

LAIRESSE MEETS BIDLOO, OR THE CASE OF THE ABSENT ANATOMIST

Susan Donahue Kuretsky

Govert Bidloo's large anatomical treatise, the *Anatomia Humanis Corpore* (Amsterdam, 1685), with printed illustrations designed by Gerard de Lairesse, demonstrates an unusual collaboration between a scientist and a major artist who specialized in classicizing history painting. Active in the theater, as was Bidloo, Lairesse sought ways to dramatize these images of anatomical performance, even to the inventive strategy—seen or sensed throughout the treatise—of invoking an unseen anatomist whose delicate maneuvers parallel those of the artist himself.

DOI: [10.18277/makf.2015.03](https://doi.org/10.18277/makf.2015.03)

Govert Bidloo's *Anatomia Humani Corporis*, published in Amsterdam in 1685 and reissued in Dutch in 1690 as *Ontleding des menschelyken lichaams*, may not be the most accurate of the anatomical treatises produced during the Age of Observation, but it is surely the most artistically powerful.¹ The product of Bidloo's collaboration with Gerard de Lairesse (1640–1711), the most celebrated Amsterdam artist of the late seventeenth century, this handsome volume leads the reader through 241 pages of images and text. The first dissection illustration in the volume is a page illustrating the anatomy of the skin, which is followed by multiple views of the intricate internal structures within the head, chest, and abdomen, the male and female reproductive organs (including stages of fetal development), the fabric and organization of the muscles, and finally the body's innermost core: the skeletal bones of adults and children.

Bidloo (1649–1713), who had earned his medical degree in 1682 from the University of Franeker after studying with the great Amsterdam anatomist Frederick Ruysch, was also a playwright and poet. In 1688 he would become a lecturer in anatomy in The Hague and in the next year personal physician to the Dutch stadholder William III of Orange, a post he continued to hold after William became king of England in 1689. Lairesse, dubbed the “Dutch Poussin” for his classicizing treatment of antique subjects, also had close ties to the theater as illustrator of the plays of Andries Pels, founder of an elite Amsterdam society of artists and intellectuals.² Bidloo was responsible for the dissections, the book's introduction, and its explanatory verbal texts, but the 105 prints designed by Lairesse are by far the volume's dominant focus and the reason for its enduring fame.

Anatomia's title page specifies that Lairesse's drawings were made directly “ad vivum delineatis,” rather than being borrowed from earlier images, and also names the artist, indicating that Bidloo refused to entrust any of the work to other draftsmen despite the magnitude of the project.³ Bidloo's instructions to his illustrator must have been crucial to the formation of these images, but later readers would complain about both the brevity of his texts and the fact that the superb artistic quality of the engravings is not matched by consistent scientific accuracy. As Lyckle de Vries has pointed out, Lairesse was quite aware of his own anatomical simplifications, for in his *Grondlegginge ter Teekenkonst*, published in Amsterdam in 1701, he advised fellow painters to consult prints in an earlier, shorter treatise, published in The Hague in 1634 by Jacob van de Gracht, which had been written for both artists and doctors.⁴ If the scope of the later project encouraged these busy, successful men to work quickly, any tendency on the artist's part to summarize the profusion of detail in the many specimens before him clearly pushed him to think creatively beyond the limits of merely recording them.⁵

Indeed, these images linger in eye and mind because Lairesse—a dramatist and history painter accustomed to courting audience involvement—reached far beyond the functional didactic purpose of a scientific treatise. Anatomical images tended to be static and diagrammatic until the early sixteenth century, when developments in empirical science and the spread of printed images inspired a livelier and more directly observational approach. Seeking new

ways to engage viewers in a subject likely to be distasteful to almost anyone but an anatomist, Lairese explored how all parts of a mortal's human remains, even the smallest and most fragmentary, can be seen to express the body's capacity to function as a living instrument. These images thus generate fresh reflection about the relationship between death and life, departing, with a few subtle exceptions, from the standard *vanitas* paintings of this period with their guttering candles, empty skulls, and stern reminders of mortality. In Bidloo's *Anatomia* Lairese connects his audience, in ingeniously dramatic ways, to the intricate systems within the body that give it its tenacious if transient life. At the same time he demonstrates a new and startlingly effective means of intensifying the immediacy of his illustrations by repeatedly invoking an anatomist who is never seen, yet whose active presence becomes almost palpable as one follows the course of his work.

