From the Mouths of Babes:

Putti as Moralizers in Four Prints by Master H.L.

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<u>Introduction</u>

The German Renaissance wood sculptor and engraver known as Master H.L. left behind only a small body of printed works from his career in the early sixteenth century, numbering some twenty-four engravings and seven woodcuts. Unfortunately, this modest oeuvre has so far received only the most cursory analysis from art historians, perhaps because of its scant size, or because a number of its prints might be dismissed as mere illustrations of traditional religious subjects, primarily scenes from the lives of Jesus and the saints. Four of his prints, however, which are the subject of this thesis, are not so easily relegated, and display his ability to work with previously established visual motifs while manipulating them idiosyncratically for his own purposes. With their unusual approach and multilayered symbolism, these prints serve as brilliant windows on to the era's religious views, humor, and artistic style.

The early sixteenth century was a crucial period of fluctuation and change in Northern Europe. It was during this time that the role of the artist was shifting from medieval artisan to inspired creator, and artists increasingly felt the need to develop a personal style in order to generate business and mark their art as notable and desirable for consumers. Easy to produce and circulate, prints were a particularly apt medium for developing and popularizing an artist's style. Many northern engravers combined recently popular classicizing elements, called *welsch,* with the traditional *deutsch* style of their regional art.[1] Master H.L. was among these artists, but he went further in showcasing his talent by playing on a theme he knew his audience would enjoy, that of the World Turned Upside Down, a world of follies and absurdity. Along with the obvious aesthetic pleasures afforded by H.L.s compositions, educated viewers could expect a twofold

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[1] Michael Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1980), 135.

reward by engaging with his sly works: first, a feeling of accomplishment for understanding their humor, and second, the moralistic or cautionary lessons imparted – because beneath their light approach, the prints' ultimate messages were moralistic.

The four prints by Master H.L. examined here in this vein are *Eros Balancing on a Ball* (fig. 1), *Eros Fighting a Snail* (fig. 2)*, Two Putti Eating Peas* (fig. 3)*,* and *Three Putti with the Instruments of the Passion*[2] (fig. 4). All were originally created in the early decades of the sixteenth century, but were reprinted later in a second edition around 1530, probably after H.L.'s death. The first and second prints will be grouped together in chapter three as being related to the nature of love. The third and fourth prints, I will argue, have a shared connection to the celebration of Carnival, and will be discussed in chapter four. All four engravings share a fundamental link in the concept, already mentioned, of the World Turned Upside Down, discussed in the conclusion.

However, in order to fully appreciate the works within their context, some historical groundwork must be laid. Chapter one will thus consider the political, religious, and artistic aspects of the era and region as they relate to H.L. and his work, along with what little is known about H.L himself. Chapter two will then offer a brief history of the *putti* that grace the four prints under consideration, as a means to better comprehend Master H.L.'s salient investment in such *welsch* creatures for his most innovative works.

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[2] While this last image is usually referred to as *Three Angels with Instruments of the Passion*, I will be using the title above in reference to the print, for reasons argued in chapter four.

Chapter One: The World of Master H.L.

The German Empire of the first few decades of the sixteenth century was a tangled

morass of squabbling principalities united by a weak emperor and a common language. At the

Diet of Worms in 1500, Emperor Maximilian I had organized the German empire into twelve

circles, which were meant to be easily managed.[3] But while Maximilian spoke rousingly of the

glories of the German nation, there was little more than a thin linguistic and cultural ribbon

threading the circles together.[4] Maximilian's hunger for power over the empire was forever

limited by the desire of various princes to remain as autonomous as possible.[5]

At the turn of the year 1500 the most prosperous areas of the empire were the southern

lands along the Rhine River, which provided an excellent means of transporting goods between

Northern Europe and the southern regions of Europe, the Middle East and Asia. The land itself

was rich in forests, mineral deposits (including iron and salt), and fertile farmland, which with

the help of resourceful bankers such as the Fuggers, helped Maximilian obtain limited capital for

his various pursuits. The area's wealth also helped artists prosper, with even small towns such as

Breisach able to afford a decorative remodeling of their church, St. Stephansmünster, complete

with a fresco cycle by Martin Schongauer[6] and an enormous wooden altarpiece by Master H.L.

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[3] Jean Bérenger. *A History of the Habsburg Empire: 1273-1700*, trans. by C.A. Simpson (London, New York: Longman, 1994), 130.

[4] Len Scales, *The Shaping of German Identity: Authority and Crisis, 1245-1414* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 98.

[5] Ibid, 55-56. The resulting political compromise was a far cry from the monarchies of France and England, which had over the centuries constructed around themselves and their families a regal mystique that succeeded in persuading the people of their God-given right to rule.

[6] These frescos, painted in 1485, were severely damaged by bombing in WWII, but their shadows may still be seen on the Münster's walls, attesting to the boldness of Schongauer's painting. While H.L.'s altar was not finished until

Maximilian was notorious for traveling often and never staying in any town for long, moving his court and meeting with various Diets in cities throughout the empire. In the fall of 1497 one of these Diets convened in Freiburg im Breisgau, the economic and cultural center of the Black Forest region. The Diet took over the small city, imbuing it for the following year with a greater sense of income, sophistication, and self-importance[7] – an air of refinement that likely extended to the affluent living in the nearby towns of Breisach and Niederrotweil.

While Maximilian's empire never had the financial resources required for grand monuments, he was an avid patron of the arts with a taste for the *welsch* style.[8] Maximilian's physical availability to the elite of southern German towns, along with his interest in artists like Dürer, Burgkmair, and Altdorfer, did much to galvanize the local collecting spirit, which in turn made it possible for local lesser known artists such as H.L. to supplement their incomes through the sale of engravings.

However, Maximilian was certainly not the sole artistic patron of the time. The Church was still the strongest influence in subject matter, if not style, and most art being produced was religious in nature. Non-religious art came in the form of portraits, manuscripts, and some engravings, but most artists spent their time creating images meant for private or public devotion, including prints of religious figures to be sold by churches or by vendors at fairs. It was

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1526, some forty years later, the two may be thought of as a single effort of the people of Breisach to show their pride in their Münster and town.

[7] Peter Kalchthaler. *Kleine Geschichte der Stadt Freiburg im Breisgau* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach Druck- und Verlagshaus, 2004), 61.

[8] Like many of his grand plans, Maximilian's large-scale works of art rarely made it to completion. However, his patronage of artists for small works is well known. Three woodcuts of considerable size, the *Triumphal Arch*, the *Large Triumphal Carriage*, and the *Triumphal Procession*, designed by such notables as Albrecht Dürer, Hans Burgkmair, and Albrecht Altdorfer, and Maximilian's prayer book, a printed book hand-decorated with marginal drawings by Dürer, Hans Baldung Grien, Jörg Breu and Albrecht Altdorfer, are two fine examples. For more on these objects see Joseph Leo Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art* (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 224-236.

impossible to successfully live outside of the Church, for it dominated nearly every aspect of one's life, from baptism to last rites. Most people submitted readily to the aegis of the Church, perhaps appreciating the sense of community, continuity, and stability it offered in an often volatile world. In the words of Bernd Moeller, "There has hardly been an age in the second millennium of Church history which offered less resistance to the dogmatic absolutism of the Catholic Church."[9]

Although the Church dominated the age, its ecumenical councils could also unintentionally facilitate fresh schools of thought. The Councils of Constance (1414-1418) and Basel (1431-1449) brought prominent Italian scholars to the north, thereby sparking a lasting intellectual fascination with classically inspired philosophies and ethical perspectives, called humanism by later historians.[10] While these early northern humanists, such Peter Ludner, Sebastian Brant, and Rudolf Agricola still worked largely within the intellectual framework of the Middle Ages,[11] the early sixteenth century saw the maturation of a new generation educated by these scholars and influenced by their translations of ancient texts, and who were still more comfortable with these new ideas. Naturally enough, they desired art that reflected these interests.

This classically inspired philosophy managed to weave its way into the fabric of Christianity in ways that would have astonished medieval scholars. The Virgin Mary was likened to Venus in poetry and painting, while sculptures such as Michelangelo's Risen Christ could compete with any ancient rendering of Apollo. In the north, the earliest and best example of this

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[9] Bernd Moeller, "Piety in Germany Around 1500," in *The Reformation in Medieval Perspective*, ed. Steven E. Ozment (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), 52.

[10] Eckhard Bernstien, *German Humanism* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1983), 8.

[11] Ibid, 16-55.

cultural crossover is the Fugger Chapel of St. Anne's Church, Augsburg, endowed in 1509 by Jakob and Ulrich Fugger. But smaller towns were also influenced, as seen in the slightly later and delicate synthesis of *welsch* and *deutsch* trends in the Breisach altarpiece by Master H.L. The naturalistically rendered Jesus wears a cloak intimating the classical wet-drapery style, the convexity of his wooden kneecaps clearly defined beneath the light cloth that covers them (fig. 5). Yet the ornate foliage decorating the work, the trefoil shape of the altar, and the general exuberance of the carving is more *deutsch* than *welsch*.

More and more artists were called upon to produce art that fused *deutsch* and *welsch* together. An early example is Dürer's engraving *Hercules at the Crossroads*, created around 1498 (fig. 6), with its Italianate nudes and clothing juxtaposed with Hercules' fantastical helmet, which is as northern as the landscape behind the bellicose figures in the foreground. It was the medium of engravings and woodcuts that provided the best vehicle for the secular branch of this hybrid art, precisely because of its more private ownership.

The audience for engravings was, from the beginning, less clearly defined than that of woodblock prints. The production of woodcuts was fueled in a large part by the flourishing book-publishing industry in the second half of the fifteenth century. Books provided ample sources of inspiration for original subject matter both inside and out of the religious sphere. Early woodcuts could illustrate medicinal texts, exotic stories, or ancient histories, among other subjects. Outside of books, woodcuts had a narrower focus that relied almost completely on devotional images sold cheaply at shrines or markets.

Engravers, on the other hand, were not tied to the demands of a book publisher. Although some engravings were mass-produced for sale to pilgrims or fair-goers,[12] they were more

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[12] The Large Einsiedeln Madonna of 1466 is an early example of this exception, having been commissioned by the Einsiedeln Monastery from Master E.S. for the anniversary of some miracles said to have transpired there in the

concerned with the creative rather than the purely reproductive image. While it is clear that

engravers were influenced by the works and styles of other mediums, including panel paintings,

metal work, and sculpture, there is little to no evidence that they were purposefully reproducing

specific works. Rather, the earliest engravers, along with some second-generation artists such as

Master E.S., created new works while utilizing older designs taken from previously successful

works and handed down within workshops through model-books. [13]

By the third generation of engravers, there had grown a greater contemporary

appreciation for engraved images, marked by the greater degree of information recorded

concerning the artists. The names and biographical information of Martin Schongauer and

Israhel van Meckenem, for instance, are well recorded, whereas the name of Master E.S.,

recognized now as one of the most talented northern artists of the previous generation, remains

unknown.[14] Through the efforts of artists such as Schongauer the medium of engraving, by the

end of the fifteenth century, had earned a status closer to that of painting or sculpting than to

woodcuts, which it more closely resembled in production method and reproducibility.[15] These

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tenth century. See Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance* (New York: Zone Books, 2010), 215-217 for more on the Einsiedeln Madonna. There are other examples of engravings made for specific celebratory occasions, showing that engravings were considered more suitable for religious images than woodcuts ever were.

[13] David Landau and Peter Parshall. *The Renaissance Print: 1470-1550* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1994), 47-49.

[14] Some of the information concerning these artists is from contemporary or near contemporary accounts. We know that Schongauer was highly regarded by his peers, as evidenced by the oft-cited inscription beneath a copy of Schongauer's *Death of the Virgin.* This well-known image was pasted into the Bible of embroiderer Hans Plock, who penned the remarks around 1550. The inscription mentions that this particular engraving had been, in his youth, considered "the finest work to have come out of Germany. See Landau and Parshall, *Renaissance Print*, 52 for more on this.

[15] The woodcut had always been considered a lesser art than copper-plate engravings. Speculations as to why include the comparative crudity of woodcut images, the relative cheapness of the material (wood blocks were less expensive than copper plates), their utilitarian connection to book publishing, and the greater durability of woodblocks compared to copper plates, which allowed more impressions to be made, making the prints less

early engravers made it possible for Albrecht Dürer to complain about the time he wasted

painting, for if he had spent more time making engravings he would have been "one thousand

florins richer."[16] But other artists less talented than Dürer assuredly shared in this expanding

market for prints.

While prints were increasing in value, it must be noted that the manner of display by a

sixteenth-century collector little resembled the post-modern connoisseur's, since most

engravings were not framed and hung upon walls as art, as they are now. Instead they were often

pasted onto the pages of books. Other prints were pasted into albums made specifically for that

purpose, or stored away in rolls, cupboards, drawers, or boxes to be leafed through at leisure.[17]

Perhaps these prints were by better known artists, of a very fine quality, or depicted subjects

lacking a connection to the written word. Regardless of how they were kept, collections of prints

were considered more personal than other works of art. This did not hold true for the single

religious print of a saint, Virgin and child, or Man of Sorrows, which graced the walls of houses,

or public spaces as devotional objects. These were still very much public property, as much as

any carving on the portal of the local church, only perhaps showing the particular devotion –

local saints or a copy of the local icon which was said to have save the town from plague,

famine, or assault – of the building's owner.

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valuable. While the refinement of Dürer's woodcuts was acknowledged even during his time, the actual cutters of the blocks that bear his name are mostly unknown, showing a clear difference in status between woodblock and copper-plate engravers.

[16] Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture*, 206-207. Taken from a letter to Jacob Heller on August 29, 1509.

[17] Mark MacDonald, "'Extremely Curious and Important!': Reconstructing the print collection of Ferdinand Columbus," in *Collecting Prints and Drawings in Europe: C. 1500-1750*, ed. Christopher Baker, et al. (Burlington, VT, Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2003), 40. An example of prints being pasted into books is Schongauer's engraving in the Bible of Hans Plock mentioned above in note fifteen.

The prints in question by Master H.L. are undoubtedly of the first group, made for a discerning clientele and meant to be looked at closely and appreciated privately. The engravings' size is the first indication of the intended market, the largest being just over five by three inches. Each engraving is filled with a profusion of nuanced details that H.L. shaped with a variety of engraving techniques that show a confidence and maturity in his form. These are not images to be glanced at then discarded, but are very much for the purpose of intense looking. This was part of the "product" that H.L. was selling. Unlike religious images, the intent of which was to bolster the faith of the viewer, the objective of these prints was to pique the viewer's curiosity, and in doing so, reward the viewer's attention by giving something in return, such as entertainment or a lesson learned.

An appeal to an educated audience is apparent in H.L.'s use of Latin, rather than the vernacular German, in his two prints that contain text.[18] One of these two is *Three Putti with the Instruments of the Passion*, which will be examined thoroughly in chapter four. The other is a sheet containing two small roundels, each slightly over two inches in diameter (fig. 7). These two roundels are often viewed separately, but were clearly meant by Master H.L. to be seen as complementary, since he placed his monogram in the negative space between the two, and cutting the images apart would have excised his signature as well.[19] Both roundels have Latin inscriptions running in bands around the central images. The bottom simply identifies the subject as Hercules, but *Adam and Eve* has a more complex Latin text written in a hybrid classical-

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[18] Diane G. Scillia, "The Audiences for Israhel van Meckenem's Proverb Imagery, Circa 1500," in *In Detail: New Studies of Northern Renaissance Art in Honor of Walter S. Gilson*, ed. Laurinda S. Dixon, (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1998), 87-89. This educated audience included clergy, rich merchants, local patricians, and aristocrats.

[19] This would have been undesirable for the top image of *Adam and Eve*, since authorship of the print would have been lost, but less dire for the bottom image of Hercules defeating the Ceryneian Hind, which includes H.L.'s monogram affixed to a tree behind Hercules and the stag.

gothic script.[20] Here, H.L. was directly quoting Dürer's figures of Adam and Eve in the already well-known engraving of the first couple,[21] and in so doing proposed a connection between himself and the more famous artist from Nuremburg and Dürer's humanist patrons. Pairing *The Fall* with an image of the heroic Hercules only reinforces the notion that the intended audience was humanist-minded.

The identity of Master H.L. is a greater mystery than that of his desired patrons, and the limited literature on H.L. is rife with speculations in this regard. The typical approach is to gather what few documents exist, pour over his works (or attributed works) for stylistic similarities to other artists, and thus armed, to speculate about his identity and origins.[22] Yet without the discovery of new documents concerning H.L.'s life, little of certainty may be said concerning the artist himself, and meanwhile his works have failed to garner the scholarly attention they deserve. Two factors may be partially responsible. The first is his very anonymity, which has made it hard to locate H.L. within any regional stylistic tradition; the second is his works' complexity, which defies casual interpretation. What little is written about H.L. generally praises his creativity and vividness, but then fails to move beyond those accolades to real critical reflection.

Master H.L. lived and worked in the Upper Rhine from around 1510 to 1530. Whether or not he originally hailed from that region, he would have trained in a town or city that had resources and patronage enough to support the workshop of a resident wood sculptor. For

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[20] The inscription reads, "ADAM PRIMUS OMO DAMNAFIT SECULA POMO EFA AFE GRAZIA." Translation of this line is nowhere to be found in any writings on Master H.L.

[21] Jeffrey Chipps Smith, "Master H.L. and the Challenge of Invention in Different Media," in *Invention: Northern Renaissance Studies in Honor of Molly Faries*, ed. Julien Chapuis (Turnout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2008), 177.

[22] Velten Wagner. *Der Meister H.L. an Oberrhein und Donau* (Munich: tuduv-Studien, 1993), 128-131.

whatever reason, it seems that he left this city, perhaps on his *Wanderjahr*, but never returned

there to work, since all his known sculptures were commissioned for churches in small towns or

monasteries.

