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## **Pieter Bruegel the Elder: art discourse in the sixteenth-century Netherlands**

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**Chapter Four:**  
**To See Yourself within It: Bruegel's *Festival of Fools***

**I.**

The topics of blindness and self-awareness I discussed in relation to the *Peasant and Nest Robber* bring me to the focus of my fourth and final chapter, Bruegel's *Festival of Fools* (fig. 84). In addition, the practices of making and viewing works of art I have described for all of Bruegel's later peasant paintings are also helpful in thinking about this particular design. Nadine Orenstein argues for a late dating of the print, after the now lost drawing by Bruegel, based on the words *Aux quatre Vents* inscribed at the bottom center. This is the form of the publisher's address used by the widow of the print's publisher, Hieronymus Cock, following his death in 1570. Orenstein speculates the drawing was completed in the last years of Bruegel's life, during the same time he painted the peasant panels, and the print produced after his death.<sup>384</sup>

Although fairly subtle, the composition of the *Festival of Fools* stages a procession similar to a wagon play.<sup>385</sup> The crowd of lively characters enters from the

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<sup>384</sup> Nadine Orenstein, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder* (2001), 251. See also, T. Riggs, "Bruegel and his Publisher," in O. von Simson and M. Winner (eds.), *Pieter Bruegel und seine Welt*, Berlin: Mann (1979), 165-174.

<sup>385</sup> Wagon plays were processional dramas that took place during *Ommegangen* (devotional processions) in the 1550s and 1560s. Rhetoricians conceived of wagon plays as didactic episodes that could morally edify and educate their audience. The plays utilized overt metaphors and personifications to create allegorical productions that focused on collective civic identity; Emily Peters, "'Den gheheelen loop des weerelts' (The whole course of the world): Printed Processions and the Theater of Identity in Antwerp during the Dutch Revolt," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Santa Barbara (2005), 151. Sheila Williams and Jean Jacquot also discuss Bruegel's *Festival of Fools* in the context of

left, beneath the trellised pergolas, and processes to the right, before dancing hand-in-hand and meandering their way into the background where the musicians provide music. The right side of the building through which they process is a gallery for viewing. On the far left side, two men support a makeshift carriage, made just visible by the handle they carry, which bears a bald-headed fool above their shoulders holding a ball before his gaze. At first sight, the collection of figures seems to be rather chaotically constructed; they engage in acrobatic manoeuvres, heads swivelled awkwardly on bodies and bodies piled on top of one another. In the foreground, multiple fools play a bowling game, while in the background people on a platform strum or bang various instruments. The figures are in full costume with hood and bells; they dance, exhibit bawdy gestures and participate in proverbial activities, examples of which I will discuss shortly. All of this is mentioned in the accompanying text below the image. The text reads, in translation, “You *sottebollen* (numbskulls), who are plagued with foolishness, / Come to the green if you want to go bowling, / Although one has lost his honor and another his money, / The world values the greatest *sottebollen*. // *Sottebollen* are found in all nations, / Even if they do not wear a fool’s cap on their heads. / They have such grace in dancing that their foolish heads spin like tops. // The filthiest *sottebollen* shit everything away, / Then there are those who take others by the nose. / Some sell trumpets and the others spectacles / With which they deceive many nitwits. // Yet there are *sottebollen* who behave themselves wisely, / And taste the true sense of ‘*tSottebollen* (numbskulling) / Because they [who] enjoy folly in themselves / Shall best hit the pin with their *sottebollen*.”<sup>386</sup>

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allegorical processions, but for different purposes; see “Ommegangs Anversois du Temps de Bruegel et de van Heemskerck,” in *Les Fêtes de la Renaissance*, vol. 2, *Fêtes et Cérémonies au Temps de Charles Quint*, ed. Jean Jacquot, Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (1960), 359-388.

<sup>386</sup> Translation of the original text is adapted from Orenstein, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder* (2001), 252 and Keith Moxey, “Pieter Bruegel and *The Feast of Fools*,” *Art Bulletin*, vol. LXIV, no.4 (1982), 640-646. “Ghy Sottebollen, die met ydelheyt, ghequelt=syt, / Compt al ter banen, die lust hebt om rollen, / Al wordet déen syn eere en dander t’gelt=quyt, / De weerelt die pryst, de grootste Sottebollen. // Men vint Sottebols, onder elcke nacie, / Al en draghen sy geen sotscappen, ophaeren cop./ Die int dansen heeben, al sulken gracie, / Dat hunnen Sottebol, drayet, ghelyck eenen top. // De vuylste Sottebols, lappent al duer de billen, / Dan synder, die d’een dander, mettenuefe vatten / De sulck, vercoopt trompen, en dander brillen, / Daer sy veel, Sottebollen mede verschatten. // Al synder Sottebols, die haer wysselyck draghen, / En van tSottenbollen, den rechten sin-smaken, / Om dat sy in hun selfs sotheyt hebben behagen / Sal hueren Sottebol alder best de pinraken.”

In his discussion of this print, Keith Moxey argues that it does not represent an actual event, such as the celebration of the “Feast of Fools” which took place in several cities of Brabant during Bruegel’s lifetime.<sup>387</sup> For one, Moxey explains, the park-like architectural setting bears little resemblance to the streets and alleyways in which the procession of fools must have taken place and, second, all the figures in the composition wear the costume of court fools instead of the varied and fantastic costumes worn in the ecclesiastical Feast of Fools. Rather than reflecting reality, argues Moxey, the picture represents an allegory of folly.<sup>388</sup> While this may be true, there is yet another contemporary, local event that this picture may be connected to, a play presented by the Diest chamber of rhetoric at the 1561 *Landjuweel* (drama festival) in Antwerp, titled “De Sottebollen.”<sup>389</sup> In this drama, or “*factie*,” not only is the setting for the action a bowling green, but the play also makes a similar pun on “heads” as the image and text of Bruegel’s engraving, a similarity I will return to. If we take a closer

<sup>387</sup> Moxey “Pieter Bruegel and the *Feast of Fools*” (1982), 641-643. See also Thierry Boucquey, *Mirages de la Farce: Fête des fous, Bruegel et Molière*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing (1991), esp. 60-72 where he discusses the image as a representation of the world-upside-down, in the context of the inversion principle central to the Feast of Fools. The religious Feast of Fools was an institutionalized ritual that constituted an integral part of ecclesiastical life in the Southern Netherlands from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries. The festival, which was a characteristic part of the communal life of cathedral chapters, consisted in an inversion of the clerical hierarchy. The lower clergy took control of the cathedral and proceeded to hold mock services. J.C. Margolin, “Des lunettes et des homes, ou la satire des mal-voyants au XVIe siècle,” *Annales, economies, sociétés, civilizations*, vol. 30 (1973), 375-393. For the history of the Feast of Fools as a European tradition, see E. Chambers, *The Medieval Stage*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903. On the festival of fools put on by rhetorical societies, see R. Marijnissen, “De Eed van Meester Oom. Een Voorbeeld van Brabantse Jokkernij uit Bruegels Tijd,” in O. von Simson and M. Winner (ed.), *Pieter Bruegel und seine Welt*, Berlin: Mann (1979), 51-61.

<sup>388</sup> Moxey, “Feast of Fools” (1982), 641.

<sup>389</sup> Moxey also raises and dismisses this idea, with little justification; see *Ibid.*, 643, n. 22. Jeroen Vandommele offers a concise description of the festival: In August of 1561, the chamber of Rhetoric *De Violieren*, connected to the Saint-Lucas guild of Antwerp (the guild of artists), organized the last ‘*Landjuweel*’ of Brabant. This festival was the last one in a cycle of seven and is considered to be the largest and the most exuberant rhetorician festival in sixteenth-century Netherlands. Fourteen chambers of rhetoric came to Antwerp to compete against each other. There were a number of special prizes to win for different categories of the festival: there was an ‘Entry’ into Antwerp, similar to Royal Entries. There was the competition of the best ‘farce-play’ or *Esbattement*, the competition of the best ‘morality-play’ or *spel van zinne*, and there was a competition for best prologue. Apart from these three competitions, chambers could win prizes for best celebration, for best ‘*tableau vivant*,’ for best comic play and for the best ‘jester’. The one with the best ‘*Esbattement*’ was the official winner of the *Landjuweel* and was obliged to start the next cycle in their own hometown. [http://www.rug.nl/let/onderzoek/onderzoekinstututen/icog/dissertaties/summaries\\_2003-2004/vanDommele](http://www.rug.nl/let/onderzoek/onderzoekinstututen/icog/dissertaties/summaries_2003-2004/vanDommele) (January 31, 2007). Literature on the 1561 *Landjuweel* is extensive; see Elly Cockx-Indestege, W. Waterschoot, et al (eds.), *Uyt Ionsten Versaemt. Het landjuweel van 1561 te Antwerpen*. Brussel: Koninklijke Bibliotheek Albert I, 1994; E. van Autenboer, *Het Brabantse landjuweel der rederijkers (1515-1561)*, Middelburg: Merlijn, 1981; G.J. Steenbergen, *Het landjuweel van de rederijkers*, Leuven, 1950.

look at the actual make-up of *facties* in general, as well as the Diest presentation more specifically, it is highly likely that Bruegel's contemporary viewers would have viewed the *Festival of Fools* with this sort of event in mind.

During the Antwerp *Landjuweel*, and the smaller festival (*Haagspel*) held immediately afterwards, there were also prizes given for the best *factie*, or short allegorical play that was satirical or comic in nature. These plays usually took place in the streets and always ended in an invitation for the crowd to join the characters in an original song and dance created by the performing chamber of rhetoric.<sup>390</sup> Although the *factie* genre is not precisely defined, only seventeen examples are extant and all but one are from the 1561 *Landjuweel* or *Haagspel*, literary scholars have concluded a number of characteristics based on the sources. For example, the plays were not performed in a specific location in the Antwerp *Grote Markt*, as were the *Landjuweel* dramas, but took place as a lively procession around a wagon along the street. In this way, explains Bart Ramakers, the plays fit the processional character of the theatrical competition.<sup>391</sup> Also in contrast to the plays designed for the *Landjuweel*, there was no designated theme to be addressed. The invitation card for the competition stipulated only that the "street revue" should be funny and must be meaningful for the crowd. Usually, many characters appeared in the performance who often spoke only one line in the dialogue. Furthermore, the most typical characteristic was that the *factie* should end with a *dansliedje* (song to dance to).<sup>392</sup>

Of the sixteen *facties* from the 1561 *Landjuweel* and *Haagspel*, four address the subjects of fools and folly. In his description of the presentation by 's-Hertogenbosch at the *Landjuweel*, which addressed the spread of folly through the use of a hand cream, Ruud Ryckaert explains that the dialogue is a true storehouse of images of folly and gets its power not necessarily from a specific comical act or exchange, but from its rich

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<sup>390</sup> Bart Ramakers, "Epilooglieden, factieliedereren, en de Brabantse connectie," in Frank Willaert (ed.) *Veelderhande liedekens: het Nederlandse lied tot 1600*, Leuven: Peeters (1997), 149-151 and Ruud Ryckaert, "Nu comt hier boven op desen waghén staen! De factie op het Antwerpse Landjuweel en Haagspel van 1561," *Spiegel der Letteren*, vol. 47, no. 4 (2005), 297-301.

