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Reforming Bruegel: Between the Margins of Morality and the Confines of Comedy

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by

Lisa Dillon Strickland

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Abstract of the Thesis

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In this thesis, I explore a pair of genre prints designed by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *The Thin Kitchen* and *The Fat Kitchen*. Each print depicts a domestic scene that takes place in the kitchen. A theme of impoverishment runs through *The Thin Kitchen*, while in *The Fat Kitchen* the setting depicts gluttony and overabundance. These prints are usually discussed in a moralizing context by scholars, and are considered critiques of avarice. However, this thesis will argue that these prints should be understood as allegories of the symbolic battle between Carnival and Lent. I will develop this idea further and argue that Bruegel created these images within the comic mode of humanist wit. Once we understand these prints as operating in the comic mode of humanist wit, we will be better able to understand how they were perceived and interpreted by their original audience.

Dedication Page

For my mother, who taught me the drama of life is just a veiled comedy.

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Introduction

Pieter Bruegel, while usually discussed as a painter, is slowly gaining renown for his work as a draughtsman. This trend sheds light on the location of the importance of print culture within early modern Europe.¹ Two prints serve as paradigmatic examples of the ambiguity surrounding genre prints in a specifically sixteenth-century Dutch context.² They were designed by Pieter Bruegel, engraved by Pieter van der Heyden, and published by Hieronymus Cock in 1563. The first, *The Thin Kitchen*, depicts a theme of impoverishment in a domestic setting. All the figures appear skeletal and sickly, and the cupboard is bare, attesting to the destitute circumstances and the malnourished condition of the subjects. The print shows a table, where a lanky man fills a bowl with a meager portion of mussels. Four cadaverous men sitting at the table reach desperately for the food. Under the table, a gaunt dog and her puppies wait for leftovers as a wasting child searches for food in an empty pot. The mother is so debilitated that she cannot even breastfeed her child; her breasts are wilted dry, and she is forced to hand-feed the baby. Next to her, a disheveled man appears to be “seeking to soften a piece of hard tack or possibly dried herring.”³ At the fireplace, a rickety figure stirs a small cooking kettle, presumably filled with watery soup.⁴ At the door, two men attempt to force a fat man to join their group. However, the portly figure notices the home’s frugal condition. The inscription on the left states in French: “Where Skin-and-bones stirs the pot, is a poor feast, Therefore, I will go to the Fat-Kitchen so that I can live.” The

1. Within this thesis, I employ the spelling “Pieter Bruegel”; however, when I am quoting other scholars, I

2. Although the prints exist in an array of states and series, the drawings or designs originally created by Bruegel do not exist. . Pieter van der Heyden after Pieter Bruegel, published by Hieronymus Cock, *Thin Kitchen*, c. 1563. Engraving, 221 x 293 mm (Photograph from Rijksmuseum, RP-P-1885-A-9290) and Pieter van der Heyden after Pieter Bruegel, published by Hieronymus Cock, *Fat Kitchen*, c. 1563. Engraving, 221 x 293 mm (Photograph from Rijksmuseum, RP-P-1885-A-9289).

3. H. Arthur Klein and Pieter Bruegel, *Graphic Worlds of Peter Bruegel the Elder: Reproducing 64 Engravings and a Woodcut After His Designs* (New York: Dover, 1963), 88.

4. An expression within the inscription below reads, “*daer roert magherman de pot* (there Bare Bones stirs the pot),” which “is a common metaphor for frugal living in the sixteenth-century literature,” and there was a satirical play with a figure named Bare Bones, in Pieter Bruegel, Max Seidel, and Roger H. Marijnissen, *Bruegel* (New York: Putnam, 1971), 70. However, although in this description of the work the authors list the food items, one should not conclude that these prints deal with Lent or Shrovetide Tuesday.

Flemish inscription on the right reads: “Where Thin man stirs the pot is poor hospitality, Therefore do I go to the Fat Kitchen with light heart.” The print, as Nadine Orenstein states, “detain[s] us with a plethora of details and demand[s] patient, reflective viewing.”⁵

The inscription and corpulent figure allude to *The Thin Kitchen*'s counter print. In *The Fat Kitchen*, we see overabundance embodied. The men at the table have no need to fight over the food because provisions overflow. One man has a hand in a pie, while another, adorned with sausages, stuffs his face. A man, most likely a monk, in a religious outfit consisting of a tunic, cowl, and scapula paradoxically holds a jug containing alcohol. Next to him, a portly fellow hangs a sausage from his belt. There is not a bare spot on the table; it is covered in “hams, sausages, pigs’ feet, pigs; heads, cheeses, baked goods.”⁶ Even the ceiling is masked by joints of meat. The print displays all the same activities as *The Thin Kitchen*, but exaggerates them to a point of nauseating excess.⁷ For example, instead of one small cooking kettle, the chimney hook holds three. The woman is not stirring watered-down soup over a flimsy fire but glazing a suckling pig in front of a sweeping blaze. *The Fat Kitchen* lacks the paucity shown in *The Thin Kitchen*. The mother in this scene is plump, and her child suckles from her engorged breasts. The swine-like children in the scene devour food out of their trough. Even the dog is overfed, chewing on a baked good. While the figures in *The Thin Kitchen* try to lure the fat man in, the figures in *The Fat Kitchen* force a thin man out. The inscription reads, in French: “Out of here Thin-Back with a hideous face, You have nothing to do here since this is the Fat Kitchen,” and in Flemish: “Go from here Thin man, however hungry you may be. This is the Fat Kitchen here, and you will not be served.” Even the dog bites at the ankles of the scrawny fellow holding his bagpipe.

5. Nadine Orenstein, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Drawings and Prints* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 29.

6. Klein and Bruegel, *Graphic Worlds*, 88.

7. Frank Getlein and Dorothy Getlein note “the contrast between *The Rich Kitchen* and *The Poor Kitchen* and the respective attitudes toward the guest could be banal, but Bruegel raised his contrast to effectiveness by making everything in the one so skinny and bare, in the other so plump and gross. Even the knives of the well-fed are fat; even the pots of the poor manage to seem thin.” In *The Bite of the Print: Satire and Irony in Woodcuts, Engravings, Etchings, Lithographs and Serigraphs* (New York: C.N. Potter, 1963), 90.

