

Cover Page



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Title: Preparations on the move : the Leiden Anatomical Collections in the Nineteenth Century

Issue Date: 2013-09-11

Chapter 4. Adieu Albinus

How the university governors lost their status symbol

Leiden University is proud of its past. Its website devotes a large section to the university's history. Part of it describes the nineteenth century, when, so it is claimed, the Royal Decree on Higher Education (1815) declared Leiden University 'the prime university, "with a primary claim in subsidies and salaries"'.¹ The quotation may seem to be another example of being proud of your past, but it is not. I would rather describe it as hanging on to a history that never happened. The university's claim is false: the sentence cited was not part of the Decree. It was in the draft version, but King William I deleted it because the sentence did not fit within his unifying policy.

Leiden's hanging on to and embellishing the past is nothing new: the nineteenth-century university governors already used the university's past to position Leiden above the other Dutch universities. One of their main tools was the anatomical collections, which they used to create a connection to the past, in particular to the eighteenth century. In this period, Leiden was without a doubt the best university in the Netherlands and one of the top universities in Europe. The medical faculty was responsible for a large part of the fame, with celebrated professors like Herman Boerhaave and Bernhard Siegfried Albinus and with the well-known Leiden anatomical collections. But all of this changed in the nineteenth century – ironically, for a large part due to the just-mentioned Royal Decree on Higher Education (RDHE). For, no matter what the university website suggests today, the decree did not confirm Leiden's top position; it threatened it. Not just because the decree refused to call Leiden the 'prime university', but because it damaged one of the university's major status symbols: the anatomical collections.

In this chapter, I will first show how the decree made the anatomical collections both less adequate and less unique. I will then analyse the governors' reaction to the threats posed by the decree. The governors tried to prevent a loss of status using two strategies. On the one hand, they renewed the anatomical collections to fulfil the demands posed by the decree. On the other hand, they used the university's glorious past, embodied in the eighteenth-century part of the collections, to position themselves above other universities. The strategies are potentially conflicting because they require the collections to be both up-to-date and historical. Yet, as we will see, in the first decades of the nineteenth century, the university governors managed to combine both strategies. However, things changed in the second half of the century, in particular after the move and rearrangement of 1860. I will argue that, because of the prolonged use of the collections in research and teaching, the preparations lost the connection to their makers. This made it impossible for the governors

¹ LEI 2010, section 'Rijksuniversiteit'

to continue using them to build a connection to the past – and just like the lay visitors, by the end of the nineteenth century they had stopped using the anatomical collections.

The Netherlands and Leiden in the early nineteenth century

In December 1794, French general Jean-Charles Pichegru got lucky. Until then, French troops aiming to invade the Dutch Republic had been stopped by the quintessential Dutch defence: water – in this case, the rivers Maas and Waal, hard-to-cross natural barriers. Pichegru, who led the troops, was wondering what to do next when a sharp frost descended. And stayed. Two days after a cold Christmas, the French troops marched over thick ice into the Republic: the start of what would become known as *de Franse tijd*, the French period. The period, which ended in 1813, was characterized by governmental changes. In early 1795, the Batavian Republic was established as a sister republic of France. In 1806, the French turned the new Republic into the Kingdom of Holland and Napoleon Bonaparte appointed his younger brother Louis as king. Napoleon had a habit of putting family members in charge of vassal states. It guaranteed direct influence for him and held up a varnish of independence and legitimacy.² In this case, the plan backfired. Just four years after Louis' crowning, Napoleon felt forced to invade the kingdom to reclaim his power. His brother had systematically put the Dutch interests above the French – he even used the Dutch version of his name, Lodewijk. In particular, Louis refused to acknowledge Napoleon's demands for money and soldiers. As a result, Napoleon annexed the kingdom as part of the French Empire. After the defeat of Napoleon, the European powers redrew the European borders. In northwest Europe, they created a buffer against France: the Kingdom of the Netherlands, which included what we now know as the Benelux countries. The son of the last stadtholder became the ruler of the new country and, in 1815, the first Dutch king: William I.

William's kingdom had been designed on the drawing board. Parts of it had cooperated before, but this cooperation had always been rather loose. In the Dutch Republic, which consisted roughly of the new kingdom's northern provinces, most business had been done locally. The new country was diverse – it was characterized by its differences, not its similarities.³ First of all, the same rivers that had slowed down Pichegru divided the country into two regions: the North and the South. There was hostility between the regions; the South – justifiably – felt looked down upon by the North. Another geographical division accompanied by differences was that between the cities and the country. Furthermore, the population was also divided religiously. Protestants and Catholics stood against each other (or rather: Protestants stood above Catholics); and within the Protestant churches, bitter conflicts regularly occurred, resulting in a wide range of denominations. Last, wealth and

² Aerts 2004, 47–48

³ De Rooy 2002, 15–36

income inequality and class consciousness had grown stronger after the economic decline in the second half of the eighteenth century.

Despite all these differences, William was determined to turn all parts into a unitary state.⁴ To do so, he pursued a policy that was both centralizing and unifying. He centralized government to such an extent that he made many decisions by himself, including detailed ones; he dealt with everything.⁵ The parliament had little control over him and, therefore, over the country. His attempts to unify the kingdom included making Dutch the national language (at the expense of French, the main language in the some of the southern provinces). His aim to unify was also visible in his economic policy and his educational policy, including the Decree on Higher Education.⁶ William, who liked to think of himself as *landsvader*, ‘the father of the nation’, aimed to love all of his children equally.

But some of his children considered themselves more equal than others – and amongst them were Leiden University’s governors. They were neither used to nor fond of being unified. After its foundation in 1575, the university quickly gained an international status. Its anatomical theatre, botanical garden and library attracted students and scholars from all over Europe, as did professors like Pieter Pauw (1564–1617), Carolus Clusius (1526–1609) and Joseph Scaliger (1540–1609). Leiden University was a centre of excellence in Europe, and it remained so until the late eighteenth century. In 1765 the *Encyclopédie* even declared it the first (i.e. the best) university in Europe:

The university of Leiden is the first of Europe. It seems that all famous men in the republic of letters went there to let it flourish from its establishment until our days.⁷

Leiden’s top position materialized itself in its collections. The anatomical theatre had contained a small collection of anatomical objects since the late sixteenth century. In the eighteenth century, the collection received important extensions. Early in the century, Leiden anatomy professor Johannes Rau (1668–1719) bequeathed his preparations to the university. The governors happily received them and asked the new anatomy professor Albinus to catalogue the collection. Albinus managed the university’s collections, but he also built a large private collection, which he used in his research and teaching. In 1771, a year after Albinus’ death, the university acquired this collection as well. The governors asked two medical professors, Eduard Sandifort and Frederik Bernard Albinus (Bernhard’s brother), to write a report on the Albinus collection. The professors did as they were asked, and took their chance to ask the governors for some additional money. They intended to reorganize the older anatomical collections exposed in the Anatomical Theatre, which, in their eyes, had been neglected. They wrote:

⁴ On William’s unifying policy, see Vosters and Weijermars 2011.

⁵ Luiten van Zanden and Van Riel 2000, 206

⁶ On William’s economic policy, see Luiten van Zanden and Van Riel 2000, 109–203. On his educational policy, see De Wolf 1983 (on education in general), and Groen 1987–88 and Roelevink 1992 (on the universities in particular). On his cultural policy, including his use of museums as unifying instruments, see Pots 2000, 59–84.

