

# Criminal Bodies

**Abstract** This chapter examines historic views on the potency, power and agency of the living criminal body in the early modern and modern periods as a way of understanding the potency of the criminal corpse. The main section of the chapter focuses on the witch as the most powerful of living criminal bodies. There is discussion on phrenological interpretations of criminality and the work of Cesare Lombroso on the ‘born criminal’. The meaning of cruentation, or the ordeal by bleeding corpse, is also explored.

**Keywords** Witch · Phrenology · Humours · Bleeding corpse  
Lombroso

In the medieval and early modern period, it was widely thought that God left his imprints on all living things, and it was an aspect of natural magic for humans to try and interpret their meaning to understand better the world He had created. With regard to human bodies, this meant that the lines on the hand, the wrinkles on the forehead, the shape of the nose, the colour of hair, the number of moles and other visible bodily features, signified how God moulded each person and imbued him or her with an individual character, identity and destiny. This art or science of physiognomy drew on concepts from the ancient world that expounded all-encompassing theories regarding the interconnectedness

of matter. The doctrine of signatures, which governed much of herbal medicine, observed, for instance, that plants, animals and objects that resembled parts of the body were imbued with healing properties appropriate to that body part. Thus, liverwort was used for liver complaints. In Christian terms, God left such clues throughout the natural world to aid humankind. Physiognomy was also tied up with Galenic humoral theory, in other words, the notion that the body was governed by four humours—black bile, yellow bile, blood and phlegm. Imbalances between these humours caused illness and behavioural problems, as well as hot and cold temperaments, which could only be cured by restoring a healthy equilibrium. The notion that criminals had ‘bad blood’ derived, for example, from the idea that they were prone to excess bile. In other words, they had bilious constitutions. The traits of potential criminality—or, at least, the humoral passions and characteristics symptomatic of criminal behaviour—might be externally observable. Therefore, people with red hair, which in Galenic terms denoted a hot, choleric temperament, were considered more prone to violence, and a monobrow denoted a dangerous person. Such associations remain in the popular consciousness even today.<sup>1</sup>

Renaissance anatomists believed that through their dissections of executed criminals they found physical evidence that the criminal body could also be *anatomically* different from normal bodies, just as saints’ bodies exhibited signs of divine influence. As Katharine Park has noted, ‘the deeds of both were assumed to be supernaturally inspired, whether by God or the Devil.’ Thus, when Florentine physician Antonio Benivieni (1443–1502) dissected a notorious thief, he found what he believed to be hair covering his heart. This, he concluded, was due to a particularly hot complexion.<sup>2</sup> Advances in anatomical science over the next two centuries rendered such interpretations obsolete, but the ambition to be able to identify the signs of innate criminality in and on the human body did not go away. The search was now on for the biological causation of crime, rather than for signs of divine influence.

The late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century anatomy schools had a regular supply of criminal corpses, and for some, influenced by early psychiatry, this opportunity enabled the study of the relationship between brain development and criminality. The most controversial exponent was the German physiologist Franz Josef Gall (1758–1828), who was the first to distinguish clearly between the grey and white matter of the brain. Gall’s studies led him to believe that different parts

or 'organs' of the brain controlled different character and behavioural traits; their lesser or greater size determined their expression through action and thought in everyday life. Gall believed, furthermore, that the skull developed in relation to the size of the different parts of the brain. This scientific idea that the bumps on the skull reflected the shape of the brain and, therefore, could be used to determine the character of the individual led to the pseudoscience of phrenology. Gall and the phrenologists identified two particular areas diagnostic of criminality: the organs of destructiveness and combativeness. Gall had originally identified an 'organ of murder', having found protuberances in the same place on two murderers' skulls, but his influential disciple Johann Spurzheim (1776–1832) disliked naming an organ 'according to its abuse' and so labelled it according to the propensity for destructive behaviour.<sup>3</sup> Gall and Spurzheim's analysis of the skulls of unwed mothers accused of infanticide apparently revealed, furthermore, that 25 out of 29 had a weak 'organ of love of children'. The implications of all this were deeply provocative from a religious point of view, as they challenged the fundamental link between sin and criminal behaviour. Gall was accused of undermining the unity of the soul, free will and Christianity itself. His publications were placed on the Catholic Church's *Index* of forbidden books.<sup>4</sup>

