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The Book Half Open

Humanist Friendship in Holbein's Portrait of Hermann von Wedigh III

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ABSTRACT: A small, blind-tooled volume sits on a table covered in green baize: one clasp is open, the other is closed; and a slip of paper emerges from it reading *Veritas odium parit* (truth breeds hatred). This detail occurs in the foreground of a portrait by Hans Holbein of a young man identified as the Cologne patrician Hermann von Wedigh III (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York). A study of the physical features of the book and of the history of the brief text — actually an ancient and then Erasmian adage — leads to a new interpretation of the painting in the context of humanist friendship. The book is seen to be a multivalent simile for the work of art authored by the artist as well as for the sitter himself, raising questions about the implications for these of a medium that can be opened and closed. The half-open condition of the book is understood to reflect the complementary pressures of openness and closedness, accessibility and intimacy, that characterized the Renaissance republic of letters.

KEYWORDS: adages; books in paintings; classical reception; Erasmus of Rotterdam; Hans Holbein the Younger; Northern Renaissance; Terence

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Amongst the most notable features of Renaissance portraiture in the decades after the year 1500 is the abundance of books. Again and again, in lay portraits and pictures of clerics, in paintings of men and of women, in Italy and in the North, we find a bound volume — sometimes in the hand, sometimes on a desk, shelf, or parapet, sometimes one of many — as the sitter's frequent and often solitary companion. There are multiple explanations for this development: the legacy of religious painting, such as the depiction of the Virgin reading or the iconographic representation of saints with attributes; the impact of Renaissance humanism and the scholarly self-assertion it entailed (often by direct appeal in the composition of these portraits to saintly representations); and, perhaps most importantly, the proliferation and the growing prestige of the printed book and specifically of printed literature as a mark of good breeding, elite education, cultural and intellectual sophistication, and lettered *otium*. These causes are, of course, not unrelated to each other, and certainly all inform a tradition such as the portrait with the *Petrarchino* or other small book of poetry that became so prevalent in Italian and Italianate art (Figure 1).[1] I do not propose to inquire further about causes, origins, or developments here, or even to talk in general. In fact, this essay will be

1 For example, see Novella Macola, 'I ritratti col Petrarca', in *Le lingue del Petrarca*, ed. by Antonio Daniele (Udine: Forum, 2005), pp. 135–57; Giuseppe Patota, 'Petrarchino',

extremely specific, focusing on one portrait with a book painted in 1532 by Hans Holbein the Younger (*c.* 1497–1543). I do, however, wish to consider the significance of inviting into the portrait another entity that, like the sitter him- or herself, was distinguished by a unique and individual skin — though admittedly one that did not of necessity or inherently belong to what it contained (most books in this period were sold unbound).[2] These facts, when they intersected with the intellectual and artistic agenda of a painter such as Holbein, made the book a particularly rich place of metaphor and simile.[3] According to the maxim of Erasmus of Rotterdam (*c.* 1466–1536), inscribed on his two most widely disseminated portraits — a 1519 medal by Quentin Metsys (1466–1530) and a 1526 engraving by Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528) — his better picture could be found in his books.[4] But what are the implications of placing that better picture not only alongside the

Bollettino di italianistica, n.s., 13.1 (2016), pp. 53–69; Kate Heard and others, *The Northern Renaissance: Dürer to Holbein* (London: Royal Collection Publications, in association with Scala Publishers, 2011), pp. 203–05 (no. 93); more generally, Novella Macola, *Sguardi e scritture: Figure con libro nella ritrattistica italiana della prima metà del Cinquecento* (Venice: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 2007), and Marco Paoli, '*Galeotto fu il libro e chi lo dipinse*: Ritratti di letterati e scienziati cinquecenteschi raffigurati con un libro. Primo censimento', *Rara volumina*, 22 (2015), pp. 5–28.

2 Indeed, bindings were more likely to reveal to whom books belonged. On binding: Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing 1450–1800*, trans. by David Gerard (London: Verso, 1997 [1957]), pp. 104–08; Anthony Hobson, *Humanists and Bookbinders: The Origins and Diffusion of Humanistic Bookbinding 1459–1559* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). On the unbound book in manuscript publication before the print era and its various aesthetic and affectual possibilities, see Nicolò Crisafi in this volume.

3 I derive my distinction between these terms in the following discussion partly from Mark Roskill and Craig Harbison, 'On the Nature of Holbein's Portraits', *Word & Image*, 3 (1987), pp. 1–26 (esp. pp. 2–6). I prefer to speak of the book as metaphor/simile than of a 'double portrait' precisely because a straightforwardly naturalistic depiction of a bound book gives no clue necessarily as to its identity or its inner character; it is therefore quite unlike a portrait of a person (as understood). Cf. Macola, *Sguardi e scritture*, p. 20: 'compagni di vita e dotati di vita, i libri trasformano spesso il ritratto in un doppio ritratto'. Even a naturalistic depiction of an open book may be an illusion of representation: Nicholas Herman, *Le Livre enluminé, entre représentation et illusion* (Paris: BnF Éditions, 2018), pp. 11–58 (esp. pp. 31–32).

4 ΤΗΝ ΚΡΕΙΤΤΩ ΤΑ ΣΥΓΓΡΑΜΜΑΤΑ ΔΕΙΞΕΙ. While the Greek συγγράμματα can mean 'writings' more broadly, in this context it is a translation of *libri*, which Erasmus used when he first wrote this phrase in a Latin letter to Johann Werder, 19 October 1518, in *Opus epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami*, ed. by Percy S. Allen and others, 12 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906–58) (= Allen), III, p. 413 (ep. 875); see Oren Margolis, 'Hercules in Venice: Aldus Manutius and the Making of Erasmian Humanism', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 81 (2018), pp. 97–126 (esp. pp. 98–102, 121–22; though with the correct date here). Images of the Metsys

Figure 1. Jean Clouet, *L'Homme au Pétrarque* (*c*. 1530–35), oil on panel, 38.4 × 33 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2020.

painted *effigies* or likeness, but in a medium that can be opened and closed?

Holbein's portrait of Hermann von Wedigh III, now on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, is in a beautiful state of preservation, allowing the viewer to appreciate the great economy with which the artist produced his compelling effect (Figure 2).[5] The

medal and the Dürer engraving are available on the website of the Victoria and Albert Museum (inv. 4613-1858, E.4621-1910).