⁷ Jaucourt 1765, 451

The costs [of reorganizing the anatomical collections displayed in the Anatomical Theatre] are slight compared to the honour this university would gain from it, because the university would be able to pride itself not only on an excellent library, an outstanding [botanical] garden, [and] a splendid Cabinet of Natural Curiosities, but also on an Anatomical Theatre adorned with cabinets of two famous professors [Rau and B.S. Albinus] and many other exquisite things, which would make it stand out above all others.⁸

The professors hardly exaggerated when they claimed that the reorganized anatomical theatre supplemented with the collections of Rau and Albinus would be better than ‘all others’, certainly not if by ‘all others’ they meant the other *Dutch* anatomical theatres. There was no way the four other Dutch universities – Groningen, Utrecht, Harderwijk and Franeker – could compete with Leiden.⁹ At the end of the eighteenth century, Leiden found itself in a comfortable position. But things were about to change.

The nineteenth century brought several problems for Leiden and its anatomical collections. The first arrived on a Monday morning, on 12 January 1807.¹⁰ A powder ship berthed in Leiden’s main canal, the Rapenburg, where it would remain until that afternoon. Around four o’clock, the crew started making dinner. It seems that they did not pay enough attention to the fire during cooking, because at 16.15 exactly, the ship, carrying 18,500 kilograms of gun powder, exploded. Over 200 buildings were blown away.¹¹ Approximately 150 people died, including two university professors. All of the university’s main buildings and many professors’ houses were located on the Rapenburg; several of them were damaged or destroyed. As for the anatomical collections: the collection built by Wouter van Doeveren suffered the most damage. Leiden University had a lot of repairing to do.

The university was generously assisted by King Louis Napoleon. His behaviour after the gun powder disaster became a standard example of how he was much more concerned with his citizens than his brother, Napoleon Bonaparte, wanted him to be.¹² Louis arrived in Leiden only a few hours after the disaster. He stayed all night to help and offered a reward for every living person extracted from the ruins. The next day he received a delegation of university administrators to ask what the university needed. The administrators had their priorities straight: the first thing they asked for was not money, building materials or replacements for lost collections, but a new title¹³ – a clear indication of how the university stood on status. The Leiden governors had long been convinced that they deserved a special title and had tried to get one before: in 1800 they had asked to become the ‘National

⁸ F. B. Albinus and Eduard Sandifort, ‘Rapport over het kabinet van Albinus’, 7 November 1771, cited in Molhuysen 1923, 18*

⁹ This was reflected in student numbers: Leiden had (many) more students than the other universities, although the differences became smaller towards the end of the eighteenth century. Furthermore, Leiden attracted more international students than the other universities. (Zoeteman 2011, 186–289)

¹⁰ Otterspeer 2005, 209

¹¹ Knappert 1906, 23

¹² Van der Burg 2007, 107

¹³ Otterspeer 2005, 210

Batavian University'. The responsible government official had acknowledged their reasons, which he had summarized as:

the height [being the National Batavian University] ... for which it was originally meant and to which it became entitled at the time both because of the renown that it had acquired throughout the learned world and because of the most precious collections brought together there.¹⁴

The governors felt they deserved a special title because of their fame and their precious collections, which included the anatomical collections. This shows that in their eyes, the collections were directly related to their status. The 1800 attempt failed,¹⁵ but after the gun powder incident, Louis could not refuse the request. Leiden received the epithet '*Universitas Regiae Hollandiae*'. The governors were very pleased, as the minutes of their meeting on 4 February 1807 revealed:

[The governors have been told that] the University [*Hoogeschool*] of Leiden will take the name Royal University [*Koninklyke Universiteit*] of Holland; and ... that the necessary steps will be taken to add the utmost lustre and the greatest fame to it ..., [and the governors are] imbued with understanding of the enormous value of the boon that His Royal Majesty has given to the university, which now becomes superior to all other academies of the Kingdom and is able to flourish and shine in all the lustre for which it was originally established, and which it has deserved and kept up throughout its existence.¹⁶

According to the governors, the university was 'superior to all other academies [universities] in the Kingdom'. The university had lost people and buildings, but the new title, and the status that came with it, added a silver lining to the first cloud in the nineteenth-century sky.

Leiden's position was further enhanced a few years later. After Napoleon had annexed the Kingdom of Holland, he restructured Dutch higher education in an Imperial Decree (1811). His centralized and hierarchical educational system left no room for the five different universities that co-existed in the Dutch Republic. Napoleon closed two of them: Harderwijk and Franeker. Leiden and Groningen remained fully functional, but were integrated into the *Université Impériale*. Utrecht, Leiden's main rival, was downgraded to an *école secondaire*; its entire staff becoming subordinate to Leiden University's Senate. The Utrecht rector was outraged about being turned into a 'servant of the Leiden rector'.¹⁷ Many students left Utrecht because the new *école secondaire* was not allowed to confer doctoral degrees. Student numbers dropped from almost 200 just before the downgrading to 140 a year after.¹⁸ Most of the remaining students were theologians, because they did not need the doctoral decree. The medical faculty had only 12 students left in 1813; in that

¹⁴ Minutes governors, 1 February 1800, cited in Molhuysen 1924, 131

¹⁵ Otterspeer 2005, 210

¹⁶ Minutes governors, 4 February 1807, cited in Molhuysen 1924, 312–13

¹⁷ Cited without a source in Kernkamp 1936, 379

¹⁸ Jamin 2001, 104

same year, Leiden had 81 medical students.¹⁹ Leiden had a clear advantage over its chief competitor, Utrecht.

Yet, they would soon lose this advantage. In 1815, a new problem arrived: the Royal Decree on Higher Education.

The Royal Decree on Higher Education (1815)

The Royal Decree on Higher Education was an excellent example of William's policy: it both centralized and uniformed higher education. It centralized it by shifting power from a local level (the university governors) to a national one (the Ministry of the Interior and thus the king).²⁰ This shift had been started in the Batavian Republic.²¹ William extended the national structures the French had created. The RDHE replaced the Imperial Decree of 1811. The 1811 decree, issued by Napoleon, was based on a report by Jean-François Noël and Georges Cuvier.²² We met the latter as the main father of zoological comparative anatomy; he was also a political advisor. Cuvier and Noël had written the third report on Dutch higher education in five years. The two earlier reports appeared in 1807 (committee led by Johan Meerman) and 1809 (committee led by Jean Henri van Swinden).²³ To prepare the 1815 decree, a fourth committee was established, chaired by Frans Adam van der Duyn van Maasdam. This committee proposed to reverse several French measures; in particular, they wanted to return power to the local governors.²⁴ However, the king refused this part of their proposal, and the organizational structure of the final decree resembled the one introduced by the French: very centralized.

The decree not only centralized higher education, it also made it more uniform. It did so in several ways. The first was that all universities were considered equal. The decree reinstalled Utrecht as a university. Franeker and Harderwijk became *athenea* (higher education institutes ranking below the universities), meaning that the Netherlands now had three universities: Leiden, Utrecht and Groningen.²⁵ Leiden was given more professors than the other two and these professors earned a higher salary. However, no difference was made in rank: Leiden lost its official title. Historians, especially those writing the history of Leiden

¹⁹ Visser 1996, 51; Blanken 1869, 79

²⁰ Jensma and De Vries 1997, 79–80; Otterspeer 2005, 75–77; Roelevink 1992–93, 13

²¹ Sluijter 2004, 59–61; Aerts 2004, 52–53

²² Cuvier and Noël [1811]

²³ Meerman 1807; Van Swinden et al. 1809

²⁴ Roelevink 1992–93

²⁵ In 1816 a similar Decree on Higher Education was issued on the Southern Netherlands. Again, three universities were established: Ghent, Leuven and Liège. These universities were part of the Netherlands until 1830, when Belgium seceded – Williams attempt to unite the North and the South had not been very successful. In the 14 years the southern universities were part of the Netherlands, the northern universities, including Leiden, did not pay much attention to them – which is why I leave them out of the discussion here; Leiden was not at all worried about losing its status to these universities.

