

CHAPTER ONE

Toward a Body of Un-Author-ized Transgression

Behold thou art fair, my beloved, behold thou art fair; thine eyes are as doves (I said), and let me see thy face, let me hear thy voice, for thy voice is harmonious and thy face enchanting, thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck, thy lips drop as the honeycomb, honey and milk are under thy tongue, . . . Who was she, who was she who rose like the dawn, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, terrible as an army with banners?

—Umberto Eco,
The Name of the Rose

Transgressive Bodies According to Umberto Eco and Friedrich Nietzsche

In the middle of Umberto Eco's mystery of medieval monks and murders, in the dark underbelly of a grand monastic library, a young Benedictine monk, Adso of Melk, comes face to face with a marvelous and terrifying body.¹ It was the body of a peasant girl, a girl foreign to the order and language of monastic life, living outside its walls in the shadow of the towering Aedifi-

cium, and entering the sacred precincts only under cover of darkness and for the sole purpose of exchange.

She was a poor girl, unable to stave off her hunger and that of her family without using her body as a commodity, an exchange of flesh for flesh—her own for that of an ox. On some nights, she would carry off an ox heart, on others just bits of lung, but on all nights it was the same sweaty hands and fat, flush lips that grasped her body and flailed about the floor of the kitchen until satiated and exhausted. So it was with an expression of surprise, even wonder, that she beheld the young, shy Adso one night as he stood at the threshold of the kitchen. And carelessly, without thought of reward, she touched his cheek with the tips of her fingers and drew him near.

For Adso, such love was a deeply transgressive act. It was not simply a matter of disobedience. There were others who regularly transgressed the lofty codes of fourteenth-century Benedictine virtue by cavorting with flesh—sometimes even in the shadows of the abbey and often with a wink of approval from unexpected sources. Even the old, grave Jorge, guarantor of monastic authority and morality, knew the value of these transgressors. “Their presence is precious to us,” he confesses, “it is inscribed in the plan of God, because their sin prompts our virtue, their cursing encourages our hymn of praise, their undisciplined penance regulates our taste for sacrifice, their impiety makes our piety shine.”²

The transgression of the unregenerate, operating within an economy of exchange, an economy that thrived in darkness and in silence—this was an “authorized transgression.”³ Lacking the careless sensuality of innocence, this transgression set nothing ablaze—neither the passions of the inarticulate girl nor the ediface of monastic virtue erected on blood-soaked soil. Jorge had nothing to fear from such transgression. Indeed, it was “inscribed in the plan of God.”

But Adso’s transgression was a different matter altogether. Here was an innocent youth, uninitiated to the seductions of the flesh, a sensitive being, genuinely devoted to service of the holy. It was troubling enough for such a one to cross the threshold of saint and sinner, indulging in the base passions of the latter. This in itself had the potential to threaten the medieval “sorting myth” of god-fearers and pagans, of good and evil.

Yet even this spontaneous act of innocent passion was not in itself fully subversive. That which propelled Adso's transgression from that of potential danger to that of consuming conflagration was the intertwining of such innocent sensuality with the language of Scripture. The real transgression, that which threw the young monk into the turbid waters of confusion and ultimately shook the foundations of Jorge's world, was the transgression of language. In the ecstasy of the moment, driven by a desire beyond his control and confronted with a body and complex of sensations for which he had no name, Adso resorted to the use of sacred words for expressing the delirium of the body.

What did I feel? What did I see? I remember only that the emotions of the first moment were bereft of any expression, because my tongue and my mind had not been instructed in how to name sensations of that sort. Until I recalled other inner words, heard in another time and in other places, spoken certainly for other ends, but which seemed wondrously in keeping with my joy in that moment, as if they had been consubstantially to express it. Words pressed into the caverns of my memory rose to the (dumb) surface of my lips, and I forgot that they had served in Scripture or in the pages of the saints to express quite different, more radiant realities. *But was there truly a difference between the delights of which the saints had spoken and those that my agitated spirit was feeling at that moment?* At that moment the watchful sense of difference was annihilated in me. And this, it seems to me, is precisely the sign of rapture in the abysses of identity.⁴

By doing this, by confusing the language of love for God with love for an illicit, earthly body, Adso set into play a host of questions culminating in a suspicion of the capability of language to discriminate between the realms of truth and falsehood and thereby represent an independent, transcendent, stable order of truth. Language was fluid. Some words evoked multiple meanings; a single meaning could be evoked by multiple words. There was no direct correspondence between language and reality and therefore no firm terrain of signification upon which to build one's edifice of truth, religious or otherwise.⁵

