

Body under Threat, “Body in History, and History of Art” Introduction

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The subject of the human body has always aroused and continues to arouse the interest of researchers, which is confirmed by several dissertations, monographs and articles focusing on its various aspects.¹ This volume addresses a particular issue, namely the situation of danger and anguish of the body from the perspective of history and the history of art.

The present volume opens with an article by Maria Starnawska: *Tormented and Glorified Body – The Example of St. Adalbert and St. Stanislaus*. The author compared the accounts relating to these two saints, whose bodies were tormented and destroyed. According to medieval sources, however, the souls of both saints were elevated. So, here we can see a juxtaposition: the tormented body against the glorified soul.

The issue of body-mind interaction is referred to in the article by Karolina Białas: *The Most Dangerous, because the Most Carnal? The Sense of Touch in the Monastic Sources from the 10th to the 12th Century*. The author undertook to characterise the importance of the sense of touch for medieval monastic culture, using selected sources from the abbeys of Cluny and Fleury as examples.

The following four articles are an analysis of the eponymous problem from the point of view of art historians. The well-known biblical theme is referred to in the article by Mattie van den Bosch: *The Bathing Women of the Old Testament: An Iconographical Research into the Medieval Imagery of Susanna and Bathsheba*. The motif of bathing was highlighted; for both heroines of the biblical story, this activity became the most important thing in life. Reference was made to the way Susanna and Bathsheba were depicted in medieval iconography. The iconographic message was also raised by Huib Iserief in his article: *The Body of Christ as a Sacrifice to Pagan Gods? Matthias’ Killing of a Jew in a Dutch Bible Historiale of the 15th Century*. Iserief analyses the historiale, which includes most of the books of the conventional Bible and also contains extremely rich illustrative material, including that relating to the eponymous

¹ Let us refer for example to the recently published collection of texts titled *Ciało i społeczeństwo. Socjologia ciała w badaniach i koncepcjach teoretycznych (Body and Society. Sociology of the body in research and theoretical concepts)*, ed. D. Byczkowska-Owczarek (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2023) 399. Volumes important from the point of view of historical research include: *Historia ciała (History of the Body)*, Vol. 1–3, ed. George Vigarello, Alain Corbin, Jean-Jacques Courtine, K. Belaid, T. Stróżyński (Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria, 2020); J. Le Goff, N. Truong, *Historia ciała w średniowieczu (History of the Human Body in the Middle Ages)*, transl. by I. Kania (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 2006).

motif. Wendelien A.W. van Welie-Vink, on the other hand, in her article: *Sacred or Scandalous? How to Approach Depictions of Genitals in Medieval Art* raised the question of how the topic of Christ's wounds is depicted. This representation could be very complex, depending on whether these wounds were shown in horizontal or vertical composition, giving space for a wide range of interpretations. Also the paper by Agata Jakóbowska: *Look Underneath, Look Above, and Look Beside. On the Three Wise Men* refers to the genitalia. The author reviewed the model of medieval and theological thinking about the naked body of the child (Christ) as sexless and male.

Kalina Słaboszowska in her article: *Emotions and the Body in the Annals of Jan Długosz* based on the 15th century chronicle, posed the question of how people in the past perceived emotions. She also pointed out how these emotions affected the health of the body and its perception.

The article by Andrzej Wozniński: *A Trapped Body or a Living Stone? The Case of Grisaille and Demi-grisaille Paintings by Hans Memling* refers to the monochrome technique that was also used by this artist. The author pointed out that we are dealing here with an intermingling of matter and means of expression, as Hans Memling used illusion to turn stone into a figure and sculpture into a painting.

Zofia Wilk-Woś in her article: *A Thing about Diseases of the Body and the Minds of the Archbishops of Gniezno in the 15th Century* drew attention to the physical condition and health of these clergymen in the Middle Ages. The author relied primarily on the chronicle by Jan Długosz.

Sylwia Konarska-Zimnicka's article: *"Through the stars to health", or Iatromathematics in Rescue of the Ailing Body. A Review of Late Medieval Sources from Kraków* takes a closer look at the numerous survived iatromathematic works, focusing, of course, on the texts produced in Kraków. In doing so, the author draws attention to the extraordinary popularity of this form of medicine during the late medieval period and the belief in the symbiosis of the lunar and sublunar worlds underlying it.

Agnieszka Szwach and Beata Wojciechowska in their article: *Women and Insanity in English Renaissance Drama* enter the modern period. They thus show how the spreading knowledge of mental health, which reached England in the 16th century through translations of the works of Hippocrates and Galen, permeated the theatre world, combining the authors' fascination with diseases of the mind and the state of knowledge on the subject at the time.

The text by Dariusz Kaczor: *Bruises, Bumps and Bloody Wounds. Body Injuries to the Victims of Physical Violence in Gdańsk in the 16th–17th Centuries*, takes us to modern Gdańsk (Danzig). Based on the surviving physical examination protocols (created mainly for court purposes), the author presents and analyses examples of physical violence among the lower and middle classes of the social strata living in the city at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries, showing the state of medical knowledge at the time.

On the other hand Aleksandra Jaśniewicz-Downes in her article: *Amok and Its Punishment in 17th Century Dutch Batavia through the Eyes of Johann Gottfried Dreyer from Gdańsk* gives us an extremely interesting look at the judicial system in 17th century Batavia and the unusual role of execution through the eyes of a Gdańsk citizen working for the Dutch East India Company.

Marcin Baranowski's article, which introduces us to the 19th century: *Matters of the Body in the World of Napoleon's Soldiers. Outline of Issues from the Polish Perspective* briefly presents various aspects of the soldiering life in the Napoleonic era, from issues of appearance to health, nutrition, and life-threatening situations.

The text by Piotr Derengowski: *Corporal and Dishonourable Punishments in the Union Army during the American Civil War in the Light of Army Regulations and Reports of the General Courts-Martial in the IX Corps of the Army of the Potomac* addresses matters from the 19th century, but takes us to the United States. The article provides not only an overview of the corporal and dishonourable punishments provided for in the prevailing Civil War laws, but also a list of those applied by the military courts of the time. As the author points out, many of the punishments used at the time would, from today's perspective, be seen as torture.

Katarzyna Szmigiero in her article: *Bra-burners and Corseted Ladies. The Female Body, Underwear, and Feminism* is the only one to address issues of the body in the 20th century. Her text briefly outlines not only the history of underwear but also its role in shaping, or even deforming, the body. The author shows the relationship between lingerie and a woman's role and position in society, clearly indicating that this is in fact a story of female liberation.

The volume closes with Martin Šorma's text: *Proportions or Perspectives? Didactic Medievalism – Moving the Body to the Fore in Czech History Textbooks*, which showcases contemporary Czech history textbooks with by focusing in particular on their way of dealing with the issue of portraying the historicity of the body. The author points out that, although medieval bodies are surprisingly present in the textbooks under discussion, the way they are depicted is already in dire need of improvement.

We hope that such a broad and multifaceted approach to the issue of the body and corporeality in the broadest sense of the term, especially the motif of exposing the body to torment and suffering, presented by the authors not only on the basis of written sources but also on works of art, will arouse the interest of readers and provoke reflection on this extremely interesting theme.

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