The one altarpiece unquestioningly attributed to H.L. stands in St. Stephen's Münster in

Breisach, a small town nestled halfway between the cities of Freiburg im Breisgau and Colmar.

It was to the city of Freiburg that the town council of Breisach sent Master H.L. when they were

in need of more wood for their new altar.[23] Since they sent H.L. to Freiburg with a letter of

introduction, it is tempting to say he was unknown to the council of that city and therefore not

native to Freiburg. The letter implies he was living in Breisach while working on the altar,

forgoing the practice of other, less peripatetic artists, who carved the sculptures in their

workshops in their home cities, and then sent them in pieces to be assembled on site by local

carpenters.[24] This afforded sculptors access to their whole workshops and the continued comfort

of their homes, while allowing smaller towns to boast altarpieces by master carvers, whose

sustained skills were not required by such smaller populations.

This does not rule out other nearby cities, such Colmar or Basel, or even more distant

locales, as H.L.'s point of origin.[25] But once again, while his native city is unknown, his status as

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[23] Baxandall, *Limewood Sculptors*, 30-31.

[24] It was a bit unusual for a talented artist such as H.L. to travel to where the work was since this was a time where one's reputation was built up slowly over years, a reputation much needed to obtain the best commissions. The extant circumstances must have been serious enough for a young artist to leave the town where he had some social credit as an apprentice to travel around a relatively rural area looking for work.

[25] Some scholars have linked his style to the Danube school because of its expressiveness. While this is possible, there are no surviving sculptures clearly linked to H.L. in the region. Some draw ties between H.L. and Hans Leinberger, a Danubian wood sculptor with a somewhat similar style. However, given that Leinberger was well-documented as working around Landshut from 1510 through 1530, any connection to H.L. seems implausible. The British Museum's website also attributes H.L.'s engravings to Leinberger, while noting they were formerly attributed to H.L, a curiously definite assertion of artistic authorship for which I can find no rationale. See Rainer Kahsnitz, *Carved Splendor: Late Gothic Altarpieces in Southern Germany, Austria, and South Tirol*, trans. Russel Stockman

an itinerant artist sheds some light on the nature of his works. Not having a workshop in a city meant relative freedom from certain guild restrictions that many craftsmen dealt with throughout their careers, such as the division of mediums. H.L. was not the only artist working in two mediums, and it was possible for an artist with a large workshop and guild associations to circumvent restrictions. Many painters, including Dürer, Schongauer, Baldung Grien, Altdorfer, and Cranach the Elder, among others, were engravers as well. A much smaller group of artists, consisting of Viet Stoss, Peter Flötner, and Master H.L., made the crossover from sculptor to engraver.[26] Perhaps guild restrictions in most cities and towns kept such disparate arts apart. Whatever the reason, it remained a way for all three sculptors to experiment with designs and supplement their incomes.

Scholars of H.L. have done what they could to connect his style and figures to that of his predecessors and contemporaries. Chipps Smith's article is the best source in English, finding similarities between H.L.'s style and that of Dürer and Hans Baldung Grien, among others.[27] While I will discuss specific visual references made by H.L. in each of the four prints within their respective chapters, special mention should be made of Dürer's influence. Dürer, more than any artist before him, made an argument for the precedence of the individual genius, or *Gewalt,* of an artist. As Koerner writes, "… Value is invested in an image's unique pictorial conceit, executed with calligraphic skill on the plate or transferred to the woodblock from an original sketch. It resides in the traces of a free and original mind, not in products of a servile hand."[28]

(Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2005), 304-311 for more concerning the various artists with which scholars have attempted to associate Master H.L. with.

[26] Landau and Parshall, *Renaissance Print*, 8.

[27] Chipps Smith, "Master H.L.," 174-189.

[28] Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture*, 214.

The notion of the artist as divinely inspired creator was not new when Dürer was writing about similar ideas in his "Aesthetic Excursus" during the 1520s, since it had been gaining importance as a concept in Italy, in some form or another, for quite some time. But it can be said without question that Dürer was the northern artist most vocal in impressing upon his contemporaries the importance of artistic virtuosity and instilling within them a desire for original conceptions.

Outside of Dürer, Master H.L.'s influences are too many to enumerate, although it is worthwhile to discuss the uniquely northern artistic style of which he was a part.[29] This style was French in origin and dated back to the twelfth century, with regional variations subsequently developing throughout Europe. While the International Gothic style had long passed its height in most of Europe by the end of the fifteenth century, in Germany the Gothic was booming. Paintings, manuscripts, and altarpieces were thickly encrusted with organic designs and filled with elongated, elegant, and unnatural figures. When the *welsch* style began infiltrating the visual terrain of the north, one of the most prolific elements was the *putto*, or impish winged child.

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[29] A special note must be made of Master E.S. and Israhel van Meckenem, artists of an earlier generation who were influential for Master H.L, more so when it came to subject than style. This connection may be seen in a unique sense of humor and originality utilized when they were creating images of a moralizing nature. And while H.L. was perhaps never directly influenced by van Meckenem or Master E.S., the earlier artists' works helped establish a culture which would enthusiastically embrace H.L.'s moralizing engravings. For more on van Meckenem, see Scillia, "Meckenem's Proverb Imagery." For more on Master E.S., see Moxey, "Master E.S. and the Folly of Love".

H.L. could easily have exploited established visual memes to convey his moralizing messages, especially since these motifs had already been proven popular and profitable by earlier artists. For example, beginning around the thirteenth century, the court Fool was often used as an agent of cautionary tales in various media, such as ivories and tapestries. By the fifteenth century his cavorting form found its way to printed works, some of the most popular being the woodcuts illustrating Sebastian Brants' *Ship of Fools*. Associated with this general leitmotif was a tradition in which the Fool revealed love and lust as irrational, seen in several engravings by Master E.S. made around 1460,[30] (fig.8) and continuing well into the next century with engravings such as *The Prostitute and the Fool* by Hans Brosamer from around 1530 (fig. 9). Indeed, H.L. himself employed the Fool occasionally in his own prints (fig. 10), but in the four engravings under consideration here, he veered from this traditional archetype in favor of one older in provenance yet quite novel to his audience: the *putto*.

This childish figure had his origins in classical Greece, but was never depicted independently, being always ancillary to other gods. One such was Eros,[31] who in his earliest iconographic representations was typically portrayed as a beautiful winged adolescent. In the Hellenistic era his physical characteristics began to diversify, and his character became more

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[30] Keith Moxey, "Master E.S.," 127-132.

[31] Eros was originally conceived as a primal force of desire that had its roots in Phoenician cosmic etiology of the seventh century BCE. It was the Greeks who personified this force around the sixth century BCE, when Hesiod described Eros as one of three primordial beings, along with Gaia and Chaos, who were born as the earth was formed. For more on the early development of Eros see Barbara Breitenberger, *Aphrodite and Eros: The Development of Erotic Mythology in Early Greek Poetry and Cult* (New York, London: Routledge, 2007), 155, and Josef Kunstmann, *The Transformation of Eros*, trans. M. von Herzfeld & R. Gaze (Philadelphia: Dufour Editions, 1965), 10.

nuanced. It was at this time that Eros was first represented as a child, coeval with his more

mature embodiment.[32]

The Romans accepted these dual faces of the love god with only a slight change of name.

Eros became Amor or Cupid, and his depiction grew more common.[33] Shown in his child-like

form and multiplied, he became the *erotes* or *amorini*, spritely attendants often seen congregating

around a primary subject along the sides of sarcophagi or architectural friezes. Those bearing

shields or plaques were called *reggistemma*, while those holding garlands were called

reggifestone (figs. 11 & 12 respectively),[34] in the later parlance of Renaissance Italy. However,

Amor was not the only god with youthful attendants. Bacchic imagery was rife with *putti* found

in diverse occupations such as harvesting, hunting, and drinking. Here they were eternal children

playing at adult themes, lending a sense of diversion and timelessness to the everyday

experiences of the viewer. [35]

The earliest Christians accepted *putti* because they accepted the associations drawn

between Bacchus, the god of the harvest and wine, and the Christian Eucharist, one of many

correlations incorporated within Christian iconography to facilitate an easier transition for

converts.[36] *Putti* continued to cavort among harvest vines much as they had for the past several

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[32] Kunstmann, *Transformation of Eros*, 12 & 13.

[33] Amor was still often seen as an adolescent, but occasionally appeared as a more adult character, as in Apuleius' famous tale of *Cupid and Psyche*, where he is old enough to fall in love with and eventually wed Psyche. Depicted alone, he adorned jewelry and sculpture in both marble and terracotta.

[34] Charles Dempsey, *Inventing the Renaissance Putto* (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 28-32.

[35] Alexandra Korey, "Putti, Pleasure, and Pedagogy in Sixteenth-Century Italian Prints and Decorative Arts" (PhD diss., Chicago: University of Chicago, 2007), 38-39.

[36] Tellingly, Amor was never accepted by the early Christians, despite his being the god of love and Jesus spreading a message of universal love. Perhaps this aversion was on account of being too bound up with erotic love.

centuries of Roman rule with only a slight change of significance. Believers also found in

Christian scripture correspondences between *putti* and Biblical descriptions of winged angelic

beings such as seraphim and cherubim.

It was not long after the acceptance of Christianity as an official religion of the empire

that *putti* first came under attack. In the early fifth century, St. Nilus sent a letter to his friend

Olympiodorus, a pagan historian at the Byzantine court, arguing that *putti* were an "insignificant

and good-for-nothing tradition and ought to be suppressed."[37] Certainly St. Nilus was not alone

in this sentiment, since *putti* were universally relegated to the margins of visual culture for the

next nine hundred years or so.

The influence of Byzantine court culture also indirectly affected the appeal of *putti* for

the next several centuries in European visual culture.[38] Among the icons of the east, saints and

angels increasingly took on the appearance of elegant courtiers surrounding the throne of Mary

or Jesus as the Queen and King of Heaven. The earthiness apparent in early Christian

iconography was left behind for a more ethereal ambience wherein the figures dwelt eternal in

golden glory. In this new world of severe grace and refinement, there was little room for

frivolous *putti*.[39]

Outside of a few remnants, *putti* in all their forms – *bacchoi*, *eroti*, or *spiritelli* – all but

vanished from European sight between the fifth and twelfth centuries. Some continued to frolic

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[37] Kunstmann, *Transformation of Eros*, 17.

[38] Ibid, 18.

[39] While *putti* remained popular in secular Byzantine imagery, most often found gracing the carved ivory and bone panels that decorated wooden boxes, they were absent from the religious icons exported to and prized in medieval Europe. See Paroma Chatterjee, "Vision, Transformation, and the Veroli Casket," *Oxford Art Journal* 36.3 (2013): 325-344, and Anthony Cutler, "On Byzantine Boxes," *The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 42/43 (1984/85): 32-46.

as foliate decoration on the archways, door jambs, and capitals of medieval Italian buildings,[40] comparable to any other grotesquerie or mythical beast.[41] Elsewhere they served as visualizations of pagan idols, with variously positive or negative connotations;[42] one extant example with positive associations is the torch-wielding *putto* and ibis who reside on the Cathedral of Modena's façade by the artist Wiligelmo (fig. 13).[43] As a contrasting element, they were used as foils for the symbolically purer imagery they surrounded, functioning as generalized signifiers of a pagan other, as seen in the early Renaissance cherub by Piero della Francesca painted just under the left capital of the choir of the Cathedral in Arezzo (fig. 14). However, these few *putti* created during the Middle Ages were not the primary catalysts for their resurgence in the Renaissance. They only ensured a continued physical presence in medieval environs, while preserving a passing allusion to their pagan past.

In actuality, it was a genuine interest in reviving a common classical heritage that inspired Italians to popularize *putti* once again. The earliest extant work in which *putti* play a significant role is the tomb of Illaria del Carretto by Jacopo della Quercia from about 1406 (fig. 15). While it was not unusual to decorate tombs with permanent mourners, here Quercia surrounds the bier of Illaria with *putti* rather than contemporaries of the deceased. These *putti* are true classical quotations of the *reggifestone*, or garland-bearing *putti* or *spiritelli*, which had once

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[40] Dempsey, *Inventing*, 26-28.

[41] Korey, *Putti, Pleasure, and Pedagogy*, 46.

[42] Dempsey, *Inventing*, 28.

[43] Wiligelmo's *putto* and ibis grace one side of the main portal of the cathedral façade, while a matching solo *putto* stands on the other. In this context, combined with the inscription on the cathedral declaring him the finest among sculptors, they seem to allude to the creative acumen of the artist and the eternal nature of his art, rather than a religious motif.

been so popular with ancient Romans. They mark the fruitfulness and beauty of Illaria's short

life, rather than focus on the sadness of her passing. Quercia's tomb would initiate an artistic

fascination with *putti* that would last well into the modern age.

However, it is not Quercia but Donatello whom most scholars credit with the

popularization of *putti* in the fifteenth century.[44] He did this by reinvigorating them with a sense

of liveliness and play missing from earlier images, and by using them as a consistent motif

throughout his career. A contract from 1429 was written commissioning Donatello to decorate an

exterior pulpit for the cathedral of San Stefano in Prato (fig. 16). The purpose of the pulpit was to

have an exterior space fit for the public display of the Virgin's Girdle, a highly prized relic of the

cathedral, on feast days. Along the curving lines of the pulpit run scenes of *putti* (or *spiritelli* as

the contract designates them) frolicking, dancing, and playing music. They are not characters in

the Biblical narratives, nor do they serve as signifiers for pagan idols. Instead they simply rejoice

in the glory of the sacred relic of the Virgin. Slightly later, in 1433, Donatello would elaborate on

this theme for the *Cantoria* of Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence (fig. 17). Instead of isolating

groups of *putti* between columns, he extended their space into the viewer's and allowed their

frolic to have free reign of the surface, dancing joyously to the singing that would saturate the

cathedral during mass.[45]

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[44] Dempsey, *Inventing*, 47-49. Korey, *Putti, Pleasure, and Pedagogy*, 21-22. Kunstmann, *Transformation of Eros*, 21.

[45] One other work of Donatello's should be mentioned since it is the first sizable sculpture of a *putto*-like figure since antiquity. Often referred to as *Attis-Amor,* the work is a bronze sculpture about which little is known: neither who commissioned it, nor when it was made, nor even its precise subject, although its symbolism is usually considered to be Bacchic in origin. A *putto* sculpture of this size and independent nature would not again be attempted until Michelangelo's faux-antique *Sleeping Cupid* of 1495. While it existed well before Master H.L. created his engravings, it is highly unlikely that he was aware of the *Attis-Amor*'s existence. The piece was part of a private collection, and if any early drawings or engravings of it existed for H.L. to see, they do not exist today. See Dempsey, *Inventing*, 58-60 for more on *Attis-Amor*.

Over the course of the fifteenth century the *putto's* presence could be seen decorating everything from parade floats (fig. 18) to fountain sculpture (fig. 19). These images continued to propagate the visual desirability of *putti*, but for the most part these figures remained marginal. Even with the advent of the printing press, and the diversification of subject matter that followed, *putti* remained peripheral and/or subjugated to other figures.

By the end of the fifteenth century, traveling merchants and artists were spreading a taste for Italianate designs and subjects in the north of Europe. As one of the wealthiest and most internationally connected families, the Fuggers devoted vast sums of money in 1509 to have their chapel in Augsburg decorated in the latest *welsch* fashion. Once again it was Albrecht Dürer who helped popularize *putti* after his return from his Venetian sojourn in 1506.[46] In his large-scale works, such as the *Heller Altarpiece* (fig. 20), angelic *putti* may be seen joyously playing around the Virgin and Child. They also appear in the drawings he made for Emperor Maximillian's prayer book (fig. 21), as well as in such enigmatic engravings as his *Witch Riding Backwards on a Goat* (fig. 22)[47] and the *Dream of the Physician* (fig. 23). However, H.L.'s use of *putti* differed from Durer's in two significant respects: by their placement as central subjects and by their role as reimagined medieval Fools.

The only work truly similar to the engravings by H.L. is the *Fate of the Evil Tongue* by Nicoletto da Modena, made around 1507 (fig. 24). Alexandra Korey, in her doctoral thesis on

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[46] Katherine Crawford Luber, *Albrecht Dürer and the Venetian Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 40-76. The second chapter of Luber's book deals extensively with Dürer's travels in Italy. She argues that there was only one trip taken by Dürer during 1506, and not an earlier visit in 1494. Her argument seems well founded, and I agree with her that any Italianate influence in Dürer's work prior to 1506 could have been achieved by access to Italian engravings and paintings (such as those by Mantegna that he studiously copied) which were beginning to circulate in Germany at the end of the fifteenth century (pgs. 63 & 73).

[47] Charles Zika, "Dürer's Witch, Riding Women and Moral Order," in *Dürer and His Culture*, ed. Dagmar Eichberger and Charles Zika, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 124-126. Zika makes an argument that these *putti* represent the children of Saturn.

putti, writes extensively regarding this work, and argues that *putti* as moralizers were unique to Italian iconography and Nicoletto was first to utilize them.[48] While Nicoletto and Master H.L. worked contemporaneously, they surely did so independently of each other. Korey believes that the tower and crescent forms on the pilasters behind the *putti* are the personal crests of whoever commissioned the work.[49] If it was crafted for a patron, the distribution of the print would have been smaller than that of a print meant for a public audience, with little chance for a copy of the work to make its way across the Alps before H.L. started working on his own engravings. So while Nicoletto was possibly the first to create moralizing images employing *putti* in Italy, H.L. was certainly the first in the north.