Although Adso himself struggled valiantly to regain firm terrain, his teacher, the unruly and brilliant Franciscan, William of Baskerville, understood the depth of the dilemma and accepted its consequences. Toward the end of the story, when William realized that his quest for an overarching plan for the abbey's murders was futile, he admitted that there was no plot—either for the events in the abbey or for the universe as a whole. "I behaved stubbornly," he confesses, "pursuing a semblance of order, when I should have known well that there is no order in the universe."⁶ His imagined plan had only accidentally helped to solve the murders. In a language not fully medieval, William reflects on truth as a ladder "built to attain something." Once used, it should be thrown away.⁷

For William, the most pressing problem of the abbey was not the threat of destabilizing events upon the structures of metaphysical truth. For him, in contrast to Jorge as well as the young Adso, the dilemma shifted from that of unruly bodies to that of unitary, fixed truths. The real problem, he concludes, is the arrogance of those who claim to hold the truth, the grimness of those whose certainty is never seized by doubt. "Perhaps the mission of those who love mankind," he says, "is to make people laugh at the truth, to make truth laugh, because the only truth lies in learning to free ourselves from insane passion for the truth."⁸ For William then, the unruly, indescribable body is important as that which resists the mechanisms of repressive truths. As the "remainder" of all forms of representation, it eludes the grasp of domination and points toward another way.⁹

In this way, through the meanderings of monks and metaphor, Eco brings into the noonday light the difference between a sickly "authorized transgression" that is the soil for edifices of religiously sanctioned virtue, and the "unauthorized transgression" of an innocent sensuality imbued with spirit. From out of the belly of "authorized transgression," a transgression of exchange and exploitation, institutions and structures of morality are born. Put otherwise, the rape of the innocent is the silent substructure of institutions that set a rigid dividing line between good and evil and then enforce the good. It is all too often the womb of church, of mosque, and of synagogue, as well as that of the state.

But such structures in Eco's story were set ablaze. Through the heat of a tender passion, a spark was ignited that brought

about the apocalypse.¹⁰ And only in its aftermath, in the scattered ruins of charred walls capped by the open beams of a roof now collapsed—only in the aftermath of such massive destruction did the remain(s) appear: some birds, a snake, ivy, and a few fragments of parchment. These fragments, gathered together by the elderly Adso, contained no unified message and yet constituted an “oracle” that spoke through his writing, an oracle of a god that “*ist ein lauter Nichts, ihn rührt kein Nun noch Hier.*”¹¹

Such is the transgressive body and sensuous remainder of a medieval rationality as imagined by a linguist of the South. But for such a body to emerge in recent days in the more northern and ethereal realms of philosophy and theology, a barbarian would be needed—one who roamed the wild spaces outside towns, dwelt in a cave, communed with a bird and a snake, and danced to the rhythms of a god adorned with ivy.¹² This old barbarian, of course, is none other than Friedrich Nietzsche’s Zarathustra. Indeed, the cry that echoes throughout Nietzsche’s writing, shattering the dominant religious and political “truth” structures of his day and writhing toward the articulation of an alternative “ontology of relationship” is precisely the cry of the body. By listening to this cry, this barbaric voice of “wild wisdom,”¹³ we will hear more clearly the challenges of a transgressive corporeality as it pertained to the problematic of philosophy in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

To bring such challenges into our era, especially in the wake of the ravages of the twentieth century and its growing powers of destruction, the cries of new barbarians or speakers of “wild wisdom” must be heard. Such poststructuralist “wild” ones, like Nietzsche before them, are characterized by two impulses held in critical tension, that is, the shattering of edifices of truth girded in relations of exchange along with a persistent retrieval and exploration of truth’s remain(s). For some, like Nietzsche’s “last man,” such remain(s) as love, creation, and longing have been forgotten.¹⁴ For the “wild ones,” these and other remain(s) are not only remembered, but retrieved as fuel for a new thinking, an igniting of the theological imagination in an age grown weary by cynicism and despair.

For the remainder of this chapter, in an attempt to clarify the problematic of a transgressive corporeality, we will first

turn to Nietzsche for a depiction of those "despisers of the body" who esteem "sickly, ugly bodies," over against those who love "healthy, natural bodies." Following this, we will turn to the writings of two contemporary radical theologians in order to augment Nietzsche's "body" thinking by ciphoning it through the events of the twentieth century and bringing it into the specificity of the theological discourse. This chapter will conclude with a preliminary theoretical framework for use in subsequent chapters in our exploration of the body philosophies of three French writers: Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Michel Foucault, and Julia Kristeva.