University, have sometimes claimed otherwise.²⁶ They quote from the draft version, which indeed declared Leiden to be the ‘prime university’ of the Netherlands.²⁷

‘Prime university’ replaced ‘*Universitas Regiae Hollandiae*’, the title Leiden had received after the gunpowder disaster. Of course, the governors had hoped for the continuation of their official status as premier university of the Netherlands. And their chances had seemed good. One of the most influential members of the decree’s preparatory committee, Jan Melchior Kemper, was a prominent Leiden professor; the committee chair, Van der Duyn van Maasdam, was a Leiden university governor between 1813 and 1848.²⁸ It was probably Kemper and Van der Duyn van Maasdam who succeeded in getting the primary status in the draft version of the decree. The other universities successfully opposed this decision upon which the king removed it from the final decree.²⁹ This must have been painful for Leiden, because they assumed they had a special relationship with King William. After all, his ancestor William of Orange had founded the university in 1575. But the king was not interested in special relationships and prime universities. What he wanted was, as we have already seen, uniformity.

The second way in which this uniformity was created was by the detailed rules all universities had to follow. All universities had to teach the same courses. Furthermore, all university collections became similar because they had to comply with the standards dictated in the decree. One of the decree’s seven sections was devoted to ‘material assistance for academic teaching’.³⁰ It prescribed which material assistance should be present – including several collections, a library, a chemistry laboratory and an observatory. Furthermore, it contained instructions on who were responsible for these objects and how they should be managed. With regard to medical teaching, it prescribed an academic hospital and collections of medical books, surgical and obstetrical instruments, and anatomical preparations.³¹ Article 178 specified the contents of the collections with anatomical preparations:

At all universities there will be cabinets of anatomical, physiological and pathological preparation and objects, for assistance and advancement of the teaching of anatomy, medicine, surgery and obstetrics; to these cabinets will also be added such preparations of *anatomie comparata*, as can serve to elucidate the knowledge of the human body.³²

This requirement and the policy William based on it threatened the Leiden anatomical collections, because it made them both less adequate and less unique.

²⁶ See for example Otterspeer 1992, 5 and Calkoen 2012, 190. However, I am not the first to point out that the RDHE provided all three universities with equal rank, see Van Berkel 1985, 103–104.

²⁷ Roelevink 1992–93, 26–27; De Geer van Jutphaas 1869, 232–233

²⁸ De Geer van Jutphaas 1869, 216; Otterspeer 1985, 244

²⁹ De Geer van Jutphaas 1869, 220

³⁰ RDHE 1815, section ‘vijfde titel’

³¹ RDHE 1815, art. 169, 177, 180

³² RDHE 1815, art. 177

The 1815 decree made Leiden's anatomical collections less adequate. Although the university possessed a rich anatomical collection, it did not fulfil the decree's demands. In their first annual report after the decree, the governors admitted their collections were incomplete:

The cabinets for the advancement of the teaching of anatomy, medicine and obstetrics are to varying degrees equipped with anatomical, physiological and pathological preparations and objects – although not in the amount required, and the name of Albinus, whose cabinet belongs to the possessions of the university, may lead one to suspect much; we would however not honour the truth if we would assure your Excellency [the Minister of Education] that Leiden reaches the standards of science in this respect, and that there are no needs, even more so because the *Anatome Comparate*, valued properly by the Royal Decree, leaves much, if not everything, to be desired.³³

According to the governors, the main problem was the lack of comparative anatomy preparations. Indeed, the university collections contained hardly any of these preparations when the decree was issued. The contents of the university collections in 1815 roughly coincide with the preparations described and depicted in the first two volumes of the collection catalogue *Museum Anatomicum Academiae Lugduno-Batavae*.³⁴ These volumes were published in 1793 and the university did not acquire many new preparations between then and 1815. The volumes list around 2500 preparations.³⁵ Most of them are general-anatomical, some are pathological, very few are comparative-anatomical. The Albinus collection, for example, contains 752 preparations, of which only 66 are listed as animal preparations.³⁶ The collection of Wouter van Doeveren consists of 441 preparations, only 15 of which are animal preparations.³⁷ Even if we consider all of these animal preparations comparative-anatomical, which is debatable, the number of comparative anatomy preparations in the university collections was small.³⁸

It is not surprising that eighteenth-century anatomists like Albinus and Van Doeveren included few comparative-anatomical preparations in their collections: comparative anatomy wasn't introduced in Dutch university teaching until the end of the eighteenth century. Sebald Justinus Brugmans was the first Leiden professor to teach comparative anatomy. As we saw in the chapter on researchers, he built an impressive anatomical collection, which included at least two thousand comparative-anatomical preparations. He

³³ Annual report of the university 1815–16, AC2 270

³⁴ Sandifort 1793a and 1793b

³⁵ It is hard to say what the exact number of preparations is: some descriptions deal with more than one preparations, and some preparations are listed twice. So the numbers should be taken with some caution, but they do provide a rough indication.

³⁶ Sandifort 1793a, 65–69, 88–90

³⁷ Sandifort 1793a, 111. On Van Doeveren's animal preparations, see also Hendriksen 2012, 107–110. Note that it is unclear how many of Van Doeveren's preparations were still present in 1815; the collection had been damaged in the gun powder disaster.

³⁸ Part of the animal preparations should probably be listed as natural-historical, that is, preparations that show the outside of the animal (like stuffed animals, or whole animals on fluid) instead of its internal structures.

used the collection in his teaching. Brugmans was appointed professor in Leiden in 1785; in 1815, his collection had more or less reached its full size. Thus, when the RDHE was issued, a large comparative anatomy collection was available for teaching Leiden (medical) students. However, this collection was *private*; it was not owned by the university, but by Brugmans, an individual professor. Hence, the governors could not claim to fulfil the demand, even though the students probably didn't notice a lack of comparative-anatomical preparations.

During the early modern period, most (anatomical) collections were privately owned; Leiden's large institutional collections were an exception. But what had been exceptional before became standard in the nineteenth century, when collection ownership shifted from private to institutional.³⁹ The Dutch government encouraged institutional collections: they were not just made obligatory in the RDHE, but, as we will see, the king also actively assisted the universities in acquiring the required collections. It also seems that the government tried to discourage professors, curators, and other people working with institutional collections from building private collections. The RDHE did not mention them, but an earlier educational report explicitly stated that the 'usefulness' of professors' private collections would become 'more general' if these collections were to become university property. This report advised the king (Louis Napoleon) to buy these collections and donate them to the universities, which, as we will see, is exactly what William would later do.⁴⁰ Much later, in 1859, the government would explicitly prohibit the directors and the staff of the Museum for Natural History to build their own collections.⁴¹ Such explicit rules were likely intended to avoid a conflict of interest: if museum staff had their own collections, they might be tempted to use resources that belonged to the museum, in particular incoming dead animals. Yet, this most likely is not all there is to it: there are multiple reasons why the government would consider institutional collections of a more general usefulness than private collections. Institutional collections bring continuity: collections no longer disappear when a professor moves to a different university, or dies. Institutional collections let the government have more control over what exactly is *in* the collections. And institutional collections can be made equally accessible to *all* professors, not just to the owner of the collection. Think of the Brugmans collection: when it was still private, it was located in Brugmans' house, and it was entirely up to Brugmans if he wanted to let other professors use his preparations. As soon as it became institutional, its use was regulated by the decree, which clearly stated that all professors were allowed to borrow preparations from the collections. There was still only one curator, but he had to follow the

³⁹ This means neither that private collections disappeared, nor that 'private' and 'institutional' were the only two useful categories – there was a wide range of ownership constructions, all of them in use throughout the nineteenth century. See Alberti 2005b.

