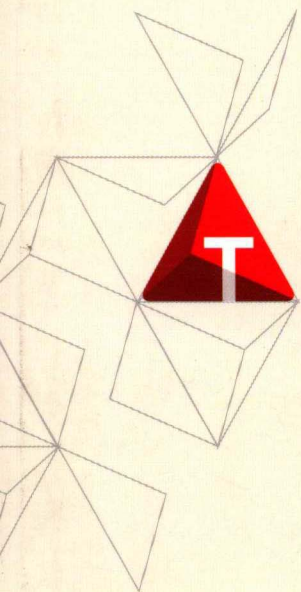
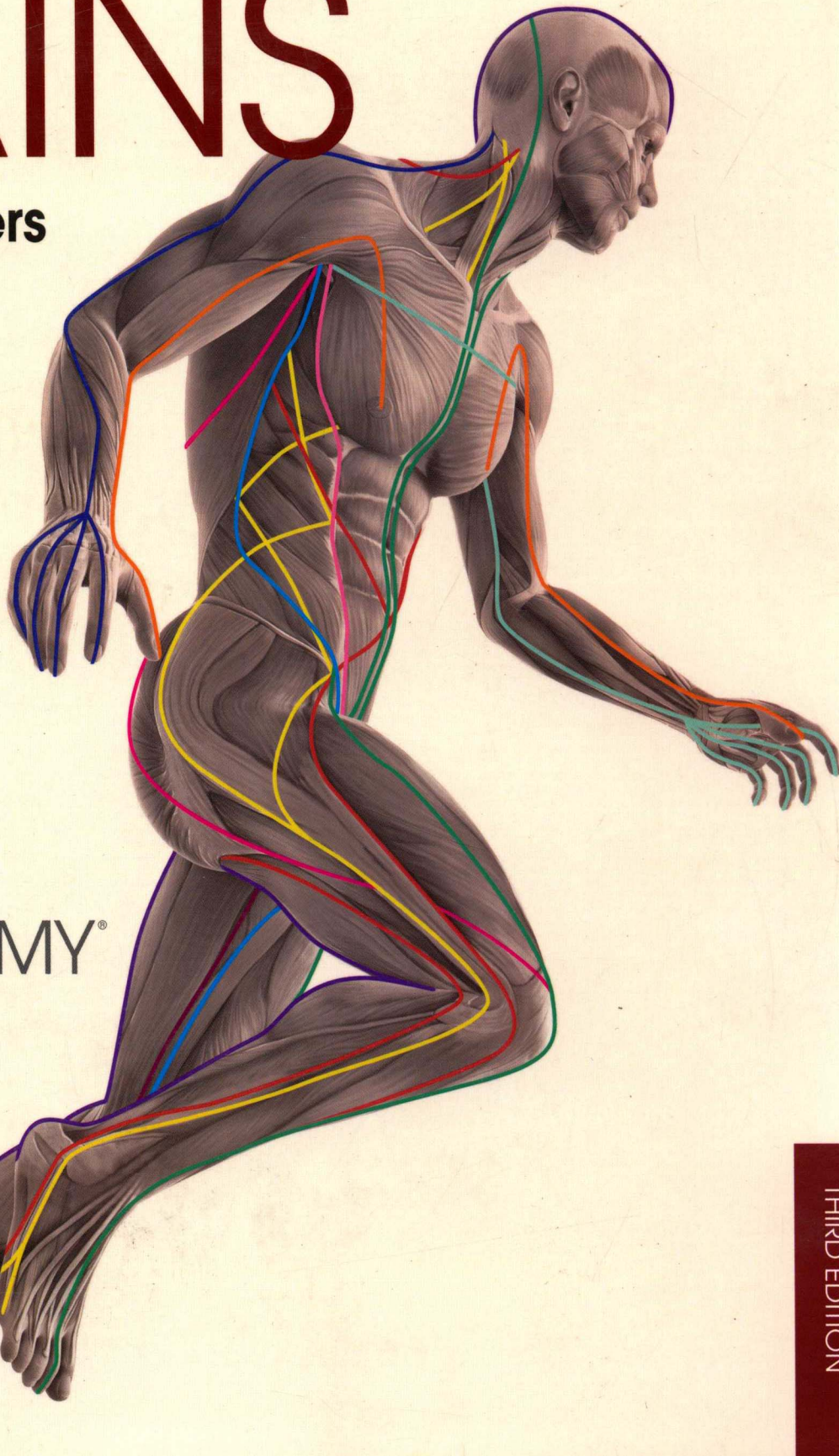


