

Bodies Beyond Borders. The Circulation of Anatomical Knowledge, 1750-1950

Veranstalter: Research Group „Cultural History since 1750“, Leuven

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Bericht von: Pieter Huistra, Research Group Cultural History Since 1750, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven

From 7-9 January 2015 a conference on the history of anatomy was held in Leuven, Belgium. „Bodies Beyond Borders“ was hosted by the Research Group Cultural History since 1750¹ and is a result of the ongoing research project „Anatomy, Scientific Authority and the Visualized Body in Medicine and Culture (Belgium, 1780-1930).“² In the project, the history of anatomy in Belgium and the Belgian Congo are studied with a stress on the way anatomical knowledge and meaning circulated between different spheres. Circulation of knowledge was also the vantage point for the conference that welcomed over twenty presenters and around fifty participants from all over the globe.

As SAMUEL ALBERTI (London) pointed out in his closing lecture, there was a remarkable coherence in the topics and problems that were dealt with throughout the conference. These issues convey a sense of what is urgent in present-day history of anatomy. One of these is the dynamics in anatomical objects. The distances – great and small - over which they are moved and the audiences that behold them provoke constantly shifting meanings. Other recurring themes were the anatomical media, their reproducibility and their dimensions.

ANNA MAERKER's (London) opening lecture on the papier-mâché anatomical models of the French model maker Dr. Auzoux was a case in point. The models traveled great distances: from Normandy to Paris, from France to the United States and Egypt. New contexts also meant new meanings and to ensure that its models were a success, the Auzoux company made use of 'model students'. Maerker explained how they served as ambassadors who could promote the models and overcome resistance. The forging of anatomical networks was also the subject of the session on 'Net-

works of Medical Knowledge'.

The distances covered by the Auzoux models were only small compared to the skulls that were discussed by HELEN MACDONALD (Melbourne) in her lecture 'Corpse stories: anatomy, bodies and the colonial world'. When body parts go from Oceania to Britain, MacDonald showed, they can undergo a shift in meaning. In this case, they can become part of a collection and part of an anthropometric undertaking in race construction. The relation between colony and metropolis was further explored in the parallel session on 'Global Exchange and Bodies for Science'.

Audiences shape meanings and RINA KNOEFF (Groningen) firmly pleaded to take these audiences seriously. Anatomical objects do not only provoke wonder or disgust, spectators can also have a more affective relation with these objects. Knoeff took as her example an object from the collection of the famous Dutch anatomist Frederik Ruysch: Siamese twins that were visited by their parents regularly. The themes that Knoeff brought forward were discussed in sessions on 'Anatomical Collections' and 'Moralizing Anatomies'. In these sessions the way anatomy went public and the role of the spectator received ample attention.

MICHAEL SAPPOL (Bethesda, MD) discussed the tradition of topographic anatomy, in which the body is 'sliced' rather than cut open, and the representations it gave rise to. The many illustrations from the genre showed a fascinating interplay between two and three-dimensional representation. The two-dimensional representation of what by nature has three dimensions, the body, was the subject of the session 'Paper Technologies' as well.

In the session 'Recycling Images' on the ways in which anatomical illustrations were used and reused, the materiality and the reproducibility of anatomical images were further scrutinized. Here, the interplay of science and art was also made subject of discussion, as was the case in NATASHA RUIZ-

¹ See <<http://www.arts.kuleuven.be/cultuurgeschiedenis/en>> (24.3.2015).

² See <<http://www.arts.kuleuven.be/cultuurgeschiedenis/history-of-anatomy/history-of-anatomy>> (24.3.2015).

GÓMEZ's (Essex) lecture on the doctor and artist Paul Richer. Richer made the cross-over between medical science and art. Ruiz-Gómez showed how Richer's écorchés bore the traces of both art and science, subjectivity and objectivity, the healthy and the pathological body.

The relationship between artistic and scientific representations of the human body was omnipresent in the exhibition *Vesalius. Imagining the body*, that was on display in Leuven as part of the Vesalius year.³ As a hors-d'œuvre, ANDREW CUNNINGHAM (Cambridge) gave a lecture on William Harvey and how the anatomist's circulation was pivotal in his discovery of the circulation of blood.