<sup>391</sup> Ramakers, "Epilooglieden" (1997), 150.

<sup>392</sup> Ibid. One example is a brief description given in the "Charte der Rhetorijcken van d'Landt-Iuweel," from the 1561 *Landjuweel* in Antwerp: "Wie de beste Factie voort sal stellen, / Achter straten doende, met een vrolijck relen, / Daer meest sins in besloten werdt sonderlinghen, / En recreatijuelijest om vertellen, / Maer Schimp en Onhuescheyt moety buyten vellen, / Met een nieu dansliedeken om springhen [...]" *Het Antwerpse Landjuweel van 1561*, with introduction and commentary by C. Kruyskamp, Antwerpen: De Nederlandsche Boekhandel (1962), xi.

symbolic language. He goes on to say that thanks to the “Bruegelesque attraction” of the language, it is not possible to miss the comic effect.<sup>393</sup>

The *factie* of *De Christusooghen van Diest* presents sixteen characters representing various vices and follies, called *hoofden*, led by *Thooft van alle Vreemde Hoofden* (head of all the strange heads).<sup>394</sup> The play is opened by the “head *hoofd*” who declares that the subject to be discussed involves everyone; therefore, all should be quiet and listen because with being silent one best acquires knowledge and insight. *Thooft vol Ghenuachten* (head full of pleasure) and *Thooft vol Sorghen* (head full of worries) must, along with their leader, decide who of the characters is allowed to become a member of their society and who is not welcome at the Antwerp festival and must leave the city. Other representatives include: *Thooft vol Keyen* (head full of stones), *Thooft vol Slaeps* (head full of sleep/laziness), *Thooft vol Amoreusheden* (head full of blind love), *Thooft vol Hoppen* (head full of drunkenness), *Thooft vol Devocien* (head full of hypocrisy)<sup>395</sup>, *Thooft vol Pluymen* (head full of frivolity), and *Thooft vol Sotten* (head full of all-encompassing folly). The *factie* is a moralizing dialogue in which the “head *hoofd*” asks each character individually who they are. Each responds in turn by describing the folly they represent. In the majority of cases, the “head *hoofd*” replies to each character informing him of what he needs to do to cure himself. It becomes apparent by the end of the dialogue that each character is a representative of specific factions of the population that would have been present in the audience. Thus, the exchanges between the “head *hoofd*” and “head” of each type of folly are meant to be heard by the audience as if they themselves are speaking and being spoken to.<sup>396</sup>

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<sup>393</sup> Ryckaert, “De factie op het Antwerpse Landjuwel” (2005), 304.

<sup>394</sup> *Spelen van sinne vol scone moralisacien vvtleggingen ende bediedenissen op alle loeflijcke consten [...]: ghespeelt met octroy der Con. Ma. binnen der stadt van Andtwerpen op dLantjuweel by die veerthien cameran van retorijcken die hen daer ghepresenteert hebben den derden dach Augusti int jaer ons heeren M.D.LXI: op die questie VVat den mensch aldermeest tot conste vervvect [...] Willem Silvius (1562), 363.*

<sup>395</sup> “hypocrisy,” the pretense of having a virtuous character or religious beliefs that one does not really possess, is not a direct translation of “*Devocien*,” but an interpretation based on the character’s lines.

<sup>396</sup> In this sense, the presentational style of the *factie* is similar to morality plays. Presentational style refers to the particular intimacy between the players and the spectators, in which the players freely acknowledged and addressed the audience. Spectators often overtly participated in the central characters’ drama, a character who stood in for them as a universal type. Peters, “Printed Processions and the Theater of Identity” (2005), 157. See also H. van Dijk, “Structure as a Mean’s to Audience Identification in the Dutch ‘rederijker’ Drama,” in M. Gosman and R. Walthaus (eds.), *European*

Likewise, Bruegel's *Festival of Fools* is also a storehouse of illustrations of folly, which the inscription below the image glosses. For example, two fools at the center of the composition pull each other's noses, enacting the Flemish proverb "to lead someone by the nose," meaning to lead someone astray or to deceive them.<sup>397</sup> Just in front and to the left of this pair are two figures representing the "world turned upside down"—one capers mid-somersault while the other shows his bare ass, an action meant to conjure up associations of excrement and defecation.<sup>398</sup> The trumpet-seller mentioned in the text is another reference to deceit. Moxey explains that the Flemish word for trumpet was derived from the French "trompe" which in turn drew its deceitful connotations from the verb "tromper," to trick. Although there is no trumpet-seller in Bruegel's image, it is likely that the man blowing a flute on the right of the composition is related to this passage. An engraving that is usually attributed to Bruegel, *The Dishonest Merchant* (ca. 1568, fig. 85), represents a man selling nets, trumpets, flutes and Jew's harps.<sup>399</sup> Since flutes are the visual equivalent to trumpets and since the sixteenth-century Flemish word "*fluten*," (present day: *fluiten*) "to flute," could also mean "to betray," Bruegel's flute player could have also been understood in the context of fraud or deceit.<sup>400</sup> Additionally, the presence of Jew's harps among the merchant's deceitful wares makes it likely that this instrument, which is played by a fool in the vicinity of the flute player, would have been viewed in a similar context.<sup>401</sup> A figure at the far right wields a pair of spectacles and may illustrate the spectacle-seller also mentioned in the text. If this is the case, then this figure too can be understood as a personification of deceit, since spectacles were a common symbol of blindness and deception, while the action of selling spectacles was associated with the fraudulent promise of improved sight.<sup>402</sup> On top of his head and on a badge, the man

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*Theatre 1470-1600: Traditions and Transformations*, Groningen: Egbert Forsten (1996), 113-117; Robert Potter, *The English Morality Play: Origins, History and Influence of a Dramatic Tradition*, London: Routledge (1975), 48.

<sup>397</sup> Jan Grauls, *Volkstaal en Volksleven* (1957), 103.

<sup>398</sup> Moxey, "Pieter Bruegel and the *Feast of Fools*" (1982), 643.

<sup>399</sup> This image was published among a set of proverb illustrations by Jan Wierix in 1568-1569, see Jacques Lavalleye, *Bruegel and Lucas van Leyden: Complete Engravings, Etchings and Woodcuts*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1967.

<sup>400</sup> Moxey, "Pieter Bruegel and the *Feast of Fools*" (1982), 640-641.

<sup>401</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>402</sup> *Ibid.* See also D.G. Denery, *Seeing and Being Seen in the Later Medieval World: Optics, Theology and Religious Life*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

wears spectacles that are upside-down, possibly further indication of his deceptive enterprise. Finally, the importance of gestures in the picture can be seen in the so-called ‘fig’ gesture made by the fool standing in the foreground who holds an owl on his left arm. It was, and still is, a well-known gesture in the Netherlands and possesses obscene significance as a visual metaphor of the sex act.<sup>403</sup>

In the translation of the caption, I have retained the term “*sottebollen*,” rather than using the English equivalent “numbskull,” because it is important both for understanding the connection between image and text, as well as for recognizing the similar pun on “heads” that the print shares with the Diest *factie*. As I mentioned, on the far left side, two men support a makeshift carriage which bears a bald-headed fool above their shoulders. We can see that the group of fools in this section hold up balls in front of their eyes; the fool who is hoisted up gazes intently into his. The resemblance between the bald round head of the fool and the smooth round ball at which he gazes is striking; elsewhere in the picture, it is even possible to confuse one with the other. Scholars commenting on this similitude have recognized that the bowling game played by the fools in the foreground cleverly puns on the word *sottebollen*, which describes both the bald heads of the fools, or numbskulls, and the balls they play with. The Flemish word “*sof*” means “fool,” while “*bol*” can mean either “ball” or “head.” “*Sottebollen*” can therefore just as easily mean “foolish heads” as it can “fool’s balls.”<sup>404</sup> Therefore, the ball that the fool sitting on the carriage holds before his gaze is a representation of himself; the print represents this symbiosis between object and personal identity both visually and textually.

The names of the characters portrayed in the Diest *factie* play a similar kind of pun. For example, the first person to speak is *Thooft van* (of) *alle vreemde hoofden*, while each character presented after him is *Thooft vol* (full) [...]. As a result, the spectator is led to consider each character as having a head full of the folly after which they are named, while at the same time being the head, or representative, of this type of folly that is present in the crowd of spectators.

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<sup>403</sup> For elaboration on these and other symbolic actions and gestures in the picture, see Moxey, “Pieter Bruegel and the *Feast of Fools*” (1982). See also Peter Hecht, *De Hollandse fijnschilders : van Gerard Dou tot Adriaen van der Werff*, Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum Amsterdam (1989), 208-211 (esp. n. 3).

<sup>404</sup> Moxey, “Pieter Bruegel and the *Feast of Fools*” (1982), 640.

Although it is by no means conclusive evidence, several elements in Bruegel's design correspond with *factie* presentations in general. Both are lively processions, similar to wagon plays, that take place in the street and end in dancing and music-making. Bruegel's image is a representation of fools that is both funny and meaningful, representing visual illustrations of proverbs, gestures or customs specific to the subject. And, as with the Diest play, a "head *hoofd*" is hoisted up on the wagon. Furthermore, as I will show in the remainder of this chapter, the viewer of the print, like the spectator of the play, is implicated in the folly represented through the pun on "heads" and the tools for play they carry in their hands.

