The Essential DÜRER

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The Artist, His Horse, a Print, and Its Audience: Producing and Viewing the Ideal in Dürer’s *Knight, Death, and the Devil* (1513)

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Within the oeuvre of Albrecht Dürer, several works stand out as especially evocative. Laden with visual cues that seem redolent with significance, the images appear almost to hail the viewer and to demand attention and interpretation. Many scholars have hearkened to their call. Dürer’s *Self-Portrait* of 1500 (A. 66; see Figure 12.3) and his engraving *Melencolia I* of 1514 (B. 74; see Figure 3.1) belong to this category of pictorially enticing images that have provoked widespread critical response; so does the artist’s engraving of *Knight, Death, and the Devil* of 1513 (B. 98; Figure 7.1). Like the two former images, *Knight, Death, and the Devil* combines elements that seem eminently understandable yet remain ultimately enigmatic: a man-at-arms rides through a landscape in which nature is as meticulously fashioned as his suit of armor. And yet, despite the plenitude of elements and details that appeal so seductively to all five senses, their meanings and their relationships to one another remain elusive, almost within our grasp and still unattainable. Even the print’s putative title, first used in the eighteenth century, is the
result of an attempted interpretation; Dürer himself referred to the print only as “der Reuter” (the rider), an appellation that may well indicate what Dürer considered the main subject to be (a man on horseback), but that gives no hint of any intentionally conceived meaning beyond that. 2

Beginning already in the sixteenth century and continuing to the present,
viewers' attempts to explain Dürer's tantalizingly naturalistic engraving have generated a body of literary and art historical discourse significant not only for what it might reveal about the print but also for what it unveils about the nature and function of interpretation. To a significant degree, these interpretations converge around specific and at times opposing issues. For example, scholars argue about whether the print should be interpreted according to its religious or to its socioeconomic context. Under the former, the writings of Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466–1536) are marshaled to indicate that the rider stands for the steadfast Christian, girded by his faith, and thus staunch in the face of death and temptation. Under the latter, the social and economic decline within segments of the German aristocracy is presented as evidence that Dürer's man on horseback is a renegade knight, for whom death and the devil are familiar companions, not sinister forces to be overcome. Some have read the print as allegorical and iconic; Nietzsche, for example, likened it to "the pessimism of the Teutonic races," while the art historian Wilhelm Waetzoldt saw it as a manifestation of the Nordic soul. Others have understood it as historical and narrative; for example, as a portrait of and commentary on Pope Julius II (pontificate 1503–13) or the Dominican monk Savonarola (1452–98). For some scholars, the print reveals Dürer's embrace of Italian models, for others his fidelity to indigenous German traditions. These issues at play in the interpretation of Knight, Death, and the Devil are based on assumptions regarding the significance of national identity, the role of historical evidence, and the function of art. Such issues mark the very boundaries of art historical discourse in its theoretical and practical manifestations and thus underscore the art historical significance of the print that so persistently generates them.

This essay does not seek to refute earlier interpretations and does not claim to offer the one, definitive, and correct reading of the engraving. Instead, this essay draws attention to entities in and associated with the print that have previously received insufficient attention: the figure of the horse and the identity of the audience. The first part of my argument makes the case for understanding the horse in Knight, Death, and the Devil as the outcome of Dürer's efforts to construct an ideal figure of a horse, and then for recognizing the artist's mobilization of visual comparison in order to highlight that ideal in the engraving. Therefore, I examine Dürer's prior explorations of such an ideal that will come to find ultimate expression in the 1513 engraving; and I engage his notion of comparison as articulated in Dürer's writings on art and as manifest in the print. The second part of my argument consists of
an inquiry regarding the identity of the print’s potential audiences. Here I introduce the reception of Dürer’s studies and his print in artists’ manuals as evidence of the engraving’s role in artisanal practice and thus of an important segment of its audience: Dürer’s fellow artists and a wider circle of artisans. In addition, I speculate about further reception according to who might have been particularly piqued by the print’s visual offerings, especially by its magnificent horse. What this essay adds to literally centuries of discourse that circumscribe *Knight, Death, and the Devil* is: first, an accentuation of the role of the horse as a significant object of artistic theory and practice, and ultimately of commercial marketability; and second, an emphasis on the engraving’s audience and reception. Ultimately, I seek to embrace rather than to bridle the print’s multivalent potential.

