

“All Are Punished”: Violent [Self-]Destruction in

Pieter Bruegel’s *Triumph of Death*

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	ii
List of Illustrations	iv
Chapter One: The State of Scholarship	1
Chapter Two: Present Study	14
Chapter Three: The Dance of Death	19
Chapter Four: Vesalius	33
Chapter Five: Processions and Performance	46
Chapter Six: Conclusion	58
Endnotes	61
Figures	65
Bibliography	107

List of Illustrations

Figure 1. Pieter Bruegel, *The Triumph of Death*, Museo del Prado, Madrid, undated, image from Museo del Prado.

Figure 2. Pieter van der Heyden, after Pieter Bruegel, *The Last Judgment*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1558, image from Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Figure 3. Hans Holbein, The Knight, from *The Dance of Death*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1538, image from The Project Gutenberg ebook of *The Dance of Death*.

Figure 4. Detail, Francesco Traini, *The Triumph of Death*, Camposanto, Pisa, 1325-50, image from Dr. Robert Ousterhout.

Figure 5. Hieronymus Bosch, *Haywain Triptych*, Museo del Prado, Madrid, ca. 1516, image from Museo del Prado.

Figure 6. Hieronymus Bosch, *Last Judgment Triptych*, Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, ca. 1482, image from Academy of Fine Arts.

Figure 7. Hieronymus Bosch, *Death and the Miser*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., ca. 1485-90, image from National Gallery of Art.

Figure 8. Pieter Bruegel, *The Wine of Saint Martin's Day*, Museo del Prado, Madrid, ca. 1565-8, image from Museo del Prado.

Figure 9. Bernt Notke, *Pope and Emperor, Lübeck Dance of Death*, Germany, ca. 1463, image from ARTstor.

Figure 10. Charnel, detail, Pieter Bruegel, *The Triumph of Death*, Museo del Prado, Madrid, undated, image from Museo del Prado.

Figure 11. Bernt Notke, *Reval Dance of Death*, Estonia, after 1463, image from ARTstor.

Figure 12. Cardinal, detail, Pieter Bruegel, *The Triumph of Death*, Museo del Prado, Madrid, undated, image from Museo del Prado.

Figure 13. *Interrupted Banquet*, detail, Pieter Bruegel, *The Triumph of Death*, Museo del Prado, Madrid, undated, image from Museo del Prado.

Figure 14. Skeletal Army, detail, Pieter Bruegel, *The Triumph of Death*, Museo del Prado, Madrid, undated, image from Museo del Prado.

Figure 15. Jean Le Noir, *The Three Living and Three Dead*, from Psalter and Hours of Bonne of Luxembourg, Metropolitan Museum of Art, before 1349, image from Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Figure 16. Hans Holbein, Last Judgment, from *The Dance of Death*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1538, image from The Project Gutenberg ebook of *The Dance of Death*.

Figure 17. Drummer, detail, Pieter Bruegel, *The Triumph of Death*, Museo del Prado, Madrid, undated, image from Museo del Prado.

Figure 18. Hans Holbein, A Cemetery, from *The Dance of Death*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1538, image from The Project Gutenberg ebook of *The Dance of Death*

Figure 19. Hans Holbein, The Advocate, from *The Dance of Death*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1538, image from The Project Gutenberg ebook of *The Dance of Death*.

Figure 20. Unknown artist, Dissection of a male cadaver, from *Anathomia* of Mondino de Liuzzi, British Museum, ca. 1345, image from ARTstor.

Figure 21. Unknown woodcutter, *Anatomy of the Bones of the Human Body*, Staatliche Graphische Sammlung München, 1493, image from Staatliche Graphische Sammlung München.

Figure 22. Hans von Gersdorff, *Skeleton*, from *Feldtbüch der Wundartzney*, Boston Medical Library, 1517, image from the U.S. National Library of Medicine.

Figure 23. Leonardo da Vinci, *Anatomical Studies of the Spine*, Windsor Royal Library, ca. 1510, image from U.S. National Library of Medicine.

Figure 24. Jan van Calcar, Representation of the bones of the human body from the anterior aspect, from Andreas Vesalius' *De Humani Corporis Fabrica*, Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1543, image from U.S. National Library of Medicine

Figure 25. Skeleton, detail, Pieter Bruegel, *The Triumph of Death*, Museo del Prado, Madrid, undated, image from Museo del Prado.

Figure 26. Detail of Hip Anatomy, Jan van Calcar, Representation of the bones of the human body from the anterior aspect, from Andreas Vesalius' *De Humani Corporis Fabrica*, Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1543, image from U.S. National Library of Medicine.

Figure 27. Jan van Calcar, Representation of the bones of the human body from the side, from Andreas Vesalius' *De Humani Corporis Fabrica*, Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1543, image from U.S. National Library of Medicine.

Figure 28. Sorrowful Skeleton, detail, Pieter Bruegel, *The Triumph of Death*, Museo del Prado, Madrid, undated, image from Museo del Prado.

Figure 29. Jan van Calcar, Representation of the bones of the human body from the posterior aspect, from Andreas Vesalius' *De Humani Corporis Fabrica*, Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1543, image from U.S. National Library of Medicine.

Figure 30. Jan van Calcar, Muscles, Second Plate, from Andreas Vesalius' *De Humani Corporis Fabrica*, Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1543, image from U.S. National Library of Medicine.

Figure 31. Jan van Calcar, Muscles, Third Plate, from Andreas Vesalius' *De Humani Corporis Fabrica*, Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1543, image from U.S. National Library of Medicine.

Figure 32. Jan van Calcar, Title Page, from Andreas Vesalius' *De Humani Corporis Fabrica*, Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1543, image from U.S. National Library of Medicine.

Figure 33. Willem Swanenburgh, *Anatomical Theatre in Leiden*, Wellcome Library, 1610, image from Wellcome Library Collection.

Figure 34. Bartolomeus Willemsz Dolendo, *Anatomical Theatre at Leiden University*, Rijksmuseum, 1609, image from Rijksmuseum.

Figure 35. Jan van Calcar, Title Page from Second Edition, from Andreas Vesalius' *De Humani Corporis Fabrica*, Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1555, image from U.S. National Library of Medicine.

Figure 36. "Hell Bastion" Wagon, detail, Pieter Bruegel, *The Triumph of Death*, Museo del Prado, Madrid, undated, image from Museo del Prado.

Figure 37. Anonymous after Hans Vredeman de Vries, *The Giant Druon or Antigoon*, Asher and Co. BV, Ijmuiden, The Netherlands, 1582, image from Asher and Co. BV.

Figure 38. Anonymous after Hans Vredeman de Vries, *Mount Parnassus and the Cave of Discord*, Asher and Co. BV, Ijmuiden, The Netherlands, 1582, image from Asher and Co. BV.

Figure 39. Anonymous after Hans Vredeman de Vries, *The Ommegang Elephant*, Asher and Co. BV, Ijmuiden, The Netherlands, 1582, image from Asher and Co. BV.

Figure 40. Anonymous, *Pageant Wagon*, Schembartbuch, Bodleian Library, Oxford, ca. 1590-1640, image from Bodleian Library.

Figure 41. Anonymous, *The Storming of Hölle*, 1539, Schembartbuch, Nuremberg Stadtbibliothek, ca. 1575-1600, image from Nuremberg Stadtbibliothek.

Figure 42. Tafelspelen, detail, Pieter Bruegel, *The Triumph of Death*, Museo del Prado, Madrid, undated, image from Museo del Prado.

Chapter One: The State of Scholarship

The oft-cited remarks of Karel van Mander illuminate the provocative nature of Pieter Bruegel the Elder's drawings:

[Bruegel] made many more works of this kind in careful and beautifully finished drawings to which he had added inscriptions. But as some of them were too biting and sharp, he had them burnt by his wife when he was on his deathbed, from remorse or for fear that she might get into trouble and might have to answer for them.¹

This provides us with a weighty contradiction, as we also know that the Hapsburg-favored Cardinal Granvelle collected Bruegel's works. Was his work political or not? Did Bruegel's political inclinations change with the growing distrust and violence in Antwerp? It is this spirit of controversy that engenders all of Bruegel's works, and his undated, unsigned *The Triumph of Death* (Prado, Madrid) forms no exception (Figure 1). Despite a relative dearth of research surrounding this picture, the existing scholarship reflects all of the different facets of the artist: The painting has been employed to argue for Bruegel the artist of the peasant, folly, and even the Classical. An enigma, however, presents itself when these typical veins of classification appear in conversation with the *Triumph*, since its nature as a painting seems entirely different from that of his other works. Widespread violence spreads across the panorama. Every man, woman, and child is met by the ferocious attacks of an infinite skeletal army. Smaller, individual scenes comprise the majority of the picture. Across the foreground, individual figures of varying class pair off with single skeletal assailants. Death has interrupted a banquet in the right foreground, and hordes of figures are forced into a large wooden box just above. To the far left, toga-wearing skeletons trumpet the end of humanity as singular figures

are picked off indiscriminately nearby. The middle background features two clashes of the skeletal army with a motley crew of humans wielding improvised weapons; the victory of Death is all but certain. Further back, other regiments have seized a charnel house and sank several ships. The distant horizon is overwhelmed by thick smoke, presumably rising from identical onslaughts. The world appears in ruin, collapsing to death and punishment.

The type of subject matter is puzzling, and so is the mood. The number of figural scenes, the compositional features, the minute details, and the color schemes are all equally representative of Bruegel, but what of the painting's "spirit" or the morbid mixture of humor and violence? Indeed, the artist's creation seems to emerge from a totally novel depiction.

How have scholars made sense of this work? To understand this painting and establish the terms for its examination, the present scholarship regarding the *Triumph* must be analyzed in conversation with the work itself and in juxtaposition with the other research. Different categories of interest will immerse us in the debate, ranging from its dating to variously argued visual traditions. In so doing, we can critically recognize the points of contention, the art historians' merits and demerits, and finally, the further research and edification that this paper has pursued.

Subject Matter

The question of subject matter certainly seems paradoxical; the universal death and destruction of humanity by an army of skeletons is perfectly clear in Bruegel's iconography. Nevertheless, despite such a simple question, the base notion of what is actually depicted is elusive. Is it biblical? Is it secular? How did this scene transpire? The question resonates with the nondescript title, *The Triumph of Death*. Karel van Mander, the earliest biographer of

Bruegel, describes a particular painting of Bruegel: “He also painted a picture...in which expedients of every kind are tried out against death.”² Some question whether van Mander referred to the *Triumph* in particular, but based on the painting’s size and labor-intensiveness, it would be hard to argue that he overlooked the work in Bruegel’s biography. Van Mander’s description is interesting in its own right since it is one of the few that does not provide an explicit title or list of characters (even including the many peasant-related scenes).

Thus, with little preliminary evidence, art historians have been forced to provide their own interpretation of the subject matter. Much of the scholarship has focused on its relation to Hell and Christian eschatology. Peter Thon argues, “The whole scene seems almost a vision of hell and its forces loosed upon earth.”³ Similarly, Margaret Sullivan describes it as an “apocalyptic vision.”⁴ Clearly, these observations arise from the *Triumph’s* visual familiarity with Last Judgment paintings (Figure 2). Further, several aspects reinforce this: Revelations dictates the earth vomiting up its dead, the death of all mankind, and the trumpeters (although there are only three, not the requisite seven) announcing the end of the world.⁵ Nevertheless, there is a distinct absence of Jesus, Mary, Michael, and the army of angels. There is no sense of salvation or even damnation; everyone dies at the hands of the skeletons of death. Perhaps this explains Walter Gibson’s subtitle to his essay on the *Triumph*, “A Secular Apocalypse.”⁶

Indeed, with Hell reduced to inconsequence and Heaven apparently banished altogether, *The Triumph of Death* is, in effect, a secular apocalypse...Bruegel appears to have invented a totally new subject.⁷

He observes that the mouth of hell corresponds to the center structure surrounded by “Boschian” demons, and that it seems unimportant compared to the grand number of skeletons throughout the entire painting. But what defines a “secular apocalypse?” Can an apocalypse

ever be considered secular? Such distinctions and stringency will be worthwhile in our forthcoming analysis.

Larry Silver avoids the eschatological language that Gibson embraces. Breaking from previous scholarship, Silver claims that this work is not apocalyptic per se, but rather presents two key facets: “a global panorama [of the] skeletal Dance of Death” and “the devastation of war by arming the irresistible forces of Death against the vain resistance” of the living.⁸ While Silver’s first assertion ties this painting to a Northern visual tradition (to be discussed later), the latter infers a more political, militant strand—that we are witnessing a war between humanity and Death, and that man will always lose. While there is a noted refinement in Silver’s battle compared to Gibson’s apocalypse, both present this work as “a totally new subject.” A reference to this work as a “secular apocalypse” delimits Bruegel’s subtlety, and a disregard for its obvious eschatological ties is just as restricting. A more nuanced delineation would be fruitful, and an understanding of this painting’s emergence from various visual traditions can temper these observations.

Thematic and Iconographic Tradition

Dance of Death

Every scholar comments on the *Triumph’s* innovative nature. Its innovation, however, is moderated by its placement within a distinct visual heritage. The almost unanimous agreement has been on the painting’s direct relation to the Northern Dance of Death with specific reference to Holbein’s *Dance of Death* illustrations, which were first published in 1538 (Figure 3). While Thon only mentions this connection in passing without further detail, Silver successfully recognizes the following figures pairing off with a skeleton: a king, a cardinal, a mother, a

pilgrim, soldiers, a fool, and a pair of lovers, among others.⁹ “Each of these appears singly in the Holbein woodcut cycle as a costumed individual who is accosted by Death while in the midst of active life.”¹⁰ Gibson proceeds further in comparing the drum player atop the wooden trap as well as the skeleton playing the hurdy gurdy on the left wagon to explicit Holbein woodcuts.¹¹ With clear access to Holbein’s work, Bruegel thus uses it as an explicit visual source.

