

Sonderdruck aus:

Colloquium Helveticum

Cahiers suisses de littérature générale et comparée

Schweizer Hefte für Allgemeine
und Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft

Quaderni svizzeri di letteratura generale e comparata

Swiss Review of General and Comparative Literature

53/2024

Disturbed Faces Visages perturbés Verstörte Gesichter

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AISTHESIS VERLAG

Bielefeld 2024

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Cataloging Faces

From the Semantics of Facial Categorization to the Pragmatics of Biopower¹

De qui la face est large depuis le front en bas iusques à la ioincture des machoueres & plus haulte qu'apres, denote l'homme simple, eschart, menteur, vain, faulx, courageux, noisif, debile, de gros nourrissement, & de grand engin.²

Toponymy of cataloging

Nestled just a few steps away from the charming Canal Saint-Martin, at the bend crowned by the elegant Bichat footbridge, lies the captivating irregular pentagon of Saint-Louis Hospital – an emblematic health center in Paris's 10th arrondissement. The very street names encircling its perimeter narrate a fascinating tale of medical advancements spanning the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Among these notable thoroughfares, Rue Bichat stands out, a tribute to the esteemed Marie François Xavier Bichat (1771-1802)³,

1 This essay is the result of a project funded by the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program (Grant Agreement No. 819649-FACETS). The final stage of writing this article was supported by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement (Grant Agreement N. 754340) at FRIAS, the Freiburg Institute of Advanced Studies, University of Freiburg. I thank the anonymous reviewers of the early versions of this essay. An early version of it, in Italian, was published as Massimo Leone. "Catalogare volti: Dalla semantica della categorizzazione facciale alla pragmatica del biopotere". *Prima dell'archivio: Il catalogo fra soggetti e oggetti* ["Percorsi / Filosofia"]. Ed. Davide Dal Sasso. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2024. P. 179-200.

2 Michael Scotus. *La phisionomie de maistre Michel Lescot*. Traduite de latin en vulgaire francoys par maistre Nicole Volkyr de Serouille, secretaire du duc de Lorraine. Avec privilege. Paris: On les vend au Palays en la gallerie par ou on va à la Chancelerie, en la boutique de Vincent Sertenas, 1540. P. 99v.

3 Thoirette; on Bichat read John E. Lesch. *The Origins of Experimental Physiology and Pharmacology in France, 1790-1820: Bichat and Magendie*. Ann Arbor: UMI,

to whom Auguste Comte dedicated the thirteenth and final month of the positivist calendar.

Bichat himself was an indefatigable anatomopathologist, his passion for his work so immense that he was once caught surreptitiously removing corpses from the Saint-Roch cemetery – a clandestine endeavor aimed at studying the bodies of the Revolution’s unfortunate victims. Engaging in spirited and nuanced debates surrounding the essence of life force, Bichat devoted himself to the meticulous collection of membranes and the systematic cataloging of various tissues. Today, he is revered as the father of modern histology and credited with the profound aphorism, *‘la vie est l’ensemble des fonctions qui résistent à la mort’* (‘life is the sum of functions that resist death’).

While the roots of modern anatomy can be traced back to the sixteenth century, it was during the late eighteenth century that the field attained newfound expertise in scrutinizing and categorizing physiological and pathological properties. This remarkable progress was propelled by two key factors: the abundant influx of anonymous cadavers left in the wake of the Revolution and its aftermath, and a burgeoning scientific sensibility. The latter, characterized by a rational articulation of the seemingly chaotic and formless, offered the tantalizing prospect of attaining profound, if not exhaustive, knowledge.

Among the intersecting streets in this captivating tapestry of medical history, Rue Bichat gracefully converges with Rue Alibert – a tribute to Jean-Louis Marie Alibert (1768-1837)⁴, an obsessive cataloguer and a pioneer of modern dermatology in nineteenth-century France. At that time, the prevailing epistemological and representational model was steeped in naturalistic principles, particularly drawing inspiration from the botanical realm. Knowledge acquisition in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries increasingly revolved around the meticulous act of inventorying, cataloging,

1997 (dissertation supported in the Department of History, Princeton University, 1977); Philippe Huneman. *Bichat, la vie et la mort*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1998; and Lucia Di Palo. *François Xavier Bichat’s “Recherches physiologiques sur la vie et la mort”*: *A physiological lexicon*. Bari: Cacucci, 2005.

