

Abstract: This paper investigates the ideological underside of the early modern anatomical project, with its capacity for establishing iconic if haunting presences, and its transdisciplinary ramifications, which colluded with the discursive practices of colonialism to mystify “exploration” and “discovery” of the body as a disinterested, noble scientific pursuit in the service of (healthy) humanity. Early modern anatomy produced the “body-as-knowledge” through unacknowledged violence, epistemic and representational, against the human body and the individual, thereby begging the question of the power relations and power–knowledge enmeshed in the anatomical practice. When Vesalius named anatomy an “Apollinea disciplina,” he anticipated the ostentatious deification of the practice and implicitly of its practitioners too, which anatomy book frontispieces would soon propound. In fact, the very co-operation of anatomist and artist in imaging body-knowledge was partly responsible for tacitly making the Metamorphoses’ Marsyas into an exemplar of knowledge acquisition, transcoded as the anatomical *écorché*, and Apollo into its transcendental guarantor, Goddess Anatomia. Ovid’s Marsyas was thereby re-morphed into a memorable icon of anatomy. Such iconicity obtained, however, through the pervasive presence of Marsyas across the larger spectrum of early modern visual production: anatomical illustration and the fine arts converged on displaying the *écorché* as the gateway to rationally devised if empirically gained knowledge, yet occluded both its violent epistemic operation and its exertions to establish the anatomist’s scientific supremacy