Only in the book's frontispiece (fig. 1) does a fully embodied anatomist appear: a female personification of Anatomy enthroned within a classical setting. Elevated upon a sarcophagus, she holds a book in her left hand and a scalpel in her right; the position of the scalpel parallels the horn blown by the figure of Fame above her while drawing attention to two skeletons at the left. At the right the sculpture of a veiled putto on a base is posed like the flayed *écorché* (skinless) models used to demonstrate the body's muscular system to art students.⁶ Below the sculpture three living putti play with a dissection drawing, a skull, and a severed arm. At the lower left, pointedly overlapping one of the skeletons, an ancient Father Time with his hourglass and scythe draws aside a large curtain to reveal the scene as if it were on a stage.⁷ In addition to Bidloo's and Lairese's individual theatrical activities, the image recalls the performative aspect of the anatomist's work, which, beginning in the late sixteenth century, also involved public dissection demonstrations within theaters designed especially for that purpose.⁸ There the audience could learn more about the wonders of Creation as they were introduced to the unseeable (and never really imaginable) organic apparatuses within their own living bodies.



Figure 1. *Anatomia Enthroned with Fame and Father Time*. Frontispiece from Godefridi (Govert) Bidloo, *Anatomia Humani Corporis* (Amsterdam: Joannis à Someren, Joannis à Dyk, Henrice and Theodori Boom, 1685). Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College (artwork in the public domain). This frontispiece and all the engravings reproduced were designed by Gerard de Lairese; page size: 81.3 x 53.3 cm.

The effect of such a performance, like the performances on paper in Bidloo's *Anatomia*, must have been profound, even shocking, since the body's internal structures can only be revealed through invasion, fragmentation, and the utter ruination of the cadaver, producing an inescapable confrontation with its vulnerability and impermanence. The male and female classical nudes (figs. 2–4) that precede Bidloo's dissections serve to provide both a physical and a theological point of departure, intensifying the dramatic effect of the dissections that follow, for the flesh of these flawless figures is intact and their anatomical perfection appears timeless and imperishable.⁹ Beside the rear view of the female figure (fig. 4), a classical urn with a relief of the Expulsion from Eden conveys the idea that these idealized beings represent the original God-created state of Adam and Eve, whose fall from grace would make humanity mortal and subject to death and the bodily ruin so vividly evoked in the pages that follow.¹⁰



Figure 2. *Classical Male Figure Seen from the Front: Adam*. Plate 1 from *Anatomia Humani Corporis* (fig. 1) (artwork in the public domain)



Figure 3. *Classical Female Figure Seen from the Front: Eve*. Plate 2 from *Anatomia Humani Corporis* (fig. 1) (artwork in the public domain)



Figure 4. *Classical Female Figure Seen from the Rear: Eve*. Plate 3 from *Anatomia Humani Corporis* (fig. 1) (artwork in the public domain)

Even a selection of the visual riches contained in the *Anatomia* shows how creatively Lairese approached this project, often making innovative use of magnifying lenses.¹¹ Dissections of the skull and brain take the most prominent place with six illustrations at the start (Plates 5–10) and four at the end (Plates 89–92), beginning with two views of a the same severed head (fig. 5). Isolated within the picture space, the heads are framed by the visible plate mark within the larger expanse of the page. Here and throughout the book this difference in scale between print and page gives the images an effect of materializing dramatically within that larger visual field, while being subtly but strongly grounded by touches of shadow, as here, or by depictions of the anatomist's pegs and pins that create the illusion of specimens attached to a table.



