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## Arousal, the Bible, and Bruegel's Codpieces: The Male Body in Early Modern Visual Culture

Alison Stewart

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VISUAL CULTURES AND GERMAN CONTEXTS

A woman with dark hair is holding a smartphone horizontally in front of her face, as if taking a selfie. The phone's screen shows a close-up of a patterned surface. The background consists of a grid of black and white squares that recedes into the distance, creating a sense of depth. The overall color palette is dark, with a prominent red vertical bar on the left side.

# How to Make the Body

Difference, Identity, and Embodiment

EDITED BY  
Jennifer L. Creech &  
Thomas O. Haakenson

B L O O M S B U R Y

## Arousal, the Bible, and Bruegel's Codpieces

### The Male Body in Early Modern Visual Culture<sup>1</sup>

Alison G. Stewart

The recent headline in *Die Welt*, “Der Dildo der Äbtissin und die Wutbürger,” linked a religious woman from the Medieval past with sex in a strikingly bold manner. The unlikely linking of abbess with a sex toy becomes more understandable with the subtitle of the article, “Die sieben Todsünden,” for the article addresses an exhibition on the seven deadly sins and prominently illustrates what it calls a “dildo” made of glass.<sup>2</sup> Dating from the sixteenth century, the glass phallus was found by archaeologists next to the living area for the abbess of the Convent at Herford in North Rhine-Westphalia, which was dedicated to women from the high nobility. The article asks, did the lady abbess use the glass object as a drinking vessel, as a joke, or as a dildo for the satisfaction of her lust, one of the seven deadly sins?

What are we to make of this glass object that mirrors the shape of the male genitals? And could the object have been used in the sixteenth century, the period under consideration in this essay, in the ways suggested above? Do other similar objects exist from the time? These questions are not easily answered because they have been seemingly irrelevant to the study of art history and higher culture, are very private, and uncomfortable ones for many historians. In addition, the literature in art history for Northern Europe has only gradually turned its attention over the past decades to the body in general and to women's bodies.<sup>3</sup> Men's bodies have gained interest even more

<sup>1</sup> An earlier form of this essay was presented at the German Studies Association Conference, 2015, Washington, DC. Generous funding for that presentation was made possible by the Hixson-Lied College of Fine and Performing Arts and the Woods Travel Fund of the School of Art, Art History and Design at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

<sup>2</sup> Available at: <http://www.welt.de/geschichte/article141612373/Der-Dildo-der-Aebtissin-und-die-Wutbuenger.html> (accessed June 23, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Some examples of literature addressing the body, especially for the Italian Renaissance, include (in chronological order): Kathleen Adler and Marcia R. Pointon, *The Body Imaged: The Human Form and Visual Culture since the Renaissance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Jonathan Sawday, *Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Andrea Carlino, John Tedeschi, and Anne Tedeschi, *Books of the Body: Anatomical Ritual and Renaissance Learning* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1999); and Pamela H. Smith, *The Body of the Artisan: Art and Experience in the Scientific Revolution* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2004). Recent publications on men and their bodies include: Sara F. Matthews-Grieco,

slowly. Admittedly, the discipline of art history during the two centuries separating its beginnings, with Johann Winckelmann (1717–68), and Michel Foucault (1926–84) with his *History of Sexuality*, has been what Jonathan Weinberg has called “a closeted profession in which the erotic is hidden or displaced.” Weinberg cites Foucault’s work, which he states begins with “an attack on academics who think that raising the issue of sex is necessarily transgressive.”<sup>4</sup> Although this subject has recently been addressed considerably more than in the past, there has been a reluctance to address issues relating to sex, the body, and sexual activities until recently, as Weinberg has pointed out, because there is a shyness, what Carolyn Bynum has called a “discomfort,” an “unease,” while “others are made nervous by potency.”<sup>5</sup> Modern historians are not alone.

This essay explores varied responses to the male body, including the phallus and its sixteenth-century covering, the codpiece, that existed over the past half millennium in the visual arts during which time discomfort coexisted with more neutral or positive representations of the human form. The essay will show that images indicate no monolithic attitude toward the body, clothed or not, in the centuries emerging from the Middle Ages, thereby agreeing with Bynum that a “cacophony of discourses” existed for many aspects of life, including responses to the body.<sup>6</sup> Bynum’s linking of more general Medieval attitudes to those of our modern world rings true for the body as well.

The visual works explored indicate no linear attitude toward the body. Attitudes toward the body have waxed and waned and like fashion, what was in last year may be out the next. In Early Modern Northern Europe, the nude body appears *not* to have been represented as often as in Italy, nor has the direct representation of the body’s most intimate areas been included in the visual arts in the North as early or as often as in Italy. In addition, the number of extant images showing the male body explicitly has been vastly reduced because of a variety of factors over the centuries.<sup>7</sup> Changing taste, both cultural and personal, has vastly reduced the numbers of such images and altered them to conform to newer taste and approaches. Yet, enough visual art has survived to indicate that such sexual images did exist, how varied attitudes were among people living in earlier centuries, and how similar our attitudes are to theirs.

The two case studies presented here are centered in the early to mid-sixteenth century in Northern Europe, where attention was paid to the male body, specifically the male member and its clothing. The first case looks at German prints showing the aroused male within biblical contexts. The second case involves a Netherlandish painting where the codpiece, the most brazen part of male dress, was altered because it

*Cuckoldry, Impotence and Adultery in Europe (15th–17th Century)* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014); and Patricia Simons, *The Sex of Men in Premodern Europe: A Cultural History* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011). Additional references in Bynum and Foucault, n. 4 and 5.

<sup>4</sup> Jonathan Weinberg, “Things are queer,” *Art Journal*, 55, 4 (1996): 13, cites Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1 (New York: Vintage, 1978), 6–7.

<sup>5</sup> Carolyn Bynum, “Why all the fuss about the body? A medievalist’s perspective on the body,” *Critical Inquiry*, 22, 1 (1995): 6.

<sup>6</sup> Bynum, “Why all the fuss?” 7.

<sup>7</sup> Reasons for loss or alteration of images over time include changing taste due to what can be called cultural differences, to wars, and to iconoclasm in the sixteenth century.

drew attention to the male sex. Over time, the codpieces were eliminated to conform to changing taste.

Historic attitudes toward the male body and the male sex are revealed through what men wore and how they are shown in artistic representations. Male clothing and changing fashion became lightning rods for what was important in their societies. In the Early Modern period of the sixteenth century, male fashion changed less often than in recent times, but it did change. Tights and padded codpieces, and broad-shouldered doublets, worn by Kings Henry VIII and Francis I, emphasized the large man with wide shoulders and large groin. Within a century, the leggings topped by the padded capsule known as the “codpiece” were replaced by blousy short trousers, and then by long pants. The case studies here demonstrate, through artistic representations, the Renaissance interest in exploration, in particular of the male body, and its various states and appearance including through clothing.

In discussing changing taste for representations of the male body, it becomes clear that the male body and how it was shown, clothed or unclothed, articulated varying attitudes, repressed or not, that both coexisted and changed over time. Although the Victorian age has often been seen as the age of repression, this essay points to earlier periods in Early Modern Europe, ones less close in time to us today, that were sometimes—but not always—shy about showing the human form in its natural state. The visual works explored here date to the sixteenth century, earlier than the seventeenth century when Michel Foucault argued that repression actually began.<sup>8</sup> Whether viewed synchronically or diachronically, taste and response to the body in works of art were not always the same. Sometimes reactions were strong enough to include outrage because of the directness of the representations of the body.<sup>9</sup> The loud responses are the ones that have come down to us most clearly and underscore the body as a contested site.

## Arousal in German Print

In 1535, Nuremberg's town council referred in a letter addressed to the Augsburg council to “a most shameful and sinful little book, containing many obscene pictures of unconventional lovemaking” (“ain gantz schenndtlich und lesterlich püechlein, darynnen vyl unzüchtiger gmeel von unordentlicher lieb”). The council wrote that the booklet was “in the possession of” Hans Guldenmund, one of the town's publishers of single-leaf woodcuts, broadsheets, and pamphlets, and that Guldenmund had been sent nine copies or examples of the booklet by the Augsburg woodblock cutter Hans

<sup>8</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, pt. 1, “We ‘other Victorians,’” 3–13, and ch. 1, 17ff., for the seventeenth century.

<sup>9</sup> On viewer response and the power of images, see David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 1989), including ch. 12, “Arousal by image.”