In the following, I will build on my description of the *Festival of Fools* thus far and focus on interweaving analyses of certain aspects of the picture—architecture, actions of the fools and text—in order to show how Bruegel elaborates on the processional format, using architecture, figures and accompanying text to visually and intellectually fuse the world of the viewer and that of the picture. Specifically, I will explain how the bowling game incites the performance of interpretation as an exercise in overcoming blindness through the acquisition of self-knowledge.<sup>405</sup> Subsequently, I will discuss how Bruegel's allegory of folly not only resonates visually with contemporary *facties* but also depictions of allegorical processions. Although Bruegel's picture may have been viewed in the context of these vernacular plays, there

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<sup>405</sup> Participation in such bowling games are also mentioned in Erasmus's *convivia*. In the "Sober Feast," the guests try to decide how to properly dedicate the garden where their feast will take place. Bartholinus's suggests, "You have playing boards and balls. We'll dedicate the garden with a game." Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 40 (1997), 926. But, the staging of a philosophical or religious discussion within the context of a game is an exercise with a longer history. For a general discussion of this phenomenon, see Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*, trans. by Richard Francis Carrington Hull, London: Temple Smith, 1970. See the poem written by Anthonis de Roovere (1430-1482), "Gheestelijck den bal te slane," in J.J. Mak (ed.), *De Gedichten van Anthonis de Roovere*, Zwolle: W.E.J. Tjeenk Willink (1955), 278-281. A text by Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464) written in 1462, called *De ludo globi* (or *The Game of Spheres*), is another example. After pausing to rest from a type of bowling game, John, Duke of Bavaria, and the Cardinal engage in an extended dialogue about the way in which their game of spheres facilitates an understanding of divine concepts. The Cardinal explains in the opening section, "Indeed, I think that no honest game is entirely lacking in the capacity to instruct." After John appeals to the Cardinal to expand on the philosophy the bowling game represents, the Cardinal responds hesitantly, understanding the magnitude of the request, "I will do what you ask and sow in your noble minds some seeds of knowledge. If you receive and protect these seeds within yourselves, each of them will produce the fruit of light which is of great importance for that most desired self-knowledge." Nicholas of Cusa, *De Ludo Globi*, trans. by Pauline Moffit Watts, New York: Abaris Books (1986), fol. CLIIv. On the soul's journey as play in *De Ludo Globi*, see "The Journey of the Soul to God in Nicholas of Cusa's *De Ludo Globi*," in *Nicholas of Cusa in Search of God and Wisdom*, eds. Gerald Christianson and Thomas M. Izbicki, Leiden: E.J. Brill (1991), 71-86.

are other pictorial elements that reveal a visual discourse with the practice of representing classical subjects in allegorical processions, particularly those of Maarten van Heemskerck. More precisely, the manner in which Bruegel portrays the procession of fools not only incorporates visual illustrations of local proverbs, gestures or customs specific to the subject, but also classical architecture and pictorial motifs that resemble, or play on, a type of image that, although not classical in nature, had been employed up to this point for depicting classical themes or royal entries. As a result, similar to the *Peasant Wedding Banquet* and *Peasant Dance*, as I have described them, Bruegel presents a local festivity in a form that was not only previously used for more lofty subject matter but also brings with it a certain mode, or habit, of viewing that would have informed the viewer's analysis and interpretation.

Before addressing these ideas, I first need to acknowledge the fact that I am discussing a print in much the same way that I previously analyzed Bruegel's panel paintings—two mediums that are entirely different. This is the case not only for the very different manner an artist would have approached the formal design of a print as opposed to a panel painting, it is also true for how, and in what context, a viewer would have engaged it.<sup>406</sup> In the inventory taken from the possessions of Cock's widow, Mayken Verhulst, after her death in 1601, the *Festival of Fools* was listed as “*Een plaete van de Sottebollen*”; she had thirty-one impressions of it.<sup>407</sup> Unlike panel paintings, prints were mass produced and much more readily available to a broader audience. Therefore, it is more difficult to delimit the type and characteristics of the print's contemporary viewer, as well as its viewing context, than it is, for example, a painting like the *Peasant Wedding Banquet*. As a result, it is impossible to discuss this picture within a single context, such as the *convivium* tradition, as I have tried to do for Bruegel's paintings.<sup>408</sup>

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<sup>406</sup> On the social conditions of print culture in a single city, see Jan van der Stock, *Printing Images in Antwerp. The Introduction of Printmaking in a City Fifteenth Century to 1585*, Rotterdam: Sound and Vision Interactive, 1998.

<sup>407</sup> Nadine Orenstein, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder* (2001).

<sup>408</sup> On the multiple, distinct viewerships of prints, see Jan van der Stock, “Ambiguous intentions, multiple interpretations: An ‘other’ look at printed images from the sixteenth century,” in *Prentwerk, 1500-1700, Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, vol. 52 (2001), 79-99; for a particular example of these complexities of reception in the work of Goltzius, see James Bloom, “Mastering the Medium: Reference and Audience in Goltzius's Print of the *Circumcision*,” in *Prentwerk, 1500-1700, Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, vol. 52 (2001), 79-99.

However, in the sixteenth century, we know that prints and drawings became autonomous works of art—bought, sold, framed and, more importantly for my argument, held in the viewer’s hands and discussed as art objects in their own right. In fact, it has been argued that by the mid-sixteenth century, prints could have influenced painting and artistic invention as much as the other way around.<sup>409</sup> One of the effects of the constantly expanding corpus of images in print during the sixteenth century was that artists had available to them a vast array of pictorial examples upon which they could draw in producing their works.<sup>410</sup> Printed images were often palimpsests of stylistic, compositional and iconographic references. As artists began producing images that imitated the style of previous art, or quoted iconographic details, or borrowed compositional motifs, viewers developed corresponding skills in recognizing citations and subtle resonances among images.<sup>411</sup>

Similar to the *Festival of Fools*, other later works after Bruegel, such as the figures in *Summer* (1568, fig. 86) and the battle scene of *The Fight of the Piggy Banks and Strongboxes* (after 1570, fig. 87), incorporate Italianate style or characteristics from more lofty representations of history. For example, Kavalier has shown that for his allegorical representation of *The Fight of the Piggy Banks and Strongboxes*, Bruegel mediates pictorial elements common for heroic battle scenes in woodcut illustrations and tapestries; as a result, he argues that the picture would have been viewed in relation to these images and understood in ironic terms, as a “mock-

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<sup>409</sup> On the development of prints and drawings as works of art, see Nadine M. Orenstein, “Images to Print: Pieter Bruegel’s Engagement with Printmaking,” in Nadine M. Orenstein (ed.), *Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Drawings and Prints*, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art (2001), 41-56; William W. Robinson and Martha Wolff, “The Function of Drawings in the Netherlands in the Sixteenth Century,” in John Oliver Hand, et al (eds.), *The Age of Bruegel: Netherlandish Drawings in the Sixteenth Century*, Washington: National Gallery of Art (1986), 25-40; Larry Silver, *Graven Images: The Rise of Professional Printmakers in Antwerp and Harlem, 1540-1640*, Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1993; David Landau and Peter Parshall, *The Renaissance Print, 1470-1550*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994; R. Chartier, *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France*, trans. by L.C. Cochrane, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987.

<sup>410</sup> See Timothy Riggs, *Hieronymus Cock, Printmaker and Publisher*, New York: Garland Press, 1977.

<sup>411</sup> Mark Meadow, “Introduction,” *Prentwerk, 1500-1700, Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, vol. 52 (2001), 9-10. Whereas historians of literature now routinely speak of the ‘intertextuality’ of humanistic writing of the period, which took myriad strands of reference and citation and reweave them into brilliant new textual tapestries, we might here begin to understand the broad dissemination of images through the medium of print to facilitate and heighten (although not to create) an equivalent phenomenon of ‘intervisuality.’ Meadow, 10. As in my discussion of Bruegel’s paintings, these habits of viewing can be likened to the concept of textual ‘sub-reading’ introduced by Thomas Greene; see n. 267.

heroic.”<sup>412</sup> Although the medium is different from his later peasant scenes and the audience more broad, I will show how Bruegel’s *Festival of Fools* continues the innovative artistic practices I have discussed thus far for his paintings. This picture participates in a complex web of visual reference and resonance, transgressing categories such as Italian and Northern, Classical and Modern. It is assembled in such a way that it would have appealed to, even challenged, the analytical and interpretive capabilities of those educated and artistically aware viewers whom we know made up part of Bruegel’s audience.<sup>413</sup>

## II.

The text below the engraving consists of four separate quatrains progressing from left to right. The first three describe various acts of folly, while the final quatrain instructs how the bowling game may be better played; this quatrain is conveniently located directly below the pin to be hit. This progression from left to right is visually highlighted by four figures isolated on the front edge of the picture: the fool in the far left bottom corner who attempts to bowl between his legs, aiming away rather than toward the pin; the fool marching to the right while thumbing his nose, a gesture of derision and mockery;<sup>414</sup> the fool standing with his back to the viewer, looking in on the festivities and holding an owl aloft; and the man in the far right bottom corner who plays the flute and kneels down to point at the target of the bowling game, the small isolated pin. This progression of fools, each standing directly above a stanza of the text, will become more clear as I discuss the intricate relationship between text and image and the process of interpretation which leads the viewer from one state of awareness to another, from total blindness (or self-unawareness), to the observation of foolish acts, to self-reflection and thence to the object of the game.

Returning to the “head fool” elevated on the carriage, who holds a ball before his gaze, it is important to point out that this motif is also common in allegorical

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<sup>412</sup> Kavalier, *Parables of Order and Enterprise* (1999), 98-105.

<sup>413</sup> On the relationship between Bruegel and humanists of his day, see n. 65.

<sup>414</sup> Moxey, “Pieter Bruegel and the *Feast of Fools*” (1982), 643.

processions in which an attribute of the stately subject being celebrated is held before his eyes. A particularly poignant example is Cornelis Bos's engraving after Heemskerck's *Triumph of Bacchus* (1543, fig. 60 and 88, 89), in which a satyr standing behind Bacchus holds a mask before the god's face. Interestingly, as with the ball and fool, the mask replicates Bacchus's identity.<sup>415</sup> The same is true for the figure of Pride, who is perched atop a wagon in one of the nine allegorical processions Heemskerck produced in 1564, the *Cycle of the Vicissitudes of Human Affairs*; a series that replicates almost exactly the iconography of the wagon play, or "interlude," presented at the *Ommegang* (devotional procession) that took place in Anwerp in 1561 (fig. 90).<sup>416</sup> Here, crowned Pride holds a convex mirror before her gaze which shows the reflection of her face.

A detail in Bruegel's *Everyman or Elck* (1558, fig. 91) sheds further light on this particular motif of the fool and figure of Pride. In the foreground, Elck wears glasses and stumbles through worldly possessions, searching unsuccessfully for self-knowledge.<sup>417</sup> Likewise, in the left background, a framed picture within the picture shows Niemand (No One), dressed in fool's garb, sitting amidst a collection of similarly assembled objects and holding up a convex mirror that reflects his face. The framed picture also bears a text stating that "No one knows himself" (NIEMAT-EN-KENT-HE[M]-SELVE[N]). Bret Rothstein explains that although Niemand's gaze into

<sup>415</sup> Although many scholars have simply stated that this motif refers to ancient Attic drama, Rainald Grosshans explains that the Bacchus mask should not only be understood in the sphere of theatre but also as a common attribute of Dionysian mystery cults. See Rainald Grosshans, *Maerten van Heemskerck* (1980), 127. A similar comparison can be made to one of Bruegel's earlier paintings, *Battle Between Carnival and Lent* (1559). Center stage is given to two processions in conflict, each led by the personifications of their cause—a fattened participant of Carnival who rides a barrel and is crowned with a pie versus an emaciated representation of Lent who is pulled forward by a monk and nun and is crowned with a bee hive.