The use of phrenology as a predictive branch of criminology was also controversial. It stood to reason that if criminals could be identified phrenologically, then one could anticipate, control and prevent crime. The potential was explosive for penal policy. Writing in 1836, the Procurator Fiscal of Lanarkshire, George Salmond, thought that the new science could lead to 'the better classification of criminals confined before and after trial, to the selection and treatment of convicts, and even to the more certain identification of such criminals as might effect their escape from justice or confinement.'<sup>5</sup> But for every murderer's skull that seemed to confirm criminal tendencies, there were others that did not match. William Saville was hanged in Nottingham in 1844 for the murder of his wife and three children, yet a phrenological study of Saville concluded in frustration: 'there was nothing in the posterior part of the head which attracted particular attention. The organs of Destructiveness were not in the least protuberant. Combativeness and Amativeness were moderate. Now, what are we to say to all this? As an individual, I feel quite confounded.'<sup>6</sup> However, it was investigations inside the skull that thoroughly undermined the theory. From early on, fellow anatomists

critiqued Gall's theories and those of his followers. The American surgeon T. Sewall stated categorically in 1837: 'the division of the brain into phrenological organs is entirely hypothetical; it is not sustained by dissection'. Because the early phrenologists had used comparative animal anatomy to draw up the typology of the various organs of the brain, referring to leonine, canine or dove-like qualities, for example, one initial advocate of Gall's work, John C. Warren, professor at the Massachusetts Medical College, decided to anatomise the head of a lion to confirm that the organs of combativeness and courage were unduly large. However, he found instead that they were no bigger than the corresponding organs of phrenologically inoffensive sheep.<sup>7</sup>

One sceptic wrote in the 1830s, 'phrenology has more lives than any cat, or it could not have survived till now, perplexing weak minds, though supported by very clever ones.'<sup>8</sup> Indeed, while phrenology eventually fizzled out of medical discourse during the mid-nineteenth century, it inspired the new discipline of criminal anthropology, and the notion of the 'born criminal' espoused by the influential Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso (1835–1909). He and others measured, weighed and analysed hundreds of living and executed criminals to draw up a scientific typology of characteristics. Some features were behavioural consequences, such as a higher frequency of wrinkles—the criminal being more prone to cynical laughter—but other features were considered inherent, biological throwbacks to a more primitive stage of humanity and arrested development. Still, Lombroso had to admit that only 40% of convicted male criminals he analysed bore a characteristic criminal feature, and even less a combination that could convincingly *predict* criminal behaviour.<sup>9</sup> The criminal anthropologists also looked inside the body. It was thought in Italian folklore that the absence of blushing was a sign of a dissolute life, so blood-flows in different parts of the criminal body were measured and the dilation of blood vessels in the face analysed, leading Lombroso to confirm that criminals were not prone to facial flushes. His studies 'showed' that of a sample of 122 female criminals, 79% of murderers, 82% of infanticides and 90% of thieves could not blush.<sup>10</sup> Lombroso and his ilk were, in some respects, trying to confirm centuries-old received wisdom that had been underpinned by humoral theory. He also observed, for instance, that red-haired people were disproportionately more prone to criminality, particularly crimes of lust.

The eighteenth- and nineteenth-century attempts to identify and classify born criminals or, at least, indicate individual's propensity for crime,

were framed as scientific endeavours, and some good science as well as a lot of very bad science emerged from the work of phrenologists and criminal anthropologists. But in one sense, they were driven by the same venerable desire as the natural magicians centuries before, that is they were trying to understand how nature not nurture stigmatised the criminal body.

## THE WITCH

While the anatomists, phrenologists and criminologists carried out their probing, prodding and cutting of criminals and criminal corpses in the name of science, for very different reasons the common people were doing the same to the bodies of the most feared of living criminals—witches.

