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Anatomies: De Vésale au Virtuel ed. by Vincent Barras
(review)

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In a short review, it is impossible to do justice to the rich diversity of the subjects considered in these essays, and it would be unfair to single any of them out for particular attention. They include many significant pieces of individual scholarship, and that alone makes these volumes a valuable addition to the literature. The most important task of a reviewer in such cases is to ask whether the essays cohere and whether the organizing concept makes sense. In relation to the first of these tasks, it may be said that the majority of essays speak to the main themes of the volume; in other words, they consider transoceanic exchanges that have shaped the epidemiological and medical histories of one or more localities within the IOW. However, the focus of some essays is a little narrow, and while significant in themselves, they do not always address the central theme as directly as they might.

By considering the IOW as a unit we certainly gain a great deal. Scholars have been aware for some time that “local” or “indigenous” medical practices in this region are usually more cosmopolitan than they seem. These interactions come through strongly in this book, which adds much to our understanding of its shared epidemiological and medical history. In both senses, the concept of the IOW is a useful complement to the more usual frameworks of historical analysis: nations, colonies, and so forth. But it is important to remember that the Indian Ocean has been part of broader networks, most obviously those that linked it to East Asia and the Pacific, and later to the Atlantic through the European empires. In addition, medical practices in countries abutting the Ocean were shaped equally and in some ways more forcefully by contacts overland. In considering the confluence of these maritime and terrestrial influences, empires and religions (most obviously the *ummah* of Islam) remain the most obvious and useful frames of analysis.

As the editors note, the concept of an Indian Ocean World makes sense only if it had meaning as a “state or realm of existence” for those who inhabited it (Vol. I, p. 27). The Indian Ocean was sometimes such a world and sometimes not. The worlds of trade, religion, and medicine overlapped but were not coextensive. For the historian, then, the framing of a historical problem is ultimately a matter of which aspects of a subject we choose to focus on and what questions we aim to answer. No temporal or geographical construct will be appropriate for all purposes. The most important thing is to remain open to the opportunities that new frameworks provide, and these are amply demonstrated in these two volumes.

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Vincent Barras, ed. *Anatomies: De Vésale au Virtuel*. Lausanne: Éditions BHMS, 2014. 104 pp. Ill. €25.00 (978-2-9700640-9-1).

Celebrations of the five-hundred-year anniversary of the birth of the famous anatomist Andreas Vesalius (1514–1564) come, like all births, with risks. An overly

romanticized figure, Vesalius has materialized in hagiographic and triumphalist terms as the father of modern anatomy, ushering in a new age of scientific discovery and truth. His birth has been used as the occasion to render the science of anatomy as a necessary and “natural” development—despite substantial evidence to the contrary. Successfully avoiding such risks, *Anatomies: De Vésale au Virtuel* provides a visually compelling and informative reflection on the historical, conceptual, and ethical issues raised by the study of human anatomy. It uses Vesalius as a window into the visual worlds of anatomy, with their overlapping iconographies; their branches to other descriptive, visual sciences; and their pedagogical functions in medical institutions.

This slim volume accompanied the exhibition, “Anatomies. De Vésale au virtuel,” which was held in honor of Vesalius’ birthday in 2014 at the Musée de la main, UNIL-CHUV, in Lausanne at the Institute and Museum of Anatomy at the University of Bâle. These essays highlight the different purposes of anatomical study and the concerns it has raised: as a series of discoveries about the mysteries of the body and nature, as a philosophical inquiry into the nature of growth, as a way of organizing the conditions of the body’s intelligibility and coordinating the techniques of the observer (to borrow a phrase from Jonathan Crary), and as a meditation on the ethical responsibilities for the management of the living and the dead. Historically persistent, these concerns continue to animate the cultural imagination today.

The first four essays provide not only historical context but arguments about the resources and practices required for the study of anatomy to develop as it did. With citations of Homer, Aristotle, and Galen, the first essay by Vincent Baras emphasizes the unnaturalness of dissection—from its first appearances in the West—and describes its development as accidental and contingent, not seamless or necessary. In the second essay, Dominique Brancher and Maïke Christadler focus attention on the iconography of early anatomical images, especially the Adam and Eve figures in Vesalius’ *Epitome*, encouraging us to see the aesthetic and erotic aspects of these images—combining original sin and voyeurism—as strategies that not only granted legitimacy to anatomical knowledge but also shaped its impact in different medical specialties, including gynecology. The third essay by Andrea Carlino turns to the spectacular nature of anatomy and the new connotations that began to accrue around public dissections in the sixteenth century under the influences of Galenic medicine, architectural investigations based on the ancient work of Vitruvius, and the theatrical nature of civic life in the period. In the fourth essay, Rafael Mandressi focus on the sensorial program instituted by the renaissance of anatomy, linking the practices and techniques of objectifying both bodies and spaces to the emergence of mechanism in the seventeenth century.

The final three essays elaborate on the function of anatomical study today in medicine. The fifth essay by Jean-Pierre Hornung, Josef Kapfhammer, and Beat Riederer connects anatomy as a descriptive science to morphology and histology and poses the question: with the graphic representation of complex structures in today’s scanning technologies, is the practice of dissection—undertaken by medical students—obsolete? The essay argues that encounters with dissection remain

fundamental for the emotional development of medical students, who must begin to confront death on material and ethical grounds, and for their intellectual development. Dissection allows students to understand the surface and texture of the organs, anatomical variations, and the relationship between organs, and this learning by gesture and touch supplements the learning that comes from memorizing information about the differences associated with representations of the human body (surface depictions, scans; p. 66). In the sixth essay, Patrice Mangin, Silke Grabherr, and Jessica Vanhaebost discuss forensic and virtual autopsies and the development of technical capacity (CT-scanning, MRI, and 3D surface scanning) for representing the body and discovering its mysteries. The final essay by Francesco Panese links the representation of the body to a more modern economy built around notions of objectivity, reproducibility, and more elaborate diagnostics for mediating the concepts of normativity and pathology within medical institutions.

Anatomies will interest scholars across the arts and sciences, students, and medical practitioners. It offers the reader a set of stimulating, informative essays that form a commentary on the beautiful and disturbing images that serve as the foundation for this catalogue. Like the essays, the images are arranged to show the past and its influence on the present and to clarify in visual terms the persistence of an iconography that has extraordinary range. Although the essays might have flagged more of the contemporary art in the exhibition, the historical and contemporary images invite us to reflect on the sensorial programs of the past and the present. Many of them will disrupt our complacency, enabling us to attend more carefully to the intellectual and ethical complexities that arise from and shape the study of anatomy.

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Benjamin Elman, ed. *Antiquarianism, Language, and Medical Philology: From Early Modern to Modern Sino-Japanese Medical Discourses*. Leiden: Brill, 2015. viii + 232 pp. Ill. \$135.00 (978-90-04-28544-6).

Medicine in early modern East Asia (ca. 1400–1850) largely revolved around the knowledge of both ancient Chinese medical classics and critical exegeses of these classics produced by subsequent generations of physicians and scholars. The medical classics included such texts as the *Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon* (*Huangdi neijing*, compiled first century BCE) and the *Treatise on Cold Damage and Miscellaneous Disorders* (*Shanghan zabing lun*, ca. 219 CE). In the commentaries and interpretations of the classics that followed from the tenth century onward, doctors in China, Japan, and Korea engaged in a wide range of philological activities, from