

Chapter 4

Knowe Thyself The Uses and Functions of Anatomical Images

Vesalius's unending efforts to communicate his anatomy to as wide an audience as possible were undoubtedly repaid by a modicum of success. But it is also right to say that the anatomical fugitive sheets contributed even more than the *De humani corporis fabrica*, the *Epitome* and the *Tabulae sex* to the diffusion of basic, rudimentary information about the human internal organs, and thus to the establishment of a general consensus about the nature of the body. The role played by the broadsheet printers was, for this reason, fundamental; they ensured the geographical and social distribution of these sheets, mostly during the course of the sixteenth century. Some editions do seem to have been produced for an educated public, even an academic one (doctors and medical students), but it is obvious that most of them were explicitly aimed at a lower level—barbers, for example—and not intended for professional use. One fact about the fugitive sheets, however, is that they repeated over and over again the model established in the Strasbourg edition of 1538. They are in effect one print, to which the woodcut designer, the wood-block cutter or the printer added variations, small textual, iconographical or typographical changes that made possible their circulation in different cultural and social environments, and allowed them to be sold to a broad spectrum of customers, thereby increasing production while cutting costs.

This chapter focuses on the changes the broadsheet printers made to the various editions—particularly those of the sixteenth century—to ensure that they appealed to a diverse social, cultural and professional market and that they were appropriate for the variety of contexts in which they were read and assimilated. More generally, it reveals the typographical and textual strategies adopted, through which anatomy became a subject of interest to a large public.

Texts

The previous chapter indicated the possible ancestors of the anatomical broadsheets with superimposed flaps and showed how sixteenth-century printers adapted medieval anatomical knowledge and iconographical tradition for use by the new public that emerged with the advent of printing. It is evident that the production of these sheets grew and flourished in parallel with the great Renaissance anatomical tradition, and in a unique way became part of the visual culture, described in the first chapter, that developed around

the representation of human anatomy. Nevertheless, the images are a genre of their own, distinctive in their iconographical structure and typographical form, which remained unchanged for decades, despite the refinement in representational techniques and the progress of anatomy during the course of the sixteenth century. From an iconographical point of view, in fact, it does not seem that the anatomical sheets with superimposed flaps owed anything at all to Vesalius's *Tabulae*. An exception perhaps—only by virtue of some specific details, not of the composition or iconography—are the illustrations by da Sabbio, whose representation of the spinal and pelvic bones bears a possible relation to the skeletons drawn by Calcar, and Sylvester van Parijs, in which the drawing of the male and female urogenital tract seems in effect to be copied from Vesalius's first *Tabula*. It does, however, seem plausible to postulate a relation between the anatomical sheets and the womb illustration in the Ketham *Fasciculus medicinae*, which itself is based on a prototype in medieval manuscripts. This pervades all the editions of sixteenth-century fugitive sheets, as does the recourse to recurrent ornamental and decorative motifs (the apple, flower, fig leaf, drapes around the hips), the choice of the figure's position, and the architectural features or landscape background included in the prints.

Matters are more complex and intricate in the case of the texts that accompany the images, their sources, their fabrication, the borrowings, exchanges and plagiarisms. They are a genre that stands apart from the development of scientific research and remains within the pre-Vesalian scientific tradition.¹ The text to Vogtherr's figures, in all the sixteenth-century editions, like the very similar version printed in Guldenmundt's 1539 sheets, is distinctly elementary and almost banal. These texts, all written and printed in German, with no reference whatever either to the university anatomical tradition or to the ancient Greek and Arabic authorities, consist of extremely brief descriptions, in simple language and in the vernacular, and are obviously intended for an uneducated public whose knowledge of human anatomy is non-existent. In some cases, the text has even been weeded and synthesised further over the course of the century, giving the images an even greater role in the communication of information, which indicates all the more strongly the kind of general, uneducated public at which they were aimed. In Lang's editions, for example, the text is half the length of that in Vogtherr's 1539 edition, omitting complementary figures and texts about the stomach, liver, lungs and heart.