5 Maryan W. Ainsworth and Joshua P. Waterman, *German Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1350–1600* (New Haven, CT: Metropolitan Museum of Art, distributed by Yale University Press, 2013), pp. 133–37, 301–02 (no. 30, ill. and figs 114, 116–17). Extensive (but not complete) bibliography is available on the Metropolitan Museum website. Relevant works include Hildegard Krummacher, 'Zu Holbeins Bildnissen rheinischer Stahlhofkaufleute', *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch*, 25 (1963), pp. 181–92 (pp. 185–87); Thomas S. Holman, 'Holbein's Portraits of the Steelyard Merchants: An Investigation', *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, 14 (1980), pp. 139–58 (p. 145); Stefan

Figure 2. Hans Holbein the Younger, *Hermann von Wedigh III* (1532), oil and gold on oak panel, 42.2 × 32.4 cm, with added strip of 1.3 cm at bottom. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; bequest of Edward S. Harkness, 1940.

sitter is a young man, dressed in a fur-trimmed black velvet cloak with luminous pile-on-pile sleeves. He holds a pair of kid gloves in his left hand, on which he wears a ring bearing a coat of arms, and rests his right hand on a table covered in green baize. The body's torsion is reminiscent of female portraits by Leonardo da Vinci, to whose work Holbein had been exposed (certainly in France, likely in Milan).[6] With pink flesh emerging from his embroidered whitework

Gronert, *Bild-Individualität: Die 'Erasmus'-Bildnisse von Hans Holbein dem Jüngeren* (Basel: Schwabe, 1996), pp. 42–47; Katrin Petter-Wahnschaffe, *Hans Holbein und der Stalhof in London* (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2010), pp. 79–92, 347–48.

6 Krummacher, 'Zu Holbeins Bildnissen', p. 186; Oskar Bätschmann and Pascal Griener, *Hans Holbein* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 120–48.

shirt and lace collar, held together by fine ties, Wedigh's youthful face nevertheless shows a hint of stubble along the jawline and beneath the chin. The light growth suggests the passage of time, and indeed time plays an important role in this picture. Gold letters on the blue background indicate the year in which it was painted and that the sitter was then twenty-nine years of age: a message of transience delivered in monumental form. Wedigh's eyes draw the viewer towards the book that hangs over the table's front edge, casting a shadow on the green baize (Figure 2a). The book has two clasps: one open, one closed. A slip of paper emerges from the top of the book, in the space left free by the open clasp; the text on the slip reads *Veritas odiu(m) parit* — truth breeds hatred. Unlike the text on the slip, which faces the sitter, the inscriptions on the book itself face the viewer. The brown blind-tooled calfskin cover bears the letters 'H. H.', identifying the artist (in the vernacular); while the abbreviation 'HER WID' and a device with the letter *W* in a shield on the gilt fore edge identify the sitter by name and as a patrician of Cologne.[7]

The portrait was in Cologne by no later than 1539, when it served as a model for another portrait of a young man by Barthel Bruyn the Elder (1493–1555); and it appears to have been one of two portraits by Holbein of members of the Wedigh family. Because of its compositional similarities and its date, it has often been classed as one of the so-called 'Steelyard portraits' of the German merchants resident at the Hanseatic trading base in London, which Holbein produced, alongside other public projects for the Steelyard, in the years immediately following his return to England for a second sojourn in 1532: a time at which other possibly expected sources of patronage — such as that of Thomas More (1478–1535), who had resigned the Lord Chancellorship mere months before his arrival — had dried up.[8] The

7 Elsewhere Holbein identified himself as Iohannes Holbein or Holpenius. He was Holbenius to Beatus Rhenanus; Erasmus called him Olpeius.

8 The monumental *Triumph of Riches* and *Triumph of Poverty* painted for the Steelyard merchants' hall no longer survive, though colour drawings of them by Lucas Vorsterman the Elder (*c.* 1595–1675) exist, divided between Oxford (Ashmolean Museum, WA 1970.93) and London (British Museum, 1894-7-21.2). Holbein was also engaged by the merchants to design an ephemeral *Apollo and the Muses on Parnassus* for the entry of Anne Boleyn into London in 1533. See Susan Foister, *Holbein in England* (London: Abrams, 2007), pp. 68, 70–71 (nos. 65, 68, 69).

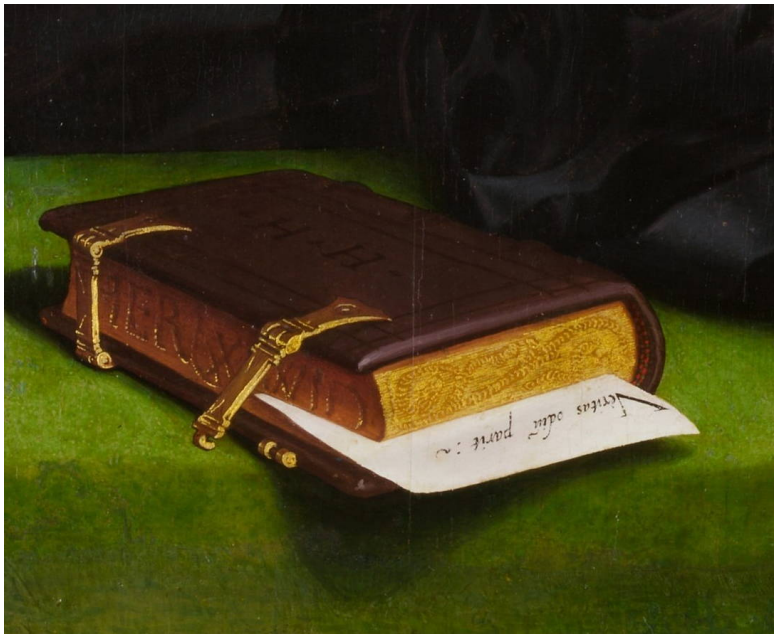

Figure 2a. Hans Holbein, *Hermann von Wedigh III*, detail.

fact of the Wedigh portrait's presence in the sitter's home town has been seen as evidence for the Steelyard portraits' intended destination, and a resultant understanding of these works (as a class) as tokens of memory and meditations on distance and death has therefore influenced interpretations of this painting — even though, beyond the most basic generic conventions and with the exception of memorializing the sitter's appearance at a given age, such concerns are largely extraneous to anything, textual or otherwise, contained within it.[9] The research of Katrin Petter-Wahnschaffe, which casts doubt on the idea that Hermann von Wedigh was ever a Hanseatic merchant or even in London, and leads to the proposal that Holbein therefore painted his portrait en route in Cologne for display in an 'ancestor gallery', is therefore

