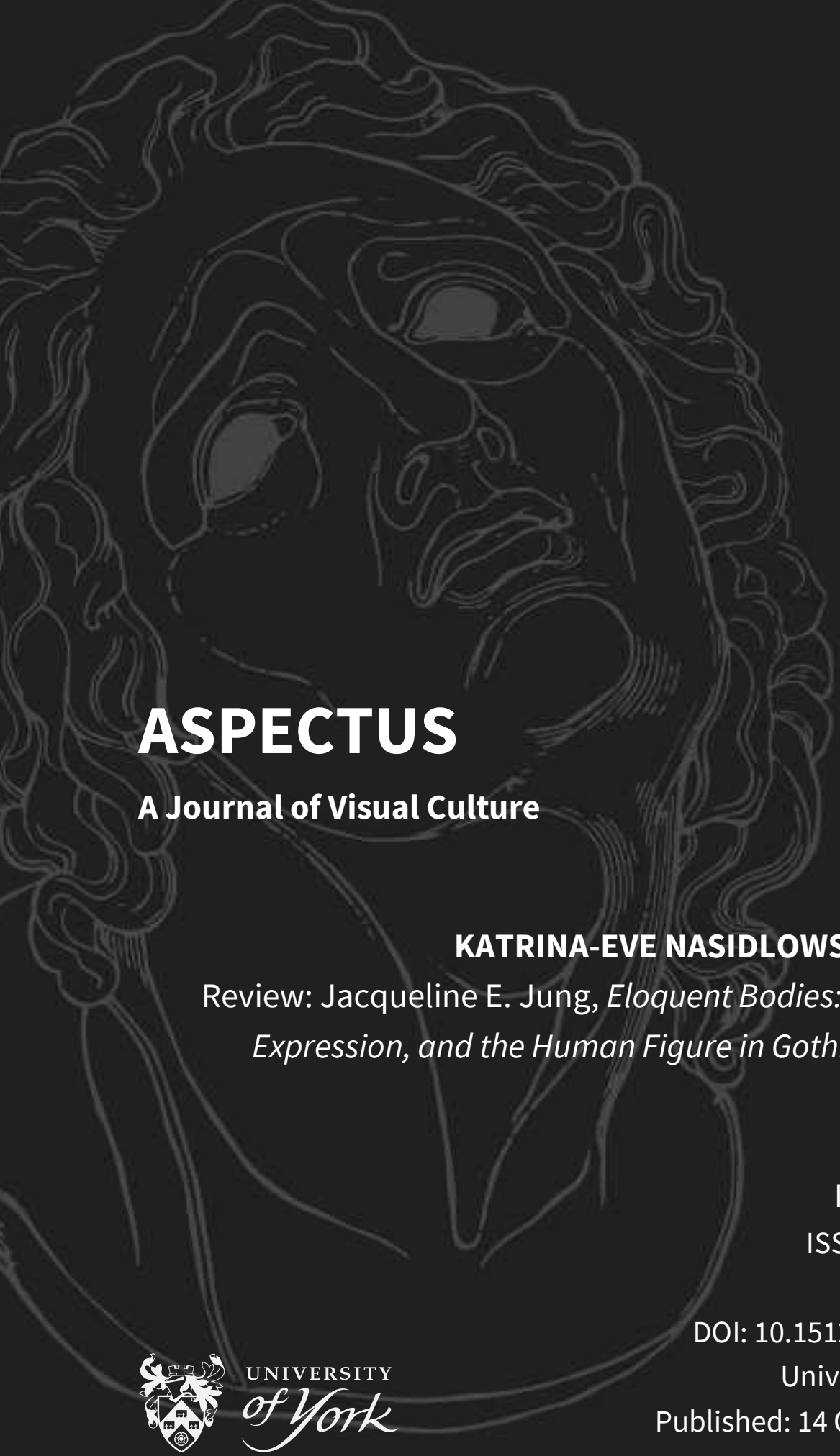

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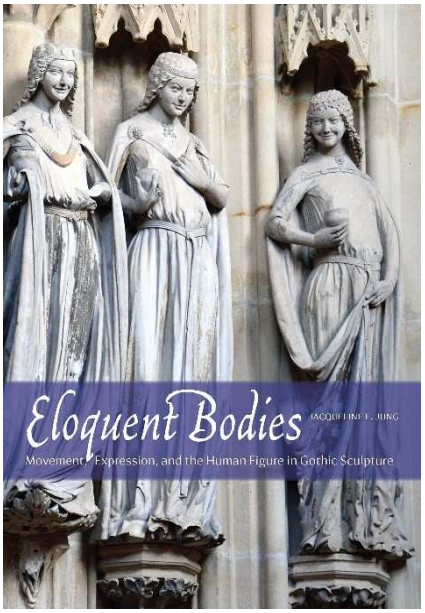
Book Review

Jacqueline E. Jung, *Eloquent Bodies: Movement, Expression, and the Human Figure in Gothic Sculpture*