In turning to Nietzsche, it comes as no surprise that the primary target of his philosophical hammer was that cluster of grim authorities, religious and philosophical, who were best characterized as "despisers of the body."¹⁵ From Socrates at the "daylight of reason"¹⁶ to Immanuel Kant, to nineteenth-century German Lutherans, the "healthy body" was hated, castrated,¹⁷ regulated, tamed,¹⁸ annihilated,¹⁹ idealized, sentimentalized, systematized, tranquilized, and desensualized.²⁰

And how was this massive denial accomplished across such a vast span of time and space? In every case, the motivating impulse was a "will-to-truth," a will to that which is constant and unitary, a will that tended to spin out in a variety of "conceptual cobwebs" but which was always inscribed in the culture in its structures of morality.²¹ For Nietzsche, the deepest challenge of his day, as it had been for a long time, was the problem of violations of the body that were implicit in and complicit with any philosophical or theological attempt to reduce the irreducible phenomena of the temporal world into a single, fixed truth by dividing all that is into the oppositional categories of good and evil. It was bad enough that such truths had thrived from the days of classical Greece to the present and from the far away shores of the Indian Sea to those of the Mediterranean.²² It was even worse that such truths posed as the best of humankind, as the cultural apex of the accomplishments of great thinkers and esteemed artists. It was the worst of injuries that such truths were girded in hidden foundations of denial and abuse.

Nietzsche's outrageous response, while not defensible in every respect, particularly in light of the events of the twentieth century, was yet, in its keenness of perception and intensity of passion, a somewhat fitting response. How could he have been

rational when rationality was defined by the truthful? How could he have been moral when morality itself was the problem? Although there is never only one way to confront such entrenched monstrosities as culturally sanctioned "go(o)ds," the only salvific way is that of wholehearted subversion. And to that end, Nietzsche threw all that he had: heart, will, and mind.

One can read Nietzsche's strategy of response as doubled. On the one hand, the pathos that drew most of his energy was the rage, the impulse to philosophize with a hammer, disempowering the architectonic of unitary truths by revealing their innermost secrets. Thus, armed with the potent weapon of laughter, he lashed out at the heart of his society's social conventions and structures. Christianity, he called a "hangman's metaphysics,"²³ a "herd religion," and "the great unholy lie."²⁴ German art was "a holiday for the spirit, the wits, and the heart."²⁵ And perhaps most disturbing to those working in academic settings even in different times and places, education was for him "the model of sublime monotony in action."²⁶

All of the above, along with several other structures of high culture, were, according to Nietzsche, rooted in the "anti-aesthetic," that is, "the desire to make [everything] comprehensible; the desire to make [it] practical, useful, exploitable"²⁷—in other words, hatred for the body. Even in laughter, Nietzsche was a raging beast, exposing the utilitarian base of such truths and struggling toward an alternative response.

But if one hears only the rage, feeling only the bite of Nietzsche's cold, wintry winds, then one has not fully encountered this amazing and troubling prophet. For as he says of all those "smoky, room-temperature, used-up, wilted, fretful souls" who surround him, "they hear only my winter winds whistling—and not that I also cross warm seas, like longing, heavy, south winds."²⁸ Nietzsche's "south winds," like those blowing through *The Name of the Rose* in the intertwining of two young lovers, are the winds of a sensuality emanating from the "higher, healthy body."

And here, at a critical juncture, in the articulation of this "higher body," Nietzsche enters rough terrain, a move for which he can be commended, and yet terrain within which he stumbles and strays. The higher body, associated by Nietzsche with a mode of existence exemplified by the ancient Greeks, and especially with a Dionysiac mode of intoxication for life, is

appealing in its fulness, its fierce courage, deep emotion, and spontaneity. This for his was the spur of creativity, the energy of the universe propelling itself into the cyclical and spiraling forms of eternal recurrence. As such, "the entire evolution of the spirit" becomes not a question of the human, but rather, "a question of the body."²⁹

Such a body was enticing in Nietzsche's day and would continue to be so today were it not for its susceptibility to the very diseases that Nietzsche tried so desperately to overcome. In the ironies of history, the higher, healthy body in the first half of this century became a war cry of the Fascists. The Dionysiac delirium for religious ecstasy became in this case a delirium of love for family, nation, and race—one which needed to expel the impurities of the body politic in order to restore its health.³⁰ Today this body is given new life in the hedonistic subcultures of technological society—from the drug-induced frenzies and fantasies of satanic cult groups to the equally mind-blowing escapades of devotees of hard rock.³¹ Given the incorporation of Nietzsche's higher body to these enterprises of hate and destruction, it would be dangerously naive to embrace this body too quickly and uncritically. More needs to be thought about this lure before we too enter its terrain and stumble.

