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Preface

Yes, the face has a great future, but only if it is destroyed, dismantled.¹

1. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Continuum: London, 2004), p. 190 [henceforth *ATP*].

2. John Pope-Hennessy, *The Portrait in the Renaissance* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1966), p. 3.

3. Frankenheimer's *Seconds* shares with Deleuze a fascination with faciality, but also with Francis Bacon about whom Deleuze devoted an entire book. In a post-operation scene in *Seconds* where a psychoanalyst is explaining to Tony Wilson the nature of his future career as an abstract artist, he hands him a reproduction of a painting inspired by Bacon.

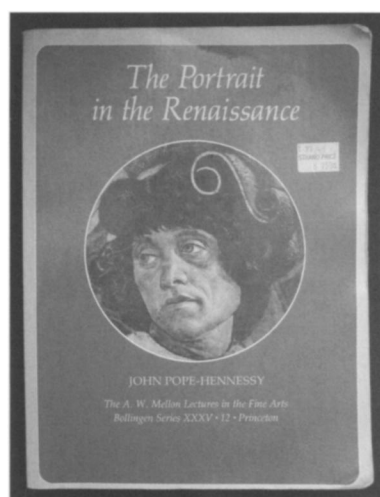


Fig. 1. John Pope-Hennessy, *The Portrait in the Renaissance* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1966).

The discussion that follows proposes another history of the portrait in early modern Italian art that turns from the humanism of Renaissance faces to engage with the abstraction of Renaissance faciality. Faciality is used here to interrogate the knowledge that has been produced by these silent faces of the past and to deterritorialise portraiture from the triumphant, universalizing, and humanizing model of the Renaissance individual. Two completely incongruous images (Figs 1 and 2) are called upon here to underscore what is at stake – to show the larger picture that moves beyond the period concerns of those researching and teaching in the earlier periods. The first image shows the cover of John Pope-Hennessy's *The Portrait in the Renaissance* (which he delivered as the A.W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts in 1963 and published in 1966). The second image is a still from Hiroshi Teshigahara's 1966 film *The Face of Another*, which follows the existentialist unravelling of a man who is offered a face transplant after an industrial accident. Pope-Hennessy's book is a monument in traditional art history and achieved for the study of Renaissance portraiture what Jacob Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860) accomplished for cultural history over a century earlier. Adopting Burckhardt's formula virtually unchanged, Pope-Hennessy plotted the rise of the 'Renaissance individual' as demonstrated in the development of portraiture that he argued moved from naturalistic records of appearances towards more idealised expressions of individual character. *The Portrait in the Renaissance* reflected a humanist belief in the dignity of man and in the controlled agency of individual intention. The book opened with a bold modern claim: 'Portrait painting is empirical'.²

The second point of departure is a profoundly anti-humanist meditation on the fragility of human identity in post-war Japanese society. Based on a novel by Kobo Abe, Teshigahara's chilling film was released in the same year as Pope-Hennessy's book and as John Frankenheimer's equally dystopian film *Seconds* (1966) in which a disillusioned New York bank manager is given a second chance in life and comes back after extensive plastic surgery as an abstract artist living in a Malibu beach house (Fig. 3).³ In the two films, the protagonists are given the opportunity to live life with another identity and another face, one deemed beautiful by the conventions of their time (Rock Hudson in *Seconds*; Tatsuya Nakadai in *The Face of Another*). In both stories, however, the two men come to realise that they are imprisoned by the fiction of these faces and, what is more horrifying, they learn that the 'authentic' lives, which they had lived before in their own faces, were equally illusory.

Whereas Pope-Hennessy's book attempted to construct a highly rational and celebratory image of the individual, the representation of human identity in Teshigahara's and Frankenheimer's films questioned the validity and hubris of

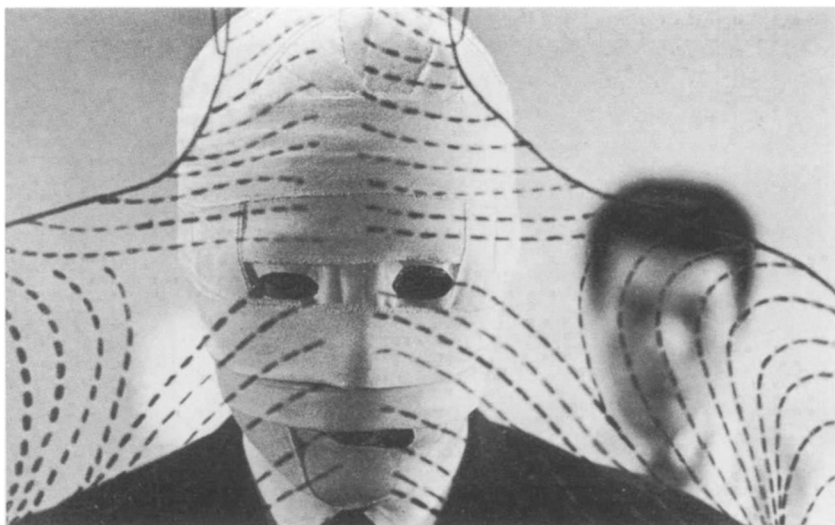


Fig. 2. Tatsuya Nakadai as Mr Okuyama in *Face of Another* (1966) Teshigahara Productions/Sogetsu Foundation.



Fig. 3. Rock Hudson as Tony 'Antiochus' Wilson in *Seconds* (1966) John Frankenheimer Productions Inc./Paramount Pictures.

that very construct in light of theories about selfhood and subjectivity that were being debated at that moment in history (Jacques Lacan's *Ecrits* were published by Gallimard in 1966, Roland Barthes' 'Death of the Author' and Michel Foucault's 'What Is an Author?' would appear shortly thereafter).⁴ However, to simply say that Pope-Hennessy's *Portrait of the Renaissance* was an old-fashioned argument by the time it appeared in print would be to miss the larger point: its conservative position was a deliberate movement towards anchoring Renaissance studies at the centre of mainstream art history in contradistinction to the methodological experimentation demonstrated at that time by a rising generation of scholars and critics of Modern art.

It has been over 40 years since Pope-Hennessy's study and nearly 150 years since Burckhardt's book. In spite of the critical interventions of the writers that I will discuss below, Pope-Hennessy's *Portrait of the Renaissance* has remained a central point of reference for students and scholars in Renaissance art

4. Roland Barthes, 'La Mort de l'Auteur', *Mantéia*, vol. 5, 1968, pp. 12–17; Michel Foucault, 'Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?', *Bulletin de la Société Française de Philosophie*, vol. 63, no. 3, 1969, pp. 73–104.

5. See, for instance, the homage paid to Pope-Hennessy's model in the National Gallery exhibition *Renaissance Faces: Van Eyck to Titian*, National Gallery, London, 2008. For a critical analysis of Burckhardt's legacy and the health of the Renaissance individual, see especially John Jefferies Martin, *Myths of Renaissance Individualism* (Palgrave: London, 2004) and Randolph Starn, 'A Postmodern Renaissance?', *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 60, no. 1, 2007, pp. 1–24.

6. Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 211.

7. Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 186 (emphasis in original).

8. Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 197.

history.⁵ Hence, rather than just being a book about portraiture, it has also contributed to affixing a certain portrait of Renaissance art history within the discipline as the guardians of out-of-date methodologies such as iconography, patronage studies, and monographic celebrations of artistic genius. Two disclaimers need to be posted here: I am not saying that these methodologies have not produced important studies for Renaissance scholarship; neither am I suggesting that other periods are innocent of having produced second-rate literature that falls under these categories. My point here is that these critical tools, when applied badly, are more often than not associated with the so-called 'earlier periods'. The ramification of this double bind – i.e. the portrait *in* Renaissance art history and the portrait *of* Renaissance art history – is the focus of this article.

White Wall/Black Hole

*The face, what a horror.*⁶

Before we come to the question of Renaissance faciality, the concept of faciality itself needs some elucidation. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari outlined the concept of schizoanalysis as a practice and as a means to resist the dominant and subliminal forces of 'significance' and 'subjectification' that push organic experience towards static, unchanging truths and knowable signs. Like Foucault, they questioned the category of the 'normal' and the processes of normalization by looking at what was included and excluded in these systems of social organization. In order to avoid being pre-determined through language, the subject had to keep in a constant state of differentiated and self-reflective becoming. At the heart of schizoanalysis, is a double movement: deterritorialization is the process of coming undone and reterritorialization describes the inevitable entropic shift back towards knowledge and order that had to be constantly questioned or otherwise kept in motion.

In a chapter entitled 'Year Zero: Faciality', Deleuze and Guattari drew upon the image of the face to explain the fraught process of these two flows. A face, they argued, is a thing that gives rise to meaning; it is a 'white wall/black hole system'. The white wall is the surface upon which meaning is organised and projected; the black holes are the sites where meaning comes into being.⁷ Let me summarise this point in a different way: without the organizing force of social codes, the face would be thought of as no more meaningful than the flab of skin that hangs at the end of the elbow. In Teshigahara's *The Face of Another*, when Mr Okuyama's wife rejects his amorous advances after his disfigurement, he makes the profoundly Deleuzian remark: 'The face is just a space above the neck covered with a sheet of rice paper'. In a second failed attempt to seduce his wife, he interrogates her: 'You feel you're looking at holes in a wall, don't you?'. When Okuyama confesses to his doctor that he contemplated disfiguring his wife, he says in his own defence: 'I'd just be freeing her from her prejudice about faces'. According to Deleuze and Guattari's theory of faciality, while the face is produced in humanity, it is nevertheless an inhuman, abstract system of signification; that is, it is a signifying machine that bores meaning into the black holes on the white wall of the face, enabling classification, knowledge, and control. The face helps determine what is passable and unpassable: 'at every moment, the [signifying] machine rejects faces that do not conform, or seem suspicious'.⁸