Before moving on to the four main prints that are the focus of this thesis, it is necessary to mention one more of H.L.'s works in which a winged child is the main subject. His engraving of the youthful Hymenaeus (fig. 25) might initially appear similar to the other four, but a crucial element of play is missing, which firmly binds the other engravings together. Hymenaeus was the Greek god of weddings, and in particular the wedding hymn. His main attributes include wings and a bridal torch, both of which appear in the print by Master H.L. Despite being a winged youth with roots to antiquity, this image shares little else in common with the other four images, being a straightforward representation of an absent figure. Replace the Greek god with St. Andrew holding his cross, and the meaning might change, but the purpose does not.

The first two of the four engravings examined in this thesis also represent youthful pagan gods, but H.L.'s treatment of them is vastly different from his Hymenaeus. *Eros Balancing on a Ball*, the first of the pair, might initially seem more confusing than complex, with its inconstant

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[48] Korey, *Putti, Pleasure, Pedagogy*, 91.

[49] Ibid, 96-97.

sense of scale and busy background. However, once unwrapped, the layers of meaning will aid in

establishing Master H.L. as an artist adept at intelligent play.

Chapter Three: Love's Folly

Eros Balancing on a Ball

Like most of H.L.'s printed works, *Eros Balancing on a Ball* is quite small, just over four

and a half by two and half inches. The size contributes to the sense of chaos in the image, since

H.L. has managed to crowd so much into such a limited space. The central figure, and the one

most easily discernable, is Eros. Much like *putti*, the classical Eros virtually disappeared from

visual representation after the fall of the Roman Empire, and so it was his subsequent

reemergence around the end of the Middle Ages, and depictions of him around that time, that

more directly influenced the creation of these sixteenth-century engravings than any classical

idol.

After the waning of pagan Rome, the cult of Amor faded into memory as Christianity

focused more on a general and platonic love of one's neighbor rather than romantic love. A

culture of romantic love[50] did not arise until around the first crusade, at the very end of the

eleventh century, taking root most readily in the courts of France. The subject of courtly love

was widely perpetuated through stories and songs of King Arthur and his round table, Tristan

and Isolde, the *Niebelungenlied*, and Parzival, to name a few, while being visually represented on

tapestries, boxes, and ivory mirrors of the upper class (fig. 26).

In fact, it was in literature, rather than on decorative objects, in which Eros as a god

initially regained popularity. For the first time in centuries love was not simply a concept but a

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[50] While the term "courtly love" was coined in the late nineteenth century by Gaston Paris, most scholars would concede that term is fairly applied. The writers of the Middle Ages, although not expressly using the phrase "courtly love", wrote in terms of such similarity that the nineteenth century term is not only convenient, but forgivable for being slightly anachronistic. See John F. Benton "Clio and Venus: An Historical View of Medieval Love," in *The Meaning of Courtly Love*, ed. F.X. Newman, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1968), 19.

personified Love, who bore all the trappings of his earlier Roman counterpart. He was seen in a twelfth-century version of the *Eneasroman* translated by Heinrich von Veldeke from the original French. When the hero first takes notice of his lady, "Amor pierced him with a golden spear, leaving a painful wound, and Venus, his mother, brought to pass that the maiden became as dear to him as his own life."[51] Veldeke used the name *Amor* instead of the colloquial *Minne*, implying a twelfth-century audience familiar with the nature and imagery of the classical god of love. With so many stories about love written during this time, it is perhaps surprising that more imagery of Amor was not produced. When he did appear, a few centuries later, it not surprising that his native ground of Italy hosted his return, but even there, a steady foundation of courtly literature was needed to establish a taste for the visual representation of love.

Dante is typically credited as a driving force in the popularizing the concept of courtly love in Florentine literature at the end of the thirteenth century. He wrote often of *amoris accension*, or an "elevated love,"[52] and the *Vita Nuova* is full of sonnets describing the chaste love and devotion he has for the Lady Beatrice. Later his writings would reflect a turn in fealty from the human Beatrice (*amoris accension*) to the purer figure of Philosophy (Beatrice-Sapientia).[53] As George Louis Clubb wrote, "Amor, who appears in visions to Dante, is the same god of love to whom Bernart de Ventadorn acknowledges his vassalage, but he is now a theologically defined "accidente in sustanzia" whose promptings have the force of divine

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[51] James A Schultz, *Courtly Love, and Love of Courtliness, and the History of Sexuality* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 20. (*do schoz in Amor sa zestunt mit einem guldinen gere eine wnden sere, vnd Venus div mvter sin gischvf, daz ime daz magedin liep wart alse sin eigen lip*.)

[52] Charles S. Singleton, "Dante: Within Courtly Love and Beyond," in *The Meaning of Courtly Love*, ed. F.X. Newman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1968), 43-49.

[53] Ibid, 52-53.

commands. Moreover, Amor's sphere of influence is specifically limited and defined."[54]

However, Dante's devotion to Philosophy could never have happened without the Lady Beatrice

functioning as a mediator or medium for whom he could develop his devotion. This elevated

form of love that Dante reached through the art of courtly love is still a far cry from the corporeal

love to which Master H.L. would allude in his engravings.

Dante's literary successors would further the cause by bringing Amor more permanently

into the spotlight, but by also bringing him down to earth. Petrarch had his Laura and Boccaccio

his "Fiammetta," both of whom were women that neither man felt the need to transform into

loftier figures so as to justify their love.[55] Love was often the subject of these poets' works, but

intertwined with it was often a sense of humor or lust avoided in earlier writings of the *Dolce Stil*

Nuovo.

With the increasing acceptance of carnal love in the writings of the fourteenth century, it

seems unusual that the god would fail to make a visual appearance until the next century. Even

when he did, it was usually as an adornment atop carts known as *armaggeria* (fig. 18), used

during parades to signify the Triumph of Love. Here he was shown as the perpetual adolescent

with a quiver of mischief-causing arrows, or as the handsome hero of the tale of *Cupid and*

Psyche. If he was accompanied by other figures they were often his attendants, the *amorini*.

Around this time, the *amorini* become something akin to the ubiquitous *putti* seen in the classical

era, and were no longer merely decorative architectural grotesqueries (as evidenced by

Donatello's frequent inclusion of *putti* in his many works).

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[54] George Louis Clubb, "Boccaccio and the Boundaries of Love." *Italica* vol. 37. no. 3 (Sept., 1960): 190.

[55] Erwin Panofsky, "Blind Cupid," in *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1972), 100.

It is within this tradition that H.L.'s child-like figure of Eros balances precariously, yet not timidly, upon a small pale ball (fig 1). Only one foot fits on the ball, throwing the god into an uneasy stance that could evoke anxiety, but instead brings forth an angry scowl. His anger is expressed by the rest of his body which, combined with his wings, makes a dramatic X-shape; the non-engaged leg is thrust straight behind him, seeking balance with his arms. His right arm wraps around his pudgy young torso, the hand seeming to reach for something but disappearing into the murk behind him. His left arm stretches upward and opposed to his right leg. He holds in his hand a bow, and this, along with the quiver of arrows that he hangs, somewhat obscurely, behind him, gives the first concrete evidence of his identity as Eros. The snapped bow string gives the first clue to understanding his rage: his favorite toy is broken, and he is not happy about it.

While partially screened by the body of Eros, and recessing into the darkness of the right side of the print, the importance of his quiver of arrows is obvious. The mouth of the quiver is a literal one, with a roaring lion's head that mimics Eros's expression. But more importantly, it is here, instead of on a drawn plaque or scrap of paper, that H.L. has chosen to sign his work. His initials are carved onto the side of the quiver directly above the artist's preferred visual monogram: a sculptor's chisel. In a way, Master H.L. is not only claiming ownership of the creation of the image, but also of the bow and arrow that make up the attributes of Eros, perhaps proclaiming his own mischievous nature. This placement of the monogram could also allude to the contemporary notion of sight as rays penetrating the eyes of the viewer like metaphorical arrows, making the artist concomitantly an archer.[56]

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[56] Margaret R. Miles, "Vision and Sixteenth-Century Protestant and Roman Catholic Reforms," in *Image as Insight: Visual Understanding in Western Christianity and Secular Culture*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), 7.

This figure of Eros is obviously somewhere outside, given the clouds in the upper left corner, cut diagonally by the black line of a mountain silhouetted with trees. The bottom of the print is more nebulous, and only upon closer exploration can one discern a group of diminutive men. This change in scale reveals the image as a fantastical, multi-layered work. Eros exists in one realm while the men inhabit another; the god acts as an overarching influence in the world below, rather than as a physical being.

The men, at least thirteen of them, are bathing jovially in a river. Most have some sort of head covering, while one man in the foreground is in the process of taking off or putting on some clothes, and two men wrestling in the shallows to the bottom right are tastefully wearing the sixteenth-century version of men's briefs. Most of the fully naked figures are tactfully turned away from the viewer, the one exception being the man fumbling with his clothing, although his genitals are partially obscured by the shadow his body creates as he bends. This propriety is in direct juxtaposition with the immodest, unconcealed erection of Eros towering above them.

Eros's concupiscence makes sense if we consider him as an overarching presence. The men below exist in the real world and are behaving properly according to early sixteenth-century standards. While mostly naked, there is no overt notion of eroticism; the two men wrestling (the most physicality any of them show towards each other) are the only ones wearing undergarments. If only the bottom part of the engraving existed, the scene would simply depict some men enjoying a public bath in a river. However, the presence of Eros and his priapic state charges the print with a tense eroticism.

At the time of the print's creation, the secular subject of nude or nearly nude men bathing publicly was nearly unattempted. The one major exception Master H.L. could have been familiar with was an engraving by Dürer titled *Das Männerbad* (fig. 27), finished around 1498. While its

somewhat risqué subject matter implies a small printing, it is possible that given a few years of

circulation a copy might have been seen by H.L.

The work shows six men at a public bath that exists at the outer edges of a town or city.

The structure is open to the outside, but roofed, and there is a pump at the left side that would be

used as a source of fresh water. There is no overt sign of eroticism; public bathhouses were an

acceptable form of social interaction, and the fact that this one is open-aired and visible from the

town meant that any salacious actions would be easily discernable.[57] Yet the erotic still exists in

undertones, of which the six mostly naked male bodies are the most apparent. Often mentioned is

the tap on the water pump decorated with rooster or cock placed suggestively in front of the

groin of the man leaning on the pump. This is a visual and verbal pun by Dürer, since the

German word for tap is *Hahn*, as well as the word for a cock or rooster.[58] The somewhat

feminized contrapposto stance of the flute player in the image's center does little to discredit an

erotic reading.[59]

This reading of Dürer's work is obviously conjecture, since we have no first-hand

accounts indicating that this print was in any way seen as lewd. However, keeping this in mind,

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[57] While in some parts of Europe, particularly in Italy, bathhouses were frequented by homosexuals in the pursuit of trysts, there is insufficient documentation to say the same about northern bathhouses. For more on the role of bathhouses in Florentine homosexual encounters see Michael Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships: Homosexuality and Male Culture in Renaissance Florence* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 154, 159, and 203.

[58] Edgar Wind, "Dürer's *Männerbad*: A Dionysian Mystery," *Journal of the Warburg Institute* vol. 2, no. 3 (Jan., 1939): 269.

[59] Edgar Wind's 1939 article remains the only English interpretation of the piece. While mentioning the suggestively placed *Hahn*, he sees the work as a comedic criticism on the Dionysian mysteries of inspiration and purification, known as *Systole* and *Diastole*. To Wind, the four non-musician bathers represent the four humors of the body. In order from left to right: the melancholic man leans on the pump, the choleric holds the scraping knife, the sanguine holds a flower, and the phlegmatic drinks heartily from a stein. They also, when combined with the clothed youth watching them from outside, were representations of the five senses (270). While his reading of the image is an interesting one, it seems to have never gained much popularity, and shares little in common with H.L.'s bathers, who show none of the specific attributes of Dürer's figures.

even if we were to wipe from the image nearly any trace of the lascivious, what is left is a clear

connection of subject matter between Master H.L.'s small engraving and Dürer's woodcut.

Given its date of creation in the 1510s, and its unusual subject matter, it seems clear that H.L.

was working with Dürer's piece in mind.[60] That H.L.'s engraving is erotic in nature is clear from

the presence of Eros in combination with his erection. However, Dürer's influence on H.L.'s

print is more nuanced than a visual reference to the subjects in the *Männerbad*. Master H.L. also

made pointed use of Dürer's ambitious, if slightly ambiguous print, known as *Nemesis* or *The

Large Fortune* (fig. 28).

The visual similarities are readily perceived. Both engravings feature a solitary winged

figure that dwarfs a scene set out of doors which rests at their feet, balance themselves on a ball,

are nude, and carry attributes that identify them as beings of classical origin. One of Dürer's

most ambitious prints, *Nemesis* was created around 1501-02, and remains the second largest

work in his printed oeuvre.[61] Ancient Greek in origin, Nemesis was considered a goddess of

vengeance and retribution. Yet far from being seen as a malevolent force who wreaked havoc on

the lives of those who did not live in fear of her power, she was often evoked as a protectress of

the golden mean. She could reduce a haughty man of wealth and glory to a pauper, but she could

also elevate a poor yet hardworking man to a live of comfort and ease. Due to this aspect of her

nature, she was a favorite of those working in perilous professions such as gladiators and soldiers

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[60] One other well-known image that H.L. could have been familiar with is of *The Children of Luna*. This was part of a series of astrological images, usually engravings, which showed each of the planets with representations of types of people they were thought to have influence over. The moon goddess was a patroness of sorts to fishermen, and her images often included scenes of nearly naked men fishing in rivers, bearing similarities to H.L.'s work. However, the men in H.L.'s print are clearly not fishing, but bathing recreationally, and so this genera was not given more credit for influencing H.L.'s engraving.

[61] Joseph Leo Koerner, "The Fortune of Dürer's *Nemesis*." *Fortuna, Fortuna Vitrea*, 15, ed. Walter Haug and Burghart Wachinger (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1995), 259. Her size is 13 x 9 inches (332 x 232 mm), Dürer's largest is the *St. Eustace* from 1500-01.

in the late Roman Empire.[62] As well being a leveler of humankind's ambitions, she was also an admonisher against excesses of all sorts. A Greek epigram from the Anthologia Planudis, titled "On a Statue of Nemesis" tells us: "With cubit-rule and bridle Nemesis proclaims/ against unmeasured action and unbridled speech."[63]

Of the two attributes given her in this epigram, Dürer's Nemesis carries one – the bridle that would curb "unbridled speech" but would also reign in the arrogance of men.[64] The cubit-rule is replaced by an ornate goblet in the shape of an upside-down pear. No surviving written sources give Nemesis a goblet to hold, but there are a few reasons for the deviation. Joseph Koerner proposes a relation to a golden goblet given to Dürer's close friend Willibald Pirckheimer for his services in the army of Maximilian. The battle that occasioned this honor, and which the emperor's forces lost, was fought in the Tirol not far from the small town of Klausen, which is perfectly rendered at the feet of Dürer's Nemesis.[65] This goblet might also be an extension of the two jugs that the Christian allegorical figure of Temperance was often shown carrying. One jug carried water that would neutralize the heady effects of the wine contained in the other. As seen from the epigram above, Nemesis was thought of as a restrictive, retributive force in the lives of the pre-Christians, a constraining power that likely continued to be attributed

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[62] David M Greene, "The Identity of the Emblematic Nemesis," *Studies in the Renaissance* vol. 10 (1963): 35.

[63] Erwin Panofsky, "'Virgo & Victrix': A Note on Dürer's Nemesis," in *Prints: Thirteen Illustrated Essays on the Art of the Print*, ed. Carl Zigrosser (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962): 17. The Anthologia Planudis was assembled during the late thirteenth century by Byzantine scholar Maximus Planudes. While the epigram itself is anonymous, it still shows that the Greeks had a concept of Nemesis that was dual-natured, she being a goddess of vengeance and temperance.

[64] Panofsky, "Virgo & Victrix," 18, with reference to the *Dionysiacs* of Nonnus ca. 450 A.D.

[65] Koerner, "Dürer's *Nemesis*," 260. While there are some interesting connections between Dürer's close friend having been rewarded with a goblet for a battle fought not far from the town shown in the engraving and this image of a vengeful goddess who promises retribution for the emperor's loss to the Swiss army, the argument seems stretched. As Koerner himself writes on page 261, he is "unsure about the reference to the Emperor's defeat."

to her into the Renaissance, when visually she was shown as a hybrid of Christian Temperance and Classical Nemesis. Her goblet might also bear a connection to the bowl that Pausanius describes Nemesis' cult statue held at her main temple in Rhamnusia near Marathon.[66] Dürer might not have had much access to ancient Greek epigrams, or the writings of Pausanius, but the artist's source for the engraving did.

His source appears to be a poem by the Florentine humanist Politian, written some twenty years earlier in praise of Virgil's *Bucolics*, titled *Manto*.[67] In the pertinent section of the poem (see appendix), Politian's description of Nemesis is quite elaborate, and much of this narrative translates visually into Dürer's engraving. Both walk "aloft, floating in empty air," both are "borne hither and thither by the whirling motions of the wind," and both carry a bridle.[68] Politian has his Nemesis carrying the bowl described by Pausanius instead of a goblet, and missing are the "stars affixed to her brow," but despite these differences the Florentine's poem seems the most likely resource for Dürer's engraving.[69]

Niccolò Fiorentino, also working from Politian's written description, created a medal around 1480-85 to commemorate the retribution for Giuliano de'Medici's assassination in 1478. Nemesis decorates the medal, turned to the left, walking on clouds while carrying a bridle in one hand and a bowl in the other. Politian's Nemesis is a mighty leveler of the imperial ambition of the ancient Greeks, but Niccolò's goddess is an exacter of vengeance. Surely Dürer was well aware of Nemesis's retributive and vengeful sides, since he was looking to the Florentine's poem

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[66] Ibid, 19. Writing in the second century C.E., Pausanius' *Descriptions of Greece* is held to be a generally accurate chronicle of Greece during the Roman empire.