In this thesis, I explore this pair of genre prints designed by Pieter Bruegel the Elder. These prints are typically effaced from scholarship surrounding the artist.⁸ The scant attention the engravings do receive places them within the context of a moralizing depiction of the excesses of the rich and the “unwillingness of the rich to address the needs of the poor.”⁹ However, Manfred Sellink argues against this moralistic approach, stating that “although some modern viewers might like to see these two pictures as an attack on the problem of poverty, this is certainly not the case: while the fat people in their kitchen are distorted grotesques who are mocked for their lack of restraint in eating, the poor thin people are also caricatured without compassion.”¹⁰ Although Sellink does not give an alternate interpretation, we can conclude from his statement that because both scenes are equally caricatured there is a veiled comedic

8. Eddy de Jongh and Ger Luijten note the term “genre” was not recognized in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The nineteenth century conceived the term “to denote scenes which are highly plausible as representations of everyday life.” In *Mirror of Everyday Life: Genreprints in the Netherlands, 1550–1700* (Amsterdam and Ghent: Rijksmuseum, 1997), 11. Furthermore, the authorial pair postulates several categories of genre prints concurrent to the emergence of the phenomenon. Some examples include profane prints created by Israhel van Meckenhem and the *Ars memorativa*, which contained depictions of habitual activities that “aimed to drum concepts or words of wisdom into the reader’s mind,” de Jongh and Ger Luijten, 11.

9. Barbara Butts et al., *The Printed World of Pieter Bruegel, the Elder* (St. Louis, MO: Saint Louis Art Museum, 1995), 81. William Jordan describes the engravings in relation to the “choice between good and evil.” Regarding the “tables of the sober and immoderate persons,” he refers to the subject of the engravings in question and *The Poor Man’s Meal* and *The Rich Man’s Meal* of Hieronymus Francken. In Sam Segal et al., *A Prosperous Past: The Sumptuous Still Life in the Netherlands, 1600–1700* (The Hague: SDU, 1988), 33. Finally, a number of sources characterize the theme of the prints as a contrast between the rich and the poor, or more broadly as critiques of avarice. For example, Robert Jütte argues that “no other picture of the early modern period illustrates better the fact that for the poor the question of how one lived was, above all, a question of how to survive on a diet which was minimal in both quality and cost.” In *Poverty and Deviance in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 72. However, more recent studies acknowledge the shrouded Carnival and Lenten references. For example, Larry Silver notes the connection between *The Thin/Fat Kitchen* and Bruegel’s 1559 painting *Carnival and Lent* but notes that while the prints “reprise the contrast,” between Carnival and Lent “but without the religious practices,” in Larry Silver, *Peasant Scenes and Landscapes: The Rise of Pictorial Genres in the Antwerp Art Market* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006) 111. Margaret Sullivan takes a different route and locates *The Thin/Fat Kitchen* within an artistic category demonstrating Bruegel’s artistic ‘turning point.’ Sullivan argues Bruegel’s return to Brussels in 1563 signals a return to more traditional subject matter in an effort to reach a broader audience and neutralize his reputation as a second Bosch which carried with it associations of distrust towards church and state. For these reasons Sullivan posits the *Thin/Fat Kitchen* are commentary on the increased migration of country peasants to urban dwellings and the xenophobic sensibility of the urban middle class. In Margaret A. Sullivan and Pieter Bruegel, *Bruegel and the Creative Process, 1559-1563* (Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 175-190.

10. Manfred Sellink, “The Very Lively and Whimsical Pieter Brueghel: Thoughts on His Iconography and Context,” in Orenstein, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Drawings and Prints*, 61.

effect to the works Sellink's position is supported by Karl Van Mander's entry on Pieter Bruegel in the first edition of *The Lives of the Illustrious Netherlandish and German Painters*, dating from 1603. In the passage, van Mander notes the artist's nickname, *Pier den Drol*, stating, "This is why one sees few pictures by him which a spectator can contemplate seriously and without laughing."¹¹

Many scholars have recently attempted to reevaluate the approaches to Bruegel's art. In *Carnivals and Dreams: Pieter Bruegel and the History of the Imagination*, Louise Milne navigates the murky waters surrounding Bruegel scholarship.¹² She notes the chronological trends in research on the artist, including iconographic, didactic, politics of difference, and Bruegel the draughtsman. Beginning with studies in iconography, which positioned Bruegel in the humanist reformer camp, scholars posited a moralizing or didactic component within Bruegel's folkloric works. Later, scholarship began to focus on the politics of difference within and outside Bruegel's works, arguing for visual caricatures of contemporary political and social events from a democratic or nationalistic point of view. The last phase of Bruegel scholarship concentrated on the artist as draughtsman and the artist's relation to print culture. Milne notes the later scholarship expanded the field by considering an alternative to a humanistic reading based in Neoplatonic ideals and accounting for the influence of popular subject matter.¹³ Milne considers the strands of evidence surrounding the artist—Bruegel's exploration and eventual fusion of genres and

11. Carel van Mander, Hessel Miedema, and Derry Cook-Radmore, *The Lives of the Illustrious Netherlandish and German Painters. Vol.2, Commentary on Biography and Lives, Fol. 196r01-211r35* (Doornspijk, the Netherlands: Davaco, 1995), 190.

12. In her study, Milne assigns Bruegel the metaphorical appointment of a cartographer as an attempt to account for Bruegel's originality. She is using this metaphor as an attempt to deal with the dream-like imagery and is postulating Bruegel as reimagining the unconscious. However, her use of the theme of the detachment of the artist is useful when considering the disunion in scholarly opinion on Bruegel's folk imagery.

13. Milne is not dealing with the comic mode within Bruegel's work; rather she is dealing with the artist's fantastical imagery as it relates to the imagination and can thus account for the discrepancy among scholars for Bruegel's sources. Louise S. Milne and Pieter Bruegel, *Carnivals and Dreams: Pieter Bruegel and the History of the Imagination* (London: Mutus Liber, 2007). While Milne's discussion of the fantastic deviates from my project, the author's discussion of religion in relation to Bruegel's technique is useful. For example, she discusses Bruegel's "characteristic technique," stating the artist worked to "combine highly abstract form with very earthy subject matter: working out symbolic actions appropriate to the pictorial representation of children's games, wedding feasts, or the transition from Carnival to Lent," Milne, 41. Furthermore, Milne posits that Bruegel's detachment (in the sense of the *flaneur*) is central to constituting the meaning in the work.

historical shift in appropriate subject matter, Bruegel's translation of popular tropes and imagery—and assigns Bruegel the role of cartographer:

The point of all quintessentially Renaissance activity was to redraw the universe, expecting to find its science divine and its divinity scientific. The visual arts were at the centre of this project – arguably more central than conventional philosophy. These mapping and re-mapping exercises were bound, here and there, to come across the limits of what was known. An artist might then apply the tools of spatialising philosophy – including the collection and comparison of data – as a means of expressing and investigating the paradoxes thrown up by the clash of competing, or incommensurable systems of representation.¹⁴

While Milne is not making a case for this expression on the comedic nature of Bruegel's work, however, when one considers the ethnographic as a detailed study of human appearances in an effort to increase knowledge of otherness, the prevalence for the occurrence of this theme within visual culture, and Bruegel's division with his own oeuvre, it is easier to come to terms with Bruegel's expansion and satirical transformation of popular culture into a type of humanist wit. Like a mapmaker, Bruegel is selecting established visual tropes and reinterpreting them so they can be appreciated for their comic valence.

