

entirely control them or ourselves—there's always some partly or entirely unconscious expression in the form, content, staging, or framing. Resistance, defiance, transference, projection. And always some measure of contingency and materiality. Happy and unhappy accidents. Side effects. Non-effects. Because: we can't entirely control what goes on outside of us. We can't dictate the distribution, reading and reception of what we create. And we're constrained by time, opportunity, resources, materials, skill, knowledge, and co-workers. The anatomist has to cope with patrons, body provisioners, prosecutors, colleagues, students, artists, engravers, publishers, printers, legal authorities, the lay public. And bodies.

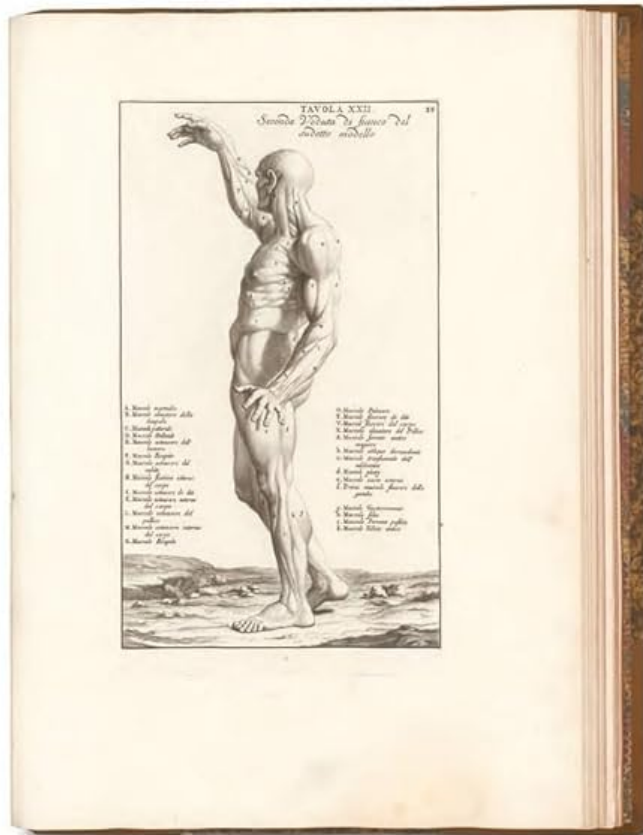
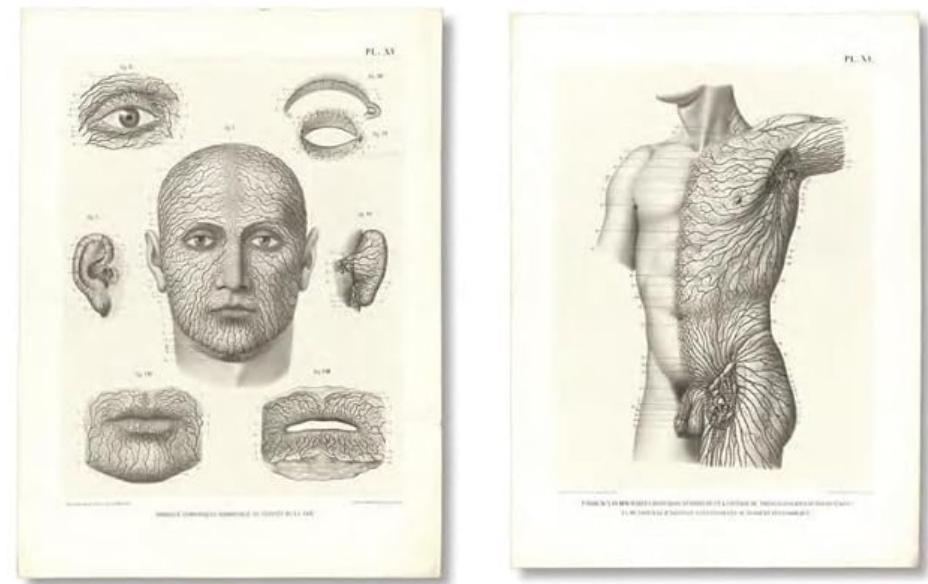


FIG. 1.9 Bernardino Genga, *Anatomia per uso et intelligenza del disegno ricercata non solo su gl'ossi, e muscoli del corpo humano* (Rome, 1691), pl. 22. Art: Charles Errard. Copperplate engraving. 47 × 32 cm. Waller Collection, Uppsala University Libraries.