Thus, our turn to the writing of today's proponents of "wild wisdom" is more than a simple updating of Nietzsche. Granted that this prophet was a voice in the wilderness of nineteenth-century philosophy, and granted that his cry echoes into our era in multiple ways—not only in the exploits of militarism and terrorism, but also, with a quite different ring, through the writing of those who rage against the truths of body despisers in contemporary form—nonetheless, a new barbarism must address the uncanny ability of structures of truth to commandeer and make their own their fiercest opposition. How does a voice such as Nietzsche's become assimilated to truths even uglier than those he himself had opposed? How does he become the hero of those who destroy the "body" in ever more terrifying ways?

It seems to me that the importance of this century's radical theologians, in wrestling with today's truths and their "remains(s)," is their responsiveness to Nietzsche's challenge along with the additional challenge of how that cry has gone astray and become itself part of the problem. Against all despi-

sers of the body, we must give voice to the "sensuous remainder" or transgressive body that is, as Mark C. Taylor suggests, the "revelation" of the holy.³² We must unleash the powers of such a body in all its fright and beauty. And yet, what this means and how to do it without falling into the hands of today's body despisers is not yet clear.

Some twentieth-century poststructuralist theologians, however, are leading the way to a clearing. Mark C. Taylor and Sharon D. Welch are among those who, like Nietzsche before them and yet more radically than he, are exposing the faults of totalizing structures of truth and exploring their remain(s).³³ Although the range of their intellectual adventures is much wider and deeper than can be fathomed here, we will draw on those aspects of their thinking that help shape the problematic of transgressive corporeality and lead to a framework for an exploration of other philosophies of body.

To summarize our investigation so far, edifices of truth—depicted by Eco as the truth-structures of fourteenth-century Benedictine monasticism, and by Nietzsche as the fixed, unitary truths of Western philosophy and theology—are shaped by a binary logic of good and evil and operate out of hidden strategies of exploitation. Because these truth structures are totalizing endeavors, continually struggling to set perimeters for the irreducible elements of life, their greatest enemy is the body that eludes their control. For both Nietzsche and Eco, the body is both indescribable (unrepresentable) and sensuous. For both, it is a body of such power that it can ignite the spark that explodes into a raging and roaring fire, reducing a grand and mighty truth, including its almighty God, to a charred ruin. These ruins are not the end of truth but its brokenness—its openness to the sky and earth and to their material remain(s).

Corporeality as Critique in Poststructuralist Theology

Although Eco, as a twentieth-century linguist, understands the role of language in the dissolution and reconstruction of edifices of truth, more needs to be said about this "linguistic turn" as it pertains to contemporary theology. In a book entitled *Deconstruction and Theology*, published in 1982, Carl A.

Raschke in the lead article begins his exploration of language with a cry from Nietzsche's madman in the town's marketplace.

"Whither is God?" he cried; "I will tell you. *We have killed him*—you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how did we do this? How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up or down? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? . . . Do we hear nothing as yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we smell nothing as yet of the divine decomposition? Gods, too, decompose. God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him."³⁴

Who, we still ask today, is this God? How did he die? And what is the "nothing" that remain(s) in the decomposition of the divine?

As Raschke argues in this article and elsewhere,³⁵ the God of classical realism who functioned as a lynchpin for correspondence theories of truth, securing the referential relation between concepts and objects, was replaced in the seventeenth century by the "idols" or constructions of the modern subject. This took many forms. It began with the Cartesian turn to consciousness as a new foundation for certainty, continued through the architectonic of Kant's universal conditions and structures of consciousness, and eventually led to a positing of the historical conditions of modern consciousness, that is, the grammar and structure of language.

Although the content of these constructs changed, shifting from Descartes' "ego" to Wittgenstein's "grammar," the underlying structure of reference remained the same. In Derrida's now well-known formulation, the logocentric structure of reference links a signifier to a signified through an Archimedean point of reference or "transcendental signified," that is itself outside the play of signification and yet secures the meaningfulness of the signifying process.³⁶ The idols themselves may change. The "transcendental signifieds" may emerge with different forms and faces. But as each new idol takes its place on the throne of the deposed God, it performs the same basic

function as each of its predecessors, stabilizing the play of signification by attesting to the reliability of language, that is, its reference to a stable, ordered reality external to itself. In Nietzsche's terms, each new idol is but a different version of the old "will-to-truth."

