

Art and Anatomy in Nineteenth Century Britain: Three Studies

by Allister Neher

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This small book, which is well illustrated and referenced, studies the connection between anatomy and art by analysing the contributions of three anatomists of the 19th century; John Bell (1763–1820), Charles Landseer (1799–1879) and Robert Carswell (1793–1857).

John Bell, elder brother of Charles Bell, was an accomplished surgical anatomist who wrote *Observations on Italy* in which he describes the relationship between anatomical correctness and art. Dr Neher demonstrates Bell's commitment to this ideal and records that the *Dying Gaul (Gladiator)* in Rome was Bell's favourite statue. 'It was not just an idealised figure but a psychologically astute representation of the death of an unknown combatant'.

Charles Landseer, the elder brother of Sir Edwin Landseer, whose paintings are in the Wellcome Collection was a student of Benjamin Robert Haydon. He never achieved the fame of his younger brother although he did make significant contributions to anatomical drawings. Charles was the keeper of the Royal Academy and in the exhibition of 1863 fell foul of the Pre-Raphaelites for not choosing to hang their paintings. Neher discusses Charles's work notably at the height of his fame and also reflects on Haydon's influence on his anatomical drawings.

Robert Carswell used the illustrations in his book *Pathological Anatomy* for teaching when he was the first Professor of Morbid Anatomy in the University of London, and many further pathological illustrations are now held in University College London's Special Collection. Carswell was a creative medical illustrator, spending time in France as well as performing many anatomical dissections. Several of his beautifully constructed compositions are shown in this book.

The only problem with the book, which is 137 pages A5 size, is the expense - over £61. This may prohibit individual readers from obtaining a copy which is a shame considering the wealth of material within.

Dr Neher is to be congratulated on producing a considered analysis of the understanding of three medical artists who contributed so much to the visual imaging of anatomy.

Sean P Hughes

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