

THE 'M.F.' ENGRAVING AND THE VALVERDE MUSCLE-MAN: A CORRECTION

ONE of the very few illustrations in Valverde's *Historia de la composicion del cuerpo humano* of 1556 which cannot be traced directly to a Vesalian prototype is the frontal muscle-figure grasping a dagger. Meyer and Wirt (1943) suggested as a possible iconographic prototype for this figure the Apollo on an engraving of the flaying of Marsyas which bears the initials M.F. and the date 1536, although they note that E. Holländer (*Die Medizin in der klassischen Malerei*, Stuttgart, 1913) cautioned in a footnote that the date may not be reliable; Singer (1950) also remarks that doubts have been expressed as to the genuineness of this date. In a note on the iconographic interpretation of the Valverde muscle-man (Wells, 1959) I drew attention to some major differences in pose between this figure and the Apollo of the 'M.F.' engraving, but could not, in view of the date 1536, completely dismiss the latter as a remote source for the Valverde illustration.

My attention has since been drawn to an engraving reproduced in Schider-Auerbach (1957), which is identical in composition with the 'M.F.' engraving but reversed. This bears a dedicatory inscription to Francesco de Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany, dated 1581, and the initials M.M., taken to stand for Melchior Meier, regarding whom very little seems to be known. The question thus arises whether the 'M.M.' engraving is a much later copy of the 'M.F.', or whether the latter is not misdated and possibly even later than the 'M.M.'

As the reproduction of the 'M.M.' engraving in Schider-Auerbach is stated to be derived from the Department of Prints, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, I consulted Mr. A. Hyatt Mayor, Curator of the Department, on this problem. He replied that he had been able to compare the two engravings, and summed up his conclusions as follows:

The anatomy of both engravings is certainly post-Vesalian, so that a date in the 1530's is impossible. The 1581 version must be the first, if only because it has various details that are misunderstood or slurred over in the other version. The Medici Grand Duke would not have been much flattered by receiving a dedication on an engraving that was only a copy of something else. Thus a number of indications point to Meier's engraving as the original.

It seems highly probable, therefore, that the date 1536 on the 'M.F.' engraving must be rejected as either deliberate falsification or merely an error, on the part of the engraver, perhaps for 1586. This engraving must accordingly be discarded from the list of possible prototypes for the Valverde muscle-man.

In drawing attention to this evidence, I wish to record my thanks both to Mr. Mayor and to his assistant Miss Janet Byrne for their cooperation.

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