Figure 5. *Severed Head in Two Views: Dissection of the Scalp and Meninges*. Plate 5 from *Anatomia Humani Corporis* (fig. 1) (artwork in the public domain)

On this page one head is placed frontally in the foreground and the other behind it in three-quarter view, but both are seen fully and from above, as if by an anatomist at work as he successively peels away the coverings of the brain, from the scalp to the layers of the meninges, in order to prepare for dissection of the brain. In both views the slit skin, pulled down over the eyes and cheeks, gives the individualized face of what was once a young man with shaggy hair and a somber mouth the look of someone blinded—but also protected—from the procedures in progress. A subsequent page depicting the same head (fig. 6) offers a potent contrast of fullness versus emptiness, as the entire intact brain spreads its lobes like an over-ripe fruit across the foreground with the evacuated chambers of the open skull yawning behind and above it. Between them at the right is one of the many startling details in the *Anatomia* that reward close observation: the barely visible fingers of the anatomist lifting the anterior lobe of the cerebellum, which controls smell and sight, to reveal the pituitary gland beneath (fig. 7).



Figure 6. *The Brain and Its Evacuated Chambers*. Plate 9 from *Anatomia Humani Corporis* (fig. 1) (artwork in the public domain)



Figure 7. Detail of fig. 6, showing the anatomist's fingers lifting the cerebellum.

Within the chapter on bones near the end of the treatise, Laireesse returned to the human skull (interior and exterior) in an intensely poetic image (fig. 8). This selective, harmonious composition translates two views of the skull into reciprocal convex and concave ovals modeled by light and shadow, again seen from above. But here evocative indications of context appear, for an inkwell and pen appear at the left—or is the pen really the anatomist’s scalpel and the polished inkwell his small specimen jar? Most striking is the fact that the empty skullcap, propped against a specimen box and a sheet of music in the foreground, draws the parallel, familiar from still lifes of this period, between the transient fading sounds of music and human mortality.¹²



Figure 8. *Interior and Exterior of the Skull with a Sheet of Music*. Plate 89 from *Anatomia Humani Corporus* (fig. 1) (artwork in the public domain)



Figure 9. *The Muscle Structure of the Upper and Lower Back*. Plate 27 from *Anatomia Humani Corporus* (fig. 1) (artwork in the public domain)

In pages that illustrate the larger, fleshy parts of the human form, the artist (as translated by the printmaker) employs an animated play of line and tone to make his images appear alive, even though the figures they depict are not. This intriguing duality is especially evident in pages in the central section of the book, where the mortal descendants of Eve appear, unobtrusively braced from above or laid out upon the anatomist’s table. In Plate 27 (fig. 9), for example, the subject appears to be seated on a bed in a natural, relaxed way, leaning slightly forward as if in meditation. With her back to the viewer she displays the complex overlays of back and shoulder muscles, defined by angled, overlapping streams of fine parallel hatchings. Only gradually does the observer notice that the body is suspended by a rope, mostly hidden under the headdress, which the anatomist has positioned around the neck. Soft folds of drapery under the buttocks and around the head and hidden face, juxtaposed with the flayed skin of the figure are reminders that skin is the body’s own clothing, shed here not by the woman herself but by the unseen anatomist at work on her mortal remains. Through the visual contrast between these internal and external claddings, with their textures of soft flesh versus the tense, smooth sheath of muscle fibers, the artist emphasizes the materiality of the body—objectifying it even as he evokes the human presence of the woman as she was in life.¹³

Throughout the *Anatomia*, the reader notices how respectfully, even tenderly, Laireesse’s depictions treat the bodies of the dead, despite the violent effects of the dissection process. This sensitivity to the objects of his study and his unwillingness to see them as merely the detritus of living beings is especially evident in his illustrations of the female body and its reproductive organs, which are given unusual emphasis in this book. Notable examples are two consecutive images (figs. 10 and 11), which evoke successive moments in the process of the anatomist’s work. In both a sharply cropped view of a female torso, placed diagonally within the rectangular picture space, includes partial exposure of the breasts and pubis, with the multiple layers of skin, fat, and muscles between them folded back to expose the uterus and parts of the surrounding organs. In the first image (fig. 10), in which the pregnant uterus fills the visible expanse of the abdominal cavity, the lower part of the woman’s face can be seen at the upper left, relaxed as if in sleep. In the second (fig. 11), her face is covered by drapery, but the uterus is now opened to reveal the fanlike placenta and the unborn child within, who seems to sleep on as if still safely enclosed and protected by the mother’s body.