Production: Constructing the Ideal and the Role of Comparison

A number of sources provide evidence—some albeit indirectly—of Dürer’s theoretical and practical engagement with the issue of an equine ideal prior to 1513. First are Dürer’s own writings, which include mention of studies of equine proportions among the lists of intended projects; and second are other images by Dürer that also seem to function as further formulations of idealized equines. The ideals constructed here seem to have been defined by a combination of proportions, both mathematically based (i.e., abstract and generalized) and empirically observed (i.e., real and individual). Direct evidence of Dürer’s theoretical and practical explorations of equine proportions, such as those that exist for his study of human proportions, is no longer extant.8

Two manuscripts, both written around 1508 in Dürer’s own hand, outline the contents of a book that the artist intended to write and would eventually refer to as “The Apprentices’ Fare” (*Ein Speis der Malerknaben*).9 Both manuscripts include a heading for “measurement of horses / a [system of] measurement of the horse,”10 clearly revealing that an analysis of equine proportions would be part of Dürer’s theoretical explorations. By 1513, however, Dürer still had not managed to write the book and in fact had decided to abandon that project in favor of another: his study of human proportions, which would occupy him for the rest of his life.11 “The Apprentices’ Fare” was never completed. Evidence suggests, nonetheless, that Dürer had found some time to pursue his interest in equine proportions. The Nuremberg humanist
Joachim Camerarius (1500–1574) translated Dürer’s first two books on human proportions in 1532 from German into Latin. In Camerarius’s introduction, he states that the artist had indeed made studies of horses but that these had been stolen from Dürer. Perhaps the chronological proximity between the creation of *Knight, Death, and the Devil* and Dürer’s decision to postpone indefinitely his work on “The Apprentices’ Fare” with its section on the proportions of the horse is no coincidence; Dürer may have intended the print as a summation of his ideas and results to date before turning to another subject. The print would have functioned as a visual record for the artist himself in addition to its subsequent functions for a wider audience.

Certain images by Dürer give further evidence of the artist’s interest, both practical and theoretical, in the horse. Equines appear in many works by Dürer as incidental characters and narrative necessities; some serve as transport for mounted saints, soldiers, and emperors, while others serve as recreation for riding out and hunting. But some of Dürer’s horses themselves attract and arrest the eye. Carefully fashioned, they pose patiently for our inspection, even in the midst of a frenetically forward trot. These are the images in which Dürer sought to understand, replicate, and then to idealize the equine form, as can be seen in *Soldier on Horseback* (W. 176, 1498; see Figure 2.6), *St. Eustace* (B. 57, ca. 1500–1501; see Figure 3.7), *Horse in Profile* (W. 247, drawing, ca. 1502, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam), *Trotting Stallion* (W. 360–61, two drawings from 1503, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Cologne, and Accademia delle belle Arti, Venice), the *Small Horse* (B. 96, engraving, 1505), and the *Large Horse* (B. 97, engraving, 1505). Naturalistic and seemingly individualized details abound in these images, and the proportions of each of these horses are unique in comparison to the others.

Dürer was certainly aware of different types of equines, as the Rotterdam Horse and the Large Horse belong to the heavier animals used to carry fully armored knights while wearing their own equine armor, a burden that could cumulatively weigh as much as 436 pounds. In comparison to the drawings of other horses mentioned above, with their long backs, slender legs, and expressive heads, the bone structures of the Rotterdam Horse and Large Horse are more massive; their heads are large, and their legs (particularly the cannon bones) are thick, short, and sturdy. Their relatively short backs also make them better suited to their jobs of carrying heavy loads. A later drawing of 1517 depicts six grooms and their horses from different regions, in which careful attention is paid not only to the varying attire of each of the grooms but also to the disparate size, proportion, and tack of their horses, indicating
that Dürer was sensitive to equine variety. But even so, Dürer seems in the above-mentioned images to be seeking the ideal conformation for each type of horse, akin to his understanding of human beauty as dependent on type and as multifarious. Although certainly based to some extent on close observation of real animals, the horses in the drawings and engravings are not merely life studies; instead, their figures are carefully composed, either highlighted by completely blank backgrounds or embedded in classicizing or religious narratives, thus elevating them beyond the realm of the purely incidental.

