

Christoph Berner – Manuel Schäfer – Martin Schott – Sarah Shulz – Martina Weingärtner (eds.), *Clothing and Nudity in the Hebrew Bible* (London – New York – Oxford: T&T Clark 2019). Pp. 616. 123 \$. ISBN 9780567678478

### ANNA RAMBIERT-KWAŚNIEWSKA

Institute of Biblical Studies, Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Wrocław  
 e-mail: anna.rambiert@gmail.com  
 ORCID: 0000-0002-9491-6786

This last year's publication *Clothing and Nudity in the Hebrew Bible* (2019) must have risen great hopes in textile researchers. Although the book seems to be focused on the Hebrew Bible, a quick look at the table of contents allows one to see how broad the scope is, and that the Hebrew Bible is only the common goal of all studies published within. All articles were divided into three parts: 1. Addressing and Contextualizing Clothing and Nudity in Ancient Israel; 2. Thematic Studies; 3. Textual Studies, and this review allows to state that the reader holds a publication that is a result of a collaboration, what is highlighted in the preface. Story of the publication is said to begin with two annual EABS meetings – in 2015 held in Córdoba and in 2016, in Leuven. The editors proved their sense of intuition in their decision to follow the problem of nudity and clothing in the Hebrew Bible, an issue open for many research opportunities even after publication of this collection.

The first part consists of texts of various natures – from methodology analyses, through the description of textile production, iconography, terminology, anthropology, and theology. Such division into subjects enables a close and multidisciplinary look at biblical nudity and textiles. The methodological part includes three texts proposing different approaches to nudity and textiles – from study of religion, gender studies and anthropology perspectives. The first of one, an erudite article by A.-K. Höpflinger (pp. 5-18) presents the multidimensional nature of nudity, which depends on the context. On the one hand, it means being uncivilized, on the other, poverty, and finally touches upon eroticism. The author also invites the reader to conduct further studies of nudity and clothing in the offered manner. In the chapter devoted to gender studies (pp. 19-32), A. Garcia-Ventura notes interesting disparities in the perception of male and female nudity – the male one is a metaphor for humanity, whereas female nudity only relates to sexuality and gender. Being interesting in itself, the article ends with praise of Femen and Guerrilla Girls, which spoils the effect and gives the impression of unnecessary

ideologization. The last of the texts, L. Allolio-Näcke's (pp. 33-49) article devoted to methodology raises a significant question about humans being the only primates without fur. It points the difference between meaning of "nude" and "naked," explains the different perceptions of nudity and of clothing in different cultures and historical periods, supported with interesting illustrations. Finally, the author proposes a claim of equality in clothing in the 1920s. Although the text barely touches upon biblical perspective, it specifies the concept of nakedness and clothing.

Second section of the first part opens with source studies on the process of textile production in ancient Near East during the Iron Age, pointing to animal species from which raw materials (animal and plant) were obtained for their production. The great value of N. Ben-Yehuda's text (pp. 53-85) lies in numerous references to the biblical text. This knowledge is further supported by, among others archaeological monuments described by A. Thomason (pp. 87-126), which contains examples of textile findings throughout the ancient Near East (sometimes including Anatolia) from the Neolithic Age, through the Bronze Age, to the Iron Age with strongest associations with the Hebrew Bible. The author also draws attention to the problem of identifying textiles based on iconographic findings that have been subject to schematization and ideologization. She emphasizes the role the context of a finding plays in interpretation of the outfit. These are significant remarks, as textile researchers pay great attention to faithful reconstruction of production processes everyday use of textiles. The researcher also devotes her attention to women's clothing and nudity, ultimately concluding that "the ancient Near East was not culturally monolithic or unchanging" (p. 118). Therefore, interpretation of biblical textiles requires a thorough confrontation with written, archaeological and iconographic material. In another text (pp. 127-161), K. Pyschny deals with the topic of male and female nudity, focusing on the threat of anachronism faced by the researcher, especially regarding shame which follows nudity. At the beginning of the study, the author notes that nudity representations should always include the concept and context behind it. She also notices disproportion in research of female and poorly developed male nudity. The author crosses the boundary of one category of archaeological monuments, analyzing figures, seals, coins, reliefs etc. Ultimately, she comes to the conclusion about the multidimensionality of nudity, which in most cases has nothing to do with eroticism. She also notes that the overtones of female and male nudity depend on the era (e.g., no image of female nudity in the Persian era). In an interesting way, the author notes that female nudity more often referred to the sphere of *sacrum*, while the male one to *profanum*. Pyschny's text is polished and erudite to great extent, opening numerous fields for further discussion. The monograph also includes research related to Old Kingdom Egypt (pp. 163-184), an era that poorly fits the biblical, although the research on representing the status of an individ-

