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Paper Festivals and Popular Entertainment The Kermis Woodcuts of Sebald Beham in Reformation Nuremberg

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Sebald Beham's kermis prints, published in Nuremberg from 1528 to the mid-1530s, are discussed within the context of kermis as a popular festival in Nuremberg. The kermis images, created at the time the Lutheran Reformation was taking hold in Nuremberg, are shown to be both extensions of that festival celebrated throughout Nuremberg's countryside and of the town council's attempts to control or halt most of the celebration. In contrast to recent studies stressing the peasant class and criticism of it at kermis, and the viewer's distance from what is represented, this essay shows that members of all social classes enjoyed kermis at the same time that the festival was praised, criticized, and re-evaluated in contemporary literature and legislation. This essay also shows that the common folk did not automatically acquiesce to commands from Nuremberg's elite authorities, and that the making and shaping of the festival prints was far more complex than revealing the attitudes of the elites. Thus, the kermis prints present a wide spectrum of approaches mixing evangelical re-evaluation, ethnographic description, and proverb collecting. The kermis images were understood on several levels in the sixteenth century, with entertainment playing a prominent role.

EVER SINCE SVETLANA ALPERS began the debate—more than a decade ago—over the meanings of representations of kermis or “festive peasants” in Northern European art, kermis or church festival has become an increasingly important subject in the study of Northern European art and traditions. In the 1980s, art historians turned from Netherlandish to German representations of the subject. The German kermis prints, made in Nuremberg during the late 1520s and 1530s, were viewed as having one specific interpretation. In particular, Keith Moxey interpreted the works as Lutheran satires of church festivals aimed at the artisan and upper classes; in not dissimilar manner, Hans-Joachim Raupp understood them

*This article is a revised version of a paper presented at the Midwest Art History Society conference at Minneapolis, April 9, 1988, and is based on chap. 2, treating kermis, from my book-in-progress, “Feasting and Spinning: The Popular Festival Prints of Sebald Beham in Reformation Nuremberg.”

Sixteenth-century diacritics have been changed as follows: the superscript *e* over a vowel has been omitted; the *o* over a vowel as pronunciation aid has been omitted; and abbreviations, including the horizontal line over vowels and consonants, have been expanded to the customary modern form. Locations of sixteenth-century sources are cited whenever possible.

to be satires of the peasant class. Margaret Carroll, by contrast, viewed them as reflections of the positive, nationalistic interest in popular festivals recorded in contemporary printed accounts.¹

In this paper I evaluate the German woodcuts in the context of Nuremberg in the 1520s and 1530s in which they were made. I also document what took place at actual church festivals in sixteenth-century Germany, as well as where and when Nuremberg kermis in particular was celebrated. More importantly, I show that, in terms of the ways those German kermis prints were understood in their original context, the previous interpretations together, both positive and critical, appear to come closer to the mark than have the single interpretations suggested heretofore. Specifically, Moxey's and Raupp's interpretation of the works as satires and Carroll's positive nationalism together approach the complex strategies employed in those kermis prints. The kermis woodcuts were, I believe, even more complex and had many levels of meaning functioning, most notably, within the dynamics of changing social forces at the beginning of the Reformation in Nuremberg, especially Nuremberg's evangelical urban moralism. The works also intersect the popular humor of carnival plays. But the existing evidence from the sixteenth century has not furthered an understanding of viewer response to the kermis images in their time through direct evidence, and thus a broader approach will need to be marshalled.

RECENT LITERATURE

The reader familiar with the literature on kermis will, undoubtedly, wish to know how this work differs from Keith Moxey's. It differs, in fact, in a number of ways. Moxey draws on Marxist theory treating class issues. He also stresses power relations.² Moxey thus investigates the notion of the peasant class, whereas I am concerned with the favorite peasant festival, kermis, in its original historical context.

¹Keith P. F. Moxey, "Sebald Beham's Church Anniversary Holidays: Festive Peasants as Instruments of Repressive Humor," *Simiolus* 12 (1981-82): 107-30, reprinted with revisions in his *Peasants, Warriors, and Wives*, 107-30. Hans-Joachim Raupp, *Bauernsatiren. Entstehung und Entwicklung des bäuerlichen Genres in der deutschen und niederländischen Kunst ca. 1470-1570* (Niederzier: Lukassen, 1986). Margaret Carroll, "Peasant Festivity and Political Identity in the Sixteenth Century," *Art History* 10, no. 3 (September 1987): 289-95.

²See Mary D. Garrard, Review of Whitney Chadwick's *Women, Art, and Society*, in *Woman's Art Journal* 12 no. 2 (Fall 1991/Winter 1992): 36, for Marxist theory that treats what she calls "issues of class from the vantage point of an abstract social model." Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, "Writing Women and Reading the Renaissance," *Renaissance Quarterly* 44 pt. 4 (Winter 91): 793, describes "newer scholars of early modern ideology and culture, with their focus on class, race, gender, and power relations."

Moxey and I also vary in how we address the issue of attribution of the prints, and thus the artists. Moxey accepts the attributions accepted in the literature, depending on Heinrich Röttinger's rather dubious creation of a small body of woodcuts assigned to Barthel Beham. By contrast, I return to Gustav Pauli's earlier work on Sebald Beham, which Röttinger supplemented. Pauli's attributions are still solid and his catalogues of Sebald Beham's prints are basic to the study of the artist. Moxey's lack of critical dialogue with attributions is not surprising considering his playing down, if not negation, of any role the artist's personal life played for that art.³ The kermis woodcuts previously attributed to Barthel Beham, attributions accepted by Moxey, are returned here to Sebald. As a result of this seemingly minor difference of attribution, all of the kermis woodcuts are assigned to designs by Sebald, or to copyists after his work. Only the *Kermis at Mögeldorf* of ca. 1528 includes parts unquestionably designed by another hand, that of the Nuremberg artist, Erhard Schön.⁴

I also differ from Moxey in my response to the bodily elements shown in the kermis prints. Although there is, admittedly, "something profoundly alien to modern sensibilities about the role of body in Medieval piety," as Caroline Bynum points out, my work with sixteenth-century sources indicates that bodily functions in the sixteenth century prove equally, if not more alien to the modern viewer.⁵ Moxey's revulsion of the

³For the "death of the artist" used by Moxey and others, see Keith P. F. Moxey, "The Beham Brothers and the Death of the Artist," *The Register of the Spencer Museum of Art* 6, no. 6 (1989): 25–30, and J. Christie and F. Orton, "Writing the Text of a Life," *Art History* 11, pt. 4 (1988): 545–64.

⁴The dozen woodcuts attributed to Barthel I believe were designed by his brother, Sebald, or by some other artist or artists. The cutting of the blocks for those woodcuts was performed by inferior cutter(s), whose works obscure a definite attribution. This is certainly the case with the *Kermis at Mögeldorf*, assigned to Barthel, yet portions of which have convincingly been given to Erhard Schön.

The attributions of Gustav Pauli favoring Sebald have been accepted here over those of Heinrich Röttinger, which have been accepted in the literature. Röttinger's arguments are overly complicated and often implausible. In those few cases when I have cited Röttinger, Pauli has been silent on the issue. See Gustav Pauli, *Hans Sebald Beham. Ein kritisches Verzeichnis seiner Kupferstiche, Radierungen und Holzschnitte*, Studien zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte 33 (Strasbourg: Heitz, 1901), and idem, *Hans Sebald Beham. Nachträge zu dem kritischen Verzeichnis seiner Kupferstiche, Radierungen und Holzschnitte* Studien zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte 134 (Strasbourg: Heitz, 1911). For Röttinger, see *Ergänzungen und Berichtigungen des Sebald Beham—Kataloge Gustav Paulis*, Studien zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte 246 (Strasbourg: Heitz, 1927), and *Die Holzschnitte Barthel Behams*, Studien zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte 218 (Strasbourg: Heitz, 1921). For Pauli's responses to Röttinger's attributions, see "Review of Heinrich Röttinger's 'Die Holzschnitte Barthel Behams,'" *Kunstchronik* 58 (1922): 27–29.

⁵Caroline Walker Bynum, "The Female Body and Religious Practice in the Later Middle Ages," *Fragments for a History of the Human Body* Part One (in *Zone 3*, 1989): 161.

bodily reveals his distance from sixteenth-century Nuremberg. The city was loud and dirty and the behavior there uncouth and violent. People talked loudly in church and defecated on the street, even during visits by the emperor. One document from Nuremberg stresses that residents should not use the streets in this manner during the Emperor's visit; rather, they should use the public *Sprachhäuser* or latrines.⁶

Tastes were dirty and bawdy and the kermis woodcuts designed by Sebald Beham were inscribed with that culture's tastes and habits. To borrow the words of Mikhail Bakhtin for Rabelais, "Only if torn away from this world and seen per se in the modern sense will these images appear vulgar and dirty." Michael Camille discusses the bodily both as "agencies of control" and "vehicles of pleasure," a more complex interpretation which I favor. Margaret Carroll also takes a more benign view of kermis excess in the Nuremberg woodcuts.⁷

Fifth, Moxey and I vary in how people viewed pictures in the sixteenth century. Moxey's viewers are, for the most part, elite snobs who sneer at the peasant bumpkins clodding about at kermis. His view of the kermis woodcuts is essentially joyless. I believe, by contrast, that such interpretations do little justice to the festival print as locus of entertainment and creator of reverie for the summer festival made visible, and thus enjoyable, year round. Michael Camille's observations buttress this argument:

Both the surface descriptions of formalism and the dry de-constructions of more recent kinds of analysis take the visual for granted and blind us to something quite wonderful in pictures, paintings, and sculptures, and that is wonder in itself—the capacity of representations to render us awestruck, excited, or afraid.⁸

Indeed, Margaret Carroll's understanding of peasant festival imagery as affirmative and enjoyable to a sixteenth-century audience re-inforces this view. In fact, Carroll's statement bears repeating here that "only the

⁶For the *Sprachhäuser* document, see 13 November 1543, no. 3 (Nuremberg, Staatsarchiv [hereafter, SA], Rep. 63–61a, Bd. A, no. 71, 184):

Auch sol niemand von Alten oder jungen auff der gassen
niederhauche seins leibs gemacht
zurvolbringen, sonder sollen auff die
gemainen Sprachhewser geen, Vnn ein yeder
hauszuater bey seinen Ehalten und kinden
ernstlich darob halten, by peen sechzig
pfenig oder ein half pfund Norii.

⁷On bodily functions, see Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1965): 380; Michael Camille, *The Gothic Idol. Ideology and Image-Making in Medieval Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989): 351. Carroll, "Peasant Festivity," 306, n. 32, and Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986): 21–25, 45, for the pig and bodily functions.

⁸Camille, *Gothic Idol*: 194.

most fatuous hypocrite would take a German 'drollery,' or the debauches of the Prodigal Son, as a warning against rather than as an endorsement of pleasure-seeking."⁹ The importance suggested here of reinstating emotion as part of cognition or perceiving images has been stressed by David Freedberg, who warns against overemphasizing context "at the expense of cognition."¹⁰ Historians Hans Medick and David Sabean similarly underscore the necessity of taking emotion into account when addressing the productions of earlier centuries in their contexts:

By making emotion derivative [from material interests rather than being embedded in social relations and cultural practice], one is left with 'strategy' as the connecting link, and this tends to be historically flat."¹¹

And historically flat, it seems to me, are interpretations that focus on the negative aspect of kermis. Moxey's and my divergent approaches toward viewer response to such images recalls the debates of Svetlana Alpers and Hessel Miedema nearly two decades ago for Netherlandish art and the paintings of Pieter Bruegel.¹²

Moxey's view of the prints as moralizing extensions of the values of Nuremberg's elites, who wished to abolish kermis in Nuremberg's countryside, fails to take the large, horizontal, descriptive format of the kermis prints into consideration. Indeed, if these prints were made by, or for, the patrician class who viewed kermis with such disfavor, why then was not a format selected that zeroed in on those negative activities, thereby minimizing the pleasurable aspects? In particular, the side-by-side format used by Lucas Cranach in his book of 1521, the *Passional Christi und Antichristi*, offers such a didactic arrangement. The left page shows the acts of Christ and the right page those of the Antichrist, the Pope. With short title above and long descriptive caption below, each vertical page gives ample space, in both text and picture, for the explication of good and bad behavior.¹³

⁹Carroll, "Peasant Festivity," 294.

¹⁰David Freedberg, *The Power of Images. Studies in the History of Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1989), xxiv, 430.

¹¹Hans Medick and David Warren Sabean, *Interest and Emotion. Essays on the Study of Family and Kinship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 7.

¹²For the debate over smiling before pictures and enjoying them, or not, see Svetlana Alpers, "Bruegel's festive peasants," *Simiolus* 6 (1972-73), 163-76; and "Taking Pictures Seriously: A Reply to Hessel Miedema," *Simiolus* 10 (1978-79), 46-50.

¹³Cranach's book was published at Wittenberg. See Virginia Chieffo Raguin, *Northern Renaissance Stained Glass. Continuity and Transformations*, exhibition catalogue (Cantor Art Gallery, College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, Massachusetts, 1987), no. 10. See also Robert Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 148-163.

Several years later, Sebald himself used that same format for the title page (fig. 1) of several books dating between 1526 and 1530 published in

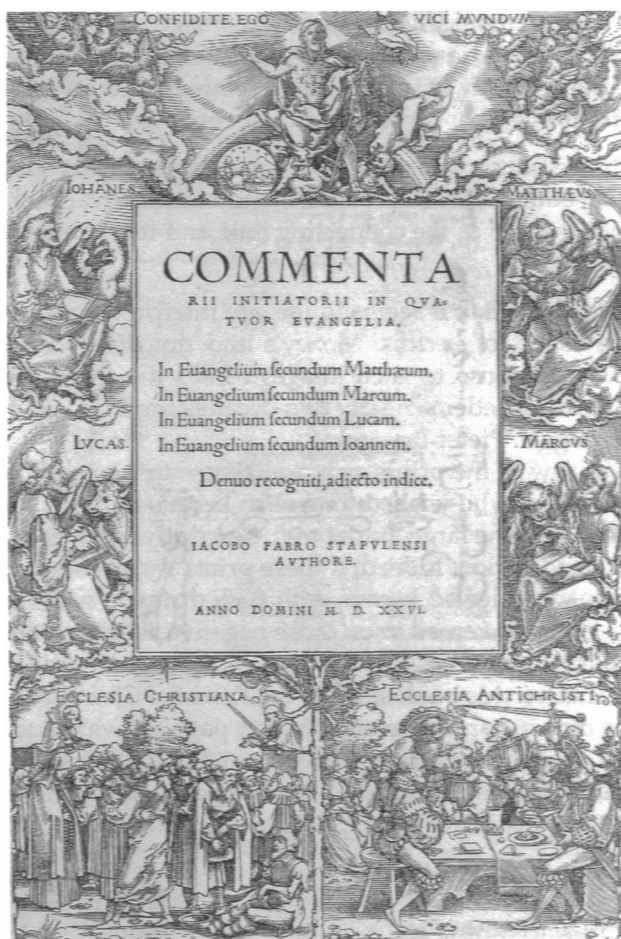


Fig. 1. Sebald Beham, *Ecclesia Christiana and Ecclesia Antichristi*, title page woodcut to *Commentarii initiatorii* (Nuremberg: Jacopo Fabro Stapulensi, 1526) (Kupferstich-Kabinett, Staatliche Landesbibliothek, Abteilung Deutsche Fotothek/R. Richter. Used by permission.

