

dio ambiente, alimentación y penalidades) a resultados de su dilatado cautiverio en Egipto, por considerar que este humor “tostado” favorecía la clase de facultad “imaginativa” más proclive a la medicina práctica.

En suma, en la obra aquí reseñada se aúnan una cuidada edición y transliteración anotada de la *Plática de medicina* del Dr. Moreno; un magnífico estudio introductorio que, por fortuna, no se limita al análisis lingüístico del texto editado en el contexto del español y del judeoespañol, sino que se adentra con determinación y solvencia en el examen del autor y la obra en su contexto histórico-médico; y un completo glosario de términos técnicos y otros hebreos, turcos, portugueses y aragoneses, y unos valiosos índices topo-onomástico, de autores y obras, y de términos técnicos. ■

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■ **Michael Sappol.** *Queer Anatomies. Aesthetics and Desire in the Anatomical Image, 1700-1900.* Bloomsbury Publishing; 2024. 280 p. ISBN 9781350400894. 21,99 £

This book is the latest work by the American author, curator, and historian Michael Sappol. In this critical essay, inspired by Sedgwick's *The Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), Sappol transports the reader to British and French cultural centers between the 18th and 20th centuries. Navigating the curious intersection of medicine and art, he reveals how anatomical illustrations became fertile ground for the expression of eroticism and queer desire.

The first chapter outlines the work's theoretical framework, with the core concept of queerness, which serves as a key interpretive lens throughout. Sappol moves beyond defining “queer” as related to sexual identities, instead framing it as an epistemological tool to interrogate the past and reflect on the present. This way the historian encourages us to abandon rigid modes of thought and embrace the path of error, embarking on a journey made of flesh, gazes, and subtle lust. Queering our perspective becomes, then, an alternative way to shed light on the dark corners of history, reading traces that, *perhaps*, tell us of silenced passions.

To put this epistemic “troubling” into practice, the author examines anatomical representations, focusing on the dual nature of the gaze. Foucault’s interpretation of power as both active and passive becomes crucial in this context. Indeed, as Sappol points out, the medical gaze was governed by norms that created an aura of modesty around the naked female body, limiting its representation. However, these restrictions led to *queer consequences*, opening spaces for non-heteronormative erotic appetite to emerge. The parallel with the metaphor of the closet is especially pertinent here: the closet, too, is characterized by duality, being a space that stifles identity while simultaneously providing a site for the thriving of desire.

In his attempt to queer the past, Sappol further explores the gaze, offering a nuanced understanding of its complexity. He challenges the clear-cut separation between observer and observed, showcasing that power and sexuality are mutable forces that flow beyond fixed categorizations. What he instead suggests is a dynamic interaction, where the observed also plays an active role, influencing the observer, returning their gaze, and even arousing them. In this scenario, the act of looking becomes intrinsically bonded to desire, forming a liminal space where the cold meticulousness of the medical observation coexists with the sensuality of the erotic gaze.

In the two following chapters, the theoretical premises established in the first part now come to life in the magnificent illustrations presented on these pages. The first setting is the 18th century, when, in the exclusive circles of *connoisseurs*, cultivated men gathered to discuss Beauty, shaping the parameters of taste. In their debates, the representation of the male anatomy held its place, not only from a technical standpoint but also, at times, capturing gazes laden with mischievous interest. The artistic style of figures such as the British anatomist William Cheselden (1688-1752), distinguished by classical and post-classical inspirations, encapsulated this tension between aesthetic perfection and homoeroticism. Even more sensually charged were the transgressive works of Jacques Fabien Gautier d’Agoty (1716-1785), which express queerness on multiple layers: in the portrayal of sexual organs, and male and female bodies. His *ecorchée* figures evoked bondage, gory martyrdom, and even Christological references, all situated within a cultural landscape influenced by Sadean libertinism.

As the 18th century transitioned into the 19th, such debauchery became more discreet, yet the emphasis on the senses and the centrality of the body remained strong. Artists like Jean-Baptiste-Marc Bourgerie (1797-1849) and his collaborator Nicolas-Henri Jacob (1781-1871) created works that went beyond teaching about the human body. By blending the allure of unveiled flesh with

surgical mastery, they managed to summon a tactile experience. These illustrations, more than mere educational tools, allow the viewer to feel the body. Similarly, Joseph Maclise's (1815-1891) drawings stand out for their haptic quality, embodying, much like D'Agoty, a multidimensional queerness that is not limited to the numerous depictions of uncovered penises. His work also conveys subversiveness in heterosexual representations and challenges cultural conventions, particularly through the portrayal of a Black body. This experience, visually intriguing and intellectually stimulating, concludes at the rise of the 20th century, when art and science divorced, being confined into distinct spheres—in an era marked by the emergence of new sites for the development of sexuality.

Finally, Sappol turns his gaze to us, the readers of the 21st century, distant in time from these artists, different from them, and highly diverse from each other. Yet, despite this social metamorphosis, the author prompts us to reflect on how, from our specific and non-innocent situatedness, we partake in power relations and shape the categories through which we understand and interpret reality. In light of this, *Queer Anatomies* offers us a unique perspective on the cultural history of anatomy but, more importantly, serves as a lens through which we can reconsider social dynamics, questioning what they entail. Transcending obvious appearances, it invites us to engage with the tension between margins and centers, visibility and invisibility—in a queer way. ■

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■ **Andreas W. Daum.** Alexander von Humboldt: A Concise Biography. Princeton: Princeton University Press; 2024. 23 €

Humboldt es quizás una de las figuras más conocidas de la historia de la ciencia. Desde fines de la Ilustración, su figura ha atraído también atención e interés en el mundo hispánico, debido a que su carrera floreció en un diálogo íntimo con intelectuales y políticos de la monarquía ibérica y las nuevas repúblicas hispano-americanas. Dado el reciente éxito editorial de *La invención de la naturaleza* de Andreas Wolf como la biografía intelectual más reciente del héroe prusiano, es justo preguntarse que tiene que aportar Daum al ya exagerado interés sobre el