In order to appreciate the importance of dethroning such pretenders to truth, more needs to be said about the relationship of these idols to historical structures of the modern era. In a move consonant with Nietzsche, but going beyond him in depth and breadth of analysis, Mark C. Taylor, in *Erring: a Postmodern A/theology* and subsequent writings,³⁷ exposes the relationship between linguistic structures of representation tied to "the actual or possible presence of a transcendental signified" and social, political, economic structures of domination.³⁸

Both economies—that of representation and that of domination—operate within structures of reference that claim to refer to the "other" and yet, in actuality, are structures of self-reference which use the "other," whether human, divine, or otherwise, as fodder for the "becoming" of the sovereign subject. This philosophy of self-relation, initiated by Descartes, reaches its apex in the speculative idealism of Hegel. In Taylor's words: "The Hegelian Idea that grounds all reality is a structural totality in which everything becomes *itself* in and through *its own* other. Because otherness and difference are essential components of self-identity . . . relationship to otherness and difference is, in the final analysis, *self*-relationship."³⁹

Thus, the "other" for the totalizing or sponge-like structures of modern philosophical projects is an "other" of utilitarian value in the constitution of the self. When the "other" resists this role, when it refuses to be used or consumed by means of the autotelic processes of the sovereign subject, its territory is then invaded and its otherness colonized.⁴⁰

The economy of representation is an economy of domination based on the subject's use and abuse of everything "other" than itself within the self-constituting process. Therefore, the idols of the marketplace are not simply silly illusions as pretenders to truth, but dangerous fictions, posing as the best and highest of truths and yet in reality girded in the most despicable forms of utilitarian relations. Although the exposure of these idols as fictive frauds cannot lead to the establish-

ment of new fixed, unitary truths, it can, by breaking the grip of hegemonies of truth operating within a cultural setting, create the conditions for the emergence of a revitalized and radicalized imagination and style of being. The real motivation for the dethroning of all idols of modernity is the subversion of economies of domination and the creation of conditions for the emergence of radically different possibilities of relatedness among all the inhabitants of the earth.

But how are these idols of the marketplace to be knocked off their thrones? And what does this have to do with the body? As set forth by Taylor in *Altarity*, that which has the potential to subvert the structures of representation/domination is neither outside of and thereby absent from these structures of self-relation nor enclosed within and thereby fully present to them. Rather, drawing upon a range of "limit" concepts from Kant to Hegel to Kierkegaard to Derrida, Taylor explores the limits of structures of representation as resources for the subversion of modernist idols and as spurs to new religious or "a/theological" thinking.

As an example of this exploration of liminal remainders, Taylor, in the last chapter of *Tears* entitled "How to Do Nothing With Words," brings into play the "nothing" that remains at the limits of economies of representation. In this "nothing," one recognizes the remain(s) of Nietzsche's decomposing God as well as those of the monastery's Aedificium gathered by the elderly Adso. By persisting in the writing of such remain(s), particularly in their exposure of the latent fascism of today's "theo-logy" and "theo-ry," Taylor helps rekindle an imagination responsive to the cry of the body.⁴¹

Still, despite the perceptiveness and intrigue of these explorations, there is one aspect of Taylor's "parapraxis" which calls for further thought.⁴² In its depiction of the impact of "nothing" upon the structures of representation, Taylor's writing reverberates with the full force and feeling of Nietzsche's wintry winds. Such writing wounds, tears, rends, and then wounds, tears, and rends again—almost without remainder, certainly without relief. From where, we might ask, comes healing? Whence come fragments of hope? Perhaps the impact of Nietzsche's warm, heavy winds from more southern states has not yet reached these northern realms. Perhaps they are still on the way.⁴³

If such southern winds are those that stirred Zarathustra's

desire to dance, even to dance with words, then these winds are not foreign to the imaginative realm of other postmodern writers, including the feminist theology of Sharon D. Welch. Although Welch, in *Communities of Solidarity and Resistance* and *A Feminist Ethic of Risk*⁴⁴ does not make a direct analogy between her "dance with life" and that of Nietzsche's dancing deity, her writing does resonate with the insights and passions of other writers of "wild wisdom." Like Taylor, she decries the utopian ideals or "truths" of theologies rooted in utilitarian relations, or, in her own terminology, in an "ethic of control."⁴⁵ Her own contribution to an analysis of the problematic of theology includes the exposure of an "erotics of domination" implicit in twentieth-century theology by virtue of its "valorization of absolute power."⁴⁶ According to Welch, through such seemingly rational and virtuous ideals as freedom and justice, new normative unities are envisioned and established in liberal ethical theory and theology.⁴⁷ These unities are in actuality part of the problem in that they have their own exclusionary devices and perpetuation of relations of domination, now made more dangerous by virtue of their mystification by the mask of virtue.⁴⁸