Figure 10. *The Uterus Within the Abdominal Cavity: Exterior View*. Plate 55 from *Anatomia Humani Corporis* (fig. 1) (artwork in the public domain)



Figure 11. *The Uterus Within the Abdominal Cavity: Interior View with Fetus*. Plate 56 from *Anatomia Humani Corporis* (fig. 1) (artwork in the public domain)

As Mimi Cazort has pointed out, Lairese controlled and confined the viewpoint in his anatomical compositions to a fixed stance with limited peripheral vision so that the illustrations are not general summations, but display “the vivid particularity of unique specimens seen at a one particular moment.”¹⁴ In other words, Lairese lets us see not only what the anatomist saw but *how* he saw it. This approach is most vividly, and by far most painfully, exhibited in the representation of an anatomized female infant (fig. 12), perhaps the unborn or stillborn child previously depicted. Laid upon a small board, propped up by an elegantly tasseled cushion or sandbag, the little corpse is held in place by ribbons that connect the umbilical cord to a metal rod projecting from the wall behind. Here the complete opening of chest and abdominal cavities displays nearly all of the internal organs, so that this tiny figure seems to bear the brunt of the anatomical excavations performed throughout the book. The dispassionate directness and unsparing specificity of the image emphasizes the anatomist’s practical tools and props, but far from depersonalizing the scene, this approach, which makes the figure appear even smaller and more vulnerable, elicits a powerful response in the viewer and—one senses—must have done so in Lairese, too. As Paule Dumaître writes: “Il dessine exactement ce qu’il a sous ses yeux, mais quelque chose de son art, malgré lui, vient voler l’atroce réalité, il donne une âme à ce qui n’a plus une âme.”¹⁵



Figure 12. *An Anatomized Female Infant*. Plate 63 from *Anatomia Humani Corporis* (fig. 1) (artwork in the public domain)

This notion of a soulless cadaver being given a soul by an artist instinctively turning away from the grim reality of death raises an important question about Lairese's illustrations, which modern scholars have come to see as the product of a new Cartesian way of defining the body as a mechanical machine distinctly separated from the soul or spirit.¹⁶ Descartes's philosophical position, formulated during his residence (1628–49) in the Dutch Republic and published in 1637 in *Discourse on Method*, had profound consequences for developments in anatomical illustration. Lairese's illustrations, with their emphasis on the internal systems and workings of the body isolated from the whole, clearly belong to this new world. And yet, probably because the artist was not a scientific illustrator but a painter accustomed to using the body to evoke story and emotion, his anatomical studies often express subtle allusions to or reminders of the animating spirit of the living body (*une âme à ce qui n'a plus une âme*) even in images that most strongly objectify its materiality in death.

As these widely varied examples illustrate, Lairese's goal in his illustrations was neither to produce scientific diagrams, which are clear but fundamentally static maps of the body, nor to animate his cadavers with movement as Andreas Vesalius had done in his venerated treatise of 1543, in which skeletons and skinless models come eerily and incongruously to life, posing and gesturing within landscape settings.¹⁷ In Lairese's and Bidloo's *Anatomia* the dead remain manifestly dead, so that their lifeless state can convincingly present them as specimens on the operating table of the unseen anatomist. As one leafs slowly through these pages, examining the largest and most recognizable sections of the body or its smallest and most fractured parts, the illustrations begin to impress the viewer as the product of multiple levels of creation: foremost, to any seventeenth-century viewer, they would have been understood as representations of the work of the Creator responsible for devising the infinitely lovely and complex machinery of the body. For us today, the creative process most noticed and admired is found in the artist's powerful formal arrangements and the handling of line and tone that interpret each subject and give it visual eloquence. But always between the two is the anatomist himself, whose knowledge and sure hands performed the gestures, even before Lairese made his drawings, that could bring those inner mysteries to sight. It is not surprising that hands were given close attention in the treatise, placed in angled positions and propped and pegged as if capable of movement, to display the muscles, tendons, and bones that permit the delicate maneuvers required by artist and anatomist alike (figs. 13 and 14).



