E. Goodich. Basingstoke: Palgrave, pp. 128–48.
- Geertz, C., 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York (NY): Fontana Press.
- Goodich, M.E., 2004. *Lives and Miracles of the Saints: Studies in Medieval Latin Hagiography*. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Goodich, M.E., 2006. The multiple miseries of Dulcia of St Chartier (1266) and Christina of Wellington (1294). In *Voices from the Bench: The Narratives of Lesser Folk in Medieval Trials*. ed. M.E. Goodich. Basingstoke: Palgrave, pp. 99–125.
- Goodich, M.E., 2007. *Miracles and Wonders: The Development of the Concept of Miracle, 1150–1350*. London: Routledge.

- Harris, O.J.T. and J. Robb, J., 2013. The body and God. In *The Body in History: Europe from the Palaeolithic to the Future*, eds. J. Robb and O.J.T. Harris. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 129–63.
- Harris, O.J.T., Robb, J. and Tarlow, S., 2013. The body in the age of knowledge. In *The Body in History: Europe from the Palaeolithic to the Future*, eds. J. Robb and O.J.T. Harris. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 164–95.
- Ingold, T., 2011. *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*. London; New York (NY): Routledge.
- Ingold, T., 2013. *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture*. London; New York, NY: Routledge.
- Koopmans, R., 2011. *Wonderful to Relate: Miracle Stories and Miracle Collecting in High Medieval England*. Philadelphia (PA): University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Korpiola M. and Lahtinen, A., 2015. Cultures of death and dying in medieval and early modern Europe: An introduction. In *Cultures of Death and Dying in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds. M. Korpiola and A. Lahtinen, Helsinki: Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, pp. 1–32.
- Latour, B., 1993. *We Have Never Been Modern*. Harvard: Harvard University Press
- Merrifield, R., 1987. *The Archaeology of Ritual and Magic*. New York (NY): New Amsterdam Books.
- Ridyard, S.J. and Ashbee, J.A., 2015. The resuscitation of Roger of Conwy: a Cantilupe miracle and the society of Edwardian north Wales. *Journal of Medieval History* 41, 309–24.

- Smith, J.M.H., 1990. Oral and written: Saints, miracles and relics in Brittany, c. 850–1250. *Speculum* 65, 309–43.
- Smoller, L.A., 2011. From authentic miracles to a rhetoric of authenticity: Examples from the canonisation and cult of St Vincent Ferrer. *Church History* 80, 773–97.
- Sumption, J., 2002. *Pilgrimage*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Stevenson, J. ed., 1847. Reginald of Durham. *Libellus de Vita et Miraculis S. Godrici, Hermitage de Finchale Auctore Reginaldo Monacho Dunelmensi*, Surtees Society. London: J.B. Nichols and Son.
- Vauchez, A., 2005. *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Walker-Bynum, C., 1987. *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*. Berkeley (CA): University of California Press.
- Wallis, F., 2010. *Medieval Medicine: A Reader*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Ward, B., 1987. *Miracles and the Medieval Mind: Theory, Record, and Event, 1000–1215*. Philadelphia (PA): University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Watkins, C.S., 2007. *History and the Supernatural in Medieval England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Webster, H.R., 2014. The Story. City Witness. [online] Available at: <http://www.medievalswansea.ac.uk/en/the-story/>. Accessed September 2017.
- Webster, H.R., 2015. Mediating memory: recalling and recording the miracles of St Thomas Cantilupe. *Journal of Medieval History* 41, 292–308.
- Yarrow, S., 2006. *Saints and their Communities: Miracle Stories in Twelfth-Century England*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Zeigler, J., 2001. Medicine and immortality in terrestrial paradise. In *Religion and Medicine in the Middle Ages*, ed. P. Biller. Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, pp. 201–42.

Notes

¹ The involvement of the papacy led to a significant decrease in the number of official saints at this time. Between the terms of Innocent III and John XXII (1200–1334) there were only 26 papal bulls issued officially recognising saints. For further details of the increasing papal involvement in the canonisation process (see Goodich 2007, 71).

² This dossier comprises Rome, Vatican MS Lat. 4015; Rome, Vatican MS Lat. 4016; Rome, Vatican MS Ott. Lat. 2516; and Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS Lat. 5373.

³ For more on the significance of miracles surrounding the Eucharist and transubstantiation especially, see Ward, 1987, 13–16. For the theology of Miracles more generally, see Chapter xvii ‘Christian Theology of Miracle’ in Goodich 2004.

⁴ This runs counter to contemporary notions of animation that lean away from using the idea of a soul as the animating force (see Harvey 2005).

⁵ William Durant the Younger’s career is well-documented. See Fasolt 2002 for a full examination of his work and influence.

⁶ See Webster 2015, for further discussion of the continued importance of the original oral testimony in canonisation proceedings.

⁷ There are many other examples of ‘measuring’ to a saint, including ‘The Miracles of St Cuthbert’ (Craster 1952, 17); William of Malesbury’s *Vita Wulfstani* (Darlinkgton 1928, 125–6, 138, 179); and Reginald of Durham, *Libellus Godrici* (Stevenson 1847, 411, 434–5 and 455).