

## **The Feeling Heart in Medieval and Early Modern Europe**

# **Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Culture**

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**LXVII**

# The Feeling Heart in Medieval and Early Modern Europe



Meaning, Embodiment, and Making

Edited by

Katie Barclay and Bronwyn Reddan

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Cover image: Detail of a miniature of the allegorical personifications of Friendly Expression and Courteous Manner, catching flighty hearts in their net; from Pierre Sala, *Petit Livre d'Amour*, France (Paris and Lyon), c. 1500, Stowe MS 955, f. 13r ([stowe\\_ms\\_955\\_f13r](#))

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# Contents

Acknowledgements — V

List of Figures — IX

Katie Barclay and Bronwyn Reddan

**The Feeling Heart: Meaning, Embodiment, and Making — 1**

## Part 1: Meaningful Hearts

Patricia Simons

**1 The Flaming Heart: Pious and Amorous Passion in Early Modern European Medical and Visual Culture — 19**

Chloé Vondenhoff

**2 Matter(s) of the Heart in *Yvain* and *Ívens saga* — 43**

Carol J. Williams

**3 Two Views of the Feeling Heart in Troubadour Song — 59**

Bronwyn Reddan

**4 The Battle for Control of the Heart in Charles Perrault's *Dialogue de l'Amour et l'Amitié* (1660) — 79**

## Part 2: Embodied Hearts

Kathryn L. Smithies

**5 The Leper's Courageous Heart in Jean Bodel's *Les Congés* — 97**

Clare Davidson

**6 "For wele or woo": Lyrical Negotiations of the Cognizant Heart in Middle English — 113**

Colin Yeo

**7 "The Grave Where Buried Love Doth Live": Hearts-Imagery and Bakhtinian Grotesque in Early Modern English Poetry — 129**

Susan Broomhall

- 8 Heart Tombs: Catherine de' Medici and the Embodiment of Emotion — 143**

### **Part 3: Productive Hearts**

June-Ann Greeley

- 9 The Medieval Spirituality of “Purity of Heart” and “Heart-piercing Goodness” in Selected Works of St. Anselm of Canterbury — 165**

Eleonora Rai

- 10 Spotless Mirror, Martyred Heart: The Heart of Mary in Jesuit Devotions (Seventeenth–Eighteenth Centuries) — 184**

Bridget Millmore

- 11 “An Heart that can Feel for Another”: Love Tokens and the Icon of the Heart in Eighteenth-Century Britain — 203**

Elizabeth C. Macknight

- 12 The Hearts of a Private Archive from France, Saxony, and England — 220**

**Further Reading — 241**

**Notes on Contributors — 245**

**Index — 247**



# List of Figures

- Figure 1.1** Sassetta, *The Virgin and Child surrounded by angels, with St. Anthony of Padua and St. John the Baptist*, 1437–1444, tempera on wood, 207 × 118 cm, Louvre, Paris (Inv. 1956–11). Photo Credit: Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY — **26**
- Figure 1.2** Florentine (here attributed to Cosimo and Francesco Rosselli), *The Infant Christ*, ca. 1480–1485, hand-colored engraving, 8.9 × 6.3 cm, British Museum, London (1854,0513.190). ©Trustees of the British Museum — **27**
- Figure 1.3** Diana Scultori (Diana Mantuana), *The Young Christ resting on a Flaming Heart*, 1577 (signed and dated), engraving, 18.3 × 14 cm, Albertina, Vienna — **28**
- Figure 1.4** Master Caspar of Regensburg, *Frau Minne's Power over Men's Hearts*, ca. 1479–1485, hand-colored woodcut, 25.7 × 36.5 cm, Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen, Berlin (Inv. 467–1908). Photo Credit: bpk Bildgaentur / Art Resource, NY — **30**
- Figure 1.5** Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *Allegory of Good Government*, detail: *Charity*, 1338–1339, fresco, Town Hall, Siena. Photo Credit: Scala / Art Resource, NY — **32**
- Figure 1.6** Hendrik Goltzius, *Venus and Cupid*, ca. 1595, engraving, 24.9 × 18.1 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (RP-P-OB-10.580) — **36**
- Figure 3.1** *Non es meravelha* – end-rhymes — **70**
- Figure 3.2** Bernart de Ventadorn *Non es meravelha* (first stanza). Transcription from Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, R 71 superiore, fol. 9r — **70**
- Figure 4.1** Genealogy of Amour and Amitié — **83**
- Figure 8.1** Germain Pilon and Domenico del Barbieri [called The Florentine], Funerary monument of the heart of Henri II (1519–1559), king of France, 1.5 m × 0.755 m, Musée du Louvre, Paris — **146**
- Figure 8.2** Primaticcio, Ponce Jacquoio, Jean Picard, Frémyn Roussel, The Heart Monument of François II, Basilica of Saint Denis. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Estampes RESERVE Pe-11a-Pet. Fol — **150**
- Figure 8.3** Artist active in France. *The Reign of Jupiter*, ca. 1575. Marble, 38.1 cm × 48.3 cm. ©The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, The Annenberg Foundation Gift, 1997 (997.23) — **151**
- Figure 11.1** Love token engraved with loving couple (1952,0904.332). © The Trustees of the British Museum — **206**
- Figure 11.2** Love token engraved with Cupid, hearts and arrows (1952,0904.121) © The Trustees of the British Museum — **211**
- Figure 12.1** Memorandum case with contents, Archives départementales du Rhône et de la métropole de Lyon AD69 11J/79 — **221**
- Figure 12.2** Liebhaber coat of arms embroidery, Archives départementales du Rhône et de la métropole de Lyon, AD69 11J/87 — **226**
- Figure 12.3** Manuscript Vie d'Henri Comarmond 1820, Archives départementales du Rhône et de la métropole de Lyon, AD69 11J/79 — **230**