Despite this generally accepted claim, the relation to the Northern Dance of Death is given relatively little explanation and elaboration throughout scholarship. The Dance of Death genealogy is taken for granted by most authors who invoke later versions of it, especially because it was a familiar and old tradition by the time of Holbein. Nevertheless, a unilateral focus on Holbein establishes this visual reference without its companion ideological heritage. That is, by essentially overlooking the vast history of the Dance of Death in late medieval Northern Europe, we have utilized a blunt instrument in analyzing Bruegel’s relation to his visual and thematic past. To be fair, other than the limited pairing of individual skeletons with the foreground figures, Bruegel’s *Triumph* bears little resemblance to medieval images of the Dance of Death. Nonetheless, to view Holbein’s innovation and Bruegel’s adaptation of increased ferocity properly, it would be productive to examine works prior to Holbein’s woodcuts.

Ironically, Bruegel’s *Triumph* has received little scholarly attention for its supposed lacks—including peasants and folly.¹² Yet the original Dance of Death served as a *memento mori* as much as it made a universal commentary on human folly without regard to social status. Similarly, Bruegel’s painting illuminates the general folly of resistance to death as well as the individual treatments of figures and groups. With these salient overlaps, an analysis of the

medieval formulation would provide a better understanding of Bruegel's elusive purpose in explicitly rendering this more archaic tradition.

Triumph of Death

Similar to the Northern Dance of Death, scholars have linked the Italian tradition of the Triumph of Death to Bruegel as well. Perhaps with the aid of an identical name, scholars argue that Bruegel's travels to Italy have influenced this particular formulation when seen in reference to *Triumph of Death* frescos from Palermo or Pisa (Figure 4).¹³ Little rigorous iconographic comparison has been presented to tie Bruegel's formulation to these Italian prototypes, and a cursory study of this relation seems lacking and inconsequential. While Yona Pinson attempts to link the two together through the nobles' interrupted banquet as well as the music-playing lovers, little else serves to reinforce this claim as the Italian versions are decidedly non-representative in the class representations.¹⁴ Moreover, while Gibson claims the central horse and skeleton pair is a direct match to the one depicted in Palermo, he rightly recognizes the fact that countless representations of this pair have long circulated in Northern Europe as it is directly from Revelations and part of the Four Horsemen.¹⁵ While the prospect of an Italian heritage is intriguing, little evidence has been compiled to address it adequately.

The Three Living and the Three Dead and the Legend of the Grateful Dead

While Thon established a visual connection to the Northern Dance of Death and the Italian Triumph of Death as early as 1968, Gibson added two further iconographic sources rooted in Christianity: the Three Living and the Three Dead and the Legend of the Grateful Dead. Using examples from the *Grimani Breviary* as his core, Gibson suggests that Giulio Clovio

introduced Bruegel to the increasingly violent depiction of the Three Living and the Three Dead in Italy.¹⁶ As the legend relates, there is a confrontation between the living and the dead, which serves as a *memento mori* in the hopes that the living will refrain from vice. While the number of figures is vastly undersized compared to Bruegel's panorama of destruction, Gibson argues that Clovio's duplication (i.e. using six Living and six Dead) may have led to the artist's grand formulation. While the difference in scale may make the two appear unrelated, both artists exploit the theme of the dead accosting the living.¹⁷

Unsatisfied with these sources, Gibson further suggests the *Triumph's* visual relation to the Legend of the Grateful Dead: In response to the prayers of the living for the souls of purgatory, the dead would come to protect the living "in times of distress."¹⁸ He provides several specific images, yet the association is tenuous; the only shared trait among this legend and the Bruegel work is the interaction of the dead and the living. However, the dead act in complete opposition in these two—those of the legend lend a protective hand in battle while those of the painting fall ferociously at the living's throats. Both the imagery and the thematic basis are wholly unrelated.¹⁹

Bosch

After the death of Bruegel, Lampsonius wrote an epigram for Bruegel: "Who is this new Hieronymus Bosch, reborn to the world, who brings his master's ingenious flights of fancy to life once more so skillfully with brush and style that even surpasses him? Even in his own time, Bruegel was renowned as a second Bosch. Therefore, it is no surprise that many link the *Triumph* to Boschian imagery. Gibson is clever to note what appears to be a specific quoting (albeit reversed) of Bosch's *Haywain Triptych* with the "hapless, naked man...pursued by two

dogs” in the left background (Figure 5).²⁰ Other than this, however, Gibson notes that the specific Boschian link is restricted to the central structure, which spews fire and brimstone behind it.²¹ Despite its central location and use of demons and several oversized insects, it appears “curiously ineffectual” in comparison to the universal killing that surrounds it. This brings us to the heart of Gibson’s paradox:

It is the picture in which the Boschian elements have been reduced to a minimum; it is also the picture that comes closest to Bosch in spirit. In its eschatological content, the painting is a true successor to the Hell scenes in Bosch’s *Haywain* and the *Garden of Earthly Delights*, and especially to his *Last Judgment* triptych in Vienna.²²

Gibson refers to the Boschian spirit of pessimism, which is certainly present in the *Haywain* as there is no salvation. However, Bosch’s *Last Judgment*—among other paintings—does leave the impression that salvation is possible for the pious few (Figure 6). Bruegel’s outlook here seems dramatically more pessimistic than Bosch’s oeuvre with no savior amidst the plethora of crosses, producing a mocking tone.

Sullivan reveals other Bruegel-Bosch overlap, referring to the *Triumph* and the *Haywain* as sharing the same ‘de contemptu mundi’ theme, in which biting satire relates both the secular and religious failings of the world. Moreover, they share “the same multi-figured composition and same expansive viewpoint.”²³ Sullivan proceeds by pointing out two more similarities to Bosch’s *Haywain*—the man with outstretched arms in the central net as well as the man lying on the ground with his leg protruding through the wagon wheel’s spoke.²⁴ One additional pictorial allusion may be found: the dying king reaching for his gold parallels Bosch’s 1485-90 *Death and the Miser* both thematically in terms of what Paul Binski refers to as “The Bad Death” and visually by means of figural arrangement (Figure 7).²⁵ These references seem abnormally specific and intriguingly similar to those in Bosch’s work.

While fully apparent, these Boschian expressions are beyond the scope of the present study. We will instead analyze the ‘hell bastion’ and ‘ineffectual’ demons—two mainstays of previous scholarship’s Boschian identification, through the lens of the theatre, urban processions, and carnival.

Classical, Humanist Tendencies

Margaret Sullivan has made her career by working tirelessly to identify Bruegel as a humanist whose clientele is equally humanist, Christian, and educated.²⁶ In “Living Dangerously,” a chapter devoted entirely to a study of *The Triumph of Death*, Sullivan argues, “There is no record of the commission...but the wealth of material, visual and literary, available in both Christian and classical sources, suggests someone knowledgeable about art and literature and interested in questions of personal and societal reform.”²⁷ While this assertion seems perfectly valid, the entire chapter focuses almost exclusively on the *Triumph’s* relation to classical sources, which are centered entirely on the literature of Lucian, Petrarch, Horace, and others.²⁸ Her connections between Bruegel’s work and these classical sources are strictly thematic, with little explicit, visual comparison. In his review of Sullivan’s *Bruegel and the Creative Process*, Todd Richardson takes issue with this same heavy classical reliance and little iconographic support:

By this point in the book, Sullivan’s reliance on classical literary sources becomes more tenuous, particularly since there is little in the image itself that leads in this direction. While the author argues that ‘the *Triumph of Death* integrates the Christian and the classical in a profoundly original work of art,’ she connects antiquity solely to the theme of death rather than other motifs in the painting.²⁹

Sullivan is unsuccessful in such a unilateral proposition, but her chapter nonetheless provides a useful methodology in examining the painting in close detail. While she applies her

findings to unsubstantiated conclusions, her process of viewing the painting is unparalleled in the *Triumph*'s scholarly literature. She is the first, for example to recognize the skeleton in the middle foreground wearing the penitential hair shirt of the hypocritical pilgrim.³⁰ Likewise, she deftly identifies the central structure as having wheels, and thus associates it with the pageant wagons of the Antwerp *Ommegang* and carnival.³¹ Sullivan's work serves as an archetype for the centrality of the image, and this sort of close reading will vitalize a nuanced analysis of Bruegel's painting.

Militant Nature and Political References

Despite the production dates variously attributed to Bruegel's *Triumph* (which will be evaluated presently), virtually all scholars are cognizant of the political references related to the ferocity of destruction produced by the skeletal forces. Of course, we see the tension (or onset in Thon's estimations) of the Dutch Revolt. Whether we date this work as early as 1562 or as late as 1568, the mood of the early years of the revolt was clearly apparent even before that if we acknowledge Bruegel's 1559 *Justicia* print as satirical. Even Sullivan, the proponent of Bruegel the humanist, suggests the danger of the political moment as evident in this painting.³² Beyond these clear references to the beginning of the Eighty Years War, Thon argues that this picture thematically indicates earlier unstable conditions, such as Reformation and "agrarian and agricultural difficulties."³³ While this broadening of scope could reflect a greater awareness to Bruegel's and Antwerp's recent past, this can only remain a hypothesis.³⁴

Less discussed, however, is the influence of warfare and military formations. Thon recognizes the "warfare imagery" and Gibson devotes space to specific military iconographic discussion, but only Silver dedicates a large portion of his discussion to specific infantry

formations.³⁵ He describes the modes of contemporary warfare on view in this image, but rightfully refrains from prescribing it to a particular year.³⁶ In our inquiry, we will likewise approach the *Triumph* with Silver's visual specificity and scholarship's reference to Bruegel's possible political leanings.

Dating

With the scholarly debates regarding subject matter, visual tradition, and political references on view, we may approach the notion of dating this unsigned and undated work with greater familiarity. Sullivan quickly summarizes the contestation of the *Triumph's* dating before suggesting her own date of 1562. This date aligns with the earlier assumptions of Grossman and Gibson, but her reasoning is based on “the six vertical lines grouped on the left [of the big fish in the middle distance], separated from the two lines on the right, can be read as IIIII II (62).³⁷ Not only does this disregard stylistic concerns that are frequently used in dating, but it also privileges some ambiguous markings or groupings over others. We could just as well view the separation of the coffin shields as reading 63, and it would be just as arbitrary a choice and distinction. Most importantly, Bruegel often dated his paintings explicitly.

In 1991, Gibson argues for a 1562-3 dating, but for different reasons:

Other scholars have suggested that the *Triumph of Death* is a commentary on the troubles that from the early 1560s on rent the political, economic, and, above all, religious fabric of the Netherlands. This is possible, although it is doubtful that the picture alludes to the bloody reign of the Duke of Alva, as at least one writer has proposed. On the basis of style, the picture is usually dated to the years 1562-63, which is most likely correct; Alva and his troops did not arrive in the Netherlands until August 1567.³⁸

He dispels Thon's dating of 1568 by dismissing the notion of Bruegel's painting such a militant, ferocious, and ultimately overt painting during the reign of the Duke of Alba. Gibson,

however, maintains the previous dating of 1562-63 “on the basis of style,” but provides no reasoning. Such a dating suggests, as Silver later argues, “...that Bruegel could only engage Bosch in his paintings within a short, sudden burst of activity.”³⁹ Instead, Silver takes a different approach to this painting, dealing first and foremost with style and comparison to other works. He notes that in terms of the *Triumph*'s mood, the work is far from the comic and certain victories shown in the 1562 *Saint Michael Fighting the Apocalyptic Dragon* and *Mad Meg*.⁴⁰ Good does not triumph over evil.

Based on formal elements, Silver dates *The Triumph of Death* closer to 1566. While further image study and visual comparison is still needed, I find the dating of 1566 much more likely than the extremes of 1562 and 1568. We can additionally associate this painting with Bruegel's recently discovered *The Wine of Saint Martin's Day*, which has been dated 1565-1568 due to the remnant inscription of “MDL” (Figure 8).⁴¹ Its flooded central composition of intertwined bodies, jumping and falling, aligns well with the *Triumph*. Just as importantly, this later dating allows for an association of the mood with the coming Dutch Revolt without actually being painted *during* the most turbulent times under the Duke of Alba.⁴²

Despite my general agreement with this dating, I offer a single observation. Silver's concept of analyzing the *Triumph of Death*'s tone in relation to other works of the same period is both innovative and intriguing. Indeed, it would be difficult to argue against his interpretation of the *Triumph*'s mood opposing *Mad Meg* and *Saint Michael Fighting the Apocalyptic Dragon*. Furthermore, the threatening military presence in the 1564 London *Adoration of the Magi* certainly matches more closely with the *Triumph*, although not in scale. Nevertheless, Bruegel's 1560 *Rabbit Hunt* includes a soldier, proffering a message of the hunter as prey—a disturbing theme. In addition, the 1562 Vienna *Suicide of Saul* and 1567 Vienna *Conversion of Paul* show

mortal soldiers en masse, though ultimately ineffective in the larger story lines. These are all thematically related and certainly similar in mood. Yet these works span seven years of artistic production, enfeebling Silver's argument. Just as he argues against the idea of Bruegel only engaging Bosch during a particular time period, these works of varying years suggest the same in terms of mood. Even with a close chronicle, tone, historical links, and even formal comparisons, dating will be essentially elusive. Therefore, the present study will assume Silver's dating around 1566-7, but with full acknowledgement that the years 1565-8 may be a more conservative production range.

