

# Summary

## “A self of flesh and bone.” Psychosomaticity of literature in seven approaches

The aim of this dissertation is to present the concept of “psychosomaticity” as an anti-dualistic interpretative tool. Psychosomaticity – a concept derived from psychosomatic medicine, but also from cultural research – is a central category in this thesis, because it allows: (1) to express in one word the intertwining of the psyche and the soma, understood, for example, as Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s “embodied subjectivity”, (2) to avoid reducing the coextension of mind and body to only one of the elements that would act as a synecdoche representing the whole. Although the word “psychosomaticity” sounds foreign in the Polish language (it does not have a clear referent and is not used commonly), it has the linguistic and cognitive advantage of making it possible to think and say in a single breath both *psyche* and *soma*, which the tradition of dualistic thinking treated as oppositional elements. Psychosomaticity – a word that unites two previously separate concepts – avoids dividing, valuing and prioritising what is physical and what is mental in a person – just like the Möbius strip that provided the corporeal feminism of Elizabeth Grosz with a model of the transition of body into mind and mind into body: a model that overcomes dualism.

The main part of the work consists of seven chapters that present a number of idiographic representations of psychosomaticity based on selected works by Bruno Schulz, Tadeusz Różewicz, Stanisław Grochowiak and Wit Szostak. The use of various methodological tools – drawing especially from post-structuralism – in the interpretation of individual works highlights the smooth and sometimes invisible transition of the cultural body into the biological body, the unconscious of the psyche into the unconscious of the viscera, and the molecular interchangeability between Deleuze’s and Guattari’s “Body without Organs” and the organic body.

Psychosomaticity as a category with no single definition or use naturally influences the “nomadic” (as in Rosi Braidotti’s work) style of writing about it. Each chapter tries in a slightly different way to reach what constitutes a representation of the psychosomatic weave in a given work(s), as it manifests itself in literature at different levels – sometimes it is the subject of thematic criticism, sometimes it is an element of the metatext, other times it can be seen in biographical and personal author’s transition into the text, establishing a specific modality.

In the first chapter, I read the poem *Messengers* by Stanisław Grochowiak as an experiment in which the Cartesian separation of body and mind, and the post-structuralist treatment of the body as a text (a cultural body), leads the lyrical subject to disembodiment of perception. The

need to understand (a specific drive of semiosis) hinders the subject from being in the world. My interpretation also shows the wound as the limit of the language, a place where contact with the Real results in a logorea spread over the symbolic silence of the body.

In the second chapter, I describe the coherence of erotic-culinary phantasms and the body in Grochowiak's poetic imagination. The herring becomes a psychic figure of the lover's body, a corporeal and aesthetic manifestation of his desire, will, and psychophysical constitution. The second figure discussed is the soup-kitchen, using the example of which I show how the male subject of this poetry brings to light the unconscious associations between the female's body and food.

The next chapter is devoted to Bruno Schulz's specific philosophy of superficiality. The surfaces appearing in his stories do not require exploration, they do not provoke us to go deeper or into the essence of things, they rather encourage us to focus our attention on them, because it is on the surface, on the skin or fabric, that the identity of being, personality and psychology of the narrative characters extends. The skin, which according to Freud's psychoanalysis and Didier Anzieu's concept of "le Moi-peau" is the place of concentration of the ego's libidinal investments, becomes the medium of Jacob's metamorphoses. Clothes are also a prosthesis for the psychocorporeal condition of Schulz's literary characters.

Chapter four returns to Grochowiak to continue the theme of things as a prosthetic extension of the "I" in the external world and to show the mental and bodily relations of the lyrical subject with walls – as stimulators of imagination, spaces of everyday existence, planes of bodily memory (as in the concept of Bachelard's "oneiric house").

The fifth chapter talks about the main psychosomatic symptom – pain – in the context of late works of Aleksander Wat. The poet suffered from a disorder known in his time as a psychosomatic disease, which clearly marked his writing. Wat's problems with describing or communicating pain to others and ways of making it as readable or textual as possible (writing without vowels, framing the disease in metaphors to facilitate understanding, explaining somatic symptoms with biographical episodes and psychological predispositions, as well as pain poems) were presented in parallel to translational models.

The sixth chapter shows the intertwining of the living and the dead in Różewicz's work, a peculiar family genealogy that finds its extension in the genology of the books *Nasz starszy brat* and *Matka odchodzi*. The chapter contains analyzes of three Różewicz's "thorns" (or *puncta*, according to Roland Barthes' terminology): (1) the belly – as a kind of crypt and at the same time a womb, (2) surnames – which are a form of genealogical record of a periodic fraction rather than a proper name, (3), wound on the forehead – the complex stigma of the poet. In

all these cases, the traumatic end of one of the family members meets with some beginning, and the mutilated corpse is incorporated into the psychosomatic “I” of the living.

In the seventh chapter, I analyse becoming-woman (Deleuze and Guattari’s term) as becoming a poet(ess) in Wit Szostak’s novel *Szczelinami* (written in verse). I describe how the influence of feminist thought and women’s writing is reflected in the empathetic creation of the lyrical subject, and how problems with gender affect both the conceptualization of lyrical persona and the text.

The ending goes beyond the scope of the previously discussed threads, and at the same time complements them, opening the perspective of psychosomatic tracks to the theatrical staging of Jennifer Haley’s drama *The Nether* and the body/mind problem transferred to virtual reality. I present there the most important problems emerging from Haley’s play: political appropriation of the web, the challenges of identity and ontology of bodies/shadows, transhumanistic projects of connecting consciousness (through the body) to the Internet, and telematic experiences as a replacement for the bodily senses. The reality of the Internet forces us to rethink psychosomaticity and the problem of dualism.