Nuremberg and Augsburg.¹⁴ Sebald employs two square compositions labeled "Christian Church" and "Antichrist Church." In the former, Saints Peter and Paul preach (at upper left and right). In the foreground, men embrace and give alms to a physically disabled man. Such Christian behavior contrasts strikingly with the adjacent behavior of the Antichrists, or Catholics, where men play cards and fight with swords. Beham was, therefore, intimate enough with such a moralizing pictorial strategy before he designed his first kermis woodcut ca. 1528 that he would have used that strategy if he had wanted to be single-mindedly moralizing, as Moxey proposed. I believe that the wide, horizontal format of the kermis woodcuts offered a large, descriptive format that allowed room both for ample visual description and for moralizing elements as well.

Last, my interpretation of the kermis woodcuts stresses several levels of meaning. Although Moxey interprets Beham's pictorial strategy as amounting to a frontal attack on the peasant class, I believe that in their original context the kermis woodcuts stressed both the popularity of kermis as rural folk festival and aspects of kermis that Nuremberg's Lutheran authorities viewed as needing reform, especially excessive drinking. Both the insistence on kermis's popularity and descriptive display of popular pastimes there, on one hand, and criticisms of the festival, on the other, Beham shows in his numerous versions of kermis. The dualism between acceptability and unacceptability of folk event and excessive drinking are thus outlined in visual form in these German prints.

THE KERMIS PRINTS

Now to the images themselves. The first depictions of popular festivals were produced as woodcuts between about 1524 and 1535 by followers of Albrecht Dürer in Nuremberg.¹⁵ Of these, the half dozen woodcuts depicting kermis or church festival, the most popular peasant festival in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Germany, date from ca. 1528 to 1535 based on dates printed on the woodcuts or on the texts included with the woodcuts. The kermis prints represent the first depictions of kermis known to me. As seen above, these prints were designed primarily by

¹⁴See F. W. Hollstein, *German Engravings, Etchings, and Woodcuts* (Amsterdam: M. Hertzberger, 1954), 3: 190–91.

¹⁵See Alison G. Stewart, *The First "Peasant Festivals": Eleven Woodcuts Produced in Reformation Nuremberg by Barthel and Sebald Beham and Erhard Schön, ca. 1524 to 1535* (unpublished dissertation, Columbia University, New York, 1986), chap. 2, Church Festivals..



Fig. 2. Sebald Beham and Erhard Schön, *Kermis at Mögeldorf*, woodcut, ca.1528, detail sheet 1. Photo: Museen der Stadt Gotha, Schlossmuseum. Used by permission.

Sebald Beham, Nuremberg's best known artist of the time.¹⁶ Sebald learned much from Dürer's prints and appears to have been trained by the master in his workshop, yet no documentation exists to support or refute this claim.¹⁷ The first kermis woodcut, the *Kermis at Mögeldorf* (fig. 2), derives its dates of ca. 1528 from the independent version of the text dated 1528 printed over the woodcut image.¹⁸ Although the design of that print is traditionally attributed to Sebald's brother, Barthel, and to Erhard Schön, the parts given to Barthel were certainly designed by Sebald and

¹⁶As stated above, I assign the kermis woodcuts to Sebald Beham, as Pauli originally did. The attribution questions surrounding the kermis woodcuts will be discussed in greater detail in the section, "The Individuals and the Prints," of my book-in-progress, "Feasting and Spinning." Sebald Beham was called Sebald Beham (not, Hans Sebald Beham) during his lifetime. Subsequently, Hans was added to his name, although there is no evidence from his own work and documents from the time that he was called anything other than Sebald Beham. See Stephen Goddard, *The World in Miniature. Engravings by the German Little Masters, 1500-1550*, exhibition catalogue (Spencer Museum of Art, Lawrence, Kansas, 1988), 222.

¹⁷Correspondence of 20 November 1990 from Jane Campbell Hutchison, who found no evidence of Beham's having worked in Dürer's shop, in the research for her book, *Albrecht Dürer. A Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990). For Beham's link to Dürer seen both in graphic means, composition, and subject, see my article-in-progress, "Beyond Prints and Politics: Drawings and Paintings by Sebald Beham."

¹⁸For Sachs's text dated 1528, see Adelbert von Keller ed., *Hans Sachs 5*, Bibliothek des Litterarischen Vereins in Stuttgart 106 (Tübingen: Litterarischer Verein in Stuttgart, 1870), 276-78.

cut by an inferior woodcutter.¹⁹ That date falls three years after the town council accepted Lutheranism as the city's official new religion, which as we shall see provides an important setting for the kermis images.

All the kermis woodcuts are products of Nuremberg—most were designed there and all appear to have been printed there. The history of Nuremberg at this time is, therefore, crucial to our understanding of those prints. Nuremberg's government officially accepted Martin Luther's new religion in March 1525 after several years of gradually adopting Luther's ideas into the town's religion. Beham was banned January 1525 from Nuremberg for his unorthodox ideas on religion and the secular authorities; this in a very orthodox Lutheran Nuremberg governed by a council responsible for these matters.²⁰ Dürer's art was also responsive to these Lutheran changes. His engraved *St. Philip* (Bartsch 46) of 1526, the date Dürer changed from its original 1523, reflects the Lutheran re-evaluation of the role of saints.²¹ Similarly, Dürer's *Four Holy Men* (Alte Pinakothek, Munich), donated to the council in 1526, warns in the inscription against "godless" religious leaders, like Andreas Karlstadt.

When the *Kermis at Mögeldorf* was created some three years after Nuremberg officially became Lutheran, Mögeldorf was a small village located four miles east of Nuremberg's walls within Nuremberg's countryside. Mögeldorf's church festivals were so popular that half of Nuremberg's population is said to have visited them.²² In 1528, Nuremberg's combined urban and rural populations of 80,000 remarkably dwarfed Mögeldorf's 30 peasants and 46 rural workers. Mögeldorf's kermis festivities were celebrated at Pentecost in late May or early June, and their attraction lay in their fortuitous location outside Nuremberg's one-mile city limit restricting brandy manufacture. As brandy increased in popular-

¹⁹For the *Kermis at Mögeldorf* by Sebald Beham and Erhard Schön, see Max Geisberg, *The German Single-Leaf Woodcut: 1500–1550*, rev. and ed. Walter L. Strauss (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1974), 144–49; Heinrich Röttinger, *Erhard Schön und Niklas Stör, der Pseudo Schön. Zwei Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des alten Nürnberger Holzschnitts*, Studien zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte 229 (Strasbourg: Heitz, 1925), no. 172; Röttinger, *Holzschnitte Barthel Beham*: no. 3; and Pauli, *Hans Sebald Beham*, no. 1247.

²⁰For the appellation "godless painter" in documents of Beham's time, see Theodor Kolde, "Hans Denck und die gottlosen Maler von Nürnberg," *Beiträge zur bayerischen Kirchengeschichte* 8 (1901): 49–50, 64–65, 72, and Wayne A. Allen, "Hans Denck: A First Generation Radical Reformer," (Unpublished dissertation, Rutgers University, 1985), 35–37.

²¹For Dürer's *Four Holy Men*, see Carl C. Christiansen, *Art and the Reformation in Germany* (Athens: Ohio State University Press, 1979), 181–206, and Linda C. Hult's review of Christiansen in *Art Bulletin* 64 (1982): 662–63, esp. nn. 7, 8. See also Craig Harbison, "Dürer and the Reformation: The Problem of the Re-Dating of the *St. Philip* Engraving," *Art Bulletin* 58 (1976): 368–73.

²²Gerhard Kindler, *Mögeldorf einst und jetzt. Ein Bildband* (Nuremberg: Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Belange und Geschichte Mögeldorfs, 1978), text accompanying fig. 66. See Leo Beyer, *Der Nürnberger Stadtteil Mögeldorf. Eine Häusergeschichte* (Nuremberg, 1964).



Fig. 3. Hans Burgkmair, *Gluttony*. Woodcut. Photo: Warburg Institute. Used by permission.



Fig. 4. Cornelis Anthonisz., *Demon of Drink*. Woodcut. Photo by author, after Eugen Diederichs, *Deutsches Leben der Vergangenheit in Bildern* 1 (Jena: Diederichs, 190), fig. 579.

ity as a wine mixer, so did Mögeldorf and its kermis.²³ The attraction of Mögeldorf to Nuremberg's drinkers in general, at times other than kermis, was noted by Nuremberg's council in February 1524: "Tell the priest at Mögeldorf to turn off his taps. If not, the bottom of his barrels will be

²³For the population of Nuremberg and its villages, see n. 69, below. For Mögeldorf and its population, see "Nach Ratsverbot kamen die Nürnberger nach Mögeldorf," *Nürnberger Zeitung* 299 (30 December 1976): 14 (StB). For the date of celebration, see *Die Chroniken der fränkischen Städten*, vol. 5: Nürnberg, *Die Chroniken der deutschen Städten vom 14. bis zum 16. Jahrhundert* 11 (Leipzig, 1874), 618, no. 10; 662, nos. 14–17. For the location outside the city limits, see "Nach Ratsverbot," *Nürnberger Zeitung*, 13, and the *Fünfergericht*, fol. 2r (dated 1559). The latter reflects laws dating from the first half of the sixteenth century. The town council mentions in a decree of 1526 the hordes that went to drink at Mögeldorf and Schweinau outside the city: "Zuvorslagen wie man neben der Pieg weg find damit das gross auslaufen vnd drincken vmb dy stat alles gen Schweynaw und Megeldorff vnd dergleichen abgestellt wurd" (Nuremberg, Staatsarchiv, *Ratsverlässe* Decrees or protocol noted during the Nuremberg town council meetings [hereafter, RV], 728, fol. 7v, 21 March 1526). Fernand Braudel, *The Structures of Everyday Life. The Limits of the Possible* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 241–43, discusses the appearance of brandy in Europe for the first time in the sixteenth century, and mentions that it was forbidden to be sold on feast days at Nuremberg in 1496.

knocked out."²⁴ The four-mile walk to Mögeldorf from Nuremberg's urban center could certainly have been accomplished within an hour, judging from a speedy trip covering six miles made at the time by foot. The trip was made on a wager to another outlying village, Fürth, in 1501.²⁵

The attraction of Mögeldorf to the masses, and the underlying problem there as seen by the authorities, was undoubtedly the daily drinking and boozing, pointed out twice by the council in 1525.²⁶ In 1528, the parson at Mögeldorf, Georg Kreuzer, was described in Nuremberg's first Church Visitation report as a warmhearted man sympathetic to the poor. He was considered so sympathetic that several rich peasants from the Mögeldorf community accused Kreuzer of preaching only to poor peasants and not to the rich ones. Kreuzer lived in such modest circumstances that the council deemed it necessary to raise his income.²⁷

The *Kermis at Mögeldorf* accordingly emphasizes drinking by placing tavern and drinker at the beginning of the print; this assumes that the woodcut with text above would have been read from left to right. Beham identifies the building there as a tavern by the sign of the bush, by a man who drinks to excess, and by a pig indicating drunkenness or gluttony.²⁸ The idea that a drunken person acts like a pig or swine was widespread enough to be represented in woodcuts of the time by Hans Burgkmair and Cornelis Anthonisz. (figs. 3 and 4). These images confirm Luther's state-

²⁴SA, RV 700, fol. 3v (13 Feb. 1524): "Den pfarer von megeldorff sagen das er seins schenckens abste, wie nicht, so wird mon den fessern die poden auss schlagen."

²⁵A man named Rab won a wager of 8 florins for his speedy trip to Fürth (which also had its own kermis celebrated on St. Michael's day, September 29); *Chroniken der fränkischen Städten* 5: 631, nos. 15-19.

²⁶Daily boozing and drinking at Mögeldorf are mentioned in two council meetings for October 1525 (both SA, RV 722, fol. 16v, for 26 October 1525): "Etlich des rats zu Werd herein bes und ihnen sagen, das teglich zechen vnd trincken so by Inn mogeldorff ... " and etlich des rats zu Werd herein bes ... und inen sagen, das sy bey den iren verckomen, das taglich zechen und trincken, so sy zu Megeldorff thun, und das sy ains denselben truncken bey nacht über die Zeit nicht die ther nicht offen lassen und dar sy die ungehorsamen ainen rat anzaigen.

²⁷Parson Kreuzer of Mögeldorf is named in Nuremberg's Church Visitation report of September and October 1528. See Adolf Engelhardt, "Die Kirchenvisitation 1528/29," *Mitteilungen des Vereins für die Geschichte der Stadt Nürnberg* 34 (1937), 86, 87. See also Matthias Simon, "Zur Visitation der Nürnberger Landpfarreien im Jahre 1528," *Zeitschrift für bayerische Kirchengeschichte* 35 (1966): 7-41.

²⁸A bush, pole, or staff indicated the sale of wine, according to Wilhelm Treue and Karlheinz Goldmann eds., *Das Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung zu Nürnberg. Deutsche Handwerksbilder des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts* text vol. (Munich: Bruckmann, 1965), 115. See also Hans Bauer, *Tisch und Tafel in alten Zeiten. Aus der Kulturgeschichte der Gastronomie* (Leipzig: Koehler und Amelang VOB, 1967), 137. For ale-poles and ale-stake bushes, see Peter Clark, *The English Alehouse: a Social History 1200-1830* (London: Longman, 1983), 67f. Clark states that the traditional device near the front door of an inn was the ale-stake, the bush hanging at the end of a pole. It indicated the nature of the business in the late Middle Ages, that liquor was on tap and brewing had taken place.

ment of 1539, from a printed sermon on sobriety, that a drunkard should be represented in the form of a pig.²⁹ The pig accompanying such a drunkard also visualized the popular proverb, the “drunken matins,” as we will see below. The motifs in the *Kermis at Mögeldorf* woodcuts of inn, pig, and drunken peasant underscore the attraction of Mögeldorf's church festivals as popular places to drink. These motifs also became stock features of kermis woodcuts along with musicians and dancers, as we will see below.

The text above the woodcut penned by Nuremberg's poet-shoemaker, Hans Sachs, describes the peasants in Nuremberg dialect in the colorful and exuberant manner of a carnival play as boisterous, earthy, and eager for drink, love, and a fight. The viewer is told that there is an abundance of food—calves' heads, stomachs and innards, blood sausage, roast pork, and sour milk,³⁰ and enough to drink that several peasants get drunk and vomit. “Liendl from Ganckhofen, Nearly drinks himself into total inebriation,” and Eselsmüller from Potenstein “is the biggest glutton at the table. He rummages about with Gretel Mayer, And hugs her 'til she vomits.”³¹

Drink thus serves in the text and woodcut as the basis of drunken and gluttonous behavior. Drink also encourages in the text loud and uncontrolled bodily noises and amorous, if not adulterous, encounters: “Wine is drunk in such large quantities, That many fall beneath the bench. On this side there is great belching and vomiting, Yelling, singing, shouting, shrieking.” Distaff Cristen, who dances with Liendl from Ganckhofen, “farts probably thirteen times.”³²

Sexuality, like the rest of the activities, is directly described. “Ulscherg from Dreckhausen, Sneaks quietly to the fence. He dances with Künlein Zettenscheis, in order to bite her backside.” Meanwhile, “Maerten Stock, shoemaker from Kolgart, Constantly spoons with his Schwarten,” and Eselsmüller from Potenstein hugs Gretel Mayer. “Jeckel Bader ... speaks with Gretel Mayer, At night [intimately] through her window.”³³ In a few cases the relationships are frankly adulterous. When Maerten Stock

²⁹“Saufteüffel ... vnd durchausz eytel Sewleben füret//Das/wenn man es malen solt//so muszt man es ainer Saw gleich malen.” Martin Luther, *Sermon on Sobriety and Moderation* called *Von Nüchternkait vnd Mässigkeit, wider Vollerey vnd Trunckenhait, Ausz der Epistel S. Petri* (Augsburg: Valentin Othmar, [1539]), fol. Aiiiiv (SB). See also Christine Megan Armstrong, *The Moralizing Prints of Cornelis Anthonisz.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), esp. fig. 21 (my fig. 4). Stallybrass and White, *Politics and Poetics*, 44–59, discuss the pig as highly visible in urban settings beginning in the sixteenth century.