**Figure 12.4** Flowers in the personal diary of Joséphine Berlié (née Comarmond), Archives départementales du Rhône et de la métropole de Lyon, AD69 11/79 — **232**

**Figure 12.5** Wax seals pertaining to Liebhaber kin, Archives départementales du Rhône et de la métropole de Lyon, AD69 11/88 — **235**

Katie Barclay and Bronwyn Reddan

## **The Feeling Heart: Meaning, Embodiment, and Making**

The heart is a key symbol in the Western world, found everywhere from Facebook and Twitter to signify “like”, to Valentine’s Day cards and religious art, to medical texts and literary metaphor. Its significance today reflects a long history with the heart a key conceptual device related to emotions, cognition, the self and identity, and the body. It is a physical organ that does considerable symbolic work. The heart is read as a metaphor for human desire and will, and situated in opposition to or alongside reason and cognition. In medieval and early modern Europe, the “feeling heart” – the heart as the site of emotion and emotional practices – informed a broad range of art, literature, music, heraldry, medical texts, and devotional and ritual practices. This multidisciplinary collection brings together art historians, literary scholars, historians, theologians, and musicologists to highlight the range of meanings attached to the symbol of the heart, the relationship between physical and metaphorical representations of the heart, and the uses of the heart in the production of identities and communities in medieval and early modern Europe.

Despite its significance as a symbol in Western Europe, the scholarship on the medieval and early modern heart is remarkably small. What exists, however, provides a rich and evocative starting point for a conversation on its meanings and the complex uses to which it has been put. Some of the earliest scholarship on the heart explored its visual representation over time, moving from its role in religious iconography, to love tokens and Valentine’s cards, to its more recent ♥ form.<sup>1</sup> Cardiologist P. J. Vinken pursues a range of explanations for the evolution of the modern heart’s distinctive shape, despite its lack of verisimilitude to the physical organ.<sup>2</sup> More recently, others have attempted to elucidate such images through long histories of their representation across time and space.<sup>3</sup> These histories identify a breath-taking range of representations, from hearts pieced with arrows and spears, entwined hearts, hearts that weep, hearts filled with other hearts or religious iconography, and hearts that are held and given, set alight, or broken. Hearts are elaborately represented in paint and statuary, often colored red but also set in gold or with jewels, surrounded by crowns, shards of light, flowers, and other lavish decoration. These are histories that emphasize not only the multiple representations and

functions of the heart, but also the significance of the icon to cultural practices and the esteem in which the heart was held.