4 On Alibert read Susanne Dahm. *Frühe Krankenbildnisse: Alibert, Esquirol, Baumgärtner*. Cologne: Institut für Geschichte der Medizin der Universität Köln Dahm, 1981; Domenico Bertoloni Meli. “The Nosology of Cutaneous Diseases”. *Visualizing Disease: The Art and History of Pathological Illustrations*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 2018; and Mario Magaña. “Alibert and His Contribution to Dermatology (1768-1837)”. *The American Journal of Dermatopathology* 44.1 (2022): p. 37-42.

articulating, and, whenever possible, creating conceptual and representational frameworks for order – such as the wondrous ‘botanical tree’.

During those transformative years, philosopher Pierre Laromiguière (1756-1837)⁵, a fellow disciple of Alibert at the College of Villefranche, embarked on a dual journey. On one hand, he lauded attention as the supreme quality of the soul, capable of perceiving connections amidst apparent disparities, and vice versa. On the other hand, he vehemently opposed the tenets of physicalist physiology, tirelessly advocating for the preservation of a psychological space for the soul.⁶

Alibert, a student under the tutelage of Bichat, found his destined path in medical practice within the very walls of the ‘Hospice du Nord’, which later evolved into the renowned Saint-Louis Hospital. Located on the outskirts of Paris at the time, this institution primarily admitted patients afflicted with chronic or contagious diseases. The concentration of such a significant number of individuals suffering from dermatological conditions within one place cannot be overstated. The burgeoning metropolis, with its modern way of life impacting the epidermis, and the establishment of a few major treatment centers in the city under the umbrella of public health initiatives, provided an ideal setting for Alibert’s alert and classification-oriented mindset. It allowed him to fervently dedicate himself to cataloging the intricacies of dermatological diseases, establishing an order akin to the one Bichat had masterfully unveiled within the realm of tissues.

It is crucial to underscore that the creation of this order necessitated the art of rhetoric, often showcased in grand medical lectures that drew crowds to the anatomical theaters of the time. Equally vital were the iconic aids, entrusted with the task of resurrecting the visual order obliterated by the ravages of aging tissues or the ravishing effects of epidermal diseases. These images, whether in patterns or graphs, assumed the responsibility of restoring a semblance of order and comprehension.

5 On Laromiguière, read François-Auguste-Marie-Alexis Mignet. *Notice historique sur la vie et les travaux de M. Laromiguière*. Paris: F. Didot frères, 1856 and Prosper Alfarcic. *Laromiguière et son école; étude biographique, avec quatre portraits*. Paris: Les Belles lettres, 1929.

6 Pierre Laromiguière. *Leçons de philosophie, ou Essai sur les facultés de l’âme*. Paris: Brunot-Labbe, 1823.

Iconography of cataloging

Here, in this historical and conceptual labyrinth, emerges a complex interplay where the cataloging of the living, the graphic representation of order, and the yearning for control over the whims of nature converge. These elements, intricately intertwined, became increasingly discernible in the late eighteenth century. Alibert's schema for dermatological diseases, modeled on Francesco Torti's (1658-1741)⁷ classification and visualization of fevers, exemplifies this progression. As the baton passed from Torti to Bichat and then to Alibert, progressively more intrinsic aspects of human nature were visually arranged, ranging from the enigmatic symptoms of fevers to the intricate tissues composing the body, and finally to the seemingly chaotic diseases afflicting the skin. In these endeavors, the dissection of cadavers, the observation of patients, and the comparative cataloging of peculiar features within Bichat's tissues and Alibert's dermatological spots harmoniously intertwined with the production of images.

These images took various forms – diagrams encapsulating the intricacies of physiological or pathological articulations within a botanical framework, drawing inspiration from the logical-philosophical concept of cataloging through tree-like structures. They also included freer depictions, serving the purpose of enclosing the multiplicity of visible nosological elements within specific genres and styles, contributing to their classification.