While the average criminal was generally a common person led to commit crime by a variety of circumstances and passions, the witch was an extraordinary evildoer, a supernatural criminal who could kill with a look or mere touch, who could transform into a cat or a hare better to perform his or her malicious acts of envy. Although by the late eighteenth century the crime of witchcraft was no longer recognised in European law (except for a few legal anomalies), fear of witchcraft was still widespread. Dozens of accused witches were murdered by mobs or individuals, and thousands were abused, ostracised and assaulted long after the witch trials ended.<sup>11</sup>

There was a rich folklore concerning what witches looked like and how they could be identified. From the early woodcut depictions in sixteenth-century witch-trial pamphlets to the folklore records of the nineteenth century, the body of the stereotypical witch was thought to bear physical traits of their criminality: some through birth, such as sharp prominent noses and squinting eyes; some characteristics engendered through age, such as a gobber tooth and hunched back.<sup>12</sup> As we have seen, according to Galenic medicine unbalanced humours caused sickness: an old woman, whose body ceased being cleansed through the menstrual process, became herself diseased and contagious. Something happened to ageing female bodies that relocated them to a marginal, aggressive zone. The horror of decay did not spread from the image of the wizened body, but from the grotesque and fetid internal state dependent on the functioning of blood. Weak and corrupted blood flowed towards disease and death and became the gateway to demonic

forces that disrupted the humoral balance. Toxicity was not merely physical: spiritual factors contributed to it and it expressly manifested itself in melancholy, which resulted from the abundance of black bile, thickened blood or corrupted, stagnant humours. These substances reached the brain, sickening the mind and infecting the faculty of imagination, which then became easy prey for the manipulative works of the Devil. He took advantage of bad humours to interfere with the fantasies of the witch, using her as a vehicle to attack the emotional environment of the community. According to the ardent witch believer, Joseph Glanvill, witches' familiars 'breath'd some vile vapour into the body of the Witch' that tainted her blood and spirits with a 'noxious quality', which, in turn, infected her imagination.<sup>13</sup> So body and imagination mutually influenced each other through blood. In the words of Robert Burton, the author of *The Anatomy of Melancholy*:

For as the Body workes upon the Mind, by his bad humors, disturbing the Spirits, sending grosse fumes into the Braine; and so *per consequens* disturbing the Soule, and all the faculties of it, with feare, sorrow &c. ... so on the other side, the Minde most effectually workes upon the Body, producing by his passions and perturbations, miraculous alterations, as Melancholy, Despaire, cruell diseases, and sometimes death it selfe.<sup>14</sup>

This explanation provided a scientific basis for witchcraft *confessions*. But even the likes of Reginald Scot, Elizabethan critic of 'witch-mongering', also thought that it was possible for people to enchant or 'fascinate' others through the eyes through similar processes: 'For the poison and disease in the eie infecteth the aire next unto it, and the same proceedeth further, carrieng with it the vapor and infection of the corrupted blood: with the contagion whereof, the eies of the beholders are most apt to be infected.' Thereby postmenopausal women could wittingly and unwittingly affect people through the 'vapours' which rose from their polluted bodies and came out from the eyes and spread contagion into others: 'as these beames & vapors doo proceed from the hart of the one, so are they turned into blood about the hart of the other: which blood disagreeing with the nature of the bewitched partie, infebleth the rest of his bodie'.<sup>15</sup>

The idea of the witch's body as a walking source of emanating pollution was grounded in the notion of the porosity and permeability of human and animal bodies, and the consequent dangers of contamination

from fluids such as blood, urine and milk. In a number of eighteenth-century Swedish church court prosecutions we find, for example, accusations that witches turned cows' milk into blood. This was sometimes thought to be the result of witch-hares, which were made from witches' blood, sucking the cows' teats. The pure milk was contaminated as a consequence. This led to the notion of bewitched butter bleeding when cut. In the early 1770s, for instance, a widow named Anna Andersdotter suspected one Karin Mansdotter of bewitching her cows' milk. She took some butter made from the contaminated milk to a local cunning woman, who confirmed that the butter was 'full of blood and bloody pus'.<sup>16</sup>

Just as Lombroso had to admit that most criminals did not exhibit a complete set of criminal physical traits, so many accused witches, whether in the early modern or modern periods, did not fit the stereotypical image. Some were male, many were young women, and some were described as attractive. Therefore, we need to be careful about conflating contemporary demonological and medical theories regarding the witch's body with the complex social and emotional factors that actually led to people being accused of witchcraft. Just because you looked like a witch did not mean you were believed to be one.

