

Just what is it that makes identification-portrait hypotheses so appealing? On why Hans Süß von Kulmbach ‘must’ have portrayed John Boner

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The alleged apprentice of Albrecht Dürer, Hans Süß von Kulmbach (d. 1522), ‘must’ have painted at least one crypto-portrait of the influential Krakow banker John Boner (d. 1523), who went down in history as ‘the Polish Jacob Fugger.’ Such an idea recurs in art-history scholarship devoted to Kulmbach’s relations to Poland. What varies is the selection of figures in his religious pictures claimed to represent Boner. This paper is to examine two of these theories, which refer not solely to the lifelikeness of random physiognomies but also to historical and iconographical arguments.¹

In the 1510s Kulmbach gained a large share of the Nuremberg art market as painter of altarpieces, portraitist and designer of glass windows. A number of his panel paintings found their way to Krakow but the circumstances of their commission are not elucidated by any written record. Only one of the concerned works contains a coat of arm – the one of the Boners ([Figure 1](#)).* This composition is part of a cycle of scenes from the life of St Catherina of Alexandria, dated 1514–5, originally comprising eight panels, two of which were lost in the 1939–45 war

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* Illustrations have been published in a separate pdf that may be accessed from [here](#).

¹ For other assumed depictions of John Boner in Kulmbach’s paintings, which will not be discussed in this article, see, e.g., Hubert Janitschek, *Geschichte der deutschen Malerei*, Berlin: Grote, 1890, 376; Karl Koelitz, *Hans Suess*, Leipzig: Seemann, 1891, 59–60; Feliks Kopera, *Malarstwo w Polsce od XVI do XVIII wieku (renesans, barok, rokoko)*, Kraków: Drukarnia Narodowa, 1926 (*Dzieje malarstwa w Polsce*, vol. 2), 117; Ewald Behrens, ‘Deutsche Malerei in Polen’, *Die Burg*, 2, 1941, 36; Wanda Drecka, *Kulmbach*, Warszawa: Sztuka, 1957, 46, 46 and 49; Agnieszka Gąsior, ‘Hans Süß von Kulmbachs Krakauer Karriere’, in: Jiří Fajt and Markus Hörsch, eds, *Künstlerische Wechselwirkungen in Mitteleuropa*, Ostfildern: Thorbecke, 2006, 333.

(Figure 2).² The legend spanned in all probability the closed wings of an altarpiece. Neither the subject of the retable's open display nor its place of destination has been documented.

The coat of arms is believed to indicate the most distinguished member of the Boner family at that time. John, a native of Landau in the Palatinate, enjoyed an elevated position in the urban oligarchy of Krakow and entered the Polish power elite as a close associate of King Sigismund I Jagiellon (1507–1548). Boner managed a Europe-wide credit and wholesale company, administered both municipal and royal finances, supervised Sigismund's building initiatives and provided the monarch's inner circle with objects of luxury.³ Notwithstanding his presumptive role in shaping the court art of the Jagiellonian Golden Age, disappointingly little is known of Boner's own artistic patronage. In particular, there are no confirmed likenesses of his face. This shortcoming provides fertile soil for hypothesising inspired by the alluring concept of the so called sacral identification portrait. Symptomatically, Boner's imagined features have been identified not only in the works of Kulmbach.⁴ Needless to say, the question of his elusive interactions with the Nuremberg artist, whose Italianate style bears comparison with the achievements of Dürer, remains an essential challenge.

Regarding the donation of the St Catherine cycle, however, two other Boners come into question apart from John. His brother Jacob (1454–1517) acted until 1512 as the company's factor in Nuremberg, then moved to Krakow, gained a royal warrant of appointment, and by 1514 owned a house at the Main Market Square.⁵ In 1517 he left for Wroclaw and died the same year. Jacob's oldest son Severin (1486–1549) stayed in Krakow by his childless uncle John.⁶ Upon the latter's death in 1523, Severin succeeded to his ranks and offices, which became a springboard for the status of Polish castellan and senator. In 1514–5, however, Severin was still at the threshold of his career.⁷ Nevertheless, the reasoning that the most esteemed personage was the most likely purchaser of a prestige artwork is not fully satisfactory. Donations served also to express one's higher aspirations or to establish

² Paweł Pencakowski and Agata Wolska, *Historia św. Katarzyny Aleksandryjskiej Hansa Süssa z Kulmbachu w Kościele Mariackim w Krakowie*, Kraków: Bazylika Mariacka, 2014.

³ The most important monographs on the Boners are Jan Ptaśnik, 'Bonerowie', *Rocznik Krakowski*, 7, 1905 and Ernst Kaussler, *Ein Pfälzer in Polen. Die Landauer Boner und ihre Weißenburger Freunde*, Neustadt/Weinstraße: Pfälzische Verlagsanstalt: 1974.

⁴ See e.g. Drecka, *Kulmbach*, 46; Marian Hanik, *Trzy pokolenia z rodu Bonerów*, Kraków: Centralny Ośrodek Informacji Turystycznej: 1985, 36.

⁵ Ptaśnik, 'Bonerowie', 8, 24; Kaussler, *Ein Pfälzer*, 185–7, 205.

⁶ Kaussler, *Ein Pfälzer*, 221–4.

⁷ Notwithstanding this circumstance, earlier scholarship linked Severin with the commissioning of at least one of the Krakow altarpieces painted by Kulmbach in the 1510s. See *Inwentarz Kościoła Mariackiego*, Krakow: Archiwum Bazyliki Mariackiej, ks. 715, 94; Stanisław Tomkowicz, 'Hans Sues von Kulmbach (Dokończenie)', *Czas*, 128, 9 June 1883, 1; Ulrich Thieme and Felix Becker, *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, Leipzig: Seemann, 1978, vol. 22, 93 (Ernst Buchner); Kopera, 113; Józef Muczowski and Józef Zdanowski, *Hans Suess z Kulmbachu*, Kraków: Anczyc, 1927 (*Rocznik Krakowski*, 21), 35.

oneself in a new milieu. Any argument that departs from the assumption that John Boner was *the* patron of Kulmbach is consequently threatened by the logical fallacy of *petitio principii*.

Yet this does not mean that the prevailing narrative is necessary misleading. Some recent remarks on the distribution of supposed crypto-portraits of John and his relatives, as long as they are based on analysis of images, might even support the traditional view as the most consistent one.

These theories will be put to the test according to the 'premodern' concept of recognisability, which was only reworded at the dawn of the renaissance.⁸ For Kulmbach's contemporaries, emulation of a person's facial features was 'part of a greater semantic system', which encompassed, among others, heraldry and costume.⁹

Heraldry

The Boner coat of arms appears exactly above the head of a male figure shown on a par with St Catherine in the scene of her disputation with heathen philosophers, whom the eloquent saint ultimately persuades into adopting Christianity (**Figure 1**).¹⁰ Both interlocutors are silhouetted against large rectangular windows adorned with stained-glass quatrefoils. One of the quatrefoils encloses the heraldic sign, the other one – an image of the Virgin. The latter motif can be perceived as a kind of emblem inasmuch as it relates to the saint virgin standing right below. As a mystical bride of Christ, St Catherine of Alexandria ranked immediately below Mary. An icon of the Mother of God played also a decisive role in the conversion of the pagan born princess, as visualised in the first panel of Kulmbach's cycle (**Figure 2a**).¹¹ It is by means of image that a hermit introduced the infant Jesus to his selected spouse.

The possible connection between the coat of arms and Philosopher can, in turn, explain the otherwise unobvious position of heraldry within the reconstructed original arrangement of pictures (**Figure 2**). The *Disputation* was namely one of the

⁸ Mateusz Grzęda, 'From Ymago to Imago contrefacta: Depiction of Reality in Central Europe in the Late Middle Ages', *Umění*, 62: 3, 2014, 321–2; Matthias Müller, 'Menschen so zu malen, daß sie erkannt werden und zu leben scheinen', in: Matthias Müller, ed., *Apelles am Fürstenhof. Facetten der Hofkunst um 1500 im Alten Reich*, Berlin: Lukas, 2010, 70.

⁹ Grzęda, *From Ymago*, 321.

¹⁰ See e.g. Agnieszka Gąsior, 'Hans Süß', 325. Drecka's alternative attempt to disclose the 'real' identities of the heathen philosophers ignores the coat of arms and names instead three humanists from Krakow academic milieu: Rudolphus Agricola the Younger, Jan Silvius Amatus and Pawel of Krosno. See Drecka, *Kulmbach*, 45. This unsupported conjecture reappeared in Edward Gigilewicz, ed., *Encyklopedia Katolicka*, Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2013, vol. 18, 1166 (Bożena Noworyta-Kuklińska). According to Drecka, the subsequent scene of the cycle, the *Burning of the conversed philosophers*, 'evokes associations' with the Jagiellonian University in that it depicts old and young men dying in flames (Figure 2).