If the heart is central to visual culture, its role in other aspects of medieval and early modern life is increasingly recognized. As an organ that has long been interpreted through its corporeal and metaphorical dimensions, many histories of the heart have started with its medical evolution. Like other bodily parts, the heart has compelled the production of histories of medicine that acknowledge the corporeal as cultural.<sup>4</sup> If the medical history of the heart has highlighted the intersections, engagements, and tensions between Aristotle and Galen, and later anatomists like William Harvey and Andreas Vesalius, it has also emphasized the centrality of metaphor to the production of medical knowledge.<sup>5</sup> Theories of the heart as an organ that breathes, moves, or circulates vital spirits or blood through the body, that attracts or expels and produces heat and power, all relied on metaphor to illuminate function.<sup>6</sup> Galen described the heart as a smith's bellows drawing in air to explain how his heart attracted blood to encourage its circulation across the body; Harvey, in turn, depicted the heart as a mechanical pump, ejecting blood through the lungs and into the body.<sup>7</sup> As a source of heat, and thus life, as Aristotle suggested, the heart was the "hearthstone" of the body.<sup>8</sup> While Galen and later Descartes were to counter the heart's primacy through their emphasis on the brain as the site of rationality and order, the heart remained a key organ across the early modern period.<sup>9</sup> If metaphor shaped medical meaning, as Fay Bound Alberti suggests, developments in cardiology in turn transformed how the heart operated as a cultural icon.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, that the heart was an organ – something of the body – ensured that physiology always infused metaphors of heart. Heart iconography did not operate beyond the body but acted to continually reinforce the centrality of corporeality to the human condition.<sup>11</sup>

The scholarship of the symbolic uses of the heart in medieval and early modern culture is still a relatively small field, yet what is emerging is not a history of a single motif, but of the multiple and complexes uses to which the heart was put. During the medieval period, as Heather Webb and Robert Erickson suggest, the heart was not only a source of heat that gave life to the body, but it came to carry the burden of life – it was the seat of the soul and will, of intellect and emotion.<sup>12</sup> As Eric Jager demonstrates, the heart was a rich symbol of the self and interior life for the medieval world, particularly associated with memory and conscience.<sup>13</sup> It could be imagined as a book, a place where knowledge was processed, inscribed, and made part of the self. Such inscription is suggestive of a broader theme of the heart as something porous, open to external influence, even available as a window to the soul.

The permeable heart sits in tension with images of the heart as hard or closed, the location of secrets and hidden truth.<sup>14</sup> This imagery was particularly prominent in religious writing, where the hard heart, a dry soil, resisted God's nourishment. Rather Christians were to be tender hearted, pricked by compunction, often symbolized as arrows or spears – iconography that drew on both Cupid from the classical world and the Bible.<sup>15</sup> Tender, open hearts were available to receive and reflect God's love; their openness not only suggested purity but honesty and transparency, values that held significance across the medieval and early modern periods.<sup>16</sup> Through piercing the heart, the external was made internal, a model that both highlighted the boundaries of the body/soul and the possibilities for their dissolution. A process of “tenderizing” the heart was particularly associated with conversion. Hearts were made soft and available through religious practice or divine intervention; it was through such transformation of heart – a heart that signified soul, self, will, intellect – that people were brought closer to the divine.<sup>17</sup> As hearts offered fertile ground for spiritual growth, they could also be equated with wombs, a model that could reinforce a patriarchal inscription of the “male pen” on the female body, but also provide opportunities for the rewriting of spiritual growth as feminine.<sup>18</sup> Elsewhere the association between the heart and the exercise of God in the human ensured its centrality to Christian devotional imagery across Europe, not least in the development of the cults of the Sacred Heart.<sup>19</sup>

It was not just God's love that could pierce the heart. The association between romantic love – that in the Christian tradition should emerge from God's grace – and the heart is enduring, although the topic has attracted remarkably little scholarly attention.<sup>20</sup> Like the divine, the capacity of “the other” to encroach and destabilize the boundaries of self could be symbolized through reference to the permeable heart. The heart as self could thus be available for giving to another and even consumed cannibalistically.<sup>21</sup> When love was removed, hearts could crack, fracture, break, thus leading to debilitation and death, both real and metaphorical.<sup>22</sup> Referring to a beloved as sweetheart, dear heart, my heart, was and remains popular, whilst the capacity of the heart to stand for the self and so be cherished can be seen in the less enduring practice of heart preservation and burial by the families of the deceased.<sup>23</sup> If the heart reflected the personal, it could also symbolize family, state, and nation. Depictions of the heart as the ruler of the body politic provided a significant framework for medieval and early modern political life that competed with models that placed power in the head.<sup>24</sup>

This collection builds upon previous scholarship by expanding discussion of the heart beyond the confines of a single genre, discipline, or chronological period. It seeks to broaden our understanding by bringing together contributions

on the use of the heart in art, music, literary and religious texts, material culture, and social rituals and practices. Its concentration on Europe, where a common religious heritage, transnational migration, and trade unified disparate groups allows for a broader conversation than a single-country focus allows. The chapters shed new light on the development of long-standing ideas including the heart as the seat of self, the heart as the repository of spiritual knowledge, and the association between love and the heart. It extends these ideas with consideration of the heart as a feeling organ and opens new ground in providing histories of the heart in contexts where there is little established literature, namely the symbol of the flaming heart and the meaning of heart-imagery in the Old Norse literary tradition.