In her exploration of the material conditions or remain(s) spawning an "emancipatory conversation," Welch suggests that this entails a turn to body,⁴⁹ that is, to "sensuous immersion in a world that outruns the subject."⁵⁰ The desire of this body threatens to subvert the totalizing forces of the "erotics of domination" through a "deeply abiding love"⁵¹ of the finite world, one that brings a "resilient, fragile, healing power"⁵² to those wounded and torn by present-day truths. In this insightful and moving exploration of suffering and love as expressed in the novels of African-American women, Welch links what we are calling "un-author-ized transgression" to an innocence intrinsic to the "resilient connections" of people in solidarity against particular, historical forms of injustice. Like Adso in Eco's novel and yet with the astuteness of a twentieth-century poststructuralist theologian, Welch also uses sacred words to express bodily connections. In her words, the "healing connections of grace" among those who with "sheer holy boldness" struggle to speak "the truth of their lives"—these connections are the divine.⁵³

Following in the wake of these adventuresome thinkers of "sensuous remain(s)," we are now ready to give preliminary

articulation to "transgressive corporeality" as it pertains to the discourse of contemporary theology. In the shaping of this alternative, we are reminded of important distinctions made by those in our lead. First, there was the distinction so brilliantly depicted in Eco's novel between the "authorized transgression" of oppressive religious structures rooted in relations of exchange and the "unauthorized transgression" of a sensuous intercourse expressed in the poetry of sacred language.

This led to a somewhat analogous division, scattered throughout Nietzsche's writings, between the "diseased body" of body despisers and idol-worshippers, and the "higher, healthy body" of devotees of a dancing deity. Such "wild wisdom" was continued in corrected form in the work of Taylor and Welch. With varied styles and agendas, these writers cite the difference between "logocentric theologies" girded in structures of oppressive relations and a/centric or a/theological thinking, which subverts these structures through a "writing" or poesis of their limits. That these limits may include such diverse discursive territories as the "nothing" of deconstructive strategies perusing the "history of thought" and the "resilient connections" of communities of solidarity and resistance reflected upon in theologies of liberation, confirms the nature of such limits as nonunified, unrepresentable, and still calling for further thought.

For us, this call leads to the positing of another distinction, hopefully in line with those just cited. This is the difference between a corporeality or "corp-o-logy" of author-ized transgression and a corporeality or "corp-o-sant" of un-author-ized transgression. The former is indicative of all contemporary structures or "corporations" which create and then perpetuate mystifications of domination under the auspices of the idols of self-aggrandizing power or privilege. The logic of "corp-o-logy" is tied to the "transcendental signifieds" of consciousness (an ego-logical corp-o-logy); of unified, universal experience (an empir(e)-ical corp-o-logy); or of linguistic structures (a gram-mot-ical corp-o-logy). "Corp-o-logy" then is a positivism of the body that takes on different names and forms within rationalism, empiricism, romanticism, liberalism, and structuralism, but has the same "effects of truth," that is, the attempted closure and control of the irreducible, sensuous body.

Our alternative, the "corp-o-sant" body of "un-author-ized transgression," is a holy body associated with the brush dis-

charge or flaming phenomenon sometimes seen in stormy weather on the upper masts of ships. Given St. Elmo's identity as the patron saint of sailors, this seemingly self-starting flame became known as St. Elmo's fire. A "corp-o-sant" then is a body sparked by the "nonoriginal origin" of atmospheric tensions and creating a flame which threatens the structure of the ship, exposing it to the abyss of the sea. This body, being part of a structure and yet outside the structure's control, is necessarily a body of limits. In terms of the division just noted, a "corp-o-sant" is a body of the limits of today's "corp-o-logies." It is a body at the limits of "economies of representation" and at the margins of "economies of domination."

This "corp-o-sant" body of nonoriginal or "un-author-ized transgression is the site then for the crossing of the forces of sky and sea. Some forces that ravish the body of the ship are philosophical, generated by tensions between truth and error, reason and madness. Some are political, spawned in the interaction of order and chaos, the powerful and the powerless. Still others are psychological, birthed through the intercourse of the conscious with the unconscious and of thinking with feeling. All these winds feed the gales that make the sails of the ship "rounded and taut and trembling,"⁵⁴ the gales of winds religious and moral—the clashing of God(s) and world, of good and evil.