Schwarzenberger.<sup>10</sup> Today not one copy of the booklet exists. Landau and Parshall raise the question of whether the Guldenmund-Schwarzenberg booklet may have been a Northern European version of Marcantonio Raimondi's now infamous *I Modi* engravings made after drawings by Giulio Romano. The prints show couples engaged in various positions of the sex act and are known today from fragments of engraved copies by the Italian Agostino Veneziano.<sup>11</sup>

The association of Guldenmund with this case is striking. Active by 1513, Guldenmund worked as a printer and publisher at Nuremberg throughout his life until his death there in 1560.<sup>12</sup> It is altogether possible that Guldenmund had initially become familiar with Marcantonio's *I Modi* prints through his family connections in Italy with both publishing and trade, coming into contact either with originals or the numerous printed copies of the series. Although Guldenmund is little known outside specialized circles today, he worked in Nuremberg with painters who are better known including Albrecht Dürer, Georg Pencz, and Sebald Beham.<sup>13</sup>

Guldenmund's shameful, sinful book showing obscene pictures of unconventional lovemaking will serve as a point of departure for a discussion of Sebald Beham (1500–50), who lived in Nuremberg and Frankfurt and published sexual imagery that pushed the limits of what was deemed acceptable to the authorities. The kind of sexual imagery Beham made was part of a larger group of works that has over time been censored, discarded, destroyed, hidden, not illustrated, and not discussed. As Weinberg stated, art history since its beginnings has been a discipline where the erotic has been "hidden or displaced."

This case is no different. Like Guldenmund, Beham worked in Nuremberg, beginning in the 1510s when he may have been trained in Dürer's workshop or under his influence. Beham ran into trouble with the council several times, as had Guldenmund and Hieronymus Andreae, the highly talented wood block cutter Dürer favored. Beham's now well-known "godless painter" hearing of 1525 resulted in his banishment from Nuremberg for most of that year, along with his brother Barthel and with Pencz.<sup>14</sup> Beham made a small number of prints, discussed below, that relate both to the larger

<sup>10</sup> David Landau and Peter Parshall, *The Renaissance Print* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 223 and 225. On the Guldenmund booklet, see Landau and Parshall, *The Renaissance Print*, 225–6, and Theodor Hampe, "Der Augsburger Formschneider Hans Schwarzenberger und seine Modelbücher aus den Jahren 1534 und 1535," *Mitteilungen aus dem Germanischen Nationalmuseum*, 1909, 59–60 and 84–5. Translation comes from Landau and Parshall, *The Renaissance Print*, 225. "Unordentlicher lieb" can also be translated as unnatural, unusual, or unchaste love; Grimm's *Wörterbuch*, vol. 24, col. 1218, definition I, at: <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GU09222>, (accessed September 19, 2019).

<sup>11</sup> Landau and Parshall, *The Renaissance Print*, 225f. For illustrations of *I Modi* fragments in the British Museum, see Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, 364, fig. 168, and Bette Talvacchia, *Taking Positions: On the Erotic in Renaissance Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), ch. 2.

<sup>12</sup> Guldenmund's family included merchants, printers, and artisans in Nuremberg, and one branch of the family worked in the book-printing industry back into the 1470s in Italy. See Ursula Timann, *Untersuchungen zu Nürnberger Holzschnitt und Briefmalerei in der ersten Hälfte des 16. Jahrhunderts mit besonderer Berücksichtigung von Hans Guldenmund und Niclas Meldeman* (Münster: Lit, 1993), esp. 79–88.

<sup>13</sup> Landau and Parshall, *The Renaissance Print*, 223.

<sup>14</sup> See *Die gottlosen Maler von Nürnberg. Konvention und Subversion in der Druckgrafik der Beham-Brüder*, Jürgen Müller and Thomas Schauerte (eds.), exh. cat. (Nuremberg: Edition Imorde/Albrecht-Dürer-Haus, Museen der Stadt Nürnberg, 2011), 33–48.

context of the *I Modi* prints and to the Guldenmund-Schwarzenberg booklet. That context, mostly lost, emphasized openly sexual images of the body that appear to have departed from earlier imagery. Traditionally, works were suggestive or symbolic in reference to sex and the body. For example, Cranach's *Unequal or Ill-Matched Couple* shows a young woman touching an old man's purse, or bag, placed in front of his genital area and that stands for it.<sup>15</sup> Here the connection between the body and costume, namely the purse, is underscored through placement.

Beham's prints with a sexual emphasis include a handful of prints with subjects from the Hebrew Bible that date over the course of his lifetime, from 1526 in Nuremberg through the 1540s in Frankfurt. This small number of existing prints represents the tip of a larger group of works, now lost. Whether that group was ant- or iceberg-sized, their diminished numbers undoubtedly result from changing social and religious norms, including attitudes and taste. Rather than being understood as examples of outrageous, outsider art for their time, Beham's sexual imagery appears to have been more mainstream than has been acknowledged to date. Laurinda Dixon's work supports such an understanding. She has argued for Hieronymus Bosch that twentieth-century's attitudes toward "nudity and sexuality" account for art history's "expung[ing] . . . allusions to sex and the appearance of genitalia . . . today," thereby altering the historical record of the sixteenth century.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, for Italy and the circle of Raphael, James Grantham Turner has argued that eroticism and the sexual imagination were not the exception, side show, or comic relief. Rather, such imagery, to use his words, "drove the graphic invention of antique-inspired artists in the sphere of Raphael" even before *I Modi* dating c. 1524.<sup>17</sup>

Such erotic imagery where the male body became showcased became a focus of the exhibition *Art and Love in Renaissance Italy*, which traveled from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2008 to the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth. That show included Marcantonio's engraving made before 1525, that depicts a woman holding a dildo, perhaps of glass, in what exists today as a unique impression in Stockholm. That so few sexual prints exist today indicates that they were censored, hidden, or discarded due to the sensitive nature of the subject matter.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Alison G. Stewart, *Unequal Lovers: A Study of Unequal Couples in Northern Art* (New York: Abaris, 1977), especially 80–3.

<sup>16</sup> Laurinda Dixon, *Bosch* (New York: Abrams, 2003), 230.

<sup>17</sup> James Grantham Turner, "Invention and sexuality in the Raphael Workshop: Before the Modi," *Art History*, 36, 1 (2013): 73. See also his more recent, *Eros Visible: Art, Sexuality and Antiquity in Renaissance Italy* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale, 2017).

<sup>18</sup> Linda Wolk-Simon, "'Rapture to the greedy eyes': Profane love in the Renaissance," in Andrea Bayer (ed.), *Art and Love in Renaissance Italy*, exh. cat. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2009), 42–58. Wolk-Simon discusses glass dildos known as "parsnips of Murano," which Marcantonio Raimondi showed in the engraving, *Woman with a Dildo*; illustrated in Landau and Parshall, *The Renaissance Print*, 298, fig. 313. She accounts for the small numbers of such images due to "dozens of puritanical purges." Fragments of seventeenth-century glass dildos from England have been excavated recently during a building expansion of the National Gallery, London; Wolk-Simon, "Rapture," 57 n. 88. For nuns using glass dildos, see Pietro Aretino, *Dialogues*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (New York: Marsilio, 1971), 21–43, where the glass is called "glass fruits made in Murano." See also Patricia Simons, "The cultural history of 'Seigneur Dildoe,'" in *Sex Acts in Early Modern Italy. Practice, Performance, Perversion, Punishment* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 77–91.

Turner's essay in the *Art and Love* exhibition catalogue discusses various Italian contributions to what he calls "this remarkable 'sex-positive' moment in the High Renaissance."<sup>19</sup> Especially noteworthy are Correggio's *Venus, Satyr, and Cupid* painting on canvas from c. 1524 and Gian Giacomo Caraglio's engraving of 1527 copying Correggio's painting, from his *Loves of the Gods* series.<sup>20</sup> Turner calls both the *I Modi* series by Marcantonio and Caraglio's *Loves of the Gods*, "laboratories of mainstream taste rather than pornographic sideshows," an understanding that may well be applicable to the North and the prints discussed here (Figure 1.1).<sup>21</sup>

Although these Italian images emphasize the gods and subjects from antiquity, Beham's images of libidinous males appear within the context of the Bible, specifically the Old Testament. These prints include *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife*, the *Feast of Herod*, *Amnon and Tamar*, and one engraving that can be seen to fit loosely within this biblical grouping, *Death and the Lascivious Couple*. The *Feast of Herod* (Pauli 832), the only woodcut in the group, dates c. 1530–5, during the early years after Beham left Nuremberg and settled in Frankfurt am Main.<sup>22</sup> The biblical story is placed in the background. At upper left, Herod and his wife Herodias sit beneath the arched portico of a domed building in the scene known as the banquet of Herod.<sup>23</sup> Salome, Herodias's daughter, approaches the steps, at right, with the head of John the Baptist on a platter that will soon be offered to Herodias. The beheading of John has just taken place at upper center, an act instigated by Herodias. In the foreground elegantly attired couples dance and play cards. Death, located left of center, holds an hourglass and a woman's elegant scarf as a man dressed in fool's costume plays a viol.

A boating party with nude swimmers fills the center of a landscape at upper right. An aroused man stands in the water and reaches or lunges toward one of the women nearby. His erection can be seen when the print is viewed closely in the early, rare impression in the British Museum; it is missing in most impressions, or prints pulled from the wood block.<sup>24</sup> As Miriam Kirch has pointed out, it is the ocular attraction of

<sup>19</sup> James Grantham Turner, "Profane love: The challenge of sexuality," in Bayer (ed.), *Art and Love*, 178.