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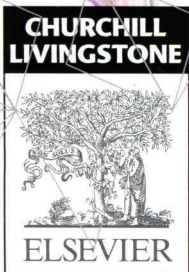
ANATOMY[®] TRAINS

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for Manual
and Movement
Therapists

Thomas W. Myers

Licensed Massage Therapist (LMT)
Nationally Certified in Therapeutic
Massage and Bodywork (NCTMB)
Certified Rolfer[®] (ARP)
Practitioner and Lecturer
Director, Kinesis Incorporated
Maine, USA

Color illustrations by
Graeme Chambers
Debbie Maizels
Philip Wilson



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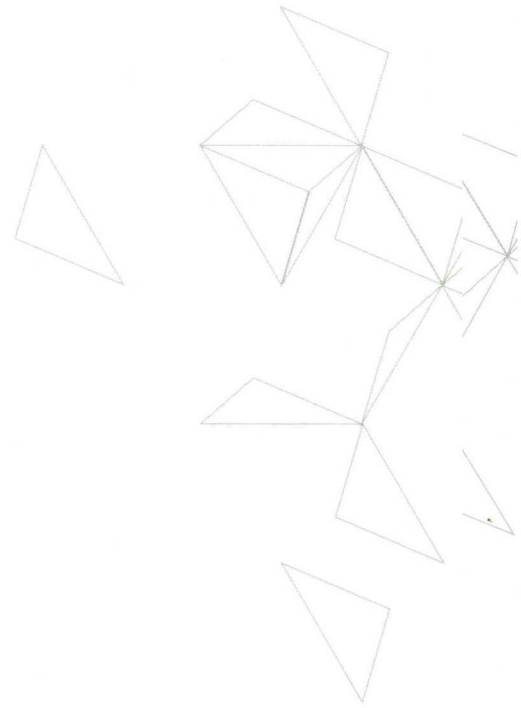
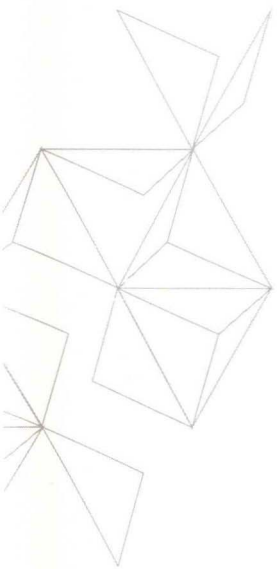
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THIRD **EDITION**

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DEDICATION

To Edward, for the gift of language.

To Julia, for the tenacity to see it through.

'Every act of the body is an act of the soul.'
(William Alfred¹)

'I don't know anything, but I do know that everything is interesting
if you go into it deeply enough.'
(Richard Feynman²)



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Content Development Specialist: *Sheila Black*
Project Managers: *Louisa Talbott, Anne Collett*
Designer: *Christian Bilbow*
Cover: *Stacy Gilliland, Studio_RSG*
Illustration Manager: *Jennifer Rose*

1. Alfred W. *The Curse of an Aching Heart*. Out of print.

2. Feynman R. *Six Easy Pieces*. New York: Addison Wesley; 1995.

Preface

Since initial publication in 2001, the reach and application of the ideas in this book have far outstripped this author's expectations. We and our staff have been invited to present these ideas and their application on every continent save Antarctica to a wide variety of professionals, including orthopedists, physiatrists, physiotherapists, chiropractors, osteopaths, psychologists, athletic and personal trainers, performance coaches, yoga teachers, martial artists, massage therapists, dancers, and somatic educators of all stripes. The book is now available in 12 languages. A simple Google® search of *Anatomy Trains* now yields nearly 6,000,000 hits, as therapists and educators find useful applications far beyond our original conception.

This third edition includes many small updates and corrections that arose out of our continuing teaching and practice, as well as preliminary evidence from fascial dissections. We have been able to include some recent discoveries made in the fascial and myofascial world since the second edition (much of it summarized in *Fascia, the Tensional Network of the Human Body*, 2012, Schleip R, Findley T, Chaitow L, Huijing P; Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone), as well as to fill in areas where our initial ignorance of the wider world has been rectified.