What received notions would a study of Renaissance faciality seek to challenge? Conventional approaches to Renaissance portraiture are bound by a misunderstanding of mimesis and by a psychobiographical tendency to impute character to these 'realistic' faces – what Harry Berger Jr identified as the fallacies of 'mimetic idealism' and 'physiognomic interpretation'.⁹ To speak of portraits in terms of 'likeness' and 'naturalism' poses certain problems (and falls into the dubious terrain of what Pat Gill defined as 'technostalgia').¹⁰ The two concepts are often confused for and conflated with the idea of facial identity, which was a very nebulous concept in a historical moment before the technological assurances of photographic mimesis and before modern criminologists and eugenicists like Cesare Lombroso, Alphonse Bertillon, and Francis Galton (Fig. 4) systematised the face as the legal guarantor of identity.¹¹ Remembering and knowing what people looked like was an ambiguous concept at best in an era before the mechanical reproducibility of the mug shot (Natalie Zemon Davis' study of the case of Martin Guerre provides an obvious example of this).¹² Writing about the operation of verisimilitude in religious and anatomical images in the second half of the sixteenth century, Fredrika Jacobs argued that the discourse of 'likeness' was one about 'lifelikeness' – about paintings and sculptures that looked as if they were real and would move, not images that really looked like someone.¹³ Mimesis, in this regard, was about animation rather than about individual exactitude – hence, the common use of phrases like *carne viva* or 'living flesh' or *ritratti parlanti* 'speaking portraits'. From a theoretical perspective, Hans Belting articulated this dilemma as an anthropological concern with artistic 'likeness' – i.e. naturalism – and saw it as both a mediator for and a possible obstacle to spiritual 'presence'.¹⁴

An overemphasis upon 'classical mimesis' regarding Renaissance portraits presupposes that such images are truthful documents, which can be used to recompose their subjects from the past. Georges Didi-Huberman remarked that scholars tend to be obsessed by a 'passion for identifying' and treat portraits like suspects in a Miss Marples or Sherlock Holmes drama, focusing on secondary clues in order to ascertain the true identity of the sitter. By focusing on the name of the 'Individual' to be discovered, such an approach fails to address the 'Particular', which asks of the object 'How is this a portrait?'¹⁵

Let me be clear: it's not that resemblance did not exist as a concept in Italian portraiture before photographic reproduction, but that what determined resemblance was more often than not in the subjective period eye of the beholder rather than in the purported 'empiricism' of portrait painting or, to draw from an argument made by Adrian Randolph, an individual's identity was determined more by visual conventions than by the idea of likeness and resemblance.¹⁶ In the history of art, we have the eloquent testimony of Michelangelo. When critics claimed that his portraits of Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici in San Lorenzo looked nothing like the men they were supposed to portray, the sculptor responded that in a thousand years nobody would be able to say what they had looked like, but that they would nevertheless continue to honour these men as he had represented them.¹⁷ Likewise, while Isabella d'Este complained that Mantegna's portrait of her did not possess anything of (and here she uses the plural) 'our resemblances', she also complimented Titian for 'our portrait' (again referring to herself and her image in the plural), even though she doubted that she ever looked anywhere as beautiful as the artist had made her.¹⁸

9. Harry Berger Jr, 'Fiction of the Pose: Facing the Gaze of Early Modern Portraiture', *Representations*, vol. 46, 1994, pp. 87, 96; an extended discussion of these issues is presented in Harry Berger Jr, *Fictions of the Pose: Rembrandt Against the Italian Renaissance* (Stanford University Press: Stanford, 2000).

10. Pat Gill, 'Technostalgia: Making the Future Past Perfect', *Camera Obscura: A Journal of Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies*, vols. 40–41, 1997, pp. 163–79.

11. See Alan Sekula, 'The Body and the Archive', *October*, vol. 39, 1986, pp. 3–64.

12. Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 1983). On the concomitant role of time, space, and performance in portraiture, see Maniura in this issue.

13. Fredrika Jacobs, *The Living Image in the Renaissance* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2005).

14. Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence. A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1997).

15. Georges Didi-Huberman, 'Portrait, Individual, Singularity. Remarks on the Legacy of Aby Warburg', in Nicholas Mann and Luke Syson (eds), *The Image of the Individual: Portraits in the Renaissance* (British Museum Press: London, 1998), p. 165. See also: Georges Didi-Huberman, 'Ressemblance mythifiée et ressemblance oubliée chez Vasari: la légende du portrait "sur le vif"', *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome*, vol. 106, no. 2, 1994, pp. 383–432.

16. Adrian Randolph, 'Introduction: The Authority of Likeness', *Word & Image*, vol. 19, no. 1–2, 2003, p. 2. For a concise overview of the problem of likeness in the history of portraiture, see also Joanna Woodall, 'Introduction: Facing the Subject', in Joanna Woodall (ed.), *Portraiture: Facing the Subject* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), pp. 1–25.

17. Nicolo Martelli (28 July 1544) letter quoted in Ernst Steinmann and Rudolf Wittkower, *Michelangelo Bibliographie 1510–1926* (Klinkhardt & Biermann: Leipzig, 1927), pp. 240–1: 'Michelagnolo solo è unico al mondo nella libreria di San Lorenzo della Città di Firenze, havendo in quella à scolpire i Signori illustri della felicissima casa de Medici non tolse dal Duca Lorenzo, ne dal Sig. Giuliano il modello apunto come la natura gli avea effigiati e composti, ma diede loro una grandezza una proporzione un decoro una gratia uno splendore qual gli pareva che piu lodi loro arrecassero, dicendo che di qui à mille anni nessuno non ne potea dar cognitione che fossero

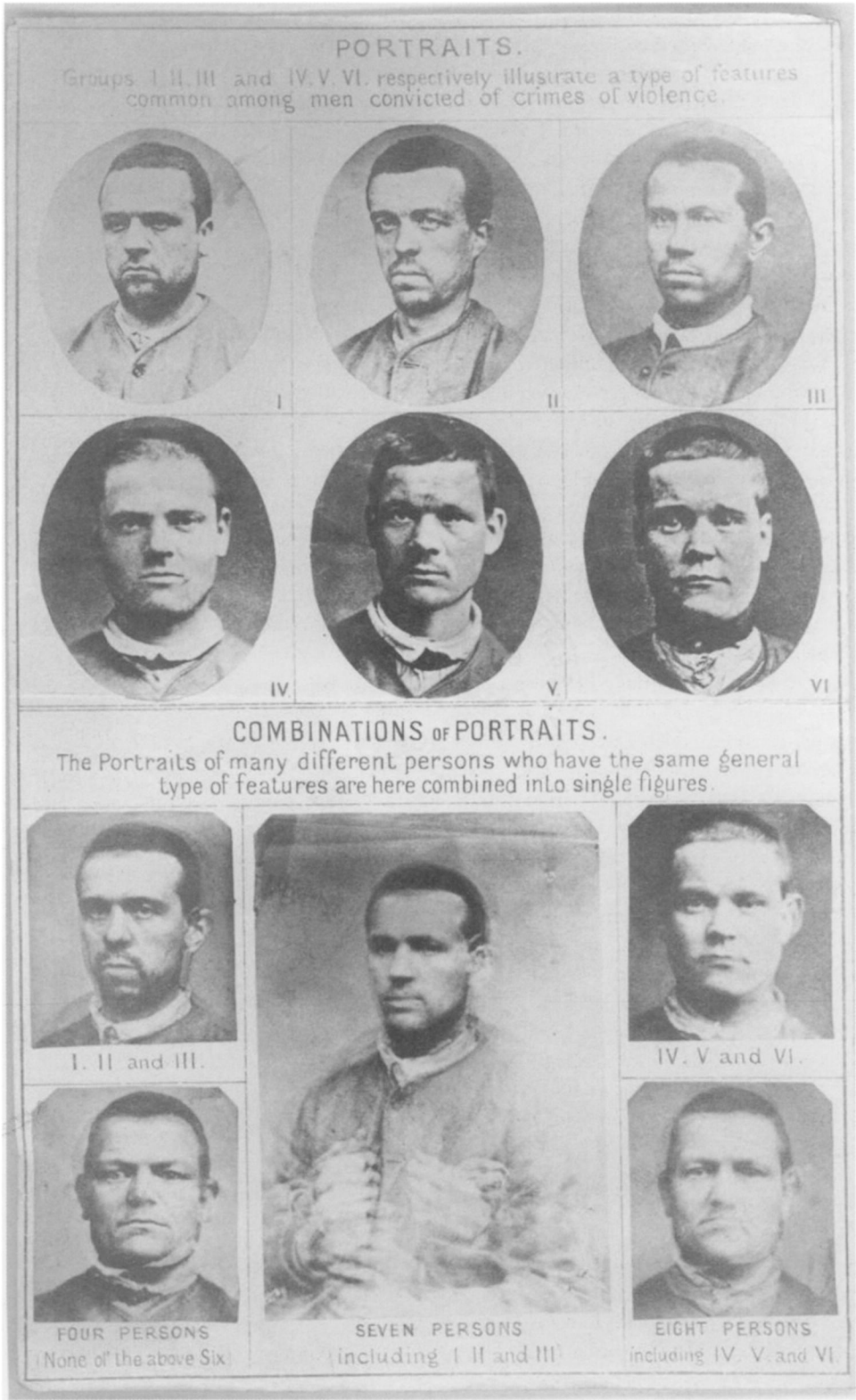


Fig. 4. Francis Galton, 'Combination of Portraits . . . men convicted of crimes of violence', 1855, Galton Papers 158/2 m. (Photo: UCL Library Services, Special Collections.)

While Renaissance portraits did not reproduce realistic records of unique individuals per se, they did contribute to the production of iconic types or ‘normative stereotypes’.¹⁹ This returns us again to faciality and the mutable image of the face that comes to define and reduce transitory, embodied experience into data. When early modern physiognomists like Giovanni Battista Della Porta and Ciro Spontone attempted to read the features of the face, they did so in order to predict and control the subjects attached to them (Figs 5 and 6). Owl face, dog face, rhinoceros face, broken lines, rising lines, consistent lines – as Deleuze and Guattari pointed out ‘it is not the individuality of the face that counts but the efficacy of the ciphering it makes possible, and in what cases it makes it possible. This is an affair not of ideology but of economy and the organization of power’.²⁰ In this regard, one can cite Bronwen Wilson’s emphasis on ‘representation’ over ‘resemblance’, a position from which portraiture is no longer ‘an expression of self-sufficiency’ but ‘an expression of the desire for legibility’.²¹ In an article focusing on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century portrait-books and physiognomy treatises, she explained the way people were beginning to organise faces into social categories at the end of the sixteenth century through representation – the axis between printed portraits and biographical texts, in the early modern sources she examined, introduced a new way of determining behaviour and stereotyping faces on a semiotic level.²² Representation was the precondition and provided the drive for both behaviour and knowledge.