[67] Panofsky, "Virgo & Victrix," 15-16.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Panofsky's thorough study of the print establishes multiple sources, outside of Pausanius, that influenced Politian's work; each of these is quite enlightening and replicated fully in the appendix as given by Panofsky.

for inspiration, but he combined them with the fickle whims of Fortune by placing an orb at her feet. Nemesis had had connections to Fortune since ancient times.[70] These deviations from Politian's written description imply Dürer's desire to distinguish his work from its source.

Prior to creating *Nemesis*, Dürer had made an engraving known as "The Small Fortune," around 1496 (fig. 29). Like Nemesis, Fortune is nude, seen from the side with fabric billowing around her, and is balanced on an orb. However, along with the absence of wings, she reveals her lack of puissance (compared to the later Nemesis) by needing a staff to help support her. The Eryngium that sprouts from the top of the staff points to this small Fortune's concern with love, since the plant was thought to give luck in love and have aphrodisiac properties.[71] The Eryngium is absent from *Nemesis*, but by giving his goddess wings, Dürer connects her to more ancient and more amorous conceptions than those of his Renaissance sources. Panofsky writes that neither Pausanius's cult statue of Nemesis at Rhamnusia "nor any other ancient statue of Nemesis had wings; but later artists[72] – convinced that the goddess mostly manifests herself in connection with love – give wings to Nemesis as they do to Cupid."[73]

I would argue that these wings were borrowed directly from Dürer's print by Master H.L. This is not very unusual; many Cupids were depicted with wings, but this Cupid's wings are

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[70] Panofsky, "Virgo & Victrix," 17-18. The full passages may be found in the appendix.

[71] Koerner, "Dürer's *Nemesis*," 247. Panofsky, "Virgo & Victrix," 26. Koerner points out Dürer's inclusion of Eryngium in three other works: "Couple on Horseback" c. 1496, "The Ravisher" c. 1495, and "Self-Portrait" 1494. Each of them holds a connection to love, although not all are positive in nature. The lovers going by horseback are leaving the watchful eye of the town for a private tryst in the woods. A devil seeks to take advantage of a lovely young lady in "The Ravisher." Most scholars believe the 1493 self-portrait was made on the occasion of Dürer's engagement to Agnes Frey.

[72] Panofsky implies these "later artists" are classical Romans rather than Renaissance artists.

[73] Panofsky, "Virgo & Victrix," 19. Wings were also an attribute of Venus, as shown in an early woodcut attributed to Dürer of a Winged Venus made as an illustration for Brant's *Narrenschiff*. Strangely enough, a blindfolded Cupid makes an appearance in the bottom right corner, but is wingless, perhaps due to compositional reasons.

different. Along their edge, individual feathers are discernable and separated from each other by tubular sheaths. These are not merely a convenient design element, but an accurate representation of the "nestling" wings of a bird too young to fly.[74] These wings imply growth; as they mature into fully adult wings, this Eros will mature with them, developing into a being more closely resembling Dürer's proud and noble Nemesis.

The meaning of H.L.'s engraving is now clearer. The viewer is to read this Eros as not only a representation of love, but of specifically young love. This love could be between youths, or it could imply the earliest stages of any love affair. The passionate and unsettling nature of young love is reflected in the figure of Eros. He balances, but only barely, on his orb, his flailing limbs threatening to throw him off at any second. This imbalance is partially due to his anger, which stems from two sources: first, his mangled bow, a symbol of frustrated love, and second, the homoerotic nature of the scene below him, against which the image as a whole may be read as a caution.

One reading is that the men's bathing and wrestling is simply a prudent stand-in for homosexual activity, i.e. sodomy (in the terminology of the time). Eros's sneer of disgust, then, is the expected reaction of the viewer, but his erection could indicate a perverse response, an uncontrollable tug of lust, that turns it into an expression of self-disgust. His rampant state also indicates the reason for his imbalance: lust is thoroughly in control.

Another, more forgiving reading, notes that the bathers are not doing anything sexual, per se; they are publicly bathing in a river, even modestly covering their private parts. However, as they splash about, and wrestle in the water, these harmless actions could incite less pure

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[74] Alexander F. Skutch, *Parent Birds and Their Young* (Austin, London: University of Austin Press, 1976), 308-310. Skutch describes the "nestling period" as "the interval between hatching and the attainment of the ability to fly." 308.

emotions – tempting them to seek out more intimate and private encounters later. The delicate balance between harmless and deviant is reflected in Eros above them. As a youthful version of Nemesis, the image promises divine retribution for any who allow these flirtations to develop, for the balance to be undone.

Eros on a Snail

At nearly the same size as _Eros Balancing on a Ball_, _Eros on a Snail_ (fig. 2) similarly invites a physically close inspection of the work. When compared side by side, their compositions mirror each other. The position of each figure cuts a diagonal across the upper half of the image. Both figures are X-shaped, with one leg extending out behind, and the arm closest to the viewer curving around the body of the child-god, but balanced by a wing extending upwards. The other arm carrying the bow is thrust upwards and away from the body. Given these similarities, the two can properly be seen as companion pieces, with related but diverging descriptive narratives and commentaries on love.

Once again we find Eros irate, but his wrath is now directed toward a snail with which he is engaged in a moment of intense battle, a battle that he cannot win. He is a fool for picking this battle, and the fool's bell on his bow is there as proof of his folly. He wears a blindfold, but he has pulled it off one eye, partially removing his handicap.

In classical art Eros was never portrayed as blind or blindfolded, and only rarely was he so described in classical literature.[75] The earliest medieval descriptions of him were platonically inspired, meaning the authors believed love, the noblest emotion, was perceptible only through

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[75] Panofsky, "Blind Cupid," 95.

sight, the noblest sense. [76] Therefore Eros could never be blinded. While the iconography of the

blindfold was used earlier for other figures, it wasn't until around the turn of the thirteenth

century that blindness was considered an attribute of Cupid, along with his bow, arrows, and

wings. [77] Whether blind or blindfolded, the trait was negative, associating Eros with being, as

Panofsky writes, "'unable to see' (blind in the narrower sense, physically or mentally) or as

'incapable of being seen' (hidden, secret, invisible) or as 'preventing the eye or mind from

seeing' (dark, lightless, black)." [78] Along with figures such as Fortune and Death, Eros was seen

as "an active force behaving like an eyeless person: they would hit or miss at random, regardless

of age, social position, and individual merit." [79]

A blindfolded Cupid implied a profane or base love that was sensual in nature. [80] The Eros

that Master H.L. presents *was* blindfolded, implying that he had initially represented sensual

love, but much like *Eros Balancing on a Ball*, this figure promises a transformation. He slips off

his blindfold, thereby gaining an advantage over his enemy and becoming representative of a

nobler emotion.

His antagonist is a simple snail, and the relationship between these two figures and the

world in which they reside is the first riddle the image presents. At first glance, it may be

assumed that this new Eros has drastically shrunk in size, to the point where he is able to ride on

the back of a snail. On closer inspection, the proportions of the landscape and foliage found

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[76] Ibid, 103.

[77] Ibid, 106 and 110. Panofsky mentions that a miniature from 975 shows the figure of Night with a blindfold, but that personifications of Synagogue and Death were also often blindfolded.

[78] Ibid, 109.

[79] Ibid, 112.

[80] Ibid, 121.

beneath the two appear to be normal. With this established, it becomes evident that this Eros is an average size for a toddler, making the snail the one who has grown absurdly. The enlargement of the snail is not as unusual as it might at first appear, since it was common to depict colossal snails in the marginalia of medieval manuscripts.

During the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance, the snail as a symbol could hold several meanings. As a religious symbol, it could signify the resurrection of Jesus after his crucifixion. Every winter the snail appeared to die by pulling itself into its shell. In fact the snail was merely hibernating, but the way the snail closed the opening of its shell resembled the stone rolled in front of Jesus's tomb. Every spring the "stone" would be rolled away to reveal the "resurrected" snail who was thought dead.[81] A lesser known symbolism ties the snail to Mary. The *Defensorium inviolatae virginitatis beatae Mariae*, a typological work from the late Middle Ages, found parallels between nature and Christianity. One of these states that "If the dew of the clear air can make the sea snail pregnant, then God in virtue can make His mother pregnant."[82] While both meanings could have been known by Master H.L., given the combination of the snail with non-Christian Eros, a religious interpretation may be safely ruled out.

The secular realm holds a greater store of symbolism connected to the snail. Most notably, the snail was a symbol of illusions that overwhelm the cowardly. Lilian Randall's article on snails found in the illuminated marginalia of medieval texts focuses primarily on their

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[81] Claude Gaignebet and J. Dominique Lajoux. *Art Profane et Religion Populaire au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1985), 273. See also Lilian M.C. Randall, "The Snail in Gothic Marginal Warfare," *Speculum* vol. 37, no. 2 (Jul., 1962): 361. Specifically, Randall writes on page 360 that possibly the earliest modern association between resurrection and snails was made by the Compte de Bastard writing in the *Bulletin des comites historiques* in 1850. He made this connection after "finding an archer shooting a snail depicted on the same page as a miniature of the raising of Lazarus in two French Books of Hours of the fourteenth and fifteenth century respectively," and termed it "*certainement relative a la resurrection.*"

[82] Helen S. Ettlinger, "The Virgin Snail," *Journal of the Warburg and Courauld Institutes* vol. 41 (1978): 316.

perceived timidity (fig. 30). The goal of her work is to explain the increased occurrence of snails in French, Franco-Flemish, and English illustrated manuscripts beginning around 1290 and ending somewhat abruptly around 1325.[83] She believes the snail represents the French attitude toward Lombards during this time. The origin of this attitude stems from the reign of Charlemagne and his defeat of King Desiderius and the Lombards in 722, of which it was said that the Lombards fled in defeat without a single blow being struck.[84] This story has little factual basis, but it seems that by 1230 the snail had become a symbol used by the French to ridicule Italians generally, but Lombards specifically.[85] Their status as foreigners who could not legally bear arms contributed greatly to the French prejudice. It also seems the Lombards were more heavily abused than other foreigners because they worked in these northern countries primarily as usurers and pawnbrokers.[86]

The snail is connected to cowardice through the illusory nature of its physical traits. Someone might reasonably fear a creature described as possessing two long horns atop its head, an impenetrable armor protecting most of its body, and strength enough to carry its house on its back.[87] Of course, such fear becomes comical when the beast in question is a tiny, harmless snail. Those depicted as being afraid of snails, such the Lombards or other figures running from them in manuscript margins, were the worst of all cowards since their fears were founded on illusions.

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[83] Randall, "Marginal Warfare," 358.

[84] Ibid, 364-365.

[85] Ibid, 362.

[86] Ibid, 366.

[87] Pinon, Roger. "From Illumination to Folksong; the Armed Snail, a Motif of Topsy-Turvy Land," in *Folklore Studies in the Twentieth Century: Proceedings of the Centenary Conference of the Folklore Society,* ed. Venetia J. Newall (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 1978, 1980), 81.

Engaging in battle with a snail was a sign of madness, for the creature was not worth fighting, and contending with a snail was a falsification of the assailant's own strength. The attacker appears to spar with a foe with fierce horns and tough armor, but in reality, he assails a harmless nothing. Even the enlargement of the snail, which occurs often in medieval manuscripts as well as H.L.'s print, does not add to its ferocity, and it remains a slow-moving and dim-witted creature whose "horns" are merely antennae.

This would imply that this Eros is a coward who battles an innocuous adversary unnecessarily in order to show an illusion of strength and might. However, there is a third meaning to the medieval snail. As far back as ancient Greece, the snail, or at least its shell, had sexual connotations. The Greeks used the word *cogxe*, the pink interior of a shell, as a crude colloquialism for a woman's genitalia.[88] The ancient Romans similarly used the word *limax* (slug or snail), the root of the French word *limace*,[89] to refer to courtesans and whores.[90] This association continued into the Middle Ages, with a slight variation cropping up. Michael Camille mentions that a "marginal image of a knight dropping his sword at the sight of a snail perched on the tendrils of a minute Flemish Psalter suggests in this instance an erotic encounter being juxtaposed with the drooping drone of the testicular bagpipe above and a woman's 'basket' being

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[88] Dempsey, *Inventing*, 142. Here Dempsey discusses Politian's knowledge of the Greek playwright Aristophane's (446-386 BCE) use of the word in his comedies. See also Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann and Sir John Wyndham Pope-Hennessy, *Fifteenth- to Eighteenth-century European Drawings: Central Europe, the Netherlands, France, England*, (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1999), 84-86. Haverkamp-Begemann and Pope-Hennessy's book is one of the few published works to directly reference H.L.'s engraving. It is a passing reference, but helpful in establishing the sexualized symbolism of the snail shell.

[89] The word *limace* today refers strictly to a slug and not a snail; however, there is some evidence that the terms were interchangeable until about 1700. See Malcolm Jones, *The Secret Middle Ages* (Gloucestershire, England: Sutton Publishing Ltd., 2002), 132.

[90] Pinon, "Armed Snail," 79. The Roman playwright Plautus (254-184 BCE) is mentioned as employing this word in such a way.

attacked by a ram on the right page."[91] (fig. 31) This image could be what Gaignebet and Lajoux refer to as the "evil snail," a symbol of impotence in the Middle Ages.[92]

From the broken state of Eros' bow and arrows, it is clear that he has been fighting for some time and been unable to defeat his enemy. This enemy is an enormous snail, its size implying that what it signifies has been literally blown out of proportion. The snail's connotation to a woman's genitalia suggests that Eros here represents a blind desire for the female sex, possibly even a desire for prostitutes' favors. The cowardly facet of the snail reflects a fear that Eros had concerning sexual encounters with women. When his blindfold was on, the snail really did seem monstrous, with an inviolable armor frustrating Eros's arrows. With his weapons unusable, Eros seeks the only other advantage available to him, namely the removal of his blindfold. In the next moment, he will realize his error, see that his desire for physical gratification is entirely out of proportion to its value, and hopefully come to embody a more temperate, ennobling love.

I would thus argue that *Eros Balancing on a Ball* and *Eros on a Snail* should be regarded as companion pieces that function as witty cautionary images. The former warns against homosexual flirtations developing into full-fledged sodomy, while the latter remonstrates against the feckless desire for a woman's carnal attentions. Both decry the foolishness of misdirected affections.

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[91] Camille, Michael. *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992), 35.

[92] Gaignebet and Lajoux, *Art Profane*, 273.

Two Putti Eating Peas

The first clear difference between the two engravings already considered and *Two Putti Eating Peas* (fig. 3) is the doubling of main figures. Instead of one winged child, there are two, and neither possesses the prominent identifiers of Eros's bow and arrows; they are, then, more generalized *putti*, representing youthful vitality or minor mischief.

The two sprites are just beginning to feast on some extremely large peas they are scooping out of an enormous peapod. This peapod, like the snail from the last chapter, has grown to outrageous proportions rather than our two *putti* shrinking, and has become at least as tall as its devourers if stood on its end. The significance of these peas will be examined shortly, but first attention should be drawn to the decorative wreath surrounding the central image.

The combination of the vegetal wreath with *putti* was certainly not unique to Master H.L. He was continuing an ancient Roman tradition of the *feste romane* (*feste* being more related to the word 'festoon' than 'feast,' etymologically implying the decoration for the feast rather than the activity itself),[93] a decorative element popular among the ancient Romans as ornament for sarcophagi and architectural friezes such as those found on the Ara Pacis (fig. 32). Later Italians delighted in using them as adornments in much the same way. When combined with *putti*, as in the second century Garland Sarcophagus from the Metropolitan Museum of Art (fig. 11) or Illaria del Carretto's sarcophagus (fig. 15), they are *reggifestone* and represent the celebration of

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[93] Dempsey, *Inventing*, 8.

life lived.[94] While the two putti in Master H.L.'s engraving are not carrying the wreath, similar associations could have been drawn by an early sixteenth-century viewer.

The use of a wreath-like element as a framing device was also ancient in origin, but had more in common with the shield or plaque-bearing *putti* known as *reggistemma* (fig. 12).[95] In these images, the plaque the *putti* held aloft was regularly encircled by a celebratory wreath of laurels. This wreath was revived in Renaissance Italy, and embraced by northern artists around the end of the fifteenth century. A woodcut from 1502 by Albrecht Dürer (fig. 33) shows Lady Philosophy enthroned and enclosed within a wreath. This wreath shows Philosophy as not merely victorious in nature, but victorious over nature. The wreath is divided into four parts, each representing a different season. Each season then corresponds to its respective humour, element, and *Anemoi* or ancient Greek gods of wind.[96] Out of the four quarters of the wreath, the spring section is still comprised of the traditional laurel leaves; the others bear markers for their respective seasons.

Master H.L. used the laurel wreath in at least one other of his works, a small engraving (fig. 34) showing St. Catherine of Alexandria surrounded by her accusers the moment before being beheaded. The saint kneels before the emperor, hands clasped in prayer. Emperor Maxentius extends his hand towards her with a look on his face that suggests he is having second thoughts concerning the death of this young woman. It is too late to alter his decision; the executioner, with crazed intent in his eyes, positions himself for a mighty death blow. Catherine

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[94] Ibid, 28.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Jenny March, ed,, *Cassell's Dictionary of Classical Mythology* (London: Cassel & Co., 1998), 168-9, 308, 536, 788-9. These four gods are: Zephyr – the gentle west wind associated with spring, Eursus - the east wind connected by Dürer to summer, Auster/Notus – the southern wind that brought heavy fog and humidity was connected to autumn, and Boreas - the north wind associated with winter.

steadily gazes at the emperor in acceptance of her death, thereby deserving the wreath of laurels that H.L. has given to her. Her piety and bravery when faced with death mark her as a new kind of hero in comparison to the martial and athletic victors who were graced with laurels in ancient times.