The point is this: anatomical images and objects perform. Spigelius and his cadavers directly refer to theatre and dance in their poses, gestures, and settings. And that was conventional practice in early modern anatomical illustration. But anatomical figures aren't limited to light entertainment and burlesquerie. They're more varied and powerful than that. They can refer to all sorts of performances—social, religious, historical, athletic, military, funerary, pedagogical, etc. And to embodied experience—life and death, beauty and ugliness, desire and disgust, sickness and health. Some images signify strongly, others are tempered or dull. Levels of coherence and incoherence vary. But with all of that, there's also a cumulative impact. Anatomical images come in bunches, and in categories and genres and styles, which collectively have ramifying cognitive effects. Anatomical specimens and charts and illustrations have authority. And generate self-referentiality. When you refer to them, you refer to yourself, make yourself over. You're looking at yourself and something else.<sup>29</sup>



FIGS. 1.10-11 Left, an almost extraterrestrial universal human, pl. 15: "Vaisseaux lymphatiques superficiels ou cutané de la face." Right, sensual tracings on the surface of a masculine body, pl. 11: "Vaisseaux lymphatiques de la paroi antérieure et latérale du tronc; ganglions du pli de l'aisselle et du creux de l'aisselle dans lesquels se rendent ce vaisseaux." M.P.C. Sappey, *Anatomie, Physiologie, Pathologie des Vaisseaux Lymphatiques...* (Paris, 1874). Art: Jean-Baptiste Lévillé. Lithography: Alfred Poirier. 54 cm. Hagströmer Medico-Historical Library.

are helpful or mandatory? How should scientists and scholars comport themselves, among colleagues and in public? And, since anatomy is a field in which art and science converge, and art also makes truth claims: how have truth claims in art developed historically in cohabitation with, or opposition to, the truth claims of science? Questions.

Kosofsky Sedgwick allows there can be no epistemological certainty when it comes to a system of meaning that is systematically cloaked, covered over in plausible and implausible deniability. But, she argues, if we only credit what is epistemologically secure, we miss the whole show. In such circumstances, an insistence on certainty is obtuse (and no fun). Wittgenstein's translator, Frank Ramsey, goofing on his heavily closeted friend, reworks the aphorism: "What we can't say we can't say, and ... can't whistle it either."<sup>70</sup> A quip which winks at melodic undertows of signifying gestures, a kind of queer, partly decipherable, music. But, from a distance, how can we "grasp ... the motors of concealment" and hear "the specific language of a person hiding himself"? (The quest that Rowan Williams, writing on Dostoyevsky, urges upon us.)<sup>71</sup> Kosofsky Sedgwick doesn't prescribe any particular method, but she does demonstrate one: an eclectic mixture of narration, contextualization, genre analysis, biography, theoretical musings, close and distant reading: an open-ended back-and-forth of provisional questions, provisional answers. Then more questions.