<sup>20</sup> For Correggio's *Venus and Cupid with a Satyr*, oil on canvas, c. 1524–5, in the Louvre, see Bayer (ed.), *Art and Love*, 183 fig. 81.

<sup>21</sup> Turner, "Profane love," 183. Whether the Italian idea of "variety" (*varietà*) that Turner discusses also became an ideal north of the Alps is a question that I can only raise here. Similarly, the "arousal model" that Turner discusses and that he argues "in effect weakened the distinction between the supposedly 'dishonorable' engraving [by Caraglio] and the prestigious painting" [by Correggio] might be considered for the German counterparts by Beham.

<sup>22</sup> Pauli numbers in this essay refer to the still excellent catalogue of Beham prints, Gustav Pauli, *Hans Sebald Beham. Ein kritisches Verzeichnis seiner Kupferstiche, Radierungen und Holzschnitte* (1901, 1911 *Nachträge*, 1927 *Ergänzungen*) (Baden-Baden: Koerner, 1974). Another impression of the *Feast of Herod* print can be found in the Popular Imagery Collection, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin, Box 16, no. 20 (hand-colored; censored) and no. 21.

<sup>23</sup> The story of Salome (Mark VI: 21–8) is centered around John the Baptist, the last in the line of Jewish prophets and the link between the Old and New Testaments.

<sup>24</sup> The *Feast of Herod*, printed from two wood blocks, is medium-sized at 15 x 21 in (390 x 535 mm). See the British Museum's website for the early impression. Later impressions, hand-colored, can be found in Berlin's print collection and in the Albrecht Dürer-Haus, Nuremberg. Pauli, *Hans Sebald Beham*, 832, lists no impressions of the print. "Copies" in art history indicates a deliberate reproduction of another work of art. Beham's *Feast of Herod* woodcut, published at Nuremberg by Albrecht Glockendon, bears an imperial privilege at upper left in the first state in the British Museum.





**Figure 1.1** Giovanni Jacopo Caraglio, *Jupiter and Antiope*, from the series, *Loves of the Gods*, no. 6, engraving, state II, 1527, 8.3 × 5.3 in (21.1 × 13.5 cm), plate, inv. no. 6749. Courtesy of Szépművészeti Múzeum/Museum of Fine Arts, 2021.

the bathing women that interests this man and that places perspective on the main subject that is placed in the background.<sup>25</sup> Herod's lust for Salome is mirrored, therefore, in the body of the male swimmer.

Most of Beham's prints showing aroused biblical men are small engravings and they begin with his *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife* from a few years earlier (Figure 1.2; Pauli 14). Signed with Beham's Nuremberg monogram at right, HSP, and dated 1526, the print is small enough to hold in the palm of one hand and measures 2 in (5.2 cm) in diameter. The print shows an aggressive woman, known in the literature as Potiphar's wife, who

<sup>25</sup> Miriam Hall Kirch, "Looking into 'Night': An erotic engraving by Sebald Beham in context" (MA thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1998), 83–4, who aptly states: "It is within the viewer and within the real world that the message has value." The excited man underscores the role of attraction and lust for the biblical subject represented.



**Figure 1.2** Sebald Beham, *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife*, engraving, 1526, 2 × 2 in (5.2 × 5.2 cm), sheet, Braunschweig, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, inv. no. 1155, PURL <http://kk.haum-bs.de/?id=h-s-beham-ab3-0013>.

within a bedroom setting is shown partially dressed and attempts to stop a fleeing man. With pillow at right and curtain above, she propels herself over the bed; the inscription at top, “Ioseph,” identifies the man who leaves this woman; her undraped breasts and pudenda underscore her desire for him. Joseph’s very noticeably aroused state underscores his body’s reaction to her even as he flees the scene. An impression of the print in Vienna emphasizes his arousal through the addition of pale pink wash to the tip of his erect member.<sup>26</sup>

Nearly twenty years later, Beham returned to the subject of Joseph and Potiphar’s Wife, but this time he shows both individuals without clothing, nude in Renaissance fashion.<sup>27</sup> Potiphar’s wife, known as Zuleika in the Islamic tradition and Saphira in medieval Europe, holds on to Potiphar’s cloak as she did in the earlier engraving. But here Joseph flees quickly and without second thoughts.<sup>28</sup> Here Potiphar’s body does not betray him, as in the earlier engraving. The Latin inscription in the tablet below underscores his intention to leave, “Joseph, the faithful servant and subduer of lust.”<sup>29</sup> The biblical source, Genesis 39: 7–20, tells the story of Potiphar, the captain of the pharaoh’s guard, who bought Joseph and made him steward of his household. When Potiphar’s wife insisted that Joseph lie with her, he fled, leaving his cloak behind in her hands, a detail Beham included in each of these prints. To her husband she accused Joseph of trying to rape her and used his cloak as evidence. Joseph was then imprisoned.

Beham again emphasizes her lustful intentions in this later engraving through her nakedness, her pained facial expression indicating lust, and by her parted legs and revealed vulva.<sup>30</sup> The bedroom setting is again emphasized as is Joseph’s athletic body

<sup>26</sup> For the impression with added color, see state II, Pauli, *Hans Sebald Beham*, 14, Albertina, Vienna.

<sup>27</sup> On Potiphar’s wife, see the British Museum’s website on Beham’s print.

<sup>28</sup> Kirch, “Looking into ‘Night,’” ch. 3, esp. 88.

<sup>29</sup> British Museum, registration number 1867,0413.680 for Beham’s engraving of 1544.

<sup>30</sup> On the lustful look, see fn. 28.

shown fleeing in profile. The tall rectangular format of this engraving from 1544 offers the scene as an unfolding narrative event to the viewer. By comparison, in the earlier print, the small size and round shape suggest viewing up close, even voyeuristically, through a window or keyhole into a private scene, the round form recalls stained glass roundels that filled windows of the time. The scene is excerpted from the story and becomes more iconic than narrative.<sup>31</sup> Yet, in both engravings, Joseph's body and his genitalia are displayed for the viewer's perusal and delectation.

Both of Beham's prints depart from contemporary representations of the subject of Joseph and Potiphar's wife where the figures are shown clothed.<sup>32</sup> Beham's approach appears to be an anomaly among Northern prints of the time for Joseph's nudity, but it was copied several times including by Dutch engraver, Allaert Claesz (active 1520–55), possibly active in Utrecht, who altered Beham's round composition into a lozenge shape, reversing the composition placing Joseph at right. Claesz. added a scroll at top and flourishes along the sides. Potiphar's wife is still emphasized although her clothing covers, rather than reveals, her genital area. Joseph flees less forcefully, and he is no longer aroused. He thereby leaves without the response shown in Beham's print. Claesz's work, believed to date between 1526 and 1534 and known in only a few impressions, constitutes a very early copy of Beham's composition, one made within only a few years of its making.<sup>33</sup> The copy suggests wide distribution of Beham's small print to the Netherlands and an audience interested in the subject, but with toned down sexuality and less exposure of the male sex.<sup>34</sup>

The gender of the aggressor is now male in Beham's *Amnon and Tamar* (Figure 1.3; Pauli 16), a small- to medium-sized engraving measuring 5.6 in (7.4 cm) in height. It is signed at bottom with the HSB monogram Beham used between 1531 and 1550 after his move to Frankfurt. The inscription directly above the monogram derives from 2 Samuel 13: 6–13, and refers to the rape by David's eldest son Amnon of his half-sister Tamar. The subject is unusual for the time; Beham makes clear the outcome of Tamar's attempt to fend off Amnon through his powerful body, his superior position over Tamar, and his erect member shown in profile. Beham focuses on Amnon's naked violence and he neither subtly hints at what will transpire (as in a Medieval *Bible Moralisée* from c. 1240) nor includes a fuller bedroom setting (as painted by the Flemish

<sup>31</sup> Her facial expression, which looks like discomfort, appears to indicate lust. Aretino similarly compares the expression of a copulating man with one on the Laocöon; Kirch, "Looking into 'Night,'" 54.

<sup>32</sup> For contemporary representations showing the figures clothed, see printed examples dating 1512 to 1546 by Lucas van Leyden, Marcantonio Raimondi, Heinrich Aldegrever, and Georg Pencz. Although they all feature bed, curtain, pillows, and the grabbing-the-cloak gesture, only Pencz's engraving, signed and dated "PG 1546" at lower right, shows Potiphar's wife partially undressed, with bodice unlaced. See the British Museum's website for these prints.

<sup>33</sup> F. W. H. Hollstein, *Dutch & Flemish Etchings, Engravings, and Woodcuts, c. 1450–1700*, vol. 4 (Amsterdam: Hertzberger, 1949), 106, no. 19 (not illustrated); and the British Museum's database under Allaert Claesz, with bibliography. Brooks Rich, curator at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, is working on Monogrammist AC, who has been identified in the past with Claesz, but Rich has shown a more complex situation. See his, "The burin, the blade, and the paper's edge: Early sixteenth-century engraved scabbard designs by Monogrammist AC," in Debra Cashion, Henry Luttikhuisen, and Ashley West (eds.), *The Primacy of the Image in Northern European Art, 1400–1700: Essays in Honor of Larry Silver* (Boston, MA, and Leiden: Brill, 2017), 347–61.

