THE ART AND SCIENCE OF READING FACES: PHYSIOGNOMIC THEORY AND HANS HOLBEIN THE YOUNGER

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ABSTRACT

This project explores the work of Hans Holbein the Younger, sixteenth-century printmaker and portraitist, through the lens of early modern physiognomic thought. This period's renewed interest in the discipline of physiognomy, the art and science of "reading" human features, reflects a desire to understand the relationship between outer appearances and inner substances of things. Physiognomic theory has a host of applications and meanings for the visual artist, who produces a surface representation or likeness, yet scholarship on this subject has been limited. Examining Holbein's social context and artistic practice, this project constructs the possibility of a physiognomic reading of several major works. Holbein's engagement with physiognomic theories of appearance and representation provides a vital point of access to early modern discourse on character, identity and self.

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CHAPTER 1:
ORIGINS AND ADAPTATIONS OF EARLY PHYSIOGNOMIC THEORY

The sixteenth-century interest in physiognomy, the art and science of "reading" human features, reflects a desire to understand the relationship between outer appearances and inner substances of things. In a period of increasing travel and trade, as well as social tension and unrest, it provided a methodology for character assessment and identification, while also interacting with current developments in natural philosophy and theology. Physiognomic theory has a host of applications and meanings for the visual artist, who produces a surface representation or likeness. The work of Hans Holbein the Younger (1498-1543) will, for the purposes of this study, become my access point for an exploration of physiognomy in the world of the sixteenth-century printmaker and portraitist. In this project I will demonstrate how, and why, his works might be seen to participate in a culture of physiognomic thought, as well as their potential for a physiognomic 'reading' by contemporaneous viewers.

Scholarship on Holbein, while abundant, has in the past lingered on questions of the artist's geographic location (Basel or London), divided the analysis of his works according to mediums (paintings or prints), or focused on his career as portraitist at the expense of his other endeavors. Recent volumes, such as those compiled by Susan Foister and Christian Müller, attentive to the particular concerns of England and Basel respectively, have praised Holbein's versatility even as they continue to isolate prints and painted portraits.[1] In this project, I will address concerns belonging to both mediums, allowing for their interconnectivity and reciprocal influences, while also attending to their

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[1] Susan Foister, *Holbein and England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004). See also Christian Müller, ed., *Hans Holbein the Younger: The Basel Years, 1515-1532* (New York: Prestel, 2006). Jochen Sander**,** *Hans Holbein: Tafelmaler in Basel (1515-1532*), (München: Hirmer Verlag, 2005).

unique visual strategies and functions.

Despite the early modern concern about appearances and the status of representation itself, physiognomy and the visual arts is an underdeveloped pairing in existing art historical scholarship. This oversight is perhaps more a reflection of modern disciplinary divisions between science and art than of the historical reality of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century culture, when the boundaries were not yet so clearly defined. Historian of science, Josef Ziegler, has well established the omnipresent undercurrent of physiognomic thought and the social uncertainties that cemented its popularity across a broad portion of the socio-economic spectrum, and Eniko Bekes has taken the step to link it to written and visual descriptions in her study of King Matthias Corvinus of Hungary.[2] Bekes' exploration of physiognomic theory as a tool for the ruler's self-fashioning has informed my argument that Holbein's commissioned portraits can be engaged with in a similarly productive vein. Steven Greenblatt's foundational work on Renaissance self-fashioning, in fact, featured Hans Holbein the Younger's *Ambassadors* and described the process of early modern identity construction through outwardly projected images and appearances.[3] One could argue that physiognomic thought as it was understood in the early sixteenth century was a contemporary attempt to redress, or cut through, the superficialities of constructed appearances to reach a core of essential truth. For a viewer, therefore, familiarity with basic physiognomic theory could be a valuable tool for interpreting the truth of inner character beneath layers of costume and accrued attributes,

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[2] Joseph Ziegler, "Text and Context: On the Rise of Physiognomic Thought in the Later Middle Ages," in *De Sion exibit lex et verbum domini de Hierusalem: Essays on Medieval Law, Liturgy, and Literature in Honour of Amnon Linder*, ed. Yitzhak Hen (Tournhout: Brepols, 2001). See also Eniko Bekes, *The Physiognomy of a Renaissance Ruler: Portraits and Descriptions of Matthias Corvinus, King of Hungary* (Saarbrèucken: VDM Verlag, 2009).
[3] Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

while for a maker or patron of art it could be a means of conveying a level of authenticity.

I propose, however, that it is not only Holbein's portraits that can be approached fruitfully with physiognomic knowledge. His *Dance of Death* woodcut cycle (1538) presents a virtual catalog of "types," distinguished by their settings, costumes, racial and socio-economic indicators and, as I will argue, their potential for physiognomic readings. Their function as prints—portable works in multiples that could be sold in sets and later would appear in book form— will provide another avenue for exploring physiognomic theory outside of commissioned portraits. Without claiming that Holbein intended a "pure" physiognomic reading of his works, it is undeniable that he engaged with universal questions of likeness and representation in an era when physiognomic thought was one piece of the ongoing dialogue, and that his work was viewed and consumed by individuals who were well aware of these concepts. Our understanding of the Renaissance preoccupation with self-construction and identity will necessarily be an incomplete one without a closer look at the ways in which physiognomic theory might subvert or sustain a reading of character in contemporaneous imagery.

The Authority and Ancient Origins of Physiognomic Theory

For what reasons, and to what purpose, was the ancient discipline of physiognomy so fully revived in the twelfth through sixteenth centuries? One factor must certainly be the widespread rediscovery of "lost" classical texts in the late medieval period, paired with the growth of scholarly libraries and the foundation of universities across Europe. Physiognomy was incorporated into the programs of these universities

during the fourteenth century, while physiognomic texts were recorded in major medieval libraries from the ninth century onwards.[4] But their presence in libraries and in the university curriculum does not answer the question of *why* there seems to have been a resurgence, *what* societal needs it fulfilled, and *how* it became such a broad cultural force. To understand the flourishing of physiognomic thought in the early modern period, it is helpful to trace a brief history of the theories from their classical foundations to their later interpretations. It must be pointed out that the reach of physiognomy was wide and varied: far from a "niche" or elite discipline, it appears in the history of medicine, natural sciences, trade and travel, rhetoric and politics, and in the visual arts.

Ziegler has defined physiognomy as "the art of deciphering one's character by the external appearance of his or her bodily organs."[5] In the classical tradition, Pythagorus and Hippocrates were typically claimed as founders of the discipline, though little is known about the first actual practitioners.[6] The earliest surviving physiognomic treatise of the classical period is the Pseudo-Aristotle's *Physiognomica.* Though this work is no longer attributed to the philosopher, Aristotle wrote frequently on physiognomic topics, including an important passage from the *Analytica Priora*: "For if a peculiar affection applies to any individual class, e.g., courage to lions, there must be some corresponding sign for it; for it has been assumed that body and soul are affected together."[7] The *Physiognomica* echoes this sentiment: "the soul and body appropriate to the same kind always go together."[8] The text identifies three types of physiognomic study: first,

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[4] Bekes, 12-13. Also Ziegler, "Text and Context," 160, 174-176.
[5] Ziegler, "Text and Context," 159.
[6] Bekes, 9-10.
[7] Cited in Elizabeth C. Evans, "Physiognomy in the Ancient World," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 5 (1969): 7.
[8] T. Loveday and E.S. Forster, trans., "Physiognomics," in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 805a1-805a17.

comparisons to the traits of animals; second, comparisons between races or groups of men; and third, a cataloguing of emotions or passions which contort or shape facial characteristics. Each are addressed in turn: qualities of the skin, brow, hair, eyes, mouth, nose, shoulders, and so forth, in conjunction with the personality traits they mark. The closing remarks promote a hierarchy of traits in reading character: "The most suitable part of all is the region of the eyes and forehead, head and face… In a word, the clearest signs are derived from those parts in which intelligence is most manifest."[9] This statement holds obvious implications for portraiture, to which I will return in later chapters.

The *Physiognomica* was subject to multiple translations and commentaries, including a thirteenth-century translation by Bartolomeus de Messana and more than one fifteenth-century edition.[10] New texts in the thirteenth century built on classical knowledge: the first of these is considered to be Michael Scot's *Liber de Physionomia* (c. 1230), followed by Pietro D'Abano's *Liber compilationis physiognomies* (1295). The influence of Aristotle, and those texts considered *spuria*, or "after" the philosopher, was felt in nearly every field of the medieval arts and natural sciences: astronomy, astrology, politics, theology, and medicine were among them. A changing understanding of man's place in the natural world was both supported and expanded by the rediscovery of Aristotle's "natural philosophy. His teachings proved central to the development of early modern academic culture.[11] In this we can begin to see how, if not entirely why, physiognomy was so well-received throughout diverse fields.

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[9] Ibid, 814a6-814b8.
[10] Bekes, 12-13.
[11] Joan Cadden, "Trouble in the Earthly Paradise: The Regime of Nature in Late Medieval Christian Culture," in *The Moral Authority of Nature*, eds. Lorraine Daston and Fernando Vidal (Chicago: University

Medieval Applications of Physiognomic Theory

From the first, it appears that physiognomy was intimately tied with the field of medicine. The Roman physician Galen, writing after Hippocrates, emphasized a physiognomy closely tied to the bodily humors, claiming that his predecessor found it indispensable for the proper diagnosis of patients.[12] Galen's systematic treatment of an individual's *complexio*, or composition, as originating in qualities of flesh and temperature (warm, dry, soft, firm) in combination with physical humors (blood, bile, phlegm, gall) and the temperaments over which they ruled (sanguine, melancholic, choleric and phlegmatic) was synthesized completely into the canons of medical knowledge of the early modern period, already settling into common knowledge by the thirteenth century. Physiognomy was thought useful for the scholar and the practicing physician. Michele Savonarola was both: his fifteenth-century practical handbook of medicine, *Practica maior*, included a section on the identification and diagnosis of physiognomic signs for treatment, while his *Speculum physiognomiae* was a specialized treatise dedicated to Leonello d'Este, Marquis of Ferrara. In this period, too, the lines between medical and cosmological knowledge were flexible or even indistinct: physical signs might be as easily read in diagnostic as well as astrological texts, as the qualities of heavenly bodies and planets were considered to correspond with the individuals they governed.[13]

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of Chicago Press, 2004), 207-231. See also Steven J. Williams, *The secret of secrets: the scholarly career of a pseudo-Aristotelian text in the Latin Middle Ages* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003)

[12] George Boys-Stones, "Physiognomy and Ancient Psychological Theory," in *Seeing the Face, Seeing the Soul: Polemon's Physiognomy from Classical Antiquity to Medieval Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 99-101. See also Bekes, 9-10.

[13] Valentin Groebner, "Complexio/Complexion: Categorizing Individual Natures, 1250-1600," in *The Moral Authority of Nature*, 365-370.

The desire for a systematic approach to wellness was one aspect of physiognomy's popularity. Social uncertainty and the need to 'size up' one's peers or enemies was surely another. Elements of this, too, are rooted in antique precedent: Polemon, writing in the second century CE, aimed many passages specifically at the identification of enemies and those of poor moral character. A fourth-century Greek translation lists one of the goals of physiognomy as "[guarding] against the vices of the bad before having to experience them."[14] Perhaps ingrained in the drive to detect character traits and flaws is a desire to predict the possible behaviors of such an individual, to assess their potential for nobility, honesty, violence, or deceit. As Martin Porter suggests, "the dividing line between character and future, like the temporal line between past, present, and future, is thin, even permeable."[15]

This was certainly a concern for those medieval thinkers who adopted physiognomic theories to their own uses. Roger Bacon, writing in the thirteenth century, instructs kings and lesser rulers to choose their advisors, servants and friends with guidance from physiognomic theory, with a particular eye for those individuals susceptible to corruption.[16] It was not only nobles who stood to benefit from a clear and scientifically-grounded framework for passing judgment on those they encountered: increased social and geographic mobility and the explosive growth of trade after the twelfth century, however opportune, thrust many individuals into uncertain encounters. As Ziegler notes, there were few reliable means of information-sharing in this period by

[14] Martin Porter, *Windows of the Soul: The Art of Physiognomy in European Culture 1470-1780* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 48-49.
[15] Ibid, 48-49.
[16] Ziegler, "Text and Context," 181.

which to establish the *bonafides*, or even identities, of strangers.[17] A system that could quickly and thoroughly assess the character of potential business partners, political allies, companions and others was an invaluable asset.

Identity, however, was not considered a simplistic or straightforward concept. The *Secretum Secretorum*, supposedly an educational epistle from Aristotle to Alexander the Great (though likely instead a collection of Hellenistic and medieval Arabic and Latin knowledge), problematized the idea of "physiognomic determinism" and the notion that reading an individual's true self could ever be truly straightforward. In the text, a life-like portrait of Hippocrates is brought by his students to Physionomyas for interpretation. Examining the image closely, the physiognomist names Hippocrates a degenerate, and is met with derision by the philosopher's students. Rather than joining them, Hippocrates answers that the diagnosis of his natural tendencies is correct, yet credits "reason" as the force holding his natural impulses in check.[18] In this narrative physiognomy is indeed credited with an ability to read the truth of inner substance, albeit a truth that can be complicated and mediated by force of will and self-direction.

Translated from Greek to Arabic in the ninth or tenth centuries, from Arabic to Latin in the twelfth century, and from Latin to Italian, French, Dutch, English and German by the fourteenth, the *Secretum Secretorum* would prove to be one of the most widely read and collected texts of the late Middle Ages and early modern period, and endures today in over five hundred surviving manuscripts.[19] The legend of Hippocrates and Physionomyas was retold and debated from the twelfth-century writings of Albertus Magnus to sixteenth-century German author and pamphleteer Bartolomäus Cocles, who

[17] Ibid, 182.
[18] Groebner, 361.

included the tale in his own work, *Physionomi vnd chiromanci: Eyn newes complexionbüchlein* (1504).[20] Roger Bacon would come to a similar conclusion for a different audience: Christians, he wrote, could not be judged by the standards of physical examination, as "divine grace" could overcome any natural flaws.[21] The next chapter will delve further into the relationship between physiognomy and contemporaneous religious imagery, specifically as it pertains to the perfection of Christ and depictions of vice and virtue.

The question of "truth" in the representation of character is highly relevant to the present project. Returning briefly to Polemon, we observe that he cites many physiognomic types from personal history, describing his political rival Favorinus as "greedy and immoral beyond all description" with "puffed-up eyes" and slackened cheeks; while his account of the Emperor Hadrian centers around his beautiful and "luminous" eyes, which were "bluish-black, with sharp vision."[22] It is impossible to ignore the socio-political relationships of the individuals to whom he referred with such vivid imagery. Jaś Elsner has suggested a connection between Polemon's emphasis on the eye and the lofty gazes of imperial portraiture, in turn linking rhetorical descriptive language, visual art and physiognomy. In this view all three become "potentially parallel and sometimes even intertwined methods for persuasive, encomiastic or polemical cultural relations."[23] This interpretation is particularly significant after a translation through time and geographic location: as Stephen Greenblatt has noted, the early modern period was marked by "an increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human

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[19] Williams, 1-2, 7-9, 30-32.
[20] Ziegler, "Text and Context," 162. Also Groebner, 361 (Footnote 2.)
[21] Ziegler, "Text and Context," 163.
[22] Jaś Elsner, "Physiognomics: Art and Text," in *Seeing the Face, Seeing the Soul,* 207-208.

identity as a manipulable, artful process."[24] Many important physiognomic treatises were dedicated to powerful men, including Michael Scot's *Liber physiognomiae*, written for Frederick II, and indeed it appears that physiognomy was of special interest to those seeking an origin or authentication for the concept of "nobility."[25] Holbein's commissioned portrait of Henry VIII [Figure 1.1] has long been seen as an influential shaper of the King's public image, and in light of physiognomic theory new questions will arise. The fourth chapter of this project will return to this concept of the creation and interpretation of identity through portraiture.

The comparison between written description and artistic depiction is not incidental. Physiognomy's impact on the creation of art appears in the counsel of Philostratus the Younger to would-be painters, from the text of his *Imagines.* His instructions mirror the *Physiognomica* in their concern for those physical traits that are thought to show the internal life of their owner:

> For he who is to be a true master of the art must have a good knowledge of human nature, he must be able to discern the signs of men's character, even when they are silent, and what is revealed in… the expression of the eyes, and the character of the eyebrows, and, to put the matter briefly, whatever has to do with the mind.[26]

Physiognomy also figures largely in texts by ancient writers who exhorted naturalism in painting, as in a passage from Pliny's *Natural History*, where the astonishing portraits of Apelles are examined by a physiognomist, their "perfect likenesses" serving as substitutes for their absent sitters. Of this anecdote, Elsner says: "Physiognomics is here brought to bear not only on any old paintings…but on the

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[23] Ibid, 206.
[24] Greenblatt, 2.
[25] Ziegler, "Text and Context," 177.

uniquely lifelike portraits of Apelles himself, in which representation effectively transcends the normal limits of art."[27] The Renaissance preoccupation with naturalism, or lifelikeness, was drawn in part from a rediscovery or reinvention of antique aesthetics. Leon Battista Alberti, in his foundational *De Pictura* (1435) and *De sculptura* (1436), echoed Philostratus in his encouragement to artists to attend to those physiognomic details that would better capture the inner nature of the sitter.[28] Holbein's commitment to complex and detailed physical description can be observed in both his printed *Pictures of Death* [Figure 1.2] and in his method of approaching portraiture, as seen in a study for his 1516 portrait of Jacob Meyer. [Figure 1.3] Ties between physiognomy and naturalism in art will be explored in greater detail in the following chapters.

Like its initial inventors, later translators and practitioners viewed physiognomy as both an art and a science, one which "derive[d] its roots from a system of knowable causes which can be deciphered through rational reasoning."[29] Physiognomy represented a philosophical system by which to explore the relationship between of appearance and substance, paralleling and sometimes problematizing Aristotle's view of the soul as "the form of a natural body potentially having life."[30] It also presented a particular challenge for those charged with representing visual "truths." It is in the visual arts that I intend to most fully demonstrate the far-reaching absorption and revitalization of physiognomy during the time of Hans Holbein the Younger. Complicated by the creation of personal, political and professional character, as well as social tensions, visual representations of human faces are inescapably tied to self-identity and the perception of the identities of

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[26] Evans, 45.
[27] Elsner, "Physiognomics," 204.
[28] Bekes, 26.
[29] Ziegler, "Text and Context," 160.

others. Holbein, as both painter and printmaker, will now become the focus of an exploration of physiognomic theory and its implications for the social history of image-making.

In the next chapter, I will explore the specific cultural milieu in which Hans Holbein, his audience, and his patrons encountered and interacted with physiognomic theory. I will discuss physiognomy's place in vernacular literature, humanist canons, and discussions on the "perfection" of Christ, as well as its transmission through the visual arts. A third chapter will explore Holbein's *Dance of Death* in relation to established physiognomic types as representative of group identities. Facial features and physical attributes, interacting with racial, social and economic indicators, will be explored alongside contemporaneous texts and related imagery in an attempt to draw out potential physiognomic meaning for the inclined viewer. A fourth chapter will explore Holbein's portraits and treatment of individual likenesses as participants in the tradition of Renaissance self-fashioning. The descriptive detail of these works and Holbein's "rhetoric of realism" make certain artistic claims to authenticity and accuracy that must be examined in light of physiognomic theory and the expectations of patron and spectator. A final closing will draw together the related threads of print and portrait to create a fuller understanding of Holbein's artistic practice and the reception of his works, as these relate to the role of physiognomic thinking in the history of art.

[30] Boys-Stones, "Physiognomy," 47.