¹¹ Anne Simon, *The Cult of Saint Katherine of Alexandria in Late-Medieval Nuremberg. Saint and the City*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2012, 64–75.

middle panels, whereas all inscriptions, such as the dates '1514' and '1515', as well as the monogram and the lengthier signature of the artist, were consequently placed in the upper left and lower right corners of the closed display of the altarpiece – that is, at the beginning and end of the story. It was, finally, not uncommon in contemporary retables to precisely label the embedded portraits of donors by cleverly integrating their heraldry into the scenography.¹²

Physiognomies

The object of the second theory concerning the alleged portrait of Boner is the *Self-burial of St John the Evangelist*, dated 1516, preserved together with the *St Catherine* cycle in the treasury of St Mary's Basilica in Krakow (**Figure 4**). This horizontal panel was probably the predella of an altarpiece, whose wings illustrated earlier episodes from Evangelist's life (**Figure 5**). The latter ones were first inventoried in the early nineteenth century the Krakow church of St Florian, where they were exhibited until the Nazi plunder in 1940.¹³ The *Self-burial* surfaced in the 1820–30s in the Chapel of the Transfiguration in St Mary's.¹⁴ In 1845 it already hung in another side chapel of the same church – the one that once belonged to the Boners.¹⁵ This change of location was long overlooked by art historians, who believed that the predella had always stayed in situ, and was hence held to be a clear indication that the whole cycle of St John the Evangelist had been part of the Boner altarpiece.

As the earliest descriptions mention at this place only a carved and gilt retable of John the Baptist, it has been suggested that the donation of John Boner

¹² A corresponding example is to be found on the closed wings of a *Crucifixion* altarpiece from St Columba's in Cologne (known as the *Liverpool Altarpiece*), dated 1489–96, c. 1500 or 1505–10 (Liverpool: Walker Art Gallery). Facing the *Mass of St Gregory* on the other wing, burgomaster Hermann Rinck and his wife Gertrud van Dalen kneel against the background of a deep green curtain decorated with heraldic roundels, arranged in such a manner that the respective coats of arms occur just over the heads of either of the spouses. See e.g. Susan Marti, 'Der Papst in der Klausur Gregorsmessen aus Klöstern', in: Barbara Welzel and Thomas Lentens, eds, *Das 'Goldene Wunder' in der Dortmunder Petrikirche*, Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 2003, 233–4; Susanne Ruf, *Die Stiftungen der Familie Hardenrath an St. Maria im Kapitol zu Köln (um 1460 bis 1630)*, Korb: Didymos-Verlag, 2011, 61–3 and Figure 17.

¹³ The earliest know mention of the paintings occurs in 'Inwentarz Probostwa So Floryana na Kleparzu w Krakowie [...] w Maju 1804 sporządzony', in: *Inwentarz kościoła św. Floriana*, Krakow: Archiwum Bazyliki św. Floriana, sig. 79, fasc. 2, no. 169.

¹⁴ *Inwentarz Kościoła Parafialnego ArchiPrezbyteralnego pod tytułem Najświętszej Maryi Panny*, Krakow: Archiwum Narodowe, MS. 3340 (MF. J-9393), 134–5; *Inwentarz Kościoła Parafialnego Archipresbyteralnego pod tytułem Wniebowzięcia N. Panny Maryi*, Krakow: Archiwum Narodowe, sig. WM 547 (In 10), vol. 1, 298 (no. 36).

¹⁵ Józef Mączyński, *Pamiętka z Krakowa. Opis tego miasta i jego okolic*, Kraków: Józef Czech, 1845, vol. 2, 187. See also the disconcerting hints as to the painting's history before its placement in the Boner Chapel in Michał Nowodworski, *Encyklopedia Kościelna podług teologicznej encyklopedji Wetzera i Weltego, z licznemi jej dopełnieniami*, Warszawa: Drukarnia Czerwińskiego i Spółki, 1894, vol. 20, 435.

honoured both heavenly namesakes.¹⁶ One argument for this hypothesis is the fact that Boner obtained astonishingly generous papal indulgences for those who would visit his chapel on the feasts of either saint John, even though the proper patron saint was the Baptist.¹⁷ According to the widely accepted reconstruction of the altarpiece, the painted panels originally belonged together with a dispersed group of sculptures and reliefs showing episodes from the life of St John the Baptist.¹⁸ However, recent investigation calls into question the assumption that the concerned reliefs and paintings constituted the obverse and reverse of the same wing, respectively.¹⁹ It is thus far from certain, which, if any, of these images were ordered by John Boner to decorate the altar of his chapel.

Neither archive photos of the painted wings nor the predella, which has been significantly trimmed on both sides, display heraldic elements. Instead, the predella depicts a crowd of differentiated physiognomies, which have long provoked attempts to identify them with individuals living in the time of Kulmbach. They were portrayed, it is claimed, among the Christians of Ephesus who attended the last mass of their bishop – John the Evangelist – and witnessed his self-arranged, miraculous departure from this world. Earlier theories build on an association with Dürer's drawing of his wife Agnes, and speculated that Kulmbach commemorated in this way relatives and friends of his illustrious fellow artist.²⁰

¹⁶ *Visitatio exterior. Ecclesiae Archipresbyterialis B. Mariae Virginis in Circulo Crac. per Illustrissimu[m] & Reverendissimum Dominum Casimirum a Lubna Lubieński Dei & Apliae Sedis gratia Episcopum Crac. Ducem Severiae. Anno Domini 1711. Die 13 Junii Expedita*, Krakow: Archiwum Kurii Metropolitalnej, AVCap 63, 95 recto; Piotr Hiacynt Pruszczyński, *Kleynoty Stołecznego Miasta Krakowa, Albo Koscioty y co w nich iest widzenia godnego y znacznego*, Kraków: w drukarni akademickiej, 1745, 57.

¹⁷ Krakow: Archiwum Bazyliki Mariackiej, dipl. 85; Augustin Theiner, ed., *Vetera monumenta Poloniae et Lithuaniae*, vol. 2, Romae: Typis Vaticanis, 1861, 357–8, 395 (nos CCCLXXXIV, CCCCX).

¹⁸ Out of the central group of the Baptism of Christ only the figures of John and three angels still exist, inserted into a neo-gothic structure in St. Florian's in Krakow. They are flanked by nineteenth-century copies of the original reliefs dating from 1514: *Sermon by the Jordan River, Baptism of crowds, Dance of Salome and Beheading of Baptist*. For the current state of discussion concerning the reconstruction see Wojciech Marcinkowski, 'Retabulum Bonerowskie revisited', in Zdzisław Kliś, ed., *Studia z dziejów kościoła św. Floriana w Krakowie*, Kraków: Unum, 183–224; Jiri Fajt, ed., *Niederländische Kunstexporte nach Nord- und Ostmitteleuropa vom 14. bis 16. Jahrhundert. Forschungen zu ihren Anfängen, zur Rolle höfischer Auftraggeber, der Künstler und ihrer Werkstattbetriebe*, Ostfildern: Thorbecke, 2014, 237–46.

¹⁹ A detailed discussion of this hypothesis is presented a separate article: Masza Sitek, 'Retabulum Świętych Janów z kaplicy Bonerowskiej. Problem istnienia', in: Marek Walczak, ed., *"Jako serce pośrodku ciała..." Dzieje artystyczne kościoła Mariackiego w Krakowie*, Kraków: Societas Vistulana (in preparation). This paper revisits, in particular, my earlier ideas, presented before new findings substantiated revision of Marcinkowski's reconstruction. See Masza Sitek, 'Overlapping Revelations. A Folding Altarpiece by Hans Süss von Kulmbach and the Boner Chapel', in: David Ganz and Marius Rimmel, eds, *Faltbilder. Medienspezifika klappbarer Bildträger*, Berlin: Reimer, 287–307.

²⁰ Marian Sokołowski, 'Hans Süss v. Kulmbach, jego obrazy w Krakowie i jego mistrz Jacopo dei Barbari', *Sprawozdania Komisji do badania historii sztuki w Polsce*, 2: 3–4, 1883, 93;

The rival hypothesis that the sitters were John Boner and his kindred reappears since the 1950s. Although Wanda Drecka and Agnieszka Gąsior disagree on how to correlate particular images and names, they suggest the same possible motivation behind the donation of the altarpiece.²¹ On 23 October 1515 John Boner's nephew Severin wedded Sophie Bethmann, a daughter of his uncle's business partner Severin Bethmann. This lucrative marriage was not the only occasion that deserved due commemoration. Within one month the father and the oldest brother of the bride passed away. Hence the conjecture that the family wanted Kulmbach to perpetuate their facial features, which, significantly, are not known. The confirmed images of Severin Boner and his wife Sophie are much later and have no evident counterparts among the faithful in the *Self-Burial*.²²

One of the mass participants shows instead a certain affinity to the grey-haired, balding Philosopher in the *Disputation* (**Figure 5**). Still, the depiction from 1516 is not an exact replica, or rather a mirrored copy, of the earlier one. It is thus debatable whether they copied the same object – John Boner's true likeness, be it Kulmbach's own portrait drawing or any other image provided for this purpose. In any event, the discrepancies between the two 'Boners' are not explained by the mere fact that the artist's final touches have been obliterated by overcleaning and other damage to the panels.