Alibert's collaboration with Palermo painter Salvatore Tresca remains renowned in this regard. Tresca, who arrived in Paris during the revolutionary years, lent his artistic prowess to draw and paint the visages of a different kind of reordering – the months of the Republican calendar. These were transformative years when reality underwent unravelling and reconstruction along new lines, even extending to the months of the year, which received new arrangements, names, and personifications. Tresca's depictions of feminine faces gave form to this re-categorization, extending to the cataloging of dermatological diseases – a subject he rendered in a light style reminiscent of his calendar illustrations, as seen in Alibert's dedicated treatise. Thus, the images complemented the rhetorical force wielded by physician-philosophers in their pursuit of world reorganization, facilitating a broader

⁷ On Torti, read, in addition to the entry in the *Biographical Dictionary of Italians*, Saul Jarcho. *Quinine's Predecessor: Francesco Torti and the Early History of Cinchona*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993 and Günter B. Risse. "The Clinical Consultations of Francesco Torti". *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 75.3 (2001): p. 573-74.

dissemination of this new articulation. Moreover, there arose a need to capture the notion of bodily rearticulation and its physiology, as well as its pathologies, by immortalizing their countless variations in visually defined types that could be annotated and labeled. The intricate interplay of articulation, visualization, and labeling assumed a central role, as evident in the *Description des maladies de la peau observées à l'hôpital Saint-Louis*, published in 1806 with 15 prints by Salvatore Tresca. The tender depictions of afflicted children suffering from various types of ringworm – ranging from ‘*favosa*’ to ‘*granulosa*’ – portray the proliferation of a monstrous epidermal morphology, manifested in spots amassed in irregular archipelagos, contrasting against the delicate ovals of the infants, always attired in their neat patient gowns and juxtaposed against achromatic, aseptic pages.

Ultimately, the Age of Enlightenment, echoing ancient customs, interpreted knowledge as the product of an ordering and cataloging intellect that applied Descartes’ method to all objects, especially those defying rational comprehension – be it due to their embodiment of evil or their expression of chaos. Nosology thus became a structured discourse that dispelled ingrained prejudices regarding the metaphysical origins of disease and pain, replacing religious etiology with a rational cataloging of symptoms. The exhaustive classification became the linchpin for the new grasp of reality, where its capricious morphology was condensed within the visual order of arborescent diagrams, schematics, and illustrated plates. Late eighteenth-century artists infused the severity of disease with the vibrant colors reminiscent of Tiepolo’s palette. Consequently, the unfathomable nature of physical illness was tamed and detached from the entanglement of religious beliefs. The word of the physician, supported by the rhetoric of captivating amphitheater lectures, accompanied by the gestures of dissection and grand folio-sized tables of the era, ventured beyond explaining physiological unknowns (thanks to Bichat’s pioneering work in histology) and pathological mysteries (thanks to Alibert’s groundbreaking contributions to dermatology), even daring to challenge the domain of philosophers with discourses on the human passions.

Cataloging pathography

In reality, it was not a matter of challenging classical philosophy, but rather of defending it. Physicians of that era, such as Alibert, for instance, not only studied philosophy but also considered themselves philosophers. They were deeply immersed in Cartesian epistemology. However, despite spending countless hours dissecting cadavers obtained from Parisian cemeteries, when

it came to the passions, they staunchly defended the exclusively spiritual realm of the soul. They rebuked those who sought to explain passions through physiological references. In the preliminary pages of his work *Physiologie des passions* (1825), dedicated to the “le système sensible”, Alibert unambiguously stated that “to understand man, one must search within his soul, not in the material organs of his corporeal envelope”.⁸ This assertion is proposed even though the same author had made a name for himself by providing a sharp, empirical, and comparative examination of diseases affecting that very “envelope”. Yet, this apparent contradiction could be reconciled. While Alibert published erudite treatises on various aspects of medicine, such as cataloging the healing properties of mineral waters in *Précis historique sur les eaux minérales les plus usitées en médecine*⁹, he also engaged in moral oratory on the spiritual origins of the passions. This contradiction, however, is only apparent because both cases are rooted in an ideology deeply influenced by religious values. For instance, the discovery of the healing properties of a particular mineral water, attributed to chance (“le hazard”)¹⁰, is seen as a manifestation of divine benevolence. Similarly, the physician-philosopher seeks to navigate the realm of human passions through the sensitive system, urging it to prevail over and replace the negative passions inspired by evil.

