

## Editorial

*Katherine C. Zubko*

While experiencing many shifts in our work as we navigated the pressures and toll of ongoing twin pandemics (Covid-19 and an increased awareness of racial injustices), publishing workflows have also been impacted. Inequities became more visible in terms of who was still able to conduct research and write, as well as who was available to take on peer reviews and move papers through our scholarly systems, with many female faculty, faculty of color, and junior faculty with young and school-age children bearing a significantly unequal strain. To try and bring awareness to these inequities, I included a statement to reviewers to make visible these concerns to more senior-level faculty and encourage participation if they had the capacity to do so. As I envision *Body and Religion* to be a forum for dynamic intergenerational, diverse, and equitable scholarly dialogue, I will be continuing to query the very structures and processes that get in the way of that aspiration. Raising awareness is only a small step, but more needs to be done to continue to break down the barriers to publication.

In the midst of the pandemic, the journal also welcomed a new book review editor, Dr. Rebecca Stephens Falcasantos, a scholar of late antique Mediterranean religions at Amherst University. Her interests in intergroup conflict, ritual, rhetoric, and violence in the late Roman East, often analyzed through the lens of embodiment, adds significantly to the editorial expertise of the journal. Welcome, Rebecca, and thank you for taking on this new role.

The articles in this issue (BAR 4.1) do not have a singular theme, but instead touch upon a few different threads of inquiry into bodies and

---

### Affiliation

University of North Carolina Asheville, USA.

email: [kzubko@unca.edu](mailto:kzubko@unca.edu)

embodiment, namely an engagement with alternative or exploratory knowledge, or a revisiting of a key theorist. Three of the articles were first presented as part of a panel at the American Academy of Religion in 2019 on 'Alternative Knowledge Production and Embodied Knowledge' while others were submitted to the journal through open calls for papers. This mix of articles has led to some intriguing intersections that touch upon particular edges of the field, including centering fragmented embodiedness within individual and communal religious identities as a response to political, technological, and/or gendered framings, as well as a commitment to reassessing theories and materials with fresh new eyes for what we have not seen previously.

Beginning with '*Corpus fractum*: Georges Bataille and sacramental theology,' Mac Loftin utilizes Bataille, and his engagement with St. Angela of Foligno, to reread sacramental theology through a wounded, lacerated body of Jesus, in order to center fragmented and vulnerable embodiedness. Loftin argues that this reframing helps to resist fascist cooption of sacramental theology for nationalist purposes, in particular ideas of moving towards 'pure' whole embodiedness as transcribed on the body politic.

Sam Gill, in 'Jesus Wept, robots can't': religion into the future,' explores the biologically human act of crying, in contrast to AI/robots/cyborgs, who do not cry, and in conversation with theological commentaries on Jesus weeping in response to Lazarus' condition. The role of human empathy, connected to bodied actions such as crying, becomes a central question in considering religious practices of the future. As humanity becomes increasingly melded with technologies, Gill considers the impact of being less connected to specifically human bodied capacities such as empathy.

Moving from the interface of the biological and technological to social dimensions of embodiment, Ali Chavoshian and Sophia Park's article, 'A body without a head: Lacan's understanding of body and its application,' seeks to apply Lacanian theory about the body to Christian discourses of embodiment. Transposing the 'not all' Lacanian position as applied to the embodied experiences of women under patriarchy and laborers under capitalist systems, the authors argue for a multiplicity of narratives and roles imagined to be possible also within women's spiritualities.

The two articles that follow serve as case studies of reimagined women's spiritualities that illuminate agency and freedom in previously unobserved ways within practices and products of writing. Ailie Posillico, in her article, 'Words on fire: Gemma Galgani and the power of authorial voice,' engages in a close analysis of the letters of a nineteenth-century Italian lay Catholic saint to make visible previously unseen forms of agency. Instead of Galgani and her wounded body falling neatly into the narrative of submis-

sion, Posillico presents evidence for how Galgani rewrites an alternative church hierarchy that co-exists with typically expected power structures. In another strategy analyzed by Haruka Umetsu Cho in her article, 'Erotic desire as a woman's way of knowing the divine: reading Arishima Taeko, *A Certain Woman*,' the Japanese Christian female protagonist in the novel creates a path of female religious knowing through an embodied eros that rejects colonial aspects of womanhood and sexual ethics. Deepening feminist and queer theological calls for taking the body and sex seriously as the loci for religious intimacy, this analysis brings to the forefront a journey of seeking the divine within transgressive human embodiment directly.

In the final article, Wesley N. Barker's 'Thresholds of touch: revisiting the mat(t)er of the body in the work of Luce Irigaray' invites us to revisit French philosopher Luce Irigaray's early theorizing on the metaphysical foundations of pre-discursive difference, which is both corporal and relational. This understanding of irreducible difference, prior to bringing bodied experience into language, Barker argues, is fundamental to current religious discourses attempting to account for a 'materiality of multiple desires.' Pre-discursive matter functions as a threshold for making visible the restrictive nature of binaries, as well as the damage inflicted upon marginalized bodies, thus shifting discourses on religious embodiment and practices onto more solid ethical grounding.

While these papers were not originally conceived as part of a unified thematic conversation, I found it enjoyable, and hope you will too, to see how the analyses and questions raised might speak to each other in productive and delightful ways.