The unifying theme of this collection is an understanding of the heart as a site of emotion or as integrated into the human body as an emotional subject. Historians increasingly present a picture of the diverse and sophisticated articulations and understandings of emotion found across the medieval and early modern world.<sup>25</sup> Whilst the vocabulary for expressing the phenomena of emotion – passion, affection, feeling – has changed over time, with such terms holding greater stability in some periods than others, the significance of the affective dimensions of human experience has been a critical constant.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, new histories of emotion are providing sophisticated methodological tools for accessing something that was so often thought to be fleeting or intangible. Emotions are no longer simply biological, but are produced through performances, social practices, and in engagements with our cultural and material world.<sup>27</sup> This collection highlights the heart as a central symbol that was used in the production of emotion for medieval and early modern peoples. In particular, its key contribution, which is found across all the essays, is the way the heart enables a visual metaphor of embodied emotion. Feeling is made tangible through an iconography (visual, written, musical) that gives it corporeal structure, but which nonetheless never completely captures it, allowing emotion to retain its dynamism. This tension between emotion as embodied and corporeal and its capacity to resist containment and explanation – its excess – is consistently explored and refigured in the iconography of the medieval and early modern “feeling heart.” Thus, a history of a potent symbol – the heart – provides insight into how emotion comes to manifest as a product of both body and culture.

Our discussion of the feeling heart is divided into three parts: meaningful hearts, embodied hearts, and productive hearts. Part 1 (meaningful hearts) examines the symbolism, iconography or representation of the heart across a range of genres and European spaces. Part 2 (embodied hearts) analyzes representations of the heart as an embodied entity and expands our understanding of the corporeal relation to metaphor in understandings of the heart. Part 3 (productive

hearts) shifts the focus to social practice and the use of the feeling heart to create identity and connections between individuals, families, and other social groups. These divisions are largely artificial, and several of the chapters could sit comfortably in another section, but the organizing principle enables some of the key insights of the collection to be drawn out. Part 1 offers examples of heart-centered discourses in which the heart is a symbol for the interior self and the sensory and emotional experiences that shape the identity of that self as an affective being. Parts 2 and 3 move outwards to interrogate the relationship of the heart to the body and to the production of affective bonds in social groups. In doing so, *The Feeling Heart* offers a history of the heart that traces its symbolic resonance from its role as a metaphorical and physiological container of meaning to its uses in the production of the medieval and early modern self and society.

## Meaningful Hearts

The heart was a porous icon. In medieval medical thought, the heart was literally an organ marked by interstices that enabled it to breathe and give life to the body.<sup>28</sup> Its porosity was also marked by the capacity to hold, and sometimes contain, meaning. As an organ closely associated with the self, it was a remarkably flexible symbol with resonance across corporeal, personal, spiritual, political, economic, and social domains. The first part of the collection draws together chapters that further understanding of the symbolism, iconography, or representation of the heart in different genres across the medieval and early modern period. Patricia Simons, Chloé Vondenhoff, Carol J. Williams, and Bronwyn Reddan analyze the ways in which the feeling heart performed significant cultural work in secular and sacred imaginations. Bringing perspectives from art, literature, and musicology, they explore the meaningful heart across genre and place.

Following some strands of medieval physiology, the heart was the location of both emotion and cognition, the seat of knowledge and judgement. The body transmitted information to the heart through the senses – touch, sight, hearing, smell, taste – where they were processed and inspired motion and emotion.<sup>29</sup> This physiological model underpinned and inflected on how the heart was represented. In this volume, Simons traces the iconographic history of the heart radiating flames or depicted as being on fire in European visual culture from the late Middle Ages into the seventeenth century. Focusing on the intellectual and experiential contexts of medical beliefs, religious symbolism, and amorous poetry, Simons highlights the crossover between sacred and secular imagery,

including popular devotional prints and the burning heart held by Charity, Christ, or Venus. She argues that, rather than a natural and transparent signifier of passion, the burning heart derives from ancient Greek ideas about the organ's anatomical function as a furnace. The representation of the flaming heart came to symbolize a life, self, being, that was inherently emotional and passionate.