9 See e.g. Holman, 'Holbein's Portraits', pp. 142–43; Roskill and Harbison, 'On the Nature', pp. 16, 23; Susan Foister, *Holbein and England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 206–14 (esp. p. 214: 'Holbein's Hanseatic portraits are presented as explicit injunctions for the sitters to be remembered. The preoccupation with mortality is overwhelming').

highly compelling, even if it may reopen the separate question of the Steelyard portraits' purpose.[10] Indeed, the inscription on the slip in the book makes little sense in a merchant portrait.[11] And, in contrast to the other, certifiable Steelyard portraits, which invariably show the sitter with letters, bills, or other accoutrements of trade, the Wedigh portrait depicts the sitter with a book.[12]

That book is of critical importance to understanding the painting. Attempting to make sense of its prominent presence and the text on the slip, a number of scholars have identified it as a Lutheran book, perhaps Luther's Bible, and the text as a pugnacious reference to the truth of Lutheran religion.[13] This historicizing interpretation is predicated on the work having been painted in London on the eve of the break with Rome, where and when German merchants might indeed be conveyors of Lutheran literature. Yet quite apart from the question of location, there are other, more essential reasons for doubting this interpretation of book and text. Cologne and its patriciate were and remained deeply Catholic.[14] Moreover, as already identified by Fritz Saxl, a rejection of the coarseness and pugnaciousness associated with Luther was evident in Holbein even in his Reformation prints of the 1520s, which led Luther's most devoted supporters to reject him and his works in turn as essentially Erasmian.[15] In *The Ambassadors* (1533), a picture of two

10 Petter-Wahnschaffe, *Hans Holbein*, pp. 88–92.

11 In contrast to the Virgilian citation in Holbein's Derick Berck portrait (1536), also at the Metropolitan Museum: Petter-Wahnschaffe, *Hans Holbein*, pp. 69–74.

12 Cf. Roskill and Harbison, 'On the Nature', pp. 23–24, misidentifying the gloves as 'bills or invoices', and thus understanding the inscription on the slip as a commentary on the 'truthful and forthright representation', which functioned as a response to 'the animosity and belligerence which German merchants had experienced in London'.

13 First proposed by Alfred Woltmann, *Holbein und seine Zeit*, 2 vols (Leipzig: Seemann, 1866–68), II (1868), pp. 230–31, with the understanding that the sitter was English; Quentin Buvelot in Stephanie Buck and others, *Hans Holbein the Younger, 1497/98–1543: Portraitist of the Renaissance* (The Hague: Royal Cabinet of Paintings Mauritshuis, 2003), pp. 80–83 (no. 12); Foister, *Holbein and England*, p. 208.

14 Robert W. Scribner, 'Why Was There No Reformation in Cologne?', *Historical Research*, 49 (1976), pp. 217–41.

15 Fritz Saxl, 'Holbein and the Reformation' [originally delivered in 1925], in *Lectures*, 2 vols (London: Warburg Institute, 1957), I, pp. 277–85. So too Erwin Panofsky, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1943), p. 239: '[Erasmus] belonged, not to Dürer but to Holbein.' See also Theophil Burckhardt-Biedermann, 'Über Zeit und Anlaß des Flugblattes: Luther als Herkules Germanicus', *Basler Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Altertumskunde*, 4 (1905), pp. 38–44; Edgar Wind, '"Hercules" and "Orpheus": Two Mock-Heroic Designs by Dürer', *Journal of the*

orthodox Catholics (one a bishop), the presence, among other objects, of a Lutheran hymnal represents not truth but division.[16]

A different, more humanistic direction is suggested instead by the appearance of Holbein's initials on the cover. This feature links the portrait to a debate in which Holbein's art had previously engaged. In a portrait of Erasmus with a Renaissance pilaster painted in Basel in 1523, a book in the foreground displayed the sitter's name as a mark of his authorship, while an inscription with Holbein's name on a book in the background asserted an equality of *auctoritas* between the scholar and the painter.[17] The conceit is sophisticated but clear: Erasmus's book is like a painting, showing his reader his better picture; Holbein's painting, the product of an author in his own right, is like a book. In the Wedigh portrait, Holbein's initials make a claim to authorship of the painting by being placed on a book that also bears the name of the sitter: the viewer is therefore encouraged to view the volume as a simile for the work as a whole. Fundamentally, then, this is a Holbein painting that — leaving aside for now the question of its destination — we can in the first instance view *as a Holbein painting*: as a picture about art, sharing in the intellectual engagements that distinguish the artist's wider oeuvre.

Warburg Institute, 2 (1939), pp. 206–18 (pp. 217–18, pl. 40b); Thomas Kaufmann, *Der Anfang der Reformation: Studien zur Kontextualität der Theologie, Publizistik und Inszenierung Luthers und der reformatorischen Bewegung* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), pp. 301–11; cf. Robert W. Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 32–34. On the importance of Holbein's Bible images across confessional boundaries, see David H. Price, 'Hans Holbein the Younger and Reformation Bible Production', *Church History*, 86 (2017), pp. 998–1040.

16 Mary F. S. Hervey, *Holbein's 'Ambassadors': The Picture and the Men* (London: Bell and Sons, 1900), pp. 219–23, emphasizing the deep desire of Georges de Selve, bishop of Lauvar (right-hand figure) for Christian reconciliation and unity; Foister, *Holbein and England*, pp. 217–19; Kate Bomford, 'Friendship and Immortality: Holbein's *Ambassadors* Revisited', *Renaissance Studies*, 18 (2004), pp. 544–81 (pp. 558–59). Cf. the openly evangelical interpretation of Jennifer Nelson, *Disharmony of the Spheres: The Europe of Holbein's Ambassadors* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2019), pp. 111–23, linking the painting to the marriage and coronation of Anne Boleyn and seeing it as 'a nervous commemoration of a new, disharmonious but notionally liberated Europe': a difference of emphasis, perhaps, though harder to reconcile to the actual sitters.