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Jacqueline Jung's Eloquent Bodies opens with a quotation from Johann Gottfried Herder in which he championed phenomenological engagement with classical art. Thus, a sculpture or monument is divided into multiple fragmented experiences, visions, and moments which collate to form the sculpture as experienced by the viewer. These fragmented or momentary perceptions of the three-dimensional necessitate movement around the object, Gothic sculpture in Jung's case, in order to see and experience it fully. Focusing on Gothic sculptures which are stationary and yet exist in perpetual movement, she writes that these sculptures are animate and 'enliven the spaces around them and render more complex their apparently straightforward iconography'.[1] Building on this, she explains that seeing and apprehending these animate sculptures becomes a haptic visuality. The eye follows the shape of the three-dimensional object to optically feel textures, contours, and scale. Looking and seeing the sculptures involves a physical response akin to touch; looking involves the body. The body of the viewer is the site of physical responses to the physicality of the sculpture(s). This premise informs Jung's examination of Gothic sculpture and the (receptive) body of the viewer.

Focusing on German sites, Jung tracks Gothic sculptures chronologically beginning with the influences from Chartres and Reims first at Bamberg and sites in the western German-speaking world moving east—Strasbourg, Magdeburg, Naumburg, and Meissen (Chapter 1). At Strasbourg, Jung explores the great portal ensemble on the south transept as experienced from different points in the cathedral, considering how movement in the church was directed by use. Moving through the cathedral, she considers the relationship between fixed sculptures and moveable, adaptable, and/or permanent objects like clocks, tombs, and altars. Wandering through the cathedral and encountering sculpture and objects, she explains, is analogous to a quest to find God and Their judgement (Chapters 2-3).

Next, at Magdeburg, Jung productively investigates the north transept sculptures of the Wise and Foolish Virgins. The sculptors of these 'interactive' sculptures offered the viewer mimesis, as the viewer experiences the actions of the wise and foolish, and then imitates the actions of the wise by being granted entry, but also being able to move beyond as they pass the portal sculptures into the cathedral (Chapter 4). At Naumburg, Jung focuses on the west choir

highlighting how movement is regulated and forbidden at the nave with the choir screen. Emphasizing the twelve life-size donor sculptures, she articulates the ways in which a singular meaning is inhibited because of the nature of the multi-faceted monument which demands multiple viewings and, thus, multi-valency in meaning-making (Chapters 5-6).

Jung's case study of the Wise and Foolish Virgins at Magdeburg Cathedral invites us to think through the visual and theological uses of the parable, and how the figures were represented previously in stasis and then in movement at Magdeburg and after at subsequent cathedrals. Key to the continued tradition of representing these figures in movement, Jung explains, is 'their format as large-scale figures at a threshold, which transformed beholders into participants in their iconography, and their forms of bodily expression'.[2] A parable based on the premise of inclusion and exclusion from heaven at the threshold enabled viewers to see themselves as invited into God's grace or rejected and expelled from the Church and also heaven. The placement of this parable at the threshold of the building optimizes the movement of viewers past and around and about the animate, almost life-sized sculptures to suggest the inclusion of the viewers' bodies in the parable. Thus, the multiple vantage points needed to make out each sculpture's torsion and tensions and facial expressions emphasized both the movement of the sculpted bodies and the viewing bodies. The viewing bodies, in movement, see themselves reflected in the moving bodies of the sculptures and can thus apply the iconography onto themselves. For these reasons, Jung insists that these sculptures be seen phenomenologically—multiple and experiential viewings are needed to see the whole, which is necessitated by the three-dimensionality of these sculptures which further twist and turn away from each other and from potential viewers.

Throughout her work, Jung advocates embodied viewership by citing primary contemporary sources as well as her own experiential viewings of sculptures and monuments. Her monograph offers multiple photographic angles of the works in order to attempt to recreate the in situ experiences she describes. She is critical of the limitations of photography and the ways in which photography is not neutral, and she challenges her readers to see past her own photographic representations.[3] To push this further, as art historians employ phenomenological approaches to seeing and experiencing art works which require movement around an object, it is crucial that we think through how accessibility to objects intersects with experiential viewing.

If, as described above, looking involves the body, then: do archives and sites such as cathedrals and art galleries make themselves accessible to persons with disabilities? were they designed to exclude certain bodies? and with whom, then, is an excluded viewer meant to identify in embodied, haptic viewings? and in what ways are prescribed viewers and viewings challenged, reclaimed, and restored when sites insist upon accessibility? How do we critically acknowledge that historic viewers would have included persons with disabilities, alongside contemporary ideas and theologies of the body and bodily perfection in holy spaces and pilgrimage sites? How can we challenge the ways in which art has been seen, described, and represented for able-bodied viewers? As a starting point, phenomenological approaches, as Jung undertakes, are key in that they have the potential to be methodologically capacious, and insist upon multiple seeings and experiences, towards that which may not even privilege the eye.

[1] Jacqueline E. Jung, *Eloquent Bodies: Movement, Expression, and the Human Figure in Gothic Sculpture* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2020), 1.
[2] Jung, *Eloquent Bodies*, 169.
[3] Jung, *Eloquent Bodies*, 6.