Let us turn here to the visual, rather than the verbal, for a demonstration (Figs 7 and 8). Ask yourself a simple question: which of these two faces would you want to identify with? The man on the left with a look of exhaustion and despair, whose state of being seems to be inscribed across his countenance from the broken, uneven lines that dangle across his forehead, to the pendulous bags sagging under his vacant, unfocused eyes? Look closely

altrimenti, di modo che le genti in loro stessi mirandoli ne rimarrebbero stupefatti’.

18. See Isabella d’Este quoted in Alessandro Luzio, ‘Arte retrospettiva: i ritratti di Isabella d’Este’, *Emporium*, vol. 11–12, 1900, p. 432: ‘Dolne summamente che non gli potiamo mandare al presente el nostro rectracto, perche el Pictore ne ha tanto mal facta che non ha alcuna de le nostre simiglie’ and in *La prima donna del mondo: Isabella d’Este Fürstin und Mäzenatin der Renaissance*, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, 1994, p. 114 (Cat. 51): ‘Il ritratto nostro di man di Titiano ne piace di sorte che dubitiamo di non esser stata in quell’etade ch’egli rappresenta di quella beltà che in sè contiene’. See also Joanna Woods-Marsden, ‘Ritratto al Naturale’: Questions of Realism and Idealism in Early Renaissance Portraits’, *Art Journal*, vol. 46, no. 3, 1987, p. 214, nn. 7, 19 (for the original documents: Mantua, Archivio di Stato, Arch. Gonzaga, b. 2991, l. 3, c. 40 and b. 2936, l. 311, c. 141).

19. Woods-Marsden, ‘Ritratto Naturale’, p. 211.

20. Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 194.

21. Bronwen Wilson, ‘The Renaissance Portrait. From Resemblance to Representation’, in John J. Martin (ed.), *The Renaissance World* (Routledge: London, 2007), p. 452.

22. Bronwen Wilson, ‘Learning How to Read: Giovanni Battista Della Porta, Physiognomy, and Printed Portrait-Books’, *Visual Knowledge Conference*, University of Edinburgh, 2003, published at: <http://www.iash.ed.ac.uk/vkpublication/wilson.pdf>. I would like to thank Bronwen Wilson for sending me her article, ‘The “Confusion of Faces”: The Politics of Physiognomy, Concealed Hearts, and Public Visibility’, in Bronwen Wilson and Paul Yachnin (eds), *Making Publics in Early Modern Europe: People, Things, Forms of Knowledge* (Routledge: London, 2009), which was still in print at the time of writing.

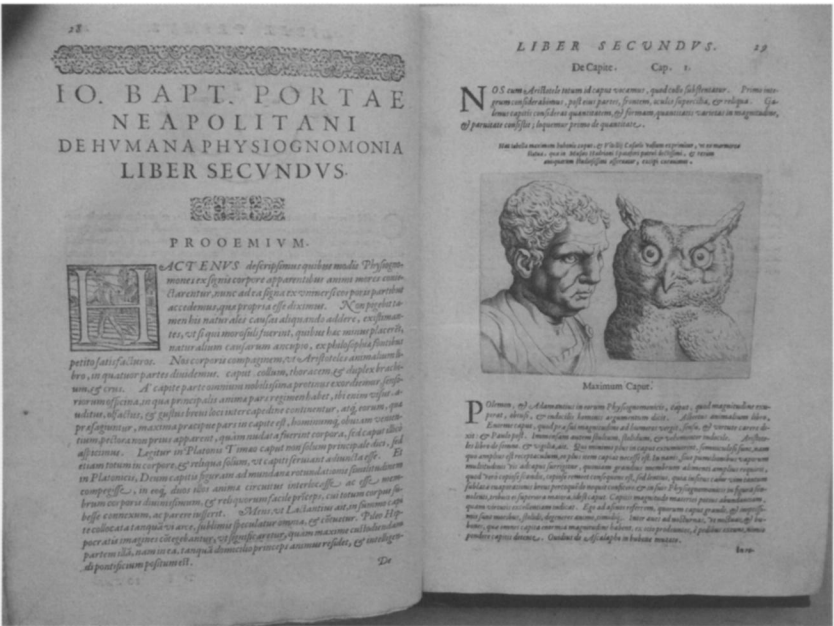


Fig. 5. Giambattista Della Porta, *Della fisonomia dell' huomo* (Gio. Giacomo Carlini e Costantino Vitale: Naples, 1610), ID No. 2826-318. (Photo: Getty Research Institute.)

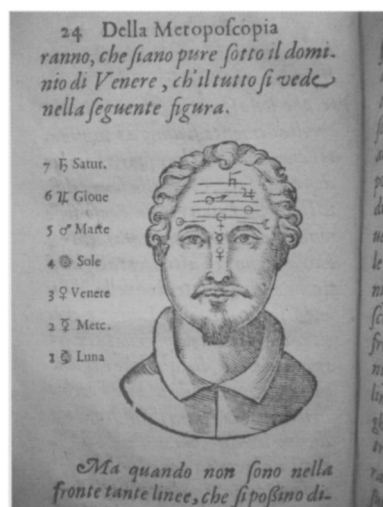


Fig. 6. Ciro Spontone, *La metoposcopia, ovvero, comensuratione delle linee della fronte* (Venice: Evangelista Deuchino, 1626), ID No. 1389-850. (Photo: Getty Research Institute.)

23. Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architetti*, Rosana Bettarini and Paola Barocchi (eds) (S.P.E.S.: Florence, 1966–1987), vol. 6, p. 121: 'se bene fu da fanciullo cagionevole e da uomo ebbe dua malattie d'importanza, sopportò sempre ogni fatica e non ebbe difetto; salvo nella vecchiezza pati dello ordinare e di renella, che s'era finalmente convertita in pietra'.

24. Vasari, *Le vite*, vol. 5, p. 333: 'Fu Iacopo molto parco e costumato uomo, e fu nel vivere e vestire suo più tosto misero che assegnato; e quasi sempre stette da sé solo, senza volere alcuno lo servisse o gli cucinasse'.

25. Vasari, *Le vite*, vol. 6, p. 109: 'chi vuole operar bene, bisogna allontanarsi da tutte le cure e fastidi, perché la virtù vuol pensiero, solitudine e comodità e non errare con la mente. Con tutto ciò ha avuto caro amicizie di molte persone grandi e delle dotte e degli uomini ingegnosi, a' tempi convenienti'. Vasari, *Le vite*, vol. 5, p. 334: 'fu tanto pauroso della morte, che non voleva, non che altro, udirne ragionare, e fuggiva l'avere a incontrare morti. Non andò mai a feste né in altri luoghi dove si ragunassero genti per non essere stretto nella cl[o]jaca, e fu oltre ogni credenza solitario'.

26. On Pontormo's critical fortune, see Elizabeth Pilliod, *Pontormo, Bronzino, Allori: A Genealogy of Florentine Art* (Yale University Press: New Haven, 2001).

at this image: even the rumpled collar that has become untucked and the silent, perfidious buttons on his coat betray him as a subject who is coming undone. Do we find some level of identification with this face or are we more likely to empathise with the figure on the right? A similar set of lines cut across the white walls of the two men – but whereas these marks signify decomposition in the former, they suggest composure in the latter. The introspective, intellectual activity this mask bespeaks is quite unlike the embodied, psychological condition communicated in the other face. Here, the sitter's hair and beard emerge in orderly, sculpted forms; at the same time, the sinuous lines suggest a softness of touch. In contrast, the other man's hair seems to hang off the skull in messy clumps; the lethargic, vertical strokes on the cheeks and on the tuft of hair beneath the chin invoke a sense of the heaviness of this man's existence. Returning to the other portrait, we read another message: the body here is regal, bound in elegant attire. With great pictorial economy, the artist has managed to convey the tactile richness and difference between the weight of the expensive brocade, the luxury of the fur trim, and the mechanical efficiency of the clasp that holds everything together – like the 'absorbed' /inward versus 'theatrical' /outward gaze of the two men, the clasp and the buttons process very different information about these two faces.

Portraits, in short, were not about preserving truthful likenesses, they were about bodies being transformed into data through signifi-ance and subjectification. These faces reterritorialise the bodies attached to them – luminous face/regal body, anxious face/neurotic body – which in turn naturalises the construction of these 'individuals' along similar terms. What his printmakers accomplished with ink and woodblocks, Giorgio Vasari reaffirmed with pen and paper. Thus, we hear Vasari celebrating Michelangelo, who overcame his delicate nature as a child to become a strong adult who could tolerate any burden and who only suffered some kidney problems in old age.²³ Jacopo Pontormo, in contrast, is described as a 'moderate and habitual man' but rather 'miserable in his lifestyle and clothing'; he was 'almost always alone and did not want anyone to serve or cook for him'.²⁴ Whereas Michelangelo was praised for his love of solitude, which allowed him to focus on his art and for his ability to socialise with great, intelligent, and creative men, but only at 'convenient times', Pontormo's social withdrawal was ascribed to his paranoia: Jacopo 'was so fearful of death that he didn't even want to hear it discussed and fled from any encounter with the dead. He never went to feasts or to other places where mobs collected for fear of being pushed into the sewer, and he was solitary beyond belief'.²⁵ A finely crafted master narrative that pits the projected High Renaissance classicism embodied by Michelangelo's luminous face/regal body against the Mannerist hyperbole of Pontormo's anxious face/neurotic body is thus naturalised and the assumptions about style and lifestyle collapse into each other.²⁶

Rather than the ultimate testament to individuality, the face becomes the matrix that enables us to believe in the myth of the veridical self. Portraits create identities that come to define our behaviour and our sense of how we are seen in the world. This a priori about the face is nowhere more evident than in portraits of women, which, as Patricia Simons argued in an important article in 1988 did not reflect reality, but narrated an idealization of reality that was made possible – made visible – by art: 'A woman, who was supposedly vain and narcissistic, was nevertheless made an object in a framed 'mirror' when a man's worldly wealth and her ideal dowry, rather



Fig. 7. Giorgio Vasari, *Portrait of Pontormo* in *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architetti* (Giunti: Florence, 1568), Shelfmark 137.d.14 – 16. (Photo: British Library Board.)

than her 'true' or 'real' nature, was on display'.²⁷ Her face was an index of the face of her husband, father, and family. It is not so much that a face is a mask that somehow hides a 'true' self, but a 'likeness' that has been imposed upon the body to obfuscate the absence of an autonomous 'true' self beneath it.