While I agree that Bruegel executes his designs in the comic mode, a revealing theme at play in these scenes is neglected by scholars. This thesis argues that Bruegel's designs are actually depictions of the popular theme of the battle between Carnival and Lent. More specifically, *The Thin Kitchen* is a personification of the Lenten theme, and *The Fat Kitchen* of Shrove Tuesday. Once these images are understood as personifying the themes of Lent and Shrovetide, the comedic quality of the prints can be better understood. The basis for my argument begins with the use of food in both prints. In *The Thin Kitchen*, all fare is in accordance with Lenten practices. The contrast between Carnival and Lent does not necessarily challenge previous interpretations that these prints allegorize gluttony and benevolence, but these rituals add a religious dimension. The religious nature coupled with the mockery of both extremes in a corresponding manner problematizes the supposed dichotomy of indulgence and need. Contemporary viewers would have understood this division of food into Lenten and non-Lenten categories. Evidence for

14. Milne, 14.

this division is found in early modern cookbooks which enumerate this division. For example, in her book *Matters of Taste: Food and Drink in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art and Life* Donna Barnes cites one of the earliest printed Dutch language cookbooks entitled *Een Notabel Boexcken van Cokeryen* (A notable little book of cookery), published around 1514.¹⁵ IBarnes discusses the organizational structure of the cookbook stating “recipes are clearly divided into dishes for everyday consumption and those to be eaten on the church-ordained days of fasting and abstinence, when meat, dairy products, and eggs were forbidden.”¹⁶ The significance between the boundaries of the religious and the secular are not part of Barnes’ objective; yet this framework reveals that the limits of these practices cannot be confined to separate categories. Rather, for they are bound together. Furthermore, as Kenneth Bendiner points out, Carnival and Lent are time-sensitive events dealing with ritual, but types of food also determine these folk/religious traditions.¹⁷ For example, during Lent one is supposed to abstain from meat, and certain foods are associated with Lenten fare—fish, pretzels, and so on.¹⁸ Carnival, or Shrovetide Tuesday, is the day before Ash Wednesday, the last day to indulge before Lent begins. This day of feasting is associated with indulgence in all types of meat and Shrovetide pancakes. Thus, in the two scenes the spectator can clearly note that, in *The Thin Kitchen*, only some seafood and Lenten fare are served, while in *The Fat Kitchen* the emblems of Carnival/Shrovetide Tuesday fill the room.¹⁹ It appears as though the family in *The Thin Kitchen* is marking the mantel for each day until Lent is over; this serves as a clue to the time-sensitive religious tradition and it appears in several of the copies after this print.

15. Donna R. Barnes, Peter G. Rose, and Albany Institute of History and Art, *Matters of Taste: Food and Drink in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art and Life* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2002), 17.

16. Ibid. Furthermore, Barnes notes, “this prohibition applied 150 days a year, when only fish, vegetables herbs, fruits (including dried fruits and nuts), legumes, oils, salt, spices, sugar, honey, beer, wine, grain products, and bread were permitted.” Barnes et al., *Matters of Taste*, 17.

17. Kenneth Bendiner, *Food in Painting: From the Renaissance to the Present* (London: Reaktion, 2004), 187.

18. Lent traditionally involves fasting and voluntary deprivation.

19. While the pancakes are missing from the scene, I will return to this subject in the discussion of the adaption and transformation of Bruegel’s scene.

In the first section of this thesis, I situate the tradition of the theme of the battle between Carnival and Lent, looking at historical precedents and contemporary manifestations. I also highlight the context of laughter in sixteenth century Flanders and the implications this had for the theme of the battle between Carnival and Lent. Examples of this include Mikhail Bakhtin's discussion of the carnivalesque and the grotesque in *Rabelais and His World* and Erasmus of Rotterdam's *Praise of Folly*. Finally, I conclude the first section by briefly discussing visual examples of the themes of Carnival and Lent and how they are manifest in *The Thin Kitchen* and *The Fat Kitchen*.

I. Battle between Carnival and Lent

Historical Precedents and Contemporary Manifestations

The battle between Carnival and Lent is one of the central emblems of the early modern period. First, this battle is intertwined with aspects of Christian Doctrine.²⁰ The battle is pictured in Bruegel's famous painting on the theme from 1559, *The Battle Between Carnival and Lent*, in which we see two personified versions of Carnival and Lent jousting with their allegorical weapons.²¹ Carnival is represented by a fat man sitting on a barrel with a jousting stick, which appears as a Carnival skewer with a pig's head, chicken, and sausages. The Lenten figure is dressed as a woman (appearing ghostly pale and emaciated) holding out a paddle with two dried fish. Bruegel did not invent this tradition, since "the dialectic relationship between Carnival and Lent," infused all types of contemporary culture—including the religious sector, fine arts, literature, theatre, and popular culture—in early modern Europe.²² Furthermore, Bruegel's oil painting is based on the earliest visual example of the battle between personified figures of Carnival and Lent, created by Hieronymus Bosch. The paintings are now lost, but four copies "of Bosch's painting have been preserved, indicating strong contemporary interest in not only

20. For example, Samuel Kinser notes, "during the annual cycle of Lenten sermons Carnival behavior served the preacher as the obvious, proximate reason for repentance and contrition. Because this Christian attention was embedded in the calendar of springtime, the Church's sense of the Carnival-Lent boundary tended over time to fuse and become confused with lay people's celebration of the year's turning toward outdoor activities, warmth, and light." In *Rabelais's Carnival: Text, Context, Metatext* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 47. Donald Gwynn Watson points out that Carnival, which culminates on Shrovetide Tuesday, "destroys or makes ambiguous distinctions of identity in order to enhance the collective celebration of certain cultural rites of transition, such as seasonal change, death and rebirth, Shrovetide and Lent"; Donald Gwynn Watson, "Erasmus' Praise of Folly and the Spirit of Carnival," *Renaissance Quarterly* 32, no. 3 (Autumn 1979): 333–53, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2860184>, 343.

21. Pieter Bruegel, *The Battle Between Carnival and Lent*, c. 1599. Oil on wood, 118 x 164.5 cm (Photograph from ARTstor, Erich Lessing/ART RESOURCE, NY). Louise Milne notes *The Battle Between Carnival and Lent* situates itself within a subcategory within Bruegel's oeuvre. This subset is known as *theatrum mundi*. Milne notes, "the *theatrum* epithet was given to spectacles, as well as atlases, encyclopedias, *kunstkammern* and other classification schemes" (Milne, 318). Visually these paintings are of large-scale "crowded with small figures, whose underlying patterns are perceived as if from above. A high horizon and high viewpoint creates the effect of a tilted panorama; the distance between spectator and protagonists also represents a distance in knowledge" (Milne, 318).