Four drawings in particular point directly to the constructed nature of Dürer’s horses and to his theoretical quest for the ideal equine form based on mathematical proportion. Around 1505, Dürer sketched three horses, one seen in profile, one from behind, and one from a three-quarter angle. Each of the figures is enclosed by a square grid. Dürer used the grid system as a guide for the placement and proportions of his horses’ limbs, torso, neck and head. The grid appears again, albeit faintly and incompletely, on one side of the double drawing done by Dürer as a preparatory study for Knight, Death, and the Devil. According to the system worked out by the artist, the horse’s entire body is contained within a square made up of sixteen smaller squares. In practice, this means that the rendering of the horse is strictly subject to proportions defined and designated a priori by the geometry of the squares. Rather than fashioning the image of a horse according to individual and accidental details of nature, the artist tempers his vision according to a theoretical framework based on his study of equine proportions and on geometric ratios. The grid used in the preparatory study for Dürer’s print allows us to identify the horse therein as the product of the artist’s theoretical vision and also to recognize his goal in the print as constructing an equine ideal.

In order that this ideal stands out all the more clearly in the engraving, Dürer provides an entire system of contrasts by which the viewer recognizes over and over again what is ideal by comparison to what is imperfect. However, both the ideal and imperfect contribute in concert with one another to the overall beauty of an image. In his notes made in 1508/09 and in 1512, Dürer writes about the connection between comparative harmony and beauty: “Things that are harmonious, one part to another, are beautiful. . . . One can find great harmony [even] in things that are dissonant” and “The harmony of one thing as compared to another is beautiful. . . . There is also great harmony in dissonance.” In these drafts for his manual for painters, Dürer is here trying to get at a workable definition of beauty and to suggest
ways to make a beautiful picture. One of the ways of displaying beauty, according to Dürer, is to juxtapose things, or parts of things, that are harmonious. However, he continues, one can still find harmony (Vergleichung)—and thus beauty—even in those things that lack harmony (ungleich) and that are therefore dissonant. Taken to their logical consequences, these sentences also mean that if there is beauty to be found in both the harmonious and the dissonant, and if the artist is to make a beautiful work of art, then there is a place and a role for both in the finished product. If the viewer is to recognize what is harmonious and what dissonant and, furthermore, how both contribute to the ultimate beauty of the work, then the viewer must perform the mental activity of comparison and contrast.

Looking at Knight, Death, and the Devil in terms of Dürer's aesthetic theory, the print seems to function as an extended exercise in comparison and contrast. Perhaps most noticeable is the contrast between the armored rider's idealized horse and Death's mount. The first is powerfully built, his muscles rippling under the black, glossy coat and enhanced by the high quality of his elaborate and decorated tack. He trots energetically along on carefully shod hooves, his small ears pricked and his focused eyes directed forward, chewing the metal bit like a working horse listening to his rider. By arching his neck, he holds his head erect but surrenders his jaw to the rider's firm hold on the double reins. From what we can see of him, Death's horse is very different. His coat appears to be a light color, and his bridle is primitively made of a piece of rope and a wooden or bone bit. He completely lacks the muscle tone and energy of the other horse. Although both horses are executing the same gait, as a comparison of their hooves reveals, Death's horse shuffles his unshod hooves along, barely lifting them off the ground. He lets his head droop at the end of his scrawny neck, and his large furry ears loll listlessly on either side of his head. He is all but oblivious to his nondemanding rider. Thus practically every component of one horse's rendering is opposite to the other's and surely would have elicited active comparison.

The two riders are also very different. The mounted warrior is armored and armed, taking notice of nothing in particular as he rides along. Death seems to be dressed in a simple white shift, armed only with his hourglass and intent on addressing the armored man. Instead of a helmet, Death's head bears a crown of metal and a wreath of snakes. The mounted warrior can also be contrasted with the devil, particularly in terms of their position and rank within an army. The man-at-arms with his powerful warhorse and full suit
of armor would have belonged to a rank superior to that of the devil who is here represented as a lansquenet, who were frequently recruited as mercenary soldiers from the peasantry and urban laborers and thus constituted the lower social ranks of the army. To underline his subservient position, the lansquenet hails the passing rider with an outstretched claw, palm outward, as is visible in triumphal procession scenes featuring foot soldiers and their commanders. Even the dog and the lizard invite comparison as well as admiration for Dürer’s virtuosity. They are placed directly adjacent to one another, following exactly opposite trajectories. One is large and furry and bounds forward with energy; the other is small and scaled and scuttles away in the other direction. Their traditional interpretation as “zealous endeavor” (the dog) and as a creature of darkness (the lizard) can also be thought of as part of their opposition. The landscape itself offers a rich variety of comparison as well: between bright highlights and dark shadows, high mountain and low ravine, limitless nature and walled city.