⁴⁰ Van Swinden et al. 1809, 118–119

⁴¹ Van der Hoeven 1860, 16

rules, and if he didn't, his colleagues could go to the governors who had the power to overrule him – they were ultimately responsible for the management of the collections.

The Brugmans collection's presence in Leiden was not enough to fulfil the decree's demands because it was not *owned* by the university. In other words, after the decree was issued, Leiden's collections suddenly looked (and were) deficient. Since the collections were a major status symbol, it was painful that the decree made them inadequate. But Leiden still had one major advantage: they owned a collection, which was more than the other universities could say. Neither Groningen nor Utrecht possessed anatomical preparations in 1815. However, Leiden's advantage was soon to disappear. Only a year after the decree was issued, Utrecht acquired the Bleuland collection. This was a high-quality collection, with many comparative-anatomical preparations.⁴²

Utrecht received the collection from William I. It was the first, but by no means the only anatomical collection he had donated to a university. Between 1815 and 1835 he bought at least seven collections and divided them between Leiden, Utrecht, Groningen and Ghent.⁴³ (Ghent was one of the southern universities that were part of the Netherlands until 1830, when Belgium seceded.) These donations suited William's unifying policy – and with his habit of occupying himself with detailed decisions.

William's donations made Leiden's collections less unique. What was worse, their main rival Utrecht now owned something Leiden lacked: a comparative anatomy collection. The governors felt overtaken. Both inadequacy and lack of uniqueness posed a threat to the status of their collections. How did they deal with this?

Strategy one: (claim to) comply with the standards

To understand what the governors did, we first need to take a closer look at who they were and what they wanted. Like all universities, Leiden had five governors who administered the university and were appointed by the king. Each university also had a senate, an assembly of professors, but their role was mainly advisory; ultimately, the governors decided what happened.⁴⁴ The governors' responsibilities included implementing the educational laws, managing the finances and caring for buildings and collections. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the most influential governors in Leiden were chairman Frans Adam van der Duyn van Maasdam (governor from 1815 to 1848), Hendrik Collot d'Escury (governor from 1815 to 1844), and Frans Godert Lynden van Hemmen (governor from 1823 to 1845).⁴⁵ Both Van der Duyn van Maasdam and Lynden van Hemmen were members of the committee that drafted the 1815 decree.

⁴² Van der Knaap 2001, 13–17

⁴³ Haneveld 1978b

⁴⁴ The university administration was regulated in the RDHE. (RDHE 1815, section 'zevende titel') On the actual administrative practices resulting from the decree, see Dorsman 2008.

⁴⁵ Otterspeer 2005, 77. For a full list of nineteenth-century governors, inside and outside Leiden, see Jensma and De Vries 1997, 75–126.

The governors had a clear idea what their main task should be. In 1822, they wrote to the minister:

To the obligations which have been imposed on us belongs also in particular the promotion of everything which could serve to maintain the university's fame.⁴⁶

'To maintain the university's fame' was indeed one of the tasks assigned to the governors in the Royal Decree.⁴⁷ But it was the last task in a list of seven, which does not particularly justify singling it out as the most important task the governors had. And yet, the Leiden governors claimed time and again that retaining, or boosting, the fame of the university was their main concern.⁴⁸

The anatomical collections were a means to this end. To use them as such, Leiden needed to convince others they were superior. To communicate this message it was neither necessary nor sufficient to own the best collection. But it would make the job easier, which is why the governors set out to complete their collection. Every year some preparations were added, but the two most important extensions were the Brugmans and the Bonn collection. The Brugmans collection was acquired in 1819. As we have seen, half of the approximately 4000 preparations concerned comparative anatomy; the other half concerned pathology and natural history. Three years after the Brugmans collection, the university acquired the preparations of Amsterdam anatomist Andreas Bonn (1738–1818).⁴⁹ Bonn's collection was bought by the king and then donated to Leiden University on the condition that preparations already present in the Leiden collections would be sent on to other universities.⁵⁰ Gerard Sandifort assessed the preparations.⁵¹ He selected 737 preparations for the Leiden collections; the remaining ones were sent to the University of Ghent. Most of the Bonn preparations added to the Leiden collections involved general anatomy or pathology; some involved comparative anatomy. Sandifort was particularly pleased with the pathology additions, specifically the monsters and the pathological bone preparations.⁵²

After the acquisition of the Bonn collection, the university collections fully complied with the standards set in the Decree on Higher Education. The Brugmans collection solved the lack of comparative-anatomical preparations; the Bonn collection added pathological preparations, which had also been under-represented in the eighteenth-century collections.

⁴⁶ Governors to Minister of Education, 17 January 1822, AC2 228, 5

⁴⁷ RDHE 1815, art. 234

⁴⁸ See for example annual report on the university collections 1821–22, AC2 228, 90; governors to Minister of Education, 28 January 1823, AC2 229, 9; annual report of the university 1822–23, AC2 229, 57.

⁴⁹ It is often stated that the Bonn collection was acquired in 1819, just like the Brugmans collection. (See for example Elshout 1952, 88; Museum Boerhaave 2000, 6.) However, the university archives clearly show this did not happen until 1822; see for example the letter of the Minister of Education to the governors, 22 October 1822, AC2 76, 162.

⁵⁰ Minister of Education to governors, 22 October 1822, AC2 76, 162

⁵¹ Gerard Sandifort, 'Rapport aan curatoren over het Museum Anatomicum Andreae Bonn, voor het Theatrum Anatomicum der Leidsche Hoogeschool aangekocht', 1823, BPL 1807; Sandifort to governors, 21 March 1823, AC2 77, 40

⁵² The Leiden part of the collection is catalogued in Sandifort 1827.

The governors now needed to tell the rest of the world their collections were up to standard: the collections would lose their fame (or would not regain it) as long as people thought they were inadequate. Leiden used various channels to communicate this message.

The first involved the university's annual reports. These reports were sent to the Minister of Education, who then used them to write the constitutionally required 'Report on the State of Education in the Netherlands'.⁵³ This report was sent to parliament and was also published in the *Staatscourant* ('Government Gazette', the official publication containing laws and governmental announcements) to inform the public.⁵⁴ Usually, the universities also received a copy of the report. Hence, the contents of the Leiden annual reports mattered: their claims could potentially reach a much wider audience than just the minister and his staff. Thus the readers of the reports included politicians, governors at other universities, and, in the case of the *Staatscourant*, informed (and probably influential) members of the public – all of whom the Leiden governors would gladly remind (or convince) of their university's top position. Indeed, the annual reports regularly stressed the high quality of their anatomical collections. For example, after the acquisition of the Brugmans collection they wrote:

With regard to the acquisitions which this university made in the past year, should in the first place be mentioned the so precious collection of the late professor Brugmans, with which the university acquired, in particular in the field of comparative anatomy, a collection which is not only able to compete with other collections of this kind in our fatherland, but may also exceed, in quality as well as in number, all other collections of this kind, both inside and outside our fatherland; and which just as much does honour to the excellent talents of its previous owner (who unfortunately for science died before his time), as it enlarges and extends the fame and lustre of this university.⁵⁵

They only just claimed their comparative anatomy collection was good; they claimed it was the best, and, as such, that it would enlarge the university's fame.