22. James B. Collins and Karen L. Taylor, *Early Modern Europe: Issues and Interpretations* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), 445.

the artist but also the artist's theme."²³ Two of the Bosch copies exemplify the importance of food in visual depictions.²⁴ In the first, we see Lenten fare exemplified by fish and a meager diet, while Carnival/Shrovetide Tuesday epitomizes excess. This image includes a satirical inscription alluding to Luther dancing with a nun, which demonstrates that these ritual allegorical combats were something people laughed about. A figure from a Mendicant order also appears in this copy, and he is present in another version after Bosch's painting. This is important because Mendicants are supposed to take a vow of poverty.. Bruegel also includes a Mendicant; interestingly, he does not place the religious figure in the thin, impoverished kitchen. He situates the man of God in the fat kitchen.

Context of Laughter

Mikhail Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World* explores the role of laughter in the literature of Rabelais.²⁵ Bakhtin cites paradoxes as "one of the many forms of knowledge used by Rabelais and his contemporaries as a means of critiquing prevailing institutions and behaviors without committing themselves to any new orthodoxy."²⁶ This use of paradox can be seen in Bruegel's kitchen prints as well. For example, it seems unusual that the pair of prints does not morally side with the poor, thin family over the overstuffed, fat one. While it is not the project of this paper to discuss Bruegel's political and religious intent, it is nevertheless fruitful to point out that it appears as if there is a satirical critique behind the

23. Kinser, *Rabelais's Carnival*, 47. These lost paintings are indicated in an inventory of the Medici Palace and are presumed to have been lost in 1494, when the palace was attacked.

24. The first in the manner of Hieronymus Bosch, *The Battle between Carnival and Lent*, c. 1600–20. Inscribed, bottom center: *Dit is den dans van Luther met zijn nonne*. Oil on panel, 74.7 x 240 cm (Photograph from Rijksmuseum, SK-A-1673). The second, in the manner of Hieronymus Bosch, *The Battle between Carnival and Lent*, c. 1540–50. Inscribed, bottom centre: *Dit is den dans van Luther met zijn nonne*. Oil on panel, 59 x 118.5 cm. Hertogenbosch, Noordbrabants Museum (Photograph from Rijksmuseum).

25. Furthermore, he investigates "the problems of totalitarianism through a specific investigation of the relationship of laughter to 'official' culture. Laughter represented an unofficial and subversive means of expression, a freedom in the midst of restrictions." Collins and Taylor, *Early Modern Europe*, 445.

26. *Ibid.*, 445.

comedic display. Bruegel is likely commenting on the authority of the church itself through paradoxes embedded in the scene.²⁷

Louise Milne discusses the idea of the Carnavalesque World-Turned-Upside-Down as one based in negation and reversal. Milne states, “to depict role reversals through actions which typify fundamental social relationships—between master and servant, goose and cook, husband and wife,” works to draw “attention to the immutability of the action itself. This underwrites, rather than challenges, the primacy of hierarchies.”²⁸ However, Bruegel’s kitchen prints do not posit a duality between a natural disposition and one that is unnatural; both are framed from a critical perspective that leads to an indecision expressed within the pair. Thus, Bruegel’s kitchen scenes play upon already established conventions within literary and visual culture, subverting them in a way that promotes neither the Lenten folk nor the Shrovetide revilers. The prints do not function to “channel potentially rebellious imaginings into the structure of therapeutic reversal” but rather as meta-commentary on the commentary—a pseudo-statement that opens the door for the comic element or moment in these works.

Bakhtin specifically refers to the battle between Carnival and Lent and traces it back to a thirteenth-century poem discussing a “dispute between non-Lenten and Lenten foods,”²⁹ entitled “The Fight of Lent with the Meat-Eater.”³⁰ Bakhtin discusses this in relationship to the fourth book of Rabelais’s *The Life of Gargantua and of Pantagruel*. The duo meet two characters (Quaresmeprenant and Andouilles); one is a passive character representing Lent, whose description conjures up the figures in

27. I will use parallels between the humor in Rabelais and Bruegel as evidence for *The Thin Kitchen* and *The Fat Kitchen* as examples of humanist wit.

28. Milne, 326.

29. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968), 298.

30. Ibid. The poem “tells the struggle of . . . Lenten fish armies” against “the non-Lenten foods.” In the poem, the meat runs to the aid of Carnival to fight against Lent (including “grilled meat, pork in parsley sauce, sausages great and small,” “meat on spits, roasted pigeon, pigeon cooked in pastry, filet of venison with black pepper, and of course beef”). Fighting for Lent, we have “the fish of the sea, the pond, and the stream.” At some point, the “dairy products arrive,” and we see butter advancing “ahead of the rest, with sour milk following right behind; hot pies and casseroles appear on great round plates. Cream proceeds, brandishing a lance.” The battle ends in a victory for Carnival.

The Thin Kitchen (fig. 1), while the other is a chaotic character representing Shrovetide Tuesday, who resembles the figures of *The Fat Kitchen*. This story is paradigmatic of literary manifestations of the World-Upside-Down, traditionally discussed as a fictional location known as the Land of Cockaigne. The Land of Cockaigne refers to “the genre of tales told about a town of fools, the town being always located some distance away.”³¹ In this discourse food imagery finds itself inextricably linked to issues of the grotesque body and thus comic scenes.³² Bakhtin’s understanding of the grotesque body is embodied in the act of eating. Using *The Thin/Fat Kitchen* as an illustration of the grotesque body the figures in the act of eating are bringing something from the outside world into his or her own body and making the food part of oneself. In the act of eating the “limits between man and the world are erased,” and the figures in *The Fat Kitchen* appropriate Carnavalesque properties by swallowing the world around them and creating a new hyperbolic body.³³ Similarly, the figures in *The Thin Kitchen* also devour the world around the body. However their grotesque and exaggerated features are signaled by the lack or absence, which characterizes Lent. In other words by swallowing up the Lenten body the thin figures produce a third body, which Bruegel depicts in caricatured effect.

The work of Erasmus is another area permeated by the theme of Carnival and Lent. Like Rabelais, Erasmus articulates a higher order of humor, one described by Svetlana Alpers as “humanist wit.” As previously discussed, Lent and Carnival served secular and religious purposes.³⁴ Donald Gwynn Watson creates a parallel between the cathartic acts of Carnival and its relationship to Lent with Erasmus’s *Praise of Folly*. Watson notes, “in drawing upon Carnavalesque traditions Erasmus was

31. Milne, 328.

32. Furthermore, Bakhtin states images of food “are intimately connected with speech, with wise conversation and gay truth,” Bakhtin, 281.

33. Bakhtin, 281.

34. Lent can be viewed as a “time of purification, reflection, and preparation for the renewal in Christ,” while Carnival is “part of the process of preparation for the renewal of spirit” (Watson, “Erasmus’ Praise,” 351.) Lent and Carnival are tied to seasonal changes as well.

exploiting conventions of folly and laughter accessible not only to a limited circle of humanists, and it is probably safe to conclude that Folly's contemporary and lasting popularity with book buyers depends upon precisely this playful seriousness and comic spirit."³⁵ Further examination of the permeation of this theme throughout print practice and the transformation and adaption of Bruegel's original design will show that the kitchen prints function in the same way.