³⁰Stanza 2. Translations of the German are my own using the Gotha impression of the *Kermis at Mögeldorf* woodcut illustrated by Geisberg-Strauss, 144–49 (Barthel Beham) and included here as fig. 2.

³¹Stanzas 9 and 19.

³²Stanzas 3 and 9.

³³Stanzas 11, 17, 19, 20.

spoons with his Schwarten, does he know that she has taken Egelmair as her husband? More concretely, "The Sacristan from Schweinau dances with the parson's wife from Schniglingen, whom he loves...."³⁴

Excessive eating and drinking and sexual behavior described by Sachs fall into two of the three areas Johannes Merkel categorizes as vehicles for the comic in carnival plays. Indeed, the third category, fecal comic, we will see represented in other kermis woodcuts created in Nuremberg.³⁵ This emphasis on the bodily—excessive sexuality and intake and expulsion—brings the *Kermis at Mögeldorf* into close proximity with the carnival play and its comic approach. Far, then, from serving only as moralizing elements, these bodily elements emphasize comedy and, therefore, humor and laughter. Carroll earlier connected the kermis woodcuts and the comic.³⁶ In addition to such direct description of relations between the sexes, fighting and aggressive behavior mark the beginning and end of kermis in Sachs's text. Toward the beginning, a man is prepared to fight over an insult: "Kunz Schwenpflug from Rottenbach, Tells Rewel Greden, If you want to laugh at my dancing, I will fight with you." Toward the end, jealousy, rage, even swords come into play, and the author leaves the scene. Kermis is thereby brought to a close.

Two peasant maidens dance in front,
Two journeymen lead the rows of dancers,
The rows [of peasants] I saw leaping backwards,
[With] many of them reaching for their blades.

I thought that it would not be long,
They would be pushing each other about,
And a great slaughter would result,
I stood up and went home.³⁷

This text, like its later variant printed above another *Kermis at Mögeldorf* dating to ca. 1534 by Sebald alone, plays a far greater role in this kermis print than does any text for the half dozen other kermis prints. Although the image depicts drinking and drunkenness, amorous play, music making, and dancing, only the text informs the viewer that fighting forces the kermis to end. Both printed image and printed text appear to complement each other including some elements in one and not the other; primacy of text over image, or image over text, does not appear to be the case here. At a time when only a small minority of Germany's population could read, the broad circulation suggested by the woodcut technique

³⁴Stanzas 17 and 18.

³⁵Johannes Merkel, *Form und Funktion der Komik in Nürnberger Fastnachtspiel* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1971), 192–201.

³⁶Carroll, "Peasant Festivity," 193, 279.

³⁷Stanzas 8, 20–22.

would actually be defeated by the primacy of text over image. In fact, the importance of image in the semiliterate Germany of the early sixteenth century assured a print's appeal and popularity, and its sale to a broad audience. The text added another level of appeal to those who could read or to those who liked to hear a text read aloud.

Drink plays a central role in all of the kermis woodcuts. This is certainly the case for the *Kermis at Mögeldorf* and the later version of ca. 1534 (fig. 5). Both *Kermis at Mögeldorf* prints depict a variety of amusements that have a greater link with drinking, the effects of wine, and drunken behavior than they do with the religious celebration of a church's anniversary. The prints draw on, in fact, what was seen as both the widespread drunkenness of German-speaking people of all classes in the early sixteenth century, and such drunkenness at folk festivals like kermis, where secular activities and drinking were favored over the religious. This inversion of popular interests over religious interests, as viewed by Nuremberg's elite council and urban clergy, was a critical topic of discussion in Nuremberg at the time the kermis woodcuts were made. For many, if not most of Nuremberg's population, however, such an inversion was considered the norm.



Fig. 5. Sebald Beham, *Kermis at Mögeldorf*, Woodcut, ca. 1534, detail sheet 1. Photo: Germanisches Nationalmuseum Nürnberg. Used by permission.

The *Kermis at Mögeldorf* and its iconography are linked to the new institution of the Reformation government in Nuremberg. The print emphasizes, on one hand, the shared outlook of the population at large, which enjoyed kermis because of its potential for drink and other secular delights. At the same time, however, the print also seems to emphasize, on

the other, the views of Nuremberg's small elite of city clergy and council members who viewed kermis as unchristian and drinking as unfavorable at religious festivals like kermis.

The kermis woodcuts include printed inscriptions and additional texts that further our understanding of these complex images. Sebald's *Kermis (Erlangen)*, known in a unique impression in Erlangen (fig. 6), bears an inscription in Latin above the image at upper left. Dated here to ca. 1535,³⁸ the print includes the elements of inn and drunken peasant, underscoring drink and dancing, as seen above, and it adds a kermis flag hanging from the church tower in the background. It also adds a dog at lower



Fig. 6. Sebald Beham, *Kermis (Erlangen)*, ca. 1535. Photo: Graphische Sammlung, Universitätsbibliothek Erlangen-Nürnberg. Used by permission.

³⁸Sebald's *Kermis (Erlangen)* was dated to ca. 1533 by Röttinger, based on the inclusion of a group fighting similar to the one in Sebald's *Nose Dance* (see Geisberg-Strauss, *German Single-Leaf Woodcut*, 262) dated 1534. The group fighting is absent from the Erlangen version but present in the Oxford and the Gotha copies. The Gotha copy is clearly inferior in quality to the Erlangen version. Moxey, "Church Anniversary Holidays," attributed the Erlangen version to Sebald as a copy after the original in Gotha by Barthel, following Röttinger's attribution in his *Barthel Behams*, 26f. This attribution runs counter to the higher quality of the Erlangen version and the clearly inferior quality of the Gotha and Oxford versions, which appear to be copies. Röttinger's fight scene comparison with the *Nose Dance* is less convincing than with the same scene in the *Large Kermis* dated 1535. I therefore favor a date of ca. 1535 for the *Kermis (Erlangen)* and after ca. 1535 for the Oxford and Gotha copies.



Fig. 7. Copy after Sebald Beham, *Kermis (Oxford)*, woodcut, after ca. 1535, detail sheet 2. Photo: Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Used by permission.

right as replacement for the pig accompanying the drunkard. This composition must originally have been twice as wide, judging from the games and sword fight included in copies today at Oxford and Gotha (figs. 7 and 8). The inscription on the Erlangen composition is an imperial privilege, which translates from the Latin as follows:

By the favor and privilege of his imperial majesty
 Let no one dare to print the present work
 Under pain and payment of ten marks of pure gold.
 Albrecht Glockendon Publisher.³⁹

³⁹Imperatoris Maiestatis gratia & privilegio: ne
 quis in tipis presens opus Imprimere ausit: sub



Fig. 8. Copy after Sebald Beham, *Kermis (Oxford)*. Woodcut, after ca. 1535, detail sheet 2. Photo: Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Used by permission.

penis et tensuris Decem Marcarum auri purissimi:

Albrecht Glockendon Illuminist.

I am grateful to Joseph Solodow, Classics Dept., Columbia University, for help with the transcription and translation in 1985. A nearly identical inscription is included at the upper left corner of state one in Sebald Beham's *Feast of Herod* woodcut (Pauli 832), as listed in Hollstein, *German Engravings, Etchings, and Woodcuts* 3:188.

This privilege demonstrates that, in the sixteenth century, printed images were frequently copied and that publishers, like Albrecht Glockendon from Nuremberg here, attempted to protect the images they printed by copyrighting them. Such woodcuts must have been good business and attracted copyists, as the two versions in Oxford and Gotha attest. Each of these two compositions was printed on four sheets. This suggests that the Erlangen composition, which has the same composition but is superior in quality and is known today in only two sheets, was probably also originally printed on four sheets. The inferior copy in Gotha is known today in a unique later impression, which was pulled from a cracked block with wormholes. The Gotha copy is characterized by areas of solid black in the door of the inn, whereas the copy in Oxford employs cross-hatching in its doorway and bears an inscription below in Latin.

The Latin inscription on the *Kermis* (Oxford) derives from Vergil's *Georgics*: "Ah too fortunate the peasants, if they were to know their blessings!" ("*O fortunatos nimium/sua si bona norint/Agricolos.*") To one modern writer this suggests (in most understated manner) a vision in which peasants do not realize their own good fortune.⁴⁰ Indeed, it is most certainly difficult for such violent peasants, as those depicted in the woodcut, to appreciate their own situation or fortune. In the kermis woodcuts in general, the bad fortune of this holiday is clearly attested by two peasants who inflict bodily harm upon themselves through excessive drink and upon others through their swords. One man falls; his severed hand can be seen on the ground beside him. Nuremberg's council considered the severing of hands and feet to be enough of a problem that it condemned such violence in legislation it issued. The printed image appears, therefore, to reconstruct that generally violent contemporary reality as seen by the council into the particular reality of kermis.⁴¹ At the same time, this particular detail suggests criticism of kermis by the authorities.

The inclusion of a Latin inscription indicates that the audience must have included members of the small group of educated elite, who could read or understand Latin and who were interested in popular culture. Such an educated audience runs counter to the art-historical assumption that the lower quality of such woodcuts indicates low cost and an audience modest in taste and education. Art historians have long viewed the woodcut audience to be broader than that for engravings. Woodcuts are easier to produce and easier to print in large numbers. Engravings are

⁴⁰I have identified the inscription as deriving from the *Georgics*, book II, lines 458–59. Comments on the passage in Vergil from Michael C. J. Putnam, *Virgil's Poem of the Earth*, *Studies in the Georgics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 143. See also *Virgil*, tr. H. Rushton Fairclough, Loeb Classical Library 63, rev. ed. (London, 1978), 149.

⁴¹For legislation addressing severed hands and feet, see *Ordnungsbuch des Fünfergericht oder Polizeigerichts der Reichsstadt Nürnberg*, ca. 1570 (hereafter, *Fünfergericht*], fol. 270r–v.

more difficult to print and are finer in quality, and are therefore more expensive. Indeed, we know that Dürer's woodcuts, for example, seem to have sold for a maximum of one-half to one-quarter of the price of his engravings.⁴² The finer quality of engravings and their correspondingly higher prices have gone hand in hand, the argument has it, with a finer audience having higher education and more refined taste. This argument has explained the massive difference in quality between the simple woodcuts and fine engravings during much of the fifteenth century.⁴³

Sebald Behaim's *Large Kermis* (fig. 8) is by far the best of the kermis woodcuts. Both signed with the artist's monogram HSB and dated 1535 at upper left,⁴⁴ it was apparently completed after Sebald left Nuremberg (he renounced his Nuremberg citizenship in 1535) and settled in Frankfurt in the early 1530s. The woodcut is extant today in numerous impressions and is more successful in its combination of higher quality design and carving of the wood block and broad continuous narrative across four sheets than in the similar yet less monumental Erlangen-Oxford-Gotha composition.⁴⁵ The *Large Kermis* emphasizes drinking at a tavern (center), a wedding before a church (upper left), a booth offering purses for sale at the fair portion of kermis (left of church), and a whole array of secular delights carving a swathe across the foreground of all four sheets—eating and drinking, dancing, and playing games. Thus, the secular here dominates the religious. At lower left, lovers point to a dentist, whose female assistant robs a patient, and an innkeeper taps a barrel of beer or wine that will be offered for sale along with the bread in the basket. At the bottom of sheet two (i.e., the second sheet from left), more peasants converse and shake hands in what appears to be agreement. One of these men carries a

⁴²Charles W. Talbot, ed., *Albrecht Dürer in America: His Graphic Work* exhibition catalogue (Washington, D. C., National Gallery of Art, 1971), 15; and Alison G. Stewart, *Unequal Lovers: A Study of Unequal Couples in Northern Art* (New York: Abaris, 1979), 119.

⁴³Alison G. Stewart, "Early Woodcut Workshops," *Art Journal* 39 (Spring 1980): 194.

⁴⁴Although the date of the *Large Kermis* has been read as 1539, the unique impression of state I in London unquestionably includes a 5 as the last numeral. The illustration in Geisberg-Strauss, *German Single-Leaf Woodcut*, no. 251–54 of state III in West Berlin shows an impression in which the 5 has slipped during printing, thus making it appear to be a 9.

⁴⁵The *Large Kermis* exists in five or six states. Hollstein, *German* 3, no. 255, after Pauli, *Hans Sebald Behaim*, no. 1245, publishes five states. I agree with this, with the following exceptions: the orders of states II and III should be reversed, and there may have been an additional state after state III, which should be considered for the impression in Stuttgart. It has several cracks in the block and the horizontal bar of the cross on the church steeple has nearly broken off. Locations of impressions for each state are: I: London; II: Oxford and Vienna (incomplete); III: West Berlin; IV: Stuttgart; V: Karlsruhe and Vienna; VI: West Berlin, Braunschweig, Chicago, Coburg, Donaueschingen, Erlangen, Gotha, Munich, New York, Nuremberg, Paris, Vienna. For more information on the states, and those of the other kermis prints, see "The Individuals and the Prints" in my *Feasting and Spinning*, no. 10, also in Stewart, *First Peasant Festivals*, 400–401.

wild boar or pig. In the middle of the woodcut, men and women embrace before a tavern, eat and drink, and the lansquenet to the right of the table offers dice to a well-dressed woman. Chickens copulate to the left of the tavern and, somewhat below, a mound of excrement appears. In the *Kermis* (Oxford) and *Kermis* (Gotha), one man crouches behind a fence and another beneath a bush. In the Oxford version, the excrement is even tinted brown. In sheet three of the *Large Kermis*, men clash swords apparently over the wager made by two men below the Maypole, as bagpipe and shawm players provide music; and on sheet four, peasants play games including a foot race, and dance peacefully.

Humanists with an ethnographic interest in vernacular culture offer comparable descriptions of German folk culture. In 1520, Johannes Bohemus, preacher and incipient Lutheran, describes music, drinking, and dancing beneath a linden tree at kermis, all represented in the right half of Beham's woodcut.⁴⁶ In 1534 Bohemus's Latin text was published in German by Sebastian Franck, radical Reformer and Sebald Beham's brother-in-law, thereby significantly broadening the audience and the text's influence.⁴⁷ In his collection of proverbs dated 1530, Johannes Agricola stresses the popularity of kermis for each and every small German village, adding that Germans from four or five such villages go to kermis at the same time. This appears to have been historical fact, as we shall see below.⁴⁸ The broad appeal of kermis and its popularity are adumbrated by Agricola's 1534 edition of 750 proverbs, which was intended for educated and uneducated circles alike. About 1560, Georg Wickram describes women competing in a foot race, such as that seen in Beham's woodcut at right, and what he calls "Bacchus's feast" or a "church shy" (*kirchscheuch*). Wickram employs this parody of the term church festival or kermis (*kirchweih*), because celebrators shy away from the church and religious commemoration which, in his opinion, should have been central to the celebration. Wickram describes a nobleman who enters the church and finds no one

⁴⁶Carroll, "Peasant Festivity," 290, mentions Bohemus's inclusion of music, drinking, and dancing beneath the linden tree in the tradition of Tacitus. She omits Bohemus's description of the kermis procession that I mention here. For Bohemus himself, see Erich Oswald and Richard Beitzl, eds., *Wörterbuch der deutschen Volkskunde*, 3d ed. (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1974), 99–100.

⁴⁷Sebastian Franck, *Weltbuch: spiegel und biltniss des gantzen erdbodens* (Tübingen, 1534).