Some attributes of the witch's body were accrued rather than being innate or consequent upon age and gender. In other words, a normal body was corrupted and marked as such by the Devil or his minions, every goodness inside the person was exchanged for the power to harm. Demonologists such as Jean Bodin and Jean Boguet attested that at sabbats the Devil placed his claw on the forehead of the witch to take away the power of the holy chrism and of the baptism. He might also ask witches to sign a pact with their own blood, as a symbol of loyalty, in the manner of ancient oaths. In his *Compendium Maleficarum* (1608), the Italian priest Francesco Guazzo stressed that of the witch's bodily goods the Devil claimed the blood.<sup>17</sup> Through the pact, the Devil impressed a seal on the human body, which invisibly transfigured it, turning it into a criminal body that needed to be abused and destroyed. Early modern confessions from Scotland, Denmark and the Basque region illustrate the demonological notion that the Devil physically assaulted the witches he recruited, biting, scratching, or painfully licking their bodies, provoking an injury that had permanent effects.<sup>18</sup> But how did this mark appear? And how did it influence the perception of the witch? According to the demonologists, the mark was usually well hidden, often close

to the sexual organs, though men also bore it on the eyelids, the arm-pit or the shoulder, while women could have it on their breasts. More importantly, it was insensible and could not bleed even if pierced, and could be confused with a range of skin marks and imperfections.

The English witch received the mark in the form of a teat, an extra nipple, or a dark spot, from which a devilish familiar spirit drank blood. The familiar, which usually appeared in the form of a dog, cat, mouse or other small animal, had a symbiotic relationship with the witch. Just to mention a few famous examples, we can look at the accusations from the end of the sixteenth century. At Chelmsford in Essex, Elizabeth Francis confessed to keeping a familiar in the form of a spotted cat named Satan: 'Every time that he did anything for her, she said that he required a drop of blood, which she gave him by pricking herself, sometime in one place and then in another, and where she pricked herself there remained a red spot which was still to be seen'. The same familiar, changing its form from cat to toad and then to a black dog, was thought to be kept by Agnes and Joan Waterhouse, mother and daughter, who gave it blood by pricking their hands or faces and putting the substance directly into its mouth.<sup>19</sup> In 1579, at Windsor, other witches confessed to giving blood, sometimes mixed with milk, to their familiar spirits, taking it from 'the flank' and 'the right-hand wrist'.<sup>20</sup> At the famous trial at St. Osyth, Essex, in 1582, the 8-year-old Thomas Rabbet testified that his mother, Ursula Kemp, had four familiars, a grey cat called Titty, Tiffin, a white lamb, Piggin, a black toad, and Jack, a black cat, which, 'in the night-time will come to his mother and suck blood of her upon her arms and other places of her body'.<sup>21</sup> Descriptions of familiars changed through the seventeenth century, under the increasing influence of demonological beliefs about the Devil's mark. While they became more ethereal and impish in form and appearance, their sucking habits developed a sexual connotation, the teat being located 'a little above the fundiment', or 'in the secret parts' of the accused.<sup>22</sup>

Blood as a means of exchange, contagion and empowerment is the key element to understanding how the witch's criminal body affected the surrounding human landscape. Taken away by the Devil at the moment of the pact, as illustrated by Italian cases, it was compensated for from witches' young victims. According to the philosopher Pico Della Mirandola, the witch killed infants by drying up their blood. In a treatise written at the end of the sixteenth century, it was explained that midwives could sometime become witches, bewitching children to death,



hitting and wounding their heads to suck the blood and the breath out.<sup>23</sup> During 1539, the Modenese witch Orsolina la Rossa di Gaiato confessed to wasting small children by sucking ‘their blood from under the nails of their hands or of their feet, or else from their lips’, and then preparing a *focaccia* with the congealed fluid.<sup>24</sup> In 1540, the accused witch Cecca confessed to having ridden on a he-goat with a friend to the house of Francesco Collavoli in San Miniato, a village close to Florence, where they sucked the blood from the left breast of Collavoli’s little daughter, provoking her sickness and death within days.<sup>25</sup> These examples characterize the witch as a stealer of life force. Sickness caused by witchcraft was an act of theft and a struggle between two bodies: one healthier and younger, the other driven by an otherworldly aggressive thirst. When blood, the vital element, was exchanged between the Devil and the witch, the latter was granted a form of criminal power, which she actively exercised as a living vampire. However, the witch’s blood itself was a nourishing, enriching substance for supernatural allies.