While typically using a wreath as a framing device would imply a laudatory intention, this is not the case for the two putti and their peapod. They are not deserving of honors: they are not heroes of any kind, role models for behavior, or remembered for a life well lived. Any approbatory reading may be discounted since the wreath is not made of laurels. Instead giant peapods, such as the one being devoured in the center, comprise the wreath. Once again, their enormity is suggested by the placement of more normal-sized peapods within the floral arrangements serving as bonding elements between the pods, and by the tasseled cording used to tie together the cases of the pods ensuring the durability of the wreath.

I believe that in this print Master H.L. has combined two ancient decorative elements to suit his own needs, implying a knowledge of classical imagery he felt comfortable in manipulating. The festive and fertile aspects of *feste romane* are paired with the circular composition of the *reggistemma* suggesting encomium. The wreath symbolizes a generalized glorification of abundance and fecundity. The two *putti* in the center are physically engaging with this symbol in a way that is evocative of the print's meaning as a whole.

That abundance is central to this image is represented not only in the wreath or the mere presence of enlarged vegetables, but by H.L.'s choice of peas over any other plant. This unassuming plant is one of the oldest known plants to be eaten by humans, with wild peas being

eaten since the Neolithic Age.[97] Throughout the Middle Ages dried peas were a staple of most

diets', since dried peas were especially hardy, they were often relied upon during the long winter

months or times of famine.[98] Eaten fresh and immature, peas were sold by sellers in the streets of

thirteenth-century Paris.[99] By the beginning of the sixteenth century the viewers of Master H.L.'s

engraving would have been familiar with eating the immature peas straight from the pod.

As a decorative element, pea plants were seen gracing the margins of many prayer books

throughout the fifteenth century. They surrounded diverse images, from the raising of Lazarus

(fig. 35) to St. Christopher carrying the Christ Child (fig. 36). One Dutch illuminator used pea

plants to ornament five different pages in his text. Of more relevance to Master H.L.'s engraving,

a Dutch Book of Hours by the Master of the Morgan Infancy Cycle (fig. 37) includes a faithful

rendering of a blossoming pea plant in the margins of a page facing a full-page image of the

nativity.[100] Mary is associated here with the delicate white flowers of pea plant, her veil

mirroring the petals on the opposite page. In a similar vein, a German devotional painting from

around the same time (fig. 38) shows a tender moment between the Virgin and her child. As the

Christ Child plays with the golden prayer beads his mother wears, she primly holds upright a

blossoming pea shoot between her thumb and forefinger. Completed around 1440, The Hours of

Catherine of Cleves contains a miniature of three angels beginning to sing the hymn "Te deum

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[97] Maguelonne Toussaint-Samat, *A History of Food*, (West Sussex, United Kingdom: John Wiley and Sons, 2009), 38. And Waverly Root, *Food: An Authoritative and Visual History and Dictionary of the Foods of the World* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980), 324.

[98] Claude Foury and Michel Pirat, *Histoires de légumes: Des origines à l'orée du XXIe siècle* (Paris: Institut national de la recherche agronomique, 2003), 353.

[99] Ibid, 353. Root, *Food*, 325.

[100] Another image of the Nativity surrounded by pea plants and blossoms, this time from Italy ca. 1430, resides in the Pierpont Morgan Library. Manuscript. M.944. Fol. 002v, Christ: Nativity.

laudamus," (fig. 39) which marked the end of Matins in the Hours of the Virgin.[101] The artist has

surrounded the text and three angels with six sets of peapods opened along their seams to reveal

golden peas; a light magenta pea blossom joins each pair in the middle. The three angels are not

themselves indicative of the pea plant's meaning, but it is believed that the now-missing full-

page miniature mirroring this leaf showed the annunciation to St. Anne that she would conceive

the Virgin Mary. The common thread is one of fecundity, and it contributes well to the *feste*

romane in H.L.'s print, marking fertility as central to the work's meaning.

There is one additional religious connection in the print, namely between peas and prayer

beads. One of Master H.L.'s *putti* holds what appear to be prayer beads in the left hand that he is

throwing upward in exaltation. Already discussed above was the panel painting of Mary and

Jesus, in which the Christ Child plays with the beads affixed to his mother's dress by a gold

broach. Another example comes from around the time of the print's creation, when Emperor

Maximilian commissioned the most famous artists of the day to draw marginal decorations for

his prayer book, including Albrecht Dürer and Lucas Cranach the Elder.[102] One of these artists

was Albrecht Altdorfer, a stylistically expressive painter and engraver from the Danube region of

the empire. While the drawings Altdorfer created typically had little if anything to do with the

printed text of the pages they shared, there was often a theme linking the images to each other.

One of these pages contains a realistic, if very elaborate, drawing of a pea plant at the bottom of

the page (fig. 40). Along the left-hand margin he has drawn a robed personage perched on

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[101] Rob Dückers and Ruud Priem, *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves: Devotion, Demons and Daily Life in the Fifteenth Century* (New York: Abrams, 2009), 230.

[102] Fedja Anzelewski, "The Prayer-book of Emperor Maximilian I," in *Altdorfer and Fantastic Realism in German Art*, ed. Jacqueline and Maurice Guillaud (New York: Rizzoli, 1984), 276. The prayer book was sent to various artists around the beginning of 1514. As with many of the emperor's artistic endeavors, it was never officially finished.

stylized grape vine and holding a string of prayer beads in his or her hands. Peas were not actually used in the creation of prayer beads, but their size, shape, and the way they "string" together in a pod allows a symbolic comparison.

In my opinion, by including the prayer beads in the engraving, or perhaps peas tied together to look like prayer beads, Master H.L. is indicating a religious context to the image, but one cloaked in profane and pagan imagery. While the peas may indicate prayer beads, the *puttis'* wild, abandoned feasting on them is decidedly not reverential. The idea of feasting is also reflected by the inclusion of a vegetal festoon, via the *feste romane* around the scene, the likes of which would have comprised many a festival decoration. Clearly, then, the print references a festival; but which one?

That the festival occurs during the spring is suggested first and foremost by the pea plant. Peas prefer cooler temperatures, and they tend to be one of the earliest harvestable vegetables; during the Middle Ages and Renaissance fresh spring peas would have delivered respite from the limited winter diet. However, it is the small scene taking place behind the two *putti* and their peas that provides the best hint of the festival's nature.

Barely noticeable between the legs of the *putti*, a miniscule procession crosses a small bridge, giving the viewer only glimpses of who or what they are. The first and most discernible figure is a man on horseback. He wears an exotic-looking hat similar to one worn by H.L.'s portly Emperor Maxentius standing before St. Catherine (fig. 34). H.L.'s rider carries a buckler with a sharpened spike protruding from its central boss, implying a militaristic nature. Perhaps the three figures following him across the bridge make up a campaign march, but military might seems a far cry from the mood impressed upon the viewer by the two *putti* in the foreground. Yet these militant attributes may safely rule out the possibility of this group being on religious

procession, common during feast days where the honored saint's relics were paraded throughout the town or city.

There was, however, a time of revelry occurring in the early spring when such a parade was customary. The festival was Carnival, the week-long period of feasting followed by the forty-day Lenten period of fasting. During Carnival a king of the Carnival would be appointed. The king's real-life identity and his role during the feasting varied from place to place. Sometimes he was a well-known and well-respected citizen who was honored with the title. In other times and places he was local fool brought high for a day, or a convict freed while the world of topsy-turvy reigned.[103] Regardless, this person was usually dressed in outlandish clothing to mark his unique status among revelers. The "foreign" hat that Master H.L.'s procession leader wears would be perfect for such an occasion as a signifier of the unusual, but H.L. has also connected it to royalty since he placed it upon the head of Emperor Maxentius in his St. Catherine print.

If the parade in the background is being led by the King of Carnival, then the two *putti* who take center stage are doing their best to fatten up before the restraining period of Lent begins. Yet despite their fervid feasting, the object of their frenzy and the prayer beads prominently held aloft allude to an underlying religious context. An engraving such as this would have been produced and sold during Carnival seasons to distinguishing patrons appreciative of the image's multiple layers of meaning. While Carnival was a period of freedom from the banality of everyday life, the purpose of the feasting was in preparation for the Lenten period and the sacrifice of Jesus's life that concluded it. This image is a visual reminder that although

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[103] Alexander Orloff, *Carnival: Myth and Cult* (Wörgl: Perlinger, 1980), 18 & 38. Gaignebet & Lajoux, *Art Profane*, 282-284.

viewers may gorge themselves, and they may bear witness to the perverse or outlandish, all of it

will be grounded by the sacred embodied in the Resurrection of Jesus that is to follow.

Three Putti with Instruments of the Passion

It takes little inspection to realize that *Three Putti with Instruments of the Passion* (fig. 4)

is the most visual ambitious of the four prints examined here, containing the greatest number of

central characters and as well as objects with which those characters interact.[104]

The overall appearance of the engraving is darker than previous three. Out of the murk

Master H.L. has highlighted certain areas with a bright light placed above and to the left of the

three characters, just outside of the observable action. This is a technique H.L. adopted from an

earlier source, shortly to be discussed, but it is also a useful tool in guiding the viewer to the

most important objects in the somewhat nebulous image – a tool not used to the same effect in

the initial source of inspiration.

The most noticeable of these highlighted objects are the three *putti* themselves,

laboriously walking away from the audience. Two of the *putti* look out over their right shoulder

toward the picture plane, their faces seen in three-fourths profile with their pudgy infant

backsides prominent. The third, and middle figure, shares a resemblance to the *putto* holding the

prayer beads in *Two Putti Eating Peas*. His head is thrown back, foreshortening his face as he

struggles to lift the objects off the stretcher, or *ferculum*, the other two carry.

These objects are the Instruments of the Passion referred to in the title. One's eye is

directed to them by the bright white side of the cross cutting through the center of the group. The

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[104] For the sake of continuity I will use the term "*putti*" where other scholars have used "angels." While the print is noticeably religious in context, given the comic and playful nature of the three figures, as well as the overarching theme that will be developed in this section, it seems just as likely that Master H.L. intended them as generic sprites rather than, or in addition to, diminutive angels.

composition turns them into a rather macabre bouquet stemming from a classically inspired ceramic container with which the middle *putto* labors. Included are most of the traditional Passion Instruments: the cross, complete with nails and the *Titulus Crucis*, St. Longinus's spear, the crown of thorns, the staff with a vinegar-soaked sponge, the column Jesus was tied to as he was whipped before his crucifixion, two whips – one made from a birch branch, the other a multi-knotted version of a modern bull whip – and a bag containing the thirty pieces of silver that Judas received for delivering Jesus to the Roman authorities. Even with all these objects reduced in size so as to fit into a single vessel, it is little wonder that the *putto* struggles to lift them.

The upper left corner contains another strip of white, directing the viewer to notice a plaque, or *cartellino*, hanging by an elaborate knotted ribbon from a leafless tree. The *cartellino* is classically inspired in much in the same way as the vessel carrying the Passion Instruments, complete with a matching decoration of stylized dolphins, their mouths stuffed with orbs. The stylized dolphin as a decorative element was popular in classical Roman art, but there are no extant vessels bearing the slightest resemblance to Master H.L.'s. These dolphins function much like the *putti* and the *ferculum* – elements meant to evoke a classical atmosphere that the viewer would have appreciated. This motif is continued in the choice of Latin instead of the German vernacular, and the Romanized font used for the message written on the *cartellino*.

The Latin is fully legible and reads, "QVI PETIS AEGRA / MEMBRA LEVARE / HIC TIBI DVLCES / COLLIGE FLORES." Chipps Smith translates these lines as, "You who seek to ease your ailing limbs, gather for yourself the sweet flowers here."[105] This translation is fine, but perhaps incomplete given the context of Resurrection: *levare*, which Chipps Smith translates as

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[105] Chipps Smith, "Master H.L." 176.

"to ease," can also mean "to raise" or "to lift," and thus "lift your ailing limbs." The "sweet flowers" referred to in the *cartellino* are none other than the grisly bouquet of Passion Instruments rising from the dolphin vessel. The image tells the audience that gathering these flowers is not easy, as evidenced by the struggle of the middle *putto*, but those who succeed will be rewarded with a new life in heaven.

Also brightly lit is the ledge at the bottom of the page, which Chipps Smith describes as having "a still-life character," showing a skull representing Golgotha and "three conical forms."[106] The "still-life character" of this ledge is unquestioned; obviously H.L. wanted these objects to be seen clearly, but it is also out of keeping with the rest of the image. Above it the *putti* walk on a rocky path in a setting composed of a few gnarled, leafless trees and the crumbling ruins of a "classical" building.[107] The ledge, on the other hand, is smooth, even, and looks man-made; taking this into consideration, Chipps Smith's limited reading leaves something to be desired. To decipher the meaning of the still-life, and of the work as a whole, one must first understand H.L.'s visual inspiration for the print.

It has been rightly noted that H.L. was greatly influenced by Mantegna's *Triumphs of Caesar* series (fig. 41) when creating this image.[108] While it is usually agreed that the paintings were commissioned by Francesco II Gonzaga, in the Mantuan court where Mantegna worked almost exclusively for most of the second half of the fourteenth century, the exact dating of these paintings is still questioned. It is generally believed that the Italian artist worked on the series throughout most of the 1490s, with some time spent away in the service of Pope Innocent VIII in

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[106] Ibid, 177.

[107] The clay roof tile on the ground beneath the *ferculum*, specifically reminiscent of Italian not German building, and the Doric column barely discernable amid the ruins of the second floor of the building in the top right corner of the image, are markers for a classical setting.

[108] Baxandall, *Limewood Sculptures*, 142. Chipps Smith, "Master H.L." 177

Rome.[109] If so, this allows a limited window for the dissemination of Mantegna's style and subject matter to reach Master H.L. before 1511, when he completed *Three Putti*. Mantegna's paintings would need to be completed, be copied as engravings, find their way into a northern art collection, and be accessed by H.L., all within a decade. While far from impossible, Andrew Martindale argues that the *Triumphs* were begun by Lodovico III Gonzaga, rather than by his grandson Francesco, around 1474-78. Martindale believes Lodovico had more of a taste and education for commissioning such works, as well as enjoying a period of peace and stability during which he could commission palatial decoration on a grand scale. If so, this dates their creation closer to the period of 1459-65, a time when the subject of the classical Triumph inspired a number of literary treatises.[110] An earlier production date would also make it more likely that a northern collector would have copy of the *Triumph* engravings by 1500.

The subject of Mantegna's paintings is a triumphal procession such as those made in honor of Roman leaders on their return from a successful military campaign. This particular Triumph represents Julius Caesar's return from the Gallic Wars. While Mantegna had little surviving description of this particular procession to which to refer, he made an effort to portray what he could with a nod to historical accuracy. For contemporary written sources, he worked from Plutarch, Appian, and Suetonius,[111] and used Roman antiquities in the Mantuan Duke's private collection for visual inspiration.

The series is composed of nine panels painted with egg tempera on canvas separated by decorative columns. The nearly life-size figures making up the procession are presented to the

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[109] Andrew Martindale, *The Triumphs of Caesar by Andrea Mantegna in the Collection of her Majesty the Queen at Hampton Court* (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 1979), 43.

[110] Ibid, 46.

[111] Martindale, *The Triumphs of Caesar*, Appendix III, 178-180.

viewer as if the ground they walked upon was indeed the bottom of the painted surface. The scale of the work and the immediacy of the procession to the picture plane invite the viewers to immerse themselves in the image, placing them as another rank of spectators slightly removed from the festivities. Anyone lucky enough to view these in the ducal palace would see them not merely as a tribute to the great Caesar but also to the Gonzaga family, who saw themselves as sharing similarities with an emperor known for his military prowess.

Commissioned sometime after the completion of the painted panels, the engravings are generally faithful to their source with two exceptions. One is the complete lack of a background (fig. 42). Where the paintings do their best to insinuate a classical setting, as processors march among the hillsides of ancient Rome dotted with classically inspired buildings (some already in ruins,) those in the engraving walk along a blank wall of white. The one exception is the final image in the series showing the senators walking along a "Roman" street where the buildings appear more contemporary than classical (fig. 43). The second difference is the heightened contrast in the modeling of the figures in Mantegna's engravings. Both of these differences were not singular to the *Triumph*, but could almost be considered general stylistic markers of the printed works emerging from Mantegna's workshop (fig. 44).

Given that H.L. was working primarily with the engravings in mind, it is safe to say that his lush background was a device belonging to the *deutch* tradition of overly vegetative ornamentation rather than any nod to the green hillsides of Mantegna's classical Rome. However, H.L. borrowed both the theme of the triumphal procession and the heavy contrast from the Italian engravings, creating a work that was not only fashionably *welsch*, but also intelligently engaging the work of a famous Italian artist.

In appropriating the high contrast from Mantegna-inspired works, H.L. employed it, along with the caliginous background, to create highlights that drive the viewer's focus toward key areas of the image. H.L. also borrowed the classical Roman military Triumph while adapting it for Christian audience. This victory march honors Jesus, and more specifically his resurrection from the dead on Easter morning, rather than some general seeking fame and fortune for himself and his empire. Mantegna's processors carry the spoils of war – material treasures, gold, and human slaves. H.L.'s *putti* carry the instruments of Jesus's triumph over death, a significantly greater achievement.