And although there is no haven from such storms, no serene harbor of peace and calm, no cure for the suffering and struggles of life, there is a choice. One can take down the sails that catch these winds in a futile attempt to escape their effects, or instead, one can hoist the sails up to the heights, opening them to north and south winds alike, until they "tremble with the violence of the spirit(s)."⁵⁵

This study is an attesting to and testing of some of the winds—philosophical, political, psychological and ultimately religious and moral—that have shaped and are shaping "bodies" in the course of post-Enlightenment Western culture. In the lead of those heading such winds in our century is Maurice Merleau-Ponty, a philosopher known for the identification and critique of "objective thought," that is, forms of empiricism and idealism that have tried to enclose and tame the body. The limit that resists such closure for Merleau-Ponty is an "aesthetics of body," first presented within the terminology of a phenomenology of perception, and then radicalized through

a shift into the dynamics of flesh, the field of Being as language.

Michel Foucault will historicize and politicize our course by naming the shifting winds of "rationalities" as they have been inscribed within and upon the bodies of people in different historical periods and places. And while the winds tested by Foucault are by and large cold and savage, the site of their inscription is also the site of resistance. The body for Foucault is not only the material "representation of authority" in Western culture. It remain(s) as well the source for the emergence of new alternatives through an "aesthetics of existence."

What Foucault only hints at in his body of inscription and resistance, Kristeva explores further within the categories of psychoanalysis and linguistics. "La Mère qui jouit" as a body of "abjection" is neither enclosed within the control mechanisms of the "law of the Father" nor relegated to the primal, undifferentiated silence of the Freudian and Lacanian "unconscious." Even though Kristeva may not be fully consistent in her thinking of the body of the "mother's joy" as a limit, she does try to hold in critical tension the structures of authorized transgression with those unruly, resilient connections of ecstatic human relatedness which threaten such structures. Over against the (ex)tensions of modernist "corp-o-logies," she gives expression to a gendered "corp-o-sant" of (re)tension, a body reverberating with an "aesthetics of relatedness."⁵⁶

With these philosophies of body taking the lead, our own adventure of "un-author-ized transgression" will move from phenomenology to poststructuralism, from the flesh of artistic vision to the flesh of penal colonies to the flesh of ec-static relations, and from a wide-ranging interdisciplinary conversation back to theology. In all of this meandering, we must beware of letting our eyes venture too far from the earthly things of sea and sky or of allowing our ears to venture beyond hearing range of Nietzsche's plaintive cry, a cry of return to the body.

Remain faithful to the earth, my brothers, with the power of your virtue. Let your gift-giving love and your knowledge serve the meaning of the earth. This I beg and beseech you. Do not fly away from earthly things and beat with your wings against eternal walls. Alas, there has always been so much virtue that has flown

away. Lead back to the earth the virtue that flew away, as I do—back to the body, back to life, that it may give the earth a meaning, a human meaning.⁵⁷

Notes

1. Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose*, trans. William Weaver (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1983), 246.

2. *Ibid.*, 476.

3. Over against the tendency of some theorists to present “carnival” as socially and politically liberating, Eco insists that most forms of carnival, including sexual excesses, are regulated transgressions that ultimately “remind us of the existence of the rule.” Not reversals, but violations from the threshold serve as truly transgressive acts. See Theresa Coletti, *Naming the Rose: Eco, Medieval Signs, and Modern Theory* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988), 139–41.

4. Eco, *The Name of the Rose*, 244–45. Emphasis mine.

5. For this insight regarding the play of language in Eco’s novel, I am indebted to two sources: Carl A Raschke, “Fire and Roses: Toward Authentic Post-Modern Religious Thinking,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 58 (Winter 1990): 671–89, and Theresa Coletti, *Naming the Rose*. Note that the most despicable heretics from Jorge’s perspective were those who condoned such confusions. St. Francis of Assisi, the founder of the order to which William of Baskerville belonged, was a principal offender.

6. Eco, *The Name of the Rose*, 492.

7. *Ibid.*, 492. Note that this is a critique of truth as the adequation of word to object and not necessarily exclusive of other notions of truth, including the one being developed in this study.

8. *Ibid.*, 491.

9. This notion of remainder or “reste” is explored by Mark C. Taylor in his presentation of Derrida’s writings in *Altarity*

(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 255–303. That this is, according to Taylor, a “sensuous remainder” (341) alluding to “transgression” and “remains of the sacred” (346) is a spur to my exploration of “transgressive corporeality.”

10. I am not suggesting here either that this “illicit” encounter by itself set off the fire or that the fire was an unmitigated good. The sexual encounter was a catalyst for the fire because, like a book of laughter by Aristotle, it was one of those confusions of the boundaries that couldn’t be tolerated by those ensnared in modes of binary thinking. In protecting his unadulterated truth from such confusions, Jorge caused the fire that ultimately destroyed the library. Here then is a prime example of the kind of destruction that is unleashed by the guardians of fixed, unitary, and pristine truths.