## OBJECTS

### 3.1 Mystery men, mute images

And that's how we'll play it. Our actors are mystery men, don't declare themselves. Maybe don't have anything to declare. Or maybe they do. Or don't know that they do. But they do leave hints, marks, "tells"—historian Carlo Ginzburg calls them "slender clues"—sometimes in print, marginalia, scribbles, often in images.<sup>72</sup> Which point emphatically, or coyly wink, or subtly redirect us ... or lead us astray. Or don't point at all, just leave trails of unresolvable incoherent feeling. Historians are more comfortable with strong evidence of intent, most of all in writing. But even seemingly clear declarations can contain double, triple meanings, contradictions, halting approximations of meaning, or lies. Which is why close reading is so often revelatory. And if that's true for text, then what of mute illustrations, where the hand of the artist may betray carefully protected feelings, and meanings might lurk in the margins or lie buried dead center? Genre and custom give us all sorts of formulas and instructions on how to read, but images (more than texts?) often exceed their remit.

For example, this gaily hand-colored engraving (fig. 1.19) from Paolo Mascagni's life-sized spectacular (posthumously published) *Anatomia universa* (1823–30) performs something that goes beyond the instrumental

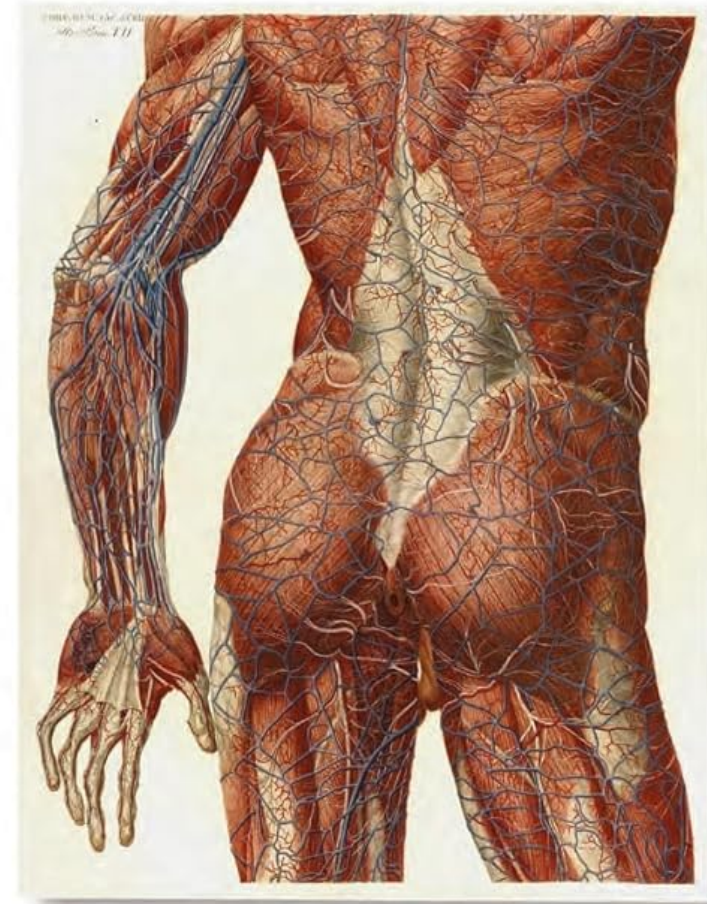


FIG. 1.19 *Flaunting? Flirting? "Back, Stratton Primson," Paolo Mascagni, Anatomia Universa or Grande Anatomia del Corpo Umano, pl. 2 (Pisa, 1823–30). Art: Antonio Servantoni. Hand-colored copperplate engraving. 99 × 72 cm. Hagströmer Medico-Historical Library.*

purpose of illustrating the surface anatomy of the back of the arm, lower back, buttocks and rectum.<sup>73</sup> Maybe it was meant to be a cruising figure, a flirt. As if the figure has a hanky stuck in his anatomical back pocket, or the tracings on the body are sexy tattoos or a form-fitting body suit ... If so, was the expressive power of that perverse flirtation intensified by the fact that anatomists had, over the previous century, mostly rejected the

(the second plate of a pair), an arresting arrangement, simultaneously intimate and theatrical. (The imperial folio format encourages Maclise to make horizontal compositions.)