Making Faces

*What chooses the faces is not a subject [...] it is faces that choose their subjects.*²⁸

How do these models affect the way we do art history? A recent monograph on Raphael brought me back to the famous portrait of Michelangelo in the *School of Athens* (Fig. 9):

The dark-haired, brooding philosopher seated in the centre foreground has the characteristics of Heraclitus, who fretted about the permutations of the universe. The contemporary touches of short beard, work-clothes and tall leather boots imply a second level of identification, while the posture of moody introspection and the props of marble block, quill pen, ink and paper point to the tempestuous sculptor who wrote sonnets, Michelangelo.²⁹

27. Patricia Simons, 'Women in Frames: The Gaze, the Eye, the Profile in Renaissance Portraiture', *History Workshop Journal*, vol. 25, 1988, p. 13.

28. Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 199.

29. Bette Talvacchia, *Raphael* (Phaidon: London, 2007), pp. 86, 90.



Fig. 8. Giorgio Vasari, *Portrait of Michelangelo* in *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architetti* (Giunti: Florence, 1568), Shelfmark 137.d.14 – 16. (Photo: British Library Board.)

This identification is perhaps one of the best-loved stories of Renaissance art history, but it always seemed fantastical, as if time were out of joint. In 1511 when the frescoes were completed, Michelangelo was in his mid-30s and there were no known 'public' images of him at that time in Rome (the earliest authorised portraits date to the 1520s). Without an identifying inscription, how did this face signify 'Michelangelo' to the early sixteenth-century visitor to the Stanza della Segnatura – a motley crew consisting mostly of ecclesiastics, princes, politicians, bureaucrats, and courtiers who may or may not have had any interest in the 'art world'?

Writing in 1568, four years after Michelangelo's death and over 50 years after Raphael's fresco was completed, Vasari was only aware of four portraits of the artist that may have been taken from life – two paintings by Giuliano Bugiardini (1522) and Jacopino del Conte (c. 1535), a medal presented by Leone Leoni to Michelangelo in 1561, and the bronze bust by Daniele da

Volterra, which was based on a pounced and much copied drawing also by Volterra. In addition to these works were numerous unauthorised prints that ranged from traditional portraits like Giulio Bonasone's engraving from 1546, which shows Michelangelo in profile, to outright fantastical representations, such as the illustration in Sigismondo Fanti's the *Triumpho di Fortuna* (1527), where a partially naked figure labelled as Michelangelo is seen sculpting a reclining female nude, and the strange sixteenth-century etching of the young, sleeping, caped Michelangelo at the age of 23, usually attributed to the Fontainebleau printmaker Léon Davent (Fig. 10).³⁰

In 1913, the German art historian and future director of the Hertziana, Ernst Steinmann, catalogued and published over a hundred portraits of the Old Master in his extraordinary *Die Portraiddarstellungen des Michelangelo* (*Portraits of Michelangelo*). Many of the works that Steinmann reproduced had been included in an exhibition at the Castel Sant'Angelo two years earlier in Rome. It could be suggested that Steinmann's heroic intervention 'reterritorialised' the face of Michelangelo; it subjugated the body into a signifying machine, knowable signs that categorised certain faces as 'Michelangelo' while rejecting others. The alleged portrait by Raphael, however, is absent from Steinmann's extensive catalogue.

When asked about the source for this art historical myth, most scholars and students assume it is buried somewhere in a sixteenth-century document. The archives, however, yielded nothing, but began to melt the edges of the black holes that make up this luminous face. The Vatican Stanze are mentioned in three letters (ca. 1511) between Isabella d'Este and Grossino (Gian Francesco di Luigi Grosso), reprinted in John Shearman's exhaustive *Raphael in Early Modern Sources*; in one of these letters, Raphael is misidentified as the author of the Sistine ceiling and in none of them is there any mention of Michelangelo's hidden portrait.³¹ In a lengthy passage from the life of Raphael, Vasari describes the two paintings of the *Dispute* and the *School of Athens*, in a rather poetic manner, as if the two stories were taking place within the same physical space rather than split across two walls. Portraits of Diogenes, the Evangelists, Aristotle, Plato, Federigo Gonzaga, Bramante, Zoroaster, and Raphael co-exist in Vasari's ekphrasis where neither temporal and spatial boundaries nor sacred and secular divides seem to be an issue.³² Michelangelo, however, is nowhere to be found. Even in Giovanni Pietro Bellori's *Descrizione delle immagini dipinte de Raffaele d'Urbino...* (1695), where the seventeenth-century scholar provided a detailed critique of Vasari's description and a lengthy analysis of Raphael's Stanze paintings, we find no reference to the putative Michelangelo portrait.

To cut to the chase, this precious myth is a modern invention first proposed in 1941 by Deoclecio Redig de Campos in a paper delivered on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of the unveiling of the *Last Judgment* and published a year later in the proceedings to the conference.³³ His primary piece of evidence was Ascanio Condivi's sixteenth-century description of Michelangelo's facial features, which Redig de Campos claimed was notable for its 'osteological precision'; this in and of itself is a gross anachronism since Condivi would not have thought in these scientific terms.³⁴ Redig de Campos, let it be noted, was a curator and then director of the Vatican Galleries and Museums so hardly an outsider speaking from the margins; instead, he was the authority pontificating from the centre. He was a contemporary voice whose authenticity resided in his institutional clout rather than the historical accuracy of his sources.³⁵

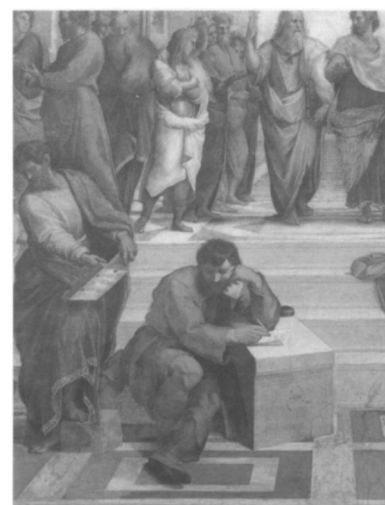


Fig. 9. Raphael Sanzio, *School of Athens* (detail), 1508–511, fresco. Vatican, Stanza della Segnatura. (Photo: Scala, Florence.)



Fig. 10. Léon Davent, *Portrait of Michelangelo*, mid-sixteenth century, etching, 142 × 88 mm. London, British Museum, inv. li.5.121. (Photo: The Trustees of the British Museum.)

30. These are reproduced in Steinmann and *Il volto di Michelangelo*, Casa Buonarroti, Florence, 2008.

31. See correspondence and commentary in John Shearman, *Raphael in Early Modern Sources*

1485–1602, vol. 1 (Yale University Press: New Haven, 2003), pp. 146–9, 160–2 (12 July 1511; 16 August 1511; 11 July 1512).

32. Vasari, *Le vite*, vol. 4, pp. 166–7: in each instance, the term *ritratto* is used.

33. The publication date for this source is often incorrectly quoted. Deoclecio Redig de Campos, 'Il pensieroso della Segnatura', *Michelangiolo Buonarroti nel IV Centenario del 'Giudizio Universale' 1541–1941* (Sansoni: Florence, 1942), pp. 205–19.

34. Note the way the author reworks all the details that do not match the physiognomic comparison: Deoclecio Redig de Campos, 'Il pensieroso', 217: 'Nell'immagine del Pensieroso si ritrovano i tratti essenziali di questa descrizione: la figura tarchiata e nerboruta, le spalle ampie e soprattutto la forma caratteristica della testa, analizzata dal Condivi con tanta precisione osteologica: larga nel cranio e gradualmente appuntita verso il mento velato dalla barba leggera. Il naso, sebbene piuttosto piatto, non è detta già la ragione di tale "abbellimento". Gli occhi non sono "piccoli" come dice il testo; ma il Condivi scriveva nel 1553 e Michelangiolo contava allora ben settant'otto anni'.

35. The 1941 'discovery' was then reiterated in Redig de Campos, *Raffaello e Michelangelo: studi di storia e d'arte* (G. Bardi: Rome, 1946), p. 88; Redig de Campos, 'Raffaello Sanzio', *Enciclopedia Cattolica*, vol. 10 (Tipografia L'Impronta: Florence, 1953), p. 478; Redig de Campos, 'Notizie intorno all'autoritratto di Raffaello nella Scuola d'Atene', *Rendiconti*, vol. 28, 1955–1956, pp. 251–7; Redig de Campos, *Raffaello nelle Stanze* (Aldo Martello: Milan, 1965), p. 17. The latter was translated into English (1957) and German (1960).

36. Marcia Hall, 'Introduction', in Marcia Hall (ed.), *Raphael's School of Athens* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1997), p. 40.

37. Ingrid Rowland, 'The Intellectual Background of the *School of Athens*: Tracking Divine Wisdom in the Rome of Julius II', in *Raphael's School of Athens*, p. 157. In another article in the same volume, Janis Bell, 'Color and Chiaroscuro', p. 95, refers to the figure as the 'Heraclitus-Michelangelo'.

38. Rona Goffen, *Renaissance Rivals* (Yale University Press: New Haven, 2002), pp. 227, 222.

39. James Beck, *Raphael. The Stanza della Segnatura, Rome* (George Braziller: New York, 1993), p. 84.

40. Talvacchia, *Raphael*, p. 86.

When Redig de Campos is mentioned (if he is mentioned at all), he is usually relegated to the paratextual space of the notes. One exception is Marcia Hall's introduction to the 1997 volume on *Raphael's School of Athens* in the Cambridge University Press 'Masterpieces of Western Painting' series where she notes that '[Redig de Campos] offered the intriguing hypothesis that Raphael added the figure after viewing the unfinished Sistine vault, as a homage to his colleague and rival'.³⁶ Hall was concerned with the technical chronology of the fresco cycle, and while the twentieth-century source is identified nothing more is said about the historiographical ramifications of this anachronism. In the same volume, Ingrid Rowland remarks that the figure 'presents a simultaneous portrait of Michelangelo's face and Michelangelo's artistic style'.³⁷ In a book about artistic rivalry, Rona Goffen confesses that, on the one hand, 'some have been reluctant to recognise Michelangelo himself' in the figure of Heraclitus, but concludes, on the other hand, that the identification of the body is 'a likeness of Michelangelo represented in Michelangelo's style'.³⁸ While Raphael's Heraclitus is undoubtedly a response to Michelangelo's figures from this period, Michelangelo's 'style' is not the same thing as Michelangelo's 'face' and 'likeness'.

