

as a place where anatomy but also plays were performed. The relations between anatomy and literature mentioned by Zinguer in her introduction now seem a bit one-sided: writers borrowing from anatomy and not vice versa. And then: what did writers and poets borrow from the science of anatomy? Michel de Montaigne's somewhat idiosyncratic use of the term "skeletons" (not so much a skeleton in the anatomical sense, as a skinned but living body dreamt up by the writer to allow insight into the workings of the human being) as described by Marie-Luce Demonet seems to suggest that writers were mainly interested in anatomy as a source for metaphors and emblems.

In some essays the subject "anatomy" seems to be stretched beyond its limits. The descriptions of physical ailments as a strategy to stress the seriousness of certain emotions in sixteenth-century ego documents may be a sign of an emerging sense of physicality, of the body, in the literature of that period (Nadine Tsur-Kuperty, 'Les mots du corps') but how closely does the use of these literary descriptions relate to the science of anatomy? Other essays use anatomy as an analogy: Gustave Flaubert came from a family of famous doctors, *Madame Bovary* is a book influenced by its author's medical connections, as is the clinical character of his observations, but does that make Flaubert an *anatomiste*, as Héléna Shillony would have it?

The wide spectrum of disciplines and topics brought together in this collection sometimes tends to obscure its central theme of the relation between anatomy and literature. That said, *Théâtre de l'anatomie et corps en spectacle* offers an interesting panorama on the way the anatomical method of looking at its subject pervaded and influenced (French) literary culture from the sixteenth century onwards. However, it would have been nice if the ways in which culture—literary and otherwise—pervaded and influenced the science and scientists of anatomy had also found a place in this book.

**Tim Huisman,**

Museum Boerhaave, National Museum for the  
History of Science and Medicine, Leiden

**Michael Sappol**, *Dream anatomy: a unique blend of art and medical science from the National Library of Medicine*, Washington, United States Department of Health and Human Sciences, 2006, pp. xii, 180, illus., \$30.00 (paperback 978-0-16-072473-2).

More than the treasures of Tutankhamen's tomb, more even than the latest impressionist blockbuster, the most visited show on earth is the display of plastinated cadavers prepared by the German anatomist Gunther von Hagens. What attracts fee-paying visitors in their millions to stare at these spectacularly revealed human innards is the subject of Michael Sappol's marvellously compelling book, namely a renewed recognition of the fact that we all think of ourselves as "anatomical beings".

I confess I picked up this book without great enthusiasm. Having myself been responsible for a number of medical exhibitions that have showcased anatomical images, I was doubtful if yet another treatment of anatomy's aesthetic surface could add much to what Martin Kemp, Deanna Petherbridge and Andrea Carlino, amongst many others, have already shown us. Like these earlier studies, *Dream anatomy* takes us through a parade of the science's greatest hits. But there is nonetheless something distinctive and important about this visual essay, and it lies in Sappol's unblinking focus on the emotional potency—the undiluted joy—of "the anatomical imagination".

His thesis is unambiguous: having initially prompted the mutual enrichment of art and science, anatomical illustrations later became the terrain upon which they were "defined in opposition to each other". In Sappol's golden, pre-modern age, anatomical images provided humanity with a moral mirror and probe—a playful and dramatic canvas upon which cadavers teased viewers by delicately draping their own skin, cavorting with props, making dramatic poses and dancing as only the dead know how. Then, from the end of the seventeenth century, the pleasure of early anatomy came to be seen as a problem: "play and the pursuit of truth became incompatible". In order to turn it into a serious science of the real, the dreamy

“art” of anatomy had to be squeezed into the margins—images of dissected bodies were quite literally stretched to fill the entire visual surface of a plate or figure, leaving no room for plots, gestures, props and fun. By 1800, the fantastical aspects of anatomy had been downgraded as merely “frivolous”, banished to the extraneous realms of academic, moral and historical art, popular health and science education, political cartoons, films, fiction and, most recently, contemporary art.

Inevitably the details of his story are more complicated. For one thing, anatomical images were mostly the result of collaborations between two artists: one brandishing a pencil, the other a scalpel. Plotting the balance of power and fame between them reveals fascinating insights into instances of stylistic evolution. Printing innovations also influenced the direction of change. But it was another form of technology (the camera obscura) that suggested photographic accuracy as the most compelling visual ideal; with the resulting “relentless gaze” being perfectly embodied in the collaborative work of Jan van Riemsdyk and William Hunter, whose images almost terrorize their subjects. These new conventions of realism also encouraged artists to disentangle primary anatomical details from secondary elements of symbolism and morally suggestive contexts. Bernhard Albinus’ anatomical atlases of the 1740s, for example, with their lavish backgrounds of wild life were reprinted thirty years later without accompanying rhinoceroses and the like. Each passing style, each step in the process of “getting real”, is clearly mourned by Sappol. Efforts to give viewers unmediated access to exactly what artist–anatomists saw, inevitably, he suggests, led to pictures that were decreasingly pleasing to look at.

Produced some three years after the exhibition of the same name, *Dream anatomy* is itself a philosophical reflection upon a set of images now packed away in the drawers and shelves of a library. It works more through repeated visual assertions than any substantially marshalled body of evidence, and offers very little by way of explanation about what propelled these unfortunate changes: some combination of theology, epistemology, and economics he briefly

speculates. Even the question of who bought these atlases and prints and why, or indeed who supported their production, is barely remarked upon. But none of this matters, for it is not his subject. Instead Sappol has treated us to a passionate account of some of the most astonishing incarnations of anatomical inspiration, and for that we should be very grateful.

**Ken Arnold,**  
The Wellcome Trust

**Richard Sugg,** *Murder after death: literature and anatomy in early modern England*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 2007, pp. xiv, 259, illus., £23.45, \$45.00 (hardback 978-0-8014-4509-5).

*Murder after death* is a study of anatomical knowledge, practice, and reference in early modern England, as explored in the plays, poems, sermons, and stories of the period. It contributes to a growing field of scholarship interested in understanding the history of the body not only through the study of scientific discovery and medical progress, but also through the close reading of the contemporary and often popular literature that seized upon such advances for its source material.

The book begins with a consideration of the impact continental anatomical works like Andreas Vesalius’s *De humani corporis fabrica* had on the English literary imagination. In particular, Sugg emphasizes how the methodology and investigative impulses of anatomy presented new rhetorical opportunities for writers. In an appendix to the book, he provides a bibliography of 120 English “anatomies” published between 1576 and 1650, and this empirical evidence provides strong support for his ensuing argument about the relationship, both etymological and epistemological, between anatomy and analysis. In the practice of both, he argues, investigators split and sort their subjects into sections for scrutiny, incrementally asserting mastery over the entire corpse / corpus. Both are involved in a quest for knowledge, its limits, and its control, and Sugg frequently returns to