A corpse obviously cannot resist, but the body in death becomes noncompliant (“dead weight,” *rigor mortis*). And so to arrange the corpse in a position favorable to both dissection and the artist’s view, the cadaver’s arms are tied to his ankles. To our eyes the tying-up suggests coercion, but other details signal consent, as in consensual sexual bondage: the hands that hold the ankles are compliant. At the same time, the figure itself appears to be asleep or lying still in anticipation, an “animated” cadaver at rest. If the man is dead, why tie his hands? Is that really necessary?



FIG. 3.7 “A deeper dissection of the Perineum. The Pudic artery and the artery of the Bulb are shown.” Richard Quain, *The Anatomy of the Arteries of the Human Body* (London, 1844), pl. 62. Art: Joseph Maclise. Lithograph. 68 × 55 cm. Hagströmer Medico-Historical Library.

But the logic of the pose becomes apparent once you account for the illustration’s iconographical origins and purpose—to show the anatomical structures and positioning a surgeon would need to know when “cutting for stone.” Maclise’s plate is likely inspired by or in dialogue with an illustration that appears in John Bell’s *Principles of Surgery* (3 vols.; Edinburgh, 1801–8), an awkward engraving of a living patient waiting to undergo, and just having undergone, the cutting for stone (Fig. 3.8).<sup>45</sup>

Lithotomy was a difficult procedure: only the unremitting agony of a blockage could make someone so desperate as to submit to the risky and painful operation. The surgeon had to keep the patient’s legs parted and fixed to suppress flinching, shuddering, and other involuntary movements. Hence the tying of hands and feet. Maclise’s plate rehearses the operation on a cadaver; Bell’s on a (reluctant, unhappy) patient whose penis is tied off and bagged, as it would have to be during surgery. The aesthetic differences between the Maclise and Bell images are telling. Bell makes no attempt at graceful rendering. The visual argument is straightforward, if a bit cartoonish. Undignified, slightly off in proportions and perspective, the image is not one of his best. Certainly not beautiful—a useful image.

That fits with John Bell’s persona as a gruff enemy of medical gentility and prettification. Roughly a decade earlier, Bell published *Engravings of the Bones, Muscles and Joints* (1794), which features flamboyantly ugly etchings of severed heads and mangled bodies abjectly plopped onto the dissecting table.<sup>46</sup> (The etching method encourages quick, sketchy lines, a kind of visual dynamism.) In the preface to that work, he deplors the fact that anatomists so often rely on professional artists whose “striving for elegance of form” introduces inaccuracies, falsifies the image. Like Maclise, John Bell was an anatomist, surgeon and artist—a brilliant artist, I think—but, unlike Maclise, an artist who never pretends to make works of Art. Bell’s etchings are powerful, disturbing, deadly serious (yet morbidly playful). And among them is another illustration of the same subject, a harsh depiction of a very dead and entirely unanimated cadaver, trussed up and in the posture for lithotomy, without much ado, placed unceremoniously underneath an unpretty dissected-out diaphragm nailed to the wall, and next to a torso hanging from a rope (both torso and diaphragm are unrelated to the lithotomy operation) (Fig. 3.9).<sup>47</sup>

The contrast between Bell’s 1794 etching and Maclise is even more pronounced in Maclise’s plate 61, the first of the pair on the anatomy of the perineum and rectum (Fig. 3.10). Which, contravening Bell, manages to combine great “elegance of form” with meticulous rendering, verisimilitude. Neither Bell nor Maclise show the cadaver’s face, but Maclise decks out his subject with drapery around the genitals and dissected area. From the attention devoted to the carefully rendered folds of cloth that frame the anatomical object—echoed by the delicate folds of the testicular sac—it is abundantly evident that Maclise aspires to make Art in the grand tradition—

