

## REMEDICATIONS OF THE WESTERN ANATOMICAL IMAGINARY: FROM OVID'S MARSYAS TO MIDDLE ENGLISH THEATRE TO RENAISSANCE ANATOMY

Estella Antoaneta Ciobanu  
Ovidius University of Constanța

**Abstract:** *My investigation of the Middle English Passion plays seeks to determine whether there exist continuities between instances of anatomisation in late medieval theatre and in Renaissance anatomy, which may indicate the subliminal role of Christian discursive practices in the formation of a western anatomical imaginary. The circumstances of tearing apart Jesus's body in the Passion plays may be a far cry from those which reveal the anatomical body in early modern anatomy and its illustration or from those of Marsyas's flaying in Ovid's Metamorphoses, an episode familiar to educated medieval Christians. Nonetheless, all three instances of "anatomisation" rely on a quest for truth which both motivates and crowns them, and whose outcome is, I contend, the mediation and remediation of the hegemonic anatomical imaginary in the West. While in Ovid truth is obliterated in the process of punitive torture, early modern anatomy actively pursues the truth of the body, even as anatomical illustration often still suggests the penological circumstances of the process, thus rendering the anatomist a modern Apollo. In between them, the Middle English Passion plays thematise the pursuit of truth, a truth not so much of Jesus as of power and its legitimacy, yet to be revealed through torture. The Passion drama's torture, like its subsequent cultic remediations, renders Christ's an "anatomical body" virtually akin to that featured in early modern anatomy books. However, just as this quest for truth in both discursive practices fashions the anatomical body, thence an anatomical imaginary, its overt violence gets tacitly inscribed as the default modus operandi of both anatomy proper and the Christian (anatomical) imaginary.*

**Key Words:** *Middle English Crucifixion plays, early modern anatomy, Marsyas (Ovid's Metamorphoses), anatomical imaginary, remediation (Bolter and Grusin)*