In some instances, the story is framed in a slightly cautious manner: thus, when James Beck claims in his monograph on Raphael's Stanze that the figure in the *School of Athens* was 'thought in earlier times to have been a portrait of Michelangelo', he does not specify that that 'earlier time' was 1941.³⁹ Likewise, when Bette Talvacchia explains that the 'game of finding portraits of Raphael's contemporaries disguised in the characters of historical personages in the *School of Athens* has precedent in Vasari', she neglects to mention that Michelangelo was not in that list.⁴⁰ When Maria Ruvoldt repeats that the 'massive figure turned inward represents Raphael's homage to Michelangelo, a variation on the prophet Jeremiah' she adds the parenthetical disclaimer '(and perhaps a portrait of the artist)' and then buries Redig de Campos in a note.⁴¹

Facing the Maker

*You don't so much have a face as slide into one.*⁴²

What this exercise produces is a *malaise d'archive* (to tweak Jacques Derrida's phrase) and the awkward revelation that we have been unwitting victims as well as active participants in a selective representation of the archive, a twentieth-century portrait of the Renaissance that recalls the romance of Irving Stone and Carol Reed's *Agony and the Ecstasy* (1965) (Fig. 11). Modern viewers may project Michelangelo into Raphael's Michelangelesque figure, but his contemporaries – critics like Vasari for whom ekphrasis was a standard mode of documentation – did not find Michelangelo in the same way that we have. Yet, in every case, the anachronism has been gently folded back into the master narrative of the great showdown between the two Renaissance *Übermenschen* in the Vatican. In much of the secondary literature, the collective desire for this particular face and body to be a portrait of Michelangelo by Raphael outweighed the ability to admit that this was a modern – i.e. twentieth-century – desire rather than an interpretation that emerged from the empirical reassurance of archival documentation. Thus, rather than using the archive as historical corroboration, the iterative performance of the shared desire to 'find' Michelangelo engendered a collective hallucination within the archive itself.

A close reading of Vasari's extended biography of Michelangelo exposes another startling twentieth-century fabrication: the face of Michelangelo allegorised in the flayed skin of St Bartholomew (Fig. 12). Vasari's comments on this passage in the *Last Judgment* are brief:

There is a great infinity of figures – Prophets, Apostles, and in particular Adam and St Peter – form a circle. The one stands for the origin prior to the judgment of the people, the other represents the first founder of the Christian religion. At their feet is a very beautiful St Bartolomew who shows his flayed skin.⁴³

Vasari, who claimed in the same biography of Michelangelo to have been an intimate friend of the artist, said nothing about this alleged self-portrait.

Buried in an endnote in Bernardine Barnes' comprehensive study of the reception of Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* we hear:

14. In a letter to Vasari dated May 1, 1545, Don Miniato Pitti remarked that the skin was beardless while the saint had a long beard; see Chastel, 1984, 190 and 279. F. La Cava (*Il volto di Michelangelo scoperto nel Giudizio finale* [Bologna, 1925]) first published the idea that the skin is Michelangelo's. The best argument in support of the identification is that it agrees with Michelangelo's known portraits. While no written documents show that Renaissance viewers recognised the portrait, in an engraved copy by Nicolas Beatrizet (1562) the name of Michelangelo is inscribed next to the skin; see *Michelangelo e la Sistina*, 1990, 250–51. To my knowledge, there has been only one attempt to refute La Cava's identification: C. Angeleri, "L'autoritratto di Michelangelo nel Giudizio Universale," *Miscellanea* (1942): 231–51.⁴⁴

La Cava's story is worth repeating here (as is Carlo Angeleri's). While Redig de Campos' 1941 identification is recounted with cool calm and authority, La Cava's is the passionate confession of a true believer, recounted in a short book that bore the revealing half-title 'A Psychological Drama in a Symbolic Portrait'.⁴⁵ On a 'bright morning in May 1923' La Cava, a doctor by training, arrives in the Sistine Chapel to study the frescoes:

Returning to my study of the composition through the various characters one by one, all of a sudden, I saw the figure of Michelangelo who was looking out at me. A shiver ran upon my spine. It really is him! ... An inexplicable internal agitation seized me. I went from here to there, from one end to the other end of the Chapel in search of an angle with the best lighting in order to see the figure that suddenly appeared to me. I even called the guards in the Chapel asking, a little weak, if there might be a portrait of Michelangelo in the *Last Judgment*; but they coldly denied it, perhaps a little surprised by the fervour of my question. They were there for many years, but never had anyone realized it. I searched in the guidebook, but there was no mention. I looked again at the painting, there was no doubt, like the face of Christ on the Holy Shroud, the head of Michelangelo was inscribed in the skin of St Bartholomew, still fresh and bloody!⁴⁶

The comparison to the Holy Shroud is priceless – it narrates the transferral of the miraculous face that imprints itself upon the material surface, the very process by which the embodied subject gives itself over to becoming representation.⁴⁷

Curiously enough, Angeleri's rebuttal to La Cava was published in the same volume as Redig de Campos' discovery of Michelangelo's portrait in the *School of Athens*. Angeleri, a historian of religious reform in Renaissance Italy, provided a historical explanation for Fra Miniato Pitti's sixteenth-century criticism of the *Last Judgment* to disprove La Cava's cavalier interpretation. Noting a discrepancy between the bearded saint and the beardless skin, Pitti, an abbot, cosmographer, and friend of Vasari, remarks that 'that skin is not his'



Fig. 11. Charlton Heston as Michelangelo in *The Agony and the Ecstasy* (1965) International Classics/Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation. (Photo: akg-images/album.)

41. Maria Ruvoldt, *The Italian Renaissance Imagery of Inspiration* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2004), pp. 55–6, 198, n. 49.

42. Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, 196.

43. Vasari, *Le vite*, vol. 5, p. 71: 'Sonvi infinitissime figure che gli fanno cerchio, di Profeti, di Apostoli, e particolarmente Adamo e Santo Pietro, i quali stimano che vi sien messi l'uno per l'origine prima delle genti al giudizio, l'altro per essere stato il primo fondamento della cristiana religione. A' piedi gli è un San Bartolomeo bellissimo, il qual mostra le pelle scorticata'.

44. Bernardine Barnes, *Michelangelo's Last Judgment* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1998), p. 155, n. 14.

45. Francesco La Cava, *Il volto di Michelangelo scoperto nel Giudizio Universale. Un drama psicologico in un ritratto simbolico* (Nicola Zanichelli: Bologna, 1925).

46. La Cava, *Il volto*, pp. 8–9: 'Queste ed, ahimè! molte altre cose io ignorava, quando in una chiara mattina del maggio 1923 mi accingevo a studiare il grande fresco del "Giudizio Finale" nella Cappella Sistina. Poche volte io l'avevo guardato, e l'impressione rimastami era di una gran folla anonima dominata da un gesto minaccioso: quello del Cristo Giudice. Imprendendo ora lo studio della composizione partitamente nei suoi vari personaggi, vidi ad un tratto la figura di Michelangelo che mi

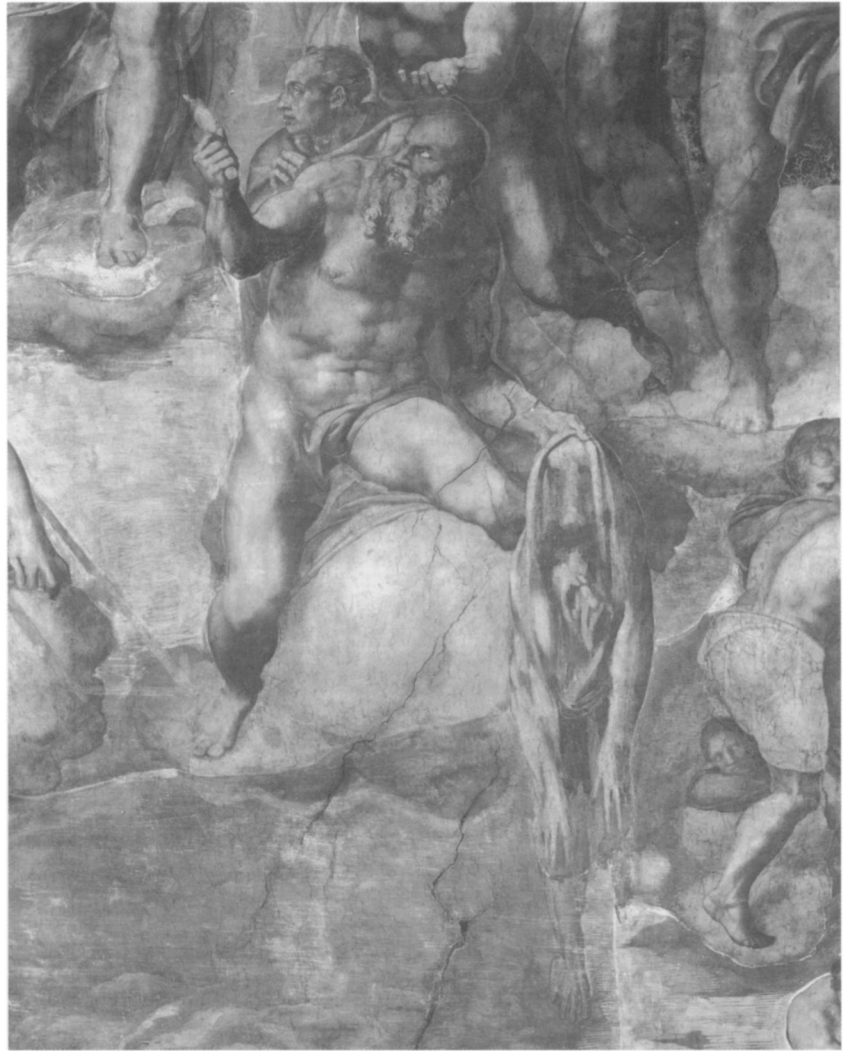


Fig. 12. Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Last Judgment* (detail), 1541, fresco. Vatican, Sistine Chapel. (Photo: Scala, Florence.)

guardava. . . Un brivido mi corse per la schiena. Era proprio lui! . . . Una interna inesplicabile agitazione si impossessò di me. Andavo di qua e di là dall'una all'altra parete della Cappella, in cerca del punto di luce più opportuno per vedere la figura improvvisamente apparsami. Mi rivolsi perfino ai custodi della Cappella chiedendo febbrilmente se nel «Giudizio» ci fosse il ritratto di Michelangelo; ma essi freddamente negarono, sorpresi forse un po' dal fervore della mia domanda. Eran lì da tanti anni: mai nessuno se n'era accorto. Cercai nella guida, nessun accenno: riguardai nuovamente la pittura; non v'era alcun dubbio: la testa di Michelangelo, come il volto di Cristo nella Sacra Sindone, era inscritta nella pelle ancor fresca e sanguinante di S. Bartolomeo!