17 As discussed in Margolis, 'Hercules in Venice', pp. 97–98, 120, 124; Bätschmann and Griener, *Hans Holbein*, p. 30.

Seen in this light, not only is the inscription on the slip important, but so too is the condition of the book, which is in fact really quite unusual. Why is one clasp open and the other closed? An explanation that seeks to explain away by recourse to narrative — i.e. that we are looking at an unfolding scene, and the book is about to be *either* fully opened *or* fully clasped — is unsatisfying because this is not evidently a narrative painting. Along similar lines, a previous scholar has suggested that the single closed clasp represents interrupted reading.[18] Interrupted reading is not infrequently depicted in Italian portraiture of the period, often indicated by the sitter-reader's finger slipped into a volume of poetry; and there are examples in northern painting too. But if that were the case and the clasp did have such a significance, one would have to believe that an interrupted Hermann von Wedigh nevertheless carefully placed a piece of paper in the book and partially clasped it before (following narrative logic) assuming this strange pose. Surely it does not depict interrupted reading as such: a single closed clasp is sufficient to preclude that option.

The most legible piece of evidence pertaining to the book is obviously the text we have read on the slip. Around this time, these words — *Veritas odium parit* — were adopted as a motto by Pietro Aretino (1492–1556), in which form they first appeared beneath a portrait bust engraving by Giovanni Jacopo Caraglio (*c.* 1500–65), where Aretino is depicted wearing the gold chain he received from King Francis I of France (r. 1515–47) in 1533: a fitting device for a man described around the frame of the portrait as *flagellum principum* (scourge of princes), and one regularly reproduced in his publications, with or without the image (Figures 3 and 4).[19] Aretino's motto is a proud and

18 Gronert, *Bild-Individualität*, p. 46.

19 The engraving must date from after November 1533, when Aretino acknowledged receipt of the chain from the king, and before November 1535, when it served as model for the woodcut frontispiece to an edition of *La cortigiana*: see *Ceremonies, Costumes, Portraits and Genre*, ed. by Mark McDonald, The Paper Museum of Cassiano dal Pozzo: A Catalogue Raisonné: Series C, 1, 3 vols (London: Royal Collection Trust, in association with Harvey Miller, 2017), I, p. 880 (no. 1575); Pietro Aretino, *Cortigiana* (Venice: Francesco Marcolini, 1535), sig. A1^{r}. Aretino also employed the phrase in his comedy *Il marescalco*, first drafted in 1526–27 but revised and only published in 1533. The character of the Pedant attributes it (said in praise of Alfonso d'Avalos) to 'lo *acerrimus virtutum ac vitiorum demonstrator*' — evidently Aretino, who would use this descriptor for himself: Pietro Aretino, *Il marescalco*, ed. by Giovanna Rabitti, in *Edizione nazionale delle opere di Pietro Aretino*, 10 vols (Rome: Salerno Editrice,

Figure 3. Giovanni Jacopo Caraglio, *Pietro Aretino* (*c.* 1533), engraving, 19.0 × 15.3 cm (sheet of paper). Royal Collection Trust/© Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2020.

defiant statement of the satirist's social function, far removed from anything that could be seen to support the *pedantissimo* Martin Luther.[20]

1992–), v/2 (2010), p. 87 (v. 3); 1536 edition (Venice: Francesco Marcolini) fronted by woodcut after Caraglio with motto, sig. A1^{r}; motto, descriptor, and woodcut portrait by or after Titian in 1538 edition of his letters (see Figure 4). See also Raymond B. Waddington, *Aretino's Satyr: Sexuality, Satire, and Self-Projection in Sixteenth-Century Literature and Art* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), pp. 63–64, 96–103; David Rosand and Michelangelo Muraro, *Titian and the Venetian Woodcut* (Washington, DC: International Exhibitions Foundation, 1976), p. 270 (no. 82).

20 So called in a letter of Aretino to Benedetto Accolti, Venice, 29 August 1537 (published 1538), in *Lettere*, ed. by Paolo Procaccioli, in *Edizione nazionale delle opere di Pietro Aretino*, IV/1 (1997), p. 261; see also the dedication of *La cortigiana* to Cardinal Bernardo Clesio (1485–1539), prince-bishop of Trent, which immediately follows the woodcut portrait in the 1535 edition (sig. A2^{r}): 'Et cosi tanti gentil'huomini che vi serveno, tanti Vertuosi che vi celebrano, et tanti Cavalieri che vi corteggiano finirano di conoscere [...] di che qualita sia lo huomo che essi adorano, non altrimenti che vi habbia finito di conoscere il diabolico Luthero'.

Figure 4. *De le Lettere di M. Pietro Aretino: Libro primo* (Venice: Francesco Marcolini, 1538), ♠2^{v}: workshop of/after Titian (?), portrait of Aretino, woodcut. Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, 2 Epist. 2, urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10142585-8.

But, as an evidently combative usage, it is worth noting nonetheless that his publication of it postdates Holbein's picture.

The words, however, originate in Terence, appearing in the Roman playwright's *Andria* (The Woman of Andros) as one half of a proverbial expression. This comes at the beginning of the play, in the freedman Sosia's response to his master Simo's account of the way his son has lived:

> SIMO: sic vita erat: facile omnis perferre ac pati;
> cum quibus erat quomque una is sese dedere,
> eorum obsequi studiis, adversus nemini,
> numquam praeponens se illis; ita ut facillume
> sine invidia laudem invenias et amicos pares.
>
> SOSIA: sapienter vitam instituit; namque hoc tempore
> obsequium amicos, veritas odium parit.
>
> (SIMO: Such was his life: he easily went along and put up with everyone; gave himself up to his company; complied with their pursuits. An enemy to none, never did he put himself before them. That's what without causing jealousy best earns praise and breeds friends.
>
> SOSIA: He has made wise provisions for life; for nowadays, complaisance breeds friends, truth breeds hatred.)[21]

The line recurs in Cicero's dialogue *De amicitia* (On Friendship), where it is credited explicitly to Terence. The speaker is Laelius, and the subject is the importance and difficulty of well-intentioned rebuke amongst friends:

> Sed nescio quo modo verum est, quod in Andria familiaris meus dicit:
>
> *Obsequium amicos, veritas odium parit.*
>
> Molesta veritas, siquidem ex ea nascitur odium, quod est venenum amicitiae, sed obsequium multo molestius, quod peccatis indulgens praecipitem amicum ferri sinit; maxima autem culpa in eo, qui et veritatem aspernatur et in fraudem obsequio impellitur.[22]

> (But somehow what my friend says in the *Andria* is true:
>
> *Complaisance breeds friends, truth breeds hatred.*
>
> Truth is troublesome if indeed from it is born hatred, which is the poison of friendship; but much more troublesome is

21 Terence, *Andria*, 62–68 (I. 1), in *P. Terenti Afri Comoediae*, ed. by Robert Kauer and Wallace M. Lindsay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 5. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine. I prefer 'complaisance' to 'flattery', with which the phrase is sometimes rendered, in light of Terence's usage (note *obsequi* in line 64) and of the evidence of subsequent classical and Renaissance readings, including those discussed below and that of Machiavelli in his version of *Andria*, in *Edizione nazionale delle opere di Niccolò Machiavelli*, 6 parts (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2001–), III/1, ed. by Pasquale Stoppelli (2017), p. 21: 'chi sa ire a' versi acquista amici e chi dice il vero acquista odio'.