<sup>416</sup> *The New Holstein Dutch & Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts 1450-1700. Maerten Van Heemskerck*, part I (1993) & part II (1994), eds. I. M. Veldman and G. Luijten, vol. 37, Roosendaal: Koninklijke van Poll (1993), cat. 482-490. Sheila Williams and Jean Jacquot were the first to establish this connection; see "Ommegangs Anversois du Temps de Bruegel et de van Heemskerck" (1960).

<sup>417</sup> The Latin inscription below the picture reads in translation, "No one does not seek his own advantage everywhere, no one does not seek himself in all that he does, no one does not look everywhere for private gain. This one pulls, that one pulls, all have the same love of possession" (*Nemo non querit passim sua commoda, Nemo / Non qu[er]it sese' cunctis in rebus agendis, // Nemo non inhiat privatis undique lucris, / Hic trahit, ille trahit, cunctis amor unus habendi est*). Elck and his search for knowledge and goods was treated often in Antwerp's 1561 *Landjuweel* and the city's 1561 *Ommegang*. Orenstein, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder* (2001), 168. See also, Bret Rothstein, "The Problem with Looking at Pieter Bruegel's *Elck*," *Art History*, vol. 26, no. 2 (April 2003), 143-173; Kavalier, *Parables of Order and Enterprise* (1999), esp. 77-110; Müller, *Das Paradox als Bildform* (1999).

the mirror seems to be self-examination, his fool's outfit, combined with his proud posture and the material accoutrements surrounding him, recalls the vice and folly of *vanitas*. Rather than representing self-knowledge, both Niemand and Elck participate in the opposite exercise—exploration of the material world—and, therefore, communicate willful ignorance, or spiritual blindness. Their activity represents more profound failures outside of the image, Rothstein argues, since the viewer also searches for meaning within a material object.<sup>418</sup>

The theme of identity, as expressed in the Delphic oracle “know thyself,” was particularly important for Bruegel's sixteenth-century educated viewers, numerous variations of which can be found in proverbs, maxims and Christian commentaries. Self-knowledge was a prerequisite for the acquisition of wisdom, and the revelation that made self-knowledge possible was that humankind is foolish.<sup>419</sup> Whereas, today, calling anyone in any circumstance a “fool” is always perceived as an insult, in the early Modern period the term is much more complex. A major component of the semantic field of folly is truth and another is wisdom.<sup>420</sup> For example, while the court fool was seen as someone without intellect, unable to think for himself, it was this very characteristic that made him the perfect receptacle, or mediator, of divine wisdom; having no intelligence himself, he could be depended upon to transmit in undistorted form what he received from above.<sup>421</sup> It is only through embracing one's foolish state that the acquisition of wisdom becomes a possibility. Through a play with paradox or

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<sup>418</sup> Rothstein, “Pieter Bruegel's *Elck*” (2003), 149-150.

<sup>419</sup> See Müller, *Das Paradox als Bildform* (1999), 66, 70-71, where he builds on the Erasmian idea that self-knowledge is the noblest form of knowledge in general.

<sup>420</sup> Generally speaking, a semantic field is a grouping of words which are associated or which define each other. Important to note is that these fields shift over time. See Trevor Donald, “The Semantic Field of ‘Folly’ in Proverbs, Job, Psalms and Ecclesiastes,” *Vetus Testamentum*, vol. 13 (July, 1963), 285-292. As Robert Weimann explains, this understanding of folly is in stark contrast to the orthodox medieval tradition of folly which posited a remarkable degree of fixity in its representational strategies. Weimann offers Sebastian Brant's *Ship of Fools*, first published in 1494, as an example in which folly was identified with sin or insanity. Brant's depiction of 112 types of fools and folly, who journey aboard an imaginary ship down the Rhine, is an encyclopedia of vice and foolishness designed to reassert authoritative norms of behavior in a highly stratified vision of late Medieval society where the dominant repertoire of social values was not in question; R. Weiman, *Authority and Representation in Early Modern Discourse*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press (1996), 136. See also Barbara Swain, *Fools and Folly During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1932.

<sup>421</sup> Florence M. Weinberg, *The Wine and the Will: Rabelais' Bacchic Christianity*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press (1972), 54-56. See also Robert Klein, “Le theme du fou et l'ironie humaniste,” in *La forme et l'intelligible*, Paris: Gallimard (1970), 433-450. On the ecstatic nature of divine folly, see M.A. Screech, *Erasmus: Ecstasy and the Praise of Folly*, London: Penguin Books, 1980.

irony, especially in theater and literature involving fools, a slippage occurs between wisdom and folly.

The idea is biblical. The apostle Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 3: 18, “Do not deceive yourselves. If you think that you are wise in this age, you should become fools so that you may become wise.” In the first section of the *Imitation of Christ*, one of the most well-known books in the sixteenth century, Thomas á Kempis asserts that, “If you think that you know many things and have great learning, then know for certain that there are many more things you do not know. So with true wisdom you may not think yourself learned, but ought rather to confess your ignorance and folly.”<sup>422</sup> Sebastian Brant echoes this sentiment in the prologue of his widely read book, *The Ship of Fools* (1500): “With caution everyone should look / To see if he’s in this my book / And who thinks not will say that he / Of wand and fool’s cap may be free. / Who thinks he is not affected / To wise men’s doors be he directed, / There let him wait until mayhap / From Frankfurt I can fetch a cap.”<sup>423</sup> Donald Verene explains that Brant offers a way of self-discovery. The reader is to look within the book, to read each of its verses and study its woodcuts and encounter a mirror in which the reader can examine the reflection of his or her foolish soul and gain self-knowledge. Wisdom is attained through the recognition of folly and the self in its foolish condition.<sup>424</sup>

Similarly, in the *Praise of Folly*, another popular book during this period, Erasmus uses paradox to play with traditional cultural ideas of folly, for instance, that it is something simply to be avoided.<sup>425</sup> Beginning within a classical frame of reference, referring to antique sources and values, Erasmus makes a survey of human follies, including those of the reader. But, he amends this process, sporadically at first and more consistently towards the end, by weaving a Christian subtext into the discussion of worldly folly. His survey culminates in an overwhelmingly Christian paradox—the ultimate folly of Christ’s sacrifice, which is actually the greatest wisdom. According to Erasmus, a fool is any human being deprived of reason—the stupid,

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<sup>422</sup> Thomas á Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*, New York: Dorset Press (1927), 8.

<sup>423</sup> Sebastian Brant, *The Ship of Fools*, translation by Edwin H. Zeydel, New York: Columbia University Press (1944), 61. First published in Flemish in Paris in 1500 by G. Marchand.

<sup>424</sup> Donald P. Verene, “Folly as a Philosophical Idea,” in N. Georgeopoulos and Michael Heim (eds.), *Being Human in the Ultimate: Studies in the Thought of John M. Anderson*, Amsterdam: Rodopi (1995), 249.

<sup>425</sup> Erasmus, *Praise of Folly* (1993).

ignorant and mad. In his letter to the Corinthians, upon which the primary insight of Erasmus's book is based, Paul explains that Christ's willingness to suffer and die on the cross, despite his omniscience and omnipotence, being fully human yet fully divine, qualifies him for this status without question.<sup>426</sup> Erasmus' vacillation between ignorant wisdom and wise folly stages the reader's ability to recognize his or her participation in both, thereby creating a distinction between an ignorant fool and a wise fool and highlighting the role of self-knowledge in progressing from one to the other.

With this in mind, I would like to raise important questions about Bruegel's *Festival of Fools*, especially in the context of the final four phrases of the inscription. What exactly does it mean to "taste the true sense of 't *Sottebollen*?" Is this referring specifically to the act of bowling? If *sottebollen* refers both to the heads of the fools as well as to the balls they play with, how, in the last phrase, does one hit the pin with his head (mind)? What judgment is to be made about the triumphant fool holding a ball to his eyes? Finally, how does recognizing folly in oneself better equip one to play the game of bowling?

Just as there is much to be seen and discussed in this procession of figures from left to right, there are equally interesting, if not altogether bizarre, elements of the background architectural (mis-) construction that are integral for the print's overall visual effect. It has only been briefly noted that the perspective of the portal on the left and the round classical temple-like construction on the right background are completely askew. However, what remains a question is the role these "errata" might play when seen in concert with the revelries portrayed in the foreground (or if, in fact, they are errata at all). This bizarre architectural setting only intensifies the sense of playfulness and mystery. The whimsical buildings seem to be as acrobatic as the figures; the enlarged temple, especially with its double tiers of round arches on the interior, does not represent an actual building, rather it is an amalgamation of several.

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<sup>426</sup> In Corinthians, Paul often explains that men must become fools for Christ's sake and commanded that those who are considered wise by the world should become fools in order that they may be truly wise. The literature on Christian folly as illustrated by Erasmus is extensive. See, for example, Screech, *Erasmus: Ecstasy and the Praise of Folly* (1980); Christine Christ-von Wedel, "Das Lob der Torheit des Erasmus von Rotterdam im Spiegel der spätmittelalterlichen Narrenbilder und die Einheit des Werkes," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, vol. 78 (1987), 24-36. Barbara Könniker, *Wesen und Wandlung der Narrenidee im Zeitalter des Humanismus: Brant, Murner, Erasmus*, Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GMBH, 1966; Walter Kaiser, *Praisers of Folly*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963.

Equally interesting is the stylistic eclecticism represented by a Flemish country house in the center background connected to a classical domed building resembling the Pantheon, but with an arcade curving in the wrong direction.<sup>427</sup> The strange design of the portal on the left with vines growing up its trellis goes far beyond lackadaisical draughtsmanship; it required calculation to construct such a twisted arch whose apex intersects with the roofline of the building.