Chapter Two: Present Study

Thus far, we have explored *The Triumph of Death* scholarship's main themes, observations, and conclusions. We have seen how Silver, Pinson, Gibson, Thon, and Sullivan similarly and variously construct a narrative in relation to subject matter, visual tradition, political references, and the painting's date. If the current state of scholarship surrounding the *Triumph* can reveal anything, it is first and foremost the importance of an image-centered interpretation. During this exploration, some iconographic neglect has led to unsubstantiated arguments and tenuous conclusions. However, the outlined critiques can allow for the construction of a more methodical and faithful narrative. Presently, I will sketch the additional strains of interpretation that this study will pursue.

First, there is a unique mood in this painting, despite its similarity to other works previously discussed. There is a sense of sardonic morbidity that is unparalleled in his other works. While scholars have equally pointed out the ferocity of the violence and the comic nature of certain aspects, neither has been discussed in tandem with the other.⁴³ The lute-playing skeleton provide a comic backdrop to the engrossed lovers, and so does the seated skeleton next to the trumpeters who appears to lament the death of a bird in the midst of this complete human annihilation.⁴⁴ There is an aspect of disturbing morbidity on display, and I believe that a reading of the *Triumph* through this lens will provide a new approach to Bruegel's conditions of production.

Just as important is an emphasis on the theatre and urban ceremonial as sources of inspiration. Sullivan correctly identifies the central hellish bastion as a pageant wagon due to the

presence of wheels. In her Classical thrust, she does not develop this aspect further, however. We can see the same theatrical association with the triumphal cart in the left foreground. Additionally, Pinson notes the masked skeleton in the bottom right foreground performing a *Tafelspel*, a theatrical act performed at a banquet.⁴⁵ Gibson and others have well established Bruegel in relation to the Antwerp theatre and the *ommegangen*, yet surprisingly none has read the *Triumph* in this way.

Both thematically and iconographically related, we can envision the association of the Northern Dance of Death as adding another layer of performance (and sardonic morbidity) to this painting. In *The Dance of Death in the Middle Ages*, Gertsman suggests,

Medieval Christian culture, in a sense, was a culture of lethal performances, fervently staging itself as a morbid drama...the procession of dreadful skeletal ghouls of the *danse macabre* have much in common with the various feast-day processions that featured personifications of Death.⁴⁶

As Gertsman explores the visual, textual, and historical indications relating performance to the Dance of Death, we too must consider the performative display of the painting's composition. Moreover, a bevy of sources and scholarship discuss the social, political, and religious nature of the theatre and literary culture of Northern Europe and could equally bolster our understanding of this work.⁴⁷ This marriage of explicit and implicit cues harmonizes with the universal belief in Bruegel's subtlety.

Finally, a third strain of analysis can be borne from a comparison to Andreas Vesalius' skeletal forms in *De humani corporis fabrica* (On the fabric of the human body) as well as other anatomical illustrations. Vesalius was a Brabantian physician who lived and directed the production of the wood-block engravings in Venice, but he chose to print the book in 1543 in Basel with Joannes Oporinus, a prominent printer of other medical texts.⁴⁸ Thus, copies of the

text were in Northern Europe as early as 1543. Without written evidence, it can only remain a hypothesis that Bruegel had seen and was familiar with these illustrations either from its proliferation in the North or from his trip to Italy. The veracity of Bruegel's forms to those of Vesalius' publication can serve to bolster this hypothesis since no anatomic illustration based on human cadavers had been previously created.⁴⁹ Earlier Dance of Death depictions, for example, portray skeletons as severely emaciated humans.⁵⁰ Further observation and research into the history of anatomical illustrations and its impact, however, is forthcoming.

The confluence of the Dance of Death, theatre, urban ceremonial, and Vesalius seems particularly difficult to reconcile. We must return to the perplexing mood of the painting to unite these themes. The *Triumph* is exceedingly pessimistic. Man squares off against his aggressor Death numerous times, and he loses each and every time. There is no question of who will reign victorious when the fighting ceases. Man struggles wholly in vain; a man in the right foreground even raises a chair to try to deflect his enemy. But this pessimism is met by an underlying humor—a sardonic morbidity. Above the round stone fortress on the left margin appear two skeletons that daintily lower a coffin into the earth. Amidst the widespread devastation, there is at least a comic comfort in their disposing of one dead human being. Just in front of the fortress is a seated skeleton that stares despondently at a dead bird, perhaps as he ponders the meaning of life. In the right foreground, a cloaked skeleton serves an unappetizing platter at the interrupted banquet, and nearby an unwanted luteist joins the two musical lovers. And throughout the entire painting, cross after cross meets the viewer's eye. At once we associate inescapable death with omnipresent crosses. On the ground, attached to monuments, and on the army's shields, the cross is married to death. Hopes of salvation seem to torment humanity as they appear

unrealized amidst physical death. The viewer is forced to confront the materiality, evanescence, and corporeality of his existence.

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Friedrich Nietzsche remarks,

She [Ophelia from *Hamlet*] alone knows how to turn these nauseous thoughts about the horror or absurdity of existence into notions with which one can live: these are the *sublime* as the artistic taming of the horrible, and the *comic* as the artistic discharge of the nausea of absurdity.

The ‘horror or absurdity of existence’ fully epitomizes the viewer’s feelings, and this Nietzschean sentiment will guide our interpretation. How does one cope with the realization of his or her inexorable mortality, or for that matter, any injustice or oppression? How does one quell the ‘nausea of absurdity?’

Nietzsche relates that the comic, one element of the carnivalesque, allays Ophelia’s horrible realizations of existence. We have already noticed that Bruegel’s painting employs comic aspects sparsely, and yet it only frightens the viewer more. Perhaps this seeming disjuncture has allowed our interpretation to remain hidden. Like Ophelia, our thematic and visual comparisons utilize the carnivalesque. Acutely aware of this, Bruegel rendered each source devoid of its inverting, satirical, and socially leveling potential. For those sources that contain remnants of the carnivalesque in the painting, Bruegel has furnished the skeletal antagonists with its power. The following sections will examine the distinction between Bruegel and his sources in order to develop this argument.

The medieval Dance of Death, the theatre, urban processions, and Vesalius—our iconographic comparisons—all suggest the carnivalesque as a coping mechanism. The ‘carnavalesque’ has become a broad, inexact term. First and foremost, ‘carnavalesque’ will be defined here in terms of its function as a ‘leveling’ agent. Throughout, we will make use of

several facets of the carnivalesque as articulated by both Peter Stallybrass and Mikhail Bakhtin. The carnivalesque is normally comic and festive, of course, but it is more so the inversion of normal social hierarchy and behavior. Above all, carnivalesque activities allowed for a special occasion of social release—a temporary freedom from the official social, religious, and political order. Associating our notions of the carnivalesque with Bakhtin’s will be opportune: as an author in Stalinist Russia, Bakhtin’s implicit pursuit of reform will also be relevant to and topical for Bruegel during the nascent Dutch Revolt. This understanding of the carnivalesque—and its allied features—will guide our analysis in the ensuing chapters.

Thus, we can envision that Bruegel’s iconographic sources have traditionally relied on the carnivalesque in order to cope with our political, religious, and social ‘nausea of absurdity.’ In *The Triumph of Death*, however, Bruegel consciously removes these carnivalesque features or reappropriates them. Through this deliberate exclusion and alteration, Bruegel relates a psychologically oppressive sentiment: Humanity’s tactics of coping and social release are ultimately futile. Death rules as our only carnivalesque certainty.

Chapter Three: The Dance of Death

With the previous scholarship in mind, this chapter aims to reveal that Bruegel's differential use of the medieval source and Holbein's newer form of the Dance of Death is significant for our perception and understanding of the *Triumph's* use (or lack) of the festive, inverting, and reform-minded features of the carnivalesque. Bruegel hearkened back to the medieval tradition and to the urban theatre—which incorporated more of these carnivalesque elements—in order to ultimately eradicate or invert them in creating this work. Before arriving at Holbein, we will proceed through the salient themes of the Dance, which are difficult to separate and discuss independently of each other, but we will attempt to do so here for the purpose of clarification. The four themes to note are: the representation of society, performativity, the depiction of death, and the role of penitence.

Representation of Society

Binski provides a succinct description of the depiction of society in the Dance of Death: “The living, regardless of their temporal or spiritual station in life as popes, emperors or kings down to the very humblest, even children, are compelled by dancing cadavers to cavort with them as a *memento mori*.”⁵¹ This form of *memento mori* was omnipresent in the ethos of medieval society, as described in Johan Huizinga's *The Waning of the Middle Ages*. Huizinga states this link clearly: “No other epoch has laid so much stress as the expiring Middle Ages on the thought of death. An everlasting call of *memento mori* resounds through life...the medieval soul demands the concrete embodiment of the perishable: that of the putrefying corpse.”⁵² Thus,

the Dance of Death in itself serves to represent the medieval guilt culture and obsession with death.

Perhaps most obvious in the Dance is the hierarchical display of all castes of society. This arrangement served both to reinforce and to subvert class structure, as we will discuss presently. In the Lübeck Dance of Death, for example, the living, punctuated by dancing skeletons, link to each other in class order, beginning with the Pope and ending with a woman and her baby (Figure 9). To reinforce such classing, each figure puts his or her attributes on display—the King carries his scepter and the baby rests in a cradle.⁵³ These carefully chosen displays of costumes and attributes leave a clear implication: every member of society is put on display, allowing viewers to find his or her representation and recast themselves.

Here, we can clearly discern the image's effect on social structure. Of course, the Dance can be understood as displaying class so hierarchically in order to undermine its earthly significance. Despite where one stands—literally and metaphorically—death spares no one. Equality in death pervades. Binski states,

The Dance came equally to all, and was an allegorical means of both reinforcing and subverting the late-medieval hierarchy of estates or classes, depending on its audience...death redistributes the true wealth of salvation, and it is the poor who have least the fear from it.⁵⁴

All benefits of class are exhibited for their destruction by inevitable death. Thus, a clear inversion in the Dance of Death arises: the poor “have least to fear,” as Binski notes, while the rich face more contempt; human fear and the parodic joy of Death overtake the pleasure of dancing. Indeed, Elina Gertsman takes this implication to its logical extreme:

This series of inversions...transforms the *danse macabre* into a Bakhtinian carnival *par excellence*, a spectacle that effectively loosens social structures: the laughter of Death is the ambivalent laughter of the carnival...the Dance is indeed an eternal carnival, in which

the suspension of the norm is everlasting. In death the terrestrial hierarchies and standards are forever broken down. It is likely that the powerful and sinful will become the lowest of the low in hell, and the poor and meek will find privileges in heaven: here, too, the carnival structure of the world...is implied.⁵⁵

We can envision the Dance as an “eternal carnival,” which “marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions,” as Bakhtin explains.⁵⁶ Through the depiction of society, the Dance relates the inverting, leveling qualities of the carnivalesque. But how does Bruegel’s *Triumph of Death* engage with this societal representation of hierarchy and carnivalesque inversion? The strict rigidity of the rows of figures from Lübeck has been replaced by a panorama replete with numerous individual and group scenes of humanity grappling with death. Yet despite this more dynamic representation of figures, class is still on display, especially in the immediate foreground where numerous figures are matched with a skeleton: a king, cardinal, mother and child, pilgrim, jester, nobleman, and soldier. Whereas class appears directly at the front of the painting, Bruegel masks the hierarchy; neither order nor procession indicates relative status. The charnel house in the middle background echoes this mixing (Figure 10). The first known image of the Dance of Death, in fact, comes from the cemetery and charnel of the Innocents in Paris, painted in 1424-5.⁵⁷ Here in Bruegel’s picture, the skeletons and the living intermix just as the charnel intersperses the bones of the poor and wealthy. The iconography varies between the *Triumph* and the *Dance*, and Bruegel’s offers a subtle distinction in his message. In both instances, Death coopted the carnivalesque behaviors of inversion and social equality. But Bruegel removes the festive atmosphere that we associate with the carnivalesque and with the Dance of Death. The consequences are dismal: Dancing has been replaced by omnipresent violence. Every human faces the swing of the scythe and the throw of the spear. The world appears to be coming to an end, overrun with Death who falls

indiscriminately at the throats of humanity. Death has seized a carnivalesque aspect where kings and popes are no more immune to the common fate than fools and peasants.

Performance

Already, we encounter overlap between the themes of society and performance. The previous section incorporated dancing in order to set the stage for a theatrical understanding of the Dance of Death and Bruegel's *Triumph*. This sort of theatrical interpretation of the Dance of Death as performance-based is the crux of Elina Gertsman's profound work, *The Dance of Death in the Middle Ages: Image, Text, Performance*. We will frame our discussion around Richard Schechner's definition of performance: "Any action that is framed, presented, highlighted, or displayed."⁵⁸ Painting is not something typically associated with this model, but any interaction with a viewer can be seen as performative, and Gertsman argues this through the Dance of Death:

Vestiges of performances, encoded both in the iconography of these murals and in the verses written below the images, serve as cues for the subsequent enactment of the Dance of Death, allowing the message of the Dance to be performed, and thereby internalized and transformed into a rehearsed and therefore memorable lesson.⁵⁹

With this in mind, we can consider the performative function of the Dance through its composition (in this case, staging), use of text, dancing, and gesturing. First, we have already discussed the rigidity of representation in the Lübeck Dance of Death. There, figures stand on what appears to be a stage set in front of a landscape. Beneath this stage are lines of text to be read by the respective figures (as well as the viewer). In Bernt Notke's 1463 or later Reval Dance of Death, these figures also process left, but toward a preacher in a pulpit who asks them (and the viewer) to consider death and their lives (Figure 11). Here, the literal staging, the

presence of an almost omniscient speaker, and the spoken word beneath the plane of action hearken to the theatre and the Dance's performative nature. This hearkening becomes all the more apparent when we consider the dancing of the skeletons, their interactions with the human figures, and the human figures' interactions with the viewer. Each actor stares out at the viewer, unblinkingly, and after being introduced, they utter their despair, setting the rest of the ensuing performances in motion. Each Dance of Death painting was thus meant for both personal consideration and performance.