Figure 13. *Dissection of the Tendons of the Hand*. Plate 70 from *Anatomia Humani Corporis* (fig. 1) (artwork in the public domain)



Figure 14. *Dissection of the Muscles of the Hand*. Plate 71 from *Anatomia Humani Corporis* (fig. 1) (artwork in the public domain)

At the end of the final printed page of the *Anatomia Humani Corporis*, Bidloo addresses his readers directly, bidding them farewell at the close of the journey of exploration they have taken together. His language reveals his wonder at the complexity and beauty of the human body, while the ambitious size and scope of the volume itself and the author's choice of illustrator suggest how much he hoped his work would live on, at least in the earthly realm.¹⁸

Goodbye, my reader, go on hoping with me that after that marvelous edifice (the body) and its earthen mouth (the voice) are gone, the soul will reach the everlasting House of The Creator, Most Excellent and Great, whose glory is endless throughout eternity.¹⁹

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Alison Kettering and I have shared not only an interest in Dutch art but also the joyful yet demanding mission of teaching bright, eager undergraduates. Such encounters can encourage ventures far beyond one's instructional comfort zone, allowing a professor to take a course even as she teaches it. These reflections—the product of a recent undergraduate seminar at Vassar called “Art and Science in the Age of Vermeer”—are offered in tribute to all that I've learned from Alison's deep and widely ranging intellectual explorations.

Susan Donahue Kuretsky, Professor of Art on the Sarah Gibson Blanding Chair at Vassar College, received her AB from Vassar and an MA and PhD from Harvard. Recent publications include diverse articles on Rembrandt and printmaking in the seventeenth century and the 2005 exhibition catalogue Time and Transformation in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art (Poughkeepsie, Sarasota, Louisville). She has also published a monograph on the Dutch genre painter Jacob Ochtervelt and coauthored the catalogue of Dutch paintings in the Detroit Institute of Arts.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1. *Anatomia Enthroned with Fame and Father Time*. Frontispiece from Godefridi (Govert) Bidloo, *Anatomia Humani Corporus* (Amsterdam: Joannis à Someren, Joannis à Dyk, Henrice and Theodori Boom, 1685). Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College (artwork in the public domain). This frontispiece and all the engravings reproduced were designed by Gerard de Lairese; page size: 81.3 x 53.3 cm.

Figure 2. *Classical Male Figure Seen from the Front: Adam*. Plate 1 from *Anatomia Humani Corporus* (fig. 1) (artwork in the public domain)

Figure 3. *Classical Female Figure Seen from the Front: Eve*. Plate 2 from *Anatomia Humani Corporus* (fig. 1) (artwork in the public domain)

Figure 4. *Classical Female Figure Seen from the Rear: Eve*. Plate 3 from *Anatomia Humani Corporus* (fig. 1) (artwork in the public domain)

Figure 5. *Severed Head in Two Views: Dissection of the Scalp and Meninges*. Plate 5 from *Anatomia Humani Corporus* (fig. 1) (artwork in the public domain)

Figure 6. *The Brain and Its Evacuated Chambers*. Plate 9 from *Anatomia Humani Corporus* (fig. 1) (artwork in the public domain)

Figure 7. Detail of fig. 6, showing the anatomist's fingers lifting the cerebellum.