<sup>34</sup> Pauli, *Hans Sebald Beham*, 14, cites three copies of Beham's composition of 1526, all in reverse.



**Figure 1.3** Sebald Beham, *Amnon and Tamar*, c. 1531–50, 1.3 × 2.8 in (3.5 × 7.2 cm), Kunsthalle Bremen—Der Kunstverein in Bremen, Department of Prints and Drawings, inv. no. 12139. Photo: Karen Blindow.

Jan van Dornicke around 1520, and as engraved by Heinrich Aldegrever in 1540), nor does he include a well-appointed room turned upside down from a distance (as in the print designed by Maerten van Heemskerck and engraved by Philips Galle in 1559).<sup>35</sup> Beham's limited setting includes bed and curtain, as in *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife*.

Beham's print offers a close-up view focused on the two protagonists. His two large figures dominate the print. Beham showcases his ability to render two nude bodies convincingly, especially Amnon's muscles and prominent member, both appropriate to the subject and very much meant to be seen. The general style is not Beham's, despite the inclusion of his monogram, and appears to be that of another artist, perhaps an Italian whose style Beham followed. Beham was undoubtedly familiar with Italian models through copies made as engraved and woodcut prints on paper, works that were more affordable than paintings and that traveled easily between Italy and the North; at the time, as many impressions were printed to meet the expected demand for them. Italian works that could have inspired Beham's Amnon print include Giulio Romano's *Jupiter Seducing Olympia* fresco painted c. 1528, in the Palazzo del Tè in Mantua, and Caraglio's *Jupiter and Antiope* engraving (Figure 1.1). Although these images feature gods, related images featuring human men could have also provided visual fodder for Beham's print.

The inscription on the bed canopy at upper left in Beham's print has been altered, according to Pauli whose catalogue remains the standard work for the artist's prints.

<sup>35</sup> For the images of Amnon and Tamar, see Artstor. Dornicke's painting is in the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, MD.

The Bremen impression, excellent in quality, with the upper corners replaced reads, "Amnon evil thoughts" ("A. MAN. BÖS. GEDANCKEN"). However, the original bears a slightly, but significantly altered text: "Look without evil thoughts" ("SCHAU . AN . BÖS GEDANCKEN") that advises the viewer against thinking, let alone acting on evil thoughts.<sup>36</sup> The Dutch engraver Claesz. copied the print in reverse and added drapery to cover Amnon and Tamar's nakedness, as he had in his copy of Beham's *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife*. The Latin inscription at the bottom of Beham's *Amnon and Tamar* print, "HAEC SPECTANS NIL TVRPE COGITA," repeats the German inscription's warning to "Look without evil thoughts,"<sup>37</sup> here underscoring Ammon's excitement and the rape to come.

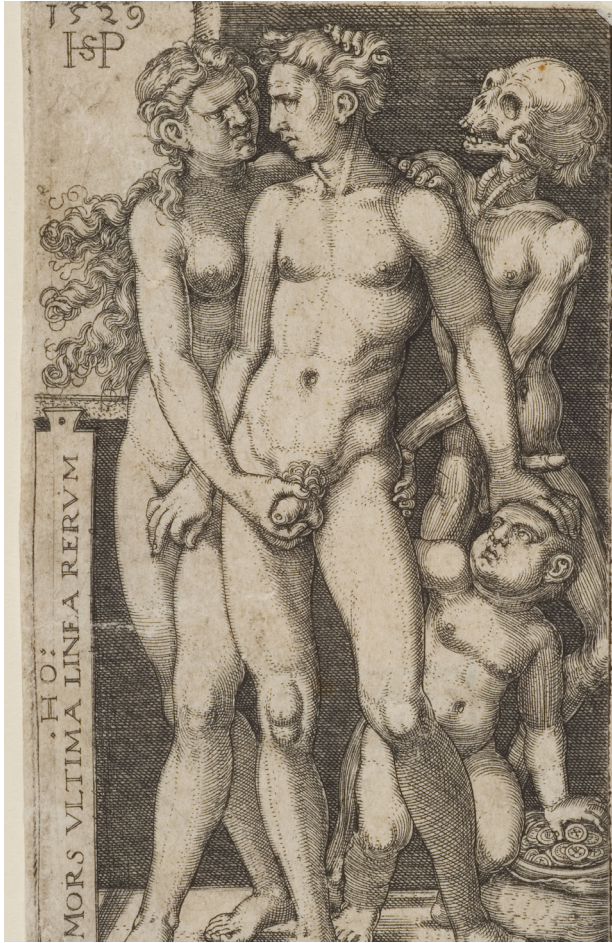
The most interesting and at the same time most disturbing print in this group of Old Testament-related prints showing an aroused male body is Beham's *Death and the Lascivious Couple* dated 1529 (Figure 1.4; Pauli 153), an engraving Beham signed and dated at upper left. A young woman with long flowing hair looks directly into the eyes of her young male companion and she bears the same pained expression indicating lust seen in the later *Joseph and Potiphar* composition. Beham humorously plays with the location of the hands in this composition. The woman places one hand on either her companion's shoulder at right or on his head, and with the other hand grasps his penis. The man, in turn, touches her genitals and places his other hand, at right, on the head of a boy who plays with a sack of coins. A partially skinned figure of Death, behind the boy, encourages the couple who does not seem to see him.<sup>38</sup> Death touches the young man's hair or shoulder and one of his hips, nudging him toward his female mate. Death's reaction to the couple is clear, even if not immediately noticed—his erect member is visible directly above the child's head. Death embodies lust, one of the seven deadly sins, and his arousal points to the idea that the sexually transmitted disease of syphilis was known to kill at the time Beham made his print.<sup>39</sup> Beham appears to have updated traditional sin iconography with the fairly new idea of contagion, thereby making the male body the center of both lust and disease. At the same time, Beham underscores the erotic tension of the scene by making touch ambiguous, who touches the man—she or Death—and where exactly—on the shoulder or head. The male body is touched from top and bottom, intimately yet ambiguously, as if Beham wished here

<sup>36</sup> Pauli, *Hans Sebald Beham*, 16, lists the Bremen impression with the altered inscription and replaced upper corners, and two impressions with the original inscription. For an excellent impression, with the lower-left corner repaired, see the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Ec.N-1651.

<sup>37</sup> Kirch, "Looking into 'Night,'" 84–5, discusses the inscriptions on the Amnon print and cites Adolf Rosenberg, *Sebald und Barthel Beham. Zwei Maler der Deutschen Renaissance* (Leipzig, 1875), 67, that the print wounded moral feelings.

<sup>38</sup> Kirch, "Looking into 'Night,'" 84, discusses the print and Death's erection caused by his viewing the couple's foreplay.

<sup>39</sup> For the connection between syphilis and sex in the sixteenth century, beginning 1502 with a printing in Venice, see Birgit Ulrike Münch, "Das Männerbad, der Jabacher Altar und die große Angst vor den frantzosen. Albrecht Dürers vielschichtige Klagen über die Syphilis," in Birgit Ulrike Münch, Andreas Tacke, and Markwart Herzog (eds.), *Die Klage des Künstlers* (Petersberg: Imhof, 2015), 24–44, esp. 35; and Claudia Stein, *Negotiating the French Pox in Early Modern Germany* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009). See also Jon Arrizabalaga, John Henderson, and Roger Kenneth French, *The Great Pox: The French Disease in Renaissance Europe* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997).



**Figure 1.4** Sebald Beham, *Death and the Lascivious Couple*, engraving, 1529, 3.2 × 4.9 in (8.2 × 4.9 cm), sheet, Braunschweig, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, inv. no. 1309, PURL <http://kk.haum-bs.de/?id=h-s-beham-ab3-0155>.

to expand on Hans Baldung's contemporary and earlier representations of Death and the Maiden.<sup>40</sup>

As in the *Ammon and Tamar*, Beham added an inscription to *Death and the Lascivious Couple*, at left, on a placard placed on its side. It reads: "HO [for Horace]: MORS VLTIMA LINEA RERV M" or "Death is the line that marks the end of all." This passage, well known by 1529, ended a letter that the ancient Roman lyric satirist,

<sup>40</sup> On Baldung's Death and the Maiden paintings and prints, see Bodo Brinkmann, *Hexenlust und Sündenfall: die seltsamen Phantasien des Hans Baldung Grien/Witches' Lust and the Fall of Man: The Strange Fantasies of Hans Baldung Grien*, exh. cat., Städel Museum (Petersberg: Imhof, 2007). *Hans Baldung Grien: heilig/unheilig*, ed. Holger Jacob-Friesen, exh. cat., Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe (Berlin and Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2019).