22 Cicero, *De amicitia*, 89.

> complaisance, which, by indulging his transgressions, allows a friend to be borne headlong away. And yet the greatest fault is in him who both scorns truth and is driven by complaisance into error.)

Cicero's solution to this problem is to reclaim and repurpose Terence's word *obsequium*, moving it out of opposition to *veritas* and contrasting the latter instead with *assentatio*, flattery and adulation:

> Omni igitur hac in re habenda ratio et diligentia est, primum ut monitio acerbitate, deinde ut obiurgatio contumelia careat; in obsequio autem, quoniam Terentiano verbo libenter utimur, comitas adsit, assentatio, vitiorum adiutrix, procul amoveatur, quae non modo amico, sed ne libero quidem digna est; aliter enim cum tyranno, aliter cum amico vivitur.
>
> (In this entire matter reason and care must therefore be used: first, that advice is free of harshness; second, that rebuke is free of insult. Yet in complaisance — since I gladly adopt Terence's word — have courtesy at hand, and put away flattery, handmaiden to the vices, which is unworthy not only of a friend but even of a free man. We live in one way with a tyrant, in another with a friend.)

Freedom to rebuke with the truth is held to be essential to friendship — indeed, to be at the heart of what ennobles it, distinguishing it for only those who are free. And instead of condemning *obsequium*, or associating it with *assertatio*, Cicero claims for it the possibility of containing the right manner in which, given human nature, it is best to address a friend with the advice he needs. In this rereading of Terence — a re-rereading that takes place within the dialogue, openly against the grain — the two halves of the proverb are no longer at odds. This is certainly the background for its deployment by Petrarch (1304–74) in the second of his two letters to Cicero — a conciliatory affair after the previous epistle, which upbraided his revered ancient correspondent's shockingly unphilosophical way of life. Petrarch's description of the author of the adage as *familiaris tuus* is probably a lapse — Terence, *familiaris meus*, was a friend of the historical Laelius, not of Cicero — rather than a conscious association of the primary interlocutor with Cicero himself, but is regardless a usage that reveals his source.[23]

23 *Epistolae familiares*, XXIV. 4, in Pétrarque, *Lettres familières*, 6 vols (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2002–15), VI, ed. by Vittorio Rossi (2015), pp. 579, 581: 'ut ipse soles dicere,

I do not believe that the volume in the Wedigh portrait is intended to represent a copy of Terence. *Andria* is the first play in a corpus that survives from Antiquity *in toto*, and it invariably appears first in all early printed editions.[24] The slip, meanwhile, is inserted towards the back of the book. Just as visual evidence was lacking for the identification as a Lutheran Bible, so too is there none here to support such a literal interpretation. But our enquiry can bring us closer to Holbein: to the most important humanist in his career and in his world. Erasmus included the full proverb in his *Adagiorum collectanea* of 1500 and then, in 1508, in the much-expanded Aldine edition of *Adagiorum chiliades* (or the *Adagia*). After this, it featured, with still further commentary, in each successive edition of the famous and popular compendium. The evidence of their correspondence shows that the proverb, often explicitly associated with 'the comic', gained currency in the circle of intellectuals around Erasmus in Basel in the 1520s: the humanist Bonifacius Amerbach (1495–1562), the printer Andreas Cratander (d. *c*. 1540), the physician Paracelsus (1493–1541), and Gilbert Cousin (1506–72), Erasmus's amanuensis.[25] This was the very circle with and to which Holbein, his 1526–28 sojourn in England excepted, collaborated and belonged. Amerbach sat for Holbein in 1519 and likely introduced him to Erasmus.[26]

The dual classical inheritance is evident in Erasmus's treatment. While in the *Collectanea* he merely calls it 'a very famous aphorism', in the *Adagia* he attributes the words to Terence.[27] Like Cicero, how-

quod ait familiaris tuus in Andria: *Obsequium amicos, veritas odium parit*' (with editor's quotation marks around 'familiaris' removed).

24 Catalogue of editions until 1600 in Harold Walter Lawton, *Térence en France au XVIe siècle: Editions et traductions* (Paris: Jouve, 1926), pp. 63–251, 263–78, noting 461 editions of the complete Terence and only 15 of the *Andria* alone.

25 Bonifacius Amerbach to Andreas Cratander, Avignon, *c*. 27 November 1520, in *Die Amerbachkorrespondenz*, ed. by Alfred Hartmann and others, 11 vols (Basel: Verlag der Universitätsbibliothek, 1942–2010), II (1943), pp. 271–72 (ep. 756): 'Novisti comici illud, obsequium amicos, veritatem odium parere'; Paracelsus to Bonifacius Amerbach, Colmar, 4 March 1528, ibid., III (1947), p. 309: '[…] nisi quod id demum verissimum esse comperio, veritatem parere odium?'; Gilbert Cousin to Erasmus, Nozeroy?, end May 1536, in Allen, XI, pp. 326–30: 'Nam etiamnum comici verbum, quo veritatem odium parere dixit […].'