Performances of the Dance of Death have also survived through the Dukes of Burgundy; one such play was performed in the house of Philip the Good in 1449.⁶⁰ Indeed, it is only natural that such a work would be translated into a physical performance. As Gertsman suggests, this argument stems “from the obvious way both images and texts make an effort to involve the viewer fully with the paintings...each [work] requires the active involvement of the beholder...within the participatory space in which it was painted.”⁶¹ The theatricality and performativity of the Dance of Death were never fully elucidated until Gertsman's 2010 work, but Binski, 15 years earlier, had similar observations, albeit with different conclusions. He remarks, “The Dance of Death is a theatrical piece of vaudeville whose strength derives from its parodic acknowledgement of emerging social norms and conventions and its picaresque inversion of those norms, of decorous rest and disciplined display.”⁶² Here again, the performative qualities of the Dance of Death revolve around the incorporation of the carnivalesque.

There is agreement between these two scholars about the presence of performance and inversion in the Dance, but what of Bruegel's *Triumph*? Any viewer would immediately have reservations about viewing performance in this painting. There is no text-image interplay,

dancing, or any recognition of the viewer that were all present in the Dance of Death iconography. Moreover, we have no information about the site of this particular painting, and therefore no knowledge of who viewed this or from what location. The artifice of the Dance of Death tradition has seemingly evaporated. What consequences emerge from Bruegel's conscious removal of these performative, carnivalesque features?

With known performances of the Dance of Death on record in the Low Countries, Bruegel may have associated this iconography and its theatrical and allegorical nature with a specific type of play—the *spel van zinne*. The *spelen van zinne* were serious, morality play allegories usually the mainstay of the *landjuweel*, an intense inter-city competition. These competitions posed large religious, social, or philosophical questions in advance for the chambers of rhetoric to answer with a *spel van zinne*. The *landjuweel* were not carnivalesque in terms of its festivity and raucous behavior, but they certainly featured the carnivalesque hope for reform. Indeed, Peter Stallybrass contends that the 'carnavalesque' developed as a "potent, populist, critical inversion of *all* official words and hierarchies."⁶³

Plays dating to the late medieval period not uncommonly featured scenes with discussions of contemporary political matters.⁶⁴ Beginning in 16th century, however, the scales began to tip toward the politicization of the *landjuweel*. Numerous scholars have expounded upon the vast history and well-preserved texts of the urban theatre in the Low Countries, but we may choose the 1539 Ghent *landjuweel* as provocative evidence for the level of dissent and political turmoil found in drama. For the main *rederijker* contest, the *spelen van zinne*, the chambers were assigned the question, "What is the dying man's greatest consolation?" Surrounded by the growth of Lutheranism, Calvinism, and Anabaptism, the Ghent contest made it all but impossible for the *rederijkers* to avoid choosing sides in the growth of religious

discontent. Gary Waite, in his meticulous work *Reformers on Stage*, categorized each of the 19 plays from this competition into its religious underpinning. While only three championed a traditional Catholic response, nearly half (nine) of the plays were identifiably Lutheran. Two other groups attempted to formulate a response of compromise while the remaining chambers offered more spiritualistic replies.⁶⁵ Johan Decavele aptly concludes that this contest contributed to Ghent's growing unrest, which culminated in outright revolt against the pro-Hapsburg Catholics only several weeks later.⁶⁶ Just months later, Emperor Charles V marched into Ghent with hundreds of knights and thousands of mercenary soldiers. A pro-Charles observer noted, "The Emperor, entering his city of Ghent in such company, with such might and on such a footing, greatly astounded and frightened the inhabitants. There was much reason for it...for this gave them much...fear and sadness."⁶⁷

The result was astounding: all *landjuweel* were forbidden in Ghent for two years, and all of the plays were added to the index of forbidden books, which were "unseemly plays, songs, refrains, and scandalous figures, dangerous and suspect of heresy, contrary to our Christian faith, to the constitution and ordinances of our mother the Holy church, and to the great dishonor of God Almighty. . ."⁶⁸ The consequences were even more far-sweeping: the Antwerp *landjuweel* planned for 1540 was delayed until 1561. As Waite observes, "That . . . speaks volumes for the level of suspicion that the higher authorities had developed regarding rhetorician contests as a result of the Ghent competition."⁶⁹ Executions of *rederijkers* after the Ghent debacle were not uncommon, as court records suggest.⁷⁰

This confluence of the carnivalesque, performance, theatre, and the Dance of Death inspired Bruegel's creation amidst civil unrest. For Bruegel, the medieval Dance inspired notions of performance and inversion, which he fully associated with the theatre and its hope for

reform. The *Triumph*, however, renders out all of these carnivalesque qualities. A sardonic, violent nature pervades in which the only leveling agent is death. Any visions of political reform and social release amount to little in the face of humanity's inexorable fate.

The Depiction of Death

We have considered the representation of society and the role of performativity, both largely thematic concerns, but now we will preoccupy ourselves with Death's depiction. The question raised is, How does Death here differ from in other depictions? In short, physicality and repetition distinguish Death in the Dance of Death from other imagery. The physicality of Death, however, can take several forms. First, we can examine the actual "corporeal" body of Death. In both the Reval and Lübeck Dance of Death paintings, Death takes the form of a decaying skeleton. Its decomposing flesh tugs tightly on its bones. In terms of its action, Death gestures and dances gingerly, speaking to the adjacent human through the associated text. In total, Death takes a corporeal, substantive form, as the human figures lose their sense of movement and tangibility. Gertsman asserts, "Death appropriates the essence of life from its victims through the media of speaking and dancing, both of which are exaggerated: the immobility and muteness of the living is no less aggressive than the movement and verbal discourse of death."⁷¹ Through movement and speech, Death trespasses on the liminal threshold between life and death.

Death exploits not only human fear and mental and physical violence but also repetition. Each human's double is Death, each one's mirror image is Death, and each one's dancing partner is Death.⁷² To Freud, the double unmasked "the uncanny harbinger of death."⁷³ The multiplication of the figures and doubles, however, grossly exaggerates Freud's notion.

Many of these iconographic modes survive in Bruegel's *Triumph*. Some remnants of repetition endure, for example, with the king, cardinal, and pilgrim, but the 'doubling' is most evident with the cardinal and jester in the middle and right foreground, respectively (Figures 12 and 13). The jester's double-as-Death wears similar clothing and has even put on a human mask; this crafts Death as a double and mirror image and certainly exemplifies Freud's assertion. Beyond these cases, however, Death proliferates from a double into an army. Bruegel surpasses repetition into inconceivable multiplication of Death figures to create a skeletal army (Figure 14). In the right mid-ground, swarms of skeletons appear; impossible to even identify individuals, the Dance's notion of repetition reaches its zenith. Death continues to represent violence as in the medieval tradition, but here again we see an extreme where dancing and speaking are replaced by sheer, merciless violence and punishment. All expedients of death are meted out, from spearing to drowning to hanging.

These sorts of extremes and physical closeness of death may seem plausible given the turbulent political and religious environment of Bruegel with the nascent Dutch Revolt and 1566 Iconoclasm, but the change in Death's bodily representation perplexes the viewer. A costume of decomposing skin no longer cloaks Death; rather, it is portrayed with bare bones. Skeletons certainly frighten, but they don't provoke that same fright without the utter physicality of rotting flesh. This single change holds significance for Bruegel and the *Triumph*; in the subsequent chapter, we will consider Bruegel's knowledge and interest in Vesalius and prescriptive anatomy in relation to the carnivalesque.

The Role of Penitence

The last theme under consideration is the emphasis on repentance in the Dance of Death. In any image that includes Death, we must consider its impact on the viewer, and we are faced with some form of *memento mori*. For the Dance of Death, the question arises, What type of meaning does *this* form of Death engender? Perhaps we can understand this best by examining the Three Living and the Three Dead. One such example, from the Psalter and Hours of Bonne of Luxembourg, depicts three horsemen encountering three cadavers who warn and admonish the living to change their ways (Figure 15). Here, there is a sense of safety and security amidst notions of choice and mortality. Yes, the three living have been frightened, but their safety is unquestioned, secured on a different page. In this way, the horsemen—and the viewer—are allowed to consider their choices and their lives from a sheltered position.⁷⁴

But with every version of the Dance of Death, this isolation of the living from the dead is shattered. The two mingle, touch, dance, and process into death. No opportunity exists to mend one's ways. Death instead snatches the living and drags them unwillingly to their demise. Death issues no warning; each person struggles alone hopelessly, without any divine or earthly intercession. No guide materializes, and his or her fate after death is wholly unknown to the viewer. The uncertainty and lack of warning, then, forms the palpable shock, the frightening crux, of the Dance of Death. The Dance is unconcerned with the afterlife, with the pangs of heaven and hell. Instead, we find a visual tradition rooted in the here and now, entirely earthly and material, in which our vitality, our movement, our form, and our language are swiftly and unflinchingly taken from us.

The carnivalesque highlights this sort of earthliness and temporariness. Carnival, as a festival, occurred once a year, and provided a singular occasion for momentary discharge.

Indeed, many consider carnival as a social release valve. But as we have seen, the carnivalesque is just as concerned with the prospect of reform; here in the Dance, the medieval viewer would understand this image as the most intense form of warning and call for penitence; the viewer is given a final chance that these figures were not.

Bruegel, however, conveys a mentality in which no form of prayer, reform, or penitence can save humanity, covering his painting with outright violence and punishment never seen in any Dance of Death cycle. Death falls upon the living mercilessly and repeatedly, both individually and as a group. Where little hope exists in the Dance, none remains here. The living struggle in vain, and the dead systematically wipe humanity from the face of Bruegel's panorama. The destruction occurs in the face of a multitude of crosses—on the ground, on the wooden 'trap,' and on Death's shield—all of whose presence serves to mock the living. His depiction brings a further level of hopelessness to materiality and earthly life, both which the plenitude of crosses and the carnivalesque cannot repair. For Bruegel, the only guarantee is death.

Holbein: Reworking the Dance

Thus far, we have considered Bruegel's use of and departure from the medieval Dance of Death. Much scholarship on the *Triumph of Death* has identified Holbein as one of Bruegel's visual sources, but we have already seen how the artist is engaging with the medieval source as well. With this understanding, we may now consider first Holbein's divergence from the medieval tradition and second Bruegel's placement into this larger trajectory.

In Holbein's 1538 *Dance of Death* and the Lübeck Dance, we have the same interest in social hierarchy: Holbein "begins" with the Pope and "ends" with the child.⁷⁵ Again, we have

the same underlying irony and tragic jest that is so prevalent in the medieval tradition. Yet the differences are more palpable. Foremost, we no longer have a continuous panel with all the figures linked together, but rather we have separate frames of action, with one individual paired with one skeleton per sheet. The text is physically distanced from the image and stands outside the pictorial frame, allowing the figures and their interactions to speak for themselves. In an increasingly aggressive struggle, no longer do the human figures stand idly by as Death grabs hold and dances off the scene. Far from it, figures like the Nobleman, the Mendicant Friar, and the Knight fight back, revealing themselves to be vibrantly alive and liminal no longer (Figure 3). Violence is paramount for Holbein, as Death even fatally wounds the Knight himself. Here, violence is no longer uncomfortably implied, but rather explicit in the actions of the living and the dead.

Whereas Holbein's work drastically amplifies the violence, notions of performativity are decidedly absent. No longer do our characters present themselves on a stage—or even speak their words (the text is written from an omniscient viewpoint). Just as well, an explicit moral lesson ebbs while Death's grabbing, stabbing, and tearing flows. The brutal physicality provokes a sense of individualized immediacy in each scene where humanity is handpicked and separated.⁷⁶ But Holbein's inclusion of Biblical narrative contrasts most starkly; he begins with Creation and proceeds through the Expulsion before beginning the storied Dance (Figure 16). And at the conclusion of the Dance, the viewer feels not the sinking materiality, but rather a final image of the Last Judgment, in which the violence of Death breeds eschatological significance.

This Biblical narrative at once alters the foundation and purpose of the medieval Dance of Death. Materiality and earthly life no longer take center stage, but instead become subsidiary to the grand history of mankind: we view the first instance in which Death comes into the world,

and we bear witness to our inevitable judgment. Each frame in between may appear as a genre scene, but the Dance is explicitly placed in a larger, continuing context. The moralization derives less from the earthly and the material as in the late medieval Dance, but rather from the divine and the immaterial.

Finally, we can envision how Bruegel fits into this entire trajectory, which begins with the medieval Dance of Death and culminates in Bruegel's *Triumph of Death*. Scholars have shrewdly discerned the similarities between Bruegel and Holbein (Figures 17 and 18). But the differences have gone unnoticed, and Bruegel's larger connection and interest in the medieval tradition stand to reveal important implications for a more nuanced understanding. Thus, we must pay strict attention not only to what Bruegel incorporates from Holbein, but also what he neglects.