Knight, Death, and the Devil thus provides a demonstration of Dürer’s developing theoretical explorations and his astounding technical facilities, especially their display in the figure of the horse. Indeed, two writers as chronologically, geographically, and methodologically disparate as the Italian artist Giorgio Vasari (1511–74) and the Swiss art historian Heinrich Wölfflin (1864–1945) recognized Dürer’s focus on the horse as the engraving’s essential component. Vasari asserts that Dürer made the print “to show what he could do” by overcoming such technical difficulties as rendering the sheen of the horse’s glossy black coat, a real challenge in the medium of engraving. Wölfflin maintains that for Dürer the most important aspect of the print was the constructed figure of the horse; the other elements of the composition, Death and the devil, were included merely as afterthoughts. Both authors agree that the print’s main emphasis was on the figure of the horse and rider and that Dürer was using the print as a showpiece for his talents and knowledge. It is indeed a virtuoso performance, and that performance surely constitutes one of the print’s more important functions. In their haste to uncover metaphysical meanings beneath the engraving’s seductive surface, art historians tend to take this perhaps simple but nonetheless powerful aspect of the print for granted.

Reception: Artists, Warriors, Patricians

But who attended to Dürer’s performance? Whose eyes would have lingered appreciatively over that surface, and whose wallet would have supported the
personal possession of this visual feast? Surprisingly, the question regarding the potential contemporaneous audience of *Knight, Death, and the Devil* is rarely raised in the print’s established scholarship. We know that in 1515 the Nuremberg merchant Anton Tucher (1458–1524) bought prints of *Melencolia I* and *St. Jerome in His Study* from Dürer for fifty-four pfennigs a piece (see Figures 3.1 and 3.6). This is a handy bit of evidence, which can help us determine a general price for *Knight, Death, and the Devil*, since the prints purchased by Tucher were approximately the same format and size as the *Knight* and were bought at a time relatively close to this print’s date. To put fifty-four pfennigs in perspective, David Landau and Peter Parshall cite workers’ average daily wages in sixteenth-century Nuremberg as comparative data. These wages ranged from sixteen to eighteen pfennigs a day for an unskilled laborer to twenty-eight for a skilled laborer. If *Knight, Death, and the Devil* also cost around fifty-four pfennigs it would have represented over three days’ wages for an unskilled worker, and almost two days’ for a skilled one. Landau and Parshall conclude that prints at that kind of price would have been beyond the reach of the lower echelons of urban and rural labor. In financial terms, then, the audience for *Knight, Death, and the Devil* as actual purchasers would have most likely come from the skilled artisan level up.

Since prints were for the most part made on speculation, not on commission, Dürer, as an astute businessman, must have given his potential audience some careful thought. The artist’s engagement of fantasy (in the composite figure of the devil, for example, not unlike the delightfully bizarre creature in his earlier *Sea Monster* engraving), his evocative creation of mood, and his references to general areas of concern (mortality, temptation, warfare) all can be seen as enticements for possible purchasers.

Compositionally, the print’s most outstanding feature is quite obviously the figure of the mounted warrior. For whom would such a figure be meaningful? Heinrich Theissing suggests that his juxtaposition with the figure of Death renders the rider in the role of “der Mensch,” or humankind in general. This implies that, as such, he is accessible, understandable, and significant to all and that the print would thus find wide and broad appeal. We can be certain, however, of at least one group of sixteenth-century viewers who studied the idealized figure of the horse very carefully: other artists.

