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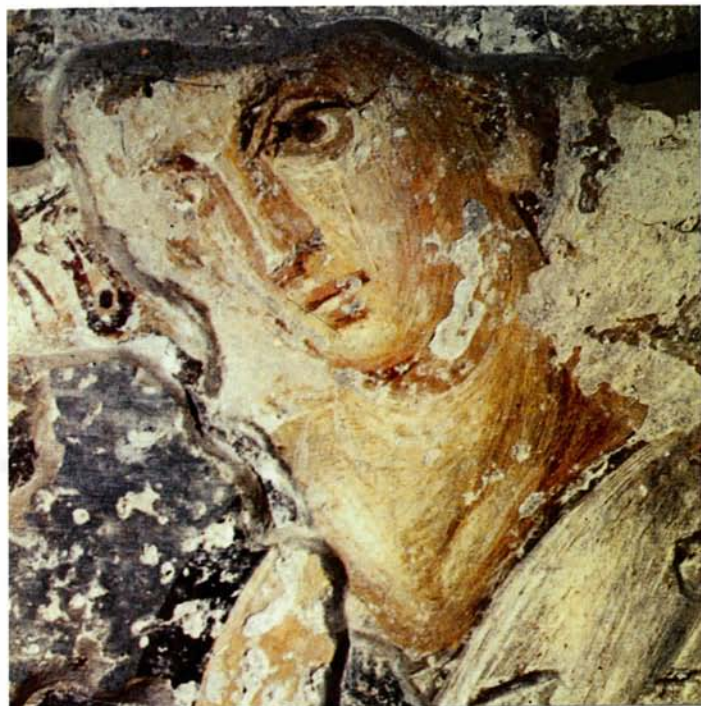


CIELESNOŚĆ CZŁOWIEKA

W ŚREDNIOWIECZNYM
MALARSTWIE ITALII

TOM I

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CIELESNOŚĆ CZŁOWIEKA W ŚREDNIOWIECZNYM MALARSTWIE ITALII

TOM I

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*Rodzicom
poświęcam*

HUMAN CORPOREALITY IN MEDIEVAL ITALIAN PAINTINGS. SUMMARY

New research into the theology of the body, theological anthropology, and numerous studies that were published in the area of history and literature were inspirations for reflecting on the body and corporeality in medieval Italian painting. In the past decade, books analyzing the human body in art have also appeared, focusing primarily on the modern visual arts. Here we can mention a work in three volumes edited by Georges Vigarello, *The History of the Body*. The first volume, from the *Renaissance to the Enlightenment* includes a synthesis of comments on the body in the art of the late Middle Ages.

This study considers undertaking different ways of portraying the body in medieval Italian paintings up to the thirteenth century in Volume I. These paintings, despite the undoubted importance of illumination and fresco paintings foreign to the Alps regions have retained the authoritative model for the whole of Europe, both in terms of sculpture, reliefs and paintings. In Italy, classical models focused on body illustrations, as well as the surrounding reality, nature and architecture. This circle accumulated religious and social processes of the Church's teaching about the creation of man by God and the resurrection of the body. In the territory of the former Roman Empire, there occurred osmosis of Greek and Latin formation of Christian culture and various visualizations of biblical history based on interpretations of the faith. On the broad horizon of Italian visual art, one can see a symbiosis of artistic imagination, which the European Middle Ages drew from up to the first quarter of the fifteenth century.

The basis for an analysis of the body and corporeality is the rich literature on Italian paintings in which the historical issues, foundations,

patronage, style and conservation studies have already been explained. They are important in the analysis presented on the body and flesh, whose media are the contours, line, hues and chiaroscuro, often changed in the subsequent history of such paintings. We must also stress the importance of research on iconographic themes and motifs for which the physical shape of the body is important. In this regard, studies in many other disciplines are helpful, especially theological, philosophical and historical. Only a synthesis of knowledge can make it possible to analyze the meaning of the displayed body and corporeality in art, which was overwhelmingly religious art.