CHAPTER 2:
PHYSIOGNOMY IN HOLBEIN'S SPHERE

Physiognomy permeated early modern culture at multiple levels, altering or encouraging the manner in which individuals regarded themselves, their neighbors and those outside their own cultural boundaries. In this chapter, I will explore the presence, influence, and continuing development of physiognomy in the circles around Hans Holbein, his audiences and patrons. Sixteenth-century trends in art, language, travel and commerce indicate both an academic attraction to the theory of physiognomy, and an immediate and practical urgency met by physiognomic knowledge as it related to concerns about appearances, traits, and internal qualities of character and substance. Through examples from high and low culture I will provide the context for the reception of Holbein's images and reconstruct Holbein's own exposure to physiognomic theory before introducing his most direct visual responses in the chapters that follow.

Humanism, Physiognomy, and Holbein's Education

Hans Holbein the Younger was born to a family of artists in the German city of Augsburg during the last decade of the fifteenth century. His father was both a painter of altarpieces and of portraits, who left behind numerous sketchbooks and portrait studies drawn from life. Christian Müller has addressed the potential effects of the elder Holbein's artistic practice on the younger. While the details of his early training are not known, Holbein the Younger's use of silverpoint and red chalk to carefully capture images of his sitters mirrors the technique used by his father.[31] One of the earliest records

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[31] Christian Mueller, "Hans Holbein the Younger as Draughtsman," in *Hans Holbein the Younger: The Basel Years, 1515-1532*, 29-30. For biographical detail, see Jochen Sander's "The Artistic Development of Hans Holbein the Younger as Panel Painter during his Basel Years" in the same volume, 14-18.

of his ability and interest in depicting fine detail in portrait images can be found in his marginal illustrations for a text of Desiderius Erasmus's *In Praise of Folly*, completed shortly after the artist relocated to Basel. The book was owned by Oswald Myconius, a humanist and educator who was responsible for instructing Holbein in the scholarly language of Latin. The text served as an important introduction in more than one capacity. With it, Myconius engaged Holbein in the most current humanist thought, while the illustrations drew the positive attention of Erasmus himself, who would later become patron and personal reference for the artist.[32]

The manuscript, written as an address in the assumed voice of the personification of Folly, introduces its narrator in terms that echo the central conceit of physiognomic theory: "…[A]s if any man, mistaking me for Wisedome (sic), could not at first sight convince himself by my face, the true index of my mind? I am no Counterfeit, nor do I carry one thing in my looks and another in my breast."[33] Erasmus's narrator expresses the foundation of physiognomy itself, the belief that virtue or vice may be read through bodily appearance. His use of 'counterfeit' similarly corresponds to contemporaneous discourse on the practice of artistic truth and the imitation of nature, which will be more fully explored in the following chapter. Holbein's marginal illustrations, notably his image of Folly itself, are lively and engaging, articulating fine facial details in small strokes. In the image accompanying these early introductions, his figure of Folly regards his bauble face-to-face, as one might look in a mirror. [Figure 2.1] Importantly, these

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[32] Lothar Schmitt, "Education and Learning among Sixteenth-Century German Artists," in *Hans Holbein: Paintings, Prints and Reception*, eds. Mark Roskill and John Oliver Hand (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 2001), 73.
[33] Desiderius Erasmus, *In Praise of Folly*, trans. John Wilson 1668 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), 11-12.

small images also captured expression and "qualities of character,"[34] with insightful and satirical observations of human behavior. In one such image, a scholar turning to regard a well-dressed young woman steps into a market woman's basket of eggs—a clear and pointedly humorous example of the dangers of being distracted by sheer superficial beauty. [Figure 2.2]

The delicate rendering of facial features adds an additional layer to these charming marginal images. Allegorical figures, which are meant to embody specific qualities or characteristics, are depicted in portrait-like detail, and witty or satirical associations may be read in what they represent and the manner of their physical representation. A figure of Wisdom, for example, appears beside his foolish child as an aged man with a long beard and prominent nose, while the audience for Folly's imagined panegyric is at the end revealed to be wearing fools' caps themselves, with gaping mouths and unruly hair. [Figures 2.3 - 2.4] These latter traits appear in physiognomic treatises as representative of the behavior of dogs and beasts, whose teeth and mouths protrude in a show of unmannerly wildness.[35] These illustrations are appropriate to their source: this and Erasmus's other writings contained numerous references to physiognomic discourse, both direct and indirect. His *On the Education of Children* (1506-9) instructed parents to watch for those personal traits and inclinations in their children that would be apparent by physical signs, after praising Aristotle's method: "I do not believe it is merely idle speculation to define a person's character on the basis of his facial appearance and expression and of his physical bearing and presence…it is a moral

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[34] Müller, "Hans Holbein the Younger," 29.
[35] Swain "The Physiognomy Attributed to Aristotle," in *Seeing the Face, Seeing the Soul: Polemon's Physiognomy from Classical Antiquity to Medieval Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 653.

failing to ignore these signs once they have become clear to us."[36]

Holbein's close reading of the Erasmus's *Praise of Folly* text seems a necessary aspect of his complex and entirely suitable images. As an artist working north of the Alps both during and after the career of Albrecht Dürer, Holbein's exposure to humanist Latin treatises is not surprising. Though no formal art academy would be founded in the North until the seventeenth century, the sixteenth century was increasingly marked by attempts to codify artistic knowledge and to engage with the production of art on a theoretical level. Dürer's own treatise looked to Italian models and set forth a methodology by which artists could engage with geometry, perspective, and human proportion. On a practical level, artists also participated in the growth of the publishing industry and the popularity of printed books. As book illustrators, those artists with a greater command of literacy in Latin and the vernacular allowed for a high degree of collaboration with publishers and authors. Holbein's own instruction in Latin began after his move to Basel, at the time a major center for publication and printing.[37]

Holbein's interest in Latin also conforms to contemporaneous expectations for the liberal arts. The perceived elevation of painting had much to do with the reception of classical treatises on art; most notably Pliny's *Natural History*, for its treatment of Apelles' portraits as both the pinnacle of representative likeness and as physiognomic *exempla*. Theoretical writings of humanist scholars on the subject stressed many of the same points. Erasmus praised Dürer as the Apelles of his time, and indeed the figure of the ancient painter held great relevance for sixteenth-century artists. Holbein himself famously painted Lais of Corinth, the courtesan who captivated Apelles and became his

[36] Erika Rummel, *The Erasmus Reader* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 83-84.
[37] Schmitt, 73-76.

Muse, and signed some works with an emblem which took the form of Apelles' own legendary tablet.[38] But the ambiguity and suspicion with which some humanists regarded painting displays an undercurrent of tension between representation and the truth of appearances. In his *Ciceronianus* of 1528, Erasmus draws together physiognomy with the portraits of the classical painters: "As far as was possible, he [Zeuxis] transferred the form of the living person to the mute image… some artists, we are told, made it possible for a physiognomist to read off the character, habits and life-span."[39] Yet in the next lines, Erasmus rejects the idea that the soul can be truly present in such a work, which represents only the "skin" of the sitter. Even in his *Praise of Folly*, he outlines the many deceptions possible in painting, from the superstitions of the faithful before painted saints, to the overvaluation of appearance at the expense of true existence. These statements consciously echo the concerns of Plato, who decried a reliance on the senses, as they are subject to a constantly shifting world and their interpretations cannot be trusted.[40]

These dueling traditions of Aristotelian and Platonic thought with regard to appearances and representation alternately reaffirmed and challenged the foundations of physiognomic theory and of artistic depiction. This debate can be most clearly articulated in portraiture, often discussed as either "capturing" or "counterfeiting" the sitter's likeness and presence. Holbein's illusionistic and complex work seems perfectly suited to participate in this discussion, and indeed the fourth chapter of this project will address these concerns more fully. For now, I will limit myself to remarking on his close

[38] Oskar Bätschmann, "Holbein's Hand," in *Hans Holbein the Younger: The Basel Years*, 113.
[39] Jürgen Müller, "The Eye of the Artist: Hans Holbein's Theory of Art," in *Hans Holbein: Paintings, Prints & Reception*, 142.
[40] Müller, "Hans Holbein the Younger," 141-143. For a discussion on the Renaissance conception of vision

relationships with prominent humanists and the high probability of his encountering physiognomic commentaries and theories of appearance within the bounds of his artistic training and professional career.

The Physiognomic Perfection of Christ

Holbein was a portraitist as well as a maker of religious images, yet for an artist of the early modern period, the most famous face was surely the face of Christ. The face of Christ provided a measure of physical perfection that was accentuated by way of contrast with other figures he encountered in the Passion story. Devotional images that depicted his life and Passion, particularly those images that humanized and emphasized his suffering, were in increasing demand from the late medieval period onward. New Latin narratives (or elaborations on the old), intended to add emotion and anecdotal detail to the Gospels' somewhat spare reports, were a common aspect of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century written devotions. In Germany and the Netherlands, popular Passion tracts in the vernacular further expanded on these texts for a wide audience. This trend was paralleled in roughly contemporaneous imagery, both in painting and especially with the development of printmaking. By the fifteenth century, scenes of Christ's ordeal and sacrifice were no longer restricted to stark biblical descriptors and a limited cast of accompanying characters, but might instead contain new incidents and torments, varied locations, a wide number of onlookers and soldiers, and grotesquely elaborate physical description.[41] The beauty and physical perfection of Christ in contrast to the distorted and

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and perception in painting, see Alexander Nagel, "Leonardo and *sfumato*," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 24 (1993), 7-20.

[41] James Marrow, "Circumdederunt me canes multi: Christ's Tormentors in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance," *The Art Bulletin* 59, No. 2 (1977): 167.

ugly appearance of his tormentors—a reoccurring element in many of these works—holds a number of implications that directly relate to early modern physiognomic thought.

It has been suggested that a kind of "typology" was at work in the development of these Passion narratives and tracts, whereby allegorical references from Old Testament stories and psalms were drawn out into more literal incidents set in the context of the New Testament.[42] James Marrow has explored the animal imagery of Psalm 21and its use as a source for northern depictions of the Passion. Within the original psalm, the enemies surrounding Christ are described as calves, bulls, lions, unicorns and dogs. This latter comparison became omnipresent in Passion tracts and devotions, with references to Christ's tormentors as "malicious dogs… raving dogs… cruel dogs… crying and howling."[43] As mentioned in the previous chapter, associations between human facial traits and their exempla in the animal kingdom were also a significant factor in physiognomic description. In the treatise commonly attributed to Aristotle, the writer states that "Projecting upper lip and gums mark those fond of abuse, on the evidence of dogs."[44] Likewise, Polemon reported: "If you see the mouth and teeth project, this is similar to the mouths of dogs; it is [one of] the signs of baseness, and of someone who loves enmity and anger."[45] Animalistic comparisons were continued and expanded in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Passion images. Here the lolling tongues, bared teeth, crouched postures, distorted features and general unruliness of the crowd would have invited comparisons by the viewer to the behavior and attributes of dogs and other beasts.

[42] Ibid., 168-169.
[43] Ibid., 174.
[44] Swain, 653.
[45] Robert Hoyland, trans., "The Leiden Polemon," in *Seeing the Face, Seeing the Soul,* 415.

In many cases, the link was made explicit: artists like Martin Schongauer and Lucas Cranach the Elder included images of dogs in certain Passion prints, uniting their depictions of the animals to human figures within the composition through posture, facial details, or expression. Marrow calls Cranach's imagery in his 1509 *Crowning with Thorns* "physiognomic,"[46] and indeed it appears that viewers were invited to view the animalistic features and profane nature of Christ's tormenters as mutually reinforcing [Figure 2.5]. This represents an accessible and immediate route by which both literate and non-literate audiences might begin to interact with physiognomy.

Physiognomic comparisons were known to many members of the clergy or laity in the fifteenth-century North. Since the late Middle Ages, Aristotelian physiognomic treatises copied by monastic scribes had stressed the importance of cataloguing and identifying those traits which marked a tendency towards sin, though with an important caveat: outwards signs that accurately indicated a sinful inner nature could be controlled by the practice of good deeds and the reform of the soul. The nobility of such a struggle, and its proximity to Christian dialogues on the nature of humanity's vices, seems to have made the pagan discipline of physiognomic belief palatable to many within the Church. The twelfth-century German bishop and theologian Albertus Magnus wrote extensively on physiognomy, and his work was later adapted for eleven chapters of the *Responsorium Curiosorum* (1476), attributed to Konrad of Halberstadt. The *Responsorium* was a practical manual designed for preachers and priests confronted by their congregations with common questions from natural philosophy and the sciences. This handbook, published in Lübeck, offered answers to questions relating to 'correct' physiognomic

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[46] Marrow, "Circumdederunt," 175, 178-179.

readings of prominent facial features: what disposition, for example, does a large forehead, small forehead, curved eyebrow, bulging eye indicate? The development of such a book represents the learned knowledge of its sources, but the necessity of its creation may also reflect the interest and curiosity of the general population, or the drive of its writers to influence the latter. The Church's wide audience and influence in both popular and elite spheres suggests the possibility of an equally broad audience for a basic awareness of physiognomy. As Joseph Ziegler writes, the popularity of handbooks of this type, and the reoccurrence of physiognomic metaphors in printed sermons, may indicate physiognomy's usefulness to clergy as a "mirror of vices and virtues."[47]

Vice took many forms, but virtue was often represented in the physical perfection of Christ. His appearance- and its historical veracity- was a topic of vital importance to early modern writers, humanists, theologians and artists. In this period, the search for the authentic face of Christ was motivated not only by religious devotion, but also by a cross-cultural search for historical knowledge and origins stretching back to the antique. The Veronica Veil provided one early source for Christ's visage. According to the legend, first recorded in the eleventh century and cemented within the Passion narrative in the fourteenth, a woman along the route to Calvary stopped to wipe the brow of Christ and was rewarded with a miraculous image of the Holy Face on her cloth. This cloth was displayed as a contact relic in Rome to crowds of thousands during the Jubilee of 1350, and by 1370 the indulgence offered to those pilgrims who looked upon it numbered twenty thousand years.[48] Scholarship has explored the legitimizing effect of the Veronica legend on the production of holy images, as well as the echoing of the divine *vera icon*—

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[47] Ziegler, "Text and Context," 168-173.
[48] Joseph Leo Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art* (Chicago: The

made without human hands—in the virtuosic brushstroke-sublimating work of portraitists and painters such as Jan van Eyck and Albrecht Dürer. Joseph Leo Koerner has traced specifically northern responses to the *vera icon,* emphasizing links between Van Eyck's *Holy Face* of 1440 and Dürer's *Self-Portrait* of 1500, but he has also observed that both works bear a striking resemblance to a famous contemporaneous textual source for Christ's physical appearance: the Lentulus Letter.[49]

In the early fifteenth century, a letter began to circulate describing the features of Christ, supposedly from an eye-witness account of the Roman patrician Publius Lentulus. Lorenzo Valla claimed that the text had been discovered in 1421 on the Capitoline Hill in Rome, while a city guidebook of 1481 asserted that it had been found somewhat later in a ruin near San Giovanni. While it is now believed that the text was in fact a thirteenth-century invention, likely a monastic document intended to aid meditation and visualization, it was deeply influential in the following decades.[50] Its importance here is its clear reliance on the vocabulary of physiognomic descriptions for its ekphrasis. Clearly composed within these traditions, the letter evokes the character of Christ by closely detailing those signs of his outward appearance. The translated letter describes the figure of Christ as follows:

> He is a man of medium size; he has a venerable aspect, and his beholders can both fear and love him. His hair is of the color of the ripe hazel-nut, straight down to the ears, but below the ears wavy and curled, with a bluish and bright reflection, flowing over his shoulders. It is parted in two on the top of the head, after the pattern of the Nazarenes. His brow is smooth and very cheerful, with a face without wrinkle or spot, embellished by a slightly reddish complexion. His nose and mouth are faultless. His beard is abundant, of the color of his hair, not long, but

University of Chicago Press, 1993), 81, 86.

[49] Koerner, 80-104, 103.

[50] Gerhard Wolf and Giovanni Morello, *Il Voto di Christo* (Milan, Electa, 2000), 221.

> divided at the chin. His aspect is simple and mature, his eyes are changeable and bright. He is terrible in his reprimands, sweet and amiable in his admonitions, cheerful without loss of gravity. He was never known to laugh, but often to weep. His stature is straight, his hands and arms beautiful to behold. His conversation is grave, infrequent, and modest. He is the most beautiful among the children of men.[51]

It seems possible that the Lentulus Letter was drawn from the same sources as a thirteenth-century Latin manuscript of the *Secretum Secretorum* found in the library of Cerne Abbey. The text consisted of an additional end-chapter describing Christ's physical appearance through many of the ideal or "best" physiognomic traits presented in the preceding treatise. While the language of the Lentulus Letter is not always identical to this earlier description of Christ, it may represent an attempt to legitimize or support the practice of physiognomy and its ability to represent "truth," in this case the outward truth of Christ's perfection and virtuous inner nature. Like the Lentulus Letter, the text describes his medium stature and erect posture, bright eyes, parted beard, complexion of "moderate redness," and the long, straight hair which curled past the ears. It also attributed to him a "sanguine, Jovian" temperament in accordance with contemporaneous belief in the bodily humors.[52]

Interest in this "knowledge" of the face of Christ was widespread, and provided a new source of material for artists like Holbein and his contemporaries. Portrait medals presenting a likeness of Christ, with his face in profile in the style of Renaissance rulers and the antique examples they emulated, had already appeared in the middle of the fifteenth century. The earliest examples may have been created for the court at Ferrara,

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[51] Anthony J. Maas, "Publius Lentulus," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1913), I-610b.
[52] Ziegler, "Text and Context," 171-172.

by two artists renowned for their portrait medals: Pisanello sketched one version, and Matteo di Pasti cast another.[53] It was from medals of this type that Hans Burgkmair derived his profile design for a new printing of the Lentulus Letter, which by that time held a particularly high status north of the Alps. A fine manuscript edition of the letter was sent by Pope Alexander to Frederick the Wise of Saxony in 1500, while at the same time a German translation was published in Augsburg by Erhart Ratdolt. Burgkmair's illustration, above Ratdolt's translation, was included in a 1511 schoolbook from the Nuremberg press of Johannes Weisenburger. This image, among other "authentic" portraits of Christ that drew on the same written description, provided important models for artists throughout the following centuries.[54] [Figure 2.6] Burgkmair's woodcut profile of Christ is highly meticulous, capturing fine details in the hair and beard, with an emphasis on clearly-defined facial features. This print, and a 1512 broadsheet for which he took a second medal as a model [Figure 2.7], creates a mutually reinforcing claim to authenticity: those who doubt the truth of the image are referred to the historic legitimacy of the text, while those who doubt the text can be reassured by the seeming authority of the image above.[55]

This "accurate" portrait of Christ, embodied in the form of a human male, provides more than a piece of historical evidence or a pure image for devotion. It models physical and spiritual unity, a body in harmony between inner and outer being. The duplication and widespread distribution of these painted and cast portraits gives weight to the idea of physiognomic thought as 'cultural currency,' widely known and engaged with throughout every level of contemporaneous culture. As much as these medal and printed

[53] Wolf, 215-216.
[54] Koerner, 116-118.

portraits were derived from classical and Renaissance examples, they also set a new and authoritative model for humanity itself, an archetype of perfection celebrated by humanists as the "most beautifully constructed of all sons of men."[56] Christ's ideal image accentuates and clarifies the imperfections present in all others, but his form opens a unique path to self-awareness. In the words of the fifteenth-century Strasbourg reformer Johann Geiler von Kaiserberg, "Only the one who… perceives his own body becomes aware of how far he is from perfection."[57] In these terms, physiognomy provides not only an urgently needed self-awareness, but also the potential for salvation.