### THE WITCH’S BLOOD AS A CURE

So far, we have been looking at early modern sources to try and understand how intellectuals conceptualised and explained the agency of the witch’s criminal body according to religious and scientific thought at the time. However, the extent to which any of these ideas were understood in popular cultures is difficult to gauge. What is clear from the actions of people, though, is that witch’s blood was thought to be inextricably linked to certain types of bewitchment. The act of witchcraft established a physical and spiritual relationship with the victim’s body. To break the spell one could, therefore, attempt, in turn, to afflict the body of the witch. This sometimes manifested itself as a brutal physical assault, beating the witch into removing the spell. Harmful rituals of sympathetic magic, such as the use of witch bottles, were performed to cause witches excruciating pain at a distance. However, the ritualistic practice of drawing blood from a witch in early modern and modern England leads us back to notions of bodily imbalance and sympathy, and the witch’s criminal body as liminal matter between the spirit and the physical world. There are numerous cases recorded from the era of the witch trials.<sup>26</sup> It was not a fail-safe therapy, though, because the blood did not always flow from the witch as it should. Thus when, in Norfolk in 1617, Edmund Newton attempted to draw blood from Mary Smith, the

nails he used ‘turned like feathers’.<sup>27</sup> When, in mid-seventeenth-century Yorkshire, one Richard Brown accused the suspected witch, Elizabeth Lambe, of drawing ‘his heart’s blood from him’, he concluded that ‘if he could draw blood of her, he hoped he should amend’. He then scratched her until the blood ran.<sup>28</sup> We can interpret Brown’s thinking in terms of humoral balance, but in popular cultural terms he was probably guided by the near universal concept of limited good. This was the notion that there was a finite amount of everything, and that someone’s loss was someone else’s gain. If a cow dried up then a neighbour’s cow must be producing more abundantly. Witches were supernatural agents in this, taking away the substance or replacing it with a polluted one and repurposing it for themselves.

While intellectual discourses on the polluting and liminal nature of the witch’s body ceased by the early eighteenth century, the scratching of witches to draw blood continued into the nineteenth century and beyond. In 1846 in Appledore, Devon, Roger Fursdon and his daughter, who was thought to be bewitched, assaulted the 14-year-old Richard Evans with a knife and then a pin. For the same reason, in 1852 at Norwell, Nottinghamshire, Ann Williamson was scratched with a darning needle by Thomas Freeman. Two of his daughters had fallen ill and the first one, who was ‘reduced to a complete skeleton’, had frequently uttered the name of the old woman.<sup>29</sup> The level of assault was often carefully judged to draw blood but not to cause substantive wounding, as a Scottish prisoner from Tain explained in the 1840s:

People believe in my neighbourhood that if anyone gets blood from a witch she can do them no more harm, and that is the reason I cut M. with my penknife, but I held the knife so that it might go into her as short a way as possible. All I wanted was to get blood. I was not the first person who wanted to draw blood from her. Those who advised me to cut her told me that if I did not she would drown me and the rest who were in the boat.<sup>30</sup>

In the numerous cases from the nineteenth and early twentieth century, there is no mention of the blood exchange indicated by Richard Brown above, nor hints of humoral or limited good notions. There is a general sense, of course, of health taken by the witch and health restored by the drawing of blood. It is possible that scratching had become received practice, while the rationale behind it was largely lost in popular belief.

What is clear is the apparent efficacy people attributed to the action. 'I have drawn your blood and broke the spell, and now you have no more power over him', and 'it was a lucky scratch for me', are representative statements from nineteenth-century cases. In 1867, John Davis from Stratford-upon-Avon was condemned to 18 months' hard labour for having assaulted Jane Ward, but he was happy because, he asserted, the witch had no more power over him, because he had got her blood.<sup>31</sup>

