

In Praise of the  
Backside

Page 4: N° 7, Biederer Studio, c. 1925

Gelatin silver print, 24 x 18 cm

Private collection.

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"Our arses should be signs of peace!"

— Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart



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## Love's Body

As we fragment the body, we make its parts the subject of a fetish. Each individual part can become a focus of erotic passion, an object of fetishist adoration. On the other hand, the body as a whole is still the sum of its parts.



## The Three Graces

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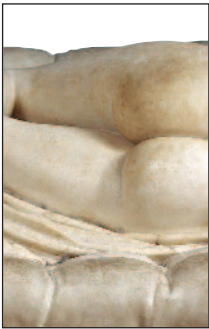
Anonymous, Roman copy of a Greek original created during the 2nd century B.C.E. (restored in 1609)

Marble, 119 x 85 cm  
Musée du Louvre, Paris









The division of the body that we carry out here brings to mind the worship of relics. Relic worship began in the Middle Ages with the adoration of the bones of martyrs and was based on the belief that the body parts of saints possessed a special power. In this respect, each fetishist, however enlightened he pretends to be, pays homage to relic worship.

### Sleeping Hermaphrodite

---

Anonymous, Roman copy of a Greek original from the 2nd century B.C.E. (?)

(mattress carved in 1619 by Gian Lorenzo Bernini)

Marble, 169 x 89 cm

Musée du Louvre, Paris





At first, this dismemberment only happened to saints, in accordance with the belief that in paradise the body will become whole again. Only later were other powerful people such as bishops and kings also unearthed after their deaths. In our cultural survey of body parts, we are particularly concerned with the history of those with “erotic significance”.

### Leda and the Swan

---

Anonymous, 3rd century B.C.E.  
Mosaic  
Museum of Nicosia, Nicosia





Regardless of whether their significance is religious or erotic, they all attain the greatest importance for both the believer and the lover because of the attraction and power inherent within them. This way, fetishist heritage of older cultures survives in both the believer and the lover.

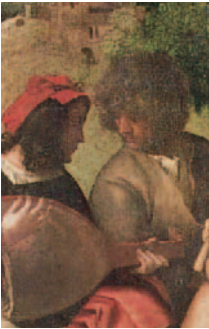
O Body, how graciously you let my soul  
Feel the happiness, that I myself keep secret,

### The Three Graces

---

Raphael (Raffaello Sanzio), 1504-1505  
Oil on wood, 17 x 17 cm  
Musée Condé, Chantilly





And while the brave tongue shies away,  
From all that there is to praise, that brings  
me joy,  
Could you, O Body, be any more powerful,  
Yes, without you nothing is complete,  
Even the Spirit is not tangible, it melts away  
Like hazy shadows or fleeting wind.

### The Pastoral Concert

---

Titian (Tiziano Vecellio), c. 1508  
Oil on canvas, 109 x 137 cm  
Musée du Louvre, Paris







*Anatomical Blazons of the Female Body* appeared in 1536, a newly printed, multi-volume collection of odes to each individual body part. These poems, praising parts of the female body, constituted an early form of sexual fetishism. "Never," wrote Hartmut Böhme, "does it sing the 'whole body,' let alone the persona of the adored, but rather it

### Hebe and Proserpina

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Raphael (Raffaello Sanzio), 1517  
Sanguine and silver point, 25.7 x 16.4 cm  
Teylers Museum, Haarlem