26 Portrait at Kunstmuseum Basel (Amerbach-Kabinett 1662, inv. 314).

27 Erasmus, *Collectanea*, 224, in *Opera omnia Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami* (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing; Leiden: Brill, 1969–) (= *ASD*), II/9, p. 118: 'celebratissima sententia'. The preceding adage, 'Davus sum, non Oedipus', is attributed to *Andria*

ever, he uses the proverb to make his own distinctive argument about friendship:

> Senarius est proverbialis apud Terentium in Andria, non admonens, quid oporteat fieri, sed ostendens quid vulgo fiat. Vulgaris enim amicitia constat obsequiis; nam invicem connivere ad familiarium vitia, *Haec res et iungit iunctos et servat amicos*. At inter veros amicos nihil est veritate iucundius, modo absit *asperitas agrestis et inconcinna gravisque*. Porro qui vulgo plurimis studet amicus esse, moribus alienis obsecundet [...]. Non probari vero sententiam hanc poetae, satis indicat, cum ait: *Nanque hoc tempore*, id est his corruptis moribus.[28]
>
> (This senarius is a proverb in Terence's *Andria*, not so much suggesting what ought to happen as saying what commonly does. Indeed, common friendship consists in complaisances: for each in turn to look aside from the vices of friends, 'This is what joins friends and keeps them joined together' [Horace, *Satires*, i. 3. 54]. On the other hand, among true friends nothing is more pleasing than the truth, provided there is no 'boorish asperity, uncultivated and disagreeable' [Horace, *Epistles*, i. 18. 6]. But he who wishes to be the friend of as many as possible amongst common people must comply with the fashions of others [...]. It is clear enough that this aphorism does not in fact meet with the poet's approval, since he says, 'for nowadays', that is, according to the corrupt fashions of our time.)

Erasmus goes on to cite Cicero, and, in later editions, adds other examples of related usages.[29] The need occasionally to cloak, obscure, or soften the truth from the motive of *pietas* and in the interest of harmony indeed became one of his great preoccupations — as well as points of conflict with erstwhile followers — in the early 1520s, precisely when the case of Luther, who stood in Erasmus's mind for a radically different ethos of non-concealment, was beginning to envelop him.[30]

(line 194), however. From *De copia* (1512) it appears Erasmus understood Cicero to have attributed the invention of the word *obsequium* to Terence; in this he was following Quintilian and Donatus: *ASD*, I/6, pp. 52, 53 n.

28 Erasmus, *Adagia*, II. 9. 53, in *ASD*, II/4, p. 248.

29 A reference to Pindar, *Nemeans*, v. 16–18, was added in 1526; one to Agathon, quoted in Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*, v. 47, in 1528.

30 As discussed in Silvana Seidel Menchi's profound introduction to *Iulius exclusus e coelis*, in *ASD*, I/8, pp. 5–131 (esp. pp. 107–10), also abridged in Erasmo da Rotterdam, *Giulio*, ed. and trans. [into Italian] by Silvana Seidel Menchi (Turin: Einaudi, 2014), pp. xcvi–c.

Erasmus's two citations of Horace are no less important for being unattributed — explicitly at any rate, as they are well known and would both be cited again in *The Praise of Folly*.[31] In its original, Horatian context, the latter belongs to the poet's advice to a young *amicus* on how to comport himself as the *amicus* of a patron. Even worse than being a *scurra* (parasite) — held to be as different to a friend as a *matrona* (honourable married woman) is to a *meretrix* (whore) — is to be one who presents his boorish behaviour as virtue and frankness. Virtue, instead, is the mean between the vices, far from either extreme.[32] In *The Praise of Folly*, Erasmus follows this passage quite closely: though he eschews the poet's demeaning term for the flatterer, Horace is cited by name, and the type of well-meaning flattery that belongs to Folly and is not intended to mislead is judged closer to virtue. Friendship is not especially the focus, which is rather a recommendation of the amiable middle ground between obsequious and unpleasant dispositions familiar from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.[33] In the commentary on the Terentian adage, however, Erasmus is instead concerned with what is proper to 'true friends'. The reader who appreciates the Horatian reference may likewise appreciate the importance to that source text of the distinction between different classes of friend. Erasmus's citation from the *Satires* makes this point even more strongly. There, what is a passage intended by its author as a plea for tolerance of others' faults — and what in the *Moriae encomium* will be attributed to Folly herself — is repurposed to impugn a type of friendship deemed 'common'.

Indeed, in his commentary on the adage Erasmus refers to what is 'common' — the words are *vulgaris* and *vulgo* (from *vulgus*) — no fewer than three times: common friendship, common behaviour, in the presence of common people. This is as many times as he uses words that refer to truth. This sense of common, *vulgaris*, is that which is associated with the multitude, the masses, and the mob, and often has pejorative connotations. It was also, of course, associated with the rejected vernacular:

31 *Moriae encomium*, in *ASD*, IV/3, p. 92: 'Age, connivere, labi caecutire, hallucinari in amicorum vitiis [...] atqui haec una stulticia et iungit, iunctos et servat amicos'; ibid., p. 130: 'asperitas, ac morositas inconcinna, ut ait Horatius, gravisque'. The Horatian source of the latter is not noted in the critical edition of the *Adagia*.

32 Horace, *Epistulae*, I. 18. 3–9: 'Virtus est medium vitiorum et utrimque reductum.'

33 Aristotle, 1126b–1127a (*Ethica Nicomachea*, IV. 6. 1–9).

> He acted in an unfriendly way [*non amice*] indeed — he who turned the hateful passages plucked from my books into German and disseminated them among the people [*evulgavit*]. I had not written them for the *vulgus*, nor had I wished for them to be read bare.[34]

People and things to be extolled or endorsed, meanwhile, were distinguished by their distance from it. In a letter of 1520, Erasmus praised Quentin Metsys as an uncommon craftsman (*artifex non vulgaris*); while, defending his *Colloquies* in print against his critics among the Paris theologians, he asserted their *non vulgarem utilitatem* (uncommon utility) for the education of boys not only in style but also in morals.[35] That this word stood out to later readers of the *Adagia* and could colour their reading of the Terentian proverb can be seen from a letter of Cardinal Jean du Bellay (1492–1560), patron and protector of Rabelais, in which he reminds Cardinal Charles de Guise (1524–74) of *illud vulgatissimum […] comici*.[36] Now it is the proverb itself that is *vulgatissimum*: very well known, common, and notorious.

Yet there is another meaning of 'common' too, which is covered in Latin by the adjective *communis*. This word refers to what is public, shared, universal, and accessible, rather than merely widespread, and is without the pejorative and divisive connotations of *vulgaris*. Perhaps the opposition between these Latin words seems starker to the English-speaker, whose language translates them the same way; but I think the ontological distinction is clear, and is nevertheless raised by

34 Erasmus, *Spongia adversus aspergines Hutteni* (1523), in *ASD*, IX/1, p. 194: 'Quam vero non amice fecit, qui decerpta ex libris meis odiosa loca vertit in linguam Germanicam et evulgavit. At ego illa vulgo non scripseram neque volebam nuda legi'; see also Seidel Menchi, in *ASD*, I/8, p. 130.