This edition benefits from updated artwork by Graeme Chambers, Debbie Maizels and Philip Wilson. New client assessment photos have been produced by Michael Frenchman/Videograf and Pedro Guimaraes/Pamedia Design.

The book is designed to allow rapid comprehension of the relevant concepts for a casual reader, or a detailed analysis for the curious.

Like most textbooks these days, this edition makes increasing use of electronic media. The text is studded with website addresses for further study, and our own website, www.anatomytrains.com, is being constantly updated. There are also consistent references to the set of a dozen or more DVDs we have produced to support professional application of the Anatomy Trains concepts.

The website accompanying this book – www.myersmyofascialmeridians.com – provides access to goodies not otherwise available in a book format, including video clips from our technique, dissection, and visual assessment DVDs, computer graphic representations of the Anatomy Trains, webinars, and some extra client photos for visual assessment practice.

Both the understanding of the role of fascia and the implications and applications of Anatomy Trains are developing rapidly. This new edition and its connections to the web ensure an up-to-date point of view on fascia, a largely missing element in movement study.

Thomas W. Myers
Maine 2014

Preface to the first edition

I stand in absolute awe of the miracle of life. My wonder and curiosity have only increased during the more than three decades of immersion in the study of human movement. Whether our ever-evolving body was fashioned by an all-knowing if mischievous Creator, or by a purely selfish gene struggling blindly up Mount Improbable,¹⁻³ the ingenious variety and flexibility shown in somatic design and development leaves the observer shaking his head with a rueful grin of astonishment.

One looks in vain inside the fertilized ovum for the trillion-cell fetus that it will become. Even the most cursory examination of the complexities of embryology leaves us amazed that it works as often as it does to produce a healthy infant. Hold a helpless, squalling baby, and it seems almost unbelievable that so many escape all the possible debilitating pitfalls on the road to a healthy and productive adulthood.

Despite its biological success, the human experiment as a whole is showing some signs of strain. When I read the news, I confess to having feelings of ambivalence as to whether humankind can or even should continue on this planet, given our cumulative effect on its surface flora and fauna and our treatment of each other. When I hold that baby, however, my commitment to human potential is once again confirmed.

This book (and the seminars and training courses from which it developed) is devoted to the slim chance that we as a species can move beyond our current dedication to collective greed – and the technocracy and alienation that proceed from it – into a more cooperative and humane relationship with ourselves, each other and our environs. One hopes the development of a ‘holistic’ view of anatomy such as the one outlined herein will be useful to the manual and movement therapists in relieving pain and resolving difficulties in the clients who seek their help. The deeper premise underlying the book, however, is that a more thorough and sensitive contact with our ‘felt sense’ – that is, our kinesthetic, proprioceptive, spatial sense of orientation and movement – is a vitally important front on which to fight the battle for a more human use of human beings, and a better integration with the world around us. The progressive deadening of this ‘felt sense’ in our children, whether through simple ignorance or by deliberate schooling, lends itself to a collective dissociation, which leads in turn to environmental and social decline. We have long been familiar with mental intelligence (IQ) and more recently have recognized emotional intelligence (EQ). Only by re-contacting the full reach and educational potential of our kinesthetic intelligence (KQ) will we have any hope of finding a balanced relationship with the larger systems of the world around us, to fulfill what Thomas Berry called ‘the Dream of the Earth’.^{4,5}

The traditional mechanistic view of anatomy, as useful as it has been, has objectified rather than humanized our

relationship to our insides. It is hoped that the relational view ventured in this book will go some little way toward connecting Descartes’ view of the body as a ‘soft machine’ with the living experience of being in a body which grows, learns, matures and ultimately dies. Although the Anatomy Trains ideas form only one small detail of a larger picture of human development through movement, an appreciation of the fascial web and balance in the myofascial meridians can definitely contribute to our inner sense of ourselves as integrated beings. This, coupled with other concepts to be presented in future works, leads toward a physical education more appropriate to the needs of the 21st century.⁶⁻⁹