In north-eastern Europe, we find a distinct tradition of scratching or beating witches to draw blood in order to drink it as a cure. In a widely reported court case from Sztum (Poland) in 1880, it was heard how the Prussian cunning man, Dr. Kotlevski, had treated a woman suffering from epilepsy. He claimed she was possessed by four devils conjured into her body by a local witch. Three of the devils he boasted to have exorcised with his magic, but the fourth proved stubborn, he said, so he went to the suspected witch's cottage and attacked her with a heavy cudgel to draw blood and collect it for his patient. A neighbour intervened and Kotlevski was arrested. In Schonbeck, West Prussia, in 1883, the daughter of a cabinet-maker was recommended to ingest the blood obtained by pricking the finger of a supposed witch in order to be cured of the 3-year-long sickness she attributed to witchcraft. Seven years later, another prosecution ensued in Prussia when a well-to-do gentleman drew blood from the arm of an accused witch to give his bewitched wife to drink. Finally, in 1907, in the Polish village of Wieliszew, not far from Warsaw, Marya Zhroh, a farmer's daughter, attributed her illness to the witchery of her neighbour, Josephine Zlolkow. Following the victim's request, some villagers assaulted Zlolkow, collecting the blood flowing from her nose and ears and giving it to Marya to drink. She, then, like many witch-scratchers, affirmed to feel suddenly better.<sup>32</sup>

### CORPSES, EVIDENCE AND FEELINGS

The witch was not the only living criminal body that engendered spiritual or magical responses. While in demonological thought the witch's criminality depended upon interaction with demonic entities, other criminal bodies generated supernatural or miraculous manifestations through the disruption of the blood and the soul, rather than the emanation of power or intrinsic potency. This is illustrated by the concept of cruentation or the ordeal by touch, whereby it was thought that the corpse of a murdered person would bleed when touched by the murderer.

In medieval theological terms, as Sara Butler observes, blood was the vessel containing the soul and so cruentation was ‘easily understood as the soul speaking after the body has lost the capacity’.<sup>33</sup> Sometimes, the mere presence of the guilty would cause the blood to flow.

The practice of corpse-touching, and religious, legal and medical questions regarding it, seeped into the age of the witch trials and cropped up in the growing debates about the continuation of miracles beyond the biblical age.<sup>34</sup> In his *Daemonologie* (1597), King James I and VI noted that ‘in a secret murther, if the deade carcase be at any time thereafter handled by the murtherer, it wil gush out of blood, as if the blud wer crying to the heaven for revenge of the murtherer, God having appoynted that secret super-naturall signe.’<sup>35</sup> In considering the matter, the seventeenth-century physician and witchcraft sceptic, John Webster, argued that the moment of death did not always correspond to the departure of the soul:

the Soul being yet in the Body, retaining its power of sensation, fancy and understanding, will easily have a presension of the murderer, and then no marvail that through the vehement desire of revenge, the irascible and concupiscible faculties do strongly move the blood, that before was beginning to be stagnant, to motion and ebullition, and may exert so much force upon the organs as for some small time to move the whole body, the hands, or the lips and nostrils.<sup>36</sup>

Webster explained the relationship between the body and the soul in terms of a divine love that violent death brutally interrupted: thus, the soul, still present in the corporeal dimension, claimed and obtained revenge through the sweating of the vital fluid.<sup>37</sup> Blood enlivened the residual vitality of the corpse and at the same time it constituted an instrument of the soul to re-establish a moral order, broken by criminal actions. Little was said, though, about the agency of the murderer in this relationship. But it clearly was essential.

Cruentation remained a judicial test into the eighteenth century in some parts of Europe, although it was increasingly held to be mere superstition by coroners and the judiciary. Eighteenth-century editions of Michael Dalton’s influential guide for magistrates, *The Countrey Justice* (1630), continued to cite cruentation as a cause of suspicion in murder cases.<sup>38</sup> Into the nineteenth century, the ordeal remained a popular judicial reflex, though not an official one, in response to suspected

murders. When, in 1827, a 15-year-old boy named James Urie was found drowned near Wandsworth in suspicious circumstances, the body was fished out and several people were asked to touch the face of the corpse. When a boy named Taylor did so, blood was seen to leak out of Urie's nose. This caused much suspicion in the neighbourhood, but no prosecution was sought for Urie's death. Three years later, in October 1830, William Edden, a gardener of Thame, Oxfordshire, was found murdered in a field near his home. The suspect, a sheep-thief named Benjamin Tyler, denied the crime and the evidence was initially found to be circumstantial. It transpired in evidence that Edden's wife had requested Tyler to touch her husband's corpse to test his innocence but he had refused to do so.<sup>39</sup>