Figure 8. *Interior and Exterior of the Skull with a Sheet of Music*. Plate 89 from *Anatomia Humani Corporus* (fig. 1) (artwork in the public domain)

Figure 9. *The Muscle Structure of the Upper and Lower Back*. Plate 27 from *Anatomia Humani Corporus* (fig. 1) (artwork in the public domain)

Figure 10. *The Uterus Within the Abdominal Cavity: Exterior View*. Plate 55 from *Anatomia Humani Corporus* (fig. 1) (artwork in the public domain)

Figure 11. *The Uterus Within the Abdominal Cavity: Interior View with Fetus*. Plate 56 from *Anatomia Humani Corporus* (fig. 1) (artwork in the public domain)

Figure 12. *An Anatomized Female Infant*. Plate 63 from *Anatomia Humani Corporus* (fig. 1) (artwork in the public domain)

Figure 13. *Dissection of the Tendons of the Hand*. Plate 70 from *Anatomia Humani Corporus* (fig. 1) (artwork in the public domain)

public domain)

Figure 14. *Dissection of the Muscles of the Hand*. Plate 71 from *Anatomia Humani Corporis* (fig. 1) (artwork in the public domain)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bidloo, Govert (Godfridi). *Anatomia Humani Corporis*. Amsterdam: Joannis à Someren, Joannis à Dyk, Henrice and Theodori Boom, 1685.

Cazort, Mimi, Monique Kornell, and K. B. Roberts. *The Ingenious Machine of Nature: Four Centuries of Art and Anatomy*. Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1996.

Cowper, William. *The Anatomy of Humane Bodies*. Oxford: Sam Smith and Benjamin Walford, 1698.

Cuir, Raphael. *The Development of the Study of Anatomy from the Renaissance to Cartesianism: Da Carpi, Vesalius, Estienne, Bidloo*. Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter: The Edwin Melen Press, 2009.

Dumaitre, Paule. *La Curieuse Destinée des planches anatomiques de Gerard de Lairesse, peintre en Holland*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1982.

Gracht, Jacob van de. *Anatomie der wtterlicke deelen van het Menschelick Lichaem . . . Bequaem voor Schilders, Beelthouwers, Plaet-snyders, als ook Chirurugiens*. The Hague, published by the author, 1634.

Johnson, Horton A. "Gerard de Lairesse: Genius among the Treponemes." *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 97 (June 2004): 301–3.

Klestinec, Cynthia. "A History of Anatomy Theatres in Sixteen-Century Padua." *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 59 (2004): 375–412.

Koerner, Joseph. *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.

Lairesse, Gerard de. *Grondlegginge ter Teekenkonst*. Amsterdam: Willem de Coup, 1701.

O'Malley, Charles D. *The Illustrations from the Works of Andreas Vesalius of Brussels*. New York: Dover, 1973.

Robert, K. D., and J. D. Tomlinson. *The Fabric of the Body: European Traditions of Anatomical Illustration*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.

Rupp, Jan C. C. "Matters of Life and Death: The Social and Cultural Conditions of the Rise of Anatomical Theaters, with Special Reference to Seventeenth-century Holland." *History of Science* 26, pt. 3, no. 81 (September 1990): 263–87.

Roy, Alain. *Gerard de Lairesse 1640–1711*. Paris: Arthéna, 1992.

Vries, Lyckle de. *Gerard De Lairesse: An Artist between Stage and Studio*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1998.

¹My thanks to Ronald Patkus, Curator of Special Collections at Vassar College, for his enthusiastic response to my suggestion that the library acquire this important book. A volume in top condition from the original 1685 edition was purchased in 2011 as the library's "Millionth Book" to mark Vassar's Sesquicentennial. The entire volume, from which the illustrations for this article are taken, may be accessed at <http://digitallibrary.vassar.edu/fedora/repository/vassar:25503>.

²In the context of this discussion, a curious aspect of Lairese's appearance deserves mention. He was apparently a person of great personal charm, even something of a lady's man, but his face (recorded in Rembrandt's eerie portrait of 1665 in the Metropolitan Museum of Art) was an anatomical curiosity, even something of a ruin, which, according to Arnold Houbraken, horrified those who met him for the first time. The cause of his sunken saddle nose, pallid skin, and protruding forehead and jaw would not be diagnosed until the late nineteenth century: congenital syphilis, which can also produce corneal clouding, perhaps the ultimate cause of the blindness that afflicted Lairese by 1690, forcing him to abandon painting and begin a second career as a lecturer on art theory. See Horton A. Johnson, "Gerard de Lairese: Genius among the Treponemes," *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 97 (June 2004): 301–3.