To sustain this web of contradictions, where unquestioned theological assumptions coexist with the modern practice of comparative anatomy, the catalog plays a pivotal role. It emerges as a move and outcome of an epistemology in which spiritualism and naturalism can converge. Both proceed according to a rhetoric of method that contrasts, distinguishes, articulates, and orders, or compares, unites, groups, and orders again – whether it pertains to the intangible movements of the spirit or the visible traces of dermatological diseases on the surface of the body. Building upon the Cartesian insight and obsession with the pineal gland, the epistemology of cataloging and categorization of the era seeks to explore the interspaces – the term used generically to designate all those elements and devices that act as interfaces within the paradoxical nexus of spirit and body, as we would say in contemporary terms. These interspaces spark the curiosity of inquisitive minds: Bichat’s membranes, the skin, Alibert’s ‘bodily envelope’, and omnipresent among them, the face. This holds a central position as it allows simultaneous

8 Jean-Louis Alibert. *Physiologie des passions, ou Nouvelle doctrine des sentiments moraux*. Paris: Bechet jeune, 1825. P. 1.

9 Jean-Louis Alibert. *Précis historique sur les eaux minérales les plus usitées en médecine*. Paris: Bechet jeune, 1826.

10 *Ibid.*, p. ix.

scrutiny of both the afflictions of the spirit, manifested through immoderate passions, and the maladies of the body, evident in skin eruptions. Both aspects are brought back to the norm through the systematic nature of not just verbal, but also visual treatment. At this juncture of ideological transitions and contradictions, it is the image itself that assumes the responsibility of manifestly recomposing the encounter between the visible and the invisible, the ethereal and the material, the signified and the signifier. The trace of Le Brun's lectures still lingers in the collective memory, while the desire for physiognomy, never truly dormant in Western culture, is set to resurface in a new guise – an empirical and rational cataloging of faces and the passionate inclinations depicted therein. These depictions, captured through the grace of drawing, immortalized by painting, and later by ceroplastics, remain an undercurrent yet distinctly visible.

In the cultural history of semiotic ideologies encompassing cataloging, the image assumes a position of considerable prominence. It is not merely a tool for visualizing the order of the world, but a visual translation of the very logic that made such order possible, particularly when confronted with seemingly infinite mutability. Cataloging faces, dreams, desires, and passions represents the ultimate utopia of a logocentric discourse that, in order to succeed in its endeavor, must embrace the image as an ally – a device capable of unveiling the divine tapestry that intricately organizes the seemingly 'unordered' and uncatalogable. From this perspective, there exists a familiar air and a subtle ideological-semiotic lineage between the early printed works of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that sought to bring order to the chaotic world of images. These works utilized images precisely for that purpose, taking advantage of the contemporaneous evolution of printing and engraving. Their influence endured for an extensive period and significantly shaped the episteme of visual cataloging, making them the quintessential exemplars of cataloging.

Emblematic of cataloging

Crucial to this genealogy is the cataloging of emblems, with Alciato's (1492-1550)¹¹ groundbreaking work marking the beginning. In his trajectory, we witness a fractal-like pattern that characterizes the relationship between

11 The bibliography on Alciato is extensive; read Johannes Köhler. *Der "Emblematum liber" von Andreas Alciatus (1492-1550): Eine Untersuchung zur Entstehung, Formung antiker Quellen und pädagogischen Wirkung im 16. Jahrhundert*. Hildesheim: A. Lax. Köhler, 1986; *Hieroglyphs, Speaking Pictures, and the Law: The Context of Alciato's Emblems*. Ed. Denis L. Drysdall. Glasgow: Glasgow

images and cataloging throughout modernity. Alciato, even as a student, embarked on a comprehensive endeavor to collect, transcribe, and catalogue Latin epigraphic inscriptions in Milan (resulting in the two books of the *Monumentorum veterumque inscriptionum*).¹² His goal was to create an exhaustive inventory that would not only encompass individual items but also produce a holistic understanding of Milan's history. This approach, rooted in the meticulous cataloging of diverse subjects, can be observed in Alciato's later exploration of emblems. Although these endeavors may seem disconnected, they are, in fact, driven by a similar approach to capturing the meaning of visual representations.

