



# **On the Fabric of the Human Body, Book II : The Ligaments & Muscles (Norman Anatomy Series, 2)**

*Andreas Vesalius*

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Vesalius's *De humani corporis fabrica libri septem*, first published in 1543 is, along with William Harvey's classic work from 1628 on the discovery of the circulation of the blood, one of the two most famous books in the history of medicine. A cornerstone of the scientific revolution, published the same year as Copernicus's monumental treatise on the heliocentric universe, *De humani corporis fabrica* inaugurated the modern study of anatomy, leading to the eventual overturn of the Galenic system that had dominated medical science for fourteen centuries.

Illustrated with woodcuts by artists in the school of Titian that have for centuries remained standard icons of medical literature, Vesalius's work is also a classic of sixteenth-century graphic art. When it was originally published in the mid-sixteenth century its Latin text guaranteed its accessibility to an international medical and scientific audience, all of whom had been educated to read and write Latin. Of course, fewer and fewer physicians and scientists read Latin today, and even professional classicists have reported considerable difficulty in interpreting Vesalius's technical Renaissance medical Latin. Although many editions, revisions, adaptations, and facsimiles of this work appeared over the centuries, remarkably it was never before now translated, except for fragments, into a modern language other than Russian (Moscow, 1950-1954). The Richardson and Carman translation supplies a modern, accessible version of this monumental work for the first time. Dr. Richardson and Professor Carman bring a lifetime of experience to the task of translating and presenting Vesalius's painstaking account of the fabric of the human body, having devoted many years to scholarly study of the Latin language (Dr. Richardson) and detailed human anatomy (Professor Carman). Book II: The Ligaments and Muscles, the second of seven books into which Vesalius's encyclopedic work is divided, contains 39 illustrations, including the series of dissected musculature that remain the most famous anatomical illustrations of all time. As in Book I: The Bones and Cartilages (published in 1998), all of Vesalius's marginal notes have been translated and the historiated initial letters have been reproduced. Book II is made up of 62 chapters and the majority of the chapters end with detailed translator's notes explaining subtleties in the translation. There are also indexes to the muscles, with detailed muscle grids; to the text; to people and places; to words from Greek and Latin; and to the translator's notes. Informative and interpretive prefaces by the translator and anatomist provide details about the translation process of the book and the anatomy described therein.

The lasting influences of both Vesalius's many discoveries and the dramatic woodcuts on the history of anatomy and the visual arts cannot be overestimated. The biographer of Picasso, John Richardson, points out that Vesalius's illustration were the direct inspiration for Picasso's famous painting *The Dryad* (1908) and other works. "How Picasso chanced upon the work of this body snatching anatomist, who saw his plates benefiting painters and sculptors as well as physicians and surgeons, I do not know. The most likely source would have been Apollinaire, a bibliophile with a taste for antiquarian medical books." (*A Life of Picasso: 1907-1917. The Painter of Modern Life* [New York: Random House, 1996]). As Dr. Richardson states in his preface to Book II, "The reader cannot but admire Vesalius's attention to detail, his astounding memory, his powers of observation and description, and his capacity for sheer hard work." Book II: The Ligaments and Muscles is a truly superb account of the muscles of the human body.

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