Bruegel's conspicuous disregard for representing the buildings in a consistent perspective—or better, his regard for creating inconsistent or multiple perspectives—is puzzling. This is the case especially if we compare this design with similar buildings in other works by, or after, Bruegel; for example, the trellised archway on the left in Bruegel's drawing of *Spring* (1565, fig. 92) and the domed circular building with classical pilasters in the right background of an engraving representing *Temperance* (1560, fig. 93). Take also the perspectival norm specific to an artist such as Hans Vredeman de Vries (1527-1606), who was a contemporary of Bruegel and specialized in illusionistic architectural backgrounds.<sup>428</sup> An etching from his series of the *History of Daniel*, part of Gerard de Jode's *Thesaurus biblicus* of 1579 (fig. 94), shows a round temple-like building with numerous columns situated in the right background behind the golden statue constructed by order of Nebuchadnezzar. In this image, the scene is designed in such a way that the viewer looks down on the events. Consequently, Vredeman portrays the building in adherence to a perspective scheme in which the bottom half of the structure—below eye level—is seen as if from above. Bruegel would have been well acquainted with Vredeman's work through their mutual cooperation with the publisher Hieronymus Cock. However, in Bruegel's design a columnar structure similar to the round temple-like building, and in the same compositional location, defies the example presented by Vredeman. Its clam-like assemblage portrays the building as if seen simultaneously from above and from below.

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<sup>427</sup> The phrase “stylistic eclecticism” is discussed in an article by Alina A. Payne, “Architects and Academies: Architectural Theories of *imitatio* and the Debates on Language and Style,” in *Architecture and Language*, eds. G. Clarke and P. Crossley, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2000), 118-133 and 195-202.

<sup>428</sup> On the work of Vredeman, see *Tussen Stadspaleizen en Luchtkastelen: Hans Vredeman de Vries en de Renaissance*, Heiner Borggreffe, Thomas Fusenig, Barbara Uppenkamp (eds.), Amsterdam: Ludion (2002), 11. Christopher Heuer, “The City Rehearsed: Architecture, Rhetoric, and Print in the Arts of Hans Vredeman de Vries,” unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2003.

Bruegel employs versions of other classical buildings in the center background of the picture. In a design for the *Massacre of the Innocents* (1565, fig. 95), Frans Floris incorporates Roman architecture as a background for the *historia*. On the left side, a villa-like building surmounted by a balustrade recedes into the distance. The rusticated wall is evenly divided by niches and framed by columns. The end of the building connects to a temple-like structure with a domed roof. In the center background of Bruegel's *Festival of Fools*, we see a similar, albeit distorted version of such a building; its wall is divided by niches and columns and connected to a domed structure at one end. It could be said that Bruegel's architectural construction does not adhere to a consistent perspective, or, put another way, is designed to represent multiple, even conflicting, points of view. Considering the foolish activities for which they serve as a backdrop, these "awry views" of the world seem thematically appropriate.

Classical decorum was central to Renaissance theories of behavior, literature and art and governed the harmony (or disjunction) between form and content in both art and literature. For Vitruvius, it was a guide for the architect's aesthetic judgment. The architect, like the orator, has to take decorum as the first consideration in his designs, which must be made to fit the occasion and character of the work. Thus decorum functions as a regulating factor in architectural design. It brings with it a concern for the unity of content, form and purpose.<sup>429</sup> For Vredeman and Floris, incorporating classical architecture into their skillful depictions of lofty historical events was, in part, an effort to adhere to this practice.

Heemskerck's representations of allegorical processions incorporate the same standard. For example, in 1565 the artist designed a series of six illustrations to represent the *Triumphs of Petrarch*. In his design he seems to select monuments which can support the central notions in Petrarch's poems.<sup>430</sup> In the *Triumph of Chastity* (fig.

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<sup>429</sup> On decorum and architecture, see Ingrid D. Rowland's introduction to her translation of Vitruvius, *Vitruvius: Ten Books on Architecture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. See also Alina A. Payne, *The Architectural Treatise in the Italian Renaissance: Architectural Invention, Ornament, and Literary Culture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

<sup>430</sup> See *The New Holstein Dutch & Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts 1450-1700*. Maerten Van Heemskerck, *The Triumphs of Petrarch*, ca. 1565, Philips Galle (engraver), plates 491-496, 173-177. For a study on the possible connection between Petrarch's Triumphs and Bruegel's *Triumph of Death*, see Helene Verougstraete, "Bruegel et Pétrarque: une évocation de Laure dans le Triomphe de la Mort de Pieter Bruegel l'Ancien?," in Marco Ross, et al (eds.), *Studi di storia dell'arte in onore di Maria Luisa Gatti Perer*, Milano: Vita e Pensiero (1999), 247-251.

96), Heemskerck shows the chariot with the allegorical figures, a motif in concordance with the poem. The circular temple in the left background—which is raised on a flight of four stairs, supported by a colonnade of Corinthian columns and crowned with a low dome—is similar to several versions of the Temple of Vesta that were reproduced in the Netherlands during the sixteenth century, including Heemskerck himself (fig. 97).<sup>431</sup> Appropriately, chastity was particularly associated with the Temple of Vesta, where the vestal virgins consecrated to a life of chastity guarded the sacred flame. And in the poem Petrarch himself singles out the Vestas as examples of chastity. In the *Triumph of Fame*, Heemskerck depicts, appropriately, a version of the Coliseum and columns with spiral friezes resembling the one of Trajan.<sup>432</sup> In the *Triumph of Time*, it is the condition of the monuments, ruined and overgrown, which conveys the notion. The same is true for his *Cycle of the Vicissitudes of Human Affairs*. The eclectic architecture Heemskerck presents in the background of each procession also correlates with the subject honored. In the *Triumph of Pride*, large sepulchres, pyramids, a triumphal arch and, on the left, the tower of Babel decorate the backdrop.<sup>433</sup> Behind War in the fifth plate, plundered, burning cities and harassed travellers are portrayed, while in the image of Peace there are well-tilled fields and orderly cities. In other words, Heemskerck employs background architecture in its capacity to illustrate ideas.

One might think, then, that Bruegel's combination of an Italian, classicist architectural backdrop and foolish revelries, which illustrate various local gestures and proverbial activities and far from a lofty *historia*, is a violation of such artistic regulations. However, Bruegel adheres to decorum as much as Vredeman, Floris and Heemskerck. The unique bowl-shaped roof of the temple on the right is especially intriguing and Bruegel's viewers could have associated it with the design of the Vesta Temple, as in Heemskerck's *Triumph of Chastity*. In Bos's rendition of Heemskerck's

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<sup>431</sup> Heemskerck's temple of the Vestas is also similar to the reconstruction which Pietro Valeriano published in *Hieroglyphica*; Pierio Valeriano, *Hieroglyphica. Sive de Sacris Aegyptiorum literis Comentariorum*, Basilea 1556 and 1567.

<sup>432</sup> In the sixteenth century, the Column of Trajan was specifically perceived as a symbol of Glory. Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*, published in Rome in 1593, and republished in 1603 with illustrations, standardized the column as an emblem of "Sublimità della Gloria." Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia*, P. Buscaroli (ed.), Torino: Fògola (1986), 432-434. See Victor Plahte Tschudi, "The Rhetoric of Roman Monuments: Observations on an engraving by Maarten van Heemskerck," *Nordlit*, no. 6 ([www.hum.uit.no/nordlit/6/tschudi.html#\\_ftn10](http://www.hum.uit.no/nordlit/6/tschudi.html#_ftn10), January 27, 2007).

<sup>433</sup> *Ibid.*

*Bacchus*, a similarly large, round temple is located behind the procession at the right. Rather than referring to chastity, the sacred structure has been decorated with the accoutrements of a bacchanal and recast as a space dedicated to the worship of Bacchus. Similarly, Bruegel's bacchanal of folly incorporates a similar temple design but amends it so that a large open area is in the middle where we see two running figures. As an echo of, or emphasis on, this playful atmosphere, the double tiers of rounded archways added to the interior of the building resonate, and could have been viewed in association, with the outside of the Roman Coliseum or Arena of Verona (fig. 98), structures in which competitions were the focus of entertainment.<sup>434</sup> Here, it seems, we have a temple remodeled to honor and accommodate fool's games.

In terms of the fantastic perspective, Bruegel also adheres to classical decorum, but now in a witty, even paradoxical manner. His Roman, yet mis-formed, structures are, in fact, completely appropriate; that is to say, when seen in concert with the ridiculous activities of the festival of fools in the foreground, he has constructed buildings that seem correspondingly and completely foolish. The "perspective" of the buildings corresponds with the "perspective" of the fools.<sup>435</sup> As a result, the play with,

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<sup>434</sup> Reproductions of the Temple of Vesta, various arenas and the Roman Coliseum circulated among artists and were portrayed in painting and print in the North (such as those of Gossaert, Heemskerck and Bos) from the time artists began to sojourn to Italy at the beginning of the sixteenth century. See for example Hermann Egger and Christian Hülsen, *Die römischen Skizzenbücher von Maarten van Heemskerck: im Königlichen Kupferstichkabinett zu Berlin*, 2 vols., Berlin: Königlichen Museen, 1913; Leon Preibisz, *Martin van Heemskerck: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Romanismus in der niederländischen Malerei des XVI. Jahrhunderts*, Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1911. On the use of composite architecture as political and aesthetic statements, such as the cultivation of civic identity and the revival of classicism, see Peter Sharratt, "The Imaginary City of Bernard Salomon," in *Intellectual Life in Renaissance Lyon: Proceedings of the Cambridge Lyon Colloquium*, Cambridge: Cambridge French Colloquia (1993), 33-48 and "The Image of the Temple: Bernard Salomon, Rhetoric and the Visual Arts," in *Rhetoric, Rhétoriqueurs, Rederijkers*, ed. Jelle Koopmans, et al., Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen (1995), 247-268; Margaret M. McGowan, *Ideal Forms in the Age of Ronsard*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985. Since both of these essays discuss visual culture in Lyon during the mid-sixteenth century, it is important to point out that scholars have speculated that Bruegel travelled in France and, specifically, Lyon. Possible evidence is found in the inventory of the miniaturist Giulio Clovio, in which there is "un quadro di Leon di Francia a guazzo di mano di Pietro Brugole," where "Leon di Francia" is generally taken to be Lyon in France; see Hessel Miedema, *Karel van Mander: The Lives of the Illustrious Netherlandish and German Painters*, 6 vols., Davaco: Doornspijk (1996), vol. 3, 257.

<sup>435</sup> Reindert Falkenburg has made a similar argument for the relationship between the theme of the painting, the construction of figures, and the design of buildings in the work of Pieter Aertsen, particularly his depiction of peasants; see, for example, Falkenburg, "Pieter Aertsen's *Alter Marktverkäufer*" (2006). For a discussion of the relation between Doric order and human figure in Pieter Aertsen's *Kitchen Maid* in Brussels, see Falkenburg, "Pieter Aertsen's *Kitchen Maid* in Brussels" (2004). For a seminal discussion on Aertsen and artistic errata, see Falkenburg, "Alter Einoutus. Over de aard en herkomst van Pieter Aertsen's stilleven-conceptie," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, vol.

or thematizing of, perspective stages the ability of the viewer to consider the design of the buildings as a pun on foolishness.