Travel, Identity, and Social Mobility

Self-awareness, and in turn awareness of the selves of others, forms a third portion of this discussion framed within the new mobility of people in the early modern period. Holbein's career would lead him on numerous journeys throughout his life: first, from Augsburg to Basel as a journeyman artist, later from Basel to France for a brief time, and later still to England on multiple occasions, where he worked for the humanist Thomas More and the English royal court.[58] His role as international traveler was not unique. Increased travel and trade had thrust many regions of Europe into close proximity by the sixteenth century, following routes that continued to be traced by pilgrims all across Europe, especially in jubilee years like 1500. The rapid growth of cities, based in large part on mercantile exchange and commerce, corresponded with the development of regional and international markets, drawing isolated villages and towns into new spheres

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[55] Wolf, 220-221.
[56] Koerner, 104-106, 116.
[57] Groebner, 373.
[58] Sander, "Artistic Development," 14-18.

of communication. New patterns of interaction required new social strategies for creating, building and sustaining relationships. One such strategy was the proliferation of identity papers- passports, travel documents, bills of health, letters of reference and other credentials, which supported the claims of their subjects and provided those that they encountered with a sense of official legitimacy. To these we can also add registries of slaves and indentured servants, and warrants for arrest. Interestingly, all of these papers increasingly recorded and codified the physical appearances of their subjects. Skin color, scars and marks, clothes, and physical attributes were documented to attest to the authenticity of the bearer who held them or was described by them.[59]

Specifically, the term *complexio*, or complexion, appears in these records with some frequency, having evolved in meaning from the combination of bodily humors (blood, bile, phlegm, gall) to a collective reading of internal and external physiognomic signs. Fourteenth- and fifteenth-century accounts of slaves sold and freed in Italy listed their height, build, the shape and features of their faces, birthmarks, and skin color ranging from olive, yellow, brown, black, purplish, greenish, and red. Valentin Groebner has examined the close associations in contemporaneous literature between skin color and bodily humors, drawn less from modern conceptions of "race" than from ancient categorizations like those found in the works of Aristotle, Pliny and Vitruvius. Varying climates and geographies of the foreign world were seen to produce individuals of corresponding temperament. In hot southern regions, black and yellow bile might produce a "greenish" skin tone and "wise, weak, swarthy" individuals, while the cold regions far to the North produced fair-skinned persons too high in moisture, resulting in

[59] Groebner, 364.

"thick" humors and "sluggish" minds.[60] Here, skin color is not simply an outside indication or classification, but a reflection of internal character and composition, seemingly well-suited to physiognomic interpretation.

Despite the supposedly "factual" nature of identity documents, their usage was not free of implied meaning or prejudice. Gypsies, recorded as having dark skin and curly hair and originating in the East, were widely believed to have the ability to alter their appearances, and so in the mid-sixteenth century were stripped of their travel documents by legislation of the Holy Roman Empire under the accusation that any papers held by such a person would be, by nature, falsified.[61] Suspicions regarding travelers were common and pervasive. In 1530, the English Parliament passed an act that set forth prohibitions and punishments for roaming "beggars and vagabonds," though this was so widely defined as to include pardoners, shipmen, and itinerant scholars from the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Fear of plague and contagion spurred some prejudices, while others were stirred by religious difference and class tension. Interestingly, some of these nomadic individuals- astrologers, physicians and quacks, magicians- were regarded with suspicion for their associations with fortune-telling and those arts which interpreted bodily signs, such as chiromancy (palm reading) or metoposcopy (reading of lines on the forehead.) "Physiognomers," also recorded as *physiognomantiers* or *fisnomiers*, appear less frequently, but were targeted alongside other practitioners of divinatory or diagnostic arts, earning inclusion on Henry VIII's list of those "superstitious folk" whose habits bordered heresy. It is possible that physiognomy's ability to cut through layers of constructed meaning (and constructed

[60]Ibid, 376-379.
[61] Ibid, 374-376.

identity, as we shall see in the fourth chapter of this project) may have complicated its use in the hands of those marginalized by social hierarchies. Non-literate practitioners, often gypsies or travelers, were primarily singled out for persecution by the authorities. Although it may have been difficult to separate entirely literate from non-literate physiognomy as it traveled between elite and popular spheres, Martin Porter has suggested a link between the evolution of the sixteenth-century culture of the book and an increasing suspicion against "folk" physiognomy as an illiterate or non-literate knowledge system lacking codification and regulation. It is possible that this suspicion was partially based in the wider difficulty of establishing credentials in this period: a second act of Parliament in 1530 warned against those "feyning" knowledge of the art, in order to deceive their victims with stories of "destenyes deceases (sic.) & fortunes."[62]

Despite any misgivings about its abuses and falsifications, physiognomy was unceasingly popular throughout the sixteenth century. Vernacular works, mostly anonymous, circulated in great numbers. One German *Complexionsbuch*, drawn from varied sources, was printed and re-printed in editions dating from every year between 1511 and 1517, and enjoyed twelve additional reprints before 1550.[63] Texts and pamphlets quoted a multitude of earlier authorities, from Michael Scot to the *Secretum Secretorum*, playing on an early modern love of lists, references, and allusions to classical origins. These references increasingly expanded to include visual examples, first-hand observations, and historical accounts. Some social uneasiness seems to have driven their production, or perhaps been encouraged by the same. For those anxious to uncover concealed enemies, size up potential business partners, or quickly assess a new

[62] Porter, 130-139.
[63] Ibid, 128-129.

contact, physiognomy provided a comprehensive and logical method. Some texts even boasted of their ability to expose "reckless disgraceful people," presumably those important to avoid at all costs (or at the cost of one's own reputation).[64]

Physiognomy was not, however, limited to the discovery of potential threats. A *Complexionsbuchlein* printed in 1536 and attributed to Bartolomeus Cocles recited the tale of Hippocrates and Physionomyas, yet for a closing section on the composition of German bodies turned to the histories of Tacitus. The classical historian was often quoted in this period in the context of German national pride and identity. According to the text of the *Complexionsbüchlein*, despite the Germans' barbaric history and all the corresponding physical indicators of this behavior, and in contrast to other barbaric races dwelling still in their natural state, the German people were marked by ingenuity and ambition and so overcame their original nature (and Nature itself) to become masters of progress, war, and invention.[65] One can imagine a German reader turning to the mirror after such a passage. Not only an echo of Hippocrates' virtuous overcoming, and of the Christian faith said to transform natural vice, physiognomy here serves the role of self-classification, national identity, and the formation of a group character. The early modern period was marked by a self-consciousness regarding identity, an awareness of its potential for manipulation. I will return to this theme in greater depth in the fourth chapter of this project, as I approach Holbein's portraits and the shaping of personal or public identities.

The cultural climate of the sixteenth-century North was one in which physiognomic theory, in one of its many guises, might as easily have been discussed on a

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[64] Groebner, 372.
[65] Ibid, 380-381.

street-corner as recounted from a pulpit, dissected in a Latin text, recorded in a travel document, illustrated in a vernacular pamphlet, or “read” from an image. From simple proverbs to the most complex theological analogies, physiognomy served and shaped a rapidly expanding world in its search for revealing truths. Holbein’s role as a maker of images situates him at the nexus of these concerns. Having established physiognomy’s place in a broader culture, I will now narrow my focus. The two following chapters will address Holbein’s prints and portraits, respectively, exploring their disparate strategies and claims to authenticity without losing sight of their interconnected creation. In the next chapter, as I move to discuss Holbein’s *Pictures of Death*, I will explore more fully the authority of prints and their role in establishing canons of knowledge, including those relating to the classification of character types and social classes.

CHAPTER 3:
READING FACES IN THE *PICTURES OF DEATH*

In this chapter, I will expand upon Holbein's connections to physiognomic theory as I examine his most famous woodcuts, the *Pictures of Death* (begun 1526). Cycles of this type depicted various individuals' encounters with a personification of Death, often accompanied by verses on mortality. Holbein's images are particularly lively and visually complex. As Peter Parshall has noted, it is precisely that complexity and their ability to stand alone as visual narratives which makes them images of their time, ambiguous and layered, concerned with individual self-reflection and the capacity for multiple readings.[66] I argue that the format of these images, and Holbein's concern for detailed visual description, provides a wealth of physiognomic traits and distinct physical types which can potentially be "read" as indicators not simply of class or rank, but also of character, and therefore of inner nature. Drawing on textual and visual sources, I will examine contemporaneous stereotypes and popular attitudes relating to the professions and characters displayed within this series, linking and contrasting these portrayals with sixteenth-century understandings of physiognomic theory. Additionally, I will explore the developing role of prints in the creation, dissemination, and authentication of systems of knowledge such as physiognomy.

The late medieval concept of the "Dance of Death" originates in several traditions.[67] One was surely the liturgical dramas of the *danse macabre*, a vivid enactment of the inevitability of death and the need for repentance, intended to accompany and highlight spoken sermons. A second potential contributor is the *ars*

[66] Peter Parshall, "Hans Holbein's Pictures of Death," in *Hans Holbein: Paintings, Prints and Reception*.
[67] Natalie Zemon Davis, "Holbein's Pictures of Death and the Reformation at Lyons," *Studies in the Renaissance* 3 (1956): 97-98.

moriendi, illustrated manuals that outlined the temptations and pitfalls experienced by the Christian soul in the process of dying. The Dance of Death emerged as a new model for exploring mortality, a favorite subject of the late Middle Ages. Its earliest recorded visual interpretation took the form of a monumental mural decorating the arcades facing the Parisian cemetery of the Holy Innocents. Painted in 1424, the mural and its accompanying verses comprised a kind of processional "dance" in which Death arrived for each dancer in turn, heedless of their social prominence or worldly associations. Kings and popes participated at the head of the dance, followed by lesser nobility and the ranks of the church, who were in turn followed by members of the merchant and trade classes, and finally by laborers and those of lesser status. Laity and clergy appeared intermingled, while no women appeared at all. In 1485, the printer Guyot Marchand produced a volume of woodcut illustrations after the mural. A second edition, which added female characters, was published both on its own and in combined editions, and a Latin re-print of the French followed in 1490. Mathieu Huss's *Grande Danse Macabre* was published in Lyons in 1499, and the popular fascination with the Dance of Death continued throughout the sixteenth century.[68]

Holbein's Dance of Death, printed in 1538 as *Les Simulachres & Historiées Faces de la Mort*, represented both a continuation of this established theme and a new vision for the subject. The project was commissioned by Melchior and Gaspard Trechsel, sons of a German printer operating in Lyons, for the publishers and booksellers Jean and François Frellon. The actual block-cutting was done in Basel by Hans Lützelburger, one of the most skilled block cutters of the time and one of the few

[68] Ibid, 97-98. See also William M. Ivins, Jr., "Introduction," in *The Dance of Death: Printed at Paris in 1490*, (Washington: Library of Congress, 1945), viii-x.

capable of carving tremendous detail on such a minute scale. Single-sheet prints of the images alone, in incomplete sets of forty, were released before 1538, probably before the blocks left Basel. The first "complete" printing included forty-one images completed by Lützelburger before his death in 1526, while a later edition of 1547 incorporated twelve additional woodcuts by a different hand. The images were accompanied by conventional verses and biblical quotations similar to those present in earlier versions of the Dance of Death. Curiously, Holbein's name was absent from the work, which credited only the block cutter and publishers.[69] It has been suggested that this may be due in part to satirical elements within the work, combined with the predominantly Catholic sentiment in Lyons at the time and Holbein's recent appointment to a court position with an English Protestant monarch.[70]

A satirical and even highly critical undercurrent appears to varying degrees in most versions of the Dance of Death, despite the hierarchical structure of the dance itself. Verses alongside the mural at the Klingenthal convent in Basel, painted around 1440 (and later duplicated or imitated in 1480 at the Dominican's churchyard in the same city), include a negative remark on the practice of indulgences accompanying an image of the pope.[71] Similarities in sequencing, composition and subject matter indicate this earlier work contributed to Holbein's own designs, though it is likely that he also looked to numerous printed sources.[72] The *Pictures of Death* were repeatedly utilized by Catholic and Protestant alike. The1538 edition was prefaced by an essay from Jean de Vauzelles, a prominent Catholic cleric, while a 1542 Latin version, translated by George Oemler (a

[69] Stephanie Buck, "The Images of Death and the Triumph of Life," in *Hans Holbein the Younger: The Basel Years, 1515-1532*, 117-118.
[70] Parshall, "Hans Holbein's Pictures of Death," 87.
[71] Davis, 99-100. 107-109, 118-120.

friend of Martin Luther and Philipp Melanchthon), replaced this introduction with a translator's note and the inclusion of an anonymous quasi-Lutheran treatise entitled "Medicine of the Soul." The fact that church censure fell solely on the 1542 text suggests that such a response had more to do with the inclusion of the latter treatise, liberally borrowed from the writings of Lutheran pastor Urbanus Rhegius, than with any perceived irreverence in Holbein's images.[73]

Comparisons between Holbein's Dance of Death and their predecessors reveal a shift from a medieval conception to a model more firmly rooted in early modern discourses. The impersonality of Death, and its ultimate inevitability, defined the tone of early versions. Figures from the 1490 Latin edition of the *Dance of Death* are already divorced from the earthly realm by the vagueness of their setting, a flat decorative garden framed with architectural portals. The pairs of the *Archbishop and Knight*, and *Abbot and Magistrate*, while rich in linear detail, offer no clues to their earthly behavior, good or bad, nor to their spiritual destination. [Figures 3.1 - 3.2] Though their accompanying verses offer some criticisms or warnings (the Abbot, in particular, is described as rotund and informed that the largest are the "first to rot"), the images are largely restrained and dignified, emulating participants in a courtly medieval procession. The abbot is not depicted visually as he is mockingly described in the text.[74] The four characters represent a limited range of facial and physical descriptors: all are roughly the same height and build, their ages indicated by the addition of lines and wrinkles around the mouth and chin, and only slight variations in the shapes of mouth and nose. Their function as symbolic players or stock characters in a universal dance is fulfilled by their essentially

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[72] Buck, 119-120.
[73] Davis, 107-109, 111-113, 121-130.

neutral or generalized physical representation.

In contrast, Holbein's *Abbot* and *Judge* [Figures 1.2 & 3.3] provide distinct facial details—facial details that indeed resonate with physiognomic discourses of the day. His Abbot is a corpulent figure who matches the conventional description, but Holbein has expanded on the older texts by portraying him also with a downward-sloping nose nearly overlapping his upper lip, furrowed brows, a drooping mouth, and large jowls that partially obscure a thick neck. The Judge, slightly smaller in build, displays a broad "Roman" or "Aquiline" nose, a thick upper lip, double-chin, and fine, straight hair. Unlike their counterparts, Holbein's figures are placed in recognizable contemporaneous settings that reflect their social roles: his King banquets, while his Judge sits in decision with two petitioners before him. Likewise, his Lawyer, Physician, Merchant, Sailor, Preacher, Farmer and others are depicted in the midst of their familiar professional activities. Holbein's images do not refrain from commenting on corrupt practices, nor do they leave narrative detail or commentary to the text below: his Judge and Town Councilor both turn away from a poor man to attend a rich one, and his Monk resists Death to clutch feverishly at a full donation box.[75] Their virtuosic detail and intimate scale demand close looking and study, while the introduction of narratives and character to the images themselves invites reflection and analysis. Holbein's vision of Death is directed towards the beholder, relying on their interpretation to unlock and unpack the many potential meanings.[76] This personalization of Death directs, and even requires, a

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[74] Ibid, 99.
[75] Davis, 101-104.
[76] Christiane Hertel, "Dis/Continuities in Dresden's Dances of Death," *The Art Bulletin* 82, No. 1 (2000): 87-88.

more personal response.[77]

Who was Holbein's audience? Certainly both Catholics and Protestants, and an international clientele: the book was published in Latin and French, and the Frellon brothers secured their German distribution "under the Arms of Cologne" from the first. Parshall has correctly suggested that the sophistication of the images directs us to a similarly sophisticated and elite audience, one equipped to decipher and appreciate their complexity.[78] This would seem to coincide with the receptive audience for physiognomic theory, at least the learned variety that predominated in scholarship. In being pocket-size, however, Holbein's *Pictures of Death*, also shares aspects of small scale with the more popular vernacular physiognomic manuals by authors like Bartholomaeus Cocles, illustrated with inexpensive woodcuts and sold on the market to broader appeal.[79] Holbein's woodcuts are of a more refined quality than those, but his *Pictures of Death* held wide appeal. Parshall notes the enduring popularity of this work among humanists, scholars and educators of northern universities as an *alba amicorum*.[80] In these heavily personalized 'albums of friendship,' images (usually cycles like Holbein's, or emblem books) were rebound with blank pages and inserts from other volumes, and offered to visitors and friends to record thoughts, notes and personal inscriptions.

That Holbein's visual strategy would encourage individual reading and interpretation seems fitting for the social circumstances in which these images were created for an increasingly anonymous public. The images themselves do not directly support one reading or doctrine over another, but rather present a narrative ambiguity or

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[77] Ivins, *The Dance of Death*, x.
[78] Parshall, "Hans Holbein's Pictures of Death," 85.
[79] Porter, 108.
[80] Parshall, "Hans Holbein's Pictures of Death," 87.

obliqueness that supports multiple (and simultaneous) interpretations. On one hand, this can be seen as a “survival strategy” by which to navigate the increasingly polemical climate of the Reformation, in which images were increasingly subject to scrutiny. But it is also an appeal to the beholder to search for hidden meaning, a period-appropriate call to personal moral reflection, and an opportunity to wrestle with dense, and vitally important, philosophical questions on mortality and the state of the soul.[81] Recalling the words of the preacher Johannes Geiler von Kaiserberg, it was thought that by this introspective and rigorous process, one might come to self-knowledge and self-betterment. Holbein’s pairing of heightened descriptive detail in the physical representation of his subjects with these questions of internal character now becomes the pathway by which I will explore the potential for a physiognomic reading of the *Pictures of Death*. As the constraints of time and scope will prevent me from remarking on each image at length, my primary subjects have been selected from a range of secular and religious ranks: the Abbot, the Judge, the Monk, the Fool, and the King.