11. Eco, *The Name of the Rose*, 501.

12. Note that the remains of the monastic aedificium following the fire are the same as those associated with Zarathustra in Nietzsche’s writings.

13. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, trans. Walter Kaufman (New York: Viking Penguin, 1966), 197.

14. *Ibid.*, 17.

15. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 34–35.

16. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols/The Anti-Christ*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Viking Penguin, 1968), 33.

17. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufman and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 253, 207.

18. Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, 55.

19. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 112.

20. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 141, 407, 131, 139, 434.

21. *Ibid.*, 249 and 317, 145.

22. On pp. 175–79 of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche applauds the Laws of Menu for their “order of castes” reflecting

the "natural order," and denounces those "truth-sayers" (like Vedantic philosophers) who teach equality. Not only is Nietzsche here sadly misinformed about the damaging effects of these laws in Hindu life, but his war against the mediocrity of the herd here takes a turn for the worse rather than for the better. Unfortunately, this ugly elitism pervades Nietzsche's writing and tarnishes its otherwise beautiful wisdom.

23. Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, 53.

24. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 127, 117.

25. *Ibid.*, 84.

26. *Ibid.*, 473.

27. *Ibid.*, 359.

28. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 174.

29. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 358.

30. The complex issue regarding Nietzsche's responsibility for the use of his writing to support the Fascist movement cannot be fully decided here. Yet, in my opinion, Nietzsche's concept of body is not healthy to the extent that it *too* rests on the utilitarian use of the other for the achievement of its heights.

31. For a depiction of the link between Nietzsche and these groups, see Carl A. Raschke, *Painted Black: From Drug Killings to Heavy Metal—the Alarming True Story of How Satanism Is Terrorizing Our Communities* (New York: Harper and Row, 1990).

32. Taylor, *Altarity*, 41–47 and 340–53.

33. There are of course others who fit this category, including Charles E. Winquist, author of *Epiphanies of Darkness: Deconstruction in Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), a work especially pertinent to "body" as it pertains to the "limits" of psychoanalysis and theology.

34. Carl A. Reschke, "The Deconstruction of God" in *Deconstruction and Theology*, eds. Thomas J. J. Altizer and others (New York: Crossroad Pub. Co., 1982), 1–2, quoting from Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. W. Kaufman (New York: Random House, 1974), 181.

35. Two of Raschke's works especially pertinent to this study are *The Alchemy of the Word: Language and the End of Theology* (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1979), and *Theological Thinking: An Inquiry* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988.)

36. Raschke, "The Deconstruction of God," 7–11.

37. Aside from *Altarity* already noted, see Mark C. Taylor, *De-constructing Theology* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Co., 1982); *Erring: A Postmodern A/theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); *Tears* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990); *Disfiguring* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) and *Notes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

38. Taylor, *Tears*, 206.

39. *Ibid.*, 93.

40. Taylor, *Erring*, 29.

41. See Mark C. Taylor, "The Politics of Theology," 59 *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* (Spring 1991), 1–37.

42. "Parapraxis" is a term borrowed from Freud which Taylor in *Tears* uses to depict his own endeavor of writing the "limit."

43. This critique might be more pertinent to *Tears* than to earlier writings. For example, in *Erring*, Taylor embraces Nietzsche's "joyous affirmation of the play of the world and of the innocence of becoming" (168) that erases the guilt of unhappy consciousness. The gentle "eros" of such "second innocence" recedes in the growing gale of "tears" in later writings.

44. Sharon Welch, *Communities of Resistance and Solidarity: a Feminist Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1985.) and *A Feminist Ethic of Risk* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990).

45. See chapter 2 of Welch, *A Feminist Ethic of Risk*.

46. *Ibid.*, 114.

47. Included in Welch's critique are the liberal theories of

Alistair MacIntyre, Stanley Hauerwas, Jurgen Habermas, H. R. Niebuhr, and Paul Tillich.

48. This notion of a “mystification of relations of domination” was first proposed by Mary Daly in *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973).

49. E.g., on page 137 of *A Feminist Ethic of Risk*, Welch links the body with desire and sets this over against a neutral, disinterested reason that has no body.

50. *Ibid.*, 138.

51. *Ibid.*, 167.

52. *Ibid.*, 178.

53. *Ibid.*, 96 and 175.

54. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 105.

55. *Ibid.*, 105.

56. See my 1991 American Academy of Religion presentation entitled, “Body as (Ex)tension or (Re)tension: From ‘Serpentine Wanderer’ to ‘La Mère qui jouit’”—a comparison of the work of Taylor and Kristeva, which attempts to delineate and appraise some features of Kristeva’s aesthetics.

57. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 76.