ual is an interesting comparative material. The author finally makes a valuable remark that in the nude-clothed relationship the former is always the person of the lower class.

The last paragraph of the first part is entirely devoted to the Hebrew Bible. As the research field is quite limited, many of the issues discussed here are repeated (see p. 194 and p. 53), although the authors try to take original approaches. First of the texts, by W. Zwickel (pp. 187-215), presents a discussion of the terminology behind nudity and fabrics, production methods, dyeing and specific outfits. The author also classifies clothes according to their function and, later, also according to sex. It is clearly visible that the study is a trivial contribution – for instance, in the case of an byssus, the author reproduces a widespread error reproduced since the Middle Ages (p. 201), saying that the term denotes sea silk, and not fine quality thin linen. However, the material collected by the researcher is a good place to organize one's knowledge and start more profound research. H. Gzella's text (pp. 217-235) contains some repetitions, but the researcher introduces a novelty – extension of textile terminology to include the Aramaic version and Dead Sea Scrolls. The author notes how important is the cultural context for creation of native versions of the Bible (e.g., LXX). The next article focuses on the anthropological and theological approach to nudity (pp. 237-249). As the author states, it is only a preliminary outline of a broad topic. The author briefly discusses the topic of nudity in specific contexts of creation, death and birth, humiliation and shame, erotica and cult. Especially in the latter case, he indicates the change in perception of nudity – from the one that desacralizes and defile (priests), to being a sign of total humbleness in the eyes of God (David), although the latter aspect is unique. The author also notes that the anthropomorphized God is not naked but clad in a *kabod*. The author associates nudity with vulnerability and a sense of security in an interesting way, showing its biblical ambivalence. This text closes the section on Bible methodology and contexts.

Part two of the monograph is devoted to thematic studies, probably those for which no common denominator was found. They include clothing of deities and the metaphorical attire of God, as well as detailed studies on the habits of: tearing clothes, removing shoes, the prohibition of combining wool with linen, covering the naked, and a general text devoted to literature of the Second Temple era. Each of them is a reflection of a separate methodology. S. Ammann's article is one of the texts which stand out (pp. 255-267) – it draws attention to the *lubuštu* ceremony from biblical times in Mesopotamia and its perception by biblical authors – always polemic and negative, emphasizing: the impermanence of textiles, and thus of deities; their resemblance to man; their powerlessness. It contrasts with the power and strength of God portrayed as a king and warrior, emphasized by J.M. LeMon and R.A. Purcell (pp. 269-287), and according to the research of M.E. Burton (pp. 289-300), metaphorically dressed in *kabod* – in glory. Burton,