The reception of *Knight, Death, and the Devil* in contemporaneous artists’ manuals has not been examined by other scholars, yet it provides strong indication that the engraving, or in some cases, the material used for its composition, was understood in the sixteenth century also in terms of its relation particularly to artistic practice. Dürer’s horse appears, for example,

in the book by the Nuremberg artist Sebald Beham (1500–1550) on the measurements and proportions of the horse (Nuremberg, 1528). Camerarius’s hints combined with archival records indicate that it was Beham who was suspected of plagiarizing Dürer’s equine studies. Beham’s book contains text and woodcut illustrations that instruct artists how to render the image of a horse by inscribing its outlines within a square grid, a strategy obviously related to Dürer’s, although Beham reduces the number of squares from sixteen to nine. Beham illustrates and demonstrates the construction of three basic poses. One of these, a horse trotting with its head held high (Figure 7.2), is clearly informed by a combination of Dürer’s horse in *Knight, Death,*
and the Devil (the horse’s gait and the length of its back) and the Small Horse (the position of the head above the vertical).

Dürer’s horseman and his mount also reappear in a second artist’s manual, this one written and illustrated by another Nuremberg artist, Schön (ca.1491–1542). To the 1542 edition of his *Treatise on Proportion*, Schön added six new illustrated pages explaining the construction of equine images.36 Two of these pages, one schematic and one in full detail, demonstrate how to render a horse and rider. The proportions, gait, and tack of Schön’s horse, as well as the pose, proportions, and some accoutrements of the rider on the second page, are all essentially informed by Dürer’s horse and rider (Figure 7.3).37

Clearly, Dürer was not alone in his interest in constructing an image of
the ideal horse. If Sebald Beham was indeed more than a putative thief, he certainly cared enough about the subject to lift Dürer's studies and publish the material as his own despite warnings from the city council about the dire consequences should he do so. Erhard Schön found it important enough to expand his manual in 1542 in order to include instruction on equine images. A third artist's manual, written by Heinrich Lautensack (1522–68) and published in 1563, also demonstrated how to fashion horses according to mathematical proportions.38

Unlike today, the role of the horse in early modern society was fundamental for agriculture, transport, commerce, warfare, recreation, and status.39 In the same manuscript that contained Dürer's autographic notes regarding "The Apprentices' Fare," an entry written by an unknown hand praises the horse as "the most useful of all animals to man and also the most desired by him for pleasure and for the necessities of work."40 Roughly a century later, the physician Peter Offenbach makes a sweeping yet succinct statement about the importance of the horse in the introduction to his translation of a book on equine anatomy: "In order to sustain political societies, and in order to preserve and protect the people who make up these societies, you cannot do without the horse."41

For related reasons, the artist could also not do without the horse. Many key and oft-repeated visual narratives, in which issues of military power, social prestige, and religious ideology are articulated, feature the horse.42 Examples of these included: depictions of saints like George, Martin, Eustace, and Paul; equestrian portraits of nobility; and battle scenes. Artists were surely familiar, albeit in varying degrees, with horses, and, as the artists' manuals and the equine iconography pervasive in art production suggest, part of their livelihood depended on their ability to produce images of horses. During his travels in the Netherlands between 1520 and 1521, Dürer made note of particularly fine horses in his diary.43 It is possible that the artist had a special personal affinity for the animals, since his paternal relatives were horse breeders,44 but his theoretical engagement with the horse was also surely based on his recognition of the importance of equine imagery for the artistic professions.

Artists like Beham, Schön, and probably also Lautensack, who incorporated Dürer's techniques and insights into their manuals, facilitated the dispersion of Dürer's ideas among a potentially large group of craftsmen. It is more than likely that an artistic audience of Dürer's professional colleagues would have recognized and admired his carefully constructed, harmoniously
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proportioned horse and his use of contrast and comparison in the print. Particularly important in the manuals, as evidence of the artisanal reception of Dürer’s work, was the unabashedly practical application of ways in which to construct an idealized equine, since the manuals’ texts provide procedural direction, not theoretical discussion. Part of Dürer’s professional audience would also have included himself, as mentioned above, since the print might have served the artist as his own visual record of what he had learned thus far about equine proportions before he turned his attention to humans.