Foremost, Bruegel's general reversion to and interest in the medieval Dance of Death testifies to his interest in the carnivalesque. Class, social hierarchy, performance, ephemerality, and the hope for reform are key themes that retain importance for Bruegel, but are essentially absent from Holbein's work. Only by acknowledging first Bruegel's reference to and second his conscious removal of carnivalesque features that are emblematic of the medieval Dance can we fully grasp Bruegel's message. The simultaneous morbidity, solemnity, and parodic jest paint a dismal aura across the canvas. He has raised Death's violence and human punishment to a new level. Indeed, these levels have grown over time to Holbein, but Bruegel's *Triumph* depicts bloodshed on an unforeseen level. Moreover, the artist grapples with earthly reality, penitence, and Christian eschatology: he removed the Expulsion and Last Judgment that so profoundly shifted Holbein's *Dance of Death*. This use/non-use relationship with both visual traditions

confirms Bruegel's grappling with not only the older and newer Dance of Death iterations visually, but also philosophically. In this stead, Bruegel manufactured the very earthly and material *Triumph*. The religiosity of Holbein cannot save humanity, and neither can the carnivalesque qualities of the medieval Dance.

Chapter Four: Vesalius

In our previous discussion of the medieval Dance of Death tradition and Holbein's subsequent conception, we identified several changes to, or developments of the depiction of Death in Bruegel's *The Triumph of Death*. Themes of repetition and doubling persisted in Bruegel's work, but they were also modified into a multiplication of Death into a skeletal army. A turbulent political and religious environment surrounding this work's production, as mentioned before, could potentially explain this shift. Most scholars have pointed to the nascent Dutch Revolt and Iconoclasm as potential features of Bruegel's work, including the *Triumph of Death*. Peter Thon, for example, details the violent effects of Reformation, agrarian and economic decline, and the arrival of the Spanish Duke of Alba as historical explanations for Bruegel's uniquely violent and pessimistic work.⁷⁷ In a more implicit fashion, Larry Silver enumerates a chronology of works that were clearly impacted by the tempestuous climate in his chapter, "Religious Imagery in a Time of Troubles."⁷⁸

In an era of ferocious conflict and merciless punishment, we can understand Bruegel's adapted notions of repetition and doubling. Yet the political and religious moment in which the *Triumph* was created cannot, however, fully explain the altered physical representation of Death. The themes of the Dance of Death persist at one extreme, but the utter corporeality of Death has changed. In the medieval Dance, Death wore its rotting flesh as a tight-fitting costume. Indeed, this depiction of Death was largely the norm in every visual tradition. Holbein's Death steps out of its rotting uniform and presents itself as a simple skeleton with little or no skin present throughout his 1538 *Dance of Death*. Holbein appears totally uninterested in the body of Death,

as opposed to its physical violence and individuality in the woodcuts. In *The Advocate*, Death is reduced to a much-simplified skeleton composed of the minimum number of bones in order to feasibly connect the body (Figure 19).

This minimalism contrasts with Bruegel's skeletal Death: again, the skeletons have largely lost their rotting flesh, but the simplistic and unsophisticated skeletal structure has been replaced by a more complex and nuanced representation—one which we today may recognize as a more accurate depiction. Even the skeletons that still wear remnants of their skin reflect this structural intricacy. This greater complexity and focus on the skeletal system is matched only by the variety of poses that Death takes throughout the picture, emphasizing movement and various viewing vantage points. Replete with 360 degrees of observational access, Bruegel's skeleton is purposefully put on display—much like displaying the latest car model on a rotating platform at an auto show. No set of unstable religious or political conditions alone could explain this anatomical update. Something has unmistakably changed in Bruegel's *Triumph*, and we must view this departure just as purposefully as any visual or thematic continuity. As we will see, Bruegel's manipulation of the carnivalesque manifests itself once again through his skeletal imagery.

Given the state of anatomical understanding around the time of the *Triumph*, Bruegel's sort of skeletal "realism" is equally surprising and revealing. Compared to our contemporary understanding, even medical anatomies were lacking, given the stigma surrounding dissection and the Galenic hegemony. In the early 14th-century anatomy text by Mondino de Liuzzi and Guido de Vigevano, a figure performs a dissection of the male cadaver (Figure 20). The forms are simplified and the bones are rudimentarily connected. A 1493 woodcut from *Anatomy of the Bones of the Human Body* (*Anathomia ossium corporis humani*), the earliest known anatomical

print of the skeleton, the bones have been identified and named, yet still in a crude way (Figure 21). More than twenty years later, another skeleton, this time from a field manual for the treatment of wounds, is depicted similarly, except this time with more of a realistic purpose; after all, a physician or barber-surgeon would be using this as a practical text (Figure 22). Still, Bruegel's depictions do not resemble these in their elongated and artistically elegant form.

To evaluate Bruegel's skeletons fully, we must recognize the concomitant rise of anatomical dissection, predicated by the Brabant-born Andreas Vesalius. His 1543 *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* (hereafter referred to as the *Fabrica*) was published in Basel by Johannes Oporinus, more than twenty years prior to the *Triumph's* completion, regardless of various scholars' dating preferences of Bruegel's work.⁷⁹ To be fair, Leonardo da Vinci also observed bodies and participated in dissections—to some degree—as his closely observed notes suggest. However, we can be sure that Bruegel was either unaware of or not noting Leonardo's anatomical interest for two reasons: these particular notes were largely private and personal, and his correct identification of the curvature of the spine is missing from both Vesalius and Bruegel (Figure 23).⁸⁰ While the implication of Bruegel's awareness of Vesalius is apparent, we must concede the lack of physical evidence of their meeting. Nonetheless, there are a variety of factors that can temper this absence of explicit proof. They were both born in the Duchy of Brabant and traveled or lived in Italy at the same time.⁸¹ Additionally, a boom in anatomical publications between 1490 and 1550 increases the chance of Bruegel's cognizance of Vesalius' work.⁸² Just as well, Vesalius himself—as well as dissection in general—encountered a meteoric rise after the publication of the *Fabrica*, traveling across Italy to perform dissections at several universities and becoming the Imperial Physician for the court of Emperor Charles V.⁸³ In conjunction with these facts, we must also recognize the historical precedent of relationships

between artists and anatomists as well as Vesalius' close collaborations with several artists, including Titian.⁸⁴ Thus, while we may never be able to historically link Bruegel and Vesalius in person, such access and opportunity lend to a fair conclusion: Bruegel was, at the very least, aware of Vesalius' work and encountered the growing societal, artistic, and scientific fascination with anatomical dissection firsthand in Italy or the Low Countries.

We are also faced with another concern: while Bruegel's skeletons are similar to Vesalius', they are not identical. The distance between the rib cage and the hip anatomy, for example, unite the two depictions (Figures 24 and 25). Likewise, the faithful illustration of the two bones of the forearm and leg reflects commonality. And in a display of close viewing on Bruegel's part, the artist skillfully represents the insertion of the femoral head into the acetabular socket (Figure 26).

While the bone structures both overlap visually, and in some places very convincingly, Bruegel shows no interest in fully copying Vesalius' studied anatomy. The simplified knee, elbow, and shoulder insertions, coupled with an abnormally shallow rib cage, all point to Bruegel's deviation. This divergence provides the viewer with the realization that Bruegel is *not* interested in anatomy for scientific purposes. We do not see a pure imitation; rather, we are met with the quandary of reconciling Bruegel's simultaneous interest in anatomy with his disinterest in total realism. To resolve this issue, we will examine the cultural, political, and social climate surrounding Vesalius and the concomitant culture of dissection. In so doing, I will argue that Bruegel's concern is not in the anatomy itself—this is a byproduct. Instead, Bruegel was acutely aware of the salient overlaps between this growing culture and the same carnivalesque ideology that led to the production of the Dance of Death, all of which converge in the *Triumph*.

Vesalius' Representation of the Body

Before discussing the culture of dissections, anatomical theatres, and representations of both, we must first look to Vesalius' representations of the body, and specifically, what connotations came with his images and anatomical skeletons in general. His first full skeletal figure represents the anterior aspect of the human body (Figure 24).⁸⁵ Each bone is labeled with a Greek letter or number, and structure is shown in a stance to animate it and to offer several views. Modern-day anatomists and physicians alike agree on Vesalius' errors—the thorax is too short, the lumbar spine too long, and the spinal curvature is absent, to name a few.⁸⁶ But what is most obvious to the lay viewer is its action and setting. The skeleton is set in a mountainous landscape and leans on a spade next to an open grave that it probably dug. This animation immediately provides the skeleton with physicality and action, and it imbues the scene with death. For Vesalius and his viewers, anatomy had a moralizing, inverting function in which Death digs a grave.

This moralizing skeletal imagery continues in a side delineation of the human body (Figure 27). Here again, the labeling continues, and the skeleton is placed in yet another position to emphasize different views of the human bone structure. But these stances clearly suggest Vesalius' ulterior motive; one could suggest various skeletal vantages without such a lifelike pose: the skeleton is depicted with one leg crossed over the other and its head leaning against one arm, which rests on a tomb. Its other arm reaches out to grab a skull while it looks forlorn. If this message was not clear enough, the Latin engraving on the front of the tomb, translated into English, reads: "Genius lives on, all else is mortal."⁸⁷ The *vanitas* and *memento mori* themes are abundantly clear. But unlike the previous illustration, this plate has a morbid feel; the skeleton gazing at the skull is both shocking and amusing. Indeed, we could compare this to the skeleton

that mourns the death of a bird in Bruegel's *Triumph* (Figure 28). Death mourns death during its death. Another Vesalian skeleton, shown from the rear aspect, emphasizes this sardonic mood, as it appears grieving from behind (Figure 29). Again, Vesalius shows that anatomy is as moralizing and earthly as it is scientific.

If this visual and ideological fodder did not prove substantial enough to Bruegel, then certainly Vesalius' fourteen full-length myological figures did (Figures 30 and 31). These figures occupy a landscape in a variety of poses; the fourteen studies of muscle, page after page, surely affect the viewer with their repetition and physicality. Numerous scholars have compared this to the Dance of Death tradition. Sachiko Kusukawa argues, "If *De fabrica*'s series [of figures]...against a panoramic landscape was indeed inspired by the murals of the 'dance of death' painted in 1425 in the cloister that surrounded the Cemetery of the Innocents, it may well have been an oblique references to the cemetery as a place for studying the human body."⁸⁸

Vesalius wrote of his experience there:

[At the Cemetery of the Innocents in Paris] we found a rich supply of bones, which we examined indefatigably over a long period until we were able to make a bet with our fellow-students that, blindfolded, we could identify by touch alone any bone which they pulled from the piles over a half-hour period and handed to us. We were forced to these lengths because though eager to learn, we had no teachers to assist us in this aspect of medicine.⁸⁹

Vesalius was grave-robbing at the site of the earliest known Dance of Death mural. We have already discussed at length Bruegel's interaction with the Dance of Death tradition; now with Vesalius' connection to the Dance of Death and Holbein, Bruegel's interest in Vesalius and the anatomical culture should not be viewed as coincidence. In fact, only recently have we lost our own sense of these connections. Christine Quigley explains,

There was a pocket of doctors trained or practicing in Philadelphia in the 1800s who rebound certain books in their libraries (Andreas Vesalius' 1568 *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* and Hans Holbein's *Dance of Death* were favorites) in human leather. One of them was physician Dr. John Stockton Hough...⁹⁰

With our contemporary lack of direct access to physical dissections and greater distance from death, we have essentially lost these connections that would have been so unmistakable to earlier viewers. In regaining this association, we can more clearly evaluate Bruegel and his *Triumph* and can reconcile his combination of Vesalian skeletons with the Dance of Death.

Vesalius does not engage the skeletal form through a sense of clinical detachment. Rather, he engages the viewer aggressively through humor; he brings death to life. His depictions' senses of festivity and morbidity—both mainstays of the carnivalesque—are matched only by their socially leveling function. That is, these are carnivalesque depictions in which the human form and our ultimate demise are both displayed as the basic, inescapable humanity of everyone. For Vesalius, however, the carnivalesque does not infiltrate his depictions in a sort of 'release valve' function. Instead, the viewer finds the carnivalesque in its rawest form: the carnivalesque is only true in death; death is our only certainty.

This very notion of death as the ultimate carnivalesque leveler unites both Vesalius and Bruegel. In the *Dance of Death*, Bruegel eliminated the iconography's carnivalesque qualities to emphasize the dismal quality of the painting. Here, Bruegel references Vesalius to imbue his skeletons with life. Bruegel forges further, however, by bringing his skeletons to life just as he brings life to death. It is this innovative dichotomy that engenders such an oppressive aura.

Characteristics of Early Modern Anatomical Dissection

There is more to anatomy than just the body, and Bruegel embodied this fact; a very purposeful process of dissection, beginning with the procurement of the cadavers and ending with the examination itself, characterizes the early modern period. This process was wholly ritualized, and a person familiar with Vesalius such as Bruegel surely would have been aware of the spectacular culture of anatomical dissection. Where better to start than with the most famous representation—Vesalius’ title page of the *Fabrica* (Figure 32)? To approach this exceedingly complex woodcut, we will begin with perhaps the most important part—the body itself. How did anatomists procure the bodies? The first statute on record is the 1752 Murder Act from England, which codified that a murderer’s body could be subject to dissection. Jonathan Sawday, however, argues that this practice had occurred for many years prior:

Indeed, the wording of the Act clearly indicates that it was no more than a legislative initiative, which attempted to regulate a practice, which was already in existence. Dissection...was to be the sentence for those convicted of murder ‘in the same manner as is now practiced for the most atrocious offenders.’ The net was simply being spread wider, whilst the Act also released professional medical men from participation, even by proxy, in a spectacle, which had collapsed into little more than an undignified brawl. Long before 1752, ‘penal dissection’ had been part of the lexicon of punishments available to the authorities, though its precise legislative status was ambivalent...As early as 1505 the Guild of Surgeons and Barbers, in Edinburgh, was granted the body of one executed felon each year...In London, the Act of 1540...also provided for the supply of corpses...Four executed criminals each year were granted to the new united company.⁹¹

For the *Fabrica* title page itself, Vesalius is shown dissecting a woman who, he recounted, had “tried to avoid hanging by claiming pregnancy falsely.”⁹² Already, we begin to see the intermingling of anatomization and punishment that is implicitly present in the *Triumph*. The skeleton is easily and readily associated with the criminal body, one that attacks so mercilessly in Bruegel’s picture.