Stanisław Tomkowicz, 'Hans Sues von Kulmbach (Ciąg dalszy)', *Czas*, 127, 8 June 1883, 1; *Katalog wystawy zabytków z epoki Jana Kochanowskiego urządzonéj w 300-letnią rocznicę jego zgonu staraniem Zarządu Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie*, Kraków: nakładem Komitetu Wystawy, 9 (cat. no. 36); Teodor Nieczuja-Ziemięcki, 'Wystawa zabytków z epoki Jana Kochanowskiego (Ciąg dalszy)', *Czas*, 4 July 1884, p. 1; Koelitz, *Hans Suess*, 60; *Katalog wystawy zabytków epoki Jagiellońskiej w 500 rocznicę odnowienia Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego zorganizowanej*, Kraków: Fundusz Wystawy, 1900, (cat. no. 260); Julian Pagaczewski, 'Jan z Kulmbachu', in: Feliks Kopera and Julian Pagaczewski, *Polskie Muzeum*, Kraków: St. Zarewicza i Spółki, 1906–1909, 4.

²¹ Drecka, *Kulmbach*, 51; Gąsior, 'Hans Süß', 329–30. See also *Odrodzenie w Polsce: Przewodnik po wystawie w Muzeum Narodowym w Warszawie 1953–1954*, Warszawa: Sztuka, 1953, 95; Andrzej Chudzikowski, ed., *Malarstwo austriackie, czeskie, niemieckie, węgierskie 1500–1800*, collect. cat., Warszawa: Muzeum Narodowe, 1964, 49–50 (cat. no. 94); Kaussler, *Ein Pfälzer*, 245–6. Kaussler's argumentation was accepted by Wojciech Marcinkowski, *Retabulum św. Jana Chrzciciela w kościele św. Floriania na Kleparzu w Krakowie*, unpublished doct. diss., Kraków 1986, 111 (n. 421). Kazimierz Kuczman distances himself from the hypothesis, see Grażyna Lichończak-Nurek, ed., *Kraków Europejskie Miasto Prawa Magdeburskiego 1257–1791*, Kraków: Muzeum Historyczne Miasta Krakowa, 2007, 510 (cat. no. VIII.69 [Kazimierz Kuczman]).

²² In the 1530s the newlyweds of 1515 were depicted on bronze tomb plates, which are still to be seen in the Boner Chapel. Portrait medals of Severin Boner by Mosca, 1529, and Mathias Schilling, 1533, also show no correspondence with any of the figures in the predella. See Kaussler, *Ein Pfälzer*, 248. Needless to say, within the two decades Severin might have changed radically the way he shaped his appearance – in accordance with new trends in fashion, let alone his new status as a Polish magnate and senator. See Kaussler, *Ein Pfälzer*, 211–2; Zdzisław Noga, *Krakowska rada miejska w XVI wieku: studium o elicie władzy*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Akademii Pedagogicznej, 2003, 228 (n. 27) and 299.

With age, top coatings of paint have become more transparent, revealing a significant augmentation of the Philosopher's braincase carried out in the course of painting. Infrared photography lays bare yet bigger changes of the head's position and size that occurred during the underdrawing stage (**Figure 7**). Alterations of this nature – shifts, enlargements or contractions done mainly to heads and hands – are notorious in Kulmbach's altarpieces.²³ A tangle of conflicting lines disclosed by infrared in the *Disputation* cannot be more different from traces typically left by the procedure of transferring earlier portrait studies onto the grounded panel. Such an undertaking reportedly resulted in either a painstaking underdrawing, or sparingly applied rigid contours.²⁴

Furthermore, there are closer matches for either of the two profile heads. Thus, the assumed Boner of the *Self-burial* shares the general outline with one of the Apostles in the *Ascension of Christ*, a panel from an altarpiece attributed to Kulmbach and dated around 1513 (**Figure 8**).²⁵ In spite of difference in the overall quality of modelling and nuances such as the line of nose, the same impression of a rather tiny bone structure sets both physiognomies apart from that of Philosopher.

The latter's sturdy viscerocranium makes him akin to Provost Lorenz Tucher (d. 1503), whom Kulmbach vibrantly portrayed ten years after the sitter's death (**Figure 9**). Tucher's monumental epitaph in St Sebald's in Nuremberg, conceived as a *sacra conversazione*, shows him as a kneeling adorant commended to the Virgin by his patron saint. A glance at his lifetime likenesses makes it clear that none of them could sufficiently inform the post-mortem 'reconstruction' of his features.²⁶ The third image falling into the same group depicts a literally dead head. It is the severed head of St Denis, presented lying on a book held by the cephalophoric bishop in a panel from the St Anne altarpiece, donated in 1510 to the Nuremberg church of St Lawrence.²⁷ Despite the skilfully rendered signs of rigor mortis, certain analogies in the construction of the face can still be seen.

²³ Juliana von Knobelsdorff, *Zur 'Anbetung der Könige' von Hans Suess von Kulmbach*, unpublished MA thesis, Berlin 2001, 11.

²⁴ See Antoni Ziemba, *Niderlandzkie Malarstwo Tablicowe 1430-1500*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2011 (*Sztuka Burgundii i Niderlandów 1380-1500*, vol. 2), 444-8, 450-2.

²⁵ See e.g. Maryan Wynn Ainsworth and Joshua P. Waterman, eds, *German paintings*, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2013, 172-6 (cat. no. 41 [Joshua P. Waterman]).

²⁶ This also holds true for the image referred to as a 'successful rendering of a person's personality' – a stained-glass panel dated 1485, originally in St. Michael's in Fürth, attributed to the workshop of Michael Wolgemut (Nuremberg: Germanisches Nationalmuseum). See *Gothic and Renaissance art in Nuremberg, 1300-1550*, Munich: Prestel, 1986, 174-6 (cat. no. 43 [Rainer Kahsnitz]), quotation p. 174; Corine Schleif, *Donatio et memoria*, München: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1990, 172-7; Hartmut Scholz, *Die mittelalterlichen Glasmalereien in Mittelfranken und Nürnberg extra muros*, Berlin: Deutscher Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 2002 (*Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi Deutschland*, vol. 10,1), 164-5 and Abb. 430.

²⁷ The panel is on display at the Staatsgalerie in der Neuen Residenz in Bamberg (Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen). See e.g. Peter Strieder, *Tafelmalerei in Nürnberg 1350-1550*, Königstein im Taunus: Langewiesche, 1993, 127-8 and 255-6 (cat. no. 127); Alexander Lühr, *Studien zu Hans von Kulmbach als Maler*, Würzburg: Ergon-Verlag, 1995, esp. 31-5.

Self-citation was a commonplace strategy among Kulmbach's fellow artists, who readily employed time-saving techniques. At the same time, Kulmbach apparently did not share Dürer's stereometric approach to anatomy or exercised the skill of drawing the same three-dimensional object – such as the head – from different perspectives.²⁸ As a consequence, even within one narrative cycle the successive depictions of the same character could be painted by use of heterogeneous ready-made models. This applies to the Krakow wings with the legend of St John the Evangelist (**Figure 5**). The portrayals of the saint's head in specific positions recall in the first place other works in which Kulmbach repeated analogical postures.²⁹ For instance, the foreshortened face in the *Evangelist on Patmos* is a twin to that of a young assassin in a design for a stained-glass panel showing the *Martyrdom of St Stanislaw*, 1511 (Bremen: Kunsthalle), as well as to that in the nude study for *St Florian* (Nürnberg: Germanisches Nationalmuseum). What links the subsequent renderings of Evangelist in Krakow is unity of type – a youth with a blond wavy hairstyle – which, in turn, was equally appropriate for Kulmbach's St Sebastian, St Vitalis and many others.

Most interestingly, Philosopher of the *Disputation* reappears in the following scene of the *St Catherine* cycle (**Figure 2**). Now, together with the other scholars converted to Christianity, he is about to suffer martyrdom of fire. His two incarnations are resemblant enough to let the viewer recognize the same actor. Only at a closer look the thin face of the prospective martyr differs from that of the well-built disputant in the neighbouring panel (**Figure 10**). The slightly tilted head with high cheekbones bears a greater similarity to that of St Willibald from the St Anne altarpiece in Nuremberg.³⁰

The countenances associated with John Boner seem therefore to originate from mutating and adjusting suitable templates from Kulmbach's standard repertoire – which also served for St Willibald, Lorenz Tucher or Apostle of the *Ascension*. Their individual features owe to the fact that the multi-use models were first interpreted in the freely made underdrawing, and then reinterpreted through masterfully applying ultra-thin layers of fat tempera and oil glazes. Kulmbach masterfully juggled differentiating details, successfully transforming figure types into 'naturalistic' pictures.