Horace, addressed in his Epistles to “good Quinctius” (Book 1, Epistle 16, line 7). The line underscores the *memento-mori* associations of the print and underscores the transitory nature of time, that death comes to us all. At the same time, the inscription may have offered a moralizing gloss warning against the deadly and sinful nature of sex and lust. Beham underscores the ancient reference through the man’s contrapposto stance, his weight shifted toward his female companion, and through his straight facial profile, both characteristics of ancient Greek and Roman art.

Beham may have added this inscription for reasons best understood within the larger historical context. Other engravers of the time supplied similar inscriptions after Marcantonio Raimondi engraved his sixteen prints of the *I Modi* series in 1524 based on designs by Giulio Romano, with copies after the lost originals seen on the British Museum’s website. According to the contemporary Italian author and satirist Pietro Aretino, Marcantonio was imprisoned, the engravings were immediately “suppressed, and the plates destroyed by agents of the outraged Pope [Clement VII].”<sup>41</sup> But some prints were disseminated and copied several times including, perhaps, nearly a decade later at Nuremberg by Guldenmund.<sup>42</sup>

The *I Modi* must have included at least fourteen engravings with multiple copulating couples, ordinary people, not gods or goddesses, who according to Andrea Bayer, were “engaged in a fulsome variety of sexual acrobatics” where the naked male body takes the lead.<sup>43</sup> The series has been called “Scandalous, instantly famous, and swiftly censored” by the Pope and his irate minions in Rome . . .<sup>44</sup> Objections to these prints rested, in part, in their everyday nature, that they were, according to Bayer, “patently quotidian (and therefore, in the eyes of sixteenth-century guardians of public morality and decorum, objectionable).”<sup>45</sup> Objections to these prints also resided in the contemporary attitude of church and clergy that sex for ordinary people was undesirable in itself unless it was intended for procreation, not pleasure.

When the *Loves of the Gods* series was issued in 1527, the protagonists became the gods whose activities filled classical myths, Roman poetry by Ovid, and Renaissance imagery. Many scholars believe the inclusion of the gods was intended to prevent criticism of the kind *I Modi* received, with the humanistic gloss—both inscription and naked male and female bodies—justifying the eroticism of the mythological narrative. Beham’s *Death and the Lascivious Couple* of 1529 offers what has been called a similar “patina of decorum” that allowed its eroticism to be understood within a humanist narrative supplied through the inscription.<sup>46</sup>

When was it acceptable to show the sex act and sex body parts without a religious or mythological gloss? And what were the cultural influences that brought about Beham’s imagery? These questions can be addressed by looking at other prints by Beham and his contemporaries. By including the inscription in *Death and the Lascivious*

<sup>41</sup> Bayer (ed.), *Art and Love*, 54.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 205, 206 n. 2.

*Couple* and in *Amnon and Tamar*, Beham may have attempted to avoid conflict with the authorities, as did the publisher of the *Loves of the Gods* series, Baviera, in 1525. As the issuer of his prints, Beham did what was necessary to get his sexual engravings emphasizing the male aroused body to his public, including through the addition of a moralizing gloss. Beham had enough trouble with the authorities in the years following 1525 when he still lived in Nuremberg where he had come before the town council and been banished for three-quarters of that year for questioning both the town council's authority and core religious beliefs. He was dubbed by contemporaries a "godless painter."<sup>47</sup>

Beham's early *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife* dated 1526 is contemporary with the Italian backlash to *I Modi*. Beham made his *Death and the Lascivious Couple* print of 1529 more socially acceptable (soon after Beham fled Nuremberg in 1528) through the addition of a quotation from an ancient source, thereby adding a humanist gloss. At least a dozen impressions have survived of this engraving,<sup>48</sup> both good impressions and a late one from the visibly worn copper plate; plates become thinner and print lighter after repeated inking and printings between rollers under great pressure.<sup>49</sup>

Beham made *Death and the Lascivious Couple* acceptable through the humanist quotation and through its reference to Old Testament representations of Adam and Eve. Beham expanded and eroticized compositions of the first couple, in particular the engraving by his brother Barthel from 1525–7, a copper plate Sebald inherited after Barthel died in 1540. Sebald's engraving, dated 1543 (Pauli 7), copies Barthel's print in full and employs a life-size skeleton that is firmly planted at the center between the two figures, like a tree, specifically the tree of knowledge. A snake runs through the skeleton's body and bites the apple both figures hold. As in Sebald's *Death and the Lascivious Couple*, both man and woman are culpable with the life-size figure of Death both present and egging them on. Sebald's Eve covers her "shame" with one hand, while the ordinary man in the *Lascivious Couple* does that for her through touch. Eve's somewhat pained facial expression indicating lust here repeats with less intensity that of her *Lascivious* counterpart.

In both prints, the consequences of the Fall and sex unfold in Christian terms: original sin and death, with the biblically based snake and apple replaced in the *Lascivious Couple* by an eroticized skeleton and bag of coins. The print secularizes and modernizes *Adam and Eve* and emphasizes Death as a living, human, male presence, with skin and phallus. The coins in the sack at lower right may point to the idea that capital and sex are equally corruptible and form a deadly combination.

In addition to such biblical inspiration in visual form, Beham appears to have been inspired for Death's erect member by Italian engravings with mythological subjects that were available by 1520 in the North. Such prints include Marco Dente's engraving of a *Nymph and Satyr* dating from c. 1516 after a design by Raphael, and by copies of it

<sup>47</sup> See *Die gottlosen Maler von Nürnberg*.

<sup>48</sup> Pauli, *Hans Sebald Beham*, p. 162.

<sup>49</sup> An engraving plate can produce hundreds of good impressions, but the soft copper becomes thinner with repeated passes between the rollers of the intaglio press.



in Northern Europe such as an engraving by the Master of the Snail (Northern?) from c. 1520–5.<sup>50</sup> These models offer humans with animal features, especially satyrs, who secretly observe a bathing or sleeping woman. Master IB with the Bird's *Priapus and Lotis* engraving features Priapus, whose pointed ears can be seen at center, his erect member extending out from and beneath his draped clothing, peeking under the drape placed across Lotis's lap; a donkey brays loudly at upper left.<sup>51</sup> These two engravings by unnamed masters catered to both the fashion for Italian art and what has been called the “niche market for explicitly erotic pictures that flourished throughout Europe.”<sup>52</sup> That market may have first appeared in Italy, but it soon continued in Germany north of the Alps.

### Similar Interests in the Male Body

Other aspects of early sixteenth-century culture beyond Italian prints and humanist texts underscored the interest in Beham's sexualized Old Testament prints. Interest in the body and its workings can be seen in other visual works that have been little studied in art history. Leonardo's drawing of a copulating man and woman, from c. 1493, indicates he explored sexual union from procreative and anatomical perspectives.<sup>53</sup> And Italian majolica plates and pitchers used the male organ as a central design element. In *Erotic Cultures of Renaissance Italy*, Sara Matthews-Grieco includes images of phalli and testes that decorate plates and pitchers. A plate from 1536 shows a man's face and neck in profile, with ear and hair covered with dozens of phalli. A pitcher from the mid sixteenth century includes a winged phallus hung with a bell and bird's feet, rabbit's ears and tail.<sup>54</sup> This winged, walking phallus is similar to ancient Roman tintinnabula which, adorned with bells, amount to phallic wind chimes. The Romans also decorated jewelry and whistles made of metal and stone with phallic imagery visible most everywhere in their culture.<sup>55</sup> The male body's most intimate part served as a good luck charm, one that appears to have been revived in the sixteenth century.

<sup>50</sup> For an illustration of the Master of the Snail's engraving, and Marco Dente da Ravenna's, see Sara F. Matthews-Grieco (ed.), *Erotic Cultures of Renaissance Italy* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 30, figs. 1.2c and 1.2a, 29. She identifies this master as possibly Northern (as “Northern?”) and states that little is known about him.

<sup>51</sup> An impression of the engraving by Master IB with the Bird is found in the print room of the Louvre, Paris, and is labeled Bartsch, vol. 13, p. 247, no. 6.

<sup>52</sup> Matthews-Grieco, *Erotic Cultures*, 29.

<sup>53</sup> For Leonardo's text and illustration, and discussion of images taken of male and female genitals during coitus, see, Willibrord Weijmar Schultz, Pek van Anel, Ida Sabelis, and Eduard Mooyaart, “Magnetic resonance imaging of male and female genitals during coitus and female sexual arousal,” *BMJ* (formerly *British Medical Journal*), 319 (1999), available at: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.319.7225.1596> (accessed February 1, 2021).

<sup>54</sup> For the maiolica plate and pitcher, see Matthews-Grieco, *Erotic Cultures*, color pls. 4 and 14. For majolica jars and tintinnabulum, see Catherine Hess, “Pleasure, shame and healing: Erotic imagery on maiolica drug jars,” *Sex Acts in Early Modern Italy*, 13–25.

<sup>55</sup> Simons, “Seigneur Dildo,” 79. The Rheinisches Landesmuseum, Trier, exhibits a variety of phallic metal objects in its permanent collection that include earrings and necklace pendants.