If H.L. had merely wished to create a *welsch*-inspired engraving proclaiming the victorious nature of Jesus' resurrection, he could easily have done so. By having the classically clad men carry instruments of the passion instead of spoils of war, they would have become soldiers of God, and the print would have had a still more solemn overarching theme. Instead, he cast *putti* instead of men for his main subjects, and infused the print with an element of frivolity. Making light of such a serious subject as the resurrection of the Son of God might seem slightly sacrilegious. However, there is one time of the year where raucous flummery and the raising of the dead Savior are closely linked, and that time is Carnival.

Besides the use of *putti*, H.L. has included other markers that clearly signify a festival environment. One such is connected to the most enigmatic feature of the engraving, H.L.'s monogram. H.L. included his monogram in numerous prints, but here he did something unusual with it. The H of the monogram is clearly branded onto an object thrown over a tree trunk just behind the rear *putto*. On close inspection, this object appears to be a pig's bladder that has been cloven nearly in two by an ax, a tool commonly used by woodcarvers. Carnival was a time of feasting, and the pig was one of Carnival's most popular foods. The pigs' bladders were used for

several purposes, such as noise-making, as balls for games, or, when tied to sticks, as batons to hit people in jest.[112] Regarding the last, the pig was a contemporary symbol for lust, and often the targets of men carrying these batons were unmarried women.[113] However, it could also symbolize the gluttonous eating of the pig itself, or signify general empty-headedness since it was often carried by fools as a prop.[114] Regardless, this symbol of carnal desires has been destroyed in preparation for the celebration of the Resurrection.

At first glance, the L of the monogram seems to be missing. Chipps Smith claims the L is a little to the right, "behind the last putto's bottom,"[115] but close inspection will reveal the L clearly inscribed on the base of an object resting on the ground just in front of the lead *putto*'s left foot (toward the bottom right corner of the print, just above the third conical shape on the ledge). This object remains impossible to identify.[116] Most likely it has some symbolic tie to the theme of the print, given H.L.'s clear effort to connect the first letter of his monogram to a thematically appropriate object. Another clear possibility, given the letters' distinctive placement, is that the two objects comprise some sort of visual game or pun on H.L.'s name,

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[112] Barbara Swain, *Fools and Folly During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932), 67.

[113] Peter Burke. *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London: Temple Smith, 1978), 183.

[114] Ibid, 191.

[115] Chipps Smith, "Master H.L." 177.

[116] It appears to be a solid object, which rules out feces, the likes of which were often seen in engravings and sometimes even paintings of the era. Peter Flötner is particularly known for his prints "glorifying" feces. Research done on scatological humor in the late Middle Ages points to a fundamentally different approach to bodily excrement in comparison to our general post-modern disgust of most things related to the body. See Crista Grössinger's *Humour and Folly in Secular and Profane Prints of Northern Europe, 1430-1540*. London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2002), 171-181, and Jones, *The Secret Middle Ages,* 274-294 for more on scatological humor in the Middle Ages. In my mind the object most resembles a shell, much like the snail shell seen in the engraving of *Eros on a Snail*. However this reading does not explain the protrusion on the top which appears to be a lid or ring fastened to the object.

which might even provide a clue to his identity.[117] He even could have been engaging in some light self-deprecation; if his given name was Hans, as was extremely common in that era, the German carnival tradition contained a character named Hanswurst, who was considered both a sage and a fool.[118] That *wurst*, the German word for sausage, held the same phallic allusions as it does today, ties nicely to the erotic symbolism of the pig's bladder.

Furthering the carnival atmosphere, the two *putti* carrying the *ferculum* wear crowns. These crowns do not indicate legitimate kingship, nor are they even the crowns worn by the King of Fools. The front *putto*'s crown is topped with a swath of cloth bunched together by a tasseled cord, creating what appears to be the late medieval version of a pom-pom. The rear *putto*'s crown is fixed firmly to his head by way of some rope running under his chin. Both the gathered cloth and the rope strap declare the accoutrements to be costumes, revealing these *putti* as actors, mummers performing a farce such as those popular during festivals.

Returning to what Chipps Smith called a "step or ledge,"[119] it must be noticed how even and man-made the ground looks, although at first glance the scene is taking place outdoors. Where Mantegna utilized a nearly eye-level perspective, hinting at the viewer's participation in the procession, H.L. placed the viewer lower than the *putti*, looking up at them as if they were actors on a stage. The objects on the ledge, then, become props used to reinforce the message the players act out above them. The skull could be a signifier for Golgotha, as Chipps Smith suggests,[120] or it could be merely a *memento mori*, reminding viewers of their own mortality. The three conical objects, however, are small horns (akin to festival noisemakers), no doubt set

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[117] Many thanks to Professor Estelle Lingo for suggesting this as a possible reading of these items.

[118] Christa Grössinger, *Humor and Folly*, 171.

[119] Chipps Smith, "Master H.L." 176.

[120] Ibid, 177.

aside by the three *putti* above, and imply that death's sting is not serious and only temporary. The horns and skull reinforce the message of the "sweet flowers" proclaimed by the *cartellino* above the *putti*: that those who wish to find relief from earthly pains should seek succor in the sacrifice of Jesus.

The Importance of Carnival

The two engravings discussed in this chapter were created specifically to be sold before and during Carnival. Their message accorded with the general atmosphere of Carnival, where normal life became life abnormal. But such festivals were always enjoyed with the underlying knowledge that the madness had a purpose, that it would be followed by the strictly controlled season of Lent, leading the penitent to the greatest miracle of Christianity.

Today the festival of Carnival is big business, with tourists flocking every year to the main centers of revelry in Europe and the Americas, but the festival's significance has changed since the Middle Ages. The carnivals of today are primarily tourist attractions centered on a series of parades showcasing fantastical costume groups. Each city claims to be continuing specific historic customs, but these festivals have mostly lost what made them essential to the people of the Middle Ages. Carnival became important precisely because day-to-day life was a continual anti-carnival, full of struggle, hardship, hunger, and death. What had been an occasion ripe with meaning has become a vacation destination – an excuse to over-eat and drink while ogling scantily costumed participants. While medieval Carnival was followed and tempered by the somber Lenten season, today revelers simply go back to their day-to-day obligations of work and family, punctuated by their favorite sitcoms.

To regard the Carnivals of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance as simply predecessors of our modern-day pre-Lenten festivals is a mistake, but unraveling the truth behind the medieval Carnival presents unique challenges. Part of the reason was Carnival's place opposite official spheres. As Mikhail Bakhtin aptly writes:

> They offered a completely different, nonofficial, extraecclesiastical and extrapolitical aspect of the world, of man, and of human relations; they built a second world and a second life outside officialdom, a world in which all medieval people participated more or less, in which they lived during a given time of the year. If we fail to take into consideration this two-world condition, neither medieval cultural consciousness nor the culture of the Renaissance can be understood. To ignore or to underestimate the laughing people of the Middle Ages also distorts the picture of European culture's historic development.[121]

Yet this very distancing from officialdom resulted in a dearth of contemporary literary and visual sources documenting these festivals. In fact, eyewitness documentation only appeared during the latter sixteenth century, when observers felt an urgency to preserve Carnival's traditions, due perhaps to a sense of loss accompanying the festival's changing nature. The festivities of Carnival began to be "represented" instead of "presented"; participants became paraders, displaying their culture's Carnival history separate from the audience, who merely watched from the sidelines.[122] When Carnival was not threatened, participants felt no need to document their revelries since Carnival was a constant in their lives.

The history of Carnival has Roman origins stemming from at least the early twelfth century, when a contemporaneous manuscript mentions a pre-Lenten festival taking place in Rome. The manuscript recounts a parade watched by the Pope and other Roman citizens weave

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[121] Pam Morris, trans., *The Bakhtin Reader: Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev and Voloshinov* (London, et al: Edward Arnold, 1994), 197.

[122] Samuel Kinser, "Presentation and Representation: Carnival at Nuremburg, 1450-1550." *Representations*, 13 (Winter, 1986): 1.

through the city ending in a ritual sacrifice of various animals.[123] The name 'Carnival' comes

from the Latin term *carnem-levare*, *levare* in this context meaning to remove oneself, and

carnem, meaning meat. Literally translated, the name seems self-explanatory. However, as with

many aspects of Carnival, *carnem* had a double meaning and could conveniently refer to either

food or sex, eventually becoming the root of the English word carnal. Over time *carnem-levare*

was shortened by the Italians to *carnevale*, or "flesh farewell."[124] Over the next several centuries

the festival gained in popularity and ritual complexity, spreading to the rest of Europe with

varying degrees of intensity, each city and town altering the basic concept of pre-Lenten

exuberance to fit local desires.

There were a few reasons why Carnival became so popular throughout the Middle Ages,

while declining over the course of the sixteenth century. The most prevalent pertains to a notion

of emancipation from the rigors of everyday life, a time of "temporary liberation from the

prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank,

privileges, norms, and prohibitions."[125] This was a belief held by contemporaries, as evidenced

by some French clerics writing in 1444 in defense of The Feast of Fools, a carnivalesque holiday

occurring in late December: "We do these things in jest and not in earnest, as the ancient custom

is, so that once a year the foolishness innate in us can come out and evaporate. Don't wine skins

and barrels burst very often if the air-hole (*spiraculum*) is not opened from time to time? We too

are old barrels…"[126] This is why the Church allowed such lascivious and unruly behavior in such

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[123] Barbara Mauldin, "Introduction: Carnival in Europe and the Americas," in *Carnival!,* ed. Barbara Mauldin, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), 3.

[124] Ibid.

[125] Morris, *Bakhtin Reader*, 199.

[126] Burke, *Popular Culture,* 202.

religiously-linked festivals, since the license to act foolish occasionally for many was a more immediate reward for good morals than any ephemeral promise of joy in the afterlife.

Official approval of these unofficial revelries also reaffirmed the hierarchical model of the age.[127] The upper class was as aware of the inconsistencies between social levels as was the lower class. Giving those less privileged sporadic chances to express their anger and frustration with impunity was always followed with a return to the normal social structure. It has been argued by some social anthropologists that where these 'rites of protest' do not occur, one finds greater social unrest and questioning of the hierarchy.[128]

This reinforcement of the cultural order also strengthened the ties of individual communities. During most of the year the common person was identified within their city or hamlet according to their occupation and status, and communally by religion and fealty to a certain liege. During Carnival, these typical binding agents were reinforced by the individual's experience of a communal activity unique to their town or city. People experienced an increased sense of time passing while taking part in annual festivals such as Carnival. By participating, they came into contact with other members of their community, all of varying age and social status.[129] They were aware of their place as a member of a continually growing and renewing people, a people who were collectively experiencing a Carnival unique to their community, different even from neighboring cities otherwise connected by language, king, and religion.

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[127] Morris, *Bakhtin Reader*, 199.

[128] Burke, *Popular Culture*, 201. Burke mentions Max Gluckman, a social anthropologist who studied rites of protest and role reversal in various African tribes, who described how in Zululand unmarried girls are sent to drive the cattle out while wearing men's cloths, singing tawdry songs and carrying shields and assegais during the time just before harvest. This form of role reversal is extremely common within the carnivalesque tradition in Europe.

[129] Morris, *Bakhtin Reader*, 210.

Yet at its foundations, Carnival was a festival celebrating the death and the rejuvenation of life, of change and renewal. Effigies of the fool or devil were usually killed by burning at the conclusion of Carnival, marking the end of sinning that was prevalent during the previous week, but also as a symbol of the people's wish to be free from temptation during the following year. They were not only killing Satan, but purging their souls, and being spiritually reborn within the cleansing flames.

Further symbols of pregnancy and fertility abound, and support this notion of rebirth. One aspect is the proliferation of animal and food symbolism, usually phallic in nature, such as cocks and pork (including sausages and the bladders already mentioned as instruments, batons, or balls intended for games). The overeating and drinking that occurred during the festival was only partially in anticipation of Lenten fasting, serving also as a spectacle display of wealth and health. Meanwhile men dressed as bears or wild men symbolized virility, and young unmarried women hoping to be soon married were made to pull a plow through the streets while being verbally and physically harassed by single young men,[130] adding to a sense of sexual license.

Carnival's topsy-turvy dynamic infused the festival with vital notions of change and renewal. As Bakhtin writes, "We find here a characteristic logic, the peculiar logic of the 'inside out' (*à l'envers*), of the 'turnabout', of a continual shifting from top to bottom, from front to rear, of numerous parodies and travesties, humiliations, profanations, comic crownings and uncrownings."[131] Men dressing as women, women as men, servants and masters eating together, fools crowned as kings – all are exaggerated yet controlled manifestations of change, partially in response to inevitable changes beyond human control, the timeless vagaries of illness and death.

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[130] Ibid, 187.

[131] Morris, *Bakhtin Reader*, 200.

<p style="text-align:center">Conclusion: The Necessity of the *Mundus Inversus*</p>

In creating these engravings, Master H.L. was playing on his audience's established love of Carnival and absurdities of the topsy-turvy. The appearance of this inane alternate universe, commonly referred to as the World Turned Upside Down, the *mundus inversus*, *le monde renversé, il mondo alla rovescia, Die verkehrte Welt*, occurred in both text and image. In literature most of the popular secular stories included some aspect of the absurd. A favorite character was Reynard, an anthropomorphized fox famous as a trickster whose adventures mimic the great epic romances of the Middle Ages. Reynard lived in a world populated primarily by animals who behaved in unaccustomed ways: Couard the Rabbit hunts and captures a peasant,[132] and Tardif the Snail is a flag-bearer for King Leo the Lion's army.[133] Along with the folk tales of Reynard, Rabelais's stories of Gargantua and Pantagruel, written close to the time H.L. was working, featured a pair of father-and-son giants, and were immensely popular. The stories of both Reynard and Rabelais's giants often served as screens for mocking politics and the Church. In this they bore analogies to the role of the Fool, who could voice unpleasant truths about his master, if he was a household fool, or about his community as the King of Carnival.

Each of these literary examples had visual counterparts in the way of illustrations within books, but also in less directly associated circumstances. Grotesques in the margins of books,[134]

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[132] Jones, *The Secret Middle Ages*, 160.

[133] Pinon, "Armed Snail," 81-82.

[134] The use of the topsy-turvy in the marginalia of manuscripts dates to the middle of the thirteenth century, seen in the Rutland Psalter (London, British Library, MS Add. 62925), which then expanded into a profusion of profane narratives within the East Anglian manuscripts of the fourteenth century. "Where earlier the emphasis had been on battles with fiendish monsters entangled in foliage, there was now an explosion of human activity along the margins of manuscripts, and although beasts, often half animal/half human, were still present, they interacted now with humans in a light-hearted, humorous, and playful fashion, causing these illuminations to be called 'drolleries'." See Grössinger, *Humour and Folly,* 13.

sculpture and stained glass decorating houses and cathedrals, and print engravings also referred to stories known to viewers without the presence of the actual text.[135] The stories themselves are outside the focus of this thesis, but because of their topsy-turvy nature, aspects of any given story could be recycled in new ways to meet various moralizing ends. It is their function as moral spurs tempered by much needed humor that ensured their longevity, and it is from the same wellspring that H.L.'s four works likewise draw their continued liveliness and interest.

While only two of the prints share a direct connection to Carnival, all of them are connected through their rearranging of the ordinary world according to the carnivalesque and topsy-turvy in order to make pedantic messages more palatable. H.L. achieved this end in ways overt and subtle, conservative and novel, by having his subjects balance comically on a ball, battle a harmless snail, gobble over-sized peas, and perform as Carnival actors. The large sizes of the snail and the peas harken back to earlier traditions in marginalia or architectural sculpture, and would have been familiar to a broad audience. His allusions to contemporary but well regarded works by more established artists such as Mantegna and Dürer would have been appreciated by a smaller circle of buyers knowledgeable about the latest trends in the art world and wishing to illustrate and confirm their sophistication.

Less obviously, he engaged with the *mundus inversus* by his choice of characters. Instead of using the Fool, who was already well established as a moralizing agent, he chose a new figure to replace the old, one that since the end of the classical era had only appeared as a marginal

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[135] The one exception to this marginal status is an early sixteenth-century diptych held in the Collections Artistique of the Université de Liège. The cover of the painting, by an unknown artist, shows a man bending over, and pointing to a scroll that warns the viewer not to open the diptych or else they will find a nasty surprise within. The inside shows the pock-marked backside of the man on the front with a couple of thistles placed between his buttocks. On the opposite panel, another man makes an exaggerated face as an "I told you so" gesture. The diptych was perfect conveyer for revealing a surprise for the viewer, but also sacrilegiously pokes fun at devotional images, the most popular form of which was the painted diptych.

character. *Putti* were always secondary to the main subjects wherever they appeared, whether in the texts of the Middle Ages or as disembodied devotees swarming like angelic bees around the the Virgin and Child in so many Renaissance paintings. In a topsy-turvy world, women could wear pants, fools could become kings, and the marginal could become the primary.

Master H.L.'s choice of characters was a subtle nod of appreciation to the *mundus inversus*, but it was also a way to make the old archetype of the Fool still relevant to his early sixteenth-century audience, despite the increasingly serious mien of art during H.L.'s productive period. This gravity may be easily seen by comparing the playful prints of Israhel van Meckenem (fig. 45) or Master E.S (fig. 8) with Dürer's somber Madonnas, bathers, and Nemesis. Even more outré prints, such as Hans Baldung Grien's witches (fig. 46) or many of the works by the Nuremburg Kleinmasters (fig. 47), feel unsettling in a way that distinguishes them from much earlier print culture. H.L., by contrast, chose to keep his works lighthearted, perhaps to mark his individuality by offering something less available from other artists, or because he knew that some buyers still possessed a desire for their very serious world to be taken a little less seriously.