²⁸ Kulmbach does not construct bodies from inside. The freely made, supple lines and hatched patches in his underdrawings produce a painterly effect rather than a spatial framework. See also Knobelsdorff, *Zur 'Anbetung'*, 11. Thus manifests itself his selective approach the Italian impulses. Having appropriated a 'southern' feel for colour and space, Kulmbach favoured the 'gothic-mannerist' stylistic embraced by many of his German peers. Interestingly, 'His response to the art of Albrecht Altdorfer and his circle is most apparent in the altarpieces that he painted from 1514 to 1516 in Cracow'. See Barbara Butts, *Dürerschüler Hans Süß von Kulmbach*, doct. diss., Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1985, 46.

²⁹ See Barbara Butts, 'The Drawings of Hans Süß von Kulmbach', *Master Drawings*, 44, 2006, 144–5 (fig. 27), 168 (cat. no. A35) and 172–3 (cat. no. 47 and fig. 79).

³⁰ Now in Bamberg: Staatsgalerie in der Neuen Residenz (Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen). See n. 27.

The painter's artistic measures varied depending on the genre. In individual portraiture, he never relied on 'iconic and fast reproducible face schemata' applied, in particular, in images of rulers by Lukas Cranach the Elder.³¹ Kulmbach's study of the human head focused on formal analysis of the epidermis (**Figure 11**). The face was taken as a colour and light phenomenon and split into nuanced tones. There is no tangible inclination to ultimately delineate sitter's personality, nor to narrate using conventional physiognomic codes. The sitters – usually posed en face – are distanced, 'inward and reflective'.³² Their subtle, undefined aura contrasts with the animated expression of the figures populating Kulmbach's altarpieces, who sometimes even make eye contact with the viewer.

It is an open question whether Kulmbach's skill in painting lifelike characters was gained through studying live models. Any attempts to relate images from altarpieces to existing portrait drawings have been proved erroneous.³³ At the same time, a couple of finely executed faces can be linked to his two detailed watercolours, showing a male and female head, which patently emulate typified physiognomies painted by another artist, the Venetian master Jacopo de' Barbari.³⁴ Whatever the means used, Kulmbach was capable of creating the illusion of mimetic image. This effect can be measured, indeed, by the repeated 'discoveries' of alleged crypto-portraits – not only of John Boner and his relatives, but also of King Sigismund I, let alone the artist's self-portraits.³⁵

Kulmbach's pictures of saintly and biblical figures could appear more red-blooded than the depictions of their donors. This is precisely the case of the St. Anne altarpiece in St Lawrence's, whose predella commemorates the family of Otilie and Heinz Mayer (**Figure 11**).³⁶ Although the father and sons are given varied features, they lack the 'naturalistic' modelling of, for example, St Denis and St Willibald on the wings of the same retable. Heinz Mayer's face looks, moreover, like a reduced replica of the head type of St Cosma from another altarpiece in the same church, whose painted wings are also attributed to Kulmbach.³⁷ The Mayer children have in turn their doubles among the numerous visualisations of angels executed by the

³¹ See Müller, 'Menschen', 64.

³² Butts, *Dürerschüler*, 256. See also Ernst Buchner, 'Hans von Kulmbach als Bildnismaler', *Pantheon*, 1, 1928, 135–42; Stephan Kemperdick, *Das frühe Porträt: aus den Sammlungen des Fürsten von und zu Liechtenstein und dem Kunstmuseum Basel*, München: Prestel, 2006, 72.

³³ See Butts, 'The Drawings', 199 (cat. no. B10); cf. Wilhelm Holl, *Hans von Kulmbach*, Kulmbach: Baumann, 1972, 64; Stadler, *Hans von Kulmbach*, Wien: Schroll, 1936, 52.

³⁴ Knobelsdorff, *Zur 'Anbetung'*, 14–6 and Abb. 5–9.

³⁵ For the conflicting identifications of Kulmbach's self-portraits see Łuszczkiewicz Władysław, 'Malarz monogramista KT i obrazy jego w kościołach krakowskich z lat 1514, 1515, 1516. Przyczynek do dziejów sztuki', *Rozprawy i Sprawozdania z Posiedzeń Wydziału Filologicznego Akademii Umiejętności*, 1, 1874, 80; Hubert Janitschek, *Geschichte der deutschen Malerei*, 375; Koelitz, *Hans Suess*, 47; Stadler, *Hans von Kulmbach*, 73; Mieczysław Wallis, 'Nie rozpoznany autoportret Kulmbacha', *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki*, 17, 1955, 174–5; Holl, *Hans von Kulmbach*, 110–7.

³⁶ Winkler, *Hans von Kulmbach*, 51–5; Butts, *Dürerschüler*, esp. 51–2. Löhr, *Studien*, esp. 31–5.

³⁷ See Kurt Löcher, *Die Gemälde Des 16. Jahrhunderts. Germanisches Nationalmuseum Nürnberg, Ostfildern-Ruit*: Hatje, 1997, 289–92.

painter's workshop. Otilie, finally, is just one of Kulmbach's schematic female figures, a couple of whom are also to be found in the Krakow *Self-Burial*.

A separate issue is the painter's work as designer of stained-glass windows produced by the Workshop of Veit Hirsvogel the Elder. The mediation of other professionals and the often monumental format of final realisations – including two apse windows in St Sebald's which portray the families of Emperor Maximilian I and of Margrave Friedrich von Brandenburg-Ansbach – did not foster strivings for mimetic resemblance.³⁸ Kulmbach also supplied the stained-glass artists with reproducible images of kneeling donors.³⁹ Of particular interest is the three-quarter portrait of Jörg von Holbach in a panel made by the Workshop in 1514 for St Anne's in Eisleben, which reminds of St John the Evangelist from the Krakow *Test of a poisoned cup* and *St. Sebastian* in *Kunstasammlungen der Veste Coburg*.⁴⁰

Generally speaking, Kulmbach's depictions of donors settled for the conventional coupling of heraldry and appropriately customized head types – in contrast to his commissions for 'modern' works of portraiture. Which standards could apply to 'crypto-likenesses'? It is popularly felt that exposure of doppelgänger cuts short speculations about 'hidden' representations of living individuals.⁴¹ On the other hand, the reference of the catch-all term 'crypto-' or 'identification portrait' is subject to debate. An intriguing possibility is that Boner indeed had himself represented under the guise of Philosopher but Kulmbach followed his standard procedure for painting altarpieces.

Dress

The literal meaning of the expression 'under the guise of' suits the context inasmuch as the clothing of the philosophers corresponds to their scholarly status. With regard to the *Self-burial*, the argument takes the opposite direction. The composition reserves a disproportionately large share for the Christian community of Ephesus, whose garments are reminiscent of city elites in Kulmbach's time. It is just this uncanny overemphasis that baffles, for introducing a contemporarily dressed audience was a norm in the late-medieval imagery of masses celebrated by St John

³⁸ Hartmut Scholz, *Entwurf und Ausführung. Werkstattpraxis in der Nürnberger Glasmalerei der Dürerzeit*, Berlin: Deutscher Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 1991 (*Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi Deutschland. Studien*, vol. 1), 151–64, esp. 160–3; Hartmut Scholz, *Die Mittelalterlichen Glasmalereien in Nürnberg: Sebalder Stadtseite*, Berlin: Deutscher Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 2013 (*Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi Deutschland*, vol. 10,2), 198–213 (esp. 204) and 539–48 (Abb. 1–18), 225–40 (esp. 231 [n. 570]) and 559–68 (Abb. 38–57); Agnieszka Gašior, *Eine Jagiellonin als Reichsfürstin in Franken: zu den Stiftungen des Markgrafen Friedrich d.Ä. von Brandenburg-Ansbach und der Sophie von Polen*, Ostfildern: Thorbecke, 2012, 175–202, esp. 184 and 196.

³⁹ See e.g. Scholz, *Entwurf und Ausführung*, 142–3, 242–3.

⁴⁰ Scholz, *Entwurf und Ausführung*, 143 and 146 (Abb. 195). Scholz mentions additionally a drawing in the Kupferstich-Kabinett (Staatliche Kunstsammlungen) in Dresden (Abb. 196), which Butts classifies as a copy after Kulmbach. See Butts, 'The Drawings', 201 (no. B25).

