Nancy M. Frelick. *Délie as Other: Toward a Poetics of Desire in Scève's "Délie."* Lexington, KY: French Forum, 1994. Pp. 176.

"Corps mystique, Corps sacré: Textual Transformations of the Body from the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century," *Yale French Studies*, 86 (1994). Pp. 208.

The 1994 publication of *Yale French Studies* volume 86, "Corps mystique, Corps sacré," and Nancy Frelick's *Délie as Other* provides significant contributions to two important critical directions in the study of early modern literature and culture: theorizations of the body and theorizations of the poetic subject. The 11 essays in the *Yale French Studies* volume employ a range of poststructuralist approaches including gender theory, social historicism, and cultural semiotics to situate the body as physical entity as well as social and textual metaphor in works from the Middle Ages through the seventeenth century. Frelick's book, in contrast, focuses on a Lacanian psychoanalytic perspective to explore the male poetic subject and his female object of desire in Maurice Scève's 1544 Petrarchan lyric sequence, *Délie*. In terms of both their analytical strategies and their persuasive theoretical positions, these two works constitute stimulating reading for scholars and teachers of medieval and early modern studies.

In her re-examination of *Délie*, Frelick expands and deepens the psychoanalytic optic pursued in several recent studies of Scève's poetics and lyric subjectivity. Her Lacanian study evolves from the thesis that Scève and Lacan both privilege problems relating to desire, thought, and communication, and that both authors explore these problems through a hermetic discourse in which complex rhetorical strategies and plays on the signifier paradoxically resist and betray meaning. Conceptualizing the unattainability crisis at the very heart of the Petrarchan lyric situation in terms of the Lacanian mechanism of desire as eternal deferral and lack, Frelick develops a fascinating view of Scève's poetics in respect to four key facets of his lyric sequence: its fundamental oppositional structure incorporating death and life; its composite mythological underpinnings; its creation of a complex lyric subject and erotic object; and its enigmatic, indeterminate textual form.

Invoking Lacan's adherence to a structuralist model of relationships based on the binary couple similarity / opposition, Frelick centres on the insistent vacillation in the text between the narrator's perception of absence and presence, and of death and life, and traces it back to the moment of *innamoramento*. The sudden imposition of the Beloved's gaze in the lover's life is a moment of rupture and fragmentation that simultaneously creates a lack; the frequent repetitions of this *coup de foudre* therefore reflect the lover's attempt to fill the chasm and achieve a moment of wholeness and unification. He thus feels absence *in* presence, and by metaphorical extension, death *in* life. Insightfully extending an earlier analysis that had viewed this phenomenon as a figure of the Freudian repetition compulsion, Frelick relates the Scavian *innamoramento* to the Lacanian moment of primordial rupture when the subject is alienated from the Real by her/his progressive entry into the realms of the Imaginary and the Symbolic. Likewise,

she links the iterative pattern of the lover's experience to Lacan's notion of dreams as compensatory mechanisms imposed to reproduce an unfulfilled reality.

Frelick's discussion of the mythical framework of *Délie* is both illuminating and comprehensive. Whereas previous critical studies have focused principally on the impact of mythical allusions in individual *dizains* or on the in-depth elaboration of one specific myth throughout *Délie*, the author here uncovers a fundamental underlying narrative that structures the volume as a whole and reveals itself through a variety of other mythic intertexts. Identifying this basic narrative as one of rupture and fragmentation, she outlines its persistent incursion into the text via rehearsals of multiple Ovidian myths, resonances from Platonic and Neoplatonic dialogue, and implicit references to Judeo-Christian myths of language. These multiform figures of fragmentation, already hyperbolized in the primordial scene of the *innamoramento*, likewise provide Frelick with a structure to extend her Lacanian analysis of Scève's male subject and female object as divided and polyvalent entities. The male subject reveals an identity split between his persona of lover in the sensory world (the realm of the Imaginary) and his persona of poet in the world of language (the realm of the Symbolic). Similarly, *Délie* herself exists both as "other" (a partial image or phantasm in the realm of the Imaginary) and as transcendent "Other" (a figure incarnating ultimate knowledge, truth, and meaning in the realm of the Symbolic). Frelick movingly develops how the lyric subject's experience of desire as lack is doubled on the two levels of his identity: in the same way that he can never attain the female other as an adored visual object in his role as lover, he likewise can never accede to the ultimate meaning (the Signified) represented by *Délie* as Other in his role as poet — this because he inhabits the realm of the Symbolic and is unable to move beyond language (the law of the Signifier). While I would not go as far as Frelick when she asserts that the male subject fails to transcend in any measure his fragmented psychic experience, I agree strongly that his fundamental search for integration remains largely unresolved.

The final chapter of this study deals with the rich yet frustrating experience of reading *Délie*, specifically in respect to how Scève's "poetics of desire" — featuring repeated psychic rupture and indeterminacy — re-emerges in the formal composition of a text that is renowned for its hermetic structure, tortuous syntax, paradoxical diction, and rhetorical polyvalence. In the context of this acute material difficulty, the global itinerary of desire traced by the lyric subject (as poet and lover) parallels the itinerary of desire undertaken by the reader to understand and to discover meaning in her/his own textual journey. Indeed, as Frelick astutely argues, the urgency with which many readers have sought to ascribe a sense of transcendence to the narrator's experience reveals less about any synthetic closure in Scève's lyric project than it does about our own compelling need to find meaning and integration in his text. As far as Frelick's own text is concerned, perhaps only a deeper and more detailed analysis of individual *dizains* would enhance her readers' engagement with the poet's psychic and textual processes. This said, Nancy Frelick has written a subtle and powerful book that stands as one of the finest recent critical responses to Maurice Scève's enigmatic poetry.