in his very trivially contributing text, which closes the section devoted to divine clothing, notes, however, that clothing in glory was not intended for God only, but also for people like kings, sages or priests. M. Köhlmoos's article (pp. 303-313) opening the next section of the second part of the monograph is particularly noteworthy. The author states that the custom of tearing one's clothes was not the first, but a secondary sign of an experienced catastrophe – confrontation with death or disturbance of the earth/cosmic order – less important than clothing the body with a sackcloth. It also proves that tearing clothes is not as much a sign of mourning and humiliation, as it is a way of expressing physically “shock, fear, and rage in the face of death or situation related to death” (p. 304). Describing the rite, the author also confirms that nudity is alien to the Jewish culture, which is why mourners never exposed themselves completely, showing only a small fragment of the body – “mourners are naked and clothed simultaneously” (p. 311), at the same time they are humiliated and normal, dead and alive. Further, J.J. Krause (pp. 316-322) emphasizes that the ancient Near East saw a common tradition of taking off shoes when entering a sacred space. He notes that in the description of rituals and, e.g. priest robes, although this is not mentioned explicitly, we are dealing with a strong *ex silentio* argument, additionally supported by texts from Exodus 3 and Josh. 5:13-15. It is worth mentioning that similar statement has already appeared earlier on pp. 245-246 in the context of cult nudity before God. In their article, E. Otto discusses (pp. 323-330) the prohibition of Deut. 22:11 in an interesting way, taking into account the dating of the sources of the Pentateuch, and noting that the functions of textiles have changed along with the development of tradition – e.g. in the context of the pre-exilic Covenant Code and the postexilic Code of Holiness. Another article (pp. 331-341) debates nudity related to, among others, poverty in the context of honor and shame, putting under consideration why the clothing of the poor was associated with righteousness. R. Kessler finally concludes that nudity is always associated with dishonor, and clothing with restoring dignity to a person. He also notes that this concept was released just before exile, when Judah struggled with the impoverishment of society and was ultimately associated with righteousness, including God's righteousness (Deut. 10:17-18), however, should also Gen. 3 be considered as such text? In the closing text of this part of the monograph, J. Orpana (pp. 343-352) studies literature of the Second Temple, which goes beyond the biblical texts. She notes that clothing is not the center of attention of the ancient authors, and a great body of possibly helpful materials has not survived to our time. Texts on textiles and nudity are fragmentary, although the author claims that there were regulations regarding nudity – especially in relation to public spaces, where it was prohibited. They were slightly different for each group and depended on circumstances (life cycle). The author thoroughly analyzes the sources, systematically presents them according to the aforementioned manner.

The last part of the monograph is a collection of texts investigating specific Bible passages, which is why it was divided into the Torah, Prophets and Wisdom Literature. Authors of the first of the sections deal with the issue of clothing and nudity:

– in a paradise reality. In his erudite article (pp. 357-378), F. Hartenstein, following B. Jacob, acknowledges the text of Gen. 3:21 as a clue to chapters 2 and 3, showing the evolution of nudity – from shameless, through shameful, resulting in insufficient clothing, to covered by God in the name of restoring mutual communication between humans and between humans and God;

– in the context of Noah’s nudity caused by his intoxication. M. Bauks (pp. 379-387) notes that the narrative of the Flood is framed by two shameful events – the intercourse of God’s sons with human women and the incident with Noah and his sons. At the same time, he points out how culture has preserved the second of them until modern times, which is a *novum* in the book. Ultimately, the author comes to the repeatedly cited conclusions that nudity (especially the exposure of genitals) is associated with loss of honor, and clothing “reflects social respect for a person” (p. 385). Noah’s loss of honor is not a single event – its second occurrence was caused by the reaction of one of his sons, Ham, whose guilt is not a sexual act – which the researcher successfully proves – but the lack of proper action;

– based on Gen. 37-39, the story of Joseph and the intertwined fate of Judah and Tamar. F. Ede (pp. 390-402) claims that very few researchers structuralize this section according to textiles, however it is hard to agree with this statement. The author is therefore involved in clothing Joseph in and stripping him of subsequent garments and describing the change of status which follows every event, like breaking the blood ties, etc. The author also notes that the vicissitudes associated with Joseph’s attire are a link to the seemingly incompatible narrative of Judah and Tamar. While Joseph’s robes indicated his identity, Tamar’s were supposed to hide it – the common denominator remains, however, in the function of the robes and clothing element: deceit and evidence (p. 400);