⁴¹ See e.g. Saskia Durian-Ress, *Hans Baldung Grien in Freiburg*, Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach, 2001, 293–4; Gašior, *Eine Jagiellonin*, 146–7.

the Evangelist, St Gregory the Pope or other holy priests. At the same time, a careful selection of luxurious clothes and accessories, which had ever been critical in portraiture, in specific cases served to draw attention to identification portraits. A remarkable example is the altarpiece painted by Martin Schaffner according to the testamentary disposition of Laux Hutz (d. 1520), one of the wealthiest merchants in Ulm.⁴² Represented as members of the Holy Kinship or saints, the donor and his relatives appear dressed up in a way that infringed the sumptuary laws for their social class.⁴³ Interestingly, the faithful of Ephesus in the Krakow predella are lent an analogous range of class-affiliation symbols.⁴⁴

Kulmbach's disposition of figures notably favours one woman, whose sumptuous attire bears comparison with the monarch's costume in the now lost panel *Conversion of empress Faustina* from the St Catherine cycle (**Figure 2 and 13**). In both cases a narrow headband with a jewel marks the hair's terminus; a gauzy veil runs down the body, broad trimmings of the low-cut bodice sparkle with gold and pearls whereas a grandiose gold chain lays on the bare shoulders and upper chest. Earlier scholarship claimed these two figures to represent the same sitter, John Boner's wife Felicia née Morrensteyn.⁴⁵ Admittedly, their faces are not dissimilar – inasmuch as both instantiate the Kulmbach's universal template for drawing the

⁴² See e.g. Manuel Teget-Welz, *Martin Schaffner: Leben und Werk eines Ulmer Malers zwischen Spätmittelalter und Renaissance*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2008, 238–46, 442–63 (cat. no. A-21).

⁴³ The painstaking city regulations as to garments allowed and forbidden to particular social groups are believed to have extended to images. See Daniela von Pfeil and Gerhard Weilandt, 'Auftraggeber und Stifter in der Ulmer Kunst', in: Heribert Meurer, Gerhard Weilandt and Stefan Roller, eds, *Meisterwerke massenhaft*, exhibit. cat., Stuttgart: Württembergisches Landesmuseum, 1993, 400; Anna Moraht-Fromm, 'Knopf und Kragen. Zu Kostüm und Accessoire im deutschen Porträt um 1500', in: Sabine Haag, ed., *Dürer, Cranach, Holbein. Die Entdeckung des Menschen. Das deutsche Porträt um 1500*, exhibit. cat., Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum and Munich, Kunsthalle der Hypo-Kulturstiftung, München: Hirmer, 2011, 273–4. The prevailing opinion that of the sumptuary laws were of little efficacy has been challenged by Anne-Kathrin Reich, *Kleidung als Spiegelbild sozialer Differenzierung*, Hannover: Hahn, 2005, esp. 72–5.

⁴⁴ In particular, Kulmbach rendered magnificent headdresses, trinket belts, furs and costly fabrics used for cuffs and broad trimmings of the women's bodices. See Julia Lehner, *Die Mode im alten Nürnberg*, Nürnberg: Stadtarchiv, 1984, esp. 127, 132, 135–8; Jutta Zander-Seidel, "'Das erbar gepent': zur ständischen Kleidung in Nürnberg im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert', *Waffen- und Kostümkunde*, 27, 1985, 119–40; Pfeil and Weilandt, 'Auftraggeber und Stifter', 405. Furthermore, the presence of more than one piece of lavish jewellery is characteristic for German portraits. See Maria Gutkowska-Rychlewska, *Historia ubiorów*, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1968, 342; Leonie von Wilckens, 'Schmuck auf Nürnberger Bildnissen und in Nürnberger Nachlassinventaren', in: Gerhard Bott and Klaus Pechstein, eds, *Wenzel Jamnitzer und die Nürnberger Goldschmiedekunst 1500–1700*, München: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1985, 87–105.

⁴⁵ Julian Kopera and Feliks Pagaczewski, 'Objaśnienia tablic', in: *Polskie Muzeum*, 1 (nos 2–4); Pagaczewski, 'Jan z Kulmbachu', 3–4; Drecka, *Kulmbach*, 46. The prominent male figure in the composition, the commander-in-chief Porphyrius, was in turn claimed to represent Jan Boner himself. In his later book, Kopera also saw here a Boner couple, but he probably meant Severin with his wife, see Kopera, *Malarstwo*, 113–4.

female profile. This is but the beginning of the list of standard elements that make up the presumptive 'family portrait' of the Boners. Indeed, the alleged image of Felicia as the empress Faustina was repeated in a stained-glass adaptation of the same scene, realised by the Hirsvogel Workshop (**Figure 13**).⁴⁶

More recent arguments depart from the assumption that the St John the Evangelist cycle was commissioned in connection with the wedding of Boner's nephew, Severin. The dressed-up lady in the predella is consequently identified with the young man's bride – Sophie.⁴⁷ This time, however, the entire group of women from the *Self-Burial* reappeared, with some modifications, in the window of Jakob Welser and Ehrentraud Thumer in St Mary's in Nuremberg (**Figure 14–5**).⁴⁸ The doppelgängers of the 'Sophie Boner' and her companions are sheltering for protection under the outspread cloak of the Virgin of Mercy. The window reportedly bore the date 1522, but it is uncertain whether Kulmbach prepared the design drawing immediately before its execution (**Figure 15**).⁴⁹

Although the predella was already finished in 1516, the respective section of its composition apparently counts among Kulmbach's multi-use motifs which recur both in altarpieces and stain-glass panels. As a matter of fact, the related paintings, windows, drafts and study sheets show a network of recombined elements, which makes it impossible to determine whether any of the preserved works played the role of the prototype. Taking into account Kulmbach's lasting and fruitful cooperation with the Hirsvogel Workshop, one has to be careful with the cliché that commissions for altarpieces always took precedence over 'petty jobs' such as making designs to be executed by somebody else.

In terms of the semiotic of dress the concept of the Welser-Thumer Window seems more consistent than the Krakow picture of the early Christian community. The stained-glass counterpart of the alleged Sophie Boner wears a crown, and hence represents the ruling class together with the male monarch depicted on the right side of the Virgin of Mercy, who protects different social estates (**Figure 15**). Those kneeling around the queen are, accordingly, typical married women of German urban upper-class, boasting diverse variations of a bulbous coif, referred to as a

⁴⁶ Hamburg: Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg. See Scholz, *Entwurf und Ausführung*, 176 (n. 345) and 179 (Abb. 245).

⁴⁷ Drecka, *Kulmbach*, p. 51. Gašior, 'Hans Süß', 329. One of Gašior's arguments refers to the Dürer's woodcut *Marriage of the Virgin*, c. 1504. Mary's transparent veil is claimed to distinguish her as the bride. Leaving aside the actual bridal headdress in Nuremberg and Krakow, a gauzy shawl adorns Mary's head in a number of contemporary paintings, and there is no reason to link it with a nuptial context.

⁴⁸ Scholz, *Entwurf und Ausführung*, 181–6 (esp. 183 [Abb. 258]); Scholz, *Die mittelalterlichen Glasmalereien*, vol. 10,2, 433–4 and 655 (Abb. 262).

⁴⁹ The overall-design of the window is preserved in the Kupferstich-Kabinett in Dresden (Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden). See Barabara Butts and Lee Hendrix, *Painting on Light: Drawings and Stained Glass in the Age of Durer and Holbein*, Los Angeles, Calif.: J. Paul Getty Trust, 2000, 172–3 (cat. no 61); Butts, 'The Drawings', 156–7 (fig. 52) and 197 (cat. no. A120). Scholz doubts whether Kulmbach was also involved in executing the cartoons. See Scholz, *Entwurf und Ausführung*, 186.

Wulsthaube (*Rundhaube*), or a wimpled veil (*Schleier*).⁵⁰ The same types of headdress are to be found in the Krakow predella. Both compositions feature also the canonical church attire of a Nuremberger patrician: an imposing headdress called *Sturz* with a wimple, a partlet (*Goller*) and a pleated sleeveless outer garment (*Heuke*).⁵¹

The figure from the *Self-Burial* wields neither royal insignia, nor has her gown attached long sleeves, such as the ones of the empress Faustina in both painted and stained-glass version.⁵² Her exquisite dress contrasts with the church suits of her companions but is comparable to luxurious gowns in some patrician portraits.⁵³ What is more, her stiff and anatomically unconvincing pose, along with her hairstyle which stands out from Kulmbach's standard repertoire, give the impression of a 'transplant' from an Italian or Italianate portrait. Such a 'copy and paste' procedure was nothing out of the ordinary. There are altarpieces that indeed integrate images transferred from actual likenesses of donors, and optionally include their headdress or neck and breast decorations.⁵⁴

Advocates of the crypto-portrait hypothesis may thus point to the 'non-German', sloping shape of the coiffure, which gravitates downwards, falling on the woman's back. She appears to have her hair contained in an Italian variant of a beaded snood termed *crinale*. This stylization, including the long transparent veil, has close parallels among images of Polish noble ladies and wealthy burgher wives

⁵⁰ See: Jutta Zander-Seidel, *Textiler Hausrat. Kleidung Und Haustextilien in Nürnberg von 1500–1650*, München: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1990, 107–19; Lehner, *Die Mode*, 132; Gutkowska-Rychlewska, *Historia ubiorów*, 140–1. The English term 'hood' is preferred to 'coif' by Ulinka Rublack, *Dressing up. Cultural identity in Renaissance Europe*, Oxford et al.: Oxford University Press, 2010, 248.