As such, Anatomy Trains is a work of art in a scientific metaphor. This book leaps ahead of the science to propose a point of view, one that is still being literally fleshed out and refined. I have frequently been taken to task by my wife, my students, and my colleagues for stating my hypotheses baldly, with few of the qualifying adjectives which, though necessary to scientific accuracy, dampen the visceral force of an argument. As Evelyn Waugh wrote: ‘Humility is not a virtue propitious to the artist. It is often pride, emulation, avarice, malice – all the odious qualities – which drive a man to complete, elaborate, refine, destroy, and renew his work until he has made something that gratifies his pride and envy and greed. And in so doing he enriches the world more than the generous and the good. That is the paradox of artistic achievement.’¹⁰

Being neither a scholar nor a researcher, I can only hope that this work of ‘artifice’ is useful in providing some new ideas for the good people who are.

Finally, I hope that I have honored Vesalius and all the other explorers before me by getting the anatomy about right.

Maine 2001 Thomas W. Myers

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Acknowledgements

I would like to express my profound gratitude to a number of people who have guided my way and helped lead to the 'myofascial meridians' concept. To Buckminster Fuller, whose systems approach to design and wide appreciation for the way the world works have informed my work from the very beginning, who urged me not to reform people but to reform the environment around them.¹ To Dr Ida Rolf and Dr Moshe Feldenkrais, both of whom pointed the way to practical and literal ways of reforming the most immediate environment people have, their body and their perception of it;^{2,3} I owe these pioneers a deep debt of gratitude for the gift of worthwhile work.

To Dr James Oschman and Raymond Dart, for giving me the original inspiration on fascially connected kinetic chains.⁴ To the late Dr Louis Schultz, the original Chair of the Rolf Institute's Anatomy Faculty, whose ideas are much in evidence in this book.⁵ Dr Schultz gave me the broadest of conceptual fields in which to play as he started me on my path of learning fascial anatomy. To my colleagues on the Rolf Institute's Life Sciences faculty, specifically Paul Gordon, Michael Murphy, and particularly Robert Schleip, who offered warm but firm critical feedback to these ideas and thus improved them.⁶ To Deane Juhan, whose comprehensive view of human function, so elegantly put forth in *Job's Body*, has been an inspiration to me as to so many.⁷ To Michael Frenchman, my old friend, who demonstrated early faith in our ideas by putting in many hours realizing them in video form. To the innovative Gil Hedley of Somanautics and Todd Garcia of the Laboratories of Anatomical Enlightenment, whose skills in dissection are on view in this book, through the medium of Averill Lehan's camera and Eric Root's microscope. I honor their dedication to exposing the actual experience of the human form for testing new ideas such as those in this book. We honor the donors whose generosity makes these advances in knowledge possible.

Many other movement teachers, at slightly greater distance, also deserve credit for inspiring this work: the yoga of Iyengar as I learned it from his able students such as Arthur Kilmurray, Patricia Walden, and Francois Raoult; the highly original work in human movement of Judith Aston through Aston Patterning, the contributions of Emilie Conrad and Susan Harper with their Continuum work, and Bonnie Bainbridge-Cohen and her Body-Mind Centering school.⁸⁻¹¹ I owe a debt to Caryn McHose and Deborah Raoult for bringing some of this work close enough to grasp, and also to Frank Hatch and Lenny Maietta for their developmental movement synthesis expressed in their unique Touch-in-Parenting program.^{12,13}

From all these people and many more I have learned a great deal, although the more I learn, the farther the horizon of my ignorance extends. They say that stealing ideas from one person is plagiarism, from ten is scholarship, and from

one hundred is original research. Thus, there is nothing completely original in this bit of grand larceny. Nevertheless, while these people are responsible for instilling exciting ideas, no one but myself is responsible for any errors, which I look forward to correcting in future iterations of this work.

To my many eager students, whose questions have goaded more learning than I would ever have undertaken on my own. To Annie Wyman, for early support and maritime contributions to my sanity. To my teachers in the Kinesis school, especially the early support of Lou Benson, Jo Avison, David Lesondak, and Michael Morrison, whose tenacity in dealing with both my eccentricities and my poetic treatment of fact (as well as my electronic challenges) has contributed signally to this artefact. Current teachers, including (alphabetically) Wojtek Cacowski, James Earls, Peter Ehlers, Yaron Gal, Carrie Gaynor, Sherri Iwaschuk, Simone Lindner, Lawrence Phipps, Jason Spitalnik, Eli Thompson, and Michael Watson have also contributed to the accuracy and scope of this edition. The effective work of my staff – especially Stephanie Stoy and Becky Eugley – allows our influence to be much more pervasive than it otherwise would be.