More popular aspects of culture offer potentially rich avenues of study that point to broader social networks and understandings of the body and male anatomy, which go well beyond the images discussed here. Badges including ones with winged and crowned phalli with legs, tails, and bells appear to draw on ideas going back to the Romans and the tintinnabula. The round bells allude to ones used in falconry, or birding, and also served as references to testicles in Italian.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, the word “cock” (“*Vogel*” and “*Schwanz*”) functioned in sixteenth-century German for “bird,” “tail,” and the male member, as it does today in both German and English. Badges worn on the body, including a walking phallus pushing a wheelbarrow full of phalli from Zeeland in the fifteenth century, and three walking phalli crowned with a vulva, found in Bruges, indicate that the phallus was not taboo in the century before Beham’s prints appeared in northern Europe.<sup>57</sup>

Other phallic precursors of Beham’s prints in the North include German glass drinking vessels in the shape of the male genitalia that could either stand upright or lie down on a flat surface.<sup>58</sup> Such glass phalli are not normally displayed in museums. Rather, they are kept in their storage areas, including ones at Trier and Munich.<sup>59</sup> These glass vessels could hold fluids that, when drunk, could mimic oral sex.<sup>60</sup> Although how the glass phalli were used is unknown, they are fragile enough to suggest that their use

<sup>56</sup> Allen J. Grieco, “From roosters to cocks: Italian Renaissance fowl and sexuality,” in Matthews-Grieco, *Erotic Cultures*, 97, 99.

<sup>57</sup> For illustrations of walking phalli and vulvae, see Simons, *Sex of Men*, fig. 7, and 10–12. See also at: <http://www.kunera.nl/default.aspx> (accessed September 19, 2019) and Hartmut Kühne, Carina Brumme, and Helena Koenigsmarková, *Jungfrauen, Engel, Phallustiere. Die Sammlung mittelalterlicher französischer Pilgerzeichen des Kunstgewerbemuseums in Prag und des Nationalmuseums Prag* (Berlin: Lukas Verlag and Kunstgewerbemuseum Prag, 2012). Willy Piron’s presentation, “The function of late medieval sexual badges. Apotropaic, farcical, moral or . . .?,” Renaissance Society of America Conference, New York, 2014, offered a review of different theories on the badges and concludes that their meaning remains speculative. See also Willy Piron, “Der Ertrag aus 30 Jahren niederländischer Pilgerzeichenforschung,” in Klaus Herbers and Hartmut Kühne (ed.), *Pilgerzeichen—‘Pilgerstraßen’* (Tübingen: Günter Narr, 2013), 187–94, and essays in that volume. See also Michael Lewis, *Saints and Their Badges: Saints’ Lives and Medieval Pilgrims Badges* (Cogeshall: Greenlight Publishing, 2014).

<sup>58</sup> Simons, *Sex of Men*, 215, fig. 44.

<sup>59</sup> Drinking vessels in the shape of a phallus are found in the Rheinisches Landesmuseum, Trier, and in the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich, in storage. I am grateful to the curators Dr. Peter Seewaldt and Dr. Monika Schwommers, for showing me examples of these fragile glass drinking vessels. See Sabine Faust, Peter Seewaldt, and Monika Weidner, *Erotische Kunstwerke im Rheinischen Landesmuseum Trier*, *Funde und Ausgrabungen im Bezirk Trier*, vol. 39 (Trier: Landesmuseum, 2007), 54–7, nos. 30–5, for earrings, pendants, drinking glasses, and more, and for Roman representations of sex scenes, phalli, including enormous ones, flying phalli with wings and bells known as tintinnabula, and the fica or female external sex organs. These visual works often took the form of oil lamps and pendants. The authors state they served to ward off the “evil eye” (*böse Blick*) and had apotropaic functions. Included also are the lying and standing glass drinking vessels in the shape of phalli that served as jokes (*Scherze*) and/or were used in bordellos. Oil lamps show couples involved in sexual intercourse, clay phalli of unusually large size, and numerous metal pendants (earrings, necklaces, door-jamb decorations) support the view stated in the Altes Museum in Berlin’s side-room exhibit, titled the “Garten der Lüste,” that “eroticism and sexuality were present in all areas of ancient life” in the form of the phallus. However, even before the Greeks, Etruscans, and Romans, related images—of lovers—were made into terracotta forms, as seen in an example from Babylon dating to 1,000–2,000 BCE.

<sup>60</sup> Simons, *Sex of Men*, 215f.

as sex toys should be excluded.<sup>61</sup> During the sixteenth century, the shape and variety of drinking vessels increased to include animals such as owls and deer, pointing to the possibility that the phallic vessels may have been similarly part of this expanding vocabulary of vessels and were used for drinking games and rituals. What their purpose was and whether they might have been used by the abbess at Kloster Dalheim discussed at the beginning of this essay must await further study.

Was Northern European art and culture so totally different from that of ancient Greece and Rome and the Italian Renaissance that such phallic imagery was totally absent from it? The ordinary works just seen, such as the badges of lead tin alloy and glass drinking vessels, point to a local tradition of sexual imagery that complemented the southern tradition revived during the sixteenth century. The badges with phalli and vulvae are beginning to be studied with greater seriousness.<sup>62</sup> Also worthy of study are the increasingly imaginative drinking vessels made from glass and other materials during the sixteenth century, objects that are often thin and fragile, and most of which were probably shattered or discarded in cisterns and cesspits, making them lost to posterity.<sup>63</sup> Although the apotropaic function is possible for these drinking vessels, the joke or *Scherz* possibilities need also to be explored in connection with carnival plays (*Fastnachtspiele*) and other contemporary literature, including ancient Greek and Roman sources that when revived furthered the idea that laughter was apotropaic, that it had the power to avert bad luck and the evil eye. Fertility, reproduction, warding off evil, ensuring luck, these are all possible associations for these visual works emphasizing the male member.<sup>64</sup>

In fact, the male member had a much broader cultural significance and inclusion in the visual arts of the past than has been broadly recognized. Mels van Driel, a urologist and sexologist at the Groningen University Medical Centre, discussed the male organ and various aspects of it throughout time in his book, *Manhood: The Rise and Fall of the Penis*. Van Driel points to Leonardo da Vinci's correction of the medieval idea that accumulated air produces an erection. After working with hanged criminals, Leonardo concluded that it was the accumulation of blood that produced one. Still, the mystery of procreation remained unexplained for Leonardo who believed seminal fluid came straight from the brain, drawing on ideas going back to Hippocrates and Aristotle.<sup>65</sup>

The discussion of the male member and how it functioned since antiquity has continued in Patricia Simons' recent book *The Sex of Men in Premodern Europe: A Cultural History*. She argues that the best model for early modern masculine anatomy was "projection," which she applies to male arousal, centuries before Freud took over

<sup>61</sup> On dildoes, nuns, and Aretino's verses, see Simons, "Seigneur Dildoe," 79–80.

<sup>62</sup> See Kunera database at: <http://www.kunera.nl/kunera.aspx?From=Default> (accessed September 19, 2019).

<sup>63</sup> The Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich, recently displayed such varied sixteenth-century drinking vessels.

<sup>64</sup> On ancient sources and laughter, including for sexual acrobatics, see the publications of John R. Clarke, above, especially his *Looking at Lovemaking: Construction of Sexuality in Roman Art, 100 B.C.–A.D. 250* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), and *Looking at Laughter: Humor, Power, and Transgression in Roman Visual Culture, 100 B.C.–A.D. 250* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007). On laughter and sexuality, see the goddess Baubo in Clarke's writings.

<sup>65</sup> Mels van Driel, *Manhood: The Rise and Fall of the Penis* (London: Reaktion, 2011), 40, 13.

the phallic concept for the twentieth century. Simons calls the sixteenth century in Italy the neglected realm of “semenotics.”<sup>66</sup> She casts a broad network of sources of the kind proposed above for what she calls “social iconography” that includes cultural works both elite and popular, from both the Latinate and vernacular areas, which include “ribald word play and creatures on secular badges.” She sees in these works elements that have been adapted, revived, or continued from antiquity and what she calls a “mutual feedback loop and reinforcement between imagery and its context,”<sup>67</sup> that continues native traditions that existed alongside revivals from the ancient past. Together they created an interesting and varied visual context for such works, an approach that mirrors mine here.

Laurinda Dixon has similarly argued for the inclusion of everyday objects like the pilgrimage badges in the study of Northern Renaissance art. For her “These items of inexpensive ornament, worn pinned to hats and cloaks for all to see, suggest that Bosch’s audience was less puritanical than we are today when confronted with candid visual representations of sexual subjects.”<sup>68</sup> To return to Beham’s Old Testament prints that show male arousal, they should be understood within the broader context of contemporary culture that includes both the everyday (badges, language, and writings of the time), along with humanist ideas and Italian prints centered in the male body. The prints discussed above share an emphasis on the male sex that was part of the broader trend of Renaissance exploration of life and the world.