47. On this theme, see especially Gerhard Wolf, 'From Mandyllion to Veronica: Picturing the Disembodied Face and Disseminating the True

[quella pelle non sia la sua].⁴⁸ The line, Angeleri concluded, reflected his concerns about iconographic clarity and about the dangers of artistic licence slipping into heresy. La Cava's identification sparked a lively debate in the Roman press, but in the end, as Leo Steinberg (who is among the only scholars to have chased up this literature in any detail) concluded: 'the art-historical world by and large has accepted that rumpled ragface as Michelangelo's only certified self-portrait'.⁴⁹ Leave it to psychoanalysis to reveal the discipline's deep-seated secrets.

In spite of La Cava's claim to be the first to discover this long buried secret and despite Steinberg's summary of the interpretation, a line in Barnes' endnote lingered – 'While no written documents show that Renaissance viewers recognized the portrait, in an engraved copy by Nicolas Béatrizet (1562) the name of Michelangelo is inscribed next to the skin'. Upon closer inspection, however, it turns out that Béatrizet's identifying tag is more an inscription of the sculptor's identity than an acknowledgement of Michelangelo's face. At the top of the version of this expansive print in the Vatican collection, there

is in fact a portrait of the maker and clearly identified as such – ‘MICHEL ANGELUS BONAROTUS PARTITIUS FLORENTINUS AN. AGENS LXXXI’. In contrast, the identification at the centre of the image that is being made is between the burin of the engraver and the knife of the martyred saint – ‘NICOLAUS BEATRIZIUS LOTARINGUS INCIDIT: ET FORMIS’ – ‘cut’ and ‘published’.⁵⁰ Rather than situating these lines at the bottom of the print, as was customary, Béatrizet hangs them rather creatively on either side of St Bartholomew, and while he acknowledges Michelangelo’s authorship of the *Last Judgment* – ‘MICHELANGELUS INVENTOR’ – Béatrizet is in no way naming the face as Michelangelo. Moreover, no other sixteenth-century reproduction repeats Béatrizet’s unique tag. Instead, the flayed skin that the saint presents before the viewer can be read as a clever conceit, an allegory of the process of carving and replicating, a comment on the art of printmaking rather than an identification of a hidden portrait.

In the final analysis, this investigation into the histories behind the alleged portraits of Michelangelo in the *School of Athens* and the *Last Judgment* turned out to reveal a group portrait of art historians who have been repeating old tales in unison. This ‘Michelangelo’ turned out to be the wrongful victim of a botched kidnapping, not unlike previous attempts from the cleaned up, courtly face that gazes out of Vasari’s *Lives* to the melodramatic action hero who appears in nineteenth-century academic paintings (Fig. 13) and Charlton Heston’s unforgettable performance as the moody, disgruntled, stubborn, and overworked Michelangelo in *The Agony and the Ecstasy*. In the example of the *School of Athens*, there is the fantasy of physical resemblance, which transforms the face into Michelangelo’s by way of pseudo-forensic evidence (physiognomic criteria extracted from a modified and manipulated textual description). In the *Last Judgment*, in contrast, the forced identification is achieved through a psychobiographical projection of personality – the conflicted inner-self read on the distorted surface of limp flesh. The former misapplies modern notions of facial recognition; the latter seeks resemblance through psychological extension.

Image of Christ in the Latin West’, in Herbert Kessler and Gerhard Wolf (eds), *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation* (Nuova Alfa Editoriale: Bologna, 1998), pp. 153–79.

48. Miniato Pitti quoted in Carlo Angeleri, ‘L’Autoritratto di Michelangelo nel “Giudizio Universale”. Lo video i contemporanei?’, *Michelangiolo Buonarroti nel IV centenario del ‘Giudizio Universale’ 1541–1941* (Santoni: Florence, 1942), p. 249.

49. Leo Steinberg, ‘The Line of Fate in Michelangelo’s Painting’, *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 6, no. 3, 1980, p. 428. To Steinberg’s credit, he seems to have gone back to Angeleri’s article and provides one of the few useful critiques of the affair.

50. See reproduction and entry in *Michelangelo e la Sistina. La tecnica, il restauro, il mito*, Vatican Museums, Vatican City, 1990, pp. 250–1, cat. 151 and pp. 229–62 regarding other reproductions of the *Last Judgment*.

51. Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon The Logic of Sensation*, trans. Daniel W. Smith (Continuum: London, 2005), p. 17.

52. Joseph L. Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1993); Victor Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image: Insight into Early Modern Meta-Painting*, trans. Anne-Marie Glasheen (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1997); Berger, *Fictions*.

Face/Off

*Pity the meat!*⁵¹

Where does all of this leave us? How can we speak responsibly about portraiture in early modern Italy in light of over half a century of theorizing about subjects and subjectivity? Is there a way to grant any form of agency to the artist and the sitter? Perhaps a partial answer to these questions can be found if we shift the focus of portraiture away from unique, authentic faces and back onto the performative body as both machine and representation – a synthetic model of what Joseph Koerner identified as ‘the moment of self-portraiture’, what Victor Stoichita called ‘the scene of production’, and what Berger referred to as ‘the fiction of the pose’.⁵²

In spite of all the images that circulated in the centuries during and after his lifetime, and despite the claims that he never drew himself, there is one image that can be classified as a ‘self-portrait’ of Michelangelo, but this definition only holds true if we free ourselves from our prejudices about the face (Fig. 14). In a famous poem addressed to Giovanni da Pistoia, dating to around 1509 when the artist was painting the Sistine Ceiling, Michelangelo is heard complaining about the hardships he had to endure. Weak in body,

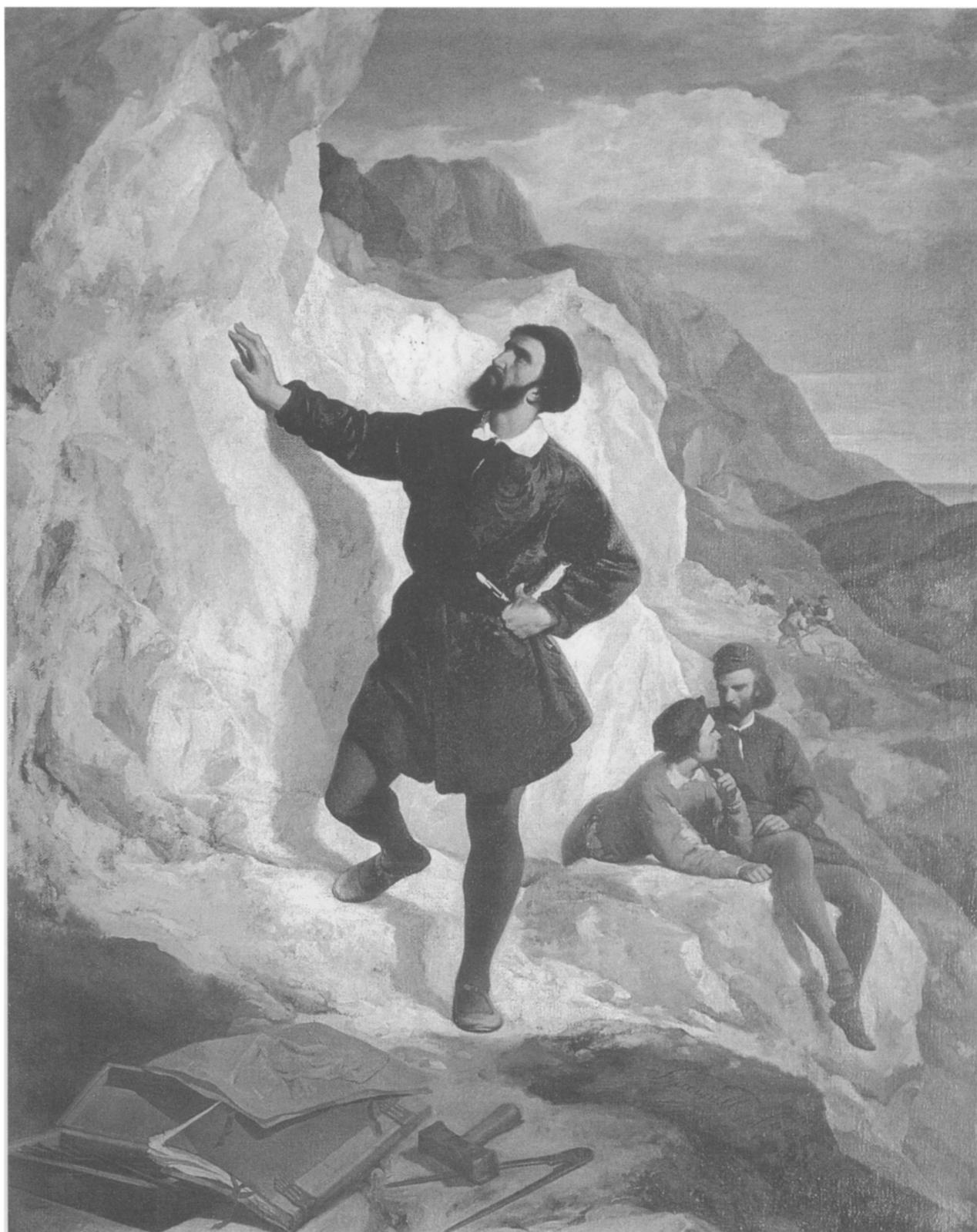


Fig. 13. Antonio Pucinelli, *Michelangelo at Carrara*, 1860–1865, oil on canvas, 157 × 128 cm. Massa-Carrara, Palazzo Ducale, Collezione della Provincia di Massa-Carrara.

mind, and spirit, he compares himself to a sick cat operating with a faulty peashooter:

I've already grown a goiter from this torture,
hunched up here like a cat in Lombardy
(or anywhere else where the stagnant water's poison).
My stomach's squashed under my chin, my beard's
pointing at heaven, my brain's crushed in a casket,
my breast twists like a harpy's. My brush,
above me all the time, dribbles paint
so my face makes a fine floor for droppings!

My haunches are grinding into my guts,
my poor ass strains to work as a counterweight,
every gesture I make is blind and aimless.
My skin hangs loose below me, my spine's
all knotted from folding over itself.
I'm bent taut as a Syrian bow:

Because I'm stuck like this, my thoughts
are crazy, perfidious tripe:
anyone shoots badly through a crooked blowpipe.