The stage of the *rederijkers*, or the chambers of rhetoric whose influence permeated all society, is another area of popular culture where the theme of the battle between Carnival and Lent manifests. This is especially the case in a large city like Antwerp, which had three *rederijker kamers*.³⁶ Donald Gwynn Watson notes that one of the main functions of these groups was to perform on holiday festivals, including Shrovetide Tuesday.³⁷ These groups created "modes of comedy whose spirit, materials, and rhythms belonged essentially to the folk arts of medieval society."³⁸

Visual Examples of the Themes

At this point, I wish to introduce other examples of this theme and variations upon it within contemporary popular print culture, to better create a catalogue of conventional motifs of the battle between Carnival and Lent. One example is Frans Hogenberg's 1558 etching *The Battle Between Carnival and Lent*.³⁹ Here, we see a similar configuration to Bruegel's *Battle*, except that in Hogenberg's

35. Watson, "Erasmus' Praise," 352.

36. Walter S. Gibson, "Artists and Rederijkers in the Age of Bruegel," *The Art Bulletin* 63, no. 3 (September 1981): 426–46, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3050144>, 428. Gibson suggests that a *kamer* is the equivalent of a society.

37. Watson, "Erasmus' Praise," 336.

38. Watson notes that "their activities revolved around the violation and parody of hierarchy, serious discourse, and everyday identities, and their repertoire consisted of little that we would recognize as sophisticated theater: dramatizations of proverbs, physical slapstick and violence, burlesques of solemn ceremony, satirical masquerade, animal maskings, monologues, topical allegory." *Ibid.*, 337.

39. Frans Hogenberg, *The Battle Between Carnival and Lent* (Den vetten Vastelavont met alle syn Gasten compt hier bestriden die mager Vasten), 1558. Etching, 331 x 552 mm. (Photograph from the British Museum, AN400518001).

image Carnival and Lent are not in a domestic setting or city but in the countryside. Instead of being in the midst of combat, here the personified figures are being rolled into battle positions. The depiction of Carnival sits on a barrel labeled to identify the figure as a Carnival reveler. As in Bruegel's painting, the figure of Carnival holds a symbolic weapon attached to his trademark foods. Carnival's soldiers also hold weapons implying a relationship to Carnival. For example, the two men charging toward Lent hold Carnavalesque weapons: one a frying pan and the other a waffle iron. In the foreground are various symbolic foods, including fish and waffles. Moving along to the Lenten side, we see Lady Lent in all her trappings holding a trivet of fish. Along the top of the print, an inscription reads in Flemish: "Here comes Fat Carnival with all his guests to combat Lean Lent."⁴⁰

Another image depicts *The Fight between the Lean and the Fat*, (dating from ca. 1620–30 and created by Boetius Adams Bolswert.⁴¹ While this is a later image, it is important that the relationship between fat and lean and Carnival and Lent is shown in the title. In this image, we see a fight between the two teams yet again. Fighting for Carnival, we see the familiar inclusion of a waffle iron, while on Lent's side we see a trivet. The protagonists of the scene have adapted some of these key emblematic features as headgear. For example, Carnival/Fat wears a frying pan on his head, while Lent/Lean wears a fish colander on his head. All the usual food items are also present. The figure of Carnival stands ready to fight, draped in waffles and an assortment of meat, while Lent is adorned in fish and positioned to withstand an attack.

A final depiction of this theme is seen in *Shrovetide Tuesday*, produced from a drawing by Hieronymus Bosch.⁴² Like the kitchen prints, the print was executed by Pieter van der Heyden and

40. Kinser, *Rabelais's Carnival*, 48.

41. Boetius Adams Bolswert, *The Fight between the Lean and the Fat*, c. 1620–30. Engraving, 27 x 40 mm (Photograph from the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, BdH 15023 (PK)).

42. Pieter van der Heyden after Hieronymus Bosch, published by Hieronymus Cock, *Shrove Tuesday*, 1567. Engraving, 222 x 284 mm (Photograph from the British Museum, AN61851001).

published by Hieronymus Cock. While this image is rich in detail and deserves ample attention, for my purposes the print is relevant only to point out that it shows an interior scene by a fireplace with a woman cooking by the fire. Here, she is cooking Shrovetide waffles, which, as we have seen, are foods symbolic of the holiday. Everything in this image points toward not merely excess but folly. For example, the fool on the right, easily identified due to his accompanying bauble, has just been shaved, which symbolizes a proverb meaning that someone has been tricked.⁴³

In sum, these examples explicitly depict the battle between Carnival and Lent, as well as exemplifying key symbolic and iconographic elements. On the side of Lent, there is consistently an inclusion of fish or non-meat items, usually a trivet, and an explicit or implicit reference to the personification of Lent being thin or lean. On the side of Carnival, there is always the inclusion of an assortment of meat items and sometimes Shrovetide pancakes and waffles, and the allegorical figure of Carnival holds a lance skewered with meat in opposition to Lent. There is usually a reference to the pudginess of the allegorical figure.

In the second section, I discuss Bruegel's original pair of prints in relation to the flourishing print market in Antwerp. This section will consist of three parts. First, I consider the popularity of Hieronymus Cock's print publishing house. Next, I describe Bruegel's working relationship with the printmaker. Finally, throughout my discussion I consider the importance of the engraver Pieter van der Heyden—a man said to lack artistic ingenuity, but who created the most faithful reproductions of Bruegel's work. I begin with the original engraving executed by Pieter van der Heyden. It is important to clarify Cock's considerable influence on the print market contemporaneous to the production of the kitchen prints, because this influence supports the second half of my argument—that understanding the pair of prints as

43. More prints dealing with the subject of Shrove Tuesday and Lent include *Vuyl Sause* (Dirty Sauce) (after Jan Verbeeck, where the viewer sees a group of people in a domestic setting eating sausages and eggs. There are even more allusions to Bruegel's print present in the figure of a breastfeeding mother. Walter Gibson mentions an anonymous drawing of a kitchen scene that represents the battle between the fat and the lean, *Winter*, an allegorical depiction of the seasons by Maarten de Vos, places the Carnival fare around the periphery of the border, which suggests the transformation from indulgence to abstinence is a ritualistic calendar event.

allegorical depictions of the battle between Carnival and Lent sheds some light on the comedic significance behind the works.