Physiognomic Indicators and Holbein’s *Pictures of Death*

As my first subject, I will address Holbein’s image of the Abbot, centered between two translations, Latin and French, of a Biblical passage from Proverbs: “He will die, for lack of discipline (instruction), and in the multitudes of his folly he shall be deceived.” His features are slightly distorted by the agitated resistance he provides, struggling to free himself from Death’s grip in a manner not altogether befitting a cleric certain of his virtue.[82] The text no longer makes reference to his physical form or weight,

[81] Ibid, 87-88.
[82] Davis, 103.

but Holbein has chosen to represent the Abbot as a man of some great size, with a large and rounded face [Figure 1.2]. The treatise according to Aristotle identified several of these features as traits of an "insensible man," listing "the jaws big and fleshy… neck thickset; the face fleshy and rather long," while a dissembler is "fat about the face, with wrinkles around the eyes."[83] Polemon also had much to say about such features, claiming that thickness in the neck "indicate[s] evil and bad anger, and remoteness from learning." Equally damning, "much flesh on the cheeks… indicates drunkenness and laziness," while a "very large head indicates lack of knowledge and understanding."[84] A 1528 English translation of the *Secretum Secretorum* tersely characterized this physique as: "Shorte, thycke, fete and flesshy, betokeneth to be folysshe, and full of injury."[85] Yet these "negative" traits are not so straightforward. For the Pseudo-Aristotle, a man who is "robust-looking, well covered with plenty of moist flesh" may also be found to be "mild."[86] Polemon regards a drooping mouth as a potential sign of both weakness and the more desired humility.[87] And despite the negative association with a thickset neck, the *Secretum Secretorum* advises against the reverse, as well: "He that hath a sklender necke, is hote, deceytfull, and folysshe."[88]

Satirical images of clerics in this period regularly tread on vicious and unflattering ground. Accusations of gluttony, intemperance and drunkenness were particularly popular approaches by which to discredit church figures. An anonymous depiction of an abbot from 1480, so inebriated that he reclines in a monumental jawbone drawn like a sled, was given a second treatment in 1530 by Hans Weiditz, well into the Reformation

[83] Swain, 645-647.
[84] Robert Hoyland, trans., "The Leiden Polemon," in *Seeing the Face, Seeing the Soul,* 411, 419, 421.
[85] Robert Copland, trans., *The Secrete of Secretes* (London: Robert Copland, 1528.)
[86] Swain, 647.

conflict. [Figures 3.4 - 3.5] Weiditz's image increases the weight and fleshiness of the figure, emphasizing the overfull drinking vessels and the effort of the sled-pullers, conflating the immoral nature of drunkenness and sloth with the physical traits of size and girth. Another related theme was that of the clergy as "devourers," as in the cover illustration for Pamphilus Gengenbach's *Die Todtenfresser* ("Devourers of the Dead.") Arguments against the church's profiting from services to the dying are here gruesomely interpreted as a pope, bishop, nun and monk partaking in a literal feast upon a corpse [Figure 3.6]. The image recalls similarly didactic secular illustrations against the vices of gluttony and overindulgence in drink.[89] Holbein's image participates in this tradition, yet unlike these overtly polemical examples, the Abbot holds no cup, utensil, or any other symbolic indication of indulgence or immoderation. The text's suggestion that the Abbot lacks "discipline" encourages a negative appraisal, one that would have been specifically familiar to contemporaneous audiences on both sides of the Reformation split. Yet a final reading of character relies on physical description, one that is to some degree mutable and subject to interpretation.

Holbein's Judge is preceded by a quotation from the second chapter of the book of Amos: "And I will cut off the judge from the midst thereof" [Figure 3.4]. He is seated between two standing men, the left in simple clothes with parted hair of medium length, the right in more elaborate dress with a thin, short face and a full purse open in his hand. The Judge directs all his attention to the latter figure, with a palm extended and an expectant gaze. This has been interpreted as a sign that he has chosen to rule in favor of a

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[87] Hoyland, 415.
[88] Copland, *Secrete of Secretes*.
[89] Christiane Andersson, "Popular Imagery in German Reformation Broadsheets," in *Print and Culture in the Renaissance*, ed. Gerald Tyson and Sylvia Wagonheim (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1986),

rich man over a poor one.[90] The Judge's features are sharply defined, particularly his prominent nose. According to the Pseudo-Aristotle, when such a nose is "strongly aquiline and demarcated from the forehead by a well-defined articulation, it indicates a proud soul, as in the eagle."[91] Pride is mentioned again in relation to the "slightly deep-set" eyes, invoking the proud soul of the lion.[92] But an aphorism provided by the 1474 *Liber de homine* of Girolamo Manfredi adds: "A hawked nose that boweth to the upper lips signifieth malice, deceit, untruth and lechery."[93] This enlarged upper lip is also subject to strong interpretation, and represents one "fond of abuse" and charged with "folly," a trait associated with dogs, apes and mules.[94]

Folly was a favorite topic of the early modern satirist, and it found no greater outlet than Sebastian Brandt's 1494 *Ship of Fools*. In its text and illustrations, it catalogued over 100 types of fools, among them those obsessed with money, love, food and drink, and other vices. In its pages is also a personification of Justice, shown as a blindfolded woman with symbolic scales and swords of judgment. Yet in this case, the ends of the blindfold are held by a Fool. [Figure 3.7] This pointed irreverence towards the figure of Justice was part of an ongoing dialogue on power, authority and corruption. Humanists and other writers of this period condemned dishonest judges in the harshest possible terms. Erasmus, in his *Education of a Christian Prince* (1516), referenced Plato as he charged that those who enforce the law must be "the least corruptible of men." Further on, he laments their interest in payment, specifically relating the demise of the noble profession with the acquisition of money: "This profession was once the preserve

143-146.
[90] Davis, 101.
[91] Swain, 655.
[92] Ibid, 657.

of the best men in society, bringing little profit but much honor; but nowadays the profit motive has corrupted it."[95] Holbein's Judge is presented in the act of receiving funds from a petitioner, an image that holds damaging connotations for a viewer already inclined to skepticism towards the profession. This evaluation can be upheld in a reading of his features. A viewer with strong personal associations to the practice of law or the enforcement of authority might be encouraged to mindfulness towards improving their own habits.

The figure of the Monk [Figure 3.8] receives a similar treatment by Holbein to both the Abbot and the Judge: the Monk's panicked response to Death and attachment to a donation box echo their respective follies. Holbein provides the Monk with a medium build and stature, a face of middling slenderness, a nose that broadens at the base, and long ears. The treatise of the Pseudo-Aristotle remarks favorably on the moderate size of the face, indicating that such a width is best, but states that a "nose thick at the tip means laziness, as witness cattle." Likewise, "Men with… large ears [have] the disposition of asses."[96] Curiously, both the cow and the ass were mobilized by Reformers as symbolic elements of anti-clerical propaganda. The so-called "Monk Calf," a monstrous birth discovered in Saxony in 1522, was repeatedly depicted in broadsheets as a deformed calf with a bald spot and a thick flap of skin overhanging its back. The calf derived its popular nickname from these features, which purportedly resembled a tonsure and cowl. The workshop of Lucas Cranach the Younger produced a striking image of the animal in 1523, the same year in which it reappeared in numerous polemical anti-clerical pamphlets

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[93] Porter, 214-215.
[94] Swain, 647.
[95] Rummel, 270.
[96] Swain, 655-657.

by Martin Luther and Philip Melanchthon. The work also featured the "Papal Ass," a famously grotesque creature with the head of a donkey rumored to have been found on the banks of the Tiber in 1496[97] [Figures 3.9 – 3.10]. Holbein's image of the Monk does not overtly indicate either of these creatures, nor their able-bodied beastly counterparts, with the exception of a potential physiognomic interpretation. The image is clear and its narrative distinct: one does not need to read the Monk's features to comprehend his attitude, nor to sympathize with or condemn him, but an understanding of physiognomic theory enriches the image and links it to previous works. This would have required an audience familiar with both Reformation visual conventions and a scholarly knowledge of physiognomy, which I have previously demonstrated was very likely the case. Part of the rewards of Holbein's cycle is the learned viewers' pleasure of recognizing or attributing a physiognomic meaning to the images and perhaps also of confirming previously-held beliefs or biases.

The image of the Fool was among those twelve images added to the cycle in the printing of 1547, one which has been commonly viewed as consistent with the style and conception of the original images and therefore confidently attributed to Holbein[98] [Figure 3.11]. It is also a figure who appears most welcoming to a physiognomic reading. Though the Fool carries an air-filled bladder, a comic prop often attached to the Fool's bauble or staff, and the dangling ears of his pointed hood are visible above his shoulder, the hood has been pulled away, granting the beholder total access to his facial and cranial forms. The Fool's pointing gesture also serves to advance the viewer's eye directly to the face. The Fool's small, egg-like skull, arching eyebrows, wide-open mouth, long ears and

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[97] Andersson, 122-132.
[98] Buck, 118.

curling nose contribute to a distorted visage. Rolandus Scriptoris, in his *Reductorium physonomie* of the fifteenth century, remarks on the intellectual poverty and lack of sense among those with small, spherical heads, through which images do not have enough time to travel to form memories or perceptions.[99] Pseudo-Aristotle also claims that a peaked head indicates shamelessness and directs attention to the outward arch of the brow: "Eyebrows that droop on the nasal and rise on the temporal side, silliness, as seen in swine."[100] The Fool's wide stance, with knees and feet pointed in opposite directions, accentuates the lifted garments that lay bare his genitals. This stance is also considered to be characteristically feminine, while his sideways gait and turned-away body is identified as an obsequious or servile "gesture of the flatterer."[101]

The Fool's large and exaggerated nose, as well as the open step and unflatteringly bared genitals, participate in a long tradition of "folk" physiognomy and humor which held that the size and deformity of the nose was directly proportional to overt sexual impropriety and lewdness. The large nose's association with the male member was also a recurring feature. Though one of the most famous representations of oversized noses and foolish behavior—Hans Sebald Beham's "Nose Dance" woodcut, accompanied by verses by Hans Sachs—would not be published until 1534, the concept was deeply entrenched in popular culture by the beginning of the sixteenth century. The German satirist Thomas Murner included a woodcut of a large-nosed woman in his *Logica memoratiua* (1509), claiming that all flaws and faults in her immoderate personality were rooted in, and symbolized by, her sizeable olfactory organ. A woodcut series by Hans Weiditz

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[99] Joseph Ziegler, "Heredity and Physiognomy," in *L'hérédité à la fin du Moyen Age.* Colloque, *Calenda*, (31 March 2003, http://calenda.revues.org/nouvelle2900.html), 13-14.
[100] Swain, 659.
[101] Ibid, 657- 659.

published in 1521 provided satirical images of various professions and also took pleasure in deriding the nose. The humor in his image of the *Physician and Assistant* relies on a depiction of the two individuals with gargantuan noses and misshapen bodies, while the "assistant" wears a cap resembling a fool's hood[102] [Figure 3.12]. Foolishness was clearly among those natural or characteristic traits that could be distinguished by conventional physical signs. A physiognomic reading of Holbein's Fool would come to a similar conclusion, whether one relied on scholarly or folk physiognomy for source material.

While I have focused predominately on negative traits, there are a number of images that could provide a neutral or even positive physiognomic reading by certain signs. One of these is the image of the King, under whose image the French verse begins, "Thus today he is King, tomorrow he will be in a closed tomb" [Figure 3.13]. It is believed that this particular figure is drawn to evoke Francis I, King of France when Holbein's cycle was designed and published. That he is shown seated at a feast table as he is approached by the skeleton of Death has been taken by some as a negative indication of privilege or indulgence.[103] A well-known 1525 portrait of Francis I, painted by Jean Clouet, shows some similarities in style of dress and in the long, slender nose and small mouth of the king. [Figure 3.14] However, Holbein's King possesses a conspicuously forked beard in contrast to the rounded beard of Clouet's portrait. The parted beard, as mentioned in the second chapter, was a distinct feature of the Lentulus Letter and a convention for the depiction of Christ, the most perfect of all physiognomic models.[104] Here, the viewer is not limited to class indicators or setting in a reading of

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[102] Alison Stewart, *Before Bruegel: Sebald Beham and the Origins of Peasant Festival Imagery* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2008), 170-171.
[103] Davis, 101.
[104] Koerner, 103.

character: virtue or nobility may be known through physical traits either outside of, or in combination with, symbols of status.

As objectionable as it may seem to a certain twenty-first-century sensibility, close associations between physical beauty and virtue existed for the early modern viewer. Deformity and irregularity of form conversely held strong connotations of vice and deformity of the soul.[105] Yet physiognomy was a complex system of signs allowing for a degree of room for interpretation and examination: as with the case of Hippocrates, it was possible to be ugly and virtuous, and the reverse was also dangerously true. One's reading might also in part be influenced by one's own individual status, group identity, or political and religious affiliations. This limited selection of images within the *Pictures of Death* has provided a wealth of physiognomic indicators that correspond to, or participate in, contemporaneous stereotypes, iconographies and discourses. The physiognomic ambiguity present in many of Holbein's images may appear problematic, but I believe this to be a potential asset: the *Pictures of Death* do not function as illustrations of a physiognomic treatise, and therefore they have no need to assert their authority as literal illustrations. Their flexibility and multiplicity allows them "openness" in their ability to interact with a canon of physiognomic knowledge in the eyes of a range of beholders.

Prints and Systems of Knowledge

Holbein's dense and complex prints are the work of an artist attuned to theories of representation and appearance, yet the importance of printed images to the physiognomic culture of the sixteenth century has received limited attention. As we have seen, physiognomy was ubiquitous in this period, emerging from spheres as various as

theology, art theory, social exchange, and the natural sciences. It should come as no surprise that the work of artists and printmakers such as Holbein, Cranach, and Weiditz contain features that might have been read as "physiognomic," or that point to the revealing union of soul and body: the medium of print was one particularly suited to a dialogue with physiognomic theory. The role of prints in disseminating canons of knowledge and their unique claims to the representation of visual truth interact with physiognomic theory at multiple points.

First, prints were considered a highly suitable format for the dissemination and analysis of scientific and empirical knowledge.[106] The sixteenth-century preoccupation with the encyclopedic compilation of information was well-served by prints. Physiognomy was among those disciplines whose dissemination and systematization was assisted by the development of prints and printed books. A 1536 edition of the *Physionomiae et Chiromantiae Compendium* of Bartolomeus Cocles contained numerous woodcut illustrations of stock physiognomic types, cataloguing their facial features and appearances in legible, linear images for study. [Figures 3.15 – 3.16] While anatomy, botany, astrology and the host of the natural sciences were all subject to enthusiastic interest in the cataloging of knowledge, this desire to codify or collect also extended to more fanciful or literary subjects. *The Ship of Fools* and its contemporaneous equivalents (including Hans Sachs' later *Book of Trades* from1568) provided "taxonomies" of fools and popular roles, humorously cataloguing their features and foibles for the better identification (or the scathing condemnation) of their real-life counterparts.[107] The

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[105] Porter, 184-186.
[106] See for example, William Ivins' argument for prints as "exactly repeatable pictorial statements" in *Prints and Visual Communication*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1969), 2.
[107] Glenn Ehrstine, "Foolectomies, Fool Enemas, and the Renaissance Anatomy of Folly," in *Fecal Matters*

similarities in format between printed 'catalog' texts of this type, and Holbein's *Pictures of Death*, may indicate that viewers could potentially have seen them as participating in a parallel tradition.

Holbein's *Pictures of Death* do not act purely as illustrations of physiognomic theory. However, a physiognomic reading of many of the images within his cycle may be seen to interact with established thought or long-held beliefs, contributing to and reinforcing an existing canon of physiognomic knowledge. Their authority stems in part from their high level of detail and finish, but also from their role as prints. As a medium of multiples, the printed image contains several unique claims to authenticity, ones not shared by paintings or drawings in their singular forms. By their repetition and duplication, prints were self-reinforcing. The widespread presence of a printed image contributes to a belief in its trustworthiness—or creates the conditions for its own truth-value—and allows the information contained within to be independently evaluated by a multitude of parties.[108] The production of large quantities of prints under the auspices or imprimaturs of professional publishing houses further contributed to their legitimacy. Many publishers were granted their privileges by governing bodies or rulers, and had an interest in maintaining a good reputation among their audiences and patrons.[109]

Prints also were understood to have value associated with the practice of eye-witness accounts. Their ability to be created with relative speed, great graphic legibility, and often in conjunction with movable type made woodcuts, in particular, eminently suitable for the reporting of current events, the spreading of urgent "new" knowledge and

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in Early Modern Literature and Art, Jeff Persels and Russell Ganim, ed., (Burlington: Ashgate, 2004), 96.
[108] David Landau and Peter Parshall, *The Renaissance Print: 1470-1550* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 239.
[109] Charles Talbot, "Prints and the Definitive Image," in *Print and Culture in the Renaissance*, 199.

scientific discovery, or promptly responding to cultural shifts that called for new modes of visual expression. This responsiveness and "first-hand" perspective correspond with the emergence of a new language with which to describe these pictorial strategies. The term *contrafactur*, 'counterfeit,' was brought into additional use in Germany during the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century.[110] It described an image purported to carry authority on the basis of its direct reference to an original or prototype. *Contrafactur* was used by printmakers to confer a special level of veracity or legitimacy. In the case of broadsheets chronicling portents, natural events or monstrous births, the descriptive language often insisted that the subject had been drawn from life, or copied from the work of an artist acting as first-hand witness. As in the case of the Lentulus Letter, the legitimization effect was bi-directional: facts, measurements, dates, times and places included on a print cemented that print's authenticity, while prints served to confirm accounts by their ubiquity and graphic representation.[111] The suitability of prints for recording and creating knowledge can be observed in their popularity as materials for collecting. While some collectors focused on individual artists or schools, many others compiled prints thematically or encyclopedically, building visual canons of knowledge by subject.[112]

But perhaps most relevant for physiognomy is the relationship between printed proof and matrix, or impression and "original." As in the legend of the Veronica Veil, the creation of an image by printed impression means that the impressed image holds the form and an indexical trace of the original; by its nature, the direct contact between

[110] Peter Parshall**,** "Imago contrafacta: Images and Facts in the Northern Renaissance," *Art History* 16 (1993): 554-579
[111] Landau and Parshall, *The Renaissance Print*, 237-239. See also Katharine Park and Lorraine Daston, *Wonders and the Order of Nature: 1150-1750* (New York: Zone Books, 2001), 182-187.

source and duplicate confers a degree of legitimacy on the copy. As Charles Talbot writes, “Giving proof of authenticity by means of an impression was familiar to everyone in the Middle Ages who had seen an official document affixed with a seal.”[113] Beyond the purely physical traces of impression, the print also retained symbolic or invisible traces of its matrix, the power of its presence or authority in borrowed form, as the Veil retained its power as a sacred contact relic. Printmakers were highly cognizant of this connection, as evidenced by the frequency and inventiveness of their *vera icon* images. Albrecht Dürer’s 1516 etching, *Angel with the Sudarium*, provides an especially thoughtful play on this theme: the angel lifts the veil above his head, resembling a printmaker with a fresh proof pulled from the press [Figure 3.17].[114] The evocation of the Veronica Veil also speaks to a second meaning for the impressed image, particularly those reproduced by the means of the printing press. The technological aspect of mechanically reproduced images suggests (however falsely) a work created without human hands, an *acheiropoietoi*, which makes claims to embody its own unmediated truth. The print can act to conceal the hand of its maker in the manner of its creation, and as such the miraculous pressing of the Veronica Veil was seen as a precursor, establishing and authenticating the printed image.[115]

Theories of impression, so vital in the dialogues of early modern print culture, are ultimately central to the discipline of physiognomy. The core concept holds that the body is an impression of the soul, a physical expression of an intangible truth, the signs of

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[112] Peter Parshall, “Prints as Objects of Consumption in Early Modern Europe,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 28, No. 1 (1998): 27-31.
[113] Talbot, 199.
[114] Koerner, 86-103.
[115] Ibid, 84-85, 94-95.

inner nature "ineliminably (sic) inscribed in one's body."[116] This Aristotelian belief was widespread in the sixteenth century and informed systems of knowledge as diverse as theories of vision (impressions, or *species*, formed on the mind by the observation of natural phenomena) to theories of human gestation (impressions formed on the child by the mother). Printing processes, or other reproductive means for forming impressions, such as minting or stamping, also were frequently referenced by contemporaneous writers as tangible examples of this process.[117] The natural science of physiognomy allows the practitioner to read the subject's features with the same informative clarity that a viewer might behold a legibly printed image. Here the soul is matrix, and the body its proof.

In the next chapter, I will turn from prints to portraits, exploring the contemporaneous emphasis placed on observation of nature and the painting of portraits "from life." Examining Holbein's career as a portraitist through several notable examples, I will explore the ramifications of physiognomic theory for a portrait painter, whose role in this period was understood not only to be the creator of an "accurate" likeness, but also the fashioner of a desired visual identity for the sitter. Holbein's portraits, in their virtuosic detail and meticulous rendering of flesh and complexion, attention to physical traits, and suppression of the brushstroke, make certain claims to naturalism and authenticity. I will attempt to construct the reception and understanding of Holbein's 'rhetoric of realism' in the physiognomic culture of the sixteenth century.