35 Letter to Nicolaus Everardi, 17 April 1520, in Allen, IV, p. 237 (ep. 1092); 'De utilitate colloquiorum' (1526), in *ASD*, I/3, pp. 741–52 (p. 742).

36 Jean du Bellay to Charles de Guise (later Lorraine), Rome, [7] May 1548, in *Correspondance du Cardinal Jean du Bellay*, ed. by Rémy Scheurer and others, 7 vols (Paris: Klincksieck; Société de l'histoire de France, 1969–2017), IV (2011), pp. 168–70 (ep. 841): 'Vous me pardonnerez, Monseigneur, si la foy, devotion et observance que j'ay envers le Roy et envers vous-mesmes me transportent a vous dire ce que dessuz. L'ung et l'autre trouverez assez de gens qui vous flatteront; de ceulx qui vous disent les veritez, je ne sçay si en trouverez beaucoup nam illud vulgatissimum est comici veritatem odium parere.' Du Bellay employs another Terentian proverb found in the *Adagia* in the same letter: 'in te enim maxime haec faba cuditur'; cf. *Adagia*, I. 1. 84, 'In me haec cudetur faba', in *ASD*, II/1, p. 192: 'Terentius in Eunucho [line 381]: At enim isthaec in me cudetur faba'.

Erasmus's repeated insistence on the proverb's vulgarity. A distinction between what is vulgar and what truly belongs to all moreover seems to me to be the problem (in the sense of the crux of the matter) at the heart of the Erasmian humanist project more broadly — a project that sought to make accessible to and for the benefit of Latin Christendom the shared inheritance of literature and eloquence, but feared its comorbidities: the cacophony, dissonance, and social, political, and religious fracture that unguarded reading, writing, and publishing for the masses could bring. This is the delicate balance — or productive contradiction? — between openness and concealment that animates the project; and these are the priorities that, despite the general adoption of the educational and rhetorical components of its programme across the growing confessional divide, cannot but lead it to a rejection of Luther. In what may be its most explicit manifesto, the essay on the adage *Festina lente* (make haste slowly), Erasmus blamed for disorder the profit motive that drove *sordidi typographi* and *vulgares excusores*, squalid and vulgar printers.[37] The contrast between *vulgaris* and *communis* is especially clear in the context of the *Adagia*, not least because the entire collection begins with the proverb *Amicorum communia omnia* — among friends all is common.[38] Erasmus claimed this for a good omen: originating with Pythagoras and preached by Plato, it embodied more than anything else what Christ wanted for his followers. Both in the volume and then also outside it, in the famous catalogue of his works addressed to Johannes von Botzheim, Erasmus presented his compiling and writing of the *Adagia*, inaugurated with this proverb, as motivated by his feelings of friendship for his dedicatee William Blount, Lord Mountjoy (1478–1534).[39] Thanks to the ambiguous power of the printed book, however, Erasmus and Mountjoy's friend-

37 *Adagia*, II. 1. 1, in *ASD*, II/3, pp. 7–28 (p. 18).

38 *Adagia*, I. 1. 1, in *ASD*, II/1, pp. 84–86; also in the *prolegomena* to the *Adagia*, in *ASD*, II/1, pp. 60–61; already proverbial in Terence, *Adelphoe*, 803–04. See Kathy Eden, *Friends Hold All Things in Common: Tradition, Intellectual Property, and the Adages of Erasmus* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 25–27; Kathy Eden, '"Between Friends All Is Common": The Erasmian Adage and Tradition', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 59 (1998), pp. 405–19.

39 In *Adagia*, III. 1. 1, 'Herculei labores', in *ASD*, II/5, pp. 23–41 (pp. 36–37), with Mountjoy named from 1523 edition onward, but already indicated by the title 'Moecenas ille meus', understood to be the dedicatee; Allen, I, pp. 16–17 (ep. 1341A); Eden, *Friends*, pp. 1–5.

ship, based on the sharing of the commonplaces of Antiquity, can be shared with all lovers of good letters. And because they now (literally) hold this heritage in common, the readers are linked to Erasmus in a humanist friendship that reaches back through the ages to include the Ancients themselves. The antidote to the commonness and vulgarity of the masses is in Erasmus's readers' own hands.

Is this what these followers and readers of Erasmus were dramatizing when they incorporated the Terentian adage into their own letters? In the letters of Paracelsus and Gilbert Cousin mentioned above, as well as that of Jean du Bellay previously cited, it is notable that the first half of the proverb, *obsequium amicos*, is missing. In each of these cases, the letter writer is remarking upon the problem of truth-telling, not necessarily of friendship — though du Bellay, who uses it to warn Charles de Guise against all of those who will 'flatter' him rather than give him their honesty as his own 'devotion and obedience' demand, seems to be referring to the full proverb and specifically to Cicero's gloss of it (which Erasmus also provided).[40] Yet the genre of the personal letter, and the fact of quoting an adage (itself a kind of shared speech) on the topic of friendship, which moreover came from a collection that was *about* friendship — that between Erasmus and Mountjoy, as well as that ideal one among the Erasmian republic of letters — make friendship a subject regardless. Employing the adage becomes, in that sense, a phatic usage, one which establishes and affirms contact on given terms. The practice among Erasmus's readers of quoting only one half of the adage may be read as an allusion to the fact that the reader with whom it is shared essentially already shares in it: he also knows the saying of the comic, and can provide it himself.

40 In a similar vein, see Baldesar Castiglione, *Il libro del cortegiano*, ed. by Vittorio Cian (Florence: Sansoni, 1947), p. 111 [1. 44]: '[Conte Ludovico:] [...] si è ritrovato tra gli antichi sapienti chi ha scritto libri, in qual modo posso l'omo conoscere il vero amico dall'adulatore. Ma questo che giova? se molti, anzi infiniti son quelli che manifestamente comprendono esser adulati, e pur amano chi gli adula, ed hanno in odio chi dice lor il vero?'; responding almost certainly to Plutarch, *Moralia*, 1. 48e–74e, translated by Erasmus as 'Quo pacto possis adulatorem ab amico dignoscere', in *ASD*, 11/4, pp. 117–63, but, given the suggestion of multiple ancient sources and the critical comment, likely also to Cicero and possibly to the Erasmian essay itself. See also Jorge Ledo, 'Erasmus' Translations of Plutarch's *Moralia* and the Ascensian *editio princeps* of ca. 1513', *Humanistica Lovaniensia*, 68 (2019), pp. 257–96, and, on Castiglione's engagement with Erasmus, Guido Rebecchini, 'Castiglione and Erasmus: Towards a Reconciliation?', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 61 (1998), pp. 258–60.