## Bruegel’s Codpieces

Male clothing from the Renaissance in Northern Europe offers a similar emphasis on the male body in visual representations, but here clothing and the codpiece are the focus. Visual images and aspects of them have often been changed to adapt to the changing taste of individuals or to new times. Such changes include obliterating details deemed too sexual, as was the case with some engravings, which resulted in reworking copper plates to make them usable again. Paintings also came under scrutiny for the fashion shown as taste and morals changed over the centuries. Pieter Bruegel’s *Wedding Dance* painting (Figure 1.5) dated 1566, in the Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA), originally sported tights topped by large codpieces worn by the three male figures (two dancers, one piper) at the bottom of the painting. The painting displays a large number of men and women dancing and celebrating out of doors, emphasizing two couples in the

<sup>66</sup> Simons, *Sex of Men*, 2 and 100. The use of long, thin objects (e.g., pipes), sack, and eggs for men and round forms (bottles, nest, hole, slit) for women goes back to the late Middle Ages in Germany, as seen especially in carnival plays. See Henry Kratz, “Über den Wortschatz der Erotik im Spätmittelhochdeutschen und Frühhochdeutschen,” 2 vols (unpublished PhD diss., Ohio State University, 1949), vol. 1, 60–95.

<sup>67</sup> Simons, *Sex of Men*, 2–3.

<sup>68</sup> Dixon, *Bosch*, 230. Landau and Parshall, *The Renaissance Print*, 225. On the definition of pornography and pornographic art, see Kirch, “Looking into ‘Night,’” 5–8, where she states in relation to her study that: “Renaissance erotic art is work with openly sexual subject matter, classical as well as religious.” Today, pornography is defined according to community standards.



**Figure 1.5** Pieter Bruegel, *The Wedding Dance*, oil on panel, c. 1566, 47 × 62 in (119.4 × 157.5 cm), Detroit Institute of Arts, access. no. 30.374. Photo: author.

foreground. At some point in time, and it is unclear exactly when, the codpieces were eliminated through overpainting.<sup>69</sup> When the painting was purchased in 1930 by the DIA's director, DIA, William Valentiner, the overpainting was intact and showed flat-fronted tights in place of the large codpieces (Figure 1.6).

Red, white, and blue codpieces are displayed on male dancers and a bagpiper at the bottom of the painting. The red codpiece, which is very prominent, looks unstable enough to fall off or become unlaced, perhaps enticing the viewer to imagine doing so. The white codpiece appears to be stuffed, and the blue phallic codpiece shown in profile at right is topped by a coin purse laced to the top. It appears to offer a convenient place for the bagpiper's tips.

Fashion comes and goes, both for men and for women, a truism applicable back through at least the Renaissance. The hairless Metrosexual male recently brought coiffed hair and neck scarves into vogue, characteristics traditionally the purview of American women. Recently, calling attention to one's appearance was deemed the purview of women whether through coiffing, shaving, and plucking, or sartorial attention to scarves, open shirts and open pants. Calling attention to the body in the sixteenth century was similarly seen by some as unseemly for men for just that reason,

<sup>69</sup> On codpieces, see Jennifer Spinks, "Codpieces and potbellies in the *Songes drolatiques*: Satirizing masculine self-control in Early Modern France and Germany," in Susan Broomhall and Jacqueline van Gent (eds.), *Governing Masculinities in the Early Modern Period. Regulating Selves and Others* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), n. 4.



**Figure 1.6** Pieter Bruegel, *The Wedding Dance*, photograph, 1930, with overpainting. Photo: Courtesy of the State Archives of North Carolina.

because attention to the body was viewed as the realm of women and subjected the male body to the gaze of both men and women, thereby turning them into sexual quarry.<sup>70</sup>

After Bruegel's *Wedding Dance* painting was cleaned and restored in 1942 by the American restorer William Suhr, it became clear that the codpieces had been overpainted to eliminate them altogether.<sup>71</sup> Such "intentional alterations" have been the focus of research by Maryan Ainsworth and offer a larger context for the changes to Bruegel's painting.<sup>72</sup> Ainsworth used the term to indicate changes made to artwork through human intervention, rather than changes made over time such as the darkening of varnish.<sup>73</sup> She studied religious images in fifteenth-century Netherlandish painting and also the addition of haloes, calling their inclusion in paintings

<sup>70</sup> Lyndal Roper, "Blood and codpieces: Masculinity in the early modern German town," *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality and Religion in Early Modern Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 117–18.

<sup>71</sup> For before and after cleaning-restoration photographs of Bruegel's painting, see Alison G. Stewart, "The William Suhr Papers at the Getty Research Institute," *Bulletin of the Visual Resource Association*, 35, 3 (2008): 23–43, available at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/artfacpub/14/> (accessed September 1, 2019).

<sup>72</sup> Maryan W. Ainsworth, "Intentional alterations of early Netherlandish paintings," *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, 40 (2005): 51–65. Some of the information I present here appeared in my article, "The William Suhr Papers," cited in the previous note.

<sup>73</sup> Ainsworth, "Intentional alterations," 51.

from the period “a relatively rare occurrence.”<sup>74</sup> Such alterations resulted in a lay religious figure becoming a saint through the addition of a halo, sometime in the nineteenth century.<sup>75</sup>

Ainsworth indicated that alterations to paintings were made during various centuries as a result of changing social forces, and that such changes “often necessitate[d] a reconsideration of the painting’s history which sometimes, in turn, reveals facts about the function and importance of the work in its own time.” Ainsworth stated that it is often difficult to date intentional alterations made to a painting to a specific century.<sup>76</sup> The difficulty of establishing when such alterations was made is also the case for Bruegel’s *Wedding Dance* painting.

One of the owners of Bruegel’s painting found the codpieces objectionable and had the codpieces painted out, but who that owner was and when the overpainting took place is unclear. Was it someone from the Victorian period, part of Foucault’s “repressive hypothesis” for the nineteenth century, or even earlier?<sup>77</sup> A seventeenth-century copy of Bruegel’s painting in Berlin suggests the possibility that the size of the original codpieces may have already become a problem for the owner, who had the codpieces made smaller.

Similar changes to clothing in other visual works point to the possibility that the overpainting in Bruegel’s *Wedding Dance* could have taken place in the seventeenth century as a result of aesthetic preference.<sup>78</sup> In 1633, the devout Catholic Maximilian I (1573–1651), Bavarian Duke and Elector, ordered several changes made to Lucas Cranach’s *Christ and the Woman Taken into Adultery*, c. 1522, which he received as a gift.<sup>79</sup> According to technical analysis, the hands of Christ and the woman were originally placed together. Maximilian requested that his court painter separate the hands and make substantive changes to the painting, including adding panels to the left and top and adding an additional figure at left.<sup>80</sup> Maximilian also requested that the text below Dürer’s *Four Apostles* or *Four Holy Men* be sawn off. He also ordered the nakedness of Cranach’s *Lucretia* to be overpainted with a kind of antique chiton, which was removed in a restoration of 1919. The contours of Lucretia’s new clothes are apparently still visible in good light when viewed in person.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>76</sup> See *ibid.*, 51–4.

<sup>77</sup> Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, 15–35.

<sup>78</sup> See an exhibition and CD titled, *Close Examination: Fakes, Mistakes and Discoveries*, an exhibition at the National Gallery, London, in 2010, available at: <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/whats-on/exhibitions/close-examination-fakes-mistakes-and-discoveries> (July 11, 2017), especially for the overpainting of drops of Mary’s milk, lingering on her breast and Christ’s genitals in a fifteenth-century painting by Robert Campin. See also Leo Steinberg, *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

<sup>79</sup> Cranach’s painting was a gift to Maximilian I from the Bamberg Domprobst Johann Christoph Neustetter, genannt Stürmer. See Martin Schawe, *Cranach in Bayern*, exh. cat., Alte Pinakothek (Munich, 2011), 21, and n. 25, for additional information including Maximilian’s correspondence concerning the transportation of the painting, today in the Bavarian State Painting Collections.

<sup>80</sup> Schawe, *Cranach in Bayern*, 24, fig. 5; and Peter Prange and Raimund Wünsche, *Das Feigenblatt*, exh. cat., Glyptothek (Munich, 2000), 106–7, for chaste changes to paintings.

<sup>81</sup> Schawe, *Cranach in Bayern*, 25.

In these examples, Duke Maximilian altered the first painting to expand it compositionally in keeping with the broadening compositional approaches of his time. Similarly, the text that contextualized Dürer's painting for the early Reformation period appears to have also lost its relevance for Maximilian. The alterations to Cranach's *Lucretia* indicates that the nudity of the sixteenth century possibly made for a Lutheran patron was deemed inappropriate a century later by the Catholic dukes. The alterations show that changing taste and religious affiliation may also have contributed to these intentional alterations.