Another revealing motif significantly located in the center foreground is the fool who stands at the edge of the crowded scene, his back to the viewer, looking in on the festivities. An owl is perched on his raised left arm, its gaze directed toward the viewer. In spite of the fact that the owl is centrally placed, it is difficult to see because of the revelry surrounding it. The owl has many different connotations. While in Antiquity the bird was a symbol for wisdom, in the early Modern northern European visual tradition it was generally associated with evil and often used specifically to refer to blindness.<sup>436</sup> An owl positioned in this way, so directly gazing at the viewer, resembles a similar depiction in an engraving representing the extraction of the stone of madness, the so-called *Dean of Renaix*, previously attributed to Bruegel but now assigned to one of his many followers (fig. 99). In Bruegel's day, folk stories explained that foolish people had stones in their heads. Thus, the operation that removed the stone from an individual's head, a popular subject in sixteenth-century art, literature and theatre, was supposed to be a cure for folly.<sup>437</sup> In the picture, we see multiple occasions of the stone of folly being removed from foreheads. In the center, an owl perched on the back of a chair faces the viewer. To the left, a man carries what seems to be a tonsured monk on his back. Although it seems as if this man is simply trying to keep his balance, upon closer observation we can see that he is straining to stretch his left arm towards the owl in order to hold next to it the hat in his hand. This motif, set within a narrative scene of fools, resonates with a type of "owl's mirror" that

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40 (1989), 41-66. See also Georgia Clarke and Paul Crossley, *Architecture and Language: Constructing Identity in European Architecture, c. 1000-1650*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000; A. Payne, *The Architectural Treatise in the Italian Renaissance* (1999), esp. 113-143; J. Onians, *Bearers of Meaning. The Classical Orders in Antiquity, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, Princeton, N.J., 1988; J. Rykwert, *The Dancing Column. On Order in Architecture*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996.

<sup>436</sup> Moxey, "Feast of Fools" (1982), 643. See also Paul Vandebroek, "Bubo significans. Die Eule als Sinnbild von Schlechtigkeit und Torheit, vor allem in der niederländischen und deutschen Bildardarstellung und bei Jheronimus Bosch," *Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerpen, Jaarboek* (1985), 19-135; Paul Paszkiewicz, "Nocturnal bird of wisdom: symbolic functions of the owl in emblems," in *Bulletin du Musée national de Varsovie*, vol. 23 (1982), 56-84; Beryl Rowland, *Birds With Human Souls*, Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1978; Karl Schottenloher, "Die Eule im Buchschmuck des 16. Jahrhunderts," in *Reallexikon zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte*, vol. 6 (1973), 267-322.

<sup>437</sup> Orenstein, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder* (2001), 194.

was well known in the sixteenth century and specifically associated with the subject of the fool.

For example, Tijl's *Uilenspiegel*, a story about a peasant folk hero, was one of the most popular vernacular works in sixteenth-century northern Europe. The name *uilenspiegel* means "owl's mirror" and alludes to an old adage, "One sees one's own faults no more clearly than an owl sees its own ugliness in a looking glass." In the folk story, Tijl is presented as a free-spirited trickster or fool, sometimes innocent and other times evil, who thumbed his nose at the hypocrisy of society, played practical jokes on his contemporaries and held his "owl's mirror" up for their self-reflection. The book, published in Antwerp by Michiel van Hoochstraten in ca. 1525, is a collection of loosely related vignettes describing the adventures of this figure and includes ca. 85 woodcut illustrations.<sup>438</sup> One straightforward example shows an owl perched on top of a mirror (fig. 100). Likewise, an illustration from the title page of the high German *Uilenspiegel* (fig. 101), shows a man sitting on his horse, his arms raised above his head with an owl sitting on his right hand and a mirror held in his left. What exactly does this motif, an owl coupled with a mirror, mean? In his study, "Uilenspiegels spiegel in de zestiende eeuw," Paul Verhuyck explains:

The owl was first the bird of Minerva and associated with wisdom, but in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries it began to be associated more with foolishness and darkness [blindness]. To fools, Tiel added a revealing mirror in the tradition of Socrates' motto "Know Thyself." An *uilenspiegel*, or owl's mirror, is the fool who unmasks the folly of the world; as such it belongs to the tradition of the jester who is allowed to speak the truth under the protective mask of conventional madness.<sup>439</sup>

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<sup>438</sup> The first collection of stories was produced in Germany around 1500. L. Debaene argues for an earlier dating of the Antwerp publication, between 1515-1520; see "De betekenis van het Oudste Vlaamse Volksboek van Uilenspieghel," in H. Servotte, et al. (ed.), *Hulde-Album Prof. dr. J.F. Vanderheyden*, Leuven: N.V. Vonksteen te Langemark (1970), 81-89. See also Vriesema, "Eulenspiegel-Drucke in niederländischer Sprache van ca. 1520 bis 1830," *Quaerendo*, vol. 32, no. 4 (2002), 3-59.

<sup>439</sup> Paul E.R. Verhuyck, "Uilenspiegels spiegel in de zestiende eeuw," in *Oog in oog met de Spiegel*, ed. Nico J. Brederoo, et al., Amsterdam: Aramith Uitgevers (1988), 198-199 (my translation). See also, J.D. Janssens, *Uilenspiegel : de wereld op zijn kop*, Leuven: Davidsfonds, 1999; Marnix Beyen, *Held voor alle werk: de vele gedaanten van Tijl Uilenspiegel*, Antwerpen Baarn: Houtekiet, 1998; Katrin Streubel, *Die Eulenspiegelfigur in der deutschen Literatur der frühen Neuzeit und der Aufklärung*, Köln: Hundt, 1988; Loek Geeraedts, *Het volksboek van Uilenspieghel*, Kapellen: DNB/Uitgeverij Pelckmans, 1986; Paul Vandenbroeck, "Bubo significans" (1985).

An “owl’s mirror” is a mirror held up to someone who is blind to the fact that he or she is foolish, evil, ignorant, etc. The owl, associated with these very characteristics, located next to a mirror is the true reflection of the person standing in front of the mirror. The motif functions to help the viewer become self-aware of his or her true nature. By confronting the viewer with a reciprocal gaze—a gaze connoting foolishness and blindness—the owl coupled with a mirror in the *Ulenspiegel* story functions to force the beholder to see himself as an owl, indicating his own inability to see similar characteristics in himself and, therefore, make him aware of his own foolishness, compelling him to see his life in comparison to all the other stories of folly surrounding the life of Tijn.

In Bruegel’s image, there is apparently no mirror accompanying the owl. In the sixteenth century, however, artists often played with the association of the owl and mirror by portraying round objects next to the bird; as substitutes for the mirror, these objects were understood to have the same reflective quality. For example, if the hat held next to the owl in the *Dean of Renaix* is seen in the context of the emblem in the *Ulenspiegel*, the association of the hat with a mirror is clear. But there is a difference between what this duo represents and how it functions. The roundness of the hat certainly represents a mirror meant to reflect the identity of the viewer, so that he sees himself in association with the owl. But, in addition, the hat is held in such a way that the empty underside faces the beholder. As a result, the reflection reveals the viewer to be the “bearer” of the hat, indicating his participation in the activities of the room; i.e., he is as much in need of an operation as the people before him.

In Bruegel’s print of the *Festival of Fools*, the back of the fool’s head (*sottebol*) who carries the owl—round and empty as it is—plays a similar game. If the round ball of the head represents a convex mirror, the viewer’s reflection becomes the face of the fool, and vice versa.<sup>440</sup> As a result, the mirror guides the viewer beyond simply

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<sup>440</sup> Important to remember is the convex, rounded shape of mirrors during this period, which would have only contributed to the visual similarities between the fools head and a mirror. Of course, the use of the mirror in the visual arts to prick the self-awareness of the viewer to see himself in relation to what is portrayed has a long history and literature on the subject is extensive; see S. Melchior-Bonnet, *The Mirror. A History* (translated by K.H. Jewett, with a preface by J. Delumeau), New York & London: Routledge, 2001; R. Bradley, “The Speculum Image in Medieval Mystical Writers,” in M. Glasscoe (ed.), *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium III. Papers read at Dartington Hall, July 1982*, Exeter: University of Exeter 1982, 9-27; James Marrow, “‘In desen speigell’: A New Form of ‘Momento Mori’ in Fifteenth-Century Netherlandish Art,” in *Essays in Northern European Art*

browsing the image to identify acts of folly in others, blind to his own state of depravity, rather toward the revelation of a new perspective, of seeing himself within the picture as a fool participating in the revelries. The interaction of the procession of fools and the accompanying text reveals two realms of foolishness: the fool who is blind to his foolishness and therefore a fool, and the fool who recognizes his foolishness and is therefore wise. “Yet there are *sottebollen* (numbskulls) who behave themselves wisely, / And taste the true sense of ‘*tSottebollen* / Because they [who] enjoy folly in themselves / Shall best hit the pin with their *sottebollen*.” The owl’s mirror in the center foreground, surrounded by the foolishness of the world, serves as a direct address that initiates a change in the viewer’s perspective that overcomes initial blindness, toward the process of self-knowledge.

Kavaler has examined particular Dutch fools’ tracts from the sixteenth century that often exhibit a brand of irony that seems especially comparable with properties that I have considered in Bruegel’s work. These vernacular texts, which were generally performed aloud, take the form of confraternity oaths, devotional pledges, or invitations to communal travel that generally begin by inviting the audience to join the company. It soon becomes clear, however, that the jovial companions, whom the audience has agreed to accept, represent various follies, a disorienting reversal that may inspire listeners to inquire into their own unwitting allegiance.<sup>441</sup> In the short piece, “Concerning the Colorful Caps, which have Only Recently Been Fashioned and Worn,” the metaphor is the sale of fools’ caps to the entire populace. The speaker comes on stage praising the audience, “noble and commoner,” and speaks of a great business deal he has made that he wants to share with his listeners. Having earned a pretty penny the previous year, he will once more make available his wares. Praised for their warmth and sure fit, his goods are finally revealed as fools’ caps, a natural fashion statement for all the fools who lack distinguishing clothing and whose nature lies covered and concealed.<sup>442</sup>

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*Presented to Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann*, Doornspijk: Davaco (1983), 154-163; Jan Białostocki, “Man and Mirror in Painting: Reality and Transience,” in Irving Lavin, et al (eds.) *Studies in Late Medieval and Renaissance Painting in Honor of Millard Meiss*, New York: New York University Press (1977), 61-72; W.S. Gibson, “Hieronymus Bosch and the Mirror of Man: The Authorship and Iconography of the *Tabletop of the Seven Deadly Sins*,” in *Oud Holland*, vol. 87 (1973-4), 205-226.