Representations of the heart as an organ shaped by the senses is central to Vondenhoff's discussion of changes to the courtly love imagery in Chrétien de Troyes's story of *Yvain* during its translation into Old Norse as *Ívens saga*. Chrétien's romances represent the heart as a feeling organ responsible for the generation and regulation of the affective states of characters. They develop a model of the self as a heart-centered phenomenon that focuses on explaining the relationship of the human body to the outside world, particularly through an emphasis on hearing and sight. It is through hearing that the heart learns; through sight that love is enabled. This concern with the physiological role of the heart gave rise to the formation of specific heart-motifs such as "remembering with the heart" and "the itinerant heart," which explicate the role the heart plays in relation to the senses. It is a model also evident in Williams's analysis of twelfth-century troubadour song in which the singing voice, entering through the ears, produces the heart as the seat of affection.

However, in its Old Norse translation, *Ívens saga*, Chrétien's feeling heart is largely absent. It was generally not connected to love, nor was it ascribed a role in the production of the affective states of characters. Instead, it was re-scripted as the seat of courage and its size interpreted as a cipher for a character's disposition. Heart-imagery in *Ívens saga* emphasizes the cognitive function of the heart, the location of the *hugr* (mind), rather than the sensory or feeling physiology foregrounded in Chrétien's *Yvain*. Moreover, whilst the French *cour* is active, engaged, moving, refusing containment, the Norse *hjarte* lacks such physical dynamism, suggestive of a stable, bounded self.

As an organ that functioned as part of cognitive and emotional processing, the heart was responsible for the production of a wide range of emotional experience. Yet, if one emotion was predominant, it was love. This was partly, as is explored by Greeley and Davidson in Part 2, because the Christian heart was the site of God's grace, experienced as love in the heart, which should form the bedrock for human action.<sup>30</sup> In godly models of human relation, *caritas* should be the foundation of all human relations, whether between spouses, family, community, or nation. Love grew from love; it can be contrasted with desire, an unruly passion that misdirected the godly heart.

Love is prominent in depictions of the heart across the period. In troubadour love songs, as Williams demonstrates, poetic expression of the inalienable



link between love and the heart conceptualizes the latter as both an active and passive agent of the emotions. This view of the feeling heart informs Dante Alighieri's subsequent articulation of the theory and rationale of troubadour song, as well as self-conscious theorizing by the troubadours themselves. Love is the source of poetic inspiration and the life-force of the heart; love originates within the heart, awakened through sight, and yet the heart is consumed by love, particularly where love is envisioned as desire. The voice of song gives expression to the love contained or received by the heart and acts to transmit that feeling to others.

Love is similarly central to Reddan's examination of Charles Perrault's 1660 *Dialogue de l'Amour et l'Amitié*. An exchange that uses the personification of Love and Reason as allegorical figures struggling for control over feeling subjects, it emphasizes the significance of the heart as the metaphorical location of emotion and subjectivity in early modern France. In this context, the feeling heart is both a battleground of and a vessel for emotion, but unlike the troubadour song in Williams's chapter, Perrault's feeling heart is not an active participant in the creation of emotion. He conceptualizes the heart as a place where emotion is felt; it is a receptacle or container for the emotions over which the feeling subject struggles to exercise control. Hearts here, as can also be seen in Philip Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* discussed by Yeo in Chapter 7, are something to be owned and conquered by emotion, but which are not involved in its generation. Such representations witness both an increased boundedness of the self-heart, something that is no longer distributed and diffuse but available for capture, and a decentering of the affective heart as central to the imagining of the human.

Representation of the heart as a site of sensory and emotional experience in the sources examined by the chapters in Part 1 adds layers of metaphorical meaning to the physiological role of the heart. In this context, hearts could both refuse containment – something evidenced in Simons's discussion of flaming hearts held in the hand or detached from the body entirely – as well as contain. Many representations in the medieval and early modern period depict hearts holding things, whether Christ, Mary, various saints, other hearts, writing, memory, emotion, humanity; as Graham Holderness notes, the interior of the early modern Christian was “a very crowded place.”<sup>31</sup> If the porous heart was suggestive of the heart's capacity to receive, as a container, it represented the human as product of environment and engagement with the world. As the chapters in Part 2 show, the heart as a container meant that the human could be infused with the collective emotion produced in the affective, communal heart, both physiologically as emotion was directed as corporeal experience, and metaphorically as a structure of self. The agency of the heart in the production of a corporeal self is diminished

over the centuries for central Europeans, perhaps producing accounts that would have not been unfamiliar to their northern neighbors in an earlier time. The medieval and early modern heart thus displayed an instability of meaning that reflected the heart's positioning as produced by and producer of the human and the world.