The annual reports were not the only place the governors boasted about their collections. The reports could reach politicians and administrators, but they would never be read outside the Netherlands. Yet, the governors wanted to claim international fame as well. A collection catalogue would be an excellent means to this end, as curator Gerard Sandifort explained to the governors:

It would be no less glorious for this university, if it would become widely known how the already renown collection, consisting of individual cabinets of professors Rau, Albinus, van Doeveren and others, again has been enlarged and become more suitable for teaching all parts of anatomy with this [collection of Brugmans].⁵⁶

⁵³ The full titles of these reports vary; between 1816 and 1857–58, they were called *Verlag nopens den staat der hooge, middelbare en lagere scholen in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden*.

⁵⁴ Jensma and De Vries 1997, 54

⁵⁵ Annual report of the university 1819, AC2 226, 9 January 1820, 3

⁵⁶ Sandifort to governors, 21 January 1823, AC2 77, 10

The governors, susceptible to Sandifort's arguments, decided to indeed publish a new catalogue.⁵⁷ Its target audience was 'the learned world';⁵⁸ it was written in Latin and could therefore be read throughout Europe. The catalogue described both the Brugmans and the Bonn collection. In the preface, Sandifort wrote:

The collection [of the Anatomical Cabinet] has been enriched and adapted to the present-day state of science [*disciplinae*] ... Our museum has acquired very important additions because the collections of both Brugmans and Bonn have been bought.⁵⁹

Brugmans' and Bonn's collections had 'adapted' the university's anatomical collections 'to the present-day state of science'. Sandifort did not specify what this 'present-day state of science' was, but this becomes clear from his descriptions of the new collections. On the Brugmans collection:

Brugmans ... left behind a collection of preparations, by which anatomy and pathology are elucidated in many ways.⁶⁰

And on the Bonn collection:

Bonn's collection should be praised no less, in the first place because of its pathological part.⁶¹

Apparently, 'present-day state of science' meant: a sufficient number of comparative and pathological anatomy preparations – exactly what was new in the Decree on Higher Education.⁶² The catalogue showed that Leiden's anatomical collections were up to date.

But other Dutch universities had up-to-date collections as well, thanks to William's donations. Utrecht had the Bleuland collection, rich in comparative anatomy; Groningen had the collections of Petrus Camper, Pieter de Riemer, and Gerbrand Bakker, all of high quality as well. The Leiden anatomical collections were no longer inadequate, but they were still not unique – much to the dismay of the Leiden governors, who did not want to settle for anything less than excellence. Complying with the decree's standards was not enough; they had to find a way to put themselves *above* the other universities, instead of next to them.

Strategy two: continue the past into the present

The Leiden governors had to find a way to distinguish themselves from the other universities. The distinction they came up with was Leiden's glorious past, which they used as a claim to fame. The following quotation by the governors illustrates their strategy:

⁵⁷ Governors to the Minister of Education, 28 January 1823, AC2 229, 9

⁵⁸ Sandifort 1827, Praefatio, 4

⁵⁹ Sandifort 1827, Praefatio, 3

⁶⁰ Sandifort 1827, Praefatio, 3–4

⁶¹ Sandifort 1827, Praefatio, 5

⁶² Of course, an international audience would not have known about the RDHE and its demands – but they would know that comparative and pathological anatomy had become important disciplines in medicine; and that a proper anatomical collection contained preparations from both of these fields. Furthermore, the catalogues were read inside the Netherlands as well; parts of the preface may have been intended mainly for a national audience.

It is known to Your Excellency [Minister of Education] that Leiden University has been famous for over a century, mainly for the medical studies, and that the fame, which Boerhaave acquired, *has continued to endure until our time*.⁶³ (my italics)

They suggested that nothing had changed since the heyday of the medical faculty and its anatomical collections: the faculty and the collections were just as famous now as they had always been. The governors tried to continue the past into the present.

They used the past rhetorically, a common strategy in the Netherlands of the nineteenth century. Roughly speaking, this can be done in two ways: normalization and dramatization, as Nicholas Jardine referred to them in his analysis of the rhetoric of the laboratory revolution.⁶⁴ In both cases, the aim is to justify a practice or a state of affairs – for example, laboratory-based medicine, or Leiden’s position as the first university of the Netherlands. In the case of normalization, the justification consists of presenting the aim or practice as a natural development in a long tradition. Dramatization, on the other hand, is justifying something by presenting it as a revolutionary break with the past. The Leiden governors used normalization, not dramatization: they justified Leiden’s supposed status as the first university by presenting it as the natural continuation of history.

But how does one do this? How to continue the past into the present? The first step is to adapt the past: you need to create an image of the past that resembles the image you want to create in the present. This may take some effort. The Royal College of Surgeons in London, for example, needed years to position John Hunter as ‘the first scientific surgeon’ – a necessary step to use Hunter’s collections to position themselves as his heir, and hence, as scientific themselves (which in turn would make them more ‘gentlemanly’).⁶⁵ In Leiden, however, creating the right image was not hard. The governors needed an image in which the university had a high rank, and in which the anatomical collections were excellent. This was the standard image of the university’s position in the eighteenth century, so the governors only had to remind their audience of that history.

Such reminders were made almost every time the governors mentioned the anatomical collections. Usually they were short and often they contained Albinus’ name. An example can be found in the quotation used above: when the governors explained to the Minister of Education that their collections did not comply with the standards of the RDHE, they slipped in the name of Albinus. (‘The name of Albinus, whose cabinet belongs to the possessions of the university, may lead one to suspect much.’)

Something similar happened in the 1830 collection report:

⁶³ Governors to Minister of Education 17 January 1822, AC2 228, 5

⁶⁴ Jardine 1992, 314

⁶⁵ Jacyna 1983 shows how the College used the annual Hunterian Orations to turn Hunter into the first scientific surgeon.

The collection of anatomical preparations, with which the cabinets of Albinus, Brugmans and others have been placed, constantly prove[s] to meet with admiration from many local and foreign scholars.⁶⁶

Recalling past glory, however, is not sufficient to continue the past into the present. Since past glory is in the past, the governors needed to make it believable that nothing had changed. They had to connect the past to the present – the second step in the rhetoric of normalization. The connection constructed by the governors started with a material link: the anatomical collections themselves. Obviously, the collections had a connection to the past, since the preparations *were from the past*. The argument ran as follows: the collections were famous in the past, they continued to exist into the present, hence, their fame should continue to exist into the present as well.

Subsequently, this relation was reinforced with the help of other links. Elements surrounding the collections – like its curator or its catalogues – were connected to the past as well.