The text that accompanies the figures published in Latin, in Venice between 1539 and 1587 and in Antwerp in the Latin and bilingual versions of Sylvester van Parijs, has a different story. It has three parts: a preface whose incipit is *Vetus dictum est* (Appendix 1A);² a text—let us call it *Viva delineatio*—laid out alphabetically with the names of body parts and, occasionally, a short anatomical and physiological description of the organs, indicated by letters; and a text called *De utero et muliebris vasis*, laid out in numerical order from 1 to 9, conceived along the same lines as the previous one. These texts abound in elements that indicate that they were aimed at a more cultivated public, perhaps following Vesalius: the use of Latin, the naming of body parts in Greek and even in Arabic and Hebrew, some references to classical authors such as Galen or Caelius Aurelianus. In

¹ There is a comparison of the texts in L. H. Wells, 'Anatomical fugitive sheets with superimposed flaps, 1538–40', *Medical History*, 1968, 12: 403–7.

² In da Sabbio's 1539 edition, the preface was printed on both sheets, which could lead us to suppose that they were sold separately as well.

the Venice edition of 1587, the *De utero* is replaced by a longer and scientifically more accurate text, called *De partibus mulieris generatione servientibus*, in which the anonymous author attempts to provide bibliographical references to the works of Hippocrates, Galen and Avicenna, whom he claimed to have used as his sources. This, obviously, assumes that the reader would be able to follow up these indications. In Sebastiano Combi's 1611 Italian translation as well as in Giovanni Battista Combi's 1638 edition, the Greek and Arabic vocabulary has disappeared and the references to classical authorities have been reduced to one single mention of Hippocrates' *Aphorisms*. Sylvester effects a similar process of simplification in the bilingual edition of his anatomical illustrations. While the Latin text that surrounds the male figure is exactly the same as that in da Sabbio's sheets, the German text around the female figure is devoid of any classical references. In both the Flemish and French editions published by Sylvester between 1540 and 1545, the male figure is accompanied by a translation of the *Viva delineatio*, much simplified in content, while the female one has next to it a somewhat free translation of the text published by Vogtherr in 1538 in his female fugitive sheet.

Jean Ruelle uses similar texts in both the Latin and the French editions: the *Viva delineatio* has no Greek terms, and the *Vetus dictum est* accompanies the male figure; a fifteen-part text, again close in its conception to Vogtherr's 1538 text, and whose incipit is *Perutilis anatomes*, is appended as a commentary to the female figure.

The Flemish translations published by Sylvester were also used by Cornelis Bos. In the Latin translation printed by Johannes Crinitus in 1540, Bos's figures appear along with *Viva delineatio*, *Perutilis anatomes*, *Vetus dictum est*, and with a text called *Secretarum corporis partium muliebris sexus debita delineatio* that replaces and simplifies the *De utero*. Of the two English anatomical fugitive sheets from the 1540s preserved in the Wellcome Library, only the text to the female figure survives; it is limited, indeed, to the names of the parts indicated on the figure with letters.

Whatever the language in which the few lines on anatomical sheets were written or published, the sparse information they deliver about anatomy and physiology is in a strictly Galenic tradition. The *Viva delineatio* text in particular seems inspired by Johann Winther's *Institutionum anatomicarum*, of which Vesalius was thinking as he conceived his *Tabulae*, and to which Ryff refers explicitly in his *Anatomia* in images. And Winther's anatomical text was the only one in the possession of Cornelis Bos.³ The other texts also seem to be inspired by undoubtedly pre-Vesalian sources, and for the entire course of the sixteenth century they remain unaffected by any of the changes in the terminology, descriptions and content of anatomy. Indeed none of the developments in academic anatomical research—from Vesalius and Falloppio to Harvey—are recorded in the anatomical sheets. They seem stuck in a complacent conservatism.