To Dr Leon Chaitow and the editorial staff at Elsevier, including Mary Law and the patient Mairi McCubbin, who initially shepherded this project to market. To Sheila Black, Louisa Talbot, and Alison Taylor, who measurably improved upon the second edition with this larger and more complex version. To Debbie Maizels, Philip Wilson, and Graeme Chambers, who so meticulously and artistically brought the concept to life via the illustrations. To my proofreaders Felicity Myers and Edward Myers, whose timely and tireless work has improved the sense and sensibility of this book.

To my daughter Mistral and her mother Giselle, who enthusiastically and good-naturedly tolerated my fascination with the world of human movement, which often led me far from home, and took up a great deal of time which might otherwise have been theirs. And finally to Quan, my friend, 'mostly companion', and my muse, who has contributed the silent but potent currents of love, depth, and a connection to a greater reality that run below the surface of this and all my work.

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How to use this book

Anatomy Trains is designed to allow the reader to gather the general idea quickly or to allow a more detailed reading in any given area. The book includes frequent forays into several related areas, designated in the margins next to the headings by icons:



Manual techniques or notes for the manual therapist



Movement techniques or notes for the movement teacher



Visual assessment tools



Ideas and concepts related to kinesthetic education



Video material accessible on the 'Myofascial meridians' website accompanying this book (www.myersmyofascialmeridians.com). Numbers relate to relevant entries on the site.



Video material on educational DVDs available from www.anatomytrains.com



Return to main text

The chapters are color-coded for easy location with a thumb. The first two chapters examine fascia and the myofascial meridians concept, and explain the 'Anatomy Trains' approach to the body's anatomical structures. Chapters 3-9 elaborate on each of the 12 mapped 'lines' of the body commonly observed in postural and movement patterns.

Each of the 'lines' chapters opens with summary illustrations, descriptions, diagrams and tables for the reader who wants to grasp the scope of the concept quickly. The final two chapters apply the 'Anatomy Trains' concept to some common types of movement and provide a method of analyzing posture.

Because individual muscles and other structures can make an appearance in different lines, use the index to find all mentions of any particular structure. A Glossary of 'Anatomy Trains' terms is also included.

Three Appendices appear at the end. These include a discussion of the latitudinal meridians of Dr Louis Schultz, a new explanation of how the Anatomy Trains schema can be applied to Ida Rolf's Structural Integration protocol, and a correlation between the meridians of acupuncture and these myofascial meridians.

The website for this book – www.myersmyofascialmeridians.com – includes a large number of videos, podcasts, and images useful to the interested reader, teacher, or presenter. Once logged in (see website for details), you can access the site whenever you wish. Additional new material is placed on the site at regular intervals.

Myofascial Meridians website

The third edition of Anatomy Trains provides access to a website – www.myersmyofascialmeridians.com – which hosts a variety of videos, animations, podcasts and downloadable illustrations, all of which are designed to increase the reader's understanding and the usefulness of the Anatomy Trains map.

Many of the multimedia components on the website are referred to in the book, and can be easily identified by an arrow symbol (see left) in the margin, together with the actual number of the item on the website. While many of the website components are referred to in the book, readers will be pleased to find many additional items present with overall video footage running into several hours.

In addition to the existing collection of videos, podcasts and downloadable images, it is the intention of the author

and publishers to keep the site regularly updated, so new material will be uploaded after publication of the book. Within this context, if readers would like to see anything in particular added to the site, they are encouraged to communicate with the publisher using the e-mail address shown on the Home Page. While the publishers cannot guarantee the inclusion of any new suggestions, they will certainly discuss all requests with the author and will do their best to ensure that the most popular, and/or helpful, items shortly appear.