In laughing at the Fool, they were able to laugh at human nature, at their neighbors, and at themselves. Laughter allowed them to digest moral lessons and ugly truths about themselves without the bitterness of unadorned criticism. Laughter also allowed them to dispel fear. As Bakhtin wrote:

> … It was the victory of laughter over fear that most impressed medieval man. It was not only a victory over mystic terror of God, but also a victory over the awe inspired by the forces of nature, and most of all over the oppression and the guilt related to all that was consecrated and forbidden ('mana' and 'taboo'). It was the defeat of divine and human power, of authoritarian commandments and prohibitions, of death and punishment after death, hell and all that is more terrifying than the earth itself. Through this victory laughter clarified man's consciousness and gave him a new outlook on life.[136]

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[136] Morris, *Bakhtin Reader,* 209.

Despite the intervening five hundred years, we can still appreciate these engravings for their levity. Post-modern culture is still rife with *putti*, although they are referred to more often by their Christianized title of "cherub." They adorn clothing, jewelry, artwork, and show up every February as agents of Cupid. The absurdity of one fighting a giant snail or struggling to balance on a ball continues to amuse or at least intrigue, and so they remain fresh where so many engravings of the early sixteenth century have not. Stock images of saints standing in blank backgrounds may have served as popular devotional images of the time, but now seem only to blend into each other. The engravings that continue to seize our attention are the humorous, the bizarre, and the grotesque. By examining these images carefully, we bring greater light to their purpose and intelligence, while affording them a more deserving station in print-engraving scholarship.

"There is a goddess who walks aloft, floating in empty air. Her loins girded with a cloud, her mantle white, her hair encircled with a crown, she resounds with whirring wings. She subdues extravagant hopes; she threatens the proud with dangers; to her is given power to crush the arrogant minds and triumphs of men and to confound their too ambitious plans. The ancients called her Nemesis, begotten by Father Ocean out of silent Night. Stars are affixed to her brow, in her hand she carries a bridle and a bowl; always she *laughs* at that which is awe-inspiring; and she sets her face against and thwarts outrageous undertakings, subduing wicked desires. Exchanging high and low, she mixes and tempers our actions by turns, and she is borne hither and thither by the whirling motion of the winds. She had seen how you, Greece, swollen from the conquest of the Persians, carried your victorious arms to the eastern [part of the] globe; she had seen how you rode high, proud of muse-inspired song and eloquence, and how you bragged, raised your upturned head to the stars and believed yourself to be equal to the gods. But soon, detesting noxious haughtiness, she forced you to wear the yoke upon your neck and subjected you, vanquished, to the arms of the Romans."

(Politian, *Manto*)

Image list

Chapter One: The World of Master H.L.

Fig. 1- Master H.L., *Eros Balancing on a Ball*, ca. 1510, 4.7 x 2.7in., engraving, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden. Photo by Dirk Gedlich.
Fig. 2 - Master H.L., *Eros Fighting a Snail*, ca. 1510, 5.2 x 3.7 in., engraving, National Gallery of Art, Washington.
Fig. 3 - Master H.L., *Two Putti Eating Peas*, 1519, 3.6 x 2.9 in., engraving, British Museum, London.
Fig. 4 - Master H.L., *Three Putti with Instruments of the Passion*, 1511, 5.2 x 3.7 in., engraving, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden. Photo by Dirk Gedlich.
Fig. 5 – Master H.L., *Christ*, Brisach Altarpiece, detail, 1523-26, wooden sculpture, St. Stephansmünster, Breisach, Germany.
Fig. 6 – Albrecht Durer, *Hercules at the Crossroads*, ca. 1498, engraving.
Fig. 7 – Master H.L., *Adam and Eve* with *Hercules Battling the Ceryneian Hind*, ca. 1511-15, engraving

Chapter Two: Why Putti?

Fig. 8 - Master E.S., *Luxuria and the Fool*, third quarter of the 15th century, engraving, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden.
Fig. 9 - Hans Brosamer, *The Prostitute and the Fool*, ca. 1530s, engraving.
Fig. 10 - Master H.L., *Morris Dance*, ca. 1510, engraving.
Fig. 11 - Marble sarcophagus with flying erotes holding a clipeus portrait, ca. AD 190-200, Roman, Proconnesian marble, Metropolitan Museum of Art.
Fig. 12 - Marble Sarcophagus with Lid, ca. 200-300 C.E., Roman, from Ierápetra, Crete, British Museum, London.
Fig. 13 - Wiligelmo, *Putti and Ibis*, ca. 1110, stone, Cathedral of San Geminiano, west façade, Modena, Italy.
Fig. 14 - Piero della Francesca, *Choir with Legend of the True Cross Cycle*, mid 1450s, fresco, San Francesco in Arezzo. Scala.
Fig. 15 - Jacopo della Quercia, *Tomb of Illaria del Carretto*, Lucca, S. Martino. Scala
Fig. 16 - Donatello, Exterior Pulpit, 1433-48, marble with mosaic background and bronze, Duomo di Prato. Scala
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Fig. 19 - Andrea del Verrocchio, Putto with a Dolphin, bronze, Palazzo Vecchio, Florence.
Fig. 20 -Albrecht Dürer, *Heller Altarpiece*, 1507-09, oil on panel, Staatliche Kunsthalle, Kalrsruhe.
Fig. 21 - Albrecht Dürer, Prayerbook of Maximillian, 1510s, drawing.
Fig. 22 - Albrecht Dürer, *Witch Riding Backwards on a Goat*, 1500-01, engraving. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
Fig. 23 - Albrecht Dürer, *Dream of the Physician*, 1497-98, engraving, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute.
Fig. 24 - Nicoletto da Modena, *Fate of an Evil Tongue*, ca. 1507, engraving. The Illustrated Bartsch. Vol. 25, Early Italian Masters.
Fig. 25 - Master H.L., *Hymenaeus*, ca. 1510-20, engraving.

Chapter Three: Love's Folly

Fig. 26 - Anon., *The Siege of the Castle of Love*, ca. 1350–1370, ivory mirror-back, possibly Paris, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Fig. 27 - Albrecht Dürer, *Das Männerbad*, ca. 1498, woodcut engraving.
Fig. 28 - Albrecht Dürer, *Nemesis*, ca. 1501-02, engraving.
Fig. 29 - Albrecht Dürer, *The Small Fortune*, ca. 1496, engraving
Fig. 30 - Anon., *Man Frightened by Snail*, Psalter (known as the 'Ormesby Psalter'), ca. 1300, illumination, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.
Fig. 31 - Anon., *Knight and Snail, Woman and Ram*, Psalter, MS G.K.S. 2284 fols 160v-161r. 95 x 70. Kongelige Bibliotek, Copenhagen.

Chapter Four: The Folly of Carnival

Fig. 32 - *Ara Pacis*, 13-9 BCE, marble, Rome
Fig. 33 - Albrecht Dürer, *Allegory of Philosophy*, 1502, woodcut, Illustrated Bartsch.
Fig. 34 - Master H.L., *Beheading of St. Catherine*, 1522, engraving. Photo by Dirk Gedlich.
Fig. 35 - Anon., *Raising of Lazarus*, ca. 1490, Book of Hours illumination on parchment, Flemish, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.
Fig. 36 - Anon., *St. Christopher Carrying Christ*, late 15th century, Offices illumination on parchment, Flemish/Italian, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.
Fig. 37 - Master of the Morgan Infancy Cycle, *Nativity*, ca. 1450, parchment, Belgian, British Library, London
Fig. 38 - Anon., *Virgin and Child with Pea Blossom*, ca. 1410-40, painted panel, German.
Fig. 39 - Master of Catherine of Cleves, *Singing Angels*, ms. 917, fol. 11, mid 15th century, Book of Hours, Pierpont Morgan Library.
Fig. 40 - Albrecht Altdorfer, Prayerbook of Emperor Maximilian, 1510s, drawing.
Fig. 41 - Andrea Mantegna, Canvas IV: *Bearers of Coin and Plate* from *The Triumph of Caesar*, second half of fifteenth century, egg tempera on canvas, The Palace of Hampton Court, England.
Fig. 42 - Andrea Mantegna, After Canvas VI: *The Vase Bearers* from *The Triumph of Caesar*, ca 1500, engraving.
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Fig. 44 - Andrea Mantegna, *Bacchanal*, ca. 1490, engraving, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Conclusion: The Necessity of *Mundus Inversus*

Fig. 45 - Israhel van Meckenem, *Kinderbad*, ca. 1490, engraving, Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.
Fig. 46 - Hans Baldung Grien, *Preparation for the Witches' Sabbath*, ca. 1510, woodcut, The Illustrated Bartsch.
Fig. 47 - Sebald Beham after Barthel Beham, *Woman and Children in Bathhouse*, 1530-1550, engraving.

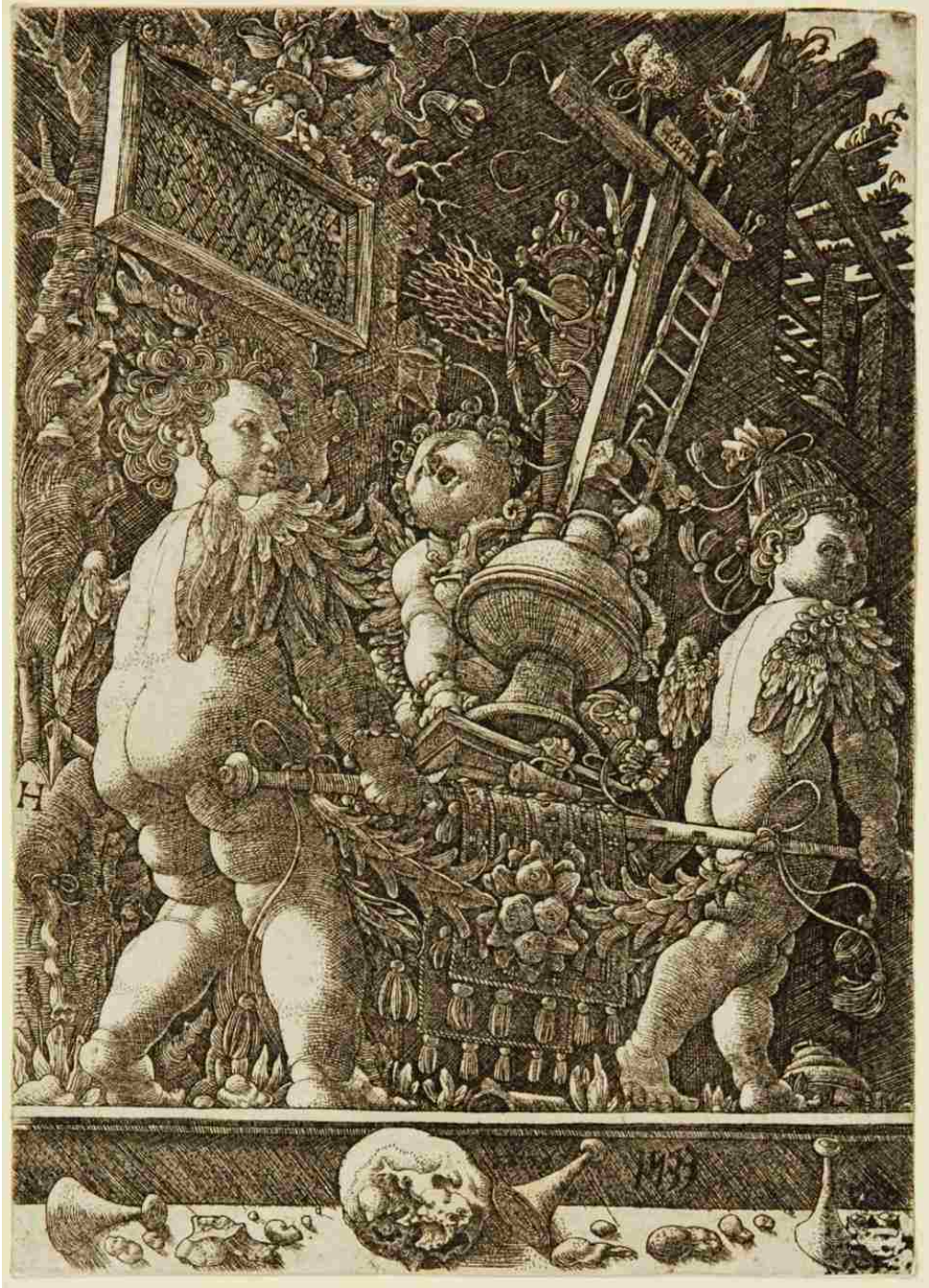Figure 1

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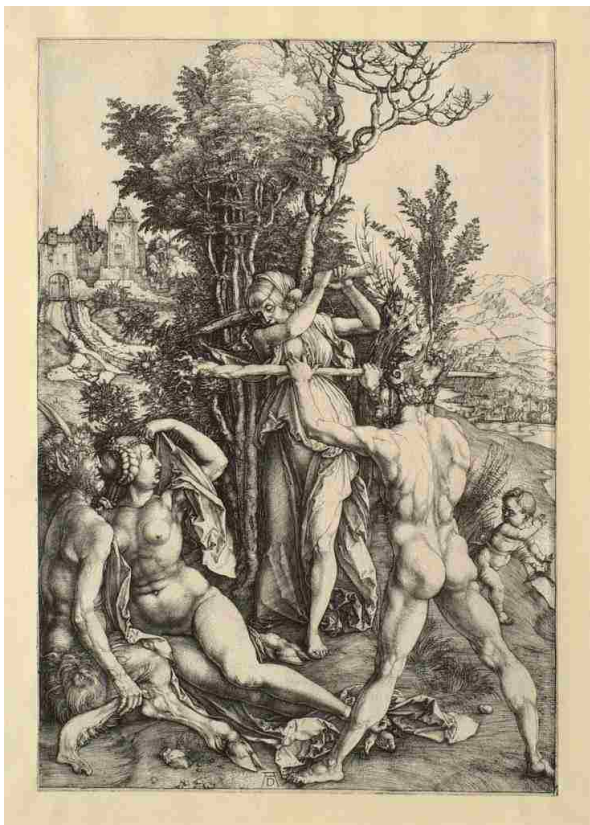
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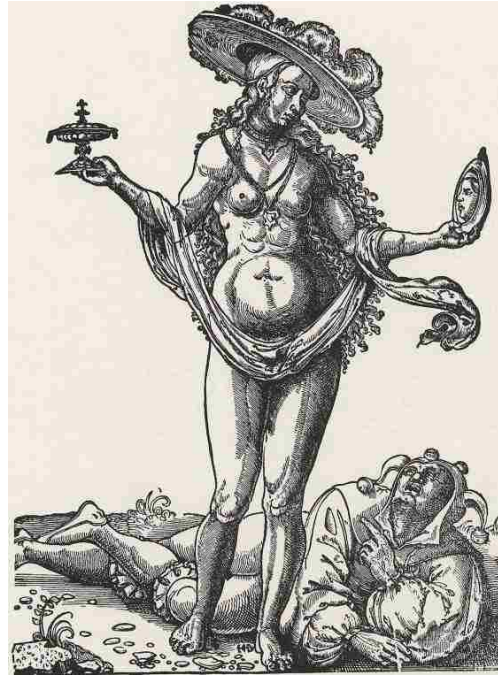

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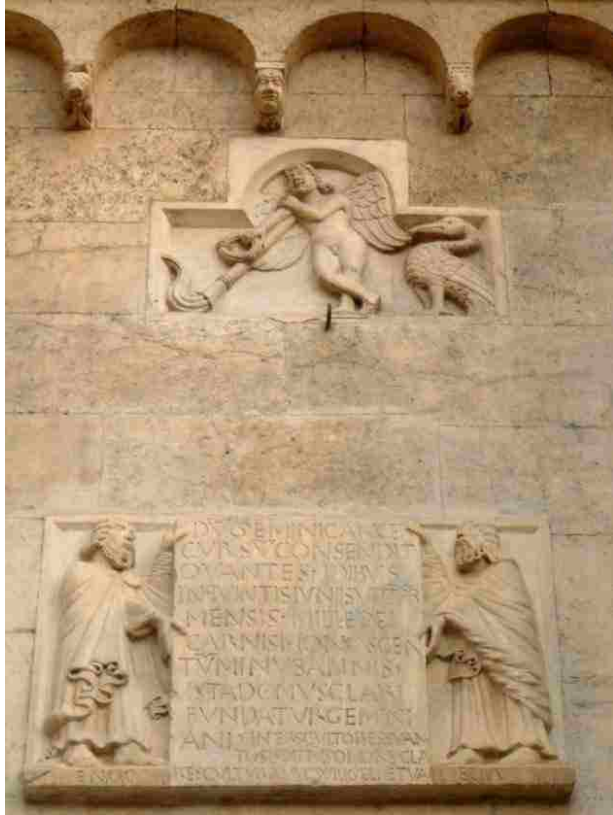Figure 9