Some quotations from the annual reports demonstrate how the governors used the collection curator to strengthen the connection to the past. As mentioned above, Gerard Sandifort was curator at the time the Royal Decree was issued. He had succeeded his father Eduard in 1799.⁶⁷ The father-son relation was an excellent means to connect the nineteenth to the eighteenth century. Consider the following phrase:

[the anatomical collections,] being put under special supervision of the decent son and worthy successor of the great Sandifort⁶⁸

The governors wrote this in 1819, when Gerard had been a curator for twenty years. Yet, he was still not called by his own name, but described as ‘decent son and worthy successor of the great Sandifort’. Eduard was a well-known curator and his collections were famous. By stressing Gerard was his son, the governors tried to associate that fame with their collections. This was strengthened by the addition ‘worthy successor’, which implied that Gerard had inherited his father’s qualities. This suggestion can be found in other collection reports as well, for example:

the praiseworthy professor Sandifort ..., who keeps the collection in the best condition on the heels of his worthy father⁶⁹

Another means to link the past to the present was the new collection catalogue, mentioned above. It was named *Museum Anatomicum Academiae Lugduno-Batavae. Volumen tertium*, to make clear that it was a sequel to *Museum Anatomicum Academiae Lugduno-Batavae. Volumen primum* and *Volumen secundum*, both published in 1793. This was decided although the plan differed from the earlier catalogues. These had described all preparations present in

⁶⁶ Annual report of the university 1829–30, AC2 270

⁶⁷ Sandifort 1827, x

⁶⁸ Annual report of the university 1817–18, AC2 226, 8 January 1819, 4

⁶⁹ Annual report of the university 1819, AC2 226, 9 January 1820, 3

the collections, but the third volume would describe only Brugmans' collection. It would therefore have been reasonable to present it as a single collection catalogue, not as a sequel to the earlier museum catalogues. However, by doing this anyway, the governors again linked the present to the past.

Eventually, the catalogue did contain both the Brugmans and the Bonn collection. This was against the governors' plans, but the minister refused to pay for the catalogue if the Bonn collection was not included.⁷⁰ The governors may have intended to exclude the Bonn collection because it did not help establish a connection to Leiden's past. Bonn was an anatomist in Amsterdam, and that was where he built his collection. Thus his collection was associated with another town. Brugmans, on the other hand, was very much related to eighteenth-century Leiden, where he had been a famous professor. This made his collection an excellent means to continue the past into the present.

Leiden distinguished itself from other universities by stressing its glorious past and continuing that past into the present through the collection, its curator and its catalogues. This worked because, unlike Leiden's collections, the collections in Utrecht and Groningen were not employed to embody a glorious past. The Camper collection in Groningen stemmed from the second half of the eighteenth century and was therefore not much younger than the Albinus collection. However, although Camper was famous, Groningen University itself did not have much status nationally, let alone internationally, at the time. Whereas the Albinus collection permitted Leiden to associate itself with a period in which it had been 'the first of Europe', the Camper collection linked Groningen to a time when it had only been one of the four 'other' Dutch universities. The Bleuland collection in Utrecht was younger than both the Albinus and the Camper collections. It was built during the French rule, one of the worst periods in the university's history – Utrecht University had almost ceased to exist. This was not exactly a period the university wished to remember. Furthermore, neither Groningen nor Utrecht owned significant anatomical collections before the Royal Decree had been issued. (The collections Groningen and Utrecht acquired were from the eighteenth century, but as *institutional* collections they were new.) Leiden did, which made it easier to position the present-day anatomical collections as a continuation of the past.

Utrecht's and Groningen's collections did not offer them a status-enhancing connection to the past – and they were well aware of this. Consider the following quotation from a letter from the Utrecht governors in which they thanked the king for the Bleuland collection:

We feel ourselves obliged to show Your Majesty our appreciation of and our great gratitude for this important and precious gift [the Bleuland collection], which, being a token of Your Royal generosity, will serve as a lasting ornament for this university and [which] will contribute, we

⁷⁰ Sandifort to governors, 11 May 1823, AC2 77, 63

believe, quite a lot to its [the university's] usefulness and flourishing. It has even more value to this university, because it [the university] completely lacked such a collection, and building such [a collection] would have taken a lot of time, effort and money.⁷¹

The governors bluntly acknowledged that their university completely lacked an anatomical collection. Instead of presenting the acquisition of the new anatomical collection as a continuation of the past, they presented it as a radical breach with the past. Leiden presented the Brugmans collection as an addition to the already existing collection. They considered their collection cumulative; it continued throughout time, and hence, its status should continue throughout time. Utrecht, on the other hand, presented the Bleuland collection not as an addition or a continuation, but as a new beginning – the Utrecht governors were not normalizing, but dramatizing. They admitted that their anatomical collections had been useless before, but now, things would change: the university would start to flourish.

The other Dutch universities did not use the history of their anatomical collections to increase their present-day status. Outside the Netherlands, however, several institutions used rhetorical strategies similar to those of the Leiden governors. Rebecca Messbarger has written about anatomical collections in eighteenth-century Bologna.⁷² The city administrators, led by Archbishop (and future pope) Prospero Lambertini, wanted to restore the city's prestige and tried to do so by creating a new anatomy museum. The museum contained mainly wax models, newly made. The collection itself was not historical (unlike the Albinus collection), but it was explicitly intended to refer to the public dissections that had made Bologna famous in the seventeenth century. Although the collections themselves were not from the past, they did in a certain way embody that past – and by presenting them as a continuation of the past, the Bologna administrators hoped to restore the city's former glory. Another example of presenting anatomical collections as a continuation of the past can be found in London. In the nineteenth century, the Royal College of Surgeons used the eighteenth-century Hunter collections to increase their nineteenth-century status. As stated above, they had turned John Hunter into the father of scientific surgery, and subsequently, they used his collections to present themselves as his sons. They suggested that they were simply continuing his work, for example by claiming that they used Hunter's original arrangement.⁷³ That they indeed did so is unlikely, because much was unknown about Hunter's original arrangement – but admitting this would not have been helpful in presenting the collection as a continuation of Hunter's work, and the college administrators therefore failed to mention this.

⁷¹ Governors to King, 4 November 1816, Utrecht, Utrechts Archief, 59/37, 320

⁷² Messbarger 2010, 1–51

⁷³ See for example RCS 1818, 3.

Preparations disconnected from their makers

The Leiden governors combined two strategies to use their anatomical collections as a status symbol. On the one hand, they extended the collections to comply with the standards set in the RDHE and made sure everybody knew about these extensions. On the other hand, they suggested that nothing had changed since the eighteenth century. They had to combine both strategies to distinguish themselves from the other universities. Up-to-date collections were necessary, if only because they had to follow the law. But they were not sufficient: due to William's unifying policy, the other Dutch universities owned high-quality collections as well. To distinguish themselves, the Leiden governors had to connect their collections to their glorious past. The governors had to simultaneously distinguish themselves from and connect themselves to the eighteenth-century collections. This seems conflicting, yet in the first decades after the decree the governors managed to combine both strategies quite well. But as the century progressed, this changed. The collections came to resist the double meaning; they could no longer be both contemporary and historical. Medical research and teaching kept changing, and the anatomical collections could remain up-to-date only if they changed as well – but this meant becoming increasingly separated from their past. The preparations lost the connection to their makers and as a result, the governors could no longer present them as a continuation of the past. Therefore, they could no longer use the collections as a status symbol, for they needed the historical meaning to do so.

The preparations were detached from their makers just as they were detached from the (moral) stories that had made them interpretable to lay visitors. Without the stories, it became hard for lay visitors to use the collections; without the connection to their makers, it became hard for university governors to use the collections. And, as with the disappearance of the moral stories, the 1860 move and accompanying rearrangement were pivotal in the disconnection of the preparations and their makers.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, users of the Anatomical Cabinet could easily find out which anatomist had made a particular preparation. All they had to do was read the label. Both Eduard and Gerard Sandifort wrote three things on their labels: a description of the object, the name of the maker,⁷⁴ and the catalogue number.⁷⁵ The catalogue number referred to the descriptions in the four volumes of the *Museum Anatomicum*. In these volumes, father and son Sandifort described collections from different makers (collectors) separately. A skull collected by Brugmans was described in the part on dry preparations in the Brugmans collection; a similar skull collected by Bonn was described in a different section, together with the other skulls from the Bonn collection. However, it is possible that both skulls were nonetheless placed next to each other on the shelves of the Cabinet's cupboard – we do not know to what extent the classification system used in the catalogues was reflected in the preparations' actual arrangement. In his preface to *Museum*

⁷⁴ Strictly speaking, they used not the name of the maker, but of the collector – but in eighteenth-century private collections, these two roles usually coincided.