II. Bruegel's Pair of Prints in Relation to the Print Market in Antwerp

The collaborative element underlies Bruegel's printed works, and plays upon this idea of mapping and re-mapping the visual sensibility in humanist traditions.⁴⁴ Bruegel was engaging in an intellectual sensibility by subverting already established conventions in art, in effect translating ideas from one medium to another. Pieter van der Heyden appears even more so as a product of this symbolic investment in the dissemination of knowledge through adaption and translation. For example, he is praised not for his artistic talent or imagination but rather for his systematic and almost scientific translation of Bruegel's designs. The collaborative process becomes even more problematic when Hieronymus Cock's print shop enters the scene, as Cock most likely was responsible for including the inscription and the choice of languages. Thus, issues of originality, adaption, translation, and transformation come to the forefront and play out in a current unique to the medium of print and its circuits of circulation.

Popularity of Hieronymus Cock's Print Publishing House

The first prints produced after Bruegel's designs were executed by Pieter van der Heyden and published by Hieronymus Cock in 1563.⁴⁵ The years between 1554 and 1569, when Bruegel was creating designs for prints, were a particularly interesting and exciting period of change in printmaking in the Southern Netherlands. During this period, Antwerp became the most important center for print production in northern Europe because of the efforts of Hieronymus Cock and others.⁴⁶ Cock's publishing house,

44. The collaborative element refers to the interaction between Bruegel as draughtsman, van der Heyden as engraver, and Hieronymus Cock as publisher.

45. Hieronymus Cock began his career as an artist. Karel van Mander discusses the figure, stating it is "very inventive in landscape," but "I have not much to tell about [him], for he abandoned the art and devoted himself to dealing in it He ordered and bought canvases in oil and watercolour and commissioned engravings and etchings." Van Mander 1604, fol. 232r. quoted in de Jongh and Luijten, *Mirror of Everyday Life*, 16.

46. De Jongh and Luijten discuss the business of printmaking: "in the course of the sixteenth century the production of graphic art became specialized, pushing the publisher to the fore." In *v*, 16.

Quatre Vents (The Four Winds), was active from around 1548 until 1571.⁴⁷ Before 1555, Italian art was fundamental to Cock's operation, and during that period, "he specialized mainly in engravings by Ghisi after Raphael, Bronzino, and other Italian artists, and works after two Netherlandish Romanists, Maarten van Heemskerck and Lambert Lombard."⁴⁸ However, at the height of Quatre Vents' production (between 1555 and 1565), Cock focused on genre and landscape prints, following Netherlandish artists such as Pieter Bruegel, Hans Bol, and Matthijs Cock.⁴⁹ During this period, Cock employed many notable engravers, including Dirck Volckertsz Coornhert, Cornelis Cort, and Phillips Galle.⁵⁰ Simultaneously, "between 1555 and 1563, Bruegel made over forty designs for engravings, capitalizing on the strong market demand for images in the style or manner of Hieronymus Bosch (ca. 1453–1516). Bruegel's *Big Fish Eat Little Fish* (1557, Vienna, Albertina) was even attributed to Bosch in Cock's print [catalogue], though all subsequent engravings were inscribed 'Bruegel inventor.'"⁵¹ Ger Luijten notes, "Cock surpassed his fellow Antwerp publishers not only in the quantity of the work he produced, but also in its quality," postulating that this work "was directed primarily towards an educated clientele and was sold internationally, many of the prints being shipped abroad to Italy, France, Spain and Germany."⁵² However, Walter Gibson attests, "the engravings and etchings issued by Cock and other entrepreneurs

47. Ger Luijten and Rijksmuseum (Netherlands), *Dawn of the Golden Age: Northern Netherlandish Art, 1580–1620* (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 1993), 175. Cock died in 1571, but his widow administered the business and "continued to print some of the old plates until her own death in 1600." Luijten and Rijksmuseum, *Dawn of the Golden Age*, 175.

48. Luijten and Rijksmuseum, *Dawn of the Golden Age*, 175.

49. *Ibid.* Note, this transformative period occurred in 1555 with Ghisi's return to Italy.

50. *Ibid.*

51. Jacob Wisse, "Pieter Bruegel the Elder (ca. 1525/30–1569)," in *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art), 2000–; http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/brue/hd_brue.htm (October 2002).

52. Luijten and Rijksmuseum, *Dawn of the Golden Age*, 175.

were intended to appeal to a broad and varied public.”⁵³ Finally, Hieronymus Cock was a member of a rhetorical society in Antwerp, which attests to a humanistic appreciation of Bruegel’s work. This is also interesting when one considers the text at the bottom of *The Thin Kitchen*. As previously mentioned in a footnote, “*daer roert magherman de pot* (there Bare Bones stirs the pot)” was a common proverb contemporary to Bruegel’s design. Proverbs and adages were popular with a humanist audience and evidenced by Erasmus’s *Adages*, which Margaret Sullivan notes was a best-selling book for an extended period and served as a prototype for successive versions.⁵⁴ The print publisher usually adds the inscription; with the inclusion of the proverb, Hieronymus Cock would specifically be marketing these prints to a humanist crowd. Finally, Cock inscribed the adage or proverb in two languages to reach a larger market.

Bruegel’s Relationship with the Printmaker

We can see Bruegel’s interest in printmaking in the drawings he executed for Cock. In the “The Elusive Life of Pieter Bruegel the Elder,” Nadine Orenstein notes the artist’s drawings on paper were meticulously delineated. Bruegel paid careful attention to the outlines and denoted fields of hatching with calculated pen strokes designed as guides for the printmaker.⁵⁵ Bruegel’s collaborative process was crucial and unique, since he operated as an image-maker, draughtsman, and designer. The artist created a map the engraver could render faithfully, attesting to Bruegel’s skill as an image maker and his savvy business practice. Orenstein notes that “Bruegel did not just make drawings that would be engraved by another artist; he created drawings to be engraved.” Pieter van der Heyden executed more prints from Bruegel’s designs than any other engraver, and Orenstein adds that he “was not an inventive engraver,

53. Walter S. Gibson, “Some Flemish Popular Prints from Hieronymus Cock and His Contemporaries,” *Art Bulletin* 60, no. 4 (1978): 673; <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=5310021&site=ehost-live>, 673.

54. Margaret A. Sullivan, *Bruegel's Peasants: Art and Audience in the Northern Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

55. Orenstein, *Pieter Bruegel*.

and his figures are stiff and angular; he was however, highly skilled technically and his great strength was fidelity to the model he was copying.”⁵⁶

Furthermore, in *The Thin Kitchen* and *The Fat Kitchen* van der Heyden extends and translates the meaning in Bruegel’s drawings to the level of the technical. In other words, through van der Heyden’s technique notions of excess and absence take on aesthetic qualities. Van der Heyden’s lines follow the swelling and shrinking of the different forms. In his rendering of figures van der Heyden employs contrasting methods for the fat versus the lean, imbuing the figures with their defined qualities at an aesthetic level. For example, van der Heyden illustrates the faces of the corpulent figures with soft burin marks in semi circles projecting away from the face depicting volume and roundness. In contrast, in *The Thin Kitchen* van der Heyden handles the burin more forcefully, creating deeper incisions of parallel lines slightly turned inwards. This aesthetic vocabulary of allows van der Heyden to more accurately or aesthetically modulate and illustrate the figure’s lack and excess.