Alciato's work extended beyond emblems and included other cataloging projects, such as his meticulous cataloging of weights, measures, and coins of the ancients in the *Libellus de ponderibus et mensuris*.¹³ However, his most academically significant work, *De verborum significatione libri quatuor* (1519)¹⁴, stands as one of the earliest examples of modern legal semiology. Building upon the tradition of the Digest, Alciato applied a metalanguage of inventory to various domains, including images. The evolution of visualization techniques, particularly engraving, enabled him to adopt images not only as objects cataloged through verbal discourse but also as a self-ordering visual metalanguage. This invention, facilitated by advancements in image production, established a thread that extended to the nosological cataloging of the Enlightenment. In this era, the cataloging of the real, encompassing its seemingly capricious morphology, relied not only on words but also on images. The relation between images and reality became more direct and iconic, surpassing mere symbolism and convention.

While books of emblems existed prior to Alciato, his *Emblemata* marked a significant turning point. These works not only discussed symbolic images and their meanings but also visually presented their inventory. This trend continued with subsequent works such as Otto Van Veen's (1556/1558-1629) *Emblemata Horatiana* (1607) and *Amorum Emblemata* (1608)¹⁵, Gabriel

Emblem Studies, 2013; and Luca Tonin. *Exile and Humanism in Andrea Alciato: Sources, Tradition, Philology*. Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2021.

12 Manuscripts include the one in the *Biblioteca Ambrosiana* in Milan, Trotti 353; a work published posthumously in 1625 in Milan under the title *Rerum Patriae libri IV* (Milan: apud Io. Bapt. Bid[elli]).

13 Haganoae [Haguenau, FR]: apud J. Secerium, mense martio 1530.

14 The edition published in Lyon, at V. de Portonariis, in 1536, was consulted.

15 On Van Veen, read Christoph Geissmar. "The Geometrical Order of the World: Otto Van Veen's *Physicae et Theologicae Conclusiones*". *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 56.1 (1993): p. 168-182; Margit Thofner. "Let

Rollenhagen's (1583-1619) *Nucleus emblematum selectissimorum* (1611)¹⁶, and Georgette de Montenay's (vers 1540-1581)¹⁷ *Livre d'armoiries en signe de fraternité* (1619).¹⁸ Ripa's *Iconology*, a widely circulated work, further developed the principle of cataloging the elusive meaning of images through elegant engravings. Jean Baudoin's (1590-1650)¹⁹ *Recueil d'emblèmes divers*²⁰ (1638-1639) reinforced the idea that cataloging emblems was intertwined with the inventory of moral dispositions.²¹ The visual rhetoric of the time relied heavily on engravings, holding together the interconnected strands on the page.

The optical illusion separating signifier from signified and the pragmatic aspects of dissemination versus semantic contents should not overshadow the fact that images themselves became a cataloging meta-language. This allowed for intertextual transductions across genres and ideologies. For example, Albert Flamen (1620-1669)²², an engraver, published collections of

Your Desire Be to See God': Teresian Mysticism and Otto van Veen's *Amoris Divini Emblemata*". *Emblematic* 12 (2002): p. 83; and Peter Boot. "Playing and Displaying Love: Theatricality in Otto van Veen's *Amoris Divini Emblemata*". *Emblemata* 16 (2008): p. 339-364.

- 16 On Gabriel Rollenhagen, read Karl Theodor Gaedertz. *Gabriel Rollenhagen*. Halle a/S: J.B. Hirschfeld, 1881; David Graham. "A Context for Albert Flamen's *Devises et Emblemes d'Amour Moralisez*". *Emblematic* 13 (2003): p. 173; Dietmar Peil. *Emblem Types in Gabriel Rollenhagen's Nucleus Emblematum*. New York, NY: New York AMS Press, 1986; and Mason Tung. "Two Research Notes on Rollenhagen's Emblems". *Emblematic* 21 (2014): p. 361.
- 17 On De Montenay read Sara F. Matthews Grieco. *Georgette de Montenay: A Different Voice in Sixteenth-Century Emblematics*. New York, NY: Renaissance Society of America, 1994; Alison Adams. *Webs of Allusion: French Protestant Emblem Books of the Sixteenth Century*. Geneva: Droz, 2003; and Pascal Joudrier. *Un "miroir" calviniste: Les Emblemes, ou Devises Chrestiennes de Georgette de Montenay et Pierre Woeiriot, 1567/1571*. Geneva: Droz, 2021.
- 18 Georgette de Montenay. *Livre d'armoiries en signe de fraternité*. Frankfurt a. M.: J.C. Unckel, 1619.
- 19 On Baudoin, read Virginie Bar/Dominique Brême. *Dictionnaire iconologique: Les allégories et les symboles de Cesare Ripa et Jean Baudoin*. Duon: Editions Faton, 1991.
- 20 A Paris, chez Jacques Villery, ruë Clopin, à l'Escu de France; et en sa boutique, près des Augustins.
- 21 It is worth noticing that, in the twin tradition of 'devices' (*imprese*), the representation of the human body (the central theme of this paper) was explicitly banned.
- 22 On Flamen, read Graham. "A Context for Albert Flamen's *Devises et Emblemes d'Amour Moralisez*".