The texts, then, like the images, resemble one another from one edition to the next, in terms of form, printing style, and content. All of them—whether they are in Latin or in the vernacular, ancient or modern—aim to give the names of the parts represented in the figures, briefly to describe and explain their functions and occasionally the physiological relation of one part to another. This didactic aim apart, the fugitive sheets' purpose was

³ The "Anatomicarium institutionum Galeni" is in the inventory of goods owned by Bos in August 1544. See J. Cuvelier, 'Le graveur Corneille Bosche', *Bulletin de l'Institut Historique belge de Rome*, 1939, 20: 40, n. 2, and S. Schéle, *Cornelis Bos: a study of the origins of the Netherland grotesque* (Stockholm, 1965), p. 154.

primarily to synthesize a body of knowledge. In the large cartouche and on the amphora that appear in the Venetian editions, there is inscribed in the form of a motto—in line with the visual culture that was then taking hold—an explicit reference to the fugitive sheets' synthetic quality: "The table shows the parts of the woman by position and number: why be longwinded, if you can be brief?" ("Membra mulieris positu, numeroque, tabella figurat. Quid longis opus est, si brevis esse potes?") The images give a map, a graphic description of human anatomy, of individual parts of the body and of their relation to one another—and such descriptions would be difficult, if not impossible to achieve through the written or spoken word.

A Knowledge of the Self

The sheets, then, name and synthesize. But is this their only function? In the text that acts as a preface to many Latin and vernacular editions of anatomical sheets with superimposed flaps—whose incipit is *Vetus dictum est*—there are references to their use within a discourse of a moral character that pleads for self-knowledge. *Nosce teipsum* is one of the apophthegms of the seven Greek sages, inscribed in large gold letters in the temple of Apollo at Delphi; from that time on and for many decades it would be automatically, in a sense obsessively, applied to anatomical discourse, its meaning shifted to denote physical, rather than psychological self-knowledge. It appears inserted in the prefaces of nearly all sixteenth-century treatises on human anatomy, inscribed in frontispieces and illustrations, chiselled into the architecture of anatomy theatres. Uses of the *Nosce teipsum* by anatomists vary a lot, a reflection of the ambiguity intrinsic in the association of the motto with anatomy: "know yourself" is on the one hand an injunction to recognise what is divine in oneself, to perceive oneself and one's body as the work of the Creator; on the other, it denotes the awareness of human fragility, transience, mortality.⁴ For the anonymous author of the *Vetus dictum est*, the divine imperative asks us—in the optimistic version—to admire the make-up of the entire human body, to recognise the extraordinary nature of its workings.⁵ On such a basis, self-knowledge is no longer a matter for doctors only, but, more generally, for all those who want to know the "facts and secrets of God's marvellous creation". And, in fact, returning to the issue of the possible function of these sheets, the text states that they were designed both to "memoriam refricare", to jolt the memory of those who have watched the dissection of a human body, and to trigger a desire to know anatomy in those who have never been inclined towards it. The author of the text thus suggests two possible uses for the fugitive sheets—as a mnemonic tool and as an invitation to self-knowledge—each for a different public, one of a specific socio-cultural and professional group, the other not at all. The differences one finds between the Latin and the vernacular reflect this: the Latin texts are rich in Greek and Arabic terms and classical quotations, the vernacular ones offer shorter descriptions and have no scholarly references. Printers like Sylvester, Bos and Ruelle, who printed both vernacular and Latin editions of fugitive sheets, using identical images with texts that differed according to the edition's

⁴ On the *Nosce teipsum* theme in its relation to anatomy, see W. Schupbach, *The paradox of Rembrandt's 'Anatomy of Dr. Tulp'* (London, 1982), esp. ch. 4 ('The double emblem', pp. 31–40), Appendix III and Appendix IV.

⁵ See Appendix 1A and 1B.

language, were evidently addressing more than one audience, aiming each set at an appropriate level. The device was commercially astute, since it permitted the use of the same blocks and plates for a potentially varied public.

