

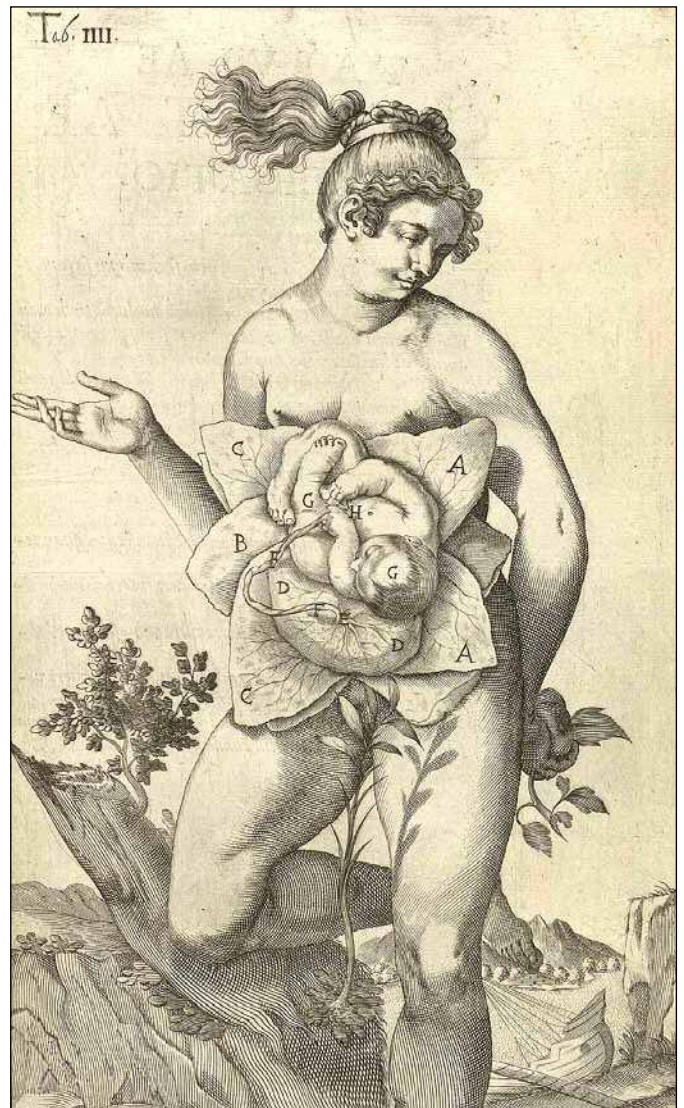
Love in Bloom

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This spectacular image shows a pregnant woman with her abdomen and uterus reflected like the petals of a flower, demonstrating the fetus and placenta (*De format foetu liber singularis*). The drawing was made sometime between 1600 and 1616 by the Italian artist Odoardo Fialetti and engraved by Francesco Valesio under the direction of the anatomist Giulio Casserio. Fialetti was a student of the great artist Tiziano Vicelli (Titian) and was renowned for his studies of the dissected human form. Casserio began work on an anatomical atlas of the body in 1600, and this drawing is from that work, the *Quinquagesimasexta tabula, Anatomia humani corporis*. The atlas was not completed at the time of his death in 1616. Whether this drawing was completed for the atlas of general anatomy or another work on the development of the fetus is lost to time; however, the history of the atlas is as fascinating as the art it contains.¹ The drawing reflects the almost romantic style of the time by showing the woman standing in a natural standing pose, opening her body for the edification of the viewers. The pose is almost flirtatious. Her eyes are nearly closed and downcast, her hair and hand point downward. Her external genitalia are modestly covered by shrubbery with strong shadowing on her thigh. The hand resting upon her hip contains a fruit, doubtlessly signifying her fertility and the sprig of new vegetation issuing from the cut tree stump revisits the theme of generational renewal.

REFERENCE

1. US National Library of Medicine. Historical anatomies on the web. Available at: http://www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/historicalanatomies/casseri_bio.html. Accessed March 11, 2013.



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