⁵¹ This much used figure type echoes the famous study by Dürer *Woman dressed for church*, 1500 (Vienna: Albertina). See Thomas Eser, 'Gewandstudien und Sittenbilder: Dürers frühe Kostümdarstellungen', in: Daniel Hess and Thomas Eser, eds, *Der frühe Dürer*, exhibit. cat., Nürnberg: Verlag des Germanischen Nationalmuseums, 2012, 167 (Abb. 1a).

⁵² The gown was indeed worthy of a ruling house. Scholz aptly notices that a similar outfit was selected for Emperor Maximilian I's spouse, Mary of Burgundy, in Dürer's woodcut referred to as the *Small Triumphal Car* or the *Burgundian Marriage*, c. 1516/18. See Scholz, *Entwurf und Ausführung*, 176 (n. 345) and 178 (Abb. 244).

⁵³ A comparable gown cut with a high-waist bodice is still to be seen in German individual portraiture of the mid 1510s, although it is believed to have been going out of fashion. See Lehner, *Die Mode*, 125. An illustration may serve the *Portrait of Sibylla von Freyberg born Gossenbrot*, painted by Bernhard Strigel in 1515 (Munich, Alte Pinakothek).

⁵⁴ An instructive example is the identification portrait of Levinus Memminger as St Vitus in the left wing of the *St Catherine* altarpiece painted by the Wolgemut Workshop, c. 1485–93 (Nuremberg: St Lawrence's). Its dependence on the likeness from c. 1485 (Madrid: Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza) is affirmed unanimously. See Simon, *The Cult*, 232–3 and **Figure 6**; Hess and Eser, *Der frühe Dürer*, 344 (cat. no. 58); Dagmar Hirschfelder, 'Vorläufer Dürers in der Nürnberger Bildnismaterie', in: Hess and Eser, *Der frühe Dürer*, 340. In 1509, Cranach twice depicted Johann the Steadfast, elector of Saxony, in a similar black beret: in a diptych preserved in the National Gallery in London and as Zebedee in the so called Torgau Altarpiece, 1509 (Frankfurt am Main, Städel Museum). See Müller, 'Menschen', 62–4.

from the 1500–30s.⁵⁵ The Italian word '*crinale*', by all its ambiguity, occurs in the fifteenth-century sources interchangeably with the Polish '*panthlik/pątlík*', which could designate snoods worn by men and women.⁵⁶

Turning to Nuremberg documents, the preferred term was '*Haarhauben*', which likewise connotes some mutation of a hairnet.⁵⁷ Its correlates in German portraiture and narrative painting range from caul of gold net that sheathe tied-up hair, to more opaque headpieces, which can be described as gold-threaded coifs or caps, often with a reticulated pattern. It is probably such a 'coif' that supports the crown of the royal lady in the Welser-Thumer Window. There are Franconian

⁵⁵ The combination of a *crinale* with a long gauzy veil was favoured by Sophie Szydłowiecka represented in the central panel of the *Assumption of the Virgin* polyptych, 1507–10 (Szydłowiec: parish church). See Jerzy Gądomski, *Gotyckie malarstwo tablicowe Małopolski 1500–1540*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1995, vol. 3, 81–3, il. 108, 232, XIII. With respect to further associations, is uncertain to which extent the Lesser Polish painter understood the forms of the female headdress he depicted. This holds for the headdress of Catherine Wielogłowska in the panel *St Nicolaus with St Andrew and St Catherine* from Tymowa, c. 1515, and for those of the two oldest daughter of Jacob Dębiński in the painting *Throne of Mercy* from Dębno near Brzesko, c. 1520 (both in Krakow: Muzeum Narodowe). In any event, the Szydłowiecki altarpiece demonstrates that certain forms of Italian fashion diffused in Poland well before the arrival of the Milanese princess Bona Sforza, who married Sigismund I and was crowned queen of Poland in 1518. Within a short time, she had herself portrayed wearing a *crinale*. See the woodcut published in Jost Ludwig Dietz, *De vetustatibus Polonorum*, Kraków: Hieronim Wietor, 1521. Really close analogies for the coiffure rendered by Kulmbach can be found in two likenesses of the goldsmith's wife Catherine Przybyło from the 1530s, oil on canvas (Warszawa: Muzeum Narodowe) and boxwood relief (Krakow: Muzeum Historyczne Miasta Krakowa). See Lichończak-Nurek, *Kraków*, 471–2 (cat. no. VIII.9 [Monika Ochnio]) and 470 (cat. no. VIII.7 [Marta M. Marek]). The carved version suggests, however, an opaque fabric rather than a pearled hairnet. More difficult to interpret is an intriguing miniature showing a client at a tailor's atelier, included in the *Balthazar Behem's Codex*, a kind of a luxurious urban cartulary commissioned by the Notary of the Krakow City Council around 1505–8 (*Codex picturatus Balthazaris Behem*, Krakow, Biblioteka Jagiellońska, BJ Rkp.16, fol. 250r). It is disputable whether the hair is contained in a net or tied up in a way known from many German pictures. See Anna Wyszzyńska, *Ubiór mieszczański na miniaturach w Kodeksie Baltazara Behema. Uwagi w świetle najnowszych tendencji w badaniach kostiumologicznych*, unpublished MA thesis, Krakow, 2012, 85, 90–2.

⁵⁶ See, e.g., Bolesław Przybyszewski, ed., *Cracovia artificum. Supplementa. Teksty źródłowe do dziejów kultury i sztuki z archiwaliów kurialnych i kapitulnych w Krakowie 1433–1440*, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy Imienia Ossolińskich, 1988 (*Cracovia artificum. Supplementa*, 2), 42 (no. 55); Jan Długosz, *Historiae Polonicae libri XII*, vol. 4, Cracoviae, 1877 (*Opera Omnia*, 13), 102; Zygmunt Celichowski, ed., *Słowniczek łacińsko-polski wyrazów prawa magdeburckiego z wieku XV. Przedruk homograficzny z kodeksu kórnickiego*, Poznań: Biblioteka Kórnicka, 1875, 12; Jan Ptaśnik, *Kultura włoska wieków średnich w Polsce*, Warszawa: Biblioteka Polska, 1922, 144; Bolesław Przybyszewski, "'Ornat Długosza". Z dziejów hafciarstwa polskiego w pierwszej połowie XV wieku', *Folia Historiae Artium*, 1995, 24–5.

⁵⁷ See Zander-Seidel, *Textiler Hausrat*, 105–7, 119–22; Jutta Zander-Seidel, "'Haubendämmerung". Frauenkopfbedeckungen zwischen Spätmittelalter und früher Neuzeit', in: Rainer Christoph Schwinges and Regula Schorta, eds, *Fashion and Clothing in Late Medieval Europe*, Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2010, 40.

depictions which better resemble the head stylization of the figure in the Krakow *Self-burial*, but the snood usually keeps the hair much higher, forming bulges that frame the face. Such 'German-style' nets often complement more elaborate head decorations or royal insignia. Those rendered in altarpieces usually belong to consorts and daughters of princely donors as well as to royal saints or heroines.⁵⁸ Portrayals of long coiffures enclosed in a pearled '*crinale*' occur sporadically, however.⁵⁹

Intriguingly, infrared photographs of the predella indicate that Kulmbach modified the shape of the headdress, making it reach lower than previously envisaged (**Figure 16**).⁶⁰ In any case, the Italian look was not reserved for the alleged Sophie: one of the background figures seems to be wearing a similar lengthy hairstyle cloaked with a gauzy shawl. Furthermore, the position of the 'Sophie's' hands, so typical of half-length renaissance portraits, is echoed in lateral inversion in the depiction of the woman kneeling behind the queen in the Welser-Thumer Window.

Analysis of the men's clothing is not conclusive either. There are no fashion-historical obstacles to identify John Boner with the owner of the long carmine gown (called *Rock* or *Shaube*) with a fur lapel bordered with a fringe of a different kind of pelt.⁶¹ The greyish colour of the fur is relatively uncommon, it might even be indicative of one of the expensive pelts restricted – legally speaking – for nobility.⁶² As a matter of practice, the man's outwear bears comparison with the *Schauben* of the sons of Frederick I, margrave of Brandenburg-Ansbach, as well as with those

⁵⁸ See, e.g., Gašior, *Eine Jagiellonin als Reichsfürstin in Franken*, p. 39-88, 92-119, 257 (Taf. III), 259 (Taf. V), 269 (Taf. XVI); Agnieszka Gašior, 'Stufungen bildlicher Repräsentation: die Darstellungen des Markgrafen Friedrich D. Ä. von Brandenburg-Ansbach und seiner Gemahlin Sophie von Polen', in: Urszula Borkowska and Markus Hörsch, eds, *Hofkultur der Jagiellonendynastie und verwandter Fürstenhäuser*, Ostfildern: Jan Thorbecke, 2010, 314-7 (Abb. 9).

