

risers is what fell.” Origen, as Riemer Roukema shows in a rather continuous commentary on passages from 1 Cor 15, has a nuanced view. Since Christ’s resurrection took place with the flesh he had, ours has to resemble his. In an attempt to explain the meaning of “spiritual body,” Origen employs the term εἶδος in its Platonic/Aristotelian sense of “form” as opposed to matter. Thus, the risen body will be spiritual since it has the same “form” as the earthly body without being material. But Origen stops short of saying that the final condition of spiritual bodies will be incorporeal.

Gilles Pelland’s essay on Hilary reveals an informed and sensitive theologian who stays close to the biblical text. In Phil 2.6–11 Christ passes from *forma servi* to *forma Dei*, but he does not cease to be flesh. What happens to Christ will happen to us, Hilary insists. This famous text he links with Phil 3.21, where it is said that our lowly bodies will be conformed to the body of Christ’s glory. It is a transformation by conformation, as Pelland explains.

Marie-AnneVannier’s treatment of St. Augustine is the closest thing to a systematic study in the volume although it is too short to be called such. She argues that the resurrection has a decisive place in Augustine’s thought from his earliest writings to his last, and the references she cites would tend to support her claim. It is to be hoped that this sketch will lead to a more complete study.

La Resurrection is a collection of competent and interesting studies about a central teaching of the Christian faith as interpreted by great thinkers in the Church’s early centuries. It casts a wide net, but succeeds in grappling with problems that remain a concern both for scholars and others as well.

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The Sex Lives of Saints: An Erotics of Ancient Hagiography

Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion

Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004

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As the author herself notes, the startling title of this book is “lightly ironic” but not oxymoronic (1); when understood in conjunction with the subtitle, it alerts the reader to one of the book’s major premises, namely, that narrow definitions of “sex” cannot account for the “exuberant eroticism” (1) that pervades ancient Christian asceticism, particularly in hagiographical writing. Rather than construing “sex” as genitally organized activity and thus interpreting ancient lives of saints as anti-erotic, Burrus argues that sanctity and *eros* form a pair. By showing how hagiography positions the saint as a subject of desire and as a desiring subject, Burrus challenges the stark distinctions that are often drawn between theology and sexuality, as well as between the holy and the erotic (and also between male and female). Self-consciously reading “otherwise” by comparison with traditional readings of saints’ lives, she has positioned the book as a

response both to ancient texts and to the continuing “repressive morality of sexuality” so forcefully analyzed by Foucault in his *History of Sexuality*. “Transgressing more than a few cherished orthodoxies,” Burrus aims “to affirm the holiness of a love that is simultaneously embodied and transcendent, sensual and spiritual, painful and joyous; that may encompass but can by no means be limited to . . . the demands of either biological reproduction or institutionalized marriage; that furthermore resists the reductions of the modern cult of the orgasm” (1–2).

This is a heady agenda, and Burrus’s insistent exposure of the excessive and transgressive desire that she detects in hagiography will be unsettling for those who prefer a more positivist practice of historiography. But interpretive discomfort is, I think, part of the power of the book, whose concern is not with anchoring “the facts” but rather with teaching the reader how to see hagiographical texts with new eyes. The book is teacherly, but it is a demanding pedagogy. Those familiar with Burrus’s previous work will know that she is expertly informed in feminist theory and theories of gender; here she has expanded her purview to include a wide range of contemporary philosophical writings on desire (Leo Bersani, Georges Bataille, and Jean Baudrillard, to name the most prominent of them). Burrus’s interweaving of ancient and modern voices is as meditative as it is analytical, but the overall effect is to induce the reader into an alternative view of what constitutes the allure of the saintly life.

The book builds on the large corpus of scholarly work done in the last twenty years on late ancient sexuality and the body, but it adds its own distinctive contribution by viewing hagiographical literature as a sign of an important moment in the history of the desiring subject. The introduction offers a complex assessment of Foucault’s (unfinished) analysis of Christian asceticism, and this clears the way for the author’s extension and revision of his position on early Christian morality, namely, that “the eruption of a powerful crosscurrent of asceticized eroticism” (3) in early Christianity was more powerful and more central than Foucault had allowed. In the four chapters that follow, a wide range of hagiographical writing is subjected to minute analysis which exposes these texts as “queer,” a term derived from contemporary “queer theory” that designates, on the one hand, a mode of interpretation that investigates the undecidability or shifting of gender categories and identifications, and, on the other, “erotic practices that actively resist and/or put into question the very categories of the ‘normal,’ the ‘conventional,’ or the ‘natural’” (168, n. 66). “Queer” is not, then, a term of derision or critique. Instead, it points to the unstable and shifting identities (including especially gendered identities) of saints, from Jerome’s Paul, Hilarion, and Malchus to the so-called harlot saints Pelagia and Mary of Egypt. It also points to the extremes of saintly human longing as in Jerome’s presentation of his friend Paula (in *Ep.* 108), whose severely self-abasing desire to be a bride/lover of Christ anticipates an afterlife that is “sublimely carnal” (68).

It is difficult to give more than a glancing sense of Burrus’s presentation of saintly *eros* because of the literary style that she adopts in this book. I would characterize it as a kind of performative reading that follows a given hagiography

from beginning to end, both narrating the text and interpreting it at the same time. The four chapters do form a coherent project, but not in the conventional sense of a linear argument; instead, each succeeding chapter circles back on or revisits topics that build toward the overall view of hagiography's construction of saintly asceticism as a performance of desire. At the risk of doing the complexity and intricacy of the book's argument an injustice, I will mention one or two features of each chapter that struck me as crucial for grasping the perspective of the book as a whole.

Chapter 1, "Fancying Hermits: Sublimation and the Arts of Romance," contains a thoroughly compelling reading of the "'homonormativity' of ascetic sociality" (45), especially as seen in Jerome's hagiographies of Paul and Hilarion, and it argues persuasively for a view of hagiography as "a remarkably plastic genre" (24), a view adopted throughout the book. Chapter 2, "Dying for a Life: Martyrdom, Masochism, and Female (Auto)Biography," is remarkable for its exposure of the "eroticized death" (59) accorded to so many female saints (Paula, Macrina, Monica) by their male hagiographers. Chapter 3, "Hybrid Desire: Empire, Sadism, and the Soldier Saint," convincingly narrates the passion of the hagiographer himself (Sulpicius Severus) as well as the hybrid quality of the saintly self (here, St. Martin, but the theme of fractured subjectivity pervades the book as a whole). Chapter 4, "Secrets of Seduction: The Lives of the Holy Harlots," contains a very suggestive discussion of conversion as seduction as well as a view of the "coincidence of extremes of sinfulness and sanctity in seductively feminized figures" (131). In their own ways all of the chapters contribute to the book's view of the paradoxical carnality of saintly Lives.

Finally, this would be an incomplete review without the acknowledgment that this is not only a scholarly analysis of ancient hagiographical texts; it is also a very personal book. Burrus interweaves her own voice, as well as those of the theorists in whose company she writes, into her performative interpretations. There is a good deal of playful and sly humor in this book, but there is also a serious grappling with authorial stance, especially when the author is a woman writing from a feminist position about male-authored texts in a tradition that has often not been receptive to what French philosopher Luce Irigaray has called "a possible operation of the feminine in language" (50). I myself found this grappling very compelling, not only for its honest recognition of an interpreter's necessary implication in what she studies but also because it confirms the author's own transgressive love for the material in the book. Style and matter are mutually reinforcing here. In any case, I think readers will agree that after *The Sex Lives of Saints* hagiography will never be the same.

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