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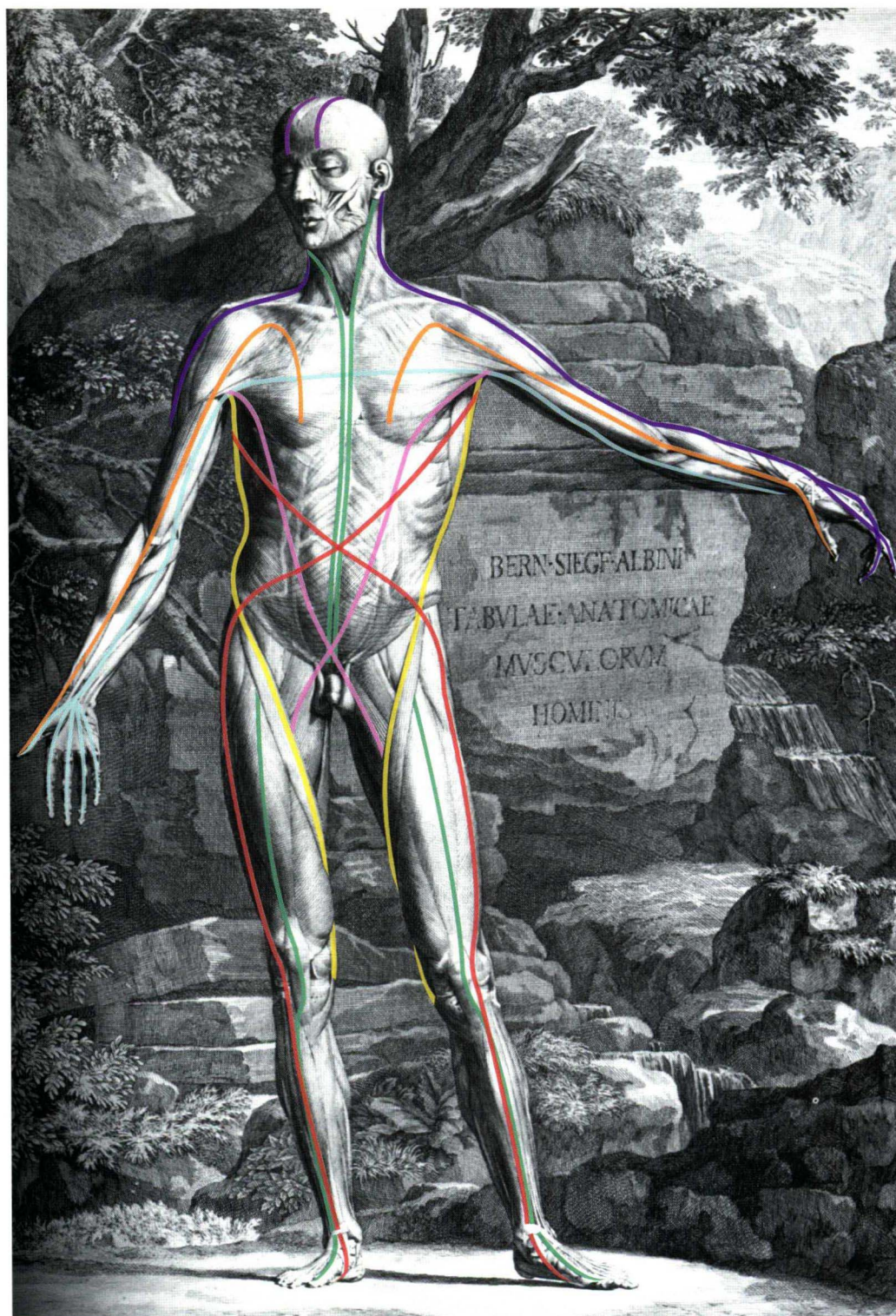


Fig. In. 1 A general Anatomy Trains 'route map' laid out on the surface of a familiar figure from Albinus. (Saunders JB, O'Malley C. The illustrations from the works of Andreas Vesalius of Brussels. Dover Publications; 1973.)

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Introduction: laying the railbed |



The hypothesis

The basis for this book is simple: whatever else they may be doing individually, muscles also influence functionally integrated body-wide continuities within the fascial webbing. These sheets and lines follow the warp and weft of the body's connective tissue fabric, forming traceable 'meridians' of myofascia (Fig. In. 1). Stability, strain, tension, fixation, resilience, and – most pertinent to this text – postural compensation, are all distributed via these lines. (No claim is made, however, for the exclusivity of these lines. The functional connections such as those described at the end of this introduction, the ligamentous bed described as the 'inner bag' in Chapter 1, and the latitudinal shouldering of strain detailed in the work of Huijing et al., also in Chapter 1, are all alternate avenues for the distribution of strain and compensation.)