⁷⁵ Elshout 1952, 11

Anatomicum 3, Gerard Sandifort seems to suggest that the collections were at least partially combined:

When the Museum was enlarged so splendidly, it had to be rearranged and reordered; since it was made up of separate collections, of Rau, Albinus, Van Doeveren, Ledebøer, Rocquette, Brugmans and Bonn, it had to get its own proper ordering and, as it were, face and character. And thus I put together everything that had been separated until then and I made sure that, while everything ran according to an uninterrupted system, each preparation had a number and name of the collection from which it was taken.⁷⁶

The ‘uninterrupted’ system was *not* the classification system used in the catalogue – that was clearly divided. Each collection had its own classification system, more or less systematically; the classification system of different collections employed different categories. But if it was not the classification system that was ‘uninterrupted’, then it had to be the system in which the preparations are arranged (*disponendum*). Yet, even in this ‘uninterrupted’ arrangement, the individual collections remained recognizable, so Sandifort claims. Travel reports show that visitors indeed distinguished between preparations made by different anatomists. Take for example the travel report by Wilhelm Horn, a German doctor. Horn offers a detailed four-page list of objects visible in the Anatomical Cabinet. This is part of it:

Many vessel injections by Albinus – A single preparation by Ruysch, an injected child’s head. Next, many preparations together, of Bonn, Brugmans, Sandifort and Rau. – Injected organs of all kinds. – Stones, bladders, in particular by Van Doeveren: lymph-vessels, spleens, livers; injected.⁷⁷

Horn suggests that he had seen several injection preparations from Albinus combined; that preparations made by Bonn, Brugmans, Sandifort and Rau were also combined; and that he could identify the preparations’ makers. Other visitor reports also regularly list individual collections,⁷⁸ showing that the visitors had at least learned that the Cabinet housed collections from various anatomists. We do not know whether these collections were kept strictly separate – probably not, considering Sandifort’s remark. But even if they were combined to a certain extent, the connection between the preparations and their makers was clear: in the catalogue, on the labels and possibly (partly) in the actual arrangement.

After 1860, the clues that connected the preparations and their makers would disappear. As we have seen, curator Halbertsma used the move to the laboratory complex to rearrange the collections completely. The individual collections were now fully integrated, both in their actual arrangement and in the classification system.⁷⁹ Skulls were put with skulls; hearts with hearts; ears with ears – regardless of who made them, if they displayed

⁷⁶ Sandifort 1827, Praefatio, 4

⁷⁷ Horn 1831, 360

⁷⁸ See for example Van Meerten 1829, 304; MacGregor 1835, 168; Guislain 1842, 91.

⁷⁹ The 1892 inventory of Zaaijer, discussed in the previous chapter, listed the preparations by cupboard, and shows that classification system and arrangement coincided.

the same body part, organ system or disease, the preparations were put together. The catalogues of Halbertsma (1860s) and Zaaïjer (1892) did not even mention Albinus, Brugmans, Bonn and the other Leiden anatomists.⁸⁰ Nor did the new labels: they contained a description and a catalogue number, but no makers or collectors.

The individual behind the collections had become unrecognizable. This posed a problem to the governors: without a connection to the past, the collections could not function as a status symbol. So, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the normalizing rhetoric disappeared from the governors' references to the anatomical collections. This did not mean the university stopped using its past to increase its present-day status. Consider for example what happened after the 1865 medical laws, which stressed the importance of practical teaching. Leiden felt somewhat threatened by these laws. In response, they (more in particular: medical professor Gerard Suringar) constructed an image of the famous Boerhaave as the first practitioner of bedside teaching, and then connected that image to the present. In so doing, they suggested that at the Leiden medical faculty, theoretical medicine and practical teaching had long been, and would continue to be, combined.⁸¹

The lost connection between preparations and makers would later also pose a problem for medical historians. The rearrangement – and the relabelling in particular – had made it rather hard for them to find out who made what. Understandably unhappy about all the tedious work they had to undertake, they were keen to find someone to blame. Their eyes landed on the collection curators from the second half of the nineteenth century, Hidde Halbertsma, Johannes Boogaard and Teunis Zaaïjer. The authors of a historical article on the Leiden anatomical collections stated in 1934:

Lack of historical awareness, typical of the second half of the nineteenth century, and in addition lack of space in the institute in which anatomy was housed from 1859 until 1923 [the authors incorrectly date the 1860 move in 1859], resulted in a constant decrease of the contents of the old cabinets, which would not have happened in case of greater care and inclination for these things. Part of the preparations were not only transferred to new jars or remounted, but, in these ahistorical times, old labels were also removed and all traces of the provenance of the preparations were destroyed. ... Because of these museological errors, the preparations lost their distinctive historical value.⁸²

The authors, D. C. Geyskes and Cornelis van der Klaauw, accuse the three curators of 'museological errors' and claim that these 'errors' stemmed from a lack of historical

⁸⁰ Zaaïjer does single out a preparation made by Ruysch, though. (Teunis Zaaïjer, 'Inventaris der verzameling in het Anatomisch Kabinet van de Rijks Universiteit te Leiden', 1892, Leiden, LUMC, archives Anatomisch Museum (no inventory number), p. 6) The classification system used by Halbertsma is described in Elshout 1952, 11. Halbertsma's catalogue has been lost for several years; fortunately, it has reappeared in the Leiden University Library – unfortunately, this happened in the last stages of preparing this manuscript, and I have not yet been able to investigate it.

⁸¹ Knoeff 2010, 269–279; see also Suringar 1866b and Suringar 1866c.

⁸² Geyskes and Van der Klaauw 1934, 181–182

awareness supposedly common in the second half of the nineteenth century. However, as we saw above, the university kept using its past – proving they had at least some sort of awareness of its history. The three curators all valued the past in one way or another. Zaaijer demonstrated in his inaugural lecture that he was well aware of the history of anatomy.⁸³ Boogaard chaired the committee that erected a statue for Boerhaave. And Halbertsma treasured a microscope made by Van Leeuwenhoek, on whose research he wrote his dissertation.⁸⁴ They were not a-historical men. Yet, they were also not *primarily* concerned with the historical value of the preparations. However, this is not, as Geyskes and Van der Klaauw put it, a ‘museological error’. On the contrary, one could say. Halbertsma and his successors rearranged, reclassified and relabelled the preparations because they wanted them to be of better use for the museum’s⁸⁵ primary purpose: teaching and research. They adapted the collections to changes in medical practices and theories, which was enabled by the preparations’ flexibility for reinterpretation.

The preparations were reused in research and teaching; and they were arranged, classified, and labeled in a way most helpful to their new use. Unfortunately for the governors (and for future medical historians), the connection to the makers disappeared in this process. Since that connection was essential for Leiden’s ability to distinguish itself from the other Dutch universities, the governors stopped using the anatomical collections as a status symbol. In the twentieth century, the connection was in some cases restored – and part of the collections once again became a status symbol, not for the university as a whole, but for the medical faculty.