<sup>441</sup> Kavaler, *Parables of Order and Enterprise* (1999), 206.

<sup>442</sup> *Ibid.*, 207. See also H. van Dijk, “Structure as a Mean’s to Audience Identification” (1996).

Similarly, in her description of a wagon play presented for the *Onze-Lieve-Vrouw ommegang* of 1563, Emily Peters explains that the journey undertaken in the drama, which has a striking resemblance to a morality play such as *Elckerlijck*, lacked a protagonist.<sup>443</sup> No universalized human type, no Everyman, encapsulated the audience's experience. With no such universalized type to stand in for all humankind, it would appear that the main character was omitted from his own drama. The epigram, however, called upon the audience as "Everyone," while the procession itself acted as a mirror, encapsulating, in its enactment, the consciousness, or self-awareness, of the spectators.

The fool on the left of Bruegel's picture who gazes at a ball, holding it before his eyes, is similar to Niemand in *Elck*; he only knows what is before him—the appearance of a round object made of stone, a tool for play—and thus his mirror is empty and he remains a blind fool. Likewise, the viewer, too, gazes into an object of play as he holds the print before his eyes. The picture is the instrument through which the viewer participates in the game. Through the mechanism of the owl's mirror in the foreground, the image also provides the impetus for the viewer to see a reflection of his own identity as that of a fool standing amidst the revelries. By recognizing folly within himself he tastes the true sense of the game, using his mind (head) to engage in the process of interpretation. It is only through becoming self-aware that he is better able to hit the pin, namely interpret correctly. Self-knowledge in this case does not exist in recognizing and evading folly, but in understanding it as an inescapable part of human existence.

The medial nature of this picture can be compared to an older practice of using art to prick the viewer's consciousness to convey a spiritual meaning. For example, James Marrow describes a German woodcut from ca. 1500 in this context, *The Devil's and the Angel's Mirrors* (fig. 102). On the left, a demon points to a blank mirror that he holds up before a young couple and encourages them to behold themselves and enjoy the worldly pleasures of youth; the emptiness of the mirror is an indication of their blindness, that they have succumbed to the devil's persuasion. On the right side, in contrast, an angel points to a mirror that reflects the image of a skull, and urges a

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<sup>443</sup> Peters, "Printed Processions and the Theater of Identity" (2005), 167.

group of three older figures to prepare themselves for God and for his heavenly reward.<sup>444</sup> By reflecting on (seeing) their inevitable end, they are more apt to prepare themselves for it.

He who holds the print of the *Festival of Fools* before his gaze, contemplating its meaning, resembles the fool who holds the ball in front of his, contemplating his next bowl. Therefore, the accompanying text that fuses the identity of the fool and the ball is equally applicable to the viewer and the art object with which he plays the game of interpretation.<sup>445</sup> Where the viewer and the ignorant fool depart company is in the recognition of this fact; the beholder overcomes his blindness by seeing the picture from a new perspective, a view that includes himself as a fool. Only then does he become the kind of fool that the apostle Paul so fondly wrote about in Corinthians.

### III.

At this point, I have addressed specific ways in which Bruegel's picture interacts with the beholder to stage a viewing process that proceeds from blind folly to self-aware wisdom. The recognition of particular visual concepts and pictorial motifs, such as the owl's mirror and architectural design, functions to bring about revelations that lead to the viewer's shift in perspective. In the following, I would like to more elaborately compare Bruegel's image with representations of contemporary allegorical processions, such as Heemskerck's series of the *Cycle of the Vicissitudes of Human Affairs*, engraved by Cornelius Cort in 1564, as well as his *Triumph of Bacchus*. I do so in order to examine further ways in which the *Festival of Fools* resonates with, or plays on, specific elements of these allegorical processions and show that the habit of viewing formed from one context would have informed the viewer's analysis and interpretation of Bruegel's design.

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<sup>444</sup> James Marrow, "Symbol and Meaning: The Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance," *Simiolus*, vol. 16 (1986), 163.

<sup>445</sup> In his discussion of Bruegel's *Elck*, Rothstein discusses a similar alignment of the viewer's behavior with that of the print's protagonist. "As Elck stares blankly at the lantern before him, and as Niemand gazes foolishly at his reflected countenance, so does the viewer stare into yet another dark glass [the print]," Rothstein, "Pieter Bruegel's Elck" (2003), 148.

As I mentioned, scholars have shown that Heemskerck's series of the *Cycle of the Vicissitudes of Human Affairs* adhered very closely to the iconography of the wagon play, "*Den gheheelen loop des weerelts*," presented during the 1561 *Ommegang* in Antwerp. The play consisted of eight figured *tableaux vivants* staged upon moving wagons that described the deeds and acts of human life and their course in the world with the clear purpose of teaching and providing moral edification for the audience. The wagons were populated with elaborately costumed actors located within temporary, yet equally elaborate, sets constructed from wood, painted canvas and *paper maché*.<sup>446</sup> Each image by Heemskerck portrays the human vicissitudes, presenting an allegorical worldly state atop a wagon, surrounded by reverent subjects who showcase various gestures and actions, as well as iconographic motifs, appropriate to the theme. For example, in the *Triumph of Pride*, the queen of pride is duly honored. The woman holds a mirror before her gaze while a peacock is perched on the back of the wagon, standard attributes that accompany *Superbia*. At her feet, sits *Invidia* (Envy). The driver of the horses, which are labeled *Pertinacia* (Stubbornness) and *Curiositas* (Curiosity), is *Contemptus* (Contempt). To the left of *Contemptus*, *Iactantia* (Boastful/Bragging) raises her left hand and forms the gesture for the sex act, a gesture also prominently displayed in Bruegel's procession; in her right hand, she holds a fool's bauble. *Inobedientia* (Disobedience) and *Derisio* (Satire) stand in the right foreground, the latter holding two ears in her left hand.<sup>447</sup>

Similarly, as I showed in comparison to Bos's *Triumph of Bacchus*, in Bruegel's crowded procession, a fool is hoisted on the shoulders of his comrades, a stone ball is held before his gaze, a reproduction of his own identity. The diverse representations of visual equivalents for verbal expressions, the use of allegorical personifications, and varied gestures that are showcased illustrate a different sort of lexicon from the pictures of Heemskerck, one that corresponds to a codified language of foolish activities rather than classical themes. The enormous diversity of actions operates to intensify the theatricality of the image.<sup>448</sup> Fools pull each other's noses or thumb their noses, play Jew's harps, bang tambourines, strum violins, sell spectacles,

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<sup>446</sup> Peters, "Printed Processions and the Theater of Identity" (2005), 1.

<sup>447</sup> Ilja Veldman, *Leerrijke reeksen: Maarten van Heemskerck*, Den Haag: Staatsuitgeverij (1986), 50.

<sup>448</sup> Boucquey, *Mirages de la Farce* (1991), 62.

show their asses, participate in a bowling game and somersault. As with Heemskerck's processions, the foolish, multi-dimensional design of the architecture in the background, as I have described it, correlates with the subject and stages "perspective" as a theme, whether the foolish perspective displayed in the foreground or the perspective from which the viewer engages the picture.

Although there are general similarities between Heemskerck's allegorical processions from 1564 and the visual strategies employed for the *Festival of Fools*, if Bruegel's picture is seen in comparison to Heemskerck's *Triumph of Bacchus* (fig. 19), as well as Bos's reproductive engraving (fig. 60), further formal and iconographic similarities emerge.<sup>449</sup> As I discussed in Chapter Three, Heemskerck's depiction of the mythological theme, his first Roman painting, functions as a stage on which he shows off, and makes reference to, the artistic and archaeological knowledge he had acquired during his travels in Italy.<sup>450</sup> His use of this subject to construct such a stage is surely no accident; as leader of the muses (an alternative Apollo Musagetes), Bacchus was also considered during the Renaissance to be the god of artistic creation.<sup>451</sup>

The naked entourage of Bacchus processes from right to left through a deteriorated archway and toward the round Temple of Bacchus in the background, two architectural structures not completely unlike those in Bruegel's print. The movements of the figures populating the scene, as well as the paraphernalia they possess, vary drastically so as to showcase not only a kind of encyclopaedia of antique bacchanalia, but also Heemskerck's anatomical prowess. The thyrsus-bearer in the right foreground announces Bacchus's entrance. The god's festive devotees get drunk on wine, children play with animals, flowers and grapes are abundant and broken antique pots litter the ground. In the center foreground, a man plays a horn, a satyr plays a flute and women bang tambourines behind them. On the far left, a man balances on stilts while another is in mid-somersault.

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<sup>449</sup> For general discussions of Heemskerck's *Triumph of Bacchus*, see Ilja M. Veldman (1990-1); R. Grosshans (1980); J.C. Harrison (1987). For a general study of representations of this classical theme, see Martin Gesing, *Triumph des Bacchus: Triumphidee und bacchische Darstellungen in der italienischen Renaissance im Spiegel der Antikenrezeption*, Frankfurt a.M: Peter Lang, 1988.

<sup>450</sup> Harrison (1987), 49.

<sup>451</sup> Weinberg, *The Wine and the Will* (1972), 51-57. See also Svetlana Alpers, *The Making of Rubens*, New Haven: Yale University Press (1996), esp. 101-157.

The painting is loaded with characters and structures from antiquity that would have been recognized and appreciated by Heemskerck's educated viewers. A panther, Bacchus's emblematic animal, strides along in front of the cart. The colossal foot resting prominently in the left foreground reproduces the sandaled foot that stood originally before the Porticus Octavia (fig. 103).<sup>452</sup> Jefferson Harrison has pointed out that the satyr caryatid on the ruined arch closely follow the design of those found in Heemskerck's time in the Della Valle Collection.<sup>453</sup>

Furthermore, the naked, muscular male bodies are painted in an Italianate style, such as that of Michelangelo. The figures in the foreground reach, run, twist and tumble, but do not come close to making narrative sense. Instead, like the antique references, the figures and the manner in which they are painted, both in style and elegant pose, are still more references meant to be recognized and appreciated as such. For example, although the viewer may get the feeling the procession is moving slowly because of the multiple stationary figures represented, the figure just right of center holding the reins to the donkey is depicted as running, in full stride, his right leg about to collide with the putto holding up a mirror. Closer to center, the striding posture of the trumpet-blowing bacchant was a canonical High Renaissance motif that the artist (and his viewers) could have observed in any number of Italian prints and paintings.<sup>454</sup> The figure walks to the left, his left foot awkwardly stepping on the face of the drunken satyr and his gaze directed behind him, not realizing that his next step will collide with the man somersaulting. We cannot be sure which way this figure somersaults, up and over to the right or down to the left, but we know that he will run into something regardless—either the man previously mentioned walking toward him or the left stilt of the black man. Finally, the man on stilts who looks to his right does not see that his next step will be in the path of a stationary goat.