This supply of criminal bodies required a suitable setting, as shown in the *Fabrica*. We are presented with what appears to be a theatrical production; the entire act is placed on a stage shown in the foreground. The dissection is set in an oval structure with tiered seating, though each attendant is clamoring to see the work at hand. The architecture is Classical with an ornately sculpted frieze. Sawday discusses its architectural precursors,

The Renaissance anatomical theatre combined elements from a number of different sources, drawing together various different kinds of public space in order to produce an event, which was visually spectacular. Thus, in the construction of these theatres, we can discern the outlines of the judicial court, the dramatic stage, and most strikingly, the basilica-style church or temple...Indeed, churches, as large public buildings, were frequently used as temporary accommodation for anatomy theatres.⁹³

This situation is more visible in a 1610 engraving of the anatomical theater in Leiden (Figure 33). During Bruegel's and Vesalius' lives, these theaters were largely temporary and makeshift, but Vesalius' title page and this Leiden engraving present their main features. In the engraving, we encounter a full wooden amphitheater set within a larger hall. The seating arrangement and sparse dignified viewers only partially lend to the well-known hierarchy that was established in these proceedings, which is clearly visible in the *Fabrica*. Despite the Leiden image's ambivalence, the theater created a purposeful hierarchy of space. The nobility, civic magistrates, wealthy merchants, academicians, students and townspeople all received seating in accordance to their status; this sort of strategy is dutifully employed in the hierarchical layout of the Dance of Death.⁹⁴

The 1610 Leiden engraving, however, does not represent an accurate demographic of viewers of these spectacles, but the *Fabrica* title page implies it. As seen from the staging, the dissection was attended by *all* walks of life: "Students of the university turned out for a lesson, but on the other side of the anatomy theater members of the community with no medical

qualifications came to gawk...They were eager to see the second half of the legal sentence to be 'hanged and publicly dissected' [among other reasons]."⁹⁵ But what of the lay, civic, and spiritual elite who turned out to view this performance? Giovanna Ferrari, in her landmark work on the culture of the anatomy theatre, argues that such a well-attended event was also transformed into a civic festival, which coincided with other civic events as well as Carnival.⁹⁶ Thus, the dissection was one act in a multi-part drama occurring around the city.

Amidst the spectacle and theatricality, one must wonder about the dissection's scientific purpose. After all, the *Fabrica* title page is centered on the human body. Are the spectators lunging to view the anatomy or to be a part of the performance? In the early sixteenth century, Italian physician Jacopo Berengario da Carpi denounced the public dissection: "He dismissed public dissections as useless displays, of interest only to tyros and curious townspeople."⁹⁷ The *Fabrica* title page reflects this carnivalesque mayhem; the live performance, not the Latin lectures, was the allure. Figures are shown springing up to view the cadaver. Quigley notes the difficulty of controlling the rowdy crowds, "despite the decorum of the proceedings" and ritual function of each act.⁹⁸ Apparently, such disturbances were the norm; the seventeenth century saw the enactment of many statutes to forbid "chatting, laughing, asking indecent questions, and grabbing organs from the dissector."⁹⁹ Unruliness during a ritualized ceremony is the gold standard of the sixteenth-century anatomy theater, and scientific enlightenment did not fit the agenda.

What, then, was the purpose of centering this ritual on the cadaver? Certainly public spectacle was plentiful during the Carnival period. The 1610 Leiden engraving is illustrative of its purpose. The dissected body is surrounded by a horde of skeletons and skeletal animals. Many of these skeletons hold banners covered in Latin inscriptions: "Death, the final boundary

of things,” “from the moment we are born, we begin to die,” “death makes scepters and hoes equal,” “we are dust and shadows,” and “know thyself.”¹⁰⁰ As implied by Vesalius’ skeletal scenes, anatomy is moralizing, and the anatomical theatre and its ritualized ceremony are replete with *vanitas* and *memento mori* reminders. The permanent Leiden Anatomical Theater, in fact, had several of these mottoes painted on its walls.¹⁰¹ During the Carnival period, viewers would be forced to come to terms with and be reminded of their mortality. Adam and Eve, in the middle foreground of the 1610 engraving, place life and death into an eschatological context. Death originated in Adam and Eve’s original sin, and death permeates the theater.

A 1609 engraving of the Anatomical Theater at Leiden University conveys the same function, except now in the context of a packed dissection (Figure 34).¹⁰² Amidst the packed crowd, engrossed in the action, the same skeletons hold similar banners with Adam and Eve still in the foreground as skeletal figures themselves. The large compass above the dissector’s head points to both Adam and Eve with the physician and opened body falling in between. An invisible triangle is formed between the three groups of participants, and the message is clear. Amidst festive fanfare, a social and religious equality of the human body typifies the dissection. Again, the viewer encounters the carnivalesque in its truest form, with death as the greatest leveler.

We may finally return back to the *Fabrica* title page with a nuanced sense of purpose. The cadaver, forever central to the ritual, is intimately associated with the skeleton holding a staff, which appears ultimately to be proceeding over the ceremony. Vesalius himself, on the viewer left of the body, discreetly points up to the skeleton, reminding us all, “Nosce te ipsum.” Know thyself. If this message was not transparent enough, the second edition of the *Fabrica* (1555) reveals an updated skeleton holding a scythe—Death personified (Figure 35).

Unfortunately, the “throng of spectators,” as Vesalius referred to them, seems unaware of the grander significance of the event; one viewer even pushes the skeletal leg to the side in order to gain a better vantage. Life is followed by death; Galenic texts are usurped by Vesalius; the nude figure in the left background is opposed by the clothed spectator; the dog and monkey in the foreground, previously the subject of Galenic dissection, are superseded by the human body; and death reigns over all, including the living. These paradoxical inversions form the mainstay of the image, and again we are in the realm of the Bakhtinian carnival.

The fact that these dissections occurred during Carnival was no coincidence. A semblance of order is instilled in the spectacle’s regulations—an attempt to invert exactly what is occurring beyond those doors and an effort to bring stability to the chaos. Sawday sums this up aptly, but with different reasoning:

Insofar as we can reconstruct the extraordinary ritual of the Renaissance anatomy theatre, then what we witness is the desire to neutralize the possibility of transgression. The anatomist’s vocation, his dealings with the dead and with the criminal outcast, the necessary transactions with the ‘taboo’ figure of the executioner and his assistants, all these factors had to be countered in some way...the anatomists struggled to demonstrate the body’s order within the context of a spectacle, which was itself a reinscription of order. If, outside the theatre of anatomy, chaos and misrule governed the proceedings, then, once the body had been transported into the theatre, a new regime came into being. No longer criminal, it was now held to exist within a larger sphere of signification.¹⁰³

The ritual of anatomy, like the Dance of Death, engenders Bakhtin’s four categories of the carnivalesque: hierarchy is overturned; behavior is erratic and unruly; inversions are normal and expected; and the profane rules the day.¹⁰⁴ Bruegel’s interplay of these themes must be seen as premeditated. Indeed, Vesalius had already referenced and transcribed the main implication of the Dance in his work, so Bruegel’s inclusion of both is fitting. Overall, this is clearly a cultural phenomenon that Bruegel is both part of and exploiting in his *Triumph*. Bruegel’s manipulation

of the Bakhtinian carnival is propagated through these visual and cultural sources, and this understanding may serve as a potent point of entry. Bruegel's nuance of the theme engages with the distillation of power: Bruegel has handed society's supposed weapon of social release, inversion, and potential reform to the aggressor. In an image that appears as the antithesis of the carnivalesque in mood and spirit, the *Triumph* testifies that Death is our only reality.

Death, in mid-sixteenth-century Netherlands, was pervaded by the nascent Dutch Revolt and violent Reformation. Not even the nobility were spared the oppressive onslaught—by law and by force in 1567—of the Duke of Alba and previous measures. Death came in—uniform, organized, and militant; ruthless punishment and torture were meted out. Perhaps, then, by intermingling the already-intertwined Dance of Death, Vesalius, and the culture of anatomy, Bruegel emphasizes his work's potential significance; the carnivalesque can no longer be affiliated with spiritual cleansing, release, and evanescent inversion, but rather an outpouring of death. Indeed, Death is our only carnivalesque certainty.

Chapter Five: Processions and Performance

In earlier chapters on Bruegel's iconographic and thematic interactions with the Dance of Death and Vesalian anatomy, one of several patterns rose repeatedly and prominently—performance. In his relation to the Dance of Death, Bruegel alludes to theatrical performance that was so apparent in the late medieval tradition. And in his interest in Vesalian anatomy, Bruegel hearkens to, among other things, the performative nature of anatomical dissection. In both cases, there is a clear emphasis on action and interaction. Performativity with regard to the Dance of Death and Vesalian anatomy alluded to the carnivalesque, and the same will be true here. In this case, performance exists in the *Triumph* as a leitmotif in reference to the contemporary moment's use of the carnivalesque at the beginning of the Dutch Revolt. Our aim will be twofold. First, we will identify two aspects of Bruegel's painting as related to this theme of performance in relation to the ceremonial. Second, we will exploit our knowledge of this intrigue with theatre and urban procession in order to come to acknowledge Bruegel's conscious removal of the features that empower both the procession and the theatre. In all three cases, the carnivalesque, parody, and satire so emblematic of our three comparisons are wholly reimagined with universal doom, despair, and militant violence.

I am indebted to Margaret Sullivan's keen observations of the "hell bastion" in the center of the *Triumph* (Figure 36). Sullivan recognizes the "strange, mobile structure in the center of the painting. Its crenellated walls make it look like a pseudo-castle, a sort of false front constructed from two stage flats hinged together and equipped with wheels like a pageant wagon."¹⁰⁵ Indeed, the corner brackets give the structure a makeshift appearance, and the wheels

on the bottom allow for mobility; such a fabrication was likely derived from pageant wagons of either theatrical performances or ceremonial processions, as will be argued presently. This singular inclusion suggests Bruegel's continued reliance on and interest in current events and cultural practices.

The Low Countries incorporated pageant wagons into special times of the year in three ways, one of which was through the theatre. *Landjuweels*, as discussed earlier, theatrical competitions between nearby Chambers of Rhetoric, featured a procession of floats as an initiation of the event. Chambers of Rhetoric were the "chief centers for the creation of poetry, music, and plays."¹⁰⁶ Kernodle describes, "Although the societies devised *tableaux vivants* for royal entries, their chief creative activity was centered in the *landjuweel*. For it they wrote songs, poems, orations, ballads, farces, and theme plays. Each society devised a triumphal entry procession and a procession to church..."¹⁰⁷ In 1493, The Gillyflower, one of Antwerp's premier Chambers of Rhetoric, entered the city on a wagon float "depicting the 'glorious castle of Antwerp,' on top of which was shown Saint Luke painting the Virgin Mary."¹⁰⁸ The pageant wagon clearly comprised a significant portion of these events in terms of viewing and finance.

The pageant wagon took prominence at the inter-chamber competition, but *rederijkers* also built these carts for *ommegangen*, state- or church-regulated ceremonial processions, as Kernodle suggests.¹⁰⁹ But floats were perhaps an even more prominent feature of Carnival. The pageant procession, as Samuel Sumberg observes, is the 'flower' of every carnival.¹¹⁰ These three festivities shared similar wagons thematically and iconographically, and the carts may even have been of common use. The specific wagons do not survive today, but text and prints relate their varied appearances. Antwerp's extensive documentation suggests that there were a mix of old and new floats incorporated into processions.

Almost every year a topical set of pageant cars was devised to link the usual secular floats and their religious counterparts. The first grouping of pageant cars normally consisted of old favorites like Neptune, the Ship, the Giant, and the Maid of Antwerp... Then, as the 1564 *ommegang* booklet has it: 'Hereafter follows the new cars which changed every year according to the circumstances of the time.'¹¹¹

Several anonymous etchings after Hans Vredeman de Vries survive (Figures 37-39).

Despite their intense variety, the wagons alike feature some sort of base, wheels, characters, and "landscape." Bruegel's "hell bastion" presents these same features, albeit in a different formulation. The wheels are on the exterior and the base has melded into the scene itself, but one can surmise similarities just from the scant surviving prints. Bruegel's creation could be viewed as a cross between the castle on "The Ommegang Elephant" and the "Cave of Discord." On the other hand, the *Triumph* itself is a testament to Bruegel's innovation, and it is just as possible that he mentally manufactured the wagon.

The wagons discussed thus far have all come from the *ommegang* tradition, yet we can be confident in their widespread similarity and use. A favorite float in the Nuremberg Schembart Carnival, for example, is identical to "The Ommegang Elephant" (Figure 40).¹¹² Moreover, towers and castles are common float designs between the two.¹¹³ Thus, the iconographic likeness between Nuremberg and Antwerp can testify to a common visual core of pageant wagons, and we can thus discuss them *visually* in conjunction.