We should also ask ourselves about other groups of viewers who might have been especially struck by the figure of the horse and rider. Certainly the print would have appealed to men-at-arms, who could have easily identified with the main figure and who would have viewed his situation with sympathy and probably also with familiarity. They would have appreciated Dürer’s detailed portrayal of splendid armor, tack, and warhorse. Many of the sixteenth-century hippological tracts on the training of horses justify their publication by emphasizing the usefulness of such training for the warhorse in particular. The way Dürer’s horse is ridden in the print—in modern equitation terms, “collected and on the bit”—accords with that training. In addition, the depiction of the devil as a lansquenet might have also greatly appealed to those of superior ranks, some of whom might have resented the inclusion of social inferiors at certain levels within the armies. From their own experiences, and also perhaps prompted by the overall preponderance of military concerns around 1513, men-at-arms might have fashioned their own narrative when viewing the print, using visual cues and props provided for them by the artist. By leaving the references to warfare vague instead of indicating a specific battle or encounter, Dürer allows for a maximum of personal interpretation by such a viewer by providing enough room for the engagement of the viewer’s own experiences and fantasies.

Following his 1512 encounter with the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I of Habsburg (1459–1519), Dürer embarked on several projects for the emperor that dealt with similar themes (warfare, chivalry) and were most likely targeted at similar audiences. Although these projects were completed after the engraving (if they were even completed at all), we know from Maximilian’s notes that they were long in the planning process. These projects included pen-and-ink drawings for Maximilian’s Prayer Book (1515), designed for the Order of the Knights of St. George, which had been founded in 1464 by Maximilian’s father, Emperor Frederick III (1415–93). It is in Dürer’s marginalia in the Prayer Book that the figure of the man-at-arms and Death
return, although here Death actively pursues the rider with his sickle. Dürer's work for Maximilian thus would have brought him into contact with themes and—more to the point here—audiences that he might have hoped to reach with his print *Knight, Death, and the Devil*.

Another related group of viewers would have been other court-related bureaucrats, humanists, and wealthy urban patricians and merchants. Dürer had contact with such men, not only through his work for Maximilian but also through his friend, the humanist scholar and patrician Willibald Pirckheimer (1470–1530). Theissing has shown that, in Dürer’s day, this group of social elites had also embraced many of the chivalric ideals belonging originally to the knightly classes since the twelfth century. Many of the hippological tracts mentioned above were either written by or dedicated to such men, indicating that they too had a great appreciation for well-bred and well-trained horses and might thus have derived knowledgeable pleasure from studying Dürer’s horse in the print. Marx Fugger (1529–97), heir to the Fugger fortunes and head of the family firm in Augsburg, was educated as a humanist and was passionate about horses. He commissioned several hippological treatises, including a German translation of Federico Grisone’s treatise on riding, and also wrote his own book on horse breeding and training. Another translation of Grisone was produced by Johann Fayser, a professor of liberal arts educated at the university of Frankfurt an der Oder, and a student of Camerarius, who himself translated Xenophon’s ancient Greek treatise on horsemanship. The vital commercial, political, and intellectual connections of such men were no doubt affected by warfare, so that they would have shared with the men-at-arms a concern about the fate of Maximilian’s armies at the empire’s various boundaries. Well educated, cosmopolitan, and intellectually sophisticated, they were also likely to understand the print beyond its more literal level; they might contemplate and converse over its spiritual as well as its artistic dimensions, perhaps even discussing its classical/Italian components, its possible connection with contemporary political events, and delighting in its satisfying juxtaposition of contrasts and its exquisite craftsmanship.

What exactly this print might have meant to its original audiences is still open to question. That is perhaps what Dürer intended all along. Providing enough signposts to stimulate contemplation and conversation, but not enough to foreclose alternative narratives, Dürer has created a veritable playing field for interpretation, not only for his contemporaneous audience but for those of us in the twenty-first century as well. Like the figures of Death
and the devil who are forced to yield to the inexorable progress of the mounted rider, we too are simultaneously marginalized—relegated, as they are, to the compositional periphery—and centralized—as key witnesses to the forceful presence before our eyes that we may seek but ultimately fail to control.

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2. Białostocki, Critics, 211–12. The identification of the rider as a knight (strictly understood as a member of the nobility) needs to be reconsidered given the historical changes in the strategies and technologies of warfare as conducted under Maximilian I. This will be argued in a future article.

3. See note 1 for overviews of centuries of interpretation.


6. For both Nietzsche and Waerzoldt, see Białostocki, Critics, 225 and 240.


8. The results of Dürer’s study of human proportions were published posthumously in 1528 as Vier Bücher von menschlicher Proportion.