To say that the fugitive sheets had a mnemonic role, that their function was to record what had been seen during public dissections, is to suppose that medical students were their main public. Fugitive sheets such as those published by da Sabbio in Venice, in which the names of each organ are indicated in Latin, Greek and Arabic, had to be used to situate the parts of the body, to represent its topography in a general, not especially detailed way. They were, certainly, read along with a text in which the parts of the body were described with the same, though more precise terminology. The anatomical sheets for students in the faculty of medicine were thus made and published in the same spirit, and with the same intentions, as Vesalius's *Tabulae*, aimed at a student market, adapted to a didactic use they were not originally conceived to have. This is an odd inversion, explained by the commercial concerns of the printers of fugitive sheets.

In the mind of the publisher, the public for the vernacular editions had to be different: it was not made up of doctors, surgeons or medical students, who would never have acquired and used such scientifically rudimentary sheets, so poor in description and terminology that they would be useless as visual complements to a university manual. Rather, it consisted of the large numbers of people—barbers amongst them—who were literate but had no familiarity with classical languages, whose learning came from the use of images, and who had only a few vague notions about human anatomy.

According to some sixteenth-century Italian manuals for the professional training of barbers, requirements for qualification included manual ability and an adequate moral and psychological profile. There is never any mention in these manuals of knowledge of human anatomy or elementary scientific education. The barber mainly had to follow “gli ordini de’ Signor Medici”, perform each treatment under the physician’s directions. These operations were limited to external interventions (phlebotomies, cauteries, the application of leeches) and did not require knowledge of internal anatomy. According to the distribution of cultural and professional expertise, as established by the corporate statutes that regulated medical practice in the *Ancien Régime*, such knowledge indeed belonged to the university-trained doctor and was a sign of social distinction in the hierarchy of the medical professions.⁶ Barbers normally were excluded from acquiring any knowledge of internal anatomy, though they aspired to have it precisely because of the value it came to have in the medical market place in those years. Barbers were at the bottom of the medical hierarchy. They most probably knew no Latin⁷ and were even unable to read with ease physicians’ instructions in the vernacular.⁸ Through the fugitive sheets and the figures

⁶ For a discussion on the social value of anatomy in Ancien Régime medicine, see A. Carlino, ‘Il cadavere esibito: le poste in gioco dello spettacolo anatomico nella medicina rinascimentale’, *Micrologus*, 1999, 7. For the formal hierarchy in the medical professions, see ch. 3 of G. Pomata, *La promessa di guarigione. Malati e curatori in antico regime* (Bari-Rome, 1995), pp. 129–98, and her ‘Barbieri e comari’, in *Cultura popolare nell’Emilia-Romagna. Medicina, erbe e magia* (Milan, 1981).

⁷ Pietro Paolo Magni wrote in 1588: “. . . qual utile possono i Barbieri trarne da simili libri composti latinamente, se non ve ne niuno, o molto pochi, e massimamente in Italia, che abbia cognitione della lingua latina?” (*Sopra il modo di fare i cauterii ò rottorii . . .*, Rome, 1588, p. 2.)

⁸ Giovanni Andrea Solia (*Pratica delle operationi delli barbieri in esecuzione de gli ordini de’ sig. medici*, Rome, 1619) insists on the inferior position of barbers and portrays them as ideally: skilful, young, clean, modest, loving to the poor, “della mano gagliarda e di animo fermo”. On p. 4, following some misfortunes

they showed, the barbers could acquire some rudimentary information about the internal anatomy of the human body; they would hang up on the walls of their shops these objects, visible and misleading to their clients, that alluded to a knowledge they wanted but did not possess: the fugitive sheets thus became an instrument of publicity.