My painting is dead.
Defend it for me, Giovanni, protect my honor.
I am not in the right place – I am not a painter.⁵³

53. Michelangelo, trans. Gail Mazur, *They Can't Take That Away from Me* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 2001), p. 62.

54. Michelangelo quoted in *Il volto di Michelangelo*, p. 110: 'I' ho già fatto un gozzo in questo stento, / come fa l'acqua a' gatti in Lombardia / o ver d'altro paese che si sia, / c'ha forza 'l ventre appicca socto 'l mento. / La barba al cielo, e la memoria sento / in sullo scrigno, e 'l petto fo d'arpia, / e 'l pannel sopra 'l viso tuttavia / mel fa, gocciando, un ricco pavimento. / E' lombi entrati mi son nella peccia, / e fo del cul per contrapeso groppa, / e' passi senza gli occhi nuovo invano. / Dinanzi mi s'allunga la chorteccia, / e per piegarsi adietro si ragroppa, / e tendomi com'arco soriano. / Però fallace e strano / surgie il iuditio che la mente porta, / ché mal si tra' per cerbottana torta. / La mia pictura morta / difendi orma', Giovanni, e 'l mio onore, / non sendo in loco bon, né io pignore'.

55. See Charles de Tolnay cited in *Il volto di Michelangelo*, p. 110.

56. Belting, *Likeness*, p. 10.

Various English versions of this poem exist and while Gail Mazur's translation sacrifices linguistic specificity for poetic flare, the general idea is there.⁵⁴ Michelangelo portrays himself as the prisoner of his perfidious, abject body that fails him. Moreover, his face becomes the very surface for his art [*I pannel sopra 'l viso tuttavia / mel fa, gocciando, un ricco pavimento*], a wonderful inversion of the usual flow of a self-portrait from body to image, here, instead his body becomes the bearer of the paint. To the right of the poem, he performs this self-representation again through a paltry set of broken lines – hands, arms, and legs stunted, his face far less defined than even the ghostly representation he calls forth above him on the ceiling.

Art historians have been reluctant to accept this sketch as a 'portrait' of Michelangelo. The drawing is usually discussed in the context of his poetry – a *scherzo* (joke) bonded to the verbal rather than to the visual.⁵⁵ However, we find in Michelangelo's denial of faciality another possibility for an embodied history of early modern portraiture that returns the face to the head, that reveals a history of memories lived through bodies in discomfort and pain, of hesitant or sometimes ironic gestures experienced once upon a time, rather than simply distilling faces into names, identities, and the archives that transform the image into text.

Belting claimed that 'People are disposed to venerate what is visibly before their eyes, which can be only a person, not a narrative. Images contain moments from a narrative, although they themselves are not narratives. [...] Only the portrait, or image, has the presence necessary for veneration, whereas the narrative exists only in the past'.⁵⁶ This may be easier to argue in the context of holy icons and portraits of saints, which was Belting's subject, but here I would propose that the boundaries between *imago* and *historia* are blurred in representations of artists, where image and narrative collapse into each other.

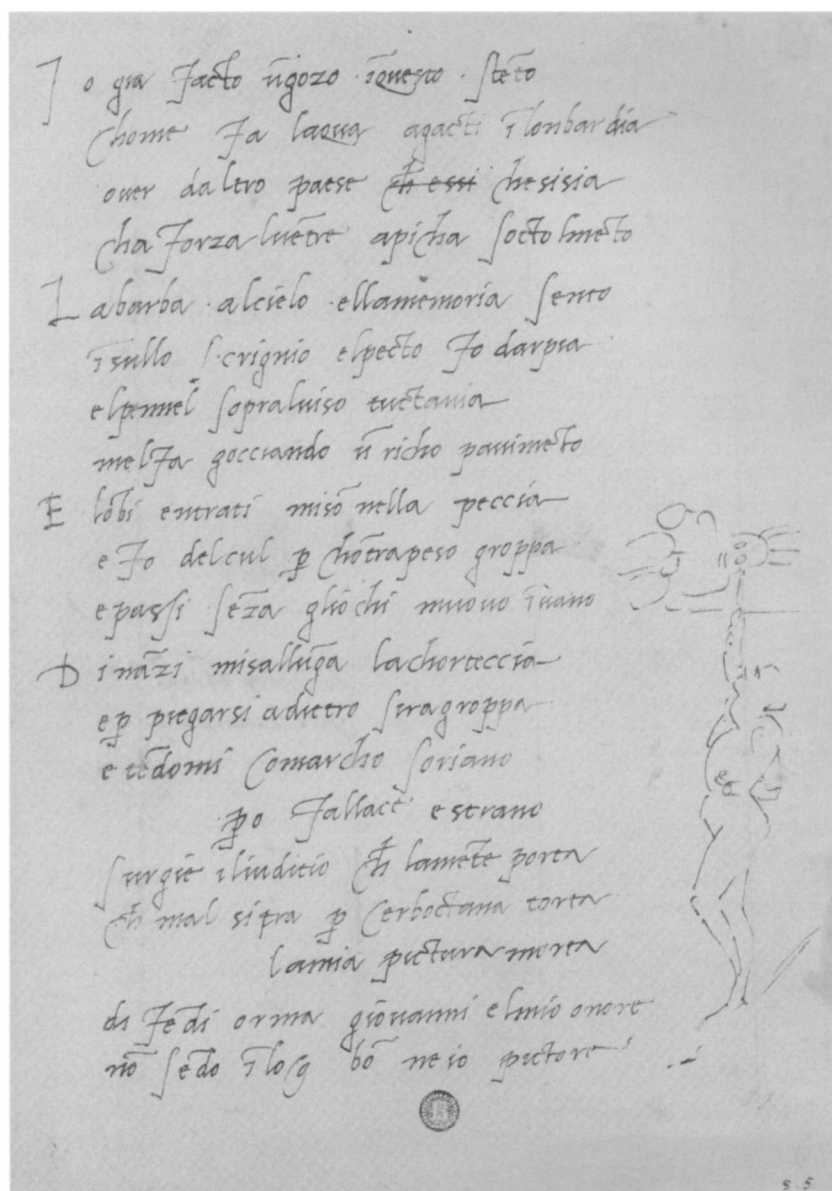


Fig. 14. Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Self-Portrait*, 1508–1512, pen, 283 × 200 mm. Florence, Casa Buonarroti (Archivio Buonarroti, XIII, III).

Michelangelo envisions the self as *historia* as an *imago* seen in a flashback – i.e. he has already become representation in his own imagination. We might contrast this state with another self-portrait, which portrays a real-time narrative that is the making of the image that we see before us as a drawing and that the artist once saw in the mirror as his reflection (Fig. 15). Twisting to one side, Pontormo moves from one representational surface to another, as if he were summoning his double to come out of the mirror and bind itself onto the sheet of paper on the other side. In his face, we read a sense of focused activity that seems to move from his eyes to the extended finger, which curves slightly before the surface of the mirror, and back again to his drawing hand at the other end. This movement, to quote Jonathan Sawday (writing about Dürer's self-portrait as a sick man) 'does not suddenly reveal

a vista of autonomous selfhood. What it does reveal, however, is the complex nature of the engagement with ‘embodiment’ in the period’.⁵⁷

I began with Michelangelo in the *School of Athens* and in the *Last Judgment*. Neither in the end, turned out to be considered, historically speaking, to be faces of Michelangelo. I then turned to a self-portrait of Michelangelo, but this face was deemed too ‘unrealistic’ to be an authentic portrait, even though, theoretically speaking, it is the closest thing we have to the possibility of a portrait not produced by the signifying machines of faciality, a simultaneous *imago* and *historia* of the body that does not reduce itself to a face and an identity, but that is founded upon sensation and the traces of the performative.

Portraits are uncanny; they often give the impression of presence and haunt the space of the viewer. Portraits can also be creepy in that they are also material reminders of our own materiality and transience. Quoting Barthes’ anxiety of ‘becoming an object’ and experiencing a ‘micro-version of death’ whenever he was photographed, Berger suggested that early modern portraits move us in the same way that photographs might because they, too, are ‘death-bearing’ – ‘inhumous’ or of a ‘death buried’ in representation.⁵⁸ If all portraits are ‘indexical icons’, as Berger suggested, this is particularly true when we are dealing with self-portraits because they are marked by an indexical link back to the artist’s body. But even when the portrait is not a self-portrait, it nevertheless recalls the gesture, the act of embodied image making and signals to the sensate, mortal presence that brought the image into being. The pathos of the portrait, then, lies in the body deterritorialised from the face. In his study of Francis Bacon, Deleuze would summarise this sentiment with the line: ‘Pity the meat!’, explaining that meat ‘is a “fact,” a state where the painter identifies with the objects of his horror and his compassion’.⁵⁹

Postface

*The face is a politics.*⁶⁰

Those who have an abiding interest in theory are often scolded by curators and traditional Renaissance art historians for privileging theory and for not paying enough attention to either the object or the archives. All three must operate together and it is often theory that enables the object and archive to come alive; my interest in theories of representation in this particular example is tied to a concern with what these images tell us rather than what we want these images to be (a concern with the ‘object’) and with how the knowledge we possess about these objects turned out to be fabricated and then normalised as fact (a concern with the ‘archive’). Jonathan Walker has pointed out that ‘while historians are well aware of the dangers of hindsight in their accounts of the past, they are far less aware of the role hindsight plays in accounts of their own activities’.⁶¹

Writing this paper has proven to be an unusually arduous struggle – received wisdom turned out to be unfounded rumour, the building blocks of history to be the dust of fairy tales. It began with an innocent question about the nature of resemblance and the role of representation in constructing such likenesses in a period before photographic mimesis – the portrait *in* the Renaissance. This then opened up a number of unexpected irruptions in the literature that raised fundamental questions about the Renaissance field, its own self-representation and its assigned position within the larger discipline – the portrait *of* the Renaissance. In my own work I tend to use the term ‘Renaissance’ only when addressing its very constructedness.⁶² Nevertheless,

57. Jonathan Sawday, ‘Self and Selfhood in the Seventeenth Century’, in Roy Porter (ed.), *Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Renaissance to the Present* (Routledge: London, 1997), pp. 41–2.

58. Berger, *Fictions*, pp. 91, 105.

59. Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, p. 17.

60. Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 201.