Terms with a pejorative understanding of the body and corporeality and a struggle between body and soul have attached to the Middle Ages, which significantly mark the iconography of some of the themes. In fact, idealization of the body, portraying its sensual beauty, is also noticeable in these Italian paintings. We want to perceive the essence of corporeality within the context of new research undertaken in neighboring disciplines and to indicate the richness of the form and matter of the body between the uniform ideal of the classical and the so-called clumsy deformation. The ways of portraying the body according to the classification of the ancient style or a variety of subsequent transformations, which have taken place within the circle of the Eastern, Byzantine style, were indicated.

In our calculations, the visualized human body is not understood as a manifestation of style, though we do not try to destroy the academic structure. The body is not only a function of the subject, which presents the beautiful body as good or distorted because it is bad. The body and corporeality of man – all the saints and divine as well as human beings, are the medium between the artist (often at the same time the benefactor) and the recipient, which includes either a single concrete faithful person or a group of religious and lay faithful who live in a particular place and at a particular time.

The human body is presented with its carnal richness, developed through artistic means, comprises the sum of the transmission of religious content and dogmas of the faith, human mentality, royal and liturgical ceremonies of the Church as well as ordinary social behavior. Human corporeality can be given such highly designated meanings that it can be expressed through the elaborate language of literary and poetic metaphors in symbols and comparisons.

The chapter *Cyclical Body Images According to the Book of Genesis* consists of an analysis of man's creation as described in the Bible and transmitted through European illustration and known reliefs from the sixth to the twelfth centuries. Interpretations of the creation of the body and soul by the Church Fathers were pointed out. Development of corporeality in the images of a naked man and naked woman in paradise has its own connotations in relation to with the body's matter with the soul and spirit as a whole constituting the essence of man.

For illumination in early Christianity and then Carolingian and early Middle Ages, the concept of unity was drawn from the interpretation of theological writings. Imagining our first parents in paradise is also closely linked with the surrounding natural paradise, the elements: earth, water and light. This indicates the importance of the location of the Creator in relation to the created parents – Adam and Eve. The Creator sitting on the globe creates through Word and gesture, and in other presentations leans low, touching the human body.

Discussed are monumental Italian paintings of the XII-XIV centuries, which contributed to the particularly wide-scale human body and carnality created in paradise. Pictured is the existence of our first parents before original sin and then after submitting to temptation, when they exited the gate of the Garden of God with feelings of guilt. The frescoes preserved at Porta Latina in Rome reflect the unprecedented scale of artistic expression of the body and carnality of Adam and Eve's relationship with the waters of the rivers of Paradise and the earth.

The frescoes in the chapel in Solaro develop firmaments with four forjets, the events surrounding the creation of Adam and Eve who were connected with a rich moral content of the grace and mercy of God. An extensive series of creation scenes in Camposanto of Pisa and San Gimignano present the beautiful human bodies of Adam and Eve surrounded by the rich garden of paradise where different kinds of trees, shrubs and flowers are presented. The nature of the human body and the natural environment have their own cohesion.

The chapter *Roman Mosaics Cycles. Transformation of the Body by Partialing Color and Light* covers select examples of Christian works of the late Empire and early Middle Ages that show the historical ties with pagan and ancient art. A gradual transformation and visualization within the body is perceived. Roman painting thanks to its material form, flesh, constantly shone in medieval Europe, despite the obvious dominance of

the new political, religious and cultural monarchies as France, Germany, England and later the Czech Republic.

Rome as the center of the Empire, Papacy and cult traditions of sacred relics, created mosaic images which defined a new perception of imagined carnality radiating light and color. There was a flash of *resplendentio* material form, which defined the traditions of ancient art in showing the body. Rome was visited by the faithful, including artists who adopted models of the visual arts, identified with the city as the metropolis for both ancient and new Christianity. The Roman model of body shape remained as the pattern and visualization of the human body for the art of the European Middle Ages.

Attempts were made to create new formal solutions for new topics, unprecedented in ancient art, especially for such important illustrations as the creation of man by God, belief in bodily resurrection to eternal life and the cult of sacred relics as a particle of the human body. In undertaking this analysis of the body within art, we want to look at the lasting ancient art and point out new solutions founded on new religious and cultural basis. Helpful in this are modern theological research on the body and soul and new analyses of literary works with rich metaphorical imagery of the human body as compared e.g. to precious stones.