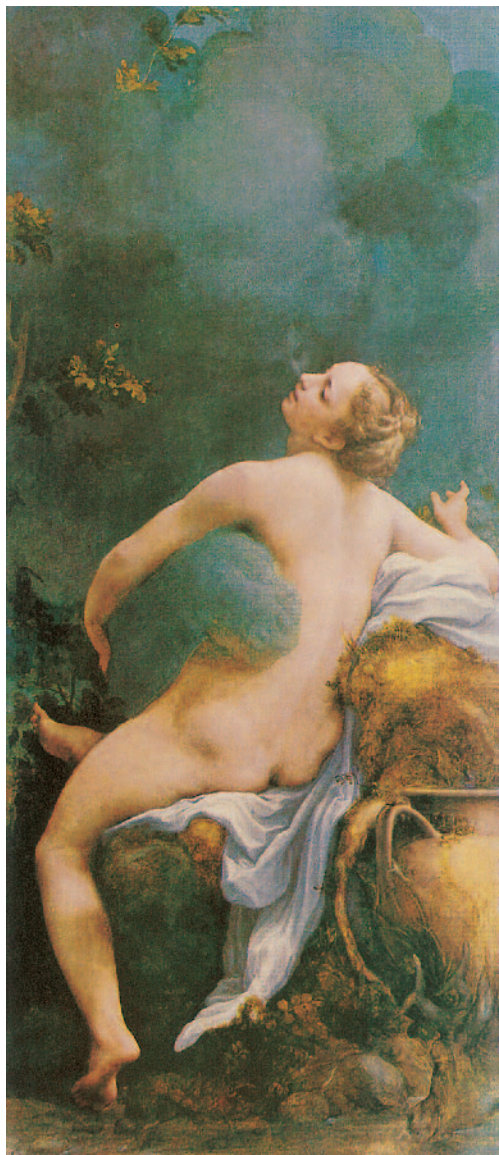




is a rhetorical exposition of parts or elements of the body". In these poems, head and womb represented the "central organs". It was to be expected that representatives of the church suspected a new form of idolatry in this poetic approach and identified a sinful indecency in this depiction of female nakedness:

### Jupiter and Io

Correggio (Antonio Allegri), c. 1530  
Oil on canvas, 162 x 73.5 cm  
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna





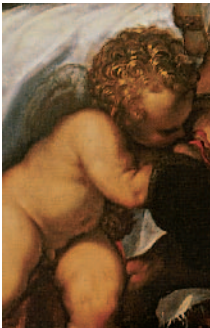
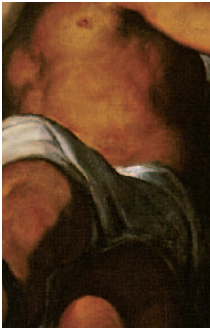
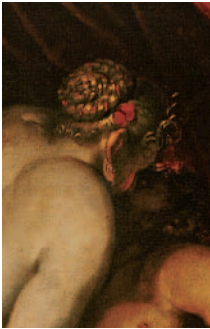
To sing of female organs,  
To bring them to God's ears,  
Is madness and idolatry,  
For which the earth will cry on Judgment day.  
This is how such condemnation is expressed  
in a document entitled *Against the Blazoners  
of Body Parts*, written in 1539.

### The Rape of the Sabines

---

Giambologna (Giovanni Bologna), 1581-1583  
Marble, height: 410 cm  
Loggia dei Lanzi, Piazza della Signora, Florence





The poets of the *Blazons* were “the first fetishists in the history of literature”. “The *Anatomical Blazons* represented a sort of a sexual *menu à la carte*: from head to toe, a series of fetishist delicacies (and in the *Counterblazons* from head to toe a series of sensual atrocities and defacements). Such a gastrosophy of feminine flesh is only conceivable when the woman is not regarded as a person.

### Venus and Mars

---

Palma Giovane, c. 1585-1590  
Oil on canvas, 130.9 x 165.6 cm  
The National Gallery, London







The fetish of the female body involves the abolition of woman as such". From this perspective, the *Blazons* would be womanless.

The poetic dismemberment of the female body satisfies fetishist phallocentrism, which, as Böhme points out, also lies at the root of male aggression. Today it would be called "sexist".



### The Rape of the Daughters of Leucippus

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Peter Paul Rubens, c. 1618  
Oil on canvas, 222 x 209 cm  
Alte Pinakothek, Munich