While we have dealt with the physical relation of the pageant wagon to the *landjuweel*, *ommegang*, and carnival, we have yet to address the religious, political, and, most importantly, social atmosphere from which these wagons were displayed. We will return to the *landjuweel* and *ommegang* shortly, and we will begin with carnival. Carnival was, of course, a festive occasion. Occurring perhaps once a year, such a time created a brief, pivotal pause from daily

life, in which citizens could wholly invest themselves in the humor, the festive spectacle, and the

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Samuel Schnittman, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Pennsylvania, Class of 2014

carnavalesque environment that life so desperately required. Mikhail Bakhtin divides the manifestations of the carnivalesque folk culture into three categories, one of which is the *ritual spectacle*, and Carnival certainly filled life in the Low Countries as such.¹¹⁴ Peter Stallybrass contends that the ‘carnavalesque’ developed as a “potent, populist, critical inversion of *all* official words and hierarchies.”¹¹⁵ Outside official religious or civic life, Carnival offered the infrequent opportunity to exist in an “extrapolitical” space.¹¹⁶ What is critical to note, however, is that these occasions were allowed to exist by the rulers. Terry Eagleton notes, “Carnival, after all, is a *licensed* affair in every sense, a permissible rupture of hegemony, a contained popular blow-off as disturbing and relatively ineffectual as a revolutionary work of art. As Shakespeare’s Olivia remarks, there is no slander in an allowed fool.”¹¹⁷

The pageant wagon could thus serve as a symbol of the carnivalesque repose for which this day of social release allowed. But Eagleton notes a contradiction: “Indeed carnival is so vivaciously celebrated that the necessary political criticism is almost too obvious to make.”¹¹⁸ As a result, we should view Carnival as negotiating the political and apolitical space. Meager scholarship exists regarding Carnival in the Low Countries, but as we have already seen, a comparison to Nuremberg, a locale that has a surfeit of surviving work and documentation, will be effective in understanding the political and symbolic underpinnings of these events in the mid-sixteenth century. While the Nuremberg Schembart Carnival took place for hundreds of years, we will focus on the 1539 event that led to an explosive revolt and the festivity’s consequential ban.¹¹⁹ First, several pageant wagons throughout Nuremberg’s history featured castles or towers, which were symbols of feudal culture, as Sumberg argues.¹²⁰ The Nuremberg wagons were referred to as *Hölle*, which literally meant ‘hell.’ While no explanation has ever been attached to this designation, citizens were cognizant of this reference.¹²¹ Thus, the

combination of the castle motif with this hellish allusion may very well serve to define the castle as a “prison for the sinners in Hell.”¹²²

The pageant wagons were always inhabited by costumed grotesques, visible in the 1539 *Storming of Hölle* (Figure 41). These figures were nonthreatening and certainly satirical, and they highlighted the ‘topsy-turvy’ character of Carnival.¹²³ The significance of the castle and the grotesques combined with the final attack of the *läufer*—‘runner.’ While the *Storming of Hölle* illustrates the *läufer* attacking the ship, the ‘attackers’ seized, destroyed, and burned each pageant wagon to the ground.¹²⁴ This assault represented the destruction of the symbols of folly and evil, as Sumberg surmises. Just as well, perhaps we can consider the cathartic nature of the destruction; because Carnival existed foremost as an event of social release, the burning of the wagons can relate the desire to exorcize the negative qualities of society each and every year—a truly carnivalesque sentiment.

Pinson argues that this burning served as the crucial turning point in the Carnival festivity, in which the comical and satirical are transformed into an essentially “sermonic lesson” condemning “deceit, hypocrisy, and sin.”¹²⁵ Where does that leave us with Bruegel’s *Triumph?* On wheels, surrounded by decidedly nonthreatening demons, and on fire, the ‘hell bastion’ pageant wagon could certainly reference the *Hölle* visually and symbolically. If this comparison exists, however, Bruegel has re-inverted the already-topsoy-turvy wagon; the cart does not appear on its final legs or under siege, but rather as the aggressor. It appears to channel the infernal flames toward greater destruction, and it aids the skeletal masses as they attack humanity. There is no carnivalesque catharsis or society-purifying moment available here. Rather, the symbols of ‘deceit, hypocrisy, and sin,’ as Pinson describes, have overtaken the world. The result is widespread obliteration and annihilation.

The 1539 Schembart Carnival and 1580 Carnival in Romans both led to revolt and murder, and this sort of physical violence manifests itself here. In the mid-sixteenth century, the tide of the carnival (and the *ommegang* below) had inexorably shifted. Peter Stallybrass observes, “For long periods carnival may be a stable and cyclical ritual with no noticeable politically transformative effects but that, given the presence of sharpened political antagonism, it may often act as a *catalyst* and *site of actual and symbolic struggle*.”¹²⁶ The 1539 Schembart Carnival (and to an extent, the 1539 Ghent *landjuweel*) serves as an archetype for such a swing. And in response, the government banned previously benign gatherings in Nuremberg (and Ghent). Such elimination, as Stallybrass argues, perhaps forced further unrest, tension, and revolt in the region:

Carnivals, fairs, popular games and festivals were very swiftly ‘politicized’ by the very attempts made on the part of local authorities to eliminate them. The dialectic of antagonism frequently *turned* rituals into resistance at the moment of intervention by the higher powers, even when no overt oppositional element had been present before.¹²⁷

It is entirely this spirit that the local viewer would engender in encountering a pageant cart in Bruegel’s *Triumph*. The wagon appears as a synecdoche of the carnival, and all of its revelry and politicization. The skeletal army, however, has appropriated the cart, and it seems to be overpowering humanity into the death trap. Bruegel has complicated the matter. Seized by the troops, the wagon has effectively lost its power as a rhetorical and political symbol. The very carnivalesque potency that the populace rallied behind has been violent usurped by the enemy. The skeletal movement does not appear as an organized procession as in Carnival, but their militant actions are clearly purposeful, methodical, and exact.¹²⁸ Without that potency, the ‘populist utopian vision’ that the cart represented has been rendered worthless. With humanity facing certain death, they and society are devoid of any power and potential for reform,

respectively, which the carnivalesque embraced. The only certainty of life to Bruegel is death—the *only* carnivalesque feature of life with any fundamental power and consequence.

Beyond Carnival and the *landjuweel*, the viewer can associate the wagon with a third festive procession—the *ommegang*. These took place in Brussels and Antwerp annually and biannually, respectively.¹²⁹ In Antwerp, for example, the “oldest and most spectacular procession” was the Whitsun *ommegang*, which “took its name from its annual performance on Trinity Sunday, one week after Pentecost.”¹³⁰ Principally, the annual procession was a religious celebration meant to honor a patron saint or relic. The regular and secular clergy participated, but so did local confraternities and militia guilds that fired celebratory rounds. Some of the largest numbers of participants, however, came from the franchised artisans who were responsible for religious and secular pageant wagons.¹³¹ In this way, these processions also affirmed civic pride as much as they celebrated religious observance. Each city had a different time and purpose of celebration, but they typically marked the political year, further implying a connection between church and state.¹³²

Clearly, the pageant wagon appears in two opposing environments, one the Carnival, the other a very orderly and hierarchical *ommegang*. While Carnival lasts, no life exists outside of it—to the participant—but in the state procession, the pattern of life was both sanctioned and reinforced, Bakhtin claims.¹³³ He continues, “Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change, and renewal. It was hostile to all that was immortalized and completed.”¹³⁴ As a staple of both the carnivalesque and the unwavering establishment, the pageant car’s ‘loyalty,’ so to speak, was put to the test. In 1539, Mary of Hungary, governess of the Low Countries, ordered a much-reduced Brussels *ommegang*:

Mary had just had her authority challenged by artisanal uprisings in the unruly city of Ghent in Flanders. Fearing similar riots in Brussels, and suspecting that the *ommegang*

was a vehicle for provoking sedition, she forbade the display of all pageant cars. The craft guilds were banned from participating and there was to be no music and no musket salvos. The militia guilds did process but had to do so fully armed in case of trouble.¹³⁵

The ruling class banned the pageant car, the artisanal guilds, and the accompanying carnivalesque gaiety from the state procession. To reinforce regional stability and order, Mary attempted to staunch the bleeding with a tight tourniquet. Unfortunately, Mary's fears were fully realized after her resignation in 1566; the August iconoclastic rioting in Antwerp followed directly after the Marian procession.¹³⁶ The floats' elimination symbolized a newly spurred, politicized population and catalyzed the carnivalesque inversion of normal social hierarchy and behavior into physical action. Its use in a singular day for social release spread and galvanized revolt.

None of this is to say that Bruegel's undated *Triumph* must be dated after August 1566; the carnivalesque spirit embedded in the wagons and the populace was present long before. If anything, the 1539 edict from Mary of Hungary attests to the outflow of the carnivalesque into civic life, which required a crushing response in 1540, almost 30 years prior to the Duke of Alba's authority. That devastating rejoinder is apparent in Bruegel's painting. The cart, forever a symbol of the citizenry whose carnivalesque disposition seeped outward, has been arrogated by the skeletal army. The fiercely active skeletons have reclaimed their immortality in comparison to the plainly mortal human beings who die singularly and in throngs. The synecdoche of their exuberant excess and willful inversion has been forcefully co-opted. Barbara Babcock writes of this inversion, "'Symbolic inversion' may be broadly defined as any act of expressive behavior which inverts, contradicts, abrogates, or in some fashion presents an alternative to commonly held cultural codes, values and norms be they linguistic, literary or artistic, religious, social and

political.”¹³⁷ Humanity’s emblem of inversion, the pageant car, has been inverted once again by death. Death, unlike their single day of social release, is the greatest leveler of all.

Thus far we have dealt with one theatrical feature of Bruegel’s *Triumph*—the float—and now we will conclude with the second feature. Again, I am thankful for Yona Pinson’s observation of the masked skeleton in the right corner who “act[s] out a *tafelspel*, a comic theatrical representation intended to be acted during a banquet” (Figure 42).¹³⁸ On the table are several red-colored cards, some of which have music notes on them, which point to the musical aspect of the *tafelspel*; several biscuits are also spread around and the skeleton robed in a jester’s outfit is serving a tray of bones and a skull, further emphasizing the interruption of the banquet. A *tafelspel* is a comic interlude, a part of the theatre, but not as large a feature as the *spelen van zinne*, the ‘morality plays,’ which the Dance of Death can portray. Bruegel consciously chose the *tafelspel*, I argue, because of its more carnivalesque features *despite* its minor role in theatre. In addition to processions and competitions (e.g. *ommegangen* and *landjuweel*), Stallybrass notes that both comic plays and feasts embrace the carnivalesque.¹³⁹ As Bakhtin notes,

They [Feasts] express the people as a whole because they are based on the inexhaustible, ever-growing abundance of the material principle. They [Banquets] are universal and organically combined with the concept of the free and sober truth, ignoring fear and piousness and therefore linked with wise speech. Finally, they are infused with gay time, moving toward a better future that changes and renews everything in its path.¹⁴⁰

The notions of overabundance, freedom from fear, and the hope of reform are all features of the carnivalesque vision. This idea of excess is clearly represented in the ostentatious garb of the banqueters and the amorous musical duo in the corner. Yet again, these carnivalesque features are overrun by death. The human jester dives under the table, and the nobleman with a

sword stares headlong into the abyss of violence. Two women run in vain away from the

2013-2014 Penn Humanities Forum Andrew W. Mellon Undergraduate Research Fellowship
Final Paper, May 2014
Samuel Schnittman, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Pennsylvania, Class of 2014

skeletons, and the two lovers continue to play music, yet one's frightened facial expression reveals their menacing company. Abundance has turned to dearth, and self-confidence and freedom have morphed into horror.

Not only does the banquet aspect of the *tafelspelen* connote the carnivalesque (or in this case, its reversal), but so does its comical character. In fact, *comic verbal composition* was the second of Bakhtin's three recognized manifestations of the carnivalesque in folk culture.¹⁴¹ Bakhtin views laughter, the natural result of the *tafelspel*, as separate from the state.¹⁴² "Laughter... remained outside all official spheres of ideology and outside all official strict forms of social relations. Laughter was eliminated from religious cult, from feudal and state ceremonials, etiquette, and from all the genres of high speculation."¹⁴³ Laughter served as the antithesis of all the late medieval period's fear, reverence, humility, and seriousness in the face of Christianity.¹⁴⁴ As an essentially individual and unrestricted act, "It [Laughter] liberates from the fear that developed in man during thousands of years: fear of the sacred, of prohibitions, of the past, of power...Laughter opened men's eyes on that which is new, on the future."¹⁴⁵ Again, several notions of the carnivalesque in laughter, freedom from fear, hope of reform, among others, are evident.

The skeletons, however, have claimed the *tafelspel* and rendered it devoid of comedy for the banqueters. The four skeletons involved appear smiling, even happy: one wears a human smiling mask, and another plays a violin along with the lovers. But *their* comic rendition has not generated laughter, but rather fear. Bakhtin discusses laughter as a weapon of the masses: "...Laughter could never become an instrument to oppress and blind the people. It always remained a free weapon in their hands."¹⁴⁶ Perhaps Bakhtin never encountered Bruegel's *Triumph*; as with the pageant wagon, the skeletal army has commandeered the power and

carnavalesque potency of the *tafelspel*, and humanity suffers an imminent and merciless death despite their protest.

