

*Abstract*

The Experience of Warfare in the Long Seventeenth-Century: Narrating Body and Personhood in European Self-Narrative Documents

This project offers a new perspective on the intertwined histories of state-building and the emerging modern body. So far narratives of increasing control of bodily affects and practices have taken decidedly top-down stances. The field is dominated by accounts of how elite thinkers changed discourses pertaining to the body and to personhood and how this gradually changed the way both could be expressed and experienced. This enquiry wants to complicate this narrative by proposing a different angle of investigation. Here it is asked what role the complex relationship between embodied, socio-centric subjectivity and fledgling state power played in this development. Self-narratives written in the transcultural contexts of seventeenth-century warfare will be discussed with a view to how they engaged with the conflicts witnessed. The sources are chosen to represent English-, French-, and German-speaking territories of Europe, and an emphasis is placed on the inclusion of both men and women of different backgrounds. Close readings of the self-narratives are conducted, taking into account intended audiences and aims of the authors with a view to how they interrelated with the bodily images presented in the texts. Specific attention is paid to narrative gaps and contradictions and what they reveal about early modern embodied personhood. The present enquiry takes it as its working hypothesis that fully embodied subjectivities proved challenging to top-down state-formation, which is why an imagined barrier between person and body came to gain traction.