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[116] Boys-Stones, 31.
[117] Katharine Park, "Impressed Images: Reproducing Wonders," in *Picturing Science, Producing Art*, ed.

CHAPTER 4:
APPEARANCE AND IDENTITY IN HOLBEIN'S PORTRAITS

In the first chapter of this project, I noted the long association between portraiture and physiognomy, from the portrait of Hippocrates and the myth of Apelles' perfect likenesses, to the instructions of Pliny and Philostratus the Younger to aspiring painters. In every case a strong correlation exists between so-called 'naturalism' in visual representation and the ability of portraits to be read as substitutes for the sitters. Holbein's enduring fame as an exceptional portraitist provides an opportunity to engage with the physiognomic implications of creating a life-like representation of the individual. Beyond the established role of portraits as "substitutions" for absent individuals, commissioned portraits were a powerful tool for self-fashioning and could serve as an expression of power, status, and personal virtue or character. In a culture where costumes and other props were outward marks of one's constructed self and social status, what role might detailed physical description of the face and hands be understood to play in relation to inner character, and how might Holbein's 'naturalism' have been understood in physiognomic terms by contemporary viewers? Holbein's portraits of Erasmus will be of particular importance here as a sitter with demonstrated faith in physiognomic theory, as expressed in such texts as the satirical *In Praise of Folly* and the didactic *Education of Children*. I shall compare Holbein's painted and printed portraits of Erasmus with other known portraits of him "from life" in order to discuss the expectations and claims of contemporaneous portraiture to portray the truth of outer appearances and inner substance.

Caroline Jones and Peter Galison, (New York: Routledge, 1998), 254-268.

Holbein's Portraits and the 'Rhetoric of Realism'

While a detailed profiling of Holbein's long career in portraiture is not possible here, a brief outline of several major commissions and the reception of his works will provide a helpful grounding for a discussion of his heightened use of 'naturalism.' Among his earliest commissions was a 1516 double portrait of Jacob Meyer, newly elected Burgomeister of Basel, and his wife Dorothea. [Figure 4.1] A preparatory drawing of Jacob Meyer in silverpoint, with the addition of red chalk to capture effects of shading and complexion, shows Holbein's concern for capturing facial features in exacting detail, giving only cursory outlines to the shape of his hat and clothing. [Figure 4.3] This is a practical approach used by artists during this period, allowing for costuming and background to be finalized in the studio. However, Holbein's focus on the physiognomy of his sitters reminds us that the central component of portraiture is likeness, the depiction of facial details that mark the individual. By all accounts, Meyer was delighted with the portraits and Holbein received a number of successive commissions from Meyer and the City Council.[118] Also in Basel, Holbein completed a 1519 portrait of Bonifacius Amerbach, son of a prominent university master and publisher, and himself a humanist scholar. [Figure 4.4] The portrait's inscription, composed by Amerbach, praises and affirms Holbein's realistic mode: "Although only a painted likeness, I am not inferior to the living face; I am instead the counterpart of my master, and distinguished by accurate lines."[119] Amerbach's inscription allows the image to 'speak,' alluding to the ancient topos of lifelikeness in portraiture. In this way the image is granted a voice, the one facet of the living person that it otherwise lacks.

[118] John Rowlands, *Holbein: The Paintings of Hans Holbein the Younger* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1985), 21-22.
[119] Stephan Kemberdick, "Portrait of Bonifacius Amerbach," in *Hans Holbein the Younger: The Basel*

Already by this time it appears that Holbein's attention to physical description and facial traits was a highly prized aspect of his work.

Amerbach's inscription also points to a broader humanist view of the art of portraiture. The portrait was thought to act as an embodiment of memory, a trace or reminder of the living subject that would remain after death. Holbein's style appears to have been particularly suited for this purpose. Erasmus, a close comrade of Amerbach, would request two portraits from Holbein in 1523. [Figures 4.5 - 4.6] The first of these, a gift to William Warham, the Archbishop of Canterbury, was accompanied by a letter that reassured the recipient that in the event of Erasmus's death, Warham would retain "a bit of Erasmus" through the "painted rendering of [his] features."[120] I will discuss this and other portraits of Erasmus in greater detail below; but here I will note that after these commissions Holbein was provided by Erasmus with a letter of recommendation to the English humanist Sir Thomas More. More's 1527 portrait, painted during Holbein's first sojourn in London, was one of many subsequent works for the "intellectual aristocracy" of court circles.[121] Holbein's second stay in England also provided several commissions from merchants of the powerful and international Hanseatic League. Seven were completed between 1532 and 1538. Two of these include inscriptions testifying to the veracity and lifelikeness of Holbein's painted representation. A 1533 portrait of Derich Born states, in letters that appear illusionistically carved into a stone ledge, "Add but the voice and you might wonder if his father or the painter created this." Similar to the allusions of Amerbach's inscription, this suggests that the painting lacks only the voice of

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Years, 1515-1532, 194-195.

[120] Matthias Winner, "Holbein's Portrait of Erasmus with a Renaissance Pilaster," in *Hans Holbein: Paintings, Prints and Reception,* 155.

[121] Andreas Beyer, "The London Interlude," in *Hans Holbein the Younger: The Basel Years, 1515-1532*,

its subject to completely embody the individual it represents; high praise for Holbein's skill in portraying the figure. [Figure 4.7] An earlier portrait of the German merchant George Gisze includes a similar phrase: "he has in life such eyes, such cheeks."[122]

From the mid-1530s, Holbein also served as a court painter to King Henry VIII and set the standards for the king's official court portraits in images that would be copied and repeated in numerous media thereafter. A wall painting by Holbein in the King's Privy Chamber at Whitehall Palace, dated to 1537, contained life-size full-body portraits of Henry VIII and Jane Seymour standing before posthumous images of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York. Though the original was destroyed by fire, a portion of Holbein's full-scale cartoon and several copies remain. [Figures 4.8 - 4.9] Holbein's choice to depart from the original drawing (in which the monarch is shown in three-quarters view) to depict the monarch's head in a direct frontal pose—gaze confronting the viewer—was a relatively unusual one that lent gravity and presence to the figure. But it has been suggested that the frontal pose may contain additional meanings beyond the forceful image it presents. Selected especially for his talent in portraiture, Holbein was personally sent by Henry VIII to record the features of prospective brides, including Anne of Cleves, Christina of Denmark, Anne of Lorraine, and the daughters of the Duke of Guise. The two surviving works, which depict Anne of Cleves and Christina of Denmark, exhibit a full-length frontal positioning with clear features and prominent hands. [Figures 4.10 - 4.11] Portraiture of potential brides, who would be called upon to bear healthy male heirs, was expected to provide a reasonably accurate and highly legible likeness in order

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66-71.

[122] The Latin quotation is borrowed from a Dürer engraving of 1519, emphasizing that such claims to accuracy and vividness were an established topos for Renaissance portraiture, both painted and printed. Foister, 206-213.

to eliminate those with visible physical deformities or 'defects.' In this view, Henry VIII's frontal posture displays his physical vigor and unblemished, even features, demonstrating his suitability as both ruler and sire.[123]

At this point we may state that Holbein's fame and reputation as a portraitist was based in part on the 'naturalistic' or lifelike quality of his images. But naturalism itself is a sophisticated visual strategy, not an uncomplicated replication of reality. Holbein's naturalism makes a number of claims for the painter's ability. How is his naturalism achieved, and to what end? What is its interaction with physiognomic theory?

First, the close relationship between naturalism and physiognomy is rooted in the observation of physical traits found in nature. This belief was borrowed in part from the ancient instruction of painters, such as in Pliny's *Natural History*, and comprised a major part of the training of the early modern artist, as well. Leon Battista Alberti's influential *De Pictura* (1435) emphasized the need for the aspiring artist to observe the many variations in the human form and encouraged memorization and categorization of existing types.[124] He was among those who urged artists to attend to physiognomic studies, the better to represent both inner and outer substance.[125] Artists including Leonardo Da Vinci explored physiognomy through studies from life and the creation of grotesque human heads, while Albrecht Dürer's *Four Books of Human Proportion* (1528) included studies of "abnormal" physiognomies.[126] Dürer's treatise insists that the diligent artist ought to record the figure "down to the last detail… in the clearest and most

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[123] Ibid, 175-181, 191-196, 200-203.
[124] Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, trans. John R. Spencer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 91-93.
[125] Bekes, 26-27.
[126] Moshe Barasch, *Theories of Art: From Plato to Winckelmann*, (New York: Routledge, 2000), 246.

meticulous manner, and the tiniest wrinkle and speck should not be omitted."[127] Yet he writes elsewhere, "no man can ever again make a beautiful image from his own thoughts, unless he has filled his mind with such things through much copying [from nature.]"[128] In his model the success or 'beauty' of the work finds its source in its relationship to nature, a nature studied, remembered as a sense impression, and then recalled and transformed by the hand of the artist-creator. The work's authority comes from its naturalism, a convincing representation of a natural likeness.

Pomponius Gauricus's *De Sculptura* of 1504 presented an even more explicit link between portraiture and physiognomic thinking, combining practical instruction for artists with a chapter of classical physiognomic theory. The work is both a compendium of workshop knowledge (primarily bronze casting, modeling, and the carving of ivory) and adapted ancient theory, relying on the treatise of the Pseudo-Aristotle for much of its physiognomic influences. Gauricus's text, composed in Latin with some Greek, mimics ancient treatises in its categorical listing of facial features and the qualities of "soul" which they reflect, yet the work as a whole represents a new bridge between physiognomic theory and physical description for the practicing artist.[129]

Holbein's method for capturing the features of sitters through careful drawing from life, initially using silverpoint, later included the use of colored chalks and pre-colored surfaces in various light tones which simulated the colors of his sitters' flesh. He frequently made use of written notes on color in the margins of these drawings, with a particular emphasis on the colors of skin, eyes and hair. Later, more elaborate portrait studies were further worked in pen or brush to define facial features. Sub-surface

[127] Cited in Koerner,142.
[128] Ibid, 162-163.

investigation of Holbein's painted portraits have shown that the artist relied on traced drawings (or, less frequently, pouncing) to directly transfer the image to the prepared surface, maintaining with exactitude the existing proportions. Some alteration of the underdrawings does exist, mainly in the adjustment of gaze or position of the head, or to allow for a change in costume. Small adjustments, such as the number of wrinkles, have been specifically made in a few works, but overall it seems that Holbein's concern for maintaining the proportional arrangement of the face and the contours of its discrete features was a consistent one.[130] Holbein's painstaking attention to subtle facial details in both drawing and finished painting have assisted in establishing his reputation for naturalism. In addition, his meticulous recording of facial traits and coloration through his studies and sketches echoes the work of the physiognomic writers, composing their commentaries, and of the close reading of the physiognomists before their subjects.

The handling of paint, and the creation of a convincing illusion of reality in the rendering of flesh and texture, is also Holbein's trademark. His materials speak to his concern for qualities of surface. The linseed oil with which he often mixed pigments for flesh was complemented by the use of pine resin, which added realistic luster and shine to textures of satin, fur, and foliage. The tonality of certain portraits has been altered by the use of a grey ground, adding natural modulation and depth to facial shadows.[131] Holbein's handling of translucent oil colors and layers of glaze concealed his brushstrokes that might otherwise disrupt the illusion of a new reality, or that might otherwise call attention to the fabricated status of the image. This effort to hide the trace

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[129] Barasch, 243-247.
[130] Foister, 48-52, 59-61.
[131] Ashok Roy and Martin Wyld, "The Ambassadors and Holbein's Techniques for Painting on Panel," in *Hans Holbein: Paintings, Prints and Reception,* 101-105.

of his hand and the subtle modeling of forms supported the illusion of real flesh and real texture. Holbein's painting claims a 'truth' in representation only previously found in nature itself. But a surface that conceals the painter's hand, in effect creating the illusion of real existence over prolonged labor, paradoxically directs the viewer to the painter's genius. Rhetorically, it links Holbein with paragons of antique art, such as Zeuxis and his rival Parrhasios, the painter who deceived the former by painting a curtain so naturalistic that Zeuxis moved to brush it aside. It also brings to mind the famous Apelles, whose portraits could be subjected to a physiognomic reading as easily as a living human subject.[132]

Holbein's techniques frame the artist-creator as a student of nature, one whose observation and talent allows him to replicate the living face convincingly and reliably. From nature he draws his authority and the 'truth' of his image, yet it is by his own labor and the skill of his hand that this naturalistic effect is accomplished. His portraits, praised for their lifelikeness, emulate antique examples. It is in this spirit that I will now turn to a physiognomic examination of some of Holbein's numerous portraits of Erasmus. The potential for a physiognomic reading of these works would seem to be supported by the humanist's familiarity with physiognomic theory and the pervasive presence of the discipline in the educated circles in which both Holbein and Erasmus traveled.

Holbein's Portraits of Erasmus

I will begin with Holbein's first portrait of Erasmus, commissioned in 1523 as a gift to William Warham, who was Erasmus's patron and close friend. [Figure 4.5] The

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[132] Oskar Batschmann, "Holbein's Hand," in *Hans Holbein the Younger: The Basel Years, 1515-1532*, 111-115. This claim is first made by Pliny in his *Natural History*.

humanist is depicted clothed in a black robe richly trimmed in fur, sitting at a table or ledge. A closed volume sits before him, on which his hands rest. To the left, a Renaissance pilaster with detailed ornamental foliage stands before a green background curtain. An inscription in Greek running along the sides of the closed book's pages translates as "The Herculean Labors of Erasmus of Rotterdam," an association underscored by the inclusion of the pillar, a likely reference to the pillars erected by Hercules at the edge of the world. Further back, a shelf with three additional books and a glass vial can be seen. Along the edge of the angled volume, a second inscription, likely penned by Erasmus, speaks for Holbein's inimitable skill and likely also alludes to his own efforts: "No one will ever be my imitator as easily as he will be my denigrator." This claim echoes one reportedly made by the ancient painter Zeuxis in an inscription below his own celebrated portrait of a famous athlete. The artist was praised by Pliny for his ability to make visible the "very soul" in his portraits. It cannot be incidental that Zeuxis is also the painter lauded by ancient writers for his command of naturalism, one so convincing that the birds themselves were said to swoop down to pick at his painted grapes.[133]

Holbein depicts Erasmus with a fair, peach-toned complexion and graying hair with touches of blonde and pale brown. His skin is unblemished and even in color. His mouth is long. His lips are thin but definite in shape, the top resting on the lower, with a v-shaped indentation above the top lip. His long, narrow and somewhat aquiline nose is softened by the three-quarters view, but Holbein is careful to show the curving arch in the middle portion rising away from the forehead. Erasmus's eyes are pale with some

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[133] Matthias Winner, "The Terminus as a Rebus in Holbein's Portraits of Erasmus," in *Hans Holbein the Younger: The Basel Years, 1515-1532*, 157-162, 165.

reflective highlights, set back into the face with hooded lids. His chin is broad, with a slight indentation in the center, and his jaw is square. Curving lines accentuate the lean facial muscles and high cheekbones, but Erasmus lacks deep wrinkles around the mouth and brow. His hands are long-fingered and of medium slenderness, without particularly pronounced knuckles, and their tone is slightly darker than his highlighted face. The nails are broad and those of his writing hand are stained with ink.

A physiognomic reading of these traits seems to fall along two lines: the first, an association with pride and strength, the traits of the lion; and second, marks of intellect or understanding. For both Polemon and the Pseudo-Aristotle, Erasmus's thin, long mouth can be compared to the mouth of the lion, signaling strength and pride. The squareness of his chin, and its "four edges" created by the center separation, are also remarked on as a sign of strength and boldness.[134] Likewise, the Pseudo-Aristotle names a slightly deep-set eye as an indication of a "proud soul," again referring to the lion as the animal counterpart.[135] Erasmus's pale and slightly pinkish-hued complexion seems to correspond with contemporaneous beliefs in the link between qualities of the flesh and geographic location and temperature. His pale skin and blonde, straight hair were thought to belong to Northerners, owing to the suppressed internal heat of their bodies and the constriction of their pores by the cold. It was believed that this resulted in abundant blood, warm flesh, and a courageous internal character.[136] Turning to qualities of intellect, his smooth brow is among those traits thought necessary for a "lover of knowledge and a collector of information."[137] Polemon further indicates that broad nails appear as indicators of good

[134] Hoyland, 415. Also Swain, 651.
[135] Swain, 657.
[136] Ziegler, "Heredity and Physiognomy11-14.
[137] Hoyland, 395.

memory and intellect. The *Secretum Secretorum* attributes good sense and judgment to long-fingered men, setting them among the wise, educated and noble of humanity.[138]

Perhaps most curiously, several of these visible traits taken together form Polemon's conception of the "pure Greek," whom he praises for good temperament and a love of learning. His description is as follows: "[he] is of medium stature… white in color, mixed with red, medium in flesh… quick to learn, neither small nor large of head… In his face there is squareness, in his lip slimness, and his nose is pointed and evenly proportioned. His eyes are moist, bluish-black… and very luminous."[139] These physiognomic readings must be considered alongside the portrait's references to Hercules and Zeuxis. The lion's connection with the Greek demigod Hercules could only lend credence to Erasmus's claim of 'Herculean' labors in the eyes of the educated viewer.[140] In this case, a reading of Erasmus's features enhances and affirms the portrait's underlying associations. His link to Hercules and to the features of the lion suggests a strength and commitment to much labor, thematically uniting the civilizing force of Hercules's brawn and Erasmus's writings. The reading also sustains the image of an individual bold enough to forge his own opinions, yet rooted in the authority and legitimacy of classical knowledge. A collective physiognomic interpretation of Holbein's Erasmus might be summarized by the educated viewer as attempting to present an intelligent, wise, and intellectually courageous thinker—in this case, providing a kind of visual corroboration of what has been demonstrated fully in his writings.

The lion, with whom Erasmus shares some physiognomic traits, is also associated with early church father and author St. Jerome, favored by many humanists, and the

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[138] Bekes, 32.

[139] Hoyland, "The Leiden Polemon," 427.

Biblical evangelist St. Mark,[141] both of whom are consciously evoked in Holbein's second portrait of Erasmus, also dated 1523. [Figure 4.6] Erasmus was known to hold a special regard for Jerome, and during his lifetime produced numerous translations and commentaries on Jerome's work, most notably 'improving' Jerome's Latin Vulgate with his own Latin and Greek editions of the New Testament in 1516. In this portrait, the author is shown seated at a writing desk, pen in hand, once again clothed in a black robe and scholar's cap. The sentence he is putting to paper states that he is composing a commentary on the Gospel of St. Mark, which indeed he was in the midst of finishing in 1523.[142] The profile view affords a better outline of Erasmus's prominent nose and chin. In addition, the profile reduces traits to their essential qualities by providing a clear and legible 'outline' of the features. A second version, completed in the same year, subtly compresses the posture of the sitter and defines in slightly sharper detail the lines of skin that gather at the neck. [Figure 4.12] The slenderness of his cheeks and the hollow depression beneath the cheekbone, more apparent in this second version, are attributes of a gaunt face to which the Pseudo-Aristotle ascribes the qualities of "assiduity" and diligence. Leanness of the face is also listed elsewhere in the same text as the sign of a "talented" man.[143] A reading of 'diligence' and 'talent' would have been considered appropriate responses to an image of the writer hard at work, laboring over a project of pious devotion that is simultaneously an expression of his own personal understanding and knowledge.