There is some evidence to support this intuitive, hypothetical thesis that part of the public for vernacular anatomical fugitive sheets consisted of barbers. The fugitive sheet called *A fygure for necessary lettyng off bloude*, made by Thomas Geminus in about 1546, and published in London by John Herford, represents a man seated on a bench, the left hand immersed in a water basin, the veins needed for phlebotomy clearly visible and marked with letters A to K (Fig. 40). A text that describes the veins is printed on either side of the figure and bears the title *A table instructive whan and how a man may connyngly let bloude of all the necessary veynes . . . for all Chirurgeons and Barbers*.⁹ The reference to barbers and to surgeons is equally explicit in the anatomical fugitive sheet presumably published in London by Gilles Godet or by Thomas Geminus. The woodblock cutter seems to have combined the concept of fugitive sheets with superimposed flaps with Geminus's phlebotomy iconography. Here too the man has his left hand in a water basin, his veins suitably dilated for bleeding. The image is always accompanied by two other leaves containing three texts, still in the vernacular, which give the captions for the numbers and letters inscribed on the figures. Two texts describe the male and female parts of the body; a third, entitled *The declaration of the letters, signifynge the principall veynes to lette bludde*, is the same text used by Geminus. In the latter text, the author gives the names of the veins most suitable for bloodletting, as well as some technical advice on how to perform it. Another fugitive sheet with superimposed flaps—published twice in Milan in 1663 by two different printers—also has a mix of elementary anatomical information and technical passages on phlebotomy for the use of “barbieri e professori di Chirurgia”.¹⁰ The male figure at the centre of the sheet shows the veins used to draw the blood, “cavar sangue”, and a text on either side of the image gives captions to the letters indicating the internal parts of the body and to the numbers indicating the veins. At the bottom of the sheet, there is a hand with a lancet and a vein, along with some advice about the best way of performing an incision.

These changes to the anatomical figures, all related to the practice of phlebotomy, evidently have a bearing upon the question of the public for which they were produced. I

he experienced, he feels the need to add this: “Et è di bisogno che [il barbiere] sappi almeno leggere, acciò possa legger l'ordine del Fisico, quando lo lascia in scritto”.

⁹ There is a copy—the only one recorded—bound in the *Compendiosa totius anatomie delineatio* (London, 1553) at the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh.

¹⁰ *Il vero disegno delli interiori del Corpo humano, con Istruttione, e Regola per sapere bene tagliare le vene in tutte le parti del detto Corpo humano secondo l'opinione de Medici antichi, e moderni più famosi . . .* is by Antonio Moneta, “Barbiero, e Professore de Chirurgia”. A copy of the edition published by Filippo Ghisolfi, signed at the foot of the image “Cesare Laurentio Fece” is at the Wellcome Library. The other 1663 edition has the imprint: “In Milano, Per Federico Agnelli Scultore et Stampatore”. It is described and reproduced in U. Calamida, ‘Tavole anatomiche volanti a piani sovrapposti del secolo XVII’, *Atti del III Congresso Nazionale della Società Italiana di Storia delle Scienze Mediche e Naturali* (Siena, 1926), pp. 135–7 (Cat. 54). Calamida also described another broadsheet with Moneta's text and a woodcut representing the same male figure, published in 1687 by Lorenzo Ferrari (Cat. 58). A reduced copy of this male figure with movable flaps is the frontispiece to Francesco Minniti, *Armonia astro-medico-anatomica ò sia colleganza degl'astri con il microcosmo, e di questo con i vegetabili . . .*, (Venice, 1690), and to F. Minniti, *Ristretto anatomico, o sia alianza de gl'astri, con l'huomo, e vegetabili* (Venice and Brescia, c.1690).