The Leiden anatomical collections in the twentieth century

In 1932, two men asked the Leiden University Fund for money to clear out an old cabinet.⁸⁶ The men were J. A. J. Barge, Leiden anatomy professor, and C. A. Crommelin, the director of the new Dutch Historical Science Museum (*Nederlandsch Historisch Natuurwetenschappelijk Museum*, founded in 1931). The cabinet formerly belonged to the Albinus brothers and contained some 800 wet preparations from the ‘old’ Leiden anatomical collections.⁸⁷ The preparations were retrieved from the basement of the Anatomical Cabinet when the anatomy department moved to a new laboratory in 1923. It is unknown when, why and by whom they were put in the basement, but it seems safe to

⁸³ Zaaijer 1866

⁸⁴ Johann Czermák, who visited the Leiden collections in 1850, described how Halbertsma showed him the Leeuwenhoek microscope. (Czermák 1879, 174) For Halbertsma’s dissertation: Halbertsma 1843.

⁸⁵ I write ‘museum’ because Geyskes and Van der Klaauw used that word, but ‘collections’ would be better suited here: the Cabinet’s preparations, of course, were not just for display in the museum, but also for handling in other research and teaching spaces.

⁸⁶ Geyskes and Van der Klaauw 1934, 182–183; Elshout 1952, 2. Note that in this section, I use the ambiguous word ‘cabinet’ instead of the clearer ‘cupboard’; I do this because of the historical connotation of the word cabinet – as will soon become clear, the historical character of the cupboard intended here is pivotal.

⁸⁷ Geyskes and Van der Klaauw 1934, 183. Elshout 1952 uses two different numbers: approximately 800 (Elshout 1952, 3) and approximately 750 (Elshout 1952, 10).

assume that it was related to the lack of space in the museum rooms upstairs.⁸⁸ However, that the preparations were moved to the basement does *not* mean they were considered useless – after all, they were *kept*, not thrown away, even though the glassware probably could have been put to good use elsewhere. Nonetheless, it seems likely they were used less frequently than the preparations upstairs, especially considering the neglected condition they were found in, in 1923. It is entirely possible that they were stored for future use by researchers or students, much like the store preparations in the Royal College of Surgeons, which could remain in the stores for decades until a new research question, or technique, made them relevant again.

Whatever the reason these preparations ended up in the basement, once they got out, they received quite some attention. In two restoration projects, the majority of these wet preparations were reconnected with their makers. The first project took place in the 1930s, with the money Barge and Crommelin had requested from the Leiden University Fund. It was carried out by D. C. Geyskes, an assistant at the zoological laboratory, who was supervised by C. J. van der Klaauw, the deputy director at the Dutch Historical Science Museum. The project aimed to catalogue the preparations and to report on their condition. Geyskes and Van der Klaauw found 353 preparations carrying legible labels.⁸⁹ The majority of these labels were added by father and son Sandifort, but they also found preparations with labels from later nineteenth-century curators, suggesting that at least part of the preparations had spent some time in the Cabinet's museum upstairs before they were moved to the basement.⁹⁰ In the end, they managed to match 271 preparations to a specific description in the *Museum Anatomicum* and 17 to one of the collections described in the *Museum*, but not to a specific description. The preparations returned to in the Albinus cabinet and arranged according to collector. A conservation report was written, but no work was done on the preparations themselves (this had never been the intention of the project, probably because it would take too much time and money). Hence, the preparations were in bad shape when they were taken out of the cabinet again, during the Second World War, when they were moved to – again – the basement for safekeeping. Antonie Luyendijk-Elshout, later professor of medical history, described them as follows:

Clearing out the mahogany cabinet resulted in a mournful spectacle. Eight hundred dirty jars, many of them with mouldy contents, had to be stored in the basement of the Anatomical Laboratory. Many preparations had gone dry; many old phials had cracked and were weather-

⁸⁸ This is also suggested by Geyskes and Van der Klaauw 1934, 182.

⁸⁹ For a detailed description of the results, see Geyskes and Van der Klaauw 1934.

⁹⁰ Even the preparations with the Sandifort labels were not necessarily put in the basement immediately after the move; the reclassification of the collection was only completed at the end of the nineteenth century, until then, the museum probably still contained preparations with old labels. Elshout wrote she had found at least eight different types of labels, several of them from the second half of the nineteenth century, and some from an exhibition held in 1915. (Elshout 1952, 11)

stained. The corks had fallen into the jars; of many beautiful intestine preparations, only a turbid mass at the bottom of the cylindrical jars could be seen.⁹¹

After the war, Luyendijk-Elshout set to work: she restored preparations, topped them up and relabelled them. She also created a new cataloguing system for the Anatomical Museum, which is still in use today. Furthermore, she painstakingly compared the preparations from the Albinus cabinet to the descriptions in the *Museum Anatomicum* and matched 451 preparations, 180 more than Geyskes and Van der Klaauw. She also found 78 preparations described elsewhere (for example, in the Suringar catalogue). Still, 220 preparations remained disconnected from their makers. That is, 220 preparations of the ones in the Albinus cabinet – for many of the eighteenth-century preparations never ended up in that cabinet. The *Museum Anatomicum* described almost two thousand wet preparations, so some twelve hundred must have ended up elsewhere. Part had no doubt been damaged or destroyed (for example, during the gunpowder disaster); part had been moved to the laboratories of physiology and pathological-anatomy and to the Museum for Natural History; and part remained tucked away in the other collections in the anatomical laboratory. Geyskes and Van der Klaauw wrote:

Without a doubt, many preparations in the new section of the collection of the new Anatomical Institute stem from the old cabinets. It is virtually impossible to find out for sure.⁹²

Something similar also holds true for the dry preparations: completely absent in the Albinus cabinet, yet abundant in the *Museum Anatomicum*. In the second half of the twentieth century, when the full Anatomical Museum was catalogued (much of the work was done by Elshout), many dry preparations were reconnected to their makers as well – often, their names had been written *on* the preparations, solving the problem of labels becoming illegible or getting lost. Many others, however, were entered in the catalogue as ‘from unknown origin’.

In the second half of the twentieth century, part of the eighteenth-century preparations were put on display in Museum Boerhaave, the successor of the Dutch Historical Science Museum. But most of them remained in the medical faculty's Anatomical Museum, where they can still be found. And, just as two hundred years ago, the preparations create a status-enhancing link to Leiden's glorious past. And again, Albinus takes centre stage. He greets us outside the building: next to entrance, above the bicycle stands, we see a gigantic poster of an engraving from Albinus' famous anatomical atlas *Tabulae sceleti et musculorum corporis humani*. It has a Seneca quotation as its caption: *Non scholae sed vitae discimus* (We do not learn just for school, but for life).

Inside, we find Albinus' old cabinet – like the nineteenth-century governors, the twenty-first-century medical administrators use not just the preparations themselves, but elements surrounding the collections as well. On the wall adjacent to the cabinet we find

⁹¹ Elshout 1952, 3

⁹² Geyskes and Van der Klaauw 1934, 182

portraits of famous Leiden anatomists. And then, of course, there are the preparations themselves: Albinus', Bonn's, Brugmans' – all reminding us of Leiden's glorious past. It's almost as if history is repeating itself – but there are two major differences, both consequences of the prolonged use of the anatomical collections. First, nowadays it is the medical centre for which the old collections are a status symbol, not the university as a whole. This is because the collections retreated into the medical faculty in the second half of the nineteenth century; they are out of reach for (the successors of) the university governors, accessible to administrators in the medical centre only. And second, in the nineteenth century, all of the thousands of preparations on display connected the present to the past; in the twenty-first, this number has dwindled to a few hundred – the other eighteenth-century preparations have had to bid a final adieu to their maker.



Figure 12. Entrance to the Leiden University Medical Center's teaching building