The fundamental aspect is not only that the victim's corpse actually bled when touched by the murderer, but the emotional upheaval of those involved and their need to placate the injured soul of the victim as much as their own fears and resentments. The living had to negotiate with the deceased to allow the soul to begin its journey and the corpse to recover its resting place. The living criminal body, through its sympathetic link to the victim, was the agent that enabled the spiritual-medical miracle to occur. There were other related customs concerning corpse-touching, though, that did not concern murderers. At Plymouth in December 1879, during the examination of Mrs. West, murdered by her husband, two servant girls visited their dead mistress and one told the other to touch the body, so 'to prevent dreaming about it, or seeing it again'. For the same reason, in Lincolnshire it was a common tradition to touch a dead body, whether it belonged to a friend or to a stranger, while in the East Riding of Yorkshire, up to the beginning of the twentieth century, it was believed that kissing the corpse ensured never being afraid of the dead. The nineteenth-century folklorist, William Henderson, who thought these traditions had their origins in cruentation, explained that through touching the corpse, the living communicated to the deceased person that they meant no harm, but had only peaceful feelings towards him or her.<sup>40</sup> Touching the corpse was a means to tame it, resolving alleged or actual conflicts between the living and the dead. The issuing of blood in the presence of a murderer suggests, though, that the relationship between blood and soul was crucial to the act of divine trial, and that the other customs were based on a more pragmatic relationship between the living, the dead and afterlife interventions.

Exploring the potency of living criminal bodies in the past throws up a series of interconnected ideas and theories current across the centuries, which were orthodoxy in the early modern period and then became largely restricted to popular cultures by the nineteenth century. Physiognomy, humours, sympathy and contagion all appear as medical factors in how living criminal bodies were thought to express criminality and to have influence on the people around them. Then there were the religious and moral issues of sin, redemption and the fate of the soul. As both a medical and spiritual force, blood appears to be a crucial link between these various medical and religious factors. The witch and the bleeding corpse displayed the notion of crime as both spiritual sickness and physical power. Spiritual crime manifested in the witch as an indispensable, contingent characteristic, able to turn the natural fragility of a human body against society. The body of the witch was clearly potent in life, but there is little in the literature of the early modern period or in the folklore of the nineteenth century that suggests that the corpses of executed or deceased witches were considered to have magical properties. By contrast, cruentation suggests that the common criminal's body, while marked by God or nature, was only actively potent after execution. And this is what we shall now explore.

## NOTES

1. Martin Porter, *Windows of the Soul: Physiognomy in European Culture 1470–1780* (Oxford, 2005), p. 12.
2. Katharine Park, 'The Criminal and the Sainly Body: Autopsy and Dissection in Renaissance Italy', *Renaissance Quarterly* 47 (1994) 26. See also, Francesco Paolo de Ceglia, 'Thinking with the Saint: The Miracle of Saint Januarius of Naples and Science in Early Modern Europe', *Early Science and Medicine* 19 (2014) 133–173.
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4. Anne Harrington, *Medicine, Mind, and the Double Brain: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Thought* (Princeton, 1987), p. 9.
5. Quoted in George Coombe, *A System of Phrenology* (New York, 1842), p. 502.
6. 'Case of William Saville', *The Phrenological Journal*, 17 (1844) 387.

7. See, for example, B.H. Coates, 'Comments on some of the Illustrations derived by Phrenology from Comparative Anatomy—with Reference to a late Review of Dr. Warren's Work on the Nervous System', *The Philadelphia Journal of the Medical and Physical Sciences* 7 (1823) 58–80.
8. *The London and Paris Observer* 13 (1837) 632.
9. David Horn, *The Criminal Body: Lombroso and the Anatomy of Deviance* (New York, 2003), pp. 13–16.
10. Horn, *Criminal Body*, ch. 5.
11. See, for example, Owen Davies, 'Magic in Common and Legal Perspectives', in David J. Collins (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Magic and Witchcraft in the West: From Antiquity to the Present* (Cambridge, 2015), pp. 521–546.
12. See, for example, Sarah Ferber, 'Body of the Witch', in Richard M. Golden (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft: The Western Tradition* (Santa Barbara, 2006), Vol. 1, pp. 131–133.
13. Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus triumphatus, or, Full and plain evidence concerning witches and apparitions* (London, 1681), p. 17.
14. Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (London, 1621), p. 119.
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