If *Délie as Other* deals briefly with the male subject's tendency to fetishize and fragment the female body in a manner typical of the Petrarchan Renaissance lyric, volume 86 of *Yale French Studies* treats the figuration of the body in a greatly expanded set of forms and contexts. At the beginning of their preface, editors Françoise Jaouën and Benjamin Semples situate the body's position in the medieval and early modern world as the "central focus of reflection on the relationship between the physical and the sacred" and "above all else, the site of a tension, of a struggle to reconcile the two antagonistic natures of man." As Jaouën and Semples go on to elaborate, this pervasive duality has as its crucial referents the dramatic figures of the Incarnation and the Eucharist, whose paradoxical fusing of the sacred and the carnal — with all their inherent contradictions — leads to complex challenges concerning both artistic and textual representation. "Corps Mystique, Corps Sacré" goes on to explore these challenges though some of the myriad ways in which the sacred body is invoked, inscribed, and transformed in medieval and early modern culture and writing.

The essays that follow are ordered alphabetically by author and pursue the above goal in loosely connected form across a broad spectrum of textual genres, including political, philosophical, and theological treatise; medieval epic, hagiography, and romance; spiritual autobiography; musical and theatrical performance; fictional narrative; and historical memoir. A number of articles focus, first of all, on the Middle Ages. Alain Boureau studies how the Western medieval notion of the sacrality of one's own body (corporal ipseity) develops from elements latent in Christian doctrine that are "actualized" in thirteenth-century scholasticism. Brigitte Cazelles ambitiously presents textual examples from the thirteenth-century saint's life of Jean Paulus along with a discussion of Fouquet's fifteenth-century illumination of the martyrdom of saint Apollonia and of Andreas Vesalius's 1543 scientific treatise entitled *Fabric of the Human Body* in order to examine the representation of the sacred in works involving public exposure of the human body.

Continuing in part the hagiographic thread, Benjamin Semples's article on the cases of three female saints recounted in *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames* by Christine de Pizan and the prologue and the first *lai* of Marie de France analyzes how these female-authored texts empower women both to experience and regulate their own sexual desire independently of misogynistic male control. A female heroin is also the subject of Kevin Brownlee's essay on Jean d'Arras's late fourteenth-century romance, *Méluise*. In a subtle and articulate close reading of two key narrative moments in the text, Brownlee details the hybrid status of Méluise in terms of how she participates and is empowered in the contradictory realms of the erotic and the "natural," the courtly and the Christian, the human and the monstrous. The male epic hero, finally, takes centre stage in the essay by Sarah Kay on death and the sacred in the medieval *chansons de geste*. Kay thoughtfully engages the notion of the "primitive" sacred in Girard and Freud in order to argue for a spiritual character in epic death that transcends the Christian framework though which it is typically interpreted.

The other six essays in this issue span the period roughly from the end of the

sixteenth century to the early part of the eighteenth century. Taking up a striking example of early modern spectacular invention, Thomas Greene examines a royal theatre production performed in 1581 to honour King Henri III's wedding, and persuasively suggests its metaphorical representation as a harmonious "body" of diverse performative media, one designed to encourage renewed harmony in the body politic incarnated in the figure of the king. The semiotic and cultural analysis of royal marriages is extended in what for me is perhaps the most fascinating piece of the volume, Abby Zanger's "Making Sweat: Sex and the Gender of National Reproduction in the Marriage of Louis XIII." Here Zanger brilliantly analyzes a narrative account of the 1615 wedding of Louis XIII and the Spanish infanta Anne of Austria, privileging the brief description of the queen's perspiring body on one hand as an indispensable affirmation of monarchal power through her sexual and procreative "ripeness," and yet on the other hand as a mere alibi for the higher validation of male political coupling. Hélène Merlin expands the parameters of the so-called body politic in the discussion of a series of political and religious tracts that interrogate the very notion of the state as a mystical body linked to the sacramental mystery of the Eucharist. Passionate debate about the status of the Eucharist itself of course helped to fuel religious and political crises throughout early modern Europe, and is reflected in the polemic travel literature of the early Enlightenment, as demonstrated in Frank Lestringant's essay on exotic fictional narratives by George Psalmanaazaar and Jonathan Swift. The remaining two essays in the book deal with different aspects of the existential and textual impact of traumas and drives upon the body. Timothy Murray underscores the persistent ambivalence of the body as a site of both fascination and repulsion in a study of seventeenth-century stoic treatises and fiction, focusing on the works of d'Aubignac to identify a powerful masculine anxiety related to the spectacle of ascetic self-representation. And last, the life and writings of Blaise Pascal, as poignantly mediated by sickness and the spectre of death, are the subject of Alain Cantillon's compelling article, "Corpus Pascalis." Here Cantillon examines elements of the original Port Royal editions combining Pascal's own writings with his sister's biographical *Life of Monsieur Pascal* as a means to elaborate the tragic dualism of flesh and spirit that haunts the *Pensées* and to suggest the gradual substitution of a textual body (corpus) for the apologist's own dying physical body.

As may be expected by the stature of the contributors, the selections in this volume are of consistently high quality and participate innovatively in the many theoretical revisions characterizing contemporary medieval and early modern studies. In its role as scholarly tool the work could well profit from a somewhat expanded editors' preface that would briefly contextualize the individual essays and delineate broad thematic groupings among them, such as I have attempted to touch on here. Globally speaking, however, "Corps Mystique, Corps Sacré" rewards the reader with its own vigorous, dense, and enlightening textual body.

DEBORAH LESKO BAKER, *Georgetown University*