Popularity of Prints

Although the collaborative process among the printer, engraver, publisher, and artist is important, it is also important to discuss the evidence for the popularity of prints in the sixteenth century. Eddy de Jongh and Ger Luijten point out several factors, including elaborate marketing strategies. The prints could be sold from a print shop, such as Quatre Vents.⁵⁷ However, the print-buying process evolved into print fairs, art shops, and a system of international agents.⁵⁸ The exchange through international agents usually entailed a collector or connoisseur of prints. These collectors inserted prints into “art albums,” creating

56. Ibid., 210.

57. For example, the imprinting of the publisher’s monograph served as a form of advertisement so potential clients could know where to purchase prints of similar nature.

58. The art shops are described as places where consumers would sift through prints. De Jongh and Ger Luijten discuss the print fairs held in Frankfurt and Leipzig. De Jongh and Ger Luijten, *Mirror of Everyday Life*, 19.

their own collection.⁵⁹ One such collection is that of Johannes Thysius (1621–1653), who was known “to have a print album consisting largely of humorous and erotic prints which he called ‘Drolleries by Bruegel and others.’”⁶⁰

Piracy in Publishing

Another important feature of publishing in sixteenth-century Antwerp was piracy, and *The Thin Kitchen* and *The Fat Kitchen* were copied three times in the Low Countries.⁶¹ One example of this replication is *The Thin Kitchen* and *The Fat Kitchen*, created by Hendrick Hondius and published by Hans Lieftrinck.⁶² At the lower right, we have the monogram of H. Hondius, composed of the two letters joined together, and on the top on the chimney are the initials “ILF” (Joannes Lieftrinck). The inscription reads in French: “Where the thin man boils the kettle—Fat brother Lubin Hurries to Flee.” In Flemish: “Wherefore has brother Lubbert taken his flight to the fat.”⁶³ The figure of Brother Lubbert emerges from contemporary Dutch literature. Lubbert represents the figure of folly commonly associated with the fool.⁶⁴ Examples of this tradition are seen in pictorial works such as Hieronymus Bosch’s *Cure of Folly* dated

59. De Jongh and Ger Luytjen note the compilations are “now extremely rare, having fallen prey to dealers who found it easier to sell the prints off individually. They were also dismantled in the interests of a ‘more modern taxonomy,’ with print rooms abandoning iconography for an alphabetical or geographical arrangement.” *Ibid.*, 21.

60. *Ibid.*

61. René van Bastelaer, Pieter Bruegel, and Susan Fargo Gilchrist, *The Prints of Peter Bruegel the Elder: Catalogue Raisonné* (San Francisco: Alan Wofsy Fine Arts, 1992), 29.

62. Hendrick Hondius after Pieter van der Heyden’s engraving after Pieter Bruegel’s design, published by Hans Lieftrinck, *Thin Kitchen*. Engraving, 220 x 283 mm (Photograph from Rijksmuseum, RP-P-1924-592).

63. *Ibid.*

64. One scholar notes the myth may have originated from the story of a cuckolded husband to prevent him from adultery, and one story refers to a husband named Hubbert. There is also the word Lubbert Das itself which refers to ‘landlubber,’ which is a ‘stupid person.’ F. Clifford Rose. *Neurology of the arts: painting, music, literature* (London: Imperial College Press, 2004), 55.

from 1490.⁶⁵ The “stone of folly” that has been traditionally placed prominently on the fool’s forehead and which functions as the main identifying marker of his mental incapacities, is now in Bosch’s work transferred to a general type or peasant.⁶⁶ This “wen” or “stone of folly” clearly references his disfigurement, because “folklore of the period represented folly and madness as a troublesome stone that rattled around the skill of its victim.”⁶⁷ Hans Liefrinck’s inscription with the inclusion of Brother Lubbert attests to the concemporary comedic value both prints attained by adding an overt reference to contemporary tropes of fools and folly.

Hans Liefrinck (1518–1573) owned a print shop in Antwerp that would have competed with Cock’s.⁶⁸ Scholars have shown that Pieter van der Heyden worked with Liefrinck as an employee and “sometime co-worker.”⁶⁹ As Peter Parshall notes, Liefrinck “made his career at that crossing point of technical understanding, artistic judgment, and entrepreneurship on which the larger and famously successful publishing house of Hieronymus Cock was established.”⁷⁰ The fact that a contemporary

65. Brother Lubbert’s presence within Bosch’s painting as the figure of folly and stupidity is evidenced by the inscription which states “*Meester synt die key eras, Myne name Is lubbert Das,*” which translates roughly in English to: “Master, cut away the stone my name is Lubbert das.”

66. This is interesting to note because the pictorial representation of fools in the sixteenth century adhered to certain iconographical markers which identified the fool on the margin of society in physical, social, and moral terms in a simple and direct visual language. Here Bosch, like Bruegel departed from conventional figural depiction creating dualisms and paradox. Several markers unite to signal the fool’s madness including, the lack sleeveless tunic with a hood mocks and imitates a cleric’s uniform. The scalloped hem reveals a white underskirt of voluminous proportions, similar to female apparel, with its wrist hook looped around the bauble’s neck. This incongruent form of humor continues with bells attached to a red belt, literally signaling the fool’s presence by echoing contemporary practices of identifying and branding the mentally insane. Attached to the fool’s hood is an animated coxcomb, and ass’s ears protrude as well, symbolizing the fool’s imprudent, lecherous, and impure temperament.

67. Larry Silver and Hieronymus d. Bosch, *Hieronymus Bosch*, 1, English-language ed. (New York: Abbeville Press, 2006), 158.

68. Hans Liefrinck was the son of Willem Liefrinck (brother of Cornelis Liefrinck). The two brothers started their careers as woodblock cutters and “were drafted into imperial service.” David Landau and Peter W. Parshall, *The Renaissance Print, 1470–1550* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 200.

69. *Ibid.*, 222.

70. *Ibid.*

publishing house pirated the same print in an almost identical execution speaks to the popularity of the print and the constant borrowing of imagery between publishing houses. Finally, I must quickly mention the copy produced by Theodore Galle. Although several elements of the composition have been changed, what is crucial here is the inclusion of another inscription, one in Latin, which would market this print to a humanist audience.