61. Jonathan Walker, ‘Let’s Get Lost: On the Importance of Itineraries, Detours, and Dead-Ends’, *Rethinking History*, vol. 10, no. 4, 2006, p. 574.

62. For a succinct analysis of the use of ‘Renaissance’, see Stefano Cracolici, ‘Renaissance’, in G. Marrone Puglia (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Italian Literary Studies*, vol. 2 (Routledge: London, 2007), pp. 1570–5.

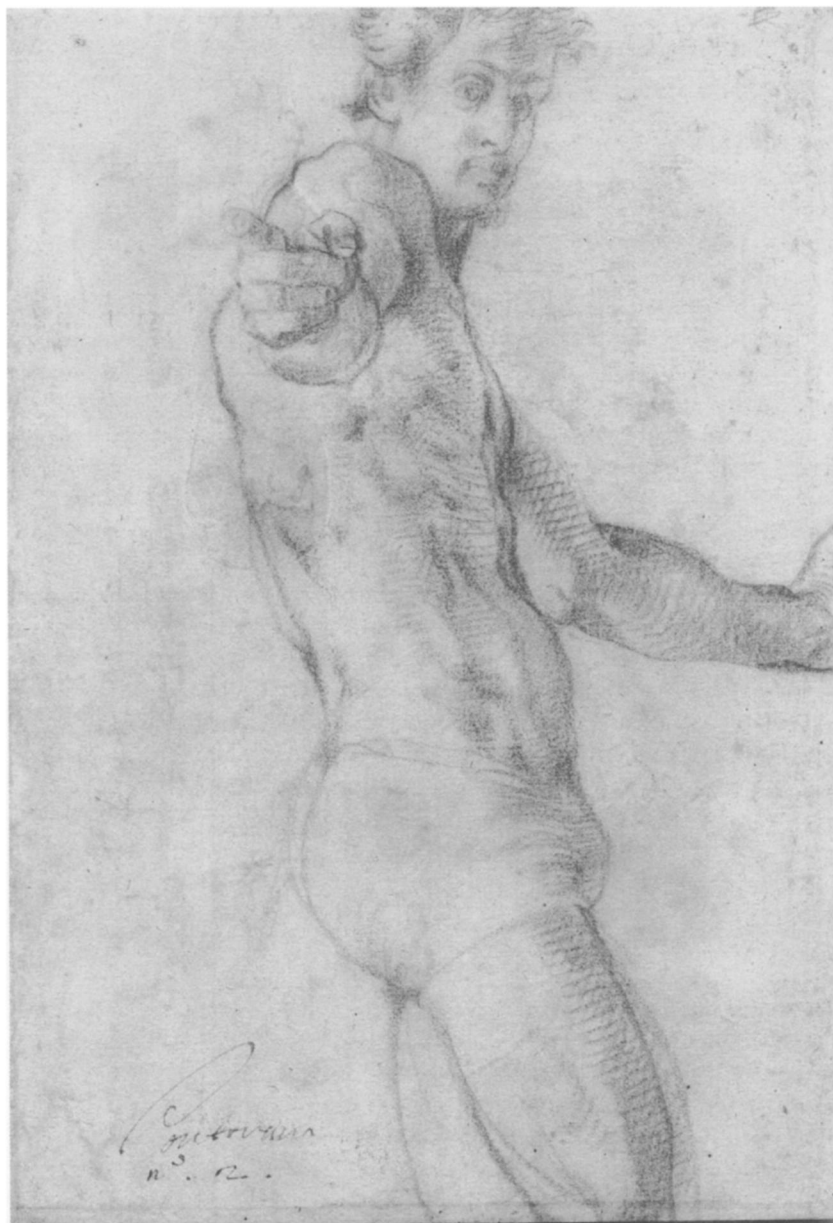


Fig. 15. Jacopo Pontormo, *Self-Portrait*, 1523–1525, red chalk on paper, 281 × 195 mm. London, British Museum, inv. 1936-10-10-10. (Photo: The Trustees of the British Museum.)

63. On the different intellectual positions of these two labels, see Leah S. Marcus, 'Renaissance/Early Modern Studies', in Stephen Greenblatt and Giles Gunn (eds), *Redrawing the Boundaries: The Transformation of English and American Literary Studies* (MLA: New York, 1992), pp. 41–63. One of the most poetic recent descriptions of the critical commitment of the 'Early Modern' appears in Douglas Bruster, *Shakespeare and the Questions of Culture: Early Modern Literature and the Cultural Turn* (Palgrave: London, 2003), p. 155: 'Like a hand with index finger extended, "early modern" points to the past with one finger while three others aim squarely at the here and now'.

there is a certain usefulness and even necessity in maintaining the category (especially as the 'Early Modern' has been losing the heuristic self-awareness implicit in its initial critical project and is now being used somewhat haphazardly by scholars and curators as a chronological marker rather than to mark out a methodological position).⁶³ Like Arif Dirlik's deliberate use of the phrase 'Third World' as a means to underline the violence affected by that term, here I invoke the 'Renaissance' label to question its persistent deployment, on the one hand, by art historians to mark the beginning of the heroic master narrative that would eventually climax in the modernity of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century avant-gardes and, on the other

hand, by those resistant to the interpretive possibilities of any theoretical frame that does not derive its 'truth' from the dusty logocentrism of the archives.⁶⁴

To some extent, many Renaissance scholars unwittingly as well as willingly perpetuate this subject position in order to remain the alpha to Modernism's omega. From another perspective, as Rebecca Zorach has pointed out in her introduction to *Renaissance Theory*, it is also in the invested interest of those 'in the discipline who *don't* study the Renaissance' for those of us who do to function as the 'traditionalist pole in art history, a place of origins, the canon'.⁶⁵ Or to quote Lisa Pon's formulation in that same volume: 'How can we study a Renaissance cast as the father of modernism's Oedipus?'.⁶⁶ It is a form of art historical othering in which the earlier periods remain 'Primitive' in contrast to the hyper activity and attractiveness of the Modern/Contemporary. While exceptions exist on both sides of the artificially maintained pre/post-Modern binary, for the time being, the caricatural face of the Renaissance remains in place so that the portrait of the later periods can remain forever young.

What is at stake here is not simply a twenty-first-century Ancients versus Moderns divide. Anachronism and timeliness are constant concerns for all historians. In part, this dilemma also reveals the dilated anxiety of Modernists who increasingly feel displaced from the centre by a new generation of critics and historians focused on themes arising from the new micro-politics of identity and globalization. While the Renaissance has traditionally played the role of Laius in the discipline's Oedipal complexes, this unfamiliar position is a new terrain for some Modernists who are seeking succour in the art of the Old Masters. And here we hit again upon the portrait of the Renaissance in art history. The assumption that the earlier periods stand as some sort of critical no-man's land permits a flexible degree of period tourism to the non-specialist as demonstrated by T.J. Clark's formidable experiment in art writing, *The Sight of Death*. Clark's elegiac diary chronicled his long goodbye not only to an idea, but to a decidedly post-theory Art History that he perceives to be overrun by attention deficit syndrome and the squeaky Nikes of contemporary youth. While this is neither the time nor place for an extended analysis of Clark's deeply felt but nevertheless problematic *état de lieux* of the discipline and while I have great sympathy for his call to patient viewing – an art history that looks quietly and closely at images rather than reducing them to facile sound bites and vehicles of readymade agendas – one cannot help but question his portrait of the pre-Modern as a depoliticised Arcadian refuge untainted by the analytical, theorizing gaze, which is presumed (both for better and for worse in Clark's account) to be the domain of practitioners in the Modern/Contemporary field. Nicholas Penny's misguided review of Clark's book as typical of the kind of high blown theoretical dribble produced by 'elite academics' invited to the Getty Research Institute who 'rarely have any interest in the museum' and who spend too much time by the swimming pool discussing Barthes and Benjamin has not helped matters and has undoubtedly helped to ossify the caricatural image of a certain kind of 'Renaissance art historian' for whom aesthetics, theory, and politics necessarily remain incompatible categories. But not all of the long-standing residents of the pre-Modern share what Tom Crow promptly dismissed as 'that stale curator's canard'.⁶⁷

What strategies of resistance are possible against this range of period-profiling? First and foremost, we must not slide into nostalgia for a heroic Art History of the past when 'we' were kings – when the Renaissance

64. Arif Dirlik, *The Post-Colonial Aura. Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism* (Westview Press: Boulder, 1998).

65. Rebecca Zorach, 'Renaissance Theory: A Selective Introduction', in James Elkins and Robert Williams (eds), *Renaissance Theory* (Routledge: London, 2008), p. 5 (emphasis in original).

66. Lisa Pon, 'Do Art Historians in the Twenty-First Century Have a Renaissance?', in *Renaissance Theory*, p. 291.

67. See Nicholas Penny, 'On the Hill Top', *London Review of Books*, vol. 29, no. 1, 4 January 2007, and Tom Crow, 'About the Getty', *London Review of Books*, vol. 29, no. 3, 8 February 2007. Crow retorted that a familiarity with the theorists named was no more than 'the mark of an advanced education'. Ironically enough, Clark's valorisation of and reinvestment in Old Master painting is probably more sympathetic to Penny's object-based connoisseurship than Penny was able to appreciate.

68. Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP* p. 208.

69. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Continuum: London, 2004), p. 2.

and Modernism dominated the discipline. Reattaching more identities to lost faces simply feeds the obsolete signifying machines of faciality without producing any different ways of thinking about and engaging with the haunting presences and with the putrid corpse of the past on terms relevant to the present and productive for the future. For those of us who remain in the field we must not join in the dirge. Instead, we must make the 'Renaissance' in all of its heroic (and problematic) constructedness relevant once more *especially* for those who remain at the site of death and those yet to come. Perhaps we can begin by looking ourselves in the mirror and deterritorializing the faces that we have been given:

Dismantling the face is the same as breaking through the wall of the signifier and getting out of the black hole of subjectivity. Here, the program, the slogan, of schizoanalysis is: Find your black holes and white walls, know them, know your faces; it is the only way you will be able to dismantle them, and draw your lines of flight.⁶⁸

What Deleuze and Guattari propose is not full out anarchy, but the lesson of self-awareness and self-knowledge, of effective action instead of melancholic self-absorption — 'A schizophrenic out for a walk', they wrote in *Anti-Oedipus*, 'is a better model than a neurotic lying on the analyst's couch'.⁶⁹ Or to quote a wise Renaissance adage: *nosce te ipsum* (know thyself). If not others will impose that knowledge on you, and you may not like the portrait they paint.

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