In the chapter *Patterns of Greek Hellenism. Selected Aspects of IX-XII Century Painting*, based on selected examples of fresco paintings within Italy, we examine ways of shaping the human body in the paintings of the early Middle Ages, such as the frescoes in Castelseprio. They depict the traditions of the preserved Constantinople court illumination, with its skill in painting the human form with corporeality and in the natural environment, especially that typical for land: rocky, dry or moist. For specific examples of paintings from this period, one points to differences in shaping the human body and corporeality. On the one hand, there is a tendency to retard patterns of Greek Hellenism in shaping the body, but on the other hand, there are trends to transform the body.

In the literature on the subject, the term *deformation of the human body* is used. One cannot exclude differences resulting from the artistic level in the development of a painting, which in the early Middle Ages were obvious. However, the universality of the phenomenon of differences other than the classic body shape allows asking about reasonable efforts to give a new form to the human body. This is especially true in art founded in ascetic monastic communities.

In visual arts throughout all of Romanesque Europe, reflections of the body began to dominate which exposed specific parts: the head, hands, feet, often including hips and knees. This method of imaging converges with the Judean tradition in the Old Testament. There was also a need to create unique Christian body language, for which an imperative, in addition to the biblical content, were commentaries written by the Church Fathers and medieval theologians, indicating the principles of the liturgy of rhetoric and ethics.

Paintings from early Medieval Rome and the Lazio region refer to various forms of corporeality. Important are intensive processes of historical and ethnic origin to differentiate the faithful – recipients of the works. They were united by a common rule of life according to the Bible and its moral messages used in the rules of everyday monastic and secular life. These mentioned types creating the style of corporality in shaping the human form also emerged in the strongly emerging feudal system environments. It was a time of constant, dangerous and dynamic changes in the life of society and in those conditions is hidden the cause of variability and diversity in visualizing the human being.

The chapter entitled *Ideals of Roman Classicism* (which consists of two: *Shaping the Body in XI-XIII Century Paintings* and *Pietro Cavallini's New Image of the Body and the Corporeality*), a new image of the body and flesh indicates the fixation patterns of classical Roman antiquity in the shaping of the body in the Roman paintings of the XII and XIII centuries. The works of the Roman Peter Cavallini restore nobility to proportions, a sensual feeling of the body and the authenticity of the mental expression of sacred and secular characters. The work of this painter in Rome coincided with the period of restoration of the authority of the Church and renewal of Art of the Holy City preparing to celebrate the Jubilee Year, as declared in 1300 by Pope Boniface VIII. Cavallini was commissioned paintings for the majority of Rome's basilicas, a few of which have survived, which were carried out along with the sculptor Arnolfo di Cambio and other artists, including Giotto.

In many works concerning this artist's paintings, there is a stress on the relationship of Giotto's paintings often emphasizing their dependence, the Tuscan being his disciple. A thorough analysis of ways of presenting the body and developing a carnal form ranks Cavallini as an original creator who, even if he knew Giotto, nevertheless created his own vision of man. This is confirmed by both mosaics in the church of Santa Maria

in Trastevere, as well as such works as frescos like the Last Judgment in the church of St. Cecilia. The painter aspired to restore the human body's form, its personal physical life that is visible in the face and palpable under the garments.

However, it was Cavallini who was honored by Lorenzo Ghiberti in the First Commentary as *nobilissimo maestro painter of great intellect*. He appreciated this historian and humanist for his familiarity with Byzantine painting known as Greek mannerism. This painter – a Roman – was not a copyist of that style of painting, which was established in Rome and throughout Italy. Analyzing the painting of this master, one indicates the bold introduction of the Roman manners *maniera Romana*, which particularly boldly emphasized strong physical volume and personalized characters. This was due to growth within the circle of existing Roman statues and reliefs thanks to cooperation between sculptors and friends of Arnolfo di Cambio.

A number of the apostles at the Last Judgment scene have either perfectly drawn youthful heads with shapes of Greek-style curly wigs or the head shape gives senility highlighted by gray, tarnished hair. There are varied physiognomies pertaining to the figure's age. The painter was able to mirror the skin on the face and exposed parts of the shoulders and neck where wrinkles were found, thickening characteristic of the human body. Shadow as a means of the painter's skill is not imposed on the surface of the painting according to the formula of Greek masters but extracts the inner volume of the body, giving it flexibility and softness. Cavallini used *chiaroscuro* as a means of extracting the characteristics of the three-dimensional body in parts: hips, shoulders, knees and feet.