⁵⁹ One example is a portrait from around 1530, which posthumously presents the Jagiellonian princess Hedwig (d. 1502), spouse of Duke Georg the Rich of Bavaria (Landshut: Trausnitz Castle). Long hair contained in a net of pearl strings adorn also the head of St. Catherine in the work of the Cologne Master of the Holy Kinship altarpiece (Cologne: Wallraf-Richartz-Museum), dated around 1503.

⁶⁰ For Kulmbach's habit of modifying the form of headwear in the course of painting see Knobelsdorff, *Zur 'Anbetung'*, 13.

⁶¹ The fur-trimmed *Schaube* was apparently a piece of clothing that would give dignity to its bearer. See Lehner, *Die Mode*, 112; Zander-Seidel, *Textiler Hausrat*, 164-5; Philipp Zitzlsperger, *Dürers Pelz*, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2008; Rublack, *Dressing up*, 139-40. The elegant motif of two-colour fur finish is by no means unique, it occurs in portraits and narrative compositions by Kulmbach and his contemporaries.

⁶² Philipp Zitzlsperger identifies a pale gray fur in the *Labours of the Months*, c. 1531 (Augsburg, Städtische Kunstsammlungen) as a nobleman's sable. See Zitzlsperger, *Dürers Pelz*, 28 (Abb. 17) and 39-40. Non-aristocratic citizens of Nuremberg ought to be contended with marter and squirrel. See Lehner, *Die Mode*, 123, 135; Zitzlsperger, *Dürers Pelz*, esp. 27-32. What was definitely prohibited to an aspiring German parvenu is ermine. Surprisingly or not, it is indeed ermine that is worn by Laux Hutz in his altarpiece. See n. 42.

worn by the progeny of the Nuremberg goldsmith Georg II Dietherr, and by the scions of the patrician couple Anna (d. 1506) and Sixt Oelhafen.⁶³

The unicolour, unlined yellow mantle of the young man whom Gaşior identifies with Severin Boner indisputably introduces a stunning highlight in the middle of the left part of the composition (**Figure 17**). However, its appropriateness for John Boner's prospective heir is questionable, even though the embroidered collar of his shirt looks glamorous. The allure of sparkling metal threads determined Dreca's choice of her candidate for John Boner: she pointed to the man with arguably the most resplendent coif (*Haube* or *Haarhaube*) – the one kneeling on the prie-dieu.⁶⁴ Coming back to the figure with the yellow outfit, one may claim that his beardless face shows certain similarity to an unidentified man portrayed by Kulmbach in 1514 (**Figure 11**). If this were the case, then Severin would be at least five younger than the sitter, whose age of 33 is specified by an inscription. On the other hand, the juvenile head type with a dark-coloured coif is also not devoid of analogies in other compositions by Kulmbach's workshop and his circle.⁶⁵

Leaving narrative logic aside, diverse garments and differentiated faces are organised into a sophisticated decorative pattern, subdued to arbitrary colouring and fluctuating condensation of forms. Larger colour fields are counterbalanced by concentrations of meticulous details. Apart from reaffirming his reputation as an excellent colourist, Kulmbach proved his skill in rendering diverse textures and emulating 'the movement of light across surfaces'.⁶⁶ Such a display of ability could be essential to win affluent clientele in the early sixteenth century. The quotations from Italian painting can also be ascribed to strategic thinking, for transalpine accents were appreciated by northern patrons concerned with individual self-creation and demonstration of political status.⁶⁷

⁶³ See n.71 and Gaşior, 'Stufungen bildlicher Repräsentation', 316 (Abb. 8); Gaşior, *Eine Jagiellonin*, esp. 98 and 269 (Taf. XV). The Dietherr epitaph (now in Kronach: Fränkische Galerie [Bayerisches Nationalmuseum]) was probably completed by an painter connected to Hans Pleydenwuff around 1483 for the Augustinians' church in Nuremberg. See Robert Suckale, *Die Erneuerung der Malkunst vor Dürer*, Petersberg: Imhof, 2009, vol. 2, 63 (cat. no. 23). For the Epitaph of Anna Oelhafer (d. 1506) in St Sebald see Gerhard Weilandt, *Die Sebalduskirche*, Petersberg: Imhof, 2007, 259.

⁶⁴ Dreca, *Kulmbach*, 51.

⁶⁵ One example can be found among the saints of *the Heavenly Rosary* preserved at the residence Plassenburg (Kulmbach, Plassenburg, Museum Hohenzollern in Franken). A further association is the face of St George, auctioned as a piece painted 'in the manner of Hans (Suess von) Kulmbach'. See http://www.artnet.com/artists/hans-suess-von-kulmbach/saint-george-xB_amkeEo_BgLvaVkOTs6A2, accessed 5 September 2017.

⁶⁶ Butts, *Dürerschüler*, 63.

⁶⁷ Barbara Marx, 'Wandering objects, migrating artists: the appropriation of Italian Renaissance art by German courts in the sixteenth century,' in Herman Roodenburg, ed. *Forging European identities, 1400 – 1700*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 178.

Temptation of a holistic picture

The more plausible theory that John Boner had himself portrayed as Philosopher from the *St Catherine* cycle who, owing to his intellect and martyrdom can be regarded as an *exemplum virtutis*, fits seamlessly in the theoretical framework sketched in the 1980s by Friedrich Polleroß.⁶⁸ Significantly, the Swiss scholar Joachim Vadian complimented Boner as a ‘man of a delightful nature and remarkable education’ – *amoenissimi ingenii et eximia dictrinae homo*⁶⁹. Cultivating relationships with local and overseas humanists was part of being elite at that time. Yet John was not as consequent as Severin in self-fashioning as a Renaissance man.⁷⁰

In identification portraits of whole burgher families, Polleroß remarks, typology could take a back seat whereas commemoration came to the fore.⁷¹ Family networking was a crucial factor in consolidating ruling oligarchies and, in particular, secured the political dominance of capable immigrants from Alsace and the Palatinate in Krakow around 1500.⁷² The Boners and the Bethmanns were the paramount exponents of this group. It is the sealing of their alliance through marriage that is claimed to be the ‘hidden’ subject of Kulmbach’s predella. Were this conjecture true, this would mean that the donor or the painter ingeniously played with time-honoured means of representation.

Thus, the grouping of the bridegroom’s and bride’s families on the opposite sides of the composition corresponds to the standard layout for church donations, with male and female adorants kneeling in two rows. To name an example from Kulmbach’s very oeuvre, Ottilie Mayer faces her husband and sons in the predella of the *St Anne* altarpiece. This traditional arrangement is also contained in numerous epitaphs of Nuremberg families showing the *Mass of St Gregory*.⁷³

⁶⁸ Friedrich B. Polleroß, *Das sakrale Identifikationsporträt. Ein höfischer Bildtypus vom 13. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert*, Worms: Werner, 1988, 14.

⁶⁹ Kaussler, *Ein Pfälzer*, 165.

⁷⁰ Kaussler, *Ein Pfälzer*, 241.

⁷¹ Polleroß, *Das sakrale Identifikationsporträt*, 44. See also Friedrich B. Polleroß, ‘Between typology and psychology: the role of the identification portrait in updating old testament representations’, *Artibus et historiae*, 12, 1991, 81; Brigitte Corley, *Painting and patronage in Cologne 1300–1500*, Turnhout et al., Miller, 2000, 42; Georg Habenicht, *Der Flügelaltar und sein Personal*, Petersberg: Imhof, 2015, 135–7, 143–4 and 468 (n. 264). Dynastic *memoria* in the form of ‘group crypto-portraiture’ was equally attractive to princely and imperial houses. See e.g. Wolfgang Rinke, *Memoria im Bild. Das Altar-Retabel des Derick Baegert aus Wesel in der Propsteikirche zu Dortmund*, Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 2004; Haag, *Dürer, Cranach, Holbein*, 250–3 (cat. nos 159–60 [Karl Schürz]); Paul Naredi-Rainer and Lukas Madersbacher, *Kunst in Tirol*, Innsbruck-Wien: Tyrolia, 2007, vol. 1, 489, 620–1.

⁷² Noga, *Krakowska rada miejska*, 10–1.

⁷³ Esther Meier, *Die Gregorsmesse. Funktionen eines spätmittelalterlichen Bildtypus*, Köln et al.: Böhlau, 2006, 13 (n. 4), 64–73 and 209–18; Berndt Hamm, ‘Ars moriendi, Totenmemoria und Gregorsmesse’, in Andreas Gormans and Thomas Lentjes, eds, *Das Bild der Erscheinung: die Gregorsmesse im Mittelalter*, Berlin: Reimer, 2007, 305–345; Yvonne Northemann, *Zwischen Vergessen und Erinnern*, Petersberg: Imhof, 2011, 122, 161–5, 174–6. See also Gaşior, *Eine Jagiellonin*, esp. 97 (Abb. 82), 269 (Taf. XV–XVI) and 271–2 (Taf. XVIII–XIX).