⁴⁸Johannes Agricola, *Das ander teyl gemainer Tewtscher Sprichwörter mit ihrer Ausslegung, hat fünff halb hundert newer wörter* (Nuremberg: Johann Stüchs, 1530, SB): fol. 45r: "Zu den kirchmessen/odder Kirchweyhen/gehen die Tewtschenn Vier/Fünff dorff schafft zu sammen/es geschicht aber des jars nur ein mal/darumb ist es löblich vnnd ehrlich/syntemal die lewttte dazu geschaffen sind/das sie freundtlich vnd ehrlich vnter eynder leben sollen." For Agricola's proverbs, see Gustav Kawerau, *Johann Agricola von Eisleben. Ein Beitrag zur Reformationsgeschichte* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1977), 109.

there. Rather than listen to the sermon during kermis, all hurry to eat at the inn. A comparable situation appears at the center of Beham's *Large Kermis*, where inn is stressed and placed in front. The church, meanwhile, is relegated to the background.⁴⁹ The contemporary situation in Germany suggests either that both Beham and Wickram drew on popular, actual aspects of kermis for their pictorial and textual descriptions, or Wickram drew on Beham's print itself. The former seems to me to be the more plausible explanation.

Links to German nationalism by humanists writing such ethnographic description have been noted by Margaret Carroll and independently by this writer.⁵⁰ Carroll cites Aventinus's *Bavarian Chronicle* of 1526 (not published until 1566) that holding elaborate church festival celebrations is honorable, because "no harm or evil comes to any one from them." This statement does not wholly stand up when compared to Beham's woodcut, where one peasant has lost a hand and another suffers from excessive drink. But Carroll rightly sets her discussion of the church festivals against Tacitus's *Germania*, where feasting and drinking are said to have been part of the German peasant culture already in ancient times. In fact, Tacitus' view of drunkenness and fighting, to use Carroll's words, are "integral to German festive practice, not ... an indictment of it," and underscore the acceptance of festival excess within the boundaries of festivals themselves. Although Carroll links positive commentaries on peasant festivity in Germany to what she calls "a broader polemic upholding the value of native popular culture in opposition to the foreign intrusions of pope, [and] emperor (after the death of Maximilian I in 1519)," it appears to be more the case that the ethnographic descriptions and collections of proverbs of the early sixteenth century belong to the beginnings of German folklore or folk history, which was grounded in sixteenth-century German humanism. Indeed, Bohemus's *Omnium gentium mores* of 1520 has been earmarked as the first German folklore.⁵¹ Carroll's politicization, or re-contextualization, of this folkloric direction seems more in keeping with new directions in twentieth-century scholarship than with sixteenth-century concerns. Carroll brings, however, much important material to light and emphasizes an approbational approach to festivity I support.

⁴⁹The text by Wickram is cited by Rudolf Frenzel, "Der deutsche Bauer in der ersten Hälfte des 16. Jahrhunderts," *Bremer Beiträge zur niederdeutschen Volkskunde* (1962/63): 136–37.

⁵⁰Carroll, "Peasant Festivity," 290, 293; Stewart, *First "Peasant Festivals,"* 145.

⁵¹Erich and Beitzl, *Wörterbuch der deutschen Volkskunde*, 99, pinpoints the third part of Bohemus's work as the first German folklore. For folklore arising out of early sixteenth-century humanism, see Erich Schmidt, "Johannes Böhm aus Aub. Die Entstehung der deutschen Volkskunde aus dem Humanismus," *Zeitschrift für Bayerische Landesgeschichte* 12 (1939): 94–111; Erich Schmidt, *Deutsche Volkskunde im Zeitalter des Humanismus und der Reformation*, *Historische Studien* 47 (Berlin: E. Ebering, 1904); and Erich Schmidt, "Von der taciteischen zur humanistischen Germania," *Deutsches Jahrbuch für Volkskunde* 1 (1955): 11–40.

THE KERMIS FESTIVAL IN NUREMBERG
AND EVANGELICAL LEGISLATION

After this essentially positive approach to German kermis by learned voices throughout Germany, let us zero in on kermis celebrated in Nuremberg as viewed by the educated voices of Nuremberg's authorities. At the time the kermis woodcuts were produced in the late 1520s and 1530s in Nuremberg, kermis was celebrated within Nuremberg's territories at a minimum of nine different locations, only two of which were in town. Seven of these took place, therefore, in Nuremberg's countryside. These church festivals were celebrated over as many as eight days in the summer and fall often around harvest time.⁵² They stressed amusement and thus the secular celebration, far more than the religious observation, so much so that revelers streamed in from neighboring towns⁵³

In the city itself, the first Nuremberg kermis of the season took place at Pentecost (between May 10 and June 13) near the church of St. Lorenz on Schütt island.⁵⁴ The weavers' kermis was celebrated July 4 on the feast day of St. Ulrich at the church of the same name, in the northern part of the city. Prior to the Reformation, the church of St. Sebald was the site of a kermis in late August.⁵⁵

In Nuremberg's countryside, smaller festivals were offered at the eastern and southwestern villages of Wöhrd and Gostenhof. To the southeast and northwest of the town walls, the villages of St. Peter and St. Johanni

⁵²Erich and Beitzl, *Wörterbuch der deutschen Volkskunde*, 451, and Wilhelm Pessler, ed., *Handbuch der deutschen Volkskunde* 2 (Potsdam: Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft Athenion GmbH, [1936]), 451. Hans Bächtold-Stäubli and Eduard Hoffman-Krayer, eds., *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens*, 4 (Berlin: De Gruyter), col. 1421.

⁵³Karl -S. Kramer, *Volksleben im Fürstentum Ansbach* (Würzburg: Kommissionsverlag F. Schöningh, 1961), 119.

⁵⁴Friedrich Bock, *Zur Volkskunde der Reichsstadt Nürnberg. Lese Früchte und Untersuchungen*, Beiträge zur Volkstumsforschung 12; Veröffentlichungen der Gesellschaft für Fränkische Geschichte 14, series 9 (Würzburg: Kommissionsverlag Schöningh, 1959), 30. See Karin Wagner, *Kirchweih in Franken*, (Erlangen: Palm und Enke, 1971). For a map of Nuremberg's city within the walls in the early sixteenth century, see *Die Chroniken der fränkischen Städten* 5: fold-out map.

⁵⁵Bock, *Volkskunde der Reichsstadt Nürnberg*, 31. The anniversary of the consecration of the choir of St. Sebald in 1379 was celebrated on Sunday until the Reformation, according to Franz Machilek, "Dedicaciones Ecclesiae Sancti Sebaldi. Die mittelalterlichen Kirch- und Altarweihen bei St. Sebald in Nürnberg," Helmut Baier, ed., *600 Jahre Ostchor St. Sebald—Nuremberg* (Neustadt a. d. Aisch: Schmidt, 1979), 143.

were the location of larger festivals.⁵⁶ On June 24, St. Johanni featured mead drinking and dancing around St. John's fire by the mostly female revelers celebrating the festival in honor of St. John the Baptist. Perhaps the smallest kermis was that of the small fish hut inn, or *Fischhäusli*, located at Rosenau just west of the city.⁵⁷

Two additional church festivals were situated farther into the countryside, but still within walking distance of the town. Mögeldorf's kermis was celebrated at Pentecost and was a four-mile walk from Nuremberg's city walls.⁵⁸ As noted above, this kermis was extremely popular with Nuremberg's 80,000 urban and rural residents, and was celebrated in two locations in 1525.⁵⁹ Mögeldorf, by contrast, had fewer than 100 residents. The kermis at Fürth was enjoyed some six miles northwest of the city on the western border of Nuremberg's territories. Celebrated on St. Michael's day (September 29), the Fürth kermis remained then, as today, the last splendid example of kermis in the year.⁶⁰

The events that took place at actual sixteenth-century church festivals, within Nuremberg and outside its walls, have been reconstructed by historians and folklorists based on sixteenth-century documents issued by local authorities and on practices still current around 1900. Such ethnographic analogy has traditionally been used for folk culture in the absence of more direct evidence. Folklorists inform us that a church service took place on the first morning of kermis, and beginning that afternoon secular

⁵⁶Hans Lautensack depicts fields being harvested on the land adjoining the city in two etchings of 1552. For illustrations, see Annegrit Schmitt, *Hanns Lautensack* (Nuremberg: Selbstverlag des Vereins für die Geschichte der Stadt Nürnberg, 1957), figs. 65, 66; cited but not illustrated in Hollstein, *German Engravings*, 21, nos. 4 and 5.

Bock, *Volkskunde der Reichsstadt Nürnberg*, 31, provides no celebration dates for the Wöhrd and Gostenhof festivals, but refers the reader to Wilhelm Schwemmer, *Aus der Vergangenheit der Vorstadt Wöhrd*, ([Nuremberg,] 1931), 55, and for the Gostenhof festival to Ludwig Eisen, *Vor den Toren Altnürnbergs. Geschichte der Vorstadt Gostenhof und des Siechkobels St. Leonhard* (Nuremberg, 1923), 30.

In 1618, for example, 600 Bratwurst were eaten in one day at the kermis at St. Peter; Bock, *Volkskunde der Reichsstadt Nürnberg*, 31–33. For a picture of St. Peter's Siechenkapelle by Hans Lautensack, see Fritz Zink, "Der benennbare Fensterblick im Porträt," *Anzeiger des Germanischen National Museums* (1963), 102, and Hollstein, *German Engravings* 21, no. 68. For St. Johanni, see *St. Johannis ein Nürnberger Stadtteil*, ed. Stadtgeschichtliche Museen Nürnberg, exhibition catalogue, Friedenskirche (Nuremberg: Die Stadt Nürnberg, 1977).

⁵⁷Bock, *Volkskunde der Reichsstadt Nürnberg*, 31, 32.

⁵⁸Kindler, *Mögeldorf*, text accompanying fig. 66. See Beyer, *Der Nürnberger Stadtteil Mögeldorf*.

⁵⁹*Die Chroniken der fränkischen Städten* 5: 618 no. 10, and 662 nos. 14–17; RV 714, f. 21v. (10 May 1525): "Die kirchweyh in die Pffingsten seyen Zu Mögeldorff zu besuchen, heier in zwe stellen."

⁶⁰Bock, *Volkskunde der Reichsstadt Nürnberg*, 34. See "Über die Fürther Kirchweih," *Fürther Nachrichten* 116 (1 Oct. 1949): 9f. (StB), where it is called the largest Franconian kermis. On Nuremberg's population, see n. 69, below.

activities, such as dancing, wrestling, and pole climbing, provided entertainment. The second day included dances around a rooster and a May-pole, and dice games. Fire eaters, acrobats, itinerant performers, and salesmen were also present. The sale of freshly cooked food and wares (see fig. 8, upper left) were popular then, as now, at such festivals.⁶¹

In addition, documents dating throughout the sixteenth century mention a number of forms of entertainment represented by Beham: climbing the pole for the rooster, women racing, the game of skittles or ninepins, walking over swords—a folk custom described by Tacitus—and the kermis flag hanging from the church tower.⁶² Nearly all these aspects of kermis believed by folklorists to have taken place at kermis throughout the centuries can be seen in Sebald's kermis prints from Nuremberg. The kermis woodcuts, far from being total fabrications on the part of the artist, draw on the realities of kermis in the sixteenth century.

Legislation issued in Nuremberg provides a distinct view of kermis, the favorite peasant holiday around the year 1500. This view belongs to Nuremberg's patrician council members, who can be included in Germany's select group of educated elite. In sixteenth-century social hierarchies, this sector of society falls far above the masses, which includes the peasantry. Indeed, by hearing this voice for what it is, the voice of authority, we can see through it and better understand the role kermis played in Nuremberg. And far from taking the views of such elite members as the key to our interpretation, as Moxey does, we need, rather, to use them with an interpretative grain of salt. The authorities in Nuremberg first attempted to regulate church festivals soon after the Reformation became the town's official religion in March 1525. On June 16, Nuremberg's town council members were asked to "Deliberate and consult how kermis in the countryside could be abolished." Deliberations lasted over one year, until the following kermis season. On 31 July 1526, a territorial administrator on Nuremberg's council asked council members, "To deliberate if and how kermis is to be prohibited in my lords' territories."

⁶¹For the activities of the first day, see Eduard Kück und Heinrich Sohnrey, *Feste und Spiele des deutschen Landvolks* 3d. ed. (Berlin: Deutsche Landbuchhandlung GmbH, 1925), 226, 231, 233. For the activities of the second day, see Eduard Rühl, "Sonderformen fränkischer Kirchweihen," *Bayerisches Jahrbuch für Volkskunde* (1953): 115; and Ernst Walter Zeeden, *Deutsche Kultur in der frühen Neuzeit*, *Handbuch der Kulturgeschichte* 1, pt. 5 (Frankfurt a.M.: Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft Athenaion, 1968), 339.

⁶²Pessler, *Handbuch der deutschen Volkskunde* 2:109. For the kermis flag, see Karl-S. Kramer, *Bauern und Bürger im nachmittelalterlichen Unterfranken. Eine Volkskunde auf Grund archivalischer Quellen* (Würzburg: Kommissionsverlag Schöningh, 1957), 73, who mentions documents for Franconia that date back to the eighteenth century. The kermis flag is also mentioned in the *Brockhaus Enzyklopädie*, 10: 204, and by Johannes Agricola, *Tewtscher Sprichwörter* (1530), fol. 45r.

One month later, in the late summer, the favored time for kermis, the council decided to abolish kermis and announced in a separate decree that the market or fair (*merckt*) at kermis could continue:

Item—the honorable council decrees, in preparation for tax [collection], that it should be announced everywhere within the honorable council's territory that kermis should no longer be held. In consideration that much malice will result to the tax collectors on the same day [as announcement], this announcement should not be disseminated orally by the tax collectors but in written form by a territorial administrator of the honorable council.⁶³

We can see from this document that church festivals in Nuremberg's countryside were popular enough among residents that the councilors were wary that the rural populace would respond violently upon word of kermis's abolition and harm the tax collector who announced termination of kermis. The council's decision to disseminate this information by tax collectors in written rather than in oral form was clearly for the protection of those collectors.

Two months later (30 October 1526), the proclamation was clarified by tax collectors and a territorial administrator. The council decreed that residents of the town of Wendelstein would receive the communication orally from tax collectors, although elsewhere it would be posted in written form. The decree reads:

Kermis in the country, within the honorable council's territories, [should be] totally abolished, and at Wendelstein should [be accomplished] orally by the tax collectors and at other places in written fashion.

Tax collectors
Territorial administrator.⁶⁴

⁶³The documents cited in the text are RV 718, fol. 2v (16 June 1525): "Bedencken und ratslagen wie man die kirchweyhen auff dem lannd konnd abstellen"; RV 733, fol. 7r (31 July 1526): "Zu ratschlagen, ob in meiner herrn gepieten die kirchweyh und wie zu verpieten sein"; and SA, Ratsbuch 13, fol. 135v–136r (28 August 1526): "Item bey eynem erbern Rath ist erteilt das itzt in bereitung der steur allenthalben in eynem erbern Rath gepiet, die Kirch wey nit mehr zuhalten abgekunt werden sollen angesehen das vil args deraus kompt per die steurhern eodem die vnd wie solchs durch die steurhern nit mentlich bescheehe soll es durch eins erbern Raths lanndspfleger schriftlich bescheen." For markets and market women, see Merry Wiesner, *Working Women in Renaissance Germany* (Rutgers, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1986), 134–47, and Merry Wiesner Wood, "Paltry Peddlers or essential merchants," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 22 (Spring 1981): 1–13.

⁶⁴RV 734, f. 10r (30 August 1526): "Die kirchweyhen auffm lannd inn aim Erbrn Raths gepieten gantzlich abzustellen auch zu Wendelstain soll durch die steurherrn mundtlich und an den andern orten schriftliche bescheen. \ Steurherrn \ Landspfleger."