³The album of Lairese's wash drawings for this project is preserved in the Bibliothèque de l'Ancienne Faculté de Médecine in Paris and is thoroughly discussed in Paule Dumaitre, *La Curieuse Destinée des planches anatomiques de Gerard de Lairese, peintre en Holland* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1982). The identity of the printmaker(s) for Bidloo's volume remains uncertain. Abraham Blooteling (1640–1690), who signed the title page with its portrait of Bidloo, may have executed the other plates, but these engravings have also been attributed to Pieter van Gunst (1659–1724). Variations in style suggest that several printmakers may have worked on the project, possibly including Lairese himself, although the 117 known prints he produced between 1662 and 1688 are all etchings.

⁴Lyckle de Vries, *Gerard de Lairese: An Artist between Stage and Studio* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1998), 174, refers to Lairese's *Grondlegginge ter Teekenkonst* (Amsterdam: Willem de Coup, 1701), 57, as the source for the artist's mention of van de Gracht. Cf. Jacob van de Gracht, *Anatomie der wtterlicke deelen van het Menschelick Lichaem . . . Bequaem voor Schilders, Beelthouwers, Plaet-snyders, als ook Chirurugiens* (The Hague: published by the author, 1634).

⁵K. D. Robert and J. D. Tomlinson have suggested in *The Fabric of the Body: European Traditions of Anatomical Illustration* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 311, that omissions or faults in the Bidloo illustrations may have been caused by the author's inadequate supervision of the artist.

⁶The presence of anatomical materials in artists' studios of this period, such as anatomical prints and diagrams, skeletons, *écorché* models, and casts of antique sculptures of all or parts of the human body, is one of the many areas where seventeenth-century art and science met.

⁷Alain Roy points out that Father Time is a variant of the figure of *Chronos* in Lairese's etched frontispiece for his *Signorum Veterum Icones* of 1671, while *Anatomia* derives from Euterpe, goddess of music, in his *Speelstukken door David Petersen* of 1683. Alain Roy, *Gerard de Lairese 1640–1711* (Paris: Arthena, 1992), 394, 450, 479, pls. G66 and G108.

⁸See Jan C. C. Rupp, "Matters of Life and Death: The Social and Cultural Conditions of the Rise of Anatomical Theaters, with Special Reference to Seventeenth-century Holland," *History of Science* 26, part 3, no. 81 (September 1990) 263–87; and Cynthia Klestinec, "A History of Anatomy Theatres in Sixteenth-Century Padua," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 59 (2004): 375–412.

⁹This abrupt and extreme transition in the *Anatomia* recalls the rhetorical device in Greek tragedy known as *peripeteia*, in which sudden reversal of a situation sets the story and the emotional tenor of the performance on an entirely new track.

¹⁰As Joseph Koerner pointed out in his discussion of the corruptible body in Northern Renaissance art, the Latin verb *cadere* (to fall) is also the root of the word *cadaver*. Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 294.

¹¹ Use of the microscope is immediately made clear in the text facing the very first dissection illustration (Plate 4), which depicts multiple details of the skin with its sheer dermal layers and minute underlying glands and follicles (“Figura I. In qua, ope Microscopii, depicta est cuticulae”).

¹² Similarly in Plate 52, which illustrates the dissection of the diaphragm and esophageal muscles, a housefly has landed on the striped cloth that masks the lower part of the torso. The insect is a common *vanitas* allusion to death and decay, but here its aliveness makes this ruined fragment of a corpse seem even more dead.

¹³ This observation about Lairesse’s comparison and contrast between the drapery and the sheets of flesh hanging from the body of the cadaver was explored in a seminar paper on the *Anatomia* written in 2011 by Sierra Starr (Vassar 2011), a double major in biology and studio art.

