

Materials for a History of the Human Body in Egypt and the Graeco-Roman World

PREFACE

The papers that follow are part of a project intended to survey understandings of the human body in ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean cultures, in reaction to the relative lack of such material in the groundbreaking survey *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, ed. M. Feher, (New York 1989). Contributors were referred for general ideas to the *Fragments...* volumes, as well as Roy Porter's important survey "History of the Body" in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. P. Burke (University Park PA 1990) 206-32. The papers for this projected volume were begun in 1993 and essentially finished in 1997. Various complications, however, led to the abandonment of the project and the subsequent solicitation of these papers by the editor of *BASP*. The authors of these papers have carried out recent minor revisions to bring their articles up to date, but in the interest of timely publication, none are substantially altered from their 1997 versions.

The acceptance of "the body" as a subject for scholarly inquiry make it unnecessary to preface these papers with a justification, but it is appropriate to note the relevance and potential interest of these papers for readers of *BASP*. Of the collection, David Brakke's essay covers eastern Christian sources, particularly concentrating on Coptic and Syriac texts. John McVay's article will help readers to situate the earlier papers within their wider Graeco-Roman and early Christian contexts. Readers of *BASP* will find Emily Teeter's paper on the human body in pharaonic Egyptian sources to be a useful survey of material from dynastic Egypt, as well as a guide to indigenous attitudes towards the body that survived into the Graeco-Roman period. Finally, Lynn Meskell's essay, in addition to its challenging and provocative observations on the body in Egyptian archaeology, provides a useful introduction to the extensive theoretical literature that has appeared in recent years on the body and related topics.

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