In the center foreground, a smiling putto disrupts the illusion of the art object by angling toward the viewer a mirror to reveal the reflection of a satyr's posterior, as well as the excrement flowing from it. This action directly addresses the viewer, connecting him to the world of the image. The central motif is not just one more act of

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<sup>452</sup> Harrison (1987), 288-289.

<sup>453</sup> Ibid.

<sup>454</sup> Ibid.

revelry, rather the reflection offers commentary on the actions and behavior surrounding it. This particular emphasis on faeces—a motif unknown in classical or Italian versions of the theme—is a sign that the usual meaning of such an image, pleasure and enjoyment in an untroubled pagan world, has changed.<sup>455</sup> Heemskerck depicts a classical theme in an Italianate style, but the artist also provides a more certain Netherlandish moral twist.<sup>456</sup>

This motif is a type of owl's mirror similar to the one in Bruegel's image; interestingly, it is even located in a similar compositional place. A helpful comparison is a woodcut by Albrecht Dürer from *Der Ritter vom Turm* (fig. 104) (Basel, 1493: a translation of a moralist French tract by Chevalier de la Tour Landry), which shows a noble woman revealing her concern for outward beauty by combing her hair before a mirror. Instead of seeing a reflection of herself, she sees a reflection of the devil who stands behind her, specifically his bottom from which faeces emerge.<sup>457</sup> Although in this image the mirror is an attribute of vanity, while in Heemskerck's painting it is more directed at drunkenness, the function of the mirror as a reflection of, and direct address to, the viewer's conscience is similar.

While Heemskerck's painting serves as a stage for him to showcase his artistic skill and learnedness, referencing actual antique ruins and a Michelangesque style that his humanist contemporaries would have identified and appreciated, the mirror in the foreground pricks the consciousness of the viewer and casts a sense of satire which functions to transform the image from a triumph of Bacchus into a kind of triumph of folly. The marginal motif turns the painting into a mock-triumph, a self-reflexive image that offers a critique of its subject. In a similar fashion, Bruegel's *Festival of Fools* is no less a triumphal procession, even incorporating specific visual strategies and pictorial motifs previously employed for allegorical processions—references which, like those of Heemskerck, are meant to be recognized and factored into the

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<sup>455</sup> Veldman, "Elements of continuity" (1990-1), 133.

<sup>456</sup> This also occurs in Dutch sixteenth-century drama; see J.J. Mak, "Pyramus en Thisbe gemoraliseerd," *De Nieuwe Taalgids*, vol. 40 (1947), 175-179. See also the recent publication of Yona Pinson, "Moralized Triumphal Chariots – Metamorphosis of Petrarch's *Trionfi* in Northern Art (1530-1560)," in Ingrid Alexander-Skipnes (ed.), *Cultural Exchange between the Low Countries and Italy (1400-1600)*, Turnhout: Brepols, 2006.

<sup>457</sup> For a discussion of this type of owl's mirror see, Verhuyck, "Ulenspiegels spiegel in de zestiende eeuw," (1988), 201.

viewer's analysis and interpretation of the picture. In this way, the triumphs of folly by Bruegel and Heemskerck can also be seen in comparison to Erasmus's *Praise of Folly*—as a paradoxical encomium (ironic inversion) in which folly is the protagonist, classical form the frame of reference and self-knowledge the objective.<sup>458</sup>

To conclude, the habit of viewing sustained by the processional format of Heemskerck's print series, and others like it, would have also informed the way Bruegel's contemporary viewers analyzed the *Festival of Fools*, both in terms of process and end result. In Heemskerck's *Cycle of the Vicissitudes of Human Affairs*, Peters explains that the first plate introduces the theme of the course of the World's vicissitudes by showing a representation of a worldly globe surrounded by the Four Elements upon a wagon moving in a leftward direction.<sup>459</sup> The wagon is driven by the personification of Time, who holds the reins of two horses identified as Day and Night. Above them, renderings of the Four Winds appear to circulate in the air. The globe and the personages, all of whom represent aspects of Nature, clearly connect the idea of the cyclical nature of human life to wider cosmological cycles. The seven plates thereafter portray the human vicissitudes. In each plate, an allegorical worldly state is presented atop a wagon; each wagon, in turn, has a causal relationship to the one following it. Riches, in the second plate, sits atop a wagon driven by the personification of Guile. Pride, which results from wealth, sits at her feet, depicted in smaller scale. In the following print, Pride is seen again, now full scale and seated in the place of Riches. In this way, Heemskerck made the causality between one worldly state and another visually explicit. Each subsequent plate repeats this basic composition and causal relationship, so that it is clear that Pride begets Envy, Envy begets War, War begets Want, Want begets Humility and Humility begets Peace. At the end of the cycle, Riches is shown as the progeny of Peace, completing the cycle and illustrating for the viewer the point of origin for the *tableau* of Riches at the beginning of the series. Like the wagon plays that these designs are based on, the

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<sup>458</sup> For a discussion of the use of the paradoxical encomium in the visual arts, see Falkenburg "Pieter Aertsen, Rhyarographer" (1995).

<sup>459</sup> Peters, "Printed Processions and the Theater of Identity" (2005), 143.

procession from one print to the next enacts a metaphorical journey of the viewer from one state of mind to another, from ignorance to a state of knowledge.<sup>460</sup>

Each print in the cycle portrays two walking figures in the same location in the foreground which function both to personify specific characteristics of the subject honored and intensify the processional, continuous nature of the series. For example, in the *Triumph of Pride, Inobedientia* (Disobedience) and *Derisio* (Satire) process forward with the wagon, with *Inobedientia* pausing to gaze out at the viewer. In the following plate of the *Triumph of Envy* (fig. 105), *Inquietas* (Disquiet) and *Perturbatio* (Confusion) stride elegantly to the left, each participating in a symbolic action illustrating her characteristic. Likewise, in Bruegel's *Festival of Fools* four figures are isolated on the front edge of the picture. Each stands above a stanza of the caption below, a text that progresses from a description of foolishness, to an observation of foolish acts, to the object of the game. The face of the fool in the far left bottom corner is hidden from view as he bends down to attempt to bowl between his legs, aiming in the opposite direction from the pin to be hit. This figure is located directly beneath the "head fool" I described earlier, who gazes at his ball and sees only a tool for play. Likewise, the identity-less figure in the foreground represents self-unawareness; his bowl away from the pin betrays his complete blindness. Next to him, a fool marches to the right in the direction of the game's objective while thumbing his nose, a gesture of derision.<sup>461</sup> This is a man who sees that which is before him, but possesses no self-knowledge and, therefore, only mocks and derides the actions of others. Closer to the pin, the fool standing in the center with his back to the viewer, looking in on the festivities and holding an owl aloft, would have been seen in association with the owl's mirror. This figure represents the moment of self-reflection for the viewer, when he gains self-knowledge; instead of simply identifying the folly before him, he sees himself as a fool amidst the revelry. Finally, a man in the far right bottom corner plays the flute and kneels down to point at the target of the bowling game, the small isolated pin. As the stanza below this figure indicates, in order to hit the pin—that is to say, to interpret the picture correctly—the viewer must enjoy folly within himself. Like Heemskerck's allegorical procession, these figures in the foreground, on the one hand,

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<sup>460</sup> Ibid.

<sup>461</sup> Moxey, "Pieter Bruegel and the *Feast of Fools*" (1982), 643.

personify specific characteristics of the folly of humanity. On the other hand, their progression from left to right illustrates the process of interpretation which leads the viewer from one state of awareness to another, from blind ignorance toward the cultivation of self-knowledge. The processional aspect representing transformation in the multiple plates of Heemskerck is now translated into four figures in a single image. Nevertheless, based on their shared format, structuring and themes, the habit of viewing cultivated by allegorical processions brought to Bruegel's *Festival of Fools* informed the viewer's analysis and interpretation.

As I have discussed, the theater of the *rederijkers* in the mid-sixteenth century had ties both to native Netherlandish and to classical traditions. Whereas the dramatic forms remained basically those of late Medieval morality plays and farces, rederijker authors translated classical dramas and, by Bruegel's time, began to use the persuasive methods of rhetorical argumentation in their own works.<sup>462</sup> Thus, Latinate forms were often reproduced in the vernacular language, and classical subjects were recast within a contemporary context.<sup>463</sup> The composite nature of Bruegel's *Festival of Fools*—a picture that combines activities defined by local custom with formal qualities, including the Roman architectural style in the background, employed for representations of allegorical processions such as Heemskerck's *Cycles and Triumph of Bacchus*—amounts to a particularly Northern humanist ideal: situating classical texts and/or Italianate visual concepts within the vernacular and translating antique stories into indigenous topics. This inter-pictorial dialogue entails not only conscious quotes of certain motifs—position and structure of figures, attributes, composition—but also

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<sup>462</sup> Meadow, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder's Netherlandish Proverbs* (2002), 17. See also Bart Ramakers, *Spelen en Figuren* (1996); G. Brom, *Schilderkunst en Literatuur in de 16e en 17e eeuw*, Utrecht and Antwerp, 1957.

<sup>463</sup> For example, in Bruegel's *Elck* the attribute of the lighted lantern especially brings to mind Diogenes and his searching with a lantern in broad daylight for an honest man; see Stefan Schmidt, *Diogenes. Studien zu seiner Ikonographie in der niederländischen Emblematik und Malerei des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts*, Hildesheim: Olms, 1993. On Bruegel's depiction of a classical drama translated to the sixteenth century stage, see Ramakers, "Bruegel en de rederijkers" (1997); see also Ramakers, "Kinderen van Saturnus" (2002); Herman Pleij, "De Laatmiddeleeuwse Rederijkersliteratuur als Vroeg-humanistische Overtuigingskunst," *Jaarboek der Koninklijke Souvereine Kamer van Rhetorica van Vlaanderen de Fonteijne*, vol. 34 (1984), 65-95. For a general study of this phenomenon, see Jean Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition and its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art*, New York: Harper Torch Books, 1961; Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958; Don Cameron Allen, *Mysteriously Meant: The Rediscovery of Pagan Symbolism and Allegorical Interpretation in the Renaissance*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970.

notions of form and style cultivated by sixteenth-century Northern humanists who advocated the assimilation of ancient stories and Latinate forms into vernacular works, both literary and visual.