Essentially, the Anatomy Trains map provides a 'longitudinal anatomy' – a sketch of the long tensile straps and slings within the musculature as a whole. It is a systemic point of view offered as a supplement (and in some instances as an alternative) to the standard analysis of muscular action.

This standard analysis could be termed the 'isolated muscle theory'. Almost every text presents muscle function by isolating an individual muscle on the skeleton, divided from its connections above and below, shorn of its neurological and vascular connections, and divorced from the regionally adjacent structures.¹⁻¹⁰ This ubiquitous presentation defines a muscle's function solely by what happens in approximating the proximal and distal attachment points (Fig. In. 2). The overwhelmingly accepted view is that muscles attach from bone to bone, and that their sole function is to approximate the two ends together, or to resist their being stretched apart. Occasionally the role of myofascia relative to its neighbors is detailed (as in the role that the vastus lateralis takes as an 'hydraulic amplifier' in pushing out against and thus pre-tensing the iliotibial tract. In fact, hydraulic amplification is occurring constantly all over the body.) Almost never are the longitudinal connections between muscles and fasciae listed or their function discussed (as in, for instance, the consistent attachment between the iliotibial tract and the tibialis anterior muscle – Fig. In. 3).

The absolute dominance of the isolated muscle presentation as the first and last word in muscular anatomy (along with the naïve and reductionistic conviction that the complexity of human movement and stability can be derived by summing up the action of these individual muscles) leaves the current generation of therapists unlikely to think in any other way.

This form of seeing and defining muscles, however, is simply an artifact of our method of dissection. With a knife in hand, the individual muscles are easy to separate from surrounding fascial planes. This does not mean, however, that this is how the body 'thinks' or is biologically assembled. One may question whether a 'muscle' is even a useful division to the body's own kinesiology.

If the elimination of the muscle as a physiological unit is too radical a notion for most of us to accept, we can at least assert that contemporary therapists need to think 'outside the box' of this isolated muscle concept. Research supporting this kind of systemic thinking will be cited along the way as we work our way through the implications of moving beyond the 'isolated muscle' to see systemic effects. This book is an attempt to move ahead – not to negate, but to complement the standard view – by assembling linked myofascial structures in this image of the 'myofascial meridians'. We should be clear that 'Anatomy Trains' is not an established science – this book leaps ahead of the research – but at the same time, we have been pleased with how well the concepts play out in clinical practice and movement education.

Once the particular patterns of these myofascial meridians are recognized and the connections grasped, they can be easily applied in assessment and treatment across a variety of therapeutic and educational approaches to movement facilitation. The concepts can be presented in any of several ways; this text attempts to strike a balance that meets the needs of the informed therapist, while still staying within the reach of the interested athlete, client, or student.

Aesthetically, a grasp of the Anatomy Trains scheme will lead to a more three-dimensional feel for musculoskeletal anatomy and an appreciation of whole-body patterns distributing compensation in daily and performance functioning. Clinically, it leads to a directly applicable understanding of how painful problems in one area of the body can be

linked to a totally 'silent' area removed from the problem. Unexpected new strategies for treatment arise from applying this 'connected anatomy' point of view to the practical daily challenges of manual and movement therapy.

Though some preliminary dissective evidence is presented in this edition, it is too early in the research process to claim an objective reality for these lines. More examination of the probable mechanisms of communication along these fascial meridians would be especially welcome. As of this writing, the Anatomy Trains concept is presented merely as a potentially useful alternative map, a systems view of the longitudinal connections in the parietal myofascia.

The philosophy

The heart of healing lies in our ability to listen, to see, to perceive, more than in our application of technique. That, at least, is the premise of this book.