## Embodied Hearts

The physiological significance of the heart as an organ and an embodied symbol acted to continually produce an affective corporeality that expands the symbolic meaning of the heart. If hearts could be disembodied and detached, they also brought the spiritual, social and cultural to the body – a reciprocity that reinforced the self as both grounded and holistic.<sup>32</sup> Part 2 explores the potentiality of the heart as embodied metaphor for interpreting the medieval and early modern world. Chapters by Kathryn L. Smithies, Clare Davidson, Colin Yeo, and Susan Broomhall explore the connection between physiological understandings of the heart and its representation, and the capacity for the “embodied heart” to enable the affective to be at once both internal and active in the world.

The dynamism of the corporeal-metaphorical exchange between physical and symbolic hearts emerges in chapters by Smithies and Yeo. Smithies analyzes the representation of the courageous heart of Arrageois poet and leper, Jean Bodel, in his leave-taking poem *Les Congés* (ca.1200). She interprets this emotionally-charged poem as an attempt by Bodel to cultivate the courage he needs to meet the earthly pain and loss caused by his leprosy. The heart is the key to Bodel's salvation; he appeals directly to his heart, the only part of his body that remains healthy, for courage to become the penitent leper whose suffering imitates that of Christ. His appeal reflects a desire for a spiritual-corporeal transformation, not from sickness to health, but from sorrow to courageous acceptance. Bodel's heart was a “symbol of affect” that controlled the movement of emotions to and from the heart, thus binding the physical heart to the psychological heart. Courage for Bodel was an emotional transformation, experienced through the body and in the soul.

A similar embodiment of heart is explored by Davidson in her analysis of “the cognizant heart” as a seat of thinking and feeling in Middle English writing. A medieval heart that is simultaneously a site of emotion and intellect, not only collapses the reason–emotion binary, but locates thought as embodied experience. Moreover, as the heart is the seat of cognition-emotion, emotions such as love are not only embodied but simultaneously cognitive and emotional – an

interpretation that has resonance with contemporary models of emotion as not only “felt judgements” but things that people “do”.<sup>33</sup> Like for Bodel, cognized feeling is experienced corporeally, an extension of mind/emotion into body. If such an embodied mind-emotion is now to be expected of the medieval *topos*, Davidson also finds emotion reported as exceeding not only the descriptive possibilities of language, but the capacity of the heart to think it. A joy produced of satiated desire and love produces a superabundance of feeling that exceeds the interpretive capacities of the heart. Here emotion and the thinking heart are in tension, a motif also explored by Greeley in Chapter 9. The ability of the affective heart to be experienced as fully embodied is thus never certain.

Whether the heart can ever be fully embodied remains a topic of tension in the early modern period, even as the heart became less central to the self. Yeo’s exploration of heart-imagery in English Renaissance love poetry highlights the important doubling of the physical and metaphorical as a technique for explaining the experience of love. He applies Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of grotesque realism to corporeal metaphors in works by Edmund Spenser, Shakespeare, and John Donne to highlight their potential to unnerve and disturb. Through “degrading” abstract metaphors of the heart, grotesque realist images reinforced the bodily effects of love and thus allowed it to be described as an embodied rather than a spiritual experience. Unlike Bodel, for whom the heart was simultaneously spiritual and embodied such that its transformation operated to perfect body and soul, seventeenth-century English poets conceived of corporeal and metaphorical hearts as distinct entities, whilst recognizing the potential of their collapse to realize emotion as an embodied experience. Like the Middle English writers explored by Davidson, the corporeal enables a particular recounting of emotional experience that is suggestive of the inability of the body to fully explain the affective heart.

A different type of corporeality emerges in Broomhall’s investigation of the dialectic relationship between early modern embodiment and materiality in the poetic and artistic expressions of the feeling heart that were integral to Catherine de’ Medici’s self-presentation as a political protagonist in France. Following the deaths of her husbands and sons, de’ Medici commissioned a series of “monuments” to their memory and, simultaneously, her grieving heart. Representations of de’ Medici’s heart and its emotional experiences became material and rhetorical performances of power that produced both her gendered, grieving body, and political agency. This was a materialization of the affective heart in stone and paper designed to redirect attention to de’ Medici’s corporeal experience of grief, which in turn authorized her embodiment of political authority.

Part of this performance drew on the custom of heart burial, in which hearts were removed from the body and used to enable particular forms of devotion or

care.<sup>34</sup> The cardiograph that de' Medici commissioned for her husband placed a physical heart at the center of the production of her political persona, thus linking her heart to his and suggesting the capacity of her heart to embody that of another. That the heart could capture another is a repeating trope in Parts 2 and 3 of this collection. Yeo finds “thy bosom is endeared with all hearts”; Davidson emphasizes hearts as other hearts; Millmore in Chapter 11 encounters hearts that overlap and combine. The multiple-heart self was an embodiment of collective identity in the individual. As an embodied self, this was not just an abstraction of identity – a metaphor – but suggestive of the capacity of the human to simultaneously *be* both self and other. Thus the heart here comes to signify excess, not only an extension of the person through the affective into the world, but the world returning to the human as affective experience.