That we should recognize Bruegel's relation to the theatre in these two instances should come as no surprise. In his book Gary Waite includes a table of the occupations of Antwerp *rederijkers* in which 51 of the 76 members come from the "arts," with 16 specifically identified as painters.¹⁴⁷ "The Gillyflower," one of Antwerp's preeminent chambers, was legally attached to the Saint Luke's artists' guild.¹⁴⁸ Artists, especially painters, were certainly constant fixtures in these groups. Ilja Veldman devotes an entire chapter to Maarten van Heemskerck's relation to the Haarlem rhetoricians. She develops her argument based on this understanding:

From the point of view of art history it is of interest to examine how and to what extent Heemskerck's association with a chamber of rhetoric left discernible traces in his oeuvre. However, it is difficult to identify any definite borrowings, partly because so much of the material produced by those chambers is now lost. Many of the themes of the plays presented by the Wijngaardranken do, though, correspond to subjects, which regularly occur in Heemskerck's prints.¹⁴⁹

I do not aim to suggest a specific link between Bruegel and a particular chamber. Rather, Bruegel's iterations of the pageant wagon and the *tafelspel* allows the viewer to bear witness to the artist's awareness of the complex intertwining of art, theatre, and religious and political freedom and unrest. Both of these features typically engender numerous carnivalesque qualities. Yet these very same qualities so present in these examples from the urban theatre and ceremonial processions have been decidedly removed. In the Dance of Death and Vesalian anatomy, we also found a clear utilization of the carnivalesque, inversion, and satire, which Bruegel *again* removed in the *Triumph*. The very ammunition of the citizenry—the carnivalesque—has been forcefully annexed by the skeletal army, dismantled, and used against them. Gary Waite

describes carnival as “provid[ing] participants with a relatively safe means to play out new social or religious relationships before adopting them in their daily lives.”¹⁵⁰ Carnival offers the prospect of reform, but in all three instances, in his use of the Dance of Death, Vesalian anatomy, and the theatre, Bruegel has consciously removed the very feature that empowers the populace. His message is dismal, and the result is not only aesthetically but also socially, politically, and religiously oppressive: their weapons of social release and reform are futile. They should resign themselves to the inexorable fate of humanity as depicted. Death, *not* the carnivalesque, is the ultimate egalitarian culmination.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

Something unnatural pervades the scene. Of course, the natural order requires death and dying, but that idea is dealt with very forcibly, oppressively, and unnaturally here. The viewer observes physical, purposeful intervention. Perhaps this notion of intervention is most obvious when seen in comparison to Bosch's *Haywain Triptych* or *Last Judgment Triptych* (Figures 5 and 6). Both Boschian works undeniably ponder the use of force, especially in the Hell panels of both. But consider the stone and wooden outcroppings on the left margins of both central panels, which may represent the entrance to hell. In the *Haywain*, people appear to clamor away from their imminent demise, and in the *Last Judgment*, people fall unwillingly from a trapdoor-like slide onto wheels of torture. These outcroppings, these entrances to hell, appear unnatural in isolation, but what of Bruegel's analog the wooden death trap, into which the throngs are driven like cattle? Neither Boschian design compares in terms of purposeful intervention. As opposed to Bruegel's death trap, Bosch's mouths of hell appear natural, as if dictated by human beings' lives of sin. The constant flow of bodies across the liminal threshold is thus not only ordinary, but also expected. For Bruegel, however, humanity is forced into a physical construct, presumably designed by the skeletal oppressors.

We should therefore envision the *Triumph* as a timely and topical illustration beyond more ordinary, religious sentiment. This concept of intervention has proven key to Bruegel. We have dealt with Bruegel's own intervention in three various iconographic and thematic traditions: the Dance of Death, Vesalian anatomy and dissection culture, and performance. In all three cases, the artist consciously altered the carnivalesque and inverting power that enlivened these

traditions in order to render humanity powerless in the face of mortality. Indeed, it is this very purposeful alteration symbolized by the skeletal-made death trap as opposed to the more “natural” Boschian idiom. Thus Bruegel offers the viewer a dismal statement: nothing can protect you from Death’s scythe. Despite this obvious truism that has been depicted visually for thousands of years, he posits a unique sentiment. Nothing in the world may protect you—physically or emotionally—from the onslaught of Death. Humanity may envision carnivalesque festivities, iconography, and popular culture as an escape from the multifaceted hardships of economic, political, religious, and social life, but our only carnivalesque certainty is Death. Death is nature’s only true leveler, and all else remains evanescent and fleeting.

The present research has engaged but a few features of Bruegel’s incredibly complex and richly detailed *Triumph*. Potential biblical allusions still remain at large as does the full significance of eschatology within an earthly ‘end of days.’ Nevertheless, we have examined an overarching thematic concern that unites several iconographic features across the entire painting. Scholarship has discussed Bruegel, the Dance of Death, Vesalius, the theatre, urban processions, and the carnivalesque separately, but these histories have now been melded as one. If anything, the aim has been for a greater awareness of Bruegel’s vast visual sources and thematic inquiries as well as a nuanced appreciation of his syncretism. An artist of tremendous knowledge and creativity, Bruegel forces the viewer to reckon with each and every work on allegorical and metaphorical terms.

Our analysis can serve as a point of entry for understanding Bruegel’s other paintings. By observing the historical changes to iconography, understanding to what extent these outgrowths appear in Bruegel’s work, visualizing the various combinations of inquiry, and identifying the key theme that may unite the work, what can our framework relate about the

artist's peasant, religious, or encyclopedic images? Above all, we must come to terms—paradoxically—with discovering what may be undetectable on his canvas alone.

Endnotes

- ¹Stechow (1996), 40
- ² Stechow (1996), 40
- ³ Thon (1968), 290
- ⁴ Sullivan (2010), 143
- ⁵ Revelations 20:13
- ⁶ Gibson (1991), referencing his subtitle “A Secular Apocalypse”
- ⁷ Gibson (1991), 60
- ⁸ Silver (2004), 266, 268
- ⁹ For a more thorough discussion of the pair of lovers and banquet scene, see Pinson (1997), 304-5
- ¹⁰ Silver (2004), 267
- ¹¹ Gibson (1991), 66
- ¹² Sullivan (2010) reads the *Triumph* through a Classical framework, which I will discuss later.
- ¹³ Palermo from Gibson (1991), 64; Pisa from Silver (2004), 267
- ¹⁴ Pinson (1997), 304-5
- ¹⁵ Gibson (1991), 62
- ¹⁶ Gibson (1991), 71
- ¹⁷ See Bruegel’s *Netherlandish Proverbs* and *Children’s Games*
- ¹⁸ Gibson (1991), 72
- ¹⁹ Perhaps in support of this same argument, Silver (2004) only mentions the Three Living and the Three Dead in discussing Gibson.
- ²⁰ Gibson (1991), 56
- ²¹ Gibson (1991), 56
- ²² Gibson (1991), 54
- ²³ Sullivan (2010), 147
- ²⁴ Sullivan (2010), 148
- ²⁵ Binski (1996), 47
- ²⁶ Beyond Sullivan (2010), see Sullivan (1991)
- ²⁷ Sullivan (2010), 145
- ²⁸ Sullivan (2010), notes 8, 11, 12, 15, 22-27
- ²⁹ Richardson (2011), 605
- ³⁰ Sullivan (2010), 145
- ³¹ For Bruegel’s relationship to the *rederijkers*, see Gibson (1981), 426-46; Sullivan (2010), 163-4.
- ³² Sullivan (2010), 144-5. She also claims this is why it is unsigned and undated.
- ³³ Thon (1968), 293
- ³⁴ Nevertheless, the prevalence of the hay in the bottom middle foreground, its visual composition of a crucifix form, and its absence everywhere else are compelling, and it perhaps requires further observation.

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- ³⁵ Thon (1968), 292; Gibson (1991), 55
- ³⁶ Silver (2004), 269, notes 20-22
- ³⁷ Sullivan (2010), 145, note 6
- ³⁸ Gibson (1991), 83; Silver relates in his notes that Gibson agrees with Silver's dating of 1566-67 from a 2001 lecture in Rotterdam.
- ³⁹ Silver (2004), 266
- ⁴⁰ Silver (2004), 268
- ⁴¹ <http://www.museodelprado.es/en/research/estudios/el-vino-de-la-fiesta-de-san-martin-pieter-bruegel-el-viejo/>
- ⁴² Silver (2004), 269
- ⁴³ See Pinson (1997); Her entire argument calls for a comical reading of the interrupted banquet in the bottom left foreground
- ⁴⁴ Sullivan (2010), 160. She recognizes this figural group, but applies it to a reference of the Roman poet Catullus
- ⁴⁵ Pinson (1997), 310
- ⁴⁶ Gertsman (2010), 79
- ⁴⁷ See Meijer (1978), Waite (2000), Strietman and Happé (2006), and Bloemendal, van Dixhoorn, and Strietman (2011)
- ⁴⁸ <http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/landprint/vesalius/>
- ⁴⁹ In fact, it is Vesalius who realizes that Galen's work, which had been a veritable source for hundreds of years, was based on animal cadaver studies. *De humani corporis fabrica* corrected many of Galen's oversights.
- ⁵⁰ See, for example, Bernt Notke's Dance of Death in Reval, after 1463, Tallinn, Estonia; images in Gertsman (2010), 22
- ⁵¹ Binski (1996), 153
- ⁵² Huizinga (1924); Binski (1996), 130
- ⁵³ Gertsman (2010), 87
- ⁵⁴ Binski (1996), 157
- ⁵⁵ Gertsman (2010), 35
- ⁵⁶ Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, 10
- ⁵⁷ Binski (1996), 153-4
- ⁵⁸ Schechner (2002), 2; see Gertsman (2010), 256
- ⁵⁹ Gertsman (2010), 15-16
- ⁶⁰ Gertsman (2010), 81
- ⁶¹ Gertsman (2010), 165
- ⁶² Binski (1996), 156
- ⁶³ Stallybrass (1986), 7
- ⁶⁴ Bloemendal (2011), 38
- ⁶⁵ Waite (2000), 147-58
- ⁶⁶ Decavele (1990), 96; Waite (2000), 159
- ⁶⁷ Waite (2000), 159
- ⁶⁸ Waite (2000), 160
- ⁶⁹ Waite (2000), 60
- ⁷⁰ Waite (2000), 71

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- ⁷¹ Gertsman (2010), 71
- ⁷² Gertsman (2010), 34
- ⁷³ Freud, "The Uncanny," (1919), 357
- ⁷⁴ It is interesting that in the 15th century, these depictions are increasingly violent. Perhaps this is worth discussing.
- ⁷⁵ I use quotations to indicate that Holbein actually begins with Adam and Eve and ends with the Last Judgment, a pivotal fact that I will discuss presently.
- ⁷⁶ Gertsman (2010), 179
- ⁷⁷ Thon (1968), 293-4
- ⁷⁸ Silver (2011), 263-307
- ⁷⁹ Garrison (1926), 48
- ⁸⁰ Tagliagamba (2010), 124-6
- ⁸¹ Saunders and O'Malley (1950), 15
- ⁸² Park (2006), 166
- ⁸³ Saunders and O'Malley (1950), 29-31
- ⁸⁴ See Garrison (1926), 43-4 for Florentine painters' impulse to learn from anatomists, and Saunders and O'Malley (1950), 25-29 for Vesalius' close relationship with artists including Titian
- ⁸⁵ Saunders and O'Malley (1950), 84
- ⁸⁶ Saunders and O'Malley (1950), 84
- ⁸⁷ Saunders and O'Malley (1950), 86
- ⁸⁸ Kusukawa (2012), 219
- ⁸⁹ Kusukawa (2012), 231
- ⁹⁰ Quigley (2012), 22
- ⁹¹ Sawday (1995), 55-6
- ⁹² Kusukawa (2012), 203
- ⁹³ Sawday (1995), 64
- ⁹⁴ Klestinec (2011), 24-5
- ⁹⁵ Quigley (2012), 20
- ⁹⁶ Ferrari (1987), 66
- ⁹⁷ Quigley (2012), 81
- ⁹⁸ Quigley (2012), 154
- ⁹⁹ Nunn (2005), 37-8
- ¹⁰⁰ Dackerman (2012), 222
- ¹⁰¹ Quigley (2012), 155
- ¹⁰² Dackerman (2012), 222
- ¹⁰³ Sawday (1995), 84
- ¹⁰⁴ Bakhtin (1965)
- ¹⁰⁵ Sullivan (2010), 163
- ¹⁰⁶ Kernodle (1944), 112
- ¹⁰⁷ Kernodle (1944), 114
- ¹⁰⁸ Waite (2000), 53
- ¹⁰⁹ Kernodle (1944), 112
- ¹¹⁰ Sumberg (1941), 132

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- 111 Thøfner (2007), 67
112 Sumberg (1941), 223
113 Sumberg (1941), 225
114 Bakhtin (1984), 5
115 Stallybrass (1986), 7
116 Bakhtin (1984), 6
117 Eagleton (1981), 148; Stallybrass (1986), 13
118 Eagleton (1981), 148
119 Indeed, it is interesting to note that 1539 saw the Nuremberg revolt as well as the dissent-infused Ghent *landjuweel*, both of which were banned.
120 Sumberg (1941), 142
121 Sumberg (1941), 133
122 Sumberg (1941), 143
123 Sumberg (1941), 97
124 Pinson (2008), 64
125 Pinson (2008), 166-8
126 Stallybrass (1986), 14
127 Stallybrass (1986), 16
128 For an analysis of the “militant” nature of Bruegel’s *Triumph*, see Silver (2004)
129 Thøfner (2007), 46
130 Thøfner (2007), 47
131 Thøfner (2007), 47
132 Thøfner (2007), 48
133 Bakhtin (1984), 9
134 Bakhtin (1984), 10
135 Thøfner (2007), 50
136 Thøfner (2007), 51
137 Babcock (1978), 14; Stallybrass (1986), 17
138 Pinson (1997), 310
139 Stallybrass (1986), 7
140 Bakhtin (1984), 303
141 Bakhtin (1984), 5
142 It is important to recall the Stalinist setting for Bakhtin, which effectively may not be so dissimilar to Bruegel’s contemporary moment.
143 Bakhtin (1984), 73
144 Bakhtin (1984), 73
145 Bakhtin (1984), 94
146 Bakhtin (1984), 94
147 Waite (2000), 57
148 Strietman (2006), 101-2
149 Veldman (1977), 131
150 Waite (2000), 135

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Final Paper, May 2014
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