11. Ibid., 99.

12. Ibid., 55.


16. Walter L. Strauss, *The Complete Drawings of Albrecht Dürer*, 6 vols. (New York: Abaris Books, 1974), no. 151714. Strauss seems unaware that the drawing’s inscriptions refer not only to the grooms but also to the horses, which, in the sixteenth century, were referred to not by breed names but by their place of breeding; see Charles Gladitz, *Horse Breeding in the Medieval World* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1997).


22. Rupprich, *Nachlass*, 2:100, 121, 126 n. 10. Rupprich (126 n. 10) maintains that Dürer uses the word *Vergleichung* to mean the same thing as “harmony,” as of one part to another. I believe, however, that the term also connotes “comparison” and “equivalency.” You cannot discern harmony between parts if you cannot compare them; if the parts are in harmony with one another, then they are in some ways equivalent. Consequently, I have translated Dürer’s term *ungleich* as meaning something like “opposite” and “contrasting.”

23. Although Panofsky and Theissing also note the print’s contrastive structure, their
metaphysical readings differ from mine with its stress on the hippological context and contemporary audience. They view the print as about the heroic artist. Panofsky sees the rider as a "scientific paradigm" conveying the "idea of unconquerable progress." Theissing believes it is a self-portrait of the artist, engaged in a Promethean struggle between good and evil, conquering nature through art, chaos through order, and ultimately, the late Gothic style through the Italian Renaissance. Panofsky, Dürer, 154; Theissing, Dürers Ritter, 117-39.

24. The light color of Death’s horse contrasts with the knight’s darker horse, while also referring to Death riding on “a pale horse” (Revelation 6:8).


26. I interpret the devil’s gesture as an attempt to hail the man-at-arms rather than the standard reading that he reaches out to grab the rider from behind. The extended arm seems more gestural than active, and the devil’s body lacks all tension and strain that would accompany such an action. For a later example of a standing lansquenet hailing his passing lord, see Jörg Breu the Elder’s woodcut series of the arrival of Charles V in Augsburg (ca. 1530), where the soldier raises his arm and hand to acclaim the passing elector Johann the Steadfast of Saxony.

27. For the interpretation of the dog, see Panofsky, Dürer, 153; for the lizard, see Theissing, Dürers Ritter, 90.

28. In his life of Marcantonio Raimondi, Vasari claims that Dürer created this print as part of his competition with the Dutch printmaker Lucas van Leyden. Heinz Lüdeke and Susanne Heiland, Dürer und die Nachwelt (Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1955), 79.


31. Ibid., 354.

32. For Dürer as businessman, see Wolfgang Schmid, Dürer als Unternehmer (Trier: Porta Alba Verlag, 2003).

33. Theissing, Dürers Ritter, 72.


41. Peter Offenbach’s introduction to Carlo Ruini, *Anatomia & medicina Equorum Nova* (Frankfurt, 1603), ii verso.


43. Dürer’s Netherlandish diary as reproduced in Albrecht Dürer, *Schriften und Briefen*, ed. Ernst Ullmann (Berlin: Verlag das europäische Buch, 1984), 64 and 91, in which he comments on magnificent stallions he saw in Antwerp while visiting a branch of the Fugger firm and while attending the annual local horse market.


45. I agree with Theissing that Dürer’s rider is meant to be regarded positively based on the image’s iconographic derivation from equestrian monuments whose function was to honor the hero/victor/ruler. Theissing, *Dürer’s Ritter*, 57.


48. On the social and technological changes in methods of warfare, see Eugene F.

49. During the 1510s, Emperor Maximilian I and his allies were involved in military engagements on almost every border of the German lands. See Hermann Wiesacker, *Kaiser Maximilian I: Das Reich, Österreich und Europa an der Wende zur Neuzeit*, 5 vols. (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1971–86), here vol. 4.


52. Strauss, *Book of Hours*, fol. 37v; also Theissing, *Dürers Ritter*, 81, fig. 25.


**CHAPTER 8. CIVIC COURTSHIP**

1. Martin Warnke, *The Court Artist*, trans. David McLintock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 71–72. The perfect counterpoint to Dürer’s distance from his court assignments is his Italian doppelgänger, Jacopo de’ Barbari, who migrated northward to work in Nuremberg for Emperor Maximilian and then to Frederick the Wise’s court, chiefly in Wittenberg.