## Productive Hearts

Hearts that exceed and extend beyond the self and body are implicated in the production of group conscious and social connections as well as individual identity. The chapters in Part 3 show how individuals use metaphors of the heart to “do” things such as enable relationships, produce group identities, and shape social and political power. Catherine de' Medici's use of the heart to legitimize her claims to political authority is a suggestive example. Part 3 extends this discussion by exploring how the feeling heart has been used by individuals, families, and other social groups to “create” religious communities, political identities, and family practices. June-Ann Greeley, Eleonora Rai, Bridget Millmore, and Elizabeth C. Macknight show the heart as a symbolic tool that produces social connections and cultural networks, as well as family and community identity.

Greeley and Rai focus on the role of the heart in spiritual and religious devotional practices from the eleventh century to the present day. Both authors examine personal practices of affective piety that extend to enable communal belief. Greeley offers a close reading of the prayers and meditative writings of Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109) and Rai explores Jesuit devotion to the Sacred Heart of Mary in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For Anselm, the heart is the most essential *locus* of the triad of heart-soul-mind that was central to devotion in medieval Christianity. The heart is where the “pluck” of compunction begins an emotional process from sorrow to the joy that arises from God's love entering the heart, an experience that exceeds human understanding and brings one into union with the divine. With significant parallels

to Bodel's text, Anselm's moving reflections on his heart's stubbornness and his desire for reformation produces an account of the heart as the center of medieval devotion. Importantly, it is a spiritual reflection that participates in the transformation of Christian practice as his writings spread across Europe. Anselm's meditation on the heart's relation to the divine is part of the production of a new form of emotional devotion for the medieval world in which the affective heart is key.

The centrality of the affective heart to religious practice continues across the centuries, especially in the growth of devotion to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Rai's study of devotional books promoting the Cult of the Heart of Mary by Giovanni Pietro Pinamonti (1632–1703) and Liborio Siniscalchi (1674–1742) emphasizes the complex spiritual potentialities of the heart as a tangible and imaginable object with the capacity to contain the emotions of individuals, the divine, and humanity. For Pinamonti and Siniscalchi, Mary's heart was both a pathway to the heart of Christ and a tool that enabled religious conversion for lapsed Catholics. Their devotional books used the corporeal nature of Mary's heart to convey its spiritual significance. Contemplation of her physical heart, particularly as a vulnerable and sorrowing organ, became a device to root abstract religious and emotional ideas in everyday understanding and experience. The heart was placed at the center of a successful missionizing campaign that produced a popular and long-lasting community of devotees. For both Anselm and early modern Jesuits, the heart was the site of conversion for the individual, and a tool of conversion for others through its capacity to enable affective devotion in those who contemplated it.

If the heart had the ability to inspire and produce religious communities, it also played a central role in making family. Chapters by Millmore and Macknight highlight the ability of hearts inscribed on material culture to produce meaningful connections between families separated by geographic and temporal distance. Millmore analyses the uses and meanings of the visual and verbal lexicon of the heart in the creation of love tokens from low-value coins in eighteenth-century Britain. She reads these affective objects as metaphorical expressions of the many different types of love experienced by the British working population who crafted them, as well as a symbol of life itself. The exchange of such tokens sought to strengthen familial bonds and secure feelings of attachment in times of disruption by expressing love, pain and suffering at the absence of love, as well as belief in "true love." She suggests the potential of such investment in the loving heart for a group for whom such ties could be fragile. The heart here performed significant emotional work in enabling the production of personal connections through the exchange of objects in which the inscription of hearts served as proxies for their makers.

Macknight explores the significance of the feeling heart in the creation of a private archive containing traces of the past lives of nobles from France, Saxony, and England connected by blood and marriage. A “flaming heart” is incorporated in a coat of arms, expressing social status and familial identity. Hearts appear in letters and diary entries articulating emotion and filial or marital identities and in drawings and printed works as statements of faith and religious identity. The co-production of the archive by family members and professional archivists drew on practices of ancestral commemoration in which the feeling heart operated as a metaphorical evocation and signifier for familial, marital, and noble identity. The affective heart thus functioned through its capacity to evoke emotional connection across generations and a shared family identity rooted in a lineage of affection and manifested outwardly to the world through their heart crest.<sup>35</sup>

As the chapters in Part 3 demonstrate, the heart was a symbol that was used to produce social and community life in the medieval and early modern period. It was an “ideational resource”, a set of ideas that could be drawn to explain, interpret, and construct social and political life.<sup>36</sup> Its efficacy was informed by the heart’s emotional resonance, which enabled it to convey the abstract affective connections of community and the personal feelings that exceeded the capacities of language, even thought, from one person to another. The affective heart, that captured and conveyed the collective emotional self, thus enabled an intimacy that extended across individuals and groups, time and place.

