Translator's Note

In a way, the hardest part of this book to translate was the title. The French title literally rendered would be something like "The Body of History: Metaphors and Politics (1770-1800)." The author himself (who kindly read the opening pages of my translation, and offered useful suggestions and emendations) proposed the present title. The reader should be warned that the word corps is of very wide semantic range in French, just as its literal equivalent "body" is in English. Unfortunately, the ranges are not identical. This failure of neat symmetry sometimes makes a trenchant and memorable title in French (corps-état, for example) come out rather flat ("state body") or circumlocuitous (the state as a body). As a result, the reader will have to put up with a mixture of literal translations and "explaining translations"; I have included the French whenever I thought any confusion might arise. Corps also enters overtly into many other words—corporation, corporeal, corpulence, for example - not all of which can be translated using some version of "body." The reader should be aware too of the pervasive play on the word histoire, which of course means "history," but also "story." While the latter meaning is usually specified in the French text by récit, conte, and so on, one is never remote from the "story" in "history."

In the hope of providing helpful information to the reader, I have chosen to be somewhat inconsistent in citation of titles in the references. When the text cited has been published in English, I have tried to give the English title if possible. Page citations correspond to the French original used

by de Baecque. Titles of eighteenth-century texts are translated, whether or not any modern translation (or even edition) exists. The pamphlet titles are often witty (if scabrous) and verbally adroit, and therefore called out for translation so the English-using reader—who has, after all, bought or borrowed a translation—will not miss the fun.

I would like to thank Odile Chilton for her help, as invaluable as it was cheerful. I am also grateful to the reference facilities of the Harvard University libraries, the Boston Public Library, and the Bard College library, especially Jane Hryshko of the last named for her help in finding, almost instantaneously, various elusive texts. Gloria Monti at Yale referred me to Cynthia Markins-Dieden, who helped me understand de Baecque's discussion of Godard. To all these and others, including my husband, Robert Kelly, I offer the thanks so natural in this desperate art of translation.

The Body Politic

Corporeal Metaphor in Revolutionary France, 1770–1800