Returning to Bruegel's painting, what Ainsworth calls the "aesthetic intentions of the artist" were revealed after the removal of the obliterated codpieces in his *Wedding Dance* painting.<sup>82</sup> That overpainting is similar to the addition of fig leaves added later to cover the naked male genitals of ancient Greek and Roman statues. Such fig leaves were made of stone and sometimes copper attached by chains, which discolored the marble below. These altered statues, made chaste through fig leaves, became the object of close scrutiny and satire around 1900 in picture postcards where added cover-ups included knee-length pants. An exhibition in 2000 explored the use of fig leaves on ancient statues and added green ones as replacements for leaves previously removed.<sup>83</sup>

Bruegel's figures sport very large codpieces, a fashion that was controversial in Bruegel's time for some contemporaries because of their emphasis and display of the male organ. Art historical studies have often understood Bruegel's codpieces as revealing the dancers' physical excitement, thus their lewdness.<sup>84</sup> Yet, codpieces were real articles of clothing in Bruegel's time and later. Visual art and literature confirm that the codpiece was worn in northern Europe across class lines, from peasants to King Henry VIII in England and to Emperor Charles V in Habsburg Spain. At the same time, criticism and satires of such fashionable male clothing, including baggy, extravagant breeches, frilly male clothing, and codpieces, gave cause for the codpiece to be viewed as morally degenerate within the context of the Pants Devil, the *Hosenteufel*.<sup>85</sup>

The author of one tract with that name was the moralist Andreas Musculus (1514–81), a preacher and very conservative Lutheran and professor of theology since 1542 at Frankfurt an der Oder. Musculus was a member of the older generation when it came to male dress.<sup>86</sup> He condemned the codpiece not just because it paraded the phallus but because it could incite lust, what Roper called a "form of nudity that displayed the penis to lascivious eyes which would only too easily be incited to lust." Thus men wearing

<sup>82</sup> Ainsworth, "Intentional alterations," 51.

<sup>83</sup> Prange and Wünsche, *Das Feigenblatt*, esp. 8–9 and 126.

<sup>84</sup> A recent example linking Bruegel's painting and the codpiece, to immoral activity, could earlier be seen on the museum's website at: <https://www.dia.org/art/collection/object/wedding-dance-35573> (accessed September 15, 2019).

<sup>85</sup> See Johann Strauss Elsterberg, *Wider den Kleider Pluder Pauß vnd Krauß Teuffel* (Görlitz: Georg Hoffmann/Georg Deffner, 1581).

<sup>86</sup> On Musculus, see *Deutsche Biographie* at: <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/sfz67494.html> (accessed February 15, 2019).



such clothing attracted attention as sexual quarries with both men and women looking at them and evaluating their “attractions.”<sup>87</sup> At the same time, the *Hosenteufel* text exhibited a bit of what Roper calls “linguistic exhibitionism, exuberantly paralleling the clothing it purports to condemn—occasionally, to the point of titillation,” stating that the young men who wear such fine codpieces bear “the sweetest honey inside” and have an “excess of masculinity.”<sup>88</sup> Roper explains, “Thick and padded, assuming outlandish shapes and colours—one is described as boasting a trinity of flies—the codpiece was outrageous. Its hyperbolic exaggeration punctured phallic authority. Where decorum required the phallus to be decently hidden, the codpiece riotously displayed the penis as a massive joke.”<sup>89</sup>

Despite Musculus's rantings such *Pluderhosen*, long and short, continued to be worn until the end of the sixteenth century. Roper identifies the codpiece as the article of clothing that “provoked [the] most explicit discussion of the male body” because it “paraded the phallus.”<sup>90</sup> However, Ulinka Rublack illustrates a fashionable Lutheran couple on an epitaph from the late sixteenth century where he sports knee-length breeches made of vertical strips with blousy, rich material below, and lavish codpiece on top.<sup>91</sup> Such moralizing appraisal offered both criticism of and fascination with the contemporary codpiece. In both covering and drawing attention to the male genitals, the codpiece constituted a contradiction in itself and a satirical, sometimes humorous element to sixteenth-century male dress for the body.

Viewers of Bruegel's painting could have understood the peasants dancing and piping, decked out with ample codpieces, as dressed in fashion of the time—ridiculous or not depending on the viewer—with fascination, even humor, possibly in the manner of ideas from the ancient world where the phallus was an important cultural object. With apotropaic and other meanings.<sup>92</sup>

Literary parallels to Bruegel's large codpieces can be seen in the exaggerations found in François Rabelais's text and in illustrations inspired by it, in particular of Pantagruel with its contemporary parody of the codpiece.<sup>93</sup> For Rabelais, codpieces functioned as emblems of masculinity and pockets for edibles, including for fruit and specifically oranges.<sup>94</sup> For Bruegel, codpieces similarly served as coin purse for the piper's tips. The

<sup>87</sup> Roper, “Blood and codpieces,” 117, 119.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>91</sup> Ulinka Rublack, *Dressing Up: Cultural Identity in Renaissance Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 110–12.

<sup>92</sup> Ancient Greek and Roman ideas, which may have continued into the Middle Ages and Renaissance or been revived in the latter, equated a large penis with the barbaric, the “other,” and as something to laugh at. Similar ideas continue today for men outside the Caucasian mainstream. For publications by John R. Clarke, see above.

<sup>93</sup> Jeffery Persels discusses the codpiece in detail in “Humanisms' codpiece,” *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 1 (1997): 79–99.

<sup>94</sup> On storing an orange in a codpiece and for a pretty tuft of red silk tied to a codpiece, see François Rabelais, *Five Books of the Lives, Heroic Deeds and Sayings of Gargantua and His Son Pantagruel*, trans. by Sir Thomas Urquhart of Cromarty and Peter Anthony Motteux, available at: [https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/r/rabelais/francois/r11g/complete.html#book\\_11](https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/r/rabelais/francois/r11g/complete.html#book_11) (accessed July 11, 2016).

purse, with draw-string top, may have been intentionally shown laced to the piper's codpiece for safekeeping and for thrill seekers who could imagine placing coins near such an intimate part of the body, reminding the viewer of Cranach's linkage of money sack with male anatomy. A codpiece with rounded form, similar to the one worn by Bruegel's piper, but much larger, illustrates a printed Rabelais from 1565. It offers a satirical understanding of over-sized codpieces that delights in, while criticizing, immoderate masculinity and perhaps the sin of lust. These codpieces are huge and creatively shaped, with pins piercing the surface.<sup>95</sup> By contrast, Bruegel's codpieces appear normal in size.

When exactly was the overpainting added to Bruegel's *Wedding Dance* that indicates a change in taste toward the codpiece? Conservation assists here. Bruegel's *Wedding Celebration* painting in Vienna indicates that the bagpiper's large codpiece, which is overpainted today, was part of the painting's original conception. Shown in profile as in the *Wedding Dance*, the Vienna bagpiper sported an even larger codpiece whose outline is still visible in some reproductions. Conservators established that the overpainting was old and that those paint layers had mingled with the layers of the original paint. A precise date for the overpainting, however, has been estimated to before the nineteenth century, perhaps in the seventeenth century.<sup>96</sup> This particular example shows how difficult it can be to establish precise dates for such artistic alterations as a result of changing taste.

The two case studies discussed in this essay for Bruegel's painting and the German Old Testament prints indicate that clothing both covered up and drew attention to the male body and that, clothed and unclothed, the male body was a site of contested and mutable meaning in the beginning centuries of Early Modern Europe. Under the impetus of Charles II of England (1630–85), who linked masculinity with modesty, the codpiece was replaced by trousers and the three-piece suit, which has become the norm.<sup>97</sup> The examples discussed here have shown that varied responses to the body in the late Middle Ages, discussed by Bynum, continued into the sixteenth century, even before Foucault's "repression" had purportedly begun in the seventeenth century. The overlapping and conflicting responses to the male body, as seen through the examples of arousal and the codpiece, indicate that tastes change over time, but that some things do not change, namely that individual and group response to the male body and its clothing can vary.

<sup>95</sup> Attributed to François Desprez, *Elderly Hybrid Male*, from *Les Songes drolatiques de Pantagruel* (Paris: Richard Breton, 1565), fol. 34c, in Spinks, fig. 4.4; illustrations there also show other oversized codpieces.

<sup>96</sup> Email from January 6, 2008, from Elke Oberthaler, Head of Paintings Conservation, and Monika Strolz, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, who state that at that time of writing, a precise date for the overpainting could not be determined. The recent Bruegel exhibition catalogue points to a date for the alteration to before the nineteenth century, probably the seventeenth century. Elke Oberthaler, Sabine Pénot, Manfred Sellink, and Ron Spronk, with Alice Hoppe-Harnoncourt, *Bruegel: The Master*, exh. cat., Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (London: Thames & Hudson, 2018), p. 262, and fig. 4 a–c with details of the codpiece.

<sup>97</sup> David Kuchta, *The Three-Piece Suit and Modern Masculinity: England, 1550–1850*, Studies on the History of Society and Culture (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002).

The flat-fronted tights, seen in Bruegel's reworked painting, neutralized the original's insistent masculinity and offer a fascinating counterpoint to Beham's small erotically charged prints. These sixteenth-century artworks, seen within the context of diverse aspects of contemporary Northern culture, act as a productive point of departure for a study of contested meaning and the male body in Early Modern Europe, whose private parts attracted viewers and sometimes required moralizing gloss to justify their representation. The body had been revealed in the sixteenth century, but it was not always found acceptable.