## Conclusion

Across the medieval and early modern period, the heart was a physical organ that performed considerable symbolic work as a site of emotional experience, of conscience, character, self, and soul. It was the site of the self and interiority, as well as a bridge between the individual and the external world, the source of life, being, and love. The history of the heart is a history of the imagining of self, soul, will, intellect, and body; it is also a history of emotion. As this volume demonstrates, the feeling heart was the site of an emotional self both embodied and extended; its history begins with love but extends to encompass the breadth of human emotional experience. Across time, the heart remained a symbol that evoked corporeal emotion and which sought to ground that feeling as an embodied experience of relation with the other. Thus it was often particularly associated with emotions of connection – love, hate, desire, grief, sorrow

at loss or separation – and also with courage to engage (whether in war or with the divine). Through its capacity to represent and convey emotion, the heart became an important tool in producing bonds between individuals, connections that could be manifested tangibly but experienced as intimate relations.

The heart also contains a history of changing ideas. The medieval heart, that could be a site of emotion, cognition, self, and will, as well as corporeal organ, had greater capacities than its early modern descendant, which increasingly lost its role as an agent in its own right. For later thinkers, the heart was a productive symbol that did significant work in articulating feeling and producing identity, but which often became subject to larger process of identity, emotion, or body. Shifting ideas of biology, and particularly the sensate body, began to downplay the direct role of the heart in processing sensory experience, such as produced through sight, hearing, taste and touch – the route to the heart became more winding in modern biologies. Having said that, the meanings evoked through the affective heart were unstable and evolving over time and place. As the less affective Norse heart suggests, the potential for alternative renderings of the heart's agency was already present in the medieval, whilst the continuing significance of an agentic heart, associated with selfhood and will, continued to appear, if with less force, in the eighteenth century.

This diversity in form and feeling is reflected in the variety of genres examined by this volume. Music, art, literature, devotional writings, material culture and archives – not just representations of the past but part of the physical world of historical actors – activated different physical senses and held different intentions, and so required the heart to be used and understood in varying ways. In being held together, they enable an increasingly panoramic perspective that highlights the complex multi-dimensionality of a critical icon in the production of ideas about the human. Similarly, different disciplinary perspectives, drawing attention to the various intellectual traditions that the heart has been significant to, have highlighted the capacities of the medieval and early modern heart to further our understanding of human experience, whether that is devotional revolutions, personal and political relationships, or the evolution of artistic practices. The feeling heart was a symbol that actively shaped the medieval and early modern world.

The heart's constructive capacities continue in the present. The iconic significance of the heart is illustrated by its ubiquitous presence in contemporary popular culture, particularly in the realm of social media. To “heart” a Twitter or Instagram post is to “like” it, and thus allow quantification of emotion with a running tally of reactions. On Facebook, the heart emoji is one of five pre-determined “Reactions” – Love, Haha, Wow, Sad, Angry – that add emotional

texture to a “like”. As one might expect, the heart reaction signifies love, and functions as an amplification of the emotional significance of a like.<sup>37</sup> In Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, hearts function as a symbol for emotion and as a proxy for social connectedness. Snapchat goes one step further by using hearts to create an emotional hierarchy that continuously monitors the closeness of users’ social connections. Relationships are ranked according to a color-coded scheme in which the yellow heart signifying “#1 best friend” changes to red or pink depending on the length of time this status is maintained.<sup>38</sup> In the making and remaking of the self in contemporary social media, hearts are almost entirely disembodied, their indiscriminate distribution rendering their emotional meaning almost entirely devoid of corporeal content. In the accumulation of hearts as ephemeral markers of connection, the corporeal affectivity of the heart is transformed into a state of contingency in which the self is separated from the body. Yet, as a productive symbol, the heart’s ability to communicate meaning and emotion, to forge communities, and even to shape the subsequent dynamics of response from others, is suggestive of its ongoing uses in the making of a modern world, where the affective connection between the self and other remains central. The medieval and early modern heart continues, if obliquely, to contribute meaning to the heart today.

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