Pastiches Created of Bruegel's Work

It is important to note the pastiches created of Bruegel's work, which not only attest to the prints' popularity but also elucidate the embedded themes of Carnival and Lent with the established symbolic and iconographic elements. First, I discuss the pair created by Maarten de Vos and published by Claes Jansz Visscher. Here, we find a similar scene to the original, except along with a different style we have a more comprehensible allusion to the Lenten and Shrovetide theme. For example, in *The Thin Kitchen* we see the weapon of Lent, a trivet with a fish resting on it—except now it is used for the appropriate function and not as a makeshift lance. The trivet has a simultaneous real and symbolic function. There is also the inclusion of religious iconography on the mantle, as seen in the form of a portrait of what appears to be a bishop. In *The Fat Kitchen*, the original theme is similarly expanded upon to include perceptible allusions to Shrovetide feasting. Next to the fireplace, we see Shrovetide pancakes and waffles. In similar fashion, the weapons of Carnival are turned to their intended uses, and we see the skewer cooking over the fire instead of attacking allegorical figures of Lent.

Another example of a pastiche created from Bruegel's original design is by the brothers Jan and Lucas van Doetecum. In this case, the image is almost completely transformed stylistically; the artists have even included a decorative border. What is crucial to gather from the adaption and transformation of

Bruegel's original iconography is the idea that artists and publishers retained the introductory compositional elements while elucidating the theme in a more apparent manner.⁷¹

Comedic Aspects

By positioning *The Thin Kitchen* and *The Fat Kitchen* within the theme of allegorical depictions of Lent and Shrovetide Tuesday, and by substantiating the popularity of the print, we can shed light on the comedic aspects embedded within the scene. Margaret Sullivan discusses Erasmus's adage "*Ollas ostentare* (To Make a Show of Kitchen Pots)." In this adage, Erasmus "defends the 'ridiculous and squalid subject.'" He argues that it is useful "to play sometimes on this kind of subject for the sake of exercising or relaxing the mind," although he qualifies his approval by specifying that "the joke" be "intelligent" (*eruditius*) and "the pleasure not unmixed with profit."⁷² I suggest that Bruegel's print designs are an example *par excellence* of this very purpose and their comedic aspect accounts for the popularity, longevity, and iconographical adaption of these prints. As I have shown, the prints fit within the tradition of the battle between Carnival and Lent. However, Bruegel does not explicitly depict this theme; rather, through ambiguity an astute observer would be able to decipher the humor. The detail Bruegel inscribes in the physiognomy, household items, and formal qualities allow the spectator to spend an extended period of time scrutinizing every last detail.

Svetlana Alper argues that, when one interprets a Bruegel work, one must consider three contexts: ethnography, iconography, and comic mode. The comic mode, according to Alpers, includes two strains of sixteenth-century comedy. The first, "humanist wit," is seen in Erasmus's *Praise of Folly*. The second type of humor can be seen in the "medieval folk Carnival tradition as found in popular farces in songbooks."⁷³ In Bruegel's works, both types of comedy find their way into his images through the

71. Another example can be seen in Italian artist Giacomo Franco's pastiches on the scene, which attest to the prints' transnational appeal.

72. Sullivan, *Bruegel's Peasants*, 23.

73. Svetlana Alpers, "Bruegel's Festive Peasants," *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 6, no. 3/4 (1972): 163–76, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3780341>.

juxtaposition of folk humor and humanist wit. Margaret Sullivan describes humanism as “an interest in the art of Greece and Rome,” and as a “potent force in the north in this period.”⁷⁴ As previously discussed, Bruegel’s interaction with the humanist crowd is seen through his relationship with Hieronymus Cock, the use of multiple languages in these prints, and the inclusion of the adage-like inscription. Bruegel’s connection to humanism was not restricted to his professional relationships, since the artist was close friends with the cartographer Abraham Ortelius and the publisher Christopher Plantin.⁷⁵ It is clear that Bruegel’s contemporaries appreciated his humanistic appeal, and *The Thin Kitchen* and *The Fat Kitchen* were even pastiched, and yet another time reproduced in Jean Theodore De Bry’s *Emblemata Secularia*. In other words, the prints were reproduced in way that was different from the original but referred back to the originals in an explicit way.

74. Margaret A. Sullivan, “Bruegel’s ‘Misanthrope’: Renaissance Art for a Humanist Audience,” *Artibus Et Historiae* 13, no. 26 (1992):143–62, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1483436>, 143.

75. Wisse, “Pieter Bruegel.”

Conclusion

Scholars have been trying for years to answer the question of whether Bruegel's work was intended to be comedic, moralizing, or both. Many ambiguities and paradoxes persist throughout Bruegel's oeuvre. I think that when one approaches work like Bruegel's, tracing the traditions of imagery and seeing how these themes transform and evolve is a very useful exercise. Throughout this thesis, I have hoped to prove that Bruegel's kitchen prints serve as references to the battle between Carnival and Lent. When this thematic reference is distinguished, it is easier to understand the comedic allusion in the work. For example, the ambiguity of the images is important; the images operate as puzzles for the active spectator to solve. Looking at the prints as a pair requires the observer to make associations between what is the same and what is different, constituting a visual, contemplative experience for a spectator who delights in the game of identification and understanding. While some may consider Pieter van der Heyden lacking in artistic ingenuity, I would argue that his ability to faithfully execute Bruegel's designs enhanced their appeal, because the contemporary connoisseur would be getting as close to a Bruegel as possible. Thus, as previously discussed, Bruegel operated as a draughtsman, creating drawings specifically for the transformation into print. When one considers this fact, it seems certain that these prints were meant to be contemplated not only for their amusing subject matter but also for their technical witticism. As previously mentioned in the discussion of Bakhtin, Bruegel executes his figures in a grotesque manner. The grotesque body represents the anti-thesis of the classical body. While the classical body is whole, complete, and actualized the grotesque body is always in the process of becoming, segmented, never complete. The comedic affect appears first as the grotesque figures manifest as panisomorphic, or resembling the food and ritual they are partaking in. This comedic effect extends outward into the materiality of the print itself in relation to the grotesque body. When one considers the process of the engraver cutting the copper plate with the burin, *The Thin Kitchen* requires the burin to cut away more, while *The Fat Kitchen* leaves more areas untouched by it. Thus, not only are the figures grotesque in manner by absorbing and expelling Lenten and Carnavalesque attributes, but now the grotesque body regurgitates its lack and excess in the technique of van der Heyden. The discerning

viewer would take joy not only in the iconographic wit but also in the technique itself. In this way, Bruegel's print functions similarly to many of the literary genres contemporaneous to *The Thin Kitchen* and *The Fat Kitchen*. Erasmus and others revived the ancient Greek genre of the *paradoxical encomium*, where one would treat a base subject with high technical rhetorical skill in an effort to praise the rhetorician's ability. In the same way, the spectator is able to see through the significant amount of detail and technical drollery Bruegel adds to the scene, and can find pleasure in the comedic play while simultaneously lauding the artist's shrewdness and wit. By drawing upon Carnavalesque notions, Bruegel displays a bit of folk humor even while he infuses it with humanistic comedy. This accounts for the longevity of and appreciation for his unique representation of the theme of the battle between Carnival and Lent.

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