would suspect, however, that the barbers and surgeons obtained the sheets and hung them up in their shops before the printers had altered the iconography and texts to suit a specialist use. In these editions “for barbers”, as in anatomical sheets in general, the texts attest to a distribution beyond the restricted circle of those normally identified as the privileged recipients. The Milanese sheet, for example, bears an Italian translation of the *Vetus dictum est*, in which a moral dimension—where self-knowledge is proposed as the means to the contemplation of divine power—completes the text’s practical and professional thrust. The sheets bound with Geminus’s 1559 anatomical treatise are, likewise, as the title shows, explicitly aimed at more than one type of user: *The Anatomie of the inwarde Partes of man . . . very necessarie for Phisytians and Surgians and all other that desyre to knowe them selves*. In an address to the reader—also already printed in Geminus’s bloodletting sheet (Appendix 2A), the text on veins concludes thus: “by the whiche [table] thou mayst exercise and teach thy selfe lightly and without daunger of any evyl accidentes to cutte any veyne of mans body”. This is a clear allusion to a private, domestic, lay practice of phlebotomy, which bypasses the control of the physicians and skill of the barbers.

Highbrow, Lowbrow: Religious Anatomy in Wittenberg

These references to a non-specialised public could be seen as the vulgar promotional rhetoric of printmakers and printsellers eager not to limit their range of customers to any specific socio-professional group. Anatomical fugitive sheets were indeed conceived and published again and again by those broadsheet printers who, around the mid-sixteenth century, had found it necessary to produce often unclassifiable objects in order both to establish a new independent profession and to conquer a slice of the print market, without, however, sacrificing the possibility of keeping as customers those who belonged to more specific social and professional groups. It is clear though, given the publishing context in which they were produced, that these unusual printed objects, depicting basic elements about the make-up of the human body, were sold for prices that were derisory by comparison with the cost of any book on the same subject, and that they would also have fascinated those who had nothing to do with medicine or medical care. The potential buyer simply could have responded to the moral call to “self-knowledge”—the proliferation of editions during the course of the century, together with the reconstruction of anatomy they each offered, confirm such a hypothesis. Some evidence of this can be found in a series of anatomical sheets with superimposed flaps published in Wittenberg in the second half of the sixteenth century. One of these, made up of three sheets—one represents a skeleton, the other two a man and a woman, each with superimposed flaps—was printed anonymously in 1573, “in gratiam studiosae iuventutis, discentis elementa doctrinae Anatomicae in libello de Anima” (Cat. 30).¹¹ The *De anima* in question here is the one published by Melanchthon in 1540 and, in a radically revised version, in 1552, which from the very moment of its publication was used as a textbook for students in the faculties of medicine, philosophy and theology as well as in

¹¹ This is the inscription on the *Tabula foeminae membra demonstrans*. There is a set of the three sheets at the Wellcome Library. Another series of these sheets was published by Schönborn in Wittenberg, probably before 1586 (Cat. 34, 35 and 36). They were reprinted by Simon Gronenberg in 1589 (Cat. 40) and 1601 (Cat. 44), and again by Johann Gormann in 1625 (Cat. 50). It is interesting to note that in all these sheets the male figure has the features of Andreas Vesalius.

Lutheran gymnasia, thus reaching a very large Protestant public.¹² Melanchthon dedicates a few pages of this text to anatomy and assigns it a central place in theological and philosophical speculation as well as in moral thought.

The presence of anatomy in a book dedicated to the soul might seem odd, but it is in fact very appropriate—as Kusakawa has demonstrated—if one looks at it within the context of Melanchthon’s reappraisal of natural philosophy in the light of Luther’s teachings. Luther had insisted that humans are the subject of grace in their entirety, and can be saved or damned in body as well as soul. Knowledge of the human body thus became one element of Melanchthon’s thought and of the education of a good Christian. In his conception of anatomy, which seems to come from Galen, the study and knowledge of the human body is not its own end: rather, such study must show the arrangement and functions of the body’s parts as an effect of God’s creative power: “. . . man did not come into existence by chance, but . . . he originated from an infinite Mind, which arranged all the parts with wondrous planning and assigned them to certain ends and impressed in him knowledge and mind, which is the clearest footprint of divinity”.¹³ More explicitly still, in a discourse on Galen’s life published in 1540, Melanchthon observes that Galen himself intended “anatomy to be the starting point of Theology and an approach to the recognition of God”.¹⁴ In the revised edition of his *De anima*, published in 1552, Melanchthon corrects—following his reading of Vesalius’s *Fabrica*—some of the anatomical descriptions he made in the first edition and then substantiates the theological and moral arguments about knowledge of the human body: through anatomy, one perceives God’s creative power and his “perfect wisdom”.