Quentin Massys' 1517 *Portrait of Erasmus* also focuses attention on the sharp,

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[140] Bekes, 17-20.
[141] Martin Kemp, *The Human Animal in Western Art and Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 6, 39.
[142] Jochen Sander, "Erasmus of Rotterdam Writing," in *Hans Holbein the Younger: The Basel Years, 1515-*

high cheekbones and the depressions defining the scholar's cheeks. [Figure 4.13] Here, too, Erasmus is shown as an author bent over a desk with pen in hand. In this case, the text of the open work is his own translation of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, while behind him a volume of the works of St. Jerome can be seen on an open shelf. The portrait displays Erasmus's features in three-quarters view; as with Holbein, Erasmus would commission a second work from Massys in profile, this time a portrait medal completed in 1519. [Figure 4.14] The Latin inscription on the medal affirms that the work was done from "the living model" (*effigies viva*.)[144] Similarities between Massys' and Holbein's physical depictions of Erasmus are numerous; from the thin, pointed nose, four-part chin and square jaw, to the small, fairly deep-set eyes, long fingers, thin lips and lean face. The face of the Massys painted portrait appears slightly elongated and more narrow, shortening the mouth, which is owed in part to the angle of view. His depiction of Erasmus's eyes gives them a dark cast, without much reflection. The "even black" of the eye, however, was taken by Polemon as a sign of "reliability and goodness."[145] It does not appear that a physiognomic reading of Massys' work would stray far afield from that of Holbein's. Erasmus's presumable satisfaction with the work, supported by his later commissioning of the medal, suggests that he considered the portrait a success in representation.

Erasmus's response to the features of Dürer's engraved portrait of 1526 was less favorable. [Figure 4.15] The portrait once again places Erasmus at his desk, engaged in the act of writing, with a stack of books on a ledge at the front of the picture plane. A

1532, 292-294.

[143] Swain, 645, 655.

[144] Winner, 97-98. This portrait of Erasmus was one half of a diptych showing on the other side Erasmus's humanist friend from Antwerp, Peter Gilles. The 'friendship diptych' was commissioned as a gift to

plain frame in the background displays an inscription which also appeared on Massys' cast medal: "The better image will his writings show," a statement perhaps acknowledging the limits of physiognomic reliability but also an ancient artistic trope of false humility. The staging of the image has more in common with earlier painted portraits, but it was this medal that Erasmus himself suggested Dürer might use as an aide for his own design.[146] Portable, durable and produced in multiples, the medal would have presented an easily available model. The printed work was eventually created after a drawing Dürer made in the author's presence in 1520, though Erasmus considered the final work "not similar" (*non similis mihi*) to his own likeness.[147] Dürer portrays Erasmus with lean cheeks, square jaw, a pointed nose, downcast eyes and prominent hands. His chin, however, seems rounded and blunt, protruding more forcefully than those of the other portraits. The shortened width of the mouth and thickened lips create a deeper shadow between the bottom lip and chin. Likewise, the hooded eyes and half-closed lids seem to bulge forward away from the hollow below his brows, accentuating the shadowed circles. Roundness of the chin was considered by Polemon a sign of effeminacy, and some sixteenth-century treatises claimed "If the ende of the chin bee rounde, it is a signe of feminine manners… the chinne of a man must bee alwaies square (sic.)"[148] Polemon calls protruding eyes "repulsive,"[149] while the text of the Pseudo-Aristotle condemns the same as a sign of "imbecility" and likens round, bulging eyes to

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Thomas More in England as a way to conjure the absent sitters' presence to their distant friend.
[145] Hoyland, 343.
[146] Andrée Hayum, "Dürer's Portrait of Erasmus and the Ars Typographorum," *Renaissance Quarterly* 38, No. 4 (1985): 667-668.
[147] Winner, 98.
[148] Hoyland, 415. Also Porter,195.
[149] Hoyland, 365.

those of cattle.[150] By necessity, a printed portrait in black and white also cannot capture nuances of complexion or facial coloring, but it seems unlikely that this would have negatively influenced Erasmus's opinion of the work. It was Erasmus, in fact, who, in his *laudatio* of 1528 for the recently deceased Dürer, would praise Dürer's mastery of the black line, declaring that he surpassed even Apelles but without the benefit of colors. In the same passages, he credits Dürer with the ability to depict even "characters and emotions… the whole of man as it shines forth from the appearance of the body."[151] Here Erasmus credits the artist with the ability to form a likeness that speaks to the "whole" of man's joined internal character and external physicality, a quintessentially physiognomic concept. His demonstrated belief in physiognomic representation, when considered alongside his dissatisfaction with Dürer's printed portrait and its subtle dissimilarity to the physiognomic models presented by other works, may add an additional layer to our understanding of the 'Erasmus' which Erasmus wished to present to the world. His positive reception of Holbein's work may indicate that it is Holbein, of all his portraitists, who most successfully captured this desired image of self.

Physiognomy and Self-Fashioning

Erasmus's portrait commissions represent a conscious and sophisticated strategy for the distribution and treatment of his likeness. His painted portraits were costly endeavors that allowed him to give prized gifts to patrons and friends, while his printed portraits were able to be widely distributed on their own or incorporated into editions of his printed texts. His awareness of the value and potential of portraiture seems to have

[150] Swain, 657.
[151] Koerner, 168-169.

been particularly keen.[152] His repeated choice of Holbein as the executor of these works, and his dissatisfaction with Dürer's engraving, might suggest a matching concern for the depiction of his features. The subtle differences in these artists' renderings of the humanist and the physiognomic implications associated with those traits are meaningful in light of Erasmus's own responses. His belief in physiognomy, and his desire to present a particular self-image, may have influenced his own reception—or rejection—of these works.

Holbein's portraits of Erasmus represent a sophisticated attempt at constructing the identity of the sitter, an encompassing appearance that could convey truthfully and reliably both inner and outer character. It is significant that the first decades of the sixteenth century, a period of intense interest in physiognomic theory, was also marked by a growing awareness of those processes that contributed to the creation of personal identity. Stephen Gleenblatt's term "self-fashioning" conveys a sense of a deliberate outward shaping or presentation of self, one that is able to be manipulated and directed. As he writes, self-fashioning represents "the cultural system of meanings that creates specific individuals by governing the passage from abstract potential to concrete historical embodiment."[153] Commissioned portraits seem an ideal vehicle for self-fashioning, as they both represent and embody the status of their sitters. As objects, they speak to the status, wealth and taste of their patron. As representations, they present the physical form of their subject alongside clothes, jewels, architecture, coats of arms, books, and other indicators of social rank and personal achievement.

Yet while these and other outward symbols have been explored at length in

[152] Sander, "Erasmus of Rotterdam Writing," 292-294.
[153] Greenblatt, 5-6.

scholarship, little attention has been provided that address the relationship and possible tension between impulses for self-fashioning and the apparently unchangeable truths revealed by one's physiognomy. The urgency of physiognomic knowledge is due in part to its potential for revealing the internal qualities that may be concealed or mitigated by outwards factors such as costume, setting, or material goods. Eniko Bekes' exploration of physiognomy as it relates to images produced of Matthias Corvinus, King of Hungary, has provided one vital source for the conception of this project and shows how the deliberate manipulation of physiognomic rhetoric might contribute to the drive to self-fashion. Her work has linked visual representation with consciously physiognomic rhetorical description by court writers. Panegyrics composed in the late fifteenth century by Corvinus's most favored humanist scholar, Galeotto Marzio, provided a flattering physical description of the king that adhered to the most desired physiognomic traits from the works of the Pseudo-Aristotles. In addition, Antonio Bonfini, court historiographer, provided a detailed physical description of Corvinus that borrowed heavily from ancient descriptions of Alexander the Great, considered the most perfect example of the physiognomic 'lion' type. The features of the lion were granted to Corvinus in nearly every portrait created between 1480 and 1490, including manuscripts, medallions and donor portraits specifically commissioned by the king. This purposeful association with the image of Alexander, the Ancient "conqueror of the East," is made more compelling by the fact of Corvinus's multiple military incursions into Ottoman territory.[154] The ubiquity of physiognomic thought during this period would have assured that many viewers of these images, both at court and those recipients of portraits abroad—ally and

[154] Bekes, 31-35, 38-41,44.

enemy alike—would have read and understood the meaning contained in Corvinus's well-defined features. Physiognomy provided Corvinus and his humanists with the perfect vehicle for fashioning an identity rooted in ancient authority, yet which spoke perfectly to contemporaneous concerns and anxieties.

Joseph Ziegler has also observed physiognomy's widespread influence among the ruling class, noting that the bulk of late medieval physiognomic treatises were dedicated to nobles. Michael Scot's dedication to Frederick II was followed by Pietro d'Abano's 1295 treatise, dedicated to the ruler of Mantua; Roland l'Ecrivain's work, bestowed on the Duke of Bedford; and Michele Savonarola's fifteenth-century treatise, dedicated to the Marquis of Ferrara. The source of many later works adopted for the popular market, Bartholomeus Cocles, dedicated his 1504 treatise to the son of the dictator of Bologna. Ziegler infers that physiognomy served a particularly desirable purpose for the nobility during this period, linking physiognomic theory to contemporaneous dialogue on the 'origin' of nobility. Ancient treatises, most notably the *Secretum Secretorum*, also had called on rulers to select their advisors using the discipline of physiognomy in order to select the most virtuous and suitable candidates. This knowledge was revived and made to suit new purposes, benefiting the noble as well as the rising middle and professional classes. For many late medieval thinkers, at the edge of the Renaissance, old notions of hereditary nobility were increasingly insufficient. Physiognomy provided a useful system by which to authenticate individual nobility based on virtue, independent of rank or parentage and based only in legible bodily signs.[155] The visibility and mutability of portraiture again suggests its suitability for this process of self-fashioning.

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[155] Ziegler, "Text and Context," 177-181.

Yet physiognomy was equally capable of overturning or subverting a desired public image as creating it. The *De Humana Physiognomia* of Giovanni Battista della Porta (1586) featured portraits of notable Italian personalities, confirming the established reputation and appearance of each individual with its correlating physiognomic interpretation. As in the union of printed image and printed text, the image and its physiognomic description are mutually reinforcing. However, in these cases, this physiognomic 'truth' was not always a favorable one. Della Porta's text places an earlier portrait of the large-nosed poet and scholar Angelo Poliziano alongside a negative appraisal of those with overlarge noses, claiming these people "despise[d] the works of other persons."[156] Here, a physiognomic reading of an existing portrait is used to undermine the dignity of the sitter. The close control exercised by Matthias Corvinus and others over their own images suggest an awareness of this possibility. It may even be that Erasmus was conscious of this prospect, as he favored one likeness over the other, even responding cautiously to a printed portrait which would have been widely distributed and read, and therefore more difficult to control. Physiognomy's claim to revealing inner truths was not only a vehicle for the public promotion of a virtuous identity, but potentially a tool for discrediting such an image.

While state portraits and images of nobility represent one aspect of fashioning a public self, the rise of an increasingly mercantile society, in which new and complex modes of patronage and commerce operated, pushed concerns of identity and status to the fore. A prosperous and literate middle class, like many of Holbein's patrons, was centered in urban hubs of culture and artistic exchange, and sought to assert its status through new models of representing and defining the self. This process was also at work

[156] Bekes, 28.

in the status of artists. The elevation of the art of painting to one of the 'liberal' arts, and its increasing disassociation from the status of skilled labor, was in large part due to an intentional campaign waged by artists and art theorists.[157] For many artists, the self-portrait was an increasingly viable means of promoting their skill and creative identity.[158] Though no painted self-portraits by Holbein survive, a fine drawing dating from 1542-1543 records the artist's vision of himself.[159] [Figure 4.16] His complexion is even, unblemished and peach-toned; his square chin, neat beard, and luminous, slightly deep-set eyes provide an image of moderation, according to current physiognomic thought. Simply clothed, with a solid background, Holbein discards outward markers of status and draws the viewer's attention to his own highly detailed features and the descriptive naturalism of his face, beard and hair, and the steady gaze of his eyes looking outward. In this way, his portrait may be seen to participate in the most current physiognomic thought of the period. This interaction with the complexities of classical and contemporaneous theory, so closely tied to philosophy and the liberal arts, is yet another avenue by which the artist may attempt to elevate their artistic practice.

Holbein's highly naturalistic portraits claim to represent accurate likenesses of their subjects. Understood as substitutes for absent sitters, Holbein's portraits could provide the opportunity for focused observation and analysis of both external form and internal character, rather than the mere fleeting glimpse of a passing encounter. Portraiture participates in the system of physiognomic knowledge not by the presentation

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[157] Joanna Woods-Marsden, *Renaissance Self-Portraiture: The Visual Construction of Identity and the Social Status of the Artist* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 3-5.
[158] Koerner, 55.
[159] Rowlands, 239.

of popular types, but in its potential for revealing the unique truth of the presented individual. While it would be difficult, if not impossible, to prove or disprove an intentional use of physiognomic theory by either painter or patron, the ubiquity of physiognomic thought and its close ties to the rhetoric of naturalism make it likely that these works may have been viewed in such terms. Physiognomy's fitness for creating and manipulating a desirable self-image or public persona further endeared it to the elites of the sixteenth century. Holbein's patrons and social circle can be firmly placed within this category. It is likely in this cultural context that responses to Holbein's vivid works were shaped in part by the widespread belief in the physiognomic link between body and soul.

CONCLUSION

There is much to suggest that Holbein's work could have been viewed in physiognomic terms by his audience. The ubiquity of physiognomic thought in the culture of the sixteenth century indicates that much of his viewership was attuned to theories of appearance and representation. Physiognomy's presence in canons of medical knowledge and its place among natural philosophical texts, as well as its popular incarnations in vernacular pamphlets and in period theology, point to a widespread dissemination. Likewise, it is easy to imagine that Holbein's viewers were among those intimately familiar with conventional depictions of Christ and his tormentors, drawn from physiognomic studies or supposed eye-witness accounts, or with other prints relying on physical types to carry symbolic or satirical meaning. Holbein's early exposure to physiognomic thought, and the physiognomic interests of his patrons, indicates that he was aware of the possibilities for physiognomic representation. Whether or not his focus on detailed descriptions of the face and body held direct physiognomic meaning for his own practice as an artist, there remains a high probability of physiognomic interpretations by his audience.

How, and why, might an audience have looked to Holbein's images for physiognomic 'truths'? As we have seen, images are closely connected to the verification or creation of information, whether this is contained in a cycle of prints cataloguing types of flora or fauna, or a 'lifelike' portrait of a prospective bride or absent friend. Holbein's prints and paintings represent two distinct strategies for representing visual truths. His prints, through their status as impressed multiples and their participation in an emerging culture of 'first-hand' knowledge, may have offered viewers a confirmation of their

biases or beliefs, linking a wider tradition of ancient and medieval physiognomic theory to contemporaneous 'types.' Alternatively, his painted portraits provide a more individualized encounter with physiognomic theory in their claims to be vivid substitutes of their absent sitters, allowing for a supposedly accurate reading of traits, as well as the shaping of a desired self. Yet both rely on Holbein's exceptional skill in capturing those legible facial details thought to be most revealing of inner character. Though subject in part to important differences in the presumed audience and function of prints and paintings, it is clear that physiognomic thought extended beyond any simple division of mediums.

I have approached physiognomic theory through Holbein in large part due to his enduring reputation for naturalism and lifelikeness. As I have demonstrated, his 'rhetoric of realism' is a strategy that claims representational veracity, and as such, it is closely tied to contemporaneous physiognomic discourses on outward appearance and inward truth. That these discourses are also present in the work of his contemporaries and peers will hopefully be further explored in future scholarship. Naturalism, particularly in the attentive depiction of the human form, was an approach taken by a multitude of Renaissance artists both north and south of the Alps, from Jan van Eyck and Albrecht Dürer to Leonardo da Vinci and the Florentine School. Theories of art that stressed naturalism, such as the writings of Leon Battista Alberti, are also seen to have encouraged physiognomic studies. Scholarship on Renaissance naturalism, as an intentional artistic strategy rooted in the authority of nature, has in large part neglected to address the link between naturalistic images and the widespread belief in the physiognomic meaning contained in such representations. An examination of these

connections will result in a more nuanced view of the reception of ‘lifelike’ images.

More broadly, physiognomy also may help to shed additional light on those Renaissance concepts of self—of self-knowledge and self-presentation—that shaped, and were shaped by, images. The early modern preoccupation with the flexibility and mutability of identity brings physiognomy to the fore of the period’s cultural and artistic concerns.[160] As new patterns of interaction called for physiognomy to act as a secure method for evaluating individuals and predicting possible outcomes, changing roles and social mobility likewise called for new artistic outlets that could engage ideas of the constructed self. Physiognomy represents an important and continuous link between modern, early modern and pre-modern notions of self.

Holbein’s complex and naturalistic work is situated at the nexus of these concerns. His prints and portraits fully demonstrate the range of challenges and meanings inherent in depicting the human face, both ‘type’ and individual, in a period of social anxiety, mobility, and change. Physiognomy’s perceived ability to reach a core of inner truth through outward signs holds vital potential for future art-historical scholarship on portraiture and other types of images that present private truths and public identities. Our view of those representations can only be enriched by a more layered understanding of the physiognomic construction of early modern selves.

[160] Porter, 307.