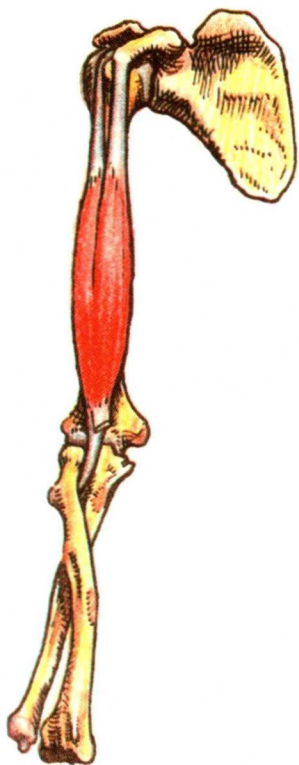


Fig. In. 2 The common method of defining muscle action consists of isolating a single muscle on the skeleton, and determining what would happen if the two ends are approximated, as in this depiction of the biceps. This is a highly useful exercise, but hardly definitive, as it leaves out the effect the muscle could have on its neighbors by tightening their fascia and pushing against them. It also, by cutting the fascia at either end, discounts any effect of its pull on the proximal or distal structures beyond. These latter connections are the subject of this book. (Reproduced with kind permission from Grundy 1982.)

It is not our job to promote one technique over another, nor even to posit a mechanism for how any technique works. All therapeutic interventions, of whatever sort, are a conversation between two intelligent systems. It matters not a whit to the myofascial meridians argument whether the mechanism of myofascial change is due to simple muscle relaxation, release of a trigger point, a change in the sol/gel chemistry of ground substance, viscoelasticity among collagen fibers, resetting of the muscle spindles or Golgi tendon organs, a shift in energy, or a change in attitude. Use the Anatomy Trains scheme to comprehend the larger pattern of your client's structural relationships, then apply whatever techniques you have at your disposal toward resolving that pattern.

These days, in addition to the traditional fields of physiotherapy, physiatry, and orthopedics, there is a wide variety of soft tissue and movement methods on offer, and a wider circle of osteopathic, chiropractic, and energetic techniques, as well as somatically based psychotherapeutic interventions. New brand names sprout daily in the field, though in truth there is very little that is actually new under the sun of manipulation. Our observation is that any number of angles of approach can be effective, regardless of whether the explanation offered for its efficacy ultimately prevails.

The current requirement is less for new technique, but rather for new premises that lead to new strategies for application, and useful new premises are a lot harder to come by than seemingly new techniques. Thus, significant developments are often opened by the point of view assumed, the lens through which the body is seen. The Anatomy Trains is one such lens – a global way of looking at musculoskeletal patterns that leads to new educational and treatment strategies.

Much of the manipulative work of the last 100 years, like most of our thinking in the West for at least half a millennium, has been based on a mechanistic and reductionistic model – the microscopic lens (Fig. In. 4). We keep examining things by breaking them down into smaller and smaller parts, to examine each part's role. Introduced by Aristotle, but epitomized by Isaac Newton and René Descartes, this mechanical type of approach has led, in the physical medicine field, to books filled with goniometric angles, levers,

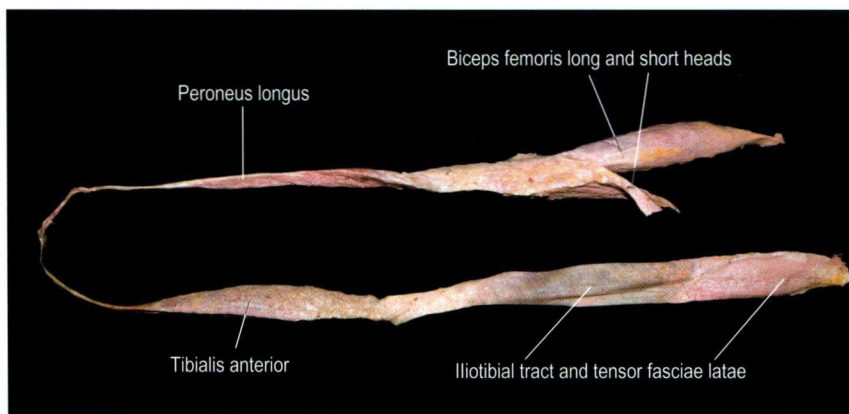


Fig. In. 3 The iliopsoas muscle has a strong attachment to the medial intermuscular septum of the thigh, and thus probably has a role in tensing this fascia for thigh and hip stability. The widely accepted notion in anatomy texts, that muscles act solely on bones, ignores these interfascial effects and hobbles the thinking of the modern manual and movement therapist. New strategies occur when fascia-to-fascia linkages are considered. (Still from a video courtesy of the author; dissection by Laboratories of Anatomical Enlightenment.) (DVD ref: *Anatomy Trains Revealed*)