In 1550, Melanchthon wrote a discourse on anatomy that synthesises these arguments:

Anatomical teaching must not be neglected in asking why it should be so useful to know the making of the human body. It is indeed a thing worthy of man to look at nature and not to despise the consideration of the remarkable creation that is this world, put together with such skill that it resembles a theatre and informs us of God and His will. But it is especially appropriate and profitable for us ourselves to see the whole series, shapes, layout, powers and functions of each of the parts. They once told of an oracle “Know Thyself”, which though filled with warning, nevertheless fits this aim, that we should examine carefully all that is admirable in us and which constitutes the spring of very many of our actions. Since they are made for wisdom and justice, and true wisdom is the recognition of God and the consideration of Nature, one must admit that one must learn anatomy whereby the causes of many actions and changes are made visible.¹⁵

¹² The *Commentarius de anima* was published in 1540 by P. Seitz. The second edition, published in 1552, bears the title *Liber de anima recognitus*. The latter can be consulted in the *Scripta Philippi Melanchthonis ad historiam profanam et philosophiam spectantia . . .*, in *Corpus reformatorum* (Halle, 1834–60) vol. 13. On Melanchthon’s *De anima*, its two different editions and the importance it assigns to anatomy, see, besides V. Nutton’s article, ‘Wittenberg Anatomy’, in O. P. Grell and A. Cunningham (eds), *Medicine and the Reformation* (London, 1993), S. Kusakawa, *The transformation of natural philosophy: the case of Philip Melanchthon* (Cambridge, 1995), esp. ch. 3, ‘The soul’, pp. 75–123.

¹³ Melanchthon, *Commentarius de anima* (Wittenberg, 1540), fols. 44v–45r. I quote from the translation of the passage in S. Kusakawa, *The transformation*, p. 92.

¹⁴ “. . . doctrinam anatomicam initium esse Theologiae, et aditum ad agnitium Dei”. *Declarationes Philippi Melanthonis usque ad annum 1552*, in *Corpus reformatorum* (Halle, 1834–60), vol. 11, col. 501.

¹⁵ “Cum igitur ingens sit utilitas nosse humani corporis aedificium, doctrina anatomica nequaquam negligenda est. Est omnino digna res homine, aspicere rerum naturam, nec asperrari considerationem huius mirandi opificii

From such a perspective, then, anatomy is a demonstration of divine power. In order to define this concept, Melanchthon takes up the arguments about anatomy as a form of self-knowledge, along with the reference to the *Nosce teipsum* apophthegm—which the text *Vetus dictum est*, present in many Latin and vernacular editions of anatomical fugitive sheets, had popularised some years before. This concordance shows the adaptability to various contexts and discourses of the anatomical theme, through the filter, as it were, of the *Nosce teipsum*: Melanchthon used it for a Protestant redefinition of natural philosophy, but the same argument is found in the sheets published in a Catholic environment. At any rate, readers who were quite ignorant of philosophical controversies surely would have been able to understand the motto as a simple incitement to discovering their own body. The body in itself was an interesting enough subject, capable of arousing the curiosity of many.