Importantly, depictions of liturgy of saints largely share the same basic compositional schemas, and the Krakow predella is no exception. Some renditions of the St Gregory theme, dating from c. 1490s–1510s, suggest that donors take part in the scene.⁷⁴ Usually, yet not always, these figures are easily identifiable or confined in separate zones.

Furthermore, the assumed identification portraits as the faithful of Ephesus fall into the Polleroß' category *imitatio pietatis*.⁷⁵ In this understanding, the donors emulate *in effigie* the worship performed by the Christian community lead by St John the Evangelist. At the same time, they set the pattern for the target audience of the altarpiece in Krakow.⁷⁶ Pious onlookers should feel inspired to pray together with and for the donor family – to the benefit to both parties. The beloved Apostle, St John, was an ideal candidate for the intercessor owing to his union with Christ – the principal mediator between mankind and God. The frontal of the altar depicted in the *Self-burial* tellingly illustrates the moment when the Evangelist 'took Christ's place under the Cross' as 'Mary's adopted son'.⁷⁷

The idea of being portrayed as participants of the liturgy was all the more attractive since donations of altarpieces were normally coupled with endowments for the saying of mass for the living or dead family members. Given the power of images to stand for the absent, the sitters could be present at the Eucharist conducted by the chaplain right before the predella of the altarpiece.⁷⁸ Yet one must not forget that it is unclear which altar was decorated with the Kulmbach paintings. Let us suppose the traditional narrative is right to link the St John the Evangelist cycle with the Boner Chapel. This could be the starting point for an even more daring, topographical argument.

The Boner mausoleum was housed in the westernmost of northern side chapels in St Mary's. It opened to a politically all-important area whose nucleus

⁷⁴ See e.g. *Gothic and Renaissance art*, 375–378 (cat. no. 179 [Guy Bauman]); Marti, *Der Papst*, 232–234; Anna Kozak and Antoni Ziemia, eds, *Sztuka cenniejsza niż złoto. Obrazy, rysunki i ryciny dawnych mistrzów europejskich ze zbiorów polskich*, exhibit. cat., Warszawa: Muzeum Narodowe, 1999, 278–279; Bożena Steinborn and Antoni Ziemia, *Malarstwo niemieckie do 1600 roku*, collect. cat., Warszawa: Muzeum Narodowe, 2000, 238–43 (cat. no. 55); Meier, *Die Gregorsmesse*, 153–4. Another example is the *Liverpool Altarpiece*. See n. 12 above.

⁷⁵ Polleroß, 'Das sakrale Identifikationsporträt', 16, 44, 48–51, 174–207, 227–32; Friedrich B. Polleroß, 'Die Anfänge des Identifikationsporträts im höfischen und städtischen Bereich', *Frühneuzeit-Info*, 4, 1993, 17. See also Lynn F. Jacobs, *Opening doors*, University Park, Pa.: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012, 124–5, 137–8.

⁷⁶ Heike Schlie, *Bilder des Corpus Christi. Sakramentaler Realismus von Jan van Eyck bis Hieronymus Bosch*, Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag 2002, 268.

⁷⁷ Jeffrey F. Hamburger, *St. John the Divine. The deified evangelist in medieval art and theology*, Berkeley, Calif. et al.: University of California Press, 2002, 20.

⁷⁸ See Michael Borgolte, ed., *Enzyklopädie des Stiftungswesens in mittelalterlichen Gesellschaften*, Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014, 96 (Tillmann Lohse); Susanne Ruf, 'Stifterbilder und/oder Memorialbilder?', in: Thomas Schilp, ed., *Pro remedio et salute anime peragemus*, Essen, Klartext-Verlag, 2008, 97.

were the stalls of the city counsellors situated against the western wall of the nave.⁷⁹ It is where Severin Bethmann, John Boner, and later Severin Boner were seated during solemn masses celebrated at the main altar. The side altar at the opposite end of the northern aisle probably had two prebends (*ministeria*) dedicated to St Catherine. Notwithstanding the missing connection to the Boners, it is believed to have been the original destination of the respective retable painted by Kulmbach.⁸⁰ At any rate, it was not unusual of wealthy chapel owners, in St Mary's and elsewhere, to install their 'outposts' closer to the chevet.⁸¹ They secured in this way 'a symbolic position in the midst of the "public" church space and of corporate liturgical and paraliturgical actions'.⁸² Such claims to visual dominance could explain the commissioning of two top-class altarpieces for the same church. Introducing own portrait into one or both of them would testify to John Boner's sophistication as patron. What is more, the guise he supposedly assumed in the legend of St Catherine corresponds perfectly to his role at the court of King Sigismund. Emperor Maxentius might be the villain, but it is still desirable to have such an immediate access to the monarch as Philosopher in the *Disputation*.

Nevertheless, it must not be lost from sight that the only solid pillar of the entire construction is the quatrefoil with the Boner coat of arms. The arguments relating to Kulmbach's handling of figures are too vague to sufficiently substantiate the narrative of two retables ordered by the same donor as part of a compound

⁷⁹ Boner's concern that the sizeable 'roof' (*oberdecke*) of the newly donated stalls blocked the view into his chapel prompted him in 1521 to replace it at his own expense with a smaller one. See Jan Ptaśnik and Marian Friedberg, eds, *Cracovia artificum: 1501–1550*, vol. 1, Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 1936, 171 (no. 464). It is though unclear how to reconcile the written record with the results of formal analysis of the still existent piece of furniture. The latter is considered homogenous and dated back to the 1520s, except for some additions made to the canopy in 1634. See Krzysztof J. Czyżewski, "Siądź mi po boku prawym". O zasiadaniu w kościele słów kilka', in: Dariusz Nowacki, ed., *Mecenat artystyczny a oblicze miasta*, Kraków: Stowarzyszenie Historyków Sztuki, Oddział Krakowski, 2008, esp. 63–6.

⁸⁰ Elżbieta Piwowarczyk, *Dzieje kościoła Mariackiego (XIII–XVI w.)*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PAT, 2000, 199 and 200 (n. 50); Gašior, 'Hans Süß', 330–2; Gašior, *Eine Jagiellonin*, 192 and 968 (n. 249); Paweł Pencakowski, 'O obrazach Kulmbacha z historią św Katarzyny Aleksandryjskiej i siedemnastowiecznych szafach w zakrystii kościoła Mariackiego', in: Walczak, „*Jako serce*” (in preparation).

⁸¹ Agnieszka Madej-Anderson, 'Aushandlungsprozesse, Aneignungsstrategien und symbolische Umwertungen in der spätmittelalterlichen Sakraltopographie Krakauer Kirchen (Marienkirche am Ring)', unpublished conference paper, *Spätmittelalterliche Privatkapellenstiftungen im europäischen Vergleich*, Bonn, Rheinischen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, 14–18 Mai 2008; Ruf, *Die Stiftungen*.

⁸² Agnieszka Madej-Anderson, 'Lutherans in Cracow – Contesting the Sacred Topography', in: Andrew Spicer, ed., *Lutheran churches in early modern Europe*, Farnham et al.: Ashgate, 2012, 397. The supposed destination place of the *St Catherine* cycle is in direct proximity to the *Corpus Christi* Chapel, which was an important site of Eucharistic cult and a starting point of liturgical processions. See Franciszek Piekosiński, *Kodeks dyplomatyczny miasta Krakowa 1257–1506*, Kraków: Akademia Umiejętności, 1882, vol. 2, 552–3 (no. 423) and 554–5 (no. 426).

memoria in St Mary's. Should future research contradict this theory, the affinity between Philosopher and the man in the carmine *Schaube* will prove but a result of Kulmbach manipulating reusable templates.

The discussed questions and ambiguities provide an insight into the complexities of portraiture in the era of Albrecht Dürer. The latter's religious paintings famously 'smuggled' a few unmistakable likenesses of himself and of his contemporaries. Still, Dürer experts are not unanimous on particular recognitions, even though the impression of immediate presence is arresting.⁸³ In Kulmbach's case the two supposed 'John Boners' – let alone the woman wearing the *crinale* – are hardly more convincing than other characters in the Krakow paintings, some of whom have been granted a certain air of lifelikeness. That effect, however, pales in comparison with the sensitively rendered countenances in his portrait works *sensu stricto*. If any of the analysed images had actually been meant to represent Boner or his relatives, Kulmbach's solution would differ from the known sacral identification portraits by Dürer and other German artists.⁸⁴

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⁸³ See, e.g., Gisela Goldberg, Bruno Heimberg, and Martin Schawe, *Albrecht Dürer. Die Gemälde der Alten Pinakothek*, Heidelberg: Ed. Braus, 1998, 166–236 (cat. no. 2), esp. 202–3; Thomas Schauerte, *Dürer: das ferne Genie. Eine Biographie*, Stuttgart: Reclam, 2012, 76–7, 136–7; Peter Strieder, *Dürer*, 3rd ed. with contributions by Bruno Heimberg and Anna Scherbaum, Königstein im Taunus: Langewiesche Nachf. Köster, 2012, 120–1.

⁸⁴ See n. 42 and 54.