*Traité des Sensations*—that knowledge fundamentally derives from the senses. Which was adjacent to the idea that sensual pleasure is good in its own right and not to be deplored (hedonism). And which motivated lively philosophical and scientific debates on the cultivation and physiological mechanics of the senses. Which Nicolas Le Cat, author of *Traité des Sens* (*Treatise on the Senses*, 1742) and other anatomists contributed to (Fig. 2.6).<sup>18</sup> As did Gautier Dagoty (Fig. 2.7).<sup>19</sup>

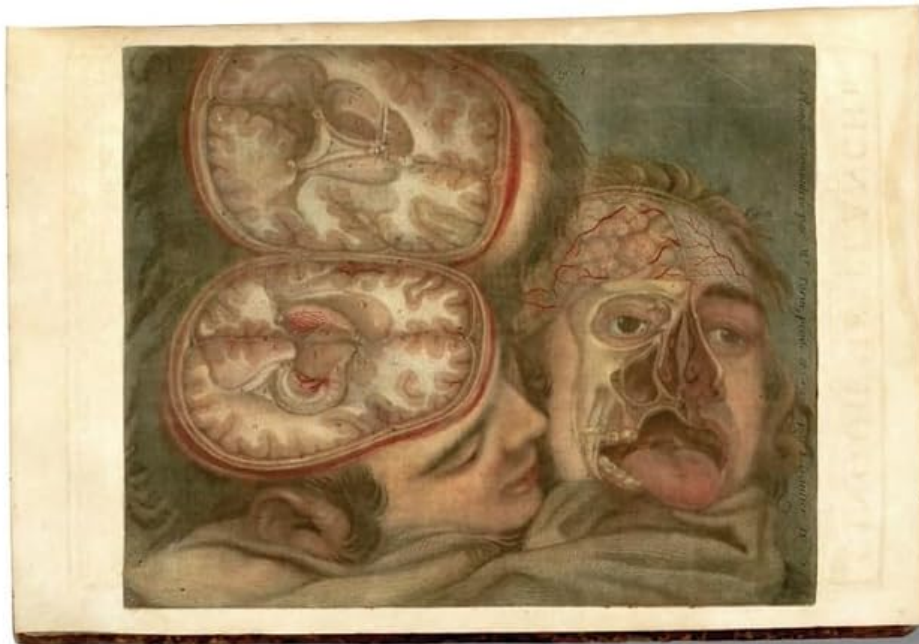


FIG. 2.5 *Organs of sense, sensing, desire, in an oddly intimate scene of horror.* Jacques-Fabien Gautier [Dagoty] & [J.-F.-M.] Duverney, *Anatomie de la tête, en tableaux imprimés qui représentent au naturel le cerveau sous différentes coupes, la distribution des vaisseaux dans toutes les parties de la tête, les organes des sens et une partie de la névrologie, d'après les pièces disséquées et préparées par M. Duverney...* (Paris, 1748), pl. 5. Color mezzotint. 55 × 39 cm. Archives & Special Collections, Columbia University Health Sciences Library.

And that justified Gautier's penchant for showing off dissected ladies and lady parts (Figs. 2.1–3, 2.8), and also sometimes male organs, as in the still life with erect penises on the right (Fig. 2.9). His concentration on organs of sensory pleasure was oddly transgressive, an eccentric presentation of objects that even the most licentious eighteenth-century painting wasn't permitted

