

TO THE EDITOR:

The biography of Renaissance anatomist Andreas Vesalius (1514-1564) by C.T. Ambrose¹ relies heavily on O'Malley's authoritative biography.² However, Ambrose incorrectly states that the anatomical illustrations that comprised the *Tabulae Anatomica Sex* (1538) "were by John Stephen [sic] of Calcar / Joannes Stephanus," when instead only the three views of the skeleton are by Stephanus. As noted by O'Malley (1964), Saunders and O'Malley (1950),³ Singer and Rabin (1946),⁴ and Ball (1910),⁵ among others, the first three *Tabulae* (i.e., physiological diagrams of the portal, caval, and arterial systems based on Galenic physiology) were drawn by Vesalius himself. As Vesalius noted in his prefatory dedication given on the first of the *Tabulae*, as translated by Saunders and O'Malley (1950), "My drawing of the veins pleased the professors of medicine and all the students so much that they earnestly sought from me a diagram of the arteries and also one of the nerves. Since the administration of Anatomy is part of my professional duties [at the University of Padua], I could not disappoint them, especially as I knew that illustrations of this sort would be extremely useful for those who might attend my dissections. ... Furthermore, since many have attempted vainly to copy these figures, I have committed them to the press, and to these plates I have added others in which Jan Stefan [van Kalkar], an outstanding artist of our time, has most appropriately depicted in three positions my recently constructed skeleton for the benefit of my students." The diagram of the

¹ Ambrose CT. Andreas Vesalius (1514-1564) – An unfinished life. *Acta med-hist Adriat* 2014;12:217-230.

² O'Malley CD. *Andreas Vesalius of Brussels 1514-1564*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1964, pp. 84-90.

³ Saunders JB de CM, O'Malley CD. *Vesalius: The Illustrations from His Works*. Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1950, pp. 233-247.

⁴ Singer C, Rabin C. *A Prelude to Modern Science: Being a Discussion of the History, Sources and Circumstances of the 'Tabulae Anatomicae Sex' of Vesalius*. Cambridge: University Press, 1946.

⁵ Ball JM. *Andreas Vesalius: The Reformer of Anatomy*. St. Louis: Medical Science Press, 1910, pp. 81-83.

nerves mentioned by Vesalius, which was presented to the students (as documented by his student Vitus Tritonius), was not in fact included among the published *Tabulae*. In its place is included an unmentioned diagram (*Tabula i*) of the portal circulation and the vasculature of the male and female reproductive organs.⁶

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RESPONSE FROM THE AUTHOR

Below is a short response to the letter sent to the Editor by Prof. Lanska regarding my recent paper on Vesalius in the AMHA.

While C.D. O'Malley wrote a comprehensive biography on Vesalius, I also consulted works on him by Moritz Roth (1892) and Harvey Cushing (1962) and scores of journal articles published over the past century. The editors of AMHA reduced my manuscript by a quarter, eliminating a section on the Holy Roman Empire. Every sentence of my paper was parsed for brevity; so extenuating details were omitted in this short but handsomely illustrated biography.

Dr. D.J. Lanska's publications on Vesalius concerning the recurrent laryngeal nerve and vivisection make him an authority here. Along with J.R. Lanska, he has reviewed other early anatomists, their works, and plagiarism by them. So DJL's scholarly emendations to my modest biography are a valuable, welcomed footnote. He has listed important references in this area.

C.T. Ambrose, M.D.

⁶ O'Malley CD. The anatomical sketches of Vitus Tritonius Athesinus and their relationship to Vesalius's *Tabulae Anatomicae*. *J Hist Med* 1958;13:395-397.