¹⁴ Mimi Cazort, Monique Kornell, and K. B. Roberts, *The Ingenious Machine of Nature: Four Centuries of Art and Anatomy* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1996), 186.

¹⁵ “He drew exactly what he saw under his eyes, but something in his art made him flee, despite himself, the awful reality and give a soul to that which no longer has a soul.” Dumaitre, *La Curieuse Destinée*, 23.

¹⁶ Raphael Cuir, *The Development of the Study of Anatomy from the Renaissance to Cartesianism: DaCarpi, Vesalius, Estienne, Bidloo* (Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter: The Edwin Melen Press, 2009), 156–79.

¹⁷ In two of the last illustrations in the treatise, however, Bidloo and Lairesse made a deliberate bow to Vesalius. Plates 87 and 88 depict animated skeletons (of dubious anatomical accuracy), gesturing dramatically toward the tombs beside them. Andreas Vesalius’s *De humani corporis fabrica libri septem*, published in Basel in 1543, can be studied in a modern illustrated translation by J. B. deC. M. Saunders and Charles D. O’Malley, *The Illustrations from the Works of Andreas Vesalius of Brussels* (New York: Dover, 1973).

¹⁸ Bidloo’s book has indeed lived on, but ironically it was too large and expensive to sell widely to general readers, and its illustrations and texts were not considered complete or accurate enough to be suitable for scientific use. When the English anatomist William Cowper purchased the plates from Bidloo’s publishers and reissued the volume with expanded texts under his own name—never mentioning Bidloo or Lairesse—one of the greatest plagiarism scandals of all time erupted. William Cowper, *The Anatomy of Humane Bodies* (Oxford: Sam Smith and Benjamin Walford, 1698).

¹⁹ “Vale, Lector, mecumque sperare perge, ut destructo mirifico atque terreo bocce aedificio, aeternam adipiscatur anima domum a Creatore Optimo Maximo, cujus gloriae, in nulle saecula fit finis.” My thanks to Dr. Lily Beck for a translation that catches the subtleties of Bidloo’s text.

Recommended Citation: Susan Donahue Kuretsky, “Lairesse Meets Bidloo, or the Case of the Absent Anatomist,” *Midwestern Arcadia: Essays in Honor of Alison Kettering* (2015) DOI: 10.18277/makf.2015.03

Best known as an anatomist, Govard Bidloo's most famous work was his monumental *Anatomia humani corporis* published in Amsterdam in 1685, containing 107 copperplate engravings. Like so many large and expensive anatomical atlases of the time, the work was not a financial success, and in 1690 he published a Dutch translation entitled, *Ontleding des menschelyken lichaams*, using the same plates. When this edition did not sell well either, Bidloo's publisher sold 300 of the extra printed plates to William Cowper, a noted English anatomist. Cowper published the plates with his own, English language text in Oxford in 1698 under the title, *Anatomy of the humane bodies*, without mentioning Bidloo or the artists of the original plates. Made by Gerard de Laresse after Govert Bidloo. Gerard or Gerard de Laresse (1640/1641 - 1711) was a very talented Dutch Golden Age painter and art theorist. Govert Bidloo or Govard Bidloo (1649 - 1713) was a Dutch Golden Age physician, anatomist, poet and playwright. He was the personal physician of William III of Orange-Nassau, Dutch stadholder and king of England. Details. Creator.Â Nicola Tyson is known for her assertive depictions of the human body, typically odd arrangements of patched-together, distorted, or missing parts rendered in a bright but reduced color palette. Category. Early 2000s Contemporary More Prints. While seven cases of serious illness required oxygen, and another was in critical condition in intensive care, none of the eight had been fully vaccinated, the health ministry said. "There is continuing evidence that vaccination helps to prevent serious disease when one gets infected," the ministry said, adding that all the fully vaccinated and infected people had shown no symptoms, or only mild ones. Infections in vaccinated people do not mean vaccines are ineffective, experts said. "As more and more people are vaccinated in Singapore, we will see more infections happening among vaccinated people," Teo Yik Ying, dean of the Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health at the National University of Singapore (NUS).