moralizing emblems (*Devises et emblesmes d'amour moralisez*, 1648)²³, as well as visual cataloging of birds (*Diversæ Avium Specie*, 1659)²⁴ and fish (*Icones Diversorum Piscium tum maris tum amnium*, 1664).²⁵ Gradually, a verbo-visual koiné emerged, enabling the coexistence of cataloging the spirit and the body through different modes (emblems and illustrations) with a shared style that visually emphasized their comparability.

To understand this evolution in cataloging, one must not overlook the question of the intended beneficiaries. Cataloging serves the interests of entities or individuals seeking new forms of knowledge and control. When Bichat categorized the tissues of the human body or Alibert composed the taxonomy of dermatological diseases, their purpose was to provide post-revolutionary France with tools to control the masses by distinguishing, isolating, and marginalizing the contagious. Similarly, the categorization of the natural world, accompanied by illustrations, allowed Europe to assert cognitive dominance and pragmatic control over the multitude of species discovered in colonial modernity. Even the categorization of passions, intertwined with premodern religious ideology, finds its roots in the moralizing images that underpinned emblem books. The reproducible engravings in print became an invaluable tool for teaching souls.

Physiognomy of cataloging

In the midst of this epistemological and semiotic development, physiognomy remains the unspoken model, aiming to categorize the human essence found in its ultimate locus of singularity – the face. As Aristotle suggested and Dante later eloquently versified²⁶, the face represents the thinnest veil between the material body and the radiant form of the soul. Paradoxically, it is through the categorization of faces, a practice yielding bitter or even poisonous fruits throughout centuries, that systematic control over humanity is exerted. Those who, throughout the course of history, meticulously organize bodily tissues, skin marks, contagious diseases, and more, always find in

23 A Paris, chez Samuel Margat, en la grand' salle du Palais, du costé de la salle Dauphine.

24 Albert Flamen. *Diversæ Avium Specie*. Paris: Van Merlen, 1659.

25 Albert Flamen. *Icones Diversorum Piscium tum maris tum amnium*. Paris: Van Merlen, 1664.

26 Massimo Leone. "Face, volto, faccia, and sembiante in Dante." *Holiness in Dante*, special issue of the journal *Ocula*, 23, 26 (2023): p. 22-36. Ed. Francesco Galofaro (forthcoming).

physiognomy the ultimate template for deconstructing the seemingly unique to capture its essence.

Indeed, Western physiognomy emerges not only with an object – the face (originally encompassing the entire body) – and a mode of transforming it into a signifier of something else, but also with a pragmatics in which the ruler is the benefactor of the physiognomic categorization of faces. It is for the ruler's benefit that the scholar devises a semiotics of faces, enabling them to discern loyal subjects from potential traitors at first glance. The entire history of physiognomy, from its inception to Lombroso's contributions and even its contemporary cognitivist and digital neo-Lombrosian developments, inherits and perpetuates this perspective: categorizing faces serves to identify potential threats.

"Phisionomia est doctrina salutis"²⁷, wrote Michael Scotus (1175-c. 1232 or 1236) in the *Liber physiognomiae*, perhaps the earliest prominent work on Western face categorization, dedicated to Frederick II and aimed at teaching him the art of discerning friendly faces from hostile ones with subtlety and certainty. This text not only incubates the philosophical passion for categorizing the existent found in Greek philosophy, whether Aristotelian or pseudo-tale, but also embodies an oriental inclination exemplified by one of the *Liber's* sources – the *Secretum*, also known as *Secreta Secretorum*, or *Sirral-Asrar* in its Arabic version (كتاب سر الأسرار), literally: "The Secret Book of Secrets"). Long believed to be the work of Aristotle, created to guide Alexander the Great's conquests, the *Secretum* is most likely a pseudo-Aristotelian text originating from the East, specifically from the legends and lore surrounding Alexander's life since his demise. Regardless of its philological origins, its clear pragmatic intent remains: to guide rulers in wielding power, categorizing their subjects, and cultivating a lightning-fast ability to distinguish the valiant from the wicked.