The fugitive sheets published in Wittenberg give form to anatomy's convergence with the theme of self-knowledge, as developed both in the old editions of fugitive sheets and in Melanchthon's reformed natural philosophy. Anatomical fugitive sheets such as those that circulated here between 1573 and 1625 were certainly used as a straightforward, visual support to the *De anima* but their role was also to transmit moral values, religious messages, a kind of knowledge whose form and meanings could radically change according to the cultural context in which the sheets were read and used. It is, in fact, quite clear from their printed form, the printing tradition to which they belonged, and the anatomical content itself that, although they were to serve as a visual support for Melanchthon's text, they were addressed to a non-learned public as well. The emphasis, quite explicit in Remmelin's *Catoptrum*,¹⁶ in Schott's sheets, and in the *Vetus dictum est* text, as well as in Peterle's texts in his Prague edition (Appendix 4), on the moral dimension of anatomy and its association with the *Nosce teipsum* motto—intended both as a recognition of divine power and as a *memento mori*—actually pushed anatomical knowledge out of the narrow confines of practical use, expanding the potential public of anatomical sheets to the whole God-fearing population.

One Object, plural Readings, many Readers

During the course of the sixteenth century and beyond, and wherever they were published, the text and figures that made up the fugitive sheets with superimposed flaps all appeared to be based on one and the same model. The prototype has its origins in the publishing environment—particularly Germany in the first years of the Reformation—in which a new market emerged, consisting of a popular public of artisans, merchants and

mundi, quod ideo tanta arte conditum est, ut tanquam theatrum aspiciatur, nosque de Deo, et de eius voluntate commonefaciat. Sed tamen maxime in nobis ipsis et decet, et prodest partium seriem, figuras, coagmentationem, vires et officia videre. Oraculum esse dixerunt, nosce teipsum [originally in Greek], quod etsi multa monet, tamen etiam huc accomodetur, ut illa, quae in nobis ipsis admiratione digna sunt, et quae sunt fontes plurimarum actionum in vita, studiose aspiciamus. Cumque homines ad sapientiam et iusticiam conditi sint, ac vera sapientia sit, agnitio Dei, et naturae consideratio, fatendum est et doctrinam anatomicam cognoscendam esse, in qua causae multarum actionum et mutationum in nobis conspiciuntur". Ibid., col. 945ff. The text is quoted in S. Kusukawa, *The transformation*, p. 105, n. 135.

¹⁶ Many iconographical elements and texts inscribed in the cartouches of the *Catoptrum* refer to the *vanitas* theme: skeletons, hour-glasses, spades for digging graves, and texts that insistently dwell on the transitoriness of human life.

Knowe Thyself

laymen, probably literate—in the vernacular only—but not learned, educated through images rather than through the written word. The broadsheet printers who produced and distributed the sheets adapted texts and images, whose origins are medieval, and drew these sheets and their contents as *imagines contrafactae* that could be appropriated again and again by any number of printers and occasionally offered to various types of public.

In the period we have been looking at, some textual and iconographical modifications were brought to the fugitive sheets that enabled their use by a specific socio-professional group, mostly medical and academic. But what I believe to be most interesting is that the sheets could be used not only in these specific ways (for the memorisation of the body's anatomy, the acquisition of surgical skills, the visual support of a text), but also as icons whose audience was socially and professionally very diversified. These icons, from da Sabbio's editions to those published in Wittenberg in the seventeenth century, brought to scientific discourse a theology of knowledge that turned the human body into the locus for the glorification of God's creation, and the act of knowledge into a universal moral imperative. Each person had to perceive both divine power and the limits of earthly life from within the body itself. This is the moral message inscribed within anatomical discourse, in its popular and learned versions. Fugitive sheets were its best vehicles. They embody in printed form the association of anatomy with the *Nosce teipsum* which became, from the end of the sixteenth century onwards, an enduring commonplace in the university lecture halls and anatomical treatises that constitute the discipline's official history.

That the fugitive sheets could be read on many levels certainly helps to explain their extraordinary proliferation and circulation in Europe during the course of a number of decades. What gave them these many functions, ensured their widespread diffusion through the most diverse strata of the literate and even semi-literate public, and therefore their editorial and commercial success, is above all their subject: anatomy as self-knowledge. It is a theme that, once well handled, captured the curiosity of everyone, even of those who would never be in a position to read Galen and Vesalius. It was enough to print it in the right way: a very brief text and an intriguing image with which one could also play.