– with regard to the symbolic value of clothing and clothing activities: dressing, changing clothes, undressing. In her text (pp. 403-416), M. Weingärtner a metaphorical potential behind both textiles and activities around them (e.g. Tamar’s morally ambivalent disguise is a call for justice);

– in reference to the need for priests to wear trousers. Ch. Berner (pp. 417-433) notes that texts devoted to priests speak very little about nudity and sex. The only exception are two passages: Exod. 20:26 and Exod. 28:42-43, to which the author devotes more attention, reflecting on their understanding in the context of perception of biblical nudity and possible historical conditions, while pointing to the exile (Persian) times. As he notes, the need for priests to cover nudity with breeches, borrowed from Persian culture, has been confirmed within separately

developing traditions (e.g. Ezek. 44:18; Lev 6:4; 16:4), meaning that this problem has been noticed in several communities. He also claims that the subsequent introduction of breeches into the priest attire is evidenced by the fact that this is the only piece of attire with no symbolic value;

- in the priesthood context. N. MacDonald (pp. 435-448), presents the stages of harmonization of texts regarding priest attire, at the same time reconstructing their original appearance and indicates the symbolic and theological potential of the priest's robes, without which the cult would lose its significance;

- in relation to divinity – radiating from the face of Moses while coming down from Mount Sinai (pp. 449-457). There is no consensus as to why he covered it – either to simply make it invisible to the people or to protect it. By examining the habits of covering the face and head, W. Oswald effectively proves that the passage of Exod. 34:33-35 is unique in the entire Hebrew Bible.

In the second section, devoted to Prophets, the authors discuss: the nudity of David dancing in front of God (S. Schulz; pp. 461-475) – a picture referred to many times in *Clothing and Nudity in the Hebrew Bible* – recited by 2 Sam. 6 (an unorthodox lecture) and 1 Chron. 15 (an orthodox relecture) in different manner; characteristic elements of the prophetic costume, predominantly with the hairy robe of Elijah (pp. 477-489) – clothing with greater functional meaning than historical value and its changeable perception: as a piece garment associated with power in 2 Kings 2 and not being a carrier of the power in Zech. 13 (M. Schott); the functional capacity of the 3-year nudity of the prophet from Isa 20, which becomes a universal warning against various peoples, including Israelites (A. Beyer; pp. 491-498); clothing, nudity and shame in those who use prophetic oracles with marriage visions indicating national tragedies in 722 and 586 BC (A. Klein; pp. 499-523) and the issue of purity of the high priest in Zech. 3 (M. Hallaschka; pp. 525-540).

The last section consists of only two texts: on women's clothing in the Book of Proverbs (pp. 543-556) – in contrast to male – functional clothing related to home space – which does not lie in the interest of the inspired author (S. Fischer) and a topic that is hard to miss – clothing and nudity in Song of Songs, which cannot be encapsulated only in sensuality and eroticism (M. Gerhards; pp. 557-567).

The monograph lacks *résumé* or particular ending. Useful indexes (pp. 569-590) were placed immediately after the last text.

The co-authored monograph *Clothing and Nudity in the Hebrew Bible*, consisting of 32 texts, definitely fills the severe gap in studies of biblical textiles, as a lecture on a multidisciplinary approach to the subject. Most of the texts presented are minor contributions, and many authors are aware of that, but they open new research fields. However, it is difficult to lose the impression that even though the authors try their best to take different approaches, a lot of content – such as the types of fabrics used, terminology etc. – is repeated in the book,

and the authors are not to blame. Attention is also drawn to the unevenness of the monograph in terms of the substantive level of texts. From a formal point of view, lack of standardization of the original text is also surprising – in some places transcription is used, other parts are written in original form. These remarks, however, do not diminish the great value of this publication, and indicate that the annual meetings of researchers from various countries whose focus is the Bible text and contexts are in fact fruitful.