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Figure 1.1
Whitehall Mural (Cartoon)
Hans Holbein the Younger, 1533

Figure 1.2
Abbot, from the *Pictures of Death*
Hans Holbein the Younger, (Hans Lützelburger, Block-Cutter), 1538

Figure 1.3
Jacob Meyer, Preparatory Drawing in Silverpoint & Red Chalk
Hans Holbein the Younger, 1516

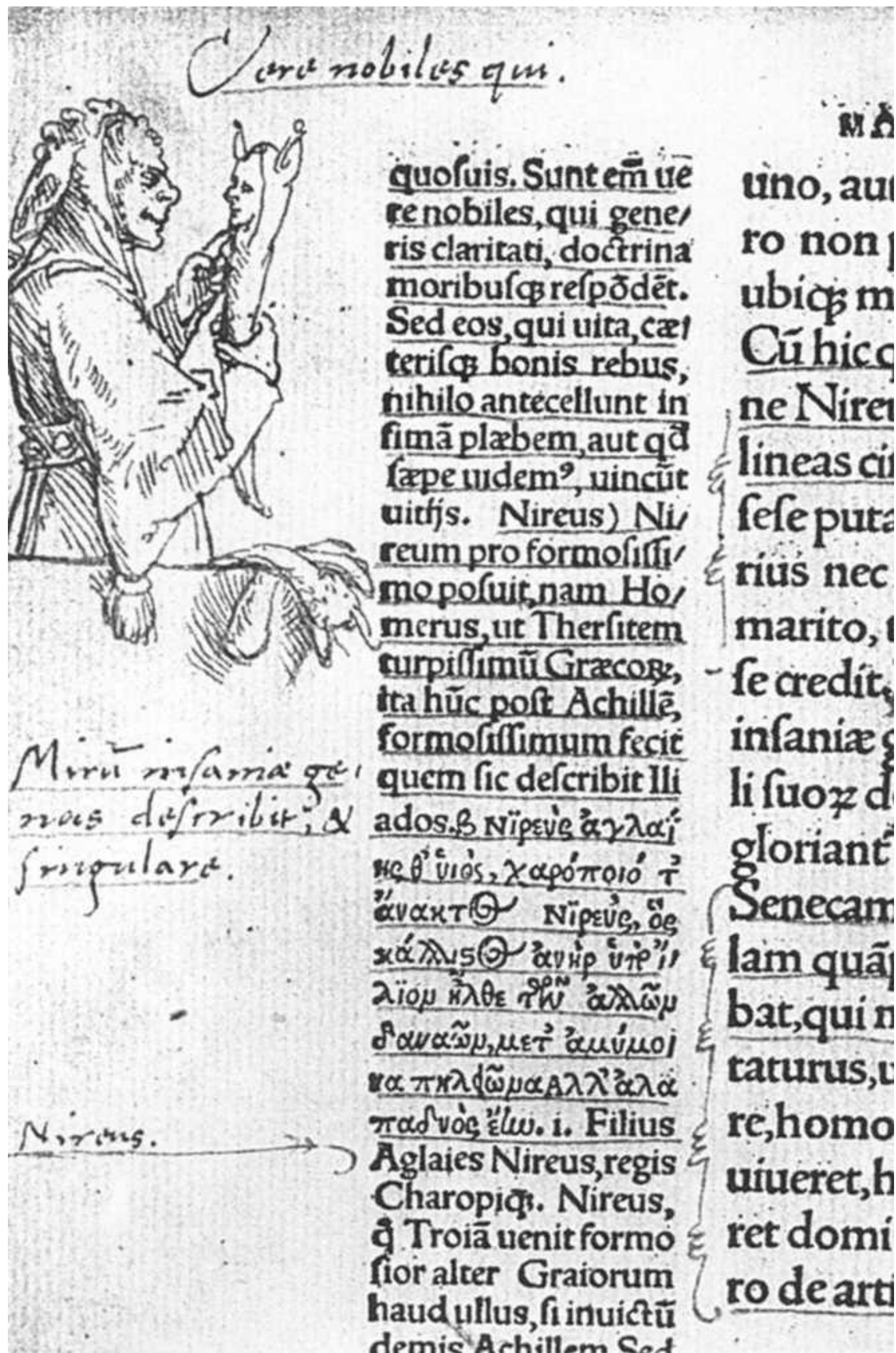


Figure 2.1
Folly, Marginal Illustration from *Praise of Folly*
Hans Holbein the Younger, 1515

dax,animi ſpeculum. Nullus apud me fucis locus,nec aliud
frōte ſimulo,aliud in pectore premo. Sumq; mei undiq; ſi-
millima,adeo ut nec ij me diſſimulare poſſint,qui maxime
Sapientiæ perſonā ac titulū ſibi uendicant, καὶ ἐν τῇ πορφύρᾳ
πίθηκοι, & ἐν τῇ λεοντῇ ὄνοι obambulant. Quamuis autem ſedu-
B 3 lo fingāt

Figure 2.2
Scholar in the Market, Marginal Illustration from *Praise of Folly*
Hans Holbein the Younger, 1515

Figure 2.3
Wisdom, Marginal Illustration from *Praise of Folly*
After Hans Holbein the Younger *(Reproduction)*
(London: Reeves & Turner, 1876)

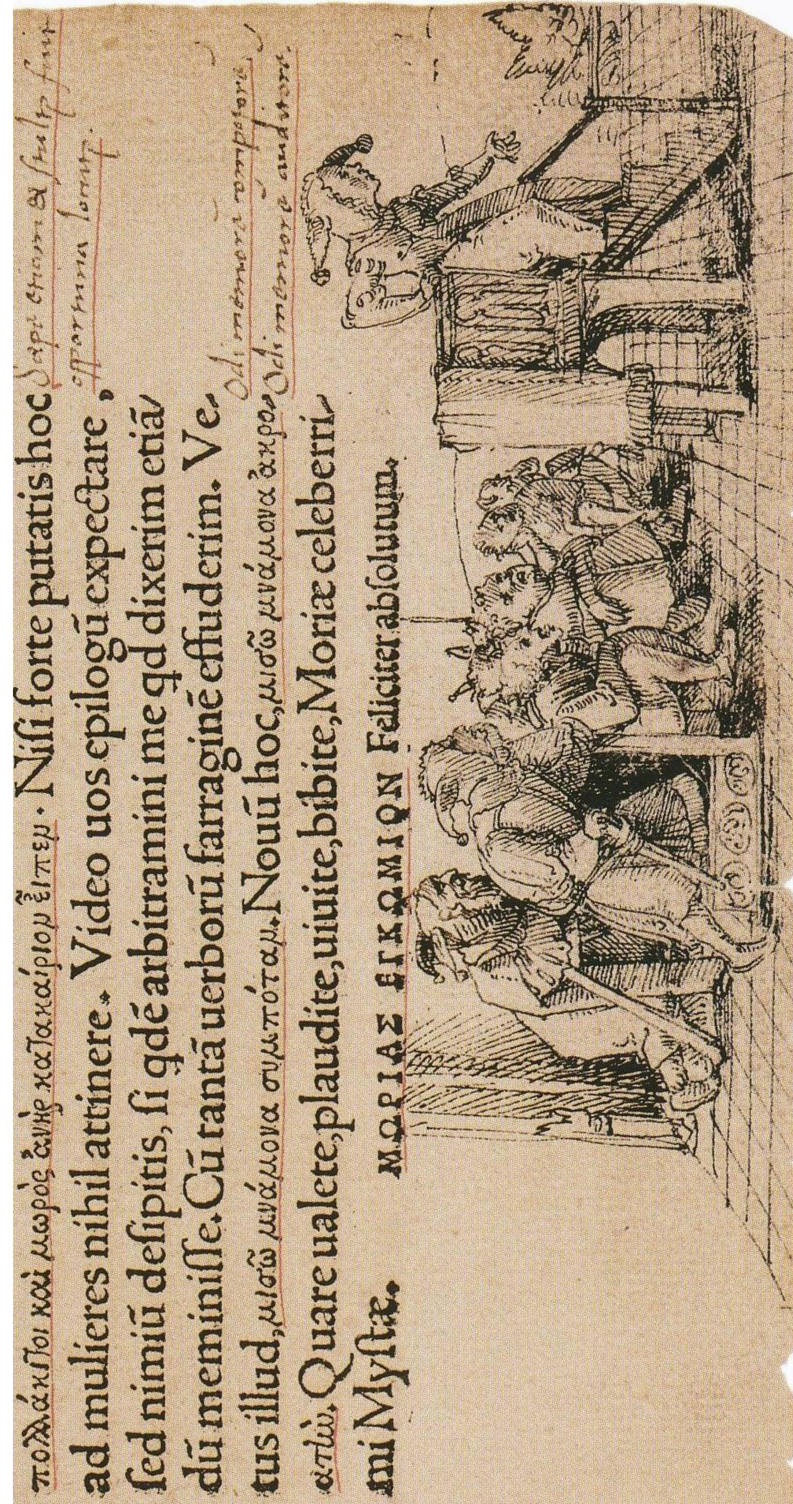


Figure 2.4
Folly Descending the Pulpit, Marginal Illustration from *Praise of Folly*
Hans Holbein the Younger, 1515

Figure 2.5
Crowning with Thorns, Woodcut from the *Passio D. N. Jesu Christi*
Lucas Cranach the Elder, 1509

Hanc Epistolam scripsit pilatus a iherusalem in Romam Tyberio et toti senatui

Apparuit temporibus nostris et ad huc est homo magne virtutis: cui nomen est cristus jesus: suscitans mortuos: et sanans languores: Qui dicitur propheta veritatis: quem discipuli eius vocant filium dei: Homo quidē statura procerus et spectabilis: vultum habens venerabilem quem intuentes possunt diligere et formidare: capillos habens coloris nucis avelane premature planos vere usqz ad aures: ab auribus vero crispos aliquantū et ceruliores et fulgentiores ab humeris ventilantes: discrimen habens in medio capitis iuxta morem nazarenorum: Faciem habens sine ruga aliqua et macula: quā rubor moderatus venustat: nasi et oris nulla prorsus est reprehensio: oculis varijs glaucis et claris [illegible] Barbā habens copiosam et non longam: scilicet capillis concolorē et impuberem sed in medio bifurcatā manus habens et brachia visu delectabilia in increpatione terribilis. in ammonitione placidus et amabilis: hylaris servata gravitate qui nuquā visus est ridere: flere autem: Sic in colle quio rarus et modestus. speciosus inter filios hominum:

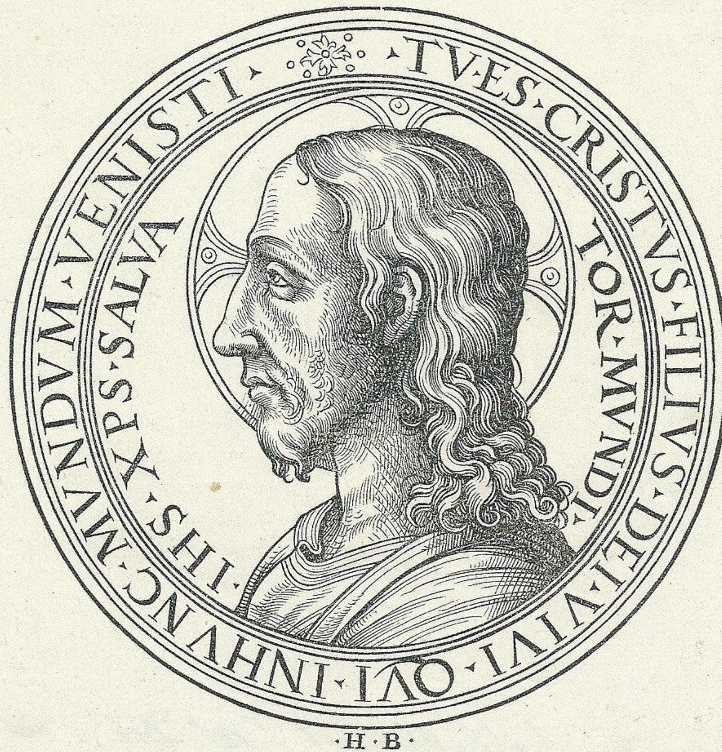
Disen brieff vnd Epestel schraib Pilatus võ Iherusolem gen Rom dē kaser tiberio vnd gemaincklichen den eltisten senatoribus vñ der gantzē maisterschafft des rumischen volcks

Zū vnsern zeiten erschinen vñ noch ist ain mensch grosser tugent der genennt ist Christus Jesus: erkucke die toten vñ hailmachend die kranckhait: der da gehaissen wirt ain prophet der warhait: welche seine jungern nennen gottes sun: Nempt war ain mensch langer masse vnd gar lieplich ... zū sehen haben ain erwirdiges angesicht: welches die: die es ansehen lieb habē mügen vnd furchten: har habent varb ainer überzeitigen haselnuss: rund schlecht nahend biss auff die orn: aber von den orn kruss ains tails: vnd gelbleter vñ liechter biss auff die achseln sich wendent: habend ain [illegible] mittel des haubts nach gewonhait der nazareischen: habent ain angesicht on ainicherlay runtzel vñ mackel welche ain mässige röte gezieret: der nasen vnnd [illegible] des ist gentzlich kain vngestalt: mit gezierten augen prawnen vñ klaren wesend habend ainen dicken part vnd nitt lang den haubtes haren gleich [illegible] jünglich gestalt vñ [illegible] vnd arm habend lieplich an zū sehen: in der straff erschrockenlichē: in der vermanung [illegible] vñ lieplich: [illegible] doch mit behaltung der tapfferhait: der nye gesehen ist lachen: besunder waine: im gespräch seltzam vnd mässiger: vnd der aller [illegible] den sünen der menschen

Dise [illegible] vnden getruckte linie [illegible] alen gemessen ist die leng [illegible] jhesu

Figure 2.6
Lentulus Letter with the Portrait of Christ, Woodcut
Hans Burgkmair, 1511

Iconia vel effigies vere faciei domini nostri Jesu christi redemptoris generis humani: quēadmodū tunc cū humana carne circūseptus terre incola cū hominibus familiariter cōuersans apparuit: a proprio ipsius vultu per quosdā plurimū deuotos christicolas subtili graciliqꝫ pictura eo (vt supra dixi) seculo rectissime extitit effigiata. Que postea cū ⁊ numerus ⁊ deuotio christicolaꝝ ob stupendoꝝ miraculorū crebrescentiū indies mirūimmodū magnū caperet incrementū: pro indelibili immortaliqꝫ memoria facienda fuerat rursus erea aureaqꝫ tabella mirabili sculptura excussa: pene ad modum nūmismatis huiusce proprie speciei ac quantitatis (vt hic oculis coram facile intueri poteris) multo ingenio arte ⁊ sagacitate (nullum deniqꝫ a prothotypo discrimē preseferens) diligentissime fabrefacta. Sicqꝫ vt cū deinceps in diuersis Asie regionibus diu circumlata fuisset ⁊ ostensa: magnam intuentibus admirationem ingesserat ⁊ deuotionem: ab vniuersisqꝫ per magnum temporis cursum in magna fuit habita veneratione. Quousqꝫ et nomen et christi religio ab oībus Asie climatibus a perfida Turcarum gente exul effecta: cum omnia sancte nostre religionis preciosa in profundis terre cauernis absconderētur: fuit hec sancta effigies cum reliquo thesauro in secretis latibulis recondita: donec postea hec et alia sacra volente deo a deuotis rursus inuenta fuere et cognita. Deniqꝫ fertur a nonnullis genere ⁊ nobilitate prestantissimis viris probateqꝫ fame ac perinde fide dignissimis hanc sacro sanctam Jesu christi iconiam in erea tabella sculptam: cum alijs tribus nummis aureis in quibus illaipsa prefata effigies erat incussa: in cuiusdam Turcarum regis erario quondam fuisse reperta: fuisseqꝫ data dono cuidam nobili Germanie magnati: qui cum (ex huiusce gentis ritu) sacro sanctū dominicū sepulchꝝ Hierusalē visitasset: rogatusqꝫ a quodā Turcarū primati de diuerso ⁊ Europe ⁊ christianoꝝ principū statu ⁊ potētia percūctanti aliqd dissereret. qui cū benigne ad singula respōdisset: inter cōfabulandū hec ab eo munera humaniter elargita cū grārū actione leta fronte accepit. Sicqꝫ ad has europe prouincias delata: fuit a quodaꝫ antigrapho in arte pingendi experto opifici iterum perfectissime repicta. Insuper vt facilius tibi persuadeam hanc imaginem vere similitudinem habere cum christi facie corporali: pro testimonio sequentem proconsulis Lentuli (viri patritij Romani) epistolā fac legas amice deuotissime.



Incipit epistola Lentuli de dispositione et qualitate faciei Jesu Christi.

Lentulus senatui Salutem. Apparuit temporibus nostris ⁊ adhuc est homo magne virtutis nominatus Jesus christus: qui dicitur a gentibus propheta veritatis: quē eius discipuli nominant filium dei: suscitans mortuos ⁊ sanans languores. Homo quidem stature procere medioris ⁊ spectabilis. Vultum habens venerabilem: quem intuentes possunt diligere ⁊ formidare. Capillos habens in modum nucis auelane: et planos vsqꝫ ad aures: ab auribus vsqꝫ ad humeros cerinos ⁊ crispos aliquantulum cerulinos ⁊ fulgentiores ab humeris: discrimen habens in medio capitis iuxta morem nazarenorum. Frontem planam ⁊ serenissimam. Faciem sine ruga et macula aliqua: quam rubor moderatus venustat: nasi ⁊ oris eboris nulla prorsus est reprehensio: barbam habens copiosam in similitudinem capillorum: non longam sed in medio bifurcatam: aspectum habens simplicem ⁊ maturum: oculis glaucis ⁊ varijs claris existentibus. In increpatione terribilis: in admonitione placabilis et amabilis: hilaris seruata grauitate. Qui nunquā visus est ridere: flere autem sic. in statura corporis propagatus ⁊ rectus: manus habens ⁊ brachia visu delectabilia: in colloquijs gratus rarus ⁊ modestus. Speciosus forma pre filijs hominum.

Figure 2.7
Lentulus Letter with the Portrait of Christ, Woodcut
Hans Burgkmair, 1512

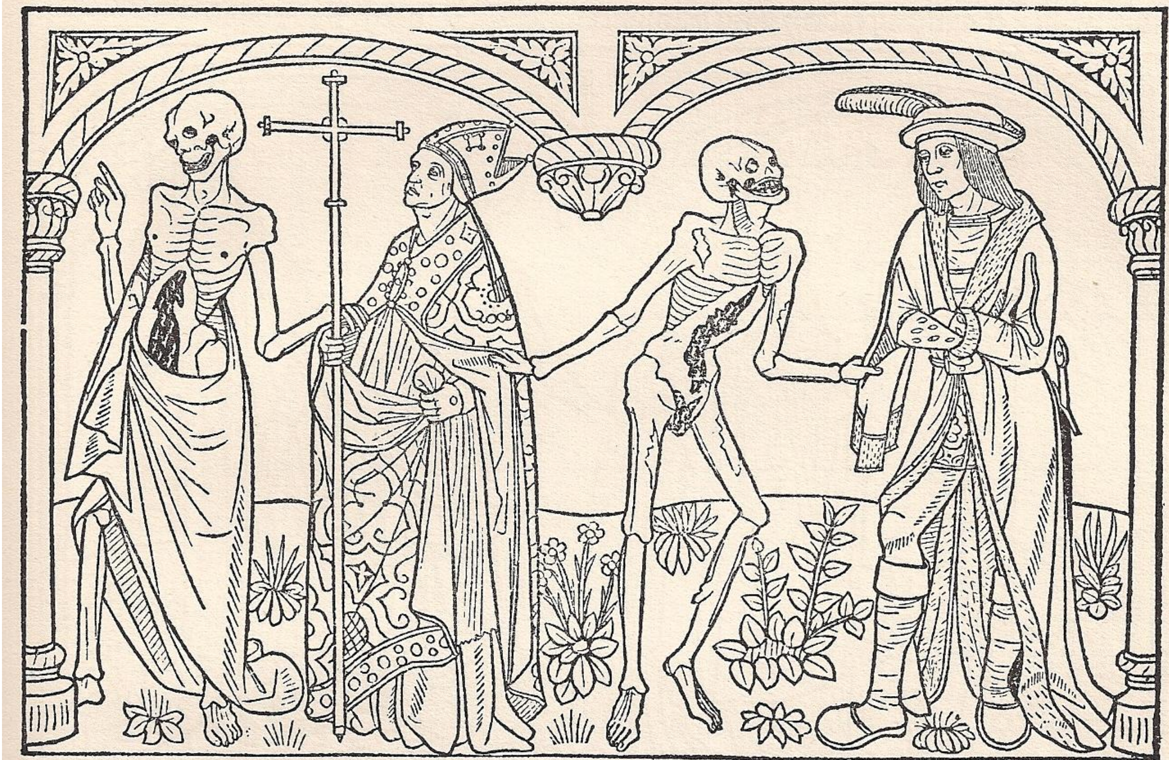


Figure 3.1
Archbishop & Knight, from Guyot Marchand's *Dance of Death*
Woodcut, 1490