This pattern of usage tells us at least two important things about how we should interpret the Holbein painting. In the first place, it tells us quite simply that this is a humanist picture: that is to say, it is a picture embedded in textual relationships — those between texts, and in texts between people. To the extent that it is also *about* humanism, meanwhile, it suggests to us that this painting's subject is humanist friendship.[41] Hermann von Wedigh is fashioned as learned and sophisticated precisely because he is fashioned as a friend with a share in a republic of letters. Led by the inscription, the painting (on behalf of its sitter) not only exploits this discourse, but also (on behalf of its artist) offers a new contribution to it. The half-adage about friendship incites the active involvement of the reader-viewer, creating a friendship centred on literature and an intimacy based on part-concealment, as it does in the letters of the readers of Erasmus.

But there is another question that this picture raises in a way that is distinct from those in the adage's previous textual history, and that is the question of authorship. Certainly, the adage itself is iterative, weaving around multiple compatible, but not identical or fully reconcilable authorities on friendship of different sorts — the common sort, friendship-as-clientage, and the truer sort — themselves often interlocking textually. The common nature of adages (in both senses: their ubiquity and their non-proprietary quality) challenges ideas about authorship that the presence of the book in the painting's foreground inscribed with both Holbein's and the sitter's names implies. At the same time, and from a very different perspective, Holbein's painted book challenges textual notions of authorship (shared or individual) and the primacy of the written word in giving an authoritative representation. Here one must again recall Erasmus's famous warning that his true self and 'better picture' were found not in his image — executed and propagated by Metsys and Dürer, as well as by Holbein — but in his *libri*, his συγγράμματα. In contrast, and just as it did in his Erasmus portrait, Holbein's name on the painted book asserts an equality between artistic and literary authorship. Wedigh's name asserts a similar equality between the textual and the visual representation of the self.

41 Cf. Gronert, *Bild-Individualität*, pp. 46–47.

At this point, however, any further interpretation along these lines must split in two directions, both of which look back to the *Adagia*. On the one hand, Holbein's verisimilistic representation of Wedigh invests the book, which Holbein's claim to authorship has rendered as a simile for the portrait, with the sitter's selfhood. The function of the adage, meanwhile, is dramatized by the projection of the slip from the book towards the viewer, transgressing the picture plane. Its shared nature and the discourse on friendship in which the portrait itself engages likewise encourage the viewer to recall the second adage in Erasmus's collection, *Amicitia aequalitas. Amicus alter ipse* (Friendship is equality; a friend is a second self).[42] Viewing Holbein's portrait thus becomes akin to the sharing of the self that, according to the Erasmian maxim, could only truly be accomplished by reading. Although Wedigh is not fashioned as an author in the way Erasmus would have been, he does receive an identity as a friend by his relationship to these texts. On the other hand, Holbein's assertion of his own pictorial authorship presents a contrast to the shared authorship and ownership of adages (though not of the *Adagia*), which is brought into the painting by means of the text on the slip. Thus exacerbating the ambivalence already present in the potential disconnect between cover and contents, the slip makes the book a zone of instability which threatens to undermine the notion of representing textual and pictorial authorship altogether, and even the possibility of fully representing a legitimized, authorial truth. This openness to further interpretation and ultimate irresolvability are, to my mind, the underside of Erasmian philological optimism and absolutely characteristic of the movement.[43]

It is time to return to the clasps. Our turn away from a narrative or iconographic interpretation of the painting towards a textually and socially situated one — that is, as a painting that figures its own role within literary and social relationships — argues against an identification of the clasps as a sign of interrupted reading. But they may be identifiable with shared reading. In a fine earlier example of the

42 *Adagia*, I. 1. 2, in *ASD*, II/1, p. 86.

43 See Thomas M. Greene, 'Erasmus' "Festina lente": Vulnerabilities of the Humanist Text', in *The Vulnerable Text: Essays on Renaissance Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 1–17; Barbara C. Bowen, *The Age of Bluff: Paradox and Ambiguity in Rabelais and Montaigne* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972), pp. 7–17.

Erasmian friendship portrait, Metsys's diptych of Erasmus and Pieter Gillis, desks covered in green baize and wooden shelving in the background containing the two humanists' books visually join the two panels.[44] The shared library, entirely of works written or edited by Erasmus, is only made whole by the union of the paintings, depicting the Pythagorean principle and humanist adage of friends holding all things in common. The Gillis panel also contains a clasped book on the green baize. Holding a letter from their mutual friend Thomas More, the painting's intended recipient, Gillis points at a book that is oriented towards the viewer, in this case also ideally understood as More.[45] A friendship portrait, certainly — but a closed one, speaking to the friendship between these three men (and perhaps the artist whose achievement this was too). Holbein's Wedigh portrait appears to have no pendant, and a book is not a library: it is neither enclosed by specific relationships nor by specific spaces. Unlike that of Metsys, Holbein's subject is not a particular humanist friendship, but humanist friendship in general. I would suggest, then, that the half-adage on the slip — to be completed by the literate friend, thus furthering intimacy over distance — is in a metaphoric relationship with the half-unclasped book. The adage can be completed, the book fully opened, and the sitter's selfhood shared with the friend who sees it.

44 On the Metsys diptych, see Lorne Campbell and others, 'Quentin Matsys, Desiderius Erasmus, Pieter Gillis and Thomas More', *Burlington Magazine*, 120 (1978), pp. 716–25; Larry Silver, *The Paintings of Quinten Massys, with Catalogue Raisonné* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1984), pp. 105–33, 235–37.

45 An identification of the book with *Antibarbari*, as the inscription on the cover indicates, is problematic: though written largely by 1495, it was only published in 1520, three years after the diptych was painted. The inscription is probably a later addition.

Oren Margolis, 'The Book Half Open: Humanist Friendship in Holbein's Portrait of Hermann von Wedigh III', in *Openness in Medieval Europe*, ed. by Manuele Gragnolati and Almut Suerbaum, Cultural Inquiry, 23 (Berlin: ICI Berlin Press, 2022), pp. 289–310 <https://doi.org/10.37050/ci-23_15>

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