Such decrees, or *Ratsverlässe*, were announced from the town hall and pulpits of Nuremberg's two main churches, if the contents of the decrees applied to the public, as these on kermis clearly did. After the Reformation in Nuremberg, printed mandates supplemented the council's proclamations. Mandates were posted in town on city gates, church doors, and chain poles that served as announcement centers. In the countryside, mandates were sent to members of the clergy, who read them aloud from the pulpit, or to an administrator or member of a subordinate office. Again, posting and reading aloud served as the means of public dissemination.⁶⁵ A set of laws dating from 1529 proclaims the latter form of dissemination on the title page: *Mandates or Laws, to be Announced Annually on the First or Other Sunday during Lent in the Countryside, 1529*.⁶⁶

The wording of the proclamation of 1526 abolishing kermis suggests that the population of Wendelstein, a village southeast of the town walls but still within Nuremberg's territories, did not pose the same threat to tax collectors announcing the abolition of kermis as did the remainder of Nuremberg's rural population, who clearly favored kermis for the popular holiday it was. To those threatening peasants, the council decided to impart kermis's abolition through written sources posted publicly, rather than through oral communication. On the same day (30 August 1526), the Office of Territorial Administration also issued a decision that the market or fair at church festivals could continue: "Henceforth kermis should be abolished in all large villages, without relinquishing and abolishing the usual fair."⁶⁷ This decision was distributed in written form, which has not survived. A printed form of the proclamation dates to 1530 and, like the earlier decisions, was issued in the late summer when kermis was frequently celebrated around harvest time.

By fall 1526, then, Nuremberg's council members had decided that kermis, at heart a religious holiday, should no longer be celebrated in its complete secular form, but only as a market or fair.⁶⁸ Decrees undoubt-

⁶⁵August Jegel, "Altnürnberger Hochzeitsbrauch und Eherecht, besonders bis zum Ausgang des 16. Jahrhunderts," *Mitteilungen des Vereins für die Geschichte der Stadt Nürnberg* 44 (1953): 243, 244. The chains between the poles in the city were drawn at night to close off streets and lanes for security reasons. Mandates supplemented the council's proclamations (*Ratsverlässe*) after the Reformation.

⁶⁶*Mandata oder Gesetze/erlich am Ersten oder Andern Suntag inn der Vasten/auf dem Lande zu verkünden* (n.p., 1529) (Nuremberg, Stadtarchiv [hereafter, StA], Mandate 1529). A new, enlarged edition of this set of laws, with the same information on the title page, is cited for the year 1548 in Nuremberg by Emil Sehling, ed., *Die evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des XVI. Jahrhunderts*, 11: pt. 1: Franken/Bayern (Tübingen: Mohr, 1961), 484. Another re-edition dates to 1572 (StA, Mandate 1572).

⁶⁷"Mer in all flecken. Vnnd die kirchwey sollen abgstelt seyn, doch vnbeugen vnd abgstelt der gewonlichen merckt." SA, *Manual des Landpflegeamts* 4 (30 August 1526): fol. 102r.

⁶⁸On the importance of the fair as center of commerce at kermis and other carnival-like celebrations, see Stallybrass and White, *Politics and Poetics*, 30; on the fair in general, 27–44.

edly brought an end to the three church festivals within the city, for Nuremberg legislation is silent on them, implying they posed no problem. Kermis in the countryside, however, continued to be celebrated and was frequently mentioned in legislation indicating that council members were acting in an attempt to control that rural festival. With 736 villages in Nuremberg's countryside and a population of more than 40,000 peasants who differed economically and socially, the council set a difficult task for itself in trying to abolish the favorite peasant holiday, which was also visited by inhabitants of the city (another 40,000).⁶⁹

The task of abolishing kermis in Nuremberg proved, in fact, to be so difficult, or to require such persistence, that the council as well as clergy continued their attempts to reform kermis into the eighteenth century, as extant legislation and sermons attest.⁷⁰ The council's persistence was undoubtedly required not only because of the difficulty of the task at hand, but in the face of backsliding, new conditions (such as war-ravaged countrysides), or new generations. This evidence over centuries points to the fact that kermis did, indeed, continue to be celebrated despite the council's continuing efforts. In particular, their efforts in 1572 and 1594 stressed visiting the church sermon during kermis, rather than squandering the resources of the common man (*gemeiner Mann*) at inns. Those efforts also stressed not feasting and visiting kermis over the course of several weeks. Attempts were also made to abolish dancing as well at church festivals.⁷¹

In Behaim's *Large Kermis* (fig. 9), inn and feasting are centrally located, and dancing is enjoyed at right. The print, like the legislation, indicates both sides of kermis—the continued popularity and vitality of this primarily secular festival, on one hand, while the authorities in Nuremberg attempted to abolish the festival, on the other. The council was even more specific in other legislation. In the printed mandate dated 1530 (fig. 10), gangs and crowds are cited by the city fathers for creating disturbances at

⁶⁹Nuremberg's countryside was divided into thirteen administrative districts, each governed by a territorial administrator. For the population and numbers of villages in Nuremberg's rural territories, see Lawrence Paul Buck, "The Containment of Civil Insurrection: Nürnberg and the Peasants' Revolt, 1524-1525" (Unpublished dissertation, Ohio State University, 1971), 21-25; Nuremberg's urban population was between 40,000 and 50,000, according to Buck (7 n. 1), who cites more recent research. Gerald Strauss, *Nuremberg in the Sixteenth Century. City Politics and Life between Middle Ages and Modern Times* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976): 36,38, relying on more traditional information, gives the population of the city within the walls as 20,000, and the population of the countryside at 20,000. Buck sets the population of the countryside at over twice that, to about 44,000, the city's to the same, and the total population to a good 80,000.

⁷⁰See Will I, 2: 66 (Nuremberg, Stadtbibliothek [hereafter StB]) for the year 1594; Mandate 4 September 1620 and 12 February 1681 (StA); and Will II: 570 and 558, for sermons of 1652 and 1741 (StB).

⁷¹Mandate 12 May 1572: Ciir and Cii v (StA) and Will I, 2: 66 (StB).

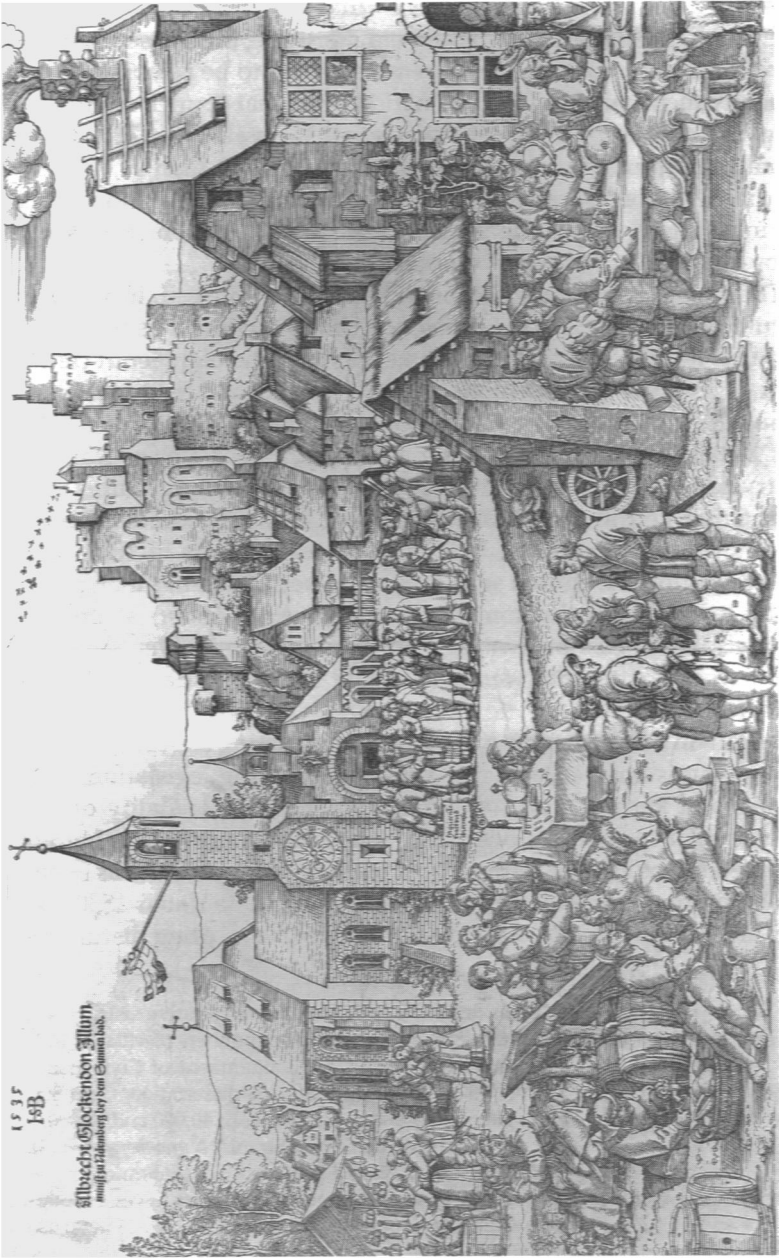


Fig. 9a. Sebald Beham, *Large Kermis*, woodcut, 1535, left side. (Photo: Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Used by permission.)

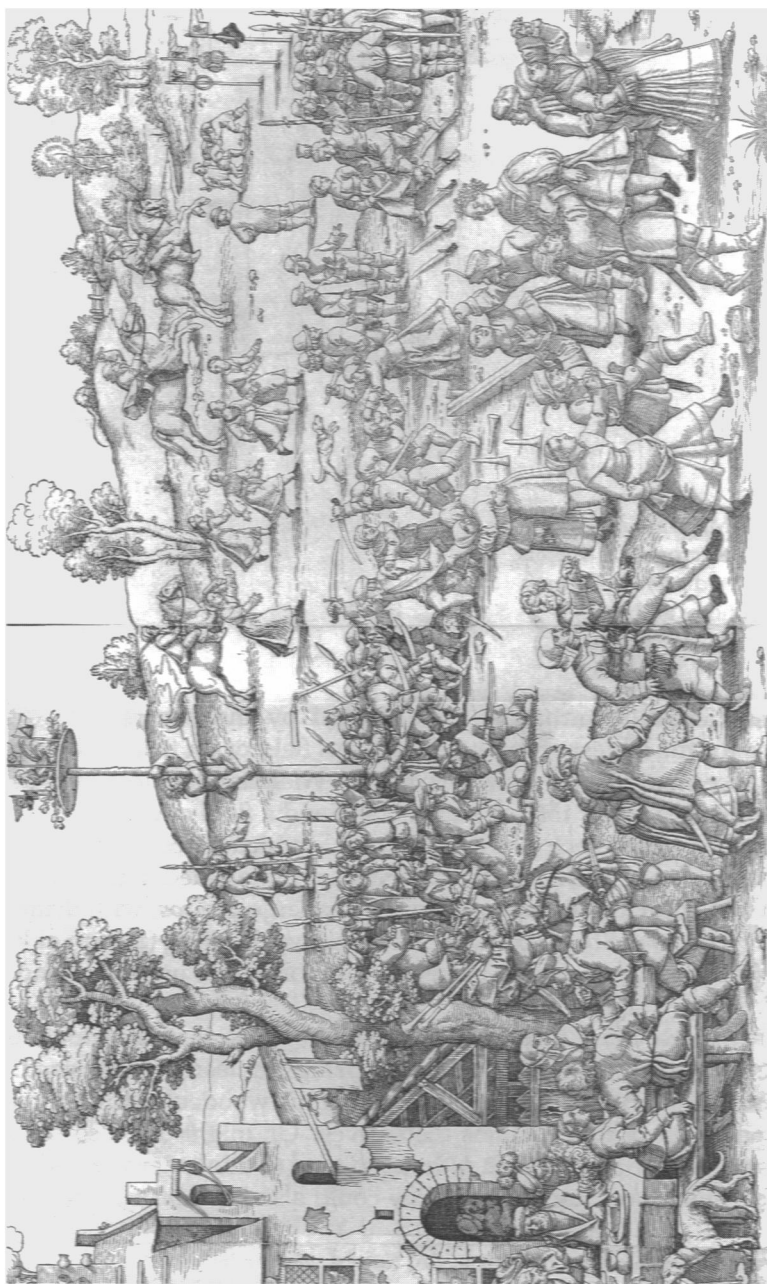


Fig. 9b. Sebald Beham, *Large Kermis*, woodcut, 1535, right side (Photo: Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Used by permission.)

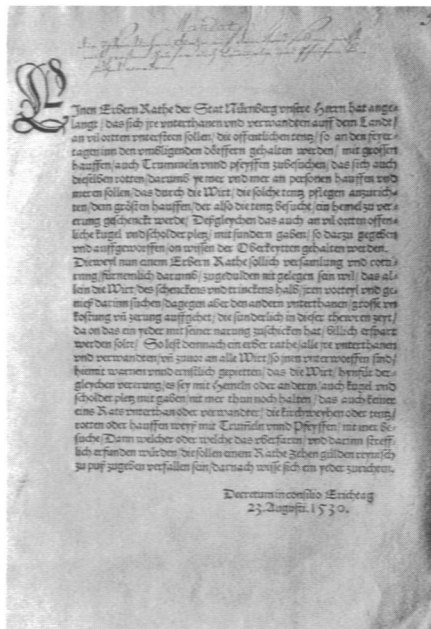


Fig. 10. Mandate addressing gangs and crowds at kermis, 1530 (Stadtarchiv, Nuremberg, (Photo: author)

kermis. These disturbances were caused by innkeepers, who offered prizes for the largest group on the skittles field or on fields where games of chance were played. As we have seen, Wickram mentions similar popular practices about 1560. A skittles field and a field of chance with gambling are similarly included in the kermis woodcuts (see fig. 8). In order to reduce noise and violence, the council also commanded in the mandate of 1530 that church festivals *not* be visited in large groups, with drums and fifes.⁷² The council also condemned excessive drinking (*zechen*) at kermis and forbade it from taking place there, according to another mandate of 1537.⁷³

Although drum and fife are absent from the kermis woodcuts, the large group on the skittles' field and boozing are clearly emphasized. Does the inclusion of these elements in the kermis woodcuts indicate reliance on contemporary folk customs themselves? Or, might one also see objections of the elite authorities? Although I tend to think viewers understood these elements as descriptions, they could also have been understood as

⁷²St.A, Mandate (23 August 1530); SA, Nürnberger Mandate, vol A: 52, no. 24, with the title "Tentz vf dem Land"; and in the *Fünfergericht*, fol. 262r-v, with minor changes. The long mandate is cited in full in Stewart, *First "Peasant Festivals,"* 189–90.

⁷³SA, Nürnberger Mandate, vol. A: 116, no. 49 (17 September 1537); also *Fünfergerichts*, fol. 9r ff. Stewart, *First "Peasant Festivals,"* 87, cites the German.

criticisms by those sympathetic to such moralizing goals. Further criticisms of kermis by Nuremberg's authorities are cited in Nuremberg's feast days' mandate, which laid down the council's objections to religious holidays in general.