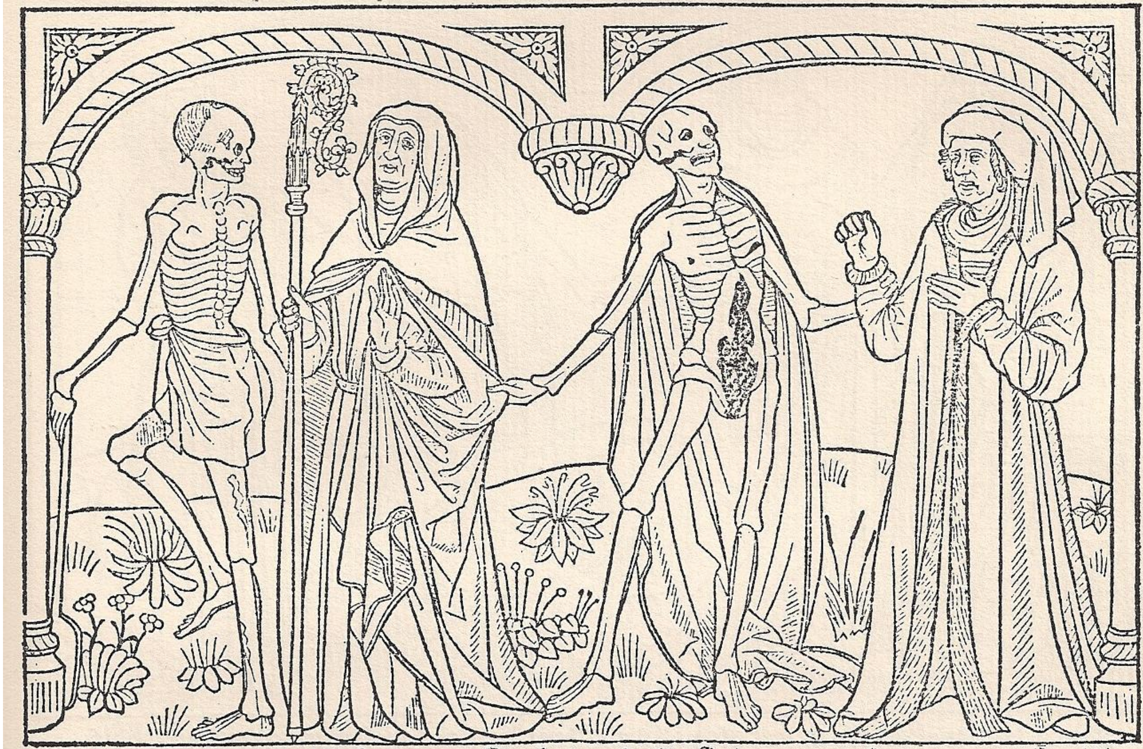


Figure 3.2
Abbot and Magistrate, from Guyot Marchand's *Dance of Death*
Woodcut, 1490

Figure 3.3
Judge, from the *Pictures of Death*
Hans Holbein the Younger, (Hans Lützelburger, Block-Cutter), 1538

Figure 3.4
Besotted Abbot Riding a Jawbone, Woodcut
Anonymous, 1480

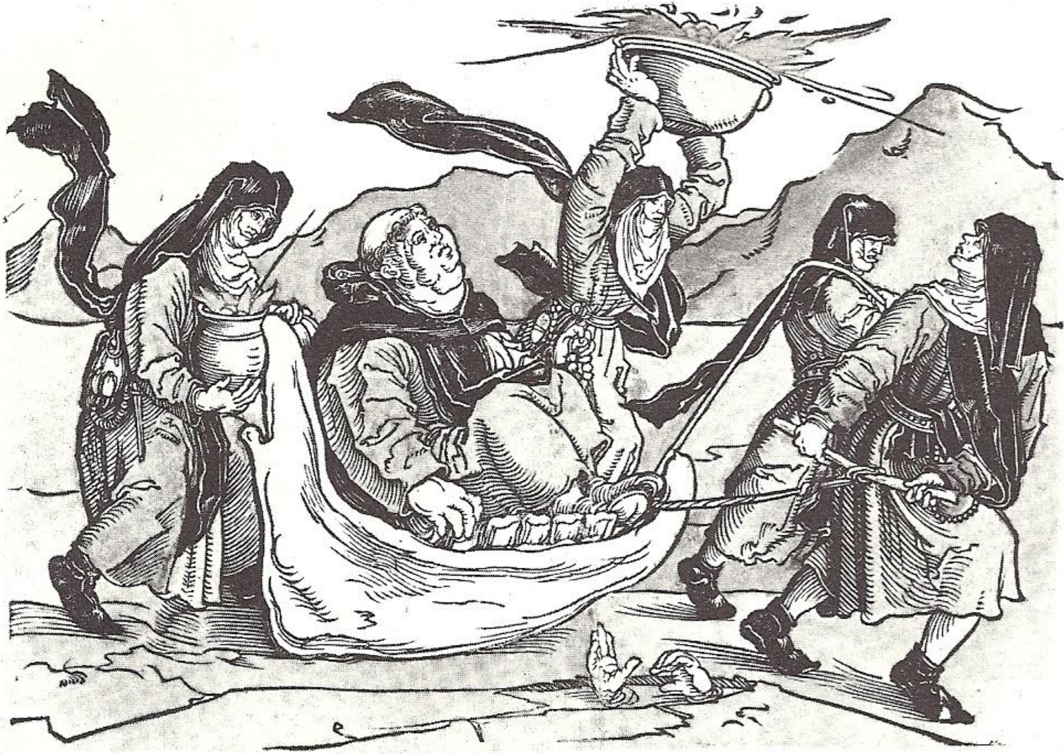


Figure 3.5
Besotted Abbot Riding a Jawbone, Woodcut
Hans Weiditz, 1530

Diß ist ein iemerliche
clag vber die Todten fresser:

Figure 3.6
Die Todtenfresser, Woodcut
Text by Pamphilus Gengenbach, 1522

Figure 3.7
Justice, from the *Ship of Fools*, Woodcut
Albrecht Dürer, 1494

Figure 3.8
Monk, from the *Pictures of Death*
Hans Holbein the Younger, (Hans Lützelburger, Block-Cutter), 1538

Figure 3.9
Monk Calf, Woodcut
Lucas Cranach the Elder, 1523

Figure 3.10
Papal Ass, Woodcut
Lucas Cranach the Elder, 1523

Figure 3.11
Fool, from the *Pictures of Death*
Hans Holbein the Younger, 1547

Figure 3.12
Physician and Assistant, Woodcut
Hans Weiditz, 1521

Figure 3.13
King, from the *Pictures of Death*
Hans Holbein the Younger, (Hans Lützelburger, Block-Cutter), 1538

Figure 3.14
Portrait of Francis I
Jean Clouet, 1525

COMPENDIVM.

SIGNA CORPORIS DISTEMPE-
rati, & male sani. Cap. VI.

Corpora distemperata &
male sana, in oībus sunt dis
similia corporibus temperatis,
& bene sanis. Vnde male come
dunt, non curant bibere, male
digerunt, & disponunt, res eis
non bene sapiunt, in horis con-
uenientibus, non se plene tribu-
unt gaudentibus, imò quasi tri-
stificantur, & manent tristes,
male dormiūt suos somnos, graues se sentiunt, & grauiter
uadunt, & raro sudant, uel non sudant, oßitant sæpe, uel

A 4

Figure 3.15
Physiognomic Illustration
Text by Bartolomeus Cocles, 1536

PHYSIOGNOMIÆ

ſternutant, brachia extendunt, in facie ſunt pallida, uel nimis colorata, quinq; ſenſus male uigent, non poſſunt diu ſufferre laborem, cito rerum obliuiſcuntur, multum ſputant, in naribus eis abundant ſuperfluitates, quaſi ad omnia ſunt pingues carnes, conflant ut naſum, & quandoq; pedes, manus & oculi lachrymant.

DE CAPILLIS. Cap. VII.

Capilli plani & extenſi, & in colore albi, uel blundi, ſi ſint ſubtiles & molles, ſignificant hominem naturaliter timidum corde, debilem uiribus, pacificum in ſocietatibus, ubiq; conuenientem & manſuetum.

Capilli groſſi & ericij, ac breues, ſignificant hominem naturaliter fortem, ſecurum, audacem, inquietum, uanum, ſæpe fallacem, cupidum pulchrorum, & plus ſimplicem quàm ſapientem, licet fortuna ei faueat.

Figure 3.16
Physiognomic Illustration
Text by Bartolomeus Cocles, 1536

Figure 3.17
Angel with the Sudarium, Woodcut
Albrecht Dürer, 1516

Figure 4.1
Portrait of Jacob Meyer
Hans Holbein the Younger, 1516

Figure 4.2
Portrait of Bonifacius Amerbach
Hans Holbein the Younger, 1519

Figure 4.3
Portrait of Desiderius Erasmus with a Renaissance Pilaster
Hans Holbein the Younger, 1523

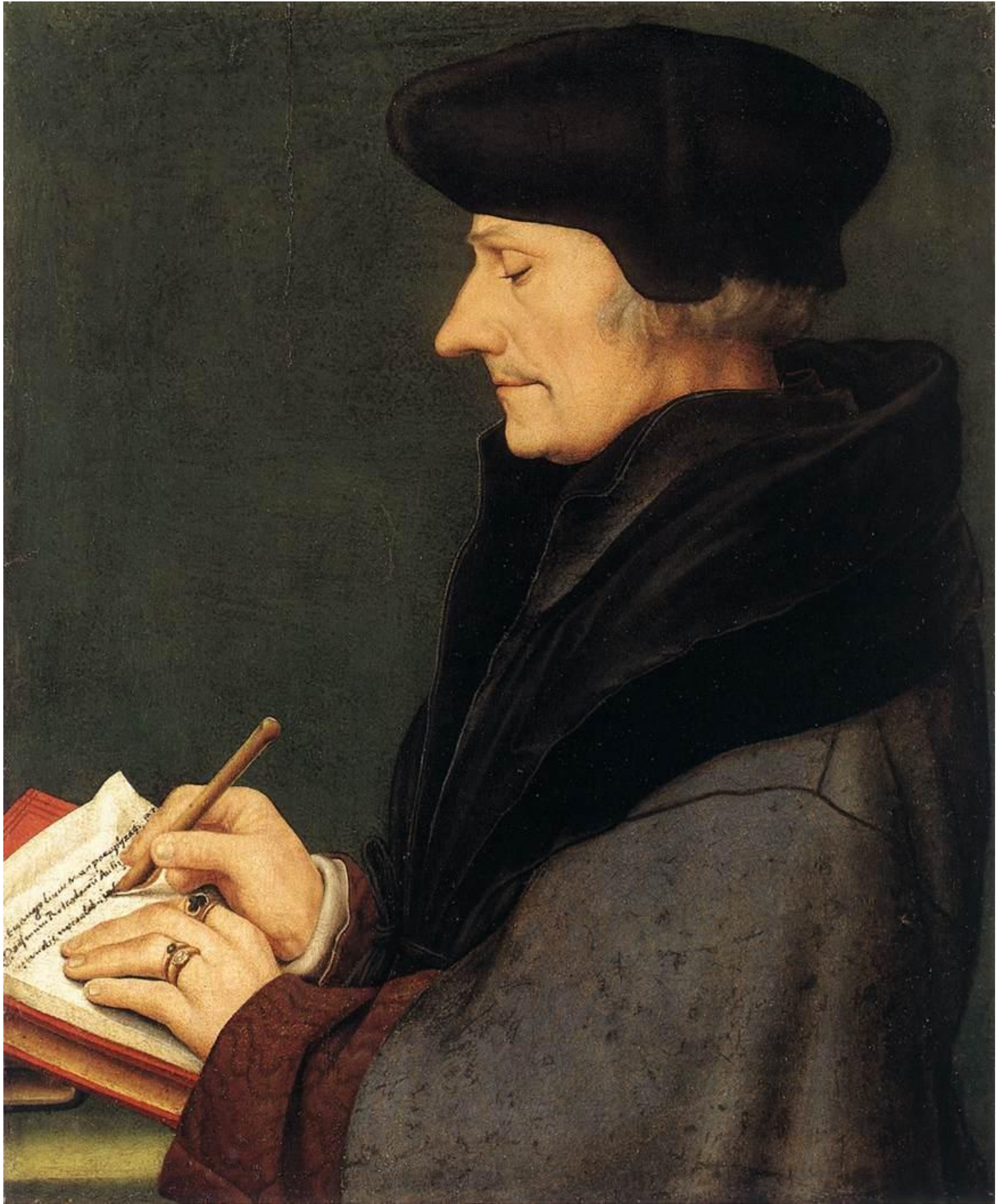


Figure 4.4
Portrait of Desiderius Erasmus
Hans Holbein the Younger, 1523

Figure 4.5
Portrait of Derich Born
Hans Holbein the Younger, 1533

Figure 4.6
Copy after *Whitehall Mural*
Remigius van Leemput, 1667

Figure 4.7
Portrait of Anne of Cleves
Hans Holbein the Younger, 1539

Figure 4.8
Portrait of Christina of Denmark
Hans Holbein the Younger, 1538

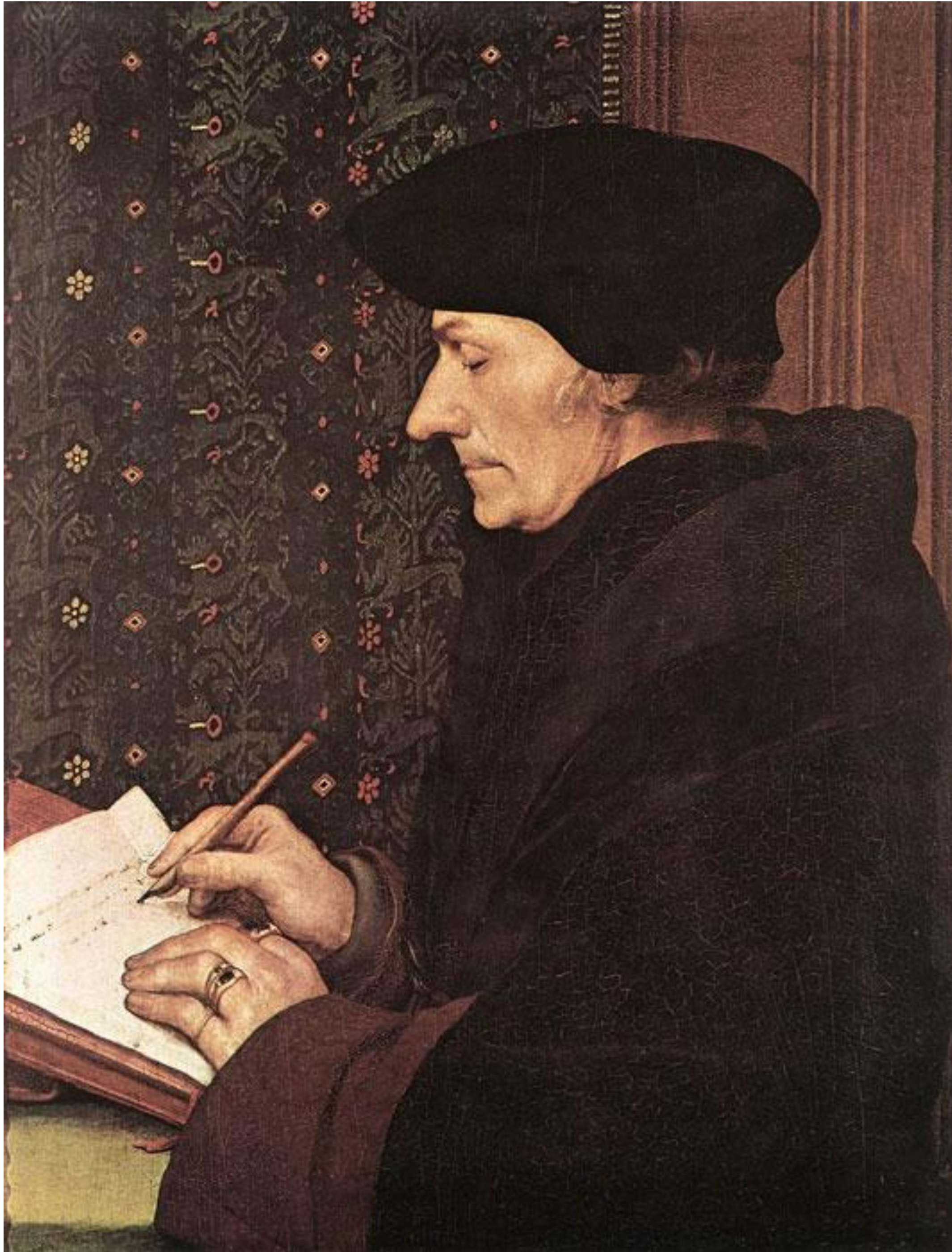


Figure 4.9
Portrait of Desiderius Erasmus
Hans Holbein the Younger, 1523

Figure 4.10
Portrait of Desiderius Erasmus
Quentin Massys, 1517

Figure 4.11
Portrait Medal of Desiderius Erasmus
Quentin Massys, 1519

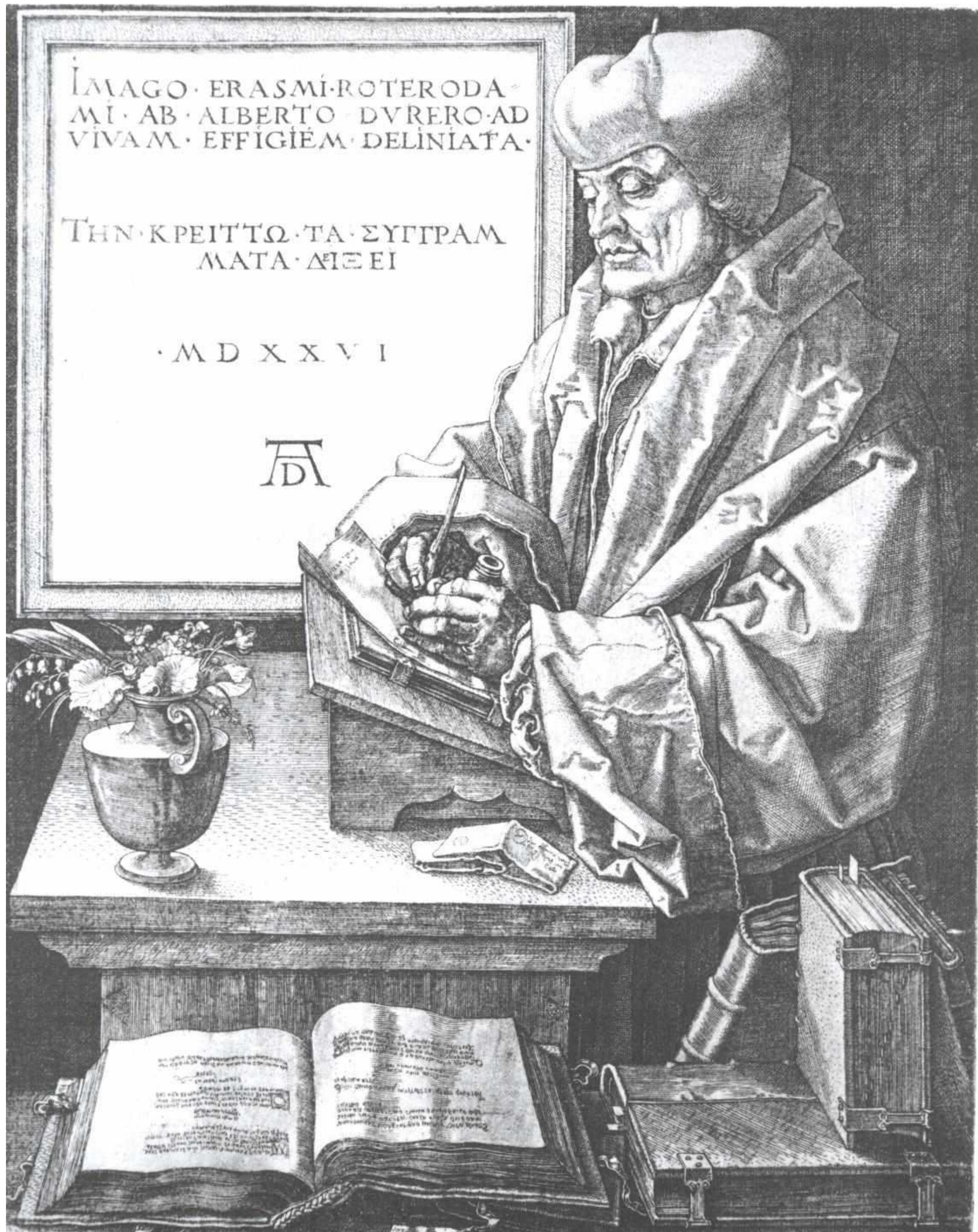


Figure 4.12
Portrait of Desiderius Erasmus
Albrecht Dürer, 1526

Figure 4.13
Self-Portrait
Hans Holbein the Younger, 1542-1543