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Lancet and Art.

Antonio Scarpa (1752–1832) Scientist and Aesthete

Pupil of Morgagni, Scarpa graduated in Padua and was professor of Anatomy and Surgery in Modena and later Pavia. A brilliant surgeon, he was also a prominent and successful scientist, as attested by eponyms such as Scarpa's foramina; Scarpa's ganglion; Scarpa's triangle. Among his works we remember *De structura fenestrae rotundae auris* (1772), *Memoria chirurgica sui piedi torti congeniti* (1803), *Sull' aneurisma..* (1804), *Sull' ernie* (1809). Of specific interest to neurology are *Anatomicae disquisitiones de auditu et olfactu* (1789), recounting the discovery of the ganglion of the vestibular nerve, and the *Tabulae neurologicae* (1794), a scientific treatise accompanied with highly precise yet aesthetically elegant engravings. The beauty of these offers us a glimpse of Scarpa's complex personality, a man of difficult temperament, bordering on misanthropic. His biographer Monti described him thus: "This great, severe old man with a magnetic gaze, who gave no confidence to anyone, .. who worked quickly and was insensitive to the cries of his patients.. was as indecipherable as the Sphinx, cold as death, and relentless as fate." Yet he nearly compensated for his coarse character harboring a deep artistic sensibility, which his biographer likes to trace to his birthplace: "... his innate good taste, a frequent trait of people from the Veneto, where every small place is rich with artistic treasure, ...made him into a great connoisseur of the arts ...". And that is how the steely surgeon turned out to be a refined collector who over the years, as he himself put it, acquired a "collection of paintings from the greatest Masters of all the Italian schools", including the famous Saint Sebastian of Mantegna. We will revisit the figure of Antonio Scarpa, scientist and aesthete.

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