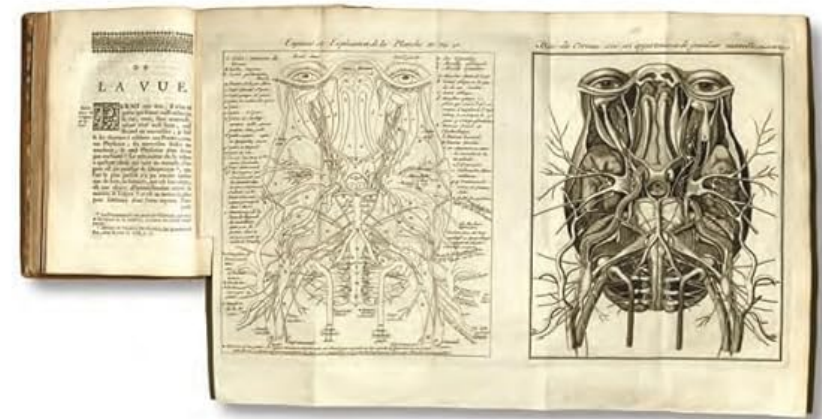


FIG. 2.6 *The anatomy of the gaze.* Claude-Nicolas Le Cat, *Traité des sens* (1742; Amsterdam, 1744), pl. 1. Copperplate engraving, fold-out. Book: 13 × 20 cm; foldout: 44 × 30 cm. Hagströmer Medico-Historical Library.

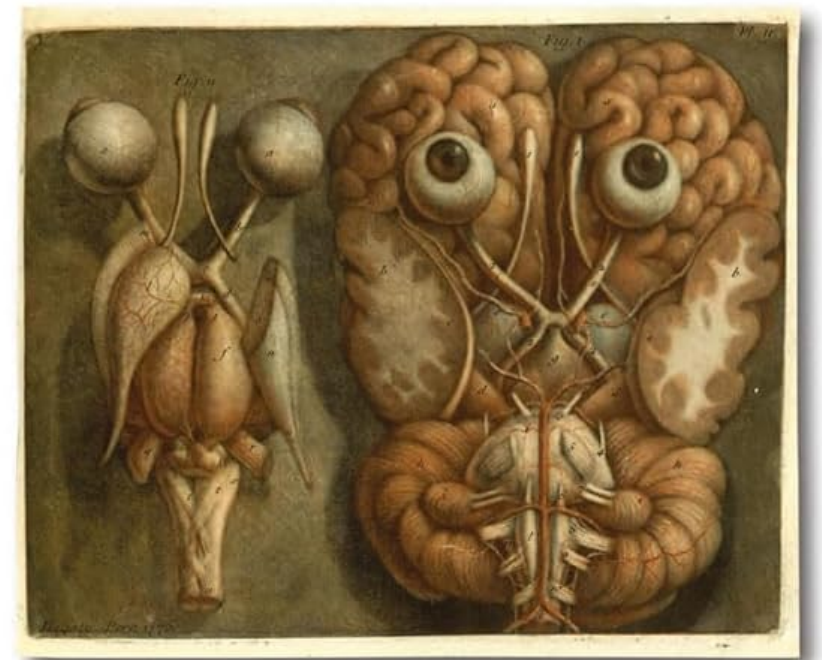


FIG. 2.7 *The anatomy of the gaze three decades later.* Jacques-Fabien Gautier Dagoty, *Exposition anatomique des organes des sens, jointe la névrologie entière du corps humain...* (Paris, 1775), pl. 2. Color mezzotint. 42 × 27 cm. New York Academy of Medicine.