This spirit was transmitted to Michael Scotus, who encapsulated it within his physiognomic pamphlet for Frederick II's benefit. From this work, *Liber physiognomiae*²⁸ originated, birthing a tradition of categorizing the human that would have far-reaching and profound consequences for the relationship between power, knowledge, and the body – faces and skin in particular. This project of control, achieved through the construction of types and categories, continues to captivate and yield consequences to this day, even manifesting in recent advancements in artificial intelligence applied to facial

27 Scotus. *La phisionomie de maistre Michel Lescot* (as note 2).

28 Written in the early thirteenth century, first printed in 1477 (in Venice, at Jacopo de Fivizzano).

recognition. Delving into the deep genealogy of these epistemic implants, exploring their assumptions through the lens of semiotics and cultural history, proves valuable in unearthing and elucidating the categorizing gaze that reshapes existence and typifies life for the benefit of power.

Conclusions: Fruits and Faces

Today, the Saint Louis Hospital, once the stage for the captivating practices of Bichat and Alibert, no longer resides on the outskirts of Paris. Instead, it finds itself nestled in the vibrant heart of one of the city's most trendy neighborhoods. Surrounded by an array of charming restaurants and eclectic venues, it is just a stone's throw away from the enchanting Canal Saint Martin. At sunset, this picturesque waterway sets the scene for leisurely strolls and the cherished tradition of young Parisians savoring aperitifs by its banks. Yet, within the hospital's walls, at the junction of the streets honoring Bichat and Alibert, a small and elegant building endures, housing the *Musée des Moulages* – an attraction that continues to draw visitors.

Conceived by the architect Gustave-Léon Vera, this graceful edifice was originally designed as a museum and was inaugurated on August 5, 1889. Coinciding with the first day of the inaugural dermatology congress in the world, organized as part of the *Exposition Universelle*, the building became home to an extraordinary collection. It was the brainchild of Charles Lailier (1822-1893)²⁹, a dedicated dermatologist practicing within the hospital. Lailier's name also graces the neighborhood's toponymy, albeit in a different context. The inscription 'École Lailier' adorns the walls of the Saint Louis Hospital, facing rue Bichat. Lailier was the founder of the *École des enfants teigneux* – a school that provided education and care for children afflicted with the contagious dermatological disease known as 'teigne', 'ringworm'. These children were segregated from their healthy peers due to their condition. Today, however, Lailier's name is primarily associated with the curious collection housed within the Musée des Moulages. Here, the third-dimensional renditions of skin diseases and, notably, the disfigured faces of children afflicted with mottled skin, serve as a systematic, catalog-like representation of the images initially captured and categorized by Palermo painter Salvatore Tresca under Alibert's guidance.

29 On Lailier, read especially Charles Philippe Lailier. *Leçons cliniques sur les teignes, faites à l'hôpital Saint-Louis*. Paris: V.-A. Delahaye, 1878.

The creation of this catalog, employing three-dimensional models that semiotically transition from the iconicity of images to the quasi-indexicality of casts, owes its existence to the collaboration between Dr. Lailler and the artist Jules Baretta (1834-1923). Baretta, probably of Italian descent, operated a small shop during that period in the charming passage Jouffroy, erected in 1836 and still traversable today. This passage showcased the curiosities of Parisian craftsmanship and collecting. Baretta specialized in the sale of his papier-mâché reproductions of fruits – a flourishing enterprise throughout Europe at the time. Notably, this field boasted a prominent figure in Francesco Garnier Valletti (1808-1889)³⁰, originally from Turin, whose remarkable ‘ceroplastic’ talents took him from Italy to St. Petersburg, where he served at the court of Tsar Nicholas I Romanov. Valletti meticulously studied, invented, cataloged, sketched, and reproduced over 1,200 varieties of fruits and 600 types of grapes, as documented in his monumental notes and extensive collection of more than 12,000 drawings, safeguarded by the Academy of Agriculture in Turin. Presently, these fruit moulages can be admired at the Museum of Fruit in Turin, fittingly located at 15 Via Pietro Giuria, in the San Salvario district. It is worth mentioning that this very building became home to Cesare Lombroso’s Museum of Psychiatry and Criminal Anthropology, which he inaugurated in 1898, as Lombroso himself noted in *My Criminal Museum* (1906), dedicated to the establishment of his collection:

The first nucleus of the collection had begun in the army, where, in addition to craniologically measuring thousands of soldiers, I had carefully preserved the skulls and brains of the dead; this collection I gradually came to grow, with the perusal of the old Sardi, Valtellinese, Lucchesi, and Piedmontese burial grounds, done by myself and my friends in Turin and Pavia. Not a day passed that in Pavia first, in Pesaro and then in Turin I did not try to increase the collection with skulls of the insane and criminals who had died in asylums and prisons.³¹

Valletti’s botanical and artistic pursuit of reproductive positivism found its striking parallel in Lombroso’s focus on the faces of those he deemed deviant. Lombroso would collect their skulls in the cemeteries of Turin and

30 On Valletti, read *The Fruit Museum “Francesco Garnier Valletti”*. Ed. Daniel Jalla. Milan: Officina Libraria 2007.

31 Cesare Lombroso. “My Criminal Museum”. *L’illustrazione italiana: Rivista settimanale degli avvenimenti e personaggi contemporanei sopra la storia del giorno, la vita pubblica e sociale, scienze, belle arti, geografia e viaggi, teatri, musica, mode [etc.]*, 33.13 (1906): p. 302-306, here p. 302

meticulously catalog their distinct features with the help of Lorenzo Tenchini (1852-1906)³², a professor of anatomy at the University of Parma and the creator of *Cervelli di delinquenti*, “Brains of Delinquents” (1885) – a catalog detailing the alleged anatomical characteristics of criminal brains. The close proximity of the three-dimensional fruit catalog to Lombroso’s plastic collection of faces at 15 Pietro Giuria Street in Turin was not a mere coincidence. It was a deliberate juxtaposition of these two emblematic outcomes of positivism during that time. Meanwhile, in Paris, chance brought about a similar juxtaposition in the Passage Jouffroy, where Jules Baretta, undoubtedly inspired by Valletti’s fame, operated his small fruit reproduction store.

It may have been during a leisurely stroll from the nearby Saint Louis Hospital that dermatologist Charles Lailier, in one of those Parisian passages that, as Benjamin noted, facilitated the blending of diverse knowledge and practices, conceived the idea of employing the same technique to reproduce not fruits but faces – specifically, the disfigured faces of dermatology. Thus, the collection of moulages portraying faces affected by dermatological pathologies was born. Over time, this collection flourished, with the last addition being specimen No. 4952 in 1958. After Baretta, who created 2,500 moulages, handed over the reins in 1913, the task was carried on by Louis Niclet, succeeded by Stephan Littré – the final ceroplastic artist responsible for the dermatological collection of the Saint-Louis Hospital.

Today, these masks of suffering rest meticulously arranged in glass cases throughout the halls of the museum, which stands as a testament to the birthplace of modern dermatology. Undoubtedly, these moulages served scientific and pedagogical purposes, just like the dermatological images that preceded them and the subsequent photographs, which would later adopt a three-dimensional form with the advent of digital technology. However, as one wanders through the museum halls, surrounded by the somber catalog of faces disfigured by disease, it is impossible not to imagine the individual pain concealed behind the cold depictions of types. One cannot help but recoil, contemplating how the sick of that era became subjects not only to be cured or studied but also to be captured in their features, transforming them into both a catalog and a spectacle – a fusion of illness, scientific art, and theatricality. One inevitably suspects that the power dynamics of an entire era were subtly at play within this framework, where the moth-eaten child torn

32 On Tenchini, read Pietro Guizzetti. *Cenni sulle opere e sulla vita di Lorenzo Tenchini, professore di anatomia nell'Università di Parma*. Parma: Tip. Rossi-Ubaldi, 1907; Lorenzo Tenchini. *Brains of Delinquents: Anatomy Researches of Prof. Lorenzo Tenchini*. Parma: Luigi Battei, 1885.

from their family and immortalized forever in a moulage intersected with the positivism-driven bourgeois doctor. Over a century later, Paris remembers the latter through street names and the remnants left behind in portraits, while the former – the moth-eaten child relegated to the outskirts of the city – exists only as a melancholic cast, forever marked by illness, forever cataloged among other sorrows and similar afflictions.

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