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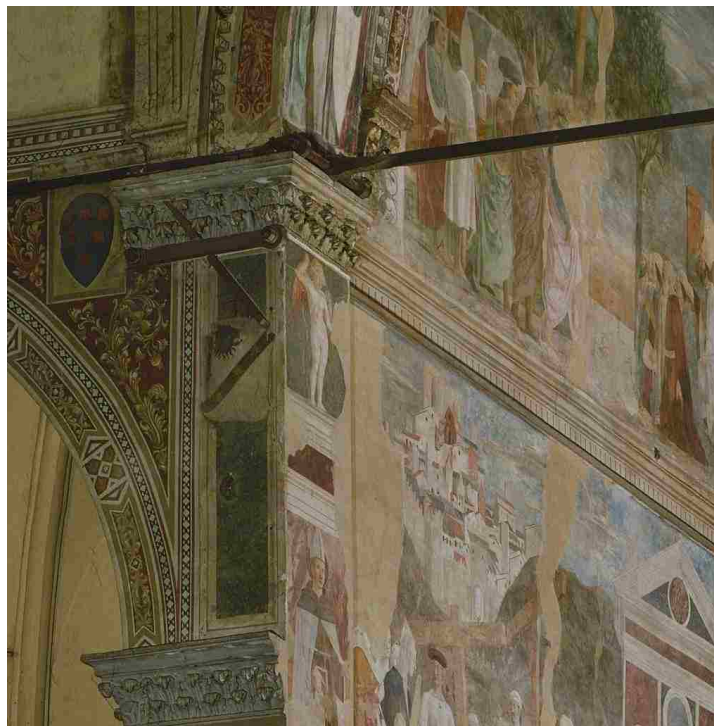
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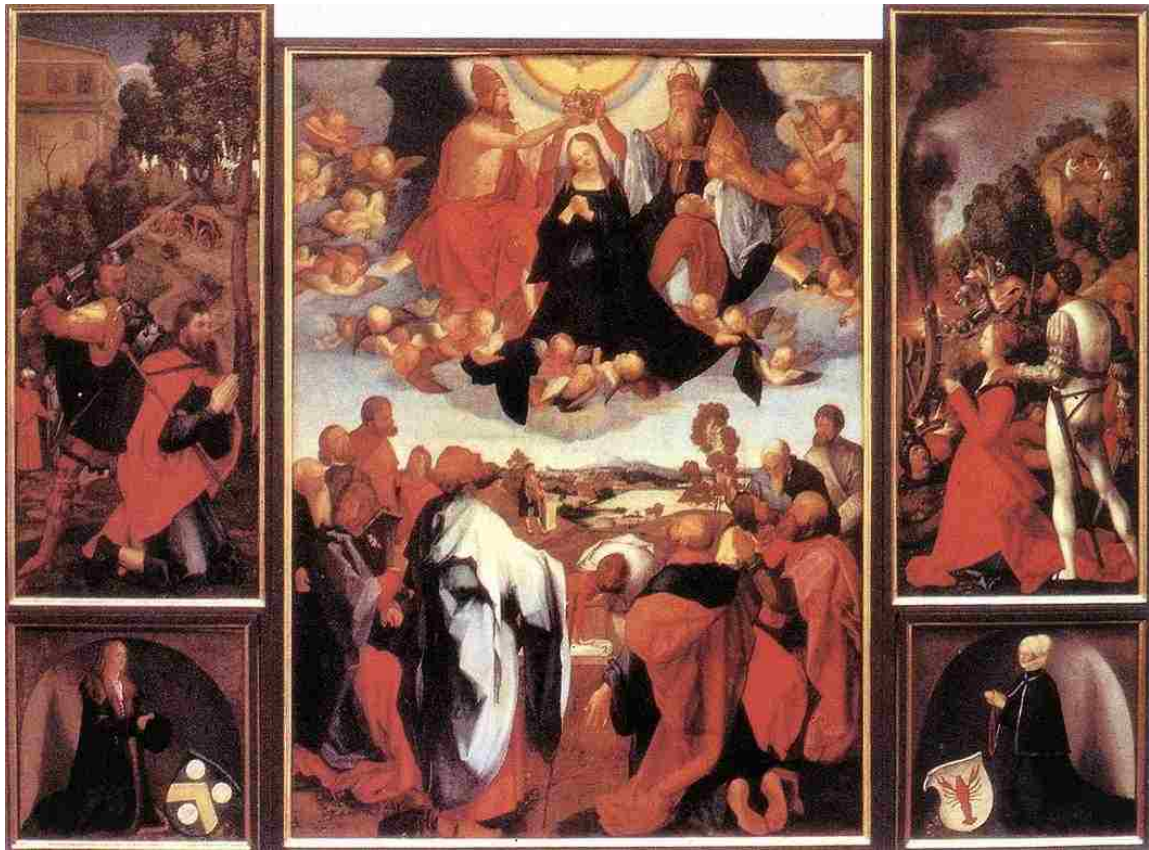Figure 17

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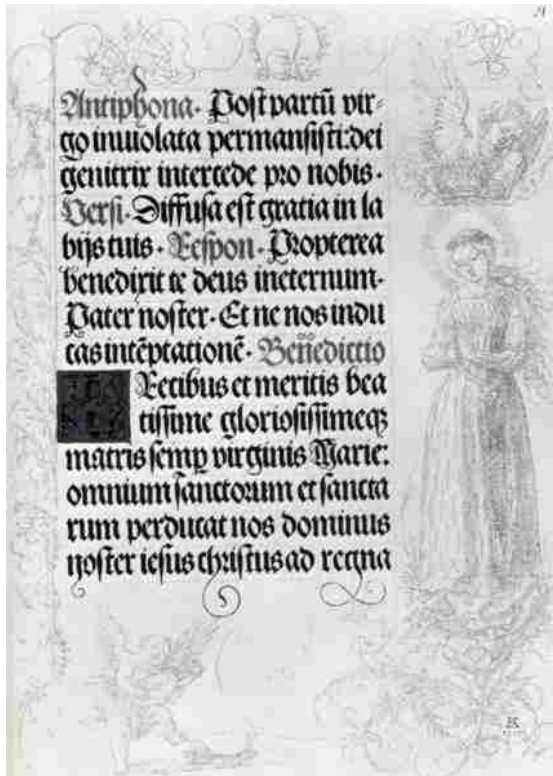

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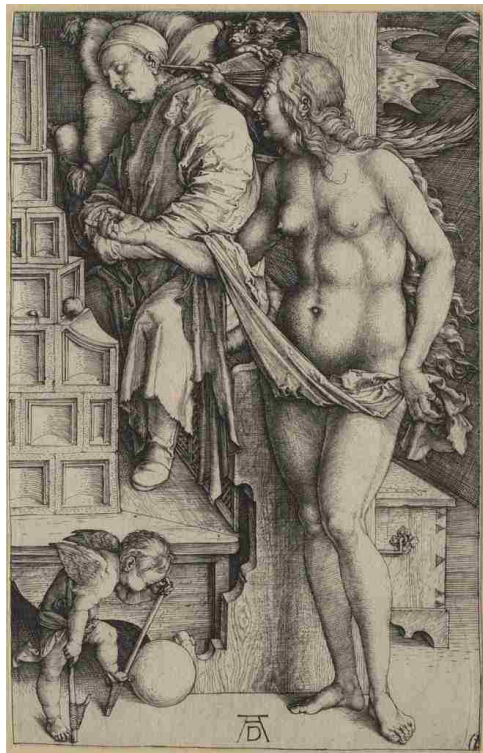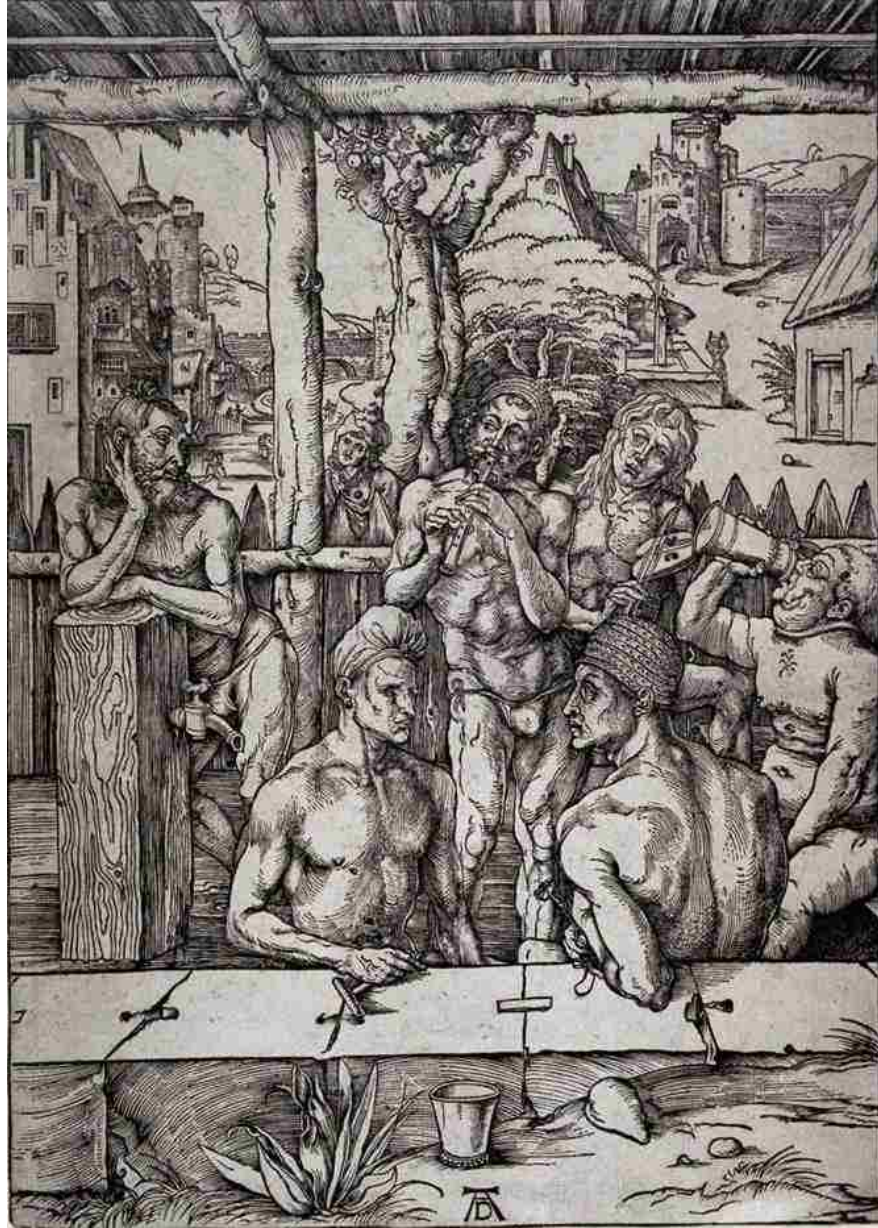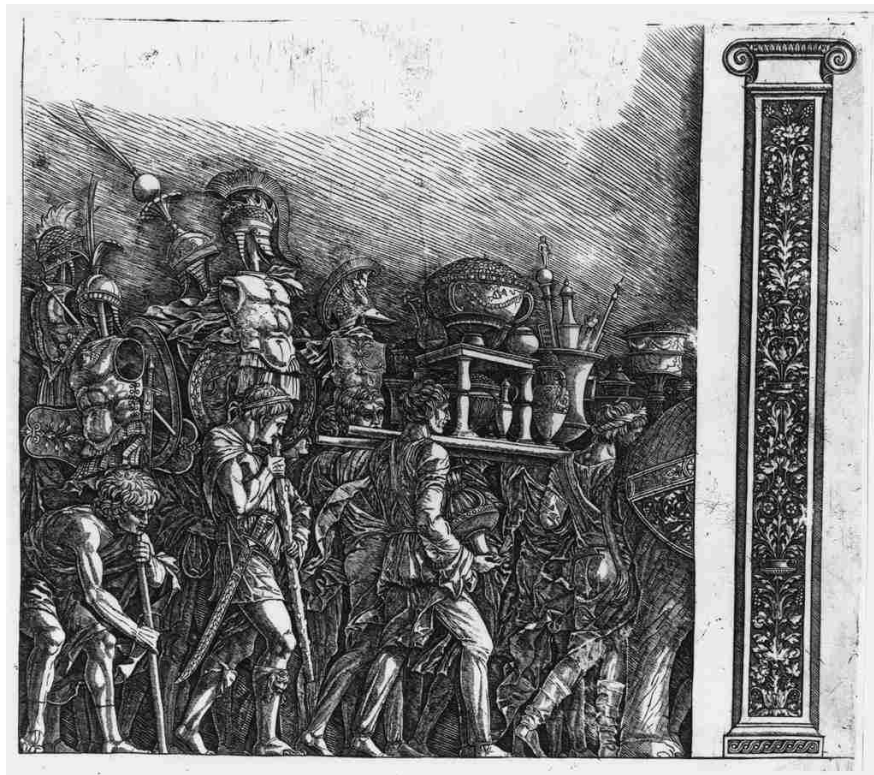
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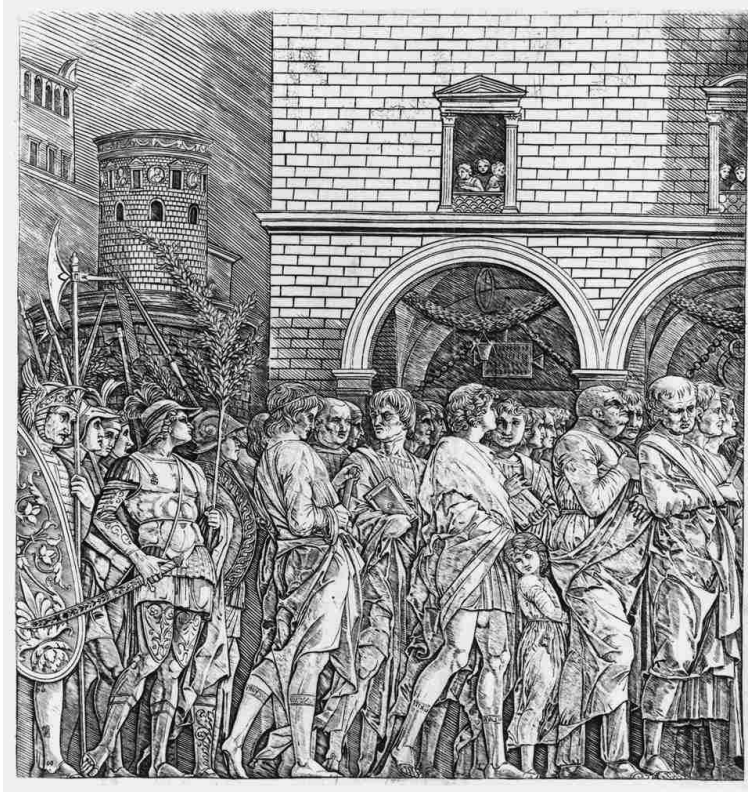

Figure 3

Figure 40

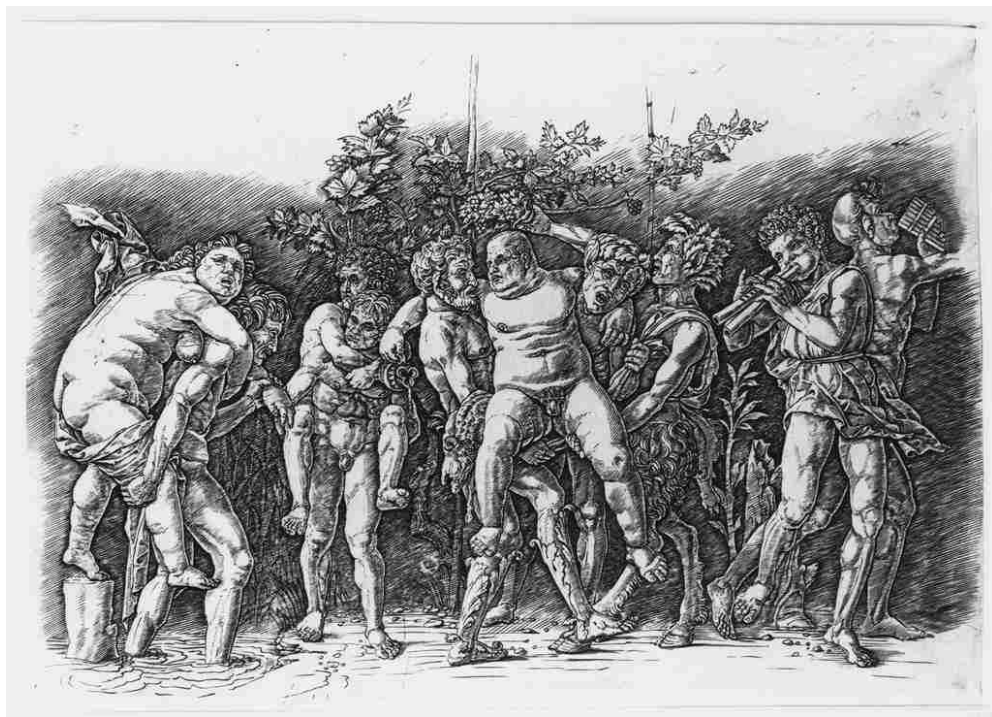Figure 41

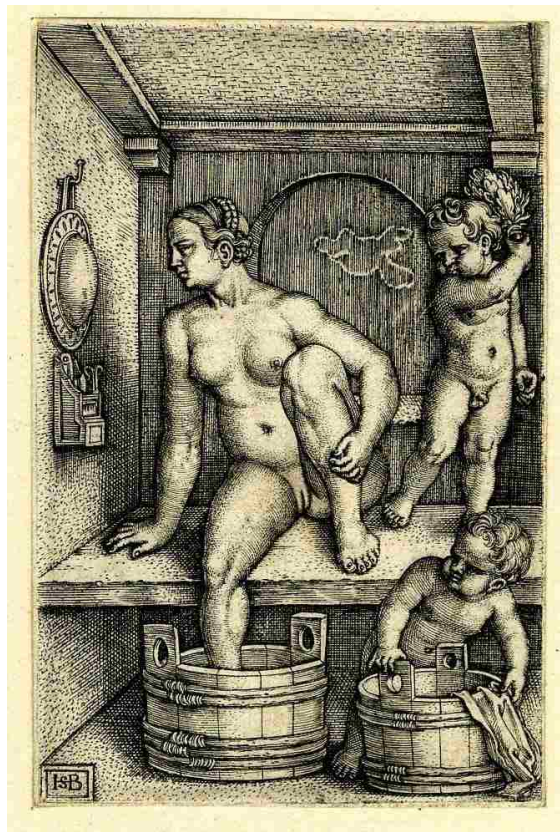
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Figure 47

<center>Bibliography</center>

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