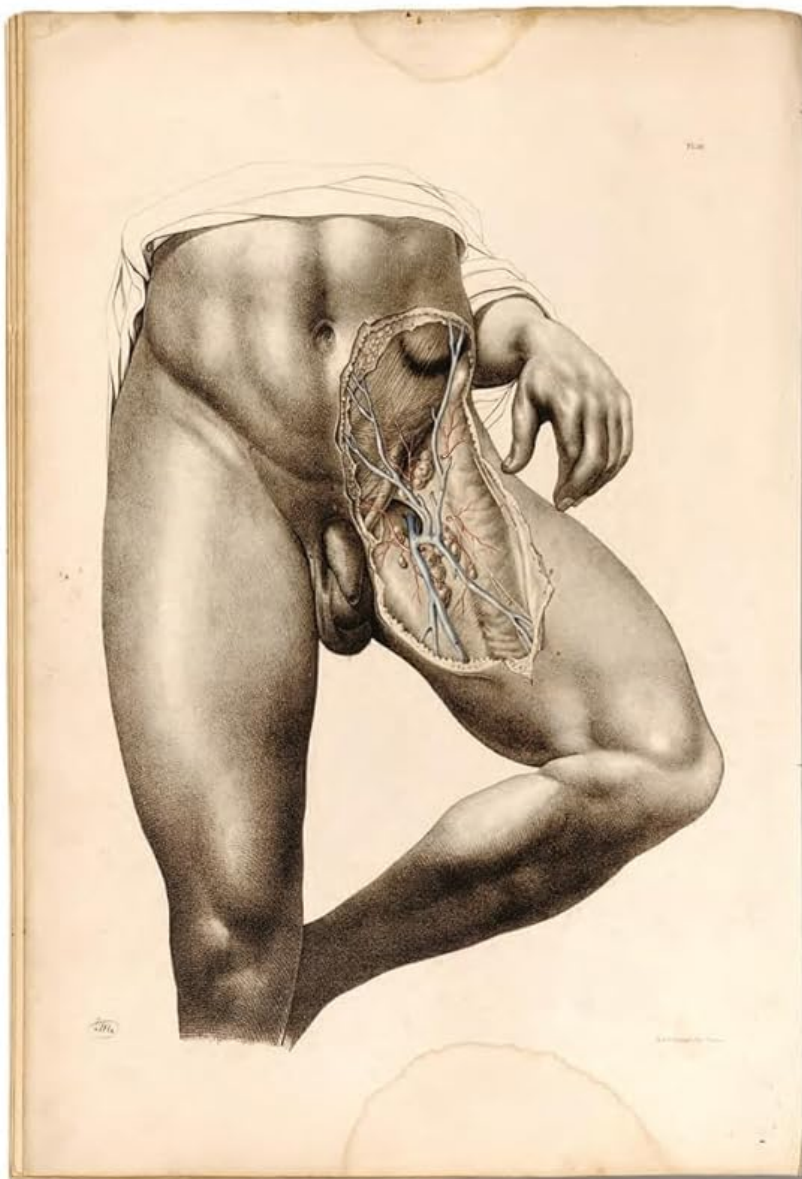


FIG. 3.20 "The surgical dissection of the superficial and deep structures of the inguino-femoral region," Joseph Maclise, *Surgical Anatomy* (1st ed., London, 1851), pl. 16. 54 × 38 cm. Colored lithograph. Wellcome Collection.

movement of the hand of Maclise, the anatomist, the surgeon, the man, on the bodies of his subjects. Another echo: look closer at the hand in Maclise's plate 26 (Figs. 3.18, 3.20). The index finger seems to caress the middle finger. A caress within a caress. Exquisite sensation.

The trope of the visible brushstroke or drawn line as the record of a caress of the surface of the paper or canvas—and, by analogy, a caress of the body of the subject—was a part of the rhetoric of eighteenth- and nineteenth-



FIG. 3.21 "The surgical dissection of the superficial and deep structures of the inguino-femoral region," close-up. Joseph Maclise, *Surgical Anatomy* (London, 1856), pl. 26. Colored lithograph. Hagströmer Medico-Historical Library.

century art discourse.<sup>63</sup> And by such means, Maclise's images manifest erotic valences as much in the representation of skin—and sensate touching fingers—as in the representation of the male genital. In his commentary on the anatomy of the hand, Maclise praises the hand's agency and powers, its "perfect ... prehensile and tactile functions": This "beautiful and valuable member" is "the material symbol of the immaterial spirit," "has a language of its own," is "the autograph of mind."<sup>64</sup> Maclise orchestrates a haptic imaginary in words, image, and line. (And if hand is an "autograph of mind", what is on Maclise's mind when he autographs the page and cadaver with *his* drawing and cutting and touching hand?)