The circulation of knowledge has proven a fruitful perspective for the history of anatomy. *Bodies Beyond Borders* brought us a lot of case studies that deepened our understanding of how anatomical objects can gain meanings and how they are imbued with new knowledge. Since the trajectories of this wide array of objects run through different domains, they allow for a broader view on the history of anatomy that encompasses university as well as fairground, metropolis as well as colony, models, paintings and descriptions as well as statues or real body parts. Finally and maybe most fundamentally, this lead to a rethinking of existing hierarchies: between colony and metropolis, between scientific and public anatomies as well as between the different media of anatomy.

Conference Overview:

Luk Draye/Pieter Huistra (Leuven), Welcome

Keynote

Anna Maerker (King's College, London), Models as mediators? The global traffic in model bodies and model students.

Session - Anatomical Collections

Caroline Girard (Université de Montpellier 1), The Dr. Spitzner Museum, or a long-living nomadic anatomical collection

Alfons Zarzaoso/José Pardo-Tomas (Musea d'Història de la Medicina de Catalunya), Anatomical knowledge to discipline people: a frightening and morbid spectacle in Barcelona, 1925-1936

Session – Moralizing anatomies

Tinne Claes (Leuven), Louis Laussedat (1809-1878). Politician, physician and crowd-pleaser

Stephen C. Kenny (University of Liverpool), „Specimens calculated to shock the soundest sleeper“: the educational lives of anatomical and pathological exhibits on-board the Louisiana Health Train, 1910-1911

Birgit Nemec (University of Vienna), Of social landscapes and political images. Visual cultures of anatomy in interwar Vienna, international networks and anatomical artefacts as media of exchange

Keynote

Helen MacDonald (University of Melbourne), Corpse stories: anatomy, bodies and the colonial world

Session – Networks of medical knowledge

Carin Berkowitz (Beckman Center for the History of Chemistry, Philadelphia), Knowledge in dispute: Bell, Magendie, and the establishment of priority across borders

Joris Vandendriessche (Leuven), Reconstructing the trajectories of anatomical specimen in nineteenth-century medical societies in Belgium

Keynote

Rina Knoeff (University of Groningen), Touching anatomy – on preparations, relics and how they affect visitors

Session – Global exchange and bodies for science

Sokhieng Au (Leuven), The anatomy of a colony: the Congolese body displayed (1880-1930)

Oana Baboi (University of Toronto), Anatomy without dissection: medical education in Escola Medico-Cirurgica de Goa

Sue Lederer (University of Wisconsin, Madison), Bodies for science before anatomical gift

³ See a review on Morbid Anatomy, by Michael Sappol, *Vesalius: Imagining the Body Exhibition*, Leuven, Belgium: A Guest Post by Michael Sappol, National Library of Medicine, 15.1.2015 <<http://morbidanatomy.blogspot.be/2015/01/vesalius-imagining-body-exhibition.html>> (24.3.2015).

acts, 1890-1955

Session – Paper technologies

Nicholas Duvall (University of Manchester),
Post mortem by mail: the forensic autopsy
and the written report in interwar Scotland

Stephan Sander-Faes (University of Zurich),
Wanted! The transfer of body knowledge in
Central Europe 'on the ground' around 1800

Keynote

Natasha Ruiz-Gómez (University of Essex),
From hospital to salon: the artistic legacy of
the Salpêtrière

Public lecture

Andrew Cunningham (University of Cam-
bridge), William Harvey and the circulation of
knowledge from Padua to England

Keynote

Michael Sappol (National Library of Medici-
ne, Bethesda, MD), The apotheosis of the dis-
sected plate: spectacles of layering and trans-
parency in 19th- and 20th-century anatomy

Session – Recycling Images

Veronique Deblon (Leuven), Reaching new
audiences by recycling anatomical illustrati-
ons

Naomi Slipp (Boston University), Internatio-
nal anatomies: teaching visual literacy in the
Harvard Lecture Hall

Corinna Wagner (University of Exeter), Medi-
cine and visual culture: the global exchange of
pathological images

Keynote

Samuel Alberti (Royal College of Surgeons,
London), Anatomical objects and their jour-
neys

Kaat Wils (Leuven), Closing remarks

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