An analysis of the body in the paintings of Giotto indicates a different understanding, and another way of forming it. Cavallini is a master of individualization and psychology – although it ought to be added, he did not eliminate Greek mannerisms, since he could not do so. He worked in Rome, at a given time, for a more traditionally minded audience. Cavallini's body and corporeality is a beautifully built body, not subject to transformations by Greek idealization, much less partitioning, although he created mosaics that already had their tradition in Rome.

The next chapter is *The Body and Corporeality in the Mediterranean Tradition: Greek, Roman and Hebrew Religious and Philosophical Reflections*. Corporeality similar to humanity introduces a person into a wider conceptual area. The phenomenon of the biological and physical

conditions and connects directly to the spiritual and mental. These coherent dispositions of body and flesh are undertaken in detailed analyses by anthropology, psychology and philosophy, especially metaphysics and cognitive philosophy. The Greek language distinguishes between two concepts of the body: *sarx* in the sense of what is perishable, and *soma* as a residence for the soul, as a container for the intellect, which divided what was material and corruptible, thus separating accidental from the indestructible, allowing it to participate in the eternal.

The Hebrew language uses the term *basar* to describe the entire material body for both a living man and animal. There is a second term *nefes hajjah* referring to the spiritual breath of God given to man. Christianity based on the Hebrew concept of the body also adopted the Greek idea with its specific separation of the *soma* from *sarx*. The Latin *corpus* in the sense of the material body was understood as an organism connected through multiple complex vessels allowing the complex structure of the various organs to operate in an almost perfect way. That is why the word *corpus* in its medieval meaning allowed for the development of rich metaphors, for example the body of the Church, the social body, etc.

A simple concept describing the body developed according to the interpretation of the Greek philosophers of the fifth century, when they pointed to an understanding of the body and corporeality in the context of various types of human experiences. According to Plato's philosophy, the notion of body and soul are particularly complex understandings. For example, in *Timaeus*, unity of soul and body is not identified with the opposition between good and evil. In the hierarchy of bodies, gods' and men, the bodies of the gods are made of the purest elements: fire, air, earth and water. They also form the building blocks of the human soul and make it an ideal substance. Plato's cosmological dualism impinged on the understanding the body.

He also created the concept in which he condemned the body, considering it a prison for the soul. In the Aristotelian concept of the body based on the cosmology of the world made from the spheres of sublunary and the celestial above the moon, the body was incorporated into passive matter, meaning changing, variable, different from the divine. The body belongs to the physical realm and is material, performing its function in the sphere of the physical world. It is an ideal structure of intertwined parts with movement and internal relationships. Based on philosophical thought, ideas of the body can be understood in art as the ideal unity of

parts according to their measure and number, which sculptors worked out to a perfect degree.

However, there exists in ancient and later medieval art a broad range of different ways to shape the body, which by transmitting the infinitely varied conditions of carnality, does not shape the body according to a single mathematical rule. Professor Jas Elsner pointed to the deep transformations, which a body was subject to in sculpture and reliefs in late Roman antiquity. Transcendence entered into the material world including the mystery of the human body and soul. Infinite possibilities of presenting the human psyche were discovered, its scale of feelings both positive as well as negative. This can be shown to the audience only by the body, especially the human face, but not only the face.

In Christian art, there also appeared an important source, which influenced the reflection of the corporeal human being in art. The Bible, especially the Old Testament, was the basic synthetic understanding of the body as entirely beautiful and good because God created it with its specific parts transferring bodily functions. Man in the Bible is understood according to actions, which are highlighted by body parts; through them, the will of God is reflected, as the Book of Job clearly describes. A presentation of the body according to biblical concepts and traditions of Judaism is seen in the paintings of monasteries in Europe, especially early Benedictine illuminism and sculpture. Highlighting parts of the body such as the face, hands, knees or hips allows directly visualizing a person in relation to specific episodes in the Bible, particularly in the Book of Genesis and the Psalms. Describing the human body and corporeality in medieval art, done here based on examples of Italian paintings, points to complex artistic and religious processes, as well as in the fields of philosophical and biblical anthropology.

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