The feast days' mandate is an evangelical document that dates to 24 May 1525, only months after Nuremberg officially became Lutheran. The council's criticisms of religious holidays, or feast days in general, are seen in this mandate and are similar to those for Nuremberg's church festivals in particular, as we have already seen. Kermis was considered to be a religious holiday in Nuremberg, because it honored the anniversary of a church's consecration and often the name day of the saint to whom the church was dedicated. The mandate states that,

Numerous feast days ... have led to the highest dishonor of God's holy word because these same numerous feast days were cause for ... blasphemy, drunkenness, anger, lust, adultery, strife, manslaughter, brawls, and other public and sinful vices.⁷⁴

Excessive imbibing in competitive form, like toasting (i. e., drinking as much as the person before you drank), was added by the council in 1527 along with a litany of problems at religious holidays, including gambling, injuries, feasting, excessive drinking, and other sins. Feasting and excessive drinking were singled out for causing the unemployment of the common man, who, it was said, abdicated responsibility for household and his numerous children.⁷⁵

In the *Large Kermis*, Sebald represents gambling by dice at the table before the inn, injuries by the amputated hand on the skittles field, and feasting and excessive drinking are shown at center before the inn. These indicate those aspects of kermis that Nuremberg's patrician authorities would have found objectionable. Yet, as we have seen, this critical voice formed the minority opinion in Nuremberg. Thus most viewers, unless council members themselves, could very well have understood them as commonplaces at kermis, as actual parts of the vital festival, as practiced by contemporaries.

The one other discussion of Nuremberg church festivals extant today that I have been able to find was written by Veit Dietrich, pastor of Nuremberg's church of St. Sebald from 1535 to 1547. Dietrich, a follower of

⁷⁴ Gerhard Pfeiffer, ed., *Quellen zur Nürnberger Reformationsgeschichte*, Einzelarbeiten aus der Kirchengeschichte Bayerns 45 (Nuremberg: Verein für Bayerische Kirchengeschichte, 1968), 413, no. 216.

⁷⁵ "Toasting" is my term for *zutrinken*. Lyndal Roper, *The Holy Household. Women and Morals, in Reformation Augsburg* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 73, uses "competitive drinking." Pfeiffer, *Quellen zur Nürnberger Reformationsgeschichte*, 445, no. 262, for the *Verzeichnus der geenderten misspreuch und ceremonien*.

Luther who studied and lived with him, stresses that God and holy works should be central in the ideal kermis, which he contrasts with the actual kermis and its foolishness, frivolities, and sins—when people act like pigs, and drink inordinately, gamble, and lose an arm or hand, or are stabbed or crippled. All of these, including the hand, are represented by Beham and agree with Nuremberg's criticism of religious holidays from 1527. Dietrich suggests that excessive drinking, playing skittles, gambling, and other amusements be forbidden during the church sermon. He thereby offers the same reasons mentioned by the council in its feast days legislation, but he specifically orients them to kermis.⁷⁶ As council and prominent clergy in Nuremberg worked together, this agreement in opinion is fully in keeping with official policy. Thus, Nuremberg's prominent urban clergy as well as council members could have viewed the kermis woodcuts with criticism, if not outright disdain.

KERMIS AND NUREMBERG'S RURAL CLERGY

But it is important to stress here that we are talking about prominent *urban* clergy. The clergy members pictured in the kermis woodcuts appear, however, to be local *rural* pastors. And whereas prominent urban clergy like Dietrich criticized kermis, members of Nuremberg's rural clergy certainly endorsed it and enjoyed it, the reasons being at least financial. In principalities near Nuremberg later in the century, rural clergy were forbidden to go to kermis. In Brandenburg-Ansbach-Kulmbach, to the north, west, and south of Nuremberg, no chaplain was to drink excessively at inns; no pastor to go to the kermis of another pastor, neither kermis proper nor the "after-kermis"; no chaplain to be so sociable as to booze and engage in secular amusements, especially among peasants and drunken brothers [i.e., clerics].⁷⁷ Such clergy was gregarious at kermis and at other secular occasions. Within Nuremberg, we should

⁷⁶For Dietrich, see *Reformation in Nürnberg—Umbruch und Bewahrung*, exhibition catalogue, Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum (Nuremberg: Verlag Medien und Kultur, 1979), 213, 214, 228; and Sehling, *Die evangelische Kirchenordnungen*, 11 pt. 1, p. 481, n. 1. For a portrait of Dietrich from the circle of Lucas Cranach the Elder, ca. 1540, see *Reformation in Nürnberg*, color pl. 4 after p. 96.

Dietrich's commentary on church festivals was incorporated into Johann Dilhern's book, *Celebration of Holy Sunday*, of 1649 and is thus preserved in a seventeenth-century edition. Dilhern was preacher and professor in Nuremberg, and he cites Luther and Dietrich for their ideas on feast days and Sundays. See Johann Michael Dilhern, *Heilige Sonntagsfeier/beschrieben/ausz heiliger Schrift/alten Kirchen-Vättern/und andern reinen Lehrern* (Nuremberg: Wolfgang Endfern, 1649) (StB, Will. 2. 265). Laws from the first half of the sixteenth century forbidding blasphemy, excessive drinking (*zehen*), and toasting (*zutrincken*) on feast days before the sermon and offices were over are included in the *Fünfergericht*, fol. 98r.

⁷⁷From the Reformed *Kapitelordnung* of 1565 and 1578, cited by Sehling, *Die evangelischen Kirchenordnungen*, 357.

recall, the council told Mögeldorf's priest to stop selling alcoholic beverages or his barrels would be destroyed. We have already seen that Nuremberg's council heard complaints that Mögeldorf's pastor was preaching to the poor peasants of the community, and not to the rich ones, thereby indicating that within the peasant class itself, differences were made between those poorer and better off.

After the adoption of the Lutheran faith, pastors in Nuremberg's countryside commonly increased their meager incomes by selling beer and wine. The few existing records for Nuremberg's first evangelical Church Visitation of 1528 make this clear.⁷⁸ Several pastors from Nuremberg's countryside were forbidden to sell beer and wine, in part to be able to afford books. If chaplain Jobst Messerer did not avoid taverns, he would be dismissed. In 1535 he was called before the council and warned to improve, for he was still often found in taverns. He was, however, forgiven for falling asleep at the altar. Pastor Johann Renauer of Kirchensittenbach, furthermore, was warned that his frequent boozing would not be tolerated much longer.⁷⁹

The results of the Church Visitation of 1528 indicate for Nuremberg's rural areas that clergy members often lived with women without being married and that drinking was often a problem. This reliance on drink by the rural lower clergy was not, apparently, a problem within Nuremberg's walls, according to the existing Visitation records. Some of Nuremberg's urban lower clergy, however, were warned to bone up on their biblical studies, for some clerics were incapable of properly reading passages from the Bible during the church service.⁸⁰ The second Church Visitation in Nuremberg of 1560 included among its "Questions and Admonitions to the Clergy" an item stating that members of the clergy should abstain from all forms of gluttony and avoid taverns.⁸¹

This evidence points to several modes of interpretation for Behaim's kermis prints. First, Behaim shows social problems that actually took place at contemporary kermis as viewed by Nuremberg's elite. Thus, the prints appear to indicate real events. The documents and church visitation records are believed to stress exaggeration, and a similar sense of exagger-

⁷⁸Engelhardt, "Die Kirchenvisitation 1528/29," 89.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 89-91.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 91, 93, 99.

⁸¹Georg Hirschmann, "Die zweite Nürnberger Kirchenvisitation 1560/61," *Zeitschrift für Bayerische Kirchengeschichte* 32 (1963): 131. More records are preserved for the second church visitation of 1560/61 than for the first of 1528/29. See also Georg Hirschmann, "The Second Nürnberg Church Visitation of 1560/61," *The Social History of the Reformation*, ed. Lawrence P. Buck and Jonathan W. Zophy (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1972), 355-80. The same author is preparing an edition of the second church visitation with an expected publication date of 1993.

ation can also perhaps be seen in the kermis prints.⁸² Second, the descriptions can be viewed as description or criticism, depending on the viewer's relationship to the issues involved. If the viewer were a member of Nuremberg's other classes, the images could well have been understood as descriptions. If the viewer were a member of Nuremberg's elite, however, the response to the prints may well have been a moralizing one, if not revulsion. In Moxey's view, such a response on the part of the viewer constituted the major response to the peasant prints. Yet, the town council of Nuremberg did not, in fact, issue prints in the early sixteenth century and thus the council members' relationship to the kermis prints is indirect, at best.⁸³ These prints should not, therefore, be viewed as extensions of the council and as state-sponsored art viewed solely by members of the upper classes in Nuremberg. It also needs to be taken into consideration that interpretation depends not only on the dynamics of class, gender, and race, as Robin Kelley reminded us recently, but on individual preference as well.⁸⁴

THE POPULARITY OF KERMIS

Third, the evidence just presented can be understood as underscoring the popularity of the peasant festival, kermis. That evidence comes from Nuremberg's elite. Unfortunately, no one from that group has described for us in detail the popularity of kermis at Nuremberg and the activities that took place there. Outside Nuremberg, Bohemus described kermis and Agricola kermis's popularity, the latter in a proverbial expression stressing several villages of German country folk going together to kermis.

The popularity of Nuremberg's kermis is historically documented. We know that the kermis at Fürth, located six miles northwest of Nuremberg's city walls, was perhaps just as popular in the sixteenth century as it is today. In 1698, for example, 383 residents of Nuremberg returned one Sunday evening from the Fürth kermis on foot through Nuremberg's westernmost gate. Other celebrators rode on horseback and in coaches, and entered through other gates. The next day more than 111 residents of Nuremberg traveled to Fürth.⁸⁵

⁸²Geoffrey Parker, "Success and Failure during the First Century of the Reformation," *Past and Present*, 136 (August 1992): 47, for exaggeration and visitation records. Parker writes, "In short the visitors [as recorded in visitation records] were predisposed to discover what was wrong in each parish rather than what was right." See also *idem*, 47, n. 13.

⁸³Information gratefully received from Dr. Rainer Schoch, Graphische Sammlung, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg.

⁸⁴Robin G. Kelley, "Notes on Deconstructing 'The Folk,'" *American Historical Review* 97 no. 5 (December 1992): 1408.

⁸⁵Bock, *Volkskunde der Reichsstadt Nürnberg*, 410.

The fact that various modes of transportation are documented as having been taken to that kermis, from foot to horseback to coach, suggests that a wide range of socioeconomic groups, from poor to wealthy, attended kermis. This certainly suggests that the Fürth kermis was celebrated in Behaim's time by members of all Nuremberg's social classes—peasants, artisans, merchants, patricians, and members of the clergy.⁸⁶ Indeed, we know that in 1592 at nearby Hof, the kermis at St. Michael's was celebrated with

special ceremony and games, and that members of the clergy and secular estate gathered together with the entire citizenry, men and women, as well as school girls ... and school boys.⁸⁷

The kermis prints may well have been viewed in their time by a correspondingly broad audience that comprised all classes of society within Nuremberg and without. But it is the view from above, the art historian's construction of audiences comprising mostly the elite, that prevents our seeing and understanding that peasant holidays, like kermis, were big draws and entertaining to large sectors of German society. The kermis woodcuts probably had a similarly broad audience.

In the images most of the kermis revelers are peasants, who sometimes wear their Sunday best (fig. 9, woman at lower right). Members of other groups are also depicted. Occasionally, there is a lansquenet (far left of table), minister or learned man (center and far right), and prince (right of minister). The peasants can be identified by their coats, which are fitted and short, while the learned men or clerics wear cloaks that are thick, gathered, full, and long. The peasant hat and shoes are simpler and sturdier.⁸⁸ By identifying most kermis revelers with the peasantry, Sebald shows that kermis is, first, a rural event with, second, urban followers.

The existing evidence for kermis, however, derives from individuals who belong to the other end of German society, from the educated elite, as we have already seen. This group includes writers, patrician members of Nuremberg's council, and members of the upper clergy. The voices heard in these sources about kermis are not from the social group that favored kermis most, the peasantry, but from the groups that favored kermis the least. The voices heard come from a privileged minority of Germans who were affluent and literate, at a time when few Germans could actually read or who were literate according to the standards of the time. Engels-ing, in fact, estimates that although 10 to 30 percent of town folk could

⁸⁶Strauss, *Nuremberg in the Sixteenth Century*, 117, for Nuremberg's social classes.

⁸⁷Sehling, *Die evangelischen Kirchenordnungen*, 467.

⁸⁸For the fine woman's jacket of the common class, worn by the woman at lower right, see Jost Amman's *In the Women's Room*, entitled *Im Frauenzimmer* (Frankfurt a.M.: Sigmund Feyrabend, 1586), fol. Gr (Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum).

read, the national average in Germany during the sixteenth century came down to a low 5 percent, at best. Indeed, Engelsing suggests that our narrow definition of literacy in the modern sense of being able to read should be expanded for the sixteenth century to include listening and looking.⁸⁹

The voice of Nuremberg's elite town council was a paternal, conservative one when it came to upholding order and maintaining the status quo. This was especially true in relation to the most popular festival of the year, kermis, and the reform of popular culture and festivals in general. This was also true in the case of Sebald and Barthel Beham, and Jörg Pencz, who were tried and expelled from Nuremberg in January 1525 when the council was about to officially adopt Luther's new religion. As a result, Sebald was dubbed "godless painter" by contemporaries after he was tried for his unorthodox views concerning baptism, communion, and the council's authority.⁹⁰ Although few facts about Beham's life exist aside from his trial, it seems evident from his *Kunst vnd Lerbuechlin*, first published in 1546, the book he wrote in German for simple youths and illustrated with his own woodcuts, that Beham was literate in German, the lay language of the time.⁹¹ Sebald may also have been aligned with the left wing of the Reformation within Nuremberg and without. Sebald's brother-in-law, the spiritualist Reformer, Sebastian Franck, was married to Beham's sister, Ottilie. Luther claimed that Ottilie blew her radical ideas into her husband's [i.e., Franck's] ears.⁹²

The council's attempts at cleansing kermis and other aspects of popular culture of their negative and sinful features appear to have begun about 1526, based on the existing evidence.⁹³ Although legislation of a reforming nature goes back to the thirteenth century in Nuremberg, it was not until 1526, the year after the Reformation was adopted in Nuremberg,

⁸⁹Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk*, 1–3, cites Engelsing. On literacy, see Ann Rosalind Jones, "City Women and Their Audiences: Louise Labé and Veronica Franco, *Rewriting the Renaissance. The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy J. Vickers, *Women in Culture and Society*, ed. Catharine R. Stimpson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 390, n. 1, who cites important sources. See also Parker, "Success and Failure," 77 n. 95.

⁹⁰Sebald's radical opinions are discussed by Keith P. F. Moxey, *Peasants, Warriors, and Wives: Popular Imagery in the Reformation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 29–34, and in my "Feasting and Spinning," chap. 1.

⁹¹For an illustration of Beham's *Kunst vnd Lerbuechlin*, see Robert A. Koch, ed., *Early German Masters* (The Illustrated Bartsch 15) (New York: Abaris Books, 1978), 219–72. See especially p. 222, with the introduction or "Vorrede."

⁹²For Ottilie Beham and Sebastian Franck, see n. 102, below. For Franck, see Horst Weigelt, *Sebastian Franck und die lutherische Reformation* (Schriften des Vereins für Reformationsgeschichte 186, Jg. 77) (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus G. Mohn, 1972), 19, and Fritz Blanke, "Reformation und Alkoholismus," *Zwingliana* 9 (1953): 88.