Critics mostly loved Maclise's artwork. A reviewer in the *Edinburgh Medical & Surgical Journal*, commenting on the first three installments of *Surgical Anatomy*, singled out Maclise's "anatomical knowledge," "talents as a draughtsman," "great fidelity

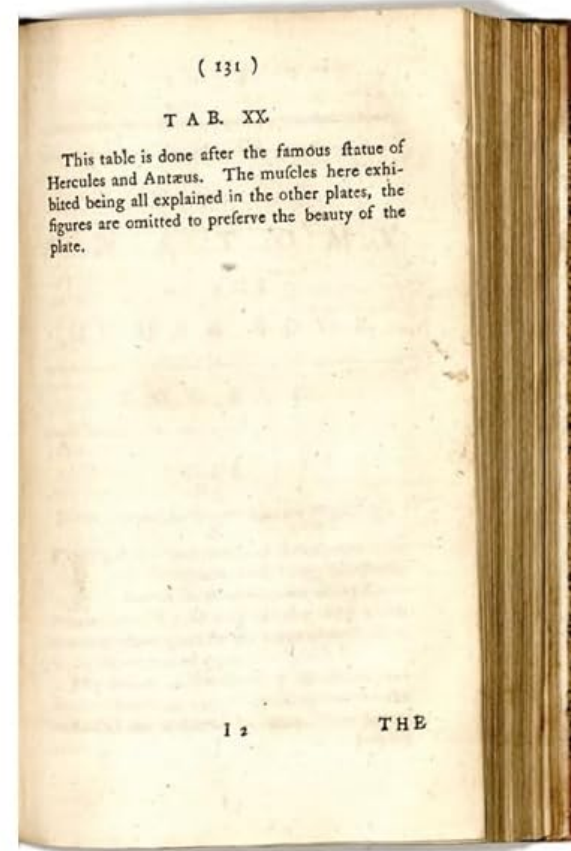
and accuracy", his "very correct and beautiful view" of dissected subjects in "the best and most effective positions ... before the eye of the beholder" so as to display them in an "impressive light."<sup>65</sup> But images like plate 27 (Fig. 3.17) push the limits. One reviewer deplored "the crowding of two anatomical figures on the same page." Was that criticism a displaced expression of discomfort with the erotic implications of such "crowding"? (And really, plate 27 doesn't look especially crowded. Given Maclise's compositional gifts, his plates rarely do.) With less space on the page, the smaller format 1851 Philadelphia edition separates the two figures,



images for similar treatment.)<sup>33</sup> But you might wonder: What makes this particular plate beautiful? Why does it merit privileged treatment?

Like Gautier, Cheselden was a striver, but as a country gentleman's son come to London, a bit more secure in his social status and prospects. Given his evident talent as a bright young surgeon and anatomist, he could realistically entertain the ambition to participate in Enlightenment discourse and social circles.<sup>34</sup> In that discursive world, aesthetics was the philosophy of beauty and the senses. The beautiful, which, by centuries-long association, had an ambivalent connection to erotic desire and pleasure in both male and female beauty.<sup>35</sup>

But Beauty has to transcend desire, rise above mere sensual pleasure and desire. To get its capital B, embodied beauty has to be attached in some way to the theory of beauty (aesthetics), and receive representation



**FIG. 2.10** "...the figures are omitted to preserve the beauty of the plate." William Cheselden, *Anatomy of the Human Body* (10th ed.; London, 1773), 130–31, tab. 20. Copperplate engraving; Gerard Vandergucht. 21 × 13 cm. Hagströmer Medico-Historical Library. This plate first appears in the 5th edition (1740).

and commentary in cultivated text and conversation, and in painting, drawing and sculpture. A man or woman may be beautiful, may be a very great beauty, but when he or she embodies Beauty, his or her body materializes an abstraction, a platonic ideal, and so corresponds to the beauty of the great art of antiquity and the Renaissance, and present-day "masters."<sup>36</sup>

In this cultural logic, Beauty becomes discernible as an object when it is perceived and appreciated by cultivated minds in dialogue with other cultivated minds. The philosopher-politician Edmund Burke, for example,