⁹³The evidence suggesting Nuremberg's attempts at reforming popular culture began about 1526 in the form of printed mandates. See Rep. A6, Mandate and Register volumes (StA).

that efforts for social reform by the secular authorities appear to have increased. This is suggested by an increased number of printed documents from that time that have come down to us, especially mandates and police ordinances issued as broadsheets and pamphlets.⁹⁴ Such legislation was, to use Gerald Strauss's words, prohibitive not preventive, because it was "imposed after excess or abuse had been noted, and attempted to apply brakes to a process already underway."⁹⁵ Similar attempts at reforming popular culture go back even earlier to Basel and Sebastian Brant's *Ship of Fools* of 1494 (e.g., against those led into temptation on feast days), and to the reform movement of the sixteenth century when humanists, members of the clergy, and secular authorities in the early part of the century redressed abuses in both religious and secular practices, attacking nearly all aspects of secular and religious behavior.⁹⁶ Peter Burke calls this the reform of popular culture and views it as a systematic attempt by the educated to change the basic values and attitudes of the rest, or most, of the population.⁹⁷

Indeed, Nuremberg's attempts at cleansing popular culture, such as kermis, follow on the tails of that earlier pre-evangelical reform movement. This indicates the continuation of earlier historical directions under Lutheran leaders. In fact, Lyndal Roper has recently discussed this broad reform movement for Lutheran Augsburg, calling it "evangelical urban moralism." She states that,

Perhaps the most striking feature of evangelical urban moralism is its determined pessimism about human nature, coupled with a view of all human relationships—and especially those between man and wife—as being structured around authority and submission.⁹⁸

Striking parallels can be made between Augsburg's Lutheran council and Nuremberg's. As Roper observes, "evangelicals made the language of moralism their own," with a resulting "ambitious style of exclusive claims to authority."⁹⁹ Roper discusses Augsburg's council as assuming increasingly more control during the 1530s in relation to the church and guilds. In Nuremberg, this was also the case since June 1524 when the council

⁹⁴For early statute books, see Werner Schultheiss, ed., *Satzungsbücher und Satzungen der Reichsstadt Nürnberg aus dem 14. Jahrhundert* (Quellen zur Geschichte und Kultur der Stadt Nürnberg 3) 2 vols. in 3 (Nuremberg: Selbstverlag des Stadtrats Nürnberg, 1965-78). For the printed documents from Nuremberg that date to the beginning of the Reformation, see the preceding note.

⁹⁵Strauss, *Nuremberg in the Sixteenth Century*: 112.

⁹⁶See Sebastian Brant, *Ship of Fools*, ed. Edwin Zeydel (New York: Dover Publications, [1967]): 306-9, ch. 95.

⁹⁷Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London: Temple Smith, 1978), 207.

⁹⁸Roper, *Holy Household*, 57.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 87, 73.

assumed sole authority from the Bishop of Bamberg, who was earlier responsible for all religious matters in Nuremberg. The council had banned guilds in the fourteenth century, effectively eliminating a powerful unit centered around work. Beginning with the Reformation, then, Nuremberg's council became the central force in Nuremberg concerned with every public and private detail of everyday life—work, church, festivals, and relations between the sexes.

The comparison between Nuremberg and Augsburg can be extended to the use of legislation and discipline. As Roper explains, once again,

These [urban] politics were spelt out above all in the processes of ordinance-making and enforcement of statutes, as evangelicals tried to create the kingdom of God through discipline.¹⁰⁰ The centrality in Augsburg of the term "discipline" for both religious and secular discourse continues through the sixteenth century and has been studied by Heinz Schilling for the Calvinist town of Emden in north-west Germany.¹⁰¹

The dichotomy between the popularity of popular culture like kermis with the masses, on one hand, and its criticism by the upper clergy and authorities, on the other, so evident in sixteenth-century literature and documents, is also visible in the woodcut images. In the *Large Kermis* (fig. 9), the church placed in the background and the inn at center foreground stress the dominance of drink over religious observance, as in the historical situation. There is no visible sign of religious observance other than a wedding before a church. Although weddings were to take place before the altar inside the church in Lutheran Nuremberg, the woodcuts

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 4. For discourse using the term "discipline," see idem, 57.

¹⁰¹On discipline in Emden, see Heinz Schilling, "Reformierte Kirchenzucht als Sozialdisziplinierung? Die Tätigkeit des Emder Presbyteriums in den Jahren 1557-1562," *Niederlande und Nordwestdeutschland. Studien zur Regional- und Stadtgeschichte Nordwestkontinental-europas im Mittelalter und in der Neuzeit. Franz Petri zum 80. Geburtstag*, ed. Wilfried Ehbrecht and Heinz Schilling (Cologne: Böhlau, 1983), 261-327; and "Sünden zucht und frühneuzeitliche Sozialdisziplinierung. Die Calvinistische Presbyteriale Kirchenzucht in Emden vom 16. bis 19. Jahrhundert," *Stände und Gesellschaft im alten Reich*, ed. Georg Schmidt (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1989), 265-302. See also Schilling's "Die zweite Reformation als Kategorie der Geschichtswissenschaft," *Die reformierte Konfessionalisierung in Deutschland—Das Problem der "zweiten Reformation,"* ed. Heinz Schilling (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1986), 387-437; and idem, "Nation und Konfession in der frühneuzeitlichen Geschichte Europas," *Nation und Literatur im Europa der frühen Neuzeit. Akten des I. Internationalen Osnabrücker Kongresses zur Kulturgeschichte der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Klaus Garber (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1989), 87-107; idem, "'History of Crime' or 'History of Sin'?—Some Reflections on the Social History of Early Modern Church Discipline," *Politics and Society in Reformation Europe. Essays for Sir Geoffrey Elton on his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. E. I. Kouri and Tom Scott (London: Macmillan, 1987), 289-310.



Fig. 11. Erhard Schön, *Four Effects of Wine*. Woodcut, originally published 1529. (Photo: author. Germanisches Nationalmuseum Nürnberg. Used by permission.)

show the continuing pre-Reformation popular tradition rather than the new location for the ceremony desired by clergy and council. The prominence of inn over church in the woodcut indicates the actual social practice in Nuremberg, where drinking played a large role.

The grape vine before the inn in Sebald's *Large Kermis* indicates that wine is seen as the alcoholic offender. Popular belief held that four different reactions to drinking wine could occur, and these Erhard Schön of Nuremberg, Behaim's contemporary, represented in a woodcut of 1528 (fig. 11). Important for the kermis woodcuts is the reaction of the drinker at lower left, who has fallen to the ground and expels his drink. He is accompanied by two pigs. His behavior is comparable to that of the drunkards in the *Large Kermis* and the *Kermis at Mögeldorf* (fig. 2, left), where drinkers slip down from their benches, vomit, and are accompanied by dog or pig expressing eager interest in each peasant's gluttonous condition. In the left half of the *Large Kermis*, a pig or wild boar is also carried by a peasant possibly underscoring the gluttonous and drunken behavior of some celebrators.

The repetition of drunkenness in the details of the kermis woodcuts corresponds to the repetitive manner of sixteenth-century discourse seen in Nuremberg's laws and writings and in printed texts and tracts of the time, as I have discussed elsewhere.¹⁰² In the *Large Kermis*, inebriation is additionally underscored by the centrally located peasant and canine companion, who illustrate the popular sixteenth-century German expression, the "drunken matins" (*die trunkene mettin*). Sebastian Franck explains the expression as behavior resulting from so much drink that Bacchus throws the drinker under a bench, after which the latter begins to sing the "drunken matins" with such long notes that all dogs and pigs run to him, and gobble the song and the matins he has produced. Franck describes the behavior and calls it debauchery in his *Proverbs* of 1541.¹⁰³ Although the first example in visual form of the "drunken matins" expression appears on a drinking tract of 1505, that visual form became more common by the time Beham made his kermis woodcuts in the 1530s. The expression was then included both on a woodcut by Hans Weiditz from Augsburg and on the title page of an anonymous drinking pamphlet from Nuremberg; thus both works come from Beham's south German realm. The most notable of this group is the pamphlet (fig. 12) printed by Hans Guldenmund at Nuremberg. The pamphlet's title identifies the expression by name, *A New Song. The Song is Called the Drunken Matins, [and] Is Well Known to Many Good Fellows*.¹⁰⁴

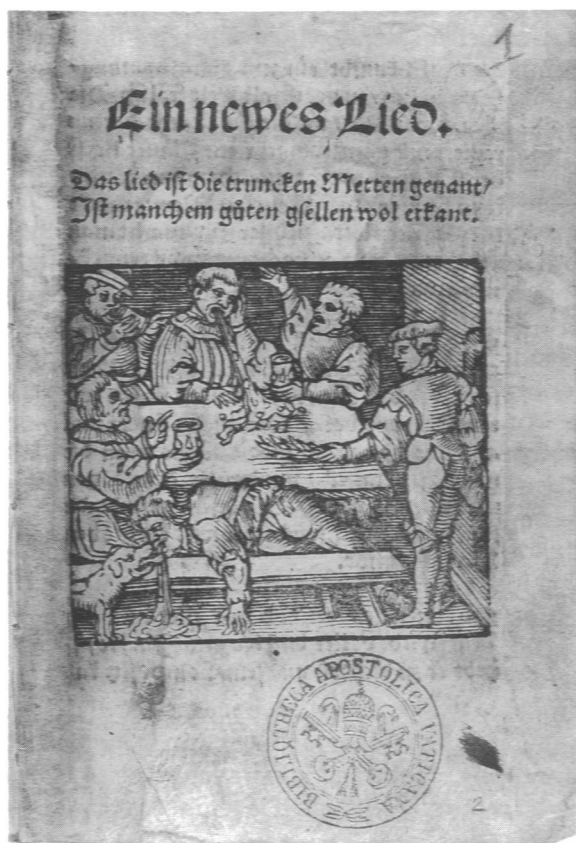
¹⁰²On the repetitive manner of sixteenth-century discourse, see Alison G. Stewart, "Sebald Beham's *Fountain of Youth-Bathhouse* Woodcut: Popular Entertainment and Large Prints by the Little Masters," *The Register of the Spencer Museum of Art* 6 no. 6 (1989): 82.

¹⁰³Sebastian Franck, *Sprichwörter* (Frankfurt am Main: Christian Egenolff, 1541): part 2, fol. 148v (Munich, Staatsbibliothek; hereafter, SB): "O das ist dann ein grosse ehr, wer eh feier abent macht, vnd den wust her ausz thu, der ist sammer bocks marter ein gut gesel, seines leibs ein held, er darff doch in stich sitzen, vnd einem guten gesellen und weinhelden eines gewarten, bisz dasz jn der Bachus (So noch stercker ist dann er, vnd nit gern mit jm zegrob schertzen laszt) under die banck wirfft, dz er anfahet die truncken mettin mit den langen noten zu singen, dasz all hund vnd sew zulauffen, vnd sich des gesangs vnd der mettin frewen."

Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch* 6 (Leipzig, 1855), col. 2147, def. 2b, cites the text in shortened variation. On Franck's marriage in 1528 to Ottilie Beham, Sebald's sister, see Luther's statement in Horst Weigelt, "Sebastian Franck," *Gestalten der Kirchengeschichte* 6 (1981) (Reformationszeit 2), 120, and Weigelt, *Sebastian Franck und die lutherische Reformation* 19. Siegfried Wollgast, *Der deutsche Pantheismus im 16. Jahrhundert. Sebastian Franck und seine Wirkungen auf die Entwicklung der pantheistischen Philosophie in Deutschland* (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1972), 71 n. 31, cites the source: "Seb. Franck Ottilia Behamin. 17 März (zu) S. Lienhard (getraut)," *Ehebuch, Pfarrei St. Sebald, Nuremberg*. For additional statements about Ottilie and Franck in relation to Luther, see Wollgast, *Der deutsche Pantheismus*, 75 n. 39.

¹⁰⁴*Ein neues Lied. Das lied ist die truncken Metten genant/Ist manchen guten gsellen wol erkant*. The original is in the Vatican Library. Photocopied illustration in Freiburg im Breisgau, Volksliedarchiv, Bl. 5136. The drinking tract of 1505 is from *Dialogismus Hieronymi Emser de origine propinandi vulgo compotandi...* (Leipzig: Melchior Lotter, 1505). See Heinrich Röttinger, "Neues zum Werke Hans Weiditz," *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für vervielfältigende Kunst* (Beilage der *Graphischen Künste*) 2 (1911): 50 no. 9; and Paul Hohenemser, ed., *Flugschriftensammlung Gustav Freytag* (Frankfurt am Main: Frankfurter Societats Drückerei, 1925), 64 no. 829; available as microfiche from K. G. Saur.

Fig. 12. Anon. pamphlet, *A New Song: The Song is Called the Drunken Matins [and] Is Well Known to Many Good Fellows*. Woodcut (Nuremberg: Hans Guldenmund, 1530s) Photo: La Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. Used by permission.



Sebald Beham combined a variety of popular interests and elite concerns in his kermis woodcuts, as we have seen. The popular aspects are most notably evident in the carnival play text of Hans Sachs printed on both versions of the *Kermis at Mögeldorf*, where the peasant is employed as a vehicle for comic humor and caricature, but not the object of caricature himself.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, as Merckel points out, such comic figures in carnival plays stuff their bellies immoderately, at a rate that corresponds to the immoderateness with which they empty their bowels.¹⁰⁶ These bodily ele-

¹⁰⁵Johannes Merckel, *Form und Funktion der Komik im Nürnberger Fastnachtspiel* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1971), 54, after Werner Lenk, *Das Nürnberger Fastnachtspiel des 15. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1966), 81, and Carroll, "Peasant Festivity," 293.

¹⁰⁶Merckel, *Form und Funktion der Komik*, 195.

ments from top and bottom overlap with contemporary illustrations of the four effects of wine, where excessive imbibing causes some drinkers to vomit and others to defecate (see fig. 11). A large body of drinking tracts and illustrated literature dating from the first half of the sixteenth century underscores the causative function of drink for these bodily effects, and provides the larger cultural background for the kermis woodcuts; I discuss this elsewhere in detail.¹⁰⁷ Yet, the overlap here of popular notions of wine's effects and the popular, comic humor of carnival play is striking and underscores the popular associations of the kermis woodcuts. I use "popular" here to refer to "beliefs, literary and visual works, practices and festivities widely dispersed in a given society and in their appeal often (though not always) jumping barriers of wealth, birth, religion, and ethnic background," to use Natalie Davis's words.¹⁰⁸

In addition to the popular notion of the four effects of wine, we have seen that the popular expression, "the drunken matins," was centrally placed at the beginning and center of the kermis prints. This indicates the centrality of drinking and drunkenness at kermis. Yet, as Margaret Carroll rightly explains, "the absence of any other theological referent ... suggests that a less far-reaching interpretation [than 'sin']" is in order here. Craig Harbison has also recently argued that theologically complex meanings are out of place for non-ecclesiastical settings.¹⁰⁹ The centrality of drunkenness in most of the kermis woodcuts certainly indicates the central role drinking was believed to play on behavior at contemporary kermis—fighting and disagreement, vomiting, and defecating, as witnessed by the large body of texts and illustrations devoted to the subject in the early part of the century. Although it is tempting to see here the influence of spiritu-

¹⁰⁷On the effects of wine in early sixteenth-century printed tracts and literature, see "Feasting and Spinning." Here, however, I mention that the idea that drink causes both vomiting and defecating is illustrated in the Petrarch Master's *Men Guzzling Wine* from the *German Cicero* of 1531, fol. CXLIIIv, also used in *Petrarcha. Von der Arzney bayder Glück/desguten vnd widerwertigen* (Augsburg: Heinrich Steiner, 1532) (SB). Sebastian Franck's long pamphlet of 1528, *On the Horrible Offence of Drunkenness*, exhaustively describes the damage of drunkenness to body, soul, honor, and possessions. Those negative effects include fouling one's clothing and falling into filth too horrible even for a pig. Franck informs that when the drunkard lies in excrement he can be likened to a dog that eats the drunkard's vomit, and to a pig that consumes the defecation in the drunkard's pants. Franck calls such bacchants wine fools. See Sebastian Franck, *Von dem gewulichen laster der trunckenheit* (Augsburg: Heinrich Steiner, 1528) (Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg), especially fol. iiv and iiir. Men vomiting from too much drink are represented in even earlier prints and drinking tracts dating from the first two decades of the sixteenth century. See, again, my *Feasting and Spinning* for discussion and illustrations.

¹⁰⁸Natalie Zemon Davis, "Toward Mixtures and Margins," *The American Historical Review* 97 no. 5 (December 1992): 1411.

¹⁰⁹Carroll, "Peasant Festivity," 306, n. 32. Craig Harbison, "Sexuality and Social Standing in Jan van Eyck's Arnolfini Double Portrait," *Renaissance Quarterly* 43 no. 2 (Summer 1990): 258.

alist Sebastian Franck on his brother-in-law, Beham, as well as Franck's criticism of drunken Lutherans, the descriptive format Sebald employs makes such associations general at best.¹¹⁰

The popular aspects of the kermis woodcuts—carnival play text and visualization of the “drunken matins” expression—overlap with elite culture, members of whom were compiling such proverbial expressions. Furthermore, the evangelical re-evaluations and criticisms of church festivals in Nuremberg brings us firmly into the realm of the elite's re-evaluations of popular culture there. Kermis was a real event and topical subject in Lutheran Nuremberg, a topic that touched both high and low.

The overlap of popular and elite concerns here recalls Stallybrass and White's thesis that “cultural categories of high and low, social and aesthetic ... also those of the physical body and geographical space, are never entirely separable.” Indeed, the “interrelating and dependent hierarchies of high and low,” as seen by these authors, appear to be applicable here to the kermis woodcuts.¹¹¹

AUDIENCE

The audience of the kermis prints was certainly a varied one that crossed class boundaries. The fondness of most of the population for the kermis of that time points to a broad, popular audience. The criticism by the elite, who wished to see kermis reformed or abolished, also points to an audience that includes the educated elite. Contemporary kermis was popular and had a range of visitors that crossed class boundaries, as demonstrated by the Fürth kermis. The woodcuts similarly range from crude, hand-colored copies, like the *Kermis (Oxford)* and the *Kermis (Gotha)*, to finer, uncolored work by Beham himself, like the *Kermis (Erlangen)* and the *Large Kermis*.¹¹² This indicates a range of tastes and interests that spanned society from low to high. We have already seen that the texts included with the kermis woodcuts vary from the earthy, carnival play-like texts in German to the elite imperial privilege and inscription from Vergil, both in Latin. The fact that one of the kermis woodcuts, the *Kermis (Oxford)*, is both relatively low in artistic quality and high in terms of its content, with that Latin inscription from Vergil, defies the traditional assumptions about the woodcut technique that low quality indicates low audience. The Latin inscription clearly points to an audience that was both learned, and thereby part of the educated elite, and interested in the subject of kermis.

¹¹⁰On Beham and Franck, see n. 103 above.

¹¹¹Stallybrass and White, *Politics and Poetics*, 2.

¹¹²The *Kermis (Oxford)*, for example, is selectively colored in brown tones and the *Kermis (Gotha)* employs a variety of strong colors that have been freely applied: green, brown, mustard, rose, blue, and orange. For a discussion of color and the various kermis versions and impressions, see “The Individuals and the Prints,” in my “Feasting and Spinning.”

The audience I am suggesting here has been constructed from both the internal and external evidence—from interests seen in the content of those prints and in the audience of contemporary kermis. I define audience as including those able to purchase the kermis prints, as Moxey does,¹¹³ those who could see or view the prints.

The viewing of printed works assumed a wider, more public and communal nature in the sixteenth century than art historians have traditionally acknowledged. Whether for printed images or texts, viewing—like literacy—had less to do with ownership and capability to buy than with opportunity to see or view a particular work. This posits a larger audience for woodcut images than that suggested by Moxey. At a time when reading aloud or oral communication was more standard than reading privately to oneself, literacy was not a prerequisite for the comprehension of texts, as Robert Scribner has clearly demonstrated.¹¹⁴ We have already seen, for the dissemination of laws, that they were read aloud from the pulpit for those unable to read the texts posted in printed form; thus the authorities in Nuremberg were aiming their messages at two different audiences—those able to read and those able to listen and understand the text read aloud. The kermis woodcuts were also aimed at an audience that was both textually oriented and solely visually oriented, as evidenced by the woodcuts themselves, for only the *Kermis at Mögeldorf* bears a text of any length.

If we are to believe the inscriptions on two printed peasant calendars of 1542 and 1548, the importance of understanding or comprehending an image, even if the owner or viewer could not read, is confirmed. These inscriptions specifically state that the calendars were intended to be understood by those who cannot read and by the “common man”¹¹⁵ (fig. 13). Communication to numbers larger than one—that is, to more than the “I” of reader or private viewer—was probably more the norm than is usually acknowledged for printed texts and woodcuts at the time Beham designed the kermis woodcuts. I am arguing here for an audience for the kermis woodcuts that is not solely defined in terms of the buyer. Thus, both those who could afford to buy the kermis prints, and those who were able to see them, formed the audience. By expanding audience to include a greater variety of viewers, rather than a circumscribed few, we open up the interpretation and understanding of the festival prints beyond those included in the definition of traditional audience for the

¹¹³ Moxey, *Peasants, Warriors, and Wives*, 65.

¹¹⁴ See Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk*, 2.

¹¹⁵ The calendars of 1542 (my fig. 13) and 1548 are inscribed: “Ein nutzlicher Kalender/ dem gemeynen Mann zuuersten” and “Wol zu verstan obschon er nicht lesen kann” (SBM). The calendars were printed as woodcuts at Nuremberg by Hans Guldenmundt and at Augsburg by Hanns Moser.

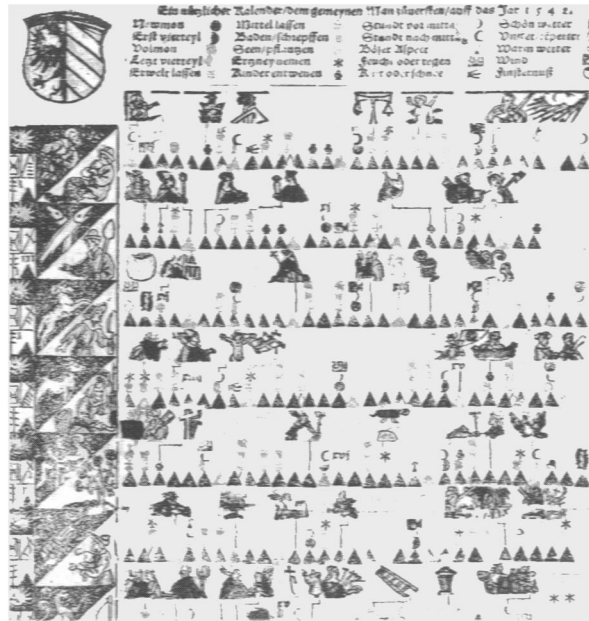


Fig. 13. Anon., *Peasant Calendar*, Woodcut, 1542. Photo: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich. Reprinted by permission.

smaller, and more refined engravings. That audience is defined as being more monied, educated, and private. In the case of Behaim's large woodcuts, and others made at the time, however, the works were probably displayed in a more public setting, like the walls of taverns. Rather than have only one meaning critical of kermis and an audience comprising only the artisan class, who performed the carnival play-like texts accompanying the *Kermis at Mögeldorf*, as Moxey originally argued, or an audience comprising the "upper classes, merchants, and professionals" as Moxey suggested more recently,¹¹⁶ I believe that the kermis woodcuts had an appeal and an audience that included all classes and cross-class boundaries within Nuremberg's population, and possibly beyond.

In Nuremberg, this group may have included patrician town councilors and members of the upper clergy who penned the kermis legislation critical of that religious holiday and who would have seen their criticisms in the woodcuts. This audience certainly included members of all classes that celebrated and enjoyed Nuremberg's numerous church festivals throughout the summer months. As we have seen, kermis was visited by all classes at the Fürth kermis on foot, horseback, and by coach. Those viewers could have delighted in the enjoyable events and activities of ker-

¹¹⁶Moxey, "Church Anniversary Holidays," *passim*, and Moxey, *Peasants, Warriors, and Wives*, 65.

mis depicted in the kermis woodcuts, events that viewers could have personally experienced at kermis in Nuremberg and elsewhere. We need here to heed the suggestions of Camille, Freedberg, and Medick and Sabean that our emotional response to the festivals themselves must be taken into consideration. Anyone who has visited a fair or festival is aware that one's own emotional state, as well as the change in one's pocket and the weather, plays an important role in how much one enjoys oneself at a festival, and thus the festival experience is a subjective one. Viewer response to the kermis woodcuts must have been similarly subjective.

The audience could have also included other members of the educated elite. Such members criticized festivals like kermis and collections of popular expressions including ones treating excessive drinking and describing folk customs. The elite members' responses to the woodcuts would have been as varied as the writings—criticizing kermis and its excesses, describing the popular festival kermis with its folk customs, and describing the kermis woodcuts as assembling proverbs about kermis and excessive drinking.

All classes of Nuremberg's society, including the middle and lower classes, would have had members who delighted in the popular text accompanying the *Kermis at Mögeldorf*, whether that text was read aloud or to oneself. It stresses excess and scatology, which is believed to have formed the broad base of appeal of such carnival play-like texts.¹¹⁷ Carnival plays were presented in taverns or inns to a mostly male audience. Such plays may also have been presented in the assembly houses of patricians (*Bürgerstuben*). Thus, the bawdy, colorful carnival play had an audience ranging from broad or popular in nature to a more exclusive, elite audience comprising patricians. This indicates an audience for the plays with members from all classes of society, for the performers were artisan journeymen, who were single, as well as young patricians.¹¹⁸

German inns were also broadly based and came in larger and smaller sizes, the smaller ones for the poor and common folk.¹¹⁹ Peter Burke views the taverns as a public setting that transmitted popular culture, and Peter Stallybrass and Allon White link tavern and popular festivals in the expression, "the tavern and the popular festive scene."¹²⁰ Although Burke's discussion centers on the English inn, alehouse or beer cellar,

¹¹⁷Dieter Wuttke, *Fastnachtspiele des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1973), 402.

¹¹⁸Merckel, *Form und Funktion der Komik*, V. See Roper, *Holy Household*, 32, for journeymen and apprentices who were all unmarried, at least in theory.

¹¹⁹See Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch* 2: col. 542, for *Bürgerstuben* and its definition. Wuttke, *Fastnachtspiele*, 402, discusses inns and *Bürgerstuben* as the location of carnival play performances. See Wiesner, *Working Women*, 133, for larger and smaller inns.

¹²⁰Stallybrass and White, *Politics and Poetics*, 198.



Fig. 14. Karel van Mallery after Johannes Stradanus, *Vermis sericos*, from *The History of Silkworm and Silk-Spinning*, sheet 3, engraving. Photo: Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museums. Braunschweig, Museumsfoto B. P. Keiser. Used by Permission.

many of their features (card playing, cock fights, and the game of ninepins) are similar to those of their German relative, the inn-centered kermis, thereby validating the comparison.¹²¹ This evidence underscores the same broadly based audience from all sectors of society as the audience I have reconstructed for the kermis prints. Sebald Beham reportedly owned his own tavern in Frankfurt late in life, according to Joachim von Sandrart in the seventeenth century, although more recent studies lend no credence to that statement.¹²²

Beham's kermis woodcuts and their copies could similarly have hung inside taverns or high inside patricians' assembly houses, if not also on the walls over wainscoting in homes of distinguished burghers (fig. 14). Burgher homes and inns have been discussed by Moxey and Carroll.¹²³ In

¹²¹Burke, *Popular Culture*, 109.

¹²²See Carroll, "Peasant Festivity," 294, who cites Sandrart, and Goddard, *The World in Miniature*, 222, who discusses evidence negating Beham's association with owning a tavern, cited by Sandrart.

¹²³See Moxey, "Church Anniversary Holidays," and Carroll, "Peasant Festivity."



Fig. 15. Jan van Hemessen, *Inn Scene*, panel painting, ca. 1540. (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin-Preussischer Kulturbesitz-Gemäldegalerie.) Photo: Jörg P.Anders. Used by permission.

sixteenth-century German burgher homes, woodcuts decorated the plain, frieze-like strip of wall high on the wall.¹²⁴ Furthermore inns, which were accessible to the public, have also been shown in sixteenth-century art itself (fig. 15) to be a location for hanging works of art on paper. In seventeenth-century London, moreover, alehouses were decorated with paintings and the home of a Faversham victualler was similarly decorated with numerous maps.¹²⁵ Broadside ballads were also pasted onto the walls of English inns and aided singing, according to Peter Burke.¹²⁶ These maps and ballads were undoubtedly made of paper like the kermis prints. I have shown elsewhere that such large-scale woodcuts representing bath-houses could have hung in public baths and in the private homes of burghers and craftsmen, based on the existing evidence.¹²⁷ I concur with

¹²⁴Horst Appuhn and Christian von Heusinger, *Riesen-holzschnitte und Papiertapeten der Renaissance* (Unterschneidheim: Uhl, 1976), 96f.

¹²⁵Clark, *The English Alehouse*, 67.

¹²⁶Burke, *Popular Culture*, 109. On p. 67, Burke also cites paintings of biblical subjects that hung in London inns.

¹²⁷Stewart, "Sebald Beham's *Fountain of Youth-Bathhouse Woodcut*," 79.

Carroll who believes the tavern and brothel provided locations for hanging the kermis woodcuts; she cites Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, part 2, of 1597/8: "And for thy walls, a pretty slight drollery, or the story of the Prodigal, or the German hunting in water-work, is worth a thousand of these bed-hangers and fly-bitten tapestries."¹²⁸ The inn or alehouse has also been underscored in more recent publications as the location for images both religious and secular, and high and low.¹²⁹

The purposes of the German kermis woodcuts appear to have been manifold and their audience large. Descriptive, entertaining, and moralizing, the kermis woodcuts created in Nuremberg codify and perpetuate a world of celebration, conflict and aggression, and of excessive drinking. The iconographic strategies outlined above indicate that Sebald Beham intentionally created prints that drew on society and its festivals undergoing reevaluation and attempts at reform, as a slow and ongoing process spurred by the Lutheran Reformation at Nuremberg. Those festivals were, nevertheless, alive, thriving, and extremely popular, and it is the prevalence and popularity of those festivals, on one hand, and contemporary criticisms of them, on the other, that we see in the prints themselves.

Although some members of Nuremberg's society may have been offended by the excessive nature of the celebrating in the woodcuts, that group may well have been the exception. In sixteenth-century Nuremberg, which was loud and dirty, where people defecated on the streets in town and outdoors at kermis in the countryside, the kermis woodcuts of Sebald Beham offer entertaining and didactic extensions of that culture and its bawdy tastes. As Stallybrass and White have shown, even small fairs like those at kermis

juxtaposed both people and objects which were normally kept separate and thus provided a taste of life beyond the narrow horizons of the town or village. Part of the transgressive excitement of the fair for the subordinate classes was *not* its 'otherness' to official discourse, but rather the disruption of provincial habits and local traditions by the introduction of a certain cosmopolitanism, arousing desires and excitements for exotic and strange commodities.¹³⁰

The bringing together of town folk and country folk, at fairs and festivals, suggests a similarly large audience for the kermis woodcuts that transcended class and urban boundaries. Although audience is usually circumscribed to urban centers for art of the sixteenth century, I suggest we

¹²⁸Carroll, "Peasant Festivity," 294.

¹²⁹Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety 1550-1640* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 332.

¹³⁰Stallybrass and White, *Politics and Poetics*, 37.

break beyond town walls into the countryside, where audiences could have viewed kermis woodcuts in rural taverns, and where those woodcuts would certainly have been enjoyed as the locus of festival entertainment. The dualism between acceptable and unacceptable behavior at kermis, as shown in the large prints, was therefore an intended part of Beham's pictorial strategy.